

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of applications for resource consent by the Central Plains Water Trust and a notice of requirement for the designation of land by Central Plains Water Limited associated with the construction and operation of the Central Plains Water Scheme

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MALCOLM GILL-FOX ON
BEHALF OF WHITEWATER CANOE CLUB**

1. Introduction

1.1 My name is Ian Malcolm Gill-Fox

1.2 I have been kayaking white water rivers since 1984. I started while still at school on the Hutt, Otaki and Manawatu rivers and became serious in 1986 after attending Outward Bound. I entered the white water scene just as plastic kayaks were starting to appear in New Zealand and more remote runs on the West Coast were starting to be explored. This provided considerable inspiration to me and I progressed very quickly, relative to my peers of the time, to paddling Grade 4 and 5 rivers in the North Island by early 1989. In spite of spending a considerable amount of my time out of NZ due to my work I managed to paddle widely throughout NZ as well as a bit in Victoria (Australia), USA and Canada. I have surf kayaked (sometimes on waves up to 20ft), sea kayaked, competed in kayak slalom, paddled downriver racers, and completed 3 Coast to Coast races. These days I mostly concentrate on teaching beginners through my club (White Water Canoe Club), helping out friends with multisport kayaking and paddling mostly Grade 3-4 rivers for my own pleasure. As well as completing 3 Coast to Coast races, I have been the leader of one of its Safety

Kayak teams for the last 6 events. I have also led one of the safety teams on 2 Mt Cook to Christchurch races, been a safety kayaker in several Brass Monkey Series and was Safety Manager for one complete series of that event. I competed in the BM series last year placing 3rd in my class. I am presently in my second term as Instruction officer for the WWCC and have held the position of Safety Officer in that club. I have been instructing kayaking as my time has allowed since 1990. I have been around rivers and/or boats of one kind or another since I was very young. I currently own 8 kayaks, all very different and ranging in age from 21 to 2 years old, and have 2 more (also very different from the others) on order. I paddle 5 of my boats regularly at different times of the year according to whether I am training recreating instructing or safety kayaking, and the other 3 occasionally when I want to shock my friends with an oddity. I categorise myself as a broadly experienced and highly skilled (if slightly rusty on harder water) kayaker.

1.3 My professional training is as a Merchant Deck Officer (navigator). I started my sea-going career in April 1986 as an apprentice with Union Shipping NZ, attained my first professional qualification (Second Mate Foreign Going, passing top of my class) in 1990 and left the sea in August 2000 so, amongst other reasons, I could spend more time paddling. I hold a NZ Master Foreign Going Certificate which was the highest available qualification in my profession in NZ at that time and qualified me to take command of most vessels at sea. While I am not a specifically trained technical expert in hull design or hydrodynamics, my formal studies did include both theoretical and practical aspects of vessel design and handling. This combined with nearly a quarter century of white water kayaking (paying close attention to boat design the whole time) has given me a good understanding of the practical physics of rivers as they relate to kayaks. I presently work as a supervisor at the distribution centre of an outdoor equipment manufacturer.

1.4 But, I define myself as a kayaker more than anything else. If anyone asks me "what do you do?" I answer along the lines of "I'm a kayaker, but I work at other things most of the time to fund my passion". This is not a trite or throwaway line, I really mean it. Kayaking is what I enjoy more than anything else, where I have met nearly all my friends, where I am closer to life (and sometimes death) than at any other time, what I would devote pretty much all my time to if I had the money or the will to do without any. Being on a river moves my heart and soul like nothing else does. It's where I've found what defines for me true friendship, as genuinely risking your life for each other is no small thing and certainly something I'd willingly do for my friends.

1.5 I enjoy all sorts of rivers, have run a wide variety in the past and continue to seek new experiences. I've paddled tiny rural streams in Auckland and Northland (some of them probably first descents), through to some large volume rivers in British Columbia and all sorts of rivers in between. I like all of them. What I like the most is being able to get a variety of kayaking experiences not just over different rivers, but on the same river at different flows. A full range of natural flows in a natural setting is my ideal.

1.6 In my evidence I will outline my experience on the Waimakariri river, my concerns at the Application's failure to consider the breadth of use of the river not just for racing but also for training instruction and casual recreational kayaking purposes, and my concerns about some safety aspects of the intake structures and flow related dangers of the proposed scheme. I have not kayaked on the Rakaia river so cannot comment on it.

1.7 I have read the Code of Conduct (Practise Note 2006) for expert witnesses and agree to comply with it.

1.8 I support the submissions of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association and the White Water Canoe Club.

2. Experience On The Waimakariri

2.1 I kayaked the Waimakariri from Mt White Bridge to Woodstock for the first time in 1989 in what was then a cutting edge white water kayak. It was a long trip and well removed from what I usually paddled, but highly enjoyable because of the stunning scenery, lack of human influence on the river, and the challenge of paddling such a long stretch of water. I next paddled that section in late 1997 in preparation for my first of 3 Coast to Coasts and have paddled it 2-4 times each summer for all but a couple of years since. I paddle this section less than some other race kayakers as my white water paddling skills are at a much higher level than most racers and so I can attain fitness closer to home and rely on my skills from other paddling to carry me through the course. My most frequently paddled section of the Waimakariri is the lower river, usually from "The Pylons" to the SH1 bridge but sometimes starting from "The Willows". I use that section of the river more in winter and have been a frequent visitor over the last couple of years as it is the easiest way for me to retain fitness over the winter. I no longer run, due to injury, and seldom cycle, due to so often

going kayaking (or climbing) after work, so by far my predominant form of exercise for fitness is kayaking. I have found over the years that the need to train to keep fitness has increased and I have acted accordingly.

- 2.2 After my last Coast to Coast in 2000 I concentrated again on recreational white water paddling and instruction, and safety kayaking, until the race bug bit me again last year. My use of the lower Waimakariri went from once a fortnight in winter (twice weekly in the summer lead up to Coast to Coast) to 3 or 4 times weekly in winter (3 times weekly prior to Coast to Coast). I'm close to those frequencies again after recovering from injury (see below) and expect to soon regain and then maintain them for the foreseeable future. I probably use the lower river more than most as I cannot stand paddling on the Avon due to its sluggish nature and urban environment, but I am not particularly unusual. I know this as I almost always see others on the river when I am on it and often they are people I see on a regular basis.
- 2.3 I agree with Ken Livingston's definition of flow bands but use flow ranges different to his here as my own experience and preferences straddles his flow bands.
- 2.4 I have paddled the lower Waimakariri at flows ranging from the low 30's (cumecs) to about 500. I am completely comfortable skill-wise paddling in that flow range and would not hesitate to paddle it at substantially higher flows. I have paddled the Waimakariri Gorge at flows from about 35 to 160 cumecs in my race kayak and estimate I would comfortably paddle it up to about 300 cumecs in that boat and over 1000 in one of my shorter more manoeuvrable white water kayaks. Mostly here I am concerned with the lower river as it is here that abstraction affects me the greatest.
- 2.5 I very much prefer the lower river at flows 150 and above. It is still good at 120-150 and ok at 100-120. My preferred minimum to paddle it would be 80 cumecs. Although I paddle the river below this ideal minimum, that is simply because I have no other viable option that can provide me with a moving water training experience after work. Below 80 the river becomes very noticeably progressively more shallow and sluggish as the river drops in flow making it harder work to paddle. I don't mind hard work, but kayaking in shallow water feels like paddling in syrup due to the effects of squat (bottom drag) on the boat. Shallow water also precludes the use of a correct and efficient paddle stroke and can lead to injury caused by poor technique that can develop as a result (which is what I have just recovered from and am having to concentrate very hard on not incurring again with the present very low flows) and damage to paddles and boats as they strike or drag along the river bed. The number

of route choices through braids reduces as the smaller ones dry up and this removes a lot of the fun of paddling braided rivers - picking the best route can be a real challenge and it gives more skilled paddlers like me a competitive advantage over those who use raw power. Sustained periods of low flows and absence of freshes leads to the braided sections of the river tending to concentrate into fewer braids that alter less, thus giving a boring experience by reducing the variety inherent in naturally variable-flowed braided rivers.

3. Breadth Of Use

3.1 During the brass Monkey Series my ratio of training to racing will be 6 or 7:1 with most of my training on the weekdays. Over a year this ratio will be such that over 95% of my time on the Waimakariri (any section) is training for either racing or general fitness, mostly during the week. Talk of mitigation by reduced takes on the weekends is simply not mitigation at all for me or those like me as I need as much natural flow as I can get over the whole week. While I paddle the lower river more than most, my annual training:racing ratio not too far above the 90% training that most regular paddlers will do, so adequate flow all the time is needed to provide for the most frequently occurring use - namely training rather than racing.

3.2 In spite of what it may look like from the amount of training I do, I sometimes get out on the lower Waimakariri for a gentle paddle down the river with friends. It's close to town and easy to get to if time is limited. Although I'd prefer native bush, and the diggers in the river can be a bit intrusive at times, it's still a pleasant environment overall and the scenery looking back to the mountains is great. The water is clear, people we meet along the way are generally friendly and trips like this are a good part day out. I wouldn't bother with a casual trip like this below about 80 cumecs though as the whole point of a casual trip is to relax and not have to dodge gravel bars.

3.3 As Instruction Officer for WWCC, I have used the lower Waimakariri as a convenient venue for further instruction after our courses on the Hurunui river. The Waimakariri offers a good and close place to keep beginners' skills advancing and is a generally non-intimidating environment. I still prefer flows above 80 cumecs for beginners in white water boats as such kayaks are slower than race boats (being short fat and heavy with low directional stability by comparison to long skinny and light racers that travel well in a straight line) and so low flows can make the trip unacceptably long as an after work option, as well as reducing safety as outlined below. I sometimes

coach friends and acquaintances in race boats on the lower river and the Woodstock-Gorge Bridge section. I prefer flows above 80 for this too as it allows me to help them to improve their route finding skills while limiting the risk of running aground as more braids will be at least marginally navigable, and the river is safer at those flows than lower.

- 3.4 There has been no consideration of the variety of types of paddling on the river and the effects of low flow days on kayaking amenity values for the majority of use. Proposed mitigation takes no account of the bulk of paddlers' use of the Waimakariri and has only come recently in the light of some information given by some paddlers.

4. **Safety**

- 4.1 The proposed scheme would create major hazards to the safety of kayakers at the intakes. The technical aspects of this issue are dealt with by others in far more depth than I can. As an experienced safety kayaker and one who is more aware than most of the abilities (or lack of) of multisport paddlers, who predominate on the Waimakariri, I can say with certainty that the only mitigation to assure kayakers' safety that could be provided by the applicant would be to not construct the scheme at all. Everything I have read about the possible construction of the intakes makes me break out in a cold sweat. I am a very good kayaker and I would not want to be anywhere near one of those intakes, particularly as I am a notably poor swimmer and even a strong swimmer would seriously struggle against the flows likely to be encountered even if they occurred in a heated pool. I am more capable than most of manoeuvring my kayak away from danger but the abysmal margin for error in the face of one of these intakes would probably cause me to portage well away from the structure. I don't like carrying my boat, I like paddling it.

- 4.2 The average multisport paddler is less technically skilled than me (although they are often fitter) and quite likely to blunder into or dangerously near an intake or capsize close enough to it so as to be unable to escape entrapment. Most multisporters paddling Coast to Coast are not locals and do not have the benefit of being able to train on the Waimakariri and gain first hand knowledge. Some do make the effort to undertake reconnaissance trips on the river prior to their race but most don't, or can't afford the cost of doing so. This large group of paddlers are those most at risk from the very real hazard presented by the intake structures and given my experience and knowledge of multisport paddlers' average skill levels, I believe that over half the Coast to Coast entrants in recent years would fall into this group. Given the

proposed construction of the intakes, including proposed mitigation features, there is a very real risk of serious injury or even death at one of the intakes. Proposed mitigation is either inadequate, absent, or as in the case of signage laughable. A sign can't mitigate a danger, it can at best only alert someone to it.

4.3 There is more than physical injury at risk here too. Something that has not been mentioned at all by the applicant is the absolute terror that anyone being trapped, even briefly, on one of the intakes would endure. Even escaping physically unharmed may not be enough to overcome the mental trauma of an event such as this. I personally know of kayakers who left the sport after encounters with far less frightening obstacles than the applicant proposes, in spite of having been dedicated paddlers previously. I don't see that the risk of mental trauma from being sucked onto, or even through, an intake should be considered any less seriously than that of physical injury. In my opinion, it's probably worse.

4.4 In the lower river, the abstraction proposed by the applicant will increase the number of low flow days. I have mentioned that low flows present a greater hazard, particularly for less-skilled paddlers. This is because at lower flows the main channel through the braids tends to run closer to the banks and thus trees and man-made flood protection works. These present an objective danger to paddlers who may become entrapped in them, particularly if they have exited their boat and are swimming. Alternative braids to the main one become fewer and in places completely absent when flows are low. Low flows also expose logs and tree stumps (and sometimes old car wrecks) in the river bed, especially in the couple of km above the SH1 bridge, and these also present a greater hazard at low flow. No mitigation has been offered for the increased hazard presented by a greater number of low flow days.

5. Summary

5.1 The major effects of the applicant's proposal that will affect kayakers are a very large increase in low flow days and a substantial increase in objective danger when paddling near the intakes and on the sections of river below them. Both these effects are of huge significance for paddlers. These effects will dramatically impact upon the long-standing existing kayaking amenity on the Waimakariri in entirely detrimental ways. These effects will almost certainly reduce interest in paddling on the Waimakariri as people will be disinclined to accept the increased risks and decreased enjoyment caused by the presence of intakes and the reduced flow.

- 5.2 The CPW scheme application takes no account of loss of paddling amenity for the majority use of the river by paddlers, namely training; provides no or meaningless mitigation for increased hazards presented by intakes and river works; takes no account of and proposes no mitigation for increased hazard due to more low flows.
- 5.3 I request that the application be declined.

Ian Gill-Fox

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