

13 October 2003

Katie Jameson  
National Rivers Officer  
Jet Boating New Zealand  
PO Box 339  
Christchurch

Dear Katie.

### **Jet Boat Access to the Buller River and Tributaries**

The Association has recently learned that Jet Boating New Zealand (JBNZ) intend to apply for a modification to the Tasman District Council bylaw to allow use of the Buller River and its tributaries for jet boats.

The Buller River and its tributaries are a major kayaking resource in New Zealand and are valued highly by kayakers for many reasons. The Association has two concerns regarding jet boats being allowed access to the Buller River and its tributaries.

#### **Safety of Kayakers**

Kayaking is a sport that has a level of inherent risk. With experience, kayakers learn to manage the risks that are intrinsic to kayaking. This occurs at all levels of kayaking, from extreme kayakers paddling very difficult rivers, to beginner and intermediate kayakers paddling relatively easy rivers. Risks that are introduced to the river environment, such as jetboats, have the potential to be overwhelming for kayakers, especially for beginner or intermediate kayakers that have less experience.

Kayakers travel downstream with the river current and carry out kayaking activity on the hydraulic water features occurring in the river. This generally involves surfing waves or riding re-circulating wave holes. Kayakers can move rapidly across the rapid from one whitewater feature to another in an unpredictable fashion. Generally where the river current is fastest the river is narrower and the biggest waves occur at that point. Kayakers sit low in the water and a kayaker's field of vision is approximately one metre above the river. Often the waves and other hydraulic features in the river are higher than the kayakers. A whitewater rapid has constantly moving water and surface kayakers are often out of view.

I understand that jet boats need to travel at speed on the plane to maintain steering control. A jet boat's ground speed is greatly increased when jet boats are travelling downstream with the current. The combination of various factors means that a jet boat travelling up or down whitewater rapid may not be seen or heard by a kayaker and conversely a jet boat driver may not see a kayaker.

At any time a jet boat passing close to a kayaker in whitewater is an uncomfortable experience for kayakers because of the boat's wash displacement wake and loud engine noise. A collision between a kayak and jet boat would have drastic consequences for the kayaker.

The NZJBA's website outlines safety rules for jet boating. This document fails to mention kayakers and how jet boaters propose to deal with the safety issues raised when kayakers and jet boaters are sharing a section of river.

Kayak participant numbers continue to increase and this will result in greater future competition for river resources. Where any overlap of use occurs between kayakers and jet boats, the future risk of a collision will be greater with the increasing number of river users. For the continuing safety of kayakers it is crucial that jet boats are excluded from existing popular kayaking river areas, such as the Buller River and its tributaries.

### **Recreational Amenity**

In 1991 the NZ Canoeing Association (since replaced by the NZRCA) conducted a National River Use Survey. The objectives of the RUS were to measure the relative importance of New Zealand rivers to NZCA members, to measure the usage of New Zealand rivers by NZCA members and to develop a database for future advocacy of New Zealand rivers.

The results of the RUS indicated that the Buller River and its tributaries were amongst the most valued rivers in the country for kayakers. Attached to this letter is the evidence of Martin Unwin and Colin Leitch, which was used to advocate for the Buller River and its tributaries during the Buller Water Conservation Order hearings. This evidence outlines the results of the RUS and details the different sections of the Buller River and its tributaries.

These hearings resulted in the creation of the Buller WCO. This was due in a large part to the efforts of kayakers. This alone indicates the value of the Buller River and its tributaries to kayakers.

One of the Buller River catchment's main attributes for kayakers is the diverse range of kayaking opportunities available for kayakers of any ability. The Buller River and its tributaries have kayaking sections ranging from Grade 1 (very easy water suitable for beginners) to Grade 5 (difficult whitewater suitable for experts). Attached are copies of relevant pages from the kayaking guide, "New Zealand Whitewater. 100 Great Kayaking Runs," which detail the relevant sections of the Buller and its tributaries.

The Association sees JBNZ's proposal as a major threat to kayaking in the Buller region. We request that JBNZ withdraw its proposal to apply for a modification of the Tasman District Council's bylaw.

Yours sincerely  
NZ Recreational Canoeing Association  
Glenn Murdoch  
Safety Officer

Cc: Mick Hopkinson, NZ Kayak School, Murchison.  
Graeme Caradus, Harbour Master, Tasman District Council, Nelson.