

CANOEING NEW ZEALAND

The Newsletter of the New Zealand Canoeing Association

Autumn 1997

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first issue of Canoeing New Zealand, the Newsletter of the New Zealand Canoeing Association. Our main aim with this newsletter is to improve communication between the Association and the membership, and to spread information to paddlers more quickly and effectively. If you have done new rivers, or have noticed changes in rivers or rapids from the descriptions in the current guidebooks (probably Graham Charles's for selected rivers in both islands, as well as Graham Egarr's old guide for the North Island, and Egarr's newer one for the South Island), please let us know, so that we can pass the word on to others through this newsletter. We hope that clubs will include this newsletter with their own newsletters, and thus get it to all their members.

Send news to:

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Or ring me on 03-454 5539 (home), 03-479 8079 (work).

Now stop reading and get out paddling! (But only after you've read the rest of the newsletter...)

Rick McGregor

CONSERVATION FLASH

January, 1997

In many kayakers' recent memory are world class runs like Sargood's Weir on the Kawarau, monster grade five holes on the Pukaki river and a continuous flow on the Wairoa. Access to quality rivers such as these is now either impossible or severely restricted. Sargood's Weir now permanently lies under Lake Dunstan, the Pukaki is released once a year, and the Wairoa twenty six times a year. How can we stop this happening to more of our favourite trips, or harder trips that you may only aspire to doing one day in the future?

In getting to grips with the role of conservation officer over the last year I have been shown two main paths to effectively protect our rivers.

The first and potentially most important path is for clubs or individual paddlers to get in touch with your local regional and district councils. Basically the regional councils control the quality of water and flow of rivers, and the district councils control the activities that take place on the surface of water bodies. Issues like damming, mining or discharges come under the regional council's umbrella, while activities like jet boating are the district council's responsibility.

Regional Plans must be reviewed every ten years. District Plans must be reviewed every ten years also, but anyone may request a change to a plan at any time. As soon as you can you should inform your regional and district councils of your desire to be consulted whenever plans come under review, or someone wants to do something affecting rivers. This is the most effective forum where kayakers can have their say and protect their favourite rivers.

Outstanding rivers and catchments can also get additional protection against damming or diversion from water conservation orders. The Kawarau and Buller catchments and the Motu and Mohaka rivers are examples of hard won battles in the past. (Most of these battles, incidentally, were initiated by our staunch river allies, the Fish and Game Council - so don't harass those fisher people you see on the side of the river!). Undoubtedly there are more outstanding rivers under potential threat that would benefit from the extra protection of a conservation order.

If you have one of these rivers this is what to do. The basic process of obtaining a water conservation order involves applying to the Minister for the Environment, identifying the river concerned, your reasons for application and a description of the type of protection you think is necessary. Advice from previous successful applicants is have bombproof evidence of how popular/important the river is, and be prepared for a lengthy, time consuming process. All efforts will be worth it if rivers like the Taipo or Kaituna are protected against the continuing threats of damming!

I want to help all the clubs where I can have their say with their respective councils. I am also in contact with all the councils to see where they stand with river conservation. If you want me to help you with anything please contact me.

Happy conserving!

Maree (Muzz) Baker

WAIKAIA RIVER, SOUTHLAND

This river is easily Southland's best whitewater run, and New Zealand's most unknown. Road access, all year round flow and seven hours of continuous grade 4/5 water will make this run a must-do for future boaters in the area. The river was first run in November 1995 by Keith Riley, Carl Waddick and Hamish McFarlane, although there was a very unsuccessful attempt earlier in Canadian canoes.

After a short and easy lead-up, the river enters a gorge, at which point you want to be on the left-hand side, where there is the mouth of a tunnel. It may be partially covered by logs. To most first timers' amazement, this is actually the line. The 5 metre waterfall at the exit of the tunnel creates an excellent beginning to a river trip.

From here on are countless roads. The pool-drop format features very rarely as each horizon line represents a long and involved sequence of moves. At the right flow, everything can be run, but slight changes in flow have dramatic effects on certain rapids. Everything can be portaged.

A swing bridge crossing the river acts as a "You're almost there" sign. Half an hour of easy paddling will take you to the get out at Piano Flat (which is also a good camp site). There is a good grade 2 beginners' run from Post Office Creek to Piano Flat.

To get to the Waikaia, follow SH94 between Gore and Lumsden and turn north at Riversdale. Drive 60 km up the road to Piano Flat, and another 10 km to the Canton Bridge get-in. At the get-in it is worth leaving the car at the top of the hill and walking down to the river.

Keith Riley

Specs:

Grade: 4+/5 (increases with flow)

Level: c. 20 cumecs. Flow phone 03-202 7891.

Anything at or above normal flow is awesome.

Length: 14 km.

Gradient: Total drop 200 metres. 30-40 metres/km in places.

Time: 7 hours

Put-in: Canton Bridge

Take-out: Piano Flat

Shuttle: 2 cars or shuttle hero. Mountain biking after paddling this is not a good idea.

Map: NZMS260 Infomap F43.

Character: Very steep and gorgy. Long, continuous, high-committal technical rapids. Very scenic if you get a chance to look.

Hot tip: Hold onto your boat real tight when portaging.