



6 April 2010

Whitewater NZ has today expressed dismay and outrage at the West Coast Regional Council's decision to approve Meridian Energy's Resource Consent Application to build a dam on the wild and scenic Mokihinui River, north of Westport.

"The Mokihinui River is not only an outstanding river for whitewater kayaking, it is an outstanding river for all recreationalists in New Zealand," said Glenn Murdoch, conservation spokesperson for Whitewater NZ. "The Mokihinui is a truly wilderness river and the West Coast Regional Council's decision to allow it to be dammed marks a watershed moment for New Zealand's environment. This decision, coupled with the National Government's move last week to weaken Water Conservation Orders in Canterbury, fully illustrates the environmental future that New Zealand's rivers face," Mr Murdoch said. "Today we see the loss of one of New Zealand's most beautiful places."

Meridian Energy have been given consent to build an 85 metre high dam on the river, which will destroy more than 330 hectares of river gorge and virgin native forest under a 14 kilometre long artificial lake. One of the most sobering statements at the Resource Consent Hearing was the opening paragraph by legal counsel for the Department of Conservation who said, "The Mokihinui hydro scheme is the largest scale proposed flooding of public conservation land in New Zealand since the Manapouri scheme of the late 1960s and early 1970s. If approved, and constructed, it will be the largest inundation for hydroelectric generation purposes of lands and ecosystems set aside for protection and conservation ever seen in this country."

"The Mokihinui Hydro-Electric Project is also unnecessary," Polly Miller, Whitewater NZ President said. "With the granting of consents for both the Dobson scheme on the Arnold River, and the Stockton Plateau scheme at Ngakawau, the Mokihinui need not be dammed. The combined output of the Dobson and Stockton schemes will supply all of the West Coast's electricity needs, with a surplus."

Submissions in opposition to Meridian Energy's proposal attracted widespread support, with many different recreation and conservation groups, and individuals, submitting against the proposal.

Whitewater NZ works to protect and conserve rivers, improve opportunities for kayakers to enjoy our whitewater resources safely, and protect public access to rivers for recreational use. We are the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater resources throughout New Zealand.



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