

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 IAN MCCRORY ON BEHALF OF
NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Ian McCrory and I am 62 years of age.
- 1.2 I have enjoyed the recreation opportunities that the Waimakariri River has to offer for over 40 years. I am a Fish and Game ranger of twenty years experience. While my main focus has been salmon and trout fishing, duck and wild bird hunting is also a main attraction for many hunters.

Scope of evidence

- 1.3 I have been asked by Fish and Game to describe the key features of the Waimakariri River, its current use for recreational purposes and the potential effects of the proposed CPW Scheme on certain values.
- 1.4 For the purpose of this evidence I will break the Waimakariri River into three areas. These being:
- a. Lower reaches, ie, SH1 bridge to the river mouth.
 - b. SH1 bridge to Thompsons Road (the Willows).
 - c. Willows to the Kowai River.

2. LOWER REACHES

- 2.1 This area of the river is subject to very heavy river use with a variety of people enjoying this vast resource especially during the summer months. In the main these are fisherman, boaties, rowers, net fisherman, whitebaiters as well as many others.
- 2.2 I consider the lower reaches of the river already suffer from long periods of low flows, with many days of flows around the 40 cumec level. This area also has high pollution levels and over these periods the river tends to warm up and become rancid. While it tends to be partly flushed by tidal movement it relies on river freshes of 70 cumecs or more to bring the river back to an acceptable level of cleanliness.
- 2.3 Salmon tend to sit off the river mouth and move when the river levels are reducing following increased flows. The salmon season runs from December to May with the

main runs taking place during the months of February and March. There are three key fishing areas here, these are MacIntoshes Rocks and the North and South sides of the river mouth. During February and March it is not uncommon to see up to 250 anglers enjoying this area.

- 2.4 Between the months of September and February, the area of the Waimakariri River between the two bridges is heavily fished for the annual runs of sea run brown trout, many reaching sizes of over 3kg. Extended periods of low flows may affect the migration of these trout as they are similar to the salmon entering the river when it floods.
- 2.5 In my opinion, to "flat line" this area of the river for any extended period by reducing the flow to a level of 40 cumecs may, over a period of time, adversely impact on the values associated with this highly used and well regarded recreational area.

3. SH1 BRIDGE TO THOMPSONS ROAD (THE WILLOWS)

- 3.1 This area of the Waimakariri River, even under present low flows, tends to be mainly in one main stream with several main holding pools for salmon. These are in the areas relating to groynes and willows. During low flows, salmon holding in these pools are subject to illegal poaching activities known as scratching.
- 3.2 Divers have advised me that many fish were holding in these pools awaiting a rise in river levels this season due to low flows. Fish hold more in the deep boulder type holes and avoid those areas with moving sand or silt. Water temperatures are warm in low flows and salmon tend to stagnate in these pools. A river fresh of 70 cumecs in late March 2008 saw these fish finally move upriver. Such is the importance of ensuring that rivers freshes pull these fish up river to their spawning grounds.
- 3.3 Good quantities of salmon are caught by anglers in this area when the river drops back from a fresh and maintains water clarity of no more than 2 metres. Many fishermen ignore fishing upriver when the river becomes too clear and too warm.

4. WILLOWS TO KOWAI RIVER

- 4.1 This area of the river tends to be very braided. At times of low flow, because of the large number of braids and associated spillover zones in this area, salmon have difficulty in negotiating a passage upstream. This year I observed salmon turning back down stream in an effort to find a more suitable passage.
- 4.2 In areas such as this, salmon are very difficult to catch during low flows and warmer waters.
- 4.3 Late in the season in April and May, many salmon tend to hold in pools below the Kowai River and Hackett's Creek waiting for increased flows before moving into these spawning streams. Again, low flows combined with warmer water tends to allow the condition of fish holding below these streams to deteriorate which is detrimental to their spawning activity and potential.
- 4.4 I am also concerned at the potential loss of salmon smolt through take off points.

5. HUNTING

- 5.1 I am concerned about the impact of the CPW Scheme on duck and wild bird hunting in these areas.
- 5.2 Many ducks and Canadian geese travel the Waimakiriri River with both species preferring to settle in the more exposed open areas.
- 5.3 Lower river flows would change these habits as their habitat would be reduced due to additional plant growth.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The concerns that I have expressed above are based on my practical experience and the comments received from many anglers over the years I have spent ranging this river. One must accept change, but must this destroy such a valuable resource?

6.2 In my view it is critical that safe passage for sports fish is allowed throughout the year, as well as providing a higher flow of water to ensure a valuable recreation area so the lower Waimakariri in particular can be maintained for the benefit of all concerned.

I McCrory

May 2008

APPENDIX





