

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 NEIL GOLDIE ON BEHALF OF
THE NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Neil Goldie. I am an independent trout and salmon fishing guide based in Christchurch, who specialises in fishing for salmon in the Rakaia and Waimakariri rivers.
- 1.2 I have been fishing both these rivers for at least 40 years, and, as a result have seen these rivers at times of high and low flows. As a guide I spend approximately 25 days combined per season guiding on these rivers, and numerous days fishing myself. This salmon guiding provides a substantial part of my income and considerable income for the local service industries, such as motels, hotels, garages, etc.
- 1.3 I have been asked by Fish and Game to describe the key features of the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers and the potential effects of water abstraction based on my experience as a guide.

2. KEY FEATURES OF THE RIVERS

Rakaia River

- 2.1 The Rakaia river has salmon runs commencing in early November, peaking in February and March and declining progressively in April. Traditionally the early runs produce large, hard fighting fish.
- 2.2 I try to follow these runs of salmon up the river and target the fish based on my knowledge of the river flows, water clarity and river bed characteristics. The Rakaia river fishes very well as the river is dropping after a flood, the longer the rivers stays high the better.
- 2.3 My observations indicate that the salmon will move up river the day after the top of the flood, and will move quite quickly. The water clarity at this stage is not good, and I will commence fishing when I can see about 30 cms in the water. The river flows that allow this clarity can vary but generally it is around 180 cumecs when measured at Fighting Hill. As the river drops the clarity improves, the water temperature rises and the fish become harder to catch.

- 2.4 The dropping river does create holes and what we call holding water thus concentrating the fish, however this benefit can be negated by the water clarity and increased water temperature.
- 2.5 The low flows this year have also exacerbated the effect of the invasive algae Didymo, the margins of the main stream and a number of the slower flowing braids have become infested. It was noticeable after the last flood that the Didymo had been substantially reduced due to the flushing of the river.
- 2.6 This season I have guided on the Rakaia for 18 days and fished for myself on at least eight days. We have fished the length of the Rakaia from the mouth through into the gorge. Where we fished was influenced by the water clarity and flow as well as where I anticipated the runs to be. We have landed 32 salmon, ranging in size from 3 kg to 11 kg. A large proportion of the fish were caught in the area of Sleemans Road and below, an area of known holding water and significant fishing pressure.

Waimakariri River

- 2.7 The Waimakariri River is a river characterised by its late runs of salmon. There is an early run in November and then the main runs commence in mid February and reach their peak in mid March.
- 2.8 The fishing in the Waimakariri is heavily influenced by the river flows, probably more so than most Canterbury rivers. The river after a flood drops very quickly and is normally low for a longer period. As with the Rakaia, the best fishing is as the river is dropping and clearing. It is a river that is fishable when the river level drops to 80 cumecs at the bridge or registers at 1.2 metres at the gorge. When the river drops to around 60 cumecs the fishing is marginal, and I often question whether it worth going out.
- 2.9 Fishing in the Waimakariri poses different challenges to those anywhere else in Canterbury as there is a tremendous amount of pressure on a limited amount of fishable water. Over the last three years the Canterbury Regional Council has changed the course of the river by placing groynes in the middle of the river thus reducing the holding water for salmon and creating increased competition for angling water. This coupled with reduced flows during the summer months has made it difficult for fish to move up river. It has become evident that this year with the very

low river flows that the fish were not moving up the river. The fish were being concentrated at the mouth and moved in and out with the tide. It did provide a number of opportunities for people to catch a fish at the mouth, but it did not allow for a satisfactory passage upstream for the fish.

2.10 When I first started fishing in the Waimakariri 40 years ago salmon were definitely more abundant and there was definitely a more constant flow of water in the river. I was not able to cross the river anywhere along the entire length of the river even at times of perceived low flows, now I can cross at will anywhere. The fishing has changed, I have to fish marginal lies more and move around a lot more to locate fish and likely fishable water.

2.11 This year I have guided on the Waimakariri for six days only, mainly because the river levels have been low and the fish were not moving up the river. One client was the president of Uruguay who I took into the Gorge. He was astounded with the beauty and the quality and clarity of the water. He was most concerned when I explained to him about the CPW Scheme proposal.

3. EFFECTS OF WATER ABSTRACTION AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AND DISCHARGES

3.1 I have a number of concerns about the potential effects of further abstraction and associated activities on the fishery resource.

Rakaia River

3.2 In terms of the Rakaia river, I am concerned about the impact of proposed abstraction, and associated diversion and other works.

3.3 The Steeles/Sleemans Road area affected by the intake and associated works is of great value to salmon anglers. In my experience salmon hold up in this reach, particularly during low flow periods. This offers anglers an opportunity to come into contact with salmon during a time when fishing elsewhere becomes very difficult.

3.4 In my view, the drawing of a considerable volume of water from this reach will mean the depth and velocity attributes of this reach, which cause it to be good holding

water, will change considerably. Fish will have to find somewhere else to hold up, or else will become stressed by being forced to hold up in unsuitable water.

- 3.5 Access onto this area from the Steeles Road access point is highly valued and used by a large number of anglers. In recent times, the Glenroy intake canal has made access onto the riverbed difficult, particularly when flows are high. This can be very difficult or impossible to negotiate. The Sleemans Road access point is also very popular, and has been particularly well used this year due to good numbers of fish in this reach.
- 3.6 Anglers need continued access to the river from both access points. They are the only points that afford good access to the river from the north side. Below Steeles Road is Te Pirita Road, which is another road subject to difficulties at higher flows due to the presence of another irrigation canal, but in any case this access point is much further downstream. Above Sleemans Road, there is no other public access point until the Gorge. Nor is there public access point from the south side to this reach.
- 3.7 In my view, the proposed abstraction will also have effects on salmon angling below this reach. I am particularly concerned about the effect of reduced flows particularly on water temperature, and how increased water temperatures may affect the wellbeing and 'catchability' of salmon in the lower river.

Waimakariri River

- 3.8 I am concerned at the impacts of an outlet in the Waimakariri River in the Courtenay area. I consider the relative stability of side channels in that reach, and the relative stability of flows in those channels, are likely to provide good conditions for salmon smolt and trout. The fish rely on the invertebrates and shelter for their survival. River works and the intermittent discharge of additional water into this reach may be to the detriment of that nursery environment.
- 3.9 The constant regulation of river flows will also remove the flushing effect that the floods have. The floods cool the river down and are a catalyst to trigger the fish to run. This will also reduce the areas to fish along the length of the river. Competition between anglers will become intense and as an effect the unique experience of salmon fishing will be lost. There are a large number of people fishing the Waimakariri and numbers are increasing each year. I am led to understand that the

Waimakariri is the most heavily fished river in the country, so therefore it is important that we increase opportunities not reduce them.

3.10 It is inevitable that Didymo will infest the Waimakariri within the next couple of years. The extended low river flows that are likely to result from the CPW Scheme will do nothing to stop the spread, particularly if there will be less floods (even of a moderate range) to give the river a clean. The impact, not only on fishermen but on other river users, will be far reaching in my opinion.

3.11 The Waimakariri is a river where a large number of children learned to fish and appreciate the outdoor life that Canterbury has to offer. If the river dies due to the continual water abstraction we have neglected our duty as the custodians of the environment for our children. I do not want to have that on my conscience.

N Goldie

May 2008

APPENDIX A

