

Whanganui River Minimum Flows Review 1987/88

# THE SCRAPBOOK



Compilation and preface by Roger Shand

Front Cover: the diverted clear mountain headwaters of the Whanganui River flow through the Wairehu Canal toward Lake Taupo and the Waikato River, November 1987.

This document may be reproduced

Published by Coastal Systems Ltd

<https://coastalsystems.co.nz>

April, 2025

# THE SCRAPBOOK

## Whanganui River Minimum Flows Review

1987/88

The Department of Conservation released its three-volume submission last Wednesday.

Mr Keith Chapple, Chairman of the Whanganui River Flows Coalition, said the Department was to be congratulated for producing such an expert and professional document in a limited period of time.

“While a lot of the material has been known about for many years, it has taken the department to uncover it and put it into language we can understand,” he said.

If information, particularly the river’s hydrological impacts, had not been released in DoC’s submission, the public would have been “seriously disadvantaged”.

“There is no doubt this submission will have a dramatic impact,” and it has enabled him (Mr Chapple) to be positive about the campaign for the first time.

Whanganui Chronicle,  
14 June, 1988



## Preface

Diversion of the Whanganui River's mountain headwaters into Lake Taupo and on into the Waikato River for hydroelectric power generation began in 1972. This scheme would be referred to as the Tongariro Power Development or TPD. Twenty two kilometres of tunnel and 14 kms of canal had been constructed (see maps p9 and 10), and captures much of the flow (water and sand).

The diversion water right (renamed a resource consent under the Resource Management Act [RMA] in 1991) contained the most basic minimum flow conditions, and in 1983 the consent was reviewed. Downstream environmental impacts were being claimed by New Zealand Canoeing Association and others including Lands and Survey Department staff who managed the river's recreational facilities. But the Rangitikei Wanganui Catchment Board (later to become part of the Horizon Regional Council) hearing resulted in little change to the consent conditions.

In 1988 a second review was held. However, this time the playing field was very different. The new Labour government was radically restructuring the public service by corporatizing some existing departments into state-owned enterprises or SOE's (which were created to partake in commercial activities and return a profit for the government), and by establishing some new departments such as the Ministry for the Environment (MFE) and the Department of Conservation (DOC). The second Whanganui River minimum flow review would be the new Conservation Department's first environmental advocacy case and expectations were high.

Environmentalists at last had a champion with a budget to hire expertise and DOC's Whanganui Conservator< John Ombler, was highly motivated. John was a Land and Survey Department Park Ranger in 1983 and had been frustrated at the 1983 review hearing; his claims of environmental impacts being met with taunts of "show us the evidence".

And the TPD operator had also changed with the Electricity Department being reformed into the SOE, Electrocorp. Their goal was to maximise profit and in their first year of operation (in the words of a senior Electrocorp staffer giving evidence at the hearing) "no tolerance would be shown", for calls to reduce the volume of diverted water.

Being a physical geographer and having recently been employed by the Taranaki Catchment Commission (now the Taranaki Regional Council), I was familiar with catchment processes and water right consents. I was introduced to John and he hired me to find that evidence. He found an office building intentionally away from the rest of the staff and let me engage an assistant. Eric Pyle was having a gap year and enthusiastically embraced the river flow

work. He would subsequently go on to study resource management and make his career in conservation.

John's instructions were clear and simple: put together a submission of evidence as thick as 3 telephone books addressing every impact I could find using the most credible experts – preferably with PhDs. It was October 1987 and I had less than 6 months to investigate and compile those 3 volumes. Thirty experts were subsequently engaged – although perhaps somewhat to John's disappointment, not all had PhDs. None-the-less, three volumes would be produced which provided a scientific basis of hydrological (water and sediment), morphological, ecological and recreational impacts as well as effects on cultural and intrinsic values.

While this story has significance in New Zealand's evolving environmental management and should be comprehensively told, I have here at least reproduced the newspaper accounts from the scrapbook I kept. John made sure the media were well informed and the articles broadly describe our activities along with the other players, the politics, the hearing itself, and the aftermath. The scrapbook provides an appreciation of the Catchment Board's efforts to control the process, our attempts at a scientific and robust approach, Electocorp's frustration at being seen as the bad guy – not helped by their blocking some DOC witnesses from appearing at the hearing, the depth of feeling of the interest groups, the infuriation of Finance Minister Roger Douglas at the Conservation Department (Minister Helen Clark) using government resources to rein in a lucrative government earner, and subsequent efforts by Treasury to ensure this "situation could not happen again!"

While Maori were late comers in the process, having been distracted by the recent establishment of the Whanganui National Park and ownership of the Whanganui riverbed, they would none-the-less play a significant role. Late in the hearing the Whanganui Maori Trust Board lawyer requested that it be reconvened at the Ngapuwaiwaha Marae in Tauramanui so tribal kaumatua could give their perspective. This turned out to be a moving experience and such marae presentations would become the hallmark of future resource management proceedings.

Perhaps one of the most influential pieces of our evidence was a video comparison of natural and abstracted flow. During the 1987/88 summer Electrocorp had released the entire headwater flow down the main tributary – the Whakapapa River, while they carried out maintenance on its intake structure. With the return of the natural summer flow the river became vibrant and enjoyed by white water rafters and kayakers. We hired a helicopter to video the spectacle. Later, with the flow diverted once more, we returned

with the video camera. The effect of splicing natural flow with virtually no flow at several locations looked dramatic when shown to the commissioners.

And of the decision? For the river it was a positive outcome with summer flows in the mountain fed headwaters not to fall below the natural average low flow – John had described this flow as “sacrosanct”. In addition, no abstraction at all was to occur from the actual Whanganui tributary coming off Mount Tongariro – this in respect of Maori values.

Electrocorp were incensed and would throw substantial resources into the appeal. But my involvement had finished after the initial hearing. I had returned to university so was now an onlooker. With their funding slashed by Douglas and Treasury, all DOC could do was try and hold on to the hearing gains rather than be proactive. But while Electrocorp would succeed in clawing back some of the water, the essence of the minimum flow decision would endure and form the basis of future national standards in water abstraction and allocation.

The scrapbook begins in October 1987 when the Royal Forest and Bird Society’s national chairman, and upper riverside resident, Mr Keith Chapple gave a public presentation of his just completed book “Rape of the Whanganui River”. His story evocatively outlined the diversion of water from the river’s mountain headwaters and his thoughts on the environmental consequences. The scene was set and the town of Taumarunui on the upper reaches, and the city of Whanganui at the rivermouth, would become absorbed in river flow matters over the following year. Indeed, the entire Whanganui community became unified and focused, something I have not seen again in the 35 years I have lived here, and something I feel somewhat proud of. The scrapbook ends on 22 October 1988, with a light-hearted and prophetic comment by Whanganui Chronicle senior journalist Mr Dave Lawrence.

To further set the scene, the *Introduction* and *location maps* from DOC’s submissions are first reproduced.

The Scrapbook, DOC’s three volume submission and video (low quality and not narrated), and Mr Keith Chapple’s “Rape of the Wanganui River” may all be downloaded from the Coastal Systems website <https://coastalsystems.co.nz>

Roger Shand

## Introductory section (with maps) from the DOC submission

The Tongariro Power Development (TPD) Scheme began diverting headwater streams of the Wanganui River (Whakapapa, Okupata, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri, Mangatepopo and Upper Wanganui) in 1972. Some 320 km<sup>2</sup> of mountain catchment are diverted, via 16 km of tunnel, two dams and a series of canals, into Lake Rotoaira and thence through the Tokaanu Power Station into Lake Taupo (See Figures 1 and 2).

After commissioning, the scheme was subject to a number of operating agreements:-

- A minimum desirable flow of 9.9m<sup>3</sup>/s at the Piriaka Power Station with an absolute minimum of 7.4m<sup>3</sup>/s
- A residual flow from the Whakapapa River of 0.6m<sup>3</sup>/s for fisheries protection, and
- Releases to be made from the Whakapapa intake when water temperature exceeds 25°C at Kakahi.

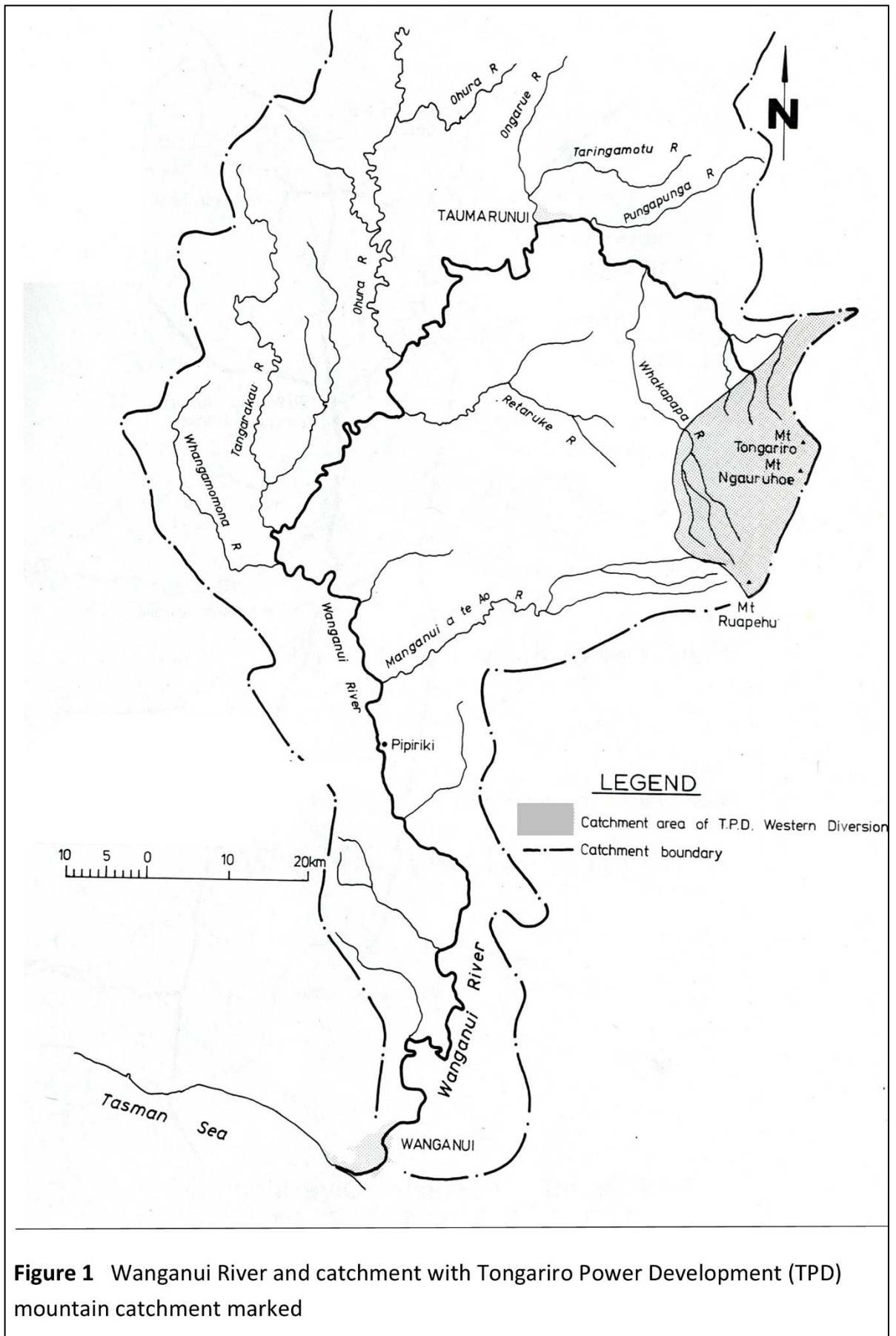
Because the scheme diverts water out of the Wanganui catchment it has a marked effect on downstream river flows - especially during periods of lower discharge.

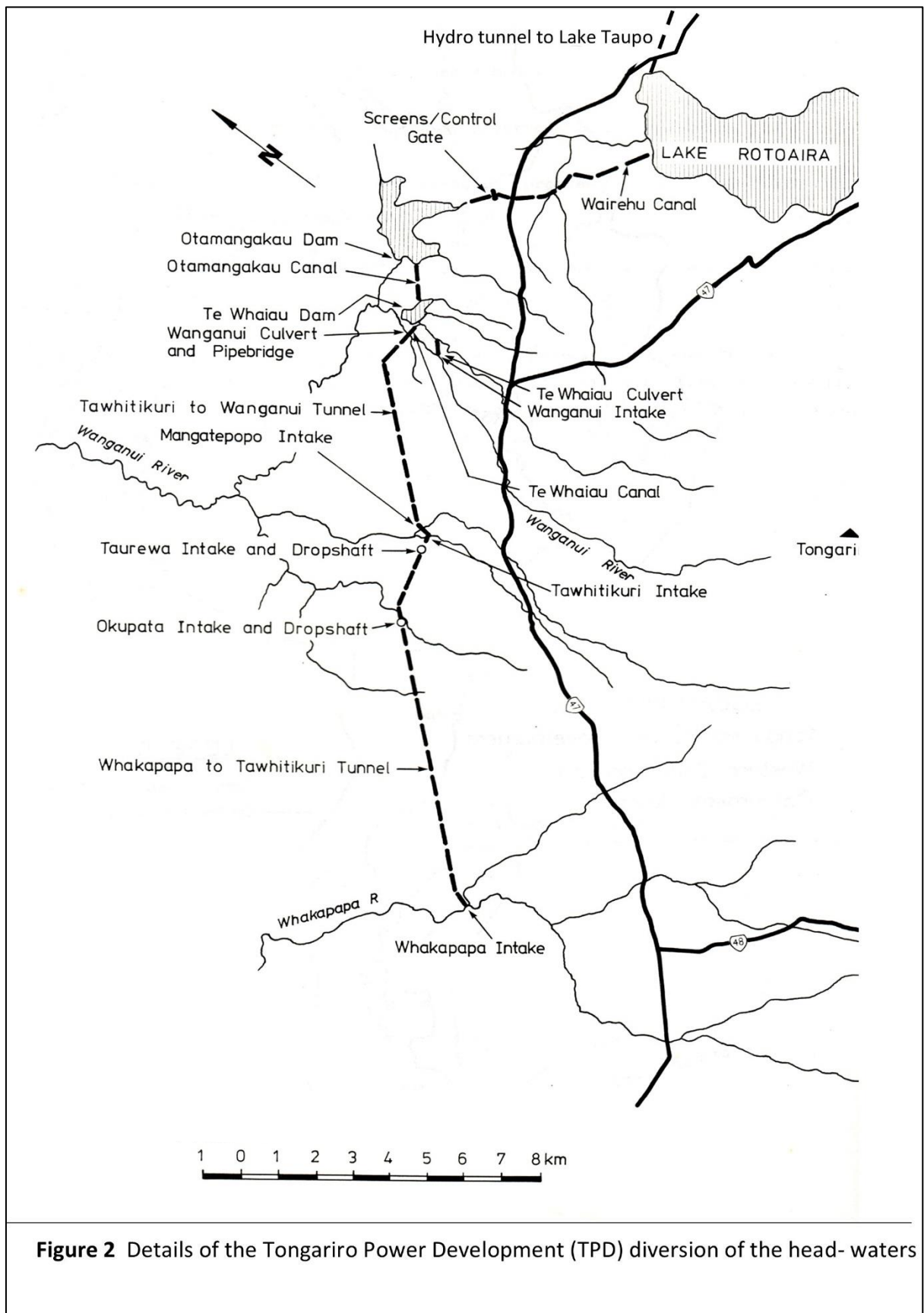
The impacts of the flow reduction on mid-river navigation were brought to the attention of the National Water and Soil Conservation Organisation (NWASCO) in 1977 by the NZ Canoeing Association. This eventually led to the Rangitikei Wanganui Catchment Board (RWCB) holding a minimum flows hearing in 1982. The Board's recommendation was for a minimum flow of 22m<sup>3</sup>/s to be maintained at Te Maire Bridge 17 km downstream of Taumarunui from 1 December to 14 February and at other times a flow of 16m<sup>3</sup>/s was to be required. This was adopted by NWASCO for a 5 year period. The so called minimum flow condition has been observed by the New Zealand Electricity Division, now the Electricity Corporation, with periodic releases from the TPD intakes - usually the Whakapapa. The initial 5 year period is about to expire and a review is to be held by the RWCB on 8 July 1988. That is the reason for this submission.

The objective of the DOC investigation have been:

1. To identify the nature and extent of diverted catchment inputs,
2. To identify and define consequences (problems) associated with the modified flow regime, and
3. To determine the appropriate flow regime that will ameliorate these affects.

After considering the significance of the Wanganui River and the authority under which the DOC has become involved in the minimum flows review, the objectives detailed above will be addressed. Visual aids such as overhead projections, videos and slides will be used to illustrate parts of the evidence.







# 'Rape of the Wanganui River'

10-10-87  
W. Chronicle

By MARY ANNE GILL

Politicians, economic theorists and industrialists were responsible for the destiny and eventual rape of the King Country, including the Wanganui River, according to Keith Chapple, whose book, "The Rape of the Wanganui River", will be released on October 20.

The book has been written in time for a public meeting in Taumarunui called to form a coalition of interested sector groups which would set about lobbying Government for a major review of the minimum flow levels on the Wanganui River.

Mr Chapple, who lives at Kakahi, just south of Taumarunui, is a member of the King Country branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, which is sponsoring the meeting.

Mr Chapple's neighbour and long-time friend, author and artist Peter McIntyre, has written the foreword to the book.

Mr McIntyre was responsible for bringing to the public's attention details of the Tongariro power project.

In a scathing letter published in the Evening Post on June 23, 1964, Mr McIntyre said he was outraged that such destruction could be contemplated in an area described in his book, "Kakahi", as "the archetype of a freshness and innocence that persist not only there but in little places all over both islands of New Zealand".

The power project is described by Mr Chapple as "one of New Zealand's most misguided engineering projects".

In the book he goes back in time, relating the legend of the centre of Te-ika-a-maui (the North Island) where once stood the mighty mountains Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, Tongariro and Taranaki, together with the beautiful maiden Pihanga.

The story of how the separated leads on to the early history of the region and how Kupe, the discoverer of New Zealand, explored the tidal reaches of the Wanganui River.

Then the arrival of the European in the 1840's, when Wanganui city was first settled, is detailed.

It was in the early 1900s when the



KEITH CHAPPLE ... public and local bodies "outrageously manipulated".

King Country was opened up during construction of the North Island Main Trunk railway that the "rape" of the region began in earnest, according to Mr Chapple.

## Ferocious rate

"Timber was extracted at a ferocious rate, often leaving behind in wastage much more than was exported. But no significant benefit from the destruction of the forests accrued to the people of the King Country.

"They hacked, hewed and felled a subsistence level of living from the forests — but little else," said Mr Chapple in his book.

Conservation issues were first raised early this century by Alexander Hattrick, the founder of the Wanganui River steamers.

Fortunately, the Government of the day listened and set legislation in place to preserve certain areas of timber along the Main Trunk line and the Wanganui River.

Much went on on the land in the period between then and 1957, when recreational use of the river was revived by the invention of the

jetboat and Bill Hamilton's pioneering trip upstream from Wanganui to Taumarunui.

However, forces were afoot as early as 1953 to have the Wanganui River used to help the generating capacity for the eight major hydro power stations on the Waikato River.

This would be achieved by diverting the rivers and streams from the Tongariro National Park, it was decided.

According to Mr Chapple, the benefits that would accrue from such a scheme against capital expenditure were glossed over and whether the power was needed was not mentioned in any substantial way, other than in vague terms that the country needed more electric power.

After three years of intensive surveys and studies an Order in Council authorised the Ministry of Electricity on October 17, 1958, to "construct and use works in connection with the utilisation of water power from the Wanganui, Tokaanu, Tongariro, Rangitikei and Whangaeu rivers and their tributaries."

## 60 Affected

Over 60 rivers and streams rising in the Tongariro National Park were ultimately affected by the Tongariro power development scheme, including the most important — the Whakapapa River.

Despite opposition from 1964 onwards in the form of public meetings, political lobbying and media coverage, the project went ahead, albeit with some concessions.

The most notable was an agreement between the Government and the Taumarunui Borough Council municipal electricity department for lost power generation as a result of the diversion.

According to Mr Chapple, this agreement in 1973 took all of the sting out of public argument. The Government cited time and again they had met their obligations to the people because of the agreement.

When the scheme went into full operation in mid-1974, the Whakapapa River was to lose 80 percent of its average mean flow while the Tongariro lost only 50-60 percent.

Mr Chapple says in the book that in reviewing the Tongariro power development scheme, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the public and local bodies were outrageously manipulated from the beginning.

continued

contn

He said facts obtained via the Official Information Act show the Government's dealings with the public were a sham — a clever public relations exercise designed to fool the public into thinking they were an important part of the decision-making.

However, the Order in Council authorised in 1958 proves otherwise, says Mr Chapple.

"It is difficult to ascertain if a deliberate policy of misrepresentation of the facts was embarked upon but there can certainly be no excuse on behalf of the Government, or officials, for their failure to put the proposal to build the Tongariro power development scheme up for public scrutiny," he says.

Mr Chapple then goes on to deal specifically with the western diversion of the scheme.

This diversion from the Wanganui catchment began in February, 1971.

In December, 1977, the New Zealand Canoeing Association requested a higher flow for the Wanganui River.

The National Water Conservation Organisation requested that the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board recommend the fixing of desirable minimum water flows.

In 1979, the board invited public submissions and had a report prepared which laid out a minimum flow regime and resulted in the setting of flows for a four-year period from 1983 to 1987.

Twenty-two cumecs (one cumec equalling one cubic metre of water passing a given point per second) were set as a minimum flow at Te Maire for the months of December, January, part of February and also at Easter, while 16 cumecs were set for all other times of the year.

Agreement was also reached with the Wildlife Service to have flows fixed so that the water temperatures at Kakahi never rose above 23 degrees celcius as trout become distressed in high water temperatures, sometimes fatally.

These three agreements — the minimum flow, temperature and the Taumarunui Borough Council's compensation for loss of flow at their Piriaka power station are currently managed by the catchment board.

#### For review

These are the agreements which are up for review next year.

The Taumarunui Borough Council has already had talks with Electricorp to discuss the level of

compensatory payments made to it as a result of loss of flow.

The council does not expect a response for at least two months.

The other two agreements are the subject of intense interest by various conservation and lobby groups in the King Country, Wanganui and, in fact, throughout the country from leisure groups such as canoeists and anglers.

With the Wanganui River the centrepiece of the new Whanganui National Park, it can expect to see more visitors and increased activity.

With water flows at their current levels, tourism can not be actively encouraged as there quite simply may not be enough water to cope with the influx of visitors say many of the lobbyists.

The King Country branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society wants to see all these groups come together to discuss the issue of minimum water flows and lobby Government for change.

Already there has been considerable interest shown from Wanganui, where a large number of people are expected to attend the public meeting in Taumarunui on October 20 at the War Memorial Hall at 7pm.

In the final chapter of his book, Mr Chapple says the Wanganui River has been excluded from the new national park possibly because it is feared that there could be conflict of interests which would see the park authority pulled in different directions by the Tongariro power development scheme, conservation interests and the role of the river.

"But those conflict of interests exist already and will not go away because the river has not been included.

"When the river is included, its flow level and general condition will come under the formal scrutiny of a park authority. One benefit of this will be the very general feeling that at last the Wanganui River has been given into the right hands," Mr Chapple says.

Some areas of the Wanganui national park are just too precious and need to be cared for under a total protection philosophy, he says.

"How will history judge us if at a time when we are able to do so, we did not take the opportunity to set in place a similar philosophy for the Wanganui River — a river which currently joins New Zealand's newest and oldest national parks," Mr Chapple concludes.

21-10-87

W. Chon

# Coalition to press Govt for review of river flows

**Hopes of a united effort to boost water flows in the Wanganui River rose when a coalition was formed in Taumarunui last night to lobby the Government for a major flow review.**

About 90 people last night attended a public meeting in Taumarunui convened by the King Country branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society to discuss the issue.

After three hours of discussion at the Taumarunui Memorial Hall those present agreed to set up an umbrella group, with representatives of 15 Wanganui, Taumarunui and river community groups and businesses indicating they would nominate a person to serve on the coalition.

Wanganui city councillor Stephen Palmer, one of several Wanganui people present, said he would recommend the council support the new coalition.

He said he had been impressed with the realistic attitude of organisers and the coalition provided an opportunity for the region to pull together on tourism.

Annette Main, of Naturally Whanganui, said the body would appoint a representative to the coalition.

## Draw-off

At issue is the Tongariro power scheme, and the draw-off of some 80 percent of the Wanganui River's headwaters to feed the tailraces and turbines at Rangipo and at stations down the Waikato River.

Pressing the meeting to set up the coalition society King Country branch president Keith Chapple said groups like his wanted to see a natural rhythmical water flow in the river instead of the Wanganui's water flows "being regulated by a set of giant taps."

Mr Chapple said the river was like a garden swimming pool filled, spilled or emptied according to the dictates of electricity consumption.

Two methods were identified to achieve enhanced natural flows.

One was to present a strong case for reduced extraction of the headwaters for hydro generation at the public hearing in May next year on the so-called "minimum flow regime."

In 1983, as a result of widespread public concern, minimum rates of flow in the river were set for various times of the year — mainly to ensure jetboat, canoe and other tourism and recreational users were guaranteed set minimum water flows. The flow rates were to be reviewed every five years.

## Alternative

An alternative being promoted by Mr Chapple and the society's King Country branch is for the coalition to lobby the Government direct for a major review of the water right that allows Electricorp to divert headwaters.

Once a review is announced by the Government, with acceptable terms of reference and timetable, the coalition could disband and individual organisations could put their cases for the ideal flows as they see them.

Mr Chapple claimed Department of Conservation staff responsible for the Whanganui National Park were trapped between two opposing philosophies. "On the one hand the 74,000ha of lowland forest will be managed on a maximum protection policy," he said. "On the other, the river is currently managed on a maximum exploitation policy."

He argued for a proportional flow fixed at 70 percent of headwaters for the river and 30 percent for Electricorp. The river would not be returned to its "former glory" but flow would be significantly increased and with the "natural" flows, damage to aquatic life, the river banks and other considerations would be reduced.

Others at the meeting urged caution. Wanganui historian Arthur Bates, suggested it may be more

prudent to work within existing provisions of legislation (the minimum flow hearings) already in place rather than challenge the water right. If the case put was firm enough, the type of flow Mr Chapple talked of might be achieved in that forum.

"I don't want to be in the least negative... but the coalition could go too far too fast. It would be a political hot potato to oppose an Order in Council," he said. Others agreed.

But Mr Chapple said groups calling for greater flows would lose half the argument by agreeing to the principle of minimum flows. He also pointed out sale of assets to Electricorp could be over by the end of the year, and the Government would have the opportunity to "wash its hands" of the responsibility if something was not done quickly.

The coalition could decide what tack to take on achieving higher flows.

Wanganui District Conservator John Ombler said a team of staff — including one full-timer — would spend six months preparing a case on water flows in time for the minimum flow hearing in May. The case would be argued on biological, ecological and aesthetic grounds.

He said he had no argument with statements made by another speaker that there was clear evidence present low flows were having detrimental effects on aquatic life, erosion and the riverbank shelves. "But we need to have each and every one of those things well quantified," he said.

# River's importance to area emphasised

**The importance of the Wanganui River to the Tongariro and Wanganui regions' health and prosperity could not be over-estimated, Taumarunui District Promotion and Development Association member Tom Wells says.**

Mr Wells, a former headmaster of Wanganui Collegiate School, was present at a meeting in Taumarunui on Tuesday night which formed a coalition of interested groups to look at ways of increasing flows in the river.

Mr Wells said it had to be of concern to both regions that the status of the new Whanganui National Park would depend most of all on the status and conditions of its mighty name-giver, the Wanganui River.

Politicians and bureaucrats had persuaded themselves the cord between park and river may be broken "because it is not politic to maintain the connection". (The river is not officially part of the national park.)

But Mr Wells said history had proved that in its natural condition the Wanganui could bring in thousands of visitors — and that in a time when travel was "no picnic."

"What a laughing stock we shall be to people everywhere some time ahead with a national park established especially to celebrate a great river . . . and now that park is to preside over what is sometimes nothing more than a tamed and shrunken stream."

"People will not travel as far as their own bathroom to see a small, dirty, pre-determined flow of water

going down the plughole — which is the effect our (Tongariro power project) engineering exercise has upon the mystery, the beauty and the general condition of the Wanganui River."

Mr Wells said there were many examples of lost earning potential. Outdoor Pursuits Centre instructors said the Whakapapa River offers the best white water rafting in the North Island — "that is on the one day or two there is sufficient water for the purpose."

The 20-seater Wakapai boat service operating out of Raetihi had had to cancel trips because of low flows. Some jet boats had also experienced difficulty.

Department of Conservation Whanganui district conservator John Ombler told the meeting he could not commit his department to supporting a call for a review of the NZED water right.

But research by a DoC team would be just as valid for any water right hearing the new coalition group may achieve, he said.

## Excellent news

Winston Oliver, of Raetihi, said news of the DoC study was excellent.

"I've seen the algae growth, the oxygen weed and dead trout and

mussels. We've got to act as one body in doing something about this."

Though at least one Taumarunui borough councillor was present, no indication of support from the two local territorial authorities was indicated. The coalition is to approach both councils.

Les Green asked if the new umbrella group would support Taumarunui's bid for compensation for money that had to be spent on water and sewerage schemes, partly as a result of drastically reduced Wanganui flows.

He was told the question would have to be answered by the coalition itself.

Groups present that indicated they wished to be a part of the coalition to lobby for increased flows were: Naturally Wanganui, Canoe Safaris Mt Maunganui, Taupo and Taumarunui Tramping Clubs, Forest and Bird King Country, Friends of the Rivers at Kakahi, Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ, Taumarunui Boating Club in conjunction with the New Zealand Jet Boat Assn, Wanganui City Council, Owango Community Council, River City Canoe Club, Taumarunui District Promotion and Development Association, Winston Oliver, and Manu Ariki Marae.

# Taking fight to Govt

The Wanganui and Taumarunui coalition to boost water flows through the Wanganui River will be taking its fight to the Government.

The coalition met at Owahango, near National Park, yesterday to elect an executive and decided about the campaign's future direction.

Conservationist and author of the recently published book "The Rape of the Wanganui River" Keith Chapple was elected coalition chairman.

"We made two specific decisions," he said.

"First, we want the Government to immediately postpone the sale of power plant assets to the Electricity Corporation.

"We feel with the transferral of assets to the corporation there is the implied continuation of the present level of water rights. We want the sale to Electricorp postponed until the issue of water levels is looked at again."

He said the coalition also intends to seek a meeting with Minister of Conservation Helen Clark as soon as possible to discuss the water rights.

"We have left three positions open," Mr Chapple said. "We hope someone from each of these bodies — the Wanganui City Council, the Taumarunui Borough Council and the Maori community — will be represented on the coalition.

"We also have the power to co-opt members and consultants," he said.

Mr Chapple believes a united approach between Wanganui and Taumarunui is vital if efforts to restore river levels are to succeed.

"We will meet again within the next 10 days," he said. "We have a lot of research to do and we have to get our arguments together."

The coalition executive members are: Chairman, Keith Chapple; secretary, Brenda Chapple; deputy chairman, Tom Wells (representing the Taumarunui and District Promotions Association); committee: Raewyn Howarth (Naturally Whanganui), Colin Parker (Plateau Guides — a white water rafting operation), Jim Gosman (Central North Island Wildlife Conservancy and the National Park Community Council), Michael Turner (Taumarunui Museum Trust) and Stuart Shaw (Taumarunui Tramping Club and Federation of New Zealand Mountain Clubs).

31-10-87

W. Chron

# Basis for tourism plan

The Naturally Whanganui marketing plan was formed from the basis of the earlier Adworks report, plan author Ron Rowe said yesterday.

With the release of the marketing plan by Naturally Whanganui to promote tourism within the wider Wanganui region, Mr Rowe was asked to explain what had happened to the full and somewhat controversial report done by Adworks, of Wellington, this year.

"The material in the Adworks report was the spur needed to get a truly regional promotional body off the ground," he said. "The earlier report had been commissioned by the Wanganui United Council (\$5000) and Hospitality Wanganui (\$5000), Hospitality acting in the capacity of regional representative at the time."

Mr Rowe said the Adworks report showed if the region was to progress it required strong leadership and direction.

Wanganui was a region of unlimited potential which could stand proudly among all other regions in New Zealand.

"In doing the research needed for the marketing plan, it became clear that this region of ours is abundant in so many things it is probably second only to Fiordland in its totalness of riches," he said.

Mr Rowe said when the united council appeared not to want to move ahead with the Adworks plan to promote the region, Hospitality Wanganui took the matter to the chairman of the Wanganui Regional Development Council, the late George Ammundsen.

"George Ammundsen saw clearly what this region had to offer and how everyone could benefit," he said. "He saw how strong and decisive leadership was required, and with the regional development council he provided the impetus needed."

Public meetings were called to progress the formation of a regional promotional body that could act on the Adworks report.

"Naturally Whanganui is in a unique position in that it is above the petty parochialisms and jealousies that were a part of earlier reports on the region," Mr Rowe said. "Naturally Whanganui is not part of local or regional politics, but as the regional body trusted now with expanding and making this region grow, it must speak out on matters affecting tourism — and it will."

3-11-87

W. Chron

# MP optimistic about talks on overcoming pollution

Wanganui MP Russell Marshall is optimistic about talks with Health Minister David Caygill on the need to deal with Wanganui River pollution.

Mr Marshall is arranging a meeting between himself, Mr Caygill and representatives of the Wanganui City Council, the Wanganui Area Health Board and the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board.

The three Wanganui authorities are joining forces in trying to persuade the Government that Wan-

ganui has a special case for sewerage finance.

A report by the health board's community and environmental division, released last week, underlined the potential health risk in the river's lower reaches and recommended that the city council undertake more sewerage to eliminate the remaining 55 river outfalls. Stage I, which cost \$23 million, was commissioned in 1985.

Mr Marshall discussed the report recently with representatives of the three Wanganui authorities.

Yesterday the *Chronicle* asked Mr Marshall whether Wanganui was being backed into a corner because of the report.

Mr Marshall: "That wasn't the tenor of the meeting I attended. There's a good co-operative attitude between the three organisations.

Everybody's aware of the financial difficulty it places the city council in."

For the council in the short term "there really isn't a way through — but we can plan for the point where the city's burden of existing debt eases and we can start to pick up new commitments."

Mr Marshall said the health board report was not an embarrassment but a useful reminder of "a problem that has not gone away and will not go away in the foreseeable future."

He hoped to set up a meeting with Mr Caygill before the end of the year.

"Baldly going to the Government cap in hand and asking for money isn't the best approach," Mr Marshall said.

"There are ways of working our way through it, sitting down with the Minister. David Caygill has an ability for lateral thinking.

"What I've asked for is not 'please will you give us some money' but 'please will you help us to find ways to sort out the problem'."

# Wanganui Chronicle

AVERAGE DAILY PRINT EXCEEDS 17,000 copies

Wednesday, November 4, 1987

## *Stand up for river*

THE coalition set up last month to lobby for increased Wangani River flows is worthy of widespread community support.

IT IS already showing a lot of vigour and is certain to maintain a high profile as it carries its fight to top people and high places.

OPTING to ignore the minimum flow hearing set down for May as "irrelevant at this stage", the coalition will instead tackle what it sees as a more urgent task.

THIS is to get the Government to delay the transfer of the Tongariro power scheme assets — and with it the continued right to extract up to 80 percent of the Wanganui's headwaters — to Electricorp.

THE longer-term aim is for a major governmental review of the water right that enables such a high water abstraction rate to feed the Tokaanu station turbines and other hydro-generation plants down the Waikato River.

THE group believes, and with good reason, that it will be much more difficult to obtain a reduction in the flow abstraction rates after the right to take the water is transferred to the corporation.

AND IT is understood negotiations over transfer of assets to the State Owned Enterprises are nearing completion, with actual handover due next month.

OBVIOUSLY, speed is essential. Coalition representatives will meet Tongariro MP Noel Scott tomorrow to ask him to urgently convey a letter and their case to the Ministers of Conservation, Tourism and Sport and Recreation, respectively, Helen Clark, Phil Goff and Peter Tapsell.

THE letter will ask for the stay in transfer of the Tongariro scheme assets until the coalition's arguments that the present diversion is detrimentally affecting tourism, sport, recreation and river ecology can be heard.

THE coalition is particularly hopeful it will find Ms Clark receptive. Not surprisingly, it sees her as a natural ally in its campaign.

IT MAKES sense that the three ministers should visit the upper reaches of the Wanganui to see what the group is on about. Indeed, that is what is hoped will happen.

THOUGH the campaign is hitting its straps, coalition chairman Keith Chapple makes a good point when he notes a united approach between Wanganui and Taumarunui is vital if efforts to restore river levels are to succeed.

THE Government will be forced to take notice of a grassroots movement that is demonstrated to have solid community backing.

BUT if it detects only scanty support, it will have little trouble brushing the coalition aside.

AS HAS been emphasised by Tom Wells, coalition deputy chairman and former Wanganui Collegiate School headmaster, the importance of the Wanganui to the Tongariro and Wanganui regions' health and prosperity cannot be over-estimated.

NOW is the time for us all to stand up for the Wanganui.

# Board broadens scope of hearing

Individuals and interest groups are to be asked to make submissions to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board on any aspect of management of the Wanganui River, rather than the narrower topic of minimum flows.

The five-yearly hearing on what are the most appropriate flow levels in the river, and what percentage of headwaters ought to be released and not diverted for power generation, is scheduled for May next year. Submissions on what those minimum levels should be are always invited by the catchment board.

But at its meeting last week the board decided to

widen the scope of the hearing, mainly as a result of the considerable interest being demonstrated in issues such as maintenance of navigable river channels, water quality, ecological considerations and Maori values.

The board's chief technical officer, Mr Don Spence, told The Daily News yesterday that the question of minimum flows was likely to remain the

dominant concern. "But (this time) the board wants to go beyond a narrow consideration of just that minimum flow to consider some of the other related issues that are surfacing."

It's not the first time the board has tried to co-ordinate discussion on the range of topics. Some years ago it held a public meeting with such a broad agenda, "but things didn't

get too far," Mr Spence said.

The Wanganui River is managed under a number of different statutes administered by several different bodies. Concerns raised in submissions may be outside the catchment board's statutory authority or in no way related to the question of desirable minimum flows. Mr Spence said if that was the case, the board could make re-

commendations to the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority on changing aspects of river management policy. Or could initiate steps to have a more appropriate authority take up the matter.

"Things might need clarification between the National Parks Board and the catchment board, for example."

Invitations for submissions will probably be issued early next year.

## Review

Meanwhile, the catchment board is preparing a review on what occurred or been achieved over the past four years with the existing minimum flow stipulations. Completion of this document is one of the activities that will decide whether the hearing is in May, or a little later in the year.

Mr Spence said a recently-formed coalition to lobby for greater water flow in the river was discussed last week. They had got into the sort of thing the coalition raised (the board) may well have had to go to committee. But it stayed open meeting.

Board members were also reluctant to enter any debate about reports in the media or on television about the river flows. "I did not want to be seen as pre-judging any matter by making formal comment at this stage," he said.

## Lobby group aim given little chance

A lobby to have changes made to the Tongariro Power Development water rights would be "beyond the resources of a local, voluntary group, with the chances of success minimal to non-existent".

That's the opinion of the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board's chief technical officer, Mr Don Spence, expressed in a letter to the organiser of a coalition with precisely that lobby aim in mind.

Mr Spence told Brenda and Keith Chapple, of the King Country Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, that water rights held by the Crown

that affect the Wanganui were conferred by special validating legislation and could not be set aside or opened up for review without amending, or new, legislation.

"There will be opportunities to advocate change, when the Water and Soil legislation is next reviewed or at the time of the next amendment to the existing Acts.

"That is simply a matter of waiting for the appropriate opportunities and taking those opportunities as they arise," he said.

At the public meeting to set up the coalition, Mr

Chapple said his society's past experience at trying to get changes to Water and Soil legislation had been "unhappy". He also advocated immediate action to get transferral of the water right to Electricorp blocked, stating a review after such a transferral would be much more difficult.

The Coalition has not taken the advice of Mr Spence to pursue its aims via the minimum flow hearing, rejecting the "custodial assumptions inherent in this proposed review".

Instead, it has presented

a case to three Cabinet ministers to postpone sale of assets relating to the Western Diversion of the Tongariro scheme to Electricorp so that proper public debate can take place.

"The Coalition believes transfer of assets to the Electricity Corporation is directly related to the amount of water required to operate those assets," Mr Chapple said last week.

"It's the Coalition's opinion Electricorp should not be given control of publicly-owned water in advance of consultation with the people."

Three men were in Taurarangi recently to start building up data on the Wanganui and Whakapapa river levels. They are, from left, Mr Roger Shand, coordinator of the research, Mr Paul Green, district conservator for Taurarangi, and Mr John Ombler, district conservator for Wanganui. Next to him is ranger Mr Ken Hunt.



## Power scheme 'threatened'

WELLINGTON (PA).— An attempt by conservationists to prevent the transfer of Wanganui water rights to the Electricity Corporation threatens the viability of the Tongariro power scheme, says Electricorp group environmental manager Dr Ian Johnstone.

The Wanganui River Flows Coalition is considering using the Treaty of Waitangi to prevent the transfer, because of concern that recreational users may be charged for access to the river and seven of its tributaries.

The coalition also believed Electricorp would have little incentive to reduce the volume of water used for power generation, and that river animal life already was suffering because of the level of draw off.

Dr Johnstone said Electricorp assumed the water right would be transferred as it would with the sale of any business that relied for its operation on a water right.

"To assume otherwise

is to assume that Electricorp can't become a state-owned enterprise. If not then the corporatisation of Electricorp can't proceed."

Electricorp had no plans to fight to ensure the water right would be transferred. Without guaranteed water supply the power generating equipment would be useless, so it could become the Government's concern to ensure this supply, he said.

The Wanganui River and its tributaries are major contributors to the Tongariro power scheme, which provides the northern half of the North Island with most of its electricity.

Dr Johnstone appeared to justify the coalition's concern that non-commercial users could be charged for using the Wanganui.

A Rangitikei Wanganui Catchment Board hearing next May will consider the level of water extraction that should be permitted to accommodate the competing interests of commercial and non-commercial users.

21-11-87  
W. Chron.

# Ministers differ on Wanganui River flow

By JOHN GIBB

**The Wanganui River Flows Coalition has won support from Conservation Minister Helen Clark in its battle to restore the river's former glory but yesterday received a less fruitful hearing from Energy Minister David Butcher.**

The coalition, which is fighting the imminent transfer of the river's water right to the Electricity Corporation, argues that 80 percent of the river's headwaters were diverted into the Tongariro Power Scheme as a result of a secret Government Order in Council in 1958, with little real public consultation.

The coalition says the Wanganui River was subsequently omitted from the scope of the Water and Soil Conservation Act 1967 which offers protection for the nation's waterways.

It suggests that if the Government transfers the water right to Electricity the public's right to greater

river flows for ecological, recreational and tourism purposes could be lost forever.

The coalition fears that, with prospects of immediate Government intervention in the lengthy wrangle between Treasury and Electricorp over the valuation of the power assets, the disposal of the river water rights is close at hand.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said yesterday he was "very pleased" with talks between himself, coalition deputy chairman Tom Wells, Mrs Clark and Department of Conservation deputy director-general Murray Hosking in Wellington on Thursday afternoon.

Mr Chapple said Mrs Clark had indicated she favoured the coalition's wish to defer disposal of the water right.

She had already written to Minister of State Owned Enterprises Richard Prebble and Finance Minister Roger Douglas backing that approach.

"We were very pleased to learn the Minister agreed with the coalition's position that a deferment of the transfer of the Western Diversion water right was desirable," Mr Chapple said.

● *Cont'd P10*

## MINISTERS DIFFER

● *Cont'd From P1*

"It was agreed at the meeting that there was an urgency in the matter as asset valuation decisions were to be finalised by Friday, November 20.

"It was expected that the transfer of assets will shortly follow that procedure," he said.

The outcome of Mrs Clark's approach to the two other key Ministers was not clear yesterday.

Mr Chapple said talks between Mr Butcher and himself in Taumarunui late yesterday afternoon had not proved as useful.

While the coalition appreciated the chance to brief the Minister on its stand, the Minister had said the issue was largely within Mr Prebble's portfolio, Mr Chapple said.

Mr Butcher, who is also Regional

Development Minister, had been asked whether he was prepared to safeguard the river asset, given the importance of river flows to the development of regional tourism.

Mr Chapple said Mr Butcher did not give any undertakings but said he would study that suggestion.

The coalition would be writing very soon to Mr Prebble and Mr Douglas requesting urgent meetings to voice concerns about the river's future.

The coalition is to hold a public meeting at the Davis Lecture Theatre, in the Wanganui War Memorial Hall, on November 30 at 7.30pm to brief the Wanganui public on the issue and to show films showing the effect of the river diversion.

# *River dispute becoming an NZ-wide issue*

A dispute over the level of flows in the Wanganui River and the public's right to make an input before 80 percent of river's headwaters are sold to Electricorp by the Government shows signs of blowing up into a major national debate.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society yesterday decided to urge the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority to prevent any transfer of public water rights to the Electricity Corporation.

The resolution, adopted by the society's national council at a meeting at Mt Ruapehu yesterday morning has widened the Wanganui River dispute into a national asset transfer issue.

The resolution followed talks at the weekend during which the Wanganui River Flows Coalition sought the society's support for its efforts to prevent the transfer of water rights to the river and its tributaries to Electricorp.

The resolution read: "The National Council of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society strongly disapproves of the scale of the nation's water and it conveys this to the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority and urges that authority to take all possible steps to prevent the scale of the nation's water."

The coalition last week appealed to Conservation Minister Helen Clark and Energy Minister David Butler to defer transfer of the Wanganui River water right until the public had been given a chance to make their views known through a formal water right hearing that would give them a chance to have their values incorporated in any subsequent flow regime.

The coalition argues that there has never been a water right hearing into the Wanganui River and that much of the history of the diversion of the river's headwaters into the Tongariro power scheme has been marked by secrecy with little chance for informed public input in support of ecological, tourism, recreational and aesthetic values as opposed to purely commercial interests.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said yesterday the coalition was extremely concerned that the State could dispose of public resources such as water to an organisation operating purely on commercial lines without first giving the public a chance to make representations.

The coalition last week wrote to Justice Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer asking him to consider their concerns and to delay any transfer of the water right.

Mr Chapple said yesterday, "I think what's happened here is that the Government has given no factual information to the public so that we're all to a certain degree left in the dark.

"The people have not been consulted and we feel that they ought to be particularly in relation to the

Wanganui River where we have never been consulted."

Last night former Environment Minister Venn Young waded into the argument, comparing the battle to save the Wanganui River's flow levels with the Save Manapouri Campaign of the 1970s.

Mr Young said it was vital that the concerns of the people of Wanganui and Taumarunui were taken into consideration and the hand over of any water rights to Electricorp should be delayed until public representations could be considered.

"It's very much like the Manapouri situation where the Government of the day ... was forced to take into account other values," he said. "There's a very strong case for deferring that water right."

23-11-87  
W. Chron.

# Need for skills and money to realise tourism potential

**While Wanganui has the potential to become a major tourist area, entrepreneurial skills and money are needed for it to be realised, Wanganui City Councillor Dave Vallely said last night.**

On Friday Mr Vallely was one of the five Wanganui people, headed by Deputy Mayor Phyllis Brown, who attended a seminar in Taumarunui on the future of provincial New Zealand.

"One of the guest speakers was Tony Stanniford, chief executive of the New Zealand Tourist Industry Federation, who noted that in the year ended March 1987 the tourist industry had generated \$1.9 billion in foreign exchange and provided 70,000 jobs, many of which were in provincial areas," Mr Vallely said.

Despite the influx of overseas tourists, however, there had been a down-turn in domestic travellers and this had quite a serious impact on regions not considered high tourist areas, he said.

The message was clear that if a provincial area was to attract tourists, development was needed on the scale of Waingaro Hot Springs, near Hamilton, he said.

"The springs are in an out of the way rural area but over the past 10 years they have been developed into a holiday resort and Mr Stanniford

noted they now attract 200,000 people a year."

That provincial areas had to face the new economic climate — the deregulation of financial and other markets and increases in Post Office charges, ACC levies and corporate taxation and compete with main centres and other countries was underlined, Mr Vallely said.

## Living standard

Petrus Simons, deputy senior economist of the Bank of New Zealand, told the seminar the country was faced with raising its productivity or reducing the standard of living to compensate for the loss of purchasing power which followed the oil price rise of the 1970s.

Peter Sukolski, former president of the Wellington Manufacturers' Association and managing director of New Plymouth's engineering firm McKechnie Bros, told the seminar if New Zealand was to compete with Korea and Taiwan, which were flooding the world with high technology equipment, it would mean paying workers \$2 an hour and tossing out environment and safety laws.

Lincoln College economist Ralph Lattmore dealt with the input into production and industry and noted while more money was put into metropolitan centres it was provincial areas which produced more exports.

The other guest speakers were Regional Development Minister David Butcher, who spent much of

his time justifying moves made by the Government, Tongariro MP Noel Scott and Doug Kidd, MP, who represented Opposition leader Jim Bolger.

Mr Vallely said although no resolution came from the seminar it had been worthwhile, particularly in stimulating creative thinking.

About 100 people from throughout New Zealand, including a deputation from the Chatham Islands, attended the seminar.

# Wanganui River Flows — How It Began

**Keith Chapple**

How it all began: 1953 - 1974.

Seven streams flowing from the Tongariro National Park make up the upper Wanganui River: the Whakapapa, Papamanuka, Okupata, Taurewa, Mangatepopo, Tawhiti-kuri and the infant Wanganui.

All seven disappear into holes in the ground! But three of them have a regulator which releases about 5% of the water downstream. This percentage rises slightly during high rainfall.

Where does the water go? And why does it go there?

It all started in the early 1950's when some engineers in the Ministry of Works and Electricity Department dreamt up a plan. A huge plumbing job to dam the water in the streams, send it through a series of tunnels and canals, and from a high point above Tokaanu, sent it rushing downhill through a series of giant pipes to turn the electricity-making turbines of the Tokaanu Power Station. From Tokaanu, the water goes into Lake Taupo through the Huka Falls and down the Waikato River, where it turns another series of turbines on the eight hydro-stations on the Waikato.

The thinking of the engineers was simple. The electricity generated by water power was cheap and water was plentiful in this region, costing nothing to produce. Once a hydro-station has been built, electricity can be made quite cheaply and for a long time. But if the cost of the hydro-station means paying high electricity prices to pay back the money borrowed to build it, they can be a waste of money. It might

be cheaper for example, to build a coal-fired power station.

And that is what happened in this case. It costs over 20 cents to produce a unit of electricity from the Tongariro Power Scheme - whereas the Huntly Coal Power Station costs seven cents a unit. The scheme is then, a sort of white elephant.

Why take so much water?

Electricity cannot be stored - it must be used, more or less immediately it is produced. But water can. Storing water behind a hydro-station is a round-about way of storing electricity because it allows the operators to adjust the water flow to suit electricity demand. The more water, the better. A full head of water behind a dam is a hydro operators dream.

Having thought of the idea, the engineers went about getting permission to build it. Although they should have thoroughly investigated the costs and the after effects, they didn't. And, although the politicians should have thoroughly investigated the engineers' proposals, they didn't.

Instead, they rubber stamped the idea. The Government even signed an Order in Council giving permission for the Tongariro Power Scheme to be built and all the streams to be dammed before detailed plans and costs had been drawn up, and the effects investigated.

Imagine what would happen for example, if a person went to a bank manager and said, "I want to borrow \$50,000 to build my dream home once I've found a section ... I've drawn a rough sketch on the back of

this cigarette packet ..." Fat chance!

But that is more or less what the Government did in 1958. An Order in Council by the way, is a back door method of making laws without going through Parliament. No fuss, no questions, no publicity. This "Order" stayed in place until 1976, by which time the scheme was just about finished.

Having obtained permission, the Ministry of Works went into business. Consultants were hired from London and workers were brought in from Italy - a new town was to be built at Turangi to house them. All the rivers and streams, apart from two, were to be diverted to the Tokaanu Power Station, amongst them the Rangitikei, Tongariro, upper Waikato and, of course, the upper Wanganui.

In other words, every major river flowing from the central North Island was to be robbed of its pure water, with devastating effects. The Whakapapa River for instance, is a dying river! No small fish, few insects, silted-up pools, a dirty slime covering everything and blackberry and buddlea growing over stagnant riverside.

In 1964, the news leaked out and the arguments started and the questions came. How will this affect the rivers? What about the fish life? Will the Wanganui have enough water for drinking purposes? Will it silt up the Wanganui Harbour? Will it flood the Waikato River? How much will it cost? How much water will

be taken? How will Taumarunui's sewerage and electricity plants be affected? Are there any alternatives, and have they been looked into? When was permission given? Why were we not told?

The Government took little notice and conducted a public relations exercise. They never answered the questions, probably because they didn't know the answers. How could they? No-one had really looked into this side of things. They never said the scheme was given permission to go ahead six years earlier - instead they let the people think it had just been thought of, and the Government were still considering it. A huge public meeting was held - promises were made. The controversy continued - the Government bulldozed the scheme through.

Come 1972, the full horror of what was to happen struck home. A trial run on the Whakapapa River was carried out. The river simply vanished - in a hole in the ground!

A further round of arguments was cut short when the Government promised to maintain a flow which would allow fish to live. It represented about 5% of the normal flow.

In 1974, the Western diversion - the Wanganui part - went into full operation. The public argument had had little effect. The idea the engineers thought of in 1953 remained virtually unchanged.

Part two next week.

24-11-87

W. Chron

## Support for coalition

Hospitality Wanganui supports the Wanganui River Flows Coalition in its fight to increase the water levels of the Wanganui River, hospitality executive officer Evert van Reenen said last night.

Virtually the full hospitality committee attended a meeting yesterday to discuss offering support for the coalition, he said.

"We had a long discussion and many view points were expressed but no-one voted against the motion to support the coalition.

"We actively support the coalition's aims and offer any help we can."

Mr van Reenen said Hospitality Wanganui has always been supportive of any organisation which wishes to maintain the river flows.

"The importance of high water flows in the upper reaches of the river cannot be stressed enough," he said.

25-11-87

W. Chron

## 'Water rights transfer won't affect flow'

National Water and Soil Conservation Authority executive director Dex Knowles says the Wanganui River's minimum flow levels would not be affected by transfer of water rights to the Electricity Corporation.

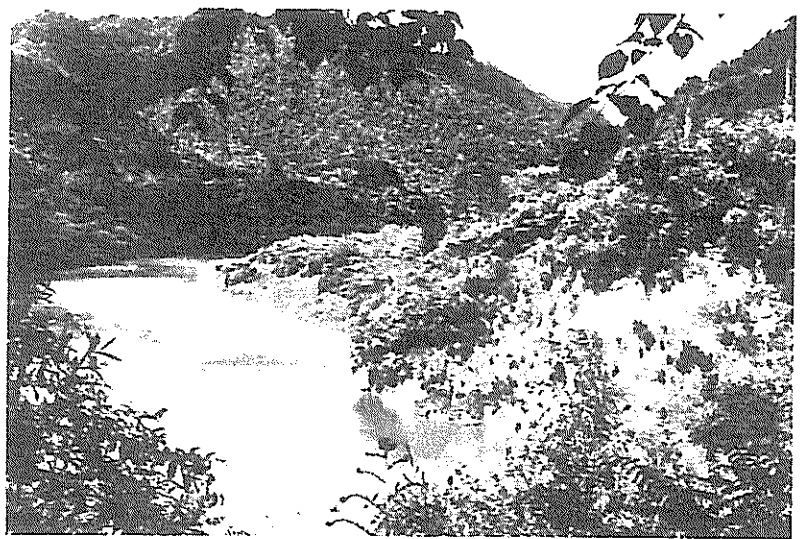
The Forest and Bird Protection Society has urged the authority to stop the transfer of water rights to the corporation after the Wanganui River Flows Coalition sought the society's support at the weekend.

The coalition was concerned that conservation and recreation values could be undermined by Electricorp when it was given "de facto" ownership of the water to generate power for the Tongariro scheme.

Mr Knowles said the existing statutory minimum flows were set by the authority in October, 1983, and due to expire on October 31, 1988.

In April the authority had asked the Rangitikei-Wanganui regional Water Board to make recommendations for new levels from November 1 next year.

The current low flow minimums,



THE WANGANUI River ... minimum flow levels not affected by transfer of water rights.

measured at Te Maire, downstream from Taumarunui, was 16 cubic metres a second for most of the year.

This was increased to 22 cubic metres a second from December 1

to February 14 and during the Easter holiday to cater for recreational users such as canoeists.

It was incorrect to describe the transfer of a water right as the sale of water, Mr Knowles said.

1-12-87  
W. Chron.

# City residents back fight over river flows

**The Wanganui River Flow Coalition's fight for a formal water right hearing for the Wanganui River won further support last night — this time coming from a group of Wanganui residents.**

About 60 people attended a meeting in the city last night organised by the coalition to brief residents on its fight to restore greater flows to the Wanganui River.

The two-hour meeting was addressed by coalition chairman Keith Chapple and deputy chairman Tom Wells.

It also included a film presentation highlighting the diversion of the river's headwaters into the Tongariro power scheme.

At the end of the meeting the group voted unanimously to support the coalition's efforts to have the issue of the transfer of the water rights from the Government to the Electricity Corporation debated in public.

The Coalition is a network of concerned Taumarunui and Wanganui groups battling for a formal water right hearing to be held before the river's water rights is transferred by the Government to the Electricity Corporation.

It fears Electrocorp will view the water resource purely in commercial terms and that ecological scenic, tourist and recreational values will be overlooked.

The coalition already has the support of nearly 30 organisations, including the Wanganui Chamber of Commerce, Hospitality Wanganui, community councils, and recreation, sporting and conservation organisations.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said it was important the Wanganui and King Country regions are fully consulted in a matter of considerable importance to their future well-being.

"At this stage we are inclined to believe that a review of the water right and its associated values is a proper and capable forum," he said.

Coalition deputy chairman Tom Wells said a review of the actual water right was required.

"It is only at such a hearing that major policy decisions can be challenged and reviewed," he said.

"If our regions are to survive on the resources and raw materials within, we need this fresh opportunity of a review to speak out on the subject of the present disposal of those same resources and raw materials."

Mr Wells said at the forum the coalition would say it was not prepared to give away an asset very valuable to the user.

"We ask for a volume of water that provides for our river to become once again the amenity it should be to the benefit of fellow New Zealanders and to visitors from overseas," he said.

"We ask for a proportional flow and thus a reversion to the natural rhythms of the river, so that it no longer feels like a drain that is flushed when the corporation is minded to undertake the exercise."

Mr Chapple later told the *Chronicle* he was delighted at the turn-out to the meeting.

"The coalition will now be pressing further with its case," he said.

## Strategic plan on tourism

**Future training and development needs of the tourism industry in the Wanganui region will be outlined in a strategic plan.**

The plan will be drafted on the findings of a meeting held in the city yesterday attended by about 20 people involved in the tourism industry.

Among those attending the meeting was the executive director of the Hotel Catering Industry Training Board, Gary Norris, of Wellington, and regional liaison officer for New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Robyn Jebson.

The meeting was organised by Wanganui Regional Community College marketing and management senior tutor Ron Rowe.

He said the meeting was positive and involved people from as far afield as Taihape, Ohakune and Ohingaiti.

Mr Rowe said it was important that a level of pride in the region was developed, with unity.

"We will not make it individually but together we can make it," he said.

It is hoped the plan will enable all tourism service organisations to better contribute to visitor enjoyment.

11-12-87  
W. Chron.

19-12-87  
W. Chon

# *Talks in city on river flows*

By JOHN GIBB

A meeting held in Wanganui yesterday to discuss the fight for greater Wanganui River flows went well, according to one of the main participants.

Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said he had gone to the gathering, which included representatives of a wide range of local authorities, not to lobby for support, but to ensure that the reasons for the coalition's actions had been understood.

Since it was set up two months ago the coalition has battled against what it feared was the imminent transfer of the Wanganui River water right to the Electricity Corporation.

The coalition of concerned Taumarunui and Wanganui district groups include the Wanganui Chamber of Commerce and Hospitality Wanganui.

It argues that 80 percent of the river's headwaters have been diverted for hydro-electric generation and that no formal water right hearing has ever been held to allow recreational, tourist, scenic and ecological values to be taken into consideration.

The coalition is pressing for a formal water right hearing.

Mr Chapple said those present at the 10.30am meeting at the Wanganui and Waitotara county council centre in Victoria Ave had listened

attentively during an explanation of latest developments in the fight to boost flows.

He made the point that the coalition was trying to work constructively rather than merely making strident gestures over the issue, he said.

The meeting, which was organised by the Conservation Department, was intended to allow informal discussion. It was closed to the press.

About 45 people attended, including representatives of the Wanganui Harbour Board, the Whanganui Maori Interim Trust Board, the Wanganui City Council, the Wanganui United Council, the Wanganui and Waitotara county councils, the Wanganui Area Health Board, the Rangitikei Wanganui Catchment Board, the Tongariro United Council and the Taumarunui County Council.

Department of Conservation staff from the Waikato regional office, the Wanganui regional office, the Wellington central office and the department's Tongariro, Rangitikei and Whanganui districts were also present.

# Breathing space in river battle

By JOHN GIBB

The coalition's fight for a formal water right hearing at which environmental, tourist, recreational and cultural values could be taken into consideration has moved into the national spotlight with concern expressed this month by Parliamentary environment commissioner Helen Hughes that waters of national importance, including the Wanganui, were being transferred to state-owned enterprises without any proper review of water rights.

Mrs Hughes said the only agency responsible for water management, the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority, was to be abolished at the end of the financial year.

Unless the Government stepped in commercial goals could over-ride environmental concerns.

There are signs the fate of the Wanganui River could next year become a national issue, with conservation efforts involving the river already compared with the successful Save Manapouri Campaign.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said the Treaty of Waitangi State Owned Enterprises Bill introduced to Parliament on December 9 stated that water rights, including that of the river, would not be sold or transferred to Electricorp in perpetuity but would be reviewed after 35 years.

## Significant

"It is very significant, for it endorses the coalition's view that New Zealand's rivers belong to all of us and are not for sale.

"Any water right which is currently operated by the Crown in perpetuity ... is subject to the provisions of the Bill and cannot be transferred or sold, before the Bill is enacted," Mr Chapple said.

"There will be very full public consultation while select committee proceedings go through."

In a recent progress report on the coalition's first two months in existence, Mr Chapple said the organisation could bring considerable pressure to bear, with a formal review of the river's water right a likely result.

"Indeed at a time when just about everything in New Zealand is either being reviewed, has been reviewed, or is being reviewed for its reviewability, this is an entirely reasonable request."

The report says the coalition has two major aims, to obtain a formal water right review and to achieve a deferment of the transfer of the water right to Electricorp.

Mr Chapple said three factors had brought about the delay in the transfer of the water right.

## Delay sought

Conservation Minister Helen Clark had advocated a delay in the transfer after meeting the coalition. Mrs Clark had sought a delay from State Owned Enterprises Minister Richard Prebble and Finance Minister Roger Douglas.

Coalition publicity suggesting the Government was selling off the river without public consultation, and negotiations between the Maori Council and the Government over land allocations to State Owned Enterprises, had also played their part.

In an interview, Mr Chapple said progress since the organisation had been set up had been "very good."

"It's more than I could have hoped for, I think, in terms of the support that we've gathered, when you take into account we haven't actually gone out and lobbied for support.

"It's extraordinary. It must mean that the issue is right and we must have expressed ourselves right.

"The message has obviously got through. The politicians have taken note. The whole business of transferring the water right without public consultation has been put on hold.

"We've learned our lessons with this Government. We can't afford to relax at all," Mr Chapple said.

"What we'll be doing in the next few weeks will be working out precisely what we want and the best way to achieve that and then we'll go for it with the same fervour as we did in the first place.

## Hard pressed

"The cause is right. Justice is on our side and I think that the Government would be hard pressed to say that we're completely wrong.

"We haven't actually begun to put pressure on them yet.

"What we're doing is widely

accepted. The way we're doing it is also accepted. Our policy is to be reasonable ... and not attack anybody.

"We're not in the business of saying how the river should be managed. This issue must be brought to a forum where it can be discussed.

"The sole role of the coalition is to have it discussed at a proper forum."

The coalition would be pressing the Government to ensure its policies were applied consistently.

It would be firmly reminding the Government next year of the need for consistency in the application of their policies on the protection of national resources, and over the use of regional development resources.

Energy Minister David Butler had indicated the Government was prepared to take action to save the Rotorua thermal resource "so that a national resource was not diminished or destroyed."

The Wanganui River was also a national resource which was being destroyed by draining off the headwaters for power production.

## Last ditch

Mr Chapple said a proposed minimum flow hearing set down by the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board for May next year was only a last ditch option for raising river levels.

The amalgamation of the Rangitikei-Wanganui board and the Manawatu Catchment Board would almost certainly mean an extensive delay.

Another major problem was that the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority which would have in the past considered any catchment board recommendations was being abolished as part of a reorganisation of the Ministry of Works.

Mr Chapple said the coalition had no intention of waiting for the 35 years laid down in the Government Bill before transferred water rights would automatically be reviewed.

"We haven't changed our minds on the review of the water right before it's transferred. We haven't budged one iota from that initial stance."

Assuming the battle would be won without further major effort would be "a very grave mistake," he said.

Mr Chapple said the issue of the future of Wanganui River flows had

cont~

created a lot of pressure on the voluntary workers pressing for the Government to reconsider.

"Our policy is to get the issue over and done with as soon as possible so we can get on with other things.

"We're not prepared to be whitewashed."

### Vigilance

Waitotara MP Venn Young, a former Environment Minister and Minister of Lands, told the *Chronicle* there was a need to maintain vigilance as far as the future of Wanganui River flows was concerned.

Mr Young said the coalition had been given only a temporary respite from the transfer of the water right, and the Government would wish to push through legislation which would allow the transfer early next

year, perhaps by April.

Mr Young said he supported the coalition's campaign for the holding of a formal water right so that values other than purely commercial ones could be taken into consideration in deciding the river's future.

The water management of the river was a "different ball game" now that the task of hydro-electric generation was being taken up by an organisation operating at arm's length from the Government.

"Whatever social responsibilities they (Electricorp) may have or that there may be they're bound to say that's the job of the Government not the corporation.

"I think the watchdogs will really have to be kept at the ready," Mr Young said.



Wanganui River flows tipped to become a national issue next year.

# Change, Posers On Council Horizon

1988 - 1 - 19  
T. Carsette

1988 looks set to be a year of challenge for the Taumarunui Borough Council - and ratepayers and residents.

Major sewage and water reticulation work is looming, there is a chance of a battle over the Hikumutu treated sewage water right and a rates hike seems likely.

The Mayor, Mr Terry Podmore, says to some degree the next 12 months mark a turning point for the urban part of the district. Government corporatisation and deregulation policies have hit the town hard.

"Something has got to be put in its place. That's where the resources and development group set up last year has a responsibility."

Mr Podmore suggests it is not only the borough council that needs to sit back and take stock. "Everyone needs to plan ahead. Gone are the days where people can expect the local authority to supply employment needs and all the answers. People in the community have a big role as well."

Criticism that a retreat for Councillors next month to set down objectives should not be held out of town, and rates spent on travel and hotel accommodation, has not had an effect. Mr Podmore is adamant the two-day gathering needs an environment removed from interruption, where councillors can dedicate their thoughts completely to the issues.

It will be the first time in many years - possibly ever - councillors have debated the short and medium term future and listed objectives for all council operations.

"Council will have to be very careful in its consideration of other works it carries out this year. Anything that doesn't have a high priority will have to be looked at hard," Mr Podmore said.

"It's a completely new approach. We've had the district scheme review every five years but that doesn't get into detailed objectives council will want to achieve in a specific time."

"Each year when we do estimates (set the rates) we go off in all different directions. The year after it's another direction. We want to stop that so the residents of Taumarunui know where we're heading in the future."

Mr Podmore said goal setting was an essential facet of business; Why not for council?

A draft set of objectives will result from the retreat and these will be released for comment by ratepayers and residents, probably in March or April.

Closer to hand is the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board January 25 deadline for the Taumarunui Borough Council to say what it will do about its continuing to break terms of the treated sewage discharge water right.

For most of last year,

sewage discharged from the Hikumutu plant into the Wanganui River failed to meet three important tests set to keep the water clean and free from organic pollution. The catchment board has run out of patience with the council blaming storm-water infiltration into the sewage network and replies from council that it is awaiting several reports from

consultants before it can take action.

It set January 25 as the deadline for council to apply for a variation to the water right, a new water right or to show it can meet the existing one in a specified short term.

Mr Podmore agrees there are dangers in applying for a variation or new right. The mood towards protection of the environment (with a new

players on the scene in the form of the Department of Conservation) and Maori issues concerning the river might see the public demand even more stringent controls on treated sewage discharge into the Wanganui, with the water right hearing the venue.

# DoC Spells Out Policy

Taumarunui residents keen to see a higher, cleaner Wanganui River and the natural assets of the Whanganui National Park protected and accessible, would appear to have a new ally in the Department of Conservation.

Certainly the Coalition lobbying for increased water flow in the Wanganui River has welcomed news the Department of Conservation will research the effects of abstraction for hydro-generation - and press for the river to become part of the national park.

Coalition chairman, Mr Keith Chapple, said the recently-released Whanganui National Park draft management plan was to a large degree a melding of the opinion expressed in 602 public submissions on the subject with the DoC's statutory responsibilities to protect the natural resources. "In the past it's been quite different - because of the conflicting responsibilities (of the old government departments) - to get the public's aspirations reflected in management policy.

"It's very pleasing to see the Department of Conservation take heed of outside concerns," he said.

Much of the interest in future management of the Whanganui National Park centres on an aspect that isn't even officially a part of it - the river itself. Because of an outstanding claim by the Maori people over the bed of the river it has been excluded from the park, "despite the fact that it is in Crown ownership and could legally have been included in the park," the draft plan states.

The DoC authors of this blueprint for future management of the park have come down firmly in favour of investigation of ways to have the river recognised as part of the National Park.

"The purpose of the management plan is not to debate this complex legal, moral and spiritual issue but to plan for the best management of the national

park, in the interests of all New Zealanders. A large number of submissions, both in the original National

Park assessment and again for this management plan, advocated inclusion of the river in the park."

The DoC argues that from a management perspective, inclusion of the riverbed would provide for a better and more cohesive control, with the conditions of the National Parks Act 1980 applying over what is a high area of commercial and recreation use.

"National Park status would give the river bed greater protection and ensure a compatibility of management similar to that enjoyed in other national parks." The draft plan states there are also sound ecological reasons for such a move.

The DoC's official policy is to promote inclusion of the Wanganui Riverbed from Te Maire to Atene in the park, under special legislation. The legislation would guarantee statutory involvement for the Maori people in management of the park in general and the riverbed in particular, at the same time providing adequate control of river activities under the National Parks Act.

Other options could also be investigated or else the DoC intends pushing for an early resolution of the outstanding Maori claim to the bed.

In regard to the level of flow in the Wanganui, the draft plan is equally forthright.

The team of DoC staff is now researching the effects of water abstraction by Electricitycorp on the natural values and recreational and commercial use of the river. The stated policy is to advocate an increase in the minimum flow levels based on the research, "and if possible a restoration of natural flows of the river".

Though effects on abstraction have yet to be scientifically assessed "it is considered a return of some of the

water abstracted for the headwaters would improve the general quality of the river's water.

"This is some of the cleanest water making up the Wanganui's flow, as compared to the heavily silt-laden rivers from the Taranaki tributaries."

Other policies in the draft plan have ramifications for the Taumarunui Borough Council being able to continue discharging treated sewage into the river from the Hikumutu plant.

The DoC has stated it will advocate an improvement in the water quality of the river in close liaison with the catchment board, electricitycorp, local authorities and adjoining landowners.

The plan notes water abstraction and sewage discharge are not the only factors contributing to deterioration in water quality run-off of farm manures and fertiliser and the removal of native vegetation resulting in faster run-off, and heavier silt load has had an effect.

"While it is accepted the river will always have a heavy silt load, it is predominantly human practices which have accounted for the deterioration in water quality and to which the (above) policy applies."

The department says it will also advocate an increase in flow in the river to enable safe navigation by a wide range of craft and people. It is in favour of safe river channel depths of at least 300mm from Taumarunui to Whakahoro and at least 600mm downstream from there. The plan stresses such channels will not be achievable without an increase in flow.

"Current minimum flow settings... are not always adequate to allow safe navigation from Taumarunui to the sea by jetboats and are not adequate to allow navigation at all by larger vessels such as river boats on large sections of the river."

The draft plan also includes a wide variety of management policies in the park on everything from horse access to maori burial sites and fires. Copies are available at the library, local councils or the DoC building at Cherry Grove.

The deadline for written comments and submissions is March 31.

Mr Chapple, of the flow Coalition, said last week his group will certainly be putting in extensive submissions on aspects of policy relating to the river. It is likely the group would also make a call for the Maungani a Te Ao River to be made a part of the national park.

25-1-88

W. Chron

## Talks on river issues

A public meeting focussing on the Wanganui River has been arranged by the Wanganui branch of Project Waitangi for February 4 in the Davis Lecture Theatre.

Speakers will discuss various current issues concerning the river and will relate them to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Keith Chapple of Wanganui River Coalition, will present the case for

appealing against Electricorp's right to take water from the headwaters of the river; Russell Marshall, MP for Wanganui, will consider some of the implications of the Whanganui National Park and ownership of the Wanganui riverbed; and Dr Patrick O'Connor will discuss the state of the lower reaches of the river.

The public will be encouraged to join in the discussion on these and any other issues relating to the Wanganui River and the Treaty of Waitangi, Project Waitangi's Hilary Wooding said yesterday.

26-1-88

W. Chron.

## New move on Wanganui River water issue

The Wanganui River Flows Coalition has launched a new effort to persuade the Government to have Electricorp apply for a formal water right to use the river's headwaters for power generation.

Coalition chairman Geoff Chapple said the coalition had recently written to Deputy Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer as part of its campaign for a formal water right hearing.

In a statement outlining the coalition's aims, Mr Chapple said authority to use the water was obtained by stealth in 1958 when the Government signed an all-powerful Order in Council.

This was validated retrospectively in 1976 as a

"water right" under the Water and Soil Conservation Act 1967.

"In contrast to other major water rights which have a life of usually 21 years and sometimes hundreds of conditions and restrictions following extensive public submissions and consultations, the 'right' to use the Wanganui has no restrictions or conditions — other than one with the Taumarunui Borough Council, an informal agreement with the Department of Conservation on water temperatures and the so-called (inadequate) 'Minimum Flow Regime'.

"There has been no public consultation and the water right has no time limit.

"The present situation where the Whanganui National Park is managed for maximum protection while the river is managed for maximum exploitation is unsatisfactory and makes a mockery of national park principles.

"The coalition stress they have no hidden agenda to close down the Tongariro power scheme.

"They believe it is correct and proper that Electricorp's right to the water is formalised after full public consultation and with legally binding conditions and/or restrictions."

A national inventory of New Zealand rivers listed the Wanganui in a

priority category as a river of national importance, because of its immense cultural and historic values and outstanding scenic, recreation and ecological values.

"Diversion of over 90 percent of the headwaters of the Wanganui to the Tongariro power scheme has severely altered the natural rhythms of the river to such a degree that the upper reaches (which used to be one of New Zealand's finest trout fisheries) is covered for many miles with an unhealthy evil slimy algae," Mr Chapple said.

"The Government has established the State-owned enterprises on the principle of competitive neutrality — able to compete with the private sector on an equal footing with no subsidies or Government protection, privileges or advantages"

# Checking River 'Vital Signs'

The Department of Conservation officer co-ordinating research on the state of the Wanganui River says there is definitely evidence abstraction of most of the headwaters is causing problems downstream.

But Mr Roger Shand says the difficulty is quantifying those problems and obtaining hard evidence on what degree other modifications to the river - such as farm run-off, gravel extraction and the like - have compounded them.

Mr Shand is responsible for designing and overseeing the programme of monitoring and research and his team has a deadline of March 21 to gather data for a submission to the catchment board Minimum Flow hearing in May. DoC staff specialising in surveying, fisheries and other fields will do much of the research, with hired consultants doing the rest.

With the responsibilities for the environment, conservation, wildlife and resource protection now under the one Government department (the DoC), it will be the first time all of the river's 'vital signs' have been monitored in a concentrated, co-ordinated approach.

"It has been rather fragmented in the past. But in the department now we've got engineers through to fisheries experts and legal people," Mr Shand said.



**Roger Shand; Abstraction is definitely causing problems downstream.**

With such a tight deadline, some data from monitoring of rapids, river banks and so on is not going to be available for the Minimum Flow hearing. It would be a year or more before researchers could isolate what factors cause certain problems with total accuracy.

Mr Shand sees the job as filling in pieces of a jig-saw, eventually uilding a complete picture of the river environment.

Monitoring the river is

part of the department's expanded role and money is being set aside so that research can continue long after the submission is made to the flow hearing.

"Some of the things we're setting up now may not bear fruit by our (submission) deadline, but in the future we'll have the data for a strong case," he said.

Farm run-off, release of treated sewage, gravel extraction and erosion all have a detrimental effect on the

Wanganui but Mr Shand thinks there is little doubt a reduction in headwater abstraction would help ameliorate many of these effects. For instance, the headwaters are colder. Greater release would reduce the warm conditions algae and other organisms thrive in. It would also further dilute treated sewage release. But with Electricorp and the country valuing the water so highly for electricity generation, it again comes back to quantifying such things on a scientific basis.

There are even theories - still to be investigated - that a lower water temperature may decrease the river's tendency to carry silt and increase the effective navigation depths of channels.

## Irony

The irony of his surname has not been lost on Mr Shand.

In the 1960s, the then Minister of Electricity - A Mr Tom Shand - promised money for sealing of SH41 and in compensation to the Taumarunui Borough Council for effects on sewage treatment, if the Tongariro Power Scheme had any bad effects. Mr Shand's promises and attendances at meetings in this district is credited with muting much of the early public outcry about the effects of abstraction on the Whakapapa and Wanganui.

But DoC officer Roger Shand, who incidentally is no relation to the late Minister, said Shand's promises also paved the way for the small river protection practices which are in place, such as the releases to lower temperature, the residual flow for the Whakapapa and so on.

Members of the DoC team have already been on the river setting up monitoring apparatus and conducting site tests.

# Stepping Up The Pace To National Campaign

The Coalition for increased flows in the Wanganui River has identified the proposed new Ministry of the Environment as the ideal and most appropriate body to consider a formal Wanganui water right hearing.

Coalition chairman, Mr Keith Chapple, said his group is encouraged by news the responsibilities of the soon-to-be-defunct National Water and Soil Conservation Authority will be transferred to the new ministry. Just as pleasing to the Coalition are some of the clauses in the Government's corporate plan for the new department, under which it will supervise or conduct hearings namely:

• "..... To ensure natural and physical resources are managed for optimal environmental quality, sustainability and human well being."

• "..... To facilitate and encourage the resolution of conflict in relation to policies and proposals which may affect the environment."

• "..... Judging whether all relevant viewpoints and values have been taken into account in a decision-making process...." and "...assessing whether they have been represented adequately."

• "..... Society has the responsibility to consider and influence the fair distribution of resources amongst groups and individuals."

• "..... The Environment Act requires the Ministry to promote opportunities for effective public participation in decision-making processes which affect the environment. The Ministry will advocate fair, just and open decision-making processes which lead to good environmental management practices. These values can be described as the values of "good process."

## ETHOS

The flow Coalition also thinks the ethos of State Owned Enterprises - supposedly one of "competitive neutrality" - and the Government's policy on market forces should apply to the river issue.

If the waters of the Wanganui are looked upon as a regional and national resource, with both value for both hydro generation and

tourism, their allocation should be fair and with public input.

"As matters stand, the allocation of (this) national resource is grossly weighted in favour of Electricorp," Mr Chapple said.

"It seems to us that if the Government is to be true to its principles, then Electricorp should not begin its competitive business life from a position of privilege which, whilst beneficial to them, beggars the regions and the ecosystems which are depleted of a major resource."

There is "considerable public unease" with the status quo, as evidenced with the wide support for the Coalitions cause. But Mr Chapple said his group does not consider its role to be to propose solutions. Its objectives will be "well-served" if the matter is brought to a formal hearing, "when the evidence will speak for itself".

## Broaden

The flow Coalition decided at its meeting last month to step up its lobbying and mount a nationwide

campaign to "Save the Wanganui River".

With the Treaty of Waitangi- State Owned Enterprises Bill halting the automatic selling or transfer of Crown water rights in perpetuity, the Coalition wants to "force the pace" by broadening its campaign.

If says the campaign only has one objective; To persuade the Government that Electricorp should apply through the appropriate channels for a water right to use the Wanganui Headwaters for hydro generation.

There has never been a water right hearing for those waters and there is no time limit on continued abstraction for the Tongariro power scheme.

"The Coalition stresses it has no hidden agenda to close down the Tongariro Power Scheme. It believes it is correct and proper that Electricorp's right to the water is formalised after full public consultation and with legally binding conditions and/or restrictions," Mr Chapple said.

The Government's consideration of the Coalition's request will be a "critical acid test" of its consistency and market forces policy, as well as its commitment to a tourism industry, protection of the environment and regional development.

26-1-88  
T. Gazette.

# *Petition latest weapon in river campaign*

The Wanganui River Flows Coalition yesterday launched a nationwide petition aimed at restoring one of New Zealand's most famous rivers to "a normal and healthy state."

The coalition consists of an alliance of Taumarunui and Wanganui community and environmental groups, with backing from several nationwide environmental organisations.

It is pressing the Government to, in the words of the petition, have "the Electricity Corporation apply to the appropriate authority for a Water Right to divert and use for hydro generation the headwaters of the Wanganui River and its tributaries: Whakapapa, Okupata, Papamanuka, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri and Mangatepopo."

The coalition argues that the right to divert more than 90 percent of the headwaters of the Wanganui River was granted to the then Electricity Department by a secret Government Order in Council in 1958, and that no water right hearing has been held to consider the river's cultural, historic, scenic recreational and ecological values.

The coalition says the massive

diversion from the Wanganui River's headwaters and from most of its tributaries has led to silting problems, heavy algae growth on rocks and a rise in water temperatures with progressively damaging effects on trout and other aquatic life.

## **SYMBOLIC**

The petition, which is to close on May 2 and then be presented to Parliament, was symbolically launched yesterday morning at Electricorp's Wanganui River dam site, part of the Tongariro Power Scheme's Western Diversion, north-west of Ruapehu, Mt Tongariro and Mt Ngauruhoe.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said the dam at which the river's headwaters were diverted was "symbolic of the audacity, greed and uncaring attitude of Government officials and engineers who built the dam site."

"It is at this site the infant Wanganui River disappears into a hole in the ground," Mr Chapple said.

## **SIGNATORIES**

First signatories of the petition were celebrated New Zealand artist Peter McIntyre, his wife Patti and coalition deputy chairman Tom Wells.

Mr McIntyre and Mr Wells are veteran campaigners who have been fighting since the 1960s and 1970s respectively for the protection of the Whakapapa and the Wanganui Rivers.

Five newspaper and radio journalists from Wanganui, Palmerston North and Taumarunui were on hand to witness the petition launching.

They also participated throughout the day in a coalition-organised familiarisation tour of key Western Diversion sites and a white water raft trip down a 16km section of the Whakapapa River.

29-1-88  
w. Chron

## RAPID WON THIS ROUND



Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple (above right) and 2XS reporter John Haylock approach a rapid on the Whakapapa River yesterday afternoon.

The rapid proved too much for Mr Chapple who was dumped uninjured from the boat (below).

The whitewater rafting trip down a 16km stretch of the river was the highlight of a day-long coalition-organised media tour of key sites in the Tongariro Power Scheme's Western Diversion.

A *Chronicle* reporter and photographer, together with Mr Haylock and three other reporters from Wanganui and Taumarunui participated.

● For further photographic coverage see tomorrow's *Chronicle*.



# Wanganui River water draw-off 'obscene'

By JOHN GIBB

The Wanganui River and its major tributary the Whakapapa are failing to reach their full tourist potential because too much water is being drawn off for hydro-electric generation.

That view was put by Wanganui River Flows Coalition members and King Country residents during a coalition-organised media tour of key sites in the Tongariro power development scheme's western diversion on Thursday.

Five journalists from Wanganui, Taumarunui and Palmerston North attended, including a *Chronicle* reporter. Two *Chronicle* photographers were also present.

The coalition organised the tour of the diversion — northwest of Ruapehu, Mt Tongariro and Mt Ngauruhoe — to coincide with the launching of a national "Speak Up

for the Wanganui" petition which aims to persuade the Government to have the Electricity Corporation apply for a water right to cover the draw-off for the scheme from the headwaters of the Wanganui River and six other tributaries.

## ● Pictorial feature on Wanganui River: P15.

The coalition argues the Government granted the then Electricity Department the right to divert more than 90 percent of the Wanganui River's headwaters by means of a secret Order in Council in 1958 and that no water right hearing has been held to consider the river's cultural, historic, scenic, recreational and ecological values.

Coalition deputy chairman and former Wanganui Collegiate headmaster Tom Wells said: "In the

river we have an asset that we simply couldn't create with billions and billions of dollars.

"We're cheapening it and sending it into serious decline in ways that seriously impede development of the central King Country. It obviously has tremendous adventure tourism potential."

The drawing off of the Wanganui River's headwaters was "an obscene transformation of a river."

"All this at a time when the Government is telling the regions to look to their resources to survive.

"All this when our major resource is being piped over the hills to another catchment."

Asked whether there was any hope the Government would agree to the holding of a water right hearing for the Wanganui River and its tributaries, Mr Wells said "there's a very good chance."

● Cont'd P3

## River draw-off

### ● From P1

Many of the journalists on the tour were struck by the sight of the headwaters of the Wanganui River being penned by a concrete dam and rushing into an intake, leaving only a pool of stagnant water behind. Taumarunui-based *Daily News* reporter Lesley Allen described the sight as "pretty shocking". Manawatu Evening Standard reporter John Newton of Wanganui: "They ought to bring a court case on the basis that they've kidnapped a river."

Jo Straker, director of the Outdoor Pursuits Centre of New Zealand at Tawhiti where the party lunched said: "We can't afford to lose any more forests, we can't afford to lose any more rivers."

Plateau Guides principal Colin Parker said the Tongariro National Park was a "park under seige" because of its heavy use by the public.

It was sensible for native bush areas such as those lining the Whakapapa to be made more available to the public through increased river flows.

That would take some of the strain off the Tongariro park.

"If we had the waters flowing in all the rivers around here we've got the potential to move the people into other areas and spread them around," Mr Parker said.

Margie Snow, Taumarunui-based promotions officer for the Taumarunui and District Promotion and Development Association described the taking of the Wanganui's headwaters as "quite dramatic."

"We do see that the Whanganui National Park is very important to us. We're a small town in New Zealand struggling like a lot of other small regional towns. If we've got an asset like that we want to use it."

"What's happening to the river is so manifestly unsatisfactory," he said. "I think the creation of a national park that focuses on the river can only draw attention to what's wrong with it."

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said "it's obvious that the engineers got carried away with the cleverness of what they were doing."

"One of the effects of the western diversion is to silt up the whole river from the Wanganui Harbour right up to these dam sites," he said.

Commenting on the petition, Mr Chapple said "the aim is to bring home to Government there are more people in this than us."

The Government's market forces philosophy was based on the idea that no group would have special privileges at the expense of another.

If no water right hearing was held that would mean Electricorp was being allowed privileges and advantages with respect to the headwaters at the expense of other river users.

"There are no conditions at all," Mr Chapple said. "Electricorp have an absolute power to take all the water they want. That gives them a position of privilege."

"If you look at the farming community they've said there'll be no more SMPs, you can either farm or sink. Why should a different policy apply to Electricorp than it does to farmers?"

Coalition secretary Brenda Chapple said the diversion of the Wanganui's headwaters was "vandalism".

"I don't think it's too late to try to do something about it," Mrs Chapple said. "I think it's incumbent on us to do something about it as New Zealanders."

# FEATURE

30-1-88

W. Chon

The Wanganui River Flows Coalition on Thursday launched a national petition calling for the restoration to a normal healthy state of the Wanganui River.

**CHRONICLE** reporter **JOHN GIBB** and photographers **Graeme Mitchell-Anyon** and **Beth Tucker** went along that day for a coalition-organised media tour of key parts of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme's Western Diversion.

Thursday's media tour of many key Western Diversion sites was both exhilarating and sobering.

It was exhilarating to take part in a white water raft trip down a 16km section of the Whakapapa River, to enjoy, in my case for the first time, the thrill of bouncing down rapids through silence broken only by the

mutter and roar of water and the sharp cries of native birds.

And to stare at the steep gorge walls soaring up through native bush on either side.

Plateau Guides principal Colin

Parker, Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple and journalists John Newton, of Wanganui, Simon Edwards, of Taumarunui, Lesley Allen, of Taumarunui, John Haylock, of Pal-



The man and the river ... Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple leans on his walking stick and muses while the headwaters of the Wanganui River run swiftly behind him on their way down from their source on Mt Tongariro.

continued...

Cont.

30-1-88

merston North and myself took part in the raft trip and the tour of dams and pipelines which preceded it.

The raft trip, bringing a group of, for the most part, town and city dwellers a rare experience, was exhilarating.

It was hard also not to be impressed by the ingenuity and engineering skill behind the construction of the dams, the pipelines and the man-made lakes which comprise part of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme.

### Rarity

But the sobering side was to realise that white water rafting on the Whakapapa is a rarity.

Although local tour operators Plateau Guides are able to operate canoes on the river at low water levels, higher water levels such as we experienced on Thursday are unusual on the Whakapapa, particularly at this time of the year.

Mr Chapple suggested that the reason for the high Whakapapa flows on Thursday was that Electricorp, having heard about the planned media trip, had released a large amount of water from the Whakapapa intake to make the river, where low flows are common, look better.

The coalition says the river systems affected by the Western Diversion of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme are dying, with fish adversely affected, silt filling up rock pools and algae growing on rocks.

### Pressure

The coalition in launching its national petition hopes to bring pressure to bear on the Government to have Electricorp apply for a water right to divert and use for hydro generation the headwaters of the Wanganui River and its tributaries: Whakapapa, Okupata, Papamanuka, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri and Mangatepopo.

It argues that decisions to divert water from the Wanganui River's headwaters and tributaries were made secretly by the Government in the late 1950s and that the river's cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational and ecological values were not taken sufficiently into account.

It was sobering to see the headwaters of the Wanganui River reduced to a muddy pool of water.

And to consider indications of inadequate public consultation in the past.

This year, before the Government transfers the water right formally to Electricorp, the people of Wanganui and of New Zealand have the chance, if they wish to take it, to reconsider what has happened to the headwaters of the seven rivers affected by the Western Diversion and make their views known.

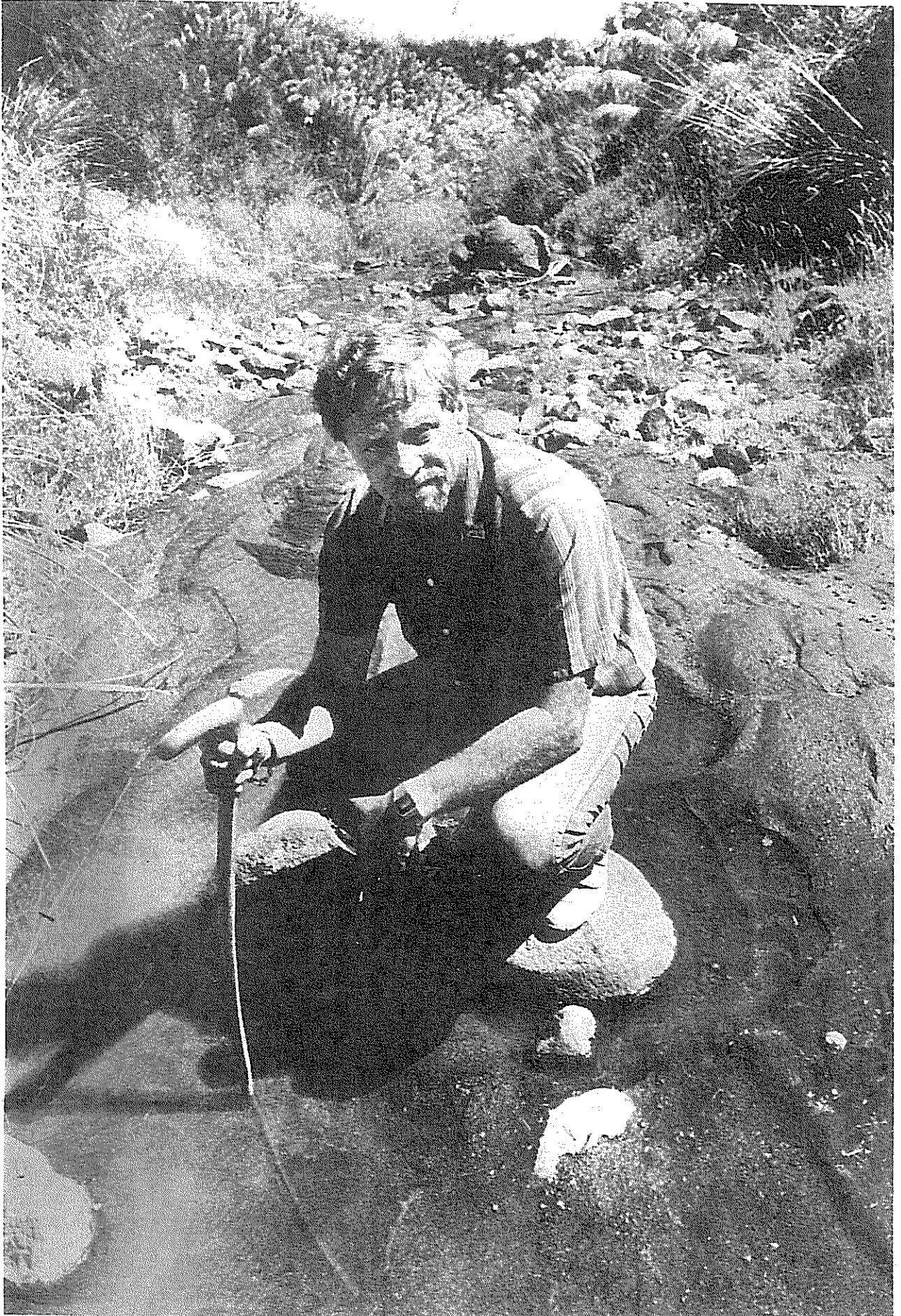


Wanganui River Flows Coalition deputy chairman Tom Wells signs the "Speak Up for the Wanganui River" petition immediately after the formal launching of the petition on Thursday morning.

Mr Wells, a former headmaster of Wanganui Collegiate School, and a veteran campaigner for the protection of the Whakapapa and Wanganui rivers, was third to sign.

Distinguished New Zealand artist Peter McIntyre and his wife Pat have signed before the formal launch at the site of the Electricity Corporation dam, where the headwaters of the Wanganui River are captured for hydro-electric generation.

continued...



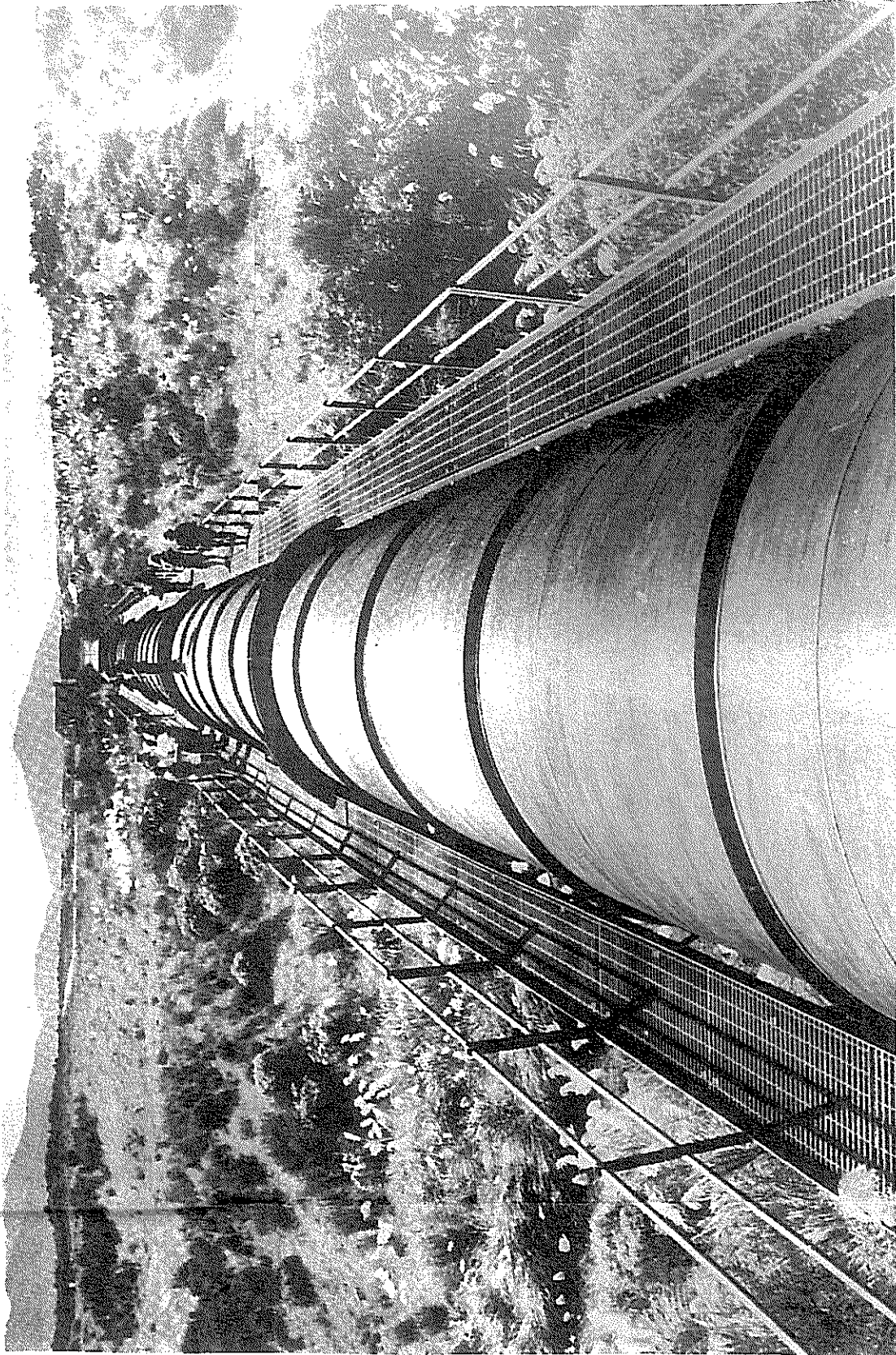
An ugly sight very few Wanganui people have seen. This yellowish stagnant pool of water which peters out into bush is all that is left of the headwaters of the Wanganui River.

In the few metres between the view above and this pool of mud, the river is penned by a concrete dam, and moving with suprising speed and volume, slams into a hydo electric intake below the dam and disappears channelled away to the Tongariro Power Development Scheme

continued ...

contn

30-1-88



This massive steel pipeline carries water from the Whakapapa, the Okupata, the Tawhitikuri and the Mangatepopo rivers into the Western Diversion of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme. The pipeline, nearly 4m in diameter, crosses a 70 metre long bridge before passing into the Te Whaiau canal, and then to the Te Whaiau reservoir before flowing down another long canal into the

Otamangakau lake.

Below the pipeline the remnants of the Wanganui River's headwaters (visible at left and right) struggle through the bush.

Most of the river's headwaters have been diverted into the power scheme further upriver.

3-2-88  
W. Chron.

# Confrontation looms over river control

**A confrontation between Wanganui River commercial boat operators and the Te Tikanga Tribal Authority looks set for Monday, February 15.**

That is the date authority chairman and kaumatua Hikaia Amohia has given boat owners to come to an agreement over joint river operations, otherwise, he says, the boats will be confiscated. And Mr Amohia appears determined to follow up the threat.

When Mr Amohia was told that the Department of Conservation had told boat owners to ignore the claim he said "to hell with them".

"We are not worried about them," he said yesterday.

Te Tikanga has based its ownership claim on a Maori Land Court decision in 1939 which gave ownership of the riverbed to the Maori people.

But a series of court cases since then have ruled in favour of the Crown.

A subsequent Court of Appeal decision in 1962 reaffirmed the decision in favour of the Crown.

However, Mr Amohia claims the customary title, which is an ancestral title, belongs to the Maori people.

"We're prepared to go to court if necessary over this," he said.

Now the Treaty of Waitangi had been recognised as a valid document, other Maori groups were

getting their land back and "we want ours", he said.

Te Tikanga intended to discuss the issue with river boat operator; but, if they would not co-operate they would be thrown off the river Mr Amohia said.

The largest commercial boat operator on the Wanganui River, Barry Crocker, of Pioneer Jet Boat Tours, Taumarunui, is annoyed and disturbed at threats made by the authority.

Mr Crocker said Mr Amohia's actions were totally unethical. The first he knew of the threat was in a newspaper.

Mr Crocker said Mr Amohia visited him some days ago asking for a "slice of the cake" but would not elaborate.

Mr Crocker said he told Mr Amohia then that if he wanted a slice of the cake he should put in the hours that Mr Crocker does.

"I pay my licence fees and I have done nothing wrong," Mr Crocker said.

Mr Crocker said he pays three licence fees which all come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation.

"I must remind Mr Amohia that I do not use the riverbed but the water," he said.

DoC Whanganui district conservator John Ombler has advised boat owners to ignore the Te Tikanga threats as they had no basis in law.

Subsequent appeals after the 1939 decision had ruled in favour of the Crown and that is how the matter presently stands, he said.

Mr Crocker said he was concerned that some type of barrier may be erected on Monday, February 15, stopping him from using the river. That then might become a matter for the police, he said.

Mr Amohia appears to be working on his own.

He does not have the backing of the Whanganui Interim Maori Trust Board, which represents the tribes on the river, and on their behalf was conducting all negotiations either with Government or all other parties related to the river.

One of the board's directors, Maurice Takarangi, of Wanganui, said the issue appeared to be a domestic affair.

It is understood Mr Amohia recently resigned from the board.

Mr Takarangi said the board would seek a meeting with Mr Amohia.

# Plea for protection of river waters

Both the bed of the Wanganui River and its waters look like being the subject of controversy in the coming year.

The ownership of the bed of the river has been disputed for many years by the Maori leaders of Taumarunui and the question must be high up on the agenda of the Waitangi Tribunal.

Be that as it may, the resolution that a river bed is owned by other than the public is not easy to come by in a country like New Zealand, where the protection of public lands for public use is so fundamental.

A determination may be some way off.

Of more immediate urgency is the determination of water rights affecting the Wanganui River.

Put a different way, when can the protection of the river waters as the Wanganui River assume supremacy over its use for sewerage and other waste water disposal or for electricity generation?

The Whanganui National Park, which was to be called the Wanganui River National Park, depends for its very existence on the river.

The water of the river is just as much part of our park as Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau are of Fiordland National Park.

Cleaning up the river requires the commitment of Taumarunui and

Waitotara MP VENN YOUNG submits the Wanganui River should have the same sort of protection as has been granted Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau, in this article specially written for the *Chronicle*.

Wanganui municipalities and cannot be avoided by either.

The management of the water division for electricity generation is another question and the present procedures are a far cry from those that apply to Manapouri.

In the latter case the interests of Fiordland National Park have predominated long after the levels of the lakes were settled.

The management of Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri for electricity generation are according to a set of guidelines set out by the guardians of the lakes.

These procedures were agreed by the New Zealand Electricity Department as it was then known and enshrined in legislation, as were the responsibilities of the guardians.

The similarity of Manapouri and the Wanganui River water rights for electricity generation lie in the fact that in both cases catchments are significantly modified by transferring water from one catchment to another.

The right to do so is in the law in both cases, but there is no legislative protection accorded the waters of the Wanganui River.

Regulations promulgated in 1958 and 1973 legislation allow the diversion of waters from the Whakapapa and other tributaries of the Wanganui River into Lake Taupo and the Waikato Hydro schemes.

A subsequent water right granted by the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board provides some limitations on diversion but that water right expires in October next.

By then the commercially-oriented Electricorp will seek the right to continue extraction.

I am informed that the newly-formed state enterprise wishes to be seen to be acting responsibly and may they be applauded for doing so.

That, however, is not the point.

The question is, "on whose side is the strength of the law should reason not prevail and a dispute on the allocation of water develop? What legislative requirement is there currently protecting the Wanganui River as an integral part of the Whanganui National Park?"

The answer is "none".

I submit that the river needs the same sort of protection as has been granted Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau.

5-2-88  
W. Chon.

# Catchment board bid to spark interest in river flow issue

The Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board yesterday released what it calls a "public discussion paper" aimed at stimulating further interest in the Wanganui River minimum flow regime up for review this year.

The 17-page report, accompanied by several pages of river flow data, was prepared by the board's chief technical officer Don Spence.

In the early stages of the report Mr Spence emphasised that the purpose of the review is to set "appropriate" minimum flows for the river, but he also restates the board's view that the review should address a wide number of other issues.

Among those other issues Mr Spence included navigation, water quality, gravel extraction, Maori values as well as the recreation, scenic and fisheries values that tended to dominate the debate when the minimum flow regime was introduced in 1983.

## Management

While the board has invited submissions on "any and all relevant issues" it still holds strongly to the view that "proper management of the soil and water resources lies in integrated whole catchment management."

Mr Spence said the board does not believe that effective management can be achieved by attempting to manage separate resources or part of catchments in isolation.

Without attempting to stifle debate or prejudice any issues, Mr Spence suggested that the review process was "simply a means seeking agreement on common goals and the means of achieving them or at least avoiding conflict in the pursuit of separate goals."

He advised those intending to make submissions to "appreciate the objective and aims" of the statutes relating to the setting and maintenance of minimum flows and to be aware of the matters the board has to consider in making its decision.

Mr Spence said the Soil and Water Conservation Act was intended to

ensure that the best use was made of the nation's water resources in the interests of the community as a whole and to allocate its use among competing interests accordingly.

"No priority is given to any particular use or the interests of any particular section of the community," he said. "Each has to establish what his or her needs are and how their use or the protection of it benefits the whole community."

Regarding the Wanganui River, he said Electricorp, the communities of Wanganui and Taumarunui and every jetboater, canoeist, fisherman and others whether Maori or Pakeha are "all users and in some cases abusers" of the river.

"But none has any privilege, position or priority of use," Mr Spence said.

"Needs for the use of water for community water supplies, primary and secondary industries including disposal of wastes and energy generation, water based recreation, fisheries and wildlife habitats all have to be taken into consideration account in making a judgment on

what is in the best interests of the community at large."

## Balanced

Mr Spence dwelt at some length on the events and activities which eventually led to the introduction of the minimum flow regime five years ago and gave some attention to the difficulties and successes of the board's river management programmes over the past nearly 20 years.

The report also makes comment on many of the "other issues" the board now considers must be taken account of in any new flow regime for the Wanganui River.

In general the report is balanced and carefully worded so as to avoid giving the impression that the board has already made any judgments.

However, with the minimum flow review having already attracted significant attention from several quarters Mr Spence and the board have no illusions that the report will be subject to considerable criticism and comment.

# Return of riverbed to Maoris 'inevitable'

By JOHN GIBB

The bed of the Wanganui River will inevitably revert to Maori ownership, possibly within two years, Wanganui MP Russell Marshall said yesterday.

Mr Marshall, a former Conservation Minister and now Minister of Foreign Affairs told the *Chronicle* in Wanganui a claim on behalf of the Wanganui River tribes was expected to be filed with the Waitangi Tribunal within days.

Depending on how quickly the tribunal was able to deal with its workload, the Wanganui River case could be decided within two years.

Mr Marshall said that for the past 60 to 70 years claims made by the Maori people in respect of the river had not been directly and fairly addressed and the claimants were still dissatisfied.

Asked whether he believed ownership of the riverbed would be returned to the Maori river tribes, Mr Marshall said: "I think that

we're on a path that makes it inevitable in one form or another."

"I think that the journey which is about to be started will inevitably resolve the matter satisfactorily. It might take a couple of years. It's an issue that will not go away."

Mr Marshall said that the Pakeha were still not fully aware about what the riverbed issue was about as far as the Maori people were concerned.

"There's a sense of grievance there which is deeply felt which has to be redressed," he said.

Mr Marshall spoke in support of restoring ownership of the riverbed to the river tribes and agreed such a move would raise the mana of the river from the Maori perspective and could improve race relations.

Asked whether conflict could arise between tribal requirements and the wishes of other river users once ownership was restored, Mr Marshall said he believed common-sense would prevail and the Department of Conservation would be able to continue to play a mediating role.

tributaries into the Western Diversion of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme.

Authority chairman Hikaia Amohia has given commercial boat owners who operate on the Wanganui River until February 15 to come to an agreement over joint river operations or risk having their boats confiscated.

After the three addresses, a member of the audience spoke strongly in support of Mr Amohia.

Mr Marshall said that despite the moral force of Mr Amohia's argument, his reading of a 1939 Maori Land Court decision was mistaken in law.

Department of Conservation Whanganui district Conservator John Ombler said he had been contacted by several commercial and recreational river users concerned by Mr Amohia's comments.

Mr Ombler asked Mr Marshall if there was a possibility the river could be limited in public access under Maori control.

Mr Marshall said he believed any problem could be resolved.

In his address, Mr Chapple spoke strongly of the need to restore the former vitality of the Wanganui River, much of which he said had been lost through excessive draw off for hydro-electric power generation.

"Two hundred years ago, the Wanganui River was a vibrant living thing," he said.

"It supported along its banks a self-sufficient society of probably over 30,000 people.

"A people who, over hundreds of years, had achieved a oneness with nature. Not a perfect union perhaps, but certainly a union where people had learned to wisely use their

Mr Marshall's comments came after he addressed about 80 people at a public forum on the Wanganui River and the Treaty of Waitangi organised by the Wanganui branch of Project Waitangi and held in the city's David Lecture Theatre.

In his address Mr Marshall considered the history of Maori claims to the river and looked at the way in which claims had been sidelined by successive courts and governments.

He said one former Appeal Court had consisted of "elderly Pakeha men."

However, he noted a healthy refurbishing of river marae in recent years, progress which would be added to by eventual restoration of Maori ownership of the riverbed.

Keith Chapple, chairman of the Wanganui River Flows Coalition and Dr Patrick O'Connor, Wanganui Area Health Board acting medical director (community and environment), also spoke at the meeting.

## ● Cont'd P3

natural resources, rather than abuse them.

"For the people of the river, the beheading of the upper Wanganui is a tragedy — regional asset stripping on a grand scale.

"For the Wanganui River, the loss of its headwaters represents an act of mindless vandalism. Its spirituality, its mana, its chemical make-up, its ability to support life, its recreational potential and scenic values are dramatically downgraded.

"The people of the river, whether they be from the King Country or Wanganui, or the places in between, have only the problems to contend with and a legacy of resentment.

Dr O'Connor, who last year helped to prepare an important area health board report on pollution levels in the lower reaches of the Wanganui River said last night the river near the city was still heavily polluted from 55 sewer outfalls, making swimming there undesirable from a health point of view.

Bathing at Castlecliff Beach was generally safe, although shellfish caught in the river or estuary should not be eaten.

Dr O'Connor said the motivation in trying to clean up the river was not purely a health one in any narrow sense of the term.

"We're not spending money to prevent gastroenteritis, but so we can have full use of our river and feel proud of it," he said.

The lower reaches of the river were part of a river which was a national treasure and was of great symbolic and spiritual significance to the Maori people.

Close consultant with the Maori people would be necessary in the future development of the city's sewerage programme.

6-2-88  
W. Chon

## Board against deadline delay

"Make the effort and get your submissions in on time."

That is the advice from Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board chief technical officer Don Spence to Wanganui Conservation Department officers seeking a deferment of the deadline for submissions on the review of minimum flows for the Wanganui River.

The review process is now underway with the board having called for written submissions and tentatively scheduled a hearing for mid-May.

However at Thursday's board meeting a letter was tabled from DoC officer John Ombler asking the board to delay the hearing for up to a month.

Mr Ombler indicated his department was carrying out or would carry out various research projects on the Wanganui River and wanted to include information gained in the department's submissions on minimum flows.

In recommending to the board that the review programme continue unchecked, Mr Spence said it was important the board received all the submissions, consider all the issues raised in them and then determine the date of the final hearing.

He said discussions with Mr Ombler had yielded no specific information as to the relevance of the research being conducted by DoC.

"I asked about the nature and purpose of the projects and got no clear answers," Mr Spence said.

He suggested that if DoC or any other party making submissions wanted to have the hearing date delayed the proper place to make the request was in their written submissions.

Mr Spence said the hearing date was only provisional and it would be premature to start deferring it at this stage.

\* \* \*

Rain in the upper Wanganui River catchment on Thursday means the river should continue to flow at least near the 22 cumec minimum for this time of the year.

However, another long, hot, dry spell similar to the past two weeks could see the river level drop below the 22 cumec minimum and neither the board nor Electricorp will be able to prevent it.

The board's resources manager, John Garrett, said that since January 12 Electricorp had been regularly releasing water from its diversion system below Mt Ruapehu to ensure the Wanganui River was maintained at or near the minimum flow set for this period.

However, Mr Garrett said the recent prolonged dry spell had affected the upper catchment and there was now almost no more water available either for power generation or to keep the Wanganui River level up.

"There's nothing left up there so if the river level falls below 22 cumecs that's too bad," Mr Garrett said.

Rain which fell over most of the region on Thursday had relieved the situation, at least temporarily.

Catchment board chief technical officer Don Spence said yesterday that while "some manipulation" of water flows was possible through the Tongariro Power Scheme diversion system it was only possible when nature allowed.

He said whether or not the Wanganui River flow could remain near the 22 cumec minimum was "in the lap of the gods" and if anyone wanted to make a fuss about it they would have to take their case to a much higher authority.

# River hit by diversion of headwaters

The Wanganui River has been hard hit by the massive diversion of its headwaters.

That view emerged from a meeting of the Wellington National Parks and Reserves Board in Wanganui yesterday morning, after a board sub-committee on river flows reported back on community concerns about the damage resulting from excessive river draw-off.

The report was compiled by sub-committee convenor Darrell Grace after discussions with the Department of Conservation on its concerns and a DoC research programme on the river.

The report spotlighted the following effects:

- The biological degradation of the many headwater streams of the Wanganui which are subject to 100 percent "takes." These streams, including the infant Wanganui, are totally diverted, (except during high flood or in maintenance shut-downs), leaving a dried up riverbed below the intake structure.

- The massive alteration to the Whakapapa River which is reduced from an average flow of approximately 16 cumecs (cubic metres per second) to a residual flow of 0.6 cumecs. This leaves a greatly reduced flow and consequent biological effects.

- Downstream effects on river life because of reduction in flow, resultant increase in temperature, reduction in available oxygen, increase in algae, and a decrease in total biomass.

- Navigational difficulties caused by reduced flow, ranging from the unsuitability of the Whakapapa for whitewater rafting, the Taumarunui-Ohinepa section becoming marginal or impossible for jetboats, the remainder of the river becoming marginal to impossible to riverboats — depending on flow levels.

- Alteration to physical processes in the lower river system where rapids were said to be "cementing" up and the channels becoming less defined due to the high sediment load and loss of clean headwaters.

- Loss of amenity value of the water. The massive reduction in flow reduces the capacity of the Wanganui to assimilate and dispose of wastes. To put the loss in context, there is a 30 percent reduction in the flow at Wanganui City, at low flows, as a result of the Tongariri Power Development western diversion.

- The opportunity cost to the Wanganui River region as a result of the loss of headwaters. The tourist and recreation industry are severely handicapped by the loss of the good clean waters from the volcanic plateau.

- The aesthetic loss. The Wanganui was once a mighty river advertised and renowned internationally. It is now but a muddy stream by comparison.

- The incompatibility in management philosophies between the Whanganui National Park — managed in terms of section four of the National Parks Act — and the Wanganui River — managed in terms of a 1958 Parliamentary order in council which gave wide-ranging and unconditional privileges to Electricorp.

The sub-committee is to meet in the city on February 24 to formulate, association with DoC a submission on behalf of the board to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board in support of a higher minimum flows regime in the river.

The catchment board is to hold a hearing into the flows regime in May and both the Wellington board and DoC are to make submissions.

# Power scheme blamed for river flow levels

The Tongariro power development scheme, since the first stages of it were commissioned, has been the target of criticism and complaint, as the cause of every change, real or imagined, that has occurred in the Wanganui River since the early 1970's.

However, it is as well to remember that the time and circumstances when the scheme was authorised by Order in Council in 1958, was a time of national energy shortage and power blackouts.

There was a recognised and accepted national need for rapid development of hydro power generation.

As the extent of the scheme, and the consequential effects on the rivers coming from the central volcanic plateau became generally known, during the 1960's, there was much public debate as to those affects and the measures needed to offset them.

The focus of interest, not too surprisingly, was on the Tongariro River and measures were required and it in place to protect the fisheries of that river, both during the construction phases and after.

Indeed, the Nature Conservation Council was set up to advise Government on such matters during and arising out of that public debate.

As far as the Wanganui River is concerned, the Taumarunui Borough Council was the prime mover in bringing the issue of consequential affects on that river to the attention of the public.

Outside of the direct negotiations in which an agreement was finally reached between the borough council and the Government over matters of compensation, there was, as a consequence of the publicity given to their negotiations, opportunity for other interested parties to express their concerns to Government and they did so.

This is the first of a five-part series on a public discussion paper prepared by Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board chief technical officer Don Spence. The paper is aimed at stimulating further interest in the Wanganui River minimum flow regime, which is up for review this year.

## Review

It has been suggested that the Tongariro power development water rights in total should be reviewed. In what form is far from clear.

The only present legal framework within which that could be done, without a change to the existing legislation, would be for a fresh application to be made for new water rights, to be dealt with by the catchment board, or if they were in fact to be sought again by the Crown, by the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority.

The only difference between that procedure, and that presently in process with the board, is that the former carries with it a right of appeal to the Planning Tribunal.

Otherwise there is essentially no difference, nor would there be much likelihood of a different outcome.

Only the Canoeing Association took the trouble to examine the opportunities available for a review of the exercise of existing water rights, and in December, 1977, requested the National Authority to fix a minimum flow for the Wanganui River.

The years prior to the commissioning of the western diversions, which affect the Wanganui River, were years of higher than average river flow.

The 1966 years are the two highest annual flows yet recorded — 25 percent higher than average.

Diversions began in a small way in 1971, but was only having any significant affect by 1973.

## Flow levels

Although annual means flows do not co-relate with annual low flows, the second lowest recorded daily mean flow of 12.6 cumecs at Te Maire Bridge, did in fact occur in 1973, at a time when low flows throughout the catchment generally, were the lowest recorded to that time.

The proportion of the Wanganui River catchment area, from which flow is diverted is not large at only five percent of the whole catchment, but it does contribute a much higher proportion to the summer low flows, particularly in the early to mid-summer period.

The lowest natural flows almost invariably occur in April or May.

Given that early accentuated impact, which would have been greater than would have been expected from the pre-diversion flow record, it is not too surprising that a remedy was sought, by someone.

In response to the Canoeing Association's request in late 1977, the national authority referred the matter to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board for inquiry, and a report and recommendation.

A hearing was held in October, 1982 and the Board duly reported with its recommendation to the authority. The authority eventually made the decision referred to at the beginning of this paper, in November 1983.

It might well be asked, why it took five years to reach a public hearing stage, and a further year to reach a final decision.

### Inquiry

The reasons for that are, that at the outset the board set out to conduct a wide-ranging inquiry with a view to formulating soil and water management policies for the Wanganui River and its catchment area, using the minimum flow issue as the process focus, just as it would again now wish to do.

A management planning document was prepared and distributed, together with a report now 10 years out of date prepared by consultants for the board, summarising the then available information on the water resources of the Wanganui River, with an invitation to the public and interested parties to make submissions.

The response was disappointing to say the least.

Either the public at the time had no understanding of the issues, or did not care particularly.

In any event there was little point in conducting a hearing. It was even necessary to persuade NZ Electricity to take an interest in the matter.

Given that limited response, an active inquiry was then initiated, by seeking out, known interested users of the river, explaining the issues, and soliciting comments and views — a process of taking the mountain to Mohammed, if he would not come to the mountain.

As a result of those inquiries it was decided to confine any further consideration to the minimum flow issue alone, having regard for what was originally sought by the Canoeing Association.

In that the Tongariro power development diversions only affect the mean annual river flow by eight percent at the mouth, which is less than the measurement error to be expected in flows, and that there is little additional catchment flow contribution from the mouth to Pipiriki, no reasons were found for even considering a minimum flow for that length of river.

Between Pipiriki and the Retaruke River, although the impact of the diversions begins to increase upstream as significant contributing tributaries are passed, again no significant effects were found of any consequence to river users.

Only in the section between the Retaruke River and the Ongarue River confluence at Taumarunui where the reduction in mean annual flow is 20 percent, was there found any real concern by river users, with the reduction in flows.

Above the Ongarue confluence the reduction in flows is even more marked and has its greatest impact.

But at the time it would appear that those interested in the upper river above Taumarunui were either satisfied with the agreements reached by direct negotiation with New Zealand Electricity or had simply resigned themselves to the new post diversion situation.

In any event nothing was asked for or sought by way of a minimum flow above Taumarunui.

As a consequence a further report was prepared, based on the board's own investigations and inquiries, which included a recommended minimum flow, fixed only at Te Maire Bridge, using the existing flow recording station at that site as the flow measuring and monitoring point.

### Invitation

Another invitation was then extended to interested parties to make submissions, directed to that report and its recommendations.

A much more positive response was forthcoming, both as to content and numbers, of the submissions received, and the matter then proceeded to a hearing of submissions.

A copy of the recommendations and report from that hearing indicates why it took so long to bring the submission process to a conclusion.

The reason it took a further year for a final decision to be made, arose from the need referred to in the board's recommendation for an arrangement to be worked out with New Zealand Electricity as to how in practice the board's recommendation could be achieved.

The discussions that took place, included other matters concerning the affects of diversions elsewhere, including the Moawhango River and were not simply or easily resolved.

## RIVERBED ISSUE:

# 'Matter of cultural and legal opinion'

**Debate over Maori claims to Wanganui Riverbed ownership came down to cultural and legal opinion, Wanganui MP Russell Marshall said yesterday.**

Maori grievances arising from 1903 legislation continued to this day, he said.

"In the end it's a matter of cultural and legal opinion," he said.

Mr Marshall was commenting on an article by former Maori Affairs Department officer Earl Nelson (*Chronicle*, February 12).

Mr Nelson took exception to Mr Marshall's assertion that there had been ignorance — although not malicious — by administrators of the day in applying English law

to New Zealand riverbed ownership.

"It is not ignorance, but a hard-nosed refusal to face facts," Mr Nelson wrote. "Mr Marshall's statements, which I accept as being well-intentioned, are more likely to be seen as one more instance of trying to pull wool over Maori eyes."

Mr Marshall said yesterday he would have thought his published views were encouraging Maori attempts to resolve riverbed grievances.

"I disown the statement I'm trying to pull wool over Maori eyes," Mr Marshall said.

"I have no qualms about saying in 1988 that things we did 150 years

ago were well-intentioned but ignorant.

"Some of the things that were done at that stage over river ownership were well-intentioned. In Britain people all too often managed to get ownership right down to the edge of rivers and stopped others from getting access. Early settlers were determined that shouldn't happen here.

"So, partly to redress one English practice they didn't like they did something which in the end was culturally inappropriate.

"Given the lack of understanding at the time about Maori river ownership attitudes, I wouldn't blame them at all."

# Need seen to clarify river access rights

By JOHN GIBB

**The Department of Conservation has been contacted by several people concerned about what a successful Maori claim to ownership of the Wanganui River bed could mean in terms of rights of public access and navigation on the river.**

DoC Wanganui regional manager Jeff Connell said yesterday the department had recently heard expressions of alarm about the future

of commercial operations on the river on behalf of people whose livelihood depended on such operations.

Mr Connell said the department was mindful that public rights of access to the Whanganui National Park and of navigation on the river needed to be clarified should the river bed ownership change hands.

"The river is crucial to access to the national park and the department would be concerned that decisions in relation to the river should not prejudice public access

to part of the nation's heritage," Mr Connell said.

"The Department of Conservation welcomes an application to the Waitangi Tribunal by the Whanganui tribes in respect of the river bed.

"The tribunal is the correct place to air and settle a long-standing grievance of that kind.

"There will continue to be difficulty in that area until that claim has been properly disposed of.

"The department does not have a position as yet on such an application.

"In some ways it would be beneficial if the claim succeeded but the department realises that this could possibly complicate public access and commercial operations on the river.

"The department is concerned about these matters and we would hope that they could be clarified in the course of any hearing and the recommendations resulting therefrom.

"The legal relationships between the riverbed, the flowing water, rights to navigation and rights to use water are far from clear and need to be investigated in the course of the tribunal hearing.

"The difficulty is that no-one knows what the consequences of the change in the ownership of the riverbed really are both legally and what approach the new owners might take."

Commenting on the concerns of commercial operators, Mr Connell said: "I think this alarm is premature but these issues are very complicated and need to be sorted out and settled in one go."

19-2-88  
W. Chronicle

## River usage not up to expectations

Wanganui residents should consider canoeing the Wanganui River for a holiday before jetting overseas. So says the Department of Conservation's Whanganui district senior conservation officer John Lythgoe.

A big increase had been expected in people on the river this summer because of Whanganui National Park status, but this had not happened.

There had been a 10.4 percent increase in canoeists, kayakers and private jetboats at Pipiriki between December 28 and February 14 this summer, compared to last season, but this could be largely attributed to a large jetboat association gathering on the river over Wellington Anniversary weekend, Mr Lythgoe said.

Last year 1142 people had arrived at Pipiriki during that period. Up to February 14 this year 1260 had arrived at the settlement.

Mr Lythgoe said the increase was based on valid figures but if the association had not been on the river

figures would have been much in line with last year or maybe lower, he said.

"It's not a big increase considering all the publicity it has had. We have got to push domestic tourism. A lot of Wanganui people have not considered doing a trip on the Wanganui River. They think of going to Fiji, Australia, Auckland..." he said.

Most Wanganui people had an image of the river as a sewer, he said.

However, Mr Lythgoe, who recently kayaked the river, said it was in the best condition he had seen it for years.

"Prior to the rains it was brilliant. It was clear and warm. I think Wanganui people would have been amazed."

Figures of canoeists, kayakers and non-commercial jetboats, putting in at Pipiriki between December 12 and January 30 over the last three summers were 904 (1985-1986), 926 (1986-1987) and 1011 (1987-1988).

has been imposed subsequent to the construction of the Tongariro Scheme. The energy loss that results from these post-construction compensation flows must be replaced by more expensive generation (at this time either New Plymouth or Marsden), a cost that is ultimately borne by the electricity consumer of New Zealand.

Of the journalists shown the Tongariro power scheme by Mr McIntyre and the Wanganui Flows Coalition only one had the courtesy to contact Electricorp to determine whether there was another side to the story and to sort fact from fiction.

At the forthcoming Wanganui River minimum flow hearings, Electricorp will be representing the interests of the electricity consumer of New Zealand. Our policy is to produce electricity efficiently in an environmentally sound way. The water Mr McIntyre saw flowing down the Whakapapa is a cost to the consumer.

I. M. JOHNSTONE  
Group environmental manager  
North Island Hydro Group  
Electricity Corporation

## River run airing at forum on power

The Wanganui Chamber of Commerce hopes to organise a forum at which the Electricity Corporation would be asked to give its views on the diversion of the Wanganui River's headwaters for power generation.

The Chamber also plans to invite the Wanganui River Flows Coalition to give its views at the forum.

The coalition favours a formal water right hearing at which Electricorp would apply for the authority to draw off water from the headwaters of the Wanganui River and many of its tributaries.

Coalition chairman Geoff Chapple addressed the chamber council's monthly meeting in the city on Wednesday and indicated the chamber could assist by promoting the coalition's nationwide petition calling for the water right hearing.

The chamber could also help the coalition by promoting its views and encouraging people to read Mr Chapple's book, "The Rape of the Wanganui River".

Mr Chapple outlined the coalition's case for a water right hearing.

He said the coalition was likely to present a submission to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board's minimum flows hearing planned for May, but the coalition would continue its battle for the whole water right to be reviewed at a formal hearing.

Chamber president Peter Aitchison: "I think perhaps the key is the Waitangi Tribunal. Certain rivers have certain mana."

Mr Chapple: "My own thinking is that Electricorp is in conflict with the treaty."

Mr Chapple said under the corporation's establishment act it was bound to obey the provisions of the treaty.

Should the matter go before the courts it could mean the closure of the whole western diversion.

Mr Aitchison: "If we had more water in the river we'd have a deeper port and there'd be more scouring and we'd have a commercially viable operation."

20-2-88  
Star Times  
**Flows down  
Whakapapa**

Sir, — The emotive letter by Peter McIntyre published in The Dominion Sunday Times on February 7, is both misleading and incorrect in suggesting Electricorp made some clever moves to fool journalists when they were being shown the Tongariro scheme.

Flows down the Whakapapa occur at the request of the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board and the board will confirm that fact. Compensation flows released down the Whakapapa to meet the Te Maire constraints have resulted in a direct loss of 28.8 GWh of electricity over the last four years. These flows have also reduced inflows to Lake Taupo and ultimately flows to the Waikato River.

The flows Mr McIntyre observed are, thus, an expensive exercise in river management that

# TAUMARUNUI *Gazette* 40c

Tuesday 1 March 1988. Volume 19 No. 141

## Electricorp Sick Of Ogre Tag

**Electricity prices could double if the Wanganui headwaters were no longer diverted for power generation.**

That's according to the Electricity Corporation's Group Environmental Manager, Dr Ian Johnstone, who told the Gazette last week his organisation was sick of being made out the big ogre grabbing resources with no thought for the environment.

He likens Electricorp's position in relation to the Coalition lobby group for higher Wanganui flows as a "Don Quixote fighting a windmill". The Coalition is quite happy to talk to the media about all the things Electricorp is doing wrong, but hasn't once approached the corporation itself with the grievances, he claimed. (It is also true the corporation has approached the Coalition).

Dr Johnstone said Electricorp spends hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, monitoring diversions and the environmental effects on the river and lakes of its schemes.

The corporation has a double purpose, however. A major aim is to keep the price of electricity down and that is tagged with the rider of achieving this with concern for the environment.

Dr Johnstone was quoted in the Turangi Chronicle last week as saying 35 percent of hydro water for the Tokaanu station comes from the Western Diversion. If that supply was vastly reduced and the Tongariro Scheme badly hampered, alternative supplies would have to be found.

"At the moment the Tongariro Scheme is pretty much the difference between putting in another Cook Strait cable, or using Marsden Point for electric-

ity generation," he said last week.

In the Chronicle he was quoted as saying this would mean at least a doubling of electricity bills. But last week he was more cautious, saying such figures would be commercially sensitive to the corporation.

"I won't confirm or deny the doubling. Just say it would be a significant increase." People should remember that the water that goes through the TPS also goes down the Waikato and is used by seven other generation stations, he said.

Over the last four years, minimum flows at Te Maire that came from the last catchment board hearing have cost the electricity consumer \$1.4 million, Dr Johnstone said. The drought conditions of January and February and the need to maintain the minimum flows will also cost the consumer a great deal this year, he said. New Plymouth power station was required to burn more gas for generation over those months.

On the Coalition's environmental concerns, Dr Johnstone said the arguments put forward on algal build-up are "to me as a scientist, just so remote from reality". He said there was a

contributing to build-up, but nutrient levels were far more relevant and it is the gradient of sections of the river that plays a large part in formation of "standing algal crops".

Weed and algae in other rivers with much higher flows was far worse than in the Whakapapa or Wanganui.

People were not coming to Electricorp with concerns about the river systems and that was particularly true with sedimentation problems. Dr Johnstone said he had a feeling some of the problems were "Just in people's minds" but said the corporation wanted to hear of specific instances. Its staff were deeply involved in monitoring programmes and the corporation abided by about 100 different agreements on flows and other protection measures agreed to in the past.

"Because we're a large organisation, people see us as unapproachable, which is quite the opposite."

Dr Johnstone said the minimum flow hearing in May would be the best opportunity to present detailed, scientific data and for an "unbiased" third party to sort out the balance of conflicting uses for the water.

The Electricorp spokesman said fishermen here knew they were taking a gamble when agreeing at meetings to the Tongariro Power Scheme. River levels would be lower, but they knew Lake Otamangakau would be created. That lake is now one of the best lake fisheries in New Zealand, Dr Johnstone claimed. "It's an amazing success story."

Some people, even in Kakahi "understand and accept they haven't lost everything. There was recognition there was going to be some loss, that's why compensation was made."

Dr Johnstone argues there is no point in trying to turn the clock back.

# *More time needed to read river report*

The Taumarunui Borough Council and the Wanganui River Flows Coalition group are to write to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board for an extension of the March 25 deadline for submissions on increased flows on the Wanganui River.

This is to enable both groups to make use of an extensive Department of Conservation report which will be ready by May.

The report covers a wide range of topics and most importantly will include evidence of downstream ecological damage caused by low flows and high temperatures.

According to Taumarunui Borough councillor Stuart Shaw, this will be new information that will be extremely important to those making submissions and especially to the council's sub-committee which must address among its topics, tourism, the river heritage and the results of a recent survey done by the Tourist and Promotion group.

"It seems that a hearing is to be held before the public has had a chance to see the results of such an important, comprehensive and up to date study on the Wanganui River system."

Cr Shaw said there must be some ulterior motive for the catchment board wanting to hold a hearing before such important information is available to the public.

Cr Shaw said the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board discussion document prepared by Don Spence was a poor document.

"It makes reference to only one paper or document being available which could assist those, who are making submissions, with wider information," he said.

The document only identifies one clause in the Soil and Water Conservation Act which is relevant to the hearing.

However, Cr Shaw says there are at least a dozen relevant clauses which should be addressed in relation to a minimum flow hearing

The discussion paper also says that the upper Wanganui River above the Whakapapa junction is now a smaller river than it was before diversion, but otherwise exhibits no obvious adverse characteristics.

"I would suggest that this statement is rubbish. The DoC document will no doubt discuss this section of river. The loss of blue duck habitat on the diverted river tributaries is an example of serious and unacceptable damage to the upper Wanganui catchment," Cr Shaw said.

Cr Shaw said if it was correct that Minister of Energy David Butler has advised Minister of Conservation Helen Clark that Electricorp will not be bound by any rulings or findings of the catchment board's minimum flow hearing, then this was very concerning.

Cr Shaw's motion to the borough council that an extension of two months be sought from the catchment board was carried while another motion requesting that the council write to the Minister of Energy asking that he must state clearly whether or not Electricorp will be bound by any rulings as a result of the minimum flow hearings was lost.

Mayor Terry Podmore said the council's general submission to the catchment board will ask for the minimum flows to be increased to a more appropriate level, about one and a half times its present level.

Meanwhile, Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple has urged members to also write to the catchment board re-

questing an extension of the deadline.

Mr Chapple said the DoC survey was very important and should be used for submissions.

"Without such evidence, the Coalition (and of course all others making submissions) will be required to make recommendations based on dated information and well-educated guesses, at the risk of their evidence being rejected because it is not based on well-documented fact.

"This is a truly absurd situation when it is known such facts will be available from DoC in early May," Mr Chapple said.

Mr Chapple said he, too, is concerned that the catchment board's discussion document was restrictive, opinionated and not representative of the statutory values laid out in the long title of the Water and Soil Conservation Act and are in some cases pre-judgmental.

"Obviously this is a matter to be addressed via submissions to the review but in the meanwhile the Coalition will seek an assurance from the board that the opinions expressed in the discussion paper are not a reflection of catchment board policy," he said.

The Coalition will hold a public tour of the Western Diversion tomorrow to assist those making submissions.

Groups and individuals are being asked to gather at the junction of State Highway Four and 47 at National Park at 9.45am, with the tour set to start at 10am.

## Board stands firm on river flow deadline

The Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board has again declined to extend the deadline for submissions on the Wanganui River minimum flow review. The March 25 closing date stands.

Last month the board turned down a request from the Department of Conservation for an extension of time to allow for the completion of research projects.

At that time the board stated that an extension of time for submissions was unjustified but a formal hearing, tentatively scheduled for May, could be delayed at least for a short time.

Yesterday the board made the same response to a letter from the Taumarunui Borough Council seeking, on behalf of the Department of Conservation, to have the submission period prolonged.

Supporting the move to turn down the Taumarunui request, Peter Pharazyn said if the request had been granted the board would "lose the initiative".

"It would set in train a series of events which would probably result in no hearing ever being held," he said.

Resources director Morrie Holland said the board had "a good timetable" for the minimum flow review process.

"If we are seen to be procrastinating now we will end up with egg on our faces," he said.

Mr Holland said when all submissions had been received all interested parties would be supplied with at least the basis of all submissions and that would allow them to consider their approaches for the formal hearing.

The board was also concerned that if the submission period was extended and the hearing deferred, the October 31 expiry date for the current minimum flow regime would be passed and nothing would be set to replace it.

# IS OUR RIVER DYING?

## Intensive study into 'hub of district'

The Department of Conservation is ploughing time and money into river flow investigations because it believes the Wanganui River is dying.

About 20 people including DoC staff and consultants, from Dunedin to Hamilton, are working on the investigation because the issue is of such importance.

The research has been prompted by a Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board review of the existing minimum flow for the Wanganui River, set in 1983 and due to expire on October 31 this year.

DoC believes the diversion of headwaters because of the Tongariro power development has had an overwhelming effect on the upper Wanganui River, and a significant effect in certain areas downstream.

Investigations co-ordinator Roger Shand, of Wanganui, said investigations were linked to looking at problems that had been reported, ascertaining whether river flows were the cause, and what remedy was required.

### Problem

"Alternately there may have been problems that have not been caused by restricted flows, but may be alleviated by increased flows," he said.

Problems linked to low water levels include:

- Physical environment impacts — increased sedimentation throughout the river system, rapids "cementing" up, increased water temperatures and increased pollution concentrations.

- Navigational problems — white water activity in the upper river beyond Taumarunui is impossible unless the tributaries are in flood, in the mid-sections larger craft cannot pass through Wanganui National Park, in the estuary river mouth reduced depth causes difficulty.

## Trout suffering

The massive diversion of headwaters for the power scheme has had an enormous effect on the trout fishery, according to Dr Theo Stephens.

A scientist based at Taupo, Dr Stephens has been involved in DoC investigations for the past six weeks.

He said the power scheme had substantially reduced the trout population in the upper Whakapapa River above the intake. In the Wanganui River, downstream below the intake, there were very few trout.

Numbers greatly increased further downstream as more tributaries and ground water entered the river channel.

By GAYELENE STONEMAN

- Ecological impacts — increased alga growth, a diminished trout fishery, a reduction in traditional Maori fishery, reduced blue duck and black shag populations.

- Aesthetic amenity impacts — discolouration from blue to colourless above Taumarunui, and from grey to yellow below Taumarunui, surface foam, unpleasant smells, slimy feeling underfoot, and a lack of "vibrance".

- Tourism impact — adventure tourism is a new growth industry and low flows reduce the region's river-based opportunities in this area.

### Involved

DoC will report its findings in a submission to the catchment board. Submissions close on March 25 and DoC Wanganui district conservator John Omblor has encouraged the public to become involved.

"Anybody who has a concern about the flows should have their say," he said.

Work on the river flows submission began about October last year.

Mr Omblor said it seemed that all the problems in DoC's Wanganui district were somehow related to the river.

"The river is the hub of the district. It has become incredibly important to us."

Most problems had an ecological impact, and meant that DoC has had to look at the effect on natural processes, including water temperature and sediment.

"Volunteer hut wardens on the Wanganui River during summer were a real bonus to us," Mr Omblor said. "They took river temperatures several times a day, as did staff at Pipiriki and Taumarunui. We also have permanent temperature recorders installed in various places. Temperature is particularly important ecologically."

Dr Stephens said he had also looked at the stream invertebrate population because it provided food for fish, and was important for some of the birdlife, including blue ducks. It also grazed the algae that grows on the rocks, which could prevent unsightly growths.

Densities of invertebrates suitable as forage for large trout were very much lower below all of the intakes and

Research has also included the Wanganui River travellers' survey, completed by river users, then returned to DoC.

### Health

The survey is being used to verify the nature and extent of navigational and health problems previously reported by river travellers, which can then be linked with river flows. DoC has had difficulty in its research because there is little pre-diversion data for the river.

"We are trying to work backwards," Mr Omblor said. Investigations have meant some time-consuming work.

Twenty-five years of movement on the harbour bar has been put on computer and analysed. The same thing has been done with river flows. It has been found there is a relationship between bar depths and flows.

Mr Omblor said that five years ago when the minimum flow regime was set, it was largely based on the needs of recreational users.

"This time people are more aware of the biological and aesthetic effects. There may be increased public awareness in things natural," he said.

DoC's thrust is one of nature conservation, he said. And the present flows are not adequate.

Inquiries show that at low flows (mid-summer) in Wanganui there is 30 percent less water than before the power development.

At Taumarunui there is 66 percent less water, and just below the diversion the level is less than 95 percent.

"Some overseas research — the Montana Method — has shown we can take up to 30 percent of the water of a river system without having any dramatic effect. Yet under the power development, five percent is left on average in our river," Mr Omblor said.

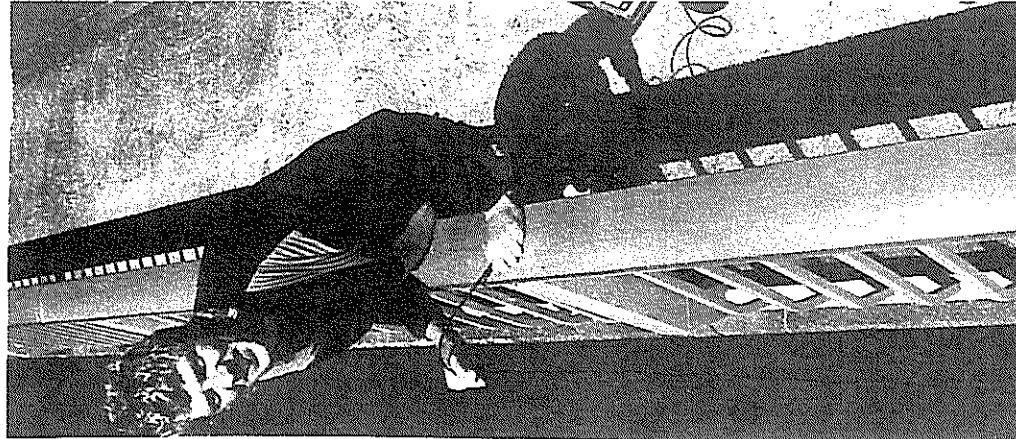
recovery downstream was slow.

"The reduction in the invertebrate population has a flow-on effect through the foodchain, meaning there is less food available for trout and less capacity to affect the algae growths.

"You can't take 95 percent of the water without fairly major impacts," Dr Stephens said. "Things aquatic need water to live in."



Discussing river flow statistics fed into the computer are investigations co-ordinator Roger Shand and scientist Dr Theo Stephens (seated).



Measuring the salinity of the Wanganui River from the Whanganui City Bridge is Eric Pyle, a university student who worked for DoC during the Christmas holidays.

# Compelling case on river flows issue, MP says

WELLINGTON (Special).—There was now a compelling case that the diversion of water from the upper reaches of the Wanganui River has had an adverse effect on conservation values and recreation, Wanganui MP Russell Marshall said last night.

Speaking in Wellington after discussing the river flows issue with Conservation Minister Helen Clark, Mr Marshall said he welcomed a local catchment board review in May of the diversion of water from the river.

"There were assurances given as I recall at the time when the diversion took place (in the early 70s) that there would be negative ecological impact," Mr Marshall said.

"That is now fairly vigorously disputed, and it seems to me that there is an argument that needs to be considered in terms of reviewing more favourably in terms of the ecology, that is the level of the water flows, in the next approval."

He said he was persuaded after looking through Keith Chapple's book on the river issue, that there was now a compelling case being made that the diversion had an adverse affect on conservation values and recreation, particularly on the upper reaches.

"I'm glad the catchment board will give us an opportunity to raise that publicly."

He was confident the Department of

Conservation would make this view well known at the hearing. This showed there was clearly an advantage in having a stand-alone department responsible for conservation values, unfettered by development issues.

The department however relied on Electricorp providing information it has requested in order to do its job properly. This related to valuations and details of river flows.

"One expects that Electricorp, being required to be a good corporate citizen under the State Owned Enterprises Act, will be as co-operative as it can be with the Department of Conservation," Mr Marshall said.

However Mrs Clark said last night her department was having "a little bit of difficulty" in getting information it requested from Electricorp.

She shared Mr Marshall's view that Electricorp was required to be a good corporate entity. The Wanganui River flowed through a national park, and the Conservation Department had considerable interest in what happened to it.

She said the Official Information Act would be used if necessary to obtain the required information for an informed case to be put to the catchment board review.

85-3-88

C. Chan

24-3-88

W. Chon.

## RIVER FLOWS DISPLAY



One way the Department of Conservation has encouraged Wanganui people's involvement in the Wanganui River flows issue has been to erect static displays in public places.

This display, at the Wanganui Library, has attracted plenty of attention from people concerned but uneducated about the river and its flow.

Heather Izett (pictured), of Wan-

ganui, felt strongly enough about the matter to stop and study the informative display.

The department has included in its display a leaflet outlining peoples' rights and suggestions on ways to write submissions.

Another display is mounted at Conservation House. Submissions close on Friday with the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board.

25 - 3 - 88

W. Chon.

# Submissions on river flow to be delivered today

**More than 2000 submissions on the Wanganui River minimum flow review may be delivered today to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board.**

During the past week representatives of the Taumarunui Development and Promotions Association have been canvassing the Taumarunui township encouraging people to make submissions on the minimum flow review.

The submissions deadline is today. Late yesterday evening, about 1500 had been collected, in Taumarunui. However, association representatives will continue to get forms until about 12.30pm today, before heading to Marton to the board offices. They hope to present about 2500 submissions.

Board staff have already received review input from 15 different sources.

But because of its recent decision to allow

late material providing it had been notified new information might be forthcoming, board resources officer John Garrett said he expected to receive more submissions after today's deadline.

A tentative hearing has been mooted for early in May, but the board has yet to confirm the date.

Mr Garrett yesterday said the board may delay

the hearing slightly, depending on whether initial submissions had been forwarded.

Keith Chapple, chairman of the Wanganui River Flows Coalition, yesterday applauded the board's decision to allow

late submissions on the review.

The coalition, along with the Department of Conservation and the Taumarunui Borough Council, had earlier requested a deadline extension.

# Taumarunui

## submissions

### on river flow

Nearly 1500 submissions from Taumarunui district residents for the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board's review of the Wanganui River minimum flow regime were delivered to the board's Marton headquarters yesterday afternoon.

The submissions stuffed inside half a canoe were handed over to the board's resources manager John Garrett by Taumarunui Promotions Association executives Kerry Hemmingsen and Graeme Pengelly.

Mr Hemmingsen said while all the submissions had the same "multiple choice" format each was an individual submission.

That was emphasised by the fact that each of the single sheets of paper were folded and stapled.

He said the adoption of that format was to highlight the widespread concern among Taumarunui residents about the flow levels in the Wanganui River.

"We wanted the catchment board to be very aware that this issue is of major concern," Mr Hemmingsen said.

The submissions were also delivered with the firm request for the board to hold the river flow hearings in Taumarunui.

In response Mr Garrett said that request would be considered seriously by the board and it would be his recommendation that the hearing be held in Taumarunui.

He said the board has yet to decide whether to conduct the hearing itself or set up a special tribunal for the purpose and that question would be resolved at its meeting next month.

Requests for the hearing to be deferred would also be considered then but Mr Garrett indicated a June date is now likely instead of the first week in May as was originally planned.

Yesterday was the closing date for submissions for the river flow review but as yet the total number of submissions received by the board is not known.

And yesterday the Electricity Corporation announced it will apply for water rights to replace the existing authorisations and agreements for the waters of the Wanganui River.

In a submission to the catchment board the corporation stated its intention to seek such water rights within the next five years.

"The water rights we will seek will be for taking water from the tributaries of the Wanganui River and discharging into the Tongariro Power Scheme," Mr G Grilli, North Island hydro group manager for the corporation, said.

"We are satisfied with the way the catchment board has widened its minimum flows hearings so that any party can raise issues relating to the use and management of the water and soil resources of the Wanganui River catchment," Mr Gilli said.

However, with the high level of local community interest in the commercial intentions and the way the corporation will manage its water resources in future, it had decided to indicate its intentions toward the Wanganui River.

"If electricity prices are to be kept as low as possible in future, it is essential that the corporation be in a position to make the best possible use of the waters of North Island rivers associated with the Tongariro Power Scheme," Mr Grilli said.

# Electricorp to replace Wanganui rights

By JAMES GARDINER

**ELECTRICORP** has announced it intends applying for water rights to replace existing authorisations and agreements for the Wanganui River.

The application would be made sometime in the next five years, the corporation said in a submission to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board on setting an appropriate minimum flow for the river.

The present flow regime, which sets minimum levels to allow boating on the river after Electricorp has diverted water to the Tongariro power stations, expires in October.

Yesterday was the final day for submissions on the proposed new regime.

Electricorp North Island hydro group manager Joe Grilli said the corporation would seek the right to continue to take water from the Wanganui River tributaries and discharge it into the power scheme.

Mr Grilli said the corporation decided to indicate this intention in its submission because of the high level of community interest in the issue.

He said the corporation would not proceed with its application till it had all the information it required and completed a full evaluation of the implications.

The corporation was "very sympathetic" to the concern of some members of the public that all competing uses of the river be taken into account, he said.

Mr Grilli said the corporation had to be in a position "to make the best possible use" of the waters of North Island rivers associated with the power scheme if electricity prices were to be kept down.

Since September last year moves have been underway to restrict the amount of water the corporation can divert to Tongariro.

Prior to the introduction of the Treaty of Waitangi (State Enterprises) Bill to Parliament in December it was thought the Government could sell the corporation water rights in perpetuity could not be sold or transferred to State-Owned Enterprises in perpetuity.

A pressure group set up to oppose the transfer or sale of water rights to the corporation, the Wanganui River Flows Coalition, also wants much of the diverted river headwaters restored.

Last week coalition chairman Keith Chapple complained that the catchment board's closing date for submissions did not allow time for in-

formation from a Conservation Department research programme being conducted on the river to be used.

Mr Chapple said the research would show how the river had fared under the existing regime.

But catchment board chairman Bunny Gorringer has said the board could obtain and use the department's research information if it felt it needed to.

## Help on land sales welcomed

**MOVES** by Electricorp to co-operate in identifying conservation and recreation areas scheduled for sale to it have been welcomed by the Public Lands Coalition.

The coalition, made up of the Forest and Bird Society, Federated Mountain Clubs and the Acclimatisation Societies, is concerned that access to crown conservation and recreation areas will be restricted if they are sold to Electricorp.

Spokesmen Bryce Johnson and Gerry McSweeney said yesterday the coalition wanted the Government to establish formal procedures for these areas to remain in crown ownership.

"Maps made public two weeks ago showed thousands of hectares of riverbeds, lakebeds, rare bird habitats and proposed reserves scheduled for sale to Electricorp," they said.

"These important areas included more than half the breeding habitat of the rare black stilt in the Waitaki basin. It also included many reserves recommended as protected natural areas in the Mackenzie Basin near Mt Cook.

"The sale also involved areas that are immensely popular with the public for fishing, boating, camping and picnics beside rivers and lakes throughout the country."

They said the coalition met with senior Electricorp staff yesterday morning and negotiations were progressing.

The coalition wants the recreation and conservation areas to remain in crown ownership, and a public process set up to sieve out important areas to be allocated to the Conservation Department.

8-4-88

W. Chron.

# River flow review stays on course

By COLIN ROWATT

Electricorp's intention to formalise its right to take water for the Tongariro power scheme has not altered the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board's programme for reviewing the Wanganui River minimum flow regime.

The announcement it would be seeking water rights within the next five years was contained in Electricorp's submission to the board for the minimum low review.

The suggestion Electricorp's plan would turn the board's minimum flow hearing into a "de facto water right hearing" was made by Wanganui River Flows Coalition chairman Keith Chapple.

He also said the Electricorp announcement would "make a nonsense" of the board's flow review and it would become little more than

an information-gathering exercise for the "proper water right hearing."

However, catchment board resources manager John Garrett dismissed the suggestion that the river flow review was likely to be abandoned.

He said the essence of the Electricorp submission was a request for the board to maintain the present minimum flow regime for at least the next five years during which time the corporation would formally apply for water rights.

## MISINTERPRETED

He said Mr Chapple appeared to have misinterpreted the Electricorp statement of intent by taking it to mean an application for water rights would be lodged almost immediately.

Mr Garrett said the coalition was probably correct in saying the flow hearing would form the basis of a

future water right hearing but had "got it wrong" if it assumed anything beyond that.

"The Electricorp submission contains a statement of intent and nothing more than that can be read into it," Mr Garrett said.

He said Mr Chapple's organisation also appeared to have missed the point that any delay in making a decision on Wanganui River minimum flows would mean that after the current regime expires in October there would be nothing in place and the situation would revert to what it was five years ago.

And if for no other reason the board would press ahead with a hearing and make a decision, for implementation by October.

## SUBMISSIONS

Meanwhile, the board is examining the 1250 submissions for the minimum flow review.

The majority of the submissions (1187) were from Taumarunui and were the result of the local promotion association's campaign.

Mr Garrett said 60 other submissions were received from a wide range of interested groups and covered a wide range of issues.

He said the number of submissions was significantly greater than for the first minimum flow hearing five years ago, because of the greater level of public awareness and use of the Wanganui River.

The decision on when and where the formal hearing would be held would be made by the board at its meeting on April 19.

## River coalition may disband

The Wanganui River Flows Coalition may disband.

Coalition chairman Keith Chapple said yesterday the recent Electricorp announcement that it intended to seek water rights from the Wanganui River effectively met the coalition's objectives.

Formed on October 20, it was to investigate the Wanganui River minimum flow regime.

Importance was also placed on ensuring that control of the river was not legally passed to Elec-

tricorp until public views has been heard.

Mr Chapple said Electricorp's statement that it was "fully committed to accommodating community interests wherever possible" when applying for river rights satisfied the coalition's aims.

"The way we have understood the changing circumstances is that the minimum review is the defacto water hearing, and Electricorp has recognised that.

"If that is the case, as we believe it is, we have achieved what we set out to do," he said.

About 60,000 people from about 30 organisations belong to the coalition.

Mr Chapple said the decision whether to disband would be made at an April 16 meeting, when representatives of the organisations meet.

14-4-88  
W. Choon

# River discussion paper under fire

A discussion paper compiled by Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board chief technical officer Don Spence was factually incorrect, shot full of opinions and did not reflect the board's statutory obligations under the Water and Soil Act.

That is the thrust of a submission to the board by the Friends of Rivers at Kakahi Society (Forks) on the minimum river flows for the Wanganui River.

In slating Mr Spence's personal paper, chairman of Forks and the Wanganui River Flows Coalition Keith Chapple said yesterday it reflected the persona of its author.

"That it has been released in its present form demonstrates either sloppy procedures or too great a reliance upon personal opinion," Mr Chapple said.

Mr Chapple said board members were entitled to their own personal opinion but these must take a back seat in terms of their responsibilities under the Water and Soil Conservation Act.

Opinions such as those laid out in the discussion paper were for others to put forward for examination and questioning, not the board, he said.

One of the problems groups such as Forks and the River Flows Coalition were facing was the attitude of the board.

"They don't seem capable of taking the much broader perspective required," he said.

Mr Chapple said when the hearing is held, his groups might not have the expert knowledge or a doctorate to back up their opinions.

"It is the lay people who have the greatest traffic of the river."

The hearing must abide by the provisions of the Water and Soil Act and not the opinions of one man, Mr Chapple said.

The ecological damage to the river was obvious to all and the 200 submissions asking for increased river flows should be put into perspective, he said.

There were only 350 submissions to the State Sector Bill.

It was important for the board to get the feelings of the people and it would be the first step to gathering public knowledge on the effects of low river flows.

Mr Chapple said he believed the hearing should be held in Taumarunui although admitted that it would be better for the cause if it was held outdoors on the banks of the Whakapapa River.

The haste with which the board called for submissions was positively indecent, he said.

Their reasoning that the present minimum flow regime required on October 1 and a new one should be in place just did not stand up.

"That's nonsense," Mr Chapple said. "The State Owned Enterprise Act says that Electricorp has to act as a good corporate citizen."

Mr Chapple said this meant that Electricorp would be obliged to maintain the present regime until a new one could be worked out. Research being done by the Department of Conservation on the effects the diverted water was having on the Wanganui River were important.

"By setting a deadline in knowing advance of such scientific research material being published, the board would seem to be thwarting the Department of Conservation in the proper exercise of its advocacy function."

Mr Chapple said the public, too, was being denied valuable information essential to their submissions on increased river flows.

A date for the hearing and a venue have yet to be decided on.

The general manager of the Rangitikei Wanganui and Manawatu Catchment Boards, Reg Barrett, said a decision would be made at the boards' joint meeting next Tuesday.

Mr Barrett hinted that because of the sheer weight of submissions, the hearing could be delayed until June.

## To circulate petition on river flows

A petition organised by the Wanganui River Flows Coalition will continue to be circulated even though its objectives have already been met.

The petition states that Parliament should make sure the Electricity Corporation applies for water rights to divert and use headwaters of the Wanganui River and its tributaries for hydro-generation.

The closing date is May 2.

Late last month, Electricorp announced it intended to apply for Wanganui River water rights. This effectively pre-empted the petition.

However, Keith Chapple, chairman of the watchdog committee established by the coalition before it disbanded on Saturday says signatures will still be collected.

He added the committee would investigate the possibility of having the petition noted as a New Zealand record.

"At our meeting we passed a tongue-in-cheek resolution to send a letter to the New Zealand Book of Records notifying them that our petition has been met six weeks before its deadline."

Mr Chapple says thousands of people around the country have signed the petition, which will be presented to Parliament later this month.

19-4-88  
W. Choon

29-4-88

W. Chron.

---

## GENERAL

---

# *Objectivity urged in river flow submissions*

**Individuals and groups planning to make submissions to the Wanganui River Flows hearing would be well advised to express their views in objective terms trying to avoid emotion**

The new general manager of the Central Districts Catchment Board, Reg Barrett, said it might be appropriate for groups to hire legal counsel to represent them.

He confirmed the tribunal hearing would begin in Taumarunui on Friday, July 8, not July 4 as previously announced.

This was because the tribunal's venue, the Taumarunui Courthouse, was being used earlier in the week for a court sitting.

Mr Barrett said while he could not direct the tribunal, he would be suggesting it hold a Saturday sitting to assist the public.

This would mean people could attend the hearing on a non-work day to make their submissions, he said.

Mr Barrett was in Taumarunui to hold discussions with Taumarunui County council chairman Don Middleton, Taumarunui Mayor Terry Podmore and representatives of the Taumarunui District Promotions and Development Association (TDPDA).

The TDPDA had indicated to Mr Barrett it was concerned at the Central Districts Catchment Board's decision to have parties which made submissions to the minimum flow hearing, foot the cost of the exercise.

Mr Barrett said he did not believe the criticisms were valid.

"There's a cost of putting a tribunal on," he said. How these costs would be apportioned would be up to the tribunal.

While unwilling to comment much further, Mr Barrett did indicate he was currently investigating alternative forms of funding for the hearing which might become available.

Having a tribunal hearing was appropriate at this stage, he said.

"The issue (of increased river flows) needs to be confronted now."

Mr Barrett said any delay would not be in the interest of the parties which had made submissions.

Mr Barrett said while many people were well intentioned with their submissions, it was important

to focus on the objective views rather than emotive ones.

Asked whether Taumarunui people were being too emotive over the low river flows in the Wanganui River, Mr Barrett said that in itself could be an objective view if presented in the right way.

The make-up of the tribunal was still not known but it was so important to select the right people to sit on the body, he said.

# Format announced for flow hearings

The 1100 Taumarunui people who made submissions to the Wanganui River flows hearing will have an opportunity to have their case heard in Taumarunui on July 8 at the district court.

The general manager of the Central Districts Catchment Board, Mr Reg Barrett, said on Tuesday each party which had made submissions would need to be asked what they wanted as far as flows are concerned and why?

A four man tribunal chaired by Mr Malcolm Conway of Nelson has been set the objective to define the space and time acceptable minimum flows for the Wanganui River and the methods of the managing conflicting.

Mr Barrett said the following questions would also need to be determined: —

- a What minimum flow do water craft require and at what times?
- b What flows may be required for fisheries and fauna protection purposes?
- c What flows may be required for other purposes; such as protection of scenic values?
- d What effect will maintaining given minimum flow, at given places and times, have on other users of water, in particular NZ Electricity power generation needs?
- e What is determined to be desirable for the needs of river users must be balanced against what is reasonable in the given circumstances?

When the objectives are

established, a statement will be required on how those objectives will be achieved and should meet the following criteria, said Mr Barrett.

- a It should be as simple as possible, to be readily understood by interested parties, and be easy to manage.
- b It should establish the means of communications between parties.
- c It should keep the need for instrumentation and measurements at a minimum, utilising as far as possible the existing network of instrumentation.
- d It should be reviewable and capable of modification with time and circumstances.

While the chairman of the tribunal can set his own procedures the following guidelines have proved to be acceptable, as there are no applicant or objectors as such, the terms petitioner and submitter has been used, said Mr Barrett.

## Procedure

The hearing procedure will be:

- 1 Chairman to open hearing.
- 2 Appearances asked for, and names of petitioner and of submitters and respective counsel recorded.
- 3 The board to present a technical paper.
- 4 Submitters to present their case and to call supporting evidence.
- 5 Petitioner to present his case and to call supporting evidence.
- 6 Closure of hearing and the tribunal to adjourn to prepare a recommendation to the board.

The rules of procedure will be:

- 1 Evidence is not required to be given under oath.
- 2 Petitioner and submit-

ters may be represented by their solicitors or counsel.

- 3 Direct cross examination of witnesses is not permitted.
- 4 Any member of the tribunal may ask any question to the parties or their witnesses at any stage of the proceedings.
- 5 At the conclusion of the evidence of each witness and before he/she leaves the box, the petitioner or counsel, and the submitter or counsel, may seek through the chairman, clarification or amplification of any part of that witnesses evidence. It is at the chairman's discretion as to whether or not to put the question to the witness.
- 6 All submissions will be taken as read and the

parties will be expected only to verbally outline the substance of their submissions, emphasising the principal points they wish made.

- 7 Each party will be permitted one spokesperson only, other than where they may wish to call witnesses with special knowledge of some aspect of their submission or to assist in answering questions from the tribunal.
- 8 The parties may be permitted to verbally introduce new information, and to comment on matters raised in other submissions, but only for the purpose of supporting or elaborating on any points made in their own written submissions.
- 9 Any party wishing to present additional information, not related to points made in their written submission, will require the tribunal's leave to do so. Whether or not new information will be accepted, or permitted to be presented, will depend on the tribunal accepting it as relevant. The parties may table further written material, but whether or not it is uplifted and considered, will again depend on the tribunal accepting the information as being relevant.

- 10 At the conclusion of hearings the tribunal chairman may invite submissions from counsel for the parties on how costs should be borne.

The board requires the written decision of the tribunal before September 9.

# Electricorp 'not to blame for flow problems'

**Electricorp does not want to take the blame for problems not of its own making at the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in July.**

That's the message from one of its environmental managers, Dr Ian Johnson.

While he accepted the river had low flow difficulties, Dr Johnson said in his view, it was clear these had not all been caused by Electricorp's water diversion.

Electricorp had to generate electricity and this could not be done without having some effect on the environment. "But our aim is to do that job causing as little harm to the environment as possible," said Dr Johnson.

The reality was that in New Zealand at present, electricity could only be generated through hydro or thermal schemes.

"As much as we'd like to discuss alternatives, such as windmills, windmill farms in the United States are causing problems too. The windmills make so much noise people can't live near the farms. So even something which seems as environmentally okay as that can disturb the environment."

He believed many people were mis-informed about what was happening in the Wanganui River, said Dr Johnson.

"People seem to think we can run around doing whatever we like. But we've got so many agreements covering what we can and can't do they're coming out our ears. We probably have more restrictions on the Tongariro scheme than something that might be built today."

Electricorp was only handling limited amounts of water, said Dr Johnson.

"That means that no matter how much concerned people would want us to release more water into the Wanganui, we can't always do it. There's only so much there."

## Bacteria

There was a good instance of where this was a problem when canoeists complained they got sick when they fell into parts of the river because of bacteria building up in the water.

"Overseas experience has shown that the solution to pollution is treatment, not necessarily dilution. This year we couldn't have sent any more water down for dilution if we'd wanted to because there wasn't any more water anyway."

In other cases, Electricorp had been blamed for problems when it couldn't be proven to be at fault.

## Fishing

This particularly related to fishing in the Whakapapa River.

"There was an unfortunate event where lahar came down from Ruapehu and wiped out the trout in the river. We had an agreement about not allowing river temperatures to increase, which would be detrimental to recreational fishing. But Electricorp was blamed for the loss of trout and again for not allowing more water in the river. Reports are coming out now saying the fish appear to be coming back."

that's because the river's recovered from the lahar or not."

Dr Johnson said he could only assure people that Electricorp operated under very precise conditions and it did its best to stick to those procedures.

"I'm sure not all the problems in the river are our fault. But I know we're the easiest people to blame."

## Concerned

Meanwhile, the chairman of the now disbanded Wanganui River Flows Coalition, Mr Keith Chapple, said he was concerned that six weeks after submissions to the hearing closed, no precis or copies were available.

However, he was pleased to see a tribunal had been appointed.

The retired director general of the New Zealand Forest Service, Mr Malcolm Conway, had been named as its chairman. A former chairman of the Soil and River Control Council and a member of other water and soil authorities, Mr Conway would be joined by tribunal members with similar background experience.

Mr Peter Simons is the retired general manager of the Hawke's Bay Catchment Board, while Dr Neil Algar, a former mayor of Matamata, also had extensive water and soil experience and an involvement with conservation orders.

The fourth member was Mr Harawiri Tir Gardiner, a past consultant to the Ministry of Maori Affairs.

## Terms

At yesterday's Central Districts catchment boards' meeting, the terms for the hearing were firmly set.

The general manager, Mr Reg Barrett, said each party must be asked what it wanted in terms of river flows and why. Other questions involving environmental values and river use should also be addressed, he said.

Once objectives were established, a statement outlining how they would be achieved was required.

In defining the hearing procedure, Mr Barrett also said the question of how costs should be borne might be addressed at the end of the hearing.

The tribunal's written decision was to be with the board before September.

9-6-88

W. Chron.

## RIVER SUBMISSIONS ARRIVE BY CANOE



Paddling for their cause ... Department of Conservation Whanganui district senior conservation officer John Lythgoe (left) and Taumarunui-based conservation officer Ken Hunt canoed down the Wanganui River yesterday before presenting DoC's submission on the Wanganui River minimum flows.

The three-volume submission was presented by the duo to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board's resources technical officer John Garrett.

On hand to watch the "symbolic gesture" by the duo were DoC staff and members representing local environmental groups including the Wanganui River Flows Coalition watchdog committee.

# Call to reinstate total river flow

Wanganui River's natural flow regime must be reinstated, according to a three-volume Department of Conservation study released yesterday.

The department's Wanganui River minimum flows submission states that unless the total river flow is returned, problems caused by the Tongariro power development diversion and minimum flows conditions will never be fully resolved.

The submission said by closing six TPD western diversion gates, the river's natural hydrological regime can be restored and improved.

The comprehensive seven-month study which cost the department more than \$40,000, was presented yesterday to the Central Districts Catchment Board.

Next month a four-member tribunal appointed by the board will consider submissions for the Wanganui River minimum flows review.

Whanganui district conservator for the department John Ombler yesterday said the submission would enable the tribunal to make an informed decision on the river flows issue.

"There is a lot more work we could have done, but I'm convinced we have done enough to justify the conclusion we have come up with," he said.

Investigations were made into river navigation, ecology, water quality, recreation and tourism values, intrinsic values, the Piriaki power scheme and

the Tongariro power development flow regulation, hydrology and electricity value.

The department also conducted a river travellers survey.

During the seven-month study the department was assisted by five Government departments, Electricorp, four local body authorities, four universities and a large number of organisations and individuals.

It is believed DoC's investigations are the first time a Government department has undertaken a multi-disciplinary study on an environmental issue.

"To date it has been very worthwhile," Mr Ombler said. "We know much more about the river and its processes than before we started. We knew that to overcome the problems some of the water would have to be put back, but it wasn't until recently we realised that to fix all the problems, all the water needs to be returned."

The Tongariro power development began diverting Whakapapa, Okupata, Taurewa, Tawhiti-kuri, Mangatepopo and Upper Wanganui headwater streams in 1972.

The submission maintains this diversion has had a detrimental impact on the river environment.

With about 95 percent of the Wanganui River mountain headwaters abstracted by TPD, there have been major changes to the downstream hydrological regime.

This has seen large areas of

the riverbank and bed exposed for long periods of time, and a significant portion of the sand sediment diverted.

Mr Ombler yesterday said the hydrology, intrinsic values and aquatic ecology issues were particularly important to the department.

Diverting water had placed greater stress on the aquatic community, the submission said. Traditional fishery and wildlife have also suffered from the altered hydrological regime.

## River flows

● From P1

The submission adds the natural processes and river ecology have been severely disturbed, and many water quality characteristics altered.

"To enable the restoration of the river's intrinsic values, the headwaters must be returned in full," the submission stated.

Returning headwaters would also give expression to obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi, it said.

"The need to link recognition of intrinsic values with the principles of the treaty is imperative. Both mainstream cultures have to re-establish a relationship with nature and the river if we are to live in harmony."

Mr Ombler said the department was "not really" willing to compromise on the river flows issue.

"If the waters are not put back, the river remains sick," he said.

However, the submission states that if the tribunal finds the department's recommendations unacceptable, another alternative is available.

All water could be returned until it was established how much could be removed without causing unacceptable changes.

To do that the total flow would have to be given back and left for several years. That would allow the river to return to a state of natural equilibrium.

The submission conceded any alteration to the flow regime would result in an electricity generation loss.

It said however, that the revenue loss could be recovered by options other than increasing the consumer price.

The minimum flows hearing will be held in Taumarunui from July 8.

# Electricorp urged to leave river alone

By STEPHEN BELL

ELECTRICORP must stop taking water from the headwaters of the Wanganui River system to allow the natural flow to be reinstated, a Department of Conservation report says.

It acknowledges Electricorp would lose power generation and calculates the potential maximum revenue loss as millions of dollars.

The three-volume, 760-page report has been prepared as the department's submission to a tribunal appointed by Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board.

recreation and tourism and intrinsic values. Offensive river smells and navigation problems had also been created.

"Changes to the hydrological regime and other associated fluvial processes have resulted in a wide range of negative impacts to ecological systems and user activities," the report says.

"To best overcome the problems identified in the department's investigation, to return the lost values and to give greater economic opportunity to

people of the region there is only one option the Department of Conservation can advocate. The natural flow must be reinstated."

The report says the power scheme is unique in New Zealand because natural flows could be restored and adverse consequences ameliorated by closing six gates.

If the tribunal found that unacceptable, the variation was to return all water to natural flows till it could be established how much could be removed without causing unacceptable changes.

"To do this the total flow should be returned and the river left for a period of several years to return to a state of natural equilibrium," the report says.

There should then be a thorough study to assess the impacts of water diversion.

The report says the river problems were associated with significant changes to the hydrological regime and to the associated ecological systems, human uses and general intrinsic values.

Project co-ordinator Roger Shand said it had been difficult for the department, which was formed only in April last year, to complete the report.

The report was the most comprehensive to be written about the river and the first of its type.

The department's regional manager, Jeff Connell, said the channel was in a beautiful, even inspiring, setting but the river itself was crippled.

"With the clearest, coldest and purest of its headwaters taken, it is like an amputee, a shadow of its former self."

9-6-88  
Dominion  
Page 1.

11-6-88

Dominion.

## McClay wants guardian group for the Wanganui

OPPOSITION conservation spokesman Roger McClay yesterday called for the establishment of a Wanganui River guardian group.

The Conservation Department's report on the river's minimum flow levels was unrealistic and ill-conceived in its call for an end to diversion of the headwaters into the Tongariro power scheme, he said.

"The river needs guardians with realism rather than illogical

unbalanced department initiatives, he said.

The department had to be "brought to heel" by the Government.

Its submission to a Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board tribunal, which starts its hearings on minimum flows for the river in Taumarunui next month, was illogical and unbalanced.

"To seek environmental protection may be an admirable philosophy but, in this case, ig-

nores the reality of the present needs (of) the Tongariro power development."

Conservation Minister Helen Clark should establish a guardian group to make a sensible study of the conservation implications of river flows, Mr McClay said.

Groups pressing for changes to the amount of water the corporation could divert were realistic in their approach, he said.

# Campaigner heartened by river flow submission

The days of low Wanganui River water flows and muddy creeks will soon be over, a leading campaigner against the minimum flows regime predicted yesterday.

Keith Chapple, chairman of the Wanganui River Flows Coalition watchdog committee, said evidence outlined in the Department of Conservation's Wanganui River minimum flows submission enabled him to be positive about the campaign for the first time.

"There's no doubt the submission will have a dramatic impact," he said.

"I can confidently say that, for the first time since the campaign started, I can see the end of the days of low water flows and muddy creeks. Never again will we see massive diversions of river headwaters."

The department released its three-volume submission last Wednesday.

It comprehensively details the affects the diversion of Wanganui River headwaters to the Tongariro power scheme has had on the river environment.

## RIVER USERS

It states the only way to satisfactorily overcome problems experienced by river users and rectify changes in the

river navigation, ecology and hydrology is to reinstate the natural flow regime.

The submission was completed in seven months and cost the department more than \$40,000.

Mr Chapple said the department was to be congratulated for producing such an expert and professional document in a limited period of time.

"One of the factors we find very disturbing in it and which underpins the fact we so desperately need the department is that a lot of the evidence has been available for many years. But it has taken the department to uncover it and put it into language we can understand," he said.

If information, particularly concerning the river's hydrology, had not been released in DoC's submission, the public would have been "seriously disadvantaged."

## COURAGE

Mr Chapple said if the tribunal hearing submissions accepted the DoC's recommendations, it would be up to the Central Districts Catchment Board to implement the altered river flows regime.

"It comes down to whether the catchment board has the courage to implement changes the public so obviously wants."

DoC's submission was last week criticised by Opposition conservation spokesman Roger McClay, who called it "unrealistic and ill-conceived."

He called for the establishment of a Wanganui River guardian group and said the department should be "brought to heel" by the Government.

But Mr Chapple yesterday challenged Mr McClay's comments, describing them as "short-sighted."

He said if Mr McClay was serious in his views, he should make them known at next month's tribunal hearing.

He said that although the idea of a guardian group for the river sounded good, it needed to be investigated thoroughly.

"Nothing will be sorted out by politics," he said.

21-6-88  
W. Chron

# Electricorp yet to approach board

**NEW PLYMOUTH (PA).—**The Electricity Corporation has not as yet made an approach to the Central Districts Catchment Board for permission to take water from the Wanganui River below the set minimum flows.

Under its agreement with the then National Water and Soil Conservation Association the Electricity Division (now Electricorp) can, in the event of a power short-

tage of national consequences, ask for more water.

Last week Electricorp announced that because of cold weather, power in the North Island had come under great pressure leading to a low level in several lakes.

The cable between the North and South Islands, now 25 years old, was also outdated and would soon be unable to cope with transporting power north, the Corporation said.

Electricorp announced yesterday that it would find alternative power supplies using gas and oil-fired methods.

This was an expensive option for which ultimately the consumers would have to pay.

## HEARING

All this happened while Electricorp was preparing for the Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal hearing, set to start in Taumarunui on July 8.

Electricorp has submitted the flows should stay at their present level. This flow set in 1983, is for 22 cubic metres a second at Te Maire for the months of December, January, part of February and at Easter and at 16 cubic metres a second for all other times of the year.

In its submission to the Catchment Board, Electricorp said it would apply for water rights to abstract water to operate the western diversion of the Tongariro Power Development project.

This water will reaffirm Electricorp's legal right to abstract water for the good of the nation, it said in its submission.

However the Department of Conservation submitted all the water in the Wanganui River should be returned to the

river and not taken for the power project.

Any alteration to the flow regime was going to result in electricity generation being forfeited. The department said that while the maximum potential revenue loss to Electricorp amounted to millions of dollars, there were options available for its recovery other than to increase the consumer price.

The general manager of the King Country Electric Power Board Neville Sanders, said consumers would not face a power increase as a result of Electricorp's problems at least until October.

## SIGNED

Electricorp had signed bulk supply tariff agreements with most power boards for a price to stay in effect until September 30, he said.

Any increase in the bulk supply tariff after that would have to be passed on to consumers Mr Sanders said.

Wanganui River Flo coalition chairman Keith Chapple, said as he understood it, Electricorp would have to demonstrate a national emergency before taking more water from the river.

"They of course would have to prove an emergency exists."

Before going for more water, Electricorp would have to appeal for consumers to conserve electricity.

Electricorp has a whole series of power options it could use before going below the minimum flows level in the Wanganui, Mr Chapple said.

Electricorp could use the situation as a plea to the tribunal for water levels to stay as they are.

"They've used emo-

tionalism right through their submission."

Mr Chapple said his group and their experts would be able to counter this.

One of the factors surrounding the tribunal hearing was Electricorp's legal position. Mr Chapple said there was some question that Electricorp had a right to take the water as it was not the corporation which was given the right but the Electricity Division of the Department of Energy.

The general manager of the Central Districts Catchment Board, Reg Barrett, said Electricorp had not applied for permission to go under the minimum flows.

# Flow management

## 'vital'

The Department of Conservation considers the Wanganui River and the integrity of its flow management to be of vital importance.

The department's wide range of responsibility has encouraged it to conduct a major impact assessment investigation.

The Tongariro power development abstracts approximately 95 percent of the Wanganui River mountain headwaters (under normal flow conditions). This has resulted in major changes to the downstream hydrological regime with the impacts increasing closer to the abstraction sites.

Flood, mean and low flows have been reduced, with low flows suffering the greatest percentage reductions, due to the mountain's summer/autumn water storage capacity. Large areas of riverbank/bed are now exposed for long periods of time.

The diversion also intercepts a portion of the river's sand-sized sediment load. Sedimentation patterns have been altered with increased

The Conservation Department will make one of the major submissions at the upcoming Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui.

The following article is the first of a three-part series which summarises the DoC submission. The hearing will begin on July 8. The objective of the DoC investigation has been to: (1) identify the nature and extent of diverted catchment inputs, (2) identify and define consequences associated with the modified flow regime, (3) determine the appropriate flow regime that will ameliorate these effects.

Flow regulation has virtually eliminated navigation upstream of Taumarunui. White water users consider 8m/s (downstream of the Whakapapa intake) permits small raft navigation only and approximately 13m/s is necessary for large rafts.

Downstream of Taumarunui the present minimum flow regime is inadequate for general navigation. DoC investigations have determined that a discharge of 22m/s at Te Māre (32m/s for the large riverboats) is necessary for a "reasonable majority" of navigational use.

However, even at these levels, channel maintenance will be required if all rapids are to be navigable at all times.

ment Board holding a minimum flows hearing in 1982. The board's recommendation was for a minimum flow of 22m/s to be maintained at Te Māre bridge, 17km downstream of Taumarunui, from December 1 to February 14 and at other times a flow of 16m/s was to be required. This was adopted by NWASCO for a five-year period.

## Diversions in 1972

The so-called minimum flow condition has been observed by the New Zealand Electricity Division (now the Electricity Corporation) with periodic releases from the TPD intakes — usually the Whakapapa.

The initial five-year period is about to expire, hence the minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui from July 8.

Because the scheme diverts water out of the Wanganui catchment it has a marked effect on downstream river flows — especially during periods of lower discharge. The impacts of the flow reduction on mid-river navigation were brought to the attention of the National Water and Soil Conservation Organisation in 1977 by the New Zealand Canoeing Association.

This eventually led to the Rangitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board holding a minimum flows hearing in 1982. The board's recommendation was for a minimum flow of 22m/s to be maintained at Te Māre bridge, 17km downstream of Taumarunui, from December 1 to February 14 and at other times a flow of 16m/s was to be required. This was adopted by NWASCO for a five-year period.

The so-called minimum flow condition has been observed by the New Zealand Electricity Division (now the Electricity Corporation) with periodic releases from the TPD intakes — usually the Whakapapa.

The initial five-year period is about to expire, hence the minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui from July 8.

The department's investigations indicate that increasing navigational restriction in the mid-river, estuary and about the rivermouth is related to the present hydrological regime causing adjustments to shape and form through altered patterns of sediment deposition.

Without a return to the natural regime (especially during summer-autumn when sedimentation can be greater), these trends can be expected to continue and possibly worsen. The impacts of the diversion on the biota upstream from Piraka are:

1. Diminished area suitable as habitat for periphyton, invertebrates and fish.
2. Increased periphyton accumulation through slower loss processes.
3. Fewer species and lower densities of aquatic insects, particularly those which graze periphyton and provide food for blue duck, trout and eels.
4. Decreased trout numbers.
5. Diminished value to anglers.

The present minimum flow releases place greater stress on the aquatic community. To provide for the aquatic biota, all flows which are agreed to should be measured immediately downstream of each intake.

There should be no flow requirements at distant sites downstream which require occasional additional releases. Each intake should be modified to:

- (a) Release a continuous minimum flow equivalent to at least the average low flow for seven days with a 1:30 year return period.
- (b) Divide any water in excess of the above quantity into two parts, one part being diverted, the other part being released downstream. The flow released should be sufficient to provide a normal (i.e. modal) flow 40 percent greater than the minimum flow defined in (a).

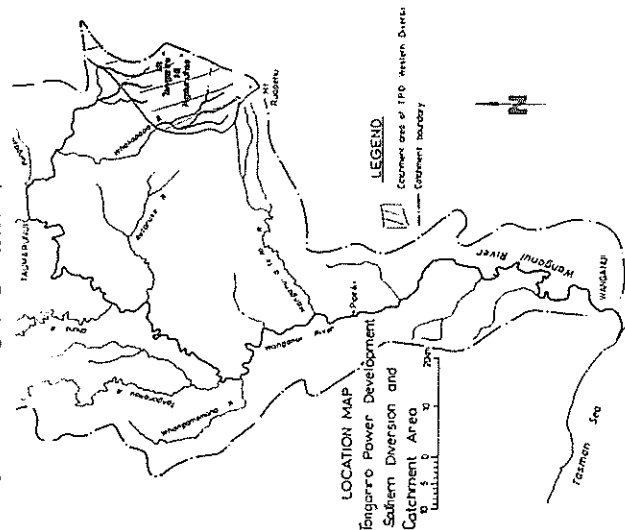
The traditional fishery and aquatic wildlife e.g. blue ducks, have also suffered due to the

altered hydrological regime. Reduction/alteration of the aquatic community, in particular changes in species and densities of insects, have modified the food chain and recovery requires a minimum flow regime based on the above criteria.

A wide range of water quality parameters have been affected by Tongariro power development abstraction: Increased temperature, reduced clarity and increased discoloration, changes to the sediment (increased fine sedimentation, reduced bedload movements), increased plant nutrient supply, increased saline penetration, increased faecal coliform concentration, and increased frequency and severity of offensive smells.

Many of these changes, e.g. creation.

(Tomorrow: Impact on re-



11-7-88  
W. Chon.

# Guardians for river favoured by Bolger

**NEW PLYMOUTH (PA).—** The idea of having guardians to oversee the conservation of the Wanganui River was worth exploring, Leader of the Opposition Jim Bolger said at the weekend.

The Department of Conservation begins its submissions to the Wanganui River Flows hearing in Taumarunui today.

A month ago, Opposition spokesman on conservation Roger McClay called for the establishment of a guardian group for the river.

He said the department's report on the river's minimum flow levels was unrealistic and ill-conceived in its call for an end to diversion of the headwaters into the Tongariro power scheme.

The department had to be "brought to heel" by the Government.

"The river needs guardians with realism rather than illogical unbalanced department initiatives," he said.

Mr Bolger said guardians seemed to have played a constructive role and cited Lake Manapouri as an example.

"Before any change is undertaken, however, the full implications for the river must be considered," Mr Bolger said. "We can never rule out changes that will again increase the flow of the Wanganui River."

The Conservation Department's three-volume submission comprehensively details the effects on the river environment of the diversion of the Wanganui River headwaters.

Over two days, the department is expected to use extensive evidence to advance its case that the full flows should be returned to the Wanganui River.

The submission took seven months and \$40,000 to complete.

Several scientists with both the Conservation Department and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries will give evidence.

12-7-88

## National 'out of touch'

The National Party is out of touch with the real environment crisis on the Wanganui River, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society said yesterday.

Conservative officer Mark Bellingham was responding to a call by Opposition Leader Jim Bolger and Opposition environment spokesman Roger McClay to appoint river guardians.

The two also criticised the Conservation Department for being "illogical and unbalanced" over the river's future.

Mr Bellingham said in a statement 95 percent of the headwaters

of the Wanganui River had been diverted for the Tongariro power scheme.

This had had a disastrous effect on eel and trout fisheries, the blue duck population and recreation and health values.

"We therefore totally support the Conservation Department's stand. It represents the views of a wide cross-section of the Wanganui River community and people throughout New Zealand who value this wonderful area," Mr Bellingham said.

The department's submissions to the Central Districts

Catchment Board call for:

- Baseline flows in the headwater tributaries of the Wanganui River to be maintained. Some streams have no flow at present.

- Surplus water to be used for the power scheme.

- Sediment that cleans the river to be allowed to pass the diversion structures.

- The river changes to be monitored and levels reviewed.

"This stand does not seem to us illogical and unbalanced, but rather in the best long term interests of the river," Mr Bellingham said.

## Second day of hearing

This four-man tribunal had its second day of hearings into the Wanganui River flows at Taumarunui yesterday. The hearings are expected to last all week. Tribunal members, from left, are Wira Gardiner, Malcolm Conway (chairman), Neil Algar and Peter Simons.



# Top-level backing for submission

The more than \$40,000 Department of Conservation submission on the Wanganui River minimum flows regime has been approved at the highest departmental level.

DoC regional manager Jeff Connell yesterday confirmed the three-volume study is a fully authorised departmental submission.

He told the river flows tribunal the study was originally a joint effort between Whanganui and Waikato DoC staff.

Since its completion, however, it has received top level support in the department.

The submission calls for the natural flow regime of Wan-

ganui River to be reinstated.

If the tribunal considered this unacceptable, it was submitted all the water could be returned until it was established how much could be removed without causing unacceptable changes.

To do this, the flow would have to be reinstated and the river left for several years to allow it to return to a state of natural equilibrium.

A thorough multi-disciplinary study would then assess the likely impacts of various diversion scenarios, the submission said.

In his opening statement yesterday DoC counsel James Guthrie told the tribunal it

should concern itself with the value and significance the Wanganui River has around New Zealand.

The Wanganui is New Zealand's third longest and most-canoed river. It is also the longest continually navigable river in the country.

Mr Guthrie suggested the tribunal should focus on establishing the water regime which would protect recreational needs and to safeguard natural and scenic features, fisheries and wildlife habitats.

He said the significance of the Tongariro Power Development Scheme, its invested capital, and the value of the water it

abstracts, should not influence the tribunal.

"Water rights are privileges. The Tongariro Power Scheme operates by virtue of a water right," he said.

The fact that it (Electricorp) is at present diverting water from the catchment will have

no significance whatever when answering the question 'what is the lowest acceptable flow for the river, having regard to the need to safeguard the public interest,' he said.

DoC witnesses will continue to give evidence in support of the submission today.

12-7-88  
S. Chen

12-7-88  
W. Chron

# Expert declines to give evidence to flows tribunal

A Department of Conservation witness for the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing has declined to give evidence after suggestions of a "potential conflict of interest".

During yesterday's opening statement from the department's Dunedin-based counsel, James Guthrie, the tribunal was told a Hamilton scientist had withdrawn his services as witness for DoC.

Jim Dahm, a Works, Development and Services Corporation employee, was to have given evidence in Taumarunui yesterday on the Wanganui River bar and estuary.

However, Mr Guthrie was informed in a letter dated June 22 the Hamilton witness was "no longer offering to give his services".

The letter stated the Works Corporation, formerly Ministry of Works and Development, had long been associated with the Tongariro Power Development Scheme and Electricorp, Mr Guthrie said.

It also said other people belonging to the Works Corporation were involved in advising Electricorp on Wanganui River issues.

Electricorp had advised it wished to avoid the "potential conflict of interest" by Works appearing for both parties, the letter said.

Mr Guthrie described it as a "summary termination of a lawful contract" and said it appeared to have been induced by a third party, a situation normally actionable under law.

## SUMMARISED

Mr Dahm's report, contained within the DoC submission, was summarised for the tribunal by a DoC technician Eric Pyle.

He said there was strong evidence the Tongariro Power Development Scheme had affected the Wanganui bar and possibly altered sediment patterns in the lower estuary.

After relating Wanganui bar depths to river flows from 1960 to 1985, Mr Pyle said the data suggested river flows of at least 130 cubic metres a second were required before the bar depth increased.

Wave action alone could not produce an increase in bar depth and river flows were vital, he said.

He said it appeared the TPD had affected the estuary's flocculation — a process which occurs when freshwater fine silt and clay mix with salt water and form clots.

## SEDIMENT

These clots may settle and become sediment.

Mr Pyle said abstracting Wanganui River headwaters and reducing the freshwater flow would theoretically increase flocculation.

"Consideration of the effect of the TPD abstractions suggests these would be expected to increase the rate of mud deposition within this region — possibly quite significantly," he said.

A long-time Wanganui resident along the estuary, Charles Noble said he had watched an "idyllic" beach change into an environment with "gross" problems since the diversion of headwaters.

Mr Noble, who has lived in his Bedford Ave house for more than 30 years, said the river bank beach was once clear, with firm black sand. The water was clean and the area near Wanganui's Cobham Bridge free from odour.

But from 1972 when the waters were diverted, the situation changed.

"Flocculant in the form of mud is deposited sometimes to a depth of one foot along the whole water's edge and beach. This mud is grey/brown, slimy and offensive in smell," he said.

Fish life became less evident, even when beaches were periodically washed clear. It only took several days for the mud to deposit again.

Mr Noble said other Bedford Ave residents had also noticed changes to the beach.

"We are all in agreement that matters have worsened substantially as far as mud deposition is concerned over the past seven years. It is no longer possible for any of these people to walk along the beach because of the mud," he said.

"In my opinion there has been a gross diminution of river flow of sufficient degree to reduce to a minimum the previous flushing of the banks and edges to clear the mud which now accumulates. This flushing used to occur all of the time and independently of flood periods."

Tribunal member Neil Algar asked Mr Noble had he noticed a difference in the river level since the minimum flow regime was instated in 1983.

"It's gradually worsening year by year — and particularly in the last three or four years," Mr Noble said.

12-7-88  
W. Chron

# Growth in tourism forecast

Increased flows in the Wanganui River system could encourage growth in the region's existing adventure tourism industry, a Department of Conservation officer said yesterday.

During the minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui, Bronwyn Hunt said the river was a "considerable regional asset."

With establishment of the Whanganui National Park and the increased publicity given to Wanganui River, she predicted tourism could grow significantly and become even more important to the economic development of the region.

But although the area has "enormous potential" for an increase in adventure tourism and recreation, she said it had so far remained untapped.

One of the major problems identified in the DoC submission was the lack of diversity available to tourists in the region.

Ms Hunt said increased diversification had been unnecessarily constrained by reduced flows in the river system.

## VIABILITY

"With increased flows the Wanganui River has potential to provide diversity by attracting a greater number of visitors in summer for such activities as rafting, canoeing and angling," she said.

"In addition increased flows throughout the year would enable greater use of the Wanganui all year round, increasing the viability of operations which at present are unable to operate outside the peak summer months because of lack of water."

Development of the river's white water and jetboating potential would also provide alternative activities next to the Ruapehu ski fields when bad weather closed the fields.

"The region has an existing adventure tourism industry but growth of this industry has been hampered by a lack of diversity."

"The Whanganui National Park and the Wanganui River system could, with increased flows, provide this much needed diversity," she said.

DoC witnesses yesterday included Peter Dale, general manager of recreation for the Hillary Commission; John Ombler, district conservator for DoC's Whanganui region; Richard Heerdegen, a Massey University hydrologist; DoC officer Roger Shand; and director of the Tourism Development Division on New Zealand Tourist and Publicity in Wellington, Donald Hayman.

# WANGANUI RIVER MINIMUM FLOWS HEARING

## More water needed to restore its reputation

Before Wanganui River can regain its "Rhine of the Pacific" reputation, it needs more water and sand, a Department of Conservation witness to the hearing in Taumarunui on the river's minimum flows.

Wellington journalist and historian David Young, yesterday gave evidence to support the department's submission on the intrinsic values of the Wanganui River.

The submission maintains intrinsic values are those qualities which make up a river's special character "belonging naturally, inherent, essential."

But Mr Young told the tribunal the Tongariro Power Development Scheme has so diminished Wanganui River intrinsic values, in some cases they now constitute intrinsic liabilities.

"The water is affected in volume and quality. Banks are exposed, as are papa shelves," he said.

"Coupled with this is a change in colour."

He said with Wanganui River flowing through the newly gazetted Whanganui National Park, its intrinsic values will become increasingly important.

"We know that if the river is to regain its reputation as the 'Rhine of the Pacific' ... then it needs considerably more water and sand," he said.

"Fishes that will cleanse, revitalise and restore the river — flush out its sluggish brackish byways and enable it to once again support the full range of animal and bird life it once enjoyed."

Mr Young said he did not oppose hydro-electricity.

"But I disagree with the idea of using the Wanganui's water as a commodity — especially for a scheme that was ill-conceived and for which the benefits are less obvious than would be the benefits of returning the water."

---

From MARAMARA ELLIS  
in Taumarunui

---

He said Electricorp could not make a moral claim on the river while there were no incentives for New Zealanders to conserve power.

Asked by tribunal chairman Malcolm Conway how an increase in "possibly selfish" interests like commercial operators or recreational users would affect the river's intrinsic value, Mr Young said: "It's a question of balance."



MALCOLM CONWAY ... tribunal  
chairman

# Diversion income may reach \$30m

Diverted Wanganui River headwaters could provide Electricorp with an estimated \$30 million annually, an expert witness told the river flows hearing yesterday.

Murray Ellis, a Wellington scientist and energy analyst, said water diverted through the Tongariro Power Development Scheme could be valued in monetary terms, because of its use for generating electricity.

The water's commercial value to Electricorp is represented by the value of the electricity, minus costs of using the extra water in the nine Tokaanu-Waikato hydro electric stations, he said.

He said the costs of diverting water were negligible.

Mr Ellis, a Department of Conservation witness, said the revenues from the TPD western diversion since 1974 should have been enough



PETER SIMONS ... member of the tribunal

## Mayor to the rescue

Wanganui Mayor Chas Poynter was this week instrumental in making sure a Wanganui City Council employee was available for the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing.

On Monday the tribunal heard that a key witness scheduled to speak about the Wanganui bar and estuary, had withdrawn his services.

Instead, his report was summarised by a DoC technical officer, Eric Pyle.

Wanganui-based counsel for DoC Andrew Cameron yesterday told the *Chronicle* the withdrawal of the Hamilton scientist's verbal evidence prompted him to contact Mr Poynter.

"We were concerned on two levels," Mr Cameron said.

"We were aware that the Wanganui City Council had done some work on sedimentation in the lower estuary and the bar, and we wished to have the benefit of that evidence before the tribunal.

"We were also concerned that the city council advise the tribunal on the importance to the city of the proposed port development by the consortium."

Mr Cameron contacted the Wanganui Mayor on Sunday night.

Yesterday afternoon, a city council engineer, Colin Hovey, gave evidence at the hearing.

He supported Mr Pyle's conclusions that the Tongariro Power Development Scheme has most affected Wanganui River at Wanganui during low flows, when flows can be reduced by up to 35 percent.

He also acknowledged the Wanganui port development situation for the tribunal.

to write off the full capital cost of all diversion structures.

Ongoing administration and maintenance expenses for the works were negligible compared with the electricity generation, he said.

"Those revenues, and consequently the value of the water, are estimated to fluctuate around \$30 million annually between now and the middle 1990s, and to average \$44.7 million a year over a longer horizon," he said.

"Given that the intakes and tunnels are in existence, and that diverted water has such a high commercial value, there is need to weigh the competing claims of the Wanganui River and its lost values, against the interests of Electricorp's shareholders."

Electricity prices would not be significantly affected by the diversion issue, he said.

Western diversion derived electricity represented 2 percent of the national system.

Mr Ellis said it was "clearly unacceptable" for the Wanganui basin to be subjected to substantial environmental costs from water abstraction, while Electricorp received a free gift of highly-valuable water.

"If Electricorp is unwilling to pay for the value of diverted water, then all waters presently diverted should be returned to their natural course down the Wanganui," he said.

Electricorp witnesses will give evidence to the tribunal tomorrow and on Friday.

## Potential cut short

The Wanganui River and its tributaries have not reached their potential as national outdoor recreation and sporting resources because of Tongariro Power Development Scheme water diversions.

During the hearing a Department of Conservation witness said Wanganui River and tributaries provide excellent potential for introducing people to water sports, as well as developing white water rafting skills.

But Peter Dale, general manager of recreation for the Hillary Commission, also said the level of abstraction from the river system tributaries has been the major factor holding back the recreational use increase.

Activities like kayaking, rafting, tubing, canoeing and fishing of most

tributaries are only possible during flood conditions, he said.

Since the Western Division construction was completed in the early 1970s, the central plateau area has become a major focus for New Zealand outdoor adventure.

"The rivers, mountains and bush of this region have become synonymous with outdoor adventure. Both the participation level and value placed on these resources is immeasurably higher than at the stage when the scheme was commenced," he said.

"It is unfortunate that the image of the Wanganui River is so poor. So many river users say after the finish of their expedition, 'I loved the scenery, but the river itself, forget it'."

"I don't know of another river in New

Zealand where people are discouraged from drinking the water on which they are involved in recreation."

DoC witness, director of New Zealand Tourist and Publicity tourism development division in Wellington, Donald Hayman, also said there is potential for growth in tourism operations on the river.

"The Wanganui River is a major tourism resource of national significance," he said.

"The degree to which the Wanganui region realises its potential will depend in part on how the river is managed. If visitors have a bad experience of the Wanganui River either through insufficient flow levels or poor water quality, the tourist potential of the region and park will undoubtedly suffer."

Reducing the diversion of Wanganui River headwaters would improve the river's water quality, according to scientist Robert Davies-Colley.

The Hamilton Water Quality Centre scientist gave evidence for the Department of Conservation in the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui yesterday.

Dr Davies-Colley said an investigation into Wanganui River water revealed the diversion of headwater streams to the Tongariro Power Development Scheme has had a "significant, definable impact" on visual water clarity.

Wanganui headwaters have higher visual qualities than other waters in the Wanganui system but the Wanganui River and tributaries downstream of Taumarunui are frequently muddy and yellow-coloured, he said.

Headwaters diverted to the TPD are clear and characterised by blue-green hues.

Dr Davies-Colley said the reduction in water clarity means the river is suitable for recreation for a smaller proportion of the year.

DoC witness Theo Stephens told the tribunal he had studied relationships between the river flow regime and aquatic life in the upper Wanganui and its tributaries.

Conclusions drawn from his investigations showed diversions have had considerable impact on aquatic life.

Upstream of Piraka he noted decreased trout numbers, diminished value to anglers and a smaller area suitable as habitats for aquatic life. Periphyton, a matrix which includes algae, bacteria and fungi and is often the main food source for other aquatic

communities, had increased. However, there were fewer species and lower densities of aquatic insects, particularly those which graze periphyton and provide food for blue duck, trout and eels.

Massey University scientist Ian Henderson gave evidence on a nationally threatened endemic species, the blue duck.

Blue duck diet consists mostly of aquatic insect larvae.

The DoC submission stated however that these insects have been severely depleted in regulated rivers of the upper Wanganui catchment.

"The food supply appears to be insufficient for the long-term survival of blue duck in these regulated rivers," the submission said.

"Changes to the flow regime that provide an

## Scientist's water evidence

increased and more natural flow rate would be beneficial to blue duck survival."

## 'Practical' decisions

Tribunal chairman Malcolm Conway yesterday told the Department of Conservation that "practical" decisions would be made on the Wanganui River flows issue.

The department yesterday finished its verbal submissions.

Environmental and recreational groups will today make submissions.

Tomorrow Electricorp will begin its two-day case, after which the tribunal will adjourn until July 30. It will reconvene at Taumarunui's Ngapuwaihi Marae for further Maori input.

# Request for return of full flow

14-7-88  
W. Chon

By MARAMA ELLIS

**Australasia's largest conservation organisation yesterday called for the return of the full Wanganui River flow.**

In a 75-minute verbal submission to the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society stated returning the full flow seemed an "inescapable" conclusion.

Keith Chapple, a national councillor, for the society, said the essential issue under examination was not the use of the water, but its abstraction.

"If the amount of water taken were an equitable percentage it is unlikely this tribunal would have been constituted," he said.

## Natural flow

"But it is not an equitable percentage. Virtually all available water is taken and re-directed into another catchment — thus breaking a natural law."

The society, which has a membership of about 52,000, said in its submissions it considered the river flows regime to be of national importance.

Mr Chapple stressed two river-related issues particularly concern the society — an endangered species, the whio or blue duck, and the river's intrinsic values.

"The whio identifies with a specific habitat. It has evolved in mountain streams — its special breeding and feeding habits cannot be transferred to an alien environment," Mr Chapple said.

## Groups give views

The Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal yesterday received submissions from four recreational groups.

These were the Palmerston North Canoe Club, the Ruahine White Water Club, Plateau Guides Ltd — National Park, and the New Zealand Professional Rafting Association.

Electricorp will respond to critics of the Tongariro power development scheme today and tomorrow.

"Taking the water from a mountain stream kills the whio as surely as if it had been shot."

Whio are present in the upper Wanganui River and its tributaries, including some reaches modified by water abstraction.

The Manganui-a-te-ao, a river unmodified by hydro-electric development, supports the highest recorded whio population density in the North Island.

Mr Chapple said although whio occur in isolated colonies over a wide area, the geographic spread was one of the classic symptoms of a declining species.

He accepted increased river flows may increase tourism and recreational interests along the river system, which could intrude on the whio habitat.

But he said the society would try to address the conflict of interest in a management plan.

## Intrinsic values

Senior Massey University lecturer in planning and law Peter Horsley said there was a compelling need for Wanganui River intrinsic values to be recognised.

If the natural flow was returned, fishing, watersports, spirituality, water quality, recreation, history, cultural heritage, wildlife and scenic regional development would be improved.

He also said recognising intrinsic values showed how scientific and philosophical factors could meet Maori concerns.

"Intrinsic values are necessary to ensure sustainability, presentation of options, protecting the needs of future generations and satisfying Maori concerns," Mr Horsley said.

Mr Chapple told the tribunal, Forest and Bird endorsed Electricorp's view of hydro power being one of the more efficient and environmentally acceptable forms of electricity generation.

But he said Forest and Bird did not agree with Electricorp's assertion that because the diverted waters represent only 8 percent of the water, volume at Wanganui, it was "of no great moment."

"One might just as well say that a human being can do without a heart because it only weighs a few ounces," he said.

# EMOTIONAL

# TIES STRESSED

4-7-88  
"Logic of the heart" was yesterday presented to the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui.

Speaking on the Taumarunui District Alliance submission, Owahango's Tom Wells asked the four-member tribunal to recognise emotional values attached to Wanganui River.

The alliance submission amalgamated input from nearly 1200 Taumarunui residents, the Wanganui River Flows Coalition, Mr Wells and the Friends of Rivers at Kakahi Society.

Mr Wells said the combined submissions showed emotional ties between the river and local people.

He stressed the alliance views corresponded with those outlined to the tribunal last Friday by Wanganui River kaumatua.

"There is a logic of the heart — we heard it expressed on Friday — that can draw from us a

reverence we shall not bestow upon the marketplace," he said.

"It's language that is not perhaps the language most appropriate to a court or a tribunal. But it is the only language that will bond together the ancient and the latterday Tangata Whenua of New Zealand."

"It is the only language that knows how to treasure what we most treasure."

The alliance submitted its requirements would be met if all diversions of the Wanganui River headwaters stopped.

"Unlike many other engineering projects in New Zealand, the nature of the diversions and the headworks are such that simple modifications make it practical to redress the position and restore a natural flow regime to the Wanganui River," it said.

The tribunal had to determine the need for water for electricity generation balanced against the needs of the local and regional communities.

Mr Wells told the tri-

bunal that Taumarunui residents considered the region's adventure tourism development depended on the potential of its rivers.

"The abstraction of more than 95 percent of the headwaters to the western diversion questions the right of a river to exist for any other purpose than to serve as a source of hydro power," he said.

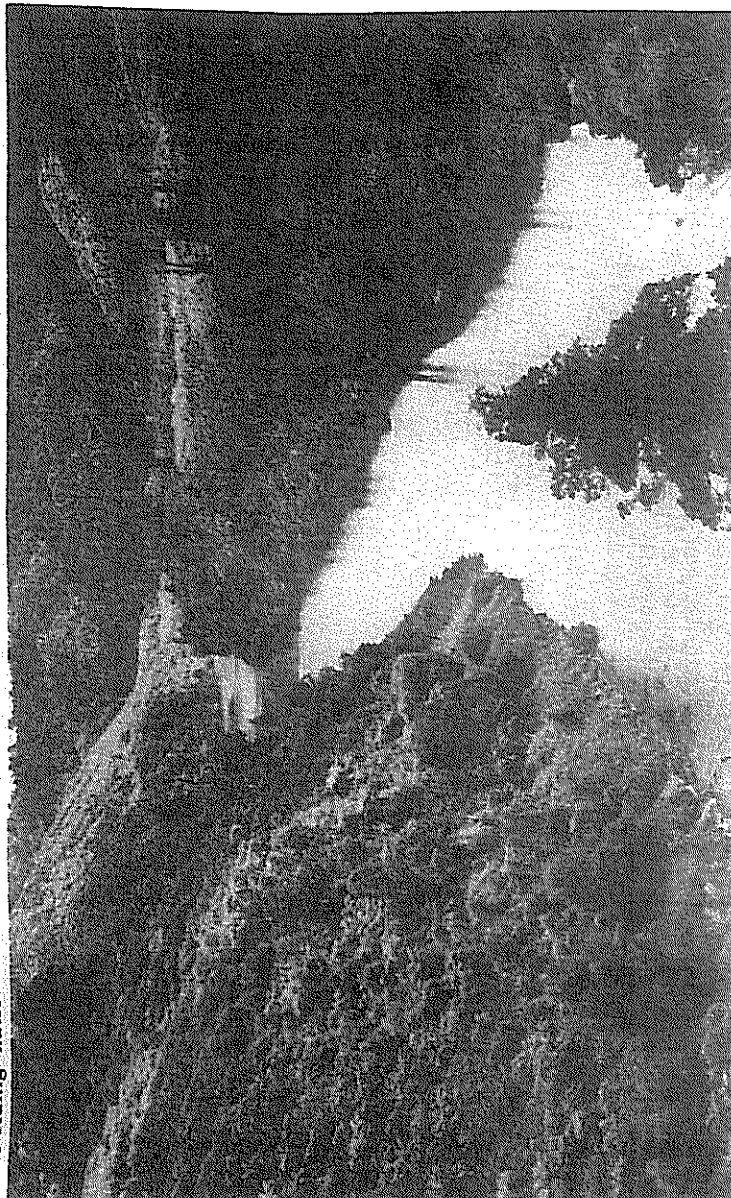
Describing the diversion as "catastrophic," the alliance submission said intangible natural water values had to be recognised when rights were sought for abstraction and other uses.

And it added if water had to be taken for hydro generation, a "proper commercial return" should be obtained for the region.

"The alliance suggests that water taken for inter-catchment transfer and use outside the natural catchment should be paid for at a rate similar to alternative fuels."

Ian Cowper, counsel for the alliance, yesterday said Wanganui River

waters should first be used for the benefit of catchment residents. "Removal of the water from the catchment must only be for purposes of over-riding national benefit, and should therefore only occur in circumstances which provide compensation for the loss to the people affected," he said. Witnesses for the alliance included Margie Snow, promotions officer for the Taumarunui Country Regional Development and District Promotion Association, Owahango representative Doug Gillespie.



A tranquil view of the Wanganui River.

## WANGANUI RIVER MINIMUM FLOWS HEARING

### TRIBUNAL TOLD:

# No surplus of hydro generating capacity in North Island

Surplus hydro generating capacity does not exist in the North Island, the Wanganui River flows tribunal heard in Taumarunui yesterday.

Electricity Corporation of NZ Ltd yesterday began its two-day presentation of Wanganui River's minimum flows regime, and its effect on Tongariro power development's western diversion.

The tribunal was told the continued effectiveness of the western diversion was extremely significant for Electricorp's total operation.

"There is no surplus of hydro generating capacity in the

North Island," David Frow, general manager of production for Electricorp, said.

"As the present Cook Strait transmission link is fully committed, perceived surpluses cannot be transferred from the South Island to make up any shortfall in the North Island hydro generation scheme.

Reductions in North Island hydro generating capacity must be made up from thermal

stations — operations expensive to run.

Tribunal chairman Malcolm Conway asked Mr Frow when the Cook Strait cable would allow surplus South Island hydro generating capacity to augment the North Island's capacity.

"They are major investment decisions which are every bit as expensive and important as building a major new power station," Mr Frow said.

"Before the end of the year the corporation will need to decide whether to go ahead with the proposal. If it does the scheme will be in operation in 1992.

With the Clyde power station due to be commissioned in 1990, the Cook Strait cable would carry the additional South Island surplus.

Electricorp corporate development manager Keith Turney estimated the New Zealand surplus was between 10 percent and 15 percent.

He predicted this surplus would carry through to the middle or late 1990s.

15-7-88  
J. Chan

# Electricorp wants to hear Maori views

Electricorp's consultation with Maori people over the diversion of Wanganui River headwaters was yesterday highlighted by a river flows tribunal member.

Electricorp general manager of production David Frow, told the tribunal in Taumarunui the corporation did not want to own the Wanganui River bed or its water.

It was only interested in using the water.

He added Electricorp wanted to listen in greater detail to Maori views.

But when tribunal member Wira Gardiner asked Mr Frow if the corporation had consulted with Maori tribes before the hearing he said "events leading up to the hearing have made it extremely difficult for us."

Mr Gardiner said the issue of Maori spiritual values was assuming more and more importance. He said the Electricorp witness list did not include an expert to speak on Maori values.

He asked how the corporation viewed diverting water from

us. We view with considerable importance our application for water rights within the next five years. We are conscious there has been insufficient consultation with Maori people in the past."

Mr Frow described Maori values as "valid" and said the corporation hoped to speak to Wanganui tribes before the water right hearing.

But Martin Dawson, counsel for the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, said any delay over dealing with the river's spiritual and cultural issues would be intolerable.

Mr Frow said Maori issues were difficult to resolve.

"We would not see that it is a matter that can be rushed," he said. "It should be looked at extremely thoroughly."

He said Electricorp managerial staff hoped to meet with Maori representatives.

Corporation staff will also visit Taumarunui's Ngapuwaiwaha Marae when the tribunal re-convenes on July 30.

Mr Frow said the corporation would keep an open mind during any meetings with Maori tribes.

Mr Gardiner also questioned the accuracy of evidence given by Electricorp area manager for the Tokaanu hydro area Leonard Malcolm.

Mr Malcolm stated that when the Tongariro power development scheme was proposed, meetings were held with groups, including the Tūwharetoa Trust.

He said from the time the TPD was first planned, besides meeting Maori concerns, the scheme gave high priority to preserving archaeological sites, scenic values, native fauna and flora and recreational fisheries.

Mr Gardiner said if the evidence was to be used for historical purposes, it should be noted only some Maori concerns were met.

"I don't notice any consultation with Wanganui tribes," he said.

He asked Mr Malcolm to identify which western diversion sites affected by construction activities were preserved or restored by Electricorp.

Mr Malcolm said most restoration work had been undertaken on the eastern diversion.



WIRA GARDINER ... Maori spiritual values assuming more importance.

Wanganui tribal areas into another region — the Waikato.

"We are endeavouring to leave sufficient water in the Wanganui," Mr Frow said.

"We are a new corporation and are working in a situation that has been historically left to

15-7-88  
W. Chon

# Water loss to Tongariro could mean dearer power

By MARAMA ELLIS

**Reducing the diversion of Wanganui River headwaters to the Tongariro power development scheme would represent a cost ultimately shouldered by New Zealand.**

Keith Turner, Electricorp's corporate development manager, yesterday told the Wanganui River flows tribunal in Taumarunui that the Tongariro western diversion contributed significantly to supplying electricity at the lowest possible cost.

The initial impact of losing water from the diversion would be to increase the amount of fuel burned at thermal power stations.

## New projects

Dr Turner said in the longer term the loss of western diversion water would result in the earlier construction of new schemes.

He said projects to replace western diversion energy would cost between \$250 million and \$550 million.

Total loss of western diversion water would cost between \$10 million and \$33 million every year, Dr Turner said.

## Detrimental

He submitted that because the corporation is owned by the Crown, any loss of value from its assets would be to the detriment of the whole nation.

"Loss to the corporation of the western diversion water will not only represent a direct waste of capital expenditure used to build it, but will also eliminate any potential benefits from that project in the future," Dr Turner said.

He said that using resources efficiently would mean an overall gain for the Crown, which would ultimately affect the

interests of New Zealanders.

"We would strongly argue therefore, that the corporation's right to use the water be retained."

And while an annual increase in fuel costs to compensate for water losses would be "relatively small," Dr Turner said the corporation was not prepared to pass on these costs directly to the consumer.

"The corporation is not a cost plus industry," he said.

"It does not believe in using its dominant position to pass on costs indiscriminately and without proper regard to its customers' interests."

But he said if the diversion of water was not allowed to continue, a "substantial and direct economic cost" would be incurred by the corporation, its shareholders and its consumers.

## GENERAL

# River health risks outlined

Human sewage input into the Wanganui River is probably the main cause of health problems among river users, a Dunedin microbiologist said yesterday.

Electricorp witness Michael Patrick, who appeared at yesterday's Wanganui River minimum flows hearing, gave evidence on public health related water quality problems in the river.

Dr Patrick referred to 14 river flows submissions which specifically mentioned water quality problems some river users have encountered.

The submissions said pollution and sewage in the river created health risks and were offensive.

Wanganui River's appearance and recreational potential would improve if the water quality was upgraded.

Major sources of sewage effluent to the river occur at Taumarunui and Wanganui.

Dr Patrick said the river generally reflected the nature of the catchment development — tributaries draining undeveloped areas showing low faecal coliform counts, with those draining highly developed areas often recording high numbers of bacteria.

Sewage effluent from Taumarunui and Wanganui increased markedly the numbers of faecal coliform bacteria in the river, he said.

This also meant an increased risk of health problems to river users. In terms of the faecal coliform bacteria count, Wanganui River water quality was generally good, Dr Patrick said.

However, major increases in the bacteria numbers occurred after rainfall in developed catchments, and also below the Taumarunui and Wanganui sewage discharges, he said.

"The diversion of water from the headwaters of the Wanganui River and its tributaries does not affect to any significant degree the magnitude of the problems at either Taumarunui or Wanganui," he said.

"Retention or maintenance of natural flows would not solve the real or perceived pollution problems."

Dr Patrick said until the sewage treatment and disposal at both Wanganui and Taumarunui was upgraded the water quality of Wanganui River could not be considered consistently safe for contact recreation users.

He urgently recommended that sewage treatment and disposal systems at both Wanganui, and particularly Taumarunui, be upgraded. This included investigating the possibility of land disposal treatment for Taumarunui.

# WANGANUI RIVER MINIMUM FLOWS HEARING

W. Chon.

## Surprised by number of adverse comments

The multitude of negative comments on the Tongariro power development's western diversion has surprised a senior Electricorp Hydro Group official Giuseppe Grilli.

During yesterday's Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui, Dr Grilli said he

had not been aware of the public's concerns.

In 1983 the Electricity Division became subject to the Wanganui River minimum flow regime.

"At that time, the Electricity Division considered a minimum regime to be unnecessary, as there had been little negative public comment on the operation of the western division," he said.

"I have been surprised at the number of adverse comments which have arisen recently with respect to this operation.

"From the records on our files at Hamilton and from my personal knowledge, there has been no history of public outcry of this nature."

Dr Grilli, Electricorp's North Island Hydro Group manager, stated the corporation was sensitive to community views and "expressions of concern."

He said the hydro group funded environmental studies and undertook scientific projects.

Funding had been made available for fish studies, weed clearances, and pollution studies.

"It is my policy that staff in the North Island Hydro Group are educated to appreciate the environmental implications of their work," Dr Grilli said.

## Electricorp witnesses

A total of 15 Electricorp witnesses gave evidence at the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing in Taumarunui this week.

The list included Maurice Rodgers, Electricorp's area operations manager for the Tokaanu Area of the North Island Hydro Group; Michael Turner, production control manager for Electricorp; Graham Macky, a Christchurch scientist; hydrologist Stephen Thompson and environmental scientist Clive Howard-Williams.

An environmental scientist, Ronald Heath, also spoke on evidence prepared by his colleague, Warwick Vincent.

## Flow change costs

Altering western diversion structures to cater for a different flow regime would be more difficult than building new structures, Hamilton engineer Neil McGregor said yesterday.

Mr McGregor, an Electricorp North Island Hydro Group engineer was yesterday asked to answer specific engineering questions from the Wanganui River flows tribunal.

He was asked the costs and practicalities involved with modifying western diversion structures to allow for differing flow regimes.

Mr McGregor quoted several options, and said they would cost millions of dollars.

Changing water control gate structures for a modified flow could cost as much as \$20 million, he estimated.

Removing all diversion structures and building a dam could cost \$100 million.

He said it would probably take about two years for the \$100 million option to be designed and implemented.

Tribunal member Peter Simons described Mr McGregor's estimations as "rather frightening".

# Not all river ventures adversely affected

An Auckland tourism planner yesterday stated the reduced Wanganui River water levels had not adversely affected all commercial river users.

During the Wanganui River minimum flows hearing, the four-member tribunal was this week told the regime had a detrimental effects on commercial river operators.

But tourism planner Michael Robbins yesterday said an analysis of the river's tourism

industry showed not all ventures had been adversely affected by the regime.

One operator, Mr Robbins said, had suggested his jetboat venture would not benefit by increase river flows.

"A large number of existing tourism operators using the river have indicated their operations and future expansion options are adversely affected by current low flow levels, navigation problems and pollution," he said.

"Conversely, there are a number of commercial operators using the river who are not affected by the low flow levels."

Mr Robbins said the Department of Conservation submission had only recorded com-

ments from operators affected by the low flow levels, "rather than providing the balance of opinions."

He said more than half the 78,270 visitor days spent on the river in 1986/1987 were accounted for by operators who have indicated present flow levels did not hinder their operations.

He described tourism growth since 1972, the year the Tongariro western diversion began operating, as "considerable" in spite of existing low water levels.

He said there was an urgent need to define the carrying capacity for the Wanganui River system to more fully realise the eventual tourism development potential.

## Need to clean up river

The Wanganui River's pollution levels diminished its appeal to overseas tourists, an Auckland tourism planner said in Taumarunui yesterday.

The Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal also heard pollution probably affected the river's recreational appeal to New Zealand tourists.

Michael Robbins, an Electricorp witness, said a polluted river like the Wanganui was contrary to the quality product New Zealand should be marketing visitors.

From a preliminary tourism assessment, he said the river's pollution appeared to be an equally important issue compared with low flows.

"There is an obvious need to clean up the river to ensure that the region can fully capitalise on the Wanganui River as a major tourism resource," Mr Robbins said.

15 - 7 - 88  
W. Chan

# Changing river flow could harm Taupo tourism potential

**Tourism potential in Taupo may suffer if diversion of Wanganui River headwaters does not continue.**

Water abstracted by the Tongariro power development's western diversion flows into Lake Taupo and Waikato River.

A senior tourism planner with an Auckland consultancy firm Michael Robbins, yesterday told the Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal in Taumarunui it should consider the flows regime effects on both the Wanganui and Taupo tourism industries.

"A change in the water regime on the Wanganui River would affect the water resource on the Taupo side," he said.

"This is because a decrease in water diversion from the Wanganui River would have a corresponding adverse effect on Lake Otamangakau, Lake Rotoaira, possibly Lake Taupo and the Waikato River, including Huka Falls."

He said it was critical when analysing the scale of the tourism industry reliant on the Wanganui River to understand the Taupo industry based on the water resource.

Tourism and recreation uses around Taupo were similar to those in the Wanganui area, he said.

These included fishing, jet-boating, river rafting, canoeing, kayaking, recreational boating and scenic viewing.

Mr Robbins said a preliminary analysis between the

Taupo and Tongariro regions and the Wanganui region showed a significantly larger tourism industry had developed from water resources along the Tongariro and Waikato rivers, and Lake Taupo.

He said his study showed the Tongariro United Council region had more visiting tourists than its Wanganui counterpart.

"There is an existing tourism industry in the Taupo and Waikato areas based on the increased flows in the Taupo-Waikato system that are diverted from the Wanganui," he said.

"When using the scale of the existing and potential tourist industries as an argument for a change in resource allocation, it is essential to recognise and define the size of the industry that would be affected."

Tribunal member Wira Gardiner commented that while the Taupo district may have gained tourism opportunities through diverted waters, it was at a direct opportunity cost to the Wanganui region.

15-7-88

W Chron.

HEARING TOLD:

# Many river claims should go to Govt

Wanganui River tribal representatives have been told many of the claims made during the Wanganui River flows hearing should be addressed to the Government.

Counsel for Electricorp Royden Somerville said during the final day of the hearing on Saturday that the corporation was not the Crown, and the river flows tribunal was not the Waitangi Tribunal.

"I believe many of the matters raised would make a strong case to the Crown," he told more than 70 people assembled at Taumarunui's Ngapuwaiwaha Marae.

"But I am not in a position as counsel for my client to undertake to make certain promises on behalf of the Crown. And I do

not believe this tribunal is either."

On the first day of the hearing the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board submitted that the full flow of the Wanganui River be returned.

---

## More reports on hearing: P5

---

The board's statement that Wanganui waters provided a spiritual and physical cleansing were supported by tribal kaumatua, who said the river maintained and retained spiritual and cultural elements bonding Wanganui tribes.

Mr Somerville said when Electricorp began presenting its evidence to the flows tribunal on July 14, it said it would not talk about the importance of the Wanganui River to the Maori people.

"That would be discourteous to the kaumatua," he said.

However, he said Electricorp agreed with the evidence given by Maori people concerning the Maori link with Wanganui.

It also accepted statements about Maori customs, values and mana which relate to the river.

"What the corporation cannot accept is that the people of the Wanganui have had their mana lost or diminished in the eyes of other Maori people," he said. "In our view, their standing is one of considerable respect."

Mr Somerville told the tribunal his full summation, including legal implications, would be sent to members later this week.

The marae hearing, reconvened two weeks after six days of evidence at the Taumarunui District Court, was the last opportunity for oral submissions.

Although river tribes presented submissions at the court hearing, the marae venue was chosen for the final day to allow the Maori perspective to be told in a Maori environment.

Representatives of each of the Wanganui sub-tribes were at the hearing.

Tribunal chairman Malcolm Conway said evidence heard on the marae was "probably the most illuminating" as far as the tribunal was concerned.

"You have given us much food for thought," he said.

## Hearing is adjourned

Although most Wanganui River flows submissions have been heard by the tribunal, the hearing has not yet finished.

Yesterday at 3pm, after six days of highly involved evidence relating to Wanganui River headwaters and the Tongariro Power Development Scheme's western diversion, the hearing was adjourned.

Tribunal chairman Malcolm Conway said it would be reconvened at Taumarunui's Ngapuwaiwaha Marae on July 30.

Wanganui River tribal kaumatua would be given an opportunity to explain their perception of the river.

Mr Conway said final addresses from lawyers representing the main submissions would be heard at the marae.

Those who wanted to attend the marae hearing should assemble outside Ngapuwaiwaha gates at 9.30am, he said.

Mr Conway thanked the many witnesses who gave evidence throughout the six-day hearing.

# Volumes of evidence

It might well take more than one barrow to transport the whole of the evidence given as submissions before the tribunal hearing on our river and the volume of its flow.

At times available seating in the Taumarunui Courthouse barely sufficed to seat the active participants plus keenly attentive members of the public from throughout our river region.

From the whole of this evidence, presented so ably by our media, it can scarcely be doubted that a holistic decision will be reached. This will be one based on the whole of the submissions made, whether on the whole course of our river from the mountains to the sea, or on the whole ramifications of the TPD and the ultimate travels of the abstracted water.

Many would agree that this hearing has been the most important turning point for this river city and river region for the past 50, 100, or 150 years.

Quite fortuitously, but most unfortunately, this tribunal hearing happens to coincide with, and to have a most important bearing upon, some recent dramatic events in the long saga of our river-mouth harbour. It was most reassuring to note that the tribunal was "au fait" with the phenomena or "littoral drift" of our "coastal conveyor belt" of sand.

We all know that the net littoral drift is such that sand builds up against our North Mole, whereas the beaches to the south of our South Mole may stand in some need of what may be called "nourishment" by additional sand.

Since a hard-working and courageous Mrs Pam Williams and a consortium are working on such modern and effective

The Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal sifted through a mountain of evidence during a week-long hearing at Taumarunui. One interested spectator was long-time conservationist JOHN R.J. MOORE, of Wanganui. In this article he discusses the hearing and links river flow with the problems at Port Castletiff.

concepts as that of a sand by-pass system, we should relax our concerns on possible inroads from the sea toward our seaside airport. An effective sand by-pass arrangement will nourish these beach fronts to the south of our moles.

**Evidence**

Some useful evidence was put forward on the contribution made by river-flow to the total volume of estuary waters ("tidal prism") which flows out between the moles during the ebbing of every high tide. At an adequate velocity this outward velocity can be effective in sweeping some quantity of bottom sediment along the shipping channel and out to sea.

As was commented on this is a complex matter, less easy to explain in words of one syllable than the "carving" out of a great river valley by centuries of river-flow, through rather soft geological formations. It is somewhat facile to suggest however, that abstractions of river flow have no bearing upon the volume and velocities and effects of this final to and fro tidal flow. Whether such a loss in volume of flow is 10 percent or 30 percent of total flow it is still far from being negligible or insignificant, because we are dealing with the same large and powerful flow which we can see pouring irresistibly down the Wairehu Capal.

It would be needless to labour this point apart from its critical importance to any shoreline

turning basin, and that might help our public to conceive of it.

**Stabilise**

It may not be widely appreciated that our "twin moles" (which in the USA might be called "jetty pairs") not only aim to create the best velocities for such channel clearance, but also stabilise the route by which our river flows to the sea.

We have had our worrying periods in the past when our river has sought to create a new channel across our south spit, but it must be realised that this is part and parcel of the natural history of natural unstable conditions.

Thus I have seen how such a gap may be made by flood waters in the unstabilised south spit of the Okuru Estuary in South Westland. The channel used by fishing boats there has no manmade moles.

Such a breach might well cause anxiety to the local fishermen, who find that the lay-out of this complex estuary undergoes constant minor changes. But the interesting thing is that such a breach there can "heal" itself as a result of quite natural sand "conveyor belt" processes.

One last remark may help in the understanding of Willard Bascom's remark that if such moles are not designed to be placed at the most suitable distance apart, "shoreline engineers can look forward to years of dredging to keep open a channel that could be maintained by natural forces".

The public will be able to see moles twice as far apart as they are now, we should be very lucky to secure even half the channel depth we enjoy at present.

**Compensation**

Given our national financial impoverishment, it could be unrealistic to expect any adequate compensation for the "holistic" losses suffered by this whole river and river-region from the unrealistic abstractions of the past.

But as so many submissions stressed, restore the regional asset of natural water flows, and at least the region will have been given the tools to do the jobs. Jobs such as the restoration of navigability, the creation of a world-ranking national park, the triumph of a viable and self-supporting harbour.

It is not too late for our city council to throw its full weight behind the case for full and immediate restitution of natural flow to our priceless and historic river. This is the best way to express our thanks to those many persons or organisations who laboured mightily over four long days to present this case in detail to a well-qualified tribunal.

In more than one respect, we can see that speed is the essence of the contract.

Many of those who heard the full evidence over the six-day period would concede that an interminable delay of years to produce a "river management plan" would not be the answer

to all these lively concerns. It could well be that old sad story of too little and too late.

In this article there is no intention to go beyond fair comment upon the mass of detail which has been so well covered by our media. An unqualified apology is offered to any parties who feel that these remarks go beyond fair comment. Especially so since further submissions are to be made on the same marae in Taumarunui where an historic hui ratified the general concept of a new national park and a Whanganui River Maori Trust Board.

**Keystone**

We may well stand upon the threshold of a brighter future and of a harmonious advance in partnership between all of our regional peoples. This has been the keystone of our city and regional history.

The light of reason shines upon the efforts of our city authorities and harbour consortium in the recreation of a viable harbour and distribution centre. Great vision is shown in the decision by Winstone's to favour such a future.

Aware, as we all are, of the great joint forest project between the Tuwharetoa people and what was the New Zealand Forest Service, we must at least consider it a possibility that our future may include some handling of the future output of this great forest project. This might be through a rail-head at National Park or otherwise.

CHRONICLE journalist MARAMA ELLIS reports from the final day of the Wanganui River Flows Tribunal hearing in Taumarunui on Saturday.

# Decision for tribunal clear — Doc

The Wanganui River Flows Tribunal should have few difficulties deciding to reinstate Wanganui's natural river flow, according to Andrew Cameron, counsel for the Department of Conservation.

On Saturday, Mr Cameron summed up the department's submission for the tribunal members.

He said the relevant legislation provided clear directions for the decision which must be made by the tribunal.

"When properly directed, you, as decision-makers, will have little difficulty in acceding to the Department of Conservation's request that waters currently taken through the western diversion be returned to the rivers down which it used to flow," he said.

Restoring Wanganui's mana and mauri demanded as much attention as the needs of the community for conservation,

recreation and water resource uses. "When we opened the Department of Conservation's presentation of oral submissions, we said this inquiry was not about whether Electricorp's existing right to divert the waters of the Wanganui catchment for hydro generation should be affirmed but rather what, in the public interest, is the lowest allowable flow permissible to safeguard conservation and the best use of water," he told tribunal members.

Mr Cameron stressed "clear statutory directions" guiding the tribunal should allow it to make its decision.

He said Wanganui headwaters were abstracted at a time when New Zealanders were blind to water resource limitations.

"We failed to give due weight then to the cultural and recreational values of water," he said. "If the proposal to build the Tongariro Power Scheme was being considered within the framework of the Water and Soil Conservation Act as it now stands, there is little doubt the Western Diversion would never have been approved."

He said submissions heard in Taumarunui during recent weeks showed the community was not only concerned about the river's mana and life-force. It was also concerned by its colour, clarity, navigability, tourist potential, traditional, recreational fisheries, and the restoration of its natural range and diversity of flow.

In 1983, the Wanganui River minimum flow regime was implemented for five years.

Mr Cameron said any flow regime adopted for the river should also be for five years.

Other summarised submissions included the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and the Wanganui River Maori Trust Board.

The Wanganui River Flows Tribunal reconvened at Ngapuwaiwaha Marae on Saturday for five hours of verbal submissions.

Wanganui River Maori tribe kaumatua and representatives spoke about the river's history. Wanganui's importance as a source of food and spirituality was also emphasised.

## Hearing lasts five hours

The Wanganui River Flows Tribunal reconvened at Ngapuwaiwaha Marae on Saturday for five hours of verbal submissions.

Wanganui River Maori tribe kaumatua and representatives spoke about the river's history. Wanganui's importance as a source of food and spirituality was also emphasised.

Closing submissions were made for the Taumarunui District Alliance, a group representing about 25 percent of the Taumarunui population, the Wanganui River Flows Coalition and Friends of Rivers at Kakahi Society.

Other summarised submissions included the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and the Wanganui River Maori Trust Board.

# Submissions 'deficient' in obtaining Maori viewpoint

Pakeha agencies attempting to understand the Maori perspective," he said.

## TREASURED

Dr Habib, who was asked to give evidence by the Wanganui River Maori Trust Board, said the Wanganui River was a Maori and a national taonga — a treasured and precious possession.

He believed the Maori view of the water diversin was not whether native fish species had been reduced, the river's former pristine water qualities had been detrimentally affected, or whether flow regimes should be introduced.

"These are all Pakeha approaches to the problem," he said. "In the Maori view, the issue is whether there should be a diversion at all. The diversion of the headwaters of the Wanganui is an affront."

"The interference with the flow causes up an image of a body without a head, or, in a Maori sense, of the Wanganui tribes without the source of their mana."

Reduced downstream flows, depleted of present-day individuals, whanau,

fish populations, increased signs of pollution and the loss of the river's intrinsic beauty were only manifestations of a greater illness — the loss of the tribal mana, he said.

Dr Habib said "the Maori world encompassed the realms of the physical, metaphysical and the dead."

## PICTURE

This combination presented a picture which constituted the ancient world of the Maori and the present-day view of the traditional Maori.

"Connections between individuals or the tribe and the river is not just those of belonging, but also of personal and tribal identity, blood and genealogy and spirit," he said.

"This means that a 'hurt' to the river and its environs, or to the fisheries in the river, is felt personally by the traditional Maori — not only as a hurt to the physical being but as a slight to the emotions, the prestige and the tribal mana."

"The affront is felt not only on the part of present-day individuals, whanau,

hapu, and iwi, but also on behalf of the Rangitira, Arikiri, Tipuna and the gods." "The water which moves in the river and its tributaries is not just water but also the blood of the ancestors; the water's murmur is the voice Tipuna. All things are connected."

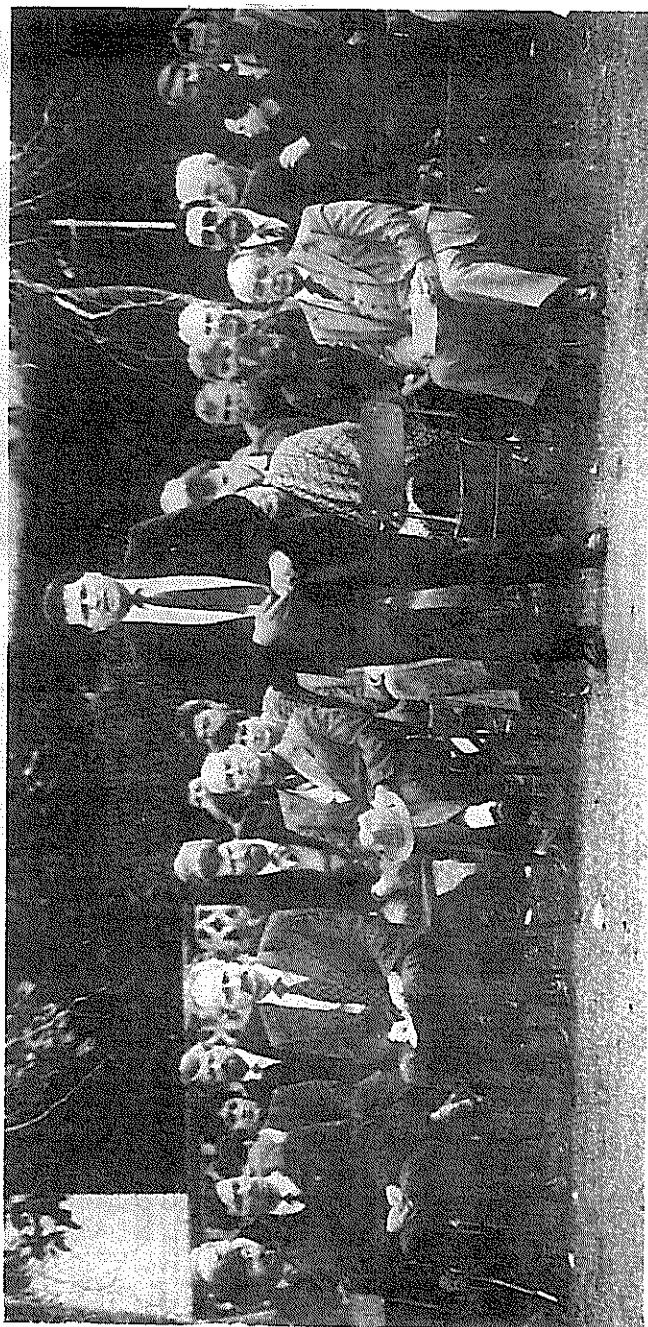
## PUBLIC INTEREST

After reviewing Electricorp's submission, Dr Habib said it seemed to be invoking "the old fallback position" — one of public interest.

He conceded Doc tried to come to terms with traditional Maori fishing concepts and the holistic Maori perspective in its submission.

"The material presented in my submission on these matters should enhance this understanding. The essence of the traditional Maori world is holistic, not piecemeal," he said.

"In the implementation of this diversion of the Wanganui, there has been a major affront to the mana of the people — one which can really only be righted by the restoration of the river's natural flow."



Wanganui River Flows Tribunal member Wira Gardiner, of Ngati-awa, speaking at the Ngapuwaiwaha Marae powhiri in Taumarunui on Saturday. Pictured in the front row (from left) are John Ombler, the Department of Conservation's Whanganui regional district conservator, Giuseppe Grilli, North Island hydro group manager for Electricorp, tribunal members Peter Simons and Neil Algar (obscured) and chairman Malcolm Conway.

!-8-88  
C. Cameron

1-8-88

W. Chon

# Kaumatua question need for argument

Wanganui River kaumatua have questioned the need to make submissions to the river flows tribunal, Archie Taiaroa, chairman of the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, said on Saturday.

Mr Taiaroa told the four-member tribunal that elders had expressed concern about having to make submissions on a river which belongs to Maori people, and has always been part of Maori life.

"Why should we spend money on legal counsel and gathering the people just to try to prove our case?" he said.

"Why should we be making submissions, both oral and written, to explain before groups

the very sensitive nature of spirituality as we see it?"

Mr Taiaroa said that in the past all Maori submissions relating to the Wanganui River had fallen on deaf ears.

"Despite the tabulated and recorded representations and objections, there has not been an attempt to enter into any meaningful consultation, negotiations or discussion by any of the Government or statutory authorities given some sort of control over the resources of the Wanganui River."

He said the Maori believes natural resources should benefit everyone. Managing such resources for future genera-

tions should not be solely for commercial operations.

"From the lack of recognition of the Maori in conservation and resource management areas by Government, statutory and ad hoc authorities, it would appear that Maori people know nothing about managing of natural resources," he said.

Mr Taiaroa acknowledged that while the river's water quality, fishing and recreational values may have been affected by sewage discharges, run-offs from farmland and chemical spraying, clearing native bush from the river banks, and metal extraction, the single biggest factor was the diversion of "crystal clear, unpolluted mountain water."

## Fearful of losing part of culture

Future generations of Wanganui River Maori people stand to lose an inherent part of their culture if diverted river headwaters are not returned.

The Wanganui River Flows Tribunal, which reconvened at Taumarunui's Ngapuwaiwaha Marae on Saturday, was asked to consider the effect water diversion would have on future Maori generations.

Julie Ranganui, of Tamau-poko, told the four-member tribunal the Wanganui was not only a source of sustenance, spirituality and mana, but a way of living.

"If you cut this water off, you are cutting off our lifestyle and spirituality as far as the water is concerned," she said.

"My plea is for the future of our culture, handed down to us and which we want to hand down to our children."

Mrs Ranganui said traditional fishing methods had been important in the river tribes' lifestyle.

### LIFESTYLE

"The men do the fishing as far as the piharau are concerned but when it comes to other fishing, bobbing for eels and catching smelt, women do it just about better than men.

"And in the past our children have played a very large part in learning about catching fish on the river — participation that was part and parcel of the whanau lifestyle of the Wanganui," she said.

"We have to teach our children how to read the river from a very early age but because the head waters are being cut off the areas our children need to learn from are drying up. We haven't got the water and what we do have is going into the deeper channels which we can't fish."

Mrs Ranganui said Maori people never interfered with nature and used only the river resources they needed.

"The Maori were the best people for conservation. We only took what we needed."

PROFESSOR SAYS ...

1-8-88

W. Chon

# River diversion violates psychological security

Interfering with central beliefs of the Maori people is a psychological violation which produces social damage, a Waikato University professor of psychology told the Wanganui River Flows Tribunal on Saturday.

James Ritchie, who is also the deputy director of the Centre for Maori Studies and Research, said Maori people were entitled to the undisturbed security of their central beliefs as a natural right.

By diverting waters of a river which Wanganui tribes identified as most sacred, the State had deprived Maori people of this security.

To repair social damage produced by this psychological violation, he submitted the river should be restored to its integrity as a taonga, and a sacred and whole entity.

Professor Ritchie said the Tongariro Power Development's western diversion mixed the purest part of the Wanganui headwaters with water from the Tawharetoa spiritual domain, Lake Taupo.

This water was then diverted

to the spiritual jurisdiction of Tainui people — the Waikato River.

"I cannot convey the enormity of the violation done by this," he told the tribunal.

"It's like taking the waters of England, emptying them into the ponds of France and disgorging them into the Volga River."

The move violated spiritual integrity and disturbed the harmonious relationship between the tribes — a relationship achieved only after centuries of battles to establish resource rights and ownership.

"The waters are also symbolic of political separation. Mixing without agreement violates past, present and future mana of the rangatira of all affected jurisdictions," he said.

He claimed neither the Government, which approved the development, nor its successors could plead ignorance of the importance of the Wanganui River to local tribes.

"Not only is there extensive writing concerning the river but also the people have re-

peatedly asserted their ownership of its bed and its waters," he said.

"Nevertheless, the State chose to subjugate this knowledge to one national concern, hydro generation, over others."

Professor Ritchie told tribunal members they had an opportunity to try to redress the affects of diverting Wanganui waters.

"To restore and clean up the river seems to me to be something which you can do. This could also help restore and clean up the relationship that exists between Maori and Pakeha," he said.

"The first thing that must be done, however, is to give back that which has been taken away."

## SEVEN DAYS' EVIDENCE

Saturday's conclusion of the Wanganui River minimum flows review hearing ended seven days of verbal evidence.

All but one of the major parties which made submissions to the hearing gave a final address at Taumarunui's Ngapuwaiwaha Marae.

Electricorp will send its written conclusion to tribunal members later this week.

The flow review was necessary because the minimum regime imposed five years ago expires in three months.

Many of the submissions to the tribunal have related to the affects of the Tongariro Power Development's western diversion on the river environment.

The Western diversion intercepts and diverts water from the Wanganui River, and seven tributaries — the Whakapapa, Te Whanau, Okupata, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri, Maungatepopo and Otamangakau.

It became operational in 1972.

6-9-88

W. Chron.

## *River report safeguards*

Central Districts Catchment Board members are being safeguarded against groups who may try to influence decisions relating to the Wanganui River minimum flows regime.

Board staff yesterday confirmed the four-member river flows tribunal has finalised regime recommendations.

Its report is expected to come before the board at the September 20 meeting.

However, board general manager Reg Barrett yesterday said the tribunal report would

probably be taken into committee.

A special four-member sub-committee would be formed to discuss tribunal recommendations and would report back to the board on October 18.

Mr Barrett said publicly releasing the tribunal's decisions before they had been fully considered would be contrary to the interests of the major parties involved in the July hearings and to catchment board members.

"We don't want powerful interest groups getting to the board prior to making the decision," he said.

"The chances of the board not agreeing to the major portions of the tribunal recommendations as a matter of course would be highly unlikely."

Mr Barrett said there was no doubt that, if the tribunal's recommendations were re-

leased before a board decision had been made, some groups would attempt to influence the decision-makers.

When asked to identify the groups he was referring to, Mr Barrett refused to comment further, saying the Taumarunui hearings highlighted those parties keenly interested in the issue.

Tribunal members are scheduled to meet with the special sub-committee on October 12.

"The board must understand what the tribunal means. It's very important we make the right decision," Mr Barrett said.

He yesterday estimated the board's bill for running the Taumarunui hearing had nearly reached the \$270,000 mark.

"This is the price of democracy."

The Wanganui was once a mighty river. But in recent years it has changed as its headwaters have been drawn off for the Tongariro Power Development Scheme. Some say the river is dying. DEBBIE JONES reports on the Department of Conservation's fight to bring it back to life.

THE ghosts of the Wanganui River's past are constantly present for river travellers. The pale outlines of poplar stands, skeletal in winter, stand out against the green of the native bush, showing where Maori villages and the sheepyards of early farmers once stood. Traditional Maori lamprey eel weirs, the utu pharau, are still used in the river, and so are navigational works installed by steam boat operators at the turn of the century.

There is an old battle site around nearly every bend, and the parataniwha (flood of the river) growing on the river banks is a reminder that more than a hundred years ago the river was used to live in this river in any other.

But it is no longer the same river. Fish numbers have dwindled. There is not enough water for the big river boats — even canoeists sometimes have trouble.

"It used to be a mighty river, a magnificent river; it was alive, it was well," Department of Conservation Whanganui District Conservator John Ombler says. "The river now is dying."

The Wanganui River runs through the heart of Whanganui National Park. Though not gazetted as part of the park itself, the management of the park and the river are inextricably intertwined, according to the Department of Conservation.

The Wanganui is our longest navigable river, and a valued recreation resource. Canoeists, jetboaters, trampers, hunters, anglers all use it.

Though economic factors have meant fewer tourists have come to the river in the last few years, the Wanganui is still popular, not only for its beauty, but for its safety. Even young children travel the river in canoeing parties. At the same time, there are enough rapids to attract the more experienced canoeists.

But the river's rapids have in recent years become concerned over the signs of profound damage done to the river since 1972.

This was when Electricity (then Electricity Division) began to extract the headwaters of the Wanganui to use in the Tongariro Power Development Scheme. When the right to divert these waters was first granted in 1958 no conditions were attached, and public comment was neither invited nor considered.

By 1978, six years after diversion began, summer water levels were falling so low that navigation became difficult, and even dangerous. The New Zealand Canoe Association called

for action, and the local catchment board set minimum flow levels for summer and winter conditions. Water from the power scheme had to be released to meet these minimum requirements, which were, however, still well below the natural lowest flow levels.

Even with the minimum flow regime, large boats cannot travel the mid-section of the river, and canoeists are still having trouble in summer. But the effects go far beyond the impact on navigation. Fish and eels have become stressed or died in the increased temperatures. There is less food for fish, and less water for fish to live in. The river has become increasingly discoloured — yellow and muddy. There is more surface foam, a slimy feeling underfoot, a build-up of algae in stagnant areas by the banks. About a third of the river water is being drawn off — the

clearest, purest water from the mountain. What is left is the muddy, silted and polluted water from the Taranaki tributaries. Also lost to the river is the volcanic sand that used flow into the headwaters on the volcanic plateau. Its function in the river system is to clean and scour the river bed. Without it, the bed is muddier, siltier, more silted.

The effects of the diversions have been felt from the top of the river right down to the sea. In the upper river above Taumarunui, white water rafting is impossible unless the river's tributaries are in flood. Down at the rivermouth, increased silt has meant more dredging is needed to keep the harbour mouth open.

When the Department of Conservation came onto the scene in April 1987, the Whanganui National Park had recently been created.

An early victory for the department was the protected river status given to the Whanganui tributary.

Another major step was the drafting of a management plan for the park, circulated for public comment last December. The draft plan opened a new forum for conservation and user groups to protest at the decline of the river.

Many submissions asked for the Wanganui River to become part of the national park. It seemed to be the obvious thing to do, as the river is clearly the heart and soul of the park. It was argued that the inclusion would give it an increased level of protection. But there was one important exception to this trend — the proposals of the local Maoris.

The tangata whenua of the river have put in three overlapping claims to the Whanganui

tribunal for ownership of the Whanganui river bed.

These claims are not new. They have been pursued from a te ao, an important Whanganui court to court since the 1930s.

The latest ruling is that, under the Oat Mines Act 1979, the river bed belongs to the Crown. Local conservationists, Russell Marshall, said he regards the success of the current claims as inevitable.

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are built into the guidelines establishing the Department of Conservation. Wanganui Regional Manager Jeff Connell has said the Department of Conservation would be "very comfortable" with Maori ownership of the riverbed. It is unlikely then that the river will be made part of the park, at least not till the Waitangi claims are resolved.

In fact, earlier this year local Maoris proposed that they

should have control not only over the riverbed, but also over the park itself. They saw this in the context of the broader process of devolution of power to local iwi authorities.

Mr Ombler believes discussions since then between the department and the Maori trust have convinced the trust that such a step is being taken in no other national parks, and that the wider community would regard it as totally unacceptable.

"What is needed is proper meaningful involvement in the management of the park, both at quango level and management level, by people of the Maori tribes of the river," Mr Ombler says. "This would include a formal link between the Whanganui River Trust Board and any future conservation quango, to make sure the trust board has a direct input into management decisions."

He describes the relationship

between local department staff and Maoris as good — "At all times we've kept talking to each other." He is adamant about creating a Maori involvement that is more than just tokenism — "It's got to be real."

If the Maori claims over the river to succeed, there could be important implications for the minimum flows issue. Mr Connell has suggested that "if the land claim is legitimate then the people have a legitimate claim to say in the amount of water they receive over the bed".

The department is unhappy with the whole idea of minimum flows, Mr Ombler says. "What's really needed is to look at how much water one can take out of the river; not how much one has to put back into it. Unfortunately, we're working from the wrong end; we're trying to recover a lost situation."

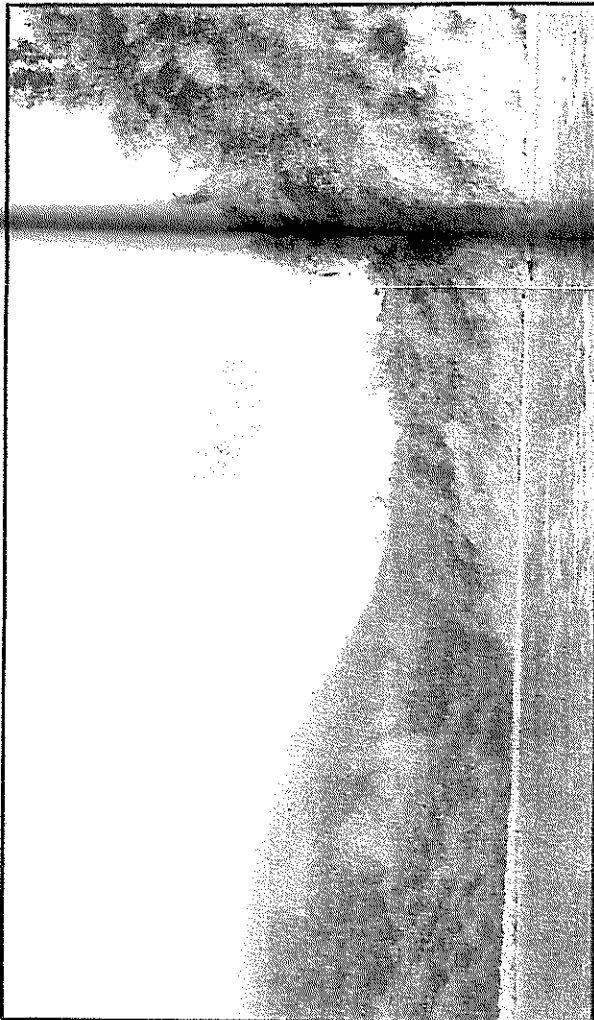
Given this basically different

approach, the department has asked the Central Districts Catchment Board for a flow regime that fluctuates according to the natural rhythms of the river.

"There's a base flow that's not surplus, that's not for allocation — full stop — in our view," Mr Ombler says.

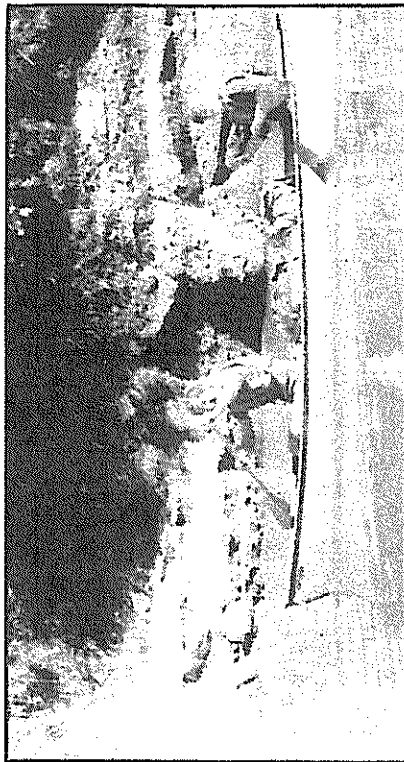
Another chance to challenge extraction from the river will come within the next five years when Electricity formally applies for the water right currently still held by the Crown. By then the Waitangi claims may be settled, and local Maoris may be in a stronger position to act to restore the water to the river.

The gradually emerging coalition between the Department of Conservation, the tangata whenua, and conservation and user groups will give the Wanganui a chance to survive.

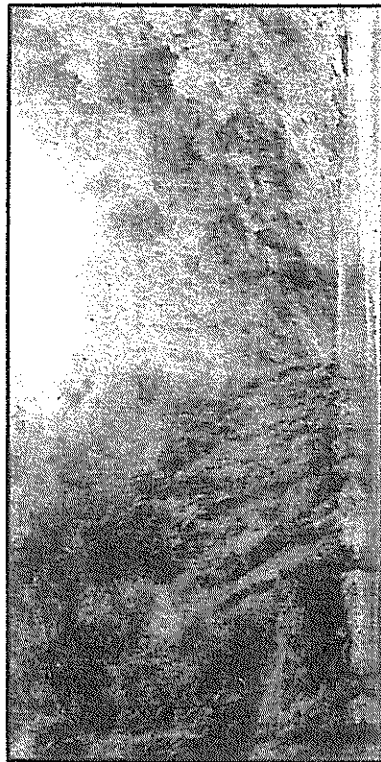


PERHAPS even the taniwha, said to be more abundant on the Wanganui River than on any other, are deserting the river.

# The dying river cries muddy tears



THE river's tributaries don't bring the pure water that used to come from the mountain.



10-9-88  
10-3-88

# Treasury queries DoC role in river issue

By MARAMA ELLIS

**The Department of Conservation's role in pushing for the natural Wanganui River flow to be returned has been questioned by Treasury officials.**

Earlier this year the Wanganui regional office of DoC spent more than \$40,000 researching and writing a three-volume study on the effects the minimum flows regime has had on the environment.

Wanganui River headwaters have been diverted to the Tongariro power development scheme for hydro-generation since 1972. The minimum flows regime has been in place since 1983.

DoC's recommendation to the river flows tribunal in July was for the natural flow to be reinstated.

However, a Treasury document to the Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, leaked yesterday to the *Chronicle*, states DoC's submission has raised several questions and created problems.

The two-page July 20 report, signed by D.R. Andrew, for the Secretary to the Treasury, questions the department's authority to undertake the submission, and asks if Cabinet Ministers were aware of the submission's existence before it was publicised by the media.

It also asks if the submission reflects a Crown position, which agency has the responsibility for reporting to Ministers, and whether the Crown should publicly express a single or potentially multiple view on the river flows issue, and other conservation matters.

The report states that although DoC furnished a copy of the submission to Conservation Minister Helen Clark, other Ministers were apparently un-

aware of its preparation and imminent publication.

DoC released its study on June 8.

Treasury also said an Electricorp estimated that the policy advocated by DoC would reduce national wealth by \$300 million in net present value terms, because of the higher fuel burn and accelerated new plant construction.

Two major problems were highlighted by the Wanganui case.

"First, Ministers are not given an opportunity to decide what view, if any, the Crown wishes to advance to the catchment authority, or whether it is desirable for more than one view to be expressed — national economic perspective for example," the document stated.

"Second, because DoC has not been required to report in the first instance to Ministers, there has not been an opportunity for Ministers to indicate

their preferences in terms of what priority DoC should attach to this issue.

If the department had made a report, these problems could have been avoided.

"Ministers could have had an opportunity to decide whether they wish to release DoC's views as the Crown views, or whether to seek advice from other departments before decisions were taken on a Crown view."

Treasury recommended that Mr Douglas and Ms Clark direct a group chaired by Treasury to report back with proposals to ensure Ministers are aware of specific resource-use policies being advocated by departments.

It also recommended mechanisms which could put forward alternative views if necessary.

● See further report on P3.

15-9-88

W. Chron.

# Request for release of river report

Fears that Treasury may try to influence the Wanganui River minimum flows regime decision has prompted a request for the tribunal report on the regime to be released under the Official Information Act.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society this week forwarded its request to the Central Districts Catchment Board.

Earlier this month board-general manager Reg Barrett told the *Chronicle* that the tribunal's recommendations from the river flows hearing would probably be taken into committee at the September 20 meeting.

A four-member sub-committee would be appointed to consider the tribunal's recommendation, and the board would make its decision on October 18.

Taking the report into committee would safeguard board members from powerful interest groups which might try to influence decision-makers, Mr Barrett said.

But Keith Chapple, a national forest and bird councillor, yesterday said a leaked document from Treasury to the Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, showed Treasury, "one of the most powerful interest groups," is interested in the river flows issue.

The document outlined problems Treasury considered had arisen from the Department of Conservation's submission on the flows regime.

It also stated Electricorp had estimated that DoC's recommendation for the natural flow to be reinstated would reduce national wealth by \$300 million in net present value terms.

"Because the memo suggests that Treasury has significant interest in the river flows, we feel it is proof that they might try to influence decisions," Mr Chapple said.

"It is evidence enough to show that the tribunal's find-

ings must be made public. Mr Barrett is saying he wants to protect the board from powerful interest groups, but there appears to be one of the most powerful interest groups involved, and that interest group was not even part of the hearing."

Mr Chapple said the tribunal's report should be made publicly available as soon as it is received by the board. Forest and Bird considered there was no justification for it to be discussed behind closed doors.

However, Mr Barrett yesterday dismissed the society's fears as nonsense.

He said copies of the tribunal's report would be sent to those who made submissions to the board, once the special sub-committee had discussed it.

"It is very important that the board consider the recommendations of the tribunal very, very clearly and without any interference or public grandstanding," he said.

He was unaware of Treasury interest in the issues and stated the board's integrity was above question.

"I want to ensure that if this goes to appeal, there will be no question of prejudice on my behalf or the board's. I will only allow the four board members on the sub-committee to see the tribunal's report.

"Certainly these sorts of documents (Treasury's) are not going to influence us."

Although Mr Barrett has not received Forest and Bird's request under the Official Information Act when contacted by the *Chronicle* yesterday, he said it would be declined.

"I don't believe they have any grounds."

19-9-88

## Director of Waitangi Tribunal



A National Party member and former Army officer, Wira Gardiner (pictured), last week became director of the Waitangi Tribunal.

Mr Gardiner, whose public profile was heightened in the Wanganui region when he was appointed to the Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal, is of Ngati Awa, Ngati Pikiao and Whanau-a-Apanui descent.

The 44-year-old Whakatane man has two degrees and a record of 25 years of service to his country, including a stint as director of Civil Defence.

As the Waitangi Tribunal director, he will be responsible to the deputy Secretary for Justice. His duties cover tribunal research, claims processing, and tribunal administration.

The new position was created under the Treaty of Waitangi (State Enterprises) Bill passed by Parliament this year.

# Secrecy lid still *W. Chon.* on river report

By COLIN ROWATT

Central Districts Catchment Board is maintaining a high-level of secrecy in its handling of the report and recommendations from the Wanganui River minimum flows tribunal.

Only a handful of copies of the report exist and as yet they have been seen by only a few catchment board staff members.

And, apart from releasing the report to a special committee of

five board members for detailed study, the cloak of secrecy will remain in place for at least another month.

General manager Reg Barrett said the report, its recommendations and the implications of those were too complex to be released to the public until the board had had sufficient time to study all the aspects.

## TURNED DOWN

The board's approach to dealing with the report has already been challenged by some participants in the minimum flow

review proceedings and some groups have requested copies of the report. Those requests have been turned down.

It has also been alleged that Treasury could seek to influence the final decision on the minimum flows.

Mr Barrett has dismissed such allegations and yesterday said the only reason for keeping the report secret was to give the board time to consider it thoroughly before making a decision.

He said the board also had to take particular care that if the matter did go to appeal, no action on the board's part could be held up as prejudicial to that appeal.

## FIRST PHASE

The first phase of the board's study of the report and its recommendations will take place today when the special five-person committee meets with staff.

The committee members are Ron Russell, Peter Pharaşyn, Laurie Speirs, Brad Grimmer and Richard Barnett. The committee includes two Manawatu board members (Messrs Speirs and Barnett) to give regional balance.

The committee will have about a month to complete its studies and will then meet with the tribunal.

The full board will, after hearing from the special committee, make its final decisions at the October 18 board meeting.

## Misleading, dangerous

Sir.— The Treasury report that questions the role of the Department of Conservation in the Wanganui River flows hearings is misleading and dangerous in its implications.

The whole point of DoC's existence is to represent this country's interests even if they conflict with official policy of the Crown or Treasury. To suggest that DoC should go to the Minister of Finance and ask if it can make a submission makes a mockery of the Conservation Act.

DoC is fulfilling a vital role in this country today. We need to protect our natural heritage. We need DoC.

RICHARD THOMPSON  
Maruia Society  
Aramoho RD  
Wanganui

## Treasury influence

Sir.— Our region is most indebted to our Marama Ellis and to Keith Chapple for their continued vigilance as to the findings of the recent tribunal upon questions of river-flow in our beloved river.

Our electricity corporation had every opportunity in its massive submissions to set out its case, including the financial side.

We should not chide Treasury for showing an interest in financial implications, but should condemn in the most outspoken way any attempt by their "experts" to intervene in the decisions made by due process from a careful and impartial hearing, in which, as Keith Chapple points out, they took no part and accordingly have no standing.

There is some comfort for us all in Reg Barrett's assurance that copies of the tribunal's report will be sent to those who made submissions after the special subcommittee has discussed it. This will be more meaningful if any significant recommendations by that subcommittee are also included.

What is of the greatest democratic and regional importance is that the public should be kept fully informed at all stages of the further progress of the findings of a tribunal hearing which was completely open to those members of the general public whose vital interests were concerned.

There is surely little justification for such "open" proceedings to be followed up any discussions "in camera" or "in committee." The dangers of such a course should be quite clear, since new evidence or new material may be introduced in secret, and will not be subject to clarification by questioning from those who gave evidence in public, nor by whatever legal representatives may have assisted in the "open" process.

This is an important principle to an "open" democratic way of life, and should be honoured much more widely than it currently is, in such matters as regional or local planning.

We continue to rely upon a free press in respect of such public interest. I believe that this public interest requires to be safeguarded to the utmost against any in-committee stage from which our press would be excluded.

The public interest requires that all proceedings should remain open to our press.

J.R.J. MOORE  
Wanganui

# Compromise puts more water in rivers

By COLIN ROWATT

Increased Wanganui and Whakapapa river flows aim to take into account scenic, recreational, environmental and Maori values without unduly penalising major water user Electricorp.

Water flows in the Wanganui River are to be restored to at least 87 percent of the long-term average natural flow as measured at the Te Maire gauging point.

Flows in the Whakapapa River are to be raised to 47 percent of the long-term mean flow for that water way.

Those will be the two most significant changes when a new Wanganui River minimum flow regime, accepted by the Central Districts Catchment Board yesterday, is implemented.

The new regime will result in a minimum flow at Te Maire, in the river's middle reaches, of 24.6 cumecs (cubic metres per second), up 2.6 cumecs from the summer flow minimum of the past five years.

At the Piriaka gauging station in the upper reaches of the Wanganui River, the minimum flow is to be set at 13.1 cumecs, an increase of 5 cumecs.

For the Whakapapa River, a minimum summer (December 1 to April 30) flow of 8.5 cumecs will be set, with the minimum flow at 4.5 cumecs for the remainder of the year.

Those flows are to be measured at the footbridge gauging station about one km downstream from Electricorp's Tongariro power scheme Whakapapa intake.

## Recommendations

The regime accepted by the board and hailed by chairman Bunny Gorringe as "landmark decision" essentially follows the recommendations from a special tribunal set up earlier this year to hear submissions for the review of the Wanganui River minimum flow regime which has been in effect since October, 1983.

The tribunal's full recommendations were that:

- The natural flow of the Wanganui River at the Tongariro power development diversion intake be restored throughout the year.

- The diversion of the Okupata, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri, Mangatepopo and Te Whaiu streams be allowed to continue as at present.

- The minimum acceptable flow of the Whakapapa River as measured at the footbridge recording site be 8.5 cumecs for the period December 1 to April 30 and 4.2 cumecs for the balance of the year subject to such flows being naturally available, subject to the condition that:

- In the event of a national power supply emergency, Electricorp may seek the approval

Catchment Board for a lower minimum flow. Such approval, if granted to be subject to any conditions that the board may impose.

- This flow regime remain in place for five years expiring on October 31, 1993.

The tribunal also recommended that the board "facilitate" consultations between the Wanganui River Maori Trust Board and Electricorp to help resolve "outstanding issues."

In making its recommendations the tribunal appears to have taken the only reasonable course open to it and gone for a compromise.

In its report to the board the tribunal stated it could not recommend a full return to the natural flow for the Wanganui River as requested by some parties to the hearing.

Such a recommendation would not have been "in the national interest" as it would have required all diversion of water through the Tongariro power scheme western diversion system to cease.

## Cost

As they stand however, the recommendations relating to the Wanganui and Whakapapa rivers will cost Electricorp an estimated \$17 million a year in lost generating capacity.

But the tribunal considered that cost is "not excessive" in terms of Electricorp's profit last year of \$141 million and a forecast profit for this financial year of \$280 million.

Basically, the extra water for the Wanganui and Whakapapa rivers will come from reductions in the amount of water diverted from the headwaters of those rivers into the Tongariro power scheme.

In the case of the Wanganui River all diversion of water will cease thus restoring the full natural flow over the whole length of the river.

That will add just 1.6 cumecs to the upper river flow — water currently being diverted to the Tongariro scheme.

Perhaps the greatest significance of that recommendation will be in terms of Maori cultural and spiritual values which attach to the Wanganui River.

It will mean the river will be complete once again with its wairua (spirituality) restored.

The tribunal believes the move will go some way toward alleviating Maori concerns relating to the loss of "spiritual integrity" when the Wanganui River was beheaded more than

Increased flows in the Wanganui and Whakapapa rivers should, according to the tribunal, result in "more natural flow patterns" to reduce the undesirable impacts of the present flow regime.

The flow rates for both rivers will result in more water being available for recreational river users as well as providing improved levels of protection for "instream values" and the habitats of flora and fauna.

Comment on  
finding: P3

# River decision slated

**Yesterday's decision on the Wanganui River minimum flows regime has been slated as unbalanced by one of the principal groups involved in this year's hearing.**

The Electricity Corporation of New Zealand, which uses water diverted from the upper Wanganui catchment for hydro-generation, yesterday said the 'angitikei-Wanganui Catchment Board review into the minimum flows had caused some concern.

In a corporation statement the *Chronicle* was told that Electricorp recognised the importance of the Wanganui River both nationally and to the people of the area.

"But there is balance of interests to be struck in the shared use of the country's

resources. The corporation does not believe that balance has been reached in the decision, which means a loss of about half of the water resource from the western diversion of the Tongariro Power Development.

Mr Grilli said the water reduction would result in a generation loss of about 300 gigawatt-hours every year. Some 29,000 gigawatt-hours are generated each year in New Zealand.

On average, the Tongariro power development provides about 41 percent of the North Island hydro energy, with the western diversion providing about 25 percent of the TPD's energy.

The corporation yesterday stated the decision would affect the operational flexibility and energy generating capacity of the Tokaanu power station by reducing its output by about 25 percent.

The loss of generation would have to be replaced by other more expensive forms of generation.

And it said the downstream effects of the reduction would also significantly affect generation from all Waikato hydro stations.

A decision on whether to appeal against the catchment board's regime had not been made yesterday afternoon.

Conservation Minister Helen Clark believes the Wanganui River minimum flows decision will considerably improve detrimental effects the

present regime has had on the river environment.

Ms Clark said the catchment board decision would have positive effects on the river ecology and recreational opportunities. It would also be of significance to the tangata whenua.

"The increased natural flows should have a positive effect on stream biota and the river's ecology," she said. "This is particularly the case with the restoration of the natural flow of the Wanganui River itself."

"There will be an increase in the wetted area of streambed and greater diversity and density of stream insects and invertebrates. This is likely to flow on through the food chain, benefiting species such as the endangered blue duck, trout and indigenous fishes."

Improved flows should also allow more sediment, which is important to physical and biological processes in the river system to pass further downstream.

Increased flows should improve the recreational experience for river travellers and should also provide for an increase in tourist and recreational use of the river, Ms Clark said.

Navigational problems, particularly below Taumarunui, should also be reduced by the new flow regime.

Ms Clark said while the board's decision on the Whakapapa River flows did not go as far as many may have hoped it would provide for long periods of stable flow.

Fishing in both the Wanganui

and Whakapapa rivers should improve under the regime, although the periphyton algae problems were likely to continue in the Whakapapa.

Department of Conservation Wanganui district conservator John Ombler yesterday told the *Chronicle* that the new regime vastly improved the previous minimum flows guidelines.

DoC experts, those working in the fisheries field in particular, would be asked to study the implications of the adopted regime.

Wanganui River Maori people yesterday greeted the decision to return the Wanganui's full natural flow with delight.

Kaumatua Taitoko Tawhiri said the river's spiritual values would be restored with the increased flows.

"It means more to me than anything," he said. "That's what we were fighting for — our river will live again."

Mr Tawhiri said Wanganui river started to die when its natural flow was diverted for hydro-generation purposes.

● **Cont'd P18**

19-10-88  
C. Chon

# River flows comment

## ● From P3

"The river is a bit like a fish — cut off its head and the body becomes nothing. But by directing the headwaters back, the fish will come alive again — and that's what will happen. I am very happy."

Archie Taiaroa, chairman of the Whanganui River Interim Maori Trust Board, said the tribunal and catchment board's acknowledgement of Maori values was the first time Maori concerns about the Whanganui River had ever been considered.

The decision was a good start toward continuing consultation with Maori people and groups which managed resources, Mr Taiaroa said.

He fully supported the tribunal recommendation that the catchment board facilitate consultation between the trust board and Electricorp to resolve outstanding issues.

"This should be started as soon as possible," Mr Taiaroa said. "As for the actual increased flow of water, our people living beside the river will monitor closely throughout the year to see what improvements there are to the quality of the water, and the changing effects on eel, fish, plant, bird and water life."

Mr Taiaroa said if an appeal was made against the catchment board decision, the trust board would continue to fight for the rights of its people.

"We hope that co-operation, continual consultation and partnership would not necessitate that."

● Wanganui would ultimately benefit from increased river flows,

Mayor Chas Poynter said yesterday.

"It's good for Wanganui because with the Wanganui National Park we rely on adequate river levels for tourist operators to be able to take best advantage of the river."

"With about 12,000 canoeists coming down the river every year we certainly need more water in the upper reaches than what we have been getting."

Mr Poynter said he was pleased with the decision.

"It's a natural resource and we are dependent on the river for many things," he said.

He did not think increased flows would have much of an affect on the lower reaches of the river, or on the silting problem.

● The Wanganui River minimim flows decision may set a precedent for water use issues likely to be reviewed in the next decade, Taumarunui Mayor Terry Podmore said.

Mr Podmore told the *Chronicle* that while Electricorp would suffer a hydro-generation loss under the new regime the catchment board stance reflected a pleasing change of attitude within New Zealand communities.

And this shift in the public awareness of conservation issues was "a good thing."

Mr Podmore said the Taumarunui Borough Council was more than pleased with the outcome of the river flows hearing.

The hundreds of submissions made by Taumarunui residents and efforts made by the borough council to represent the region's concerns to the tribunal had been amply vindicated.

"The whole district will be very pleased with the decision," he said. "From the borough's point of view it appears as though it will be unlikely that we will need compensation payment for loss of power generation, because the Piriaka flows will be above the compensation level."

This compensation loss did not worry him.

"The borough council wanted the water returned," he said.

20-10-88  
W. Chon

# Electricorp calls for \$85m in reparation

**Electricorp chairman John Fernyhough yesterday said the corporation should be reimbursed between \$80 and \$85 million — the cost of reducing Wanganui River headwaters for hydro-generation use.**

Mr Fernyhough, who announced last evening that Electricorp would appeal a Central Districts Catchment Board decision to increase the Wanganui River minimum flows, told the *Chronicle* there were no cost-less options in the issue.

The board's decision, which halved the amount of water available to Electricorp through the Tongariro Power Development for hydro-generation, devalued the corporation by between \$80 and \$85 million, Mr Fernyhough said.

This was calculated by the reduction in the value of the Government's stake in Electricorp because of increased costs from using alternative electricity generation methods.

A loss to Electricorp would mean a reduction in Government revenue, and an ultimate loss for New Zealand taxpayers.

Asking New Zealanders to shoulder a nearly \$100 million burden would cost each household about \$100.

Mr Fernyhough said competitive pressures within the industry meant it was unlikely electricity consumers would be asked to pay an extra \$100.

But the price would have to be paid eventually, and there

was a possibility electricity could cost more.

Mr Fernyhough said intelligent choices and effective decisions could only be made if the public fully realised opportunity-costs involved.

He suggested decision-making bodies which ruled on issues like the Wanganui River minimum flows regime should make a commitment to pay the cost.

"It's up to the community to make whatever decision it thinks appropriate in relation to conservation. But we do want to see decisions made by bodies or people who will be accountable for the cost of that decision," he said.

## Applications

"We as a community are not going to get effective decision-making unless whoever makes the decisions follows it up by compensation for that decision."

The corporation was worried about the long-term implications of the river flows tribunal findings and the board decision.

The Wanganui issue could affect water right applications Electricorp planned to make throughout New Zealand during the next 15 years.

Mr Fernyhough said a restriction on the use of a renewable resource like water would force Electricorp to draw on non-renewable resources like coal, gas or oil.

He dismissed as nonsense suggestions the corporation could actively promote energy conservation.

This would leave expensive capital assets standing idle, and would result in a significant power price hike.

And even though the corporation's projected profit for the financial year was \$280 million, it would need a much higher profit margin before it could absorb the tribunal's estimated Electricorp loss of about \$17 million every year.

Mr Fernyhough said more than \$400 million profit would have to be made before Electricorp could give a proper return.

Although he was unable to estimate how much money the State-Owned Enterprise had spent on the river flows hearing, he said it would continue to spend whatever was necessary to make an effective appeal.

"Obviously it's not so much the figure that concerns us because the cost of the alternative is so great."

20-10-88

W. Chon

# Concentration on energy conservation more useful

**Electricorp should investigate energy conservation instead of complaining about the loss of Wanganui River system waters, a Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society spokesman said yesterday.**

On Tuesday, the Central Districts Catchment Board decided to return the full natural flow of the Wanganui River.

It also agreed to substantially increase the Whakapapa River flows.

This action, while beneficial to the river environment and recreational users, will halve the amount of water Electricorp collects through the Tongariro Power Development western diversion for hydro-generation.

The corporation stands to lose \$17 million each year under the new regime.

A forest and bird society spokesman, Gerard Hutching, yesterday dismissed Electricorp's concerns.

He said the corporation had diverted water from 66 rivers around the Tongariro National Park, virtually all the mountain rivers of the region.

"Any reasonable person would accept that some of that water should be restored in the interests of conservation and recreation," he said.

## Heavy pressure

"We congratulate the catchment board for having made this decision under heavy pressure from Electricorp to continue with the present regime."

The society was unlikely to appeal the decision, and called upon Electricorp to abide by it as well, Mr Hutching said.

More water in the rivers was good news for the rare blue duck and other users.

The stronghold of the blue duck in the North Island is around the Central Plateau. With only a few thousand birds left, it was vital that some of the mountain waters they depended on for their food and breeding habitat was free to flow.

Mr Hutching said there was concern over the five tributaries of the Wanganui which would continue to be diverted, even though they were prime blue duck habitats.

These streams, the Okupata, Taurewa, Tawhitikuri, Mangatepopo and Te Whaiau, would be the subject of water right hearings over the next five years.

## Applauded

● King Country conservationist Keith Chapple yesterday applauded moves to increase water flows in the Whakapapa and Wanganui rivers.

Mr Chapple, who chaired the now defunct Wanganui River Flows Coalition, said he was very pleased with the catchment board's decision.

Members of the coalition would also welcome the decision.

He yesterday denied he had earlier described the increased flows as tokenism and less than a compromise.

Mr Chapple was quoted in a North Island newspaper as saying the forest and bird society would consider appealing the decision.

This, he told the *Chronicle* was not true.

# Dismissal of loss claim by Electricorp

Claims that Electricorp will lose nearly \$85 million under the new Wanganui River flows regime has been dismissed as "emotional nonsense" by Central Districts Catchment Board general manager Reg Barrett.

Electricorp chairman John Fernyhough on Wednesday said the catchment board's decision to increase flows, thereby re-

ducing water available for hydro-generation, devalued the corporation by between \$80 million and \$85 million.

He suggested the corporation be reimbursed money it would lose under the decision.

But Mr Barrett yesterday described Mr Fernyhough's arguments as "nonsensical."

## Wanganui likely to have league side

Wanganui soccer could have a representative side playing in a competitive league next year for the first time since the 1970s.

At a special meeting of the Wanganui Football Association last night a 12-8 vote supported the entry of a combined side into either Central League, a representative league, or both.

But the meeting got away to a sensational start when it was adjourned after just five minutes because *Chronicle* reported Bryce Johns was tape-recording proceedings.

Association president Steve Phillips asked him to turn the recorder off, but Mr Johns declined, saying it was a public meeting.

The meeting was adjourned on a 9-4 vote, but several minutes later Mr Phillips reconvened the meeting by himself after discussions.

Mr Johns was allowed to continue taping the meeting.

## Extra cost

The river flows tribunal, using statistics provided by Electricorp witnesses at the hearing, stated the new regime would cost the corporation an extra \$14.5 million each year.

The existing minimum flows regime was already costing Electricorp about \$3 million per annum.

During the new five-year regime period, the actual cost to Electricorp would be \$72.5 million, Mr Barrett said.

"Electricorp's own estimate at the hearing was if the whole of the western diversion water was taken, the costs to the North Island power consumer would increase by only 1.5 percent to 2 percent," he said.

The catchment board's decision reduced the theoretical average flow able to be used by Electricorp by 50 percent.

"Now people can work that out by themselves," Mr Barrett said. "The figures (Mr Fernyhough's) are a misrepresentation of the facts."

## Sewage disposa'

The new Wanganui River minimum flows regime did not remove the Wanganui City and Taumarunui Borough councils' responsibilities to improve sewage disposal schemes, Mr Barrett said.

Both councils are allowing sewage to flow into the Wanganui River.

Mr Barrett said Taumarunui Borough Council would be required to apply for a water right by early next year.

The board will also monitor the progress of the Wanganui City Council's improvements of its sewerage systems.

The city council has applied for a new water right for its marine outfall.

Mr Barrett said as part of the water right procedure, the board would seek details of the council's on-going proposal to eliminate sewage discharge into the river.

21-10-88  
W. Chon

# Maori concern over Electricorp stance on flows

**The Whanganui River Interim Maori Trust Board is disappointed by Electricorp's stance over the Whanganui River minimum flows decision.**

Electricorp will appeal against the Central Districts Catchment Board decision to increase the river flows.

Trust board chairman Archie Taiaroa yesterday said Electricorp must consider communities directly affected by the diversion of Whanganui River waters.

While the trust board agreed with New Zealanders benefitting from natural resources, if the natural flows of the Whanganui River were not returned, communities affected by the decision should be compensated.

Maori people in the Whanganui tribal area had always wanted the natural flows returned.

"Electricorp should come and see the full effects that the low flow is having on the very life of the Maori people who have always occupied the Whanganui River area," Mr Taiaroa said.

The board was willing to invite Electricorp officials to the area to discuss the issue.

● The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society yesterday accused Electricorp of creating confusion over the cost of restoring waters to the Whanganui River.

Society spokesperson Gerard

Hutching said Electricorp should clarify their claim that the cost of restoring the waters would be \$100 per household per year.

"In evidence to the catchment board hearing Electricorp said the decision would cost \$17 million a year. Because industry takes two-thirds of electricity the cost to the householder comes down to just over \$5 a household a year.

"Now we have the figure of \$75 million or \$100 per household as the cost of the decision."

"The public have a right to know which is the right figure or else they could rightly accuse Electricorp of mischievous scaremongering," Mr Hutching said.

He said Electricorp had admitted recently that there was an over-supply of electricity in the South Island. That could be used for the North Island once the Cook Strait cable was upgraded in two years' time.

Mr Hutching called upon Electricorp to show some social responsibility and start to focus on energy conservation.

● The Central Districts Catchment Board has not ruled out the possibility that more Whanganui River system water may be diverted by Electricorp in the future.

The new regime, adopted on Tuesday, is to last for five years.

General manager Reg Barrett said the five-year duration for the regime was "quite deliberate."

"The perspective and energy requirements of the nation may well change by then," he said.

"A new regime may consequently be more appropriate."

Hydro-electric power was seen by the board as probably the most environmentally acceptable form of power generation.

"The board's decision does not negate the possibility that in five years' time, allocation of further water from the diver-

sion may be deemed desirable," Mr Barrett said.

"Undoubtedly, the probable replacement of the Cook Strait cable will affect the decision at that time."

22-10-88

# 'Over-reaction' by *w. Chan.* Electricorp

Conservationists have accused Electricorp of promoting wasteful use of electricity in the wake of the Wanganui River water use decision.

They have also criticised a figure used by the corporation for the extra cost per household through loss of water for power generation, the Press Association reported.

The corporation said that if the same criteria were used for all hydro schemes as the Wanganui decision by the Central Districts Catchment Board, it would cost the country \$75 million, or \$100 per household, to replace the lost power.

This was questioned by Energy Minister David Butcher, who pointed out that the Tongariro power scheme was about the only case where water was diverted. Electricorp, he said, may have over-reacted.

Energy researcher Molly

Melhuish said that on the basis of the \$17.5 million figure used by the corporation in its submission to the tribunal which studied flows of the Wanganui and other rivers used for the Tongariro power scheme, the increase in electricity bills would be \$5.30 a year.

King Country chairman of Royal Forest and Bird Keith Chapple slammed Electricorp for its decision to appeal.

"We are extremely disappointed about that," he said. "We think that is an over-reaction to the decision."

Mr Chapple said the water rights were achieved by stealth, by proclamation and without public debate in 1958, although they were not used until the 1970s.

He called on New Zealand to take energy conservation seriously. In New Zealand, per capita use had risen 25 percent in 15 years.

He said Electricorp had spent millions of dollars on advertising encouraging the use of more energy.

"This is entirely inappropriate," Mr Chapple said.

Director of energy management for the Ministry of Energy David Haskell said the corporation might look at ways around the spending of \$17 million on fossil fuels to replace the lost water resources.

He said Electricorp advertising that certain uses cost a certain amount was not precise enough.

He said the ministry was about to launch a scheme which would give consumers information about how much energy different appliances used.

## River riddle

Breathlessly promoted as the lifeblood of this region's tourism and recreation, the Wanganui River nevertheless is pretty much taken for granted by most of us.

After all ... it divides the bulk of Wanganui from the quality suburbs on the east-side, it stinks, it usually looks dreadful and it serves as a sewer. It also carries noisy motorboats.

However, we're supposed to be positive about these things so let's ponder for a moment all the benefits arising from the Central Districts Catchment Board decision to partly restore the headwaters.

Let's see. It'll be running high with clear upcountry water. We'll be catching trout from the Kowhai Park riverbank. There'll be no more mudflats covered in unmentionables.



Dave Laurence's  
**Case in Point**

Downtown workers will have a lunchtime swim in the river.

No? Well would someone in authority please tell us in plain language what the river flows decision really means.

So far the news media has left the impression that robbing water from the Tongariro power project will increase our electricity bills by about \$5 a year simply to please a few environmentalists and protect some blue ducks in the middle of nowhere. But, of course, we've got to take the Maori perspective into account.

