

**Comment to the Kaimai Hydro-Electric Power Scheme Expert Panel
Fast-track Approvals Act 2025**

From: Kaimai Canoe Club (Listed in Appendix 4 of Minute 1 of Expert Panel)

Re: Manawa Energy Limited – Application for Re-consenting of the Kaimai Hydro-Electric Power Scheme

Support for Inclusion of Recreational Releases (Part B.04 - Appendix E, Clauses 9.6 and 9.7)

I am writing on behalf of the Kaimai Canoe Club to express our strong support for the inclusion of Recreational Releases, as outlined in clauses 9.6 and 9.7 of B.04 – Appendix E – Proposed Consent Conditions, within the re-consenting of the Kaimai Hydro-Electric Power Scheme.

These scheduled recreational releases are of significant and enduring value to the whitewater community at local, national, and international levels. For decades, they have enabled a vibrant culture of kayaking, rafting, and river-based recreation on the Wairoa River. The existing conditions have operated effectively and reliably, and their continuation is essential to maintaining the social, cultural, and recreational benefits that the river provides. We are keen to see this continue into the future.

The value of the Wairoa River to the community has long been recognised. In the 1970s, the local council purchased land specifically to secure public access to a section of the river well-suited for slalom competitions, swimming, and general recreation. More recently, the council has acquired land adjacent to the Ruahihi Power Station to improve access to the lower river. The Kaimai Canoe Club has been actively involved in enhancing this area by constructing steps and pathways, improving drainage, and undertaking tree planting to improve the environment. This access is used not only by kayakers and rafters but also by local iwi, who utilise the site to safely relocate eels that have strayed into the canal system above. These long-standing investments in access demonstrate the deep and enduring community commitment to the river and its recreational values.

If it is possible for the Panel to consider amendments to the consent conditions at this stage, the Kaimai Canoe Club would also support clarifying that the recreational releases are to be provided for a minimum of six hours, rather than a maximum of six hours, within the 10am to 4pm window. This clarification would better reflect the long-standing practice of providing a full day of usable flows and would ensure certainty for event organisers, visiting paddlers, commercial operators, and the wider community who plan their activities around these scheduled releases.

The Wairoa River is widely recognised as one of Aotearoa New Zealand's premier whitewater training and competition venues. The controlled releases provide consistent, high-quality flows that support a broad range of users—from recreational paddlers to elite athletes. Olympians such as Luuka Jones and Mike Dawson have relied on these flows as a critical training ground for Canoe Slalom, Kayak Cross, and Extreme Whitewater disciplines. Their achievements on

the world stage are a testament to the importance of maintaining access to this unique resource.

Beyond high-performance sport, the releases enable the running of slalom competitions, extreme races, club events, and informal paddling sessions. They also support participation from those who travel from across the country, often planning long weekends or holiday trips around the scheduled flows. Importantly, the releases also allow non-experts to experience the Wairoa River through guided rafting and river-bug activities, broadening community engagement and fostering appreciation for this special environment.

These recreational opportunities have not diminished over time; if anything, their significance has grown. The Wairoa River is a cornerstone of the paddling community, and the scheduled releases are fundamental to its ongoing use and value. Their inclusion in the consent conditions is therefore essential to us and to the many individuals and organisations who rely on them.

For these reasons, the Kaimai Canoe Club strongly supports the retention of clauses 9.6 and 9.7 in the proposed consent conditions. We respectfully request that the Expert Panel ensure these provisions remain in place to safeguard the future of recreation on the Wairoa River.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about this.

Ngā mihi nui,
Richard Lang

President, Kaimai Canoe Club