

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

MINUTE #7 OF THE EXPERT PANEL

Peer reviews commissioned by the Panel and comments sought on conferencing/joint empanelling proposal
Waitaha Hydro [FTAA-2505-1069]

27 January 2026

[1] The purpose of this Minute is to advise the parties of the availability of the peer reviews from the Panel's technical advisors, and to seek comment from the Applicant and DOC regarding the Panel's proposed conferencing proposal.

Peer reviews from the Panel's technical advisors

[2] As recorded in our Minute #5, in December 2025 the Panel appointed the following three technical advisors to review and provide advice on aspects of the Waitaha Hydro application as well as comments received on those aspects:

- a) Paul Morgan who reviewed hydraulic engineering and fish passage matters;
- b) Jon Tunnicliffe who reviewed fluvial geomorphology matters; and
- c) Paul Wilson who reviewed recreation matters.

[3] Final reports from the appointed experts were received by the Panel on 27 January 2026.

[4] These experts' reports will be published on the FTAA website:
<https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/projects/waitaha-hydro/reports-and-advice>

[5] The Panel invites the Applicant to provide comment on these reports. If the Applicant wishes to do so, the Panel requests that a response should be provided to the Panel by no later than **12pm on the 10th of February 2026**.

Proposed conferencing/joint empanelment for hydraulics/fish passage/fluvial geomorphology, freshwater ecology and whio

[6] In their peer review reports, Paul Morgan and Jon Tunnicliffe have identified

some areas of disagreement and issues as well as raised questions regarding potential impacts for certain freshwater species and whio. While, as noted above, the Panel is providing the Applicant with an opportunity to provide written comments on these two reports, the Panel considers that these matters would also benefit from joint conferencing or a joint empanelling of the experts in the areas of hydraulics / fish passage / fluvial geomorphology / freshwater ecology and whio, with an opportunity for the Panel to ask questions. This would enable any (remaining) areas of disagreement to be ventilated and the reasons for any disagreements to be clearly articulated for the Panel.

[7] Accordingly, the Panel seeks input from the Applicant and DOC (the latter given expert comment was provided in relation to freshwater ecology and whio) on the following matters by no later than **5:00pm Friday the 30th of January 2026**:

- a) whether there is any preference between an online conferencing session with the Panel present and able to ask questions or a more formal online joint empanelment (hot-tubbing) of witnesses as part of a discrete hearing convened solely for that purpose;
- b) which of their respective experts they consider should attend any such conferencing/joint empanelling session;
- c) the availability of those witnesses to attend an online session on Friday 13 February 2026 in the afternoon (this being the Panel's preferred date and time slot given the peer reviewers' and Panel's respective availabilities);
- d) whether legal counsel should be present and if so in what capacity (observer v active participant); and
- e) whether a joint statement of issues can be produced by no later than 12pm on Thursday 12 February 2026.

[8] Once the Panel has received and considered any comments from the Applicant and DOC a further Minute will be issued confirming next steps.



Vicki Morrison-Shaw
Waitaha Hydro Expert Panel Chair