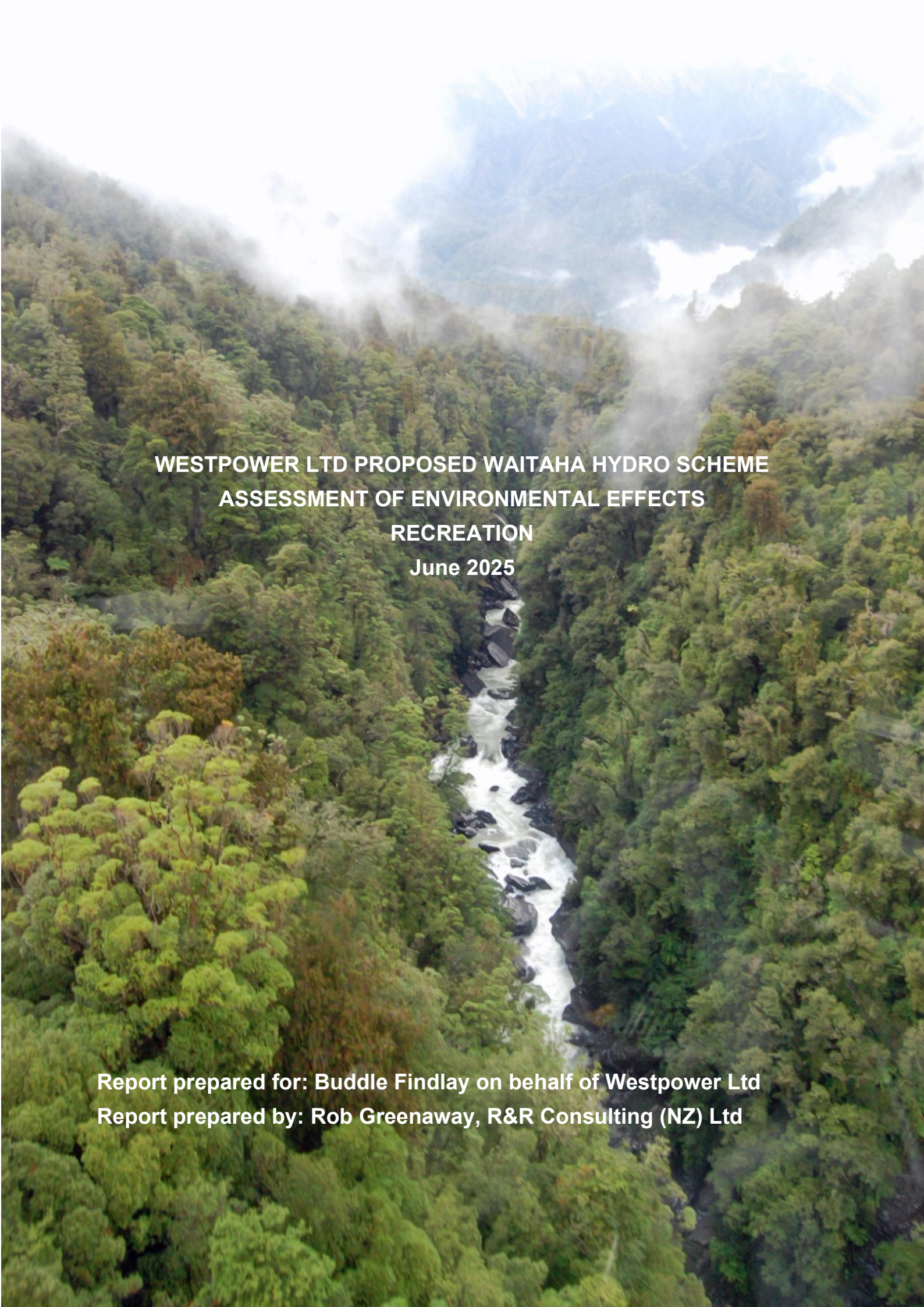

WESTPOWER LTD PROPOSED WAITAHA HYDRO SCHEME
ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS
RECREATION
June 2025

Report prepared for: Buddle Findlay on behalf of Westpower Ltd
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WESTPOWER LTD PROPOSED WAITAHA HYDRO SCHEME

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RECREATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Westpower Ltd (**Westpower**) proposes a run-of-the-river hydro-electric power scheme (**Scheme**) for the Waitaha River, approximately 60km south of Hokitika[1] on the West Coast of the South Island, New Zealand.

1.2 The proposed Scheme is run-of-river with no in-stream storage. The proposed Headworks include a low weir and intake structure situated at the top of Morgan Gorge that will divert water into a pressurised tunnel and desander. The pressurised tunnel will convey the diverted water down to a Power Station below Morgan Gorge. After passing through the turbines the diverted water will be returned via a tailrace discharging to the Waitaha mainstem in the vicinity of the confluence of Alpha Creek. The Scheme will divert up to a proposed maximum of 23 m^3/s (cumec), while maintaining a minimum residual flow of 3.5 m^3/s immediately downstream of the intake. The hydro design includes a 10 m^3/s bypass valve to maintain water flow following Power Station outages. The abstraction reach concerns approximately 2.5 km of the Waitaha River, including Morgan Gorge. Construction access to the Headworks above Morgan Gorge would initially be via helicopter and / or on foot and then via the access tunnel (once it is completed), while an access road and transmission line corridor (average 15 m in width) would be required from the Waitaha Valley Road to the Power Station to enable a connection to the existing network. Further detail on the project design and project background information as it relates to recreation is set out in **Appendix A,** and the Scheme's general layout is shown in **Attachment 5.** This information and a description of the Project Site is set out in the **Project Overview Report** and the **Project Description**.

1.3 Westpower commissioned R & R Consulting (NZ) Ltd to undertake an assessment of the potential effects of the Scheme on recreation (this **Recreation Report**). The qualifications and experience of the report author relevant to the Scheme are set out in **Appendix B**.

1.4 An earlier 2014 report assessed the significance of recreational values in the Waitaha Valley and the potential impacts of the Scheme on those values based on investigations and material from 2008-2013. That 2014 report was prepared by the same author as this report and submitted in support of Westpower's application for concessions under the Conservation Act 1987. This 2025 report relies on that older material with updates in response to more recent data and the approvals that are now being sought by Westpower.

1.5 This report considers and assesses the recreation values and significance of the Waitaha Study Area (defined below), the potential effects of the Scheme on recreation, and how (if necessary) these effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated. The scope and approach of this recreation report is set out in **Appendix C.**

2. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

2.1 The Waitaha Study Area for this assessment comprises the entire Waitaha Catchment. The Waitaha River extends approximately 35 km in length. Named river sections and key features referenced in this report are shown in **Figures 1** and **2**.

2.2 The Lower Waitaha River extends just over 18 km to the coast from the confluence of Douglas Creek, which is very near the boundary between private land in the Lower Waitaha Valley and

[1] Measured using local roads and tracks to the Power Station.

public land administered by the Department of Conservation (**DOC**). The Lower Waitaha Valley includes farmland and the developed area of the coast, including the State Highway 1 bridge. Recreational use in this area includes jet boating and angling and kayaking for those exiting Morgan Gorge or only paddling the Lower River.

2.3 The Upper Waitaha River – upstream of Douglas Creek and extending approximately 17 km to the headwaters[2] – forms the natural and forested 'backcountry-remote' section of the River, as defined in DOC's operative *West Coast Conservation Management Strategy 2010-2020* (CMS). **Figure 3**, from the CMS,[3] shows the location of the Scheme in relation to the defined backcountry-remote visitor setting within the 'Hokitika Place' (a land management unit defined in the CMS).

2.4 The Upper Waitaha Valley receives a low level of recreation use, which includes tramping, hunting, canyoning, alpine recreation and whitewater kayaking (in order of decreasing participation). The low level of recreation activity reflects the management strategy for the Upper Waitaha Valley implemented by DOC and relying on the CMS 'backcountry-remote' visitor setting definition (described further in paragraph 2.20 below). This means an intentional low level of management and maintenance of tracks and huts in a natural setting, and an expectation that visitors to the Upper Valley will be seeking, and enjoy, few interactions with other visitors. Much track and hut maintenance in the Upper Valley is carried out by volunteers coordinated by the 'Permolat' volunteer group.

2.5 Terrestrial access to the Upper Waitaha Valley from SH6 requires driving to a small parking area at the terminus of Anderson Road on the River's true right, and obtaining permission from the local landowner to walk across their land to the public conservation estate on the upstream side of Macgregor Creek,[4] and continuing along the river's bed or margin to Macgregor Creek. It appears that few visitors request access, and onsite DOC signage does not reference this requirement. Public access was once possible from the road-end via the bed and banks of the Waitaha River, but this has washed out and access now relies on the use of private land. Access was also once possible via Allen Road on the true left of the river, but this also requires landowner permission, and the access track has not been maintained. The access on the true left appears to be rarely used, if at all. These access issues undoubtedly dampen the level of recreational use of the Upper Waitaha Valley.

2.6 The location of public land and huts in the Upper Waitaha Valley are shown in **Figure 4**.

2.7 Between Macgregor Creek and Kiwi Flat a rough tramping track has been maintained, requiring some basic backcountry experience and fitness. A swingbridge across the entrance to Morgan Gorge links the track to Kiwi Flat. Accessing the six-bunk Kiwi Flat Hut on the true left of the river requires fording Whirling Water.

[2] Measured to near Ivory Lake. At approximately 18 km above Douglas Creek, and just upstream of the Top Waitaha Hut, the Waitaha River, as named, begins, and is fed by Stag Creek, Watson Creek and Reid Creek. Stag Creek is in the Ivory Lake catchment.
[3] Department of Conservation *West Coast Conservation Management Strategy 2010-2020* Vol 1 p240
[4] The 53 ha block of private bush-clad land adjacent to the true right bank of the Lower Waitaha River and variously described as 'Point 202m' or 'Sugarloaf' is subject to a Conservation Covenant between the landowner and the Department of Conservation (COV 091201.7). This requires that, 'The public shall have access to and across the Covenant Area with the prior permission of the Landholder, the giving of which shall not be unreasonably withheld', and 'No person may develop any tracks or roads or use tracked or wheeled vehicles across the Covenant Area without prior approval of the Minister….' This level of public access is the very much the same as currently exists on adjacent private land – requiring landowner approval.

Figure 1: Definition of river reaches

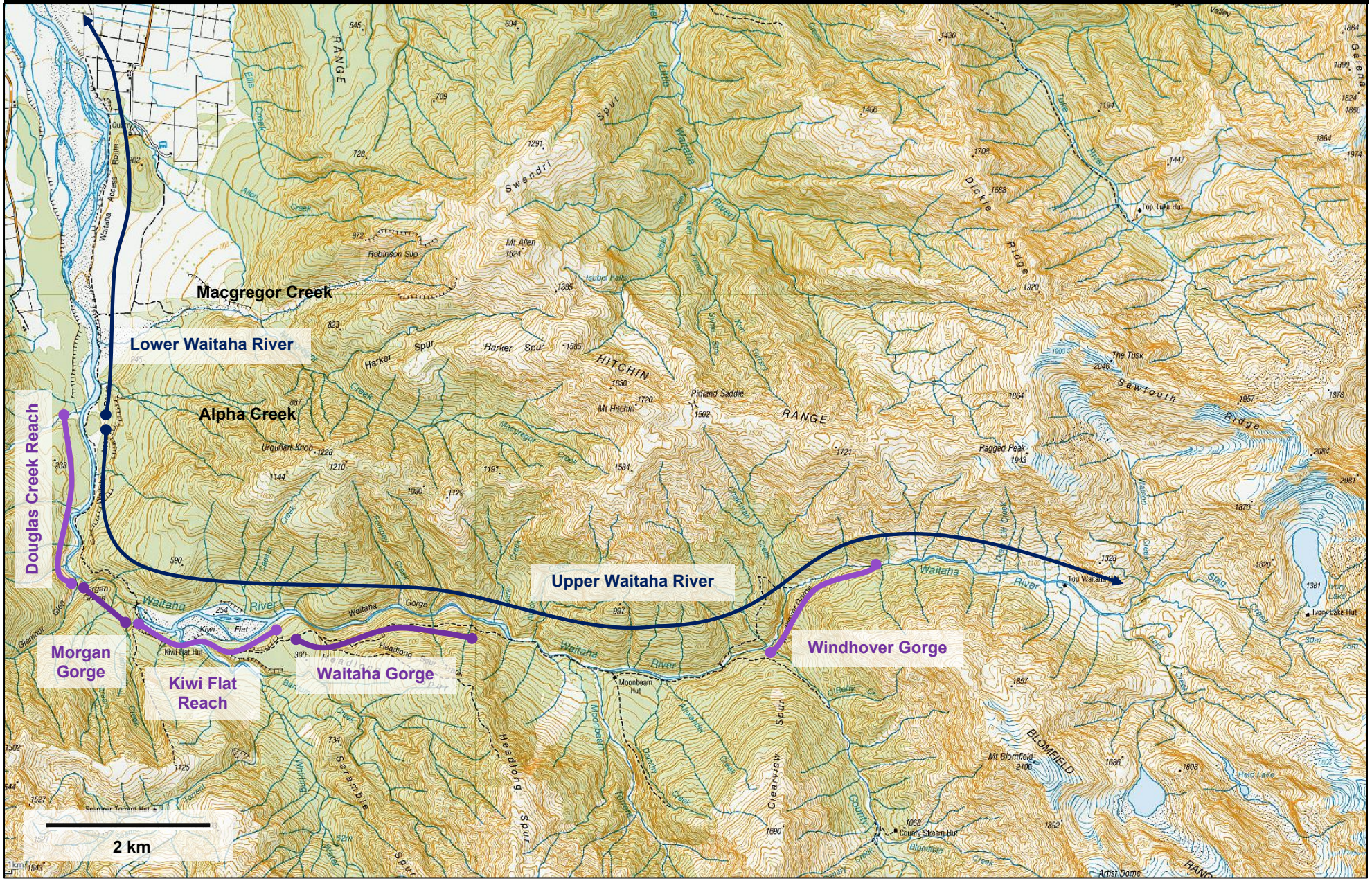


Figure 2: Location of Scheme

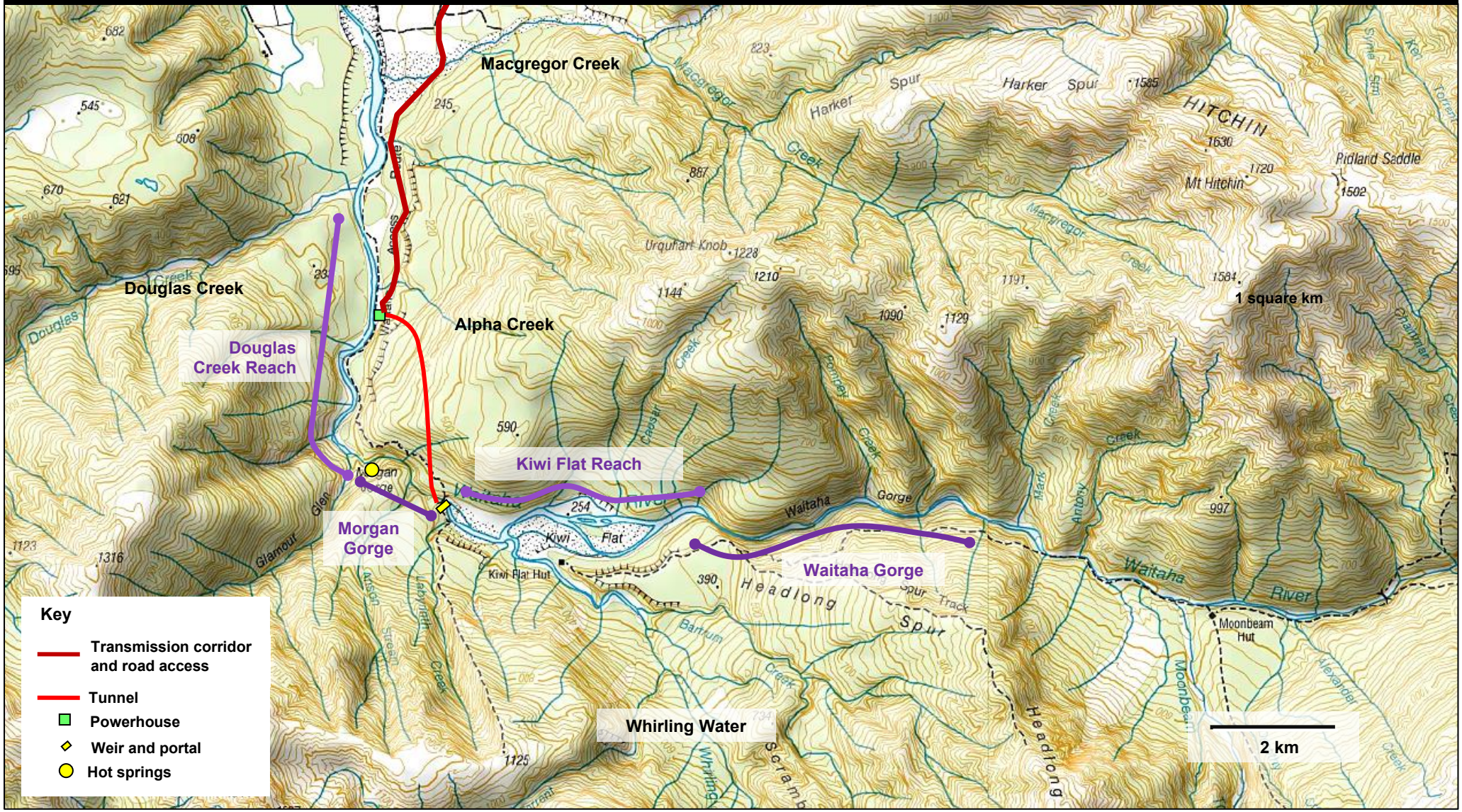


Figure 3: Location of Scheme within Hokitika Place Backcountry-remote Zone (DOC CMS Vol 1 p240)

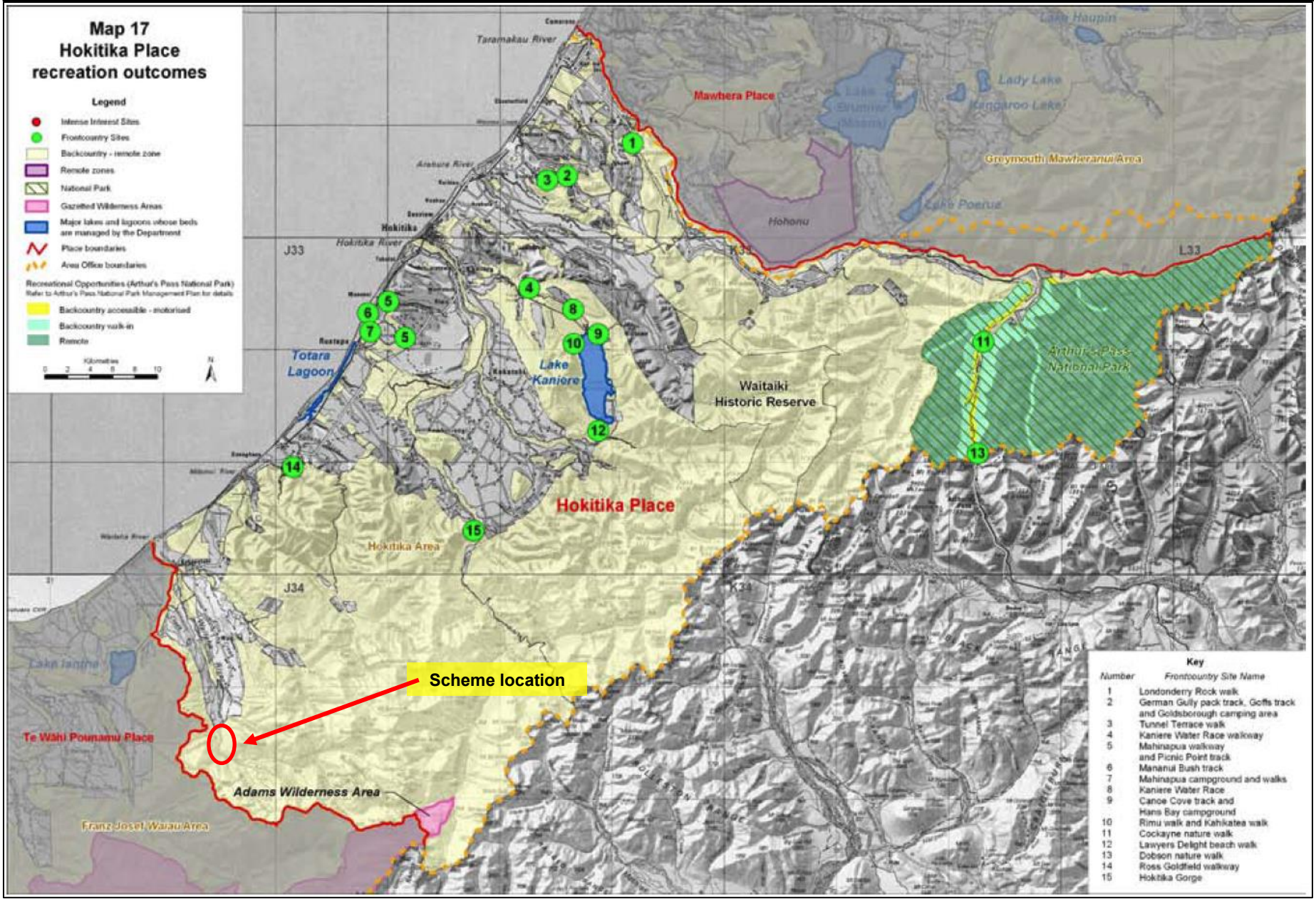
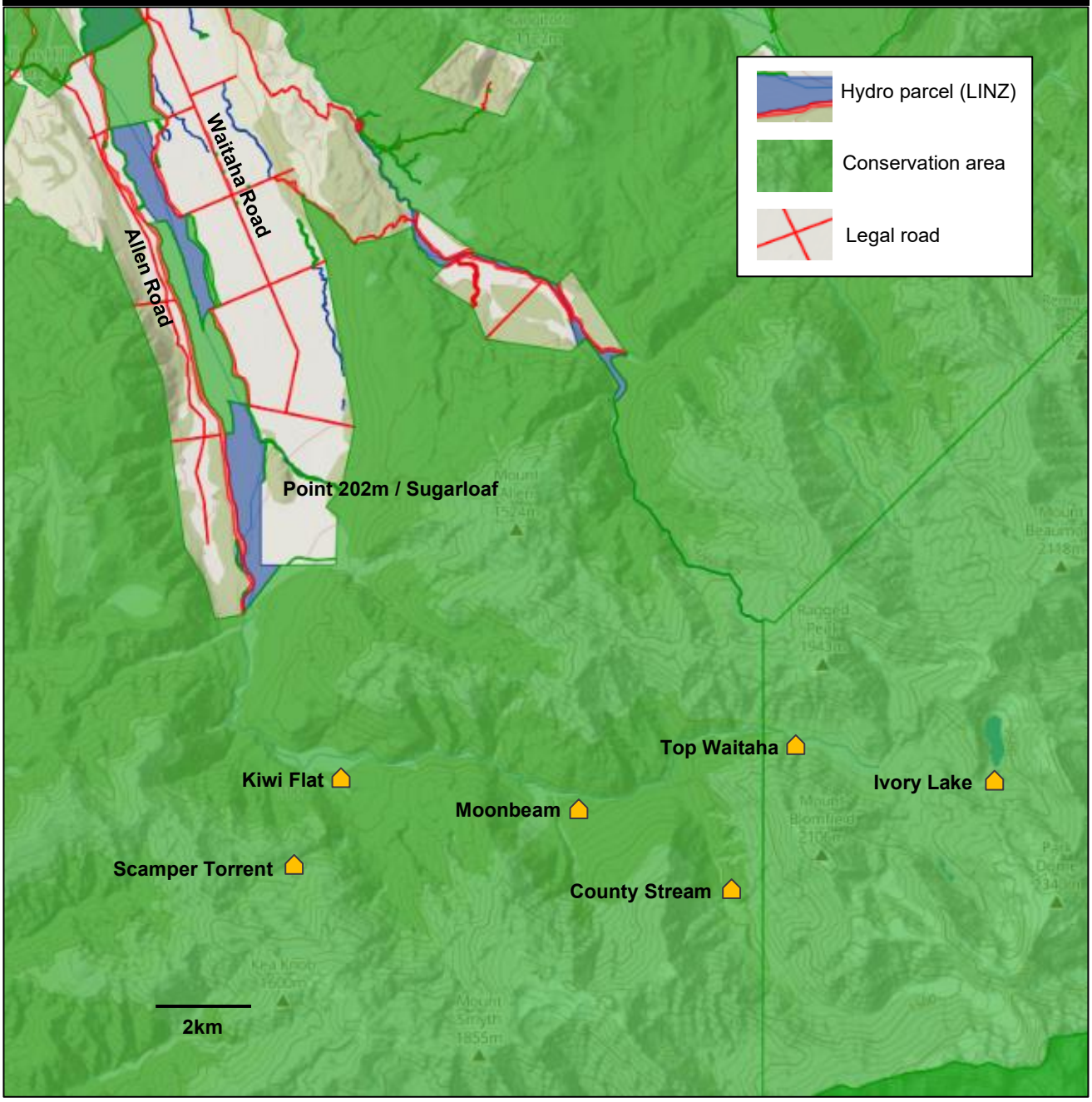


Figure 4: Public access areas and huts. Source: Land Information New Zealand



2.8 Trampers and hunters can carry on upstream in the Upper Waitaha Valley via a low-grade track to Moonbeam Hut and further on to County Stream Hut. True backcountry skills are required to access Top Waitaha Hut and Ivory Lake Hut near the top of the catchment, and the latter requires mountaineering skills outside summer. The Waitaha River begins approximately 800 m upstream of Top Waitaha Hut and is fed by Stag Creek and Reid Creek. Ivory Lake Hut, at 1357 m, on Stag Creek, is located on the lip of a very scenic cirque and was originally installed to monitor the neighbouring glacier, with reports of approximately 20 visitors per year.[5] Top Waitaha Hut has a reported annual average of 15 visitors. Scamper Torrent hut is located on a tributary of Whirling Water with a reported average of 15 visitors per year, and a high of 29 in 2022. All huts beyond Kiwi Flat normally support multi-day backcountry tramps between

[5] All the hut use data in this paragraph is taken from the Remote Huts website operated by Permolat and updated to around 2022: For example, see: https://www.remotehuts.co.nz/ivory-lake-hut.html

neighbouring West Coast valleys, and are suited to very experienced trampers, hunters and mountaineers. Kiwi Flat Hut is more often a base for overnight tramps from Waitaha Valley Road, canyoning in Whirling Water, visits to the hot springs on the true left of Morgan Gorge, hunting, and for access further up the Upper Valley.

2.9 Access to the hot springs near the bottom of Morgan Gorge on its true left is via an unmaintained route from Kiwi Flat, although there are some online reports of access via the true right and swimming across the River (not to be recommended from a safety perspective).[6] Access from the true left is challenging. On a site visit the author of this report relied on ropes and harnesses to access the hot springs. Sandbags are stored amongst trees above the Gorge and can be seen in use in the upper pool in the photo in **Figure 5** (the white bags at the upper bather's feet).[7] Modelling carried out by AusHydro in their 2025 report *Waitaha Hydro Project - Downstream Flow Modelling* indicates that the hot spring rock ledge becomes naturally inundated at river flows above approximately 50 m³/s, which occur about 10% to 15% of the time.

Figure 5: Morgan Gorge hot pools. Photo by Sally Jackson, Wilderness Magazine

2.10 The River below the Morgan Gorge is used rarely by jet boaters, and almost all angling is confined to the reach below, and at, the State Highway. A few kayakers use the River below Morgan Gorge as a relatively easy paddle in itself, and there is some use of this reach by those exiting Morgan Gorge. However, considering its accessibility, there is little recreational use of the Lower Waitaha Valley.

[6] For example: https://leeburty.com/leeburty/2014/02/07/waitaha-river-morgan-gorge-hidden-hot-pool
[7] https://thespinoff.co.nz/books/13-07-2017/book-of-the-week-a-guide-to-the-hot-pools-of-new-zealand

2.11 The Upper Waitaha River is identified as one of 14 class V[8] white water rivers on the West Coast which require helicopter access, and one of 24 class V rivers in the region (of all access types). Although the River has Class VI sections, the overall rating applies to the ability to portage the hardest of those. Based on a comprehensive 2010 multi-criteria analysis (RiVAS – see **Appendix D**), the Waitaha River was ranked the 5th-equal most-kayaked class V river on the West Coast out of 24. However, recent interviews with helicopter operators indicate that the river is currently in a significantly less-popular position.

2.12 Canyoning is a recent activity in the Upper Waitaha Valley, focusing on the Whirling Water catchment, with the first full descent of Whirling Water recorded in 2024. The New Zealand Canyoning Association describes the Whirling Water catchment as having nationally significant values for the activity, albeit only for the very experienced. The activity relies on Kiwi Flat Hut as a base. This activity has the potential to continue and grow into the future.

2.13 Entries in the Kiwi Flat Hut hut book suggest a consistent level of activity by, mostly, trampers from 2000 to 2011, with between 36 and 79 individuals recorded annually, with recorded increases in 2012, 2017 and 2018 of approximately 100 individuals for those years (hut book records for 2013 – 2016 are not available). More recently there have been highs of 194 recorded visitors in 2022, 156 in 2023, and 131 by August in 2024. Some of this new interest is associated with the development of Whirling Water as a canyoning destination. Approximately 75% of entries in the Kiwi Flat hut book between the start of 2000 and August 2024 were made by non-West Coast residents (those who did not identify their origin excluded).

2.14 Kayaker numbers in the Upper Valley peaked prior to 2011 at around 50 per year. Prior to 2011 and according to England (2011), international kayakers comprised more than 25% of the Waitaha kayaker population. More recently however there has been a significant reduction in interest due to competing international destinations and the cost of accessing the Upper Waitaha Valley by helicopter. There are no more recent data on origins, but helicopter operators in 2024 reported very few annual deliveries of kayakers to the Waitaha Valley since 2014 when helicopter operators were last interviewed. At that time, kayaking activity relying on helicopter access on the West Coast had substantially declined since 2011. In 2024, helicopter companies (combined) reported delivering fewer than 10 kayaking trips to the Waitaha River over the past decade. The Waitaha Valley is almost equidistant from the closest heliports at Franz Josef and Hokitika and is therefore one of the more expensive heli-destinations on the West Coast. As a result, patrons are currently more likely to opt for closer recreation destinations that offer similar recreation opportunities.

2.15 Estimates for use of the Waitaha catchment for recreation are based on historic peaks in use, and are:

(a) Approximately 50 white water kayakers annually, noting that many portage the Morgan Gorge section. This is the peak in kayaking activity estimated prior to 2011 and reflects the potential of the setting for white water kayaking rather than actual current use, which is far lower.

[8] Class IV: Difficult rapids requiring a series of controlled moves, cross-current and spinning in confused water. Scouting often necessary and a reliable roll is mandatory.
Class V: Very difficult, long and violent rapids. Nearly always must be scouted. Definite risks in the event of a mishap. Requires a series of controlled, precise, 'must make' moves to navigate successfully.
Class VI: Extreme, very dangerous and only for experts. Close inspection is mandatory and all possible safety precautions should be taken.

Helicopter operators report that over the past decade that **fewer than 10 groups might have kayaked the upper Waitaha River Gorge (above Moonbeam Hut) and/or Morgan Gorge. These sections might not be run at all for long periods, and there is a limited pool of suitably skilled kayakers because kayaking Morgan Gorge requires extreme** skill, experience and courage.

Kayaking use levels vary over time, and currently cost is a deterrent to access, and international interest in West Coast kayaking appears to have waned but might return. Therefore, this report has erred in favour of a conservative (high) estimate based on historical peak usage.

(b) Approximately 300 trampers, canyoners (in Whirling Water) and day visitors access Kiwi Flat annually and approximately 50 hunters use the Waitaha Valley area annually. This is based on analysis of the Kiwi Flat Hut hut book up to August 2024 (noting that not all visitors to Kiwi Flat record their activity in the hut book) and on interviews with helicopter operators. This is an increase on the level of patronage prior to COVID which were close to 50% lower. There is a high level of variation in visitor activity as recorded in the Kiwi Flat Hut hut book and this report has erred in favour of a conservative (high) estimate. The potential for sustained interest in the destination for canyoning favours a high estimate.

2.16 This gives a total and conservative estimate for use of the Upper Waitaha Valley by 400 people per year.

2.17 Further detail of the existing environment is set out in **Appendix D**.

Investigations

2.18 The findings of this assessment are based on four site visits between 2014 and 2024, literature review, interviews and reference to other technical reports prepared for this application. The findings of these investigations are detailed primarily in **Appendix D –** in relation to describing the existing environment – and these have informed the effects assessment summarised below.

Values assessment

2.19 Despite relatively low use levels, the Upper Waitaha Valley remains an important recreation setting due to its accessible (to Kiwi Flat at least) but ‘remote’ natural setting, and the characteristics of its white-water resource. There has been a steady decline in kayaking over the past 13 years. However, given the possibility for kayaking to return to the levels of use seen between 2008-2013, the kayaking resource remains of interest to international paddlers, and of international significance to highly advanced kayakers when combined with other rivers as part of the West Coast kayaking complex. Adopting the conservative position explained above, the recreational values of the Waitaha Study Area are:

(a) Internationally and nationally significant for extreme kayaking (Morgan Gorge, upper Waitaha Gorge) and high-grade kayaking (Waitaha Gorge) as part of the West Coast kayaking complex.

(b) Regionally significant at Kiwi Flat for tramping but nationally significant in the upper valley, particularly at Ivory Lake (at the top of the catchment). There is low use throughout.

(c) Regionally significant for hunting.

(d) Regionally significant for hot springs in the Morgan Gorge. This is mostly an element of the tramping and kayaking experience rather than a destination in itself but, it has been identified as a specific destination by some visitors. The springs have challenging access and limited space for bathing.

(e) Nationally significant for canyoning in the Whirling Water (this is a CANZ assessment).

(f) Regionally significant for angling (lower River only, outside Scheme footprint and not impacted by the Scheme directly or indirectly).

(g) Locally significant for jet boating (lower River only, outside Scheme footprint and not impacted by the Scheme directly or indirectly).

2.20 A core value of the existing recreation setting in the Waitaha Study Area is its 'backcountry-remote' conservation management status. 'Backcountry-remote' is defined in the West Coast Conservation Management Strategy (**CMS**)[2]:

The 'backcountry-remote' zone provides opportunities to access extensive natural settings where facilities are provided but a considerable degree of physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation is involved. Although users of these areas usually travel in groups for company and safety, the expectation is that groups will generally be small and that encounters with other groups will be infrequent, except on a limited number of high-use tracks and rivers. Huts and tracks that see relatively little use provide the opportunity for solitude for those who seek a greater sense of isolation and challenge but still need the security of some facilities, especially with the topographical difficulties and climatic extremes regularly encountered on the West Coast Te Tai o Poutini. Overnight use is more intensive at some sites and at certain times of the year.

Within the backcountry-remote zone an extensive network of backcountry facilities (such as roads, routes, tracks, huts, bridges, cableways and signs) and road-end facilities (car parks, shelters, track information) provide access to a wide range of backcountry experiences. Many of these facilities pre-date the establishment of the Department of Conservation (1987) and were originally provided by the New Zealand Forest Service for their wild animal control operations. As a result, many of the huts, tracks and bridges were not designed primarily as a recreational resource, although from the outset they were available for recreational use. Trampers, climbers, hunters and fishers have traditionally used these facilities and, in the past, access has been largely on foot. However, in some places these patterns are now undergoing change as new activities (e.g. kayaking, rafting, mountain biking) create demands for access to areas in the backcountry-remote zone. Increased use is also now being made of air access for both new and traditional forms of backcountry recreation.

2.21 Further detail of the significance of the values relating to recreation is provided in **Appendix E**. This provides a synopsis of the significance of the values assessed, in accordance with the relevant planning provisions.

3. RECREATIONAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

3.1 Effects on recreation are considered in two ways:

(a) Changes to recreation opportunities. These relate to the physical ability to carry out a recreation activity. For example, a reduced flow in Morgan Gorge directly affects the ability to kayak that part of the Waitaha River, but it does not affect the opportunity of tramping into Kiwi Flat and staying at the Kiwi Flat Hut or canyoning in Whirling Water. The change in flow levels might affect the experience of those visiting the hot springs near the bottom of Morgan Gorge due to reduced noise and power in the river depending on the flow at that time, but the opportunity remains.

(b) Changes to recreation values. Presently, the core value of the Upper Waitaha Valley lies in its managed 'backcountry-remote' setting characteristics. As above, these are defined by low encounter rates with other visitors, low levels of service in terms of huts and tracks, and a high-quality natural setting remote from the evidence of human developments that are not associated with low-level recreation services. The introduction of new activities / structures into these areas reflects a fundamental change to its character and alters its values. Introducing hydro generation infrastructure into a 'backcountry-remote' setting can therefore affect the experience of all visitors to the Upper Waitaha Valley. While this change will be most evident nearer Morgan Gorge and Kiwi Flat where visitors will encounter the infrastructure, for kayakers using the river in its higher reaches, knowing that the river is hydro-controlled may also reduce that experience for some (a perceptual rather than direct effect). The change in experience may be sufficient to displace some visitors to other settings with no similar infrastructure, and may diminish the quality of experience of, for example, a visitor to the Morgan Gorge hot springs. Alternatively, the change in the setting, for example through improved access, could alter the existing low use environment by increasing recreational use.

3.2 Accordingly, the only recreation opportunity affected by the Scheme is white water kayaking in Morgan Gorge. However, effects on recreation values in the Upper Waitaha Valley may accrue to any visitor to that setting directly where the Scheme is visible, and perceptually for some by their simply knowing the Scheme is there (and the River is no longer 'wild' or 'natural') even when the Scheme components cannot be seen. The effects at the regional level (the West Coast) have been considered as well as at the local level (i.e., the Waitaha Valley).

3.3 In relation to the levels of effects, a seven-point level of effects assessment from very low, low, low-moderate, moderate, moderate-high, high and very high has been applied. This allows for a reasonable differentiation to be made among the various levels of effects being assessed.

Summary of potential effects (unmitigated)

3.4 Effects of the Scheme on recreation may potentially result from:

(a) Construction activities at the headworks (Kiwi Flat), at the Power Station Site and in constructing the access road and transmission line corridor between Macgregor Creek and the Power Station (temporary effects).

(b) The modified flow regime between the top of Morgan Gorge and the Power Station tailrace (2.5 km). This includes controlled and uncontrolled flow decreased and increases at the weir as a result of, for example, Scheme start-up or station shut-down or trip.

(c) Introduction of headworks at the entrance to Morgan Gorge and generation infrastructure (and associated Access Road and transmission line corridor from Macgregor Creek to the Power Station) into a 'backcountry-remote' managed setting which has minimal infrastructure (and that being only for recreation purposes).

(d) Views from the access track at the lower end (Power Station) of the Upper Waitaha Valley, and encountering infrastructure, (roading, transmission and generation infrastructure, including the infrequent by-pass valve plume).

(e) Knowledge of the existence of the Scheme creating a perceptual effect for some.

(f) Interactions between visitors to Kiwi Flat and Scheme maintenance and operational activities at the Headworks. These include:

(i) Maintenance work in the bed of the river to clear gravels and rocks from the intake area, preferably over summer (January to March) to avoid the whio breeding season and during low flows, relying on a 12 to 20 tonne excavator. This activity is unlikely to affect kayakers due to their need for high flows, but will occur over relatively high use periods for other activities.

(ii) Site visits occurring twice weekly in the first year of operation, thereafter easing to weekly. Access for maintenance will mostly be via light vehicles or small trucks that will access the Headworks through the access tunnel, and/or by foot with occasional periods of helicopter use.

(iii) Infrequent sounding of a warning siren at Kiwi Flat whenever a Power Station trip occurs, indicating a partial or full cease of water diversion to the intake and a potential consequential increase in flow into Morgan Gorge of up to 23 m^3/s. The same siren will be heard at the Power Station.

3.5 A full summary of the scales of effect (unmitigated and mitigated) is presented below and in **Table 1** on page 21. Mitigation options are also summarised in this section.

Construction

3.6 During construction of the Scheme there will be unavoidable short-term and **very high** adverse effects on the recreation values of the Upper Waitaha Valley and at the tramping track near the proposed access road and transmission line corridor and the Power Station Site. Weir construction will also affect the opportunity to kayak Morgan Gorge. The construction footprint covers and influences a wider area than that of final Scheme infrastructure operational effects, and includes construction noise, helicopter movements and laydown areas, but will be temporary (three to four years).

3.7 Mitigation requires limiting the scale of the construction footprints and minimising the duration of activity.

3.8 An alternative alignment for the recreation access track in the Lower Waitaha Valley has been included in the project description to avoid, as much as possible, new infrastructure (access

road and transmission line corridor, and Power Station), and will be built prior to construction commencing, maintaining effects here at the low and transitory level.

Operation

Effects on recreation opportunities

3.9 For those who kayak the **Morgan Gorge** the Scheme has the potential (without mitigation) for a **very high** level of adverse effects on recreation opportunities by:

(a) constraining, via a reduction in days of suitable residual flow, kayaking opportunity in the 2.5 km abstraction reach (and for those who would otherwise kayak Morgan Gorge an additional 1530 m portage from the top of Morgan Gorge to 'Alpha Creek');

(b) modifying the entry into Morgan Gorge by introducing a weir at the Gorge entrance;

(c) creating a public safety risk from planned and unplanned changes in flow at the Headworks by Scheme start-up or shut down or unplanned outages – potentially affecting kayakers within Morgan Gorge at the time, or users of the hot springs (unplanned outages are estimated likely to occur four times annually lasting 30 minutes); and

(d) imposing a new requirement to communicate with an external entity (Westpower) if ceases to abstraction are sought for the Morgan Gorge and/or the Douglas Creek reaches.

3.10 Preferred kayaking flows identified by the Department of Conservation of 17.5 to 22.5 m^3/s (Wightwick, 2015:23) are currently available 15.5% of the time and will reduce to 2.5% availability (57 days per year to 9). Over the more popular summer kayaking period that flow regime will be available for 4.5% of the time as opposed to 29% naturally (106 days per year to 16). Flows above 22.5 m^3/s would be reduced from 42% of the time to 15% on an annual basis, and 24% over summer. A kayaking opportunity relies on the coincidence of a range of flow and weather factors, such as the need to kayak on a receding flow for safety reasons, avoiding any incoming bad weather, and general group and transport organisation. These figures therefore over-estimate the true kayaking opportunity on the river (because a preferred flow also needs to coincide with other factors).

3.11 The effect of planned and uncontrolled changes in flow at the Headworks– by Scheme start-up or shut -down or unplanned outages – are assessed by AusHydro in their 2025 report *Waitaha Hydro Project - Downstream Flow Modelling*. AusHydro assessed the risk of unexpected inundation of the hot springs and increased hazard within the white water setting of the Gorge. The greatest river level rise following load rejection would occur when station flow is maximum (23 m^3/s) and the residual flow in the Gorge is minimum (3.5 m^3/s) – a total river inflow rate of 26.5 m^3/s. In such a case, there would be no kayakers in the Gorge due to low flows, and no potential to inundate the springs (requiring a minimum 50 m^3/s flow). The assessment concludes that at other times there is, conservatively, a very low (but slightly uncertain) potential for a public safety risk within the gorge as a result of rapid flow changes, and recommends the installation of a 10 m^3/s bypass valve at the Power Station to mitigate this risk, along with public safety warnings. The valve will allow the moderation of rapid flow changes by 10 m^3/s and, in the opinion of the authors, appropriately mitigate public safety risks in the Gorge.

3.12 The kayaking opportunity above Kiwi Flat will not be directly affected by the Scheme, although there may be an indirect effect if the potential for inadequate flows in the abstraction reach influences some loss of uptake of the kayaking opportunity above Kiwi Flat (due to the whole River being unable to be run) – noting also that many kayakers will currently portage Morgan Gorge for safety reasons. For some kayakers there may also be a perceptual effect of knowing that the river, as a whole, is no longer 'wild' or 'natural'. The effect on opportunity for kayaking the Waitaha River upstream of Morgan Gorge is therefore likely to be **low to moderate**.

3.13 Mitigation will rely on providing kayakable flows at agreed times, and maintaining safe kayak access into the Gorge past the weir structure. Significant flexibility will be required in timing ceases to abstraction, and potentially in defining their scale (i.e. maintaining a preferred flow in Morgan Gorge and not necessarily the full flow). Planning a relatively high-risk kayaking expedition on the Upper Waitaha River requires consideration of many factors. White Water NZ has agreed with Westpower that, in light of an agreed number of no-take days for kayaking, financial compensation and other Scheme components they consider that the adverse effects of the Scheme on paddle sports / whitewater recreation have been appropriately mitigated.

Effects on recreation values

3.14 During the operation of the Scheme, all recreational activities beyond kayaking in the Waitaha Catchment including tramping, hunting, canyoning and hot spring use will remain fully accessible. Jet boating and angling in the Lower River will be unaffected.

3.15 The Scheme's introduction of control and generation structures, with associated changes in flow over a 2.5 km section, on an otherwise natural free-flowing river will change the visitor experience from that of a backcountry-remote setting, albeit more-so nearer the Morgan Gorge and Kiwi Flat areas. Periodic maintenance activities at the intake (gravel and boulder clearing, inspections by vehicle and/or helicopter) will compound effects within the Kiwi Flat area.

3.16 The direct effects of the Scheme on visual amenity, landscape and natural character for recreational users are limited to defined visual catchments, reducing at a distance. These effects are addressed by Bentley, James (2025) Waitaha Hydro Scheme assessment of environmental effects: landscape (**Landscape Report**).

3.17 Kiwi Flat is a core feature of the recreational experience in the lower section of the Upper Waitaha Valley. The entrance to Morgan Gorge is a key element of that, with the swingbridge passing directly over the site of the proposed weir, and the access track to Kiwi Flat Hut passing via the broad riverbed immediately adjacent. The introduction of the weir structure at Morgan Gorge, along with the lowered flow and periodic maintenance, will change the visual and aural experience at and near the swingbridge, and at the entrance to the Gorge as experienced from the river flats.

3.18 Most visitors to Kiwi Flat confine their visit to the wider Kiwi Flat area. Relatively few visitors head further up the Upper Valley to or past Moonbeam Hut or to and past Scamper Torrent Hut, and either return as part of a day trip, or stay overnight at Kiwi Flat Hut. Hunters and canyoners rely on the Kiwi Flat Hut as a base. The change of the River from an uncontrolled natural state to one featuring hydro infrastructure and modified flows will adversely affect the experience of the backcountry-remote setting at Kiwi Flat (noting the Scheme will not be visible from the hut),

and for some this will affect their experience of the entire Upper Waitaha Valley (through a perceptual effect of the loss of an undeveloped environment).

3.19 While individual reactions to the change in setting characteristics will vary, the recreation setting is managed for its backcountry-remote values, and these will be compromised to some extent. The back-country remote experience within the Scheme (abstraction reach), and more-so nearer Morgan Gorge and Kiwi Flat where the weir will be visible, including for some 800 m to 1 km upstream will, without mitigation, result in a **very high** (**high** with mitigation) change to the currently managed backcountry-remote recreational setting. Beyond those areas, the Scheme's effects on remoteness will diminish to **low-moderate** due to transitory effects for those continuing up the Upper Valley and perceptual effects (simply knowing the Scheme is there).

3.20 However, visitors who do not pass through the Kiwi Flat area, such as those relying on only the huts higher in the Upper Waitaha Valley as part of tramping trips passing between valleys, such as County Stream, Top Waitaha and Ivory Lake Huts, will have no experience of the infrastructure and will be unaffected.

3.21 In the Upper Waitaha Valley, the effect of access road and transmission line (from Macgregor Creek to the Power Station) and the Power Station will delay the experience of entering the backcountry-remote setting of the Waitaha Valley conservation area. Conversely, kayakers exiting the river and walkers returning from Kiwi Flat will exit their remote experience earlier than currently. The Landscape Report indicates that the river in the abstraction reach downstream of Morgan Gorge will retain high natural values. Rerouting the current track alignment will minimise interactions with infrastructure and maintain the scale of effect to a **low to moderate** level.

3.22 A more finely grained assessment for all components of the proposal for recreation values by activity are detailed in **Table 1** on page 21.

Regional effects

3.23 At the regional level, the unmitigated adverse effect of the Scheme on West Coast recreation and tourism will be **low** due to the small scale of the Scheme, the high number of alternatives available for all activities affected by the Scheme and the relatively low level of use of the Kiwi Flat area.

3.24 The net effect on the West Coast kayaking scene is also likely to be **low**. This is due to the number of kayaking alternatives, the ability to retain the kayaking opportunity in the Morgan Gorge, and the relative low level of use of the Waitaha River, and far lower level of use of Morgan Gorge (although this is a normal characteristic of such extreme kayaking settings).

3.25 The Waitaha River was assessed in 2011 one of 14 class V runs with helicopter access on the West Coast, and I see no reason why this assessment would have changed since. Class IV and V runs were identified as the most common kayaking opportunities on the West Coast (24 and 14 runs respectively). There is a high level of choice for high-grade kayaking options on the West Coast, and the Waitaha contributes to a relatively abundant kayaking opportunity setting (and hence the significance of the region at the international level).

3.26 The West Coast will retain its international reputation as a challenging kayaking setting with the Scheme in place, and the Morgan Gorge (and the remainder of the River) will retain its ability to challenge highly-skilled kayakers, albeit with additional restrictions on its use due to the need to

confer with an external entity (Westpower) if a cease to abstraction is required to provide a natural or preferred flow. However, this change from an uncontrolled river for kayaking may diminish a key quality which makes the Morgan Gorge and the Waitaha River internationally significant (albeit for a relatively small number of highly skilled kayakers).

3.27 In terms of tramping and hunting at the regional level, the scale of effect is likely to be **low**, considering the large scale of the backcountry-remote recreation setting on the West Coast.

3.28 Further detail of the effects of the Scheme is provided in **Appendix D**.

ADVERSE EFFECTS MANAGEMENT

3.29 The adverse effects of the Scheme on the wild and scenic qualities and recreation values of the Waitaha River are difficult to mitigate. The key issue is a change from an uncontrolled and undeveloped state to one with hydro structures at the Power Station Site (including roading and transmission) and the weir and portal entrances at the Headworks at Kiwi Flat, and a controlled flow regime though the abstraction reach, with periodic maintenance activities. The Landscape Report details how visual amenity and natural character effects of the Scheme in both the Upper and Lower Valleys have been managed, and these actions are fundamental to minimising adverse effects on recreation values.

3.30 There are management opportunities to maintain – as far as is possible – quality recreational opportunities and experiences in the Upper Waitaha Valley.

3.31 There is the potential to increase visitor activity in the Upper Valley by improving the quality of the tramping track between Macgregor Creek and Kiwi Flat. However, as above, this has both pros and cons, as providing easier access may increase visitors and further change the current recreational experience. Therefore, this is a decision best made by users and managers of the conservation area. The preferred option is to offer financial support to, for example, a group like Permolat, to support recreation services that may be in the Waitaha Valley or elsewhere in the Region.

3.32 Potential mitigation options (beyond managing the landscape effects of infrastructure) that have been included as part of the Scheme design include:

Kayaking

- Design the weir, in cooperation with White Water New Zealand, to allow safe kayaking access to Morgan Gorge.
- Provide no-take days, or controlled flow levels, to allow kayaking through Morgan Gorge, with adequate flexibility to suit the level of planning required to paddle in the Upper Waitaha Valley.
- Provide a bypass valve and flow control system to avoid safety effects for in-river recreation in the event of a Scheme emergency shut-down. The bypass valve and flow control system can also potentially provide better flow management during no-take days improving the certainty for, recreational benefit of, those days. A siren will be installed at the intake and Power Station to warn of the potential for flow changes when abstraction is reduced due to a Power Station trip. Signs advising visitors of the function of the siren will be necessary at, for example, Kiwi Flat Hut and trackside at or downstream of the Morgan Gorge swingbridge.

- Provide online telemetry of actual flows in the Waitaha River immediately upstream of the weir to enable kayakers to take advantage of natural flows, for within the abstraction reach as well as the paddling options upstream.
- Provide online information on construction activities, including the type, location and duration of works, potential hazards (including in-river hazards), advice on avoiding hazards and construction activities generally, and any effects on the flow regime.
- Improve access for the kayak portage from the top of Morgan Gorge to 'Alpha Creek' to address lowered kayak amenity in the abstraction reach (this may be located on either bank of the river, but private land access issues on the true left suggest it will remain on the true right).

All users

- Realign the access track upstream of Macgregor Creek to avoid, as much as possible, Scheme infrastructure (as detailed in the **Landscape Report**).

3.33 Additional potential mitigation options (beyond managing the landscape effects of infrastructure) not already included as part of the Scheme design include:

Kayaking

- Enhance kayaking experiences and access in other rivers of the region.

All users

- Financially support track development and maintenance in the Waitaha Valley, or elsewhere in the region, to enable user groups to best respond to changes in the setting.
- Relocate the swingbridge over the Morgan Gorge at Kiwi Flat to reduce visibility of the weir and diversion structure, in discussion with the Department of Conservation and user groups (such as Permolat).

3.34 Notably, as stated, White Water NZ has agreed with Westpower that based on mitigations and compensation that the adverse effects of the Scheme on paddle sports / whitewater recreation have been appropriately mitigated.

4. SUMMARY

4.1 The recreational effects of the Scheme, and potential mitigation measures, are set out in **Table 1**. This considers construction effects, operational effects on recreation opportunities, and operational effects on recreation values.

Table 1: Scheme effects and mitigation summary			
Activity	**Unmitigated level of effect**	**Potential mitigation**	**Residual level of effect**
Construction			
All	Very high but temporary	▪ Reroute lower track access prior to construction to avoid as much as possible Power Station Site infrastructure. ▪ Online construction activity advice. ▪ General management of construction activities to manage noise, minimise lighting, to limit footprint and limit in-river water quality effects.	Very high but temporary
Operation – recreational opportunities			
Kayaking opportunity – Morgan Gorge Douglas Creek abstraction reach	Very high – change of kayaking opportunity	▪ Agreed ceases or limits to abstraction. ▪ Provide a bypass valve and flow control system to avoid safety effects for in-river recreation in the rare event of a Scheme emergency shut-down. The bypass valve and flow control system can also potentially provide better flow management during no-take days improving the recreational benefit of those days. Warning siren and signs. ▪ Weir construction to allow in-river or other kayak passage to be agreed with WWNZ. WWNZ and Westpower have agreed that Westpower will continue to consult with WWNZ during the design and construction process for the Scheme in relation to the provision of safe kayak passage involving portage across and around, the weir. Online telemetry of flows upstream of the weir. ▪ Support for regional kayaking development and / or agreement with WWNZ. Westpower and WWNZ have agreed measures to mitigate the potential effects of the Scheme on kayaking such that WWNZ are neutral on the application for the Scheme.	WWNZ notes in its agreement with Westpower that is content that the adverse effects of the Scheme on paddle sports / whitewater recreation have been appropriately mitigated

Kayaking opportunity – upstream of Morgan Gorge	Low to moderate – no direct effect, but catchment changes may result in reduced uptake.	▪ Online telemetry of flows upstream of the weir. ▪ Support for regional kayaking development in agreement with WWNZ. As above, agreement between WWNZ and Westpower has been reached as to how the potential effects of the Scheme on kayaking are to be mitigated such that WWNZ is neutral on the application for the Scheme.	Low - moderate
Kayaking opportunity – whole river	Moderate - high	As for Morgan Gorge above	Moderate
All activities – opportunity – Upper Waitaha Valley	Nil (opportunity unaffected)	Scheme infrastructure design as per landscape report.	Nil
Angling	Nil. Activity predominantly below and at State Highway	None required	Nil
Jet boating	Nil. Low use setting.	None required but online flow information services may assist boating.	Nil or very mildly positive
Operation – recreational values – localised effects			
Managed backcountry remote experience-abstraction reach, Morgan Gorge and Kiwi Flat (altered flows and visible infrastructure)	Very high (structures make a fundamental change to the managed remote experience)	▪ Scheme infrastructure design as per Landscape Report. ▪ Realignment of lower access track near the Power Station And potentially (in consultation with users) ▪ Improve track standard for kayak portaging of Morgan Gorge ▪ Relocate Morgan Gorge swingbridge to limit visibility of weir infrastructure ▪ Track and recreation asset development fund to allow appropriate access development and maintenance by user groups potentially to be achieved through agreements with parties such as DOC, Permolat, WWNZ and Federated Mountain Clubs or others	High
Managed backcountry remote experience – rest of the Upper Waitaha Catchment	Low to moderate (transient for those who walk up the whole Upper Valley, perceptual effects (from knowing the river tamed).	As above	Low - moderate
Lower Waitaha Valley	Nil	None required	Nil

Operation - recreational values – regional effects			
All activities	Low. There are numerous alternative backcountry-remote and white-water settings. This assessment recognises that the Waitaha Valley has some local characteristics, such as poor access through lower valley, and all white-water settings on the Coast have unique characteristics.	As above	Low

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Waitaha Study Area receives relatively low use from kayakers, trampers, hunters and canyoners – the latter a new activity in the Upper Valley with potential for growth. Low recreational use is a natural and preferred quality of the backcountry-remote management of the setting and not a reflection of low value. Its primary recreational values are its high-quality white water and backcountry-remote characteristics. For both values, the Waitaha contributes to a large West Coast backcountry-remote recreation setting.

5.2 The Scheme has the potential to affect the quality and nature of the recreation experience in the Waitaha Study Area by changes to the backcountry-remote characteristics of the Kiwi Flat and Douglas Creek settings (via the installation of the access road and transmission line corridor from Macgregor Creek to the Power Station Site, the Power Station itself and its tailrace, and periodic maintenance activities and infrequent by-pass valve events), an altered flow regime in the Morgan Gorge and much of the Douglas Creek reaches and the introduction of a weir and intake structures at the Headworks at the top of Morgan Gorge near Kiwi Flat.

5.3 Restrictions on the ability to carry out existing recreation activities in the Waitaha Valley (the recreation opportunity) are limited to white water kayaking. Restrictions include effects on those highly experienced kayakers paddling the Morgan Gorge, and on all kayakers on the river who portage the Gorge but use the river below it to complete their journey. The residual flow regime would reduce the availability of preferred flows for kayaking in Morgan Gorge (17.5 to 22.5 m^3/s, as identified by DOC) from 15.5% of the time naturally to 2.5% of the time with the Scheme in place (57 days per year to 9). This is a shift from some availability of mid-range flows to infrequent availability (and especially so when weather conditions are factored in).

5.4 Mitigation opportunities are available to reduce the scale of effects on kayaking (ceases to abstraction or the delivery of a preferred flow (potentially using the by-pass valve and flow control system), kayak access over or around the weir, regional compensation), but the net effect on kayaking opportunity in the abstraction reach would potentially be high. However, White Water NZ has agreed with Westpower that considering an agreed number of no-take days for kayaking, financial compensation and other Scheme components, that WWNZ is content that the adverse effects of the Scheme on paddle sports / whitewater recreation have been appropriately mitigated.

5.5 The net effect on the West Coast kayaking scene is likely to be **low** with mitigations in place.

5.6 If there are no changes to access levels in the Upper Valley, the tramping, canyoning and hunting experiences will remain ‘hard won’, but would be diminished by Scheme infrastructure and periodic maintenance at Kiwi Flat. Within the abstraction reach and at Kiwi Flat, the change to the backcountry-remote characteristics of the setting (the recreation values) due to the placement of structures will be **high** after mitigation (as it imposes a fundamental change) – more so at Morgan Gorge and Kiwi Flat where the weir structures are visible and visitors have the potential to be affected by maintenance activities. For the rest of the Upper Waitaha Valley, the effect on the values will be **low – moderate** (and nil for those who solely traverse the top of the catchment).

5.7 Mitigation opportunities are available to reduce interaction with structures in the Lower Valley by realigning the access track to avoid Power Station infrastructure, and at the Morgan Gorge

swingbridge to limit or avoid views of the weir. The hot springs in the Gorge will remain in place but within, normally, a quieter and less dramatic river-side setting.

5.8 As mentioned above, at the regional level, the scale of effect on recreation values is likely to be **low**, but effects within the Morgan Gorge / Kiwi Flat area of the Upper Valley will remain **high**, as most visitors to the Valley remain at Kiwi Flat or pass through it. This is a rather binary assessment considering the fundamental qualities of a defined backcountry-remote recreation setting. Further up the Upper Waitaha Valley the effects on values reduce to low-moderate (to nil for those whole solely traverse the top of the catchment).

5.9 There are **no** effects of note on angling or jet boating.

5.10 Construction activities at Kiwi Flat will have **very high,** but temporary and localised, adverse effects on all users in the Upper Valley due to noise, lighting and the presence of construction machinery and personnel.

5.11 Importantly, the relatively small scale of the head-works structure, the lack of impoundment at Kiwi Flat, and the scale of the Power Station means that the key components of the Scheme are removable if the generation capacity was ever to be no longer required.

APPENDIX A – FURTHER DETAIL ON THE PROJECT DESIGN AND PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION AS IT RELATES TO RECREATION

A.1 The Scheme involves diverting up to 23 m^3/s water from the Waitaha River where it enters Morgan Gorge at the downstream end of Kiwi Flat. The water would flow through a pressurised tunnel and penstock to the Power Station on the right bank of the Waitaha, downstream from Morgan Gorge above the confluence of Douglas Creek, where the diverted water would be returned to the river. A minimum residual flow of 3.5 m^3/s would be maintained in the Morgan Gorge and a section of Douglas Creek reach, with small additional inflows from tributaries in the abstraction reach.

A.2 The design of the weir is intended to incorporate safe kayak access over or past the weir crest and into the Gorge, with relevant features designed in consultation with kayaking representatives.

A.3 A diversion structure – the intake channel – would be built to the true right of the weir leading to a desander and a penstock intake. Sediment from the desander would be transported to the tailrace where it will be diluted by the water coming out of the Power Station before being discharged back to the river. Flushing would normally be carried out during floods or on their recession when the river is already turbid and at relatively high levels. There is not expected to be any deposition of material at the outlet.

A.4 The weir would create an initial backwater extending 200 to 300 metres upstream, which would rapidly fill with sediment, possibly after the first flood. The weir would have little effect on flood flows because the structure is upstream of the natural throat of the gorge.

A.5 The scale of the weir and diversion structures, and the limited aggradation in the river bed, means that the most obvious components of the Scheme would be removable, with the original river alignment at the entrance to Morgan Gorge able to be recreated.

A.6 A power station would be constructed upstream of the Douglas Creek confluence with road access to the Power Station on the true right of the Waitaha River. A tailrace would return all diverted flow to the river above the Douglas Creek confluence at ‘Alpha Creek’ (see **Figure 6**). The residual flow would therefore affect the River from the top of Morgan Gorge to this point (the 'abstraction reach', which includes Morgan Gorge and a section of the Douglas Creek reach).

A.7 The tunnel from the Power Station to the Headworks at the top of Morgan Gorge will provide access for construction machinery and materials to Kiwi Flat. A laydown area (Construction Staging Area 1) and temporary road to that laydown area would be required for construction and a short track from the tunnel portal to the river near the Morgan Gorge entrance would be required for maintenance.

A.8 There is no proposal to construct a road from the Power Station to Kiwi Flat which had previously been considered during Scheme development. The current proposal is to maintain the existing opportunity for recreational access to Kiwi Flat on the present alignment.

Operating regime – the residual flow

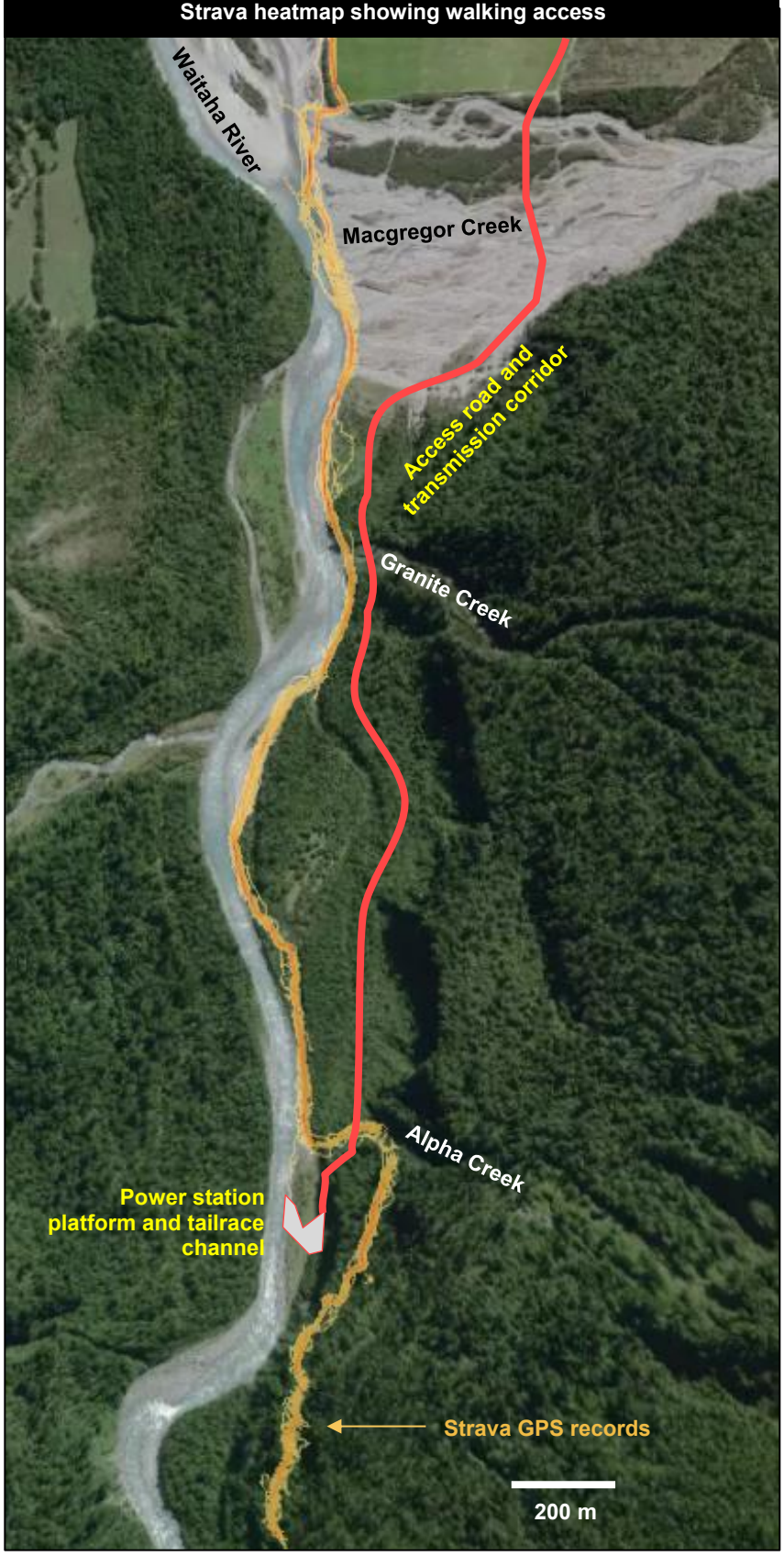
A.9 Preferred kayaking flows identified by the Department of Conservation of 17.5 to 22.5 m^3/s (Wightwick, 2015:23) are currently available 15.5% of the time and will reduce to 2.5%

availability (57 days per year to 9). Over the more popular summer kayaking period that flow regime will be available for 4.5% of the time as opposed to 29% naturally (106 days per year to 16). Flows above 22.5 m^3/s would be reduced from 42% of the time to 15% on an annual basis, and 24% over summer. A kayaking opportunity relies on the coincidence of a range of flow and weather factors, such as the need to kayak on a receding flow for safety reasons, avoiding any incoming bad weather, and general group and transport organisation. These figures therefore over-estimate the true kayaking opportunity on the river (because a preferred flow also needs to coincide with other factors).

A.10 **Attachment H** shows the proposed location of the Power Station, tailrace channel, access road and transmission corridor on the true right of the Waitaha River. **Figure 6** shows the Power Station and access road location overlaid on a Strava heatmap[9] which shows the route taken by walkers (trampers most likely) on the access between the Waitaha Valley road-end and Kiwi Flat Hut (for the 12 month period up to April 2025). These GPS tracks are recorded on personal GPS units and uploaded to a popular social media app (Strava), and are shown here to indicate the location of the walking access route commonly used.

A.11 Scheme infrastructure is located near the walking access near Granite Creek and intersects with the access route at Alpha Creek. The Power Station would be near the access route, and the heatmap shows a walking record on the river flat proposed to be occupied by the Station

Figure 6: Power Station, access road and transmission corridor over Strava heatmap showing walking access



[9] Strava is a social media application which uses GPS records from subscribers' smartphones and other devices uploaded to a central database, allowing speed and time comparisons with other cyclists, runners, walkers and trampers (for example), and the monitoring of individual activity or training targets. While the service is popular with professional athletes, its membership is dominated by casual recreation participants. Strava indicated that it had 50 million international users in early 2020 (80%

and tailrace channel. This could easily be a walker who has missed the track markers and has had to retrace their steps.

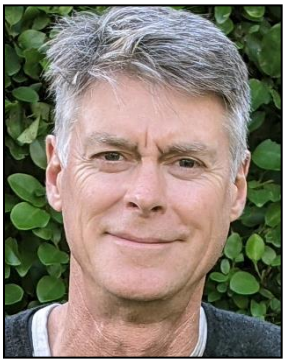
A.12 Scheme design provides for alternative foot access track near the power station to be maintained as a permanent track, in accordance with the DOC Track Construction and Maintenance Guidelines where practicable.

A.13 Kayakers will pass the Power Station Site when paddling the lower Waitaha River, after kayaking or portaging Morgan Gorge or when kayaking only the lower section. Trampers will have little opportunity to view the Power Station from the proposed alternative alignment of the formed access track. Relevant landscape effects are addressed by Bentley, James (2025) *Waitaha Hydro Scheme assessment of environmental effects: landscape* (**Landscape Report**).

A.14 The location of the Scheme infrastructure in this location will delay the experience of entering a predominantly natural setting for walkers over approximately 1 km of the 4.5 km trek into Kiwi Flat Hut measured from the true left of Macgregor Creek.

outside the US) with an additional million joining per month, and in 2024 the company reported 120 million users. It is popular amongst regular cyclists and runners, but is also used by a wide variety of other pursuits, such as rowing, swimming and skiing. An international comparison between different forms of data-gathering in 2016 showed a range of 1% to 12% of users recording their activity on Strava; and that this is growing. Comparisons between track counter data and Strava records undertaken by the author of this report in Nelson suggest levels of Strava adoption as high as 73% for cyclists and 26% for pedestrians (predominantly runners). More accessible tracks appear to have a lower uptake of around 40% for cyclists and 7% for pedestrians. Such response rates would compare favourably to an on-site intercept survey of users in an outdoor setting, particularly since the Strava data are collected over all seasons and all day (an intercept survey would normally only cover relatively short time periods and be confined to specific interception points). Nevertheless, caution needs to be applied to the use of Strava data as they show participation by only Strava members. There will be an inherent bias to the more competitive and tech-savvy, and some data accumulate from users staying logged in when they are doing other activities, such as driving. Some records are also offset by tens of metres due to either poor GPS reception or map projection errors. However, most records appear in their correct locations. Strava is therefore a little like a tag and release programme. Strava essentially tags several thousand active people in an area and monitors where and how they recreate. Heatmaps indicate the cumulative activity of Strava subscribers in any setting. The brighter the colour, the more activity there. In their use for this study, the heatmap is presented only to indicate the location of the walking access into Kiwi Flat from the lower Waitaha Valley.

APPENDIX B – ROB GREENAWAY QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE



ROB GREENAWAY • CURRICULUM VITAE

Recreation and Tourism Research and Planning

Rob Greenaway has an academic and practical background in recreation, tourism and conservation management. He is experienced in planning and managing for public, community and commercial facilities and services in parks and reserves, and in urban and protected areas.
His strong skills in formal and informal data gathering, research analysis and journalism have been demonstrated in hundreds of project reports, management plans, publications, evidence, submissions and research papers over the past 30 years. Rob has published extensively in New Zealand, Australia and Asia (examples of articles and papers are available on www.greenaway.co.nz).

Core work is recreation and reserve management planning, and comprehensive and robust assessments of effects of large-scale infrastructure proposals. Rob has presented expert evidence at over 120 hearings, with experience in hydro, irrigation, wind, forestry, subdivision, roading, cycleways, mining, marine farming, discharges and coastal and tourism developments.

Work History from 1990

1997 - current:	Director, **Rob Greenaway & Associates (R&R Consulting (NZ) Ltd),** Nelson.
1995 - 1997:	Consultant in Recreation and Tourism, **Boffa Miskell Limited**, Christchurch.
1990 - 1995:	Consultant in Recreation and Tourism, **Tourism Resource Consultants**, Wellington.

SELECTED EXPERIENCE

Energy and river-related

Lochindorb Wind Limited Partnership, 2023–current: Assessment of wind farm effects near Balclutha.

Westpower, 2012–current: Investigations and evidence for Waitaha River hydro proposal.

Manawa Energy / Trustpower, 2005–current: Effects assessment work and evidence on four proposed and 11 existing hydro schemes (including Kuratau, Mangahao, Arnold, Coleridge, Wairau, Pātea, Mangahao, Matahina, Motukawa, Mangorei, Beaumont, Wheao, Kaimai and Kaniere). Wind farm impact assessments in Whanganui and Central North Island.

Meridian Energy, 2004–current: Assessments of effect and evidence presentation for seven hydro schemes (including Pūkaki, Waitaki, Mokihinui, Manapouri, Waiau), three wind farms (including Project Hayes) and two irrigation proposals. Review of Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan, preparation and presentation of evidence to Waitaki Water Allocation Board and reconsenting of Waitaki Scheme.

Otago Regional Council, 2022–2024: Regional outstanding waterbodies assessment (with Ken Hughey).

Hawke's Bay Regional Council, 2023–2024: Evidence for PPC7 relating to assessment methods for outstanding water bodies.

Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment / DOC, 2021: Recreation assessment for Lake Onslow/Aotearoa/NZ battery project.

Genesis Energy, 2021–2023: Effects assessment of operation of Tekapo hydro scheme for reconsenting.

Wairarapa Water, 2020–2021: Effects assessment for water storage scheme near Masterton.

Amuri Irrigation, 2018–2021: Review of effects of proposed irrigation infrastructure and water take, Hurunui River.

Ngaruroro River Water Conservation Order, 2017–2020: Analysis of recreation significance and evidence for Hastings District Council and Horticulture NZ.

Rangitata Diversion Management Ltd, 2015–2020: Review of effects of water storage and abstraction on Rangitata River, including proposal for an artificial whitewater feature.

Otago Regional Council, 2019–2020: Visitor survey of Manuherekia River and review of recreation values of Manuherekia River and Dunstan Creek.

Alliance Mataura, 2018–2019: Survey of recreation use of Mataura River and review of discharge effects for consent renewal.

Otago Regional Council, 2017–2019: Social values assessments for the Arrow and Clutha catchments to support regional planning for water quantity**.**

Environment Canterbury, 2018: Recreation assessments for four rivers for the Braided River Management & Certainty (BRIDGE) Project (with Boffa Miskell).

Outstanding Freshwater Bodies project, 2015–2016: Development of methods for identifying nationally outstanding rivers for recreation (with Golder Associates for Auckland and Hawke's Bay Regional Councils)

Environment Canterbury, 2015: Preparation of resource document and RiVAS assessment for jet boating in Canterbury (with Dr Ken Hughey and Rob Gerard).

Silver Fern Farms, 2014: Expert evidence in relation to a discharge into the Waimakariri River.

Waimea Water Augmentation Committee, 2010–13: Recreation assessment for irrigation/flow augmentation proposal (with Tonkin & Taylor).

Hurunui Water Project Ltd, 2009, 2011–13: Recreation AEE for water storage scheme on Hurunui River.

Pioneer Generation, 2009–12: Evidence for Kawarau Water Conservation Order for Nevis River.

Mighty River Power, 2011: Assessment of effects for wind farm proposal (Puketoi).

Genesis Energy, 2010–12: Assessment of effects for wind farm proposal (Castle Hill).

Contact Energy, 2011. Review of hydro options on Clutha River.

Environment Canterbury, 2010: Review of Opihi/Opuha irrigation area within Canterbury Water Management Strategy (through Golder Associates and with Lindis Consulting).

Norske Skogg, Tasman JV, 2010: Expert evidence for mill discharge on Tarawera River.

MainPower, 2008–11: Mount Cass wind farm consent application recreation assessment and evidence.

Lincoln University, 2009–10: *A Significance Assessment Method for River Values*, peer review of main report and activity-specific reports.

Fish & Game Council, Canterbury, 2009: Hurunui River Water Conservation Order evidence.

Environment Canterbury, 2005–06: Visitor survey for lower Waimakariri River.

Central Plains Water Trust, 2006: Recreation development planning for proposed irrigation scheme (with Steve Gurney and GHD).

King Country Energy, 2005: Expert evidence for proposed Mokau River hydro scheme.

Bay of Plenty Energy, 2005: Assessment of effects for proposed upper Kaituna River hydro scheme.

Contact Energy, 2005: Expert evidence for Clyde and Roxburgh hydro scheme re-consenting.

Hurunui Community Water Scheme, 2004: Assessment of effects for preliminary irrigation proposal.

Environment Canterbury, 2000–01: Recreation survey of the Hurunui River and assessment of significance.

Ministry for the Environment, 1998. Recreation section of *Flow guidelines for instream values* river management guide.

ECNZ, 1998. Recreation research for resource consents for Tongariro Power Diversion Scheme (with Kay Booth & Boffa Miskell Ltd).

Assessments of effect and expert witness evidence

NZSki, 2025 – current: Impact assessment for Remarkables Skifield expansion.

Christchurch City Council, 2023–current: Impact assessments for reconstruction of Akaroa Wharf (with Enviser).

Santana Minerals, 2024–current: Effects assessment for Bendigo gold mine proposal.

Port of Tauranga, 2023–current: Assessment for reconsenting of harbour dredge activities.

Bathurst Resources, 2023–current: Assessments for mining works on Denniston and Stockton Plateaus**.**

Mowbray family, 2023–current: Assessment for consent for helicopter activity, Westmere, Auckland.

Treetops Adventure, 2022–current: Concession and consent application for high-ropes course in Hanmer Springs.

OceanaGold, 2020–current: Review of effects of Waihi North project (with Mitchell Daysh).

Skyline Enterprises, 2024–2025: Submission evidence for proposed aerial lift amenity area at Franz Josef.

Auckland Council, 2024–2025: Open space assessment and evidence for Private Plan Change 94.

Ravensdown, 2022–2024: Reconsenting Dunedin fertiliser works, recreation assessment.

Northport, 2020–2023: Effects assessment and evidence for port expansion and reclamation (with Enviser).

Waka Kotahi and Auckland Transport, 2022–2023: Assessments for NORs for Airport to Botany and North West rapid transit corridors and roading improvements (with Beca).

100WPS Trust, 2023: Evidence for marina redevelopment near Walter Peak on Lake Wakatipu.

Watercare, 2022–2023: Central Interceptor works on Point Erin Park, recreation assessment.

Kāpiti Coast District Council, 2021–2022: Assessment for wastewater treatment options in Waikanae (with Stantec).

Hurunui District Council, 2021–current: Effects assessment and evidence for a Flyride in Hanmer Springs.

Wellington Water, 2018–2022: Assessment for wastewater treatment options in Porirua (with Stantec).

Bayview Maitahi Proposed Plan Change 28, 2022: Evidence for plan change for residential development in Kaka Valley, Nelson.

Kaikōura District Council, 2022: Effects of Wakatu Quay tourism development proposal (with Enviser).

Graymont Ltd, 2019–2022: Quarry expansion and reconsenting existing operations (with PDP).

Whakatāne District Council, 2021: Assessment of effects for boat harbour development connected to the Whakatāne River (with Sally Gepp Barrister and Wardale).

Waka Kotahi, 2019–2021: Review of effects and benefits of proposed shared path between Ngauranga and Petone.

Talley's, Clearwater Mussels, Clifford Bay Marine, PALMS Ltd, Marine Farming Association, Aquaculture NZ and Friends of Onapua Bay, 2021: Several sets of evidence relating to Marlborough District Council's Proposed Marlborough Environment Plan for aquaculture (largely with Gascoigne Wicks).

Tasman Asphalt, 2021: Evidence for asphalt plant near the Waimea River (with Sally Gepp Barrister).

King Salmon, 2021: Assessment of effect for offshore Blue Endeavour salmon farm (with Gascoigne Wicks).

Yili Oceania, 2019–2020: Review of effects of proposed ocean outfall for dairy factory near Waimate.

Hutt City Council, 2018–2020: Recreation assessment and evidence for coastal shared path proposal in the Eastern Bays (with Stantec).

Auckland Council, 2020: Effects assessment and evidence for Te Whau shared path.

Ponui Aquaculture Ltd, 2020: Evidence for proposed marine farm, Firth of Thames (with Gascoigne Wicks).

Ohinau Aquaculture Ltd, 2020: Evidence for proposed spat farm in Mercury Bay (with Gascoigne Wicks).

Wellington Water, 2018–2019: Review of options for location of cross-harbour water supply pipeline (with Stantec).

Wellington International Airport Ltd, 2015–2020: Assessment of effect of runway extension and sea defences renewal.

Auckland Council, 2016–2019: Assessment and evidence for Orewa seawall consent application (with T&T).

Simcox Quarry, 2019–2020: Review of effects of quarry trucks on recreation in the road corridor.

Port Gore, 2017: Expert evidence in relation to marine farming, Marlborough Sounds.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 2017–2018: Assessment for SH3 Mt Messenger roading by-pass.

Lyttelton Port Company, 2013–2018: Review of effects of port deepening project and cruise ship berth development.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 2017: Assessment for Petone Interchange development.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 2017: Evidence for Northern Corridor Improvements, Auckland.

Suburban Estates Ltd, 2017: Evidence to QLDC plan review for development by iwi of Sticky Forest in Wanaka.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, 2016–2018: Review of Additional Waitemata Harbour Crossing for designation and coastal permit.

Mt Maunganui Dive Club, 2016–2017: Evidence for Rena consent appeal.

Clearwater Mussels Ltd, 2015: Assessment for plan change in Marlborough Sounds for marine farm.

Refining New Zealand, 2014–2017: Review of effects and evidence for Marsden Point port development.

CentrePort, 2014–2017: Review of effects of Wellington port development.

Trans-Tasman Resources, 2013–2015: Review of recreation and tourism effects of iron sand mining proposal off the South Taranaki Coast (with Argo Environmental) and presentation to EPA.

Peninsula Bay Joint Venture, 2016: Evidence for plan change proposal for Wanaka subdivision.

Silver Fern Farms, 2016: Assessment of effect for ocean outfall reconsent.

Harakeke residential development, 2016: Evidence for coastal subdivision in Tasman.

Chin Hill, 2015–2016: Public access review for proposed subdivision near Orewa.

Rena owners and insurer, 2012–15: Review of recreation and tourism effects of wreck removal options.

Auckland Transport, 2015: Assessment of effects on parks for major roading project (Mill Road).

Southland District Council, 2014–2016: Environment Court evidence in relation to the Around the Mountains cycleway proposal.

Fonterra, 2014–15: Review of recreation effects of dairy factory expansion in South Canterbury.

Direction Matiatia, 2014: Expert evidence in relation to a marina proposal on Waiheke Island.

Marlborough District Council, 2012: Expert evidence in relation to salmon farming, Marlborough Sounds.

Buller Coal, 2011–13: Expert evidence in relation to an open cast mine, West Coast.

Nelson Cycle Trails Trust, 2011: Expert evidence in relation to cycleway proposal, Nelson.

South Head Action Group, 2011: Expert evidence in relation to a road stopping, Kaipara.

Port Gore, 2011: Expert evidence in relation to marine farming, Marlborough Sounds.

Fonterra, 2010: Expert evidence for new dairy factory in Darfield.

Moutere Station, 2010: Expert evidence in relation to road stopping proposal, Otago.

Omaha Park Ltd, 2010: Expert evidence for coastal subdivision, Auckland.

Darby Partners Ltd, 2007–10: Presentation of evidence for subdivision at Parkins Bay, Wanaka. Preparation of evidence for Te Arai coastal park development. Review of West Wanaka development.

Port Marlborough NZ, 2010: Survey of current and prospective marina berth holders, recreation assessment of effect for Waikawa marina extension and expert evidence at Council hearing.

Lincoln Land Developments / Ngai Tahu, 2009: Expert evidence in relation to Dairy Block subdivision.

Fiordland Link Experience, 2004–10: Assessment of effects of proposed monorail in conservation area.

Lakes Environmental, 2009. Expert evidence in relation to commercial jet boating on Wilkin River.

Auckland Regional Council, 2009: Bayswater Marina development Environment Court hearing.

Queenstown Airport Corporation, 2009: AEE preparation for gravel extraction on lower Shotover River.

Wairewa Rununga, 2006–07: Recreation assessment for proposed Lake Forsyth opening structures.

Landco Ltd, 2007: Presentation of Environment Court evidence for subdivision at Long Bay, North Shore.

Infinity Investments, 2005–06: Expert evidence for two Wanaka subdivisions (Hillend, Peninsula Bay).

Recreation research and planning

Department of Conservation, 2025–current: Review of management options for Molesworth Recreation Reserve.

Tasman District Council, 2023–2024: Recreation value assessment of Tasman and Golden Bays to assist marine aquaculture area planning.

Nelson City Council, 2022–2024: Reserve General Policies development.

Koata Ltd and Nelson City Council, 2019–2024: Recreation management planning for private forest.

Christchurch City Council, 2023: Review of options for managing wharf development and use in Akaroa (with Enviser).

Auckland Council, 2022: Review of appeal material for Drury plan change proposal.

Nelson City & Tasman District Councils, 2019–2021: Reserve Management Plan for Saxton Field.

Port Nikau Joint Venture, 2021: Review of reserve development contributions assessment for residential development in Whangarei.

Bathurst Resources, 2019–2023: Visitor survey on Denniston Plateau and recreation access monitoring.

Nelson City Council, 2019: Review of esplanade reserve width requirements for recreation values for all waterways to advise policy in proposed Whakamahere Whakatū Nelson Plan.

Department of Conservation, 2018: Review of visitor management options for Rakau Rangatira project (kauri die-back, Waipoua Forest) (with Boffa Miskell).

Nelson City Council, 2017: Survey of Nelson Marina and boat ramp users

Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2016: Survey of users of the Hutt River Corridor.

Nelson City Council, 2016: Review of Open Space and Recreation Zone provisions for the proposed Whakamahere Whakatū Nelson Plan.

Nelson City Council, 2016: Survey of use of Maitai River ford.

Wellington City Council, 2015: Mount Victoria Masterplan (with Megan Wraight & Associates).

Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve Board, 2015. Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve and Kaka Point Historic Reserve Management Plan.

Nelson City Council, 2014–15: Survey of recreational use of Maitai and Roding Rivers.

Christchurch City Council, 2013–14: Survey of recreational and commercial use of 15 marine structures on and around Banks Peninsula.

Tasman District Council, 2012–2014: Regional Open Space Strategy and General Policies.

Meridian Energy, 2012: Survey of recreational use of the Waiau River.

Trustpower, 2007–2011: Surveys of recreational use of the Rangitāiki, Arnold, Wairau and Rakaia Rivers.

Lake Hood, 2007: Survey of Lake Hood residents and visitors (with Tonkin & Taylor).

Christchurch City Council, 2002–07: Visitor surveys for the Port Hills, Spencer Park, Sumner Beach, New Brighton Beach and users of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

Clutha River Parkway, 2006: Review of recreation and tourism benefits (with Dr Kay Booth and GHD).

Department of Conservation, 2003–04: National survey to quantify recreation displacement.

Christchurch City Council, 2003: Port Hills Recreation Strategy.

Meridian Energy, Project Aqua, 2001–02: Recreation survey of the Waitaki River and door-to-door survey of Waitaki Valley residents for AEE for recreation and community.

Journalism

More than 100 articles published in over 30 magazines and newspapers in Australasia and Asia since 1989. Interviews on over 20 radio stations for outdoor events and outdoor management issues. Instigated and appeared on two Television NZ items for outdoor recreation activities. Authored various publications, including the updated Tongariro National Park Handbook and the Samoa Visitors Bureau 'What to do and see' guide. Several hundred photos published in books and magazines in New Zealand and Asia. Editor of Mary Hobbs' books *Kiwi Tucker for the soul* and *Letters to America,* and story editor for *NZ Outside* (1996-2001).

BACKGROUND

Awarded the Ian Galloway Memorial Cup by the New Zealand Recreation Association in 2004: *To recognise excellence and outstanding personal contribution to the wider parks industry*.

Education

Diploma in Parks and Recreation Management (Distinction); Lincoln University 1987.
Postgraduate study in conservation management – 18 months, Lincoln University 1988 – 89.

Professional training and associations

Accredited Recreation Professional and Fellow of Recreation Aotearoa.

Chair of Nelson Marina Advisory Committee to the Nelson City Council, 2021 – 2023, Deputy from 2017.

Member of New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment, ex-executive member, 2006 – current.

Member, inaugural Sport NZ Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council, 2009 – 2013.

National Executive of Recreation Aotearoa, 2000 – 2005 (member since 1990). Previously Chair and currently member of Recreation Aotearoa Board of Accreditation for member accreditation to professional status.

Member of Cashmere Forest Park Campaign for the Port Hills Park Trust Board, 2005 – 2011.

Member of Board of Management, Styx River Living Laboratory Trust, 2002 – 2006.

Introduction to Māori language, University of Canterbury, 1996.

Selected conference papers and articles

Mapping recreation: A costly dangerous mess? Recreation Aotearoa National Conference, Queenstown 2016.

Assessing recreation in coastal plans – a case study of the Lyttelton Port Recovery Plan. NZ Association for Impact Assessment annual conference, Lincoln University 2016.

Keynote speaker. NZRA Coastal Recreation Seminar, Wellington 2014.

Christchurch 2025. Lincoln Planning Review. Vol 3. No 1. 2011.

The RMA and Recreation. Thinking Recreation – Recreation Aotearoa National Conference, Nelson 2011.

Recreation and tourism impact assessments: Rivers. Resource Management Law Association national conference, Christchurch 2010.

The effects of rural change on recreation and tourism, and vice versa. NZ Association for Impact Assessment annual conference, Papamoa 2009.

Recreation impacts: Coastal and lake-front environments. NZ Association for Impact Assessment annual conference, Nelson 2008.

An exploration of recreation displacement in New Zealand. Annals of Leisure Research, Volume 10 (2007).

Impact assessments for recreation. NZ Association for Impact Assessment annual conference, Dunedin 2006.

Measuring the significance of multi-use outdoor recreation resources: A comparative analysis of three sites in New Zealand. Annals of Leisure Research, Volume 5, 2002.

Visitor profiling: To what degree are users of open space dedicated, loyal, frequent, alternative and local, and in conflict? Recreation Aotearoa National Conference, Hamilton, 2002

Using Market Segmentation Analyses to monitor trends in recreation. Recreation Aotearoa National Conference, 2001

APPENDIX C – SCOPE AND APPROACH OF RECREATION REPORT

C.1 This report is based on a similar assessment completed by the same author in 2014. This report relies on much background data gathered at the time, with sufficient review to ensure that the information still applies, and with updated data where relevant.

C.2 The recreation and tourism values of the study area, preferences for development options, and potential adverse effects of the Scheme proposal, have been identified by:

- Four site visits to the study area between 2014 and 2024, including gaining an aerial overview of the entire Waitaha Valley by helicopter twice, walking both the true left and true right of the Morgan Gorge, exploration of Kiwi Flat and accessing the hot springs in the Gorge.
- Reference to a preliminary recreation effects assessment of the Scheme, as it was proposed in 2008, prepared by Lindis Consulting in 2008 (Booth 2008) including the findings of 23 stakeholder interviews (see Attachment 1 in **Appendix I** of this report). Data from these interviews are used in this report where referenced. All conclusions made in this report about the effects of the Scheme on recreation and tourism values are those of the author of this 2024 document and are based on subsequent research and a revised Scheme design.
- Reference to a 2012 review of information gaps in the 2008 assessment (largely due to developments over time) by the Department of Conservation (Ian Wightwick, 27 July 2012) and a further Departmental review of the 2014 application (Wightwick 2015).
- Attendance at public information days on the West Coast, staged by Westpower in 2012.
- Meetings by Westpower with representatives of White Water NZ (national and West Coast representatives) in 2012 and 2013, NZ Alpine Club in 2012 and 2013, and Federated Mountain Clubs in 2012.
- Interviews with relevant service providers and user group representatives (indicated as personal communications in the text of this report) in 2012 and 2013, with additional interviews with local landowners and helicopter operators to review any changes in access patterns up to 2024. Terrestrial access to the Valley from the West Coast relies on permission from the two landowners on the true right and left of the River, and kayak access to upstream of Morgan Gorge relies almost entirely on helicopter access.
- Review of relevant research, popular literature and online references, and conservation and regional policy documents.
- Meetings with the development and specialist assessment team to identify and understand development options, effects and mitigation opportunities.
- Review of relevant technical assessments of proposal, particularly terrestrial and aquatic ecology and landscape effects.

APPENDIX D – DETAIL OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

D.1 This section describes the recreational environment of the Waitaha River study area (the Waitaha catchment). It outlines the recreation opportunities within the study area, its land tenure and public access status, existing recreational facilities (and their maintenance) and the recreation management regime for the catchment.

SETTING DESCRIPTION

Recreation opportunity settings

D.2 The study area can be divided into the following recreation opportunity settings (illustrated in Figure 1):

- The upper Waitaha Gorge above County Stream. This is a grade 6 extreme kayaking experience limited to highly skilled kayakers, and was first run in 2013. Windhover Gorge, above the upper Waitaha Gorge was also first run 2013.
- The main stem of the Waitaha River from the confluence with County Stream (immediately below Windhover Gorge) to the bottom of the Waitaha Gorge. This provides a grade 5 whitewater resource currently used by advanced-level adventure kayakers, and was first run in the late 1990s.
- Morgan Gorge. This is a grade 6 kayaking experience limited to highly skilled kayakers, and was first run in 2010, with a first attempt in 2002. Most kayakers will portage all, or much of, Morgan Gorge.
- The river section from the bottom of Morgan Gorge to Douglas Creek. This set of rapids presents whitewater of variable grades, suitable for a range of abilities and is accessible by foot. Trout are present in the river below the Gorge, but the main recreational fishing setting is near the State Highway Bridge (fish numbers and size are low in the Douglas Creek reach, and angler access is poor).
- Kiwi Flat provides a backcountry-remote destination for trampers and hunters (who may stay at Kiwi Flat Hut or stop-over on longer tramps). Hut locations are shown in Figure 4.
- The Scamper Torrent 'weekend' tramping route. For some people this trip includes the Mt Durward – Headlong Spur circuit. The track facilitates access above the bushline onto the tussock tops.
- The headwaters and wider catchment area. This includes the upper Waitaha River basin (Windhover Gorge and above to Ivory Lake) and the spurs leading to and from the Waitaha Valley onto the open tops. These provide access to a smorgasbord of tramping options in the surrounding valleys and ranges. This setting offers the opportunity for remote and challenging multi-day alpine traverses.

Land tenure and public access

D.3 The Scheme lies within public conservation land which encompasses the Waitaha catchment upstream of the Macgregor Creek confluence (approximately). The land unit is the Waitaha Forest Conservation Area (its legal designation is Stewardship Area) comprising 30,796 hectares, but abutting other public conservation land spanning the Southern Alps.

D.4 **Figure 4** (p9) shows publicly accessible lands in the Waitaha valley, based on Land Information NZ (LINZ) data. This shows the location of public roads downriver of Douglas Creek and their disconnection with public land on the true left of the River. A road borders the boundary of the river on the true left, but this has been eroded and is now in the riverbed. The red dotted line from the road end on the true right indicates the existing access option to Kiwi Flat.

D.5 Access into the Conservation Area from the west is via Waitaha Road (on the true right of the River) and Allen Road (true left). The latter was traditionally the main access to the area, but relies on a section of track across private land which is not now generally available. A new track on the true right was cut in 2012. This relied on access on the true right of the Waitaha River downstream of Macgregor Creek, within the riverbed and adjacent to the privately-owned forested knoll often referred to as 'Point 202m' (see **Figure 4**). As at 2024 this section of access within the riverbed had eroded with the river flowing hard against its true right bank (see photo below). There is no cut track on the forested private land adjacent (the author of this report attempted access in April 2024 and, although some tapes had been placed to indicate a route, it was impassable due to, in the main, a cobweb of supplejack – although Strava data indicate that some walkers have used this route in the 12 months to Aril 2025). Walking access to the Waitaha Conservation Area from the west currently relies on crossing private farmland from either of the two road-ends, and gaining landowner permission.

D.6 Access beyond Macgregor Creek relies on a reasonably well-maintained track leading to the Kiwi Flat swingbridge (renovated prior to 2012 and funded by Westpower Ltd) which spans the top of Morgan Gorge and leads to Kiwi Flat hut on the true left, although requiring a river crossing of Whirling Water.

D.7 Helicopter access is often relied on, particularly for hunting, and particularly to Moonbeam Hut and County Stream Hut and by other recreational visitors to Ivory Lake and Top Waitaha Hut.

Waitaha River true right at Point 202m

D.8 Four operators have been identified as recently or currently active in delivering kayakers to the Waitaha River. The level and type of activity of these operators is discussed in section 5 for the recreation activities they service.

SETTING MANAGEMENT

DOC Conservation Management Strategy

D.9 The primary planning document which covers the Waitaha Forest Conservation Area is the DOC West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* Conservation Management Strategy (**CMS**) 2010-2020 (DOC, 2010). This document outlines the management intentions for the area.

D.10 The CMS uses a recreational zoning system to plan for the provision of recreation opportunities. The Scheme falls within the zone termed 'backcountry-remote'.[10] This zone is described by DOC (2010:122) thus:

> *The 'backcountry-remote' zone provides opportunities to access extensive natural settings where facilities are provided but a considerable degree of physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation is involved. Although users of these areas usually travel in groups for company and safety, the expectation is that groups will generally be small and that encounters with other groups will be infrequent, except on a limited number of high-use tracks and rivers. Huts and tracks that see relatively little use provide the opportunity for solitude for those who seek a greater sense of isolation and challenge but still need the security of some facilities, especially with the topographical difficulties and climatic extremes regularly encountered on the West Coast Te Tai o Poutini. Overnight use is more intensive at some sites and at certain times of the year.*
>
> *Within the backcountry-remote zone an extensive network of backcountry facilities (such as roads, routes, tracks, huts, bridges, cableways and signs) and road-end facilities (car parks, shelters, track information) provide access to a wide range of backcountry experiences. Many of these facilities pre-date the establishment of the Department of Conservation (1987) and were originally provided by the New Zealand Forest Service for their wild animal control operations. As a result, many of the huts, tracks and bridges were not designed primarily as a recreational resource, although from the outset they were available for recreational use. Trampers, climbers, hunters and fishers have traditionally used these facilities and, in the past, access has been largely on foot. However, in some places these patterns are now undergoing change as new activities (e.g. kayaking, rafting, mountain biking) create demands for access to areas in the backcountry-remote zone. Increased use is also now being made of air access for both new and traditional forms of backcountry recreation.*

D.11 The CMS identifies that concessionaire activity may take place within this zone. Several concessionaires were identified within the study area (discussed in section 5).

D.12 The objectives for 'backcountry remote' zones are (DOC, 2010:123):

1. *To provide access to a range of recreational opportunities via facilities that enable people to enjoy challenging natural settings in the backcountry.*
2. *To enable people to access extensive natural settings where:*
    a) *facilities are provided but a considerable degree of physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation is involved;*

[10] The other recreation zones are: gazetted wilderness areas, remote, front-country, intense interest sites.

b) *groups of recreational users are generally small and encounters with other groups are infrequent (except on a limited number of high-use tracks and rivers);*

c) *huts and tracks provide the opportunity for solitude for those who seek a greater sense of isolation and challenge, but still need the security of some facilities; and*

d) *overnight use is more intensive at some sites and at certain times of the year.*

D.13 Eight policies for 'backcountry remote' zones are identified (DOC, 2010:123). The relevant policies are:

- That the zone should be managed to meet the desired outcomes described (see below) within the document and appropriate facilities and services provided.
- That concession activity should be consistent with the objectives and may be regulated (limits are given for party sizes and the maximum occupation rated for public campsites and huts provided). Small to moderate group sizes and a moderate degree of risk is deemed appropriate for concessionaire operations within this zone.
- That aircraft landings may be authorised.

D.14 Other policies relate to recreation planning facets not relevant to the study area (popular campsites and formed roads).

D.15 The CMS provides a vision for public conservation lands in 2020 (the end of the term of the Strategy). This includes statements about the recreation and tourism outcomes envisaged for 2020. The study area falls within the 'Hokitika Place' (s4.2.6), which extends from the Taramakau River in the north to the Waitaha River catchment in the south and inland to the crest of the Southern Alps *Kā Tiritiri o te Moana*. The outcomes include:

- Scenic and historic walks.
- A range of opportunities associated with rivers and larger lakes.
- A comprehensive network of backcountry facilities (with almost all the valleys of the backcountry containing tracks, huts and bridges).
- Concessionaires providing recreational opportunities.

D.16 More specifically, the vision for 'backcountry remote' zones within the Hokitika Place includes the following statements (excerpts from DOC, 2010:248-249):

New Zealanders continue to regard the extensive Hokitika backcountry as the country's backcountry adventurer 'capital', because of the comprehensive network of backcountry tracks, routes and huts. Opportunities range from multi-day valley and trans-alpine tramping via remote and challenging terrain, to day tramps and weekend trips to accessible huts or natural hot pools (the latter are found in several valleys, including at Cedar Flats and in the Taipo valley). A number of tramping tracks and historic huts are associated with historic routes across the Southern Alps Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, especially Harper Pass Noti Taramakau, Browning Pass Noti Raureka and Whitcombe Pass Rakaia Wai Pakahi. Numerous opportunities exist for extended north to south traverses utilizing routes and passes into the Newton Saddle, Mikonui, Tuke, Mungo and Waitaha catchments. Circuitous routes are also available, such as the Scamper-Torrent circuit up the Waitaha Valley and down the Smyth Range. Recreational facilities are generally concentrated on valley floors along the more popular tramping and traditional access routes. However there are several huts, ridge routes and a few bridges specifically sited to maximise 'non-tracked' linkages between valleys. Such

facilities include Bluff Hut, Sir Robert Hut, Moonbeam Hut, County Stream Hut, County Junction swing bridge, Price Basin Hut and Ivory Lake Hut....

Hokitika is a world-renowned rafting and whitewater kayaking destination. The Styx, Toaroha and Kakapotahi rivers and Totara Lagoon are maintained as key places for kayaking that are free from high numbers of other users during kayaking trips.…

Irregular or occasional aircraft landing concessions may be granted throughout the backcountry-remote zone and the remote zone. Concessions may be granted for regular aircraft landings within the backcountry-remote zone where adverse effects on conservation values, recreational users, remote or wilderness values can be avoided or otherwise minimised. Regular landings may occur for the purpose of positioning backcountry recreationists (including hunters, rafters and kayakers) or for scenic landings (including scenic snow landings). Regular landing concession conditions specify restrictions on landing sites and frequency of landings.

D.17 The 'Hokitika Place' may be useful by providing a geographic planning boundary for the relevant part of the CMS, but does not provide an adequate scale of assessment for the supply of some recreation opportunities, particularly kayaking. The supply of kayaking opportunities must be considered on the regional scale due to the mobility of kayakers and their national and international origins. Assessments of significance for kayaking and other forms of recreation in this report are therefore assessed on a wider scale than just the 'Hokitika Place'.

D.18 In summary, the CMS plans for maintaining a backcountry-remote recreation experience within the Waitaha study area. This involves protecting extensive natural areas for the physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation that they afford to users. Recreational use is facilitated by aircraft access and concessions provisions, as well as maintaining basic facilities.

DOC Stewardship Land Review

D.19 The Department of Conservation commenced a review of the status of stewardship land it manages in 2021. Recommendation reports for each conservation area under consideration were published in 2022 with submissions closing in August of that year. No further analysis has been provided by DOC. The short 'conservation value' technical report for the Waitaha Forest Conservation Area (which includes the headwaters of both the Wanganui and Waitaha Rivers) noted, in relation to recreation:[11]

Setting *– This is a large area managed as a backcountry-remote zone. The eastern boundary of the area adjoins the Adams Wilderness Area. The department works in partnership with volunteer groups such as Permolat Trust and The Backcountry Trust* [who are discussed later in this report] *to maintain tracks, huts and bridges in this area. Tramping tracks and routes provide access up the Waitaha Valley to Kiwi Flat, Scamper Torrent, Moonbeam and County Stream huts. A tramping track and routes up the Wanganui River provide access to Hunters and Smyth Huts. Routes up to Blue Spur Lookout and Lamberts Tops provide access to the Adams Wilderness Area. Experienced people will also cross between the two catchments. This is challenging country – the Waitaha River and the Morgan Gorge are very challenging kayak runs. The Wanganui River is also used for rafting and kayaking, including guided operations.*

[11] https://ftp.doc.govt.nz/public/file/CUuXVPxVW0eFH70pUOc9_Q/SLR%20-%20WSI%20-%20HOK_52%20-%20Waitaha%20Forest%20-%20Technical%20Report%20MWP%20-%20DOC-6957277.pdf

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken *– Backcountry adventures for people who seek remote and wilderness experiences. The area is used by trampers, hunters, kayakers and rafters.*

Access *– Road access on the north bank of the Waitaha River provides access to the start of the track network in the Waitaha River, as well as road access on the north bank of the Wanganui River at SH 6. Helicopter operators provide air charter services to drop off hunters, trampers, kayakers and rafters in this area.*

D.20 The recommendation report included that of a Mana Whenua Panel – which sought to retain the stewardship classification due to the area's potential for hydro-generation – and of the Western South Island National Panel. The latter recommended classifying the area as a Conservation Park, stating, for recreation values:[12]

The assessment area contains recreation values associated with a diversity of activities. There is an established network of tracks linked by associated huts, maintained in partnership between the Department and volunteer groups such as Permolat Trust and The Backcountry Trust. The area is widely used by trampers and hunters. Rafters and kayakers utilise a range of rivers in the area, including guided operations on Wanganui River. Many hunters, trampers, kayakers and rafters access remote areas via helicopter charters. The classification of conservation park is considered to provide for these recreational values, being managed to facilitate public recreation and enjoyment as a secondary objective.

D.21 In February 2024 a briefing paper to the Minister of Conservation was presented seeking guidance on the next steps on stewardship classification. A final decision is reported to be expected in mid-2025.[13]

DOC Recreation opportunities review

D.22 In 2003/04, DOC undertook a national consultation process to discuss the level of provision of recreation facilities on public conservation lands. This 'recreation opportunities review' involved consultation with the community and key interest groups. In October 2004, DOC released its decisions from this review (DOC, 2004).

D.23 Proposals upon which the Department sought comment included the intention to maintain all huts within the Waitaha catchment at a 'minimal' level. DOC defined 'minimal maintenance' as:

Used for huts and other buildings. The building will be inspected by DOC on a regular cycle. Inspectors will travel with basic tools and equipment and some minor maintenance (that can be done during the regular inspections) will be undertaken. When the building is no longer weatherproof or becomes dangerous or unsanitary, it will be removed, unless there is a community group willing and able to bring it up to standard and maintained to standard (DOC, 2004:63-64).

D.24 Submissions to these proposals indicated a considerable level of interest in the Waitaha study area:

- Scamper Torrent Hut attracted the greatest number of submissions of any proposal within the Conservancy (20 submissions, all against the proposal for minimal maintenance – presuming seeking a higher level of maintenance, although this is not stated). DOC summarised the submissions' content thus: "Essential accommodation in the Waitaha –

[12] https://ftp.doc.govt.nz/public/file/PiuG2UbuJEOSxqAN-tJswg/SLR%20-%20WSI%20-%20HOK_52%20-%20Waitaha%20Forest%20-%20Recommendation.pdf
[13] See: https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/managing-conservation/stewardship-land/

Scamper Torrent – Headlong Spur route. Classic backcountry hut. Classic backcountry weekend trip" (DOC, 2004:9).

- Kiwi Flat Hut drew 13 submissions (all against minimal maintenance). Submissions' content was presented as: "Important accommodation in both the greater Waitaha Valley trip and the Scamper Torrent – Headlong spur route" (DOC, 2004:9).
- Moonbeam Hut[14] attracted 11 submissions (10 against and 1 for minimal maintenance). The summary of submission content states: "Part of the Waitaha system. Challenging location to visit. Well placed as accommodation when traversing the valley en-route to Ivory Lake" (DOC, 2004:10).

D.25 Through the consultation process, additional opportunities were raised. DOC noted that "Further facilities were deemed to be required in this [Hokitika] area in order to create the opportunity mix for which the Central West Coast backcountry was valued" (DOC, 2004:13). These additional opportunities included (amongst others) access into: Lower Waitaha/Kiwi Flat, the Scamper Torrent – Headlong Spur route, and the Waitaha and County systems including Smyth Range access.

D.26 Final decisions from the review resulted in a higher level of maintenance than originally proposed for four facilities and the reinstatement of three routes not originally proposed. Decisions about two huts and two bridges remained unchanged. No facilities were downgraded in maintenance level following public comment. Facility maintenance changes resulting from public comment were:

- Increased level of maintenance for Kiwi Flat Hut, Moonbeam Hut and Scamper Torrent Hut.
- Increased level of maintenance for County Junction bridge.
- Reinstatement of routes into the Lower Waitaha/Kiwi Flat, the Scamper Torrent access route and the Headlong Spur route (these were not originally proposed).
- No change to the proposed maintenance regime for County Stream Hut, Top Waitaha Hut, Morgan Gorge Bridge (also called the Morgan Gorge Swingbridge) and Moonbeam Bridge.

D.27 Some facilities were not encompassed by the document because there was already an intention by DOC to maintain them (it was business as usual). These include Ivory Lake Hut, which will be fully maintained.

D.28 The final decisions about facility maintenance show an increased emphasis placed upon the Waitaha catchment in response to public comment. The document summarised the situation thus:

> *Consultation reinforced the value placed by traditional backcountry users on the valley based 'classic' tramps. The provision of marked routes through the scrubline to the open tops, in the central Westland Beech gap, was also deemed as important facility provision to offer a variety of untracked linkages to other valleys (DOC, 2004:60).*

[14] Erroneously listed as County Stream Hut on page 7 of the document.

D.29 In summary, the 2004 review showed that demand existed from recreationists for a backcountry experience within the Waitaha Valley and its upper catchment. The recreation opportunity is described by DOC:

The Waitaha valley will offer recreationists the ability to undertake a wild valley traverse on nature's terms in the Hokitika backcountry. This will be supported through the retention of the key facilities only (DOC, 2004: 60).

Permolat volunteer maintenance group

D.30 Three huts are sited within the Waitaha River Valley: Kiwi Flat Hut, Moonbeam Hut and Top Waitaha Hut. Another three huts are sited within the wider Waitaha catchment: Scamper Torrent Hut, County Stream Hut and Ivory Lake Hut. All six are classified as 'basic', which means that they provide "very basic shelter with limited facilities and services".[15] They are six-bunk huts (with the exception of Scamper Torrent which is a four-bunker) and only Kiwi Flat Hut has a fire.

D.31 Two bridges span the Waitaha River: at the top of the Morgan Gorge and near the County Stream confluence.

D.32 The volunteer group Permolat, in association with the Backcountry Trust,[16] has been working since 2007 to redevelop and maintain tracks and huts in the Valley. **Table 2** shows the status of the tracks in the Catchment as recorded on the Remote Huts Westland website, which is used to coordinate Permolat activities. In 2014 The Permolat Trust was formed as a registered charity. The 'Remote Huts' website describes their aim:

The aim of Remote Huts and Permolat was to raise and maintain awareness of the lower-use back-country facilities and encourage and support the outdoor community to take ownership of them rather than leave it to some external agent or higher authority to do it. We figure those with the greatest investment in and personal connection with these structures are best able to look after them and ensure this legacy continues for future generations.[17]

Table 2: Waitaha catchment tracks status
Source: remotehuts.co.nz/tracks.html, accessed 3 September 2024. Verbatim

Track	Current condition	Last cut	Priority for re-cutting	Agency or person responsible	Next cut
Kiwi Flat from North Bank of Waitaha	Good although boggy in places on the section above the Morgan Gorge	2020	High	DOC Maintained	?
Kiwi Flat Via South Bank of Waitaha	Overgrowing but should still be followable	Some trimming and cruise taping 2019/ 20	Low	Rory McDougall?	?
Kiwi Flat – Moonbeam Track	Rough undulating line but track is reasonably good	2021	Medium	Permolat / Offers?	Ongoing
Scamper Torrent Hut from Kiwi Flat	Good	2023	Medium	All welcome!!	?

[15] https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-in-a-hut/hut-categories/
[16] https://www.backcountrytrust.org.nz/
[17] https://www.remotehuts.co.nz/about-us.html, accessed 3 September 2024.

Table 2: Waitaha catchment tracks status Source: remotehuts.co.nz/tracks.html, accessed 3 September 2024. Verbatim					
Track	**Current condition**	**Last cut**	**Priority for re-cutting**	**Agency or person responsible**	**Next cut**
Urquhart's Knob Track from Kiwi Flat	Vanished?	Early 1970s?	Low	No interest	?
Clearview Spur Track from Moonbeam Hut	Reasonably Good	Retrimmed 2021	Low-Med	Permolat	Ongoing
Moonbeam Hut to Chainman Creek	Reasonably Good. Some fresh damage in places	2019	Medium	Permolat / DOC	?

Kiwi Flat Hut 2024

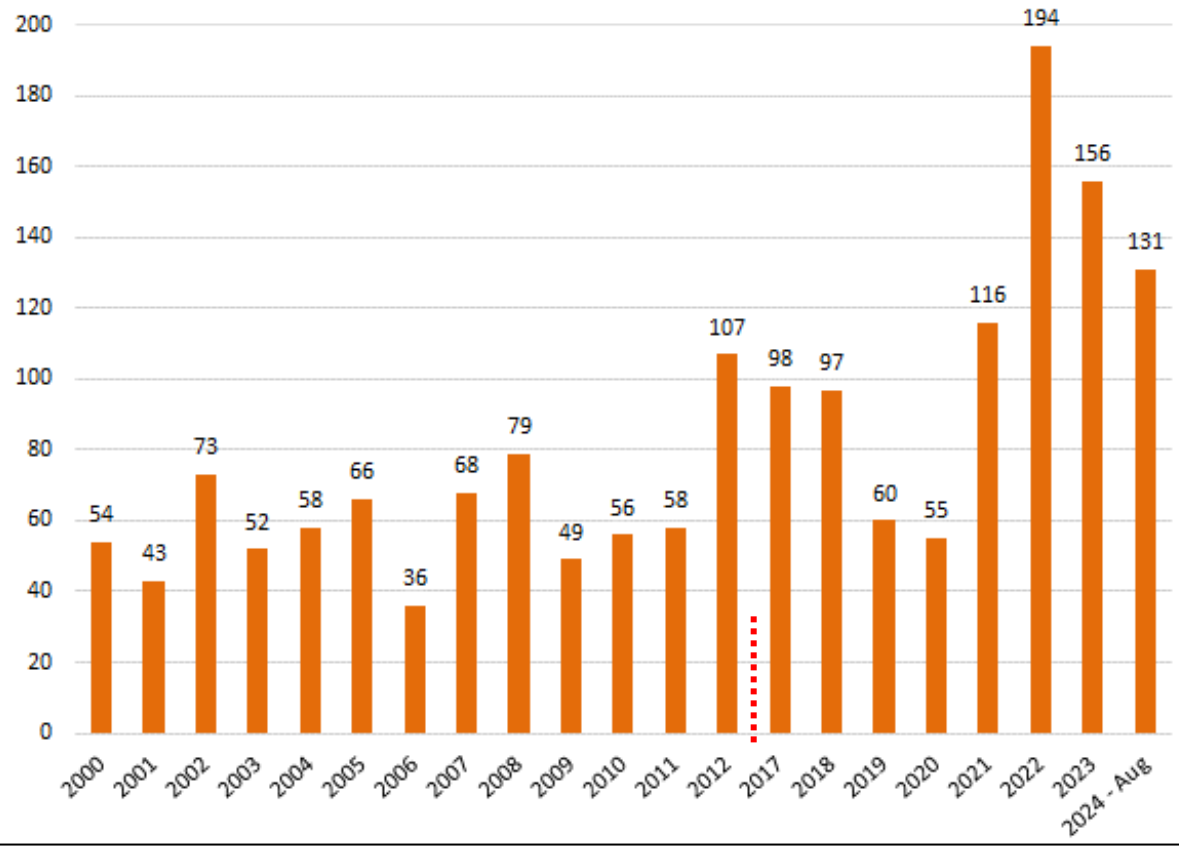
KIWI FLAT HUT BOOK

D.33 The records in the Kiwi Flat hut book give a good record of the recreation activities undertaken in the Waitaha valley by type and amount and change over time, as well as the origin of visitors. Following sections in this Appendix review the activities identified here.

D.34 Counts for the total number of visitors who recorded their visit in the Kiwi Flat hut book are shown in **Figure 7**. The period covered is 2000 to 2024, omitting 2013 to 2016 where the hut books are unavailable – although there are partial counts for 2013 and 2016 (which are not shown). The 2024 year to August is, however, included, as it was a relatively busy period, in line with an apparent increase in 2022 and 2023 (post-Covid lockdowns). The lowest count was 36 in 2006[18] and the highest 194 in 2022 (although 40 bednights were contributed by one party of 20 staying two nights). While hut book data are not a reliable means to measure numbers of users, figures show a base level of use. The proportion of users who record entries is not known. DOC estimates that approximately 30% of hut users do so, however this proportion is likely to be much higher for more remote huts (Booth 2008) and the figures shown are therefore conservative.

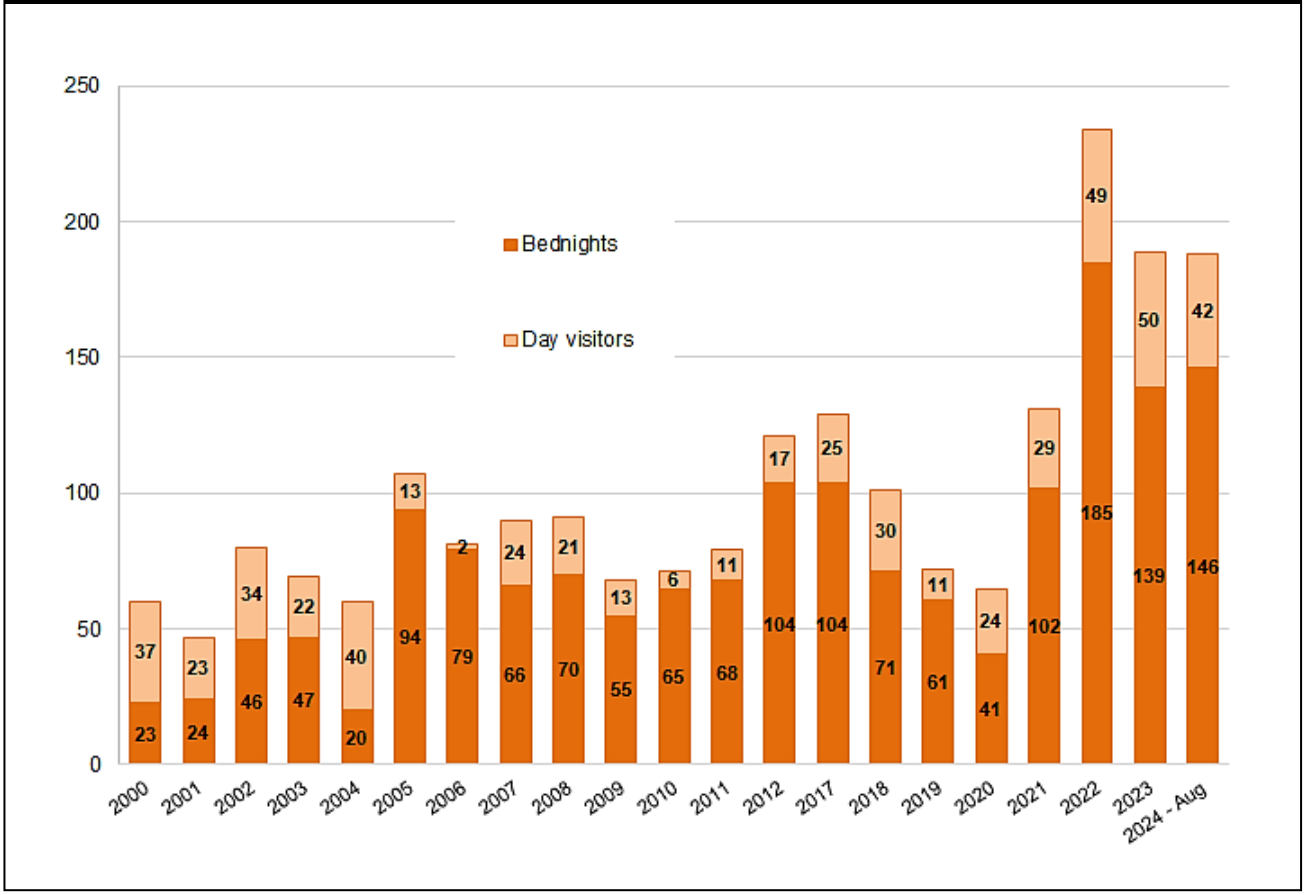
D.35 **Figure 8** shows bednights and day visits over the same period. This shows the total number of person-days recorded in Kiwi Flat. Just under a third of recorded visitors over the period were passing through and did not stay in the hut overnight.

Figure 7: Individual visitors recorded in Kiwi Flat hut book by year, 2000 – Aug 2024, count



[18] A new hut book was installed in the hut in 2006 and it is not clear if there was a gap in provision – day visits were low but bed nights for the year were not unusual. The replacement hut book had no records of use from October 2006 until Christmas 2006, which was a relatively wet period.

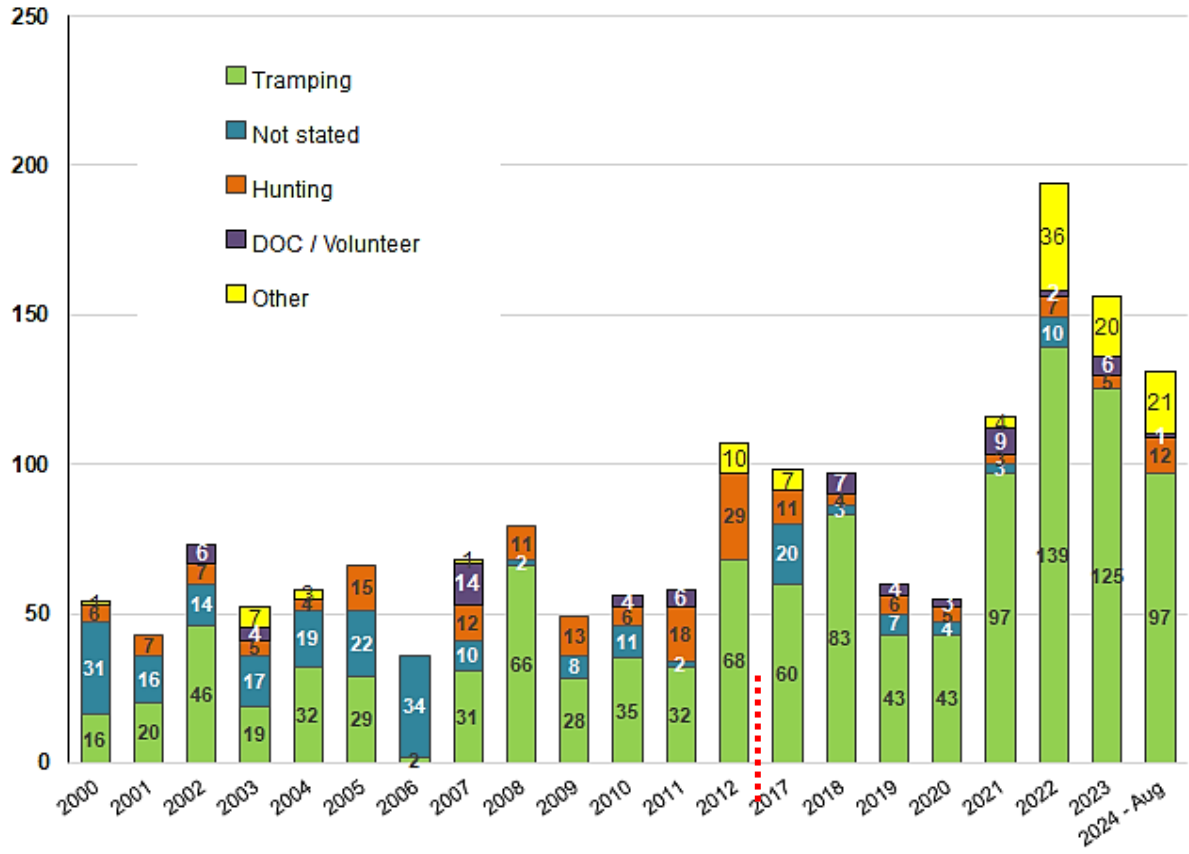
Figure 8: Day visitors and bednights recorded in Kiwi Flat hut book by year, 2000 – Aug 2024, count



D.36 **Figure 9** indicates the activities recorded in the hut book. Tramping is the main activity. Many visitors did not record their activity ('not stated') but comments indicate that most of these people were tramping or hunting. Activities recorded with both 'tramping' and 'hunting', or 'armed tramping' have been described as 'hunting' in the chart. Some entries stated both 'hot pools' (or 'hot springs') and 'tramping' and these have been described as 'hot pools'. Those ‘relaxing’ or ‘exploring’ have been recorded as tramping. Those describing themselves as doing 'DOC work' may include visitors involved in volunteer track maintenance as well as DOC staff, and so the category has been combined. Data illustrate the popularity of Kiwi Flat with hunters in the roar (autumn).

D.37 ‘Other activities’ include ‘canyoning’, which only appeared as a recorded use in 2021, with four individuals and one in 2022, rising to 14 in 2023 and 21 by August 2024. Entries indicate Whirling Waters and its tributary Bartrum Creek is the focus. Fifteen kayakers recorded their visit in 2022 (in three parties) and six in 2023 (one group). Twenty individuals recorded ‘teaching’ in 2022 (in one group staying two nights in the hut – so contributing 40 bednights that year). Ten individuals focused on the hot pools as a prime destination in 2012 and eight in some of the years previously, but not subsequently, although a total of 34 entries mentioned the hot pools as a prime destination or a side trip in the full record, with several mentioning not being able to find them. Other ‘other’ activities include photography, bird watching, a food drop for others, skiing and geology.

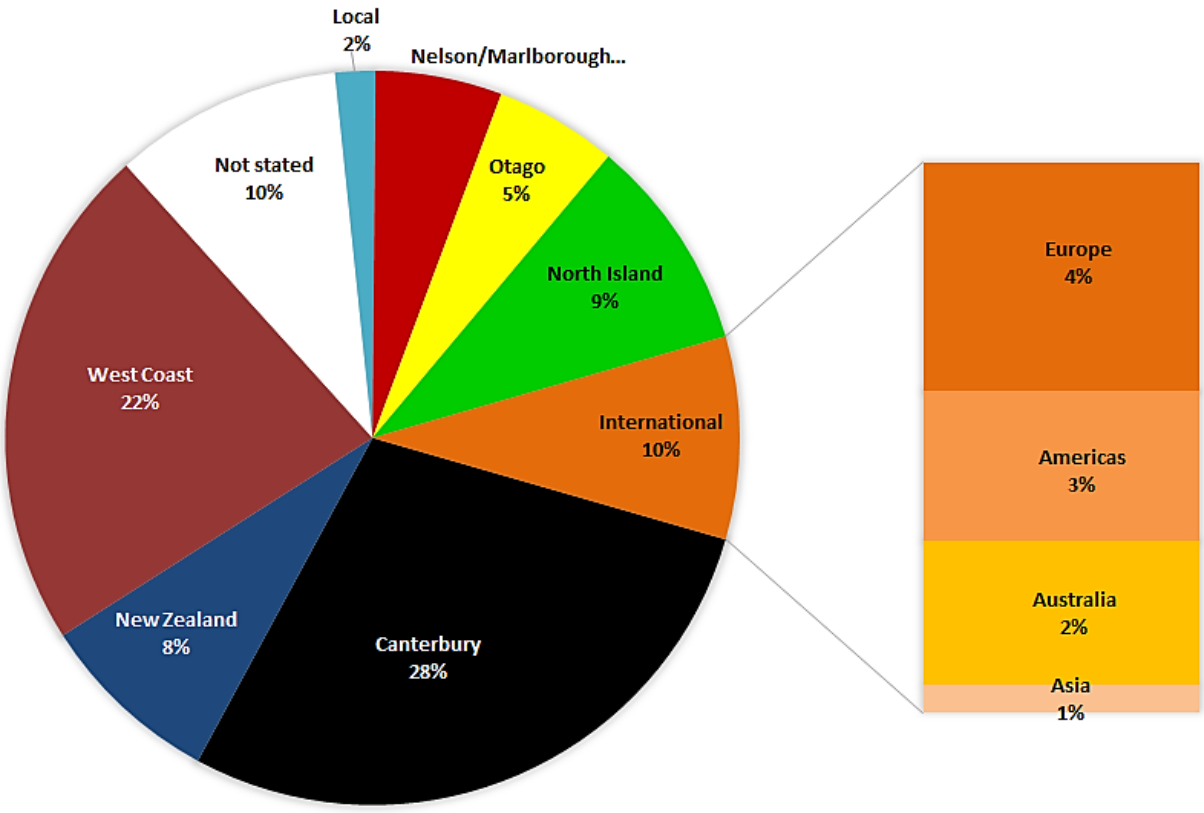
Figure 9: Activities recorded in Kiwi Flat hut book by year, 2000 – 2024, by visitor count



D.38 **Figure 10** shows the origin of visitors as recorded in the hut book between 2000 and August 2024, including the partial records for 2013 and 2016 and omitting the period between. It is not known whether New Zealanders are more or less likely to make entries compared with international visitors. Locations have been grouped, with 'local' referring to those living between Fox Glacier and Ruatapu (south of Hokitika) on the West Coast. Eighty-percent of entries in the Kiwi Flat hut book were by non-West Coast residents, if those who did not identify their origin are excluded.

D.39 These data can only be described as indicative, but show that recreational visitors to the Waitaha Valley come from a wide area, with only approximately a quarter from the West Coast. Many internationals were accompanied by a New Zealander.

Figure 10: Origin of visitors recorded in Kiwi Flat hut book by year, 2000 – Aug 2024



DOC 2015 SUMMARY OF USE

D.40 In response to Westpower's 2014 application for the Waitaha hydrogeneration proposal, the Department of Conservation presented a summary of its findings relating to recreation values in the Waitaha Valley (Wightwick 2015). They found (pp6-7):

> *Westpower correctly identifies that people are attracted to the Waitaha River and catchment for whitewater kayaking, tramping and hunting. No angling occurs above the Morgan Gorge and the river is rarely jet boated and then only in the lower reaches. There is little or no commercial guiding in the Waitaha Valley….*
>
> *Westpower identifies although there is a low level of use for the recreation activities undertaken in the Waitaha Valley, the remote and challenging recreation experiences available are highly valued by users.*
>
> *The Waitaha valley is used by a low number of trampers, mountaineers, hunters and kayakers.*
>
> *The Department of Conservation maintains a marked route[19] up the true right (north bank) of the Waitaha River to the top of Morgan Gorge, crossing the Waitaha River at this point and continuing up the true left to the 6 bunk Kiwi Flat Hut. (allow 2.5 – 4 hours from the road end to Kiwi Flat).*
>
> *The Permolat Trust under a management agreement with the Department maintains marked routes up the Waitaha Valley from Kiwi Flat to the 6 bunk Moonbeam and Top Waitaha huts*

[19] "Routes are described as challenging overnight tramping/hiking, track unformed and natural, may be rough and very steep, suitable for people with a high level of backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival. Be completely self sufficient, track has markers, poles or rock cairns, expect river crossings, sturdy tramping/hiking boots required."

as well as a route from the Waitaha River to the 6 bunk Country Stream Hut and to the 4 bunk Scamper Torrent Hut.[20]

From Country Stream Hut people can access the 6 bunk Smyth hut in the adjacent Wanganui River catchment, via the Smyth Range. From Top Waitaha Hut foot access continues to the 6 bunk Ivory Lake Hut. Foot access to Ivory Lake has always been somewhat of a challenge due to its remoteness and uncompromising rough lower stretches of the Waitaha valley. This became more so when DOC ceased maintaining the mid and upper valley tracks in the 1990's. Fit and experienced trampers can expect to take 2-3 days to make the journey from the Waitaha road end to Ivory Lake.[21]

The Department of Conservation supports Westpower's estimate that that approximately 50 hunters use the Waitaha Valley area annually and fewer than 150 trampers and day visitors access Kiwi Flat annually. Huts book records show that visitor use of Kiwi Flat Hut peaked in 2012 with approximately 123 people per annum recorded as staying in the hut and 37 people per annum recorded staying at Ivory Lake in 2014.[22]

Huts book records show that visitor use of Country Stream hut peaked in 2010 with approximately 17 people per annum recorded as staying in the hut and 35 people per annum were recorded as staying at Scamper Torrent hut.[23]*….*

Ian Wightwick met with Matt Bennett and Doug Rankin from Whitewater NZ and Mick Hopkinson of the New Zealand Kayak School on 4 November 2014 to ensure that the kayaking values of the Waitaha River were understood by Department of Conservation. Mr Wightwick also met with kayakers who have made runs of the Waitaha River…

Paddling the upper Waitaha River and the Morgan Gorge is described by kayakers as the pinnacle of hard whitewater kayaking experiences available in New Zealand and around the world. Kayakers describe the Waitaha as pristine water, huge beautiful schist boulders and vertical dramatic gorge walls overhanging in places. The dramatic cascading and complex rapids are of exceptional international quality. The Waitaha River is a remote, pristine wilderness with stunning scenery. Kayakers have described the Waitaha River as one of the most dramatic and inspiring landscapes in the entire world…

D.41 And at page 34, in summary:

The Department considers that the Waitaha study area receives low use from kayakers (50 – 100 PA), and trampers and hunters (<150 PA) is a fair assessment of the level of recreation use of the area. The Department, however, considers that is level of use is not uncommon for Backcountry – remote zones on the West Coast due it remoteness and the fact that it is relatively hard to travel through. The kayaking values of the river are associated with the relatively untouched 'wilderness' environment and a number of challenging white water runs on the river of extreme difficulty, suitable for only the top level of expert kayakers. Due to the high level skills and experience required to tramp, hunt or kayak in the Waitaha Valley the level of use is low but the recreation opportunity is highly valued by those who visit.

D.42 Hut book records for Kiwi Flat Hut show a marked increase in visitors to Kiwi Flat since 2020, and the 2015 assessment of 150 has probably doubled to 300. Conversely, the number of kayakers has most likely reduced (as discussed below), and an upper figure of 50 is applied in this assessment.

[20] "Management Agreement between Permolat Trust and Direct-General of Conservation dated 2 October 2014"
[21] "Page 6, Volume 4, Appendix 19 Westpower: Waitaha Hydro Scheme Application for Concessions and Assessment of Environmental Effects. – July 2014 "
[22] "Department of Conservation, annual hut book/bednight data - AMIS."
[23] Ibid

TRAMPING AND HUNTING

D.43 The Waitaha Valley contributes to the large-scale tramping network on the West Coast, which DOC describes thus (DOC, 2004:59-60):

> *The southern alps between the Taramakau and Waitaha Rivers is regarded by New Zealanders as the backcountry "capital" of New Zealand because it is accessible and presents a complete spectrum of opportunities. These range from multi-day valley and trans-alpine tramping in challenging terrain to day tramps and weekend length opportunities along open tops to accessible huts. Of particular note are the numerous opportunities for extended north to south traverses utilizing routes and passes to link existing visitor sites and valleys.*

D.44 Barnes (2012:15) in the NZ Climber magazine described the setting:

> *The Waitaha is one of several West Coast valleys that provides a wonderful remote experience, has high wilderness values and fantastic old-school backcountry huts such as Samper Torrent (sic) and Moonbeam. While Kiwi Flat is a popular overnight destination, trampers and hunters also do longer trips to the head of the valley, and on to the Smyth Range. Overall the valley has relatively few visitor numbers (maybe only 50 – 100 parties per year).*

D.45 Multi-day trans-alpine traverses are undertaken in the study area, using the Waitaha Valley for access on/off the open tops and dropping in/out of adjacent valleys, such as the Mikonui (via the Tuke River), Wanganui and Whitcombe. This may include tramping-mountaineering on the passes. Several interviewees in Booth (2008) mentioned Ivory Lake in terms of a 'prize' or simply that it was iconic and that mountaineers value the 'hard out' remote travel required to reach their climbing destination (Mount Evans and the Whitcombe massif). The study area offers alpine-tramping or tramping-mountaineering opportunity (using an ice axe and crampons to move across ice and snow fields) rather than a technical climbing opportunity.

D.46 Permolat, via its Remote Huts website, maintains a description of the huts and tracks in areas where it is active. There are some discrepancies between descriptions of track maintenance responsibilities (the website suggesting DOC is maintaining access tracks in the Waitaha Valley and the DOC website saying it is not, for example), and some track condition descriptions are out of date, but the setting descriptions are otherwise useful. Of the Kiwi Flat hut, Permolat notes:[24]

> *Kiwi Flat Hut is located on the TR [true right] of Whirling Water, 400m upstream from its confluence with the Waitaha River. The Hut sits adjacent to the large river flat from which it derives its name and the bush around it a mix of podocarps, rata, and hardwood. Kiwi Flat is a relatively easy three-hour jaunt from the road end and a first stop for those heading further up the Waitaha valley. Despite its accessibility Kiwi Flat has historically been quite low use. Things have ramped up considerably over the last couple of years with 40 visits in 2021 and 67 in 2022. A fair percentage are these are either bound for Ivory Lake in the head of the valley or doing an increasingly popular traverse of the Smyth Range….*
>
> *The DOC maintained track to Kiwi Flat follows the TR of the Waitaha valley and starts at a sign-posted car park at the end of the North Bank Road. From here a narrow strip of land between the farm fence and the river is followed to some low bluffs abutting Point 202m. The river has recently cut in below the bluffs and a rough track has been cut through the bush to detour this bit [unable to be located in 2024]. There is another detour track around the bluffs which isn't necessary at normal flows at the moment. Instead, you can ford a shallow braid of*

[24] https://www.remotehuts.co.nz/kiwi-flat-hut.html,Sept 2024

the river that cuts in against the bluffs and follow a short stretch of riverbed to reconnect with paddocks and a farm road that takes you to Macgregor Creek. The first section of the farm road around the back of Point 202m is not currently open to public access….

The original Kiwi Flat route went up South bank of the Waitaha until a row between DOC and the top farm owners led to this being abandoned. To the best of our knowledge public access up that side continues to be difficult although the route is still useable, despite starting to get rough in a few places. It is accessed via an old farm track from one of the top paddocks which leads to an old bulldozed cutting down to a flood channel on the riverbed. Follow this upstream for a few hundred metres to where it joins the river just below Douglas Creek….

Kiwi Flat Hut is in good condition currently. DOC patched the chimney some years back, and in 2019 they re-piled the Hut, removed the lead head nails from the roof, and added new fly screens, a fire surround and a ceiling sheet. The hut was painted, and the toilet door and latches fixed. New mattress covers were provided.

Published Guidebooks

D.47 Outdoor recreation guidebooks were reviewed to assess the prominence and frequency of mention of the Waitaha study area. However, these are now all outdated and replaced by online resources; in particular for the Waitaha Valley, the Remote Huts website operated by Permolat.[25] Some points from published books include:

- Barnett et al (2012) describe the Top Waitaha Hut as a "classic" Forest Service hut built in 1968 and detail the history behind the construction of the Ivory Lake Hut in 1970.
- Scamper Torrent was chosen as one of ten weekend tramps on the West Coast – one of 47 in the South Island (Groves, 2003). Brabyn (2004) also focuses on this route in his guide, along with several ‘hard’ routes which include an exit or entry from the Waitaha Valley. He indicates the importance of cleared tracks to make them possible.
- The Waitaha study area is not referenced in tramping guidebooks which feature, for example, the top 100 tracks (or similar selections).

D.48 Groves (2003:7) describes his track gradings as follows:

On a 'moderate' trip you may have river crossings, and there could be steep sections of track over slippery rocks, mud and tree roots, as well as travel on unmarked, open tops. Some days can be quite long at this grade; an occasions, expect eight hours tramping or more, depending on how you have planned the trip. A 'hard' tramp may involve even longer days, but more usually this grade reflects the rugged nature of the terrain, with route-finding difficulties and long stretches of unmarked travel above the bushline or short sections across snowfields.

D.49 Groves (2003: 75) describes the Scamper Torrent tramp as "another classic West Coast trip, comparable to the Mt Bowen tramp … The approach has all the right ingredients for a trip on the west side of the Main Divide: a rough access road, a boulder-hop along the Waitaha River, an impassable gorge to circumvent and a steep trail through thick forest to the tussock tops."

D.50 The trip description includes reference to the following features:

- Morgan Gorge – "a typically impressive West Coast canyon".

[25] https://www.remotehuts.co.nz/

- An "inaccessible" hot spring, "a little upstream from the confluence with Anson Creek." Anson Stream, which is the correct name, is the wrong location for the spring, which is upstream from Glamour Glen.
- Fine views to the lower Waitaha River Valley upon reaching the tops.
- Blue ducks near Scamper Torrent Hut.
- The location of Scamper Torrent Hut -- "set in a pretty valley, with the craggy and complex slopes of Mt Durward rising directly above" and "views southwards to the ravine-cut slopes of Mt Durward, rising above".

D.51 There is little information available about hunting in the Waitaha Valley, although the hut book records show it to be a popular use. DOC provides no local advice online – although it does for hunting areas immediately south and further north on the West Coast.

D.52 Booth (2008) and interviews carried out by this report author in 2013 and 2024 indicate that hunters in the valley focus on red deer, chamois and thar. Occasional possum shooting takes place. Overall, the level of hunting use is relatively low due to the quality of the track access for walking in and the cost of helicopter access. The Waitaha Valley is located midway between the closest helicopter bases in Franz Josef and Hokitika, and nearer and cheaper hunting areas are preferred.

D.53 In 2013, interviews with helicopter pilots indicated that the upper valley – mostly at and above Moonbeam Hut, but also at Scamper Torrent, and less frequently at Kiwi Flat – is of most interest to hunters, An estimate of approximately 50 hunters per annum in the valley was made by Booth (2008) and this count was supported by the data gained from 2013 and 2024 interviews, and the hut book data.[26]

D.54 Interviews with helicopter operators in 2024 indicated a similar pattern of activity, with most focus in the upper valley – at and above Moonbeam Hut – and at Scamper Torrent, and at similar numbers to 2013. Pilots interviewed reported very little hunting activity at Kiwi Flat Hut via helicopter delivery.[27]

D.55 Booth (2008) reported that the presence and habits of the animals dictate the activity of hunters; with thar and chamois being hunted around the tops and red deer largely requiring 'bush hunting'. Deer hunting is concentrated in the roar (approximately April), while thar and chamois hunting mainly takes place during March-June. Alternative hunting areas are plentiful. Hunters indicated that other catchments, such as the Wanganui, offer better hunting, as there are more animals present and access is easier. The Waitaha is "good for a change".

D.56 An excellent summary of a tramping experience on the Waitaha can be found here (posted September 2020 and retrieved August 2024): https://www.pointssouth.co.nz/blogs/news/7-day-westland-back-pack-trip-report-up-the-waitaha-down-the-whitcombe.

[26] Alpine Adventures, James Scott, pers comm. Sept 2013. Southern Alps Helicopters, James Scott, pers comm. Sept 2013. Kokatahi Helicopters, Danny Reedy, pers comm. Sept 2013. Precision Helicopters, Patrick Amberger, pers comm. Sept 2013. Wilderness Trophy Hunting, Marcus Pinney, pers comm. Sept 2013.
[27] Glacier Country Helicopters, Gus Gordon, pers comm. Sept 2024. Precision Helicopters Hokitika, Matt Newton and Lilly Newton, pers comm. Sept 2024. Anderson Helicopters, Fletcher Anderson, pers comm. Aug 2024. HeliServices.NZ, Quentin Arnold, pers comm. Sept 2024.

KAYAKING

Introduction

D.57 The only water-based activity within the study area is whitewater kayaking. The Waitaha Gorge was successfully paddled (first descent) by a group of women in 1998/99.[28] Most kayakers put in as near to the confluence with County Stream as possible (depending on available helicopter landing options on the day, this may be at Moonbeam Hut), portage Morgan Gorge, paddle the last 100-200m of the Gorge, and the 1-2 kms of whitewater below Morgan Gorge and then get out, and only occasionally continue to the sea.

D.58 The Morgan Gorge was first fully kayaked in 2010 and the upper Waitaha River in 2013. In February 2013 the Tai Poutini Polytechnic released a press release describing this achievement:

Kayakers "knock off" their own Mt Cook

Five South Island white-water kayakers have "knocked off" the kayaking equivalent of Mt Cook, completing the first ever descent of the Upper Waitaha River from the heart of the Southern Alps.

The Waitaha River, south of Hokitika, is known as one of New Zealand's top class five rivers but until now no-one has kayaked the length of the river from the Southern Alps to sea level.

Kayakers Keith Riley and Zak Shaw who are both outdoor education tutors at Greymouth's Tai Poutini Polytechnic, Nelson doctor Justin Venable, Christchurch doctor Paul Currant and Christchurch engineer Will Martin took three days to complete the epic journey.

The group used a helicopter to access the top of the Waitaha, starting their kayak from an elevation of 1220 metres near Ivory Lake which is the Waitaha's source.

"It was most remote rugged wilderness I have ever kayaked, literally you can't go any further into the Alps. We started paddling through alpine tussock with old avalanche debris scarring the hillsides, and then entered the upper gorge which was like a water-worn sculpted gutter through bedrock," says Zak Shaw.

Known in kayaking circles as one of the hardest adventure kayak trips around, the lower part of the Waitaha was first kayaked in 2001. However it wasn't paddled further up because at the time it was thought the river was too steep.

Two years ago Keith Riley and Paul Currant were part of a group that made the first descent of Morgan Gorge, both of them also taking part in this latest expedition.

"Most kayakers would see Morgan Gorge as a challenge, but compared with what we paddled above it when we got to Morgan Gorge on day three we felt like we were on the easy street home," says Keith Riley.

"The Waitaha is one of the great wild rivers and I feel privileged to be one of the very few to paddle it in its entirety as a wild river," he says.

One of the most challenging parts of the approximately 28km paddle was the Windhover Gorge where the river drops 200 metres in 1km. Zak Shaw says the group arrived at the gorge after six hours of exhausting work on their second day, and were forced to portage their 30kg boats up through the bush on a steep, rough track. The portage took an additional four hours and forced the team to paddle a kilometre of hard rapids at 8.30pm when light was fading.

[28] Nikki Kelly (one of the first descent team) was "hazy about timing" in Booth (2008).

“The terrifying element is the unfinished business. People will go back to Windhover Gorge, perhaps when there is less water, and they have more energy and they will try to kayak the whole thing,” he says.

“It was an amazing paddle, I have come back to work rejuvenated and inspired as an outdoor educator. As tutors we need to keep having these big adventures so we can hand over the skills and values to our students.”

D.59 Booth (2008) describes the River's international reputation amongst elite paddlers, and the nature of the kayaking opportunity as "expert whitewater adventure kayaking". The Morgan Gorge portage was indicated as a positive characteristic. All parts of "the Waitaha experience" were perceived as an adventure and not just about paddling the rapids. The term "holistic experience" was used in Booth (2008) by several kayakers to describe this style of kayak-based adventure.

D.60 The West Coast Region offers a series of hard paddles which are "classic" adventure whitewater runs including rivers such as the Whitcombe, Upper Hokitika and Arahura. The Arahura River is the 'test' river (to ensure paddlers can handle the West Coast rivers). The Waitaha is perceived as the “pinnacle” of this set – it was reported as representing an ultimate goal (Booth 2008).

D.61 Interviews with helicopter operators by the author of this report indicated that prior to 2012 there was a relative boom in kayak activity on the West Coast, but that this had significantly reduced by 2012, particularly with a loss of international focus.

D.62 For example, prior to 2010, Alpine Adventures would deliver 20 kayakers in an average year to the Waitaha Valley above the Waitaha Gorge, although some years there are no deliveries and the three years up to 2013 had been extremely quiet; the level of international interest had died away almost completely. Further, clients were now mostly New Zealanders, whereas it used to be a 50/50 division. Pilot James Scott attributed this as potentially due to the global recession and the Kiwi exchange rate, but the biggest effect may be greater competition for other kayaking destinations globally taking international interest away from New Zealand. Alpine Adventures delivers kayakers to three main destinations: approximately 70% of deliveries are to the Whataroa River, 20% to the Wanganui and 10% to the Waitaha (James Scott, pers comm. Sept 2013).

D.63 Bruce Dando of Kokatahi Helicopters estimated that, in the three-year period up to 2011, he would have delivered approximately 150 kayakers to rivers on the West Coast per season and only four or five loads would have been delivered to the Waitaha River, 90% of whom would have been New Zealanders. He estimates that 150 to 200 people may have kayaked the Waitaha River since 1990 (Bruce Dando, pers comm. Sept 2013).

D.64 Southern Alps Helicopters – piloted by Danny Reedy – would have normally taken 30 to 40 kayakers per year to the Waitaha (15 to 20 drop-offs), almost all to the Moonbeam Hut area above the Waitaha Gorge. Reedy ceased operation in 2013 due to low demand for commercial work. Patrons were approximately 50% New Zealanders and 50% international, although international interest varied from year to year, with the two seasons prior to 2013 quieter than previously. Levels of activity on the Waitaha were lower than on the Arahura, Hokitika, Whitcombe or Wanganui Rivers, but the Waitaha was 'up there' as a popular kayaking destination (Danny Reedy, pers comm. Sept 2013).

D.65 A repeat of interviews in 2024 with current helicopter providers indicate that the level of use has not improved since the downturn reported in 2013, but could be lower, with very few kayak deliveries to the Waitaha Valley in the past decade (fewer than 10 combined). All operators refer to kayakers preferring options closer to their helicopter bases (and so cheaper) – such as the Whitcombe, Whataroa, Perth or Hokitika Rivers.[29]

D.66 In 2013 the data available suggested the total annual number of kayakers using the Waitaha River was approximately 50 per year, which matches the estimate in the RiVAS review (Booth et al 2009 – discussed below). This appears to have significantly reduced over the intervening period.

D.67 Wightwick (2015:23) described the preferred flow ranges for kayaking on Morgan Gorge and immediately downstream (based on kayaker reporting to the Department of Conservation):

- Morgan Gorge estimated to be between 17.5 and 22.5 m^3/s.
- The lower 1.5 km from just below the most difficult rapids on the Morgan Gorge to the proposed powerhouse estimated to be 10-50 m^3/s.

New Zealand Whitewater: 180 Great Kayaking Runs

D.68 In the 5th edition of this guidebook, the Waitaha River is awarded national status. Charles (2013: 232) calls it one of the best runs in the country:

> *One of the best runs on the coast and thus one of the best in the country, this is a step up from the Arahura and Whitcombe – it even has a lovely wander through lush forest near the end!*
>
> *The normal put in is just above Moonbeam Hut. A short warm up and Class IV boulder gardens lead down to 'the big drop', an obvious slot between two giant boulders and HUGE hole at the bottom. Good luck, and keep ropes handy. Clear of this some more boulders take you into an easy gorge and a chance to relax and enjoy the scenery. The tunnel section is next up and has three big rapids in a row culminating in The Tunnel. This is a fabulous stretch of water and is all portageable if needs be.*
>
> *The river takes a break for a while and pushes through a couple of gorges. You'll come to an obvious rapid which runs hard into a wall and then turns hard right through a very small gap. Either run the rapid or portage on the right and seal launch off the obvious break in the cliff into the run out of the rapid. Things ease after this down to the portage. Once down to Morgan Gorge, find the track on the left and get amongst it. It is a hard work portage no matter who you are. If it is your first time it is a good idea to stick together as it is very easy to wander off the track and waste time trying to find each other. Put back in wherever you feel the urge. There is still some solid Class IV boating (which feels harder because you'll be knackered) before the gradient eases right off to the shingle fan and walk up to the cars.*
>
> *'Don't go into Morgan Gorge,' the Hot Tip used to say. I should know. .. / wrote it. I must 've forgotten as we sat at the entrance to the gorge in January 2002. We had run the river in four hours and arrived at the portage around the gorge in the early afternoon. When we flew over the gorge it looked like some good lines existed and there were some portages around the impossible stuff. Like moths to a flame we were all drawn to the excitement of the unknown. Like a lost world the twisting corners kept things hidden, there were some hard drops, some mandatory portages and we were in up to our armpits. We made it over halfway through*

[29] Glacier Country Helicopters, Gus Gordon, pers comm. Sept 2024. Precision Helicopters Hokitika, Matt Newton and Lilly Newton, pers comm. Sept 2024. Anderson Helicopters, Fletcher Anderson, pers comm. Aug 2024. HeliServices.NZ, Quentin Arnold, pers comm. Sept 2024.

before we met our nemesis, a rapid no one wanted to try, but with no way back and no way around. We left the boats and began the climb up the only possible break in the vertical moss walls. We made the cars that night after seven hours of walking and bush crashing. The boats took a further nine hours the next day after we abseiled in and hoisted them out and carried upstream and eventually around the gorge. It wasn't until 2010 that a strong local team ventured back in, had good water levels for it and put what was left to rest. It's very flow dependent and even strong teams still have to climb out if levels aren't right.

To get to the TAKE OUT: phone the farmer for permission (03 755 4931). Drive south from Hokitika to the Waitaha Valley Road on the Hokitika side of the river (about 600 metres past the Kakapotahi Road). Drive about 10 km up this road to a DOC carpark and the start of the track. Make sure you can recognise the take out from the river and there is room for the helicopter.

Other Stuff:

- *It is possible to walk in to Morgan's Gorge if you want. This is a 3-4 hour walk followed by some difficult, f low dependent paddling to get out. Enjoy.*
- *In 2012 Justin Venable, Zak Shaw, Keith Riley (cover photograph) flew into the upper reaches of the Waitaha starting at just over 1200m in elevation near Ivory Lake. This added two days of exceptionally hard kayaking and portaging on top of the classic run. They portaged Windover [sic] Gorge.*

CLASS: IV - V+

LEVEL: Low/medium

GAUGE: Visual/local

LENGTH: 8.5km

TIME: 5-9 hrs

PUT IN: above Moonbeam Hut

TAKE OUT: Waitaha Valley road end on Hokitika side of the river

SHUTTLE: Helicopter - see providers on page 321 [reference to a list of helicopter companies later in the book]

MAPS: BV17 Kakapotahi, BW17 Harihari, BW18 Whitcombe Pass

CHARACTER: Steep boulder gardens, big drops

VERY HOT TIP: Morgan Gorge is an unreal place – but think carefully about timing and flow before heading in.

D.69 Charles uses the following river grading system (2013:11-12):

Class IV: Difficult rapids requiring a series of controlled moves, cross-current and spinning in confused water. Scouting often necessary and a reliable roll is mandatory.

Class V: Very difficult, long and violent rapids. Nearly always must be scouted. Definite risks in the event of a mishap. Requires a series of controlled, precise, 'must make' moves to navigate successfully.

Class VI: Extreme, very dangerous and only for experts. Close inspection is mandatory and all possible safety precautions should be taken.

D.70 For other descriptors that are not self-explanatory, Charles states that:

- River flow 'level' is an indication only and does not represent the only flows at which a river may be run.
- The 'gauge' of visual/local means "Figure it out yourself. Associated flows are an educated guess-timate." (p12) and presumably seek local knowledge.
- 'Length' represents the distance from the put in to the take out.

An assessment of the whitewater recreational values of West Coast rivers – whitewater kayaking

D.71 England (2011) compiled a data-set describing the values and users of kayaking rivers on the West Coast relying on: direct experience of kayaking 31 West Coast rivers; a photographic record of 31 kayaking settings; an on-line survey of the international kayaking community with 265 respondents; and a review of other West Coast kayak-related research, particularly RiVAS (see the following section of this report).

D.72 The author describes the nature of the analysis (England 2011:2):

> *This report is not an academic paper. It is based on a range of data that will be described openly and are open to scrutiny. The overall aim of this report is simply to provide the Department of Conservation – and anyone else who may need user data on West Coast rivers – with a set of current data about whitewater kayakers/canoeists. One particular challenge was to take subjective views and create an objective resource. I have not made recommendations as I see this data set's purpose as contributing to decision makers' tools.*

D.73 England (2011:preface) reported, in summary:

> *The research shows that, as a whole, the rivers of the West Coast region are the most highly valued in New Zealand and amongst the most highly valued in the world by whitewater kayakers. To whitewater kayakers around the world, the West Coast region is characterised by its rivers and its rivers are characterised by their high levels of challenge, scenery and wilderness.*
>
> *In comparison to other regions of NZ and the world, the West Coast region has a very high density of rivers that offer great whitewater challenge, inspiring river scenery and a strong wilderness feel. Added to this are such qualities as cleanliness and clarity of water, a range of access arrangements including helicopter access, geographic closeness of rivers meaning low travel times between rivers, and a wider regional experience that offers additional social attractions.*
>
> *That so many rivers of the West Coast are valued so highly does not belittle their assessment, but truly represents their remarkable qualities. It makes it impossible to segregate a common set of top rivers, but a general trend is that northern Westland has the highest concentration of top rated rivers for whitewater challenge, with very high scores for scenery and wilderness; while northern Buller and South Westland have small concentrations of rivers top rated for wilderness and scenery with high ratings for whitewater challenge.*
>
> *The main whitewater kayak users of West Coast rivers are highly specialised and experienced, which reflects and is reflected by the high proportion of more challenging rivers, yet the region is also held in high regard as a destination to aspire to by users of lower ability. Of interest is the demographic profile of survey respondents, showing that most whitewater kayakers on the West Coast are male, of widespread ages, educated to bachelor's degree or beyond, professionally employed with incomes above national averages.*

D.74 The full trip report for the Waitaha River and river-specific findings of England's on-line survey of the international kayaking community is provided in Attachment 2 in **Appendix H**. At a relative level, the Waitaha was ranked amongst 60 West Coast rivers as:

- 35th for 'number of respondents' having used a river.
- 12th for percent of international respondents using a river.
- 8th for 'overall importance'.
- 5th for 'whitewater challenge'.
- 10th for 'scenery from river'.
- 5th for 'wilderness feeling'.

D.75 England (2011:85) notes that the survey results have a "definite bias towards harder rivers, reflecting the respondents' profile [more advanced kayakers generally]." The survey period (winter 2009) preceded the first full descent of the Morgan Gorge (February 2010) and so the data will relate predominantly to the other sections of the Waitaha River.

D.76 The results indicated high levels of accord with the values listed above, but there was less agreement over the reliability of the flow on the river (see Attachment 2 in **Appendix H**).

River Values Assessment System (RiVAS)

D.77 Hughey *et al* (2010) carried out a research programme funded by the Foundation for Research Science and Technology to develop a 'useable' system for regional councils to assess the significance of in and out of stream river values in New Zealand. An assessment method – called the River Values Assessment System (RiVAS) – was developed and has been applied to several suites of recreation and natural river values within several regions. The RiVAS method has been applied to kayaking on the West Coast, but not for other regional recreation values.

D.78 The RiVAS method relies on a panel of experts from a specific recreation activity to identify the regional resources able to be used for their activity, the resource attributes which indicate their importance for recreation, including the level of use, and to score various indicators of value to give a relative assessment of significance.

D.79 For the West Coast assessment (Booth *et al* 2009), a list of rivers was provided by the West Coast Regional Council, and an expert panel identified 41 rivers that were regularly kayaked, or had been recently kayaked and were expected to become popular within the following three years. Several rivers were divided into sections, giving 58 kayaking runs to assess. Measurable attributes which afforded those rivers value for kayaking, and which were able to be assessed, were identified:

- Perception of scenic attractiveness.
- Perception of wilderness character.
- Density of high quality hydraulic features.
- Flow reliability (percent of time river is kayakable).
- Ease of access.
- Number of users (kayaker days per annum).
- User catchment (home district/region).

- Scarcity of kayaking experience.

D.80 There was little primary data available so expert opinion was relied on to generate the assessments. The significance assessment for kayaking on the West Coast is shown in Attachment 3 in **Appendix I**. Of the 58 West Coast kayak runs assessed, 28 were identified as of 'high' value, 29 of 'medium' value and 1 of 'low' value. The Waitaha River was assessed as of 'high' value for kayaking. The use of the terms 'national', 'regional' and 'local' were avoided in the assessment as the analysis was not completed at a national level. An assessment of 'high' value indicates a high level of importance at the regional level, and this is likely to imply significance at the national level – although a national-level assessment would be needed to confirm this.

D.81 The assessment also considered the 'scarcity' of the type of run at a national level, and the Waitaha River was described as 'nationally scarce'. However, this score was given to 71% of the West Coast rivers reviewed, suggesting that most rivers on the Coast have been assessed as unique in some way.

D.82 In the following tables, where the Waitaha River falls within a set of results, the relevant cell has a double border.

D.83 **Table 3** shows data taken from Booth *et al* (2009) and depicts West Coast kayaking runs by grade and the form of access to the run. Twenty-eight runs accessible only by helicopter were identified, all of grade 3 or higher. The Waitaha River was one of 14 grade 5 runs with helicopter access. Grade 5 and grade 4 runs were identified as the most common kayaking opportunities on the West Coast (24 and 14 runs respectively). Grade 5 can be applied to a river like the Waitaha where grade 6 sections can be portaged.

Table 3: West Coast rivers: Grade by access

Access (main form)	Whitewater grade							
	2	**2, 3**	**3**	**3, 4**	**4**	**4, 5**	**5**	***Total***
Helicopter				2	6	6	14	28
Long walk-in					3	2	5	10
4WD		1						1
2WD	4		3	2	5		5	19
Total	4	1	3	4	14	8	24	58

D.84 Table 4 shows the number of West Coast river runs by kayak days per annum and river grade. The Waitaha River was reported to have approximately 50 kayak days per annum. That is, 50 kayakers spending a day or less on the River, which may include the same people doing more than one trip per year, and could be, for example, four trips with five **kayakers** on each. This is average to high use compared with other grade 5 kayak runs on the West Coast. The highest estimate of use of a grade 5 run was for the Kakapotahi River with 150 kayak days per year). It is important to note that the RiVAS use assessment provides an indication of levels of activity at a point in time, and these will change over the years. For example, helicopter operators report a significant decline in heli-kayaking activity on the West Coast since 2011 (see section 5.2) and the 2013 levels of activity may be far less than those reported in RiVAS. However, the use data

provide, at least, a useful description of estimated relative levels of activity, if not absolute data – although rivers which do not rely on helicopters for access might currently be relatively more popular.

D.85 The total estimated number of kayak days for all runs reviewed on the West Coast was 4477, to which the Waitaha River contributed 1.1%. Runs on the West Coast accessible by helicopter supported 1787 kayak days per annum, and the Waitaha River contributed 2.8% of that activity. Grade 5 runs with helicopter access (14 thereof) on the West Coast supported 407 kayak days and the Waitaha River contributed 12.3% of that activity.

Table 4: West Coast rivers: Grade by number of kayak days per annum

Kayak days per annum	Whitewater grade							
	2	2, 3	3	3, 4	4	4, 5	5	Total
2							1	1
5							3	3
10					3		5	8
20	1				1	1	6	9
30			1		1		1	3
40				1	2	1	1	5
50	1			1	2		3	7
60							2	2
80			1		1	1	1	4
90	1							1
100				1	1	1		3
150			1		2		1	4
160		1		1		1		3
200					1	2		3
250						1		1
800	1							1
Total	4	1	3	4	14	8	24	58

D.86 England (2011:3), who participated in the West Coast RiVAS assessment, says of the method:

> *This method has the strength of being relatively easy to repeat by regional councils, for which it is aimed, and applicable across various river-based activities. In my opinion, the numerical base for the system offers a limited insight into a region's river activity, albeit useful and a vast improvement on the knowledge that usually exists in organisations such as regional councils. Where applied, it is also useful in that it is current and (if staff are involved directly) helps staff to increase their understanding of relevant issues for river users.*

D.87 and also (15-16):

> *The West Coast report was the first, trial, application of this method to whitewater kayaking (it had previously been applied to salmonid angling). From my experience this year, I see the following issues:*

- *The expert panel made a few mistakes (valuable sections omitted and at least one river, the Cascade, scored incorrectly) which could in part be due to trying to cover so many rivers in one day, a problem made worse by the West Coast region having so many rivers*
- *There was no written descriptive overview for the region (this has since been amended in the method)*
- *The headings were not all agreed upon and therefore may have been interpreted inconsistently (this has since been amended in the method)*
- *The overall product, a set of numerically ranked rivers, is of limited depth and value on its own; it requires further examination to be used as a decision making tool but could be useful for a strategic planning tool*

D.88 Nevertheless, RiVAS provides the most completed description and analysis of white water settings on the West Coast. The reductionist approach enables identification of the basis for each assessment, and while there may be disagreement about site-specific conclusions, RiVAS remains a significant resource for identifying the scale of alternative kayaking options on the West Coast and the level of resource substitutability. Debate about absolute and relative values of river settings should not result in the RiVAS data being ignored.

Online

D.89 Recent example videos of kayak runs on the Waitaha River can be found at:

- From Moonbeam Hut: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7snHz23hRUM
- From Ivory Lake: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onMMwl7gyCY

CANYONING

D.90 Canyoning first appeared as an activity in the Waitaha Valley in the Kiwi Flat hut book in 2021, and there is little information about the local growth of the popularity of the activity. A 2015 publication, *Canyoning in NZ Guidebook* (Clearwater, 2015) helped cement the activity domestically, and it is now updated to 2023.[30] The NZ Canyoning Association was formed in 2015.[31]

D.91 The activity is described on the NZ Canyoning Association activity website.[32]

> *At the most basic level, Canyoning is the practise of descending rivers and streams, using any combination of walking, climbing, abseiling (rappelling), swimming, jumping and sliding. Canyoning is kind of like a Hydroslide theme park, carved into stone and located in the wilderness. Anyone who loves sliding, jumping and playing in water, exploring, abseiling and technical problem solving will love going Canyoning.*
>
> *Though Canyoning has many similarities to Caving and to Kayaking, we do not squeeze through tight caves underground nor do we paddle any small plastic boats. We walk up to the head of the stream, put on wetsuits, harnesses and helmets then descend the canyon, doing whatever is necessary to reach the bottom, whilst having a ball and marvelling at the rugged beauty of these inaccessible places.*

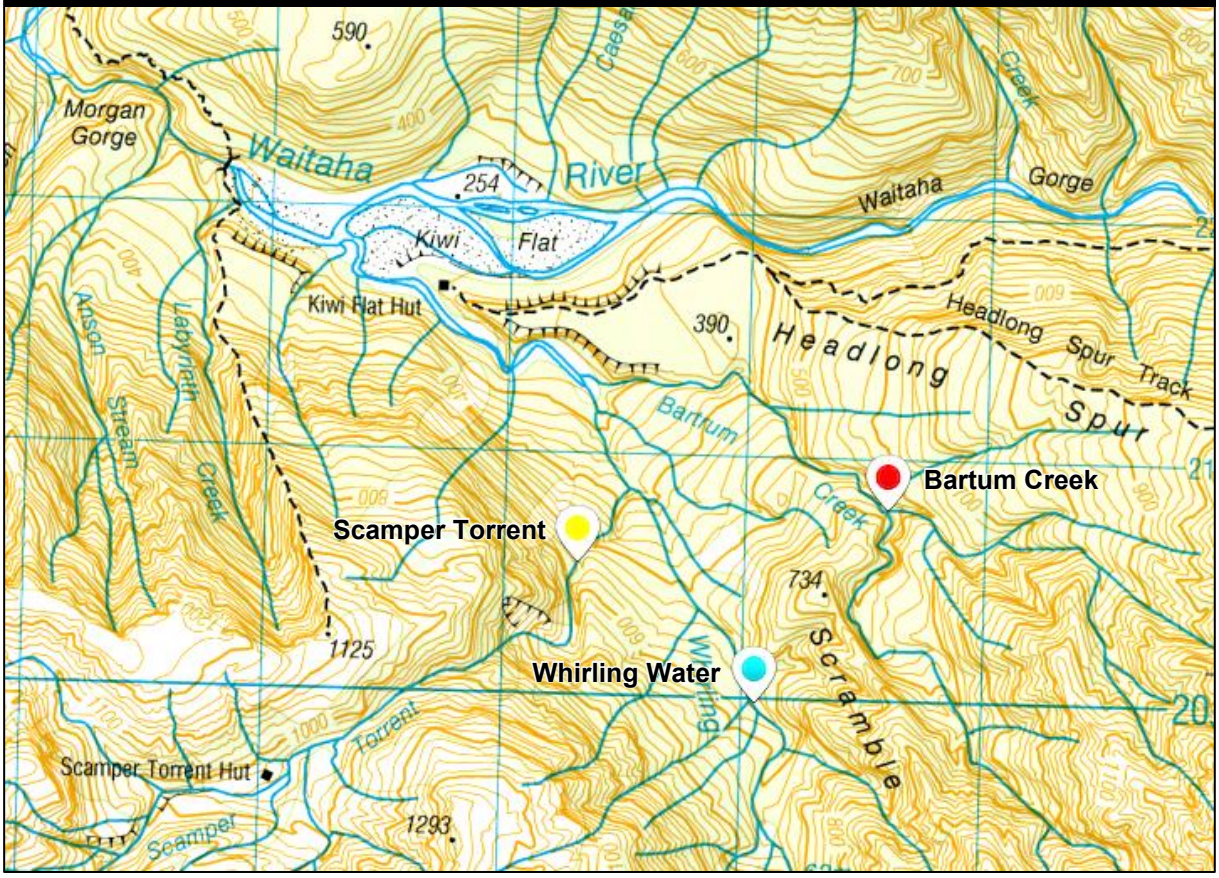
D.92 The NZ Canyoning Association identifies three canyoning sites in the Waitaha Valley (**Figure 11**):

[30] https://www.kiwicanyons.org/product/canyoning-in-nz-guidebook-lulu/, Sept 2024
[31] https://nzcanyoningassociation.org/about/. Sept 2024
[32] https://www.kiwicanyons.org/about-canyoning-in-nz/how-do-i-get-into-canyoning/ Sept 2024

- Whirling Water: “Possibly the most famous canyon in New Zealand. Whirling Water is in the Waitaha Valley, on the West Coast of the South Island. After 3 successive seasons of exploration, the first full descent of this incredible canyon was completed in March 2024…. As the grade suggests, this is a very technical and very high-flow canyon, suitable only for expert canyoners.”[33]
- Scamper Torrent: “The little cousin of Whirling Water. Unfortunately nowhere near as good, but still a worthwhile descent.”[34]
- Bartrum Creek: “The little brother to Whirling Water. A very high-quality canyon in its own right, this is a tributary of NZ’s most famous canyon, Whirling Water.”[35]

D.93 A visual record of a canyoning experience on Whirling Water can be found here (at Sept 2024): https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5Fk-Pmr3Zy/

Figure 11: Three canyoning locations, Waitaha Valley. Source: KiwiCanyons.org



ANGLING

D.94 Ecologically, the Waitaha River above the Morgan Gorge is valued because salmonids are absent due to the barrier effect of the Gorge. One fishing website states that the upper reaches and headwaters offer angling opportunities, which is incorrect as there are no trout in the river above Morgan Gorge.[36]

[33] https://www.kiwicanyons.org/whirlingwater/ Sept 2024
[34] https://www.kiwicanyons.org/scamper-torrent/ Sept 2024
[35] https://www.kiwicanyons.org/bartrum-creek/ Sept 2024
[36] https://nzfishing.com/west-coast/where-to-fish/waitaha-river/, Sept 2024

D.95 Below Morgan Gorge, Fish & Game New Zealand West Coast describes the fishery in its 2024 Sports Fish and Game Management Plan as regionally significant and in a rural setting, with brown trout, salmon and game birds present. Several angling guidebooks and websites also identify the presence of a trout and salmon fishery on the Waitaha but provide few details (Kent, 2006; Moore, 2002). [37] Unwin (2012) indicates that there is a minor salmon run in the River.

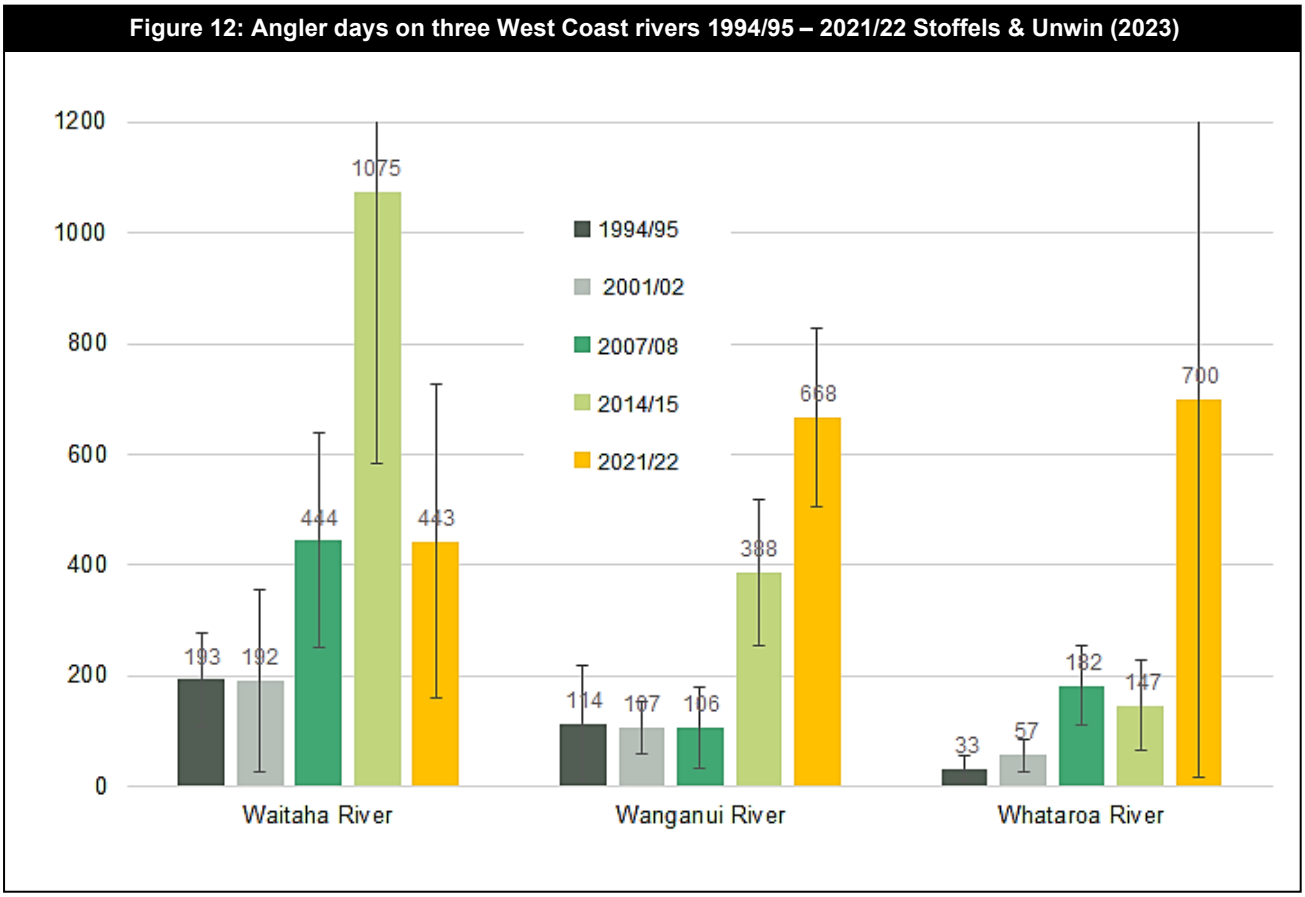
D.96 EOS Ecology indicate that trout numbers in the Douglas Creek reach are very low and fish are generally small (Tom Drinan, EOS Ecology, pers comm, Nov 2013), and would not constitute an angling resource.

D.97 Millichamp (1997) describes the west Coast salmon fisheries thus:

> *Salmon run into a number of West Coast rivers. Chris Tonkin, manager of the West Coast Fish and Game Council, tells me that there are significant but variable runs into all major rivers between the Grey River in the north and the Arawhata River in the South. To put these runs into perspective, a good run into the better West Coast salmon rivers seldom exceeds 1000 fish, varying from year to year according to how far the cool water currents move up the coast during the summer months.... the most consistent rivers are the Hall (which drains Lake Moeraki) and the Paringa, both of which had a lake only a few kilometres upstream of the mouth.*

D.98 Stoffels and Unwin (2023), via the periodic national angler surveys (**NAS**), describes the level of use of the Waitaha River for freshwater fishing in angler days, compared with the Wanganui and Whataroa Rivers (**Figure 12**). An angler day is any time spent fishing a river over a 24 hour period. The very high error margins indicate that the counts are based on a small number of respondents fishing relatively regularly – notable on the Whataroa River in the 2021/22 season

Figure 12: Angler days on three West Coast rivers 1994/95 – 2021/22 Stoffels & Unwin (2023)



[37] http://www.fishingmag.co.nz/locations-salmon-waitaha-river.htm, accessed 17 May 2013

especially. There were no international anglers reported for the Waitaha River. The total angling effort for the West Coast in the 2021/22 season was 44,7780 (± 3,870). In 2021/22, the NAS identified 108 angling waterbodies within the West Coast, with almost 80% of all effort recorded in the 20 most popular (not including the Waitaha). Unwin (2014) noted a more than two-fold increase in total annual effort between 2007/08 and 2014/15 occurred throughout the West Coast region, with the sole exception of the Buller/Karamea sub-region – and this is evident in the data for the Waitaha River. Unwin suggested that this was the result of a (p54), "general redistribution of angler activity…. suggesting that anglers in search of a back country fishing experience are travelling further afield than was the case in 2007/08". This trend would not apply to the Waitaha which lacks a back country fishing resource.

D.99 In 2013 changes in levels of angling activity on the River from year to year were reported to be largely accounted for by variations in the quality of the annual salmon run (2008 was a relatively good year), which is a common feature with angling activity on the West Coast in general (a good salmon year can double regional angler licence sales) (Dean Kelly, Fish and Game West Coast, pers comm, Nov 2013). The apparent annual changes in activity on the Waitaha River are, however, largely within the margins of error (**Figure 12**).

JET BOATING

D.100 The Waitaha River can be navigated by jet boats to just below the Morgan Gorge but this requires 'good flows'.[38] The river is graded as Class 2 for "More advanced boating/comfortable after one season" with "logs, shingle and braids likely to be encountered".[39] Other rivers in the area offer higher flows and are therefore more reliable (and less damaging). No club events have been staged on the River by the West Coast Branch of Jet Boating NZ, but there is the potential for them. The run on the River is, however, short and there are plenty of preferable jet boating destinations on the Coast. It would be unlikely for anyone to boat the boulder garden above Douglas Creek. Users of the River would most likely be individuals "trying it out", but it would be unlikely to be visited repeatedly (Colin Holmes, Rivers Officer West Coast Branch JBNZ, pers comm. Sept 2013).

MORGAN GORGE HOT SPRINGS

D.101 The hot springs in Morgan Gorge[40] are often referred to in literature and through consultation as a component of the local kayaking and tramping experience and as a destination in itself. There are no records of use levels, which are likely to be low as a result of its difficult access (ropes are not essential, but they were used for the 2013 site visit – see photos below), compounded recently by the transfer of track access from the true left of the River, where the pools are located, to the true right. A 2014 online reference to access to the springs states (verbatim):[41]

> *My mission was to find the hidden hot pool in the Morgan Gorge, which has always been in the back of my mind after seeing it in Wilderness Magazine when first arriving in New Zealand. Before heading out I gathered as much information as I could from the web, after all these hotpools are hidden and would require a wee sense of adventure to reach them. To reach the Hotpool: Follow the DOC track at the end of Waitaha Road heading towards Kiwi Flat, after about 2 hours the track reaches a calm flat pool and heads up into the bush, this is the point*

[38] https://www.jbnz.co.nz/river-information/ Sept 2024
[39] Ibid
[40] The Geopreservation Society site name is the Waitaha River Hot Spring, but the Morgan Gorge title is commonly applied.
[41] http://rivers.org.nz/nz/west-coast/waitaha/morgan-gorge. 15 May 2013 – no longer available

Morgan Gorge hot springs 2013 – indicated

Morgan Gorge hot springs issuing from rock face 2013

> *you leave the track and limber up for your swim across to the other side...boy its fresh! Once on the other side, boulder hop up the river eventually reaching the mouth of the Morgan Gorge, from here follow the side stream to find a faintly marked track up and around the gorge. Keep your eye out for markers, the track is very over grown. Once you reach the third stream/large obvious slip head down to the edge of the gorge where you will see and smell the hotpool. Carefully scramble down to access the lower tier of the gorge and enjoy the pool.*

D.102 A more recent 2023 post states:[42]

[42] https://nzhotpools.co.nz/hot-pools/waitaha-river-hot-springs/ "Matthew, Queenstown" Sept 2024.

I just visited this one, It's a pretty unique spot! It's fairly technical access though, be warned! The pool is fairly small by default. Sometimes it has sediment, sometimes not. I didn't have any sediment on my trip. If it does have sediment, use the white bags under a rock above to fill (to act as sandbags). Two sandbags here.

D.103 Wightwick (2015) noted:

Hot pools are located on the true left of the Waitaha River near the bottom end of the Morgan Gorge. Access to the hot pool is quite challenging and requires either fording the Waitaha River below Morgan Gorge of tramping up to the Morgan Gorge swingbridge and back down the true left of the gorge. People are required to climb down a steep section of rock, immediately beside the river to access the pools. A record of the use of the hot pools is not kept, however, the Department agrees with Westpower's comments that due to the difficulty of access the number of people visiting the hot pools is considered to be low.

D.104 The springs are incorrectly referred to in at least two references as being located upriver of the Anson Stream confluence, rather than upstream of Glamour Glen.

Accessing the hot springs, Morgan Gorge 2013

WHITEBAITING

D.105 There is scant information nationally about whitebait activity. DOC completed a study of selected waterways for the 2021 season, but this included only four rivers in the South Island (Watson & West 2023). Otherwise, Kelly (1988) reported "Good access to the river mouth is a bonus for older whitebaiters who cannot reach the mouths of other rivers to the south. There are 12 registered sites on the lower river. Generally, the river is fished by a dozen or so retired locals, but the catches are good."

D.106 The West Coast Regional Council reports ten registered whitebait stands in 2025 (Figure 13).[43]

Figure 13: Registered whitebait stands (pink). WCRC data

[43] See: https://www.wcrc.govt.nz/environment/water/whitebaiting/whitebait-stands-location-map

APPENDIX E – SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VALUES RELATING TO RECREATION

E.1 This section considers the significance of the recreational values of the Waitaha study area at an international, national, regional or local level.

E.2 To determine the importance of the resource for recreation, two steps are required. First the values of the resource for recreation must be identified. Second, the significance of these values is assessed. Both parts of this assessment are problematic and cause considerable debate with proposals of this nature. There are no nationally-accepted criteria for identifying the significance of recreational values. The RiVAS method (Appendix D, for kayaking) is the sole comprehensive attempt with credibility, but on the West Coast it has only been applied to kayaking. Debate centres as much around the basis of assessments as the outcome statements. For this reason it is critical to be explicit about criteria.

E.3 This recreation assessment is based upon four values:

- Use values derived from economic, personal and social benefits attained from the recreational use of a setting. Much of the necessary assessment of this value is beyond the scope of this study – requiring detailed economic and social research and analysis. Use value in this study is represented by the numbers, activities and origin of users and is considered in a relative rather than an absolute sense.
- Resource attributes (environmental, social settings and managerial (services and controls put in place by resource management agencies)).
- Experiences (sought and attained).
- Availability of substitute resources (where activities and experiences may be satisfied).

E.4 Other values may be applied to a recreation setting, such as:

- Existence value relating in recreation terms to a non-user's positive feelings about the ability of others to use a resource (for ecological or cultural values it might apply to settings which are not visited).
- Option value, relating to a non-user's currently unrealised future option of using a setting, or the setting being able to be used by current or future users for activities not currently available or attempted. The latter would have applied to the Morgan Gorge and upper Waitaha Gorge before they were kayaked.

E.5 Assessment of these last two values is beyond the scope of this study, requiring, for example, contingent valuation studies and un-testable foresight, both of which have methodological weaknesses. These values may also apply equally to all recreation resources and therefore will not necessarily elevate the significance of any one resource above another. In absolute and relative terms, their complete evaluation would add little to this analysis.

Recreational use

E.6 The Waitaha study area currently receives a low level of use for all of the recreational activities undertaken in the catchment, which includes whitewater kayaking, tramping, mountaineering and hunting. Total use of the Waitaha catchment is measured in the hundreds, and this low level of activity is an important appeal of the setting. Recreationists are drawn from a wide area, with international kayakers comprising, according to England (2011) at the time, more than 25%

of the Waitaha kayaker population. Most trampers and hunters are drawn from outside the region – 80% of entries in the Kiwi Flat hut book are by non-West Coast residents, if those who did not identify their origin are excluded.

E.7 Use estimates include:

- 50 kayakers (based on helicopter records and RiVAS in 2011) paddling the Waitaha Gorge section (and mostly portaging Morgan Gorge) annually.
- Fewer than 10 individuals might kayak the upper Waitaha Gorge (above County Stream) and/or Morgan Gorge in any one year, although these sections might not be run at all for long periods, and there is a very limited pool of suitably skilled kayakers.
- Approximately 50 hunters use the Waitaha Valley area annually.
- Approximately 300 trampers and day visitors access Kiwi Flat annually, including canyoners.

E.8 Activities supported by helicopters have declined in recent years, particularly kayaking. In 2013 interviewed helicopter operators reported the total number of kayakers visiting the Waitaha River was approximately 50 per year. In 2024, helicopter companies (combined) reported delivering fewer than 10 kayaking trips to the Waitaha River over the past decade. White Water NZ reports that Morgan Gorge "sees little regular paddling activity".[44] While activity levels may currently be supressed due to a number of possible factors (such as the cost of living, exchange rates and international destination competition), there is no reason to predict that activity levels might not return to those recently experienced. Estimates for use of the Waitaha catchment for recreation are based on the potential of the setting for kayaking rather than actual current use which is much lower. Therefore, this report has erred in favour of a conservative (high) estimate based on historical peak usage than usage over the past decade.

E.9 The area provides a mix of activity opportunity values:

- A highly challenging whitewater adventure kayaking opportunity.
- A weekend trip for trampers and hunters, especially to Kiwi Flat and Scamper Torrent.
- Tramping/mountaineering access into the remote hinterland.

Setting attributes

E.10 Specific values are attributable to the setting, including the natural environment, the managerial environment (recreation facilities) and activity-specific attributes (such as presence and quality of whitewater rapids). The Waitaha catchment is valued as 'classic' West Coast backcountry. Integral to this is the ability to travel through the valley and access the 'tops'. For most users this requires maintained tracks. The significant contribution from Permolat members to facility maintenance indicates the value placed by committed backcountry recreationists on retaining access to the traditional backcountry huts and natural settings within the study area. Several informants (Booth 2008) noted that Morgan Gorge acts as a natural barrier between the frontcountry and the backcountry. To them the remote territory begins beyond Kiwi Flat and Scamper Torrent.

[44] https://whitewater.nz/fast-track-waitaha-dam-update/ accessed June 2025

E.11 Interviewees in Booth (2008) stressed the beauty of the natural, unmodified landscape. Common descriptors were: awesome, beautiful, dramatic, spectacular, stunning. Many people made reference to 'wilderness', including pristine wilderness, unspoiled wilderness and, simply, 'wild'. The diversity of natural landscape features was raised including the two gorges and Kiwi Flat. Such terms have been commonly used in communications with recreation user groups through more recent consultation on the Scheme.

E.12 The whitewater attributes of the Waitaha River represent an important kayaking value. The rapids are described as challenging, very committing, of consistently high quality and difficulty. The 'cave rapid' in the Waitaha Gorge was mentioned in several blogs and by some informants as a unique feature of the River (Booth 2008). The section below the Morgan Gorge suits a wider range of kayak abilities and is accessible by foot. The river can be kayaked for large parts of the year, given it has consistently good flows (when other rivers may not).

E.13 Recreationists use and value the opportunity to access the study area by air. The relatively high cost of accessing the River – a result of the location being almost equidistant from the closest heliports – reduces use, but that is not concomitant with a lesser value being placed on it.

Experiences

E.14 The 'remote and challenging' recreation experience was identified as highly valued by interviewees in Booth (2008). They described the experience as "accessible remoteness" with a wild quality but with the provision of traditional backcountry facilities and air access.

E.15 For kayakers, this style of experience is also relevant. The River provides the additional challenge of a "very committing" and "remote" experience that represents "a big day out". Several kayakers interviewed in Booth (2008), including those who had not paddled the river, described it as "inspirational" and/or "aspirational", and representing a peak adventure whitewater kayaking experience. The ‘Mt Cook’ of kayaking is a common terminology applied.

Resource substitutability

E.16 One dimension of significance is uniqueness. If a readily available substitute site is available, the resource value is lower than for a site for which no substitute is available.

E.17 The recreation resource provided by the Waitaha study area sits within a region that offers a grouping of similar recreation settings. At 2024, the DOC West Coast Conservancy managed 141 backcountry huts.[45] More specifically, the DOC Hokitika Area manages "a comprehensive network of backcountry visitor sites. Almost all the valleys of the backcountry contain tracks huts and bridges" (DOC, 2004:59). DOC's CMS states that "the extensive tracts of remote experience and gazetted wilderness areas set the Conservancy apart from other parts of New Zealand" (DOC, 2010:114).

E.18 From a kayaking perspective, the presence of a set of wild whitewater rivers on the West Coast provides a concentration of adventure kayaking opportunities and a wide range of choice, particularly at the advanced end of the kayaking opportunity scale. **Table 3** (page 60) indicates that at the gross level the Waitaha River is one of 14 grade 5 rivers on the West Coast which rely on, primarily, helicopter access.

[45] https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/walking-and-tramping/huts/?region-id=3016000 at Sept 2024

E.19 Charles (2013) identifies 42 class IV to V runs in the South Island and 20 grade V+ to VI runs. The latter are:

- Anatoki River, Golden Bay. Helicopter access only.
- Blue River, Otago. Walk-in.
- Burke River, West Coast. Helicopter access only.
- Cleddau River, Milford. Vehicle access.
- Falls Creek, West Coast. Helicopter access only. Requires rain.
- Hokitika River – upper / Mungo. Helicopter access only.
- Hollyford – Monkey Creek. Vehicle access. Requires rain.
- Kawarau River – Nevis Bluff. Vehicle access.
- Kokotahi River, West Coast. Helicopter access only.
- Nevis River (from Nevis Crossing to the Kawarau). Requires rain. Vehicle access.
- Perth River, West Coast. Helicopter access only.
- Red Granite Creek, West Coast. Vehicle and walk.
- Roaring Meg Creek, Otago. Walk in. Requires heavy rain.
- Toaroha River – upper. West Coast. Helicopter access. Requires rain.
- Whataroa River, West Coast. Helicopter access only.
- Waikaia River, West and East Branches. Drive – East, Helicopter East. Requires rain.
- Waitaha River, West Coast. Helicopter access only.
- Whitcombe River – upper. Helicopter access only.

E.20 The uniqueness of the Waitaha River Valley was discussed in Booth (2008) and Wightwick (2015). Opinions varied and some views may have been strategic given knowledge of the Scheme (Booth 2008). There was a clear difference between hunters and other users. Hunters all expressed that better hunting areas existed elsewhere in the region. The Waitaha was not a first-choice hunting destination (for red deer, chamois and thar). Individual kayakers, trampers and mountaineers, however, spoke of the specific characteristics that make the Waitaha catchment different from its neighbours. This included ease of access (a relatively short tramp in/out between Kiwi Flat and the road end), the beauty of the valley (influenced by factors such as the presence of permanent snow and ice fields), its landscape diversity (flats and gorges) and the River's whitewater attributes.

E.21 While the Waitaha Valley is one of many backcountry-remote settings on the West Coast, almost all of which are accessed by river valleys, the Waitaha differs by having relatively difficult access in the lower reaches and poorly formed tracks (or none) in the upper valleys. This means that most experiences in the valley are 'hard won'.

Significance assessment

E.22 The significance of recreational values can be described in terms of geographical scale, from local to international significance. As already noted, there are no accepted criteria to define these levels and their threshold. This study is based on the following significance rating system:

- International significance: The resource attracts recreational visitors from around the globe. It has international recognition or status within a specific recreation community. It offers a form of recreational value that is outstanding and rare.
- National significance: The resource attracts recreational visitors from around New Zealand. It has national recognition or particular status amongst a specific recreation community.
- Regional significance: The resource attracts recreational visitors from the West Coast primarily. The recreation opportunity is common nationally and may be common regionally.
- Local significance: The resource attracts recreationists primarily from local communities. The recreational opportunity is common regionally or is of low interest.
- Not significant: The resource is infrequently used for recreation, has no reputation as a favoured destination and has no recreation management input.

E.23 A difficulty in making these assessments is identifying the contribution that the Waitaha catchment makes to a wider recreation opportunity setting. For both kayakers and land-based users, the Waitaha comprises one part of a 'whole' or region-wide set of destinations. If the Waitaha catchment was absent from this set of opportunities, the West Coast would still, for example, retain an international reputation for kayaking opportunities. For trampers and hunters the Waitaha affords a linkage between it and other valley systems within the central West Coast.

E.24 The number of setting users is not a strong or single determinant of significance. The value of a backcountry-remote setting is often low encounter rates with other recreational visitors, and some settings are specifically managed to maintain this value. However, where access to a setting is unregulated and relatively easy, and where there is a high level of setting substitutability, low user numbers may indicate a common-place recreation resource.

E.25 The value of this collective opportunity differs for kayakers compared with land-based users. For kayakers, the Waitaha's contribution extends beyond the region. The suite of West Coast rivers is valued internationally and nationally – and the high number of challenging runs represents a peak experience for advanced kayakers. The Waitaha is therefore a component of the West Coast kayaking opportunity which represents the 'best collection' of whitewater rivers in New Zealand.

Kayaking

E.26 ***Significance*:** Internationally and nationally significant (in association with the other high grade West Coast kayaking rivers) for advanced kayaking in class V and VI settings. The low use of the Waitaha River (assessed as 50 kayak days per annum – as above this is based on a conservative assessment of historical peak numbers which have since significantly reduced to fewer than 10 kayaking trips to the Waitaha River over the past decade), and particularly Morgan Gorge (rarely kayaked and by only the most skilled paddlers), is tempered by the extreme difficulty of the recreational opportunity it provides, its difficult access (helicopter to the get-in which is costly, and a difficult portage at Morgan Gorge for most users) and reduction in interest due to competing international destinations.

E.27 ***Rationale*:** Small numbers of users (limited by the required skill level and other factors set out above) but the river attracts a cadre of elite kayakers. The West Coast is a well-known adventure kayaking destination internationally (along with places such as Norway and California). The Hokitika area is recognised as a rafting and whitewater kayaking destination of international significance (DOC, 2004). The Waitaha has features that make it an important component of the West Coast kayaking scene. Of the 24 grade 5 rivers on the West Coast, the Waitaha River has been assessed as the 5th-equally most kayaked (RiVAS assessment 2010, **Appendix D**). This significance assessment applies equally to all sections of the River above the bottom of the Morgan Gorge.

Tramping

E.28 ***Significance*:** Regionally significant in the Kiwi Hut and Flat area and nationally significant in the upper valley, particularly at Ivory Lake. Low use throughout, but with 50% growth post 2020. Although use levels vary over time, and interest in tramping in the Waitaha Valley may change over time, this report has erred in favour of a conservative (high) estimate based on current peak tramping numbers as opposed to the lower historical numbers.

E.29 ***Rationale*:** Trampers are drawn to the West Coast/Southern Alps from around New Zealand. The West Coast is valued for its relatively low use, traditional backcountry and remote experiences (natural environment and the cultural assets of backcountry huts) and extensive network of long and short tramping opportunities. The significance rating is influenced by the degree of emphasis placed upon the collective value of the whole West Coast/Southern Alps backcountry area (national significance) or the lower Waitaha Valley alone (regional significance) and the origin of trampers as recorded in the Kiwi Flat Hut book.

E.30 The Ivory Lake hut has a higher (national) level of significance due to its landscape setting and identification as a "classic" tramping destination (Barnett et al 2012).

E.31 DOC describes the tramping network (DOC, 2004:59-60):

> *The southern alps between the Taramakau and Waitaha Rivers is regarded by New Zealanders as the backcountry "capital" of New Zealand because it is accessible and presents a complete spectrum of opportunities. These range from multi-day valley and trans-alpine tramping in challenging terrain to day tramps and weekend length opportunities along open tops to accessible huts. Of particular note are the numerous opportunities for extended north to south traverses utilizing routes and passes to link existing visitor sites and valleys.*

Hunting

E.32 ***Significance*:** Regionally significant, low use.

E.33 ***Rationale*:** Hunters are drawn from around New Zealand, but in small numbers. Animals (the major draw-card) are in more plentiful supply in other places close by. The main focus of the little commercial hunting activity which occurs (guided hunting and helicopter drop-offs – 30 to 50 annually) is hunting thar and chamois in the upper valley.

Hot springs

E.34 ***Significance*:** Regionally significant, low use.

E.35 ***Rationale*:** Largely an element of a tramping, hunting or kayaking experience for New Zealanders rather than a destination in itself, and accessed by the same cross-section of users.

Some destination-specific activity has been reported by international visitors and a local accommodation provider. Difficult access and limited space for bathing. Geopreservation Site.[46]

Canyoning

E.36 ***Significance*:** Nationally significant, low use.

E.37 ***Rationale*:** This is a new use of the setting and an activity with an apparent recent growth in popularity. The New Zealand Canyoning Association describes Whirling Water as 'Possibly the most famous canyon in New Zealand' and for experts only.

Angling downstream of Morgan Gorge

E.38 ***Significance*:** Regionally significant, low use.

E.39 ***Rationale*:** The national angler survey indicates relatively low levels of angling activity with high margins of error, and with variation in use reflecting the quality of the salmon run. Activity takes place only in the lower River and there is a strong focus on salmon and sea run trout. Assessment parallels that of Fish & Game New Zealand (**Appendix D**).

Jet boating

E.40 ***Significance*:** Locally significant, low use.

E.41 ***Rationale*:** Little indication of value or of frequent use. Activity only in the lower river currently, but may include the proposed abstraction reach in high flows.

Whitebaiting

E.42 ***Significance*:** Regionally significant, similar use to other regional rivers.

E.43 ***Rationale*:** Based on WCRC whitebait stand data.

[46] See Bentley, James (2025) Waitaha Hydro Scheme assessment of environmental effects: landscape (**Landscape Report**)

APPENDIX F – POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE SCHEME

F.1 This section considers the effects of the Scheme on the recreation values identified in the preceding ***sections*** of this report. The assessment responds to evaluation and resource management issues – from a recreation perspective – identified in the West Coast *Te Tai Poutini* Conservation Management Strategy, the RMA and regional and district plans prepared under the RMA including the operative Westland District Plan and the Te Tai o Poutini Plan Proposed Plan.

STATUTORY PLANNING PROVISIONS

Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

F.2 See also the analysis of the CMS in **Appendix D** as it relates to the management of the Waitaha study area. This identifies the Waitaha Conservation Area to be a backcountry-remote setting with an expectation for low encounter rates with other visitors and a low level of facility provision within a setting dominated by natural processes.

F.3 The CMS defines several issues requiring assessment in the DOC concession application process:

> ***DOC CMS (2010)*** *3.7.2 (1) When assessing applications for any activity on or in the bed of a river or lake, consideration should be given to (but not limited to) the following guidelines:*
>
> *a) Adverse effects on freshwater and terrestrial species, habitats and ecosystems, historical and cultural heritage values, public access, recreation opportunities and amenity values should be avoided or otherwise minimised;...*
>
> *e) The natural character within the setting of the activity should be maintained.*

F.4 The Scheme falls largely within the Waitaha Forest, which is held as Stewardship Area and is subject to the Conservation Act 1987, including section 25 which provides that *"Every stewardship area shall so be managed that its natural and historic resources are protected.*"

F.5 In parallel, the "*maintenance and enhancement of amenity values"* is a Section 7 matter under the RMA. 'Amenity values' are defined in the RMA as, "those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes". Natural character values of rivers and their margins are a Section 6 matter, and of relevance to recreation values.

West Coast Regional Policy Statement

F.6 The West Coast Regional Policy Statement (2020) (**WCRPS**) identifies the need to protect water resources, rivers and outstanding natural features and landscapes. The WCRPS states (S.8 Land and Water, p35):

> *The West Coast has high rainfall and water is generally abundant in most areas. Given the development pressures facing other regions, West Coast experiences of the natural environment are being keenly sought, with many of these experiences centred around coastal and freshwater environments. The region's natural beauty and resulting popularity with tourists is, in no small measure, due to the pristine nature of most water bodies. Management of these resources needs to take into account the high recreational and habitat values these water bodies provide.*

F.7 Policy 8.6 of the WCRPS is to "Identify the significant values of wetlands and outstanding freshwater bodies in regional plans and protect those values," with associated Methods:

8.4. Develop with stakeholders regionally consistent criteria to identify the significant values of wetlands and outstanding freshwater bodies.

8.5. Identify the significant values of wetlands and outstanding freshwater bodies in a regional plan.

F.8 This work has not yet been completed.

F.9 The Anticipated Environmental Result from implementing the policies in Section 8 include:

4. Significant values of wetlands and outstanding fresh water bodies are protected from the adverse effects of activities that compromise these values.

F.10 Those recreation opportunities in the Waitaha Valley described as national and internationally significant in **Appendix E** of this report (kayaking in the River above the bottom of Morgan Gorge and tramping in the upper valley, particularly around Ivory Lake) would likely qualify as 'outstanding' for recreation purposes.

F.11 Section 5 of the WCRPS (Use and Development of Resources) notes (p18):

The West Coast has a significant proportion of public land administered by the Department of Conservation. The use and protection of public conservation land, is central to the long term sustainability of West Coast communities. Development of new tourism related infrastructure within public conservation land will provide incentives for growth and investment in the wider region. There are also a number of other activities that occur on land administered by the Department including grazing licences, mining and sphagnum moss harvesting.

The Department issues concessions under the Conservation Act, or access arrangements under the Crown Minerals Act in the case of mining, for activities to occur. While this includes consideration of environmental effects under the Conservation Act, regional and district council functions under the RMA still apply on public conservation land. While large portions of land are not freehold in the region, appropriate use and development can occur, generating growth opportunities while still protecting the values of natural resources and the wider environment.

Westland District Plan

F.12 The Westland District Plan (**WDP**) (2002) notes (section 3.10):

The Westland landscape is unique to New Zealand and provides an essential platform for the growing tourism industry. Individual elements of this landscape, such as the glaciers, lakes and wildlife also attract significant visitor numbers. Tourism has become an integral part of the viability of a number of small communities in the District. The landscape quality, individual stands of trees and natural features also contribute to the amenities and environmental quality enjoyed by local residents.

F.13 And requires, as objectives:

3.10.1 To ensure development does not impinge on the integrity of landscapes in Westland.

3.10.2 To maintain and protect the existing scenic and open and diverse character of Westland District, dominated by natural dynamic processes.

3.10.3 To ensure that land uses, buildings and development have regard to the natural landscapes in which they are located or seek to be located.

F.14 In relation to ‘natural environments’ the WDP also notes (Part 3):

Given the over-riding emphasis on conservation orientated-management within the District, the Plan's approach is to support sustainability managed, development opportunities that can avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the natural environment.

F.15 With the objectives

3.7.1 To recognise and provide for the unique values and importance of natural environments and ecosystems in Westland.

3.7.2 To recognise that the people of the district can provide for their needs within the context of sustainable management.

3.7.3 To protect the integrity, functioning, and health of indigenous ecosystems and maintain the current diversity of indigenous flora and fauna.

Te Tai o Poutini Plan Proposed Plan (TTPP)

F.16 The upper Waitaha Valley is identified in the TTPP as part of a wider outstanding natural landscape, with policy NFL-O1 applying:

To protect the values of outstanding natural landscape and outstanding natural features on the West Coast/Te Tai o Poutini, while providing for subdivision, use and development where the values that make the landscape or feature outstanding can be maintained or enhanced.

F.17 The Waitaha Valley upstream of Macgregor Creek is within the Open Space Zone. These are areas (p25). “used predominantly for a range of passive and active recreational activities, along with limited associated facilities and structures.” However, the zone includes both extensive areas of Department of Conservation land, as well as small neighbourhood parks, and so the relevant policies tend to be quite broad, but include:

OSRZ - P3 *Buildings and structures should be designed and sited to be compatible with the function and predominant purpose of the open space and fit within the character and amenity of the surrounding area.*

OSRZ - P7 *Promote the protection and enhancement of existing natural environment values having regard to the relevant OSRZ - Open Space and Recreation Zone and the opportunities for enhancement of these on the site.*

OSRZ - P12 *Enable activities and facilities within the OSZ - Open Space Zone that:*

a. Are consistent with the intended purpose, character and qualities of the OSZ - Open Space Zone; and;

b. Contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of the community; and

c. Minimise adverse effects on the character and amenity values of the surrounding area.

OSRZ - P13 *Provide for activities that are ancillary to the functions of the OSZ - Open Space Zone including:*

a. Retail activities;

b. Residential activities, including for caretaker purposes; and

c. Agricultural, horticultural or pastoral activities.

Policy impact summary

F.18 The provisions of the four planning documents appear restrictive when the proposed Scheme is considered. Key issues to consider are:

- CMS: Impacts on the backcountry-remote characteristics and natural character of the Waitaha Conservation area and the enjoyment of those (noting that low recreational use of the Waitaha Valley is a natural feature of the setting and not an indication of low value);
- WCRPS: Impacts on a potentially outstanding freshwater body via changes to its flow regime and its 'significant values',[47] which will include recreation opportunities (the physical ability to use a setting for recreation) and appreciation of the river's natural qualities;
- WDP: Impacts on 'natural dynamic processes'[48] which underpin the backcountry-remote characteristics of the Waitaha setting;
- TTPP: That 'Buildings and structures should be designed and sited to be compatible with the function and predominant purpose of the open space and fit within the character and amenity of the surrounding area.'[49] With the need to 'minimise adverse effects on the character and amenity values of the surrounding area' where activities and facilities are enabled.[50]

F.19 These are interpreted as setting very high standards for the maintenance of recreation values and opportunities in the Waitaha against which the Scheme should be measured.

EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

F.20 The effects assessment made here considers both recreation opportunities and values to reflect the assessment considerations required by these plans. The assessment is based on the project design reviewed in relation to recreation in **Appendix A**.

F.21 The scale of effects described in this section use the following definitions.

1) Nil – no adverse effects in the recreation setting.

2) A 'low' effect refers to a small change in the recreation setting, but where the original recreational activities can continue and many participants may be unaware of a change in the setting.

3) A 'moderate' effect refers to an activity opportunity where a shift in the recreation setting may modify the characteristics of an activity – such as the frequency it may be undertaken, the location of the favoured sites, and some of the activity's qualities – but the activity setting retains most or many of its original values and the activity may continue to be pursued and enjoyed.

4) A 'high' effect represents a setting where the opportunity remains, but there are important and unavoidable adverse effects on the scale of opportunity retained or the values which contribute to the quality and availability of the existing experience.

5) A 'significant' effect refers to an activity opportunity or setting characteristic that is removed or severely constrained (to be rarely available), and/or where a basic management categorisation of a setting is altered (such as from a backcountry setting

[47] Section 8, policy 4
[48] Section 3.10.2
[49] OSRZ - P3
[50] OSRZ - P12

to a frontcountry setting), or where a component of development proposal is incompatible with the management categorisation.

F.22 There may be positive effects on recreation as a result of the Scheme development, and these are discussed where relevant.

F.23 Both 'low' and 'significant' effects are generally easily identified. The scale of effect within which a 'moderate' and 'high' assessment can be made is broad, and interpretation of the type and degree of effect is necessary. Where a setting is rarely used for a recreational activity, the scale of effect may be reduced if the level of use occurs in a commonplace recreation setting with few barriers to access. Otherwise, low levels of use may be an important feature in a backcountry-remote or wilderness setting and not an indicator of low recreation value.

Kayaking the upper Waitaha Gorge, including the Waitaha Gorge and Kiwi Flat reach

F.24 These kayak options will remain in place. This will enable up to two days of advanced (and extreme in the Windhover Gorge) kayaking from the headwaters of the river before the weir is encountered.

F.25 The net adverse effect in these two settings is likely to be 'low' to ‘moderate’. Although there are no direct effects on this upper section of the river, the potential for inadequate flows in the abstraction reach, which includes Morgan Gorge and the section below Morgan Gorge that those portaging it will normally rely on, may influence a loss of uptake of the opportunity. Perceptions of change based on the introduction of a new structure in a setting otherwise only developed for recreation, and the control of a previously free-flowing river, is likely to influence the number of kayakers using the area.

Kayaking Morgan Gorge

F.26 The Scheme effects on Morgan Gorge will result from: the installation of a structure across the River at the entrance to Morgan Gorge and a change in the flow regime.

F.27 The design of the weir can incorporate a range of features to enable kayaking access over or past it and into Morgan Gorge. A final design option should be developed in consultation with kayaking interests. The net result should be an access setting which enables scouting of the entrance to the gorge, at a scale similar to that which currently exists, and an entry setting which is appropriate to a class VI kayaking opportunity, and one used by a small number of suitably skilled individuals.

F.28 For a take of 23 m^3/s, and residual flow of 3.5 m^3/s, flow effects are represented by a residual flow of 3.5 m^3/s under the Scheme compared with minimum of 4.8 m^3/s naturally and a reduced frequency of high flows above the minimum flow. Tributary inflows below the weir will be insufficient to ameliorate the low flow effects – they might very marginally reduce the scale of effects for those portaging Morgan Gorge (see section 7.3.3), but the flow at the top of Morgan Gorge will determine the ability to kayak any of it.

F.29 Preferred kayaking flows identified by the Department of Conservation of 17.5 to 22.5 m^3/s (Wightwick, 2015:23) are currently available 15.5% of the time and will reduce to 2.5% availability (57 days per year to 9). Over the more popular summer kayaking period that flow regime will be available for 4.5% of the time as opposed to 29% naturally (106 days per year to 16). Flows above 22.5 m^3/s would be reduced from 42% of the time to 15% on an annual basis, and 24% over summer.

F.30 Ceases to abstraction will enable kayaking of the Morgan Gorge at agreed times, in addition to when the flow through the Gorge is sufficient to kayak. This will represent a change to the current quality of experience which occurs within a predominantly natural backcountry-remote setting with no artificial constraints on participation. Making river flow information publicly available would enable kayakers to better judge optimal kayaking periods and take advantage of suitable natural flows which augment the residual flow. However, the net adverse effect of the Scheme on kayaking the Morgan Gorge is likely to be 'high'.

F.31 When flows are suitable for kayaking in the Gorge (naturally or via a cease to abstraction) there should be no experience of hydro developments until the Power Station is encountered near 'Alpha Creek'.

F.32 The effect of planned and uncontrolled changes in flow at the Weir – by Scheme start-up or shut-down or unplanned outages – are assessed by AusHydro in their 2025 report *Waitaha Hydro Project - Downstream Flow Modelling*. Unplanned changes are estimated to be likely to occur ten times annually and to last 30 minutes. AusHydro assessed the resulting potentially increased hazard within the white water setting of the Gorge. The greatest river level rise following load rejection would occur when station flow is maximum (23 m^3/s) and the residual flow in the gorge is minimum (3.5 m^3/s) – a total river inflow rate of 26.5 m^3/s. In such a case, there would be no kayakers in the Gorge due to low flows. The assessment concludes that at other times there is, conservatively, a very low (but slightly uncertain) potential for a public safety risk within the gorge as a result of rapid flow changes, and recommends the installation of a 10 m^3/s bypass valve at the Power Station to mitigate this risk, along with public safety warnings. The valve will allow the moderation of rapid flow changes by 10 m^3/s and, in the opinion of the authors, appropriately mitigate public safety risks in the Gorge – along with appropriate warnings and signs.

Kayaking between Morgan Gorge and Douglas Creek

F.33 The river below Morgan Gorge is largely a class II experience through a boulder garden in the upper reaches and a more meandering and braided river below Douglas Creek. This is used as part of a kayaking experience in the upper river (by all kayakers), or as a stand-alone kayak experience accessed by foot from below Morgan Gorge. Consequently, this is the most frequently kayaked section of the Waitaha River.

F.34 The flow below Morgan Gorge will be augmented by flows from Anson Stream and Glamour Glen. These two waterways boost the residual flow considerably after rain, and for 50% of the time they add a further 0.7 m^3/s. The residual flow between Glamour Glen and Douglas Creek would be at least 4.2 m^3/s for 50% of the time. These inputs are unlikely to provide sufficient flow to reduce the scale of effects of the residual or reduced flows caused by the Scheme on kayakers. The 'high' scale of change identified for Morgan Gorge, above, would therefore also apply to the Douglas Creek reach.

F.35 During low flow periods, the portage of Morgan Gorge (approximately 870 metres of difficult track) would potentially be extended by approximately 1530 metres.

F.36 Ceases to abstraction and public flow information would enable kayakers to still experience this option. However, the net unmitigated adverse effect is likely to be 'high' due to the reduced availability of mid-range and higher flows. WWNZ has signed an agreement with Westpower

regarding no-take days for flows, and financial compensation, and other Scheme design considerations, and

Kayaking the whole river

F.37 The Waitaha River is one of the most challenging of the West Coast, and New Zealand, rivers. It is an experience for the truly expert kayakers and some of the runs, in particular Morgan Gorge (and the as yet unpaddled Windhover Gorge), provide a peak experience of risk and challenge. For expert kayakers, the River can provide three days of kayaking from its upper limits to below Morgan Gorge.

F.38 As stated above, the effect of the Scheme on each individual section of the river ranges from 'low' above Morgan Gorge to 'high' between the top of Morgan Gorge and the Douglas Creek confluence. While the River will remain kayakable for the majority of users who portage Morgan Gorge, there will be unavoidable changes to the setting which will influence the value of the entire River to kayakers:

- The introduction of control and generation structures on an otherwise free-flowing river,
- The introduction of permanent (albeit removable) structures in a backcountry-remote landscape setting otherwise developed only for recreation,
- An additional 1530 m portage when flows between the top of Morgan Gorge and 'Alpha Creek' are inadequate,
- A reduced availability of mid-range and higher flows for kayaking in the Morgan Gorge (mid-range flows of 15 – 25 m^3/s which currently occur for 31% of the time will be available under the Scheme for 6% of the time on an annual basis and 9% of the time over summer (Dec, Jan, Feb). Flows above 23 m^3/s would be reduced from 41% of the time to 15% on an annual basis, and 24% over summer),
- A new information regime with, potentially, more live data about flow characteristics,
- A new requirement to communicate with Westpower if ceases to abstraction are sought by kayakers in the Morgan Gorge and/or the Douglas Creek reach. The scale of change to the availability of mid-range and higher flows represents a net loss in comparison with the potential benefit gained from being able to plan a trip with a timed cease to abstraction. Freshes and floods may still coincide with a planned cease, and a level of unpredictability will always remain.

F.39 This is a major change from a completely uncontrolled river setting and the net effect on kayaking on the entire River would be 'high'.

Hunting and tramping

F.40 Effects on hunting and tramping (including voluntary hut and track maintenance carried out by participants in both activities) primarily result from changes in the backcountry-remote setting characteristics of the Waitaha Valley above Douglas Creek.

F.41 As discussed in the Terrestrial Fauna Report (TACCRA 2014) Westpower will undertake local pest and weed management as part of the ongoing operation and maintenance of the Scheme.

F.42 However, contributions to enhancing recreational amenities beyond Kiwi Flat as well as ecological initiatives in addition to any proposed mitigation may also be considered as part of

ongoing discussions with DOC and the other relevant recreational users such as Permolat . Therefore, this assessment assumes that the Scheme will result in no change to access levels to the recreation setting and that there are no changes to deer numbers as a result of any potential pest management programmes associated with the Scheme.

F.43 The Kiwi Flat area and the wider Waitaha catchment above Douglas Creek is a backcountry-remote recreation setting with "very high, near pristine levels of natural character".[51]

F.44 The installation of hydro development structures will be incompatible with the preferred management setting characteristics described in the DOC CMS. However, the outcomes set out in the CMS for the Hokitika Place will still be achieved with the Scheme in operation.

F.45 As discussed in the Landscape Report, the net effect on natural character of the Power Station and Headwork structures at the local level are considered to be 'high', while there are also 'high' effects on visual amenity near to the structures, with the effects lessening with increasing distance. Effects on landscape (the ability of the setting to accommodate change without detrimental effects) are also 'high' in the immediate area of the structures. Effects are low at a broad scale, with no changes to the landscape values associated with the hot springs in Morgan Gorge, although there would be a 'moderate 'level of effect on the perceptual aspects of natural character effects through the abstraction reach. Overall, the Landscape Report finds (Section 6.0):

> *The mitigation measures proposed, and the iterative design process, has enabled the Scheme to sit well within its landscape and to respond to its setting and to acknowledge the outstanding landscape, natural character and visual amenity values the Upper Waitaha Catchment holds. Overall, it is considered that the Scheme is appropriate despite the fact that at more local levels the natural character, landscape and visual amenity effects are moderate to high. At a broader scale the effects are low.*

F.46 The effects on visual amenity and natural character are limited to quite confined visual catchments and will be, in the main, settings which recreational visitors pass by rather than experience for long periods of time. The structures themselves are relatively small and located within an expansive landscape setting. Hunters who spend several days in the Kiwi Flat area may experience the Headworks area for a large part of their visit. Also, the mouth of Morgan Gorge is a significant geological feature of the valley. Developments at this point may leave more than just a transitory impression.

F.47 Residual flow effects may be experienced by trampers and hunters accessing the valley on foot through the Douglas Creek reach. There are few opportunities to view Morgan Gorge from the track (particularly that on the true right), and the lowered flow will change the visual and aural experience in the abstraction reach, as noted in the Landscape Report.

F.48 Users of only the upper catchment – such as Ivory Lake accessed from the Sawtooth and Lange Range – will have no experience of the Scheme, and these remote experiences may be unaffected (depending on the route taken by visitors). Beyond Kiwi Flat, effects on the recreation setting are perceptual rather than experiential, and will relate to an understanding of a change in an otherwise uncontrolled river setting. The degree of effect on hunting and tramping beyond the Kiwi Flat area will largely depend on the attitudes of the visitor. These may

[51] Bentley, James (2025) Waitaha Hydro Scheme assessment of environmental effects: landscape (**Landscape Report**)

range from experiencing a local, small-scale, reversible and sensitive hydro development, to the significant change to an otherwise pristine river and valley recreation setting.

F.49 The effect on hunting and tramping will be 'high' for the Kiwi Flat area and the access track from Douglas Creek to Kiwi Flat (due to the location of the powerhouse and residual flow regime). The effect considers no loss of access or the ability to experience the Waitaha Valley and assumes that access remains on the true right of the River. The effect will range from 'moderate' to 'nil' for the remainder of the valley, and will depend on: the influence of the Headworks structures at Morgan Gorge on the visitor experience; personal attitudes to the Scheme; and whether visitors experience the Kiwi Flat area during their visit to the valley.

F.50 There may be some trampers who are attracted to the valley to view the Scheme (both the Power Station and Headworks). This may be considered to be an adverse effect by traditional users of the area (as a result of increased visitor numbers), but could also be an addition to the local recreation opportunities. The scale of attraction would depend on the quality of the foot access into Kiwi Flat.

Hot spring visitors

F.51 The flow and location of the hot springs will not be affected by the Scheme. Changes in experiencing the hot springs will be limited to a change in the flow characteristics of the River and the accompanying soundscape, with the retention of its essential landscape values described in the Landscape Report. Overall, the effects on the recreational attributes of the hot springs, as a destination in themselves, will be low. Their essential characteristics will remain, including the hot water, the difficult access and the sculptured, active, river setting. However, visiting the hot springs will often be part of a hunting and tramping experience, and as above, there will be general adverse effects via the experience of scheme infrastructure in a backcountry-remote setting.

F.52 The AusHydro report *Waitaha* Hydro *Project - Downstream Flow Modelling* assessed the risk of unexpected inundation of the springs. The greatest river level rise following load rejection would occur when station flow is maximum (23 m^3/s) and the residual flow in the gorge is minimum (3.5 m^3/s) – a total river inflow rate of 26.5 m^3/s. In such a case, there would no potential to inundate the springs, requiring a minimum 50 m^3/s flow. The assessment concludes that at other times there is, conservatively, a very low (but slightly uncertain) potential for a public safety risk within the gorge as a result of rapid flow changes, and recommends the installation of a 10 m^3/s bypass valve at the Power Station to mitigate this risk, along with public safety warnings. The valve will allow the moderation of rapid flow changes by 10 m^3/s and, in the opinion of the authors, appropriately mitigate public safety risks in the Gorge – along with appropriate warnings and signs.

Canyoning

F.53 There will be no direct effect on key established canyoning settings of Whitling Water, Scamper Torrent and Bartrum Creek. The Scheme will, however, change the backcountry-remote setting experience en-route to the locations, considering Kiwi Flat Hut will be the base for the majority of canyoning experiences and access will often be via the walk-in from the lower Waitaha Valley.

Angling

F.54 Effects on angling are based on residual flow effects between the bottom of Morgan Gorge and the Scheme tailrace. Little angling occurs in this area and the Waitaha River is a low-use angling setting generally, with peaks in use based on the quality of the annual salmon run. The angling options will remain in the most accessible parts of the River near SH6 with the Scheme in place. Allen & Hay (2013) indicate that residual flows will be adequate for salmonid passage although there will be a reduction in the scale of trout habitat in the abstraction reach. Reduced flows between the bottom of Morgan Gorge and the Scheme outlet could improve the 'anglibility' in this reach (with less energetic flows), but frequent freshes and floods will always limit the ability of trout to linger in the Douglas Creek reach and there is unlikely to be any benefit to angling (Tom Drinan, EOS Ecology, pers comm). The effect on angling amenity on the River is likely to be 'nil'.

Jet boating

F.55 The River above the proposed tail race is rarely boated. Suitable minimum flows are not clear, but flows above 23 m^3/s would be reduced from 41% of the time to 15% on an annual basis, and 24% over summer. The River is a low value boating resource. The effect of the Scheme on boating is likely to be 'nil'.

Whitebaiting

F.56 Effects on whitebaiting relate to the retention of aquatic habitat for inanga and river flows. The former are assessed by EOS Ecology, and the latter considered in the Assessment of Environmental Effects Hydrology Martin Doyle's Hydrology Report.

All setting users – construction

F.57 Construction activities, especially at the down-river end of Kiwi Flat, and at the Power Station, will take three to four years. Construction noise and human activity, especially at the Headworks, during this period will be incompatible with the experiences associated with a remote recreation setting at and around the construction sites. The net effect of construction on recreational values will be 'significant' during the construction process. For the remainder of the valley, away from the construction sites, the effects of construction will be similar to those for hunting and tramping. In the upper valley beyond Kiwi Flat the effect will be perceptual rather than experiential, and influenced by the importance of the 'Alpha Creek' and Morgan Gorge settings to the total visitor experience and amount of time spent at Kiwi Flat.

Regional level – all users

F.58 The effect of the Scheme on West Coast recreation and tourism generally will be minor due to the high number of alternatives available for all activities affected by the Scheme and the relatively low level of use of the Kiwi Flat area. The West Coast will retain its international and national reputation as a challenging kayaking setting with the Scheme in place. It is noted that the region's international reputation appears to have waned with competition from South America – and the Morgan Gorge (and the remainder of the River) will retain its ability to challenge highly skilled kayakers, albeit with additional restrictions on its use due to the need to confer with a management authority (Westpower) if a cease to abstraction is required to provide a natural flow. Importantly, the key components of the Scheme (weir, diversion structure and powerhouse) are removable if the generation capacity is no longer required.

F.59 Effects are summarised in **Table 1** (p21) in Section 4 of the main body of this report.

APPENDIX G – PROPOSED MANAGEMENT OF EFFECTS

G.1 The effects of the proposal on the wild and scenic qualities of the Waitaha River are difficult to mitigate, considering the key issue is a change from an uncontrolled and ***undeveloped*** state to one with hydro structures and a controlled flow regime. However, there are management options that can be considered to support continued recreational use of the setting. These are, in the main, options to be considered by the recreation community, rather than essential components of the development. Their implementation may benefit some users over others and influence other changes in the setting, such as via improved access (for kayak portaging).

G.2 Potential mitigation options include the following. Items (a) to (h) are necessary and form part of the Scheme design and / or agreement with WWNZ, and the remainder optional depending on the preferences of the recreation community and ability to achieve agreements with third parties:

a) Scheme infrastructure design as per Landscape Report.

b) Develop a regime of ceases to abstraction to support continued kayaking in Morgan Gorge.

c) Design the weir to allow safe kayaking access to Morgan Gorge.

d) Provide online real-time flow data for the Waitaha River at Kiwi Flat to support kayaking in the River.

e) Provide online information on construction activities, including the type, location and duration of works, potential hazards (including in-river hazards), advice on avoiding hazards and construction activities generally, and any effects on the flow regime.

f) Provide a bypass valve and flow control system to avoid safety effects for in-river recreation in the rare event of a Scheme emergency shut-down. The bypass valve and flow control system can also potentially provide better flow management during no-take days improving the recreational benefit of those days. Associated warning siren and signs are required.

g) Support for regional kayaking development in agreement with WWNZ.

h) Realignment of lower access track near the Power Station.

i) Improve access for the kayak portage from the top of Morgan Gorge to ‘Alpha Creek’ to address lowered kayak amenity in the abstraction reach. This may be located on either bank of the River, but private land access issues on the true left suggest it will remain on the true right.

j) Improve tramping access to the valley to support recreational use of the area, and address changes in recreation amenity generally. This could include transferring access to the true left of Morgan Gorge (if landowner approval was gained, and noting that there has been no engagement through this process), where it was originally, giving better access to the hot springs and views into the Gorge, and reducing interaction with the Scheme Headworks at Kiwi Flat. This would contribute a small mitigation for kayaking amenity, but the net effect on kayaking in and below the Gorge would remain ‘high’ due to the loss of flow availability.

k) Relocate the swing bridge over the Morgan Gorge at Kiwi Flat to reduce the visibility of the weir and diversion structure.

G.3 The installation of the 10 m^3/s flow bypass valve is required to limit the potential for personal safety issues in the Morgan Gorge and for users of the hot springs during controlled and unplanned flow events.

G.4 Locating the weir at the top of Morgan Gorge (and its design to allow kayaking access) rather than at the bottom of the Waitaha Gorge, and its reduced scale, has been incorporated into the Scheme design. This will avoid some adverse effects on recreation in Kiwi Flat and kayaking above Morgan Gorge.

G.5 Mitigations will assist in reducing the amenity effects of the Scheme, but there is nothing that can moderate the introduction of the development into a previously uncontrolled backcountry-remote setting.

G.6 Effects are summarised in **Table 1** (p21) in Section 4 of the main body of this report.

Planning framework

G.7 Identifying the scale of effect of the Scheme on the internationally and nationally significant status of kayaking opportunities on the West Coast should consider how the scale of significance of the Waitaha River derives from the value of the West Coast complex of kayaking opportunities, rather than identifying the Waitaha River as independently significant. However, the change in the quality of the Waitaha River as wild and uncontrolled may remove the status of the River as internationally significant for kayaking in itself.

G.8 Effects of the Scheme relevant to the RMA (including sections 6 and 7) are on the internationally and nationally significant status of kayaking opportunities on the River, although this scale of significance relates as much to the West Coast complex of kayaking opportunities as it does to the values of any single river. This effect will also impact the 'outstanding' characteristics of kayaking amenity on the River under the West Coast Regional Policy Statement. The Scheme may sustain nationally significant kayaking values on the River with the retention of current kayaking opportunities above Morgan Gorge. All other forms of recreation in the Waitaha Valley will retain their regional and local significance.

G.9 The DOC CMS defines the setting as back-country remote, and a hydro-development is not compatible with this recreation management category. However, the outcomes set out in the CMS for the Hokitika Place will still be achieved with the Scheme in place.

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APPENDIX I – ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES (BOOTH 2008)

KAYAKING AND JET BOATING

Hugh Canard	Kayaker
Andy England	Kayaker
Nikki Kelly	Kayaker (first descent of Waitaha River)
Dave Kwant	Kayaker
Dave Ritchie	Kayak instructor
Duncan Catanach	Conservation Officer (North Island), New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (now White Water NZ)
Tony Ward-Holmes	Conservation Officer (South Island), New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (now White Water NZ)
Colin Holmes	Chairperson, West Coast Branch, Jet Boating New Zealand
Mark Jones	Member, West Coast Branch, Jet Boating New Zealand

FISHING AND HUNTING

Chris Tonkin & Dean Kelly	Fish and Game New Zealand (West Coast)
Marcus Pinney	Wilderness Trophy Hunting
Murray Hewer	Hunter
Basil Detlaff	Hunter

TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING

Andrew Buglass	Author of website *http://www.remotehuts.co.nz* Co-ordinator of *Permolat* (online group for remote huts in Westland)
Ollie Clifton	Executive Officer, New Zealand Alpine Club
Nick Groves	Tramper/mountaineer Author of *South Island Weekend Tramps*
Chrys Horn	Tramper
Geoff Spearpoint	Tramper/mountaineer Editor of *Moir's Guide North*
Mark Watson	Tramper/mountaineer Editor of *The Climber*

OTHER

Ian Wightwick	Technical Support Supervisor (Visitor and Historic Management), Department of Conservation, West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy Office
Ted Brennan	Programme Manager (Community Relations), Department of Conservation, Hokitika Area Office
Hugh Barr	Secretary of Council of Recreation Associations of New Zealand (CORANZ)
Bruce Dando	Kokatahi Helicopters

ATTACHMENT 2: RIVER REPORT FORM: WAITAHA FROM ENGLAND (2011)

River report form		
Andy ENGLAND	Royal Society of New Zealand Awarded Teacher Fellowship	Department of Conservation Lincoln University
River (section)	Waitaha River (normal fly-in around Moonbeam Hut)	
Locations (latitude and longitude of put in and take out)	Put in	Take out
	Wherever the helo can land on riverbed around Moonbeam Hut, on this trip river left bank opposite Dorothy and Moonbeam Creeks, approx: 43° 08.388'S 170° 48.822'E 223 213 There is a walk-in option to the downstream end of Morgan Gorge, put-in depending on ability but around: 151 255	At downstream end of Robinson Slip, river right, approx: 43° 06.092'S 170° 43.816'E 153 254
Access description	Helicopter access usually with Kokatahi Helicopters. Helo pick-up varies depending on vehicular access to Robinson Slip, but is usually from Robinson Slip.	
Land status (banks)		
Date kayaked (for this report)	20th February 2010	
Group members (on this trip)	Paul Currant (UK/NZ) Keith Riley (NZ) Kevin England (NZ) Andy England (NZ)	
Description of whitewater kayaking technicality (inc. grade and style of kayaking, volume on day, flow requirements and estimate of reliability)	Classic adventure whitewater grade 5. The Waitaha is medium steep, technical g4 and g5 pool-drop river kayaking. The pools are short, except Kiwi Flat, and the rapids are medium length usually requiring several linked moves, and very close together. Whitewater is powerful and varied, with holes in particular commonplace. Hazards are very real and varied, with sieves and caves on top of the usual hydraulic hazards of holes and waterfalls. Portaging is possible but usually technical in itself, requiring skill in moving on steep rock and in at least one place a 5m seal launch into a powerful hole. A lot of the Waitaha is very committing, set in gorges with steep rock sides. It is also physically and mentally (if not emotionally!) tiring, creating an epic adventure style of kayaking. On this trip, the Waitaha was at the lower end of medium flow and approx. 30 cumecs. It is commonly run lower than this and higher. At lower flows, holes can be even more powerful in places and rocks can be disconcerting, while at higher flows rapids can be very quick and powerful. It is unlikely that the Waitaha would get kayaked at flood flows as it would be very powerful and almost impossible to portage rapids in the gorges.	

	It does, however, have a broad range of useful flows making the Waitaha's flow very reliable throughout late spring through to autumn. The section from Moonbeam to Morgan Gorge is about 7.5km, then just over 1km through or around Morgan Gorge, then just over 5km to the take-out at Robinson Slip: 13.6km in total.
Description of water landscape (inc. water quality and clarity, river bed features)	The water is almost always silty-opaque, with a green or blue grey colour. Its opacity varies throughout the season. The river bed varies from boulders to bedrock with some amazing features of both, including caves and waterfalls made from huge boulders and chutes carved from bedrock. In most of the section before Kiwi Flat, it is whitewater that is prevalent. Kiwi Flat is a gentle shingle section, followed by Morgan Gorge and downstream with more bedrock and boulder whitewater. There is no return to shingle until the take-out.
Description of valley landscape from river (inc. gorges and views from river, types of vegetation)	The Waitaha valley is steep sided and covered in dense native bush. The sides are dissected by slips, tributaries and waterfalls. The Waitaha has several spectacular gorge sections, although only two are named on the map (it is not usual to kayak Windhover Gorge, although I believe at least one group has). Waitaha Gorge seems to be several gorges, from river level. There is one particularly scenic section with numerous waterfalls very close together, running over cliffs on river left, which always seem to catch the sun to create rainbows. Most of Waitaha Gorge is reasonably wide, although it narrows in one section to river width and constricts the river to a winding slot with cliffs either side. The resulting erosion of the rock makes incredible sculpted gorge sides. Waitaha Gorge spills abruptly into Kiwi Flat, which is a reasonably wide grassy flat covered in layered shingle/sand beaches from floods. The valley sides wrap around Kiwi Flat on all sides with only a slot for the Waitaha River to exit from. This is Morgan Gorge which is one of the most spectacular gorges – perhaps the most spectacular - on the West Coast. It has high, vertical sides which are close together and are fluted vertically in sharp arêtes instead of the usual gentle waves of gorge wall profiles. The upstream end of Morgan Gorge has large boulders at river level but the gorge narrows further as you progress downstream, to a point where it opens out slightly and cascades over a steep rocky slip next to a huge boulder or eroded bedrock shape. There are hotpools on the left bank here. Morgan Gorge then turns to the right and flows straight out to its sudden downstream mouth. The rapids at this point go over a small waterfall into a calm pool, from which you can look back upstream (usually in awe) into Morgan Gorge. Downstream, the valley progressively widens and the gradient progressively eases until you reach Robinson Slip. Here, at the

	take-out, the Waitaha becomes a wide valley and the shingle rapids lead downstream towards the sea which is apparent in the light and openness of the valley at this point. From put-in to take-out, the Waitaha is a spectacularly scenic river, primarily for its gorge features.
Description of degree of wilderness feel (inc. presence or absence of human influence, remoteness)	The Waitaha river trip has a very high wilderness feel, despite travelling through farmland to reach the helo pick-up and flying over a swingbridge and hut. The immediate river corridor is pristine and wild in every way, with no sign of human influence until observant paddlers notice the ominous monitoring equipment around the end of Waitaha Gorge, then the trail marker and bridge at the start of Morgan Gorge (usually a portage along the trail). There are then some signs of further industrial work on the river bank downstream of Morgan Gorge, where surveying for a potential hydro scheme has obviously taken place. Despite the detracting factors of the industrial monitoring, the Waitaha currently feels very much like a pristine wilderness adventure and the aggressiveness of the river environment adds significantly to that feeling. At the time of this trip, Morgan Gorge had not been descended right through (I was part of a group who attempted to in 2003 and members of my team from this trip successfully kayaked Morgan Gorge the day after this trip). The portage, however, is an important part of the 'wilderness' adventure experience: it is arduous, carrying a kayak through dense bush for 1-1.5 hours and requires both skill to find the trail which is frequently broken by slips and stamina to complete this portage after an intense day of difficult whitewater kayaking. The fact that there are still technically challenging rapids after the portage adds further to the sense of wilderness adventure. On this trip, I found the Waitaha to be every bit the wilderness adventure experience that I have in the past.
Notable flora and fauna (eg blue duck)	None on this trip although I have seen several whio in the river at Kiwi Flat every other time I have been here.
Description of overall character of river	This is the pinnacle of one-day wilderness adventure kayaking on the West Coast and a classic grade 5 river trip of world class. The Waitaha offers an intense and aggressive whitewater challenge set amongst spectacular gorges, with a known challenge held back for the end of the day in the form of the Morgan Gorge portage. Morgan Gorge now being paddled leaves a delectable challenge open to the world's most skilled whitewater kayakers.
Distinctive features of river trip (key words)	Adventure; grade 5 whitewater; gorges; wilderness; commitment; hot springs; portage
Info for land managers	Vehicular access to the road end can be difficult and it would be very useful to ease this difficulty on either bank (in the past, the south bank has been very difficult despite there being a DoC

	track). For kayakers, deterioration of the track is not a problem and possibly even adds to the adventure challenge of the day. Helo access is essential and due to usual landings in the (mobile) river bed, helo access leaves no traces. The presence of testing equipment in the river bed is ugly and offensive to kayakers. Progress towards a hydro scheme of any sort in this river would be vehemently opposed by kayakers, with no compromise position possible.
Info for rescue managers	As the track is mostly well back from the river, it is unlikely that anyone other than a kayaker would end up in the Waitaha river. Most kayak teams that paddle the Waitaha are well experienced and act as their own rescue team. In the event of a SAR op, a helo sweep of the river is worthwhile as most of the river is visible from the air (except Morgan Gorge). I would strongly recommend using an experienced whitewater spotter as there are many unusual river features. Due to the Waitaha's usual cloudiness, steepness, technical challenge and complexity, any search for an unresponsive target is likely to produce a very low POD. An experienced kayak team could search the Waitaha safely with reasonable effectiveness, especially looking for a responsive target. It would require a highly skilled team. Allow 4-6 hours from Moonbeam Hut to Kiwi Flat and more if detailed searching is required. Carrying overnight equipment on the Waitaha would be hazardous and it may be necessary in this case to plan to helo out from Kiwi Flat (or drop overnight gear there). The Waitaha holds its flow for several days after a reasonable rainfall event. At low to medium flows, it is possible to portage all grade 5 rapids (which I think is essential for risk management on SAR ops).

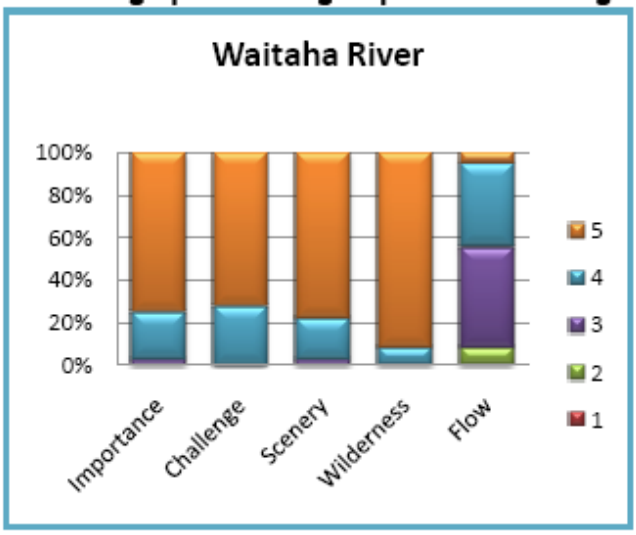
Any other notes

Put-in from helo

River scenery – waterfalls and gorge walls

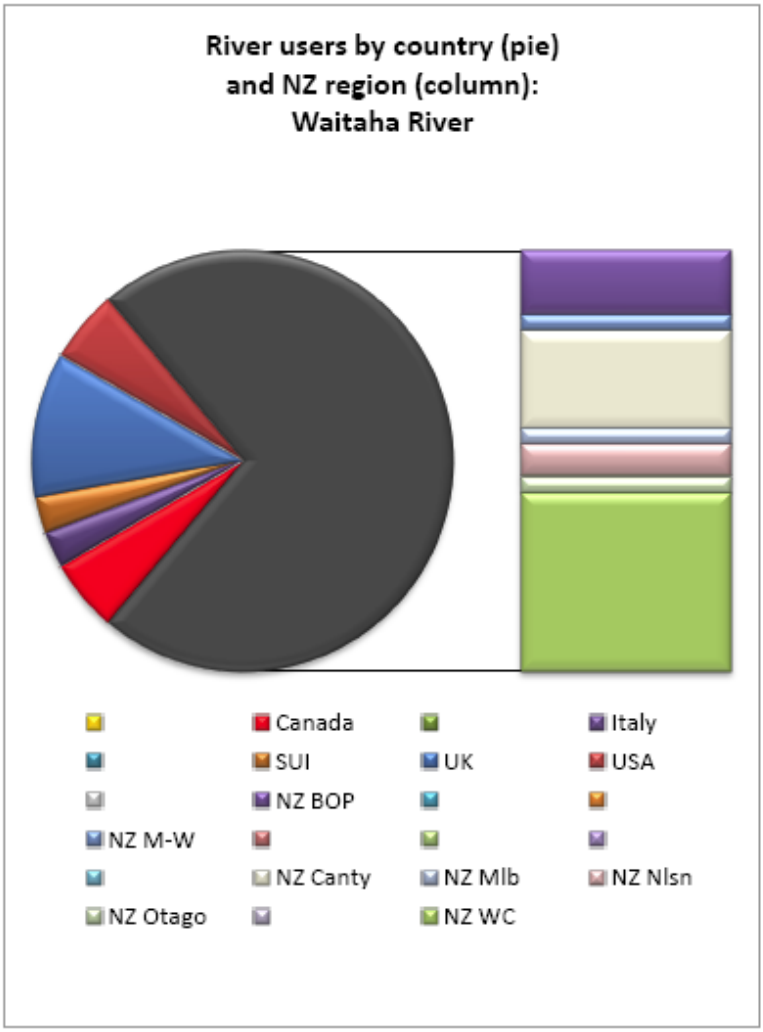
Statistics from 2010 West Coast Whitewater Kayaking Survey

% column graphs showing respondents' scoring of river attributes



Importance: 1=not, 5=extremely
Challenge: 1=none, 5=only on a good day
Scenery: 1=unattractive, 5=inspiring
Wilderness: 1=no wilderness, 5=pristine, remote
Flow: 1=unreliable, 5=very reliable

The bigger the block, the more people scored that number



Numbers	
Total number trips recorded	92
Number of respondents for this section	36
Mean number trips per person	2.6

ATTACHMENT 3: ANALYSIS OUTPUT FROM RIVAS (BOOTH *ET AL* 2009)

Step 1: Define river segments				Step 6A: Apply indicators								Step 6B: Apply thresholds								Step 8: River value												Step 9: Issues
River no.	River	Reach	Whitewater grade	Perception of scenic attractiveness (rating scale)	Perception of wilderness (rating scale)	Density of quality hydraulic features (rating scale)	Flow reliability (% of time river kayakable)	Ease of access (mode)	Number of users (kayaker days p.a.)	User catchment (home district/region)	Scarcity of kayaking opportunity (rating scale)	Scenic attractiveness	Perception of wilderness	Density of quality hydraulic features	Flow reliability	Ease of access	Number of users	User catchment	Scarcity of kayaking opportunity	**Equal weights**	River rank 1	Hydraulic density x 1.5	River rank 2	Flow reliability x 1.5	River rank 3	**No access attribute. Equal weights**	River rank FINAL	No access attribute. Hydraulics x 1	River rank 5	No access attribute. Flow reliability x 1	River rank 6	**River kayaking value**	Comments
				1=highly modified to 5=not modified	1=no wilderness to 5= exceptional wilderness	1=very low density to 5= very high density	Recorded as 10% bands	Mainly: 1=helo; 2=long walk-in; 3=4WD; 4=2WD	Recorded as number	1=intra-district; 2=intra-region; 3=bordering regions; 4=other NZ; 5=international	1=not scarce; 2=regionally scarce; 3=nationally scarce	1= 1 or 2= modified with little scenic value; 2= 3 = little modification with moderate degree of naturalness; 3= 4 or 5 = barely modified and highly natural	1= 1 or 2= low wilderness value; 2= 3 = moderate wilderness value; 3= 4 or 5 = high wilderness value	1= 1 or 2= low density; 2= 3= moderate density; 3= 4 or 5= high density	1=<33%; 2= 33-66; 3=>66%	1=1 or 2 helo or walk-in; 2=3 4WD; 3=4 2WD	1<100; 2= 100-500; 3=>500	1=intra-district; 2= intra- or bordering reg 3=rest of NZ or int'al	1=not scarce; 2=regionally scarce; 3=nationally scarce												More comments could be added to column
908000	Arahura River	Newton Ck put in	4, 5	5	5	5	90	1	250	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
906000	Hokitika River	Kakariki	4	5	5	5	80	1	150	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
893250	Perth River	Five Finger	4, 5	5	5	5	80	1	160	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
906055	Styx River	Tindall Creek	4, 5	5	4	4	90	2	200	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
893000	Whataroa River	Lower	3, 4	5	5	5	80	1	160	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
906140	Whitcombe River	Cropp	4, 5	5	5	5	90	1	200	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**20**	1	21.5	1	21.5	1	High	
951000	Karamea River	Roaring Lion	4	5	5	5	80	1	80	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
943000	Mokihinui River	Forks	4	5	5	4	100	1	40	4	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
893250	Perth River	Scone	5	5	5	5	70	1	80	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
911310	Taipo River	Julia Creek hut	4, 5	5	5	4	80	1	80	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
906054	Toaroha River	Below T Canyon	4	5	5	5	60	2	100	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21	3	**19**	2	20.5	2	20	3	High	
901000	Waitaha River		5	5	5	5	80	1	50	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
897000	Wanganui River	Upper	4, 5	5	5	4	80	1	40	5	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
897000	Wanganui River	Lower	3, 4	5	5	4	90	1	100	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	3	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**19**	2	20.5	2	20.5	2	High	
901100	Kakapotahi River	Lower	4	4	3	4	80	4	200	5	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**18**	3	19.5	3	19.5	4	High	
903000	Mikonui River		2	5	5	4	100	4	50	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	22.5	1	**18**	3	19.5	3	19.5	4	High	
929000	Totara River		4	4	4	5	10	4	150	5	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	**21**	1	22.5	1	21.5	2	**18**	3	19.5	3	18.5	6	High	
911310	Taipo River	Seven Mile	2, 3	4	4	4	90	3	160	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	**20**	2	21.5	2	21.5	2	**18**	3	19.5	3	19.5	4	High	
906000	Hokitika River	Mungo	5	5	5	5	40	1	20	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
906000	Hokitika River	Serpentine	5	5	5	5	60	1	60	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
906050	Kokatahi River	Crawford	5	5	5	5	60	1	50	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	Internationally scarce
868200	Landsborough River		4	5	5	3	80	1	50	5	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.0	4	20.5	4	**18**	3	19	4	19.5	4	High	
893250	Perth River	Upper	5	5	5	5	50	1	20	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
864000	Waiatoto River		4	5	5	4	80	1	40	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20.5	4	**18**	3	19.5	3	19.5	4	High	
893000	Whataroa River	Upper	5	5	5	4	40	1	10	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
906140	Whitcombe River	Wilkinson	5	5	5	5	60	1	20	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
906140	Whitcombe River	Prices	5	5	5	5	60	1	60	5	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	20	5	**18**	3	19.5	3	19	5	High	
	Crooked River	Upper	4, 5	5	5	5	30	2	100	5	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	3	**19**	4	20.5	5	19.5	8	**18**	3	19.5	3	18.5	6	High	
901100	Kakapotahi River	Upper	5	5	3	5	60	4	150	5	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	**20**	2	21.5	2	21	3	**17**	4	18.5	5	18	7	Med	
908000	Arahura River	Styx Saddle	5	5	5	5	50	1	10	2	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	19	7	**17**	4	18.5	5	18	7	Med	
868250	Burke River		5	5	5	5	60	1	10	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	19	7	**17**	4	18.5	5	18	7	Med	
	Red Granite		5	5	5	5	10	1	5	5	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	3	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	18.5	8	**17**	4	18.5	5	17.5	8	Med	Recently kayaked
	Roaring Meg		5	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	3	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	18.5	8	**17**	4	18.5	5	17.5	8	Med	Recently kayaked
906054	Toaroha River	Upper	4	5	5	4	50	1	10	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	19	7	**17**	4	18.5	5	18	7	Med	

Step 1: Define river segments				Step 6A: Apply indicators								Step 6B: Apply thresholds								Step 8: River value													Step 9: Issues
River no.	River	Reach	Whitewater grade	Perception of scenic attractiveness (rating scale	Perception of wilderness (rating scale)	Density of quality hydraulic features (rating scale)	Flow reliability (% of time river kayakable)	Ease of access (mode)	Number of users (kayaker days p.a.)	User catchment (home district/region)	Scarcity of kayaking opportunity (rating scale)	Scenic attractiveness	Perception of wilderness	Density of quality hydraulic features	Flow reliability	Ease of access	Number of users	User catchment	Scarcity of kayaking opportunity	**Sum Weights 1**	River rank 1	Sum Weights 2	River rank 2	Sum weights 3	River rank 3	**Sum Weights FINAL**	River rank FINAL	Sum Weights 5	River rank 5	Sum Weights 6	River rank 6	**River kayaking value**	Comments
				1=highly modified to 5=not modified	1=no wilderness to 5= exceptional wilderness	1=very low density to 5= very high density	Recorded as 10% bands	Mainly: 1=helo; 2=long walk-in; 3=4WD; 4=2WD	Recorded as number	1=intra-district; 2=intra-region; 3=border regions; 4=other NZ; 5=international	1=not scarce; 2=regionally scarce; 3=nationally scarce	1= 1 or 2= modified with little scenic value 2= 3 = little modification with moderate degree of naturalness; 3= 4 or 5 = bare modified and highly natural	1= 1 or 2= low wilderness value; 2= 3 = moderate wilderness value; 3= 4 or 5 = high wilderness value	1= 1 or 2= low density; 2= 3= moderate density; 3= 4 or 5= high density	1=<33%; 2= 33-66; 3=>66%	1=1 or 2 helo or walk-in; 2=3 4WD; 3=4 2WD	1<100; 2= 100-500; 3=>500	1=intra-district; 2= intra- or bordering region; 3=rest of NZ or int'al	1=not scarce; 2=regionally scarce; 3=nationally scarce	**Equal weights**		Hydraulic density x 1.5		Flow reliability x 1.5		**No access attribute. Equal weigh**		No access attribute. Hydraulics x 1		No access attribute. Flow reliability x 1			More comments could be added to column
914060	Arnold River		2	3	2	4	100	4	800	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	2	**19**	3	20.5	3	20.5	4	**16**	5	17.5	6	17.5	8	Med	
914000	Grey River	Gentle Annie	3	5	4	3	100	4	80	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	**19**	3	20.0	4	20.5	4	**16**	5	17	7	17.5	8	Med	
952000	Oparara River		5	5	5	5	10	4	20	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	3	**19**	3	20.5	3	19.5	6	**16**	5	17.5	6	16.5	10	Med	Internationally scarce
943000	Mokihinui River	North Branch	4, 5	5	5	5	30	1	20	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	**17**	5	18.5	7	17.5	10	**16**	5	17.5	6	16.5	10	Med	
	Stony River (Reefton)		5	5	5	5	10	1	10	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	**17**	5	18.5	7	17.5	10	**16**	5	17.5	6	16.5	10	Med	
906055	Styx River	Grassy Flats	5	5	5	5	20	2	20	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	**17**	5	18.5	7	17.5	10	**16**	5	17.5	6	16.5	10	Med	
866000	Turnbull River		5	3	4	5	40	2	40	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	**17**	5	18.5	7	18	9	**16**	5	17.5	6	17	9	Med	
906140	Whitcombe River	Saddle	5	5	5	5	10	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	**17**	5	18.5	7	17.5	10	**16**	5	17.5	6	16.5	10	Med	
914190	Ahaura River		2	3	4	3	90	4	20	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	**18**	4	19.0	6	19.5	6	**15**	6	16	9	16.5	10	Med	
947000	Falls Creek	Hokitika	5	4	4	5	10	4	50	1	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	18.5	8	**15**	6	16.5	8	15.5	11	Med	
924000	Fox River	Fox Glacier	3, 4	3	2	5	100	4	50	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	1	2	3	**18**	4	19.5	5	19.5	6	**15**	6	16.5	8	16.5	10	Med	
	Big Totara		4	4	4	4	10	2	20	2	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	**16**	6	17.5	9	16.5	11	**15**	6	16.5	8	15.5	11	Med	
914140	Blackball Creek	Smoke Ho	5	4	5	5	10	2	30	2	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	**16**	6	17.5	9	16.5	11	**15**	6	16.5	8	15.5	11	Med	
	Crooked River	Lower	3	5	2	3	50	4	150	3	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	**17**	5	18.0	8	18	9	**14**	7	15	10	15	12	Med	
868000	Haast River		5	4	2	3	90	4	20	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	1	2	2	**17**	5	18.0	8	18.5	8	**14**	7	15	10	15.5	11	Med	
	Chasm Creek		4	4	3	4	30	4	10	1	2	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	2	**16**	6	17.5	9	16.5	11	**13**	8	14.5	11	13.5	14	Med	
914170	Moonlight Creek	To bailey bridge	3	4	3	4	10	4	30	2	1	3	2	3	1	3	1	2	1	**16**	6	17.5	9	16.5	11	**13**	8	14.5	11	13.5	14	Med	
911380	Otira River		5	3	1	5	10	4	10	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	1	2	3	**16**	6	17.5	9	16.5	11	**13**	8	14.5	11	13.5	14	Med	
	Waimangaroa		4	3	3	5	40	2	50	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	**14**	8	15.5	12	15	13	**13**	8	14.5	11	14	13	Med	
	Waiho River		3, 4	2	2	4	90	4	40	2	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	2	1	**15**	7	16.5	10	16.5	11	**12**	9	13.5	12	13.5	14	Med	
932000	Buller River	Iron Br downstm	2	3	1	2	100	4	90	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	1	1	2	**15**	7	16.0	11	16.5	11	**12**	9	13	13	13.5	14	Med	
859000	Cascade River		4	3	3	3	40	4	10	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	**15**	7	16.0	11	16	12	**12**	9	13	13	13	15	Med	
906014	Bluebottle Creek		4	3	2	4	10	4	30	2	1	2	1	3	1	3	1	2	1	**14**	9	15.5	13	14.5	14	**11**	10	12.5	14	11.5	16	Med	
939000	Ngakawau River		5	1	2	1	30	2	5	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	**10**	10	10.5	14	10.5	15	**9**	11	9.5	15	9.5	17	Low	Scarce because poor quality

ATTACHMENT 4: PEER REVIEW STATEMENT, 2014

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11 February 2014

For Westpower Ltd.
Attention: Sue Cotton, Consultation Officer

Peer review by Dave Bamford of TRC Tourism Ltd. of the Westpower Waitaha Hydro Investigations, Recreation and Tourism Assessment of Effects, by Rob Greenaway Associates, Version 5, February 2014.

Introduction

This review is the result of:

- a desk top review of the Waitaha Recreation and Tourism effects report – version 5;
- a site visit with Gavin Lister, landscape advisor and Sue Cotton of Westpower on January 24th, 2014. This included assessing the Waitaha Catchment and a visit to the Westpower Amethyst Hydro scheme. The visibility for the field visit was good;
- a statutory check of key issues;
- a review of key components of the report.

A key focus of the peer review, in addition to the 6 points below, was to cross check the executive summary with the main report. No issues in this regard were identified. I refer readers to the 10 page executive summary for a comprehensive summary of the report by Greenaway.

The assessment

a) Description of the existing environment, recreational and tourism values.

The Waitaha recreation resources and their management are accurately and unemotionally described. Where needed, recreational guide books are quoted. Current recreational use is described in detail. The kayaking and tramping sections are particularly extensive. The field visit confirmed that, whilst the Waitaha Catchment from Macgregor Creek and including the Morgan Gorge is remote and difficult to access on foot, the Morgan Gorge itself is quite short – approximately1 kilometre (abstraction reach is approx. 2.6km).

Greenaway clearly outlines the importance of recreation to the Waitaha Catchment and concludes (page 7 and 8) that the kayaking resource is likely to be of sufficient interest to off-shore paddlers, and to be of international significance to highly advanced kayakers, as part of the West Coast kayaking complex. The Waitaha Valley is also:

- Internationally and nationally significant for extreme kayaking (Morgan Gorge, upper Waitaha Gorge) and high grade kayaking (Waitaha Gorge) as part of the West Coast kayaking complex;
- Regionally significant in the lower valley (Kiwi Flat area) for tramping but nationally significant in the upper valley, particularly at Ivory Lake. Low use throughout;
- Regionally significant for hunting;

f) Does the overall conclusion reflect the findings of the assessment?

The conclusion notes that the Waitaha Catchment's primary recreational value is its high-quality white water and back country-remote characteristics. For both values, the Waitaha Catchment contributes to a large West Coast back country-remote setting.

He comments that whilst mitigations are available to reduce the scale of effects on kayaking (ceases to abstraction and improved portage tracks), the change from a natural state waterway means that the final effect on kayaking on the Waitaha River remains 'high'.

He assesses the net effect on the West Coast kayaking scene is likely to be minor.

This statement is likely to be debated by those kayakers who perceive that the Waitaha proposal does have an adverse regional impact. I concur with Mr Greenaway's findings. His findings are supported by the findings of his assessment.

Greenaway's conclusion of the effects on trampers, hunters, anglers and jet boaters is more than adequate.

Conclusion

This is a thorough report that builds on good research, including extensive use of secondary research (Appendix 2, 3, 4, 5) and consultation since 2008 (including the Booth report, Appendix 1). The report requires no alterations.

Dave Bamford
11 February 2014

ATTACHMENT 5: Scheme infrastructure