



12 January 2026

Expert Panel – Waitaha Hydro Scheme
Environmental Protection Authority
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Tēnā koe

Comments on the Waitaha Hydro Scheme (FTAA-2505-1069) under Section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On behalf of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio (**Poutini Ngāi Tahu**) we provide comments under section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 in support of the application made by Westpower Limited for the Waitaha Hydro Scheme (the **project**).
- 1.2 Poutini Ngāi Tahu holds and exercises tino rangatiratanga within our respective takiwā and are the kaitiaki of the natural and physical resources on the West Coast. The Waitaha River is located within our shared takiwā within which the project is proposed.

2. Poutini Ngāi Tahu Position

- 2.1 Poutini Ngāi Tahu requests that the Expert Panel gives careful consideration and strong weighting to the Poutini Ngāi Tahu support for this project and the partnership approach taken with Westpower Limited, which reflects our tino rangatiratanga within our takiwā and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- 2.2 Poutini Ngāi Tahu strongly supports the project and have entered into a partnership agreement with Westpower Limited in relation to the project. If the approvals necessary to enable the development of the project are granted and the project proceeds, Poutini Ngāi Tahu and Westpower Limited will be project partners and Poutini Ngāi Tahu will have a financial interest in the project.
- 2.3 The project will be of significant benefit to Poutini Ngāi Tahu and will provide an opportunity for us to reconnect with our whenua and to benefit economically from the project.
- 2.4 The project will also benefit the wider West Coast community. There is a shared vision between Poutini Ngāi Tahu and Westpower Limited to protect and advance the interests of the West Coast, its economy and the environment. The project would provide electrical

resilience to the region through green-renewable energy. Poutini Ngāi Tahu is keen to ensure security of supply for the West Coast, noting:

- a. Additional power generation will reduce the amount of energy being transmitted to the region, reducing transmission charges; and
 - b. The sharing of the benefits of the project with comparatively cheaper power (and line charges) for the West Coast.
- 2.5 This is important to Poutini Ngāi Tahu, as part of our responsibility is to provide for our iwi, manaaki visitors and the community.
- 2.6 Security of supply is also an important consideration in the Ngāi Tahu Climate Change strategy: He Rautaki mō te Huringa o te Āhuarangi. In particular, Poutini Ngāi Tahu see the impact of climate change on us and the conservation of taonga within its takiwā as hugely significant issues. We see renewable energy as part of the solution and therefore strongly support the project.
- 2.7 The project would also create much-needed employment and training opportunities and would provide significant investment for the region supporting existing and new industries to grow.

3. Ngāi Tahu Treaty Settlement and Statutory Documents

- 3.1 The Ngāi Tahu Treaty settlement, as reflected in the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement and the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (together the **Treaty settlement**), is highly significant to Poutini Ngāi Tahu.
- 3.2 Poutini Ngāi Tahu can confirm that the project is consistent with the relevant principles and provisions of our Treaty settlement. There are no statutory areas, statutory acknowledgements, deeds of recognition or other specific redress mechanisms or documents that cover the project site.
- 3.3 Poutini Ngāi Tahu can confirm that the granting of the proposed concessions to Westpower Limited does not trigger the first right of refusal (RFR) under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, which would be triggered by the granting of a concession of 50 years or more. There are two concessions proposed for the project (short term for construction (15 years) and longer term for operation (49 years)). Those are separate concessions, and they do not trigger the RFR.
- 3.4 The cultural effects and the effects on the environment, wildlife, taonga species and taonga fish species have been appropriately addressed to the satisfaction of Poutini Ngāi Tahu.
- 3.5 Poutini Ngāi Tahu can confirm that the project is consistent with our Mana Whakahono ā Rohe with West Coast Regional Council.
- 3.6 Poutini Ngāi Tahu notes that the current West Coast Te Tai o Poutini Conservation Management Strategy was not co-authored with mana whenua and that as a result of the recent stewardship land reclassification process, the Waitaha area will remain stewardship land and will not be reclassified to a stronger conservation status.
- 3.7 The Waitaha Valley makes up a small proportion of the back-country remote area on the West Coast and Poutini Ngāi Tahu considers that landscape and recreation matters issues have been addressed to our satisfaction.

3.8 Poutini Ngāi Tahu supports ongoing discussions outside of the Fast-track process around improving access to the Waitaha valley.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Poutini Ngāi Tahu thanks the Expert Panel for the opportunity to provide comments on the Waitaha Hydro Scheme Fast-track application.

4.2 Poutini Ngāi Tahu seeks that appropriate consideration is given to the provided comments and the support of the project by Poutini Ngāi Tahu.

Nāku noa, nā

Francois Tumahai
Chair
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae

Paul Madgwick
Chair
Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio