



**ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS OF NEW ZEALAND (INC.)**

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22 April 2008

West Coast Regional Council  
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**SUBMISSION ON RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATIONS UNDER SECTION 96 OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991**

To: West Coast Regional Council, Regulation and Consents Section,  
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**Statement Of Submission On Applications By Meridian Energy  
To Develop Mokihinui Hydro Proposal and associated  
transmission facilities, in Buller District Council and West  
Coast Regional Council**

**Type of Consents: Water permits, Land use, Discharge permits:**

- Mokihinui consents RC07150/1 – RC07150/6
- River Earthworks and Vegetation consents RC07150/14 – RC07150/19
- Inundation Area consents RC07150/7 – RC07150/8
- General Construction consents RC07150/20 – RC07150/23
- Staging Area consents RC07150/9 – RC07150/10
- Access Roads, Walking Tracks and Recreational Activities consents RC07150/24 – RC07150/26
- Substation and Transmission consents RC07150/11 – RC07150/13

**and as described in the submissions pack**

## 1 Introduction

The Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand (ECO) is the national alliance of 63 organisations with a concern for the environment and conservation, including sustainable development. ECO was established in 1972.

This submission is made with the authority of the Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand Executive Committee and is compliant with our existing policies and constitution.

**This submission opposes all of the Resource Consent applications.**

## 2 Reasons for submission

### 2.1 Concerns

The proposed scheme does not represent a sustainable use of the resources in terms of the RMA section 5 and West Coast Regional Policy Statement. The proposal is not consistent with the West Coast Regional Water Plan. The Proposal is also inconsistent with the Conservation Act.

ECO appreciates that there is increasing demand electricity but is also aware that our valley systems are not renewable and that much greater investment needs to be undertaken into demand reduction technologies. ECO supports truly renewable energy generation and soundly managed and consistently applied energy conservation measures.

The effects of the proposed application, including the impact on a 14 km section of the Mohikinui valley system and the flooding of 33 hectares of lowland native forest and river, represents an **avoidable** unsustainable modification of a natural system. This river currently provides significant ecological and amenity values to the local and wider public and endangered species such as kaka, whio, and eight threatened freshwater fish species. The proposed mitigation is inconsistent with:

- the purposes and principles of the RMA;
- the West Coast Regional Policy Statement;
- the West coast Region Water plan; and
- the Conservation Act in relation to both recreation and endangered species present on DoC and Private lands, and public waters under consideration.

ECO considers this absence of sustainability of the proposed scheme is contrary to provisions within the RPS (West Coast Regional Policy Statement 2000) including:

#### **14 Energy**

*14.1 Recognise the importance of an adequate supply of energy resources for the needs of people and communities on the West Coast, provided that this is not inconsistent with other policies in this RPS.*

*14.2 Promote sustainable management and efficient use of energy within the region.*

*14.3 Cooperate with any crown initiatives and policies where practicable, that seek to promote greater energy conservation, efficient and use of renewable*

*energy sources including the governments Voluntary agreement Scheme for reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.*

## **2.2 Section 6 RMA matters**

The proposal is contrary to the matters of national importance set out in section 6 of the Resource Management Act.

Section 6 matters have not been adequately recognised and provided for by the proposal. In particular, the proposal involves the removal of over 330 ha of natural lowland forest and vegetation cover to make way for the lake. This will permanently impact on the natural character of the river and its margins. It will also generate a net CO<sub>2</sub> discharge due to the forest loss and this has not been accounted for.

Section 6 matters to be considered include:

- (a) The preservation of the natural character of ...rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- (b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- (c) The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.

### **2.2.1 Success of proposed rehabilitation is uncertain**

The proposal does not safeguard the life supporting capacity of waterways or land ecosystems (section 5(2)(b)).

The flooding of the river and associated lowland forest will destroy the life supporting capacity of this area.

The works will generate a net loss of a CO<sub>2</sub> sink and this needs accounting for. In all over 300 ha of vegetation will be lost.

### **2.4.2 Natural character, section 6(a)**

The proposal would fail to preserve the natural character of the Mohikinui River and its margins, and the effects of associated transmission facilities.

Outstanding landscapes and natural features in the Grey District and West Coast region have not been comprehensively identified in any of the planning documents. The current landscape of the naturally flowing Mohikinui river valley system is outstanding. The landscape represents an outstanding example of a lowland river landscape that would be unsustainably modified by the proposed works.

### **2.4.3 Protection of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, RMA section 6(c):**

The area contains lowland forests which are significant and nationally rare. The area is a significant habitat of indigenous fauna including a range of threatened species – kaka, whio (or blue duck), kākārīki, weka and two species of giant land snail.

## **2.5 Section 7 RMA matters**

Section 7 matters have not been adequately provided for. These include:

### **2.5.1 Section 7 (c) which requires the Councils to have particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values**

A natural environment with a high degree of integrity, natural quiet, and variable natural flows, and a sense of relative remoteness are part of the current recreational experience and amenity values of the area. The proposed project will detract from this.

### **2.5.2 Section 7 (d) which requires the Council to have particular regard to the intrinsic value of ecosystems**

Intrinsic values include biological and genetic diversity and the form and functioning of ecosystems. The proposal will redefine the lower section of the river. This may have negative impacts on the small islands down stream, cause erosion, and effect the sustainability of their natural vegetation cover. More information on the effects on the lower catchment is required.

### **2.5.3 Section 7(f) which requires the Council to have particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment**

The project will degrade and destroy the integrity and high natural quality of both land and waterways.

### **2.5.4 Section 7(g), which requires the Council to have regard to the finite characteristics of natural and physical resources**

Low-altitude and especially valley-floor forests are poorly represented in the Ecological District.

## **2.7 Planning Instruments**

ECO considers the application is contrary to provisions of the:

- West Coast Regional Policy Statement including chapter 7 Soils and Rivers, chapter 8 Water, chapter 9 Habitats and Landscapes (eg Policies 9.1 and 9.2, 9.6 and 9.7), chapter 6 Heritage, 14 Energy, Appendix 1 sec 6, 7, 8 RMA; Appendix 3 Treaty of Waitangi,
- Proposed activated Regional Land and Riverbed Management Plan including chapter 6 Land Management and chapter 7 Riverbed Management.
- Proposed activated Water Management Plan including Chapter 7 Surface Water Quality.

- Draft West Coast Conservation Management Strategy.
- Conservation Act 1987.

## 2.8 Decision sought

That Councils decline all resource consent applications relating to the development of the Mohikiniui scheme, including associated transmission lines, because of the unacceptable adverse effects on indigenous wildlife, indigenous vegetation and habitat, natural character, water quality, natural landscape, recreational amenity and other values.

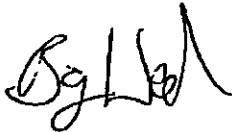
## 3.0 ECO wishes to be heard in support of this submission

### Address for service:

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Level 2, Trades Hall, 126 Vivian Street, Te Aro, Wellington  
04-385-7545  
Contact Amelia Luxton.

ECO seeks to be heard at any Local Authority hearing or related meeting to do with this application.

Yours sincerely



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Co-Chairperson

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