

SOUTH ISLAND EEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION INC

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SUBMISSION – MOKIHINUI HYDRO PROPOSAL

The Chief Executive Officer,
West Coast Regional Council,
P. O. Box 66,
Greymouth.

25th April 2008

Dear Sir:

Re: Submission to West Coast Regional Council on behalf of the SOUTH ISLAND EEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION on applications for resource consent by MERIDIAN ENERGY LTD for the Mokihinui Hydro proposal

1. Introduction

This submission is on the applications for Land Use, Water and Discharge permits (resource consents) by Meridian Energy Ltd, to the Buller District Council and West Coast Regional Council.

The South Island Eel Industry Association (the submitter) opposes all consents applied for (the MHP proposal).

2. The submitter would like to be heard on this submission.

The address for service is: Attn: Victor Thompson, PO Box 1673, Invercargill.
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This submission **OPPOSES** the grant of these consents, for the following reasons:

3. Adverse effects on upstream and downstream migration of eels

The MHP proposal refers to an attached report by NIWA scientists (Bonnett *et al* 2007) which describes the eel fishery, then attempts to quantify it from a single survey. While the authors state that this is insufficient to accurately determine the effects of the MHP proposal, they then make inferences on these, which are essentially opinions based on very little fact.

Despite this, Bonnett *et al* (2007) are clear on two issues:

- a. The MHP proposal will adversely affect the upstream migration and subsequent recruitment of elvers into the Mokihinui catchment.
- b. The MHP proposal will prevent the downstream migration of breeding adults to the sea. This will adversely affect the sustainability of the freshwater eel fishery.

We do not agree with statements in Bonnet *et al* (2007) that this adverse effect can be appropriately mitigated through catch and upstream transfer of elvers, and catch and downstream transfer of mature eels. This has never properly worked on any other hydro scheme, and the result of such developments have always been a depauperate eel population upstream of hydro dams, large masses of elvers seen trapped immediately downstream of these dams, and many migrating adult eels fatally impinged on hydro electricity turbines. Nothing in Bonnett *et al* (2007) suggests that the MHP proposal will be any different.

Furthermore, Bonnett *et al* (2007) strongly advocate further monitoring of the mitigation measures they propose. This proves doubt in their minds that the mitigation measures they recommend will be effective.

4. Buller District Plan

We strongly reject the conclusions of the “Statutory Assessment” report (attached to the MHP proposal) conclusions on RMA S 104D. This report states:

The section 104D test is able to be met with regard to the dam structure as it is not contrary to the relevant objectives and policies of the District Plan.

This statement conflicts with Section 9.3 of the “Statutory Assessment” report, which outlines Part 4.8 of the Buller District Plan, including the requirement to protect ***significant habitats of indigenous fauna***. Clearly, the adverse effects of the MHP on migratory eels is inconsistent with this requirement, so the gateway S104D test for non-complying activities is not met for the Buller District Plan.

5. West Coast Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plans

With regard to the West Coast Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plans, the “Statutory Assessment” report states:

“ ... the proposal demonstrates a high degree of consistency with relevant objectives and policies.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. Again, the gateway S104D test for non-complying activities is not met. The MHP proposal conflicts with:

West Coast RPS Policy 5.2.3: *Recognise the role of kaitiakitanga in the management of natural and physical resources on the West Coast*
Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of the customary, recreational and commercial eel resource is not achieved through the blocking of eel passage.

West Coast RPS Objective 8.1.1: *To manage the quantity of the Region's water resources so as to:*

a. Meet the needs of a range of uses, including the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and

b. Safeguard the life-supporting capacity of water and related ecosystems.

Future generations will not be able to harvest eels from this catchment because its life-supporting capacity will be reduced through blocking eel passage.

West Coast RPS Objective 9.1: *To protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.*

Blocking eel passage does not protect the Mokihinui River habitat of indigenous freshwater eels.

West Coast RPS Policy 9.1: *Preserve the natural character of the West Coast's... rivers and their margins and protect them, and outstanding natural features and landscapes, from inappropriate subdivision, use and development*

It should be noted that Bonnett *et al* (2007) stated that the Mokihinui River is famous for its population of very large eels. This is an outstanding natural feature which has been preserved by eel fishermen through not harvesting any eel larger than 4kg. This allows these large (female) eels to go to sea to breed. The blockage of their passage to the sea is therefore inconsistent with this Policy. This is also inconsistent with Policy 9.2: (c), (d), (f), (h), (j), (k) and (o).

West Coast Regional Water Plan. The MHP proposal will have a significant adverse effect on the sustainability of the customary, recreational and commercial eel resource of the river. It is therefore inconsistent with the following provisions:

- Objective 5.3.1
- Objective 5.3.2
- Objective 5.3.3
- Policy 5.4.1
- Policy 5.4.1 C
- Policy 5.4.4
- Policy 5.4.5

West Coast Regional Land and Riverbed Management Plan. The MHP proposal is inconsistent with the following provisions:

- Objective 5.3.1 (d) & (e)
- Policy 5.4.2 (c), (g) & (i)

6. Sustainability of the freshwater eel fishery

It should be noted that our members and associates have been subjected to severe limitations on catching eels through the imposition of the Quota Management System, gazettal of no-fishing waterways and various other reserves. Our Association has also imposed various standards and initiatives which have allowed the eel fishery to recover to a more sustainable level. We have been lobbying against ongoing water abstraction, waterway pollution (especially from the dairy industry), inappropriate flood control works and aquatic biosecurity (e.g. didymo) concerns. Further pressure on the sustainability of the eel fishery from hydro proposals such as this, serve only to

negate the measures we have imposed to preserve the eel fisheries, disrupt ecosystems, reduce eel stocks, and hence reduce our livelihoods.

7. Relief Sought:

Accordingly, The South Island Eel Industry Association wishes the consent authorities to make the following decision:

Decline all consents applied for by Meridian Energy Ltd for the MHP proposal:

Yours faithfully



VT: Victor Thompson

SOUTH ISLAND EEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION INC.

Karen Glover

From: Denise Cassidy
Sent: Monday, 21 April 2008 3:18 PM
To: Karen Glover
Subject: FW: Mokihinui Hydro proposal
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red
Attachments: Mokihinui submission.doc

From: Bill Chisholm [mailto:bill@chisholm.co.nz]
Sent: Monday, 21 April 2008 14:59
To: info@meridianenergy.co.nz
Cc: info
Subject: FW: Mokihinui Hydro proposal

Dear Sirs

Please find attached the submission of the South Island Eel Industry Association on the Mokihinui Hydro proposal..

Chisholm Associates acts as environmental advisor to the South Island Eel Industry Association on this matter.

Hard copies are in today's post.

Yours faithfully

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