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SUBMISSION ON RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATIONS

Section 96 Of The Resource Management Act 1991

TO: THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL	Copy to: ✓
PO BOX 66	Meridian Energy Limited
GREYMOUTH	PO Box 2454,
	Christchurch.

THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL
 PH: 0508 8000-118
 Fax: (03) 768 7133

Applicant: Meridian Energy Ltd	Application Numbers: tick boxes overleaf
Closing Date for Submissions on the Mokihinui Hydro Proposal: (Wednesday 23 April 2008)	

(Please print clearly) Title: Mr Mrs Miss Ms (Please circle the appropriate title(s) or write below)

My/Our Full Name(s): MARK PICKERING

Postal address: 11 PORT HILLS ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH

Wk Ph: 03/3894-235 Hm Ph: same Cell: _____

Wk Fax: _____ Hm Fax: _____ Email: mark.pickering@clear.net.nz

I/we support the application numbers ticked on the back of this form (tick one)
 I/we oppose the application numbers ticked on the back of this form

The reasons for my/our submission are as follows (further information attached (tick for yes)
 [State in summary the nature of your submission, giving reasons]

1) oppose dam & inundation of gorge
2) injure gorge scenery
3) well preserved historic path-track
4) need to preserve future landscapes.

I/we wish the consent authority to make the following decision [Give details, including the nature of any conditions]

Not to dam and inundate the Mokihinui River

Use the tick boxes below to indicate the resource consent applications your submission concerns.

I/we make my/our submission concerning **all** the resource consent applications below (tick)

My/our submission **only** concerns the resource applications ticked below (tick)

I/we **wish to be heard** in support of my/our submission (tick one)

I/we **DO NOT** wish to be heard and hereby make my/our submission in writing only

Signature(s): *[Handwritten Signature]*

Date: 31 March 08

If this is a joint submission by 2 or more individuals, each individual's signature is required)

I/we have served a copy of my/our submission on Meridian energy Limited as per Section 96(4) of the RMA (tick)

Consent List

Mokihinui River
consents RC07150/1 – RC07150/6

Inundation Area
consents RC07150/7 – RC07150/8

Staging Area
consents RC07150/9 – RC07150/10

Substation and Transmission
consents RC07150/11 – RC07150/13

Earthworks and Vegetation
consents RC07150/14 – RC07150/19

General Construction
consents RC07150/20 – RC07150/23

Access Roads, Walking Tracks and Recreational
Activities
consents RC07150/24 – RC07150/26

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Submission to the Resource Consent for the Mokihinui River Power Station

This submission is by Mark Pickering. I am a self-employed writer, with a large number of walking and tramping guidebooks published. I also write a regular column called 'Out of Town' for the Christchurch *Press* newspaper.

I have previously written two privately published histories on the West Coast, *The Southern Journey* and *The Colours*.

I object to the inundation of the lower Mokihinui River gorge on three grounds:

- 1) the river gorge has unique scenery that is not easily found in other parts of the West Coast.
- 2) the partial or total submergence of the historic pack-track is a significant loss of heritage for the area.
- 3) the close association of the historic pack-track with views into scenic gorge is a magnificent recreational and visual amenity, not duplicated in other parts of the West Coast.

- 1) **the river gorge has unique scenery that is not easily found in other parts of the West Coast.**

In my tramping experience of West Coast rivers, the Mokihinui River and its lower gorge have significant characteristics that differ from other rivers found in the area.

Many West Coast rivers in their gorge sections are heavily bouldered along their edges, with short pool stretches interrupted by long difficult rapids. Their vertical rate of descent is often rapid. Rivers such as the Whitcombe River, Karamea River, Whangapeka River, etc.

The Mokihinui River has almost the opposite 'look', with long pools interrupted by short rapids. The scenery of the gorge and bluff walls are enhanced by the deep pools.

The river scenery reminded me slightly of the Fox River canyon, or the Porari River, both in the Paparoa National Park. However the pristine white river beaches of the Mokihinui River seem quite unusual and distinctive.

- 2) **the partial or total submergence of the historic pack-track is a significant loss of heritage for the area.**

The historic pack-track is an unique example of it's kind, almost 12 km long, running alongside the Mokihinui River at heights estimated as varying from 20-40 metres above the gorge.

It is a significant engineering achievement, both in terms of it's gradients and well-constructed platforms and cuttings around the bluffs. Technically it must have been a hard pack-track to build, with many challenges in this steep broken country.

It's construction was probably started sometime in the late 1860's, during the time of the West Coast gold rush, which lasted approximately from 1865 to 1868.

I believe that the pack-track was gradually pushed up the gorge to the gold mine workings at Jones Creek and onto Specimen Creek by about the middle 1870's. Public road works of this nature were often used to occupy unemployed gold miners, and provide some limited financial assistance to the region.

In 1880 or thereabouts, the Karamea Road was re-directed up the Mokihinui pack-track to opposite Rough and Tumble Creek, where a bridge was built. The 'road' or horse-track to Karamea continued up the Rough and Tumble, over the saddle near Happy Valley and down Glasseye Creek.

The horse-track is marked on maps from 1909 and 1918 though by 1912 the new road to Karamea (which is the existing Highway 67 called The Bluffs) was cut through and the first car reached Karamea in about 1915.

Cattle were regularly taken up the pack-track till the 1929 earthquake, when some sections of the pack-track suffered slips, and two men S. Russell and J. Russell were both killed. Their memorial crosses can be seen beside the track.

It is not clear to me how much of the historic pack-track will be submerged by the new lake, but it disturbs me that Meridian frequently referred to the track as 'degraded' and giving 'limited access'.

In fact it is a perfectly well-maintained track, albeit a trappers track. There are two very short sections which require care. One slip has a marked trail around it and a second slip has a wire bolted across it.

Apart from these sections 90% of the pack-track is in excellent condition and is in fact a superb example of the track makers skill and expertise. There are many finely crafted stone retaining walls, and expertly cut bluffs negotiated. There has been little historic research done on the Mokihinui River pack-track.

3) **the close association of the historic pack-track with views into scenic gorge is a magnificent recreational and visual amenity, not duplicated in other parts of the West Coast.**

Of the 16 or so pack-tracks I calculate to currently exist on the West Coast, none has that close association with the gorge structure for such a significant tramping distance. Since I have tramped almost all of these pack-tracks I feel well qualified to comment that the Mokihinui stands out in this regard.

Of the 25 or so major rivers on the West Coast, from the Arawhata River to the Karamea River, twenty have no surviving examples of pack-tracks at all.

There are short pack-track remnants of 2-3 km length on the Oparara River, Whangapeka River, Fox River and Styx Rivers. The Copland Track partly follows a pack-track in places, but frequently deviates where the track has been poorly maintained, and in fact it is difficult to believe there was a tourist pack-track here at one time.

Two rivers with significant lengths of pack-tracks are the Toaroha River (about 3 km long) and the Arahura River (about 8 km long). The pack-tracks in both cases avoid their respective gorges. Neither are such good examples of the road-makers skills as the Mokihinui River, either because they were not well made in the first place, such as the Toaroha River, or have eroded significantly away in many sections, such as the Arahura River.

The most significant surviving pack-track examples on the West Coast tend to occur away from rivers, such as the Paringa-Haast Cattle Track (18 km long), Kirwans Hill, and Murray Creek goldfields. Short pack-track sections exist at Okarito Lagoon, Gillespies Beach and Alex Knob.

Surviving pack-tracks outside of the West Coast are rare, and are almost entirely a South Island phenomenon, and are usually associated with goldfields activity, such as the Wakamarina, Anatori River, Lowburn-Pisa, Macetown-Big Hill etc.

The Mokihinui River pack-track is not only significant for the West Coast, it is nationally significant, and is arguably one of the finest surviving river gorge pack-tracks of it's type anywhere in the country.