

Before the Canterbury Regional Council and the Ashburton District Council

In the matter of the Resource Management Act 1991

And

In the matter of The Rangitata Diversion Race Management Limited
Consents

Statement of Evidence of Grant South for and on behalf of Whitewater NZ Incorporated, the Whitewater Canoe Club Incorporated, the New Zealand Rivers Association Incorporated, Hidden Valleys (NZ) Ltd, Geraldine High School and the University of Canterbury Canoe Club Incorporated

Dated: 19 April 2018

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Grant South and I am 53 years old. I grew up in the Geraldine area for a period of time on a small farm on the downs of Geraldine. I was taught to hunt and fish by my father, grandfather and family friends. My favourite playgrounds became the local rivers the Waihi, Orari Te Moana and the Rangitata.
2. In the late 1980s I went travelling for 4 years spending most of my time in the UK, Africa and the States. In 1991 I returned to New Zealand and the local area of Geraldine. Not long after my return I began my raft Guide training on the Rangitata River. This has been my job and my life since then. I am still based here on the Rangitata.
3. I worked for Rangitata Rafts as a guide, head guide and base manager from 1990 to 1993. I became a company director/manager of Rangitata Rafts from 1994-99. During the 1990-2000 New Zealand Winters, I worked on numerous rivers overseas including the Payette and American (USA), Coruh River (Turkey), White Nile (Uganda), Sun Kosi and Trisuli Rivers (Nepal) and the Tully and Barren (Australia).
4. I am the director of Hidden Valleys (NZ) Ltd, which is an adventure tourism company established in 1999 and based at Peel Forest near the Rangitata River. It specialises in running many of the more remote rivers around New Zealand and largely with a focus on multi day trips. I am a past Chairman of the New Zealand Rafting Association (now the New Zealand Rivers Association; having held the position for over ten years) and I remain on the executive holding a portfolio dealing with Maritime New Zealand.
5. I am a Skills Active Industry registered assessor for the raft guiding awards. I was involved in the development of the New Zealand Raft Guide award System. I am currently one of the four registered Senior Assessor Mentors in New Zealand responsible for sign off of assessors within the Industry. I have been involved with accident investigation for Maritime New Zealand and also in the role of an expert witness for the defence in the Maritime New Zealand prosecution where a river guide lost his life on the Rangitikei River.
6. In 2001 I was part of New Zealand's six man raft team which competed in the world championship competitions in Japan and Zambia. I have worked as a water safety person on events in New Zealand and off-shore and trained river guides in Borneo and Uganda.
7. I have rafted on numerous New Zealand Rivers in the North and South Islands, including many inaccessible and challenging runs on the South Island's West Coast. In addition to my passion for white water rafting, I am a competent and enthusiastic kayaker and have kayaked most of the rivers I have rafted on.
8. Throughout the years I have worked in many locations throughout the world; sometimes working on one day trips and in other locations trips that are up to ten days in duration. During this time many of the rivers I have worked on are no longer

free flowing rivers. Many have been dammed and others have been drained for human use in one form or another.

9. Over the years here in New Zealand I have seen some major changes in the make-up of the riverbeds, the flows, and particularly changes in the snowfields and glaciers in the headwaters of many of our rivers. Most of the rivers I mentioned from my childhood have shingled in. Now there are no longer any deep pools and in the case of the smaller rivers the rivers they are often dry. There may well be water flowing deep down under the gravel but nothing on the surface for any form of river recreation.
10. I confirm that I have read and have complied with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on facts or information provided by another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

11. My evidence will cover the following points:

- Rafting values in the Rangitata River
- Rafting on the lower Rangitata (Klondyke to Arundel Bridge section)
- Changes to the lower Rangitata River over time
- Water flow and other requirements to retain the rafting values

RAFTING VALUES IN THE RANGITATA RIVER

12. The three sections run (or used) on the Rangitata River include:
 - Above the gorge, flat braided, grade 1-2 reach for fishing and float trips
 - Rangitata Gorge, white water trips of grade 4/5
 - Lower river (Klondyke section), grade 2, suitable for school parties, families providing fun white water of low risk.
13. Commercial operators on the river include Hidden Valleys, Rangitata Rafts, Peel Forest Outdoor Centre and Alps to Ocean (who use a range of kayaks). Often the river is used by Polytechnic Institutes for training students in the outdoors.
14. The upper braided section of the Rangitata River is a great section of river to introduce youngsters to moving water with stunning scenery in an alpine environment. Using the rafts as a mode of transport participants can experience swimming in moving water and try their hand at guiding.
15. The Rangitata Gorge is seen as one of the best one day raft trips in the country by both local and international visitors. It features a wide range of flows during the season and if at a high flow or low flow it is still a grade 4/5 run. In contrast many

ivers throughout New Zealand and internationally lose their grade and become less challenging at low flows.

16. In a busy season Rangitata Rafts may raft up to 5000 people down the river over summer.
17. The lower Rangitata section (as we rafters refer to it as, from Klondyke Intake to Peel Forest or the Arundel Bridge, with get-in and get-out points at different places) has some fun white water with waves that break over the boats. The section has been used for adventure (raft and kayak) races as part of a multi-sport course. It is best suited to giving our youth a rafting experience and teaching them how to enjoy rivers and most importantly to enjoy them safely. Peel Forest Outdoor Centre does a great job of this hosting school groups throughout the summer.

THE VALUE OF THE LOWER RANGITATA RIVER FOR RAFTING

18. During summer there would hardly be a week goes by where there are not people rafting the lower Rangitata. I use both the gorge section and lower Rangitata section about once a month during summer for Hidden Valleys. I still do trips for Rangitata Rafts and I also work at times for Peel Forest Outdoor Centre who focus on outdoor education for school age kids. A big part of their outdoor education programs are river trips by raft and kayaks as well as running river safe programs.
19. The most rewarding rafting experience on the lower Rangitata is to take our local New Zealand kids down the river. These trips are not just raft trips; we use the opportunity to get kids in the water and teach them to be comfortable swimming in moving water, learn to understand and read the water, and to try different river craft. It is amazing for their self-confidence and their self-belief and for them to gain an appreciation and understanding of the river and the river environment. Opportunities for this around New Zealand are fast disappearing ...let's not add the Rangitata to this list.

CHANGES TO THE LOWER RANGITATA RIVER OVER TIME

20. The lower Rangitata has had a huge amount of gravel shift and many of the deep pools have disappeared, the river now running more at a constant gradient and constant depth.
21. In the headwaters 20 years ago I walked all the way up the Eric Glacier to the main divide in the Havelock catchment of the Rangitata. This glacier is now gone and all that remains is an icy head wall. With the disappearance of the snow and ice in the headwaters the flows in the Rangitata can only become less with lower natural flows in between northwest rain events. For the well-being of the river and for the river to survive we have to be careful what is taken from it.

FLOW REQUIREMENTS TO RETAIN RAFTING VALUES

22. It is extremely important to have natural flows and good water quality retained in our rivers. As rafting operators we rely on natural flows to assist the rafts with our downstream progress. Reduced flows combined with naturally occurring afternoon head winds can make trips challenging and at times unpleasant resulting a negative experience. This can have a serious flow on effect on our businesses.
23. As discussed in Dr Rankin's evidence, the best flows for a 'big' water experience, larger white water producing a more exciting ride, fall into the 80 – 170 cumec range. As flows increase from 170 – 250 cumecs the river velocities pick up and the journey time shortens. The height of the white water starts to flatten, and becomes a little less interesting as a result.
24. What we call the medium flows (70 – 120 cumecs, in the river) are the optimal flows for taking kids down the river. It means the kids do not get knocked around due to it being too shallow when they are swimming. Also the water is not too fast and intimidating if swimming. The trip duration at these levels is also about the right time in case the weather is cold or there are head winds.
25. An additional concern for me is the take of water when the river is at very low flows. This is the time when the river needs protecting the most. The life of everything that depends on the river needs that flow to go all the way to the sea. To take half the flow or nearly all the flow especially when the river is low, as is permitted by the WCO, does so much harm to the river. Remember this is one of Canterbury's biggest rivers ...or was. I am aware that this is not something that the current consent application impacts on or that this Hearing can consider. However, it is part of the bigger picture. It is important to note that sufficient high and low flows are needed to ensure river processes and ecosystem and recreation amenity values can be maintained and kept intact.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

26. Many of the rivers of Canterbury have unique features, starting with the back drops of the South Island's main divide mountains. Often the rivers start out as or relatively quickly become wide and braided or have braided sections, and then pass down through narrow gorges before opening out into yet more braids onto the Canterbury plains. This is true for the Rangitata River.
27. In many corners of the world free flowing rivers are being destroyed and New Zealand is fast becoming the only place world-wide that has natural flows and free flowing rivers. People are already coming to New Zealand for our rivers and mountains that are at this time still relatively untouched. They are only going to become more and more 'touched' as time goes on unless we recognise and protect their intrinsic values.
28. We often introduce the general public to our New Zealand Rivers and often find that they have no idea of the importance and the possibilities the rivers provide. We

change people's lives on these river trips and often their direction and purpose. We will be the poorer as a nation without our rivers in their free flowing and healthy state. They are a reflection of our health as a community.

29. We ask that you commissioners recognise the white water values associated with the lower Rangitata and not grant the proposed take, unless the white water values recognised in the WCO are properly provided for. The right flows left in the river are needed to maintain and protect and provide good amenities for the community for recreation, as required by the Canterbury Water Management Strategy. What remains for our community to have by way of river recreation opportunities if you grant the consent in such a way that does not look after what remains of the outstanding values? We will never be able to feed or power the world but we can do this for our country and keep our best freshwater resources intact for our children and future generations to enjoy for recreation and other purposes such as tourism.

Grant South
Director, Hidden Valleys Ltd