

## Save the Wairau

*“A Place of Many Streams” could become a trickle....*

Tauranga-based TrustPower have now lodged their resource consent applications to build a hydro scheme by diverting a large proportion of the Wairua River's flow (up to 40 cumecs plus 20 cumecs from the existing Branch Hydro Scheme) into a 46 kilometre private canal feeding six power stations. This will reduce the entire 49 km middle reach of the Wairau River to a virtual trickle for much of the year.



TrustPower claims that the low water flows they are proposing are a “common occurrence” and the environmental impact will be minimal.” But when their historical data is analyzed this is found to be not so. The river only ever reached such a low level for 148 days or 0.8% of the time out of the 14,952 days between 1959 and 2001, with many of these being up to six years apart and nearly all occurring in the big droughts of 1973 and 2001. But TrustPower's hydro scheme will increase these uncommonly low flows to around 150 days every year, instead of just occasionally for a few days at a time.

The Wairau River is the largest river in Marlborough and one of the least modified braided river systems left in the world with nationally and internationally important bird and fish populations. Beautiful, wild and scenic it is amongst the last habitat to endangered Black-fronted tern, which breed solely on the braided rivers of the South Island's East Coast, and breeding ground to the Banded Dotterel, Black-billed gull, Caspian Tern, and a diverse, native braided river fish population. It is also the most popular regional sports fishery for trout with around 11,000 visits from New Zealander anglers a year as well numerous locals and visitors - from jet boaters and kayakers to swimmers, walkers and hunters.

### How will this affect the Wairau?

*We believe that TrustPower's proposed hydro scheme will:*

- De-water the smaller river channels, destroying important habitat for native fish, juvenile trout and water insects, and significantly reducing food supply for fish and birds.
- Increase summer temperatures to levels that could kill trout and important insects, increase nuisance algae growth, further reducing food supply, and threaten fish passage for all migratory species.
- Dramatically reduce fish numbers and angler opportunities, and increase predation on nesting endangered bird species.
- Have an unknown effect on Marlborough irrigators.
- Make the river more dangerous to river users due to increased flow fluctuations.

### Save the Wairau River Inc

“Save the Wairau River Inc” is seeking membership from other organisations as well as individuals opposed to TrustPower's hydro proposal. Our membership subscription is only \$2 as an individual or \$20 as an organisation. The membership subscription has been kept deliberately low to enable as many groups and individuals to join as possible, but donations are encouraged from those that can afford to give more.



## The Wairau River

This magnificent Marlborough river, 170 kilometres long and draining a 3,800 square kilometre area, rises in the Spenser Mountains with the Rainbow River, which rises in the St. Arnaud Range, its main headwater tributary.

The river at first flows in a northerly direction for 50 kilometres and separates the St. Arnaud Range to the west from the Raglan Range to the east. Subsequently it flows in a north-easterly direction through a fault-angle depression – the Wairau Valley – filled with glacial outwash material, and whose terraces sustain prosperous pastoral farms.

### Wildlife

Beautiful, wild and scenic the Wairau River is amongst the last habitat for endangered Black-fronted tern, which breed solely on the braided rivers of the South Island's East Coast, and breeding ground to the Banded Dotterel, Black-billed gull, Caspian Tern, and a diverse, native braided river fish population. It also provides habitat for a diverse range of game bird species.

### The Wairau Lagoons

The Wairau Lagoons cover about 2000 hectares of saline marsh and mud-flats between the Wairau River mouth and the Vernon Estate to the south. During the Autumn and Winter months the predominant species in the lagoon are game birds. A great diversity of wildlife however utilizes the lagoons, with over 90 species recorded, including the country's largest colony of royal spoonbills. Besides the obvious main channels in the northern part of the lagoons, and Te Aropipi Channel, which runs along inside the seaward Boulder Bank, few parts of the lagoons exceed a metre in depth. The mud in some areas can however be very deep and care should be taken in unfamiliar areas.

### Kakaying

The Wairau River has a fast, technical section in its upper reaches and is accessed via the Rainbow Station. The Lower Wairau has Grade 2 rapids with put in points along S.H.63 and a take out at the S.H.1 bridge at Tuamarina. This is a pleasant jaunt for inexperienced paddlers as the river bubbles along its braided shingle bed close to the road. It also provides opportunities to practice long river runs.

### Other Activities

- Estuarine fishing
- White baiting
- Waterfowl and upland game hunting opportunities
- Jet boating
- Rowing
- Picnics or walking



## Make a Submission to Save the Wairau

This photo was taken when the Wairau River flow was 70 cumecs (its median flow). The area indicated shows approximately 20 cumecs, which is twice the flow proposed to be left in the Wairau River below the intake for much of the time. Reduced flows will affect a 49 km reach, if TrustPower gets its way!



### TrustPower's proposal will destroy the life-force of the river by:

- 1 . Reducing the river to a mere 10 cumecs below the intake for half of the year, with reduced flows affecting a 49 kilometre reach. Many of the side-braids will dry up resulting in significant habitat loss for a number of species.
- 2 . Increasing water temperatures as a result of the low flows may kill fish and invertebrate species and cause increased slime growth.
- 3 . Significantly reducing the food production for wading birds in the affected reach -the most favoured area for nesting birds.
- 4 . Significantly reducing the habitat and food production for trout and other aquatic species in the affected reach, with unknown effects on the fishery in other parts of the river.
- 5 . Detrimentally affecting fish migration. Adult trout and salmon can move 70 km or more each year. Native fish and sportsfish need to access the sea from the upper reaches of the river.
- 6 . Reducing the fish numbers, which will affect fishing opportunities for both native and sportsfish.

### Other Concerns

1. Water flows in the lower Wairau to the sea are likely to fluctuate by up to 40 cumecs or up to 5 times the residual flow.
2. Effects of major daily flow fluctuations on the aquifer are unknown, perhaps requiring irrigators to reduce their takes or causing the lower river to dry up.
4. The canal will be within 200 metres of New Zealand's largest fault line over most of its 46 km length.
5. Boating activities like kayaking and jet boating will be limited in the affected reach.
6. Public safety concerns relating to the discharges associated with the scheme's operation
7. Negligible public access to canals.
8. No mitigation for these effects is proposed.

## What You Can Do to Save the Wairau

1. Phone or write to your local Electorate Candidates, the Prime Minister and District Councillors to express your concern and ask how they are going to protect the river.
2. Write a letter to the paper or contact talkback radio and express your views.
3. Join 'Save the Wairau River Inc' and make a donation or offer to help - Go to Save The Wairau River Inc
4. If you are a TrustPower customer, change your power supplier - alternative suppliers in Marlborough include Contact and Meridian. [www.consumer.org.nz/powerswitch](http://www.consumer.org.nz/powerswitch)
5. When TrustPower's consent application is publicly notified, write a submission in opposition to the proposal and say you support the submissions of 'Save the Wairau River Inc'.
6. Take a look at the Branch River below the weir for an idea of what a largely dewatered river looks like, courtesy of TrustPower.

## Contact us to Save the Wairau

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