

# **Report on prehearing meeting for resource consent applications lodged by Opunake Power Ltd**

(In accordance with section 99(5) of the Resource Management Act)

**16 June 2020**

**Taranaki Regional Council Office, Stratford**

## **Initial comment**

Section 99(5) of the RMA requires that the pre-hearing meeting chairperson prepare a report of the meeting that:

- Does not include anything communicated or made available on a without prejudice basis; and
- For the parties who attended the meeting sets out the issues that were agreed and the issues that remain outstanding.

This report must be provided to all parties so that they have it at least 5 days before a hearing. The Council's practice is to include this report in the Officer's report.

## **Attendees**

Colin McLellan (Consents Manager, TRC) Meeting Chair  
Anna Johnston (Consents Officer, TRC)  
Paddy Deegan (Freshwater Ecologist, TRC)  
Steve O Sullivan (Opunake Power - Applicant)  
Bart Jansma (Riverwise consulting - Consultant to applicant)  
Puna Wano-Bryant (Taranaki Iwi - Submitter)  
Allen Stancliff (Fish & Game NZ - Submitter)  
Tom Christie (for Director General of Conservation -Submitter)  
Jacob Williams (for Director General of Conservation -Submitter)  
Ilse Corkery (for Director General of Conservation -Submitter)

## **Introduction**

Opunake Hydro is a 400kVA (320kW) hydro station located at Opunake in Taranaki. The scheme involves the diversion via a weir of up to 3900 L/s of water from the Waiaua River to an earth lined canal and then to a storage lake (Lake Opunake). Water passes from Lake Opunake through a penstock to the powerhouse before discharging to Opunake Beach and the Tasman Sea. The application involves 7 renewal consents and 1 new consent.

The meeting was held specifically to discuss the residual flow to be maintained downstream the weir and fish passage past the weir. This was an initial meeting involving Iwi and those parties with statutory authority to manage fisheries, i.e. Fish & Game and DoC. It was acknowledged that there are other submitters who raised these matters.

A further meeting is proposed that will involve all submitters and where all the issues raised in submissions will be discussed.

Ms Wano-Bryant noted at the start of the meeting that she and Mr Stancliff had met with Council staff (McLellan and Johnston) to discuss the application prior to the submission closing date.

### **General meeting discussion**

The applicant gave an overview of the scheme and general discussion occurred as follows.

- The major discussion was about the appropriate residual flow to be retained downstream of the weir. The submitters present want the residual flow to be higher than the 180L/s that was on the previous consent. The applicant presented an assessment of how various higher residual flows would affect the amount of water that could be taken and therefore the amount of power generated. The applicant will provide this presentation to the parties present.
- The option of varying the residual flow depending on the time of year (for example) was discussed, but there was little support.
- Following some discussion the applicant indicated that they would accept a residual flow of 300 L/s.
- Fish passage was discussed. There was general agreement that the fish pass is working effectively but that passage for native species is restricted by high velocities through the intake tunnels. The applicant indicated that they could minimize the velocity through the tunnels by managing water levels. There was general support for that approach provided there was monitoring to confirm its effectiveness and an 'adaptive management' approach.

### **Outcomes of the meeting**

For the parties present the following was agreed on a without prejudice basis:

- submitters are to consider whether a 300 L/s residual flow is acceptable;
- the applicant agreed to manage water levels in the intake canal to provide better fish passage through the intake tunnels, and to undertake fish surveys to monitor if this results in adequate fish passage being achieved;
- another pre-hearing meeting will be held with all submitters.



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Colin McLellan

Consents Manager, Taranaki Regional Council