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The New Zealand Herald

Opposition to water export facility in remote South Westland

By Janna Sherman of Hokitika Guardian



The wharf at Jackson Bay, West Coast. Photo / Mark Mitchell

A water export facility proposed for Jackson Bay in remote South Westland - including a 12km water pipe - is being opposed by neighbours and Heritage New Zealand.

Okuru Enterprises, which was first issued consent to export water from Tuning Forks Creek, a tributary of the Arawhata River, 30 years ago, is currently seeking fresh land use consents for associated buildings, from the Westland District Council.

It wants to pipe water to incoming ships for export.

Landowners of two Neils Beach properties close to the proposed water storage site have opposed the development as a whole.

The Hughes, of Cromwell, said they lived in their property up to three days a week. It would look over the proposed access road, pump station and holding tanks.

The consent was never mentioned in the LIM report before they purchased the property.

Both the Hughes and the Wanaka-based owners of a second nearby holiday home said visual and noise pollution would impact on the peace and tranquillity which they purchased their properties for.

They also raised environmental and safety concerns, while Heritage New Zealand was concerned about the disturbance of historic Maori taonga.

There were several known significant archaeological sites in close proximity to the site under application, Heritage NZ said.



The mouth of the Arawhata River at Neils Beach, South Westland. Photo / Greg Bowker

Excavations at the Arawhata River mouth in 2003 revealed evidence of a settlement that was believed to date back to the 14th century. They did not accept the accidental discovery protocol approach proposed by the applicant.

It has submitted that a detailed archaeological assessment first be completed prior to any disturbance associated with construction, if consents are approved.

The new approvals sought by the district council are for vegetation clearance and earthworks associated with the construction and maintenance of a water export facility including holding tanks, storage ponds and intake and discharge pipelines over a 14ha property owned by local farmer Kerry Eggeling.

The 12km pipeline would go from Tuning Fork Creek to the storage tanks at Neils Beach, where the water will be pumped via a buried pipeline to vessels anchored off Jackson Bay.

"This bay... is considered the best location on the entire West Coast for such an activity and can handle the size of vessels necessary to export water economically," the company says.



However, the two landowners have opposed the docking facility for safety reasons.

"There are a significant number of recreational vessels currently using the bay. Having large tankers entering, docking and leaving the bay will cause congestion among other water users and heightened danger for local fishing and recreational boat users."

They have also raised environmental concerns.

"There will be a massive risk factor to the coastal ecosystem if tankers are allowed to enter the area and discharge ballast waste before taking on water."

The proposed discharge of back flushing water from the cleaning of the holding tanks into the Arawhata River could also cause pollution in a pristine environment.

Both said the changing view on wholesale exporting of water from New Zealand also needed to be considered.

"We request that the Westland District Council and West Coast Regional Council rethink their positions in the light of rapidly changing global circumstances and not simply rubber stamp a previous application without consulting those affected as the West Coast and its people and opinions have changed in the last 20 years."

The regional council has already re-issued consents to Okuru Enterprises.

The district council's decision will now head to a hearing. A date has yet to be set.

- Hokitika Guardian

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