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## DOC grants Lake Matiri power scheme concession

The Department of Conservation has approved granting a concession to New Zealand Energy Limited (NZEL) for parts of a hydroelectric scheme on public conservation land at Lake Matiri, near Murchison.

Date: 25 May 2011

The Department of Conservation has approved granting a concession to New Zealand Energy Limited (NZEL) for parts of a hydroelectric scheme on public conservation land at Lake Matiri, near Murchison, with stringent conditions to manage impacts of the scheme and to improve public access to the area.

The concession is subject to acceptance of the terms by NZEL.

The concession allows NZEL to put parts of scheme infrastructure on Lake Matiri Conservation Area, including three weirs at the lake outlets into the Matiri River, part of the penstock, and access track. Scheme infrastructure would also be installed on adjoining NZEL-owned land. The company has resource consents from the Tasman District Council for the power scheme.

DOC Nelson/Marlborough Acting Community Relations Manager Rod Witte said public submissions on the draft concession document had been considered in approving the concession and its conditions.

“Conditions reduce the environmental and recreational effects of the scheme to acceptable levels and provide for some conservation and recreation gains. Gains include public access improvements and NZEL providing \$30,000 funding to enhance freshwater aquatic habitat in the Buller River catchment.

“A significant gain has been securing legal walking and biking access in perpetuity across the company’s land into Lake Matiri Conservation Area which is also an important gateway into Kahurangi National Park. Concession conditions also require NZEL to make improvements to the Lake Matiri access track.

“NZEL is required to contribute \$30,000 to benefit public recreational use of Matiri Valley public conservation land, which would be used to build a footbridge over the West Branch Matiri River or another recreational project.

“An important consideration for the department has been measures to minimise impacts on the freshwater values in the conservation area, including longfin and shortfin eels and koaro, a native whitebait species.

“The concession conditions include maintaining fish passage between the lake and river which is to be provided for in the design of the three weirs at the lake outlets. Fish screens are required on the penstock intake and trailrace to prevent eels and other fish getting caught in these.

“There is also a requirement for monitoring the effects of the scheme on aquatic ecology in the longer term.

“Conditions have been set in relation to a long-tailed bat population found in the Lake Matiri Conservation Area in January in a Forest & Bird bat survey. NZEL is required to check no bats are resident in trees to be felled for scheme infrastructure. The company must also contribute \$20,000 to enhance terrestrial habitat in the catchment.”

In considering the concession application and public submissions on it, DOC could only take into account matters relating to impacts of the scheme on public conservation land. This is in line with Conservation Act requirements for assessing such applications. The resource consent process considers wider effects.

### Additional concession information

- Concession conditions require NZEL to make payments to DOC of \$105,000 in total, for the most part to offset residual impacts of the scheme. It includes:
  - \$30,000 to enhance freshwater aquatic habitat in the Buller River catchment.
  - \$20,000 for riparian planting along the Matiri River to enhance natural character and visual amenity and compensate for the loss of natural forest.
  - \$5000 for signage.
  - \$30,000 towards a footbridge to be built over the West Branch Matiri River or another recreational project.
  - \$20,000 for the enhancement of terrestrial habitat in the catchment.
- Additionally, the company is to fence part of its land to keep livestock off the Matiri River edges and provide aggregate to upgrade a section of the Lake Matiri Hut access track surface.
- The concession term is 35 years in line with the term of resource consents for the hydroelectric scheme.

### Contact

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