

## Speaking notes for Clement Lagrue, Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation.

### Proposed Timaru District Plan, Hearing F “Activities on the surface of water”, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

#### Summary of evidence

1. My full name is Clement Francois Georges Lagrue. I have been a Senior Science Advisor (Ecosystems) for the Department of Conservation since 2019. My work involves braided river bird monitoring, habitat restoration, introduced predator and anthropogenic effects on bird nesting, and advice on river work (gravel extraction, flood protection, erosion mitigation, etc.) within and outside of DOC.
2. My evidence addresses the effects of motorised crafts on braided river birds present on the Timaru District rivers, especially the Rangitata, Ōrāri, Ōpihi and Pareora Rivers. This evidence is provided in the context of the proposed provisions in the Activities on Surface Water (ASW) chapter of the proposed Timaru District Plan that relate to the use of motorised crafts.
3. Timaru’s braided rivers, especially the Rangitata, are significant nesting habitats for endemic braided river birds including:
  - a. black-billed gulls/tarāpuka (*Chroicocephalus bulleri*)
  - b. black fronted terns/tarapiroe (*Chlidonias albostratus*),
  - c. banded dotterels/Pohowera (*Anarhynchus bicinctus*),
  - d. wrybill/ngutu pare (*Anarhynchus frontalis*) and
  - e. Sl pied oystercatchers /Tōrea (*Haematopus finschi*).
4. These species are all threatened according to the New Zealand Threat Classification System (Robertson et al. 2021) and under increasing pressures from anthropogenic activities.
5. Evidence from New Zealand and overseas studies shows that motorised craft have a range of direct and indirect negative effects (noise, visual disturbance, speed, wave action, human access to nesting habitat, etc.) on birds, especially during nesting season, and that cumulatively the effects are more than minor.
6. For birds that nest on braided rivers, including the Rangitata, Ōrāri, Ōpihi and Pareora Rivers, the best way to address the adverse effects on birds is to avoid using motorised craft during the nesting season (August to January, inclusive). No other measures seem applicable.
7. Alternatives, such as buffer zones, or a minimum flow trigger above which motorised craft would be permitted to use the rivers, would be difficult to implement and monitor. There is also no evidence that such options would be effective, and obtaining any such evidence would require in depth research and monitoring, for example to identify a flow rate (if there is one) at which effects on birds would be acceptable (i.e., less than minor).

8. Outside of the nesting season, the potential effects of jetboating on these birds are then likely to be less than minor and any other effects on biodiversity values are not well documented.

### **Response to points raised by Jet Boating New Zealand**

9. I have read the evidence filed from Jet Boating New Zealand (JBNZ), including the attached statement of evidence from James Jolly in relation to Plan Change 19 of the MacKenzie District Plan, and Mr Jolly's statement in relation to the Proposed Timaru District Plan.
10. First, I wanted to commend JBNZ for their constructive response to our meeting and submission and evidence from DOC. Even though some points of discussion remain, I acknowledge that the points of difference within the evidence as to the appropriate temporal restrictions have narrowed considerably.
11. The majority of the points raised I have already covered in my evidence. However, I note the following:
  - a. Mr Jolly's MacKenzie District Plan evidence refers to bird surveys carried out in the context of gravel extraction activities. Disturbance from gravel extraction activities and motorised crafts are not comparable in terms of effects on nesting birds for several key reasons that can be easily explained if required. This means that effects (or absence thereof) of gravel extraction activities on nesting birds should not be used as reference point for potential effects of jetboats.
  - b. I agree that what I would call "core" nesting season for braided river birds, especially more conspicuous colony nesters is September to December (inclusive), as highlighted by JBNZ's evidence (see statement of Mr Jolly at paragraphs 12 and 13). However, solitary nesters, especially banded dotterel, will start nesting in early August, and nesting of all identified bird species can extend well within January or even February in some years. I have explained in my evidence that I consider the appropriate exclusion period for motorized craft activities to be August – January inclusive.
  - c. Inclusion of a water level trigger for allowing jetboating on Timaru district's rivers can only be acceptable as an *additional* requirement to the temporal exclusion period over the breeding season, not as a substitute or stand-alone restriction for the reasons explained in my evidence.
  - d. I note that in Mr Jolly's MacKenzie District Plan evidence, one of his recommendations was to make information to boat users about nesting birds. Providing information to river users about bird nesting areas and endangered birds, and steps to avoid nests or chicks is theoretically a good idea, but that assumes the general public will be able to find and identify nests/chicks and adjust their activities in a way that would mitigate their effects. From my own experience and expertise in monitoring these birds during nesting, this would be simply impossible to implement in a way that would provide adequate protection to nesting birds given how camouflaged and cryptic nests, eggs and

chicks can be. It is also extremely optimistic to expect satisfactory adherence to such advice by all river users.

- e. I understand JBNZ is seeking to add a new permitted activity rule for the Te Ngawai, Te Moana and Waihi Rivers. In my opinion, for the reasons I have set out in my evidence, if jetboating activities were to be allowed on these rivers, the same exclusion period would need to be applied over bird nesting season.

Happy to take any questions.