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Ngai Tahu Property and Meridian to develop Amuri Integrated Water Project

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Ngāi Tahu Property and Meridian Energy Limited (Meridian) have jointly lodged initial consent applications for a proposed hydro and irrigation scheme to be located between the Waiau and Hurunui Rivers in North Canterbury.

The partners have lodged consent applications for the take and use of water for, and discharge from, a hydro-generation facility. This is the first step in the development of the Amuri Integrated Water Project. The proposal reflects the needs expressed by the local community and councils through the consultative process run under the auspices of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS).

“The partnership between Meridian and Ngāi Tahu Property demonstrates our strong desire to work closely on a project that provides lasting benefits to the region and its communities. We’re proud to be working with Ngāi Tahu Property as we share a genuine commitment to the sustainable and effective management of our natural resources,” said Tim Lusk, Meridian’s chief executive.

Meridian’s water infrastructure development manager, Nick Eldred, says the proposal will fulfill the vision, values and outcomes of the draft Hurunui-Waiau Regional Plan, which is part of the ongoing development of the CWMS.

Both organisations have been actively involved in Hurunui-Waiau Zone Committee community consultation, and have identified the Waiau River as having great potential for an integrated hydro-irrigation scheme in North Canterbury.

The proposed scheme will form the core of the integrated water management solution for the Hurunui District, enhancing the availability and security of electricity supply, whilst supporting regional development through irrigation, says Mr Eldred.

Ngāi Tahu Property and Meridian have applied for water consents for the Amuri Hydro Project – a water take of up to 50 cubic metres per second, and a discharge of up to 55 cubic metres per second.

“We’ve been encouraged by the very positive response to the proposed scheme from the local community.

“The design of the scheme and its exact footprint are yet to be determined. We will be carrying out some preliminary work and engaging others to help us determine the design in the coming months. It’s a significant project and, subject to approvals, could take up to a decade before construction could begin,” adds Mr Eldred.

Later this month the local community will be invited to attend a public open day to learn more about the proposed scheme and the work Meridian and Ngāi Tahu Property will be doing in the preliminary stages to progress the proposal.

Ngāi Tahu Property chief executive Tony Sewell says the infrastructure developed would enable a more efficient and reliable irrigation scheme for the Amuri district.

“Investment in the proposed project would satisfy multiple objectives including direct tribal involvement in the design and management of water infrastructure that is sensitive to cultural and environmental values,” says Mr Sewell.

“The proposal continues to be refined as more specific consultation with stakeholder groups occurs. We are confident that following the consenting process, there will be broad agreement that an optimal sustainable outcome has been achieved.”

Both Ngāi Tahu Property and Meridian recognise the important natural, cultural and community values associated with the Waiiau River and as such numerous studies into the current state of the river, the land and the environment are being undertaken.

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Editor’s notes:

[Meridian Energy](#) is a state-owned renewable electricity generator that produces electricity from wind and water in New Zealand, wind in Australia and solar in the United States of America. Meridian is also an electricity retailer to residential, rural and business customers through our Meridian and Powershop brands. In New Zealand, the company is the largest electricity generator, owning and operating seven hydro stations, (six within the Waitaki Hydro Scheme), and four wind farms across New Zealand. Meridian acknowledges and supports the communities where our assets are located, where our customers live and work, and where we plan to develop generation assets in the future. Recently the government re-confirmed its commitment to achieving a 90% renewable energy target by 2025. Meridian Energy believes the generation realized from the Amuri Integrated Hydro Project will go some way to help achieve that aspiration.

[Ngāi Tahu Property](#) is owned by the South Island’s largest iwi which has more than 47,500 registered members. Ngāi Tahu Property focuses on property investment, property management, property development and agricultural investment. In North Canterbury Ngāi Tahu is commencing the agricultural conversion of its Balmoral and Eyrewell properties comprising a total area of 16,100 ha. The first three pilot dairy farms (focusing on sustainable water quality and biodiversity outcomes) will commence operation in 2012 and this will complement existing dryland sheep and beef operations. The Waiiau River catchment and Amuri area are part of the rohe (tribal area) of Ngati Kurī (Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura) and Ngāi Tūāhuriri (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tūāhuriri), both rūnanga have been involved with discussion of the project via hui at appropriate mārae.