



26 August 2021

Dual name altered for Shag River (Waihemo)

The name of a river in Otago has been altered putting its Māori name at the front and centre to recognise the mana of the river.

The decision was made by the Minister for Land Information Hon Damien O'Connor.

New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa Chairperson Anselm Haanen says many submissions to the Board supported the change. However, because several objections were received Minister O'Connor was required to make the final decision.

"The dual name Waihemo / Shag River acknowledges the significance of both Māori and European histories of the river. It also meets the New Zealand Geographic Board's modern and standardised conventions for dual names" says Mr Haanen.

"The meaning of Waihemo refers to the 'river that has gone away' or 'dwindled'. Shag River was named by early whalers being descriptive of the seabird in the area."

The proposal for the dual name alteration was submitted by Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, both Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga and mana whenua.

The river flows for 75km, first southwest from the Kakanui Mountains, then across State Highway 85, then southeast to the Pacific Ocean at Shag Point / Matakaia. The river mouth is 7.5km east of Palmerston.

Dual names recognise partnership, equal significance of two languages and cultures, and distinct histories/stories. They allow for one or other or both names to be used verbally, while both names must be shown together on official documents such as signs and maps.

ENDS

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Background and additional information

Further information is available at: <https://www.linz.govt.nz/regulatory/place-names/place-name-consultation/16825>

The New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa is New Zealand's national place naming authority, with jurisdiction over New Zealand, its offshore islands and continental shelf, and the Ross Dependency of Antarctica. The Board is an independent statutory decision-making body that is supported by Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand.

Place names are important signposts of modern, historical and cultural influences and values of the people who gave them. Knowing the correct names for places and their locations is also important for everyday communications and activities, such as when emergency services need to identify 'where' quickly, clearly and accurately.

Official New Zealand place names can be found in the [New Zealand Gazetteer](#).