



The recent decision by the Court of Appeal supporting a conservation order for Canterbury's Rakaia River is a landmark for conservation. Two years ago the Planning Tribunal supported a conservation order for the river, but Federated Farmers then won a High Court ruling which stated that the purpose of conservation orders was not to over-emphasise conservation at the expense of other water uses. Because of this latter decision, wild and scenic river legislation stalled, creating a backlog of pending conservation orders on rivers such as the Rangitikei, Wairau, Grey, Buller, Ahuriri and Maitai, as well as Lakes Ellesmere and Wairarapa.

The Acclimatisation Societies challenged the High Court ruling in the highest court of the land and won. The threatened wrybill (perhaps only 5000 birds remain), terns, and recreationists will benefit from this decision and other conservation orders should follow soon. The photo shows rafters enjoying a roller coaster ride down the Manganui-a-te-Ao, one of the few undeveloped rivers coming off the central volcanic region. It is also in line for a conservation order.

Photo: Graeme Loh.