

## CANAL ETIQUETTE

There are a few things to keep in mind when fishing the canals that will keep your visit enjoyable and ensure that the opportunity to fish around the hydro-electric schemes, which are privately owned and operated, is maintained for future generations of anglers. The Tekapo Canal is owned by Genesis Energy while the Pukaki and Ōhau canal chain is owned by Meridian Energy.



A salmon caught near the farm pens on the Tekapo Canal

**Be considerate of others** – The canals are popular, and you will encounter other anglers, and often in close proximity. Anglers use a range of fishing methods and styles at the canals and they are not always compatible with how you will intend to fish. Be courteous when approaching anglers who were there before you and ask if it is ok to fish close to them, if not please find your own spot.

**Roads** – Drive to the conditions and stick to the speed limits. Speed limits vary throughout the canal system and many of the roads are narrow, unlit and offer no berm parking. Please park off the roads and where parking is designated and walk to your fishing spot if necessary.

**Camping** – no camping is permitted on the canals. Camping includes camper vans, motor homes, and sleeping in your car. This rule is enforced, and campers will be required to move-on based on the assessment: “if it looks like camping, it is camping”. Accommodation and camping is available throughout the Mackenzie, especially in the townships of Tekapo and Twizel.



An 18 pound brown trout from the Pukaki Canal

**Rubbish** – Your rubbish and fish waste is your responsibility, pack-in and pack-out. If you are fishing near the Ōhau power stations, large skip bins are provided by Meridian for your use. Do not leave fish frames and guts in the margins of the water, wrap them in paper and a plastic bag and dispose of them in the skip bins. Please also be careful not to snag your line in the power station intakes, fishing nylon is causing blockages to the intake screens, which then causes issues for hydro generation.

**Toilets** – Toilets are provided on the canals and in the Tekapo and Twizel townships. On the Tekapo Canal portaloos are provided while toilets are available and signposted at the power station buildings of the Ōhau A, B and C power stations.

**Signage** – Signage is erected throughout the power scheme and around the salmon farms to advise anglers of health and safety issues. Please obey all signage and keep out of dangerous areas. Failure to do so may result in a reduction in access.

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## THE HYDRO CANALS

The hydro canals of the Mackenzie Basin harbour a uniquely productive and world-famous sports fishery. The canals were constructed in the 1970's and 1980's to link power stations and combine the waters from lakes Tekapo, Pukaki and Ōhau to utilise the full potential of that water to generate power before it reaches Lake Benmore.

These canals and the power stations on them are now owned and operated by Meridian Energy and Genesis Energy. They play a significant role in generating renewable energy for New Zealand. Access to the canals for fishing has been made possible by them and all users should ensure they respect the rules and fishing etiquette.



A rainbow trout caught from the Ōhau A Canal

Set in a spectacular high-country landscape with easy access and productive fishing, the canals are one of the most popular freshwater sports fisheries in New Zealand. Brown trout, rainbow trout and chinook salmon fishing is on offer year-round and because the canal flows are controlled and cannot flood, it is possible to fish 365 days a year. Canal flows are changeable and are based on the generation demands of their associated power stations.

The canals provide anglers with the chance to catch a fish of a lifetime. Trout more than 4.5kg are commonly caught, trout between 10-13kg get caught occasionally and in recent years a few have tipped the scales at over 15kg! Salmon are usually 1-4kg, but they do get much bigger.

Prior to the establishment of the salmon farms within the canals, angling effort at the canals was minimal and the resident trout were abundant and usually in poor condition.

The salmon farms provide a unique fishery dynamic whereby the trout and salmon benefit greatly from the additional food sources they provide. For this reason, the size and condition of the canal fish is unmatched by any other freshwater sports fishery in New Zealand.

Although some fish spawn in the canals the contribution they make to the population is considered insignificant. Most trout present in the canals migrate into the canals from the headwater lakes through the control gates and power stations. Spawning also occurs in the Upper Ōhau River, which provides fish stocks to the Ōhau B and C canals via Lake Ruataniwha. The presence of salmon in the canals is solely attributed to the salmon farms.

## ANGLER INFORMATION

The Mackenzie Basin is a hotspot for tourists and local holiday makers and accordingly most angling activity occurs at the canals over the summer months and on public holidays. Anglers willing to brave the cold high-country environment in winter can be well rewarded for their efforts and have more space to themselves.

Fish are found throughout the canals, although their numbers and size can be higher in certain locations and as a result angling is more popular there. This includes within a few hundred metres of the salmon farms, and at the top and bottom of each canal by the control gates and power station intakes. The salmon farms attract anglers year-round, but the top ends of the canals are more favoured in autumn and winter while spawning fish migrate upstream and congregate near the impassable structures.



SH8 crosses the Ōhau B Canal, salmon farms can be seen on the canal and Lake Ruataniwha is in the background

## The Hydro Canals



The Ōhau A Power Station



Central South Island Region

The water clarity in the canals varies from crystal clear to a silty glacial blue-green or grey. Sight-fishing is possible during the clear times, but the fishing can be frustrating as these fish are often well educated and will refuse your lure as you watch. In clear water, fishing with as light line as possible will be an advantage as will fishing during low light times like dawn, dusk or night. When the water clarity is heavily affected by glacial silt, bait fishing can be the most successful method.

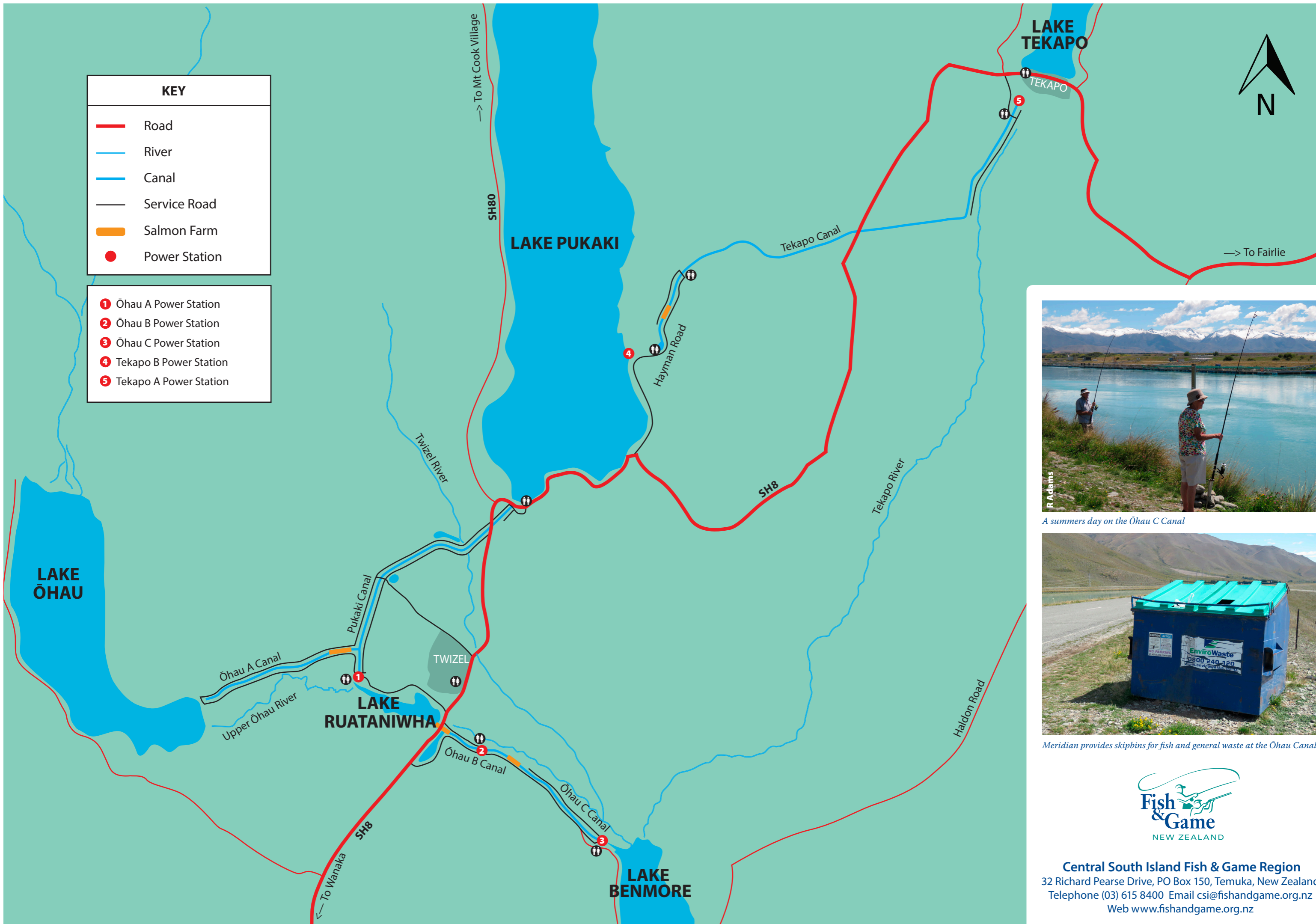
Bait fishing is by far the most popular method at the canals. Anglers that fish statically will often use a heavy sinker and a float like a cork to float their bait above the weed beds. The other popular way to fish bait is to walk along the canal bank at the same speed as the water flow and bounce and drift the bait and a small weight along the canal bottom. Popular baits include crustaceans like shrimp or prawn, insects like huhu grubs, and fish that are fully intact. Soft baiting is a form of bait fishing and is popular, especially when salmon are numerous after a release by the salmon farms or at night for gigantic brown trout.

Spin anglers should take a variety of traditional and modern lures and change often if they are not inducing a bite. Try fishing different depths as the canals are very deep and swift. Fishing your lure near the bottom is a big advantage. A spin rod rigged with a small weight and a fly fishing fly like a glow bug egg imitation can be very successful from autumn, through winter and in to early spring, particularly on rainbows as they take full advantage of the bounty of eggs spilt by spawning fish.

Fly anglers are catered for as well with sight fishing along the canal edges away from the salmon farms. Trout can be spotted on station or cruising around the weed beds and spring creek style fishing can be had albeit on a large scale! Night fishing with a lumo doll fly or large woolly bugger can be worthwhile too, as large fish come close into the banks to feed at night.

All anglers are required to hold a valid sports fishing licence and must adhere to regulations which are contained within the South Island Sports Fishing Regulation Guide. The regulation guide is available in digital or pamphlet form when you purchase your licence and can be found on the Fish & Game NZ website [www.fishandgame.org.nz](http://www.fishandgame.org.nz). There are multiple regulations to consider and these are subject to change on a seasonal basis. It is each angler's responsibility to understand the regulations. If you need any clarification, please contact the Central South Island Region office.





KEY	
	Road
	River
	Canal
	Service Road
	Salmon Farm
	Power Station

- 1** Ōhau A Power Station
- 2** Ōhau B Power Station
- 3** Ōhau C Power Station
- 4** Tekapo B Power Station
- 5** Tekapo A Power Station



A summers day on the Ōhau C Canal



Meridian provides skipbins for fish and general waste at the Ōhau Canals



**Central South Island Fish & Game Region**  
 32 Richard Pearse Drive, PO Box 150, Temuka, New Zealand  
 Telephone (03) 615 8400 Email [csi@fishandgame.org.nz](mailto:csi@fishandgame.org.nz)  
 Web [www.fishandgame.org.nz](http://www.fishandgame.org.nz)