



# Towards a better network of visitor facilities

National public resource document

SEPTEMBER 2003



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

# Towards a better network of visitor facilities

A Department of Conservation recreation opportunities  
review

SEPTEMBER 2003

Published by:  
Department of Conservation  
Southern Regional Office  
P.O. Box 13-049  
Christchurch, NEW ZEALAND

This Resource Document provides background detail about planning for recreation opportunities to support the public consultation process 'Towards a better network of visitor facilities' which is the final stage of DOC's Recreation Opportunities Review. There are 13 Proposal Summary documents, one for each conservancy, that summarise proposals for visitor facilities on conservation land throughout New Zealand. Also available are an Overview of Consultation and a Submission Form. These documents are available from DOC conservancy offices and the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

© 2003, Department of Conservation

ISBN 0-478-22469-0

Cover photo: Powell Hut, Tararua Forest Park, under construction, 1999. Photo by Jim Flack.

# Foreword

Visitor facilities in conservation areas, such as huts, tracks, bridges and picnic areas, are provided for the use of the recreational visitor and, in some cases, the tourist.

The challenge for the Department of Conservation is to determine what those needs are around the country—what are the recreational opportunities most desired by the visiting public?—and to tailor a mix of visitor facilities accordingly.

Presently, the department manages a diverse mix of facilities, built for a range of purposes and inherited from a range of parent agencies. In the coming years, thanks to a ten-year \$349 million cash injection from the Government announced in the 2002/03 Budget, the department has an opportunity to bring this network of facilities into line with current needs.

All this must be achieved within the available funds, and within the legal and general policy parameters under which the Department of Conservation operates.

The bottom line is that existing recreation opportunities are assured. But, it is also clear that there are situations where facility changes are warranted. This may mean the removal of some facilities that do not serve a useful purpose, the downgrading or upgrading of the level of service provided by some facilities, or the creation of new facilities to meet changing needs.

In total, it will mean the Department is able to create the best mix of facilities that can be properly managed. At current levels of funding, it would not have been possible to sustain the current range of recreation opportunities sought by New Zealanders and also enjoyed by visitors from overseas.

This document *Towards a better network of visitor facilities* presents the background to that challenge, and outlines how a lasting and sustainable solution can be achieved with input from the community.

I encourage you to take up this opportunity to learn more about the decision-making framework the department is working within, to consider the proposals that will be put forward, and to provide the feedback you think will achieve the best recreation result for all people with an interest in New Zealand's public conservation lands.

Minister of Conservation  
Chris Carter



## CONTENTS

Foreword	3
<hr/>	
1. Introduction	7
<hr/>	
2. Objectives	8
<hr/>	
2.1 Consultation scene	8
2.2 What is consultation not about?	8
3. The Department of Conservation's role in outdoor recreation	9
<hr/>	
3.1 Public conservation areas	9
3.2 Visitor facility network	10
3.3 Matching facilities to needs	11
4. How the Department of Conservation manages outdoor recreation	12
<hr/>	
4.1 Legal parameters	12
4.2 Funding parameters	13
4.3 General policy parameters	13
5. 'Towards a better network of visitor facilities' consultation process	18
<hr/>	
5.1 Objectives	18
5.2 Background	18
5.3 Overview of New Zealand recreation opportunities managed by DOC	19
5.4 Overview of Proposals For DOC Recreation Facilities	22
5.5 Conservancy Proposal Summaries	23
5.6 Site Assessment Reports	23
5.7 Process	23
5.8 Timeline	24
6. How you can be involved	26
<hr/>	
Conservancy Addresses	26
7. Glossary	28
<hr/>	
Appendix 1	
<hr/>	
Visitor groups	32
Appendix 2	
<hr/>	
Recreational Opportunity Spectrum	38
Appendix 3	
<hr/>	
Visitor site assessment report	39
Appendix 4	
<hr/>	
Service standards	42
Appendix 5	
<hr/>	
Principles to guide a core facility network	43

Appendix 6	
Selecting a sustainable core network of huts	46
Appendix 7	
Track classifications	49
Appendix 8	
Defining the site and facility (asset) proposals	52

# 1. Introduction

There is good news for the Department of Conservation and the people who recreate in conservation areas.

In May 2002, the New Zealand Government announced in its 2002/03 Budget that it would dramatically increase funding for outdoor recreation on public conservation land in New Zealand.

In total, the Government committed \$349 million over ten years, effectively doubling the Department of Conservation's maintenance budget for visitor facilities.

Under the funding package, the Government is:

- Increasing the Department's annual operational budget for visitor facilities (including maintenance) in stages until it reaches a total of \$24 million a year.
- Funding the Department with an average of \$21.2 million a year for annual depreciation to replace facilities.
- To begin paying accumulated depreciation from 2007/08, which covers unfunded depreciation since the Department was created in 1987, at a rate of \$18 million a year. Accumulated depreciation is to be paid for 15 years, representing a total capital injection of \$270 million. This funding is a catch-up.

This funding package was designed to ensure that the existing range of recreation opportunities will be sustained on public conservation land in New Zealand.

However, it is important to note that the new funding is going to be sufficient to properly maintain *most but not all* of what is currently there, especially if some new facilities are needed.

Despite efforts made by the Department over the past 15 years to rationalise this network, there remain some visitor facilities that presently receive little or no use or which no longer contribute to the overall range of recreation opportunities being sought by visitors to public conservation lands.

Rather, the funding package marked the chance to develop the optimal network of visitor facilities that most effectively meets the needs of New Zealanders and visitors from overseas.

The aim of this document is to introduce the process by which the Department of Conservation will decide, in consultation with the community, which overall mix of visitor facilities will best meet public needs, to the level of guaranteed funding.

The topic of consultation is about facilities for recreation within the context of the recreation opportunities these provide.



## 2. Objectives

This document aims to:

- Describe the Department of Conservation's role in providing outdoor recreation opportunities in New Zealand, why it is involved and its objectives in providing visitor facilities. (*Section 3*)
- Explain how the Department of Conservation makes management decisions in managing visitor facilities on public conservation lands. (*Section 4*)
- Introduce the process by which the Department of Conservation will decide, in consultation with the community, which overall mix of visitor facilities will best meet the needs of New Zealanders and visitors from overseas, to the level of funding guaranteed. (*Section 5*)

### 2.1 CONSULTATION SCENE

The consultation process should be viewed within the following context:

- DOC is neither in an expansionist phase nor in an unduly reductionist phase as far as managing visitor facilities.
- Information should be easily understood.
- Where the public want to be involved in discussing issues relating to visitor facilities, an informal approach is preferred with DOC staff familiar with the locations being available.
- This is a non-statutory process honouring the Minister's commitment to consult.
- The main focus is on the current mix of recreational opportunities.
- The timing of the consultation reflects the need for the Department to explore the implications of the announced new funding and to make facility proposals within this context.
- This is a 2003–2004 snapshot of recreation facility needs.

### 2.2 WHAT IS CONSULTATION *NOT* ABOUT?

This consultation process is not a Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) Review. Those reviews, which cover each conservancy's conservation management strategic objectives, occur every ten years and follow a statutory process. There may be particular issues that people want to discuss that relate to visitor facilities, but which may be relevant to particular CMS objectives, and because of this any potential for resolving such issues will be through the CMS Review statutory process. Information provided through this current process that is not directly relevant will be passed to the appropriate manager for their later consideration.

This process of consultation is not about DOC General Policy. DOC and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) are consulting on the draft General Policies for the Conservation Act 1987, and the National Parks Act, 1980, details of which you can find on the DOC website, [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz), or from DOC Head Office, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington.

This process of consultation is not about public access to foreshores, issues relating to the Queen's Chain or about High Country Tenure Review.

# 3. The Department of Conservation's role in outdoor recreation

## 3.1 PUBLIC CONSERVATION AREAS

The public conservation lands managed by the Department of Conservation, on behalf of present and future generations of New Zealanders, cover eight million hectares.

This includes 14 National Parks, three World Heritage Areas, many forest, maritime and farm parks, marine reserves and several thousand reserves, marginal strips around lakes and along rivers, and other protected areas.

It also includes many of the country's major tourist attractions and iconic geographic features, such as Rangitoto Island, Milford Sound and the West Coast glaciers.

Given the scale and diversity of the public conservation lands, it is one of the main settings for outdoor recreation in New Zealand, rivalled only by New Zealand's vast coastline and the man-made infrastructure of dedicated sporting/recreation facilities. The Department estimates that there are about 40 million visits to DOC sites each year, most of them recreation-related.

### 3.1.1 Activities undertaken

The types of activities undertaken, or recreational opportunities sought, on public conservation lands are hugely varied, but include:

- Tramping
- Walking
- Picnicking
- Hunting
- Duck-shooting
- Mountain-biking
- 4WD touring
- Gold panning
- Nature appreciation
- Exploring history
- Running
- Triathlons/endurance events
- Adventure sports
- Bird-watching
- Boating

## 3.2 VISITOR FACILITY NETWORK

To support the many recreational activities that take place on public conservation lands, there is an extensive visitor facilities network managed by the Department on behalf of the community.

Visitor facilities are provided so that you can access conservation areas, and get the benefits you want from your visit. The other important role of facilities is to protect the environment, through encouraging you to stay on tracks and directing people away from areas with wildlife or plant communities sensitive to disturbance. However, the facilities themselves or the use of them can result in environmental impacts such as soil erosion, sewage and waste water impacts on watercourses or ground water, and the introduction or spread of invasive weeds. The location, style and standard of facilities are all important to ensure visitors and the facilities themselves do not unacceptably impact on natural, cultural and historic resources.

The network of visitor facilities has been developed over the last 100 years by successive generations and includes:

- more than 300 campsites
- 12,500 kilometres of track including NZ Walkways
- 1,000 backcountry huts
- 2,130 kilometres of road
- 1,570 toilets
- 570 car parks
- 14,000 bridges, boardwalks and other structures
- 390 amenity areas
- 79 visitor centres and information outlets.

This makes the Department of Conservation one of the most significant providers of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Zealand.

A market survey, conducted in 2000, found that more than one-third of New Zealand adults (aged 18 and over) had stayed in a hut within the public hut system and/or camped on public conservation lands at some stage in the past. About ten percent had done so during the last 12 months.

Similarly, more than two-thirds of adults surveyed had visited a DOC visitor centre and/or been on a short walk in an area managed by the Department at some time in the past. One-third had done so during the last 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Some visitor facilities are also provided by the private sector. At present, there are about 1,200 recreation businesses with a concession to operate on public conservation lands, ranging from air, water and land transport operations to guided treks, hunting and fishing trips, nature tours, ski fields and accommodation.

The community also contributes to the provision of some visitor facilities. In particular, tramping and alpine-based groups help the Department maintain huts and other facilities and, in some cases, have sole responsibility for this.

---

<sup>1</sup> Recreational Facilities and Services: Defining Visitor Needs and Measuring Satisfaction - Results of Survey amongst Visitors to Department Huts, Campsites and Visitor Centres by Christine Angus, May 2000.

### 3.3 MATCHING FACILITIES TO NEEDS

Since its inception in 1987, the Department of Conservation has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure that the visitor facility network, much of which it inherited from a range of parent agencies, is managed to best meet the needs of the visiting public.

Progress has been made through Conservation Management Strategies, some new conservation management plans (e.g.: the draft *Fiordland National Park management plan* 2002), and some conservancy-based hut and track reviews (eg: the *Nelson/Marlborough Hut and Track Review* 1994).

A partial rationalisation of the network of facilities was also achieved as the Visitor Asset Management Programme commenced, which incidentally led to the removal of some sub-standard and unnecessary structures and the closing of some little-used tracks as facility inspection programmes were undertaken. The Visitor Asset Management Programme is focussed on ensuring quality procedures for managing visitor facilities and services and is not a strategy in itself.

However, given the extent of this network, and the high level of patronage it already receives, the Department acknowledges that this network may *not* deliver the optimal range of recreational opportunities possible and that further review is justified.

At the same time, the Department also recognises that, while the network might not be ideal, there are good reasons for not radically changing the network; including public interest, cost, environmental protection and supply and demand issues.

Decisions made following the 'Towards an Improved Network of Visitor Facilities' consultation programme will be used to inform the overall facility management programme. While some decisions might require short-term action, others will only be implemented as the affected facility meets its retirement date. During this time, there will be opportunities to review these decisions if the need arises. Such a need will be the ten-year review of each Conservation Management Strategy.

## 4. How the Department of Conservation manages outdoor recreation

The Department of Conservation is committed to maintaining a wide range of recreation opportunities for visitors to New Zealand on public conservation lands. In doing so, however, it must conform to a range of parameters.

### 4.1 LEGAL PARAMETERS

The founding legislation for the Department of Conservation is the Conservation Act 1987. This describes one function of the Department as being: *to the extent that the use of any natural or historic resource for recreation or tourism is not inconsistent with its conservation, to foster the use of natural and historic resources for recreation, and to allow their use for tourism.*

Similarly, under other key statutes including the National Parks Act, Reserves Act, and the New Zealand Walkways Act, people are encouraged to visit and enjoy protected areas managed by the Department provided natural and historic values are protected. The Reserves Act, for example, requires: *management for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.*

The National Parks Act additionally requires: *freedom of entry and access to parks, so that they may receive in full measure the inspiration, enjoyment and other benefits that may be derived from mountains, forests...*

The Department, then, has a legal imperative to foster use of the public conservation lands, to guarantee freedom of entry, and to seek to ensure that visitors derive benefit and enjoyment from their visit—all the while ensuring that natural and historic values on public conservation land are safeguarded.

Whether there is a requirement for DOC to make management decisions clearly differentiating between recreation and tourism is a point of some debate. DOC follows both the legislative requirement of Part IIIB of the Conservation Act 1987 which requires commercial activity to be managed through concessions, and the DOC Visitor Strategy which defines visitors as being all people who use conservation areas.

The Department is also required to comply with the requirements of the Building Act, and in particular the New Zealand Building Code. Structure design criteria shall comply with NZS4203:1992, *Code of Practice for General Structural Design and Design Loadings for Buildings*, unless stated otherwise in the DOC *Guidelines for the design of outdoor visitor structures*, November 1998. This manual has been recognised by the Building Industry Association.

## 4.2 FUNDING PARAMETERS

### 4.2.1 Funds available

The New Zealand Government, in its 2002/03 Budget, committed an additional \$349 million over ten years for the Department of Conservation's maintenance budget for recreation facilities.

Under the funding package, the Government is:

- Increasing the Department's annual operational budget for visitor facilities (including maintenance) in stages until it reaches an additional \$24 million a year.
- Funding the Department with an average of \$21.2 million a year for annual depreciation to replace facilities.
- To begin paying accumulated depreciation from 2007/08, which covers unfunded depreciation since the Department was created in 1987, at a rate of \$18 million a year. Accumulated depreciation is to be paid for 15 years, representing a total capital injection of \$270 million.

The funding package recognises the predicted on-going revenue coming to the Department from hut and campground use, and any contributions to facility management specified in concession agreements.

### 4.2.2 Maintenance costs

The Department's assessment of the costs involved in maintaining visitor facilities is based on lifecycle models developed by accounting, engineering and recreation planning staff, in consultation with external advisors.

The lifecycle models are based on an analysis of current best practice within the Department for the management of each facility type, and/or a comparison with the practices of other agencies that manage similar assets.

The lifecycle models are designed to provide a total life cost for the management of the facility at the appropriate standard for the expected user. These costs are all estimated, and the ability to better predict costs and hence plan ahead more accurately for future work will come as the real work of using the new funds gets underway with earnest.

## 4.3 GENERAL POLICY PARAMETERS

### 4.3.1 General Policy

The General Policy for National Parks was set by the National Parks and Reserves Authority of New Zealand in 1983.

This General Policy provides guidance to the administrative agency managing national parks, now the Department of Conservation, that sets the parameters for making practical administrative decisions.

In many cases General Policy gives general guidance, but directs that management plans will prescribe when and where specific activities will be permitted.

Key policy relevant to the management of recreation opportunities are:

- Visitor facilities shall provide for the safety and comfort of visitors and shall be sited, in conformity with the management plan for the park, in areas where the natural features and scenic beauty of the park will not be unduly affected.
- The off-road use of vehicles will be prohibited except for search and rescue and for management purposes. (Mountain bikes are defined as vehicles by the Department, for the purposes of this policy)

#### *New General Policy*

New General Policy has been drafted and released for public comment in August 2003 by the NZCA in order to ensure the Policy provides guidance to current use patterns and needs. At the same time General Policy for the Conservation Act and related legislation has also been released by the Department in consultation with the NZCA. The two new draft General Policies reflect the Visitor Strategy Principles, and the final approved Policies will be useful for concluding some issues relating to managing visitor facilities and services that have been raised in the last few years, and there will no doubt be related points raised during this process of consultation.

Where issues are raised during this process of consultation that are relevant to the process of developing new General Policy, people will be referred to this concurrent public process.

### **4.3.2 Conservation Management Strategies**

The Conservation Act requires that a Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) be developed to implement general policies and establish objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources within each of the Department's 13 conservancies.

The strategies are developed for a ten-year period, in consultation with the community.

All facility proposals have been developed with the current CMS objectives in mind. If there is any proposal that is in some way inconsistent with the current operative CMS (because the conservancy believes a change is now warranted), then this will be made clear in the Conservancy Proposal Summary.

### **4.3.3 Visitor strategy**

The Department of Conservation's visitor strategy was published in 1996 to guide and inform the Department's planning and management relating to visitor services and, where relevant, it may also assist the implementation of Conservation Management Strategies and management plans for national parks and other specific conservation areas.

The strategy identifies that:

- Subject to suitability, the Department will manage a range of recreation opportunities across the lands and waters it administers.
- A range of recreation opportunities implies that the Department should ensure a range of settings is available for a range of activities.
- The Department will provide for a range of Visitor Groups when considering the overall mix available.

- The Department will provide the appropriate safety levels for the needs of the predominant Visitor Group at visitor sites, which will reflect the relevant facility service standard.

The Visitor Strategy Principles are all reflected in the draft General Policy now out for public comment.

#### *4.3.1.a Visitor Groups*

The seven distinct Visitor Groups identified for planning and management purposes in the Visitor Strategy are:

1. Short Stop Travellers (SST)
2. Day Visitors (DV)
3. Overnighters (ON)
4. Backcountry Comfort Seekers (BCC)
5. Backcountry Adventurers (BCA)
6. Remoteness Seekers (RS)
7. Thrill Seekers (TS)

*(See Appendix 1)*

The underlying principle behind this categorisation is that the people who visit conservation areas are not all the same, and do not all seek the same experience. The Visitor Group classifications have proved useful in terms of planning for a variety of facility types, which appear to be satisfying to those people using them, as a recent study of track users around New Zealand has found.

There is current criticism of the DOC Visitor Groups, and DOC is looking at ways of modifying the existing group titles and descriptors in response. It is, however, important to note that differentiating people into categories reflecting their preferences and abilities is not a new or unusual management technique, and as is often a problem, the names used to describe groups are open to disagreement.

#### *4.3.1.b Recreational Opportunity Spectrum*

The Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a broad classification of land areas based on the general recreational opportunities they provide.

There are seven main ROS classes:

- Urban
- Urban Fringe
- Rural
- Backcountry Drive-in
- Backcountry Walk-in
- Remote
- Wilderness

*(See Appendix 2)*

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is useful as a visual tool reflecting a range of recreation opportunities. Further detail is provided on the experience types available within particular parks or reserves based on the purpose that tracks and huts fulfil through the use of the Track Categories and the Hut Principles (*See Appendix 6, 7*).



#### **4.3.4 New Zealand Tourism Strategy**

The New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010 promotes a 'whole-of-government' approach to ensure that destination marketing is more closely aligned with destination management.

As one of the key providers of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Zealand, key recommendations relevant to the Department of Conservation are that:

- The Department monitors visitor impacts on the protected environment and promptly intervenes to manage these impacts using tools such as booking systems and one-way routes.
- The Department invests in maintaining and developing new visitor services and facilities on conservation land to support increased visitor growth without damaging the environment.
- The Department investigate the options for monitoring and minimising conflicts between tourism and the environment.

Concern has been raised that the Conservation Act 1987 functions suggest that more importance be given to the role of 'fostering recreation' than to the role of 'allowing tourism'. This issue is complicated by the lack of definition of any of these terms in the Act. Commercial activity, which is seen by many people as being synonymous with tourism, does require a concession under Part IIIB of the Conservation Act, which allows the department to establish conditions, monitoring and impose fees. However, as noted above, access by both New Zealand and international tourists to recreation facilities on conservation areas is important to local and national economies. DOC legal opinion is that there is no implied hierarchy between recreation and tourism in the Act, and that this and other legislation must be considered for all their functions when considering how recreation and tourism are managed

#### **4.3.5 Visitor Asset Management Programme**

The Visitor Asset Management Programme (VAMP) is the Department's system for managing visitor facilities and services. It is based on the premise that facilities can generally be described in terms of a life-cycle model, which means management should include:

- Planning for the building of facilities
- The on-going management of the facility
- The on-going inspection of the facility to inform management action
- Planning for the replacement of the facility

The programme has been implemented for structures (such as bridges, boardwalks and jetties), huts and tracks including Walkways. Work is required to bring campgrounds, roads, car parks and picnic areas into the system, which is being progressed.

##### *4.3.5.a Visitor Site Classifications*

Nationally, the Department has designated recreation areas on public conservation land into 3,800 visitor sites, as part of the Visitor Asset Management Programme. The same principles will apply to marine reserves where visitor facilities are provided and will be used to assess whether facilities need to be provided at new Marine Reserves.

Visitor sites form the basic unit that guides the Department's management of recreation facilities and services. A site is defined around existing facilities managed by the Department that are used by a predominant Visitor Group.

Each site is managed to cater for one of the six Visitor Groups (as identified in the Department's 1996 Visitor Strategy *see 4.3.1*).

The 'Milford Track (Glade Wharf to Clinton Hut)' site, for example, is mainly used by people expecting more developed tracks and services at huts such as cooking facilities (called Back Country Comfort Seekers by DOC). The Southern Crossing in the Tararua Ranges is mainly used by Backcountry Adventurers, and the Craters of the Moon geothermal walk near Taupo is mainly used by Short Stop Travellers.

*(See Appendix 3)*

#### *4.3.5.b Service Standards*

Service Standards have been developed by the Department to guide the way that facilities are built and serviced as part of the Visitor Asset Management Programme. The standards establish a degree of regularity to the great range of facilities being managed, such as the type of track surface, and the services provided at a hut. This assists visitors to organise their trip so that they choose facilities that are appropriate to their needs, or which match their preference.

*(See Appendix 4)*

Hut and Track Service Standards have been reviewed through a process involving representatives of outdoor recreation organisations and other providers of outdoor facilities, and while there are not significant changes likely, some improvements are anticipated.

### **4.3.6 Principles to guide a core facility network**

A standard assessment framework.

A series of principles have been developed by Department of Conservation staff, in consultation with representatives of key national recreation and tourism organisations, to guide the Department's management of visitor facilities. These reflect the general policy parameters outlined from 4.3.1 to 4.3.5.

*(See Appendix 5)*

In addition, the principles incorporate two new parameters: a set of hut principles and track purpose classifications.

#### *4.3.6.a Hut principles*

The hut principles have been developed to guide the continued management of huts. These principles aim, primarily, to ensure huts provide reasonably-spaced shelter around a core network of tracks. For example, a hut principle may be that 'any hut that has become a popular overnight destination will be retained' and that 'historic huts will be retained'.

*(See Appendix 6)*

#### *4.3.6.b Track purpose classifications*

These describe the recreation opportunity that each track provides - from classic tramping tracks to short walks. Like the hut principles, these classifications aim to ensure an appropriate suite of facilities is being maintained.

*(See Appendix 7)*

## 5. ‘Towards a better network of visitor facilities’ consultation process

The Department is seeking feedback on which overall mix of visitor facilities will best meet the needs of New Zealanders and visitors from overseas, within the funding, legal and general policy parameters under which the Department of Conservation operates.

### 5.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the ‘Towards a Better Network of Visitor Facilities’ consultation process are:

- To confirm with the public what mix of visitor facilities is needed to provide the recreational opportunities most desired on public conservation land
- To raise public awareness of DOC visitor services planning tools and objectives

#### 5.1.1 What is consultation *not* about?

This process of consultation is not a CMS Review. These reviews which cover all the Conservancy conservation management strategic objectives are each undertaken every ten years following a statutory process. There are going to be particular issues that people want to discuss that relate to visitor facilities, but they may be relevant to particular CMS objectives, and because of this any potential for resolving such issues will be through the CMS Review statutory process. Information provided through this current process that is not directly relevant will be passed to the appropriate manager for their later consideration.

This process of consultation is not about DOC General Policy. There is draft General Policy for the Conservation Act 1987, and the National Parks Act, 1980 out for public consultation details of which you can find on the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or from DOC Head Office, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington.

This process of consultation is not about public access to the foreshore, issues relating to the Queen’s Chain or about High Country Tenure Review.

### 5.2 BACKGROUND

In essence, the Department aims to be able to provide the public with a network of visitor facilities that are:

- *Appropriate* - tailored to suit the visitors most commonly using them
- *Consistent* - managed to the same standards nationwide
- *Sustainable* - managed into the future within the available resources
- *Legal* - maintained in a way that complies with all relevant legislation

In 1987 the Department inherited a diverse mix of facilities which were built for a range of purposes by the parent agencies, which had never been managed in a co-ordinated way.

Since 1998, the Department has been implementing a process to ensure that this network of visitor facilities is managed to *consistent* and *legal* standards nationally, through its Visitor Asset Management Programme.

It has also sought to ensure this mix of visitor facilities is as *appropriate* as possible, guided by the DOC Visitor Strategy, and through regional Conservation Management Strategies, some new Conservation Management Plans (e.g.: the Fiordland National Park draft management plan 2002), and some conservancy-based hut and track reviews (e.g.: the Nelson/ Marlborough Hut and Track Review 1994).

The 2002 funding package means the Department is now able to share with the public the task of choosing which visitor facilities ensure the best national mix.

DOC facility managers have assessed some facilities as contributing little to the range of recreation opportunities available. You can help us decide which facilities should be removed because they do not serve a useful purpose, which will be downgraded or upgraded, and which new facilities should be created to meet changing needs.

The public information refers to visitor facilities, but department managers organise facilities into 'sites' which group visitor facilities based on common visitor needs and geography.

In undertaking the consultation process, the Department will make draft management proposals for each of the 3,800 visitor sites in New Zealand, and their attendant facilities, based on the legal, funding and general policy parameters outlined in Section 4.

However, to guarantee that the most *appropriate* and *sustainable* suite of facilities are provided, it is vital that key stakeholders, iwi, recreational user groups and the general public are able to offer their input as well.

In particular, the Department needs to know:

- Do you agree or not agree with particular facility proposals within the context of their contribution to the recreation opportunities that you use?
- What information is most relevant to explain why you believe this?

By getting involved, members of the public will assist the Department develop a mix of visitor facilities that better delivers the current range of recreational opportunities nationally.

## 5.3 OVERVIEW OF NEW ZEALAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES MANAGED BY DOC

### **Introduction**

Department of Conservation-managed areas provide a unique and significant component of New Zealand's outdoor recreation opportunities. They offer a great variety of activities and experiences and are often important because of the natural settings. They are important, both to New Zealanders, helping define who we are, and to visitors from overseas who are attracted by New Zealand's natural environment.

## **The visitor setting**

The current visitor facility network is spread across the country in a great variety of settings, catering for a variety of visitor needs. The northern regions of New Zealand are known for their coastlines, and significant protected remnant kauri forest, wetland, and attractive off-shore islands. The central and lower North Island is highlighted by volcanic cones, but characterised by rugged hill country and long relatively accessible north-south oriented mountain ranges supporting the traditional Kiwi tramping and hunting tradition. With the growing population in the North Island, and improved roading, these opportunities are expected to become more important with time.

The South Island is less populated but more endowed with relatively unmodified mountainous lands. The landscape is dominated by the Southern Alps, with braided rivers and large lakes to the east, and temperate rainforest, glaciers and rugged coastline to the west. The Great Walks provide easier access for trampers to this scenic land, and compliment the extensive backcountry adventure and remote hut and track network, which appeal to those with a more time-honoured approach to accessing New Zealand's wild lands. The South Island supports most of the true wilderness opportunities, and both gazettal of wilderness and restricting the spread of facilities such as huts and tracks should help preserve this unique feature for future generations.

Throughout the country peri-urban and rural visitor facilities such as short walks, Walkways and picnic areas provide access to a variety of locations, including a rich diversity of historic sites and scenic attractions. Local and regional authorities also provide significant outdoor recreation opportunities in these settings.

Iconic tourist locations require considerable commitment to protect both the environment and the visitor experience. Many other locations are managed through providing the basic needs for people to access and enjoy the location. The provision of the appropriate facilities is influenced by changing needs and available funding, which has been insufficient for a number of years. New Government funding will now enable the department to guarantee maintaining facilities to the desired standard, provided that most, but not all, of the current facility network is included, and also allowing for a few new developments to meet current needs.

## **What will change?**

In reviewing the facilities needed to best support the recreation opportunities most appropriate for protected conservation areas, the department has identified that some improvement is needed to day visitor opportunities throughout the country, in line with the shorter time-frame of many people's recreation activities these days, and a perceived higher expectation for facility standards. The bulk of the backcountry network of huts and tracks is proposed to be retained, recognising the importance to New Zealanders of the character of the backcountry experience provided by these facilities. Some reduction is proposed, selected from across the country, but most notable in Bay of Plenty, Canterbury, West Coast and Southland. The choices made relate to locations with relatively high numbers of huts leading to obvious duplication of opportunities. Typically the huts receive little use and are often associated with tracks no longer maintained or shown on maps. Some conservancies have already made reductions in this sort of facility provisions as a

result of previous visitor facility reviews. Some small improvement in overnight tramping is proposed for the Coromandel, Great Barrier Island and in Northland recognising the current limited opportunity now available in the north of the country.

There are also a variety of proposals that relate to phasing out facilities that do not fulfil a function of importance in the context of public access to conservation areas, which include some of the number of wharves in the Hauraki Gulf, community halls on DOC managed land, and little visited reserves. There will be the opportunity for local communities to take on the management responsibility for some of these facilities if they wish to see them retained. Some visitor locations will remain open, but will be managed to a lower standard, with the removal of structures now not required.

Some visitor activities are not particularly compatible with the goals of conserving natural and historic resources, and will generally not be encouraged through the provision of facilities for that use. Effort is being made to accommodate mountain biking with tracks dedicated for this activity, but 4X4 driving remains a limited opportunity, typically allowed only as access for hunting and fishing on already formed roads. Lands coming to the department through the High Country Tenure Review process may provide more opportunities for mountain biking, 4X4 driving, quad bikes and horses.

### **The future**

When all proposals have been finalised, taking account of feedback from the public, the aim is to be able to manage the agreed network of facilities into the foreseeable future, hopefully better supporting the needs of New Zealanders. While this exercise is intended to provide decisions reflecting the 2003/04 view, there will be reasons why some decisions will need to be changed in the future. These reasons include gaining more accurate information about the costs of managing facilities, changing patterns of use, and ensuring the protection of the natural and historic values.

The following information summarises the facility types and the proposals for all DOC managed visitor facilities in New Zealand.

## 5.4 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS FOR DOC RECREATION FACILITIES

The following information summarises the facility types and the proposals for all DOC managed visitor facilities in New Zealand.

### HUTS

PROPOSAL	NUMBER
Maintain / Replace / Upgrade / Maintain to lower standard	678
Maintain by Community	73
Owned by DOC but maintained by Community	6
Minimal maintenance	137
Non-visitor DOC-managed	16
Remove	81
Proposed (new)	19
<b>Current total</b>	<b>991</b>
<b>Proposed future total (includes minimal maintenance)</b>	<b>913</b>

### TRACKS

PROPOSAL	LENGTH (km)
Maintain / Replace / Upgrade / Maintain to lower standard	11574
Maintain by Community	215
Owned by DOC but maintained by community	6
Cease maintenance	488
Non-visitor DOC-managed	119
Close	149
Proposed (new)	273
<b>Current total</b>	<b>12551</b>
<b>Proposed future total</b>	<b>12068</b>

### Proposals for other facilities

*Campsites:* 216 maintain, 9 proposed new, 15 close and 2 maintain by the community.

*Amenity Areas:* 693 maintain, 18 proposed new, 17 close and 13 maintain by the community.

*Roads:* 1524 km maintain, 5 km proposed new, 75 km close and 241 km maintain by the community.

*Booked Accommodation:* 30 maintain, 1 proposed, 3 maintain by the community.

## 5.5 CONSERVANCY PROPOSAL SUMMARIES

At the heart of the 'Towards a Better Network of Visitor Facilities' consultation process will be a series of 13 Conservancy Proposal Summaries.

These will present a summary of the draft facility proposals for each conservancy, which will provide the basis for discussion between the Department and the community.

For each facility, a proposal on its future will be offered.

*(See Appendix 8 for the full list of recommendation types)*

Based on initial scoping, the Department anticipates that, in the vast majority of cases, proposals will simply confirm the existing use of facilities, by proposing to maintain a facility to current standards.

## 5.6 SITE ASSESSMENT REPORTS

As well as the funding, legal and general policy parameters outlined in Section 4, each recommendation will be based on a 'Visitor Site Assessment Report' for each visitor site. The Visitor Site Assessment Report presents information about each site, such as visitor numbers, recreation activities undertaken there, and the cost of management.

In a minority of cases, which may be more prevalent in those conservancies which have not already undertaken their own review process in the past few years, the proposal may be that a site or facility is best managed by the community, that the Department should only undertake minimal maintenance in the future, or that the site or facility be removed or closed.

Where the community has an interest in understanding how management proposals have been developed, the site assessment report will be available on request from the local Conservancy or Area Office.

*(See Appendix 3 for information useful for understanding Site Assessment Reports.)*

## 5.7 PROCESS

In undertaking public consultation, the Department will make every effort to obtain representative views from all types of visitors that use public conservation lands.

### 5.7.1 Public submissions

A public submission process will run until 31 January 2004

This will allow individuals and groups to provide specific comment on the Department's analysis of recreational opportunities and/or on facility proposals, contained in the Conservancy Proposal Summaries.

Submission Forms will be available at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz), or by contacting your local Conservancy or Area Office.



All submitters will receive an acknowledgement that their submission has been received.

The Department will aim to assess all submissions, discuss particular issues in more detail with recreation groups if this is warranted, undertake a national overview, and make decisions on all facilities by October 2004, after which submitters will be informed about the decisions relevant to their interests.

### **5.7.2 Working groups**

Working groups may be used to involve the more-informed or representative members of the recreation community in the analysis of issues and to seek solutions, and may lead to a longer-term relationship between the Department and the groups being represented.

An example of a working group is the Tararua Aorangi Huts Committee, representing tramping and hunting clubs who have ownership of a number of huts in Wellington Conservancy and the Department, which coordinates planning for the management of all huts where fees apply.

### **5.7.3 Focus groups**

Focus groups offer a way to involve a small number of people, who are representative of a particular type of visitor, with the task of exploring particular issues and providing feedback.

It may be particularly used where some Visitor Groups are not well represented through the public submission process—such as Day Visitors and Short-Stop Travellers, who have tended not to become involved in previous visitor facility and management planning processes.

## **5.8 TIMELINE**

### **September 2003**

*National launch of consultation process*

### **September/October 2003**

*Conservancies/Area Offices introduce consultation process locally*

- Hold briefing meeting for local key associates on proposed process and principles.
- Circulate information packages to associates as required.

### **September 2003 – July 2004**

*Conservancy/Area consultation*

- Present facility proposals for each conservancy
- Consult on facility proposals
- Public submission process September 2003 – 31 January 2004.

- Analyse submissions
- Develop draft core facility network, based on feedback, and consult again as required
- Develop ‘maintain by community’ agreements, where appropriate
- Consult with Boards on issues and draft decisions.
- Complete ‘decisions’ on sites and facilities

## December 2003 – September 2004

### *National overview of results*

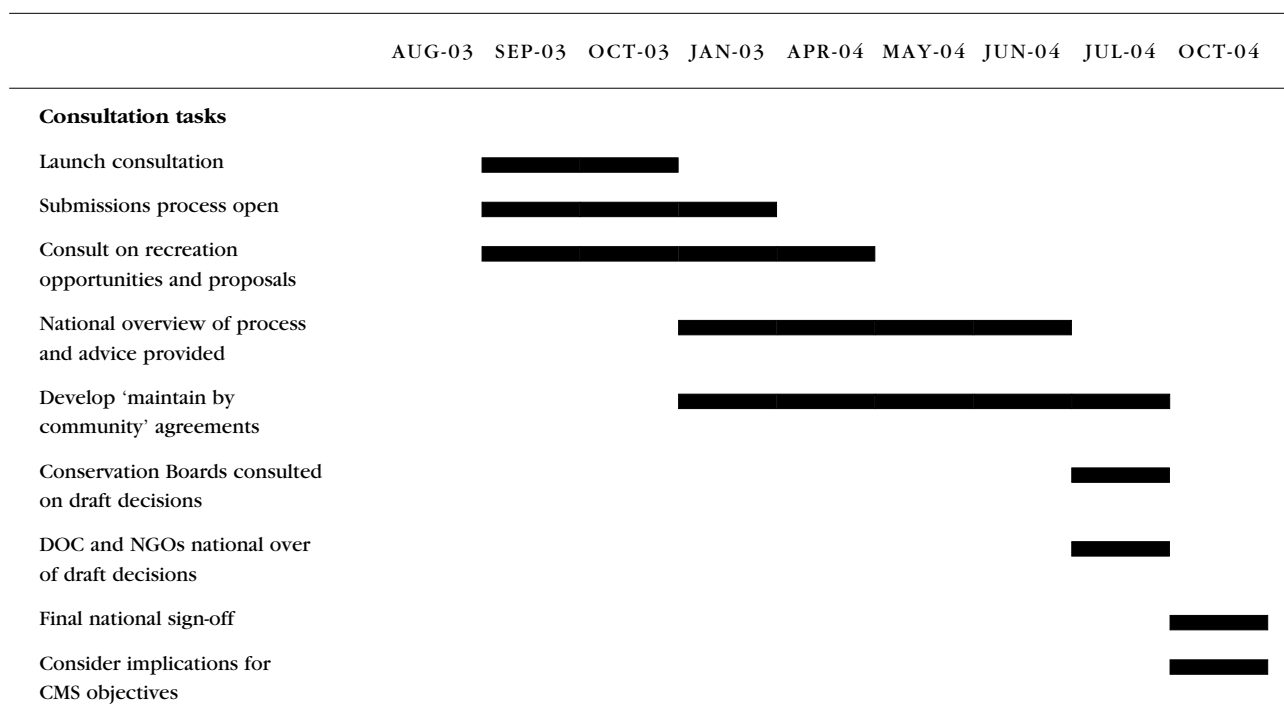
- Overview of progress
- Advise Conservancies to encourage national consistency
- Recreation planners’ workshop to consider draft decisions
- Discussion with NGOs on decisions
- Conclude decisions and produce final national report

## October 2004

### *Conclusion of consultation*

- Each conservancy to consider the implications of the decisions, such as business planning for new work, timing of changes, and implications for the existing CMS or CMP.

### CONSULTATION PROCESS



## 6. How you can be involved

Key stakeholders, iwi, recreational user groups and the general public are encouraged to take part in the 'Towards a Better Network of Visitor Facilities' consultation process.

There are a number of ways to have your say:

- Obtain a copy of your local Conservancy Proposal Summary, which will contain draft facility proposals.
- If you require further information, contact your local Conservancy or Area Office
- Send a hard copy of the Submission Form to your local Conservancy office.
- Visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) to view all Conservancy Proposal Summaries, and make a submission on-line.
- To make your views known on proposals outside your local Conservancy, copies of all Conservancy Proposal Summaries will be available at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or from your local Conservancy or Area Office. Submission forms should be directed to the relevant Conservancy.

### CONSERVANCY ADDRESSES

#### **Northland Conservancy**

PO Box 842, Whangarei. Tel: (09) 430 2470. Fax: (09) 430 2479.

#### **Auckland Conservancy**

Private Bag 68 908, Newton, Auckland. Tel: (09) 307 9279. Fax: (09) 377 2919.

#### **Waikato Conservancy**

Private Bag 3072, Hamilton. Tel: (07) 838 3363. Fax: (07) 838 1004.

#### **Bay of Plenty Conservancy**

P.O. Box 1146, Rotorua. Tel: (07) 349 7400. Fax: (07) 349 7401.

#### **East Coast/Hawke's Bay Conservancy**

P.O. Box 668, Gisborne. Tel: (06) 869 0460. Fax: (06) 867 8015 .

#### **Taupo/Tongariro Conservancy**

Private Bag, Turangi. Tel: (07) 386 8607. Fax: (07) 386 7086.

#### **Wanganui Conservancy**

74 Ingestre Street, Wanganui. Tel: (06) 345 2402 . Fax: (06) 345 8712.

**Wellington Conservancy (including Chatham Islands)**

P.O. Box 5086, Wellington. Tel: (04) 472 5821. Fax: (04) 499 0077.

**Nelson Marlborough Conservancy**

Private Bag 5, Nelson. Ph: (03) 546 9335. Fax: (03) 548 2805.

**West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy**

Private Bag 701, Hokitika. Tel: (03) 755 8301. Fax: (03) 755 8425.

**Canterbury Conservancy**

Private Bag 4715, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 379 9758. Fax: (03) 365 1388.

**Otago Conservancy**

P.O. Box 5244, Dunedin. Tel: (03) 477 0677. Fax: (03) 477 8626.

**Southland Conservancy (including Stewart Island)**

P.O. Box 743, Invercargill. Tel: (03) 214 4589. Fax: (03) 214 4486.

## 7. Glossary

**Area** DOC as an organisation is divided into 59 separate units called Areas. Each Area provides the main delivery of conservation outputs. Each of the 13 Conservancies contains 4 or 5 Areas, with Area Managers reporting to the Conservator.

**Area Manager** Leads the Area Office team. Accountable to the Conservator for ensuring approved conservation gains are delivered in the Area in accord with DOC's quality systems, standards and procedures.

**Community Relations Manager** A senior management position in Conservancy Office. Provides community relations support and advice. Accountable to the Conservator. Manages staff involved in planning, public awareness, Conservation Boards, media, issues, statutory land management and concession management.

**Conservancy** DOC as an organisation is divided into 13 conservancies. Each conservancy operates independently to manage conservation outcomes within its geographic boundaries. The coordination of conservancies is achieved through the three Regional Offices.

**Concession** Permit to carry out commercial activity on conservation land. Issuing concessions allows the Department to utilise the skills and capital of the private sector to broaden the range of recreation and commercial opportunities available to visitors and the public. Concessions confer a legal right for a fixed period, with conditions to protect the environment and assure quality operations. A rental is charged. The activity provided for under the concession must be consistent with the plans and objectives for the area.

**Core Visitor Facility Network** The total visitor facilities that together form a network that generally satisfies the needs of the visitors using conservation areas, and that can be managed by the Department within the available budget.

**Criteria** Pre-determined measures and/or standards to help with decision-making.

**Facility** Also known as "visitor asset." These include structures, huts and other back country accommodation, tracks, camp grounds, visitor information centres, roads and carparks. Each asset is recorded and is on one of the department's 3,800 *sites*.

**Guidelines** Provide guidance to staff in following DOC *Policy* and *procedures*. Less prescriptive than *Criteria*.

**Life-Cycle Model** Assessing ongoing life-time costs such as maintenance and upgrades, not just the capital costs of creating an asset.

**Management by the Community** The sharing of responsibility between DOC and a group or individual outside the department, for the ongoing management of a visitor asset or assets, and/or a site or sites. There are varying degrees to which community interest groups can support the department in managing visitor assets. It is important to clearly spell out each party's role and expectations, preferably through the use of a standard management agreement.

**Procedure** A set of steps to follow in order to achieve a specific outcome.

**Process** A series of activities that take place over time to achieve a result. Unlike a *procedure*, a process does not specify actual tasks.

**Proposal** Each visitor facility and the 'site' where that facility can be found has a 'Proposal' which is the intended future management option put forward by the Conservancy. Consultation on recreation opportunities will focus on Proposals, and feedback from visitors will be used when the department makes its 'decisions' by October 2004.

**Recreation Opportunity** The mix of settings at the places where people visit and the recreation activity they undertake there. The *setting* comprises the landscape, the facilities and services, the management rules, and the people who are visiting the place.

**Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)** A classification on the basis of setting, activity and the visitor experience. It ranges from the urban environment to remote wilderness areas of the backcountry. There are seven main ROS classes: Urban, Urban Fringe, Rural, Backcountry Drive-in, Backcountry Walk-in, Remote and Wilderness. ROS classification provides a wide recreation-based context to the management of individual sites. Thus the visitor needs and the characteristics of the setting can together guide what services and facilities are provided.

**Site** A place where people recreate. Facilities and services are provided based on the needs of predominant visitor group using those places and the individual recreation opportunity being provided. For example, short stop travellers need a good even track, backcountry comfort seekers a comfortable hut and remoteness seekers a lightly marked route. The department manages about 3,800 sites. These *do not* cover the whole of department-managed land. They *do* cover all visitor facilities and services. Each site has clear and logical boundaries. Sites are a management tool. The standard of facilities and services at each site are targeted to a specific *visitor group*. Four major types of site exist—tracks, roads, amenity areas/campsites and isolated huts/bivouacs.

**Site Assessment** The Department manages a range of visitor recreation opportunities across the country, which are classified into one of the ROS classes. The characteristics of 3,800 sites within these ROS classes have been assessed for a variety of factors including the level of use by visitor group, the aspects that make each site special, and possible threats to the visitor opportunity found at the site. The state of the facilities and services currently provided has been assessed. Initial analysis of the needs of the predominant visitor group for each site has been done. Based on the ROS setting, and the visitor needs the preferred facilities and services have been defined. The Department is consulting these draft proposals with users. The Department will then consider the necessary steps to ensure that there are adequate visitor facilities meeting the required standards across the range of visitor settings to satisfy the majority of visitors in all visitor groups.

**Site Priority Criteria** Each *site* has been assessed on four specific *criteria*. This allows them to be prioritised within visitor opportunity types. The four criteria are: 1) the current number of visitors; 2) expected future visitor numbers; 3) its importance for recreational and educational experiences; and 4) its potential for raising people's appreciation of New Zealand's heritage.

**Social Impacts** High numbers of people, their choice of transport and their behaviour can detract from other visitors' experiences. This is termed social impact, and it is a major contributing factor to the level of satisfaction each visitor achieves from their visit. The Department is currently developing a range of surveying methods to monitor the effects of social interaction and how this changes satisfaction levels and therefore the amount of benefit received from their visit to areas managed by the Department.

**Standard Operating Procedure** This is an instruction about how to do an activity. It must be documented in some way, such as writing, pictures or a video. It cannot be verbal. Each standard operating procedure contains an objective, a *procedure*, standards, *accountabilities* and a review process.

**Statement of Intent** A statement of the Department's overall direction during the coming five years. Sets out tasks in a framework of goals, objectives and targets. This document underpins annual *business plans*.

**Visitor** A person who uses land managed by the Department for recreation. DOC's Visitor Strategy defines visitors as: *people visiting areas managed by the department. They include people using visitor centres and clients of concessionaires, New Zealand and international visitors.*

**Visitor Asset** See Facility.

**Visitor Group** The department's *Visitor Strategy* defines seven groups of visitors, each with specific expectations and needs. These cover the spectrum of outdoor experiences, from road travellers stopping for short breaks, through to trampers seeking a remote experience away from anyone else or any facilities. Because each *site* has a predominant visitor group, the expectations and needs of that group drive the levels of service and facilities provided at each site. The six visitor groups that the Department will provide visitor services for are: *short stop travellers, day visitors, overnighters* (campers), *backcountry comfort seekers, backcountry adventurers* and *remoteness seekers*. The seventh group, *thrill seekers*, is not seen as a priority group for departmental expenditure because the majority of facilities and services, such as ski-fields, will be provided by the private sector.

**Visitor Satisfaction** Ongoing use of the visitor sites and facilities combined with the level of visitor satisfaction indicates whether the level of service is meeting the majority of visitor needs and giving them some benefit. Visitor satisfaction is measured using standard questionnaires to determine the level of satisfaction with a visit to areas managed by the Department. The Department aims to sample the visitor satisfaction of each visitor group in the appropriate setting.

**Visitor Strategy** Completed in 1996, it guides and informs all the department's planning and management related to visitor services. The strategy underpins annual *business plans*. The Visitor Strategy is one of six strategies that aim to achieve the department's vision and mission for the year 2000 and beyond.

**Visitor Asset Maintenance** Because visitor facilities are in a continual state of deterioration due to weather and use, ongoing maintenance and upgrading are required to ensure the Department maximises visitor satisfaction and continues to meet standards.

**Visitor Asset Management Programme** A national programme that aims for a sustainable number of *visitor assets* that meet the needs of the *visitor groups*. The department's programme is based on *life-cycle asset management*. It is derived from Local Government asset management.

**Visitor Asset Management System** All information about visitor sites and facilities including summary information about visitors, history, impacts and plans for the future is stored in a database developed for this purpose, known as the VAMS database.



# Appendix 1

## VISITOR GROUPS

(Information provided in the DOC Visitor Strategy)

### A. SHORT STOP TRAVELLERS (SST)

#### **Setting**

This group uses the “natural edge” (for up to one hour’s duration) along main access routes as part of a stop along a journey to a destination. Sites are located beside:

- highways, including the main tourism highways
- local access roads which are used predominantly by domestic visitors.

#### **Accessibility and nature of visit**

High vehicle accessibility with visits of a short duration of up to one hour’s length or associated with lunch/cup of tea break/toilet stop/stretch of the legs or a visit to a natural attraction.

#### **Activities undertaken**

Seeking activities of a passive to mildly active nature such as picnicking, photography, sightseeing, nature appreciation and short walks.

#### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

Seeking an “instant immersion” in nature experience, associated with a high degree of scenic value or historical interest. Low risk experience associated with safe facilities.

#### **Facilities/services sought**

Seeking a high standard of facilities and services, including car parks, toilets, easy tracks of short duration that cater for all ages and most abilities, picnic facilities and orientation/interpretation signs about the location.

#### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

Represented by both domestic and international visitors including free and independent visitors. Sites used by short stop travellers receive high use compared with sites used by the other visitor groups.

#### **Projected use**

Because of the expected large increase in international visitors there will be a corresponding increasing demand for this type of facility/service in this setting, particularly along main tourism highways.

## B. DAY VISITORS (DV)

### **Setting**

This group uses a wide range of settings from urban fringe to backcountry walk-in. Day visits range from one hour up to a full day (see SST). This group often uses sites that are access points for the backcountry such as roadends, easy day walks or scenic attractions. They also visit the coast or islands.

### **Accessibility and nature of visit**

High vehicle accessibility associated with a range of road standards, from gravel through to tar seal, and can involve significant travelling time to get there. Tracks used by this group are of a standard that enable use by relatively inexperienced visitors with a low level of skill.

### **Activities undertaken**

Visits are often associated with a family or group outing or a specific recreational activity. Two distinct types of activities may occur at these sites: a) those activities such as picnicking and swimming; b) activities such as walking along easy day tracks. Water is often a focus for the visit, be it at the coast, lakes or rivers.

### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

Seeking experiences in a natural (or rural) setting with a sense of space and freedom. This group seeks an outdoor experience with a low level of risk, and safe facilities.

### **Facilities/services sought**

Seeking a high standard of facilities and services, including car parks, wharves, boat ramps, toilets, tracks, picnic facilities, on-site orientation/interpretation signs and also pre visit information about activities that are possible and features of the site.

### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

Sites used by day visitors receive medium to high use compared with sites used by the other visitor groups. This group uses two major types of sites:

- sites that are used predominantly by non-locals, both domestic and international visitors
- sites used largely by visitors from local communities, many of whom make repeat visits.

### **Projected use**

International visitor numbers are expected to increase greatly whereas domestic visitor numbers will increase more slowly.

## C. OVERNIGHTERS (ON)

### **Setting**

Campsites and overnight accommodation at rural or backcountry drive-in Sites accessible by vehicle. The site may be accessible only by boat.

### **Accessibility and nature of visit**

The type of accommodation and the setting are often associated with a natural attraction that will determine the experience. The duration of the visit may be from one night to one or more weeks. These locations are often used as summer holiday spots year after year.

### **Activities undertaken**

Camping is the predominant activity. At both campsites and overnight accommodation this group often undertakes a range of activities using the site as a base, including easy day walks, guided nature programmes, water-skiing, fishing, swimming etc.

### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

This group seeks an overnight experience in a predominantly natural setting. They expect both the camping/overnight experience, and the associated activities they undertake, to be generally low risk ones. Includes the traditional New Zealand family holiday experience.

### **Facilities/services sought**

Seeking basic facilities and services, at least pit toilets and a water supply. Like day visitors, overnights generally prefer a high standard of facilities (e.g. tracks, on-site orientation/interpretation signs) for activities where the site is used as a base. A few seek facilities such as cabins and sites, with electricity found at a small number of serviced campgrounds. Seek pre-visit information on booking arrangements, planning where to go, and on activities that can be undertaken in the area or on unique natural or historic features.

### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

Visitors staying for one week or more tend to be mainly New Zealand family groups. Many overnight campers are school groups. Most international visitors stay for only one night and can include those in campervans and other free independent travellers. During the peak summer period, use at most sites is high compared with low use for much of the year.

### **Projected use**

Because this group is made up mostly of New Zealanders, total use is expected to increase only slowly with the exception of areas close to Auckland. But as these are increasingly "found" by international visitors, use will increase.

## D. BACKCOUNTRY COMFORT SEEKERS (BCC)

### **Setting and accessibility**

Natural setting (backcountry walk-in) with generally the only modification being the facilities provided. Largely foot access apart from where air and boat access is permitted. Often requires and has good links with transport infrastructure.

### **Nature of visit and activities undertaken**

The major activity undertaken is tramping on the major tracks, with most trips taking 2 to 5 days.

### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

Seeking an outdoor experience in a backcountry environment that has low risk due to the provision of safe, comfortable facilities. To ensure a safe and comfortable experience this group sometimes uses guided or concessionaire operations. For many this may be their first introduction to the New Zealand backcountry.

### **Facilities/services sought**

Seeking a low risk comfortable experience in the backcountry. This is facilitated by the provision of well constructed tracks, bridges and quality huts (some with hut wardens) and backcountry campsites with associated facilities. Seek pre-visit information to help plan their trips and daily track condition information from hut wardens.

### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

Overall there is an equal proportion of New Zealanders and international visitors on the major tracks. New Zealanders in this group are relatively inexperienced with a wide age range. The majority of international visitors are aged between 20 and 40.

### **Projected use**

This group is projected to experience a large increase in international visitors, with the domestic visitors remaining static or even dropping (if no limits on numbers are set), based on ‘tramper flight’ to lower use areas to avoid increasing numbers.

## E. BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURERS (BCA)

### **Setting and accessibility**

Natural setting (backcountry walk-in or remote) with basic facilities. Access is largely on foot except where air or boat access is permitted. Foot access is on tramping tracks or routes.

### **Nature of visit and activities undertaken**

Visits generally range from 2 to 7 days (sometimes longer), but also include some day visits. Backcountry adventurers undertaking day visits can range further into the backcountry but do not require the standard of facilities sought by the day visitor group. Activities include tramping, hunting, fishing, mountaineering, cross-country skiing, rafting, kayaking and mountain biking; activities with a high degree of self-reliance.

### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

The traditional New Zealand backcountry experience. This group has a higher level of backcountry skills and experience than backcountry comfort seekers. They seek an experience that has challenge and a sense of freedom and they accept a degree of risk and discomfort.

### **Facilities/services sought**

Require only basic facilities maintained to appropriate standards (for example, huts, tracks, tent sites, essential bridges, routemarkers, limited signs). Seek pre-visit information to help plan their trips, including maps, information on snow/weather conditions, hut tickets and route guides. They are particularly interested in information about transport options and access restrictions.

### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

Backcountry adventurers are generally young, male New Zealanders. It is difficult to estimate the numbers in this diverse and widely dispersed backcountry adventurer group.

### **Projected use**

Because this group is made up mostly of New Zealanders, numbers are expected to increase only slowly. Potential growth in some areas may occur from international visitors and New Zealanders seeking alternatives to higher use tracks.

## F. REMOTENESS SEEKERS (RS)

### **Setting and accessibility**

Natural setting (remote or wilderness). Contains few or no facilities. Access is largely on foot except where air or boat access is permitted. Foot access to the edge of remote/wilderness areas is usually by tramping track or route.

### **Nature of visit and activities undertaken**

Visits range from 3 to 7 days (or longer). The main activities are tramping, hunting, mountaineering, cross-country skiing, rafting, all require the highest degree of self reliance.

### **Experience sought/degree of risk**

Seeking a wilderness experience with limited interaction with other parties. Seek the challenge and complete sense of freedom that comes from prolonged contact with wild nature. Because of their high skill level and experience, this group accepts the higher level of risk associated with travelling through remote wilderness areas.

### **Facilities/services sought**

Seek no facilities once in remote country. Seek pre-visit information to help plan their trips, including maps, snow/weather conditions and route guides.

### **Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers**

This group is made up of fit, experienced, predominantly male New Zealanders. Compared with other visitor groups, remoteness seekers numbers are very low.

### **Projected use**

Numbers are expected to increase slowly. Although remote experience has international appeal, it is difficult to assess the growth of overseas visitors seeking remoteness.

# Appendix 2

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

The term *recreation opportunity* is used to describe the mix of *settings* at the places where people visit and the recreation *activity* they undertake there. The *setting* comprises the *landscape*, the *facilities* and *services*, the *management rules*, and *the people* who are visiting the place.

A classification on the basis of setting, activity and the visitor experience is called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), and it ranges from the urban environment to the remote wilderness areas of the backcountry.

There are seven main ROS class;

- Urban
- Urban Fringe
- Rural
- Backcountry Drive-in
- Backcountry Walk-in
- Remote
- Wilderness

ROS classification provides a wide recreation-based context to the management of individual facilities. Thus the visitor needs and the characteristics of the setting can together guide what services and facilities are provided.

There is a physical output of mapping that shows opportunity classes (zones) as generic areas within boundaries derived from relatively coarse setting descriptors. The way that mapping is undertaken is explained in *The New Zealand Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Guidelines for users*, published by the Hillary Commission and DOC in 1993. It is also possible to compile greater descriptive information for facilities within each ROS Class, based on ROS setting characteristics (Experience, Activity, Physical setting, Social setting, Managerial setting) also explained in the Guidelines.

New criteria for defining ROS Class boundaries have been developed to provide better social setting characteristics. Further work is needed to explore the implications of the new ROS criteria. In terms of a tool for visual presentation of geographic information, including the overlay of visitor facilities (such as tracks) this new version is more useful, as there are now maps for the whole country using a GIS base on topomaps with links to VAMS recreation facility asset database information.

One perceived failing of the ROS mapping is that most tracks managed by the department fall within the 'backcountry walk-in' setting, and the concept of a 'range of opportunities' is thus not well demonstrated.

As a result, further tools have been developed to help explain how the great number and variety of huts and tracks contribute to a range of recreational opportunities on lands administered by the department (Hut Principles and Track Categories).

# Appendix 3

## VISITOR SITE ASSESSMENT REPORT

A standard report is produced taking from the database specific information that DOC believes is important for understanding the context of that site and the facilities within the site. Some of the information relates to How the Department Manages Outdoor Recreation (Part Four of this document) through the Site Description and Characteristics and Visitor Use sections, and some of the detail relates to the specifics of that site, through the Management sections of the report. Because there are 3,800 sites, it is impractical for DOC to provide large numbers of these reports to people, but specific reports will be sent on request through your local DOC office.

Not all of the information contained in the VAMS database and hence in the reports is complete, and some information you may consider inaccurate. Some of this information is value based, such as the importance of particular aspects of a site, and there will be some varying opinions about whether DOC has it right or not.

DOC believes that the information will get better with time, and you can assist by reporting as part of your submission what corrections you believe should be made. It will be very useful to quote the Site number when doing so, given the large number of facilities and sites.

Some of the sections of the Site Assessment Report are explained here to assist your understanding:

### **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

A track may cross from one Recreation Opportunity Class to another, and so a site containing a track may be classified into more than one ROS Class.

### **Recreation Importance**

Sites are assessed as to how exclusive or unique the recreation experience is that can generally be gained there. Obviously every site is different and unique, but the more that the site has characteristics that are appealing to visitors and are unlike any others, the more important that experience is considered. There will be very important remote locations, as well as very important picnic spots, as well as highly significant recreation experiences to be gained in between.

### **Visitor Use**

Visitor numbers to sites are known in some cases, where some form of counting has been undertaken, and these are referred to as the 'actual total number'. Where the visitor numbers are not known from actual monitoring, then the 'estimated total number' is used. The estimated numbers may be inaccurate, but they will place the site-use within the correct ranking of visitor sites in that general locality.

Visitor number information will improve as new technology 'people-counting' devices are put in place.



## **Main Recreation Activities**

DOC has tried to detail the main activity types that occur at each site, but this does not mean that sites are not important for other unmentioned activities. If you believe that a site is important for your preferred activity and this is not mentioned, then point this out in your submission.

## **Impacts on site**

The information about impacts on sites is often based on the view of the manager. Impacts that are mentioned may not be significant enough to warrant management intervention, and many have been listed just to indicate that concern may be warranted if the situation were to get worse. DOC is doing further work in the area of impact assessment.

## **Linked Sites**

This part of the report is intended to alert the reader to other nearby sites that form part of a typical visit. Management actions on any of the sites that are linked should be done with consideration for the other linked sites as well. For example, all the track sections that make up a Great Walk will be linked sites.

## **Management of Assets Section**

An asset is what you would commonly call a facility, where a facility is a particular unit such as a track section, a bridge, a hut, a toilet.

The Name or Number of Assets - This column gives the common name for a facility. For many small facilities there may not be a name, and where there is a number it reflects the number of that facility type (e.g. 14 sawn timber bridges).

## **Annual Maintenance Cost**

This is the estimated cost to maintain that facility, using some standard models DOC has developed based on known best practice for that type and size of facility. For many huts and track the estimated annual maintenance cost has been further corrected by managers to reflect the local situation that the model cannot anticipate. These model costs may be different to the real cost when the work is actually done, and model costs will be improved as DOC does more of the work funded by the new money.

Not all maintenance tasks are required every year, so the annual cost is simply the total maintenance cost divided up to indicate how much should be budgeted each year. Annual Business Planning is when the budget is assigned to the tasks actually needed.

## **Annual Replacement Cost**

Each facility needs to be replaced eventually, although with tracks this is actually done in an ongoing manner rather than the whole facility at once.

The total estimated cost of replacing a facility is divided by the model life of that sort of facility, to provide an estimated annual replacement cost, which is also known as *depreciation*.

As with maintenance costs, a facility is not replaced every year, but each year those facilities that need to be replaced will be funded from the total pool of funds available.

*Capital Charge* also applies, which is the equivalent of interest that you pay when you have borrowed money, and is part of the funding associated with each facility, but is not listed in these Site Assessment Reports.

### **Current total cost**

The total cost to manage the site with current facilities is the estimated total cost using the model costs.

These funds are unlikely to be currently committed because the new funding is only just beginning to become available. Previous management costs have tended to be much lower, with much maintenance work being deferred (and hence facilities getting into disrepair).

The total cost per visitor is the estimated total cost per visitor per year. This figure is useful for comparing the financial commitment required to manage similar facilities or sites, or different facilities and sites. Financial cost is only one of the factors being considered when DOC has made Proposals for the consultation process. A range of recreation opportunities would not be possible without some facilities having an annual cost per visitor somewhat higher than other facilities.

### **Management proposals for assets on the site**

#### *The Preferred Visitor Group*

The Preferred Visitor Group refers to the type of visitor that DOC believes the facilities should be suitable for. Usually this is the main visitor type that currently the site is managed for, but in some cases, the standard of current facilities does not match the predominant users and DOC is choosing to make a change to correct this

#### *Proposed Total Cost*

The Proposed Total Cost is estimated taking account of all the changes that would eventuate if all the current facility Proposals are agreed.

Because proposed new facilities are often little more than a concept, there are not good model costs available to give good financial information. DOC will try to give best-guess estimates where there are proposed new facilities, as part of the consultation process and when looking at the total funds required to manage the preferred network.

#### *Management Proposal for the Site*

This is where the DOC proposal for the whole site is explained. There are nine Proposal types for Sites and fifteen Proposal types for facilities within sites. This is because different types of facilities may need to be managed differently where there is a proposal to change. The Proposals listed in the *Conservancy Proposal Summary* document are a slight simplification of the Facility Proposal types, for easier use by the public.

# Appendix 4

## SERVICE STANDARDS

As part of the DOC Visitor Strategy, the Department profiles seven key visitor groups (or users) and the level of service required to meet their recreational needs. To ensure that the appropriate level of service is provided the Department has been developing facility (track, hut, structure etc) standards appropriate for each visitor group. The Department's track standards (1998) were developed in consultation with interested community and user groups, and the structure standards (1997) in consultation with the engineering industry. The Department of Conservation has subsequently used its standards to assess the condition of all of its tracks and structures and has undertaken repairs and replacement of its structures to these standards throughout the country.

# Appendix 5

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE A CORE FACILITY NETWORK

1. The department manages areas that are predominantly forested mountains with tussock sub-alpine at higher altitudes, some accessible coastal areas, limited wetland, a number of near pristine and re-vegetated islands, and increasing coastal marine areas. The settings for recreation opportunities thus tend to reflect this mix, which is appropriate.
2. The Conservation Act 1987, The Department's Statement of Intent and Visitor Strategy and the NZ Tourism Strategy 2010 will form the context of the Department's consultation with the public on the provision of a range of visitor opportunities.
3. Protection of natural and historic resources will be of paramount concern when making decisions about the provision of recreation opportunities (Conservation Act).
4. Subject to suitability, the Department will manage a range of visitor recreation opportunities across the lands and waters it administers (Visitor Strategy).
5. A range of recreation opportunities implies a range of settings available for a range of activities (Visitor Strategy).
6. The Department will provide for the range of Visitor Groups when considering the overall mix available (Visitor Strategy).
7. The Department will provide, to the appropriate safety levels, for the basic needs of the predominant Visitor Group using visitor facilities, which will reflect the relevant facility service standard (Visitor Strategy).
8. The Department will take account of recreation opportunities provided by other landowners or managers within the local geographic area or in some cases, further afield.
9. Not all recreation opportunities will be able to be provided at the local level (i.e. by each area or even by each conservancy) throughout the country.
10. The Department will not allow some recreation activities that are not compatible with existing recreation uses or with the Department's obligations under the Conservation, National Parks or Reserves Acts.
11. The Department will maintain free access to tracks, roads and amenity areas, and all land managed by the Department (although some fees for service may apply) (Visitor Strategy).
12. When considering the provision of a network of recreation opportunities that can be managed, priorities will be decided by taking account of:
  - The recreation opportunity provided and its contribution to the range of opportunities being managed in that locality
  - The ability to use the location to tell a conservation story
  - The level of visitation
  - The likely change in the level of visitation (Visitor Strategy)

13. The **hut principles** - Huts may be considered in terms of fulfilling certain criteria that are intended to ensure that an appropriate number of huts are retained that matches the nature of the backcountry setting (i.e. less huts per area in remote locations than backcountry walk-in locations) while still fulfilling a function of supporting activities such as tramping and hunting for a range of visitor groups.
14. The **track classifications** - these describe the recreation opportunity each track provides and help to define a core network that should be retained. These classifications allow conservancies to identify the extent of track that provides certain visitor opportunities, with a view to looking for over or under supply. The ROS Classes are very broad, and the bulk of department managed tracks in particular are found in backcountry Walk-in settings. These categories provide a further sorting of tracks by the purpose they fulfil in relation to visitors preferences. These include short walks, day walking tracks, day tramping tracks, classic tramping trips, popular backcountry destination tracks, other backcountry destination tracks, remote networks, safe exit tracks from popular tracks.
15. The **long-term funding** available. Taking account of current facilities, upgrades that are likely and new facilities that will be required, it is likely that there are not enough funds to retain all current facilities. It will be important to prioritise facilities to ensure funding for the more important facilities as identified by conservancies and confirmed through public consultation.
16. **Cost per visitor** - this information allows a comparison of the cost per visitor within a visitor group and within ROS classes. In combination with other principles and facility priority setting information, it will be possible to identify where the best value for money can be achieved.
17. **Cater for expected growth** - proposals must take a short-medium term view. The proposals need to consider obvious visitor growth considering known trends at DOC locations and possible management actions that are already accepted as the strategic approach (i.e. CMS). The new Government funding was not approved with a view to catering for growth from projected tourism, but relates to managing the current mix of opportunities better.
18. **New facilities/opportunities** - these need to be identified by looking at gaps in the range of opportunities provided (by DOC and by others) both in the conservancy and in neighbouring conservancies. There are likely to be new initiatives for visitor facilities arising from the public consultation process which should be incorporated into the analysis at that time.
19. **Maintain by community** - a cautious and realistic approach will need to be taken to proposing facilities that can/should be maintained by community groups, clubs and local authorities.

These principles are interrelated. The creation of recreation opportunities (except wilderness) is dependent on the provision of facilities and services that provide access, accommodation, environmental protection, information and safety for visitors. Where a recreation opportunity is provided, only those facilities essential to ensure the majority of visitors can use the opportunity need to be retained (or developed).

The principles are also in some tension. For example, within each service standard for huts and tracks, it is possible to define a range of comfort levels, from very comfortable to very basic. These standards contribute, in part, to defining each recreation opportunity and therefore each visitor's recreation experiences. Provision of more facilities at a basic standard may enable the retention of more facilities overall. Yet as standards are reduced, this may also conflict with seeking to enable as wide a range of people to access conservation areas as possible as tracks may become more challenging e.g. muddier and rougher.

# Appendix 6

## SELECTING A SUSTAINABLE CORE NETWORK OF HUTS

New Zealanders have enjoyed a long history of access to a network of huts located at more than 1,000 sites throughout the country's conservation areas. The majority of these facilities provide basic overnight shelter although some buildings can accommodate up to 60 people a night at popular destinations. Between them these facilities are a significant contribution to the character of the backcountry, with many huts seen as important in their own right. Indeed, local communities through the efforts of tramping and hunting clubs have provided many huts now available to the public.

- Huts provide basic overnight shelter in conservation areas, complementing tent camping.
- Huts between them create a range of opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreation activities including tramping, hunting, fishing and climbing.
- Huts may be used for a weekend away, an escape during the week, or to support a multi-day trip.
- In order to ensure that the right mix of huts is retained into the future to support a range of recreation opportunities, the following Principles and guidance will be used to make proposals on huts. The proposals arising from the use of these principles will not directly lead to management action, but will form the basis of discussion through the public consultation process. Over time the total number and location of huts may be changed within a location and the opportunities still retained.
- These Principles apply to most huts including Great Walk huts but do not apply to locked booked accommodation or shelters.

### **Hut principles**

- Huts are an important part of the backcountry experience and many are significant in their own right
- Overnight accommodation is provided to enhance the backcountry experience by providing safe dry shelter suitable for sleeping at a variety of locations.
- Day visitors do not require overnight accommodation, although they may require shelter
- Huts must all meet the following minimum service standard requirements;
  - weatherproof
  - in a reasonable state of repair
  - not dangerous
  - not insanitary
- The objective is to retain the existing range of opportunities of which huts are often an integral part.
- There should be neither too many nor too few huts, to be determined through the use of these Principles and conservancy strategic objectives.
- Huts will range in size to cater for and in some cases to manage the variety of levels of use.

- The choice of the appropriate mix will be made following public consultation and will take account of the concept of providing a range of recreation opportunities including suitable travel times for primary visitor groups.
- Where a hut is deemed to not be part of the core hut network, but there is an individual, a community group or club prepared to commit the time and resources required, then an agreement can be established between the individual, group or club and the department to hand over management responsibility.

Travel times to huts are:

- Considered in terms of the time the average visitor from the primary visitor group would take for a safe and comfortable day's travel in normal weather conditions.
- Times rather than distances combined with topographical information have been chosen because of simplicity, although there is no one best way of describing the concept of a 'reasonable distance' to a hut.

As a guide these should be:

- 3-4 hours for huts used primarily by less-experienced users
  - It is a reasonable planning principle that huts should be spaced 3 to 4 hours apart except in remote locations. It is also desirable for the safety and comfort of many visitors. There are likely to be many good reasons why there should be exceptions to this principle. Factors to consider are the most common direction of travel, the capacity of the hut in question (and the nearest hut), potential crowding at other nearby huts if this hut is removed, and geographical difficulties in locating huts with the ideal spacing.
- 6 hours for more experienced visitors at Remote sites
  - Remoteness Seekers are, by definition, capable of walking greater distances in a day (at a greater speed) than Back Country Adventurers or Back Country Comfort-seeker visitors. They seek remote experiences and are capable of planning trips that do not require huts, or where huts are spaced considerable travelling times apart.

It is recognised that the time required to reach the first hut on any track system will include travel time to reach the start of the track. Hut locations may be decided taking this into account.

*Accommodation at the start of a trip is recognised as a convenience to trampers, but not considered a high priority in the provision of huts.*

A hut will generally be retained where it is

- A popular destination (used most nights, or most weekends)
  - Some huts receive moderate to high use because visitors see the hut (and its location) as an attraction itself. Popularity may result from the location of the hut, the layout and design of the hut itself, the views from (or on the way to) the hut or an attraction (such as the top of a hill) easily accessible from the hut. A hut may be regarded as "popular" nationally, regionally or locally.
- A significant recreation opportunity within the local area or region (for lower use huts)
  - On its own the concept of a 'low use hut' (which is suggested to be less than 50-100 bednights annually) does not by itself lead to conclusions about its contribution to the network of huts.



- If a low use hut is located in a catchment, and there are one or more huts in adjacent catchments, it may be regarded as duplicating the recreation opportunities in the area. The key here is to determine whether the recreation opportunity provided by this hut is duplicated by other huts in the area.
- At a 2-wheel drive roadend with nearby staff presence or as booked accommodation
  - Roadend huts are often subject to vandalism because visitors can drive to them. They are not an essential part of a backcountry hut network, although can provide convenient overnight accommodation for people travelling some distance before starting a tramp. Shelters may be required at some roadends, but that is a different issue.
- Deemed historic and actively managed as such
  - Historic huts have value beyond their recreation value and are protected in perpetuity and managed in accordance with conservation plans.
- 3 hours or more from the nearest roadend (for the primary visitor group – Backcountry Adventurer or Backcountry Comfort Seeker) unless a popular destination hut.
- 3 hours or more from another hut (BCC and BCA sites)
- 6 hours or more from the nearest roadend or other hut (Remoteness Seeker sites)

A hut will generally not be retained when it is:

- At a roadend (unless staff or a caretaker is present or unless it is booked accommodation)
  - Vandalism at huts close to roadends leads to unsightly facilities and increased maintenance costs. The scale of this problem in the past has led to a reluctance to provide huts in these locations. Tenting is often an option available for people over-nighting at the start of a track.
- Less than 3 hours from a roadend or from another hut on BCC or BCA site (unless a popular destination)
  - It is recognised that such huts are convenient for people who do not have accommodation close to the start of a trip. However vandalism at huts tends to be much worse where they are located within a couple of hours of a roadend.
- Less than 6 hours from a roadend or another hut (Remote RS site)
- On a Day Walking Track (DV Site) unless the track continues on to a more distant BCC or BCA hut.
- On a Day Tramping Track
  - “Day tramping tracks” are tracks that take a day or less to walk and that are to tramping track or route standard. On these tracks no overnight accommodation is required. Shelter may be required, but that is a different issue.
- A low use hut (<50-100 bednights) that unnecessarily duplicates opportunities in the same major catchment in Backcountry Walk-In settings, or in the same or adjacent catchments in Remote settings.
  - Low use huts, where there are a number of huts providing similar recreation opportunities in the area, may be regarded as not necessary.

# Appendix 7

## TRACK CLASSIFICATIONS

The purpose of the track classifications is to *describe each track and the recreation opportunity it provides* as part of the national Recreation Opportunity Review. The classification system covers a spectrum from the high use Day Visitor tracks starting at roadends or wharves through to tracks in large and remote areas.

The hut and track network combine in providing facilities that support the visitor opportunities. With this in mind, application of the Hut Principles in determining the core huts to manage should be done in conjunction with classifying the tracks.

Choosing the category for each track requires a ‘value judgement’ based on the description of the descriptions provided. Two important criteria for classifying tracks (particularly day walks and day tramping tracks) are the current condition of the track, and the management intention for the track. Current condition is important because it will determine whether visitors currently experience a “walk” or a “tramp”. The management intention should be decided by considering if the current track condition suits the preferred visitor group or not. This in turn should take account of whether similar walking opportunities are available locally or regionally.

### Track principles and categories

The track category represents *the main purpose* that it fulfils for the users (recognising that tracks may fulfil more than one of these purposes).

#### 1. *Classic tramping track (C)*

Tramps requiring at least one night out, the trip being popularly known and considered one of the defining tramps of that park or area. Typically the first sections of the track will be the highest-use tracks in the Conservancy. Includes Classic Crossings and Classic Circuits, which differ only because the circuit tramp allows the trampler to exit from or near the place where they entered.

**Explanation:** There exist tracks that are known to the local/regional visitors as the most significant tracks in the park, which form a 2-4 day (or more) walking opportunity. These are often described in park publications, and typically included in tramping guidebooks (although such inclusion does not automatically guarantee ‘classic status’). Huts on a Classic Tramp will generally receive the highest number of bednights of huts in a Conservancy, although where the tramp is multi-day there may be huts of a lower standard that receive relatively lower use but which are still considered an integral part of the tramp.

#### 2. *Popular backcountry destination track (P)*

The tracks which lead to popular destinations, other than those that form part of a Classic tramp.

**Explanation:** Some huts are popular destinations for weekend trips, and are seen as an attraction in themselves. They are often located at around 3 hours easy

tramping from a roadend. Tracks are maintained to at least BCA tramping track standard. The hut should receive annual bednight use that is at the higher end of use for huts in the Conservancy. Other destinations reached by tracks in this category may be popular camping spots or hunting areas.

3. *Remote access - remote network (R)*

Tracks and routes that provide direct access to remote zones or wilderness areas. Also tracks that require at least one day tramping from a roadend to reach, and by joining together, (including Classic Tramping tracks and untracked routes), provide a network of tracks through remote areas of the park (but not encroaching on designated Wilderness areas).

**Explanation:** Remote tracks should provide the only formed or marked walking access within each large catchment, or on each part of a main range, and the majority of this network should be found within the ROS class Remote. The 'network' may be considered the tracks that provide formed access or managed routes as well as the unmanaged untracked river-valley or tops in between (i.e. where no formation or marking is required). This is not intended to be a collection of 'all other tracks' that are not classified Classic or Popular.

4. *Safe exit from Popular track (S)*

Tracks that provide an alternative exit from a popular track or destination, suitable for those people with limited tramping experience who are reliant on an all-weather track, should the main access become unsafe due to weather changes causing river levels to rise.

**Explanation:** This will not apply where the main access track is all-weather. Huts are considered a safe haven. Included in this category are track sections that are alternative to a ford or estuary crossing. The Safety exit should be all-weather and should provide rapid (not more than 3 hours) access to some safe haven. In general it is assumed that Classic Tramps will not require safety exit tracks because the defined Classic track is the safest route. It is also assumed that the remote network will contain adequate tracks to ensure experienced trampers can reach a safe destination within 3 hours should the weather change. (It is assumed that experienced trampers will be prepared to spend the night out if necessary).

5. *Other backcountry destination track (O)*

Tracks that provide access to huts that receive 'relatively low use' (i.e. not a Popular destination), or tracks that provide access to a camping area 2 or more hours from a roadend.

**Explanation:** Tracks to huts that are not highly used provide experiences for those people who prefer to get away from others. The standards of the track will be Route or BCA Tramping Track.

6. *Day tramping track (DT)*

Tracks that provide a tramping opportunity of one-to-many hours that can be and often are completed in one day. The track is managed to a BCA Tramping Track standard or a Route standard and is not considered a track to a Popular destination..

**Explanation:** There are many tramping opportunities that can be completed in a day, that may not provide access to a hut or form the start of a Classic Track or

Remote network, but which are walked because they provide a BCA experience, including meeting few others and requires a moderate amount of backcountry skills and experience. Alternative activities such as mountain biking, horse riding and 4 wheel driving are day visit activities, and some tracks are managed for this use.

7. *“Day” walk (DW)*

Tracks that provide a walking opportunity of one to several hours that can be completed in half a day but may take some people a day to complete. The track is managed to a DV Walking Track standard.

**Explanation:** This is the type of track is used regularly and is suitable for relatively inexperienced visitors with little backcountry skill, or people who are less mobile on foot.

8. *Short Walk (SW)*

Tracks that provide up to one hour’s easy walking and managed to the SST standard.

### **Use of these categories**

The purpose of these categories is to help determine how each track contributes to the overall track network. Some categories of track may be well provided in a conservancy, and some poorly provided or absent. It is not necessary that all track categories be provided.

It may be that there are abundant tracks of a particular type and not all need be retained into the future.

Clearly all tracks provide the opportunity of travel from point A to point B, and the experience gained from travelling on that track will be different to any other track. However, this is not justification in itself for continuing to maintain that track.

# Appendix 8

## DEFINING THE SITE AND FACILITY (ASSET) PROPOSALS

### A. **Site Proposals (these summarise what will happen to the whole site)**

#### *Maintain site*

Site will be maintained to the primary visitor group standard, providing recreation opportunities the same as or similar to those available currently. This option may include the removal of non-essential assets (such as structures) or addition of some assets.

#### *Maintain site - requires upgrade*

Site requires upgrading to meet the primary visitor group standards and/or to mitigate against visitor impacts. Once site is upgraded it will be maintained at the necessary standard

#### *Maintain site - retain key assets*

The site is maintained by DOC, but some facilities on the site, such as small structures, may be removed where they do not contribute to providing access, meeting the service standard, protecting natural or historic values or visitor safety

#### *Maintain site to lower standard*

The site is maintained by DOC to a lower standard than for the current visitor group. The primary visitor group is changed to one for whom the current standards are appropriate. For example, a walking track (catering for day visitors) may only be maintained to a standard suitable for Backcountry Adventurers.

#### *Cease maintenance*

No (or only very minor) maintenance will be undertaken on the site. (Note that 'cease maintenance' will mean 'minimal maintenance' for isolated hut sites). All structures will be removed. Other facilities can remain (although some signs will be removed) until they fall below bottom line standards. Remaining facilities will be regularly inspected to check their condition. Track markers may be left until they naturally disappear. Huts will be retained but not replaced or maintained (except for minor maintenance). This option is a temporary one. Eventually the site will be closed.

#### *Close site/remove all assets*

Remove all assets (structures, signs, huts, track markers etc), plant out track entrances and leave the site to revert to a natural state. Closed sites will be removed from all visitor information. Where necessary the site or part of it will be rehabilitated.

### *Maintain by community*

The site is either one already maintained by the community, with an agreement in place to do so, or it is one DOC believes it should not maintain at all. In the latter case, the site should only be retained if the community agrees to take it on. It is one that realistically could be maintained by a club, community group or local authority. DOC will discuss ongoing maintenance and replacement of facilities on the site with such groups. If a group agrees to maintain the facilities to the relevant service standards, and take on replacement of the facilities when they reach the end of their life, the facilities on the site will be transferred to that group/authority. A formal agreement setting out the community group responsibilities should be established. If no agreement is reached, the site will be closed and all facilities removed. The exception is huts; they will be put under a minimal maintenance regime.

### *Own by DOC but maintain by community*

The site is one DOC believes should be retained. It is one that realistically could be maintained by a club, community group or local authority. The site is either one already maintained by the community, with an agreement in place to do so, or one with no agreement in place. In the latter case, DOC will discuss ongoing maintenance of facilities on the site with such groups and should establish a management agreement for that maintenance. It is unlikely, however, that any club or community group could take on the replacement of the facilities at the end of their lives. The replacement of the facilities remains DOC's responsibility. If no agreement is reached with the community over maintenance, DOC will maintain the site.

### *Non-visitor DOC management*

For sites receiving very little or no visitor use, all facilities on the site will be managed by DOC for other purposes (such as for biodiversity work). The facilities will not normally be available for visitor use.

## **B. Asset proposals**

- **Maintain** - Asset will be maintained by DOC to the primary visitor group standard (*funding assumption - fully funded*)
- **Maintain at lower standard** - maintain asset to a service standard lower than required for the current visitor group. This is used if it is proposed to change the visitor group to one requiring a lower standard (e.g. from DV to BCA for a track). (*funding assumption - fully funded*)
- **Upgrade – to bring to standard** - upgrade asset to bring it to the standard required for the visitor group. This is used if the asset is clearly below the required standard (e.g. track service standard). (*funding assumption - fully funded*)
- **Upgrade – to higher standard** - upgrade asset to bring it to a service standard higher than its current standard. This is used if it is proposed to change the visitor group to one requiring a higher standard (e.g. from BCA to DV for a track). (*funding assumption - fully funded to the higher standard*)
- **Upgrade – size/capacity** - add sleeping capacity or area to an existing building, campsite, carpark or amenity area. (*funding assumption - fully funded to the level of the proposed sleeping capacity*)

- **Replace – same size or smaller size or bigger size** – for buildings, structures (and large signs) “same size” is used if it is proposed to replace the asset in the next five years earlier than its retirement date, and ‘smaller’ or ‘bigger size’ is used if it is proposed to increase or decrease the size of the asset in the next 5 to 10 years. It is not used for assets that will be maintained and then replaced with assets of the same size on their retirement date. (*funding assumption – fully funded to the level of the proposed sleeping capacity*)
- **Replace with existing asset** – for buildings and structures (and maybe signs), the asset is removed and replaced with an existing building or structure. The latter should be given the proposal ‘move to another location’. (*funding assumption – not funded, because asset being moved is funded*)
- **Move to another location** – for buildings and structures, the asset is moved to replace an existing asset or is moved to a location where there is currently no asset. (*funding assumption – fully funded*)
- **Proposed** – this is applied to assets that do not yet exist (or that DOC may ‘inherit’). (*funding assumption – fully funded*)
- **Maintain by community**: The asset is either one already maintained by the community, with an agreement in place to do so, or it is not one DOC believes it should maintain at all. In the latter case, the facility should only be retained long-term if the community agrees to take it on. It is one that realistically could be maintained by a club, community group or local authority. DOC will discuss ongoing maintenance and replacement of the facility with such groups and should establish a management agreement for that maintenance. If a group agrees to maintain it to the relevant service standards, and take on its replacement when it reaches the end of its life, it will be transferred to that group/authority. DOC will continue to inspect the facility on a regular basis. If no agreement is reached, the facility will be removed or closed with the exception of huts; they will be put under a minimal maintenance regime. (*funding assumption – inspection costs only funded*)

#### *Owned by DOC but maintain by community*

The facility is one DOC believes should be retained. It is one that realistically could be maintained by a club, community group or local authority. The facility is either one already maintained by the community, with an agreement in place to do so, or one with no agreement in place. In the latter case, DOC will discuss ongoing maintenance of the facility with such groups and should establish a management agreement for that maintenance. It is unlikely, however, that any club or community group could take on the replacement of the facility at the end of its life. Its replacement remains DOC’s responsibility. If no agreement is reached with the community over maintenance, DOC will maintain the facility. (*funding assumption – inspection and replacement costs funded; maintenance not funded*)

#### *Cease maintenance*

Used for tracks, roads, amenity areas, carparks, and campsites. For a track, cease maintenance means it will be left to revert to a natural state. Track markers may be left until they naturally disappear. For roads, cease maintenance means that the road is closed to motor vehicles. For carparks, amenity areas and campsites, signs, toilets and other buildings are removed and the area left to revert to natural state. (*funding assumption – no funding*)

### *Minimal maintenance*

Used for huts and other buildings. The building will be inspected by DOC every 2 years. Inspectors will travel with basic tools and equipment and some minor maintenance (that can be done during the regular inspections) will be undertaken. The building will be retained in its minimally maintained state as long as it is weatherproof, not dangerous and not insanitary. When the regular inspection, or the re-inspection by engineers, concludes that the building no longer meets these bottom line standards, and if there is no organisation willing to bring it up to standard and maintain it to standard, it will be removed. (*funding assumption - inspection cost only funded*)

### *Non-visitor DOC management*

For facilities receiving very little or no visitor use, the facility will be managed by DOC for other purposes (such as for biodiversity work). It will not normally be available for visitor use. (*funding assumption - no funding*)

### *Remove (and not replace)*

Facility is removed (e.g. structure, sign, hut, track markers etc) within two years of the decision on the facility being made. If a track, amenity area, carpark or campsite, track entrances and entrances to the area are planted out and the site left to revert to a natural state. A closed facility will be removed from all visitor information. Where necessary the site or part of it will be rehabilitated. (*funding assumption - no funding*)