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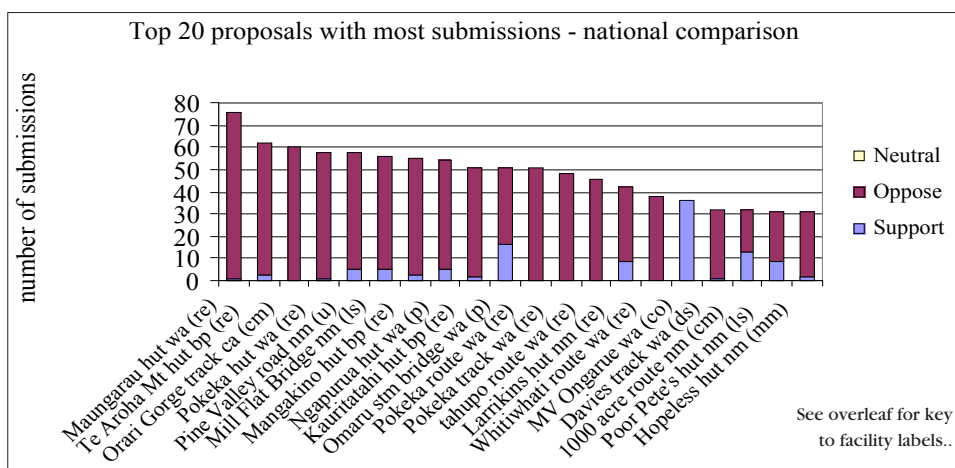
DOC Recreation opportunities review

National summary of submissions analysis and decisions

Submissions process

- The 13 conservancies of DOC reviewed their recreation opportunities and facilities and, in October 2003, came up with what they believed was an essential core network that could be maintained to standard in the long term.
- The proposals attracted 8590 submissions, provided by 1468 submitters. These were taken into account in making the final decisions.
- It is likely that submitters were most representative of the people who currently use conservation areas for the tracks and huts, and least representative of those people who make little use of conservation areas.
- The most submissions were received by Nelson conservancy (over 1800) followed by West Coast (nearly 1200) and Wanganui (nearly 1000).
- Submissions were generally clearly either
 - in support of proposals (for the most part supporting proposals to enhance the current facility network) or
 - in opposition (for the most part opposing proposals to reduce the facility network).
- The department appears to have in some cases underestimated the depth of local feeling about particular recreation opportunities, which has been reflected in submissions and other initiatives to protect their interests.

Submissions analysis



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

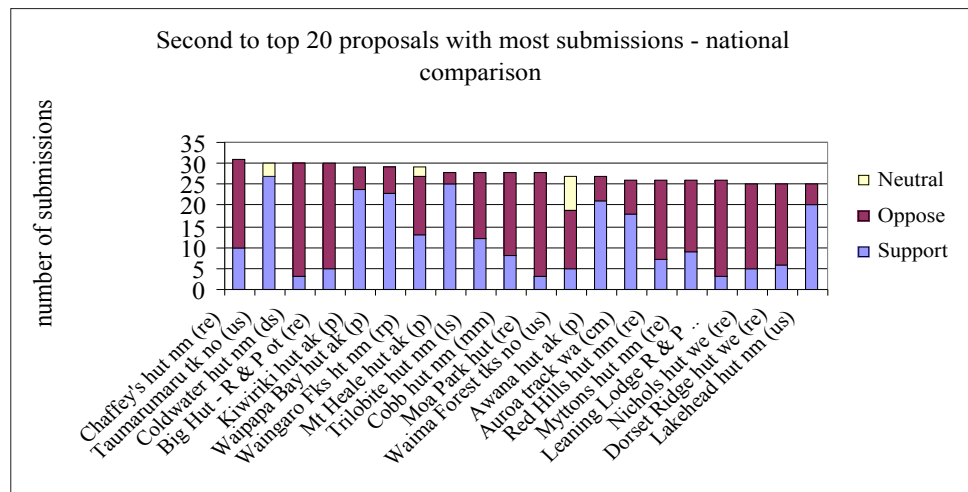
Key to figures

Letters after the facility name identify the conservancy in which the facility is located:

- ak Auckland
- bp Bay of Plenty
- ca Canterbury
- ch East Coast / Hawkes Bay
- nm Nelson / Marlborough
- no Northland
- ot Otago
- sl Southland
- tt Tongariro / Taupo
- wa Wanganui
- wc West Coast
- we Wellington
- wk Waikato

The proposals for facilities ranged across 12 options, but for the purposes of simplicity in the figures, the following proposal types have been indicated in parentheses:

- (p) Proposed (new)
- (ls) Replace larger size
- (u) Upgrade (significant) to higher standard
- (us) Upgrade to standard
- (rp) Replace
- (mo) Move to another location
- (m) Maintain
- (ds) Maintain to lower standard (or downsize)
- (co) Maintain by community
- (mm) Minimal maintenance
- (cm) Cease maintenance
- (cl) Close
- (re) Remove



The three conservancies with the most submissions across the top 15 proposals were Wanganui, then Nelson and Bay of Plenty.

- These submissions are characterised by significant opposition to track closures in Wanganui, in particular the Waitotara Valley proposals.
- There is majority opposition with a small level of support for removing huts or phasing huts over time in Nelson, Mill Flat swing bridge and Pine Valley road upgrades being notable.
- There is general opposition to hut closures or phasing out of huts and tracks in Bay of Plenty.

Conservancies with the medium level of feedback on facility proposals through submissions are Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury.

- Auckland proposals appeared to receive the highest level of support, to be expected given the number of proposed improvements featuring in the 15 proposals.
- Wellington submitters were supportive of improvements to the facility network, but generally not supportive of planned hut removals or phasing out huts.
- Canterbury registered more opposing submissions, with the Orari Gorge Track closure receiving a singularly high number of submissions in opposition.

Northland, Waikato and East Coast / Hawkes Bay and West Coast conservancies received smaller number of submissions.

- Northland proposals enjoyed a reasonable level of support.
- Waikato submitters generally supported proposals for new tracks and accommodation, but rejected proposed track closures.
- East Coast / Hawkes Bay submitters were of mixed opinion on the proposed reduced effort across huts, but supportive of a proposed hut and an upgrade of a Bivy.
- West Coast submitters were consistently opposed to huts being phased out, and mixed views on hut upgrades.

Conservancies with the least level of public feedback by way of submissions are Tongariro / Taupo, Otago and Southland.

- Tongariro / Taupo submitters were supportive of new proposals for tracks, a hut replacement and community management of two huts, and limited opposition where this was expressed.
- Otago submissions were generally supportive for proposed tracks and hut upgrades, but opposition to hut removals from the Rock and Pillar range.
- Southland submitters expressed general opposition to proposed phasing out of huts and closing of some tracks.

General themes in submissions

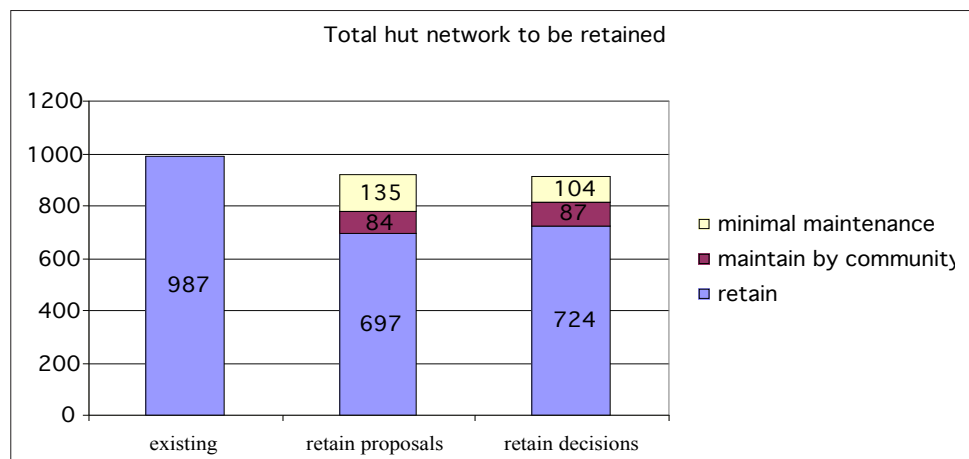
- A key concern raised across the country is that DOC is planning to significantly reduce the level of facilities provided for the basic backcountry experiences quintessential to the New Zealand outdoors.
- Another concern is that DOC is seeking to upgrade facilities to cater for the increasing tourism demand, thus changing the desired experience through attracting many more people.
- The changes that have been decided do not reflect to a significant degree such a shift, but is happening to small degree in response to obvious demand.
- These issues will continue to be a focus of concern, when the decisions are released.
- The proposals for consultation for most amenity areas and campgrounds was status quo, so although these are significant in terms of public visitation, they have featured very little in the consultation and decisions discussions.

Decisions

- Based on the funding models for facility management the department believes that the core facility network identified through the consultation process can be managed into the foreseeable future.
- The implementation of the decisions will take time, as funding levels increase in line with the Government's commitments, and because there is a lot of work ahead to deal with issues of deferred maintenance from the past.

Huts

- The current network of huts is 987.
[The exact number of huts has been complicated by a number of huts used for management purposes being removed from the total during the consultation process, new huts added because of High Country Tenure Review outcomes, and the ongoing construction and removal of huts that occurs as a matter of course.]
- Decisions will see 811 huts retained into the long term, and 104 additionally retained on minimal maintenance until the end of their functional life.
- Proposals were for 781 huts to be retained into the future, with an additional 135 huts retained on 'minimal maintenance'.
- 79 huts will be removed, which will occur within two years.
- Following consultation Standard and Basic huts (with Service Standards to suit the Backcountry Adventurers), will over time reduce from 847 huts currently to 663 huts once 'minimal maintenance' huts have reached the end of their functional lives.



Tracks

- The total length of track to be managed into the future is 12,910 km, which is 98 km more than is being managed at the start of the consultation process (12,812 km).
- Of this total, 258 km of track are being considered for community group management, and, on a case by case basis, if no agreement is established, may be phased out of the system. An additional 132 km of track already has agreements in place that community groups manage these facilities.
- Of 817 km of track proposed to be phased out of the system, 290 will now be retained, resulting in 527 km of track to be removed from the visitor track system. 435 km of track will be phased out completely and 92 km will be for management purposes only.
- There are 625 km of new track proposed.
- Some new tracks now to be developed were the result of strong community interest expressed through the consultation process.
- At least 200 km of new track are coming to the department as a result of High Country Tenure Review outcomes.
- 158 km of new route will be marked in West Coast Southern Alps locations to better connect the remote tramping network there.
- Bringing existing tracks up to their required standard will commence prior to beginning the construction of new tracks.

