



Waikato Conservancy recreation opportunities review

Submissions analysis and decisions

OCTOBER 2004



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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This report is the conclusion of the department's public consultation process 'Towards a Better Network of Visitor Facilities', a Recreation Opportunity Review aimed at confirming with the public the mix of visitor facilities needed to provide the recreational opportunities most desired on public conservation land.

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1. Message from the Conservator

The following report details the content of submissions received by Waikato Conservancy as part of the recreation opportunity review public consultation phase, and reports on other feedback received through public meetings and discussion with stakeholders during this period.

Taking account of the submissions and other information received, decisions have been made by this Conservancy. These decisions align with the strategic direction as covered by the Principles to Guide a Core Facility Network and the key Policy and Strategic directions referred to within these. Where there has been a preference identified through submissions to vary from this direction, these cases have been noted.

Greg Martin

Conservator

2. Executive summary

2.1 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Letters of invitation were mailed to Iwi, known local and regional recreation groups and other key associates including territorial local authorities, to attend public meetings in Thames, Te Kuiti and Hamilton during November 2003 to learn about the proposals and how they could have their say in the Recreation Opportunity Review (ROR) by making written submissions by 31 January 2004.

2.2 SUBMITTERS AND SUBMISSIONS

There were a total of 81 submitters of whom 57 commented on 53 of the 63 departmental site change proposals. Submissions were entered into a customised Access database. A summary of submissions and copy of original submissions were circulated for decisions by a panel of staff in each of the three Areas. It is recognised that the number of user groups / potential user groups that have participated in the ROR process has been limited and that structured interaction with focus groups is required to inform both the final ROR decisions and the Waikato Recreation Strategy which is being prepared as a complementary exercise. It is intended to engage more often with more user groups.

2.3 SUMMARY OF GENERAL POINTS FROM SUBMISSIONS

- A preference for multi day tramping options on track networks with loop options.
- Additional tracks are needed.
- Retention of all back country tracks as the essence of Kiwi tramping experience.
- A need for front country short walks close to residential areas for ease of access by locals.
- Mountain bikes tracks need to be provided.
- Existing tracks and roads proposed for removal or to cease maintenance could be used by off highway vehicles/ four wheel drive vehicles, quads and motor cycles.
- Coastal tracks / walkways need to be expanded.
- Printed information and local interpretation including signage of tracks needs improvement by stating length, fitness level/grade of track based on Australian National Parks best practice.
- Sea kayakers need more camp sites.
- Huts and tracks play a valuable role in search and rescue operations and need to be retained.
- Need to provide access for the disabled to tracks, toilets, car parks, huts, booked accommodation.
- Self contained vehicles/camper van/bus use of car parks and road ends could resolve vandalism of signs and theft problems.
- Interest expressed by a community group in contract track maintenance.
- Access to and through Whangamarino Wetlands was supported by National Wetlands Trust and Miranda Naturalist Trust.
- The lack of track and hut maintenance was criticized.
- Positive impact of tracks on North Coromandel's local economy.

All points raised that were not directly related to a proposal were assigned to an appropriate alternative forum or process, e.g. need for information / interpretation relates to the Interpretation Plan in a forthcoming Conservation Management Strategy review.

2.4 SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

The Waikato Conservancy covers a range of ecosystems from the temperate podocarp forest of Pureora, the karst and cave landscape of Waitomo, wetlands and lakes in central Waikato, and the unique combination of forest and coast found on the Coromandel Peninsula and on off shore islands. Approximately 270,000 ha (12%) of the 2,250,000 ha and 1,200 km of coast line of the Waikato region is

administered by the department.

These landforms and waters provide habitat for some rare endemic New Zealand species. Maori history in the Waikato dates back over 800 years. There are more than 5,000 pre-European recorded archaeological sites in the Waikato, with 10% of these on lands administered by the department. The conservancy falls mainly within the rohe of Tainui, but also includes part of the territory of Tuwharetoa.

Dramatic changes to land form occurred following the arrival of Europeans. Historic sites remain, including trading posts, mission stations, sites associated with the Waikato campaign (1863–64) of the New Zealand Wars. Historic sites on crown land administered by the department add an extra dimension to recreation sites and add special interest and potential for an educational dimension to the visitor's experience. Extractive industries, notably gold mining and kauri logging, whaling, shipping and ship building, railway routes and agriculture caused significant changes to the physical and social landscape.

This diverse mix of natural and cultural assets presents opportunities for a broad spectrum of recreational pursuits in the Waikato.

A number of significant external factors, leading to increasing demand and varied use, place the Waikato Conservancy's recreation opportunities under growing pressure, including the following:

- 52% of New Zealand's population lives within a 1-hour drive of the Conservancy. Construction of the express way between Hamilton and Auckland is steadily advancing. Most domestic visitors originate from the greater Auckland conurbation, Hamilton, and the Bay of Plenty. The projected population growth to 2021 in Auckland and Bay of Plenty is 40% and 30% respectively (Source: Statistics New Zealand). This contributes to an exponential increase in the population of the Coromandel during the peak summer holiday season. For example, in 2002, the summer population was estimated as 180,000 people compared with the usually resident population of 25,167.
- A diverse permanent population with a mix of urban and rural and a higher proportion of Maori (21%) compared with the total New Zealand Maori population (15%) (Source: Statistics New Zealand). The 65 years and-over age group is projected to comprise 26% of the population by 2051. (Source: Statistics New Zealand). Greater use of natural resource based recreation facilities by older visitors is expected.
- An active boating fraternity able to access the Coromandel coastline within one hour of Auckland.
- A mild climate conducive to year round outdoor activity.
- Continued growth of New Zealand tourism. International visitors totalled 2.04 million, up by 14.3% in 2002 compared with 2000 (Source: Ministry of Tourism).
- Established tourist routes through the region and icon tourist destinations of Cathedral Cove on the Coromandel coast and the glow worm caves at Waitomo in the King country that are actively marketed nationally and internationally.

The decisions relating to tracks reflect a response to the sound tramping track planning principle of multi day tramping options on track networks with loop

options that came from submitters. At the top end of the tramping opportunity spectrum, the remoteness seeker group is offered a remote tramping opportunity in the central Coromandel. Multi day tramping opportunities and additional loops are offered in the southern Coromandel for the backcountry adventurer's visitor group. This opportunity is further enhanced with a remote campground and shelter and two new huts in the southern Coromandel. Multi day tramping opportunity in the south eastern sector of the Pureora Forest Park is broadened with the provision of one new hut. The decision to remove two existing dilapidated huts does not lessen multi day options. Te Araroa's long distance tramping opportunities through the Waikato are enhanced with the selection of the best route through Pirongia Forest Park and a new hut in the southern sector of Pureora Forest Park. An extension of the Cathedral Cove walking track and the new walking track linking Port Jackson campground with Fletcher Bay will add to the coastal recreation opportunities. A new track to the TeToto Gorge / Karioi mountain on the West coast and another on the Firth of Thames inter tidal zone will add to the variety of coastal short walk recreational opportunities. Cease maintenance options have been adopted on selected tracks where reasonable alternatives exist or maintenance costs are extremely high.

Submitters also registered the need for front country short walks close to residential areas for ease of access. Established tourist routes and destinations reinforce the demand. It is strategically important to note that the demand for recreation opportunities for the short walk and walking track visitor groups will escalate in the short, medium and long term, given the rapidly changing demographics of the region and the nation. Retirees are the greatest contributing factor, being active more often and with a longer life expectancy.

A network of tracks, boardwalks and car parks will provide access to and through the Whangamarino Wetlands, a key Waikato ecosystem of international importance. Proximity to Auckland and located adjacent to State Highway one raises the potential strategic recreational destination value of these wetlands. A strong interpretative conservation message opportunity is also presented here. Planning is to continue in close association with the National Wetlands Trust.

Due to strong local interest and support in the Hauraki Area (Coromandel), proposals for three tramping tracks and one walking track to cease maintenance were reconsidered leading to maintain to appropriate standard decisions. The proposals for two new huts, two basic camp sites /shelters, cease maintenance on three tramping tracks, three new coastal walking tracks and an upgrade of Hoffman's pool car park were supported. Waitaia picnic site, Kauaeranga road end and Tararu car parks proposals attracted low levels of interest or presented unconvincing motivations to alter the proposed management options to cease maintenance. Maratoto road end car park remained as a proposed new facility.

In the Maniapoto Area proposals for two new huts, removal of two dilapidated huts, cease maintenance on three tramping tracks, two new walking tracks and one new tramping track received support. All proposals for roads to change to maintain to a lower level for mountain bike or off highway/quad/four wheel drive use were supported or received a low level of interest.

Proposals in Waikato Area to cease maintenance on one tramping track and one road, three proposed new car parks linked to new short walks in the Whangamarino wetlands and the proposed car park on the Firth of Thames were supported.

Increased options for the growing visitor user group of mountain bikers is primarily addressed by adapting the network of existing logging roads in Pureora Forest Park to provide challenging routes. The issue of potential conflict between trampers and mountain bikers can be addressed by providing dedicated tracks for each of these user groups.

The existing extensive network of roads in Pureora Forest Park also presents the potential for quads/four wheel drive/ off highway vehicle use opportunities which will broaden the recreational opportunities in the Waikato. Interaction with these groups is ongoing to address the issues of soil erosion, alien plant control, sensitivity of vegetation types, safety and quality of experience.

An island basic camping opportunity is offered with the decision to provide a campsite/shelter on Mahurangi Island. This responds partially to the growing concern from sea kayakers about limited, if not diminishing, coastal camping opportunities due to subdivision of land and housing developments.

This process broadens the range of recreation opportunities in the Waikato and in addition achieved the objective of reducing some high maintenance cost recreation assets.

3. Introduction – how consultation was undertaken

- Public consultation was undertaken as part of the Department's Recreation Opportunity Review 'Towards a Better Network of Visitor Facilities'
- Consultation was launched on 30 September 2003, with a press release from the Minister of Conservation, and a press release from the Waikato Conservancy. Letters were sent to Iwi, local recreation groups and other key associates inviting them to attend public meetings during October 2003 to learn about the consultation process. Proposal documents, submission forms and background resource material was provided and was available on the DOC website.
- Information about the submission process was provided in local newspapers with feature articles and invitation notices to the public meetings. Follow up reminders were mailed to all meeting attendants one month before the closing date for submissions and a feature article was published in local newspapers to encourage submissions.
- Invitations to take part in the process were not taken up by Iwi. Other political issues dominated at the time with reviews of legislation that the public in general and Iwi were asked to consider.
- Discussion has taken place between the Maniapoto Area Manager and Rereahu Iwi regarding their opposition to the proposals to reduce the road network in the Pureora area and their expectation of improved road standards.
- Meetings were held with local trampers and off road vehicle users in the Maniapoto Area to further explore some issues.

3.1 SUBMISSION ANALYSIS PROCESS

- Submissions entered into a customised Access database.
- A staff team drawn from Area Manager, Programme Manager - Visitor and Historic, Programme Manager Community Relations, Recreation Planners made decisions based on a summary of submissions, copy of original submissions, guidelines provided by the national team and collective experience.
- The submissions were analysed as follows: Submission points all entered into a customised Access database — generally verbatim. Submission points categorised according to their nature: in support, not in support, neither. (Neither representing submissions that were unclear). Proposals with 'not supporting' submissions were considered in view of the weight of submissions, and in view of the strategic objectives for that location (e.g. from Conservation Management Strategy, Visitor Strategy). Proposals with few submissions had submissions considered for merit, and the strategic intent behind the proposal.
- A Submission Analysis report was drafted and submitted to the Area Managers, Programme Managers and Conservator to review and for sign off by the Conservator for submission to the Regional General Manager Southern Region.
- Decisions entered into the Visitor Asset Management System and the final draft of the report sent to Head Office.

3.2 WHAT DECISIONS NOW MEAN

The Department of Conservation is making these decisions in order to provide the public of New Zealand and the associated user groups with some surety about the future visitor facilities network to support their recreation facilities into the foreseeable future. These decisions will guide resource commitment and work programmes for the department.

There remain some factors that cannot be accurately forecast or guaranteed at this point in time, such as; future construction costs, the durability of existing and new facilities, the effects of changing weather patterns, and changing user group priorities. As a result these decisions are a negotiated outcome rather than conclusions set in stone.

Formal planning processes will continue to provide the mechanism for further change as needed and ensuring public input (e.g. Conservation Management Strategy review), and Conservation Boards. This will assist the department to manage specific facility provision issues that will arise from time to time.

4. Analysis of submission data

4.1 NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS

- 57 submitters provided 227 submissions between them.
- Submitters were made up of 22 group submissions and 35 individual submissions.
- 34 submitters came from within the Waikato Conservancy, 17 from neighbouring conservancies, and six from further away.
- No submissions made direct reference to the Principles to Guide the Core Facility Network (contained in the National Resource Document).
- 29 submissions contained comment that related to regional or national issues, as well as comment on specific proposals.
- 61% of submissions supported proposals and 35% opposed proposals, 4% were neutral.

4.2 MAIN PROPOSALS COMMENTED ON, BY ORDER OF TOTAL SUBMISSIONS.

ASSET NAME	SUBMISSIONS
Stony Bay and Te Hope tracks (Cease maintenance)	18 12 against/six for
Waiau Summit track (Cease maintenance)	17 17 against
Hihi-Kopu hut (Proposed new)	15 15 for
Castle Rock track (Cease maintenance)	14 11 against / 3 for
Mt Moehau track (Cease maintenance)	12 8 against / 4 for
Christmas Creek hut (Proposed new)	11 11 for
Hauhungaroa Hut proposed (Proposed new)	9 9 for
Crosbies Clearing Camp site (Proposed new)	8 1 against / 7 for
Cathedral Cove to Cooks Beach Coastal w/way (Proposed new)	7 7 for
Karaka stream to Wainora kauri track (Cease maintenance)	7 6 against / 1 for
Tarau track (Cease maintenance)	7 4 against / 3 for
Bum Bay track (Proposed new)	6 1 against / 5 for
Hauhungaroa Range return loop track (Proposed new)	5 5 for
Tapu Coroglen Summit to Maumaupaki track (Cease maintenance)	4 4 against
Knox Farm track proposed (Proposed new)	4 4 for
Landcare hut (Basic hut)	4 4 for
Mahurangi Island shelter/ campsite (Proposed new)	4 2 against / 2 for
Mangatutu track (Proposed new)	4 4 for
Nuffield lodge (Remove)	4 3 against / 1 for

ASSET NAME	SUBMISSIONS
Pureora Heritage track (Proposed new)	4 four for
Tiwarawara track Pirongia Forest Park - (Cease maintenance)	4 2 against / 2 for
Guinness Road, Meremere (Cease maintenance)	3 1 against / 2 for
Hotoritori pony trail (Cease maintenance)	3 3 against
Kopuera car park (Proposed new)	3 3 for
Lake Kopuera track (Proposed new)	3 3 for
Lake Rotomanuka track (Proposed new)	3 3 for
Lake Whangamarino track (Proposed new)	3 3 for
Okahukura road (Maintain to a lower standard)	3 3 for
Piropiro roads (Maintain lower standard)	3 3 for
Whangamarino car park (Proposed new)	3 3 for

4.3 PROPOSALS THAT RECEIVED THE MOST SUBMISSIONS AND SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS, BY LOCATION

HAURAKI AREA

VISITOR FACILITY NUMBER	FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS
301013	Stony Bay and Te Hope tracks (6 support/12 oppose)	Cease maintenance	18 submissions: 12 opposed, citing that a well defined, well maintained track would minimise environmental damage and facilitate search and rescue to a well known destination with stunning views and acknowledged the link with access to Mt Moehau. Interest in the 2000 Memorial plaque, DOC pest eradication programmes in the area, and value of exposure thereof to visitors was cited to retain access. six supported the rationale to cease maintenance.
301001	Waiiau Summit track (17 oppose)	Cease maintenance	17 submissions: 17 opposed with thrust of reasoning that it is well used by hunters, walkers and school groups, has historical significance as a section of the coach road between Coromandel town and Whitianga. Interest due to improvement to fauna and flora due to the effects of 1080. A well maintained track would minimise environmental damage and facilitate search and rescue. Low use level due to no publicity, poor maintenance and no DOC maps. Contribution of tracks to local tourist economy Risk of loss of both this and Castle Rock track.
191796	Hihi-Kopu hut - proposed (15 support)	Proposed new	15 submissions: Nil opposed. 15 in support. Opportunity recognised for multi day back country trips. Possibility of reducing visitor pressure on Pinnacles hut. Four submitters very critical of poor access track maintenance. One conditional support provided appropriate research was done and one supported with no reason given.
301006	Castle Rock track (6 support/ 11oppose)	Cease maintenance	14 submissions: 11 opposed as use level is high despite low standard of maintenance. The distinctive natural rock landmark provides outstanding views as a destination which is popular with locals and visitors, is widely publicised and within easy reach of the tourist hub of Coromandel town. Three supported respect for the wishes of the Maori land owners to close the track.

VISITOR FACILITY NUMBER	FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS
301013	Mt Moehau track (4 support / 8 oppose)	Cease maintenance	12 submissions: Eight opposed. A high level of interest in Mt Moehau by visitors to the Coromandel town Visitor Centre was recorded. Five submitted that a defined, well maintained track tends to minimise environmental damage and facilitate search and rescue. Interest in an alternative route (Stony Bay – Fantail Bay) around the summit was acknowledged by four submitters opposed to the proposal and one in support. Four supported rationale of protecting fragile vegetation and respect for waahi tapu.
191645	Christmas Creek hut (11support)	Proposed new	11 submissions: No opposition. Three conditional supports provided that the access track is not upgraded, appropriate research is done, and hut pass owners must have use. Support based on the need for 20 beds for back country trampers endorsed, locality considered ideal for links with Pinnacles hut and Tapu Coroglen access for multi day tramps. Moss Creek hut replacement.
191797	Crosbies Clearing Camp site (7 support/ 1oppose)	Proposed new	Eight submissions: One opposed to a formal camp which would not fit with the farmland aspect of the site. Total of seven in support. one with no reasons given. Three in favour of a toilet and a shelter and one of these proposed a basic 10 bunk hut, because of the risk from sudden heavy rain storms and wind. Supporters recognised the enhanced North South tramping opportunities along the Kauaeranga Valley and Tapu / Coroglen road axis.
191647	Cathedral Cove to Cooks Beach Coastal w/way (7 support)	Proposed new	Seven submissions: No opposition. One conditional support on the basis of the predominant user group would be day visitors requiring a higher standard to meet the demand of the existing Cathedral Cove track. Supported by four due to easy gradients (steep between Purangi Estuary and Cooks Bluff) and good coastal views. Potential for one way walk and bus ride for tourists and options to walk parts or entire length from Hahei to Whitianga. No reason given by two supporters.
302064	Karaka stream to Wainora kauri track (1 support / 6 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Seven submissions: Six opposed to losing a round trip tramping opportunity and loop route to Waiotahi Creek that is easily accessible from the Thames residential area. 1 supported DOC rationale.
302070	Tararu track (3 support / 4 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Seven submissions: Four opposed with reasons of being easier than the alternative/duplicate Waiotahi, the need for a high quality track in close proximity to Thames and retention as a marked route. One proposed use by off highway vehicles. Three in support cited similar alternative of Waiotahi track.
191646	Bum Bay track (5 support / 1 oppose)	Proposed new	Six submissions: One individual opposed due to potential increase in visitor numbers and cumulative effect of tracks, roads and buildings on the character of North Coromandel. Five supporters including Federated Mountain Clubs as an “excellent proposal” and local Coromandel Independent Living Trust supported formalisation of track already in use. Kiwi Assoc. of Sea Kayakers supported due to their interest in coastal camp sites.
302076	Tapu Coroglen Summit to Maumaupaki track (5 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Five submissions: Five opposed, retention as a marked route recommended. Nil supported.
191642	Knox Farm track (4 support)	Proposed new	Four submissions: Nil opposed. Two supported access to headland. Two gave no reason for supporting the new track.

VISITOR FACILITY NUMBER	FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS
302163	Mahurangi Island shelter/ campsite (2 support / 2 oppose)	Proposed new	Four submissions: Two opposed due to risks of fire, fish poaching, weed invasion and risks to coastal endangered species e.g. plants, lizards, kiwi. Two supported proposal based on a need to address sea kayak user groups needs for coastal camps.
302017	Hotoritori pony trail (3 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Three submissions: Three opposed proposal two submitted that continued use for horse riding due to desirability of this loop track and low use levels did not pose maintenance risks and additional sites at Waikawau Bay Farm Park, Fletchers Bay, Waitotahi -Wainora Kauri track, Golden Cross Track suggested for horse riding. One suggested alternative use by off highway vehicles and requested more information.

MANIAPOTO AREA

VISITOR FACILITY NUMBER	FACILITY NAME (SUBMISSIONS)	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS
190289	Hauhungaroa Hut (9 support)	Proposed new	Nine submissions: Nil opposed. Nine in support acknowledged new opportunities for multi day tramps, loops and potential relief of pressure on Tongariro National Park given improving trampers taxi/shuttle service and location on the Te Araroa route. Supporters included Federated Mountain Club and the Auckland, Taupo and Rotorua tramping clubs.
	Hauhungaroa Range return loop track (5 support)	Proposed new	Five submissions: Nil opposed. Five supporters thrust for support was relationship to other huts and tracks in the Pureora area, multi day options, increased local tramping opportunity.
191716	Landcare hut (4 support)	Basic hut	Four submissions: Nil opposed. Four supporters recognised the potential for an improved network of huts and tracks.
191694	Mangatutu track (4 support)	Proposed new	Four submissions: Nil opposed. Four supporters recognised the value of a Short Walk to the historic hut and Mangatutu area.
30108	Nuffield lodge (2 oppose, 1 conditional, 1 indecisive)	Remove	Four submissions: Two opposed offering option to maintain by club or private operator/ concession and the minimal maintenance option. One indecisive statement recording support for a past proposal to replace with a larger hut. One conditional support from Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ drawing attention to the demand for better tramping options to the south of Waihaha hut.
191750	Pureora Heritage track (4 support)	Proposed new	Four submissions: Nil opposed. Four in support Two tramping clubs gave no reasons. Two clubs approved of provision of a short walk.
98253	Okahukura road (3 support)	Maintain to a lower standard	Three submissions: Nil opposed. Two supporters in favour of proposed use by mountain bikes and one favoured proposed off road vehicles and four wheel drive vehicles.
98269/70/1	Piropiro roads (3 support)	Maintain to a lower standard	Three submissions: Nil opposed. One supported mountain bikes only. Two supported off highway vehicles and mountain bikes.

WAIKATO AREA

VISITOR FACILITY NUMBER	FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS
303025	Tiwarawara track (1 support, 1 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Two submissions: One opposed. Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ objected to loss of a variation to tramping in Pirongia and recommended retention as a marked route. Te Araroa supported given their preference to reopen the old Forest Service Hihikiwi track as part of the route through Pirongia Forest Park.
98248	Guinness road, Meremere (2 support, 1 oppose)	Cease maintenance	Three submissions: One opposed giving alternative use by off road vehicles. Two supported, one with no reasons and one conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust.
192055	Kopuera car park (3 support)	Proposed new	Three submissions: Nil opposed. One in support conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust. National Wetlands Trust support linked to proposed Centre at Rangiriri and wetlands trail network.
191978	Lake Kopuera track (3 support)	Proposed new	Three submissions: Nil opposed. Support for access to wetlands and conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust.
192006	Lake Rotomanuka track (3 support)	Proposed new	Three submissions: Nil opposed. Support for access to wetlands and conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust.
192025	Whangamarino track (3 support)	Proposed new	Three submissions: Nil opposed. Support for access to wetlands and conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust.
192003	Whangamarino car park (3 support)	Proposed new	Three submissions: Nil opposed. 1 support conditional on agreement with National Wetlands Trust. National Wetlands Trust support linked to their proposed Centre at Rangiriri and wetlands trail network.

4.4 OTHER SUBMISSIONS ON PROPOSALS

Kauaeranga Valley

Amenity areas: The proposed cease maintenance of the Kauaeranga road end car park was supported by one submission and the Tararu car park proposed to cease maintenance (linked with the Tararu track cease maintenance which had four opposing and three supporting) was opposed by one individual. The proposed new car park at Maratoto road end for use by iwi/community initiative walks was supported by one with no reason and opposed by one for the alternative use of off highway vehicles.

Waitaia Recreation Reserve

Cease maintenance of the remotely located and low use level Waitaia picnic site attracted opposition from one individual.

Pureora Forest Park

Huts: The removal of Chainmen's hut had one submission to have minimal maintenance and one submission requested more information on locality.

Roads: The 10 logging roads and tramways with proposals to maintain to a lower standard attracted a low level of interest with one submission each in support primarily for use by mountain bikers.

Karioi Mountain

Te Toto Gorge track proposal was supported by three submissions.

Te Kauri Park Scenic Reserve

The proposal to cease maintenance attracted opposition from one individual.

Firth of Thames

The proposed new car park and track has two supporters, Miranda Naturalist Trust and Federated Mountain Clubs.

4.5 PROPOSALS THAT DID NOT RECEIVE SUBMISSIONS

Kauaeranga Valley Visitor Management Zone:

Hoffmans pool car park upgrade

Pureora Forest Park

Waihora Stream road maintain to lower standard

Keepa Road maintain to lower standard

Mangataua Stream road maintain to lower standard

Onawenga roads maintain to lower standard

Hoddle Road maintain to lower standard

5. User group meetings

A meeting was convened by the Maniapoto Area with the Taupo and Te Kuiti four wheel drive clubs. Mutual expectations were discussed. A proposal for a site is to be submitted for further consideration.

Access for the disabled was discussed with the Waikato Access Co-ordinator for New Zealand CCS, Kevin Churchill. Willingness to access existing day visitor and short stop traveller tracks and associated toilets and parking areas and booked accommodation (e.g. Pureora cabins) was expressed. Follow up site visits will be required to determine what is needed to make them barrier free. It was noted that trained access auditors should be involved with such assessments to achieve national consistency and objectivity to satisfy the needs of a wider range of people with partial disabilities, and not just wheel chair access.

Discussion during a routine meeting with Rereahu Iwi revealed support for new mountain biking opportunities in Pureora Forest Park. They did not support proposals to reduce the DOC managed road network. A better job of managing roads to a higher standard to facilitate visits to DOC sites in the Maniapoto Area was expected and in Pureora Forest Park in particular.

6. Summary of general points from submissions

The following themes, followed by comment were evident in the submissions:

A preference for multi day tramping options on track networks with loop options

This sound track planning principle is supported and will be applied.

Additional tracks are needed

This is appropriate where there is a deficiency of a particular tramping opportunity and there is a demonstrated need. The merits of being essential or of strategic value and the responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs would also need to be considered when evaluating proposals for additional tracks. A commitment by the department to enhancing Te Araroa and links across conservancy boundaries contributes to providing additional tramping opportunities. It is pertinent to note that the intention is to achieve effective management of existing recreation opportunities rather than to cater for growth.

Retention of all back country tracks as the essence of the Kiwi tramping experience

This is not achievable given the intention as stated above to achieve effective management of existing recreation groups opportunities rather than to cater for growth. In addition the department aims to meet the objective of providing a range of recreational opportunities in different settings for visitors with different capabilities, skills and interests.

A need for front country short walks close to residential area for ease of access by locals

The demographics of the Waikato, in particular resident population growth and the age cohort of 65 years and over being more active, more often, supports this trend in the submissions. Established tourist routes and destinations reinforce the demand. Where a reasonable alternative exists or maintenance costs are extremely high, cease maintenance options have been adopted on some short walks.

Mountain bike tracks need to be provided

This is a relatively new user group that is growing in popularity. Compatibility with trampers on the same track and the safety of all users needs careful consideration. There is evidence on some dual use tracks of conflict between trampers and mountain bikers. The ideal of dedicated mountain bike tracks is to be investigated. There is potential for challenging mountain biking tracks along old forestry tracks in the south western sector of the Pureora Forest Park. Consensus has yet to be reached on standards for mountain bike tracks.

Existing tracks and roads proposed for removal or to cease maintenance to be used by off highway vehicles/ four wheel drive vehicles, quads and motor cycles

Use of the same track by all or permutations of these motorised vehicles as well as trampers is considered undesirable and unsafe. An exception would be use of a tramping track by quads and motorcycles for conservation management purposes. Dedicated tracks or areas are considered the best option for motorised recreational activities and the limited potential options are being investigated.

Coastal tracks / walkways need to be expanded

Various groupings of coastal walkway and track proponents and some individuals want to see access to almost all of the Coromandel east coast. It is pertinent to note that a primary purpose of the review to achieve a better network of visitor facilities is to achieve effective management of existing recreation opportunities rather than to cater for growth.

Information / interpretation including signage of tracks needs improvement with addition of length, fitness level / grade of track

Over the past eight years there has been an emphasis on ensuring our visitor assets are sound with most of our recreation resources directed to this priority. An effect of this has been to defer work on other recreation management activities such as improving the production and dissemination of information to the public. A national information and interpretation programme has been developed to meet public expectations for easy to find, interesting and up to date information via the Department's website, visitor centres and publications.

The request for more track information signs will be addressed in a Conservancy Interpretation Strategy. A national directive would also be needed to deliver consistent messages on track signage.

Sea kayakers need more camp sites

This user group is well established on the northern Coromandel coast and appreciative of the existing camping sites. There is an expressed need for more designated sites (similar to freedom camping) to expand their recreation into multi day trips and or overnight trips. A diminishing coastal camping opportunity is linked to recent land sub division trends and closure of private and Territorial Land Authority camp sites. The decision to proceed with the low intensity overnight shelter on Mahurangi Island addresses this need in part. Further low cost opportunities need to be investigated.

Huts and tracks play a valuable role in search and rescue operations and need to be retained

The decisions regarding removal and replacement of huts results in no significant change in the number of huts in the popular backcountry tramping areas in the Coromandel and Pureora Forest Parks. High cost of maintenance, unstable ground conditions and reasonable alternative tracks were considerations in the decisions to close tracks.

Need to provide access for the disabled to tracks, signs and facilities, e.g. toilets, car parks, butts, booked accommodation

No formal, specific submissions were received. However, legislation and departmental obligations under the New Zealand Disability Strategy requires consideration of disabled people before making decisions. Rising advocacy for equal citizenship for the disabled highlights the need to evaluate opportunities and standards of appropriate facilities. The Building Act 1991 does require structures to be accessible. NZ 4121:2001 "Design for Access and Mobility – Buildings and Associated facilities" also applies. Preliminary discussions with the designated CCS representative for Waikato have taken place. It is intended to evaluate existing short walks and walking tracks, linked car parks and toilets. To achieve consistent evaluations, it is imperative that only trained access auditors assess existing facilities.

Self contained vehicles / camper van/bus use of car parks, amenity areas and road ends

Members of the NZ Motor Home Association make extensive use of existing camping sites where there is good road access, particularly outside of the peak holiday periods. Visitor safety at road ends and remote amenity areas is an issue with visitors' vehicles and personal belongings at risk of theft and damage. It has been reported that overnight use of marina and golf course car parks elsewhere in the country has security benefits. There appears to be merit in encouraging a presence of desirable visitors / campervans at some sites. The department prefers that all overnight visitors at vehicle accessible locations to use designated camping areas.

Maintain by community option for tracks and contract track maintenance

No interest expressed by community groups in management agreements. This option remains open. Interest in track maintenance contracts was expressed by the Coromandel based Independent Living Trust.

Access to and through Wbangamarino wetlands

Support was recorded by the National Wetlands Trust and Miranda Naturalist Trust. Liaison with these partners will continue.

Criticism of lack of track and hut maintenance

Lack of maintenance has been acknowledged and will be addressed as funding becomes available. Hut maintenance has received priority attention. The intention is to achieve effective management of existing recreation opportunities.

Positive impact of tracks on North Coromandel local economy

The network of tracks is for local resident use and an attraction for domestic and international tourism. This supports the natural resource economics debate.

Section Two

7. Making decisions

The following decisions on 30 specific proposals are based on the understanding provided by the above general points.

7.1 HAURAKI AREA

FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION REQUESTS	DOC DECISION	REASON FOR DECISION
Cape Colville Management Zone				
Stony Bay and Te Hope tracks	Cease maintenance	Well known destination. Stunning views. Interest in DOC pest eradication.	Cease maintenance	Iwi cultural values, a sensitive environment and reasonable alternative routes between Stony Bay and Fantail campsites offering a similar experience take precedence over the high level of local interest. Access to view DOC pest control has been enhanced by improved track access along recently fenced routes. This decision is linked to the Mt Moehau track cease maintenance decision as the recent track upgrades for Biodiversity projects and alternative routes greatly improve public access.
Mt Moehau track	Cease maintenance		Cease maintenance	As above.
Bum Bay track	Proposed new	Formalise a track already in use	Proposed new	Strong local, mountain club and kayak/camper support. Demonstrated user preference.
Kauaeranga Valley Management Zone				
Hihi-Kopu hut	Proposed new standard hut 10 bunks	Multi day back country trips.	Proposed new	Support from target user group
Christmas Creek hut	Proposed new serviced hut 20 beds	Multi day back country trips.	Proposed new	Support from target user group
Crosbies Clearing camp site	Proposed new remote, rustic camping experience, informal site with a toilet a shelter and access to water	Enhanced N-S / Kauaeranga Valley-Tapu-Coroglen Road tramping axis Shelter needed from sudden storms and wind	Proposed new	There is a need for shelter in sudden and extreme weather conditions and offers a remote camping experience.

FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION REQUESTS	DOC DECISION	REASON FOR DECISION
Hotoritori pony trail	Cease maintenance	Loop route ideal for horse riding. Low level of use with low level maintenance. Alternative use by off highway vehicles (OHV's)	Reconsider, maintain to appropriate standard for horse riding.	Best existing option for horses. Alternative local site for OHV's at Maratoto and regionally in Pureora Forest Park.
Karaka stream to Wainora kauri track	Cease maintenance Alternative track in close proximity	Need to retain round trip and loop option. Close to Thames town, ease of access. Retain as marked route	Reconsider pending detailed investigation and projection of costs	Detailed / geotech investigation needed. Bridge may be needed. Retention of loop option to Waitotahi Creek strongly supported. Sound track planning principle.
Tararu track	Cease maintenance Alternative track - Waiotahi, in close proximity	Close proximity to Thames town, ease of access. Retain as marked route. Alternate route poorly maintained. Off highway vehicle use	Cease maintenance	District council is responsible for the approach to the trail head. Reasonable alternative is available. Maintain by community option.

Central Coromandel Management Zone

Tapu Coroglen Summit to Maumaupaki track	Cease maintenance	Strong support for retention as a marked route	Cease maintenance	Terrain is rugged with high safety risks. Challenge for the top end of the spectrum of fitness, map reading skills etc. in Central Coromandel as a Remote experience.
Castle Rock track	Cease maintenance	Popular destination with stunning views. Distinctive natural landmark. Close to tourism hub of Coromandel town and widely publicised. Strong local interest.	Cease maintenance	Request by Maori land owners to close the track (confirmed as Maori Reservation in Gazette 1989 P 4141) over rides the demand. There is an opportunity for iwi to establish a guided tour service. Additional issue of access road across Crown Forestry lease land.
Waiiau Summit track	Cease maintenance	Used by local trampers, school groups and hunters. Historical interest as a coach road. Interest in positive effects of DOC pest control. Lack of publicity and signs.	Reconsidered, maintain to appropriate standard.	Strong local support.

Cathedral Cove Management Zone – Coastal Reserves

Cathedral cove to Cooks Beach Coastal Walkway	Proposed new	Easy gradients. Coastal views Potential short stages and longer link from Hahei to Whitianga with commercial "taxi" services Route first & upgrade on demand	Proposed new	Existing high use levels / demand from predominant user group of day visitors using Cathedral Cove track - this is essentially an extension to meet walking track standards.
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FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION REQUESTS	DOC DECISION	REASON FOR DECISION
Hauraki Gulf Marine Park				
Mahurangi Island shelter/campsite	Proposed new	Risks of fire, fish poaching base, invasive fauna & flora. Sea kayaking user group demand increasing - decreasing coastal campsites	Proposed new	Risks can be actively managed. Highly modified habitat, re-vegetation strategy progressing. Low natural and historic values.
Waikawau Bay Visitor Management Zone				
Knox Farm track	Proposed new	Access to northern headland / Waikawau Bay	Proposed new	Formalise existing access to recently acquired land

7.2 MANIAPOTO AREA

FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION REQUESTS	DOC DECISION	REASON FOR DECISION
Pureora Forest Park				
Hauhungaroa Hut	Proposed new	Multi day tramps and loop options Potential relief / alternative to Tongariro National Park tracks	Proposed new	Demand for tramping track experience. Supports Te Araroa. Within 1 day tramp of Waihaha hut. On network to south and east of Waihaha hut. Addresses the visitor and staff safety issue of rapid and extreme weather changes.
Hauhungaroa Range return loop track	Proposed new	Increases options in relation to existing track network Multi day options	Proposed new	Pureora village trail head offers booked accommodation and parking. Local club interest. Contributes to track network.
Landcare hut	Basic hut	Potential to improve tramping options	Proposed new	Existing hut is serviceable for two persons. Original purpose to support research achieved Suitable to test demand. Network / loop options enhanced
Mangatutu track	Proposed new	Short walk (3.2 km)	Proposed new	Network options enhanced
Nuffield lodge	Remove	Concession or club maintenance	Remove	Dilapidated, high cost for minimal maintenance
Pureora Heritage track	Proposed new	Short Walk opportunity	Proposed new	Pureora village trail head offers toilets and parking Interpretation opportunity.
Okahukura road	Maintain to a lower standard	Mountain bike use Off highway vehicle use	Maintain to a lower standard	Reduce maintenance costs Rising demand
Piropiro roads	Maintain to a lower standard	Mountain bike use Off highway vehicle use	Maintain to a lower standard	Reduce maintenance costs Rising demand

7.3 WAIKATO AREA

FACILITY NAME	DOC PROPOSAL	SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION REQUESTS	DOC DECISION	REASON FOR DECISION
Pirongia Forest Park				
Tiwarawara track	Cease maintenance	Loss of tramping option/ variation. Alternative of reopening old Hihikiwi track	Cease maintenance	Supports Te Araroa through Pirongia Forest Park by using an alternative track.
Whangamarino Wetlands				
Guinness road, Meremere	Cease maintenance	Off road vehicle use as an alternative. Needs National Wetlands Trust support.	Cease maintenance	Too short for off highway vehicle use. No longer needed for mining operations.
Kopuera car park	Proposed new	Support from National Wetlands Trust. Conditional on support of National Wetlands Trust.	Proposed new	Complements proposed National Wetlands Centre and wetlands tourist road route and proposed trail network
Lake Kopuera track	Proposed new	Access to wetlands. Support from National Wetlands Trust. Conditional on support of National Wetlands Trust.	Proposed new	Complements proposed National Wetlands Centre and existing wetlands tourist road route and proposed trail network
Lake Rotomanuka track	Proposed new	Access to wetlands. Support from National Wetlands Trust. Conditional on support of National Wetlands Trust.	Proposed new	Complements proposed National Wetlands Centre and existing wetlands tourist road route and proposed trail network
Lake Whangamarino track	Proposed new	Access to wetlands. Support from National Wetlands Trust. Conditional on support of National Wetlands Trust.	Proposed new	Complements proposed National Wetlands Centre and existing wetlands tourist road route and proposed trail network
Whangamarino car park	Proposed new	Access to wetlands. Support from National Wetlands Trust. Conditional on support of National Wetlands Trust.	Proposed new	Complements proposed National Wetlands Centre and existing wetlands tourist road route and proposed trail network

8. Summary of decisions

8.1 HAURAKI AREA

The proposals for two new huts and one new remote campsite with shelter enhance back country tramping options. A new campsite with shelter on Mahurangi Island responds to the growing trend of sea kayaking. Cease maintenance on four tramping tracks, cease maintenance on one short walk, one new short walk. Two new coastal walking tracks remained unchanged. The proposal to cease maintenance on one walking track was reconsidered to provide for horse riding. The proposals to cease maintenance on two tramping tracks were reconsidered pending a detailed geotech investigation on the Karaka stream to Wainora kauri track and due to strong local support for the Waiau summit track.

8.2 MANIAPOTO AREA

The proposal for one new hut and use of an existing two bunk research staff hut supports the use of a section of Te Araroa route in the south eastern sector of the Pureora Forest Park. Removal of Nuffield Lodge and Chainmen's hut is due to the dilapidated condition and safety risks. Proposals to cease maintenance on three tramping tracks, two new walking tracks and one new tramping track remained unchanged.

All proposals for roads to change to be maintained to a lower level for mountain bike or off highway/quad/four wheel drive use were supported or received a low level of interest. These changes are in response to upholding the demand for established recreation opportunities of hunting and tramping and new trends in motorised recreation. The road network in Pureora Forest is a legacy of past Forest Industry. To achieve the proposed changes in use and appropriate maintenance standards will require comprehensive research to gain a clear understanding of legal responsibilities in terms of agreements and obligations to maintain certain roads.

8.3 WAIKATO AREA

The proposals for cease maintenance on one tramping track and one road remained unchanged. Proposals for two new car parks linked to three new short walks in the Whangamarino wetlands present new opportunities with significant education / interpretation potential. The Te Toto Gorge track on the West coast presents a new opportunity for coastal walking with support from the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand.

9. Overview of decisions in terms of range of recreation opportunities

The range of recreation opportunities in the Waikato is broadened as an outcome of this process. A key objective of a reduction in high maintenance cost assets with associated visitor and staff safety issues is achieved. The financial commitment required by the decisions will not be significantly more than the original proposals.

At the top end of the tramping opportunity spectrum, the Remoteness Seeker group is offered a remote tramping opportunity in the central Coromandel. Multi day tramping opportunities and additional loops are offered in the southern Coromandel for the Backcountry Adventurers visitor group. This opportunity is further enhanced with a remote campground and shelter and two new huts in the southern Coromandel. Multi day tramping opportunity in the south eastern sector of the Pureora Forest Park is broadened with the provision of two huts. The decision to remove two existing dilapidated huts does not lessen multi day options. Long distance tramping opportunities through the Waikato are enhanced. Te Araroa is supported with decisions in Pirongia Forest Park regarding selection of the best route and a new hut in the Southern sector of the Pureora Forest Park. All walking track opportunities remain and two new opportunities arise in the Pureora Forest Park. An extension of the Cathedral Cove walking track and the new walking track linking Port Jackson campground with Fletcher Bay will add to the coastal recreation opportunities.

A network of tracks, boardwalks and car parks will provide access to and through the Whangamarino Wetlands, a key Waikato ecosystem of international importance. A strong interpretative conservation message opportunity is also presented here. Proximity to Auckland and located adjacent to State Highway one raises the potential strategic recreational destination value of these wetlands. A new track to the TeToto Gorge/ Karioi mountain on the West coast and a new track on the Firth of Thames inter tidal zone will add to the variety of coastal short walk recreational opportunities.

It is strategically important to note that the demand for recreation opportunities for the short walk and walking track visitor groups will escalate in the short, medium and long term given the rapidly changing demographics of the region, and the nation. The greatest contributing factor being retirees who are active more often and have a longer life expectancy. The neighbouring Auckland conurbation is the origin of the majority of domestic visitors to the Waikato Conservancy's recreation opportunities.

Increased options for the growing visitor user group of mountain bikers is primarily addressed with the decisions on the network of logging roads in the Pureora Forest Park. The issue of potential conflict between trampers and mountain bikers using the same tracks is addressed by identification of dedicated tracks for each of these user groups. Given the existing extensive network of roads in this Park, the option for off highway vehicle/quads/four wheel drive vehicles can also be added to the range of recreation opportunities available in the Pureora Forest Park.

An island basic camping opportunity is offered with the decision to provide a campsite/shelter on Mahurangi Island. This responds partially to sea kayakers growing concern about limited, if not diminishing, coastal camping opportunities.

More work is planned with focus groups. The Recreation Opportunities Review process highlights the need to maintain liaison and work with communities and visitor user groups on an ongoing basis. It is recognised that relatively few submissions were received and that we (DOC) probably still do not connect with many New Zealanders, many Waikato residents and in particular key components of society - Iwi, new New Zealanders, families and young people. Having good social science research support now and in the future by DOC Science and Research and other external providers is essential. The Conservancy also needs to be satisfied it is conducting sound quantitative and qualitative monitoring of visitor numbers and visitor impacts. This is needed to support what is constantly changing business that needs to be cognisant of societal changes. An exciting place to be for which the results of the ROR might be only scratching the surface.

Appendix 1

WHAT THE DECISIONS MEAN

Decisions for facilities in the Conservancy have been made by DOC as an outcome of this process of consultation. The options for future management are grouped under 13 broad headings.

Maintain

The facility will continue to be maintained, to the appropriate standard, providing recreation opportunities the same as, or similar to, those currently available. If it is a building or a structure it will be replaced with a similar facility at the end of its useful life. DOC will bring the asset up to the required standard if it is not currently to the required standard.

Proposed (new)

A new facility will be developed in a place where there has not previously been one.

Replace

A new facility will be built replacing an existing facility that will soon reach the end of its useful life.

Upgrade to higher standard

The facility requires upgrading to a higher standard or to a larger size to meet the needs of the main visitor and/or mitigate against visitor impacts.

Maintain to lower standard

The facility will be maintained to a lower standard than has previously been the case. Often this will mean continuing to manage to a lower standard because the original standard intended for the facility was too high and never achieved.

Remove

Remove the facility (if a structure, sign, hut or building). If a hut, remove by the end of 2006. If a track, remove markers, plant out track entrances and leave the track to revert to a natural state, or assist this process if necessary.

Minimal maintenance

Used for huts and other buildings. The building will be inspected by DOC on a regular cycle. Inspectors will travel with basic tools and equipment and some minor maintenance (that can be done during the regular inspections) will be undertaken. When the building is no longer weatherproof or becomes dangerous or unsanitary,

it will be removed, unless there is a community group willing and able to bring it up to standard and maintained to standard (see Seeking Community Maintenance)

Cease maintenance

For tracks, markers will be left until they naturally disappear, but the track will be left to revert to a natural state. Roads are closed to motor vehicles. Carparks, amenity areas and campsites are left to revert to a natural state and any associated buildings or signs will be removed. Signs will be placed at track entrances stating that the track is no longer maintained.

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.

Own by DOC but maintain by community

The facility is one DOC believes should be retained. It is one that could realistically be maintained by a club, community group or local authority. The facility may already be maintained by the community. A management agreement should be established if one is not already in place. The funding assumption is that DOC will not cover maintenance costs, but will fund inspections and replacement.

Owned and maintained by the community

The Department currently has a formal agreement in place with a club, community group or local authority to maintain the asset. If, in the future, that agreement falls over, the future of that asset will be determined following consultation with the community.

Seeking community maintenance

The asset currently has no formal agreement in place and is not one that DOC believes it should maintain at all. 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

Non-visitor DOC management

For facilities receiving very little or no visitor use, the facility will be managed by the department for other purposes, such as to accommodate pest control staff or to access a biodiversity conservation area. The facilities will not normally be available for visitor use.