

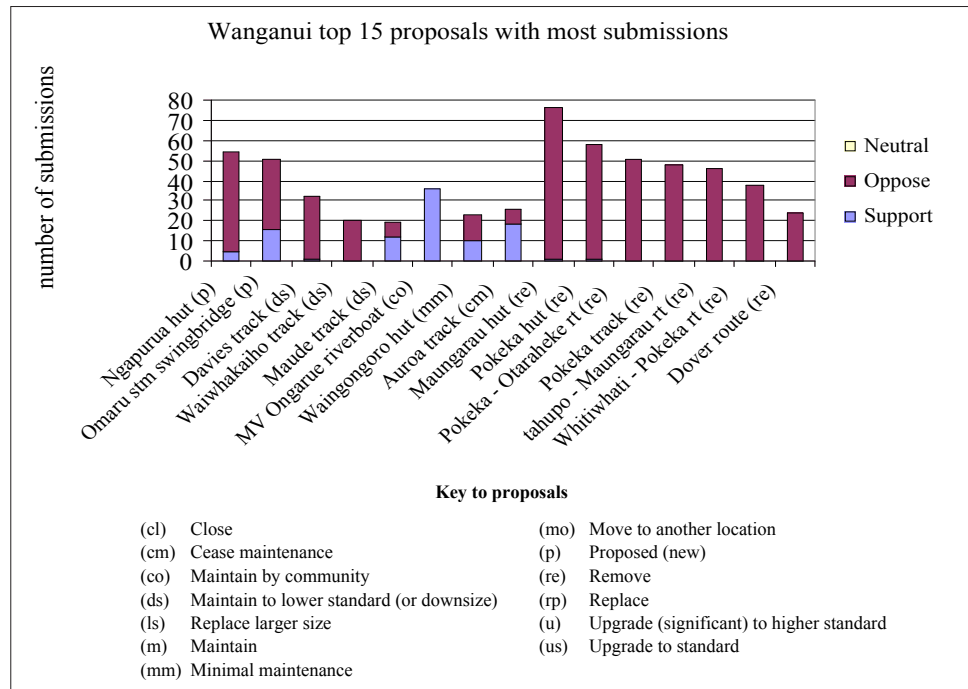


Published by:
 Department of Conservation,
 Southern Regional Office,
 P.O. Box 13-049
 Christchurch, New Zealand.
 October 2004.

Wanganui Conservancy recreation opportunities review

Summary of submissions and decisions

Submission analysis



The number of submissions received in opposition to asset proposals in the Waitotara Conservation Area resulted in a meeting with key stakeholders and submitter groups, along with Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board members, to discuss possible management options for this area.

Some of the main themes from submissions on Wanganui Conservancy proposals were as follows:

- The closure of any tracks is considered a backward step - regular visitors and locals want a variety of tramping opportunities (including less popular, challenging tracks) to cater for a range of abilities.
- Removing any tracks will reduce recreational opportunities, as many tracks can be used either on their own or in conjunction with other tracks - trampers want loop opportunities retained.
- Tracks with no or few structures are assumed to have low maintenance costs and should be retained. Rather than removing tracks outright, retain signs and markers so that tracks can still be used by experienced trampers/hunters
- Tracks that provide an escape route (whether classified as "safe exit from popular track" or not) should be retained, e.g. Auroa Track.
- DOC is too focused on achieving a very high standard for high-use tracks near roadends and is neglecting backcountry areas, even those close to roadends



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

- the funding could go towards maintaining more kilometres of track to a good tramping track standard, rather than upgrading only a few tracks to walking track or short walk standard.
- DOC's minimum service standard requirements for huts are too high
- Too much money is proposed to be spent on the more popular huts yet less popular huts could have their lives extended with a minimal amount of maintenance/cost.
- Backcountry huts should be retained, even if in poor condition, especially those in remote areas, as they provide shelter in severe weather/emergencies.
- Removal of backcountry huts will discourage recreational hunting and pest numbers may get out of hand; huts should also be retained for ongoing DOC pest control programmes, as recommended in the CMS.

Decisions

In response to submissions, decisions have been made, that will in general mean little change in the range of recreation opportunities provided within Wanganui Conservancy. There will, however, be some upgrades, some new facilities and some reduced effort.

In response to the strong opposition registered through submissions to the closure of routes and removal of huts in the eastern Waitotara area, the following solution has been brokered through public meetings:

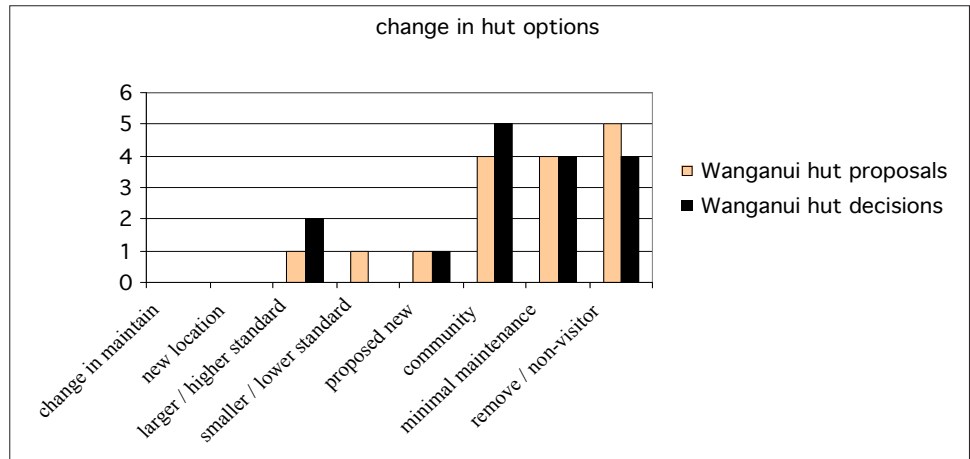
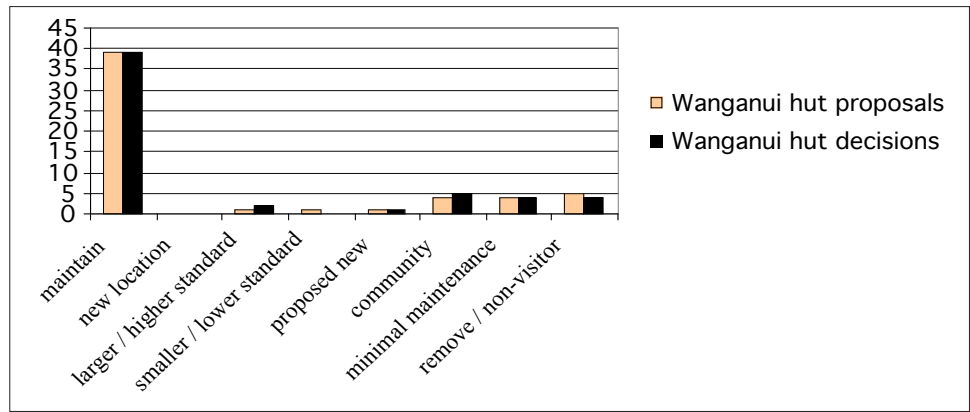
- A maintenance agreement to be negotiated with a local tramping club to maintain Pokeka Track and the eastern routes (if an agreement is not established the tracks will not be maintained).
- Following the removal of Pokeka and Maungarau Huts, two enclosed shelters will be built at strategic locations on the Eastern Waitotara Route.
- A new suspension bridge across the Waitotara River, near Kapara, will provide access for hunters into the extensive eastern Waitotara area.

In Taranaki, the majority of tracks will be retained although some to a lower service standard (e.g. the Dover Track to route standard).

The upgrading of a number of popular walking tracks at roadends in Egmont National Park (and at Atene and Gordon Park near Wanganui) will enhance day visitor opportunities. Some of these tracks, including a new track proposed for Lucy's Gully, will be developed to barrier free standard, providing new opportunities for disabled people, families with young children and elderly people.

The new hut proposed for the Matemateaonga Track and new bridges and camping facilities proposed in the Mangapurua area and at Whakahoro will enhance the two major backcountry tramping opportunities in Whanganui National Park and provide improved facilities on the Whanganui Journey.

In the western Ruahine Ranges, four huts will be managed on minimal maintenance and two huts will be removed. The Department will explore entering into a management agreement with a local branch of the NZ Deerstalkers Association to upgrade and maintain Te Ekaou Hut. The remaining 23 huts in the western part of Ruahine Forest Park will continue to provide a good range of opportunities for hunting and tramping.



Wanganui Conservancy will manage 775 km of track in the future, 34km less than the current track network. The changes in proposals for tracks, resulting from consultation, are shown in the following figure. The first bar represents the *change* in track length to be 'maintained' as *decisions* compared with *proposals*, and the other bars compare actual length of track first with *proposals* and then *decisions* to change from the current situation.

