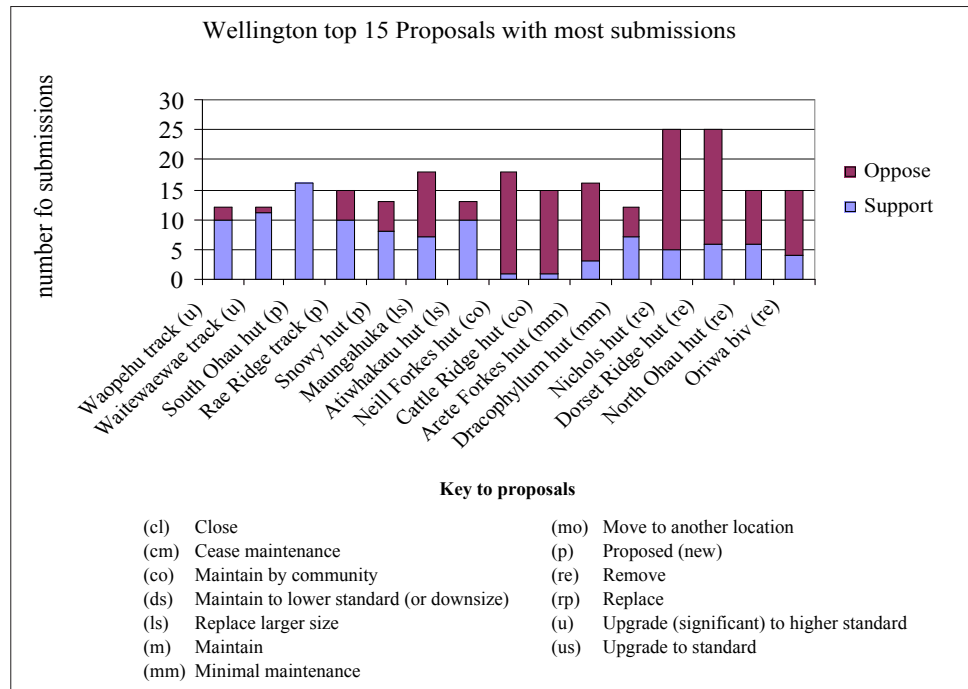


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# Wellington Conservancy recreation opportunities review

## Summary of submissions and decisions

### Submission analysis



By the nature of the comments received it appeared that many submitters were experienced back country users. Submitters were generally supportive of providing a variety of experiences for users with differing level of experience. Submissions generally encouraged good access to and use of the parks. A number of submitters raised concern about decreasing access to the more remote areas of the park due to the closure of tracks in the past and non-replacement of huts in more remote areas. A number of submitters called for a focus on retaining and enhancing the existing network, with some suggestion that it should be restored to the NZFS network status, which should have priority over the development of new facilities. Some concern was expressed that, if access to the more remote areas of forest park is limited due to reduction in facilities, increasing number of people will be channelled into smaller areas and larger huts, causing crowding and environmental impacts (especially in the sub-alpine zones). There was also concern that the upgrade of tracks could produce the same crowding effect and present a safety risk where high quality tracks lead into more challenging areas of the ranges. Submitters are concerned about the lack of parity between investment in the front country and 'fringes' against the investment in facilities in the more remote areas of the parks. The feeling is that there is disproportionate expenditure on road-end facilities and large huts and bridges. If huts and structures could be built more



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cheaply then more could be retained overall. There was also the feeling that the priorities in the Tararua Aorangi Hut Committee (TAHC) strategy reflected a lower level of funding than is now available and that proposals should therefore be more generous than those presented in the TAHC strategy.

In order to foster a safe tramping environment, there is felt to be a need for adequately short spacing between huts (in particular to allow for the affect of adverse on travel times in 'the tops'). Submissions also requested the placement of signs on key junctions on open tops, to assist route finding.

There is a general concern that tracks do not become over-engineered leading to loss of their essential basic character. A number of submissions assumed that 'upgrade to standard' meant increasing the service standard for particular tracks, rather than doing the remedial work needed to re-establish the track to its original standard.

## *Decisions*

The strength and depth of submissions centred on the requirement to retain a backcountry and remote network of huts and tracks, principally focusing on the Tararua Forest Park. As a result decisions now reflect an overall increase in the level of infrastructure to be maintained to support the backcountry experience.

- Three backcountry/remote huts (Nichols, Arete Forks and Neill Forks) have been added into the core network.
- A new hut is proposed for South Ohau, responding to the level of interest shown in replacing the hut removed due to slips a couple of years ago.
- A number of tramping tracks proposed for downgrade or cease maintenance will now be retained, and the Nichols and Dorset Ridge linking track re-established.
- Two huts, Dorset Ridge and North Ohau, have offers from groups of hunters to take on their management.

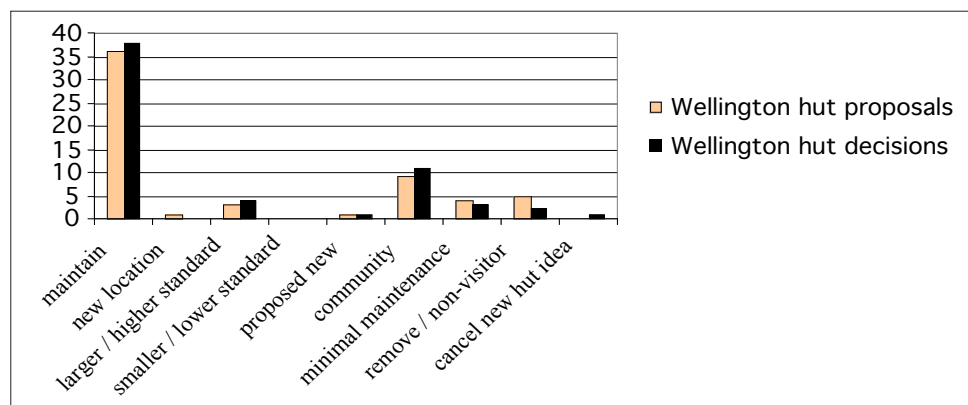
Progress towards improving the limited opportunities for the less able or less experienced trampers will be made by proceeding with the Rae Ridge proposals and through ensuring dry weather routes to Totara Flats and Waiotauru.

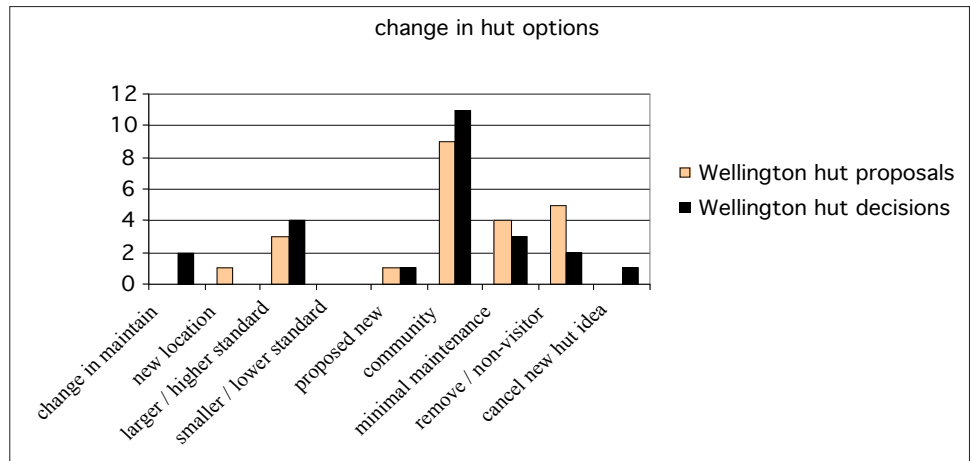
New day visitor facility proposals will be pursued:

- Additional tracks and facilities for Kapiti Island
- Paraparaumu Scenic Reserve tracks

The bridge on the Donnelly Loop will be upgraded to allow wheelchair access to the Donnelly Flat and further up the Atiwhakatu Valley.

Some decisions are contrary to the management approaches set out in the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy and will be worked through with the Conservation Board who will consider their status in light of the upcoming review of the CMS.





Wellington Conservancy will manage 763 km of track in the future, 12 km 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.

