

Kahurangi National Park

Management Plan Partial Review

A revised Kahurangi National Park Management Plan (the plan), containing new provisions arising from a partial review of the plan, was approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) in December 2010. This means the five matters addressed by the review are now in effect. The matters reviewed related to mountain biking, aircraft landings, hunting, horse riding, and private accommodation.

The plan was developed following an extensive public consultation process, including notification of the draft plan, public submissions, hearings, and consideration by the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board, the NZCA and the Minister of Conservation.

Kahurangi National Park

Kahurangi National Park, covering 452,000 hectares, is the second largest national park in the country. It contains the greatest range of landforms, habitats and ecosystems of any of New Zealand's national parks, including important populations of threatened species like giant *Powelliphanta* snails, whio (blue duck) and roa (great spotted kiwi). The park also has significant historical, cultural and recreational values, many of which are focussed on the Heaphy Track, which is a Great Walk.

The plan changes

The key changes that have been made to the plan are summarised below.

Mountain biking

Mountain biking trials are now allowed on three park tracks, on the Heaphy Track during the five-month winter season only (1 May to 30 September); and year-round on part of the Kill Devil Track and on the Flora Saddle to Barron Flat track.

Plan provisions incorporate careful measures to minimise impacts of the activity on other track users and the environment. Mountain bikers and walkers are urged to show consideration for each other. Mountain bikers are required to comply with a Mountain Bikers Code of Conduct and plan requirements.

The trials will run until the end of 2013 and will be monitored by the Department to assess social and environmental impacts. Monitoring information and feedback from track users will be taken into account in evaluating the trials to determine whether or not mountain biking should continue on the tracks.



For all three tracks the maximum group size is six riders, and mountain bikes cannot be taken off the formed tracks or into huts. No night riding is allowed on the Heaphy and Flora Saddle to Barron Flat tracks to protect wildlife and their habitat, particularly nocturnal *Powelliphanta* snails and roa (great spotted kiwi).

Separate factsheets on the mountain biking trials on these tracks can be found on the Department's website www.doc.govt.nz or are available at Department of Conservation visitor centres.

Aircraft landings

Aircraft landings throughout the park are now managed in accordance with landing zones and limits. There are four landing zones: Frequent, Restricted, Remote, and the Tasman Wilderness Area. Landings are generally provided for in the Frequent and Restricted zones but are not generally allowed in the Remote zone or the Tasman Wilderness Area.

The Frequent landing zone is limited to two locations in the park: the Karamea Bend and Roaring Lion Hut. This zone classification reflects the high visitation in summer months to fish in these famous trout fishing areas. The maximum number of landings in this zone for general visitors is 265 per year (1 July – 30 June) and 90 per calendar month.

The majority of the park is within the Restricted landing zone. The maximum number of landings in this entire zone for general visitors is 520 per year (1 July – 30 June) and 145 per calendar month.

Additionally, aircraft may also land in the Frequent and Restricted zones, subject to limits and other criteria, for the following purposes: private aircraft, filming, caving expeditions, commercial rafting trips, and private rafting/kayaking trips.

The Remote zone has been established to protect wilderness qualities for visitors, and includes areas with high landscape and scenic values, and biodiversity values that are vulnerable to increased



human activity and weed and pest incursions. Within the Remote zone aircraft landings are generally not allowed. This zone includes: the north-western coastline; the Heaphy Track; the Goulard Ranges and around Mt Olympus; the Cobb Valley and Flora tracks; the Luna and South Arthur Ranges, Mt Arthur and Tableland area; Granity Creek and Courthouse Flat; Mt Owen; and the South Branch of the Wangapeka River. Occasional landings will only be permitted within this zone for New Zealand Speleological Society major caving expeditions to transport equipment (but not people).

The Remote zone contains within it a number of specific sites zoned Restricted, where Restricted landing zone conditions apply (as detailed above). Those specific sites are: the Kahurangi Keepers Hut; Mt Olympus; the mid-reaches of the Aorere River; the Cobb Valley Road end; the lower and mid-reaches of the Crow River; and the Heaphy Hut. An additional restriction of only ten landings per year applies at the Heaphy Hut (from 1 October to 30 April and between the hours of 10 am to 3 pm).

The Tasman Wilderness Area is a special area created under the National Parks Act 1980 where no aircraft are allowed to land, except for a few specific purposes, such as for pest control and other park management purposes. There are a number of restrictions around the times some of these activities can take place.

Hunting

The period during which hunting is not allowed in the Cobb Valley Flats and Mt Arthur/Tableland area for public safety reasons has been reduced. It is now from sunset 22 December to sunrise 9 February of the following year. Additionally, the hunting exclusion corridor either side of the Heaphy and Wangapeka tracks has been reduced from 1 km to 500 metres, but it now applies all year round. The 500-metre hunting exclusion area allows favoured deer habitat on the margins of river valleys to be hunted while minimising the effects of such hunting on the experience of track users.

Within the Tasman Wilderness Area, the period during which commercial hunting (the recovery of carcasses for food processing and the live recovery of deer) for deer control purposes can take place has been increased. The exclusion periods for commercial hunting in the wilderness area are now from 22 December to 5 January (of the following

Mt Owen, Kahurangi National Park. Photo: Rudy Tetteroo.





year) and from 23 March to 9 April (plus the four days of Easter if it falls outside this period). This is consistent with the exclusion periods for commercial hunting in wilderness areas in the South Island.

The Department may also use ground-based recreational hunters, to undertake deer control in the Tasman Wilderness Area, using helicopters to access the area. This can only occur between 23 March and 9 April (plus the four days of Easter if it falls outside this period) when commercial operators are excluded. It would be subject to conditions that ensure the values of the Tasman Wilderness Area are protected, such as leaving no trace of human presence.

The changes to the hunting restrictions in the Tasman Wilderness Area are in response to increased deer numbers and heavy deer browse on threatened plant species.

Aorere Peak and Anatoki Peaks, Kahurangi National Park. Photo: Les Molloy.

Horse riding

In addition to a existing provisions that provide for a horse riding concession within the park, to the Kahurangi Keepers House (near the Kahurangi Lighthouse), the plan now provides for horse riding through a small part of the northern end of the park as well. The route has been established in response to public safety concerns with riding horses on the narrow and winding Wharariki Road, which provides access from Puponga to Puponga Farm Park (a recreation reserve). This specified route across national park land follows the remains of an old stock route and tracks used by pit ponies for coal mining.

Horse-riding concessionaire use of this route is limited to eight return trips per day. Access for independent horse rider(s) is through Puponga Farm Park. A permit from the Golden Bay Area Manager is required for independent horse riders to use this horse route in the park (and to ride over Puponga Farm Park), with a limit of 4 permits per day. Conditions of use for both concessionaires and independent horse riders will include that horses are only allowed on the route if they are being led or ridden and no horse can stay in the park unattended or overnight.

Private accommodation

The plan clarifies that no private or commercial accommodation (such as on the Heaphy Track) should be allowed in the park, as it is inconsistent with General Policy for National Parks 2005 and plan provisions, including in relation to management of the Heaphy Track Corridor as outlined below.

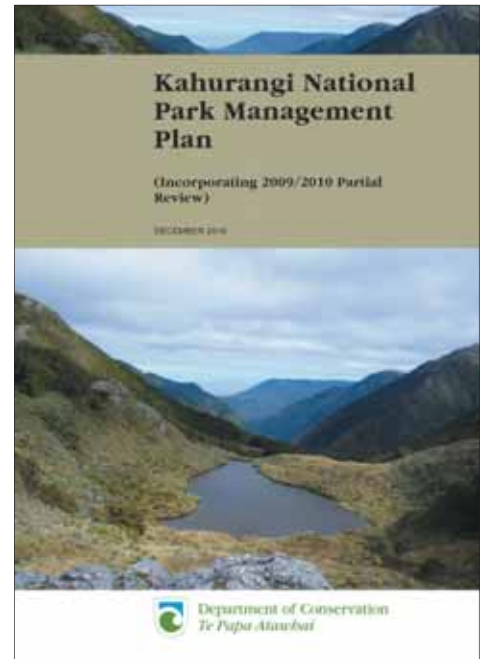


Heaphy Track Corridor

To enable more integrated site-focussed management, the Heaphy Track Corridor has been identified as a distinct place within the plan. There are five outcomes for this place:

- a. *The Heaphy Track Corridor continues to reflect the diversity of values that contribute to it being a unique place and historic route in Kahurangi National Park. These include a range of exceptional landscapes, scenery, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities together with interesting historical and cultural heritage features.*
- b. *The Heaphy Track Corridor provides a premier example of natural New Zealand giving a backcountry experience in the heart of Kahurangi National Park.*
- c. *Visitors to the Heaphy Track Corridor can experience natural beauty, quiet and solitude. The Corridor is a relatively undeveloped environment and remains free from the proliferation of man-made structures.*
- d. *Within the Corridor the Heaphy Track is managed as a Great Walk, which encourages self-reliance in a moderate to low risk backcountry environment. It gives visitors with limited backcountry experience a safe and challenging environment, accessed either by foot or seasonally by mountain bike where potential conflicts between different user groups are minimised.*
- e. *The integrity of the historic pack track on the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy side is preserved.*

Copies of management plan



If you would like to see the whole plan it can be viewed on the Department of Conservation's website www.doc.govt.nz.

A hard copy will be available for purchase from March 2011 from the Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy Office at 186 Bridge Street, Private Bag 5, Nelson 7042.

Phone 03-546 9335 or

Email: nelson-marlboroughco@doc.govt.nz

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Trampers on the Heaphy Track. Photo: Diana Parr.