

4. USE AND ACCESSIBILITY

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4.1 Visitor Services and Management

Policy

To provide for a range of appropriate activities in the Park, subject to the preservation of its intrinsic natural and historic and cultural values and the protection of the remote and wilderness qualities of the Park.

Background

(See also Section 1.3.6)

Access

Kahurangi National Park has many access points on its periphery (Map 2). The major road-ends are generally well developed with short stop/day use flowing from these sites.

In the interior, the Park contains extensive areas of wilderness and sanctuary and a great diversity of landforms and living things. The level of tourism promotion was low prior to the national park investigation but national and international promotion have increased markedly since then. The new national park status of the area is likely to increase the profile the Park which will attract more visitors, particularly those from overseas.

Recreational Opportunities

The Recreational Opportunities Spectrum (ROS) is a system of recreational categorisation developed in the 1980s to map the various recreational opportunities in a consistent way across all areas and organisations. There are six categories of recreational opportunity in the spectrum: Urban; Urban Fringe; Rural; Backcountry; Remote; and Wilderness. Each category has a set of criteria which define its characteristics and hence the type of recreational experience which is found within it. (Appendix 5). Kahurangi National Park offers backcountry, remote and wilderness ROS category experiences (as depicted on the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Management Strategy ROS map and the West Coast draft CMS map, sheet 1).

The Park provides visitors with a range of opportunities from short bush walks close to a car park with a toilet (backcountry - drive in), to wilderness tramping with no facilities provided at all. In between are activities such as one to five day backcountry tramps on formed tracks with huts provided; remote camping and tramping on lightly marked routes; helicopter flights to remote sites for a fishing weekend; hunting for deer and pigs on foot using formed tracks with huts (backcountry), or routes (remote); remote river rafting and kayaking; climbing and caving (backcountry/remote). The variety of activities require a range of practical experience to cope with the different

levels of risk involved in each activity. In general, the further into the Park a visitor ventures, the higher the level of self reliance and skill required.

Remote and wilderness recreation are becoming rare opportunities in an ever developing world, so it is important to protect those opportunities which remain. Many of New Zealand's national parks offer short road-end walks and backcountry tramping opportunities, but few can offer the remote and wilderness experiences available in Kahurangi.

Issues and Opportunities

Access

The National Parks Act states that “*subject to the provisions of this Act and to the imposition of such conditions and restrictions as may be necessary for the preservation of the native plants and animals or for the welfare in general of the parks, the public shall have freedom of entry and access to the parks, so that they may receive in full measure the inspiration, enjoyment, recreation, and other benefits that may be gained from mountains, forests, sounds, seacoasts, lakes, rivers and other natural features*”. *This gives the public the general right of free access to the Park, but also gives the Department the ability to limit access if necessary to protect the natural values of the Park.

Visitor Use

Use of tracks and huts is likely to increase, but it is expected that this would be centred on key backcountry tracks which are already developed and promoted. The Park has an extensive hut and track system, much of which has a low level of use at present, and existing facilities could cope with an increase in use. As use grows, it will be increasingly important to maintain a range of differing levels of opportunity and associated facilities.

Some environments can cope with high visitor numbers better than others, for example the hardened Heaphy Track can sustain much higher levels of use than many of the high altitude and fragile substrates of the Park. Cave and karst areas are particularly vulnerable to damage by visitors through wearing down of the sharp edged sculpting of exposed marble and bogging up tracks in wet karst forest areas. Facilities also have the potential to damage these areas through toilet wastes entering karst aquifers, track drainage into sinkholes and track cutting over karren areas. The Key Biodiversity Areas (see Section 3.1 Biodiversity) can also be particularly vulnerable to human damage and impacts need to be monitored in order to identify areas which may need further protection through visitor management.

The draft West Coast CMS identifies a specific area in the south west of the Park as a Remote Experience Zone with certain restrictions on activities and facility provision. This management plan must implement those restrictions.

Visitor Management

The Department does not intend to provide rubbish bins in the Park as they are not in keeping with the wild character of the Park. Therefore, rubbish produced by visitors needs to be removed from the Park by those visitors using a pack in-pack out system.

*Footnote: National Parks Act 1980 S4(2)(e).

The introduction of soaps or washing water into waterways, particularly alpine and sub-alpine tarns, can create adverse effects on the pristine lake environments of the Park and needs to be prevented. Ecological and environmental monitoring is required to ensure any increased use of the Park does not damage fragile features and ecosystems.

Social impacts also need to be monitored to see if visitor numbers and behaviour are having adverse effects on other visitors' experiences. It is important to protect the remote and wilderness experiences provided by certain areas from overuse, as that would in effect alter the experience. It should be recognised that the perception of crowding is highly individual and that people who are seeking a wilderness experience may be uncomfortable with levels of use which are acceptable to those looking for a short road-end walk.

Options for managing visitor numbers and crowding include placing limits on bunk occupation by large groups; limiting the number of nights visitors can stay in certain locations; requiring permits to stay for extended periods; introducing booking systems; and other mechanisms where required.

The Heaphy Track

Use of the Heaphy Track is increasing and the profile of the Heaphy as a Great Walk is likely to add to this. It is therefore important to manage visitor numbers on the track to ensure that all visitors enjoy the experience and do not encounter unreasonable crowding in huts and on the track. One way to achieve this could be to institute a booking system for the huts on the Heaphy Track. That way the numbers of trampers in each hut per night could be controlled and overcrowding avoided. There is an existing two night limit in huts on the Heaphy.

Facilities

Existing facilities may need to be rationalised and new ones may be developed in order to effectively manage a range of visitor opportunities for an increasing number of visitors.

As a result of the Cave Creek Inquiry, the Department is carrying out a Visitor Asset Management Review on all its visitor facilities. The outcome of this review will result in amendments to the Nelson/Marlborough CMS, as present priorities in the CMS will be updated by the new review. The plan must remain consistent with the CMSs. It is important that this management plan provides for the implementation of the outcomes of these reviews.

Areas on the periphery at road-ends will be the focal points and facilities must be maintained to an acceptable standard and carrying capacity. Where use increases beyond the capacity of facilities at road-ends, expansion should only be considered where environmental impacts would be low and where a facilitated increase in visitor numbers would not adversely affect recreational values.

Apart from the high profile Heaphy Track, there are several other multi-day tracks, such as the Wangapeka, Cobb Valley, Tablelands, and Karamea-Leslie Tracks, which need to be maintained to a reasonable standard to provide a full range of recreational opportunities within the Park.

The present track and route network is considered to be adequate and no further tracks are currently proposed, except perhaps a short walk in the vicinity of the Cobb reservoir, and perhaps the development of short walk opportunities in the Karamea area. In the present funding environment, offers of assistance or sponsorship from other organisations for the provision of appropriate new facilities for public use should be considered by the Department.

Climbing

Climbers have expressed an interest in the placement of permanent climbing bolts in some rock faces and the Matiri already has some. Such bolts are very useful to climbers, but can have an adverse effect on landscape and remote/wilderness values and so the placement of climbing bolts will be discouraged. The Department intends to promote a code of conduct for climbers and cavers using the park. However, if impacts become unacceptable, then the Department will need to review this approach and take more preventative action. Wire-brushing and "gardening" of rock faces will be prohibited through a by-law as it has unacceptable adverse effects on natural and scenic values. This applies to all areas including caves, where the New Zealand Speleological Society Guidelines will also be advocated.

Caving

Caving is an activity which can potentially impact on the Park in ways which are different from other recreational activities. These different patterns of use need to be recognised, allowed for and controlled if necessary in park management. The physical features of caves have little or no ability to regenerate themselves if damaged, and many of these features are highly vulnerable to damage. Therefore caving has the potential to cause irreversible impacts on or damage to caves. The New Zealand Speleological Society and its member clubs promote safe caving practices and cave conservation to their members to make them aware of these issues. However, people caving outside of these groups may be less aware. A number of methods can be used to protect cave features, from restricting entry (eg. Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area), to providing educative and informative signs, to defining routes of least damage by laying tapes along cave floors. The latter method is only successful if subsequent visitors keep to the marked route.

Cavers sometimes wish to undertake direct modification of caves, these activities range from the removal of boulders from a rock fall to gain access beyond it, to the excavation of silt filled passages. The removal of boulders is considered to be a legitimate part of cave exploration and will usually have little significant impact. However, silt excavations can potentially have severe adverse effects on cave values. For example, the excavation of a route through a silt-filled passage may result in adverse effects from the disposal of the excavated material, the loss of scientific values within the sediment, or most importantly, if the passage was completely sealed by the silt in-fill, excavating a route could cause significant changes in air flows and microclimate, with possible impacts on cave fauna and the growth of speleothems. In order to protect fragile and irreplaceable cave features any such proposals for major sediment/silt removal (>0.5m³) or air flow alteration need to be assessed by the Department and permission given before any such activity is undertaken. Advocacy to caving groups about best practice methods could also help to protect vulnerable features and systems.

Most recreational users of the park (trampers, fishers and hunters) will move through an area in small numbers, seldom stopping for more than two consecutive nights at any site. Cavers undertaking cave exploration in an area will often be present in larger groups and base themselves at a convenient site for two weeks or more. This may cause localised impacts in the area of campsites, including problems with toilet waste, and can also result in the cavers “taking over” huts and making them unavailable to other users. This could be partially remedied by permitting such groups to occupy up to half of the available bunk space in any hut and requesting that they inform the Department of their location and the expected duration of their stay so other visitors can be made aware of their presence and can avoid the caving party if they wish. If necessary, by-laws will be sought to accomplish this.

The exploration of deep caves requires large amounts of technical equipment, including ropes and rigging gear, and even comparatively non-technical caves require a basic minimum of bulky and heavy equipment over and above the normal contents of a trumper’s pack. For this reason many caving expeditions use helicopter support.

Kayaking

The Karamea River is considered one of the country's top wilderness kayaking rivers and interest is increasing through publicity. Other rivers in the Park are also becoming popular. Many other rivers have not yet been explored by kayakers, but interest in them remains. Many kayakers use helicopter transport to take kayaks and other equipment to remote rivers. Kayakers value the remote and wilderness experiences available in the Park and do not require facility development. Impacts on the ground are generally negligible as they do not use tracks and move quickly, therefore requiring fewer nights in huts or camping in the Park.

Hunting

Recreational hunting on foot can be undertaken throughout the Park, but hunters must compete with commercial hunters using helicopters for deer recovery (see Section 4.2 Concessions for management of commercial hunting). As hunting is an important recreational activity in the Park and assists the Department with deer control, it would be beneficial to maximise the opportunities to work with recreational hunting groups to assist in the control of deer and other wild animals. In areas where fallow deer occur, they will be controlled in the first instance by recreational hunting. The use of commercial methods or Departmental operations are not ruled out where necessary to maintain ecosystem health.

In order to prevent conflicts with other Park users, the Cobb/Tablelands area will need to be closed to hunting over the summer months (December to February) for public safety. In addition, corridors along the Heaphy and Wangapeka tracks will also be closed to hunters over the summer. Closure periods will be reviewed annually with regard to the environmental impacts of deer and recreational use, to ensure that closures are effective and appropriate.

Fishing

Trout fishing has been occurring in the Park area since the 1880s. The most popular fisheries in the Park are the Wangapeka and Karamea Rivers. Use of the Park by anglers is not high by national standards but the experience gained by anglers is highly valued by them. A few of the most sought after fisheries are accessible by

vehicle, including a small part of the Wangapeka, part of the Takaka and the Cobb reservoir. Most fisheries are accessible on foot by day from a road-end, such as the Little Wanganui, Cobb, Aorere, and lower Karamea Rivers. Extended trips can also be made to the Karamea, Crow and Leslie Rivers. Helicopters are also used by some anglers to access the more remote areas. The outstanding fisheries of the Roaring Lion, Beautiful and Ugly rivers in the Tasman Wilderness Area are accessible only on foot from the helipad just outside the Wilderness Area, as helicopter landings are prohibited in Wilderness Areas in terms of the National Parks Act.

Trout fishing in the Park is managed by the West Coast and Nelson/Marlborough Fish and Game Councils under the Conservation Act 1987 and a licence is required from them to fish. The Fish and Game Council is currently undertaking research in the Park to determine angler perceptions of the social carrying capacity for popular fisheries in the Park. Management of fisheries, in co-operation with the Fish and Game Council, is covered in both CMSs. The release of trout and other fish species into any new rivers where they have not been released before is considered in terms of Section 26ZM of the Conservation Act and, because of the high ecological values of rivers free from introduced fish species, the Department will recommend that the Minister of Conservation exercise his/her discretion to prohibit the release of trout and other introduced aquatic life where not previously released or where it does not already exist.

Boating

Power boating is not popular in the Park and use is rare. The use of power boats and personal water craft (eg. jet skis - see glossary) is considered to be incompatible with the primary objectives for the Park and should be prohibited through a by-law. An exception will be made for the use of such boats by approved eelers in defined waterways and only for the duration of their access permits.

Visitor Information

Visitor Centres, Information Centres, and Conservancy and Area Offices of the Department provide visitors with a range of information and maps relating to the Park. This information needs to be kept up to date to ensure accuracy and safety. Any new interpretation will be concentrated at road ends and on the periphery of the Park.

The two Conservation Management Strategies (CMSs) set out priorities for interpretation within each Conservancy and this management plan must provide for the implementation of those priorities in relation to Kahurangi National Park.

Dogs

Under the National Parks Act 1980 (Part VA) dogs are not permitted in a national park without a permit, unless (Section 56E) they are seeing eye, companion (as defined in Section 2), search and rescue, or police dogs, or for Park management purposes.

Permits can be issued, subject to conditions. The Director-General can issue a dog control permit if he or she is satisfied that the dog is essential for the proposed activity; that the proposed activity is lawful and is not inconsistent with the purposes of the National Parks Act, relevant management strategy or conservation management plan. Hunting dogs may not stay in the Park overnight because of the threats they pose to native birds and animals, kiwi in particular. Permits will be issued subject to conditions that prohibit such dogs from staying in the Park overnight and restrictions

on access to the periphery of the Park (approximately a half-day's walk from the boundary into the Park). Permits will not be issued where hunting could occur near known populations of threatened species that could be adversely affected by hunting activity.

Fires

Fire is a major threat to the natural values of the Park and therefore requires controls. On major tracks there are huts and permanent fireplaces which can be safely used by visitors. However, the lighting of fires in other areas can be unsafe and has the potential for severe damage to the Park and safety risks to visitors. Fires should therefore be limited to permanent fireplaces on the Heaphy, Wangapeka and Tablelands track networks where they are provided. Where fireplaces are not provided, open fires may be lit and should be closely attended. No fires are permitted during a total fire ban.

Disabled Access

There is currently disabled access to the Park at the Riwaka Resurgence and Kohaihai (Nikau Walk), there is also access to the visitor shelter at the Flora carpark. In order to cater for the disabled more effectively, any future upgrades of toilet and other facilities at developed road-ends should meet disabled access standards where practicable.

Mountain Bikes

The Park must be managed in line with the General Policy for National Parks which prohibits the use of vehicles, including bicycles, anywhere other than on formed roads within a national park, with a few specific exceptions. The General Policy would have to be changed by the New Zealand Conservation Authority before the Department could consider allowing mountain bikes on Park tracks.

Karamea-Collingwood Road Proposal

The development of a road link from Collingwood to Karamea is a long standing proposition and there has been considerable public debate throughout the Park formation and planning processes. However, no defined agreed route or corridor has yet been presented.

This management plan can neither provide for nor prohibit any such road or road corridor proposal, because any land required for a public road would first need to be taken out of the national park.

Any proposed public road would have to be designated by an appropriate requiring authority and would have to proceed through the appropriate Resource Management Act process. If the designation were confirmed and land contained within the Park was necessary for the road, the requiring authority would need to approach the Minister of Lands to acquire the land on its behalf. To comply with Section 11 of the National Parks Act that Minister would introduce an Act of Parliament to remove the land from the national park. If a road was built it would be outside the national park and would be administered by the requiring authority, not the Department of Conservation.

Implementations

- 1. Protect the Park from over-use and over-development through management of visitor impacts and ongoing monitoring of the social and environmental impacts of visitors.***
- 2. Monitor visitor impacts on Key Biodiversity Areas as a priority and implement management controls if necessary.***
- 3. Manage the West Coast Remote Experience Zone in line with the West Coast CMS.***
- 4. Consider implementing a booking system for hut accommodation on the Heaphy Track, should visitor numbers warrant it, and seek an appropriate bylaw.***
- 5. Prior to the development of any new tracks or facilities, carry out an environmental and social impact assessment and seek to avoid adverse environmental and social impacts.***
- 6. Promote and implement a pack in-pack out system for the management of visitors rubbish and discourage the use of soap or other washing products in waterways, particularly lakes, in the Park, through advocating compliance with the Environmental Care Code.***
- 7. Manage and maintain hut and track facilities in accordance with Departmental and Conservancy priorities consistent with the CMSs and periodic facility reviews.***
- 8. Undertake a public consultation process involving key stakeholders regarding the future of huts and tracks in Kahurangi.***
- 9. Continue to manage the Heaphy Track as a Great Walk.***
- 10. Consider the development of short walk opportunities in the Karamea area and a short walk adjacent to the Cobb reservoir to provide access to and interpretation of the roches moutonnees field at the head of the reservoir.***
- 11. Maintain road-end facilities and upgrade where appropriate and practicable, as set out in periodic facility reviews and ensure that access is safe and convenient for visitors.***
- 12. Co-operate with road control authorities to ensure public access roads into the park are maintained to acceptable standards.***
- 13. Ensure that all new or upgraded toilet facilities at appropriate developed road-ends meet disabled access standards.***
- 14. Invite offers of assistance or sponsorship for the development or maintenance of appropriate visitor facilities, including historic huts, for general public use (not as commercial or private facilities) where they are not a Departmental priority.***
- 15. Develop and promote a code of conduct for climbers and cavers to minimise their impacts on the environment.***
- 16. Seek a bylaw to prohibit the wire-brushing and "gardening" of rock faces for climbing.***
- 17. Seek a bylaw that requires any group of more than 10 people wishing to stay in the Park more than one night to obtain a permit.***

18. *Seek a bylaw that requires that where large expedition groups of more than 10 people are based in or around huts, at least half of the hut bunk capacity remains free for other Park users, tents for the entire party are carried, and environmental effects are avoided or mitigated and waste is removed.*
19. *Continue to limit overnight stays on the Heaphy Track to two nights per hut through a bylaw.*
20. *Seek a bylaw that requires any group or individual intending to stay in a hut for more than three nights, or at a campsite for more than seven nights, to obtain a permit and to ensure that any adverse environmental or social effects resulting from their presence are avoided or mitigated.*
21. *Encourage all cavers to adhere to the New Zealand Speleological Society's ethical guidelines and practise good cave conservation practices and advocate best practice methods to caving clubs.*
22. *Seek a bylaw which requires a permit for major excavations of fine sediments (>0.5m³) and any excavations which may alter air flows in caves, and assess applications on a case by case basis in terms of the vulnerability to disturbance of natural cave features, scientific and cultural values and fauna.*
23. *Seek a bylaw to close the Cobb Valley flats and Mt Arthur Tablelands, to all hunting from 15 December until after the Waitangi Day holiday period, for visitor safety.*
24. *Close corridors one kilometre each side of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks to recreational hunting from 15 December until after the Waitangi Day holiday period, for public safety.*
25. *Review closure periods (23 & 24 above) annually to reflect changing deer numbers/environmental impacts and recreational use.*
26. *Liaise with Fish and Game Councils regarding sports fishery management, research and monitoring.*
27. *Recommend that the Minister exercise his/her discretion to prohibit the release of trout and other introduced aquatic life where they have not previously been released or where they do not already exist.*
28. *Seek a bylaw prohibiting the use of motorised vessels in the Park, except for specified eelers as part of their access concessions.*
29. *Ensure visitor information is readily available at community and Departmental Visitor Centres and DOC offices and that it is up to date and accurate.*
30. *Develop any new interpretation consistent with CMS priorities at popular and accessible amenity areas and road ends on the periphery of the park.*
31. *Seek a bylaw to prohibit the lighting of fires on or adjacent to the Heaphy, Wangapeka and Tablelands Tracks, except in permanent fireplaces.*
32. *Recommend that the Director-General ensure that all dog control permits be issued only for hunting and contain conditions which limit the use of dogs to within half a days walk of the Park's boundary (and exclude areas where there are known populations of threatened species) and prohibit such dogs from remaining in the Park overnight.*

33. *Seek a bylaw to prohibit the use of all vehicles, including mountain bikes, within the Park except on formed roads, unless for search and rescue, management, or facility servicing purposes, in line with General Policy.*
34. *Do not resume the unformed legal road through the north-west of the Park and consider the proposal for its development as a mountain biking track, in conjunction with Tasman District Council.*
35. *Consider any proposal for a road link or corridor between Collingwood and Karamea if and when a requiring authority proposes such a designation. Any such consideration must ensure that the protection of the landscape, ecological, historic and recreational values remains the primary objective of Park management.*

4.1.1 THE TASMAN WILDERNESS AREA

Policies

To preserve the integrity of the Tasman Wilderness Area and preserve its existing boundaries.

To recognise the importance of the Tasman Wilderness Area as the only gazetted Wilderness Area in the top half of the South Island.

Background

The Wilderness Area (Map 3) provides a special recreational opportunity, offering sanctuary, peace, solitude and inspiration to wilderness seekers who have the desire and self-reliance necessary to explore the Park's wild heart. It gives visitors an opportunity to witness a truly unspoilt landscape and experience nature on a one to one basis in the absence of tracks, huts or any other facilities.

Issues and Opportunities

Access

There is pressure to make the Wilderness Area more accessible to more visitors, particularly by helicopter. However, it should be noted that Section 14(2) of the National Parks Act prohibits the use of any vehicle, including aircraft and powered vessels, in a Wilderness Area except for park management, wild animal control, approved scientific use and emergency purposes. Roads, tracks and all other facilities are also prohibited in gazetted Wilderness Areas.

There are very few places left in this country where people can go to experience a true wilderness. There are other places in this and other national parks where visitors can fly into a pristine area to experience a wilderness setting without impacting on the experiences and expectations of wilderness seekers in a formally gazetted Wilderness Area.

Helicopter Hunting

The Wilderness Area is currently open to helicopter deer hunting for most of the year, in terms of Section 14(4) of the National Parks Act, provided the operator has a permit for the Park. This situation means that hunting helicopters are uncontrolled in the Wilderness Area and have the potential to impact on visitor experiences. However, they do provide necessary wild animal control. An Air Access Strategy is to be completed in 2001 and helicopter hunting in the Wilderness Area will be reviewed as part of that process.

Boundaries

The Department has taken into account the submissions on the draft plan and the extensive consultation over at least a decade which produced the current boundaries, along with the benefits gained by both the local communities and the country as a whole from the presence of the Tasman Wilderness Area. As wilderness opportunities are becoming rarer they are also becoming a highly valuable recreation resource, providing a rare opportunity for visitors and locals to experience true isolation and oneness with nature.

The existing boundaries are the result of lengthy discussions and are supported and will be retained by the Department.

Visitor Impacts

As the profile of the national park increases, the “wilderness” image which the Tasman Wilderness Area lends to the Park will attract increasing numbers of domestic and international visitors to the Park as a whole and to the surrounding communities.

Due to the isolated nature and the unspoilt image of the Wilderness Area it is important to minimise human impacts in order to maintain the experience for future visitors. To this end, the building of temporary or permanent structures or campsites is prohibited, except in emergencies, under Section 14(2)(a) and (b) of the Act.

Implementations

- 1. Enforce the prohibition on helicopter landings within the Tasman Wilderness Area (except for wild animal control, Park management, approved scientific or emergency purposes) in line with the National Parks Act and review landings on its border as part of the Air Access Strategy to be completed in 2001.*
- 2. Seek to limit the number of helicopter operators permitted to hunt deer in the Tasman Wilderness Area, while retaining hunting efficiency, in accordance with amendments to the Wild Animal Control Act and in conjunction with the Policy Statement on Deer Control and the Air Access Strategy.*
- 3. Monitor the social and environmental impacts and the number of visitors to the Tasman Wilderness Area.*
- 4. Retain the Tasman Wilderness Area, at its present size with existing boundaries and propose that the NZCA recommend the existing boundaries to the Minister.*

Land Status Map 3

4.1.2 THE HONEYCOMB HILL CAVES SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREA

Policy

To actively preserve the natural, cultural and scientific values of the Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area

Background

The Honeycomb Hill Caves area (see Map 3) has Specially Protected Area status under Section 12 of the National Parks Act*. Such status means that visitors require a permit from the Department for entry. The Honeycomb Hill Caves contain natural features and the Pliocene fossil remains of birds and animals which are of very high scientific and cultural value and must be protected from damage by visitors.

Issues and Opportunities

A single guiding concession operates in the cave system, enabling visitors to view the delicate features under strict supervision. The concessionaire has an access permit and clients do not require a personal permit. However, anyone wishing to visit the caves independently of the guide must apply for a permit from the Department.

The Department is concerned about damage to the cave system and is, therefore, reviewing the management regime. Management options to be considered will include tendering concession opportunities, limiting visitor numbers, limiting public access to Speleological Society members only, and consideration of cave closure. This management plan may require amendment once the review is complete (2001).

Implementations

- 1. Complete a review of the management regime in the Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area by 2001 with regard to access, involve key stakeholders and, until that review is complete, retain the status quo.*
- 2. Until the management review is complete, recommend that the Minister limit guiding concessions to one, and restrict activities to the section of the caves which has already been developed, in order to ensure the protection of cave features and values.*
- 3. Monitor the guiding concession for its impacts on natural and scientific features, and review concession conditions as appropriate to ensure protection of natural, cultural and scientific values.*
- 4. Monitor the impacts of other visitors on natural and scientific features.*

*Footnote: Gazette reference 1997, p4139

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

Visitors to Areas Administered by the Department, p265-333, ROS map

West Coast draft CMS

Visitors, p173-233

ROS map

National Parks Act 1980

Wild Animal Control Act 1977

Dog Control Act 1996

Resource Management Act 1991

General Policy for National Parks 1983

Wilderness Policy 1985

Visitor Strategy 1996

Hut and Track Review 1993 (Nelson/Marlborough)

Camp and Service Area Review 1995 (Nelson/Marlborough)

NZ Recreational Opportunity Spectrum : Guidelines for Users 1993

Environmental Care Code

4.2 Concessions

Policy

To allow for appropriate concession activities in the Park while preserving its intrinsic natural, historic, cultural and recreational values from adverse effects.

Background

A concession is an official authorisation to carry out an activity on land administered by the Department of Conservation. Concessions include leases, licences, permits and easements. Concessions are required for all activities including, but not limited to, transport services, commercial education or instruction services, commercial guiding, commercial attractions and services, grazing, scientific research, recreational events, filming, the taking of materials, commercial hunting, trading, operating a business, building or occupying a structure, easements or occupation of land.

Legislative Changes

Section 49 of the National Parks Act makes the provisions of Part IIIB of the Conservation Act 1987 (as amended by the Conservation Amendment Act 1996) applicable to national parks.

The Conservation Act 1987 (Part IIIB) places new responsibilities on concession applicants to identify possible effects of their proposed activities and to suggest ways in which any adverse effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated. It also specifies the matters the Minister must consider when deciding whether or not to grant a concession. The matters to be considered include whether or not the proposed activity is in line with the relevant CMSs and this management plan.

Recreation Values

Remoteness, impressive scenery, peace and natural quiet are the things that attract most visitors to the Park. People see the Park as a place to get away from it all and experience nature at its best. Visitors have different levels of confidence and experience and therefore need different levels of facilities and services. This is where concessionaires can offer assistance with guiding and transport services which can enable visitors to have a variety of experiences and to reach different parts of the Park. Many concessionaires value the wilderness qualities of the Park and base much of their advertising on that image.

Existing concessions operating in the Park at present include ecotourism, recreational events, rafting trips, guided tramping, hunting and fishing, caving and helicopter and road transport services. There are also commercial concessions in the Park that are not related to visitor services and recreation. These include commercial deer hunting using helicopters, telecommunication transmitter sites and water and electricity supply easements.

Scientific Research

Research activities currently being undertaken within the Park include the study of great spotted kiwi ecology, *Powelliphanta* distributions and the South Island kaka. Information gathering projects such as species distributions and geological mapping are also ongoing. In the past, large survey projects obtained basic information on plant ecology and introduced animal impacts. There is provision in the General Policy for approval to be given for samples to be taken for research purposes, but this also requires a concession. Projects that modify habitat can not be undertaken unless they are considered to be in the national interest. The Department itself does not require a concession to undertake research.

Issues and Opportunities

Protection

The national park has significant intrinsic natural, historic and recreational values. Some concessions offer visitors an enhanced recreational or educational experience of the Park, others are for scientific purposes, filming, sports events, or for the occupation of Park land for things such as easements and the siting of telecommunication facilities. All these activities have the potential to adversely affect the natural environment and the experiences of other visitors. It is the Department's primary mandate to protect the natural values of the Park. Use by visitors and commercial interests is secondary and may not occur at the expense of the primary mandate. It is appropriate for the Minister to take a precautionary approach when little is known about the effects of an activity. Where there is a conflict the purposes of the National Parks Act will prevail.

Air Access

The control of air space is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Ministry of Transport and is administered in terms of the Civil Aviation Act 1990. Unless they are landing, aircraft are not permitted to operate below 500 feet (152m) above ground level. The Department can control the landing of aircraft, which it does through requiring permits, but it cannot control over-flying itself.

Helicopter landings and over-flying are the activities which are perceived to have the most potential to impact on the experiences of other visitors, particularly if use increases. One of the guiding principles of the Department's Visitor Strategy is that the qualities of solitude, peace and natural quiet will be safeguarded as far as possible in order to enhance visitor's enjoyment. The two Conservation Management Strategies also reflect this stance.

In order to protect the peace and natural quiet of the Park helicopter access needs to be managed in such a way that impacts on other visitors are minimised, while the opportunities provided by such access are retained. The arrival of visitors by helicopter in remote and wilderness areas can offend those trampers who have walked there and can also result in crowding problems in huts. Helicopters are often used by the Department for park management purposes. This puts some onus on the Department to attempt to minimise the adverse social effects of its use of helicopters in the Park (see Section 6.0 Administration).

The Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Management Strategy requires that an Air Access Strategy be produced in consultation with the air industry and other key stakeholders. An Air Access Strategy for the park will be completed by 2001 and will cover both commercial and Departmental air transport use.

Options for managing air access which will be considered in the development of the Air Access Strategy will include, but not be limited to: Setting limits on the number of recreational landings permitted; keeping landing sites away from major tracks and remote experience/wilderness areas, but perhaps near to selected huts, to help to protect the remote experience for all visitors; and limiting the number of clients per flight. It may also be useful to encourage the establishment of voluntary no-fly zones around certain popular features and tramping areas; and limiting the number of concessions for helicopter transport.

The Park has previously been used for training helicopter pilots, which is not in keeping with the remote values of the Park and should be discouraged as there are more appropriate areas outside the Park. The social impacts of fixed-wing aircraft over-flying the Park (but not landing) also need to be monitored. The Department should advocate to the Civil Aviation Authority for controls on aircraft over-flight, should adverse effects on visitor experiences become unacceptable.

The Airforce has a Defence Training Agreement with the Department and jets occasionally over-fly the Park at low altitude for training exercises. This activity should be discouraged as it is not in keeping with the wilderness and remote values of the Park.

Caving

Caves are an area where the potential for damage to ancient and fragile natural features is high and experience is generally necessary. Guiding concessions offer the general public an opportunity to experience caving in a safe and supervised environment thus helping to protect the unique and ancient features inside. However, most caves in the Park would not be appropriate for concessionaire use because of access and/or technical difficulties, safety issues, or vulnerability of the cave or karst features.

In some caves guiding concessions may be appropriate, however the number of concessions should be limited to a maximum of one per cave system in order to minimise and monitor human impacts. Concessionaires should not be given exclusive access rights to cave systems which prevent members of the public or caving clubs from exploring on their own (with the exception of Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area where an access permit is required - see Section 4.1.2). Some cave systems may need to be closed to visitors where human impacts are likely to result in unacceptable or irreversible damage to cave features.

The Cave and Karst Strategies in place and being developed will address this issue and determine cave and karst management in the Park (see also Section 3.2 Landscape).

Structures

The Department provides and maintains all huts and other accommodation within the Park at present, except for one hut in the Cobb which is leased to the NZ Deerstalkers Association. The Department generally views the development of privately owned commercial accommodation as inappropriate within this Park.

Structures and buildings can have impacts on the landscape and natural values of an area. It is therefore important to ensure that such adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated through sensitive design, colour, siting and revegetation (see Section 4.2 Landscape for policies).

Guiding

Guided tramping is offered by concessionaires in the Park on several of the formed tracks and also into remote areas and the Tasman Wilderness Area. Guiding is also offered for rafting, caving, hunting and fishing. Guiding concessions offer visitors, particularly those with limited experience, an opportunity to explore the Park more widely than they would on their own. There is however, the potential to clash with other visitors through overcrowding at huts or by taking large numbers of people into remote and wilderness areas.

Fishing guides in the Park require a concession from the Department and will soon also need to obtain a licence from the Fish and Game Council. It is therefore important that the two organisations liaise effectively in the administration of guided fishing.

Crowding

Increasing visitor use of the Park is likely to result in crowding, particularly in the more accessible areas of the Park and around hut sites. Conditions will be set on hut occupation by large groups, and permits will be required for extended stays in one place. Conditions can also be placed on recreational concessions. Setting limits on guided group sizes could reduce crowding in huts and the perception of crowding in remote areas. However, in some cases, for example school groups, limits on group sizes may need to be waived for a particular guided trip.

In order to minimise crowding at huts, guiding concessionaires should only be allowed to occupy up to half of the available bunk space in any hut, on a first come first served basis, to allow for public use. It should also be made a condition of their concession that they carry or provide tents for all their clients in the event that the hut is already full or partially full. Should no other trampers arrive by dark, guided groups could then fill the remaining bunks if unoccupied. A booking system could alleviate the crowding problem on the Heaphy, but other forms of management may be more appropriate and should be considered. In addition, limiting the number of trips concessionaires can take into the Park per week/month may also be a useful way to manage visitor numbers.

Through limiting guided group sizes, the number of trips and hut occupation through conditions on concessions, other visitors are less likely to be disturbed or overcrowded by such groups and visitor numbers to the Park can be partially managed.

Tasman Wilderness Area

In the Tasman Wilderness Area guiding is seen by some to be in conflict with the purpose and values of the area. The self-reliance required and the solitude experienced by visitors independently exploring the Wilderness Area could be degraded by allowing guides to take large groups of inexperienced clients into the Area. Limiting the number of clients per trip and the number of trips permitted would help to avoid this conflict. There are also alternative parts of the Park, outside of the Tasman Wilderness Area, that have high remote and wilderness values which would provide guided groups with a similar experience. Guiding concessionaires should be encouraged to use those areas in preference to the Wilderness Area.

Wilderness river rafting guided tours on the Karamea River in the Tasman Wilderness Area are controlled through concession conditions, which allow for up to 20 trips per year to be shared out between all concessionaires and trips must be at least two weeks apart. There is a limit of 21 people, including guides, per trip to allow for two rafts to travel together as a safety precaution and all waste and rubbish must be removed. These limits effectively protect the environment and the wilderness experience and should be retained unless environmental effects warrant a reduction in the future.

Horses

A horse riding guiding concession has been operating for years in the Kahurangi Point area and the continuation of such use is allowed for in the General Policy. Provided that the use of horses in the Park does not increase above the existing level, create unacceptable adverse effects, or expand into new areas, it is considered appropriate that it be allowed to continue. However, in order to protect natural values, horses should not be left within the Park boundaries overnight or unattended.

Commercial Deer Hunting

It is important to protect native vegetation from the browsing pressure of deer and the National Parks Act requires that all introduced animals are exterminated as far as possible. Deer are a high value commercial resource, but they are also an animal pest in the Park. A useful side-effect of commercial deer recovery is the control of deer numbers within the Park. Unfortunately, helicopter deer recovery has adverse effects on the natural quiet and wilderness values of the Park through the generation of high noise levels and visual impacts. The Wild Animal Control Act has been reviewed and commercial hunters now require a concession rather than a permit to operate in the Park.

Research and monitoring need to be undertaken to gain data on the impacts of helicopter hunting on deer numbers. Once the impacts on deer numbers and other visitors experiences are known, an appropriate management regime can be put in place. This could include limiting the number of commercial hunting concessions permitted in the Park, restricting landing areas and temporary closure of certain areas for set time periods. Management methods will be determined through the development of the Air Access Strategy, which may be added to this plan through a formal public review process.

Eeling

Commercial eeling was carried out under permit in the former Forest Park from time to time over the last couple of decades. Commercial eeling permits are granted by the Ministry of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act 1996. However, a permit to take indigenous animals, under Section 5 of the National Parks Act, and a concession for access under Section IIIB of the Conservation Act (Section 49 National Parks Act), is also required from the Minister of Conservation for any commercial eeling in the Park. The General Policy for National Parks allows for commercial eeling only where there is a tradition of such use and only where the resource is sustainable.

Eel populations have been found to be highly vulnerable to over-fishing and even local extinction, due to their slow growth and reproductive rates. Because knowledge of eel ecology is limited and the sustainability of eel harvesting in the Park is unknown, the Minister should take a precautionary approach to applications. Further long-term research is required to determine the ecological sustainability of the species and this research should include both scientific and traditional Māori practice concepts.

Commercial take is considered to be inappropriate. Consequently, in order to protect vulnerable eel populations and to maintain the ecological sustainability of eels, it will be necessary to limit access to only those eelers with a proven history of fishing in the Park and to monitor the effects of such harvest. Any permit granted for commercial eeling and any concession for access should be limited to specific waters outside the Tasman Wilderness Area which have previously been fished and already have trout present, as determined by the Department. The absence of trout in some waters in the Park make those eel populations particularly valuable ecologically and eeling should not be permitted in those areas. Any authorities granted for commercial eeling should be limited to one only five year term from the date of the plan's approval.

Telecommunication Facilities

Because of the mountainous nature of the Park it can provide sites for effective telecommunication facilities, some of which already exist in the Park. Because these facilities impact on scenic and landscape values, applicants should be encouraged to locate these facilities outside the Park where practicable. Where siting in the Park is considered necessary, applications will need to be carefully assessed for adverse effects and proposed mitigation measures and whether or not the option of co-location at an existing site has been adequately investigated (see also Section 3.2 Landscape).

Hydroelectric Power Schemes

Operative hydroelectric power schemes in the vicinity of the Park were excluded from the national park when it was formed. However, there is some public interest in using the Park waters for small scale power generation. Such developments would only be considered appropriate where water take was negligible (less than 5% of 5 year return low flow), fish passage was provided and generating structures were located outside the Park. Hydroelectric power schemes are prohibited in national parks as they are incompatible with the National Parks Act, and this has been confirmed by case law*.

Easements

The Park is the main source of water for the communities surrounding it and easement concessions are allowed for water pipelines provided take is sustainable. Easements can also be granted for right of way access to properties surrounded by Park land.

Electricity Transmission Facilities

A small portion of the Park adjacent to State Highway 60 contains poles and overhead power lines which transmit high voltage electricity from the Cobb Hydroelectric Power Station. It is acknowledged that these are existing facilities which only traverse a few hundred metres of Park land. These lines provide an essential utility service and their existence, including minor upgrading, should be allowed to continue unimpeded.

However, the establishment of new overhead power lines is likely to be inappropriate within the Park.

Scientific Research

Scientists and organisations outside the Department require a concession to undertake scientific research in the Park. The Department needs to encourage and support research that will provide useful information to assist in the management of plants, animals, habitats, geological features, archaeological and historic sites, pests and visitors in the Park, in line with the General Policy. Avoidance or mitigation of permanent negative environmental effects must be a requirement of any research concession in order to protect the natural values of the Park. There is provision for the taking of samples for scientific use and other scientific undertakings, but applications for such approvals must be carefully considered in accordance with the provisions of the legislation and General Policy.

Footnote: Case Law: Buller Electricity Limited vs Attorney General [1995] 3NZLR344.

All of these uses of the Park need to be managed in such a way as to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on native plants and animals, ecosystems, landscapes, geological features, historic sites, water and air quality and the experiences of visitors.

Implementation

1. ***Process all applications for concessions under the Conservation Act 1987 (Part IIIB) and manage approved concessions under the provisions of the National Parks Act 1980 and any other relevant Acts, the General Policy and the two Conservation Management Strategies.***
2. ***Include in any concession issued conditions necessary to ensure that any actual or potential adverse environmental and social effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.***
3. ***In assessing applications for concessions have regard to the Primary Objectives of this plan.***
4. ***Consider as inappropriate in the Park any concession activities where actual or potential adverse effects will be significant, and/or proposed mitigation measures will not adequately avoid, remedy or mitigate such effects, and/or there is no technical or other reason that the activity could not practicably be located outside the Park.***
5. ***Liaise with the Fish and Game Councils regarding the management of concessions involving sports fish and/or gamebirds.***
6. ***Give effect to, and where necessary establish, a protocol with nga iwi for a consultation process for concessions applications, which reflects the provisions of the Ngai Tahu Claim Settlement Act.***
7. ***Recommend that the Minister ensure all guiding concessions include conditions which limit the number of people per trip to 6 (including guides) in the Tasman Wilderness Area, 8 (including guides) in the remote zones of the Park and 12 (including guides) in the backcountry zones of the Park, in line with the CMSs.***
8. ***Consider exceptions to group number limits for single trips for school and other such groups on a case by case basis (but not in the Tasman Wilderness Area), to be approved by the Conservator.***
9. ***Make an exception to group number limits for guided rafting in the Tasman Wilderness Area and allow a maximum of 21 (including guides) per trip.***
10. ***Consider placing a limit on the number of trips permitted per week/month as a condition on guiding concessions where frequency of operation will have adverse effects on other users.***
11. ***Recommend that the Minister make rubbish removal and, where appropriate, waste removal a condition of all guiding and transport concessions.***
12. ***Ensure all guiding concessions include conditions which permit all guides and clients in any one hut to occupy a total of no more than 50 percent of available bunk space on a first come, first served basis and require concessionaires to carry or provide tents for their entire party for use in case huts are occupied.***

13. *Consider placing a limit on the total number of guiding concessions in the Park if cumulative adverse environmental or social effects become unacceptable.*
14. *Develop and implement an Air Access Strategy for the Park, to be completed in the year 2001.*
15. *Following completion of the Air Access Strategy consider its incorporation into this management plan through a formal public review process.*
16. *Advocate to the Civil Aviation Authority for flight path and/or altitude regulations should they be considered necessary as a result of monitoring impacts on visitors.*
17. *Discourage the Air Force from using the airspace above the Park for training flights and ensure that any Defence activities comply with the Defence Training Agreement.*
18. *In those cave systems where concessions are considered appropriate in terms of the Cave and Karst Strategies, recommend that the Minister permit a maximum of one guiding concession per cave system, while still allowing for the public right of free access (except in the Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area - see Section 4.1.2) see also Section 3.2 Landscape.*
19. *Consult the New Zealand Speleological Society, local caving clubs and iwi when establishing the appropriateness of concessionaire activity in any cave.*
20. *Enforce the prohibition on helicopter landings in the Tasman Wilderness Area (except for wild animal control, management, approved scientific, or emergency purposes) in line with the Act.*
21. *Seek a bylaw to prohibit horses in the Park except those under the existing concession in the Kahurangi Point area, not exceeding 1998 levels, not overnight, and restricted to areas specified in the concession.*
22. *Seek a bylaw to continue to require helicopter transport operators intending to land in the Tablelands area to advise the Department of their intentions prior to setting out (pending the completion of the Air Access Strategy).*
23. *Seek a bylaw to close a corridor one kilometre either side of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks to helicopter hunting at all times.*
24. *Seek a bylaw to continue to close the Tasman Wilderness Area to helicopter hunting from 1 December to 31 March and at Easter.*
25. *Review closure periods annually to reflect changing deer numbers/ environmental impacts and recreational use.*
26. *Review the appropriateness of retaining the rest of the Park as “open” for commercial helicopter deer recovery permits as part of the Air Access Strategy.*
27. *Recommend that the Minister consider granting an authority* for commercial eeling only where an application meets the following criteria:*
 - *the take will not affect the ecological sustainability of the species;*
 - *the applicant is an individual with a proven history of regularly fishing for eels in the Park;*

*Footnote: An authority consists of a concession for access under Section 49 of the National Parks Act, and a permit to take under Section 5 of that Act.

- *the waterways in which fishing is to take place are outside the Tasman Wilderness Area; already have introduced fish species present and are considered appropriate by the Department;*
 - *catch monitoring and ecological research are carried out.*
28. *Recommend that the Minister limit any commercial eeling authority to a single five year term and make the rights non-transferable.*
 29. *Seek a bylaw to prohibit all commercial eeling in the Park after five years from the approval of the management plan.*
 30. *Work with the Ministry of Fisheries and nga iwi to ascertain whether or not eeling is ecologically sustainable within the Park and is otherwise compatible with national park values.*
 31. *Allow for the use of appropriate motorised vessels by commercial eelers with concessions in the waterways specified on their permit.*
 32. *Consider applications for water take for small scale micro-hydroelectric power generation where generating structures are located outside the Park and water take is less than 5% of five year low flow, other environmental impacts are minimal and provision is made for fish passage.*
 33. *Continue to grant easements for water supply, where sustainable, and easements for electricity supply and transmission, and access to property where necessary.*
 34. *Encourage scientific research projects which are relevant and beneficial to Park management.*
 35. *Assess applications to take samples for scientific use on a case by case basis.*
 36. *Encourage applicants for telecommunications facilities to locate them outside the Park where possible, or to co-locate them at existing sites within the Park where practicable and to minimise their visual impacts as far as possible (see also Section 3.2 Landscape).*

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

Use of Areas Administered by the Department, p231-263

West Coast draft CMS

Private and Commercial Activities, Structures and Facilities, p235-262

Conservation Act 1987 (Part IIIB)

National Parks Act 1980

Wild Animal Control Act 1977

Civil Aviation Act 1990

General Policy for National Parks 1983

Visitor Strategy 1996

4.2.1 CUSTOMARY HARVEST AND USE

Policy

To provide for the taking by tangata whenua of cultural materials from the Park, where it can be carried out without significant damage to Park values and is in line with the National Parks Act, other relevant legislation, CMSs, and national policies.

Background

Maori have traditionally gathered certain plants and animals from the land and water for cultural use. These materials were essential to everyday life and a necessity for tangata whenua. There is a present day revival of former traditions and the use of natural materials. Traditional cultural materials include, but are not limited to, native plants used in weaving and for medicine and native birds and animals for their feathers and for food.

Many of the cultural materials remaining today are found on lands administered by the Department and may be requested by nga iwi in the continuation and revival of the use of cultural materials. Maori are bound by tikanga and whakapapa to ensure that the mauri is not debased in the customary harvest of cultural materials.

Section 5 of the National Parks Act allows for the cutting or taking of plant material and the trapping, killing, or taking of animals only with prior written consent. The General Policy provides for the traditional taking of indigenous plants and animals from a national park, including any Wilderness Area, where the plants or animals are not protected under other legislation and demands are not excessive.

A permit from the Minister is required for the gathering of any material from the Park. Restrictions on such gathering may be necessary to ensure that materials are available to future generations and that native species are preserved.

The New Zealand Conservation Authority, following a public consultation process, has, at the request of the Minister of Conservation, prepared a report on Customary Use on land administered by the Department. This report may result in legislative amendment. This management plan will need to implement any approved policy and any resultant changes in legislation.

Issues and Opportunities

Preservation

There are provisions in the Wildlife Act and the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations which provide for the non-commercial gathering and use of freshwater fish, plants and some animals for traditional use by Maori. However, there is some conflict between the Department's legal requirements to preserve native species and their habitats in the national park and fulfilling Treaty obligations. Where there is a conflict the purposes of the National Parks Act will prevail.

The national park status of Kahurangi provides a high degree of protection to plants and animals within the park. The harvesting of plants and animals is not appropriate to the general purpose of a national park and Maori should be encouraged where possible to harvest traditional materials from areas outside the Park instead. However, some harvesting from within the Park may be appropriate in limited circumstances for the exercise of tikanga. Within the Ngai Tahu Takiwa, the Minister

has agreed to develop and implement guidelines to define levels of use of cultural materials (Ngai Tahu Protocols). Native animals protected under the Wildlife Act should not be taken from within the Park for any reason, as that would be against the principle purpose of the National Parks Act.

A precautionary approach is appropriate in a national park, such that where little is known about a species, or the effects of an activity or harvest, then the most protective measures are taken and harvest is not permitted.

Eeling

Eels have been traditionally harvested from some rivers within the Park. Eel fisheries are managed by the Ministry of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act 1996 and access to those fisheries in the national park is controlled by the Department through permits. The Department is responsible for freshwater fish and their habitats in terms of the Conservation Act 1987.

Although the commercial component of the customary right of Māori to take eels was provided for in the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act (Section 10), the customary rights of Maori to take eels on a non-commercial basis remains and any such authorisation will be made in accordance with Section 5 of the National Parks Act.

Knowledge of eel ecology is limited but it is evident that, because they breed only once, eels are vulnerable to over-fishing. Further long-term research is required to determine the ecological sustainability of the species and this research should include both scientific and traditional Maori practice concepts. Any customary harvest which is permitted must be for non-commercial purposes and will have to be carefully monitored and catch sites varied to ensure that it remains sustainable in the long term.

Where restrictions need to be placed on the harvesting of eels, it is appropriate that the restrictions are firstly applied to the commercial harvest and secondly to the customary harvest.

Implementation

1. ***Consider applications for the gathering of materials for traditional Maori uses by permit only, in accordance with relevant legislation, issued by the Minister in consultation with the relevant nga iwi.***
2. ***Ensure that applications for non-commercial customary harvest (other than eels) meet the following criteria and conditions:***
 - ***the species to be harvested is not a protected species under the Wildlife Act;***
 - ***the species is not rare, endangered, or locally uncommon;***
 - ***there is a justified need to use the resources from within the Park (eg no other sources available or appropriate);***
 - ***there has been historic use of that species in the Park;***
 - ***use is not excessive and the protection and preservation of the species is ensured;***
 - ***the species is of high importance to iwi;***

- *iwi will carry out appropriate measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate the effects of taking.*
3. *Encourage nga iwi to carry out customary harvesting in areas outside the national park.*
 4. *Where customary harvest could adversely affect ecological values or the viability of a species, take a precautionary approach.*
 5. *Recognise iwi management of their non-commercial customary fishing (which excludes eels) in accordance with the Conservation (South Island Customary Freshwater Fisheries) Regulations, once they are promulgated.*
 6. *Liaise with the Ministry of Fisheries in the undertaking and encouraging of research into eel ecology and sustainability, including traditional Maori concepts.*
 7. *Work with nga iwi to determine appropriate no-take (rahui) rivers in the Park to act as baseline controls for scientific study of eel ecology and for the maintenance of intrinsic values.*
 8. *Allow for the customary harvest of eels for non-commercial purposes in specific areas where there is a tradition of such use and the catch will not affect the viability of that eel population.*
 9. *Where cultural harvest of eels is permitted in the park, ensure that ecological and catch monitoring is carried out to detect any unacceptable adverse effects and act on this information accordingly.*

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

Maori Traditional Use, p237-239

West Coast draft CMS

Customary Use, p27-28

Treaty of Waitangi

Conservation Act 1987

National Parks Act 1980

Wildlife Act 1953

Fisheries Act 1983 and Regulations

NZCA Maori Customary Use - Interim Report and Discussion Paper 1997

South Island Eel Management Plan 1997

4.3 Mining

Policy

- 1. To ensure that any mineral prospecting, exploration and mining is permitted only where national park values are preserved or where the Minister of Conservation is satisfied that there are safeguards against any potential adverse effects.*
- 2. The Minister of Conservation will consult with the Minister of Energy with a view to including Kahurangi National Park into the Fourth Schedule Crown Minerals Act 1991 under Section 61(4) of that Act.*

Background

The park has historically been the target of mining interest because of its unique geology and high mineralisation. At the time the national park was gazetted, existing mining and advance prospect opportunities, such as the gold prospecting licence in Sams Creek and the dolomite mining licence on Mount Burnett, were excluded from the Park at the request of mining interests.

The Crown Minerals Act (No. 2) 1997 amended the Crown Minerals Act by restricting mining in national parks and other lands administered by the Department. The restriction on mining, however, relates to national parks in existence as at 1 October 1991. Kahurangi National Park is not covered by this amendment (being gazetted after 1 October 1991). In considering applications for access arrangements to undertake mining activities, the Minister of Conservation is required to have regard to:

- the objectives of the National Parks Act 1980; and
- the purpose for which the national park is held; and
- any policy statement or management plan of the Crown in relation to the national park; and
- the safeguards against any potential adverse effects of carrying out the proposed programme of work; and
- such other matters as the Minister considers relevant.

Also, in accordance with Section 18A of the National Parks Act 1980, the New Zealand Conservation Authority is consulted.

Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu is the owner of all pounamu found within the Ngai Tahu Takiwa. Although the largest pounamu deposits are found well to the south of the National Park, there is anecdotal evidence that some small deposits of pounamu exist as far north as the Kahurangi National Park area.

Issues and Opportunities

The Park is managed for the protection and preservation of the natural environment. In the past some mining interests have argued that mining activities can be undertaken in an environmentally sensitive manner including ecological rehabilitation. Generally, however, mining activities are regarded as having unacceptable adverse environmental impacts and, therefore, being inconsistent with the purpose for which the Park is held.

In assessing any application for mining activities allowed for by the Crown Minerals Act 1991, the Minister needs to take into account the national park status of the land and the actual and potential adverse effects of any such activity on natural, historic and recreational values of the Park.

Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu has advised that it will be seeking to enter into an agreement with the Department of Conservation across the Ngai Tahu Takiwa regarding access to public conservation lands, including national parks, to enable the collection of pounamu by Ngai Tahu whanui.

Implementation

- 1. Consider applications for mining activities in terms of actual and potential effects, the necessity for the activity to occur in the Park, and the purpose of a national park.***
- 2. Seek to ensure that applications for any permissible mining activities include provisions for complete site rehabilitation and adequate compensation to ensure no net conservation loss to the Park.***
- 3. Manage mining activities in accordance with the CMSs, this management plan and relevant legislation.***
- 4. The Department will recommend that the Minister of Conservation consult with the Minister of Energy with a view to including Kahurangi National Park into the Fourth Schedule Crown Minerals Act 1991.***

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

Mining, p255-258

West Coast draft CMS

Prospecting, Exploration and Mining, p256

National Parks Act 1980

Crown Minerals Act 1991

Crown Minerals Amendment Act 1997

5. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

5. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Policy

To establish and maintain a constructive relationship with local communities and associates to preserve the natural values of the Park and retain opportunities for them to be involved in Park management.

Background

The Park is administered by the Department of Conservation but is also within the jurisdiction of the local authorities in terms of the Resource Management Act. The local authorities with responsibility for the Park are the Buller District Council, the Tasman District Council and the West Coast Regional Council (Map 4).

The Park has several communities of various sizes located close to its boundaries, including Westport, Karamea, Collingwood, Takaka, Tapawera, Motueka, and Murchison. Nelson is the closest city to the Park.

Issues and Opportunities

Consultation

Consultation is an ongoing and evolving process which calls for regular meetings and liaison with affected and interested parties and key stakeholders, such as the local community (Community Forums), iwi, neighbouring landowners, farming, conservation and recreation groups, tourism organisations and commercial operators, in order to achieve effective management of the Park and public support for that management regime.

Local Economies

The presence of a national park can have beneficial spin-offs to a small community, particularly in terms of bringing tourism and the associated income to an area. The management of the Park can therefore have an impact on the economy of surrounding communities, particularly the smaller ones. It is important for the Department to foster a constructive relationship with these communities and, where possible, avoid hindering their use of the Park for appropriate activities. It is important for the communities located on the periphery of the Park to feel a sense of being involved in the management of the Park and the protection of its natural values.

Effects on the Park

Communities can also have effects on the Park by way of increasing visitor numbers, causing impacts through commercial use, runoff, wandering stock, pollutants, weed spread and other associated neighbouring land use effects.

Most native freshwater fish rely on unimpeded access to and from the sea to complete their life cycles. The Park contains many water bodies with high native fishery values which flow through private land outside the Park on their way to the sea. Activities on private land, particularly the building of weirs and the like, can therefore have adverse effects on native fisheries within the Park.

Admin Map 4

In terms of the Resource Management Act, the Department can advocate, through the district and regional planning processes carried out by Local Authorities, for the protection of natural values and the control of activities outside the Park which could potentially have adverse effects on the natural values of the Park.

The Conservation Board

The Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board has jurisdiction over the entire Park. The Board is comprised of private individuals appointed by the Minister to represent the general public. Board members come from diverse backgrounds such as conservation, iwi, commercial concessions, farming and business.

The role of the Board is to represent public opinion and it also has statutory duties relating to the approval of Management Plans and Strategies. The Board also oversees the implementation of Management Plans and Strategies and ensures that the Department fulfils its obligations through the annual Business Plan.

As a result of the Ngai Tahu Settlement, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu may nominate at least one of the members of the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board.

Fencing

The Fencing Act does not require the Department to share the cost of boundary fencing. However, the Department has a policy of working with landowners on a case by case basis and negotiating, subject to resources, the sharing of fencing costs.

Implementation

- 1. Meet with local communities, associates and key stakeholders on a regular basis with regard to the implementation of this management plan*
- 2. Seek provisions in Regional and District Plans to protect water quality, cave and karst features and other natural values within the Park*
- 3. Work with landowners on a case by case basis to consider the sharing of fencing costs.*

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

Community Liaison, p357-358

Statutory Planning, p359-364

West Coast draft CMS

Advocacy in Statutory Planning Processes, p282

Working with Others, p141, 167, 226, 261

Buller District Plan

Tasman District Plan

West Coast Regional Plan

Fencing Act 1978 S3(1)(b)

6. ADMINISTRATION

6. ADMINISTRATION

Policy

To administer the Park effectively in line with legislation, CMSs, the General Policy for National Parks, other General Policies and this management plan.

Background

The Park is administered primarily under the National Parks Act, but is also subject to other Acts, the General Policy for National Parks, other General Policies, and also to the CMS documents for Nelson/Marlborough and the West Coast.

Management of the Park requires a range of administrative activities which enable the Department to carry out its legislative obligations and to implement this management plan and strategies.

The Department is in the process of putting in place a Quality Conservation Management (QCM) system which will improve the way the Department carries out its functions and manages land it administers. The QCM system will be introduced in stages, the first of which applies to structures and sets specific standards for the design and construction of all structures built by the Department. Soon all the Department's activities, from planning to pest control will have a set of QCM guidelines which must be followed and standards which must be met. This plan will be implemented within the framework of the evolving QCM system.

Issues and Opportunities

Compliance and Law Enforcement

The National Parks Act includes a list of offences (Appendix 6) for which offenders can be legally prosecuted. Conservation Rangers and Compliance and Law Enforcement officers of the Department carry out responsibilities in respect to offences in the Park. In order for the Park to receive the level of protection accorded to it under the National Parks Act, offences should first be discouraged through compliance education, then, should an offence occur it can be pursued through law enforcement.

Unformed Legal Roads

There are several unformed legal roads within the Park, mostly on the periphery. These unformed roads were transferred to Local Authorities, without compensation, under the Local Government Act 1974. The Government retained the right of the Crown to take back (resume) the roads at no cost, provided certain criteria were met. A number of unformed roads in Kahurangi meet these criteria (see Map 5).

The General Policy for National Parks states that such roads "should be closed and incorporated into the Park except where they are essential legal access to other lands". These unformed roads do not provide legal access to any other lands or properties and should therefore be transferred to the Department and incorporated into the Park in accordance with General Policy. It should be noted that the Northwest Nelson Forest Park Management Plan, which used to apply to the majority of the land now in the national park, had a similar policy. The Department will liaise with the Local Authority in which the unformed roads are vested, although it is not required to by legislation. Public consultation will not be undertaken.

Unformed Legal Roads Map 5

Additions to the Park

In future, public land adjacent to the national park, which meets the criteria for national park status, could become available. In such cases, the Department should seek to add that land to the Kahurangi National Park through the process dictated in the National Parks Act.

Section 452 of the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act provides that an area of land at Whakapouai will become part of the Park in the future.

Bylaws

In terms of the National Parks Act, the Minister may make bylaws for park management that are not inconsistent with the management plan. This management plan will require a number of bylaws to be passed in order to give effect to the implementation statements.

The Minister may, on the recommendation of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, make bylaws in respect of the Topuni area of Kahurangi.

Management

The Park straddles the Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast Conservancies, so it is important that liaison is maintained between those conservancies to ensure that management of the Park is consistent and is carried out efficiently.

Because of the special relationship between the Department and the Fish and Game Council in terms of the Conservation Act, regard must be had to the West Coast Sports Fish and Game Management Plan and the Nelson/Marlborough plan, when prepared, in the management of fish (trout) and game birds in the park.

Access

Some parts of the Park are only accessible over private land through casual arrangements with the landowners. The Matiri Valley and the Little Wanganui River are two such areas and there are several others which are less frequently used by visitors. In order to provide permanent access to the Park, the Department needs to negotiate with the landowners to have these entry points formalised through easements.

Communications

The Department relies on radio communication within the Park and may require the installation of repeater stations to enhance communication systems for staff and public safety. In constructing any such structures, the Department will need to follow the guidelines for building structures as set out in Section 3.2 Landscape.

Helicopter Use

The Department often utilises helicopters for park management purposes. As has been mentioned previously, helicopter over-flight can have a significant adverse effect on the experiences of some visitors. In order to minimise these effects, the Department should seek to carry out activities requiring helicopter support at times of the day or year when visitors are least likely to be disturbed by the noise and visual impacts.

Memorials

The General Policy allows for memorials such as plaques to be attached to structures such as huts in the Park, where they are appropriate, and for the construction of monuments, but only where they are of exceptional importance.

Implementation

1. *Manage the Park in line with relevant legislation, General Policies, the two CMSs and this management plan.*
2. *Carry out compliance and law enforcement activities in the Park in line with the National Parks Act and other relevant legislation.*
3. *Consider resuming and incorporating unformed legal roads within the Park as indicated on Map 5, following liaison with the Local Authority in which the roads are vested.*
4. *Seek to add adjacent public land, which meets the necessary criteria, to Kahurangi National Park if and when it becomes available.*
5. *Provide for the passing of any bylaws necessary to enable the implementation of policies within this management plan.*
6. *Ensure that there is regular and ongoing liaison between Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast Conservancies in the implementation of this management plan and park management activities generally.*
7. *Liaise with the Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast Fish and Game Councils in the management of sports fish and game birds in the Park.*
8. *Where informal access to the Park exists over private land, seek to legalise access through an easement.*
9. *Allow for the construction of communication facilities for Departmental use and ensure that they comply with the relevant policies listed in Section 3.2 Landscape regarding minimising impacts on landscape values.*
10. *Seek to minimise the impacts on visitors of helicopter use by the Department where possible through the timing of flights to avoid periods of high use and by avoiding over-flying areas where visitors are likely to have high sensitivity, such as the Tasman Wilderness Area (this will be addressed through the Air Access Strategy).*
11. *Permit memorials of a monument type only where the historical association of the site, individual or event is of exceptional importance, in line with General Policy.*
12. *Where appropriate permit benefactors of the Park to be commemorated by plaques on facilities such as huts, shelters and footbridges.*
13. *The Minister may, on the recommendation of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, make bylaws in respect of the Kahurangi Topuni area.*
14. *Provide for the passing of bylaws relating to Topuni.*
15. *Ensure that there is regular and on-going liaison with Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu in the management of Kahurangi Topuni and to give effect to other matters arising from the Ngai Tahu Settlement.*

References

Nelson/Marlborough CMS

West Coast draft CMS

National Parks Act 1980

Conservation Act 1987

Wildlife Act 1953

Wild Animal Control Act 1977

Local Government Act 1974

General Policy for National Parks 1983

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Policy

To implement the management plan through the annual Business Plan and maintain its integrity through review and amendment where necessary.

Background

The priorities in the Conservation Management Strategy and management plans are put into effect through the annual Business Plan. Each year every Conservancy, in consultation with its Conservation Board(s), prepares a business plan setting out the activities it intends to complete in that financial year. This forms the basis for managing finance allocated to the Department and directed for use in the Conservancy.

The Department is funded by an annual appropriation from Parliament as a result of a purchase agreement between the Director-General and the Minister of Conservation to carry out an agreed range of activities which the Minister, and the government of the day, wish the Department to achieve.

One of the main purposes of this management plan is to provide a guide to the priorities to be pursued by the Department in Kahurangi National Park over the next ten years. Thus this management plan establishes targets which the Conservancy will aim to achieve. Annual business plans will seek to reach these targets as personnel and finances permit and depending on the priorities of the government of the day.

This management plan has a statutory term of ten years from the date of its approval by the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA). To keep up with increased knowledge and changing circumstances it will require periodic review and amendment and can be reviewed as a whole or in part. Major amendments will require the full public consultation process, but where an amendment is considered to be of a minor nature and does not alter the general intent of the document, it requires only the approval of the Conservation Board and the NZCA in terms of Section 46(5) of the National Parks Act.

Issues and Opportunities

Priorities in any one year may vary from those set out in the Conservation Management Strategy and this management plan according to national priorities and the extent to which priorities were completed in previous years. Threats to natural, historic and recreational values, finance, national priorities and many other factors can redirect the priorities from year to year. This management plan will be implemented within these constraints.

Implementation

- 1. Ensure that the annual business plans acknowledges the priorities set out in this management plan.*
- 2. Consult the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board and liaise with the West Coast Conservation Board on priorities for Park management prior to and during the preparation of the business plans.*

3. *Review or amend this management plan where changes in circumstance or legislation, or new knowledge cause the policies in the plan to become ultra vires, outdated or irrelevant.*
4. *Allow for the recommendation of minor amendments proposed by the Department directly to the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board and the NZCA.*
5. *Undertake a full review of this management plan within 10 years of the date of approval.*
6. *Consult with Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu on matters relating to Topuni and have particular regard to its views.*
7. *Consult with Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu in accordance with the Protocols.*

References

National Parks Act 1980

Conservation Act 1987