

### 5.3.5 Visitor Centres

- operating visitor centres to provide information, interpretation and retail products to the public

#### Current Situation

##### Background

Historically, visitor centres were located by the priorities of the former New Zealand Forest Service and the Department of Lands and Survey. Not all of these facilities were necessary, and some were not located to maximise public use. Visitor centres should be located where large numbers of people can visit.

The Department's two visitor centres in the Conservancy (as at February 1998) are at Arthur's Pass and Aoraki/Mount Cook Village. These are well used (see Table 29) and provide information on conservation and local areas, emphasising sensitive recreational use. Both are also members of the Visitor Information Network (VIN). Funded by the New Zealand Tourism Board, VIN is a nation-wide grouping of information offices that provide a quality information service to visitors at key tourist locations.

A Hurunui Visitor Information Centre at Hanmer Springs was jointly managed by the Department and the Hurunui District Council, and a visitor centre at Twizel was managed by the Department. Both centres are VIN members. The Department may continue to supply information to these centres.

Table 29: Visitor Centres and Services

Visitor Centre	1995/96 Visitor Numbers	Range of Services
Aoraki/Mount Cook	192,868	Basic information services plus detailed recreation maps and recreation information, including sales of the full range of publications, interpretation displays, tramping supplies and items such as T-shirts
Arthur's Pass	89,579	

The Conservancy also produces leaflets and publications about recreation opportunities on lands managed by the Department in Canterbury. A recent review of these publications rationalised what the Conservancy will produce over the next decade. The Conservancy's ability to quickly access requested recreational information needs to be improved.

#### Statutory Framework

Sections 6(c), (d), and (e) of the Conservation Act 1987 enable the Department to promote the benefits to present and future generations of conservation; to prepare, provide, disseminate, promote and publicise educational and promotional material relating to conservation; and to foster compatible recreation.

#### Objectives

- To provide high quality visitor centres in locations close to Department-managed areas, where a significant number of visitors can benefit from natural, historic and recreational information.
- To meet reasonable visitor needs, stimulate their interest and appreciation in natural and historic issues, and to enhance their enjoyment.

#### Implementation

The Conservancy will:

1. Foster local natural, historic and recreational opportunities on lands managed by the Department through the Conservancy's visitor centres and other information centres.
2. Provide Department visitor information centres in Canterbury with experienced staff who have local knowledge, and with material to enable staff to answer queries relating to land managed by the Department and Conservancy activities in their area; natural and historic values; and appropriate recreational use (see 5.1.4 Communication and Liaison).
3. Undertake regular reviews and, where warranted, alter visitor centre services to meet changing public needs and departmental priorities.
4. Develop a GIS-based recreation information system to quickly provide accurate information on facilities.
5. Encourage community financial and staffing support for Departmental visitor centres, particularly where there is a high level of tourist information not directly related to Conservancy management.

6. Retail products that promote natural and historic values and the appropriate use of land managed by the Department.
7. Ensure its visitor centres meet efficient standards of retail operation.
8. Provide a quality customer service that enhances the public understanding of natural, historic and recreational issues.
9. Provide support to non-Departmental visitor centres that promote the conservation and appropriate use of land managed by the Department.

## Priorities

### Primary

The primary visitor centre priority for Canterbury will be the upgrading of the Aoraki/Mount Cook Visitor Centre. The existing facilities are dated and this is a high-use facility.

### Secondary

The second priority will be to assess what means of involvement the Department will have with the Hurunui and Twizel Visitor Centres.

### Priority Sites

Table 30 outlines the priority sites for visitor centres. The Arthur's Pass and Aoraki/Mount Cook Visitor Centres will continue to be priority facilities over the term of this CMS.

### Less Achievable Tasks

Tasks the Conservancy may not be able to undertake or complete include:

- opening, or joining with other agencies to operate new or existing visitor centres
- updating visitor centres
- opening visitor centres seven days a week

See also:    5.1.4 Communication and Liaison  
              5.3.6 Interpretation

**Table 30: Key Visitor Centre Priorities**

Theme	Issue	Method	Results Sought	Place
Aoraki/Mount Cook Visitor Centre	To interpret the rich alpine history and values of the Aoraki/Mount Cook area	1. Crown funding 2. Corporate funding 3. Public donations 4. Visitor charges	An international standard visitor centre established, with appropriate interpretive opportunities	Waitaki (Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park)