

5.3 VISITOR SETTINGS

5.3.1 Visitors to Fiordland (An inventory of existing use)

The Department of Conservation's national Visitor Strategy (1996) defines visitors to the public conservation estate into seven distinct visitor groups. These seven groups are:

- Short Stop Traveller;
- Day Visitor;
- Overnighter;
- Backcountry Comfort Seeker;
- Backcountry Adventurer;
- Remoteness Seekers; and
- Thrillseekers.

Short Stop Travellers, for example, may visit a National Park for an hour or so en-route to somewhere else. Their visit is for a tea break or toilet stop and may involve a short walk or taking photographs. They are looking for scenic places with car parks, toilets, short walking tracks, picnic facilities and information about the area. This group makes up a significant number of visitors and their numbers are expected to increase.

Day Visitors, as the name implies, may spend up to a day in an area managed by the Department of Conservation. Visits are often associated with a family or group outing or a specific recreational activity, ranging from a picnic to walking, trout fishing, or hunting. The focus of the visit is often water, either lakes or the coastline. In addition to the facilities required by short stop travellers, this group also requires longer tracks, wharves and boat ramps. Day visitor numbers are expected to increase at popular tourist sites.

Overnighters are the traditional family holidaymakers. Most of their visits range from one to two weeks and are based around staying at a campground or educational lodge. Day walks, swimming, water skiing and trout fishing are their preferred recreational activities and they want attractive locations with basic accommodation or campground facilities. There are only a relatively small number of overnighters, but their use is concentrated in certain areas over the popular summer months. Their numbers may increase with the growing popularity of campervan touring.

Backcountry Comfort Seekers are mostly walkers on the more popular tracks such as the Routeburn or Milford. For many of this group a two to five day tramp is their first experience of the New Zealand outdoors. They want a low risk backcountry experience with well-constructed tracks, huts with cooking and heating facilities, and good information about the track. This group is made up largely of young visitors and will

increase in size as more international visitors walk these tracks. There is an increasing number of visitors in the older age group.

Backcountry Adventurers are self-reliant trampers, hunters, mountaineers and kayakers who want a remote experience. They require only a few facilities such as small basic huts, tramping tracks, bridges and some signs. In addition, they need information to plan their trip, such as maps, snow and weather reports and route guides. This group has historically comprised young male New Zealanders, however there is an increasing trend towards a wider demographic range including both male and female international visitors. Many of these visitors are also staying for longer periods.

Remoteness Seekers are self-reliant trampers, hunters and mountaineers who want a true wilderness experience with very few interactions with other visitors, and no facilities. Like the backcountry adventurers, they need information to plan their trip. This group is very small in size in comparison with other user groups.

For Thrillseekers, areas managed by the Department of Conservation provide the natural backdrop for activities such as skiing, paragliding, rafting and bungee jumping. They require specialised facilities such as ski fields and bungee jumping platforms. They are localised compared with other groups and they are generally young and well-off. Thrillseekers are not a significant user group of Fiordland National Park, but there are a number of activities beginning to appear on the periphery of Fiordland National Park. The Department of Conservation does not cater for this user group and thrillseeking activities are not considered consistent with the range of opportunities provided by Fiordland National Park.

5.3.2 Recreation Opportunities

Fiordland's greatest attribute is that, to most people, the area is a wild untouched landscape and this is enhanced by the vast remote mountainous and rugged terrain. The remoteness values of western Fiordland are of international significance. Fiordland National Park is the largest of New Zealand's national parks and contains a large proportion of the country's truly remote and Wilderness Areas. This has been recognised officially by including Fiordland within Te Wāhipounamu - *South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area.

A further strength lies in the three Great Walks: Milford Track, Kepler Track and the Routeburn Track (the latter being managed jointly with the Otago Conservancy). The Great Walk tracks absorb the bulk of the backcountry users in Fiordland, catering for visitors who are seeking a multi-day walk with high quality, comfortable facilities. Guided walk operations run alongside the independent walker activity and allow for a greater diversity of people to complete these tracks.

Other recreation opportunities include providing for wilderness tramping opportunities and for day visitors; the most obvious sites are Milford Sound / Piopiotahi, Milford Road, Doubtful Sound / Patea and the Te Ana-au glow worm caves. These attractions are internationally renowned 'icon' sites. (Note that most of the activity relating to Milford Sound / Piopiotahi and Doubtful Sound / Patea is undertaken off land administered by the Department of Conservation, however it is accessed and supported via facilities in Fiordland National Park. As a result there are a number of associated management implications on Fiordland National Park.)

Lakes Hauroko, Monowai, Manapōuri and Te Anau are attractive destinations for boat users. Besides the activities undertaken on the lakes from boats, such as angling and water sports, the lakes allow easy access for hunting and tramping opportunities. There are several lakeshore huts and tracks that (without chartering aircraft) can only be accessed by boat.

A noticeable change in water activities over the last few years has been the growth in kayaking on both lakes and fiords.

The fiords also provide a setting where similar activities can take place. Although the fiords are outside Fiordland National Park, the activities occurring on them can result in use of Fiordland National Park.