



Heaphy Track operational plan 2008-2018

Kahurangi National Park

VERSION 1.1 - INTERNAL DOCUMENT DECEMBER 2009



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Kahurangi National Park

B Clough

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When updating this document, be sure to update the version number on the title page.

APPROVALS:

When updating this document, electronic approvals must be gained from the following people:

- Area Manager, Buller (Robert Dickson)
- Conservator, West Coast Conservancy (Michael Slater)
- Area Manager, Golden Bay (John Mason)
- Conservator, Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy (Neil Clifton)

NOTIFICATIONS:

When updating this document, the following people must be emailed that edits have been completed:

- Brendon Clough
- Ian Wightwick

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Preface

This operational plan for the Heaphy Track has been prepared in order to implement the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan in a consistent way across two conservancies.

The actions in this plan are printed in ITALICS.

This plan has been reviewed and finalised by staff of the Department of Conservation in Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast Conservancies

This operational plan will be reviewed should there be changes to the management plan or operational resourcing.

Approvals

Area Manager Buller:



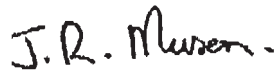
Date: 17 March 2009

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Date: 17 March 2009

1. Introduction

The Heaphy Great Walk is located within Kahurangi National Park which lies in the northwest of the South Island and is the second largest national park in New Zealand. It has the greatest range of landforms, habitats and communities of plants and animals of any of the national parks in New Zealand. Many landforms in the park are considered internationally, nationally or regionally important. (KNPMP 2001)

The park contains outstanding examples of pre-human ecosystems, with numerous nationally and internationally significant native plants, animals and geological features. Particular recognition has been given to two areas of the park which have been given special status; the Tasman Wilderness Area which protects 80,000 ha of undeveloped remote wilderness; and the Honeycomb Hill Caves Specially Protected Area which protects a range of outstanding scientific values contained within its cave systems.

The vision for the park identified in the management plan is Diversity, Sanctuary and Wilderness. The objectives include:

- To preserve in their natural state in perpetuity the landscape, natural ecological systems, wilderness and natural and historic features of Kahurangi National Park and as far as possible eradicate introduced plants and animals.
- To retain the essential character of Kahurangi National Park as a remote, undeveloped, natural area of great beauty, natural quiet and diversity, and of value for whakapapa, recreation, appreciation and study.
- To give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, at least to the extent that the provisions of the National Parks Act 1980 are not inconsistent with those principles.
- To give the public the opportunity to gain benefit, enjoyment, inspiration and opportunities for recreation from the park to the extent compatible with the objectives above.

1.1 HEAPHY TRACK GREAT WALK - LOCATION AND HISTORY

The Heaphy Track is located in the northwest area of Kahurangi National Park, linking Golden Bay to the West Coast north of Karamea.

A route between the Aorere and Heaphy Rivers was known and used by Maori but it appears that the more commonly used route between Golden Bay and the West Coast was along the coast between Whanganui Inlet and Kohaihai. That this was a long established route is borne out by the recorded stories and wahi taonga and wahi tapu (special sites and places) along this coast. There is evidence of an early Maori camp site at the Heaphy River mouth and other recorded sites up the Heaphy River, along the coastal section of the track and at the mouth of the Kohaihai River.

Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner with guides Kehu and Tau were the first recorded Europeans to travel the coastal route in 1846. However the first record of Europeans using the inland route was not until 1859. Exploration by James Mackay led to the first cutting of a formal track in the mid 1860s. It was used by miners travelling between the Collingwood and West Coast goldfields and was later significantly realigned and upgraded to a horse track. This track, the basis of the present track, was maintained by the Collingwood and Buller County Councils until 1964 when NZ Forest Service assumed responsibility.

Formal protection of the area began with the establishment of the Goulard Downs Scenic Reserve and Wildlife refuge in 1917. Other areas within the present National Park were gazetted State Forest from 1920 which resulted in the North West Nelson Forest Park in 1965¹. A resurgence of mining interest in the 1980s saw increased public pressure for a higher level of protection for the area. The Forest Park and some adjoining areas became Kahurangi National Park in 1996.

For decades walkers have experienced the characteristically remote and undeveloped nature of this multi-day journey where basic huts, diverse terrain and varying track conditions have challenged and rewarded thousands of New Zealand and overseas trampers. Since 1974 a gradual track upgrading program has been implemented to create a higher standard all-weather surface.

1.2 TRACK DESCRIPTION

The track crosses the park's range of landscapes, from the junction of the Brown and Aorere Rivers in the east, over expansive tussock downs to the lush forests, Nikau palms and roaring seas of the West Coast.

The track is well formed and suitable for fit, well-equipped people. All rivers and major streams are bridged. The track takes four to six days to complete.

As one of New Zealand's nine Great Walks, at 78.4 km the Heaphy is the longest and considered one of the least developed. Although there have been a few exceptions, an average of 4000 people have completed the track each year, with a gradual rise in numbers over the last 20 years (Fig 1). Although statistical data is not available prior to 1987, anecdotal evidence suggests that visitor numbers have remained relatively constant for over 30 years spanning both State Forest Park and National Park management periods.

¹ Barne states it was NW Nelson Forest Park in 1965. Kahurangi Management Plan says 1972!

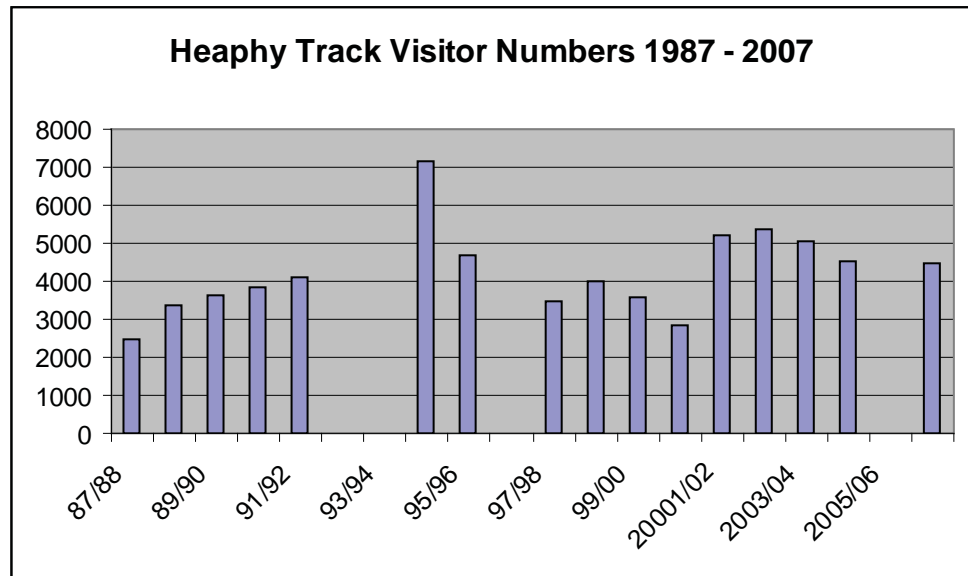


Figure 1. Heaphy Track Visitor Numbers 1987 – 2007 (incomplete)

A bunk and camp site booking system has been in place since 2006 to reduce overcrowding at huts during peak periods and so far appears to be successful. The booking system has also assisted the guided walks concession operators with a longer term planning tool for business surety.

The track is not a circuit and trampers need to arrange transport to and from both ends of the track. A number of land and air transport operators provide connections to the ends of the track. It is possible that the combination of track distance and location, logistical challenges and associated costs are factors that stifle significant increases to visitor numbers.

1.3 VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Reflecting the undeveloped nature of the park, trampers can encounter great spotted kiwi, blue duck, and *Powelliphanta* snails and experience the variety of alpine tussocks and herb fields, inland and coastal forests and extensive coastal plant communities on their journeys.

On this track visitors can expect to see some of the most pristine and scenically beautiful coastal and mountain scenery in New Zealand, and experience a remote environment requiring a reasonable level of fitness and self-reliance. Visitors are provided with a high standard of serviced huts secured through an organised pre-booking system.

2. Objectives of management

1. Management of the track should also effectively protect the natural and historic values and on the West Coast side should be consistent with its status as an Actively Managed Historic Asset (where heritage fabric is present).
2. The management objectives also include fostering recreational experiences through:
 - Safety.
 - Comfort.
 - Environmental/conservation values.
 - Interpretation.

These objectives are consistent with the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan 2001–2011.

3. Issues and policies

The following sections discuss the major issues relating to the track. The items in *ITALICS* note the relevant policy.

3.1 PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

As previously stated this strategy provides the overall guidelines for operations along the track in conjunction with the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan.

- *ANY ON-SITE DEVELOPMENT OR UPGRADING OF THE TRACK AND FACILITIES IDENTIFIED IN THIS STRATEGY WILL BE FURTHER COVERED BY DETAILED DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR PRESCRIPTIONS AND ON THE WEST COAST SIDE WILL BE CONSISTENT WITH ITS STATUS AS AN ACTIVELY MANAGED HISTORIC ASSET.*
- *A PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY WILL BE HELD IN THE ASSETS DATABASE COVERING ALL HUTS, SHELTERS, BRIDGES, AND SIGNS.*
- *THE DESIGN OF STRUCTURES WILL BE AS PER TRACKS AND OUTDOOR VISITOR STRUCTURES, SNZ HB 8630:2004.*

3.2 FUEL SUPPLY

When the huts were managed by the NZ Forest Service, woodlots were established near some of the huts to provide heating (and in some cases, cooking fuel). This practise ceased some years ago as increased understanding and valuing conservation deemed the activity to be inappropriate.

Current practise is for wood and coal to be supplied; with gas stoves provided at most huts for cooking. In time it is anticipated that changes to DOC policies regarding the use of fossil fuels and sustainability may require further changes to heating and cooking provisions.

- *GAS COOKERS AND HEATING FUEL (TYPE DEPENDANT ON SUSTAINABILITY) WILL BE SUPPLIED AT PERRY, SAXON, JAMES MACKAY, LEWIS AND HEAPHY HUTS AND ALL STAFF HUTS.*
- *TRAMPERS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO CARRY THEIR OWN COOKERS.*
- *THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE FUELS FOR HEATING WILL BE INVESTIGATED.*
- *ALL NEW HUTS WILL INCORPORATE ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTISES TO MINIMISE FUEL USE.*
- *SOLAR POWERED LIGHTING WILL BE INSTALLED IN PERRY SADDLE, SAXON, JAMES MACKAY, LEWIS AND HEAPHY HUTS.*

3.3 RUBBISH REMOVAL

The track will be managed as a litter-free zone to promote the philosophy of "Pack it in; pack it out" that encourages trampers to take responsibility for their rubbish. This is in line with nationally consistent procedures throughout Public Conservation Land (PCL).

- *THE TRACK WILL BE PROMOTED AS A LITTER-FREE ZONE.*
- *APPROPRIATE SIGNS AND INFORMATION TO EDUCATE TRAMPERS TO CARRY OUT ALL THEIR RUBBISH WILL BE PLACED IN ALL HUTS AND SHELTERS AND AT THE ENDS OF THE TRACK.*

3.4 THE TRACK

Over the years the track has been gradually upgraded to an all weather surface capable of withstanding the high rainfall and increasing use. This has primarily been undertaken on the Collingwood end of the walk. The West Coast side is somewhat below this standard and hence there is a mismatch in track conditions and experiences which will be remedied, via the undertaking of deferred maintenance work, over the life of this plan.

Standard specifications will be the "*Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures, SNZ HB8630:2004*"

Classification: Great Walk.

Visitor type: Backcountry Comfort Seeker. These tracks cater for less experienced trampers, expecting a low risk experience in the backcountry. Great Walk tracks are generally multi-day tramping tracks and are suitable for pedestrians and other approved recreation activities.

Grade: No maximum grade however a 1 in 6 gradient is desirable.

Width: Maximum – 1000 mm walking surface.

Surface: Well drained, gravelled where necessary providing a firm and even footing.

Structure width: Maximum width needs to be set to ensure machinery for management purposes can cross structures safely.

There are sections of the track which still require upgrading to a Great Walk track standard. These sections will be completed during the term of this plan. Ongoing maintenance and repairs will occur on an ongoing basis. On the West Coast side this will be consistent with the track's status as an Actively Managed Historic Asset (where heritage fabric is still present).

- THE WEST COAST SIDE WILL HAVE DEFERRED MAINTENANCE UNDERTAKEN IN ORDER TO ENSURE A BETTER TRANSITION BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST SIDE.
- DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR PRESCRIPTIONS WILL BE PREPARED FOR ALL UPGRADING.
- ALL TRACK UPGRADING WILL BE TO THE GREAT WALK CLASSIFICATION SPECIFIED IN "TRACKS AND OUTDOOR VISITOR STRUCTURES", NZ HANDBOOK, SNZ HB 8630: 2004.

3.4.1 Historic values

The track is based on an historic track and follows in part earlier historic routes. There are significant archaeological sites and historic structures and features particularly on the West Coast side. As a result the West Coast Conservancy has designated their section of the track an Actively Managed Historic Asset. This gives primary management to the conservation of historic values and will be a significant factor in any future development of this section of the track and its facilities.

- *ALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND HISTORIC STRUCTURES WILL BE IDENTIFIED AND THEIR FUTURE MANAGEMENT WILL BE GUIDED BY CONSERVATION PLANS AND/OR MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES PREPARED BY HISTORIC STAFF.*
- *ALL HUTS OLDER THAN 30 YEARS WILL BE ASSESSED FOR HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE PRIOR TO ANY MAJOR ALTERATION OR REPLACEMENT.*

3.4.2 Revegetation

Revegetation will be necessary around new huts and upgraded sections of the track. An Environmental Impact Assessment will assist in providing guidance to minimise damage and identify the indigenous species likely to re-establish successfully following any disturbance. The best way to maximise natural regeneration will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the advice of Area biodiversity staff and Conservancy botanists.

- *ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT ASSESSMENTS WILL BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO ANY NEW HUTS BEING CONSTRUCTED, OR MAJOR TRACK UPGRADES CARRIED OUT.*

3.4.3 Chemical sprays

The use of chemical sprays is an effective management tool to control vegetation along the track.

- *WHERE REQUIRED, THE CAREFUL USE OF APPROPRIATE CHEMICAL SPRAYS (BIODEGRADABLE AND NON-RESIDUAL) TO CONTROL VEGETATION ALONG THE TRACK WILL BE PERMITTED.*
- *ANNUAL GORSE CONTROL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE HEAPHY VALLEY (FROM RIVER MOUTH TO ABOVE LEWIS HUT) AND ON GOULAND DOWNS, USING TORDON/GRAZON WILL CONTINUE DURING THE LIFE OF THIS PLAN.*

3.4.4 Future development

The provision of maintained side tracks leading to points of interest off the main Heaphy Track will be avoided so as to deter the inexperienced from deviating from the main track and to avoid environmental damage.

A number of unmarked routes exist at:

- Perry Saddle Hut to Mt Perry.
- Saxon Hut to Peak North.
- James Mackay Hut to Peak North.

These routes will not be maintained. However route guides may be available in the relevant huts for those who wish to explore further. We may choose not to supply guides if the side tracks start to show unacceptable impacts.

Alternative routes that would result in unacceptable environmental impacts will not be publicised by the Department or those that pose a risk to trampers.

3.5 ACCOMMODATION

The huts along the track are essential for safety and shelter. They will provide adequate and relevant facilities and service standards to cater for Great Walk track users. They will be well maintained and attention will be paid to retaining and enhancing the landscape character of each site.

Where possible ancillary buildings will be incorporated into the main building, or alternatively sited to reduce their impact on the landscape. All new huts will be built to the standards required in the National Hut Procurement Manual. All Wardens Quarters will be stand alone buildings due to season length and the need for some privacy.

As huts are often full during the peak December/January and Easter periods, booked camping options will continue to be provided in defined areas adjacent to huts.

Problems in the past with high rainfall, poor drainage and cool temperatures have meant toilet facilities were less than adequate. New technology has allowed for major upgrading of sewerage systems throughout the track. These systems will be closely monitored to ensure environmentally acceptable discharges and that they meet consent requirements.

The following sections outline major considerations and policy for individual huts:

3.5.1 Public huts

Issues such as fuel and rubbish are discussed in separate sections of this plan.

Other policies which relate to all huts are outlined below followed by statements specific to each hut.

- ALL FUTURE HUTS WILL BE OF A SIMILAR DESIGN (INCLUDING SIMILAR FLOOR PLAN, BUILDING MATERIALS, AND COLOURS ETC) BUT WITH CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO INDIVIDUAL SITE DIFFERENCES.
- NEW HUTS WILL BE CONSTRUCTED TO THE STANDARDS REQUIRED IN THE NATIONAL HUT PROCUREMENT MANUAL.
- ALL WARDENS QUARTERS WILL BE STAND ALONE BUILDINGS.
- ALL HUTS ON THE HEAPHY TRACK WILL BE MANAGED UNDER THE DEPARTMENT'S NATIONAL HUT BOOKING SYSTEM.
- HUT BUNK CAPACITY WILL NOT EXCEED 28 PEOPLE AT PERRY SADDLE AND JAMES MACKAY HUTS.
- * HUT BUNK CAPACITY WILL NOT EXCEED 34 PEOPLE AT HEAPHY HUT.
- * NEW HUTS WILL BE DESIGNED TO ALLOW FOR INCREASED CAPACITY IF REQUIRED AT A LATER STAGE.
- * THE LEVEL OF SERVICE TO BE PROVIDED IN THE HEAPHY TRACK HUTS WILL FOLLOW THE SERVICE STANDARD DETAILS FOR GREAT WALK HUTS (BCC) AS SET OUT IN THE DEPARTMENT'S "HUT SERVICE STANDARDS, MAY 2004, QD CODE: VC/1199.

3.5.1.1 Brown Hut

Size: Adequate.

Toilets: Adequate.

General: Retain hut as is, focus on road access issues and bridge requirements with Tasman District Council (TDC).

* INVESTIGATE ROAD ACCESS AND BRIDGING REQUIREMENTS WITH TDC.

3.5.1.2 Perry Saddle Hut

Size: Replace with 28 bunk hut in 2010/2011.

Toilets: Not Adequate.

General: Site to ensure most sheltered position.

* REPLACE 2010/2011 WITH A 28 BUNK HUT.

3.5.1.3 Gouland Downs Hut

Size: Maintain as an existing 8 bunk hut. Do not replace.

Toilets: Adequate.

Heating and cooking: Retain open fireplace for character and historic association.

3.5.1.4 Saxon Hut

Size: Maintain as an existing 16 bunk hut.

Toilets: Adequate.

* NOTE: OPTION TO EXTEND THE HUT IN FUTURE. NOT FEATURED IN THE LIFE OF THIS PLAN.

3.5.1.5 *James Mackay Hut*

Size: Replace with 28 bunk hut in 2013/2014.

Toilets: Adequate.

** REPLACE HUT IN 2011/2012 WITH A 28 BUNK HUT.*

3.5.1.6 *Lewis Hut*

Size: Maintain at 22 bunks in interim. Will re-address size requirements and re-site it elsewhere when due for replacement. Third in priority order for replacement on West Coast.

Toilets: Adequate.

** REPLACE HUT IN 2014/2015 WITH A 22 BUNK HUT.*

3.5.1.7 *Heaphy Hut*

The Heaphy Hut is popular with more users than just those tramping the track; people walk in from Karamea end to fish or spend a few days relaxing in the area. It is also the hut at which trampers often choose to spend an extra day.

Size: Replace with 34 bunk hut in 2012/2013.

Heating and cooking: Requires the provision of outside cooking facilities.

Toilets: Adequate.

** REPLACE HUT IN 2012/2013 WITH A 34 BUNK HUT.*

3.5.2 **Staff accommodation**

Staff accommodation along the track will be designed to cater for both seasonal hut wardens and biodiversity staff working on flora and fauna programmes.

Due to the length of the wardening season it is desirable that staff accommodation be constructed as stand alone units.

** ANY NEW STAFF ACCOMMODATION WILL ACCOMMODATE NO MORE THAN 6 PEOPLE.*

** ANY NEW STAFF ACCOMMODATION WILL BE CONSTRUCTED AS STAND ALONE UNITS.*

3.5.2.1 *Perry Saddle staff hut*

Size: Replace hut in 2010/2011.

Toilets: None required.

** REPLACE 2010/2011 WITH A 4 BUNK HUT.*

** REPLACE TOILET IN 2009/2010 WITH AN APPROVED SYSTEM.*

3.5.2.2 Saxon staff hut

Size: Inadequate.

Toilets: Adequate.

** UPGRADE TO ENSURE LIVING SPACE STANDARDS ARE MET FOR 4 STAFF.*

3.5.2.3 James Mackay staff hut

Size: Adequate.

Toilets: Adequate.

** INVESTIGATE VISUAL IMPACT AS VIEWED FROM PUBLIC HUT.*

3.5.2.4 Heaphy staff hut

Size: Adequate.

Toilets: Adequate.

** REVIEW AND REPLACE WITH 4 BUNK HUT IN 2012/2013.*

3.5.3 Shelters

Shelters will be provided for day and emergency use only.

3.5.3.1 Aorere

Retain for safety.

3.5.3.2 Katipo Creek

Retain for safety.

** REPLACE SHELTER IN 2012/2013 AND RELOCATE THE TOILET ONTO THE INLAND SIDE OF THE TRACK.*

3.6 CAMPING SITES

In conjunction with the hut booking system, designated campsites will be provided outside all huts and at other strategic locations along the track.

Campsites are: Brown, Aorere, Perry, Gouland, Saxon, James Mackay, Heaphy, Katipo and Scotts Beach.

Campsite bookings will be managed under the Department's national booking system.

** ALL CAMPSITES ON THE HEAPHY TRACK WILL BE MANAGED UNDER THE DEPARTMENT'S NATIONAL BOOKING SYSTEM.*

** CAMPING WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY IN DESIGNATED AREAS.*

** KATIPO AND SCOTTS BEACH CAMPSITES WILL BE UPGRADED IN 2009/2010.*

3.7 BRIDGES

A number of large, flood prone waterways are currently bridged on the Heaphy Track, with old NZFS swing bridges. A gradual programme of swing bridge replacement is being undertaken. Reasons for this include: age and condition; ongoing maintenance; user resistance as many people are apprehensive of swing bridges and thus reluctant to use them; potential changes in recreational uses (i.e. mountain bikes); delays, with the one person at a time loading restriction can result in stoppages occurring at some bridges in busy periods; limitations for accessing the track with light machinery used for track work.

- *ALL MAJOR RIVERS AND STREAMS WILL BE NAMED.*
- *ALL BRIDGES WILL BE DESIGNED TO BEST FIT THE PARTICULAR SITE.*
- *SWINGBRIDGES ALONG THE TRACK WILL BE REPLACED WITH SOLID STRUCTURES, OR SUSPENSION BRIDGES AS FUNDING ALLOWS AS IDENTIFIED IN THE MEDIUM TO LONG TERM CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME.*
- *WHERE BRIDGES ARE PROVIDED ON WET WEATHER ACCESS ROUTES THESE SHOULD BE REPLACED AS NEAR AS PRACTICABLE TO THE FORD SITE ON THE MAIN TRACK.*
- *A MAXIMUM STRUCTURE WIDTH WILL BE SET FOR MANAGEMENT PURPOSES TO ENABLE ACCESS FOR TRACK MACHINERY.*
- *THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY IS TO BE ASSIGNED TO BRIDGE REPLACEMENT:*
 1. *GUNNER*
 2. *SWANBURN*
 3. *WEKAKURA*
 4. *MURRAY*
 5. *HEAPHY*
 6. *KOHAIHAI*
 7. *BROWN*
 8. *SHINER*
 9. *BIG RIVER*
 10. *CAVE STREAM*
 11. *UNNAMED COASTAL BRIDGE*

3.8 SIGNS

All outdoor signs will be as per the Department's sign manual.

- *THE DESIGN OF ALL OUTDOOR SIGNS WILL BE AS PER THE DEPARTMENT'S OUTDOOR SIGNS MANUAL.*
- *ALL DIRECTIONAL AND ORIENTATION SIGNS WILL INCLUDE BOTH TIMES AND DISTANCES AS PER GREAT WALK STANDARDS, TRACKS AND OUTDOOR VISITOR STRUCTURES, SNZ HB8630:2004.*
- *ALL HUTS AND SHELTERS WILL BE NAMED.*
- *MARKERS WILL BE POSITIONED 1 KM OUT IN EACH DIRECTION FROM EACH HUT AND SHELTER.*
- *HISTORIC SITES AND RELICS WILL BE IDENTIFIED, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE INTERPRETED AND PRESERVED.*
- *ANY HAZARDS ALONG THE TRACK WILL BE CLEARLY SIGNPOSTED AS PER THE DEPARTMENT'S VISITOR RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.*

3.9 ROAD ENDS

The Brown River and Kohaihai road ends are popular with a range of users, other than trampers. These include:

- People meeting or dropping off trampers.
- Picnickers.
- Sightseers keen to visit the track end and walk a short length of the track.
- Fishers.
- Campers.

The needs and aspirations of these users will be given consideration and addressed in the Heaphy Track Interpretation Plan.

The road from Bainham to the Brown River Hut can cause delays for visitors when stream crossings (fords) are in flood. Management of this road section lies with the Tasman District Council (TDC) who do not have the upgrade of any of the fords to all weather standard on their current 10 Year Roothing Programme.

Future proposed changes to "special purpose roads" funding means the continued co-operation of TDC should be sought to ensure that the road is maintained in a satisfactory condition and the fords upgraded if suitable funding options become available.

The Department could also discuss possible joint venture options for this road with TDC.

- *BOTH KOHAIHAI AND BROWN RIVER ROADENDS WILL BE KEPT TO A HIGH STANDARD TO PROVIDE FOR DAY VISITORS NEEDS.*
- *TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO UPGRADE THE FORDS ON THE SECTION OF ROAD FROM BAINHAM TO THE NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY TO ALL WEATHER STANDARDS.*

3.10 TRACK MAINTENANCE

Regular track inspections will be undertaken as per the standards specified in the Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures Handbook 5NZHB 8630:2004.

Maintenance plans will be specified in AMIS.

- *TRACK INSPECTIONS WILL BE UNDERTAKEN AS PER THE STANDARDS AND TIMEFRAMES SPECIFIED IN THE ASSET MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM.*
- *ALL SERVICING AND MAINTENANCE ON THE HEAPHY TRACK WILL BE CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSPECTION PROCEDURE AS ESTABLISHED BY THE ASSET MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM.*

3.11 CONCESSIONS

All concession applications for guiding on the Heaphy Track are considered in accordance with Part IIIB of the Conservation Act 1987, the National Parks Act 1980 and the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan.

Generally concessions have been granted for a term of five years. Concessions for overnight walks have been granted for a maximum group's size of 12 people including guides.

The introduction of the Great Walks hut booking system has provided a good management tool to reduce crowding in huts. Setting conditions on maximum concession group's sizes can manage the perception of crowding on the track. The hut booking system is on a "first come first served" basis.

- *ALL EXISTING AND NEW CONCESSIONS FOR DAY WALKS ON THE HEAPHY TRACK WILL HAVE A SEPARATE PERMIT AND HAVE A MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE OF 12 PEOPLE INCLUDING GUIDES AND A COMMON EXPIRY DATE.*

3.11.1 Fields Cave

Fields cave is currently being utilised by visitors. These are both independent visitors and some concessionaires whom are actually not currently licensed to guide in the cave. The cave has got historic and natural values which we need to safeguard. The cave environment is managed and actively monitored.

- *WILL NOT PUBLICISE THE CAVE TO INDEPENDENT VISITORS.*
- *ANY CURRENT COMMERCIAL GUIDING OF THE CAVE IS PUT THROUGH A CONCESSION PROCESS.*
- *ANY NEW APPLICATIONS WOULD BE TREATED ON THEIR MERITS.*

3.12 VISITOR MONITORING

An accurate database on visitor numbers and demographic information is available for management purposes. (See – AMIS and National Visitor Booking System.) This information will be kept up-to-date.

3.12.1 Visitor numbers

1. Three boardwalk counters are located near both ends of the track providing basic data on numbers of day and overnight users.

(a) Eastern Side:

- Brown Hill.

(b) Western Side:

- 20 Minute Beach (day visitors and overnights).
- Scotts Hill (overnights).

• *EXISTING BOARDWALK COUNTERS WILL BE REPLACED WITH THE NEW MODEL AMIS COUNTERS.*

2. The National Visitor Booking System (NVBS) collects statistics on Heaphy Track hut and campsite bookings.

• *NVBS AND BOARDWALK COUNTER DATA WILL BE COLLATED AND UPDATED TO AMIS ANNUALLY.*

3. Wardens have been collecting information on actual overnights at staffed sites and campsites since the booking system was established. Data on compliance with tickets (no ticket, wrong ticket) etc is compiled for management.

• *THE NEED FOR, AND AMOUNT OF DATA COLLECTED BY WARDENS WILL BE REVIEWED.*

3.12.2 Visitor preferences, motivations and characteristics

The National Visitor Booking System collects statistics on overnights demographic characteristics: age, gender, country of residence.

• *RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS AND WHEN REQUIRED IF INFORMATION IS ON VISITOR PREFERENCES AND MOTIVATIONS IS REQUIRED.*

3.12.3 Visitor surveys

• *VISITOR SURVEYS WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS AND WHEN REQUIRED FOR MANAGEMENT PURPOSES.*

• *SOCIAL MONITORING WILL BE DEVELOPED BASED ON VISITORS PERCEPTION OF OUTCOME AT PLACE.*

3.12.4 Visitor consent monitoring

Some new visitor infrastructure requires consent monitoring. Current monitoring includes quality and quantity of toilet waste from disposal systems as directed by local authorities.

- *MONITORING OF CONSENTS WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS REQUIRED BY RESOURCE CONSENT CONDITIONS SET BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.*
- *WEST COAST WILL BE UNDERTAKING MONITORING WITHIN THE FIELD CAVE 08/09.*

3.13 INTERPRETATION

There are numerous opportunities for interpretation of particular features, which may include:

- Viewpoints.
- Flora and fauna.
- History of Maori use of the area.
- History of European exploration, track making and huts.
- European attempts at settlement and farming.
- The story of the Goulard Downs Scenic Reserve and Wildlife Refuge.
- County boundary.
- Coal outcrop between James Mackay and Lewis.
- James Mackay.
- Tide locations at Heaphy Hut.
- Japanese Shipwreck.
- Field Cave.

Methods used to interpret these features may include trackside panels, pamphlets and displays in huts.

- *AN INTERPRETATION PLAN WILL BE PRODUCED FOR THE TRACK BY 30 JUNE 2010.*

3.14 PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

Past promotion has included videos, pamphlets and maps available at Departmental offices and Visitor Centres.

With the recent introduction of the hut and campsite booking system, the Heaphy Track brochure has been upgraded to a 28 page recreation brochure, providing far more detailed information for visitors.

The Kahurangi National Park Parkmap 274-13 has recently been rewritten and digitised to the Department's Icon Mapping Standard.

Further information is now available on the DOC Website.

It is likely that the track and facilities will continue to be well used during the Christmas/New Year period, and Easter. Any promotion should thus concentrate on the off-peak periods.

Major regional initiative

The West Coast Development Trust, NZ Trade and Enterprise, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Tourism West Coast and the Department of Conservation have formed a regional partnership to develop a number of Major Regional Initiatives (MRI) for the West Coast. The Heaphy Track MRI will examine the motivators, expectations, travel patterns and experience of the Heaphy Track users to better inform the marketing planning for Karamea.

The MRI objectives aims to increase the use of the track, examine its seasonality issues, and increase awareness of the northern Buller region to visitors. A survey will be carried out on users of the Heaphy Track in peak summer, autumn and spring with a report expected to be completed March 2008. Data collected will be analysed and used to identify and explore opportunities for sustainable development of the track and inform destination marketing planning.

- *BROCHURES AND MAPS WILL BE REGULARLY UPDATED.*
- *PUBLICITY WILL BE AIMED AT ENCOURAGING USE DURING OFF-PEAK PERIODS.*
- *DEPARTMENTAL STAFF WILL LIAISE WITH TOURISM AGENCIES FOR PROMOTIONAL PURPOSES.*
- *WEBSITE INFORMATION WILL BE REGULARY UPDATED.*
- *THE HEAPHY TRACK MRI WILL BE USED BY THE WEST COAST REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP TO INFORM DESTINATION MARKETING PLANNING.*

3.15 MOUNTAIN BIKES

Mountain biking on the Heaphy Track is being considered as part of the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan Partial Review and any relevant operational outcomes from the Partial Review will be incorporated into this document at a later stage.