

# **Stewart Island/Rakiura Conservation Management Strategy Review and Rakiura National Park Management Plan Preparation**

## **Summary of Feedback Responses**

APRIL 2007



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



Cover Photo - Bald Cone and Port Pegasus

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report is a summary of feedback responses that were received in response to a discussion document prepared for the development of a revised draft Stewart Island/Rakiura Conservation Management Strategy and a draft Rakiura National Park plan. This report has been prepared as information for those that provided feedback to this process as well as for interested parties and the general public.

Public meetings were held in Oban and in Invercargill in September 2006, to explain the process for the conservation management strategy review and the preparation of the national park management plan. The discussion document was also presented at these meetings, to seek comments and suggestions for the public on the future management of Stewart Island / Rakiura.

Feedback responses on the discussion document were requested to be sent in by 10 January 2007.

It is important to note that no decisions regarding the future management of Stewart Island / Rakiura have been made, but this document aims to summarise the responses received from individuals and organisations, to the discussion document.

As a result of the feedback to the discussion document the Department of Conservation is no longer working from a 'blank sheet'. Instead it has been provided with a clear direction from the public about important topics of discussion on Stewart Island / Rakiura.

The Department of Conservation will now begin the Rakiura conservation management strategy review and the preparation of the Rakiura national park management plan.

## 2.0 Overview

A total of 406 feedback responses were received.

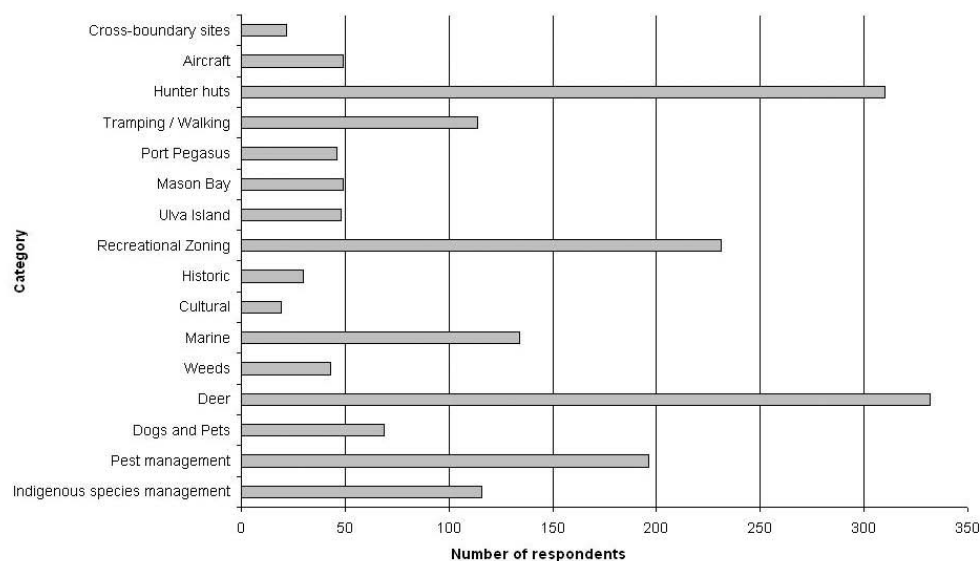
### Number of individuals versus organisations

Total Individual	370
Total Groups	29
Total feedback responses	406

### Breakdown by region

Stewart Island / Rakiura	27
Invercargill	29
Southland	33
Otago	46
Canterbury	38
West Coast	4
Nelson/Marlborough	17
Wellington region	18
Taranaki	8
Tongariro/Taupo	3
Hawkes Bay/East Coast	3
Bay of Plenty	5
Waikato	107
Auckland	26
Northland	5
Chatham Islands	0
Overseas	8

Respondents by category





**Note when reading this report:**

Use of classifiers in text, when qualitatively describing numbers of respondents on issues, an attempt was made to use consistent wording as follows:

0%	None, Zero
1-20%	Few
20-40%	Some, a number,
40-60%	Mostly
60-80%	Generally, many
80-99%	Substantially
100%	Universal, total

The use of “near”, “close to”, “almost”, “a similar number” are used to denote where support for issues raised in responses approaches the descriptive bands given above. The wording also relates to the percentage of feedback responses to a particular topic i.e. of the 116 feedback responses to conservation and biodiversity, many said ....



## 3.0 Values of Stewart Island/Rakiura

Of the responses received, almost all spoke of the value placed on the natural environment of Stewart Island / Rakiura. The relatively undeveloped coastal environment, the native flora and fauna, and the ecological integrity of the forest were specifically mentioned by respondents.

Many respondents provided personal accounts of their experiences on Stewart Island / Rakiura, some spanning a number of generations. The emphasis in these responses was on the wide range of recreational activities available, such as tramping/walking, hunting, fishing, diving, and enjoying the solitude and remoteness that the island offers.

## 4.0 Conservation and Biodiversity

Respondents were substantially in support for the protection of all indigenous plant and animal species currently on the island. They were also strongly in support of the protection of the full range of terrestrial and marine ecosystems present on the island.

### 4.1 PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS SPECIES

**Number of Responses: 116**

#### **Birds**

Kiwi were cited by a small number as a reason for visits to the island. Places where this was important include the Halfmoon Bay Domain, Ocean Beach / The Neck, and Mason Bay. Some respondents raised concern about the effect of kiwi spotting activity on the birds, but others suggested that cats are a far bigger threat to kiwi than humans, and that cat control in areas of high kiwi population should be the priority.

Yellow-eyed penguins may be at risk of local extinction on the Northern coast of Stewart Island. Suggestions made to avert this include more research into the penguin colonies on Stewart Island, better signage of breeding areas to prevent humans (primarily trampers and hunters) from disturbing the birds, and better management of the boundary between the park and the coastal marine area.

A few respondents indicated concern at the lack of protection for lizard species on Stewart Island, particularly populations on Table Hill and the Tin Range that may not be receiving the required level of protection. Further areas for gecko and skink monitoring and protection were mentioned, such as Mt. Anglem.

The presence of kākā, kererū, and tūi in the Halfmoon Bay area was noted by a number of respondents as important, and the suggestion was made to provide better protection for these species around Oban. The ongoing predator control work of the Stewart Island Environment Trust within the Halfmoon Bay area was noted with regard to these species.

Other species mentioned by respondents included the NZ Dotterels, the South Georgian Diving Petrels, Bats, and the Rock Wren.

#### **Ecosystems**

General points were made by a small number of respondents that the currently intact forests on the island need to be preserved and given high priority. Specific mention was made of the Freshwater Basin forest, as this is suggested as being one of the last undisturbed lowland catchments in Southland.

The coastal environment of Stewart Island / Rakiura was discussed by many respondents, all of whom valued it highly for its uniqueness. The coastal vegetation sequences present on the dune systems at Mason Bay and other west coast beaches were specifically mentioned by a large number of respondents, with support given for the continuation of the restoration programme.

Three respondents focused on freshwater ecosystems on Stewart Island/ Rakiura, stating that these need to be valued more in any management plan or strategy, with the priority being to preserve representative areas. This included the Department of Conservation advocating for the protection of freshwater systems on land outside of the park. Concern was raised that the importance of these ecosystems has been undervalued on Stewart Island / Rakiura in the past.

## 4.2 PEST MANAGEMENT

### **Number of Responses: 196**

Pest management issues were commented on by many. There was general consensus from those who responded on this category that possums, rats, and wild cats constitute a threat to indigenous plant and animal species on the island and that the long term aim should be to remove these three introduced species from the island. Most responses received on the issue of pest management highlighted the potential for the island to become possum, rat, and wild-cat free. Wild cats were stated by many as being the number one priority for control and/or eradication, given their impact on the kiwi population.

A few individuals did not support the vision of a rat, wildcat, and possum free island. Their concerns were that this would not be practical, cost-effective, or sustainable in the long term given the absence of biosecurity controls on the island.

There is continued support for the Oban Pest Liaison Group, and community consultation in regard to planned pest management activities. Support was also received regarding closer co-operation between relevant pest control agencies (i.e., Environment Southland, Southland District Council) and this was requested in order to better manage the island as a whole.

There is a difference of opinion as to whether deer, particularly whitetail deer are animal pests and whether they constitute a threat to indigenous species. There were a wide range of responses received regarding the status of deer in on Stewart Island / Rakiura, and these are covered in more detail in section 4.4.

### **Poisons**

There was also a difference of opinion on control methods for pests. Aerially spread 1080 poison was opposed by a number of respondents, instead giving preference for ground-based methods of pest control, including hand-laid 1080 bait.

Other respondents acknowledged the sensitivity around the use of 1080 poison, but indicated that it is one of the few cost-effective methods of controlling predators across large areas, and request that the Department of Conservation retain its capacity to aerially drop poison if necessary.

### **Hunter Management**

The hunting community suggested that hunters engage in pest control whilst hunting on the island, with most hunting respondents indicating that they were more than happy to expand their current pest control efforts. The Rakiura Hunter Camp Trust already provides cat traps at hunter huts for use by hunting parties.

## **Offshore Islands**

Support was received by a few respondents for expanding the number of predator free off-shore islands surrounding Stewart Island / Rakiura. This includes islands managed by the Department of Conservation within Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera and Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, such as Native Island. The Titi Islands were also mentioned as good candidates for island restoration.

### 4.3 **MANAGEMENT OF DOGS AND PETS**

#### **Number of Responses: 69**

##### **Dogs**

From those respondents that commented on this aspect, there was opposition to allowing dogs in the national park, with the exception of dogs used for conservation management purposes, search and rescue, and hearing/seeing dogs. Some respondents expressed concern with the use of dogs on land outside of the park, especially in the Halfmoon Bay area, but others sought to preserve some recreational opportunities for dogs on short walks. Specific concern was raised regarding the impact of dogs on the Halfmoon Bay kiwi population, particularly at the Domain, and breeding seabirds on the Deep Bay - Ringaringa coastal track.

##### **Pets**

Opinion regarding domestic pets on Stewart Island / Rakiura was mixed. Options raised included a non-replacement policy for existing pets, the compulsory de-sexing of any existing or new pets, and the status quo. Micro-chipping of current pets is another option. Of those respondents in support of the status quo, it was claimed that domestic pets no longer contribute substantially to wild populations, and that the priorities should be on eradicating the wild population first. Opinion was generally in favour of not allowing visitors to bring pets, particularly dogs, to the island for short visits.

### 4.4 **DEER**

#### **Number of Responses: 332**

##### **Status of Deer**

Responses on the status and management of deer in the park, the first of the three main issues raised by the hunting community, and recreational hunting made up the bulk of the responses received. Whitetail deer in particular were stated as highly valued by recreational hunters, and as such both individual hunters and their organisations have sought exemption for whitetail deer under section 4.2(b) of the National Parks Act 1980.

It was clear from the feedback responses that the whitetail deer are important to hunters and a key reason that people (hunters) visit the island. The economic

benefit to the island from hunters was commented on by many respondents, with the view that deer should be viewed as a recreational resource for the benefit of hunting visitors and islanders alike.

### **Red Deer**

The feedback responses suggested that red deer are not as highly valued amongst hunters as whitetail deer. Some suggestions indicated that there would not be much concern if red deer were eradicated.

### **Impact**

The current impact of deer on Stewart Island vegetation is debated, with some respondents stating that deer numbers continue to decline as a result of recreational hunting, whilst others cite evidence that deer numbers are too high, especially in inland areas where hunting pressure is less. Feedback responses suggest that approximately 1500 deer are shot on the island every year, and as such, suggested that the management of the whitetail deer could become a hunting community responsibility in consultation with the Department of Conservation.

A few respondents supported the total eradication of deer, both red and whitetail, from Stewart Island / Rakiura.

### **Permit System**

The current permit system in place on the island received positive comment from nearly all who responded, with regard to the number of hunting blocks available, and the simple process of booking them.

The safety aspect of having one hunting party per block was also noted. It was generally suggested that the current permit system be continued, with one or two suggestions that the number of hunting blocks available be increased.

### **Promotion**

Concern was raised by two respondents that the activity of hunting on Stewart Island / Rakiura is not promoted by the Department of Conservation in publications, and it was requested that the Department of Conservation take steps to address this concern in order to address the perceived marginalisation of the sport.

## **4.5**

### **WEEDS**

#### **Number of Responses: 43**

The issue of weeds and plant pests on Stewart Island/ Rakiura was commented on by a number of respondents. The idea that Stewart Island / Rakiura could become pest-plant and weed free featured highly amongst these people. Concern was raised at the potential for the spread of new and existing plant species. More integrated management and information sharing between agencies was requested.

## **Biosecurity**

Concern was also raised about the biosecurity controls on Stewart Island / Rakiura, with requests made for making this more stringent, at Invercargill airport, Bluff and Halfmoon Bay wharves.

The problems associated with plant species for private gardens on Stewart Island/ Rakiura were raised, along with other options such as actively encouraging local gardeners to use plants from the local nursery.

## 4.6 MARINE

### **Number of Responses: 134**

#### **Reserves / Marine Protection Areas**

One general concern raised in relation to marine issues is the lack of protection for the marine environments surrounding Stewart Island / Rakiura. The coastal marine environment was mentioned as one of the key values of the island by those who responded. These environments are highly valued by respondents for their intrinsic worth, and the recreational opportunities such as fishing, diving, boating and swimming.

A variety of methods were suggested for increasing the level of protection for the marine environment surrounding Stewart Island / Rakiura, such as a combination of reserves under the Marine Reserves Act, mataitai, and open recreational and commercial fishing areas.

Generally, respondents commenting on this aspect were supportive for the current Ulva Island / Te Wharawhara marine reserve, with respondents requesting better marking of its boundaries and monitoring of activity within it. The Paterson Inlet mataitai mostly received support, but there were some who did not support it due to cultural concerns.

New reserves / mataitai were suggested for Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, Port Adventure Lords River/Tūtaekawetoweto. The freshwater estuaries of the Rakeahua and Freshwater Rivers were identified as needing greater protection.

However, some respondents raised concerns over the restrictive nature of the Paterson Inlet / Te Wharawhara marine reserve and the concept of marine reserves in general. Several hunting blocks on the south side of the Te Wharawhara marine reserve have no easy access to recreational fishing, as explained in responses.

#### **Monitoring**

Concern was raised about the level of monitoring of fisheries, particular at Port William/Potirepo where over-fishing may be an ongoing issue. Shellfish such as paua and scallops received special mention as there is ongoing concern about over use. Further education of recreational fishers was encouraged, as is increased monitoring by a variety of agencies.



## **Aquaculture**

The marine farming and rock lobster industry in particular raised concerns at the apparent lack of regard for their industry in the discussion document. They seek recognition of the existing marine farming operations in Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera and Big Glory Bay in either the Rakiura national park management plan or Stewart Island/Rakiura conservation management strategy.

## **Oil Exploration**

A few respondents raised the issue of potential oil exploration in the Great South Basin, affecting the coastal marine environment of the island. Those respondents sought mention of this possible issue in the Stewart Island/Rakiura conservation management strategy and mitigation measures as appropriate.

## **Wharves / Structures**

Several respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the current state of many of the island's wharves, and wished to see the Department of Conservation take over management and maintenance of these marine facilities. The commercial rock lobster industry indicated that a number of mooring structures, such as endless rope systems, may have been built unknowingly above the line of mean high water springs, and as such are in the national park.

## **Marine Pests**

The presence of *Undaria* in the Stewart Island marine environment was commented on by a few respondents, with concern as to the effects it will have if it continues its spread throughout the island.

## 5.0 Cultural Considerations

**Number of Responses: 19**

### **Values**

The importance of recognising tangata whenua and Māori values in the plan is generally recognised by most respondents, but there are also some suggestions stating that whilst Māori values are important, that the expression of these values in the park should be considered alongside other cultures. These respondents indicated that there should be more mention of the pioneering European settlers' contribution to the island, and the enduring legacy of these settlements.

### **Consultation**

Environment Southland and the Southland District Council seek to see the principles of kaitiaki and kaitiakitanga worked through with the local Ngāi Tahu manawhenua.

The Rakiura Māori Land Trust expects the planning documents to acknowledge that its members are tangata whenua and seeks an ongoing and active formal relationship with the Department of Conservation that reflects the Crown's recognition of this status.

### **Historic Sites**

The wider issue of historic sites and areas on Stewart Island / Rakiura is covered in more detail in section 3.4, but this section covers those which have specific cultural issues attached to them, which in the context of responses given, is generally Māori.

A number of responses were received on mahinga kai sites, stating their importance to local iwi and the continued need for consultation with regard to their management.

A similar number of responses were received on wāhi tapu sites, including urupā. It was stated that a large number of urupā exist around the island, and that there are issues such as lack of marking, and grave site erosion through both natural processes and human influence which is causing respondents some concern.

Management options suggested were consultation between local iwi and concessionaires to better inform them as to the location of urupā and wāhi tapu sites in the areas in which they operate. In terms of recreational visitors, opinion was divided as to whether to mark sites, or whether to leave them unmarked so as not to draw attention to them.

### **Tutae-ka-wetoweto Forest / Lords River/Tūtaekawetoweto Lands**

The Rakiura Māori Land Trust, which administers the SILNA lands at Lords River/ Tūtaekawetoweto, wishes to see that their status as land-owner and kaitiaki acknowledged in the Rakiura national park management plan and Stewart Island/ Rakiura conservation management strategy. The trust states that whilst there is legal protection on the SILNA sections (a conservation covenant under section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977), the other lands under its ownership will continue to receive a similar style of management.

The trust wishes to reserve its right to undertake commercial activities on its land.

## 6.0 Historic Sites and Areas

### **Number of Responses: 30**

There was general agreement amongst respondents that the Department of Conservation should continue to manage historic sites within the park, and that access to these sites should not be restricted. Some respondents were surprised that the Department of Conservation only actively manages 11 sites, and that these sites are mostly based around the extractive industries (timber milling, whaling, farming) that dominated the island in the past.

The Southland District Council wishes to see more integration in the management of historic sites, particularly where they cross boundaries. This is both to reduce costs and to achieve a better outcome for the site and visitors.

### **New Sites**

Requests were made to see interpretation of natural history, at sites where this is appropriate. Another request was to see the site at Cooks Arm, Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti where whitetail deer were first released recognised. The Historic Places Trust and another respondent mentioned the importance of the tin mining area at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, stating that it is probably the best preserved example of alluvial mining extant in New Zealand, and that it deserves more active management by the Department of Conservation. Various other sites were also mentioned as having historic value.

The Historic Places Trust has requested a full coastal survey of the island, in order to generate new information about the historic values of the island.

## 7.0 Access and Visitor Management

Over half of all respondents commented on the issues of access and visitor management. Most of these responses were from the hunting community in relation to the land status and recreational zoning of the Upper Lords River/ Tūtaekawetoweto area, requesting a change in order to build a hunter hut. Other comments received were related to the zoning of the island, and the proposed southern wilderness area. Ulva Island, Mason Bay, and Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti all received specific comments, and these are dealt with on a place basis.

### 7.1 RECREATIONAL ZONING

#### **Number of Responses: 231**

A large number of responses were received on the issue of recreational zoning, and there was no clear agreement on a recreational zoning system for the park.

Some respondents saw it as important to keep the zoning terminology simple, such as front country, backcountry, remote, and wilderness. A few responses stated that there was no need for any further intra-zone complication, such as back-country walk-in and back-country accessible.

It was suggested by one respondent that the existing eastern popular zone be reduced to not include the southwest arm of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera. Other concerns regarding this zone are its inclusion of the Freshwater River, and Ulva Island.

It was requested by many respondents that the coastal area in the island be zoned back-country drive-in, to reflect the fact that boat access is available across the whole island. A similar number spoke in favour of using the back-country accessible zone to cover all currently maintained tracks and popular tramping routes, in order to ensure that visitor use aligns with zoning.

On the other hand some respondents were concerned with the effects that this change in recreational zoning would have, especially at Mason Bay, Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, the arms of Paterson Inlet/Whaka a Te Wera and anywhere that was formerly zoned as remote or wilderness-zone.

Some respondents were concerned with a change in recreational zoning in the area surrounding the Freshwater - Mason Bay track. It was felt that this would, over time, significantly alter the Mason Bay experience, and also require an unnecessary upgrade of the track. Therefore it was requested that the current North-west remote zone continue to cover Mason Bay in its entirety.

There was continued support for the sections of the current Southern wilderness zone to receive remote zoning classification, if not higher protection, from the Southwest Arm - Doughboy Bay area to Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti and South Cape/Puhiwaero. Some concern was raised about how any zoning in this area, whether it is remote, or the current wilderness zone, would affect the maintenance of the route from Rakeahua onto the Tin Range. A number of recreationalists wished to see this route maintained to a basic standard to facilitate access.

## Wilderness

There appeared to be some confusion amongst respondents between wilderness zones, which are used as a visitor management tool, and gazetted legal wilderness areas under the Reserves Act 1977 or National Parks Act 1980<sup>1</sup>.

There was some support for the proposed northern wilderness zone, but most who responded on this issue were opposed to the concept, due to its closeness to the North-west circuit track. The maintained route to Mt. Anglem/Hananui was also cited as an impediment to creating a wilderness zone in the northern part of the island.

The formal southern wilderness area mentioned in the discussion document received slightly more support, than the northern zone, with regard to concerns of increased aircraft access and visitor pressure at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti. However, more responses were received opposed to the creation of a southern wilderness area, due to concerns that a legal wilderness would be too exclusive, preventing access for hunting and other recreation, and also unnecessarily limiting commercial activity at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti. There were also concerns about current recreational activity at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, such as walking access to Bald Cone, and how any proposed wilderness area would affect these.

One respondent stated concerns over the tramway on the Pegasus tin field, which extends into the proposed legal wilderness area, and that gazettal would impede maintenance of this historic site.

## Special Areas

The status of the remnants of the Tin Range Nature Reserve outside of the park received much comment as the second of the three main issues raised by the hunting community. Their concern is that the nature reserve (Reserves Act 1977) status of the land in the Upper Lords River/Tūtaekawetoweto area is preventing them from building a hunter hut on the pre-existing campsite in the area. They also stated that the purpose of the reserve is no longer necessary as all known kākāpō have been moved to offshore islands, and that its continued existence is not compatible with the recreational use of the area. As such, the proposed solution is to downgrade the nature reserve to a more appropriate category, such as scenic reserve.

There is little support for the designation of any other special areas in the park, primarily because none appear necessary, but those areas that do have special status, such as Whenua Hou/Codfish and Bench Island appeared to be understood and supported by those who mentioned special areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes on wilderness:

Wilderness zone – A planning and visitor management tool used for large, isolated and continuous areas where visitors have a high expectation of not meeting another party. It may not necessarily be a legal wilderness area, but is stated in a national park management plan or conservation management strategy.

Legal wilderness area – Any part of a national park or public conservation land set apart as a wilderness area under section 14 of the National Parks Act 1980, or section 47 of the Reserves Act 1977.

## 7.2 ULVA ISLAND

### **Number of Responses: 48**

Of those who responded on Ulva Island discussion questions, all valued the special nature of the island as an open sanctuary, and it was clear that respondents wished to see this continue long into the future.

### **Visitor Management**

The main issue of concern raised by respondents regarding Ulva Island was the increasing number of visitors to Ulva Island, and the effects of this on the wildlife, particularly birds. However, few respondents, including commercial concessionaires, wished to see access restricted to guided / commercial parties only.

Suggestions made to cope with increased numbers of visitors on Ulva Island included a night-time curfew on visitors, a one-way track system to avoid constant encounters with other groups, and a limit on group size as encounters with large groups were not appreciated. There was a difference between the party-size limits suggested for concessionaires (6) and independent (12) visitors. One respondent suggested that if concessionaires have to accept limited numbers, that the impact of this be divided amongst all concessionaires equally.

### **Biosecurity**

Concerns were raised about the lack of biosecurity monitoring on Ulva Island, and respondents requested that this be increased. The potential for a full-time staff member on the island with responsibility for this, among other duties, was raised as a possibility. Another option raised was a disinfectant-soaked pad near the wharf that all visitors pass across, to prevent disease and some plants from establishing themselves on the island.


### **Tracks**

Several respondents expressed the wish to see tracks to the northern end of the island opened and maintained in order to provide other options for visitors on the island. One respondent wished to see a one-way track established as a 'quiet area' for those who wished to have solitude whilst on the island. Other concerns regarding tracks was the state of track marking, especially pest control lines, in that it detracts from the natural experience, the suggestion being to modify the markers accordingly.

## 7.3 MASON BAY

### **Number of Responses: 49**

Mason Bay received a high number of responses. Respondents generally commented on the current wild nature of the place, and expressed the wish to see this continue into the future. The marram eradication programme received positive comments from nearly all of those who responded on Mason Bay issues.



The hunting opportunities on the three Mason Bay blocks are highly sought after, and Mason Bay continues to be a rated destination for trampers on the North West circuit and on shorter trips from Freshwater. Commercial operators value the kiwi spotting opportunities around the hut and in the dunes. It is acknowledged that Mason Bay is a pressure point where three track systems, easy aircraft access, and commercial interests converge, and that this needs to be taken into account when planning for its future management.

### **Access and Visitor Management**

Respondents viewed Mason Bay as having the potential to become overcrowded, and that this required active management to address. The possibility of restrictions on numbers accessing Mason Bay if they became unsustainable was suggested, such as by putting a booking system in place for the hut, or for part of the hut as required.

Some respondents were concerned with the state of the track between Freshwater and Mason Bay, particular after flood events. The maintenance of the drain was questioned, with regard to whether further maintenance should be required to ensure a higher standard of the Mason Bay track. Some respondents were concerned that if the zoning changed from remote to backcountry, that the track would have to be upgraded to reflect the changed zoning. This could be inconsistent with track standards on the rest of the North-west circuit. However, some respondents stated that an upgrade would be necessary considering the ease of access into both Mason Bay and Freshwater. This is covered in section 3.4.

A general point of agreement amongst those who responded on Mason Bay was the continued need for a Department of Conservation presence at Mason Bay for management, compliance and public relations purposes.

### **Huts**

Although the Mason Bay Hut has recently been redesigned and expanded, concern was raised about overcrowding. It may be that responses are referring to past issues. Some respondents wished to see a new, increased capacity hut built on the present site to cater for the increased number of visitors, but not to increase the capacity beyond 30/40 bunks.

From the people that responded, there was some opposition to the establishment of a separate lodge for concessionaires, with concerns around the erosion of the back-country ethic, and the possibility of setting a dangerous precedent for Stewart Island in terms of private facilities on public land. A few respondents were in support of commercial accommodation and the reasons they were in support included reducing conflicts between visitor groups, to spread the visitor load and to provide increased income for conservation activities.

Two respondents raised the issue of having the Island Hill homestead open for public access, but the rest did not see the restricted access to this historic facility as being an issue. It was suggested by a few that the homestead be used for commercial accommodation.

## **Aircraft**

From the 49 people that provided feedback regarding Mason Bay, the issue of aircraft was raised by seven, covering both fixed and rotary wing. The respondents on this issue were concerned about the lack of management of aircraft below the park boundary in the tidal zone, and requested better co-ordination between the Department of Conservation and Environment Southland for the management of aircraft in this area.

They were also concerned about noise and unprepared visitors stepping foot into the national park. A few respondents were concerned with future restrictions on aircraft access, and stated that they were pleased that low-tide landings are outside of the direct control of the Department of Conservation. Another respondent wished to see the old Island Hill airstrip reopened for fixed wing landings.

## 7.4 PORT PEGASUS/PIKIHATITI

### **Number of Responses: 46**

Of the three places listed as key sites, Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti was valued the most amongst respondents. Of those that responded, support was high for maintaining it in its current, wild and natural state. The marine environment, the three islands, the bush, and the unique granite landscape were specifically mentioned.

### **Visitor Management**

There was support for continuing to limit the number of visitors to Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, both from individuals and concessionaires. The concern is that visitor numbers to the area may increase and that the management of this potential problem has not been properly solved. Concessionaires were of the view that if concession opportunities were not used, then the operator should lose that right. As with Ulva Island, some concessionaire respondents indicated that if the environment at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti cannot sustain visitor numbers, then all operators in the area should take an equal cut.

Concern was raised at the potential for the private land at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti to be used as a commercial facility, and two requests were made for the Department of Conservation to investigate purchasing that land, in order to secure the area.

### **Facilities**

Opinion was evenly split on the issue of facilities at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti. A number of respondents recognised that the area has a long history of human habitation, and that having some facilities in such a remote place is necessary. The two hunter huts were viewed positively by some respondents, with mention made of the improvement over the old campsites. However, a similar number of respondents were concerned with the perceived exclusivity of those sites, especially in an area that has no other huts. The view of these people was that the Department of Conservation should either build a hut at Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, or take over the current hunter huts. A few respondents saw the need to build toilet facilities at well-used campsites in the Pegasus harbour area.

Mention was made of the need for some track markers and a properly installed chain on the currently used route to Bald Cone from Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti.

## **Access**

A few people commented in opposition to allowing aircraft access into Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti. Most respondents who discussed this issue were happy with the current primary means of access by boat. Commercial charter boat operators sought a reasonable limit on the number of vessels in Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti at any one time, as well as a limit on party size, however it is noted that controls on these surface water activities are outside the Department of Conservation's jurisdiction.

Although dealt with specifically in section 7.1, the issue of recreational zoning of the southern part of Stewart Island / Rakiura received comment in relation to Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti. While respondents were substantially in favour of protecting the wild nature of the area, they were concerned that recreational zoning, particularly legal wilderness, would unfairly limit access to the area. Several respondents stated that the climate would continue to be the biggest limiting factor for access to the area.

## **Marine**

There were some responses calling for formal protection for the marine environment of Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, such as a marine reserve or mataitai, provided that any such protection catered for recreational fishing.

The effect of mooring anchors on the sea floor was mentioned, and it was requested that designated mooring sites be established in order to better protect this part of the marine environment.

## 7.5 TRAMPING / WALKING

### **Number of Responses: 114**


Aside from hunting, tramping and walking opportunities was the second major reason identified by respondents attracting them to Stewart Island / Rakiura. The Freshwater - Mason Bay track, the North-west circuit, and tracks around Halfmoon Bay received the most responses. Respondents in this category appeared generally happy with the current amount of tracks and facilities on the island, but had concerns related to the maintenance of those existing facilities.

### **Mud**

There was no definitive opinion regarding the issue of mud on Stewart Island / Rakiura. Some saw the mud as an inherent part of the island, and also as a useful visitor limiting agent in sensitive locations, while others saw the existence of mud as environmentally damaging. The track from North Arm to Freshwater over Thompsons Ridge was highlighted as a problem location, as was the Freshwater-Masons Bay region. The North-west circuit was mentioned by a few, but no specific locations of concern were mentioned.

### **Tracks**

There was mixed opinion on the state of the Mason Bay - Freshwater Track, with several respondents wishing to see it upgraded to cope with greater use, and others wishing to see it maintained at the current level. The Scott Burn drain was highlighted as a continuing issue.



In terms of the North-west circuit, it was stated by one respondent that this track attracts a more adventurous type of tramp, and as such should continue to be managed for this type of recreational user (backcountry adventurer).

One respondent mentioned the possibility of opening a low level route from Freshwater to North Arm avoiding the climb to Thompsons Ridge, and potentially, the worst of the mud.

A few concerns were raised about the state of the track to Rocky Mountain, and that this needed to be upgraded to cater for increased visitor load, particularly those on day trips to the area.

Various other tracks were listed as requiring either re-opening or upgrading to a higher standard of maintenance. For example, concern was raised by some respondents about the track over Adams Hill to Doughboy Bay, and how this needs to be board-walked to avoid further damage to the peat bog. And some respondents also wished to see the track to Mt. Rakeahua from the Rakeahua valley reopened, as well as the route down from it to Freds Camp. This was primarily to give an alternative route out of and into the area when the current low-level route is flooded.

Of note is that the bulk of responses received relating to huts and tracks were regarding tracks and facilities in the Halfmoon Bay area. The general message from these was that the Department of Conservation should be managing more facilities in this area to encourage use by lesser-abled and time-pressured day visitors to the island, and to take the pressure off existing facilities.

## 7.6 HUNTER HUTS

### **Number of Responses: 310**

As the third of the three main issues raised by the hunting community, the issue of hunter huts received a large amount of coverage. There was substantial support for the concept in general, and also support for the building of further huts. It was requested by most of those who commented on this subject that the aims and objectives of the Rakiura Hunter Camp Trust be acknowledged in the Rakiura national park management plan and the Stewart Island/Rakiura conservation management strategy. Other recreational users, notably the Federated Mountain Clubs, were also in support of the hunter hut concept.

Those who responded, even those who were against the building of further huts, noted the positive environmental effects of replacing makeshift hunter campsites with huts. A few respondents were concerned with the exclusivity of hunter huts, and requested that they become more open to the public. The conflict resolution element of hunter huts was noted, considering the unfamiliarity that some visitors have with firearms and hunting activity in general. However, most of those who responded requesting increased access to the hunter huts acknowledged the sense of ownership that the hunting community have of them.

The use of volunteer labour to lower the cost of building these huts was mentioned, as was the increased hunting pressure on blocks which currently have huts. The management of the hut booking system by the Department of Conservation was requested to continue. There was some concern that hunting hut fees should be aligned with tramping hut fees, and that hunting huts should be made more available to other recreational users, particularly during the hunting off-season.

Permission was requested to build new hunter huts on the following blocks: Upper Lords, West Ruggedy, Little Hellfire, Smoky, and Murray River. A few respondents wished to see hunter huts built on all hunting blocks.

Concerns raised around the expansion of the current hunter hut network included the changing of recreational use patterns on the North-west circuit if people choose to stay in hunter huts instead of in tramper huts, the potential 'capture' of the island by one recreational group, hunting parties taking in excessive amounts of supplies whilst on trips, and the issue of future aircraft access to hunting huts.

## 7.7 AIRCRAFT ACCESS

### **Number of Responses: 49**

Most responses on the issue of aircraft access wished to see the current natural quiet of the island continue into the future. It appears that the current level of aircraft activity is accepted by most park users, but that no further increase is required. Many respondents stated that no further aircraft access was necessary because most of the park is easily accessible by water. Low-tide landings on beaches were acknowledged as being outside of Department of Conservation control, but it was requested that these be better managed, as noted above especially at places such as Mason Bay.

Some of responses from the hunting community requested that access be permitted inside the park at hunter huts, in order to make access easier.

Aside from the hunter huts, additional sites requested for helicopter landings included: Port William/Potirepo, Mt. Anglem/Hananui, Mason Bay, Port Adventure, Port Pegasus/Pikihatiti, Freshwater and Toi toi flat (outside of the park). However, most responses received on the issue of aircraft access were against any increase in helicopter / rotary wing aircraft access in the park.

## 7.8 CROSS-BOUNDARY SITES

### **Number of Responses: 22**

The cross-boundary issues raised in the discussion document received some response, particularly with regard to integrated conservation management of the coastal marine area and buffer zones adjacent to the park. It was requested that to ensure the integrity of the park that the marine area be managed (in places) with a higher degree of protection that it currently receives.

Some responses asked that the buffer zones behind Oban receive a higher level of protection than current, as they are considered of high conservation value. The issues around the buffer zones between Rakiura Māori Land Trust land and the national park in eastern Stewart Island are discussed in section 5.0, but were commented on as needing similar protection to a national park.

Respondents were generally in favour of respecting the private property rights of landowners on the island, but using advocacy where necessary to achieve good conservation outcomes on that private land. The importance of consultation and good-faith negotiation between parties was stressed.



## 8.0 Other Comments and Suggestions

### INTERPRETATION

Three respondents indicated that they wanted to see improved interpretation facilities, either at the current visitor centre, or at a new purpose-built facility. This would provide a place for visitors to learn about the park during bad weather.

It was also requested that the Department of Conservation undertake more active education programme, and provide more materials to island visitors.

### TOURISM

A few general comments were received regarding tourism on the island, and its importance to the local economy. It was stated in one response that numbers need to increase significantly in order for the island economy to remain sustainable, and that tourism should be therefore encouraged on the island. Another comment was regarding the effects of tourism, requesting the Department of Conservation to be careful in its management, so as not to compromise the very resource that draws people to the island.

## 9.0 Conclusion

This report should provide a summary of the responses received to interested parties. The Department of Conservation now has a clear indication of views on the future management of Rakiura National Park and other public conservation lands on Stewart Island. The large number of responses received from a wide range of people indicates that the island and its management is of interest to people, and this simplifies the next stages of the process.

The next stages in the process of writing the national park management plan and reviewing the conservation management strategy are as follows :

1. As a result of the feedback, public meetings and workshops will be held and the Department of Conservation may seek to meet with specific groups, organisations and individuals to aid the drafting of the strategy and the plan.
2. The Department of Conservation will draft the strategy and plan in consultation with the Southland Conservation Board.
3. The Department of Conservation will advertise that the draft strategy and draft plan have been completed and are publicly available, and invite submissions from the public.
4. Submitters who wish to present their submissions, views and additional evidence will have an opportunity to attend hearings convened by the Department of Conservation and the Southland Conservation Board.
5. The Department of Conservation will consider all hearings and submissions and amend the draft strategy and draft plan accordingly, subject to the relevant general policies and legislation.
6. The Department of Conservation will send the revised draft strategy and draft plan and a summary of public submissions (including a statement of the degree to which comments have been included) to the Southland Conservation Board.
7. The Southland Conservation Board will consider the revised drafts and has the option to request that the Department of Conservation make further amendments before sending the drafts and associated information to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for approval.
8. The New Zealand Conservation Authority may modify the strategy and plan as it thinks fit, before referring them to the Minister of Conservation for further comment.
9. The New Zealand Conservation Authority has regard to the views of the Minister before approving the strategy and plan, which will then be publicly notified.

It is envisaged that the next stages of this process will begin this year.

The Department of Conservation wishes to thank those who responded so far, and also those who have taken an interest in the process. If you would like any further detail or explanations of the process, you are welcome to contact the planning team at the Department of Conservation, Southland Conservancy.



Anke de Jong  
Community Relations (Planning)  
Department of Conservation  
33 Don St  
PO Box 743  
Invercargill  
Phone (03) 211 2400, Fax (03) 214 4486  
Email rakiura@doc.govt.nz

Peter Wilson  
Community Relations (Planning)  
Department of Conservation  
33 Don St  
PO Box 743  
Invercargill  
Phone (03) 211 2400, Fax (03) 214 4486  
Email rakiura@doc.govt.nz

Sharon Pasco  
Stewart Island Field Centre Manager  
Department of Conservation  
Main Road  
PO Box 3  
Halfmoon Bay 9846.  
Phone (03) 219 0002, Fax (03) 219 0003