

Planning for recreational activities in Ō Tū Wharekai (Ashburton lakes and upper Rangitata River)

CANTERBURY

Background

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has produced a discussion document to guide the planning, implementation and management of recreational opportunities in Ō Tū Wharekai (Ashburton lakes and upper Rangitata River). Ō Tū Wharekai is one of three wetlands around the country managed as part of the national Arawai Kākāriki wetland programme. Arawai Kākāriki aims to restore wetlands with the assistance of the community, and learn more about methods for wetland restoration along the way.

As well as containing high wetland and other biodiversity values, Ō Tū Wharekai is highly valued for its recreational opportunities. The discussion document explores the range of recreational opportunities compatible with the area's management, and proposes key recreational opportunities people can enjoy without affecting the values of the area and the wetland restoration programme.

What has happened so far?

DOC has analysed recreational opportunities available within Ō Tū Wharekai, gathering information from existing survey work, collecting local knowledge, public meetings, and other written information. The analysis looked at the actual and potential opportunities and assessed the potential impacts each opportunity would have on the values of Ō Tū Wharekai and the experiences of other visitors. These potential impacts were then assessed to see whether or not any could be reduced or removed. This analysis identified a number of recreational opportunities to consider and included them in the discussion document.

What is in the document?

The discussion document is in two parts. The first part gives the context for various recreational opportunities. It explains the relevant legislation the department is bound by; briefly describes other relevant planning processes that influence decision-making for Ō Tū Wharekai; looks at the biodiversity, landscape, cultural and historic values that make Ō Tū Wharekai special and the threats to those values that recreational activities could pose; identifies which areas of land are managed by the department; and gives a brief overview of some of the social impacts and compatibility of activities.

The second part of the document examines the recreational opportunities and gives the department's views on which combinations of activities and



locations are likely to be supported for ongoing funding and management. Where options are still being considered these are outlined for public comment.

Ō Tū Wharekai may be covered by a specific 'place' section in the next Canterbury Conservation Management Strategy when this is reviewed. To illustrate how the Ō Tū Wharekai recreation opportunities may be covered within the CMS a pre-draft chapter '2.6 Ō Tū Wharekai' has been prepared and released along with this draft recreation opportunities discussion document. Comment on this chapter may be included with comments on the discussion document.

How can I get involved?

The discussion document is being made available to the public for informal comments for one month - until 30 November 2009. Throughout the document there are question boxes covering particular areas the department is keen to receive comment on.

You are invited to comment on two documents relating to recreation:

1. Recreation opportunities in Ō Tū Wharekai (Ashburton lakes and upper Rangitata River) discussion document
2. Canterbury Management Strategy Ō Tū Wharekai place section draft

The discussion document is available as a PDF on the department's website at:

www.doc.govt.nz/otuwharekairecreation

Send in your comments by 30 November 2009 to the Raukapuka Area Office by:

- email to otuwharekai@doc.govt.nz

or

- by post to PO Box 33, Geraldine 7956. Please include the section or page number you are commenting on, along with any justifications or supporting reasoning.

The department may contact people to clarify or discuss comments made.

What happens next?

Once feedback has been considered, the department will make decisions about the future management of the various recreational opportunities discussed in the document. Because of the high level of biodiversity values and risks to these from some activities, some hard decisions will have to be made. These decisions will then be documented in a recreation plan for Ō Tū Wharekai.

Further information about Ō Tū Wharekai can be found on the DOC website at:

www.doc.govt.nz - put Ō Tū Wharekai in the search box.