

Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki



Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki project newsletter

September 2026

Nau mai, haere mai!

Kia ora koutou,

The most exciting update to share with you in this edition of the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki update is the establishment of the project's External Advisory Board.

The Project Board is made up of Ngāi Tahu, community, commercial and DOC representation, and will meet up to six times in the first year of the project to fulfil its role. We'll publish their meeting summaries on the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki webpage following each hui, with the frequency and duration of meetings to be reviewed after six months.

You can find out more about our Board members below, as well as some very important information about the first bridge on the Hooker Valley Track.

Ngā mihi maioha



On the Tasman Lake and River track. Photo: DOC

Introducing the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki External Advisory Board

We are very pleased to announce the membership of the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki External Advisory Board.

This group is collectively responsible for providing sound, objective advice to support the DOC project lead of Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki in making informed decisions, and can make recommendations as the project develops.

Tamati Matehe-Takao represents Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua on the Sustainable Destinations Aoraki External Advisory Board. He brings experience in Māori governance, community development and mātauranga Māori, providing a mana whenua perspective to the sustainable future of Aoraki/Mount Cook and the wider region.

Te Wera King (interim) represents Te Rūnanga o Waihao. Te Wera has been heavily involved in tribal initiatives, including the Te Manahuna

(Mackenzie Basin) visitor experience projects, river restoration advocacy like the Rakitata River programme, and traditional knowledge sharing.

David Higgins represents Te Rūnanga o Moeraki. David has a depth of experience in conservation matters, and in 2000 was appointed as the Kaupapa Atawhai Manager for the Canterbury Conservancy of the Department of Conservation. During this tenure he assisted in establishing the Ngāi Tahu Cultural Mapping Project, providing material to map the Ngāi Tahu historical footprint throughout the South Island High Country.

Distinguished Professor Philip Hulme - Chairperson of the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board - is the community representative. Philip is an experienced biosecurity academic, having served on Biosecurity Advisory Committees for the UK and New Zealand governments, as well as Environment Canterbury. In 2023, the Minister of Conservation appointed him as a Director of the QEII National Trust.

Peter Carnahan - Executive Director of Trojan Holdings Ltd, Queenstown - is the commercial representative. Trojan Holdings' investments include owning and operating The Hermitage Hotel and Airport at Aoraki/Mount Cook. Peter brings a wealth of governance experience covering a range of sectors. This has included commercial and local body owned entities. He is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, and a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Directors.

We feel very fortunate to have such an esteemed group working together with DOC towards the goals of the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki Project. We were also incredibly impressed and grateful for the applications received throughout the Expression of Interest process. We are now cementing the make-up of the Stakeholder Reference Group, who will play an important part

in helping to shape independent advice and support provided to our Board.



Hooker Valley Bridge no.1. Photo: DOC

Pause gate for Hooker Valley Bridge no.1

The Department of Conservation will install a special “pause gate” on the first bridge up the Hooker Valley track at Aoraki/Mount Cook to manage the number of people using it.

Engineers have identified cable wear on the 47-year-old suspension and have recommended enforcing the 20-person limit.

Aoraki Principal Ranger Dave Dittmer says the bridge is safe to cross but the people limit needs to be followed.

“We’ve seen a surge in visitors recently and have regularly seen more than 40 people on the first bridge at one time which is double the recommended limit. We will be installing a swinging self-closing gate system at each end, and we are asking walkers to make sure they check numbers on the bridge before crossing.

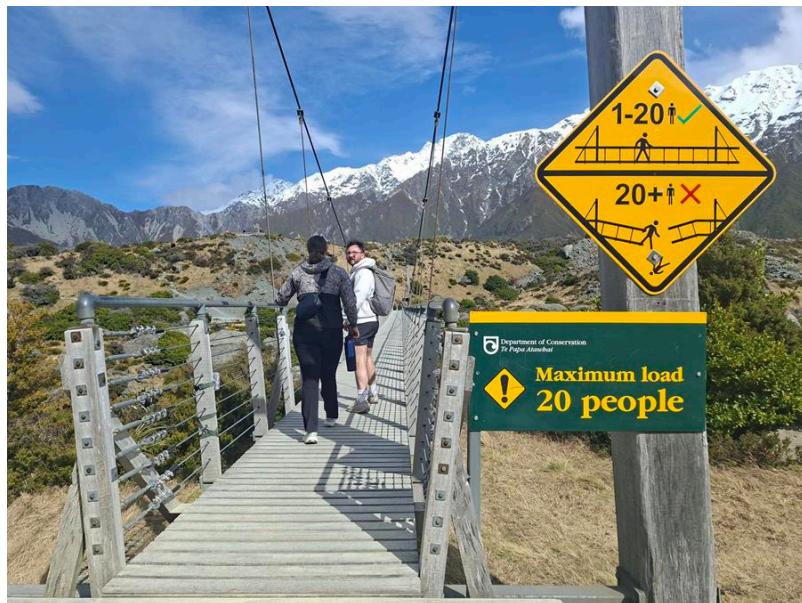
“We will also be rostering rangers on duty at the bridge during peak times over summer to monitor

people crossing and also look at installing a web cam for remote monitoring,” Dave says.

With the completion of a spectacular new suspension bridge further up the Hooker Valley there has been a big increase in visitors to the area.

DOC's Director of Asset Management Anthony Clegg says his team is investigating options to replace the number 1 Hooker bridge within the next few years.

“We have started this work, but in the meantime it's important that visitors adhere to the person limit on the bridge. Ahead of a predicted busy summer season, people need to be patient, read the signs and take their time on the Hooker track,” he says.



Hooker Valley Bridge no.1. Photo: DOC

Inset at Dead Horse Stream

Work to improve accessibility points for visitors along the State Highway 80 corridor to Mt

Cook/Aoraki Village is ongoing, and recent upgrades at Dead Horse Stream have been made.

An inset has been further developed, with fencing and gate access put up to make things a lot easier and safer for visitors wanting to explore and access the area, or to simply pull further off the road for photo opportunities.

Signage about the braided river system has also been put up at this inset.



- 1) The inset at Dead Horse Stream on State Highway 80.
- 2) An indicative line showing the fencing put up within the inset. Photo: DOC

Staying in touch



Newsletter

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Website

You can find out more about the Sustainable Destinations - Aoraki Programme on [DOC's website.](#)



Email the team

We welcome your feedback and interest in the work: SDAoraki@doc.govt.nz

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