Kahurangi National Park Management Plan amendment 2016: extending the mountain biking season on the Heaphy Track - submissions response report

Note: this report should be read in conjunction with the Certificate of Compliance for the Plan amendment. This report deals with matters raised in submissions and the Certificate sets out the Plan amendment process including the submissions process.

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Executive summary

A partial review of the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan in 2010 provided for a three-year mountain biking season trial on the Heaphy Track from 1 May to 30 September each year under strict conditions. In 2013 the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board considered the trial results and confirmed mountain biking could continue for the same 5-month period. Mountain biking has proved popular and there is capacity at facilities for an extended season. An amendment to the plan providing for an extension for mountain biking from 1 April to 30 November excluding the 4 days of Easter was notified and attracted 188 submissions, 19 in opposition.

This report analyses the submissions and Departmental information against three criteria in General Policy for National Parks 2005 (GPNP) that provide for non-motorised vehicles on designated routes in national parks. A particularly relevant criteria for this plan amendment is to ensure that the “benefit, use and enjoyment” of other people, in this case track walkers, can be protected. This report considers that aspect in some detail. The report notes that the New Zealand research on social impact on shared use tracks concludes that walker perceptions of conflict prior to their walk are not borne out by the reality of their experience after the walk and with one exception an analysis of the submissions supports this conclusion. An analysis of hut booking statistics pre (2011) and post mountain biking on the track suggests no statistically significant decrease in walker numbers over the current 5-month mountain bike season.

It is clear from submissions and the Department’s hut booking data that April is popular for walkers. It has less rainfall and more settled weather than most other months. Including April in the extension would also have an adverse impact on a guided walk concessionaire. The proposal to exclude Easter could also create enforcement issues.

Submitters raised a number of issues outside the scope of the amendment or beyond the scope of statutory matters that can be considered, such as local economic benefits, electric bikes, the hut booking system and a surcharge for bikers. The report discusses these matters and in some cases makes recommendations in respect of them.

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1 National Parks Act 1980 section 47 (2) and (3) refers to “comments”. Subsection 4 refers to “comments and submissions”. This report uses the terms “submissions” and “submitters” as that is more familiar terminology for public processes of this type.
2 General Policy for National Parks 2005, policy 8.6(h)iii)
Introduction and background

1. Introduction

The draft amendment to the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan (2010) (“the Plan”) was publicly notified on 11 May 2016, with the submissions period closing 12 July 2016. Information about the amendment and its process was placed on the Department’s website and included:

- An information sheet and the draft amendments;
- A recreation analysis: Heaphy Track mountain bike season extension;
- Two background reports from the 2011-2013 mountain bike season trial; and
- A report on impacts of mountain bikers on Powelliphanta snails along the Heaphy Track.

The draft amendment proposes to extend the mountain biking season from its current 1 May - 30 September, to 1 April - 30 November excluding the four days of the Easter holiday weekend (when it falls in April). The reasons for proposing the amendment were:

1. To promote more use of the Heaphy Track;
2. To give mountain bikers more opportunity to ride the Heaphy Track outside of the winter months;
3. To implement, in part, a recommendation from the 2013 mountain biking trial report, to extend the mountain biking season over the period 1 March to 30 November; with the amendment process being undertaken now, as a full review of the Plan may be some years away.

This report:

- Sets out the statutory context, relevant policies in GPNP and issues raised in submissions; and
- Evaluates and analyses issues raised to inform the Department of Conservation’s (“the Department”) responses to the submissions.

In addition to issues raised in submissions and in hearings a number of other data sources have been used to inform the analysis presented. These sources include:

- The 2009-2010 partial review of the Plan – background documents, public submissions, hearings records, and decisions reports;
- The 2011-2013 mountain biking trial data, public responses, and trial reports;
- This amendment process - background documents, 188 public submissions and data analysis as referenced in this report; and
- Track user observations by Department rangers (hut wardens) during May to July 2016.

2. Submissions

188 submissions were received on the draft amendment. Specific submissions are referenced in this report by their number, in the form [s123], or by reference to their topic group in Appendix 1, in the form of [t1a].

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5 Reason 3: See information Sheet for the draft amendment, 11 May 2016.
115 submitters supported the amendment. The majority are individual submitters. Submitter organisations in support include NZ Cycle Trails Inc. [s142], Trail Fund NZ [s174], as well as the Buller Cycling Club [s72] and the Golden Bay Mountain Bike Club [s163].

16 conditionally supported. Organisations in conditional support include Federated Mountain Clubs [s183], Nelson-Tasman Cycle Trail Trust [s143], the Buller [s156] and Waimea [s118] Tramping Clubs. Also in conditional support was a Heaphy Track guided walk concessionaire [s139]. Submitters in conditional support generally requested a shorter extension, usually excluding April or Labour Day weekend, and/or additional promotion of the Biker’s Code and monitoring of biker behaviour.

17 supported seeking a longer mountain bike season than the amendment proposed. This group of submitters included Buller District Council [s158], Mountain Bike Trails Trust [s159], Sport Tasman [s164] and the NZ Recreation Association [s176].

19 submitters opposed the amendment. Organisations opposed included the West Coast Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc [s116] and the Motueka Tramping Club [s157].

The characteristics of the submitters are shown in the Appendices to the Certificate of Compliance.

The topics raised by submitters are summarised and grouped in Appendix 1.

All submissions in summary form, and the submitters’ names, are included in Appendix 2.

Most responses from the Department to the submissions are covered by the text of this report. Where issues are specific to a single submission, or require an individual response, this response can be found within the summary of submissions (Appendix 2).

3. Hearings

A Hearing Panel comprising the Chair of the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board (NMCB) and one other Board member together with two Departmental representatives heard, at a hearing in Motueka on 15 August, from eight submitters: two biking organisations (MTB Trails Trust [s159] and Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust [s143]) – both in support; a concessionaire (Kahurangi Guided Walks [s139]) – conditional support; and 2 individuals (Stephen Pendergast [s181] and Lucy Meagher [s171]) – both opposed to the extension. In Westport the following day the panel heard from the West Coast Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society [s116] – opposed; and a joint submission in support from Karamea Community Inc [s82] and a Karamea business owner, Iltamara Ltd [s154].

The hearings record is attached (Appendix 3).

4. Statutory context

4.1 National Parks Act 1980

The National Parks Act 1980 (NPA) sets out in its “Principles to be Applied in National Parks” that parks are to be preserved in a natural state, and the public shall have freedom of entry and access. The NPA allows vehicles in national parks unless there is a prohibition or restriction (s60(2)(b)).
4.2 General Policy for National Parks 2005

General Policy for National Parks 2005 (GPNP) sets out the policies to be applied when preparing management plans for national parks including policies for the control of powered and non-powered vehicles such as mountain bikes. The primary statutory considerations for assessing the proposal are whether the criteria in GPNP Policy 8.6(h) can continue to be met.

Policy 8.6(h) states:

*Roads and routes may be approved for the use of a specified type of non-powered vehicle only where:*

i) adverse effects on national park values can be minimised;

ii) the track standard is suitable; and

iii) the benefit, use and enjoyment of other people can be protected.

All three criteria need to be satisfied for the extended season to be approved.

Policy 8.6(h)iii) does not clearly define who the “other people” are. For the purposes of this report it is assumed they are actual or potential walkers of the Heaphy Track.

Since 2005 the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) has approved twelve cycle/mountain bike tracks or opportunities on existing tracks within six national parks under the criteria of Policy 8.6(h) – see Appendix 4.

For the most part all are shared-use tracks and in most cases design parameters have been set (e.g. track location, width, etc.) and/or management controls applied (e.g. bylaws) to ensure the criteria of Policy 8.6(h) are met.


The Heaphy Track straddles the boundary of these two conservation management strategies.

The Nelson Marlborough Conservation Management Strategy 9 (1996) pre-dates the creation of the Kahurangi National Park in 1996, the first Kahurangi National Park Management Plan (2001) and the plan resulting from the 2009/10 partial review. It is considered that greater weight be given to the more recent and specific national park management plan.

The West Coast Conservation Management Strategy 10 (April 2010) defers management direction to individual management plans as follows: Objective 2 “To manage Kahurangi [and other] National Parks in accordance with their individual management plans.”

The West Coast Conservation Management Strategy also has a “Karamea Place” that largely consists of Kahurangi National Park. Outcomes for the Karamea Place include:

“4.2.1 Desired Outcome for Karamea Place” 11

“The Park is managed in accordance with the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan.” (pg. 184)

“Key recreational features include: ...”

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11 Note this is the desired Outcome for the year 2020.
The western ends of the Heaphy and Wangapeka Tracks which are among the most popular tramping routes in the northern half of the South Island.” (pg. 193)

“The Heaphy Track is New Zealand’s longest Great Walk and is managed primarily to provide a comfortable multi-day tramping opportunity for people with limited backcountry experience. The partial review of the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan, which was publicly notified in 2009, determined whether mountain biking is permitted on the Heaphy Track on a seasonal basis. The Wangapeka track caters mostly for New Zealanders with some tramping experience. Group sizes for guided trips on the Heaphy and Wangapeka tracks are limited to a maximum of 12 people per trip, including guides. Guided walks...and mountain biking on the Heaphy Track (see Section 3.6.4.9) are managed in accordance with the provisions of the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan.” (pg. 193)

An extended mountain bike season on the Heaphy Track is consistent with the two relevant conservation management strategies.

4.4 Kahurangi National Park Management Plan 2010

The Plan already allows for the use of the Heaphy Track (and two other tracks) by mountain bikes, in accordance with the following:

Outcome for Heaphy Track Corridor:
“Within the Corridor the Heaphy Track is managed as a Great Walk, which encourages self-reliance in a moderate to low risk backcountry environment. It gives visitors with limited backcountry experience a safe and challenging environment, accessed either by foot or seasonally by mountain bike where potential conflicts between different user groups are minimised.” (1.6.1(d), pg. 40)

Other parts of the Plan regarding mountain biking are included in this draft amendment.

Analysis

5. Adverse effects on national park values and on track standard (GPNP Policy 8.6(h), criteria i) & ii))

For the Heaphy Track, ensuring the adverse effects on national park values are minimised and the track standard is suitable (GPNP 8.6(h)i and ii)) was achieved by a combination of a restricted mountain biking season (1 May to 30 September), Bylaw controls, and the introduction of a Mountain Bikers’ Code. These provisions were tested through a three-year trial (the 2011, 2012 and 2013 seasons).

The Department monitored adverse effects of mountain biking on park values and other user’s experiences during the trial and prepared a report to the NMCB recommending mountain biking be confirmed on the Heaphy Track and the season remain unchanged. The Board considered this report at its October 2013 meeting and agreed to the continuation of mountain biking on the Heaphy Track subject to the same conditions of existing use (i.e. from 1 May to 30 September). This decision was subsequently endorsed by the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board (November 2013). At its December 2013 meeting the NZCA noted the decision and recorded that it was for the Conservation Boards and Department to decide because no amendment was required to the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan.

5.1 Powelliphanta snails and natural values

Snails are nocturnal and for this and other reasons the Kahurangi National Park Bylaws 2009 (the bylaws) prohibit night riding. The effects on snails and values alongside the track were
well assessed during and after the 2011-2013 mountain biking trial\(^\text{12}\). A few individual submitters have either commented on the lack of snails since mountain biking was allowed \([s132]\), or have suggested that snail monitoring and the night-riding restriction are not needed \([s162]\), or have asked for snails to be looked after \([s40]\) or continued being monitored \([s2]\). The Motueka Tramping Club \([s157]\) - opposed to the extension - has identified a diverse and fragile environment and an individual in support \([s119]\) asked for continued monitoring of ecological impacts.

The Department is confident that effects on snails and other natural values are either minor or manageable. The effects on snails have been well monitored\(^\text{13}\) and there has been no evidence of mountain bikers going off track or having effects on ecological natural values greater than walkers.\(^\text{14}\)

The Department does not support allowing mountain bike riding at night, when snails are most active and intends to retain this provision in the bylaw. Walking at night may pose some risk for snails but would be difficult to restrict given the freedom of walking access allowed under the NPA.

5.2 Track standard and track grade

Although raised as a concern by some submitters for reasons such as bike impact, increased maintenance, hard surface detracting from walking, and track damage affecting older walkers \([s28, 120, 124, 156, 169]\), it is acknowledged by others that the current track standard is suitable for mountain biking and sustainable \([s5, 83, 96, 98, 174, 182]\). If mountain biking use moves more into October, November and April, some submitters \([t3, b]\) have suggested this will lessen maintenance requirements, due to drier conditions. However, as noted by other submitters \([s86, 172]\) October is, on average, the wettest month of the year (see Appendix 5).

The Department is close to completing a 3-year programmed upgrade of the Heaphy Track to bring the entire track, and particularly the western side, to Great Walk standard. This work is required and scheduled regardless of any extension to the mountain bike season. The Department is confident that with the completion of that work the track will be robust and able to withstand the impacts of both bikers and walkers over the wet spring months.\(^\text{15}\) The Department further advises that where the track is already to Great Walk standard, since mountain biking commenced there has been no discernible impact from bikers compared with walkers.\(^\text{16}\)

Occasional severe storm events may temporarily disrupt the track and require maintenance, but this is the norm for much of the Department’s national track network.

The track standard (Great Walk) also affects the track grade for mountain biking, which in turn influences the extent and type of mountain bike use. Currently the Department’s track user information notes that for mountain biking the track grade is 4 to 5, depending on weather conditions. While the imminent completion of track upgrades will bring the track to a grade 4 standard overall, unfavourable weather, track wetness, long days and the remote

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\(^{12}\) See the background reports referenced in Footnote 1.


\(^{14}\) Pers. com Eric de Boer, Senior Ranger, DOC, Westport 25 October

\(^{15}\) Email from Buller Kawatiri Operations Manager, Bob Dickson to Rod Witte 26 October.

\(^{16}\) Ibid
nature of the track will still require users to take additional caution\(^\text{17}\). The bylaws provide for the track to be closed at any time to both walkers and bikers if the track conditions require.

As a biking submitter [s98] notes, the Heaphy Track is a difficult ride and track user information needs to insist on this and reinforce how the degree of difficulty increases during bad weather. It is not realistic to envisage the Heaphy Track being an easy, fine weather ride, even if the season is extended. Family and other groups with mixed riding skills may be able to ride the track in comparative safety, but they would need to be well-organised and well-equipped.

6. Protection of the benefit, use and enjoyment of other people [GPNP Policy 8.6(h)(iii)]

The following sections look at this criterion under the headings of:
- Social impact/conflict/interactions;
- The significance of Easter, school holidays, Anzac Day and Labour Day;
- Potential changes in visitor range / demographics;
- Mountain biking participation; and
- The effects of daylight and allowable mountain biking hours, and weather.

The 8.6(h)(i) criterion for “national park values” other than national park ecological values, such as ‘natural quiet’, inspiration and ‘nature on nature’s terms’ are also relevant.

6.1 Social impact/conflict/interactions

6.1.1. Research

The issue of social impact/conflict/interactions is raised in a number of submissions, either as an actual, potential or perceived occurrence, or non-occurrence [12]. The issue is perhaps best expressed in the submission of support by the NZ Recreation Association (s176) who note that despite initial perceptions, conflict between user groups has been minimal but “that there may be a certain amount of unreported conflict and/or unvoiced resentment” and the Department “needs to pay close attention to potential conflict, resource appropriate monitoring of this risk and pre-emptively carry out management actions that will mitigate any conflict.”\(^\text{18}\)

Another submitter in support, Fiordland Trails Trust (s65) in a detailed submission that addresses the issue of risk states: “We ought to be aware of the difference between perceived risk and actual risk. Our perception of risk is heavily influenced by how we feel about an issue – a psychological bias known as the affect heuristic. If we don’t like the idea of sharing a trail with cyclists we will perceive it as risker than it actually is. The upside is that if people are educated about the benefits of an activity they will perceive it to be less risky – hence the need for public education.”

That statement is largely supported by research. Although there is no recent New Zealand research of social impacts between bikers and users, earlier New Zealand (2002)\(^\text{19}\) research shows that whereas walkers on shared use tracks perceived there would be conflict prior to undertaking the walk this was not borne out in reality due mainly to considerate biker

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\(^{17}\) Pers comms 17.08.16 with Guy Wynn-Williams (Mountain Bike NZ) [s89], Chris Mildon (MTB Trails Trust) [s143], and Simon Kennett [s90].

\(^{18}\) New Zealand Recreation Association, paragraphs 16 and 17, submission 176.

behaviour. More recent overseas research suggests that social impact between different activities is often “asymmetric” with one group (i.e. walkers) objecting more to the presence of another group (i.e. bikers) than the reverse.  

6.1.2 Issues raised in submissions

Submissions addressing walker and mountain biker interactions identify various perspectives, from no/minimal/negligible to varying social impacts; see [t2 a-z, 21, 22, 28, 33 a-q, 34-40, 44].

The issues raised by walkers about social impact include:
- on-track safety, especially for children and older trampers, and avoiding collisions;
- being surprised or shocked by an unexpected mountain bike encounter [t28a];
- lack of biker courtesy;
- experiencing mountain bikes and their mechanical noise and wheel tracks as an intrusion within a ‘natural’ area [s172];
- experiencing mountain bike riders as somehow different from trampers [s178, 179, 184];
- hut sharing pressures due to bikers arriving at huts before walkers;
- differing hut etiquette and ‘vibe’;
- disturbance of the slower pace of walkers and their experience of vegetation and birds; and
- cyclist technology and talk at huts being at odds with tramping.

The issues raised by bikers about social impact are set out in [t2] and in general terms include:
- encountering low walker numbers [t2a];
- emphasizing track sharing, tolerance, courtesy, enjoyable interactions [t2c], [t2j];
- the success of the ‘pilot’ (trial) and the Recreation Analysis findings [t2s];
- walkers can use the more favourable summer months [t2e];
- management methods: access code, risk management, hut bookings, slower riding, warning methods, track width, Easter and heavy walker-use period exclusions;
- low biker speeds due to multi-day gear [t2g, p, r, u, v, w, x] and
- recreation vs competition riding [s36, t2h] (note the management plan and bylaws prohibit organised events).

Of the submitters supportive of the amendment, several [t2] do make comments that explicitly or implicitly acknowledge some degree of adverse effect by mountain biking on walkers, but qualify the statement with comments such as: ‘learning to co-exist’, ‘conflict being minimal’, ‘little impact’, ‘nearly always trouble-free’, ‘largely negated by hut bookings’, etc.

An accommodation provider in Karamea [s154] who meets about 1000 tramper and/or mountain biker clients each year has yet to hear of a single complaint or case of walker/biker conflict, and his submission notes: “I have been pleasantly surprised at the camaraderie and mutual respect between the two groups, who are after all people out enjoying the wonders of the Kahurangi National Park and are not so dissimilar.”

Another business operator, Golden Bay Air Ltd [s45] who according to their submission last financial year provided air and ground transport services to over a third of the Heaphy Track visitors states: “We have generally found walkers and bikers to be tolerant of one another, and bikers are respectful of the need to ensure tramper (and their own) safety while on the track.”

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Derry Kingston [s29] who operates a vehicle re-positioning service, and walks the Heaphy track about 10 times during the current mountain bike season has not encountered any real difficulty in sharing the track with mountain bikers (presumably some are his clients) but does request that bikers use a warning bell when approaching from behind or in front. He supports the extension because it provides a “fairer division of time during the year when mountain biking is allowed.”

Individual biker submitters who have shared the track and hut with walkers and other bikers without conflict include submitter 7 and submitter 20, a woman biker, who noted: “I was really impressed with the huts and the camaraderie of walkers and bikers.”

Another individual submitter [s171] whose family tramping trip straddled the 1 May start to the existing mountain biking season, identified an experience and safety perception change for them during the trip once they started meeting bikes and they had to change their behaviour to avoid mountain bike impacts especially for their children.

Submitter 172 considers that: “national parks are places to get away from the pace and stresses of everyday life and slow down to nature’s pace. Cycling is not nature’s pace and diminishes the relaxed atmosphere for other users.”

No submitter has mentioned displacement explicitly, but several raise the issue in different words. Three [t33l] consider that extending the mountain biking season will push some walkers into the peak walking season, or away altogether. A guided walking concessionaire [s139] advised that their largely older clients avoid peak holiday periods and shared-use tracks, with April, October and November providing 47% of their total people days on the track during the 2015/16 season (15 of 32 walkers guided that season over 8 trips). However, that submitter has suggested as a compromise an extension during October (which would provide a 50/50 yearly split of walkers/bikers) but not April or November but would expect a corresponding reduction in their annual management and concession fees.

Submitter 122 notes that walkers would be more tolerant of mountain bikes on the Old Ghost Road as it was first a mountain bike trail, but the Heaphy was not (albeit that some mountain bike use did occur before it became national park). That individual submitter also supports an extension of the mountain bike season during October.

In a detailed analysis of hut booking statistics submitter 181 notes that an extended mountain biking season during the longer daylight hours would result in shorter overall stays by bikers, increasing the number of 1 night stays, leading to an overlap scenario where riders with different start dates intersected, potentially extending the impact on other track users. That submitter opposed an extension during April (when hut occupancy is relatively high) but supported an extension during October and November when hut occupancy is much lower.

6.1.3 Is social impact/conflict evident?

While various submissions suggest that a degree of adverse social impact/conflict is occurring or is perceived, the extent of impact suggested by several submitters (e.g. West Coast Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society [s116]) is not supported by the Department’s surveys. It also needs to be recognised that a limited mountain bike season has already been approved, with perhaps some acceptance that social impact/conflict will or may occur on occasions and so the issue is whether an extension of the mountain bike season would unacceptably increase the extent of any social impact.
A 2013 Departmental report\(^{21}\) on the outcome of the initial 3-year mountain bike trial noted that: “Conflict between walkers and mountain bikers has been minimal”, but also that “It is difficult to fully gauge the effect of mountain bikers upon walkers due to the fact that there were few walkers on the track during the mountain biking trial.”

Since 2013, hut warden information gathered by the Department (Appendix 6) together with limited survey information suggests that social impact/conflict on the track and at huts over the past 6 biking seasons has been low. Hut wardens have observed no incidents of conflict between walkers and bikers.

From the Department’s destination feedback on-line, of 2627 responses since the survey started in October 2011, 37 are for the Heaphy. Of these responses, several are positive about mountain biking aspects and one expresses concern about a 15-20 rider group “bombing through at speed” (June 2013). A group of this size is in breach of the bylaws which limit group size to six.

The Great Walks user survey\(^{22}\) was started in December 2015, and will remain in place for all Great Walks year-round. All users receive targeted and incentivised invitations to complete both a Pre-visit, and a Post-visit survey. The survey is comprehensive, and captures robust data on all aspects of visitors’ Great Walk experiences, including differentiating between those of walkers and bikers on the Heaphy Track.

As an example of what this survey covers, the Heaphy re-visit surveys to date record:

- 19 walker responses, 80% female, 25 to 69 age bracket with largest sector 50-54, 68% New Zealanders, 79% NZ resident, most have completed other Great Walks, and walking with friends and family.
- 10 mountain bike rider responses, 80% male, 35 to 69 age bracket with largest sector 45-49, 80% New Zealanders, 100% NZ resident, all have completed (i.e. walked) other Great Walks, some past walkers of the Heaphy, some children involved.

For two weeks into the 2016 mountain biking season, four Heaphy responses have identified varied comments\(^{23}\): “a great ride... It was fantastic”; “a comfortable and safe riding experience”; “better suited to mountain bikers than walkers. The trail surface is hard on the feet and boring”; “a couple of mountain bikers were a day early on the track... Mountain bikers - they were very courteous on the trail but it doesn’t change the fact that they can be upon you before you know it. An accident waiting to happen on those blind bends. I didn’t hear them coming as I expected I would.”

The Department is not aware of any injuries as a consequence of biker to walker or biker to biker collisions. Because the Heaphy Track can be ridden both ways there is risk of injury to a biker of colliding with a biker coming the other way and this may help moderate biker speeds.

Several submitters conditionally supported the proposed extension provided the Department continued, and preferably increased, its promotion of rider etiquette. Another effective way to do that may be through the national booking system at the time of hut booking and include a copy of the Mountain Bikers Code on the booking receipt.

\(^{21}\) See footnote 5.

\(^{22}\) The national Great Walks user survey involves a self-administered survey form completed when hut bookings are made, then a DOC-prompted re-survey after the walk is completed.

\(^{23}\) Great Walks Guest Survey - Post-visit 2016.
6.1.4 Is displacement occurring and/or significant?

One submitter who addressed displacement did so on behalf of their concessionaire clients [s139] Other submitters considered that mountain biking pushes some walkers out of the period when bikers are using the track [s161, 140, 178, 184]. One submitter [s178]. expresses it thus: “A hut surrounded in lycra, metal, rubber, plastic and bike talk is not what I enjoy about tramping.”

Similar “hut incompatibility” can occur between other hut users such as trampers and hunters and those who fly in and those who walk. However, the difference is that walkers on the Heaphy Track during the mountain bike season know they can expect to share a hut with mountain bikers.

A comparison of hut booking statistics April to September before 2011 and after 2011 (when mountain biking commenced) shows a slight decrease in 4 and 5-night hut bookings suggesting some displacement of walkers during the mountain bike season. However, the change is not considered statistically significant given the limited number of years available (2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014) (Refer Appendix 7)

6.2 The significance of April, Easter, school holidays, Anzac Day and Labour Day

Visitor use patterns for walkers on the Heaphy Track vary between high peak months (December-January), lower peak months (February-March-April), low use months (May-September), and months of ascending use (October-November) (refer Appendix 8).

Within this yearly use pattern sit the public and school holidays.

The draft amendment excludes a four-day (Good Friday to Easter Monday) period from the proposed mountain biking season. Submissions [t31 a, b] have raised concerns about current visitor use over the school holidays and Anzac weekend. A few [t24 a] have requested that Easter not be excluded from the mountain biking season. Two submitters [s98, 159] have queried what happens if mountain biking use were to ‘stray’ into Easter intentionally or due to adverse weather or other delays.

Federated Mountain Clubs [s183], while supportive of the extension, requests that April be excluded because Easter, the April school holidays and Anzac Day are popular for family tramping trips as well as important for guided walker concessionaires.

Submitter 172 while overall opposing the extension concludes that if the extension does proceed that it excludes April.

The Easter holiday weekend usually falls within April. For public schools Easter is a five-day holiday weekend if not within the school holidays.

The public school holidays at the end of term 1 mostly fall within April; non-state schools often having a longer holiday at this time.

Anzac Day is always on 25 April and if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday a public holiday occurs on the following Monday, giving a 3-day weekend. If Anzac Day falls on a Thursday or Tuesday it is not uncommon for people to take a day’s leave and create a 4-day weekend, even more so if within school holidays.
Hut use data for 2012 to 2016 is shown in Appendix 8. The daily hut use data for April can be taken from Appendix 9. Collectively the data shows:

- Except for 2014, there has been consistent high visitor use over the first week or more of the school holidays, increased when there is overlap with either the Easter or Anzac Day weekends.
- When Easter fell outside the school holidays, i.e. 2013 and 2016, the Easter weekend higher-use period extended for at least 9 and 10 days respectively.
- Full or near-full capacity at James Mackay Hut was reached some nights and may be showing an increasing trend.
- Use of all huts collectively over the holiday periods is around 50 to 70 percent of full capacity.
- On past years’ walking and biking use, transferring the May, primarily mountain biker, hut use to April would likely take James Mackay hut occupancy to full capacity for much of April, especially at and near weekends and holidays. Total Heaphy Hut occupancy in April may also be taken to near capacity, especially at and near weekends and holidays. While the James Mackay and Heaphy huts may approach capacity should the mountain bike season extend into April the booking system shows the other huts have capacity and are able to be booked as alternative options.

School holidays generally are a time when the Heaphy Track is more accessible for families. Within the proposed extended mountain bike season both April and September-October include suitable school holidays [s50, 74, 80] (outside of the winter July holidays), although [s171] suggests an October clash with NCEA exam preparation. The opportunity to ride as a family during school holidays was mentioned by four submitters [s37, 50, 74 and 80].

Various submitters made the point that April is busy for walkers and is a good tramping month [t31a, b, c] and school holidays should be kept mountain bike free [t31f].

Submissions, supported by hut booking data, show that April is a desirable tramping month due to generally settled weather, school holidays and Anzac Day. That together with the enforcement challenges that could arise by excluding Easter from mountain biking leads to the recommendation that April be excluded from the extended mountain bike season. The current underutilised hut capacity over April provides an opportunity for the Department to further promote April as a “shoulder season” walking option and may assist the Department overall as other Great Walks approach capacity during the preferred walking months.

A submission from the Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust [s143] requested excluding mountain biking from three days over Labour Day weekend. Some walker submitters referred to October as a tramping month [t31b], but none to Labour weekend specifically. Appendix 8.2 shows a spike in visitor use from 2011 to 2015 for James Mackay Hut on one night of Labour Day weekend and presumably that “spike” moves from hut to hut each night as the cohort of walkers traverses the track (generally walkers travel from East to West). However, overall total hut use for the track over Labour Day weekend is in the lower range.

Overall it is considered that current track usage by walkers together with the management challenges of prohibiting mountain biking for 3 days in the middle of the season does not support excluding mountain biking during Labour Weekend.

### 6.3 Potential change in visitor range/demographics

Many submitters stated that an extended mountain biking season, with warmer weather and longer daylight hours), will allow for a wider range and demographic (e.g. age and gender) of visitors.

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24 Cyclone Eta (April 2014) seriously affected West Coast forests, tracks and subsequent visitor use.
mountain biking users [t1c]. Other submitters note that mountain biking has brought a wider demographic into the New Zealand outdoors [s36, 153], or enabled a wider group of recreational users to experience the Park [s26, 65, 66], or given an opportunity for more people to enjoy the Track and Park values [t1d].

There has been a predominance of male bikers during the current 1 May to 30 September mountain bike season (see Appendix 10) but as one female biker [s85] who rode the track in early May 2016 and considered it would be daunting for her in wet conditions noted: “by opening up the shoulder season, the experience widens itself to the more average intermediate rider. … We need to encourage more fit women onto bikes and the shoulder season will help.”

A similar comment was made by submitter 58: “The wider season will be of greater appeal to less adventurous more social riders. The more people that experience the back country the greater the numbers of advocates for the environment of the back country and the work that DOC does.”

Several submitters referred to the Heaphy as a “world class” ride [s137] particularly in combination with the Old Ghost Road (Sport Tasman [s164]) Nga Haerenga The New Zealand Cycle Trail Inc [s142], and Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust [s143]) suggesting potential international visitation.

One submitter [s184] states that the demographics of people using the Track are diminished by allowing mountain biking, and another [s139] that retired/older walkers do not want to walk with bikers, implying a demographic difference in attitude to mountain bikers.

Track hut booking data allows some analysis of visitor demographics (see Appendix 10), as shown by the hut users at James Mackay Hut which is frequently used by both walkers and bikers. The analysis shows a noticeable difference in visitor age and gender demographics between the summer tramping and the winter biking seasons, and a further age difference over April, probably due to the public and school holidays. However, the data for the mountain bike season may be partly skewed by it being a winter season, with more-hardy bikers.

6.4 Mountain biking participation

As noted in 6.3, many submitters have stated that an extended mountain biking season will allow for a wider range and demographic of mountain biking users. Sport Tasman (s164) have provided independent research data that shows cycling (including mountain biking) is the second choice of recreation activities for all males in the Nelson/Tasman region, third for all females and third for all genders in the 25-44 and 45-64 age groups. The New Zealand Recreation Association submission [s176] quotes the Sport NZ Active NZ Survey 2013/14 that shows that tramping is the ninth most popular form of recreation for New Zealanders with 9.7% of the population participating at least annually, and all forms of cycling (a subset of which is mountain biking) as the third most popular with nearly 25% participation.

An analysis of hut booking before and after 2011 when mountain biking commenced shows a marked increase in one night (+615), two night (+552) and to a lesser extent three night bookings (+44) (Appendix 7). This suggests the majority of bikers spend one or two nights at huts on the track (a two or three-day ride). Anecdotal information supported by warden observations suggests fewer single-day riders than occurred in the initial mountain biking seasons.

Data on mountain biking participation nationally and on grade 4-5 tracks like the Heaphy Track is lacking. However, several submitters noted that mountain biking seems to be
increasing in popularity compared with tramping with one submitter (s177) noting: “I was a very keen tramper until I developed arthritis in my ankles in my late 40s. I was in my late 50s when I was introduced to mountain biking and found that I could now again enjoy getting into the back country that I love, going where I could no longer tramp. I biked (most of) the Heaphy firstly in Sept 2011 then again in May this year.”

While it is possible that an extension of the mountain biking season may extend current participation over a longer season it seems more likely that a longer season with longer daylight hours and warmer weather will increase biker participation on this track by encouraging the less “hard core” mountain bikers. The NZ Recreation Association [s176] notes an extended Heaphy Track Mountain bike season would allow a loop ride with the newly developed Old Ghost Road (open year-round) thus attracting more mountain bikers to remain the Buller district for a longer period. At least one submitter [s34] combined their ride of the Heaphy with a ride on the Old Ghost Road.

It also needs noting from the submissions that there are riders doing multiple trips through the Heaphy, either within days, or within each season, or in subsequent seasons, and that this appears to occur much more often than for walkers.

6.5 The effects of daylight and allowable mountain biking riding hours, and weather.

Many submissions mention the benefit of an extended mountain biking season in providing extended daylight hours and better weather conditions i.e. warmer and drier [t1c], and allowing for a safer track experience [t1b].

The bylaws allow mountain biking riding for a period between 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. This gives a maximum of 11 hours and 8 minutes on 6 May and 13 hrs 24 mins on 29 September25 (see Appendix 11), i.e. towards the beginning and end of the current mountain biking season.

Extending the mountain biking season as proposed would provide a 12 hr 22 min period for 6 April and a 15 hr 50 min period for 28 November - both substantial gains in the mountain biking period, especially in October and November.

The Department promotes the Heaphy Track as an overnight ride. In the early years from 2011 a proportion (possibly 10-20%) of riders did single-day rides, with recent hut warden observations estimating this has decreased to 2%26. The majority of riders do a 2- or 3- day ride (see Appendix 7). Mackay Hut, at about the mid-point of the track, is the most-preferred overnight hut for bikers, but submissions show there are many variations in how bikers time their rides and hut stays.

It is reasonable to predict that longer allowable riding hours will alter biking use patterns, as submitters have indicated [s58, 66]. Single-day riding may increase [s45, 48, 154] (with or without return trips after an overnight in Karamea). Additionally, or alternatively, as suggested by [s74, 154] some usage may swing towards a more leisurely ride of the track.

Appendix 5 shows the average monthly rainfall and temperature for Karamea. April is a low rainfall and medium-range temperature month. October is the peak rainfall and a medium-range temperature month. November is a low spring rainfall and a medium-range temperature month.

6.6 Research and monitoring

25 These dates reflect the sunrise/sunset date intervals in the LINZ website data.
26 No accurate date exists on the incidence of single-day riding, but information from visitors, rangers, hut wardens and submitters (e.g. [s154]) suggests an initial 10-20% and a recent 2% (Appendix 8)
Several submissions [t29 & 41] raised questions about the adequacy of the Department’s current research and monitoring to inform this Plan Amendment. Some of these questions have, at least in part, been addressed by the further data analysis contained within this report.

The Department has now instigated an ongoing Great Walk user survey (see 6.1.3) and may soon have a new national hut booking system that will distinguish between walkers and mountain bikers. These systems will aid future research and monitoring.

The assessment in 6.1.1 above has noted there is no recent New Zealand research on the interactions of bikers and walkers on shared use tracks.

7. Other matters

7.1 Varying the months of the proposed mountain biking season

Submissions have requested both additions [t24 a, c-e, h-i] and reductions [t24, 31] to the draft amended mountain biking season, including allowing mountain biking over Easter.

Additions cannot be considered, due to natural justice legal issues that would effectively mean having to re-notify the amendment. There will be an opportunity for any person to raise any further mountain biking season extensions through the review of the whole Plan.

Reductions from the notified proposed season extension can be considered. As noted in section 6.2 above several submitters, including Federated Mountain Clubs [s183] have requested that April be excluded from any extension.

7.2 Regional economic benefit

Regional economic benefit was raised by many submissions including Buller District Council [s158] [t3d]. While regional economic benefit is a matter that the Department is very aware of in its interactions with local and regional communities and the national tourism industry, it is not a matter that can legally be considered under the NPA. The NPA requires a focus on the preservation of the Park itself and, subject to this preservation, public use.

Some matters raised in submissions warrant mention:

- Of four submissions from the tourism industry:
  - their Karamea visitor support business has seen significant increases over the winter biking season, and sees scope for further promotion [s154];
  - an extension to the biking season would be positive for their air and ground transport business, and notes that April can be very busy for walkers [s45];
  - from the Karamea community perspective additional business has been generated, albeit perhaps at levels below expectations raised in the 2013 report, but considers an extended season and other initiatives could further extend business [s82];
  - a biking season extension would marginalise their guided walking business concession, especially in April; their busiest months are October-November and March-April [s139] (as noted in 6.1.2 above) this concessionaire guided 32 people during 2015/16 (8 trips) with 15 (47%) total people days over April, October and November. This submitter opposes an extension in April and November but not October); and
  - a guided biking concessionaire considers the demand is there to ride the track for longer periods in better weather, and that it would make sense to combine this “classic” trail with riding the Old Ghost Road thus spending more time and money on the West Coast [s49].
That hut revenue or investment return for DOC will be less from bikers, and nil from single-day riders, and that from a sustainable business perspective it makes no sense to replace multi-night walkers with lesser-night riders.

With regard to hut revenue, the Department considers it is better to fill more of the huts more of the time and notes that since mountain biking commenced overall hut occupancy has increased for 4 of the past 5 years. Cyclone Ita the week before Easter 2014 depressed visitor numbers that year.

Regarding comment about walkers staying 3 or 4 nights in huts (and therefore contributing more revenue) compared with riders staying one or two nights, the data is not conclusive about what walkers and biker user patterns may emerge from an extended mountain bike season. There may be periods when riders may generate more revenue than a smaller number of walkers staying longer, but the more relevant issue is the effect of the riders on the “use, benefit and enjoyment” of the walkers; not on investment return or sustainable business.

7.3 Extending mountain biking use to other tracks and in other national parks

Seven submitters have commented on allowing or encouraging mountain bike tracks in other areas, or in the case of Federated Mountain Clubs seek a national strategy for mountain biking on public conservation land. These comments will be passed to the Department’s Science and Policy, and Operations Groups for their consideration.

The draft Amendment is only in respect of Kahurangi National Park and the Heaphy Track, and cannot make recommendations for other national parks or tracks. There will however, be the opportunity for any person to raise the issue of mountain biking in other national parks or on other Kahurangi tracks when the park management plans come up for whole review.

7.4 Electric power-assisted pedal cycles (‘e-bikes’)

Four submissions have sought prohibition or clarification of policy on ‘e-bikes’.

The current Plan and bylaws were written prior to the extent and level of development seen for e-bikes today, but with the clear intention in the Plan to only allow ‘non-powered’ mountain biking (as consistent with Policy 8.6(h) and its understanding of mountain biking in 2005).

A 2013 Declaration by the New Zealand Land Transport Agency revised the definition of a power-assisted cycle to a ‘power-assisted pedal cycle’ to allow pedal cycles with auxiliary motors with a maximum power output not exceeding 300 watts to be treated as ordinary cycles (i.e. no registration or licensing or drivers licence requirements). While the Declaration is specific to the use of such vehicles on roads under the Land Transport Act 1998 it has created a potential issue as to whether an electric assist bike is a “non – motorised vehicle” in terms of the current Kahurangi National Park Management Plan and bylaws. In accordance with the National Parks Act low powered (under 300 watt) electric cycles still fall within the definition of “motorised vehicle” because the National Parks Act does not differentiate motorised vehicles based on the power output of the motor. However, because the status of such vehicles has been raised by submitters and to remove any uncertainty a new definition of “non-motorised vehicle” is recommended: “non-motorised vehicle means a vehicle propelled solely by human power and includes a mountain bike”. That definition is consistent with the New Zealand Transport Agency definition of a “pedal cycle”.

It is noted that e-bikes have been used on the Heaphy Track. This use is contrary to the current Park bylaws and such users are open to enforcement action. The definition recommended above will remove any doubt as to the legal status of e-bikes on the Heaphy mountain bike route. It is further recommended that the all track information makes clear that all types that are not solely human powered vehicles including electrically assisted bicycles are not permitted on the Heaphy track.

7.5 Consistency with Old Ghost Road and Queen Charlotte Track

A few submissions have requested consistency of mountain biking provisions between the Heaphy, Old Ghost Road (open year-round) and Queen Charlotte Tracks (closed over one section to mountain bikes from 1 December to 28 February). While there may appear to be some desirability in this it needs to be noted that the three tracks are over lands of different status with different statutory controls.

The Heaphy Track is within a national park under the NPA and subject to the GPNP and the Plan; the Old Ghost Road is over legal road, Crown riverbed, and conservation lands under the Conservation Act 1987 and subject to the Conservation General Policy (2005); and the Queen Charlotte Track is over scenic reserves under the Reserves Act 1977 and subject to Conservation General Policy 2005, and over legal road and private lands.

7.6 Facility use and national park entry fees

Submitters have suggested hut or bivvy use differential pricing [s99, 157, 164, 181], or a national park entry fee for tourists [s147]. Others [t23], including some mountain bikers, have suggested a mountain biker fee contribution for track maintenance, especially for single-day riders not overnighting hence not paying hut fees.

The NPA ensures freedom of access to all, but GPNP policy 8.1(g) allows charges to be made for the use of facilities, which includes tracks, as well as the bike stands and bike wash down facilities provided at several huts on the Heaphy. Mountain bike advocacy organisations have indicated they would support a reasonable additional charge for bikers. The possibility of charging an additional facility fee for bikers should be investigated.

The incidence of single-day mountain biking (i.e. no hut stays or fees) is addressed in 6.4 and 6.5 above; the anecdotal data suggesting a decrease in this activity between 2011-13 and today, although an extended season with increased daily riding hours may change this again.

One submitter [s53] has suggested a certain number of bunks in the huts be reserved solely for walkers to limit mountain bike numbers. This could mean huts are under-utilised and for that reason the Department does not support the concept.

Federated Mountain Clubs [s183] requests that the existing Departmental policy that no more that 50% of the beds in a hut can be booked by a concessionaire (walking or biking) be made an explicit rule in the plan in respect of biking concessionaires. The Department notes that the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan already provides that all guiding concessions in the park include a condition that no more than 50% of the of available bunk space on a first come, first served basis can be occupied by guides and clients. (4.2 Concessions - Implementation 14, pg. 122)

See https://www.facebook.com/HeaphyTrack

Pers com Nessa Lynch Secretary NZ Trails Trust (submitter 174) 1 Nov. Mountain bike advocacy organisations that submitted in 2010 also supported an additional charge for bikers commensurate with dedicated facilities provided.
Kahurangi Guided Walks [s139] who hold a concession for the Heaphy Track, suggest that the Department holds up to 8 bunks in each hut for concessionaires until a month in advance after which if not taken up by the concessionaires they would be made available to the public. This issue has arisen on other Great Walks and at a national level the Department is investigating policy options.

7.7 Helicopter use

Three submitters have either noted the popularity of helicopter drop-offs of mountain bikes [s31] or seek confirmation that helicopter landings and heli-biking has been phased out [s98, 183].

The Plan, section 4.2.1.12 Implementation, states: “2. Concessions should not be granted for aircraft landings associated with mountain biking.”, but allows under Implementation 5 for very limited landings within “remote” zones (which includes all national park landings along and adjoining the Heaphy Track, and under Implementation 6 for landings at the Heaphy Hut “restricted zone”. The Plan (page 130) provides for no more than 10 landings per year at the Heaphy Hut restricted to one operator only between 1 October to 30 April each year and between the hours of 10am to 3pm.

These aircraft landing provisions are not being changed as a result of this Plan Amendment.

7.8 Bells on bikes

One submitter [s22] suggested all bikers be required to have and use a bell to warn of their approach to walkers. Another submitter [s188] has suggested the Department promote the use of the clicking of brake levers as an unobtrusive way to warn of the approach of a cyclist. The Department will consider these suggestions when next updating its information for this and other shared use tracks.

7.9 The Department’s Outcomes Model

The Department of Conservation has developed an outcomes model consisting of a vision, outcome statement and four intermediate outcomes supported by detailed intermediate outcome objectives. Extending the Heaphy Track mountain bike season is consistent with the intermediate outcome that “New Zealanders and our visitors are enriched by outdoor experiences”. Providing a multi-day opportunity during longer day light hours and the generally warmer October and November period should assist to achieve the objectives of “More people enjoy the backcountry” and “Enjoyable experiences lead to more visits more often”. One of the Department’s ‘Stretch Goals’ for 2025 is that “90% of New Zealander’s lives are enriched through connection to our nature” and the opportunity for a more leisurely ride of the Heaphy Track by extending the mountain bike season into October and November is consistent with that goal.

8. Overall conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Overall conclusions

1. General Policy for National Parks 2005 Policy 8.6(h) provides that routes may be approved for the use of non-powered vehicles such as mountain bikes only where three criteria are satisfied – adverse effects on national park values can be minimised; the track standard is suitable; and the benefit use and enjoyment of other people can be protected.

2. Mountain biking was initially approved on the Heaphy Track as a three-year seasonal trial from 1 May to 30 September each year with the first season commencing 2011. In 2013, at the conclusion of the trial and following consideration of a monitoring report, the NMCB and the Department agreed to mountain biking continuing for the
same 5-month period. There is now 6 years of mountain bike track usage data (including hut bookings, track condition and hut warden reports) as well as the information provided by submitters to assist in the assessment of the current and potential effects of mountain biking.

3. The Department’s experience over the past six seasons is that there has been no discernible effect on national park ecological values from mountain biking on the Heaphy Track and no submitter has provided conclusive information to the contrary. An extension of the mountain bike season is not likely to adversely affect ecological values.

4. The Department has almost completed a programmed upgrade of the track to Great Walk standard. Experience has shown that those parts of the track that already meet that standard have not been adversely affected by mountain biking. The track standard is therefore suitable and despite October being a wetter month there is no reason to consider the track will not cope with increased bike traffic over a longer period.

5. The social issues arising from shared use walker and biker tracks is an issue raised by the 19 submitters in opposition. New Zealand research undertaken in 2002 shows that while walkers may perceive risks and conflicts sharing a track with bikers before their walk, this does not appear to be borne out in reality. Numerous submitters including accommodation providers and transport operators who cater for both walkers and bikers state that they have not seen conflicts between the two groups of track users. That is also supported by the hut wardens. While not wishing to discount the validly held perceptions of walker submitters only one walker submitter has had an actual experience on the Heaphy Track of concern about bikers in respect of possible risk to her children. There is limited evidence that walkers are currently being displaced from walking the track in the period it is shared with mountain bikers but the effect of an extension is not known.

6. It is clear from submitters representing organisations and from a guided walk concessionaire that extending the season into April while excluding the 4 days of Easter will be problematic. An analysis of hut bookings over the period also shows that while there is additional capacity it is considerably less than for October and November. The typically dry and settled weather period of April which includes Anzac weekend and school holidays is important for walkers (and the guided walk concessionaire). It is considered that mountain biking should not be extended into April. There is an opportunity for the Department to further promote the shoulder season of April for walkers particularly as demand on other Great Walks increases.

7. Extending the mountain bike season into October and November, including a school holiday period, has received strong support. It is likely to enable a broader demographic and experience level of mountain biker to enjoy the track including women who have been under-represented in biker numbers over the current winter seasons. While some submitters wanted Labour weekend excluded for bikers this is not justified by current hut booking data and could create potential enforcement challenges.

8. A number of submitters have highlighted the current importance of mountain biking to the local economy and the potential economic benefits of an extension. While this is not matter that can be considered under the NPA it is relevant to the Department’s engagement with local communities.
9. Several walker submitters consider there is a disparity in the Department’s revenue recovery between walkers who typically spend 3 or 4 nights in huts and bikers who are more likely to be in huts for 1 or 2 nights. The Department can charge a fee for the use of facilities, including the track, as well as the bike racks and bike wash facilities at some huts. The Department should investigate whether to charge a facility fee for bikers. The concept is not opposed by mountain biker advocacy groups who consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to ride the Heaphy Track.

10. Several submitters conditionally supported the proposed extension provided the Department continued, and preferably increased, its promotion of rider etiquette. One additional effective way to do that may be through the national booking system at the time of hut booking with the receipt including a copy of the Mountain Bikers Code.

11. Several submitters sought clarification of the status of electric assist bikes (“e-bikes”). A definition of non-motorised vehicle is proposed to clarify any ambiguity as to the status of such vehicles which may have arisen from a 2013 Declaration by the New Zealand Land Transport Agency in respect of the use of such vehicles on roads.

8.2 Recommendations

1. Approve the extension for the period 1 October to 30 November.

2. Do not approve the extension for the period 1 April to 30 April.

3. Amend the Kahurangi National Park Bylaws 2009 to incorporate the extension of the period of the year the Heaphy Track mountain bike route may be used by a non-motorised vehicle. [Clauses 17A (5)(a) and 17B (2)(b)]

4. Request the Department investigates whether to charge an additional facility fee for mountain bikers in recognition of dedicated mountain bike facilities provided at huts.

5. Request the Department investigates whether the national booking system can cost effectively be amended to print the Mountain Bikers’ Code onto the hut booking receipt for bikers.

6. Request the Department continues to:
   (a) promote shared use track etiquette on the Heaphy Track through its website, track brochures, track and hut information and other reasonable means; and
   (b) monitor social interactions between users.

7. Amend the Kahurangi National Park Bylaws 2009 to insert a new definition: “Non-motorised vehicle’ means a vehicle propelled solely by human power and includes a mountain bike”. [Clause 3]

8. Amend the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan to insert a new definition: “Non-motorised vehicle’ means a vehicle propelled solely by human power and includes a mountain bike” [Glossary]

9. Request the Department includes information on its website, track brochures, track and hut information that motorised vehicles including electrically assisted bicycles regardless of power output are not permitted on the Heaphy Track or other mountain bike routes in the Kahurangi National Park.
APPENDIX 1: Submission topics summary and reference numbers

This is a summary of submissions by common words and topics. Topics are referenced in the report as [t xx]. For instance, [t1a] refers to all submissions under the topic heading ‘Extended season will enhance experience for all mountain bikers by: (a) Providing increased likelihood of better weather/longer daylight hours’.

A summary of submissions by submitter is provided in Appendix 2.

Support matters:

1. Extended season will enhance experience for all mountain bikers by:
   b. Allowing people to experience track in safer manner [7, 22, 24, 26, 31, 32, 41, 58, 80, 85, 87, 126, 127, 134, 136, 160, 163, 167, 168, 180, 182, 185, 188]
   c. Making track more accessible and achievable for a wider range of mountain bikers particularly family groups/tourists/schools/women/uni students/less able/less experienced riders [4, 7, 15, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 39, 50, 49, 51, 58, 72, 73, 74, 79, 80, 85, 87, 93, 95, 96, 98, 102, 103, 111, 112, 131, 134, 141, 142, 145, 149, 160, 163, 164, 167, 168, 175, 177, 183, 188]
   d. Opportunity for more people to enjoy the track & KNP values [44, 59, 60, 96, 112, 115, 119, 121, 129, 136, 137, 147, 185]
   e. Spreading the mountain biker user load & avoiding artificial peaks in cycle numbers and hut use [129, 142, 182]
   f. Mountain bikers brought a wider demographic into NZ outdoors [36, 153]
   g. Better allows for busy lives (i.e. 1-4 mountain bikers cf 4-6 walking) [4, 98]
   h. Providing greater flexibility in organising mountain biker trips [135]
   i. Enables a large recreational group to experience Park. Riders represent high % of track users [26, 65, 66]
   j. Good to have more access to trail to ride [18]
   k. Reducing mountain bike breakdowns due to mud damage [126]

2. Mountain biker & walker interactions
   a. Low walker numbers encountered [5, 34, 85, 165]
   b. Low walker numbers during extension period [180, 185]
   c. No conflict/difficulties sharing; common courtesy shown [6, 7, 29, 48, 93, 117, 121, 148, 154, 158, 177, 182]
   d. Hut experience more enjoyable to mountain bikers & walkers by having additional people [93]
e. If walkers don’t really want to share the track, they can walk in the prime summer months [15]

f. Conflicts/social impacts are/will be “minimal”/negligible [27, 32, 96, 113, 162, 174, 180, 185], and can be managed [162]

g. Potential conflict addressed in NZ & internationally by access codes; not a valid reason to limit mountain bikers [57]

h. Mountain bikers in NZ have little impact on other users, as are recreationally cf competition based [36]

i. Bikers generally considerate to walkers; walkers & bikers generally tolerant of each other [44, 45]

j. Mountain bikers valid; walkers & riders can successfully share/co-exist on a track [47, 112]

k. Amendment still gives walkers the 4 main months of summer [134]

l. Mountain bikers won’t displace, just complement or convert trampers; most common walker reaction is envy [188]

m. Extension creates opportunity for mountain bikers & walkers to learn to coexist, creating culture of tolerance [48]

n. Extension will lead to more mountain biker/walker encounters, nearly always trouble-free, slight risk not really significant [188]

o. Risk to trampers & mountain bikers needs to be compared to other backcountry risks & is manageable [65]

p. Potential mountain biker/walker conflict largely negated by hut bookings [80]

q. Generally, bikes & walkers can co-exist as long as choke points are recognised [88]

r. Encourage slower riding and warning methods on blind corners [188]

s. The pilot proved successful/outstanding & Recreation Analysis clear in its findings; there seemed to be no/little conflict between mountain bikers & walkers [92, 95, 105, 159, 174, 176]

t. May be unreported conflict &/or resentment; needs monitoring and preemptive management [176]

u. Mountain bikers with multi-day gear do not normally travel fast [97]

v. Track wide enough / well suited for both mountain bikers & trampers [97, 121]

w. Excluding Easter & heavy walker-use period reduces potential for user conflict [104, 113]

x. Existing & proposed conditions will limit adverse effects on values [113]

y. QET 8-month shared access well accepted / good balance [134]

z. For successful shared path example see Tamaki Drive on a sunny Sunday [188]

3. Extended season will spread park usage across longer period [27, 29, 30, 32] and with following benefits:

   a. Reducing congestion/ pressure on facilities e.g. huts [32, 33, 66, 73, 95, 141, 177]
b. Less riding in winter months, and better weather, will lead to less track damage & maintenance [30, 32, 33, 41, 49, 51, 73, 87, 88, 101, 104, 137, 141, 145, 175, 180]

c. Provides longer season for local businesses [27, 32, 41, 45]

d. Economic benefits [34, 35, 41, 45, 46, 68, 72, 73, 82, 86, 87, 96, 98, 115, 123, 127, 129, 134, 137, 142, 143, 146, 154, 158, 164, 165, 176, 180, 185]

e. Will strengthen “Top of the South” as a biking destination [143]

f. More hut fees and income for DOC [73, 79, 137, 188]

g. Increases Heaphy utilisation in periods when walking less popular [68]

h. Will optimise use of infrastructure/assets [41, 56, 64, 76, 121, 131, 158, 176, 180, 185]

i. Mountain biker hut usage will increase with more riders and longer stays [188]

4. Mountain biking popularity

a. Mountain biking & cycle tourism a growth sport [143, 182]

b. Tramping 9th most popular NZ recreation; cycling 3rd [176]

c. Mountain biking & cycling top activities in Tasman, helped by 4 great rides (Great taste, Dun Mtn, QCT, OGR) [164]

d. Tramping is old school and slow, mountain biking more fun [52]

e. NZ needs greater mountain bike development now [153]

f. Opening tracks like Heaphy has been pivotal in growing international interest in NZ mountain biking [36]

g. More people biking rather than tramping to get fit [83]

5. Mountain bikers have legitimate use status, so no need to prioritise with walking [162]

6. Sensitive, non-motorised use of public ownership trails should be the norm [21]

7. One of best mountain bike rides in NZ & rates well internationally, world class, one of very few multi-day without crossing a road [105, 137, 143, 170, 176]

8. QCT did have seasons, now removed; mountain bikers becoming more accepted [162]

9. Provides options to combine & spread mountain bike use with Old Ghost Road [1, 7, 34, 49, 72, 73, 87, 90, 98, 110, 117, 129, 142, 164, 176]

10. Most mountain bikers are environmentally aware [36]

11. Opportunity to impress visitors with importance of conservation [146]

12. Topography and distance make it a better ride than walk; GW but a greater ride [6, 188]

13. Track standard now more suitable for bikes & sustainable [5, 83, 96, 98, 174, 182]

14. Significant capacity for increased use [35]

15. Ecological impacts minimal [98, 113]

16. Oct-Nov wettest months, so no significant mountain bike season change [162]

17. Especially popular with heli drop-offs [31]

18. Tracks like Heaphy that are gazetted as public roads should have no restrictions on non-motorised access. [21]
Restriction, changes, conditions suggested:

19. Oppose amendment to 4.1.1.4(f) – should be limits on guided tours/ group size [22]
20. Remove unenforceable & nonsensical mountain bike group size limitation in
   4.1.1.12(3) [162]
21. Restrict mountain biker numbers during peak walking months [53]
22. Require mountain bikers to have tinkling bell as a warning of approach [29]
23. Require mountain bikers to pay towards upkeep of track – either by staying one
   night or paying track user fee/levy [40, 95, 139, 156], or paying higher hut fees [164]
24. Variations on mountain bike season
   a. Include Easter / no evidence in documentation to justify exclusion [1, 7, 159, 176]
   b. Consider walker numbers over Labour weekend and excluding 3 days from
      mountain biking [143]
   c. Provide year-round mountain bike access or as many months as possible
      [32, 34, 96, 164]
   d. Provide year-round mountain bike access, if necessary closing 26 Dec-05 Jan,
      or Dec-Jan, & Easter, or go consistent with trial recommendations 01
      March–30 Nov, excluding Easter [99, 142, 152, 162]
   e. Allow mountain biking over Easter, to increase visitor numbers [114]
   f. End season 31 October allowing 5 clear months for walkers only [53]
   g. Change to May to October season [81]
   h. Year-round except 1st week of each school holiday and Easter [158]
   i. Prefer 01 March to 15 December [170]
25. Facilities
   a. Rules for bikers should be on signs [85]
   b. Bike storage to protect bikes from kea [85, 164]
   c. Upgrade river crossings so all mountain bike friendly [7, 63]
   d. Concern about bikers’ pressure on MacKay Hut – perhaps need new or
      larger hut? [23]
26. Regarding snails
   a. Look after snails [40]
   b. Snail monitoring no longer needed; remove ref in 4.1.1.15(g) [162]
   c. Remove restrictions on riding at night [162]

Opposition matters:

27. Physical/environmental track issues
   a. A diverse & fragile environment [157]
   b. Mountain biking damages tracks, increases maintenance [28, 120, 124, 156, 169]
   c. Tracks laid with metal / hard track std, detracts from walking experience
      [124, 128]
   d. Track damage affects many, esp age 60+ walkers [139]
   e. Extending to Oct/ Nov which are typically wettest months will result in more
      damage to track surface and surroundings [86, 172]
f. More mountain biking benefits mountain bikers & off-track accommodation, but adds to track maintenance [94]
g. Lack of *Powelliphanta* since mountain biking[132]
h. Is track upgrade for walkers now a waste if mountain bikers are now main users [157]

28. Hazards and risks
   a. Mountain bikers pose hazard to walkers, esp children; stressful for parents; increased risk during busy tramping/mountain biking times [25, 28, 120, 128, 132, 140, 166, 171, 179]
   b. Have been knocked over twice by speeding mountain bikes on other shared-use tracks [161]
   c. Now few places to enjoy tramping without mountain bike risks [25]

29. Research
   a. DOC research not comprehensive enough to establish if biker/walker conflict [106, 116]
   b. DOC analysis narrow; no consideration to keeping separate different activities which impact on enjoyment of others [172]
   c. More research needed into practicalities of shared-use trails & effects on track standards and tramper and mountain bike use [183]
   d. What is the reduction of trampers during mountain bike season? [178, 179]
   e. Analyse who is using track over school holidays/Easter [13]
   f. Most marked effect would be mountain bikers transferring to the extended period, but no assessment of what increase in numbers and timing [91]

30. Revenue & sustainable business
   a. Hut revenue less from bikers; nil from single-day mountain bikers [94, 108, 125, 139, 156, 157, 178, 179]
   b. From sustainable business view it makes no sense to replace multi-night trampers with lesser-night mountain bikers [169, 179, 184]
   c. Return to DOC on investment from bikes likely lower than for trampers; note poor respect for OGR hut fees [172]
   d. Harder to secure concessionaire hut bookings [139]
   e. Marginalisation of guided walking concession; would seek DOC fees reduction [139]

31. April, October & November
   a. April is busy for walkers – negative impact on walkers if extend season during Autumn [81, 86, 87, 91, 172, 181, 183]
   b. April, Oct & Nov good tramping months; would become very busy with mountain biking. Oct reasonable, but not April & Nov [81, 100, 106, 139, 140, 155, 166, 169, 184], or just not April [91, 122, 181, 183]
   c. April (& Dec & Mar) are high use periods for Perry, MacKay & Heaphy huts, which are likely to disproportionally carry increased track traffic [181]
   d. Walker numbers increased over past summer season [156]
   e. DOC report IDs April as good hut occupancy month [91, 169, 172, 184]
   f. Keep school holidays mountain bike free [13, 161, 169]
g. Huts full of trampers during Easter/school holidays; mountain biking would ruin April as great family tramp [108, 125]

h. Extend date to last date on which Easter falls [13]

i. Have experienced almost full & full huts in Nov; adding mountain bikers will push trampers aside [128]

j. Would agree to 20 April to 01 Nov [122]

k. Oct, Nov & April was 47% of our guided people days [139]

32. Great Walk promotion

a. Will encroach too much on track as a Great Walk [108, 116, 125, 128, 161]

b. Promoting ‘Great Walk’ aspect makes better sense/consistency [86, 116, 172]

c. Heaphy, as a GW, is promoted to international visitors; these & NZs do not want peace & quite disturbed by mountain bikers [116]

d. Tourism NZ majority marketing now for shoulder season (Oct, Nov, Mar, April) [116, 169, 172, 184]

e. Heaphy is a Great Walk, not a great mountain bike ride; not the OGR; not part of NZ cycle network; more dangerous than QCT [139]

f. Promote track as one of best GW to tramp in winter [13]

g. Data suggests likely more walker demand in late summer/autumn; this consistent with overseas visitors to Te Araroa [181]

33. Walker & mountain biker interactions

a. “Minimal conflict” to DOC is most likely not ‘minimal’ to walkers [100]

b. Walkers avoid winter months because of mountain bikers [161]

c. More mountain bikers will affect walkers detrimentally; increased conflict as encounters rise [94, 166, 181]

d. A minority of mountain bikers forget to be courteous to trampers [122]

e. Retired/older walkers do not want to walk with mountain bikers [139]

f. Currently, mountain bikers & trampers hardly clash because of different times of year [108, 125]

g. Mountain bikers hogging accommodation; trampers slower getting to huts [124]

h. Unfair to walkers & potential walkers [116]

i. An extended mountain bike season would increase shorter mountain biker stays, resulting in overlaps of more bikers with trampers, lowering enjoyment for trampers and mountain bikers [181]

j. Premise of GPNP that NPs are places to slow down to nature’s pace; cycling not this & diminishes atmosphere for others [172]

k. Sharing huts with cyclist technology & talk is at odds with tramping [178, 179, 184]

l. Extending mountain bike season will push some trampers into the peak walking season, or away altogether [140, 178, 184]

m. Demographics of people using the track are diminished by allowing mountain bikers [184]

n. Impact of mountain bikers on great outdoors; Oct/Nov flowering trees & birdlife experience [116]
o. Capacity of huts & campsites a less determining effect than the effect on walkers & potential walkers [116]

p. A Heaphy highlight is meeting birds on the track; mountain bikers not necessarily there to experience this & too many mountain bikers would affect these meeting chances [169]

q. A walker would expect to be tolerant of mountain bikers on the OGR as it was first a mountain bike trail, but the Heaphy was not [122]

34. Will make Dec-Feb even busier [139]
35. Retain tramping times without mountain bikers and outside of peak tourism season [178, 179]
36. Longer extension seems to be a fait accompli [157, 169, 179]
37. Ban bikes altogether [28]
38. A poor reward for NZ trampers who contribute to conservation, made for revenue [178]
39. There are now many long-distance mountain bike tracks not there during the Heaphy mountain bike trial; promote more intensive use of these purpose-built tracks rather than on highly prized tramping tracks [169, 172, 181, 184]
40. Create more cycle tracks instead of turning tramping tracks into mountain bike ones [178, 184]

Other matters:

41. Surveys & monitoring
   a. Keep monitoring snails and physical/ecological impacts [2, 119]
   b. Keep monitoring social impacts [118, 119]
   c. Survey trampers to see what would attract them to the track [157]
   d. Need greater effort to collect track usage data [176]
42. Other alternative mountain bike opportunities
   a. Allow mountain bikers on Kepler Track outside Great Walk season [61]
   b. Encourage mountain bikers on Crown & Council land in exotic forest where effects essentially nil [94]
   c. Open further National Parks to seasonal mountain biking [34, 147]
   d. Open more tracks to mountain bikers [123]
   e. Allowing mountain bikes on Fenian and/or Oparara tracks during mountain bike season a better option [86, 154]
43. Engage with NZ Cycle Trails to explore Heaphy becoming NZ’s first Great Walk/Great Ride [164]
44. Continue to adhere to mountain bikers code & giving way to walkers [118, 183]
45. Do support efforts to increase track use [13]
46. Will provide increased opportunities to ride in one day [45, 48]
47. Huge commitment logistically to ride – limits type of people who want to ride [20]
48. Golden Bay Air note that April can be busy time for walkers, especially if Easter is close to ANZAC Day [45]
49. Mountain biker demand may shift from May & Sept to April & Nov [45]
50. Economic benefit below expectations [80]
51. Track wear/rutting from cyclists can be mitigated by alternative routes or better surfacing [88]
52. Charge tourists for NP entry [147]
53. Consult with mountain bikers about trail needs [153]
54. Hut use
   a. Encourage more shoulder season trampers by reducing hut price & having no mountain biking [157]
   b. Encourage older hut use via differential pricing [181]
   c. Promote use of less-used huts, via lower hut fees [157]
   d. Implement bivvy class accommodation; pay in advance but no booking, as an alternative to fixed hut bookings pushing visitors into bad weather [99]
55. Amendment silent on topic of e-bikes/motorised cycles; should prohibit &/or clarify policy [98, 99, 172, 183]
56. It’s a difficult ride & ramps up in bad weather; retain current track grading [98]
57. How will DOC manage mountain bikers straying into Easter, & managing the variable dates of Easter [98, 159]
58. Concessionaire mountain biker activity & hut use be limited [183]
59. Confirm that helicopter landings phased out & heli-biking prohibited [98, 183]
60. NZs & visitor use patterns changing; DOC & CBs need to adapt [21]
61. Make less use of NPMP amendments for operational changes; NPMP take considerable community effort & should be followed to full term [183]
62. Need national strategy for mountain biking on public conservation land, not current ad hoc [183]
63. Implement system to identify mountain biker or tramper use/hut stays [159, 176]
APPENDIX 2: Summary of submissions and responses to submissions by submitter

Abbreviations used in submission summaries:

CB – Conservation Board  
CMS – Nelson Marlborough Conservation Management Strategy  
DOC – Department of Conservation  
FNPMP – Fiordland National Park Management Plan  
GBW – Golden Bay Weekly newspaper  
GW – Great Walk  
Heaphy – Heaphy Track  
KNP – Kahurangi National Park  
MTBNZ – Mountain Bike New Zealand organisation  
mtb – refers variously to mountain bikes, mountain bikers, mountain biking  
NLNP – Nelson Lakes National Park  
NP – national park  
NZ – New Zealand  
OGR – Old Ghost Road  
SRR – submissions response report
APPENDIX 3: Hearings record

Kahurangi National Park Management Plan amendment 2016 – extending the mountain bike reason on the Heaphy Track – Hearings record

1 Introduction

This report provides a record of hearings into the Heaphy amendment to the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan held on 15 and 16 August.

The report identifies:
- submitters who were heard
- additional points made by submitters in support of their submissions
- responses provided by submitters to panel members

The report is based on notes taken by Poma Palmer and Sarah Smylie, Management Planners in attendance at the hearings. Panel members were invited to review these notes.

Panel members and advisors in attendance were the same for both days and as follows:

Panel:
- Bob Dickson, Operations Manager, Buller District (Chair)
- Greg Napp, Community Ranger, Takaka District
- Bob Dickinson, Nelson-Marlborough Conservation Board
- Mairangi Reiher, Nelson-Marlborough Conservation Board

Advisors:
- Jo Gould, Statutory Support Officer
- Poma Palmer, Management Planner
- Sarah Smylie, Management Planner

Ian Wightwick, Technical Advisor (Recreation) attended the hearing in Westport as an observer.

Andrew Lamason, Operations Manager, Golden Bay made his apologies for not being able to participate in the hearings owing to illness.

2 Monday 15 August, Motueka

2.1 Submitter #139 – Kahurangi Guided Walks

Submitter #139 was represented by Jennifer Kingston. In presentation the following additional points were made:
- Took over business a year ago. Has been working in business since 2007.
- Receive very few enquires for tramping over winter.
- Few bookings in January (grandparents busy).
- Has observed school holidays getting busier.
- Think 50/50 split mtb/ walking fair. I.e. extend season into October not April/ earlier.
- Considers it would be easier to exclude April rather than to have exclusions for Easter. Easier to remember – no excuse.
• Considers that mtb would detract/ change clients experience e.g. tyre marks in mud.
• 70% of clients are from NZ.
• Heaphy most valuable concession.
• Can understand desire of people to mtb both Old Ghost Road and Heaphy which makes an overlap in season necessary. This could be achieved in September and October.
• Notes that DOC receives good revenue from walkers who spend more nights on track. Very few guided mtb trips go through.
• Considers should be some usage fee of $20 on mountain bikers. Thinks that would get 80% payment.
• One of difficulties with securing concessionaire hut bookings is that can only book when have names and public are generally booking earlier (3 months + in advance). Suggested option of reserving beds to address this.
• Has observed that some backpackers are doing trips very quickly due to accommodation non-availability.
• Considers that amendment could significantly change their business – feels like concession being compromised. Posed question as to whether there is any consideration for reimbursement/ compensation?

The following points were made in response to questions:
• (How many trampers in a typical year) – Typical year would have 6 Heaphy trips per year with average group size of 4.
• (Were you aware that Easter is to shift to 2nd or 3rd week April?) – No but makes April even more of an issue.
• (How do clients react to presence of DOC vehicles on track?) – Probably detracts from experience but need explained.
• (What do you think about having a bell on bike?) – Possibly might help. Could hire from DOC.
• (What other concessionaires are operating on track?) – Bush and Beach and Southern Wilderness.
• (Have you put concession booking idea to other concessionaires?) – Not yet.

2.2 Submitter #159 – MTB Trails Trust
Submitter #159 was represented by Chris Mildon.
In presentation the following additional points were made:
• Supportive of DOC initiatives to use spare capacity on Heaphy.
• Track upgrades similarly appreciated.
• Suggest could get more hard date about mtb use at time of booking (tick box).
• Would like to see mtb use extended even further e.g. last week in every month. Also couldn’t figure out whether there was spare capacity in December/ January.
• Reinforced view that DOC research has shown that conflict ‘minimal’ and ecological and social impacts minimal.
• Unclear as to justification for Easter exclusion. Considers a bit exclusive.
• OGR demand possibly increasing demand for Heaphy.
The following points were made in response to questions:

- (Do you have published data on participation in mtb activity on grade 4-5 tracks?) – Little data nationally on grade 3-4. Local data focussed on grade 1-2. Nelson has reasonable number of grade 4-5 tracks.
- (How realistic do you think it is to apply results of May to September trial to extended season?) – Totally realistic; physical impact certainly less; conflict minimal.
- (Panel has heard that walkers experience on Heaphy may be affected by mtb. Any comment?) – Some recognition of issue. Valid perception -if there with mindset to expect mtb response would be different than if didn’t expect. Time may clarify the issue. Mtb to some extent ‘trampers on bikes’. All sharing the same space. Some mtb may not like sharing with walkers.
- (What are your thoughts on a mtb fee?) – Probably would be positive reaction from mtb.
- (What grade 4-5 tracks in Nelson region and has there been much evidence of conflict?) – Most conflict where mtb introduced to tracks previously solely walking e.g. Marsden Valley, Dun Mountain. Also conflict where non mtb come into mtb tracks.
- (Where conflict how is it being managed?) – Haven’t had to. Nelson City Council looking at hierarchy of use – prioritisation of users, yielding to others.
- (What does conflict look like on Dun Mountain?) – Perception rather than actual.
- (Do mtb want to get through quickly in one day?) – Early on in trial, number of people wanting to do in one day. Less now and clubs etc. are trying to discourage this to avoid conflict.
- (Would you get more 1 day riders if more daylight?) – Yes probably.

2.3 Submitter #143 – Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust

Submitter #143 was represented by Gillian Wratt.
In presentation the following additional points were made:

- Trust have vision of developing the top of the South as a cycling destination (Great Taste Trail, Dun Mountain Trail).
- Support extension.
- Emphasised Heaphy is a world class experience that adds to package in region.
- Not suggesting year-round access as Heaphy has been developed as a walk and to do so would create conflict. Shouldn’t rule out as a future possibility though.
- Studies show mountain bikers come to area, stay longer and pay more.
- Happy to consideration of exclusion over Labour Weekend.
- Nelson-Marlborough received Gold Star rating from International Mountain Biking Association (USA) along with Rotorua. Queenstown = silver.

The following points were made in response to questions:

- (Would there be displacement?) – Few people would walk over extended period.
- (Would it be difficult to manage exclusion – say over Easter?) – Potentially.
- (Is there any evidence that visitors are portable between Abel Tasman and Heaphy Tracks?) – Anecdotally – no stats.
- (Do you have any information on participation on grade 4 tracks?) – Nelson City Council have counter on Dun Mountain. No data otherwise.
• (Do you have any comment on grade 4-5 for Heaphy?) – Would say it 3-4.
  Technically easier than Old Ghost Road.
• (Would extension push usage to warmer months rather than increase usage?) – Think will get increased usage.

2.4 Submitter #181 – Stephen Prendergast
Submitter #181 presented via skype.
In presentation the following additional points were made:
• Support intent of increasing mtb season, conscious of impacts on trampers. Think that April may be too aggressive
• Considers Heaphy still well utilised by trampers particularly in March/ April.
• Opportunities to mtb elsewhere.
• High contention between mtb and trampers and will detract from people’s enjoyment.
• Mtb travel faster.
• Longer riding time means can ride past intended destination and put pressure on other huts possibly at expense of trampers who will travel more slowly.
• There are narrow portions of track e.g. Gouland Downs. If increase mtb will get continuous stream of riders.
• Mtb typically ride a similar line and this pushes walkers off that line.

The following points were made in response to questions:
• (Have you looked at the number of ‘overlaps’ of mtb groups that may occur for trampers? Not calculated. Will get catch-up and may get conflict at ‘overbooked’ huts.
• (What are your thoughts on increased daylight hours and impacts on people riding in one day?) – Only so many mtb would do as a one-day ride. Naturally self-limiting.
• (Do you have any suggestions as to what season you could support?) – 1 May to 1 November.

2.5 Submitter #171 – Lucy Meagher
Submitter #171 presented via telephone.
In presentation the following additional points were made:
• Declared interest – appointed to East Coast Conservation Board since making submission.
• Family made an April -May trip with last few days having mtb on track.

The following points were made in response to questions:
• (Did you experience any conflict?) - Experienced conflict with mtb. Some considerate, others rude and abusive saying walkers taking up mtb beds. Had to get her children to jump out of way of mtb.
• (What were reactions of children meeting mtb?) – Had some experience having done Queen Charlotte Track. Took on board parents direction to move out of way/ be cautious.
• (In your submission you say mtb season should start 1 May. Can you talk us though this?) – April better weather for tramping and ability to get leave. October is NCEA time so not so good a time for families to take time away especially teenagers.
• (Will you do again?) – Yes.
3 Tuesday 16 August, Westport

3.1 Submitter #116 – West Coast Branch, Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society

Submitter #116 was represented by Jen Miller.

In presentation the following additional points were made:

- Oppose extending season from 5 to 8 months.
- Considers that DOC has not put a case re: impacts on walkers.
- As a Great Walk, Heaphy plays an important function in introducing people to outdoors.
- National Park General Policy, National Parks Act and Kahurangi National Park Management Plan (KNPMP) emphasise the protection of national park values.
- Purpose of national parks is to experience what might experience on day walks and in areas where these normally occur. Not expect dogs, lots of people, mtb.
- National Parks are our cathedrals in absence of built heritage – this is a step too far.
- Referred to primary objectives in section 1.5 of KNPMP. They relate to …preserving in perpetuity… retaining essential character (quiet, remoteness) with qualifier that recreation only to be provided to an extent compatible with these objectives.
- Language in KNPMP seeking public experience involving reflection, sense of quiet/stillness, appreciation – will not get these experiences with mtb.
- Risk killing golden goose.
- Think proposal not consistent with philosophy of national parks, legislation or policy.
- DOC appears to be unclear as the effects of mtb over shoulder season.
- Note that DOC’s own leaflet emphasises walking.
- Don’t believe DOC research proves no impacts on walkers.

The following points were made in response to questions:

- (Re: 4th bullet re: conflict and 5th bullet. How can you reconcile?) – MTB currently occurring when low number of walkers. Considers DOC hasn’t made convincing case that the trial date justifies extended period.
- (Where does Forest & Bird consider it may be appropriate to have long distance mtb opportunities?) – Barron Track, Old Ghost but consider need to draw the line in terms of national parks. Not really DOC role to manage international visitors – that’s Government role. DOC doesn’t have to provide for all mtb.

3.2 Submitters #82 - (Karamea Community Incorporated) and # 154 (Iltamara Ltd)

These submitters presented jointly. Submitter #82 was represented by Clive Hellyar and Submitter 154, Paul Murray.

In presentation the following additional points were made:

Clive

- 2014 survey of local community wanted more cycling opportunities in region to derive economic benefit.
- Benefits of mtb on Heaphy not being realised as people exit Karamea quickly. Community needs to work on ways of keeping people in Karamea.
- Support extension of season.
- Posed question as to whether Heaphy could have future as all round MTB opportunity like above mentioned tracks.
Paul

- Only slight concern about extending season is that currently most people choosing to ride May and September. Fewer people at other times as perception that weather is bad at other times. Could we have a weather cam on hut – James Mackay?
- Observed 6 e-bikes to date coming off track.

The following points were made in response to questions:

Clive

- (Have you had any contact with mtb?) – Not personally.
- (How would Heaphy rate as a destination?) – High. Could link icon sites. E.g. Oparara Arches.

Paul

- (How would Heaphy rate as a destination?) – High.
- (Have you had any contact with mtb?) – Speak to mtb/ walkers staying at lodge. Received very little feedback re: conflict. One group of mtb had negative comments about another mtb group. Two groups seem to emerge (1) used to be trampers – new mode of transport, older (2) mtb – this group don’t seem to have ethic of tramping fraternity – don’t sweep huts etc.
- (How many people do you host?) – 4000 a year. About 1000 from Heaphy, of which 20% are mtb, and about 20% of mtb stay in Karamea. No other mtb opportunities in Karamea.
- (What initiatives do you take re: marketing Heaphy as a destination?) – Manage Heaphy Facebook page. Also heaphytrack.com (for 10 years). Promoting Heaphy as an in/out ride from Karamea – saves logistical issues.
- (Have you noticed people linking Old Ghost and Heaphy Trails?) – Yes. Provide transport between the two. Some mtb ride the 50km between the two.
- (You’ve talked about feedback from mtb, what info do you get from walkers/trampers?) – Trampers appear to have lots of time but little money (mtb reverse). First few years of trial ride seen as a challenge for one day, and 2 x 1-day. Now more family groups and people taking time. Still lots of people involved in tramping – is a different experience. Mtb more active, quicker, challenge - are not taking so much in. Can do a cycle/tramping combination experience.
- (What do you envisage being the effects of mtb behaviour with longer day lengths?) - suspect lots of riders in April-May, then October-November, with lower traffic in middle of season.
- (Would there be more one day riders?) – Yes, and would promote 1-day in/out from Karamea to Mackay Hut, plus other options.
- (What if tramping was the growth activity?) – trampers much more cautious about money, though some differ and are well-off.
- (Do you notice any differences in school holidays?) – Yes. Quality recreation time with families. All holidays busy in Karamea.
- (What about Easter & Labour weekend?) – Support Easter exclusion.
- (Have you observed an ANZAC weekend hump?) – Last busy weekend. Mainly Canterbury visitors. Last hurrah before winter.
- (Do you go mtb with clients?) – No as would need a concession. Not enough demand yet.
APPENDIX 4: Mountain bike tracks in national parks

Mountain bike tracks and/or shared-use tracks approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority to date are:

- The Poulter valley track in Arthur’s Pass National Park;\(^{29}\)
- The Wainui Bay-Gibbs Hill-Totaranui and Rameka-Wainui tracks within Abel Tasman National Park;\(^{30}\)
- The Franz Joseph and Fox Glacier valleys’ tracks within the Westland Tai Poutini National Park;\(^{31}\)
- The Heaphy, Flora Saddle to Barron Flat, and Kill Devil tracks within Kahurangi National Park;\(^{32}\)
- The beginning of the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail within Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, and a yet-to-be built track up the Tasman valley;\(^{33}\) and
- The Matemateāonga and Mangapurua/Kaiwhakauka Tracks within Whanganui River National Park.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{29}\) Arthur’s Pass National Park Management Plan, 2007 (as amended 2012), Department of Conservation, Christchurch.

\(^{30}\) Abel Tasman National Park Management Plan, 2008, Department of Conservation, Nelson.


\(^{33}\) Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan, 2004 (as amended 2012), Department of Conservation, Christchurch.

\(^{34}\) Whanganui River National Park Management Plan, 2012, Department of Conservation, Whanganui.
APPENDIX 5: Average monthly rainfall and temperatures for Karamea

APPENDIX 6: Heaphy Track mountain bike season 2016 – hut warden observations

As part of the 2016 Kahurangi National Park Management Plan amendment process for a Heaphy Track mountain bike season extension, the Heaphy hut wardens were asked to report on the number of walker and mountain bike users they encountered.

This data was collected for May-July 2016 and the reports can be found at DOC-2850319. The data was summarised by Eric de Boer, Senior Ranger, Recreation/Historic, Buller District.

Some observations:
- Both mountain bike and tramper use was stronger in the warmer months of May than in July.
- Use was affected by poor weather conditions or forecasts.
- There were some large tramping groups through, school groups, etc.
- There were often large number of walkers on the same days that bikers were present.
- There were several days where there were more walkers on the track than cyclists.
- Wardens reported no incidents of conflict.
- Many cyclists reported linking their Heaphy ride with other rides in the district, such as the Old Ghost Road.

From the analysis of the data provided by the wardens\(^{35}\)
- 59% of the use was from mountain bikers.
- 41% of the use was from tramper.
- Only 2% of mountain bikers encountered rode through in a single day.
- 58% of the monitored days there were more mountain bikers on the track than walkers.
- 42% of the monitored days there were more walkers on the track than mountain bikers.

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\(^{35}\) Not all inclusive; due to some not working weekends etc., but does give trend indications.

Data from DOC’s National Visitor Booking System on usage of the Heaphy Track from 2007-2015 has been analysed to assess possible displacement of walkers by mountain bikes during the May to September mountain bike season, which started in 2011.

The figure below shows visitors to the Heaphy Track during and outside the mountain bike season May to September, by number of nights booked. The data bears out the assumption that mountain bikers will mostly spend 1 or 2 nights on the track, as the number of 1 or 2 night bookings leaps during the periods the track was available to bikers. Walkers are likely to spend two or more nights, typically three or more.

There is limited evidence of a reduction in stays of 3 or more nights during the periods the track has been open to mountain bikers.

The table below shows the average number of booked visitors in April to September, before and after opening the Heaphy to mountain bikes, by number of nights booked. The change for 4 and 5+ nights is negative, but not statistically significant so (p values of 0.06 and 0.18 respectively). The bounds given indicate the values of change that are consistent with the data, given the limited number of years available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nights</th>
<th>Before 2011</th>
<th>After 2011</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Lower bound</th>
<th>Upper bound</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 night</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>+615</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 nights</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>+552</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 nights</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>+45</td>
<td>-46</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nights</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>-44</td>
<td>-91</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ nights</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>-86</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 8: Hut visitor use for April and October

8.1: Hut visitor use for April

Total daily use of Heaphy Huts for April 2012

Capacity of Perry Saddle, Gouland Downs, Saxon, James Mackay, Lewis and Heaphy huts

Total daily use of Heaphy Huts for April 2013

Capacity of Perry Saddle, Gouland Downs, Saxon, James Mackay, Lewis and Heaphy huts
8.2: Hut visitor use for October

[Charts showing visitor use for James Mackay Hut and total daily use for Heaphy Huts for April 2016 and October 2011]
APPENDIX 9: Daily Heaphy Track visitors (by bed-nights) from 2005 to 2016
(red = Easter Sunday, green = Anzac Day, blue = mountain bikers season)
APPENDIX 10: Demographic data for Heaphy Track visitors

The following graphs are derived from hut booking data from 2012 to 2016.

### Season 2015

#### Proportion of visitors by gender during mountain bikers season 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Proportion of visitors by age group during the tramping season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-35</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Proportion of New Zealanders who visited during the MTB season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Proportion of New Zealanders who visited during the tramping season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 11: Daylight and allowable mountain biking riding hours

Heaphy Track daylight hours and maximum mountain bike riding time periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sunrise and sunset data from [www.linz.govt.nz](http://www.linz.govt.nz) sunrise and sunset times July 2015- June 2016, using times for Wellington, being close in latitude to the Heaphy Track.

** Kahurangi National Park Bylaws 2009, bylaw 17B(2)(b), allows mountain biking for 30 minutes before sunrise and after sunset.

# The longest daylight hours date varies between 21 and 22 December.