

18 November 2022



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received 20 October 2022, in which you asked questions regarding track expenditure.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *What is the budget allocated for the Heaphy track this year for repairs?*

In February of this year Cyclone Dovi caused extensive damage to tracks in Buller District and the wider Western South Island Region as well as two other DOC regions - the Northern South Island, and Hamilton, Waikato and Taranaki.

In response to the Cyclone Dovi damage the Government approved recovery funding of up to \$8 million in Budget 2022 for repairing the DOC infrastructure damaged or destroyed across those three regions.

The Heaphy Track portion of this funding is for the replacement of the lost bridge across the Heaphy River and track remediation and a new hut water supply on the Heaphy Hut.

To date \$293,000 has been allocated for Heaphy Track recovery planning and design.

Further funding will be allocated for the replacement of damaged bridge and track once engineers' designs and final cost estimates are completed.

A section of track approaching the Heaphy River is closed due to the severe damage to the Heaphy Bridge in the February storms. There is currently no bridge over the Heaphy River. This section of the track will remain closed until the bridge is replaced.

Helicopter transfers over the Heaphy River are available over the closed section until track and bridge repairs are completed. This commercial service enables walkers and bikers to complete the entire track from end-to-end.

The Heaphy Track is open at both the West Coast and Golden Bay entrance/exits. All huts on the Track are open and bookable.

Visitors can walk from Brown Hut as far as Lewis Shelter on the eastern side of the track, and from Kohaihai up the Heaphy River valley to the site of the previous Heaphy River Bridge on the western side.



2. *How much income is being lost this year for the Heaphy?*

Before the partial closure, revenue of \$740,000 was budgeted for the Heaphy Track for the business year ending 30 June 2023. The actual revenue from this season is estimated to be approximately \$163,000 representing a forecast revenue loss of \$577,000 for the coming year.

3. *What is the budget for the Paparoa Track this year?*

The operating expense budget for the Paparoa Track is \$431,705 for the current financial year ending 30 June 2023.

4. *What was it last year?*

For the year ended 30 June 2022 it was \$466,705. The difference relates to a change in the rostering and shifts of wardens at the huts for this season.

5. *What is the budget for Welcome Flat (Copland) track this year?*

The operating expense budget for the Copland Track is \$85,120 for the current financial year ending 30 June 2023.

6. *What was it last year?*

The budget for the year ended 30 June 2022 was \$85,120, the same as the current year.

7. *How much has been lost in income due to Covid on this track?*

Forecast revenue from the Copland Track for the current financial year ended 30 June 2023 is \$72,178. This is not materially different from previous years.

Actual revenue for the Copland Track was \$69,585 for the financial year ended 30 June 2022, \$89,939 for the year ended 30 June 2021 and \$74,624 for the year end 30 June 2020.

8. *What is the budget for other front country walks on the West Coast and has this overall gone up or down, compared to the past few years?*

The operating expense budget for all Western South Island Region front country sites is \$1,217,963 for the current financial year ending 30 June 2023. This includes all visitor facilities at these sites and campgrounds.

It was \$1,410,963 for the year ended 30 June 2022. The decrease is due to the lower visitor numbers at many of the front country visitor sites over the last two years with the border restrictions in place meaning less servicing and maintenance was required. Now that the border is fully open and international visitors are returning, we will be looking at the servicing requirements and cost as we move into this summer season depending on the level of visitors.



9. *Is less maintenance being done on some walks? Such as Croesus, Bain Bay, One One at Hari Hari?*

Tracks are maintained to their service standard level dependent on the visitor group and visitor numbers i.e. lower use of tracks can result in less maintenance being done. The maintenance relates directly to the amount of work needed to meet the service and maintenance standard rather than an intention to spend less.

10. *Are any front country walks not being maintained? If so, which ones?*

As per our response to question 9, less work has been done at sites where visitor numbers are lower over the last two summer seasons due to COVID impacts. This directly relates to the need to maintain rather than an intention to spend less.

All front country sites are maintained to a service standard level dependent on the visitor group and level of use. Some have been closed due to visitor safety related reasons. Those currently closed will remain closed until this work is completed (to address slips, track erosion, tree fall, etc). The current closed tracks are:

Gibson's Beach Track
Bain Bay Walk
Cockayne Nature Walk
Fox River Caves Track
Charming Creek (partial)
Britannia Track
Denniston Bridle Track

Further information about the current state of these closures can be found on our website at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/west-coast/>

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā

Mark Davies
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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai