

Minutes Ruahine User Group Meeting, 7.00pm Monday 21 September 2015
DOC Office, 28 North Street, Palmerston North

Present: Ian Patterson (NZDA Manawatu), Mike Charlton, Vince Payne (Ruahine NZDA), Darryl Huia (Central Districts Hunting Club), Anne Lawrence (PNMTC & Wellington Conservation Board), Janet Wilson (PNMTC & RWP), Jean Garman (MTSC) , John Beech (MTSC), Jamie Stewart (FMC).
Attending for DOC: Allanah Irvine (Acting Conservation Partnerships Manager); Rod Smillie (Conservation Services Manager)

Apologies: Julie Mackie (NTC), John Montgomerie (Heretaunga Tramping Club), Derrick Field (LNIHG), Susan Lopdell (Heretaunga Tramping Club), Chris Tocker (Tramper), Ross Whitelock (Central Districts Hunting Club).

1. Welcome & introductions
2. Apologies · As recorded above
3. Minutes from last meeting (DOCDM-2548367) and Matters arising

Minutes confirmed.

4. Update on DOC realignment

DOC has been working to improve the organizational model put in place in September 2013. The focus has been on continuing to work with others to achieve more for conservation while ensuring there is clear accountability for decision makers and clear processes. As a result of this work, some changes are being made.

- A new Operations group is being created which will include all Conservation Services staff and those Partnerships staff working on local engagement (ie. with the RUG group). There will be a smaller dedicated Partnership team focused on significant nationally prioritised conservation growth opportunities .
- The Lower North Island (LNI) region boundary is staying the same. However, there are some changes to DOC boundaries in other parts of the country. The districts within the region are also staying the same – the Ruahine Forest Park will continue to be managed from Palmerston North. The Tararua Forest Park will continue to be managed from Masterton.
- The Director of Operations in the LNI will be Reg Kemper. Reg is currently the LNI Partnerships Director and prior to that was the Manager for Te Anau area. Appointment process for operations managers is occurring at the moment.
- The changes take effect from mid-November. DOC will update the RUG website when there is further information.

5. WARO – Review of Ruahine

Rod reported on the meetings held in Palmerston North and Upper Hutt. Mike Slater, DOC Deputy DG, Operations, will be making the decision.

Action Point: Rod to get the key changed on the map online.

Action Point: Rod to advise via RUG website when decision has been made.

6. CMS

Allanah provided a brief update on the review of the Conservation Management Strategy. DOC Management Planners are working on the document, given all of the submissions. There are workshops being scheduled with the Wellington Conservation Board Sub-Committee to work on specific components. The notification date extension from November into early 2016 (ie. March) discussed is to be confirmed. When it is confirmed RUG as a whole and individual members will be advised.

Allanah suggested that when the draft does come out there could be value in RUG members (excluding DOC) having a specific meeting to discuss the draft and submission proposals. Although DOC couldn't be an active participant, DOC would be happy to make the Palmerston North meeting room available.

Jamie (FMC) provided some comments on FMC's belief that there was a lack of detail in some other CMS and also emphasized the importance of community members ensuring there was a clear and strong connection between the draft CMS and the Conservation General Policy. See: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-policies-and-plans/conservation-general-policy/>

7. Huts and Tracks Funding Round

Jamie Stewart from FMC provided an update on the Huts and Tracks Funding opportunities. Jamie advised that Huts and Tracks organization have received \$500,000 this year. Applications are now invited for funding projects. Applications close on 31 November. However, Jamie stressed that applications will be considered as they are received so if you've got a funding idea get in an application now so you don't miss out. Details are at: <http://hutsandtracks.org.nz/>

8. Huts:

DOC-managed

Rod commented there hadn't been a lot of work on huts since the last meeting as it has been winter months. Focus was on planning for the summer.

A-Frame: It was noted that there has been some damage to (window smashed; fire in the middle of the hut). Action Point: Rod to get his team to address.

Community managed

Gold Creek (MTSC): Rat bait has been put in and they are hoping to put a new long-drop in over summer.

Cattle Creek (Ruahine NZDA): skylight still to do on the verandah – just waiting for the opportunity.

Kiritaki (Ruahine NZDA): noted it was quite wet on the far wall window. Rod confirmed the Hut is scheduled to be painted this summer.

Heritage Lodge (Manawatu NZDA). Work started on the steps. Rat stations installed.

Website: Rod and Allanah noted that we are keen to update a number of website pages, as they are desperately in need of it. We're also keen to ensure that where huts are managed by volunteers that this is noted on the website [NB: express permission will be gained before adding any club or individual names]. Please send your photos, corrections or additional information to

Manawatu@doc.govt.nz<mailto:Manawatu@doc.govt.nz> .

Alert re inspections: clubs emphasized they are very keen to have the information from inspections of their huts when the inspection is done so that they can plan their work and keep the hut in the best shape possible. Action Point: Rod to ensure this information is shared.

9. Tracks and Roads

DOC-managed

No Mans Road has been trimmed. The Ballot occurred last week and was really popular. 100km of track is planned to cut this year. No. 1 line has just be done. Work programme is set so that when track cutters reach huts the hut will get a spruce up also. Of note, Shutes Biv; Ruahine Corner; Colenso; Iron Bark; Deerford Loop; Takapari Road to Tamaki (Mike noted this wasn't particularly urgent and DOC could consider reprioritizing that); Pohangina likely to be done later in the year.

Community-managed

No updates.

Poh (Pohangina Hut) Bridge

Janet and Anne noted PNMTTC Committee is seeking expressions of support, including in-kind or financial, from other clubs that support a new Poh Bridge. There was discussion about what DOC agreement would need to be made – Allanah confirmed it would be a 'level three' agreement. DOC confirmed any new bridge would take on responsibility for inspections and was happy to provide this in a letter [Janet/Anne to let Allanah know when letter is required].

There was some discussion about an appropriate legal entity and the possibility of a specific legal entity being set up.

Jamie noted some concerns about a plethora of high risk structures being taken on (or explored) by FMC membership. He believed Poh Bridge should be more of a conversation about DOC safety project for its biodiversity volunteers.

There was some discussion about an alternative route to make the crossing safer. Action Point: Rod to consider and explore alternative route, even on a temporary basis.

Other

Allanah noted DOC had received an application from Hawkes Bay Mountain Bike Club for their annual ride to Sunrise Hut to take place on 22 November. DOC is confirming the neighbouring landowner is supportive prior to giving permission.

10. Access

Sunrise: plan still progressing and being finalized.

Western access: DOC, Rangitikei DC and Walking Access Commission had a meeting last Thursday and are working well together to develop a coherent and targeted plan of engagement.

11. Biodiversity

Ruahine Whio Collective

Janet explained that a management plan for whio in the Ruahines has been developed and is nearing completion. All of the volunteer groups involved have formed a collective and agreed to meet twice a year.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved so interested persons should get in contact with Janet. In particular, Oroua Pohangina group are looking to expand from Longview to Leon Kinvig. The group applied to the Ruahine Whio Protectors Trust and got money. There is a real focus on engaging the community to increase awareness and education. Still very keen on sightings of whio being reported – there are some laminated posters available. The information will be put into whio manager.

Te Potae line is going ahead as it has also received funding. Volunteers welcome to register their interest with Rod (in his personal capacity).

War on Weeds

Minister has announced a 'War on Weeds'. This is essentially an exercise to increase awareness and efforts towards getting rid of weeds. Twelve specific target weeds have been identified and they include OMB and Wilding Pine. See <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/war-on-weeds/> for more information.

DOC really appreciate the feedback we get from RUG members and others when they see weeds of concern and report it to DOC – please keep up the contact.

Rod noted it was particularly valuable for people to:

- i) keep an eye out on the first five hundred meters of track as you go onto PCL, as this is where weeds from other places could come off your boots and settle;
- ii) To ensure your boots are cleaned between tramping trips to avoid spreading weeds between places.

Dog Access

Rod noted the anomaly regarding hunting dog rules in the Ruahines being different on the west and eastern side. Rod is keen to get rules in place that make sense. There was discussion about: the need to have plenty of lead in time for people to be able to comply with whatever decision; the need to ensure that any requirements re aversion training could be met by humane local training options; and that aversion training for who would be particularly relevant.

12. Next meeting

Agreed the next meeting would be on Monday 15th February 2015 at 7pm in Dannevirke. Specific location and address to be advised.

Meeting closed.