

Minutes Ruahine User Group Meeting, 7.00pm Monday 26 September 2016

Smallbore Rifle Club, Dannevirke

Present: Lex Smith (HTC), David Mulinder (Ruahine NZDA, HTC), John Montgomerie (HTC), Julia Mackie (NTC), Janet Wilson (PNMTC & RWP), Jean Garman (MTSC), Anthony Behrens (FMC, RWP, PNMTC) Ian Patterson (NZDA Manawatu), John Beech (FMC and MTSC), Phil Glasson (Parawai Tramping Club, FMC); Wayne Jacobsen (volunteer/tramper); Sheryl Bayliss (Tramper); Dan Eldercamp (CHB Forest & Bird); Mike Charlton (Ruahine NZDA); Vince Payne (NZDA); Chris Tocker (Tramper), Nicola Henderson (Walking Access Commission), Rod Smillie (Walking Access Commission)

Attending for DOC: JJ Rasmussen (Senior Ranger - Chair), Allanah Irvine (Operations Manager, Manawatu), Reg Kemper (Operations Director, Lower North Island), Dave Carlton (Operations Manager, Hawkes Bay)

Apologies: Derrick Field; Chris Tocker; Glenda Hooper

1. Welcome & introductions

2. Apologies

- As recorded above

3. Minutes from previous meetings (CM-2826663) & matters arising and not covered elsewhere

- Aranga Hut – DOC still to advise re ownership of land (**Action: JJ** to advise John B) – ongoing
- Ratbait – send JJ an email and he will action any ratbait requests jrasmussen@doc.govt.nz
- DOC – Topo map action carried over. **Action: Ken** to follow up – on-going
- Photos of Top Maropea post repile to be posted – anyone that has photos
- Tree at Te Ekaou Hut – in the DOC work plan for October
- Flashings at IronGates – has been programmed to be completed at same time as rest of track is being cut
- Action re text on websites “this hut is maintained by..” on-going **Action: JJ** to complete
- Discussion re heli-operators – work in progress.
- HTC re Waikamaka engagement with RDC – **Action: JJ and John M** agreed to progress off-line.
- Action re PF Olsen Kashmir road - on-going **Action: JJ** to provide update
- Action re-sign on the range at Heritage – underway. **Action: JJ** to progress.

4. Improvements of the RUG function

John Beech explained he thought the RUG function was working well had some initial discussions with others about what improvements could be made to make it even better. In particular, Permolat seemed to function quite well. John also noted it would have been really good to have the bids that went into the recreation consortium shared by the applicants with the RUG group but this didn't happen. Following this context from John there was a lot of positive discussion. There was an overall impression that sharing information and knowing what was happening was good, including the updates that come through from DOC, and that it would be good to know when people could help out or join in on different maintenance trips and tasks, including hut painting. It was noted RUG had been initially established in a basic form and that at the time it was set up there was a view that it would evolve over time. A suggestion of a Trust (as per one aspect of Permolat's operating model) was made but there was consensus that although RUG may evolve to that it was not necessary for a Trust at this time. Support was given for DOC continuing to provide the chair and draft the agendas/notes for the meeting. John noted that he could talk with Permolat about possibly having more information on their website re hut information etc. There was agreement that John should continue to look at options and report back at the next meeting. **Action:** to be included as an agenda item for next meeting

5. CMS

Allanah advised the revised CMS was now scheduled to be released for public review in late December/early January. The due date for submissions would likely be mid to late March. Allanah undertook to advise, via the RUG website, when the CMS was publicly notified.

6. Review of field centres update

The proposal to move the two positions based on Onga onga to Palmerston North was discussed at the Ruahine User Group meeting on Monday 26th September. Reg Kemper, LNI Director Operations attended to speak to the group and hear their concerns directly. He acknowledged that engagement with the RUG group earlier would have been desirable.

The group identified key aspects they value about having DOC staff based in Onga at the moment. These were:

- Ability to respond to local emergencies:
- Providing a first point of contact for tourists and local trampers, volunteers;
- Current staff member provides a familiar face for current volunteers and is familiar with farmers;

- Current staff member holds strong institutional knowledge and immense knowledge of the huts/tracks/biodiversity etc on eastern side;
- Existing users have feel there is a high trust environment with current DOC Staff
- They also identified the impact of the closure of the base on the place of Onga onga.
- The meeting expressed an opinion that it should be more cost effective (ie cheaper) for the Eastern Ruahines to be serviced from a central location on the eastern side than to service the area from Palmerston North.
- The groups also expressed some convenience of having the base over there when working on volunteer projects e.g. huts/tracks, biodiversity etc. Very useful when collecting gear, dropping off long drops, bringing out rubbish.

The group also identify the characteristics of what they believe consists of a good DOC-user relationship. This included:

- Stability and continuity;
- Staff with relationships and knowledge of the people and places (ie. a high level of 'street cred');
- Goodwill on both sides;
- When the user groups can engage and work with the staff members who are actually doing 'the work';
- The provision of good service eg. responding quickly to requests etc.

The group also expressed a view that DOC's closure of the base discredits the publicly stated aim of DOC to establish positive working relationships with the community and potentially destroy the relationships.

7. Huts and Shelters – work undertaken and planned

Thanks to those that are posting updates on the RUG site – this is interesting.

DOC managed

JJ provided an update, as listed below.

- Huts Triple X and Waipawa fireplaces almost in just a bit of extra flu to go in.
- Sunrise toilet windwall delayed due to snow will be done as weather and other work allows
- Irongate roof work has been included in the work programme for when we will be there doing the rest of the track work. Thanks for alerting us to the problem.
- Monthly and bi-monthly checks of huts and road-ends is continued

Community managed

- NZDA - have done the meatsafe and other work at Forks Hut and Te Ekaou Hut. Will do decking at Heritage over the coming summer.
- PNMTTC – Mid-Poh and Ngamoko nothing to report.
- Janet - sought feedback on changing the fire at Leon Kinvig from an open to a closed fireplace. Someone noted that Derrick Field may have ideas. Mike noted that there was no need to retain all of the open fires as long as some were retained (eg. Waterfall). JJ noted that no changes to fireplaces could be made at the historic huts.
- Rec consortium – John B noted a bid had been put into the rec consortium to do some work on Toka Biv. John noted the rec consortium are focused on funding like for like and the bid was for a larger porch. Someone noted that the sparrowhawk biv was a nice comparable model to work from.
Action: John or JJ to post pics on RUG site for comments.
- HTC – Waikamaka Porch is due for work in November.
- John B – Gold Creek now has a new long drop.

Other

- **Wardens:** Allanah noted that the summer volunteer warden programme was underway again and welcome any involvement from clubs or club members. A request for warden information to be posted on the RUG site.
Action: Allanah to post information.
- **Bookings:** Allanah noted the discussion at the June meeting re Sunrise and Rangi Huts going on the booking system and that the proposal was to put it through the system for a decision based on the same approach as the Jumbo-Holdsworth bookings. Welcome any further feedback from the RUG group. There was some discussion re the need to manage conflict and the maintaining the value of the annual back country hut pass. There was also a request for PNMTTC to be consulted separately due to their specific relationship with Rangi Hut. **Action: Allanah** to update the RUG on progress
- **Minimal maintenance:** some discussion. **Action: JJ** to circulate list

8. Tracks and roads – work undertaken and planned

DOC managed

- Kasmir Road – thanks for feedback. Contractor has inspected and provided quote. Feedback sought on whether or not the last 600m (or so) needed to be road or could be left as a track. There wasn't a strong view either way – just whatever made the most sense from a cost perspective.
- Takapari Road – have let Council know about some conditions. Also pricing up some work.
- There was a discussion on snow damage that had been observed by members. Daphne Track – last quarter of an hour is quite damaged due to snow (ie. 200-300m from the top). Daphne Spur to Howletts is 'as clean as a whistle'. Quite a bit of snow break from Parks Peak to Totara Spur (900m-1500m).
- There was a discussion on the track cutting schedule, following on from some concern re operating on a six year cycle. JJ noted the track-cutting plan has been developed (JJ, Ken and Tim) and that from his perspective, a four year cycle was preferable and a one in six was not ideal but that the team were doing the best they could with resources. It was noted that some of the mountain tracks could be cut on a longer rotation due to slower growth. Key point was to keep them there so they could always be re-opened in time.

9. Access

- A brief update was provided on access situation at: Sunrise, Kawhatau, Purity, Pohangina, Happy Daze, Mokai, Makaroro River, Oroua. As per previous, the update was provided in-confidence. The great support of two Walking Access Commission Reps at the meeting (Nicola and Rod) and in the discussions with landowners was acknowledged. Rod (WAC) noted that H&S liability is something that they had information on see: <https://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/walkways-and-access/frequently-asked-questions/health-and-safety-responsibilities-of-farmers-to-recreational-visitors/>.

10. Biodiversity

- Whio – Janet see report (handed out and on the RUG site) re whio sightings – appreciate all the reports. The new line is half way in. Hopefully get it all out in the next few weeks.
- Goats – JJ noted the contractors had been locked in for the goat control work in the southern section and north-eastern section of the park.

- Contorta – discussion on contorta. JJ explained the focus is on the tussock land. Dave Carlton noted there was a need to hold the line on the kawekas and there was a bid in and some will be used to protect the Ruahines.

11. Other Items

Candle holders – John M noted the candle height at x hut was causing damage to the roof and he moved it down the wall when he was there.

12. Next meeting date:

Proposed to meet at 7pm Monday 20 February at DOC's office, 28 North Street, Palmerston North.

Meeting closed.