**Ruahine User Group Meeting Notes**

**20 July 2020, 7.00-10pm,**

*Lower North Island Regional Office, 28 North Street, Palmerston North*

Present: Joe? (Carterton), Lisa Whittle (Wgtn Apias/Ikawatea Traplines), Rick ? (Walking Access Commission), Kevin Ross (Walking Access Commission Whanganui based), Ian Patterson (Manawatu NZDA), John Montgomery (Heretaunga Tramping club), ? Smith(?), Matt Short (Hastings HBRC), James Stewart (?), Dan Elderkamp (CHB F&B W Conservation Board), Warren Wheeler (PNTMC), Julie (PNTMC), John Beech (MTSC FMC), Mike Charlton (Ruahine NZDA), Jean Garman (Manawatu Tramping Club), Fiona Burliegh (Palmy Pine Pulling Posse), Anthony Behrens (Palmy Pine Pulling Posse), Janet Wilson (RWP PNTMC), Dan Tuohy (Chair), Moana Smith-Dunlop (Operations Manager, Anna Atchley (Community Ranger), Stephen Robson (DOC Supervisor Bio), Sharon Alexander (notes).

Apologies: David Muliner (HTC).

(Items highlighted in yellow are actions, items highlighted in green are decisions)

No questions arising from the last meeting (March 2020).

**Summary of actions/decisions from this meeting:**

1. ACTION: Moana to speak with Ash (Works Officer) to determine what the type of access is in the design of Sunrise carpark upgrade.
2. ACTION: Moana will request an inspector to review the slips and establish why the signs are up closing the Coppermine tracks. Track has been inspected by DOC inspector and a list of work orders was compiled, see Appendix
3. ACTION: Nobby will have a look at Tremaine Avenue for spare parts for the Corker cooker at Barlow. There are no spare parts for this cooker at the Tremaine Ave worksite
4. ACTION: Dan to check if a works order is in place for the replacement cooker. Works Order in the system to source spare parts and repair cooker - 4942110
5. ACTION: Dan to put a call out with other DOC offices for cookers parts and/or contact the Foundry.
6. ACTION: Dan to share Sunrise hut bookings issues with Christina in admin team.
7. ACTION: Focus group (Kevin, John, Jean, Dan, local hunter) to prepare a planning meeting for the meeting with the Rangitikei Council. Meeting is happening on Tuesday 22nd September at 4pm
8. ACTION: Nobby to contact a local hunter to join this focus group. Done, there was not interest from local hunters, but it was mentioned to ask Allison Dorrian (ex DOC worker and landowner of the farm at Kawhatau road end)
9. Kawhatau focus group will provide RUG members a monthly progress email as describe in these notes.
10. ACTION: Dan/Sharon, to ensure Community update is included in all RUG agendas. Done
11. ACTION Janet to call the DOC office to get Mark’s contact details for Mid Poh access.

**Review of Actions from the last meeting:**

1. Group to chat to their relevant groups about potential projects that could be done through the BCT.
The group came up with a list of projects that was placed online for input.The list has been collated and forward back to Peter Wilson in BCT and has now been prioritised and provided to DOC (see Appendix Two).

A question was asked around the money for bidding (jobs for the environment) seeking ideas around what sort of monies that will be allocated or discussed. Jamie advised that this is still above the clouds; the list looks extensive based on the work that does need to be completed.

1. DOC to contact the farmer about access/locked gate at Master’s Road End. DOC is planning to go up next month for a maintenance trip and will be talking to the farmer on access. Track work completed.
2. For the group to provide suggestions or comments on the proposed Sunrise carpark upgrade and/or what to do with the closed Coppermine tracks. The comment was made that from a RUG meeting approximately three years ago we thought this was set in concrete with the designs all completed. The issue was mainly around ensuring buses will be able to turn around. The plans are being reviewed.

Currently this work is now sitting with the Works Officers and will be through to completion.

It was noted there are significant frustrations with the time it has taken to get this work compete.

Warren shared that the road 200-400 yards before the carpark is not up scratch. It was queried whether DOC was aware of this and if so, what is happening for this issue to be rectified. DOC is talking with the Central Hawke’s Bay District Council about road maintenance.

ACTION: Moana to speak with the Works Officer to determine the type of gates/cattle stops that will be installed as part of the project. Will the bottom carpark be available for emergency parking? It’s still part of the road; no thoughts have been discussed about that.

Warren questioned why Coppermine track is closed. Mike took five people on the loop that we couldn’t find the “slips”. ACTION: Moana will request an inspector. Moana advised that DOC like to loop some of the tracks, however consultation will be required or alternatively we could look at downgrading the track to a route for more casual usage.

1. Mike Charlton to talk with Ken Mills re the spare part required for Barlow Hut cooker.
ACTION: Nobby will have a look at Tremaine Avenue for spare parts. It was mentioned that Shaun was looking at pricing for replacement cooker. What is the status with the fireplace at Barlow? Its been like that for the past two to three years. ACTION: Dan to check if a works order is in place. May need to replace the whole fire if we can’t get a cooker top replacement. There were no objections with this suggestion. Alternatively, ACTION: Dan could put a call with other offices for parts or contact the Foundry.

**Recreation and Historic Update**

Since COVID, huts maintenance, track and roading work has been undertaken: Sunrise Hut, Longview Hut, Ruahine Hut, Pohangina Base, Manawatu Gorge walking tracks, Kashmir road, plus another 53.1 km of tracks cut, (refer to the report that was handed out at the meeting for details). Wrong time of year for external painting however Longview needs a paint. Place on your radar, the vaulted toilet as this was replaced by a long drop. Vaulted toilets are more friendly to the environment and at this facility, could the vaulted toilet be reinstated. Would there be any interested in this room if DOC supplied paint. Scaffolding would be needed for the repainting of huts in the coming summer.

Pohangina Base is now bookable online, although there are some problems with the online service. ACTION: Dan to share this feedback with the admin team.

Tawa Loop has a capital bid submitted due to the number of slips that has occurred there. The track designers will be coming up with plan.

Additional money was available to DOC from the Government as part of the action plan from COVID economic recovery. A lot of work has been completed due to this additional funding.

Manawatu Gorge - Mike commented that the metal flown into the Gorge is now spread out, it’s a nice job. It was a new contactor who completed this job.

Parks Peak Ridge to Barlow’s Track needs to be reviewed at – it may have been disconnected although James Stewart was querying as they have the maintenance contract however the tracks are too bad for their Walking Access Commission’s responsibility. These contracts also need extending as they have expired.

Council to maintain the public roads, however we are still to talk with the landowner and whether he is also happy to contribute with the Council to take on this work?

***Plan for next three to four months:***Rangiwahia Hut maintenance, more Service Hut visits, potential visit to Top Maropea Hut for historic maintenance, another 2-3kms of track maintenance for the Manawatu Gorge, and 50km of back country track cutting.

**Walking Access**

Kawhatau Access

Access through the old road is currently unavailable.

There is however a legal unformed road. That takes you to the Ruahine Forest Park. This track is known as the Six-Foot track is used by locals.

Thorough planning is required with all parties WAC, DOC, RDC, RUG members and a local representative. A plan with all options needs to be developed. This was agreed around the table, including that we do need to focus on one access area at a time until it has been determined whether the access change is a a solution that can be achieved or if it should be deferred until off before moving to the next access area.

It was also recommended to have some community people in the team. Rick stated that we do need to get the Council involved earlier in the planning. The river route is supposed to be accessible in the summer, which is a more direct route. Kevin advised that the Walking Access Commission has had this problem on their books since 2009 so it needs addressing with possible options for negotiation.

We need to know for example, how long will the current track survive in its current state; if the track is on the road is it the council’s responsibility; who is picking up liability for health and safety regulations and other legal requirements. It was asked about poling a new route; however, this option will also need to be completed in the right way as other groups will question why we haven’t engaged with them and may have differing views on who/what is correct.

A focus group needs to be set up. It was suggested representation will be from the Walking Access Commission, a couple of RUG participants, a councillor from the Rangitikei area, a DOC representative. The group will work on a strategy and a plan which will determine options and responsibilities.

At present different user groups want different track alignments this needs to be resolved before a solution can be implemented.

ACTION: Focus group to plan a planning meeting for the meeting with the Rangitikei Council (Kevin, John, Jean) with options and solutions including a summary of where we have been and where we could go. ACTION: Nobby to contact a local hunter to join this focus group. A fixed set time needs to be agreed around each of the options as well as a recommendation as to whether this is process or not.

Mokai Patea access has recently changed ownership. Kevin is also working on a plan for renegotiating access; however we will concentrate on Kawhatau access first. The Kawhatau focus group will provide RUG members a monthly update on where things are at

Quickest route to the cableway is the most preferable option

Have discussions with the farmer regarding options and determine his preferences

Discussions options with the farmer who brought the bush block.

Keeping in mind that we need an option that is good and fast and understand the correlation between costs.

**Community Group Updates**

ACTION: Dan/Sharon, this segment needs to be added to all agendas.

Forks Hut, Pohangina - Ian NZ Manawatu, shared that the hut has been washed, spouting cleared, water tank maintenance completed, and that the hut will need a paint soon (they will need a petrol water blaster).

Miles and Mike reported that the hut at the top of the Gorge there was a leaking roof, this has been replaced.

Awatere Hut - Janet informed the forum that the Trust’s financial officer reported that they didn’t received any funding from the public. In addition, the Trust has determined that they will not be rolling over the community agreement for Rangiwahia Hut.

It was commented that the RUG members have been previously advised by DOC that if a hut got less than 100 nights, then the maintenance will stop, however they have since discovered that this is not true. Comment was also made there appears to be work occurring without community agreements.

No work can occur on public conservation land without an agreement in place. If you wish to undertake work on public conservation land, please get in touch with DOC to set up an agreement

Ongoing conversations on expanding the traps in the Northern Ruahine are happening. Geoff and Lisa Whittle have done over 50 trips in the last seven years. There is a vision is to build a capital kiwi style project in Wellington, where the traps are regularly producing rtc’s of 2% they would like to do this in the Northern Ruahine.

Geoff has communicated with members of the trust about Aranga hut. A discussion was had on what the trusts preference would be to either remove and put a biv in or restore the hut. The trust said they were happy to have the hut weather proofed. They would like to engage in discussion regarding future management and activities at the site.

The hut has been determined to be on public conservation land and therefore must be entered into the AMIS system.

The Trust believed they have ownership on the hut (it was mistakenly thought to be on trust land) therefore it is important to continue to build a relationship with the trust to determine the way forward for Aranga hut.

The group was made aware of the obligations that DOC has under Section 4 of the Conservation Act where it stipulates that DOC must give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi. This area is a meeting place of two places of land and should be available for ongoing visitors.

Mid Poh hut – Dan gave an update on Janet’s request regarding the restricted access of this farm and he has given the farmer a call and has left a message; now waiting for a response. ACTION: Janet to call the DOC office to get Mark’s contact details

**Biodiversity**

Refer to the document that was handed out at the meeting.

Warren asked about the draft weed control plan.

**Other Items**

Kashmir Pines (Anthony Behrens) – deferred to the next meeting.

**Next Meeting: 19 October 2020, 1900-2100**

**APPENDIX ONE**: **List of projects for the Ruahine Forest Park**

Manawatu Operations District

* Leon Kinvig hut. Replace open fire with stove.
* Happy Daze hut maintenance
* Sparrowhawk biv upgrade
* Tamaki River campground, general maintenance and fix up the toilet block
* General maintenance on the following huts:
	+ Cattle Creek
	+ Top Maropea
	+ Gold Creek (new roof?)
	+ Taruarau biv (wire stay broken allowing leakage inside)
	+ Masters Shelter (add sleeping platform?)
* Track maintenance between Aranga turnoff and No-mans
* Road maintenance No-Man’s Road
* Pole route from Totara spur across open tops to track up to Potae (about 2kms)
* Re-open track from Main ridge to Aranga and pole around to Totara spur following the boundary of the Awarua O Hinemanu block (about 7km)
* Rebuild of Aranga hut and toilet
* Update of Rangi to a bigger hut
* Open some new recreational opportunities where our access is not restricted
	+ Pole route from Rangi to Mangahuia and along the tops to Pourangaki turn off (about 7km)
	+ Provide all weather route from Alice Nash to Iron Gates hut and onto Triangle hut. Bridge Cumberfield and Tunipo creeks and the Oroua at Triangle and Iron Gate and use the present track that avoids Iron Gate gorge, cut new track up to the true right of Oroua to Triangle. (about 2km of new track plus 2 major bridges and 2 lesser bridges.) This would open up a potential 3-day trip between Rangi carpark and Oroua river carpark. This would enhance recreational opportunities for medium level tramper’s and ensure more use of the new Iron Gate hut
* Formalise the track from Rocky knob down to Top Gorge hut (about 1km)
* Cut a new track from Matanginui to Takapari Rd, to make a through route as far as the Apiti track (about 6km)
* Replace bridge that was removed at Mid Pohangina
* Track from Waipawa saddle to Waikamaka hut maintenance.