

Minutes Ruahine User Group Meeting, 7.00pm Monday 25th September 2017

Manawatu DOC Office

Present: Janet Wilson (PNMTC & RWP), Ian Patterson (Manawatu NZDA), Mike Charlton (Ruahine NZDA), Vince Payne (Ruahine NZDA), John Beech (FMC and MTSC), Dave Mulinder (Ruahine NZDA, HTC), Ian Rasmussen (Manawatu NZDA / RWP), Anthony Behrens (PNTMC/FMC/RWP), Brian Hall, Warren Wheeler PNTMC.

DOC: Duncan Toogood (Operations Manager, Manawatu), Shaun Ruddle (Senior Ranger, Rec/Historic, Manawatu) Chair.

Apologies:

- Dan Elderkamp (CHB Forest and Bird),
- Derrick Field,
- John Montgomerie, Glenda Hooper and Lex Smith (HTC)
- Jean Garman (MTSC)
- Chris Tocker
- Julie Mackie (NTC)
- Rod Smillie

2. Welcome & introductions

3. Minutes from previous meetings (CM-2986937) & actions arising

- Arranga Hut – **Action: DOC** to provide John Beech with update on situation.
 - i. Awarua o Hinemanu Trust (currently being managed by Aorangi Awarua Trust) are meeting with DOC this week to discuss potential future management plans for this hut. Duncan provided some background information around why DOC was discussing the future of Aranga with the Trust first rather than with RUG or community.
- Top Gorge Hut – **Action: DOC** to contact Nathan Bellamy to see if he is still interested in maintaining the hut and if he would like to conduct a verandah install.
 - i. Nathan is not interested. John Beech has declared an interest.

- ii. DOC will follow up with a Maintenance plan for John Beech.
- Track from Top Gorge Hut to Longview/Makaretu Hut Tk – **Action: DOC** to investigate the concept of cutting a new track to establish an East/West connection.
 - i. At this stage DOC does not intend to cut any new Visitor tracks within the Ruahine Forest Park.
 - ii. Mike Charlton will contact Shaun Ruddle regarding a Bio/Trapping line being cut and marked. Duncan agreed in principle to the idea of a basic track being cut and marked on the proposed alignment. The intention of this track would be to provide access for trapping work and possibly to lay another line of traps along. The track would need to be marked with pink triangles and have appropriate signage at either end (both to be provided by DOC). If cutting were to include use of a chainsaw then DOC would need to approve a suitably trained and competent person for this work – noting DOCs chainsaw use requirements.

Closed items/No Further info shared

- Action re text on websites “this hut is maintained by..” on-going **Action: DOC**
 - i. This can be added as huts are adopted by the community. This can explain that it is community managed or the option of adding contact details onto the website for feedback/assistance.
- Action re-sign on the range at Heritage – underway. **Action: Tumau** to progress.
 - i. The context behind this was discussed. It appeared that there was no requirement for any further signage within the area.
- Action re PF Olsen Kashmir road pines - on-going **Action: DOC** awaiting advice from national team.
 - i. A Contractor has declared interest in the pines and has approached DOC. As the situation progresses, DOC will provide suitable updates in further RUG meetings.

4. CMS

- The Department’s responses to submissions and the Revised draft Wellington CMS was referred to the Wellington Conservation Board (Board) on 14 August 2017. Once their consideration of the revised draft CMS is completed, the Board will forward it to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) for approval. It should be noted that as both the Board and the NZCA may seek further changes to the Revised draft Wellington CMS, the CMS is not yet finalised.

5. Huts and Shelters – work undertaken and planned

Community managed

- Stephen Robson arranged a Meat Safe drop at Otukota for Rod Smillie.
- Peter Daily coordinated the successful Fire install at Kawhatau. Firewood and coal arranged for flight in when conducting Crow Swingbridge tasks. Rubbish will also be removed from the hut.
- Mike Charlton assisted with the Fire install at Kiritaki. Conducted some hut tasks with his visit. Vince helped with arranging some firewood to be taken in on a backload.
- Ian Patterson and Ian Rasmussen coordinated with Tim Paki for the install of a new mattress, ash bucket, rat poison and signage at Alice Nash Memorial Heritage Lodge.
- John Beech was planning on visiting Gold Creek in the coming months. There was a discussion on an old toilet left at the site from a previous install. DOC will seek to remove this via helicopter when next working in the area.

DOC managed

- Kiritaki Fire, Installed successfully.
 - i. Mike Charlton has some residual tasks left at Kiritaki that will be completed in the coming weeks.
 - ii. It was discussed about a report of people becoming sick after staying at the hut. It appeared that people have stayed since with no ill effects.
- Rangiwahia Hut Maintenance. Summer planned tasks are:
 - i. Paint inside and out,
 - ii. Replacing spouting around balcony,
 - iii. Removal of the old bench and cupboards and install of a more suitable bench,
 - iv. Track improvements and maintenance.
- Sunrise Hut Maintenance. Summer planned tasks are:
 - i. Paint inside and out,
 - ii. Track improvements and maintenance,
 - iii. Toilet empty.

- **Action: DOC**. Inform the community through the RUG Forum on when Hut painting is occurring and invite volunteer efforts.
- Iron Gate. The mould and damp issues were discussed. DOC is going to conduct a comprehensive hut clean to remove the mould. At the same time, an in-depth inspection will be conducted to annotate how severe the issue is and what action will be required. **Action: DOC** to update progress on the RUG Forum.
- Crow Hut service. Will be conducted while completing Swing Bridge Tasks.
- Pourangaki Hut/Kelly Knight Hut. A back-country stint is planned for the next allowable weather window to address a number of tasks within the area. This will involve Swing bridge work, Track Cutting, Slip remedial work, Track Marking, Hut Servicing and other remedial work encountered.
- Sunrise and Rangiwahia Booking. The booking report was provided and discussed. Points raised were:
 - i. The use of a hut warden at Rangiwahia would occupy a bed that could be used for visitors when the hut is at capacity. It was suggested that having a warden at Rangiwahia was not suitable for this reason.
 - ii. It was acknowledged that the certainty of a booking system for families would be beneficial. It would require the system to be prescribed with the use of a hut warden.
 - iii. There was a report of beds being booked and upon arrival at the hut it was at capacity with non-booked visitors. The booked visitors were not going to ask children to move so they could have their bed.
 - iv. A part of the hut wardens' role would require the arrangement of booked beds vs non-booked for visitors.
 - v. Data from the report appeared vague for what information was sought from the group.
 - vi. It was raised that capturing relevant data from the hut book for actual bed nights stayed was not accurate. It was estimated the only 50% of users made entry into the hut book. By having the booking system and a warden present, this would allow suitable data to be captured of actual bed nights and visitors.

6. Tracks and roads

DOC managed

The weather situation over winter caused a large amount of lower level tree branches to fall on mainly the Eastern Tracks. This has been the focus for July and parts of August. The following tracks were cut:

- Rangiwahia
- Alice Nash
- Kahikatea
- Piripiri campsite and Poh Base
- Manawatu Gorge Tracks
- Coppermine
- Bruce Park
- Swamp Track

Structures

- A new 22m Glue laminated beam bridge has been installed over the previous Water Supply Bridge. This is located at the Ballance end of the Manawatu Gorge Walking Track.

Roads

- Takapari Rd maintenance conducted. Manawatu Council were conducting track maintenance to the track boundary. DOC were able to make benefit of conducting maintenance while machinery was on site.

Community managed/work done

- Alice Nash to Iron Gate track was cut after the weather event in August by the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club and other helpers.

Other items Tracks/roads

- Back country cutting will commence November onwards. Priorities will be finalized in the coming weeks.

7. Access

- Wakarara Road End. DOC has been working to find a suitable working solution along with the Walking Access Commission. There is paper road access shown on the Walking Access Commission's website.
- Oroua Car park. Discussions with the landowner have been occurring regarding the Dog issue.
- Sunrise Carpark. Carpark re-location onto PCL is in the early stages of planning. This will allow for more capacity and reduce congestion. Initial Planning will start in Nov/Dec.

Business plan for 2017/18

- Access would continue to be a specific part of the work programme for SR Rec in the coming year.

8. Biodiversity

DOC Managed

- Duncan provided an update on the coming Northern Ruahine aerial 1080 operation (part of the Battle for our Birds 2017 programme). DOC has now received all consents and the contractor will be starting the operation in the next available weather window. Aorangi Awarua Trust acting on behalf of the Awarua o Hinemanu Trust had accepted DOC's offer to treat the adjoining trust land as part of the operation, however there is some follow up required on this from DOC.
- Wilding pine programme will continue again this year though Duncan did not have exact figures to hand.
- *NB (not raised in meeting): Goat control in the Southern and NE Ruahine will be carried out soon by ground hunting contractors as part of our normal annual control regime.*

Community Managed

- Janet Wilson announced that the trap line has been installed from Gold Creek Hut to past Barlows Hut.

9. Other Items

- There was a discussion for a get together with DOC, volunteers and wider community. It was proposed that a date in November was set before the Xmas period makes it difficult to find a suitable date. **Action: DOC** propose and arrange a community and volunteer social gathering. Details to be posted on the RUG Forum.

10. Next meeting date: 19th February 2018 7.00pm Danniverke Small Bore Rifle Club