Agenda: Ruahine User's Group Meeting

8 June 2026 (1830-2030)

Taonga from Ruahine - Between Barlow and Upper Makaroro Huts

Figure 1 - Craig Davey

Date:	8/06/2026	**Chair:**	Dave Middleditch
Time:	18:30-20:30	**Minute taker:**	Kelly Hancock (DOC) and Co Pilot (AI)
Venue:	Dannevirke NZDA & Teams Meeting		
Attendees:	Mike Charlton (Ruahine NZDA), Ian Patterson (Manawatu NZDA), Janet Wilson (PNTMC, Ruahine Whio Protectors), Jimmy & Sarah (J&S Heli), Gary & Sim (Ruahine NZDA), Rod Smillie (CD Field & Game Club), Gordon Kuggeleijn (Ruahine NZDA), Steve Bailey, Julia Mackie (Napier tramping club), Dave Mullinder, David Barnes (Walking Access Commission), Glenda Hooper - Heretaunga Tramping Club) DOC Dave Middleditch, Dan Tuohy, Lindsay Tallman, Chris Wootten, Kelly Hancock		
Apologies:	Wayne Jacobson, Lisa Whittle, Marcus Steeneken, Joe Nawalaniec, Megan Dimozantos		

18:30	**Welcome, Karakia, Introductions & Apologies** Karakia Kā toro ki runga, kā toro ki raro Kia mārangi mai ngā māramatanga Ā kui mā, Ā koro mā Hei aratakina achieving a tātou kia manawatītī Ki ngā mahi katoa Draw strength from above, draw strength from below Let the knowledge and understanding of our predecessors wash over us So, we may follow their spirit of perseverance and apply it to our work today Achieving great things
18:35	**Actions from previous meeting** • Hapi Daze Hut redevelopment: Come up with and circulate concepts for the new hut to gather feedback from the group. (Dan & Anthony). Community Engagement for Hut Project: Run a post through the group's Facebook page to inform and engage the community about the hut project. (Dan & Anthony). Norsewood Community consultation: Have a conversation with the Norsewood community regarding their use and needs before proceeding further with the hut project. (Dan & Anthony). ○ BCT looking at replacement with 4 bunk hut. Some feedback via FB that bigger would be better. Sim – bigger hut would be better as it is likely to become a well used loop. Mike suggested could reduce cost by talking to farmer about vehicle access. Question asked about whether the current hut could stay as it has a lot of history – could it be decommissioned and used as a woodshed? Action: DOC to raise bigger size with BCT. • Monitoring Framework for Deer Management: Stand up a monitoring framework for deer management and collaborate with relevant project leads to ensure it serves multiple interests. (Chris) • Landowner Engagement for Deer Management: Initiate engagement with neighbouring landowners, farmers, and foresters to strengthen relationships for deer management efforts. (Chris & Dan) • Sausage Bait Toxin Clarification: Find out and report back on the specific toxin used in the sausage bait trials for feral cats and mustelids. (Chris) • Red Mistletoe Survey: Commission a red mistletoe survey to assess the current state and presence of this species in the region. (Lindsay)

18:45	**Community Group Update** Steve Bailey went out with Steve Bielski on Deadmans. Noted erosion and overgrown tussock near Mangahuia. Gordon (Ruahine NZDA) – feel like left out of discussion about deer management plan, hope they have a chance to be more involved. What does encouraging commercial harvesting mean? Unfortunate hunting death recently – wondering about thermal hunting Gary – track from Laws road being well used. Rain gauge track overgrown. Janet – RWP newsletter out. No problems with traplines. General condition of Ruahine tracks is pretty poor. Recognition for good work on relocation and refurb of Leon Kinvig Hut and new tracks. Glenda - HTC applying for funding from BCT to reroof Waikamaka Hut.
19:00	**Ruahine Deer Management Update – Chris Wootten** The **2025–26 Ruahine Forest Park Operational Plan** sets out actions to support a longer-term adaptive deer management strategy (2025–2030), focused on improving forest health while balancing ecological, cultural, and recreational interests. The plan prioritises intensive deer control in the park's northwest management unit—an area of high ecological value—through 50 hours of aerial hunting, building on the previous year's removal of 727 deer. It also continues Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) contracts, targeting 500 deer and encouraging commercial harvesting of lighter animals, alongside recreational hunting initiatives such as NZ Deerstalkers Association management hunts. Monitoring is a key component, with tools like the Seedling Ratio Index and Faecal Pellet Index used to assess deer impacts and inform adaptive management decisions. The plan emphasises collaboration and continuous improvement through engagement with iwi, hunters, and local communities, supported by structured planning, monitoring, and reporting. Key actions include developing a park-wide monitoring framework, strengthening partnerships through wānanga and advisory groups, and improving data collection on hunting outcomes. Targets include completing monitoring transects, increasing hunter participation, and evaluating effectiveness through measurable indicators such as deer removed and forest condition trends. Overall, the approach integrates DOC-led control, commercial harvesting, and community involvement to refine deer management over time and ensure decisions are evidence-based and responsive to ecological outcomes. Feedback about lack of engagement with local interest groups – reps on DAG should be feeding information on to their groups, please raise with your reps. Working on a new web page that will have links to info about the deer management plan. Connecting in with catchment care groups – attended meetings at Pohangina and Oroua CC groups. Operational Plan has been sent to RUG mailing list today – if you have any questions or comments after reading it, email cwootten@doc.govt.nz or get in touch with Dan Tuohy and he'll pass it on to Chris. Action - Local NZDA branches to discuss and decide if they want to put forward people to be on DAG instead of national NZDA reps. 2 in person meetings + 4 online catch ups. Action - Look at attending catchment care group meetings on eastern side (eg Tukituki).

19:15	**Heritage and Visitor Update** **Leon Kinvig** • New heli pad built and track marking completed. Ngamoko Road end sign currently being updated with new map. Limestone Road end sign will be updated soon – send in any great high-res photos of the area you'd like to see on the sign (with credit info) to manawatu@doc.govt.nz **Waterfall Hut Reno** • The H&V team and volunteers were finally able to get into Waterfall hut to replace the roof and install a new woodshed. The trip was delayed several times due to weather but we finally got a good window in the first week of May. • Takapari road – 2/3rds repaired just need funding to finish • Petersons Road easement has been fenced. (Has sign been taken down from gate?) • Iron Bark bridge – had funding for a 3-wire bridge but this won't work as no suitable trees so looking at alternatives and will need to apply for more funding **TripleX Hut Reno** • Thanks to sponsorship from Dulux the H&V team and volunteers realigned TripleX hut on the eastern side of the Ruahine (not far from North Block Road end) to bring the front wall out and make the two bunk rooms internally accessible. This means these rooms are now able to be heated by the woodburner and the communal living space is a bit roomier. It is looking amazing and the only thing let to do now is complete the verandah roof over the new deck in front of the hut.

19:30 Biodiversity Update

Northern Ruahine NPCP op – eastern block

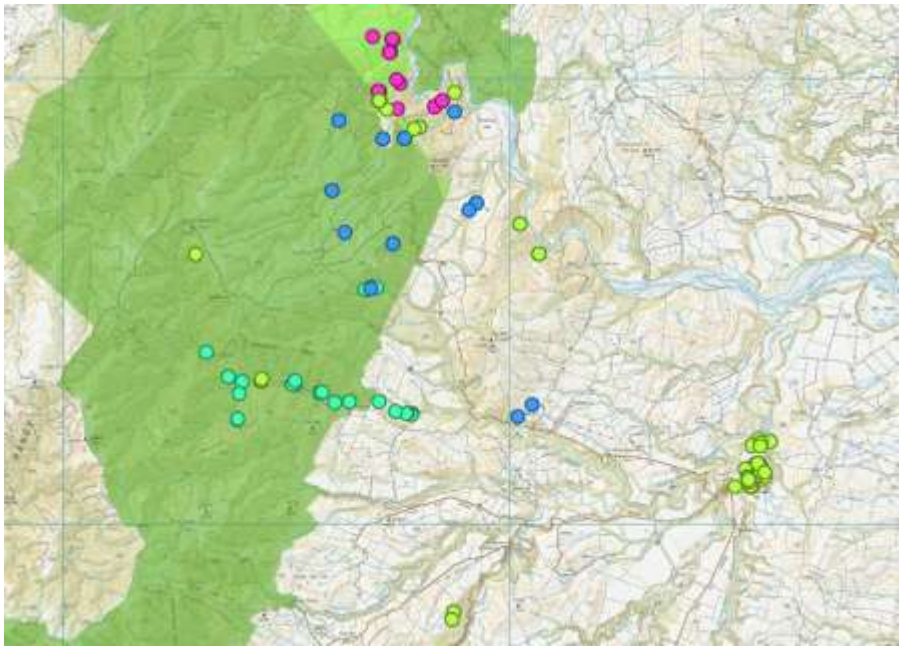
The Northern Ruahine NPCP aerial 1080 operation was completed in March 2026, nearly a year after the western block was treated. We are considering keeping the east-west split in future operations as it is very difficult to get a suitable weather window on both sides of the ranges. The Northern Ruahine is currently on a three year cycle, so the next operation should be 2028/29.

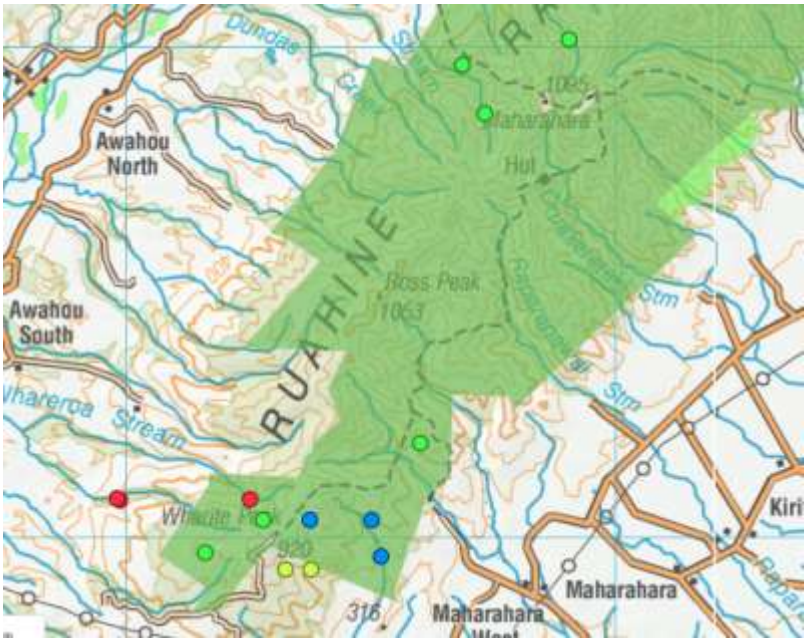
Contorta Control – Northern Ruahine

- The Annual Contorta aerial contract was wrapped up this month. This year we had 30k from the Manawatu RPMP budget, 70k from MPI and a further 37k from LNI regional reallocations. With that Rangitikei Helicopters were able to control a total of 710 plants of various sizes, 150 of those were at the stage of coning, which is a great result for the Northern Ruahine treatment block.

Goat Control - Ruahine

- The Ground hunting goat contracts are all finished for the year. Sam and Cam, our 2 goat hunters and their respective teams have once again combed the Southern and Northeastern blocks to work towards that goal of 'zero density'. We are nearly there in the southern block, getting harder to find a goat down there, but there seem to be a mob of goats that keep finding their way into the north eastern block. There are a couple of landowners we need to convince, but we are working on them. Dots in the maps below indicate goat kills





	2026 Whio Survey • The Northern Ruahine Whio Survey 2026 is a coordinated three-day survey (23–25 March 2026) across multiple catchments in the Ruahine Ranges, involving DOC staff, trained whio dogs, and volunteers. The work covered the Mangatera/Remutupo, Apias/Ikawetea, and Unknown/Maropea catchments, all of which benefit from extensive predator control (including trapping networks and 1080 operations) across approximately 70,000 hectares. Overall, habitat quality was generally good, with stable substrates, abundant macroinvertebrate food sources, and suitable roosting sites, although some areas (e.g., gorges, unstable tributaries, or flood-affected sections) were less suitable. The combined conservation efforts aim to support whio populations alongside other native species such as kiwi, skinks, and bats. • Survey results recorded 23 whio in the Mangatera catchment, 19 in the Apias/Ikawetea catchment, and 14 in the Unknown/Maropea catchment, including multiple breeding pairs and some juveniles. In Mangatera, birds were widely distributed with evidence of successful breeding but also two mortalities (likely due to predation and territorial conflict). Apias/Ikawetea showed moderate numbers (8 pairs, 2 singles, 1 juvenile), with food availability improving downstream and particularly strong habitat in Ikawetea. Unknown/Maropea recorded fewer birds overall but still contained several pairs in good habitat sections. Compared with historical surveys, populations fluctuate but remain supported by ongoing predator control, with evidence of continued breeding and occupancy across most surveyed rivers, indicating generally stable but still vulnerable whio populations. • Janet mentioned survey done in Oroua catchment – surveyed in May (delayed from Feb due to weather events). No food, no ducks seen.
19:45	**Access Update** • Mokai Access – RDC had been consulting with Mokai Station over transferring the ULR to the start of the poled 76 agreement. Mokai station now want to move the access back to the two ULRs and want DOC to surrender the 76 easement. The station have apparently removed all the obstructions along the ULRs and installed gates where appropriate. A site visit is need to ton confirm this and it would be good to include DOC, RDC and FMC in this site visits, if a rep is available. There will be no surrendering of any easement until the ULRs are clear and ready to be used with no obstructions. • Purity Hut Access – A conditions of access has been created for the landowners to send out to everyone requesting access. Email is now the only way of getting access • Mid Poh Access – The gorge piece has been surveyed, and it seems clear there is no public access with the farm boundary coming well into the river. Waiting on finalized survey map from LINZ. • Makaretu Access – We are coming to the end of the trial period (10 Nov 2025 – 1st Aug 2026). We now wish to engage with the neighbouring landowners and members of the public to gain feedback on how the trial went. We will meet with the adjoining landowners this week. Is there any feedback from the RUG? ○ Sim says he has heard there has been quite a bit of use from hunters and trampers, being well used and feedback is that it is good access. Question about length of closure for lambing (3.5 months). Suggestion that we stick with what has been agreed for this first year to keep them happy then look at shortening it next season.
20:00	**General Business** • JS Heli Information talk – new heli operator based in Ashley Clinton, Black Road eastern Ruahine foothills, keen to work in and for community. www.jsheli.co.nz

	• Julia – Napier Tramping Club did Maharahara – Kumeti crossing. Track really good to high point, then really over grown. Daphne track is overgrown. Dave M (DOC) noted that a volunteer (Geoff) is doing track cutting under his own steam. • Janet asked that DOC staff advocate for funding to cut overgrown backcountry tracks. DOC noted that there are strict criteria around what funding can be used for and it is unlikely that maintenance of low use backcountry tracks would be funded.
20:30	Next Meeting – Monday October 5th 2026