



## Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ

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Kahurangi National Park Management Plan Amendment  
Department of Conservation  
Private Bag 4715  
CHRISTCHURCH 8140

To whom it may concern

### **Kahurangi National Park Management Plan Amendment to extend the Heaphy Track Mountain Biking Season**

FMC represents 20,000 members of over 80 tramping, climbing and other outdoor recreation clubs throughout New Zealand, and also the interests and concerns of the estimated 300,000 New Zealanders who enjoy backcountry recreation.

FMC does not oppose the extension of the Heaphy Track Mountain Biking season. FMC recognises that mountain biking is a pursuit enjoyed by many, including many of our members, and that shared use trails can represent an opportunity for more people to share experiences in and enjoy our wonderful backcountry.

FMC has the following specific requests:

1. That the month of April be excluded from the extension. April typically includes the Easter long weekend and the April School Holidays which is a popular time for family tramping trips, it is also we are told by concessionaires one of the most popular times for guided walks on the track. The addition of recreational and guided mountain biking participants to the existing users during April will create a demand that exceeds supply.
2. That the provision enabling mountain-biking concessionaires be accompanied by a provision limiting the number of guided riders per day, and the number of bunks in a hut that can be booked by a concessionaire on a given night. There is an established norm across the country that only ½ of bunks in a public hut can be used by concessionaires on any given night. This rule should be explicit in the Plan. There is the opportunity now to manage future commercial demands and expectation with consideration to the carrying capacity of the track, both physical and social, before crowding and conflicts occur.
3. That DOC confirms it has phased out helicopter landings on the Heaphy Track as expressly required by the National Park Management Plan. FMC would be firmly against any heli-biking to points on the Heaphy Track for the reason of the maintenance of the natural quiet.

FMC would also like to make several general comments:

1. FMC would like to see less use of National Park Plan Amendments to make operational level changes. National Park Management Plans take considerable community effort to negotiate and should, where possible, be followed for their full term.
2. FMC would like to see the practicalities of shared use trails further investigated. Are people less inclined to tramp on hardened, regular surfaces, or on tracks where they know other people are cycling? Are people likely to choose the fastest option to complete a track thereby diminishing the “journey” aspect of the experience? There is an irony that needs unpacking and careful management: tracks made easier to encourage more trampers become rideable, which then creates demand for easier rideability, which eventually, at a certain track standard, may discourage both trampers and the more adventurous riders.
3. FMC would like to see a National Strategy for Mountain Biking on public conservation land. The current ad hoc approach, in response to local interest groups, does not enable good decisions to be taken as to where these experiences are best located. In particular, we are concerned that tracks are being created or chosen without regard to the long-term costs of maintaining a reasonable riding surface.
4. FMC is clear that Electric Bikes as ‘powered vehicles’ under the National Parks General Policy are not expressly permitted on the Heaphy Track. We note the proposal to expressly permit them on the Pike 29 track and are currently considering this.
5. FMC is pleased that DOC continues to support the MTB Code of Conduct. FMC worked with MTBNZ on its initial development and its continued promotion is important for reducing risks on shared use trails. The code is clear that the appropriate warning signage for shared use trails is “Give way to walkers” and FMC would like to see this continue to be emphasised given mountain bikers advantage of weight and speed.

In summary, while there are a huge amounts of positives to be gained from the increase in backcountry mountain biking opportunities on public conservation land, which are improved again by this season extension, there needs to be some serious work done on how to manage these opportunities in a coherent way, both to ensure optimal outcomes for investment, minimise long term maintenance costs and prevent future conflict between, and displacement of, other user groups.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Wilson', written in a cursive style.

Peter Wilson  
President