

Submission form for the Draft Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan

Return your submission by 4.30pm on Tuesday 30 June 2009 to:

Mt Aspiring National Park Management Plan Review, PO Box 176, Alexandra 9340
or Fax: 03 440 2041
or bhunt@doc.govt.nz

PART A

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Signature/Date: Jonathan Hunt, 28 June 2009

(Person authorised to sign on behalf of person or organisation making submission. Type name if via email)

PART B

Do you wish to present your submission at a future hearing? YES / NO

How much time would you prefer for presenting your submission? ___ MINUTES

(Please note that the standard time allocated for hearing of submissions is 15 minutes, unless you stipulate otherwise)

Preferred time for a hearing during Mondays to Fridays? (ie MORNING / EVENING / AFTERNOON)

PART C

The specific part of this plan that my comment relates to is:

(Please state section number/s and page of plan)

p24

"Despite that, much of the park retains its wild and natural character and is largely unaffected by increasing recreational and tourism use."

p26

"Management of public use, including concessionaire activities, is essential to ensure that the remote and wilderness qualities for which the park is renowned are not lost."

p26

"This plan proposes that aircraft landings in the remote zone be restricted to only a few areas and/or for limited time periods. This differs from some other national parks and

reflects both the park’s special character and the overall objective to retain its remote, quiet, and undeveloped values. This may limit these areas to self-reliant outdoor recreationists who have the ability and inclination to reach the remote zone on foot." p26.

"There is no intention of providing for the full spectrum of recreational activities." p28.

Section on "Aircraft use and preservation of natural quiet" p57

"The effects of some activities may also cause conflicts between different visitors and be inconsistent with the values of particular zones or places. An example is the noise generated by aircraft, both overflights and actual landings. In the wilderness and remote zones in particular, visitors generally expect to experience high levels of solitude and natural quiet. This may not be realised if aircraft noise intrudes.

Section 6.6.5 Aircraft

“This plan proposes that one of the roar sites (site 7 at Bonar Flats) may also be used by recreational river users to access the upper reaches of the Waitototo River from mid October to 31 December annually. This recognises the value of the two-day kayaking trip on the Waitototo River and the opportunities it provides for a remote experience for moderately experienced kayakers. This site is also used by the occasional rafting party.” (p 71)

Section 6.6.5 Aircraft, Policies

“7. Concessions for aircraft landings at roar landing sites, R1-R8, should be restricted to access by recreational hunters for the roar period only, to protect remote values for the majority of the year, except that roar landing site R7 (Bonar Flat on the upper Waitototo River) should also be available for kayaking and rafting parties from 15 October to 31 December (inclusive) annually, with a maximum party size of 12.” (p 73)

TABLE 1 Aircraft Landing Sites (p 76)

Landing site	Location	Grid Ref	Level of use	Exclusions
Roar site 7	Bonar Flats	G38 734 529	Low	Access only during roar and for kayaking and rafting parties not exceeding 12 people from 15 Oct to 31 Dec

My comment is that:

(Please state concisely the nature of your concerns. Clearly indicate whether you support or oppose the specific part of the plan or wish to have amendments made. Please give reasons.)

There appears to be an error in the location of the Bonar Flats landing site. Instead of G38 734 529 it should be around F38 740 515 NZMS 260 (thanks to Craig Adams for pointing out the issue).

I oppose policy 7 outright. It is unacceptable to impose such unreasonable limits on recreational when there has been inadequate consultation with kayakers, and when no evidence has been presented of a specific air access problem at locations utilised by kayakers.

Kayakers appear to be suffering from perceived air-access issues at other parts of the National Park such as Bevan Col. I have not seen any evidence of complaints regarding the existing use by kayakers of helicopter access to the Waiatoto.

I am concerned that the policies perpetuate an ongoing failure of DOC to foster recreational kayaking. Whitewater kayakers have already lost significant recreational amenity through hydro schemes on rivers such as the Clutha, Kawarau, Tekapo, Pukaki, Tongariro, and Waikato. Kayakers are faced with potential recreational amenity loss due to proposed developments on the Mokau, Kaituna, Mohaka, Motu, Whangaehu, Tarawera, Rangitaiki, Ruakituri, Mokihinui, Matakītaki, Glenroy, Nevis, Waitaha, Taipo and Arahura rivers and more. As well as losses due to hydro or irrigation development, kayakers have lost recreational opportunities due to DOC zoning decisions on the Karangarua (2000), Waipara and Upper Landsborough rivers. As kayaker habitat decreases, DOC cannot assume that the recreational amenity of the Waiatoto can be substituted by similar reaches outside the national park.

Fortunately, in 2002 kayaker submissions resulted in favourable adjustments by DOC to proposed access restrictions on the Adams and Perth rivers.

The level of kayaking use of the Waiatoto is low, and is unlikely to increase to levels where impacts would be significant. If this did happen, there is provision in the plan to adjust policies if necessary. The proposed restrictions are premature in the absence of clear evidence of conflicts between recreationalists.

The Waiatoto is a special river, being a remote, wild and scenic river with moderate whitewater rapids. New Zealand's small size means that few multiday river trips exist at all, and range from the very challenging (Karamea) to the mild (Whanganui, Clarence). The Waiatoto is probably best compared to the Motu and Landsborough, so only two alternatives exist for this style of trip at this level of difficulty.

The party size is unreasonably and impractically small. How was this figure arrived at? My one descent of the Waiatoto to date was with a Whitewater Canoe Club party of approx. 30, configured in a mixture of kayaks and rafts over Waitangi weekend 2006. We had a splendid trip, camped overnight on river flats, then out the next day. We did not encounter any other people on the trip. We were probably one of only a handful of kayak trips that year.

The proposed date range is arbitrary and too restrictive. We struck perfect conditions for flow and weather in late summer. Also, more public holidays exist outside the proposed

time period; long weekends are an important and often only opportunity for most people to participate in such a remote, multi-day adventure.

The proposed policies would decrease the recreational amenity for multiple reasons:

- reduced party size increases the per-person cost of access;
- the narrow time period means that a suitable dates and times away from employment, family, study etc. will be much harder to come by;
- spring melt will generally lead to higher river flows, increasing the canoeing challenge out of the reach of some aspirant recreationalists;
- spring weather may reduce the number of safe, stable weather windows for access and descent.

To put it bluntly, I am outraged that in a time of generally reduced participation in active outdoor recreation, DOC is seeking to restrict recreational amenity without specific evidence of conflict between affected recreational groups.

I seek the following decisions:

(Please give details. If you seek text changes, the more specific you are, the easier it will be for us to understand your concerns.)

Reword policy 7 to increase the party size to 30, and remove the date restrictions on access.

Reword policy 18 to specifically monitor effects of access by kayakers. Only if this research indicates a specific problem relating to kayak/raft access would additional measures be introduced after consultation with stakeholders.