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## **News Release**

### **Kahurangi National Park Management Plan Draft Partial Review**

The Department of Conservation has released its Draft Partial Review of the Kahurangi National Park Management Plan. The Plan proposes to trial seasonal access for mountain bikes on the Heaphy from 1 May to 1 October each year.

Mountain Bike New Zealand is delighted by DOC's announcement. It has lobbied for this outcome since mountain bikes were denied access on the Heaphy in 1996 after the establishment of Kahurangi National Park. Since then the General Policy guiding the management of national parks has been changed, allowing access for mountain bikes on specific tracks.

The Heaphy is a unique multi-day backcountry ride that has no equal in New Zealand – 82km of singletrack traversing from coast to coast through diverse landscapes and vegetation. It is to mountain bikers what the Milford Track is to walkers.

One of the common objections to mountain bikers and trampers sharing tracks is the issue of potential collisions. Research and DOC's experience with other tracks suggests that the risk of collision is generally overestimated by walkers, and that with appropriate management tools, trampers and cyclists can successfully share tracks for a net gain to all. The Queen Charlotte Track in the Marlborough Sounds records around 23,000 walkers and 7,000 cyclists each year with no significant conflicts.

The potential for conflict between trampers and bikers on the Heaphy is minimised through the proposed May to October season – with less than 20% of the current visitors walking the track during that off-peak period.

There are good sight-distances and the trail is sufficiently technical to ensure low speeds on most sections. Potential for conflict is further reduced by limiting group size to six riders or less; the promotion of responsible riding through the Mountain Bikers' Code; and precluding heli-biking on the track.

Research also shows that while the physical impacts of mountain biking differ from those caused by tramping, on properly constructed tracks they both result in similar levels of track wear and tear. The Heaphy's track surface is robust making it durable to the impacts of both boots and tyres. The proposed winter season records lower rainfall than the spring and early summer when wet, nor-west weather conditions often prevail. However the Plan's provision to close tracks during and after heavy rainfall further protects the track from unnecessary damage.

A minority of walkers will still prefer to avoid cyclists. They can do so easily given the proposed season and the large number of other (walking-only) tracks available within Kahurangi and throughout the country.

The Draft Plan also allows mountain bikes on two other excellent tracks within the Park: Flora Saddle to Barron Flat and the Kill Devil. Although technically challenging the Flora Saddle to Barron Flat track has in the past been a popular day ride for

experienced, fit riders. The Kill Devil is both physically and technically demanding. As the first section follows legal road, mountain biking is currently a permitted activity. The Plan proposes to extend access to Waingaro Forks Hut. It is unlikely to ever be a popular ride but is nonetheless rewarding for the few with the fitness and skills to tackle it.

As a legitimate backcountry recreation, mountain biking provides a special opportunity to attract new (mainly younger) users into our national parks and enable them to experience our backcountry in a wholesome and self-reliant manner. In December 2007, the Poulter in Arthur's Pass National Park was the first track to be opened for mountain biking under the new General Policy. It quickly has become a popular ride and to date the trail is rated as a success by DOC.

We welcome the opportunity to regain mountain bike access to the Heaphy – New Zealand's premier multi-day mountain bike ride.

**For more information contact Guy Wynn-Williams ph 03 379 9174**



Respect others	Respect the rules	Respect the track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stay in control.</li> <li>- Give way to walkers.</li> <li>- Signal your approach and pass with care.</li> <li>- Ride shared-use tracks in small groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ride only where permitted.</li> <li>- Obtain permission from private land owners.</li> <li>- Leave gates as you find them.</li> <li>- Be prepared - take food, water, tools, First Aid and warm clothes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't skid, cut corners or make new lines.</li> <li>- Avoid riding in the mud and rain.</li> <li>- Take rubbish home.</li> <li>- Clean your bike to prevent spreading weeds.</li> </ul>

