

# Proposal for the Addition of Land at Pike River to Paparoa National Park under Section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980

Report from the New Zealand Conservation Authority

8 June 2015

## Recommendations

1. Having considered the values of the land area proposed for addition to Paparoa National Park, and understanding that there are currently limited mining values associated with the land, the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) is satisfied that under section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980 it meets the requirements of Policy 6(h) of the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) for land additions to a national park, and recommends to the Acting Minister of Conservation that: The area of land outlined in black in Figure 2 (Areas B and C) totalling 3,971ha should be added to Paparoa National Park.
2. The Authority also recommends that the part of Saxton Ecological Area within the proposed Park addition should have its special ecological values recognised in the revised Paparoa National Park Management Plan. The revised Park Plan should also recognise that the mining facilities associated with the Pike River mine are a modified area recognised for inclusion in the Park under Policy (6c) of the General Policy for National Parks. In time, most of this modified area will be regenerated back to natural state.
3. The boundaries chosen for this recommended addition, totalling 3,971ha and named as Area B & C, are the core of the important ecological values of this part of the eastern Paparoa Range associated with the area surrounding the Pike River mine and its associated facilities. Area A (2,000ha) in the Moonlight Forest, from Slaty Creek south, is not included because this has previously (Nov 2000) been identified as a part of a proposed Mawhera Conservation Park. Moonlight Forest is an area of considerable goldmining interest. It includes a lot of historic mining heritage areas including a recreational goldpanning area. Areas D & E (2,498ha) to the north-east of Pike River are both part of the Saxton Ecological Area.
4. Having made these recommendations, however, the Authority brings to the attention of the Minister the following consequential matters:
  - a) Costs: The Authority is concerned about the level of additional costs that will be placed upon the Department for the following items:
    - Maintenance of the road (7 km) and its infrastructure (bridges and culverts)
    - Maintenance of the buildings, for whatever purpose of use, at the current mine amenities area, including their ongoing security
    - Monitoring of the mine portal for water outflows.

While not quantified by the Authority, feedback from the parties consulted indicated these could be significant on an annual basis. Reallocation of current Department resources for these purposes should not result in a net loss of conservation on the West Coast (or indeed elsewhere). Formal estimates should be made of future additional costs and provision made for these.

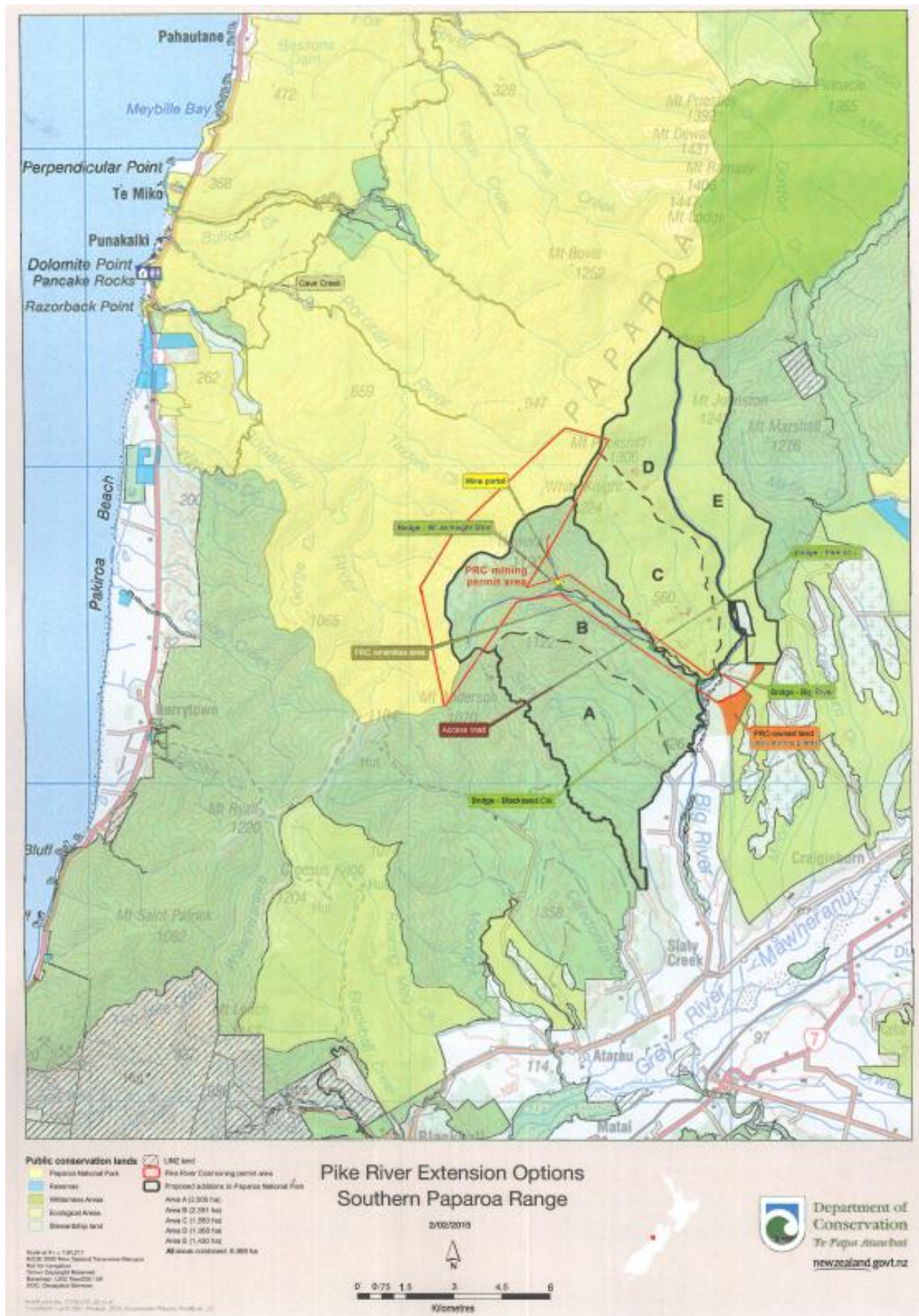
- b) **Great Walk proposal:** Based on feedback from West Coast stakeholders representing local communities and judgement of likely relative returns on alternative investments, the Authority does not support the concept of a Great Walk style track linking Pike River to Punakaiki, whether via a northern loop along the escarpment and then dropping down into Bullock and Cave Creeks, or via a southern loop along the skyline through the head of the Moonlight and down the ridge to the west of the Punakaiki River. Much of the route is enclosed in dense forest, the mountain range section is exposed to severe weather and the underlying geology, especially to the west of the main range, is largely limestone karst country within the Barrytown Syncline, which will be excessively costly for track construction. Further, tracks of this nature and the construction of huts are not currently permitted within the Paparoa National Park Management Plan (which would apply if Recommendation 1 is adopted).
- c) **Southern Paparoa Historic and Recreation Opportunities:** The Authority is of the view that a better option for a track that will act as a memorial to the men lost in the Pike Mine disaster and their lives in a coal mining district, is to upgrade and link several existing historic tracks in the southern Paparoa ranges outside the national park. This will enable the mining heritage of the Strongman Mine, Rewanui and the Liverpool Mine, and Brunner, all to become linked and accessed via a wide range of walking and mountain-biking tracks of varying lengths and difficulty. The Southern Paparoa recreation proposal from the Grey District Council incorporates integrated recreation development of existing tracks, roads and historic mining infrastructure with three focal points each catering to a slightly different recreation group. The Point Elizabeth to Rapahoe to 9 Mile coastal rainforest walk and bike pathway explores the southern-most palm forest in the world on a dramatic coastline. There is easy viewing of Hector's Dolphin and then north of Rapahoe township the pathway explores a maze of tracks, tunnels and coal mining heritage areas in a loop track. The Runanga to Rewanui historic walking area has a greater family and history focus and offers everything from one hour waterfall walks to full day walking. The dramatic Coal Creek Falls near the start of this area are an important attraction. The historic Rewanui Incline to the Liverpool mine track behind Runanga township captures the core of the Southern Paparoa coalfields historic area in a place now abandoned for mining. The Brunner Historic Site to Mt Sewell to Mt Davey Coolgardie Track traverses from the valley through beech-podocarp forests and subalpine vegetation to the rock paved summit of the Southern Paparoa Range. This one to two day walk on existing historic tracks, in part marked by large rock cairns, is ideal for wilderness walkers. It links the Grey Valley with Runanga township and provides a challenging alternative to the easier coastal and family walking options of the other two focal points.

- d) **Economic benefits to the Grey District:** We were advised by the Grey District Council that a network of tracks of varying standard based around the existing mining tracks, tunnels and coal transportation network, suitable for all levels of fitness and walking, will also bring much needed economic benefits to the Grey District, particularly the towns of Greymouth, Dobson, Runanga, Rapahoe and Punakaiki. These will provide outdoor opportunities for people from the Grey District. Greymouth District Council is developing its position as the northern hub of the Westland Wilderness Cycle Trail. The development of a network of tracks in the southern Paparoa area linking historic heritage sites, coupled with existing facilities such as Shantytown, the Brunner historic site and the Point Elizabeth track, will be very important for recreation and tourism. This will hold visitors in the district for longer periods and increase visitor demand for accommodation, meals, services and shops. It would also act as a fitting memorial to the nearly 450 men who have lost their lives in the mines since coal mining began in the District in 1864. The Authority's consultation identified that in matching any funding of these facilities there needs to be emphasis on the marketing and promotion associated with these developments. This will ensure that they are well recognised and supported by the New Zealand tourism industry and by the people of the region. The Authority commends the Grey District Council for the community development initiative shown in these recreation development proposals.
- e) **The Paparoa National Park Management Plan Review:** This is now seriously overdue for a review. Many of the policies are still applicable but given that this will be the second major addition of land to the original Park (the first of which which occurred in 2002), the Plan must be updated to account for all of the land that is encompassed, and enable modern management principles to be applied. The Authority considers the review of the Paparoa National Park Management Plan should take priority over the reviews of other national park management plans.

### **Background to the proposal**

1. On 6 November 2014, Solid Energy advised the government and public of its decision not to proceed with the proposed re-entry of the Pike River mine drift on the basis that risks to life remained too high. Solid Energy also indicated its intention to surrender its coal mining permit at Pike River and began decommissioning the site.
2. Following the decision not to re-enter the Pike River mine drift, representatives of the Pike River families put forward a package of proposals for the government to consider:
  - extension of the Paparoa National Park to include the Pike River mine site along with parts of the Moonlight Block and the Saxton Ecological Area;
  - construction of a suitable memorial at the mine site;
  - construction of a 'Great Walk' track from the Grey Valley to Punakaiki.

Figure 1: Initial area of proposed extensions to the National Park.



3. The Acting Minister of Conservation for Pike River Matters, Hon Nick Smith (the Acting Minister), welcomed the families' proposals and, in a teleconference with the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) on 3 February 2015, sought an initial view as to whether five contiguous areas in the Slaty Creek, Pike Stream and Saxton Ecological Area could be added to the Paparoa National Park (Figure 1):

- Area A (2,000 ha), covering the headwater catchments of Slaty Creek and Granity Creek;
- Area B (2,391 ha), consisting of the Pike Stream and Kakapo Creek catchments;
- Area C (1,580 ha), comprised of the Saxton Creek and Blacksand Creek catchments;
- Area D (1,068 ha), including the western slopes of the headwaters of the Big River catchment, excluding the Saxton Creek and Blacksand Creek catchments;
- Area E (1,430 ha), covering the eastern slopes of the headwaters of parts of the Big River catchment;

Areas C, D and E are located within the Saxton Ecological area.

4. One of the functions of the Authority is to recommend addition of land to (and establishment of) National Parks. Both the National Parks Act 1980 and the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) state the Authority may request a formal investigation, thus giving the Authority a wide discretion as to whether a formal investigation is needed before recommendations are made to the Minister.

5. The Acting Minister sought the Authority's view on whether section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980 applies or if a section 8 investigation is warranted with respect to the land parcels identified in paragraph 5.

6. To adjudicate on this, the Authority sought a background briefing from the Department that set out the conservation values (vegetation, landscape, wildlife, recreation and tourism, historical and archaeological) of the five areas. The Department also sought advice from the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment on the minerals values of the proposed areas.

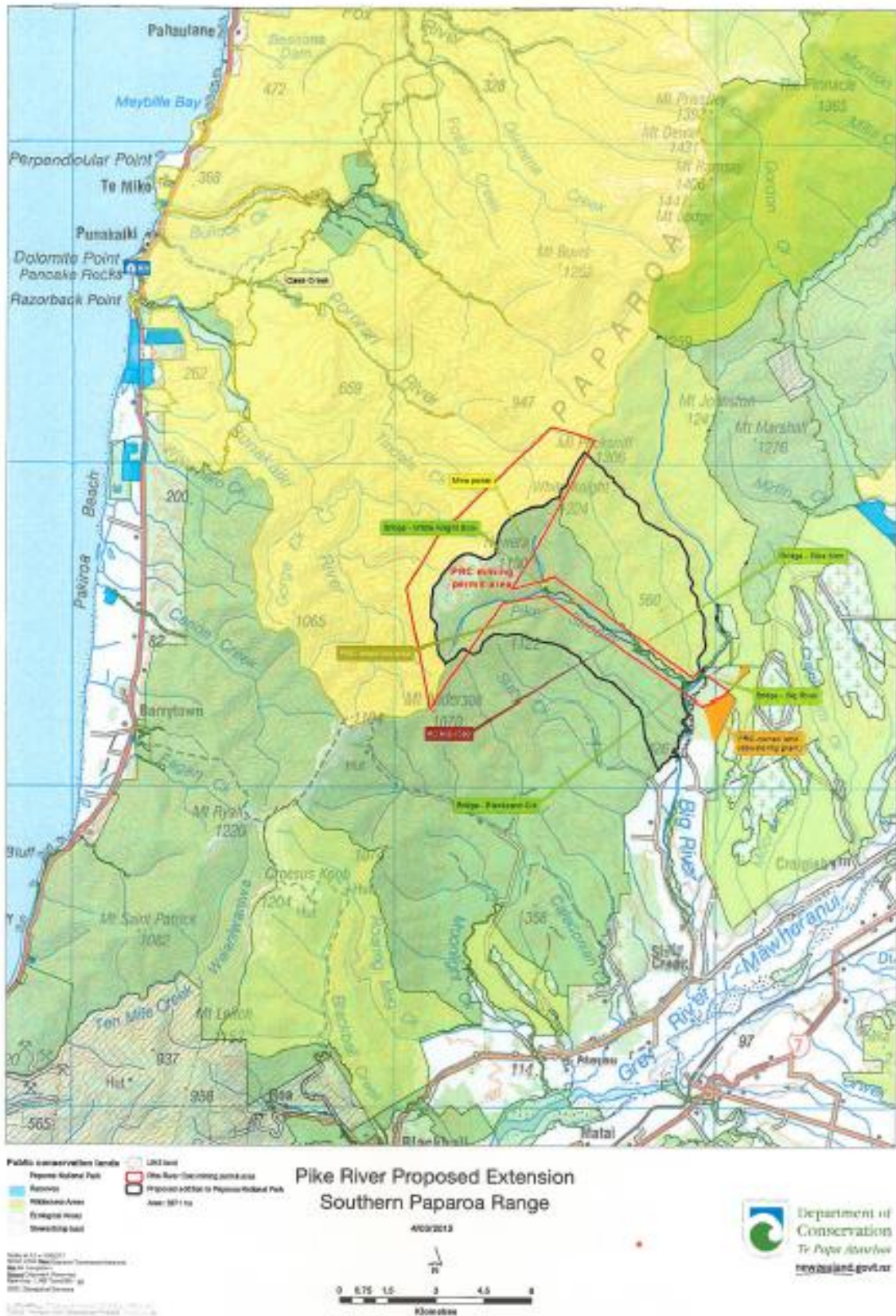
7. There are precedents for adding areas the size of the proposed additions to an existing national park after a section 7 evaluation rather than a more comprehensive public investigation process under section 8. The main precedent is five additions, ranging in size from 821ha to 9541ha, to the Paparoa, Kahurangi and Westland *Tai Poutini* National Parks as a result of the West Coast Accord Forest processes.

8. Following the receipt of this information, the Authority met in person and via teleconference on 17 February 2015, to discuss how the proposed addition could best be managed relative to the legislated requirements. The Authority agreed that the addition of the land would be consistent with processes under section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980 because prior work on assessing the values of some of the land gives confidence in the knowledge of those ecological values, but it must be consistent with Policy 6(h) of the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005), and following consultation with the Conservation Board and Ngai Tahu.

9. The Authority wrote to the Acting Minister on 20 February and advised that:
- Policy 6(h) of the Authority’s General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) applies and indicates that a section 7 evaluation would be appropriate.
  - The information regarding Areas A and B provide an initial indication that both have the characteristics required for national park status and consideration of their inclusion is consistent with section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980. While more investigation will be required for Areas C – E, the Authority is satisfied that this work can be robustly carried out under the provisions of section 7 [this report]. Prior assessment work for Timberlands West Coast Ltd in Areas A and B gives the Authority confidence that the ecological values of these areas are well understood, albeit this may require some updating.
  - The addition of all five Areas would set a precedent in terms of the size and scale; however this is contingent on the investigation which may show not all the land parcels satisfy national park criteria.
  - Consultation is required with the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board and Ngai Tahu, including with respect to the likelihood of any changes to land status having “significant adverse effects on communities beyond the boundaries of the national park”.
10. The Authority gave its initial view (in the letter referred to in para 9) that the section 7 National Parks Act 1980 process would be appropriate. The Authority also advised that consideration of other matters, such as the expressed desire for a Great Walks type track and resourcing, are consequent to the section 7 investigation and should be fully assessed on their own merits once the decision on the potential addition of parcels of land has been determined.
11. In a further meeting between the Acting Minister and families on 25 February, agreement was reached that the two areas (B and C) immediately adjacent to the Pike River Mining Permit area should be added to the Paparoa National Park (Figure 2). Together, these areas comprise 3,971 ha in the Pike Stream, Kakapo Creek, Saxton Creek and Blacksand Creek catchments (the area outlined in black in Figure 2). This addition satisfies the families’ requirements that the area to be added to the Park should be the minimum needed to protect the Pike River mine site, without unduly curtailing future mining opportunities, given that national park status:
- is the highest conservation protection classification available, and is publicly perceived as the ‘gold standard’ in environmental protection;
  - would automatically include the Pike River mining permit area in Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act 1991, preventing an Access Arrangement for mining being obtained for the site; and
  - would establish unfettered access for the families and the public.

Reflecting the Minister’s discussions, the Authority narrowed the scope of its consultation with stakeholders principally to areas B and C.

Figure 2: Final proposal for land to be added to the National Park.



## National Parks Act and General Policy for National Parks

### National Parks Act 1980 – section 7 and 8 processes

12. All new national parks and additions to national parks are established by Order in Council under section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980, regardless of whether or not a section 8 investigation has been carried out. Before a Minister can recommend an Order in Council to create a national park, a recommendation is needed from the Authority following consultation with the appropriate Conservation Board. Section 4 of the Conservation Act also creates a requirement for consultation with the relevant whanau, hapu or iwi.
13. Section 8 of the National Parks Act 1980 states that “the Authority may... request the Director-General to investigate...”. The Authority therefore has discretion as to whether it seeks an investigation of proposals to add to parks or establish new parks. The General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) also provides flexibility for the Authority to determine if an investigation is needed.
14. The values of land to be included in a national park are specified in section 4(1) of the National Parks Act 1980, and in the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005), policy 6(a):
  - 6(a) *Lands recommended for national park status will contain, for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public, the following:*
    - i) *scenery of such distinctive quality that its preservation in perpetuity is in the national interest; or*
    - ii) *ecosystems or natural features so beautiful, unique or scientifically important that their preservation in perpetuity is in the national interest.*
15. Areas A and B (Moonlight Block) contain ecosystems that are unique and scientifically important. The block encompasses 123 ha of an unusual association of stunted rimu, pink pine, yellow silver pine, toatoa and mountain beech. This type of low altitude hill country forest is not represented to the same extent elsewhere in the Blackball Ecological District. The forest has also been classified as High Value Indigenous Forest by the Office of Treaty Settlements.
16. Area A, particularly in its southern part does border on and also contain considerable areas with gold mining heritage, both historic and more recent. In November 2000, the Timberlands Forest Review Panel recommended that Area A become part of a much larger Mawhera Conservation Park to protect both the high ecological values here and its coal and goldmining historic heritage<sup>1</sup>. Its protection was considered inappropriate under National Parks status because of the historic and current goldmining activity. The Authority agreed with this position.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Independent Review Panel on the Conservation Values of Indigenous Forests Currently Managed by Timberlands West Coast, November 2000. 293 pages.

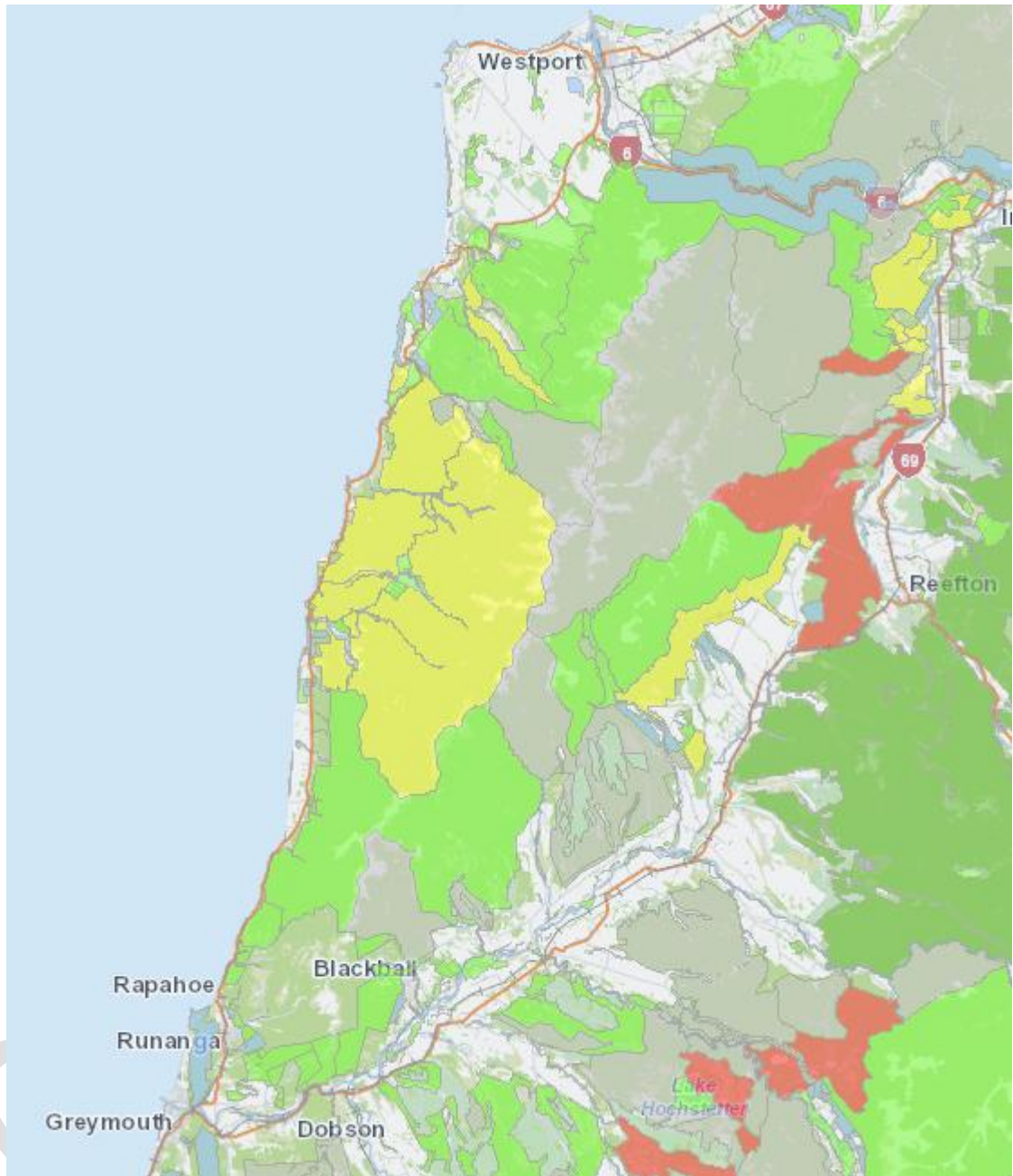


17. The forest ecosystems of the Moonlight Block also contain habitats for the following nationally vulnerable species:
  - roroa/great spotted kiwi
  - kowhiowhio/blue duck
  - kaka.
18. The Saxton Ecological Area includes the oldest rock formations in New Zealand and protects an altitudinal sequence from the valley floor to the mountains typical of the East Paparoa District.
19. Area A (2,000ha) in the Moonlight Forest, from Slaty Creek south, is not included because this has previously (Nov 2000) been identified as a part of a proposed Mawhera Conservation Park. Moonlight Forest is an area of considerable goldmining interest. It includes a lot of historic mining heritage areas including a recreational goldpanning area. Areas D & E (2,498ha) to the north-east of Pike River are both part of the Saxton Ecological Area. Although considered of equal conservation value to the Area C part of the Ecological Area, the Authority believes National Park consideration under either section 7 or section 8 of the National Parks Act 1980 of these two parts of the Ecological Area, together with the conservation lands and wilderness area to the northeast of the Pike River, should be undertaken. It is desirable to investigate if all these could be linked with the Craigieburn Forest – Maimai Forest Paparoa National Park outlier (shown in yellow on the Figure 3), all of which would be then contiguous with the main Paparoa National Park. The Authority will further consider this and make recommendations to the Minister in due course, although the Authority is of the view that there are other priorities in terms of certain stewardship land being reclassified as specially protected areas

#### **General Policy considerations**

20. Policy 6(h) states that the Authority may recommend additions or boundary adjustments to a national park without requesting a formal investigation, when the land has been specifically acquired for national park purposes [which does not apply to these areas], and in other circumstances, including one or more of the following six circumstances:
  - the addition or adjustment would create a boundary that more closely follows natural features;
  - the land to be added is contiguous with the national park or largely surrounded by the national park, with the same, or complementary, natural values;
  - the national park values have already been investigated or are already well documented;
  - there are no significant adverse effects on tangata whenua values;
  - the land does not contain significant known mineral deposits with commercial potential which are economically viable for extraction;

Figure 3: Extent of Paparoa National Park (in yellow), showing the eastern outliers referred to in paragraph 19.



- the addition is considered unlikely to have significant adverse effects on communities beyond the boundaries of the national park.
21. Although the national park values of the proposed additions have not been comprehensively investigated, information about them is known from existing documentation. In November 2000, the Government's Independent Review Panel on West Coast Indigenous Forests Managed by Timberlands recommended that lands of the eastern and northern Paparoa Range, including the Saxton Ecological Area, should be investigated for addition to the

Paparoa National Park. Their report noted that *“this proposal excludes any area required for access and mining of the Pike River coalfield”*.

22. The proposed additions also meet the requirements of Policy 6(b) of the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) in that the Areas are:
  - generally large (1000+ ha);
  - comprise contiguous and related areas; and
  - natural areas.

### **Consultation undertaken by the Authority**

23. Policy 6(d) of the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005) states that, as part of the investigation into additions of land to a national park, the Authority “will seek” the views of the local conservation board and tangata whenua, and “should seek” the views of the territorial authority and the regional fish and game council.
24. Authority members Judy Hellstrom and Dr Gerry McSweeney (along with the Executive Officer, Dr Rick McGovern-Wilson) met with Grey District Council (29 April 2015), the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board (30 April 2015) and West Coast Fish and Game Council (1 May 2015). Authority member Rauru Kirikiri (and the EO) met with Katiwaewae at Arahura Marae (13 May 2015). On May 26, Dr McSweeney again met with the Grey District Council Mayor to review their reports and submissions on the proposal. He also met Tourism West Coast Chief Executive Jim Little.
25. All parties are supportive of the proposal to add the proposed area of land to the Paparoa National Park, but all of them raised issues that they felt also needed to be addressed.

### **Issues identified**

#### **Grey District Council**

26. Grey District Council’s viewpoint ‘evolved’ during our consultation with them. Although they began with preferring the Paparoa Great Walk option, they moved to preferring a series of short-duration walks around the Moonlight Southern Paparoa area, as set out in Appendix 1, which they felt would give more economic benefit to Greymouth and the West Coast in general (Appendix 2). They were not convinced that a Great Walk would generate much added economic benefit.
27. They also moved from an initial stance of querying the benefits of adding land to the national park and the potential economic disadvantages of having less land available for productive uses, to accepting the addition to the National Park, on the basis that an appropriate level of money be put into building infrastructure, including the series of walks referred to, but also building up tourism infrastructure in the small communities close to the Paparoas (e.g. Blackball).

28. The Council also moved from thinking that a memorial to the Pike River victims should be at the portal, because they do not want to be responsible for maintaining the road, and they felt the buildings will decay over 10-20 years in any case (as they observed had happened at Denniston), to thinking that a good site for a memorial would be at the Mines Rescue Centre at Runanga. There is already a much-visited memorial site to the lost miners on the main road. The Council do not think that a memorial at the portal can be sustained, if the road is not maintained in the medium to long-term.
29. The Council also made it very clear that they would take no responsibility for the upkeep of the 7km access road which includes seven bridges and numerous culverts.

#### **West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board**

30. The Conservation Board supports the addition of the land to Paparoa National Park, via a section 7 process, but have two major concerns:
  - This would be the second addition of land to the Park, and in their view necessitates a full review of the Paparoa National Park Management Plan – which was initially written in 1992 and was due for a review in 2002.
  - The additional costs to the Department for the additional monitoring and maintenance of the buildings and the road, requiring additional funding over and above current allocations for the region if other aspects of West Coast conservation management are not to be diminished.

#### **West Coast Fish and Game Council**

31. Fish and Game support the addition of the land to the national park, in principle, but their primary concerns were around water quality and seepage from the mine portal. In particular, this relates to ongoing acid mine leachate from the portal, and the need for access for water treatment and testing.
32. The Pike and White Knight Streams are major trout spawning streams, feeding into Big River which in turn is a very important fishery. Because Fish and Game are not able to fly into the headwaters of the Pike to electric fish for habitat management, it is important to them that the access road be maintained.
33. Subsequent to the meeting with Fish and Game, Dr McSweeney discussed the situation with the West Coast Regional Council Senior Compliance Officer responsible for the Pike River Mine Resource Consent Monitoring. The Compliance Officer's comments were that while Pike River Mine does have some water coming out of the portal it has been extensively tested and is not acid mine leachate, and therefore, the water does not require any chemical treatment (lime etc) to neutralize it. The only contaminant that might be emitted in the water is some silt, so the Regional Council is keen for part of the flat area near the portal to be turned into a small wetland to capture this sediment before it runs into the river. This is seen as being a minor job.

34. The Compliance Officer also expressed serious concerns that any buildings remaining unoccupied at the Pike River site will quickly be vandalised. His recommendation was that all buildings should be removed. He also suggested that the lowest bridge on the mine access road should be removed to stop people driving up the road because of the risk they could cause damage and create problems at the site.

#### **Katiwaewae**

35. While there was general agreement at the hui in support of the proposal to add the land to the national park, Katiwaewae expressed a desire some form of co-management of the park. They want greater access to their traditional food and weaving resources, something that is precluded by the National Parks Act 1980. The area along the eastern side of the escarpment was a traditional birding area for them – as the sun rose and warmed the forests, this resulted in the ‘dawn chorus’.
36. They would like to see the traditional name for Pike Stream – Waimoka – returned to the maps. This is an important inanga spawning site for Katiwaewae. The Authority will bring this to the attention of the NZ Geographic Board.
37. Their desire is for any memorial to Pike River to be comparable to those for other disasters in the area, such as Cave Creek and Strongman. But also, it was felt, for example, that not enough has been done in memory of the 19 men killed in the Strongman Mine disaster on 19 January 1967.

#### **Checks against requirements of the General Policy for National Parks (April 2005)**

38. The Authority’s view is that the following circumstances set out in Policy 6(h) apply to the proposed additions to Paparoa National Park:
- The boundaries of the proposed additions:
    - are based on ridge lines, closely following the natural features of the area;
    - are contiguous with part of the eastern boundary of the Paparoa National Park;
    - encompass an area of complementary natural values. The proposed additions would complement the existing Paparoa National Park as they are on the inland side of the mountain range. The vegetation sequence is different with beech forest at altitude to mixed beech podocarp forest in the lower slopes.
  - Consultation with Katiwaewae has confirmed that there will be no significant adverse impact on tangata whenua values.
  - New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals has advised that mining of the significant coal resources identified in parts of the proposed additions is currently uneconomic, and is likely to remain uneconomic even at much higher coal prices than at present.
  - The proposed additions are highly unlikely to have any significant adverse impacts on communities beyond the boundaries of the national park.

## Options for track networks

39. There was no support during the consultation phase for the concept of a “Great Walk track” to be constructed in the Paparoa National Park. The most common reasons were the difficult geography of the region (equating to high costs), the fact it would begin/end at an isolated road end which had few amenities, and the lack of financial benefit to the wider Grey District.
40. However, a network of tracks of varying standard in the southern Paparoas, outside the national park, based around the existing mining tracks, tunnels and coal transportation network, suitable for all levels of fitness and walking, will also bring much needed economic benefits to the Grey District. These will provide outdoor opportunities for people from the Grey District. They will also foster a lot of recreation and tourism interest thereby holding visitors in the district for longer periods and increasing visitor demand for accommodation, meals, services and shops. This would act as a fitting memorial to the nearly 450 men who have lost their lives in the mines since coal mining began in the District in 1864.
41. Since the 1860’s coal was mined at Brunner, Wallsend Dobson, Point Elizabeth Mine, James Mine, Liverpool 1,2 & 3, Rewanui, Strongman, Spring Creek, Mount Davy and many more coal mines all in a radius of 9 miles from Greymouth. The vistas and environment around this mining heritage is spectacular including limestone cliff formations, valleys, tunnels, gorges, waterfalls, mountain passes, podocarp forest, ocean and old settlements that were abandoned over the last 150 years when coal was “King” on the West Coast.
42. There are a number of existing track networks in the southern Paparoa Ranges – the Point Elizabeth Track, the Croesus Track, the Moonlight Track, the Coolgardie Track from Brunner north towards Roa and Blackball, tracks up 9-Mile and 10-Mile Creeks which include the area of the Strongman Mine, the Rewanui Incline etc. which link the mines and mining settlements.
43. A charitable trust set up in conjunction with the Grey District Council is well established and is investigating the development of walkways to explore and enjoy this environmental and heritage gem. The trust name is “The West Coast Coal Heritage Trust” and the Trustees are volunteers. The details of the walkway proposals are set out in Appendix 1, and an analysis of the pros and cons of the two options – a Great Walk track from Pike River to Punakaiki, and a hub of walking and cycling tracks in the southern Paparoas – is set out in Appendix 2.
44. Tony Kokshoorn, Mayor of Grey District, has raised the southern Paparoas concept with the Pike River families as an option that would not only serve to remember the Pike Men in a wider coal-mining heritage, but also bring an economic boost to the district. Initial indications from the families’ representative are that they would support this option.

## Conclusions

45. Having considered the values of the land area proposed for addition to Paparoa National Park, and understanding that there are currently limited mining values associated with the land, the New Zealand Conservation Authority is satisfied that under section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980 it meets the requirements of Policy 6(h) of the General Policy for National Parks (April

2005) for land additions to a national park, and recommends to the Acting Minister of Conservation that:

**The area of land outlined in black in Figure 2 should be added to Paparoa National Park.**

46. Having made that recommendation, however, the Authority brings to the attention of the Minister the following matters:
- a) The Authority is concerned about the high level of additional costs that will be placed upon the Department as a result of this addition.
  - b) The Authority does not support the concept of a Great Walk style track linking Pike River to Punakaiki, whether via a northern loop along the escarpment and then dropping down into Bullock and Cave Creeks, or via a southern loop along the skyline through the head of the Moonlight and down the ridge to the west of the Punakaiki River.
  - c) The Authority is of the view that a better option for a track that will act as a memorial to the men lost in the Pike Mine disaster and their lives in a coal mining district, is to upgrade and link several existing tracks in the southern Paparoa ranges, outside the national park.

We note that both of these options (b) and (c) will require a rigorous economic analysis and the preparation of a business plan that identifies potential costs to the Department. We do note that the Grey District Council has performed a low-level pros/cons analysis of the two options – included here as Appendix 2.

- d) The Paparoa National Park Management Plan is now seriously overdue for a review, and should be reviewed as a matter of priority. The Authority will discuss the timetabling of this work with the Department, to ensure that it is a high priority and agree a date for the completion of the review.

## Appendices

- 1 Southern Paparoas Track Proposal, from Grey District Council.
- 2 Analysis of the track options, by Grey District Council.

CONFIDENTIAL



Appendix 1: Southern Paparoas Track Proposal, from Grey District Council.



14 May 2015

File ref:  
Council person for contact:  
Contact ph:  
Contact email:

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03 769 8600  
paul.pretorius@greydc.govt.nz

Dr Rick McGovern-Wilson  
New Zealand Conservation Authority  
PO Box 10420  
WELLINGTON

Dear Rick

**PROVISION OF A SERIES OF WALKING/CYCLING TRAILS AS PART OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE PIKE RIVER DISASTER**

Thank you for your visit to Council last Wednesday. I apologise for not being able to attend. Council members however found it a most interesting and worthwhile meeting.

Council members were most interested in your suggestion to provide and upgrade a range of tracks as alternative to the track option that had been discussed with the Pike families. With the proposed network of tracks all within a reasonable distance from Pike River Mine, it will provide a much more relevant and poignant celebration of the 29 men that so tragically lost their lives in the mine. It will have the added benefit that it will link with the Greymouth Cycle Hub concept (with the Greymouth to Ross cycle trail as main feature) which is part of the National Pathways initiative. The starting point to this will be the West Coast Miners' Monument on the Greymouth Floodwall. This will be a magnificent celebration of our District's mining heritage in general and the Pike River Disaster in particular.

I draw your attention to the enclosed map showing the network of trails identified. The funding promised by the Government will go some way towards making the majority of the tracks into a reality.

We fully appreciate that this proposal represents a deviation from what has been discussed between the Government and the Pike families. We are however confident that the families will see the benefit of a network of trails around the Pike River Mine as a more fitting commemoration of the Pike River Disaster. Mayor Tony Kokshoorn will be available to discuss this alternative with the families or their representatives should you wish him to do so.

I therefore respectfully ask that you also mention this deviation from the original proposal to the Minister on the basis that the families will support it.

Should this alternative be accepted, I suggest that an inclusive body be created to implement it. In this respect, I submit the following structure for your kind consideration:

**The Governance Group:**

- 1x Pike River family rep.
- 1x Council rep (The Mayor)
- 2x Conservation Authority/DoC reps
- 1x cycling rep
- 2x Coal Heritage Trust reps
- 2 Public

Note: If you are looking for a Chairperson for the group, the Mayor is happy to undertake the role

**The implementation team:**

You (or your nominee) as Convenor

*Heart of the West Coast*

2x Council reps  
2x DoC reps  
I trust the above will be to your satisfaction

Kindest Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Pretorius', with a horizontal line underneath.

Paul Pretorius  
Chief Executive Officer

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# PROPOSED SOUTHERN PAPAROA COAL HERITAGE TRAILS

The Southern Paparoa Coal Mining Heritage has been well documented and talked about for many years.

Since the 1860's coal was mined at Brunner, Wallsend Dobson, Point Elizabeth Mine, James Mine, Liverpool 1,2 & 3, Rewanui, Strongman, Spring Creek, Mount Davy and many more coal mines all in a radius of 9 miles from Greymouth. The vistas and environment around this mining heritage is spectacular including limestone cliff formations, valleys, tunnels, gorges, water falls, mountain passes, podocarp forest, ocean and old settlements that were abandoned over the last 150 years when coal was King here on the West Coast.

All of the area described in this overview is already accessible by walking or biking tracks but they are in need of massive upgrading with some areas capable of being huge tourist attractions in their own right. On the Highway to the Pancake Rocks, Punakaiki, a 1km walk from the road leads to an area that has huge visitor potential.

A charitable trust set up in conjunction with the Grey District Council is well established and is investigating the development of this environmental and heritage gem. The trust name is "The West Coast Coal Heritage Trust" and the Trustees are volunteers.

With this overview I have included a map of the tracks and heritage areas and the following description of the coal mining heritage experience in the Southern Paparoa ranges on the West Coast:

1. The walk or cycle starts at the Miners Memorial on the floodwall down town Greymouth which includes the Port Heritage precinct and starting point of the Greymouth to Ross Wilderness Trail.
2. The outlet of the Grey River in Cobden which features a bird sanctuary, lagoon walks and breakwater stone boulder piers that were the site of 45 shipwrecks. Fishing trawlers negotiating the entrance to the harbour are a spectacular sight.
3. Point Elizabeth walkway has Tasman Sea views, seals, views of Mount Cook and the Southern Alps. The area was goldrushed in the 1860's. It finishes at Rapahoe on the State Highway to Westport near Seven Mile Beach which is one of the West Coasts safest and popular destinations.
4. The Strongman Mine Disaster Memorial on the highway at Nine Mile close by is the Strongman Coal Mine where 19 coalminers were killed after methane gas exploded in 1967 (6)
5. The valley of mines on Canal Creek has huge tourist potential. Much of the car parking area was developed many years ago by Solid Energy. A 1 kilometre walk

through native forest and limestone cliffs take you to many old coal mines and huge tunnels through solid rock drives. There is potential to showcase pre Maori and European history of birds and tectonic plate movement. A more expensive small rail experience could convey tourists into this area.

6. As above.
7. Native forest and old abandoned coal mining relics.
8. The James Mine portal, which was one of the early mines on the West Coast.
9. West Coast Mines Rescue headquarters which is just off the main highway. This site could be used for a museum and tribute to our coal mining heritage.
10. Runanga Miners Hall, the birthplace of the union movement and the Labour Party. Currently under restoration.
11. Coal Creek Falls track starting in Runanga. It is a well established walk to waterfalls (12) which are already a major attraction.
12. As above.
13. Point Elizabeth Coal mine. Relics and tunnels from the late 1800's.
14. Solid Energy's Spring Creek coalmine, this is an operational site at present.
15. The Rewanui Incline – Existing railway cycleway winding up the Spring Creek Valley through railway tunnels finishing at the Mt Davy and Liverpool No 3 coal mine sites. (16) This area has a huge development potential.
16. As above.
17. Liverpool No 2 mine and Liverpool No 1 mine (18) have huge heritage value – pit pony housing, old mine buildings and portals from 100 years ago are numerous in this area. This walkway ends at Siberia (19) which is one of the earliest mining settlements in New Zealand.
18. As above.
19. As above.
20. Open Cast coalmining managed by Solid Energy. Sometime in the future when mining is finished these roads can be linked to the Coast Road Highway at Nine Mile.
21. This is the hard section of the walks which starts at the end of the railway incline at Rewanui. The walk rises up onto Mt Davy then across the snowline to Mt Sewell (23) surprisingly this point can be reached by car (24) from the Greymouth – Taylorville Road which gives options for trampers wishing to do the reverse easy tramp. Spectacular views of Ocean, Greymouth, Grey Valley and Arnold River including Lake Brunner and Southern Alps, Big Stone Kern wayfinders were placed in the 1870's with stone wayfinders between Kearns so miners could navigate

through fog when travelling between Brunner and Blackball towns.

22. The Roa Mine near Blackball. This private Mine employing over 40 people is currently producing high grade coal for export and can be seen from the walking track.
23. As above.
24. As above.
25. Descending the mountain down the Coolgardie Track past old mine workings to the historic mine site.
26. In the 1880's the Brunner Mine supplied one third of all New Zealand's coal. Coal was barged down the Grey River on punts for shipment from the Port of Greymouth. The mine started operation in 1864. The historic site has had substantial restoration. It is connected by a swing bridge across the Grey River to more coal mining heritage and is very close to the 1876 Wallsend (27) and Dobson (28) Mines, where 9 men were killed in an explosion in 1926. In 1896, 65 men were killed in a methane explosion in the Brunner Mine which is the same coal seam that runs through the Pike River coalmine where 29 men lost their lives in a methane explosion in 2010. The Pike River Mine is another 25km north east of Brunner.

These walks and cycleways are a tribute to the 430 men killed in mining accidents on the West Coast. The mining Heritage trails exist now but need huge upgrading which will result in a spectacular series of trails showcasing 150 years of coalmining.

I have designed two walks, one easy and the other is a harder snowline walk but the two can be combined or users can choose many start or exit points depending on length of stay and time duration of walk or cycle required. There are 8 drop off or pick up vehicle stations throughout the trails.

I have tramped and cycled all of the trails and I currently chair the West Coast Coal Heritage Trust. We have an excellent team of volunteer trustees that can progress the mapped heritage trails creating an opportunity for economic development on the West Coast. The trust can add new members.

Tony Kokshoorn

Grey District Mayor

2015

# Proposed Southern Paparoa Range Coal Heritage Trails





OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
AF (Tony) Kokshoorn

**WALKING/CYCLE TRAILS AROUND RUNANGA, RAPAHOE, COAST ROAD, GREYMOUTH, GREY VALLEY, DOBSON, TAYLORVILLE AND COBDEN AS OPPOSED TO THE PROPOSED TRACK LINKING PIKE RIVER TO PUNAKAIKI. A BRIEF COMPARISON**

**Introduction:**

The Minister, in consultation with the Pike River families agreed on a commemoration project in the form of a walking/cycling trail linking the mine to Punakaiki. New Zealand Conservation Authority met informally with Council members and an alternative commemoration project in the form of a series of tracks/trails closer to Greymouth was identified. There is every expectation that the families will also prefer the alternative, given its greater relevance to the memory of the 29 men. This submission purports to compare the two alternatives with the view of providing the Minister with an evidentiary basis for his eventual decision.

**Comparing the two**

At the outset, I want to commend the Government and Minister on the initiative taken. The harsh yet objective reality that the bodies of the 29 men cannot be recovered and the Government's decision to rather invest the money set aside for the recovery in an appropriate commemoration project is laudable.

**The Punakaiki trail option**

**Benefits:**

1. It enjoys the support of the Minister.
2. It will provide an opportunity for commemoration of the Pike River disaster in the form of a trail over a distance of approx. 30 kilometres.
3. Such a trail will be quite scenic as it will for the most part in the National Park.
4. Its length makes it a reasonably comfortable cycle trip to accomplish in a single day.
5. Punakaiki may also derive an economic benefit from this trail.

**Negatives:**

1. The length of the trail makes it a specialist cycle trail with limited opportunity for walkers to enjoy it. This will mean that user numbers will be relatively modest.
2. Maintaining security on the trail to avoid damage to it will be near impossible.
3. Private land and inaccessible terrain will make it a most demanding project logistically.
4. For us as a District, we will inherit the cost of maintaining the trail but Punakaiki, which is in the Buller District to gain the economic benefit.
5. The Croesus Track which is similar already exists just south of Pike River at Blackball. It also goes from the Grey Valley to the Coast Road finishing at Barrytown just south of Punakaiki. Duplication is not cost effective and no new economic benefit to the District would result from two similar tracks close to each other.
6. There is only one start and finish point with nothing in between. It is at least a two day walking track which will mean that trampers will have to overnight in the open or sleep in a DoC hut
7. Outside of Pike River Mine, there is no coal heritage on the trail making it questionable as a commemoration of the event.
8. It is a greenfields development

**The "extending the Cycle Hub concept" option:**

**Benefits:**

*Heart of the West Coast*

1. It is most likely to be preferred by the Pike River families once they see it.
2. It will be a more relevant and intimate commemoration of the Pike River disaster as the trails are well known to families and part of the Pike River landscape and the wider mining heritage. Mining heritage along the series of walks is significant and in abundance .
3. The series of trails are interlinked and the user will have a choice of various distances, destinations or themes. As to themes, the trails are all closely linked to our District's mining history
4. Unlike the Punakaiki trail option, the length and also location and accessibility of the series of shorter trails will be popular to both cyclist and walkers and therefore an appreciably larger user market. It will provide for 9 drop-off or pick-up points which provides for greater choice and promotes greater usage.
5. It will add to the local economy. Townships with a strong mining heritage will stand to gain from greater visitor numbers and the economic benefits that it brings.
6. It will establish the cycle hub concept as extension to the "Pathways" programme initiated by the Prime Minister. In the process it will contribute greatly to the economy of Greymouth, not only as "hub" but also because of the concept as tourist attraction.
7. It will be a very fitting celebration of the lives of the 29 men involved in Pike River and 410 others who have lost their lives in coal mining since 1864 when coal mining commenced on the West Coast.

**Conclusion**

The benefits of the Cycle hub option will be appreciably more than the benefits of the Punakaiki trail option. This not only applies in economic terms but also as a relevant commemoration of those that lost their lives in coal mining.



**TONY KOKSHOORN**  
**Grey District Mayor**

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