

Paparoa Track Great Walk – Visitor Use Review

Monitoring and Evaluation Report

2020/21, 2021/22



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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

New Zealand Government

Cover: Trampers and mountain bikers on Paparoa Track. *Photo:* Katabatic Creative Limited

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1. Executive Summary.....	3
2. The Paparoa Track - Introduction.....	8
3. Visitor Use.....	13
4. Visitor Profiles.....	22
5. Future Use.....	25
6. Hut Use Patterns/Camping.....	26
7. Visitor experience and satisfaction.....	34
8. E-bike use.....	40
9. Economic and social benefits.....	40
10. Financial Health.....	44
11. Hut Fee Review.....	46
12. Paparoa Track Investment Plan.....	48
13. Working with Others.....	48
14. Conclusion.....	50
15. Appendix 1 – Estimated overnight visitors by month.....	51
16. Appendix 2 - Relevant Paparoa National Park Management Plan policies.....	52
17. Appendix 3 – Great Walk - required outcomes and foundational requirements.....	53
18. Appendix 4 – Key items measured for satisfaction levels, results and comparisons with the Great Walks as a whole for the 2021/22 year.....	55
19. Appendix 5 - Comments on interactions with bikers.....	56
20. Appendix 6 – Summary of recommended actions from respondents to increase benefits to local businesses, people and communities.....	58
21. Appendix 7 - Community Groups and Pest Control.....	59

1. Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this Monitoring and Evaluation Report is to;

1. To report against the Paparoa National Park Management Plan (PNPMP) milestones Section 5.4, Table 8 milestones 3-6.
2. To inform Department of Conservation decisions on future investment and use of the Paparoa Track.

Success

The first two full years of visitors on the Paparoa Track, from 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2022 has met expectations of delivering economic benefits to the community and reaching target visitor numbers. The Track has delivered on the 5-year Milestone in the Paparoa National Park Management Plan (PNPMP) which sought these outcomes. However, the total cost to operate the Paparoa Track was \$896,000 in 2021/22, with a cost recovery rate of 44% compared with a cost recovery for the Great Walks as a whole of 94%.

Visitor Use

Overnight visitor numbers¹ for both 2020/21 and 2021/22 were 4720 and 6620 respectively and have exceeded the most optimistic target of 5500. Since opening, the Paparoa Great Walk has consistently been one of the higher-performing Great Walks in terms of hut occupancy and compares to Kepler and Routeburn Tracks. It was also one of the top performing Great Walks during Covid.

Bikers vs Walkers

Based on the Great Walk post visit surveys and anecdotal evidence from hut wardens the percentage of overnight bikers vs walkers on the Paparoa Track over the two years is estimated to be 22-26% bikers with a higher percentage of bikers using Ces Clark and Moonlight Tops Huts compared with Pororari Hut.

Day visitor biker numbers are more difficult to establish due the lack of a strategically located counter mid-way on the track and issues with some of the counters. However, based on data from the southern end of the track (and assumption most riders are going right through) day biker numbers appear to be around 990 per annum either riding right through in one day (or doing day trips from the Blackball end) and we know most are riding from south to north.

There is also significant day use at the northern end of the Paparoa Track by bikers at the Waikori Road end and walkers on the Pororari River Track entrance with some more limited day use at the Smoke-ho carpark end.

¹¹ Overnight visitor numbers = the individual number of visitors whole have booked the track (excludes day visitors)

Closures

Full or partial track closures from Covid, weather events and road works impacted on the tracks use in the 2020/21 year on 188 days (140 days of partial closure at the Blackball end from roadworks) and on 43 days in the 2021/22 year.

Visitor profiles

The visitor profile on the Paparoa Track is similar to visitors on the Great Walks generally although there appears to be about 10% more females using the Paparoa Track and a much older age group (50-55% of visitors are in the 50-69 year age bracket compared with a median age of 31 years on the Great Walks generally.) Visitors in 2021/22 came predominantly from New Zealand (98.9%) due to the impact of the Covid border restrictions. International visitors are expected to rise to 24-38% of walkers and 16% of bikers in future years. Our top five New Zealand visitor markets are from Canterbury, Wellington, Nelson/Tasman, Auckland and Otago and are coming from a wider range of locations than expected.

Future use

Overnight visitor numbers are expected to rise to an estimated 7219 visitors in the 2023/24 year following a number of changes on the track.

By year end 2024 we expect all the huts to be operating close to maximum capacity with little further room for overnight growth without introducing greater capacity for overnight visitors.

Day use of the Paparoa Track by both walkers and bikers particularly at the Pororari end is significant. Based on estimated visitor growth on the Paparoa Track and new visitor use of the, soon to open, Pike29 Memorial Track it is expected that there will be a 37% increase in use of facilities Moonlight Tops and Ces Clark Huts by December 2025 from additional day users following the opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track. Day use at Moonlight Tops Hut is also predicted to grow 10%. This increase by day users should be factored in when budgeting for managing the facilities at Moonlight Tops and Ces Clark Huts.

Hut use patterns and prices

Over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 years there was uneven hut occupancy with Moonlight Tops Hut having the highest occupancy level due to one night track users preferring Moonlight Tops Hut for their one-night stay.

Proposed changes to the Paparoa Track hut prices reflect that the Track has been performing well and should be priced in a manner consistent with the Routeburn and Kepler Tracks. Approved hut pricing changes from July 2023 should also help manage the capacity at Moonlight Tops Hut and will include differential pricing for international visitors. Having said this, forward bookings to the end of April 2023 showed occupancy for both Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts are at 97-100% and there was/is almost no remaining capacity at Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts for this time period. Pricing changes as a management tool for spreading visitor use will therefore be of most use in

moving visitors to Ces Clark Hut which has some capacity. This will however exacerbate issues due to its smaller living space and internal configuration (too small to meet the Great Walk Hut Standard).

Future Investment – hut extensions/camping options

The Paparoa Track is still in its infancy and the first two years were affected by Covid and closures from road works.

The Pike29 Memorial Track is expected to open in late 2023 and will attract a whole new tranche of visitors including both day and overnight bikers and walkers wanting to experience the new memorial track. Because of this, we won't fully understand the use patterns nor how the track is performing in terms of visitor satisfaction for a few more years. This information will not likely be available until June 2025 when the Pike 29 Memorial Track has been operating for at least two summer seasons and the Great Walk post-visit survey has been completed for the 2024/25 season.

The Department is working on a Great Walk Investment Plan for each Great Walk with the Paparoa Track Plan expected to be prepared in the 23/24 financial year. This will inform the needs and timing of future investments. In the interim there are a number of urgent operational issues such as water supply systems, woodsheds, ensuring staff and wardens' accommodation is fit for purpose, which will be considered along with other bids nationally in the Department's national visitor asset capital process.

No significant decisions on hut extensions or provision of camping sites should be made until after June 2025 when the visitor use of the Pike29 Memorial Track is understood. However, with the huts expected to reach full capacity over the coming peak season some consideration and planning for investment in hut extensions and potential camping options could be undertaken in the interim.

Ces Clark Hut alternative booking option

The current agreement for a process to enable use of a Back Country Hut Pass at Ces Clark Hut, based on the number of visitors taking advantage of this offer, appears to have been successful and should be continued and reconsidered again at the next hut price review.

Visitor experience and satisfaction

There is currently no clear description of the visitor experience the Department is providing on the Paparoa Track. Further consideration should be given to what unique visitor experience we want to provide on the Paparoa Great Walk and ensure that the values that provide that experience are preserved through any management decisions.

The Great Walk Annual Survey for 2021/22 shows the overall visitor satisfaction levels were high, with 93% of visitors being very or extremely satisfied. This is the same as for the Great Walks overall. The 2021/22 survey shows one in two people felt connected to nature and human (including Māori) history, therefore more effort could be focused on providing information on nature and human (including Māori) history. The satisfaction

levels relating to toilets and availability of hut wardens were less than the Great Walk as a whole and needs further consideration.

The visitor experience around natural soundscapes/tranquillity, disturbance by the behaviours of other visitors and the number of other people encountered appear to be meeting the expectations of the Paparoa Track overnight visitors. The survey results also show that 90% of visitors did not experience disturbance from the presence of walkers or bikers (i.e. conflict between the two user groups). These surveys will be useful and important to track any changes in visitor expectations and experiences following the expected growth in overnight visitors on the Paparoa Great Walk in 2023/24 and the opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track and the increase in both overnight demand and day use it will bring.

Visitor risk and safety

The 2021/22 Great Walk post-visit survey shows that 86% of those surveyed were very or extremely satisfied with safety information and structures (signs, barrier, bridges, trail markers) and a further 11% were moderately satisfied. 88% of those surveyed agreed totally or agreed a lot that they had all the information they needed to complete the 'Great Walk' safely and a further 9% agreed moderately with 3% slightly agreeing or not agreeing at all.

Satisfaction levels for safety information provided on the Paparoa Track is the same as the Great Walks as a whole.

The survey covered visitor incidents and hazards, showing 7.4% of visitors suffered from an injury, most of these injuries were minor and only one resulting in an evacuation.

E-bike use

E-bikes are not allowed to be used on the Paparoa Track; this is made clear on the DOC website in the pre-trip information. There is no official data for the Paparoa Track on e-bike numbers vs non-e-bikers however anecdotal evidence suggests demand for e-bike use on the Paparoa Track is significant and growing. A full review of e-bike use is recommended as provided for in the Paparoa National Park Management Plan once the CMS has been reviewed.

Social and economic benefits

The direct spend in the region from Paparoa Track overnight visitors is estimated to be approximately \$3.38 million.

A survey of the surrounding community groups and businesses, indicates that of those businesses who responded, 11 permanent full time equivalent (FTE) jobs and 16 FTE seasonal jobs have been created in the community following the opening of the Paparoa Track.

61% of survey respondents were very, extremely or moderately satisfied with benefits to local people and their families. 67% of the respondents were very, extremely or moderately satisfied with benefits to local communities.

There are 35 recreation concessions associated with the Paparoa Track. Of these only two provide for guiding on the whole Paparoa Track and there is one concession for a competitive sporting event. Most of the concessions are associated with short walks at either end of the track.

The Paparoa Track appears to have added value to the West Coast as a visitor destination and economic and social benefits are accruing to the surrounding communities.

Financial Health

Cost recovery for the Paparoa Track in the 2020/21 financial year was 47% and in 2021/22 it was 44%. Cost recovery for the Great Walks overall over the last five years is 94%. Despite the Paparoa Tracks high occupancy, critical factors influencing its cost recovery for the reported two years are its higher costs and its lower revenue due to a comparatively lower bednight capacity (compared to Kepler, Milford and Routeburn) and lower hut prices, including no differential pricing for international visitors. This result supports the recent hut fee increases which is estimated to improve cost recovery. The forecasted additional revenue from these price changes is expected to be between +\$34,000 (+10%) and +\$155,000 (+45%), contingent on the return of international visitors and how many of them use this Great Walk.

Expenditure and revenue forecasts are being considered in a separate report the 'Paparoa Track Operational Review'. This report considers the dual design of the track for walkers and bikers and indicates the design may mean that the Paparoa Track has a higher maintenance cost than other Great Walks. Ways to reduce operational costs are constantly being explored.

Working with others

The Paparoa Track was intended to be an enduring memorial to the 29 Miners who lost their lives on 19th November 2010 in the Pike River Mine Disaster. The Department has maintained and continues to maintain a good relationship with the Pike River Families and is committed to incorporating their views and desires in any changes to facilities that might impact the visitor experience.

The Department worked in partnership with Ngāti Waewae during the development of the Paparoa and Pike29 Memorial Track and continues to work in partnership with Ngāti Waewae in terms of its ongoing management.

The Department also encourages people wanting to get involved in protecting the environment through pest control. There are currently two main community groups that are supported with pest control programmes in the Paparoa National Park and including in the vicinity of the Paparoa Track. These are the Paparoa Wildlife Trust (PWT) and the West Coast Alpine Club.

2. The Paparoa Track - Introduction

Background

The Paparoa Track Great Walk was constructed as part of an enduring memorial to the 29 miners who lost their lives on 19th November 2010 in the Pike River Mine Disaster. Created in partnership with the families of the men, Ngāti Waewae and the Department of Conservation the 55km long track is not only a memorial but also a thank you to New Zealanders and West Coast communities for their unwavering support of the Pike River Families. The Pike River Families also wished to assist in bringing social and economic benefits for the West Coast and work towards creating sustainable and resilient jobs in local communities.

The Paparoa National Park Management Plan (2017) (PNPMP) made provision for the construction of the Paparoa Track and the Pike29 Memorial Track. The Paparoa Track, located in the Paparoa National Park and adjoining public conservation land, is New Zealand's 10th Great Walk and is the first purpose-built, dual-use Great Walk for both walkers and mountain bikers.

The Paparoa Track is both a Great Walk catering for less experienced trampers (In Department planning terminology referred to as Back Country Comfort Seekers) and a Grade 4 Advanced Mountain Bike Track. The Track is bookable and generally accessible throughout the year. The track is at Great Walk Standard all year round. Full time hut wardens are present during the summer season (November to June).

Construction commenced in mid-2017 with the Paparoa Track fully opened in March 2020. (The Track was first opened in December 2019, however a slip prevented full access through the whole track until December 2020) The Paparoa Track has opened up Paparoa National Park for multi-day walking and cycling access through a variety of landscapes, including alpine tops, subtropical rain forest, and the dramatic limestone gorge of the Pororari River.

The Paparoa Track starts at Smoke-ho carpark near Blackball and crosses the Paparoa Range to finish near Punakaiki. The \$12 million project used 14 km of the existing historic Croesus Track and involved construction of 41km of new track, minor upgrades of the 16 bunk Ces Clark Hut with gas and a deck added, the building of two new 20 bunk huts (Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts) and four major suspension bridges.

The Pike29 Memorial Track goes from the Paparoa Range to the Pike River Amenity Area. While this track has largely been constructed, the track has not been opened to the public yet. Opening is scheduled for late 2023 depending on the timing of completion of works on the Pike Valley Road bridges and agreement on opening the valley with the Pike Families.

Intent and Expectations of the Great Walk

The Cabinet Paper² that sought funding for the track, stated *“the track will serve as an enduring memorial to the 29 men who tragically lost their lives in the Pike River Mine disaster as well as bringing recreation and economic benefits to the Grey District and Buller communities.”*

The Pike River to Punakaiki Track Feasibility Study³ notes that the desired outcome was to create an easy overnight (2-3 day) tramp that directly or indirectly links the Pike River Valley with the tourist hub of Punakaiki and that it should appeal to a wide range of markets, both domestic and international. (With potential for a shared use track: bikers/walkers).

Stakeholder expectations were that it would be a thriving visitor experience in its own right as well as a legacy to the Pike River miners. In addition, the Cabinet Paper noted that the intent is for the track to be a shared use track for walkers and bikers with the grade for mountain biking being a Grade 4 ‘Advanced’ that would take mountain bikers 1-2 days to complete.

The Benefits Realisation Plan for the Pike River Mine Transition Project noted a number of relevant assumptions⁴:

- a) *“That the number of visitors completing the track end to end (whether cyclists or walkers) is limited by the number of bunks (i.e., for the three huts: 20, 20 and 16). Therefore, revenue is limited. However:*
 - i. *An increase to the size of Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts to increase bunk numbers by 10 in each would allow more revenue to be gathered*
 - ii. *Setting up campsites would allow an increase in overnight visitor numbers*
- b) *That the decision was deliberately made to focus on quality of experience rather than the revenue for a higher quantity of people overnighing at any one time.”*

Alongside public expectation to deliver and retain this experience is the expectation of, and agreement with, the Pike River Families, who have been partners on the journey from inception to delivery of the Paparoa Track and the pending Pike River Memorial Facilities. There is the Pike River Mine Transition Project Families Committee Working Group with the purpose of *“ensuring the views and desires of the Pike River Families are incorporated into the planning and provision of the facilities that will be an enduring memorial to the men of the Pike River”*⁵. The Terms of Reference⁶ provided for the input into the design of the Great Walk facilities at the concept design through to the final design stages. This is also an expectation that there will be ongoing consultation with

² [docCM - Cabinet Paper - Approval of funding for establishment of Pike River Memorial Track and related assets](#)

³ [docCM - Pike River Facilities Feasibility Study - TRC 2015](#)

⁴ [Benefits Realisation Plan - DOC-6031505](#)

⁵ Pike River Mine Transition Project decision paper #30 - 22/3/23

⁶ [2016 Terms of Reference --DOC-2752211](#)

the Pike River Families on any significant decisions on the ongoing management of the Paparoa Great Walk Track.

The Pike Valley is a spiritual place for the families and the visitor experience around the Pike River Memorial Facilities and the Pike29 Memorial Track will provide a vehicle for the public to be a part of this. Maintaining a high-quality experience for this reason is even more pertinent.

The Paparoa National Park Management Plan in the description of the recreation values, outcomes and policies in the Tī Kōuka Place also sets expectations around being able to consider concessions for the development of purpose built concession huts (subject to considering effects on other visitors use and enjoyment), two annual competitive sporting events as well as provide for the future potential for e-bike use following a national review of e-bike use on public conservation land.

Purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation Report (exclusions and assumptions)

The purpose of this Monitoring and Evaluation Report is, following the first two years of operating, to report to the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board, Pike Families, and the communities across the West Coast on the PNPMP milestones, and the performance of the Paparoa Track including visitor use and economic benefits. Some data for the 22/23 year is also included. The report will help inform Department of Conservation decisions on future investment and use of the Paparoa Track.

Relevant PNPMP three and five-year milestones from Section 5.4, Table 8, Milestones:

Achieved by the end of Year 3 (2019)

- 3. Community involvement in pest control programmes is being encouraged and supported, including initiatives on the Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track and goat control in Tī Kōuka Place and throughout Paparoa National Park.*

Achieved by the end of Year 5 (2021)

- 4. [Deleted by High Court, May 2021] (provision for recreational motorised aircraft landings)*
- 5. A report has been prepared on the analysis and review of the use of electric power-assisted pedal cycles (e-bikes) and the Department's Guideline Electric bikes on public conservation land, and whether to consider their use on the Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track by way of a partial review of this Plan.*
- 6. The Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track have reached their target visitor numbers and local communities are benefitting (as determined by agreed indicators). The Department is working with others to expand opportunities on the tracks while maintaining the high-quality visitor experience.*

Exclusions

The Monitoring and Evaluation Report will not include a review of the use of electric power-assisted pedal cycles (e-bikes) as this will need to be done by way of a review of the West Coast Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) and following a review of the use of e-bikes on public conservation lands and waters, noting however the report will consider the potential economic benefits, compliance issues and potential demand for e-bike use.

An operational review of the track is being carried out by the Greymouth District. The operational review will consider operational aspects such as staffing, asset maintenance and more details on costs, expenditure and revenue forecasting for both Paparoa Track, Pike29 Memorial Track, Pike Valley and the Pike Memorial and Interpretation Centre.

Assumptions

- The additional visitation to the West Coast occurring due to the use of the Paparoa Great Walk has not had a substantial impact on West Coast infrastructure services such as roading, power and waste management.
- The people choosing to use the Paparoa Great Walk were not substituting this for another type of activity on the West Coast that they would have done anyway.
- The people who use the Paparoa Great Walk will show a visitation profile similar to the use of other Great Walks – most will make the trip only once or twice in their lifetime, and a small percentage will make multiple trips.



Paparua Track and Pike29 Memorial Track



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3. Visitor Use

Visitor use and use patterns on each section of track is measured using a combination of hut booking data and counters. A draft Counter Plan⁷ was agreed with the Social Science and Monitoring Team when the track was established. However, bids for all the proposed counters needed to fully understand day visitor use have not yet been successful.

It is recommended that the draft Counter Plan continues to be implemented and bids for remaining counters resubmitted. This would provide more strategically placed counters which would inform comparisons between visitors starting at Smoke-ho carpark, those going right through the Paparoa Track and those doing the Pike29 Memorial Track. This is essential information to inform future investment planning.

Have visitor numbers grown as expected?

Target visitor numbers

The Pike River Facilities Feasibility Study TRC 2015 forecasted overnight visitor numbers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Forecasted overnight visitor numbers from the Feasibility Study.

Projected use by Year 5			Ratio of domestic to international visitors
Pessimistic	Base Case	Optimistic	
500	1,000	2,500	80:20

The targets in the DOC Marketing Plan - Paparoa Track Pike29⁸ were remodelled in January 2017⁹ and forecasted the following:

1. Achieve target of 3500 overnight visitors per annum and 1000 day visitors of the Paparoa Track in first year (2019) increase visitors to 7000 overnight visitors per annum by 2024.
2. Achieve target of 1000 overnight visitors and 1000-day visitors on the Pike29 Memorial Track in first year (2019) increase visitor to 2000 overnight visitors by 2024.
3. Optimistic scenario achieve target of 5500 overnight visitors and 1000-day visitors of the Paparoa Track in first year (2019) increase visitors to 8858 overnight visitors by 2024.

The Pike River Mine Transition Project – Benefit Realisation Plan, October 2021¹⁰ reflected the numbers in the Marketing Plan and also noted an additional 2000 day users per annum were expected.

⁷ [Draft Counter Plan - DOC-7379595](#)

⁸ [Marketing Plan - Paparoa Track and Pike29 Memorial Track - DOC-2915899](#)

⁹ [Remodelled Visitor Forecasts - DOC-5424096](#)

¹⁰ [Pike River Mine Transition Project - Benefit Realisation Plan-DOC-6031505](#)

Annual Overnight visitor numbers – based on hut bookings

The estimated annual overnight visitor use based on hut bookings for the Paparoa Tracks first year 2020/21 was 4,720 increasing to 6,620 in the second year 2021/22. An overall increase of 40% on the first year. Since opening, the Paparoa Great Walk has consistently been one of the higher-performing Great Walks in terms of hut occupancy and compares to Kepler and Routeburn Tracks. It was also one of the top performing Great Walks during Covid.

The average occupancy rate was 50% in the 2020/21 year increasing to 62% in the 2021/22 year as shown in Table 2. Using estimates for the last few months of the 2022/23 year overnight visitors numbers have dropped by about 6% compared with 2021/22 due to slips from weather events and Covid-19, this is explained further later in this report under ‘What impacts has Covid-19 and weather events/slips had on visitor use’ (as shown in Table 3).

Table 2 Hut use based on hut bookings, occupancy rates and ratio of domestic use

	Date	Total Overnight Users* ¹¹	Average annual Hut Occupancy Rate	Ratio of domestic to international visitors
Year 1	1 March 2020 – 28 February 2021	4720	50%	95.9%
Year 2	1 March 2021 – 28 February 2022	6620	62%	97.7%

¹¹ Note: The total annual figures in Table 1 does not equate to the sum of months in Table 2 due to people visiting across multiple months.

Table 3 Paparoa Track hut visitor bookings by month and comparison for 2020/21 and 2021 seasons and forward bookings through to April 2023¹², the highlighted numbers are estimates¹³

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
March	553	805	725	758
April	0	788	607	665
May	36	696	455	
June	105	453	472	
July	78	209	175	
August	53	51	121	
September	72	376	431	
October	835	764	575	
November	832	680	668	
December	796	753	798	
January	788	839	775	
February	722	463	682	
Total	4,720	6,625	6,219	

Based on data from the other Great Walks for 2017-2021 the Paparoa Track had the 5th highest summer (October- April) occupancy rate in 2020/21 at 87% compared with the other Great Walks. Milford Track, Able Tasman Coast Track, Kelpner and Routeburn Track had higher summer occupancy rates.

What are the use patterns of mountain bikers verse walkers and where have they come from?

What are the overall biker numbers?

The Great Walk Guest Surveys Post-visit Monitoring and Evaluation Reports provide an indication of bikers vs walkers for overnight users of the track. This information gives an indication of overnight visitors walking vs visitors riding.

2020/21 – overnight users, bikers vs walkers:

Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 332 post-visit surveys were completed for the Paparoa Track. Of those who were surveyed, responses show that 25.8% biked and 74.2% walked.

2021/22 – overnight users, bikers vs walkers:

Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, 443 post-visit surveys were completed for the Paparoa Track. Of those who were surveyed, responses show that 22.4% biked and 77.6% walked.

Where have visitors come from?

Of the 2020/21 Great Walk survey respondents, 99.4 % came from New Zealand, and 2021/22 98.9% came from New Zealand, this is not surprising given the impacts of

¹² Great Walks BI data Joe Ellingham

¹³ Updated [Great Walks BI data 20/12/22 =DOC-7233278](#)

Covid19 and border closures over the first two full years of operating. Origins of New Zealand visitors are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 showing visitors region of origin

	2020/21	2021/22
Canterbury	30%	29%
Wellington	11.8%	15.5%
Nelson/Tasmin	10.3%	12.8%
Auckland	11.5%	9.4%
Otago	10.6%	8.0%
West Coast	5.2%	5.0%
Bay of Plenty	7%	5%
Marlborough	4.8%	3.4%
Other (Northland, Waikato, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu/Whanganui, Southland and other smaller towns)	7.2%	11.8%

What is the day visitor use patterns of different sections of the track?

Both pedestrian and cycle counters are present in some locations, (see Table 5 below) but without counters located strategically on the track (e.g. between Pororari Hut and the intersection of the new Pike29 Memorial Track and between the intersection of the new Pike29 Memorial Track and Moonlight Tops Hut) they don't provide a complete nor accurate picture of day use. Some more strategically located counters for bikers would give a better chance of modelling biker numbers and travel patterns of day visitors.

The track counters data should be used as an indication of trend over time. The acknowledged challenges of the Paparoa Track Counter Plan not being implemented means the following numbers are indicative and not absolute. The Waikori Road cycle counter appears to be wrong given we know about 23-25% of overnight visitors are bikers and most would exit, or enter via the Waikori Road end. It is clear there is significant additional day use on the track at the Pororari Road end with 19724 visitor counts.

Note that Pedestrian counters capture both walkers and bikers and bike counters only capture bikes.

Table 5 showing non adjusted data from track counters, pedestrian counters includes both bikers and walkers

	Counter report ID	Counter Type	Estimates of Visits 1 March - 28 Feb 2021	Estimates of visits 1 March - 28 Feb 2022
Lower Pororari River Track	100098566	Pedestrian	19,724	NA - data gaps from May 2021 to Feb 2022
Pororari - on Paparoa Track	100128580	Pedestrian	14,134	10,594
Pororari - on Paparoa Track	100133500	Cycle	NA	5,117
Waikori Road	100132664	Pedestrian	9,932	9,671
Waikori Road	100132665	Cycle	486	1,378
Croesus Track, Blackball	100055454	Pedestrian	5,710	NA - data gaps from Jan 2022 onwards

Notes:

CAVEAT: the Pororari counters are located extremely close to the Punakaiki township at the Pororari entrance of the Paparoa Track, and it is assumed that people doing short walks are causing high counts compared with other counters on the main track.

Has Paparoa Track met its target numbers?

A comparison of estimated visitor numbers versus visitor numbers based on hut bookings and counter estimates are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Previously estimated Vs actual visitor number, based on hut bookings and track counter data

	Achieve by first year end 2020/21	Achieve by second year end 2021/22	Achieve after 5 years
Feasibility Study TRC 2015 base case/Optimistic	-	-	1000 base case 2,500 optimistic
Marketing Plan estimates (remodelled in 2017)	3500 overnights plus 2000-day visitors on the Pike29 Memorial Track from Blackball to Pike River (not open yet)	3850 overnights plus 2200 day visitors on the Pike29 Memorial Track from Blackball to Pike River (not open yet)	7000 overnights plus 3200-day visitors on the Pike29 Memorial Track from Blackball to Pike River (not open yet)
Numbers based on hut bookings and counter data estimates	4,720 overnight <u>Plus</u> Estimated 990-day visitors at the blackball end <u>Plus</u> An additional 9,414-day visitors entered at the Pororari River end. <u>No visitors</u> on the Pike29 Memorial Track as it is not open yet.	6,625 overnight (no data on Blackball counter from Jan 22) so no day use data can be estimated for 2021/22 <u>Plus</u> An additional 3,969 day visitors entered at the Pororari River end No visitors on the Pike29 Memorial Track as it is not open yet.	-

Overnight visitors

Visitor numbers based on hut bookings have exceeded expectations and are forecasted to continue to grow. Based on the Marketing Plan overnight visitor numbers exceeded the first-year targets by 2220 visitors and by the end of the second year of operating overnight visitor numbers have exceeded the second-year estimates by 2,775 visitors and getting close to the 5 year estimates of 7000 visitors.

Day visitors

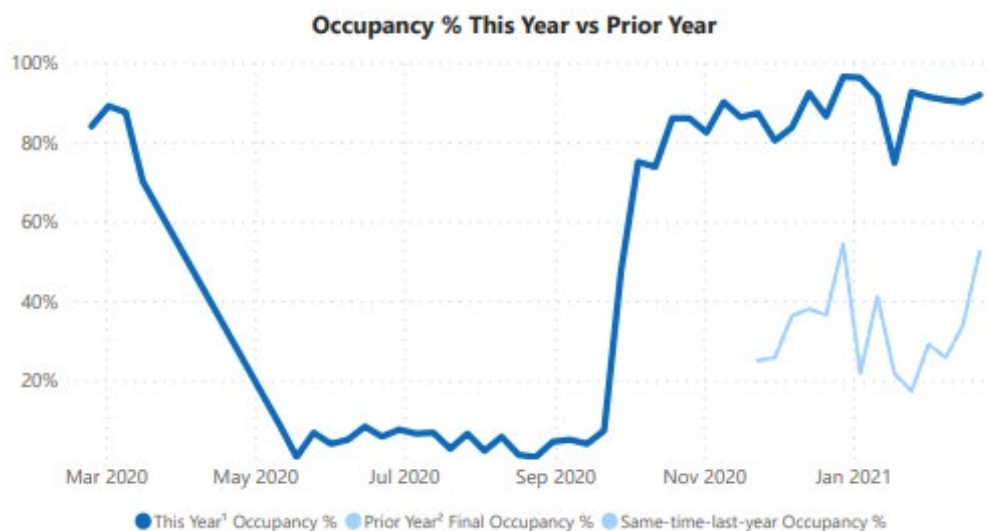
Day visitor use of the Paparoa Track appears to be significantly more than expected with track counter data showing that in 2020/21 an estimated additional 990-day visitors entered the Paparoa Track from the Blackball end. These visitors are likely to be predominantly bikers travelling right through to Punakaiki in a day and riding from

South to North, plus a number of visitors doing a short (1-2hr walk) as we see at many other Great Walks or short in and out ride.

Day visitors entering from either Pororari River Track entrance or the Waikori road entrance are also significant with data showing that in 2020/21 an additional 9,414-day visitors (walkers and bikers) used the northern section of the track and in 2021/22 there were an additional 3,969, day visitors (walkers and bikers) who used the northern section of the track. Based on the Pororari on track cycle counter it appears there were approximately 1335 day bikers biking into Pororari hut and return, or a shorter section ($1335 = \text{total bikers counted} - \text{the overnight bikers, divided by } 2^{14}$).

What impacts has Covid-19 and weather events/slips had on visitor use?

There were short term drops in visitor levels at times of Covid alert level restrictions, but outside of these periods, visitor levels were quite robust although seasonally lower over winter as would be expected. The impact of this on visitor use can be seen from the estimated monthly overnight visitor numbers (see Appendix 1) and Figure 1 and 2. Note the low visitor use from May to September in 2020 was not Covid related (it was actually due to road works on the Smoke-ho carpark access road).



¹⁴ [Calculations for day bikers at Pororari end of Paparoa Track 2021-22 - DOC-7355333](#)

Figure 1. Changes in occupancy during 2020/21 reflecting Covid19 restrictions



Figure 2. Changes in occupancy during 2021/22 reflecting Covid19 restrictions

Due to Covid, the numbers of international visitors were less than expected. New Zealand’s borders were closed to international tourists from March 2020 and did not start to reopen until February 2022. International visitor arrivals have not yet reached the pre-pandemic levels as of March 2023 but are heading towards those levels.

In the first year 1 March 2020 – 28 February 2021, there was one day where the track was partially closed due to a direct weather event. This number was likely low because the track was already partially closed for 140 days through the winter of 2020 for road widening.

In the second year, 1 March 2021 – 28 February 2022, there were 21 days where the track was either fully or partially closed from direct weather events or damage caused by weather events. 56%¹⁵ of weather events in the second year were concentrated in the months from July – September. There was a significant 6-day closure in February 2022 due to a ‘red warning weather event’, this is reflected in figure 3. Closures result in visitors having to cancel or rebook at their trip at another time when hut space is available.

For the third year, 1 March 2022 – 28 February 2023, the estimated number of visitors are 6219 which is a 6% decrease compared with 2021/22. The Track had 90 days of either full or significant closures due to weather events and slips including 40 days of closure for vehicles (open for walking/biking) on the Blackball to Smoke-ho carpark access road and 12 days of full closure on this road. In addition, March, April and May 2022 was at the

¹⁵ [Track Closure data 2019-2022 - DOC-7224232](#)

height of the Omicron outbreak and New Zealand was in the Red and Orange traffic lights phases and through to September 2022 the tail end of the My Vaccine Pass Programme. A lot of cancellations occurred during this time and this explains the decrease in visitor numbers. However, it is also worth noting that a traditional cut of the visitor data for the year ending 30th July the overnight numbers show a 4% increase for 22/23. Table 7 shows a summary of closures.

Table 7 Summary of closures

		No. of Days track fully closed due to weather events or damage from weather	No. of Days track Partially closed due to weather events or damage from weather events (significant partial closure)	No. of Days track partially closed (significant partial closure) due to other non covid/non weather-related events	No. days track closed due to Covid
Year 1	1 March 2020 - 28 February 2021		1	140 (100% road works)	47 days from 27th March 2020 to May 2020
Year 2	1 March 2021 - 28 February 2022	9	12	2	20 days from 18 August 2021 to 7 September 2021
Year 3 (partial year)	1 March 2022 - 2 November 2022	6	32	12	

It is unknown if and when further Covid impacts or similar situations over the next few years will occur. Impacts from road closure caused by weather events and a number weather events significant enough to close the track are of course likely and should be expected. More time, however, is needed to be able to understand any pattern in this regard aside from expecting more high intensity rain events due to climate change.

How does the number of bikers riding the track in a day impact on facilities such as toilets and water supply?

There is no data available on the impact on facilities due to day users of the track. However anecdotal evidence suggests both water and toilet paper supplies increased with an increase in day visitors.

We estimate using the Blackball track counter minus the overnight hut booking, that day visitors cycling right through the track is around 990 noting some of these visitors will

be day users at the Blackball Track end. Predicted day visitors for the Pike29 Memorial Track is 2000 by the end of its first year. If numbers grow as predicted there will be potentially an additional 2200 day users per annum or a total of 2800 additional visitors compared with 2021/22 impacting on both Ces Clark and Moonlight Tops Huts. This equates to a 37% increase in use of the facilities by day users.

It is recommended a 37% increase in operating effort/costs is factored in when budgeting for managing the toilets and water supply at Moonlight Tops and Ces Clark Huts by the end of the second year of operating the Pike29 Memorial Track, i.e. December 2025. It is likely that day use at Pororari hut will also increase by 10%.

4. Visitor Profiles

Do the Paparoa Track visitors match the target audience? And do Great Walk visitors match the target groups for the Paparoa Track?

The Feasibility Study (2015) identified key domestic target markets were expected to be residents of Christchurch and also West Coast residents, as well as appealing to walkers and trampers from the North Island. It was estimated in the feasibility study that the international component of total visitation would be between 10-20%. The Marketing Plan¹⁶ estimated international visitors at 38% for walkers and 16% for bikers.

Where are the visitors from compared with Great Walk visitors

Of the 2020/21 Great Walk survey respondents, 99.4 % came from New Zealand and in 2021/22 98.9% came from New Zealand with most New Zealand visitors coming from the Regions as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 showing visitors region of origin

Region of residence	2020/21	2021/22	Typical Great Walk visitors (2020/2021)
Canterbury	30%	29%	13%
Wellington	11.8%	15.5%	13%
Nelson/Tasman	10.3%	12.8%	
Auckland	11.5%	9.4%	20%
Otago	10.6%	8.0%	7%
West Coast	5.2%	5.0%	
Bay of Plenty	7%	5%	
Marlborough	4.8%	3.4%	
Other (Northland, Waikato, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu/Whanganui, Southland and other smaller towns)	7.2%	11.8%	

¹⁶ [Marketing Plan - Paparoa Track Pike29 - DOC-2915899](#)

While the key expected domestic target markets of Canterbury and West Coast are reflected in the regions of residence, visitors are also coming from a wider range of regions than expected with larger numbers coming from Wellington, Nelson/Tasman, Auckland and Otago.

The numbers of international visitors are less than expected due to New Zealand's borders being closed to international tourists from March 2020 and did not start to reopen until February 2022. International visitor arrivals have not yet reached the pre-pandemic levels as of March 2023 but are heading towards those levels.

More of the Paparoa Track visitors came from Canterbury and the Nelson/Tasman regions compared with the typical Great Walk visitors (in 2020/21) and less came from Auckland.

Key Visitor profiles for Paparoa Track Vs Typical Great Walk Visitors

The Department runs a Great Walk Guest Survey, comprising of a pre-visit and post-visit online questionnaire, which anyone who books a Great Walk is invited to complete. This survey misses the day user groups which would change the dynamic, from staff observations the day bikers going right through are mostly males from the middle age group.

There were 377 surveys completed for the Paparoa Track for the 2020/21 year and 443 for 2021/22. Table 9 provides a breakdown of the key characteristics based on the survey data of the Paparoa Track visitors.

There is very little difference between the profile of the booked Paparoa Track users and the profile of users on other Great Walks. There appear to be more females using the Paparoa Track than the 50:50 split for other great Walks, and a much older age group using the Paparoa Track, but this may be influenced by few international visitors in the Paparoa survey, whereas other Great Walk data includes periods with high proportions of international visitors.

Table 9, Key overnight visitor insights from the Paparoa Track Guest Survey 2020/21 and 2021/22:

	2020/21 Summary of Response (n=332)	2021/22 Summary of Response (n=443)	Typical Great Walk visitors ¹⁷
Gender	57.8% Female 41.3% Male	60.9% Female 38.1% Male 0.9% Other Gender	There is approximately a 50% split between male and female visitors
Age	59.2% of visitors were between 50-69	54.6% of visitors were between 50-69	Median age is 31 and participation declines with age
Children	5% ¹⁸ (note our booking system shows 6%) ¹⁹	5% (note our booking system shows 9%)	12% for 20/21 and 10% for 21/22 (Note the booking system shows the average % across the other GWs is around 16%.)
Type of party or group	Solo 12% Family/Partner 40.7% Friends 41%	Solo - 19.9% Family//Partner 41.3% Friend 37.5%	Solo 16.4% Family /Partner 50.3% Friends 29.4%
Group size	The most popular group size was two, four, one and three in order of descending popularity. The average group size was 3.7 ²⁰	The most popular group size was two, one four and three in order of descending popularity. The average group size was 3.1	The most popular group size is two, one, four and three in order of descending popularity
qualifications	65.2% of visitors had an undergraduate (university/collage) degree or post graduate degree	72.2% of visitors had an undergraduate (university/collage) degree or post graduate degree	75.1% of visitors had an undergraduate (university/collage) degree or post graduate degree
Employment Status	48.8% were working full time	54% were working full time	68.2% were working full time
Household	53.2% were couples with no children 25.6% were couples with children 12.5% living on own	49.2% were couples with no children 24.5% were couples with children 15% living on own	Most visitors are likely to be couples with no children or are in a group flatting situation

¹⁷ [Great Walk Current State Assessment=DOC-6942243](#)

¹⁸ [Great Walk % Children - DOC-7316791](#)

¹⁹ [Great Walk groups size booking system - DOC-7316800](#)

²⁰ [Great Walk Groups size averages - DOC-7316783](#)

5. Future Use

What are the potential changes to visitor use patterns on the Paparoa Track when the Pike29 Memorial Track is opened?

The opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track in 2023 will provide the following new options:

- A two-day Great Walk from Smoke-ho carpark to the Pike Valley carpark, this could be walked either way.
- A one-day or two-day grade 4 mountain bike from Smoke-ho carpark to the Pike Valley carpark.
- A 16.8km return day walk or mountain bike from the Pike Valley carpark to the Vent Shaft Viewpoint. Expected walk time 3hr 30min, bike time 2-3hr up to the Vent Shaft.
- A short walk 10-15minutes one way from the Pike Valley carpark to the Twin Bridges.

Based on the new offerings there is expected to be an increase in both overnight visitors and day visitors on these sections of the Paparoa Track and Pike29 Memorial Track. These visitors will predominantly still be in the Backcountry Comfort Seeker visitor group. However, with the addition of the day walk from the Pike Valley carpark to the Vent Shaft Viewpoint and the short walk to the Twin Bridges, there can be expected to be an increase in the Day Visitor Group numbers.

International Visitor demand

In the absence of reliable international visitor demand data for the Paparoa Track, this demand must be estimated. Pre-Covid, international visitor demand for Great Walk huts ranged from 22-55% of hut bednights, and 41-81% of campsite bednights. Given that there was international demand immediately after opening, and other Great Walks all experienced international visitor demand, it is reasonable to expect the same for Paparoa Track, as international visitor arrivals return to pre-Covid levels which is now occurring. In the 2018/19 season (pre-covid), international visitor bednights on the Great Walks generally accounted for an average of 41% of hut bednights and 51% of campsite bednights. The closest Great Walk to the Paparoa Track is the Heaphy Track with international visitors being 24% of hut users, Abel Tasman is the next closest at 36%. Estimated international visitor are likely to be walkers between 24-38% and bikers 16%²¹.

What are the expected visitor numbers for the next five years?

Overnight 23/24:

Additional considerations for continued overnight visitor growth include that forward booking data recorded on 8 September 2021 for 1/1/2021 to 31/12/2021 showed the annual number of visitors booked in that year was 7039 and that forward occupancy through to end April 2023 shows Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts are 97-100% booked.

²¹ [Marketing Plan - Paparoa Track Pike29 - DOC-2915899](#)

A number of other indications and management measures are likely to result in increased visitor numbers:

- The addition of the Pike29 Memorial Track in mid 2023/24
- An increasing number of international visitors are likely to walk the Track (between 24-38% and bikers 16%) following the opening of our borders.
- Prices changes that might be applied to the Huts could increase overall visitor numbers by spreading use away from Moonlight Tops Hut and encouraging more use of Ces Clark Hut which is currently operating at about 66% occupancy during Peak season.

As a result of these changes, we could expect for 2023/24 an additional 1000 overnight visitors on 2022/23, up to 7219.

Without further changes to accommodation capacity on the Track and assuming a similar number of closures from weather/slip events further increases to visitor numbers beyond 2023/24 are unlikely as the huts will all be operating close to maximum capacity.

Day Visitor Use 23/24

Day visitor use is already estimated to be about 990 cycling right through the track, an additional 2000 day users are expected on the new Pike29 Memorial Track section by the end of the first year of operating.

Day visitor use at the Pororari Road end will likely grow as international tourist visitor numbers continue to recover. Visitor counter data from pre-covid had numbers on the Pororari River Track at approximately 20,000 per annum. A return to approximately 74% of this level is expected by end June 24 and 80% of this by November 2025.

Day visitor biking use at the Waikori road end is also likely to grow. Based on previous predictions for growth, this is estimated to be 10% per year, starting at 1844 from the 21/22 year. This would be 2028 visitor per annum by 22/23 and 2231 visitors per annum by 2024/25.

The previous three years have shown that we should plan for the impacts of weather and slip events and consider the potential for these to increase (in the long term) with climate change predictions of 5 additional wet days and an 11% increase in intensity for 1 hour duration rainfall events and a 5% increase in intensity for 5-day duration rainfall events by 2040. However, it is not known if we are likely to experience another Covid outbreak or similar at least in the next few years.

6. Hut Use Patterns/Camping

What are the hut booking patterns for Moonlight Tops, Pororari and Ces Clark Huts

Currently, there are no restrictions on how track users can book the track in terms of hut sequencing, and track itineraries are booked on a first-come-first-served basis. The Paparoa Track was built to accommodate mountain bikers, who can typically cover more

distance in one day than track walkers. Bikers can complete the track in two days with a one-night stay in Moonlight Tops or Ces Clark Hut.

A part of the pricing review of the track²², 2021 and 2022 booking data was analysed to determine the most popular track itineraries in both peak (Oct-Apr) and non-peak seasons. The findings of this analysis are summarised in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Hut use patterns for the Paparoa Track huts

Peak (Oct > Apr)	Avg. Booking Size (pax)	Bednights	% bednights	Stay pattern demand	% effective demand	User type	Demand	% tot.
Moonlight Tops + Pororari	3.1	6,734	31%	3,367	27%	Multi-night	6,955	56%
Ces Clarke + Moonlight Tops + Pororari	3.3	7,631	35%	2,544	20%	Single night	5,574	44%
Moonlight Tops <i>only</i>	3.1	2,495	11%	2,495	20%			
Ces Clarke <i>only</i>	2.7	1,858	8%	1,858	15%			
Pororari <i>only</i>	2.4	1,221	6%	1,221	10%			
Ces Clarke + Pororari	2.4	1,499	7%	750	6%			
Ces Clarke + Moonlight Tops	3.2	589	3%	295	2%			
Grand Total	2.9	22,027	100%	12,529	100%			

Rest of Year	Avg. Booking Size (pax)	Bednights	% bednights	Stay pattern demand	% effective demand	User type	Demand	% tot.
Moonlight Tops <i>only</i>	3.1	762	13.6%	762	23%	Multi-night	1,589	48%
Ces Clarke + Moonlight Tops + Pororari	2.8	2,146	38.3%	715	22%	Single night	1,717	52%
Moonlight Tops + Pororari	2.4	1,369	24.4%	685	21%			
Pororari <i>only</i>	2.5	661	11.8%	661	20%			
Ces Clarke <i>only</i>	2.9	294	5.2%	294	9%			
Ces Clarke + Pororari	2.3	207	3.7%	104	3%			
Ces Clarke + Moonlight Tops	3.2	171	3.0%	86	3%			
Grand Total	2.7	5,610	100.0%	3,306	100.0%			

Ces Clark Hut

Ces Clark Hut, the first hut on the track, pre-dates the Great Walk and, in the past, was mainly used for one-night stays via the Croesus Track. Ces Clark Hut is less popular than the newer huts. The hut is typically included in a track user itinerary in one of three ways:

1. 3-night track walkers - Users book Ces Clark Hut for their first hut on the track, followed by Moonlight Tops Hut and Pororari Hut on day 3.
2. 2-night track users (likely bikers) - Typically, users stay in both Ces Clark and Pororari Huts, likely due to a lack of availability at the popular Moonlight Tops Hut.
3. 1-night stays. Some of these are Croesus Track walkers, some may be bikers going on for the night and back out the same way; however, most one-night stays are likely bikers who plan to ride the whole track in one day.

Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts

The track's mixed user group (walkers and bikers) and the 20-bunk hut capacity at Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts have resulted in uneven hut occupancy (refer to Table 10) due to one-night track users (mostly bikers) spending their one night at Moonlight.

²² [Paparoa Track Pricing Review Memo - DOC-7237310](#)

Table 10 provides an insight into how the Paparoa Track is used. Some key observations of this analysis include:

- During the summer season (1 Oct to 30 April), the typical multi-night Great Walk itineraries (2 & 3 nights) account for 47% of demand and 66% of booked bednights.
- 20% of demand is for one-night stays (likely mountain bikers) in Moonlight Tops Hut. This contributes only 11% of total bednights and is likely displacing 2 and 3-night Great Walk itineraries.
- At both ends of the track, the single-night itineraries of Ces Clark and Pororari Hut are the next most popular combination. Ces Clark Hut is the most popular of the two.
- Outside of the summer season (1 May to 30 Sep), one-night Moonlight Tops Hut stays is the most popular itinerary and the hut is mostly fully booked in the shoulder months of May and September.

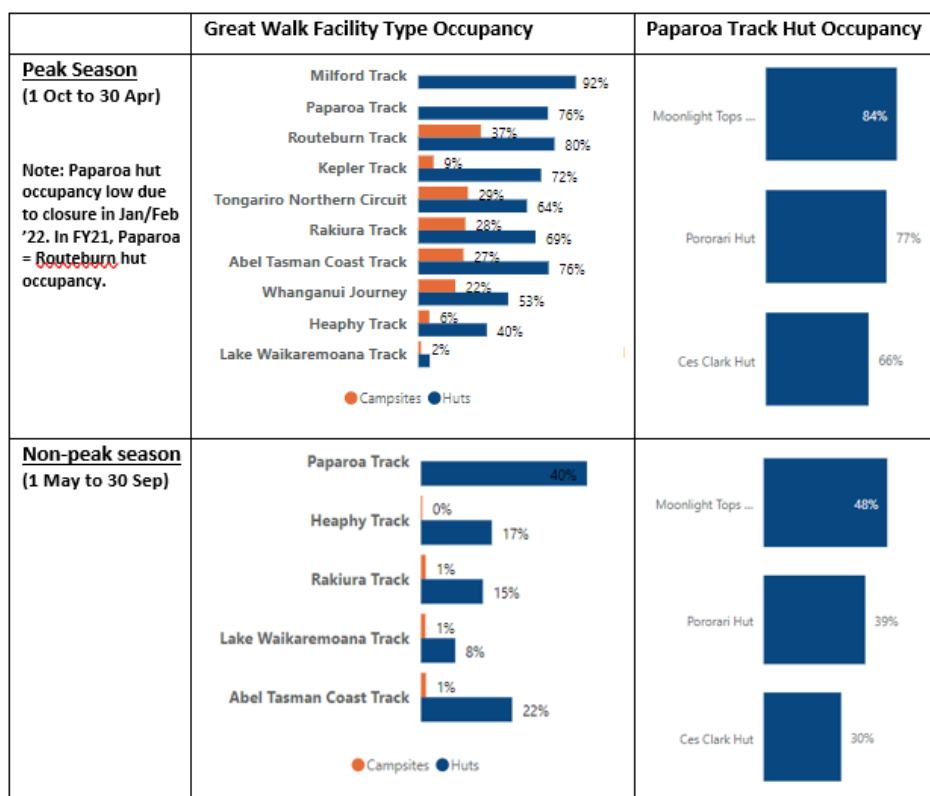
To get a better distribution of users across the available hut space, the track could benefit from demand management, particularly around the Moonlight Tops Hut bottleneck. High demand pricing options have now been approved as part of the Paparoa Track pricing review.²³

Paparoa Track hut occupancy compared to the Great Walks

Since opening in 2018/19 the Paparoa Great Walk has consistently been one of the higher-performing Great Walks in terms of hut occupancy and was one of the top performing Great Walks during Covid. Occupancy during the peak season (1 October to 30 April 2021/22) has been similar to the Routeburn and Kepler Great Walks. Paparoa Track had the highest hut occupancy and booked bednights over the winter months compared with other Great Walks that are open as Great Walks over this period. Mountain bikers use of the track contributes to this higher occupancy. For a full breakdown see Table 11.

²³ [Memo Paparoa Price Review 2022 - DOC-7237310](#)

Table 11 – Paparaoa Track hut occupancy peak and non -peak season 2021/22 comparison with Great Walks



What are the hut use patterns of mountain bikers verse walkers?

It is difficult to fully understand the hut-use patterns of biker vs walker over the two years, as a complete data set is not available. However, hut wardens kept good records of bikers vs walkers for Pororari and Moonlight Tops Hut from October 2020 to February 2021²⁴ as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 – bikers vs walkers at Moonlight and Pororari Hut

Moonlight Tops Hut	Walkers	Bikers	Pororari Hut	Walkers	Bikers
October	63.8%	37.2%	October	87%	13%
November	68.56%	31.44%	November	84.42%	15.58%
December	84.31%	20.98%	December	90.21%	9.79%
January	88.7%	11.63%	January	95.22%	4.78%
February	77.2%	22.8%	February	87.1%	12.9%
Average % for the period	75.2%	24.8%	Average % for the period	88.75%	11.25%

Bikers make up between 11% and 37% of hut users for Moonlight Tops Hut, this occupancy peaking in spring (with no reliable data available for winter). Bikers make up a smaller proportion of the users of Pororari Hut at between 5% and 13% of hut users.

²⁴ [Walkers vs bikers Paparaoa Track Oct 2020 - Feb 2021=DOC-6599590](#)

Numbers for Ces Clark Hut are less reliable as Wardens were not on site every day of each month but the following gives a good indication.

The numbers indicate that for this period approximately 1/3 of visitors to Ces Clark Hut are bikers (Table 13), approximately 1/4 of visitors to Moonlight Tops Hut are bikers and 11% of visitors to Pororari Hut are bikers. This reflects that bikers are more likely to travel from South to North spending one night on the track, predominately at Ces Clark Hut or Moonlight Tops Hut.

Table 13 – bikers vs walkers at Ces Clark Hut

Ces Clark Hut	Walkers	Bikers
October	55.8%	46.2%
November	66.7%	33.3%
December	53.3%	46.7%
January	76.2%	23.8%
February	76.2%	23.8%
Average % for the period	65.6%	34.4%

What are the potential changes to hut use on the Paparoa Track when the Pike29 Memorial Track is opened?

The planned opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track in late 2023 will provide the following new options:

- A two-day Great Walk from Smoke-ho carpark to the Pike Valley carpark, and vice versa.
- Both a one-day or two-day grade 4 mountain bike from Smoke-ho carpark to the Pike Valley carpark.
- A day walk from the Pike Valley carpark to the Vent Shaft View Point
- A short walk 10-15minutes on the Pike29 Memorial Track to the Twin Bridges

The overnight options will see further increase in demand for overnight stays at Moonlight Tops Hut

The option of a one-day grade 4 mountain bike from Smoke-ho carpark to the Pike Valley carpark is likely to be popular and will have an impact on day use of both the Moonlight Tops Hut and Ces Clark Hut.

Over the next two years the recommendations are to:

- Monitor use of the huts and the limited outdoor space at Ces Clark Hut to understand what the impacts are from increasing day use and if any changes might be required to manage impacts.
- Monitor increased pressure on toilet capacity and water supply, noting the predicted potential growth of facility use discussed earlier in this report.

Should hut capacity be increased and what would be the potential effects on visitors?

The Track is in its infancy with only two full years of use, with both years affected by significant closures due to Covid and partial closures due to road works at the Blackball end.

While hut occupancies over the first two years initially indicate some potential to grow occupancy further, forward bookings through to April 2023 indicates there is no remaining capacity at either Moonlight Tops Hut or Pororari Hut (3% or less) through the peak season to end April. There is still approximately 20% capacity available at Ces Clark Hut.

Moonlight Hut Pinch Point

While use of the track and huts are not yet fully understood it is clear there is a pinch point at Moonlight Tops Hut as it is the preferred location for mountain bikers to stay overnight. This pinch point is likely to increase with the planned opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track in late 2023. This is discussed further below.

Extending Moonlight Tops Hut

If the Moonlight Tops Hut capacity was increased, it would provide more capacity for mountain bikers wanting to do the Paparoa Track or the Pike29 Memorial Track (once it opened) as an overnight experience.

Increasing capacity at Moonlight Tops Hut alone, would not increase the capacity for walkers wanting to take three nights during the peak season. This is because forward bookings for Pororari Hut are already showing to be near capacity for the 22/23 peak season. If there was a desire to increase capacity for Great Walk walkers, both Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts would need to be extended or camping options put in place.

Discussions with a range of Department staff have highlighted there are other management tools which might spread use from Moonlight Tops Hut. Tools to do this include;

- Increase the price difference between Moonlight Tops Hut and Ces Clark, which should have the impact of shifting use away (to some degree) from Moonlight Tops Hut to Ces Clark which still has capacity.
- Off-peak lower pricing could also be used to shift bookings to the shoulder seasons, encouraging occupancy to be spread-out further through the year thereby increasing overall use of the Track.
- Promoting the Track differently for mountain bikers by encouraging more use of Ces Clark Hut. Currently there is no encouragement to use one hut over another.

Hut price differences and off-peak lower pricing has been implemented for the 2023/24. This should be monitored for effectiveness. A different approach to promoting how the Track is used should be explored.

Consequences of shifting use to Ces Clark Hut

An issue with encouraging a shift of use to Ces Clark Hut for mountain bikers is that Ces Clark Hut living space is too small for the sleeping capacity (16) and is not meeting the

Great Walk Hut Standard. If use of this hut starts to reach capacity over much of the season, then there will be a stronger case for increasing the footprint of Ces Clark Hut (if possible) to improve living conditions for visitors. In addition, moving mountain bikers to Ces Clark Hut will also likely displace walkers wanting to do a three-day overnight option.

Increasing Capacity

It is recommended decisions on increasing the capacity of the huts and developing campsites are not made until use patterns are better established and the impacts on the visitor experience are well understood. This will not likely be until after the 2024/25 Great Walk pre and post walk visitor surveys are completed and reported on after June 2025 when the Track would have had two seasons of operating with the Pike29 Memorial Track open. This information should be considered along with a better understanding of the visitor experience on the track that the Department wants to protect.

Has the use of the Annual Hut Pass and alternative booking method at Ces Clark Hut been successful?

Part of the Croesus Track is shared with the Paparoa Track. The decision to bring Ces Clark Hut into the Great Walk booking system was made towards the end of the planning phase when it was realised that adding Ces Clark Hut would make the Track more attractive to families by decreasing the distance between huts and having the option of a 4 day walk. During consideration of this option, consultation with local and national tramping clubs including FMC identified there were local trampers and hunters who walk the Croesus Track from Blackball to Barrytown, and those who liked to use Ces Clark Hut for in and out overnight trips who previously could use their Backcountry Hut Passes. The consultation resulted in an agreement to continue to allow for use of Back Country Hut passes at Ces Clark Hut.

This is managed by visitors booking online and then claiming a refund through the Paparoa Visitor Centre after the booking is made.²⁵

Results

- For the first full year of operation from 1 March 2020 – 28 February 2021, 69 visitors took advantage of this offer for a total of 83 nights, at a total refund cost of \$3,735.
- For the second full year of operation from 1 March 2021 – 28 February 2022, 85 visitors took advantage of this offer for a total of 99 nights, at a total refund cost of \$4,455.
- The uptake is small at approximately 1.7% of the total available capacity for Ces Clark Hut and the financial impact to the Department is considered minimal.

The process has been a success in providing a workable solution for the community. Anecdotal feedback from visitors using this process has been positive (pers com Senior Ranger, Greymouth District) with no bad feedback recorded. Occasionally visitors

²⁵ [Ces Clark Hut refund raw data 2020-2022 - DOC-7363523](#)

have got to Ces Clark Hut and not understood that this was an option and have sought refunds successfully post their walk. It is recommended the option to allow use of the Backcountry Hut Pass at Ces Clark Hut is continued and then re-considered again at the next review.

What are the issues and opportunities of providing campsites on the Paparoa Track?

Currently there are no designated areas for camping on the Paparoa Track. Section 5.4 of the Paparoa National Park Plan, policy 5 provides that a bylaw is sought to prohibit camping within 500m of the entire length of the Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track, unless within a designated campsite. A bylaw is not yet in place and camping is currently managed by simply stating on the DOC website that there are no campsites along the track. Getting a bylaw in place has been tasked to the Statutory Planning Team and work on this is underway.

Providing designated campsites on the track has been raised as a question particularly because the hut accommodation is nearing capacity. Camping as an option for accommodation is available on most of the Great Walks although that doesn't mean it should necessarily be provided on the Paparoa Track.

Benefits of offering camping options:

- Help ease use at Moonlight Tops Hut (which is the main pinch point) and Pororari Hut and increase tramping options for taking three nights
- Enable more people to use the tracks by increasing capacity for walkers (and bikers keen to carry a tent) as accommodation is the main limiting factor.
- Potentially generate more revenue although a full cost/benefit should be considered.
- Offer visitors a lower cost accommodation option enabling a wider group of people to access the track and connect with nature and cultural heritage.
- Increase options for walkers taking three nights as opposed to two.
- Provide an alternative for some people who prefer to camp rather than sleep in shared bunkrooms with the associated noise and congestion.

Challenges/issues with providing designated campsites on the Track including:

- Understanding impacts on conservation values through potential removal of vegetation and compaction.
- Understanding if accommodation capacity has actually been reached and if there would be a demand for camping.
- Determining how many visitors campsites should cater for.
- Determine if there is an increased risk to visitors from exposure to weather events that is tolerable to the Great Walk visitors.
- Identification of suitable locations for campsites that would not impact on the experience of other visitors.
- Understand the cost/benefit analysis of introducing camping.
- Determine the carrying capacity of the campgrounds.

- Determine the priority of camping infrastructure to support campsites, i.e., toilets/shelters and water supplies against national investment needs.
- Understanding if increasing the capacity on the Track could change the nature of the experience for other visitors.

Some of these challenges/issues are not well understood at present. As noted earlier in this report, there are other management tools which might ease use at Moonlight Tops Hut. Decisions on the option of campsites should not be considered until the impact of Pike29 is understood after the 2024/25 season.

7. Visitor experience and satisfaction

What is the visitor experience we want to provide and what are the unique selling points of the Paparoa Track?

There are a number of broader objectives/key factors that drive the visitor experience and unique selling points of the Paparoa Track:

- Providing a dual purpose Great Walk memorial track to remember the 29 men who lost their lives in the Pike River Mine Disaster which will provide a spiritual place for the Pike River families, iwi and the public.
- To provide a 2-3 day Great Walk year round and a 1-2 day Grade 4 (advanced) cycle ride linking the coastal landscape of Punakaiki to the mining heritage of the Pike River mine and Blackball.²⁶
- To bring social and economic benefits to the surrounding communities such that the Paparoa Track and the Pike29 Memorial Track are successful and valued by the local community and visitors.

There is a commitment to incorporate the views and desires of the Pike River families and actively involve Ngai Tahu/Ngāti Waewae in any changes to facilities that might impact the visitor experience.

PNPMP

The PNPMP provides some guidance on contributing factors to the visitor experience to consider: (see Appendix 2 for the relevant PNPMP policies)

- avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects on the qualities of peace and natural quiet, solitude and remoteness where this is an important feature and expectation of visitor experience;
- avoiding or minimising conflicts between those undertaking different types or similar activities in the same location.
- Allows for future consideration of purpose-built concession huts and use of e-bikes (if assessed as consistent with the above policies)

²⁶ Paparoa National Park Management Plan – Outcomes 5.4 a)

The 2020/21 and 2021/22 Great Walk post-visit visitor surveys indicate the experiences of visitors are meeting expectations for tranquillity; 'limited' disturbance by other visitor behaviours and encounters with other people. However, because the Track has only been operating for two full seasons and the Pike29 Memorial Track is expected to open at the end of 2023, it is not yet understood how the use of the Pike29 Memorial Track will impact the visitor experience on the Great Walk.

More thinking and agreement is required on the unique selling points offered by the Paparoa Track in order to protect the visitor experience.

Strategic framework for New Zealand's 10 Great Walks

The Paparoa Track is one of New Zealand's 10 Great Walks. The Department has recently developed a strategic framework to manage the Great Walks consistently under a set of key parameters and required outcomes that the Tracks must meet²⁷.

This framework provides an overall purpose for the Great Walks, customers profiles and a number of required outcomes that are associated with the visitor experience as well as foundational requirements that the Great Walks must demonstrate to be added or retained. (See Appendix 3). The framework will need to be considered in future thinking.

Great Walks – overall purpose

“To provide a range of premier, independent, multi-day experiences for less experienced people to access Aotearoa/New Zealand's outstanding natural landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural heritage.” ²⁷

The physical visitor experience

Starting from Smoke-ho carpark the Paparoa Track follows in the footsteps of gold miners on the historic Croesus Track. The Paparoa Track crosses the Paparoa Range taking you through remote and spectacular wilderness of the Paparoa National Park including; alpine tops, limestone karst landscapes and thriving rainforests.

Incredible sunsets over the Tasman Sea from Moonlight Tops Hut can be enjoyed and the spectacular Pororari River Gorge can be explored, with dramatic limestone cliffs, beech forests and glades of subtropical nīkau palms.

The waharoa carved by a team of Ngāti Waewae carvers can be admired at the Paparoa Track entrances and exits and reflect the spiritual significance of the Paparoa National Park to Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Waewae.

Some sections of the track are steep and rough and challenging in poor weather. Walkers will need a good level of fitness and the right equipment. It is a tough ride and not to be underestimated and should only be taken on by fit, experienced riders with good equipment.

²⁷ [Great Walks Product Set Strategic Framework - DOC-7083169](#)

Service Standards and visitor experience

The Department's hut and track standards for Great Walks also drive the visitor experience. Based on the Department's Track Standards²⁸ the Paparoa Track is an Easy (Great Walk) Tramping Tracks catering for less experienced trampers. This visitor group is referred to as Backcountry Comfort Seekers who expect a low-risk experience in the backcountry. The Track was also designed to meet the New Zealand Cycle Trail off road 'Grade 4: Advanced' Trail Standard.

The foundational requirements for a Great Walk note that the walks must have the following visitor risk levels which are relevant to the Paparoa Track:

- hiking – relatively inexperienced/entry level multi-day walkers (low-medium risk and 'reasonably manageable' walking experience)
- mountain biking – advanced expertise (tracks are level 4 and above)

To what degree are visitors satisfied with their experience on the Paparoa Track?

The Department's annual Great Walk survey provides a wealth of information about the visitors' satisfaction with their experience. As part of assessing performance of our Great Walks, a survey is carried out both pre and post the Great Walk visit. Responses to key questions measure satisfaction with facilities and services on the Paparoa Track.

In summary, for 2021/22 the overall satisfaction levels for the Paparoa Track were high. Essentially 93% were very or extremely satisfied, which is the same as for the Great Walks as a whole.

Are visitors satisfied/dissatisfied?

Visitor satisfaction questions consider a range of facilities and services including the following (key areas where visitor satisfaction levels are high are noted):

- Safety information and structures (84% of visitors were highly satisfied with safety information)
- DOC rangers/hut wardens
- Condition of the track, huts (84% of visitors were highly satisfied with track conditions, 90% of visitors were highly satisfied with the huts and their facilities.)
- Facilities in the huts/shelters (cooking equipment, drying racks, washrooms, heating etc)
- Distance between huts and toilets

There were some key scores where satisfaction levels were lower or lower than the Great Walks as a whole:

- Approximately 52 % were highly satisfied with the information provided about nature, local history and Māori culture. This is still higher than the Greats Walks as a whole.
- Approximately 50% agreed they felt connected to nature and natural and human (including Māori) history, this was still higher than the Great Walks as a whole.

²⁸ Standards New Zealand Handbook – Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures (2004) (SNZ HB 8630:2004)

- Approximately 75% of visitors were highly satisfied with the toilets, 74% with Hut Wardens, both lower than the Great Walks as a whole.
- 78% agreed the experience was good value for money which is higher than the Great Walks as a whole.

A full list of the key items measured for satisfaction, results and comparisons with the Great Walks as a whole for the 2021/22 year is set out in Appendix 4.

How can we ensure visitors are satisfied?

There is a monitoring and evaluation process in place as part of a strategy to manage the Great Walks within a consistent framework.

High visitor satisfaction with the overall experience, and specifically the landscapes, cultural heritage, biodiversity, facilities, and hosting experienced is one of the required outcomes for the Great Walks. This includes the entire customer journey from booking to completing the experience.

Post visit monitoring surveys, including questions on visitor satisfaction help inform where more effort could be focused. The 2021/22 survey indicates more effort could be focused on helping visitors feel more connected to nature, providing information on nature and human (including māori) history and on improving toilet facilities.

Is there conflict between walkers and mountain bikers?

A question on the Great Walk Visitor Survey asked visitors if they were disturbed by the presence of guided walkers or bikers. Results show that 90% of visitors did not experience any disturbance between the two user groups. 1 % of respondents were disturbed a lot, 3% were disturbed moderately, 6% were slightly disturbed.²⁹

These results should continue to be monitored as more day bikers use the Track following the opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track.

A number of specific comments were made in regard to bikers, key themes included:

- Use of ebikes on the track when they were not allowed
- The track had a hard track surface designed for bikers resulting in sore feet
- No revenue from day bikers
- Needing to be aware of bikers due to risk and lack of biking etiquette
- Walkers disadvantaged by bikers booking Moonlight Tops Hut

A selection of comments on interactions between walkers and bikers can be found in Appendix 5, these have been taken from the 2021/22 Great Walk Post -Visit Guest Survey³⁰.

As noted earlier in the report ebike use may be addressed at a later stage. Messaging about the track surface being hard because it has to cater for mountain bikers could be incorporated into web site messaging.

²⁹ [Great Walk Guest Survey - Question 21 - disturbance - DOC-7418239](#)

³⁰ [Expanded Great Walk Post Visit Survey Paparoa Great Walk](#)

The historic sections of the track from Smoke-ho carpark to Ces Clark Hut being much rougher due to its historic nature is already referred to in the track guide which is available online but be more prominent in the web site messaging. This would help manage visitor expectations.

A cashless donations system for day users could be explored or trialled following solutions being looked at by the Department’s Information Systems and Services Team on standalone cashless donation systems.

Expectations Vs Experiences

Based on 2021/22 Pre-and post-visit Great Walk survey results shown in Table 14 the experiences of visitors appear to meet expectations for the below attributes.

Table 14 - Expectations versus experience from 2021/22 Pre-and post-visit Great Walk survey

The experiences being measured	Pre - visit expectations	Post-visit experiences
Experiencing natural soundscapes /tranquillity	for 87% of visitors this was very or extremely important	92% agreed a lot or totally agreed that they experienced Natural soundscapes /tranquillity
Not being disturbed by the behaviour of other guests during the day or night	for 47% of visitors this was very or extremely important and for 28.3% this was moderately important	62% agreed a lot or totally agreed that they were not disturbed by the behaviour of other guests during the day or night, a further 22.6% agreed moderately
The number of other people encountered being low	for 34% of visitors this was very or extremely important and for another 36% this was moderately important. For 30% this was only slightly or not at all important.	46% agreed a lot or totally agreed the number of other people encountered was low, another 33% agreed moderately

Visitor Risk and Safety - Is the Great Walk managed to the approved level of risk?

Prior to opening the Paparoa Track a full visitor risk assessment was carried out³¹ in line with the ‘Managing Risks to Visitors on Public Conservation Lands and Waters Standard Operating Procedure³². This assessed the hazards and level of risk to the intended user groups on the Paparoa Track. The types of hazards identified and the way they have been managed was assessed as consistent with the relevant service standards. It was considered that the hazards associated with the Paparoa Track had been appropriately managed to meet Visitor Risk Management Best Practice Guidelines and that any

³¹ [Visitor Risk Assessment - Full Paparoa Track 2020 - DOC-6207043](#)

³² [Managing Risks to Visitors SOP - DOC-2852133](#)

residual risk will be tolerable for the intended user groups. ('Backcountry Comfort Seekers' and 'Advanced' level mountain bikers). It is normal to review the risk assessment every three years.

Do visitors receive enough information on risks for them to be able to make an informed decision on deciding to do the Paparoa Track?

Yes, visitors receive enough information on the Paparoa Track from the pre-trip information and the Paparoa Track brochure on the website. The feedback from visitor surveys shows 84% of visitors are satisfied with the visitor safety information.

Visitor satisfaction level with safety information

The 2021/22 Great Walk post-visit survey shows that 86% of those surveyed were very or extremely satisfied with safety information and structures (signs, barrier, bridges, trail markers) and a further 11% were moderately satisfied. 88% of those surveyed agreed totally or agreed a lot that they had all the information they needed to complete the 'Great Walk' safely and a further 9% agreed moderately with 3% slightly agreeing or not agreeing at all.

Satisfaction levels for safety information provided on the Paparoa Track is the same as the Great Walks as a whole.

Incidents/hazards

The extent to which visitor safety-related incidents and hazards are reported by track users is an indicator of potential risk.

The 2021/23 Great Walk survey questioned visitors if they or a member of their party or group experienced any incidences or hazards. The results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: 2021/22 Incidents and hazard responses

Questions	% Yes	% No
Suffered from an injury	7.4	92.6
Suffered from illness	0.7	99.3
Suffered from dehydration/heat stress	0.7	99.3
Suffered from hypothermia	0.2	99.8
Suffered from exhaustion	2.3	97.7
Feared serious injury or death	1.1	98.9
Became lost or disorientated	0.9	99.1
Ran out of food	0.2	99.8
Needed better/more clothing or equipment	2.7	97.3
Wanted to abandon the journey before reaching the end.	2	98
Needed to be rescued or evacuated	0.2	99.8

A range of injuries were reported in more detail, mostly these were minor with one injury resulting in an evacuation, where a walker twisted their back.³³

8. E-bike use

What is the potential demand for e-bike use

E-bikes are not allowed to be used on the Paparoa Track; this is made clear on the DOC website in the pre-trip information. There is no official data for the Paparoa Track on e-bike numbers Vs non-e-bikers.

Electric e-bike imports have increased from 23,000 units to 57,000 units from 2017 to 2021 according to StatsNZ Import Data.

A google search indicates that in the U.S. the leading age groups for e-bike use are 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. Based on the Great Walk survey result these age groups made up 58.4% of the Paparoa Track visitors in 2021/22 showing potential demand for e-bike use.

It is recommended a review of e-bike use is carried out as provided for in the Paparoa National Park Management Plan once the West Coast CMS has been reviewed and following the Departments national review of biking.

9. Economic and social benefits

Understanding the changes in economic and social benefits to the surrounding communities is important given it was one of the key reasons for the Track and improving regional and community wellbeing is one of the 9 key shifts being driven by the DOC Heritage and Visitor Strategy³⁴.

Have social and economic benefits to the local and broader communities been realised from the Paparoa Track?

One of the reasons for establishing the Paparoa Track was to bring recreation and economic benefits to the Greymouth and Buller communities. The 2015 Pike River to Punakaiki Track Feasibility Study³⁵ estimated there would be 6 Direct FTE's and 7 indirect FTE's and a total visitor expenditure (direct output) of \$545,000 per annum³⁶.

The analysis shows that Paparoa Track added value to the West Coast as a visitor destination and has delivered economic and social benefits to the surrounding communities for example 11 permanent FTE jobs and 16 FTE seasonal jobs. However,

³³ [Paparoa Great Walk 2021 -22 post visit survey - expanded - DOC-7077513](#)

³⁴ [Heritage and Visitor Strategy \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)

³⁵ [Pike River Facilities Feasibility Study - DOC-2583094](#)

³⁶ This amount was calculated using \$545 per person and 1000 visitors per annum. The \$545 was based on 2 nights' accommodation on the track, transport shuttle, food for 3 days, fuel for round trip from Christchurch and one nights accommodation at the end of the beginning or end of the trip.

due to differences in methodology the analysis cannot be definitive about the extent and whether the benefits received are greater than initially thought to be received.

It is also noted that COVID and resulting lockdowns and lack of international visitors affected the level of social and economic benefits from the Paparoa Track for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 years.

The methods to assess the economic and social benefits of the Paparoa Track included calculating the visitor spend,³⁷ surveying the local business community^{38 39} and reviewing the concessions activity.

Economic benefits

The economic benefits were assessed to determine whether the expectations set out in the feasibility report were realised. The analysis was based on calculating direct visitor spend and a survey of local businesses.

Direct Spend in the Region

Of the 6625 overnight visitors on the Track in 2021/22, 5876 visitors were doing the Paparoa Track as the main reason for their visit to the West Coast. 5% of the original number or 331 visitors were already from the West Coast. In 2021/22 approximately 990 visitors cycled the Paparoa Track in one day. Assuming consistency between day users and overnight reason for visiting the West Coast we can estimate direct spend in the region noting 5% of day users are locals. The average daily expenditure of track users contributes approximately \$521 to the local economy²². The total direct spend in the Region arising from the provision of the Paparoa Track is approximately \$3.38 million, with details shown in Table 16.

³⁷ [Calculating the Direct Spend - Dhrit's Memo - DOC-7374223](#)

³⁸ The survey carried out over January and February 2023 with the assistance of Development West Coast and the DOC Monitoring and Evaluation Team. It provided information on both economic and social benefits. [SurveyMonkey Analyze - Paparoa Track: Community Survey](#)

³⁹ The response rate was low at around 10% with 43 responses in total, which affects the confidence in the stated benefits from providing the track.

Table 16: Direct and indirect spend from visitors on the Paparoa Track for 2021/22

Tourism expenditure and GDP estimates from Development West Coast based on relationship of TECT to MRTE data							
Period: March 2021 to February 2022		Average expenditure per visitor per visit (\$) (as per TECT)* ⁴⁰	Ratio of TECT/MRTE#	Average expenditure per visitor per visit (\$) (as expanded to MRTE)##	Total expenditure (\$)	Tourism GDP/Tourism expenditure ratio##	Tourism GDP (Direct value added(\$))
Paparoa Great Walk and hut users (excluding already in West Coast)	5545	\$207	0.40	\$521	\$2,890,229	0.36	\$1,041,742
Cyclists at Paparoa (excluding already in West Coast)	940	\$207	0.40	\$521	\$489,958	0.36	\$176,598
Total	6485			Total	\$3,380,187	Total	\$1,218,340

Any conclusions on whether the economic benefits are greater than expected cannot be considered definitive. This is because methodology used for this report is different to the methodology used in the feasibility study. However, it is noted that visitor numbers are notably higher than predicted in the Feasibility Study.

The Paparoa Track has clearly added value to the West Coast as a visitor destination and economic and social benefits appear to be accruing to the surrounding communities.

The survey of local businesses indicated that out of 43 respondents 25 (59%) said they own or operate a business that derives revenue/sales directly or indirectly from users of the Paparoa Track. The 25 businesses stated:

- 22% employed or intend to employ additional staff for the 22/23 season, as a direct result of the Track opening
- 26% have added goods & services to their business offering following the opening of the Track
- 22% have invested in formal staff training
- 44% invested in plant, equipment, facilities etc and sourced goods and/or services from other local businesses
- No businesses said they started up as a direct result of the opening of the Paparoa Track

⁴⁰ *Tourism Electronic card transactions (TECT) are based almost exclusively on physical electronic card transactions and do not include cash, pre-purchases or online spend.

#Monthly Regional Tourism Expenditure (MRTE) is a more accurate representation of tourism expenditure as it also covers expenditures left out by TECT. However, MRTE are only available up to October 2020. On average, TECT was 40% of MRTE based total tourism expenditure from March 2019 to February 2020. This has been used to expand the average tourism expenditure based on TECT of \$207 to \$521 per visitor based on MRTE.

Derived as a ratio of Tourism GDP for West Coast (source: Infometrics) to Tourism expenditure estimate based on blowing up TECT to MRTE data.

- 69-78% of businesses thought there was a slight or moderate benefit to sales and profitability while 13% thought there was a large or very large benefit to their business
- 22% thought there was a large or very large benefit to the resilience of their business
- 26% thought there was a large or very large benefit from the opportunity for growth or expansion

How has the track contributed to creating sustainable and resilient jobs in local communities?

The results of the survey of local businesses show that, 30% of business created one or more full time jobs following the opening of the track with a total of 11 permanent FTE jobs and 16 FTE seasonal jobs.

The social benefits questions in the survey of local businesses indicated that:

- Of the 38 respondents, 37% were very or extremely satisfied with the level of benefits the track has brought to the respondents and their family's and a further 24% were moderately satisfied.
- Of the 36 respondents:
 - 28% were very or extremely satisfied and a further 39% were moderately satisfied
 - 58% had either walked or biked the track either end to end or in part
- Respondents were asked what actions they would recommend to enable more benefits to local businesses, people and communities from the Paparoa Track. A list of the recommended actions is summarised in Appendix 6.

Have opportunities for concessions been realised?

The opportunity for new businesses has been assessed by looking at the concession opportunities and added-value businesses. These included:

- Recreation Concessions – yes 35 concessions have been approved, with several now active.
- Sporting events – one event concession has been granted but not occurred yet
- Shuttle services – new shuttle services are now in place.

Recreation Concessions

There are 35 concessions associated with recreation on the Paparoa Track including activities for guiding (cycling and walking), photography, parking and filming that are permitted on parts or all the Paparoa Track⁴¹.

There are only 2 guiding concessions that include the use of the whole Paparoa Track, the remaining guiding concessions are for day walking at either end of the track or are

⁴¹ [Concessions on Paparoa Track April 2023 - DOC-7342166](#)

on the Inland Pack Track or the Croesus Track (which share parts of the Paparoa Track). One of the two concessionaires using the full Paparoa Track is only permitted to operate up to twice per month and 24 times per year. The other can operate up to 5 times per week year-round. The maximum group size permitted is 6 people including guides.

Based on activity returns, only one operator has been actively guiding on the Track, with a total of 21 trips.

Aircraft

There are no recreational aircraft concessions (landings) permitted inside the Paparoa National Park. There are a number of aircraft concessions (landings) that allow for 2 landings per day with a maximum total of 20 per year for the section of Paparoa Track outside the Paparoa National Park, these permits provide for dropping off of recreationists.

Sporting Events

The Paparoa National Park Management Plan allows for two sporting events per annum on the Paparoa Track and the Pike29 Memorial Track. There is currently one concession for a sporting event which allows for competitive races held annually, comprising a Mountain Bike Event and a Trail Run Traverse Race. This concession has not occurred yet.

Shuttle Operators

Shuttle operators do not require a concession to operate as two of the three carparks are not on public conservation land and the Pororari River carpark, which is on public conservation land, is not used as the normal pick up/drop off location. It is understood that the tavern across the road serves as the pickup and drop off point.

Has there been new services available to the community that has come largely as a result of the increase in visitors

Of the businesses surveyed none said they started up as a direct result of the Paparoa Track opening however we know that both the shuttle services and the guiding concession mentioned above were new services that started as a result of the opening of the Paparoa Track.

10. Financial Health

Does the Paparoa Track fund itself from its revenue? And how well (efficiently) does the Paparoa Track use its OPEX and CAPEX?

Analysis on the financial performance of the Paparoa Track was carried out by the Department's Strategy, Investment and Pricing team as part of the pricing review. The following information is drawn from that review⁴² along with some additional analysis.

⁴² [Memo- Paparoa Price Review - DOC-7237310](#)

The costs and revenues from the Paparoa Track for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are set out on Table 17 and are for the two full years that the track has operated.

Table 17 – Costs and revenues 2020/23

Paparoa Track	2020/21	2021/22
OPEX (incl wages, expenses, depreciation)	\$647,000	\$580,000
Capital Charge	\$245,000	\$236,000
Overhead	\$ 90,000	\$ 80,000
Total Cost	\$982,000	\$896,000
Revenue	\$461,000	\$398,000
Cost recovery	47%	44%

The cost-recovery position of the Great Walks as a whole over the last five years is 94%.

Cost recovery for the Paparoa Track declined slightly from 47% in 2021, to 44% for 2022. This was due to a greater decrease in revenue compared to the decrease in costs. The cost reduction was from 10% reduction in operating expenses. The decrease in revenue was on the back of a 14% reduction in occupancy (due to the track closure for heavy rain in early February 2022).

Paparoa Track hut occupancy has been 88% over 19/20 and 20/21 and 76% for the 21/22 summer seasons. This is close to the hut occupancy of Kepler, Abel Tasman and Routeburn tracks, each of which have achieved over 100% cost recovery within the last five years (including both pre-COVID and pre-differential pricing). Despite its high occupancy, there are some critical factors that resulted in the lower level of cost recovery (44% for FY22) for Paparoa Track relative to other high-occupancy Great Walks. They are:

- Higher costs
The Paparoa Track is in a ‘settling in period’ as it has only been operating a very short time, the maintenance needs of the track and problem points are still being understood.
- Cost savings in the initial design of the huts and track resulted in additional expenditure over the first two years, for example, water tanks were under sized and there were additional costs from flying in water and then installation of larger water tanks; fix up tasks such as to fire flue systems and a new ventilation system needed installing due to moisture in the huts. The track itself has had issues resulting in higher operating costs over first two years.
- The dual design of the Paparoa Track and the different water management system which relies on regular swale clearance and shaping to maintain a quality experience (including meeting standards for a grade 4 mountain bike track) also means that maintenance of the track is labour intensive. Additionally, the Pike 29 Memorial Track (considered to be part of the Great Walk) while not quite

finished has also required operating expenditure to maintain the work completed to date.

- As a result of all of the above, the track has had a higher maintenance cost over the last two years than the other Great Walks.
- Lower revenue
 - lower bednight capacity⁴³
 - lower prices (including no differential pricing).

A more detailed breakdown of costs including salary and operating along with 4-year expenditure and revenue forecasts is being prepared as part of a separate report 'Paparoa Track Operational Review'. Ways to reduce operational costs are constantly being explored.

The Great Walks Strategic Framework has a number of business processes that going forward that will help drive improvements. This includes the requirement for an annual Monitoring and Evaluation Plan⁴⁴ including a measurement framework that has key performance measures that will measure financial.

11. Hut Fee Review⁴⁵

Hut fees: Currently \$45 per person per night. How does this compare with other Great Walks, is this set at the right level? What are the recommendations for huts fees?

The Department has undertaken a pricing review for the Paparoa Track huts. The key findings and outcomes summarised below.

The initial pricing for huts at \$45 per adult person per night (youth free) was developed in conjunction with the local community as part of the wider goal of economic development on the West Coast. The pricing was set up as a two-year trial to be reviewed following this period. The price review was delayed a year to ensure that two full years of track performance data could be obtained.

In 2019, a complete review of the Great Walk price structure was undertaken. It resulted in a 4-Tier price structure for the Great Walks. The Paparoa Track was initially placed in Tier 2 along with Abel Tasman Coast Track. The price range for Tier 2 huts is \$40-\$50 per adult per night (including GST). Prices for Tier 1 Great Walks are set on an individual basis.

Aligning hut prices to comparable Great Walks

A review of the Paparoa Track's hut occupancy indicated it performed well, and over the peak season (October to April) visitor demand aligns with our other Tier 1 Great Walks such as Routeburn and Kepler Great Walks. However, its cost recovery position of 44% is

⁴³ Bednight capacity of Paparoa ranges between 32% and 42% of Kepler, Milford and Routeburn.

⁴⁴ [Great Walks Monitoring and Evaluation Plan - DOC-7082920](#)

⁴⁵ [Memo - Paparoa Price Review -DOC-7237310](#)

lower than other comparable Great Walks (comparable in terms of occupancy performance, such as the Routeburn and Kepler Track). The key factors in this poor cost recovery are the track's higher costs and lower revenues compared to Milford, Routeburn and Kepler tracks. The Paparoa Track has smaller bunk capacity than these other Great Walks (20 bunks compared to 40+ bunks) and lower nightly hut prices (\$45 compared to \$73 on the Milford and \$68 on the Kepler and Routeburn). There is also no international differential pricing for the Paparoa Track. Pricing for Moonlight Tops and Pororari Huts will be increased to align with the Tier 1 Great Walk huts for 2024.

Bottleneck at Moonlight Tops Hut

Analysis of hut use and occupancy rates show that there is also a bottleneck at Moonlight Tops Hut and the track could benefit from high demand pricing at Moonlight Tops Hut, which provides the opportunity to increase revenue.

Shoulder seasons

The Paparoa Track is open as a Great Walk year-round, unlike the other Tier-1 Great Walks. Hut occupancy over the winter (Jun-Aug) is low, and there will be minimal change to prices in these months. For 2021/22 Moonlight Tops Hut had reasonably high occupancy in the shoulder seasons (May and September) and pricing will be increased during this shoulder as well. This provides the opportunity to gain greater revenue as well as encourage higher occupancy over winter through higher prices over summer and the shoulder seasons.

Differential Pricing

As international visitors return to pre-covid levels, Paparoa Track huts are expected to have a proportion of international visitor use similar to Heaphy Track and Abel Tasman Coast Track (between 24-38% walkers and bikers 16%) during the summer season. It is considered that this level of international demand is sufficient to implement differential pricing at the Paparoa Track.

The review concluded that, to manage visitor demand, hut-by-hut seasonal pricing should be implemented on the Paparoa Track, with pricing determined by the levels of use and how users will be encouraged to spread from high-use to lower-use times of the year.

2023/24 Hut Prices

The following change in hut pricing from 1 July 2023.

1. Increase Moonlight Tops Hut's price to \$70 for October to April (summer season), and \$55 for May and September (shoulder season).
2. Increase Pororari Hut's price to \$55 for October to April (summer season).
3. Introduce international differential pricing to Paparoa Track huts for October to April (summer season) at the differential of 1.5.

Refer to Table 18 for the approved new hut prices for NZ resident and non-resident users.

Table 18 – prices for 2023/24

NZ resident fee	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Ces Clarke Hut	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Moonlight Hut	45	45	55	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	55	45
Pororari Hut	45	45	45	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	45	45

Non-resident fee (+50%)	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Ces Clarke Hut	45	45	45	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	45	45
Moonlight Hut	45	45	55	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	55	45
Pororari Hut	45	45	45	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	45	45

Representatives of the Pike River families and Ngāti Waewae supported the proposed price changes.

The forecasted additional revenue from these price changes is expected to be between +\$34,000 (+10%) and +\$155,000 (+45%), contingent on the return of international visitors and how many of them use this Great Walk.

12. Paparoa Track Investment Plan

As part of the Great Walk Product Set Strategic Framework each Great Walk will have its own plan that will enable current and future planning and management; outlining the visitor experience, service levels and standards that will be monitored to ensure consistency across Great Walks. These plans will also include a five year investment plan. The Paparoa Track Great Walk Plan is expected to be initiated in the latter half of 2023.

Once the visitor use of the track is better understood and we understand the experience we want to provide and protect, then we can consider if potential opportunities for further investment such as extending huts and providing campsites, is appropriate.

There are a number of opportunities for potential further investment on the Paparoa Track, some considered fairly urgent such as bringing some sections of the track and facilities up to standard to meet visitor expectations, reducing ongoing maintenance costs and improving operational aspects. There are a number of operational issues such as water supply systems, woodsheds, staff and wardens' accommodation that are being considered as part of the Departments visitor assets capital processes. These more urgent proposals will be considered along with other bids nationally in the Departments national visitor asset capital process.

13. Working with Others

The Paparoa Track was intended to be an enduring memorial to the 29 Miners who lost their lives on 19th November 2010 in the Pike River Mine Disaster. Created in partnership with the families of the men, Ngati Waewae and the Department of Conservation the 55km long track is not only a memorial but also a thankyou to New Zealanders for their unwavering support of the Pike River Families.

Pike River families

The partnership with the Pike River Families has been from inception to delivery of the Paparoa Track and continues with the Pike River Memorial Facilities. The Pike River Mine Transition Project Families Committee Working Group represented the families and provided input into the design of the Great Walk facilities at the concept design through to the final design stages.

The Department has maintained and continues to maintain a good relationship with the Pike River Families and is committed to incorporating their views and desires in changes to facilities that might impact the visitor experience.

Working with Te Runanga o Ngāti Waewae on the Paparoa Track?

The Department's partnership with Ngāti Waewae included development of the Paparoa Track and involves ongoing management of the Paparoa Track and development of the Pike29 Memorial Track and facilities. The work included;

1. PNPMP Review
2. Development of the Assessment of Environmental Effects for the Paparoa & Pike29 Memorial Tracks via a cultural values report
3. Development of the concepts and detailed design for the Pike River Memorial Facilities and Paparoa Track interpretation, as a co-designer with the Pike River Families and the Department
4. Implementation of the agreed interpretive material and cultural items on the Paparoa Track (waharoa, pou whenua, interp panels, corporate signage)
5. Ngāti Waewae partnered the Department on events associated with major announcements, openings, unveilings etc

What opportunities has there been working with others to protect the natural environment?

Milestone 3 in table 8 of the PNPMP states:

“Community involvement in pest control programmes is being encouraged and supported, including initiatives on the Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track and goat control in Tī Kōuka Place and throughout Paparoa National Park.”

The Department encourages people wanting to get involved in pest control. There are currently two main community groups that are supported with pest control programmes in the Paparoa National Park and in the vicinity of the Paparoa Track (Pororari River to Moonlight Junction). These are the Paparoa Wildlife Trust (PWT) who operate under a community agreement and the West Coast Alpine Club acting as volunteers for the Department. (See Appendix 7 for further details on the work of these community groups)

There is one further group, 'Predator Free Punakaiki' that has 12 A24 traps around Dolomite Point. This group was initially funded through a Department funding programme and this group continues to operate.

While there is a similar need for goat control in these areas there are no community groups that carry out goat control in the Paparoa National Park. This is likely because the ability for community involvement in controlling goats is limited by accessibility, skills and competency required. The only form of community involvement in goat control is by recreational hunters although there is one person who voluntarily carries out goat hunting targeting the Punakaiki area.

14. Conclusion

The first two full years of visitors on the Paparoa Track, from 1 March 2020 to 28 February 2022 have been a success in terms of exceeding target visitor numbers and benefitting local communities. The Track has delivered on the 5-year Milestone in the PNPMP which sought these outcomes.

Hut occupancy levels of the Paparoa Track are performing at a similar level to the other high performing Great Walks. Future use is expected to grow and huts will be operating close to maximum capacity by year end 2024.

Day use is significant at the Northern end of the Paparoa Track and day use at the southern will likely increase significantly with the opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track late in 2023 and should be planned for. Anecdotally e-bike use is significant and growing despite e-bikes not being allowed on the track. Providing for e-bike use on the Paparoa Track should be reviewed following a review of the CMS as per PNPMP policy.

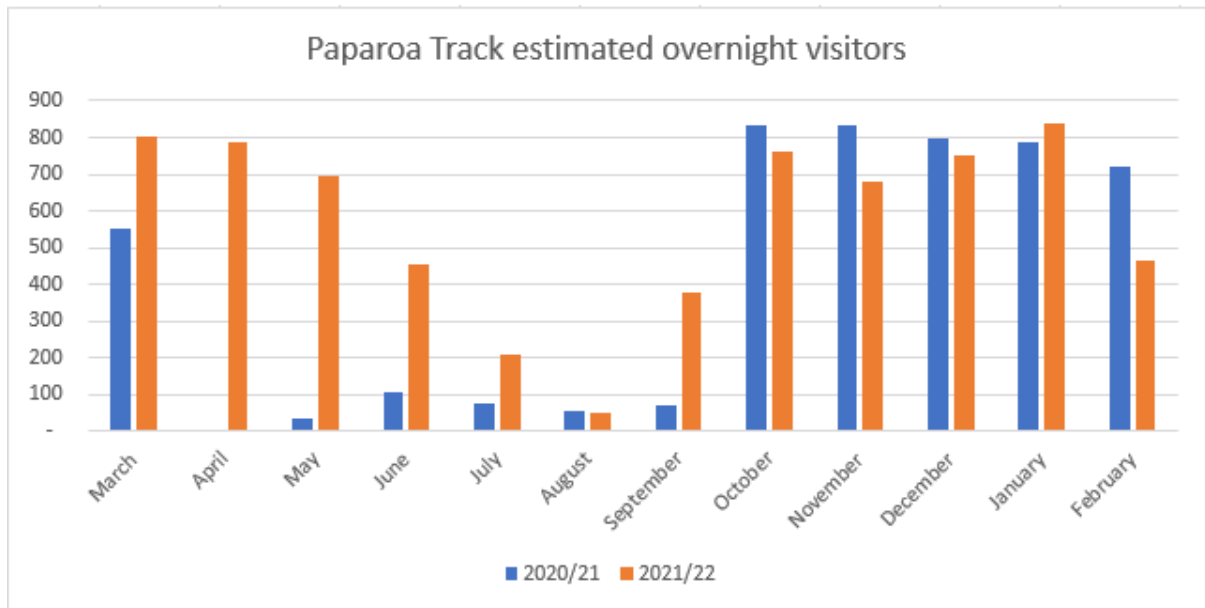
Visitor satisfaction levels are high with a few areas indicating more effort could be focused on helping visitors be more connected to nature, providing information on nature and human (including Māori history) and on improving toilet facilities.

Financially the track is performing lower than the Great Walks overall, at least in part because the track is in a settling in phase, maintenance, track closures and the operating needs of the track are still being understood. As noted above, visitor patterns are still changing and with the opening of the Pike29 Memorial Track this will bring additional costs with no additional revenue.

The hut price increases being implemented from July 2023 as a result of the Hut Price Review will help increase revenue, but the financial health of the Track will need to be actively monitored and managed.

Future Investment will be guided by The Great Walks Strategic Framework and a Great Walk Plan for the Paparoa Track, which will enable current and future planning and management and ensure consistent delivery of service levels and standards.

15. Appendix 1 – Estimated overnight visitors by month



16. Appendix 2 - Relevant Paparoa National Park Management Plan policies

Under Recreation Values

Policy 2.3.5 States *“Seek to avoid or otherwise minimise conflicts between those undertaking different types of or similar activities in the same location.”*

policy 2.3.7 states *“Avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the qualities of peace and natural quite, solitude and remoteness where this is an important feature and expectation of visitor experience.”*

The Outcome Section for Tī kōuka Place under 5.3 Recreation Values notes that *“the development of purpose built concession huts and use of e-bikes may be considered sometime in the future once the track has matured.”* And also *“Management of the recreation opportunities in Tīkōuka Place seeks to maintain, as far as possible, the natural remote setting of this place.”*

Section 5.4 Policies - Pike29 Memorial Track and Paparoa Track

Te ara Pike29 and Te ara Paparoa

Policy 3 states *“Manage the Pike29 Memorial Track and the Paparoa Track as year-round, multi-day, shared use experiences.”*

17. Appendix 3 – Great Walk - required outcomes and foundational requirements

Required Outcomes

There are a number of Required Outcomes outlined in the Great Walks Product Set Strategic Framework⁴⁶:

There are six Required Outcomes for the Great Walks:

1. high customer satisfaction with the overall experience, including the landscapes, cultural heritage, biodiversity, facilities, hosting experienced, booking system, support staff, and Visitor Centres ⁴⁷
2. high proportion of customers well-informed about the risks and feeling ‘safe’⁴⁸
3. the product set has a high level of use, is financially stable and self-sustaining⁴⁹
4. well maintained basic accommodation and well-formed and maintained tracks
5. that visitors are more aware of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s cultural heritage and conservation related to the Great Walks and become an advocate for conservation
6. the product set is environmentally sustainable (for example, has climate change adaptability and that carbon emissions are managed and reduced).

These outcomes will be measured against a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the Great Walks.

Foundational Requirements

The following are Foundational Requirements (or key parameters) also outlined in The Great Walks Product Set Strategic Framework that the Great Walks must demonstrate to be retained as a Great Walk:

The foundational requirements are key parameters that each walk must demonstrate to be included (added or retained) as a Great Walk. They will enable an assessment to be undertaken on any new proposed Great Walks (by the Department or a third party) or where the withdrawal of the Great Walks brand from an existing product/experience may be appropriate. Great Walks must meet all the following requirements:

- the experience is exceptional for customers
- involve Aotearoa/New Zealand’s outstanding natural landscapes, scenery, cultural heritage (Māori and settler), and biodiversity
- multi-day experience of 3–5 days (2–4 nights)
- provide for independent and guided customers
- tell the story of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s conservation and cultural heritage through which the experiences pass

⁴⁶ [Great Walks Product Set Strategic Framework - DOC-7083169](#)

⁴⁷ This is the entire customer journey from booking to completing the experience.

⁴⁸ Note: ‘feeling’ safe does not mean a completely ‘riskless’ experience.

⁴⁹ As a set, their revenue must cover all costs of provision and operation - all annual costs, including overheads, depreciation, and capital charge

- have a bi-lingual naming convention and signage where possible
- have the following visitor risk levels
 - **hiking** – relatively inexperienced/entry level multi-day walkers (low-medium risk and ‘reasonably manageable’ walking experience)
 - **mountain biking** – advanced expertise (tracks are level 4 and above)
 - **canoeing/kayaking** – non-guided ‘relatively’ experienced
- operate as a Great Walk over a defined season between October/November and April⁵⁰
- have Ranger ‘hosting’ for all huts for the season
- consistent minimum levels of service across all the experiences/walks
- well maintained ‘bookable’ basic accommodation (huts and campsites)
- well-formed and maintained tracks and structures
- informative signage and high-quality information
- users pay for the experience.

⁵⁰ Noting some variation for risk management e.g. avalanches, will need to be accommodated.

18. Appendix 4 – Key items measured for satisfaction levels, results and comparisons with the Great Walks as a whole for the 2021/22 year

Item	Commentary
Overall satisfaction	Essentially 93% were highly satisfied with their experience.
Value for money	Is higher than the product set as a whole. The result is 78% agreed the experience was good value for money.
Accomplishment	Is lower than the product set as a whole. The result is 55% agreed they proved to themselves they could do this walk.
Connection to nature and natural and human (incl Māori) history	Is higher than the product set as a whole. The result is 50% agreed they felt connected.
Information on nature and human history	Is higher than the product set as a whole. The result is, 52% were highly satisfied or ore with the information provided.
Tranquillity	Is the same as the product set as a whole. The result is 91% agreed they experienced tranquillity on the walk.
Disturbance	Is better (lower in this case) than the product set as a whole. Less than 5% were disturbed by activities of other people or natural pests.
Safety	Is the same as the product set as a whole. The result is 84% of visitors highly satisfied with the safety information provided.
Information provided	
Felt safe	
Suffered injury or mishap (no KPI on this item)	The percentage of customers experienced an injury, illness, or mishap on the walk. This is the same as the product set as a whole. Only 2% of visitors suffer and injury or mishap.
Track conditions	Is the same as the product set as a whole. The result is 84% of customers highly satisfied with track conditions (incl. spacing between huts and toilets).
Huts and their facilities	Is higher than the product set as a whole. Over 90% of visitors were highly satisfied with the facilities. However, the score was lower for sleeping areas.
Toilets	Is lower than the product set as a whole. The result is 75% of visitors were highly satisfied with the condition of the toilets.
Hut Wardens	Is lower than the product set as a whole. The result is 74% of visitors were highly satisfied with the Hut Wardens.

19. Appendix 5 - Comments on interactions with bikers

- *Some cyclists going too fast past people*
- *Abused by a local runner at the Punakaiki end who told a mother and 10 year old on bikes to "get off the track". We were riding slowly downhill.*
- *The only worry we had was the possibility of bikers coming up behind us...*
- *... seeing all the bikers coming through for just the day I realised DoC gets no revenue from those who use the track most frequently: could you instigate a track fee?*
- *The track and surface suited biking more than walking, which was stony and hard on the feet. The mtbikers were generally courteous - only one group mowed past us without slowing - but getting out the way for them all does alter the experience.*
- *Disappointingly we encountered 6 separate groups of bikers on e-bikes on 3 different days, two of these groups startled one or more of the party and several failed to give priority. Whilst generally polite, every challenge was met with indifference and a sense of entitlement "I wouldn't be able to do this without the e-bike" was a refrain used a couple of times - to which the correct response is "Don't then!"*
- *No injury, but feet very sore after walking on the hard surface for 3 days. Obviously more designed with mountain bikers in mind.*
- *Bikers going in both directions on the trail meant they could come up on you quite quickly from behind on a downhill which was a bit scary. As the track becomes more popular and there's more and more day bikers, it might be a good idea to enforce doing the trail in a particular direction to avoid this, or putting up additional reminders that bikers need to be on the lookout for hikers.*
- *The condition of the track. It really is a bike track that you walk. The sharp gravel was hard on the feet. I feel as with the Heaphy, there should be tramping season only (no bikers). I feel the bikers and the trampers share very different values. The trampers for the wilderness experience and the bikers for the challenge*
- *I experienced mountain bikers on the track I feel this could cause some safety issues between hikers and bikers in the future once international visitors return and take to the track. These concerns are around safety. I am not against bikers!*
- *On the other great walks I have done, the condition of the tracks has been really high, but due to the fact that so many bikers are going through the track there were clearly worn places that I had to be careful not to roll an ankle in. Also seeing a group of 15 people on e-Bikes the first day was surprising considering they are not supposed to be used (which they clearly do use the e part of the bike) and on the second day as I reached the hut there was another group of 7 from punakaiki end for a day trip into the hut using e-bikes. Lovely people but me being someone who has to pay to use this track and they don't have too but have more of an impact on the track and also use the facilities it was something for thought.*
- *E-bikers. Unapproved users need to be turned back or confiscated and destroyed as an example. I don't care which. We'd be happy to organise that for you*
- *Having bikers on the trail takes you out of it slightly and you sort of feel you need to be on guard for them to come up quick to you. Bikers definitely don't yield to trampers either, but most were friendly anyways.*
- *Sharing track with bike riders especially groups of more than 2 or 3. I would like to see bikes restricted to times outside the main summer season which should be for walkers only on the track. Not all bikers observe track etiquette especially going down hill in groups when*

laggards at the back of the bunch are in a hurry to catch up with the leaders who are themselves literally racing ahead along smoother parts of the track.

- *Frustrating that walkers on Paparoa Track are disadvantaged by bikers booking only one night in the Pororari Hut, limiting options for trampers who need sequential bookings for both huts.*
- *Having to move out of the way for mountain bikers*
- *Bikers - different mind set to trampers. Distance between huts for the bikers and not walkers-*
- *too short first section and then long next 2 days - just at the limit of enjoyable on the last days*
- *as distance between just slightly too long. Bikers doing fast day trip and trail runners cruising through - just lost that wilderness feel.*
- *Bikers on same tracks as walkers, no bells used/available to warn walkers of bikers coming from behind...*
- *Also mountain bikers racing up behind when walking alone was quite intense.*
- *Felt like a bike trail. Carefully graded and zigzagged to suit bikes. Also large stones used to maintain track are not nice to walk on. Disturbed that walkers pay top dollar to stay in huts and walk a track that is maintained for bikes and bikers bike it in a day for free, ...*
- *...there seems to be confusion about ebikes on the track, we encountered quite a few, which weren't a problem, but we weren't sure they are allowed.*
- *Bikers, not a fan that they can use the track as they do and pay nothing or very little to use the track the same track that tramp use and need to pay for 3 nights (max), yet bikes pay nothing but use the huts. There need to be a track using fee*
- *Some parts of the track were adversely affected by bikers - puddles created and dirt scoured out by the wheels. Having to keep a lookout behind in case bikers were approaching. On some narrow spots this could be rather disconcerting.*
- *The sudden appearance of bikers while walking - sight/sound lines were not always ideal so sometimes they seem to appear out of nowhere going faster than expected on a shared trail.*
- *the Ces Clark Hut was overcrowded at lunch time with really noisy bikers*
- *I think this walk should only be biked/walked in one direction. We commented how dangerous it would be if bikers were coming towards you at speed around some of the corners. When they are behind you they can see you more easily*

20. Appendix 6 – Summary of recommended actions from respondents to increase benefits to local businesses, people and communities

- Allow events
- Allow e-bikes
- Allow camping options
- Approve heli-copter landings (at specified times) to open the accessibility of this space to the older less active of skilled walkers/bikers.
- Ensure alternate access points to the track, should regular access become unavailable. e.g. Smokho road closure recently
- Extending the Paparoa Track to start in Blackball, Punakaiki has an advantage being right at one end of the Track, people would be encouraged to use parking facilities and the businesses more if the Track started closer to Blackball
- more advertising/marketing of areas around the track e.g Reefton, Westport not just Blackball and Punakaiki
- Not be closed so readily because of the slight possibility of bad weather
- upgrading the Moonlight Track would be beneficial, especially when the Croesus side is closed after storm damage to Croesus track or access road (as happened last year)
- We are in the process of putting together a map of Blackball with information on locations, walks, local business's etc. These could be distributed to Information Centres and other suitable venues around the West Coast. This is something we, as a community can discuss further.
- DOC needs more funding to maintain the quality of the Paparoa Track. There are less wardens on the track this season compared to previous seasons, and as someone who walks the track a lot of summer I can see the negative effect that this is having on the user experience. Track maintenance also needs attention, the work load for wardens is too high and the condition of the track is going to keep deteriorating.
- Move quicker on the opening Pyke 29 trail as an additional offering to the trail.
- Blocked out weekends per month to allow West Coast residents priority bookings
- Public awareness seems low... use of local FaceBook pages would assist?
- A proper charge being made for using the Track
- This is a wonderful addition to the West Coast Trails network and valuable both economically and for the well-being physical activity component. I'd like to see an annual open public forum to look for new ideas and concepts to enhance this track.
- There is benefit in more interaction between DoC, community and operators which is currently lacking.
- Happy to discuss further previous recommendations. Also happy to pay commercial rates for the privilege of included marketing. Until there is a change of doc policy of "non inclusion" there will only be limited support and benefits to other operators and the extended community and then so only to the associated chosen operators. Geoff Schurr Founding Director Underworld Adventures Ltd

21. Appendix 7 - Community Groups and Pest Control

Paparoa Wildlife Trust (PWT)

The PWT has held Community Agreements with the Department for their predator trapping and kiwi work since 2006. The PWT operate a trapping network for protection of both Great Spotted Kiwi and Whio in the Pike Valley, Moonlight Tops and Croesus areas. The trapping network consists of DOC 200 kill traps and a handful of A24 self-setting Goodnature traps. Through an Air NZ stream of work initiated by DOC, 400 traps were built in Fox /Franz to help support the J4N operations, DOC provided helicopter hours to get the traps placed on the hill. Currently this covers approximately 16,000 ha in total and growing. The PWT has an operating model of volunteers and paid employees, they have 6 part time paid staff with income from various sources such as Roa Mine, Save the Kiwi and the DOC Community Fund.

This trapping supports the work the Department is doing in the Pike River area to protect Whio by increasing predator protection adjacent to the Departments trapping network. PWT are currently expanding trapping infrastructure to surround and bolster the Departments current trapping network. Outside of this PWT's work is largely independent of the Departments, but is supported by the Departments aerial operations when required to suppress rodent populations.

In the past the Department has provided technical advice to the PWT, but PWT are operating as an independent partnership now with the relevant skills and experience held within their team.

Results of monitoring is only undertaken on the success of aerial 1080 operations delivered by the department by monitoring rodent tracking pre and post operation (based on numbers of rodents using tracking tunnels).

The PWT and Save the Kiwi undertake regular outcome monitoring of Great spotted Kiwi , however data collection needs to continue over several years before inferences can be determined to possibly support any recognisable population change through predator control. Trap catch data is recorded using the TrapNZ.

West Coast Alpine Club

A trapping network was established by Westreef during the construction phase of the Paparoa Track. Initially supported by funding from the DOC Community Fund the trapping network was designed to kill predators in the vicinity of the Track. The Trapping network runs from the Pororari River to the Moonlight Junction. The West Coast Alpine Club operate as volunteers for the department The West Coast Alpine Club have taken on maintaining this trapping network as volunteers on behalf of the Department and more recently they have upgraded the traps to meet the kea SOP and added additional traps in the valley floor. Catch result data is recorded by the West Coast Alpine Club.