

Freedom of the hills

Policy for the outdoor community and the environment

October 2021





Introduction

Federated Mountain Clubs' kaupapa is the freedom of the hills. It is the pull of nature's mauri and mana, the rights and responsibilities and joy of belonging. From its close canyons to its open tops, our land is part of who we are, have been, and will be, as individuals and as a people.

Since 1931, FMC has stood for nature and the outdoor community. Our pillars are our steadfast history and the laws that govern Aotearoa's wild places; particularly, the Conservation Act 1987, the National Parks Act 1980, the Reserves Act 1977, the Land Act 1948, the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998, and the Resource Management Act 1991. Our activities and locations can bring other statutes into play. FMC recognises the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document of New Zealand.

Additional to these laws of the land, FMC embraces the concept of Wild Law, which honours the fullness and sovereignty of nature, from its smallest fragments to its immeasurable combined forces. We acknowledge that we are part, only, of te Ao/the Earth.

FMC has developed the following policies on a range of matters.*

* Where an issue is relevant to several areas (for example, concessions are relevant to *Commercial use*, *Department of Conservation funding*, and *Tourism* policies), it is dealt with directly once only in this document.



Access

The backcountry
and the recreation
that takes place
there are at the
heart of Aotearoa's
nationhood...



...therefore:

- 1** FMC recognises the mauri and mana of Aotearoa's wild places.
- 2** all New Zealanders should have free and enabling access to all public land.
- 3** FMC supports development of a national policy statement on recreational access.
- 4** FMC values the ethos of 'nature on nature's terms'.
- 5** FMC advocates for 'leave no trace' recreation.
- 6** FMC will promote the connectivity of public land.
- 7** where land under non-public tenure, including Crown pastoral lease, separates public land from public access, then, following consultation, provision should be made for practical and enduring public access to the public land.
- 8** when land or a lease is sold to overseas interests, practical and enduring public access to any public land beyond should be created.
- 9** where part of a Crown pastoral lease going through tenure review has sufficiently high conservation values, redesignation as public conservation land will be sought; where conservation values are not sufficiently high for redesignation as public conservation land and redesignation as freehold is appropriate, public access to any public land beyond will be sought.
- 10** FMC affirms that legally surveyed roads are public land regardless of whether they are formed and that they are for the use of the public.
- 11** the Queen's Chain (marginal strips and esplanade strips) should be completed.
- 12** track construction and maintenance should provide usable facilities with the least possible impact on the land and the landscape, and should encourage intimacy with the environment.
- 13** where a biosecurity threat or incursion restricts public access, the area and period of the restriction should be guided by science.



Commercial use of public land

Conservation
and Aotearoa's
recreation values
are priorities.
Commercial use
of public land is a
privilege...



...therefore:

- 1** FMC recognises that the intrinsic values of the land and its waterbodies, including natural quiet, are of the highest importance and should be managed accordingly.
- 2** only those commercial pest control activities with efficiency and conservation outcomes equal to those of the Department of Conservation or other public agencies performing pest control should be allowed.
- 3** commercial activities that facilitate New Zealanders' recreational enjoyment have an important role in the backcountry.
- 4** as required by conservation legislation, the Minister shall not grant an application for a concession if the proposed activity is contrary to the provisions of this Act or the purposes for which the land concerned is held (Conservation Act 1987 s17U(3)).
- 5** concessions for tourist operations should not cause congestion or exacerbate crowding of areas used by New Zealanders, or exceed the capacity of existing infrastructure.
- 6** where commercial activities take place on public land, exclusive use of areas or public facilities should never be allowed.
- 7** FMC affirms that in gazetted wilderness areas, aircraft landings are unacceptable except for emergency, authorised scientific research, and biodiversity management purposes, and that overflights should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- 8** mining is unacceptable on public conservation land.
- 9** creating flight Restricted Areas above gazetted wilderness areas will give effect to the intention behind legislation providing for those wilderness areas.
- 10** statutory management plans, which among other things guide commercial use, are developed through public consultation in good faith and should prevail.
- 11** concession fees should be sufficient to cover the administration, monitoring, and enforcement of a concession, and to contribute appropriately to the health and restoration of the whenua/land used by the concessionaire.
- 12** the Department of Conservation should consult with FMC on any matters concerning huts, tracks, and access on public land.



Department of Conservation funding

The Department of Conservation should be appropriately funded to properly carry out its responsibilities...



...therefore:

- 1 as a core public service, the Department of Conservation should be properly funded by general taxation revenue.
- 2 the key role of the conservation estate in tourism and the contribution of tourism to Crown revenue, notably through GST, are further reasons for fully funding the Department of Conservation through general taxation.
- 3 funding for the Department of Conservation should be increased, particularly at the 'hands-on' level and for landscape-scale pest animal and plant control.
- 4 FMC is agreeable to a border tax, on the basis that it is an efficient mechanism for collecting revenue, but does not believe it would increase funding for conservation in the longer term. Border taxes may be better directed into local government tourism infrastructure.
- 5 charges for access to public conservation land, including for use of tracks or bridges, are inappropriate.
- 6 there should be no differential charging as it has potential to be inefficient and harmful to a welcoming culture.
- 7 huts with potential to qualify as heritage should be given that status and should be exempt from capital asset charges.
- 8 FMC is opposed to any conservation law reform that would alienate public conservation land to increase revenue or allow damage caused by concession activity to be allowed and off-set rather than prevented.
- 9 FMC would consider traffic management strategies on a case-by-case basis, though considers there are other means of managing supply and demand such as infrastructure design, publicity, public transport, and the recreational opportunities network.



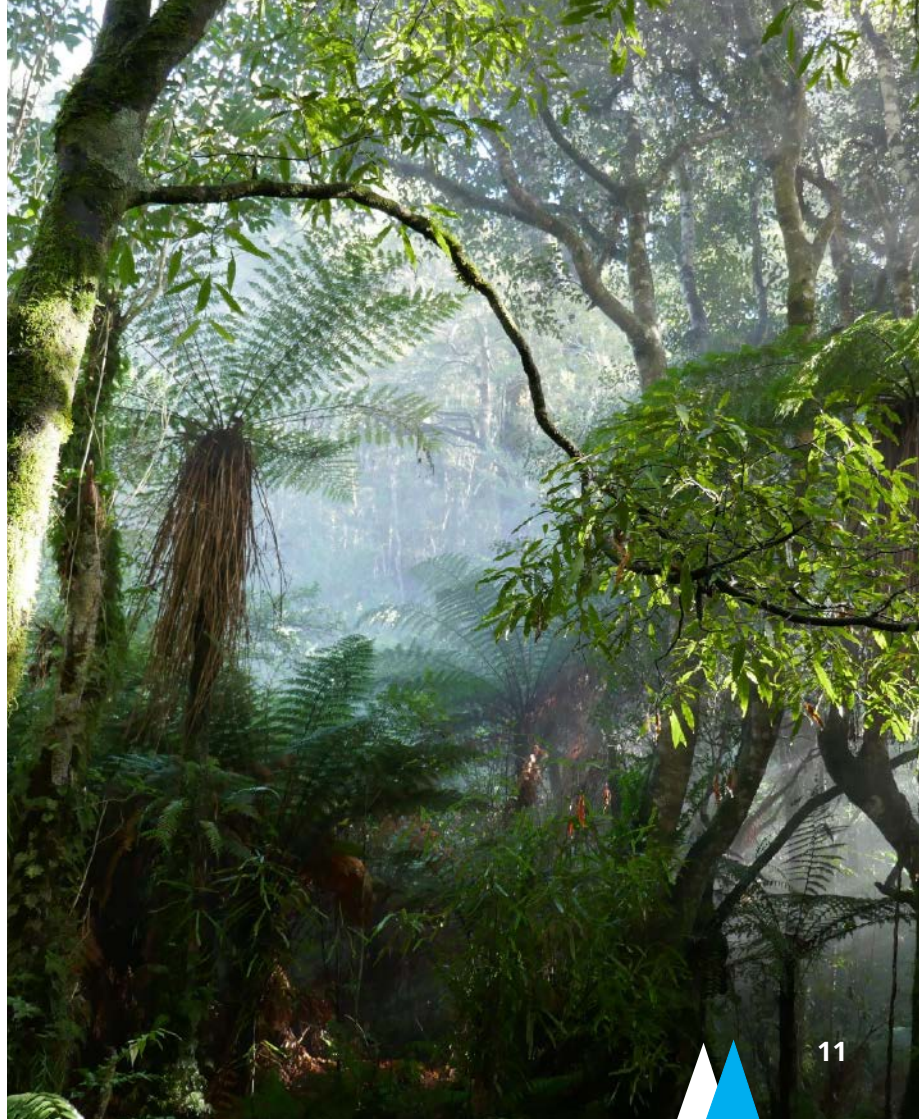
Large-scale environmental issues

Climate disruption, loss of biodiversity, and multi-dimensional contamination threaten the health of the Earth and our land...



...accordingly:

- 1** FMC will advocate for conservation and other natural values legislation, policy, and planning that will reverse biodiversity loss.
- 2** FMC will advocate for conservation and other natural values legislation, policy, and planning that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3** FMC will advocate for conservation and other natural values legislation, policy, and planning that will reduce non-naturally-occurring contamination.
- 4** FMC will advocate for the natural character of the environments covered by the objects of the FMC constitution.
- 5** FMC will advocate for sustainability in all aspects of backcountry recreation.



Facilities (private and community-built)

FMC recognises that there is a long and ongoing tradition of community-led and public-private track and hut building on public land. It is an important contribution to non-commercial recreation...



...therefore:

- 1** FMC supports clubs, other groups, and individuals voluntarily looking after existing tracks and huts for non-commercial public use.
- 2** FMC supports volunteers' use of initiatives such as the Backcountry Trust to help them maintain, and potentially build, tracks, huts, and bridges on public land.
- 3** FMC encourages collaboration between volunteers and the Department of Conservation (or other relevant agency) on construction where volunteers propose building new tracks.
- 4** tracks on public land must be freely accessible to all.
- 5** appropriate maintenance budgets should be assured prior to construction of new tracks or huts by community groups or public-private partnerships.
- 6** non-commercial privately-built huts on public land should be readily available for public use.
- 7** fees for use of non-commercial privately-built huts on public land should be similar to those charged for similar public huts.



**BACKCOUNTRY
TRUST**





Fostering the outdoor community

Advocacy and mentoring are vital to the sustenance and development of Aotearoa's backcountry recreation whanui...



...therefore:

- 1 FMC supports a spectrum of recreational opportunities, for example, the Department of Conservation's visitor management zoning system.
- 2 FMC promotes mentoring and training in all non-motorised forms of mountain recreation. This includes bushcraft etiquette, technical skills, and lore.
- 3 all New Zealanders should be encouraged to be involved in backcountry recreation.
- 4 all young New Zealanders should be given practical opportunities to experience, and develop in, backcountry recreation.
- 5 new backcountry pursuits that respect the land (including natural quiet) and other recreationists should be supported.
- 6 the outdoor community has a kaitiaki role.
- 7 FMC embraces the whakatauki: ko au ko koe, ko koe ko au ('I am the environment; what I do to the environment, I do to myself').
- 8 backcountry built structures' maintenance and network development should be well-planned and supported.
- 9 FMC supports frontcountry campsite development where appropriate.



Tourism - huts and booking systems

The hut and campsite booking system has been introduced amid: growing tourism; feedback loops that inflate supply and demand for increasingly domesticated and costly tracks and huts; and perceptions of entitlement to bunks when bookings are made. These influences can be abrasive to the land and New Zealand recreational communities and use, including aspects of backcountry etiquette...



...accordingly:

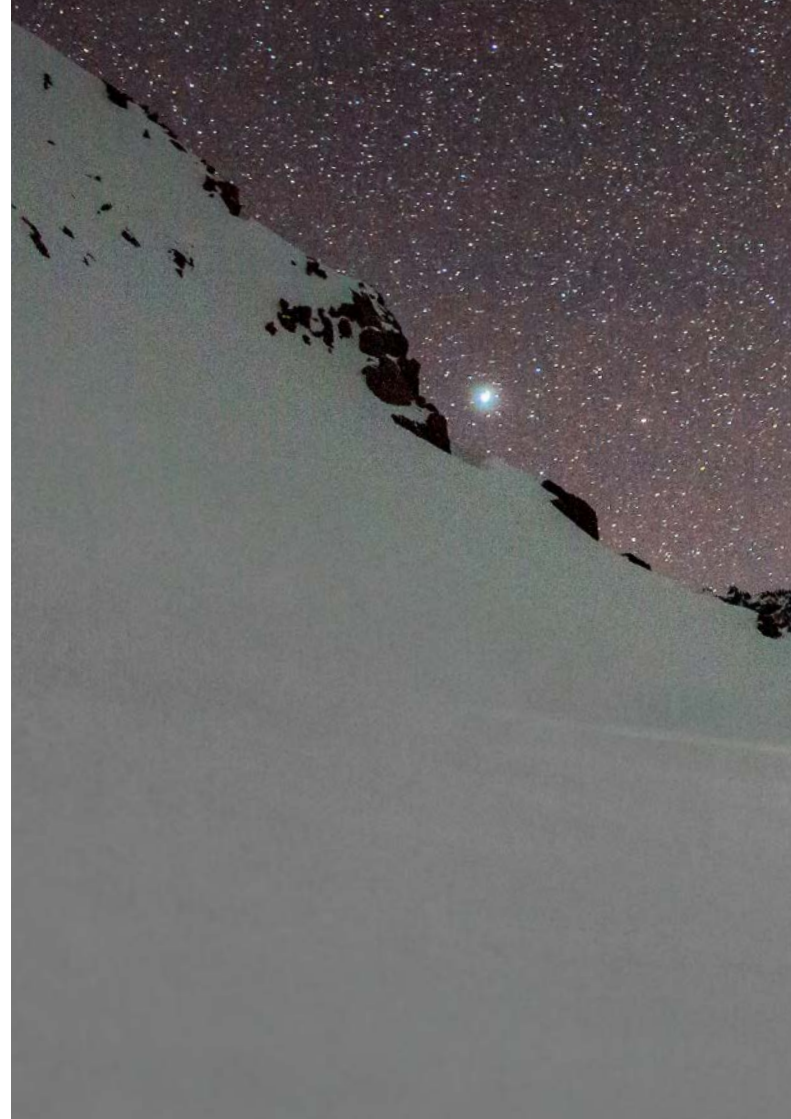
- 1** FMC emphasises that the primary purpose of huts is shelter.
- 2** hut and campsite tickets should be purchasable online.
- 3** where FMC's Tourism – general policy is given effect to and huts/campsites are still frequently overcrowded, FMC recognises that the booking system may be used as a management tool, provided the system is fair, equitable, and not open to abuse.
- 4** robust data should be gathered to inform decision-making on proposed booking systems, and, where booking systems are adopted, for their monitoring.
- 5** FMC should be consulted at least four months in advance to allow affiliated clubs and members to comment when booking system changes are proposed.
- 6** the booking system should operate only where occupancy rates indicate need, for example, weekends at certain times of the year.
- 7** hut and campsite fees should be linked to national cost of provision and should not be increased significantly where the booking system is introduced.
- 8** the booking system should not be used for huts that are key points on longer and/or more challenging routes, for example, Dart Hut.
- 9** where the booking system has been introduced inappropriately – for example, at Mueller Hut, where usage doesn't match its 'alpine hut' description – it should be removed.
- 10** huts and campsites on the booking system should have resident wardens whenever possible when the system is operating. Wardens should be volunteers where appropriate.
- 11** wardens at huts and campsites on the booking system should not impose penalties for unbooked people where they are satisfied that their reasons are robust, for example, injury or weather.
- 12** where the booking system has been introduced

continued overleaf



for huts on tracks that may be travelled in more than one direction, sufficient campsites should be established to cater for people able to book some, but not all, of the tracks' huts.

- 13** the booking system should not generally be linked to locking of huts.
- 14** the Backcountry Hut Pass is preferable to night tickets.
- 15** non-Great Walk huts that were excluded from the Backcountry Hut Pass prior to online bookability with the Pass should be re-incorporated. Backcountry Hut Passes should provide 10% discounts on Great Walks huts to their holders.
- 16** Department of Conservation and New Zealand Alpine Club co-managed huts in the West Matukituki should be available at New Zealand Alpine Club rates to annual Backcountry Hut Pass holders.
- 17** there should be a 30% discount on six-month Backcountry Hut Passes for FMC members (this presently exists on the annual pass only).





Land status

Land classifications should give conservation and recreation values appropriate protection...



...therefore:

- 1 FMC affirms the objects of Part 2 of the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998, which allows tenure review, as we prefer that land under review with strong natural values be protected by full Crown ownership and control.
- 2 FMC affirms the role of the Nature Heritage Fund in protecting indigenous ecosystems, and, hence, extending recreation opportunities.
- 3 FMC affirms the purpose of Part 1 of the Overseas Investment Act 2005 (to acknowledge that it is a privilege for overseas persons to own or control sensitive New Zealand assets by (a) requiring overseas investments in those assets, before being made, to meet criteria for consent; and (b) imposing conditions on those overseas investments) and expects that its spirit and intent will be put into practice.
- 4 FMC affirms the status of unformed legal roads and supports transfer of their administration to the Walking Access Commission (subject of FMC's Same as State Highway 1 campaign).
- 5 appropriate and timely reclassification of land presently classified as stewardship (subject of FMC's Forgotten Lands campaign) should occur; priorities for reclassification should be advised by natural values experts.
- 6 where land coming through tenure review is to become public conservation land and is unable to be reclassified immediately (for example, if it will become conservation park), its specific classification should be prepared prior to substantive proposals' signing and actioned as soon as possible after signing.
- 7 FMC supports the creation of practical and enduring public access easements through Crown land under s60 of the Land Act 1948.
- 8 FMC supports creation of a legislative mechanism for resumption of Crown pastoral lease land components that are unsuitable for pastoral use.
- 9 FMC supports World Heritage listing for sites that have outstanding universal value and meet at least one of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation's ten selection criteria.



Mountain bikes

FMC recognises mountain biking as a popular and evolving form of recreation, and supports it on appropriately zoned existing public tracks or purpose-built tracks...



...accordingly:

- 1** FMC supports public participation in decision-making processes around mountain bike access to existing tracks and about construction of new mountain bike-accessible tracks and will, in consultation with member clubs, make submissions on mountain bike issues.
- 2** FMC supports recreational mountain bike access to public lands being free of charge.
- 3** decisions on appropriateness of mountain bike access should consider the purpose for which land has been set aside.
- 4** decisions on appropriateness of mountain bike access should consider ecological, social, and physical effects.
- 5** conservation management strategies and management plans should include specific mountain bike policies categorising tracks as non-compatible, conditionally compatible, compatible, or mountain bike priority.
- 6** FMC supports Mountain Bike New Zealand's Mountain Bikers' Off-road Code and will promote it along with the more general Leave No Trace Code.
- 7** ecological, social, and physical impact control measures should be used where needed on tracks. These may include: close-out periods, one-way traffic, compulsory portage sections, weather-based restrictions, speed alerts, improved drainage, vegetation control, mountain bike-specific maintenance, use of physical features for speed control, volunteer working bees, signage, and others.
- 8** FMC recognises the potential of e-bikes (legally defined as pedal-assisted bicycles with electric motors of 300W or less) for recreation by most people, and that e-bikes may have minimal impact on some tracks such as cycle trails.
- 9** FMC supports the use of e-bikes where they replace motorised vehicles.
- 10** as e-bike technology and use develop, relationships between e-bike users and others will develop. FMC will seek participation in discussions about e-bike access to tracks on public land.



Off-road vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles

Appropriateness of off-road vehicle use on public land is related to its effects on conservation and other recreational values...



...accordingly:

- 1 where conflict with conservation values (including natural quiet) and/or non-motorised recreational users is likely, FMC opposes the use of off-road, unmanned aerial, and other powered vehicles.
- 2 FMC recognises that use of off-road, unmanned aerial, and other powered vehicles is legitimate in some circumstances. The use of these vehicles should be planned for and managed to avoid conflict with other users and to ensure conservation values are not jeopardised.
- 3 improved education for operators of off-road, unmanned aerial, and other powered vehicles should be established where appropriate.



Pest control

Introduced animal and plant pests pose existential threats to many of Aotearoa's native species and ecological communities and wider environment. The quality of outdoor recreation experiences is linked to the health of environments they take place in...



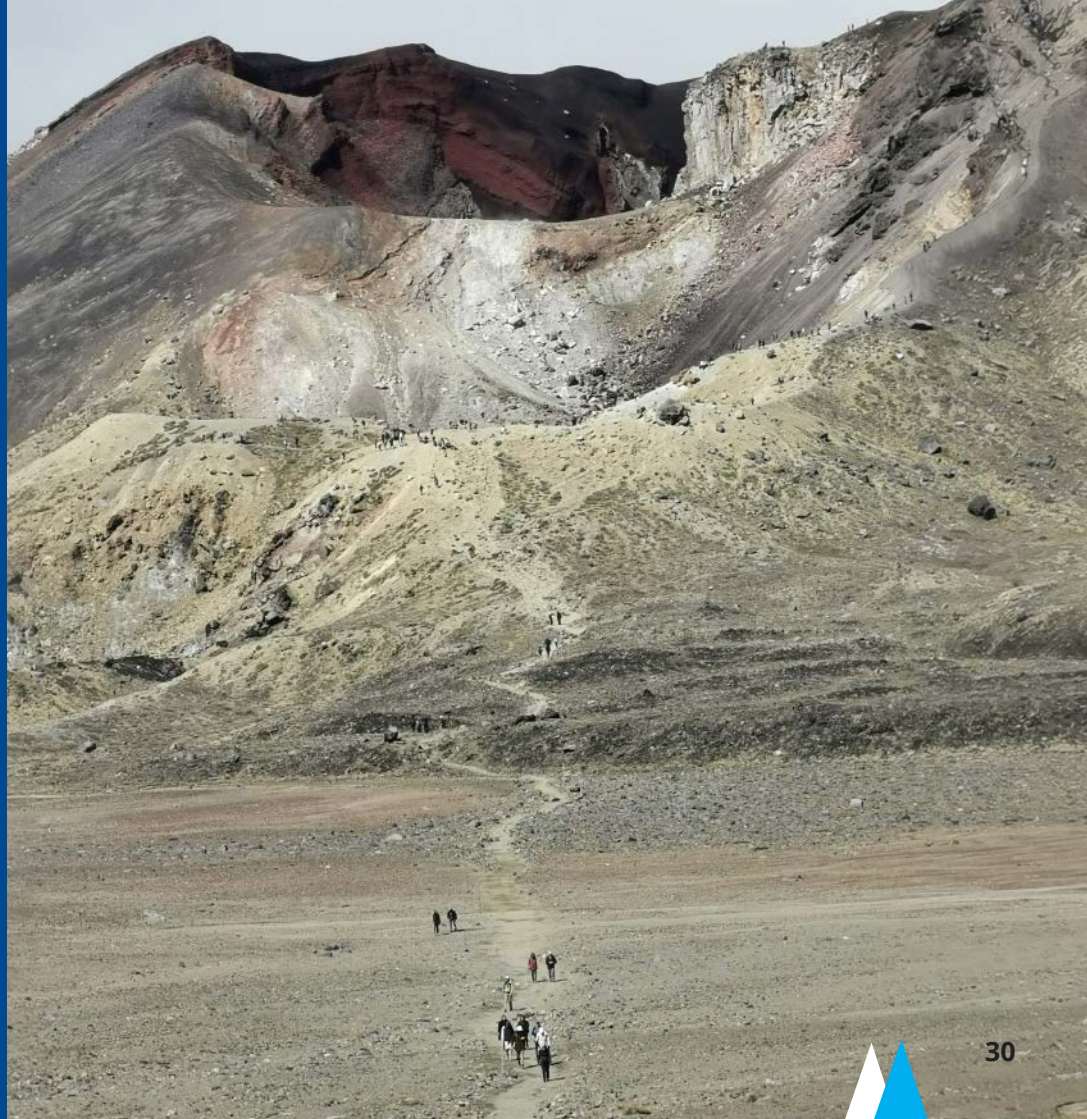
...accordingly:

- 1 FMC supports evidence-backed use of chemical, biological, and physical (including hunting and trapping) pest controls.
- 2 FMC endorses the aims of Predator Free New Zealand.
- 3 FMC supports the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's position, expressed in *Evaluating the Use of 1080: Predators, poisons, and silent forests* (June 2011), backing aerial 1080 to control target pest species in the backcountry.
- 4 scientific investigation of pest ecology and existing and alternative pest controls should continue.
- 5 investigation into and action on reduction of non-target species by-kill should continue. For certain areas, this may involve deer repellent (recognising that deer repellent's additional cost may mean less pest control is done).
- 6 plans for pest control operations should be made public to inform, and gain the support of, potentially negatively affected parties.
- 7 FMC supports a properly-funded national wilding conifer control strategy.



Tourism

Aotearoa's wild places are at the heart of New Zealand's non-commercial recreation heritage and its communities. Tourism is a privilege and should defer to the land, New Zealand citizens and residents, and New Zealand recreation...



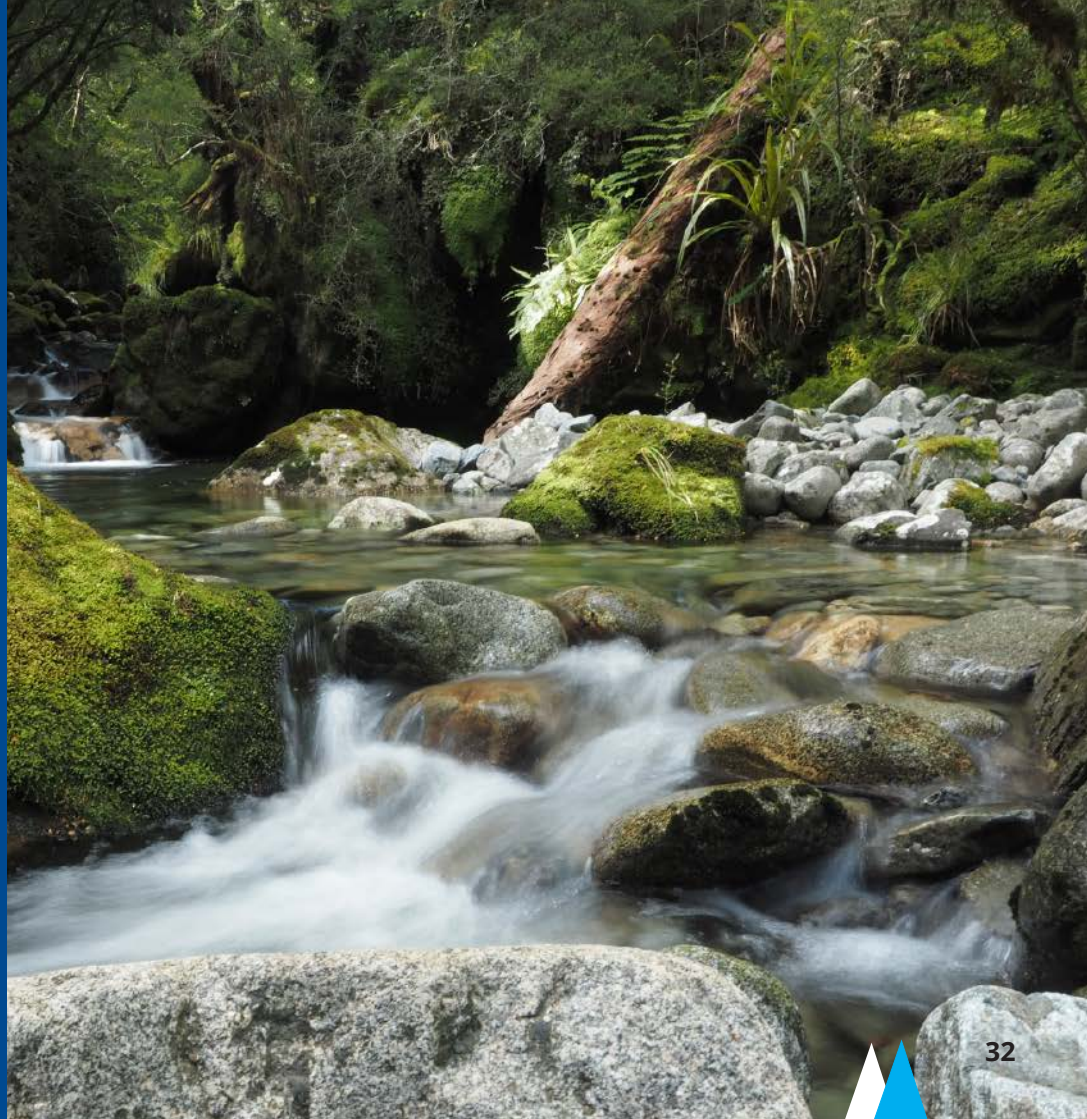
...accordingly:

- 1** FMC affirms the Conservation Act 1987's prioritisation – conservation, then recreation, then tourism.
- 2** FMC affirms the National Parks Act 1980's purpose *of preserving in perpetuity as national parks, for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the public, areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems, or natural features so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important that their preservation is in the national interest.*
- 3** protection of natural values, including natural quiet, should be prioritised in our public lands. Ecological, social, and physical impact control measures should be planned for and used where needed.
- 4** where demand for access to Aotearoa's wild places exceeds capacity, and a booking system or other means of controlling numbers is in place or may be implemented, New Zealand citizens and residents should have priority.
- 5** facilities in Aotearoa's wild places should be built and maintained in line with New Zealand's non-commercial recreation kaupapa. This should include track construction that respects the land and recreationists' relationships with it, and modest structures for communal use.
- 6** the principle of 'shelter from the storm' must be applied in all huts and shelters.
- 7** backcountry and other New Zealand outdoor etiquette, including the expectation of social equality, should be promoted and expected.



Water/wai

Water is intrinsic to life. Waterbodies are essential features of the New Zealand outdoors and are central to recreation and our identity...



...therefore:

- 1 FMC recognises the mauri and mana of water and species and communities that depend on it.
- 2 all New Zealanders should have access to water for life's sustenance and recreation and inspiration in our wild places.
- 3 waterbodies should have protection appropriate to their values.
- 4 water-sequestering and regulating natural communities, such as tussock grasslands and rainforests, should be protected or, where they have been degraded, restored.
- 5 where water within public land is naturally drinkable, it should remain drinkable.
- 6 land use should be consistent with its environmental profile.
- 7 commercial use of water is a privilege that, if granted, obliges the user to compensate the whenua/land appropriately.
- 8 National and other energy strategies that include hydro generation should ensure that the waterbody's natural and recreational values are fully considered in decision-making.
- 9 FMC will oppose all new hydro generation and water abstraction proposals that relate to public conservation lands that have, or potentially have, high recreational and/or ecological values.
- 10 externalities should be assessed and factored into decision-making in commercial water use application processes.
- 11 all non-naturally-occurring water contaminants (physical, chemical, biological, and other) should be limited as far as possible, monitored, and eliminated or restricted.



Photo credits

Cover	Tony Gazley, Wellington TMC, Lake McKerrow
2	Emma Rogers, Christchurch TC, Igloos and Snowcaves at Night
4	Anthony Behrens, Overlooking Mokai Station
6	Kathy Eggers, Heretaunga TC, Whanganui River
8	Anthony Behrens, Whio Monitoring, Mangatera River
10	Anthony Behrens, Wilding Pine Control, Lake Benmore.
11	Bryan Shroeder, Auckland BTC, Sun Shines Through the Mist
12	Geoff Spearpoint, Top Waitaha hut
14	Megan Dimozantos, Mahi on Te Ao Tupare - Wae, Dave, Jorinna, Damien and Cherry
16	Lester Barnes, New Plymouth TC, Werribee Gorge
18	Nicola Ponsonby, Lake Angelus Hut
21	Emma Rogers, Christchurch TC, The Milky Way Above Mueller Hut
22	Geoff Spearpoint, Mokihinui
24	Andy Hovey, Riding the Waiuta track
27	Neil Silverwood, Drone
28	Anthony Behrens, 1080 Operation Mount Crawford
29	Anthony Behrens, Laying Stoat Traps, Deerford Loop
30	Erin Roughton, Tongariro Crossing
32	Tobi Wulff, Stream and Waterfalls in Kahurangi National Park
35	Sky Lovill, Fiordland TORC, Lake Quill and Sutherland Falls
36	Katja Riedel, NZAC Wellington, Ski touring Tasman Glacier







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