

17 October 2025

Paid Parking Team, Department of Conservation
sent by email to: paidcarparking@doc.govt.nz



Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc.

Feedback on DOC's Proposed Car Park Pricing at White Horse Hill

Tēnā koe,

Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc. (FMC) was founded in 1931 and advocates on behalf of over 22,000 New Zealanders, comprising 93 member clubs and associations, and over 1,000 individual supporters, who enjoy outdoor recreation in New Zealand's front and backcountry. We also speak for the large number of other New Zealanders who enjoy our public lands for outdoor recreation.

FMC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Department of Conservation's (DOC) proposal received 23 September 2025 to trial car parking charges at White Horse Hill carpark, Aoraki / Mt Cook. We note that many of the "DOC Considerations" in our earlier submission on carpark charging at this location dated 11 July 2025 have been acknowledged in this latest proposal.

DOC Carpark Charges at White Horse Hill and Nationally

Given that DOC has decided to implement these charges, the proposed fee structure appears to be reasonable as a single site fee structure.

However, we are concerned about the cumulative impact of carpark charges for frequent recreationalists and hunters across multiple sites (3 now, potentially more in the future). We submit that a national DOC carpark permit be established, providing access to all DOC carparks where access charges are in place.

We suggest that if the July 2026 review concludes that carpark charging will continue and be expanded to other locations, then that would be an appropriate time to introduce a national DOC carpark permit.

DOC Carpark Charges and Conservation Volunteers

As per our previous carpark charging submissions, we stress the importance that conservation volunteers who need to use the car parks are issued with permits for their vehicles.

There will need to be sufficient local DOC resources available to ensure that the permit creation can be flexible and prompt to cater quickly for variations in volunteer vehicles and work dates. Volunteers donate their own time and expenditure in the pursuit of activities that support the Department, so should never have to pay car park charges as part of their volunteer mahi.

White Horse Hill Considerations

This is a complex site given the widely varying demands on it, and the not always predictable flow on impacts of attempting to change parking behaviour.

A few suggestions / comments:

1. A good base for a park and ride facility would be Mt Cook airport
2. The detailed arrangements for exemptions need to be worked through with the owners of Wyn Irwin Lodge (Canterbury Mountaineering Club), Tahr Lodge (NZDA South Canterbury), and Unwin Lodge (NZ Alpine Club) - by virtue of their location in the area they fall under the local and / or concessionaire categories, especially for where their regular staff / maintenance personnel are involved
3. It is unfortunate that a DOC ranger may have to spend significant time managing parking on White Horse Hill Road when there are so many other DOC core activities requiring ranger involvement. We would encourage a permanent way to discourage unsafe parking that does not involve constant on the ground supervision.

Implementation and Notification

To implement these changes in a way that provides advance warning to regular and longer term car park users requires a well considered communications plan, potentially involving

- DOC website updates to reference the charges from all tracks, huts and other information points where the carpark could be used
- Providing direct communications to national and regional stakeholders for dissemination to their user groups
- Identifying suitable social media platforms that could reach a wider audience

Nga mihi,

Megan Dimozantos
President
Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ