

5.3.8 High Use Track Corridors

Boundaries

The boundary for high use track corridors will generally be 500 m either side of the track and may be defined by river boundaries. There are some exceptions to this, including where these tracks run alongside Lakes Te Anau, Manapōuri or McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai. In these situations, the boundary will be the shore of the lake. Another exception is on the Routeburn Track, at Key Summit, where the one kilometre wide corridor will extend south beyond the end of the track to spot height 1086. The specific boundaries are defined and held by Southland Conservancy office.

Recreation Opportunities

This visitor setting recognises that the hut and track systems associated with the three Great Walks (the Milford, Routeburn and Kepler tracks), the Hollyford Track and the Hump Ridge Track require more intensive management and greater resources than the backcountry visitor setting.

These tracks absorb the majority of visitors to Fiordland's backcountry and are invaluable for this purpose. The tracks cater for Backcountry Comfort Seekers who are looking for a moderately challenging but safe, multi-day walking experience within a natural environment. Huts are generally larger and more comfortable with flush toilets, gas cooking facilities and wood burners for heating. The lodges provided for guided clients are more comfortable again with showers, smaller bunkrooms and some private facilities. Track standards are usually higher than in Backcountry or Remote Visitor Settings. On the Great Walks, visitors should expect to share the facilities with large numbers of other people (at least 40 people) and encounter many other parties along the track.

A booking system for all independent and guided overnight walkers is utilised on the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Hump Ridge Tracks, with the intention of spreading the use more evenly and hence avoiding crowding at huts and on the track.

Access to these tracks is relatively easy as they are supported by an extensive network of concessionaires providing transport in various forms (e.g. from bus to boat to kayak); or in the case of the Kepler Track, it is close to the Te Anau and Manapōuri townships enabling visitors to make their own way to the track. These multi-day walking opportunities need to be protected to avoid conflict with other users such as anglers, hunters or day-trippers. The challenge and sense of achievement by these walkers, many on their first backcountry, multi-day experience, should not be diluted.

Current use levels on these tracks (annual number of walkers) are shown in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6 - APPROXIMATE ANNUAL NUMBERS OF TRACK WALKERS (HIGH USE TRACK CORRIDOR)

TRACK	INDEPENDENT ¹	GUIDED ²	TOTAL
Milford	7000	7000	14000
Routeburn	11500	7000	18500
Kepler	10500	3000	13500
Hollyford	3500 ³	1000	4500
Hump Ridge Track	⁴	2500 ⁵	2500

¹ Annual average, based on data collated between September 2002 and August 2005, rounded to nearest 500

² Based on current use levels of concessions on a per annum basis, rounded to nearest 500

³ Based on track counter information and includes day visitors, but excludes people travelling by jet boat, rounded to nearest 500

⁴ Data not available for independent walkers on this the Hump Ridge Track

⁵ Average for 2002 to 2005, rounded to nearest 500

This section of the plan also covers management of the very short sections of the Greenstone and Caples tracks that are within Fiordland National Park. As a number of areas of Fiordland National Park are adjoined by the Otago Conservancy and Mount Aspiring National Park, consistency of management will be achieved where possible.

The biggest issue facing management of these tracks is the pressure for increased levels of use on some tracks. There are existing commercial overnight guided walks operations on the Milford, Routeburn, Hollyford and Hump Ridge tracks and strong interest has been shown from new operators to set up competing operations on these tracks and also on the Kepler Track.

The social effects of increasing use may include noisy, overcrowded huts; possible proliferation of facilities, and meeting more people than might be expected in a backcountry setting on the tracks. This can lead to diminished feelings of remoteness, peacefulness, tranquillity or solitude that many people are seeking from their trip in the backcountry. Research has shown that large huts that are full decrease people's satisfaction with their trip. Conversely too many huts, shelters and other structures along the length of the track may detract from the natural character of the setting.

Other mechanisms utilised for managing social effects include booking systems or allowing one way walking only.

These tracks are being managed primarily for relatively high levels of use by less experienced visitors seeking a multi-day backcountry experience. Other types of use, with the potential for conflict, therefore need to be restricted so that the multi-day overnight walkers' experience is not compromised. Aircraft and boat access can have negative impacts because of the noise and intrusion, but are also important forms of access (see section 5.5).

The number of day-walkers and the distance they can travel along the track will be managed to reduce effects on overnight walkers.

These Great Walk tracks are managed differently outside of the walking season. The facilities provided and the servicing of these reverts to a general backcountry standard and the tracks are managed for the Backcountry Adventurer category of visitor and according to backcountry standards..

In general, sporting events will be prohibited except where there is an established and accepted use or when the event is small scale such as a local community fun run, where this does not exceeding a level of use usually expected at the place.

Visitors to Fiordland National Park seeking the type of experience and facilities associated with high use tracks are already well catered for. It is also undesirable to displace more experienced trampers through the upgrading of existing tracks or routes such as the Dusky Track to a high use standard. For these reasons, new high use overnight track developments will not be appropriate in Fiordland National Park. There are opportunities in other parts of New Zealand where such tracks may be appropriate and further developments should be considered in this national context.

The high use tracks are managed for multi-day overnight walkers. An exception to this is the Moturau Hut section of the Kepler Track. Due to its proximity from the road end, the Moturau Hut and this part of the Kepler Track offers opportunities for day visitor use as well as overnight use. Other huts where day visitors alter the experience include Luxmore Hut and Howden Hut.

The Hollyford Track currently does not receive anywhere near the same level of use as the other tracks in the high use category. It has traditionally been a track whose main users were hunters and fishers. In recent times it has grown in interest amongst the tramping fraternity. It has the potential to become as popular as the other high use tracks, but at the moment could absorb considerable growth in visitor numbers before the impacts become unacceptable. If use does increase, some controls on camping may be necessary and larger huts may be required to meet demand. An advantage that the Hollyford Track has over the other high use tracks is that its low altitude means it can be walked safely throughout the year by relatively inexperienced backcountry visitors.

The Hollyford Track has an established history of motorised access. There are two airstrips in the valley, float-planes can land easily on Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai and the Lower Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka; and jet boats regularly use the lake and river systems.

Six kilometres of the Greenstone Track and two kilometres of the Caples Track are within the Fiordland National Park, The remainder of the track and all the track huts are outside the Fiordland National Park and are within land managed by the Department of Conservation's Otago Conservancy according to the provisions of the Otago

Conservation Management Strategy. In the interests of consistency across administrative boundaries these tracks should be managed as a whole rather than having separate policy for them in this plan.

Objectives

1. To manage high use track corridors for optimum levels of use while protecting natural values and recognising the specific attributes of each and their value to less experienced walkers.
2. To protect these tracks as overnight, multi-day walking opportunities and to minimise conflict with other competing uses / demands.

Implementation

1. No new high use overnight tracks will be developed in Fiordland National Park.
2. Individual hut capacity will not exceed 50 walkers, except for Luxmore, Iris Burn and Lake Mackenzie huts which are already larger than this, in which case further expansion will not be allowed. This is also subject to the provisions outlined below for the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Hump Ridge tracks.
3. The total accommodation provided at any one location should not exceed 90 people, subject to the provisions outlined below for the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Hump Ridge tracks (i.e., where independent hut, guided hut or camping accommodation is provided at or near the same site, the total should not exceed 90 people). Should an applicant seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research approved by the Department of Conservation that addresses social carrying capacity effects.
4. The spacing and location of huts and other structures should be designed to ensure the track retains most of its natural character. The following criteria should be met by the Department of Conservation and concession applications:
 - a) All visual, social, cultural and ecological impacts both at the site and in the wider context should be managed;
 - b) Architectural designs demonstrating point (a) above should be provided for all hut proposals and major structures;
 - c) The necessity for the facility both in terms of need and location (i.e. why the facility is required/necessary); and

- d) Applications for variations to existing hut leases should be restricted to the existing footprint of the lease and a new lease application should be required for development outside of this. Criteria (points a-c) are applicable to variations.

Refer to section 6.12 for Private Huts.

- 5. The development of walking opportunities off high use tracks will be consistent with the objective outlined for that track. In particular, the effects on multi-day users will need to be avoided.
- 6. High use tracks will be maintained to tramping track (Back Country Comfort Seekers)” standard, with the exception of a section of the Hollyford Track (Demons Trail) and the Hump Ridge Track should it no longer be managed by concession. Refer to section 5.8 for information on track standards.
- 7. Department track and hut facilities will conform to the Backcountry Comfort Seekers standard prescribed in the Department of Conservation’s Visitor Service Standards documents.
- 8. Guided day walk parties should be restricted to a maximum party size of 13 inclusive of guides. Limits may be placed on the total number of guided day walkers allowed on specific tracks and the direction and timing of use to protect the experience of multi-day overnight walkers.
- 9. Management of individual tracks will be undertaken according to the prescriptions set out below. Those parts of the Greenstone and Caples tracks within Fiordland National Park will be managed to be consistent with the relevant provisions of the Otago Conservation Management Strategy.
- 10. In conjunction with guided walks operators, monitor visitor perceptions and satisfaction to inform management decisions and to ensure a quality visitor experience is maintained (refer to section 5.16).
- 11. All concessionaires operating on these tracks will be charged a contribution for track and facility maintenance and replacement.
- 12. The walking season is defined from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise.
- 13. Section 5.6 Boating and Facilities provides management direction for commercial boat access to these tracks. The limits set for boating concessions will be consistent with

the limits set for visitor numbers (for guided and non-guided parties) in the implementations of this section.

14. There should only be one multi-day guided walk operation on each track in this visitor setting.

5.3.8.1 Milford Track

Objective

1. The Milford Track will be managed to protect its iconic status as one of the greatest multi-day overnight walks in the world located in a remote place. The key attributes of this place include:
 - a) A quality multi-overnight walking experience where walkers all walk in the same direction;
 - b) An experience that offers a representation of Fiordland’s mountainous landscape, from Lake Te Anau to Milford Sound / Piopiotahi;
 - c) An experience that is enriched in heritage from the early greenstone trails, European exploration and tourism opportunities; and
 - d) Its dynamic nature and unforgiving landscape that is made safely accessible through careful visitor and facility management.
2. The walking season for the Milford Track is defined as being from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise.

Implementation

1. People walking the whole track during the walking season will be required to walk the track in the same direction – Glade to Sandfly Point.
2. The total daily number of overnight walkers (i.e. guided and independent) entering the track on any one day during the walking season will not exceed 90 people. The number of independent walkers within this total will be maintained at 40 per day under this regime. Should an applicant seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research approved by the Department of Conservation that addresses social carrying capacity effects.
3. A pre-booking system for independent tramping use of the Milford Track will be maintained because of the heavy demand to use this track during the season. To keep opportunities open as much as possible, bookings for a track season will not be accepted prior to the close of the previous season.
4. Guiding services should not use independent walkers’ facilities during the walking season (excluding toilets).

Outside of the walking season access to independent walkers' hut facilities will be made on an equal opportunity basis with independent walkers (i.e. guiding services may occupy a maximum of 50% of hut sleeping capacity outside of the walking season only). Refer to Implementation 8(c) of this section.

5. Aircraft landings should not be allowed within 500 m of the track for other than servicing of the track and accommodation or park management purposes (refer to section 5.5). An amendment to Fiordland National Park bylaws will be sought to enforce this.
6. By-laws prohibit camping within 500 m of the track.
7. Sporting events should not be authorised on the Milford Track.
8. Guided day walks may be allowed on the following sections of track, and under the following circumstances:
 - a) Glade Wharf to Clinton Hut
 - (i) Restricted to a maximum of 34 visitors inclusive of guides per day.
 - b) Sandfly Point to Giants Gate
 - (i) Restricted to a maximum of 26 visitors inclusive of guides per day; and
 - (ii) Walkers should be off the track between 2pm and 5pm to avoid conflict with multi-day overnight walkers.

Note: Party size and frequency for day walks will be managed through the concession process.

 - c) Outside the Great Walks booking season, the total number of guided walkers entering the Milford Track (day and overnight walkers) should be limited to 20 inclusive of guides per day; and
 - d) Should an applicant seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research (approved by the Department of Conservation) that demonstrates no reduction in the quality of the overnight walkers' visitor experience; and the activity will not result in inappropriate non-essential visitor facility development.

5.3.8.2 Routeburn Track

Objective

1. The Routeburn Track will be managed to provide a challenging two to three night two-way walking opportunity in a predominantly mountainous environment. Key attributes include:
 - a) A link between two spectacular national parks that also provides access to other tramping opportunities in Fiordland and the Wakatipu basin;
 - b) Spectacular alpine scenery where smaller party sizes than on the Milford Track can be expected; and
 - c) A place that provides visitors accessible day walking opportunities at either end of the track.
2. The walking season for the Routeburn Track is defined as being from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise.

Implementation

1. In order to maintain flexibility for walkers this track will continue to be managed for two-way travel, unless social effects make it essential to introduce a one-way system. Even then it will be preferable to strictly enforce the total quota stated below, or to consider other options before introducing one-way travel.
2. The total daily number of overnight walkers (i.e. guided and independent) entering the track on any one day should not exceed 92 people. The number of independent walkers within this total will be maintained at 68 per day. Should an applicant seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research approved by the Department of Conservation that addresses social carrying capacity effects.
3. A pre-booking system for independent tramping use of the Routeburn Track will be maintained because of the usually heavy demand to use this track during the season. To keep opportunities open as much as possible, bookings for a track season will not be accepted prior to the close of the previous season.
4. Guiding services should not use independent walker facilities during the walking season. Outside of the walking season, access to independent walkers' facilities will be made on an equal opportunity basis with

independent walkers (i.e. guiding services may occupy a maximum of 50% of hut sleeping capacity outside of the walking season only).

5. Aircraft landings should not be allowed within 500 m of the track for other than track or concessionaire facilities, or park management purposes (refer to section 5.5). An amendment to Fiordland National Park bylaws will be sought to enforce this.
6. Bylaws prohibit camping within 500 m of the track, except at designated sites which are to be clearly marked on the ground and on track information maps.
7. Only one competitive sporting event may be authorised on the Routeburn Track. This should only be permitted in the third weekend of April, unless this is Easter weekend in which case the second weekend of April may be utilised. Should research approved by the Department of Conservation demonstrate unacceptable effects on track users, the appropriateness of this opportunity will be reassessed.
8. Guided day walks on the part of the track within Fiordland National Park should be authorised on the following sections of track only:
 - a) Divide to the end of the Lake Marian lookout at Key Summit. Total guided day visitors should be restricted to 20,000 per year on this part of the track. Access onto the track may be limited to specific times of the day for this activity;
 - b) Divide to Lake Howden. Total guided day visitors should be included within the limits set for Key Summit; and
 - c) Research approved by the Department of Conservation may demonstrate either that guided day visitors have no effect or an unacceptable effect on other track users. This may result in the Department of Conservation reassessing the appropriateness of this opportunity; including varying the access times to the track for guided day visitors and changing the annual limits of guided day visitors. Annual limits and / or access times may increase or decrease according to the results of approved research.
9. Management of the track will be undertaken in full co-operation with the Department of Conservation's Otago Conservancy in recognition of the fact that the eastern part of the track is within Mt Aspiring National Park.

5.3.8.3 Kepler Track

Objective

1. To provide a multi-day two-way circular walking track that represents the variety of Fiordland wonders. Key attributes include:
 - a) It being the “shop front” for the Great Walks in Fiordland due to its easy access, circular nature, and high-quality visitor facilities on the track and at the road end;
 - b) Opportunities for all to experience the grandeur of Lake Te Anau dwarfed by the Kepler Mountains; and
 - c) A quality alpine and bush walking experience away from the track ends which are accessible by day walkers.
2. The walking season for the Kepler Track is defined as being from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise.

Implementation

1. A pre-booking system for independent tramping use of the Kepler Track will be maintained because of the heavy demand to use this track during the season. To keep opportunities open as much as possible, bookings for a track season will not be accepted prior to the close of the previous season.
2. During the walking season, the total daily number of overnight walkers (i.e. guided and independent) entering the track on any one day will not exceed 89 people. The number of independent walkers within this total will be maintained at 77 per day. Should an applicant for a guided walking opportunity seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research approved by the Department of Conservation that addresses social carrying capacity effects.
3. In considering future applications for overnight commercial operations on the Kepler Track, preference should be given to proposals which:
 - a) Provide services and backcountry accommodation for guided and/or unguided walkers on the track;
 - b) Increase the range of walking opportunities available in Fiordland National Park without unreasonably

- detracting from other visitors' use and enjoyment of Fiordland National Park;
- c) Involve minimum impacts on the recreation experience of existing track users and on the physical and ecological environment of the specific localities involved and on the track as a whole; and
4. Guiding services may make use of Department huts on an equal opportunity basis with independent walkers, outside of the walking season only (i.e. guiding services may occupy a maximum of 50% of hut sleeping capacity outside of the walking season only).
 5. Bylaws prohibit camping within 500 m of the track, except at designated sites which are to be clearly marked on the ground and on track information maps.
 6. Aircraft landings should only be allowed in the proximity of Luxmore Hut (see section 5.5), unless they are for track or concessionaire facilities or park management purposes. Other landings should not be allowed within 500 m of the track (refer also to Implementation 8). An amendment to the Fiordland National Park bylaws will be sought to enforce this.
 7. Guided day walks are permitted year round. Guided day walks should be authorised on the following sections of the track only:
 - a) Lake Te Anau control gates to Moturau Hut. Guided day walking parties will be restricted to a party size of 13 inclusive of guides. Should day use activity result in conflict with the overnight walkers, management actions may include (but may not be limited to) limiting numbers, frequencies and timing of guided day walks;
 - b) Control gates to Brod Bay. Guided day walking parties will be restricted to a party size of 13 inclusive of guides. Should day use activity result in conflict with the overnight walkers, management actions may include (but may not be limited to) limiting numbers, frequencies and timing of guided day walks; ;
 - c) Brod Bay to Mt Luxmore. Guided day walking parties will be restricted to 20 visitors inclusive of guides per day. Should day use activity result in conflict with the overnight walkers, management actions may include (but may not be limited to) limiting numbers, frequencies and timing of guided day walks; and
 - d) Should an applicant for a guided walking opportunity seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be

required to undertake appropriate research approved by the Department of Conservation that addresses social carrying capacity effects.

8. The Kepler Challenge is an established annual competitive sporting event held on the track. Any reapplication for a permit to undertake this activity will require consideration according to the standard concessions process and confirmation that the social and environmental effects remain acceptable. No other large scale competitive sporting events should be authorised on the track. Small scale community events may be appropriate.
9. Commercial boat access to the Kepler Track is outlined in section 5.6.

5.3.8.4 Hollyford Track

Objective

1. A multi-day walk that is an alternative to the Great Walk tracks that offers the following values:
 - a) A mountains to the sea opportunity that is accessible all year round;
 - b) A journey that provides a glimpse of New Zealand's pioneering history;
 - c) A place where the visitor experience reflects that of a traditional backcountry setting as opposed to a Great Walk opportunity;
 - d) A place that provides an opportunity as a training ground for a backcountry experience;
 - e) A place where conflict between tramping, hunting, fishing and jet boating is managed to protect backcountry visitor experiences;
 - f) A place where visitor facilities are provided to meet the needs of backcountry visitors;
 - g) Where a part of the track (the Demon Trail) is retained as a more remote experience for those trampers seeking a challenge; and
 - h) A place that provides an opportunity to connect on to remote tramping opportunities in the Big Bay, Pyke and Olivine areas.
2. The walking season for the Hollyford Track is defined from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise.

Implementation

1. The Demon Trail (McKerrow Island to the outlet of Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai) section of this track will be maintained to a lower standard than the rest of the track. This section is rough and caters to trampers rather than walkers. It is by-passed by many who utilise the option of a jet boat along Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai.
2. Concessionaire use of this visitor setting will be managed in order to maintain the backcountry recreation opportunities present.
3. Guiding services may make use of Department huts on the Hollyford Track all year round on an equal opportunity

basis with independent walkers (i.e. up to a maximum of 50% of sleeping capacity). Concessionaires granted this right should provide for a review to give priority to independent use of the track if it increases to the extent that sharing facilities becomes impractical. The exception to this is the Martins Bay Hut, where the Department of Conservation will recommend to the Minister that no commercial use of the hut should be permitted (refer to section 5.3.6.2 and section 5.8). This may be reassessed should the hut be upgraded.

4. Recreation and tourism concession party size restrictions should be the same as for those in the backcountry visitor setting (refer to section 5.3.7).
5. Commercial boating activities within this visitor setting should be limited to those that are for the following activities:
 - a) Transport of overnight trampers on the Hollyford Track where consistent with section 5.6; or
 - b) Boating that involves multi-day trips consistent with the opportunity objective above and section 5.6.
6. Use limits for multi-day walkers (similar to those used on the Great Walks) are unlikely to be introduced on this track during the life of this plan unless there is a dramatic increase in use. Aircraft landings in the Hollyford Valley will be managed in accordance with section 5.5 of this plan.
7. Camping will be unrestricted along the length of the track, unless dramatic increases in use make the creation of designated sites necessary in the future to minimise widespread impacts.
8. Competitive sporting events should not be authorised on the Hollyford Track.

Refer also to sections 5.5 and 5.6

5.3.8.5 Hump Ridge Track

Objective

1. The Hump Ridge Track provides a two night walking experience that passes through magnificent southwest Fiordland environments. Key attributes of this track include:
 - a) Its strong connection with early New Zealand history; and
 - b) Its challenging long days in a predominantly remote environment.

Implementation

1. The management of this track will continue to be operated by a concession to the Tuatapere Hump Track Trust (or its successor). Should this track not be managed by a concessionaire, the Department of Conservation will no longer manage the track to a Backcountry Comfort Seeker standard. It will be managed to a Backcountry Adventurer standard.

In order to provide flexibility to walkers this track will be managed for two-way travel, unless environmental or social effects make it necessary to introduce a one-way system.

2. That the capacity of the huts developed by the Tuatapere Hump Track Trust should continue to be limited to 40 people.
3. A minimum of 50% of the Tuatapere Hump Track Trust hut accommodation capacity should be available to booked independent walkers of the track at all times.
4. A pre-booking system will operate on the track to ensure equitable allocation of hut space between guided and independent walkers.
5. Guiding services (other than those being offered by the Tuatapere Hump Ridge Trust) should gain Trust permission to use their accommodation facilities.
6. Outside of the main walking season (defined from the Tuesday after Labour weekend to the 30th April unless natural events determine otherwise) guiding services authorised by way of concession may be made on an equal opportunity basis with independent walkers for overnight use of the Department of Conservation's hut at Port Craig (i.e. up to a maximum of 50% bunk capacity).

7. The total daily number of walkers allowed to walk the track should not exceed 90, unless it can be shown that numbers in excess of this quota will not detract from the uncrowded setting of the track, and all other social and environmental effects can be minimised. To protect the opportunity for independent walkers, commercial/guiding operations should only be granted rights to use a maximum of 50% of the total quota. Should an applicant for a guided walking opportunity seek changes to these limits, the applicant should be required to undertake appropriate research (approved by the Department of Conservation) that addresses social carrying capacity effects.
8. Bylaws will be sought to prohibit camping within 500 m of the track above the bushline. Camping will be unrestricted along the length of the track below the bushline, unless levels of use make the creation of designated sites necessary in the future to minimise widespread impacts.
9. Aircraft landings are addressed in section 5.5.
10. Competitive sporting events should not be authorised on the Hump Ridge Track.