

26 April 2023

Lawrence Blair
[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Larry

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), sent on 25 March 2023, in which you asked:

- *“What decision-making processes were made/used to close Graces Stream Campsite? Can I see a copy? ‘Trampling’ is mentioned in press release; what mitigation efforts were put in to avoid or educate campers on the impact of this?”*
- *What community consultation was made as to the effects and long-term cultural impacts of closing the campsite? What documentation supports that, and what mitigations are planned for those impacts?*
- *What internal tools does DOC use to consider cultural impact on their maintenance (or not) of facilities? (Not just on Maori but all NZ recreational opportunities and culture.)*
- *Can you please provide a list of major recreational DOC assets (huts, campsites, trails) that have been closed/dismantled/deactivated/shuttered in the last three years?*
- *Can you please provide a list of major recreational DOC assets (huts, campsites, trails) that have been created in the last three years?”*

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *What decision-making processes were made/used to close Graces Stream Campsite? Can I see a copy? ‘Trampling’ is mentioned in press release; what mitigation efforts were put in to avoid or educate campers on the impact of this?*

Included in this request is a copy of the background paper describing the critical issues we faced at Graces Stream. Also included is the decision document following the Team Process meeting that we held on 20 September 2022 to decide outcomes at Graces Stream. This document captures how visitor safety from dead and dying trees was the primary issue that we faced at that site. DOC did not have the budget to manage the trees at site to ensure it was safe for campers. As a result, the only mitigation action available to us was closure.

2. *What community consultation was made as to the effects and long-term cultural impacts of closing the campsite? What documentation supports that, and what mitigations are planned for those impacts?*

Taranaki Whānui, the Remutaka Conservation Trust, and local schools were informed of the decision to close Graces Stream Campsite. The public were informed via a [press release](#) and notification on our [website](#). The press release referred to other sites in the Remutaka Forest Park as being available for camping opportunities, including at the nearby Catchpool Valley Campsite.

3. *What internal tools does DOC use to consider cultural impact on their maintenance (or not) of facilities? (Not just on Maori but all NZ recreational opportunities and culture.)*

The Department does not have policies that use an interpretation of culture in the way that you have defined it in your question. However, DOC's visitor facilities are an important contribution to the following DOC outcomes:

- From the city to the wilderness, people connect with nature and our cultural heritage.
- New Zealanders care for and take action to preserve our special places and species.
- A range of sustainable recreational experiences encourage New Zealanders to enjoy the outdoors.

Recreation on public conservation lands and waters is an important contributor to the wellbeing of New Zealanders. People regularly visit public conservation lands for diverse reasons, such as for physical exercise, for a sense of spiritual fulfilment, and to experience the challenge, solitude and freedom of being in nature.

The community and stakeholder values associated with places are described within statutory plans, the conservation management strategies, conservation management plans, and national park management plans. These documents guide the Department's work and decision making.

4. *Can you please provide a list of major recreational DOC assets (huts, campsites, trails) that have been closed/dismantled/deactivated/shuttered in the last three years?*
5. *Can you please provide a list of major recreational DOC assets (huts, campsites, trails) that have been created in the last three years?*

The Department's asset management system provides details on all changes to individual assets, but it does not link removed assets with replacements. Therefore, without checking back with the Operations Regions for all items that have been added or removed from the asset database, an accurate list cannot be provided without substantial checking.

What is available is the DOC Annual Report figures. These figures indicate the scale of change in assets over the last three years:

Huts managed:

2020: 968

2021: 965

2022: 967

Kilometres of tracks managed:

2020: 14,682 km

2021: 14,673 km

2022: 14,729 km

Structures managed:

2020: 13,345

2021: 13,425

2022: 13,580

The number of facilities reported changes each year, not only as facilities are permanently removed or new facilities added, but also because of facilities that are temporarily closed one year but open the next.

The following documents have been released to you as part of this request:

Item	Date	Document Description	Decision
1	6 September, 2022	Graces Stream Campsite Background Paper	Released in full
2	20 September, 2022	Graces Stream Team Process Decision Document	Released in full

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

If you would like to discuss the closure of Graces Stream Campsite further with the Department, please contact [REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā



Moana Smith-Dunlop

Acting Director Operations, Lower North Island | Kaihautū Matarautaki Kāhui Matarautaki, Mai i Potaka ki te raki, ki Te Upoko o Te Ika ki te tonga, ki Turakina ki te hauāuru, ki Rēkohu/Wharekauri ki te rāwhiti