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DOC update to WDC

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government



DOC's Role

When nature thrives, New Zealand thrives – healthy nature supports a healthy economy

- Managing and protecting public conservation lands and waters, as well as conserving cultural heritage.
- Managing visitor assets, including tracks, huts and campsites ensuring people have safe and enjoyable experiences.
- Regulation and law enforcement.
- Advocating for nature.
- Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 requires us to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Minister's priorities

- Target investment into high value conservation outcomes
- Generate new revenue
- Strengthen relationships with iwi / hapū
- Streamline permissions processes



DOC Western South Island Region Overview

- 1.9 million hectares of public conservation land (84% of all land in WSI, approx. 25% of NZ conservation land)
- Regional office in Hokitika
- 4 District Offices , 5 field centres, 149 staff
- Treaty partnership with Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio
- 5 National Parks
- 5 Marine Reserves
- Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area



DOC Western South Island Region Overview

- 8 key visit experiences
- Approx 1290km of tracks, 147 huts and total of 9074 assets
- 2 Great Walks - Heaphy and Paparoa Tracks.
- 3 Visitor Centres
- Six Tohu Whenua sites
- 275 actively conserved heritage sites

DOC is New Zealand's largest provider of visitor activities. We provide more toilets, tracks, picnic areas, huts and campsites than anyone else.



Heaphy Track. Photo: Leigh-Anne Wiig

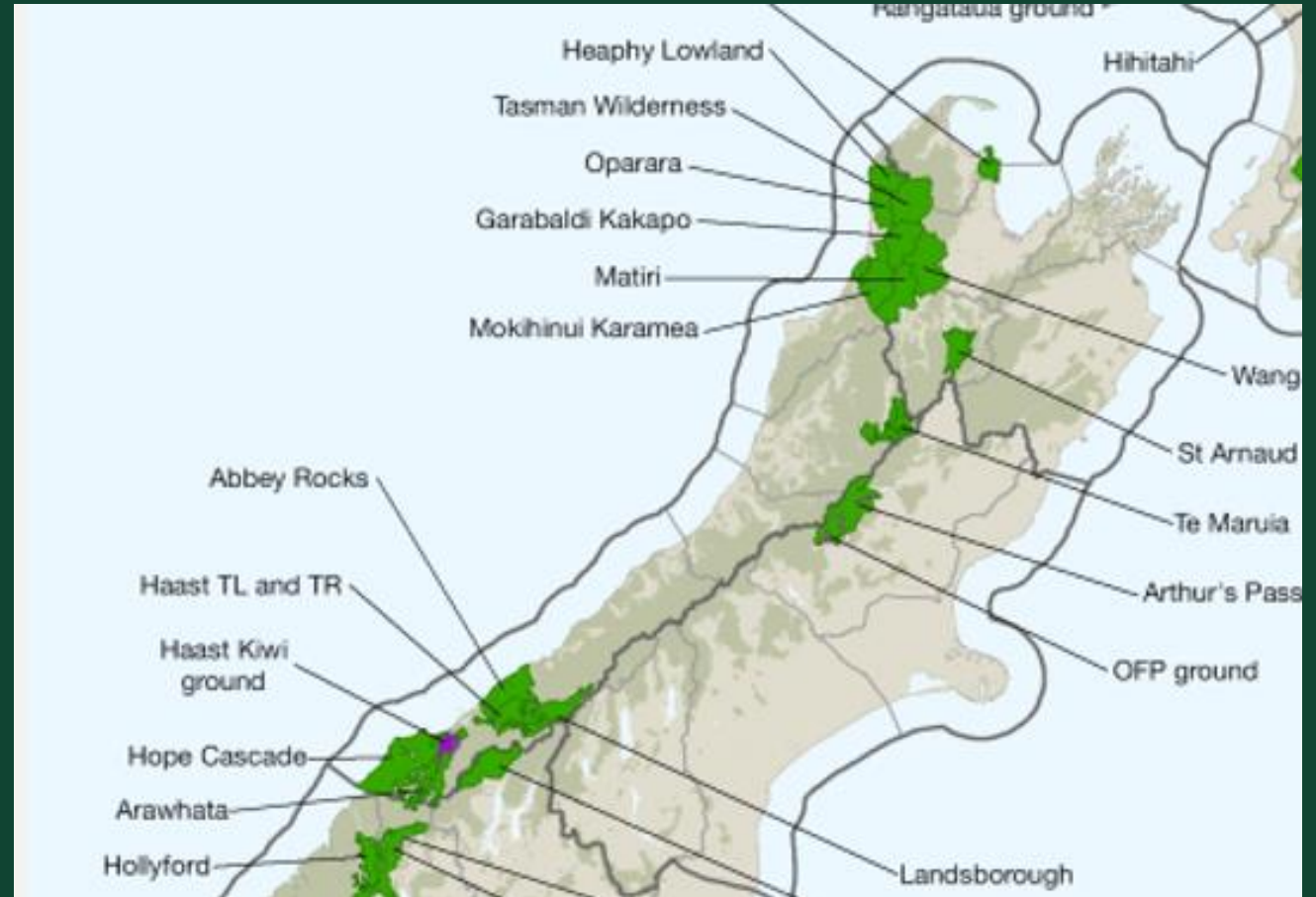
Species Management

- In situ management of rowi kiwi
- In situ and ONE of Haast Tokoeka kiwi
- Only mainland population of Kiwi Pukupuku
- Whio security sites
- Kapitea and Alborns skinks in predator fenced areas
- Significant populations of long tailed bats, bittern, mohua, rock wren, tawaki and kororā, several fresh water fish species



Animal Pest Control - WSI Aerial and ground predator control

- Treated approx. 354,00 hectares year to date of a total approx. 718,000 hectare programme.
- Significant alignment with OSPRI TB Free programme



Wild Animal Management

- Limited resources and cannot work everywhere - we must prioritise important biodiversity values to protect.
- Extensive goat control carried out – primarily in or protecting National Parks.
- Proposing to increase work in Kahurangi with Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance and its ungulate programme.
- Pigs are controlled in the Heaphy - coast down from Kahurangi Point.
- Tahr are limited to a feral range.
- For deer there is no active control in WSI.



Weeds

- 20,406 hectares of weed work last financial year.
- Working on a Regional Weeds Strategy to prioritise our work.
- Mix of weed led (RPMP) and site led.
- Focus is on PCL
- Working with WCRC to renew RPMP

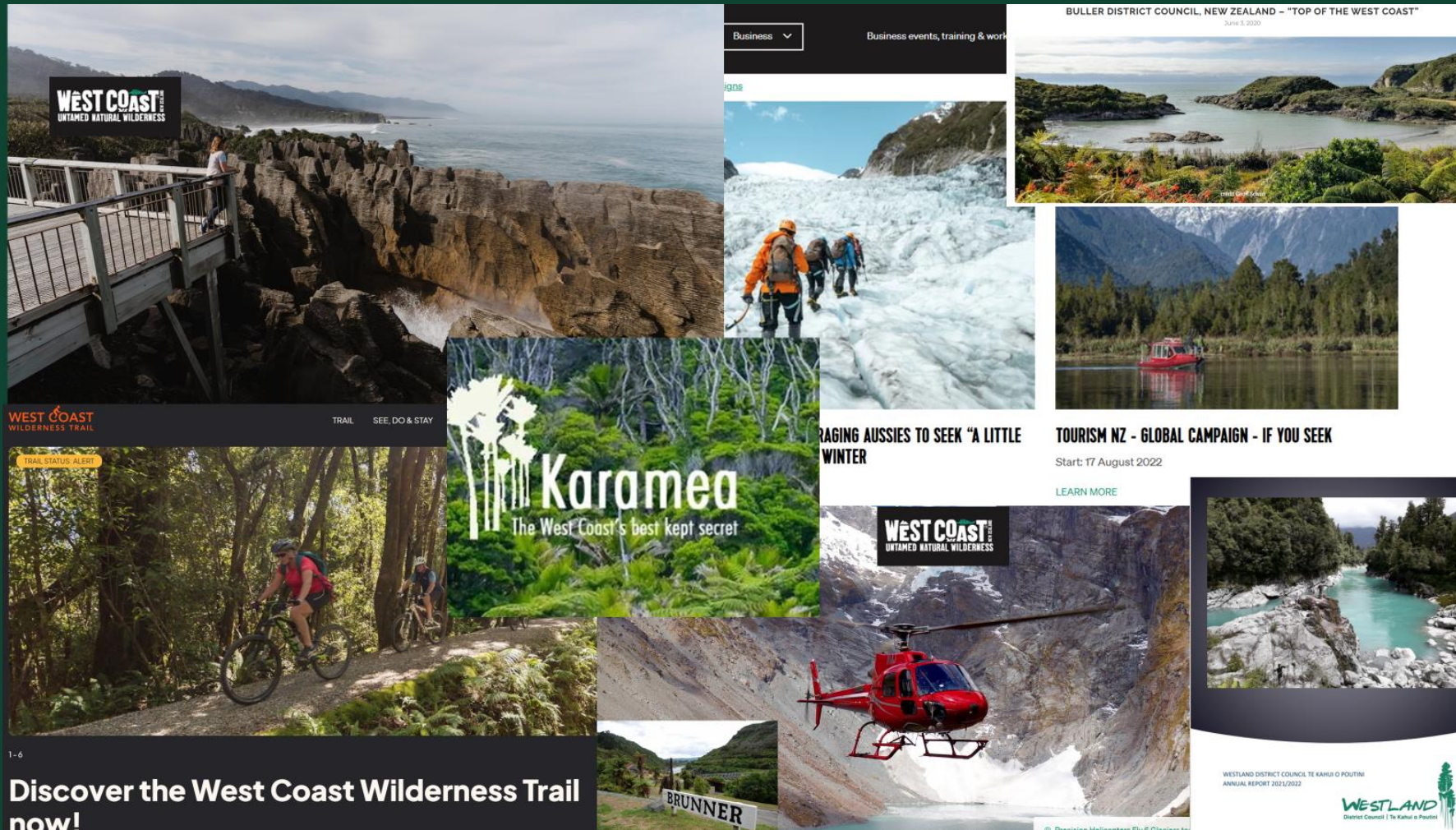


Land management, regulator and economics

- Permissions
 - 123 Grazing licences - approx. 9400 hectares.
 - 56 Mining Authorisations - approx. 1490 hectares.
 - Numerous other authorisations including aircraft, guiding, easements, baches, gravel takes, beehives and others.
 - Permissions processing timelines are being met.
 - Economic impact from use of PCL estimated at \$220M in 2004.
- Stewardship land reclassification decisions have been made
 - – next step is implementation of the Minister's decisions
- Fast track – DOC provide technical advice to panels
- Conservation Management Strategy review
 - – paused pending proposed legislative change
- RMA role



Visitor experience – Nature is the experience



- 90% of visitors to WSI interact with nature
- Nature is the primary attraction for 70% of visitors to WSI

Visitors, recreation and tourism



1290 km of
tracks



19 campsites



46 amenity
areas



147 huts

2 Great Walks

3 Visitor Centres

8 key visit experiences

6 Tohu Whenua

275 actively conserved heritage sites

DOC is New Zealand's largest provider of visitor activities. We provide more toilets, tracks, picnic areas, huts and campsites than anyone else.

- 90% of visitors to WSI interact with nature
- Nature is the primary attraction for 70% of visitors to WSI
- 74% Internationals walk, hike, trek or tramp (2024/25)
- 53% of internationals do a short walk, our most popular activity.

Partnering

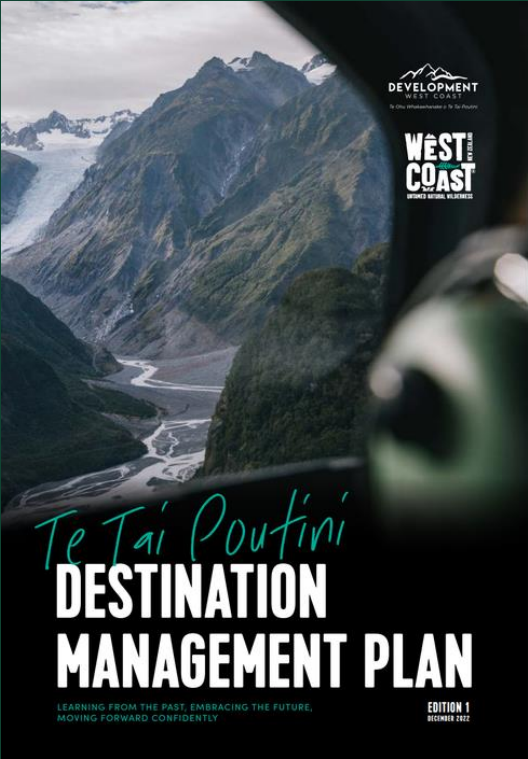
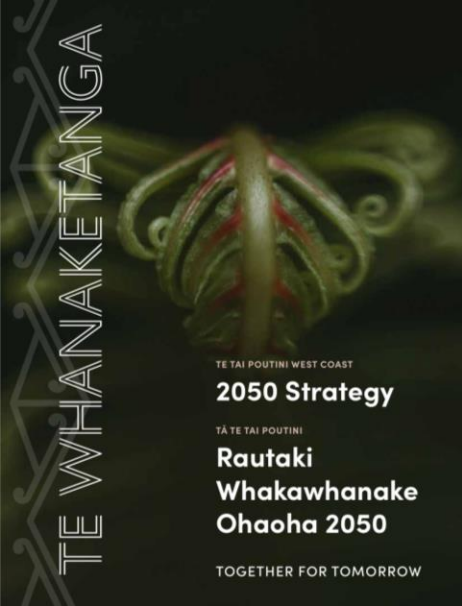


Westland Mayor Helen Lash, left, with Department of Conservation Hokitika operations manager Tim Shaw and DoC Western South Island operations director Owen Kilgour at the new Hokitika Gorge swing bridge after the opening on Friday. PHOTO: JAVINA SHEPHERD

A bridge to tourism's future



PREDATOR FREE
SOUTH WESTLAND



Hokitika Place

- **Our patch** - Taramakau to Waitaha inland to main divide
- **Our team**
 - District - 20 across 3 functions
 - Regional - 7 across Marine, Freshwater, Heritage, Builders, Goat control
 - 1 Ops manager
- **Our highlight reel**
 - Biodiversity – whio, Kapitea skink, weed control
 - Land use - Gold mining, grazing, gravel take, tourism concessions
 - Heritage – Arahura River, Pounamu Trails, Mahinapua Battles, Early Goldmining
 - Tourist – Hokitika Gorge, Wilderness Trail
 - High use – Lake Kaniere and Mahinapua Campground and amenities
 - Backcountry capital of NZ – 72 Huts and 300km+ of tracks

Hokitika Place

- **Our 5 Year Plan**

- Ensure continued effective protection of Otira rata, whio and Kapitea skink
- Help realise Mana whenua story telling aspirations through management implementation
- Maximising effectiveness of weed control work by refining strategy and collaboration
- Retain backcountry capital of NZ status by increasing collaboration with others
- Maximise the quality of experience at our high use visitor sites through improvements and attention to detail.

- **Working with WDC**

- Build on existing effective partnerships – Gorge, Wilderness trail
- Increase familiarity and collaboration across our teams
- Replacement of Mahinapua Historic Rail Bridge on Westland Wilderness Trail

Te Waipounamu – South Westland District

- The future of tourism
- Embedding Predator free
- World Heritage status

Changing the story:

Glacier Centric

Nature Based

What's changing

- Climate change is reshaping the Franz Josef / Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere experience — visibility and access are no longer reliable.
- The future is broader than glaciers: Te Taiao, World Heritage values, and place-based experiences.

Why it matters to Westland

- A diversified visitor offer supports year-round visitation, longer stays, and reduced vulnerability.
- Honest storytelling protects the reputation of the place and the district.

What this means in practice

- Shift from “come see the ice” to “come experience the place”.
- Strong alignment with community, Council, iwi and tourism partners on visitor planning.

Predator Free South Westland: From Project to Normal Life

Where we are now

- Elimination of predators from 103,500ha in South Westland almost complete.
- Predator Free South Westland has delivered nationally significant gains.
- The next phase is defence, transition, and business-as-usual.

Why it matters to Westland

- Healthy ecosystems underpin tourism, community pride, and future opportunities.
- Consistency and discipline protect the investment already made by partners and funders.

What this means in practice

- Predator defence becomes everyday work, not one-off effort.
- Strong community, iwi, Council and landowner roles in maintaining gains.
- Biodiversity outcomes that support both conservation and visitor experience.



Te Wāhipounamu: World Heritage with Responsibility



What World Heritage really means

- Te Wāhipounamu status carries international obligations, not just branding value.
- Protecting Outstanding Universal Values includes nature and cultural narratives.

Why it matters to Westland

- World Heritage strengthens the district's global identity and long-term appeal.
- Credibility depends on how well weeds, pests, access and visitor pressures are managed.

What this means in practice

- Visible weed and pest control at gateways and high-use areas.
- Co-authored storytelling with mana whenua at key sites.
- Council, DOC and community alignment on protecting what makes this place unique.

Q & A?

