

# NZAC NELSON MARLBOROUGH SECTION NEWS

February 2025



Photo: Andy Buchanan on the Summit of Te - ao - Whekere looking towards Mts Alarm Tapuae-o-uenuku.

## Featured in this issue:

- Join in, help lead your Section
- Alerts for Section Meetings in March and April
- Successful Climb of Mt Travers
- Reminder to submit on Government's proposals to "Modernise" Conservation, and charge for its use.

## **Share in Management of the Nelson Marlborough Section**

New committee members are needed especially to help lead trips

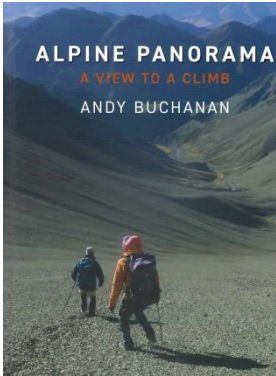
Anyone who would like to contribute  
should talk to a committee member or email

Section Secretary: Maree Holland: [mareeholland9@gmail.com](mailto:mareeholland9@gmail.com)

## **Lock in the Dates for these Club Meetings**

**Wednesday 19 March 2025**

**7.00pm The Honest Lawyer, Stoke**



### **ALPINE PANORAMA. A talk by Andy Buchanan**

On a clear morning, Christchurch residents have an awesome view across the Canterbury plains to the peaks of the Southern Alps. The view changes dramatically from summer to winter depending on the weather.

Andy Buchanan's self-imposed retirement challenge was to climb all 133 named peaks on a hand-drawn panorama sketch published in the Christchurch Press over 50 years ago. The panorama extends from Mt Peel and Fox Peak in the south, to Tapuaenuku and Manukau in the north, including Canterbury foothills and many peaks in the Southern Alps as far away as Mt Cook and Mt Rolleston.

Andy has climbed all these peaks, and has written a book about the views, the mountains, their history and the climbs.

His talk will give more information on the panorama, the peaks, and the book, describing successes and failures along the way, with many friends.

Andy is a semi-retired structural engineer. He taught civil engineering at the University of Canterbury for many years.

More information about the book, the peaks, and the panorama challenge is available at [www.panorama.nz](http://www.panorama.nz)

**Wednesday 16 April.**

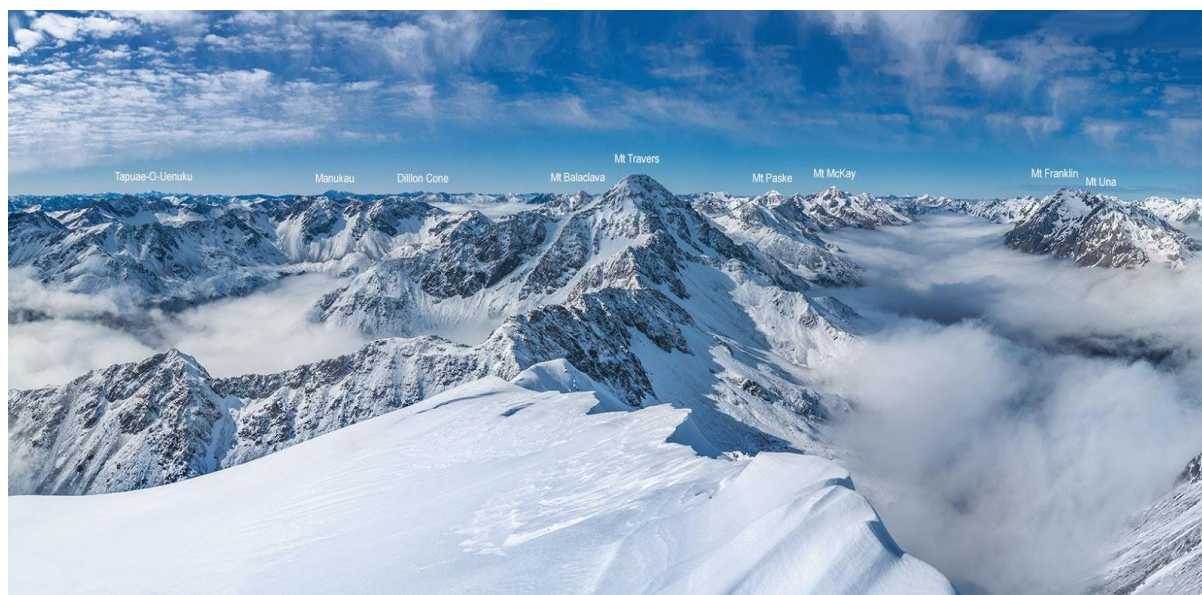
**7.00pm The Honest Lawyer, Stoke.**

### **Adventures in Karakoram**

Pam Henson, committed environmentalist, experienced trumper, caver and kayaker, will discuss her experiences over six seasons as an English teacher in Shimshal, a remote village in the foothills of the Karakoram Range in northern Pakistan. There is a postscript too: a long term commitment to helping local youth.

## **Fourth Time Lucky. Climbing Mt Travers.**

By Peter Laurenson



A view from the summit of Mt Cupola to Mt Travers and other peaks. This view looks on to the Summit Creek route

Before the coming of Europeans, the pass, Poukirikiri, gave Ngati Apa access to sacred Kehu Peak.

Towering above Poukirikiri/Travers Saddle, is the second highest point in Nelson Lakes National Park. At 2,338 metres, Mt Travers is just two metres lower than Mt Franklin to the southwest and 551 metres above the saddle.

My target, Mount Travers, named by Julius von Haast after the explorer W.T.L. (William Thomas Locke) Travers, has three main ascent routes. The most technical and shortest route is the south ridge, accessed from Poukirikiri/Travers Saddle. This is graded 3, with a steep wall above a notch at 2,000 metres requiring use of a rope. The longest route, up Summit Creek to the north of the mountain, is graded 1. Another route, accessed from Upper Travers Hut, up the east face to the northeast ridge, is graded 2. Of course, like any mountainous terrain, weather and snow conditions dictate how difficult any route up the mountain is on a given day.

I've attempted climbs on all three routes, only reaching the summit on my fourth attempt. Mt Travers is a big mountain, where the possibility of avalanche must be considered, and where exposure to varying degrees is encountered on all routes. In fine summer conditions, reaching the summit is feasible for fit trampers. My first attempt was on the grade 2 route in October 2023. Due to unconsolidated snow and deteriorating weather, we retreated after reaching the northeast ridge at 2,070 metres. My second attempt was up the grade 3 south ridge in May. At the notch, treacherous verglass was enough to force our retreat. My third attempt was up Summit Creek, where at just 1,700 metres, clag and minimal visibility turned us around. But in August 2024, bluebird weather and firm snow conditions on the grade 2 route made all the difference.

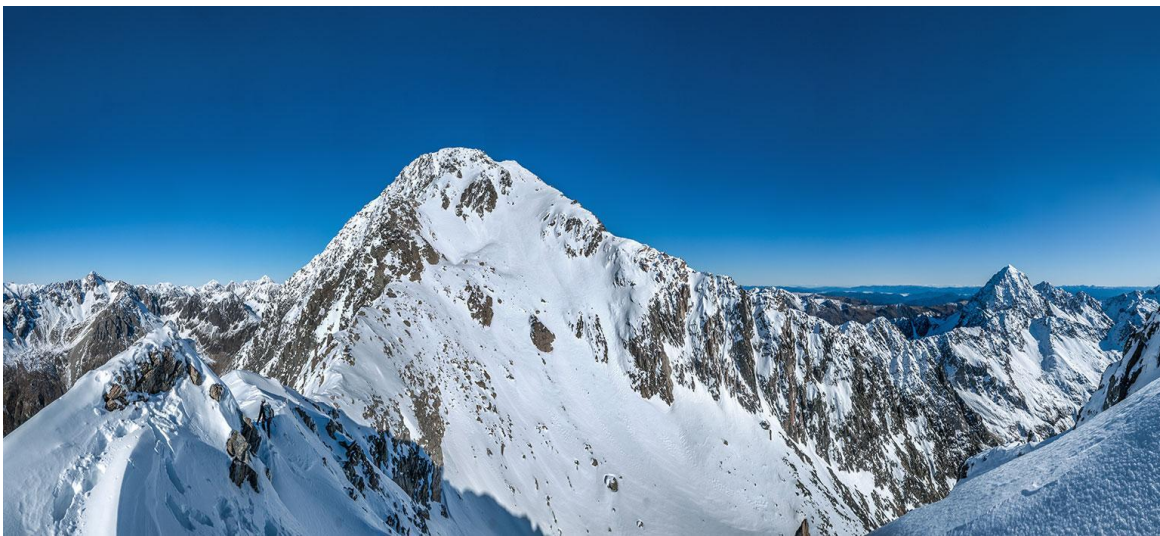
Following a quick water taxi zip along Lake Rotoiti soon after dawn, Jim Davidson and I set off up Lakehead Track under a clear blue sky - the start of a three-day fine forecast. We made steady progress up the mostly easy and gradually ascending trail to Upper Travers Hut, reaching there in late afternoon. On our approach to the Hut, Mt Travers loomed above to the north. Its snow cover looked quite thin for mid-winter. Being a winter weekday, we were sole occupants, enjoying cosy sleep beside the wood burner that night.





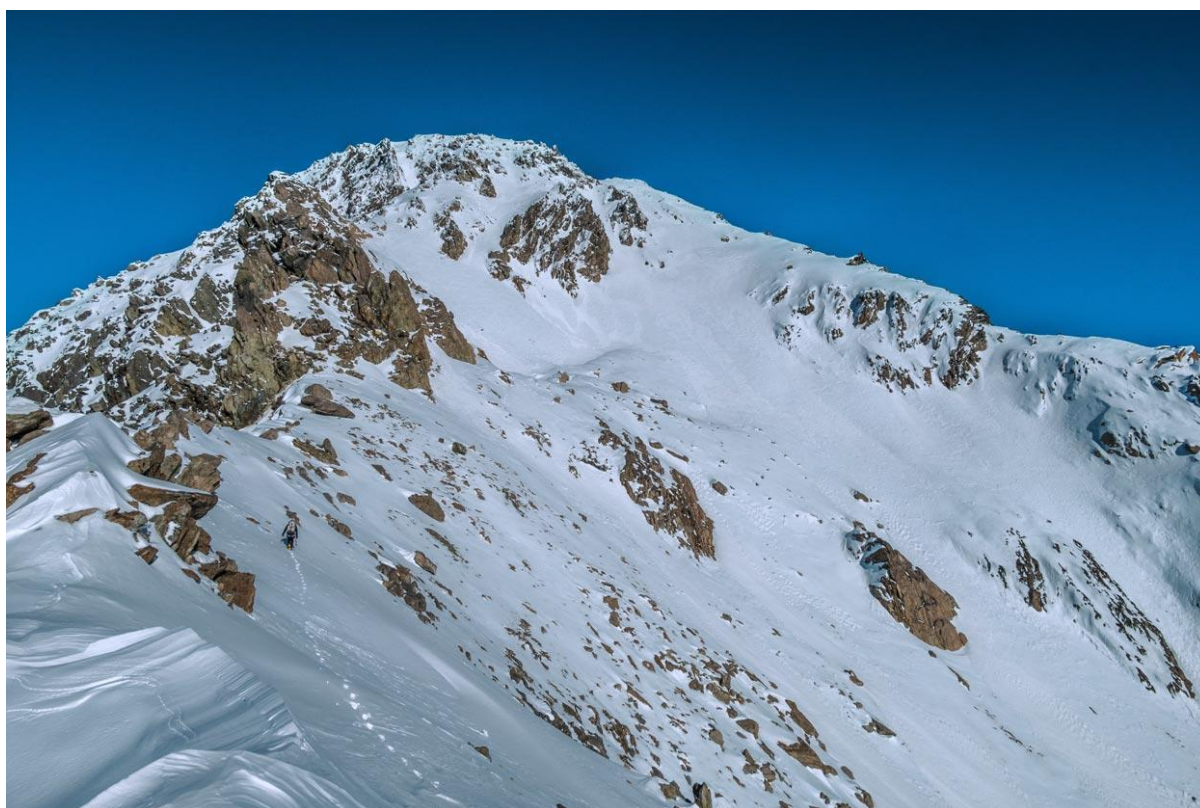
Mt Travers, viewed on the approach to Upper Travers Hut (left). The grade 2 route is hidden behind the right-hand ridge

We set out before dawn at 6 a.m. next morning to take advantage of the overnight freeze and to leave plenty of daylight for our climb. We reached the snowline at 1,500 metres and soon after putting on our crampons. As we approached a shoulder at 1,720 metres, the terrain steepened, and the alpenglow became distracting. So up on the shoulder we paused to enjoy the moment. The view across Travers Valley was already impressive, as Kehu and other peaks were highlighted by the strengthening dawn light.



The view south along the NE ridge, beyond Pt 2127. On the skyline Kehu left and Cupola right

On the 1,720m shoulder with a dawn view east, Kehu is the prominent peak mid-right. Beyond the shoulder the route drops 70 metres, skirting a steep buttress, before our climb to the northeast ridge up steep, mostly open snow began. On this part of the climb there are a couple of places where small rock steps give a real sense of exposure. While the snow was very firm, on these rocks it was so thin that it sometimes fell apart just where a reassuring step would have been nice. We didn't use the rope, but at one point probably should have. Up on the ridge I prepared for new ground, as this is where I turned right, down the ridge last time I was here. To our left the ridge reared up towards Pt 2127. The going was absorbing and spectacular – no need for a rope, but not a place to be complacent, with big drops both sides of the ridge.



At 2,100m we had lunch at the base of the west face before heading right onto the face, diagonally climbing to Mt Travers' north ridge

Beyond Pt 2127 the ridge narrowed as it stretched away to a point still at 2,100 metres, where the final climb to the summit began, which still appeared further away than I'd expected. We worked our way along, sometimes dropping slightly off to the west side to get past gendarmes. The snow remained firm, allowing reassuring positive crampon placements. At the point where the final climb begins we stopped for lunch while gazing down the narrower of two gullies that lead to Summit Creek. Beyond that, directly north, Mt Hopeless stood out, with Mt Cupola much closer and to the west.

We had two options to reach the summit. While I think Jim would have enjoyed pushing on directly up the steep rocky northeast ridge, we opted to traverse a steep snow face above the first gully to reach the north ridge at 2,250 metres. From there we could look into the second gully above Summit Creek and also up easy ground to the summit, which we reached at mid-day.

I felt great to have finally reached this point. In a cloudless sky we could see mountains in every direction. The broad summit of Mt Franklin loomed up to our southwest. Directly east, the inland Kaikoura peaks punctuated the skyline. Just over a vertical kilometre below us, and about one horizontal kilometre to the southeast sat the tiny dot of the Upper Travers Hut. If I'd been told that it would take me another eight hours to reach it, I wouldn't have believed it.





The view south to Jim just north of the summit

After taking many photos, it was time to begin our descent. Although a longer route, we agreed to descend into Summit Creek rather than down-climb our steeper ascent route. The snow was now softening in the afternoon sunshine, demanding frequent whacking of our boots with an ice axe to avoid snowballing under our crampons.



On the lookout for a way down to Summit Creek, at left

Although the Summit Creek Route is graded 1, looking down it felt pretty steep. For 100 or more metres of descent, we faced into the slope until the gradient relented. At about 1,850metes we reached snow plod terrain. It seemed the hard work was over, but I was forgetting how big Mt Travers is. Skirting around its base is a long way on surprisingly rough terrain. Once in the beech forest conditions underfoot improved, but route finding wasn't easy with tree fall frequently

disjointing the faint trail. Eventually at about 1,100 metres, we reached a small bridge spanning Summit Creek. Jim, who is much quicker than me, shot off to reach the hut before nightfall. Donning my head torch, I trudged on to reach the hut, 14 hours after setting off that morning. Jim could not tell whether it was a grimace or a grin on my face as I joined him by the wood burner. Actually, it was both. What a great day in the hills.

For more captioned images and a route map use this link:

<https://www.occasionalclimber.co.nz/browse-images-2/new-zealand-south-island/nelson-lakes-browse/mt-travers-east-face-summit-creek-august-2024/>

## **Reminder.**

### **Responding to Government Proposals to Change NZ Conservation Management**

Background. In November 2024 the Government made two significant announcements.

To:

- “Modernise NZ Conservation management,
- Charge for access to public conservation land.

Neither proposal was part election campaigns mounted by any of the government parties. If adopted, these will significantly impact the enjoyment of New Zealand’s outdoors by Club members and the general public.

Please consider the government proposals. Importantly, consider how implementation of the proposals would affect your enjoyment of national parks and other public conservation land for climbing, tramping and allied recreation.

- What do you support?
- What do you oppose?
- What alternative management measures would you the government to implement?
- Are they desirable?
- Reflect on alternatives and make a submission expressing your views.

### **Government Proposal No. 1. “Modernise” Management of NZ Conservation**

The Government states its proposals aim to:

- Generate new revenue through increased charging to help finance conservation work
- “Target” investment into “high-value conservation outcomes”
- “Streamline” planning
- “Fix” the concessions process.

Seeking to justify its action the Government discussion document that focusses on:

- Responding to consistent lobbying by the commercial tourism industry to allow more flexibility in concessions for commercial use of public conservation land.
- DOC’s lack of resourcing which impacts effective performance in conservation, and national park and public conservation land management;
- Integrating Treaty of Waitangi principles in DOC policy and management.

You can read the Government’s case for introducing user charging by using this link:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/2024-consultations/proposals-to-modernise-the-conservation-system/>

Key questions posed by the Government include:

1. Do the Government's proposals to "modernise" Conservation management strike the right balance for you?
2. Do you agree with the proposed framework for making and updating a "National Conservation Policy Statement." How could this be improved?
3. Do you agree with proposals to simplify management planning"? How could it be improved?
4. Do you agree with introducing classes of exempt activities, prohibited activities and permitted activities in conservation planning. How could this framework be improved?
5. Do you agree with criteria listed by the Government for public conservation land exchanges? How could these be improved?
6. Do you agree with Government proposals for disposal of public conservation land?
7. Do the proposals give appropriate consideration to applying principles of the Treaty of Waitangi?
8. What criteria should be considered for disposal of Crown land, including granting land to Maori?
9. Do you agree with the way the Government proposes to "simplify" /"improve" the processing of concession applications?
10. Do you agree to the conditions proposed for concession management including advertising applications, competitiveness of concessions terms and fees paid to the crown.
11. Do you agree with proposals to improve management of DOC concession areas eg camping grounds? How could they be improved?

### **Issues Not Addressed in Government Information**

The discussion document has been issued by the Department of Conservation not the Minister. Arguably this is political rather than balanced assessment of the government's stated need to "modernise" the conservation. It should have been issued by the government's responsible minister. Discussion of its perceived need for modernisation should have been supported by long term data identifying short comings and options for improved management

There is need for a better definition of what the government means by "modernisation" and why this is needed. Review of managing one third of NZ's land mass and key legislation should be undertaken by a special commission of inquiry and involvement of independent specialists including the Parliamentary Commissioner of the Environment.

There is already long standing conservation and national park legislation, and a Departmental General Policy document in place. The need for a "National Conservation Statement" is not explained by the Government. What is the necessity for a new one? What key issues need to be addressed?

There are already areas managed by DOC where recreation by n New Zealanders is adversely affected by overcrowding or "over-tourism." Milford, the Routeburn Track, the Hooker Valley Tongariro Crossing and even remote areas such as the Earnslaw Burn are examples of this.

The Government discussion document gives a heavy weighting to new measures that mainly benefit commercial tourism on public conservation land. More recent government announcements emphasise the need to increase tourism to support NZ's economic growth. Leading economists are critical of this approach to national economic management.



Government information provides no discussion on:

- The impact of commercial tourism on the funding of public conservation land management, or how the Government could ensure that realistic contribution by the tourism industry to the real management costs of tourism on public conservation land.
- How concession holders benefit from limited competition and enjoy privileged access to areas of prime commercial appeal with low per capita usage fees.
- Modernisation of huts, tracks and bridge facilities used by the New Zealand recreation community
- How the “modernisation” will better manage the impact of commercial tourism on public infrastructure
- The importance of recreational use of public conservation land which is a key statutory responsibility for DOC. And protecting the enjoyment of PCL including National Parks by New Zealanders
- The value of the internationally recognised, Recreational Opportunity Management Spectrum (ROS) management system has guided DOC land management since the 1980s. This employs a balanced approach for managing human activity on public conservation. ROS seeks to rationally balance demand for commercial tourism and informal use for individual, club or other non-commercial activity while protecting the intrinsic natural values.
- The importance of rationalising public funding of public conservation land management currently split between multiple government agencies and DOC. For instance in 2024 through MBIE, the Tourism Ministry invested considerable public funding into planning for enhancing facilities and increasing tourism to key areas such as Milford Sound (\$3m), Fox Glacier (\$3.9m), Tongariro Crossing (\$1.8m) reopening the Waikaremoana Great Walk (\$1.7m); \$6m to increase the range of short walks and day hikes on public conservation land, \$4.2m over four years for maintenance and management of huts of national importance, and funding for DOC to improve its website, and DOC’s geographic information or mapping systems. This suggests that government funding to support commercial tourism has significant influence on DOC land activity management.

Any new measures introduced by government should provide for a balance of taxpayer, commercial fee, user and philanthropic funding to ensure for balanced long term management of DOC’s statutory conservation recreation and commercial responsibilities.

### **FMC’s Response to the Proposal to “Modernise” DOC**

*Note: NZAC has been a member of the Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ since its foundation in 1931*

FMC’s initial response focusses on governance. It states that Conservation isn’t about profit; it’s about ensuring our land is protected in perpetuity.

The proposed “modernisation” would cement control of conservation issues almost entirely to the Minister for Conservation, which could undermine democratic processes vital to New Zealand’s conservation. FMC is also deeply concerned over the proposals to simplify the process of disposing of conservation land and to provide sole authority to sign off on conservation documents to the Minister of Conservation. Currently, this function is overseen by the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) and conservation boards.

Further, conflicts of interest could undermine democratic processes crucial to New Zealand’s conservation. Recent history shows the risk of having government ministers who want to dig up or monetize conservation land. The NZCA and boards were designed as a brake on that and should not be discarded.

## **Government Proposal No. 2. Charging for Access to “Some” Public Conservation Land**

The Government is considering charging for access to some public conservation land and seeks to justify this with these claims.

- Current legislation does not allow DOC to charge for access to public conservation land in New Zealand.
- The current charging system is complicated and unfair
- Costs for conservation management are increasing.
- Tourist demand is placing pressure on funding of public conservation land management.
- Currently many visitors do not contribute towards public conservation land they visit.
- Overseas, access charges are “commonly used” to fund conservation work.

Key government questions posed by the Government include:

1. Do you support the government introducing charging for access to some public conservation land?
2. Do you support charging everyone?
3. Charging only international visitors
4. Access charging to special areas:
  - Facing unsustainable visitor pressure
  - Places popular with international visitors
  - Places with high biodiversity and scenic values?

You can read the Government’s case for introducing user charging by using this link:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2024/access-charging/exploring-charging-for-access-to-some-public-conservation-land-discussion-document.pdf>

### **Considerations Not in Government Information**

For decades governments of all persuasions have failed to adequately fund the Department of Conservation to effectively manage its statutory responsibilities for conservation, pest management and recreation and commercial tourism. Reportedly DOC is provided with 0.64% of the nation’s budget, yet it manages human and conservation activities on one third of the nation’s land mass with a full time equivalent of 2,500 staff.

Given DOC’s estimated annual operating deficit of \$1.5 billion, how realistic are the government’s proposals to increase charging for public and commercial use of public conservation land, without increasing the human and physical resources needed for sound management? Clearly there is need for reform including realistic staffing for nature, landscape and heritage conservation, commercial tourism and non-commercial visitor management.

Discussion of higher contribution from taxation based funding and reformed concession charging should also have been provided in the Government discussion document. Reform of NZ conservation should justify as in the national public interest and include utilisation of reasonable funding from national taxation revenue. It should improve DOC’s ability to meet long established responsibilities set out in the Conservation Act 1987 and widely accepted by the public.

Reform should include maintenance and improvement of facilities for recreation on DOC managed land and in national parks by New Zealanders as well as conservation management.

Management improvements proposed should also address DOCs primary responsibilities for conservation management.



Imposing access fees would be radical change to the management of PCL. Freedom of access to NZ national parks for New Zealanders is a compact agreed with government by recreation groups since the formation of FMC in 1931. This right should be protected.

Charging for access could very well become a barrier for recreation on public conservation land by low-income New Zealanders, educational groups.

DOC has had difficulty in establishing an effective centralised fee payment system for its huts. Examination of any access charging should include discussion on the costs of implementation ongoing compliance management, and the risks of non-compliance.

Quoted examples of access charges overseas to justify the Government case is selective. Charging is not always practical or politically acceptable. There is no discussion of access in the European alps, particularly in Scandinavia where the right to roam is an historic practice politicians are bound to protect. And in Victoria, Australia, year round access charges for the use of public conservation land are impractical because of the large number of access points. Charging is only viable in winter for ski resorts. Access to NZ public conservation land is porous too.

### **FMC's Comments on Charging for Access**

New Zealand's public conservation land should be accessible to all, and its management and protection should be funded by the government.

"We do not support access charges or car parking fees for New Zealanders," says FMC President Megan Dimozantos. "These charges would disproportionately impact families and lower-income communities like students and younger people, making our backcountry areas inaccessible to many. The hills should not be a place for only the wealthy."

"FMC stands united in supporting conservation that benefits all New Zealanders, not just those who can afford it. While we support access fees for foreign visitors, we have been alarmed by the many recent additions to fees for Kiwis heading outdoors, such as higher hut fees, reductions in volunteer discounts, and the complex process required to access these discounts. Such barriers risk dissuading volunteers whose work significantly supports the Department of Conservation's (DOC) conservation goals."

"Most of our recreation community are volunteers on the conservation estate, and these cumulative fees will become a barrier to carrying out this important mahi. DOC relies heavily on the unpaid dedication of volunteers—our wild places deserve access, protection, and care, not attempts to profit from the very volunteers who look after it."

"Whether we're talking about volunteers or not, our wild lands should be accessible to all, regardless of their financial situation. New Zealanders shouldn't have to pay for the privilege of enjoying and preserving their own backyard."

The use of any access fees is also an area of concern. FMC is clear: any funds raised through access fees should be solely allocated to conservation initiatives, supplementing-not replacing-government funding. "The government must adequately fund DOC to protect Aotearoa's unique environment. Conservation isn't about profit; it's about ensuring our land is protected in perpetuity."

## **Making Your Submission**

You are encouraged to make your own email submissions directly to DOC and the Government  
The deadline for these is 5pm on 28 February 2025.

- On Access Charges  
[accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz](mailto:accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz)
- On “Modernising” Conservation.  
[landlegislation@doc.govt.nz](mailto:landlegislation@doc.govt.nz)



## **Contribute Your Ideas for Member Evenings**

Section Evening Convenor, Peter Laurenson welcomes tips for future Section evenings and social activities. You can meet Peter at almost any Section evening, or contact him by:

Email: [occasionalclimber@gmail.com](mailto:occasionalclimber@gmail.com)

Phone: 021 446 725.

## **What have you Climbed or Explored Recently?**

Newsletter Editor, Rob Mitchell is always ready to publish contributions.

Send them in.

- Enjoyable alpine trips
- Interesting photos of people and places
- Gear, book and video recommendations.
- Letters on issues, worries and solutions
- Welcome or Curious news with an alpine twist

Share your experiences and ideas.

Move brain into gear.

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