



BACKCOUNTRY TRUST
Supporting Aotearoa's Backcountry Heritage



2021-22 PERFORMANCE REPORT



Nardoo Biv after renovation by Jobs for Nature. Nelson Lakes National Park

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM THE CHAIR.....	4
WHERE WE INVESTED	8
WHO WE ARE	10
OUR VOLUNTEERS & CONTRACTORS.....	12
2021-22 WORK PROGRAMME.....	14
TE IKA-A-MĀUI / NORTH ISLAND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME	16
TE WAIPOUNAMU / SOUTH ISLAND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME	26
KAIMAHI FOR NATURE	34
LIST OF APPROVED GRANTS	46

FROM THE CHAIR



'Busy' is one word to characterise the 2021–22 year, although 'hectic' might be a better one to describe the expanding volunteer programme and the many additional Kaimahi for Nature projects.



We are extremely proud of the many excellent track and hut restoration projects completed in the back country throughout New Zealand, and gratefully thank all those who have participated in what was our largest work programme yet undertaken. Our contractors have worked exceptionally hard, both in the field, and orchestrating projects behind the scenes. Settled late summer and autumn weather over much of the country helped the work flow, but other complications such as material supplies proved very challenging.

Despite these challenges, the Trust's mission remains true: 'the restoration, maintenance and enhancement of back country facilities'.

SITUATION

The Covid 19 Pandemic, with all the associated shutdowns and restrictions, greatly affected the tourism industry to a degree that I doubt anyone had envisaged. Lacking opportunities to generate an

income, many people involved in the tourism industry left smaller towns to take jobs in metropolitan areas. Supply chain problems also meant some builders had to postpone projects. Others had little option but to attempt to ride out the storm. The Kaimahi (Jobs) for Nature programme assisted some of those individuals to stay in their communities.

As we began the year, little indication of these significant challenges were apparent, but it was not long before material shortages and significant price increases began to impact the BCT's hut restoration work. Conflict in Europe further exacerbated problems, with large freight restrictions, posing more challenges for those wanting to restore huts.

However, the deteriorating state of our precious huts and tracks meant an urgent need to continue and expand our work programme. So despite the challenges, the work intensity actually increased.

Interest in our huts and tracks has continued to grow, with many people expressing their desire to see

Freeman Burn Hut being renovated, Fiordland National Park.





NZDA Southern Lakes members on the rebuild of Freeman Burn Hut

the state of these facilities improve. Our managers reached out to generate interest from many new and various groups. Through the efforts of paid contractors undertaking more complex projects, sometimes working hand-in-hand with volunteer groups, the BCT expanded its work more widely throughout the New Zealand back country – resulting in a win-win for everyone.

CHANGE

Several facets of our work programme changed to accommodate the greater resources made available through the Kaimahi for Nature (KFN) initiative. As the workload increased beyond the capacity of the BackCountry Trust to coordinate, a third contract project manager, Ollie Clifton, was employed. Ollie's role in the South Island released manager Rob Brown from oversight of several projects and spread the workload more evenly.

Rob's role expanded beyond oversight of projects into closer liaison with DOC to achieve the goals made possible by the KFN programme. As usual, Rob worked closely with contractors and groups on a multitude of projects, as well as assisting and guiding other contractors. This huge task would, in most other organisations, have been undertaken by a much larger team – but true to our roots the BCT effectively and efficiently completed a large number of projects. We are extremely grateful for Rob's continued commitment. People enjoying the back country will benefit for decades to come.

The role of our North Island project manager Megan Dimozantos also expanded considerably over the year. Megan spent considerable effort nurturing local relationships, building capability and engaging with potential volunteers. The greatly expanded number of successful projects completed in the North Island back country has been there for all to see. Notably, significant work was achieved in places like the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges, both of which have a large number of huts that need significant maintenance. Megan worked far beyond the call of duty, often spending much time on site mentoring new volunteers. The Board acknowledges Megan's significant input, and the diversity of projects she has conducted has greatly contributed to expanding the BCT's work to become a truly national programme.

DELIVERY

The performance report contains more detailed information on work totaling just over \$1.1 million spent on 70 projects through both the Jobs for Nature and volunteer programmes.

Looking across the projects, their location, scale and degree of difficulty it is with some incredulity that this has all been achieved in a year. As always, this has required dedication, accrued knowledge, co-operation and the support of others, not to mention much damned hard work.

The builders and track workers employed through the Jobs for Nature work programme have also

demonstrated these qualities, often while living for extended periods in the backcountry. Their work has encompassed the extent of the back country from Rakiura / Stewart Island to the middle of the North Island, and the wilds of Kahurangi National Park.

Volunteers, often working with KFN contractors and DOC staff, have once again contributed hugely to the success of our programme. When the BCT Board agreed to be part of KFN programme, it held some apprehension that this might swamp the volunteer programme.

Happily, these fears proved unfounded, and this year's volunteer programme was bigger than ever. We cannot thank the volunteers enough for their interest, enthusiasm and dedication. Their mahi ensures the longevity of many back country facilities well into the future.

One project stands out for special recognition. While many others are no less deserving of mention, the rebuild of the historic Freeman Burn Hut was an epic plagued by all that Murphy's Law could throw at it. This hut, originally built in the 1930s on the shores of Lake Manapōuri, was part of an early tourism effort in Fiordland.

The volunteer group from Southern Lakes Branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association led by David Rider and Simon Brackstone, returned time and time again to complete what they started. There is no doubt the result was worth their effort.

The project grew in scope after the walls were opened up. Almost all the original timber was riddled with borer meaning the team was suddenly involved in a complete rebuild of this nearly 100 year old hut.

We were fortunate to have some extremely skilled contractors in Clint Jarvis, Paul Chinn, Mark Williamson, Locky Urquhart and Andrew Hardey who found time to help out. In the course of doing the work, Paul discovered that his great, great grandmother was married to Bob Murrell – who for many years ran the boat transport on Lake Manapōuri. His son Les Murrell was the man who built Freeman Burn Hut, demonstrating just how deep the connections are for some of the people involved in the BCT's work.

I am sure the difficulty of the restoration meant some soul searching at times, so I can only express deepest thanks from all at the BCT. Anyone who visits Freeman Burn Hut cannot but help appreciate the magnificent work.

OUR FUTURE

Our mission involves a marathon of ongoing effort.

To support our long-term goals, the BCT is working on a model that better separates the purely operational features and the Board's governance role.

- > We are directing more effort into supporting people to look after places by enabling their specific efforts, but also by attempting to grow the volunteer base by encouraging diverse collaboration of back country users.
- > Additionally we want to further support biodiversity work through maintaining the network needed to make the work more efficient and effective for volunteer groups
- > The board will also seek to clarify criteria we apply to proposed projects and where our focus of investments will be directed.

Rest assured, we will never seek to isolate the Board's role from decision-making about practical realities, but it is increasingly necessary to review and improve our systems. The Jobs for Nature work has naturally resulted in changes, and better positioned us to become a perennial force maintaining back country facilities into the future.

Working alongside DOC, we can all benefit from a commitment to the facilities we so love and cherish. Others are welcome to join and either assist directly or provide goods or funds to support work. Ongoing donations from many sources – some commercial and some individual – have helped contribute to additional work. The BCT is extremely grateful to those who see the value in our work, and we hope that this will continue. Coming generations will benefit greatly.

Our funding is largely reliant on a significant contribution from DOC. This crucial partnership is one the BCT greatly appreciates and values. While some people might question why we engage in work sometimes considered to be 'DOC's responsibility', I am quite certain a growing number understand that DOC alone cannot do all the work. Not only is it fair and reasonable to provide opportunities for volunteers to 'give something back', it also helps create a camaraderie of public service.

Our future work relies on DOC's willingness to provide us with the necessary resources. Our contractors working alongside DOC staff to help identify where the needs are greatest, and where volunteers can



Mark Lesaicherre recladding Belltown Hut, Kahurangi National Park

provide the greatest benefit. Our future lies in continuing the work, securing funding from DOC and other sources and applying efficient, commonsense approaches. After all, the back country hut and track network offers not just valuable recreational experiences, but also supports biodiversity work, animal control, immersion and training.

Volunteers, contractors and DOC staff alike can be proud of what they have achieved together in a collaborative partnership.

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

I am extremely pleased with the performance of the BCT this past year. The sheer number of administrative and operational challenges serves to highlight the depth and scale of work we have successfully undertaken. Our Treasurer Dennis Parker and administrator Jodi Baillie have worked diligently in the background. Their commitment to refining processes have helped create a much more capable organisation with a bright future.

BCT owes a lot to pioneering example set by the Permolat group, who demonstrated a different approach to maintaining and restoring our hut and track facilities. This was clearly the genesis of what has grown to become the BCT. This initial spark was nurtured by senior DOC staff and given the opportunity to fully ignite - purely through their commitment and willingness to try another approach. All back country users owe a huge debt

of gratitude to retiring Deputy Director General (Operations) Mike Slater, and recently retired Director General for Conservation Lou Sanson. Both leaders were brave enough to back an idea and then champion its success.

It is a long time since the days when we were the 'Outdoor Recreation Consortium', but the evidence is clear that both Mike and Lou's support and belief was a huge part of the force that created the BCT.

For me, this is my final report. After five years as the BCT Chair, I am retiring.

I look forward to seeing the continuing good work of the Trust. Personally, I hope to get back to some projects that have been sidelined due to my commitments, and I intend to spend time enjoying the back country places I so love.

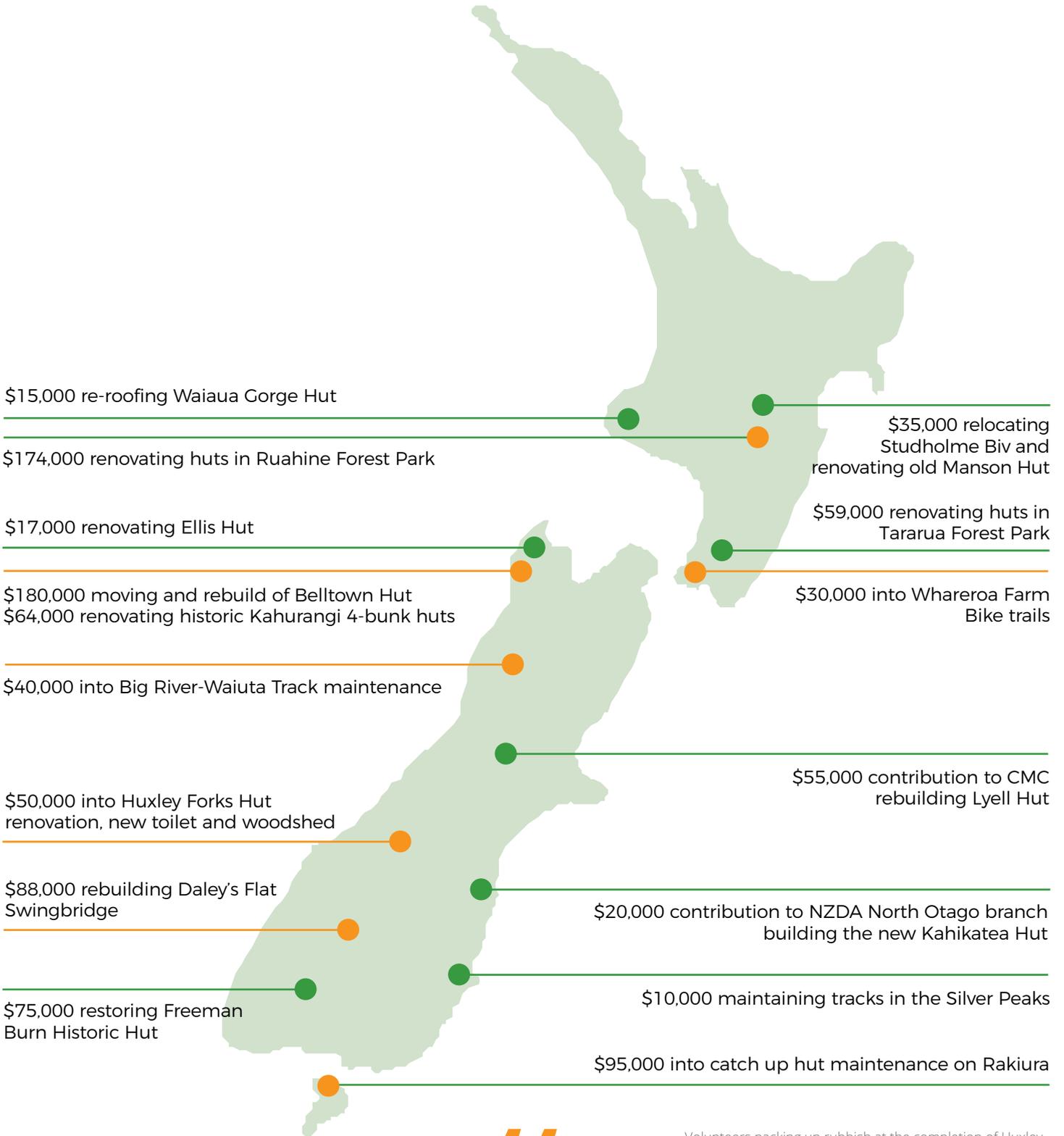
To all those who have served both the ORC and BCT, I extend my profound thanks.

I hope to see you on the hill somewhere.

Craig Benbow
Chairperson, Backcountry Trust



WHERE WE INVESTED



Carkeek Hut, Tararua Forest Park



In 2021-22 the Backcountry Trust delivered over 1.25 million into the Backcountry hut and track network across 71 projects. This delivered maintenance on nearly 300km of track and maintenance on 47 huts.

Volunteers packing up rubbish at the completion of Huxley Forks Hut renovation, Ruataniwha Conservation Park





Jobs for Nature track work with DOC on the Big River-Waiuta Track, Reefton



VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

- > 256 volunteers
- > 14,500 hours contributed
- > 240 km tracks maintained
- > 33 huts maintained
- > part funding for 2 new huts



KAIMAHI FOR NATURE

- > 14 huts renovated
- > 55 km track cutting
- > 35 paid workers
- > 1 new bridge
- > a 10 bunk hut relocated
- > 7,400 hours of field work



HUTS AND TRACKS

- > 55K members
- > 8.2 million views
- > 308K reactions to posts
- > 93% New Zealanders
- > 33% between 25-34
- > 23k average daily views

WHO WE ARE

GEOFF SPEARPOINT (FMC NOMINEE)

Geoff began tramping in the Tararua Ranges, spending his first night in a hut (Cone) during 1966 when he was 15. He joined the Hutt Valley Tramping Club and later the New Zealand Alpine Club (and is now a life member of both) following a passion for transalpine tramping and climbing trips. Initially trained in microbiology, he later worked for Mt Aspiring National Park and spent many years in prepress in the Print Industry.



His first book on tramping – Waking to the Hills – was published in 1986, and has since published various articles for club journals, Wilderness Magazine as well as being the editor for Moirs Guide North 'The Otago Southern Alps' (a tramping guide to the area between Mt Cook and the Hollyford). His other books include 'The Canterbury Westland Alps', a climbing and transalpine guide (co-authored with Yvonne Cook and major books on New Zealand's backcountry hut network with Shaun Barnett and Rob Brown ('Shelter from the Storm' and 'A Bunk for the Night').

Whilst editing Moir's Guide North, Geoff became increasingly aware and concerned at the lack of maintenance of huts, tracks and other infrastructure in the back country. This led him to advocate for those facilities, and ultimately to simply start doing the maintenance himself, along with other like minded people. In 2017 Geoff was awarded a QSM for services to outdoor recreation. His latest book 'The Great Unknown – mountain journeys in the Southern Alps' was published in 2019 and celebrates a lifetime of adventures into New Zealand's most remote backcountry.

KEVIN O'CONNOR (VICE CHAIR AND FMC NOMINEE)

Kevin started work as a Ranger Trainee and studied Parks and Recreation at Lincoln. He joined DOC when it started in 1987 and his roles included District Conservator Taupō, Operations Manager Nelson/Marlborough, Conservator Southland, Deputy Director General (DDG) Science and Technical and DDG Operations. Kevin left DOC to lead the National Rural Fire Authority and to help create the new Fire and Emergency NZ. He has been involved in a variety of management and governance roles, working closely with iwi and communities on a wide range of initiatives. Kevin is a keen user of the backcountry and is recently retired.



GORDON GEORGE (NZDA NOMINEE)

Gordon is a semi-retired North Islander whose family recently moved to the South Island (North Canterbury) and is on a steep but enjoyable learning curve about farming. He has a BSc (Physics) from Victoria University, spent some time with an army reconnaissance unit and has spent the past 24 years managing industrial waste waters (trade wastes) along with resolving a wide range of stormwater management and quality issues in an urban environment.



Gordon is a keen hunter, primarily of deer and Tahr. He is a life member, committee member and former president/secretary of the Hutt Valley branch of the NZDA and is currently president of the Lower North Island Red Deer Foundation (a collective of hunting clubs). He is also a passionate advocate for the sustainable management of game animals and our backcountry network of tracks and huts.

STEVE PETERS (TRAIL FUND NOMINEE)

Coming from an extensive background in public land management, Steven spent 15 years as a Parks Land Manager with Wellington City Council and the Department of Conservation as a Recreation Advisor. He has been involved in developing the Mountain bike trail and construction guidelines with Recreation Aotearoa. Steve has his own business Paper Trails NZ, with a vision to help deliver a consistent MTB trail grading system across NZ.



He is a keen volunteer trail builder, trail building educator and works as a youth mountain bike instructor with WORD.

LOU HUNT (TRAIL FUND NOMINEE)

Lou has been in public sector roles since her first DOC Ranger role in 2004 in the sub-Antarctics. She's worked in policy leadership roles at the Ministry for the Environment, DOC, and currently at the Ministry for Primary Industries managing the International Environment team.



Lou represents Trail Fund and the interests of the mountain bike community on the Trust Board. She's also a mountain bike instructor, and active member of Revolve women's mountain bike club.

Lou lives in Wellington, but loves to load the bikes and dive gear into the camper and get away as much as possible.

DENNIS PARKER (TREASURER)

Dennis is our Treasurer working in very much a part-time role supporting our Trustees and contractors to ensure our financial obligations are met. Dennis has a MA (Cant) in the Sociology of Organisations and is a CMintD (Chartered Member of the NZ Institute of Directors). He was introduced to the outdoors at a very young age with now many decades of tramping experience around NZ and in other parts of the world but is now more likely to be found in the outdoors on a road bike. He enjoys a challenge, taking up competitive cycling road racing and in recent years in his age group has twice been the NZ champion and the World Masters champion.



He was fortunate to match his passion for the outdoors with his professional training, becoming the Financial Controller of Macpac in Christchurch in his early 30s. He worked there for 17 years in a critical role as part of the management team developing Macpac as a leader in the outdoors sector. He eventually became their General Manager and an Executive Director of Macpac and followed this with a 12 year stint at the University of Canterbury in a management role. He now works in governance roles for various clients in the charity, not-for-profit and volunteering sector.

JODI BAILLIE (ADMINISTRATION)

Jodi handles the administration for the BCT, working in the background to support the Managers and Trustees. She is currently based in Taupo-nui-a-tia (Taupo) and grew up in National Park, in the central North Island, which offered multiple opportunities for experiencing the outdoors at a very early age, and developed her love for skiing/snowboarding, mountain biking, tramping, and general adventuring in the beautiful spaces of Aotearoa.







2021-22 WORK PROGRAMME



The depth and breadth of our field operation increased markedly this year. Boosted by the additional government resources from the Jobs for Nature funding, we were at last in a position to get our critical mass to a point where we could not only deliver that contract programme, but have much better resources to support the work of our volunteers.



With Megan Dimozantos working full-time in the North Island, and Ollie Clifton being recruited on a part-time basis to deliver selected projects at the top half of the South Island, we had the basis of a team that could manage over a million dollars worth of investment into the backcountry hut and track network.

Our team worked incredibly hard to achieve that and at the start of the season we had over 100 live projects on the go. By the end of May 2022 nearly three quarters of those had been completed, including 47 hut renovations. Many of these projects

were significant renovations with future-proofing the hut foremost in mind. This not only cleared a backlog of previously neglected maintenance, but will also reduce the future maintenance burden.

The 2021/22 season was also a year where we increased our co-ordination with the Department of Conservation, moving to a closer collaborative working relationship with their own field operations. Numerous projects occurred where DOC rangers worked with a combination of BCT contractors and volunteers. This greatly increased capacity by injecting the skills and people power into places to

Anthony and Fiona taking a break during the Herepai Hut renovation.





Members of the Sika Foundation painting Oamaru Hut, Kaimanawa Forest Park



Past board member Dave Keen led a party to carry out maintenance on Stan's Hut, West Coast

ensure maximum work during periods of optimum weather. This collaborative approach increased the capability of both DOC and the BCT.

On the face of it, our operational resources to support the work being done look relatively sparse. However, in a Backcountry Trust context, it is just the more structured part of a much larger community network. This year, the Trust involved over 200 volunteers in projects totalling over 14,000 hours, and through Jobs for Nature a further 35 people worked under part time contracts for other specific projects. Without some of those volunteers also taking on some of the project management roles, we could not have undertaken such a large amount of work. Likewise some Jobs for Nature contractors like Tim Marshall and Joe Eagles did a lot of work to pull projects together. While BCT website or blog images of the completed hut or track work certainly showcase the results, it is often forgotten just how much preparatory work goes on behind the scenes.

The collaborative approach increasingly indicates that we have the makings of a cost-effective and realistic model to look after the complete hut and track network so valued by many New Zealanders.

The operations team also want to thank all the people that cheered us on and supported all our

work in the backcountry. Social Media is something of a fraught tool, but it does give us a valuable means to celebrate the completed work. It also allows the New Zealand public to show how they value and appreciate the work done by the Trust.

This dialogue is important so that we can value our volunteers and contractors, and for securing funds to keep the work going.

From a recreation perspective, new tracks and restored huts increase use, and serve as their own means of celebrating the BCT's achievements. That too is pleasing for people doing the work. It makes it all worthwhile to see people out there enjoying the facilities.

The outlook for the backcountry hut and track network looks relatively assured. A collaborative approach can only strengthen local relationships between the outdoor community and the Department of Conservation, and result in a national hut and track heritage we can all be proud of.

Rob Brown
National Operations Manager

TE IKA-A-MĀUI / NORTH ISLAND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



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The North Island season started with gusto in October. Josh Murray returned to Toka Biv (Ruahine Forest Park), which he and two mates had restored in 2020. This time he shifted the thunderbox to a better location, and installed track rafts, as increased use of the bivvy was making the surrounds muddy.



Colenso Hut in the Ruahine Range got a birthday upgrade. A Backcountry Trust team fitted a new roof, built a new woodshed, painted the inside, varnished the floor and made provisions for a new fireplace, which was installed the following month under the KFN programme. Volunteers Steve Wilman and Fiona Burleigh were both new to the BCT, but quickly became integral to several other projects. Steve

returned to Colenso Hut later that month with Tina Christie and Izzy Baxter to paint the exterior.

Meanwhile, in Kaimanawa Forest Park, Mike Main and his Sika Foundation crew gave Ōamaru Hut a makeover. Fresh paint, new ridge capping and some new guttering meant this very popular hut is looking good.

Left: Re-roofing Colenso Hut. Below: Steve Willman and Izzy Baxter at Colenson Hut, Ruahine Forest Park



In November, Jean Garman led a painting team to South Ōhau Hut in Tararua Forest Park. Builder Steve Wilman joined the crew to replace half the roof, which had been damaged by gunshots. The hut is now dry and mould-free, and in February, the crew completed painting it.

Poutaki Hut was one of the bigger jobs for this year's work programme. A BCT-lead team including local builder Gary Macdonald spent seven days on site, followed by another two visits by smaller teams. The full makeover included a new floor, roof, cladding,

woodshed, windows, tank and tankstand, plus a fancy new deck, new wood-burner, lining and sarking inside and a full paint. This was a significant effort to save a hut that otherwise may have been lost. The last touches were finished just before Christmas.

In the nearby Ruahine Range, Sally Neal's team took on their first 'big' project. After doing a great job painting Sunrise Hut the previous year, now they decided to expand their ambition to include some building at Stanfield Hut. Sally completed all the materials estimates for the job, and over five days led a diverse

Painting South Ohau Hut, Tararua Forest Park



Renovating Poutaki Hut, Gwavas Forest Park



Re-roofing Stanfield Hut. Below: Stanfield Hut after renovation, Ruahine Forest Park

team that knocked out the majority of the work. This included a new roof and sarking, woodshed, deck, tank and tankstand. They also painted the hut inside and out. The team consisted of Sally Neal, Aaron Neuel, Helen Payn and Tobias Wevers. Victoria and Emilie Bruce took a break from their Te Araroa adventure to

lend a hand. In an almost poetic full-circle, Bill Veale and a mate came in to rip up the deck he had built 30 years ago, and replaced it with a new one. Two more visits pre-Christmas rounded off the work on this popular hunting hut, with DOC and local hunters helping out too – concluding a true community effort.





Otukota Hut after renovation, Ruahine Forest Park

Between Christmas and New Year, keen volunteers Ron Davis and his crew, including Rodger Smith as lead builder, headed into Upper Matakuhia Hut in the Waipunga Valley (south of Whirinaki). This seldom-visited hut sits beside a beautiful river with resident whio (blue duck). The hut, previously subject to some severe leaking, got a new treated plywood floor, and was relined. The old fire was removed and an alcove built. Still to come are a new roof, and the installation of a Wagener Cooktop in the alcove.

The pace of work increased over the next two months, with eight projects started and completed. After receiving a new roof, woodshed, deck and tank under the KFN programme, Matt Short's crew spent a long weekend at Otukota Hut in the Ruahine painting it inside and out. The blistering heat ensured the paint dried quickly between coats, and the nearby river provided welcome respite at the end of a hot day's mahi.



Mitre Flats re-roof, Tararua Forest Park



In January, an Ex-NZFS crew returned to McGregor Biv in Tararua Forest Park to complete some weather-proofing work. They re-nailed the existing cladding and roof and installing a galvanized skirt around the bearers – staying true to their kaupapa of keeping structures as original as possible. At the same time, another Ex-NZFS crew, lead by John McCann, completed the final touches on the new Winchcombe Biv by finishing the painting and installing a new thunderbox.

In Aorangi Forest Park, Graham Blanchard from Porirua NZDA teamed up with Sally Neal to paint Tauanui Hut, which was long overdue for some maintenance. It was an excellent example of people from different groups working together and sharing their collective skills.



Tauanui Hut after renovation, Aorangi Forest Park

At the end of January, Jason Cheetham led a team into Taruarau Biv, in the northern Ruahine Range. After clearing vegetation around the biv, the team installed a new roof and deadman anchors, cleaned out the water tank, added new spouting and gave the hut a fresh coat of paint.

Early February, Peter Roil's team painted Cameron Hut in Kaweka Forest Park. That month also saw Mike Wilkinson, Bill van Woekom, and ex-culler Andy Jarvis from Ex-NZFS put a new roof on Carkeek, a classic old S70 deer culler's hut in Tararua Forest Park – using

authentic colours: NZFS orange for the exterior and Hakatere for the interior.

Towards the end of February eight volunteers put in a huge effort at Mitre Flats Hut. This involved installing a new roof, new window and painting. At 14 bunks, this larger hut in Tararua Forest Park has a complex roofing structure, so having qualified carpenter Steve Wilman and roofers Stephen Jennings and Yan Quesnel on site was essential. Jean Garman orchestrated the painting team, providing another excellent example of multiple groups working together for an impressive result.

Restoring Taruarau Biv, Ruahine Forest Park



Studholme Biv after being relocated to North Whetu location



Cameron Hut, Kaweka Forest Park



Re-roofing Carkeek Hut, Tararua Forest Park

Another four significant projects were completed in March. Steve Wilman had barely dried his boots before he was back to lead a team of nine volunteers to fully upgrade Herepai Hut, also in Tararua Forest Park. The hut was treated to a new roof, deck, lining, sarking, door and woodshed. The team also replaced

rusty cladding on the back wall, cut back encroaching scrub, and improved the heli-pad. The dented old chimney flue was replaced before fresh paint inside and out completed a remarkable transformation. Of all the summer's work, the 'before-and-after' pictures show this project as perhaps the most impressive.

Herepai Hut renovation, Tararua Forest Park





Re-roofing Waiaua Gorge Hut, Mt Taranaki

The BCT's first Taranaki project also began in March, when Angus Isdale led a team to re-roof the much-loved Waiaua Gorge Hut. Angus has contributed to other BCT projects and also designed and manufactured the heli-crate we now use throughout the North Island.

Back in Kaweka Forest Park, builder Hamon McKay and his team from Te Awamutu slogged away in tough conditions to relocate Studholme Biv to a new site on North Whetu. Previously, the biv was only 500m down valley from Studholme Hut, so will be of much greater use in its new location further north, at the bushline just shy of 1400m. The team began preparing the new site first. In the rocky soils, digging holes for the new piles and deadman anchors proved a hard task. Once the foundations were in place, the biv was flown in one piece and placed directly onto its new piles. The relocated biv now has a water tank and toilet.

Back at the original biv site, the team fixed piles ready to relocate Studholme Hut down-valley to the sunny position. They also installed a new wood-burner and

completed other tasks so the hut is ready to shift in early 2023.

Adjacent to Whanganui National Park, three groups teamed up for a massive effort on the Waitōtara Valley Tracks, tackling approximately 40km of these rugged trails that connect the Waitōtara River with the Matemateāonga Track. Long neglected, the tracks needed significant work. Local Wayne Gedye teamed up with the New Plymouth Tramping Club to complete the southern section of the track, while the northern section was cut by Tony Walton and a crew from the Auckland Tramping Club. A chainsaw team will remove large windfalls before next summer.

Trackwork also occurred in the Tararua Ranges, where Rob and Noel Bigwood and their crew completed the installation of tracks rafts over boggy sections in the Waiopehu Track.

In May, a significant restoration was completed on the historic Old Manson Hut in Kaweka Forest Park. Earlier in the year, Damon Wise and Aaron Harwood visited the site, cut back scrub and built a heli-pad.

Considerable work occurred behind the scenes, but with Robin Oliver and Brian Maplesden at the wheel, the project was in very safe hands. Both are former Forest Service rangers who had previously built and maintaining a number of the old huts in the Kaweka and Gwavas Ranges. Ken Turkington and James Robertson joined the team to form a tight-knit group of four.

While the logistics and materials were organised, local Tohunga Whakairo Nathan Foote and Phil Belcher adzed 1.5 tonnes of red beech into slabs to replace rotten cladding. The on-site mahi was completed in a narrow window of reasonable weather. They replaced rotten cladding, installed a drainage system (designed by Stuart Bilby Engineers pro-bono) with materials sourced on site, replaced the malthoid lining and roof, repaired the chimney, and fixed internal bracing also using locally-sourced materials. The beautiful restoration does full justice to the historic hut and also serves as a testament to the fine craftsmanship of the team members.

To round off the season, a Sika Foundation team consisting of Mike Main, Ben Gordon, Brett Stokman,

Joseph Turner and Alex Dixon visited Black Birch Biv, also in the Kaweka Range. They built a deck, moved the toilet, and installed a tank to ensure a reliable water source. The team plans to return next summer to paint the bivouac.

Altogether, it has been an impressive year. The volunteer programme in the North Island has grown exponentially, resulting in an increasingly diverse cross-section of the outdoor community getting involved. Groups are mixing and mingling to share their skills, while already established teams are taking new volunteers under their wings. Both approaches are strengthening the capacity and extending the range of skills within the North Island Backcountry Trust community. This forms a solid platform to expand upon, and the BCT is making concerted efforts to ensure ongoing sustainability for, and succession within, our volunteer workforce.

Megan Dimozantos
North Island Project Manager

Finishing touches to restoring old Manson Hut, Kaweka Forest Park





Raymond Ford track cutting on the Lower Waitaha Valley, West Coast

TE WAIPOUNAMU / SOUTH ISLAND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

The 2021/22 summer season was notable for what seemed like endless good weather in the deep south and on the West Coast with many of the regular South Island groups getting through another long list of projects.

Permolat West Coast focused on much needed track work in some key areas. Andrew Barker led a group in to Kakapo Hut in north Westland to recut and mark the track from this hut through to the Wangapeka Track. This tied in with the work that was also being done on the Jobs for Nature work on Kakapo Hut. Other Permolat track cutting projects included the Bald Hill Track near Mikonui and some more work on Logjam Creek between the Rochfort Basin and the Waikiti Valley.

Geoff Spearpoint also did another round of routine maintenance on Tunnel Creek Hut in the Paringa, which also included cutting the track from the rock biv down to the hut. Geoff's team of regular volunteers included his partner Jane Morris who also led a trip into the Waitaha to do some routine maintenance to keep that route open. Jane is another one of those inspirational volunteers that just quietly goes about

ticking off project after project with little fuss or fanfare which is the backbone of much of the work getting done.

Over the last few years, it's become evident that the use of the remote huts network on the West Coast is increasing. Places with low use levels that could get away with no toilets were in need of more formalised sanitation. Permolat applied to the trust for funds to build and install three toilets for Healey Creek, Mullins and Top Waitaha Huts. DOC Hokitika built the one for the tops hut at Healey Creek and Tom Hayes' team installed it over a weekend. Over easter 2022, Colin Morris and two others installed the other two which Colin had built over the summer.

A further joint DOC/Permolat West Coast project was finished in February 2022 when the replacement Scottys Biv was installed by the DOC Hokitika builders Nigel Schroder and Miquel Dijkstra. They worked in with a Permolat track team of Andrew Buglass, Joke de Rijke, Martin Clapham and Nico Cogan who split into two teams to work on the connecting tracks into Griffin Creek and down into the Taipo.

The new long-drop at Top Waitaha Hut, West Coast



Tunnel Creek Hut maintenance crew, West Coast





The Permolat Southland group also had a very busy season. They started in early January with an excellent renovation of Mansion Hut in the Eyre Mountains, then went onto Irthing Hut in February and then in March did an amazing renovation of historic Eel Creek Hut. This was stripped right back to its original Dexion frame and a team of 12 re-clad it, rebuilt the open fire and built a new woodshed.

In early January the NZDA Southern Lakes branch embarked on what would be the biggest volunteer project of the year. Freeman Burn Hut on the shores of Lake Manapouri had been built in the early 1930s as part of creating a multi-day tourism walk through to Doubtful Sound. The volunteer project to restore the hut was ambitious to start with, but project turned out to being much bigger than anticipated when the building was opened up and 90 percent of the timber framing and sarking was found to be badly affected by borer. This turned what everyone hoped would be a straight forward renovation into a complete rebuild which would end up taking many months. To help

Permolat Southland working on Irthing Hut, Eyre Mountains



Andy and Locky working on Freeman Burn Hut restoration



Permolat Southland restoring Eel Creek Hut, Fiordland National Park





Volunteers working on Green Point Hut, Gamack Conservation Area

the NZDA team, we also put in our Jobs for Nature Wanaka build team to help out with some of the more challenging parts and get the project completed by winter.

Another regular group who gave up some of their summer to work on a couple of huts was Nick Ross and Sam Newton's group. Eight members of this group did work on Jollie Hut and Green Point Hut in

the Jollie Valley. This lesser used valley on the eastern side of Aoraki/Mt Cook has some ideal paddling for the increasingly popular recreation of pack rafting.

In February, retired DOC ranger Geoff Speirs and two others renovated Jollie Brook Hut and Cold Stream Hut in Lake Sumner Forest Park. This work included removing all the lead, redoing the roofing underlay and building new woodsheds for both.

Maintenance work on Jollie Brook Hut, Lake Sumner Forest Park





Volunteers renovating Ellis Hut, Kahurangi National Park

Late in the season, Ross Cullen led a team in to finish off stage 2 of the Ellis Basin Hut renovation. The team spent the week building a new entry foyer and replacing the open fire with a wood burner. These improvements were done with the intention of making the hut a little more suited for one of the user groups: local caving expeditions who sometimes take refuge to dry out gear and regroup.

We had a number of volunteer groups work in with Jobs for Nature projects to paint huts around the South Island and on Stewart Island. Chris Milne and Graeme Stretch also returned to paint another hut and this time dragged in a couple more to their group that included retired Director-general of Conservation Lou Sanson. They were joined by John Dale and over four days this team of four completed the painting work on East Ruggedy Hut and a few other minor repairs to the hut.

The East Ruggedy Hut paint team, Rakiura National Park





Winton and Wanaka Rotary Club members after painting Yankee River Hut, Rakiura National Park

The Winton and Wanaka Rotary Clubs also combined to do a weeks worth of work helping DOC and the Jobs for Nature team on completing the Yankee River Hut project in Rakiura National Park. The Rotary clubs in this southern region have a long history of working in with DOC, and now BCT, to get work done on the island.

Two new volunteer hut builds were also completed this year that the Trust contributed to. The Canterbury Mountaineering Club completed the Lyell Hut replacement. This hut replaced one of the oldest club huts in the Southern Alps and is a great example of a

Lyell Hut under construction and after completion, Rakaia Valley



club pulling together the volunteer resources to keep their connections going with a place.

A similar project was Kahikatea Hut; built in Waianakarua Scenic Reserve by the NZDA North Otago Branch. This six bunk hut was built in a remarkably quick and efficient time frame by a large group of volunteers expertly organised by branch stalwart Barry Wilson.

The Horse Trails South Trust was also active over the past season. A grant from the BCT funded the re-routing of the track up the Leatham River and over





George Sound Hut after maintenance work by the Wapiti Foundation, Fiordland National Park

Severn Saddle and into the Molesworth Recreation Reserve. From here the return trip heads over Saxton Saddle providing an excellent 3-4 day horse riding circuit for more experienced riders.

This volunteer group also installed a number of horse paddocks this year on established horse trails further south at places like Otamatapaio 'Pink' Hut and Hideaway Biv in the Ahuriri.

The Wapiti Foundation continued their valuable support of the hut and track network in the George Sound Track area. In February they went in to George Sound Hut in renovated the open fireplace to make it compliant, carried out other routine maintenance

and demolished the old boat shed and cleaned out all the rubbish.

The Nelson Mountain Bike Club did some further repair work to the Creamed Rice track in the Wairoa Gorge Bike Park. This work involved a contractor working in with local volunteers to clear slips and put in new water tables.

To finish off the season, former BCT board member Dave Keen installed a thunderbox into Tripp Creek. This work followed Dave, his son Joshua and Michael Wilson completing maintenance on the remote Stan's Hut on the Price Range on the south bank of the Whataroa River.

Volunteers working on the Creamed Rice Track, Wairoa Gorge Bike Park, Nelson



Builder Mark Williamson working with volunteers from the Canterbury University Tramping Club at Huxley Forks Hut, Ruataniwha Conservation Park



KAIMAHI FOR NATURE

OLLIE CLIFTON joined the Backcountry Trust team as a project manager to help deliver the Jobs for Nature programme over the summer of 2021-22 coordinating a number of projects in the Upper South Island.

His outdoors background has been quite varied, with his tramping interest starting during his high school years in Palmerston North, growing and diversifying across mountaineering, rock-climbing, ski-touring (essentially anything fun in the mountains!) during his studies at Lincoln University.

Professionally, Ollie has had the good fortune to work in areas like volunteer management, community development, and project management for the last 25

years. Most recently he worked for NZAC at their National Office in Christchurch, where managing the Club huts network was one of his prime responsibilities.

This was followed by a 7 year stint in commercial project management for a small consultancy Sidera, in post-EQ Christchurch (yep plenty of EQ repair and strengthening work!). Ollie brought all these skills and experience to the fore to play a major role in delivering the Jobs for Nature programme in the South Island.



The second year of the programme got underway in October with the Wanaka build team renovating Huxley Forks Hut. This project happened in two parts with the first stage to strip out the hut, install some new windows and convert it to two bench bunks and increase the capacity to eight bunks. A new toilet was installed at the same time. The team then went back early in January over a longer weekend to install a water tank, build a new woodshed and finish off the painting. For this second part of the renovation, they were assisted by a group of four volunteers from the Canterbury University Tramping Club.

Clint Jarvis' Wanaka build team with Mark Williamson and Hedley Wilton then moved on to Rakiura National Park again. Over a two-week stint on Stewart Island they carried out repairs on the deck on East Ruggedy Hut as well as building a new woodshed, before moving onto the bigger job of recladding Yankee River Hut and installing new windows in the bunkrooms. The new shadowclad system replaced the old galvanised iron that had starting to fail in the coastal environment.

Builder Clint Jarvis repairing the deck at East Ruggedy Hut, Rakiura National Park





Otukota Hut, Ruahine Forest Park



Working on Gold Creek Hut renovation, Ruahine Forest Park

The North Island Jobs for Nature work also got underway around the same time. Builder Joe Eagles and his group of Army apprentices first completed a major renovation of Otukota Hut in the Ruahines, before moving on to complete work on Gold Creek Hut and Leon Kinvig Hut.

Also in the North Island, Daniel August and his team from BTR Trails completed some extension work for us on the Bath Tub Trail at the Whareroa Farm Recreation Reserve on the Kapiti Coast. This mountain bike track is a nice addition near the popular Red Tape Track.

The start of the new track at Whareroa Farm Park, Kapiti Coast





Golden Bay Track team working on the route between Sopers Shelter and Waingaro Hut

In the top half of the South Island we had three teams operating for the first part of the summer season. A group from Golden Bay formed themselves into a track team and worked with DOC to clear the Wainui Track between Caanan Downs and Birds Clearing. They then followed this up with a two-week effort recutting the track between Anatoki Forks, Sopers Shelter and the Waingaro.

Later in the season, this same team painted Rocks Hut in Richmond Forest Park.

Nick and Darryl working on Rocks Hut, Richmond Forest Park





Cone Creek Hut after renovation, West Coast

Our 'Top of the South' Project Manager Ollie Clifton got another build team up and running in the northern South Island working with builders Pete Sinclair and Al Ritchie. Their first job in January was a major overhaul of Cone Creek Hut on the West Coast. This needed redoing the foundations with a stronger brace pile arrangement. A new roof, woodshed and

new windows were also completed in the week of work. The following month, two of the party – Pete Sinclair and Pete Braggins – teamed up with Marc Lesaicherre to do a nice renovation of the rarely visited but historic Kakapo Hut in Kahurangi National Park.



Re-roofing Kakapo Hut, Kahurangi National Park

Tim Marshall's Murchison based team picked up where they had left off the previous year and completed an intensive programme of work in the northern Westland region.

The early summer was devoted to planning and preparing for the major project of moving Belltown Hut on the Wangapeka Track. The third Belltown/Manunui Hut had been built on an old earthquake slip in 1996 and soon after it was finished, water flowing under the hut started opening up deep sinkholes under the foundation. These issues worsened after Cyclone Ita and had become a concern to engineers

by 2016. A business case was put together for either shifting the hut or trying to remediate the ground underneath the hut. The second of these options was going to cost a lot of time and money with no guarantee of success.

The department had already carried out a geotech assessment on a new site one kilometre downstream near Lawrence Creek. This formed part of a business case to shift the hut to this site however over the last few years the shift had struggled to meet funding thresholds for capital works. The Trust picked up this project as part of the Jobs for Nature project

Rebuilding Belltown/Manunui Hut, Wangapeka Track, Kahurangi National Park



and engaged Ollie Clifton to work with Tim to project manage the shift. This major project was completed over a five-week period between mid February and early March 2022. The old hut was deconstructed and as much salvaged as possible to work into the new hut with the same footprint and basic overall dimensions.

With Belltown Hut already underway, the second major Jobs for Nature build also started in February with Abseil Access being contracted to build a new 70

meter 3-wire bridge across the Dart River at Daley's Flat. As a big, glacial fed river, the Dart can sometimes be problematic to cross in getting across to the Barrier Range and then on through to the Olivine Wilderness Area. Recreation users of this area had indicated a desire to see this crossing re-installed after the flash floods of early 2020 had washed the old Forest Service 6-wire bridge away. The team did the build in one impressive 13-day push.

Ed and Jimmy fitting the south tower of Daley's Flat 3-wire Bridge



Daley's Flat 3-wire Bridge completed, Mt Aspiring National Park



Renovating Goat Creek Hut, Old Ghost Road, Kahurangi National Park

After a short break, Tim Marshall's team were straight into their next projects. In quick succession they renovated Goat Creek Hut on the Old Ghost Road Track, Johnson Hut, and to finish the season they renovated Nardoo Biv. This final project also involved a track team working with DOC to recut and mark the track down to the East Matakītiki Valley.

Mark Williamson fitting new gutter to East Ruggedy Hut





Johnson Hut after renovation, Kahurangi National Park

Hedley and Anna putting the finishing touches onto Doughboy Hut maintenance



One of the last Jobs for Nature projects for the season was a solid round of catch-up maintenance on Doughboy Hut in Rakiura National Park. Week one of this project saw builders Clint Jarvis and Mark Williamson re-roof the hut. In the second week Hedley Wilton and Anna Amos went in with DOC senior ranger Dale Chittenden and BCT contractors, Rob Brown and Megan Dimozantos, to finish the painting, vegetation clearance around the hut and woodshed.

The bulk of our Jobs for Nature programme is now complete. The program was a huge opportunity for

the Backcountry Trust to build capability and work with some great people who were looking for work in the backcountry. For these people, parts or all of their jobs were affected by the last two years by the Covid pandemic, and the programme at least enabled the Backcountry Trust to provide a small amount of meaningful work and wages to help them through this time.

For the facilities themselves, it enabled the Trust to work closely with the department to catch up on some outstanding maintenance on huts and tracks leaving them in a better state than ever.

DOC Senior Ranger Dale Chittenden clearing the hut site at Doughboy Hut



Financial Performance

Backcountry Trust (Aotearoa | New Zealand)

For the year ended 31 May 2022

	THIS YEAR	LAST YEAR
Income - Funding for Projects		
DOC Funding for Volunteer Projects	315,000.00	315,000.00
DOC Funding for KFN Projects	1,038,000.00	386,500.00
Funding for Tagged Projects	7,267.39	4,105.00
Total Income - Funding for Projects	1,360,267.39	705,605.00
Less Funded Project Expenses		
Volunteer DOC Funded Project Expenses	573,209.91	459,124.11
KFN DOC Funded Project Expenses	733,027.14	254,821.06
Tagged Project Expenses	7,267.39	7,853.76
Deferred Project Funding	46,762.95	(16,193.93)
Total Less Funded Project Expenses	1,360,267.39	705,605.00
Surplus (Deficit) - Funded Projects	-	-
Administration Income		
DOC Administration Funding	135,000.00	135,000.00
DOC Administration Funding - Kaimahi for Nature	311,125.00	107,500.00
Mataketake Hut Fees	7,793.71	-
Donations	38,062.39	8,948.62
Interest	4,089.47	9,899.03
Total Administration Income	496,070.57	261,347.65
Administration Expenses		
Contractor Expenses	304,840.49	188,177.75
Honoraria & Salaries	29,750.00	31,083.37
Administration Expenses	40,139.71	27,409.16
Total Administration Expenses	374,730.20	246,670.28
Surplus (Deficit) - Administration	121,340.37	14,677.37
Surplus (Deficit) - Backcountry Trust	121,340.37	14,677.37

Financial Position

Backcountry Trust As at 31 May 2022

	31 MAY 2022	31 MAY 2021
Assets		
Bank		
Cheque Account	18,560.31	51,228.07
Savings	400,535.25	250,962.01
Total Bank	419,095.56	302,190.08
Current Assets		
Accounts Receivable	536,925.22	-
Term Deposits	140,001.36	490,001.36
Total Current Assets	676,926.58	490,001.36
Fixed Assets		
Equipment	6,327.50	3,527.50
Accumulated Depreciation	(523.00)	(114.00)
Total Fixed Assets	5,804.50	3,413.50
Total Assets	1,101,826.64	795,604.94
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	105,213.38	22,911.92
GST	54,748.69	(1,217.81)
PAYE Payable	825.00	742.50
Rounding	(0.27)	(0.18)
DOC Unallocated and Unspent Funds	754,106.49	707,343.44
Business Visa	210.20	442.29
Total Current Liabilities	915,103.49	730,222.16
Total Liabilities	915,103.49	730,222.16
Net Assets	186,723.15	65,382.78
Equity		
Retained Earnings	97,956.71	83,279.34
DOC Equity Adjustment	(32,573.93)	(32,573.93)
Current Year Earnings	121,340.37	14,677.37
Total Equity	186,723.15	65,382.78

LIST OF APPROVED GRANTS FOR 2021-22

PROJECT NAME	ORGANISATION	AMOUNT APPROVED (INCL GST)
VOLUNTEER PROJECTS		
Irthing Hut	Permolat Southland	\$9,500
Mansion Hut	Permolat Southland	\$9,500
Scottys Biv	Permolat West Coast	\$10,000
Toka Biv	Josh Murray	\$5,000
Colenso Hut	Steve Wilman	\$14,000
West Coast Tracks	Permolat West Coast	\$15,000
Upper Matakuhia Hut	Ron Davis	\$25,000
Kiwi Hut	Graeme Jackson	\$6,000
Stanfield Hut	Sally Neal	\$12,000
Townsend Hut	Graeme Jackson	\$5,000
Triangle Hut	Niki Carling	\$5,000
Penn Creek Hut	Victoria University Tramping Club	\$5,000
Halfway Hut	Clint Jarvis	\$40,000
Stans Hut	Safari Club International	\$6,000
Mullins Basin/Top Waitaha Toilets	Permolat West Coast	\$10,000
Piripiri Hut	Andrew Mercer	\$8,000
Rocks Ahead Biv	Megan Dimozantos	\$12,000
Oamaru Hut	Mike Main/Sika Foundation	\$5,000
Studholme Biv relocation	Hamon McKay	\$35,000
Black Birch Biv	Mike Main	\$10,000
Back Ridge Biv	Gary MacDonald	\$8,000
Taruarau Biv	Jason Cheetham	\$10,000
Waiototara Valley Tracks	Wayne Gedye	\$30,000
Waiau Gorge Hut	Angus Isdale	\$15,000
Eel Creek Hut	Permolat Southland	\$12,000
East Ruggedy Hut painting	Graeme Stretch	\$5,000
Yankee River Hut painting	Wanaka Rotary Club	\$5,000
George Sound Hut	Wapiti Foundation	\$7,500
Mitre Flats Hut	Steve Wilman	\$20,000
South Ohau Hut	Jean Garman	\$10,000
Kiritaki Hut	Gary MacDonald	\$25,000
Wakiti Bridge renovation	Abseil Access/BCT	\$32,200
Huxley Forks Hut Stage 2	Canterbury University TC	\$12,000
Ellis Basin Hut	Greg Pickford	\$17,000
Penk Hut	NZDA Marlborough	\$10,900
Old Manson Hut renovation	Brian Maplesden	\$17,250
Wairoa Gorge track maintenance	Nelson MTB Club	\$7,000
Lyell Hut finishing	Canterbury Mountaineering Club	\$5,000
Winchcombe Biv painting	John McCann exNZFS	\$5,000

PROJECT NAME	ORGANISATION	AMOUNT APPROVED (INCL GST)
McGregor Biv repairs	John McCann exNZFS	\$10,000
Tunnel Creek Hut maintenance	Geoff Spearpoint	\$5,000
Robin Saddle Hut	Paul Maxim	\$25,000
Manson Biv maintenance	Mike Main	\$8,000
Back Ridge Biv maintenance	Gary MacDonald	\$8,000
Iron Bark Hut	Megan Dimozantos	\$15,000
Herepai Hut	Steve Wilman	\$25,000
Sayer Hut	NZDA Wairarapa	\$18,500
Smith's Stream Hut	Sally Neal	\$5,000

PROJECT NAME	AMOUNT APPROVED (INCL GST)
KAIMAHI FOR NATURE	
Lake Stream Hut Toilet	\$8,000
Belltown Hut Toilet	\$8,000
Waiuta – Big River Track maintenance	\$40,000
East Ruggedy Hut maintenance	\$15,000
Yankee River Hut renovation	\$15,000
Daley's Flat 3-wire Bridge	\$50,000
Belltown Hut relocation and rebuild	\$119,000
Tararua Track maintenance	\$20,000
Wainui Track maintenance	\$14,500
Dunns Creek Hut rebuild	\$15,000
Nardoo Biv maintenance	\$25,000
Kakapo Hut maintenance	\$20,000
Anatoki-Waingaro Track maintenance	\$20,000
Otukota Hut	\$15,000
Leon Kinvig Hut	\$15,000
Gold Creek Hut	\$10,000
Upper Deception Hut	\$35,000
Rocks Hut	\$19,000
Hopkins Road Repair	\$50,000
Doughboy Hut maintenance	\$30,000
Goat Creek Hut renovation	\$20,000
Johnson Hut renovation	\$28,000
Kirwins Hut re-roof	\$50,000

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Te Papa Atawhai





“

We are passionate about outdoor recreation and preserving Aotearoa's rich inheritance of remote huts and tracks