

Otago Tourism Policy School - Keynote

Resourcing tourism on conservation land

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**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government



Tongariro Alpine Crossing Photo: Leigh-Anne Wiig

DOC's responsibilities

DOC Budget: 0.5% of Government budget



A third of NZ's land area
(8.7m ha)



220 large islands and
many smaller islands



14,000 native species



13 National Parks
52 marine reserves



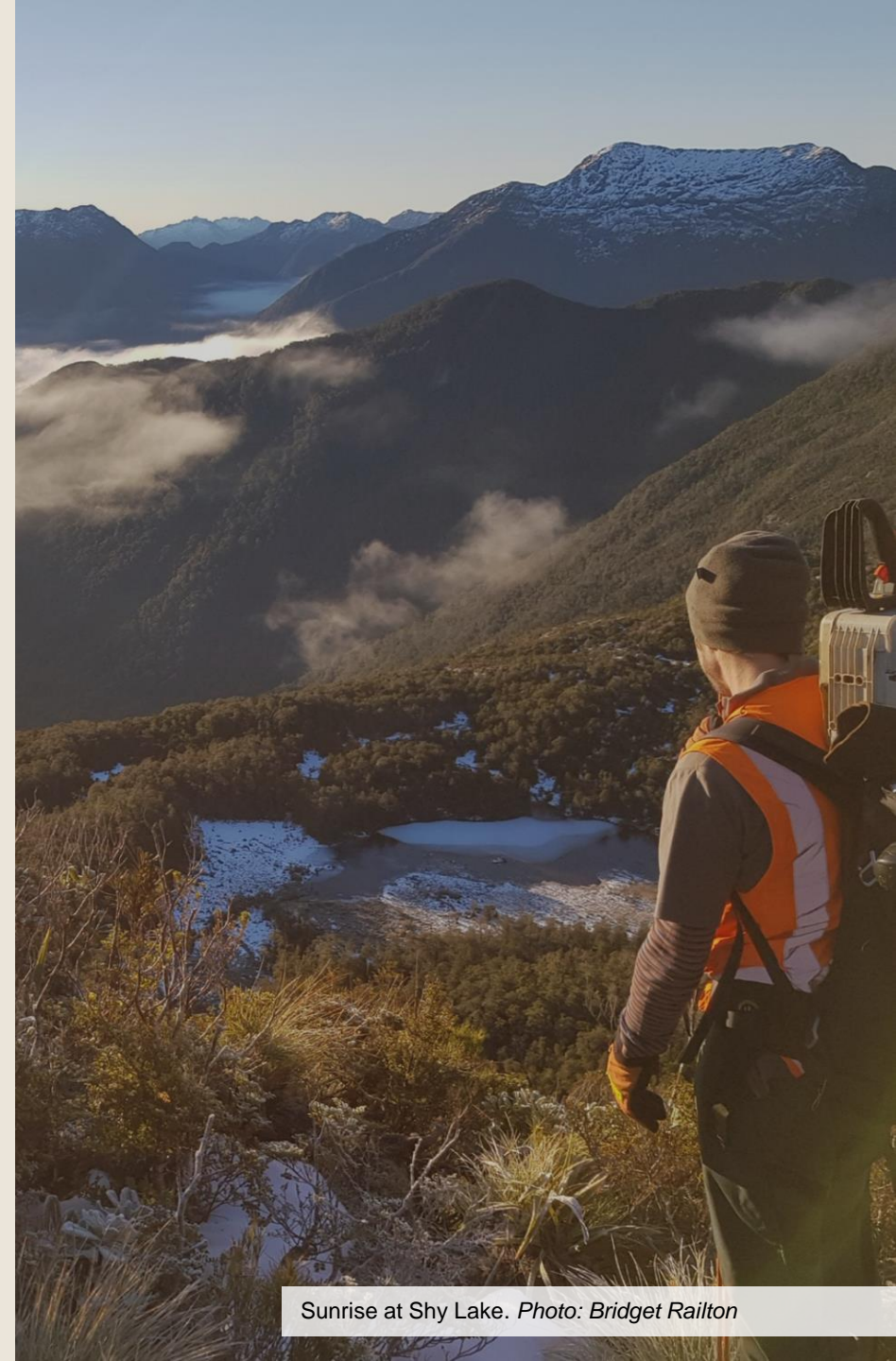
25 Acts of Parliament



22,000 visitor assets



3,300 Treaty settlement
obligations



Sunrise at Shy Lake. Photo: Bridget Railton

DOC is New Zealand's biggest tourism provider



15,000 km of tracks



326 campsites



521 amenity areas

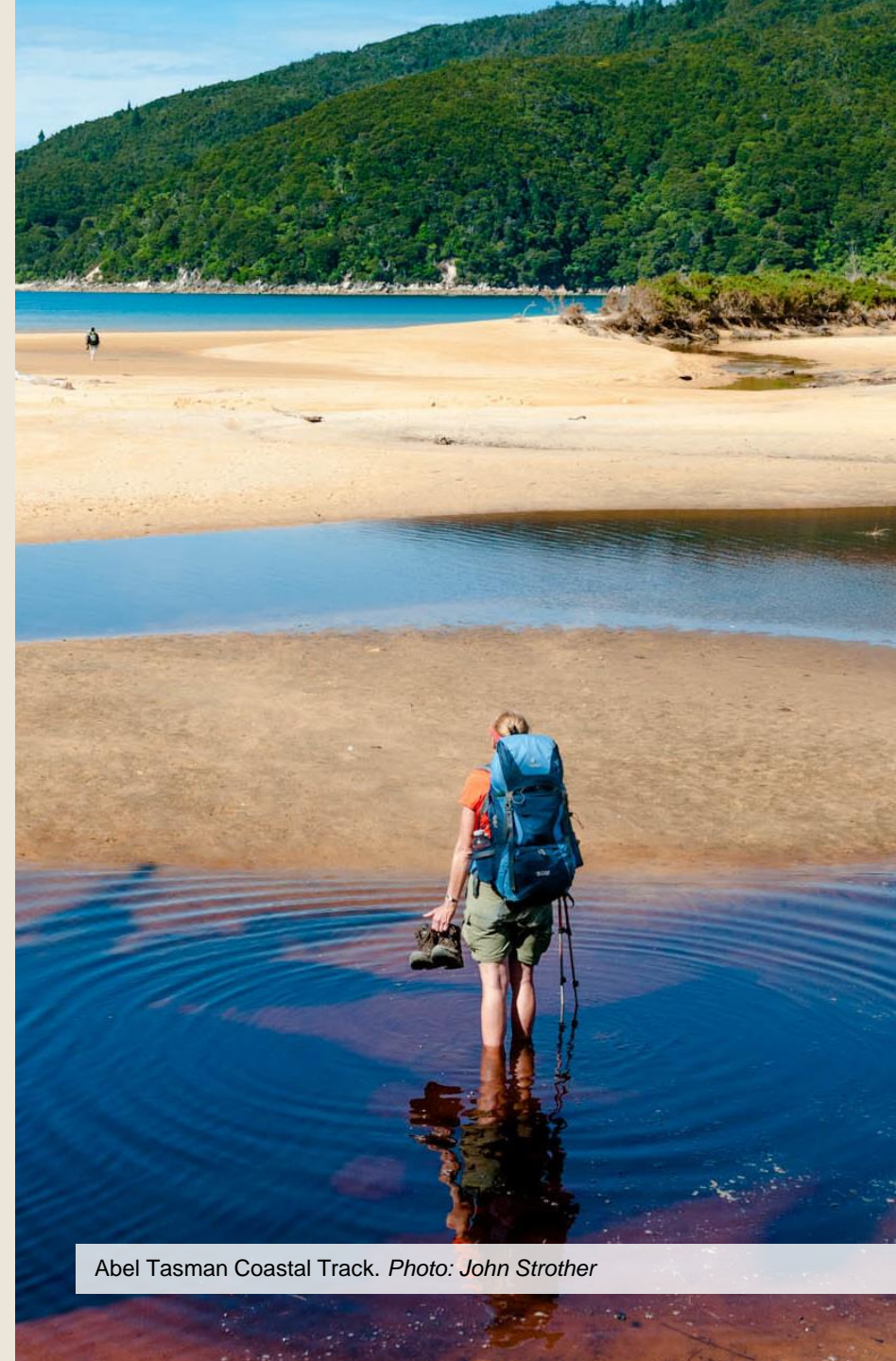


Over 950 huts



24,000 signs

- 1,000 tourism operators on public conservation land and waters.
- \$26.9m concession revenue to Crown (2023/24)
- Enables a wide range of activities, eg skiing, boating, filming and guiding.
- \$3.4bn - economic value of tourism on public conservation land



Abel Tasman Coastal Track. Photo: John Strother

New Zealand thrives when nature thrives

- 70% of NZ export earnings rely directly on nature
- 80% of export markets demand nature-friendly products
- \$12bn – value of National Parks to NZers
- \$500m – non-market value of recreation activities linked to conservation land
- Regional economies rely on DOC-managed assets



Challenges

- Nature is in trouble
- 4,000 species threatened or at risk of extinction
- Resourcing visitor experiences is against this backdrop



63% of ecosystems are threatened.



82% of resident native birds are threatened or at risk.



94% of reptiles are threatened or at risk.



90% of NZ seabird species are threatened or at risk.



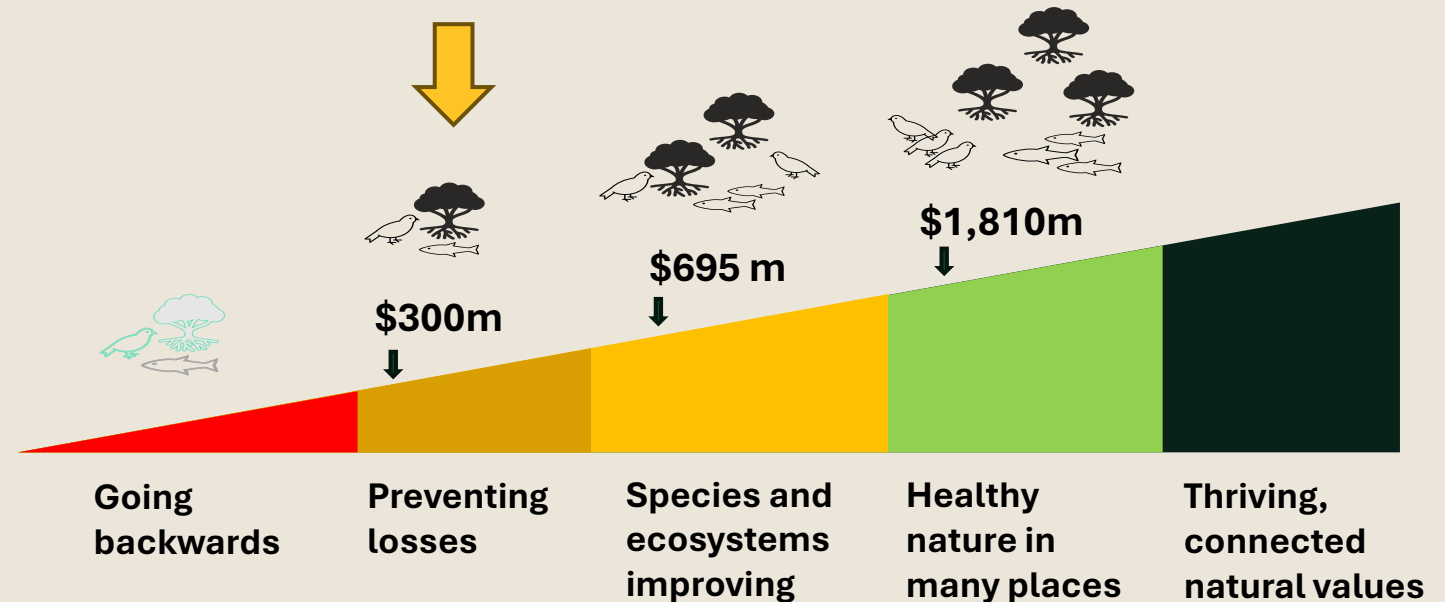
76% of native freshwater fish are threatened or at risk.



68% of native mosses are threatened or at risk.



78% of native amphibians are threatened or at risk.



Figures are annual, average budget

Visitor network challenges

- Affordability gap
- Depreciation
- Maintenance costs
- Growing visitor numbers
- Changing demand
- Climate change impacts
- Social media influencers/safety
- Under and over use of facilities



Traffic congestion at Aoraki/Mt Cook



Video shows cars and camper vans parked on both sides of the narrow road for about 500m

Conservation system challenges

- 25 Acts of Parliament – ageing legislation
- Outdated rules and planning documents
- Backlog of concessions
- Frustrating for everyone



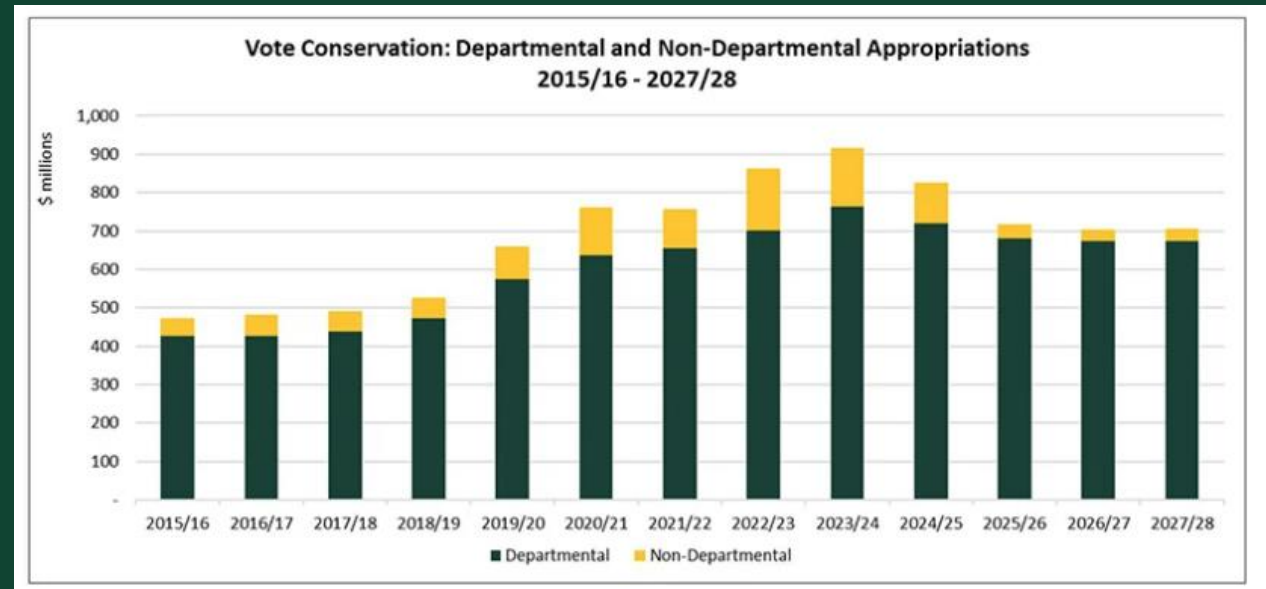
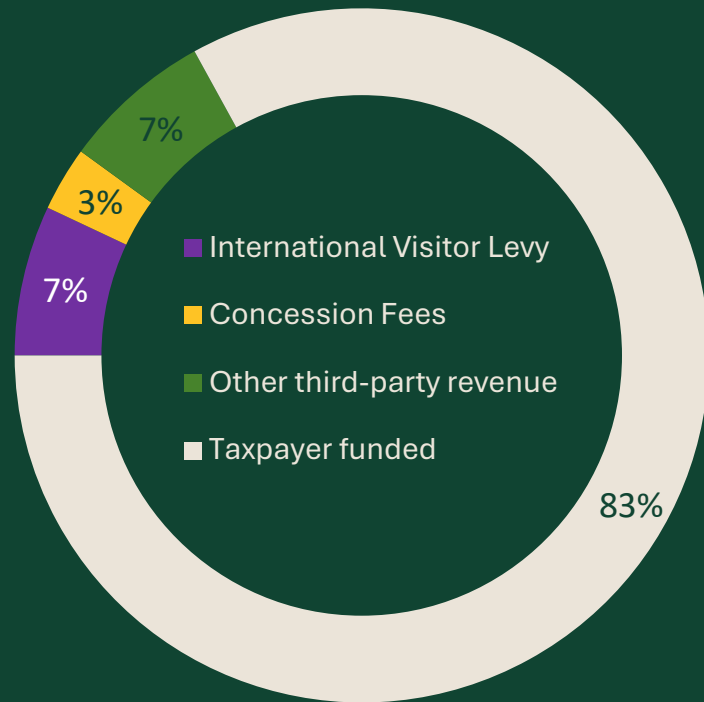
Guiding across the Boyd. Photo: Jimmy Johnson, DOC



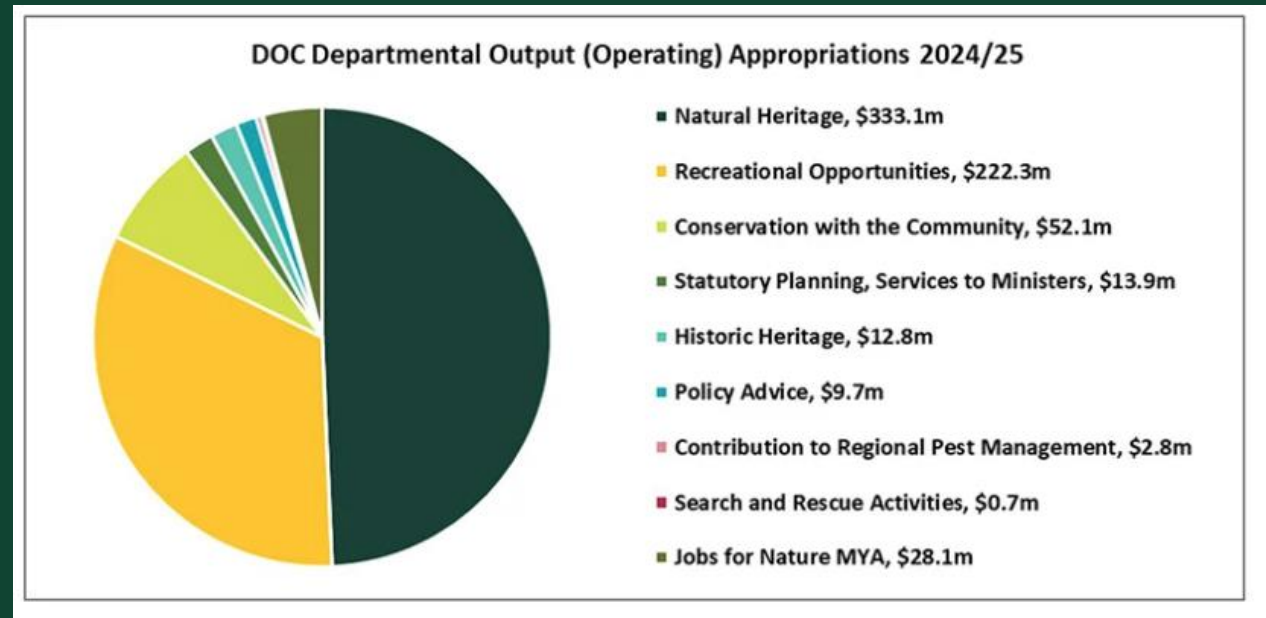
Kayaking, Kaituna Wetland. Photo: Pete Huggins, DOC

How DOC is funded

Sources of conservation funding



Vote Conservation – Budget appropriations since 2015



How DOC's operating budget is sliced

So what are we doing about it?

Current framework



Goulund Downs hut. Photo Jeremy Town:

Things we are doing now



- **IVL funding** – strategic investment approach



- **Reduce permissions backlog** – with urgency



- **User charges** for car parks and huts - reducing the cost to all New Zealanders.



- **Asset management** – long term strategic approach 10-year capital investment plan
- **Reviewing Standards** – Levels of service approach – ensuring our standards are fit-for purpose and priorities are correct.

What's coming

Future framework



Pending decisions from Ministers



- **Future Visitor Network** - rebalance and futureproof



- **Modernising conservation legislation** – to simplify planning and concessions



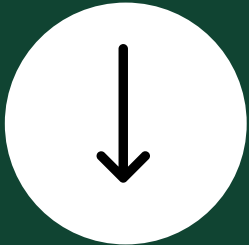
- Exploring **charges for access** to some areas

Future Visitor Network



Realigning the Network

Match our network with visitor demand



Reducing Costs

Transfer experiences to others and review standards



Building Resilience

Focus on environmental and financial sustainability



Increasing Revenue

Updating legislation, reviewing pricing and what we charge for



Visitor risk
and safety

Iwi/Treaty
partnership

Preserving
uniquely kiwi
experiences

Tongariro Alpine Crossing - a case study

- Partnership - DOC and Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro
- Dual World Heritage status (environmental and cultural values)
- One of the Top 10 Day Hikes in the world
- 150,000 visitors in 2018/19 (nearly 3,000 on peak days)
- Visitor numbers now 75-80% of pre-COVID levels
- Impacts include:
 - human waste
 - congestion at key nodes
 - lack of preparedness
 - lack of cultural appreciation

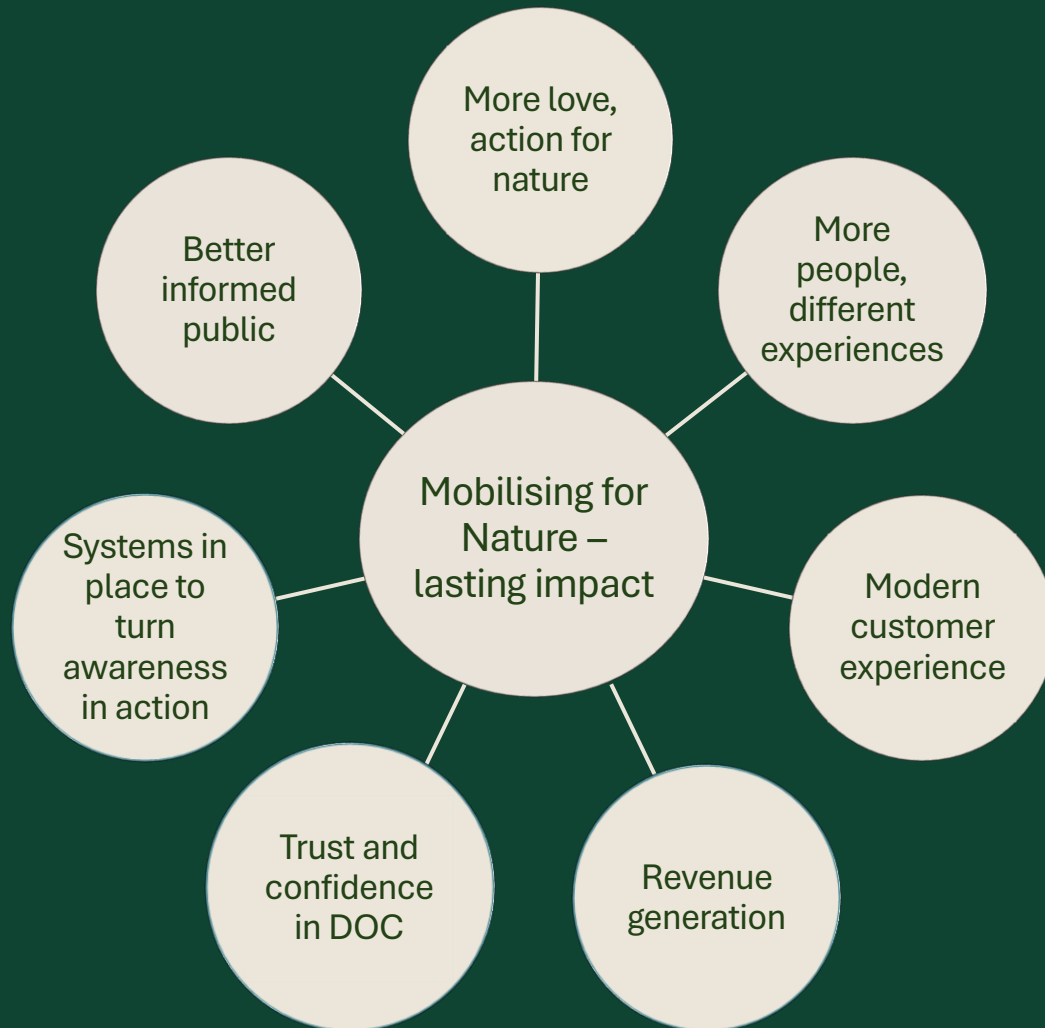


Phase 1 interventions



- First booking system for a day walk
- Manaaki Rangers on-site 7 days per week (Oct to Apr)
- Identify the TAC carrying capacity
- New conditions for concessions
- New fee through concessions to fund Manaaki Rangers
- Extensive monitoring (visitor counters, water tank sensors, visitor surveys, tether systems, eDNA testing)
- Climate station – better weather forecasts
- Behaviour change campaigns
- More visible pou whenua/interpretation
- Better track signage

Mobilising for Nature



Rakiura site visit as part of International Island-Ocean Connection Challenge. *Photo: DOC*



Whareroa Farm. *Photo: DOC*



Stu Cockburn, Ashburton Lakes. *Photo: Jack Mace*