

## Communities to benefit from outdoor access funding

**Eighteen projects designed to enhance access to New Zealand's great outdoors have been awarded funding through the Walking Access Commission's Enhanced Access Fund.**

More than 40 organisations across the country applied for a slice of the \$230,000 made available in this year's funding round. The fund contributes to the Commission's goal of free, certain, enduring and practical walking access to the outdoors.

New Zealand Walking Access Commission Chairman John Forbes said 2011 grant recipients had submitted strong applications requesting funding for projects ranging from bridges and track extensions to maps and booklets.

"The list of successful applicants covers a wide range of groups from across New Zealand, from Northland to Otago, and all have strong community support."

The project that won the largest grant (\$40,000) in this year's funding round was the 11km Kokako Track, which will link Retaruke and Crotons Road in Ruapehu District. The walkway will form part of the Te Araroa Pathway – a national network of tracks that will eventually allow people to walk the entire length of New Zealand.

Other projects receiving funding support of \$20,000 or more were a 20-metre footbridge to enhance access to the Brynderwyn Ranges, near Whangarei (\$23,000), a bridge providing improved access to the Old Ghost Road in the north west of the South Island (\$21,500) and a walkway to the Rangihoua/Pilot Hill Heritage Reserve, near Wairoa in northern Hawke's Bay (\$20,000).



A walkway to enhance public access to the Little Waihi Estuary near Pukehina in the Bay of Plenty has received funding of \$10,000 in the Enhanced Access Fund 2011 funding round.

Mr Forbes said many of the projects required agreement, consents and permissions from landholders, local councils and iwi.

"We look forward to the completion of these projects so that locals and visitors alike can enjoy improved access to the outdoors and the vast array of recreational activities it supports."

The 2011 round of the Enhanced Access Fund is the second held by the Commission in the exercise of its responsibilities under the Walking Access Act 2008.

It follows a successful 2010 round, in which twelve projects received funding. Among those that have been completed are the Pahi Peninsula Walkway in Northland, Lake Hill Track near Canterbury's Lake Coleridge, Dalton's Track near the Pelorus Bridge in Marlborough and an extension to the Te Ara Piko pathway in Porirua.

For more information and a full list of 2011 grant recipients, visit the Enhanced Access Fund page on [www.walkingaccess.govt.nz](http://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz).

## New look for Commission's board

The Walking Access Commission's board has slimmed to six members.

Existing member and Opotiki Mayor John Forbes has been elevated to chairman and Queenstown businessman Mike Barnett has been appointed. Following the end of their terms, Kay Booth, Barbara Stuart and retiring chairman John Acland have left the board.

"We've been lucky to have such talented people on the board over the past few years – John Acland, Kay Booth and Barbara Stuart made an immense contribution," Mr Forbes said.

"Thanks in part to their efforts the Commission is fully established and is in a strong position to continue promoting free, certain, enduring and practical walking access to the outdoors."



The Dry Acheron Track (pictured) near Lake Coleridge in Canterbury was officially gazetted by the Walking Access Commission in March. It was the first gazetted by the Commission under the Walking Access Act 2008. Photo: Jim Henderson, DOC.

## The year ahead



The next 12 months promise to be a productive and busy period for the Walking Access Commission.

The Commission is now fully established, thanks in large part to the work of retiring chairman John Acland and outgoing board

By John Forbes, Chairman, New Zealand Walking Access Commission

members Kay Booth and Barbara Stuart. The three of them have done an outstanding job and I wish them the best in their future endeavours.

I'd also like to welcome incoming board member Mike Barnett, whose knowledge and experience will be a welcome asset.

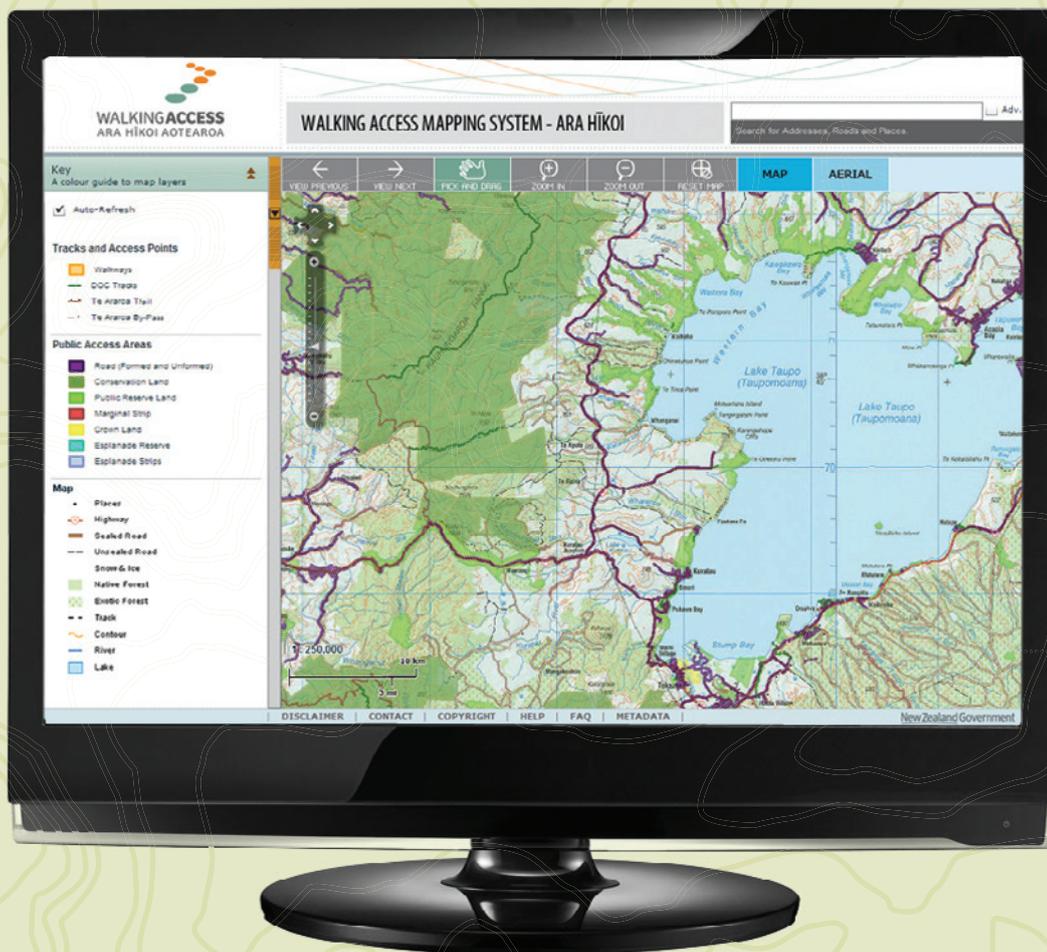
This year the Commission will focus on three broad areas; the Walking Access Mapping System, the Enhanced Access Fund and the Outdoor Access Code. At the same time, the Commission's regional field staff will continue to work collaboratively with recreationalists and landholders to create new access and resolve access cases around the country.

A significant investment has been made in the Walking Access Mapping System and it's important that the Commission increases awareness of it and continues to enhance its functionality. A media briefing event was held to promote the system this month, to coincide with its release to the general public.

The second major focus area will be the Enhanced Access Fund, which has provided financial support for 30 access-enhancing projects over the past two years. The number of applications for funding increased from 29 in 2010 to 44 in 2011, and with further promotion the Commission should see another leap in interest for the 2012 round.

Thirdly, the Commission will raise awareness of its Outdoor Access Code. The Code explains responsible behaviour when accessing the outdoors and the Commission will promote it further this year, both through the media and via education programmes that reach Kiwi students in the classroom.

All of these projects are vitally important to the Commission's overarching goal of promoting free, certain, enduring and practical walking access to New Zealand's outdoors.



## Walking Access Mapping System open for public use

The Commission's Walking Access Mapping System (WAMS) has completed testing and is now open for wide public use.

Found online at [www.wams.org.nz](http://www.wams.org.nz), the system uses geographic information system (GIS) technology to identify public and private land across New Zealand. A new 'Tracks and Access Points' map layer, launched to coincide with the system going public, allows people to find information about physical tracks and other access points to rivers, mountains, lakes, forests, beaches and legal roads.

Walking Access Commission Chief Executive Mark Neeson said the system provided clear benefits to both recreationalists and landowners.

"The benefits of the mapping system to groups like walkers, anglers and hunters are huge, but these maps are also vitally important for landholders. Detailed maps that inform the public about land that is publically accessible and land that is privately owned are essential if people are to know the extent and limits of their legal access."

Mr Neeson said the Walking Access Mapping system would

continue to evolve and improve based on user feedback and as more organisations provided access point information to the Tracks and Access Points layer of the mapping system.

Other sectors, including the property sector, were now using WAMS as their site of choice, he said.

"This is a new and innovative use of core government data, with clear benefits to end users. Users can view, at no cost, all of New Zealand's land parcels with contextual aerial, topographic and public access information from one website – a New Zealand first."

Other functions available through WAMS include an 'Information Tool' that can be used to view information about different access classifications or identify publically accessible land within up to 3km of any chosen location. Users can also make enquiries directly to the Commission about public access, use a 'Draw' tool to measure distances between various points, and print maps.

## River access agreed in Ruapehu District

A desirable fishing spot on the Whakapapa River in the central North Island is now publically accessible, thanks to an agreement between a landholder and the Walking Access Commission.

Commission Regional Field Advisor Rod McGregor has worked with the Ruapehu District Council and the owner of a property on Stone Jug Road, south-east of Taumarunui, to create a signposted route across the property to the river. Mr McGregor is one of nine field advisors who have been appointed by the Commission to give it an on-the-ground presence across New Zealand.

"There's an unformed legal road on the property but part of it is heavily overgrown and more or less unusable," Mr McGregor said. "Many anglers were neglecting to use the overgrown section of the road and were instead taking the quickest and most direct route across the

property, often without the permission of the landholder who was concerned about the impact on his business."

The solution, in agreement with the landholder, was for the Commission to fund construction of a stile over a fence on the property and access signs marking out an agreeable route down to the river.

Ruapehu District Council played a significant role by supporting access rights and agreeing to deal with any disputes over access on the legal road in future.

"With the help of Ruapehu District Council councillor Warren Furner we came up with a practical solution that provided a substitute to the overgrown



Access to the Whakapapa River is easy thanks to a stile and signs marking access to the Stone Jug Road property.

section of the unformed legal road," Mr McGregor said. "The agreed route allows people to access a stunning spot on the Whakapapa River and ensures those accessing it don't damage crops or disturb the landowners stock."

A list of regional field advisors across New Zealand can be found on the Commission's website, [www.walkingaccess.govt.nz](http://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz).

## New public access signs available

Landholders who allow public access across their property can now signpost contact details and access conditions for visitors, thanks to a partnership between the Walking Access Commission and Rural Women New Zealand.

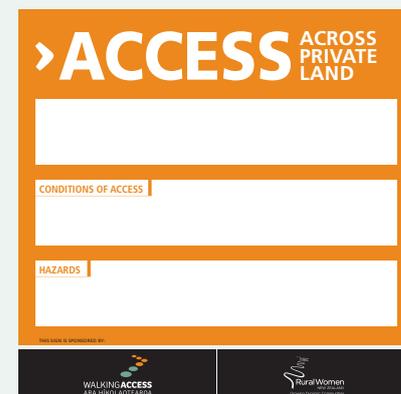
A joint project between the two organisations will provide public access signs for Rural Women members, and other landholders on request, who wish to voluntarily signpost access points to their property.

Conditions, such as 'no dogs', 'no guns' or 'closed during lambing' can be marked on the signs with waterproof pictorial stickers, and a contact phone number can be provided to prompt people to ask permission.

Rural Women NZ Executive Officer Noeline Holt said: "we are really excited to be able offer these signs free to all our members, we will certainly be encouraging everyone to make the most of this opportunity."

New Zealand Walking Access Commission Chief Executive Mark Neeson said the partnership between the Commission and Rural Women NZ would benefit both landowners and those seeking access.

"These signs smooth the access process for everyone involved. They allow landowners to provide contact details for the members of the public, who no longer need to walk down a landowner's driveway to ask for permission to cross a property, and they clearly mark any desired conditions of access."



The new access sign developed by the Commission and Rural Women New Zealand.

The signs are for use by people who wish to voluntarily grant access across their property. They are not being used to mark or impose conditions of access on an unformed legal road.

More information about the signs is available online at [www.walkingaccess.govt.nz](http://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz)



### CONTACT US

TO SUBSCRIBE TO ACCESSING NEW ZEALAND PLEASE EMAIL US.

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