

Outdoor Recreation Strategy

2009–2015

FOREWORD

In 2007 SPARC led a review of the outdoor recreation sector with support from the Department of Conservation. The review findings were outlined in a discussion document that was released on 1 July 2008 for consultation with government agencies and sector stakeholders. The initial review findings and the summary of the submissions received underpin the strategy set out in this document.

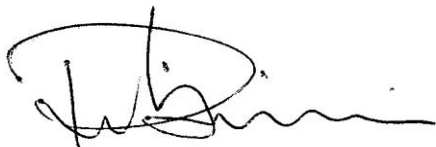
The review identified that New Zealand's heritage has, to a large extent, been shaped by the special features of our unique environment, outdoor lifestyles and adventurous spirits. Not only do these landscapes and activities define our communities and quality of life, they also underpin New Zealand's tourism industry and innovative outdoor equipment and clothing design and manufacture industry.

However, there are several factors impacting on participation in outdoor recreation in New Zealand including population growth, increasingly diverse communities, changing urban structures and growth, societal and lifestyle change, changing and diversified recreation interests and increasing environmental pressures.

Participation in outdoor recreation is changing as people make different choices about how, when and where they choose to recreate. Stakeholders have reported concerns that these changes in participation may lead to less interest in participating in outdoor recreation, a loss of skills (especially those required for more traditional activities), and a decline in understanding about outdoor etiquette and knowledge about the environment that is so vital to outdoor recreation. As well, much of the participation in outdoor recreation is unstructured and informal, which means that providing good information, easy access and promoting outdoor recreation activities and opportunities is increasingly important.

If we are to continue to encourage people into the outdoors and preserve the natural areas that sustain outdoor recreation, we must be responsive to these changes. This requires organisations and groups that provide opportunities for people to participate in outdoor recreation to be firstly aware of any changes in participant needs and then to be able to manage their resources to respond effectively. Groups within the sector face different challenges in doing this.

The national Outdoor Recreation Strategy (the Strategy) tackles these challenges and will help to achieve our aim of more people participating in outdoor recreation so that the many benefits associated with outdoor recreation can be enjoyed by individuals, communities and the nation.



Peter Miskimmin

CEO SPARC

August 2009

WHAT IS OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation includes a range of leisure, recreation, cultural or sporting activities, undertaken in natural, heritage, rural and urban open space. It offers New Zealanders opportunities for improved mental and physical wellbeing, education gains, social development, economic prospects (employment, business investment, marketing opportunities), building national identity and understanding our environment. Outdoor recreation offers value to all parts of our communities at all stages of life.

Trying to provide a definition of outdoor recreation that is not open to challenge is difficult considering the wide range of activities involved, the diverse groups and individuals who participate and the varying motivations for participation. However, for the purposes of this strategy, outdoor recreation activities are those that:

- are undertaken by people in their free time;
- have a physical component;
- require access to natural, rural and urban open spaces;
- are not primarily focused on competitive outcomes; and
- meet a range of purposes that are determined by the needs of the individual participant.

Outdoor recreation does not include:

- sporting activities;
- indoor activities; or
- activities that do not have a physical component.

THE STRATEGY

The Strategy recognises the contribution that outdoor recreation makes to the nation's health and wellbeing, and social, education, conservation, cultural, environment and economic outcomes, especially when large numbers of people participate in the many and varied activities available across the full spectrum of outdoor recreation settings.

Our vision is:



The Strategy focuses on increasing participation in outdoor recreation, building the responsiveness of sector groups to the changes that impact on participation, and ensuring that pressures on the natural areas used for outdoor recreation are managed effectively and in a way that is beneficial to outdoor recreation.

OVERALL STRATEGIC APPROACH

The following diagram shows the overall strategic framework that will guide government moving forward to address the challenges and issues based on the three outcomes areas.

VISION	New Zealanders participate regularly in outdoor recreation because they understand and value its contribution to their quality of life.		
LONG-TERM OUTCOME	Increase the number of people who participate regularly in outdoor recreation activities through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the development of the outdoor recreation sector’s ability to respond to changing participant needs; and Ensuring the availability of, and access to, high quality natural areas for outdoor recreation*. 		
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	1. A more capable and effective delivery system for outdoor recreation.	2. Access to natural areas that support the full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities.	3. More New Zealanders with the skills and knowledge to participate in outdoor recreation.
PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and leadership Sector coordination and capability Research Smart investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing access Coordinated planning Protection of natural resources for outdoor recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth participation Coordinating learning and development in outdoor recreation.
OUTPUTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council. A mechanism to coordinate government approaches to outdoor recreation. Completed stock take of existing outdoor recreation research Outdoor recreation research agenda Capability resources applied to sector groups. Investment approach developed and applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated management plans for natural resource use are developed. Activities of the Walking Access Commission. Environmental care codes available. Participatory planning processes applied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on outdoor education within the school curriculum. An agreed framework for learning and leadership development in place and used as a basis for building sector capability. Baseline participation data for outdoor recreation is established and made available to sector groups. Promotional and awareness-building activities carried out by NGO groups
2015 SUCCESS MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% increase in participation in outdoor recreation activities as measured by Active New Zealand survey. 		

* High quality natural areas: are accessible by the public; preserve the unique features of a setting; provide the necessary facilities; create few barriers for participation; and cover the spectrum of settings from urban to wilderness.

KEY CHALLENGES

Several challenges must be addressed by the outdoor recreation sector if the Strategy is to be realised. These challenges have been identified following a review of outdoor recreation conducted by SPARC during 2007-09. The challenges are:

Leadership

Leadership of the sector is critical and lacking. Lack of leadership impacts on a number of issues identified through the review process including:

- effective advocacy;
- effective investment in outdoor recreation; and
- better understanding and appreciation of the values and benefits of outdoor recreation.

Improved leadership is required from both government and the sector.

Delivery of outdoor recreation activities and opportunities

As a consequence of changes in the way we live our lives, demand for outdoor recreation activities and services has also changed. A change in demand will, in turn, change the nature of services and opportunities that are required and sector groups will need to be responsive to these.

There is a significant opportunity for the sector to organise its resources and effort to achieve common outcomes. This, however, would require the sector to place greater emphasis on coordination and collaboration.

In order to grow participation and support, sector groups will need to carry out more informed planning and management of recreation opportunities. It will be essential that planning by interested groups is integrated to minimise duplication and maximise the use of available resources.

Strengthening the capability of NGO sector groups may encourage partnerships between organisations and address issues of duplication and identify gaps and opportunities.

Additionally, as more people choose to participate informally rather than through formal groups and organisations

Developing skills and knowledge

Learning and development and safety management will be enhanced if more people are provided with the opportunity to develop skills for participating, leading, gaining greater understanding of the environment and managing risk. For young people these opportunities will come predominantly through outdoor education at school while community-based opportunities such as youth groups will also be important. Skilled instructors and educators are critical in this process.

Ensuring ongoing access to outdoor recreation spaces

Land is a finite resource that is put to many uses including recreational use. Recreational use, both commercial and non-commercial, is constantly under pressure from other potential land use such as urban growth, transport, and industry and commerce (amongst other things). While outdoor recreation is a legitimate use of the natural resource it is not always considered in decisions relating to changes in what the land is used for, putting future recreation opportunities at risk.

Planning and management of outdoor recreation will need to address the potential effect of climate change. Increased participation may also increase the potential for negative impact on the environment. Planning and management of current and future uses will help to mitigate some of these.

Summary of challenges for the outdoor recreation sector

The table below outlines the challenges identified during the course of the review and submissions process.

<p style="text-align: center;">LEADERSHIP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor advocacy of outdoor recreation • Undervaluing of the benefits of outdoor recreation • Lack of coordinated promotion of outdoor recreation • Low levels of investment and/or adequate resourcing • Outdoor recreation not a priority for public and/or private policy development and funding • Low levels of cooperation and collaboration across the sector • Lack of a coordinated research agenda 	<p style="text-align: center;">CAPABLE AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting and retaining volunteers • Changing nature of demand for outdoor recreation • Continued viability of existing sector organisations and/or current service delivery • The demand for high quality outdoor recreation experiences across a broader range of opportunities • Lack of high quality research about demand for and participation in outdoor recreation • The role of commercial providers alongside volunteer groups • Increasing liability for instructors/leaders of outdoor recreation – both employed and volunteer.
<p style="text-align: center;">DEVELOPING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with school boards to raise the importance placed on outdoor education in schools • Ensuring that there are more competent outdoor leaders within schools (teachers, volunteers, contracted providers) • Support for community-based learning and development opportunities • Developing appropriate standards around industry training and development • Establishing appropriate skill standards and clear pathways for learning from novice to expert • Minimising the load on safety management organisations through better educated and informed participants 	<p style="text-align: center;">ONGOING ACCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving recreation management and planning to mitigate adverse effects on land of over use or improper use • Ensuring and managing appropriate access to public recreation spaces – including the impact of legislation on access and/or participation • Effective management of recreation, conservation, educational and tourism needs and interests in the environment • Balancing multiple and competing demands for natural resources used for outdoor recreation • Effects of climate change • The need for greater emphasis on ‘front gate’ and front country outdoor recreation opportunities in planning around urban areas • Improving active and shared-mode access to urban recreation areas and facilities.

THREE OUTCOME AREAS

The strategy will coordinate government and non-government sector organisation (NGO) responses to these challenges and provide a framework for taking action to address these and any other issues that may arise in the future.

The following tables outline the three strategic outcome areas that are derived from the vision.

Outcome One:

A more capable and effective delivery system for outdoor recreation

<p>Issues</p>	<p>The sector is diverse and represents a wide range of often competing interests. This makes it more difficult to address sector-wide issues although there are broad areas of common interests that can be built on. A more coordinated approach from the sector to the changing needs of both existing and potential participants will help the sector to respond effectively.</p> <p>Sector responsiveness to change is an important part of sustaining an effective and capable sector. A critical aspect of responding to this change is the availability of credible research and evidence that can be used to guide planning and management approaches within the sector. Some outdoor recreation organisations and groups are more equipped to address this than others with many groups looking for support such as increased investment and access to other services to build their ability to respond.</p> <p>A lack of leadership both within the sector and at government level is often cited as a contributing factor to outdoor recreation issues in New Zealand.</p>
<p>Priorities</p>	<p><i>Leadership</i></p> <p>There is no national representative body for outdoor recreation in New Zealand nor is there one government agency with sole responsibility for outdoor recreation. Lack of leadership has been one of the key contributing factors to the non-realisation of value and the under-valuing of outdoor recreation in New Zealand.</p> <p><i>Sector coordination and capability</i></p> <p>The sector is diverse and represents a wide range of interests. This makes it more difficult to address sector-wide issues although there are broad areas of common interests that can be built on. A more coordinated approach from the sector to the changing needs of both existing and potential participants will help the sector to respond effectively. Some sector groups have more capability than others to do this.</p> <p><i>Smart investment (financial and non-financial)</i></p> <p>Investment in outdoor recreation refers to financial and non-financial activities. Smart investment means developing an appropriate investment approach to achieve the outcomes of the strategy and realise greater value from outdoor recreation participation.</p> <p><i>Research</i></p> <p>The initial review findings suggested that there is a lack of comprehensive information from research relating to outdoor recreation to assist the sector plan and manage effectively. The sector is not supported by a coordinated research and information framework. This reduces opportunities for robust trend analysis and evidence-based programme and planning development and implementation.</p>

***Achieving Outcome One:
A more capable and effective delivery system for outdoor recreation***

Achieving this outcome requires a focus on:

1. Improving sector leadership
 - By establishing the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council to provide quality advice to SPARC and others.
 - By improving collaborative Government approaches to supporting outdoor recreation.
2. Improving sector capability and coordination
 - By working with the NGO sector to determine how best to coordinate action around common issues.
 - By providing financial and non-financial resources to support the capability development of key NGO sector groups.
3. Smart investment in outdoor recreation
 - By completing a stock take of current investment in outdoor recreation from all sources to identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities to coordinate investment approaches and stimulate funding levels.
 - By directing investment towards achieving the outcomes of the strategy.
 - By completing an economic value study of outdoor recreation to assist the sector to access funding from a variety of sources to reduce the reliance on government funding.
4. Using research to inform planning
 - By conducting a stock take of existing research and making it available to the sector.
 - By establishing a plan to drive future research that addresses gaps in knowledge and information about participation in outdoor recreation.

Outcome Two:**Access to high quality natural areas across the full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities**

Issues	<p>Impacts on our natural resources are increasingly discussed and debated. The natural environment comprises many unique species of flora and fauna and provides support for ecosystems, landscapes including those of cultural significance, and marine environments, amongst other things. The influence of climate change on plants, wildlife and their habitats means that good management of the environment is even more important than ever and this too will impact on outdoor recreation.</p> <p>Environmental sustainability is a central issue for New Zealand with some environmental limits being reached in some areas. A balanced approach is required and transparent decision-making processes applied, to ensure that the use of the natural resource is managed appropriately.</p> <p>Regular improvement to management systems and standards is key and needs to be built on good evidence and in consultation with all interested groups including tourism and recreation providers, conservation groups, iwi, participants and other resource managers. Participatory processes around planning are essential to ensure that solutions can be found that optimise the benefits for all concerned.</p>
Priorities	<p><i>Managing access</i></p> <p>Access to public outdoor recreation places is a more complex issue. New Zealanders value access to land for recreational use, but landholders and outdoor enthusiasts often disagree about how and where access should be allowed. Access to public recreation spaces is a fundamental requirement for people wanting to engage in outdoor recreation activities. Changes in land use and ownership and different expectations regarding access in rural areas as opposed to urban areas coupled with changes in demand for access mean that this has been, and will continue to be, a challenging issue.</p> <p><i>Coordinated planning</i></p> <p>Settings for outdoor recreation need to be managed to protect them while providing opportunities for recreation activities. Partnership is the key to the success. Partnerships between central and local government and government and communities are effective means of achieving a more collaborative approach to managing the outdoor recreation resource.</p> <p><i>Managing use</i></p> <p>Many places of outdoor recreation face competing demands from multiple activities. Tensions between user groups are evident where competing and/or conflicting interests and/or use of outdoor environments exist. This means that difficult choices sometimes have to be made about the use of a particular environment.</p>

Achieving Outcome Two:

Access to high quality natural areas across the full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities

Achieving this outcome requires a focus on:

1. Managing access
 - By continuing to implement, support and regularly review current mechanisms for managing access on private and public land.
 - By ensuring that a graduated range of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences is available across the spectrum of natural environments from urban to wilderness.
2. Coordinating land –use planning and management
 - By promoting and supporting partnerships that lead to coordinated planning, including managing conflicts and over-use issues, for the resources used for outdoor recreation.
 - By ensuring that outdoor recreation interests are considered in all aspects of long-term planning, including urban design and transport planning at national and community level.
 - By ensuring that outdoor recreation interests are considered in the development and/or modification of relevant legislation and regulations at national and community level.
3. Increasing environmental awareness
 - By promoting messages about the values of sustainable environments to outdoor recreation participants to ensure appropriate use of the natural resource.

Outcome Three:**More New Zealanders with the skills and knowledge to participate and lead in outdoor recreation**

Issues	<p>Many New Zealanders want to participate in activities at a time and venue that suits, without the need to join a club or formal group. At the same time, people seek high-quality, time-efficient experiences, and expect high quality facilities around passive and active recreation across the spectrum of outdoor recreation settings. Having access to places set aside for recreation becomes important as does the availability of information about what opportunities exist.</p> <p>A person's involvement in outdoor recreation varies throughout his/her life depending on work and life/family pressures and commitments, and health and disability reasons. The changing nature of our population structure, the increasing demand for outdoor recreation activities that are "close to home and done in a day" and more people opting to recreate informally must all be considered when looking to reduce the barriers to participation in outdoor recreation.</p>
Priorities	<p><i>Youth participation</i></p> <p>Outdoor recreation activities provide an opportunity for young people to recreate and experience fun, excitement and adventure. Challenging outdoor experiences can impact powerfully on a young person's development and learning. Participating in outdoor activities promotes the acquisition of motor skills, social skills and cognitive function and can have a positive effect on a young person's mental and emotional wellbeing. Schools, in particular, can play an important role in introducing young people to the outdoors and beginning the process of building skills and knowledge that supports their ongoing participation. The availability of quality leadership for this process is vital.</p> <p><i>Coordinating learning and development</i></p> <p>Learning and development support participation and leadership in outdoor recreation either through ensuring quality instruction and/or creating opportunities for participants to learn the necessary skills to allow them to participate confidently. The review identified the need for standards, qualifications and safety management schemes to be coordinated within a strong framework that will deliver education and training in the sector. At the present time there are a number of competing interests in this area and, although attempts have been made to coordinate the sector's approach, a clear framework has not yet been completed.</p>

Achieving Outcome Three:

More New Zealanders with the skills and knowledge to participate and lead in outdoor recreation

Achieving this outcome requires a focus on:

1. Coordinating learning and development in outdoor recreation
 - By developing a coordinated framework to drive learning and development of participants and leaders within outdoor recreation.
 - By creating innovative approaches and opportunities to support community-based learning for outdoor recreation participants and volunteers.
2. More young New Zealanders participating in outdoor recreation
 - By encouraging schools to create more opportunities for young people to participate in outdoor recreation through giving it priority within the school curriculum.
 - By encouraging and supporting links between schools and outdoor recreation community groups to facilitate participation in outdoor recreation by young people.
 - By establishing a mechanism for coordinating new and existing information about outdoor recreation activities and opportunities to encourage participation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Overall responsibility for the strategy will sit with SPARC and the Hillary Council. Partnerships with other agencies and with NGO sector groups will be critical to the success of the strategy.

Primary responsibility for implementing the strategy is held by government agencies that have an interest or impact on outdoor recreation through their work. Many of the actions identified in the strategy are already in place; however, greater coordination between agencies is required. A mechanism to coordinate central government's actions will be established in order to achieve this.

The strategic framework is deliberately high-level. NGO sector groups have a role to play through working with the Hillary Council to add more detail to the high-level direction of the strategy and influence how the strategy is implemented.

In some instances it is expected that the NGO sector will lead the implementation of some initiatives with support from government. Given the competing interests that exist, the sector will need to determine how best to work collaboratively around common areas of focus.

Key players

Implementing the strategy will be the responsibility of the entire outdoor recreation sector. This includes:

- Government agencies with an interest and/or impact on outdoor recreation including amongst others, SPARC, DoC, Ministry for the Environment (MFE), Ministry of Education (MoE), Walking Access Commission, New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), Ministry of Tourism;
- Non-government sector groups including National Recreation Organisations (NROs);
- The Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council (the Hillary Council);
- Local authorities;
- Providers;
- Outdoor recreation funders; and
- Participants.

The role of the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council

It is proposed that the Council will be the lead organisation in the sector and an advisory body for SPARC and other government agencies as required.

The Council will operate as an expert advisory council and provide advice to SPARC about how and where to direct its investment and services in order to achieve the outcomes in the strategy. Final decisions about these matters will be made by the SPARC Board via its usual decision-making processes.

Specifically, the terms of reference for the Council are to:

- provide expert, impartial strategic advice on the development and implementation of the national outdoor recreation strategy;

- monitor progress towards the implementation of the outdoor recreation strategy;
- facilitate collaboration and coordination on the delivery of outdoor recreation services;
- report regularly on progress to the SPARC Board;
- suggest initiatives for implementing the outdoor recreation strategy;
- advise on a coordinated approach to research needs to support planning and management;
- establish and maintain linkages with other relevant organisations as required; and
- provide advice to the SPARC Board on relevant outdoor recreation issues to ensure the promotion and support of outdoor recreation in New Zealand.

In order to provide high quality advice to SPARC, the Council will need to establish effective communication networks with the sector and related groups that impact on the sector such as the New Zealand Conservation Authority, the Walking Access Commission and funders, amongst others.

The SPARC Board will agree an annual work plan with the Council and SPARC will drive the work programme of the Council by submitting papers to the Council for their consideration and advice. SPARC will implement the aspects of the national outdoor recreation strategy for which it has responsibility namely: leadership and governance; capability development; and investment.

Proposed roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities for supporting the strategy can be broadly grouped as follows:

Lead/influence	Providing clear, decisive and informed leadership to influence the thinking and actions of others in outdoor recreation.
Enable	Working with sector groups and other partners to enable the development of outdoor recreation by assisting organisations to build their capability and ensuring sound management of natural areas used for outdoor recreation.
Invest	Investing in activities that will support the achievement of the goals of the strategy.
Provide	Providing activities, opportunities and facilities that support and promote participation in outdoor recreation.

The table below identifies the roles that each stakeholder in the sector can play in implementing the strategy. Coordinating stakeholders’ commitment to the strategy will be managed by SPARC via the Hillary Council, SPARC Relationship Managers, SPARC’s Community Sport and Recreation team and the establishment of a cross-government group that will focus on outdoor recreation matters.

	Lead /Influence	Enable	Invest	Provide
SPARC	✓	✓	✓	
Hillary Council	✓	✓		
DoC	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tourism sector	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education sector	✓	✓		✓
NZ Walking Access Commission	✓	✓	✓	
NZTA	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other government	✓	✓	✓	
Territorial authorities	✓	✓	✓	✓
NGO – advocacy	✓	✓		
NGO - training		✓		✓
NGO - safety		✓		✓
NGO - clubs				✓
NGO- education and personal development		✓		✓
Funders	✓		✓	