Frenchmans Cap

Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park
Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone Plan 2020

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) acknowledges and pays respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as the original owners and continuing custodians of this land and acknowledges Elders – past, present and emerging.

This Recreation Zone Plan (the plan) has been prepared under the provisions of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 2016 (TWWHAMP), a statutory management plan prepared in accordance with the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002.

This plan has been prepared for the recreation zone that covers the Frenchmans Cap Track located in the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park. It aims to improve visitor experience and environmental outcomes and guide site management.

This plan has been finalised knowing that a tourism masterplan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is to be completed by December 2019. The tourism masterplan may require or recommend amendment of this plan (Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone Plan).

The Tasmanian Reserve Management Code of Practice 2003 specifies appropriate standards and practices for new activities in reserves that have been approved through project planning and assessment processes. It also provides best practice operational standards. The guiding principles and basic approach specified in the Code of Practice are adopted in this plan and applied in the conduct of operational management activities.

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5. Monitoring and evaluation ................................................. 40
   Review...................................................................................... 43
6. Information sources & glossary ......................................... 44
   Glossary....................................................................................... 47
7. Appendices ............................................................................ 48
   Appendix 1: Management Context............................................. 48
   Appendix 2: The Reserve Standards Framework ...................... 51
   Appendix 3: Track Classification Scheme................................... 52
   Appendix 4: Implementation Schedule ..................................... 57
   Appendix 5: Design Brief for Replacement Lake Tahune Hut ...... 59
1. Summary

Frenchmans Cap (1,443 m) constitutes perhaps the most dramatic landform in western Tasmania. Its prominent and distinctive shape made it a landmark before European settlement. The area has a long history of both recreational use and reservation, with a national park in the area first proclaimed more than 70 years ago.

The 45 km return walk to the Cap is a challenging experience but is, nevertheless, the fourth-most popular backcountry-walking destination in Tasmania, with 1,832 people visiting in 2016-17. Walkers typically undertake the return trek over four days. In almost 80 per cent of visitor nights spent in the area, visitors use the public huts at Lakes Vera and/or Tahune for accommodation. Apart from the Overland Track, Frenchmans Cap is the only backcountry walk in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) where such a public hut-based walk experience is possible.

Walkers are not the only recreationists who use the area. Frenchmans Cap has been popular with rock climbers for more than 40 years and many traditional-style routes have been established on its steep walls. The wild Franklin River’s gorges partly surround Frenchmans Cap and the Irenabyss Track provides a recreational link for both rafters and walkers.

Several companies are licensed to undertake commercial walking trips; however, customer demand for a guided experience has been relatively low to date.

Many sections of the main access track have been subject to construction or stabilisation works at various times. Major PWS-funded works were undertaken during the 1980s and 1990s, mainly in the higher altitude areas, with a focus on environmental protection. The most recent track work is part of a 10-year project, begun in 2008, facilitated by business person Dick Smith providing $100,000 annually to the Wildcare Inc Gift Fund. A major part of this project has been the construction of a new 4.5 km track section bypassing much of the ‘Sodden Loddon’ plains. The opening of this bypass in March 2013 resulted in an immediate 50 per cent increase in walkers, with a lesser trend since, although walker numbers have continued to significantly increase.

In addition to the indisputable scenic and recreational values, aspects of the area’s flora and geoheritage values are important. Rainforest and fjaeldmark communities are particularly noteworthy environmental values of the Frenchmans Cap area. The large area of rainforest in the Lake Vera–Barron Pass area contains large and very old specimens of King Billy and Huon pine, and the Huon pines are among the highest altitude occurrences known. This forest is particularly important given the fate of neighbouring rainforest areas destroyed in a 1966 wildfire. The summit dome of Frenchmans Cap has summer temperatures that are among the coldest in Australia. It provides habitat for several rare and uncommon plant species. The vegetation in this area is very vulnerable to trampling damage because of the slow growth rates caused by the cold, windy weather and the thin, low-nutrient soils.

The purpose of this plan is to outline the values and management issues that will need to be addressed in coming years, describing actions that aim to protect both the area’s high conservation values and the visitor experience. As the Frenchmans Cap Track becomes increasingly popular, preserving its wild character while maintaining the self-reliant visitor experience will involve careful planning. Management actions include:

- Maintain the main access track as a class T2 track. In this way, the Frenchmans Cap Track retains its position (between the Overland and South Coast tracks, for example) as part of the range of recreational walking experiences available in the TWWHA.
• Repair and upgrade (consistent with the above) the remainder of the main access track.
• Improve the site design at Lakes Vera and Tahune overnight nodes.
• Replace the toilet at Lake Vera with a system appropriate for the climatic conditions and visitor numbers.
• Maintain an ongoing seasonal ranger presence.
• Develop and implement improved and consistent education and interpretation messages, to be presented both onsite and more broadly.
• Conduct track monitoring and visitor research, including exit surveys from summer 2018-19, to identify, evidence and inform issues and decision-making.

This plan is intended to apply for a 10-year period, at the end of which there is to be a thorough review and evaluation of its effectiveness and the currency of its objectives and vision. There will also be an interim evaluation after three years. The interim review will provide the opportunity to review environmental monitoring and visitor research data and inform evidence-based decisions.
2. Introduction

Background

The Frenchmans Cap area is located in the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park, part of the TWWHA. An area at Frenchmans Cap was first proclaimed a national park in 1941. This was absorbed into the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park in 1981 and declared part of the TWWHA in 1982.

The Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park covers more than 440,000 ha of reserved land. The area most visited and used for recreational bushwalking is only part of the total reserve area and is largely encompassed in the 6,596 ha Recreation Zone.

The statutory management plan for the TWWHA includes the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and applies to the Frenchmans Cap Track. The TWWHAMP sets out what uses may occur in the TWWHA, where they may occur and under what circumstances. It provides guidance on the various uses of the TWWHA, primarily through a zoning and overlay system and an associated Table of Use, as well as a number of specific prescriptions (DPIPWE 2016, p. 33).

Location, plan area and access

The Frenchmans Cap area is located in western Tasmania, immediately south of the Lyell Highway. Access is via a major walking track starting at a car parking area adjacent to the highway 29 km west of Derwent Bridge.

In the TWWHAMP, Recreation Zone plans have been prepared to guide management in higher-use areas including Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone. The area covered by this plan is defined in the TWWHAMP and referred to as the Recreation Zone. Map 1 (see page 5) shows the location of the Recreation Zone and surrounding features.

The former Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 1999 defined a more extensive Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone than the current Recreation Zone detailed in the TWWHAMP. The former Recreation Zone allowed for the consideration of a loop track (see DPIWE 1999, p. 174). The idea of a loop track was investigated and abandoned given the difficulties associated with construction, the cost and the impact on natural values. Consequently, the Recreation Zone boundary defined in the TWWHAMP covers a 400 m wide corridor centred on the existing walking track (see Map 1 on page 5).

A Recreation Zone corridor extends east and west along the Lyell Highway but, apart from the car park vicinity, this is not part of the area covered by this plan.

Overarching vision and objectives

This Recreation Zone Plan is a subsidiary plan under the TWWHAMP, which is the statutory management plan for the area. This Recreation Zone Plan complies with the relevant provisions of the TWWHAMP, and where appropriate builds on these.

The guiding vision for management of the TWWHA, in line with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (Articles 4 and 5), is to:

Identify, protect, conserve, present and, if appropriate, to rehabilitate, the World Heritage, National Heritage and other natural and cultural values of the TWWHA, and to transmit that heritage to future generations in as good or better condition than at present.
The National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 lists various objectives for management of national parks, including protecting natural, biological and geological diversity, preserving wilderness areas and water quality, as well as encouraging and providing for recreational use and enjoyment consistent with the conservation of the national parks’ natural and cultural values. The TWWHAMP objectives align with the Act and apply to this plan.

The overarching objectives of management in the TWWHAMP (DPIPWE 2016, p. 34) are:

**Cultural Values**

- To develop and implement a joint management arrangement that ensures the strategies and actions for identification, protection, conservation and presentation of the World Heritage and other values of the TWWHA are developed in partnership with Tasmanian Aboriginal people.
- To understand the TWWHA as an Aboriginal cultural landscape, reflecting its long occupation, as a foundation for management of its cultural values.
- To identify, protect, conserve and restore cultural values in the TWWHA.

**Natural Values**

- To identify, protect, conserve and restore natural biological and geological diversity and processes in the TWWHA.
- To protect and conserve the natural landscapes of the TWWHA, particularly in areas of exceptional natural beauty, and aesthetic and cultural importance.

**Presentation**

- To provide a diversity of visitor experiences in a manner that is consistent with the conservation of natural and cultural values.

**Community Engagement**

- To promote and facilitate the role of the TWWHA as an integral and valued component of the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the international, national and Tasmanian communities, and to involve these communities in its management.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- To support the delivery of an informed, effective and transparent adaptive management regime for the TWWHA.

The Frenchmans Cap area was declared a Fuel Stove Only Area in 1989, and the entire Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park was declared a Fuel Stove Only Area in 1998, meaning that campfires cannot be used in the park.
Map 1 TWWHA management zones for the Frenchmans Cap Track area
3. Current situation

Values of the Frenchmans Cap area

Cultural and heritage values

Aboriginal significance and values

The TWWHA is a diverse Aboriginal cultural landscape comprising a variety of environments in which the cultural heritage of Tasmanian Aboriginal people is preserved. For tens of thousands of years Aboriginal people lived in the coastal environments, the valleys with freshwater rivers, open button grass plains and alpine mountains.

Archaeological research and excavations have shown that Aboriginal people lived in the TWWHA for at least the past 35,000 years and were, for 20,000 years, the southernmost people on Earth. Among the significant sites in the TWWHA is Kutikina, which is located in the lower Franklin Valley about 30 km from Frenchmans Cap, where occupation dates to at least 20,000 years.

Research suggests that the nature of Aboriginal use and management of the TWWHA, including in areas around Frenchmans Cap, varied over time, with Aboriginal people adapting to live in the environment that was subject to extreme climatic change. The cultural practice and the unique adaptation and resourcefulness required for their ongoing occupation of the area are evidenced by the archaeological record. It reveals hunting and butchering strategies, use and transportation of available raw material, modification of the landscape through targeted firing regimes, glimpses into Aboriginal people’s spiritual life through artistic representations in rock shelters, and use of seasonal and coastal resources.

A number of cultural heritage surveys have been completed in the Frenchmans Cap area, with a small number of sites identified. Despite this, there is a high probability of additional and currently unrecorded Aboriginal cultural heritage sites being located in the Frenchmans Cap area.

Historical values and significance

Europeans first explored the Frenchmans Cap area in the mid-1800s. Various, mostly short-lived, access tracks in the area were ‘cut’ for prospectors over the years to the early 1900s. J.E. Philp cut and marked the route that forms the basis for the current walking track beyond Laughtons Lead in 1910, although it was subsequently forgotten until rediscovered by bushwalkers in 1932. It had become a relatively common wilderness-walking destination by the 1940s. From the 1940s to 1970s, various efforts at clearing and maintaining the track for bushwalkers were undertaken, some voluntary and some by contractors.

Various huts and campsites were established during this historical era, but little trace of any remains. Some of the benching on the current track (on Mt Mullens) dates from the 1930s. The remains of one of Philp’s camps exist near the now-closed track in Philps Lead.

Tasmanian bushwalkers are acknowledged as historical users of the track and recognised for their significant contributions to the exploration and protection of the Frenchmans Cap walking track network.
Natural values

Flora

The vegetation communities in the Frenchmans Cap area comprise buttongrass, wet forest and scrub, rainforest and alpine communities, their distribution related to altitude, drainage, aspect and fire history. Buttongrass sedgeland communities dominate the country between the Lyell Highway and Lake Vera, and there is *Eucalyptus nitida* wet forest or scrub; the former blankets the open plains while forest and scrub fringe drainage lines. A large area of rainforest occurs in the Lake Vera–Barron Pass area, with large and very old specimens of King Billy pine (*Athrotaxis selaginoides*) and Huon pine (*Lagarostrobos franklinii*) both occurring here. The Huon pines are among the highest altitude occurrences known. This forest is an important value of the Frenchmans Cap area, particularly given the fate of some neighbouring sites (see below). King Billy pine also occurs in rainforest and alpine shrubbery beyond Barron Pass (although the bleached fire-killed trunks of King Billy pines here indicate its greater extent before several devastating bushfires).

Dwarf alpine rainforest and shrubbery, graminoid and cushion moorland, herb-field and fjaeldmark communities occur in higher elevation and exposed settings and contain many endemic species.

Wildfires affected the area in the 1890s, 1934 and 1966. The earlier fires killed some King Billy pines, but the 1966 fire was particularly devastating in the Lake Tahune and Artichoke Valley areas, resulting in the death of large swathes of King Billy pine alpine rainforest.

Volunteers at Lake Tahune undertook some replanting of King Billy pines and other species during Easter 1967, but an assessment 25 years on concluded success was limited compared to natural revegetation. Natural revegetation is still very slow, but young King Billy pines are prevalent in a few areas at Lake Tahune (for example), facilitated by track drainage and hardening works limiting trampling impacts. However, up on 'Tahune Ridge', where both vegetation and soil were lost during the fire and its aftermath, it seems unlikely King Billy pines will ever return.

There are some threatened or otherwise significant species known from the area, but data is limited. Vegetation communities of particular significance include the alpine areas (particularly fjaeldmark), King Billy pine rainforest, King Billy pine-*Nothofagus gunnii* short rainforest, and King Billy pine sub-alpine scrub. These communities are considered important despite the impact of wildfires.

Fjaeldmark has high conservation values and limited distribution in Tasmania. It is sensitive to trampling impacts. The summit dome of Frenchmans Cap is of particular significance due to its cold summer temperatures that provide habitat for several rare and uncommon plant species. The vegetation in this area is very
vulnerable to trampling damage because of the slow growth rates caused by cold, windy weather and the thin, low-nutrient soils.

Since the 1990s, the Frenchmans Cap area has been a focus of dendrochronology and climate research using Huon and King Billy pines (e.g., Cook et al. 2006). At Lake Vera, both living and sub-fossil trees were sampled. The oldest living Huon pines sampled in the Lake Vera basin are more than 1,400 years old. Areas available for future dendrochronology research are limited (DPIPWE 2011, Fitzgerald 2012). Proposals for further sampling that may involve repeated access to off-track areas have the potential for unplanned routes/tracks to develop.

Any increase in users associated with the upgraded track (see page 13) may result in additional impacts on trampling-sensitive alpine vegetation communities. Track hardening will be required to protect many of these communities. The summit dome of Frenchmans Cap and Artichoke Valley are two sites of particular concern.

In recent years, an infestation of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* root rot fungus has been identified near the track on the southern Loddon Plains. This area is now bypassed by the newly opened re-route so, if the old track is not used, opportunities for the spread of the infestation by humans will be minimised.

Tasmanian rainforest communities are susceptible to myrtle wilt, and track works in rainforest areas that may damage trees are therefore a potential concern. Climate change (see page 11) will also increase the risk of myrtle wilt.

**Fauna**

The Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone contains many fauna values that contributed to the world heritage listing of the TWWHA. The dominant vegetation communities are alpine, rainforest (King Billy pine), wet eucalypt forest and moorland that, along with the freshwater habitats, contain many ancient taxa and Tasmanian endemic fauna. The living fossil, the Tasmanian mountain shrimp (*Anaspides tasmaniae*), is common in the alpine tarns, streams and lakes. Burrowing crayfish are found in alpine areas and in the moorlands, and a sister species of the giant freshwater crayfish (*Astacopsis gouldi*) is found in the rivers and streams.

The area provides secure habitat for several species that are of conservation concern, such as the Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*), spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*) and ground parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*). The area is remote, largely undisturbed and contains very few invasive fauna species.

While no formal records exist, track workers have seen feral cats on the new re-routed track west of Loddon Plains and Mt Mullens.

Evidence of lyrebirds has been noted in the Frenchmans Cap area recently. This is further west than previously recorded observations and indicates the slow migration westwards of this introduced species is continuing. No significant ecological impacts are known, but the birds contribute to infill of trackside drains and so increase the need for track maintenance.

Devil facial tumour disease has not been recorded in the Recreation Zone but is known from the Derwent Bridge area, and it is possible the disease is in the zone. Spread of the disease is from devil to devil but it is believed that tracks, roads, and perhaps planned burns opening up vegetation may facilitate disease spread.

The area provides important habitat for the Tasmanian tree frog (*Litoria ewingi*), which is ranked as at extreme risk from chytrid frog fungus. Chytrid frog fungus is known to occur along the Lyell Highway, so prevention of anthropogenic disease spread to populations in the Recreation Zone is
a high priority. This involves education of the public, and particularly management staff, and the use of wash-down stations at the main trailhead.

Most walking and camping-based recreational activities will have limited impact on fauna values unless walkers cause fires or a decline in water quality.

**Water quality**

Surveys of surface water quality have not been undertaken at Frenchmans Cap, but it is likely to be similar to other comparable parts of the TWWHA, with low nutrient levels consistent with the largely pristine nature of the catchments. Bacterial levels are likely also very low, but probably do not comply with National Water Quality Management Strategy 2011 drinking water quality guidelines for bacteria, which is typical for natural surface waters due to native animal droppings etc. Camping and, in particular, toileting and washing by recreational visitors, have the potential to impact on water quality and so impact both environmental values and the visitor experience.

The siting of existing toilets is unlikely to cause any water contamination.

Both Lakes Vera and Tahune huts have associated drinking water tanks with roof collection. There is no regular water quality testing, but signs identify and qualify the risk to users.

**Geoheritage**

Bedrock in the Frenchmans Cap area comprises Precambrian quartzite and schist, with some dolomite occurring with schist within a band encompassing Artichoke Valley, Lake Tahune and Jetty Lake. These ancient rocks have been folded and metamorphosed several times during their billion-year history, and it is their contorted nature and resistance to erosion of the quartzite, in particular, that provide the basis for the area’s spectacular scenery.

The area hosted up to eight glacier systems on several occasions during the last million years or so. The most recent glaciation ended a mere 14,000 years ago. Erosion by the glaciers
themselves, and sediment-laden outwash streams, has shaped the present landscape. The vicinity of Frenchmans Cap contains one of the most impressive suites of glacial landforms in Australia, with both erosional (cirques, horns, serrated ridges, meltwater gorges) and depositional (moraines, outwash deposits) features common.

Some lake basins contain sediments with long post-glacial environmental records; for example, charcoal in a recent sediment core from Lake Vera spanning at least 19,000 years indicates a high fire frequency in the region between 17,000 and 11,000 years ago.

Organic soils are virtually ubiquitous throughout the region and blanket undulating terrain in response to a humid climate. These organosols and their soil-forming processes are considered of international significance. Organosol surface horizons generally overlie gravelly (usually quartzitic), sandy mineral soils. However, both the organic and/or mineral soil horizons may be quite thin, especially in higher or more exposed localities. Slopes dominated by sedgeland may have 0.6 m deep organic soils, with both fibrous and muck horizons, overlying quartzitic gravels. In contrast, rainforest soils have a thin fibrous organic horizon overlying clay loam or loam mineral horizons. Bare soil occurs in particularly exposed alpine localities (fjaeldmark). Soil-forming processes in the alpine country are exceedingly slow.

The Frenchmans Cap area contains a number of significant sites listed in the Tasmanian Geoconservation Database, but most are quite robust to walker-related impacts. Some of these aspects of the area could be usefully promoted in any interpretation.

Scenic, wilderness and recreational values

Frenchmans Cap (1,443 m) constitutes perhaps the most dramatic landform in western Tasmania. Its prominent and distinctive shape made it a landmark from the earliest days of European settlement, and it features in many historical accounts of early exploration and bushwalking.

The values of the Frenchmans Cap area were acknowledged by the proclamation of a 9,550 ha national park encompassing the region in 1941.

The wilderness values of the TWWHA are of significant importance. The extensive remote and largely undisturbed country forms the tangible component of wilderness value in the TWWHA. Wilderness is also valued for the recreational opportunities it provides as well as from a social and intrinsic perspective.

The Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone is a corridor for recreational travel through to the adjacent area zoned as Wilderness.

Wilderness quality has been mapped across the TWWHA using a modified version of the National Wilderness Inventory technique (Hawes 2005). While the track and huts have some negative influence, the 2015 mapping indicates most of the Recreation Zone remains high wilderness quality (wilderness values equal to or greater than 12 and up to 18).

Key Desired Outcome 8.5 of the TWWHAMP (DPIPWE 2016, p. 175) is ‘Wilderness is managed for the protection of the integrity and the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA and the quality of the recreational experience it provides’.

In order to protect wilderness values in the TWWHA, the TWWHAMP (DPIPWE 2016, p. 177) commits to ensuring that impacts on wilderness values are considered in any assessment of activities in the TWWHA.

There is significant contemporary social value associated with recreation to areas such as Frenchmans Cap, and also increasing recognition of the significance of the spiritual and
therapeutic values of the TWWHA, a theme acknowledged in the TWWHAMP (DPIPWE 2016, p. 49).

Frenchmans Cap has been a relatively popular bushwalking destination since at least the 1940s, such that walker huts were first constructed at Lake Tahune in 1947 and Lake Vera in 1962, and intermittent works to maintain or clear the track were undertaken during the same period.

The 2006 Great Bushwalk Scoping Study concluded that Frenchmans Cap was primarily a destination-style walk with outstanding scenery and considered a medium-hard walk for experienced walkers.

The scenic values of the area also make it a focus of some commercial scenic flights, subject to Fly Neighbourly Advice Tasmanian World Heritage Area and Mount Field National Park.

Rock climbers appeared on the scene in the early 1960s, no doubt attracted by the spectacular unclimbed walls. Today, all major features have been climbed, some via several routes. There are more than 70 established rock-climbing routes in the Frenchmans Cap area, from single-pitch challenges to the classic 400 m lines on the towering east and south-east faces. All climbing at Frenchmans Cap has been traditional free climbing with little or no use of permanent anchors (bolts). Climbers often spend several days in the Cap area, usually based at Lake Tahune Hut.

The high vertical cliffs of Frenchmans Cap first attracted BASE jumpers in the 1980s and continue to be used occasionally for this activity.

In recent years, small numbers of walkers undertaking pack-and-paddle trips have appeared, walking in or out via the Frenchmans Cap Track after pack rafting on the Franklin River.

The Frenchmans Cap Track currently offers a medium-length camping trip for self-reliant bushwalkers, a recreational opportunity that should be viewed in at least a regional or TWWHA-wide context.

The 1997 Tasmanian Walking Tracks Strategy and Marketing Plan identified eight Great Bushwalks, having considered their potential for promotion and marketing as key overnight walking experiences in Tasmania. Frenchmans Cap was one of these bushwalks, but its adoption as such was not advocated as part of the initial strategy.

Climate and climate change
The Frenchmans Cap area ranges from less than 300 m to 1,443 m elevation, with a consequent wide range of microclimates. Mt Read (near Rosebery), the closest and most similar locality with meteorological data records, has a mean temperatures range between 6.3 to 14.3 degrees in February and 0 to 3.6 degrees in July. The wettest months at Mt Read are May to October but precipitation occurs all year, with an annual total rainfall of more than 3.6 m: the wettest recorded place in Tasmania. Frenchmans Cap is likely even wetter than the Mt Read annual totals, perhaps nearer to 4 m in total annual rainfall.

The maritime climate of Tasmania is associated with a lack of persistent snowline in winter and snow that falls at any time of the year. Nevertheless, winter snowfall is common at higher
elevations, and snow can lie for extended periods (well into summer) at some localities around the Cap itself. This climate has significant implications for both users (comfort and safety) and managers (servicing and design of facilities, rehabilitation of any disturbed areas).

Climate change modelling for Tasmania through the 21st century indicates a progressive increased seasonality of precipitation, with increased winter and decreased summer rainfall in western Tasmania. A general mean warming of 1 to 2 degrees is also predicted, with resultant increased drying in summer. It is important that any management investment in the area now and in the future is consistent with the likely impacts of climate change.

In terms of the environment, this climate change will mean changed fluvial processes (eg seasonal run-off), perhaps increased landslip risk and a reduction in alpine freeze/thaw processes. Increased seasonal drying and fire will progressively degrade the organosols. Species such as King Billy pine, thought to be limited by low summer rainfall, will be directly affected by this seasonal drying.

**Fire**

The Frenchmans Cap area provides stark evidence of the fire-sensitive nature of some vegetation communities and soils. Wildfires affected the area in the 1890s and 1934, and a devastating wildfire in 1966 destroyed alpine vegetation and many of the remaining conifers throughout the main range. An escaped campfire at Lake Vera burnt 6,450 ha in 1980.

Fire risk analysis indicates a low to moderate fire risk for most of the Recreation Zone. However, the area between Lake Vera and Artichoke Valley has a high risk due to the presence of a ‘major’ value, the unburnt rainforest containing fire-sensitive species (Huon pine, King Billy pine etc). The persistence of these conifers indicates this area was a fire refuge and should be managed for its protection.

Fire potentially affecting the Frenchmans Cap area may result from external factors that are beyond the scope of this plan; however, unauthorised campfires are a potential ignition source. The Recreation Zone has been a Fuel Stove Only Area since 1989.

The Lake Vera hut is surrounded by flammable vegetation. Some vegetation clearance in recent years has improved the situation, but the hut is indefensible in the case of a major wildfire. Nevertheless, the hut precinct itself is the likely source of a minor fire, and hut modifications or modest vegetation clearance (for example) may assist in saving the structure during such a small fire.

The **Frenchmans Cap Emergency Response Plan 2017-2018** provides guidance for quick but comprehensive initial response by PWS staff to any emergency reported in the Frenchmans Cap area. While the Emergency Response Plan has a focus on protecting people ahead of built assets and natural values, the protection of the latter remains a high priority given the fire sensitive nature of the alpine vegetation. Emergency fire evacuation plans exist for Lakes Vera and Tahune huts (with signs and maps at each hut indicating lake refuges etc).

There has been some recent management burning on the Loddon Plains for ecological and asset protection reasons, and more may be planned in future.
While beyond the explicit scope of this plan, the broader issue of wildfires originating beyond the boundaries of the Recreation Zone or national park are addressed as part of the PWS Northwest Region Strategic Fire Management Plan 2012. Under the current version of the Bushfire Risk Assessment Model (BRAM) used by the Fire Management Plan, the values at risk in the Frenchmans Cap area are considered ‘major’. Any wildfire threatening values, whether external or internal to the Recreation Zone, should be a high priority for suppression.

Usage and visitor characteristics

Frenchmans Cap is the fourth-most popular overnight backcountry-walking destination in Tasmania (after the Overland Track, the Three Capes Track and the Walls of Jerusalem). The Recreation Zone provides an accessible but challenging wilderness bushwalking experience in a spectacular mountain setting.

Usage of the Frenchmans Cap area (based on the registration record) has varied year to year over the 30 years for which records are available (see Figure 1 below). During the period up until 2013, walker numbers per annum were mostly between 600 and 800, with a peak in use in 2007-08 that bumped numbers up over 1,000 walkers per year.

The opening of the bypass track around the ‘Sodden Loddons’ in March 2013 resulted in a dramatic increase in walkers in 2013-14 to 1,450. This was expected, given the reputation the ‘Sodden Loddons’ had for being extremely wet and muddy. Walker numbers have continued to significantly increase since, with 1,832 walkers visiting Frenchmans Cap in 2016-17 and 1,675 in 2017-18.

Figure 1 Estimated annual visitation to Frenchmans Cap

![Figure 1 Estimated annual visitation to Frenchmans Cap](image)
Annual totals are based on logbook registrations until 2012-13. The 2013-17 totals (black bars) are primarily based on recently installed IR counter data but are supported by logbook registrations and track ranger surveys, which indicate very high registration compliance.

Visitor characteristics
Data from 2006-07 and 2010-13 indicate walker parties spent an average three nights in the Frenchmans Cap area, with Lake Vera used much more than Lake Tahune for overnight stays. The median trip duration during extended holiday periods (eg Easter 2014) is a slightly longer four days.

Verbal surveys by the track ranger of more than 120 parties during the 2013-14 season indicate Lake Vera hut is used for almost twice as many nights as Lake Tahune. The same surveys indicate 77 per cent of visitor nights in the area were in the huts, rather than camping, but that of visitor nights spent at either Lakes Vera or Tahune, 83 per cent were in the hut.

Analysis of walker registration data from the 2010-13 period indicates that:

- Fifty-six per cent of walkers (52 per cent of parties) were from Tasmania, 35 per cent of walkers (37 per cent of parties) were from interstate, and less than 7 per cent of walkers (9 per cent of parties) were from overseas. Interestingly, these proportions are virtually identical to those from a limited survey undertaken in 1994-95. They are also similar to those for visitors to the Walls of Jerusalem, another accessible backcountry Recreation Zone.

- Surveys undertaken by the track ranger during 2013-14 recorded a slightly higher overall proportion of overseas walkers (11 per cent) and mainland walkers (39 per cent) compared to Tasmanian walkers (50 per cent), but this may be a reflection of more seasonal (peak summer season) visitation by non-Tasmanian walkers.

- Average party size was 2.5 walkers, with average Tasmanian parties larger (2.7 walkers) and overseas parties smaller (less than 2.1).

- Ninety per cent of all parties comprised four walkers or fewer, and 75 per cent of all walkers travelled in parties of four or fewer. The most common group size was two walkers (45 per cent of all walkers are in groups of two). The maximum registered party size was 12.

- The average walk duration was 2.6 nights (ie 3 to 4 days).

- Almost 80 per cent of walkers went to Frenchmans Cap (as distinct from stopping somewhere short).

- Registration data suggests 4.5 per cent of walkers visited Irenabyss as a side trip, and a further 2.5 per cent intended to exit via Irenabyss to the Raglan Range. Four per cent of walkers indicated some other side trip (eg Daverns Cavern, Philps Pk, Clytemnaestra, rock climbing) was undertaken. Verbal surveys by the track ranger during 2013-14 confirm Irenabyss is the most popular side trip and indicate it was attempted by almost 10 per cent of walkers.

Visitation is quite seasonal. The peak month for visitation is usually January (22 per cent of total visitation during 2010-13), with almost 70 per cent of visitation generally occurring during the December to March period. However, in 2014, April was the peak visitation month for the 2013-14 season (Easter fell in April that year).

Commercial use
An aim of Recreation Zones, as described in the TWWHAMP, is to support commercial use. In particular, guiding companies provide the opportunity for walkers to visit zones, such as Frenchmans Cap, who otherwise may not have the confidence or experience to visit.
Twelve commercial guiding companies are licensed to use the Frenchmans Cap Track, although fewer than half actually advertise Frenchmans Cap as a potential trip. Party sizes of up to 13 are permitted, consistent with the track’s T2 prescriptive classification, although most groups are smaller than this. Guided walking companies currently operating at Frenchmans Cap run one to two trips per season, with customer demand for a guided experience relatively low to date.

The four companies undertaking guided Franklin River rafting trips are also licensed to guide clients on a side walk to Frenchmans Cap, using the track from Irenabyss to North Col. This occurs several times each summer and is weather dependent.

Commercial scenic flights operate over many parts of the TWWHA. There is no capacity under the National Parks and Reserves Management Act, the TWWHAMP or this plan to regulate the use of airspace over reserved land. Regulation of over flights is limited to the voluntary Fly Neighbourly Advice, which is generally adhered to by commercial operators who conduct operations in the TWWHA (DPIPWE 2016, p. 134).

For the purposes of the voluntary Fly Neighbourly Advice, an area encompassing the Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone is designated a ‘sensitive area’. With respect to the designated sensitive areas, this advice states:

- flights in and through Sensitive Areas should be kept to a minimum; and
- aircraft should be operated at an altitude and configuration that will minimise noise and visual impact for ground observers.

There have been no formal complaints from walkers during the last ten years, suggesting reasonable acceptance of aircraft use within existing limits.

Commercial aircraft landings in the Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone are subject to the following condition: except for the purpose of resupply of huts or standing camps, landings will not be permitted within 200 m of the Frenchmans Cap Track (DPIPWE 2016, p. 135).

Non-commercial groups
The Frenchmans Cap area receives limited use by school groups and individuals leading outdoor education programs. Observations by the seasonal track ranger suggest such use has declined in recent years, and this is supported by the relative lack of applications for educational exemptions from national park fees. However, improved track conditions and a new hut at Lake Tahune may generate increased interest from school groups.

Existing facilities
A range of facilities has been developed in the context of the PWS Reserve Standards Framework (RSF). The RSF is a strategic planning mechanism developed by the PWS to define and maintain acceptable levels of public risk and to establish standards for the provision and maintenance of services and facilities throughout the park system (refer to Appendix 2).

Walking tracks
The PWS Walking Track Classification System (PWS 2011, Appendix 3 of this plan) grades tracks on reserved land in accordance with a range of criteria to provide guidance to land managers on the appropriate level of development for walking tracks and campsites.

The Recreation Zone contains three walking tracks totalling 27.1 km, plus almost 10 km of recognised routes.
## Table 1 Track classification and total track length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PWS Track Class</th>
<th>Total track length in Recreation Zone (km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total tracks</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these routes continue into the neighbouring Wilderness Zone, notably the 12 km route north from Irenabyss to the Raglan Range. Track classifications range from T1 to Route (see table above and Appendix 3 for details).

The short walk to the Franklin River swing bridge is managed as a T1 track and is used by many passing car-borne tourists. The main track beyond here (Franklin River to Frenchmans Cap) is classified T2; this is a ‘wet boot’ standard walking track (example at left). The other major track is the T3 classified Irenabyss Track.

The Recreation Zone also contains more than five km of closed track, above Lake Tahune (0.15 km) and in the Loddon Plains–Philps Lead area (4.9 km), due to the construction of major re-routes in 1993 and 2010-13 respectively.

Many sections of the main access track have been planned and constructed at various times (see below) but other sections and most side routes have evolved from routes repeatedly used by walkers and hence are unplanned, with sections aligned for ease of access rather than long-term stability or robustness.

Extensive works were undertaken on the Frenchmans Cap Track between 1983 and 2005, latterly guided by the Walking Track Management Strategy for the TWWHA 1994 and therefore focused on the most environmentally sensitive or least resilient areas. During this period, more than $800,000 was spent on track works at Frenchmans Cap. Virtually all of the works considered the highest priority, principally priority erosion control and stabilisation of tracks in alpine and steep areas, were undertaken by the early 2000s.

As of September 2017, approximately 76 per cent (18 km) of the main track has been constructed, hardened or stabilised in some way; this includes stonework, boardwalk, planking, gravel surfacing or turn piking, and benching. The 5 km Irenabyss Track features over 600 m of stonework plus 1 km with stabilising steps and water bars.
These works largely controlled impacts in alpine areas and on Mt Mullens (although some areas now require supplementary works and maintenance). Rock (readily available above 1,100 m) was used for track works in many parts of the alpine area and produced an aesthetically pleasing and long-term solution to impact problems. For example, parts of the track along the ridge tops to the Irenabyss constructed from local rocks appear to have lasted well and are a good example of what is possible in areas where rock is available.

The late 1990s period included work on the traverse of the steep cross-slope around Lake Vera using local logs, rock slabs and tree buttresses. Despite the challenge of this section, it has received many walker compliments for its organic feel.

Despite these 20 years of intermittent works, as of 2005, some 5.3 km of mostly wide, braided, boggy and/or eroding track remained on the Loddon Plains and Philps Lead, but this has now been addressed, as a result of a philanthropic gesture.

Concerned about the condition of the Frenchmans Cap Track after a visit in early 2008, business person Dick Smith approached the Tasmanian Government to jointly fund repairs. An agreement was reached between Dick Smith, the PWS and Wildcare Inc, whereby Dick Smith, over a period of 10 years, would donate $100,000 annually to the Wildcare Gift Fund to support maintenance and upgrade of the track, and the State Government would continue to provide $50,000 annually to the project. Wildcare Inc manages the allocation of the donations received from Dick Smith.

A Track Management Plan was prepared in 2008 to guide this significant investment. One of its major recommendations was the construction of the re-route bypassing the southern Loddon Plains and Philps Lead (other re-routes had been proposed in 1977 and 1991 but not proceeded with). The track plan also contained prioritised recommendations for the upgrade and repair of the entire track.

Track work funded via the Wildcare Gift Fund began in 2009, with costed works programs being approved by the Gift Fund. Works undertaken include track hardening on the north Loddon Plains and east of the Loddon River suspension bridge, and construction of a new 4.5 km track up Laughtons Lead (the west-trending valley north of Philps Lead). With the opening of this re-route in March 2013, the extensive, seriously muddy and degraded ‘Sodden Loddons’ have been bypassed.

Further repair and upgrade works on the existing track remain to be tackled (as outlined in the 2008 Track Management Plan) during the remaining year of the Dick Smith funding agreement, which expires in 2019. However, even now, the Frenchmans Cap walk is a slightly easier and potentially more attractive undertaking than it has been for the last 80 years.
Elevated structures

Major elevated structures on the track comprise the 42 m Franklin River swing bridge (built in 1992) and the 40 m Loddon River suspension bridge (built in 1989). The former replaced a flying fox that was operational from 1949 to 1991. The latter replaced a log crossing in use from 1960 until 1988.

Three other significant bridges exist: near the Lyell Highway, at the east end of Laughtons Lead and at Vera Creek. Flights of stairs exist at Artichoke Valley and near Lake Tahune.

Several ladders or stepped logs exist around Lake Vera and below Barron Pass.

Visitor risk

Under the PWS RSF, the main Frenchmans Cap Track is considered a Bushcamping Backcountry (mid) setting (see Appendix 2), in which a 'substantial' level of visitor risk is acceptable. There are some sections of the track where there is an increased risk to visitors (eg an exposed step-down on a bluff approaching Artichoke Valley, a small cliff scramble on the summit track). Using the calculator in the PWS Risk Register (based on the National Safety Council of Australia’s Risk Score Calculator), these situations are acceptable in the above context.

The track and major built structures (eg bridges) are constructed to comply with different standards and assessments and are managed differently. It is not appropriate to assess visitor risk for these structures using the method outlined above. For this reason, different levels of barriers and other safety features may be required on major built structures that are not required near cliffs and other natural hazards associated with the walking track.

Minor built structures including ‘track features’ (eg ladders and steps cut into logs) do not necessarily fit into either of the above categories and may need to be assessed for visitor safety on a case-by-case basis.

Huts and shelters

Walker accommodation huts exist at Lakes Vera and Tahune. These public huts are open to all comers; there are currently no private huts on the track. Almost 80 per cent of visitor nights are spent in these huts (see page 14). The huts are understandably relatively more popular during periods of wet weather.

These overnight nodes also contain campsites and toilets (see page 19 & 20). Each site also has a designated helipad for management and emergency access.

Lake Vera hut is a 15 km walk from the Lyell Highway and is a typical first-night destination for walkers. This hut is the most popular overnight site in the area (see page 14). Most walkers spend additional nights here on their return walk or as a base for a Frenchmans Cap day walk attempt. Built in 1979, the hut was built to design standards of that time and consists of a timber structure with corrugated iron roof. It
accommodates 20 to 24 people on four sleeping benches. It is in good condition and is structurally sound.

Lake Tahune hut is an arduous additional 5.5 km from Lake Vera hut. The original hut was built in 1971 (and refurbished in 1994). In 2017, work started to replace this hut. The new hut and envelope is designed to cope with extreme snow loads and wet conditions. Non-combustible materials for external walls are used to withstand a possible bushfire. Construction materials were chosen for their longevity, low maintenance and low environmental impact. The expected life of the hut is over 100 years.

The increased floor area of the new hut is adequate to comfortably provide for 24 occupants. A generous amount of shelving and hanging space will assist with stowing of belongings. Eighteen people in total can be seated at tables, with extra cooking benches provided. The large northern windows in the dining area capture views and sun, contributing to the comfort of occupants. A high level of energy efficiency is achieved through significant levels of insulation to walls, roof and floor, and triple glazing and large windows to the north. A heat exchange ventilation system prevents condensation in the hut, while retaining an ambient air temperature.

Lake Vera hut is currently heated using a briquette-fuelled potbelly stove. Briquettes have recently become scarce and difficult to source; therefore, an alternative source of heating will need assessment. The Lake Vera stove is exempt from the Fuel Stove Only requirement declared over the remainder of the national park (see page 4).

The new Lake Tahune hut is passively heated, relying on internal gains (heat generated by cooking and occupants) and the sun. Additional electric heating is provided, powered by a small-scale hydro power plant.

Both huts also have associated drinking water tanks with roof collection.

The TWWHAMP, through the zoning of the walking track as a recreation zone, supports the continued use of these huts and identifies them as important infrastructure contributing to the experience of those visiting.

A three-sided treated pine shelter, containing bench seats and interpretive panels, is located in the car park adjacent to the Lyell Highway. It was built in 2008 and the structure remains in good condition. This shelter is associated with the gravel and bitumen-surfaced roadside car park, which contains marked spaces for 23 cars. Car park capacity has proven adequate at all times, but toileting and rubbish issues have been noted in the vicinity.

Campsites

Until recently there were no constructed or specifically designated campsites on the Frenchmans Cap Track; all sites used for camping were unimproved and evolved from walker use.
The major, and most impacted, camping sites exist near the two huts, and these sites comprise the major overnight nodes in the Frenchmans Cap area. Camping occurs twice as often at Lake Vera compared to Lake Tahune (based on track ranger surveys during 2013-14), although only a minority of walkers choose to camp (see page 14). Parties also camp elsewhere en route to or from the huts, and (based on the aforementioned surveys) more than a third of the camping nights spent in the Frenchmans Cap area are not at the hut nodes.

During the 2016-17 season, camp platforms were built at both Lakes Vera and Tahune to replace the informal campsites. Three single and two double platforms were built at Lake Vera, and a further two double platforms are to be built in 2017-18. At Lake Tahune, one double platform and three single platforms have been constructed downslope from the hut. The traditional informal campsites at both locations will be closed and rehabilitated. (Note that the helipad at Lake Vera is intended to be relocated away from the camping area.)

The Loddon River is the most popular campsite other than those near the huts. The large campsite (eight plus tents) on the west bank of the river at the suspension bridge is the major in-use campsite here, although it is slightly off the main track and not obvious to some walkers.

Other campsites along the track are relatively minor and generally seem little used. A number of such sites are now bypassed by the newly re-routed track and hence have become disused.

Toilets
A Clivus Multrum composting toilet exists at Lake Vera hut. This toilet is located 100 m south-east of the hut. It is a raised structure with an elevated treated pine access way to the colorbond and timber-clad building. An elevated deck provides access to the rear of the toilet for emptying and maintenance. Current maintenance is prolonging life, but overall the output is ‘poor’ (with respect to quality, ie not composting) and it is struggling to handle current user numbers. For these reasons, replacement of this toilet is planned to occur before 2020 subject to funding.

The Lake Tahune toilet will be replaced in 2017-18 with a complete capture ‘fly out’ system and the old Clivus Multrum system removed on completion of the new toilet.

Signs
The Frenchmans Cap area contains a mixture of signs from different eras, with different styles, and some outdated messages including entrance signs, directional and interpretive signs. In addition, some signs are in poor condition.

Track markers occur on some sections of the track (mostly in Philps Forest and Barron Pass to Artichoke Valley) and usually comprise a wooden post with a plastic triangle marker. However, these are not consistently located or adequate (assuming a need for the route to be apparent in snow, for example) in some areas.
Existing recreational impacts

Some environmental settings in the Frenchmans Cap area are notably more sensitive than others. Physical impact monitoring indicates that trampling thresholds have been exceeded in some areas. The alpine environment of western Tasmania is particularly sensitive to trampling impacts (e.g., Whinam & Chilcott 2003). Lowland buttongrass country is also sensitive to trampling impacts (e.g., extensive track widening and braiding with mud holes can develop) but is generally quite resilient. In contrast, wooded areas can be quite robust to trampling impacts.

Impacts on tracks

The wide boggy track on the ‘Sodden Loddon’ plains had become almost legendary by the 1990s, and a 1994-95 survey indicated 50 per cent of walkers were concerned about ‘track width’. Track works since the 1980s have progressively addressed problems on the Frenchmans Cap Track, and the Loddon Plains themselves have now finally been addressed.

As described previously (page 16 to 17), extensive sections of the Frenchmans Cap Track have been constructed, hardened or stabilised. Although there are several short sections remaining in poor or very poor condition (less than 500 m), it is expected these will further reduce by the conclusion of the Dick Smith program in 2019.

Noting Frenchmans Cap is the most popular rock climbing destination in the TWWHA (DPIPWE 2016, p. 143), monitoring of the area for environmental damage is required to identify and mitigate any issues that may arise. A field assessment (Sutherland & Steane 1997) concluded that problems associated with rock climbing at Frenchmans Cap were limited to the potential for access track erosion. Using this as a baseline, inspections have noted no significant escalation in impacts to the cliff access track.

Track development and localised erosion is occurring on routes to Frenchmans Cap’s south-east face and to Sharlands Peak–Daverns Cavern.

The direct route to North Col was closed in 1993 (and replaced by the existing switchback summit track). Works to stabilise, or re-stabilise, the closed track were undertaken in 1993, 1998 and 2005, mostly comprising wooden steps, cross-boards, jute matting and limited fertiliser use. Downslope scree movement is progressively warping and destroying this infrastructure. Revegetation is being continuously encouraged by the use of jute matting and small quantities of fertiliser. Revegetation to date has been limited in this active setting, but some is notable on the lower slopes where remnant soil remained in situ.

Impacts at campsites

While currently the impacts at most campsites are acceptable due to the sites being relatively robust in their environmental setting, this is not the case for all, and increased use may see deterioration at a number of sites.
Those sites of most concern are at Lake Tahune, which exist in a sensitive alpine setting close to the lake and within its catchment (see picture to left). Concerns about the impact of informal toileting on lake water quality, and soil loss due to sheet erosion at a campsite overlooking the lake, prompted the development of new tent platforms in the zone between the hut and the toilet (see site plan on page 33); informal campsites within the lake catchment will be closed.

The main campsites at Lake Vera are spatially confined by thick scrub. While their surface is mostly bare soil, site impacts here have changed little over more than 20 years.

The major campsite on the west bank of the Loddon River has expanded downstream during the last ten years but appears relatively robust at current use levels. Conversely, the old campsites on the east bank of the Loddon have shrunk or become disused during the last 5 - 10 years.

Campsites on the now-closed section of the main track (e.g. at Philips Creek) are clearly disused and being reclaimed by scrub or windfalls. However, for most of these sites, this is the continuation of a trend dating from the 1990s.

Off-track camping occurs in a few areas, but no impacts have been observed.

The main campsites at Lake Vera are remote from both the hut (150 m) and toilet (250 m). Some toileting issues have been observed near this campsite, and in scrub near the hut. Replacement of the toilet at this site offers an opportunity to consider an alternative location that may help reduce this issue. Toileting issues have also been noted near the Loddon River campsite.

**Other issues**

Rehabilitation of degraded campsites (and other degraded areas associated with infrastructure) at Lake Tahune will be problematic given its altitude. The re-routed section of track up from Lake Tahune has been closed since 1993 and had some active rehabilitation works on it, yet recovery is slow and there are still signs of active erosion. However, as noted above, revegetation is possible where some soil remains. This is an example of how challenging rehabilitation at this altitude and on such slopes can be, and the cost and potential success of rehabilitation works must be fully considered in any planned works.

Biosecurity issues are particularly important at Frenchmans Cap, for both management and visitors, as *Phytophthora* infestations are of limited extent and chytrid infections are not yet known from the area (see page 8).

The inappropriate use of helicopters in the Frenchmans Cap area, by management or other permitted users, has the potential to impact on the recreational experience of walkers.
Education and interpretation

The PWS website (www.parks.tas.gov.au) includes basic information about the Frenchmans Cap area, including access and reference to it being a Fuel Stove Only Area. Additional information about walking safely and minimal impact walking is also included on the website. The notes on the back of the current national park map and notes (Tasmap 2018) contain related information, together with descriptions of natural and cultural values.

Interpretive material published by the PWS in the past, and relevant to the Frenchmans Cap area, includes material associated with the Minimal Impact Bushwalking campaign during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the Frenchmans Cap Track Notes produced in the early 1990s to encourage minimal impact bushwalking practices. More recent PWS publications include Leave No Trace materials (posters, swing tags, brochures) and the general Before You Walk booklet, which includes Fuel Stove Only Area messages.

The shelter hut in the Lyell Highway car park, walker registration booth near the Franklin River bridge and Lake Vera hut all contain interpretive or educational material. The first of these is relatively new and current, whereas some information in the Lake Vera hut is either dated or inconsistent.

PWS developed an Interpretation Plan for Frenchmans Cap in 2015 that provides guidance for updating all aspects of interpretation relating to the experience, particularly those in the park.

In the late 1980s, the Minimal Impact Bushwalking campaign was used to promote the incoming Fuel Stove Only Area designation of the Frenchmans Cap area, and other parts of the TWWHA, as well as to provide advice on ways walkers could limit their environmental impact. The combination of a Fuel Stove Only sign, an active education campaign on the need to use fuel stoves, and a track ranger presence reinforcing the message was seen to be the most effective approach to reach walkers with environmental impact messages (O’Loughlin 1996). Campfires have not been a significant issue since these days.

An intermittent track ranger presence from 1988 to 1998, and again from 2010 onwards, has greatly assisted in spreading knowledge of Leave No Trace practices as well as being invaluable in undertaking some basic maintenance tasks.

The Frenchmans Cap area features in a number of commercial guidebooks (eg Chapman 2008, Wilkinson 2011). Information published in such guides is not always consistent with the latest desired management practice.

Walking areas such as Frenchmans Cap are mentioned in public websites, forums (eg www.bushwalk.com) and other internet sources from time to time. Again, such information is not always accurate or appropriate. Historical information on the mountain is found in Simon Kleinig’s 2012 book, Frenchmans Cap: Story of a Mountain.
Adjacent areas

A Wilderness Zone to the north of the Franklin River is traversed by a track/route from Irenabyss to the Raglan Range, essentially a continuation of the Irenabyss Track in the Self Reliant Recreation Zone (see map, page 5). This is managed as a low class (T4) track and Route, which includes advocating minimal publicity for this relatively un-impacted route. This level of management is considered appropriate into the future, though Chapman (2008) includes a detailed description of the route.
4. Future recreation management

Overall strategy

This section of the Recreation Zone Plan sets out more detailed strategies and actions for improving the visitor experience of the Frenchmans Cap area while protecting, conserving and presenting the area's natural and cultural heritage.

Priority conservation issues for the Recreation Zone are protection and maintenance of the sensitive natural values, notably the King Billy and Huon pine rainforest communities and alpine fjældmark communities. Other conservation values can be readily managed by the PWS' standard operating procedures.

Priority visitor management issues for the area comprise the provision of adequate and appropriate accommodation and toilet infrastructure at visitor nodes. Likely use changes associated with the repaired and upgraded track must also be considered. A targeted education program can manage other user-related issues.

The following sections detail the planned approaches for particular issues. Appendix 4 describes an implementation schedule for the various prescribed management actions.

Site-specific environmental and social issues associated with any infrastructure development, including that proposed in the following sections, must be assessed using the PWS Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA).

The significant jump in walker numbers since the opening of the Loddon bypass in 2013 (see page 13), with a continuing upward trend since, combined with the increasing popularity of bushwalking, indicates that walker numbers will exceed 2,000 in the next two years. Although no significant change is expected in the seasonality or composition of walker visits (party sizes, origin, etc), changes in site use may occur (for example, Lake Vera verses Tahune), but there is insufficient data to make definitive judgements at this time.

As walker numbers continue to increase, issues with hut overcrowding and increased site impacts may occur. To protect the visitor experience and the environment, PWS will focus on and implement social and environmental impact monitoring tools. In the interim (three-year) plan review, the data collected will inform evidence-based management actions. In the event that the carrying capacity of the track and its supporting infrastructure become exceeded, consideration may be given to introducing a moratorium on new commercial operator use of public facilities, staggered commercial visitation times and a seasonal booking system, in consultation with stakeholder groups, to regulate numbers. Social impact monitoring tools include the introduction of exit surveys starting in summer 2018-19 to assess the positive and negative aspects of the visitor experience. Environmental impact monitoring will include track and campsite condition assessment monitoring.

Some Tasmanian bushwalkers have expressed concern about the introduction of a booking system for the Frenchmans Cap Track because of potential displacement of Tasmanian bushwalkers. PWS acknowledges these concerns but recognises the importance of regulating numbers to protect social and environmental values.

If a booking system is considered, options for fees to accompany the system will be considered, ensuring affordability. Through consultation, key stakeholders, including Tasmanian bushwalking and climbing clubs, will consider the booking system and associated fees before they are introduced.
Desired outcomes

- High value natural assets are protected.
- A great result is achieved in delivering a quality experience for visitors.

Management strategies

- Ensure strategies and planning support the protection of high value natural assets.
- Collect trip data from existing commercial operators to accurately capture the current level of commercial use of the track and infrastructure.
- Conduct track monitoring and visitor research, including exit surveys from summer 2018-19, to identify, evidence and inform issues and decision-making.
- Monitor and evaluate key desired outcomes (outcomes 1, 2, 5 and 6 – see pages 41 - 43) and performance indicators to support evidence-based management.
- In the event that the carrying capacity of the track and its supporting infrastructure is exceeded, consider introducing a moratorium on new commercial operator use of public facilities, staggered commercial visitation times and a booking system, in consultation with stakeholders.
- Review the plan within three years and update any required management actions based on evidence collected through monitoring tools.

Walking tracks

The TWWHAM (DPIPWE 2016, p. 131) lists the following Management Actions for walking tracks:

- Ensure walking-track conditions are generally consistent with the limits and prescriptions outlined in the PWS Walking Track Classification System and the levels of service outlined in the RSF, and that they are also in accordance with the principles of the Walking Track Management Strategy for Tasmania’s National Parks and Reserves (2011-2020).
- Prioritise the delivery of track infrastructure through the methodology of the Walking Track Management Strategy.
- Develop and monitor key indicators that provide an overview of the condition of the track system in the TWWHA, and the recreation opportunities that are provided by the system, to allow for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Walking Track Management Strategy’s application in the TWWHA.
- Develop indicators and programs for the assessment and monitoring of visitor experiences, including visitor satisfaction, on priority walking tracks throughout the TWWHA.
- Develop Recreation Zone Plans for the South Coast, Frenchmans Cap and Overland Track.

The Frenchmans Cap Track is a reasonably challenging bushwalking track, mostly T2 class (see Appendix 3) and rough in places, with a number of sections where the combination of terrain and track works are an important part of the recreational character of the place. Furthermore, on a number of sections (e.g., Lake Vera sidle and the ascent to Barron Pass) it would be very difficult and costly to construct a higher-class (T1) track, with major re-routes and potential disturbance required.

The track is being improved over a 10-year period (2009 to 2019) due to a philanthropic gift from Dick Smith. As part of these improvements, consideration has been given to the most appropriate long-term track class for the track but, for the reasons summarised above, it is proposed to retain the track’s current T2 classification and to promote and manage accordingly. In this way, the Frenchmans Cap Track retains its position (between the Overland and South Coast tracks, for example) as part of the range of recreational walking experiences available in the TWWHA.
Apart from the Irenabyss Track, all side trips from the main track are low-use and considered ‘Routes’; it is similarly proposed to continue to manage these consistent with their classification. A core component of this is advocating minimal publicity.

The main track contains some significant built assets, including bridges and elevated structures, which require an ongoing and structured inspection and maintenance regime.

The Frenchmans Cap Track traverses a wide range of ecological settings, some of which are sensitive to trampling impacts, particularly the summit dome of Frenchmans Cap.

The **Great Bushwalk Scoping Study 2006** ultimately provided the basis for the Three Capes Track development, but also assessed the Frenchmans Cap as one of the options. It concluded that it was primarily a destination-style walk with outstanding scenery, was too similar to the Overland Track, exposed to cold and wet conditions, and considered a medium-hard walk for experienced walkers. However, it was noted that development of a loop option would enhance appeal by providing other points of interest.

Previous investigations into developing a loop track at Frenchmans Cap concluded the proposed extension was neither environmentally desirable nor economically feasible. Additionally, the Wilderness Zoning surrounding the Frenchmans Cap Track precludes the development of a loop track.

A walking route, used by less than 100 walkers annually at present, involves continuing from Lake Tahune to Irenabyss (T3 track) then crossing the Franklin River to traverse little-tracked country (T4 and Route) to the Raglan Range and Lyell Highway. This might be another option for consideration to develop as a through route; however, it would also require a significant upgrade of the existing Irenabyss Track, extensive construction of new track, plus consideration of how to deal with the Franklin River crossing. Furthermore, the country traversed is also not particularly scenic (compared to Frenchmans Cap) once the Franklin River is crossed. Therefore, an upgrade of this route for greater use is not considered warranted or economically feasible. In addition, the Wilderness Zoning north of the river currently precludes such a track.

**Desired outcomes**

- Condition of all walking tracks and routes is stable, with condition and use consistent with relevant track class prescriptions.
- No unplanned expansion of the walking track network occurs.

**Management strategies**

- Continue to repair/upgrade the main track, generally to T2 standard, guided by the 2008 Track Management Plan, any subsequent works plans and this plan.
- Similarly, consider additional stabilisation of the T3-class Irenabyss Track in this context.
- Continue to manage visitor risk using the PWS RSF (see Appendix 2) and any relevant standards.
- Manage the maintenance and future replacement of bridges and other elevated structures as part of the PWS engineering program and consistent with relevant policies.
- Encourage a minimalist approach for any publicity of low-class side routes (Routes).
- Do not undertake further consideration of the loop track option.
- Maintain rehabilitation works on the closed tracks section below North Col.
• When constructing track infrastructure, give preference to non-timber solutions, both for overall aesthetic considerations and to minimise the need for any post-wildfire replacement or repair works.

**Lake Vera overnight node**

The Lake Vera overnight node is located in buttongrass and scrub vegetation on the east bank of Vera Creek immediately downstream of Lake Vera, 555 m above sea level. It contains overnight accommodation and management infrastructure (public accommodation hut, campsites, toilet, helipad, coal bunker, drinking water tank, etc) and partly-hardened tracks link these site components. It is the major overnight node in the Recreation Zone, and likely to continue to be so.

A number of issues with the historic layout of the various site components at Lake Vera are progressively being rectified (see proposed site plan page 30). In 2016-17, a new helipad site was proposed away from seven new tent platforms.

The traditional informal campsite west of Vera Creek will be actively monitored and visitors encouraged to use the tent platform provided near the hut. If unacceptable deterioration of the campsite occurs, PWS will take management action. A proposed site for any future replacement toilet system is located closer to the hut and tent platforms to alleviate the current toileting issues at the Lake Vera precinct.

The installation of group platforms at Lake Vera may be considered if management of commercial guided trips is necessary.

The condition and capacity of the existing hut is adequate for current and near-future needs, although possible expansion could be considered if required. Nevertheless, some tweaks are desirable – the drinking water tank would be more accessible if relocated nearer the door, and the appearance of vegetation clearing around the hut could be improved.

In addition to its location, there are also issues with the existing toilet system and its operation. This is considered in a separate section of this plan (see page 34).

The issues noted above, and future infrastructure needs (replacements), provide an opportunity for site (re)design, and it is appropriate to consider these as part of this plan. The preparation of an all-of-site PWS RAA may be the best way to progress site planning.

**Desired outcomes**

• Hut, toilet and other visitor infrastructure is appropriately located and designed with respect to the environmental setting, capacity, usability and long-term maintenance.

• Condition of all campsites is stable and, if closed or disused, there are signs of revegetation on any bare soil areas.

• Visual amenity of the overnight node is maintained and visual impact from any new infrastructure is minimised.

**Management strategies**

• Finalise the site design for the Lake Vera precinct (see proposal, page 30), including location of new toilet in appropriate proximity (to service walkers from both hut and campsites), and hardened linking tracks.

• Install replacement toilet with full capture system (see page 34).

• Construct or upgrade surfaced tracks linking the various site components.
• Monitor hut use and consider the future need for an expansion of the structure. If expansion is required, PWS will consider the following:
  ▪ a second room on the north end, which is likely most practical;
  ▪ a new north-facing wing, which would likely require a re-think of the internal layout of the hut, perhaps locating cooking/living areas in the new northern wing;
  ▪ the potential for separate staff accommodation;
  ▪ maximising solar gain and insulation to a high standard;
  ▪ mildew management;
  ▪ the need for a second water tank; and
  ▪ the fuel type required for any heater, including consideration of fire risk, fuel availability and servicing requirements.

• In the shorter term, consider relocating the drinking water tank to be nearer the hut door, and consider building a larger deck or verandah.

• Undertake sensitive strategic vegetation clearance around the hut to facilitate rapid control of any fire originating from the hut precinct.
Map 2 Lake Vera node proposed site plan
Lake Tahune overnight node

The Lake Tahune overnight node is located in alpine rainforest on the lip of a steep-sided glacial basin, 965 m above sea level. It contains overnight accommodation and management infrastructure (public accommodation hut, campsites, toilet, helipad, drinking water tank etc). While four to five metre-high myrtle regrowth closely surrounds the hut, the effects of the devastating 1966 wildfire are still apparent nearby.

Lake Tahune, with its limited level terrain and alpine environment, is the limiting site in the Frenchmans Cap area regarding visitor capacity. Camping options are particularly limited, and the setting is sensitive to impacts. The site’s physical size and environmental sensitivity (including site visibility from the summit track and rehabilitation issues) are significant issues.

PWS replaced the hut during the 2017-18 season. The final design (photo to the left and Appendix 5) is suited to the harsh alpine conditions and offers high levels of thermal efficiency with innovative approaches to heating. Materials were chosen for longevity, low maintenance and aesthetics, with the structure expected to have a life of 100 years.

The most recent visitor characteristic data captured in 2013 noted that the Lake Tahune hut was used for less than half the number of annual visitor nights compared with the Lake Vera hut (see page 14), but this reflection of walker itineraries may have changed with the re-routed track at Loddon Plains and the new hut at Lake Tahune. The new hut has been designed with a larger capacity (24 persons), noting that some users (eg rock climbers) use the hut for multiple nights. The design of the new hut makes efficient use of space on a constrained site and is about 30 per cent larger than the former hut.

Regularly used campsites exist in two localities – overlooking the lake, some 30 m from the hut; and near the helipad, below the hut. Total use of these sites is not high, but slow deterioration has been noted at the lake-view site. Use of the campsite adjacent to the helipad has caused problems with helicopter access. In 2017, tent platforms were installed between the helipad and the hut. The new site design plan is provided on page 33. Key features of the site plan include:

- a new hut on the existing site;
- a minor re-routing of the main walking track, avoiding the new hut;
- three new tent platforms in a zone on the northern aspect below the hut; and
- a new toilet in a more suitable location adjacent to the helipad.
**Desired outcomes**

- Hut, toilet and other visitor infrastructure is appropriately located and designed with respect to the environmental setting, capacity, usability and long-term maintenance.
- Environmental impact from camping is minimal, with revegetation of closed campsite areas.
- Visual amenity of the overnight node is maintained, and the visual impact from any new infrastructure, particularly as viewed from the track to the summit, is minimised.

**Management strategies**

- Close existing unimproved campsites in close proximity to the lake and within its catchment.
- Construct or upgrade surfaced tracks linking the various site components.
- Rationalise lake access tracks.
Map 2 Lake Tahune node site plan
Toilets
While current maintenance is prolonging the life of the old Clivus Multrum toilet at Lake Vera, its performance is ‘poor’ (with respect to output quality) and struggling to handle current user numbers. Replacement of this toilet is planned to occur before 2020, subject to funding.

Concern has been raised about increasing toileting issues at the start of the track near the Lyell Highway, and consideration of an additional toilet to service walkers at this point is required.

Desired outcome
• Toilet design and capacity are appropriate for the environmental setting, and the system is easy to maintain.

Management strategies
• Replace the toilet at Lake Vera with a full capture system by 2020, subject to funding.
• Install new toilets that are Tasmanian-accredited or approved through Tasmanian Plumbing Code requirements (for non-accredited systems).
• Consider the attributes of specific locations during design, eg slope, proximity to visitor accommodation infrastructure, access for maintenance, scope for future expansion of systems etc.
• Ensure the building design includes space for storage of toilet maintenance equipment.
• Locate toilets as per site design for Lake Vera.
• Monitor toileting issues at the start of the walking track near the Lyell Highway, and if necessary and supported by monitoring data and walker feedback (collected through the exit survey), install a toilet.

Other camping
There are currently no unacceptable impacts at any campsite, and most sites are relatively robust due to their environmental setting.

The major campsites are located at the hut nodes and are addressed in those sections of this plan (see page 30 and 33). There are several other campsites along the track, with the largest and most popular site at the Loddon River crossing (see page 20). Most other sites are little used or now disused (eg the former Philips Creek campsites now bypassed by the re-routed track).

Desired outcome
• Condition of all campsites is stable and, if closed or disused, there are signs of revegetation on any bare soil areas.

Management strategies
• Promote the existing large and robust campsite on the west bank of the Loddon River, downstream of the suspension bridge, as the preferred intermediate (between highway and Lake Vera) campsite. Monitor impacts at this unimproved site.
• Assess and manage any dangerous trees at the above campsite.
• Manage access to campsites through signage and other education material.
• Monitor any development of new informal campsites on the re-routed Laughtons Lead section of the main track as a guide to future campsite demand.
Biosecurity

A range of biosecurity issues affect (or may affect) the plan area, and various recommended field hygiene techniques have been documented (Allan & Gartenstein 2010).

A generic approach to dealing with biosecurity issues across the TWWHA, involving the installation of boot cleaning stations with a liquid disinfectant applicator at many trail-heads, has been implemented (TWWHA Biosecurity Program 2010-15). One of these has been installed near the start of the Frenchmans Cap Track. The long-established wash-down station with scrubbing brushes, near the base of Mt Mullens, will remain as a backup.

Biosecurity protocols are part of the PWS Environmental Management System and apply to DPIPWE employees, researchers, commercial operators and the public equally.

**Desired outcomes**

- No new pests, weeds or pathogens are introduced to the Recreation Zone.
- The spread of pests, weeds and pathogens that are present in the Recreation Zone is managed.

**Management strategies**

- Promote the use of the boot cleaning station and good biosecurity risk management practices via education program materials.
- Maintain and monitor the use of the above installation.
- Carefully inspect wash-down areas when installing, removing or relocating any wash-down stations.
- Ensure appropriate hygiene procedures are in place for any helicopter access to the area.
- Promote and implement biosecurity protocols.
- Ensure the section of the old track traversing the southern Loddon Plains and now bypassed by the 2013 re-route is effectively closed and not used.
- Monitor for new pests, weeds and pathogens, and assess and respond to incursions.
- Monitor the walking track for infestation by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* spreading from the closed section of track.
- Apply guidelines for minimising myrtle wilt where any track works may be undertaken in rainforest areas (eg avoid cutting roots or wounding myrtle trees).
**Fires**

The aims of fire management for the Recreation Zone are to protect walkers from wildfires and exclude fire from high value natural assets. A major tool is strategic (ecological and asset protection) burning as required.

The Recreation Zone area includes both fire-sensitive and fire-adapted vegetation types (see page 7 and 12), the former considered high value natural assets. The area also includes extensive areas of fire-sensitive organosols (see page 10). This is reflected in the fire risk analysis, which indicates a low to high risk for the different parts of the area (PWS 2012).

Fire potentially affecting the Frenchmans Cap area may result from external factors, which are beyond the scope of this plan; however, unauthorised campfires are a potential ignition source.

**Desired outcomes**

- No campfires are lit.
- Fire is excluded from areas with high value natural assets, particularly the historic fire refuge in the Lake Vera–Artichoke Valley area.

**Management strategies**

- Promote the Fuel Stove Only Area regulation in the Frenchmans Cap area as per the TWWHAMP, and install signage at campsites and huts promoting and describing this.
- Prepare and maintain an Emergency Response Plan for the Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone.
- Undertake strategic burning as appropriate.

**Commercial visitor services operators**

A number of commercial walking trips to Frenchmans Cap operate each season (see page 14). The TWWHAMP allows for and encourages this activity in Recreation Zones including provision for sensitive and high-quality commercial infrastructure.

To stimulate private investment in tourism on reserved land, a Tourism Expression of Interest (EOI) policy was developed in 2015 by the Tasmanian Government. The EOI is an administrative process, within the existing legislative framework, for assessment and approval of development proposals.

Any commercial development proposal in the recreation zone will be assessed on merit, through the relevant assessment and approvals processes, to determine if a specific proposal is compatible with the vision and management objectives set out in the TWWHAMP, relevant legislation and Codes of Practice.

RAAs are the PWS assessment process for activities on reserved land. For development proposals in the TWWHA, potential impacts on values that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Values of the TWWHA will be a key consideration (DPIPWE 2016, p. 81 and 82). In recognition of the particular circumstances and management obligations in the TWWHA, an additional set of assessment criteria is prescribed and applies to any assessment in the TWWHA undertaken through the RAA process or future equivalent (refer to TWWHAMP (DPIPWE 2016, p. 82) for the specific criteria).

Any new commercial proposals are expected to support themselves (that is, new commercial operations will not rely on public infrastructure nodes). They will be subject to the RAA assessment
process and would only proceed if they received all the necessary Tasmanian and Australian Government approvals.

Some commercial walking tours are available on the Frenchmans Cap Track. While customer demand is currently low, if commercial trips increase to a point where the independent visitor experience is unreasonably affected (evidenced by exit surveys), consideration will be given to a moratorium on new commercial operator use of public facilities and staggered commercial visitation times to regulate commercial trips.

**Management strategies**

- Continue to permit licensed commercial walking tours, consistent with the group size and other prescriptions of the relevant track classification.

- If numbers of commercial trips using public facilities increase and the independent visitor experience is affected (as evidenced by exit surveys), consideration will be given to a moratorium on new commercial operator use of public facilities and staggered commercial visitation times to regulate commercial trips.

**Groups**

The T2 classification of the main track provides for group sizes of up to 13 (see Appendix 3), although groups anywhere near this number are very rare. In a setting such as Frenchmans Cap, with shared huts and smaller campsites, small parties are both more appropriate and user-friendly.

**Desired outcome**

- No crowding or social issues related to large parties.

**Management strategies**

- Promote the advantages and benefits of smaller parties, particularly related to the use of huts and available campsites.

**Education and interpretation**

Educational and interpretive materials should be reviewed in line with planned changes at Frenchmans Cap.

Education and interpretation is an essential tool for influencing visitor behaviour and effectively implementing many of the management strategies described in the previous sections. Some of this is necessarily site-specific, and some is broader and relevant to other sites managed by the PWS. An onsite education and enforcement presence is an essential component of any user education program. Leave No Trace is the underlying philosophy for any education program, supplemented by messages about site-specific issues and values.

The TWWHAMP provides for the installation of signage in Recreation Zones. Any walking track signage should be consistent with the relevant prescriptions of the PWS Track Classification System (Appendix 3).

Educational messages important in the Frenchmans Cap area include:

- Actively promote the Leave No Trace ethos to visitors, especially in relation to not lighting campfires and using only fuel stoves.

- Identify and promote preferred campsites.

- Explain how to use tent platforms (eg pitching tents on platforms).

- Use provided toilets if possible, and appropriate toileting behaviour if not.
• Explain the trampling sensitivity and significance of alpine vegetation, in particular at the summit dome of Frenchmans Cap.
• Stay on defined or hardened tracks, particularly important on the Frenchmans Cap summit area.
• Advise about off-track walking (eg fan-out, small parties).
• Provide rationale for small party sizes.
• Give advice regarding biosecurity.
• Report management issues noted by walkers.

**Desired outcomes**

• There is understanding of the cultural and natural values of the area among users.
• There is broad user understanding of and compliance with Leave No Trace messages.
• No unacceptable user behaviour or impacts occur (eg poor toileting practices, use of campfires, rubbish on track and at huts).

**Management strategies**

• Promote the use of tent platforms.
• Employ track rangers during peak visitation periods.
• Undertake survey(s) of visitor knowledge and attitudes about various issues. These may be either onsite or online.

The following will form components of this plan:

• Provide updated information, improved navigation and more accessible language through the redeveloped PWS website to better inform the public on these issues.
• Use and monitor Facebook, Twitter and appropriate web forums to promote and disseminate messages.
• Install appropriate interpretation, educational and directional signage at relevant locations, as agreed in the Interpretation Plan and consistent with the TWWHAM.
• Locate appropriate explanatory or interpretive material in huts, toilets, registration booths and other infrastructure where possible, as appropriate.
• Incorporate information regarding the changed management of the area in future editions of Tasmapi’s Frenchmans Cap Map and Notes and topographic maps.
• Compile additions or changes to published third-party guidebooks for the Frenchmans Cap area and provide them to authors.
• Incorporate education about biosecurity (ie making sure that all gear and clothing are free of mud, seeds and insects before leaving home, and use of wash-down stations, water bottles and tank use) in the above where appropriate.
• Use relevant visitor information centres (eg Lake St Clair) to promote the Frenchmans Cap area and appropriate educational messages.
Other issues and strategies

The Recreation Zone boundary in the 1999 TWWHA Management Plan included a large swathe of country extending north to the Franklin River, intended to provide for the potential development of a loop track. As this is no longer considered desirable, the TWWHAMP defines a reduced Recreation Zone at Frenchmans Cap, essentially a 400 m corridor along the track (similar to other track-based zones in the TWWHA, eg Overland and South Coast tracks). The TWWHAMP also provides for a new Self-reliant Recreation Zone buffering the Irenabyss Track and connection with the Franklin River corridor.

Frenchmans Cap is one of the major remote rock-climbing areas in the TWWHA, and the most popular (DPIPWE 2016, p. 143). The area will be maintained as a traditional free climbing area (ie no bolted sport climbs), as provided for in the TWWHAMP.

In recent years, an increasing number of stone cairns/shelters have been observed on the summit of Frenchmans Cap. Consideration will be given to simple messages at the Lake Tahune hut node and in educational material that discourage this practice.

Helipads exist at Lakes Tahune and Vera. These helipads shall continue to be used for management and rescue activities. Landings will occasionally be necessary elsewhere for these activities. Commercial helicopter use will be regulated through authorities granted by the Minister and prepared in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Policy and TWWHAMP.

Lake Tahune from above | PWS | Chris Crerar
5. Monitoring and evaluation

PWS is committed to a system of adaptive management (PWS 2013). Preparing a plan is just one step in this cyclic process of good reserve management. The system is intended to be simple, flexible and focused on achieving results. This recreation zone plan aims to direct improvements in how the reserve is managed, used and enjoyed.

A key ingredient to this management is monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the plan. Monitoring and evaluation are related, but different, activities. Monitoring is:

- the process of repeated observation, for specified purposes, of one or more elements of the environment, according to prearranged schedules in space and time and using comparable data collection methods. [Evaluation is] the judgment or assessment of achievement against some predetermined criteria (Hockings et al 2006).

Monitoring provides the information that is evaluated and allows managers to assess change in the selected parameters over time. Monitoring includes examination of the activities and processes of management, as well as examining the physical and social attributes of the designated area.

Monitoring and evaluation, together, can provide a better understanding of how effectively management is working and whether the declared objectives for managing the park are being achieved. It allows for a review of management actions and subsequent alterations.

This circular process is known as Adaptive Management and allows `information from past management activities to be fed back into and improve the way management is conducted in future`.

---

The adaptive management cycle

- Determine management objectives
- Define key desired outcomes
- Identify performance indicators
- Develop management strategies and actions
- Establish monitoring programs for selected performance indicators
- Implement strategies and actions to achieve objectives
- Evaluate management effectiveness
- Adjust management actions and arrangements to enhance effectiveness
- Periodically review overall management program
- Report findings and recommendations of evaluation

Source: DPIWWE 2016 after Jones 2005, 2009
The stating of clear measurable performance indicators against a range of important Key Desired Outcomes (KDOs) is a critical step in this process. It also provides the community and partners in implementation with an easy method of holding PWS to account.

Management activities are targeted at achieving desired outcomes using available resources.

**Strategies and actions**

- Establish KDOs (see below), monitor appropriate environmental or social indicators, and take adaptive management steps to achieve the outcomes desired.
- Monitor private and commercial use of the park using logbook, counter and commercial operator returns to work out user characteristics and numbers.
- Undertake user surveys as appropriate to determine acceptability and effectiveness of management.

**Key Desired Outcomes and Indicators**

Six KDOs have been derived from the desired outcomes listed in the previous chapter. They will be monitored for effectiveness over the life of this plan. The choice of these KDOs has taken account of the most important issues, as well as available resources for monitoring. The KDOs and the aimed-for results are detailed below.

**Table 2 Outcome 1 – Condition of all tracks and routes is stable and consistent with the relevant classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Condition of tracks in the Recreation Zone.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring action</td>
<td>Periodically undertake inspection of all tracks using spatial survey or distance-sampling techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>Track network stable, well maintained and consistent with planning goals, with conditions everywhere within prescriptions of the relevant track classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>Track network stable and track conditions generally within prescriptions of the relevant track classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Continued deterioration of parts of the existing track network OR formation of unplanned tracks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3 Outcome 2 – Condition of all campsites is robust and stable and, if disused or closed, there are signs of revegetation of any bare soil areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Number and condition of campsites.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring action</td>
<td>Continue existing campsite monitoring program to identify, map, photograph and report on campsites throughout the Recreation Zone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>Condition of all in-use campsites (whether unimproved or hardened) stable, with areas of bare/disturbed ground decreasing in size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>Condition of all in-use campsites (whether unimproved or hardened) stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Expansion or increasing impacts at existing campsites OR development of new unplanned campsites in the Recreation Zone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 Outcome 3 – Fire-sensitive vegetation remains free of fires associated with visitor use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Evidence of campfires.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring action</td>
<td>Campsite monitoring program (see above). Surveys of visitor knowledge and attitudes (re Leave No Trace principles etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>No unauthorised fire use AND wide knowledge and practice of Leave No Trace principles by visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>No unauthorised fire use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Repeated or escalating evidence of unauthorised fire use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Outcome 4 – No new pests or diseases are introduced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Presence of Phytophthora on plains near Lake Vera. Presence of chytrid fungus in the area's frog populations. Weed occurrences in the area.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring actions</td>
<td>Periodic surveys to check status of Phytophthora, Chytrid, weeds, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>No evidence of chytrid in the area, no further evidence of Phytophthora, and no further introductions of weeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>No incursions or new introductions of pests or diseases that cannot be eradicated or managed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Introductions or incursions of Phytophthora or chytrid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Outcome 5 – Hut and toilet infrastructure meets visitor demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Frequency of hut crowding. Frequency of toilet maintenance and emptying.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring actions</td>
<td>Periodic infrastructure inspections. Surveys of hut occupancy and visitor attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>No overcrowding of huts. Toilets require significant maintenance/emptying only once/year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>Huts overcrowded only occasionally during peak holiday periods. Toilets require significant maintenance/emptying only once/year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Frequent occasions of hut overcrowding. Frequent or excessive toilet maintenance required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 Outcome 6 – All visitors are satisfied with the social experience of their visit to Frenchmans Cap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Visitor attitudes towards their social experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring action</td>
<td>Surveys (including exit surveys) of visitor experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great result</td>
<td>All visitors happy with the social experience of their visit, whether part of large or small groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable result</td>
<td>Huts overcrowded only occasionally during peak holiday periods with limited impacts on the visitor experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable result</td>
<td>Crowding or conflict issues at any hut or campsite.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review

This Recreation Zone plan is to have an interim evaluation after three years. This evaluation will check progress against the KDOs above by collating relevant data, reviewing progress and making recommendations as appropriate for any adjustments in management.

The Recreation Zone plan is intended to apply for a 10-year period, at the end of which there will be a thorough review and evaluation of its effectiveness and the currency of its vision and objectives.
6. Information sources & glossary


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**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camping areas</td>
<td>Cluster of campsites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campsites</td>
<td>Discretely defined or bounded site for a small number of tents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIPWE</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (from 1 July 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPIWE</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (until 30 June 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDOs</td>
<td>Key Desired Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNT</td>
<td>Leave No Trace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWS</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAA</td>
<td>Reserve Activity Assessment, a systematic way of assessing the environmental, social and economic impacts of an activity on land managed by the PWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSF</td>
<td>Reserve Standards Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWWHA</td>
<td>Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWWHAMP</td>
<td><em>Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 2016</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices

Appendix 1: Management Context

Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan 2016

The management framework for the Frenchmans Cap area is set out in the TWWHAMP, in accordance with the National Parks and Reserves Management Act. The plan specifies the management directions and objectives of the area and lists management prescriptions concerning a range of issues including the management of walking tracks and walkers.

As the TWWHAMP is a statutory document, PWS is bound to manage the area in accordance with its directives.

Overarching Vision and Management Objectives

See pages 3 and 4 of this plan.

Management Zoning

The TWWHAMP specifies a system of zoning that defines the levels of development and management input that apply in different parts of the TWWHA. This plan encompasses a Recreation Zone, with the Franklin River corridor to the north lying within a Self-reliant Recreation Zone, and other surrounding country comprising a Wilderness Zone (see Map 1, page 5).

Recreation Zone

The Recreation Zone aims to (see TWWHAMP at DPIPWE 2016 p. 62):

- provide a range of recreational experiences for suitably equipped and prepared people in moderately challenging and largely natural settings;
- enable relatively high levels of active day and overnight recreation without significant impact on natural or cultural values;
- provide a location for site-appropriate management infrastructure, such as bushwalker huts, sensitive and high quality commercial infrastructure, and infrastructure that is managed by others and used by the general public; and
- allow for a variety of access opportunities including the use and maintenance of roads, vehicular tracks and associated infrastructure.

Key Desired Outcomes (KDOs)

- The TWWHAMP identifies a number of KDOs that this Recreation Zone Plan contributes to, including those listed in the table below.

Table 8 TWWHAMP KDO 6.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare Recreation Zone Plans as required</td>
<td>Required plans produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 TWWHAMP KDO 6.4

6.4 A range of recreational walking experiences is provided and maintained in the TWWHA through the provision of appropriate levels of corresponding track infrastructure and management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure walking-track conditions are consistent with the limits and prescriptions outlined in the PWS Walking Track Classification System and the levels of service outlined in the RSF, and that they are also in accordance with the principles of the Walking Track Management Strategy.</td>
<td>Evaluate monitoring results against standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritise the delivery of track infrastructure through the methodology of the Walking Track Management Strategy.</td>
<td>Track infrastructure resourcing reflects the work priorities identified through the methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and monitor key indicators that provide an overview of the condition of the track system in the TWWHA, and the recreation opportunities that are provided by the system, to allow for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Walking Track Management Strategy’s application in the TWWHA.</td>
<td>Indicators developed and monitoring applied on priority tracks. Evaluation undertaken at five year intervals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop indicators and programs for the assessment and monitoring of visitor experiences, including visitor satisfaction, on priority walking tracks throughout the TWWHA.</td>
<td>Monitoring in selected locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Recreation Zone Plans for the South Coast Track, the Frenchmans Cap and the Overland Track.</td>
<td>Plans completed within three years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 TWWHAMP KDO 6.8

6.8 There is sustainable management of walking tracks and recreational walking throughout the TWWHA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to implement and develop a program to monitor walking tracks, campsites and their users.</td>
<td>Monitoring effort across priority areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review usage data collection and effort. Ensure that the data collection effort is strategic and value-adds to track and campsite monitoring in the TWWHA.</td>
<td>Extent to which usage data improves track and campsite monitoring as a management tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As funding allows, provide for track rangers during the peak walking season (November to Easter), focusing on the Eastern and Western Arthurs, Frenchmans Cap, South Coast Track, Anne Range, Central Plateau and Walls of Jerusalem, in addition to their periodic presence in other areas such as the Denison Ranges. Continue to provide track rangers on the Overland Track.</td>
<td>Review effectiveness against key management issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct an effective, ongoing ‘Leave No Trace’ walker education program.</td>
<td>Application, effectiveness and awareness of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to support and offer volunteer participation in visitor services and walker education through volunteer hut wardens, campground hosts and on-track education programs.</td>
<td>Level of participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 11 TWWHAMP KDO 6.12**

6.12 Visitors are educated and encouraged to adopt safe practices, and they are provided with sufficient and appropriate information about potential hazards to enable them to make responsible decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide information, interpretation and educational material that raises visitor awareness of individual responsibility for personal safety, with the focus on ensuring that visitors understand potential hazards and are sufficiently well prepared.</td>
<td>Evaluate through visitor research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an appropriate information management system and related procedures to systematically monitor public health and safety incidents in the TWWHA, to enable routine reporting of public safety performance and to enhance PWS’s ability to identify and respond to emerging public health and safety issues.</td>
<td>Effectiveness of the information management system in improving safety and health outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematically monitor and evaluate the incidence and cause of all deaths, serious injuries and lost persons in the TWWHA.</td>
<td>Monitoring report is used to develop new information that minimises and prevents accidents and injuries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 12 TWWHAMP KDO 6.13**

6.13 The delivery of interpretation and information for the TWWHA is integrated with presentation strategies and supports management objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the Tourism Master Plan is completed, update the <em>Interpretation Framework 2007</em> to produce a strategic TWWHA interpretation plan.</td>
<td>Within two years of the completion of the Tourism Master Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop behaviour guidelines for walkers and other users of the TWWHA about biodiversity threats and minimisation including ‘Leave No Trace’.</td>
<td>Visitor awareness of guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the provision of written information and interpretation skills training for commercial tourism operators.</td>
<td>Level of uptake by commercial tourism operators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a communication strategy for the TWWHA.</td>
<td>Within two years of the completion of the Tourism Master Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: The Reserve Standards Framework

The RSF is a strategic planning mechanism developed by the PWS to define and maintain acceptable levels of public risk and to establish standards for the provision and maintenance of services and facilities throughout the park system (PWS 2014). The RSF recognises that there is an unavoidable element of risk in all forms of outdoor recreation, and aims to manage risk primarily by matching visitors’ skills and abilities with the level of risk involved in a particular activity and location.

In the Frenchmans Cap area, the RSF is defined by a system of zoning that augments the overarching zoning scheme in the TWWHAMP. The main difference is that whereas the plan zones cover wide areas, the RSF zones apply only to developed sites (such as walking tracks, huts and campsites) and their immediate surroundings. In the case of walking tracks, the RSF zone extends just 10 m to either side of the centre of the track.

The hazard rating defines the level of hazard that visitors should expect if a site is managed as prescribed. Note that the rating can vary from one site to another within a particular RSF category, but only within a defined range (eg Neutral to Moderate).

The RSF scheme applies only to areas where some form of visitor infrastructure exists. Other areas are classified ‘Not managed for visitor services’, implying that no services are provided and that visitors are expected (and must expect) to take full responsibility for their own safety. Four distinct RSF categories apply to walking tracks and related sites in the Frenchmans Cap Recreation Zone, as listed in the table below. The major policy guidelines associated with these categories and relevant to walking tracks and associated infrastructure are summarised in the following tables.

The classifications of tracks in the relevant sites below are also listed (see Appendix 3 for an explanation of the PWS track classification scheme). Where the site comprises a camping area, the class of the relevant access track is listed to provide additional context.

Table 13 Service levels and track classes for the Frenchmans Cap area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>RSF category</th>
<th>Track Class</th>
<th>Acceptable risk level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyell Highway to Franklin River track</td>
<td>Day-use Comfort (mid)</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frenchmans Cap Track (Franklin River to Frenchmans Cap)</td>
<td>Bush camping Backcountry (mid)</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Vera overnight node</td>
<td>Bush camping Backcountry (complex)</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Tahune overnight node</td>
<td>Bush camping Backcountry (complex)</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenabyss Track (from North Col)</td>
<td>Bush camping Backcountry (basic)</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other routes (eg Daverns Cavern, Philips Peak, Sharlands Peak, Clytemnastra) &amp; other remaining areas in the Recreation Zone</td>
<td>Not Managed for Visitor Services</td>
<td>R (route)</td>
<td>Severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Track Classification Scheme

The following table lists specifications for the various elements of the PWS track classification scheme. The PWS uses the scheme as a tool to plan, provide and maintain walking tracks across lands it manages (Parks and Wildlife Service 2013). The scheme is prescriptive, ie it specifies track standards as guidelines for management.

Table 14 Track Classification Scheme elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>Route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>750m return / 1.5k loop.</td>
<td>1.5k return / 3k loop.</td>
<td>No limit.</td>
<td>No limit.</td>
<td>No limit.</td>
<td>No limit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Width</strong></td>
<td>1.2 - 2.5 m, preferably 1.5 - 2.0 m.</td>
<td>0.6 - 2.5 m, preferably 1 - 2 m over most of track.</td>
<td>&gt;500 mm, generally &gt;750 mm. &lt;1.2 m. Width variable.</td>
<td>&gt;500 mm but short sections &lt; 500 mm acceptable. Max 1 m.</td>
<td>&lt;750 mm.</td>
<td>&lt;500 mm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surface and drainage</strong></td>
<td>'Shoe' standard. Firm, even, well drained. Edges clearly defined.</td>
<td>Well drained, 'shoe' standard. Reasonably firm.</td>
<td>'Boot' standard. May be rocky and uneven in places. Some mud and water acceptable. Extensive hardening acceptable.</td>
<td>'Wet boot' standard. Stabilisation and drainage mainly for environmental purposes, but some concessions to user comfort. May be rough over extended sections. Mud up to 200 mm deep acceptable in places.</td>
<td>Improved surfacing/drainage minimal – for environmental purposes only.</td>
<td>Improved surfacing/drainage minimal – for environmental purposes only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gradient</strong></td>
<td>Max 5° (1:11); mostly &lt;2°.</td>
<td>Mostly &lt;8° (or 1:7 or 14%). max 15° (or mostly &lt;15° (or 1:3.7 or 27%) but may be steeper in places.</td>
<td>Mostly &lt;20° (or 1:2.8 or 36%) but may be steeper in places.</td>
<td>Limited by environmental considerations only.</td>
<td>Limited by environmental considerations only.</td>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No steps; ramps &lt;1:14</td>
<td>Steps and stairs may be included, with handrails where necessary for user safety.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetation clearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300 mm at ground, 500 mm at shoulder level, 2.2 m height. No obstacles.</td>
<td>300 mm at ground, 500 mm at shoulder level, 2.2 m height. No obstacles.</td>
<td>Clear across width and to above head height. Obstacles rare.</td>
<td>Mostly clear across width. Occasional obstacles.</td>
<td>Fairly easy navigation under normal conditions. Some obstacles.</td>
<td>Minimal; sufficient for navigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridges to full width, signposts, interpretation facilities, viewing platforms. Shelters and benches are acceptable, but not picnic tables. Track markers are unnecessary.</td>
<td>Bridges to full width, signposts, interpretation facilities, viewing platforms. Shelters and benches are acceptable, but not picnic tables. Track markers are unnecessary.</td>
<td>Bridges over all major creeks and rivers. Stepping-stones acceptable; fords acceptable where water generally less than 100 mm deep.</td>
<td>Bridges over major creeks and rivers not normally safely fordable &lt;500 mm deep. Bridges OK to minimise erosion. Log crossings, cable bridges, flying foxes and swing bridges acceptable. Some fords may be flood prone.</td>
<td>Bridges or other constructed crossings generally not required if major creeks and rivers are normally safely fordable, except for environmental purposes. Rough log bridges acceptable, but not necessary. Flying foxes acceptable over rivers which cannot normally be forded, but some fords may be flood prone. Delays may be expected under abnormal conditions.</td>
<td>Bridges or other constructed crossings generally not provided, except for essential environmental purposes. Natural crossings preferred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track markers</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
<td>Where necessary to ensure that direction is obvious except under extreme conditions.</td>
<td>Where necessary to ensure that direction is obvious except under extreme conditions.</td>
<td>Where necessary to ensure that direction is obvious except under extreme conditions.</td>
<td>Low-key. Track may be difficult to follow in places.</td>
<td>For essential management purposes only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td>Directional and interpretive signs provided.</td>
<td>Directional and interpretive signs provided.</td>
<td>Directional signposts at start of track and junctions with tracks of grade T3 or higher; otherwise signs should refer to main (T1) track only (junctions with T4 tracks generally unsigned). Interpretive signs in existing structures only. Other signs may be installed for management and safety purposes.</td>
<td>Directional signposts at start of track and junctions with tracks of grade T3 or higher; otherwise signs should refer to main (T2) track only (junctions with T4 tracks generally unsigned). Interpretive signs in existing structures only. Other signs may be installed for management and safety purposes.</td>
<td>Directional signposts at start of track and junctions with tracks of grade T3 or higher; otherwise signs should refer to main (T3) track only (junctions with T4 tracks generally unsigned). Other signs may be installed for management and safety purposes.</td>
<td>Limited signs and only for management purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campsites</th>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>Route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>At major camping nodes, sites for up to 25 tents preferably dispersed in groups of up to five tents. Enclosed toilets to be provided at sites of more than 10 tents, or where necessary for environmental or health purposes.</td>
<td>Up to 12 tents, preferably dispersed in groups of up to four tents. Toilets to be provided at sites of more than 10 tents, or where necessary for environmental or health purposes.</td>
<td>Up to 8 tents, preferably dispersed in groups of 2 to 4 tents. Toilets of minimal design to be provided where necessary for environmental or health purposes.</td>
<td>Visibly impacted (long-term) sites for up to 4 tents. Toilets of minimal design to be provided only where necessary for environmental purposes.</td>
<td>Formation of campsites to be avoided where possible. Visibly impacted sites for up to 4 tents, preferably at least partially vegetated, are acceptable where unavoidable or desirable for environmental purposes. No toilets provided unless essential for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage levels</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>To be defined where required for social, environmental and management purposes.</td>
<td>To be defined where required for social, environmental and management purposes.</td>
<td>To be defined where required for social, environmental and management purposes.</td>
<td>To be defined where required for social, environmental and management purposes.</td>
<td>To be defined where required for social, environmental and management purposes.</td>
<td>environmental purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Max party size</th>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>Route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>While recognising circumstances for group sizes up to 13 persons, for environmental and crowding reasons, party sizes of 6 or fewer will be encouraged.</td>
<td>While recognising circumstances for group sizes up to 13 persons, for environmental and crowding reasons, party sizes of 6 or fewer will be encouraged.</td>
<td>Recommended max 8. Party sizes of less than 6 will be encouraged.</td>
<td>Recommended max 6. Party sizes of 4 will be encouraged.</td>
<td>Recommended max 6. Party sizes of 4 will be encouraged.</td>
<td>Up to 8 acceptable on some T4 tracks in robust areas, subject to environmental conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publicity</th>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>Route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>No restrictions – may be included in maps, tourist brochures etc.</td>
<td>Generally no restrictions, but may be discouraged if (for example) overall usage restrictions are necessary.</td>
<td>Low-key publicity preferred. T3 tracks may be included on maps.</td>
<td>Discouraged. Not included on maps except for PWS management purposes.</td>
<td>Discouraged. Not included on maps except for PWS management purposes.</td>
<td>Discouraged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route guides</th>
<th>W1</th>
<th>W2</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>Route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>No restrictions.</td>
<td>Acceptable, but authors encouraged to consult with the PWS. Published info to be compatible with management objectives.</td>
<td>Acceptable, but authors encouraged to consult with the PWS. Published info to be compatible with management objectives.</td>
<td>Acceptable if sparsely written. Consultation encouraged.</td>
<td>Discouraged.</td>
<td>Discouraged.</td>
<td>Discouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided tours</td>
<td>W1</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Licences required.</td>
<td>Licences required.</td>
<td>Permitted, but licences required and numbers of trips may be restricted.</td>
<td>Permitted, but licences required and numbers of trips may be restricted.</td>
<td>Permitted, but licences required and numbers of trips may be restricted.</td>
<td>May be permitted.</td>
<td>May be permitted under stringent conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Implementation Schedule

Management activities in the plan area are to be compatible with this plan and the conservation of the area’s environmental and heritage values, water quality, and the natural landscape. To this end, areas of disturbance arising from any developments should be minimised and, as far as practicable, strategies implemented to minimise any adverse effects of management activities and other works. Some actions will require an RAA to be undertaken. The RAA process is the Environmental Impact Assessment system the PWS uses to assess whether activities conducted on PWS managed land are environmentally, socially and economically acceptable (PWS 2010a). Once this plan is finalised, all tasks shall be incorporated into the PWS Information Management System.

An implementation schedule for the major actions prescribed by this plan is proposed below. The relevant KDOs listed in this plan (page 41 to 43) are noted for each action. Prioritisation will be determined and subject to funding and resource availability, but indicative priorities are indicated.

Table 2 Indicative Implementation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant KDO</th>
<th>Strategy and actions</th>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>Within 12 months</th>
<th>Within 3 years</th>
<th>Within 5 years</th>
<th>More than 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2, 5, 6</td>
<td>Monitor numbers and in the event that the carrying capacity of the track and its supporting infrastructure start to become exceeded, introduce a seasonal booking system in consultation with key stakeholders that provides a practical and effective system to manage use of the track, huts and campites.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>Conduct track monitoring and visitor research during 2018-19 to identify and quantify issues and establish a baseline for evaluation of management strategies.</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td>Complete the repair/upgrade of the main Frenchmans Cap Track.</td>
<td>VH-M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant KDO</td>
<td>Strategy and actions</td>
<td>PRIORITY</td>
<td>Within 12 months</td>
<td>Within 3 years</td>
<td>Within 5 years</td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stabilise relevant sections of the Irenabyss Track.</td>
<td>H-M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Undertake drainage and other appropriate rehabilitation works on closed sections of former track.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td>Ongoing track maintenance.</td>
<td>H-L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lake Vera overnight node**

| 1, 2, 5, 6  | Finalise site design for Lake Vera overnight node. | VH       |                  |                |               |                  |
| 2           | Construct tent platforms at agreed locations.    | H-M      |                  |                |               |                  |
| 5           | Review accredited toilet system options and decide on appropriate replacement toilet. | H        |                  |                |               |                  |
| 5           | Install replacement toilet at new location at Lake Vera | H-M      |                  |                |               |                  |

**Lake Tahune overnight node**

| 5           | Construct the new hut at Lake Tahune | H        | Complete         |                |               |                  |

**Education/Interpretation**

| 6           | Seasonal track ranger presence. | VH       |                  |                |               |                  |
| 3, 4, 6     | Install new interpretation, educational and directional signage consistent with the Frenchmans Cap Track Interpretation Plan. | H-M      |                  |                |               |                  |
Appendix 5: Design Brief for Replacement Lake Tahune Hut

The hut at Lake Tahune was originally built in 1971. It was refurbished in 1994 but, while acceptable in the short term, its concept and design are considered outdated and inadequate for purpose, and its capacity is not adequate for trending future use.

PWS sought a concept design from architects Green Design for a replacement hut. PWS criteria for such a structure, and the architect’s design response, are summarised below. The architect’s concept sketch and floor plan are also presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PWS-defined design criteria</th>
<th>Architect’s design response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A single roofed accommodation building with separate sleeping arrangements (that provides beds for 24 walkers) and a communal area with places to cook, sit and eat.</td>
<td>The new hut incorporates 50% more sleeping spaces, secure storage in a separate ranger’s room, and a porch for wet gear. The main room has a food preparation area, seating and bunks to sleep 6. In addition, 3 sleeping spaces on a large bench seat for infrequent peak demand. A large side bench offers flexible use for cooking and storage or, alternatively, 2 additional sleeping spaces. The sleeping arrangement is divided to provide flexibility according to the number of users. A separated bedroom with bunks sleeps 14. When only a few walkers are using the hut, the separate bedroom can remain closed with all warmth retained in the main room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An area of the structure should provide for walk-in storage for tools and maintenance equipment.</td>
<td>A lockable ranger’s room contains a double bunk and some storage. A secure storage cupboard is accessible off the verandah, with additional storage under the water tank stand (fuel etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small, separate (within the structure) area for staff accommodation.</td>
<td>A covered entrance deck provides space to hang wet coats etc and is a semi-sheltered transitional zone between external and internal. An animal-proof dry porch provides further storage space for coats, boots and packs. It works as an airlock to buffer heat loss from the main room, and is a well ventilated drying space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dry porch or similar to enable walkers to remove wet gear and potentially provide an air-lock to the main hut.</td>
<td>Drinking water tank(s) are required and the hut roof should provide the catchment for these. Two slimline tanks provide 3,500 L of rainwater. A sink is accessible under cover from the verandah. The grease trap and greywater treatment is located west of the hut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut design to sit comfortably in the environment, utilising the existing disturbance footprint as much as possible, and with minimal visibility from the summit track.</td>
<td>Innovative approaches to heating and energy efficiency should be considered to minimise the cost and carbon footprint of the hut. Attention to suitable air movement within the hut to minimise condensation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A high level of energy efficiency is achieved through significant levels of insulation to walls, roof and floor, and double glazing and large windows to the north. The hut is passively heated, ie entirely relying on internal gains (heat given off by occupants and cooking) and the sun. It does not need active heating, thus eliminating the environmental and financial impact of fuel transport by helicopter. A sophisticated passive ventilation system prevents condensation within the hut, while retaining an ambient air temperature.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of pre-fabrication and fly-in for efficient construction on site.</td>
<td>All components (wall, roof and floor sections) are prefabricated offsite, flown in by helicopter in segments of approx. 800 kg, and assembled on site.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other architects’ comments include:

- The structure and envelope are designed to cope with extreme snow loads and wet conditions.
- Non-combustible materials are employed for external walls to withstand a possible bushfire.
- The materials are chosen for their longevity, low maintenance and low environmental impact. The expected life of the hut is over 100 years.
- The materials have a low VOC content and low flammability.
- The increased floor area of the new hut is adequate to comfortably provide for 24 occupants; however, efficient space planning has maintained a reasonably compact footprint, meaning less impact on surrounding vegetation.
- A generous amount of shelving and hanging space should assist with stowing of belongings. Eighteen people in total can be seated at tables, with extra cooking benches provided.
- The large northern windows in the dining area capture views and sun, contributing to the comfort of occupants.
CONTACT DETAILS

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