

Access News



The Newsletter of the Akatarawa Recreational Access Committee Inc.

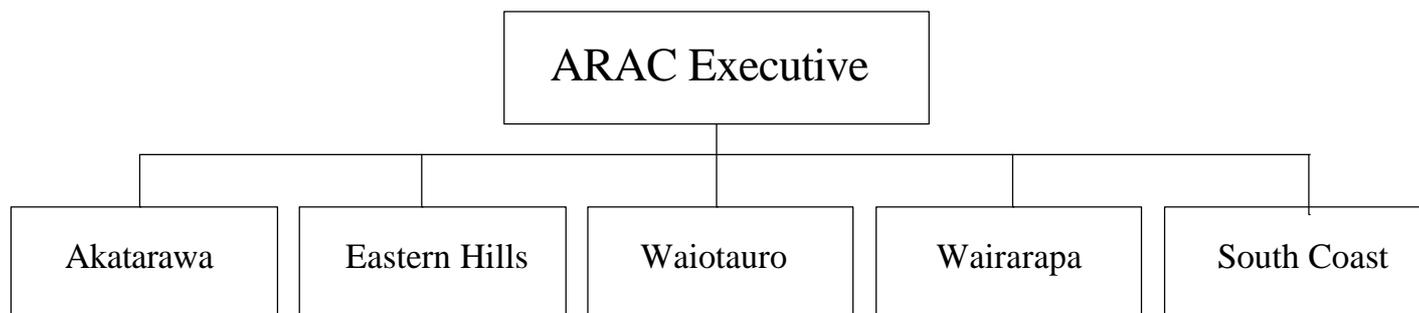
Issue No 1, August 2001

Welcome to this, the inaugural issue of Access News. We aim to use this medium to get useful information out there to you the recreational user.

In this issue, introductory reports from each of the main areas of interest to ARAC members (and non-members alike). For those not totally familiar with how ARAC operates, here's a brief introduction:-

ARAC is divided into special interest groups or "Divisions". Currently we have 5 Divisions: Akatarawa, Waioatauro, Eastern Hills, Wairarapa and South Coast. Each division has to be self-funding, with all monies raised being devoted to the particular area of interest. No funds destined for say Waioatauro can be spent in the Akatarawa Forest and vice versa. This way, each Division can set its own priorities according to its own funding.

Over and above these Divisions, lies the ARAC Executive Committee. Their role is simply to act as mentor to the divisions, and provide such things as accountancy, secretarial, insurance etc as needed.



From The Divisions:-

ARAC Akatarwa, the first Division formed in 1996, when Wellington Regional Council faced some tough decisions regarding the future of the forest and how best to retain sustainable use of the tracks with minimum resources.

Although the original meetings were somewhat stormy, things have moved a long way from there. Both sides regard the recreational management of the Forest as a partnership, with each having something positive to contribute to its future.

In recent times, the Orange Hut project saw ARAC constructing a new Hut with Council's blessing. Indeed, Council provided the Architect and various building consents. Whilst still not completed, it is nonetheless warm and dry, with a newly-installed log burner. Additions will come later this year with an outdoor barbeque and improved water supply.

In recent months, a major 1080 drop has taken place around the whole of the Forest, and you can play your part by taking great care around any of the bait pellets that might still be lying around. Do not let kids play with any of it, and keep dogs under control. Especially dangerous are the rotting possum carcasses, 1080 is still hanging around in the gut, so do take care with pets.

ARAC Eastern Hills the special-interest group working with the Hutt City Council to find ways of re-establishing motor recreation along the Eastern Hills Firebreaks.

Whilst things may seem to be taking their own sweet time, a lot is happening behind the scenes. Numerous meetings have been held with Council, and lots of alternatives looked at, until we get back to the inevitable conclusion that there is no real alternative to the firebreaks.

With that acknowledgement, we are now pursuing a plan put forward by Neil Tonkin, Manager Leisure Services, that will allow us a set of trial periods back onto the hills. As Neil says "...a toe in the water, not a foot in the door...", but it is a very positive step for Council to take. We would be foolish not to take up Council's offer.

Hopefully, while there are still many hurdles to be overcome, we should be able to begin these trial days before Christmas.

More details will follow as they become available, or watch the local papers for details.

ARAC Waiotauero, deal purely with the Waitauro Track (aka Odlin's Road). This much loved back-country trail runs from the Akatarawa Saddle, via Renata Saddle and on into the Waiotauero Valley beyond. Much prized by ARAC Members, Hunters and Trampers alike, the track was threatened with closure until ARAC came to the rescue.

Now with a group of dedicated volunteers, ARAC has entered into a management agreement with DOC, whereby ARAC becomes responsible for maintaining a 4WD-style track as far as Renata Saddle, with a walking track only into the Valley.

One of the biggest problems DOC identified, was the number of cars using the track. Whilst at first sight this may be seen as reasonable, DOC are concerned that the track should be used only by appropriate vehicles. In this case, genuine 4WD, quads and trail bikes.

Whilst we undertake to try and prevent use by ill-equipped vehicles - you might have noticed the ditches at the start, and the tank-traps at Renata - we are not trying to prevent *bona-fide* and properly equipped recreational users from gaining access.

You might also have seen a rather nice knock-on effect of this, in that the dumping of stolen cars has all but stopped. A nice bonus.

Lots of work is being done to Waiotauero Hut, originally condemned as part of DOC's rationalisation of Huts. Now it is beginning to take shape as another example of what can be achieved by a bunch of willing volunteers.

ARAC Wairarapa, one of the newest Divisions within ARAC, charged initially with working together with DOC to look at ways in which the old Sutherland's Track can be reinstated for recreational use.

Now renamed as the Aorangi Crossing, ARAC is in the midst of negotiating a management agreement (similar to that for Waiotauero) that will see ARAC become responsible for the maintenance of the track, in return for DOC affording access on a permit basis for organised groups.

This is an entirely new type of venture for both DOC and ARAC alike, as it will be the first time that DOC have not only "outsourced" the maintenance of a track, but also allowed a third party to decide to whom permits can and will be issued.

What does this mean? ARAC will be responsible for maintaining the track to an agreed standard, but in addition, will allocate the available permits to the various user groups.

This doesn't mean that ARAC is seeking to exclude any users or groups of user, rather it seeks to ration the available facilities amongst the many interest groups.

It is expected that the track will be closed during winter, but available for recreational use each summer.

The first working bee will be held early in September

ARAC South Coast, One of the most recently-formed Divisions, indeed at the time of writing it is only just beginning to be put together. The South Coast of Wellington is under threat to recreation not only from groups who seek to limit access, but also from many amongst ourselves.

Thoughtless use creates an impression that all motorised recreation is composed of hoons. This does us no favours, and plays straight into the hands of those who would see the whole of New Zealand locked up to all but the most ardent walkers and trampers.

This impression is created by only a small number, yet reflects badly on all of us. We have to find ways to counter this impression, and at the same time provide enough education and guidance to people who might not realise that their actions are irresponsible.

Wellington City Council seems willing and eager to work with groups such as ARAC, and we are hoping to be able to enter into a good working relationship with them to ensure recreational access is available around the South Coast for future generations to enjoy.

Interested in Learning More?

For information about any of the Divisions listed here, or if you have any information that might be of help to your fellow recreational users, please contact ARAC at:-

Phone 025 522 503

e-mail arac.incorporated@clear.net.nz

tread lightly![®]

LEAVING A GOOD IMPRESSION



Travel only where permitted

Respect the environment and the rights of others

Educate yourself, plan and prepare before you go

Allow for the future use of the outdoors, leave it as you found it

Drive and travel responsibly, discover the rewards of responsible recreation