

ARAC NEWS



The Newsletter of the Akatarawa Recreational Access Committee Inc

Issue 4, July 2013

ARAC Executive

Firstly, within our own organisation, we have to report that long serving Executive and Akatarawa Committee member Grant Purdie has resigned.

His huge contributions, diligence and attention to detail will be sorely missed. Grant remains on the list of active Akatarawa Trip Leaders.

We can also take the opportunity to welcome Marcus Steeneken on board as Secretary of both ARAC and the Akatarawa Committee. A huge undertaking – well done Marcus.

Akatarawa Forest

GW See Major Staff Changes and Restructure (again)

For those who may not be aware, long-serving ranger Dean Hearfield has left GW. He is replaced by former GW river ranger Thane Walls.

Also new on the scene is Principle Ranger Eastern Sector Jimmy Young.

It is also very sad to note the departure of Ross Jackson, a key player in the GW/ARAC relationship since our founding in 1996 – it is with great sadness that we see Ross' departure and wish him all the very best for the future.

Amanda Cox is now promoted to the role of Manager, Parks. As such Amanda will play an even more crucial role in the GW/ARAC relationship going forward

ARAC and GW still in new talks to establish closer dialogue.

We reported back in March 2011 that we were in negotiations with GW and trying to develop a Memorandum Of Understanding (MoU) – well perhaps no surprises here that the process continues.

After much debate that led nowhere, and a pause whilst various staff changes and restructures took place, ARAC presented their own proposed MoU to GW during July 2013. A meeting is scheduled to discuss the whole MoU position shortly.

Orange Hut

The Orange Hut has been painted on the inside now, and graffiti has dropped off – but not completely. If you see someone despoiling what is after all OUR hut, try and get some details/description so we can follow up.

It's also sad to note some moronic behaviour on the grass beside the Orange Hut – as if the 15,000 hectares of forest weren't enough, idiots have been doing donuts spraying mud and grass everywhere.

Track Maintenance Required

The Rock Garden has suffered a big washout, and will require some remedial work.

ARAC took GW personnel on two separate trips to the Rock Garden to inspect the damage down there. Since both Jimmy and Thane are new to their respective roles, it was a good opportunity to get to know each other and enlighten GW on the various challenges that face us. It is fair to say a full and frank exchange of opinions took place on both days.

Depending on the final course of action chosen for the Rock Garden, we may have to send out the call for volunteers with shovels and pick-axe to help out. If you come across other areas that we need to know about, let us know info@arac.org.nz

Link Track

Since Dean's departure, GW have been raising less and less issues over the Link Track, let's keep it that way!

Previous Management Plans allowed only a 2 metre deviation from the centreline – those who know the Link Track know how wide it is getting in places – please try and avoid any more damage or see the track under increased threat of closure

Plantation Cutting Rights

GW have decided in principle to sell off the cutting rights for all its plantation forests for two full growth cycles (60 years).

Since a huge part of our recreation takes place in plantation forestry, ARAC is naturally concerned that any future cutting-right "owner" may try to curtail our access. To this end, ARAC have been engaged quite ardently with GW's plantation management team headed by Wayne O'Donnell.

The MoU under consideration right now is 100% dependent on gaining acknowledgment of our enduring access to plantation forestry – despite whomsoever may hold the cutting rights.

Trip-Leader Training

ARAC is working on a schedule for trip-leader training to take place later this year. It is anticipated that all trip-leaders will be expected to re-qualify given the huge changes that have taken place in the forest over the past years.

GW have also indicated a willingness to offer chainsaw training to all trip-leaders to help lift our safety standards.

Odlins Road and Waiotauro Valley

There are a few reports of damage to the track following all the recent heavy rain, but the track remains passable we understand. A track assessment will be undertaken shortly to determine if remedial work is required anywhere.

The big slip beyond Waiotauro Hut remains a stopping point for 4WD and most quads.

Waiotauro Hut has had a small amount of damage as now usual intellectually challenged have tried to cut through the lintel above the entrance-way. The building remains intact however.

Wellington South Coast

As many will be aware, severe storm damage was done to the road around the South Coast from Owhiro Bay. Wellington South Coast Chair – Barry Insull – has been liaising with Wellington City Council to resolve access issues. It was thought likely the road would remain a “challenge” for some time – certainly beyond Red Rocks.

However, WCC had a digger in for several days working between the former quarry and Red Rocks. No significant issues beyond Devils Gate

Barry has also been very busy working with WCC to arrange the annual dune planting day. CCVC and Wellington Family 4WD put 800 odd plants in the ground.

Aorangi – aka Sutherlands

Sutherlands has stood up well to all the storms of late, and the hut is in good condition.

Track will be open for use probably from October onwards – check with ARAC Wairarapa for exact timings.

Trip Leader training is scheduled sometime this spring, and will concentrate again on identifying areas where access is OK, and those sensitive out-of-bounds locations.

As a stark reminder, one Club has already been suspended from Sutherlands, and will remain so until such time as agreed reparation has been made – all because they didn't observe the no-go areas.

Any Other News?

Anything we need to know about? Anything you want to know about? Email info@arac.org.nz