

Consultation Work Undertaken

The FRCT has spent the last 11 months consulting and meeting to gather background information and support on the boat ramp situation.

The need to have a mandate of support from the entire recreation sector has been a key goal over this period. We have organized and hosted three public meetings in Te Anau, Invercargill and Gore where over 180 people attended. Within the meetings there were representatives from recreation clubs, Environment Southland, Milford Opportunities group, commercial operators and individuals. Clubs represented included the Southern Sport Fishing Club, Te Anau Boat Club, Gore Boat Club, NZ Alpine Club – Southland branch, Southland Tramping Club, Southland Jet Boat Association, Tautuku Fishing Club, Dive South, Otago Dive, Fiordland Tramping and Outdoor Recreation Club, Southern lakes Deer Stalkers and Sport Fishing NZ.

The FRCT asked for support of our trust to the meeting attendees and we currently have over 110 individuals and 6 clubs supporting our vision.

The FRCT had a stand at the recently completed Southland Boat Show. There were over 5000 attendees to the show, with many supporting the work the trust was undertaking.

The FRCT put out a meeting invitation to the Deep Water Basin commercial operators to discuss the Deep water Basin issues. Those in attendance were two trustees from the FRCT, three representatives from Real Journeys and Rosco from Roscos Kayaks. Descend Dive put an apology in and Fiordland Lobster replied that the boat ramp has no affect on their operations and they wouldn't be attending. Ultimate Hikes failed to respond to communication despite multiple attempts to do so.

The FRCT met with the Milford Opportunities group in Te Anau to outline their concerns about the issues in Deep Water Basin. The group was receptive to our concerns and took note for future recommendations that they will be putting in place.

The FRCT met with Environment Southland to discuss the current situation with the boat ramp and to clarify areas of responsibility and future requirements.

The FRCT has been in discussion with the Milford Road Alliance to obtain vehicle and boat counts. A period from 12/03/2019 until 25/04/2019 was surveyed for vehicles towing boats into Milford Sound. This period was over 6 weeks with 10 days of this period not boatable due to weather conditions. A total of 176 vehicles towing boats was recorded. This does not include boats already parked long term in Milford Sound and workers with boats residing in Milford. A copy of the count is included in the appendix.

The FRCT has met with Bruce McCulloch from McGregors Concrete Ltd. Bruce has been involved with boat ramp construction and previous construction work in Milford Sound. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss boat ramp construction and possibilities for a new ramp in Deep Water Basin. A drawing of the concrete panels is included in the appendix.

There has been multiple email correspondence from a variety of interested parties including Fiordland Lobster Company, Sport Fishing NZ, DOC, Environment Southland and Commercial Fisherman working in Fiordland.

Current Situation

The Department of Conservation (DOC) are the current consent holders for the boat ramp in Deep Water Basin. See attached permit in appendix.

DOC are currently looking at options for the current ramp which is falling into disrepair and not fit for purpose. DOC commissioned a report completed by OPUS in January 2018, to look at options for the ramp.

Options:

1. Do nothing
2. Basic repairs
3. Replace lower section of ramp
4. Complete replacement

Communication from DOC manager Greg Lind in November 2018 and senior works officer for DOC Shane Hatwell, is that DOC would only consider funding a 3.6 metre wide ramp with a 5 metre extension to the wet end, and that any additional funding for any alteration to this would have to be sought elsewhere. "Like for Like" replacement is what DOC are advocating.

Greg Lind stated that if additional funds were sourced by the recreational sector then they would be open to possible alternatives. The replacement cost is estimated at around \$100 000.

The Boat ramp is the only road accessible boat ramp in Fiordland and the only ramp between Jacksons Bay in the north and Colac Bay in the south.

The ramp is used by recreational power boats, recreational kayakers, two commercial kayak companies, dive company, commercial pau divers and other commercial operators removing large boats from the water. There is a mix of both recreational and commercial operators using the ramp throughout the year.

The graveled areas either side of the ramp are used by the kayak companies to allow their customers to get in and out of the kayaks.

The area on both sides of the ramp at its entrance are used by the kayak companies for kayak storage.

The staging area above the ramp is used by the kayak companies for pre trip briefings and teaching technical aspects of kayaking.

The commercial wharf abutting on to Fiordland Lobster surveyed land is used by the commercial fishing sector, large recreational boats and small recreational craft. The wharf is used for refueling, loading and unloading cargo and for passengers embarking and disembarking from boats.

Boat Ramp Issues

The current physical condition of the boat ramp is poor with large cracks, with the joins becoming eroded. There are potholes developing and the wet end is breaking up due to trailers having to go off the edge to launch and retrieve. The trailer draw bars and frame continually impact against the concrete.

The ramp is no longer fit for purpose. When the ramp was built, boats and vehicles were generally smaller with launching and retrieving being relatively easy. The increase size means boaters have difficulty launching and retrieving within 1 hour either side of low tide. The trailer has to be driven off the end of the ramp. This then requires strong thrust of the props to get on and off the trailer, leading to scouring out of the substrate under the ramp.

There are now more boats entering Fiordland and as this is the only direct access ramp by road. The increasing number of boats is further causing degradation of the ramp but there are small congestion issues at peak times in the early morning and late afternoon.

Congestion on the ramp occurs when the commercial kayak companies are launching and retrieving kayaks, and when a powerboat is trying to launch or be retrieved. The kayakers have to move aside or boats have to wait.

This leads to frustrations for both parties and potential for conflict.

Congestion occurs in the staging area above the ramp when kayak companies have their craft being readied for the customers. The kayaks are often positioned close to the ramp access or partly across it making reversing of boat trailers difficult or not achievable. The kayaks have to be repositioned or reversing trailers have to wait, which again leads to frustrations for both parties.

The lack of a wharf/pontoon adjacent to the ramp causes significant issues for recreational powerboat users.

Once boats are launched, passenger access to boats is restricted. Boats either have to pull up either side of the ramp and passengers have to board over the bow, which is physically very difficult with moderate to large boats. The reverse occurs when coming back in and passengers have to be dropped off.

The other alternative is, powerboats have to motor to the commercial wharf and passengers board or disembark from this structure. This raises serious health and safety issues with recreational individuals on a commercial wharf.

The other issue is when commercial boats are tied up to the wharf there is no ladder access for individuals to board or disembark from boats.

There are significant safety issues with the current ramp situation.

On the ramp issues of concern occur when a boat trailer is reversing down and kayaks are either side of the ramp with individuals getting in and out of kayaks. There is potential for an individual to inadvertently move on to the ramp and be run over. The same situation could occur when boats are being retrieved and trailers are moving up the ramp.

There are safety concerns in the staging area above the ramp. Boat trailers reversing across the area have the potential to run into individuals walking in the area or preparing kayaks in this area.

Kayakers walking across the staging area to the toilets or meeting room at the "White House" are at risk of impact from reversing boat trailers. The risk is heightened in the early morning when daylight further limits visibility.

Individuals entering the Fiordland Lobster Company operational area and then on to the commercial wharf pose significant safety issues. Forklift operations, along with vehicles and trucks manoeuvering around and on the wharf entrance pose risks to these individuals.

The increasing number of cruise ships entering the fiord, poses potential major incident events that place the need for a ramp to handle a variety of watercraft a priority. The current ramp does not allow multiple craft to launch or retrieve or allow large boats to launch and retrieve easily. The lack of a designated wharf to disembark is also a concern if a serious situation occurs.

The current ramp and water at the wet end of the ramp has current and future issues. If the Cleddau River is in flood the flow of water moving across the ramp makes launching and retrieving boats very difficult. The flow is also a hazard when maneuvering boats on the water adjacent to the ramp, with control being compromised. If kayakers are on the water at the same time, the potential for collision is a possibility.

The gravel accumulation on the ramp during and post a flood is also an issue. The gravel accumulation at the mouth of the Cleddau is gradually increasing and over time this will eventually restrict boat access.

FRCT Proposal

The FRCT would like to propose a new ramp be built on the same location as the existing ramp.

The ramp should be 31 meters long and 7.5 metres wide

The ramp should have a floating pontoon attached to the side which extends into the basin and allows boat and kayak users to access their craft with ease and safety.

The above ramp/wharf facility would allow recreational and commercial operations to coexist in safety without restrictions. The facility would cater for the current situation and future proof the facility for expansion of any sector.

The above proposal would improve the safety aspect of all the users in the area, but the storage position of the kayak companies boats is a key factor which must be addressed in the future. The kayak companies ultimately would like their own base buildings and launching ramp and this again needs to be worked through as it's the ideal option.

The FRCT long term plan would be for the commercial and recreational sectors to be separate where no safety of conflict issues could arise.

Developing the backwater area as the recreational area with a marina would be the optimal long term solution and one that needs to be given serious consideration.

Fiordland Recreation and Conservation Trust
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