

Claudia Kling

Mountain Bike Use on Shared Tracks

User Survey and Management Proposal for The Queen
Charlotte Track in New Zealand

Diploma Thesis

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Claudia Kling

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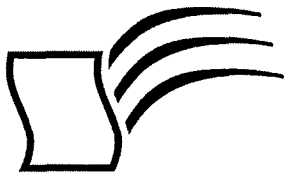
User Survey and Management Proposal for The Queen Charlotte Track in New Zealand

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*User Survey and Management Proposal
for The Queen Charlotte Track in New Zealand*

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an der Fachhochschule Nürtingen
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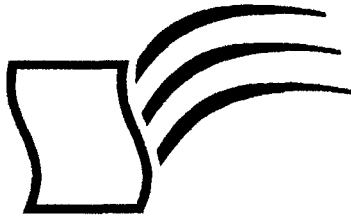
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAN	Canada
CHCH	Christchurch
DAV	Deutscher Alpenverein e.V.
DOC	Department of Conservation
GER	Germany
GNP	Gross National Product
IMBA	International Mountain Bicycling Association
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
MBAA	Mountain Bicycling Association Australia
NEMBA	New England Mountain Bike Association
NL	Netherlands
MTB	Mountain Bike
MTBs	Mountain Bikes
NZ	New Zealand
NZCA	New Zealand Conservation Authority
OV	Overseas Visitor
OZ	Australia
QCT	Queen Charlotte Track
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

AOTEAROA

*Toitu he kainga, whatungarongaro he tanagata
The land is the mother of the people*



1.1 Introduction - Survey Background

In the past years a lot of 'new kinds of sport' were discovered as a form of outdoor recreation. Today the traditional walker has to share the tracks with a lot of other user groups. At present shared tracks often lead to conflicts between the 'old' and the 'new' user groups. One of the 'new' groups is the Mountain Bike (MTB) group.

Mountain biking seems to be the new wave sport of the nineties, but it all started in the early to mid 1970's with a few enthusiasts in the US. It became established internationally in the early 1980's. Mountain bikes began to appear in New Zealand from the mid 1980's, and since then are growing in popularity among all ages and genders.

The popularity of the MTB is now changing the recreational patterns of the traditional outdoor user groups. A discernible number of people who have traditionally been walkers / trampers have now often changed their outdoor recreation use from walking to biking. This new type of track use seems to create conflicts in a social and physical way, and it appears that there are some problems between walkers/trampers and mountain bikers.

Mountain biking experiences a growth in popularity, encouraged through:

- Advances in technology;
- the attractive qualities of a mountain bike compared to other bicycles;
- its appeal to a wide range of people;
- and perception of cycling in general as a health promoting, 'environmentally friendly', alternate mode of transport and means of recreation.

It is from this perspective that a survey on the Queen Charlotte Track (QCT) in the Marlborough Sounds has been undertaken to try and determine what the realistic management options are so that consistency in policy formulation may be obtained. Public view points are still very divided on this issue. The objective of this survey is to gauge the public opinions and to then make recommendations for future management strategies.

The Marlborough Sounds are a unique and popular holiday destination for New Zealanders and overseas visitors. Before the re-development of the Queen Charlotte Track in 1991/1992, the track experienced only low to moderate use with seasonal peaks occurring between Anakiwa and Mistletoe Bay and from Ship Cove to Resolution Bay. It was renamed the Queen Charlotte Track in 1991/1992 and underwent promotion by local bodies and has since experienced a dramatic increase in visitor numbers.

The Department of Conservation has conducted two previous user surveys on the Queen Charlotte Track, one in 1993/94 that came about due to rising visitor numbers, and one in 1994/95 to investigate more specific aspects of the issue surrounding MTB / walker conflicts.

Now the Department of Conservation was interested to identify the public opinion and visitor movement patterns of MTBs and walkers, especially about overcrowding, services/facilities, management and the use of mountain bikes on the track. This time a special interest was taken in the opinion of MTB riders and their needs, and also in the interactions between walkers and riders.

At present MTB management involves a MTB Trial period with the closure of the Ship Cove to Punga Cove section of the track between December and February, thereby reducing conflicts during peak season.

1.2 Survey Objectives

The basic aim of the Queen Charlotte Track Visitor Survey was to produce information on track user demographics; their levels of satisfaction with services/facilities; opinions and aspirations; as well as any existing conflicts between the user groups, here mainly walkers / mountain bikers, so that future management policies may be formulated.

To be more specific, the objectives were:

1. To determine demographic user patterns (for both MTBs and walkers) to provide a comparison to the existing data from the previous surveys thereby identifying demographic trends on the track.
2. To identify user movement patterns with respect to facilities and sections of the track used, also to establish levels of user satisfaction with services and facilities on the track.
3. To gauge whether users perceive MTBs to be a problem and to understand user perceptions and opinions towards MTBs on the track and in general opinions about MTB use on tracks.
4. To ascertain the level of MTB rider experience needed on the different sections of the track, and to get an opinion of the riders about track management and satisfaction.
5. To indicate possible management options and alternatives to the present situation, e.g. with services and facilities.
6. To indicate management options for social conflicts between user groups, and the future handling of MTBs on tracks.

To get all these informations different questionnaires were designed, adequate for every user group. The reason for the use of questionnaires is, that they give the option to ask the 'real' users about their opinions and satisfaction with the present situation, because they are 'out there' and use the structures. If they are not satisfied, the track management system cannot work.

1.3 The Scope of this paper

I spent the previous months in New Zealand in the Marlborough Sounds, to organize the thesis and then to collect information on the Queen Charlotte Track. I thought the User Survey to be a very important tool for the future management of shared tracks, because it gives the option to get the opinion and satisfaction of the users. Especially the growing numbers of different outdoor activities need to be managed, and also the user expectations need to be modified. Therefore the use of questionnaires is an important method in the field of track management planning.

Part I - Chapters Two and Three

The first part of the thesis provides background information about New Zealand and the Marlborough Sounds, with information about history, geography, flora & fauna and tourism.

Part II - Chapters Four and Five

The second part introduces the Department of Conservation (DOC) with an emphasis on mountain bike management on tracks administered by the Department. A rough introduction is given into the mountain bike (MTB) history internationally and in New Zealand. Physical and social impacts of MTBs are discussed as well, and then the Queen Charlotte Track (QCT) is introduced with its history and features.

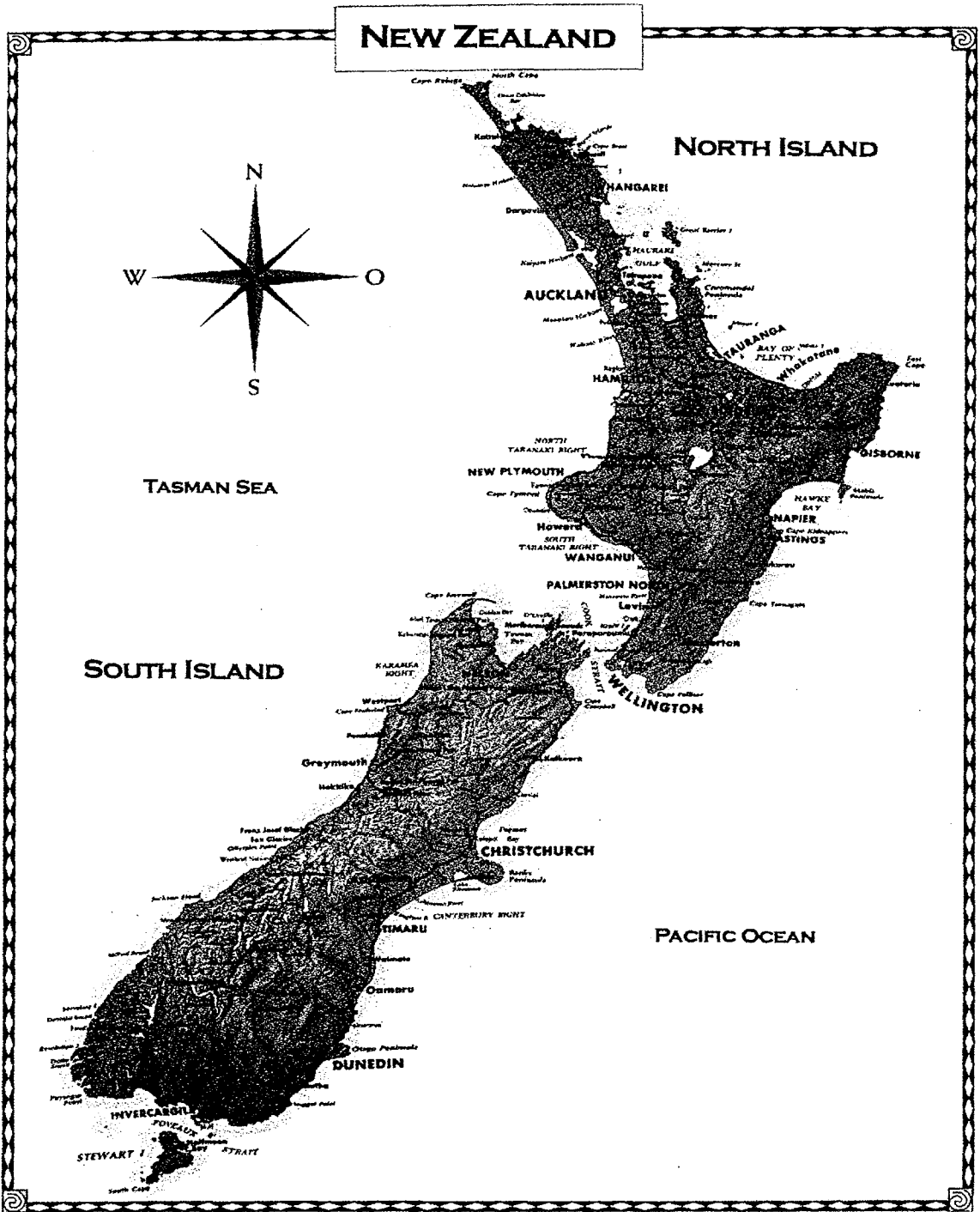
Part III - Chapter Six

The third part includes the Survey design and also an explanation of the procedure and the reason why questionnaires were used. The results of the questionnaires are explained and summarised. Each questionnaire has its own summary, so that readers who have a special interest in one topic (e.g. 'walkers overnight') can get the information without having to read the results of the other questionnaires.

Part IV - Chapter Seven

The last part of the thesis shows examples of MTB management in other areas and initiatives of MTB Clubs / riders. It also includes an overall summary of the results from all questionnaires, so that readers who are not interested in the separate results of the questionnaires can get an overall impression of the present situation on the QCT. Conclusions and recommendations for the future management of the QCT and options for MTB use on tracks are discussed as well.

CHAPTER TWO NEW ZEALAND



Pict. 2 Map of New Zealand (source: NEW ZEALAND TOURISM BOARD)