


24 April 2026

Whare Kaupapa
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Ref: OIAD-6232

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 07 April 2026, in which you asked:

1. How frequently is the track information (including distance and estimated duration) reviewed and updated on your website?
2. When was the most recent update or verification conducted for the Rob Roy Track's distance and time estimates?
3. What methodology is used to measure track distance (e.g., GPS tracking, mapping tools, on-ground survey), and what standards or processes are in place to ensure accuracy and minimize measurement error?
4. Are there any internal guidelines, thresholds, or tolerances for acceptable discrepancies in published track distances and time estimates?
5. Is there a policy or standard practice to periodically re-measure or reassess track data (e.g., every few years), particularly in cases where track conditions may change over time?

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.
Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *How frequently is the track information (including distance and estimated duration) reviewed and updated on your website?*

DOC has almost 1600 individual track pages on its website. This does not include pages for accommodation (huts, campsites etc) that connect the tracks. Track information is provided to help visitors:

- Decide where they want to go (including understanding the length and difficulty of tracks)
- Plan when they should go
- Know what they need to take
- Identify if they need to book or pay for anything
- Be aware of important safety information

Reviews and updates of track information (including distance and duration) take place frequently. Every year there are over 10,000 requests by DOC staff for changes to be made to

recreation pages to ensure that information is current and fit-for-purpose. Specific alerts are added to recreation pages to advise visitors of critical safety information, such as windfall, slips, closures and changes in track conditions. These alerts are regularly monitored and updated until they are removed.

2. *When was the most recent update or verification conducted for the Rob Roy Track's distance and time estimates?*

DOC's website data does not enable us to identify the specific purpose for changes to web pages. There have been 21 changes to the Rob Roy Track's web page since 2018, with the most recent update occurring in November 2025. This does not include publishing and updating safety alerts.

3. *What methodology is used to measure track distance (e.g., GPS tracking, mapping tools, on-ground survey), and what standards or processes are in place to ensure accuracy and minimize measurement error?*

A methodology for calculating track distance is set out in DOC's Track Construction and Maintenance Guidelines (2008) which is used to provide technical guidance on all aspects of track planning from track formation to water management. The document can be found here: [Track construction and maintenance guidelines: Policies and plans](#)

The section in the Guidelines on track length calculation has been included here in response to your question. It advises that staff should factor slope, incline and elevation into the lengths of track set out on maps.

12.1 CALCULATING THE LENGTH OF TRACK

This is an important aspect of track planning (section 11.0). Determining the approximate length of track required will assist you with;

- Selecting the most appropriate grade
- Determining approximate cost for draft capital business cases
- Determining whether other construction details (switchbacks, steps) are required

Enter angle of inclination (degrees)	a=	8	Enter value here in the orange box
Enter height to be gained (metres)	h=	200.00	Enter value here in the orange box
Length of track on slope (metres)	l=	1436.87	This is your answer in the yellow box
Length of track on map (metres)	m=	1422.89	This is your answer in the yellow box

Table 9- Track Length Calculator

NB: This is the minimum length of track as it assumes a constant grade. To calculate the approximate length of track required for your upgrade or construction work refer to the Track Length Calculator in the attached document “Track length, water speed and material volumes calculators”.

Once track length/distance is established, it is generally only amended if there is a change to the route or if visitor feedback indicates that it may be significantly inaccurate resulting in life-threatening visitor safety issues or incidents. Rob Roy Track is not a site that has been flagged in this regard, but we have recently reviewed track times and distances in the Tararua Forest Park for this reason.

Please see the response to Q. 5 for more detail on DOC’s inspection process and quality assurance relating to track length.

4. *Are there any internal guidelines, thresholds, or tolerances for acceptable discrepancies in published track distances and time estimates?*

There are no specific guidelines, thresholds or tolerances for acceptable discrepancies in published track distances or time estimates. We have visitor risk thresholds which set out the level of risk to visitors that DOC considers acceptable, given the nature of the site, activity, and the role of visitor responsibility. This supports DOC to identify the risk that is tolerated and managed, and the risk that is unacceptable and must be reduced, managed or avoided. Mueller Hut site has a high-risk threshold given the alpine terrain and the risk of landslides and avalanches. As such, DOC’s focus is on managing these hazards and/or communicating these to visitors.

5. *Is there a policy or standard practice to periodically re-measure or reassess track data (e.g., every few years), particularly in cases where track conditions may change over time?*

Tracks are inspected by specialist Asset Inspectors to ensure that they are managed in accordance with regulatory obligations, standards and service levels. This is generally completed within a scheduled programme, but inspections can be requested by staff at any time (usually after severe weather events). All new tracks have an initial baseline inspection. Front country tracks are inspected every two years, and back country tracks are inspected every four years. Inspectors measure the track length of Short Walks and Walking Tracks as part of the biennial inspection process using a measuring wheel, but other tracks are only measured during baseline inspections.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Catherine Wilson
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai