

Hump Ridge Great Walk Project Facts.

In 2019 the Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track in southern South Island was selected to join New Zealand's existing network of Great Walks. It will achieve this status in October 2024. This is the project's story.

The Decision.

In Budget 2017, *Tourism Growth Initiative - New Walks* was included as an initiative approved by Cabinet. As a result, DOC was awarded capital and operating expenditure to bring existing track(s) to Great Walk standard.

A public participation process¹ was held to identify tracks that qualified as special enough to join New Zealand's existing network of Great Walks. 30 tracks were nominated for consideration, which was whittled down to three.

After much deliberation, it was announced in July 2019 that Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track was chosen to be developed into NZ's next (and 11th)² Great Walk.

The Origins of the Track.

The idea for this track came after a ban on native logging in the mid-1980s saw the loss of NZ Forestry Services from Tuatapere. In 1988 the Tuatapere and Districts Promotions Group suggested the construction of a tramping track that would support the community by creating jobs and bringing income to the area from visiting track walkers.

The community embraced the idea and provided numerous volunteer hours, skills, tools, and resources to create the track between 1994 and 2001.

The Tuatapere Hump Ridge track opened in November 2001. It is operated by a not-for-profit business, on behalf of the Tuatapere Hump Track Charitable Trust ("the Trust").

The Track Itself.

The track start (and end) is at the carpark at Rarakau, located about 22km from Tuatapere. The track traverses multiple blocks of land before hitting Te Rua-o-te-moko Fiordland National Park³. Each of these blocks are owned and/or managed by entities including South Island Landless Native Act (SILNA) representatives,

Rowallan Alton Inc., Southland District Council, and other private individuals or groups. The track also incorporates a section of the DOC-managed South Coast Track.

The track is a challenging yet rewarding 3-day, 60 km loop that follows the coastline of Te Waewae Bay - where Hector's dolphins surfing the waves can often be sighted - climbing up to the sub-alpine zone, with soaring limestone tors (rocks), tarns (little alpine lakes) and expansive views.

The track then descends Ōkaka Hump Ridge back to near sea level, then over historic viaducts in the heart of native forest, passing through the historic Port Craig Sawmill and Settlement Area⁴ and along the coastline back to Rarakau carpark and the end of the track.

From DOC Archives: "(Fig 2-8) Beach Area at Port Craig, 1921".



Figure 2-8. Beach area at Port Craig, 1921. (Department of Conservation, n.d.-c).

Throughout the track, interpretation panels highlight SILNA and iwi stories, as well as heritage history from the native timber industry, especially that of Port Craig.

The Agreement with The Trust.

In July 2019 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between DOC and the Trust. The agreement outlined how DOC and the Trust would work together to progress Hump Ridge Track's development to a Great

Walk standard. It was agreed the Trust would continue to manage and operate the track and facilities during and after the Great Walk upgrade project.

What has been worked on, as the project progressed, is the Trust would be responsible for funding the operation of the track and facilities, including the maintenance of structures, track, and lodge facilities. The Trust is also responsible for ensuring the Track is maintained to Great Walk standard.

The Project.

The project's aim is for the track to be a world-class visitor experience that reflects the significant cultural and heritage values of the area and inspires increased conservation advocacy.

DOC manages the project with oversight from a governance group, that includes representatives from Ōraka-Aparima Rūnaka, the Trust and DOC.

The project team also worked with other stakeholders that have a relationship to the track, including SILNA representatives, Rowallan Alton Inc., Southland District Council, Heritage New Zealand, Port Craig Viaducts Charitable Trust, and private landowners.

The project was initiated early 2020, with the main construction phase beginning mid-2022. The project is scheduled to be in the delivery phase till late 2024, and then, in 2025, will begin its closure phase.

Key facts of the project's business case:

- Project capital expenditure costs of \$7.9m.
- Project will deliver a track to Great Walk standard by upgrading the track surface and structures.
- A new swing bridge built at Edwin Burn to bypass the Edwin Burn Viaduct.⁹
- An extension of Rarakau carpark, an entrance Waharoa (gateway), shelter, and additional toilets.
- Detailed development of the high-level experience design, which includes storytelling and installations.
- Detailed assessment work for the protection of the heritage and cultural values/impacts for the track and environs, including a conservation heritage plan for Port Craig Sawmill and Settlement Area.

The track is scheduled to open with Great Walk status in late October 2024.

Iwi Partners.

Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka - mana whenua mana moana of the rohe - have supported the track since it originated.

Their takiwa⁵ covers the southernmost coast of Te Wāhipounamu, beginning at the Waimatuku River then centred at Ōraka /Colac Bay and Aparima / Riverton) and extends to encompass the whenua of the Hump Ridge Track and beyond - to Piopiotahi

From 2019, the DOC project team has built a strong working relationship with Rūnaka through a process of engagement, as a project partner in governance, and for the storytelling and interpretation development work.

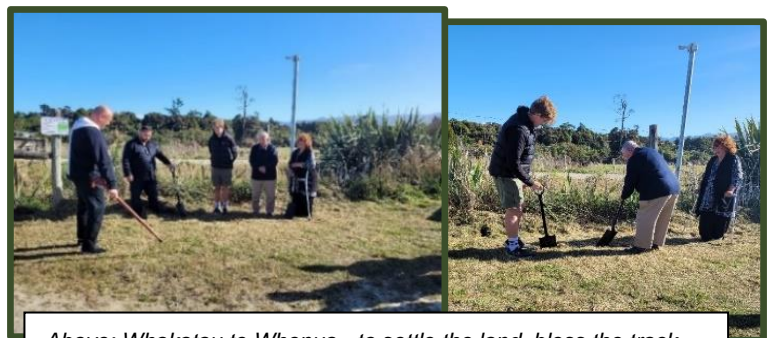
The project team's collaboration with Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka started with visioning and story exploration workshops in Tuatapere for all stakeholders in 2019 and 2020.

In mid-2021, a 3-day knowledge-sharing hiko and wānaka based at their marae, Takutai o Te Titi⁶, was supported by the project team. The purpose of this event was for Ōraka Aparima to enable the sharing of rūnaka knowledge and greater engagement of rangatahi with their whenua.

The relationship with Rowallan Alton Inc., as a SILNA landowner, has also been a significant aspect of this project. They have contributed to the Māori stories and interpretation, as it is their land that the carpark, Waharoa and the track start/end rest on.

Other SILNA landowners along the track corridor also have an opportunity to tell their stories in the new lodge books.

In April 2022, Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka held a Whakatau Te Whenua⁷ at Rarakau carpark/track start. Rowallan Alton Inc. also shared the honours of turning the whenua to mark the first spade hitting the ground for the project⁸.



Above: Whakatau te Whenua - to settle the land, bless the track, and clear the way for construction to begin – April 2022.

Engagement continues with Ōraka Aparima and Rowallan Alton Inc. regarding the Waharoa (gateway) at the track start, as well as other cultural stories and events.

The project team also is working closely with Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka and Te Ao Mārama to develop Taonga that will be installed in areas of Fiordland National Park.

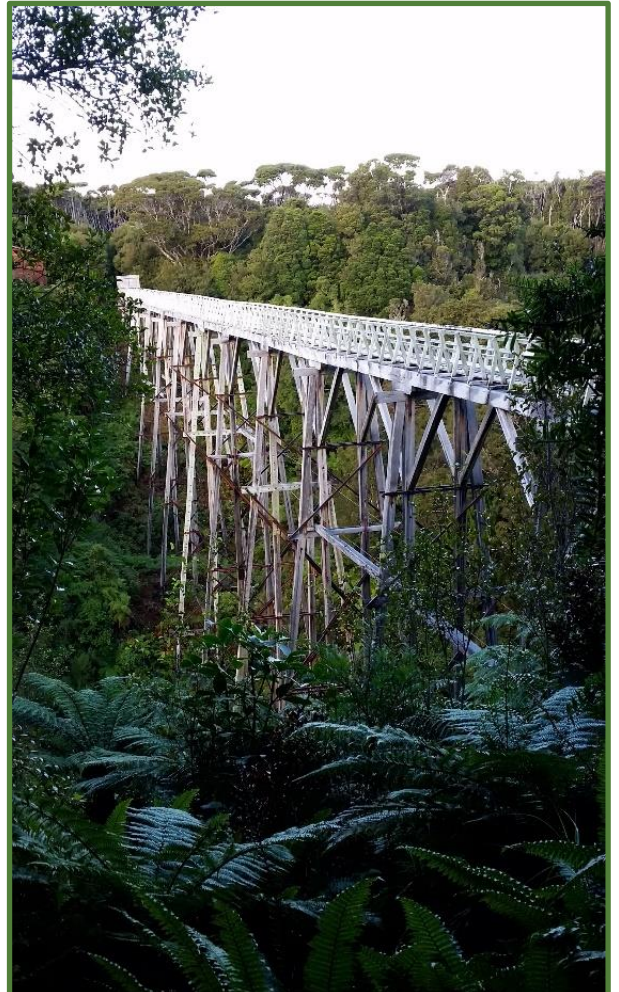


Above/Below: Two examples of upgrade work (before/ during, after) to improve track conditions underfoot.



Visitors walking the track will notice obvious signs of improvement, even if this is their first time on the Hump Ridge Track.

However, despite the upgrade work, the track should still be considered as a challenging track. Walkers will still need to ensure they plan and prepare well for their trip and have a reasonably high level of fitness.



Above: Historic Percy Burn Viaduct. Built in 1923 for the 25km logging tramway, it is 125 metres long and 36 metres high. Reputedly the largest surviving wooden viaduct in the world.

Challenges.

Several factors needed to be addressed for this project to succeed. These included:

- Bringing the South Coast Track up to Great Walk standard, including fixing drainage surfacing.
- Ensuring legal access across all private land that the track crosses.
- Ensuring safety concerns on and around the track are addressed; and
- Ensuring the viaducts can be managed and maintained for long term public access.

Good progress continues to be made on these challenges, as the project heads towards the track achieving Great Walk status, followed by the project's conclusion.



Right: On the Lookout loop track above Ōkaka Lodge, looking south-west, across to the Great Southern Ocean.

Benefits.

One of the outcomes this project offers is expected to be added economic benefits for the western Southland community / region through:

- Additional employment.
- Business opportunities.
- Increased tourism/visitor spend by people, as Great Walk status elevates interest in the track.

There has already been a noticeable increase in track patronage¹⁰ since the 2019 announcement.

The area has a rich history. The stories of mana whenua/iwi and the forestry heritage, including the viaducts and Port Craig, are part of the project's work to enhance the experience.

Improving the Hump Ridge Track means this place steeped in cultural and historical significance becomes more of a drawcard for a larger pool of kiwi and international visitors.

This project also offers opportunities for DOC to build on many partnerships and relationships and explore ways to provide an enhanced Great Walk visitor experience.

Supplementary Information.

¹ Information about the process: *Selecting new Great Walks: Issues June 2017* (doc.govt.nz).

² Paparoa Track opened in November 2019, as NZ's 10th GW.

³ Fiordland National Park (FNP) is part of Te Wāhipounamu, the south-west corner of South Island, internationally recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site – as one of the great natural areas of the world.

⁴ Port Craig is an HNZPT-Listed Historic Place Category 1, which is a status given to places of 'special or outstanding historical or cultural significance or value'. It is also recorded as an archaeological site (C46/25) in the New Zealand Archaeological Association site recording scheme known as Archsite.

⁵ www.ōraka-aparimarūnaka.co.nz and Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka - Ngāi Tahu Pepeha (ngaitahu.maori.nz).

⁶ Takutai o te Titi translates "Coastline of the muttonbird".

⁷ Ōraka Aparima Hakui Muriel Johnstone shared ... "The Whakatau Te Whenua acknowledged the many tūpuna (ancestors) who traversed these lands and waterways over the centuries, lived on the whenua, and gathered treasured mahika kai from the mountains to the sea - ki uta ki tai. In gathering here, we are reminded of one very

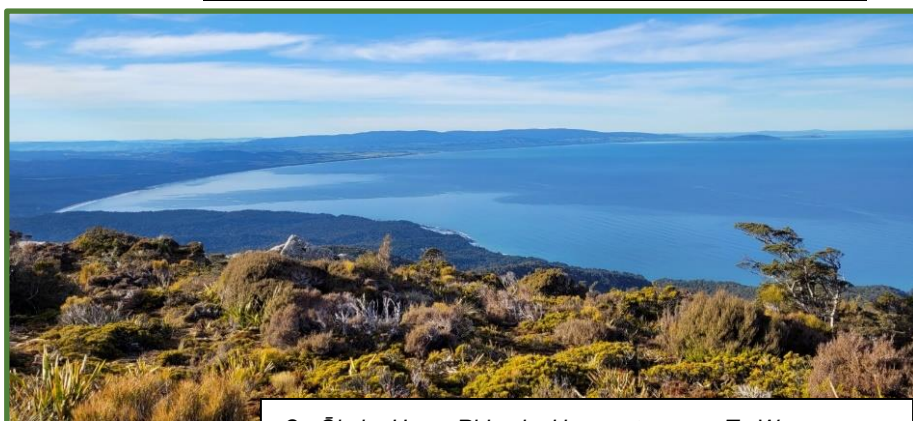
ancient aranui (track) in this rohe (tribal area), which travelled up and over the vast, long ridge known as Ōkaka, and onwards to the many lakes and mountains throughout Fiordland."

⁸ A joint media release shared the news about the first spade hitting the ground for the track upgrade work. *Hump Ridge Track Great Walk upgrade begins: Media release 4 April 2022* (doc.govt.nz).

⁹ The Edwin Burn viaduct is not being removed nor is it unsafe - this new bridge will provide an alternative crossing should the viaduct become unusable.

¹⁰ Annual total walker numbers on the Hump Ridge Track, since 2012 – to end June each year – tabled.

6/2012 - 900	6/2017 - 2090	6/2021 - 3889
6/2013 - 1200	6/2018 - 2392	6/2022 - 3036
6/2014 - 1750	6/2019* - 3177	6/2023 - 3475
6/2015 - 1852	6/2020 - 2997	6/2024 - 3094
6/2016 - 1839	* Great Walks announcement	



On Ōkaka Hump Ridge looking east, across Te Waewae Bay, at Murihiku Southland.

Quick Links.

Information about the Great Walk selection process: [Selecting new Great Walks webpage](#)

DOC Information: [Hump Ridge Track: Fiordland National Park, Fiordland region](#) (doc.govt.nz) and [Hump Ridge track - YouTube](#)

To find out more about the track, the options and how to book, visit the Trust: [Welcome to the Hump Ridge Track](#)

Project webpage: [Hump Ridge Great Walk Project: Our work](#) (doc.govt.nz)

Information about the track sections upgrade see: [Hump Ridge Track map](#) (PDF, 3,700K) (opens in new window).