



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

09 September 2019

The President
Federated Mountain Clubs
Po Box 1604
Wellington

Dear Jan,

Re: Online Booking for Pinnacles and Woolshed Creek Huts on Mt Somers Track

Thank you for providing FMCs comprehensive feedback on the Department's proposal to add Woolshed Creek and Pinnacles Huts to the Online Booking system.

I would like to address the points that you raised.

FMC's Position on Hut Booking Systems.

I agree that there should be enough camp sites available adjacent to huts. This is an issue at Pinnacles Hut, and we have put in a funding bid to provide a helicopter pad and additional flat space around the hut. This is combined with an upgrade of the toilet system.

FMC's Recommendations

- We have been advised that the Department's booking system will be changed next year to accommodate the acceptance of Annual Hut Passes. In the meantime, users can make the booking online and then claim a refund from our Geraldine office. The best option would be to contact our Geraldine Office first and request that we make the booking for them. I appreciate that both these options are not ideal, but it does ensure that Annual Hut Passes can be used.
- Last summer we upgraded our radio link at Woolshed Creek Hut. The wardens now have reliable comms with our Geraldine office, and we will be able to relay hut booking details. This is still subject to any issues with the overall radio system.
- We do not intend to include campsites near the huts in the booking system. We have brought a number of sleeping matts that the wardens can lend to users who miss out on a bunk.
- The advantage of a booking system is that users can plan their trip with the knowledge that they will have a bunk at the hut. This is especially so at Woolshed Creek Hut where the chance of sharing with a large group or many individual trampers is common. Users that haven't booked may still get a bed

Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*

Geraldine Office
PO Box 33, Geraldine 7956
Ph: 03 693 1010
www.doc.govt.nz

- at the current usage rates.
- Through our hut wardens we get good data on users. The hut booking system will add to this. This information is going to be required for further upgrades of the huts or track. We anticipate that the booking system will stay in place from season to season to provide certainty for users. We will review the effectiveness of the booking system in achieving the desired outcomes on an annual basis.
 - We will update the web about the booking system and the options for users to still camp nearby. From most other sites where bookings have been introduced hut usage has increased. We hope that this is also the case for The Mount Somers Track which is designed for first time or inexperienced users.

Bookings only for specific days/weekends

Unfortunately, our current system is unable to provide this level of detail or flexibility. I have passed your feedback on to the owner of the booking system platform for their consideration.

Bookings to open at short notice

Our system is currently unable to provide this function. I consider that it can be argued that having a booking system is of benefit to users wanting to do a trip at short notice; They can check the planned visitor numbers and determine if they still want to do the trip. I have passed your feedback on to the booking system owners for their consideration. This is an issue that I suggest that you also raise nationally with the Department as it relates more to the overall way the system works.

The Department's Position

The Department will put both huts onto the national booking system for this summer season 1st October to 30th April 2020. I acknowledge that you support this outcome subject to the concerns raised in your reply. I hope that those concerns have been addressed above. I would also like to invite FMC to participate in an end of season review of this season and the use of the booking system. I expect that this would occur sometime during May or June 2020.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely



Duncan Toogood
Operations Manager

Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*
Geraldine Office
PO Box 33, Geraldine 7956
Ph: 03 693 1010
www.doc.govt.nz