

# DOC funds clubs to upgrade huts, tracks

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Tramping, hunting and mountain-biking clubs will upgrade remote huts and tracks after signing a \$700,000 deal with the Department of Conservation.

Conservation Minister Nick Smith this week announced a consortium of outdoor recreation clubs would share the money in return for completing up to 107 back-country projects, including repairing and improving up to 36 huts and 670 kilometres of track. The move would involve 10,000 hours of voluntary labour.

The clubs are calling on their members and the community to tell them what huts or tracks they think need attention.

The consortium comprises the Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) with 17,000 trampers, the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association with 10,000 hunters, and the Trail Fund with 8000 mountainbikers. The money would be split between the three organisations.

FMC president Robin McNeill said the club had identified some projects, but wanted to hear from its members and the community before any decisions were made on which huts and tracks to work on. The money was granted from the \$26 million Community Conservation Partnership Fund announced in March.

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**Nick Smith**  
Conservation Minister



Smith said some huts had 20 or fewer nights of use a year but maintenance and inspection costs were \$4000 annually. The facilities were important to New Zealanders, but because usage was low they were only marginally economic to maintain, he said.

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Smith said it was likely the \$700,000 contract would be expanded because it was part of DOC's new direction to work more with communities and businesses.

Work on the huts and tracks will have to meet strict DOC guidelines and will be inspected by DOC staff as part of its normal schedule of checks, a DOC spokesman said.