RMCA Newsletter – 19th July 2026



Matariki Weekend was outstanding on the maunga. The bluebird weather attracted the tourists to the snow and the Gondola in record numbers. Clubbies were delighted to enjoy the first skiing of the 2026 season on the Rock Garden. WHL continue to pump out the snow in the cold temperatures. We are excited for the 2026 season.

Ruapehu District Council Rates

Clubs should have now received the 2024 and 2025 Ruapehu District Council (RDC) rates charges. These RDC rates have been on charged by DOC to clubs. The RMCA is currently investigating the validity of the RDC charging rates in a national park. A LGOIMA (Request for information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987), has been filed by the RMCA with the RDC. The RMCA has requested communications, records, reports and emails between RDC and DOC regarding rates to be shared with the RMCA from 1st January 2024. The LGOIMA was filed on 8th July. Local councils must generally make a decision and respond within 20 working days.

The RMCA has built a strong and collaborative relationship with DOC and we are in regular communication with Mitch Black, Mere Moroaka and Libby O'Brien. The RMCA has requested on behalf of clubs, a delay in the payment of the 2024 and 2025 rates. The letter sent to DOC on the 7th July 2026 is shared below:

Mitch Black

Senior Statutory Advisor

Department of Conservation

Subject: Request for Grace Period for Payment of 2024 and 2025 Rates Invoices

Dear Mitch,

I am writing on behalf of the Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association (RMCA) regarding the rates invoices issued by the Department of Conservation for the 2024 and 2025 rating years, which are currently due for payment on 20 July 2026.

The RMCA has recently lodged a Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) request with Ruapehu District Council seeking information relating to the validity and basis of rates being charged on club properties located within Tongariro National Park.
The information requested is material to the clubs' understanding of their rating obligations and the processes by which these rates have been assessed and recovered.

Given the statutory timeframe associated with the LGOIMA request and the likelihood that the requested information may not be received until after the current due date, the RMCA and its member clubs are not in a position to make payment of the 2024 and 2025 rates invoices by 20 July 2026.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Department of Conservation grant a grace period of two to three months to allow sufficient time for the requested information to be received, reviewed, and considered by the affected clubs before any payment is required.
This request is made in good faith and should not be interpreted as a refusal to engage with the matter. Rather, the clubs are seeking to ensure they have access to all relevant information before making a final determination regarding the rates charges that have been passed on to them.

We would appreciate written confirmation that the Department is prepared to defer the payment due date for a period of up to three months and that no collection action, penalties, or interest will be applied during that time while the requested information is being obtained and assessed

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working constructively with the Department to resolve this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Evans

Chair **Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association**
Email **president@rmca.org.nz**

Additionally, the RMCA is delighted to have the valued support of Donald Webster. Clubs wishing to make a request for a delay in paying rates can submit their own request, using the letter drafted by Donald Webster. (See attached). These submissions can be emailed to mblack@doc.govt.nz

Clubs are again invited to please hold off on paying your recent rates invoice for the 2024 and 205 period. Rates bills are due for payment by the 20th July 2026. **The RMCA is requesting to DOC to extend the payment deadline to 20th October 2026** This gives us time to clarify the legal position for the clubs. We will email all clubs with an update as soon as we hear back.

Whakapapa Mountain Road Access

Matariki weekend served as a reminder of the desirability of the Maunga as a tourist destination. The public holiday on Friday saw visitor numbers + 4000, with Saturday + 6000. This translated into a stationary traffic jam, back to the mounds, before the approach to The Chateau Tongariro. On Friday, the road was closed for several hours from 11am. Whilst most cars were full of tourists, clubbies were also caught in the traffic jam. Clubbies trying to gain access to drive up the road and drop off supplies, drop of family and friends, and then return to Scoria Flat to park, were denied access. The collaboration from TPP on the gate at the bottom of the road was no where to be seen.

This does not bode well for Clubbies access in the season ahead. The RMCA has requested a hui with DOC who manage this road. DOC contract TPP's services for operating the road. The RMCA seeks a proactive solution for clubbies road access and ability to park in the Carpark 2 – the designated over night car park.

The RMCA will now receive all road updates and closure notices directly from DOC in the same communication channel as WHL. The RMCA will post these updates, as they are delivered, to the **RMCA Whakapapa Clubs Community Notice Board** face book page. And to the Instagram page **rmca_clubs**. A massive shout out to Darien Warburton (Puketoi) for leading this for the 2026 season.

The Tussock Bar, Whakapapa Village

The Tussock Bar and Restaurant building currently sits within the legal framework of the Chateau Tongariro Buildings. It is subject to the same timelines that will see the Chateau Tongariro refurbished and opened or not reopened again. The RMCA has now submitted a letter of support for the opening of The Tussock Bar to the Honorable Tama Potaka, Minister of Conservation.

Grocery Room

The RMCA has 2 new fridges ordered for the grocery rooms. In the main grocery room, the silver fridge needs to be replaced. In the custodian's grocery room, additional fridge / freezer space is required.

Sam from New World Ohakune has proved to be a committed part of the team for 2026. Thanks to Sam for negotiating with the TPP folks on Matariki Friday to ensure Grads, LWTC and Rangatira had their supplies for the long weekend.



Contact Energy Bills

Some clubs have received large bills from Contact Energy. These are most likely estimated bills as smart meters have lost contact with the energy provider. This outage occurred when major telecommunications providers shut down 3G networks in 2026. Older smart meters that relied on these signals dropped their connections. If your club has received an estimated reading, check your meter and provide accurate reading to your electricity provider.

DOC Rent Review Proposal

Just a reminder that the timeline for the DOC rent review is now a late October / November delivery to clubs. With clubs having a 3 month right of reply. Rent reviews will now be effective in early 2027.

Nga mihi,

Debbie Evans

Chair Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association

Email **president@rmca.org.nz**

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Mountain Clubs Association