

REPORT

MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Visitor Survey of the Lower Waitaki Valley

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1 Introduction

This study continues and extends a review of the nature and scale of tourism and holidaymaking in the lower Waitaki Valley, defined as the relatively unmodified stretch of river extending from the Waitaki Dam, above Kurow, to the sea (Kearsley & Middleton, 2004). As a result of timing and scheduling imperatives, the earlier study reported on the supply side (operators, accommodation facilities, service providers and other formal and informal organisations) but was not able to report on visitor attitudes, behaviour and perceptions. Previous studies, carried out as a part of the Project Aqua hydro-electricity resource consent process, had reported on recreational behaviour, principally the recreational patterns of the local community, but also those of a small number of international tourists and other domestic holidaymakers from outside the region.

What had not been estimated, at any point, was the extent and importance of river-oriented activity for the tourist and holidaymaker markets, their perceptions of the scenic and amenity value of the river valley, the significance of the river itself as a tourism resource and the relative significance of the lower Waitaki in the overall regional context. Thus, while it was known that substantial numbers of tourists travelled through the valley and sometimes used local services and facilities, it was not known whether this was as a purposive visit to the lower Waitaki, of itself, or simply the result of needing to traverse the area in order to arrive somewhere else, such as Mount Cook or the hydro lakes of the upper Waitaki. In the same way, while it was known that significant numbers of visitors stayed at such accommodation complexes as the Kurow motor camp or in bed and breakfast accommodation, there was no sense of how far the lower Waitaki was a significant component of their holiday, what they did or how they perceived the scenic, amenity and recreational values of the river.

In order to fill this information gap, which is critical to the understanding of the current scale of regional tourism and its future prospects, the objective of this study is to survey samples of both groups, the travelling population and those in accommodation, in order to establish patterns of behaviour and perceptions of the environment.

2 Method

A random sample of each of the two populations was taken, with the aim of obtaining 250 valid responses in each case to a short survey document. A sample of 250 allows for confidence limits of about ± 6 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for an infinite population. Since both populations were unknown in size, but were bound to be relatively small, the anticipated confidence limits have been sustained.

The sample survey of travellers was collected at a series of stopping points within the lower Waitaki valley. These included the Maori rock drawings site at Takiroa, the Elephant Rocks Vanished World fossil site and the large fruit stall outside Kurow. Travellers were also encountered in Duntroon at the Vanished World information centre and the café and at various points within Kurow itself, such as the Visitor Centre and the Heritage Centre museum. Inevitably, this process made contact only with travellers who had stopped and is therefore biased against those who travelled straight through the district without stopping at all. A limited number of interviews were carried out outside the region with travellers who might have travelled through the area; these showed no significant difference from those undertaken in situ.

The sample of resident holidaymakers was aimed at people who were spending at least one night in the lower Waitaki valley and was drawn from the commercial accommodation sites identified in the previous study and from the fishing huts and similar properties at the river mouth. A small number of riverside freedom campers were also contacted. The support and cooperation of accommodation proprietors is gratefully acknowledged.

The survey forms used were designed for either interviewer completion or self-completion should that be necessary. Whenever respondents asked to take a survey form for later completion, they were provided with a postage paid envelope. In the event, virtually all of the traveller responses were collected by interview, whereas the majority of accommodation-based surveys was by self-completion.

Copies of each survey form are included in Appendix 1.

The surveys were carried out between 13 and 21 January 2005. The interview period occurred at a time when the high numbers associated with the Christmas and New Year period had departed and before a second peak in early February, associated with the commencement of the school year and the return of most families to their place of residence. As it transpired, numbers of both travellers and holidaymakers were relatively low and it was not possible to collect full samples with the time and resources available. In total, 201 valid responses were obtained from travellers through the area. Of those approached, very few declined to participate, but the survey staff noted that, at each survey point, many more vehicles passed by than stopped.

Rather fewer responses were obtained from the sample of those in accommodation in the area and the response rate for self-completion returns was also lower at slightly over 80 percent, although this is still very satisfactory for a self-completion survey. In particular, there were far fewer people in residence than was expected at the mouth of the river. Contacts there explained that the survey period was in the trough between the immediate Christmas period and the high levels of occupancy expected during the salmon run of late February to early April. Similarly, very few freedom campers were encountered, either. In all, a total of 124 useable responses were collected.

Responses to each question were coded numerically and the data files analysed through the use of SPSS, a standard social science statistical package.

3 The Traveller Survey

All but one of the sample of 201 considered themselves to be visitors to the Waitaki district; the sole exception was a resident of Oamaru who was out driving for pleasure.

The majority of respondents, some 70 percent had never visited the lower Waitaki valley before; the full range of responses is set out in Table 3.1. In this and all other tables, figures are presented as percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. For this reason, totals may not always exactly equal 100 percent.

Table 3.1: “How often have you travelled through the lower Waitaki valley before?”

Never	70
Once or twice	13
A few times	8
Often	9

Patterns of travel were ascertained by asking respondents where they had come from that morning and where their intended destination was for that night. Table 3.2 sets out the origins of the day’s travel.

Table 3.2: “Where did you leave from this morning?”

Dunedin	21
Mount Cook	16
Oamaru	16
Twizel	7
Tekapo	6
Omarama	5
Dansey’s Pass	4
Otematata	4
Queenstown	3
Naseby	3
Wanaka	3
Moeraki	3
Christchurch	2
Pukaki	2
Timaru	2
Franz Josef	2

In addition, a limited number of minor origins were mentioned just once.

The lower Waitaki can be approached from a number of directions. The main axes of flow, from inland or from the coast, are similar in volume. A total of 40 percent came from the east coast to the south of the Waitaki, primarily Dunedin and Oamaru; similar numbers came from within the upper Waitaki Catchment, primarily Mount Cook and the emerging resorts of Tekapo, Twizel, Omarama and Otematata. These are closely associated with the hydro lakes and the larger glacial water bodies. In addition, small numbers came from Central Otago (6 percent) presumably via the Lindis Pass, 7 percent had come from the Maniototo or Dansey’s

Pass itself and 4 percent had come from Christchurch and Timaru. Two percent had made the long trip from Franz Josef on the West Coast.

Most respondents had their destination already planned; these are set out in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: “Where do you intend to travel to tonight?”

Oamaru	23
Dunedin	22
Mount Cook	9
Twizel	7
Tekapo	5
Christchurch	5
Omarama	4
Otematata	4
Queenstown	3
Kurow	3
East Coast	2
Dansey's Pass	2
Moeraki	2
Don't know yet	7

As before, a limited number of destinations were mentioned just once.

The patterns of movement are broadly similar to those set out in Table 3.2, which, given that most respondents did not intend to stay in the lower Waitaki itself, is not surprising since most travel is through the valley in one direction or another. Three percent indicated that they would stay in Kurow and a further 2 percent nominated Dansey's Pass, so that 5 percent in total were intending to stay within the broader lower Waitaki region. The dominant destination area was the east coast, primarily Oamaru and Dunedin again, and this accounted for half of all of the destinations mentioned. Thirty percent listed Mount Cook or the various resorts and townships within the upper Waitaki, while 5 percent intended to go through to Christchurch and a further 3 percent suggested that they would aim for Queenstown.

The overall pattern of flow is thus primarily to and from Dunedin and Oamaru, connecting with Mount Cook and the lakeside resorts of the upper Waitaki. Smaller numbers enter and leave the catchment by a number of entry and exit points, mainly the Lindis and Dansey's Pass, but also, in small numbers, via Burkes Pass and Fairlie. Most of these are trips of reasonably lengthy duration, leaving little time for activity or expenditure within the lower Waitaki itself.

Respondents were then asked for how long they intended to stop in the lower Waitaki, if at all; responses are set out in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: “How long do you intend to stop for in the lower Waitaki valley?”

Will travel straight through	36
Will stop briefly	42
Will stop for several hours	11
Will stay for a night or more	11

As can be seen, the majority of respondents only intended, or had taken, a brief stop at best. More than three-quarters said that they would travel straight through or else stop only briefly. By contrast, only 11 percent stated that they would stay a night or more. Given the destinations cited in Table 3.3, it is clear that, despite the careful explanations given, many respondents had confused the lakes with the lower Waitaki. A total of 8 percent of the sample said they had stopped, or would stop, briefly at Kurow, almost always with the intention of eating or buying a drink; a further 5 percent indicated that they would view the Maori rock drawings, as well as the large numbers who were interviewed there. Clearly, the Maori rock art site is the principal and only stopping place for many. Around 6 percent mentioned, or were interviewed at, fossil sites, principally Elephant Rocks. Smaller numbers mentioned the café at Duntroon, the fruit stalls, the Heritage Centre at Kurow and the Kurow Visitor Information Centre.

Virtually everyone encountered was on a holiday of some kind; many used campervans and a significant few were cycling. Most respondents said that they were touring, sightseeing or on a general holiday, but a small number, less than 5 percent, specified a particular focus for their trip. These included fishing, swimming, following the Vanished World fossil trail or visiting friends who were already on holiday.

Respondents were then asked to identify the relative significance of the lower Waitaki as a part of their overall trip; responses are set out in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: “How important is the lower Waitaki valley as a part of your trip?”

The main purpose of the trip	8
Quite an important part of the trip	13
Neither important nor unimportant	16
A minor part of the trip	24
Just somewhere on the way	40

Clearly, the lower Waitaki itself was not seen as a major part of the trip and, in fact, fully two-thirds saw it as a minor part of the overall trip or else just somewhere on the way and this was, in fact, by far the largest single response. For those who said that the valley was a significant part of the trip, many were not staying in the area, having come from Oamaru or nearby and intending to return the same day.

When asked whether they intended to use the Waitaki River itself for recreational purposes on that trip, 12 percent said that they would or might, although the majority, 88 percent, said that they would not. The activities listed are set out in Table 3.6, with the percentages of the whole sample and of those that responded positively being set out with the latter in parentheses.

Table 3.6: “What recreational purposes do you intend to use the Waitaki River for?”

Swimming	6	(36)
Fishing	5	(27)
Picnic	4	(21)
Boating	2	(12)
Birdwatching	1	(6)

Respondents were then asked to give their personal evaluations of the scenery of the lower Waitaki valley. Again, while care was taken to explain the limits of what constituted the valley itself, it seems likely that some responses were modified to a degree by the experience of having travelled down through the lake environments of the Mackenzie Country and the upper Waitaki. However, since half of the sample had travelled up the valley and had not had this experience, the fact that their evaluations are broadly similar in range and value, it is likely that this effect is limited.

Responses to aspects of scenery are set out in the following three tables.

Table 3.7: “How do you personally rate the scenery of the lower Waitaki valley?”

Exceptional	15
Impressive	35
Picturesque	45
Moderate	5
Dull	Nil

While the modal value in Table 3.7 was ‘picturesque’, a rating at the middle of the range, the overall distribution of values is strongly positive. Around one in six saw the scenery as ‘exceptional’ and a further third saw it as ‘impressive’. By contrast, only a minimal 5 percent saw it as ‘moderate’ and no-one at all cited ‘dull’. Clearly, then, the valley’s scenic values are well regarded.

In a similar vein, respondents were asked to compare the lower Waitaki with other scenery that they had encountered. Clearly, responses are dependent upon previous experience, both immediately and in the longer term, but they provide a further subjective yardstick of how the valley is regarded and in this the two tables are quite consistent.

Table 3.8: “How far does the lower Waitaki valley compare with other scenery that you have seen so far?”

Among the very best	10
Better than most	31
About average	54
Not as good as most	4
Among the least attractive	Nil

Again, responses are very positive and there is a close correlation between the degrees of response in the two tables, so that those who rated the scenery as ‘exceptional’ also regarded it as ‘among the very best’ that they had seen. ‘About average’ is the modal response, equating to those who saw it as ‘picturesque’, but a full third saw it as ‘better than most’. Overall, then, the scenery of the lower Waitaki is seen as at least average and often better than that. Very few see it in adverse terms.

The third table in this sequence, Table 3.9, asks about the importance of the river itself as a component of the scenery, bearing in mind that, while the line of the channel is clearly visible through its accompanying vegetation, the river itself and its immediate bed are not often seen.

Table 3.9: “Scenically, how important is the Waitaki River itself as a feature of the valley?”

Most outstanding feature	15
Fairly important feature	52
Not particularly important	10
Hardly noticeable	13
Irrelevant	Nil
Invisible	6

Most people saw the river as a ‘fairly important feature’, with more than half offering that response. A full 15 percent saw it as the ‘most outstanding feature’, a response from those who had come from up river, in the main, and to this extent, their perception was probably influenced by their previous encounter with the lake and river systems upstream, but also by the river’s clear visibility above Kurow and at the twin bridges. By contrast a quarter saw it as either ‘hardly noticeable’ or as ‘not particularly important’, although no-one thought that it was irrelevant. Rather than opting for one of the responses offered, some 6 percent said that the river was ‘invisible’ or ‘could not be seen’.

It is apparent that the Waitaki River itself is seen as an important component of scenery, but it has not been possible to determine whether this is as a result of actually seeing the river, being aware of its scale and character through brief glimpses or by being aware that the whole scenery of the valley is a result of river action. Clearly, though, modification of the river would have an effect upon the scenic evaluations of most respondents, although it is not possible to determine from this study what the nature of that effect might be.

Finally, in this section, respondents were asked if there any particular features that contributed to the valley’s scenic attraction; responses are set out in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10: “What do you think are the particular features that make the lower Waitaki scenically attractive, if you think that it is?”

Mountainous backdrop	28
River and streams	22
Limestone rock	14
Rolling hills	7
Lakes	7
Farmland	4
Greenness	4
Openness	3
Heritage and cultural sites	3
Fossils and geology	2
Braided river	2

Most respondents thought that there was a degree of scenic attractiveness within the valley (Table 3.10) and most were able to identify specific contributors to this. The principal ones were the mountainous backdrop and the river and its tributary streams; in addition, the braided nature of the river was specifically mentioned. The many outcrops of limestone were frequently remarked upon and the general rural and heritage environment contributes through a series of responses. The impact of the Vanished World fossil trail is also clearly apparent.

Minor responses also included the wild flowers and the Maori rock art. Those who nominated the lakes, some 7 percent, were clearly confusing the wider region with the area specified.

In the final question, respondents were asked to list their normal residence. Two-thirds (68 percent) gave an overseas address as their normal residence; it is not clear how many of those who gave a New Zealand address were permanent residents, although most probably were. The details are set out in Table 3.11, where the percentages quoted are percentages of the whole sample.

Table 3.11: “Where is your usual home?”

New Zealand	
Otago and Southland	14
North Island	12
Canterbury	6
Rest of South Island	1
Overseas	
United Kingdom	17
Australia	14
Germany	10
Netherlands	8
USA	4
Switzerland	3
Canada	3
Austria	2
Belgium	2

In addition to the broad national groups listed, one or two respondents were identified as coming from Thailand, France, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Israel, Sweden and Slovakia. The segment from the United Kingdom is almost entirely from England, mainly the southern parts of the country. Overall, apart from Australia, the overseas group is dominated by England and by the German speaking parts of Europe. Indeed, Britain and northwest Europe comprise some 46 percent of the sample, substantially more than the entire domestic New Zealand segment.

4 The Holiday Visitor Survey

All of the 124 respondents contacted in this survey declared themselves to be on holidays of varying duration.

Although many were first time holidaymakers, many had visited the area, and often the same location, many times over long periods; the details are set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: “How long have you been coming on holiday to this area?”

1 year or less	36
2–5 years	15
6–10 years	13
11–15 years	4
16–20 years	7
21–30 years	13
More than 30 years	12

A third of the sample were on their first visit, but a full quarter were at the other extreme, having visited the area regularly, as it transpired, over more than 30 years, with the longest recorded response being for 48 years.

The reasons for going to that location, or for returning to go there, were very much to do with the river, especially, as might be expected at the fishing hut settlements, but various environmental and social qualities were important too. Results are set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: What are your main reasons for choosing to holiday on the lower Waitaki?”

Fishing in total	52
Trout and salmon	33
Salmon primarily	8
Trout primarily	11
Peace, quiet, relaxation	26
Company, friends, relatives	23
Jet boating, boating	11
Geology and fossils	11
Range of activities available	10
Range of rivers and streams	10
Cleanliness of river	9
Good camp facilities/environment	9
Scenery and natural beauty	7
Dry, sunny climate	6
Good family environment	5
Farm-based activities	4
Duck shooting	3

A number of other reasons, such as the opportunity for painting or for fruit picking, were mentioned by individual respondents. Fishing is by far the most important reason, especially for the Kurow motor camp segment and for the fishing huts at the river mouth. Residents of the Dansey's Pass motor camp tended to emphasise environmental and social values much more. These included the peacefulness of the area, the family environment and so on. Thus, while the nature of the river as an important fishery is of specific and place sensitive importance, many of the attributes of the area are eminently replicable.

Respondents were also asked to list the main leisure activities that they undertook while on holiday; given that particular activities were cited as the main motive for holidaymaking in the lower Waitaki valley, it is not surprising that Table 4.3 should be similar to the previous one, Table 4.2.

Table 4.3: What are your main leisure activities while on holiday?"

Fishing	60
Swimming	24
Jet boating, boating	21
Walking	19
Relaxing, sunbathing	16
Mountain biking, cycling	12
Picnic, BBQ	11
Photography	9
Reading	8
Sightseeing	7
Geology	7
Family activities	6
Running	3
Golf	3
Rock climbing	2
Kayaking	2
Painting/crafts	2

Since more than one activity could be listed, results add up to more than 100 percent. Clearly, water-based activities are central to the holiday experience on the lower Waitaki. The next question asked whether any of them were carried out on the lower Waitaki and 46 percent of the sample answered that they were. The specific activities were principally fishing and boating, with minor mentions of swimming and picnicking. The stretches of river that were used were focused on the Kurow area, with a secondary focus at the river mouth. Table 4.4 sets these out, with the percentages referring to the proportion of those who specified an area.

Table 4.4: "Which parts of the Waitaki River do you mainly visit for these activities?"

Kurow to Duntroon	34
Around Kurow	26
River mouth	20
Kurow to SH1 bridge	7
All areas	6
Duntroon	6

Respondents were then asked if they used any other parts of the Waitaki and lakes system for those or similar activities. The overwhelming majority nominated the lakes in general or occasionally individually, while a small number listed the Ahuriri, Maerewhenua and Hakataramea streams. The extent to which the Waitaki River was used, compared with other places, is set out in Table 4.5. The highest proportion was 95 percent and the lowest 5 percent.

Table 4.5: “What proportion of your time is spent on the Waitaki River itself?”

0–24 percent	27
25–49 percent	14
50–74 percent	33
75–100 percent	27

It can be seen that there is a range of proportions, but some 60 percent use the Waitaki River half of the time or more, but that relatively few use it either exclusively or not at all.

Respondents were asked if there were other activities that took them out of the lower Waitaki proper, but these were relatively few. A small minority listed picnics, fruit picking, visiting geological sites (such as the Clay Cliffs at Omarama) and shopping in Oamaru. Because of the limited number and general nature of the activities listed, a range of other locations from around the country were listed. Apart from a minor focus on the area around Queenstown and Wanaka, no particular pattern was observable and alternative locations seem primarily related to place of normal residence. When asked to estimate how much of their total holiday time would be spent in the lower Waitaki itself, many respondents felt unsure and suggested that ‘about half’ was probably their best estimate. In total, 40 percent nominated three-quarters or more, a similar proportion cited a half and the remainder ranged about 30 percent. The lowest figure was a single case of 10 percent, but 15 percent said that all of their time would be spent there.

Similar questions to those asked of travellers through the area were asked of the holidaymaking population, with reference to scenic qualities. Personal evaluations of the scenic quality of the lower Waitaki Valley are set out in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: “How do you personally rate the scenery of the lower Waitaki valley?”

Exceptional	23
Impressive	31
Picturesque	32
Moderate	7
Dull	–

As with the travelling sample, the single largest response was to describe the scenery as ‘picturesque’, although this was effectively shared by a designation of ‘impressive’, with the two values being well within the margin of error. Similarly, almost a quarter saw the scenery as being ‘exceptional’, while few saw it as ‘moderate’ and none as ‘dull’. When the two samples are compared, there is a tendency for the resident population to offer slightly higher evaluations than the travellers, although the two are not strikingly different.

In a comparison with other scenery that the respondent had experienced, ratings were higher than for the travelling sample to a greater extent than in the previous table. Results for the resident sample are set out below.

Table 4.7: “How does the lower Waitaki valley compare with other scenery that you have seen so far?”

Among the very best	29
Better than most	33
About average	33
Not as good as most	5
Among the least attractive	–

Clearly, with three times as many offering ‘among the very best’ as their evaluation, perceptions are much more favourable; conversely, fewer rated the comparison as ‘about average’. The high degree of awareness of river development issues among resident holiday makers may partially account for this difference through consciously strategic evaluation, but the extent, if any, is impossible to calculate.

The difference between the two samples is greatest for the next question, which asks about the significance of the river itself as a landscape component. Since a high proportion of this sample are overtly river users, it is natural that they should have a far clearer and more intimate view of the exact character of the river itself, to a degree that is quite impossible for the traveller restricted to the main highways. The evaluations recorded are set out in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: “Scenically, how important is the Waitaki River itself as a feature of the valley?”

Most outstanding feature	58
Fairly important feature	13
Not particularly important	–
Hardly noticeable	8
Irrelevant	4

Nearly four times as many saw the river as the ‘most outstanding feature’; at nearly 60 percent, this is by far the dominant response, while a further 13 percent who said that it was a ‘fairly important feature’ means that, for this sample, the river has critical significance. These sentiments are replicated in the final question in this section, which asks what particular features make the lower Waitaki valley scenically attractive, with the bulk of responses concerned with attributes of the river. Responses are recorded in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: “What do you think are the particular features that make the lower Waitaki scenically attractive, if you think that it is?”

Braided river	26
Big river	25
Unmodified river	21
Lakes	20
Limestone features	17
Mountains	15
Ever-changing river	11
Rural landscape	9
Good weather	4
Willows and autumn colours	4
Sand bar at mouth	2
Tussock grassland	2

As noted above, the river is well known to and much used by, this sample, so it is not surprising that its size and character should dominate this table. Again, the reference to the lakes shows that the question may not have been answered accurately by some respondents.

The final question asked for the respondents' normal place of residence. By contrast with the travelling sample, the people questioned are primarily New Zealanders and mostly from the South Island.

Table 4.10: "Where is your usual home?"

New Zealand	
Canterbury	48
Otago and Southland	31
Rest of South Island	7
North Island	5
Overseas	
United Kingdom	4
Australia	3
USA	1

Overall, only 8 percent were from overseas, compared with 68 percent for travellers. Indeed, at least two respondents were from a bed and breakfast establishment and could themselves reasonably be considered as travellers, rather than as holidaymakers. Similarly, the proportion of Canterbury residents is much higher than for the other sample and the Otago and Southland group correspondingly much less.

Conclusions

This study reports on a limited duration survey of visitors to the lower Waitaki valley and is thus limited in its capacity to reflect variations in seasonality and market variation. Nevertheless, it was undertaken during a significant holiday period and, with substantial samples having been collected, provides an accurate portrayal of visitor perceptions, attitudes and behaviour for the survey period. Two separate samples were contacted, one of travellers through the area and one of people occupying overnight accommodation of varying kinds.

In the event, it is clear that the two populations are quite different. The travelling sample was made up primarily of overseas visitors, coming mainly from Australia, England and northwest Europe. New Zealanders in this sample came from the North Island and Otago and Southland in the main. The sample of holidaymakers staying in the area was dominated by people resident in Christchurch and the Canterbury region; there were few overseas visitors and few from the North Island. Although detailed demographic data were not collected, observation suggests that the travelling sample tended to have a much higher proportion of younger people and fewer family groups.

Although those staying in the area tended to have visited before, most of the travellers had not. Thus, 70 percent of the travellers had never visited before, whereas 64 percent of those staying had been holidaymaking in the area for a year or more and a half had been doing so for more than five years.

The travelling sample, in the main, were travelling straight through or stopping briefly at best. Indeed, as noted, many appeared to be travelling through the area without stopping at all. Only one in eight thought that they might use the Waitaki River for recreation, no matter how briefly, whereas those in accommodation were very much focused upon it. For those in accommodation, fishing was a principal holiday motivation, along with boating, and was a principal recreational activity, together with enjoyment of the peace and quiet and relaxing atmosphere. The Waitaki River itself was an important focus for recreational activity, although some use was also made of the nearby hydro lakes and tributary streams.

Given the much greater engagement with the Waitaki on the part of the resident holidaymakers, it is perhaps not surprising that scenic evaluations differ. While the resident sample saw the overall scenery in slightly more favourable terms, their assessment of it comparatively was considerably stronger than that of the travelling sample, while their assessment of the river's role was very much stronger and four times as many saw it as the most outstanding feature of the valley. Similarly, resident holidaymakers saw the river's specific character as a stronger contributor to the landscape than did the travellers.

In sum, there is a significant through flow of overseas visitors, especially, who travel through the area from Mount Cook to the east coast and vice versa in broadly equal proportions. Few stay in the area as such, although many stay in the vicinity of the hydro and glacial lakes for at least a time. This population makes little use of the facilities and resources of the area at present, save to visit cafes and visitor centres in passing, or to stop briefly at the Maori rock drawings or at one of the Vanished World fossil sites. They view the scenery as pleasant, but have relatively little awareness of the Waitaki River in the area of the valley. At present, their contribution to the regional economy is slight, apart from casual consumption of snacks and perhaps the purchase of fuel or other routine supplies, they seem unlikely to spend much. Nevertheless, they represent a huge potential and it is clear that further developments, such as the wine tourism alluded to in the earlier report, have a ready-made market to draw upon.

The population of holidaymakers staying within the area is quite different, as noted above. Those who stay in the fishing settlements at the mouth of the river are clearly oriented towards fishing, notably the salmon run, although the facilities are also used for Christmas holidays. Those staying in the Duntroon and Kurow area are equally oriented towards the river and the fishing and boating opportunities it offers. Their evaluations of the scenic environment are very positive and the role of the river itself is central to these. Although their favourite pursuits could be undertaken at a variety of venues throughout the broader region, most tend to favour the river or at least to use it for half of the time, so that it is a hugely significant holiday resource. Without it, the domestic holiday industry would be severely affected.

In the absence of specific development proposals or information about associated works, it is not possible to assess the likely impact of development upon tourist activity and behaviour, but it is clear that the travelling population sees the lower Waitaki as scenically attractive and a pleasant rural environment through which to travel. The river is much more central to the holidaymaking population staying in the area, especially the area around Kurow and on down to Duntroon. Any development proposals that impacted upon the fishing and boating experience would be significant and any that impacted upon the form and character of the river itself would have a substantial effect upon scenic evaluations. Given that the population concerned is largely made up of domestic New Zealanders, mainly from Canterbury, then it is likely that estimations of impact carried out as part of the Project Aqua investigations would have some validity in determining the likely response of this group.

Reference

Kearsley GW, Middleton MC. 2004. *Nature, Cultural and Heritage Tourism and Associated Leisure Activities in the Waitaki District*. Waitaki First and Ministry for the Environment.

Appendix 1: Visitor Survey Forms

Lower Waitaki Valley Visitor Survey

Welcome to the Waitaki district; we hope you enjoy your stay.

This survey is being undertaken as part of the process to allocate the water of the Waitaki River in the best possible manner for a variety of possible uses. We are attempting to assess the scenic value of the lower Waitaki valley and the extent to which visitors use the valley as a tourist resource.

The lower Waitaki valley is that part of the Waitaki River that is still in its original channel and that runs from just above Kurow to as far as the sea.

Your answers would be greatly appreciated as they will give us a far clearer idea of the perceptions and activities of visitors to the area and so help us to plan more effectively for the future development and greater enjoyment of this important river.

Professor Geoff Kearsley
University of Otago

-
1. Are you a visitor to the Waitaki district? Yes No
 2. How often have you travelled through the lower Waitaki valley before?
Never ☐
Once or twice ☐
A few times ☐
Often ☐
 3. Where did you leave from this morning?
 4. Where do you intend to travel to tonight?
 5. How long do you intend to stop for in the lower Waitaki valley?
Will travel straight through ☐
Will stop briefly ☐
Will stop for several hours ☐
Will stay for a night or more ☐
 6. If you do intend to spend time in the lower Waitaki valley:
Where do you intend to stop? ☐
What will you do there? ☐
 7. What is the main purpose of your trip?
-

8. How important is the lower Waitaki valley as a part of your trip?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The main purpose of the trip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Quite an important part of the trip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither important nor unimportant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A minor part of the trip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Just somewhere on the way | <input type="checkbox"/> |
9. Do you intend to use the Waitaki River itself for any recreational purposes? Yes No
- If yes, what do you intend to use it for?
-
10. How do you personally rate the scenery of the lower Waitaki valley?
- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Exceptional | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Impressive | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Picturesque | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dull | <input type="checkbox"/> |
11. How does the lower Waitaki valley compare with other scenery that you have seen so far?
- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Among the very best | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Better than most | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| About average | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not as good as most | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Among the least attractive | <input type="checkbox"/> |
12. Scenically, how important is the Waitaki River itself as a feature of the valley?
- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Most outstanding feature | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fairly important feature | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not particularly important | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hardly noticeable | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Irrelevant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
13. What do you think are the particular features that make the Lower Waitaki scenically attractive, if you think that it is?
-
-
14. Where is your usual home?
- Country.....
- Town or city.....

Thank you very much for your help.

Lower Waitaki Valley Holiday Visitor Survey

Welcome to the Waitaki district; we hope you are enjoying your stay.

This survey is being undertaken for the Ministry for the Environment and Waitaki First as part of the process to allocate the water of the Waitaki River in the best possible manner for a variety of possible uses. We are attempting to assess the scenic value of the lower Waitaki valley and the extent to which visitors use the valley as a tourist resource.

The lower Waitaki valley is that part of the Waitaki River that is still in its original channel and that runs from just above Kurow to as far as the sea.

Your answers would be greatly appreciated as they will give us a far clearer idea of the perceptions and activities of visitors to the area and so help us to plan more effectively for the future development and greater enjoyment of this important river.

Professor Geoff Kearsley
University of Otago

-
1. Are you here on holiday? Yes No
 2. How long have you been coming on holiday to this area?
 3. What are your main reasons for choosing to holiday on the lower Waitaki?
.....
.....
 4. What are your main leisure activities while on holiday?
.....
.....
 5. Are any of these carried out on the lower Waitaki River itself? Yes No
If so, which ones?
 6. Which parts of the Waitaki River do you mainly visit for these activities?
.....
.....
 7. Do you visit any other places in the overall Waitaki River and lakes system for these or similar activities? Yes No
If yes, where do you go?.....
.....
-

8. If you have listed various other places, what proportion of your time (eg, a half, a quarter, etc) is spent on the Waitaki River itself?
.....
9. Apart from using the Waitaki River itself, do any other of your holiday activities take place in the lower Waitaki valley generally? Yes No
If yes, which ones and where do you go?.....
.....
10. Do you go anywhere else for these or similar activities? Yes No
If yes, where do you go?.....
.....
11. Overall, what proportion of your total holiday time (eg, a half, a quarter, etc) will be spent in the lower Waitaki valley itself and how much will be spent in other places?
Lower Waitaki valley
Other places.....
12. How do you personally rate the scenery of the lower Waitaki valley?
Exceptional ☐
Impressive ☐
Picturesque ☐
Moderate ☐
Dull ☐
13. How does the lower Waitaki valley compare with other New Zealand scenery that you have seen so far?
Among the very best ☐
Better than most ☐
About average ☐
Not as good as most ☐
Among the least attractive ☐
14. Scenically, how important is the Waitaki River itself as a feature of the valley?
Most outstanding feature ☐
Fairly important feature ☐
Not particularly important ☐
Hardly noticeable ☐
Irrelevant ☐
15. What do you think are the particular features that make the Lower Waitaki scenically attractive, if you think that it is?
.....
.....
16. Where is your usual home?
Country.....
Town or city.....

Thank you very much for your help.