



*A guided canoe trip down the Moeraki River. "Within five minutes of leaving the State Highway people can be walking in untracked bush or in a canoe imagining they are the only person on earth. With those sort of opportunities you haven't got a case for carving a road through the wilderness from Milford to Jackson Bay." – Gerry McSweeney Photo: Gerry McSweeney*

objectives and an implementation framework for the integrated management of all the region's natural and historic resources including stewardship land. Work on the strategy on the West Coast and in other South Island regions is in its early stages and several years away from completion.

Close liaison between the four DoC conservancies responsible for managing the South West is needed to maintain high standards in protecting natural ecosystems. Rising visitor numbers and the desire of eco-tourists to experience the environment they travel through, and not just admire the scenery through a coach or car window, will inevitably increase the pressure for tourist concessions and access to the conservation estate.

Awarua or Big Bay illustrates the potential for conflicting management objectives within the department compromising conservation and wilderness values. Enclosed on three sides by lowland forests and wetlands, access is by air or several days walking. A number of concessions for guided hunting trips include Big Bay within their licence area. New applications for guided walking trips and canoe safaris are being considered by DoC Southland. If these ventures are successful, the number of aircraft landings on the beach, and the number of visitors to an area which currently has only a DoC hut, whitebaiters'

cribs, and no proper rubbish, toilet or other facilities, could increase considerably.

Yet to the north east of Big Bay, the Upper Cascade/Gorge River area is managed by DoC West Coast as a remote experience area in accordance with former Forest Service policies. Without an adequate buffer zone, the potential for incremental erosion of a potential wilderness area is high, particularly as DoC

Otago proposes to permit aircraft access to the nearby Red Hills after a 22 year ban on landings to protect the area's wilderness values.

The more sensible strategy would be to direct concessionaires to focus their activities on Martin's Bay, a little further south. An airstrip, toilets, rubbish and accommodation facilities already exist there. Such decisions, however, require a



*Brenda and Graham Monk at their Waituna Creek salmon farm. "Five years ago we didn't dream of getting into tourism." Photo Eugenie Sage*