



# KOKODA TRACK AUTHORITY

A Special Purposes Authority of the Kokoda and Koiari Local - level Governments

Newsletter Issue: No.1 - May 2009

## Numbers on the Track

The 2009 season is well underway with the two busy weeks surrounding Anzac Day completed. The economic downturn seems to be biting hard with April's recorded numbers down by 34%, compared with last year.

### Kokoda Track Permit Holder Monthly Trekking Statistics Since 2001

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	% change
January	0	0	4	7	6	2	4	11	0	
February	0	0	0	0	2	5	10	13	0	
March	0	0	11	13	33	56	57	123	122	-1%
April	0	0	152	79	286	723	909	1030	768	-34%
May	0	0	8	53	239	180	254	438		
June	5	12	273	293	336	486	659	540		
July	50	132	173	266	506	647	961	1368		
August	21	128	191	346	469	697	939	802		
September	0	16	127	273	353	629	734	765		
October	0	29	62	101	90	286	490	412		
November	0	22	73	95	53	28	79	83		
December	0	26	0	58	1	8	50	36		
<b>Total Permits:</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>1,074</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>3,747</b>	<b>5,146</b>	<b>5,621</b>	<b>890</b>	

Permitted trekkers departing p/month.

## Deaths on the Track

During April two deaths were recorded on the Track. The KTA has expressed its condolences to the families on behalf of all the stakeholders and the KTA will continue to seek findings from the coroners report to discover the causes of these deaths. Not knowing what has caused these incidents has allowed a large amount of media interest and speculation which is unhelpful to the Industry as a whole. I would ask that tour operators temper their comments to the media until the cause of these deaths is found as the ongoing discussions being carried out in the media can only cause harm.

## Kovelo – Threat to close the Track

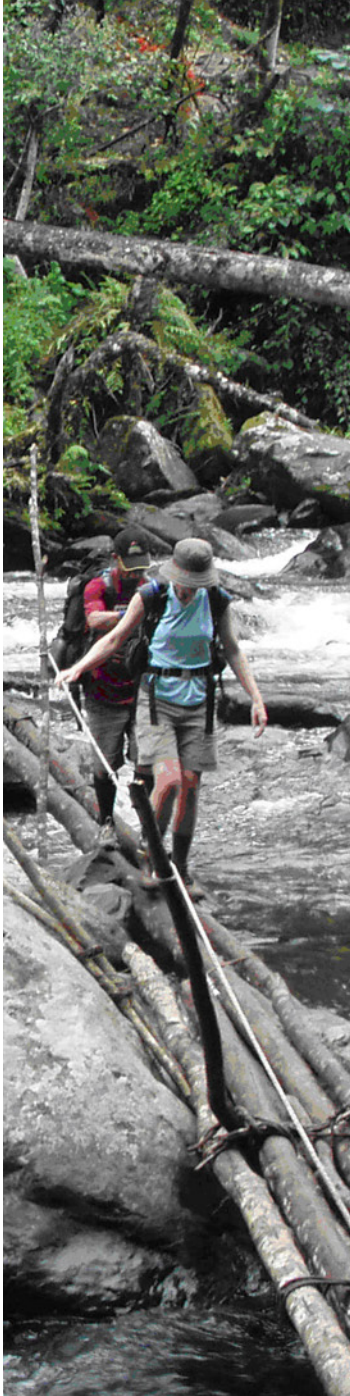
Representatives from Kovelo Village closed the Track on the 6th May demanding that funds only be supplied to Villages directly on the Track, as opposed to the current agreement to send equal funding to the 14 Ward Development Committees.

Agreement has now been reached with these representatives that the Track will remain open subject to outcomes of the KTA Management Committee meeting on the 12th May. The KTA advises that Tour Operators should develop contingency plans in case negotiations are unsuccessful.

PO Box 545  
Boroko NCD 1 11  
Papua New Guinea

P: (+675) 323 6165  
F: (+675) 323 6020

E: kokodatrackauthority  
@global.net.pg



## Owers' Corner Road

Owers' Corner Road has been closed, partly closed for the past two weeks after rain at the end of April. The KTA is not responsible for the road but has allocated K70,000 to repair sections of the road and it is hoped work will commence shortly with these funds. This amount will not solve the problem and a co-operative approach will be required to maximize the small benefits that will be gained from these funds.

A major issue seems to be the use of PMVs to collect/drop off trekkers in wet weather. These vehicles cause serious damage to a substandard road and makes for an extremely poor experience for the trekkers. A realistic approach to hiring these vehicles should be adopted whilst the KTA, and others, seek a more permanent solution to the road's condition.

## Ward Development Committees

The KTA budget allows for K15,000 to be allocated to each of the 14 Ward Development Committees along the Track in 2009 (three quarterly payments). Unfortunately at this stage no Ward Development Committees are in place but there are high expectations that some will come on line in the very near future. This process creates a clear pathway for funds collected through permit fees to be distributed to the local communities minimizing issues of individuals directly receiving the funds. I hope to be able to report in the next newsletter how many funds have been distributed.

## Track Analysis

A Track Analysis will be undertaken shortly to determine the works program required to repair the Track to Australian Standards for class 4 walking trails. This is a minimum standard and seeks to provide sustainable use for the Track. Once this report is complete it will be circulated.

## Current KTA Priorities

The KTA is very conscious of the fact that there needs to be some tangible benefits flow from the new arrangements very soon. An enormous amount of energy has been spent in establishing systems and processes so the Office can function without constant claims for money from interested parties. Over the next three months the focus will be on

- Ensuring compliance (Permits)
- Completing the recruitment of advertised positions
- Completing the register for Ward Development Committees and distributing funding
- Repairing Owers' Corner Road
- Undertaking a Track Assessment
- Commencement of track work

## Outstanding Permit Fees from 2008 Season

My thanks to the vast majority of Operators who have arranged a repayment schedule for these outstanding fees. These fees allow works such as the repairs to Owers Corner Road to be undertaken.

Yours.

Rod Hillman  
*Chief Executive*



## Staff at KTA

**Annette Dean and Silas Sutherland** have returned to Australia. I thank them for all their hard work in achieving some great outcomes in a short time. **Michael Rui** continues his outstanding task in maintaining the permit and financial systems whilst **Janet** guards our door!

Advertisements have been placed for;

- Co-Chief Executive – Counterpart Position
- Co-Operations Manager – Counterpart Position
- Track Supervisor (Senior Ranger)
- Track Officers (Rangers) x 2

The Management Committee's Agenda (12th May) includes a recommendation to replace Operations Manager position – (Silas Sutherland's position).