

Outdoor Recreation

New Zealand's natural habitats have high values for outdoor recreation. The quality of the environment is critical to our recreation. The unique indigenous biodiversity and the quality of our natural lands is a priceless recreational asset that needs to be protected. The Conservation Act sets a good basis for management of the Conservation estate. Under this Act access to the estate for the public for their own enjoyment is free. Under provisions of the Act recreation is to be fostered where this is appropriate and tourism is allowed.

1. Maintain existing public conservation lands and waters in public ownership (including our national parks, reserves and other protected areas) so as to protect indigenous biodiversity and enable public enjoyment of our natural heritage.
2. Enhance and extend the network of parks and reserves by the addition of new areas of natural value. This will involve funding for the Nature Heritage Fund and Nga Whenua Rahui and for tenure review.
3. Manage the conservation estate to protect natural values and to provide for recreation that is compatible with this:
 - Control and restrict activities that would be in conflict with the protection of natural values. Activities which conflict with the protection of natural values should occur outside of the conservation estate.
 - Encourage hunting as a recreational activity contributing to the maintenance natural values. Remove the need for individual permits in those areas where these are currently granted as a matter of course.
4. Continuing to ensure there is adequate funding for a system of basic huts, tracks and other facilities in the public conservation lands, thus allowing New Zealanders to access and enjoy their publicly owned natural lands and waters. The system should provide a range of experiences from remote recreation to easier walking and it should leave other areas as wilderness.
5. Curbing the development of elaborate recreational facilities on public conservation land eg 40 bunk huts and Great Walk type tracks.
6. Acquire areas for recreation use. This includes some sites for camping near the coast, lakes and rivers.
7. Effectively manage tourism to limit its impact on natural values and recreational use.
8. Protect the mountain areas of Otago and Southland from new roading and other intrusive developments such as the proposed gondola.
9. Improving access to appropriate public lands through directing the Department of Conservation to encourage the establishment of new walkways across private land and encouraging local authorities to signpost and publicise the existence of cycle or walkways and unformed legal roads so there is clear access to conservation land.
10. Improve cycle access to formed tracks or roads in areas, including the high country, that are suitable for cycle use.

11. Protecting areas of natural quiet by excluding machine noise and create aircraft free zones within selected areas, including wilderness.

Natural Heritage

12. Ensure that the Department of Conservation is funded sufficiently to undertake comprehensive pest and weed control and manage protected areas to maintain or improve their ecological condition and integrity and safeguard threatened species.
13. Amend the legislation to ensure that:
 - Conservation management strategies, plans, and policies prepared under the Conservation Act 1987 can bind management, including providing guidance on concessions and where these will not be approved, take a precautionary approach and consider cumulative impacts.
 - Mining on public conservation land and other public land with high conservation value cannot occur.
14. Establish water conservation orders on rivers that are important for recreation and the environment.

Public Access

The maintenance and enhancement of free public access to and along coastal and marine areas, lakes and rivers, and the conservation estate, by legal roads and other means is a very important principle. Our parks, reserves, rivers, lakes, sea and the coast must remain in public ownership and control, and not become dominated by commercial interests. The public should be involved in management of recreation and other activities on the conservation estate and the sea.

1. Maintain and enhance responsible free public foot access to and over the public conservation land, coast and waterways, including riparian margins, esplanade reserves, and access strip (collectively known as the Queen's chain) and legal roads.
2. Provide clearly marked legal access to the edge of the public conservation estate.
3. Retaining in public ownership and control the land and waters administered by local or central Government, with predominant conservation or access values.
4. Protecting the public interest in access to high country lands by amending the Overseas Investment Act to prevent the sale of blocks of freehold land to non-New Zealand citizens or any offshore company without providing for additions to the Queens chain where there is none and other conditions that ensure appropriate public access.
5. Support the creation of an access agency as proposed by the Acland report to:
 - Develop and publicise a code of conduct for users of access through private land, to ensure they know their responsibilities and appropriate conduct.
 - Facilitate negotiated solutions to access problems.

- Ensure that the existence of areas and routes providing legal access is mapped and that maps and information are readily available to the public.
6. Ensuring that the Resource Management Act provisions for esplanade reserves and strips and public access strips are effectively implemented.
 7. Ensuring marginal strips are set off along all waterways and water-bodies and adequate easements are established to waterways and conservation land through tenure review of pastoral lease lands.
 8. Improving walkway provision on undeveloped private land to allow for free access along these routes. Examples of these areas are Mt Tarawera, the central Kaimanawas, Mohaka River.

South Island High Country

The high country covers about one sixth of the South Island, and includes lands east of the main divide in Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago. While the land itself is publicly owned, the grazing rights have been passed to some 340 run-holders under long term pastoral leases. Some pastoral leases include whole mountain ranges and steep and fragile country with thin soils unsuited to continued grazing and farming.

Pastoral leases include many areas well known to New Zealanders for their spectacular landscapes. The high country provides important habitat for wildlife, particularly birds, invertebrates, lizards and native freshwater fish. It has high recreational values for tramping, walking, mountain biking and hunting. Foreign ownership of some pastoral leases has created difficulties for public access.

The tenure review process allows run-holders to freehold pastoral lease land while areas of high conservation and recreation value are supposed to be restored to full Crown ownership and protective management by the Department of Conservation.

1. Creation high country conservation parks based on the following areas:
 - Kaikoura Ranges,
 - St James/Rainbow,
 - Upper Rangitata/Mt. Arrowsmith/Ashburton lakes,
 - Hawkdun/Otateake
 - Remarkables,
 - Pisa Range
 in the term of the next Parliament.
2. Work towards extinguishing grazing leases on the conservation estate in areas where damage occurs and recreation is affected – eg in National parks etc
3. Continue tenure reviews of pastoral leases, facilitated and encouraged by the Crown:

- a) More resources and staff should be allocated to tenure review,
 - b) The Crown should be prepared to purchase certain important leases outright.
 - c) Ensuring marginal strips are set off along all waterways and waterbodies and adequate easements are established to waterways and conservation land through tenure review of pastoral lease lands.
 - d) Conditions of sale of pastoral leases should include a requirement that the new lessee commit the lease to the tenure review process.
 - e) Covenants cannot be used as protective mechanisms over large areas of freehold land.
 - f) Pastoral lease rentals should be adjusted to market rates, unless there are good reasons for not doing so.
4. Improving the outcomes for conservation through the discretionary consent process under the Crown Pastoral Lands Act by directing the Commissioner and/or amending the Act to:
- a) Discourage any further modification or destruction of indigenous vegetation and habitats including by burning, cultivation, over sowing and top dressing, forestry or other land uses.
 - b) Provide for public notification and a public submission process for discretionary consent applications.