

General Policy for National Parks

8. Benefit, Use and Enjoyment of the Public

New Zealand's national parks have unique natural and historical and cultural characteristics which are cherished by New Zealanders and contribute to their sense of home and what it means to be a New Zealander. They are areas preserved in perpetuity for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public.

People of all ages, cultures and backgrounds go to national parks for a variety of reasons: to be inspired by the scenery, unique features, sights and sounds of wild nature, to experience solitude, remoteness, peace and natural quiet, to experience nature on nature's terms, to experience the challenge of being self-reliant and adventurous, to explore, enjoy and learn about new and natural places, to share experiences, to maintain active, healthy lifestyles, and "to get away from it all".

People can also have an adverse impact on the very qualities which attract them to national parks in the first place. In addition, the enjoyment of some can be at the expense of the enjoyment of others. A range of activities and behaviours, facilities and services, and large groups, can erode enjoyment of national parks in their natural state and as places of refuge from commercialism and urbanisation.

The traditional New Zealand back country experience has a distinctive character based on basic facilities. This requires self-reliance and its focus is on nature being met on nature's terms.

Some places within national parks have attracted people as tourists for over a century and businesses have been established to cater to their needs and enhance their experiences. This activity has become part of the experience of people at those places.

The General Policy recognises the different, and sometimes potentially conflicting, aspirations of people to enjoy national parks and seeks to find a balance which facilitates benefit, use and enjoyment while respecting the rights of others to do the same, maintaining what is distinctive about recreation in the backcountry of New Zealand national parks, and preserving them in their natural state for future generations.

POLICIES

8.1 Planning and management in general

8.1(a) Each national park management plan will identify the outcomes planned for places within the national park consistent with the values of those places identified in the planning process set out in Chapter 12.

8.1(b) Opportunities for the benefit, use and enjoyment of each national park will be provided. Where they are provided they should be consistent with the outcomes planned for places.

8.1(c) Planning and management for recreation and other opportunities for the benefit, use and enjoyment of each national park should:

- i) preserve national park values, including natural quiet, as far as possible;
- ii) minimise adverse effects, including cumulative effects, on national park values;
- iii) provide for a range of experiences to enable people with different capabilities, skills and interests to have the opportunity to benefit, use, enjoy, and gain inspiration from national parks; and
- iv) maintain the distinctive character of recreation in New Zealand national parks, including the traditional New Zealand backcountry experience with its ethos of self-reliance.

8.1(d) Each national park management plan should identify:

- i) current recreational opportunities available;
- ii) characteristics of the experience to be preserved;
- iii) current and projected levels of use;
- iv) potential conflicts between different recreational activities; and
- v) contribution to, and compatibility with, the wider network of recreational opportunities in other places.

8.1(e) Recreational opportunities, should be managed using a variety of tools to support the outcomes planned for places, including, but not limited to, zoning and limitations on the number of people or activities, including concessionaires.

8.1(f) The Department should undertake advocacy and work cooperatively with other people and organisations to secure legal and practical access to national parks.

8.1(g) Public access to national parks will be free of charge. Charges may be made for the use of accommodation, facilities and services.

8.1(h) Facilities donated by people and organisations may be sited in a national park consistent with the national park management plan and should:

- i) be for the benefit and use of the public;
- ii) be constructed, maintained and managed to the same standards as similar facilities constructed

and maintained by the Department;

- iii) meet the criteria set out in chapter 9 of this General Policy if the facilities are accommodation;
- iv) be consistent with outcomes planned for the place where they are sited; and
- v) minimise adverse impacts on the natural state of the national park; and may contain a discreet plaque identifying the benefactor.

8.1(i) Unformed legal roads within national parks should be closed and the land incorporated into the national park except where they are essential as legal access to other lands.

8.2 Information including interpretation

8.2(a) A range of information should be provided to:

- i) encourage and assist people in understanding, appreciating, enjoying and preserving national parks; and
- ii) enable people to assess the risks from hazards that may occur in a national park.

8.2(b) Boundaries, entrances, tracks and features of particular interest may be signposted or interpreted.

8.2(c) Signs should be confined to those necessary for safety, information and interpretation and should be located, and be of such a scale, design and colour, as to harmonise with the landscape and seascape, except where for safety reasons they should be clearly visible.

8.3 Hazards to people

8.3(a) People are responsible for their own decisions on risks they are prepared to take in national parks and for ensuring that they and, generally, those in their care, have the level of skills, competence, and the equipment required to cope with those risks.

8.3(b) Recreational activities that create hazards for other people should be managed to reduce the risk of harm.

8.4 Sports fishing and game bird hunting

8.4(a) Fishing for sports fish legally present in the waters of national parks will be allowed, except in specially protected areas, in which case a valid authorisation will be required.

8.4(b) Hunting of introduced game birds in national parks should, consistent with outcomes at places, be allowed where:

- i) it does not have an adverse effect on populations of indigenous species;
- ii) the safety of people would not be at risk;
- iii) a valid licence is held; and
- iv) it is provided for in a national park management plan.

8.5 Animals

8.5(a) Animals (including pets) will not be permitted to be taken into a national park unless they have been specifically authorised by the National Parks Act 1980, a national park bylaw or national park management plan.

8.6 Vehicles and other forms of transport

8.6(a) A national park management plan should specify where the use of vehicles and any other forms of transport may be allowed:

- i) consistent with the outcomes planned for places; and
- ii) where adverse effects on national park values, including natural quiet, can be minimised.

8.6(b) Policies 8.6(c) to 8.6(m), below, will need to be considered in conjunction with policy 8.6(a), above.

Powered aircraft (including, but not limited to, fixed-wing, ultra-light and model airplanes, helicopters and gyrocopters):

8.6(c) The landing, hovering and take-off of aircraft may be authorised where this is consistent with the outcomes planned for a place, is provided for in the relevant national park management plan and is consistent with policies 10.6(a) to 10.6(h).

Powered watercraft (including, but not limited to, runabouts, launches, hovercraft, cruisers, personal watercraft (e.g. jet skis), and powered sailing craft):

8.6(d) Jet skis and other powered personal watercraft should not be used in national parks.

8.6(e) A national park management plan may provide for other powered watercraft, where this is consistent with the outcomes planned for places.

Powered vehicles (including, but not limited to, automobiles, motorcycles, motorised bicycles and trail bikes, snow-mobiles, beach vehicles, and hovercraft):

8.6(f) Powered vehicles should not be taken into or used in national parks except on roads formed and maintained for vehicle use, and on routes specifically approved for use by a specified type of powered vehicle in a national park management plan.

Non-powered vehicles (including, but not limited to, all non-motorised cycles and mountain bikes):

8.6(g) Non-powered vehicles should not be ridden or otherwise used in national parks except on roads formed and maintained for vehicle use, and on routes specifically approved for use by specified types of non-powered vehicle in a national park management plan.

8.6(h) Roads and routes may be approved for the use of a specified type of non-powered vehicle only where:

- i) adverse effects on national park values can be minimised;
- ii) the track standard is suitable; and
- iii) the benefit, use and enjoyment of other people can be protected.

8.6(i) A national park management plan will identify measures to manage the approved use of specified types of non-powered vehicles that should be taken to:

- i) minimise any adverse effects (including cumulative effects) on national park values; and
- ii) protect the experiences of, and avoid creating hazards for, others.

8.6(j) Measures to manage the use of a specified type of non-powered vehicle approved for use in a national park may include, but are not limited to:

- i) trial periods;
- ii) restricted seasons;
- iii) limits on numbers;
- iv) one-way flow; and
- v) adherence to a nationally recognised user code.

8.6(k) A national park management plan should identify monitoring requirements for the use of specified types of non-powered vehicles and specify what actions should be taken if adverse effects arise, including the possibility of use no longer being allowed.

Non-powered aircraft (including, but not limited to, gliding, hang-gliding, parapenting, hot-air ballooning, model gliders and kites):

8.6(l) A national park management plan may provide for use of non-powered aircraft, where this is consistent with the outcomes planned for a place.

Non-powered watercraft (including, but not limited to, sailing boats of all types and sizes, windsurfers or sailboards, waka, rowboats, canoes, kayaks (including sea-kayaks), and rafts):

8.6(m) A national park management plan may provide for use of non-powered watercraft, where this is consistent with the outcomes planned for a place.