

# Guidance on how to notify DOC before lodging a fast-track application

This guidance is intended to assist applicants to notify DOC before lodging a fast-track application.

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## Introduction

Prior to lodging a referral application, or a substantive application for a listed project, applicants must notify DOC in writing where the application includes conservation approvals.

If you are intending to apply for a land exchange, you must consult with DOC prior to lodging the land exchange application. Further information on this is here: [Land Exchange form: Request for consultation with DOC](#).

DOC also strongly recommends applicants engage before lodging a substantive application for a referred project because the level of information available at substantive application vs referral application stage is vastly different, and key details, opportunities and issues that would benefit from proactive engagement could be overlooked.

## What is pre-lodgement notification?

The requirement to notify DOC prior to lodging an application means that you must provide information to DOC in writing on a planned fast-track application so that DOC can provide you with a response on the application.

## What are the benefits?

Providing DOC with fulsome information on a planned application can support a more efficient and effective application process once a proposal is lodged.

DOC encourages applicants to provide as much information as possible and to engage with us. DOC provides advice to Ministers and the panel at a number of stages in the fast-track process.

DOC can provide you with feedback on the conservation approvals required for the application, how to meet the information requirements related to the approvals and identify potential future roadblocks or opportunities. DOC's input at this early stage can identify key issues such as approvals and/or information missing that can be resolved prior to lodgement. This helps ensure your application is comprehensive, complete and well positioned. Once an application is lodged, the timeframes under the Fast-Track Approvals Act (FTAA) are tight and the opportunity for an applicant to revise an application or provide additional information is limited.

Our experience to-date is that good pre-lodgement engagement assists both DOC and applicants and can streamline the rest of the formal (post-lodgement) stages.

Best practice pre-lodgement engagement involves open sharing of information with a view to incorporating feedback and revising proposals as appropriate. DOC can facilitate meetings/site visits and co-ordinate our conservation experts to provide valuable feedback as part of the process.

Your application must include a summary of how any responses to the notice have informed the project. If the pre-lodgement information requirements are not demonstrated in the application, it may be determined to be incomplete and returned to you.

## How to notify DOC

To notify DOC fill out this form: [Notification of Fast-track pre-lodgement](#) and new customer forms and email them to [fasttrackapplicationenquiries@doc.govt.nz](mailto:fasttrackapplicationenquiries@doc.govt.nz).

Further information is available on DOC's [website](#). DOC's dedicated [fast-track team](#) is the first point of contact at DOC for all fast-track applications and they can assist with any questions you have in relation to the process.

## How long does it take?

The FTAA requires you to provide DOC with 20 working days to respond to the notice. This is the minimum time required.

Our experience is that to carry out engagement with DOC in a way that will best set up your application for the rest of the Fast-track process, you should ideally allow at least 4-6 weeks. The amount of time to allow depends on the scale and complexity of your project and the number of conservation approvals that may be required as part of the application. It also depends how advanced your project is and how much information you have available – larger and complex applications (multiple approvals) will benefit from a longer timeframe.

## Information to provide

The more information you provide us, the better we can understand the proposal and provide the right feedback. Guidance to assist with understanding the information requirements for a wildlife approval available here: [Guidance for applying for a wildlife approval](#) and further guidance for other conservation approvals is under development.

Some key information to provide includes:

- Proposal details (approvals sought, activities, disturbance, effects)
- Draft application documents
- Conservation focused assessments
- GIS file/s showing the area of the proposal, as a polygon, in one of the following file formats - Esri Shapefile (must include .shp, .shx, .prj and .dbf files), KML, KMZ or GeoJSON
- Consultation information (including historical).

## Referral

At the referral stage, we appreciate only high-level information may be available – a solid overview of the project, the approvals anticipated to be required and any assessments to be undertaken if the project is referred, and indicative timing will be useful. We recommend that you take a precautionary approach to any conservation approvals required – it is easier to start broad and narrow the scope than add extra approvals later.

## Substantive

How close you are to lodgement will influence how much information you have – by the time consultation and notification is concluded and you intend to lodge, we will expect to see detailed plans and locations (including translocation sites for any wildlife to be moved), baseline surveys, descriptions of the activities and impacts, detail of the precise approvals sought, proposed conditions, any management plans, and

offsetting or compensation proposals. Details of consultation undertaken, particularly with groups DOC would also engage with, is helpful.

## Land exchange

If you are intending to apply for a land exchange, you must consult with DOC prior to lodging that application. Documents that would facilitate preparing a complete application are:

- Conservation values assessments (biodiversity, freshwater, recreational, and cultural and heritage values).
- Detailed land status check by a LINZ-accredited supplier
- Valuation information and information about any financial and legal liabilities and obligations associated with the land to be exchanged.
- Details of any consultation undertaken with any parties that have rights or interests in the land to be exchanged.

Guidance to assist with understanding information requirements of a land exchange application can be found on our website.

## Consultation started prior to 31 March 2026

If you started pre-lodgement consultation with DOC prior to 31 March 2026, under the old section 11 or 29 of the Fast-track Approvals Act, you do not need to notify DOC but you must finish the pre-commencement consultation that you started.

## What to expect during pre-lodgement engagement with DOC

Depending on the stage and nature of your application, pre-lodgement engagement with us may involve a simple exchange and review of information, or meetings and site visits.

We will provide you with a response to the notification. Your application must include information on the responses to your notice and how the responses have informed the project. This may include:

- Commentary on conservation approvals sought
- Commentary on application documents and assessments
- Commentary on proposed conditions
- Identification of key issues/opportunities worked through as part of the process
- Existing permissions/concessionaire information in relation to a project site (focus on potentially affected parties/crown liability considerations).

DOC undertakes a Treaty obligations assessment for all projects. This seeks to identify any specific arrangements and agreements in place that are or may be relevant to a project so that they are considered as part of the process. We can also share this information with you, to inform your project as part of the pre-lodgement process too.

## Cost Recovery

DOC recovers the actual and reasonable costs we incur as part of any work on fast-track projects. For our response to pre-lodgement notification, we recover costs directly even if the application does not proceed, is withdrawn or declined. DOC's Cost Recovery Policy can be found here: [DOC Fast-track Cost Recovery Policy](#).

We'll provide an estimate of our pre-lodgement costs once we have an understanding of your proposal. We'll recover additional pre-lodgement costs if it is necessary to do work that was not covered by the original estimate.

Our team will be timely, efficient, consistent, and cost-effective in developing our response. Refer to the DOC Fast-track cost recovery policy for more information.

## **Other consultation**

Part of DOC's role involves engaging with and supporting Treaty partners and entities including the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) and conservation boards.

We update these groups about projects/applications that DOC is engaged with at various points in the fast-track process – we ask that you provide a summary of your proposal that can be shared. If you have any concerns or questions about what information is to be shared, please discuss with us – we typically don't share any detailed information that isn't publicly available unless you've okayed it.

Please note that you have obligations to consult or notify certain Māori groups as required by the FTAA and we encourage you to carry out these processes early.

Also note that the NZCA and relevant conservation board(s) will always be invited to comment on conservation approvals under the FTAA.