

VISITING NEW ZEALAND'S CONSERVATION LAND

Concessions guidelines for commercial tour operators, coach companies and guides

Exploring our natural environment is a highlight for many visitors to New Zealand. Tour companies, guides and drivers have an important role in helping visitors experience and learn about New Zealand's natural, historic and cultural heritage.

Almost 33% of New Zealand's lands and waters have conservation status as a national park, reserve, or other protected area. All public conservation land in New Zealand is managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). DOC's role is to protect New Zealand's unique natural, historic and cultural heritage and to administer access to public conservation lands and waters.

Individuals have unlimited access to conservation land for recreational purposes, provided their recreational activity is allowed within the area. However, commercial operators and businesses require a permit to access public conservation land and this is done through DOC's concession process.



For further information contact:

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www.doc.govt.nz

Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

What is a concession?

If you want to use public conservation land to run a business or activity, you must get permission from DOC in the form of a concession. Concessions are a legal requirement under the provisions of Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987.

Concessions allow:

- ▶ Commercial activities, eg setting up and running a retail or tourism business
- ▶ Organised non-profit activities, eg running a sports event
- ▶ Occupation of land and building or structures, eg grazing an area, right of way access, building bridges.

These activities can be permitted as long as conservation values are protected – the right activities in the right places.

When is a concession required?

If you want to run a commercial or organised activity in any area managed by DOC, you need to apply for a concession.

Who needs a concession?

You must have a concession if you gain revenue from activities on or provided by public conservation land. This includes activities such as guiding, parking, filming, aircraft landing, extraction and occupation. It applies to sole operators, New Zealand companies, international companies and other government departments.



Why is a concession required?

Concessions help DOC to:

- ▶ Manage the potential effects of activities on the area's conservation values and the recreational experiences of people visiting the area
- ▶ Ensure that the various concession activities are compatible with the primary aim of protecting the land and other resources
- ▶ Make sure that services and facilities provided for visitors are appropriate and of a suitable standard, and that commercial activities do not conflict with visitor enjoyment
- ▶ And they provide for a fair rent to be paid to the Crown for commercial use of public resources. Conservation land is owned in the public interest, and where private use or development of that land delivers private gain, there should generally be a return to the public which helps to manage the conservation values on that land.

It is an offence under section 39(1)(ga) of the Conservation Act 1987 if commercial activities are conducted on Public Conservation Land without a valid concession.

What activities do concessions cover?

Concessions provide for a wide range of recreational activities such as: guiding (including walking, tramping, climbing, hunting, fishing, biking, kayaking and canoeing, skiing, bungee jumping and caving).

Concessions also cover many other activities including: accommodation facilities; water, air or land transport services; commercial education/instruction; services such as shops, tearooms, restaurants and equipment hire; grazing; baches; telecommunication facilities and power lines; commercial filming; beehives; sphagnum moss gathering; gravel extraction; and other resource use activities.

What types of concession are there?

Concession activities vary in size, scale, complexity and in their effects. To reflect this DOC has five types of concessions. If you are unsure which type of concession is right for you, please contact either the DOC permissions team, your local DOC office, or discuss at your pre-application meeting.



The types of concessions available are:

- ▶ Conforming
- ▶ Non-notified
- ▶ National
- ▶ One-off
- ▶ Notified

See the reverse for a full list of most concession types.

Guiding and/or transport services concessions are probably the most applicable to your business and in general these are conforming, one-off or non-notified concessions.

When is a concession NOT required?

1. You do not need a concession if you only sell FIT (independent travellers), unguided tours.
2. You do not need a concession if you do not park or guide on conservation land.
3. You do not need a concession if the driver or tour guide does not park on conservation land or accompany your customers onto conservation land.

What happens if I don't have a concession?

DOC conducts compliance checks on public conservation land. Commercial operators found to be guiding or parking illegally face prosecution and fines under 39(1)(ga) of the Conservation Act 1987.

Can I hold more than one concession at a time?

Yes, many concession holders have multiple active concessions, as each concession is specific to the activity it authorises in the place stipulated. If you regularly conduct activity on conservation lands that is NOT covered by your TECNZ, BCA or ProGuides concession, you will need an additional concession from DOC for this particular activity.

CONCESSION TYPES

CONFORMING CONCESSION

THE CONFORMING concessions process is a streamlined, cheaper process to manage applications for low-impact activities that are deemed to be 'conforming', eg guided walking. DOC has an extensive list of short, half-day, full-day and even overnight walks that are available under a conforming concession. See the [full guided walking \(conforming\) list here](#). We recommend this concession for small tour operators who regularly visit the same locations AND those locations are included in the Conforming Tracks Schedules.

NON-NOTIFIED CONCESSION

THE NON-NOTIFIED process is intended for an activity where the effects are minor and relatively well understood and where the application is for a period of 10 years or less.

You will need to apply for a non-notified concession if your tour:

- ▶ Operates regularly
- ▶ Includes more than a guided walk (mountaineering, ski touring, kayaking etc)
- ▶ You want to go to areas not included on the Conforming Tracks Schedules.

NATIONAL CONCESSIONS (LIGHT USE)

IF YOUR TOURS merely stop for a short guided walk (up to 1 hour), a photo opportunity, a short break or short-term parking, you may find it beneficial to join one of the tourism association groups that have a national concession with DOC (TECNZ, ProGuides, BCA). These concessions provide reduced activity fees based on lighter use, reduced processing and a streamlined processing procedure.

ONE-OFF CONCESSION

THIS PROCESS is for low impact one-off activities, such as aircraft landings, guided trips, filming or small-scale sporting events, as well as short term trials to establish the commercial viability of an activity.

This one-off concession process is only appropriate for an activity that:

- ▶ Has minor effects that can be managed (an assessment of effects is unnecessary as they are well understood)
- ▶ Complies with the relevant legislation, conservation management strategy and conservation management plans
- ▶ Has clearly defined limits (eg numbers of trips/landings to be authorised by the permit)
- ▶ Does not involve permanent structures
- ▶ Does not have a duration of more than 3 months
- ▶ Does not take place in the same location more than once in a 3-year period.

If you operate customised tour itineraries that vary with each client, you may be better to apply for one-off concessions as and where you need them. You should contact the [local DOC office](#) in the area you wish to access if the itinerary is to include:

- ▶ More than a guided walk (mountaineering, ski touring, kayaking etc)
- ▶ Includes locations not included on the [Conforming Tracks Schedules](#).

	CONFORMING CONCESSION	ONE-OFF CONCESSION	NON-NOTIFIED CONCESSION	NATIONAL CONCESSION		
				TECNZ	PROGUIDES	BCA
DEFINITION/ PURPOSE	Low impact guided walking on selected tracks where the effects are well understood.	Low impact activity has minor effects that can be managed AND there are clearly defined limits and duration. Does not take place in the same location more than once in 3 years.	The activity is likely to have minor effects.	Low impact guided walking on selected tracks where the effects are well understood. Visits to public conservation lands are to a viewpoint, for a photo opportunity or for short walks and are NOT the main purpose of the tour.	Low impact guided walking on selected tracks where the effects are well understood. Visits to public conservation lands are to a viewpoint, for a photo opportunity or for short walks and are NOT the main purpose of the tour.	Low impact parking at road ends and conservation car parks where the effects are well understood.
VALIDITY	5 years	Max 3 months	Up to 10 years	31/3/22	31/3/22	30/6/20
MAX PAX/ VISIT	15	Limits on group size and frequency will apply.	Limits on group size and frequency may apply.	The concession contract does not stipulate a maximum group size.	The concession contract does not stipulate a maximum group size.	NA
INCLUSIONS	Parking Guiding	Limited to the activity applied for.	Parking, embarking, disembarking and guiding. Not limited to the Conforming Tracks Schedules.	Guiding	Guiding	Parking, embarking/ disembarking
EXCLUSIONS	Any tracks not listed on the Conforming Tracks Schedules.	Any activity outside the concession application.	Any activity outside the concession application.	Parking Any tracks NOT listed on the concession. Visits longer than 1 hour.	Parking Any tracks NOT listed on the concession. Visits longer than 1 hour.	Guiding All sites listed on the Exclusion Schedule.
APPLICATION/ PROCESSING FEES	\$400 (for 10 tracks) \$115 (for each additional set of 10 tracks)	\$130	\$1540 Additional fees when total Department time exceeds 16 hours for processing.	Nil	Nil	Nil
ANNUAL MANAGEMENT FEES	\$300	NA	\$300 – \$350	\$50	\$50	Nil
ACTIVITY FEES	Up to 1 hour: \$1 per person 1 – 4 hours: \$5 per person Full day: \$10 per person (Minimum annual activity fee: \$200)	Up to 1 hour: \$1 per person 1 – 4 hours: \$5 per person Full day: \$10 per person	Up to 1 hour: \$1 per person 1 – 4 hrs: \$5 per person Full day: \$10 per person (Minimum annual activity fee: \$200)	Up to 1 hour: \$0.20 per person/ per day of the itinerary	Up to 1 hour: \$0.20 per person/ per day of the itinerary	Standard: \$225 per vehicle 1 Jul to 30 Jun (for first 55 cars) \$95 per vehicle 1 Jul to 30 Jun (for each additional vehicle in excess of 55) Light user: \$95 per vehicle valid for 15 days
IDENTIFICATION	ID card	Concession document/ number	ID card	Letter of authority	ID card	ID card displayed on each vehicle
REQUIREMENTS	Audited safety plan or Qualmark. Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Forest & Rural Fires Act extension \$250,000 or more. Third party vehicle liability insurance \$500,000 or more.	Safety plan. Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Forest & Rural Fires Act extension \$250,000 or more. Third party vehicle liability insurance \$500,000 or more.	Audited safety plan or Qualmark. Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Forest & Rural Fires Act extension \$250,000 or more. Third party vehicle liability insurance \$500,000 or more.	Qualmark Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Forest & Rural Fires Act extension \$250,000 or more.	Qualmark certification or safety plan audited by member of OutdoorsMark. Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Statutory liability insurance \$100,000 or more.	Public liability insurance \$1 m or more. Forest & Rural Fires Act extension \$1 m or more. Statutory liability insurance \$100,000 or more.
APPLICATIONS & PROCESSING TIMEFRAMES	Application forms for conforming concessions are available via the DOC website. Conforming concessions will be processed within 5 working days.	Applications for one-off concessions are handled by the local DOC office in the area of interest. One-off concessions will be processed within 5 working days	Varies depending on size and complexity of the application	TECNZ members must sign Schedule 6 to be eligible under this concession. For more information or to join TEC contact Lesley@tourismexportcouncil.org.nz	ProGuides members must sign Schedule 6 to be eligible under this concession. For more information or to join ProGuides visit proguides.co.nz	BCA members must sign Schedule 6 to be eligible under this concession and pre-purchase vehicle ID cards. For more information or to join BCA visit busandcoach.co.nz
REPORTING	Annual activity return.	Payable prior to activity or on invoice.	As identified in the concession document.	A voucher is sent through to DOC for each tour. Annual activity return due end of March.	Annual activity return due end of March.	Concession identification cards purchased in advance of the period covered.

* All prices are quoted exclusive of GST (goods and services tax rate of 15%)