

29 April 2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 30 March 2025.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

Before responding to your questions, I will first provide some background context. A rāhui is performed following the loss of a life or lives, to allow for tapu (sacredness) associated with the death(s) to dissipate from a physical area. The period of time the rāhui is placed on an area allows for it to be cleansed by the natural elements. In this sense, it is a sign of respect for the deceased by tangata whenua (people of the land) and will be placed for a period of time in an area to acknowledge the death and to express our sympathy to the whānau of the deceased.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *How many people were booked to do the Tongariro Alpine crossing on each of the following days, 23 March, 24 March, 25 March 2025?*

Booking numbers for the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC) on the dates requested were:

23 March 2025	85
24 March 2025	39
25 March 2025	86

2. *How many people did the crossing on those three days?*

Less than 5 private walkers completed the TAC during the rāhui. Transport Operators and Walking Guides respected the tikanga of the rāhui and did not bring walkers to the TAC. Manaaki Rangers on site reported no concerns raised by the public at place over these days.

3. *This is an official information request for all communications sent and received by the Department of Conservation relating to a rāhui placed on the Tongariro Crossing in March 2025?*

All information in relation to this part of your request is provided to you in the attached schedule of documents (Items 1 - 9).

4. *All advice and information given by the Dept of Conservation regarding the legality of the rāhui.*

DOC does not prevent access to any part of the Tongariro National Park during a rāhui. We work with local iwi and the community to advise the public of any rāhui that are put in place, and request that visitors respect the rāhui by avoiding the area over this time.

Businesses operating on public conservation land are required to obtain a concession from DOC to undertake their activities, which includes both guides and transport operators. One of the conditions of these concessions is that concessionaires do not operate on the TAC when they are provided written notice from DOC that there has been a fatality on the TAC. This condition was introduced in consultation with TAC guides, transport providers and local iwi and is a standard condition for all operators undertaking their business on the TAC. This condition is agreed to by both parties as part of each concessionaire's contract with the DOC. Most visitors to the TAC use a transport operator or guides due to limited carparking at the track start and the long length of Mangatepopo Road.

Advice in relation to the inclusion of this condition has been withheld in full under section 18(a) of the OIA, by virtue of section 9(2)(h), to maintain legal professional privilege.

5. *All information or advice given by the Dept of Conservation regarding the enforcement of the rāhui.*

DOC works with local iwi and the community to advise the public of any rāhui that may have been put in place for the Tongariro National Park (TNP). DOC does not enforce the rāhui and penalties are not formally imposed for visitors who do not respect it; however, breaches are seen as culturally insensitive. As mentioned in Question 4, DOC does not prevent access to any part of the TNP, however ask that visitors respect the rāhui by avoiding the area for this short period of time.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed in the document schedule, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- personal information, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- advice subject to legal privilege, under section 9(2)(h) - to maintain legal professional privilege,

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Damian Coutts
Director Regional Operations
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Document schedule

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	22 March 2025	Email - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.
2	22 March 2025	Email - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.
3	22 March 2025	Email - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.
4.	22 March 2025	Email – Media Release - Rahui Tongariro Alpine Crossing	Released in part.
5	22 March 2025	Email – Re: Tongariro rahui notification	Released in part.
6	22 March 2025	Texts - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.
7	24 March 2025	Email - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.
8	26 March 2025	Email - RE: Web alert - Tongariro death	Released in part.