

04 December 2025

Ref: OIAD-5822

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 10 November 2025, in which you asked:

*I would like to learn more about the boardwalks in New Zealand's national parks.*

*Could you please provide some information on the following points:*

- *When were boardwalks first introduced in New Zealand parks?*
- *Are they present in all parks, or mainly in certain types?*
- *What are their main purposes?*
- *How are they maintained, and how often?*
- *Are there any notable boardwalks (for example, very long, elevated, or iconic ones)?*

*Any additional details or resources you could share would be greatly appreciated.*

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

*1. When were boardwalks first introduced in New Zealand parks?*

DOC does not hold a single definitive date for the first introduction of boardwalks in New Zealand parks, as these structures were implemented progressively across different regions and park types. We can however confirm that boardwalks have been utilised within parks since their inception and are implemented as and when required based on a variety of needs and considerations.

*2. Are they present in all parks, or mainly in certain types?*

Boardwalks are present in nearly all NZ National parks that have DOC tracks. They are more common in areas with high visitor numbers, wet, slippery terrain, or for protection of vulnerable, endangered plants and roots.

*3. What are their main purposes?*

Boardwalks have two main uses:

- a) To improve safety and visitor experience in popular walks, e.g. by spanning small depressions or sections of wet, low laying ground, connecting paths across or around waterways or wetlands; or creating safe traversable pathways around coastal areas such as through sand dunes.

- b) For environmental protection: e.g. root protection, avoiding transfer of disease that causes Kauri dieback, to demarcate pathways in extremely environmentally sensitive areas such as sub-Antarctic islands.

*Below are two photos of boardwalks in the same loop track, at Ship Creek, South Westland. They both serve the purpose of improving the visitor experience, enabling safe and comfortable travel, at a popular short walk.*



*4. How are they maintained, and how often?*

Boardwalks are defined as a structure in our asset management system. They are inspected by a qualified DOC inspector approximately every 2 years. Any faults identified, either by the Inspectors, or other DOC employees in between scheduled inspections, are programmed for maintenance or renewal as required. The life expectancy of different components of the boardwalks can differ around the country, depending on factors such as use, climate & environment e.g. salt spray, mists, sand erosion, moss growth etc.

*5. Are there any notable boardwalks (for example, very long, elevated, or iconic ones)?*

Yes, Tirohanga Dunes (Whakatane District) boardwalk and Lagoon Boardwalk (Tongariro District and currently under repair) are a couple of notable boardwalks but there are many throughout the country. Location maps for the two mentioned, are provided below.

Tirohanga Dunes Boardwalk:



Lagoon Boardwalk:



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

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Nāku noa, nā

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Shan Baththana  
Director Asset Management  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*