

27 May 2025

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (the Department), received on 29 April 2025, for the following information:

"I read that you have a new concessions process for doc in regard to able Tasman national park. <https://www.tourismticker.com/2025/04/29/doc-iwi-to-design-new-concessions-process-for-abel-tasman-kaiteriteri/>

If there is a final report or similar document that explains the new process, and the reasons for the change, and comparisons to the previous process, can I please have that. I am also interested to know the role of iwi in this new process.

If there is not a report, can I please have information that addresses these points."

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

Concessions

Certain activities require approval (that is, 'permission') from the Minister of Conservation (Minister), or the Director-General of Conservation (or appropriate delegate(s)). 'Permissions' is the umbrella term for statutory authorisations granted under various Acts.

A concession is a type of permission - a statutory authorisation to undertake an activity on public conservation land (PCL) or water managed under the Conservation Act 1987 (Conservation Act), National Parks Act 1980, or Reserves Act 1977.

Concessions are one way that the Department is able to monitor and manage the effects of activities on PCL and waters, ensure safety of users of the land, balance competing uses and demands of users, and create a return to conservation and the economy. In doing so, concessions also align with the priorities outlined by the Minister.

Undertaking an activity without a valid permission is an offence under the relevant piece(s) of legislation, which can lead to prosecution and criminal conviction.

When a concession expires (but preferably prior to expiry), the concessionaire (or concession holder) is required to apply for a new concession to continue the activity. There is no automatic right of, or entitlement to, renewal. Each application for a concession received by the Department is a fresh application to be considered on its merits.

Over time, the activities or uses proposed to be undertaken on PCL and the costs associated with undertaking those activities or uses change as society and the environment evolve.

Applications are assessed and decisions are made in accordance with the statutory tests set out in Part 3B (sections 17Z – 17ZJ) of the Conservation Act.

A list of permissions granted by the Department for activities on PCL is available on the Department's website. This list is usually updated twice a year:

[Active concessions](#)

Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri

Current water-based commercial concessions and some land-based guiding concessions within Abel Tasman National Park, Abel Tasman Foreshore Scenic Reserve and Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve (together referred to as 'Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri') are due to expire 30 April 2027.

There are three relevant management plans that set limits on the amount of activity that can be undertaken at Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri:

- Abel Tasman National Park Management Plan;
- Abel Tasman Foreshore Scenic Reserve Management Plan; and
- Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve and Kaka Point Historic Reserve Management Plan.

The management plans are still operative and are not being reviewed in advance of the Department receiving activity-related concession applications to operate within these areas from 1 May 2027.

Limits on the amount of commercial recreational activity have been set to prevent overcrowding; manage demand on services and infrastructure; ensure sustainability of the tourism industry; protect wildlife; and achieve other conservation outcomes.

A notice issued in September 2024 restricted new applications for commercial activities at Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri until a new allocation process is established. No applications for specific activity-related concessions will be accepted outside the allocation process.

Some or all current concession holders of activity-related concessions expiring in April 2027 are likely to wish to continue to operate. Potential new operators have also signalled their interest in applying for concessions at Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri to the Department.

Engagement with interested parties – Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri

Due to the noted upcoming expiry date for concessions connected to the areas, the Department is engaging with interested parties to design a fair process for the allocation of new concessions to operate from 1 May 2027. This will include targeted consultation on a proposed process - with input from iwi, local authorities, tourism operators, and other stakeholders.

From 1 May 2025 to 23 May 2025, the Department invited operators to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for land- and water-based concessions in Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri. It will help gauge interest from both current and prospective operators.

The tentative timeline connected to this work stream indicates a targeted consultation document will be released for feedback in July 2025, with a new allocation process for the specific activity-related concessions applications in place by October 2025.

Department's response

The components making up your request and our responses are set out below:

Final report related to a new concessions process

There is no final report or similar document of the type requested by you. Provision of such a document is refused, per section 18(e) of the OIA, as it does not exist.

Reasons for a change to the allocation process in these areas

As noted above, the reasons for a change to the allocation process connected to Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri (being a part of the overall concessions process) include:

- the upcoming expiry (30 April 2027) for specific existing activity-related concessions in the areas;
- the fact there is no automatic right of, or entitlement to, renewal of concessions;
- the level of interest from existing operators and prospective parties intending to apply for activity-related concessions in the areas;
- the existing limits on the amount of activity that can be undertaken in the areas, particularly during peak season, and corresponding limits on available activity-related concessions;
- the desirability to establish a fair and consistent allocation process for applications for activity-related concessions in the areas; and
- the need to clearly notify a date from which applications will be accepted for consideration for new concessions that will take effect from 1 May 2027.

The media article referenced by you in your request also took readers to the following link:

[Fair allocation process for commercial activities in Abel Tasman and Kaiteriteri: Have your say](#)

The information available via this link outlines the tentative timeline and steps for the Department to engage and consult interested parties on the design of a fair allocation process.

The extent and nature of engagement and/or consultation undertaken by the Department is governed by a mix of legislative measures and current policy, depending on the matter. Identification of affected stakeholders is also typically determined in a comparable way.

Due consideration will be given to views submitted from across the spectrum of interested parties when engagement and/or consultation is undertaken. It is recognised however that, for a range of reasons, decisions made by the Department concerning the design of the allocation process may not be viewed favourably by some parties.

Comparison to existing allocation in the concessions process

In a standard process for considering concession applications, applications are considered in the order in which they are received – a “first in, first served” allocation process.

If there are two competing applications for the same activity at the same location/area, the second application would not usually be considered (including public notification undertaken) until a decision on the first application had been made.

If a concession holder wishes to continue an activity for which they hold a concession after the applicable expiry date, they are required to apply for a new concession (preferably prior to expiry) if they intend to continue the activity.

Once activity-related limits are met for a particular area, no further applications are accepted or considered until the expiry of an existing concession and/or a concession holder chooses to terminate their concession early.

Each application for a concession is assessed as set out in Part 3B of the Conservation Act, on its own merits.

How the new process differs, and reasons for this:

A 'first in, first served' allocation process, as presently exists, is unlikely to provide the fair, consistent and more transparent process the Department is seeking to establish - given the shared expiry date, the limits to the number of concessions that can be granted, and the range and size of operators (existing and prospective) that may apply.

Further, the existing process could have enabled an existing or a prospective operator, aware of the upcoming expiry dates, to apply for most of the 'future' activity-related concessions and impact/exclude others from later doing so.

The EOI that was run is seen as a useful way to ascertain interest. This step may indicate potential demand for concessions within the noted areas is likely to outstrip available supply, given the limits in three relevant management plans. In such circumstances, the Department may choose from a range of different methods to allocate concessions, including a competitive tender process.

Role of iwi in the design and use of the allocation process

As noted within the information made publicly available on the Department's website, the intention is to involve iwi, by way of their nominated representatives, in the development of the allocation process.

At this stage, there is no formalised role for the iwi of Te Taihupo/Te Tai Ihu (iwi in this context, areas are connected to their rohe).

Information about the Department's responsibilities to its Treaty Partners and the application of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in relation to the Permissions process can be found via the following links on the Department's website:

[Permissions application process: Permissions](#)

[Iwi/hapū/whānau consultation: Apply for permits](#)

[Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and DOC: Apply for permits.](#)

The Department encourages applicants involved in the concessions process to engage with iwi. We can facilitate contact; but cannot necessarily require such engagement.

While feedback from iwi will be taken into account by the decision maker, it is not the only factor that is taken into consideration in processing and deciding the outcome of an application for a concession.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of the Department's response by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

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

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phillippa Fox', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phillippa Fox
Director Regulatory Authorisations
Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*