



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

# **DOC and nature based tourism**



# Outline

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- What is DOC's role in facilitating nature based tourism?
  - Land management
  - Facility management
  - Concessions
- How are the impacts of visitation being managed?
- What are the key challenges ahead?



# **FUNCTIONS**

**MANAGE** land and conserve natural and historic resources

**CONSERVE** indigenous freshwater fisheries

**PROTECT** recreational fisheries and freshwater habitats

**ADVOCATE** for conservation of natural and historic resources generally

# **FUNCTION**

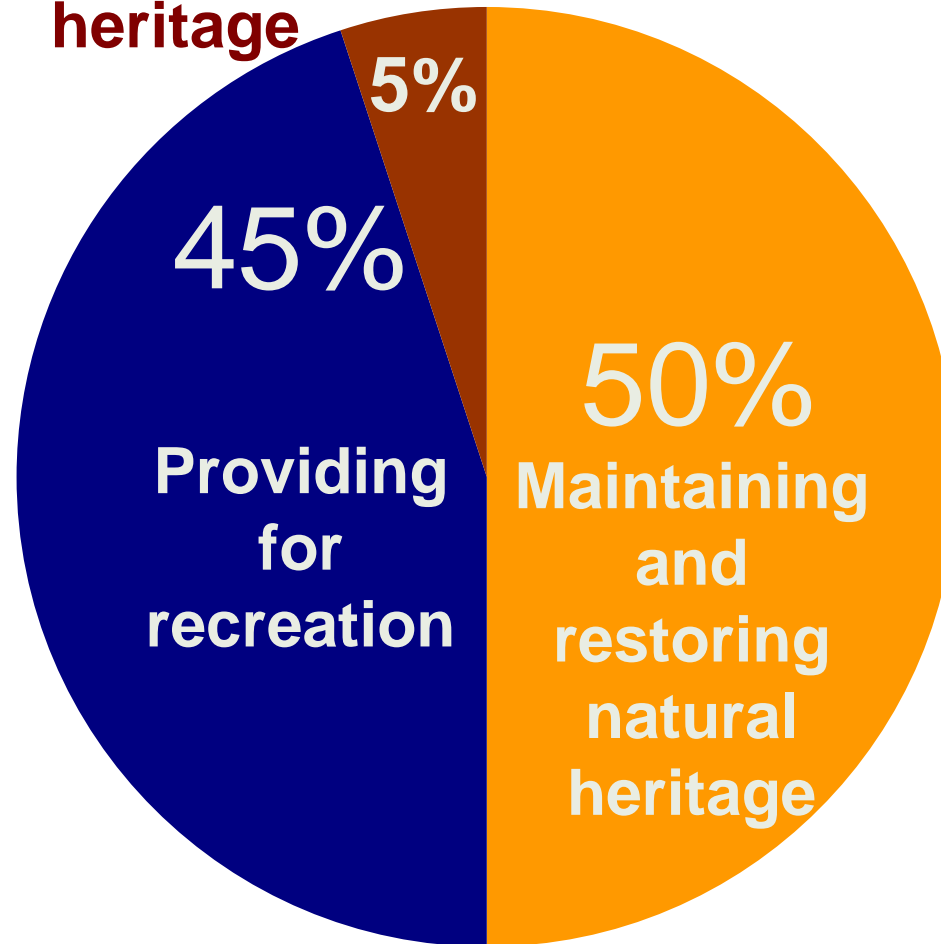
**FOSTER recreation and ALLOW**

**tourism** To the extent that use is not inconsistent with conservation of any natural or historic resource

**PROVIDE** information about conservation and recreation

# DOC's Activities

Maintaining and  
restoring historic  
heritage



# Key activities supporting nature based tourism

- Land management (strategies and plans)
- Facility provision\ non-provision
- Concession and other partnership arrangements

Supports a “range of recreation opportunities” that meets the recreation needs of New Zealanders and other visitors, consistent with conservation values.

# Why manage visitors?

- People want to be able to visit and use these places.
- Tourism is an important industry for New Zealand.
- It is good for conservation.

# Land management

- **Approx one third of New Zealand's land area managed by DOC – this land underpins the New Zealand tourism industry.**
- **30m+ visits per year to these areas and growing.**
- **Forecast growth in numbers driven by continued increase in the number of tourists coming to New Zealand.**

# Strategies and Plans

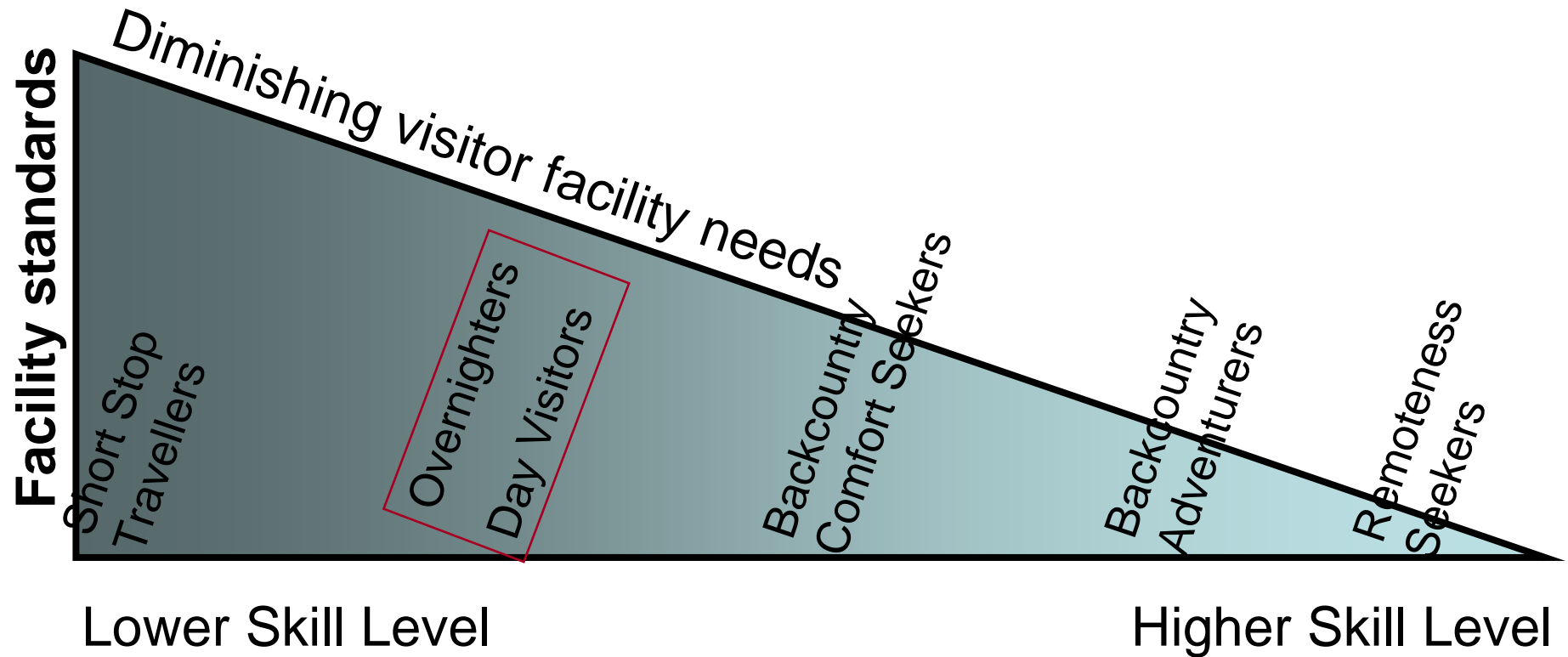
- Key documents shaping the future.
- Public processes.
- Determines the appropriate balance between conservation and use.
- Ecotourism vs. other potential uses.
- ROS is a key tool but not the only tool.
- Key values defined and outcomes specified - provides ability to assess and measure impact.

# DOC managed facilities

- **12,800 km tracks**
- **13,300 structures (8,000 bridges)**
- **986 backcountry huts**
- **230 front-country campsites**
- **26 visitor centres**
- **1570 toilets**
- **2300 km roads**
- **3800 visitor sites**

# Facilities to support a range of opportunities

- Standards for facilities defined by the specific needs (comfort, safety, challenge, duration) of that group in that setting.



- Size and type of facility provided is a key factor influencing use.
- Consideration required of objectives and key values identified in plans/strategies.
- New facility or significant replacement requires completed AEE.
- DOC has the same responsibilities as anyone else.

# Issues for visitor facility management

- **Balancing** recreation need and demand
- **Meeting** visitor expectations
- **Changing** use and experiences
- **Cost** of ownership increasing
- **Information:** Updating information and interpretation
- **Legislation:** Changing legal standards
- **Consult:** Community want to be involved in decisions



# Concession management

## GOAL

In managing the range of visitor opportunities; allow the private sector to provide visitor facilities and services where they do not compromise the intrinsic natural and historic values of areas managed by the department and do not compromise the experiences or opportunities of other visitors (Visitor Strategy 1996).

# What are concessions?

- Is essentially a permission to operate a commercial activity on land managed by DOC.
- Not an automatic right.
- Subject to an application & is legal contract between the crown & the applicant.
- Specifies the rights and responsibilities of both parties.
- Key tool to safeguard the environment.

# Typical concession activities

- **Recreation (approx 1000 multi year authorisations)**
  - Guided walking\biking\kayaking**
  - Transport services (bus, helicopter, plane, boat)**
  - Heli-skiing**
  - Accommodation (hotels, huts)**
  - Ski fields**
- **Non Recreation (approx 2000 multi year authorisations)**
  - Grazing**
  - Telecommunication facilities**
  - Mining**
  - Collection of samples**
  - Infrastructure**

# Concessions - Statutory Framework

## Legislation

Conservation Act 1987 - Part IIIB

## Policy

e.g. Visitor Strategy

## Strategies/Plans

e.g. West Coast Conservation Management Strategy  
Arthur's Pass National Park Management Plan

# Applicants responsibilities

- *Identify proposed location and land status.*
- *Provide a description of activity.*
- *Request the type of concession wanted/duration.*
- *Describe potential effects and actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate effects.*
- *Ensure that they are able to carry out the activity properly.*
- *Communicate.*

# Considerations for DOC

- *Nature of activity and fit with management intention for location.*
- *Effects of activity, structure or facility.*
- *Reasonable measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate effects.*
- *Ability of the operator to "do the job".*
- *Oral or written submissions (if public process).*
- *Any other relevant information.*

# Decision making

*An Application will be declined if:*

*Contrary to the Act or purpose for which land is held.*

*insufficient or inadequate information to assess the effects.*

*no adequate methods for remedying, avoiding or mitigation effects.*

*not consistent with the management intention for that location.*

# Benefits for DOC

- Concessionaires are important partners who assist DOC to meet its objectives.
- Enables a wider range of recreation activities and opportunities to better meet the varied needs of people.
- Protection of the environment – ability to control various factors e.g. group sizes.
- Enhanced visitor experiences.
- Safer visitor experiences.
- Education and advocacy for conservation values.
- Less direct government investment required.

# Benefits for the concessionaire

- Legal right to operate and access to public conservation land.
- A formal relationship with DOC.
- Robust business systems and processes e.g. safety plans, operational plans to minimise effects.

# Concessionaires responsibilities

Be an effective partner:

- Operate in accordance with the conditions specified.
- Monitor for impacts arising from their operation.
- Pass on other relevant information to the Department.
- Engage in plans etc shaping your future.

# DOC's responsibilities

Be an effective partner:

- Prevent operators without concessions from operating.
- Administer the concession system in a fair and transparent manner.
- Communicate.
- Ensure key values are not compromised.
  - Monitor the physical and social effects of tourism activities
  - Set limits on visitor numbers, group size, incompatible activities, etc to protect the environment.

# Monitoring

- Ad hoc driven by individual issues and perspectives.
- Focussed on collecting information without a clear understanding of the issue or how the information would eventually be used.
- What are the key strategic drivers – what do we need to know to be able to make informed management interventions in the future to protect conservation values and the quality of a visitor's experience?

# A new focus

- Consistent drivers for the whole of DOC aligned with the needs of the tourism sector.
- Focussed on key values and/or risks – triggers for monitoring.
- Managers using this information to effect positive change.
- Lack of monitoring not to be used as excuse to delay making a sensible decision – precautionary principle.
- Standard methodologies also available for use by others.

### 3 basic types:

- baseline monitoring:  
numbers, activity,  
location, time.
- compliance monitoring.
- effects monitoring

# Standard effects monitoring methodologies


- ✓ Funded By The Ministry Of Tourism and developed by DOC
- ✓ Protecting Conservation Values
- ✓ Enhance the quality of the visitor experience
- ✓ All effects are being measured in the same way

Visitor Monitoring Toolkit  
**Photopoint Monitoring**  
Standard Operating Procedure

OD Code: 1580



- ✓ Track widening, deepening or braiding
- ✓ Change in vegetation coverage
- ✓ Fence and Structure Condition
- ✓ Erosion on beaches, dunes, duff areas and stream edges
- ✓ Weed spread in relation to visitors or other factors
- ✓ Spread or decline of native habitat or colony
- ✓ 4WD impacts
- ✓ Damage to caves

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- ✓ Aircraft
- ✓ Photopoint
- ✓ Tracks & Campsites
- ✓ Social (crowding, conflict, satisfaction, displacement, interpretation quality, facility quality, overall experience)
- ✓ Caves
- ✓ Rock climbing
- ✓ Ski fields

Visitor Monitoring Toolkit  
**Track & Campsite Monitoring**  
Standard Operating Procedure

OD Code: XXXX



- ✓ Measuring change to track conditions indicators
  - Width (Shouldering)
  - Surface wear
  - Depth / Moirai
  - Blowing
  - Hole depth
  - Moisture / Ice
- ✓ Measuring change to campsite conditions
  - Site layout / vegetation
  - Structural components
  - Fire sites
  - Waste sites

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# *Continued challenges*

- *Co-ordinated approach - avoid ad hoc management.*
- *Determining the type & extent of tourism appropriate in different areas.*
- *Increasing use of some areas:*
  - *New Zealanders v.s. tourists.*
  - *Tourism on DOC land that doesn't require a concession.*
- *Lack of a co-ordinated approach to tourism management in NZ.*