



tourism
INDUSTRY

ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND

**Stewart Island/Rakiura Conservation Management Strategy
Review and Rakiura National Park Management Plan
Preparation**

19 January 2007

Introduction

1. This paper is from the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA), located at level 4, Travel and Tourism House, 79 Boulcott Street, Wellington.
2. Attached as Appendix 1 are details about our organisation and who we represent.
3. The paper responds to your letter of 23 September 2006 by providing initial feedback on the Stewart Island/Rakiura Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) review and Rakiura National Park Management Plan (NPMP) preparation. We trust this feedback will allow the Department of Conservation (DOC or “the Department”) to formulate a revised Stewart Island/Rakiura CMS and Rakiura NPMP. On release of the draft plan, TIA will seek the comprehensive views of its Members and provide a detailed submission.
4. If you wish to contact us regarding this submission, please telephone Simon Wallace, Policy Manager on 04 494 1842 or e-mail simon.wallace@tianza.org.nz or Geoff Ensor, Sector Manager on 04 496 4889 or e-mail geoff.ensor@tianza.org.nz

Comment

A Vision Statement for Stewart Island/Rakiura

“The development of a management plan for the Rakiura National Park presents an opportunity for boldness and vision in establishing a green sanctuary to rival any other eco-tourism destination in the world. With astute conservation management, Stewart Island could become New Zealand’s eco-tourism jewel”.

5. Our Association believes the Rakiura CMS review and NPMP preparation creates a huge opportunity to establish this remote part of New Zealand as the country’s eco-tourism jewel. This is a chance for New Zealand to position itself as a world-class eco tourism destination, attract high yield visitors and build on our reputation in offering outstanding conservation experiences.

Tourism Growth

6. As noted in the discussion document, protecting the natural values and visitor experiences of specific places with potentially increased visitor numbers will be a challenge for both the Department and tourism operators. With careful management we believe the environmental footprint can be minimised. Limits should be used only as a last resort and if DOC is prepared to work with groups and operators on techniques and strategies to reduce impacts, then a prescriptive approach will not be necessary.

7. To manage growth, it will be essential for a co-ordinated approach between the Department, the Southland District Council (SDC), Environment Southland (ES) and other relevant agencies to ensure infrastructure works are handled in an appropriate way. It will be necessary, for example, to have the co-operation of the SDC and ES so that planning permission and resource consents for infrastructure on Stewart Island are able to proceed smoothly.
8. The development of a common vision for Rakiura will assist with ensuring development is empathetic with the local community and interest groups. For example, TIA is involved in a similar process in Milford where a common vision is being developed. The aim is to seek the agreement of all parties as to the values of Milford, leading to co-operation on planning and infrastructure matters while working alongside the local community to manage such impacts.
9. The community itself has said that increased tourism is needed to ensure that Stewart Island will remain economically sustainable. On estimates presented by the Southland Conservancy to the NZ Conservation Authority in August 2006, it was noted that 100,000 visitors are needed annually for the community and its services to be viable. Currently, about 60,000 people visit the island each year.
10. The continual decline of primary based industries, especially fishing, has been responsible for much of the island's falling population. The development of the Stewart Island/Rakiura CMS and NPMP should not ignore the opportunity tourism offers to provide an economic base and preserve Stewart Island's social fabric.

Research and Monitoring

11. We think the CMS and NPMP must be informed by up to date research and ongoing monitoring. It should outline clearly how, what, where, by whom and when monitoring will be undertaken. Management decisions, especially those where limits are being proposed, need to be backed by sound evidence. As TIA has said in previous submissions to the Fiordland, Abel Tasman and Whanganui Management Plans in 2006, we urge DOC to address research and monitoring issues and work with tourism operators to produce the best possible results.

Concession Allocation

12. In developing this Plan, the Southland Conservancy should be aware of the work currently underway between TIA and the Department to develop a nationally consistent allocation policy when demand for an opportunity exceeds supply. We have enclosed a copy of the submission made by TIA to DOC in December 2006.
13. As part of this work, concession terms are also being discussed. Business success, positive environmental outcomes and strong DOC/concessionaire relationships depend on an allocation system that recognises both incumbent investment and risk. Longer concession terms also recognise business reality

and the time required for return on investment. With the Rakiura NPMP, our Association is urging the Department to adopt allocation terms that recognise both incumbency and business realities.

Access and Visitor Management

14. The discussion document poses a number of questions relating to recreational zoning, Ulva Island, Mason Bay, Port Pegasus, tramping and walking, hunter huts, aircraft access and cross-boundary sites. TIA will wait until the draft plan is released before seeking to represent our Member's views on the specific and detailed parts of the plan.

Process

15. TIA supports the parallel process of combining the CMS and NPMP as it will avoid delays to what is already a prolonged process. We encourage the Department to engage with as many stakeholder groups as possible, including those who have an interest in the Plan, but who may live outside the boundaries of the Southland Conservancy.
16. A significant challenge for DOC will be to ensure the draft plans are read and commented on by as many people as possible. The form in which it is distributed, whether in hard copy, on the web or on CD, will all play a role in the amount of feedback received. We understand submissions may be called for in January 2008, and as this is at the peak of the visitor season which extends from October to April, we would ask the Department if they could allow a sensible timeframe in which tourism operators can respond.
17. A succinct Executive Summary to accompany both draft documents for the CMS and NPMP will be helpful for those overwhelmed by the full versions. TIA and Venture Southland will be encouraging operators to actively participate in the formal submission process.

Background

Conservation and Tourism

“...enjoying public conservation lands and waters is a popular activity for many New Zealanders and overseas visitors, and outdoor recreation is often perceived by many to be central to our identity and way of life...”¹

18. The tourism industry supports balanced conservation management policies that sustain economic development, provide a social return for New Zealanders and allow memorable visitor experiences to be delivered. Sustainable tourism businesses that provide a high quality product are dependant on an effective working relationship with the Department. Our

¹ General Policy for National Parks, New Zealand Conservation Authority, April 2005, p.7.

Association supports the strong environmental focus of its Members who operate concessions on public conservation land. Their businesses and livelihoods depend and rely on the way they use and care for the natural surroundings and in this regard, we strongly believe managed visitors are the most responsible users of the public conservation estate.

19. New Zealand's environment and scenery is a major draw card for overseas visitors forming the basis of the "100% pure" marketing brand, which underpins the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and economic growth. The land, sea and air operators that ply the national parks and public estates ensure domestic and international visitors are able to enjoy New Zealand's natural environment and it is essential that this access is continued. Tourism businesses also invest and develop public amenities and infrastructure that improve the quality of the visitor experience.
20. TIA supports the following principles for conservation management:
 - a) policies that sustain economic development and tourism businesses while protecting the environment in which they operate;
 - b) legislation interpreted and applied in a way that leads to the achievement of a mutual relationship between use and conservation;
 - c) lands that provide an economic and social return to New Zealand in a way that is consistent with the values that New Zealanders place on them;
 - d) a fair rate paid by concessionaires for use of public lands to run their businesses in return for a fair consultative process in the management of that land;
 - e) meeting visitor expectations of excellence by insisting concession holders meet quality industry standards;
 - f) ongoing and robust review of DOC's research priorities and capabilities so future decisions are always made on a sound evidence basis;
 - g) policies that are cognisant of the variety of effects imposed by each user group and the nature of benefits they receive from this use; and
 - h) consistent New Zealand wide conservation management policies and standard operating procedures that acknowledge locally justified variations.
21. TIA acknowledges that visitor numbers are growing and increasing the pressure on the natural resources and infrastructure of New Zealand's national parks and public lands and believes it is vital that the Department continues to work closely with the tourism sector to effectively manage this growth. In many cases we believe the issue is one of under-management rather than overcrowding – prescriptive limits are one tool, but a stronger more effective one is collaborative management that seeks operational and facility based solutions. In this way a park's visitor-carrying capacity can be increased to meet demand without increasing social or environmental impact.

22. TIA believes that mutual acceptance of the above principles lays the foundation for a sound and effective working relationship with the Department, based on a “no-surprises”, consultative approach to the management of issues as they arise, as well as encouraging free and frank discussion. It is essential that conservation management strategies or plans are disseminated appropriately, at a national level, and are consistent with legislative criteria.

Appendix 1

Background Information on the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA)

1. The Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) advocates for the interests of the tourism industry in New Zealand. The businesses we represent generate more than 85% of New Zealand’s tourism-related revenue.
2. Tourism is a \$17.5 billion industry (\$8.4b from international and \$9.1 from domestic tourism) with international tourist expenditure accounting for 18.7% of New Zealand’s total export earnings.² The industry, directly and indirectly, employs 1 in 10 New Zealanders in a diverse range of businesses – the majority of which are small and medium sized enterprises. Not only is tourism important because of its size, representing 9.4% of New Zealand’s GDP, it is:
 - Highly employment intensive;
 - Regionally disparate; and
 - Very diverse - ranging from large stock exchange listed companies to small cottage industries.
3. These businesses cover a range of tourism-related activities – hospitality, transport, adventure and activities, attractions and retail and related tourism services. In many cases, regional tourism businesses have developed around regional assets divested by other industries and have revitalised those assets and the communities that depend on them.
4. The tourism industry in New Zealand consists of more than 8,000 small and medium sized businesses. Of these businesses, most employ less than five people.
5. New Zealand welcomes more than two million overseas visitors to its shores every year. The domestic tourism industry is also important in helping to sustain a vibrant tourism industry. TIA estimates that over 75 million visitor nights are spent by New Zealanders every year.

² “Key Tourism Statistics – September 2006”, Ministry of Tourism website