



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS OF NZ INC.

Level 2, 126 Vivian St, Wellington, New Zealand
PO Box 11-057, Wellington
Email: eco@eco.org.nz Website: www.eco.org.nz
Phone/Fax 64-4-385-7545

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Department of Conservation
The Westland Plan Review
PO Box 10-420
Wellington 6011
Attn: Kate Brooking

Submission on:

Partial review of the Westland Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan

By:

Environmental & Conservation Organisations of New Zealand (ECO)

INTRODUCTION:

"Too long we have been dominated by a Gross National Product syndrome. ... We have served man's material needs; now let's serve his spirit. We have shown him how to make a living; now let's make that living worthwhile". – Governor Tom McCall of Oregon speaking at the Western Governors' Conference at Seattle, Washington, 30 July 1969.

- 1) ECO considers that the intrinsic values of our national parks are at risk of devaluation from increasing demands for hurried, "quick thrill" experiences, which contrast with the serene, slower-paced traditional experience. This shift in demand is typified by demands for faster and/or easier access by aircraft, motor-vehicle or foot. All such "improvements" detract in some way from the experience of people seeking a traditional experience,
- 2) ECO considers that the present era of cheap energy is unlikely to continue indefinitely.
- 3) ECO considers that at some future time society will need to shift focus from energy-intensive forms of entertainment to sustainable forms.
- 4) ECO considers that our traditional respect for our priceless national parks makes them an appropriate starting point to educate society in natural values which will endure beyond their abuse for energy-intensive entertainment.

AIRCRAFT ACCESS:

- 5) ECO considers that existing aircraft use in the glaciers intrudes excessively on the experience of those who choose not to use aircraft for access.
- 6) ECO strongly opposes any increase in aircraft use.

LANDING SITES:

- 7) ECO does not consider the list of approved landing sites needs changing.

ROAD:

- 8) ECO considers that any intrusion of formed roads into the National Park detracts significantly from the park experience.
- 9) ECO considers that the relatively small distances where roads could be formed would, in any case, not justify any further intrusion.

VEHICLES:

- 10) ECO considers that no vehicles should be allowed beyond the existing car park.
- 11) ECO is aware that the definition of vehicle includes mountain bikes.

FOOT ACCESS:

- 12) ECO considers that the alternating advance and retreat of glaciers are natural processes, and that the effort needed to reach the terminal faces will change according to those natural processes.
- 13) The most valuable way in which the Plan can protect the experience of people who walk up the valley is to maintain the natural surroundings in total so that the experience remains one with genuine, unmodified surroundings.
- 14) ECO considers that there will always be some element of risk when people enter an area as active as a glacier valley, and that efforts are required to encourage people to realistically assess the risk themselves rather than have an all-encompassing open or closed status which assumes all people have the same level, or lack, of skills.
- 15) ECO does not consider desirable any increase in the number of people who can be guided on the glaciers each day.

CONCLUSION:

- 16) ECO strongly supports the Plan's primary objectives:

Objective 1

To preserve in their natural state, as far as possible, the landscapes, indigenous ecosystems and natural features of Westland Tai Poutini National Park.

Objective 2

To preserve the character of Westland Tai Poutini National Park as a natural area of exceptional beauty, geological significance and biological diversity and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the general public to the extent that this is compatible with objective 1.

ECO appreciates this opportunity to submit on the proposed amendments to the Westland Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan.