



Media release

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GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR ACCESS DRAFTED

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission today published draft guidelines for access to New Zealand's beaches, lakes, rivers, and mountains.

The draft Outdoor Access Code and the draft National Strategy on Walking Access were officially released by Agriculture Minister David Carter at a function in Christchurch.

New Zealand Walking Access Commission chairman John Acland said the Walking Access Commission's job was to provide leadership by preparing and administering a national strategy on walking access.

"The great outdoors is an important part of our New Zealand culture. I think all New Zealanders, and a great many of our overseas visitors, feel a real attachment to our beaches, lakes, and mountains.

"The purpose of the law setting up the New Zealand Walking Access Commission is to provide practical, enduring and guaranteed walking access to the outdoors that the public can enjoy at no cost. Our strategy is to promote, encourage and, where appropriate, negotiate public access on foot to rivers, lakes and the coastline, and to our forests, mountains and countryside."

He said that, along with creating better walking access for New Zealanders, the strategy would also benefit industries, such as tourism, that rely heavily on access to natural resources and landscape.

"I want to see Commission staff work alongside tourism industry and other organisations. They are already exchanging ideas with those planning the national cycleway project, for example."

John Acland said the Commission's focus in the next year would be to produce a mapping system so that people could more easily find out where there was legal public access.

“The current system is complicated. It’s not easy for people to find information on where they can go on publicly-owned land, or who to contact to ask for permission to access privately-owned land.

“The Commission expects to trial a pilot scheme next year. That should make a difference. The lack of information has been a problem.”

John Acland said the Commission dealt with issues that had been controversial in the past.

However, a huge amount of work had been done over the past few years to ensure that stakeholders from recreational groups and landowners understood the issues and were involved in decision-making.

“Property rights are important – both private property rights and public property rights.”

He said the commission’s draft Outdoor Access Code spelt out the need for people to behave properly and to take responsibility for their actions in the outdoors.

“It also asks landholders to continue the traditions of New Zealand, which have seen it as customary for landholders to give access to people wanting to cross their land.”

John Acland said the commission was keen to hear from interested parties and members of the public about what they thought of the two draft documents. He said that consultations about walking access issues during the past five years had improved and refined policies a lot.

“We want to hear from as many people as possible.”

Submissions and letters can be sent to the commission either by email to contact@walkingaccess.org.nz or by mail to NZWAC, PO Box 12-348, Thorndon, Wellington 6144 by 18 December 2009.

Copies of the draft documents are available on the commission’s website www.walkingaccess.org.nz or by contacting Cathie Bell, NZWAC, on 04 8940549 or contact@walkingaccess.org.nz

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