

## 4.2 Special Areas and Management Zones Te Rohenga o te Papa Rēhia

### 4.2.1 Introduction Whakatuwheratanga

The National Parks Act 1980 provides for the setting apart of specially protected areas by the Governor-General and for the gazettal of wilderness areas or amenities areas. Tongariro National Park has two wilderness areas and three amenities areas. There are no specially protected areas in terms of the National Parks Act 1980.

As well as these areas created by legislation, it is possible to have management zones. The park has two pristine areas.

Collectively these zones constitute approximately thirty per cent of the park, nearly 28,000 hectares. Wilderness and pristine areas meet the purpose for which national parks are managed in the purest sense and their preservation is a priority for park management.

The wilderness and pristine areas have been set aside through a process of gazettal or by policy because of their outstanding natural landscapes. Many of the features that give rise to the park's World Heritage status can be found in these areas.

Infrastructure in wilderness and pristine areas is either non-existent and not permitted by policy or legislation (for wilderness areas) or is at the lowest level possible to provide purely for public safety. There are no marked routes in the wilderness areas and the only tracks in pristine areas are small sections of the Tongariro Crossing and the Tongariro Northern Circuit, which are provided for in order to mitigate high visitor pressure.

The pressure on these areas is, in the main, external to them. Land management, either on the margins of the park or within the park, can seriously affect the values of these sites.

The three amenities areas in the park are Turoa Ski Area, Whakapapa Ski Area/Iwikau Village, and Whakapapa Village. In these areas, there is a high level of infrastructure development and intense use. The level of impact and high level of associated use is anticipated in the National Parks Act 1980 by the provision for amenities areas. It is expected that amenities areas will be as small as practical to fulfil their purpose.

For the location of these areas, see *Map 9 Special Zones*. The amenities areas are more clearly shown on *Map 11 Turoa Ski Area*, *Map 12 Whakapapa Ski Area*, *Map 13 Iwikau Village* and *Map 15 Whakapapa Village*.

## 4.2.2 Wilderness Areas

### Ngā Koraha

Wilderness provides an increasingly hard to obtain opportunity for a relationship between individuals and the environment at the most natural level. Setting aside areas of the park for wilderness experience is desirable for a balance in recreation activity.

Both existing wilderness areas in the park, Te Tatau Pounamu (6475 hectares) and Hauhungatahi (8498 hectares), were gazetted (in 1962 and 1966 respectively) under the National Parks Act 1952. These areas have been surveyed as part of the gazettal process and are shown on *Map 9 Special Zones*.

Neither wilderness area complies with the National Wilderness Policy or the *General Policy for National Parks 2005* wilderness area provisions, both established subsequent to their gazettal. The wilderness areas are too small and are not sufficiently remote to be unaffected by human influences. Both wilderness areas are adjacent to highly used and/or modified environments; Te Tatau Pounamu is adjacent to the Tongariro Crossing and not far from State Highway 46, while Hauhungatahi is very close to State Highway 47 and Whakapapa Village. Neither wilderness area has a buffer which mitigates their proximity to modified environments. However, they remain gazetted wilderness areas and have been retained as formal park management zones in recognition of their remoteness and visitor opportunity in a park that is easily accessible. Both will continue to be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Area provisions of the National Parks Act 1980.

The criteria that allow Hauhungatahi and Te Tatau Pounamu to be maintained as wilderness areas are:

- the park is a significant island of wild land in an increasingly modified landscape in the central North Island;
- both areas embody the criteria and values of remoteness, challenge, solitude, self-reliance, and discovery;
- they are contrasting areas: one has mainly forest (Hauhungatahi) while the other (Te Tatau Pounamu) has more varied and richer vegetation as a result of different geological history and environmental conditions; and
- each allows for different recreation opportunities.

The wilderness experience is an intimate one. The user of a wilderness area tends to be seeking the solitude and independent experience that cannot be provided for by a concessionaire. Contact with concessionaires and their clients would undermine the reasons for visiting these areas.

In a park such as Tongariro, where the pressure for development, commercialisation and inappropriate use – both from within and outside the park – is high, it is imperative that some very significant areas receive protection from development.

Also refer to sections 4.3.2.7 *Off Track Use*, 4.4.2.6 *Aircraft*, 4.4.3.6 *Wild Animal Recovery* and *Appendix 6 – Wilderness Areas in Tongariro National Park*.

## Objectives

- a To protect Tongariro National Park's wilderness areas in perpetuity in their unmodified natural states.
- b To seek restoration to their original states of wilderness areas which have been affected by human-induced activities.
- c To avoid the adverse effects of recreation use on indigenous biodiversity.
- d To avoid the adverse effects of development and use which undermine the wilderness experience sought by park visitors.
- e To manage the gazetted Hauhungatahi and Te Tatau Pounamu wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Area provisions of the National Parks Act 1980.

## Policies

- 1 The department will continue to manage the gazetted Hauhungatahi and Te Tatau Pounamu wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Area provisions of the National Parks Act 1980.
- 2 Wilderness areas will be maintained in a natural unmodified state.
- 3 Concession applications involving the use of wilderness areas should be declined.
- 4 Where applications for the activities described in 3 above are received the department will:
  - publicly notify the application, acknowledging the wide public interest in these matters;
  - consult with tāngata whenua;
  - consult with the Tongariro/Taupō Conservation Board and seek its recommendation; and
  - require a full environmental impact assessment undertaken by appropriately-qualified specialists.
- 5 No tracks, routes, huts or other infrastructure will be provided, maintained or considered within wilderness areas.
- 6 Helicopter landings in wilderness areas will only be permitted in emergencies, for management purposes, or where research is necessary for the preservation of natural resources.

### 4.2.3 Pristine Areas Ngā Wāhi Taketake

The park has two pristine areas: the alpine zone of Mount Ruapehu and the alpine zone of Mount Tongariro/Mount Ngauruhoe, shown on *Map 9 Special Zones*.

Reasons for the management of these zones as pristine areas include:

- historical and cultural heritage as the Gift areas which constituted the beginning of the park;
- unique scientific and landscape values;
- the pervading sense of solitude and quietness
- the outstanding visual features associated with the summit areas, especially the crater area of Mount Ruapehu;
- location within the most remote areas of the park. Foot access is not unduly difficult at any time of the year but does require care and some knowledge of mountaineering skills;
- preservation of the only high alpine areas in the park; and
- lack of development, apart from poled tracks.

The park's pristine areas hold a variety of values. For recreation users these may include the technical challenge of the alpine terrain and stunning views obtained after the hard work of ascending a mountain, or the thrill of carrying skis to the head of the Whakapapa Glacier to visit the Crater Lake and ski home. For many tau iwi the peaks of the mountains are revered and respected because of the spiritual values attached to them. For tāngata whenua the mountains are ancestors: they have come from and will return to them. The mountains are tapu and as such are sacred places. These varied values are complementary in terms of the shared respect held for these areas.



The desecration feared by many could occur through overuse, overt commercial exploitation, and ignorance of the values of these areas, represented through inappropriate infrastructure development or waste left on the mountains.

Concession applications for guiding in the pristine areas are assessed under policies 4.4.1 *Concessions General* and 4.4.2.1 *Guiding*. Also refer to section 4.3.2.7 *Off Track Use*.

## Objectives

- a To protect Tongariro National Park's pristine areas in perpetuity in their unmodified existing states.
- b To seek restoration of pristine areas to their original states where they have been affected by human-induced activities.
- c To avoid the adverse effects of development and use which undermine the pristine zone experience sought by park visitors.
- d To avoid the adverse effects of intensive recreation use by park visitors.
- e To protect historical and cultural heritage within pristine areas.

## Policies

- 1 The pristine areas will be managed to avoid developments unless for essential visitor safety, to retain and enhance their historical and cultural significance, and to provide for natural quiet.
- 2 Concession applications involving infrastructure development within the pristine areas, or above 2300 metres, should be declined. The exception to this is consideration of applications within Turoa Ski Area where the surveyed ski area boundary extends to 2325 metres. Also refer to sections 4.4 *Concessions* and 5.2.1 *Management of Existing Ski Areas*.
- 3 Applications to increase existing ski area boundaries should be declined.
- 4 Helicopter concession applications and landing permits in the pristine areas should be declined, except for emergencies and management of the sites, such as maintenance of the Eruption Detection System and the Eastern Ruapehu Lahar Alarm Warning System. This exception does not apply to media and independent scientific work.
- 5 Concession applications for over-snow vehicles, or use of over-snow vehicles, should be declined in pristine areas, except within ski area boundaries for management purposes, in emergencies or for management of the sites, such as maintenance of the Eruption Detection System and the Eastern Ruapehu Lahar Alarm Warning System. This exception does not apply to media and independent scientific work.
- 6 In the Tongariro/Ngauruhoe Pristine Area, no infrastructure development should be permitted above 1500 metres, excluding infrastructure for management purposes which meets the essential needs of park visitors, such as toilets.

- 7 Where applications for the activities described in 2-6 above but excluding the exceptions in those provisions, are received the department will:
- publicly notify the application, acknowledging the wide public interest in these matters;
  - consult with tāngata whenua;
  - consult with the Tongariro/Taupō Conservation Board and seek its recommendation; and
  - require a full environmental and social impact assessment undertaken by appropriately-qualified specialists.
- 8 Any infrastructure project planned for the Tongariro Crossing will require consultation with and agreement of tāngata whenua who have mana whenua.
- 9 The Dome Shelter will be disestablished as an emergency shelter and public facility when it falls due for replacement. A replacement structure will be built and sited for the sole purpose of housing equipment for the operation of the Eruption Detection System and the Eastern Ruapehu Lahar Alarm Warning System. This facility will be of the smallest size necessary to house the equipment, to minimise its presence in the pristine area. This facility will not include accommodation infrastructure for technicians.
- 10 Applications for summer and winter guiding in the pristine areas will be considered with an expectation that the following criteria will be met:
- Small group size with appropriately-qualified guide/s;
  - guides' ability to demonstrate standard guiding skills and a demonstrated understanding of the cultural values of the area;
  - maintenance of a register of appropriately-qualified guides to be held by the concessionaire for inspection at the request of the department;
  - total number of concessionaire groups and individuals given permission to guide on a single day will be capped by the department at a scale which does not affect the values and experience of other users; and
  - removal of all waste, including human waste.

Also refer to sections *4.4.1 Concessions General* and *4.4.2 Guiding*.

## 4.2.4 Amenities Areas

### Ngā Taonga Whakaahuru

The department administers amenities areas in the vicinity of Whakapapa and Turoa ski areas and Iwikau and Whakapapa villages. These are shown on *Map 9 Special Zones*. Their boundaries are more clearly defined on *Map 11 Turoa Ski Area*, *Map 12 Whakapapa Ski Area*, *Map 13 Iwikau Village*, and *Map 15 Whakapapa Village*.

Amenities areas are set aside to provide for the development and operation of recreational and public amenities and related services at a scale and intensity which is not generally appropriate elsewhere in the park.

The existing boundaries of amenities areas provide for the activities undertaken by licensed concessionaires and adequately provide for the development which these activities require in line with the provisions of the National Parks Act 1980, with the possible exception of the alpine flush zone exclusion from the Turoa Amenities Area, see below.

The alpine flush at Turoa (refer to *5.1.1.2 Natural Values* and *5.2.3 Base Area Strategies*) has been protected from development by exclusion from the amenities area. However, in the past there has been some modification of the alpine flush and as a consequence the gazetted exclusion zone may not be congruent with the natural boundary of the alpine flush. A botanical and landscape survey will be undertaken (see *5.2.3 Base Area Strategies*, policy 4) to determine the natural values of the alpine flush, including its natural boundary, and, if necessary, re-gazettal of this exclusion from the Turoa Amenities Area.

Also refer to *Part V Ski Areas* and *Part VI Whakapapa Village*.

#### Objective

- a The effects of large-scale development and intensive use within Tongariro National Park should be confined to existing amenities areas which provide appropriate management to avoid or mitigate impacts.

#### Policies

- 1 No further amenities areas (and scale of development inherent in them) should be gazetted.
- 2 The boundaries of the existing amenities areas should not be expanded, with the exception of 3 below.
- 3 Should the botanical and landscape survey of the Turoa alpine flush carried out under *5.2.3 Base Area Strategies*, policy 4, indicate that the natural boundary of the alpine flush differs from that of the gazetted exclusion from the Turoa Amenities Area, the department will seek to re-gazette the Turoa Amenities Area boundary to correctly show the alpine flush zone exclusion.

- 4 The department will consult with the Turoa Ski Area concessionaire prior to seeking any change to Turoa Amenities Area boundary.
- 5 The highest standard of detailed planning, assessment, and design will be required for activities within amenities areas.



# Map 9 Special Zones



