



Reviewing the Walking Access Act 2008

Have your say on public access to the outdoors



Walking Access Act Review

Have your say on public access to the outdoors

We are reviewing the Walking Access Act 2008 and we want to hear from organisations and individuals involved in access to the outdoors so we get the best possible outcome. The Act is about providing free access to the outdoors for walking and for types of access that may be associated with walking, such as access with firearms, dogs, bicycles, or motor vehicles. Access to the outdoors can be in, close to, or far from towns and cities.

New Zealanders value having access to our outdoor spaces, our land, bush, mountains, rivers, coasts, and areas of cultural significance. That access is also an important attraction for visitors to New Zealand, who support many businesses around the country.

The Walking Access Act 2008 says the Act must be reviewed 10 years after its introduction. The findings must be tabled with the House of Representatives before 30 September 2019.

The Act, including the role of the Walking Access Commission it established, is being reviewed to determine whether changes are needed. It aims to ensure the Act and the Commission are fit for the future.

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission is an independent body that leads and supports the negotiation, establishment, maintenance, and improvement of access. The Commission works with private landowners, local government, the Department of Conservation, community groups, and others to carry out this work. It also provides detailed information to help people find tracks and trails across the country and use them safely and respectfully.

The Ministry for Primary Industries is leading the review, because it is responsible for administering the Act. A review panel has been appointed with expertise in public access to the outdoors, how government works, Māori cultural values, and landholder issues.

The review will not consider the “right to roam” over private property. Changing the premise that the New Zealand Walking Access Commission must negotiate access with landholders is specifically excluded from the review.

Public feedback paper

The success of the review will depend on the input we get from organisations and individuals with an interest in access to the outdoors. A public feedback paper has been prepared to help people engage and give feedback. It is available at www.mpi.govt.nz/walkingaccessreview. It includes the views of some stakeholders we have already spoken to and responds to issues they have raised.

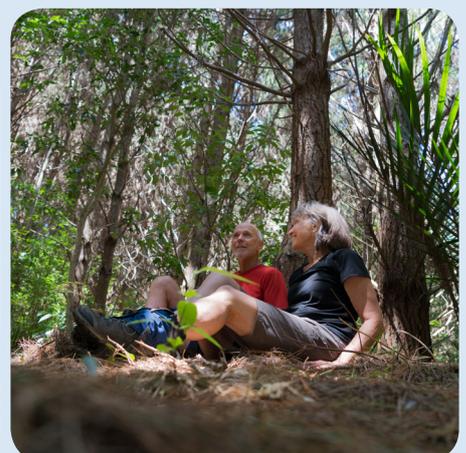
We've prepared this summary of the issues and two key questions to be addressed. There are more questions in the public feedback paper and you are welcome to provide your views on any of these.

Two key questions

The two questions we'd like you to consider are:

1. **What's working well?**
2. **What could be improved?**

Please provide examples or evidence to support your responses.



1. What's working well?

We have heard there is support for the Commission's independent brokering role in public access issues, and support for the role that its Regional Field Advisors play in working with landowners, councils and others to secure public access. Do you agree these roles are important?

What other aspects of the Act and the Commission's work do you think have been effective over the past decade?

2. What could be improved?

We have received a range of suggestions on improvements that could be made to the Act and the Commission.

Reviewing the purpose, priorities, objective and functions in the Act

Do the purpose and priorities in the Act need any updating? Do the names of the "Walking Access Act" and "Walking Access Commission" reflect public access issues now?

Working towards equal access

Do you think the outdoors is less accessible for some groups? If so, who? What has been your experience?

Māori perspectives on access

Many Māori want to access their wāhi tapu and other places significant to them, including where these are on private land. They want to make sure their taonga are protected. Some will want to take up opportunities to build business opportunities based on provision of free public access to lands they own.

Coping with visitor numbers

High visitor numbers can provide economic benefits in the regions, but put pressure on the host community. What do you think the Commission's role should be in managing the impact of high visitor numbers?

Addressing barriers to landowners providing public access

Some landowners see risks in providing public access to their land, from disruption to farming through to having to take responsibility for the safety of all visitors. What barriers do you think exist, and what should be the Commission's role in addressing them?

Encouraging positive visitor behaviours

Can you provide any information to help us understand the scale of poor visitor behaviour on tracks and trails on private land, particularly those shared by different groups of users? Does the Commission provide enough guidance on responsible behaviour at wāhi tapu and other sites of cultural significance?

Organisations working together

Do you have any examples where a lack of coordination or duplication between agencies and the Commission has got in the way of maintaining and improving public access?

Tools for the Commission

The current instrument for creating walkways under the Act doesn't allow for a changing pathway – for example, if a stream bed moves. It doesn't allow the landowner to change the pathway easily if their farming operations change by season for example. Would a more flexible means of formalising a walkway be a useful addition to the Commission's tool box or would it create other issues?

Governance for the Act and Commission

Do you think that the Ministry for Primary Industries, or another government agency, should administer the Act? What are your views on the size of the Commission's Board and the ideal skills and experience for its members?

Funding

The Commission receives annual government funding of \$1.789 million, which it uses to employ Regional Field Advisors, provide advice about public access, cover survey and legal costs, and provide public information about tracks and trails. Should the Commission supplement this with private funding and/or cost recovery?



Having your say

We want to hear from anyone who has a view on any aspect of the review. You can comment on one particular issue, or on every issue, and use whatever method you prefer – it's up to you.

We have developed a simple survey. To carry out the survey go to www.mpi.govt.nz/walkingaccessreview and click on the *online feedback form*.

Alternatively, you can email or post your contributions to us (contact details below) by Tuesday 2 July.

A broad range of agencies and organisations are involved in the public access system. When you are providing input, it would help us to know which organisations you work with, or contact, when you have public access issues.

Contact details

Visit www.mpi.govt.nz/walkingaccessreview for access to the Public feedback paper, the Terms of Reference, the legislation, information about the New Zealand Walking Access Commission and the Review Panel, and the online survey.

You can email responses to the questions and any other input you have to walkingaccessreview@mpi.govt.nz or you can write to Ministry for Primary Industries, Walking Access Review Team, Environment & Communities Directorate, PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140.

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



PO Box 2526, Wellington 6140
0800 00 83 33
www.mpi.govt.nz