

Code launched

Agriculture Minister David Carter launched two significant projects improving access to the outdoors for the New Zealand Walking Access Commission this month.

The well-attended launch at Parliament on 30 June was to celebrate publication of the Commission's new Outdoor Access Code and to launch a joint signage project with Federated Farmers New Zealand.

The Code sets out guidelines for access to New Zealand's beaches, lakes, rivers, and mountains, spelling out the need for people to behave properly and to take responsibility for their actions in the outdoors.

Commission chairman John Acland said 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.

He said that public rights of access were not always certain, and precise locations could be hard to establish. Access across private land relied on landholder goodwill.

"Generally, landholders have been traditionally happy to extend access to their land. In return, it is expected that recreational users will respect the environment and the requirements of farming life."

John Acland said rights and privileges of access brought with them responsibilities.

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

"Respect for property rights is important – both the property rights of private landholders and the public's property rights. Our society is reliant on property rights being respected. I think all our stakeholders support that principle of New Zealand society."

David Carter, the minister responsible for the Commission, said that he was pleased to support the Commission's Code.

"The Code aims to enhance people's knowledge and understanding of what to do in the outdoors and raises awareness of access rights and responsibilities.

"It is practical and informative.



"It should also help to minimise damage and nuisance by encouraging responsible behaviour. In turn I hope this will encourage landholders to allow access.

"I commend the Commission, all stakeholder groups, and members of the public who contributed to the development of this Code."

David Carter said there was a need to safeguard both private property rights and public property rights.

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Twelve projects to boost walking access will be funded through the New Zealand Walking Access Commission's Enhanced Access Fund.

Commission chairman John Acland said the Commission's board members were delighted with the range of the successful projects.

"As can be seen from the list of successful applicants, they cover a spectrum of groups – including Rotary and local councils working with community-based organisations. Six of the projects are in the North Island and six in the South Island, and include creating or improving walkway access to coastal areas, inland waterways and inland scenic areas."

A full list of the projects to be funded is on the Commission's website: www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/EnhancedAccessFund

"Property rights are important to this Government. They are essential for the smooth running of our economy and society.

"Farmers produce what becomes two-thirds of our merchandise export earnings. They need certainty about the status of their property rights when it comes to walking access and the security of their farming businesses.

"Parliament was quite clear when it passed the Walking Access Act 2008 that private land is private land, and the landowner has the right to refuse access to anyone for whatever reason.

"It was also clear that public land is available for access, and the public as ultimate owner has the right to know where it is."

David Carter said that just because there is legal access, it does not mean that the access is either practical or safe or reasonable. Potential users need to take care and apply common sense where there might be areas of doubt.

"And that's where the Outdoor Access Code plays its part.

"The New Zealand outdoors is a special place, but it can be dangerous for the unprepared, and vulnerable to damage by people unaware of how their actions can have adverse impacts."

Federated Farmers and the Walking Access Commission also launched a new signage initiative for walking access across private land.

Federated Farmers access spokesperson Donald Aubrey said the signs would readily answer the questions of members of the public wanting access to private land.

"In response to numerous questions expressed by the public, this joint signage project enables land owners to provide contact details and conditions related to access across private land."

Donald Aubrey said it was a voluntary initiative that Federated Farmers anticipates many land owners will welcome. These are standardised signs that will be readily recognised New Zealand-wide.

"The majority of farmers are happy to continue to generously provide access



across private land. It is important that those wishing to access this land treat both the land and the farmer's business with respect.

He said Federated Farmers understood how important it was for both the public and for landowners to recognise that rights come coupled with responsibilities.

"We welcomed the Commission's Outdoor Access Code, because it will provide reassurance to farmers that those accessing their land should now know how to do so responsibly.

"Knowing what to do in the great outdoors is not only a benefit to recreational users, but a reference point for landowners. It's about the public and landowners knowing where they stand."

Fish & Game NZ chief executive Bryce Johnson said his organisation would be interested in participating in a joint signage strategy with the Walking Access Commission.

While it was early days yet, he said it made good strategic sense for all parties to act jointly where possible on such a public service. The Commission and Fish & Game NZ have agreed to work more on this proposal.

Copies of the Outdoor Access Code and accompanying brochure are available on the commission's website www.walkingaccess.govt.nz or by contacting the Commission by phone on 04 8158502 or by email: contact@walkingaccess.govt.nz

» Fish & Game NZ chief executive Bryce Johnson, Commission chairman John Acland, Agriculture Minister David Carter, and Federated Farmers NZ vice-president Donald Aubrey at the launch of the Code and joint signs.



WALKING ACCESS

ARA HĪKOI AOTEAROA

❖ Operations Adviser

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission is a Crown entity established in 2008 to manage walking access opportunities to our rivers, coast and countryside.

We are seeking an Operations Advisor to be part of our small operations team based in Wellington and the regions.

We are looking for someone with 3-5 years experience in central, local and/or local regional government with experience in land management including relevant legislation. Knowledge of or interest in learning about GIS is desirable

The position reports to the Operations Manager and has responsibility for:

- Developing advice and information on walking access issues;
- Managing access enquiries and investigations;
- Providing assistance and support to the Commission's walking access mapping system; and
- Providing support and information to the Commission's regional advisor network.

A copy of the job description can be accessed at www.walkingaccess.govt.nz

Please visit our online recruitment supplier
www.QJumpers.co.nz/3628 to apply.
 Applications close 16 August 2010

New Zealand Government



Project aims to improve accuracy of the cadastre

Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) is making it a priority to improve the accuracy of New Zealand's rural cadastre.

LINZ is taking a leadership role in the emerging geospatial information sector, while also working to improve its own data, says Jan Pierce, General Manager Customer Services.

"A specific area we're focussing on is improving the accuracy of digital cadastral survey data so that boundaries in rural areas more accurately match the legal position," she says.

Improving data quality for the rural cadastre will enable wider and more confident application of this information.

"Our work will increase the availability of high-accuracy digital cadastral data, and enable organisations using the data to concentrate on innovative spatial processing products and services like three dimensional or time-lapse modelling."

A team of five LINZ staff will spend the next two years capturing survey data to improve the accuracy of identified high-priority areas. The project will initially focus on improving the quality



of data in urban and intensive rural areas, where accuracy currently ranges from 1m to 100m. The aim is to have 95% of coordinates in the upgraded areas accurate to better than 2m.

Jan Pierce says the survey-accurate digital cadastre (SDC), which covers 70% of the parcels and 50% of the boundary points in New Zealand's cadastre, is accurate to at least 20cm. Most of these are in urban areas.

"Because it's not possible to upgrade the entire cadastre in this time, we're focussing on extending the survey-accurate digital cadastre into areas where the benefit of high-accuracy data will be greatest.

"This has involved extensive analysis of the current accuracy of our rural data, as well as consideration of feedback from a range of users of cadastral data, including surveyors, local authorities, GIS companies and the general public."

Users can expect to benefit from the upgrades almost immediately. As areas identified for upgrade are completed, the corrected data is loaded into LINZ databases that are made available to external users on a monthly basis.

Mapping project

New Zealand Walking Access Commission Board members and staff have been making presentations about the Commission's proposed online mapping system to interested groups around the country.

Commission chief executive Mark Neeson said it was pleasing that people were showing a keen interest in the system.

"There is clearly a demand for this sort of system. We are hearing from people – both landholders and recreationists – that it is very important to respect property rights. In order to do that, people need to know where private land is located and where the public land that people can legally access is located."

Mark Neeson said the Commission was continuing a consultative approach that had been in place around walking access issues for several years now.

Landholders, recreational users, and the public all agreed during the access debates that started in 2002 that information about the location of public



and private land and access was not readily available and that it should be. Recreational access to New Zealand's outdoors is part of who we are, part of our nation's heritage and culture. Enjoyment of our beaches, rivers, and mountains is seen as the birthright of all our people.

A further agreement was that the Commission, as set up under the Walking Access Act 2008, would have no coercive

powers over private landholders, and that property rights – public and private – would be respected. Property rights are essential to the work of the Commission.

As a result of this consensus of opinion, all parties have adopted a collaborative approach to access.

One outcome is that the Commission is required by the Walking Access Act 2008

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to “compile, hold, and publish maps and information about land over which members of the public have walking access”.

The most practical and cost-effective way to do this is through an online mapping system, using aerial photography, topographic maps, and the cadastral information (the official record of land-ownership in New Zealand) as its base.

The cadastral information held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), is the best available. It defines not just roads, but boundaries of farms and other properties as well.

Mark Neeson emphasised that the information was not new.

“No new information is being generated by the New Zealand Walking Access Commission. The presence of unformed legal roads intersecting properties should not be a surprise to landholders – a title search is a basic requirement for anyone considering a property purchase of any kind.”

He said the mapping system would make it clear that the cadastral layer must be switched on to show legal public access. Tracks and other routes shown on the topographical layer are not necessarily legal access ways.

“Without making the information easily available, any mistakes or discrepancies cannot be corrected. This mapping system will help that process, and the Commission is working with LINZ to develop a process to manage these.”

LINZ is beginning a project to improve the information on the cadastral database and this will be sped up by information from the enquiries feature of the Commission’s mapping system. (see article by LINZ on page 3).

Mark Neeson said users of the mapping system must also show before they can

access the maps that they understand that while there is legal access shown on the maps, it does not mean that the indicated access is either practical or safe.

“People must take responsibility for their own actions.

“The proposed website will suggest that anyone planning a journey to the New Zealand outdoors makes sure that they are familiar with the Commission’s Outdoor Access Code (www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/page/17/OutdoorAccessCode) and the Outdoor Safety Code (www.outdoorsafetycode.org.nz).

The Commission’s Code spells 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.

The brochure summarising the Code will be widely distributed, initially in all fishing and hunting licence packs, to landholders who sign up to the joint signage project with Federated Farmers, and through Department of Conservation visitor centres.

Mark Neeson said the Commission was making good progress in publishing a guidance document on the management of unformed legal roads.

Primarily aimed at territorial authorities, the document would bring together all the strands that made up good practice around the management of unformed legal roads that so all parties were starting from an informed position.

He said the Commission is working closely with stakeholder representative groups on its projects. For example, Federated Farmers, Federated Mountain Clubs, and Fish&Game NZ are represented on the mapping project’s steering committee.

STAFF HIRINGS



Two key staff joined the New Zealand Walking Access Commission during the past few months: Ric Cullinane is the Commission’s new Operations Manager and Helen Barker is the Commission’s new Corporate Services Manager.

The positions were advertised nationally and a large number of excellent applications were received, Commission chief executive Mark Neeson said.

Ric Cullinane has a long career in the military, as an Air Force officer, and enjoys a wide range of outdoor activities. He was most recently Fish & Game NZ’s communications and marketing manager.

Helen has a background in accountancy and has worked in both the private and public sector (local government), most recently working as a consultant. Helen looks after her carbon footprint by cycling to work and in her spare time sings barber-shop and plays lawn bowls.

Mark Neeson said the Commission is now moving to an operational stage with permanent staff on board. Till now, the chief executive has been the only permanent staff member of the Commission with other functions being carried out by contractors.

“Shortly, I hope to be announcing the appointment of up to six regional field officers, working part-time and spread around the country.”

The Commission is likely to end up with eight full and part-time in Wellington and six regional staff.



CONTACT US

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