



Media release

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GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR ACCESS PUBLISHED

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

The Outdoor Access Code was officially released by Agriculture Minister David Carter at a function at Parliament in Wellington.

New Zealand Walking Access Commission chairman John Acland said the great outdoors was 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 role 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. All of us at the Commission take that role extremely seriously."

Mr Acland said the Commission's 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."

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.”

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

“We live in an increasingly urban society, despite our strong rural cultural identity and economic reliance on agricultural products. That means that people may not be aware of rural customs and local practice. And they may not understand the adverse impacts that their behaviour can have.

“We in the Commission hope that this Code will help significantly in building and reinforcing that understanding.”

John Acland said the Commission’s focus this year was 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 complete this project later this year. That should make a difference. The lack of information has been a problem.”

John Acland said 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.

“Respect for property rights is important – both the property rights of private land owners 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. ”

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

For more information, contact:
Cathie Bell
NZWAC communications manager
04 8158513 or 027 4998467
Cathie.Bell@walkingaccess.govt.nz