

**Approved Amendment to Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park
Management Plan 2004** [As approved by the New Zealand Conservation
Authority on 13 June 2012]

1.1 Management Planning, additional paragraph at end of 1.1, page 13:

In 2012 amendments on three issues were made to the Plan, using the same process except for the first bullet point as above, as in accordance with Section 46(4) of the National Parks Act.

2 Management Issues and Objectives, heading amended, page 35:

2 Management Issues, Objectives and Outcomes

2.3 Outcomes, additional section, page 40:

Since 2005 the General Policy for National Parks has required planned outcomes for places within national park management plans. The scale of the amendments made to the Plan in 2012 was such that an outcome statement for the lower Tasman valley was considered required. Note that this outcome statement only applies to the valley area within the Park.

Outcomes for the Lower Tasman Valley (see Figure 3A)

Lower Tasman Valley

From the Park boundary, the Park is clearly managed as part of a World Heritage Area, a premier destination for New Zealand, and for the dramatic approach to the mountain Aoraki/Mount Cook and its alpine setting. SH80, extending into the Park, is managed with regard to these national park values.

The valley showcases outstanding examples of New Zealand's glacial, braided river and indigenous vegetation succession processes at work. These processes are readily visible and are interpreted to visitors using SH80, Park roads, foot tracks, lake boating, and aircraft.

Views across the valley floor away from the Airport and Unwin Lodge are of an uncluttered landscape where the indigenous revegetation is slowly recovering following the cessation of stock grazing.

The lower Tasman valley houses the Aoraki/Mount Cook Airport and air traffic and aircraft noise is noticeable. The Department continues to work with aircraft operators to reduce adverse effects on the Park experience of on-ground and on-Tasman Lake visitors.

A cycle track from the Aoraki/Mount Cook Village to the Airport, as one end of an Alps to Ocean Cycle Trail to Oamaru, provides for non-powered vehicle access across the wide valley floor seldom visited by walkers.

Tasman Valley Road and cycle track, and Blue Lakes car park

Leaving SH80, visitors experience a slowing in their entry to the Park, on a road designed and managed as part of the national park experience, not just as a route to an end-destination. Frequent traffic can be expected during the peak visitor season, and periodic road closures due to snow and other natural events outside of this period.

A cycle track provides for non-powered vehicle access safely separated from the road and its traffic noise, from the Hooker Corner to the Wakefield Falls carpark, then is managed to share with pedestrians a track to the Blue Lakes carpark, and beyond that to share a 4WD vehicle track towards Husky Flat. It is accepted that natural rockfall, avalanche and erosion events will periodically and may in time fully close this 4WD track for vehicles.

The Wakefield Falls and Blue Lakes carparks sit unobtrusively within the landscape, and are managed to avoid impacts on successional shrub-lands and threatened species, Blue Stream, and the moraine topography.

To reduce road and carpark traffic, concessionaire passengers are bussed from Aoraki/Mount Cook Village or a carpark near to SH80. Other traffic reduction measures are implemented if required to maintain a high-quality visitor experience and to keep vehicle numbers and vehicle sizes within the capacity of the road and Wakefield Falls and Blue Lakes carparks.

Walking tracks and Blue Lakes

Walking only, from the Blue Lakes car park through an icon visitor destination site, visitors use a well-designed and maintained primary loop walking track between the carpark, Blue Lakes, the Tasman Lake lookout and the lake-edge, with a side track to the Lake outlet. Visitors experience a terminal moraine landscape with successional vegetation, and dramatic views of Tasman Glacier and Lake, the up-valley mountains and Aoraki/Mount Cook, and the down-valley incised then braided Tasman River flowing to Lake Pukaki.

Frequent encounters with other visitors may occur but will be reduced by a sinuous track sympathetic to the varied topography and vegetation of the glacial moraine site, and by encouragement of a one-way walking circuit.

Visitors walking along the carpark to lake-edge combined pedestrian and vehicle track may encounter concessionaire vehicles carrying fuel and equipment only, but such vehicle use seeks to avoid such encounters.

The visual amenity, lake-edge vegetation, water quality and ecology of the Blue Lakes and their surrounds are managed as more-intimate scenic highlights within the wider glacial moraine landscape.

At the Tasman Lake edge all structures and ancillary features and activities appear coherent and blend into their largely bare-rock moraine landscape setting. Visitor access to the lake-water edge is managed to minimise conflict between concessionaire and other visitor activities.

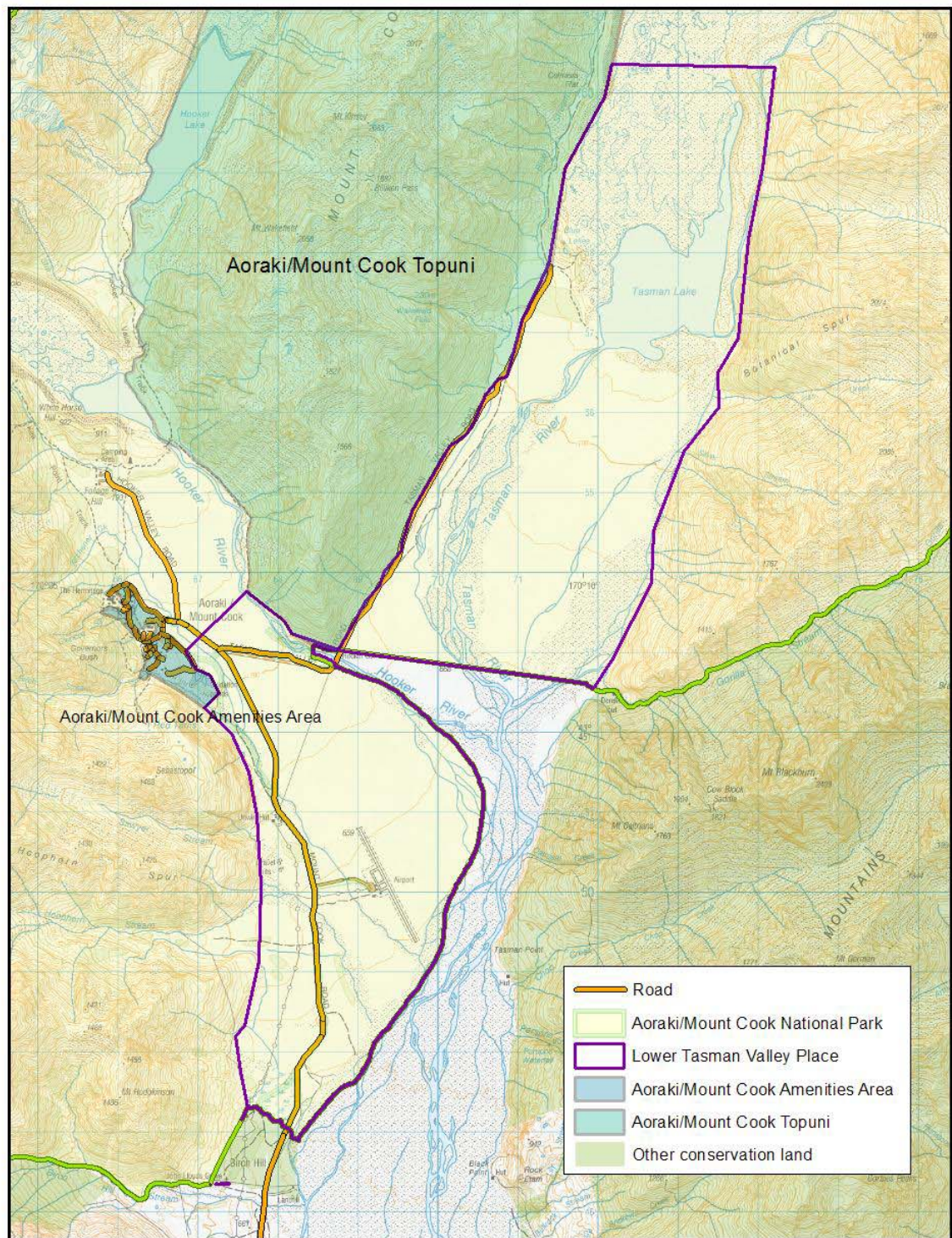
Tasman Lake



Visitors to Tasman Lake, both in watercraft and on land, while being aware of watercraft on the lake, will have an overall experience of an un-crowded lake.

Watercraft visitors will have a safe and awe-inspiring experience of the dynamic glacial lake, iceberg, moraine and wider alpine environment. Working from a confined lake-edge site, only two concessionaire operations offer this safe experience through either powered or non-powered open-watercraft. Powered watercraft will operate quietly and at managed speeds.

Watercraft sizes and passenger capacities are chosen to maintain a low visual impact from lake-edge viewing sites, to emphasize the difference in scale of visitors and their transport with the scale of the glacial and mountain landscape, and for ease of transport to and from the lake.

Figure 3A



 <p>Department of Conservation <i>Te Papa Atawhiri</i></p>	<p>Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan amendment Lower Tasman Valley</p>	 <p>Conservation unit data is current as of 4/07/2011. Map background by Geographix</p> <p style="text-align: right;">New Zealand Government</p>
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Canterbury Conservancy 06/10/2011

4.2.1 Access within the Park

Explanation 4.2.1(a) (Additional paragraph, as second paragraph, page 70)

Visitor increases on the popular tracks to and/or past Blue Lakes requires particular management attention to avoid the loss of the natural values of these vulnerable waterbodies and their surrounds.

Method 4.2.1(a) (Additional bullet point, page 71)

Assess proposals for the maintenance, further development or upgrading of Park access, having particular regard to:

- impacts on the visual amenity, lake-edge soils and vegetation, water quality and ecology of the Blue Lakes;

4.2.4 Roads, Parking Areas and Vehicles

(Heading amended, page 79)

4.2.4 Roads, Parking Areas and Vehicles (including Watercraft)

Policies (Additional policies, page 79.)

4.2.4(a)A1 The realignment of the Tasman Valley Road so that it is entirely on the valley floor should be permitted.

4.2.4(a)A2 Vehicle speed limits that reflect the Park setting and visitor safety needs should be sought for roads passing through or within the Park.

4.2.4(a)A3 Traffic reduction measures for the Tasman Valley Road including requiring concessionaire passengers using the road to be concessionaire-transported, and the management of vehicle numbers and vehicle sizes within the capacity of the road and Wakefield Falls and Blue Lakes carparks, should be instigated.

4.2.4(a)A4 The use of powered watercraft should not be permitted except:

- by a single concessionaire using watercraft quietly on Tasman Lake for the carrying of passengers, with watercraft limited to a single-deck, maximum 15 passenger capacity, at speeds in accordance with an approved safety plan,
- by a single concessionaire using powered watercraft for safety support only while operating non-powered watercraft on Tasman Lake, or
- to enable research and monitoring in accordance with 4.3.11 Research and Monitoring.

4.2.4(a)A5 Non-powered, non-concessionaire watercraft may be used on Tasman Lake where carriage of the watercraft from the Tasman Valley Road to the lake does not involve a vehicle.

Policy 4.2.4(b) (Policy amended)

Vehicles should not be permitted to move off a formed road except:

- in emergency or search and rescue situations, or
- for Park management purposes, approved research, or to service public utilities, only where no reasonable alternative access is available, or
- on a combined pedestrian and vehicle track from the Blue Lakes carpark to and on the vehicle manoeuvring areas at the Tasman Lake shore, for the purpose of servicing the lake boating concessionaire activity only, but not for the transport of passengers and minimising interactions with visitors, or
- to service concessionaire facilities, where the formation of a road or vehicle track is not required and will not develop through use, or
- for bicycles using a Aoraki/Mount Cook Village to Airport cycle track (part of the Alps to Ocean Cycle Trail), or the Hooker Corner to Blue Lakes carpark cycle track, subject to both these tracks meeting the requirements of 4.1.10 Management of Adverse Effects, or
- to follow a 4WD vehicle track in the Godley valley to a defined vehicle end-point at Separation Stream, or
- to follow a 4WD vehicle track in the Tasman Valley from the Blue Lakes carpark to Husky Flat, until such time as the track is closed due to natural events, or
- as otherwise provided for by the park Bylaws.

Additional Explanations (page 80.)

4.2.4(a)A1 A 1.8 km section of the Tasman Valley Road crosses the ‘bluffs’ with a narrow, winding road, exposed to avalanches and rock-falls, that is difficult to maintain. With traffic volumes increasing, the road requires upgrading for public safety and maintenance cost reasons. Upgrading the current road would have a high environmental impact, still have exposure to geotechnical risks, and still have high maintenance costs. After extensive investigation an alternative route on the river flats was approved in 2012.

4.2.4(a)A2 SH80 extends into the Park and finishes at a “T” intersection with the Village loop-road, having just passed side-road intersections for the airport, the Tasman Valley and Hooker Valley Roads, and crossed three one-way bridges. On this stretch of SH80 self-drive visitors to the Park frequently stop to take photographs and consult route guides, before turning off onto the lower-speed side-roads. A less rapid transition from the SH80 open-road limit, to the lower-speed roads, is desirable, followed by low-speed travel on the Park roads to enable and encourage Park appreciation with safety.

4.2.4(a)A3 The Tasman Valley Road is expected to experience increased traffic following road upgrading. While the road may have the capacity to handle this there are Park natural value constraints which could, at least seasonally, require traffic management to avoid loss of a high-quality visitor experience along the road and at the limited parking areas.

4.2.4(a)A4 & A5 A low level of recreational non-powered watercraft activity has occurred on the pro-glacial lakes within the Park for many years. Since the 1990s, as the Mueller and Tasman Lakes have enlarged, concessionaires have established guided powered watercraft operations on Tasman Lake and guided kayaking on both lakes, providing a new recreational opportunity and means for interpreting to visitors the very dynamic glacial lake and landscape. On Tasman Lake, quietly operated powered watercraft are considered suitable within the “Backcountry accessible-motorised” visitor management setting where there is already an element of noise from overhead aircraft. Other lakes though lie within the “Backcountry remote” setting (e.g. Godley valley) and/or in areas (e.g. Mueller and Hooker valleys) where natural quiet is desired and aircraft or other engine noise is sought to be avoided.

The limitation on the number of concessionaires reflects the confined lake-edge site which they and other visitors must share for facilities and the movement of visitors, boats and vehicles.

A low level of non-powered watercraft use may continue within the Park and this is appropriate provided there is no breach of allowable vehicle or aircraft access provisions to transport the watercraft. The Department will inform non-guided park visitors of the risks involved with watercraft use on very cold water and wind-swept lakes, in accordance with Policy 4.2.8(a).

Explanations 4.2.4(a) and 4.2.4(c), and Method 4.2.4(a)(4) (Explanations amended, pages 80 & 81)

References to “Transfund”, “Transit New Zealand” and “Transfund New Zealand”, amended to Land Transport New Zealand.

Explanation 4.2.4(b) (Additional explanation, page 81)

From the late 1990s a growing Tasman Lake concessionaire watercraft activity sought limited vehicle access for the safe transport of motor-boat fuel and equipment, and for vehicle manoeuvring at the lake-edge. This resulted in the

formation of a combined walking and vehicle track and lake-edge tracks and platforms. While these concessionaire activities are adding to visitor opportunities within the Park, constraints on the tracking and vehicle use are required to avoid adverse effects on the Park's natural values and on visitor experiences.

Method 4.2.4(a) (Subclause 4 amended, page 81)

4. Through liaison with Land Transport New Zealand, the Department will seek a reduction in the open-road speed limit for SH80 from in the vicinity of the Tasman Valley Road turn-offs, to the SH80 end, and will also seek the ongoing retention of the "special purposes road" funding for the Tasman Valley Road.

Method 4.2.4(a)A1 (Additional method, page 81.)

Realignment and/or upgrading of the Tasman Valley Road, in accordance with 4.1.2 Landscape Management and specific landscape and engineering design will ensure that:

- the location and orientation of the road should align with and be sympathetic to local natural patterns, particularly those relating to landform, water courses and vegetation;
- the extent of disturbed areas is kept to a minimum, including those effects occurring during road and bridge construction, particularly avoiding the roadside moss fields;
- for the purposes of restoration of disturbed areas, vegetation and surface rock material is retrieved, saved and re-used where practical;
- the former 'bluffs' road route is restored to a more natural hill-slope form where practical, especially at the more visible end stretches, and all structures are removed; and
- measures are taken to prevent vehicles moving off the completed road.

Method 4.2.4(a)A2 (Additional method, page 81)

Vehicle speed limits on the Hooker and Tasman Valley Roads should not exceed:

- 70 kph on the Tasman Valley Road from SH80 to the Hooker River bridge, then 50 kph thereafter, and
- 50 kph on the Hooker Valley Road.

Method 4.2.4(b) (Additional sub-clause to method, page 82)

Tracks and vehicle manoeuvring areas for concessionaire vehicles moving from the Blue Lakes car park to and around the Tasman Lake edge, shall meet the requirements of 4.1.2 Landscape Management and specific landscape design, and the Department's Track Construction and Maintenance Guidelines.

4.3.3 Aircraft and Airports

Explanation P.4.3.3(b) (Penultimate paragraph amended, page 109)

Scenic flights are a significant means of use and enjoyment of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park. The flights are for scenic observation, which implies gentler flying, not thrill-seeking (see 1.3.5.2). Scenic over-flights of the Park operate with both helicopters and fixed-wing planes from outside the Park. Ski planes and helicopters land at specified glacier snowfield and ridge-top sites. Aircraft are also used for access to mountain huts for climbers, to glaciers for skiers, for heli-skiing, and in support of approved watercraft concessionaire operations at Tasman Lake.

Table 1: Lower Tasman/Hooker Aircraft (Table amended, “Lower Tasman & Lower Hooker valleys” column, “permitted uses/activities” row, page 118)

Scenic over-flights, Tasman Lake watercraft concessions equipment positioning.

References (Amend, page 223)

Delete “National Parks and Reserves Authority. 1983....” and add
New Zealand Conservation Authority. 2005. General Policy for National Parks.
Department of Conservation for the New Zealand Conservation Authority,
Wellington.