

Guidance for pre-lodgement consultation for fast-track applications

This guidance is intended to assist applicants with pre-lodgement consultation with DOC.

Introduction

Prior to lodging a referral application or a substantive application for a listed project, applicants must consult with DOC where the application includes conservation approvals. DOC also strongly recommends applicants consult before lodging a substantive application for a referred project because the level of information available at substantive application vs referral application stage is vastly different, and key details, opportunities and issues that would benefit from proactive engagement could be overlooked. If you are intending to apply for a land exchange, we also recommend that you discuss this with us before applying.

What is pre-lodgement consultation?

For the purposes of the pre-lodgement consultation requirements of the FTAA, consultation needs to have been undertaken since the enactment of the FTAA (i.e. after December 2024). This is because the FTAA purpose, process and requirements are different from the legislation under which approvals would otherwise have been sought. If you have consulted with DOC prior to this, a summary can be included in your application, but it shouldn't be solely relied upon to meet the pre-lodgement consultation requirements of the FTAA. This doesn't mean we will forget or ignore earlier consultation, but we will need to specifically consider your application in the FTAA context.

Consultation is not a matter of just telling us what you want to do, it requires a genuine engagement and open sharing of information with a view to incorporating feedback and revising proposals as appropriate. DOC will facilitate meetings/site visits and co-ordinate our conservation experts to provide valuable feedback as part of the process.

What are the benefits?

Your application must include a summary of the consultation undertaken with DOC and demonstrate how the consultation has informed the project. If the pre-lodgement consultation information requirements are not demonstrated in the application, it may be determined to be incomplete and returned to you.

The pre-lodgement consultation process is designed to support a more efficient and effective application process once your proposal is lodged. Engaging early allows DOC to provide feedback on how the information requirements for conservation approvals/land exchanges may be met and provides a platform for discussing any key issues. This helps ensure your application is comprehensive, complete and well positioned.

Once an application is lodged, the timeframes under the FTAA are tight and the opportunity for an applicant to revise an application or provide additional information is limited.

Effective pre-lodgement consultation would ideally result in resolution of any issues and streamline DOC's involvement in formal (post-lodgement) stages of the fast-track process. Our experience to-date is that good pre-lodgement consultation assists both DOC and applicants – we have been able to identify approvals and/or information missing and this has been addressed by applicants prior to lodgement.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

How to request pre-lodgement consultation

Information on requesting pre-lodgement consultation is available on DOC's [website](#), including information on [costs](#). DOC's dedicated [fast-track team](#) is the first point of contact at DOC for all fast-track applications and they can assist with any questions you have in relation to the process.

How long does it take?

In line with the user pays approach of the FTAA, applicants are asked to pay a deposit prior to pre-lodgement consultation. Once this has been paid, we will reach out to meet/discuss your proposal. This can take up to a week after the payment of the deposit.

The amount of time to allow depends on the scale and complexity of your project and the number of conservation approvals that may be required as part of the application. It also depends how advanced your project is and how much information you have available.

As a minimum, it is recommended you allow at least 4-6 weeks – larger and complex applications (multiple approvals) will benefit from a longer timeframe.

Information to provide

The more information you provide us, the better we can understand the proposal and provide the right feedback. Guidance to assist with understanding the information requirements for a [wildlife approval](#) is available online and further guidance for other conservation approvals is under development.

Some key information to provide includes:

- Proposal details (approvals sought, activities, disturbance, effects)
- Draft application documents
- Conservation focused assessments
- GIS file/s showing the area of the proposal, as a polygon, in one of the following file formats - Esri Shapefile (must include .shp, .shx, .prj and .dbf files), KML, KMZ or GeoJSON
- Consultation information (including historical).

Referral

At the referral stage, we appreciate only high-level information may be available – a solid overview of the project, the approvals anticipated to be required and any assessments to be undertaken if the project is referred, and indicative timing will be useful. We recommend that you take a precautionary approach to any conservation approvals required – it is easier to start broad and narrow the scope than add extra approvals later.

Substantive

How close you are to lodgement will influence how much information you have – by the time consultation is concluded and you intend to lodge, we will have expected to see detailed plans and locations (including translocation sites for any wildlife to be moved), baseline surveys, descriptions of the activities and impacts, detail of the precise approvals sought, proposed conditions, any management plans, and offsetting or compensation proposals. Details of consultation undertaken, particularly with groups DOC would also engage with, is helpful.

Land exchange

We strongly recommend pre-lodgement consultation prior to lodging any application for a land exchange. Documents that would facilitate preparing a complete application are:

- Conservation values assessments (biodiversity, freshwater, recreational, and cultural and heritage values).
- Detailed land status check by a LINZ-accredited supplier
- Valuation information and information about any financial and legal liabilities and obligations associated with the land to be exchanged.
- Details of any consultation undertaken with any parties that have rights or interests in the land to be exchanged.

Guidance to assist with understanding information requirements of a land exchange application can be found on our website.

What to expect during pre-lodgement consultation

Depending on the stage and nature of your application, pre-lodgement consultation with us may involve meetings, site visits or simple exchange and review of information.

We will provide you with written advice as a record of the consultation undertaken which you may like to include in your application alongside evidence of how this has informed the project. This may include:

- Commentary on conservation approvals sought
- Commentary on application documents and assessments
- Commentary on proposed conditions
- Identification of key issues/opportunities worked through as part of the process
- Existing permissions/concessionaire information in relation to a project site (focus on potentially affected parties/crown liability considerations).

DOC undertakes a Treaty obligations assessment for all projects. This seeks to identify any specific arrangements and agreements in place that are or may be relevant to a project so that they are considered as part of the process. We can also share this information with you, to inform your project as part of the pre-lodgement process too.

Other consultation

Part of DOC's role involves engaging with and supporting Treaty partners and entities including the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) and conservation boards.

We update these groups about projects/applications that DOC is engaged with at various points in the fast-track process – we ask that you provide a summary of your proposal that can be shared. If you have any concerns or questions about what information is to be shared, please discuss with us – we typically don't share any detailed information that isn't publicly available unless you've okayed it.

Please note that you have obligations to consult directly with certain Māori groups as required by the FTAA and we encourage you to carry out this consultation early. We will not carry out any of your required consultation with these groups on your behalf.

Also note that the NZCA and relevant conservation board(s) will always be invited to comment on conservation approvals under the FTAA.