



29 June 2026

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai /
Conservation House
18 Manners Street
Wellington 6011
doc.govt.nz
Ref: OIAD-9276

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 10 June 2026, in which you asked:

1. *"Have there been discussion at DOC regarding a cap on visitor numbers at the Tongariro Alpine Crossing?"*
2. *"What is the potential cap being considered?"*
3. *"Would the cap only impact single direction trips?"*
4. *"If a cap is being considered, what process will be followed before it is implemented?"*
5. *"What will the timeline be on implementation of such a cap?"*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC) Sustainability Project was set up in 2022 by the Department and Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro to make management of New Zealand's most popular day hike more sustainable. Project objectives centre on the values of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga, implemented through phased and adaptive interventions.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Have there been discussions at DOC regarding a cap on visitor numbers at the Tongariro Alpine Crossing?*

In 2023, DOC commissioned a report to understand the carrying capacity of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. This report considered the findings of four impact assessment reports commissioned for this study – cultural, environmental, social and economic. These reports are available on our website: www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/sustainable-visitor-management-for-tongariro/carrying-capacity-of-the-tongariro-alpine-crossing/

This work suggested a range of thresholds that indicate when sustainable limits are being reached and further management interventions may be needed.

- **Annual numbers above 155,000** – This has not happened to date.

- **Daily count above 2,000** – This has most impact if it happens for several days in a row. When the TAC booking form is added to DOC's online booking system, it will include features to 'nudge' people towards quieter days.
- **Rolling five-day average above 1,500** – This has not happened to date. Our contract with the Manaaki Rangers, who welcome visitors at the track start, allows for additional resource on public holidays when peaks usually occur.

2. *What is the potential cap being considered?*

The management interventions put in place over the last three years are managing **daily** visitor impacts very well. An additional Manaaki Ranger is deployed on days we know will be busy, particularly public holidays. Annual numbers have not met the 155,000 threshold described in the carrying capacity report and therefore a cap is not necessary at this time.

If visitor numbers reached 155,000 in a season AND the forecast was for tourism to continue to grow in the following season, a visitor cap would be considered for that next season. However, the data shows that this should be targeted to periods when there is clear evidence that we would exceed 1500 walkers for multiple days in a row, rather than a daily limit for the entire season.

3. *Would the cap only impact single direction trips?*

No. A visitor cap would need to incorporate all track walkers as facilities and services would reach capacity regardless of which end of the track they entered from.

4. *If a cap is being considered, what process will be followed before it is implemented?*

Further data is required to understand what a cap might look like in the future. At the appropriate time this would be discussed with Te Rūnanganui o te Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro, DOC concessionaires, the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Sustainable Management Project and the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board.

5. *What will the timeline be on implementation of such a cap?*

There is no timeline for implementation of a visitor cap. DOC has chosen to implement tools that help the department and Te Rūnanganui o te Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro manage impacts better. A cap will only need to be considered when annual visitor numbers meet the threshold.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'C. Wilson'.

Catherine Wilson
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai