

Permissions and Treaty partner engagement

The Department of Conservation (**DOC**) processes applications for permission (applications) to carry out regulated activities. DOC is required to consider Treaty partner interests in the application process to fulfil our statutory requirements.

We engage with our Treaty partners on most applications to understand their interests, meet our Treaty settlement obligations, and provide informed advice to decision-makers.

Summary Statement

DOC's position is that engagement with our Treaty partners is not always required on an individual application where we are well-informed of Treaty partner interests.

Examples where engagement may not be required include, but are not limited to:

- We have an agreement with our Treaty partners that certain categories of applications do not require engagement, e.g. relationship agreements, or “engagement triggers” documents.
- We hold information about our Treaty partners' interests and views on an activity in a specific location, including standard or previous positions they have provided, and jointly developed conditions to address adverse effects.
- Our Treaty partners have let us know they prefer to engage directly with the applicant, and we have confirmed with those partners that the applicant has provided us an accurate summary of their views. This confirmation would replace DOC completing a full engagement process.
- We have assessed Treaty partner interests for categories of applications in the development of Statutory planning documents or operational policy, and set policies for categories that don't require engagement. These policy settings will exist separately to this Position Statement.

Legal/Statutory context

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 states that the Act *shall be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi*. This obligation applies to applications processed under the Conservation Act, and the Acts listed in Schedule 1 of that Act. Section 4 requires (among other things) for DOC to consider and understand Treaty partner interests, when we provide advice to the decision-maker for an application.

However, section 4 does not create an obligation for DOC to engage on all applications we receive. Engagement may be required due to the provisions of a Treaty settlement and/or completed to understand Treaty partner interests.

Relevant regulatory processes

This Position Statement applies to all applications processed under the Conservation Act, and the Acts listed in Schedule 1.

Relation to DOC outcomes

DOC's work is guided by our strategy, which outlines our purpose and outcomes.

This position is aligned with the DOC outcomes of:

- We are an honourable Treaty partner, and
- Improved performance of the conservation regulatory system.

Approval and review

This Position Statement was approved by the Director, Regulatory Systems Performance on 7 November 2025 and will be reviewed every 3 years.