

30 June 2020 by Email

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Tourism and Freshwater Management

Dear Minister

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) is the peak body for the tourism industry in New Zealand. With over 1,600 members, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including hospitality, accommodation, adventure & other activities, attractions, retail, airports & airlines, transport, as well as related tourism services.

We are seeking your support for the inclusion of a Tourism Value in the review of the National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management (NPS-FM). TIA submitted on the [Action for Healthy Waterways consultation](#) in October 2019. This was a key component of our response and we were pleased to see this point highlighted in the summary of submissions released in May.

Our view is that the draft NPS-FM does not reflect what we consider to be the essential nature of the tourism/freshwater interface. The suite of resources that makes up the 'Destination New Zealand' proposition includes social characteristics such as friendly people, safety, and environmental characteristics including biodiversity, fresh water, and landscapes. As such how we manage fresh water is inherently tied to the well-being of the tourism industry. If visitors perceive New Zealand as having a poor quality of freshwater, then over time this will have a significant detrimental impact on the visitor experience and New Zealand's reputation as a high-value destination.

The 2019 consultation document failed to describe the nature of the tourism usage and its value: that it's use of freshwater is largely non-extractive, that significant value can accrue from non-extractive use of freshwater, and that the tourism industry is a primary means of monetising this value. If it had included such a description, this would have signaled that the wealth-generating capacity of New Zealand can be enhanced from ensuring quality freshwater resources. We recognise that the value of freshwater to the tourism economy is less tangible compared to some other direct or primary water uses (such as irrigation) but the value ultimately achieved is just as real.

It is difficult to quantify both the value and volume of visitors, international and domestic, interacting with our waterways and associated environments; this is an insight gap that needs addressing. There is, however, some pre-COVID data which shows the value of freshwater to tourism via activities. For example, the NZTE-developed New Zealand Visitor Activity Forecast provides an indication of freshwater value. For the year 2019, it estimated 11,502,219 visitors (both domestic and international) interacted with freshwater through rafting, kayaking, canoeing, jet boating and fishing.

Freshwater and healthy freshwater ecosystems are fundamental to supporting many of our iconic tourism landscapes. Some landscapes are under threat from changes to land use and increases in population, and potentially from increases in visitor numbers if these are not well managed. In a very visible example, the consenting of irrigation in the Mackenzie Basin greatly altered that landscape. The changed land-use is inconsistent with the iconic nature of the Mackenzie landscape and devalues the region in terms of landscape attractiveness. Another example is the impact of dairying on the Canterbury Plains. The clearing of trees so that irrigators can move across large tracts of land has greatly altered the scenic beauty long associated with that region.

How regions manage their landscape related resources for tourism is important and should be integral to planning and resource management decisions. These proposals present a significant opportunity for tourism to be considered within regional freshwater management. To give effect to this we are asking that a Tourism value is added to the NPS-FM.

It is also worth noting that while the tourism industry is sitting in a period of flux, with the major determinants of its future direction lying out of our hands (for instance: the way the COVID-19 virus spreads globally, the length of time the borders will be closed, the impacts on the New Zealand and the global economy), we are determined for the industry to come back stronger than it was. The importance of freshwater to tourism in Aotearoa is not diminished with the current state of the industry – rather, it is important that we use this time to get the policy settings right for the sustainable future of the industry.

We would like to meet with you to discuss our request in more detail and look forward to hearing from your office.

Ngā mihi



Chris Roberts
Chief Executive
Tourism Industry Aotearoa