



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



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**MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Quality Conservation Saves Money for Operators

An agreement between the tourism industry and Department of Conservation is to save individual New Zealand tourism operators hundreds of dollars.

From today, the safety requirements to gain a DOC concession can be met by gaining a Qualmark® accreditation.

The initiative between DOC and the tourism industry's official quality assurance agency, Qualmark New Zealand, standardises the requirements for independently audited safety plans. Now, any tourism company that has gained the Qualmark®, will simultaneously meet the health and safety audit requirements for a DOC Concession, instead of having to pay for two separate audits. This will save operators time and money.

"This is a really concrete benefit for the tourism industry," says Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive George Hickton. "Tourism bodies have been working increasingly closely with DOC and other conservation bodies to ensure that we are working together for the same end goal. That is that the key attraction to New Zealand – its landscape – is adequately protected and that visitors to the conservation estate have an enjoyable experience."

The process adds value for both tourism operators and visitors, says Chief Executive of Qualmark New Zealand, Geoff Penrose.

"In this case, less IS more! By becoming Qualmark-accredited, tourism operators will gain all sorts of useful business knowledge, while customers will now be able to choose concession holders knowing that not only are their environmental practices sound, but that the whole operation of their business is of absolute top quality."

Andy Thompson, DOC's Concessions and Tourism Manager agrees, saying that the partnership makes a lot of sense.

“This builds on the very good work and leadership shown in this area by DOC and the Register of Outdoor Safety Auditors. The change also means that concession holders don’t have to duplicate their efforts with different agencies and so, introduces greater efficiency to their business.”

“We know that industry organisations have the best understanding of the safety requirements of their operators, so it made sense to align the concession process with Qualmark standards developed by the industry with Tourism Industry Association New Zealand.”

While working through the process of standardising the requirements, Qualmark’s processes were further enhanced, with some higher levels of health and safety standards introduced into their own criteria. Additional health and safety training was also undertaken by the assessment staff. These changes aligned the assessment system to meet DOC and the industry’s requirements for using the public conservation lands.

“It is a win-win situation,” says Mr Penrose, “the concession holder saves money and gets extra business advice, while the customer gets a top-quality experience.”

Tourism Industry Association New Zealand Chief Executive, Ms Fiona Luhrs welcomed the move saying any measures which minimise compliance costs for small businesses are much appreciated by the industry.

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