

MEDIA RELEASE



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Numbers stack up for tourism's green scheme

Qualmark is celebrating the success of the Qualmark Green programme, with the number of businesses achieving Enviro Awards hitting the 500 mark this month.

Award winning tourism businesses are answering consumer questions about how green we are, according to New Zealand tourism's official quality assurance agency.

Qualmark Chairman, David Wilks, says our world leading quality and environmental assurance system is delivering successful outcomes for consumers, businesses and the environment.

"The numbers simply have to stack up for businesses in tough times and consumers need to know when they see a Qualmark Enviro Award that it stands for something measurable."

All businesses applying for Enviro Awards submit resource monitoring information, with many showing significant cost savings from efficiencies found in waste, water and energy consumption.

We know these businesses are taking effective steps to protect the environment and New Zealand's quality image, says Mr Wilks, highlighting the success of the programme.

The commitment of the industry to making the right decisions when trading times were tough means tourism now has a strong brand and track record for quality and environmental assurance, he says.

"The effort 500 businesses have put into earning Enviro Awards sends the message to international and domestic travellers alike that the tourism industry can demonstrate tangible actions to support our reputation as a country that cares about its environment."

The milestone of the 500th award, an Enviro-Gold award, was achieved by Kaikoura Wilderness Walks, who operate completely off the national grid – meeting all water supply and electricity needs with a purpose built micro-hydro system.

Owner and manager, Nicky McArthur, says an awards programme focused on measurable and tangible goals benefits businesses, while highlighting the integrity of their approach to consumers.

"It's about wrapping good business practice around what we are doing to care for the environment - protecting our precious land as a legacy for future generations," says Nicky McArthur.

Stonefly Lodge in Motueka, another recent Enviro-Gold recipient operating off the grid, built a micro hydro turbine using a motor from a washing machine and driven by water from a spring on the property. Solar panels and a wind turbine also ensure there is ample power, whatever the season, says owner John Kerr.

"In summer the solar panels perform well and in the winter the water table rises and we can run on more hydro power. At this time of year our guests often stand on the deck and enjoy watching our wind turbine come to life as an autumn breeze picks up," says Mr Kerr.

Energy efficiency measures ensure the lodge runs on about half the consumption of the average New Zealand household, he says.

Ascot Park Hotel, who received the 100th Enviro-Gold Award, now sends nearly 70 tonnes of material to the recycling station every year, rather than landfill, saving about \$7,200 annually. This pays for employee waste sorting, so the initiative is self sustaining, allowing the business to monitor recycling by product, such as paper, plastic, cardboard and glass.

Ascot Park Hotel manager, Peter Ridsdale, says in the first three months of implementing changes identified in an energy audit the business has saved about \$3,000.

"Many of the initiatives we have undertaken to lessen environmental impact have helped significantly reduce costs, so for us the benefits are measurable and proven," says Mr Ridsdale.

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About Qualmark Green and Enviro Awards

Since August 2008, the environmental performance of all tourism businesses with a Qualmark has been considered as part of on-site quality assessments. Businesses performing well in reducing environmental impact in five key action areas (energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation,

community activities and conservation initiatives) are eligible to apply for an Enviro-Gold, Enviro-Silver or Enviro-Bronze Award.

The initiative, referred to as Qualmark Green, was unveiled to the tourism industry by the Minister of Tourism on 27 May 2008. The introduction of criteria used to assess environmental performance marked a 'world first', with New Zealand being the first country with a fully integrated quality and environmental performance tourism assurance system.

In November 2008, New Zealand won the 'Overall Winner' and 'Best Destination' categories in the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards in London. The judges recognised Qualmark Green as one of New Zealand's most important achievements in responsible tourism.

About Qualmark

- Qualmark® is New Zealand's trusted guide to quality travel experiences - helping travellers identify over 2,300 great places to stay, things to do and ways to get around.
- Accommodation, activities and transport businesses carrying the Qualmark® logo have been independently assessed to meet tough quality standards and environmental criteria - earning New Zealand tourism's official quality mark.
- Over 500 businesses have achieved Enviro Award status - recognising their commitment to Qualmark's responsible tourism criteria and environmental practices.
- Qualmark is jointly owned by Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association. The programme is run as an industry service, on a not-for-profit basis.