

October 2026

# NZSki Project – DOC section 51 covering report

FTAA-2605-1236 – Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolan's Expansion



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

**Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

## Purpose

1. This report serves as a covering report across the three reports provided by the Department of Conservation (DOC) under section 51 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the s51 reports).
2. Although not specifically requested, this report is intended to:
  - a) Set out the structure of DOC's s51 reports
  - b) Address common issues across the reports
  - c) Create efficiencies for the panel in their assessment of DOC's advice
  - d) Provide expert statements from both internal and external advisors that have informed DOC's advice to the panel.
3. It is recommended that this report is read prior to the individual s51 reports set out below.

## Background

### Project Overview

4. On 20 May 2026, NZSki (the applicant) lodged a substantive application with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for the Remarkables Ski Area Upgrades and Doolans Expansion Project (the Project). On 8 July 2026, after requesting and receiving further information from the applicant, the EPA determined that the application was complete and complied with section 46 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA/the Act).
5. The project relates to the upgrade and development of infrastructure at the Remarkables Ski Area, and the expansion and development of ski activities, trails and associated infrastructure within the adjacent Doolans Basin, Queenstown.
6. The Project area (for those parts seeking concessions) spans the existing Remarkables Ski Area; the Doolans Basin, located in the upper part of the Doolans Creek Right Branch; and the ridgeline between the two (including what is locally known as "Helicopter Ridge"). The Project area also includes the Lower Remarkables Transit Hub - this is not on lands administered by DOC.
7. For efficiency DOC refers to the project description provided by the applicant at document *A-10 Project Description updated 3 September 2026* in the substantive application documents<sup>1</sup>.

### DOC's Reports

8. On 11 June 2026, in accordance with s51 of the Act, the Panel Convener directed the EPA to obtain three reports from the Director-General of Conservation, and these reports are now duly provided:
  - I. A report under clause 4 of Schedule 6 for **concessions** on Crown land
  - II. A report under clause 3 of Schedule 7 for the **wildlife approval** (s42(4)(h)); and

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<sup>1</sup> [Project-Description-Updated-3-September-2026.pdf](#)

III. A report under clause 4 of Schedule 9 for the **complex freshwater fisheries approvals** (s42(4)(j)).

9. A summary of the approvals sought and covered by each of DOC's report is provided in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: DOC Approvals Sought - Overview**

| <b>Report Reference</b>                                    | <b>Overview</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Concessions</b><br>s51(2)(a)                            | The applicant has applied for the following concessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A new concession authorising all activities associated with the expansion of the ski area into the Doolans Basin, as well as the supporting infrastructure that spatially traverses the Rastus Burn (i.e. over the existing Remarkables Concession) ("Doolans Concession"); and</li> <li>ii. A new concession authorising an expansion to the existing Rastus Burn Base Building and associated buildings and utilities located within the access road and Level 3 Car Park ("the Remarkables Base Concession").</li> </ul>                                                                                                           |
| <b>Wildlife Approvals</b><br>s51(2)(c)                     | The applicant has applied for wildlife approval to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. capture, relocate and, as a last resort, destroy nests (to force re-nesting within the same breeding season) of New Zealand Pipit; and</li> <li>ii. to disturb, injure and/or kill McCann's skink within the Project's vegetation and earthworks footprint.</li> </ul> <p>DOC notes that the application for <i>Approvals relating to Wildlife updated 3 September 2026</i>, when updated (on 3 September 2026) removed reference to relocation of nests and/or chicks from the management approach to New Zealand Pipit. Therefore DOC understands that the relocation of nests is no longer sought as part of the Wildlife Approval.</p> |
| <b>Complex Freshwater Fisheries approvals</b><br>s51(2)(e) | Complex and standard freshwater fisheries approvals that would otherwise be applied for under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations are being sought as part of the Project.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

10. DOC has sought input from a range of technical experts to inform the preparation of the conservation approval reports. This expert advice will also inform DOC's comments to be provided under section 53. These are appended as **Appendices A – J** and are further described below.

11. A Detailed Assessment of the Otago Conservation Management Strategy is provided at **Appendix K**.

12. DOC has also prepared a report (the weighting report), on behalf of the Director-General, advising how the weighting of relevant matters should be approached (requested in Minute 1 of the Panel Convenor). This report is provided at **Appendix L**.

13. DOC will also be providing comments on broader conservation and resource consent considerations under section 53.

## Structure of section 51 reports

14. The section 51 reports are intended to be read in conjunction with this report.
15. The structure of DOC's section 51 reports and the associated appendices is set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2: DOC Advice – Structure and relevant appendices

| <b>DOC Advice</b>                                | <b>Appendices - submitted with particular section 51 reports</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Related expert statement – submitted as Appendix to this DOC Covering Report</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Concessions</b><br>- Section 51 Report        | <b>Appendix A</b> – DOC Proposed Conditions of Remarkables Upgrade Concession<br><b>Appendix B</b> – DOC Proposed Conditions of Doolans Expansion Concession<br><b>Appendix C</b> – DOC s78 conditions<br><b>Appendix D</b> – Existing arrangements in relation to the land | <b>Appendix A</b> – Statement of Dr S Walker – Terrestrial Flora & ecosystems<br><b>Appendix B</b> – Statement of Dr C Kavazos - Freshwater<br><b>Appendix C</b> - Statement of Dr C Watts - Invertebrates<br><b>Appendix D</b> - Statement of N Harker - Lizards<br><b>Appendix E</b> - Statement of Dr K Weston - Avifauna<br><b>Appendix F</b> - Statement J Head - Landscape<br><b>Appendix G</b> - Statement of T Moore – Visitor Experience<br><b>Appendix H</b> - Statement D M Schmidt - Heritage<br><b>Appendix I</b> - Statement of D Barrell – Geomorphology*<br><b>Appendix J</b> - Statement of Dr Fleur Maseyk – Effects Management including compensation<br><b>Appendix K</b> - Detailed Assessment of Otago CMS<br><b>Appendix L</b> - Weighting of relevant matters to be taken into account |
| <b>Wildlife Approvals</b> –<br>Section 51 Report | <b>Appendix A</b> - Wildlife Conditions - Lizards<br><b>Appendix B</b> – Wildlife Conditions - Avifauna                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Appendix D</b> - Statement of N Harker - Lizards<br><b>Appendix E</b> - Statement of Dr K Weston - Avifauna<br><b>Appendix K</b> - Detailed Assessment of Otago CMS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                   |               | <b>Appendix L</b> - Weighting of relevant matters to be taken into account                                                               |
| <b>Complex Freshwater Fisheries Approvals - Section 51 Report</b> | No appendices | <b>Appendix B</b> – Statement of Dr C Kavazos – Freshwater<br><b>Appendix L</b> - Weighting of relevant matters to be taken into account |

\*Mr Barrell was engaged after the Panel Convenor conference. DOC informed NZSki that this additional statement of expert advice was being prepared as soon as Mr Barrell was engaged.

## Engagement with the Applicant

16. Engagement by the applicant commenced in February 2026. A summary of the engagement from that point until the Panel Convenor's conference on 6 August 2026 is outlined in the Director-General's memorandum (dated 3 August 2026) for that conference.
17. Following that conference, a four-week delay in the panel's appointment was sought by NZSki to allow them to undertake further engagement in some areas and to then update the application. DOC was supportive of that delay.
18. Since 3 August 2026 the applicant invited DOC to meetings in regards landscape; lizards; wetlands, streams and crossings; and terrestrial ecology. They also held a meeting to present their approach to the effects management hierarchy and compensation package.
19. These meetings have assisted DOC's understanding of the application, the values at place and the applicant's approach to assessment and treatment of the effects of the application.

## DOC's overarching comments

20. The DOC s51 Concessions Report, while focussed on the applications for concessions, captures DOC's overarching views on all approvals that form a part of the application. The reason for this is that the matters required to be addressed by DOC in that reporting are wide reaching and include the effects of the proposed activity; any measures that can reasonably and practically be undertaken to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of the activity; information adequacy; whether adverse effects can adequately avoided, remedied or mitigated; and compensation.

## Conditions

21. DOC has provided 'tracked changes' versions of the proposed conditions for both the proposed concessions, and the proposed wildlife approvals, should the panel decide to grant them. No

conditions are proposed by the applicant, or sought by DOC, on the complex freshwater fisheries approval.

## Treaty of Waitangi obligations and considerations

### Treaty of Waitangi settlement obligations

22. Section 7 of the FTAA requires all persons performing and exercising functions, powers, and duties under the Act to act in a manner consistent with obligations arising under existing Treaty settlements.
23. The Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport provided the Panel Convenor with a report which sets out the section 18 FTAA matters it considered relevant to the application. DOC agrees that the Treaty settlement relevant to this application is the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.
24. The Treaty settlement requires, among other things, DOC to manage historic resources on lands that are significant to Ngāi Tahu, which includes wāhi tapu, wāhi taonga and places of historic significance.
25. Several taonga species are present and affected by the project, including:
  - Plants: five species of Taremea, three species of Wīwī (*Juncus*), and Koromiko (riparian wetland)
  - Avifauna: New Zealand pipit/pihoihoi (*Anthus n. novaeseelandiae*), eastern falcon/ karearea (*Falco n. novaeseelandiae*), paradise shelduck/ Pūtangitangi (*Tadorna variegata*), Australasian harrier/kāhu (*Circus approximans*), and Kea (*Nestor notabilis*).

### Treaty of Waitangi principles

26. DOC has sought to prepare its conservation approval reports in a manner that as far as possible gives effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi,<sup>2</sup> in accordance with DOC's obligation under section 4 of the Conservation Act.
27. DOC considers that the Treaty Principles most applicable to the application are:
  - **Partnership** – mutual good faith and reasonableness.
  - **Informed decision-making** - both the Crown and Māori need to be well informed of the other's interests and views. Consultation is a means to achieve informed decision-making.
  - **Active protection** - requires informed decision-making and judgement as to what is reasonable in the circumstances.
  - **Redress**– requires recognition of existing rights and interests.
28. DOC has notified our Treaty partners of the application and its status as it has moved through the various stages of processing; and invited engagement with them as DOC has prepared its expert reports. DOC has also prepared its advice mindful of the interest that they have in the area affected by the concessions. This includes noting the need to understand the perspective of Kā Rūnaka with the impacts to Tarn 3, whether there are ways to avoid this, and the impact to protected wildlife.

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<sup>2</sup> See [Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and DOC: Apply for permits](#)

29. DOC is actively engaging with Kā Rūnaka over the application, largely in the form of information sharing and understanding. DOC will continue this engagement as it prepares its 53 comments. DOC notes that our Treaty partners are likely to make their views on the Project understood through the s53 comments opportunity.

## Appendices

### Expert Statements

**Appendix A** – Statement of Dr S Walker – Terrestrial Flora & ecosystems

**Appendix B** – Statement of Dr C Kavazos - Freshwater

**Appendix C** - Statement of Dr C Watts - Invertebrates

**Appendix D** - Statement of N Harker - Lizards

**Appendix E** - Statement of Dr K Weston - Avifauna

**Appendix F** - Statement J Head - Landscape

**Appendix G** - Statement of T Moore – Visitor Experience

**Appendix H** - Statement D M Schmidt - Heritage

**Appendix I** - Statement of D Barrell – Geomorphology

**Appendix J** - Statement of Dr Fleur Maseyk – Effects Management including compensation

**Appendix K** - Detailed Assessment of Otago CMS

**Appendix L** - Weighting of relevant matters to be taken into account