Fast-track

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Your Comment on the Remarkables Ski Area Upgrades and Doolans Expansion application

Please include all the contact details listed below with your comments and indicate whether you can receive further communications from us by email at substantive@fastrack.govt.nz

1. Contact Details

Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.

Organisation name (if relevant)	Department of Conservation		
First name	Jenny		
Last name	Clafferty		
Postal address	PO Box 10420, Wellington 6140		
Mobile phone	[redacted]	**Work phone**	
Email	fast-track@doc.govt.nz and [redacted]		

2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment

X	I can receive emails and my email address is correct	☐	I cannot receive emails and my postal address is correct

3. Please provide your comments on this application

Please find comments attached



Linda Kirk
Fast Track Applications Manager
Acting pursuant to delegated authority on behalf of the Director-General of Conservation.
Date: 27/10/2026

Note: A copy of the Instrument of Delegation may be inspected at the Director-General's office at Conservation House Whare Kaupapa Atawhai, 18/32 Manners Street, Wellington 6011

Comments on a fast-track consenting application

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 section 53

To: The Expert Panel

From: Department of Conservation

Regarding fast-track project: **Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion**

Fast track Reference: FTAA-2605-1236

1 Introduction

1.1 A Project Overview is provided in the DOC section 51 Covering Report[1] provided to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) by the Department of Conservation (the Department/DOC) on 12 October 2026. That description is adopted for the purpose of these comments.

1.2 In accordance with sections 53(2)(k) and 53(2)(m)(i) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA), the Director-General of Conservation (D-G) has been invited to comment on the substantive application. Statutory delegations are in place for DOC to provide commentary on behalf of the D-G.

1.3 Appendices A – J of the DOC section 51 Covering Report provides expert statements of advice that informed DOC's s51 reporting. Those statements equally inform these comments under s53 of the FTAA[2]. They are listed here but not re-appended:

- Appendix A – Statement of advice of Dr S Walker – Terrestrial Flora & ecosystems
- Appendix B – Statement of advice of Dr C Kavazos - Freshwater
- Appendix C - Statement of advice of Dr C Watts - Invertebrates
- Appendix D - Statement of advice of N Harker - Lizards
- Appendix E - Statement of advice of Dr K Weston - Avifauna
- Appendix F - Statement of advice of J Head - Landscape
- Appendix G - Statement of advice of T Moore – Visitor Experience
- Appendix H - Statement of advice of D M Schmidt - Heritage
- Appendix I - Statement of advice of D Barrell – Geomorphology

[1] DOC-s51-Covering-Report-Remarkables.pdf

[2] Reports and advice (see 12 October 2026 entry)

- Appendix J - Statement of advice of Dr F Maseyk – Effects Management including compensation

1.4 Attached to these s53 comments are:

a. **Attachment 1** - Statement of Advice of Jane Macleod (Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) Planning matters), including Appendix A to that statement (comments on proposed resource consent conditions)

b. **Attachment 2** - Addendum to statement of advice of Dr S Walker (Terrestrial Flora & Ecosystems)

c. **Attachment 3** - Addendum to statement of advice of J Head (Landscape)

d. **Attachment 4** - Addendum to statement of advice of Dr F Maseyk (Effects Management)

1.5 Attachment's 2 and 3 have been provided to specifically inform RMA matters. Attachment 4 is provided to provide an update to/further refinement of the potential compensation package.

2 Assessment

Overview

2.1 DOC's s51 Concession Report provides DOC's views on the application for concessions, and the effects on the environment. Paragraphs 16 – 32 of that report provide an overview. These overarching comments apply to the application in a broader RMA sense also. For brevity, they are not repeated here, but in summary DOC considers that:

a. ski-fields provide important recreation opportunities and benefits across New Zealand. DOC supports ski-field developments where appropriate and where appropriate effects management strategies can maintain and improve conservation outcomes.

b. adverse effects are understated by the application and measures to avoid, remedy and mitigate adverse effects are also not yet able to be fully determined.

c. further information is required for the Panel to appropriately understand the values present on the Project site, and the actual and potential effects on the environment of the Project.

d. the Project is largely inconsistent with the national, regional and district level resource management policy statements and plans.

e. should the Panel approve the application, conditions aimed at providing a form of compensation should focus on values and outcomes that respond to the landscape and ecosystem-level adverse effects. As it stands, DOC considers the proposed package is not appropriate for the scale and scope of natural values proposed to be lost, as it will not achieve outcomes commensurate with the impacts of the project.

f. should the Panel approve the application, amendments are required to conditions and management plans to improve their rigour and ensure that better environmental outcomes are achieved.

Further Information Required

2.2 Further information is required for the Panel to appropriately understand the values present on the Project site, and the actual and potential effects on the environment of the Project. DOC considers that this information includes:

a. Assessment of the anticipated trajectory of climate change from a suitably qualified professional, how this will be responded to in regard to the longevity of the ski-field, additional snow making, and where any additional water required for this will be sourced from and stored.

b. Assessment of operational effects from snow making, snow grooming, skiing, visitor use and road use on freshwater, vegetation and ecosystem, and invertebrate values, taking into account the effects of climate change over the life of the project.

c. A more full assessment of alternatives to the proposed option of taking water for snowmaking from Doolans Creek and storing it in a reservoir at the site of Tarn 3.

d. Mapping of terrestrial naturally uncommon ecosystems (NUEs), and quantification of the area of each type of NUE that will be lost.

e. A foot survey of the area of the proposed weir and water intake at Doolans Creek, to properly understand if heritage sites may be present.

f. Comprehensive data on invertebrate values in the Project area – information is currently limited by the absence of sampling during early to mid-summer, and no reporting of abundance data.

g. A survey of lizards in the proposed Transit Hub area next to SH6.

h. Assessment of effects on geomorphology.

i. Assessment of the combined and cumulative effects of all elements of the project, particularly on freshwater and vegetation/ecosystem values.

j. Measures to suitably avoid, remedy or mitigate natural hazard risks, and in particular rockfall risk and road stability on the proposed access track and skier return trail above Swan Lake.

Resource Management

2.3 A statement of advice to DOC of Resource Management Planner Jane MacLeod on RMA/ Planning matters is provided at **Attachment 1**.

2.4 As concluded by Ms McLeod, in relation to the RMA planning framework as it relates to management of effects on ecological values, heritage values, landscape and natural character values (including geomorphology) and recreation values:

a. the proposal is inconsistent with relevant provisions in the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F), the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB), and

b. the proposal is inconsistent with provisions relating to the management of effects on ecological and recreation values in the Otago Regional Policy Statement, the Regional Plan: Water for Otago (RPWO), Queenstown Lakes District Plan and Central Otago District Plan.

c. the relevant provisions in the NES-F, the NPS-FM and the NPS-IB direct that the proposed activity should be avoided.

d. the proposal does not recognise or provide for RMA Part 2 s6(a) or s6(c), and does not have particular regard to s7(d) or s7(i).

e. further information and assessment is required to determine whether the proposal is consistent with provisions for the management of effects on heritage and landscape values. Therefore, it is currently not clear whether the proposal appropriately recognises or provides for RMA Part 2 s6(b) or s6(f).

f. the proposal is consistent with RPWO provisions relating to water quantity.

g. in relation to effects on the ability to collect scientific information from a geomorphological feature on the site, the proposal does not have particular regard to RMA Part 2 s7(g).

Compensation

2.5 The Project would have significant impacts on high conservation values, of which the impacted sequences of ecosystems are unique and irreplaceable. In light of the significant, vulnerable and irreplaceable values that will be permanently lost, the Department's expert statements explain that offsetting and compensation done consistently with the internationally accepted principles as explained in the NPS-IB is not possible.

2.6 Should the Panel wish to consider compensation type packages in any case, consideration will need to be given to the range of outcomes that should be provided for.

2.7 This requires judgements around what outcomes are appropriate and the scale of outcome that would be proportionate (to outweigh the adverse effects). There is no agreed best practice approach or framework for determining compensation for significant biodiversity that is irreversibly lost and irreplaceable.

2.8 Given this, the statement of advice from Dr Maseyk (Appendix J to DOC's s51 Covering Report) outlines the framework the Department has used to consider appropriate

compensation (informing the use of this concept in the FTAA) and proposes a package of activities intended to deliver outcomes in light of the level of impacts expected of the proposal. This package has been refined somewhat since lodgement of DOC's s51 reports; the refined package is provided in the attached Addendum to Ms Maseyk's statement of advice (**Attachment 4**).

2.9 The advice to DOC from Dr Maseyk outlines a package of projects. DOC is of the view that some are scalable in their extent of application and therefore cost. There are implications of scaling back the selection and extent of the projects in terms of achieving adequate outcomes commensurate to the effects of the development.

2.10 The Department has been working on the cost of these projects internally. Should the Panel wish to understand that further DOC can provide guidance on the likely cost of implementing them.

2.11 DOC is willing to engage further with the applicant on a proportionate package and is available to support the Panel in further considering what any proposed package should look like if the Panel is minded to approve the project on that basis.

Treaty of Waitangi considerations and obligations

2.12 DOC's s51 reports address Treaty matters. Since lodging those reports, DOC has provided a copy of those reports to our Treaty partners and has met with Kā Rūnaka. DOC understands that Kā Rūnaka will be providing comments to the Panel within the timeframe set out by s53.

3 Comments on conditions

3.1 Appendix A to Ms Macleod's statement of advice provides comments on the proposed resource consent conditions that form part of the application. The Department considers that, should the Panel be minded to approve the application, the proposed conditions require further work to ensure that:

a. all avoidance, remedy and mitigation measures are implemented to be as effective as possible

b. they are specific, enforceable, and where appropriate include quantitative and time bound targets and triggers and specify remedial actions when targets and triggers are not met

c. provide greater clarity and certainty, removing room for discretion where this is not appropriate.

Management Plans

3.2 DOC considers that the management plans should be amended to require all plans to be prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person, to set out clear objectives that relate to the outcome that must be achieved in terms of effects management, and to include specific performance management requirements. Ms Macleod's statement of advice summarises the feedback on the management plans from the various DOC subject experts.

3.3 Additional management plans are also recommended for the management of operational effects, including snowmaking and grooming; and for the management/monitoring of landscape effects.

3.4 DOC notes that the date of the Lizard Management Plan stated at clause 1 of Schedule 1 of the proposed Wildlife Approval (being 14 May 2026) is incorrect/outdated. This was not picked up prior to DOC's s51 Wildlife Approval's report being submitted to the EPA.

Compensation Conditions

3.5 As noted, the Department's experts take the view that it is not possible to compensate for the adverse impacts, and instead the focus should be on avoidance in the first instance for the more significant impacts.

3.6 In the event the Panel does instead consider conditions relating to compensation type packages are possible without further avoidance, the Department considers (while it will not amount to compensation in a principled sense), the projects and conditions need to be driven by outcomes rather than a predetermined funding cap. The current proposed conditions only specify funding, not outcomes. Conditions need to include a description of each project, the anticipated outcome, time-bound actions, performance measures, monitoring, reporting and compliance requirements and a feedback loop that triggers contingency measures where monitoring shows anticipated outcomes have not been achieved.

3.7 Drafting of appropriate conditions is not yet possible as it will depend on the end package, and at this point the Department sees that as a work in progress. In regard to where conditions around such packages should sit, at a conceptual, high-level DOC would see the conditions being:

a. For most impacts to the values in the Doolans Basin, conditions about alternative packages sit in the concessions. There might also be cross referencing to this package in the resource consent conditions, given the impacts span both the Conservation Act and Resource Management effects hierarchy.

b. For the impacts to wildlife, such as packages addressing the impacts to McCanns skink, this would be contained in the Wildlife Act approvals.

4 Process from here

4.1 As set out above, the Department's position is:

a. Further information is required to inform the Panel before it can be in a position to consider whether to grant this application.

b. There is currently an inability to comment sensibly on the package of measures being considered compensation by the applicant. Key considerations for the Panel are whether this application can be granted without first avoiding the impacts, whether compensation is available, and if so, what might be an appropriate level of compensation.

4.2 The material and considerations required by paragraph 4.1 are substantial and relate to new or additional material being provided by the Applicant, including potentially material changes to the application and conditions.

4.3 The Department therefore seeks an opportunity for further engagement with this material in the Panel-led process. Clause 10 of Schedule 3 to the FTAA requires the Panel to regulate its own procedure as it thinks appropriate, without procedural formality, and in a manner that best promotes the just, as well as timely, determination of the approvals sought in a substantive application.

4.4 The Department would also be agreeable for its technical advisers to engage in expert conferencing or hot tubbing if the Panel considered this to be of benefit.

Attachments

- **Attachment 1** - Statement of Advice of Jane Macleod (Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) Planning matters), including Appendix A to that statement (suggested amendments to resource consent conditions)
- **Attachment 2** - Addendum to statement of advice of Dr S Walker
- **Attachment 3** - Addendum to statement of advice of J Head
- **Attachment 4** - Addendum to statement of advice of Dr F Maseyk