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Media release

Paparoa National Park values must be protected, TIA says

The quiet and solitude of Paparoa National Park must be protected, even as the park is opened up to more visitors, Tourism Industry Aotearoa says.

Visitor numbers to the park are likely to increase, and the resulting pressure on existing facilities and the environment must be carefully managed, TIA says in a submission to the Department of Conservation.

The Paparoa Track and Pike29 Memorial Track in the park are due to open this year, and in anticipation of this, the Paparoa National Park Plan allows for activities like mountain biking and aircraft landings.

However, DOC is also having to amend the West Coast Te Tai O Poutini Conservation Management Strategy to permit these activities. The West Coast CMS also covers activity in the Paparoa National Park and other conservation areas on the West Coast.

DOC has proposed amendments to the West Coast's CMS that would allow mountain biking on the Paparoa Track and Pike29 Memorial Track, and limited aircraft landings to deliver and pick up track users. It also wants to clear the way for sporting and other competitive events.

Paparoa National Park is an outstanding example of natural New Zealand and provides a remarkable opportunity to connect visitors to nature, TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says.

"Catering for higher visitor numbers needs to be carefully managed to ensure the inherent values of the park – quiet, remoteness and solitude," Mr Roberts says.

Allowing for aircraft landings to support walkers and mountain bikers is a significant change that must be fully evaluated, particularly to protect the park's natural quiet, he says.

While sporting events have proved to be a good way to connect people to our natural places, and encourage visitors into less-visited regions, they can attract large numbers of people to use the area at the same time.

"We recommend that if sporting and competitive events are included in the Paparoa National Park, they are limited in frequency, have restricted numbers of participants and are confined to existing tracks," he says.

TIA believes the CMS should allow mountain biking on the Paparoa Track, the Heaphy Track (between May and November) and the Old Ghost Road, but wants e-bikes to be permitted as well. Electrically-assisted mountain bikes are increasingly common.

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TIA is unsure whether mountain biking should be allowed on the Pike29 Memorial Track as this may detract from the aspiration for quiet reflection and remembrance there. TIA also wants to see improvements in DOC's planning process.

"We have raised concerns about how DOC is undertaking its planning for National Parks and specifically the amendment process for the West Coast CMS. Several aspects of the Paparoa National Park Plan, which was reviewed in 2017, allow activities that are prohibited in the CMS," Mr Roberts says.

"DOC is now trying to clear up the confusion of having different rules in different documents."

"We agree with Forest & Bird and others that the CMS should be more thoroughly reviewed, rather than amended. The lack of planning and following the proper process, and inconsistencies between the Paparoa National Park Plan and the CMS has led to an uncertain environment for tourism operators."

To read TIA's submission, go to <https://tia.org.nz/assets/Uploads/eeee159ffc/TIA-submission-West-Coast-Te-Tai-o-Poutini-CMS-amendments-v2.pdf>

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KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$107 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$44 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$63 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism is New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$16.2 billion or 20.6% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2018).
- 13.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 365,316 people are working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

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