

MINIMUM IMPACT CODE FOR ENTRY TO ISLAND NATURE RESERVES

Management objectives

The Kermadec Islands are managed so that they are kept as far as possible in a natural state. This means ensuring that the distribution, number, and interactions of indigenous plant and animal species are not detrimentally affected by human activities in the reserves. Any disturbance of wildlife and alteration of their natural behaviour must be for good and sufficient reason.

Reason for the code

Any person visiting Raoul Island must give absolute priority to conservation values of the reserve, over their own activities. The following code of behaviour is provided as a guide to help visitors apply entry permit conditions.

The code includes important precautions to prevent the introduction of unwanted animals and plant species, or diseases and pathogens being brought ashore through soil on boots, clothing or other gear.

Birds, even of the same species, need to be treated as very sensitive individuals and they will vary in their reaction to disturbance. Ground nesting species are especially vulnerable.

Inadequate rubbish disposal can attract rodents, pollute waters, or create a hazard, such as plastics debris hazard to marine mammals and sea birds, as well as spoiling the natural appearance of a reserve.

The code

1. Animal clearance for vessel
 - 1.1 Ensure there are no pets (or any other animals) on board.
 - 1.2 Obtain a ships sanitation certificate/sanitation exemption certification from the medical officer of health or inspector of health, if required.
 - 1.3 Immediately before departure for the reserve thoroughly inspect all possible rodent shelter, i.e. fenders, ropes, coils, dinghies, etc.
 - 1.4 Place rodent poison in bait boxes and bait and set traps below decks for at least two nights before sailing, during the journey, and for at least two nights following arrival; check baits regularly and renew as required.
 - 1.5 Ensure on night before departure that:
 - No edibles, rodent baits or provisions are on deck.
 - No doors or hatches are left open, and that all openings and vents are screened.
 - If anchorage allows, laying alongside other boats, is avoided.
 - If available, an effective rat guard, shield, disc or trap is placed on every rope or hawser to prevent entry onto ship (Note: When anchoring/mooring at the reserve ensure that any rat guards are reversed as a precaution against chance escape from the ship).

- Unnecessary landing stages, gangways and nets between the ship and any wharf, lighter or other ship are removed between sunset and sunrise.
- If possible, the ship is moved before sunset from the wharf to a position in stream and left there until sunrise on the following day.

2. Packaging of cargo to be landed

- 2.1 Carefully choose area for packing and ensure minimal risk of mouse, rat or invertebrates remaining undiscovered in containers; do not leave boxes open overnight during packing.
- 2.2 Place all foodstuffs and, as far as possible, other cargo, in robust containers which are securely sealed, so that on inspection any rodent entry would be readily apparent.
- 2.3 Keep cargo that is awaiting loading, in a warehouse where rodent poison bait stations are maintained and good housekeeping standards are practised.
- 2.4 Immediately before loading, carefully re-inspect the cargo for sign of animals, especially any heavy equipment, tentage in unsealed containers, or building materials. Repack as precaution if necessary; fumigation is essential where doubt remains.

3. Landing checks

- 3.1 Carry out further checks for sign of rodents, invertebrates or soil while unloading is in progress onto the landing-boat or helicopter, and when the cargo is landed on the reserve. Do not land any suspect packages.
- 3.2 Ensure the landing-boat is free of all rodents. And at the Kermadecs, Auckland or Campbell Islands be diligent with rodent precautions in travelling between one island and another in the group in case a rat or mouse has been picked up at the previous locality.

4. Plant precautions

- 4.1 Check clothing and equipment on the transport vessel before landing, to ensure that no seeds, plant material, soil or leaf litter are adhered. Pay particular attention to soles of boots, socks, trouser cuffs, pockets of clothing, and packs, as well as tents and other gear.
- 4.2 Dispose of all seeds, plant material, soil and leaf litter discovered in an inspection, in a manner which avoids the possibility of it blowing or washing onto the reserve.
- 4.3 Take similar precautions on the shore before travelling between one island and another of the same group by boat or helicopter.

5. Wildlife disturbance

- 5.1 Develop careful patterns for visiting each seal or bird colony, where this is necessary for photography or research, to cause the least disruption to the natural behaviour of the inhabitants.
- 5.2 Remain on the fringes of colonies whenever possible; after approaching slowly and quietly. Detour round breeding grounds and seal hauling-out beaches, if there is an alternative route.
- 5.3 Land helicopters (if authorised) at least 200 metres from any sea-bird or seal breeding colony, and fly on a route and at a height to avoid unnecessary disturbance of wildlife.
- 5.4 Care for nature's rhythm and balance.

6. General conservation methods

- 6.1 Plan visits to different parts of the island from the main base to minimise rubbish. Pack out what you pack in. Return as much rubbish as possible to the mainland. Do not burn rubbish in pits or in contact with peat or vegetation.
- 6.2 Keep to tracks or recognised routes where they exist; avoid trampling the surrounding areas. Keep movements to a minimum, especially along stream margins and wet ground.
- 6.3 Use portable stoves rather than fires, ensure fires are kept small and prepared, lit and controlled so that there is no danger of igniting the vegetation or peat. Before leaving extinguish fire and dismantle fireplace.
- 6.4 Take care to completely extinguish all cigarette butts and ash.
- 6.5 Plan research to make use of existing huts rather than establishing camp sites. Limit camping as much as possible; and use existing clearings on environmentally robust sites.
- 6.6 Do not use soap or detergents in fresh water. Carry washing water to the camp site and drain it onto absorbent soil.
- 6.7 Bury toilet wastes. Select a suitable spot well away from fresh water and dig a shallow hole within the 'biological decomposer' layer of the soil. Refill the hole with humus or loose soil.
- 6.8 Be thoughtful of the interests of other researchers when carrying out your work.

Section 20 of the Reserves Act 1977 provides that: "For the better protection and preservation of the flora and fauna in its natural state, no person shall enter....." a nature reserve ".....except under the authority of a permit....." Entry is deemed ".....to include any physical contact with the land by a boat...the attaching (by rope or otherwise) of a boat to the reserve or to a wharf....."