



Permission Decision Support Document

Notified concession application

Application Details

Decision Maker	Mark Davies, Director Operations, Western South Island
Permissions Manager	Judi Brennan
Applicant	Precision Helicopters Limited
Permission Number	81956-AIR
Permission Type	Notified aircraft landing permit

Document Links

Application	DOC-6127312 and DOC-6327170
Task register	DOC-6858785
Submissions and Hearing Report	DOC-6473018
Request for additional information	DOC-6525042
Additional information provided	DOC-6582707
Full ecology tech advisor report	DOC-6633670
Full management planning advice	DOC-6625280

Resources

Senior Permissions Advisor	Livi Geddes, Lisa Wheeler
Statutory Managers	Janine Sidery (ESI); Joy Comrie (WSI)
Hokitika District Office	Michelle Lambert, Community Ranger
Management Planner	Joanne Easterbrook
Recreation Planner	Ian Wightwick
Ecological Advice	Brian Rance

1. Context

The Department has received an application from Precision Helicopters Limited (the Applicant) for a concession to undertake regular helicopter landings for scenic / tourism activities on six West Coast landing sites identified in table one below:

Table One: Aircraft Landing Sites – Concession Application

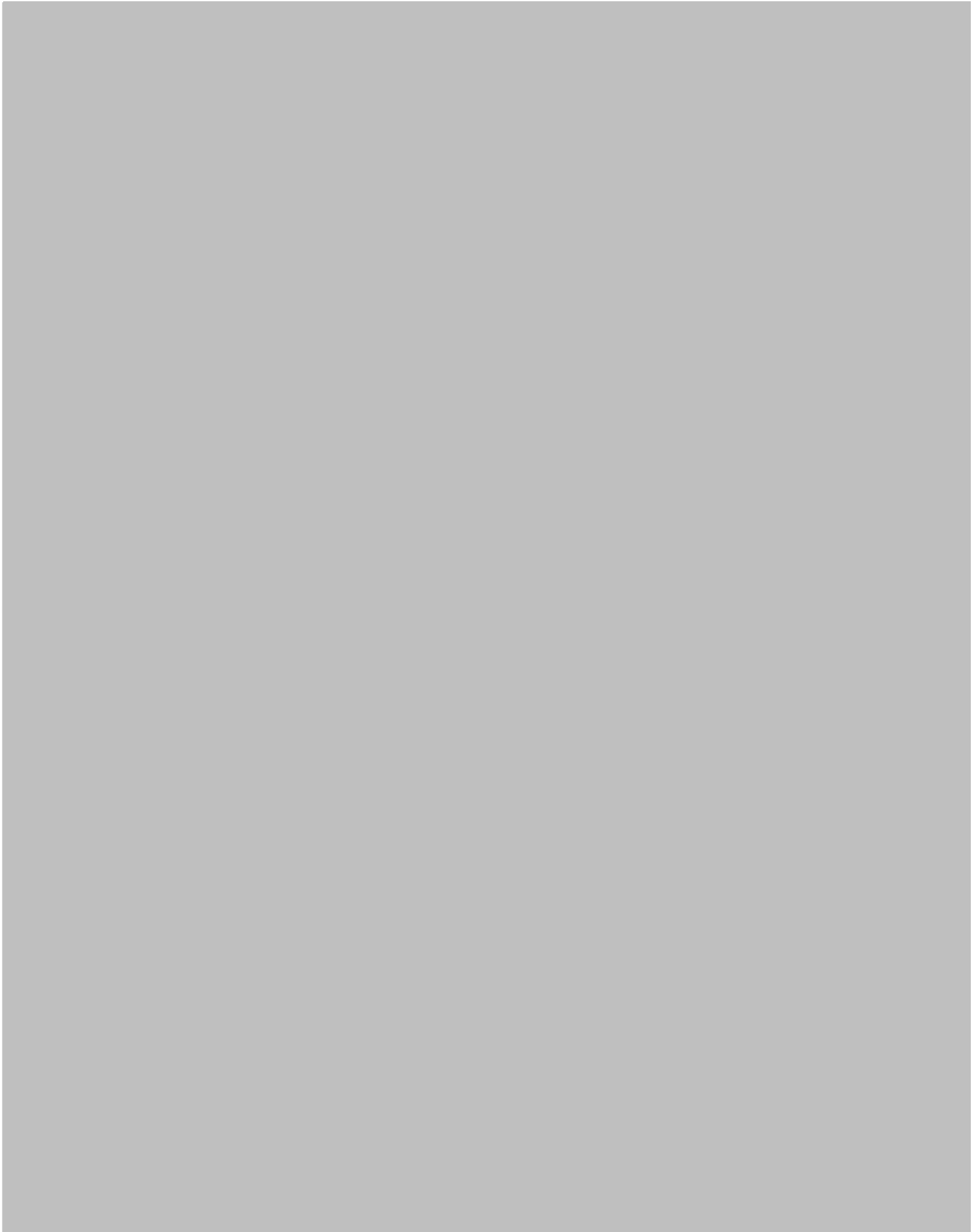
Aircraft Activity			Recreation Landings (3 or more landings per day and/or 25 or more landings per year)	
Landing Site Name	Conservation area	NZTM co-ordinates	Maximum per day	Maximum per year
Miserable Ridge	Totara - Mikonui Forests Conservation Area	1434610.5 E 5235685.9 N	3	150
Mount Beaumont	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1431831.2 E 5226180.6 N	5	300
Remarkable Peak	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1431661.0 E 5230282.0 N	3	300
Whataroa Glacier	Waitangi Forest	1399389.0 E 5191753.0 N	3	300
Prices Flat	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1438039.3 E 5225476.9 N	6	100
Mount Greenland	Upper Totara Ecological Area	1422382.0 E 5242431.0 N	4	100

The Applicant is seeking a term of 10 years to allow for some certainty around the viability of this aspect of their business.

Potential effects of activity on recreation users

The proposed activity is introducing a high level of aircraft landings (ranging between 100 – 300 per site, per year) in the Hokitika backcountry remote zone areas. Because the effects of this on other recreational users are not well understood, the application was put out for public notification pursuant to s 17SC(3) of the Conservation Act 1987.

2. Iwi, Stakeholder & Public Engagement



2.2 West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board Consultation

West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board Recommendations (6 September 2020) Inserted by Livi Geddes, Senior Permissions Advisor

For noting: the following recommendations were made on the original publicly notified application.

The West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board (the Board) recommends that the application is declined due to insufficient information on the effects of the activity. The application is inadequate for those who will be processing it and for a public consultation process.

If the Department chooses to continue to process the application, consideration should be given to the effect on recreational users as provisioned for in the CMS. If the severity of the effects is unclear, a cautionary approach should be taken, and the application declined.

- A Whataroa Glacier landing site, and any subsequent variation that would take helicopters into or over a wilderness area for regular landings, is excluded from any approved concession.
- The inclusion of the reasonable cost of appropriate and adequate monitoring, including of GPS records, in the concession fee.
- The term be no longer than 12 months so that a clear understanding of the effects can be gained by all interested parties, and any renewal or extension of the concession be considered with that clear understanding and input.

The Board acknowledges that the applicant would be unable to assess cumulative effects beyond those of their own multiple flights and landings. The Board therefore asks that DOC consider cumulative effects very carefully, taking into account all helicopter landing concessions, regular and irregular in this area.

The Board endorses the intentions stated in the active Visitor Management Strategy 1996 and the draft Heritage and Visitor Strategy to preserve or protect natural quiet to ensure visitor enjoyment. The Board asks that these intentions be brought into effect to impose suitable restrictions on helicopter flights and landings.

Noted
[Signature]

The Board recommends that the zero carbon 2050 target is given due consideration and any concession incorporates mitigation measures and emissions reduction plans, given the application is for a long-term and emissions-intensive activity.

The Board would like to see the risk of pollution and contamination of pristine sites given appropriate consideration.

- Any concession approved for no more than 12 months:
 - a) to enable a better understanding of effects by all interested parties,
 - b) so that DOC's new guidance document outlining how to consider climate change effects in decision making in relation to the Zero Carbon Act will be available and can be taken into account, and
 - c) so that the broader consideration of aircraft activities that may be available through both the upcoming CMS review and the development of national policy on aircraft, signalled as forthcoming, could be taken into account.

Noted.

2.3 Public Notification

Provided by Livi Geddes, Senior Permissions Advisor, on behalf of Judi Brennan, Permissions Manager

The public notification period ran from Wednesday 22 July 2020 with submissions closing on Wednesday 19 August 2020.

The application was notified on the Department website for the dates above and advertised in the Hokitika Guardian and the Greymouth Star once on Wednesday 22 July 2020.

Thirty eight (38) submissions were received (15 opposing the application and 23 in support).

The key themes from the objections and submissions are listed below:

• Noise from helicopters and effects on ground recreationalists	• Inadequate information/poor EIA
• Access to remote areas	• Carbon emissions
• Consistency with West Coast CMS	• Precedent for other applications and safety issues
• Disturbance to wildlife	• Economic benefits

These key themes will be discussed in the statutory analysis section below.

Five submitters requested to be heard and a hearing was held on Monday 28 September 2020, in the St John Rooms, 134 Stafford Street, Hokitika.

The Hearing Chair: Jo Gould, Statutory Manager, Northern South Island, Department of Conservation, (DoC)

Hearing Panel members: Ian Wightwick, Senior Visitor Advisor (DoC)
Joy Comrie, Statutory Manager, Western South Island (DoC).

Submitters that were heard:

Paulette Birchfield (Support) in person

Sonja Barker (Support) in person

Bill Johnson (Support) via Microsoft Teams

Nicky Snoyink for Forest and Bird (Object) via Microsoft Teams

Allan Brent and Jan Finlayson for Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) (Object) via Microsoft Teams

Applicant's representatives: Matt Newton, Lily Newton

Media presence: Nil

Hearing Chairs Recommendations

(Extract from full Objection and Submission Summary Recommendation Report dated 3 December 2020)

8.1: Seek further information and advice

8.1.1 Request that the applicant provides a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

8.1.2 Seek further information from DOC on current helicopter landings in Hokitika Place and Te Wahi Pounamu Place, including the Whataroa Glacier.

8.1.3 On receiving further information, seek advice on the following:

- the effects of the proposed activity and advice on appropriate methods to avoid, remedy or mitigate those effects (including potential cumulative effect);
- potential effects of carbon emissions and methods to remedy or mitigate those effects; and
- consistency with statutory planning documents.

8.2: Consider whether to approve all or some landing sites and reduced landing frequency; and if so, relevant conditions

8.2.1 Decline sites where adverse effects are deemed to be unacceptable.

1.2.2 Approve sites where adverse effects can be appropriately avoided, remedied or mitigated.

1.2.3 Matters to be considered to minimise impacts on natural quiet, wilderness values and ecological values include:

- Limiting total number of daily landings at each site.
- Daily limits for all sites
- Different levels of seasonal use

- Noise abatement methods
- Requirement to follow the Fly Neighbourly code
- Conditions to minimise impacts on natural quiet and wilderness areas
- Require GPS monitoring on flights and provision of information to DOC
- Avoid landing if other recreational users are visible in vicinity.

A copy of the Submission Summary Recommendation Report is provided as attachment 1 to this report.

3. Additional Information

Following feedback from the public notification and stakeholder engagement process and further consideration of the application by the Department, the Applicant was requested by provide a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which has been summarised below.

- **Advice on the effects of flight frequency on backcountry users and noise associated with each landing site, along with any proposed methods to avoid, minimise or reduce effects.**
The pilot will ensure that a variety of flight routes are used to minimise flight frequency associated with the helicopter landing sites. The following noise abatement strategies (building on those provided in our letter of 8 June 2020) will be employed:
 - Flight routes will avoid following walking tracks and huts.
 - Flights will be operated at a minimum of 500ft above ground level at all times, except for during take-off and landing manoeuvres.
 - Adhering to the Helicopter Association International's 'Fly Neighbourly Guide'.
 - Pilots will check for people on the ground before undertaking a landing, and if people are visible, the landing will be aborted and an alternative landing site chosen.
- **Information on how long the landings are for at each site (and whether they continue to idle or whether they shut down).**
The average landing duration is around 12 minutes depending on the nature of the flight and equipment to be loaded/unloaded. The aircraft must be left at idle to avoid the risk of the helicopter failing to restart in a remote location, which is a health and safety risk.
- **Information on the level of existing recreationalist use for each proposed landing site (number of people, type – e.g. experience seeking, seasonal use).**
Anecdotally, the company has been carrying out regular trips up the Whitcombe Valley, and has only seen six other parties of hikers/hunters in the vicinity of huts while carrying out these trips. Precision Helicopters has obtained intentions logbook information from DoC operational staff to determine the extent of recreationalist use of each of the areas. For the period February 2020- February 2021, the following numbers of hut visits were recorded for the year: Neave hut – 16; Wilkinson Hut – 12; Frews Hut - 42 • Prices flat – 37; and Ivory Lake - 32
Of these recorded visits, Precision Helicopters estimates approximately half of these were flown into the area by the company itself.
- **Potential for effects arising from overuse of individual sites.**
Precision Helicopters has engaged K J Ladley to undertake an ecological report. This report canvasses the flora and fauna found at each of the proposed helicopter landings, and assesses the potential effects of the landings. The report concludes that the effects of landings at each of the sites are acceptable, with the exception of non-snow landings at Remarkable Peak, and provides monitoring recommendations.

- **Proposed flight paths, particularly over wilderness area.**
As noted above, the company intends to scatter flight routes as much as possible to avoid concentrating along pre-determined flight paths. It is therefore considered inappropriate to define flight paths. By withdrawing the Whataroa Glacier landing area from the application, this removes flights from the southern Adams Wilderness Area. The intention is to undertake flights in the northern tip of the Adams Wilderness Area to access the Wilkinson and Ramsay glaciers and Whitcombe Pass. If climbers are seen then the pilot will divert to view glaciers in the headwaters of the Rakaia such as the Reischeck Glacier.
- **For the Upper Totara Ecological Area – assessment of whether proposed landings would affect ecological values.**
The attached ecological report suggests that the proposed landing area in the Upper Totara Ecological Area is a highly modified environment. And an adverse effect can be avoided by using the existing bulldozer track and heli pad.

Precision Helicopters has reviewed the ecological report, and on the back of the recommendations contained in this report, wishes to modify its application as outlined below in order to, address the potential effects outlined in the report.

- Amend the minimum term of the concession to 5 years. This is considered to be the minimum term required given the level of investment this application has required.
- Withdraw the Whataroa Glacier landing area as outlined above, to minimise flight over the Adams Wilderness Area.
- Carry out and submit annual photographic surveys of the landing sites from defined photo points at the active landing sites to the Department of Conservation to allow monitoring of vegetation to demonstrate that the landings are not having an adverse effect on the identified threatened plant species.
- Ensure passengers are briefed on rare/threatened plant species to avoid, and to stick to animal tracks and tread with care to avoid trampling plants.
- Kea and other birds are seen from time to time on approach to land. The speed of the aircraft on approach to landing is 60 knots or less. This low-speed approach gives a kea time to alter course if encountering a helicopter while landing. In 12000 hours of flying the applicant has never had a bird strike.
- Ensure passengers to the Miserable Ridge landing site are briefed to stay at least 2m from the edge of the tarns to avoid trampling the vulnerable tarn edge vegetation.
- Make the following modifications to proposed maximum annual landings, reflecting the risks outlined in the ecological report, and to avoid adverse effects on users of the Adams Wilderness Area (changes highlighted in yellow):

Aircraft Activity	Regular Landings (3 or more landings per day and/or 21 or more landings per year)
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Landing Site Name	Conservation area	NZTM co-ordinates	Maximum per day	Maximum per year
Miserable Ridge	Totara - Mikonui Forests Conservation Area	1434610.5 E 5235685.9 N	3	75
Mount Beaumont	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1431831.2 E 5226180.6 N	5	300
Remarkable Peak - snow landings	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1431661.0 E 5230282.0 N	3	300
Remarkable Peak - non snow landings	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1431661.0 E 5230282.0 N	1	100*
Whataroa Glacier	Waitangi Forest	1399389.0 E 5191753.0 N	0	0
Prices Flat	Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area	1438039.3 E 5225476.9 N	6	80
Mount Greenland	Upper Totara Ecological Area	1422382.0 E 5242431.0 N	4	100

*no more than 4 landings per week

4. Technical Assessments

Brian Rance, Technical Advisor Ecology

Review of Applicant's Ecological Assessment - (April 2021)

Summary

The primary potential ecological impacts from the helicopter landings and associated passenger activity are vegetation disturbance (through trampling and helicopter landing) and pest plant introductions. Of the five sites the Remarkable Peak site is assessed to have the highest potential impact (i.e. high ecological vulnerability when not covered in snow). The Miserable Ridge site is assessed to have moderate ecological vulnerability. The Mt Beaumont, Price Flat and Mt Greenland sites are assessed to have lower ecological vulnerability.

The potential impacts upon vegetation disturbance and pest plant introductions could be reduced through appropriate conditions including some foot access restrictions. Monitoring of the sites is supported and will assist with evaluation of future continuation of the concession and/or the case to vary landing numbers. Recommendations for the individual sites are provided below:

Miserable Ridge

Recommendations: - From the ecological assessment include:

- That the existing animal tracks be used for access.
Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- That visitor access should not be allowed within 2m of the edge of any tarns.
Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- That photographic monitoring of the *Craspedia* patches within 50m of landing sites and margins of tarns within 200m of the landing site.
The monitoring is suggested to be repeated biannually.

Additional conditions:

Biosecurity

- That passengers should be checked to ensure that they have clean footwear.
- That helicopter skids are checked to be clean.
- That passengers are briefed regarding the risk of spreading weeds and to take action to minimize the risk.

Monitoring

- That photographic monitoring of the *Craspedia* and tarn margins is undertaken (as recommended).
- That photographic monitoring is supplemented with a walk-through survey to assess any damage from foot traffic within the area and also to search for any exotic plant species present. The walk-through survey to concentrate on the landing area and animal tracks.
- That monitoring is established prior to beginning the concession activity. The monitoring is repeated after year 1, year 3 and year 5. The assessment of effects to be considered as any concession renewal or variation.

Mount Beaumont

Noted

Recommendations: - No site-specific conditions are required.

Remarkable Peak

Recommendations: - From the ecological assessment include:

- That landings at this site only occur when snow cover is present.

Alternative recommendations from the applicant:

- That a maximum of 100 landing when snow is not present. With a maximum of 1 landing per day and 4 landings per week
- Non-snow cover landings to be restricted to sites with aggregate cover (i.e. gravel/rock substrate) with sparse vegetation.
- That baseline and regular photographic monitoring be undertaken of the landing area and sensitive.

Additional conditions:

- That sensitive sites (i.e. snowbank, damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation) to be avoided. Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- Biosecurity - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above.
- Monitoring - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above with:
 - photographic monitoring of the landing and sensitive vegetation (i.e. snowbank and damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation) is undertaken.

Price Flat

Recommendations: - From the ecological assessment include:

- That photographic monitoring should be set up and measured annually.

Additional conditions:

- Biosecurity - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above.
- Monitoring - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above.

Mt Greenland

Recommendations: - From the ecological assessment include:

- That photographic monitoring should be set up and measured annually at the landing site.
- Access in the area should be confined to the existing bulldozer track.
- Annual monitoring of myrtle rust to be established.

Additional conditions:

- Biosecurity - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above with:
 - That Precision Helicopters be required to undertake gorse control to remove gorse from the landing clearing and to maintain in a gorse free state for the duration of the concession.
- Monitoring - as per conditions recommended for Miserable Ridge above.

General comments

The impacts are largely from helicopter landing and increased foot traffic. The level of impact will be influenced by the number of landings and amount of foot traffic.

There is a risk of weed introduction resulting from the activity. This is of particular concern at the higher altitude sites that are essentially weed free (especially the Miserable Ridge and Remarkable Peak sites).

The risk from weeds can be reduced by the applicants ensuring that passenger's footwear and clothing is clean and that helicopter skids are clean/weed free. The risk of introducing weeds could also be reduced through the sequence of site visits and so visiting more modified sites last (i.e. Price Flat and also Mt Greenland), where possible.

Monitoring should be established to assess any potential effects. The monitoring should consist of a combination of photographic monitoring supplemented by walk-through surveys. The monitoring should be targeted to helicopter landing areas, sensitive vegetation (notably moss areas and wetlands), tracks and other sites where passengers travel or congregate. The monitoring should be repeatable (i.e. utilize the same sites on repeated visits).

A term of 5 years appears appropriate. During this time the number of landings, frequency of landings and number of passengers should be recorded. Monitoring of effects should also be established to determine the nature and extent of effects.

Noted

Ian Wightwick, Senior Visitor Advisor

Adverse effects of the activity on visitors (29/07/2021)

Summary

Hut book data indicates that in recent years annual visitor use of the relatively accessible 10 bunk Frews Hut peaked at 297 PA and Rapid Creek Hut at 139 PA. These huts are in the Hokitika and Whitcombe Valley floor. The more remote huts and bivvys located further up the catchment and on the tops have annual visitor use that peaked between 12 and 87 visitors PA.¹

Currently irregular² aircraft landings occur in the area under application. Aircraft concession returns from the applicant show landings for the positioning of recreationists at nearby huts or locations in the area total 24 landing per annum. Concession returns for the other aircraft operator based in Hokitika are less than 15 landings annum for the area.

Soundscape and tranquillity mapping – another way of describing/managing natural quiet
When preparing the draft Westland Te Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan 2018, the department mapped and described the soundscape and tranquillity for the Park.³ This

Noted

¹ Hut book data indicates annual use peaked at Ivory Lake (56), Prices Flat (87), Wilkinson (46), Neave (64) Prices Basin (12), Healy Creek (37), Mikonui Spur (21), Explorer (49).

² Irregular: Irregular landings are defined as no more than 2 landings per day, and no more than 20 per annum, at a given location. Landings may be authorised for the purposes of transportation of personnel and/or equipment to or from a variety of possible locations within the remote or backcountry-remote zones, or at frontcountry sites. This provides for landings for air charter purposes, but does not include regular landings at specific sites or scenic snow landings.

³ Refer <https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/f299bfd706f4c928b5b0c770d46e403/westland-tai-poutini-draft-npmp.pdf>

approach can help to describe the impacts of aircraft on natural quiet⁴ in the area under application.

Tranquillity is a function of both the visible setting and the audible setting. This is reflected in the need to preserve not only the natural landscapes of an area but also its natural soundscapes – also known as natural quiet²². The introduction of ‘unnatural’ anthropogenic (human-caused) sounds from powered aircraft – including overflights other human activities – affects the naturalness of the soundscape. These unwanted effects constitute noise and can reduce the tranquillity benefits the public receives from public conservation lands and waters.

One mechanism for monitoring and measuring the integrity of the natural soundscape is by applying tranquillity levels across a geographical area. Tranquillity levels are expressed as a Tranquillity Rating (TR) on a scale of 0-10. The presence of both fully natural landscapes and fully natural soundscapes result in the highest level of tranquillity possible (TR 10) and low levels of tranquillity (TR 0-2). Refer Table 1 below.

Tranquillity Rating (TR) scale	TR 0-2	TR 2-4	TR 4-6	TR 6-8	TR 8-10
Word used in outcomes to describe the desired tranquillity level	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high

Table 1 Tranquillity rating scale outcomes at Place

Research indicated that most people tend to increasingly benefit from tranquillity above 5 on the TR scale: Note: TR 10 requires a fully natural soundscape – i.e., ‘natural quiet’.

Applying tranquillity outcomes to Wilderness Areas and West Coast CMS, Remote zones and the Hokitika Place Backcountry – Remote zone.

Wilderness Areas: As discussed, the objective for the Adams Wilderness Area is *to enable people to experience extensive natural settings with diverse topography and very high levels of natural character, including natural quiet.*

A Tranquillity Rating of TR 8-10 with the desired tranquillity outcome of Very High is appropriate for a Wilderness Area. To achieve this objective no landings should be authorised and we advocate that aircraft overflights avoid the wilderness area.

Remote zones: Like gazetted wilderness areas (see above), ‘remote’ zones provide extensive natural settings with diverse topography and high levels of natural character and are managed so as to maintain their characteristic remoteness, natural character and natural quiet. In some situations, remote zones provide a buffer to gazetted wilderness areas.

⁴ Natural quiet is described as natural ambient conditions in a natural area; the sounds of natures. Refer Glossary West Coast Te Tai Poutini Conservation Management Strategy page 309.

*Noted
Conservation*

A Tranquillity Rating of TR 8-10 with the desired tranquillity outcome of Very High is also considered appropriate for a Remote zone. To achieve this objective only irregular or occasional aircraft landings should be authorised.

Hokitika Backcountry – remote zones: The Hokitika ‘backcountry-remote’ zone provides opportunities to access extensive natural settings where facilities are provided but a considerable degree of physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation is involved.

A Tranquillity Rating of TR 6-8 with the desired tranquillity outcome High is considered appropriate. To achieve this objective only irregular landing be authorised and regular landing only occur at specific sites where High levels of tranquillity can be achieved by measures such as flying neighbourly and flight paths and use of terrain to avoid huts and tracks.

In relation to this application, flight paths can be used to minimise the impacts of aircraft noise on visitors using tracks and huts. However, these forms of mitigation are more difficult to achieve in relation to the unformed routes used by trampers, climbers and hunters undertaking multi day trips between the Whitcombe, Mikonui, Tuke, Cropp and Waitaha valleys. These high level routes provide the opportunity for people seeking a considerable degree of physical challenge and solitude.

The applicant proposes a maximum of 5 landings per day/ 300 per annum on Mount Beaumont. (elevation 2136m). Mount Beaumont must be climbed on these high level traverses. The proposed frequency of landings per day/per annum has the potential to impact on recreationists seeking solitude and quiet, particularly when the weather is fine, and conditions allow for a safe traverse of this terrain.

To minimise the effects of aircraft activity on these recreation users and retain a high level of natural quiet, I recommend that aircraft landings at Mount Beaumont are limited to a maximum of 2 landings per day and 150 per annum and a seasonal restriction on landings between 1 May and 30 September.

Currently, fewer people are likely to tramp or be present at Remarkable Peak and Miserable Ridge. However to avoid the impacts of helicopter use on the fragile environment at Remarkable Peak, I recommend aircraft landings occur only when snow is present at the landing site.

To minimise the cumulative effects of aircraft activity of recreation users and maintain high levels of natural quiet in the overall area under application, I recommend that in addition to the daily/annual limit of landings per site, the applicant is limited to carrying out a maximum of 6 landing per day across all sites.

The withdrawal of the proposed landing site at the Whataroa will minimise the impacts of aircraft activity on the majority of the Adams Wilderness Area, however, helicopter flights over the northern tip of the Gazetted Adams Wilderness Area will impact on the natural quiet and spiritual values of the wilderness area.

The applicant proposes flights will operate at a minimum of 500ft above ground level at all times. To minimise impacts over the Adams Wilderness Area I recommend that we advocate that flight paths avoid the wilderness area.

Critical issues

- It is appropriate for the decision maker to consider the adverse effects of aircraft landings and their associated flight paths on people using the area under application and the adjoining Adams Wilderness Area.
- It is appropriate for the decision maker to impose conditions and restrict flight paths to avoid, remedy or mitigate the potential adverse effects associated with the proposed aircraft landing on public conservation lands.
- However, key stakeholder groups such as FMC and some individuals, consider the Department also needs to prioritise work with CAA to restrict flight paths over the Adams Wilderness Area for aircraft activity that is not associated with aircraft landings on public conservation land.

Hokitika District Office: Michelle Lambert, Community Ranger

Hokitika Place context (West Coast Conservation Management Strategy)

Locations applied for are all within the Hokitika District Operations area in the Hokitika Backcountry-Remote zone. The areas are all within Stewardship land.

This is the first regular landing scenic tourism application the Hokitika District has received. There are numerous irregular landing permits granted for Hokitika Place in the Backcountry-Remote Zone, which allow for the positioning of recreationalists but do not allow for regular scenic landings. Any regular landings already authorised in the Hokitika Backcountry-Remote zone are for infrastructure maintenance such as water gauge monitoring.

Applicant Engagement

The District Office has provided advice to the applicant numerous times which has allowed for the applicant to remove and modify potential scenic landing locations.

The applicant also viewed the hut books for the proposed landings sites next to huts to gain a better understanding of the recreation use in those specific areas.

Assessment of Environmental Effects

Vegetation values

The ecological report produced by the applicant was clear on the impact of the activity on the values at all the proposed landing sites. Proposed landing sites were in areas already disturbed such as Mt Greenland, or on alpine herbfields. The applicant provided a range of mitigation techniques within their ecological report suggesting landing locations in already disturbed

areas, or less sensitive alpine environments to avoid any potential impacts of multiple landings of the helicopter in one spot. Two of the proposed landing sites have no presence of exotic species (Miserable ridge and Remarkable Peak), therefore any biosecurity measures proposed are especially important at these two sites. At some sites, Data Deficient, and At risk-recovering species were specifically identified for further monitoring via photo points at the proposed landing sites. These species were chosen due to their threat status or their visually conspicuous nature.

The District Office views the proposed conditions provided by the applicant and the Department's Ecological technical advisors as adequate to mitigate any potential effects on ecological values at propose landing sites.

Recreational Values

The Hokitika Backcountry is a very special place and resource for locals, recreationists, and iwi. The Hokitika Backcountry has the highest density of huts and tracks in the South Island of New Zealand. The area is largely intact native forest and alpine ecosystems. For many the Hokitika Backcountry is a place to experience challenging remote valleys, seldomly visited huts and to connect with wilderness. The Hokitika Backcountry caters for a range of activities such as tramping, hunting, kayaking, packrafting, and fishing to name a few. The use of helicopters by visitors to the Hokitika Backcountry is increasing, but this is usually limited to hunters and kayakers. Despite this increase, helicopter numbers are still low and the area is still very highly regarded for its remote nature.

The effects of the proposed activity on recreational users of the Hokitika Backcountry and local community was unclear and not well understood. The effect of helicopter noise is subjective and varies person to person. The District Office strongly advocated for Public Notification of this application to ensure the Department could get a range of opinions to understand the potential effect of the activity on the local community and the recreational user groups of the area. The views of both can be seen via the Public Notification report.

Multiple different flight routes will be taken to avoid concentrating pre-determined flights and avoid following walking tracks or flying directly over huts.

The applicant has proposed conditions to mitigate or reduce potential impacts of the activity on other recreational users.

The District Office views the proposed conditions provided by the applicant and the Department's Senior Recreational Advisor and Senior Management planner as adequate to mitigate any potential effects on recreational values at propose landing sites.

Historic Values

The Historic Price Flat hut is located at the Price Flat hut landing site. It is an actively managed historic site and was fully restored in 2020. The oldest part of the Historic hut was probably built in 1908. It was then refurbished or completely rebuilt in the late 1940s for the first Westland deer culling operation. It is a slab hut with a hand-hewn frame which is an

unusual construction feature. It is a preserved link with the early deer culling days on the Coast.

A condition should be put in the contract to protect the values of the hut as the proposed landings will potentially increase the number of people interacting with the historic feature. The increase in the number of landings there will enable more people to learn about the West Coast's deer culling history.

Proposed condition:

- The concessionaire must ensure passengers are aware of the historical significance of the Historic Price Flat Hut and visitors don't damage the building.

Joanne Easterbrook, Management Planner

Management Planning Assessment (May 2021)

Purpose

Management planning advice to consider whether this revised application from Precision Helicopters for regular helicopter landings at 5 locations in the Hokitika backcountry is consistent with the West Coast CMS.

Context

Additional information provided by the Applicant confirms the Whataroa Glacier landing site has been removed from the application.

There are 5 remaining landing sites as part of this revised application. The frequency and number of landings per site have been reduced to reflect the recommendations in the ecological report. Details of the landing sites subject to this planning advice is as follows:

Table One: Proposed Landing Sites

Landing site name	Conservation Area	Maximum Per Day	Maximum Per Year
Miserable Ridge	Totara – Mikonui Forests	3	75
Mount Beaumont	Wanganui/Otira Catchments	5	300
Remarkable Peak	Wanganui/Otira Catchments	3 - snow 1 - no snow	300 - snow 100 - no snow
Prices Flat	Wanganui/Otira Catchments	6	80
Mount Greenland	Upper Totara Ecological Area	4	

As part of the further information the applicant has requested to undertake scenic overflights around the northern tip of the Adams Wilderness Area. The proposed take off and landings for this scenic flight are not located on pcl therefore this scenic flight activity is not considered as part of this planning advice. The CMS has policies to address impacts of aircraft over wilderness areas, which I have included in this advice.

Notes
This application is for aircraft landings for the purpose of scenic flights and does not include any commercial guiding associated with the aircraft activity.

Recommendations/Summary

The revised application for aircraft landings at 5 landing sites in the Hokitika backcountry is consistent with the West Coast CMS, provided the following is undertaken:

- Consultation with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Rūnaka of Makaawhio on the proposed landings. ✓
- Include a condition that states shared use of landing sites and facilities by operators is required. ✓
- It is recommended the number of landing sites available to each concessionaire is specified in concession conditions. ✓
- There may be some landing sites where seasonal restrictions could be considered such as Remarkable Peak. ✓
- Advocacy with interest groups and relevant agencies such as Civil Aviation Authority is undertaken to minimise effects of the activity and potential effects of overflights on pcl and the Wilderness Area. ✓
- The applicant has offered a concession term of 5 years, which is recommended. ✓
- The West Coast CMS requires adverse effects of proposed landing sites to be assessed and avoided or otherwise minimised (Hokitika Place Outcomes p249). The recommendations in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by KJ Ladley Ecological Consultant and those in the recreational advice by Ian Wightwick address minimising the impacts of the proposed landings. Implementing those recommendations would meet the requirements of Hokitika Place Outcomes. These recommendations include: ✓

Environmental Impact Assessment by KJ Ladley Ecological Consultant:

- Carry out and submit annual photographic surveys of the landing sites from defined photo points to allow monitoring of vegetation. ✓
- Ensure passengers are briefed on rare/threatened plant species to avoid trampling plants. ✓
- The speed of the aircraft on approach to landing is 60 knots or less to avoid potential impacts on kea and other birds. ✓
- Ensure passengers to the Miserable Ridge landing site are briefed to stay at least 2m from the edge of the tarns. ✓
- Seek further technical biodiversity advice on the impacts of no-snow landings at Remarkable Peak. ✓

Recommendations from recreational advice by Ian Wightwick:

- It is suggested the operators do not fly below 500ft from land over the Wilderness Area and suggests a higher overflight limit for the wilderness area. ✓
- GPS trackers are installed in the helicopters for ongoing monitoring of flight paths. ✓
- A reduction of proposed daily and annual landings at Mt Beaumont landing site - maximum of 2 landings per day and 150 landings per year. ✓

5. Statutory Analysis

Statutory Analysis: Notified Concession under Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987
Livi Geddes, Senior Permissions Advisor

S17S: Contents of application

To be complete (s17S(1)), an application for a concession must include:

- A description of the proposed activity;
- A description of the locations for the proposed activity;
- A description of the potential effects of the proposed activity and proposed action to avoid, remedy, or mitigate adverse effects;
- The proposed term and reasons for that term;
- Relevant information about the application (as requested in the application form).

Criteria for decision:

- Does the application include all the required information as per s17S?

Yes 

Discussion:

Further information was sought from the Applicant to clarify and expand on their application before it was publicly notified. The application was then deemed to contain sufficient information to satisfy s 17S.

Following the stakeholder and public engagement process, a full environmental impact assessment was requested to further assist with assessing the effects of the application.

S17T(2): Process for complete application

Every application must be publicly notified before a decision is made if it meets any of the following criteria:

- The concession type is a lease - this is for exclusive use of public conservation land;
- The term of the concession exceeds ten years (unless it is an easement - an easement may be granted for a term exceeding ten years without public notification);
- The effects of the activity mean it is appropriate to do so.

Criteria for decision:

- Is public notification required?

Yes

State why public notification is required:

Whilst irregular helicopter flights are undertaken in the Hokitika backcountry remote zone, regular landings to cater for scenic flights are not. In order to understand the potential effects of this activity on conservation and recreation values, pursuant to s 17SC(3) of the Conservation Act 1987. Public consultation was considered to be the most effective way to identify potential effects which meant it was appropriate to publicly notify the application.

S17U(3): Purpose for which the land is held

A concession shall not be granted if the proposed activity is contrary to the purpose for which the land is held.

Criteria for decision:

- Is the activity not contrary to s17U(3) of the Conservation Act? (That is, consistent with the purpose for which the land is held - although note that 'not contrary to' is not as high as a test as 'consistent with').

Yes

Discussion:

The Totara - Mikonui Forests Conservation Area and Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area are both **Conservation Areas** (Stewardship Areas) which are held under Part 4A Section 25 of the Conservation Act 1987 for the purpose of "every stewardship area shall so be managed that its natural and historic resources are protected."

Upper Totara Ecological Area is an **Ecological Area** held under Part 4 Section 21 of the Conservation Act 1987 for the purpose of "every ecological area shall so be managed as to protect the value for which it is held."

The activity of aircraft landings is not contrary to the purposes for which the lands are held because the natural and historic resources have been assessed and conditions are being recommended to protect the value of the land.

S17U(4): Can a structure or facility be reasonably undertaken elsewhere?

A concession to build or extend a structure or facility shall not be granted if the activity could reasonably be undertaken in another location that is outside conservation land or in another conservation area where the potential adverse effects would be significantly less, or if the activity could reasonably be undertaken in an existing structure.

Criteria for decision:

- Is the activity consistent with s17U(4) of the Conservation Act? (That is, the activity cannot reasonably be undertaken at another location or in an existing structure?)

N/A

Discussion:

The activity is for aircraft landing only, there are no structures or buildings associated with this activity.

S17W: Relationship between concessions and conservation management strategies and plans

A concession shall not be granted unless the proposed activity is consistent with any established conservation management strategy, conservation management plan, and/or national park management plan.

Criteria for decision:

- Is the activity consistent with all relevant statutory planning documents?

Yes

Discussion:

The Conservation General Policy 2005 and the West Coast Te Tai Poutini Conservation Management Strategy 2010 are the relevant planning documents for this application.

Conservation General Policy 2005 (CGP)

This CGP has been prepared under section 17C of the Conservation Act 1987 to provide unified policy for the implementation of the Conservation Act and other Acts listed in the Act's First Schedule.

Policy section 1 outlines how policies will apply and how they will be interpreted when considering policies within the GCP and in conservation management strategies and plans.

Policy section 2 outlines how the Department will develop relationships and consult with tangata whenua to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

Policy section 3 outlines when public participation and consultation should occur.

Policy section 9 outlines that recreational opportunities will be provided on public conservation lands and waters and where provided, they should be consistent with the values of and outcomes planned for places. That these will be identified in conservation management strategies and plans and will be consistent with the statutory purposes for which the place is held.

This section states that recreational activities that create hazards for other people should be managed to reduce the risk of harm. Aircraft activities, whether recreational or commercial require a concession under Section ZF of the Conservation Act. This requirement allows

the Department to place conditions on their use which include conditions to reduce the risk of harm to the land and other users.

Policy section 11 outlines that concessions or authorisations, should where relevant, avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects (including cumulative effects) and maximise any positive effects on natural resources and historical and cultural heritage, and on the benefit and enjoyment of the public, including public access.

Thus, it is considered that the applied for activity of aircraft landings is consistent with the CGP, conditions are being proposed to manage effects and iwi consultation is undertaken to ensure that aircraft does not detrimentally affect the values of sites of significance.

West Coast Te Tai Poutini Conservation Management Strategy 2010 (West Coast CMS)

Interpretation

When considering the West Coast CMS, Policy 1 (Page 5), it sets out the objectives, policies and the desired outcome statements as holding statutory weight. The descriptive text has been used to give context and gain a better understanding of the intent although it does not hold statutory weight.

Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

The West Coast CMS has policies for working in partnership with tangata whenua. Policy 4 (3.1.2.1 Treaty of Waitangi relationships, p 32) states that consultation with Poutini Ngāi Tahu/Ngāi Tahu will be early, ongoing, informed and effective. It is recommended that consultation is undertaken with Ngāi Tahu regarding this application.

Visitor Management Settings

The Hokitika Backcountry is a very special place and resource for locals, recreationists, and iwi. The Hokitika Backcountry has the highest density of huts and tracks in the South Island of New Zealand. The area is largely intact native forest and alpine ecosystems. For many the Hokitika Backcountry is a place to experience challenging remote valleys, seldomly visited huts and to connect with wilderness. The Hokitika Backcountry caters for a range of activities such as tramping, hunting, kayaking, packrafting, and fishing to name a few. The use of helicopters by visitors to the Hokitika Backcountry is increasing, but this is usually limited to hunters and kayakers. Despite this increase, helicopter numbers are still low and the area is still very highly regarded for its remote nature.

The West Coast CMS identifies the importance of providing a wide range of recreational opportunities within the region which is stated in 3.6.1.1 Provision and management of recreational opportunities Objectives 1 and 2:

“1. To provide a comprehensive range of recreational opportunities that enable people with different capabilities and interests to enjoy and appreciate West Coast Te Tai o Poutini public conservation lands, whilst protecting natural, historical and cultural heritage from adverse impacts of recreational use.

2. To avoid or minimise conflicts between different users, including people undertaking different types of activities in the same location.”

The policies set out the recreational zoning framework as the way the CMS identifies and manages an appropriate range of recreational opportunities and minimises conflicts between different types of recreational uses (3.6.1.1 Provision and management of recreational opportunities, Policy 1 p.114).

The proposed landing sites are in the backcountry remote zone (3.6.1.4 Remote Zone p.122).

Place – The Hokitika Backcountry

Place Outcomes

The proposed landings and scenic flights are within the Hokitika Place which extends from the Taramakau river in the north to the Waitaha catchment to the south. The northern tip of the Adams Wilderness Area is within Hokitika Place. There are no specific outcomes for the Wilderness Area in Hokitika Place as the majority of the Adams Wilderness Area is within Te Wāhipounamu Place which identifies specific outcomes.

The CMS identifies outcomes for concessions (4.2.7.10 *people’s benefit and enjoyment in 2020*):

“Concessionaires provide recreational opportunities that complement those provided by the Department. They are sympathetic to and in keeping with, the natural, historical and cultural heritage values of the sites concerned. Recreational facilities or activities have no adverse effects on sites of cultural significance to Poutini Ngāi Tahu, several of which are located in coastal areas.”

Hokitika Place

An outcome for Hokitika Place is for concessionaires provide recreational opportunities that complement those provided by the Department and/or enhance people’s enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of natural, historical or cultural values. Concession activities are generally of low impact and are sympathetic to, and in keeping with the conservation values of the particular site.

The expectations of the Hokitika Place are concessions may be granted for regular aircraft landings within the backcountry-remote zone where adverse effects on conservation values, recreational users, remote or wilderness values can be avoided or otherwise minimised. This is set by the outcome statement for the backcountry-remote zone. Regular landings may occur for the purpose of positioning recreationists (including hunters, rafters and kayakers) or for scenic landings (including scenic snow landings). Regular landing concession conditions specify restrictions on landing sites and frequency of landings (see Section 3.6.4.2).

Management of Wilderness areas

Wilderness areas are protected areas under Section 20 of the Conservation Act 1987. The Adams Wilderness Area is a gazetted wilderness area. The purpose of a wilderness area is to ensure the indigenous natural resources are preserved.

Policy 4 (p. 119) only permits aircraft landings for the preservation of indigenous natural resources, emergencies or search and rescue purposes. Other than those activities the West Coast CMS excludes aircraft landings from wilderness areas.

3.6.1.2 Wilderness Areas (p.117) Policy 5 states the Department may seek to restrict low level flights over gazetted wilderness areas through liaison with relevant authorities, interest

groups and operators to minimise adverse effects of aircraft overflights on p.c.l. This is to protect the recreational experience, natural quiet and natural character of these areas.

An aircraft landing includes hovering within 500 feet of a landing site therefore it is suggested the operators do not fly lower than 500 feet over the wilderness area.

Management of Backcountry-Remote Zones

Objective 1 of the backcountry remote zone is to provide opportunities to access extensive natural settings where facilities are provided but a considerable degree of physical challenge, self-reliance and isolation is involved.

The expectation of this zone is that groups will generally be small and that encounters with other groups will be infrequent. Within this zone increased use is being made of air access for both new and traditional forms of backcountry recreation. This application reflects this increased use of air access for recreation activities.

Policy 1 states the backcountry-remote zone should be managed to meet the desired outcomes described in Part 4, providing facilities and services that cater principally for the needs, interests and abilities of most backcountry comfort seekers and back country adventurers. The Hokitika Place states that concessions may be granted for regular aircraft landings within the backcountry remote zone where adverse effects on conservation values, recreational users, remote or wilderness values can be avoided or otherwise minimised. The environmental impact assessment and recreational advice provide recommendations for managing potential adverse effects.

Policy 2 for the backcountry-remote zone states that concessionaire operations should be consistent with the objectives for the zone, which include small to moderate group sizes and a moderate degree of risk. The recommended group sizes are a maximum of 8 including guide/s.

Policy 7 states that within the backcountry remote zone regular aircraft landings may be authorised. The number and frequency of landings should be considered in a case-by-case basis.

Policy 10 states that where practicable the aircraft landing sites available to each concessionaire will be specified in concession conditions.

The applicant has amended their application as a result of recommendations in the EIA. The landing site at the Whataroa Glacier has been removed from the application and there has been a reduction in the frequency and number of landings. It is recommended the number of landing sites available to each concessionaire is specified in concession conditions.

Aircraft

Section 3.6.4.2 Aircraft (p. 130), states that public conservation lands are a focus for aircraft landings and overflights. Aircraft are used for recreation and tourism purposes (eg, access to the backcountry, scenic flights, private landings) and non-recreational purposes (eg, conservation management, wild animal recovery operations, emergency or search and rescue, servicing of utilities, mining, management of pounamu resource, filming and other commercial activities).

Section 3.6.4 Recreation and Tourism Activities, Objective 1 (p.129) is to provide opportunities for people to undertake a wide range of recreation and tourism activities, while avoiding or minimising adverse effects and conflicts with other users. As described in the overview the

objective applies to all recreation and tourism activities undertaken within public conservation lands, therefore is relevant to this application for aircraft landings.

Aircraft categories - Policy 2 states that aircraft landings on pcl will be assigned to one of four categories depending on which recreational zone the site is located and the legal status of the site: Excluded, Regular, Irregular, or Occasional.

This proposal is within the category of regular landings as there are more than 21 landings per annum at each specific site.

“Regular: Regular landings are defined as occurring when a concessionaire undertakes 3 or more landings per day and/or 21 or more landings per annum, at specific sites. Regular landings may only be authorised within the backcountry-remote zone and may occur all-year-round or on a seasonal basis. Numbers and frequencies of landings should be considered on a case-by-case basis.”

There may be some landing sites where seasonal restrictions could be considered such as Remarkable Peak as it has been recommended to land in snow cover only. The number and frequency of landings are to be considered on a case-by-case basis. The impacts of these landings sites and the overflights associated with these are difficult to determine. Requiring the operators to install GPS trackers in the machines provides a source of data for DOC to monitor the impacts of flight paths.

Policy 4 excludes landings from nature reserves, wildlife refuges, wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife management areas, scenic reserves, wilderness areas and intense interest sites.

Policy 6 states regular landings should be restricted to specified landing sites where practicable, and Policy 7 requires shared use of landing sites and facilities by operators to be required. The applicant has restricted their application to 5 landing sites.

Policy 8 requires the conservancy to liaise with relevant authorities, interest groups and operators to minimise the adverse effects of aircraft overflights on pcl. Policy 9 requires the conservancy to seek Civil Aviation Agreement to regulatory restrictions over airspace where implementation of policy 8 has failed.

Historic Sites

Prices Flat Hut is an actively managed historic site as identified in Map 16 of the CMS (heritage policy). Section 3.4.1.4 Identifying threats to historical and cultural heritage values p.100), Policy 2 states that recreational impacts and public safety should be monitored at actively managed historic places. Policy 4 requires recreational users to minimise their impacts on historical and cultural heritage, through the provision of signage and other information media.

The EIA identifies the historic deer cullers hut within the location of the Price Flat landing site. It is recommended in the EIA that the pilot reflect the historic value of the hut to visitors to ensure no damage is undertaken to the structure.

Discussion

The proposed regular aircraft landings are consistent with the West Coast CMS as supported by policies 2-8 and outcomes in the Hokitika Place. There are number of actions that need to

be undertaken to manage adverse effects of the proposal which are identified in the recommendations above.

The West Coast CMS requires adverse effects of proposed landing sites to be assessed (Hokitika Place Outcomes p249). The ecological report recommends that landings be avoided at Remarkable Peak during period of no-snow cover to protect the sensitive alpine vegetation. The applicant has stated they require to be able to undertake some no-snow landings at this location and they will land on aggregate with very little or no vegetation. They have reduced the no-snow landings to 100 per annum with a maximum of one landing per day and 4 landings per week. It is recommended technical biodiversity advice is sought, as the approach is different to what is recommended in the ecological report.

The recreation advice recommends a reduction of proposed daily and annual landings at Mt Beaumont landing site (maximum of 2 landings per day and 150 landings per year). This is to protect the recreation and intrinsic natural values of this area. The description of regular landings in the CMS states that these landings can be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

It has been suggested in the recreation advice that GPS trackers are installed in the helicopters to undertake monitoring of flight paths as there is uncertainty on the potential effects of noise from this proposed activity.

Assessment of Effects

Lisa Wheeler, Senior Permissions Advisor

s17U(1) and (2): Analysis of effects

Briefly discuss the positive and adverse effects of the proposed activity, drawing on information from:

- The application form, as provided by the Applicant;
- The contributions described in the context and check in meetings, and outlined in this document.

Any adverse effects identified that are not managed by a standard condition for the activity may require a site/activity specific special condition to either avoid, remedy, or mitigate the adverse effect. Include the condition proposed and a description of how it avoids, remedies, or mitigates the adverse effect, and list the condition in the Proposed Operating Conditions section of this document.

Note that only information relevant to the activity on public conservation land can be considered - if information about effects of the activity is included in the above sources that is outside of this scope, note why it is not a relevant consideration under the Conservation Act (for example, economic benefits to an area).

Criteria for decision:

- Is the activity consistent with s17U(1) and (2) of the Conservation Act?

Yes

Discussion:

The Applicant initially completed the table in section K of the application form as their assessment of effects. This table is a prepopulated table identifying proposed methods to avoid, remedy or mitigate the effect of a range of activities and allows applicants to tick which ones apply for their individual activities. In this instance the Applicant ticked all of the boxes indicating their activity would have potential effects on flora and fauna, biosecurity, other users of the land, cultural values, historic values, rubbish and waste, and fires.

The Applicant was requested to provide a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which was prepared by KJ Ladley Ecological Consultant. A summary from that report is contained in section 3 of this report.

This EIA has been reviewed by the District Office, Ecology Technical Advisors and a Senior Visitor Advisor and a summary of their reviews is outlined below:

Ecological effects

The ecological report produced by the applicant was clear on the impact of the activity on the values at all the proposed landing sites. Proposed landing sites were in areas already disturbed such as Mt Greenland, or on alpine herbfields. The applicant provided a range of mitigation techniques within their ecological report suggesting landing locations in already disturbed areas, or less sensitive alpine environments to avoid any potential impacts of multiple landings of the helicopter in one spot.

- The impacts are largely from helicopter landing and increased foot traffic. The level of impact will be influenced by the number of landings and amount of foot traffic.
- There is a risk of weed introduction resulting from the activity. This is of particular concern at the higher altitude sites that are essentially weed free (especially the Miserable Ridge and Remarkable Peak sites).
- The risk from weeds can be reduced by the applicants ensuring that passenger's footwear and clothing is clean and that helicopter skids are clean/weed free. The risk of introducing weeds could also be reduced through the sequence of site visits and so visiting more modified sites last (i.e. Price Flat and also Mt Greenland), where possible.
- Monitoring should be established to assess any potential effects. The monitoring should consist of a combination of photographic monitoring supplemented by walk-through surveys. The monitoring should be targeted to helicopter landing areas, sensitive vegetation (notably moss areas and wetlands), tracks and other sites where passengers travel or congregate. The monitoring should be repeatable (i.e. utilize the same sites on repeated visits).

Two of the proposed landing sites have no presence of exotic species (Miserable ridge and Remarkable Peak), therefore any biosecurity measures proposed are especially important at these two sites.

At some sites, Data Deficient, and At risk-recovering species were specifically identified for further monitoring via photo points at the proposed landing sites. These species were chosen due to their threat status or their visually conspicuous nature.

Proposed Conditions

The proposed conditions by the applicant and the Department's Ecological technical advisors are:

- The Concessionaire must brief all passengers on rare and threatened plants and ecosystems, such as the tarn edge ecosystem, to ensure passengers avoid trampling on those plants and ecosystems.
- The Concessionaire must direct passengers as practicable to follow already made paths by animals to reduce trampling of native vegetation.
- The Concessionaire must ensure passengers stay 2m away from the edge of naturally rare tarn edge ecosystems to avoid trampling.

Photo Monitoring

- The Concessionaire must set up biannual photo point monitoring and visual survey at each landing site. The photo point monitoring will include:
 - (a) a photo point established and marked at each landing site (e.g. by GPS) before the activity commences;
 - (b) a location that is marked where photographs are taken year 1, year 3, year 5 to help understand potential effect of the activity;
 - (c) at the Miserable ridge site, photographic monitoring of the *Craspedia* (native woolly head) is undertaken within 50 of the landing site and photographic monitoring of tarn margins within 200m of landing sites.

Biosecurity

- The Concessionaire must ensure passenger's footwear are cleaned before undertaking flights and passengers are briefed on the risk of spreading weeds into these alpine environments.
- The Concessionaire must ensure the helicopter skids are free of weeds and seeds before undertaking flights.
- The Concessionaire must ensure no kea or other wildlife are fed or interacted with in such a way as to change their behaviour.
- The Concessionaire must only undertake aircraft landings at the Remarkable Peak landing site when snow is present.
- The Concessionaire must know the plants that are affected by myrtle rust and what the rust symptoms look like. This serious fungal disease only affects plants in the Myrtle (Myrtaceae) Family which includes pohutukawa, manuka, kanuka, and ramarama. See <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/myrtle-rust/>.
- If the Concessionaire encounters suspected symptoms of myrtle rust, the Concessionaire must not touch it and must take the following steps:

- (a) Call the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline immediately on 0800 80 99 66;
- (b) Take clear photos, including the whole plant, the whole affected leaf, and a close-up of the spores/affected areas of the plant;
- (c) Don't touch or try to collect samples as this may increase the spread of the disease;
- (d) If accidental contact with the affected plant or rust occurs, bag clothing and wash clothes, bags and shoes as soon as possible.

Miserable Ridge Landing Site

- That the existing animal tracks be used for access. Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- That visitor access should not be allowed within 2m of the edge of any tarns. Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- That photographic monitoring of the *Craspedia* patches within 50m of landing sites and margins of tarns within 200m of the landing site. The monitoring is suggested to be repeated biannually.

Remarkable Peak

Recommend that landings at this site only occur when snow cover is present.

- That a maximum of 100 landing when snow is not present. With a maximum of 1 landing per day and 4 landings per week
- Non-snow cover landings to be restricted to sites with aggregate cover (i.e. gravel/rock substrate) with sparse vegetation.
- That baseline and regular photographic monitoring be undertaken of the landing area and sensitive sites.
- That sensitive sites (i.e. snowbank, damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation) to be avoided. Note this should be part of the pilot briefing for this site.
- Biosecurity
 - That passengers should be checked to ensure that they have clean footwear.
 - That helicopter skids are checked to be clean.
 - That passengers are briefed regarding the risk of spreading weeds and to take action to minimize the risk.
- Monitoring
 - That photographic monitoring of the landing and sensitive vegetation (i.e. snowbank, damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation) is undertaken.
 - That photographic monitoring is supplemented with a walk-through survey to assess any damage from foot traffic within the area and also to search for any exotic plant species present. The walk-through survey to concentrate on the landing area and areas of sensitive vegetation.

Price Flat

Recommendation that photographic monitoring should be set up and measured annually.

Conditions:

- Biosecurity
 - That passengers should be checked to ensure that they have clean footwear.
 - That helicopter skids are checked to be clean.
 - That passengers are briefed regarding the risk of spreading weeds and to take action to minimize the risk.

- Monitoring
 - That photographic monitoring is undertaken (as recommended).
 - That photographic monitoring is supplemented with a walk-through survey to assess any effects within the area.
 - That monitoring is established prior to beginning the concession activity. The monitoring is repeated after year 1, year 3 and year 5. The assessment of effects to be considered as any concession renewal or variation.

Mt Greenland

Recommendations:

- That photographic monitoring should be set up and measured annually at the landing site.

- Access in the area should be confined to the existing bulldozer track.

- Annual monitoring of myrtle rust to be established.

Conditions:

- Biosecurity
 - That Precision Helicopters be required to undertake gorse control to remove gorse from the landing clearing and to maintain in a gorse free state for the duration of the concession.
 - That passengers should be checked to ensure that they have clean footwear.
 - That helicopter skids are checked to be clean.
 - That passengers are briefed regarding the risk of spreading weeds and to take action to minimize the risk.

- Monitoring
 - That photographic monitoring is undertaken within the landing clearing (as recommended).

 - That photographic monitoring is supplemented with a walk-through survey to assess any damage within the area.

 - That monitoring is established prior to beginning the concession activity. The monitoring is repeated after year 1, year 3 and year 5. The assessment of effects to be considered as any concession renewal or variation.

The District Office views the proposed conditions as adequate to mitigate any potential effects on ecological values at proposed landing sites. A term of 5 years appears appropriate. During this time the number of landings, frequency of landings and number of passengers should be recorded. Monitoring of effects should also be established to determine the nature and extent of effects.

Recreational Values

The effect of helicopter noise is subjective and varies person to person. Multiple different flight routes will be taken to avoid concentrating pre-determined flights and avoid following walking tracks or flying directly over huts.

The applicant has proposed conditions to mitigate or reduce potential impacts of the activity on other recreational users. The proposed conditions from the applicant and the Department's Senior Recreational Advisor and Senior Management planner are:

- The concessionaire can only use one aircraft to carry out the activity.
- The Concessionaire must avoid flying over the Gazetted Adams Wilderness Area.
- The Concessionaire must adhere to the Helicopter Association International's Fly Neighbourly Guide.
- Aircraft landings on Mount Beaumont are limited to a maximum of 2 landings per day and 150 per annum and only occur between 1 May and 30 September.
- The concessionaire is limited to carrying out a maximum of 6 aircraft landings (across all sites) on any one day.

The proposed modifications to landing numbers will minimise the effects on vegetation in areas identified as being at higher risk of damage. It is acknowledged that the ecological report recommends that landings be avoided at Remarkable Peak during periods of no snow cover. The Remarkable Peak site is covered in snow for 5 to 6 months of the year, however the application is seeking to undertake some non-snow landings.

The ecological report notes that there are some parts of the Remarkable Peak site that are more highly vegetated than others. In order to avoid adverse effects associated with non-snow cover landings, Precision Helicopters can land only on areas covered with aggregate and with very little or no vegetation. As the risk of trampling vegetation can be reduced by employing this management technique, Precision Helicopters proposes to cap the non-snow landings at this site at 100 per annum, with a maximum of one landing per day and a maximum of 4 per week over a 6-month period when there is no snow cover.

This, in addition to carrying out baseline and regular photographic surveys of the landing site and vegetation will allow the Department of Conservation to review the suitability of the landing site for non-snow landings going forward, if damage occurs.

The ecological report commissioned by the applicant to K J Ladley Ecological Assessment provides a detailed assessment for each of the 6 sites. This assessment includes a site description including photo, physical characteristics, flora, fauna, ecological values and recommendations to minimise impact. The conclusion at the end of the report summarises the findings on the sites, including possible risk, and overall states "provided the frequency of visits

is kept at a reasonable level and the specific recommendations are implemented, these sites could be available to Precision Helicopters Limited for landings without significant impact. To understand what a 'reasonable level' of visits it is recommended that the prescribed monitoring is undertaken and the impact of the activity assessed annually and adjusted accordingly.

Climate Change

This activity is for helicopter landings and will use aviation fuel.

The activity will emit greenhouse gas emissions that will contribute to climate change and is an adverse effect on New Zealand's natural and historic resources in terms of s17U(1). The activity's contribution to climate change is relevant to the purpose of the Conservation Act, and the Conservation General Policy, in particular Policy 4.6 Ecosystem Services of the CGP (avoiding or otherwise minimising adverse effects on the quality of ecosystem services).

The 2050 target for emissions reductions in the Climate Change Response Act 2002 is also relevant in assessing the application and is consistent with the purpose of the Conservation Act.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires measuring the emissions of the activity, developing and implementing a plan to reduce those emissions, and if appropriate, offsetting those emissions. The Permissions Advisor recommends, if the application is approved, to include special conditions 6 to 10 enabling the Department to require greenhouse gas emissions data from the applicant during the term of the concession, and to amend the conditions to reflect climate change-related legislation and government or Departmental policy and that those conditions may, amongst other things, require the applicant to measure, manage and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the proposal.

6. Proposed Operating Conditions

Conditions

Standard conditions applicable to the proposed activity:

Refer to Schedule 2 of the draft Concession contract: [DOC-6757898](#)

Special conditions relevant to this application that will form Schedule 3 in the above contract are listed below:

Concession Activity and Locations

1. Activities and locations approved are as follows and the Concessionaire must not exceed the limitations set out in the table below:

Location Name	Grid Reference	Max. No. Landings per Day	Max. No. Landings per Year	Other Conditions
Totara - Mikonui Forests Conservation Area - Miserable Ridge	NZTM co-ordinates: 1434610.5 E 5235685.9 N	3	75	Subject to Schedule 3, Condition 3
Wanganui/Otira Catchments Conservation Area - Mount Beaumont	NZTM co-ordinates: 1431831.2 E 5226180.6 N	2	150	Subject to Schedule 3, Condition 3 Aircraft landing can only occur between 1 May and 30 September
Wanganui/Otira Catchments Conservation Area - Remarkable Peak	NZTM co-ordinates: 1431661.0 E 5230282.0 N	3	300	Subject to Schedule 3, Condition 3 Aircraft landing can only occur when snow is present at the landing site
Wanganui/Otira Catchments Conservation Area - Prices Flat	NZTM co-ordinates: 1438039.3 E 5225476.9 N	6	80	Subject to Schedule 3, Condition 3
Upper Totara Ecological Area	NZTM co-ordinates:	4	100	Subject to Schedule 3, Condition 3

- Mount Greenland	1422382.0 E 5242431.0 N			
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2. The Concessionaire can only use one aircraft to carry out the activity.
3. The Concessionaire is limited to carrying out a maximum of 6 aircraft landings (across all sites) on any one day.
4. The Concessionaire and any pilot of the aircraft authorised by this Concession must hold the applicable aviation document and privileges to conduct the Concession Activity under the Civil Aviation Rules and must comply with Civil Aviation law requirements applying to the Concession Activity.
5. Section 17ZF of the Conservation Act 1987 requires that the Concession must be in the possession of the operator and shall have been sighted by the pilot in command of the aircraft prior to landing or taking-off.
6. The Concessionaire must take flight paths that avoid overflying climbers, tramping tracks and huts where possible.
7. The Concessionaire must choose flight paths that avoid flying over the Gazetted Adams Wilderness Area.
8. The Concessionaire must adhere to the Helicopter Association International's Fly Neighbourly Guide.
9. The Concessionaire acknowledges they don't have exclusive use of the landing sites. If the Concessionaire views another ground party within 500m of the landing site, they must not land at that site.
10. The Concessionaire must ensure that aircraft idle times on the ground are kept to a practicable minimum.
11. The Concessionaire must not refuel, leave any fuel drums or construct any fuel dumps on the Land, unless in an emergency situation.
12. The concessionaire must ensure the helicopter skids are free of weeds and seeds before undertaking flights.
13. The Concessionaire must ensure passenger's footwear are cleaned before undertaking flights and passengers are briefed on the risk of spreading weeds into these alpine environments.
14. During the term of the concession, where Grantor believes that the effects of aircraft noise should be further reduced, the Grantor may, by notice, require the concessionaire to either undertake measures to minimise the effects of noise on conservation values or become accredited to a recognised noise abatement and disputes resolution programme. If such notice is given by the Grantor, the concessionaire must:

- (i) if required to undertake measures to minimise the effects of noise on conservation values within 3 months from receiving the notice undertake those measures to the satisfaction of the Grantor until the Final Expiry Date.
- (ii) if required to become accredited to a recognised noise abatement and disputes resolution programme within 3 months from receiving the notice provide proof to the Grantor that such accreditation has been completed and must keep their participation in that programme or training current until the Final Expiry Date.

The Grantor may, at any time, issue a subsequent notice(s) requiring the Concessionaire to implement the other option.

- 15. If during the term of this Concession there are reoccurring complaints from the public regarding significant conflict about helicopter landings at a particular site, then the Grantor has the right to review landings at that site. This includes the right to withdraw the site completely from the concession or impose further restrictions on that site designed to avoid the adverse effects on the public.
- 16. The Concessionaire is to advise the Grantor, as soon as practicable, if (due to emergency or other unforeseen circumstances) any aircraft must land at a site other than those specified in the permit.
- 17. All aircraft authorised under this concession shall be, at a date directed by the Grantor, required to carry and operate GPS data loggers or equivalent technology so as to provide verifiable records of the concession activity at all times unless otherwise notified by the Grantor. The Concessionaire shall provide the information on a monthly basis in arrears for the previous month's operation for the duration of this Concession. The Grantor will give the concessionaire 12 months notice of its intention to invoke this condition.
- 18. During the term of this concession the Concessionaire shall continue to review methods and aircraft technology with the aim of encouraging a reduction in noise levels.
- 19. Kea and other birds are seen from time to time on approach to land. The Concessionaire will ensure the aircraft operator reduces the speed of the aircraft to 60 knots or less on approach to landing. This low-speed approach gives a kea time to alter course if encountering a helicopter while landing.

Use of toilets

- 20. Toilets must be used when in the vicinity of huts.

Private land

- 21. This Concession does not confer any right of access over any private land or public conservation land leased by the Grantor. Any arrangements necessary for access over private land or leased land are the responsibility of the Concessionaire. In granting this Concession the Grantor does not warrant that such access can be obtained.

DOC staff

22. The Grantor may send any officer of the Department on any of the activities authorised during the term of this Concession for the purpose of assessing the impact on conservation values, the standard of service offered and compliance with the terms and conditions of the Concession, at no expense to the Grantor.

Use of tracks

23. The Concessionaire must ensure that, where provided, clients remain on formed tracks or well-used routes designed to protect natural and historic features of the Land, do not enter caves and do not exceed any loading limitations placed on facilities and structures.

Climate Change considerations

24. The Concessionaire acknowledges that the Grantor and the Department of Conservation are reviewing their obligations under the Climate Change Response Act 2002 and developing responses to address greenhouse gas emissions from activities conducted on public conservation land and waters. The reviews are likely to result in policies which seek to measure, manage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Concession Activities. The Grantor wishes to signal to the Concessionaire that new concession conditions related to both climate change mitigation and adaptation may be imposed during the life of this Concession to address greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Concession Activity.
25. If the Grantor requests data relating to greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Concession Activity, the Concessionaire must provide any relevant data that is reasonably available to it within 6 months of the Grantor's request.
26. The Grantor may review and amend the conditions of this Concession to reflect climate change-related legislation and government or Departmental policy and those conditions ("Revised Conditions") may, amongst other things, require the Concessionaire to measure, manage and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the Concession Activity.
27. Before amending the conditions of this Concession in accordance with clause 13, the Grantor will provide the Concessionaire the draft Revised Conditions. The Concessionaire may provide written comments on those draft Revised Conditions within 60 days. The Grantor must take into account any comments received from the Concessionaire on the Revised Conditions before finalising the Revised Conditions.
28. The Revised Conditions will apply to the Concession Activity 4 months after the Grantor has notified the Concessionaire of the Revised Conditions in accordance with clause 14 or any later date specified in the Revised Conditions.

Wāhi Tapu

29. The Concessionaire must recognise the sensitivity of wāhi tapu and urupa and seek guidance of iwi who claim mana whenua over any parts of the Land prior to providing interpretation on matters of iwi cultural significance and recognise the sensitivity of wāhi tapu and urupa.

In respect to Ngāi Tahu

30. The Concessionaire is requested to consult the relevant Papatipu Runanga (www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz) if they wish to use Ngāi Tahu cultural information. If the Concessionaire wishes to use the Tōpuni or statutory acknowledgement information contained in schedules 14-108 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, or any Department produced interpretative material in respect to Ngāi Tahu cultural information, they are requested to notify the relevant Papatipu Rūnanga, as a matter of courtesy.
31. The Concessionaire must, as far as practicable, attend any workshops held by the Department for the purpose of providing information to concessionaires, which is to include the Ngāi Tahu values associated with Topuni areas.
32. The Concessionaire must ensure any persons employed by the Concessionaire are requested to recognise and provide for Ngāi Tahu values in the conduct of their activities.

Pounamu

33. The Concessionaire acknowledges that pounamu (including all nephrite, semi-nephrite, bowenite and serpentine) is under the ownership of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu pursuant to the Ngāi Tahu (Pounamu Vesting) Act 1997.
34. No pounamu may be removed or recovered by the Concessionaire or their employees/clients.
35. Where any pounamu is found by the Concessionaire, they are requested to immediately notify the Pounamu Manager, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Christchurch, ph 0800 Kai Tahu (0800 524 8248) AND for the West Coast District - Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Chairperson, 0508-7862642, email: francois@ngatiwaewae.org.nz; AND/OR Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio Office 03 755 7885, email: makawhio1@xtra.co.nz].

Interpretation materials

36. The Concessionaire must consult with and seek the guidance of iwi claiming mana whenua over any parts of the Land prior to providing interpretation on matters of cultural significance to such iwi.
37. The Concessionaire must provide detailed information of any historical, cultural or natural science interpretation provided by the Concessionaire to its clients in the course of the Concession Activity, to the Grantor within thirty days of the date of any such written request by the Grantor.
38. If the Grantor considers the interpretative material provided by the Concessionaire above unsatisfactory, the Concessionaire must prepare an interpretation plan for approval by the Grantor within 60 days of advice from the Grantor that this is required.

Animals

39. The Concessionaire must not take, and must ensure that its clients do not take, any animals, including dogs or any domestic pets, onto the Land.

Weeds

40. The Concessionaire must take all precautions to ensure weeds are not introduced to the Land; this includes ensuring that all tyres, footwear, gaiters and packs used by the Concessionaire, its staff and clients are clean before entering the Land.

Recordings of bird songs

41. The Concessionaire must not and must ensure that its clients do not play recordings of bird songs on the Land.

Client Activity Returns

42. The Concessionaire must complete and submit an activity return form at the end of each year. The declaration must contain the following information:
- (a) Date of each landing;
 - (b) Location of all landings (common description and GPS co-ordinates);
 - (c) Number of landings undertaken on the Land;
 - (d) Number of people landed; and
 - (e) Purpose for the landing.

Review of Concession Activity

In this clause:

“Client Activity Return Form” means the Form required in clause 6.1 of Schedule 2.

“High Season” means the consecutive three-month period when the highest use of the Conservation Activity occurs.

“Permitted Limit” means the frequency of trips and/or the numbers of clients the Concessionaire is permitted in carrying out the Concession Activity specified in Clause 1 of Schedule 3. It also includes the new limit set below.

43. On each Concession Fee Review Date the Grantor may review the Concessionaire’s Client Activity Return Forms to determine the actual use of the Concession Activity, including the actual numbers of the Concessionaire’s clients undertaking the Concession Activity in the twelve month period immediately preceding the Concession Fee Review Date.
44. If the Grantor’s review of the Client Activity Return Forms shows that:
- (a) the Concessionaire is not conducting the Concession Activity in all or any of the locations specified in clause 1 of Schedule 3; and/or
 - (b) on average the Concessionaire has utilised less than 70% of the Permitted Limit over the High Season for that twelve-month period,
- the Grantor may:

- (c) exclude any such location from the Concession Activity; and/or
- (d) reduce or eliminate significant under-utilisation over the life of the Concession.

45. Such a review must:

- (a) examine the Concessionaire's Activity Returns for the preceding three years, or for such other period as the Grantor considers appropriate, to ascertain trends and in relation to the Permitted Limit component identify the amount of the Permitted Limit that has not been utilised over the High Season/s; and
- (b) offer the Concessionaire an opportunity to present any business plans demonstrating any expected use of such location or an explanation as to why the Concession Activity has not been conducted at the location; and/or
- (c) invite the Concessionaire to offer an explanation as to why the level of use has, on average, been below 70% of the Permitted Limit over the High Season/s; and to demonstrate that it has the capacity and the intention to increase utilisation. Capacity may be demonstrated by the existence of the equipment and infrastructure necessary to utilise the Permitted Limit. Intention may be demonstrated through business plans showing anticipated levels of operation up to the Permitted Limit.

46. Following this review the Grantor is to:

- (a) determine if any location is to be excluded from the Concession; and/or
- (b) determine if a reduction of the Permitted Limit is appropriate and the amount of that reduction; and
- (c) advise the Concessionaire of the date the exclusion and/or the reduced Permitted Limit becomes effective.

47. If any location is so excluded and or the Permitted Limit is so reduced the Grantor is not to be liable for any subsequent loss sustained by the Concessionaire (including loss of profits) even if that loss is wholly or partly a result of such exclusion and/or such a reduction in the Permitted Limit.

48. The Grantor may exercise the Grantor's right to exclude a location and/or to reduce the Permitted Limit notwithstanding any prior waiver or failure to undertake action by the Grantor or any indulgence granted by the Grantor for any matter or default.

Endangered fauna

49. The Concessionaire must ensure passengers do not feed or encourage interaction with keas or other wildlife in such a way as to change their natural behaviour.

Rare/threatened plant species

50. The Concessionaire must brief all passengers on rare and threatened plants and ecosystems, such as the tarn edge ecosystem, to ensure passengers avoid trampling on those plants and ecosystems.
51. The Concessionaire must direct passengers as practicable to follow already made paths by animals to reduce trampling of native vegetation.
52. The Concessionaire must ensure passengers stay 2m away from the edge of naturally rare tarn edge ecosystems to avoid trampling.

Photo Monitoring

53. The Concessionaire must set up biannual photo point monitoring and visual surveys at each landing site. The photo point monitoring will include:
 - (a) a photo point established and marked at each landing site (e.g. by GPS) before the activity commences; and
 - (b) a location that is marked where photographs are taken year 1, year 3, year 5 to help understand potential effect of the activity;
 - (c) at the Miserable ridge site, photographic monitoring of the *Craspedia* (native woolly head) is undertaken within 50 of the landing site and photographic monitoring of tarn margins within 200m of landing sites; and
 - (d) at the Remarkable Peak site, photographic monitoring of the landing and sensitive vegetation (i.e. snowbank, damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation) is undertaken.
54. That monitoring is established prior to beginning the concession activity. The monitoring is repeated after year 1, year 3 and year 5. The assessment of effects to be considered as any concession renewal or variation.
55. Photographic monitoring is supplemented with a walk-through survey to assess any damage from foot traffic within the area and also to search for any exotic plant species present. The walk-through survey to concentrate on the landing area and areas of sensitive vegetation.

Biosecurity

56. The Concessionaire must ensure passenger's footwear are cleaned before undertaking flights and passengers are briefed on the risk of spreading weeds into these alpine environments.
57. The Concessionaire must ensure the helicopter skids are free of weeds and seeds before undertaking flights.
58. The Concessionaire must know the plants that are affected by myrtle rust and what the rust symptoms look like. This serious fungal disease only affects plants in the Myrtle (Myrtaceae) Family which includes pohutukawa, manuka, kanuka, and ramarama. See <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/myrtle-rust/>.

59. If the Concessionaire encounters suspected symptoms of myrtle rust, the Concessionaire must not touch it and must take the following steps:
- (a) Call the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline immediately on 0800 80 99 66;
 - (b) Take clear photos, including the whole plant, the whole affected leaf, and a close-up of the spores/affected areas of the plant;
 - (c) Don't touch or try to collect samples as this may increase the spread of the disease;
 - (d) If accidental contact with the affected plant or rust occurs, bag clothing and wash clothes, bags and shoes as soon as possible.
60. The Concessionaire must report any signs of damage in and around any landing site to the Grantor as soon as practicable.
61. Aircraft landings on Mount Beaumont are limited to a maximum of 2 landings per day and 150 per annum and only occur between 1 May and 30 September.

Miserable Ridge landing site

62. The Concessionaire must ensure passengers to the Miserable Ridge landing site are briefed to:
- a. only use the existing animal tracks for access; and
 - b. stay 2m away from the edge of any tarns to avoid trampling the vulnerable tarn edge vegetation.

Remarkable Peak landing site

63. The Concessionaire must only undertake aircraft landings at the Remarkable Peak landing site when snow is present.
64. The Concessionaire must ensure that passengers are briefed to avoid all sensitive sites such as snowbanks, damp mossy areas and streamside vegetation.

Prices Flat

65. The Concessionaire must ensure passengers are aware of the historical significance of the Historic Price Flat Hut to avoid any damage occurring to the building.

Mt Greenland

66. The Concessionaire must ensure access in this area is confined to the existing Four-wheel drive track.

67. The Concessionaire will undertake annual photographic monitoring and annual myrtle rust monitoring at this site.
68. The Concessionaire must undertake gorse control to remove gorse from the landing clearing and to maintain the landing site in a gorse free state for the duration of the concession.

Monitoring

Photographic monitoring of the impact on regular landings has been included in the special conditions above.

Term

5 years effective from 1 December 2021

A term of 10 years was originally being sought and this was reduced to 5 years by the Applicant following undertaking a full environmental impact assessment. The Conservation Board recommended a 1 year term before the above assessment was undertaken. Special conditions are being recommended that address the concern raised by both the Conservation Board and the submitters.

Fees

Processing Fee - Notified Application: [REDACTED]

A breakdown of the processing costs can be found in [REDACTED]

Annual Activity Fees:

Where flight includes taking off or landing on Public Conservation Land:

- Single Drop off or Pick-up \$22.00 per person plus GST
- Single Glacier Landing \$28.00 per person plus GST
- Shuttle Service \$33.00 per person within a 2 week period plus GST
- Multiple Sites \$40.00 per person per day plus GST
- Multiple Sites including Glacier \$46.00 per person per day plus GST
- Heli-Skiing \$50.00 per person per day plus GST
- Loads Single Drop off or Pick-up fee times the maximum seating capacity of aircraft used plus GST
- Hovering Equates to a landing

Annual Management Fee:

\$400.00 per annum + GST

The Management Fee represents a fee to recover administrative costs of managing the concession during its term. The management fee covers matters such as responding to general enquiries about the concession, invoicing, reviews and the like.

The following standard Management Fee components:

- (i) Basic Rate \$150 per annum + GST
- (ii) Rent/Fee Review \$100 per annum + GST
- (iii) Activity Return \$150 - \$200 per annum + GST
- (iv) Recovery of the processing of rates \$100 per annum + GST

Items (i)-(iii) are relevant in this case making the Management Fee \$400.00 per annum plus GST.

Annual Environmental Monitoring Fee:

Not required - The Concessionaire is undertaking photo monitoring as part of the concession contract conditions.

7. Applicant Comments

Comments received from Applicant

The Applicant was provided with a copy of this draft report on 17 November 2021 for their comment.

Feedback through the Applicant's representative is they are generally accepting of the proposed conditions and recommendations with the exceptions of special conditions restricting:

1. Overflights over the Adams Wilderness Area; and
2. Seasonal landing restrictions of no landings between 1 May and 30 September.

The Applicant has also asked for some changes to the proposed special conditions 2 and 39. The Applicant's comments and staff responses are discussed in more detail below.

Discussion

Overflights over the Adams Wilderness Area

The Applicant's representative made the following comment:

"One key exception to this is the condition which dictates that Precision Helicopters "must avoid" flying over the Adams Wilderness Area. The applicant has been clear in the application and in further information provided in February 2021 that some overflight of the Wilderness Area would occur. This is in accordance with Civil Aviation Authority rules, which govern the airspace from 500ft above ground level. DoC has no jurisdiction to dictate flight paths above 500ft agl, and if it were not for the proposed landings, these overflights could occur as of right.

There has been no agreement by the applicant to avoid flying over the Adams Wilderness Area. The applicant has already amended the application to avoid one of the key landing sites which will minimise flights over the area, we consider this is a significant concession to make.

I note that this appears to be on the basis of the Senior Visitor Advisor's recommendation to "advocate that flight paths avoid the wilderness area." Despite the

Noted and uncorrected

Senior Visitor Advisor's view, the Department cannot restrict overflight of conservation land. His advice further notes that "the Department also needs to prioritise work with CAA to restrict flight paths over the Adams Wilderness Area for aircraft activity that is not associated with aircraft landings on public conservation land." This is the appropriate avenue to deal with such issues, not through imposing conditions on concessions. ... the applicant strongly disagrees with any directive to avoid overflight of the Adams Wilderness Area on the basis of the lack of statutory context for such a directive."

Permissions Advisor comments

Following further consideration of Schedule 3, condition 7, the Permissions Advisor confirms that the CAA is the appropriate authority that manages uncontrolled airspace above 500 feet. It is recommended that the condition be revised to read:

The Concessionaire must remain above 500 feet when flight paths fly over the Gazetted Adams Wilderness Area.

noted

Restrictions on landings at the Mt Beaumont site

The Applicant's representative made the following comment:

"Condition 1 limits the number of landings at the Mt Beaumont site, not only in number but also restricts these landings to the winter months of May to September. This restriction would be very detrimental to the application. The key tourism season for the West Coast is October to April, so to prevent the landings as proposed would severely impact the applicant. Without the Mt Beaumont site, the applicant would not have any sites covered in snow during the key tourist season. Many of the tourists who come to New Zealand have come to experience touching snow, and so removing the Mt Beaumont site during this time would defeat the purpose of many of the scenic flights. There are other conditions which seek to avoid impacts on recreational users, such as condition 6, condition 9, condition 10, condition 14, condition 15."

Permissions Advisor comments

The Applicant has requested a maximum of 5 landings per day/ 300 per year on Mount Beaumont, the advice from the Recreation Advisor is that for this site the limits should be restricted to a seasonal landing opportunity because "Mount Beaumont (elevation 2136m) must be climbed on these high-level traverses. The proposed frequency of landings per day/per year has the potential to impact on recreationists seeking solitude and quiet, particularly when the weather is fine, and conditions allow for a safe traverse of this terrain." This view has also come through from the submitters, however these views are subjective, and the effects of regular landings have not yet been understood. Condition 15 specifically allows the Grantor to review landings at a site if there are reoccurring complaints and this should be taken into account, when considering the landing limits for this site.

Changes to other special conditions

The Applicant has requested a review of the following two Schedule 3 special conditions:

- *"Condition 2 requires one aircraft to carry out the activity. The company has different aircraft and it must be enabled to utilise any of these aircraft, because the number of*

passengers dictates the type of helicopter which would be used. The applicant would agree to using one aircraft at a time, but not being limited to one aircraft type or particular aircraft."

Permissions Advisor comments

I agree this condition is restrictive and recommend amending the condition to read:

The Concessionaire may only operate one aircraft from its fleet, at any one time when undertaking the activities included in this concession.

- *"Condition 39 - the applicant is happy to accept the restriction on animals, unless the animals are for search and rescue, police or conservation purposes and requests that the condition is updated to reflect this."*

Permissions Advisor comments

If the activities described by the Applicant's representative occur, these will be in an emergency situation or for conservation management purposes, and will not impact the concession activity or limits identified in Schedule 3, condition 1. Recommendation is that no change is made to this condition.

8. Decision Making

Summary and Recommendations

A public process was carried out as required under section 17SC of the Conservation Act 1987. Thirty eight (38) submissions were received and five (5) submitters requested to be heard. ✓

Under section 17U(1)(f) of the Conservation Act 1987 you are required to have regard to relevant submissions and under section 49(2)(e) consider the recommendations and the contents of the Summary of Submissions Report before deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposal. ✓

Further information sought and application revised

Following the public notification process, the Applicant was requested to submit a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA submitted was that prepared by K J Ladley Ecological dated 2 February 2021. This EIA contained a number of recommendations to minimise the impact of the activity. As a result of this, the Applicant revised their application by:

- reducing the term being sought down to 5 years; ✓
- removing the Whataroa Glacier site; ✓
- reducing the number of landings per year on the Miserable Ridge site from 150 down to 75; ✓
and
- reducing the number of landings per year on the Prices Flat site from 100 down to 60. ✓

The Applicant has also proposed an increase in the number of landings at the Remarkable Peak site to include a non-snow landing activity of 1 non-snow landing per day / 100 non-snow landings per year.

Once the Whataroa Glacier site was removed the remaining sites are consistent with the West Coast Te Tai Poutini Conservation Management Strategy 2010, as supported by policies 2-8 and the outcomes for the Hokitika Place. ✓

Special conditions have been recommended in section 6 of this report to mitigate the potential effects of these regular landings including undertaking annual and/or biannual photographic monitoring so that ongoing assessments can take place. ✓

Non-snow landings at Remarkable Peak

These non-snow landings are not recommended in the Applicant's EIA which states: "*that this site only be used when there is snow cover and visitors are not able to walk on the substrate*". The EIA's assessment is further supported by the internal ecological assessment with the following special condition 63 (in section 6 above) recommended to be included in any concession if granted.

63. The Concessionaire must only undertake aircraft landings at the Remarkable Peak landing site when snow is present. ✓

As the decision maker you will need to separately determine if non-snow landings are appropriate to include in any concession granted. If the decision is made to support this, special condition 60 will be removed and the following condition outlining recommended landing numbers (if supported) will be inserted into the table under special condition 1:

Wanganui/ Otira Catchments Conservation Area - Remarkable Peak	NZTM co- ordinates: 1431661.0 E 5230282.0 N	1 non-snow	100 non-snow	No more than 4 landings to occur per week in non-snow conditions. Landings are restricted to sites with aggregate cover with sparse vegetation
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Restricted landing limits for Mount Beaumont

As the decision maker, you must consider the application request as lodged for this site of 5 landings per day/ 300 per year while taking into consideration the views of the internal expert advisers and submitters when deciding on the limits to be included in any concession if granted. The Recreation Advisor has recommended the landing limits of 2 landings per day / 150 per year from 1 May to 30 September only for this site.

The effects of regular landings in the Hokitika backcountry are not yet well known and this application if granted will allow this activity to be monitored. The Applicant has agreed to conditions being included that allow for limit reductions and/or noise restrictions to be put in place under certain circumstances. This along with the reduced concession term of 5 years will provide the best opportunity to better understand the effects of regular landings in this setting.

Recommendations

1. That it is noted that the Whataroa Glacier site has been withdrawn from the application and will not form part of the concession if granted.
2. That a revised (reduced) term of 5 years is considered a more appropriate to allow for monitoring of the effects of the activity to be better understood.
3. That the revised (reduced) landing limits per day/per year for the Miserable Ridge and Prices Flat sites are considered more appropriate for regular landings.
4. That consideration is given to the proposed landing limits and seasonal restrictions contained in Schedule 3, condition 1 for the Mount Beaumont site.
5. That non-snow landings on the Remarkable Peak site are declined.

Decision: Notified Concession under Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987

1. Deem this application to be complete in terms of s17S of the Conservation Act 1987:

Agree / ~~Disagree~~

2. Confirm that in terms of section 49(2)(e) of the Conservation Act 1987 you have considered the Summary of Submissions Report and decided to proceed with considering the remaining legislative requirements.

Agree / ~~Disagree~~

3. Decline the inclusion of non-snow landings on the Remarkable Peak site.

Approve / ~~Decline~~

4. Confirm that the landing limits and seasonal restrictions for the Mount Beaumont site contained in special condition 1 in section 6 of this report is appropriate:

Agree / ~~Disagree~~

5. Approve the granting of a 5-year Permit to Precision Helicopters Limited subject to the standard concession contract and the special conditions listed below:

Approve / ~~Decline~~

Special conditions to be included are those contained in section 6 of this report.



Signed by Mark Davies, Director Operations, Western South Island
Pursuant to the delegation dated 9 September 2015

3/12/21

Date

Decision Makers Comments

