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Stewardship land reclassification



## Stewardship land reclassification

Stewardship land is public conservation land that has not yet had its natural and historic values assessed to determine an appropriate classification.

# Western South Island stewardship land update

February 2025: The Minister intends to make final decisions on the reclassification of stewardship land for the Western South Island in mid-2025.

[Help us reclassify stewardship land on the West Coast](#)

## About stewardship land

Public conservation land is held under different categories to reflect the values present.

Stewardship land is a holding status for unclassified public conservation land. It is managed by DOC under the Conservation Act 1987 to protect its natural and historic resources.

[Categories of conservation land managed by DOC](#)

Around 30% of conservation land is held in stewardship – over 2.7 million hectares or 9% of Aotearoa's total land area. Many of these areas are home to threatened species and high-priority ecosystems.

This includes land that came to DOC following its inception in 1987, land purchased by the Nature Heritage Fund, and land acquired through Tenure Review.

[Map of stewardship land across New Zealand](#)

## Reasons for reclassifying stewardship land

Reclassifying stewardship land ensures it can be managed appropriately. A clearly defined land classification provides clarity to users of the land, both recreational and commercial.

Land identified as having very low or no conservation value can be considered for disposal.

The process of reclassifying stewardship land requires consideration of cultural, historic, natural and recreational values when assigning a new classification. It must also give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Given the scale and complexity of the task, most stewardship land has not yet been reclassified.

## The reclassification project

The Stewardship Land Reclassification Project was established in May 2021 to accelerate the reclassification process.

[Media Release 28 May 2021: Government speeds up stewardship land reclassification](#)

Independent National Panels were appointed to provide recommendations on revised land

classifications for stewardship land in the western South Island and northern South Island regions.

A Ngāi Tahu-appointed Mana Whenua Panel was established to work alongside the National Panels for each region within the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.

## Western South Island

The Western South Island National Panel and Mana Whenua Panel (the Panels) began their work in November 2021 and spent five months assessing the values of stewardship land in the Western South Island region.

Technical reports were prepared by the Department to support the assessment process, including conservation value reports, landscape reports and management planning guidance. The Panels also undertook site visits to the region.

The assessment process included assessment of the ecological, cultural, historic, landscape and recreational values of each stewardship land area, and [section 4 Conservation Act 1987](#) considerations.

The Panels prepared draft recommendations for the future classification of stewardship land.

Where land has been determined to have no or very low conservation values, it has been recommended for disposal.

After receiving recommendations from the Panels, the former Minister of Conservation publicly notified intentions to reclassify 644,016 hectares of stewardship land in May 2022. This notification called for public submissions on the proposed land classifications.

[Media Release 27 May 2022: Public feedback sought on proposed land classifications for the West Coast](#)

To support the public submission process, DOC provided information on the proposed land classifications including the Panels' recommendations, maps, conservation value reports, landscape value reports and management planning reports.

[Documents that support the reclassification of stewardship land](#)

The public submissions and hearings process closed in September 2022.

A summary of submissions report has been drafted under s49 of the Conservation Act 1987.

[Stewardship Land Review – Briefings and progress update February 2024 \(released under the Official Information Act\) \(PDF, 3,673K\)](#)

The Minister of Conservation will consider the summary of submissions report, alongside input from Treaty partners, Conservation Boards, and the New Zealand Conservation Authority, before making final decisions on whether to proceed with the notified classification proposals.

## Other regions

Following decisions for stewardship land in the Western South Island region, we will seek Ministerial direction regarding the work programme for future regions including the Northern South Island.

DOC staff will engage with Treaty partners to understand how they wish to be involved when reclassification work takes place within their rohe.

## Related

## Stewardship land documents

Documents that support the reclassification of stewardship land.



### Help us reclassify stewardship land on the West Coast

Submissions closed Tuesday 23 August 2022. We asked for your views on the proposed reclassifications for 504 pieces of stewardship land on the West Coast before final decisions are made.

## Categories of conservation land

The public conservation land we administer has different layers of protection, depending on which category or status it holds under various legislation.



### Streamlining the stewardship land reclassification process

Submissions closed Friday 18 March 2022. We asked for your views on how to improve the process for reclassifying and disposing of stewardship land through legislative reform.

## Was this information helpful?

Yes

No