

# Submission on the discussion document on options to streamline processes for reclassification and disposal of Stewardship land

March 2022

## Introduction

The Aggregate and Quarry Association (AQA) is the industry body representing construction material companies which produce an estimated 45-50 million tonnes of aggregate and quarried materials consumed in New Zealand each year.

Funded by its members, the AQA has a mandate to increase understanding of the need for aggregates to New Zealanders, improve our industry and users' technical knowledge of aggregates, and assist in developing a highly skilled workforce within a safe and sustainable work environment.

## Background

Central and local government will need to invest an unprecedented amount of money into infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, roads and transport, to meet forecast population growth and address the infrastructure deficit. New Zealand relies heavily on locally sourced aggregate resources for infrastructure repair following disasters, for road and rail transport corridors, major projects, and for housing development; all of which are essential for the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of communities.

A wide range of industrial minerals are also produced in New Zealand including clay, limestone, perlite, halloysite, bentonite, zeolite, silica, dolomite and serpentine.

It is therefore vital that local aggregate resources throughout the country are identified, understood and effectively managed. Quarrying is a high value and temporary land use, with site restoration a critical element to ensure that land is available for future generations. In many cases, site restoration can result in the delivery of valuable new habitats, contributing towards national biodiversity targets and wider 'net gain' ambitions.

## General comments

We agree that some of the requirements within current legislation could be simplified and modernised to create a streamlined approach, while maintaining the oversight required to give confidence that stewardship land is being assessed and reclassified appropriately. This will reduce the cost and time associated with assessing and reclassifying stewardship land areas and disposing of them where appropriate and will ensure that alternative uses for the land can be pursued, and public resources used efficiently.

We make the following submission in relation to the [discussion document on options to streamline processes for reclassification and disposal of Stewardship land](#).

## **Improving consistency of public notification and submission processes**

We support proposed Options 1.1 and 1.2 as follows:

- Shorten the period that the panels must allow for public submissions to 20 working days, and
- Allow the ability to decline a hearing where holding the hearing would cause substantial delay to the process or cause substantial burden on the resources of the panel.

We agree that these two options balance the objective of enabling a more efficient process for reclassifying stewardship land while ensuring Department of Conservation (DOC) meets its wider obligations under conservation legislation. It would also meet the objective of enabling national panels to carry out their work efficiently and effectively.

## **Enabling the national panels to carry out the public notification and submission process**

We support amending the Conservation Act to enable the national panels to carry out the public notification (Option 2.1).

## **Clarifying responsibilities for making recommendations to reclassify stewardship land to national park land**

We agree that national panels should assume primary responsibility for reclassifying stewardship land as national parks in consultation with tangata whenua, the NZCA and relevant conservation boards.

## **Removing the statutory step to declare all stewardship land to be held for conservation purposes before it can be reclassified or disposed of**

We support declaring all stewardship land under section 62 of the Conservation Act 1987 to be held for conservation purposes via a legislative change (Option 4.1), as the current process appears to be an unnecessary administrative process for little benefit.

## **Enabling the Minister of Conservation to direct the proceeds of sale of stewardship land to DOC**

We support the pragmatic approach of Option 5.1 to amend the Conservation Act to allow the Minister of Conservation to direct the proceeds of sale of stewardship land to DOC for further reclassification or management activities.

## **Clarifying the status of concessions on reclassified stewardship land**

Currently extraction of aggregates on DOC land is essential for flood mitigation, river restoration, and the construction and maintenance of tracks, carparks and structures in national parks and on other DOC land. An example is the extraction of rock and gravel from conservation land adjoining the Waiho River near Franz Josef Glacier to help protect its walking tracks. This sensible and pragmatic decision saved DOC a fourfold amount – and considerable carbon emissions – from the alternative of trucking material a long distance.

Quarries successfully operate under concessions on numerous parcels of DOC land and therefore it is critical that the ongoing status of concessions during the stewardship land reclassification process provides certainty that concessions will continue regardless of reclassification.

We therefore strongly support amending the legislation to clarify that existing concessions on stewardship land can continue under agreed terms regardless of reclassification (Option 6.2).

### **Non-regulatory options to improve stewardship land reclassification**

The Government's Resources Strategy was released in 2019 and clearly articulated that *"We need to make sure we have the aggregate (crushed rock and stone) required, or alternative replacement material, to build the foundations of our houses and roads."* It also states that *"it's important that quarries are located near their end users."*

MBIE are responsible for implementing the Government's Resources Strategy and therefore it is important that they are consulted on the stewardship land reclassification to ensure such reclassification is not inconsistent with Government policy.

We agree that it is important to ensure operational arrangements between DOC and the MBIE are fit for purpose. While we don't have a view on the structure of the arrangement it is important that MBIE continue to provide information relevant to the reclassification of an area of stewardship land to the national panels during their assessment process.

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