



# FRESH WATER ACTIVITIES

## SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

This good practice guide has been developed specifically for fresh water-based tourism businesses, such as those operating river and lake cruises, white water rafting, kayaking, fishing trips, jet boat tours and other water sports. It provides targeted and practical ideas for business sustainability. Further information, tools and similar guides for other types of tourism businesses are contained in the Ministry of Tourism website: [www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability](http://www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability)



### MINIMISING WASTE

- List all the wastes generated by the business, and think of what can be done to avoid sending them to landfill.
- Choose from the following management options for each waste stream: Avoid, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Compost. Regularly check on progress and costs (e.g. conduct simple waste audits).
- Reduce the use of office consumables (e.g. print double sided, reuse paper, keep electronic instead of paper copies, purchase refillable products).
- Purchase consumables in bulk, avoid unnecessary packaging and supply reusable crockery, cutlery and containers to minimise waste.
- Adopt a 'Pack it in – Pack it Out' ethic on canoe/kayak/rafting trips, taking out all waste. Look carefully for food scraps, bottle tops, cigarette butts, packaging, used matches, old tent pegs before leaving rest and camp sites, and pick up any litter found.
- Make sure all clients understand waste management procedures (no waste is to be thrown overboard), and provide biodegradable (e.g. cornstarch) bags for collection.
- Secure all loose items and always collect articles that fall overboard accidentally, as well as any floating rubbish observed.
- Provide labelled recycling containers and organic bins in appropriate locations, and ensure clients and staff use them.
- Establish a compost bin or worm farm (or outsource for collection by another agency), so that organic wastes (such as food scraps, tea leaves and tree cuttings) can be converted into fertiliser.
- Safely segregate all hazardous wastes (e.g. batteries, fuel and oil filters, oil/fuel contaminated absorbents), and find schemes for the safe management of these wastes; ask your council for advice.



### CONTRIBUTION TO CONSERVATION

- Support local freshwater research and conservation efforts (e.g. participate in riverbank and lake edge planting projects, river and lake management plans).
- Work with other recreational users of waterways and adjoining landowners to ensure sustainable use and management (e.g. involvement in river or lake user groups).
- Implement team-building days, volunteering on a local conservation project (e.g. DoC and weedbuster projects).

If you see any pollution in fresh waters, report it immediately to the responsible regional council pollution hotline.



### PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Carefully plan and prepare, particularly for new trip itineraries or one-off private trips; prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies.
- Check whether any restrictions apply to waterways, shores and access areas and fish catch; obtain necessary licences, permits or approvals.
- Ensure that guides are fully aware of any known hazards and acceptable flow parameters.
- Schedule trips to avoid times of high use, and restrict numbers to ensure preservation of both the environment and the 'experience'.
- Regularly check equipment, maintenance, spares and supplies, including those needed for minimal-impact travel.



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

The Ministry of Tourism  
Telephone: (04) 498 7440  
Email: [info@tourism.govt.nz](mailto:info@tourism.govt.nz)  
[www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability](http://www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability)



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## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

- Develop and adopt a sustainability policy for the business, and review regularly.
- Develop an Action Plan, setting out ways to enhance sustainability performance; make someone responsible for each action and impose a deadline; review to ensure deadlines are met.
- Integrate sustainability into existing management systems and processes (e.g. build ethical recreation principles and contents of this guide into ops manuals).
- Seek to become a carbon neutral certified business, reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as much as possible, and offset those that remain (e.g. by funding native tree planting or energy-efficient schemes to compensate for carbon released from vehicle and boat operations).
- Implement a formal client feedback process, and include sustainability performance as an area for comment; introduce client rewards for good ideas (e.g. vouchers).
- Become Qualmark® endorsed, using this guide to assist in meeting the requirements for environmental accreditation.
- Consult a business mentor, to identify ways to operate more efficiently (free up time), develop and grow the business (e.g. NZTE programmes).

Avoid washing directly in waterways; and use biodegradable detergents, soaps and shampoos at all times.



## PROTECTING WATERWAYS

- If you see any pollution in freshwaters, report it immediately to the responsible regional council pollution hotline.
- Check, clean and dry watercraft and gear between waterways to prevent the spread of unwanted aquatic pests, such as freshwater algae (didymo), human and animal pathogens (such as giardia and cryptosporidium), and plant pathogens (such as fungi, nematodes, bacteria and viruses).
- Where trips involve crossing areas affected by, or at high-risk of containing aquatic pests, visit un-infected areas first, followed by infected areas later.
- When operating motorised boats, drain livewells, bilge water and transom wells prior to leaving waterways.
- Ensure guides and clients do not tip water bottles filled in one waterway into another catchment.
- For motorised vessels, ensure spill prevention and clean-up plans are in place for refuelling (e.g. integrate into Operations Manuals), and that staff are trained in these procedures.



## CONSIDERATION OF OTHER USERS

- Ensure all guides and clients are considerate of other recreational users on and around waterways, and include requirements in Operations Procedures.
- Observe safe boating practices at all times, in line with regulatory requirements and industry best practice.



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- Provide clients with laminated reference cards to be returned at the end of the trip, explaining outdoor ethics to be followed (e.g. this could be adapted from the DoC Environmental Care Code, this Sustainability Guide and the Treadlightly! principles).
- Provide briefings to clients at the commencement of each trip, outlining sustainability initiatives and environmental protection measures to be followed.



## FIRE PREVENTION

- Carry CO<sub>2</sub>, dry powder or foam fire extinguishers on board motorised vessels, and ensure skippers and guides know how to use them.
- Regularly inspect and maintain all fire protection systems on board vessels.
- Use portable fuel stoves for cooking during rest or camping stops on land, as these are more efficient than fires, and candles in windproof glass holders or plastic bags weighted down with sand for light.
- If you do light a campfire, keep it small and contained, use only dead wood. Douse it with water and check ashes before leaving.
- Avoid lighting campfires in sensitive areas (including lake and river margins), as fires will leave permanent scars on soil and vegetation.



## MANAGING TOILET WASTES

- Encourage clients to use onshore facilities, prior to departure.
- If the vessel has no marine toilet, take a portable toilet when going on a trip of more than half a day, or plan for onshore stops as often as needed.
- Install holding tanks (or a sewage treatment system) on vessels, and pump sewage to on-shore facilities for appropriate treatment before disposal.
- When resting or camping in areas without toilet facilities, either carry a portable toilet or dig individual shallow holes (15-30cm deep), at least 100m from any waterways, and bury toilet wastes.



### MANAGING GREY WATER

- Avoid washing directly in waterways; and use biodegradable detergents, soaps and shampoos at all times.
- Carry water at least 100m away from waterways for washing; this allows soapy water to drain into the soil and be filtered.



### WORKPLACE CULTURE

- Develop and implement induction and training processes that include sustainability as a core element; include in operational manuals.
- Communicate sustainability objectives to staff (e.g. through awareness sessions, meetings), encourage suggestions, actively involve them, and reward achievements (e.g. build values into performance criteria for staff).



### MINIMISING USERS' IMPACT

- When choosing rest stops and areas for put-ins and take-outs of canoes/kayaks/rafts and clients, avoid trampling and damaging vegetation.
- When camping, use existing campsites; camp on durable surfaces and set up tents and cooking areas on a non-vegetated area.
- Choose campsites at least 100m from waterways, and avoid camping near historical, archaeological or culturally significant sites.



### CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Include sustainability successes in marketing collateral (e.g. web-site, brochures, sales calls).
- Share and continue to build on sustainability successes through existing channels (e.g. relevant industry associations, business networks).
- Submit an Expression of Interest to the Tourism Industry Association for the New Zealand Tourism Industry Awards.
- Hold celebratory events for staff, and encourage other local businesses to participate.



### WILDLIFE SAFETY

- Identify sensitive areas, such as nesting and breeding ground, and avoid these areas.
- Avoid crossing or otherwise disturbing waterways that are important for rare species, fish spawning or fish breeding.

Select the cleanest burning, most fuel efficient engine models to reduce hydrocarbon pollution (e.g. choose four stroke outboard motors, which are more fuel efficient, cause less pollution and are quieter).



### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- Employ local staff, and offer internships or tourism work-experience.
- Develop training programs covering both basic skills and those necessary for promotion, so that local people can be phased into senior guide and management positions over time.
- Buy locally produced goods and services, sourced from medium, small and micro-enterprises (e.g. organic produce for trip lunches).
- Donate old, partially used or unused products to local charities (e.g. buoyancy vests and wet-suits, office equipment that is still functional).
- Establish a partnership with a local school, and work with local and regional partners to support the school and environmental education (e.g. participation in Education Outside the Classroom programmes for water skills, sponsorship, mentoring students).



### VESSEL OPERATION

- Ensure skippers and guides comply with all signage and barriers, including speed limits, no-wake zones and obstructions.
- Review all safe operating procedures, and ensure adequate measures are in place to protect the environment (e.g. from vessel launching through to anchoring, operation and cleaning).



### FUEL EFFICIENCY

- Work with skippers (of motorised vessels) to implement fuel efficient vessel operations (e.g. regulate cruising speed).
- Select the cleanest burning, most fuel efficient engine models to reduce hydrocarbon pollution (e.g. choose four-stroke outboard motors, which are more fuel efficient, cause less pollution and are quieter).
- Tune all engines regularly (in line with manufacturer's specifications), to keep engines running cleanly and at peak performance.
- On larger vessels, investigate retrofitting in-board motors to use biodiesel as an alternative fuel source.



## SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

- Review all products and services that you purchase, and advise your suppliers that you will give preference to products that meet social and environmental criteria (e.g. based on distance from origin, biodegradability, toxicity, water and energy efficiency ratings, recycled content etc).
- Consider 'whole of life cost' in future product sourcing decisions (e.g. whether products can be recycled, sold or donated after use – look for supplier 'take back' schemes, consider from 'cradle-to-grave').
- Select biodegradable and environmentally certified (e.g. Environmental Choice) cleaning agents and other products, and continue to look for new environmentally friendly products for the boating sector.
- When purchasing new watercraft, work with suppliers to ensure that packaging is either re-used or recycled (e.g. return kayak and canoe packaging to supplier).
- Consider fuel-type, efficiency and emissions, alongside operational needs, when selecting new vehicles and vessels (e.g. hybrid, bio-fuel powered or clean burning diesel).
- Where catering is included in trips, buy re-usable or biodegradable food containers (e.g. potato starch or corrugated paper).
- When selecting new office equipment and appliances, buy energy efficient (e.g. EnergyStar or Energy Rated) equipment.
- Consider 'sustainable' clothing alternatives when sourcing new uniforms (e.g. Eco Fleeces produced from recycled PET plastic, organic merino and cotton fabrics).
- Create written contracts for boat maintenance and repair, and ensure they include requirements for protecting health, safety and the environment (e.g. from product selection through to safe work practices and disposal of hazardous substances).
- Use publishers that offer 'green' options for publishing promotional materials (e.g. vegetable-based inks printed on recycled [100% post-consumer content, Process Chlorine Free] paper) and communicate this in printed materials.



## CHEMICALS AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- Use non-toxic, phosphate and chlorine-free cleaners (avoid cleaners with bleach, ammonia, lye or petroleum distillates), or natural products (such as citrus, salt, vinegar and baking soda).
- Display supplier-provided Material Safety Data Sheet information (detailing health, safety and environmental precautions to be followed), where hazardous substances are used, and train staff in handling and disposal requirements.
- Where fuel and oil is used on watercraft, provide a means of safely and efficiently containing spills (e.g. chemical absorbent mats).
- Keep all hazardous substances in labelled stores that are covered, sealed and contained and ensure incompatible substances are segregated; ask your suppliers for advice.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Owner/operators and staff need to schedule holidays at least once a year to enhance personal well-being.
- Implement a health and safety programme for all staff, using templates developed by Worksafe, and in line with relevant Maritime Safety Authority (MSA) requirements.
- Ensure all guides and vessels are equipped with safety and survival equipment and training appropriate to the type of trip, waterways and season. Require guides to hold first aid certificates.
- Require clients to agree to follow your safety policies at the start of trips (e.g. have them read and sign policy statements when registering).
- Develop a safety plan and safe operating procedures (e.g. require guides to phone into the office at set times, include steps to take in an emergency and who to notify in different scenarios).
- Join the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) Workplace Safety Management Practices Programme. This attracts reduced premiums upon demonstrating that the business health and safety management systems meet the graded requirements.

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

- MAF Biosecurity, Guidance on Identification and Management of Didymo and other invasive pests and diseases, [www.biosecurity.govt.nz](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz)
- Water Safety New Zealand 2006, Safe Boating: An Essential Guide, [www.boatsafe.org.nz](http://www.boatsafe.org.nz)
- UNEP, Tourism and Mountains: A Practical Guide to Managing the Environmental and Social Impacts of Mountain Tours, [www.unep.fr/pc/tourism/library](http://www.unep.fr/pc/tourism/library)
- For details of industry sustainability initiatives and sources of help, refer to the Ministry of Tourism website, [www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability](http://www.tourism.govt.nz/sustainability)

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### PHOTO CREDITS:

- Black Abyss Cavers – Tourism Holdings Limited, [www.thlonline.com](http://www.thlonline.com)
  - Stones – Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, [www.tepapa.govt.nz](http://www.tepapa.govt.nz)
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