



Unlocking the full value of outdoor access

STRATEGY 2026–27

Belonging begins with access

STRATEGY 2026–27



Getting outdoors isn't a nice-to-have — it's a foundation for healthy, connected, communities and a thriving, resilient New Zealand. We work to unlock outdoor access for everyone, building the infrastructure that lets people get out and enjoy our land.

OUR PURPOSE

To enhance free, certain, enduring, and practical outdoor public access

OUR MISSION

Bring people, places, and information together to enhance outdoor public access

OUR VISION

Connecting People, Connecting Places
Ngā Ara Hikoī

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Outdoor public access is valued, but not yet treated as critical national infrastructure. We help others get things done through maps, advice, relationships, and practical support. We are trusted, efficient, and responsive, but much of our work is still reactive. We rely on our financial reserves to sustain our work.



WHERE WE'RE HEADING

Public access is the infrastructure that connects people to the outdoors. It supports health, tourism, local business, participation, and wellbeing. We are a trusted, impartial national steward of outdoor access — using our relationships, local knowledge, and geospatial expertise to focus effort where it matters most, so over time the whole system becomes stronger and more connected.

OUR FOUR FOUNDATIONS

- Strategy and policy
- Communication and enablement
- Operational delivery
- Organisational support

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

- Begin a national conversation about why outdoor access matters — influencing how the public service, communities, and private partners collaborate to use outdoor access to improve our country.
- Give farmers, foresters, hunters, and trampers trustworthy information and advice they can act on.
- Open up access on the ground by engaging with people in a transparent, timely way, and delivering enduring results that people can rely on.
- Build an organisation that works smarter — freeing up our capacity for frontline delivery, grounded in sound governance and accountability.

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARDS

- Leading the system
- Getting stakeholders active
- Opening up more access
- Building lasting capability

Moving forward together

The commission is the only agency whose remit spans every land type and landowner, and the only one for which outdoor public access is a core job, giving it a unique ability to lead work across government that unlocks the benefits of public outdoor access infrastructure.



Unlocking our land for success

Research in New Zealand and overseas shows outdoor access delivers better health, stronger regional economies, social cohesion, and care for the environment. It creates new value and helps avoid future costs. (Heuser Whittington, June 2026)



Generating value



Kawatiri Coastal Trail

We invested \$32,000 to help the local community secure access for this 40km West Coast trail. That unlocked a \$9.3m build. In its first full year, the trail attracted 32,000 users and about \$18m in visitor spending.

KCT 2026.



Production forests

Mountain biking in 96 production forests attracted 600,000 riders in 2022, generated \$291m in visitor spending, and supported about 1,490 jobs. Access is the active ingredient in this economy.

B Patterson, 2023.



Great rides

Ngā Haerenga generates \$1.28b in visitor spending across 23 Great Rides, against approximately \$10m in trail management costs. Businesses serving the network have grown 81% since 2021, reaching over 2,900.

MBIE 2021, 2025.

Success stories



Pūhoi to Matakana

Our long-term support is helping build a connected trail network across Rodney. The network now has about

390,000 uses a year

and will support 250 long-term jobs.

Outdoor Access Commission unlocked value through:

EASEMENT

ADVICE

GRANT



Maungatautari Crossing

A \$50k grant to Ngāti Koroki Kahukura Trust helped complete the final 4.5km of a 12km walkway. The family-friendly crossing now supports more than

20,000 visitors per year

and benefits the Waipā region.

Outdoor Access Commission unlocked value through:

EASEMENT

GRANT

Protecting what we have



Physical wellbeing

Physical inactivity costs New Zealand an estimated \$2.3 billion in lost productivity and a further \$530m in direct health system costs.*

Outdoor recreation is twice as popular as organised sport.**

* Deloitte, 2022. ** Sport NZ, 2025.



Mental Wellbeing

During COVID-19 restrictions, 62% of New Zealanders said nature access was “very important” to their wellbeing. People with closer access to nature reported better mental health outcomes.

MfE, 2022.



Resilience

We are developing a national tracks dataset for LINZ as part of key climate and emergency resilience work so that emergency responders and stranded communities have data about alternative access routes.



Ashley Gorge Skyline

Our funding covered the survey and legal work needed for a

key easement across private land.

That final step unlocked a 4–5-hour loop with views across Pegasus Bay and the Southern Alps.

Outdoor Access Commission unlocked value through:

EASEMENT

ADVICE

GRANT



Around the Mountains Cycle Trail

A \$23k grant helped secure access agreements for this multi-day Southland trail,

bringing visitors and economic benefits to rural communities.

Outdoor Access Commission unlocked value through:

GRANT

LEGAL ACCESS