

Whakapapa

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WHL calls for submissions on its application to lease and license Whakapapa

Public submissions are currently open on Whakapapa Holdings 2024 Limited (WHL)'s application to lease and license Whakapapa for a ten-year period. This is the latest milestone in WHL's endeavour to take ownership of Whakapapa, following the NZ Government [pledging to support](#) the purchase in December 2024. Submissions can be made on the Department of Conservation (DOC) website up until 11:59pm Friday 7 February 2025. A guide on how to submit can be found [here](#).

With progress, this week has seen the first local hui held by WHL with key local stakeholders and interested community groups in audience, including regional tourism operators, local businesses, and the Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association. This is the first time the WHL directors have been able to speak freely and positively of their aspirations for Whakapapa and demonstrate their collaborative intent. *"We will go further and get there faster through open discussion and hui"* - it acknowledges.

Since its inception in 2022, WHL has championed the potential of Whakapapa and has been passionate about maintaining the value it brings to the region and its communities. *"There needs to be a solution - one to strengthen the current situation for the region, in particular for those who have accommodation, jobs, and businesses in the area"* - it says.

It has formed a group of three directors - Dave Mazey, Tom Elworthy, and more recently, Bridget Legnavsky - with a combined over 75 years' experience at the forefront of the New Zealand ski and tourism industry. More on the directors' credentials can be found [here](#). The knowledge and capability of WHL will sit alongside the expertise of the existing senior management team and the wider Whakapapa team who have a combined 350 years of experience at the ski area.

Following consultation with key stakeholders, including tāngata whenua, WHL has applied to DOC for a ten-year license term to be reviewed after five years. *"This term strikes a balance between providing short-term operational certainty while allowing flexibility to address longer-term planning, including cultural, environmental, and governance considerations"* - it says. In particular, the time-frame will enable further progress on the settlement of Wai 1130 - the Waitangi Tribunal claim pertaining to the Tongariro National Park.

In its [concession application](#), WHL demonstrates a clear commitment to enhancing both recreational opportunities and environmental conservation in the region. In the short-term, investment will ensure the repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure, the upgrade of its snowmaking capabilities including the acquisition of new state-of-the-art snow guns, and replacement of what is an aged groomer fleet. All existing lifts – including the western lifts – are in the scope of WHL’s operation.

Long-term planning for Whakapapa will be conducted in collaboration with tāngata whenua. *“Retaining the facilities and available activities and experiences associated with them, and the value this can bring to the surrounding communities, will only be possible if there is ongoing engagement with iwi”* – it says. Only once these conversations have taken place, and there is shared understanding of cultural values and “what good looks like” from all parties, can an Indicative Development Plan be finalised and a longer-term license applied for. There will be no large-scale investment until this time.

WHL’s full concession application can be found on the [DOC website](#), while a summary of the key points can be found on the [Whakapapa website](#). WHL encourages anyone with an interest in the future of Whakapapa to have a say – whether in support of against.

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About Whakapapa

Whakapapa is situated in the heart of New Zealand’s central North Island spanning 550 hectares on the northern side of Mt Ruapehu in Tongariro National Park, an easy three-hour drive from Hamilton, four from Wellington and five hours from Auckland.

Since 1953, New Zealanders have been discovering their first love of snow at Whakapapa’s premier learner facility, Happy Valley, while more advance skiers and riders hone their skills exploring natural bowls, wind lips, exhilarating chutes, and remnants of old volcanic crater rims on descent from 2320m – New Zealand’s highest lifted point.

Naturally volcanic terrain is formed by solidified lava, with snow filling in natural gullies and rocky crevasses from June through to October. Traditionally a snow base upwards of 1m from August is enhanced by Whakapapa’s expert team and makes for some of the best free ride terrain in the Southern Hemisphere.

Whakapapa is home to the Sky Waka gondola, New Zealand’s premier gondola experience (wheelchair accessible). It transports guests 1.8km up the Whakapapa side of the maunga 2020m above sea level and offers panoramic vistas out across the volcanic terrain and neighbouring mountains, Mt Tongariro and Mt Ngauruhoe. Skiers, boarders, and sightseers are welcomed to the architecturally awarded Knoll Ridge Chalet and highest year-round eatery in the country. The Sky Waka gondola runs daily, 10am – 4pm.

For families looking to give their kids a snow play experience, a snow experience zone at the top of the Sky Waka gondola can be accessed with a sightseeing pass. Or the Whakapapa sledding zone in Happy Valley offers fun for snow-seekers of all ages. Kids need to be 8 years+ to ride their own sled unaccompanied.

For more visit [whakapapa.com](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Media Contact: Rochelle Landl | GM – Customer & Growth | P. 0278077864 | E. rlandl@whakapapa.com