

Media release from The Hermitage Hotel Aoraki Mount Cook, 17 October 2009

Hermitage takes gold for environmental work

One of the first to achieve Qualmark's prestigious new Enviro-Gold rating, The Hermitage General Manager Denis Callesen says it's a natural fit with the hotel's commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

"We're delighted to have this recognition of practices we have engaged in for many years. Our remote location and the pristine nature of where we live and work have meant we have always needed to engage in sustainable environmental practices. Living in one of the most beautiful corners of the world makes you more aware of the impact people have on the environment.

"Because Aoraki Mount Cook is so isolated, and so sensitive to environmental factors, our whole community must be environmentally aware and proactive in everything it does, from managing waste to energy-saving initiatives.

"We've developed some pragmatic policies that work for our unique environment and rely on continuous buy-in from our staff and guests. I'm the first to admit we're not perfect, but the people who live here are happy to go the extra mile to make these policies work. If you look at our progress year by year over the last decade we've made enormous improvements."

Shirley Slatter, DOC Programme Manager Community Relations, says "It's absolutely wonderful that The Hermitage has achieved this rating and completely fitting as they are located within a national park. We really appreciate their support – it makes our job of caring for Aoraki Mount Cook National Park that much easier."

The hotel and village community employ many sustainable practices including:

- Recycling all materials where possible, such as newspapers, untreated timber and old products – including donation schemes. For example, newspapers and untreated timber can be burned in fireplaces, left property items (after 3 months) and old uniforms go to the Salvation Army, furniture goes to retirement homes, old hotel carpet goes to local sports clubs, and towels become kitchen rags.
- All plastic, glass, cans, cardboard and newspaper are separated and are compacted in the village. When there's enough for a truckload it is sent to Christchurch or Timaru to be recycled. Beer and wine bottles go to Christchurch in 200 litre wheelie bins on a return system. Tin can ends are removed, washed, squashed and compacted into bales.
- The hotel runs a paperless office system wherever possible and recycles paper to make notepads. The paperless office policy is reviewed regularly.
- Water turbidity meters have been installed to monitor the clarity of Aoraki Mount Cook water. The UV treated water is some of the purest in the world – so much so that tea guru Mr Dilmah himself said when visiting earlier this year that the tea was some of the best he'd ever tasted and was keen to learn how to make the water so pure!
- As part of its contribution to conservation, a gene stock programme has been instigated which works up to five years ahead of time. Under the programme, seeds are harvested from existing native plants, propagated and sent to Motukarara Nursery near Banks Peninsula for nurturing. They are then returned to Aoraki Mount Cook for winter acclimatisation prior to being planted.
- Sustainable design features include the use of stone, timber and glass throughout the village and designated colour



Photo Caption:
The Hermitage Hotel, Aoraki Mount Cook

palettes.

- A 20 year native gene stock planting programme is nearing completion. All exotic trees (except a few historic ones) are being removed from the Aoraki Mount Cook area and some have been recycled into building materials for the village. A great example is the shelter at Blue Lakes.
- Putrescibles (all food, recyclable waste) are compacted then trucked to Twizel's Resource Recovery Park every three days. Here, the compacted waste is composted to become "Mackenzie Black Compost" which is then on-sold.
- The Hermitage buys in bulk by the pallet where possible and is careful to choose products that produce the least possible waste. The Hermitage restaurants and bars use almost no condiment sachets which saves an estimated total of more than 65,000 empty sachets a year. This prevents the potential for one sachet to contaminate a wheelie bin of compostable material. Large jars and bottles are used to dispense jams and sauces.
- Local sourcing of food supplies is an art form at The Hermitage: Salmon from the Tekapo Canal Salmon Farm, local Otago wine, and local cheese from Geraldine. Coffee is UTZ certified, ensuring a socially and environmentally responsible production method.
- Sandwich boxes are made of corn starch and serviettes are brown recycled paper. All bags and bin liners used are now biodegradable.
- All hotel appliances are rated energy-efficient and induction technology has been introduced to the kitchens to produce instant efficient energy only when needed.
- Sensors and timers are used to turn off heating and lighting. Low energy light bulbs and fluorescent tubes are used throughout entire hotel complex, including staff quarters. Pipes, ducts, wall and roof spaces are insulated, and doors and windows have been weather stripped to reduce heat loss/gain. Energy-efficient underfloor heating is installed in newer bathrooms. Most energy-inefficient areas are closed down in winter.
- The Hermitage has just completed a 10 year insulation best modern practice programme this winter.
- Volunteer conservation programmes such as the Lake Pukaki to Tasman/Hutt Valley trapping programme which several staff are part of aim to return the natural habitat to pre-European times.
- And finally, this press release has been electronically generated, reviewed, stored and distributed. At no point has it been printed.

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