



**NEW ZEALAND
PETROLEUM & MINERALS**

GUIDE

Prospecting for petroleum in New Zealand, and the Open Market competitive process

SEPTEMBER 2025



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Hīkina Whakatutuki – Lifting to make successful

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MORE INFORMATION

Information, examples and answers to your questions about the topics covered here can be found on our website: www.mbie.govt.nz

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This guidance is intended to provide an overview of how petroleum prospecting permits are applied for and allocated under the Open market competitive process introduced in 2025. It does not replace the need for permit applicants to refer directly to the applicable legislation for a clear understanding of the legal requirements underpinning a petroleum permit application.

Prospecting for petroleum in New Zealand under the Crown Minerals Act 1991 ('CMA') means any activity undertaken for the purpose of identifying land likely to contain petroleum. It includes conducting reconnaissance and general investigations of an area, like aerial surveying, but does not include drilling. To prospect for petroleum in New Zealand you must have a Petroleum Prospecting Permit.

Petroleum prospecting permits

A **Petroleum Prospecting Permit** ('PPP') is applied for through New Zealand Petroleum & Minerals ('NZP&M'), the brand name of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment branch responsible for administering New Zealand's minerals estate.

PPPs are ordinarily granted with exclusive rights to prospect and the subsequent right to apply for an exploration permit, the next stage in permitting, which allows for drilling.

PPPs are ordinarily granted for a maximum duration of 2 years.

There are no specific size limitations for a PPP, but a permit would not ordinarily be granted if the area applied for:

- › exceeded the area to be prospected under the permit's minimum work programme, or
- › exceeded the maximum area allowed for under a Petroleum Exploration Permit (PEP).

The maximum area allowed for a PEP is:

- › up to 250 sq kms if the area applied for includes onshore land
- › up to 2,500 sq kms if the area applied for includes land in the **Offshore Taranaki area**
- › up to 10,000 sq kms if the area applied for is anywhere else offshore.

PPPs initiate an **Open Market competitive process**

Speculative petroleum prospecting

Alternatively, an applicant may apply for a non-exclusive PPP with **speculative prospector status**, allowing them to investigate an area to gather information that is on-sold to others.

Speculative prospecting permits **do not** initiate an **Open Market competitive process**

Overview of the Open Market competitive process

The Open Market competitive process was introduced in 2025 through changes to the CMA and associated secondary legislation. The Open Market competitive process allows for greater flexibility in the permitting regime. It is an applicant-led process, with applicants able to decide the areas of land they wish to apply for. A PPP application may be made at any time over any land that is available for permitting.

Land may be unavailable for permitting

Applicants should be aware that some areas of land will not be available for a petroleum permit. Land may be excluded from permitting under certain provisions of the Act or through other legislation, for example, Treaty of Waitangi | Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement legislation.

Check the **Petroleum Permit Webmap** regarding availability of land.

Applicants should also be aware that other legislation may limit prospecting activities, including:

- › the **Resource Management Act 1991**
- › the **Health and Safety at Work Act 2015**
- › the **Health and Safety at Work (Petroleum Exploration and Extraction) Regulations 2016**
- › the **Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014**
- › the **Climate Change Response Act 2002**.

Applying for a petroleum prospecting permit

Submitting an application

Applications for PPPs can be made using form **APP 01-PET**. Alternatively, applications can be made online using NZP&M's **Online Permitting System**.

Before applying, you will need to understand the **legislation and the rules and regulations** relevant to petroleum applications. Legal advice is recommended to ensure applications are completed correctly.

Acceptable applications

Once an application has been submitted, along with evidence of payment of the application fee and all required supporting information, NZP&M will send a letter acknowledging receipt. NZP&M will then check that the application is complete and that all supporting information meets the requirements specified in the Petroleum Regulations.

When the application is considered complete and valid it is formally accepted. The applicant will be advised and the application will enter NZP&M's queue to await allocation for assessment.

Supporting information

It is important to provide all the required supporting information with a permit application. NZP&M uses the supporting information specified in the **Petroleum Regulations 2007** to evaluate the application against the requirements for granting a permit set out in the **Crown Minerals Act 1991**.

Applications will not be accepted if they are incomplete.

Initiating the Open Market competitive process

The first complete open market application over a proposed permit area received by NZP&M for:

- › an exclusive petroleum prospecting permit with a subsequent right to apply for an exploration permit, or
- › a new petroleum exploration permit – i.e. an exploration permit that is not applied for by the holder of a prospecting permit over the land in question with a subsequent right to apply for an exploration permit

is considered to be the “Initial Application” for that area of land.

Once accepted by NZP&M, details of the Initial Application including contact details of all permit participants, the location and work programme, will be recorded publicly on **NZP&M’s website** (www.nzpam.govt.nz). This will trigger the three-month competitive process known as the “Period of Competition”.

During the “Period of Competition” other parties may make “Competing Applications” over all or part of the same area as the Initial Application.

Note: Competing applications can range from other PPPs to mining permit extensions of land.

No competing applications will be accepted once the three-month period of competition ends.

Consultation with iwi and hapū

When considering a petroleum permit application NZP&M will always consult iwi and hapū who might be affected. Consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and procedures set out in chapter 2 of the **Petroleum Programme 2025**.

Evaluating a petroleum prospecting permit application

Matters that will be considered when we evaluate petroleum permit applications are set out in **section 29A** of the Act and chapters 5 & 6 of the **Petroleum Programme 2025**.

Evaluation will include (amongst other things) consideration of:

- › the proposed work programme
- › the applicant’s technical and financial capability to give proper effect to the work programme,
- › and whether the applicant is highly likely to comply with the conditions of the permit and their relevant obligations as a permit holder.

Managing and deciding Initial and Competing Applications

NZP&M will evaluate applications and make final decisions at the end of the three-month competitive process.

However, this evaluation may not always result in a decision to grant a permit. The Minister may decline to grant all or any applications that are received.

Competing applications will be prioritised for decision by permit type in the order established in clause 6.2(12) of the **Petroleum Programme 2025**.

Prospecting permits in an Open Market competitive process are decided **last**, once applications for other permit types have been evaluated

Applications for extensions of land (EOLs) from the holders of existing mining permits will be decided first, ahead of all other applications.

Applications for EOLs from existing PEPs, will be decided next.

Applications for PEPs, will be decided next.

Once any applications for EOLs or PEPs have been dealt with, and if only prospecting permit applications remain, they will be decided on the following basis:

- › If a prospecting permit application was the initial application that triggered the competitive process, this will be decided first.
- › Subsequent competing applications for a prospecting permit will be decided in the order in which they are received by NZP&M.
- › If two or more competing applications for a prospecting permit are received on the same day, the application which NZP&M initially assesses “best meets the purpose of the Act” will be decided first. (This will involve an evaluation of the proposed work programme and other relevant considerations.)



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