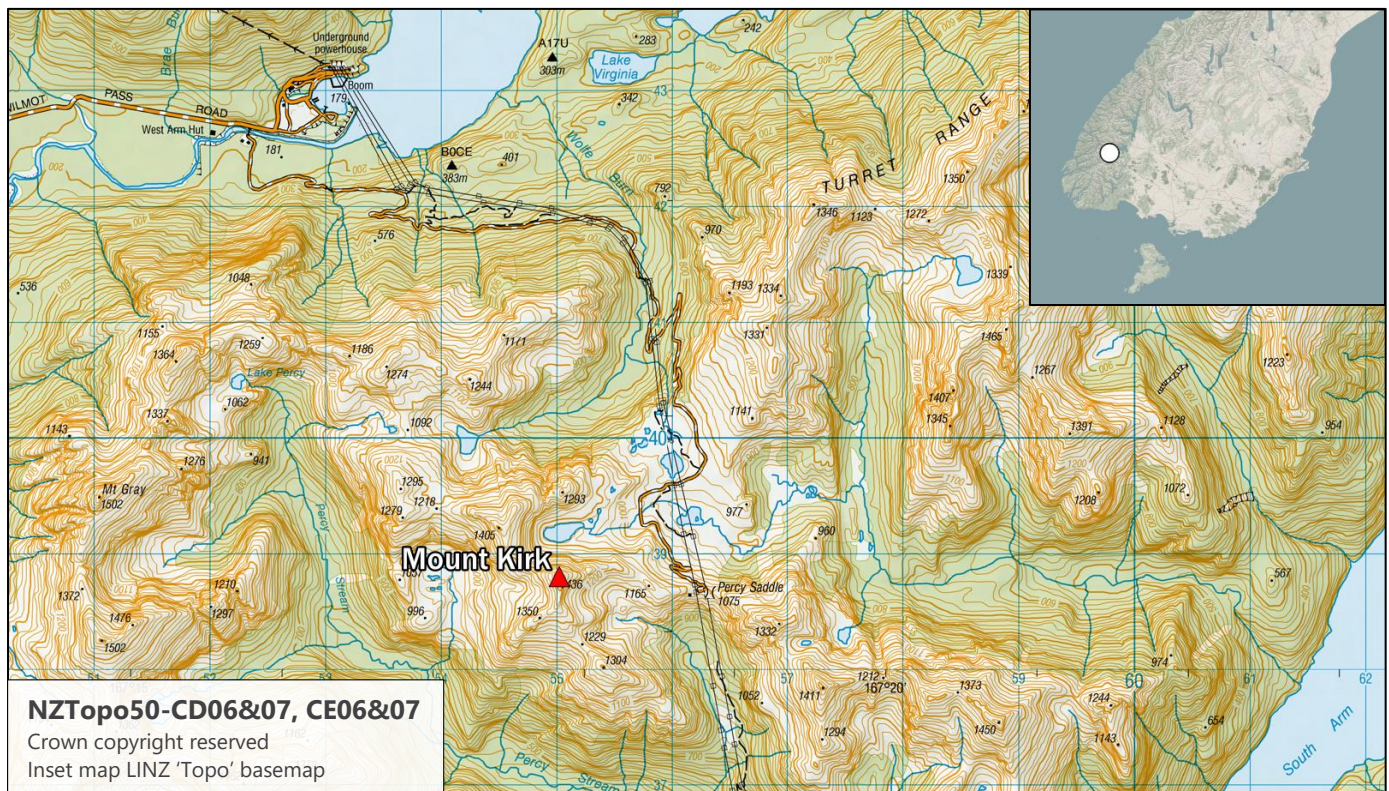


Proposal report considered by the Board on 15 September 2025 with the Board's decision for Mount Kirk

[new name]



Summary

The proposal is to assign Mount Kirk as the official geographic name for a prominent 1436m mountain at the west side of Percy Saddle, Turret Range, in Fiordland National Park at the west of Lake Manapouri.

The name would commemorate former Prime Minister Norman Kirk, particularly for his role in upholding the Save Manapouri campaign petitions and establishing the Guardians of Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau¹ statutory body in 1973. The proposers are the two original surviving members of 'the Guardians'. The proposal is prompted by the 50-year anniversary of Norman Kirk's death in office in 1974.

The proposal was received as 'Norman Kirk's Peak / Horn' and didn't conform with the Board's standard. In discussion with the proposers, they advised Mount Kirk would be agreeable. They also suggested that Norman Kirk's nickname, 'Big Norm' would work. This report recommends Mount Kirk, but the Board may wish to consider alternatives.

Fiordland Community Board supports the proposal to '*name a peak or another meaningful tribute*' for Norman Kirk.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu advise that no original Māori names are known for the feature and therefore they '*do not oppose*' the proposal being referred to the Board for consideration.

¹ now Guardians of Lakes Manapouri, Monowai and Te Anau under Section 6B Conservation Act 1987:
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0065/latest/whole.html#DLM104243>

Board's decision

At its 15 September 2025 hui the Board made this decision on the proposal:

Accept the proposal to **assign Mount Kirk** to the unnamed mountain at 1436m, west of Percy Saddle one of the highest and visibly prominent in Turret Range, at the west of Lake Manapouri, based on:

- marking a notable event in New Zealand history and acknowledging former Prime Minister Norman Kirk's leadership role in upholding the petitions of the Save Manapouri campaign and establishing the Guardians of Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau,
- marking a notable New Zealander worthy of commemoration for his service and impact and thus meeting the Board's standard 1.1(c) 'a notable leader, of good character, and/or contributed to, or had a strong association with the feature, place or area.'
- the location of the chosen feature being appropriate given its connection to the history, being in close proximity to Manapōuri hydro station and Lake Manapouri,
- support from Fiordland Community Board,
- Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu advising there is no known original Māori name for the feature and not objecting to the proposal progressing,
- giving a name in an area with few place names and therefore potentially assisting with back country recreation and search and rescue response,

and

Notify as a proposal to assign for one month.

Noting that the family of Norman Kirk would be advised of the proposal, as a courtesy and may wish to make a submission.

[Note: due to potential public interest, following the Board hui the Chairperson decided to extend public notification to two months]

Secretariat assessment

The proposal

The proposers, the two remaining original members of the Guardians of Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau, seek to assign Mount Kirk as the official geographic name of a prominent 1436m high mountain just west of Percy Saddle at the west side of Lake Manapouri.

They seek to commemorate former Prime Minister Norman Kirk (1923-1974) and his 1973 decision to uphold the Save Manapouri campaign petition. The proposal is prompted by the 50-year anniversary of Norman Kirk's death in office in 1974.

Kirk's decision put an end to plans to generate hydro-electric power by raising the level of Lake Manapouri by up to 30m. This would have joined the lake with Lake Te Anau and in the process flooded the Manapouri township, submerged many of the islands in the lake and flooded large areas of native forest. Instead, power generation at the Manapōuri hydro station, New Zealand's largest, is managed within the recorded natural variations of the level of the lake. This preserves the ecology of the lake and shoreline and prevents erosion to the

lakebed. A statutory body the 'Guardians of Lake Manapouri and Te Anau' was created to monitor the arrangement.

The proposed Mount Kirk is 4.6km south-southeast of Manapōuri hydro station and adjacent to the power lines that head south to [Tiwai Point](#) aluminium smelter near Bluff.

The proposers have provided:

- photos and 3-D models of the feature,
- a brief history of the Save Manapouri campaign, from Dr Jonathan West, University of Otago,
- a letter of support from Fiordland Community Board, which also plans to erect new signage about the Save Manapouri campaign at [Frazers Beach](#), Manapouri (locality),
- evidence of their correspondence with Ngāi Tahu.

The proposal was initially for 'Norman Kirk's Peak / Horn'. The Secretariat advised the proposers of the Board's standard discouraging first names and possessive apostrophes and stated that they needed to choose which name they wanted to propose to the Board. They reiterated that their primary consideration was suitable commemoration of Norman Kirk and his connection to the area, so they were less concerned as to what exact form the name took, ie Kirk Peak, Mount Kirk.

They indicated that their preference would be 'Mount Kirk', otherwise 'Big Norm' – which was Norman Kirk's nickname and one he was reported to be fond of. This report treats the proposal as being for Mount Kirk, although the Board may wish to consider 'Big Norm', 'Kirk Peak', or other appropriate options.

The proposers have not provided specific evidence on the correct spelling of Norman Kirk's name in terms of the Board's minimum requirements, but it is not in doubt and has been verified.

Names shown
on plans and
maps

No maps and plans name the feature.

Location of the
feature, generic
term,
[geographic
feature type](#)

The feature is a prominent 1436m peak, west of Percy Saddle in Turret Range, and 4.6km south-southeast of Manapōuri hydro station, at the west side of Lake Manapouri. The generic terms Mountain or Peak would accurately describe the feature.

The proposal initially included 'Horn' as an option, probably a reference to the conical shape. There are some 'Horn' names for peaks in the *Gazetteer* including a [Matterhorn](#) in the [Matterhorn Mountains](#) (unofficial recorded names) just 10km west of the feature. The 'horn' in Matterhorn can also mean 'peak' in German.

The proposers suggested a name with no generic term, 'Big Norm'. There are 26 'Big' names for mountains, hills, peaks in the *Gazetteer*, eg [Big Flora](#), [Big Bolton](#), [Big Cregan](#) etc. 8/27 of these names are accompanied by a 'Little' name, eg [Little Flora](#), [Little Bolton](#), [Little Cregan](#).

[New Zealand Gazetteer](#), associated names, and duplication

The peak is not named in the *Gazetteer*.

There are eight 'Kirk' and 'Kirks' names in the *Gazetteer* partially duplicating the proposed name. The closest is Kirks Terrace, 114km northeast, southwest of Queenstown. The partial duplication is of no concern due to the distance and different generic terms.

The Alfred Wegener Institute's *RV Sonne* SO168 cruise in 2002/03 named an undersea feature Kirk Seamount. It was one of several named for past Prime Ministers ([Nash Seamount](#), [Muldoon Seamount](#), etc). However, this name is not in the *Gazetteer* as the feature was already named Young Nicks Seamount. In 2013 the Board officially altered the name to [Te Kuri-a-Paoa Seamount](#).

Research, history and references

Due to the power pylon access roads and proximity to Manapōuri hydro station, the feature and wider area are relatively accessible for recreational activities. This includes an expert grade mountain bike trail crossing Percy Saddle, from which the proposed Mount Kirk is highly visible.² No existing unofficial local use name for the feature was noted in the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* or the New Zealand Alpine Club's *climbnz* database³.

A biography of Norman Kirk refers:

- [Michael Bassett. 'Kirk, Norman Eric', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 2000. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

Some recent articles marking 50 years since the Save Manapouri campaign refer:

- [The Politics of Manapōuri, Forest & Bird, 1 June 2020](#)
 - [Saving Lake Manapouri - 50 years on, The Press, 8 July 2023](#)
 - [Manapouri Damning the Dam, New Zealand Geographic](#)
-

Consultation with iwi

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu discussed the proposal with Ōraka-Aparima Rūnaka and advised:

'There are currently no recorded Ngāi Tahu names in Kā Huru Manu (either public, or non-public) for this geographic feature.

Therefore, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, in collaboration with Ōraka Aparima Rūnaka, do not oppose the proposal progressing to the next step in the process under the New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa) Act 2008.

Should the proposal proceed to the public notification, we reserve the right to make a submission at that point.'

Consultation with others

Fiordland Community Board supports the proposal (see above).

The feature is within Fiordland National Park, so the Department of Conservation (DOC) may have an interest in new names assigned within the park (for maps, information boards, etc). If the Board accepts the proposal DOC will be advised prior to public notification.

The proposer has not provided evidence of consultation with tramping and mountaineering clubs that may also have an interest in the proposal.

² <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/fiordland/places/fiordland-national-park/things-to-do/tracks/percy-pass/>
- last accessed 16 August 2025

³ <https://climbnz.org.nz/1436-0>

The proposer has not provided evidence of consultation with the family/descendants of Norman Kirk, noting this is not a requirement, but would be a courtesy.

Relevant section from the [NZGB Act 2008](#)

A purpose of the Board under s.3 is to: *'provide the means for appropriate recognition to be accorded to cultural and heritage values associated with geographic features'*

[Standard for New Zealand place names](#) criteria

1.1 Acceptable names

- (a) Names that reflect New Zealand's exploration, events, tradition and history, and its diverse and inclusive society and culture.

No existing place names appear to mark the events of the Save Manapouri campaign in 1969-1972 (or earlier aspects of the campaign) which saw a 1970 petition signed by nearly 10% of the populace and a significant shift in environmental consciousness in New Zealand. Few geographic features in New Zealand are named to mark a connection to conservation related history or conservation issues (although there are many names for Crown protected areas). Assigning Mount Kirk to a mountain in this area would make a connection to the history. However, naming a mountain directly overlooking the Manapōuri hydro station or Lake Manapouri could make a stronger connection.

Similarly, assigning names for those that organised the Save Manapouri campaign and moved the New Zealand populace to engage might appropriately mark the history. Noting the proposal is made by the remaining original Guardians, the other original Guardians who have since passed away are Ronald McLean, Wilson Campbell, Les Hutchins and Jim McFarlane. The petition was organised by Forest & Bird there are other figures from the time might also be relevant.

- (c) The surname or traditional ancestral Māori name of a person who has been deceased for at least two years, was a notable leader, of good character, and/or contributed to, or had a strong association with the feature, place or area.

The proposer has provided biographical information for former Prime Minister Norman Kirk to demonstrate their notable leadership and character, and connection to the place, regarding the Save Manapouri campaign and establishing the Guardians of Lake Manapouri and Te Anau in statute.

- (g) Names that contribute to a theme in an area.

There is no theme in the area. There is (unofficial) thematic naming for Prime Minister's in the undersea names for 20th century Prime Ministers (Savage through to Clark⁴) on [Hikurangi Plateau](#), noting many are not in the Gazetteer.

In Antarctica there are names for former Prime Ministers Walter Nash and Keith Holyoake, relevant in the history of the Manapōuri hydro station but noting these names were given at earlier dates and for unrelated reasons.

⁴ Hoernle, Kaj, Mortimer, Nicholas, Werner, Reinhard and Hauff, Folkmar, eds. (2003) FS/RV SONNE Fahrtbericht SO 168 = Cruise report SO168, ZEALANDIA : Causes and Effects of Plume and Rift-Related Cretaceous and Cenozoic Volcanism on Zealandia ; Wellington - Sydney - Lyttleton/Christchurch ; December 03, 2002 - January 16, 2003 ; [BMBF contract No. 03G0168A]. Open Access . GEOMAR-Report, 113 . GEOMAR, Kiel, 205 pp. DOI 10.3289/GEOMAR_REP_113_2003. See p.19 for diagram.

1.3 Undesirable names and other considerations

- (i) There should be a compelling or overriding need, such as identification for emergency services, to name features in designated wilderness areas and pristine/remote conservation areas with wilderness characteristics

The feature is not in a designated wilderness area. While it is in Fiordland National Park the vicinity of Percy Saddle is not necessarily 'pristine/remote' due to the access roads and power pylons heading south and southwest to Tiwai Point. The naming of this mountain may assist with navigation and emergency response given that very few feature are named in this area.

Media

The issue of the level of Lake Manapouri was topical recently as Meridian Energy (which operates Manapōuri hydro station) sought changes to allow lower minimum lake levels in order to increase power generation. This was opposed by Guardians of Lakes Manapouri, Lake Monowai and Te Anau but some changes including increasing the duration for which levels could stay lower than the target level were agreed and gazetted on 30 May 2025.⁵

There may be some media attention, also because the proposed name is for a former Prime Minister.

Supporting information

1. Proposal for Mount Kirk – 5 May 2025
2. Consultation with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu – 30 July 2025
3. Correspondence with the proposers and Fiordland Community Board – July 2025

⁵ [New Zealand Gazette 30 May 2025, Notice No. 2025-go2889](#)