
Request for Restricted Area at Mahia
Rocket Lab Ltd
Airspace user consultation

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Introduction

Rocket Lab Limited have submitted an airspace application requesting a permanent restricted area, to be activated by NOTAM, at the Rocket Lab Mahia site.

The application for this special use airspace area is to permit static rocket engine fires and also occasional low altitude parachute drops onto land to test various elements of the rocket parachute systems including soft inflations and gentle landings of test articles.

Civil Aviation Rules context

Civil Aviation Rule Part 71 provides the regulatory context to designate Restricted Areas, as special use airspace. Specifically, 71.151 prescribes the criteria that the Director must consider in designating special use airspace, as below:

71.151 General

(a) The Director may designate special use airspace under this Subpart if the Director considers such airspace is necessary—

- (1) in the interests of safety or security within the civil aviation system; or*
- (2) in the interests of national security; or*
- (3) for any other reason in the public interest.*

(b) The Director must ensure that each portion of airspace designated under this Subpart is as small as practicable consistent with the activities for which the area is required.

Further, 71.153 prescribes the criteria for designating restricted areas, detailing the Director and administering agency responsibilities:

71.153 Restricted area

(a) The Director may—

(1) designate a portion of airspace as a restricted area to restrict the activities of aircraft within that area —

- (i) within the territorial limits of New Zealand; and*
- (ii) within the territorial limits of another ICAO Contracting State in the Auckland Oceanic Flight Information Region upon request by that State; and*

(2) impose conditions under which—

- (i) aircraft may be permitted to fly within that restricted area; and*
- (ii) the administering authority responsible for the restricted area must operate.*

(b) The Director must—

(1) specify the type of activity for which each restricted area is designated; and

(2) specify the administering authority responsible for each restricted area; and

(3) identify each area by the ICAO nationality letters of the applicable State followed by the letter “R” followed by a number.

(c) The administering authority responsible for a restricted area—

(1) must manage—

(i) the entry of aircraft into the restricted area; and

(ii) the operation of aircraft within the restricted area; and

(iii) the exit of aircraft from the restricted area; and

(2) if the restricted area is designated as being made active by NOTAM, must at least 24 hours before the restricted area is to become active, give to the New Zealand NOTAM Office notice of that restricted area becoming active, except that in the case of emergencies less than 24 hour’s notice may be given; and

(3) may, within any conditions imposed by the Director under paragraph (a)(2)(ii), impose conditions under which an aircraft may be operated within the restricted area

Proposed Area

The proposed Restricted Area location is 39 15 37.84S 177 51 54.74E, the lateral dimension is 1.5 NM radius from this position, see Figure 1 below:

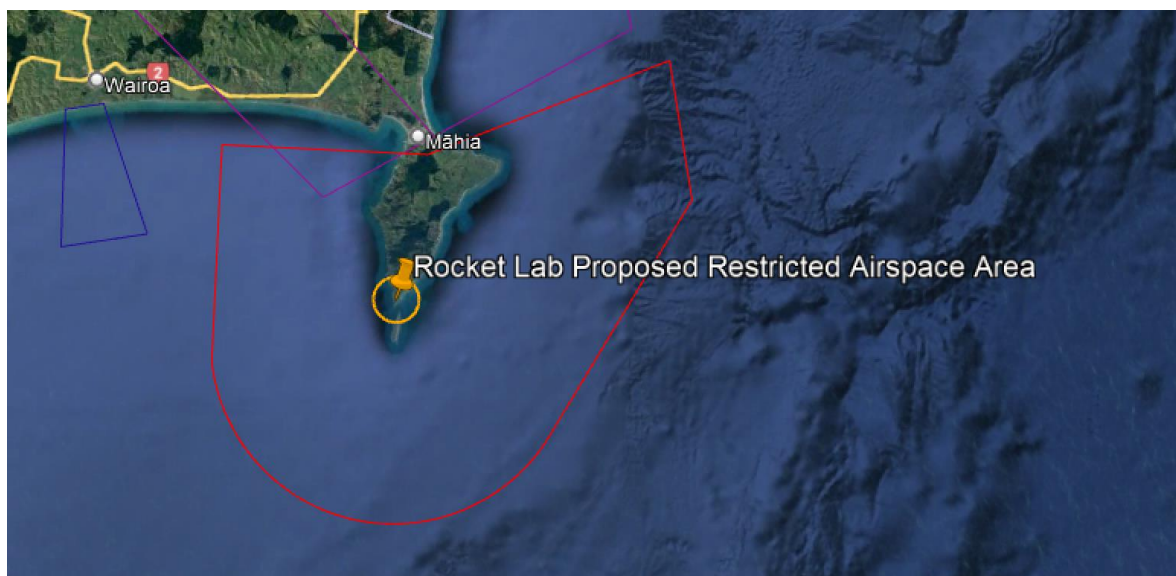


Figure 1: Location and radius of proposed Restricted Airspace Area

The static rocket engine fires and rocket parachute testing activities may pose a hazard to aircraft and therefore this request is in the interest of safety within the aviation system, to ensure aircraft flying in the area remain clear of the potential hazards associated with these specific Rocket Lab operations. If designated, this area would be activated by NOTAM, at least 24 hours in advance of any planned activities.

Possible effect to IFR aircraft

The proposed area is coincident with the NZR401 and would only be activated when NZR401 was not activated. The area is outside of controlled airspace and the effect on IFR traffic will likely be minimal.

Possible effect to VFR aircraft

Given the dimensions of the proposed area the effect on VFR aircraft is expected to be minimal.

Consultation

Rocket Lab advise they have provided initial advisory information to stakeholders; see Rocket Lab Special Use Airspace Application attached. Rocket Lab further advise they have received no objections

Prior to designating airspace, Civil Aviation Rule 71.9 requires the Director to consult with affected persons, organisations and representative groups within the aviation industry before making a designation or classification of airspace, including amending the activity or propose of currently designated airspace.

The Director invites feedback regarding the proposed Restricted Area.

This document will be sent directly to the organisations listed below. It would be appreciated if you would kindly forward the document to your members for consideration and comment.

Aerodrome operators (charted aerodromes only)

- Gisborne Aerodrome
- Gisborne Hospital Heliport
- Napier Aerodrome
- Wairoa Aerodrome
- Hastings Aerodrome
- Hastings Hospital Heliport

Operators, Organisations and User Groups

- Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
- Airways Corporation of New Zealand
- Air New Zealand
- Balloon Association of New Zealand
- Gliding New Zealand
- New Zealand Aviation Federation
- New Zealand Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association
- New Zealand Helicopter Association
- Recreational Aircraft Association of New Zealand
- Royal New Zealand Air Force
- Sport Aircraft Association New Zealand
- Sport Aviation Corp
- Hawkes Bay & East Coast Aero Club
- Central Hawkes Bay Aero Club

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This document is also available on the CAA website at the following link:

[2023 airspace reviews | aviation.govt.nz](https://www.caa.govt.nz/2023-airspace-reviews)

Submissions

This document forms part of the consultation process. Submissions are sought from any interested person, organisation or representative group.

Submissions are accepted either electronically or via mail, addressed to:

Team Coordinator
Aviation Security and Infrastructure
Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand
PO Box 3555
Wellington 6140

Email: aeronautical.services@caa.govt.nz

Reference – 23/ASD/51 Request for Restricted Area – Mahia Peninsula

Closing date for submissions to this proposal is **Friday 5th May 2023**.

For further information contact:

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