

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

Submission on the publicly notified draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

On: Ministry for the Environment – draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

To: Ministry for the Environment

Personal Information

** indicates required fields*

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Section A: General responses to the proposals:

- I support the overall goal of the proposals that recognise the value of indigenous biodiversity to New Zealand, its people, and communities, and to ensure that Indigenous Biodiversity is protected, and where it has been significantly lost is restored.
- New Zealand farmers have retained 2.7 million hectares of indigenous habitat within their farms which is testament to the value farmers place on indigenous biodiversity. A total of 24% of New Zealand's total indigenous habitats occurs on the 8.8 million hectares covered by sheep and beef farms, with over 47% of QEII covenants being on sheep and beef farms. The area of indigenous habitats formally protected by QEII, Ngā Whenua Rāhui, and other covenants is growing.
- I support provisions which recognise that for conservation actions to be enduring, they require landowner and community support and leadership. Policies need to recognise that people are critical to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and acknowledge the importance of respecting and fostering the contribution of landowners as custodians and Kaitiaki to these habitats and species.
- However, I oppose provisions which seek to 'lock up indigenous biodiversity' and in so doing penalise those landowners who have done the most to protect indigenous biodiversity. I seek changes to the policy to ensure that indigenous biodiversity can be integrated within pastoral based land uses and activities, and which recognise these can co-exist for mutual benefit.

- *We have gullies that are not fenced off, yet the indigenous bush is growing. This is because we don't force animals into the gullies. They go to the creek to drink, then they walk back to the tussock and pasture. We also encourage our tussocks to grow by not overgrazing, and only keeping the animals in a block long enough to chew the grass and clover down, but not be forced to eat other plants.*
- *It's great to take our children for a walk up the creek amongst the indigenous bush and watch them explore. It is like a different world once you are in there. We want them to be able to take their children up the same gullies and have the same experience that we have all been so lucky to have.*

- Indigenous biodiversity should be considered as an asset to the farming business, and communities, and not as a liability. Subtle but significant changes to the NPSIB are required to ensure that existing conservation efforts are rewarded, and ongoing conservation is supported and incentivised. The recognition of the values of indigenous biodiversity as part of pastoral based landscapes and farming businesses is required to ensure that these values, habitats, and species, are sustainably managed. A strong regulatory or stick approach to the recognition and ongoing management of indigenous biodiversity could, if not carefully constructed, undermine existing and future conservation efforts.

Section B: Impacts and implementation:

- I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts of these proposals on my farm in relation to areas being identified as Significant Natural Areas (SNA's), areas identified as being important for the protection of SNA's which may include land adjacent to SNA's, and the identification of highly mobile species, in relation to the impacts this may have on my farming business and its resilience and viability. The provisions could be interpreted as precluding the ongoing grazing of animals adjacent to and within these areas, which means that those that have done the most to protect indigenous habitats and species within their farming businesses could shoulder the greatest costs including restrictions to their farming businesses.
- The compliance costs of the various proposals are likely to be significant and include the identification of these habitats and species, fencing of these habitats (could require deer fencing to manage wild populations), and ongoing pest management. As currently proposed, it is unclear where these costs fall. Financial, technical, and human resourcing support should be provided to assist landowners to continue to protect and restore indigenous habitats and populations within their farming businesses and communities. Support should be provided to not only areas where indigenous biodiversity is being restored, but also to where it currently exists.
- I am concerned that New Zealand does not currently have the extent of technical expertise available to assist regional and district councils to identify SNA's and mobile species across their territorial areas within the next five years, to ground truth this work, and to work with farmers. The requirements on regional and district councils including timeframes should ensure that the identification of these habitats and species is robust, and is undertaken in a way which engages landowners and communities, builds understanding and knowledge, and which empowers local conservation efforts.
- On the hill of our farm we have small creeks, with indigenous bush on both sides. Each year I notice new plants growing beside the creeks. When I hear that maybe I will have to fence these areas off, I struggle to understand why. If I put fences in, then I would have to use a digger or dozer to put the line then. This creates scarring of the country which will take years to heal. Why would we want to disturb the ground when Indigenous Biodiversity is already flourishing, by our stewardship of the land.
- The specific provisions of the proposal that this submission relates to and the decisions it seeks are as detailed in the table in Section C below.

Section C: Specific responses to the proposals:

Specific Provision in the Proposed Plan	Submission	Decision sought
<i>The specific provisions my submission relates to are:</i>	<i>My submission is that:</i>	<i>The decision I would like MfE and DoC to make is:</i>
<p>Hutia Te Rito (Discussion document on a proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, page 23)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I support provisions which recognise and empower ground up, landowner, and community led conservation actions, and which prioritise non regulatory over regulation management frameworks. Custodianship means protect. Stewardship means to care for, which we believe is a more honest approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I see ourselves as Stewards, placed with a responsibility to look after the land and an obligation to hand it to the next generation healthier than when we started.
<p>3.7 Social, economic and cultural wellbeing: (Discussion Document Page 45)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support with amendments objective 3.7. I support provisions which empower and support landowner and community conservation activities and local approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I seek that the NPSIB be amended so that policies and rules reflect Objective 3.7 including prioritising non regulatory approaches and partnerships over regulatory frameworks, and the establishment of conservation frameworks which recognise that the protection and, where required, enhancement of indigenous biodiversity can be provided within pastoral based farming land uses and alongside pastoral based activities, and that these are not mutually exclusive.

3.8 Identifying Significant Natural Areas:

(Discussion document page 31)

- I support the identification of areas with significant indigenous plants and or species, by experts working with communities and in partnerships with landowners. This assessment should be undertaken in a consistent manner, with the significance of habitats verified or refined through an on the ground assessment, rather than just through reliance on spatial maps.
- I oppose the requirements on local authorities that the assessments have to be completed within 5 years. This is because it is unlikely that the technical expertise is available within New Zealand to be able to undertake the assessments appropriately including through on the ground verification of the significance of habitats, in partnership with landowners.
- While I support the establishment of a consistent approach to determining whether or not a habitat is significant, I oppose the broad reach of the currently proposed criteria as it is likely to capture all remaining indigenous habitats irrespective of whether they are significant i.e. they are rare, threatened, or at risk.

- I seek that provision 3.8 is amended to enable local authorities the time to undertake this work in a robust manner. The ability for experts to work with landowners in identifying these habitats and in informing the ongoing management of these habitats within pastoral based land uses and activities, is an essential element to providing successful and enduring conservation outcomes.
- I seek changes to provision 3.8 so that the significance criteria are narrowed so that habitats or species which are endangered, or threatened, are identified Management frameworks can then be tailored to the level of risk that the habitat faces and the attributes that underpin the habitats significance.
- Amend provision 3.8 so that a habitat that is identified as “threatened” is only included if it is 0.25ha or greater and contiguous.
- Amend provision 3.8 so that a habitat that is identified as “rare” if only included if it is 0.5ha or greater and contiguous.
- Amend provision 3.8 so that a habitat that is identified as “at risk” is only included if it is 1ha or greater and contiguous.
- Exceptions can be provided for but should be specified in the regional or district plan.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seek any consequential amendments to ensure provisions are aligned in identifying and then establishing management frameworks specific to the risk status of the habitat e.g. “rare”, “threatened”, or “at risk”.
<p>3.9 Managing adverse effects on SNA’s (Discussion document page 42)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I support with amendments. • I support requirements to manage new activities that effect significant natural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seek that 3.9 is amended so that the effects management hierarchy is based on the level of the habitats significance e.g. “endangered” or “threatened”, and is tailored to the values which underpin the habitats significance. • Amend 3.9 so that the provision relates to consent applications and the assessment of effects, and requirements to avoid, remedy, or mitigate the effects. New activities should be provided for where the effects of the activity on the attributes that underpin the habitats significance (such as representativeness, rarity, and distinctiveness) can be avoided, remedied, or mitigated. • Amend provisions so that the ability to offset effects should only be provided for where the offset can occur in the same ecological area. The ability to offset an activity in the urban environment, onto the rural environment should not be enabled.

3.12 Existing activities in SNA's

(Discussion document, page 49)

- I oppose the current proposal, but put forward the proposed changes.

- I seek that 3.12 be amended to specifically provide for the following activities within and adjacent to an SNA and areas identified as important for mobile species, where this is an existing activity:
 - grazing of productive animals;
 - Pasture renewal;
 - Cultivation;
 - Vegetation clearance.
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3.13 General rules applying outside SNA's:

(Discussion document, page 51)

- I oppose the intention of recognising areas around SNA's as important for protecting SNA's themselves and their values.

- I seek that 3.13 is amended to prioritise engagement with the technical expert and landowner to co-design management frameworks for the farm which ensures that indigenous biodiversity is provided for as an inherent and integral part of the farming business. These plans can be provided for through tailored Farm Plans bespoke to the biodiversity values and the farming business.

<p>3.15 Highly Mobile Fauna: (Discussion document, page 38)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I oppose provisions which seek to mandate this protection through regulatory frameworks where this may impact on existing activities and land uses. Enduring and effecting conservation approaches to protect these species are best achieved through working with landowners, and in particular the role of the expert in working with landowners to build understanding of these species, their values, and any management which is required for these populations to be healthy and resilient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I seek that 3.15 is amended to prioritise engagement with the technical expert and landowner to co-design management frameworks for the farm which ensures that mobile species is provided for as an inherent and integral part of the farming business. These plans can be provided for through tailored Farm Plans bespoke to the biodiversity values and the farming business.
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Conclusion

- Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. I/We welcome the opportunity to further discuss any of the points above with the Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Conservation, should you wish for more information.
- For any inquiries relating to this feedback please contact [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

13/03/20