

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION
ON PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT
FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

TO: MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
indigenusbiodiversity@mfe.govt.nz

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Submitter's Name and Contact Details

Name	Phone Number	Address
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Introduction

My name is [REDACTED], aged [REDACTED], husband of one wife and father of [REDACTED] daughters aged [REDACTED]. Our beautiful farm at Inglewood in Taranaki is a dairy unit of [REDACTED] hectares and [REDACTED] cows. It has been used to provide for two or more households over each of four generations of my family. This includes our family and employees all our married life, my parents family when I was growing up and relatives before that who had immigrated from Scotland two generations before my father. Dad, widowed at age [REDACTED] is now [REDACTED] and holds a mortgage over the farm which provides security for his retirement and [REDACTED]. Having three generations on the farm has provided social stability to each generation of children raised here and enabled them to survive and flourish in the world.

On our part, decreasing profitability means we may not be able to keep the farm for a 5th generation. Reducing terms of trade and increasing compliance costs are slowly winning the battle against increasing production and on-farm efficiencies.

Biodiversity on my farm

Remnants of native trees show that the volcanic ash soil here was host to indigenous forest dominated by a Tawa tree canopy. The land was

largely cleared by European colonising farmers after the area was settled starting in the 1870's.

When I came to the farm in 1969 the only original forest species were individual Tawa trees surrounded by grazing cows and waiting to be overtaken by old age or disease. Pasture grew on every square metre of land, right to the edge of every stream. Cows had access to the multitude of stony bottomed waterways and boggy areas and some died there each year from misadventure. My father fenced off most waterways but the effluent from the cowshed still flowed into a swamp draining into one of the streams. He also drained other swamp areas adding to cow safety and grass production. He subdivided pastures to increase grazing efficiency but he also fenced off pockets of native trees allowing the undergrowth to regenerate. Other fenced paddocks still contain individuals groups of Tawa that provide shelter to grazing cows.

Before his time half the farm had been sold by forced sale to pay death duties. Dad was able to lease it back and eventually purchase to reunite the family farm. The interim owner had covenanted over a hectare of original Tawa forest to the QE II trust and this had regenerated in full. This left a farm grazing area of about 90% including stream banks. Dad also did his part to control the possum population with his trusty 22, but new specimens soon move across the boundary fence to fill any vacant habitat.

I took on management of the farm in 1989 and [REDACTED] in 1990. Since then we have made gains to protect biodiversity. Of the 3 largest positive impacts, all have been initiatives of the Tarinaki Regional Council. One was the upgrade of the farm effluent treatment to include 48 hours storage and pasture spreading by travelling irrigator.

I found the lack of technical expertise or advice in designing the system was a disappointment. The year after the current configuration was approved and constructed, we were informed that the storage capacity was already too small to qualify as best practice. This is, or should be a once in a lifetime capital expenditure for a land owner. My learning experience has been multiplied needlessly by other land owners. The alternative would have been to place myself at the mercy of the sales people who sell the effluent management infrastructure. It would be far preferable to be served by a conscientious Council specialist in this field.

This was a large capital expense but it has transformed the small stream below the milking shed. It has also improved the economic viability of the farm by reducing the annual fertilizer bill by 15 %. Over my 50 years

here the whole catchment has been worked on and water quality in ALL streams has improved and is today far superior to what I swam in, in the 1970's.

Secondly the council has sponsored a riparian fencing and planting program. This has reduced our farm grazing area to 84% as stream banks were retired. This has not visibly improved water quality (compared to effluent management) but we are told BOD levels and nitrate content have decreased as a result. The annual expenditure has been about ██████ and after 20 years this project is largely completed with only some in-fill planting to be done.

The downside of this from a farming business standpoint is a reservoir of introduced weeds which persistently recolonise our pasture and the retired areas themselves. Problem species include gorse, blackberry and Chilean rhubarb. Further to the minus side, the whole cost of this program has been born by the land owners in direct costs or via rates raising. Property rights have been reduced. No compensation has been paid or offered. No rates relief for retired land has been given and no carbon credits for riparian plantings have been recognized.

On the plus side, the Council sponsored model has enabled nurseries to grow and sell reasonably priced natives trees to a reliable market and circumvented the economic shock of bureaucratic brainstorms as experienced in other catchments. Slow and steady allows for education and normalization to ease the path of such reforms.

Third, the council has sponsored the eradication of possums. This started with a council funded cull in the 1990's and has continued with a farmer funded , council monitored program ever since. Total eradication will not happen until the government owned land nearby is similarly controlled. In spite of this we have seen a marked increase in tui, korimako, piwakawaka and kereru. Introduced bird species such as carrier pigeons and Australian rosella have also grown in the area.

On balance I have found the Taranaki Regional Council has served the farming community and the indigenous biosphere well. I would like to see them also policing introduced weeds with the support of comprehensive border control.

On the whole elected representatives have communicated to Council staff the importance of respecting ratepayer values and opinions, if not property rights. Education and negotiation over time and consistent long

term guidelines have worked to maintain community agreement on the conservation of indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki.

How the NPS will impact my farm

1/ This Policy may extinguish some of our historical, current and future property rights.

Our farm has individual and groups of indigenous trees within areas of improved pasture which serve as shelter for cattle. These trees remain after others have died out due to the existing use of the land for farming activities. As the existing use continues they will die and not be replaced in the areas of improved pasture. While these pockets of indigenous biodiversity have declined the resulting economic value to our family has increased.

These areas may not qualify as periodically cleared according to definitions in the NPS.

While this process has continued, we have retired stream banks, maintained an area of QE II trust covenant and retired higher value areas of the same indigenous trees. These areas are of increased social and cultural value to our family. My concern is that this past economic sacrifice may not be recognized as qualifying biodiversity offset as described in Appendix 3 of the draft NPS.

2/ There appears to be no consideration of financial compensation for proposed SNA classification of farm land or recognition of past costs incurred. We currently pay local body rates on the total market value of our farm, including the area's we dedicated to indigenous biodiversity value at our financial expense. There is also no recognition of the carbon sequestration value of these area's on our account as owners.

3/ The NPS is a large and complicated document. The possible classification of SNAs on our land is a cause for anxiety and trepidation. The impact it may have on our economic viability and on direct and indirect (via council revenue) costs is difficult to assess. The mental health impact of this uncertainty is troubling

Other considerations.

1/Conservation of Biodiversity costs money. Agricultural land in NZ covers about 121,000 square kilometers and produces tax revenue.

National parks cover 340,000 square kilometers and consume tax dollars. The government seems to have insufficient funds to control possums within the public conservation estate. This NPS seems to assume the conservation department does not have the resources or land to materially maintain indigenous biodiversity. I don't understand how meddling in the conservation efforts of farmers could be an improvement. We are talking about a target of 10% of rural land where a highly developed farm such as ours is already 16%.

2/ Public access to SNA's is a stated goal of this policy. This government has vetoed expansion of existing public car parks in national parks. My local Egmont National Park is accessed by single lane roads. Tour buses on day trips make this problematic for local residents using family cars. The owner of an accommodation and restaurant business at one car park has been denied permission to build sufficient beds to attract a full busload of international visitors. The 1920's founded business is marginally profitable as a result, relying on single car clients to fill beds. Redress of this imposition could help the funding of the National Park through royalties.

By comparison the SNA's on my farm are accessible only to family members, staff and friends. This provides no revenue.

My plea is that the Wellington government set it's own house in order before interfering in ours.

I thank the Ministry for considering my views.

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