

BIODIVERSITY SUBMISSION

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a 5th generation dairy farmer from [REDACTED] in the Waikato.

Like many of my farming peers, I have an intense interest and love for the outdoors and by extension for all our native flora and fauna.

Our farming enterprise has planted approximately [REDACTED] trees as well as fencing off and planting all waterways with plans to plant out a couple of areas into native groves.

While I believe that our native biodiversity needs protection and special recognition, I feel this proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity is too extreme with how it should be accomplished.

It is extreme in the way that privately owned land can in many cases be randomly classified as Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) that will essentially forbid the landowner from customary use, and yet be still responsible for maintenance and rates.

The definition of “adverse effects” under this NPS are vague and will in all probability outlaw any agricultural activity with buffer zones likely to creep into other productive areas of the farm.

An example of this is an on-farm wetland (natural or constructed) that is proposed to have a buffer zone of [REDACTED] meters. This will severely impact the operational ability of the farmer to manage this area in terms of grazing and drainage and combined with the draft Essential Freshwater legislation is overkill.

In my mind it is a legalised land grab. My urban example would be if a 1950’s state house in Orakei was declared a national treasure and all neighbouring properties now had a 25-meter buffer where they would need to seek a discretionary consent for everyday activities. This could mean being unable to use the kitchen, bathroom or bedroom. The farming example is no different.

The landowner in many districts will be penalised twice if the local district council is now compulsory required to map SNAs within five years, as this will have a direct impact on rates.

The assessment criteria(s) appear to be very broad and vague. Will a Kauri that I planted 10 years ago be declared a SNA, and then will I have to prove what my existing land activities are to be still allowed to dairy farm in the immediate vicinity.

Indigenous biodiversity certainly needs better protection, but this legislation should be encouraging landowners to become engaged, not threaten them with loss of property rights for perhaps having done the right things decades ago. There is already the option of voluntary QE2 covenants that should perhaps be better publicised and incentivised.

Until government can better fund and protect our native parks and other areas by improved and focussed funding of the Department of Conservation, they should engage and encourage landowners to participate in biodiversity preservation and growth and not cane them into submission.

This type of legislation will only make people do the bare minimum, when they could do so much more with better engagement and incentives.