

The Upper Harbour Ecology Network (UHEN) is a group of volunteer based organisations operating in the Upper Waitemata Harbour in Auckland. Areas of focus include Greenhithe, Poremoremo, Hobsonville Point, Herald Island and Whenuapai. Threats to indigenous biodiversity as a result of intense development pressure is felt very keenly throughout this area. With funding support from Auckland Council, member groups undertake environmental restoration, animal pest trapping, education and monitoring. The Upper Harbour Waterways Collective (UHWC) is an informal subcommittee of UHEN with a specific focus on waterways protection and environmental connectivity across a wide range of ecosystems.

Overall thoughts about the introduction section and the need for an NPS-IB:

- Upper Harbour Waterways Collective (UHWC) supports the rationale for the necessity of the NPS-IB. The requirements for protecting and maintaining indigenous biodiversity in the RMA are woefully inadequate and any strengthening of the RMA as a result of guidance through this Policy Statement is welcomed.
- UHWC supports the overall direction and intent of the proposed NPS-IB but there are a number of areas where provisions put forward are unclear and this lack of clarity will exacerbate implementation. Local Authorities throughout New Zealand ,particularly the smaller ones ,will need to be supported by Government, in some cases financially, to reach a level of consistency that will be required if this NPS-IB is to achieve its goals.
- Even large, well-resourced Councils like Auckland Council will need support because of intense pressure around development .This need for support, technically and financially is of grave concern to our group and many other similar volunteer based groups in the Auckland Region undertaking environmental restoration work. Some of our Volunteer organisations currently rely on funding from Auckland Council sources like the recent NETR funding and we would hate to find funds diverted away from us to cover costs for the recruitment of professional Ecologists(for example) to deliver on extensive surveys and monitoring programs that might arise from the implementation of this NPS-IB.

- UHWC supports the ‘all land tenures’ approach and the concept of communal care for our IB. Indigenous Biodiversity will not contain itself within tidy boundaries. One of the limitations of the RMA is its tight focus on the “site” in question and has little concern with regard to effects on areas outside this narrow focus. Unfortunately the Objectives and Policies section seems at times vague and unclear as to how some real changes in this direction will be achieved.
- UHWC strongly supports the focus on restoring and enhancing IB.
- UHWC expresses its concern over a lack of alignment of the NP-SIB with the National Policy Statement on Urban Development and the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. We advocate strongly for the inclusion of fresh water biodiversity in the NPSIB.
- UHWC feels that more thought needs to go in to the NP-SIB on how to achieve tangible results in as short a time as possible to protect habitats on private land including Maori owned land. Incentives will be required to achieve this if we are looking for realistic outcomes.

SECTION A: Recognising te ao Māori and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

- UHWC strongly supports the NPS-IB fundamental concept 1.7(3), including the reference to the restoration or enhancement of ecosystems and habitats. UHWC has concerns about the lack of definition of the term tangata whenua.
- UHWC strongly supports the NPS-IB fundamental concept 1.7(4).
- UHWC recognises that Māori land generally holds a higher percentage of indigenous biodiversity than private land. Therefore, UHWC supports the intent of the NPS-IB section 3.13(3) and 3.16(5).
- UHWC endorses that consideration of mātauranga Māori is given in the use and application of science.

SECTION B: Identifying important biodiversity and taonga

- UHWC has concerns around the NPS-IB proposal to manage adverse effects on SNA’s differently depending on whether an SNA is classified as High or Medium. We suggest that this type of delineation will bring unnecessary contention and litigation. We suggest a single High grade.
- UHWC is of the view that the NPS-IB requires an additional Policy to ensure the conservation status of indigenous species is a key part of decision making around IB protection and management. Such a Policy will assist in achieving implementation 3.4, including maintaining and enhancing of freshwater ecosystems.

UHWC submits that: the following should be included in the NPS-IB Policies: Policy 12(a) to identify and consider the conservation status of

terrestrial and aquatic indigenous species. If this submission is accepted, changes to the NPS implementation requirements (such as regional biodiversity strategies and assessment of adverse effects) will be required.

SECTION C: Managing adverse effects on biodiversity from activities

- Managing adverse effects outside SNA (Policy 7, clause 3.13 and 3.15) UHWC supports this inclusion in the proposed NPS-IB .However some of the key threats to IB in these areas outside SNA relate to the impacts of plant and animal pests and these issues require greater recognition.
- UHWC is also concerned that there is no clear direction around the management of the habitat of highly mobile fauna, including outside of SNAs.
- Consideration of Climate Change. UHWC supports the requirements to promote the resilience of indigenous biodiversity to climate change through the regional policy statement, plans and regional biodiversity strategy. UHWC has concerns however over how councils might implement clause 3.5 and suggests that this is elaborated and developed further to make this clear.
- UHWC is concerned about the concept and definition of biodiversity offsets, and questions the ability of these practises to contribute to any real net enhancement of IB.
- The NPS-IB *Appendix 3: Principles for biodiversity offsetting* puts little emphasis on the conservation status of species that would be destroyed in the act of offsetting, or on the concept of ecosystem linkages and connections. Pockets of IB are important in terms of ecological corridors, connections, and seed sources. These pockets will become increasingly important as ecosystems are restored and free from predators.

SECTION D: Restoration and enhancement of biodiversity

In response to section D (a) UHWC supports in full the submission of the New Zealand Conservation Authority.

- The loss of 90% of NZ's wetlands has happened without any formal consent. If NZ is serious about encouraging the restoration and enhancement of degraded wetlands, then this restorative practice should be a permitted activity with standards in place.
- The restoration of wetlands typically involves the reinstatement of the original wetland water levels and hydrological regime. Standards could include, but are not limited to:
- Inclusion of structures required to meet standards in the relevant Plan,

- Fish passage is provided,
- The extent of the restored/enhanced wetland aligns with the approximate extent and scale of the wetland in its original form.
- UHWC feels that the NPS-IB part 3.16 requires an addition to reinforce the interactions between terrestrial and aquatic IB and, in turn, strengthen both the NPS-IB and the NPS-Freshwater Management (**NPS-FWM**).
- **UHWC submits** that: part 3.16(1) requires a new clause:

e) Fresh water and estuarine ecosystems and their riparian margins.

Alternatively, an addition to 3.16(1) (c) would suffice:

c) areas that provide important connectivity or buffering functions, including freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and their riparian margins.

- **UHWC submits** that: 3.16(4)(c) requires the same addition, to read:

c) areas that provide important connectivity or buffering functions, including freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and their riparian margins.

Section D (b) Restoring indigenous vegetation cover in depleted areas(Policy 11, clause 3.17)

- UHWC supports direction and requirements to increase indigenous vegetation cover in urban and rural areas with depleted cover. UHWC is concerned that the target is too low and that assessment may be confusing in practise. More clarity is required here.

Section D (c) regional biodiversity strategies.

- UHWC supports the direction to require regional biodiversity strategies in the NPS-IB. UHWC considers that their needs to be stronger direction in clause 3.18(2) whereby regional policy statements and plans “must have regard to” the regional biodiversity strategy. We feel this is important to support collaboration especially with community organisations and groups like ours. UHWC feels that a regional biodiversity strategy also needs to address other aspects that impact biodiversity like predator control and invasive plant and animal pests and pathogens. An integrated approach is needed in the regional biodiversity strategy if the broad aims of the NPS-IB are to be realised.

SECTION E: Monitoring and implementation

- UHWC supports the approach to monitoring and reporting and supports greater guidance and direction on monitoring IB in clause 3.20 of the NSP-IB, particularly the direction around using matauranga Maori and tikanga Maori

monitoring methods equally with scientific monitoring .UHWC would like some clarity on the definition of tangata whenua as used in the NPS-IB however.

- UHWC strongly advocates for a monitoring regime and framework that is determined at the national level but suspects that Auckland Council will need a standalone monitoring and implementation regime.
- UHWC agrees with the implementation process described in the NPS-IB part 3.4 but once again, we are mindful that this will be a considerable task for territorial authorities, particularly the smaller councils. The limited experience and expertise of these smaller councils will be a challenge, particularly in terms of comprehending the links between land and freshwater ecosystems, and what that means in regard to their land management responsibilities.
- UHWC supports in full the following statement from the NZCA submission. “The wider biodiversity processes envisaged in the NPS-IB require collaboration between territorial and regional government, resulting in an increased workload funded by ratepayers. Integrated management is very difficult to achieve; the success of which has been mixed over the life of the RMA to date. The NPS-IB provides an opportunity to improve the current situation. Achieving integration with conservation legislation (and the Strategies and Plans flowing from legislation) is particularly important for achieving the objectives of the NPS-IB and could be achieved more effectively and efficiently by encouraging delegation of functions to regional councils.”
- UHWC notes that the conservation status of indigenous species should be specified as a key element of the integrated approach. The NPS-IB part 3.4(c) addresses the issue of considering all conservation legislation, but not the conservation status of specific species.

UHWC submits that: a national measurement system should be introduced and implemented with appropriate deadlines in order to adequately develop a core set of environmental indicators, monitor progress, and enact accountability. We submit also that in the case of Auckland Council there may be a requirement to establish a separate core set that reflects its unique issues and responsibilities.

UHWC submits that: central government resourcing will be required to achieve the objectives of the NPS-IB, irrespective of the financial position of the smaller councils. Central government resourcing should also consider the efforts of vast numbers of volunteer groups around the country who work in partnership with councils on activities that enhance local IB. Additional costs to councils as a result of the implementation of the NZPS-IB should not be to the detriment of these productive relationships.

UHWC submits that: an addition to the NPS-IB 3.4(c) is required to account for the conservation status of species, this could read:

c) Considering the requirements of strategies and other planning tools required or provided for in legislation and relevant to indigenous biodiversity, including the conservation status of terrestrial and aquatic indigenous species.

SECTION F: Statutory Frameworks

23. UHWC has concern that the NPS-IB does not apply to IB in waterbodies and freshwater ecosystems. Current legislation affecting the status of NZ's native fisheries, has failed to halt the decline. Similarly, the RMA has, to date, failed to adequately protect these habitats. UHWC acknowledges that the NPS-FWM addresses the issue of freshwater ecosystem management, but questions whether the links between the two NPS's are adequate.