DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY
Submission on the publicly notified draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.


To: Ministry for the Environment

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[Obfuscated personal information]
Submission

- Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

Background about my farm
(Keep this section brief. It is not required for your submission, but does help set the scene)

- We farm in the north west King Country.
- The farm is approx. ha and ranges from easy hill country to steep hill country. Over of the property is either LUC Class 6 or Class 7 (steep hill country).
- A significant area of the farm (approx. ha or ) is not in pasture, being either native bush or Manuka. Some of this is re-generating Manuka.
- The farm was purchased in 2004 and is owned/run by a family equity partnership. A previous, smaller property was farmed for 40 years. A larger farm was purchased to help achieve farm succession.
- It is a sheep and beef farm with approx. sheep (breeding ewes plus replacement ewe hoggets) and cattle (breeding cows plus replacements and Friesian bulls). This mix of stock classes has not changed over the 15+ years we have been farming here. However we have reduced stock numbers (& therefore stocking rate) approx. 10 years ago to run a more extensive farm system with less inputs.
- We also receive from beehives placed on the farm.
- We would like to further develop our easiest country. Due to budget constraints to date we have focused on repairs & maintenance (R&M) to the existing assets rather than capital works.
- As our budget has permitted we have undertaken some environmental management works. Eg: fencing off the Te Kauri stream; fencing off & planting poplar poles on a large eroding area. We have other similar works planned for 2020 & 2021. We have also allowed Manuka to regenerate in the gullies on our hill country (beehives for honey production have been introduced).
- Future aspirations include developing further income streams (eg: tourism/forestry/other) and potentially achieving farm succession to the next generation.

Why am I making this submission?

- We are making this submission for several reasons:
  - Biodiversity is important to us now and in the future both as individuals and as land owners for ourselves, our family and local community, catchment, region and country.
  - Our livelihood as farmers is vitally important to us now and for future generations.
  - Property rights as a landowner are vitally important to us. We would not want to see our property rights being reduced/removed as a result of the NPS Biodiversity.
  - The balance between private good and public good is important to us. We would not want to see unreasonable costs imposed on us as landowners, in order to achieve ‘public good’. If this was the case it has the potential to affect our ability to run a profitable farming business and therefore to continue farming (our livelihood).
  - We would like to see ourselves and our family, community & catchment operating in the future in a physically financially and socially sustainable manner.
- We contribute to our natural environment (eg: via environmental works, controlling weeds and pests) and economic environment (by being an employer, using local contractors, purchasing local goods etc.).
Section A: General responses to the proposals:

- We 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.

- We 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, we 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. We 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.

- 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.

- It is not practical or cost effective (affordable) for us to fence off all areas of native bush or Manuka/Kanuka on the farm. However the main (largest) area is fenced off and stock are not normally grazed in there – though we have had to graze some stock in there this year due to the drought and the need to access water. There is an access track through this area, to access one end of the farm from the other and it is very beautiful to walk/ride/drive through here.
Section B: Impacts and implementation:

- We are deeply concerned about the potential impacts of these proposals on our farm in relation to areas being identified as Significant Natural Areas (SNAs), areas identified as being important for the protection of SNAs which may include land adjacent to SNAs, and the identification of highly mobile species, in relation to the impacts this may have on our 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.

- We are concerned that New Zealand does not currently have the extent of technical expertise available to assist regional and district councils to identify SNAs 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.

- Given that approx. [ ] of our farm (approx. [ ] ha) is not in pasture (largely native bush and Manuka/Kanuka) we feel that the Draft NPS Biodiversity could potentially have a large impact on our farming operation in the following ways;
  - We potentially could have many SNAs on our property.
  - It is not practical to fence of many/all areas of indigenous vegetation on our farm.
  - We quite simply could not afford to fence of areas of indigenous vegetation on our farm – a high level of subsidy would be needed to fund (materials, labour etc).
  - We aim to control pests (in particular pigs, goats) as much as possible, as they are not desirable for our farming operation let alone indigenous biodiversity.
  - Some of the area of indigenous vegetation provide shelter to stock. Eg: areas of regenerating manuka for ewes lambing on hill country or shade during summer – this summer & last summer proving extremely hot.
  - Regional Council advice and input has been extremely useful and effective for us with the environmental works completed to date.
### Section C: Specific responses to the proposals:

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<td>My submission is that:</td>
<td>The decision I would like MfE and DoC to make is:</td>
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**Hutia Te Rito**  
([Discussion document on a proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, page 23](#))

- We support with amendments.
- We support the objective of local authorities recognising and providing for Hutia Te Rito which recognises the relationships between indigenous biodiversity and people and communities, and that conservation requires kaitiakitanga and custodianship.
- We support provisions which recognise and empower ground up, landowner, and community led conservation actions, and which prioritise non regulatory over regulation management frameworks.
- We seek that the term “stewardship” is replaced with “custodianship” which more correctly reflects the values we place on indigenous biodiversity within our farm and as part of our family’s history and our future, and our relationship and ties to our land.

- We have been farming here since 2004 (15 years), which in farming terms can be viewed as a relatively short space of time. However in that time as a family we have developed very strong emotional attachment to the property due to it’s special character, due in a large part to the native biodiversity on the property (native vegetation, birdlife etc).

3.7 Social, economic and cultural wellbeing:  
([Discussion Document Page 45](#))

- Support with amendments objective 3.7.
- We support the recognition that the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity can occur while still providing for use and development.
- We support the recognition that people and communities are critical to conservation actions and the protection and

- We seek that objective 3.7 is retained as notified.
- We seek that 3.7 is amended to recognise the importance of providing for farming land uses and business resilience, in supporting indigenous biodiversity protection.
- We seek that the NPSIB be amended so that policies and rules reflect Objective 3.7 including prioritising non
| 3.8 Identifying Significant Natural Areas:  
(Discussion document page 31) |  
We support the intent of 3.8 in identifying Indigenous Biodiversity which is significant. However, the criteria appears really broad and in our opinion could capture any indigenous biodiversity irrespective of how common it is. Because the criteria is broad and examples are not provided of what habitats and species it is intended to cover, it is difficult for us to work out what it means to my farming business, and community.  
  
We support the identification of areas with significant indigenous plants or species, by experts working with communities and in partnerships with  
  
We 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. |  
We 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.  
  
We support provisions which empower and support landowner and community conservation activities and local approaches.  
  
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. |
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.

- We 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 we support the establishment of a consistent approach to determining whether or not a habitat is significant, we 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.

- 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.

- We 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”.

| We are not aware of any current significant natural areas on our farm. We farm in the Otorohanga District. |
| Given that approx. [ ] of our farm (approx. [ ] ha) is not in pasture (largely native bush and Manuka/Kanuka) we feel that the Draft NPS Biodiversity could potentially have a large impact on our farming operation in the following ways; |
| - We potentially could have many SNAs on our property. |
| - It is not practical to fence of many/all areas of indigenous vegetation on our farm. |
| - We quite simply could not afford to fence of areas of indigenous vegetation on our farm – a high level of subsidy would be needed to fund (materials, labour etc). |
| - We aim to control pests (in particular pigs, goats) as much as possible, as they are not desirable for our farming operation let alone indigenous biodiversity. |
Some of the area of indigenous vegetation provide shelter to stock. Eg: areas of regenerating manuka for ewes lambing on hill country or shade during summer – this summer & last summer proving extremely hot.

| 3.9 Managing adverse effects on SNA’s (Discussion document page 42) | • We support with amendments.  
• We support requirements to manage new activities that effect significant natural areas. | • We 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) | • We oppose the current proposal, but put forward the proposed changes.  
• We support the intention of providing for existing activities but am concerned that 3.12 as proposed does not do this. | • We 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:  
  o grazing of productive animals;  
  o Pasture renewal;  
  o Cultivation;  
  o Vegetation clearance. |
| 3.13 General rules applying outside SNA’s: (Discussion document, page 51) | • We support the intention of recognising areas around SNA’s as important for protecting SNA’s themselves and their values. | • We seek amendments to 3.13 to ensure that existing activities as outlined under 3.12 are provided for. | • We are concerned that 3.13 as proposed may result in areas of my |
farm around my SNA’s being ‘locked up’ from pastoral based farming activities. This could result in significant areas of my farm being impacted which ultimately would significantly impact my farm viability and resilience.

- We seek that 3.13 is amended to prioritise non regulatory, partnership, and landowner led approaches to managing areas around SNA’s in order to protect the attributes that make a SNA significant. We seek that clause (2) is deleted.

- We 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.

| Approx $\%$ of our farm could be ‘locked up’ under these provisions? This could potentially have a huge impact on our management decisions/ future viability. |
| In the locked up areas of indigenous biodiversity greater resources would more than likely need to be spent/focused on weed and pest control. |

### 3.15 Highly Mobile Fauna:
(Discussion document, page 38)

- We support with amendments.
- We support the intention to recognise and provide for highly mobile fauna through non regulatory/ partnership-based frameworks generally, and where required regulatory approaches in relation to new subdivision, and development.

- We seek that 3.15 is amended to prioritise non regulatory, partnership, and landowner led approaches to managing mobile species and their habitat and lifecycle requirements.

- We seek that 3.15 is amended to prioritise engagement with the technical expert and landowner to co-design management
We 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.

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.

We are not aware of any mobile fauna on/crossing our property.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. 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] at [redacted]

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

14th March 2020