

## **Submission on the Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity**

Thank you for the opportunity to pass comment on the Draft NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity (DNPSIB). Before going further I wish to endorse the submissions from Federated Farmers of NZ and Local Government NZ.

I am a beef farmer on [REDACTED] ha beside the [REDACTED] and am also a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the Waitomo District Council.

Since 2016, rural residents have been hit with a plethora of new and more stringent regulations, starting with the Waikato Regional Council's Plan Change 1, and subsequently including the Draft NPS for Freshwater, and now the Draft NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity. Coupled with the thinly veiled (and not so thinly veiled) criticisms from urban dwellers and politicians, in the national media, rural folk are now in a very defensive mindset. An example being a statement attributed to Minister Sage; "For the last 150 years of history land owners have not compensated the community for the loss of wetlands. They have not compensated the community for the loss of shrub lands or wildlife." Such mindless, ill informed commentary from a Minister of the Crown defies credibility, and raises major questions of conflict of interest (bias and predetermination) if she has a role in any decision making in this NPS. If those wetlands, shrub lands and wildlife had not been sacrificed, I doubt Sage's parents would have been in any position to raise any children, and New Zealanders certainly wouldn't be enjoying the high standard of living the majority enjoy today.

The majority of farmers I know of have had dealings with over the last 40 years, have always done the best they can for their farms and the environment they farm in. Issues and processes we never knew existed can now be routinely identified, measured, and monitored, so our on-farm policies are in a constant state of flux and change.

In the early 1980's, [REDACTED] I was implementing Government Policy by providing [REDACTED] per hectare for farmers to cut and burn native bush, turn it into pasture, and increase stocking numbers. Farmers are being castigated now for still having that 'increase production' mindset, but no-one remembers or acknowledge it was a response to Government Policy.

Regional and District Councils are being lambasted for not fulfilling their obligations toward environmental protection under the RMA and Government Policy Statements. The benefits of those protections are 'National Benefits', but those Councils are only funded by ratepayers, and ratepayers will only vote for elected members that promise no more than mediocre rate rises, and then rail against 'empire building' when the necessary staff numbers are employed to ascertain and implement the policies that ensure the 'protections' are achieved.

I understand the WRC's Plan Change 1 may have cost over \$30m to date, and it hasn't been approved yet 3½ years after notification.

Consideration of this Draft NPS has been very challenging as most rural folk are struggling to maintain their farming businesses in the face of a severe drought, and

many are also frustrated that they have not yet seen a plausible response to their submissions on the Draft NPS for Freshwater, which has challenged their belief in 'common sense', and 'social equity'.

Waitomo District Council is currently progressing through its District Plan Review at a budgeted cost of \$3.74m (Long Term Plan 2018-2028). We have employed an ecologist to update the extremely inaccurate SNA data we were provided with and he has stated that for our Council to comply with the SNA requirements set out in the Draft NPSIB would cost between three and four million dollars; a similar cost to our entire District Plan Review. With a district population of 9,300, (42% Maori), 30% of the land area in the Conservation Estate or Maori Land, a debt of \$40m, and residential rates already over \$3,500 per household, that sort of expenditure will seriously jeopardise our district's future 'well beings' (LGA).

I wish to reiterate the Draft NPS for Freshwater and the Draft NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity outcomes are all for 'National Benefit', so must be funded fully by Central Government.

Yours faithfully

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