

MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT – PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY (NPSIB)

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By way of background we [REDACTED] within the Waikato Region and Rotorua District. Well over half of our property has been proposed as a Significant Natural Area (SNA) and is recorded as secondary forest and scrub.

We have owned our property for 26 years and have a strong focus on actively protecting the indigenous vegetation and associated fauna. Ironically as landowners endeavouring to protect biodiversity for the benefit of not just ourselves but for the wider District and Regional community, we fear an SNA could result in us (and other similarly impacted landowners) wearing the greatest costs and limitations to the ongoing use of our land.

We concur that protecting, managing and restoring our nation's threatened indigenous biodiversity for present and future generations is most important.

However we have concerns there is a perception by some within government (central and local) that by simply scheduling ('locking up') indigenous vegetation as a Significant Natural Area, the area will be largely protected by the NPSIB and associated Council regulatory process. In our opinion scheduling alone will not achieve the protection expected. If the SNA regulatory approach is to have any chance of success, there needs to be regular, on-the-ground management of all sites – possibly in perpetuity. Our key concern is the devastation wrought by pest plants and pest animals. Pest plants are invading and seriously degrading many of our country's 'protected' indigenous areas. Pest animals are devastating both indigenous flora and fauna. Effective pest control measures are critical to maintaining biodiversity and helping restore and enhance natural areas. Who is to pay these substantial pest control costs? Many Landowners, including ourselves, can't afford to cover these costs year after year. This particularly applies to those owning larger SNA's that are not generating income. We need substantial technical and financial help achieve ecological sustainability.

Councils must be able to provide landowners with SNA's, realistic financial assistance. Is this to come from the nation's taxpayers by way of Central Government, or via Council ratepayers? Other incentives such as meaningful rates remission and consent fee waivers are also necessary. Without such help landowners will become discouraged and give up and the SNA's will become 'Significant Neglected Areas'. Councils (especially those provincial District's with a low rating base) are telling us they are currently unable to assist landowners with the ongoing SNA maintenance costs. They too need help. This whole long-term SNA resourcing and funding matter needs to be addressed through the NPSIB as a priority.

In addition, we are also of the opinion there needs to be a non-regulatory partnership arrangement made available between all Councils and landowners to develop tailored property biodiversity management plans (or equivalent) to engender landowner, Council and community enthusiasm and buy-in.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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