

From: [REDACTED] on behalf of [REDACTED]
To: Indigenusbiodiversity
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED] Submission on the Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity
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Our Farm Business

We are a [REDACTED] who recently purchased our [REDACTED] farm. Our property is called [REDACTED] overlooking Lake Taupo. Being in the Lake Taupo catchment, we farm under a strict nitrogen management plan (with a Total Annual Nitrogen Discharge Allowance), which is audited annually by the Waikato Regional Council. We are proud to be doing our part to help protect the water quality of Lake Taupo. We also have [REDACTED] of retired native bush, plantation trees and wetland areas – more than 15% of the farm. Our farm also features a Lysimeter research site, and we gladly opened our gates to the public in the recent Open Farms day.

We are concerned that the Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) would, in its current form, have a serious impact on the financial viability of our own and many other farm businesses across New Zealand. However, 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 both protected and restored.

New Zealand's sheep and beef farmers have retained 2.7 million hectares of indigenous habitat within their farms which is testament to the value farmers place on indigenous biodiversity. As much as 24% of New Zealand's total indigenous habitats occur 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, Nga Whenua Rahui, 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 while acknowledging, respecting and fostering the contribution landowners, as custodians and Kaitiaki, make 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.

Impacts and implementation:

We are deeply concerned about the potential impacts of these proposals on my farm in relation to areas being identified as Significant Natural Areas (SNA's), areas identified as being important for the protection of SNA's which may include land adjacent to SNA's, 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 on 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.

For example, whilst we have [REDACTED] already retired and in native bush and trees, we have a further [REDACTED] that could be classified as a SNA under the current draft NPSIB. This [REDACTED] is in a north facing paddock of medium to steep contour. The scattered native trees provide protection from erosion and shade/shelter for our livestock in adverse weather. The draft NPSIB as written could allow the local council to enforce livestock exclusion from SNA's. The cost to our business to exclude stock from this [REDACTED] would be approximately [REDACTED] with an ongoing cost of [REDACTED] from lost productivity and maintenance of new fences.

In addition, we have approximately [REDACTED] of boundary with a neighbouring property which features large amount of native fauna. Under the current NPSIB, it would be possible that some of our farm would be identified as being an area adjacent to a SNA – and therefore placed under some sort of restriction from its current activity of pastoral farming. The financial impact of this could be huge.

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 not only to areas where indigenous biodiversity is being restored, but also to where it currently exists.

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

We have the following particular comments in relation to the NPSIB:

Hutia Te Rito:

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 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 relationship and ties to our land.

We support provisions which recognise and empower ground up, landowner, and community led conservation actions, and which prioritise non regulatory over regulation management frameworks.

3.7 Social, economic and cultural wellbeing:

- 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 enhancement of indigenous biodiversity.
- We support provisions which empower and support landowner and community conservation activities and local approaches.
- We seek that the NPSIB be amended so that policies and rules reflect Objective 3.7 including prioritising non 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.

3.8 Identifying Significant Natural Areas:

- 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 our farming business, and community.
- We seek changes to provision 3.8 so that the significance criteria are narrowed so that only 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 values that underpin the habitats significance.
- 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 support the identification of areas with significant indigenous plants and or species,

by experts working with communities and in partnerships with 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.
- 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.

3.9 Managing adverse effects on SNA's

- We support requirements to manage new activities that affect significant natural areas.
- We seek that 3.9 is amended so that the effects management hierarchy is based on the level of the habitat's significance e.g. "endangered" or "threatened" and is tailored to the values which underpin the habitats significance.
- Amend 3.9 so that the requirements relate 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 values that underpin the habitats significance (such as representativeness, rarity, and distinctiveness) can be avoided, or 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

- We support the intention of providing for existing activities but are concerned that 3.12 as proposed does not do this.
- We seek that 3.12 be amended so that the temporal and spatial nature of existing activities as part of pastoral based farming are recognised. Specifically, vegetation clearance, cultivation, or pastoral renewal, that may occur within a 7-year rotational basis, along with the pastoral grazing of livestock that also may be temporal in nature for example during drought periods.

3.13 General rules applying outside SNA's:

- 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 our farm around our SNA's being 'locked up' from pastoral based farming activities. This could result in significant areas of our farm being impacted which ultimately would significantly impact our 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.

3.15 Highly Mobile Fauna:

- 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 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.
- 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 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.

Summary

We are proud to be part of the pastoral farming industry, which already does so much to protect and foster New Zealand's indigenous flora and fauna. Whilst we support the overall intent of the NPSIB, we feel significant changes need to be made in order to make this landowner lead rather than council enforced. Changes must also be made to ensure that the viability of farms are not affected by the NPSIB, and that there are systems in place to support farmers who wish to do more to protect and enhance indigenous biodiversity on their properties.