

**SUBMISSION ON
PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY**

To: Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10-362
Wellington 6143

Submitter: **Waerenga East and West Blocks Incorporated**

Address: C/- Deloitte, PO Box 12003, Rotorua

Contact: John Fenwick

Telephone: +64276885995

Email: chairman@waerengafarms.co.nz

Submission: **Oppose** the Proposed NPS and seek that it be substantially amended in response to the concerns expressed below or otherwise withdrawn entirely.

Introduction

- 1 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED is a maori owned farming entity located in the Rotorua District. It runs a dairy and dry stock operation with complimentary plantation forest of some 300 hectares.
- 2 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED **opposes** the Proposed NPS on Indigenous Biodiversity (the **Proposed NPS**) in its current form.
- 3 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers unless the document is substantially modified it will result in significant costs for limited environmental benefit and creates real risk of exacerbating the loss of biodiversity on private land.

Support for indigenous biodiversity

- 4 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED supports the broad objective of the Proposed NPS and is very conscious of the value of biodiversity. It prides itself on being an environmentally responsible company that adopts sustainable management techniques throughout its forestry operations.
- 5 Within its current operation WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED already has some 76 hectares set aside as reserves or excluded from grazing or plantation forestry to allow for indigenous regeneration. Notwithstanding its support for indigenous biodiversity, WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED does **not** support the Proposed NPS in its current form because it is likely to result in unnecessary additional costs without achieving any material gains in maintaining indigenous biodiversity within plantation forest.

General concern with Proposed NPS

- 6 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED acknowledges that the Proposed NPS contains some recognition that plantation forest should be treated differently from other land uses. However, these provisions are limited in scope, their meaning is unclear and their relationship with other parts of the Proposed NPS is ambiguous.
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- 7 For example, Policy 3.10 provides that plantation forest identified as containing Significant Natural Areas (SNA) are deemed to be "plantation forest biodiversity areas" (PFBA). However, as currently drafted Policy 3.8 of the Proposed NPS would require all SNA within plantation forest to be identified and mapped in district plans.
- 8 The excessive breadth of the criteria for identifying SNA at Appendix 1 of the Proposed NPS means that large areas of plantation forest would be identified as SNA. The surveys required to complete this task would come at enormous cost and achieve little benefit in terms of maintaining indigenous biodiversity.
- 9 Policy 3.10 applies to PFBA and requires that adverse effects of plantation forestry activities on (a) threatened or at-risk flora must be managed, and (b) significant habitat for threatened or at-risk indigenous fauna must be managed, to maintain long-term populations of such fauna.
- 10 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED is very concerned about what this means in practice. For example, it's unclear how these values will be identified, and what requirements will be imposed on plantation forest owners to manage and maintain them.
- 11 With respect to other indigenous biodiversity within PFBAs, policy 3.13 and policy 3.15 require local councils to maintain indigenous biodiversity (including highly mobile fauna) by amending their plans to manage adverse effects of land use on such indigenous biodiversity. These policies could lead to new and stringent regulation of harvesting activities. Again, WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED is very concerned about what this means in practice.
- 12 When a resource consent application is triggered by indigenous biodiversity controls, policy 3.19 contains onerous requirements for assessment of potential adverse effects which would be very expensive to complete in the context of large-scale land use such as plantation forest harvesting activities.
- 13 Overall, it is reasonable to anticipate that the Proposed NPS in its current form will be relied upon to impose significant new restrictions on plantation forestry. Such measures would impose considerable additional costs on WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED's operations.
- 14 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers that the Proposed NPS should be substantially modified to address the above concerns and should place much more emphasis on non-regulatory measures and incentives to support positive outcomes for indigenous biodiversity within plantation forest.
- 15 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED supports the broader and more detailed submission filed by the Forest Owners Association and the proposals for amendment to the Proposed NPS detailed in that document.

Potential implications for biodiversity

- 16 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers that plantation forest is beneficial for the maintenance and restoration of indigenous biodiversity. Production forest is planted to be harvested. Harvesting operations can sometimes disturb indigenous biodiversity values. However, these values typically make a full recovery over time after the forest is replanted. Consequently, WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers well managed harvesting activities present little threat to biodiversity values.

- 17 In addition, many forest owners take active steps to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity values in plantation forests through monitoring biodiversity, pest and predator control, and partnerships with other stakeholders.
- 18 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED is concerned that forest owners may be deterred from pursuing these voluntary initiatives if they perceive that improving biodiversity outcomes within plantation forest will lead to more onerous regulatory control over harvesting activities. This is not a good outcome for biodiversity, but one which is at real risk of occurring if the Proposed NPS is introduced in its current form.

Overall costs, benefits and alternatives

- 19 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers that the intended public benefits to biodiversity will not eventuate and that the Proposed NPS in its current form will not be effective at achieving its objective on plantation forest land.
- 20 In contrast, WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED considers that the risks and costs of the Proposed NPS are much more significant and much more certain. These costs have been discussed above.

Conclusion

- 21 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED **opposes** the Proposed NPS in its current form on the basis that it will not be effective or efficient at achieving its objective of protecting biodiversity on plantation forest land.
- 22 It will potentially generate an adverse reaction from forest owners that threatens the very values that the Proposed NPS seeks to protect and will create significant and disproportionate costs for responsible landowners such as WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED that are already taking steps to actively manage biodiversity on their land.
- 23 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED strongly supports the continued and increased use of non-regulatory methods and incentives as the most effective way to achieve the desired biodiversity objectives. Such measures can encourage and support positive actions from forest owners and ensure that the costs of such measures are equitably distributed amongst all those who benefit from the shared biodiversity values.
- 24 WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED seeks that the Proposed NPS be substantially modified to address the concerns raised above or otherwise that it be withdrawn.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Proposed NPS.

13th March 2020



John Fenwick

Chairman
WAERENGA EAST AND WEST BLOCKS INCORPORATED