

Memo

Date	20 November 2017
To	OTOP Zone Committee
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From	Michael Hide, Rob Carson-Iles

Protection of Indigenous Biodiversity in the Orari, Temuka, Opihi and Pareora Zones

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this paper is to:

- a. Inform the Orari, Temuka, Opihi, Pareora (OTOP) Zone Committee (ZC) of the role of the Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy;
- b. Provide options to the ZC for prioritising funding and resourcing for the protection of biodiversity within the OTOZ Zone.

BACKGROUND

The ZC identified the following outcome in relation to biodiversity in the zone:

- *Protect and enhance indigenous biodiversity Ki uta Ki Tai, particularly high naturalness areas, coastal lagoons, and wetlands and springs in the upper parts of catchments.*

The draft recommendations support statutory actions to facilitate this outcome, along with a number of non-statutory initiatives that can be summarised as follows:

1. Support for increased collaboration between the district and regional councils to protect areas of significant biodiversity;
2. Development of good management practices for the protection of tussock grasslands;
3. Increased control of invasive woody weeds and wild animal populations;
4. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity values in Waitarakao;
5. Improved co-operation between river engineers, gravel contractors and councils to enhance braided river habitat.

The Immediate Steps Programme also delivers on the ground actions that contribute to the achievement of the ZC's outcome. The fund is currently fully subscribed until the end of the 2017/2018 year.

Environment Canterbury has also identified opportunities to reduce regulatory barriers to protection and enhancement projects through catchment scale consents and consent processing cost remission. The implementation of these options are being implemented within the zone currently.

CANTERBURY BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

The Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in February 2008 by 19 agencies and organisations across Canterbury including Te Rūnanga o Ngā Tahu, several NGOs, most of the district councils, Fonterra, Landcare Research Manaaki Whenua and Environment Canterbury. The strategy was developed over about two years by a steering group that met regularly.

The guiding principle of the Strategy is 'to focus first on protecting and maintaining what remains, and then on restoring what has been lost'. Priority areas for action under the strategy are:

- Threatened environments
 - Those where less than 20% indigenous cover remains
 - Environments where there are low levels of protection, coupled with increasing threats to remaining indigenous habitats and ecosystems.
- Habitats and ecosystems that are naturally rare or distinctive
- Habitats and ecosystems that support rare and threatened species.

It is a non-statutory document, but has a number of targets:

- There is no further loss of significant habitats and ecosystems from 2010
- There is an on-going increase in the number, quality and effectiveness of ecosystem-based restoration projects and initiatives, particularly in areas where less than 30% indigenous cover remains
- Awareness of the multiple benefits of incorporating indigenous biodiversity into working and urban landscapes is increased by 2012
- Public awareness, understanding and support of biodiversity is increased by 2012, leading to increasing instances of consequential behaviour change
- The accessibility and usability of information, guidance, advice and funding relating to biodiversity protection and restoration is improved by 2012
- A framework for monitoring the status of regional biodiversity is established by 2012
- Key information and knowledge gaps are addressed through on-going research
- There is an on-going increase in the number of inter-agency and agency/community partnerships that result in biodiversity improvements

A wide range of work has been undertaken by signatories in the years since 2008. Environment Canterbury's contributions result in over \$4 million allocated to 'on the ground' projects involving the protection or restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem health, resulting in the physical protection (i.e. fenced) of over approximately 3,000ha of land, and habitat protection and maintenance (weed control) of over 116,000 ha.

Environment Canterbury uses the strategy to guide its priority setting, its strategic programme (with an emphasis on first protecting and maintaining, then restoring), in targeting work on the ground, and in guiding the manner in which it carries out this work.

PRIORITISING NON-STATUTORY ACTIONS IN THE ZONE

Achieving the ZC outcome for biodiversity will be achieved through a combination of District and Regional Council statutory tools, Immediate Steps funding, existing Council funding (Regional and District) and resources and through partnerships with other organisations.

Collaboration between councils, and working in partnership with other organisations will make the best use of the resources available, it will maximise the outcomes for biodiversity on the ground

The following options could be used to ensure that the available people, tools, and resources are put to best effect:

1. Define priority areas in the zone that will contribute to the ZC outcome, align with the Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy and help provide direction for the work of the relevant agencies within the zone:
 1. Coastal margins and lagoons to support indigenous biodiversity and over time provide a biodiversity corridor;
 2. The protection of long tailed bats;
 3. Protection and enhancement of braided river habitat;
 4. Opportunities to protect high value species, sites or habitats in the zone, especially in the upper catchments.
2. Establish a grant scheme to help individuals and community groups with activities that promote biodiversity within the zone, but which do not meet IMS criteria or the priorities listed above. This would show support for action in the community, could be achieved at a relatively low cost and implemented within existing resourcing.
3. Establish a new biodiversity action group (or repurpose an existing group) involving the relevant councils, DoC, community groups and industry. Such a group could fill the following roles:
 - a. Assist with the co-ordination of statutory plan development and implementation.
 - b. Align funding and resources across the zone.
 - c. Information sharing between agencies and groups.
 - d. Develop and drive further non-statutory actions.

KEY DECISION AREA:

The ZC could recommend to Environment Canterbury that:

1. **Projects that contribute to the protection and enhancement of the following areas are prioritised for funding and resources in the zone, including funding allocated under the Immediate Steps Programme:**
 1. **Coastal margins and lagoons to support indigenous biodiversity and over time provide a biodiversity corridor;**
 2. **The protection of long tailed bats;**
 3. **Protection and enhancement of braided river habitat;**
 4. **Opportunities to protect high value species, sites or habitats in the zone, especially in the upper catchments.**
2. **Investigations are made into the establishment of a fund to assist with small projects in the zone which do not qualify for IMS funding, but which will promote and enhance biodiversity within the zone.**
3. **A South Canterbury Biodiversity Action Group or similar is established to coordinate and promote biodiversity actions in the zone.**