



He Kura Koiora i hokia: A summary

A summary of the discussion document on a proposed
National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have a special relationship with nature. Whether tramping, camping, or relaxing with family and friends in the wilderness, nature inspires us.

As New Zealanders, biodiversity is part of our identity. However, our nature is facing a crisis. The indigenous plants and animals of Aotearoa New Zealand are in serious decline. Around 4000 of our native species have been identified as threatened with or at-risk of extinction. Some of these native plants and animals will disappear forever if we don't work together to increase our national efforts to reverse the decline and restore what has been lost.

Why does indigenous biodiversity matter?

Indigenous biodiversity is the variety of native plants and animals and the habitats they live in. Indigenous biodiversity includes the pristine mountain forests, regenerating bush, native scrub and grasslands, and native animals that make their homes in our productive landscapes and cities.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have flora and fauna with unique qualities that are irreplaceable and found nowhere else in the world. Indigenous biodiversity is our inheritance and our responsibility.

Iwi, hapū and whānau have distinct and special connections to their land and the environment in their rohe. In te ao Māori, identity, wellbeing, knowledge and how the culture is nourished, are indivisible from the health of Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother. Humans are embedded in the environment, not distinct from it.

Our economic success also relies on our natural environment. It gives us a competitive advantage that underpins New Zealand's top two earners, tourism and primary production. Indigenous biodiversity contributes to the success of farming, forestry and horticulture through ecosystem services such as clean water, nutrient cycling, pollination, and protection from flooding. Safeguarding ecosystems and the services they provide is important for New Zealand's future prosperity.

The need for a National Policy Statement

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) provides the main framework for maintaining and protecting indigenous biodiversity on private land (sections 5, 6, 7, 30 and 31 of the RMA). However, these provisions don't provide detailed direction and are often

subject to different interpretation, application and monitoring by councils. This has led to repeat litigation costs, confusion, uncertainty and an undervaluing of biodiversity in decision-making. Overall, we continue to lose our indigenous biodiversity and taonga – regardless of current efforts to protect and restore them.

The main objective of the proposed National Policy Statement is to maintain indigenous biodiversity under the RMA. Managing Significant Natural Areas and other provisions in the proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity will ensure biodiversity is maintained overall, including no reductions in the following:

- ▶ the size of populations of indigenous species
- ▶ indigenous species occupancy across their natural range
- ▶ the function of ecosystems and habitats
- ▶ the full range and extent of ecosystems and habitats
- ▶ connectivity between, and buffering around, ecosystems
- ▶ the resilience and adaptability of ecosystems.

The proposed National Policy Statement is consistent with the purpose of the RMA, which is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

Creating a National Policy Statement

The first draft of the proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity was developed by the stakeholder-led Biodiversity Collaborative Group. The group comprises industry representatives, environmental groups, and an iwi advisor to the Iwi Chairs' Forum. The Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Conservation have worked together to further develop the Biodiversity Collaborative Group's draft proposed National Policy Statement.

Te ao Māori and the Treaty of Waitangi provide a foundation

The proposed National Policy Statement has Hutia te Rito as a fundamental concept to achieve an integrated and holistic approach to maintaining indigenous biodiversity. The concept of Hutia te Rito recognises that the health and wellbeing of our environment – its ecosystems and unique indigenous plants and animals – has intrinsic value. This acknowledges kaitiakitanga and that our dependence on the environment comes with a responsibility to look after it. This connects to all parts of the proposed National Policy Statement and how it would be implemented by councils and communities on the ground.

Councils will need to work with iwi/Māori to protect taonga, recognise te ao Māori and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in biodiversity management.

All land tenures are covered

The proposed National Policy Statement will affect the management of biodiversity on all types of land including public, private and Māori land. Much of New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity is on privately owned and managed land. This includes ecosystems that are poorly, if at all, represented within public conservation land, such as lowland ecosystems.

The proposed National Policy Statement seeks actions from councils and landowners to show the vital role we all play in ensuring indigenous biodiversity is maintained. Partnerships and collaboration between landowners, tangata whenua, communities, councils, and public agencies are critical to the success of this National Policy Statement.

Councils will need to implement regional biodiversity strategies to align communities behind a shared set of priorities and provide a strong link to the [New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy](#).

Significant Natural Areas

The proposed National Policy Statement requires councils to consistently identify areas with significant vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna and manage their protection through regional and district plans, and consent processes under the RMA.

Significant Natural Areas would be identified by councils and ecologists working with landowners, using significance criteria developed by ecologists. The proposed National Policy Statement recognises the importance of species and ecosystems that are locally rare but nationally abundant, as well as those that are locally abundant but nationally rare.

The proposed National Policy Statement also includes provisions to manage adverse effects from new activities that impact on Significant Natural Areas.

Other important biodiversity

Indigenous biodiversity that exists outside of Significant Natural Areas is also important. Councils will be required to determine where and when to manage adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity outside of Significant Natural Areas.

The proposed National Policy Statement will also require councils to survey for highly mobile fauna that are difficult to detect but threatened or at risk and impacted by land-use activities.



Nelson Green Gecko. Photo credit: Samantha King

Looking after our indigenous biodiversity together

This visual shows how the proposed National Policy Statement will protect, maintain and restore our indigenous biodiversity



Managing particular land-use activities

For the following activities, the proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity has some specific management approaches that are different from Significant Natural Areas in general.

For pastoral farming, some areas may have the potential to be identified as Significant Natural Areas (eg, if they contain significant indigenous grasses or rare indigenous fauna). The proposed National Policy Statement provisions allow existing farming to continue as long as impacts on indigenous biodiversity don't increase.

Plantation forests also have the potential to be identified as Significant Natural Areas, as threatened or at-risk fauna may establish populations in these plantations. Plantation forests will be managed as plantation forest biodiversity areas rather than Significant Natural Areas to ensure harvest is still possible. The proposed National Policy Statement and National Environment Standard for Plantation Forestry will be aligned to provide consistent direction to councils.

There are also specific provisions regarding nationally significant infrastructure, activities on Māori land, mining and aggregate, dwellings and options for managing adverse effects on geothermal systems.

Restoring indigenous biodiversity

Restoration and enhancement are also an important part of maintaining New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity. Some ecosystems in New Zealand have suffered so much loss the only way they can be maintained is through restoration and reconstruction.

In 2014, there were 71 identified rare ecosystems, with 45 of them threatened with collapse. Wetlands are now only about 10 per cent of their pre-human extent. The proposed National Policy Statement will require councils to promote restoration of degraded Significant Natural Areas, important buffering or connectivity areas, wetlands, urban areas, or other areas that align with national priorities.

Timeline





Have your say

You can access *He Kura Koiora i hokia: A discussion document for a proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity* and information about the consultation process – including how to make a submission – on our website at: www.mfe.govt.nz/consultations/nps-indigenous-biodiversity.

Your input will help achieve the best outcome for New Zealand.

We want to hear from interested organisations and individuals by 5pm on 14 March 2020.

An online submission tool is available at www.mfe.govt.nz/consultations/nps-indigenous-biodiversity. This is our preferred way to receive submissions.

- ▶ Submissions can also be emailed to: indigenousbiodiversity@mfe.govt.nz
- ▶ Submissions can also be posted to: Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

You can also share your views and have questions answered at workshops being held in early 2020.

If you have any questions or need more information email: indigenousbiodiversity@mfe.govt.nz.