

Office of the Minister of Conservation

Chair, Cabinet Energy, Environment and Climate Committee

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

### **Proposal**

1. This paper seeks Cabinet approval to the terms of reference and a timeline for the development of a new National Biodiversity Strategy (the 'Strategy').

### **Executive summary**

2. Our unique natural places and the species that live within them have always been recognised as national treasures. They underpin our identity, our cultural and social well-being, and our lifestyle and livelihoods. For Māori, biodiversity conservation is integral to their culture and identity.
3. Preserving and restoring our nature is central to the wellbeing of our nation and contributes across the 'four capitals' of the living standards framework. Biodiversity is key to our 'natural capital,' providing us with benefits through ecosystem services like flood protection and pollination. Connecting with nature has also been shown to have a positive effect on mental and spiritual health and wellbeing.
4. Biodiversity underpins a range of economic activities from recreation and international tourism, and employment in regions where there are significant tracts of conservation land. It is central to our global brand, supporting industries from primary production to the film sector to selling our goods and services offshore.
5. Despite biodiversity's importance to New Zealand, pressures associated with human settlement, mammalian pests and pathogens have led to a rapid decline of our native species. Despite current management responses, this decline continues.
6. I consider there is a need to act now and develop a new biodiversity strategy that reflects the central importance of biodiversity to this Government's wellbeing agenda and the commitment in the Government's long-term plan to protect our unique biodiversity, and to position nature at the heart of our success.
7. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000 and Action Plan (2016-2020) expire in 2020. Cabinet directed the Department of Conservation (DOC) to complete a new Strategy by December 2019 and to report to Cabinet by December 2018 on the scope and process for achieving this (CAB-18-MIN-0158.04).

8. I see the development of the new Strategy as the opportunity for all the relevant participants to unite around a common purpose and ensure we are taking the highest priority actions for biodiversity. The new Strategy needs to drive better alignment and focus on priorities across the biodiversity system, provide a clear framework for delivery and prioritisation of effort and provide a 'fit for purpose' approach to monitoring and evaluation.
9. The strategy also needs to reflect and consider new developments including the impacts of climate change, considerable developments in the science sector such as the establishment of the New Zealand Biological Heritage National Science Challenge, and new programmes like Predator Free 2050 and the development of a draft National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity.
10. Given the wide range of players involved in biodiversity management, I propose that the Strategy has broad governance. I will be the lead Minister for the Strategy, and work to develop the strategy will be governed by a cross-agency biodiversity group led by the Department of Conservation (DOC) with representatives from the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Ministry for the Environment, Te Puni Kōkiri, Land Information New Zealand, regional councils; and supplemented by the relevant officials from the Treasury and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be consulted.
11. Development of the new Strategy will be informed by three reference groups: a mana whenua reference group, a stakeholder reference group and a scientific and technical reference group that will consist of internal and external scientists and technical experts as well as experts drawn from the wider community. Engaging these key players is critical to ensuring buy-in to a common purpose and collective priorities. These groups will provide advice, test ideas and help to build a shared understanding with Māori and stakeholders during development of the Strategy.
12. Officials will also engage early with Māori, communities and the general public prior to formal consultation on a discussion document, in order to capture a wide range of views before the formal process commences.
13. All parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) must have a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in place. New Zealand developed its original Biodiversity Strategy 2000 to meet this obligation. The Biodiversity Action Plan (2016-2020) was developed to meet new global targets arising from the CBD's Strategic Plan. National Strategies and Action Plans are the principal statement of how New Zealand implements the CBD at the national level.
14. International parties to the CBD have begun a process to agree on a new post-2020 biodiversity framework. This will most likely include new global biodiversity goals that parties will be expected to implement. Progressing a new Strategy will position us well to influence and meet those goals. The finalised Strategy may then need to be revisited following CBD adoption of a new global framework in 2020.

## Context

15. Biodiversity is the variability among all living organisms. It includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems, found within terrestrial, marine and other aquatic environments.
16. Owing to New Zealand's long history of isolation from other land masses, we have a high number of species found nowhere else in the world (referred to as 'endemism'). Our indigenous plants and animals evolved without predatory or browsing mammals, making them especially vulnerable to predation and competition with introduced mammals and other species.
17. Our natural environment and biodiversity conservation is clearly linked to the Government's focus on wellbeing and the four capitals in the wellbeing framework. Ecosystem services provide benefits including carbon sinks, nutrient filtration, flood protection, and pollination. Connecting with nature has been shown to positively support mental and spiritual health. For Māori, the ethic of kaitiakitanga confers obligations to care for environmental taonga, including indigenous flora and fauna.
18. Nature and biodiversity are also important for New Zealand's economic success, contributing towards our global brand giving us a competitive advantage offshore. Tourism, now our largest contributor to export earnings, relies on the beauty and health of our natural environment. Our primary industries rely on the ecosystem services that biodiversity helps support. Nature supports employment in regional New Zealand through the work we do to manage threats and restore it, as well as support visitors to enjoy it.

### ***New Zealand continues to lose biodiversity, despite current management methods***

19. Since New Zealand was settled, the decline in indigenous biodiversity has been rapid. The cumulative effects of fire, land clearance, overexploitation of resources, and introduced plants and animals have left a lasting impact on our native biodiversity. Our economy and way of life are supported by our primary industries which are heavily reliant on introduced species and their biodiversity. Many of our activities at land and sea have also had an impact on our indigenous plants and animals, and their habitats:
  - 19.1. our fishing industries catch protected seabirds and marine mammals as bycatch, and methods such as bottom trawling destroy corals and benthic habitats
  - 19.2. our indigenous forests are reduced to about one-third of their pre-human extent
  - 19.3. wetlands are reduced by about 90 percent; other ecosystems, such as active sand dunes, are also substantially reduced
  - 19.4. many indigenous species face extinction, including 81 percent of bird species that breed in New Zealand (known as resident species), 72 percent of

freshwater fish, 88 percent of reptile, 100 percent of frog, and 27 percent of our resident marine mammal species.

20. New Zealand currently has more than 4000 species that are threatened or at risk<sup>1</sup> of extinction. We need to act now to reverse the decline.
21. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000 and Action Plan expire in 2020. This presents an opportunity to develop a new Strategy and action plan that places nature at the heart of New Zealand's success and drives collective priorities and coordinated action.
22. On 9 April 2018 Cabinet directed DOC to 'report to Cabinet with the scope and process for a review of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000 by December 2018, and to complete this strategy by December 2019' (CAB-18-MIN-0158.04 refers).
23. Developing a new Strategy now is also an opportunity for New Zealand to position itself internationally as responding to a clear need for urgent action to address biodiversity decline. All parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) must have a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in place.
24. Over the period 2019-2020, parties to the CBD will be negotiating new global biodiversity targets. I expect most other parties to the CBD will delay updating their existing strategies until new targets are agreed in late 2020. While an early update is not required under CBD processes, a new Strategy produced towards the end of 2019 is an opportunity for New Zealand to promote the urgency of increased action.

### ***Existing New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan***

25. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000-2020, expresses New Zealand's commitment to stem the loss of biodiversity. An independent review of the Biodiversity Strategy was undertaken in 2005. The New Zealand Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2020, is a targeted update of the original strategy.
26. The purpose of the existing strategy is to establish a strategic framework for action to conserve, sustainably use and manage New Zealand's biodiversity. The primary focus is on New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity. However, because of the value and economic importance of much of our introduced biodiversity, the conservation of the genetic resources of our important introduced species was also addressed. The existing strategy is centred around four goals:
  - 26.1. Enhancing community and individual understanding of, and responsibility for, biodiversity

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<sup>1</sup> 'At Risk' species are not considered Threatened but could quickly become so if declines continue or if a new threat arises. 'At Risk' species are either declining but not uncommon, or uncommon but not declining.

- 26.2. Protecting iwi and hapū interests in indigenous biodiversity and strengthening partnerships between government agencies, iwi and hapū in conserving and sustainably using indigenous biodiversity
  - 26.3. Maintaining and restoring a full range of remaining natural habitats and ecosystems and indigenous species to a healthy functioning state, and
  - 26.4. Maintaining the genetic resources of introduced species that are important for economic, biological and cultural reasons by conserving their genetic diversity.
27. The 2016-2020 Action Plan is focussed on:
- 27.1. Mainstreaming biodiversity within wider government programmes and society
  - 27.2. Reducing pressures on biodiversity
  - 27.3. Promoting sustainable use, safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, and
  - 27.4. Enhancing benefits to all and implementation.

### ***Key players in biodiversity management***

28. Responsibility for biodiversity management is spread across different participants who sometimes have overlapping roles. These roles are especially complex where they straddle multiple environments (e.g. land and fresh water), and different tenures (e.g. Māori freehold, private and public conservation land), and whether the approach focuses on species or habitat. Key participants in biodiversity management include central government, local government, iwi and hapū, science and research bodies, community and environmental groups, philanthropists, landholders and resource users.
29. There has been increased involvement from a number of key players in conservation and biodiversity management, including:
- 29.1. Recognition of the role of Māori in conservation as kaitiaki which is at the heart of tikanga Māori. This has led to an increase in co-management and iwi-led projects alongside Treaty Settlements increasing iwi land and resource ownership.
  - 29.2. A shift towards a community partnerships model, with more and increasingly active community groups and private landowners in conservation at various scales.
  - 29.3. An increased and proactive role of local government in biodiversity management. A 2003 amendment to the Resource Management Act clarified maintenance of biodiversity as a key function of local government.

30. Developing a new biodiversity strategy is an opportunity to focus and align the involvement of key players, with potential benefits for regional employment in conservation and biodiversity management roles.

### ***Developments since 2000***

31. Since 2000, there have been several new initiatives concerning the management of biodiversity in New Zealand. These include:
  - 31.1. Considerable developments in the science sector and in particular the establishment of New Zealand Biological Heritage National Science Challenge – Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho, which provides research, science and innovation that supports biodiversity management. The Challenge’s objective is to protect and manage New Zealand’s biodiversity, improve our biosecurity, and enhance our resilience to harmful organisms. In addition a Conservation and Environment Science Roadmap has also been developed.
  - 31.2. A stakeholder-led Biodiversity Collaborative Group tasked with delivering a draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) and complementary measures in September 2018
  - 31.3. The development of landscape scale approaches to biodiversity management (pest control and ecological restoration)
  - 31.4. Work to develop a Predator Free 2050 Strategic Plan which will direct how New Zealand will deliver its 2050 goal and a complementary plan for the Department of Conservation (DOC) both due in December 2018
  - 31.5. DOC’s Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System which provides DOC and others with consistent, comprehensive information about biodiversity across public conservation lands, and potentially across New Zealand
- 31.1. The Environmental Reporting Act 2015 requiring regular mandatory reporting of national biodiversity status
- 31.2. The Biosecurity 2025 programme, which aims to ensure that the biosecurity system remains resilient and strong amid growing pressures from increased travel and trade.

### **Assessment of the current strategy**

32. I consider that the goals of the current strategy are generally sound. However, given the variety of players a key challenge has been uniting around a common purpose – defining and agreeing on what the goals mean in practice and the role of different players in achieving them. This lack of clarity has made it difficult to prioritise and coordinate resources at the national level or articulate to external stakeholders the underlying framework that guides the Government’s choices. The current strategy does not establish clear accountabilities or require monitoring of progress against action. This has led to variable implementation and limited progress.

33. The current Strategy does not address new methods of quantifying the value of biodiversity including natural capital valuations and ecosystem services assessments. It also does not recognise the growing impact of climate change on New Zealand's plants and animals.

## **Terms of reference for development of a new Strategy**

### **Scope**

34. Noting the need for the Strategy to focus a range of stakeholders around a common purpose and priorities, I propose that a new Strategy will:
  - 34.1. Support a nationally consistent approach to biodiversity protection and management
  - 34.2. Improve the alignment and focus around priorities and collective ambition
  - 34.3. Improve connection between various parts of the New Zealand biodiversity system by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders and iwi
  - 34.4. Clarify the national framework for prioritisation of effort and delivery and provide a 'fit for purpose' approach to monitoring and evaluation
  - 34.5. Ensure that the Strategy aligns and supports other government priorities including billion trees, climate change and the wider focus on wellbeing.
35. As part of developing a new strategy I expect there may be public discussion about the role of new technologies to manage threats and pressures on our biodiversity. I will consider feedback and views as they are presented in the process. However, the strategy process is not the place to determine any changes to the current precautionary approach to new technologies such as gene editing which have wider implications for society than just biodiversity.

### **Governance**

36. Given the variety of biodiversity players, we need structures that will bring the range of interests to the table. I propose that governance of the new Strategy will be provided by a cross-agency biodiversity group consisting of core representatives from DOC, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment, Te Puni Kōkiri, Land Information New Zealand, and regional council representatives. This group will be supplemented by officials from the Treasury and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. These agencies will provide input and feedback on the development of the Strategy throughout the process. The officials process will be led by DOC and will:
  - 36.1. Report to the Minister of Conservation on development of the Strategy

- 36.2. Ensure alignment of the process with the NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity's development and delivery
- 36.3. Prepare policy papers for discussion with external reference groups
- 36.4. Draft the Strategy discussion document and undertake public consultation on the document
- 36.5. Prepare the finalised Strategy document and paper to Cabinet seeking approval for release

### ***Engagement***

37. Engagement on a New Zealand wide Biodiversity Strategy is critical to ensure buy-in to a common purpose and collective priorities.
38. Identifying and engaging on key themes that are important to New Zealand could feed in to the global CBD process to develop a post-2020 framework.

### ***Engagement with Māori***

39. We will need to engage early with iwi and hapū to understand their aspirations for a Biodiversity Strategy and what is key to its success. Feedback will also be sought from Māori on the draft discussion document regarding how accurately Māori perspectives have been addressed, in addition to the formal consultation process.
40. We will also establish a mana whenua group (see below) to work alongside us on Strategy development, to ensure it is informed by a strong mātauranga Māori perspective.
41. We may need to modify this approach in light of the proposed revision of Crown-Māori engagement by Cabinet.

### ***Engagement with Councils***

42. Local government has a significant role in biodiversity management and the new strategy will guide their work. Officials will engage with regional councils through their representation on the cross-agency biodiversity work programme group and through the Regional Council – Central Government Chief Executive's Biodiversity-Biosecurity Forum. Officials will also engage as required with the Territorial Authority Reference Group established to inform the Biodiversity Collaborative Group.

### ***External reference groups***

43. I propose to establish three reference groups to help develop the new Strategy. These are; a mana whenua group (para 37 refers), a stakeholder group and a scientific and technical reference group. All groups will have strong Māori input. The

reference groups will provide advice, test ideas and help to build a shared understanding of the issues and possible solutions for addressing New Zealand's biodiversity decline. Meetings will be scheduled as required and all groups will report back to the Minister of Conservation. Compensation for group members will be determined using the Cabinet Fees Framework (CO (12) 6 refers) and benchmarking against similar groups.

44. The stakeholder group will include Māori representatives, members from environmental NGOs and industry (Federated Farmers, electricity generators, fishing industry bodies). The scientific and technical reference group will include scientists and technical experts from within DOC as well as external experts and will include members with expertise in matāuranga Māori.

#### *Engagement with the public and communities*

45. Early engagement will be undertaken with the public and communities to understand what New Zealanders want a new biodiversity strategy to deliver and what is key to its success. Public feedback will be sought on a strategy discussion document prior to Cabinet consideration for final approval.

#### **Resources**

46. Resourcing for development of the new Strategy will be provided primarily by DOC. The cross-agency biodiversity work programme group will assist in carrying out the work programme.
47. Compensation for reference group members will be met out of DOC's baseline.

#### **Timeframes**

48. The new Strategy will be developed in accordance with the following proposed timelines:

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Cabinet agreement to TOR for development of new Strategy	October 2018
Early engagement with reference groups, iwi and the public	November 2018 – February 2019
Develop discussion document	November 2018 – March 2019
Cabinet agreement to consult on discussion document	March 2019
Public consultation on discussion document	April – May 2019
Drafting of Strategy	June – October 2019
Cross-agency consultation on draft	November 2019
Cabinet agreement to final Strategy (paragraph 20 refers)	December 2019

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Possible revision subject to global agreement to post-2020 CBD framework (paragraph 51 refers)	October 2020

### **Consultation**

49. The following agencies have been consulted in the preparation of this paper: Environmental Protection Agency; Ministry for Primary Industries; Te Puni Kōkiri; Ministry for the Environment; Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment; Land Information New Zealand; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and the Treasury. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.

### **Financial Implications**

50. Development of the new Strategy will be funded within DOC baselines. To ensure the funding is aligned with the key priorities of the Strategy, allocation of biodiversity funding will be considered once the Strategy has been updated.

### **Legislative Implications**

51. No legislation is required to develop a new Strategy.

### **Human rights**

52. Development of the new strategy is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

### **Risks**

53. Engagement on a New Zealand wide Strategy is critical to ensure relevance and buy-in but will take time to do well and the overall timeframe is relatively short.
54. The new global framework will be decided at the CBD Conference of the Parties in October 2020. There is a moderate risk that the new Strategy due for completion by December 2019 may need to be revised to ensure it satisfies the requirements of the new global biodiversity framework. The Department of Conservation will work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to share information as the process to develop the CBD's global framework unfolds.

### **Publicity**

55. I intend to announce my intention to develop a new biodiversity strategy following Cabinet approval. I will release this paper and Terms of Reference as part of that announcement.

## Recommendations

The Minister for Conservation recommends that the Committee:

1. note that biodiversity provides us with benefits through ecosystem services including carbon sinks, nutrient filtration, flood protection, pollination, and human health and wellbeing, and that this links to the Government's wellbeing agenda.
2. note that the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2000 and Action Plan expire in 2020 and that New Zealand is required to develop a new biodiversity strategy in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
3. note that the Department of Conservation will submit a finalised strategy to Cabinet for approval by December 2019.
4. agree to the attached Terms of Reference for a new biodiversity strategy.
5. agree that development of a new biodiversity strategy will be led by the Department of Conservation and governed by a cross-agency biodiversity work programme group consisting of representatives from the Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment, Te Puni Kōkiri, Land Information New Zealand, regional councils, the Treasury and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.
6. agree to the establishment of a mana whenua reference group, a stakeholder reference group and a science and technical reference group that will perform an advisory role in the development of the strategy.
7. note that I will appoint the members of these reference groups and compensation for will be determined using the Cabinet Fees Framework and benchmarking against similar groups. note that the finalised biodiversity strategy may be revised pending the determination of a new Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity Framework in 2020.
8. note that I will release this paper and Terms of Reference when I announce the development of the new Strategy.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Eugenie Sage

Minister for Conservation