



Cabinet paper material

Proactive release

Hon. Eugenie Sage, Minister of Conservation

Title: New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – approval to release the discussion document

Date: 30 August 2019

These documents have been proactively released:

Cabinet paper – New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – approval to release the discussion document

Date: 1 July 2019

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Attachment 1 – New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – Discussion Document

Date: 1 July 2019

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Attachment 2 – New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – Draft Te Ao Māori Framework

Date: 1 July 2019

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee minute – [ENV-19-MIN-0038]

Date: 27 June 2019

Author: Cabinet Office

Material redacted

No material has been withheld from these documents.

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Conservation

Chair, Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee

New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – approval to release the discussion document

Proposal

1. This paper seeks agreement to release the attached discussion document for the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. The discussion document is intended to test ideas for inclusion in the strategy.

Executive Summary

2. This paper provides an update on the early engagement phase of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, an overview of the discussion document, and the planned eight-week consultation period in July - August, 2019.
3. New Zealand's biodiversity is in decline with thousands of species at risk of extinction.
4. Tourism is the single biggest export earner and is largely dependent on landscapes and unique species. Tourism exports rely on New Zealand's international reputation and global brand as good environmental steward.
5. As a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, New Zealand is required to develop a national biodiversity strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The current New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, adopted in 2000, expires in 2020.
6. The purpose of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) is to provide a national framework that guides how New Zealand will protect and enhance biodiversity. It is a statement of New Zealand's national goals on biodiversity management, outcomes and priorities to drive action by central and local government, iwi/hapū and the wider public.
7. Cabinet agreed to the Terms of Reference for the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and establishment of three reference groups to guide the development of the strategy, on 25 September 2018. It was also agreed that a discussion document for public consultation would be tested with Cabinet in mid-2019.
8. Stakeholder engagement was initiated in November 2018 and concluded in mid-April 2019. A discussion document is planned for public release in June 2019, to test ideas with the public to inform the development of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. The national conversation and submissions on the discussion document will then inform a draft strategy that will be brought to Cabinet by December 2019.

9. The discussion document frames the value of biodiversity in terms of the essential role it plays in supporting human wellbeing and underpinning the economy, and the intrinsic value of biodiversity regardless of its value to people. It tests long term outcomes with both ecological and wellbeing components. Ecological outcomes focus on healthy ecosystems and species while social outcomes relate more broadly to society, wellbeing and people's relationships with nature.
10. Content of the discussion document has been tested and refined with a range of groups including the cross-agency officials' working group, the Department of Conservation's Senior Leadership Team, the Natural Resource Sector Directors Governance Group, the NZBS Reference Groups, and government agencies.
11. Addressing the challenge of biodiversity loss requires coordinated action across the country. Given the diverse range of people, agencies and groups who will need to be involved, the discussion document proposes values in the strategy to guide how the multitude of players work together and deliver action.

Background

12. New Zealand's species and ecosystems have intrinsic value, and their high degree of endemism (52% of our species are found nowhere else) means the continued existence of our species is not just nationally but globally important. However, the recently released Environment Aotearoa report found that 90 percent of seabirds, 76 percent of freshwater fish, 84 percent of reptiles, and 46 percent of vascular plants are currently threatened with or at risk of extinction. The extinction risk has worsened for 86 species in the past 15 years.
13. New Zealand's flourishing tourism industry is the single biggest export earner and is largely dependent on landscapes and unique species.
14. Tourism exports and our primary sector rely on New Zealand's international reputation and global brand as good environmental steward.
15. As a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, New Zealand is required to develop a national biodiversity strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The current New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, adopted in 2000, expires in 2020.
16. Cabinet agreed to the Terms of Reference for the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and establishment of three reference groups to guide the development of the strategy, on 25 September 2018 [CAB-18-MIN-0485 refers]. It was also agreed that a discussion document for public consultation would be tested with Cabinet in mid-2019.
17. The purpose of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) is to provide a national framework that guides how New Zealand will protect and enhance biodiversity. It is a statement of New Zealand's national goals on biodiversity management, outcomes and priorities to drive action by central and local government, iwi/hapū and the wider public. It is a strategy for putting nature at the heart of New Zealand's success by protecting and restoring biodiversity.

18. The Government is committed to supporting New Zealand's transition to a climate resilient low-emissions economy and a large component of the Government's work programme supports biodiversity, including one billion trees, freshwater and climate change programmes.
19. Cabinet agreed that the allocation of biodiversity funding from Budget 2018 will be reviewed once the NZBS has been updated, to ensure the funding is aligned with the priorities of the NZBS [CAB-18-MIN-0158.04 refers].

Timeframes

20. A discussion document is planned for public release in July 2019, to test ideas with the public to inform the development of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. This paper provides an update on the early engagement phase of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy, an overview of the discussion document, and the planned eight-week consultation period in July - August, 2019.
21. The timeline is to return to Cabinet at the end of 2019 with a draft NZBS for approval. This will be followed by a collaborative process in 2020 to design an implementation plan for the NZBS.

Early engagement on the NZBS is complete

22. Stakeholder engagement was initiated in November 2018 and concluded in mid-April 2019. This consisted of:
 - six biodiversity stakeholder workshops held in the main centres. Representatives participated from local government, urban and rural conservation projects, research organisations and included interested members of the public;
 - three reference group workshops with the three reference groups: Science, Stakeholder, and Te Ao Māori. The Stakeholder Reference Group has representatives from: Federated Farmers, Fish and Game, Electricity Generators (Meridian and Genesis), Fisheries Inshore NZ, Forest Owners Association, Forest and Bird, and Environmental Defence Society;
 - 25 full day hui held with iwi/hapū/whanau at place throughout Aotearoa. Hui were open conversations regarding iwi/hapū/whanau aspirations and challenges on biodiversity and visitor management;
 - two youth workshops on the biodiversity strategy have been held in Wellington and Auckland.
23. Key points that have arisen from early engagement with stakeholders include the cultural and social values of biodiversity, the responsibility all New Zealanders have in looking after biodiversity, co-ordinating investment and resourcing, the role of education and communication in engaging the public and enabling them to act, providing a framework that empowers regional/local implementation, and the use of ecosystem and landscape-scale approaches to protect and restore biodiversity.

24. There is consensus across the reference groups that system issues are a key driver of biodiversity loss and should be a priority for action. This includes formal audit and review arrangements and improved monitoring and reporting systems. Ensuring biodiversity legislation is fit for purpose is also seen as a key part of system improvements.
25. This includes the need for reforms to the governance system including clearer leadership, stronger accountabilities,
26. Themes that have arisen from engagement with iwi/hapū/whanau include their role as kaitiaki in their rohe, the inter-relationships of people with their environment, capacity and capability required by iwi/hapū/whanau to co-manage lands and waters, integrating Mātauranga Māori and science, and the potential of sustainable cultural harvest.
27. Across discussions with biodiversity stakeholders, reference groups and iwi/hapū/whanau, co-ordinated investment and resourcing has been considered a priority for the long-term outcomes of the NZBS to be achieved.
28. Discussion on implementation of the strategy has focused on the need for collaborative and iterative planning, bringing together many participants in the system to develop plans for the short-term that can be iterated over time. It is also considered that an implementation plan is required that should be a separate document, with regular scheduled reporting and review.

The discussion document sets out bold and ambitious ideas for biodiversity management

29. The discussion document reflects what Department of Conservation officials have heard from early engagement and tests a range of content that will be used to form the strategy. The discussion document is not a draft strategy, it is a document to test policy ideas through stimulating a national conversation on biodiversity management. This in turn will inform the outcomes and system shift areas that the final strategy will focus on.
30. The discussion document frames the value of biodiversity in terms of the essential role it plays in supporting human wellbeing and underpinning the economy, and the intrinsic value of biodiversity regardless of its value to people. It tests long term outcomes with both ecological and wellbeing components. Ecological outcomes focus on healthy ecosystems and species while social outcomes relate more broadly to society, wellbeing and people's relationships with nature.
31. The NZBS framework and ongoing work programme will support the alignment of investment across the biodiversity system and optimise biodiversity management. The ambition is to build a living strategy that helps New Zealand define and redefine its biodiversity objectives, rather than simply a static document.
32. Te Ao Māori Reference Group has developed an overarching framework for the strategy, based on the concept of the NZBS as a stairway, providing a pathway to protecting and restoring the natural world. There is strong support from the Science and Stakeholder reference groups for the concept.

33. The discussion document outlines draft proposals for inclusion in a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS). These proposals include:

- a vision for biodiversity to ensure a co-ordinated response.
- long term outcomes, to describe the end-state New Zealand is aiming for.
- goals, for the next 5, 10, and 30 years.
- principles, to guide how the sector will work together.
- the international context and the post-2020 global biodiversity targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- information on the process to develop, finalize and implement the NZBS.

34. The main sections of the discussion document are:

Problem definition

35. New Zealand has a unique biodiversity, with a high number of endemic species (i.e. species that are found nowhere else in the world) and unique ecosystems. For many New Zealanders the natural environment, including biodiversity and taonga species, is part of their identity and whakapapa.

36. Biodiversity is essential to human wellbeing by providing ecosystem services including carbon sinks, nutrient filtration, flood protection and pollination, which have important economic benefits. More broadly, there is also increasing awareness of the role of nature in improving our health and wellbeing.

37. Despite the importance of biodiversity, current management methods have not halted the decline as over 4000 species are now threatened or at risk of extinction. There is a national need to provide strategic direction and coordinated, outcomes-based approaches for biodiversity conservation.

Vision

38. The proposed vision for the NZBS is: “Aotearoa New Zealand’s unique nature is healthy, abundant, and thriving. Current and future generations connect with nature, restore it and are restored by it.”

39. This reflects the perspectives and values that the project team have heard from early engagement. It will take a long-term effort to restore New Zealand’s natural environment to a state where biodiversity is increasing.

40. The NZBS vision is intended to reflect where New Zealanders want to be in the future – something ambitious that everyone involved can see themselves working towards. A timeframe of 50 years is proposed – the year 2070 – far enough into the future to stimulate long-term thinking but not too distant that it seems incomprehensible.

Outcomes and goals

41. The discussion document proposes eight long-term outcomes that describe what New Zealanders want the future of biodiversity to look like. These outcomes are

ambitious and may take 50 years or more to fully achieve. Proposed outcomes will require innovative approaches and technology to achieve.

42. The NZBS long-term outcomes are:

- A full range of ecosystems on land and water are healthy and functioning.
- Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous species and their habitats are secure and thriving.
- Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity is managed to be resilient to the impacts of global threats/change.
- All New Zealanders can connect with nature and recognise its value in supporting intergenerational wellbeing.
- Tangata whenua are empowered to exercise their role as kaitiaki.
- Aotearoa New Zealand's economic development provides for the restoration and protection of indigenous biodiversity.
- Non-indigenous species are managed to both avoid negative impacts on indigenous species while enhancing people's wellbeing.
- Aotearoa New Zealand is making a significant contribution to global biodiversity conservation and management.

43. The discussion document sets out a range of possible 5, 10, and 30-year goals. These goals aim to be measurable and ambitious steps to meet the long-term outcomes and vision. They will set out what the strategy needs to achieve first and track progress towards the long-term outcomes and vision.

44. The 2025 goals will be set as part of the first five-yearly cycle with the NZBS reviewed on a five-yearly basis. The 2025 goals will be pragmatic in terms of their attainability to catalyse New Zealand's response to the biodiversity crisis.

45. Short-term goals engage people to maintain commitment and build momentum. Long-term outcomes are important as ecological timescales can be significantly longer than a human lifetime. Addressing biodiversity decline will also require intergenerational change. Therefore, the NZBS goals aim to address both the current challenges and provide coordinates for future action.

Principles and values

46. These are intended to guide how participants in the biodiversity system work together and guide decision making. The project team have heard that addressing the challenge of biodiversity loss requires coordinated action across the country. Given the diverse range of people, agencies and groups who will need to be involved, the discussion document proposes values in the strategy to guide how the multitude of players work together and deliver action. Also proposed is a set of principles to guide decision making.

System shift areas and actions

47. System shift areas are proposed as the most important changes to focus on getting right in the next five years. Developing and strengthening these areas will set New Zealand on the best possible path towards achieving the long-term outcomes and

vision. It is envisaged that action in these areas will have the greatest impact to enable progress towards the long-term outcomes.

48. These areas are intended to be the main areas for investment and change across the biodiversity system for the first five years of the strategy. After five years, they will be reviewed to see if they are still the most important areas to focus on.

49. Under each of the five system shift areas is a statement of what success would look like for this area.

1. Getting the biodiversity system right

50. A biodiversity system that's fit for the future – a well-co-ordinated system, optimised to plan, enable, support and deliver action, with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for those involved at national, regional and local levels. This is a fundamental building block to respond to the key drivers of loss and learn the lessons from implementation of the first strategy.

2. Empowering kaitiakitanga and mātauranga māori

51. Te Ao Māori perspectives are embedded throughout the biodiversity system, and tangata whenua are enabled to be kaitiaki at all levels of the system. Getting this right is critical for our Treaty relationship, and for our overall success.

3. Communities are empowered to take action

52. All New Zealanders are empowered to be stewards of nature, conserving, managing and using it wisely, and those who are actively contributing are connected, effective, and well-supported. Given the many drivers of loss and the range of actions that need to be taken by many players, ensuring empowerment (through resources, information and better coordination) is key to success.

4. Working at scale from the mountain tops to the ocean depths

53. Biodiversity is managed at scale in a joined-up way across boundaries in the places New Zealanders live, work and play. The drivers of loss are many and varied, as are the number of people who need to play a role in addressing them. Ecosystems are interconnected. Delivering joined up work at scale is critical if New Zealand is to make progress.

5. Innovating for the future

54. Harnessing the power of technology, data and science to transform the way we manage biodiversity. The issues are many and complex – we don't yet have all the technology that we will need to succeed - and we will need to innovate. We have many gaps in our knowledge to fill before we can finalise effective approaches.

55. The discussion document suggests initial actions for each of the system shift areas – these are intended to be first steps for implementation.

Monitoring and governance

56. Feedback from early engagement has indicated that delivering on the outcomes of any strategy requires a new approach to monitoring and governance in the biodiversity system.
57. As part of this, the discussion document tests a five-yearly cycle of action planning, supported by reporting against progress every five years. It also outlines the collaborative process to develop an implementation plan that will propose the next round of actions.
58. Example actions, designed to progress towards the long-term outcomes include:
 - ensure an appropriate regulatory framework for biodiversity on private land / economic development, through a National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB). This will incorporate biodiversity considerations strongly in the new National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management and National Environmental Standard, including ultimate inclusion in farm plans;
 - support coordination of regional and community biodiversity action: through regional strategies (including urban development) and community hubs;
 - initiate a free and frank discussion with mana whenua on their role in respect of conservation land;
 - set up a new monitoring system that can, amongst other functions, oversee implementation of the NZBS; including the establishment of a biodiversity data commons;
 - embed a science roadmap that sets out the priorities for science and research activity across the biodiversity sector.
 - Prioritise the marine environment through an increase in marine protected areas.

International context

59. The current set of global biodiversity targets, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, are set to end in 2020. There is an international process under way in the Convention on Biological Diversity to agree a new set of targets. One of the roles of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy is to explain what New Zealand is doing to support achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and later iterations will do the same for the new set of targets.
60. The discussion document asks for feedback on how the vision, principles, long term outcomes, goals and system shift areas might align with this global work. This will help inform New Zealand's negotiating position in the process to determine the new targets.

Risks

61. The discussion document is testing ambitious goals which will take a long time to deliver. Expectations to see results in the short term will need to be managed to

avoid the loss of buy in from those involved over the long term. The proposed five-year reviews will maintain momentum by demonstrating progress and ensuring that the strategic direction maintains relevancy. These goals will also need to be delivered through a collaborative approach involving many participants – not just government, but the private sector, iwi/hapu, community and others.

62. In addition, there is a high demand for biodiversity action which may be greater than the available resourcing. This could also result in a loss of buy in and will be managed by the long-term view of the strategy with a focus on selected areas in the short term.
63. Achieving collective buy in and delivery will be a key challenge to implementing the strategy. Extensive early engagement to inform the discussion document, combined with the upcoming public consultation, will help to build the necessary buy in. However, there is a risk of the public viewing the document as a draft strategy, and as such may consider that it is too late for them to offer alternative suggestions to the proposed components. This will be managed through the implementation of a carefully considered engagement and communications strategy.
64. A Cabinet paper regarding the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) will be provided to Minister Mahuta in June. This will provide the policy direction of the draft NPSIB and seek approval for public consultation. There is a risk of confusion as the two work programmes are similar.
65. This will be managed by explaining the relationship between the two policy projects: the NZBS is an overarching national strategy for indigenous and non-indigenous biodiversity management across all domains (terrestrial, aquatic and marine). The NPSIB is a regulatory tool within the Resource Management Act to protect indigenous biodiversity on land.
66. Anti-1080 sentiment is likely to be expressed during the consultation period due to the controversial issue of mammalian predator control. There is also likely to be debate on the proposed long-term outcomes and goals due to the indirect impact the NZBS may have on associated work programmes.

Public engagement on the Biodiversity Strategy

67. Public consultation on the discussion document will run for eight weeks. The aim is to facilitate discussions with diverse groups, from people and organisations who are actively involved in biodiversity work to the general public, including iwi/hapū/whanau and youth.
68. Engagement with Māori will further inform the development and implementation of the NZBS through a second series of hui during the eight-week consultation period. These hui will seek to co-design with Māori their kaitiaki relationship with biodiversity, their role in conservation and how this can be developed and implemented through the NZBS.
69. A proposal is for Treaty partner hui to be held on a six-monthly basis to contribute to the implementation of the NZBS.

Consultation

70. Content of the discussion document has been tested and refined with a range of groups including the cross-agency officials' working group, the Department of Conservation's Senior Leadership Team, the Natural Resource Sector Directors Governance Group and the NZBS Reference Groups.
71. In addition, the NZBS discussion document has been developed with input from a range of agencies, including: Ministry for the Environment, Ministry for Primary Industries, Treasury, Land Information New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Internal Affairs, and Māori Crown Relations - Te Arawhiti.
72. The NZBS engagement approach with Māori is in line with the Government's principles of effective engagement.

Financial Implications

73. Proposals within the discussion document will not give rise to any financial implications.
74. Following finalisation of the NZBS, a review of Budget 2018 biodiversity funding and the International Visitor Levy Investment Plan will occur to ensure these align with NZBS priorities.

Legislative Implications

75. There are currently no legislative implications.

Impact Analysis

76. Not applicable to this paper.

Human Rights

77. This paper is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Gender Implications

78. There are currently no gender implications.

Disability Perspective

79. There are currently no disability implications.

Publicity

80. A **press release / announcement** is planned for the week of 3 June.

Proactive Release

81. the Minister of Conservation proposes to release the paper [proactively in whole/in part, or to delay the release beyond 30 business days].

Recommendations

The Minister for Conservation recommends that the Committee:

1. note that Cabinet agreed to develop a renewed New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy in September 2018.
2. note that officials have been through a comprehensive phase of early engagement with iwi and stakeholders to test policy on a renewed New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.
3. note that I am now seeking to test these ideas and the approach to the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy in a discussion document, before the strategy is developed then presented to Cabinet by the end of 2019.
4. authorise the publication of the discussion document for public engagement on the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.
5. authorise the Minister of Conservation to make minor editorial changes to the discussion document as needed before public release.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Eugenie Sage

Minister of Conservation