PROTECTING & MANAGING OUR ENVIRONMENT

National is managing the environment carefully so New Zealanders can continue to enjoy both the high standard of living they expect from a strong economy and the recreational and cultural opportunities they value.

National has put in place significant reforms in the past six years to improve water quality, streamline and simplify our resource management system, bring environmental protection to our Exclusive Economic Zone, and introduce robust and independent state of the environment reporting.

New Zealand’s environment is at the core of our quality of life, our national identity, and our competitive advantage.

National has a plan to ensure that New Zealanders can continue to enjoy the benefits of our natural resources, while improving the way our town and cities are managed through reforms to the Resource Management Act.

We are providing real leadership on environmental issues to strike the right balance between our environmental responsibilities and our economic opportunities.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

→ Adopted a National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management.
→ Brought in national standards for freshwater and national bottom lines to protect our freshwater quality.
→ Streamlined and simplified the Resource Management Act.
→ Passed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) legislation to protect our oceans.
→ Introduced the Environmental Reporting Bill to provide robust independent information to New Zealanders.
→ Ninety seven per cent of consents were processed on time in 2012/2013, compared with 69 per cent in 2007/08—meaning thousands more consents were processed on time.
NATIONAL IS...

IMPROVING FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT

✓ Developing proposals to deliver generational reform of freshwater management through a scientifically backed national framework to help councils and communities work together to improve water bodies.

✓ Protecting freshwater quality by implementing national bottom lines.

IMPROVING INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

✓ Introduced the Environmental Reporting Bill to provide robust, independent information to New Zealanders.

✓ Passed legislation to standardise the way in which environmental data is collected and provided by councils to central government.

INCENTIVISING BETTER WASTE MANAGEMENT

✓ Announced a comprehensive work plan to clean up New Zealand’s most contaminated sites, costing $30.5 million.

✓ Completed the clean-up of Tui Mine, on time and under budget.

✓ Distributed nearly $100 million through the Waste Disposal Levy to support projects that minimise waste.

✓ Invested $1.3 million in a hazardous substances safety campaign.

✓ Established the Waste Minimisation Board to expand recycling.

✓ Consulting on mandatory product stewardship to reduce key waste streams going into landfills.

DELIVERING CLEANER AIR

✓ Improved the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality.

✓ Phased in tougher vehicle emission standards to improve air quality.

✓ Spent $103 million on water clean-ups in the past five years.

✓ Committing a total of $350 million to cleaning up iconic water bodies like the Rotorua Lakes, Lake Ellesmere and the Waituna Lagoon.

✓ Established the Land and Water Forum, a collaborative approach to freshwater management, and begun implementing their recommendations.

✓ Brought in regulations to improve monitoring of compliance with water consents, double penalties for non-compliance, and require metering of 98 per cent of water takes.

✓ Introduced a requirement on councils to account for how much water is taken from water bodies and any contaminants that are discharged into them.
PROTECTING OUR OCEANS

✓ Passed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) legislation to protect our oceans from the potential environmental risks of activities like petroleum exploration activities, seabed mining, marine energy generation and carbon capture developments.

✓ Introduced regulations to support the EEZ legislation. The regulations reinforce National’s commitment to world’s best practice for environmental protection and reducing marine pollution.

✓ Made the Environmental Protection Authority responsible for consenting, monitoring and enforcing activities that impact on the EEZ environment, such as petroleum exploration, seabed mining, deepwater aquaculture and marine energy development.

EASIER & QUICKER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

✓ Streamlining and simplifying the Resource Management Act.

✓ Introduced legislation to ensure council decisions on medium-sized projects are made within six months.

✓ Required an assessment of the opportunities for providing or reducing economic growth and employment that councils must undertake before putting in rules that restrict the way we use our land and resources.

✓ Set up a streamlined process for the Auckland Unitary Plan to enable an efficient plan process.

✓ Prevented rules that required resource consents to trim trees, particularly prevalent in Auckland.

✓ Removed frivolous, vexatious, and anti-competitive objections that can add thousands of dollars to consent applications.

✓ Formed the Environmental Protection Authority.

✓ Set a nine-month time limit for consenting projects of national significance.
OUR RESULTS SO FAR

CLEANER WATERWAYS

- Lake Rotorua and Lake Rotoiti have reached their water quality targets and Lake Rotoiti has the best water quality since monitoring began in the 1990s, with other Rotorua Lakes close to approaching their targets.
- Lake Taupo is 89 per cent of the way towards reaching its nitrogen reduction target.
- 103 of the Land and Water Forum’s recommendations are being progressed, with a further 30 to be considered as part of future work.
- Indicator reports on river conditions and swimming suitability show water quality is generally improving at most monitored sites, with overall concentrations of nutrients and bacteria either stable or improving.
- Over 23,000kms of waterways fenced to exclude stock.
- Water storage schemes are beginning to be built, which help us to conserve water in areas facing pressure.

TACKLING WASTE

- 103 projects funded through the Waste Minimisation Fund, with over $100 million distributed to help reduce waste.
- Introduced 12 voluntary product stewardship schemes, diverting 34,000 tonnes of waste from landfills each year.
- Remediated the Tui Mine, New Zealand’s worst contaminated site.
- Set a national environment standard for contaminated soil.
BETTER INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Introduced the Environmental Reporting Bill, which will provide for mandatory independent Environmental Reporting.
- 75 projects funded through the Community Environment Fund.

CLEANER AIR

- Air quality at best levels since comprehensive reporting began.
- Reduction of nearly 20 per cent of estimated premature deaths attributable to air quality problems.
- New Zealand ranked in the top 10 countries in the OECD for air quality.

IMPROVED RESOURCE CONSENTING

- Thirteen nationally significant projects, representing billions in investment, progressed through the nine-month consenting process.
- Oversaw significant improvements in consenting timelines, resulting in multi-billion dollar projects being consented in just nine months.
- 97 per cent of consents were processed on time in 2012-2013, compared with 69 per cent in 2007-08 – meaning thousands more consents were processed on time.
WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT...

1. REFORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Water is the centrepiece of our environmental policy and National has a strong plan in place to ensure our water quality meets the needs of New Zealand, as both an economic resource, and an important part of our cultural and social identity.

➔ Buy and retire selected farmland next to important waterways

There are some strips of land that are particularly sensitive to intensive farming.

We will spend $100 million to buy and retire areas of selected farmland next to important waterways to create an environmental buffer which will help improve water quality.

This fund will add an option for councils to help manage freshwater by enabling these sensitive areas to be retired for environmental purposes and/or community recreation.

Retiring the land will bring benefits to the waterway, with the potential for additional benefits if the establishment of wetlands is possible.

This fund will complement existing measures to covenant land, and current practice from Ministers responsible for the Overseas Investment Office for relevant land sales to overseas investors to vest ownership of beds of waterways with the Crown as part of the sale process.

➔ Introduce a requirement for dairy cattle exclusion from waterways by 1 July 2017

The dairy industry has made significant progress in voluntarily addressing some of the key environmental issues their industry faces. However, to provide greater confidence to New Zealanders, we will make meeting this environmental protection a mandatory requirement for dairy farmers.

We will work constructively with dairy farmers when developing the legislation to ensure practical solutions in areas of difficult terrain and/or which are subject to extreme weather events.

National will work with industry to exclude other cattle from waterways over time on intensively-farmed lowland properties.

➔ Advance the Land and Water Forum’s recommendations

National will continue water reform by advancing the Land and Water Forum’s recommendations, including addressing efficient use and allocation of freshwater.

We have taken significant steps to ensure New Zealand has a sufficiently rigorous system for managing freshwater quality, including a scientifically-backed national framework.

National is implementing over 100 of the Land and Water Forum’s recommendations to improve the way New Zealand manages freshwater, and has begun the multi-generational reforms required.
2. REFORM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

There is widespread agreement that the system that has developed over the past 22 years is not serving New Zealand well. Our reforms are focused on taking away much of the uncertainty, time and cost from the RMA and creating a system that enables growth while ensuring important environmental standards are maintained.

→ Improve resource management planning
  → Require more upfront, clear decisions to be made in plans to reduce the need for consent-by-consent planning so communities can move ahead with certainty.
  → Introduce a national planning template to standardise planning documents, while still allowing for specific local issues to be addressed through local content.
  → Require a single resource management plan per district or other agreed area to increase the accessibility of plans to the public without having to consult multiple documents.
  → Require compulsory pre-hearing mediation to more quickly resolve environment court hearings.
  → Improve Maori participation to specify clear requirements for councils to involve iwi/hapū in early stages of planning.

→ Improve greater national consistency and guidance
  → Change sections 6 and 7 of the Act to improve their relevance and balance in regard to broader social, environmental, and economic outcomes.
  → Improve the way we develop National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards to ensure timely direction about emerging issues of national interest.

→ Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of resource consents
  → Provide more proportionality to allow reductions in regulatory requirements for minor and less complex projects, to better reflect their scale and environmental impact.
  → Require clearer rights and responsibilities for consents in terms of notifications and objections, and who is considered an affected party.
  → Incentivise a greater emphasis on plan making by not requiring consents where an activity has already been allowed through the planning process.

→ Improve council accountability
  → Require councils to publish fixed fees for many consents and report on consent charges and costs.
  → Develop a performance expectation system to complement council monitoring requirements.
3. PROVIDE MORE ROBUST AND INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

→ Put in place comprehensive environmental reporting

The Labour Government undermined confidence in State of the Environment reports by removing information they didn’t like.

National is committed to independent, arms-length reporting to ensure that New Zealanders have a better understanding of key environmental information.

→ Publish and regularly update a national list of priority public sites for contamination remediation

New Zealand has a legacy of contaminated sites. We are cleaning these up through the Contaminated Sites Fund, and ensuring that high priority sites are identified so these can be addressed.
CLIMATE CHANGE

National takes climate change seriously and we are committed to making sure New Zealand does its fair share. New Zealand produces just 0.15 per cent of global emissions, but we have one of only two comprehensive nationwide emissions trading schemes outside of Europe.

New Zealand faces unique domestic challenges in reducing emissions. About three-quarters of electricity is already from renewable energy, we have a growing and dispersed population, and around half of our emissions are from agriculture. Our opportunities to reduce emissions are more expensive than in other developed countries.

The New Zealand ETS is a long-term tool and it is expected that its impact will increase over time, and with progress being made on international negotiations for a new post-2020 global agreement. New Zealand is actively involved in climate change efforts, particularly when it comes to reducing emissions from farm animals, and assisting our Pacific neighbours.

National will focus on four key areas:

1. **Adaptation**: we need to ensure our ability to adapt to the changing climate over the next 100 years is fit for purpose;

2. **International Negotiations and Research**: we have to play our part in international efforts to reduce emissions;

3. **Managing New Zealand Emissions**: we need to make a fair contribution to that global effort in terms of New Zealand’s share of global emissions (0.15%);

4. **Climate Change Assistance in the Pacific**: we need to help the small island states of the Pacific, in particular, adjust to climate change and move to renewable energy.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

→ National has amended the ETS and taken responsibility for the country’s emissions in a way that doesn’t impose unreasonable costs on households, families and businesses.

→ New Zealand is playing an international leadership role through the Global Research Alliance, where we can make the greatest contribution.

→ Continued to provide climate-related support to Pacific nations.

→ On target to meet our commitment under the Kyoto Protocol First Commitment Period of stabilising our net emissions from 2008 to 2012 at the level of our total emissions in 1990.
NATIONAL IS . . .

SENSIBLY MANAGING NEW ZEALAND’S EMISSIONS

✓ Amended the ETS and taken responsibility for our emissions in a way that doesn’t impose unreasonable costs on households and businesses.

✓ Agreed to a minimum unconditional target to reduce our emissions to 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 – representing a reasonable and fair share of climate change action.

✓ Set a conditional 10-20 per cent target by 2020 and a target of 50 per cent reduction by 2050. These are very ambitious targets given the nature of our economy.

✓ Working towards a goal of 90 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2025. With 75 per cent of our electricity generation already renewable, we have fewer low-cost options to reduce emissions compared with most other developed countries.

✓ Committed to exploring innovative and technical solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. We have developed multiple initiatives including:
  - The Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre, which is a consortium of nine research organisations led by AgResearch and based in Palmerston North.
  - The Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change research programme, which covers all aspects of climate change in the land-based sectors.
  - The Primary Growth Partnership, a government-industry investment initiative, for research and innovation to boost the economic growth and sustainability of New Zealand’s primary, forestry and food sectors.

LEADING INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

✓ Working towards a binding agreement under the Convention Framework, which accounts for 85 per cent of global emissions and includes many major economies (US, China, India, Brazil, Russia, Japan, Canada), and participated in on-going international climate change negotiations.

✓ Advocated for an international agreement that requires all major emitters to reduce their emission levels over time.

✓ Established the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Emissions, which brings countries together to work on reducing emissions from livestock, cropping and rice production. New Zealand, which is a co-chair of the Alliance and runs its secretariat, has committed a total of $45 million (out to 30 June 2019) to support the Alliance’s work.

✓ Joined the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, which brings together countries committed to taking action on short-lived climate pollutants (such as black carbon and methane).

✓ Initiated the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform, a group of small and medium sized countries to support reform of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.

✓ Pledged more than $80 million over the next three years in climate-related support to the Pacific, including $65 million for renewable energy initiatives. Working alongside the EU Commission, we raised over $650 million in funding for such developments in the Pacific.
**NATIONAL IS...**

**EASING PRESSURE ON FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES**

- Extended the transitional implementation phase for the electricity, industrial and transport sectors.
- Maintaining a fixed-price option until at least 2015.
- Removed the 2014 legislated entry of agricultural emissions into the ETS.

**SUPPORTING ADAPTATION**

- Committed around $100 million on research projects relating to climate change adaptation. For example, we commissioned research under the Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change Research programme, and the Natural Hazards Research Platform.

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**OUR RESULTS SO FAR**

**ON TRACK TO MEET OUR INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

We are on target to meet our commitment under the Kyoto Protocol First Commitment Period of stabilising our net emissions from 2008 to 2012 at the level of our total emissions in 1990.

**CONTINUING TO WORK TOWARDS OUR FUTURE COMMITMENTS**

We have set a target of 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 while over 100 countries have yet to indicate they will do anything in the second period.

Our offer of 5 per cent is roughly comparable to Australia (4 per cent), the US (-3 per cent).

**OUR FARMERS ARE BECOMING MORE CARBON EFFICIENT**

New Zealand pastoral agriculture is the most carbon-efficient in the world in producing dairy and meat products. The emissions intensity of agriculture product is reducing.

*Between 1990 and 2011, real agriculture GDP increased 48 per cent. Over the same period, agriculture emissions increased by just 12.1 per cent.*

Improvements in agriculture efficiency are due to improved livestock genetics, pasture quality, farm management and research.
WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT...

1. SEEK INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

→ Work with international partners to put in place a comprehensive new Global Agreement by the end of 2015.

New Zealand supports a global response to lower the growth rate of global emissions. Under National, New Zealand has stepped up its efforts to contribute to international climate change negotiations and research.

Our negotiators have played important facilitator roles in the formal negotiations.

2. CONTINUE TO PLAY OUR PART INTERNATIONALLY

→ Help New Zealand scientists and experts contribute to other international climate change research efforts.

National will assist NZ scientists, both within the formal UN negotiating process and associated research efforts such as in Antarctica.

→ Continue to support highly vulnerable small island states in the Pacific.

→ Other countries are aware of New Zealand’s unique circumstances. They recognise New Zealand’s contribution in international forums towards an effective, global agreement on climate change and our work with our Pacific neighbours to adapt to a changing climate.

3. INVEST $22.5 MILLION TO SUPPORT NEW FOREST PLANTING

→ Re-boot the Afforestation Grant Scheme, investing $22.5 million over five years to encourage and support the planting of new forests.

The grant will help landowners establish forests of between five and 300 hectares.

In return for the grant, grantees will forfeit carbon credits to the Crown for up to a decade.

The removal of carbon by forests plays an important role in helping New Zealand meet its long-term climate change commitments.

Planting new forests contributes positively to reducing New Zealand’s net emissions.

$22.5 MILLION TO PLANT NEW TREES
15,000 HECTARES OF NEW FORESTS
DON’T PUT IT ALL AT RISK

Labour and the Greens would:

- Damage our regional economies by placing unreasonable expectations on local authorities for freshwater management. Under the last Labour government, difficult water issues were put in the ‘too hard’ basket and our waterways were allowed to deteriorate.

- Not seek a balance in the Resource Management Act, but would look to increase its role as a handbrake on economic growth.

- Drive an extreme climate change agenda dictated by the Green Party.

- Add costs to households and put the brakes on the economy through their, and the Green Party’s, ETS policies.

- Introduce policies to reduce the dairy sector, which would not influence international demand for dairy. It would simply mean that less carbon-efficient dairy producers in other countries would fill the gap. That would hurt our exports, reduce jobs, reduce incomes and force us to borrow more from overseas to maintain our living standards.