

Forestry Policy

Vision

Forests are of significant value to Aotearoa New Zealand. They act as important carbon sinks and expanding the area of land in forest can help Aotearoa New Zealand meet its international climate change commitments in the short term. Wood products also play an important role in replacing high-energy high carbon products such as steel and concrete.

Alongside economic value, forests are important for ecological, environmental, recreational, spiritual, social, medicinal and cultural reasons.

Originally, over 80% of Aotearoa New Zealand was covered in forest. Indiscriminate clearing of forest and conversion to farmland, together with the introduction of exotic animal and plant species, has caused significant environmental degradation with increased erosion, loss of biodiversity, and more severe flooding in deforested catchments. Although steps have been taken to preserve and restore our remaining native forests, more needs to be done.

The effects of world forest destruction reinforce the need for us to preserve, protect and extend ours and to act internationally to improve the stock and health of the world's forests.

The Green Party's vision for forestry in Aotearoa New Zealand is that:

- Aotearoa New Zealand has large areas of land in healthy, productive, sustainably managed forests, which contain a diversity of species, both indigenous and exotic.
- Forestry is recognised and encouraged as one of normal suite of possible land uses by all landowners
- Marginal and vulnerable land prone to erosion is largely in permanent protection forests and the proportion of forest in indigenous species has greatly increased.

- Aotearoa New Zealand has a viable, innovative and stable forestry industry where plantation forests are managed and harvested on a sustainable basis, while at the same time respecting and enhancing the cultural, ecological, economic and social values that people place on forests.
- Protection forests, shelterbelts, shade trees and small to medium sized multipurpose woodlots are an integral and valuable part of farming operations and the rural landscape.
- Internationally, Aotearoa New Zealand is a world leader in sustainable management of its forests and plays a key role in promoting the sustainability and protection of indigenous forests around the world.

See also the Green Party [Conservation](#) policy, which contains detailed policies relating to protecting the conservation values of publicly owned indigenous forests.

Key Principles

1. To protect, maintain, enhance and increase our indigenous forests.
2. To significantly expand both our protection forests and our plantation forests in diversity of species, and to manage and use them sustainably.
3. To protect soil, water and associated dependent indigenous ecosystems.
4. To develop and maintain a viable, innovative, and environmentally and socially responsible commercial forestry sector.
5. To retain and expand government ownership of state forests, unless they are required for settlements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
6. To support the appropriate regional implementation of resource management legislation in order to ensure that forestry is treated fairly along with other land uses.
7. To ensure that all timber and other wood products (both imported and domestic) used or sold in Aotearoa New Zealand are sourced from legal sustainably certified forestry.
8. To maintain and improve the environmental, recreational and cultural values New Zealanders derive from our forests.
9. To contribute to the sustainable management of the world's forests and to support a global increase in all types of forest cover and the rights of forest dependent communities.
10. To honour all Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations related to Aotearoa New Zealand's forestry resources.

Specific Policy Points

1. Ensuring Wood Products are from Sustainably Managed Forests

Illegal harvesting of timber – both in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas – undermines efforts to ensure sustainable forestry. Importing illegally harvested timber can undercut our local forestry industry. Our local forestry industry already has a relatively good reputation for sustainability, but this can be strengthened and backed up with credible certification so that consumers can easily tell if wood products are from sustainable sources or not.

Policy Positions

- 1.1 Protect the honest operators in the forestry sector by:
 - a) Placing an immediate ban on the import and sale of all illegally harvested timber and wood products
 - b) Requiring all wood products from indigenous forests (both domestic and imported) on the domestic market to be independently certified by a credible third party as being sourced from sustainably managed and harvested forests.
 - c) Requiring all timber and wood products to have clear country of origin labelling.
 - d) Reviewing the penalties applying under the Forests Act and the Conservation Act to ensure they provide an effective deterrent to illegal and unsustainable harvesting, processing and clear felling of indigenous forests.
 - e) Significantly increasing funding for the Department of Conservation and other relevant government agencies, so that these agencies can effectively enforce existing legislation to protect Crown owned indigenous forests and to ensure that indigenous forests on private land are managed sustainably.
 - f) Requiring all state forests and local council forests to obtain Forest Stewardship Council certification.
 - g) Encouraging all larger plantation forests to gain Forest Stewardship Council certification.
- 1.2 Promote a public education campaign in partnership with the forestry industry to encourage consumers to only buy timber and wood products that have been certified as sourced from sustainably managed and harvested forests, until 1b is fully implemented.

- 1.3 Actively promote the use of locally grown Forest Stewardship Council certified timber in the construction industry, particularly for government and other public buildings, as a less energy intensive alternative to concrete and steel.
- 1.4 Work in partnership with both local and foreign companies on an international marketing program for Aotearoa New Zealand wood products that are certified as sustainably grown.

2. Protecting, Maintaining and Increasing our Indigenous Forests

It is vital that the health of our indigenous forests is restored and maintained. This requires high quality plans and permits to be adhered to when harvesting occurs, action taken to protect indigenous forests from introduced pests and weed species, and monitoring and management of the increasing pressures of recreation, tourism and other competing resource uses.

The Green Party would like to ensure public access to public indigenous forests for all these other uses, including for the harvesting of products other than timber. However, it is critical such activities are carried out in an ecologically sustainable basis.

In achieving these objectives we need to ensure that the rights of Māori guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi are upheld.

Policy Positions

- 2.1 Require a review of the performance of the plans and permits approved by government agencies, in particular regarding approved levels of harvest, silviculture, and levels of set aside areas.
- 2.2 Ensure effective management within strict ecological guidelines of:
 - a) introduced species especially wilding tree species;
 - b) human access; and
 - c) harvest of non-timber resources e.g. sphagnum moss and honey.
- 2.3 Increase the level of funding to the Department of Conservation and other relevant government agencies, for pest control and to raise awareness among land owners and local and territorial authorities about the importance of investing in the long-term rehabilitation of damaged native forest estate by replanting or silviculture treatment to encourage natural regeneration.
- 2.4 Review and increase incentives for private land owners with indigenous forest on their property to protect, maintain and expand their forests by:

- a) Assisting landowners (by providing information) to be able to claim the carbon credits from their forests.
- b) Ensuring that the QEII Trust and Nga Whenua Rāhui are adequately resourced so that land owners are able to protect and manage areas with high conservation values and to support local and territorial authorities to do so as well.
- c) Working with all forest owners where there are concerns about unsustainable management of privately owned indigenous forests.
- d) Fairly compensating individuals or groups if forests used in settlements under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and managed for the purpose of sustainable harvesting, are affected by subsequent changes to sustainability standards within 25 years of the deed of settlement.

3. Supporting a Viable, Stable and Sustainable Forestry Industry

Commercial forestry is a key contributor to the economy and is critical to the livelihoods of many New Zealanders. Production forests are also valuable for the ecosystems they support and the "ecosystem services" they provide, including carbon sequestration, soil conservation and water quality.

An expanding and healthy commercial forestry sector is critical to slowing the pace of climate change, and providing products that can replace more energy intensive products (concrete and steel) in the building industry as well as providing a carbon neutral source of energy.

As we phase out fossil fuels, wood will become an increasingly important source of energy, and this will provide an additional source of income for foresters, particularly when waste products can be used.

The Green Party supports the use of waste wood, pellets and woodchips for domestic heating in clean wood burners, and for industrial boiler fuel, particularly where it can replace coal. Second generation biofuels, particularly cellulosic ethanol and other fuels from purpose grown or waste wood may be a sustainable source of transport fuel, unlike fuels made from food crops (see our [Energy](#) policy for further detail).

It is also important to recognise that our commercial forests are particularly vulnerable to biosecurity and climatic threats due to the current dominance of *Pinus radiata* as a plantation species. The Green Party believes that there is a need to promote greater genetic and species diversity in our forest estates as well as a need to increase biosecurity border control.

The Green Party acknowledges that inappropriately sited forestry can be detrimental to local cultural or scenic values and that poorly managed, intensive harvesting operations can have a negative impact on erosion control, water quality, local

biodiversity and other factors. The Forest Owners Association Environmental Code of Practice provides a basis for improving performance in this area. We believe that it is important that the forestry industry protects its reputation as a 'sustainable and responsible' operator by continuing to work constructively within the RMA framework.

To secure this commitment from the commercial forestry sector, and to improve sustainability, the regulatory and policy environment in which the sector operates needs to be fair. That is, it should not discriminate against forestry relative to other competing land uses.

In order for Aotearoa New Zealand to realise the economic gains from the expected increase in wood harvesting, the industry needs to develop and retain a skilled and experienced workforce. It also needs to produce a far greater proportion of value added products and to target high value markets.

Policy Positions

- 3.1 Support research and development of benefit to the forestry industry, including:
 - a) Funding research and development of projects which use wood and wood waste as an energy source.
 - b) Developing and promoting wood as an alternative to energy and carbon intensive building products, such as steel and concrete.
 - c) Funding research and development into converting lignin and cellulose from wood into fuels, chemical feedstock and other products to replace oil and coal derived materials.
- 3.2 Promote and encourage longer rotation plantation species as an alternative to *Pinus radiata*.
- 3.3 Support increasing the diversity of tree species grown for timber, especially encouraging those that provide high value timber and those that do not need to be treated chemically (e.g. *macrocarpa*, cedar, totara, eucalyptus).
- 3.4 Work with industry to have at least 30% of the plantation forestry portfolio in superior high value species in 10 years.
- 3.5 Facilitate a greater level of collaboration between growers, researchers and industry so that the exchange of new information on the propagation, establishment, care and maintenance of forests in alternative species is hastened and information is made more accessible to small operators
- 3.6 Investigate ways of restoring genetic diversity to our plantations, as currently there is a high level of dependency on cloning which exposes our plantations to climatic and biosecurity threats.

- 3.7 Maintain a high level of biosecurity protection (as outlined in our [Conservation](#) policy). including taking a precautionary approach towards any proposals to create international airports in major forestry regions such as Rotorua.
- 3.8 Provide incentives for the planting of forests on farms by increasing funding to the Government Afforestation Grants scheme, while changing the scheme to ensure more long-term sequestration.
- 3.9 Provide greater investment certainty to the forestry industry by introducing a floor price for the value of carbon for new planting, and charging a very modest premium to foresters for this security.
- 3.10 Improve the Permanent Forest Sinks Initiative to encourage afforestation of private land.
- 3.11 Facilitate the planting of new and diverse permanent and harvestable forests on non-conservation and State Owned Enterprise land.

A. Genetic Engineering in Forestry

The Green Party's position on GE is that our food and our environment must be kept GE free. Genetically engineered trees are no exception to this position as they also have the potential to have unforeseen impacts on our forests and wider environment.

Policy Positions

- 3.12 Ban the commercial release and growth, development and field-testing of GE trees.
- 3.13 Maintain zero tolerance to all GE derived seed and plant imports.
- 3.14 Allow genetic engineering experiments to continue in secure containment subject to assessment by the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA), while ensuring ERMA's processes for evaluating the risks and benefits are sufficiently objective to protect public safety.

B. Regional Forestry

Policy Positions

- 3.15 Promote and encourage farm forestry and woodlots on agricultural land, especially lower productivity, erosion prone land and sensitive catchments, by encouraging the dissemination of information to farmers and landowners.
- 3.16 Encourage the establishment of collaborative marketing strategies for small lots of high value timber species.

- 3.17 Support the industry move to producing a higher level of value added products and to move away from producing low value export product such as logs. For example, we will work with industry to address the need for a substantial amount of new investment in large-scale manufacturing capability.
- 3.18 Investigate current rating mechanisms for forestry to ensure that the contribution of forestry to regional transport funds is being determined fairly when compared to other land uses.
- 3.19 Support the regional organisation of fire services for the management and control of rural and forest fires.
- 3.20 Ensure that the economic and social benefits of forestry are enjoyed by local communities by:
 - a) Encouraging national coordination of regional training and research programmes to develop skills in all aspects of forestry and provide trade certification assessment in consultation with agencies such as The Logging and Forestry Industry Training Organisation and NZQA.
 - b) Assisting regional forestry communities to develop so that nursery work, planting, environmental assessment, training, pruning, logging, processing and marketing can all be carried out by suitably qualified local people.
 - c) Encouraging the processing of timber products in the region in which they are grown.
- 3.21 Support the use of State pension funds to invest in Aotearoa New Zealand forestry as opportunity arises including buy back of forests.

4. Promoting the Environmental, Recreational and Cultural Values of our Forests

All forests, whether planted or naturally occurring, are important to New Zealanders for a range of cultural, social, aesthetic, recreational and environmental reasons. The forests are also a key part of our heritage as New Zealanders.

Policy Positions

- 4.1 As part of environmental education, ensure that curricula, at all educational levels, teach the value of trees and forests, the ecosystems they support, and their contribution to biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- 4.2 Support and increase public campaigns to educate all New Zealanders in the importance of trees and forests and using wood products instead of concrete, steel or plastic.

- 4.3 Encourage volunteers and public participation in tree planting, forest development and management.
- 4.4 Encourage local and regional councils to provide greater opportunities for their communities to create new areas of woodlots and forest reserves for soil and water conservation, recreation and biodiversity.
- 4.5 Encourage the integration of research programmes, landowner's experience and educational institution's programmes to improve the development and implementation of locally appropriate tree planting and appreciation of their ecological values.

5. Contributing to the Sustainable Management of the World's Forests

Aotearoa New Zealand has a responsibility to contribute to the sustainable management of the world's forests and to support a global increase in all types of forest cover. Currently much of the world's wood is being produced on an unsustainable basis. Of particular concern is the large-scale destruction of tropical forests as deforestation accounts for a significant amount of global carbon emissions.

As consumers New Zealanders either knowingly or unknowingly contribute to this destruction. Aotearoa New Zealand's imports of cheap wood products have increased three-fold in the last decade. Much of this product is from timber that has been logged illegally or unsustainably. Not only does this contribute to global deforestation and to a reduction in biodiversity, but it undercuts domestic operators who are producing product from sustainably grown timber.

Policy Positions

- 5.1 Actively work with others countries to combat unsustainable logging and trade.
- 5.2 Ensure Aotearoa New Zealand consumers do not contribute to global deforestation by the initiatives in section 1 of this policy.
- 5.3 Enable developing countries to protect their forests by actively advocating, in international forums on forestry and on climate change, for the establishment of a compensation and development fund, resourced by developed countries, that:
 - a) Compensates local communities in developing countries for the foregone revenue from timber and from agriculture on converted forestry land;

- b) Assists developing countries, where human health and survival is dependent on income from forest clearance, to establish alternative economic activity to provide for their needs.
- c) Encourages training opportunities to foresters from developing countries in order to assist and promote sustainable management of forests.
- d) Investigates establishing and funding a collaborative international research project that works with developing countries whose forests are threatened with extinction (as a result of deforestation and global pollution). This project will work to establish gene banks for the rehabilitation of their forests when or if their problems are solved. This project would initially be Aotearoa New Zealand-led but would be expanded to include international researchers and third party investment as support grows.