

## Conservation Policy

### Vision

The Green Party envisions an Aotearoa New Zealand in which:

- Distinctive and varied landscapes are protected, and indigenous biodiversity thrives.
- Threatened and endangered native species recover to flourishing population levels
- Habitats are restored, enhanced and extended and there is no further loss of natural ecosystems.
- There is a complete linked network of ecologically representative areas - terrestrial, marine and aquatic - under protective management.
- Modified ecosystems of towns, farms, forests and waterbodies are managed to accommodate our indigenous species.
- There is public access to the conservation estate so that people can enjoy, interact with, and understand our indigenous natural environment.
- The Crown recognises the kaitiaki role of tangata whenua, and works with them to protect tāonga species and significant places. Conservation is informed by mātauranga Māori.

### Key Principles

The Green Party recognises that nature has innate value, and our quality of life is underpinned by the health of our ecosystems. Therefore:

1. Conservation policies and practices must safeguard and enhance ecosystems and all native plants and animal species, especially those that are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. Conservation policies and practices must acknowledge and incorporate the current and predicted impacts of global environmental changes, such as climate change.

3. Conservation policies and practices must foster people's awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the protection of the indigenous plants and animals of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the ecosystems in which they exist; while educating people on how best to achieve positive conservation outcomes.
4. Conservation must extend beyond parks and reserves to become an integral part of the planning and management of the countryside (including farms), towns and cities, and waterbodies.
5. Support should be given to whānau, hapū and iwi in carrying out kaitiaki responsibilities in conservation management, and models of conservation co-governance will continue to be developed for both central and local government.
6. All human activity needs to be managed in a way that supports the wellbeing of natural ecosystems, indigenous species and habitats. This requires recognising the effects on nature from human activities in both urban and rural areas, improved management of these activities and their effects, and support for increased predator and pest and weed control and community and iwi initiatives that restore our natural environment.
7. We should work collaboratively with other countries and implement international biodiversity agreements, share knowledge, and encourage others to take action to protect biodiversity.

## Specific Policy Points

### 1. Improving Department of Conservation (DOC) funding

The Department of Conservation (DOC) must be adequately funded to undertake its primary conservation and advocacy roles, including the protection of indigenous biodiversity.

#### *Policy Positions*

- 1.1. Developing DOC's core capacity by improving funding for staff and contractor capacity, including scientific and technical expertise, field staff and rangers.
- 1.2. Increase DOC's capacity to conduct research into the eradication of introduced pest species and the control of diseases threatening biodiversity recovery.
- 1.3. Increasing funding to the Nature Heritage Fund to enable the purchase and protection of special places that are threatened and/or under-represented in the conservation estate. These could include whole property purchases in

the high country and iconic coastal and lowland areas with high ecological or landscape values.

- 1.4. Training for DOC staff to work constructively with whānau and hapū and communities to achieve common conservation goals in a manner that strengthens conservation outcomes and relations.

## 2. Protecting threatened indigenous species

Besides reducing new and existing pest pressures on indigenous biodiversity, we have to ensure there are habitats suitable for indigenous species to live and breed. We need to ensure that these species are protected from the harmful consequences of human activities.

### *Policy Positions*

- 2.1. Work with district and regional councils, landholders and iwi and hapū to protect indigenous nature on private and Māori land.
- 2.2. Enhance the nationwide network of protected natural areas and fund DOC to establish new reserves to provide protection for areas representing all ecosystem types in Aotearoa New Zealand, from the mountain tops to the sea. This will include dunelands, tussock land, grasslands, wetlands, lowland podocarp forests, and other ecosystems not currently well represented in the conservation estate, to form a connected network.
- 2.3. Support research into developing new technologies for the eradication of introduced pest species.
- 2.4. Ensure that all threatened species have a recovery plan in place.
- 2.5. Review the Wildlife Act to establish protection for indigenous plants and ensure protection for indigenous wildlife are robust enough for all threatened species.
- 2.6. Establish new and larger 'mainland islands' for intensive pest management, as well as developing ex-situ species conservation away from natural habitats, such as captive breeding programmes, to help save threatened native species from extinction on the mainlands.
- 2.7. Recognise the cultural heritage value of traditional Māori plants and animals, such as the kiore, and develop strategies to ensure these species are conserved in areas where they will not seriously threaten indigenous species.
- 2.8. Enhance the conservation potential of islands in co-operation with residents and tangata whenua, including protecting the pest free status of

islands without introduced pest and predator species, and achieving pest free status on others.

- 2.9. Fund increased research into indigenous ecosystem functioning and species population dynamics.
- 2.10. Encourage private and customary landowners to maintain existing, and create new, areas of indigenous vegetation (see below).
- 2.11. Continue the existing ban on the export of indigenous logs and chips, including swamp Kauri, and ensure that any removal of windblown trees on public conservation land is ecologically sound and consistent with cultural materials plans agreed between local hapū and iwi, and DOC.
- 2.12. Amend the Forests Act to require public consultation on draft sustainable management plans.
- 2.13. Ensure rigorous enforcement of the sustainable forest management provisions of the Forest Act that relate to indigenous forest on private land.
- 2.14. Prevent field trials or release of genetically engineered organisms.
- 2.15. Fund increased research into the impacts of climate change on indigenous species, habitats and ecosystems.
- 2.16. Develop strategies for climate change adaptation, including dealing with increased beech mast seasons and habitat change.

### 3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

#### *Policy Positions*

- 3.1. Support the return of conservation areas of significant value to whānau, hapū and iwi.
- 3.2. Continue to implement a range of governance models which enable whānau, hapū and iwi to restore their relationship with protected lands and waters.
- 3.3. Ensure support and funding for whānau, hapū and iwi to undertake pest control and other kaitiaki responsibilities.
- 3.4. Enable customary use by tangata whenua within the conservation estate.

### 4. Beyond the Conservation Estate — Protecting Nature on Private and Māori Land

We seek an end to indigenous habitat loss and fragmentation. Achieving this will require co-operation and dialogue between whānau, hapū, iwi, government agencies, local authorities, community organisations, and private and Māori landholders. The Green Party will foster conservation through economic incentives, education and regulation.

## *Policy Positions*

- 4.1. Increase funding to help private and Māori landholders actively manage and protect indigenous habitats and ecosystems (i.e. the Community Conservation and Partnership Fund, Mātauranga Kura Taio, Ngā Whenua Rahui, Nature Heritage and QEII Trust Funds).
- 4.2. Encourage landowners to retain and develop their sense of kaitiakitanga through support for voluntary initiatives to promote conservation on private and Māori land, for example, those facilitated by Landcare groups, and the promotion of on-farm biodiversity protection and native planting. This can rehabilitate, enhance and maintain natural ecosystems and ensure our rural landscapes contribute to conservation values.
- 4.3. Encourage landowners to set marginal and erosion prone lands aside for restoration of native vegetation, and to establish habitat corridors with the planting of indigenous vegetation on unused road strips, railway corridors, esplanade reserves and other areas.
- 4.4. Encourage diversification of production forestry, including planting native species, and ensure regulatory settings are fit for purpose to enable production forestry to contribute to biodiversity outcomes.
- 4.5. Recognise the value of conservation on private and Māori land and provide financial incentives to landowners, for example, by providing rating reductions for land with protected conservation areas.
- 4.6. Support and enable the use of the Resource Management Act (RMA) or successor legislation to identify and protect significant habitats on private land against ecologically harmful activities.
- 4.7. Ensure the national policy statement on indigenous biodiversity under the RMA provides clear direction to local authorities as to how significant natural areas are to be protected, requires councils to control damage to indigenous habitats (terrestrial and freshwater), and gives additional recognition and protection to the habitats of species threatened with extinction.
- 4.8. Foster and support local urban and rural nature conservation initiatives such as forest, wetland, dune and stream restoration and maintenance by community groups, iwi and hapū and local authorities, including increasing the funding available.
- 4.9. Require local authorities to develop and use conservation plans, and use low impact 'green' infrastructure and regulatory and non-regulatory methods to improve natural habitats in urban areas.

- 4.10. Work with local government and communities to ensure a minimum 5% of the land area of all ecological districts in Aotearoa New Zealand is in native vegetation or set aside for the restoration of nature within four years.

## 5. Enhancing and Protecting Freshwater Species and Habitats

Water quality, particularly in lowland rivers, lakes, and streams (including urban streams), is deteriorating. Wetlands are still being drained despite 90% of lowland freshwater wetlands having already been destroyed, with adverse impacts on freshwater species. Urgent action is needed to halt and reverse these trends.

### *Policy Positions*

- 5.1. Ensure that fresh water quality and flow levels are managed in a way that sustains indigenous species and ecosystems such as wetlands.
- 5.2. Ensure DOC develops and implements recovery plans for threatened freshwater species and ecosystems, and that all threatened native fish (e.g. giant kokopu and short jawed kokopu) are legally protected.
- 5.3. Facilitate joint action by Fish and Game New Zealand, DOC and others to remove pest fish from selected waterways.
- 5.4. Transfer Crown-owned riverbeds in the South Island that are administered by LINZ to DOC to promote better management of braided river ecosystems.
- 5.5. Support efforts to obtain water conservation orders to protect taonga, wild and scenic waterbodies.
- 5.6. Phase out grazing concessions on public conservation land except where this is required to protect ecological values, such as light sheep grazing to control weeds.

See our [Environmental Protection](#) Policy for more details on fresh water management.

## 6. Reducing Biosecurity Threats

Increasing trade and tourism has resulted in numerous new organisms arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand that pose threats to biodiversity. The Green Party aims to ensure, through stringent management of NZ biosecurity, that no new species of invasive animal, plant or other pests become naturalised in NZ.

### *Policy Positions*

- 6.1. Enhance our ability to prevent exotic species from entering Aotearoa New Zealand and the ability to respond to any incursions that do occur.

- 6.2. Give equal importance to biosecurity threats to the marine and terrestrial environments.
- 6.3. Require risk assessments for exotic organisms to consider their potential impacts on indigenous species and ecosystems.

See our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policy for our full biosecurity policy.

## **7. Reducing Pest Threats to Biodiversity**

Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity continues to be severely diminished due to the impact of introduced pest animals and plants.

### **A. Pest Management Strategies**

The Green Party vision is for thriving biodiversity, no further extinctions, and restoration of healthy populations, habitats and ecosystems. In order to achieve this, the Green Party seeks to eradicate pest plants, animals and other organisms that threaten significant ecological values wherever possible, and to control them where eradication is not possible.

#### *Policy Positions*

- 7.1. Develop and fund national pest management strategies as part of coordinating and integrating pest control between central and local government agencies, to ensure efficient, humane and purposeful pest management is achieved.
- 7.2. Work with whānau, hapū and iwi to implement the most appropriate methods of pest control in their rohe; especially in sites of cultural and spiritual significance.
- 7.3. Promote and significantly increase funding for pest eradication and control, to a level that ensures biodiversity and ecosystem health is maintained and, where possible, enhanced or restored.
- 7.4. Identify all priority sites for the conservation of species and ecosystems, ensure that these sites have legal protection in perpetuity, and that they are fully resourced for integrated pest control.
- 7.5. Ensure that control of introduced animals on conservation land remains the responsibility of DOC.
- 7.6. Remove or eradicate, where possible, large non-predator pest animals such as goats, deer, pigs, chamois, and tahr in those areas where they threaten important ecological values; and restrict the range and density of the remaining population in cooperation with the community.

- 7.7. Significantly expand pest free offshore islands and intensively controlled 'mainland islands' as a first step to creating a predator free Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 7.8. Raise public awareness of the threats posed by pest plants, animals and other organisms to Aotearoa New Zealand's biodiversity and ecological health, and the various pest control efforts being undertaken to reduce these threats.
- 7.9. Support community involvement in volunteer pest control projects and private-land pest management for biodiversity purposes.
- 7.10. Establish a regulatory regime for farming of pest species (such as some introduced fish, goats and deer) to prevent the establishment of new pest populations by escapees, and prohibit the establishment of mustelid farms except for pest control purposes.
- 7.11. Introduce and broaden offences for the purposeful or neglectful release of pests into the wild, and ensure robust enforcement.
- 7.12. Enable local authorities to take measures that limit the impact of predatory pets (including cats and dogs) on indigenous species and ecosystems, such as prohibiting dogs in areas used by ground-nesting birds.

## **B. Use of Poisons in Animal Pest Control**

Currently animal pest control in Aotearoa New Zealand involves the extensive use of poisons in ground and aerial operations because they are generally a cost effective means of controlling animal pest species. Modern technology allows more precise distribution of aerial poison, significantly reducing the amount of poison per hectare while maintaining effectiveness.

1080 poison is widely used to control pest species as it degrades relatively rapidly and is not bio-accumulative. A 2006 independent Environmental Risk Management Agency review found that "the continued use of 1080 has significant benefits for New Zealand's environment" and "well-managed aerial operations posed a low risk to the native environment and to indigenous biodiversity". Nonetheless it is acutely toxic to a number of non-target animals, including dogs, is arguably inhumane, and there may be as yet undiscovered long-term toxicological effects arising from its widespread use. While 1080 remains the most effective option for landscape scale mammalian pest control, we strongly support research and promotion of other pest control methods

## *Policy Positions*

- 7.13. Minimise the use of bio-accumulative and persistent, persistent, bio-accumulative, environmentally damaging, or non-sustainably produced poisons for animal pest control.
- 7.14. In general, and wherever practical, replace poisons with humane and safe biological and physical controls, especially persistent, bio-accumulative, environmentally damaging, or non-sustainably produced poisons.
- 7.15. Promote, support and fund ground-based methods of animal pest control by a properly trained workforce in preference to aerial poisoning wherever they could reasonably achieve the desired conservation outcomes,
- 7.16. Significantly increase funding for research for innovative, safe and humane methods of animal pest control.
- 7.17. Support greater involvement of local communities in maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity, and promote and fund a multi-agency approach to integrated pest control. Such an approach will include educating the community on biodiversity values, threats and pest control methods, and engaging the public in community-led ground based control programmes.
- 7.18. Enable industries harvesting pest animals (e.g. the fur and textiles industries) to operate, provided that pest animal harvesting operations are consistent with conservation outcomes.
- 7.19. Support poison-free integrated animal pest control in partnership with the local community, whānau, hapū and iwi where this is effective in protecting indigenous plants and wildlife and achieving.
- 7.20. Continue to support a ban on the release or field trial of genetically engineered organisms into the environment (see our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) policy for further details).

## **8. South Island High Country**

Over 1 million hectares of South Island high country is Crown pastoral leases where leaseholders are permitted to use the land for grazing. Much of this land is ecologically sensitive and has been degraded by grazing. Rentals paid on the leased land are not adjusted for inflation and bear no relationship to commercial return levels. With the end of tenure review and reform of Crown pastoral land management, a reform of South Island high country management is needed.

### *Policy Positions*

- 8.1. Encourage and support high country farmers to work with DOC, whānau, hapū and iwi, and territorial authorities to improve the management and protection of indigenous biodiversity.
- 8.2. Require leaseholders to develop farm management plans, in consultation with LINZ, DOC and territorial authorities, to achieve sustainable land and water management.
- 8.3. Ensure that programmes to review crown tenure and pastoral lease programmes protecting conservation values, public access and the Crown's interest.
- 8.4. Amend the Overseas Investment Act to restrict the sale of high country property to Aotearoa New Zealand citizens or residents who reside in Aotearoa New Zealand for at least 185 days a year.

### 9. Public Access to Public Conservation Land

The Green Party supports public access across private land to public conservation lands.

### *Policy Positions*

- 9.1. When conservation values and the values of whānau, hapū and iwi are upheld, support the public continuing to have walking access to public conservation land.
- 9.2. Support the work of the Walking Access Commission to:
  - a) Build constructive relationships between landowners and land users.
  - b) Provide financial support for landowners who need to erect signs and fence their properties.
  - c) Work with DOC on this issue of access and any resulting conservation issues.
  - d) Liaise with the Waitangi Tribunal to determine if land may be under a claim or investigation.
  - e) Facilitate engagement between whānau, hapū and community stakeholders to identify whānau and hapū interests in land, and to provide for co-governance where necessary.
  - f) Ensure access to paper roads is maintained by resolving complaints about the obstruction of paper roads.
  - g) Provide community mediation and work with councils and assist them to enforce the law and provide appropriate signage.

- h) Research and collect information from the public about land access issues.
- i) Report to Parliament within two years about whether there is a need for legislation to resolve issues and improve public access to land.
- j) Facilitate public access to Aotearoa New Zealand outdoors and iconic lands by ensuring existing paper roads remain open and adequately marked.

## 10. Helping People Get Involved

New Zealanders are proud of their natural heritage and increasingly want to be actively involved in its protection and promotion. The more they are able to do so the more they are likely to value Aotearoa New Zealand's natural heritage.

### *Policy Positions*

- 10.1. Ensure DOC takes a collaborative approach to its work, working in partnership with whānau, hapū and iwi on their interests on the conservation estate, and with environment and community groups involved in conservation and education.
- 10.2. Provide secure funding to assist community conservation groups in carrying out biodiversity, conservation and ecosystem restoration activities.
- 10.3. Ensure advocacy and education within the wider community regarding biodiversity efforts, including restoring and adequately resourcing DOC's advocacy and education role.
- 10.4. Incorporate environmental education into the core curriculum at all levels from pre-school to tertiary and teacher training and significantly increase funding for Enviroschools and other environmental education initiatives.
- 10.5. Encourage expanded environmental education in the adult education network.
- 10.6. Strengthen the role of conservation boards as independent voices for conservation, providing input to policy from tangata whenua and community.
- 10.7. Encourage and support local government to develop and implement regional biodiversity strategies with their communities and local hapū and iwi, including implementation through district and regional plans.
- 10.8. Support improved community and tangata whenua participation in resource management issues.
- 10.9. Ensure sufficient funding is available for regions with a high proportion of protected areas, to recognise that our natural heritage is a public good and

so the costs of its protection should be shared across the country as a whole.

## 11. Mining

Mining is inherently harmful to ecosystems. The regulatory framework should ensure this harm is avoided, remedied and mitigated as far as possible. The Green Party is committed to protecting public conservation land from mining activities. See our [Mining Policy](#).

## 12. Tourism

Tourism has increased significantly over recent years and many tourists utilise public conservation land. In some places this has led to pressure on infrastructure and adverse impacts on natural values and local amenity

### *Policy Positions*

- 12.1. Review the concessions section of the Conservation Act, and DOC's management and administration of concessions, to better protect natural values and avoid and manage visitor impacts.
- 12.2. Implement strategies to reduce the impact of high tourist numbers in some areas, including:
  - a) Visitor quotas on land with high conservation value.
  - b) Reviewing Civil Aviation Authority rules that allow air traffic over areas of natural quiet.
  - c) Conservation education for visitors.
  - d) Discouraging high volume tourism on public conservation lands.
- 12.3. Ensure that the levy on overseas visitors to Aotearoa New Zealand provides sufficient funding to DOC and Local Government to mitigate the impacts of tourism on the conservation estate, and regional infrastructure.
- 12.4. Ensure that DOC has sufficient resources to protect and maintain classic back country huts and bivouacs.
- 12.5. Require consideration of the cumulative effect of visitor activities on the character of the conservation estate rather than just the effects of individual activities in isolation.
- 12.6. Ensure that Wilderness Areas remain protected as places where people can experience natural quiet, and consider proposals for new Wilderness Areas.

## 13. Marine Conservation

### *Policy Positions*

- 13.1. Work with whānau, hapū and iwi, DOC, fisheries stakeholders, and the community to identify and protect areas of the marine environment for conservation purposes, including through the development of a network of marine reserves and sanctuaries. See our [Marine Environment](#) Policy for full details.