

Mining Policy

Vision

The Green Party envisions a society in which:

- Extraction of naturally occurring minerals should only occur where it will assist in our transition to a just and sustainable green economy;
- Renewable and recycled materials and forms of energy production are maximised, reducing the demand for new extraction activities;
- All extraction is within acceptable environmental limits; and
- All adverse effects are remedied as far as reasonably possible, both during a mining operation and after decommissioning.

Key principles

1. Extraction of fossil hydrocarbons must be ended, given the need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a just transition to a net-zero emissions economy (recognising that this must be complemented by assisting the development of alternative energy sources and systems and energy efficiency practices: see our [Energy Policy](#)).
2. The regulatory framework for mining should honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and recognise tangata whenua customary relationships with minerals and natural resources.
3. All New Zealanders should have opportunities to be involved in decisions about mining.
4. Landholders should retain absolute right to deny access for mining on their land.
5. Mining should only occur for or materials which serve a socially useful purpose, for which renewable alternatives are not available, and only after maximum recycling of available materials.

6. Mining should not occur in areas of high ecological, landscape, cultural, and community value.
7. Mining should only use methods that minimise the risk of environmental and social damage.
8. Royalties, taxes, and resources rentals should ensure the Crown, on behalf of all New Zealanders, receives a fair return for the exploitation of our natural resources.

Specific Policy Points

1. Legislative and regulatory framework

Mining is inherently harmful to ecosystems. The regulatory framework should ensure this harm is avoided, remedied and mitigated as far as possible.

Policy Positions

- 1.1. Ensure ecological, cultural, and landscape values, and water quality, are better protected when considering resource consent applications for mining;
- 1.2. Require decision-makers to consider the greenhouse gas contribution of mining activities and downstream effects when considering resource consent applications.
- 1.3. Give communities, whānau, hapū and iwi the ability to protect areas of the coastline having historical, archaeological and/or cultural significance from seabed mining, including ironsand mining.
- 1.4. Ensure mining in New Zealand only happens for materials which serve a socially useful purpose, for which renewable materials are not available, and when mining is the best means of obtaining the material.
- 1.5. Place a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for oil and gas within territorial New Zealand, the Exclusive Economic Zone, and the continental shelf, until it is proven safe.
- 1.6. Prohibit seabed mining involving exploitation of massive sulphides, phosphate dredging, and ironsand mining unless and until it is proven safe for marine environments, and processing occurs in New Zealand to create long-term sustainable industry and employment.
- 1.7. Strengthen the regulatory regime for the oil and gas sector, providing certainty for phase out and a just transition away from oil and gas extraction, and ensuring that the costs associated with the entire lifecycle of the operations remain with the operators.

2. Affirming the public interest in mining resources

Policy Positions

- 2.1. Support resource rentals on mineral, oil, and gas extraction (see our [Economic](#) policy).
- 2.2. Implement a royalties and tax regime that would at least be equal to the OECD average for Government take on minerals (royalties plus taxes) to ensure that New Zealand is getting fair compensation for the exploitation of our petroleum and mineral resources.
- 2.3. Ensure the ETS settings appropriately incentivise a transition from extraction that causes greenhouse gas emissions, and achieve a fair return to the Crown; with a long-term view to replacing the ETS with a simpler and more principled carbon levy (see our [Climate Change](#) policy).
- 2.4. Require bonds and/or minimum insurance requirements for “worst case scenario” pollution events – on land and at sea – to minimise the risk that the taxpayer has to pay clean-up costs when mining operations cause pollution.

3. Rapidly ending coal, oil and gas extraction

To transition to a sustainable, just, green economy and minimise the devastating effects of climate change, we must rapidly end oil, gas, and coal extraction.

Policy Positions

- 3.1. Phase out, as soon as possible, all extraction of petroleum, coal, and natural gas.
- 3.2. Prohibit extensions to existing oil, gas and coal mining permits, both onshore and offshore (see below).
- 3.3. Only allow new onshore wells to be drilled if the associated emissions remain within nationally set carbon budgets (see our [Climate Change](#) policy).
- 3.4. Prohibit underground coal gasification, exploitation of gas hydrates (e.g. methane hydrates), and new coal seam gas projects.
- 3.5. Plan for and fund the early retirement and decommissioning of existing coal mines, including compensation and retraining, reskilling and redeployment of workers and support for low-carbon economic development in the affected regions. Concurrently, work proactively to support other coal-producing countries to do the same (see our [Global Affairs](#) Policy).

- 3.6. Promote research and development into sustainable biofuels and other alternatives to replace oil- and coal- derived materials.
- 3.7. Ensure a Just Transition¹ by developing a strategy for affected industries, regions and workers, in partnership with tangata whenua, communities, unions and local economic development organisations, and enabling the development of a resilient and sustainable new economy (see our [Economic Policy](#) for more information on a Just Transition).

4. [Seabed and offshore mining and extraction](#)

Mineral and hydrocarbon extraction at sea can have considerable negative impact on marine communities and ecosystems. These impacts arise not only from the physical disturbance and noise caused by extraction, but also from toxic substances released by the extraction process.

Policy Positions

- 4.1. Amend the relevant environmental management framework for offshore activities to ensure better protection of the marine environment beyond the 12-mile limit.
- 4.2. Oppose foreshore and seabed mining in significant marine habitats, e.g. the Maui dolphin's habitat.
- 4.3. Make the following activities a prohibited activity:
 - a) Exploitation of sea floor massive sulphides.
 - b) Seabed phosphate dredging.
 - c) Seabed iron sand and rare metal mining unless:
 - i. It occurs in a location that poses no threat to the marine environment; and
 - ii. Processing takes place in New Zealand, adds value to the raw resource, and creates sustainable long-term industry and employment.
- 4.4. Uphold the ban on new offshore oil and gas extraction and strengthen this by prohibiting extensions to existing permits, thus phasing out all deep sea oil drilling through a certain and sustainable transition, in recognition of the high risks to marine ecosystems from this type of activity.

¹ A Just Transition is a change that upholds the rights and dignity of all involved, with a focus on equity and justice. It requires a managed approach to employment and community wellbeing in areas that have traditionally relied on unsustainable industries. It involves communities being involved in planning for their own transition, and acknowledges that different people, families, communities, and regions will benefit from different approaches.

5. Protecting the conservation estate from mining

Mining and extraction have adverse effects on landforms, oceans, waterways, and ecosystems.

Policy Positions

- 5.1. Prohibit new exploration, prospecting, and mining on or under all public conservation land, regardless of the classification of the land.
- 5.2. Ensure there is tight control over existing mining (including post-mining rehabilitation) on public conservation land and reserves, in partnership with tangata whenua, and through consultation with environmental groups, local communities, and the public.
- 5.3. Require mining activities to stop when rare, endemic species are found to be present on the mining site.
- 5.4. Gazette areas of public conservation land deserving of schedule 4 (Crown Minerals Act) status which have been omitted from schedule 4 because of their mineral potential.
- 5.5. Reject the notion of trading public conservation land for other land to facilitate extractive activities.

6. Mining of high value, socially essential minerals

Policy Positions

- 6.1. Accept that some forms of mining will continue as we transition to a just and sustainable green economy. These should be limited to materials which serve a socially essential purpose (as determined by public consultation), for which renewable alternatives are not available, and for which maximum recovery and recycling of available materials has been achieved and yet proven insufficient for the needs of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 6.2. Proactively resource and facilitate the maximum recovery and recycling of available materials to reduce the need for extraction (see our [Environmental Protection](#) Policy).
- 6.3. Strengthen the regulatory regime to ensure mining for socially essential minerals can only proceed within ecosystem baselines.
- 6.4. Prohibit industrial scale hard-rock gold/silver mining.
- 6.5. Ensure strict environmental protections relating to both location of extraction, and environmental impacts of extraction techniques.
- 6.6. Ensure that new technologies, especially for offshore mining, are subject to a precautionary approach.

- 6.7. Encourage the processing of minerals within Aotearoa New Zealand as far as possible.

See also our [Environmental Protection, Conservation, Sea and Oceans, Energy, and Economic](#) policies.