

Terms of Reference: Development of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy

The Minister of Conservation issues these Terms of Reference to the Department of Conservation (DOC) to direct the development of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.

The purpose of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS)

- 1) The purpose of a New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) and Biodiversity Action Plan is to provide a national framework that guides how we protect and enhance our unique indigenous biodiversity. It is a statement of our national goals, outcomes and priorities and will be used 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 what is special to us.
- 2) As a national document the Strategy is led by the Minister of Conservation, but it must have support from all parties with a role in biodiversity management.
- 3) The development of a NZBS is a key opportunity to engage iwi and the public on their aspirations for New Zealand's biodiversity and provide a platform for delivering on those aspirations.
- 4) A NZBS enables us to meet our international obligations under Article 6 of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

Why do we need a new Biodiversity Strategy?

Our biodiversity is central to our success as a country but remains under threat

- 5) New Zealand has a unique indigenous biodiversity, with a high number of endemic species (i.e. species that are found nowhere else in the world). For many New Zealanders the natural environment, including biodiversity and taonga species, is part of our identity and whakapapa. Our biological diversity and functioning ecosystems also provide intrinsic value in their own right.
- 6) Preserving and restoring our nature is central to supporting the wellbeing of our nation and contributes to the 'four capitals' of the Living Standards Framework. Biodiversity provides us with ecosystem services such as carbon sinks, nutrient filtration, flood protection and pollination, which have important economic benefits. Biodiversity underpins a range of economic activities from recreation to international tourism, and employment in regions where there are significant tracts of conservation land. It is also central to our global brand, supporting industries from primary production to the film sector to selling our goods and services offshore.
- 7) Connecting with nature has also been shown to have a positive effect on mental and spiritual health and wellbeing.
- 8) Despite the importance of biodiversity, current management methods have not halted the decline. Over 4000 indigenous species are now threatened or at risk of extinction.
- 9) New context and challenges have been identified since the last strategy, given our increasing understanding of wider pressures on biodiversity and drivers of biodiversity decline. For example, the impact of climate change on biodiversity, linkages between healthy ecosystems and rich biodiversity, and the catching of protected seabirds and marine mammals as bycatch.
- 10) The current NZBS was finalised 18 years ago. It and the associated Action Plan expire at the end of 2020. Parties to the CBD have begun a process to agree a new post-2020 Strategic Plan for

Biodiversity that parties will need to implement. This is likely to be agreed at the CBD Conference of the Parties in October 2020.

There have been significant new developments since the 2000 Strategy...

11) These include:

- a) Considerable developments in the science sector and in particular the establishment of the New Zealand Biological Heritage National Science Challenge – Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho, which provides research, science and innovation that supports biodiversity management. The Challenge's objective is to protect and manage New Zealand's biodiversity, improve our biosecurity, and enhance our resilience to harmful organisms. In addition a Conservation and Environment Science Roadmap has also been developed.
- b) A stakeholder-led Biodiversity Collaborative Group (BCG) tasked with delivering a draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) and complementary measures in September 2018.
- c) The development of landscape scale approaches to biodiversity management (pest control and ecological restoration).
- d) Working to develop a Predator Free 2050 Strategic Plan, which will direct how New Zealand will deliver its 2050 goal, and a complementary plan for DOC both due in December 2018.
- e) DOC's Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting System which provides DOC and others with consistent, comprehensive information about biodiversity across public conservation lands, and potentially across New Zealand.
- f) The Environmental Reporting Act 2015 that requires regular mandatory state of the environment reporting of national biodiversity status.
- g) The Biosecurity 2025 programme, which aims to ensure that the biosecurity system as a whole remains resilient amid growing pressures from increased travel and trade.

...as well as growing interest in conservation and biodiversity management

12) This includes:

- a) Recognition of the role of Māori in conservation as kaitiaki. This has led to an increase in co-management and iwi-led projects alongside Treaty Settlements increasing iwi land ownership.
- b) A shift towards a community partnerships model, with increased roles of community groups and private landowners in conservation at various scales.
- c) An increased and proactive role of local government in biodiversity management. A 2003 amendment to the RMA clarified maintenance of biodiversity as a key function of local government.

So a new strategy is needed to set the direction for the next 20 years

13) There is a national need to consider how all these initiatives fit together and to provide strategic direction and coordinated, outcomes-based approaches towards biodiversity conservation.

14) The Minister of Conservation considers the goals of the current strategy to be generally sound. A key challenge is defining and agreeing on what the goals mean in practice and the role of different players in achieving them. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to prioritise resources or coordinate at the national level; or articulate the underlying framework that guides the Government's choices to external stakeholders. The current Biodiversity Strategy also does not establish clear accountabilities or require monitoring of progress against action. This has led to variable implementation and progress.

15) Developing a new Strategy is a key opportunity to refocus the purpose of the NZBS to position nature at the heart of our success and:

- a) Support a nationally consistent approach to biodiversity protection and management
- b) drive greater alignment and focus around priorities and collective ambition
- c) demonstrate how the various parts of the New Zealand biodiversity system 'fit together'
- d) address gaps in that system; and
- e) set up ongoing collective oversight and ownership of progress.

16) Internationally, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have begun a process to agree a new post-2020 biodiversity framework that parties will need to implement. This will most likely include new global biodiversity goals. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be running consultations to give the public and stakeholders a chance to contribute to New Zealand's position, and there may be opportunity to align this process with NZBS outreach. The global framework will be decided at the CBD Conference of the Parties in October 2020 and the NZBS will need to be revisited at that point.

Scope of the new Strategy

17) In light of the above context The Minister of Conservation directs that the new Strategy will:

- a) Set national priorities and objectives for biodiversity conservation by
 - Identifying the end state we are seeking;
 - Identifying the likely trajectory to achieving the end state; and
 - ensuring there is alignment across Māori, communities and stakeholders about these priorities and collective ambition.
- b) Ensure there is clear connection across the various parts of the New Zealand biodiversity system by
 - Clarifying the role of different biodiversity initiatives and actions and how they align to achieve our national and international objectives; and
 - Incorporating new context and challenges that have been identified since the last strategy given our increasing understanding of wider pressures on biodiversity and drivers of biodiversity decline. For example, the impact of climate change, the need for protection of marine biodiversity due to threats to ocean ecosystems, how to mainstream biodiversity considerations into wider policies and programmes.
- c) Address gaps in the biodiversity system by
 - Identifying what we need to build on or do differently to achieve our biodiversity goals e.g. assessing international best practice and how to take an ecosystem-based approach to biodiversity management;
 - Investigating ways in which the national framework, tools and resources may need to be adjusted; this may include changes to policy or regulation;
 - Identifying innovative approaches to biodiversity protection and sustainable use; and
 - Considering where further information/research is required to improve biodiversity outcomes.
- d) Improve the national framework for prioritising effort and implementation by
 - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of groups involved in achieving biodiversity goals;

- Considering the extent to which the goals of the strategy could be met with existing resources or where further resourcing is likely to be needed to achieve them;
- Setting up ongoing collective oversight and ownership of progress including monitoring, evaluation and information sharing; and
- Ensuring that monitoring and reporting is nationally consistent and 'fit for purpose', tracking progress through measurable objectives and establishing a baseline against which progress will be measured.

- 18) The new Strategy should draw on the lessons learnt from the current 2000-2020 Strategy.
- 19) Other issues may be addressed through the scope as they arise, particularly in discussion with Treaty Partners.
- 20) The Strategy will recognise the importance of biodiversity to all cultures in our multicultural nation, including the unique relationship between mana whenua and nature and the importance of mātauranga Māori.
- 21) The Strategy needs to outline the role of biodiversity in providing ecosystem services, as a component of 'natural capital' and nature's role in improving health and wellbeing. It should align and support other government priorities including billion trees, climate change and the wider focus on wellbeing.
- 22) While not a focus of the Strategy, it also needs to recognise the value of introduced biodiversity for primary industries, for recreation (e.g. hunting and fishing) and in conserving species that are threatened in their original habitats.

Governance, engagement and consultation

- 23) The Minister of Conservation will be the lead Minister for the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. Cabinet will ultimately agree and approve the new Strategy.

Officials Governance Group

- 24) The day to day governance for this process will be provided by a cross-agency biodiversity group of Directors from the Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment, the Department of Conservation, Te Puni Kōkiri and Land Information New Zealand and regional council representatives. This group will be supplemented by the relevant officials from the Treasury and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. This group will be the key group reporting to the Minister of Conservation on the development of the Strategy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be consulted.

Māori

- 25) Engaging with Māori will entail a two-stage process:
- a) Engaging with Māori early to understand what Māori want a Biodiversity Strategy to deliver and what is key to its success; and
 - b) Seeking feedback from Māori on the draft discussion document and how well Māori perspectives have been addressed. This will include engaging more widely at the local level, given the need to engage with iwi and hapū at place.

- 26) A mana whenua reference group shall be established to work alongside DOC on Strategy development (to assist in ensuring the strategy is informed by a mātauranga Māori perspective). The mana whenua reference group could also:
- a) Test and refine policy ideas, identify priorities and gaps from a mana whenua perspective; and/or
 - b) Consult with mana whenua.
- 27) DOC may need to modify this approach in light of the proposed revision of Crown-Māori engagement by Cabinet.

Councils

- 28) Regional councils and territorial local authorities have a significant role in biodiversity management and the Strategy will help guide their work. DOC shall engage with regional councils through representation on the biodiversity governance group and through the Regional Council – Central Government Chief Executive’s Biodiversity-Biosecurity Forum. This Forum will be used to test and guide the approach on key choices and issues for the new Strategy.
- 29) DOC shall engage with the Territorial Authority Reference Group established to inform the Biodiversity Collaborative Group as required.

Stakeholder reference group

- 30) A stakeholder reference group will be established to test policy ideas, identify priorities and gaps from a stakeholder perspective with the aim of building support for the Strategy. This Group may also front early engagement with the public on what New Zealanders want a Biodiversity Strategy to deliver and what is key to its success.
- 31) Membership of this group will include: Māori representatives, members from environmental NGOs and industry (agriculture, forest owners, electricity generators, fishing industry bodies).

Science and technical reference group

- 32) A science and technical reference group shall be formed to provide scientific or technical advice to ensure the Strategy has a sound scientific base; to identify priorities for the Strategy, advise the cross-agency group, and provide scientific and technical advice as required by the stakeholder and mana whenua groups. For example, approaches to monitoring or classification systems, or mātauranga Māori.
- 33) This reference group will also provide DOC with advice on specific science or technical questions that may arise.
- 34) The members of the reference group will be a mix of DOC and independent scientists and technical experts and will include people with expertise in mātauranga Maori. The scientific and technical reference group will have an external chair.

Remuneration

- 35) Where appropriate, DOC shall hold joint workshops with the three reference groups. Compensation for group members will be determined using the Cabinet Fees Framework (CO (12)6 refers) and benchmarking against similar groups. The current per diem rate for the Biodiversity Collaborative Group, for example, is \$300.

Consultation with the public and communities

36) DOC shall engage early with the public and communities to understand what New Zealanders want a Biodiversity Strategy to deliver and what is key to its success.

37) DOC shall prepare a discussion document for ministerial approval and seek public feedback on that discussion document prior to Cabinet's final approval of the Strategy.

Resources

38) Resourcing will be provided by DOC. The cross-agency governance group noted above will assist in carrying out the work programme.

39) Any compensation for group members will be met out of DOC's baseline.

Timeframes and deliverables

40) The new Strategy must be completed by December 2019, noting the timetable below.

Deliverable	Timing to complete	Related projects
Cabinet agreement to scope and process	October 2018	
Early engagement with reference groups, iwi and the public	November 2018 – February 2019	
Develop discussion document	November 2018-March 2019	Predator Free 2050 Strategic Plan released (December)
Discussion document to Cabinet – agreement to consult	March 2019	
Consultation/engagement on discussion document	April–May 2019	Public consultation on the NPS Indigenous Biodiversity
Draft Strategy	June – October 2019	
Cross-agency consultation	November 2019	
Cabinet agreement to final strategy	December 2019	
	September 2020	NPS Indigenous Biodiversity finalised
Possible revision subject to post-2020 CBD framework	October 2020	