

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Conservation

Chair, Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee

## **Release of the Predator Free 2050 Strategy and Action Plan**

### ***Proposal***

1. I am seeking Cabinet agreement to the endorsement and release of the Predator Free 2050 Strategy and Action Plan, consisting of: Te anga whakamua kia Aotearoa kaikonihikore: Towards a Predator Free New Zealand (the Strategy); and the Predator Free 2050 5-year action plan 2020-2025 (the Action Plan).
2. I also seek Cabinet agreement to a revised set of interim 2025 goals for Predator Free 2050, and to clarify the predator species captured by the Predator Free 2050 goal.

### ***Executive Summary***

3. In 2016, Cabinet agreed to the Predator Free 2050 vision, with the goal of eradicating predators (possums, rats and stoats) by 2050, and with interim goals to be achieved by 2025.
4. At my direction, the Department of Conservation has developed a Strategy and Action Plan to enable a collaborative approach that aligns government and non-government activity towards achieving these goals.
5. The Strategy and Action Plan has been developed through extensive consultation and revision with our Treaty Partners, key partners and stakeholders, researchers, central and local government agencies, NGOs and the New Zealand public.
6. The Strategy and Action Plan is based on a visionary approach: to *mobilise* people and communities, and through regional and national collaborations; to *innovate*, developing the tools and techniques required to achieve the Predator Free goals; and to *accelerate* action across landscapes as tools and techniques are refined and learning is shared.
7. I am seeking agreement from Cabinet to refine three of the original four interim 2025 goals, to provide greater clarity and alignment with the original intent of these goals.
8. The development of the Strategy and Action Plan also provides the opportunity to expand on Predator Free 2050's original interim 2025 goals, with three new goals that are particularly relevant to whanau, hapu and iwi; and for urban and rural communities.

9. This opportunity is also used to provide clarification that the target predator species includes possums, three species of rat (Ship, Norway and Kiore), and three mustelid species (stoats, ferrets and weasels).

### **Background**

10. In July 2016, Cabinet agreed that the Government adopt the vision of achieving a predator free New Zealand by 2050, with the goal being defined as the eradication of possums, rats and stoats (CAB-16-SUB-0335 refers).
11. Cabinet agreed that four 2025 interim goals be adopted as steps towards achieving the 2050 goal. These interim goals were (CAB-16-SUB-0335 refers):
  - 11.1. by 2025, we will increase by one million hectares the area of mainland New Zealand land where predators are suppressed, through Predator Free New Zealand projects;
  - 11.2. by 2025, we will have demonstrated that predator eradication can be achieved in areas of mainland New Zealand of at least 20,000 hectares without the use of fences;
  - 11.3. by 2025, we will have eradicated all mammalian predators from New Zealand's island nature reserves; and
  - 11.4. by 2025, we will have developed a break-through science solution that would be capable of eradicating at least one small mammal predator from the New Zealand mainland.
12. Cabinet agreed that the Department of Conservation (DOC) be the lead agency, and the Minister of Conservation the lead Minister, to align work across government on the predator control strategy, to ensure maximum effectiveness of predator control investment (CAB-16-SUB-0335 refers).
13. In 2018 Cabinet approved \$81.28 million over four years to suppress predators in priority ecosystems; protect and increase biodiversity on offshore islands; and develop more effective and efficient predator control methods (CAB-18-MIN-1058.04 refers).
14. Collectively, an estimated \$150 million per year is being invested in predator management and research across multiple agencies, which will be aligned through a collaborative structure to achieve better results.

### **Developing the Strategy and Action Plan – Towards a Predator Free New Zealand**

15. In December 2017 I directed DOC to develop a strategic plan for Predator Free 2050, to enable a collaborative approach for aligning government and non-government activities towards the common goal of eradication of possums, rats and stoats from New Zealand.
16. DOC has developed the Strategy (Attachment A) and Action Plan (Attachment B) following a consultation process in 2018 and 2019 with our Treaty Partners, key stakeholders, government agencies, community groups and the public.

The Strategy and Action Plan are designed to provide a vision and collaborative approach to meeting the Predator Free goals.

17. Predator Free 2050 is not an isolated programme, but a collection of programmes that will contribute to the outcomes of the updated New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (currently being developed), which is the overarching strategy for biodiversity-related policies and programmes.
18. A range of benefits will be achieved through making New Zealand predator free. These benefits extend beyond conservation values. The Strategy identifies a suite of working outcomes that will be revised when the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy is finalised (expected in early 2020). These working outcomes are:
  - 18.1. indigenous plants and wildlife returning to abundance and richness;
  - 18.2. ecosystems being restored to health;
  - 18.3. whānau, hapū and iwi expressing kaitiakitanga / rangatiratanga;
  - 18.4. generations of New Zealanders reconnecting with our ngahere and natural environments;
  - 18.5. international standing of New Zealanders is increased through predator management, innovation and expertise; and
  - 18.6. ecosystems more resilient to climate change.
19. To achieve the Predator Free goal, a strategic collaborative approach is required, bringing together whānau, hapū and iwi; key stakeholders (such as Predator Free 2050 Ltd, the Predator Free New Zealand Trust, and the Royal Forest and Bird Society); researchers; central and local government agencies; philanthropic and business organisations; community conservation groups and the people of New Zealand.

***Consultation process to develop the Strategy and Action Plan***

20. To arrive at the current Strategy and Action Plan, DOC has undertaken a series of consultations in the past 18 months with our Treaty Partners, key stakeholders and partners, central and local government agencies, community and conservation organisations, and the public.
21. Consultation was initiated in 2018 with five focus group workshops held around the country. Participation included scientists, iwi/Māori, Predator Free 2050 Limited, the Predator Free New Zealand Trust, government agencies, business, National Science Challenges (New Zealand's Biological Heritage; Science for Technological Innovation), conservation NGOs, and DOC staff. The focus of these workshops was to collate thinking on what is required to achieve the Predator Free 2050 objective, with a particular focus on meeting interim 2025 goals.
22. DOC also consulted specifically with iwi/Māori to develop this thinking through a further four workshops, held in Christchurch, Northland, Taranaki and with Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

23. From these initial consultations, a discussion guide was developed and released on 27 November 2018, with consultation open until 30 January 2019. Discussion and feedback on the guide took several forms:
- 23.1. iwi/Māori were consulted through 15 hui held around New Zealand, to which more than 100 iwi, hapū and rūnanga were invited;
  - 23.2. engagement with local government, science agencies, government agencies NGOs and the New Zealand Conservation Authority;
  - 23.3. presentations to various stakeholders and groups during the two-month consultation period;
  - 23.4. the use of social media reached more than 160,000 people, and received 4,300 comments; and
  - 23.5. an online survey received 742 responses.
24. Feedback on the discussion guide was generally positive. The main priorities raised by respondents included building capacity; being collaborative; enabling local resourcing; encouraging participation from rangatahi; and generating employment.
25. A large number of comments expressed opposition to the continued use of 1080 as a tool to assist New Zealand becoming predator free. The need to respect diverse values and opinions is acknowledged and DOC is continuing to work with partner agencies to address concerns about the use of 1080. At the same time, science supports the use of 1080 as a key tool for achieving the Predator Free 2050 goal.
26. This feedback informed the writing of a draft Strategy and Action Plan, which was circulated to Treaty Partners and key stakeholders in June 2019. Feedback on this draft further informed the final version of the documents. Submitters included:
- 26.1. Biosecurity New Zealand; the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu; Whatariri Resource Management Unit (Whangarei); Royal Forest and Bird Society; Predator Free New Zealand Trust; Predator Free 2050 Ltd; New Zealand Conservation Authority; Maungaharuru-Tangitū Trust and the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge.

***Content of the Strategy and Action Plan – Towards a Predator Free New Zealand***

27. The Strategy focuses on the broad vision, principles and pathways to achieving the Predator Free 2050 goal. The Action Plan is designed to provide a more detailed plan of action for the coming five years. It is envisaged that five-year action plans will be in place through to 2050.
28. The Strategy is designed to bring together the several programmes of work being carried out by government and non-government organisations and individuals to address the decline in New Zealand's biodiversity. It takes a long-term approach to achieving eradication of possums, rats and stoats from New Zealand by 2050.

29. The Strategy is focussed on three core actions, to:
- 29.1. *mobilise* – taking the steps needed to build predator free communities and establish regional and national collaborations;
  - 29.2. *innovate* – Developing the new and transformational tools and techniques (and the public acceptance of them) that will be required to eradicate predators;
  - 29.3. *accelerate* – applying Predator Free 2050 tools and techniques across the landscape as fast as possible, as they are developed.
30. This work will be delivered through six pathways, reflecting the complexity of the task:
- 30.1. whānau, hapū and iwi expressing kaitiakitanga;
  - 30.2. advancing our knowledge, innovation and improvement
  - 30.3. communities taking action;
  - 30.4. moving from sustained predator control to eradication;
  - 30.5. measuring and assessing the difference we make; and
  - 30.6. supporting the kaupapa through legislation and policy.
31. These concepts and pathways, combined with the programme principles of collaboration; adaptability; guardianship and responsibility; environment at place; connection; inclusivity; and courage; is designed to provide a layered, multi-dimensional approach (the *whāriki*, see page 31 of the Strategy) to achieving the Predator Free goals.

***A revised set of interim 2025 goals for Predator Free New Zealand***

32. The Action Plan provides the shorter-term focus on actions required to achieve the interim 2025 goals for Predator Free 2050 (CAB-16-SUB-0335 refers).
33. I am seeking agreement from Cabinet to amend three of the original four interim 2025 goals (listed at para 10), and to add a further three interim 2025 goals.
34. I am proposing that three of the four original interim goals (see paras 11.1 to 11.3, above) be amended. The new wording, and the rationale for the changes, are:
- 34.1. *by 2025, we will increase by 1 million hectares (from 2016 figures) the area of New Zealand mainland where predators are suppressed, through Predator Free 2050 projects – the addition of ‘from 2016*

figures' provides clarity on the baseline from which this goal is measured<sup>1</sup>;

- 34.2. *by 2025, we will have demonstrated that predator eradication can be achieved in areas of mainland New Zealand of at least 20,000 hectares and that these areas can be defended from reinvasion without the use of fences* – adds 'and that these areas can be defended from reinvasion' to emphasise that the goal is not only eradication, but also ongoing and sustainable protection against re-infestation; and
  - 34.3. *by 2025, we will have eradicated all mammalian predators from New Zealand's uninhabited offshore islands* – replaces 'island nature reserves' with 'uninhabited offshore islands'. The original intent of this goal was that all New Zealand's uninhabited offshore islands, and not just formally designated 'Nature Reserves', would enjoy the benefits of predator eradication.
35. In addition to the four original interim goals (as amended above), the Strategy adds a further three goals:
- 35.1. *by 2025, whānau, hapū and iwi will have identified sites of importance for predator eradication and at least five eradication projects led by whānau, hapū and iwi will be underway across the country* – to reflect the desire of whānau, hapū and iwi to lead predator eradication projects within their rohe;
  - 35.2. *by 2025, we will have eradicated possums or mustelids from at least one New Zealand city* – to reflect urban community effort; and
  - 35.3. *by 2025, effective tools and knowledge will be available to achieve predator eradication on farmland* – to address the limitations of currently available techniques for predator suppression in rural areas and mitigate the economic impact of these predators on agriculture.

#### **Species included in the Predator Free 2050 goal**

36. When Cabinet agreed in 2016 to adopt the vision of a predator free New Zealand by 2050, the goal was defined as the eradication of possums, rats, stoats (CAB-16-SUB-0335 refers). These species were chosen because, collectively, they inflict the worst damage of all introduced predators to New Zealand's native plants and wildlife.
37. I wish to take the opportunity that the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan provides, to clarify the species covered by the Predator Free 2050 goal. These species are:
  - 37.1. possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) – this species is widespread across New Zealand;
  - 37.2. rats – comprise three species:

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<sup>1</sup> The area of sustained possum suppression by DOC in 2016 was 773,233 ha. The area treated (by DOC and others) for rats and/or mustelids was 190,385 ha (DOC Annual Report 2016, p.40).

- 37.2.1. ship rats (*Rattus rattus*) are the most widespread species of rat in New Zealand
  - 37.2.2. Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) are largest rat species in New Zealand, found in towns, cities and farmland; and
  - 37.2.3. Kiore, or Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*), the smallest of the rat species, confined to the southern South Island, Stewart Island and some offshore islands.
- 37.3. mustelids (the *Mustilidae* family) – comprise three species:
- 37.3.1. stoats (*Mustela erminia*) are found throughout mainland New Zealand and on inshore islands and are a well-known mustelid in New Zealand. This is why reference was made to stoats in the Predator Free goal;
  - 37.3.2. ferrets (*Mustela furo*) are found throughout the North and South Islands; and
  - 37.3.3. weasels (*Mustela nivalis vulgaris*) are patchily distributed across the North and South Islands.
38. Kiore came to New Zealand with the Polynesian ancestors of Māori and have cultural values for some iwi Māori. Along with other rat species they predate on native species including birds, seeds, snails and lizards. Whilst their inclusion in the Predator Free 2050 goal was not questioned by hapū and iwi during engagement on the Strategy, where eradication of kiore is being considered locally, this will be subject to engagement with relevant whānau, hapū and iwi.

### **Consultation**

39. The Ministry for the Environment; Land Information New Zealand; Ministry for Primary Industries (Biosecurity New Zealand); the Treasury; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; Te Arawhiti; and Te Puni Kōkiri have been consulted on the Strategy and Action Plan. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed of this paper.

### **Financial Implications**

40. There are no immediate financial implications associated with the endorsement and release of the Strategy and Action Plan.
41. The change to the interim goal regarding islands (see para 34.3 above) will require approximately \$3-4m per annum to deliver. As part of the investment planning for this, my Department is considering funding sources including the International Visitor Levy.
42. Achieving the PF2050 outcome will require further investment over time. My Department will be developing a full investment plan over the next three years.



### **Climate Implications**

44. Unable to complete an assessment because it would create unreasonable delays to do so.

### **Legislative Implications**

45. There are no legislative implications associated with the endorsement and release of the Strategy and Action Plan.

### **Human Rights**

46. The Strategy and Action Plan are not inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

### **Publicity**

47. I propose to publicly launch the Predator Free Strategy and Action Plan at a time and location to be determined.

### **Proactive Release**

48. I propose to release this paper proactively. Release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

### **Recommendations**

The Minister of Conservation recommends that the Committee:

1. agree to the Predator Free 2050 Strategy and Action Plan, consisting of: *Te anga whakamua kia Aotearoa kaikonihikore: Towards a Predator Free New Zealand*; and *Predator Free 2050 5-year action plan 2020-2025*;
2. agree to the revised set of interim 2025 goals for Predator Free 2050, being:
  - 2.1. by 2025, we will increase by 1 million hectares (from 2016 figures) the area of New Zealand mainland where predators are suppressed, through Predator Free 2050 projects;
  - 2.2. by 2025, we will have demonstrated that predator eradication can be achieved in areas of mainland New Zealand of at least 20,000 hectares and that these areas can be defended from reinvasion without the use of fences;
  - 2.3. by 2025, we will have eradicated all mammalian predators from New Zealand's uninhabited offshore islands;
  - 2.4. by 2025, we will have developed a breakthrough science solution that would be capable of eradicating at least one small mammal predator from the New Zealand mainland;
  - 2.5. by 2025, whānau, hapū and iwi will have identified sites of importance for predator eradication and at least five eradication projects led by whānau, hapū and iwi will be underway across the country;
  - 2.6. by 2025, we will have eradicated possums or mustelids from at least one New Zealand city; and

- 2.7. by 2025, effective tools and knowledge will be available to achieve predator eradication on farmland;
3. agree that the predator species covered by the Predator Free 2050 goal are:
  - 3.1. possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)
  - 3.2. ship rat (*Rattus rattus*);
  - 3.3. Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*);
  - 3.4. Kiore, or Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*);
  - 3.5. stoat (*Mustela erminia*);
  - 3.6. ferret (*Mustela furo*); and
  - 3.7. weasel (*Mustela nivalis vulgaris*); and
4. authorise the Minister of Conservation to make any editorial changes to the Predator Free 2050 Strategy and Action Plan consistent with Cabinet decisions on these recommendations;
5. authorise the Minister of Conservation to launch the Predator Free 2050 Strategy and Action Plan.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Eugenie Sage

Minister of Conservation