

Department of Conservation Status Report

for the Minister of Conservation

Week beginning 15 September 2025

Date: / /

Seen by Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation



We are seeing strong engagement with the **Always be Naturing** campaign. There has been a 42.5% increase in visits to DOC's donation pages and an 18.5% increase in visits to volunteering pages.

Details can be found in item 2.1.

 : DOC



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Out of scope

3.3 Policy and research update on nature and carbon credits

- You requested an update on nature and carbon credit policy and related research.

Voluntary Nature Credit markets

- On 6 June 2025, Cabinet agreed in principle to key aspects of the government's role in the proposed Voluntary Nature Credit Market (VNCM), which will be tested through a pilot programme [CAB-25-MIN-0187]. The VNCM aims to attract private investment to support landowners, community groups, and Iwi in protecting nature and reducing emissions. It will include biodiversity credits, voluntary carbon credits, and other nature-based activities.
- The VNCM offers new opportunities and risks for conservation. As the government lead for biodiversity, we have a strong role in shaping a credible and trustworthy market that delivers real biodiversity gains. Additionally, there are two pilot projects on PCL s 9(2)(b)(ii) s 9(2)(b)(ii). We recently provided you with a letter responding to the Kaimai Mamaku Voluntary Credit Market pilot project regarding their permission status (CORM-1678).
- We are developing our VNCM work programme, which will include supporting MfE to develop the market settings for the VNCM and exploring options to better enable and facilitate VNCM activities on PCL s 9(2)(f)(iv).

Assessment framework for carbon removals

- A draft Cabinet paper from the Minister of Climate Change on changes to the Climate Change Response Act is currently out for targeted Ministerial consultation. You have been provided with talking points to support discussion at Cabinet Economic Policy Committee (ECO) for when it is tabled [25-K-0028 refers]. It seeks agreement to an assessment framework, which will provide a consistent, robust approach for activities with carbon sequestration benefits to be formally recognised.

- Re-wetting peatlands is a key opportunity for carbon removal recognition. You recently received advice on a proposed joint work programme across MfE, DOC, and MPI to advance recognition of re-wetting peatlands, as well as on-farm sequestration, as priorities through the new carbon removals framework.
- Initial estimates are that there are around 20,000 ha of drained peatland soils on public conservation land. Further work is planned to study restoration sites and more accurately estimate the carbon benefits.

Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) native carbon initiative

- ZIP developed a novel proposal to sequester carbon and sell carbon credits through the removal of predators and browsers s 9(2)(b)(ii) (refer 25-B-0018). ZIP propose to reinvest revenue generated from potential carbon benefits back into predator control and browser management.
- An independent consultant has assessed the potential for recognising carbon sequestration from the ZIP proposal. The report states that significant work would be required of ZIP to find a suitable voluntary carbon programme and to develop the required standards to recognise browser management. ZIP has engaged the consultant to investigate this.
- The report also found that browser management activities would not be easily recognised in New Zealand's Nationally Determined Contribution without significant changes to the current national monitoring system. MfE will not progress these changes in the medium term, until scientific evidence is provided to support the link between intensive browser management and additional carbon sequestration.
- Officials from MfE and DOC are working with ZIP to consider next steps associated with the proposal and agree roles and responsibilities. We will uphold our operational responsibilities including our treaty relationships and concessions obligations. If this proposal proves a material amount of carbon sequestered, and accurately models voluntary carbon prices, this type of project could be considered through the VNCM programme.

New report on forest carbon and browser impacts

- We commissioned Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research to analyse a large-scale national dataset to investigate possible links between introduced browsing animals and carbon stocks in mature native forests.
- They found that overall carbon stocks across both live trees and dead wood in New Zealand have remained stable over more than a decade.
- There was a small overall loss of carbon from live trees, primarily driven by large losses in a few plots in 'kāmahī podocarp' and 'kāmahī-southern rātā' forest. This observation aligns to a high-profile Forest and Bird report published in 2021 advocating for increased browser control.
- The report has been sent to ZIP, MfE and MPI and will be circulated more widely in the week of 15 September.

Next steps

- We are working closely with MfE on these developments and with MPI on forest carbon research.
- We will provide you with an update later this month.

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