



Briefing: Developing the National Conservation Policy Statement

To	Minister of Conservation	Date submitted	17 June 2025
Action sought	Agree to the revised approach to developing the National Conservation Policy Statement	Priority	Very High
Reference	25-B-0257	DocCM	DOC-10348869
Security Level	In Confidence	Timeframe	26 June 2025
Risk Assessment	High Delays in preparing the National Conservation Policy Statement will reduce or remove the time available for targeted consultation.		
Attachments	Appendix 1: Proposed timeline for seeking Cabinet policy decisions for the NCPS – June to September 2025		

Contacts	
Name and position	Phone
Ruth Isaac, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Regulatory Services	s9(2)(a)

Purpose – Te aronga

1. This briefing seeks your agreement to an updated process for developing the National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS) and responds to your request to extend the targeted consultation period.

Background and context – Te horopaki

2. We recently briefed you on the proposed process for drafting the NCPS and sought your agreement to inform post-settlement governance entities (PSGEs) and key stakeholders [25-B-0207 refers]. You requested that the process be revised to allow for six to eight weeks of targeted consultation.
3. You are seeking Cabinet approval in the coming weeks to start drafting amendments to modernise conservation land management. The Cabinet paper outlines some key process steps for the development of the NCPS, including:
 - your intention to seek Cabinet agreement to the content of the NCPS in September 2025

- your intention to undertake targeted consultation with PSGEs and key stakeholders on the content of the NCPS, with materials to be approved by you, the Attorney General, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality and the Minister for Resources.
4. We have not yet communicated a proposed consultation process to PSGEs and key stakeholders, as we intend to confirm the timing and length of consultation first.

Proposed National Conservation Policy Statement development timeline

Shortening drafting time will allow six weeks for targeted consultation

5. We propose extending the period for targeted consultation from two weeks to six weeks by reducing the time given to the Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) from roughly two months to one, as outlined in the below table. Appendix 1 outlines a week-by-week plan.

Milestone	Dates
Consultation document provided for ministerial approval	30 June 2025
Joint ministerial approval of consultation document	1 July to 11 July 2025
Targeted consultation (six weeks)	14 July to 22 August 2025
Revise policies and prepare Cabinet paper and Regulatory Impact Statement	14 July to 31 August 2025
Lodgement of Cabinet paper seeking approval to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office	11 September 2025
Cabinet approval for PCO to draft NCPS	ECO: 17 September 2025 Cabinet: 22 September 2025
PCO drafts NCPS as part of the Bill (4.5 weeks)	Late September to late October 2025
Introduction of the Bill	November/December 2025

6. We have also updated the proposed process to provide ministers with the full consultation document including the draft policies, rather than a briefing seeking agreement to higher-level policy direction.
7. Once agreed by ministers, we will circulate the document and request feedback from:
- the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA)
 - PSGEs
 - the National Iwi Chairs Forum – Pou Taiao
 - Conservation Boards
 - Tourism Industry Aotearoa
 - the Environmental Defence Society; and
 - the Concessionaire Reference Group.
8. As previously agreed, we are working with the NZCA and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu as we prepare the consultation document.

9. Policy development will continue during the consultation period, including preparing the Cabinet paper seeking agreement to the content of the NCPS and the Regulatory Impact Statement. We will revise the policies at pace based on consultation feedback and work closely with you to update the Cabinet paper in the window between consultation and lodgement.

Developing the NCPS at pace carries risks

10. The key risk with this approach is that it shortens the time available for the Parliamentary Council Office (PCO) to draft the NCPS for its inclusion in the Bill. This increases the risk of the Bill being introduced with gaps or outstanding issues that will need to be addressed through the parliamentary process. We are aiming to partially mitigate this risk by seeking advice from PCO and providing them with a draft NCPS prepared by DOC, though this approach is unconventional and usually discouraged.
11. It will not be possible to extend the end date for targeted consultation or PCO's drafting time without jeopardising the inclusion of the NCPS in the Bill or delaying introduction of the Bill. The consultation period will need to be shortened if joint ministerial approval of the consultation document is not secured by 11 July 2025. Seeking joint ministerial approval cannot start until Cabinet has approved the recommendation in the Cabinet paper you will bring to Cabinet shortly.
12. Although six weeks of targeted consultation will be better received than two, it is likely that PSGEs will criticise the timeframes and nature of the consultation as not being fulsome engagement or co-development. Our view is that this is the most effective way to support informed decision-making without delaying the progress and implementation of the overall reforms. The select committee process will provide more time for considered review and input into the NCPS.

Next steps

13. Following Cabinet agreement to undertake targeted consultation on proposed NCPS policies, DOC will email PSGEs and key stakeholders outlining when we expect to share the consultation document with them and how long they will have to comment. Any correspondence will be clear that the proposed process is subject to change through the Parliamentary process.
14. We will provide you, the Attorney General, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality and the Minister for Resources with a consultation document for approval at the end of June 2025.
15. No slippage will be possible between now and introduction of the Bill in November 2025 if legislation is to be passed this term. During this, you will have a number of briefings to make decisions on including Cabinet report backs on the wider Bill, decisions for the NCPS, and decisions on how settlements will be upheld. DOC is preparing a timetable for you of all relevant advice and decisions through until the end of 2025.

We recommend that you ... (Ngā tohutohu)

		Decision
a)	Agree that the proposed approach to developing the NCPS subject to Cabinet agreement, is six weeks of targeted engagement starting in mid-July 2025 following ministers' approval of the consultation document	Yes / No
b)	Note that DOC will email PSGEs and key stakeholders outlining the proposed process following Cabinet agreement to targeted consultation on the NCPS.	

s9(2)(a)

Date: 17/06/2025

Ruth Isaac
Deputy Director-General, Policy and
Regulatory Services

Date: / /

Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation

ENDS

Appendix 1: Proposed timeline for seeking Cabinet policy decisions for the NCPS – June to September 2025

Month	2 – 6 June		9 – 13 June		16 – 20 June		23 – 27 June			
	Policy development				Share initial policy w/ NZCA and TRONT, prepare consultation doc		Prepare consultation document			
Month	30 June – 4 July		7 – 11 July		14 – 18 July		21 – 26 July		28 July - 1 August	
	Ministerial review of consultation document				Targeted consultation					
Month	4 – 8 August		11 – 15 August		18 – 22 August		25 – 29 August			
	Targeted consultation						Finalise policy advice			
Month	1 – 5 September		8 – 12 September		15 – 19 September		22 – 26 September			
	Finalise policy advice		Lodgement of Cabinet paper		Cabinet committee		Cabinet	Instruct PCO to draft		