



How the Nature Heritage Fund operates and its criteria

How the Nature Heritage Fund operates

Background

The Nature Heritage Fund (formerly the Forest Heritage Fund) was established in June 1990 following the Government's announcement of its Indigenous Forest Policy. The scope of the fund was expanded in 1998 to include non-forest ecosystems and the name changed to reflect the widened scope.

The vision of the Nature Heritage Fund (the NHF) is:

"To protect indigenous ecosystems that represent the full range of natural diversity originally present in the landscape through the establishment of a sustainable and interacting system of protected areas".

The objective of the NHF is:

"To enable, facilitate, and support activities directed at the protection of indigenous ecosystems through helping to permanently protect representative, sustainable, landscape and amenity values of indigenous ecosystems, by purchase of interest, or, while leaving the land in private ownership, through covenanting, leasing, accords, and management agreements".

The scope of the NHF includes all indigenous terrestrial ecosystems that in their local or national context are considered important ecologically. It includes indigenous forests, wetlands, tussock lands and coastal ecosystems on private land.

Protective mechanisms

NHF funding can be used to permanently protect land using legal mechanisms, including:

- Land purchase or securing of voluntary agreements or covenants to permanently protect indigenous ecosystems through the Reserves Act 1977, Conservation Act 1987 or the Local Government Act 2002.
- Reserves under s.338 Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 or the acquisition of reserves under other relevant statutes.
- A system of accords and exchanges where agreements can be reached, and land exchanged in order to achieve both the goals of protection and economic survival for the landowner.

How applications to the NHF are evaluated

Applications will be considered by the NHF Committee. Factors considered in assessing applications include.

- The extent to which the project meets the NHF's core criteria of representativeness, sustainability, landscape and amenity/utility.
- Where relevant, the extent to which the project meets the 2008 national protection priorities for biodiversity on private land.
- The extent to which the project meets the goals of any NHF Regional Protection Strategy developed for the region in which the project is located (if applicable).
- The merit of the proposal, particularly in its relationship to the



NHF's vision, objective and scope.

- The contribution the applicant, landowner or other interested parties will commit to the project.

The funding application should not be for.

- Commercially oriented projects including subdivision of land where protection of natural areas is a condition of a RMA requirement such as a resource consent or plan change, or those projects involving the immediate or future production of indigenous timber.
- Projects which are appropriately funded for water and soil purposes by Regional Councils.
- Projects which are ordinarily the responsibility of local and regional government.

Eligibility of grants

Eligible applicants include:

- private landowners;
- local and regional government bodies and local authority trading enterprises;
- professional and community-based organisations;
- local, regional, and national "umbrella" organisations; and
- Central Government departments and agencies.

Applications are encouraged from multiple organisations who wish to form funding and/or future management partnerships.

Application requirements

Proposals must be in accord with the NHF's objective. Applications should be for the direct costs associated with the legal permanent protection of land. Consideration may be given, on a case-by-case basis, to including reasonable costs of hui, legal advice and protection negotiations. Independent negotiators are often engaged. Assessment of applications will be based on the completed application summary form and associated supporting material. Applicants should therefore take care in the preparation and presentation of this material. Further information may be requested.

Communication with applicants

Successful applicants will be offered grants once negotiations have been positively concluded. These grants will be made subject to a number of conditions including confidentiality. Please note it is the Minister of Conservation's prerogative to announce any protection achieved. Payment of grants will be staged until protection has been finalised.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email, and may be invited to amend their applications and resubmit them for further consideration.

How to apply

Applicants are required to provide a completed application summary form, a completed checklist and all supporting information in electronic form by the next closing dated indicated on the NHF webpage (refer www.nhf.govt.nz)

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by email.

For further information contact:

The Funds Advisor
Nature Heritage Fund



Email: NHF-admin@doc.govt.nz
PO Box 10-420, WELLINGTON 6140
Telephone: 0800 86 20 20

The NHF's core criteria

All applicants need to describe how their application meets the four criteria below, using each criteria's statements and questions.

The criteria's statements and questions are designed to help ensure that applicants fully consider the NHF's criteria when completing their applications. Applicants need not answer each question but should ensure that the information provided with their application includes consideration of all the main concepts covered in the questions. Adequate consideration of these questions will help ensure the NHF's committee has sufficient information to assess the ecological parameters of applications. As the NHF is concerned with the total ecosystem, all vegetation types should be assessed when responding to these questions.

Criteria one: representativeness

The extent to which the area proposed for protection is representative of the full range of vegetation variety that was originally present in the natural landscape, including:

- both commonplace and rare indigenous species, habitats, and communities;
- the ecological processes that link them; and
- the extent to which the ecosystems are already protected in the proportion they were originally present in the ecological district.

Questions on representativeness

1. What ecological district and ecological region is the area in?
2. How well does the area represent the indigenous biodiversity (plant and animal communities) that were originally present in the ecological district; especially those which have now been reduced?
3. Are the communities and habitats present in about the same proportion as they originally were in the ecological district?
4. How intact is the area; are the processes that link the species, habitats and ecosystems functioning in a natural way?
5. To what extent do the communities present in the area represent the full range of communities in the ecological district: how many recognisable communities are present within the area?
6. How well does the area protect important populations of rare or endangered species; does it support minimum viable populations of these species?
7. Does the area provide seasonal habitat or food resources for important indigenous animal populations normally resident outside the area?
8. How well are the ecosystems or communities within the area protected elsewhere in the ecological district?
9. Does the area include any uninterrupted ecological sequences, such as across changing altitude, soil type, or moisture?
10. If already modified, how well will the ecosystem expected to be present in the area in the future represent indigenous character of the ecological district?



Criteria two: sustainability

The extent to which the area proposed for protection is likely to continue to be viable and evolve in a natural way in the long term, including the extent to which the area is:

- protected by its size and shape;
- buffered from the effects of adjoining land uses or activities;
- linked to or dependent on other protected areas (either physically or by ecological processes) for its continued viability;
- expected to maintain its ecological integrity through major natural disturbance events;
- able to migrate in response to climate change
- vulnerable to the depredations of introduced species;
- able to be managed to protect its ecological values; and
- expected to contribute to sustaining existing protected areas, through additional scale, buffering, linkages or restoration.

Questions on sustainability

1. What size and approximate shape is the area?
2. Is the area large enough to adequately sustain the ecosystems present; is there sufficient opportunity for continued regeneration and evolution of the indigenous communities, including ecotones and altitudinal migration?
3. How wide is the area at its narrowest point?
4. What land-use activities occur on the boundaries of the area, particularly at its narrowest points, upstream or upwind, and how well is the area buffered from the effects of these activities?
5. Does the area adjoin any other protected area; how significant is this link?
6. Is the area resilient to introduced species; are plant and animal pests present, what are their effects, and can they be controlled?
7. Is the area threatened by any natural disturbance events, such as rising sea level, flooding, drought or landslide; could the communities present endure these events by, for example, gradual movement inland or upslope in response to climate change, or natural regeneration following landslides, flooding or drought?
8. How easily can the area be managed to maintain the values for which it is protected?
9. How likely are the ecosystems of the area to retain their indigenous character in the long term?
10. If already modified, are the restoration efforts proposed for the area able to be maintained for the term of the restoration process?



Criteria three: landscape integrity

The extent to which the area proposed for protection contributes to and maintains the original integrity of the landscape, including the extent to which it:

- protects the original character;
- protects the original context;
- protects the range of processes that link the ecosystems present;
- maintains the natural nutrient cycles, energy flows, and hydrological regimes;
- maintains the functional coherence of the original and remaining natural landscape values;
- protects an uninterrupted ecological sequence; and
- eliminates unprotected enclaves in an otherwise protected landscape.

Questions on landscape Integrity

1. Describe the area in terms of its landscape context; how does it fit in with the surrounding landscape?
2. Is the area recognised locally (or regionally/nationally) as an important landscape feature; is it listed in the District Plan or in any other landscape assessment?
3. How significant is the area to the functional coherence of the original or remaining landscape; do the plant communities of the area stand out as an isolated feature in the landscape, or do they blend or merge with the surrounding plant communities?
4. Is the area important for landscape integrity; does it link existing plant communities or protected landscapes?
5. What proportion of the catchments of the streams or rivers of the area is protected within the area, or already protected outside the area?
6. How important is the protection of this area for landscape protection; is it an unprotected enclave within a surrounding protected area, or does it contribute significantly to the landscape character of the area?



Criteria four: amenity/utility

The extent to which the area proposed for protection would contribute to the physical and spiritual welfare of the local people as well as to ecosystem services, including its contribution to:

- carbon sequestering;
- protecting aesthetic coherence and pleasantness;
- conserving soil;
- maintaining water quality and yield;
- providing for recreation or tourism; and
- providing for physical, social, and spiritual renewal.

Questions on amenity and utility

1. How effectively does the area protect parts of a catchment above important water intakes for domestic, urban, farming or industrial use?
2. How effectively does the area protect soils from erosion?
3. Is the area important for recreation and/or tourism?
4. Is the area part of an important area for the appreciation of nature and for spiritual renewal?
5. What does the area mean to the local community and do they support its protection?
6. Is the area important to the wider area's pleasantness and aesthetic coherence?
7. Does the area contain any listed geopreservation sites?
8. Does the area contain any recognised historical or archaeological sites, or any features or values that are important to tangata whenua?

Feasibility and funding criteria

The aim of the Nature Heritage Fund is to recognise and legally protect the conservation values of indigenous ecosystems.

Additional criteria which might be applied include:

- urgency of threats to the area that protection could alleviate;
- the opportunity for protection may not arise again;
- costs of protection versus the value of protection; and
- opportunity costs of not being able to protect other areas.

Use of the criteria

These criteria will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of applications with emphasis on ecological significance criteria, in particular representativeness, sustainability, landscape integrity and amenity/utility. The feasibility and funding criteria will be used once other criteria have been assessed.



An evaluation of how an application meets the Government's national protection priorities for protecting rare and threatened native biodiversity on private land

Only applicants seeking funding for the protection of priority three ecosystems need to provide a statement on how their application meets three of the four national priorities (refer to [2008 national protection priorities](#)). Use the guidance below to show which national priorities your application meets.

National priority one

Provide a map using the Landcare Research map platform at https://ourevironment.scinfo.org.nz/maps-and-tools/app/Habitats/lenz_tec that shows the extent of any residual indigenous ecosystems in critically threatened land environments (<10% indigenous cover left (in red) and <20% (in orange)).

National priority two

Provide a map using the Landcare Research map platform at https://ourevironment.scinfo.org.nz/maps-and-tools/app/Habitats/lenz_tec that shows the location, extent and type of wetland; and the location and extent of sand dunes. The latter is shown by selecting the layer "sand or gravel".

National priority three

Refers to the protection of indigenous vegetation associated with 'originally rare' terrestrial ecosystem types not already covered by priorities 1 and 2. These are now termed 'naturally uncommon ecosystems'. Refer to the resources at [Naturally Uncommon Ecosystems » Manaaki Whenua \(landcareresearch.co.nz\)](#) to determine if any such ecosystems, excluding any of the threatened 17 ecosystems this round is targeting, are in the application area.

National priority four

Refers to the protection of habitats of acutely and chronically threatened indigenous species. Note that an update to the New Zealand Threat Classification System means that:

- acutely threatened now translate to one of the following three subsets of "nationally threatened":
 - nationally critical
 - nationally endangered
 - nationally vulnerable:
- chronically threatened now translates to "nationally vulnerable" and "risk-declining".

To determine if any species in the area are classified as being "nationally threatened" or "at-risk-declining", refer [the New Zealand threat classification website](#) for information about the "threatened" and "declining" classifications.

NHF Regional Protection Strategies

Only if applicable provide a brief (100 word max) assessment with respect to the relevant NHF Regional Protection Strategy. See [Protection strategies: Nature Heritage Fund publications \(doc.govt.nz\)](#).