



# Information for Applicants: Nature Heritage Fund

## 1. 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 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 Fund 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 Fund:

The Fund's scope 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.

## 2. Protection Mechanisms

The protective actions for which the Fund can be employed for protection of indigenous ecosystems include the following:

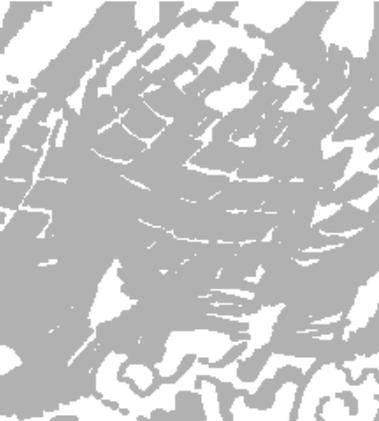
- land purchase or securing of voluntary agreements or covenants to permanently protect indigenous ecosystems through the Reserves Act, Conservation Act or local government;
- reserves under s.338 Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993 or the acquisition of reserves under other relevant statutes;
- a system of 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; and
- assistance to private owners or organisations with management costs, where such management assists in accomplishing long term sustainability.

## 3. The Operation of the Fund

Applications will be considered by the Nature Heritage Fund Committee. The Committee usually meets two to four times a year, and the date of the next meeting and application due date is published on the Fund website [www.nhf.govt.nz](http://www.nhf.govt.nz)

Factors taken into account in assessing applications include:

- the extent to which the project meets the Fund's criteria of representativeness, practicality for sustainable management, landscape and amenity/utility;
- the merit of the proposal, particularly in its relationship to the scope, objective and strategy of the Nature Heritage Fund;
- the contribution the applicant, landowner or other interested parties will commit to the project;
- the capacity of the applicant or future manager to complete the project satisfactorily (including long-term management) and to meet the terms and conditions of the grant; and
- the extent to which the projects are likely to catalyse effective on-going actions so as to avoid future dependency on support from the Fund.



#### **4. Eligibility for Grants**

The funding application should not be for:

- (i) 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;
- (ii) projects which are appropriately funded for water and soil purposes by Regional Councils;
- (iii) projects which are ordinarily the responsibility of local and regional government.

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.



#### **5. Application Requirements**

Proposals must be in accord with the Objective of the Nature Heritage Fund as stated above.

Applications should be for "project funding" rather than for administrative overheads or for equipment to be purchased for unspecified projects. Consideration may on occasion be given, on a case-by-case basis, to including reasonable costs of hui, legal advice and protection negotiations.

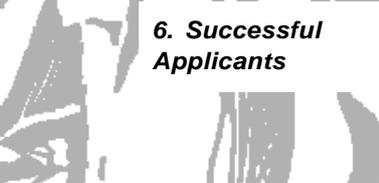
Applications may seek to obtain approval in principle from the Fund in order for protection negotiations to proceed. Such applications would need to outline a timetable for negotiations and a price range for those negotiations. It is the Fund's policy to use an independent Fund negotiator.

Assessment of applications will be based on the completed application form and associated supporting material. Applicants should therefore take care in the preparation and presentation of this material. The Committee may require further negotiation, for example, on purchase price or may need to undertake inspections of the site, or may require visual/ personal presentations by applicants.



#### **6. Successful Applicants**

Grants will be offered to successful applicants after the Committee and Minister of Conservation have considered applications. These grants will be made subject to a number of conditions including confidentiality. Please note it is the Minister's prerogative to announce any protection achieved. Payment of grants will be staged until protection has been finalised.



#### **7. Unsuccessful Applicants**

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing. Unsuccessful applicants may be invited to amend their applications and resubmit them for further consideration.



#### **8. How to Apply**

Applicants are required to provide one electronic set and seven hard copy sets of a completed application form and all supporting information by the next closing date indicated on the website:

[www.nhf.govt.nz](http://www.nhf.govt.nz)

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged in writing.

Contact for further information:

The Executive Officer  
Nature Heritage Fund  
PO Box 10-420, WELLINGTON 6143  
Telephone: (04) 471-0726, Email: [NHF-admin@doc.govt.nz](mailto:NHF-admin@doc.govt.nz)





# Fund Criteria

The application of each criterion should be guided by the statements and questions listed below.

The questions are designed to help ensure that applicants give full consideration to the Fund'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 Fund's committee has sufficient information to assess the ecological parameters of applications. As the Fund is concerned with the total ecosystem, all vegetation types should be assessed when responding to these questions.

## **Level 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?

## **Level 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.



**Level Three:  
Landscape  
Integrity**

### 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?

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?



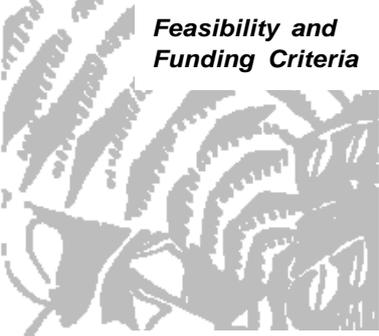
#### **Level Four: Amenity/Utility**

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 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.