

Land Use and Soils Policy

Vision¹

We respect land and soil as part of the ecosystems we rely on. Land and soil ecosystems are protected and regenerated for present and future generations, to nurture our wellbeing and livelihoods, and provide food, medicine, and spiritual fulfilment.

Values and Principles

- *Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi*: We affirm tino rangatiratanga of iwi, hapū and whānau as kaitiaki of this whenua. The perspectives, approaches, needs, and aspirations of tangata whenua are embedded in the philosophy and approach to land and soil management.
- *Ecological Wisdom*: Soil ecosystems have intrinsic value and humanity needs to steward the natural world by understanding and working within the carrying capacity of the land.
- *Social Responsibility*: The need for equity in the sustainable use of land and soil resources is acknowledged.
- *Appropriate Decision-Making*: Good governance (i.e., the processes by which institutions and other parties make and implement decisions in order to manage resources efficiently and ensure human rights), and strong institutions should underpin land and soil management.
- *Non-Violence*: Conflict resolution over land and soil management should ensure no violence is felt by te taiao, the creatures that call it home, and always honour Te Tiriti.
- *The mauri of land* - its cultural, spiritual, historical, conservation and ecological aspects - are prioritised. At the same time, agricultural land is valued for its ability to produce healthy food, fibre and wood and is regenerated and managed sustainably to ensure that its productive potential is protected and enhanced.

Summary

We must improve the ways we use and care for land for the sake of current and future generations, other species and ecosystem health. We will ensure that land use and land cover are managed in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Protecting soil health and preventing loss of soils will be a key focus.

¹ This policy discusses land use and soils within the context of environmental protection, and as a vital part of te taiao. For our response to colonial land dispossession, please see [Hoki Whenua Mai—Land Back](#) and our [Te Tiriti o Waitangi Policy](#).

Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

"All native species and their habitats will be thriving or on a path to recovery in terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments.

Our laws and practices will respect the biological integrity of all life, while prioritising the health of indigenous species and ecosystems.

The customary and decision making roles of whānau, hapū and iwi will be integral to decisions about resource use.

Decision-making about resource use will provide for community participation and environmental justice."

Actions in this policy that will help achieve this include:

- 1.1.1 Upholding the right of tangata whenua to exercise customary practices regarding soil sovereignty and māra kai on their land.
- 3.1.2 Using both mātauranga Māori and Western science in research and the development of land and soil policies and practices.
- 1.2.1 Ensuring that land use aligns with the urgency of climate change mitigation and adaptation, supports ecosystem health and conservation objectives.
- 1.6 Including community-based biodiversity conservation initiatives into land-use planning and local sustainable development strategies.
- 2.1 Encouraging and resourcing landowners to set marginal and erosion prone lands aside for restoration of native vegetation, and to establish habitat corridors.
- 3.6 Encouraging the use of soil conservation best practice, including mechanical and biological control techniques.

Connected Policies

This Land and Soil Policy is fundamentally connected to the [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#), [Food](#), [Climate Change](#), [Freshwater](#) and [Conservation](#) Policies. It supports the protection of te taiao through the [Environmental Protection](#) Policy.

Policy Positions

1. Land Use Management

Issues

Current land use systems are focused on the individual property owner, which at times is at the expense of ecosystems and communities. Changes of land use, largely for agriculture and human settlements, have caused loss of natural ecosystems across the world and in Aotearoa New Zealand. This loss is ongoing.

Actions

- 1.1. Affirm the tino rangatiratanga of iwi, hapū and whānau when making decisions on land use, in accordance to Article II of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
 - 1.1.1. Uphold the right of tangata whenua to exercise customary practices regarding soil sovereignty and māra kai on their land.
- 1.2. Ensure that land use:
 - 1.2.1. Aligns with the urgency of climate change mitigation and adaptation (see also our [Climate Change](#) Policy)
 - 1.2.2. Aligns with soil type, supports soil biodiversity and prevents erosion
 - 1.2.3. Supports freshwater ecosystems, including water quality and flows (see our [Freshwater](#) Policy)
 - 1.2.4. Restores and protects native species and ecosystems (see our [Conservation](#) Policy)
 - 1.2.5. Recognises the interconnection of land use and animal husbandry methods with ecosystem and human health, including zoonotic diseases
 - 1.2.6. Protects wāhi tapu
- 1.3. Implement the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land, including identifying, mapping and protecting this land from urban development.
- 1.4. Ensure that highly productive soils are regenerated and managed sustainably to ensure that their productive potential is protected and enhanced; while also enhancing and respecting their amenity, cultural, spiritual, historical, and conservation values and ecosystems (see our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#), Policy)
- 1.5. Ensure the strategic co-governance of bioregions, informed by robust assessment (including physical characteristics and risks), community consultation, planning (including for climate change) and monitoring.
- 1.6. Include community-based biodiversity conservation initiatives into land-use planning and local sustainable development strategies.
- 1.7. Ensure that land use patterns and land use functions in buffer zones adjacent to protected areas and public conservation land are compatible with, and complement the conservation objectives (see also our [Conservation](#) Policy)
- 1.8. Enhance ecological integrity and resilience through inter alia land use linkages, corridors and connectivity, and by rehabilitating and restoring ecosystems
- 1.9. Ensure recognition, protection, and restoration of significant indigenous heritage and cultural landscapes, including within urban areas (see our [Arts, Culture and Heritage](#) Policy)
- 1.10. Resource the Walking Access Commission to explore a tikanga Māori based system of public access (similar to a "right to roam") to Crown and private land in partnership with tangata whenua.

2. Land Cover Management

Issues

Our land cover is affected by naturally occurring disturbances as well as human activities. In turn, our water quality, watershed hydrology, habitat and species composition, climate and carbon storage have all been negatively affected by changes in land cover.

Actions

- 2.1. Encourage and resource landowners to set marginal and erosion prone lands aside for restoration of native vegetation, and to establish habitat corridors.
- 2.2. Work with tangata whenua and communities to urgently restore and protect at least 5% of the land area of all ecological regions in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 2.3. Devise and implement a land cover strategy and action plan to rehabilitate and restore degraded land cover systems of national concern (see also our [Conservation](#) and [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policies)
- 2.4. Avoid soil erosion and ensure the protection of soil surface areas with vegetation cover as soon as possible after the harvest of trees and crops, earthworks, or other vegetation clearance.

3. Soil Health, Quality, Loss and Protection

Issues

Soil-related issues include wind- and water-driven erosion, degradation, excess nutrients and contamination:

- Erosion affects productivity by removing topsoil, and affects the quality of surrounding waterways by increasing sediment.
- Degradation lowers the soil's ability to sequester carbon, retain moisture, and support healthy ecosystems.
- Excess nutrients applied to soil can leach into groundwater and waterways, causing unwanted plants to grow and affecting freshwater quality.
- Past and present use of chemicals in industry, agriculture and horticulture has left some New Zealand soils contaminated and degraded, affecting agriculture, people, water bodies and the broader environment.

These issues are exacerbated by land use change and intensification (including irrigation), and by climate change.

Actions

- 3.1. Establish a national soil management agency and strategy to:
 - 3.1.1. Set direction on soil use, policies and research, such as improving knowledge of how the land responds to human pressures, understanding the potential limits to land-use intensification and other development, and discovering what drives natural resource management decisions.
 - 3.1.2. Use both mātauranga Māori and Western science in research and the development of policies

- 3.1.3. Promote objective assessment, monitoring and accountability among all stakeholders.
- 3.1.4. Put in place measures to ensure that land is used according to its capability
- 3.2. Require all landowners and land developers to replace any displaced area of ecological value with a comparable area of equal ecological value.
- 3.3. Ensure that soil mapping and soil quality information is available to land use and farm consultants, farmers, developers and other land users.
- 3.4. Expand soil protection programmes, such as the Hill Country Erosion Programme, to improve environmental quality and reduce flooding.
- 3.5. Review and develop policy and regulation on soil pollution control, including for when land changes use, and to ensure treatment and remediation costs are paid by the polluters.
- 3.6. Encourage the use of soil conservation and earthworks best practice, including mechanical and biological control techniques
- 3.7. Ensure the treatment of solid waste does not result in contaminated soils (see our [Waste and Hazardous Substances](#) Policy).
- 3.8. Ensure that herbicide, fungicide and pesticide use in both agricultural and non-agricultural applications does not damage soil system integrity, and rapidly phase out all that do (see our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policy).
- 3.9. Urgently increase the number of assessments of chemicals per year that are used in biocides, and other agricultural purposes, to ensure their safety for human use; and prevent their use until such assessments have been undertaken.
- 3.10. Regulate the synthetic nitrogen added to soils (see our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policy)
- 3.11. Protect and enhance the role of soil in re-capturing or sequestering carbon and storing moisture/water, especially in agricultural soils, by improved tillage and other practices (see our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policy).
- 3.12. Develop and implement a National Soil Strategy which promotes soil health, soil conservation, and carbon sequestration.
- 3.13. Develop a national wetland strategy that prioritises the establishment and restoration of wetlands to accumulate carbon in areas that are otherwise unsuitable for productive agriculture, such as boggy and floodable areas.
- 3.14. Develop a framework to include farm-based wetland restoration as a form of carbon offsetting.
- 3.15. Support and guide farmers to transition to natural methods for regenerating their soils, that improves the overall ecosystem of their soils to sequester carbon such as increasing the diversity of plants, crops and trees in keeping with what the land can support.
- 3.16. Fund research and development to identify new innovations for building soil, such as commercial scale production and application of humus, as one answer to soil quality, water retention, nutrition and health, containment of contaminants, and storing of carbon.
- 3.17. Continue to monitor and report on the location and quality of agricultural soils, and their rates of soil carbon sequestration per year.

