

Biodiversity and Environmental Regeneration Policy

In Government, the Green Party will take a holistic approach to conservation. We will make sure Aotearoa New Zealand plays a leading part in protecting the biodiversity of planet Earth from the global mass extinction that is currently underway. We will protect threatened indigenous species from invasive species, diseases, and human activity, and support the kaitiaki role and indigenous knowledge of tangata whenua.

Vision

Indigenous biodiversity thrives and there is a healthy relationship between people and te taiao | the environment.

Values and Principles

Policy decisions relating to biodiversity regeneration must be consistent with the following values and principles:

- *Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi*: Regenerative efforts must recognise the kaitiaki role of tangata whenua and the insight that mātauranga Māori brings.
- *Ecological Wisdom*: Regenerative efforts must recognise the inherent value of nature, and work within its complex dynamics. We must actively safeguard and regenerate indigenous ecosystems, Ki uta ki tai | from the mountains to the sea.
- *Social Responsibility*: Regenerative efforts must ensure future generations will inherit a healthy environment, which is achieved alongside progress on social issues.
- *Non-Violence*: Regenerative efforts must cause minimal harm whilst preventing the harm caused by inaction.
- *Appropriate Decision-Making*: Regenerative efforts must be adaptable, evidence-based, and effective. Decision making must be distributed equitably, engage with local communities, and achieve co-benefits.
- *Interconnectedness*: Regenerative efforts must recognise that humans are interdependent with other species. Our survival requires a functional biosphere as we are part of the circle of life and share a common descent and whakapapa.

Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

"Human interaction with the rest of the natural world needs to be based on the principles of ecological sustainability and circularity, underpinned by mātauranga Māori, and giving life to our international commitments on indigenous knowledge and rights."

"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."

Actions in this policy that work towards these goals include:

- Establishing a job guarantee programme focused on understanding, protecting, and regenerating ecosystems. (2.1.1)
- Broadening legal protections and conservation strategies to cover indigenous fish, plants, invertebrates, and fungi to recognise the importance of taxonomic diversity. (3.1.2)
- Investigate appropriate regulation that limits or suspends the harvesting of vulnerable aquatic species such as whitebait to ensure populations regenerate. (3.1.3)
- Significantly increasing resourcing for invasive species, weed eradication, and control bodies, prioritising the eradication of invasive species identified in Predator Free 2050 and species with disproportionate effects on indigenous ecosystems. (3.2.3)
- Taking a collaborative and Tiriti-based approach to Government-led conservation, such as co-governance and co-management. (4.1.3)
- Establishing a Sovereign Biodiversity Fund to resource regenerative efforts. (2.1.3)

Connected Policies

See also our specific policies for the protection and regeneration of [Land](#), [Freshwater](#), and [Marine](#) ecosystems, and our policies relating to:

- Establishing legal rights of nature and recognising the legal status of Papatūānuku ([Governance Policy](#)) and a right to a healthy environment ([Human Rights Policy](#))
- Ensuring economic activities uphold the wellbeing of the natural world ([Government in the Economy](#), [Business](#), and specific sectors, e.g. [Mining](#), [Agriculture](#), [Tourism](#), [Forestry](#))
- Minimising the further loss of indigenous ecosystems to other land uses ([Land Use and Soils Policy](#))
- Adapting urban design to support environmental growth ([Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy](#))
- Collaborating with other countries, including strengthening international treaties ([Global Affairs Policy](#)) and leveraging trade agreements ([Trade and Foreign Investment Policy](#))
- Aligning 'carbon farming' with ecological resilience ([Climate Change Policy](#))

Policy Positions

1. Global Biodiversity Crisis - The urgent need for action

Issues

Rates of species extinction across the world have increased sharply due to pressures caused by human activity. Global economic and political systems undervalue, exploit, and destroy nature. Rates of extinction are now as high as the five previous 'mass extinction events' in Earth's history, meaning we are facing the "Holocene mass extinction event". The level of biodiversity is declining to the point that it is threatening ecosystems, and the human systems reliant on them. This means the need for action is critical.

Actions

- 1.1. Ensure that the need to act to prevent ongoing biodiversity loss and secure a viable future is widely understood, including by:
 - 1.1.1. Expanding the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity to establish clear targets within its implementation plan and demonstrate clear practical pathways to achieving those.
 - 1.1.2. Supporting advocacy and education within the wider community regarding biodiversity loss and the mass extinction event, including restoring and adequately resourcing DOC's advocacy and education role; and
 - 1.1.3. Incorporating environmental education into curricula, from early to adult education, and funding nature-based school activities.
- 1.2. Minimise the impact of climate change on biodiversity, including by:
 - 1.2.1. Considering climate change impacts and adaptation strategies when designing conservation programmes.
- 1.3. Enable New Zealanders to strengthen their relationship with the environment and conservation efforts, including by:
 - 1.3.1. Supporting traditions and practices that recognize the rights and wellbeing of the natural world and its fundamental societal value;
 - 1.3.2. Exploring a refocus of DOC to be solely on conservation by allocating its tourism, recreation, and heritage roles to other agencies; and
 - 1.3.3. In partnership with tangata whenua, exploring a tikanga Māori-based system of public access to Crown and private land.

2. Environmental Growth and Ecosystem Regeneration

Issues

Human activity pressures ecosystem health and functioning through pollution, habitat loss, resource extraction, and biodiversity loss, which is further accelerated by an economy which incentivises exploitation for short-term gain. This has led to the loss and degradation of ecosystems and their critical functions.

Actions

Authorised by Miriam Ross, Level 5, 108 The Terrace, Wellington

- 2.1. Ensure that economic development and commercial activities support the regeneration and growth of the environment, including by:
 - 2.1.1. Establishing a job guarantee programme focused on understanding, protecting, and regenerating ecosystems;
 - 2.1.2. Exploring and supporting the criminalisation of 'ecocide' within domestic and international law, incorporating a Te Tiriti o Waitangi perspective; and
 - 2.1.3. Establishing a Sovereign Biodiversity Fund to resource regenerative efforts, with:
 - 2.1.3.1. Incentives for government, private, and iwi investment in biodiversity; and
 - 2.1.3.2. Reliable funds from a new user-pays natural resources levy.
- 2.2. Resource landowners to regenerate and maintain indigenous biodiversity, including by:
 - 2.2.1. Introducing a biodiversity credits system that incentivises private and Māori landowners to establish indigenous biodiversity pockets and regenerate indigenous ecosystems, particularly for important ecosystems disproportionately being degraded, such as wetlands;
 - 2.2.2. Ensuring resource management legislation and plans take an ecosystem-based approach and encourage the regeneration of indigenous ecosystems and biodiversity; and
 - 2.2.3. Prohibiting further net loss of indigenous ecosystems to human land uses, and requiring new developments to undergo thorough analysis on environmental impacts, whilst bolstering the ability to gather and access data needed for these analysis.
- 2.3. Ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand's activity in Antarctica protects the region's biodiversity, including by:
 - 2.3.1. Collaborating with other Antarctic Treaty signatories to uphold responsible stewardship;
 - 2.3.2. Developing and funding a biodiversity and environmental regeneration plan for the Ross Dependency; and
 - 2.3.3. Establishing a system to require environmental impact assessments for human activities such as research and tourism in Antarctica.
- 2.4. Monitor and control air pollutants, including by:
 - 2.4.1. Introducing mandatory monitoring and controls for fine particulate matter; and
 - 2.4.2. Updating the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality to reflect international standards.
- 2.5. Minimise light pollution, including by:
 - 2.5.1. Supporting research and development on efficient light technologies that minimise light pollution; and
 - 2.5.2. Increasing and protecting dark sky reserves.

3. Indigenous Species

Issues

Aotearoa New Zealand is a known “hotspot” for its biodiversity. Due to its distinct evolutionary history, it has many unique species and a distinct ecological composition. Unfortunately, this uniqueness makes our endemic species particularly vulnerable to extinction and human pressures. The majority of our vertebrate indigenous species, and many other indigenous species, are now at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, disease, and genetic bottlenecks. Growing pressures, such as climate changes and human impacts on the environment, increase the urgency to respond.

Actions

- 3.1. Restore the population health of indigenous species so that they are safe from the threat of extinction, including by:
 - 3.1.1. Broadening recovery plans to cover more threatened species across different taxa and updating them regularly;
 - 3.1.2. Broadening legal protections and conservation strategies to cover indigenous fish, plants, invertebrates, and fungi to recognise the importance of taxonomic diversity; and
 - 3.1.3. Investigate appropriate regulation that limits or suspends the harvesting of vulnerable aquatic species such as whitebait to ensure populations regenerate.
- 3.2. Ensure that invasive species are either exterminated, or well managed and monitored, and no longer prevent indigenous species from flourishing, including by:
 - 3.2.1. Expanding 'mainland islands' for intensive invasive species management;
 - 3.2.2. Strengthening regulation and enforcement around introducing, releasing, and commercial use of invasive species;
 - 3.2.3. Significantly increasing resourcing for invasive species and weed eradication and control bodies, prioritising the eradication of invasive species identified in Predator Free 2050 and species with disproportionate effects on indigenous ecosystems; and
 - 3.2.4. Developing and prioritising humane and effective biological, chemical, and physical invasive species control options, while recognising and applying the most effective options currently available (e.g. 1080, cyanide, glyphosate, trappings).
- 3.3. Ensure that diseases that impair indigenous species (e.g. Kauri dieback, myrtle rust) are well understood, monitored, and controlled, including by:
 - 3.3.1. Funding research to understand diseases that affect indigenous species; and
 - 3.3.2. Establishing strategies to combat the spread of disease in indigenous species.
- 3.4. Ensure that genetic diversity and variation of indigenous species are well protected, including by:
 - 3.4.1. Researching and monitoring genetic bottlenecks, inbreeding depression, and other declines in variation of indigenous species;

- 3.4.2. Funding genetic rescue programmes to increase genetic variation of indigenous species;
- 3.4.3. Exploring ways to use eco-sourcing in nurseries and re-wilding programmes; and
- 3.4.4. Establishing genome and seed banks for indigenous species, prioritising endemic species.
- 3.5. Ensure biosecurity measures that prevent the introduction of new species and biological hazards are robust, well resourced, and effective.
- 3.6. Recloak Papatūānuku through the regeneration of indigenous forests, including by:
 - 3.6.1. Strengthening the existing restrictions on the export of indigenous logs and chips, including swamp kauri;
 - 3.6.2. Ensuring that any removal of windthrown trees on public conservation land is ecologically and culturally sound; and
 - 3.6.3. Prioritising the control of introduced pests that contribute to forest collapse (i.e. possums, pigs, and deer) over recreational hunting.

4. Te Tiriti and Conservation

Issues

Conservation that is disconnected from Māori fails to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Conservation systems have exacerbated the disconnection of Māori from ancestral lands and undermined the kaitiaki role of tangata whenua.

Actions

- 4.1. Ensure that conservation efforts resource and uphold the tino rangatiratanga of Māori as kaitiaki, including by:
 - 4.1.1. Enabling customary use of indigenous species and resources on public conservation land by iwi and hapū Māori, in line with kaitiakitanga;
 - 4.1.2. Supporting Māori-led oversight of the customary management of tāonga species by iwi and hapū Māori;
 - 4.1.3. Taking a collaborative Tiriti-based approach to Government-led conservation, such as co-governance and co-management; and
 - 4.1.4. Implementing recommendations of Ko Aotearoa Tēnei Waitangi Tribunal (WAI262) report, such as establishing Māori advisory boards, improving support for rongōa Māori, and reviewing patents of plant lineages.
- 4.2. Build public awareness of the colonial history of public conservation land and how Te Tiriti o Waitangi and conservation intersect.
- 4.3. Ensure conservation efforts recognise native species as tāonga with whakapapa connections to Māori, including by:
 - 4.3.1. Developing strategies to preserve non-native tāonga animals and plants, such as the kiore, in a way that would not threaten indigenous species.

5. Effectiveness of Conservation Efforts

Issues

Conservation efforts seek to protect biodiversity and halt its decline but they have so far been insufficient. Despite decades of conservation, locally and nationally, biodiversity is continuing to decline.

Actions

- 5.1. Ensure that conservation efforts are accorded sufficient priority, funding, and tools to achieve their goals, including by:
 - 5.1.1. Expanding DOC's core capacity by increasing funding for technology, data, and employing many more field and research personnel;
 - 5.1.2. Enabling the purchase, protection, and regeneration of special places, including by iwi and hapū, that are threatened or under-represented in the public conservation estate; and
 - 5.1.3. Strengthening the role and funding of conservation boards as independent advocates, speaking for the community.
- 5.2. Ensure that conservation efforts are evidence-based and reflect the drivers of ecosystem health, productivity, and biomass, including by:
 - 5.2.1. Funding increased research into indigenous ecosystem functioning and species population dynamics;
 - 5.2.2. Prioritising landscape-scale and ecosystem-based conservation projects that will protect and restore the ecological niches of individual populations and species that are at risk; and
 - 5.2.3. Developing a set of environmental indicators with meaningful tipping points and limits, grounded in mātauranga Māori and Western science.
- 5.3. Support community efforts to regenerate urban biodiversity and incorporate better indigenous ecology and greenspace into city design.
- 5.4. Enable linkages between ecotypes by establishing ecological corridors through developed areas.