Vision
Indigenous biodiversity thrives in distinctive and varied ecosystems that are protected, restored and connected.

Values and Principles
Policy decisions that relate to conservation must be consistent with the following values and principles:

- **Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi**: The kaitiaki role of tangata whenua to protect taonga species and significant places should be upheld, including through the return of whenua.
- **Ecological Wisdom**: Nature has innate value, and our quality of life is underpinned by the health and well-being of the natural world. All native ecosystems and plant and animal species should be safeguarded and restored, especially those that are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Social Responsibility**: All New Zealanders should be able to enjoy, understand and care for indigenous ecosystems, and benefit from a clean, healthy natural environment.
- **Appropriate Decision-Making**: The restoration and management of our native ecosystems should be based on a holistic, ecosystems-based, mātauranga Māori-informed framework that recognises the rights and mauri of every native species. Local communities and hapū should be encouraged, resourced and empowered to regenerate and care for their local ecosystems.
- **Non-Violence**: There should be no further loss of natural ecosystems or species extinction, including from predicted harms such as climate change.
- **Regenerative activity**: All human activity should support and regenerate the wellbeing of natural ecosystems, indigenous species and habitats.

Summary
The Green Party will protect Aotearoa New Zealand’s biodiversity using a whole ecosystem, mātauranga Māori-based approach that extends beyond parks and reserves to become an integral part of planning and resource management. We will support and resource landowners, hapū, and local communities to care for and regenerate our native biodiversity, particularly in the light of climate change. We will also adequately resource the Department of Conservation and other government agencies to protect and restore healthy native ecosystems and manage human activities that take place within them, such as tourism, and undertake biosecurity measures.

Strategic Priorities
Authorised by Miriam Ross, Level 5, 108 The Terrace, Wellington
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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:

- Uphold and resource the kaitiaki role of tangata whenua, and work with them to protect taonga species and significant places, including through the return of whenua. (1.1)
- Establish a complete linked network of ecologically representative areas - terrestrial, marine and aquatic - under protective management. (3.2)
- Work with local government and communities to ensure a minimum 5% of the land area of all ecological districts in Aotearoa New Zealand is in native vegetation or set aside for the restoration of nature. (3.3)
- Establish legal protection for indigenous plants and ensure legal protections for indigenous wildlife are robust enough for all threatened species. (3.8)
- Implement strategies for climate-change adaptation of native ecosystems and species (...). (4.1)
- Manage human activity outside of public conservation land in a way that supports the wellbeing of natural ecosystems, indigenous species and habitats (...). (5.1)

**Connected Policies**

This policy is highly connected to our [Environmental Protection](#), [Marine](#), [Land Use and Soil](#), and [Freshwater](#) Policies. See also our policies about [Mining](#) on public conservation land and our [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) Policy for our full biosecurity policy.

**Policy Positions**

1. **Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Conservation**

   **Issues**

   Tangata whenua have little influence over the management of lands and resources, which hinders their customary role as kaitiaki.

   **Actions**

   1.1. Uphold and resource the kaitiaki role of tangata whenua, and work with them to protect taonga species and significant places, including through the return of whenua.
1.2. Continue to implement a range of governance models which enable whānau, hapū and iwi to restore their relationship with lands and waters in urban and rural areas.

1.3. Enable co-governance of public conservation lands with hapū, for both central and local government, such as resourcing Mana Whakahono ā Rohe.

1.4. Support the return of conservation areas of significant value to whānau, hapū and iwi.

1.5. Enable customary use by tangata whenua of the conservation estate.

1.6. Recognise the cultural heritage value of traditional Māori plants and animals, such as the kiore, and develop strategies to ensure these species are conserved in areas where they will not seriously threaten indigenous species.

2. **Department of Conservation Capacity**

*Issues*

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is charged with conservation and advocacy roles, including the protection of indigenous biodiversity, but is often not well funded to do this.

*Actions*

2.1. Develop DOC’s core capacity by improving funding for staff and contractor capacity, including scientific and technical expertise, field staff and rangers.

2.2. Increase DOC’s capacity to conduct research, including into the eradication of introduced invasive species and the control of diseases threatening biodiversity recovery.

2.3. Increase funding to the Nature Heritage Fund to enable the purchase and protection of special places that are threatened and/or under-represented in the conservation estate.

2.4. Increase focus on collaboration with whanau, hapū and communities to achieve mutual conservation goals at place.

3. **Indigenous Ecosystem Protection and Restoration**

*Issues*

Many indigenous plants, animals, fungi and ecosystems are subject to negative pressure from pests and human activities.

*Actions*

3.1. Prohibit further conversion of indigenous ecosystems to human land uses.

3.2. Establish a complete linked network of ecologically representative areas - terrestrial, marine and aquatic - under protective management.

3.3. Work with local government and communities to ensure a minimum 5% of the land area of all ecological districts in Aotearoa New Zealand is in native vegetation or set aside for the restoration of nature.

3.4. Restore and protect te mauri and the natural character of coastal and estuarine ecosystems and wetlands (see our [Freshwater Policy](#)).
3.5. Increase the width of native riparian plantings to levels that will lead to a regeneration of streams and rivers.

3.6. Fund increased research into indigenous ecosystem functioning and species population dynamics.

3.7. Establish a recovery plan for all threatened species that lack one.

3.8. Establish legal protection for indigenous plants and ensure legal protections for indigenous wildlife are robust enough for all threatened species.

3.9. Continue the existing ban on the export of indigenous logs and chips, including swamp kauri, and ensure that any removal of windblown trees on public conservation land is ecologically sound and consistent with cultural materials plans agreed between local hapū and iwi, and DOC.

3.10. Establish guidelines for indigenous planting in urban areas, such as unused road strips, railway corridors, esplanade reserves and other areas.

4. **Conservation in a Changing Climate**

*Issues*

Widespread loss of indigenous forest cover and wetlands has resulted in a major loss of biodiversity, carbon-sequestration capacity, and resilience to drought, erosion and flood, all of which occur more frequently in our changing climate.

*Actions*

4.1. Implement strategies for climate-change adaptation of native ecosystems and species, including:

4.1.1. Dealing with increased beech mast seasons and habitat change;

4.1.2. Increasing erosion protection of riverbanks, prioritising nature-based interventions that are specific to the local (native) habitat; and

4.1.3. Facilitating the relocation of native species to more suitable habitats if the effects of climate change disrupts their ability to thrive.

4.2. Fund increased research into the impacts of climate change on indigenous species, habitats and ecosystems.

5. **Conservation on Private and Māori Land**

*Issues*

The loss of native biodiversity is pronounced outside of the Conservation Estate because of habitat loss and fragmentation.

*Actions*

5.1. Manage human activity outside of public conservation land in a way that supports the wellbeing of natural ecosystems, indigenous species and habitats, including:

5.1.1. Recognising the effects on nature from human activities in both urban and rural areas;

5.1.2. Improved management of these activities and their effects; and
5.1.3. Supporting increased predator and invasive species control and community and whānau, hapū, and iwi initiatives that restore our natural environment.

5.2. Require local authorities to develop and use conservation plans, and use low impact ‘green’ infrastructure and regulatory and non-regulatory methods to improve natural habitats in urban areas.

5.3. Support and enable the use of resource management legislation to identify and protect significant natural areas on private land against ecologically harmful activities.

5.4. Provide clear direction as to how significant natural areas are to be protected, require councils to control damage to indigenous habitats (terrestrial and freshwater), and give additional recognition and protection to the habitats of species threatened with extinction.

5.5. Increase funding to help private and Māori landholders actively manage and protect indigenous habitats and ecosystems

5.6. Promote on-farm biodiversity protection and native planting.

5.7. Encourage landowners to set unused, marginal and erosion prone lands aside for the restoration of native vegetation and habitat corridors

5.8. Provide financial incentives to landowners for conservation, for example, by providing rating reductions for land with protected conservation areas.

5.9. Encourage diversification of production forestry, including planting native species, and ensure regulatory settings are fit for purpose to enable production forestry to contribute to biodiversity outcomes (see our Forestry Policy).

6. **Enhancing and Protecting Freshwater Species and Habitats**

**Issues**

Water quality, particularly in lowland rivers, lakes, and streams (including urban streams), is deteriorating. Wetlands are still being drained despite 90% of lowland freshwater wetlands having already been destroyed, with adverse impacts on freshwater species. Urgent action is needed to halt and reverse these trends.

**Actions**

6.1. Ensure that fresh water quality and flow levels are managed in a way that sustains indigenous species and ecosystems such as wetlands.

6.2. Ensure DOC develops and implements recovery plans for threatened freshwater species and ecosystems, and that all threatened native fish (e.g. giant kōkopu and short jawed kōkopu) are legally protected.

6.3. Facilitate joint action by Fish and Game New Zealand, DOC and others to remove pest fish from selected waterways.

6.4. Transfer Crown-owned riverbeds in the South Island that are administered by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) to DOC and/or hapū to promote better management of braided river ecosystems.

6.5. Support efforts to obtain water conservation orders to protect taonga, wild and scenic waterbodies.
6.6. Phase out grazing concessions on public conservation land except where this is required to protect ecological values, such as light sheep grazing to control weeds.

See our [Freshwater Policy](#) for more details on freshwater management.

## 7. Tourism on Public Conservation Land

### Issues

Tourism is implicated in loss of natural quiet, water quality degradation, solid waste generation, ecological harm from infrastructure development and landscape modification, biodiversity loss and biosecurity risk, and greenhouse gas emissions. Visitor density and long-distance tourism are significant factors.

### Actions

7.1. Implement strategies to reduce the impact of high tourist numbers in sensitive ecosystems, guided by consideration of the cumulative effect of visitor activities on the character of public conservation land.

7.2. Ensure that the levy on overseas visitors to Aotearoa New Zealand provides sufficient funding to mitigate the harms of tourism, including on the conservation estate and regional infrastructure.

7.3. Ensure that tourism concessions in conservation systems effectively protect natural values and avoid and manage visitor impacts.

7.4. Ensure that Wilderness Areas remain protected as places where people can experience natural quiet and dark, and support appropriate additions of new Wilderness Areas.

7.5. Require the Department of Conservation to prioritise recreation over tourism, in line with its Conservation Act mandate to “foster recreation”, but only “allow for tourism”.

7.6. Fully resource the protection and maintenance of backcountry (DOC) huts and shelters.

See also our [Tourism Policy](#) for more details on tourism management.

## 8. Biosecurity Threats

### Issues

Increasing trade and tourism has resulted in numerous new organisms arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand that pose threats to biodiversity.

### Actions

8.1. Ensure, through stringent biosecurity management, that no new invasive species become naturalised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

8.2. Ensure there is a biosecurity strategy in place that is based on a precautionary approach and that:

8.2.1. Recognises that many pest incursions are irreversible and so promotes the lowest practical risk approach;
8.2.2. Gives equal importance to biosecurity threats to the marine and terrestrial environments;

8.2.3. Considers the harmful effects of toxins on human and non-target species, in decisions on the use of ground and aerial spray, and ensures chemicals are only used as a last resort;

8.2.4. Addresses the risks from new and imported organisms and ensures the Ministry of Primary Industries maintains and constantly improves biosecurity protocols, including protocols for seed importation and viable GE organisms such as micro-organisms, seeds, plants and animals (see our Research, Science and Technology Policy);

8.2.5. Only permits new species of biological control after extensive risk assessments in relation to indigenous and existing naturalised exotic species; and

8.2.6. Amends the Biosecurity Act to include, as its purpose, the need to protect Aotearoa New Zealand from invasive species, diseases, and viable GE organisms.

8.3. Ensure there is a biosecurity services levy on all freight, passengers and vessels arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand.

9. Pest Threats to Biodiversity

Issues
Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity continues to be severely diminished due to the impact of introduced invasive species. Currently animal pest control in Aotearoa New Zealand involves the extensive and increasingly precise use of poisons in ground and aerial operations because they are generally a cost effective means of controlling animal pest species, but they can be toxic to non-target species and are arguably inhumane.

Actions
9.1. Remove or eradicate, where possible, large non-predator invasive species in areas where they threaten important ecological values; and restrict the range and density of the remaining population in cooperation with the community.

9.2. Develop and implement national invasive species management strategies as part of coordinating and integrating invasive species control between central and local government agencies, to ensure efficient, humane and purposeful invasive species management is achieved.

9.3. Work with whānau, hapū and iwi to implement the most appropriate methods of invasive species control in their rohe; especially in sites of cultural and spiritual significance.

9.4. Ensure that control of introduced animals on conservation land remains the responsibility of DOC.

9.5. Promote and significantly increase funding for invasive species eradication and control, to a level that ensures biodiversity and ecosystem health is maintained and, where possible, enhanced or restored.
9.6. Ensure that all priority sites for the conservation of species and ecosystems are fully resourced for integrated invasive species control.

9.7. Enhance the conservation potential of islands in cooperation with residents and tangata whenua, including protecting the pest-free status of islands without introduced invasive and predator species, and achieving pest-free status on others.

9.8. Establish new and larger 'mainland islands' for intensive invasive species management.

9.9. Significantly increase funding for research for innovative, safe and humane methods of eradicating invasive species (see also our Animal Welfare Policy).

9.10. Prevent field trials or release of viable GE organisms (see our Research, Science and Technology Policy).

9.11. Raise public awareness of the threats posed by pest plants, animals and other organisms to indigenous biodiversity and ecological health, and the various invasive species control efforts being undertaken to reduce these threats.


9.13. Establish a regulatory regime for farming of invasive species (such as some introduced fish, goats and deer) to prevent the establishment of new invasive species populations by escapees, and prohibit the establishment of mustelid farms except for invasive species control purposes.

9.14. Introduce and broaden offences for the purposeful or neglectful release of invasive species into the wild, and ensure robust enforcement.

9.15. Take measures that limit the impact of predatory pets (including cats and dogs) on indigenous species and ecosystems, such as prohibiting dogs in areas used by ground-nesting birds.

9.16. Enable industries harvesting invasive animal species (e.g. the fur and textiles industries) to operate, provided that the animal harvesting operations are consistent with conservation outcomes.

B. Use of Poisons

9.17. Recognise the use of 1080, including in aerial control, as currently the most effective option for landscape scale control of mammalian invasive species and support continued research into improved application methods and alternatives.

9.18. Minimise the use of bio-accumulative and persistent, environmentally damaging, or non-sustainably produced poisons for controlling invasive animal species.

9.19. In general, and wherever practical, replace poisons with humane and safe biological and physical controls.

9.20. Promote, support and fund ground-based integrated methods of controlling invasive animal species, in partnership with the local community, whānau, hapū and iwi by a properly trained workforce in preference to aerial poisoning wherever they could reasonably achieve the desired conservation outcomes.

10. South Island High Country

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Issues
Over 1 million hectares of South Island high country is Crown pastoral leases where leaseholders are permitted to use the land for grazing. Much of this land is ecologically sensitive and has been degraded by grazing. Rentals paid on the leased land are not adjusted for inflation and bear no relationship to commercial return levels. With the end of tenure review and reform of Crown pastoral land management, a reform of South Island high country management is needed.

Actions
10.1. Encourage and support high country farmers to work with DOC, whānau, hapū and iwi, and territorial authorities to improve the management and protection of indigenous biodiversity.
10.2. Require leaseholders to develop farm management plans, in consultation with LINZ, DOC and territorial authorities, to achieve sustainable land and water management.
10.3. Ensure that programmes to review crown tenure and pastoral lease programmes protecting conservation values, public access and the Crown's interest.
10.4. Amend the Overseas Investment Act to restrict the sale of high country property to Aotearoa New Zealand citizens or permanent residents whose primary residence is in Aotearoa New Zealand.

11. Public Access to Public Conservation Land

Issues
It can be difficult for the public to access public conservation land in places where there are no roads across private land.

Actions
11.1. When conservation values and the values of whānau, hapū and iwi are upheld, support the public continuing to have walking access to public conservation land.
11.2. Support the work of the Walking Access Commission to:
   11.2.1. Build constructive relationships between landowners and land users;
   11.2.2. Provide financial support for landowners who need to erect signs and fence their properties;
   11.2.3. Work with DOC on this issue of access and any resulting conservation issue;
   11.2.4. Liaise with the Waitangi Tribunal to determine if land may be under a claim or investigation;
   11.2.5. Facilitate engagement between whānau, hapū and community stakeholders to identify whānau and hapū interests in land, and to provide for co-governance where necessary;
   11.2.6. Ensure access to paper roads is maintained by resolving complaints about the obstruction of paper roads;
   11.2.7. Provide community mediation and work with councils and assist them to enforce the law and provide appropriate signage;
11.2.8. Research and collect information from the public about land access issues;
11.2.9. Report to Parliament within two years about whether there is a need for legislation to resolve issues and improve public access to land; and
11.2.10. Facilitate public access to Aotearoa New Zealand outdoors and iconic lands by ensuring existing paper roads remain open and adequately marked.

12. **Helping People Get Involved**

**Issues**

New Zealanders are proud of their natural heritage and increasingly want to be actively involved in its protection and promotion. The more they are able to do so the more they are likely to value Aotearoa New Zealand's natural heritage.

**Actions**

12.1. Foster and support local urban and rural nature conservation initiatives, including increasing the funding available.

12.2. Foster people's awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the protection of the indigenous plants and animals of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the ecosystems in which they exist; while educating people on how best to achieve positive conservation outcomes.

12.3. Ensure DOC takes a collaborative approach to its work, working in partnership with whānau, hapū and iwi on their interests on the conservation estate, and with environment and community groups involved in conservation and education.

12.4. Provide secure funding to assist community conservation groups in carrying out biodiversity, conservation and ecosystem restoration activities.

12.5. Ensure advocacy and education within the wider community regarding biodiversity efforts, including restoring and adequately resourcing DOC's advocacy and education role.

12.6. Incorporate environmental education into the core curriculum at all levels from preschool to tertiary and teacher training and significantly increase funding for Enviroschools and other environmental education initiatives.

12.7. Encourage expanded environmental education in the adult education network.

12.8. Strengthen the role of conservation boards as independent voices for conservation, providing input to policy from tangata whenua and community.

12.9. Encourage and support local government to develop and implement regional biodiversity strategies with their communities and local hapū and iwi, including implementation through district and regional plans.

12.10. Support improved community participation in resource management issues.

12.11. Ensure sufficient funding is available for regions with a high proportion of public conservation land, to recognise that our natural heritage is a public good and so the costs of its protection should be shared across the country as a whole.

12.12. Encourage New Zealanders to work collaboratively with other countries to implement international biodiversity agreements, share knowledge, and encourage others to take action to protect biodiversity.