



Forest & Bird
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

Forest & Bird Conservation Policy – Mangroves

Forest & Bird recognises that mangroves are an indigenous species with high biodiversity value, and support -

1. The protection of mangroves as an indigenous species.
2. Recognition that mangroves provide ecosystem services that contribute to the welfare of people and ecosystems.
3. The requirement that any removal of mangroves must be small scale, evidence based and limited.
4. That resources be properly directed at avoiding the impacts of activities that are causing changes in the coastal environment.

Forest & Bird Conservation Policy – Mangroves

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this mangrove policy is to assist branches with submissions on consents which seek to remove mangroves and to inform the public of Forest & Bird's position on both the protection and clearance of mangroves.

Policy Context

What is Forest & Bird?

Forest & Bird is New Zealand's independent voice for nature. It is a national non-government organisation, with 50 branches throughout New Zealand with a supporter base of around 70,000. Forest & Bird's mission is *To protect and restore nature in Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

Why have a policy on mangroves?

Mangroves are an indigenous species uniquely adapted to live in the mid intertidal zone, where few other plants can survive. Our mangrove, *Avicennia marina*, is a temperate species only found in northern NZ where there is a lack of frosts. New Zealand's mangroves are the furthest from the equator of any of the World's mangroves. Mangroves have natural character, landscape and habitat values and play a very important role in protecting the coastal zone.

Mangroves are expanding their natural range southwards. This is in response to climate warming and therefore reduced frost events, which in the past has limited the survival of seedlings. Within their range mangroves are occupying more of the available habitat because of the effects of land use change and increased sedimentation in harbours, which provides a suitable substrate for mangroves,. It is also a recovery response in some areas to previous removal, grazing or drainage.

There has been increasing pressure to remove some mangroves from some harbours. The reasons put forward are that people prefer open water views, a belief that mangroves have made the harbours muddier (rather than mangroves being a response to muddier harbours), and a general dislike of mangroves that are perceived to depreciate coastal property values.

Policy Detail

1. Forest & Bird supports the protection of mangroves as an indigenous species.

Mangroves are an indigenous species of northern NZ's coastal vegetation. Forest & Bird supports the protection of indigenous species and native forests, including mangroves and mangrove forests.

2. Mangroves provide ecosystem services that contribute to the welfare of people and ecosystems.

Mangroves contribute to the welfare of people and ecosystems, including:

- Providing significant habitat for indigenous fauna, including habitat for threatened species such as the banded rail, plus safe breeding and feeding habitat for fish and birds dependent on them such as fairy terns.
- Buffering salt marsh and coastal land from erosion.
- Sequestering carbon.
- Binding silt/suspended sediments.
- Contributing to natural character and landscape values.

Mangroves will be increasingly important to mitigate the effects of climate change, both as a carbon sink, and as a buffer against more frequent and severe storm events and rising sea levels.

3. Any removal of mangroves must be small scale, evidence based and limited.

As mangroves are an indigenous species and provide valuable ecosystem services, any removal of mangroves must be small scale, evidence based and limited to:

- A case by case basis i.e. require a resource consent.
- For valid purposes that also are matters of national importance such as maintaining public access to the coastal marine area e.g. public boardwalks and boat ramps, or maintaining the relationship of Maori with ancestral lands, water, wahi tapu and other taonga, protection of protected customary rights and of historic heritage.
- At a scale that preserves the contribution of mangroves to natural character, protects landscape values, protects mangroves as significant areas of indigenous vegetation and protects mangroves as significant habitat of indigenous fauna.
- Publicly notified if for other purposes or if the scale of proposed removal is less than minor.
- Provide on-going predator control (cats, dogs, mustelids) where predator access is enhanced by mangrove removal or provision of board walks, or banded rail habitat is involved.
- Limited removal of small areas must be staged to allow ongoing monitoring to occur.
- Removal by authorised contractors to avoid illegal removal.

Ongoing monitoring must provide evidence that:

- The removal of mangroves has achieved the defined outcome sought.
- The removal method has not had an adverse impact on the environment.
- Monitoring has continued for sufficient time to show that removal of mangroves has not had an adverse impact on indigenous species threatened or at risk of extinction before further removal is considered.

4. Resources should be properly directed at avoiding the impacts of activities that are causing changes in the coastal environment.

Mangroves are an indigenous species of vegetation, naturally responding to changes in our coastal environment. Resources should be properly directed at avoiding the impacts of activities that are causing these changes e.g. reducing greenhouse gases, reducing sedimentation to the harbours from land use activities and dealing with sea level rise threats to existing wading bird roosts by providing new roosts.

Relevant Policy/Legislation

The protection of mangroves is consistent with and furthers the conservation outcomes set out in Forest & Bird's Strategic Plan For Nature for climate change and climate disruption, the effective management of threatened species, protecting biodiversity in urban areas and projecting our estuarine habitats.

Forest & Bird Regional Managers and Legal staff can assist branches with submissions on mangroves.

The key relevant national policy is the **New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010**. It provides more detailed policy direction which must be considered in both Council Plans and Resource Consents. In particular Policy 11 provides for the protection of indigenous biological diversity in the coastal environment.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/conservation-publications/marine-and-coastal/new-zealand-coastal-policy-statement/new-zealand-coastal-policy-statement-2010/>

Council plans and consents should also reflect the provisions of the **Resource Management Act 1991**. It is best to refer to the council plan in the first instance and use the RMA as a back up to the plan's objective and policy direction, which the resource consent application may conflict with. In particular s5, s6 and s7 set out the sustainable management purpose of the Act. Section 6(c) provides for the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna as a matter of national importance.

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1991/0069/latest/DLM230265.html>

The **Marine Important Bird Areas** – particularly **Document 2, Sites on Land, Rivers, Estuaries, Coastal Lagoons and Harbours** - identifies many areas of important mangrove habitat e.g. Waipu, Mangawhai, Kaipara Harbour etc. These sites are globally important for seabird and often other birds are included during the assessment eg Bittern.

<http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/important-bird-areas>