

POLICIES FOR THE PLANET

A three-year plan for nature 2020—2023



Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

As we head towards a general election in 2020, New Zealand is facing unprecedented public health, social, and economic threats from the global spread of Covid-19.

At the same time, the environment is already at tipping point with climate change, degraded freshwater, depleted oceans, and more than 4000 endemic species at risk of extinction.

We need a plan that will help deal with all of these crises at a time when Kiwis are rightly worried about what Covid-19 means for them, their families, and the country's economic future.

Our economy is dependent on the state of the environment, for example the tourism sector needs a "clean and green" New Zealand brand and commercial fishers need properly managed oceans full of fish. By taking strong, bold action to restore nature as part of the government's coronavirus recovery response, we will help secure the future for everyone who depends on it for their work, play, and mental wellbeing.

More New Zealanders than ever before are worried about the environment, with 2019 polling showing 35% of voters were intending to take the environment into account before they vote. This is considerably higher than the 11% who intended to take the environment into account in the 2017 election.

Public opinion has shifted significantly since the last election as more New Zealanders realise nature is reaching breaking point. There is also increasing recognition that our future and human survival depends on incorporating environmental sustainability into everything we do.

The government needs to take bold and ambitious action to turn things around and create a safe climate, vibrant natural landscapes, healthy freshwater, thriving oceans, and a sustainable economic future for everyone.

This work will also help New Zealand recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak and become more resilient. Protecting nature on private and conservation land will create jobs, for example through increased pest control work. Cleaning up freshwater pollution, helping farmers move to using restorative farming practices, planting trees, introducing observers on fishing boats will deliver vital spending in the regions.

We know investing in conservation works – where the government commits resources and regulations to protecting nature the decline has been reversed. Protecting nature is the right thing to do for our natural world and also brings important benefits to our society, our health, and the wider economy.

Forest & Bird has drawn up a practical and ambitious three-year plan for the next parliamentary term that has the power to transform the laws, regulations, and programmes needed to secure nature's future in an uncertain world.

The following pages set out a list of detailed conservation, climate, and economic policy recommendations for the 2020—2023 Parliament. The policies have been guided by Forest & Bird's strategic plan developed by our Board with input from staff branches, and our 80,000 members and supporters.

Forest & Bird is New Zealand's leading conservation organisation and we are proudly politically independent. We are engaging with all political parties and making them aware of the need to bring nature back from the brink.

We need nature and nature needs us. If adopted by the next government, *Policies for the Planet – A Three-year Plan for Nature* will set our society and economy on a genuinely sustainable and more resilient course for the future.



A SAFE CLIMATE



Dealing with climate change should be at the centre of everything New Zealand does. The country is uniquely positioned to have nature protection play a significant role in achieving carbon neutrality and to mitigate the impact of climate change. Over the next three years, priority needs to be given to developing a nature-first pathway to deliver the carbon budget and the adoption of a national adaptation plan that recognises the role of nature.

WHAT'S AT RISK?

Climate change threatens New Zealand's nature, prosperity, and way of life.

New Zealanders will face impacts from climate change that include sea-level rises threatening coastal communities, more extreme weather events, drought and disruptions to agriculture, and more forest mast events leading to a huge jump in the number of rats, mice, and stoats that kill our birds, bats, and lizards.

The impacts are likely to devastate nature. Food chains will be disrupted, fragile alpine ecosystems will be damaged or destroyed, and rising seas will squeeze out some species from coastal habitats. Changes to ocean chemistry and temperature will disrupt ocean systems, currents, weather, and biodiversity. Climate change will likely to tip some species over the edge into extinction.

The climate change threats facing nature also threaten people. Fire, floods, food availability, new pests, and sea-level rise pose dangers to nature and people alike and New Zealand needs to play its part in reducing emissions and promoting resilience.

The good news is that by protecting nature from climate change impacts we can help New Zealand meet its carbon zero targets and build a carbon positive future.

VISION

Aotearoa New Zealand does everything it can to keep the climate safe for all life on Earth. Our country is uniquely positioned to have nature protection play a significant role in achieving carbon neutrality and to mitigate the impact of climate change.

OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

- New Zealand takes a leadership position in effective global response to the climate crisis.
- New Zealand has effective, nature-friendly policies for climate change mitigation and to make our country carbon neutral by 2040.
- The government considers the impacts of climate change in all its work and minimises its contribution to climate change and related risks.

KEY POLICIES FOR 2020–2023

1. Commit New Zealand internationally to emission reductions consistent with stabilising climate at no more than 1.5 degrees warming.
2. Contribute a fair share annually to international climate finance.
3. Amend the Climate Change Response Act to acknowledge the role of nature in New Zealand's climate response, including taking into account ocean acidification.
4. Amend the Resource Management Act to require the climate change and ocean acidification impacts of activities to be addressed through:
 - National direction following the adoption of a carbon budget and a national adaptation plan.
 - Consideration of climate change and ocean acidification for land use decision making, discharge permits, and spatial planning.
 - A National Policy Statement on climate change and ocean acidification.

5. Include climate change mitigation and adaptation in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development.
6. Ensure public land carbon stocks are protected and enhanced through effective pest control across all public land within three years.
7. Introduce agriculture in the ETS, or directly cap ruminant animal numbers.
8. Amend the Crown Minerals Act to prohibit new coal mining across New Zealand and all mining on public conservation land.
9. Introduce a plan to phase-out existing coal mining and existing oil and gas drilling that addresses the needs of affected communities and those dependent on mining.
10. Ensure government activities are climate friendly by:
 - Divesting from all Crown investments in fossil fuels.
 - Transitioning the Crown's vehicle fleet to electric vehicles wherever technologically feasible within five years.
 - Operate all stationary Crown assets on 100% renewable energy sources within 10 years.
11. Expand active, public, and renewable modes of transport and support people and communities to implement community and household solar and wind power alongside battery storage.

A photograph of a large tree trunk in a lush forest. The tree trunk is covered in moss and lichen, and is surrounded by dense green foliage, including ferns and other trees. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

VIBRANT NATURAL LANDSCAPES

New Zealand has a wonderful network of protected areas on land. Over the next three years, priority needs to be given to broadening the range of plant and animal pests being effectively controlled on public conservation land, increasing the protection of poorly protected conservation stewardship and LINZ-managed land, and protecting vulnerable habitats on private land.

WHAT'S AT RISK?

Behind New Zealand's 100% Pure tourism slogan lies the fact that nature is at a tipping point. The Department of Conservation has identified 4000 species of native plants and animals classified as threatened or at risk of extinction. About 800 are in serious trouble.

Protecting nature is the right thing to do for our natural world and also brings important benefits to our society, and the wider economy.

The permanent loss of any of New Zealand's endemic species would not only be a huge blow for our country's image but also for the world's biodiversity. About 80% of our invertebrates, 70% of our birds, 84% of our freshwater fish, and 80% of our trees, ferns, and flowering plants are unique to New Zealand.

Of the 168 different species of native birds in New Zealand, 93 are found nowhere else. Only one in every five of these species is in good shape and a third are in serious trouble. Turning this situation around must be a priority for the government.

VISION

Stable, healthy ecosystems; native animals and plants returned to their natural abundance.

OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

- All public conservation land is secure and well managed.
- Remaining indigenous species, ecosystems, and landscapes are protected, restored, and resilient to climate change.
- The amount of public protected land increases to protect poorly represented ecosystems and improve climate change resilience.
- Plant and animal pests no longer threaten the resilience of species and ecosystems.

KEY POLICIES FOR 2020–2023

1. Adopt a National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity that ends habitat loss and degradation across all land and provides for restoration where this is necessary to achieve healthy ecosystems. Ensure there is a transformative New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy funded and implemented.
2. Increase funding and support to the Department of Conservation, Biosecurity New Zealand, and regional authorities to address threats posed by introduced invasive species, including introduced predators, wilding conifers, weedy exotics, kauri dieback and other pathogens, and the impacts of introduced browsing animals.
3. Ensure the Department of Conservation as managers of 30% of New Zealand's land area has enough long-term resources and mandate to protect biodiversity across all of New Zealand (particularly on public conservation land) by:
 - Increasing Vote Conservation to 1% of Crown revenue.
 - Increasing funding to the Nature Heritage Fund and Ngā Whenua Rāhui to ensure they are properly resourced to assist in the purchase of land that is considered a priority for protection, including threatened ecosystems and land with strong cultural significance.
 - Ramping up landscape-scale biodiversity protection and strengthening conservation legislation.

- Upholding the purpose of the Conservation Act, National Parks Act and Conservation Management Strategies and Policies in decision making.
- Ensuring National Park Management Plans, the Conservation General Policy, and Conservation Management Strategies mitigate climate impacts on biodiversity.
- Amending the Conservation Act to improve the protection of all public stewardship land managed by the Department of Conservation.
- Measuring and publicly reporting on tourism's contribution to nature protection.

4. Improve New Zealand's sustainability by:

- Implementing a strong and effective National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity.
- Reforming the Resource Management Act to ensure all activities occur within clear environmental limits, and to safeguard public participation and due process.
- Increasing oversight of regional and local government to ensure they effectively implement the Resource Management Act including in the development, implementation, and enforcement of planning documents.
- Ensuring new urban development protects native ecosystems and does not degrade freshwater bodies.

5. Ensure the One Billion Trees programme:

- Operates to the principle of the right tree in the right place.
- Creates strong incentives for landowners to re-establish native forest in favour of exotic species, particularly on marginal and erosion-prone land.
- Encourages the restoration and planting of ecological corridors.
- Recognises the role of native forests in providing resilience in the face of climate change.

6. Improve the protection of nature on land managed by LINZ by:
 - Reviewing the Crown Pastoral Lands Act to prioritise the protection of biodiversity and on-going monitoring and compliance of Crown Pastoral Leases, including riverbeds managed by LINZ.
 - Ensuring LINZ has sufficient resources to manage or eradicate pests on all land under its control.
 - Requiring LINZ to work with lessees to ensure their plant pest control responsibilities are met.
 - Requiring LINZ to ensure tahr numbers on land it administers are compliant with the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan.

7. Increase efforts to control pests, including:
 - Ensuring browsing mammals are managed below ecological carrying capacities across the entire public conservation estate.
 - Progressively eradicating browsing mammals from national parks.
 - Controlling wilding conifers over all areas of high biodiversity value.
 - Implementing a 10-year plan to eradicate wallabies.
 - Ensuring compliance with the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan.
 - Ensure ferrets, weasels, hedgehogs, and feral cats are included in the Predator Free 2050 target species list.
 - Maintain the commitment to and resourcing for achieving Predator Free 2050.

8. Support local government, landowners, and community conservation groups with advice and funding to future-proof their conservation projects in the face of unavoidable climate change.



Over the next three years, central government needs to prioritise the health of our streams and rivers in all resource management decisions, and consider the flow-on impact on human health based on the principle “kei te ora te wai, kei te ora te whenua, kei te ora te tangata” – if the water is healthy, the land and people will be healthy. This will mean embedding a robust National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management along with associated national standards, cleaning up urban waterbodies, and driving the shift towards regenerative land uses. Active protection of native freshwater fish needs to become a greater priority.

WHAT'S AT RISK?

Most of New Zealand’s lowland rivers are unsafe for swimming, nearly half of monitored lakes contain more nutrients than they can cope with, and three-quarters of our native freshwater fish species are listed as threatened or at risk of extinction.

Urban and industrial pollution play a part in the story of poor water quality, but the biggest factor in the decline is the growth of the dairy industry. The number of dairy cows has risen 69% in the last two decades to 6.5 million, leading to a rapid increase in nutrients and pathogens entering waterways and groundwater and the unsustainable use of irrigation in some areas.

Over the past 20 years, fossil nitrogen fertiliser use has increased 800%. There is a strong link between human and ecological health — New Zealand’s rate of waterborne illness is twice that of the UK and three times that of Canada and Australia.

Wetlands act as filters for our waterways, helping to keep them healthy, but 90% of these have been drained. New Zealand’s remaining high quality water is largely found on or near public conservation lands – a reflection of the key role the management of public conservation land plays in maintaining water quality.

VISION

Rivers and streams that run clean, and are healthy and teeming with life.

OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

- Resilience is built into freshwater ecosystems in the face of unavoidable climate change.
- The integrity of freshwater quality and quantity, and habitats, support stable and abundant populations of native freshwater species.
- Freshwater management is underpinned by Te Mana o te Wai (protection, enabling, sustaining) and ki uta ki tai (from mountains to the sea).

KEY POLICIES FOR 2020–2023

1. Ensure New Zealand’s Adaptation Plan under the Climate Change Response Act prioritises nature-friendly policies for flood and drought adaptation.
2. Support councils to move towards a way of managing rivers in their regions that maintains natural processes vital for habitat protection and enhancement and allows rivers space to function naturally.
3. Support councils to fund infrastructure upgrades to sewage treatment and stormwater networks to protect and restore urban water quality.
4. Establish a goal of doubling the area of New Zealand’s wetlands and develop a plan to achieve this.
5. Ensure resource management safeguards freshwater ecosystems by:
 - Adopting/retaining a robust National Policy Statement and standards on freshwater quality and quantity.
 - Requiring all urban development and infrastructure projects to ensure fish habitat and passage is maintained, and the loss of wetlands and stream length is avoided.
 - Increasing oversight of regional government to ensure it is

adequately protecting freshwater quality and quantity.

- Including standards for physical stream/river habitat in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater (as happens in the EU).
- Revise the definition of 'wetland' in the Resource Management Act and remove the 'wet pasture' exclusion from the proposed NPS Freshwater to enable protection of wetlands that are currently degraded but have intact hydrology.

6. Support the transition to ecologically sustainable freshwater ecosystems by funding:

- Research into the impacts of climate change and potential climate change adaptation options on freshwater ecosystems.
- Practical freshwater restoration projects such as riparian fencing/ planting.
- Research into the interaction between freshwater quality, quantity, and habitat.
- De-intensification of land use, protection and enhancement of river corridors, and retirement of riparian margins, and marginal and erosion-prone land through incentives such as ETS credits.
- Encourage efficient and fair use of water by introducing a resource rental for commercial use of fresh water.



THRIVING OCEANS

There has been slow progress improving New Zealand’s management of its oceans and coastal areas. Over the next three years, the government must accelerate the pace of change, including reforming marine laws, creating marine reserves, implementing a programme to achieve a zero-bycatch goal, and rolling out 100% observation (people or cameras) on commercial vessels to ensure laws are upheld.

WHAT'S AT RISK?

New Zealand’s land mass is dwarfed by the ocean that surrounds us. Our marine Exclusive Economic Zone is the fifth largest in the world, but we are failing to properly manage it and our decision-making is hampered by a lack of knowledge about biodiversity loss in this vast offshore marine habitat.

Half of New Zealand’s commercially fished stocks have no research on which to base an assessment of their population or a sustainable catch limit, so the health of these stocks is unknown. Of those fish stocks that are assessed, most are at only 20% of natural abundance, a level that has significant impacts on marine ecosystems. This huge drop in abundance from pre-fished stocks is taking place under our current fisheries management, and the consequent impact on other marine species is not well recognised.

Our current fisheries management system encourages waste, with large volumes of non-quota, damaged, or lower quality fish being illegally dumped at sea by fishers. Some of our fishing methods cause long-term damage to the seafloor and its associated fauna, and unnecessarily kill seabirds and marine mammals.

New Zealand is known as the seabird capital of the world but 90% of our seabirds and shorebirds are threatened with extinction, along with 28% of our marine mammal species and five out of six of our penguins. The government estimates as many as 14,000 seabirds may have been killed last year as a result of fishing interactions.

Warming seas are driving some species into cooler and deeper waters and disrupting food webs. Animals have to work harder and travel further to forage. Little is known about the likely impacts of climate change on the oceans and coasts, but they play an important role in determining weather patterns, as well as absorbing large amounts of the leading greenhouse gas — carbon dioxide.

VISION

Protect, preserve, and enhance our marine ecosystems and native species.

OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

- Aotearoa New Zealand leads the world in ecosystem-based management of fisheries and aquaculture.
- 30% of our our Exclusive Economic Zone and Territorial Sea is protected within a meaningful representative network of no-take areas by 2030.
- Bycatch of endangered, threatened, or protected species is reduced to near zero levels by 2030.
- The Territorial Sea, Exclusive Economic Zone, and Extended Continental Shelf is protected from impacts of non-fishing threats.

KEY POLICIES FOR 2020–2023

1. Reform the Fisheries Act during the coming term to give effect to ecosystem-based fisheries management, including phasing out destructive unsustainable fishing methods like bottom trawling, set netting, and dredging, use of the precautionary principle, and a Zero Bycatch goal.
2. Adopt a Zero Bycatch goal and implement a programme to achieve the goal, including:
 - Amendments to the Fisheries Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act.
 - Ensuring all fisheries plans and National Plans of Action have a clear zero bycatch goal and meaningful measurable objectives to drive bycatch rates down.
 - Ensuring all commercial fishing vessels have observers or cameras to verify catches and compliance with regulations by December 2022.
 - Working internationally to reduce bycatch of endangered, protected, or threatened migratory species.

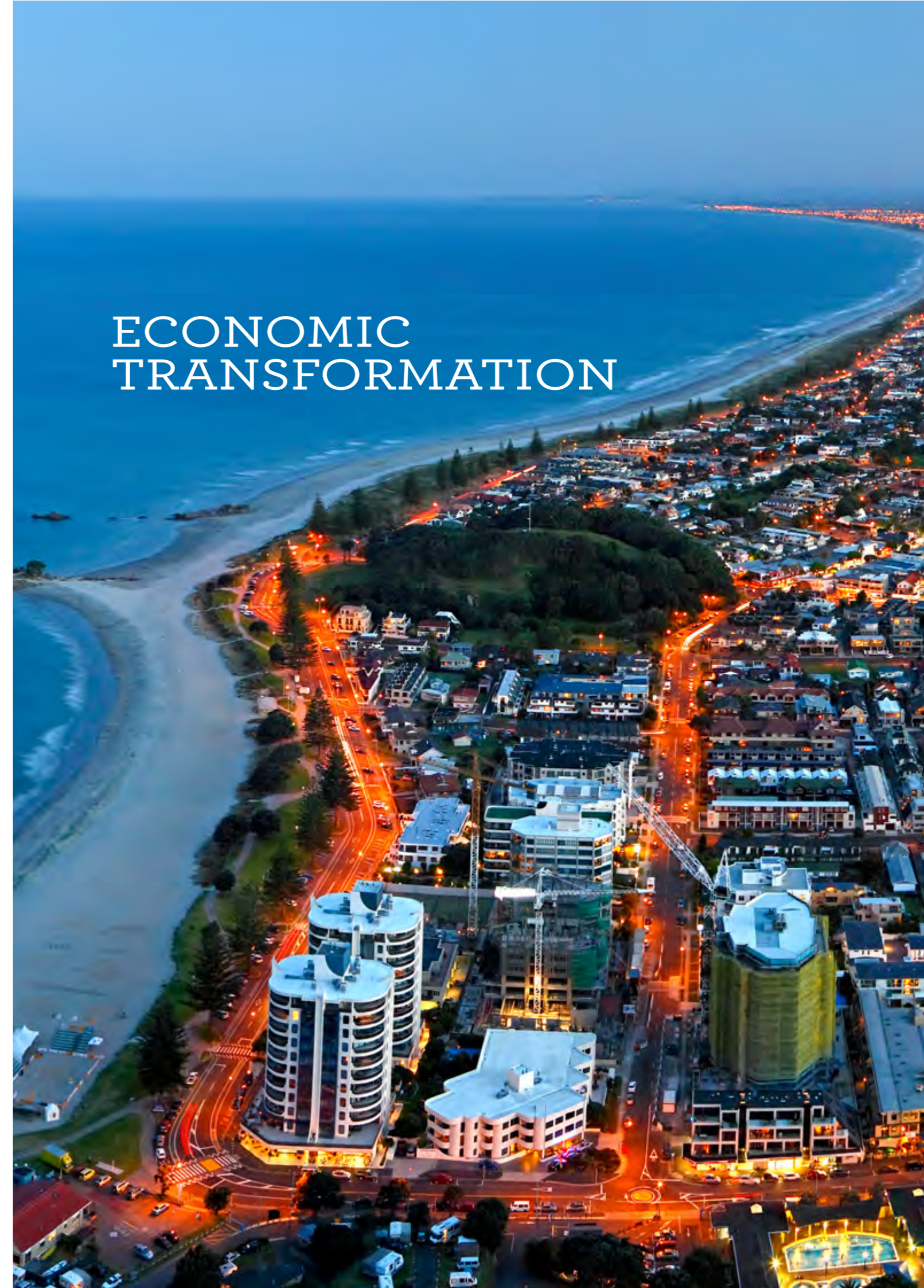
3. Improve New Zealand's marine protection by:

- Adopting the goal of protecting 30% of New Zealand marine environment within a network of meaningful and representative no-take marine protected areas by 2030.
- Replacing the Marine Reserves Act with a new Marine Protected Areas Act to enable achievement of the 30% by 2030 goal and enable marine spatial planning as the primary tool to achieve this by December 2021.
- Initiating an assessment of all bioregions throughout New Zealand and establishing marine spatial planning processes for each, starting with Northland and Top of the South Island by December 2021.
- Retaining section 30(2) of the Resource Management Act that underpins the ability of regional councils to regulate to protect nature from the environmental effects of fishing, provided it's not for a Fisheries Act purpose.

4. Reduce non-fishing threats to the marine environment by:

- Maintaining and extending the offshore oil and gas exploration ban.
- Requiring oil and gas exploration and marine mining to comply with a new seismic code reflecting world's best practice.
- Requiring MPI/Fisheries New Zealand to advocate in all relevant resource management processes to eliminate or mitigate non-fisheries threats to the marine and freshwater environment
- Reform the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act to require the EPA to work to avoid and reduce the environmental effects of marine activities.

5. Advocate and negotiate internationally to protect New Zealand's migratory animals, including marine mammals, seabirds, and fish, across their entire range. Designate marine protected areas on the high seas (ocean beyond our EEZ) with a goal of 30% full no-take protection. Expand full no-take marine protected areas throughout the Southern Ocean.



ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

New Zealand will not be able to properly protect nature unless it changes the incentives in the economy. Over the next three years, the government needs to lead by example in shifting investment towards genuinely sustainable economic activity and away from harmful activities. It also needs to help primary industries start a transformation towards a genuinely sustainable and nature-first production system.

WHAT'S AT RISK?

What we grow, make, buy, sell, or invest in matters. If we don't change how we do things, we will continue to entrench activities that damage the environment.

Our economy is dependent on having healthy and abundant ecosystems. For example, farmers need access to a reliable source of clean water and fishers need restored oceans full of fish.

Getting it right can be win-win for everyone. Regenerative farming pioneers in New Zealand are making a healthy profit while helping improve their local environment. Getting it wrong will see negative impacts, especially in the regions. For example, the US has warned it will ban imports of fish caught in New Zealand waters if we don't do more to protect Maui dolphins.

To properly protect and restore our climate, freshwater, oceans, and terrestrial landscapes, we need to change the way the economy works, put nature first, and make it easier for people to do the right thing.

VISION

A society that values nature for its intrinsic and life-giving values and recognises the long-term economy is dependent on a healthy environment.

OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

- Economic activities protect and restore the environment.
- The government assists individuals, firms, and communities to transition from environmentally damaging activities to those that restore and protect.
- Public and private finance drives positive change for the environment.
- Key government economic levers drive economic changes that support environmental goals.

KEY POLICIES FOR 2020—2023

1. Ensure the current government's four wellbeings (social, economic, environmental, and cultural) approach incorporates the intrinsic value of nature.
2. Adopt the principle that trade and economic policy reinforces the four wellbeings by ensuring economic decision-making takes into account social and environmental costs and benefits, and trade agreements prevent poor environmental standards from being used to gain competitive advantage.
3. Ensure business are required to reduce their environmental impact by:
 - Reforming environment and conservation laws, including the Conservation Act, Resource Management Act, Fisheries Act, and EEZ and Continental Shelf Act to include stronger environmental bottom lines.
 - Ensuring all agencies with environmental compliance responsibilities, including Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, regional councils, and territorial authorities, are effectively enforcing environment and conservation laws.

4. Ensure investment decisions protect, rather than harm, nature by:
 - Requiring state-owned entities to measure their environmental performance and demonstrate best environmental practice.
 - Ensuring all Crown investments divest from fossil fuels.
 - Reviewing all Crown investments to identify other environmentally damaging activities.
 - Requiring the Reserve Bank to publicly report annually on risks to the environment from the financial sector.
 - Reviewing all Crown spending to identify direct and indirect subsidies that contribute to environmental harm and removing those subsidies.
5. Assist regions to transition to a sustainable economy by:
 - Directing regional development funding into enabling a transition to environmentally sustainable regional economies.
 - Directing trade negotiations away from sectors of the economy that are not environmentally sustainable and towards sectors that enhance sustainability.
 - Providing support for workforces to transition out of unsustainable industries.
 - Invest in increased support and uptake for regenerative farming practices and more sustainable primary industries.
6. Take action towards ending plastic by adopting the Plastic Free New Zealand plan to:
 - Adopt national reduction targets.
 - Ban avoidable plastics.
 - Introduce a container deposit scheme.
 - Introduce a plastic pollution levy.
7. Replace part of income tax revenue with a suite of levies to discourage environmentally damaging practices and encourage protection and restoration.



Forest & Bird is New Zealand's leading independent environmental NGO. We are a registered charity funded by our members and supporters.

Our national conservation work covers freshwater, marine, climate, and terrestrial nature protection, and we employ a team of conservation experts based in Wellington and regional offices around the country. We work at both a national and local level, advocating for pro-nature policy development and law reform, and our expert legal team represents nature in the Environment Court, Environmental Protection Authority boards of inquiry, and council planning processes.

We also have 50 volunteer-led branches operating in urban and rural communities across New Zealand. From Northland to Southland, Forest & Bird members are on the ground restoring nature, managing predator-control, weeding, and planting programmes, and looking after nature in their backyards. We also engage with local communities through public nature talks, displays, and field trips.

Forest & Bird's portfolio of practical conservation projects is likely the largest for a New Zealand NGO, with 180 projects operating around the country. Close to 95% of the projects are managed by our branches. The remaining 5% are nationally significant restoration projects supported by National Office in partnership with branches and other external groups. We also own and manage 36 reserves around the country and carry out voluntary work on public land managed by the Department of Conservation and regional and local government.

Through our pioneering Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) and Forest & Bird Youth, we engage children, young people, and their families, inspiring them to enjoy, understand, and love the natural environment and to care for it. We have more than 6000 KCC members, and many ex-KCC members have gone on to establish science and conservation careers.

Nearly a century after Captain Val Sanderson established Forest & Bird, we continue to work for the protection and restoration of New Zealand's wildlife and wild places wherever they live.





Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

Published 2020 by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc.

For more information, see www.forestandbird.org.nz/votefornature or
contact strategic advisor Geoff Keey at g.keey@forestandbird.org.nz.

Photos by: Rob Suisted www.naturespic.co.nz, Richard Robinson www.depth.co.nz,
or Forest & Bird staff.