



Forest & Bird

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

Recovery for People and Planet

How New Zealand's COVID-19 pandemic recovery
and nature's recovery go hand in hand.

The Government is proposing to spend billions to get New Zealand working again after the COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019) lockdown ends. At the same time New Zealand faces rising greenhouse gas emissions and an ecological crisis with 4000 species at risk of extinction. New Zealand can help both nature and ourselves, to recover if the Government makes smart investments and avoids mistakes of the past.

Self-isolation has been a reminder of how much nature means to us as New Zealanders. People have missed their local beaches, swimming in the sea and walking in the bush. Nature is essential for our physical and mental health and we can do a better job of looking after it.

New Zealand's economy is nature-based. We rely on clear air, clean water and healthy seas for our economic wellbeing. Our incredible landscapes and wild places will bring visitors to New Zealand again once the threat of COVID-19 abates. Now is the time to make the investment in our land, sea and freshwater to help our economy become more resilient for the long term.

Forest & Bird has a range of proposals the Government can adopt to help New Zealand recover from the economic and social impact of COVID-19, and to build a stronger economy and more resilient environment.

This briefing note provides suggestions for investment the New Zealand Government can make as part of an economic stimulus that will enable New Zealand to emerge from this crisis more resilient and with an improved environment.

Adopting the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy will set a strong framework for how New Zealand's economic recovery can help protect nature.



Investing in assets and infrastructure

There are significant opportunities to invest in assets that also improve the environment. Our rail system is largely fossil-fueled. Local government investment in clean domestic water and management of sewage and stormwater has lagged behind needs. Capital investments relating to conservation and managing tourism have also fallen behind. The decline in tourism as a result of COVID-19 provides an opportunity to catch up on investment.

We recommend:

- electrifying New Zealand's rail system
- accelerating outstanding Department of Conservation (DOC) capital investments such as infrastructure repairs and upgrades, fencing, and track maintenance
- significantly boosting the Conservation Tourism Levy fund to address a reduction in levy revenue and complete work in places under tourism pressure while numbers are low
- expanding funding for local councils to provide clean domestic water and reduce pollution from sewage and stormwater.



Benefit for the recovery from COVID-19

These works provide significant opportunities to employ infrastructure contractors and tradespeople in the regions, and jobs in project management and administration. The need to feed, accommodate and transport workers provides the opportunity to use under-capacity tourism infrastructure and services, including accommodation. The improved infrastructure will help our tourism industry in its recovery by reinforcing the sustainable image of New Zealand's 'clean- reen' tourism industry.

Training opportunities

Increased trades training to provide skilled workers. Work experience for apprenticeships.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Benefits for nature include reducing tourism and recreation pressures over the long-term and improved water quality. Benefits for social wellbeing include safer drinking water, safer recreational beaches, rivers and lakes, reduced gastrointestinal disease, and better experiences for people in nature more generally. Reduced gastrointestinal disease will reduce future demand on the health system.



Core state sector staffing

Ensure the conservation and environmental management agencies, particularly in regions facing reductions in tourism, are employing to capacity. This will help sustain spending levels, school attendance and social cohesion.

We recommend:

- ensuring all vacancies are promptly filled in DOC and other environmental management agencies with a regional presence (such as Ministry of Primary Industry's (MPI) biosecurity and fisheries compliance capacity)
- increasing DOC staffing capacity, especially frontline staff
- boosting staff capacity for environmental monitoring, advice and compliance.

Benefit for the recovery from COVID-19

These roles help maintain employment and spending in the regions. Many environment and conservation regional roles occur in regions that are going to face problems due to a loss of tourism and forestry.

Training opportunities

These jobs would achieve an expanded ranger programme, create opportunity to employ tertiary educated and skilled returnees from overseas. There is potential to redeploy people previously engaged in tourism and forestry.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Expanding employment in conservation and environmental management roles would lead to improved management of the environment, improved provision of conservation and recreational services, and maintenance of social cohesion. It will contribute to retaining a critical mass of population for schools and other facilities in small communities.



Cleanups

New Zealand has a legacy of toxic waste dumps, former mine sites, and historically poorly managed local authority waste sites. These places need cleaning up as the experience at Fox River on the West Coast shows.

We recommend:

- investing in cleanups and protection of legacy sites such as hazardous waste locations and historic dump sites
- restarting Operation Tidy Fox and extending it to known West Coast dump sites at risk of exposure.

Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

Operation Tidy Fox provides opportunities for unemployed semi-skilled workers to be employed. Cleaning up and protecting hazardous waste locations and historic dump sites provides opportunities for regional contractors and will provide opportunities to make use of under-utilised tourism infrastructure, including food and accommodation providers. This work will support the environmental resilience of regional communities and support the recovery of the tourism industry by reinforcing its sustainable credentials.

Training opportunities

Cleanup jobs would increase trades training to provide skilled workers and provide work experience for apprenticeships.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Cleanups reduce risk of contamination of the surrounding environment, including risks to social wellbeing from pollution. They create an opportunity for spending in the West Coast, which is likely to experience medium term impacts from reduced tourism.





Protecting nature on private land

The National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS IB) has a range of complimentary measures that could be started immediately.

Local and regional governments need support to give effect to both statutory and non-statutory activities in the NPS IB.

We recommend:

- fund surveys of Significant Natural Areas (SNA)
- funding a programme of assistance for work on fencing, planting and pest control for landowners focused on high priority biodiversity sites (e.g. SNAs, coastal and riparian margins, wetlands, biodiversity corridors and/or areas identified in regional biodiversity strategies)
- supporting councils to help identify areas of highly mobile fauna within their regions/districts
- funding work with iwi and hapu to enable them to participate in implementing in the measures outlined in the NPS IB, (e.g. identifying taonga species and developing regional biodiversity strategies)
- funding biodiversity programmes that deliver resilience and mitigation from the impacts of climate change, (e.g. dune restoration, coastal forests, restoration of hapua/river-mouth lagoons and deltas)
- assisting regional governments to develop regional biodiversity strategies
- expanding compliance and monitoring services within and across councils
- funding improvements in coordination of biodiversity protection within central government
- any other complementary measures in the NPS IB.

Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

These changes create opportunities for regional employment including semi-skilled and skilled labour. They lead to increased demand for supplies of seedlings from nurseries, hardware and other regional supplies. This will help the economic recovery of our primary industries by helping them tell an authentic 'clean-green' story about the country's high-value and sustainably produced products.

New jobs will emerge in ecological assessment, project management, supervision and conservation operations. There would be increased demand for materials (e.g. timber products, hardware, electronics) to support conservation activities.

Training opportunities

New roles involve training in fencing, pest control and planting techniques. Training in biodiversity monitoring and assessment methods will also increase development of technical and policy capability in biodiversity protection and assessment.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Implementing the NPS IB will lead to improved management of biodiversity on private land. It will increase the social acceptance of protecting biodiversity on private land and better recognition of the efforts of land managers.

Changes should support increased iwi and hapu capacity to participate in decisions relating to Te Ao Māori and their connection with the whenua, awa, and moana.

It would achieve increased ecological knowledge and capability with central, regional and local government and wider society, and reduced costs from harm to biodiversity. Changes would lead to and greater social and economic resilience from better land, freshwater and marine management.

Cleaning up and protecting freshwater

We recommend:

- establishing a fund for riparian management (e.g. fencing of streams/rivers and riparian planting)
- funding the establishment of more flow monitoring sites
- investing in improved stormwater and wastewater treatment infrastructure
- launching a programme of native freshwater fish population monitoring and increasing spawning habitat
- employing more independent farm/environmental advisors at regional councils
- funding of farm system modelling and improvements for farmers
- increasing the rollout of compliance and enforcement staff (or monitoring staff as a start)
- public media campaigns from councils on freshwater (e.g. 'this drain flows to the sea')
- investment in stormwater and wastewater treatment infrastructure
- establishing a wetland restoration and creation fund
- funding the restoration of urban streams
- establishing a research and development arm of Pāmu to develop, trial and upscale methods of sustainable agriculture.



Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

There are opportunities for regional employment including for semi-skilled and skilled labour. There would be increased demand for supplies of seedlings from nurseries, hardware and other regional supplies, and opportunities for under utilised trades, heavy vehicles and machinery operators. Cleaning up water creates opportunities to redeploy people from tourism to roles as rangers, and increased employment in project management and administration. This will help the economic recovery of our primary industries by helping them tell an authentic 'clean-green' story about the country's high-value and sustainably produced products.

Training opportunities

Opportunities include training in fencing, pest control and planting techniques, training in biodiversity monitoring and assessment methods. There would also be opportunities to upskill farmers and farm advisors in sustainable land management practices.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

We will see improved management of biodiversity on riparian margins, improved management of whitebait spawning areas, better water quality including on recreational beaches, lakes and rivers. Clean water improves recreational experiences on and around water, and reduces the incidence of gastrointestinal disease. We would also expect higher brand performance for New Zealand farming.

Weed and pest management

New Zealand has persistent weed and pest management problems. Increasing efforts to control pests and deliver new local regional and national eradication programmes will provide an opportunity to use spare capacity within the regions and deliver a step change in the protection of nature on land.

We recommend:

- implementing, with funding, the kauri dieback National Pest Management Plan with diverse stakeholder representation.
- funding pest and weed control over Crown riverbeds aiming for eradication where possible
- funding pest and weed control on iwi land through partnerships
- increasing aerial 1080 and ground-based pest control across all conservation lands at risk
- funding didymo/invasive freshwater species advocacy work for spring and summer, including rangers at key lakes, and rivers and ferry terminals
- increasing the wilding conifer control programme
- delivering new island eradication programmes
- increasing control of tahr, goats, pigs, chamois, and deer across public conservation land and for tahr, any corridors (e.g. high country pastoral leases) where they may be present and/or extending their range
- scaling up the work of Zero Invasive Predators
- funding a wallaby eradication programme
- increasing investment in regional pest management plans so they can deliver on the next tier of priorities.



Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

This work would provide employment for skilled and semi-skilled workers otherwise not fully engaged in the workforce as well as provide income for helicopter firms, and trap and bait manufacturers. Because of the juxtaposition of land with conservation values and tourism this would provide spending in regions affected by a tourism downturn. Project management and administrative work would also increase.

Under capacity tourism infrastructure (e.g. helicopter operators, accommodation and food providers) could be used to transport feed and accommodate operational staff. This will help the economic recovery of our tourism industry by improving the environmental health of public conservation land that forms the main infrastructure of the tourism industry. It will help the industry tell an authentic 'clean-green' story about the country's high-value and sustainable tourism products.

Training opportunities

Weed and pest management would increase ranger training, training in pest control and programme management, including for iwi members.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

There is a potential for long term conservation benefits and future cost reductions through funding effective regional, national and island plant and animal pest eradications now. We would see increased implementation of social behaviours that encourage good internal biosecurity. It would also require development of project management capabilities in deprived regions such as Northland and the North Island's east coast. Long term, improvements in pest control and experience from this work could provide opportunities for New Zealand to assist Pacific Island partners in pest control and eradication.



Sustainable fisheries

New Zealand has begun a transition to ecosystem-based management of fisheries. This has arisen due to fish stock collapses, greater expectations on the fishing industry over its environmental performance, and recognition of the limitations of the current fisheries management system. This transition could be supported to help protect the environment and future-proof the industry. Funding the transition for fishers who are implementing actions from the National Plan of Action on Seabirds provides an opportunity to generate a step change in industry performance.

We recommend:

- establishing a fund to pay for the capital cost of voluntarily adopting cameras on vessels
- establishing a fund and a programme to trial low impact methods of fishing that eliminate bycatch and prevent sea floor damage
- funding the adoption of hook pods across the long line fleet and employing observers to monitor success
- funding a voluntary transition for set netters to other methods of fishing such as potting and long lining to cover the capital cost of conversions, and to employ former fishers as mentors and advisors for transitioning set netters
- expanding the fisher wellbeing programme to build resilience in the fishing industry
- funding best practice mentoring to deliver improved environmental performance from fishing vessels.



Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

This work would provide employment and spending in fishing ports for skilled tradespeople to carry out conversions of vessels and absorb excess capacity arising from reduced economic output in those regions. Trialing new methods to reduce the environmental impact of fishing provides an opportunity to get boats back on the water when demand increases. Changes would improve the capital asset base of fishing.

Training opportunities

Training would include skills training for fishers with new technology, and increased opportunities for apprenticeships in trades. There would be increased and diversified skills within the industry and the adoption of higher-skilled methods of fishing. There would be more mentoring opportunities for former fishers and training of tradespeople for work in relation to digital monitoring and converting fishing vessels.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Sustainable fisheries will reduced the environmental impact of fishing, achieve better social wellbeing for fishers and stronger social licence, and increased skills within the fishing sector. It has the potential to attract more people to being employed in fishing. It also creates a stronger value proposition for New Zealand fisheries and greater resilience for New Zealand fishers in the face of rising environmental performance expectations at home and abroad.



Billion Trees Programme

Now is the time to be collecting native tree seed for nurseries to ramp up the supply of native species for the Billion Trees Programme.

We recommend:

- increasing funds for planting native vegetation and restoration on private and public land and wetlands
- working with nurseries to increase supply of seedlings
- establishing a planting programme for the next five years
- encouraging retirement and where appropriate, planting of marginal and erosion prone land.

Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

Planting work and associated ground preparation provides a potential supply of semi-skilled labour and is relatively easy to learn. A multi-year programme of planting creates the opportunity to employ any semi-skilled labourers that struggle to find work during the recovery period. Billion Trees work would increase workforce capacity in nursery skills and provides opportunities for baseline expansion of nursery infrastructure and skills to enable ongoing planting.

Training opportunities

There will be increased skills in preparing ground, planting and weeding. Plant identification and seed collection. There are potential opportunities for amenity horticulture and nursery apprenticeships.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

We'll experience improved resilience in the landscape, better coast, soil and water protection, and future proofing against climate change impacts. Billion Trees Programmes would be socially useful and valued work for semi-skilled labour and an opportunity to mitigate unemployment.



Connecting people with nature

Many organised, large group recreation and leisure opportunities may remain closed for a time, even after lockdown ends, due to COVID-19, but nature will be open.

We recommend the Government:

- runs a publicity campaign to encourage people to experience nature while they are otherwise practicing 'physical distancing'
- supports the publicity campaign with rangers on the ground.

Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

There's potential to deploy under-utilised advertising capacity and help sustain media outlets dependent on advertising revenue until private sector advertising recovers. Connecting people with nature would sustain wellbeing through the recovery period while people are otherwise practicing 'physical distancing' strategies. There is significant potential to redeploy people from tourism to roles as rangers.

Training opportunities

The Government could work with existing and potentially new providers to expand training for new rangers to at least one other location in New Zealand, and have a second intake for rangers in February.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

Encouraging New Zealanders to have a stronger connection to nature will lead to improved social wellbeing from time spent outside and strengthen support for conservation initiatives.



Investment in waste management and recycling

New Zealand has a significant waste management problem with very high per-capita waste. Addressing this offers opportunities for work.

We recommend:

- establishing a tyre recycling plant
- undertaking preparations for a container deposit scheme
- funding trials of proposals to establish products and markets for recovered materials
- assisting councils with setting up curbside collection of green/food waste
- assisting council with providing curbside collection of recyclables
- setting up local councils and industry sectors to recycle and reuse plastics and building materials.

Benefits for recovery from COVID-19

There's potential to redeploy people into new roles and help boost the functioning of local governments. New business and manufacturing opportunities would emerge in using recovered materials.

Training opportunities

Improving waste management and recycling creates entrepreneurship opportunities for people, encouraging the development of new businesses and new models to use recovered materials. There would also be new training for semi-skilled and unskilled workers in waste processing.

Benefits for nature and social wellbeing

These measures would reduce waste and pollution in the environment. New businesses using recovered materials would emerge, and there would be new social capital in waste minimisation.





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