

## **Forest & Bird Guidance on Implementing New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy 2025-2030 public consultation**

### **What is being consulted on?**

The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) is in the process of developing the next implementation plan for New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy (Te Mana o te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020). This plan will guide actions for nature at the national, regional, and local levels.

Aotearoa New Zealand's natural environment is unique and irreplaceable. Many species can only be found here, and once they are lost, they are gone forever. Our ecosystems are among the world's most vulnerable and constitute a crucial economic asset, contributing 27% or \$57 billion to our GDP. Therefore, it is essential to protect them.

DOC are proposing 13 critical actions that central and regional government can take to make a difference for nature and empower all New Zealanders to contribute to environmental conservation.

DOC's discussion document seeks your feedback on the proposed critical actions for the next implementation plan for the Biodiversity Strategy.

The proposed actions sit within four themes:



Image: The four themes the Department of Conservation (DOC) is currently consulting on.

Credit: Forest & Bird

These above actions would be the focus of the implementation plan and the work completed by central and regional government between now and 2030.

## **What is Forest & Bird's main concern?**

We want to ensure that DOC continues to be adequately funded so they can continue to fulfil their responsibilities to manage natural heritage and to maintain, restore and protect ecosystems, habitats and species.

### **What should my submission say?**

We would encourage you to touch on the red flags we have mentioned in our guidance below. You can expand on those themes and if you wish, make them your own. It is up to you if you wish to comment on the thirteen actions for biodiversity with your own personal opinions and experience.

## **Consultation point one: Agreed biodiversity priorities are driving investment and action**

Central and regional government agencies currently do not have an agreed set of biodiversity priorities to guide investment. Although there are many areas of collaboration between agencies that can be built on, each agency undertakes its own planning and prioritisation. Agreeing on and adopting shared priorities will drive a coordinated effort into critical biodiversity work across New Zealand.

### **Implementation Plan Critical Actions:**

1. Develop a national picture of our most important biodiversity values and quantify the costs to protect and restore priority species and habitats.
2. Tackle biodiversity loss by agreeing on priority programmes to:
  - a. protect and restore high-priority degraded habitats (e.g. impacts from browsers, weeds, predators)
  - b. recover native species
  - c. develop nature-based solutions for biodiversity and climate change (e.g. wetland restoration), in light of environmental and climate change responsibilities.

### **Forest & Bird think:**

▶ **Selective conservation:** Currently, a small number of charismatic species are receiving the lion's share of funding, leaving behind some that might be less loveable but ecologically highly valuable, such as corals, freshwater fish, invertebrates and lizards.



▶ Currently, funding is tunnel visioned and focused on a few species rather than entire ecosystems, habitats and how they interact and interconnect.

▶ Terrestrial conservation is prioritised over equally important coastal and marine environments.

### **Consultation point two: Increased external funding, revenue and support is delivering more work on biodiversity priorities**

Many other organisations, groups and individuals are playing their part in addressing the state of our biodiversity. We can increase effort and make a bigger difference for biodiversity by supporting others and making it easier for people to contribute. We can also achieve more by generating new revenue from public conservation lands and waters and investing it back into biodiversity.

#### **Implementation Plan Critical Actions:**

3. Develop a biodiversity investment prospectus to attract and direct external investment into biodiversity priorities.
4. Generate new revenue from public conservation lands and waters to invest back into biodiversity.
5. Increase private investment in biodiversity by supporting business sector demand and system integrity: including private sector nature-based financial disclosures, reporting and investment.
6. Increase the protection of biodiversity on private and Māori land by improving the accessibility and coordination of government support and incentives.

#### **Forest & Bird think:**

▶ Biodiversity is seen as an economic asset when it should be a national responsibility, integral to the wellbeing of our motu and our communities.

▶ Increasing external investment and philanthropy: Central Government should be adequately funding biodiversity as a priority, not defunding DOC and searching elsewhere for the shortfall. External funding should be an added extra and not cause losses to the bottom line.

### **Consultation point three: An evidence - and knowledge - based approach is driving improvements in practice and decision making for biodiversity**

Improving data, knowledge and systems will strengthen the foundations that support biodiversity work across New Zealand and ensure that we understand the costs and return on the investment of our efforts to protect and restore biodiversity. At present, gaps in our monitoring work are impacting our ability to understand the difference we are making and to make informed and robust decisions. We can also learn from existing programmes that address biodiversity risks and pressures and use this knowledge to improve future work. Improvements to understand the potential of nature-based solutions to climate change will also benefit the biodiversity system as a whole.

#### **Implementation Plan Critical Actions:**

7. Agree and implement an achievable set of priority indicators for monitoring progress on national targets, monitoring the effectiveness of interventions, and meeting statutory and international reporting requirements.
8. Support Māori to use knowledge systems, including mātauranga, in decision making and biodiversity management.
9. Capture and embed the lessons from existing partnership-based delivery models for biodiversity and biosecurity management to inform decisions on future programmes.
10. Encourage optimal investment in nature-based solutions, including the restoration and protection of native ecosystems for carbon and biodiversity benefits, by improving the evidence base, developing case studies, and operationalising existing research.

#### **Forest & Bird think:**

- ▶ With projects such as Jobs for Nature being disestablished, the government missed a tremendous opportunity to get the skilled conservation workers we desperately need to counteract the biodiversity crisis.
- ▶ In light of the interconnected biodiversity and climate crises, investment in the implementation and maintenance of nature-based solutions, including comprehensive browser control as one of those tools, should be prioritised in decision-making frameworks.

## **Consultation point four: Increased capability and support enables New Zealand to address the state of our biodiversity**

A range of skills are needed to address the state of our biodiversity crisis and achieve the national targets. However, there are capability gaps in key areas of our workforce, and these are expected to worsen in the future. These gaps can be addressed by working together to plan for future needs. There are opportunities to better coordinate and lift our existing capability to understand, detect and manage emerging biosecurity risks within New Zealand. We also need to increase effort and ensure that New Zealanders understand the value of our biodiversity and are inspired and motivated to take personal action to protect and restore the species and places they care about.

### **Implementation Plan Critical Actions:**

11. Develop a cross-sector plan to address the most important capability gaps in the biodiversity system.
12. Increase New Zealanders' awareness of the value of our biodiversity, show how they can make a difference to biodiversity in their communities, and drive urgency and momentum for action.
13. Establish cross-agency emerging risks capability for domestic biosecurity to horizon scan, share intelligence and support decision-makers in prioritising emerging risk management

### **Forest & Bird think:**

- ▶ Capability gaps are a direct consequence of the Government's failure to prioritise our environment by defunding our universities and public sector agencies, causing subject matter experts to lose their jobs.
- ▶ The Jobs for Nature programme engaged and upskilled people who would not have normally considered a job in conservation, or had the opportunity, due to not having the specialist knowledge and experience. Losing Jobs for Nature meant losing those upskilled people and not having new people coming through the conservation system to fill gaps.
- ▶ Mobilising all New Zealanders is fundamental to addressing the scale of the biodiversity crisis we face. However, it is paramount to prioritise and provide accessible and meaningful opportunities for New Zealanders to engage with nature firsthand, as this is crucial for building the emotional connections and sense of place.



**REMINDER:** We would encourage you to touch on the red flags we have mentioned in our guidance above, as part of your submission.

**You can fill out the form that DOC have provided [here](#) (DOC's preferred option).**

**Alternatively, you can write your own submission and email it**

**to: [biodiversitystrategy@doc.govt.nz](mailto:biodiversitystrategy@doc.govt.nz)**

**Submissions close by 5 pm Monday 30 June 2025.**