Conservation Policy

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Vision
The Green Party envisions an Aotearoa New Zealand in which:

- Distinctive and varied landscapes are protected, and indigenous biodiversity thrives.
- There are no further extinctions or declines in the status of threatened native species due to human impact, and no further habitat loss.
- Threatened animals and plants are restored to healthy numbers throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.
- There is a complete linked network of ecologically representative areas - terrestrial, marine and aquatic - under protective management.
- There is public access to the conservation estate so that people can enjoy, interact with, and understand our indigenous natural environment.
- The contribution of mātauranga Māori to conservation management is enhanced.
- The Crown works together with whānau, hapū and iwi each step of the way to achieve this vision.

Key Principles
The Green Party recognises that our quality of life is underpinned by the health of our ecosystems. Therefore:

1. Conservation policies and practices must safeguard and enhance ecosystems and all native plants and animal species, especially those that are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. Conservation policies and practices must 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.
3. Conservation must extend beyond parks and reserves to become an integral part of the planning and management of the countryside (including farms), towns and cities, rivers and the sea.
4. Support will be given to whānau and hapū in carrying out kaitiaki responsibilities in conservation management, and models of co-governance will be further developed.
5. The way we live places pressures on our natural ecosystems, indigenous species and habitats. A fundamental commitment to conservation is required, including protection from introduced predators, animal and plant pests and human threats, and supporting community initiatives and education.
6. The health of natural areas must not be compromised by economic activity.
7. We will work collaboratively with other countries and implement international biodiversity agreements, share knowledge, and encourage others to take action.
Specific Policy Points

1. Improving Department of Conservation (DOC) funding

DOC must be adequately funded to undertake its primary conservation and advocacy role, including the protection of indigenous biodiversity. The Green Party supports:

1. Developing DOC's core capacity by improving funding for human resources, including scientific and technical staff, field workers, rangers, educational officers, and locally based volunteer initiatives.

2. Increasing 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. These could include whole property purchases in the high country and iconic coastal and lowland areas with high ecological or landscape values.

3. Training for DOC staff to work constructively with whānau and hapū and communities to achieve common conservation goals in a manner that strengthens conservation outcomes and relations.

2. Protecting threatened indigenous species

Besides reducing new and existing pest pressures on indigenous biodiversity, we have to ensure there are habitats suitable for indigenous species to live and breed. We need to ensure that these species are protected from the harmful consequences of human activities. To this end, the Green Party will work to:

1. Conserve existing protected natural areas (PNAs) and establish new areas (national and conservation parks and reserves) to represent all ecosystem types in Aotearoa New Zealand, from the mountain tops to the sea. This will include dunelands, tussock land, grasslands, wetlands, lowland podocarp forests, and other ecosystems not well represented in the conservation estate, to form a connected network.

2. Ensure that all threatened species have a recovery plan in place.

3. Review the Wildlife Act and plant protection legislation to promote the conservation and protection of indigenous biodiversity, particularly those species threatened with extinction.

4. Establish new and larger 'mainland islands' for intensive pest management, as well as developing ex-situ species conservation such as captive breeding programmes, to help save threatened native species from extinction on the mainlands.

5. 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.

6. Enhance the conservation potential of islands in co-operation with residents and tangata whenua. These islands are free of some pests and there is a potential to eradicate others.

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

8. Encourage private and customary landowners to maintain existing, and create new, areas of indigenous vegetation (see Beyond the Conservation Estate below).

9. Continue the existing ban on the export of indigenous logs and chips, including
swamp Kauri, and end the logging of windblown trees on conservation land.
10. Amend the Forests Act to require public consultation on draft sustainable management plans.
11. Ensure rigorous enforcement of the sustainable forest management provisions of the Forest Act that relate to indigenous forest on private land.
12. Prevent field trials or release of genetically engineered organisms.
13. Fund increased research into the impacts of climate change on indigenous species, habitats and ecosystems.
14. Develop strategies for climate change adaptation, including dealing with increased beech mast seasons and habitat change.

3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

1. Support the return of conservation areas of significant value to whānau, hapū and iwi.
2. Continue to implement co-governance and other power sharing models which enable whānau, hapū and iwi to restore their relationship with protected lands and waters.
3. Ensure support and funding for whānau, hapū and iwi to undertake pest control and other kaitiaki responsibilities.
4. Support customary use by tangata whenua within the conservation estate.

4. Beyond the Conservation Estate — Protecting Nature on Private and Māori Land

We seek an end to indigenous habitat loss and fragmentation. Achieving this will require co-operation and dialogue between whānau, hapū, iwi, government agencies, local authorities, community organisations, and private and Māori landholders. The Green Party will foster conservation through economic incentives, education and regulation. The Green Party will:

1. Increase funding to help private and Māori landholders actively manage and protect indigenous habitats and ecosystems (i.e. the Community Conservation and Partnership Fund, Mātauranga Kura Taiao, Ngā Whenua Rahui, Nature Heritage and QEII Trust Funds).
2. Encourage landowners to retain and develop their sense of guardianship through support for voluntary initiatives such as those facilitated by landcare groups, and the promotion of the farm park concept to rehabilitate, enhance and maintain natural ecosystems and rural landscape values.
3. Encourage landowners to set marginal and erosion prone lands aside for restoration of native vegetation, and to establish habitat corridors with the planting of indigenous vegetation on unused road strips, railway corridors, esplanade reserves and other areas.
4. Encourage the planting of indigenous forest for sustainable production of native timber by recognising on the title that these forests have been planted for harvest. This will provide ecosystem and landscape benefits, and certainty of ownership.
5. Reduce financial disincentives and barriers that whānau, hapū, iwi and landowners face regarding the protection of nature.
6. Support the use of the Resource Management Act (RMA) to identify and protect important habitats on private land against cultivation, fertilisation, intensive stocking rates, infilling of aquatic habitats and wetlands, and inappropriate flood defences.
7. Ensure the national policy statement on indigenous biodiversity under the RMA
provides clear direction to local authorities as to how significant natural areas are to be protected, requires councils to control damage to indigenous habitats (terrestrial and freshwater), and gives additional recognition and protection to the habitats of species threatened with extinction.

8. Foster and support local urban and rural nature conservation initiatives such as forest, wetland and stream restoration and maintenance by community groups and local authorities, including providing matching grants to those involved.

9. Require local authorities to develop and use conservation plans, and use low impact ‘Green’ infrastructure and regulatory and non-regulatory methods to improve urban habitat.

10. Work with local government and communities to ensure a minimum 5% of the land area of each of the 268 ecological districts in Aotearoa New Zealand is in native vegetation or set aside for the restoration of nature within four years.

5. Enhancing and Protecting Freshwater Species and Habitats

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. The Green Party will work to:

1. Ensure that the New Start for Freshwater programme aims to manage all fresh water at a quality and quantity that will sustain indigenous species and ecosystems such as wetlands.

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

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

4. Support the transfer to DOC of Crown-owned riverbeds in the South Island that are administered by LINZ to promote better management of braided river ecosystems.

5. Support efforts to obtain water conservation orders to protect wild and scenic rivers.

6. Phase out grazing concessions on conservation land except where this is required to protect ecological values, such as light sheep grazing to control weeds.

See our Environment Policy for more details on fresh water management.

6. Reducing Biosecurity Threats

Increasing trade and tourism has been accompanied by numerous new organisms arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand that pose threats to biodiversity. Trade and tourism interests cannot justify the accidental or deliberate introduction of new pest species into Aotearoa New Zealand. The Green Party aims to ensure, through stringent management of NZ biosecurity, that no new species of invasive animal, plant or other pests become naturalised in NZ.

The Green Party will:

1. Enhance our ability to prevent exotic species from entering Aotearoa New Zealand and the ability to respond to any incursions that do occur.

2. Give equal importance to biosecurity threats to the marine and terrestrial environments.

3. Require risk assessments for exotic organisms to consider their potential impacts on indigenous species and ecosystems.
See our Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy for our full biosecurity policy.

7. Reducing Pest Threats to Biodiversity

Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity continues to be severely diminished due to the impact of introduced pest animals and plants.

A. Pest Management Strategies

The Green Party vision is for thriving biodiversity, no further extinctions, and restoration of healthy populations, habitats and ecosystems. In order to achieve this, the Green Party seeks to eradicate pest plants and animals that threaten significant ecological values wherever possible, and to control them where eradication is not possible.

The Green Party will:

1. Develop and fund national pest management strategies as part of coordinating and integrating pest control between central and local government agencies, to ensure efficient, humane and purposeful pest management is achieved.

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

3. Promote and significantly increase funding for pest eradication and control, to a level that ensures biodiversity and ecosystem health is maintained and, where possible, enhanced or restored.

4. Identify all priority sites for the conservation of species and ecosystems, ensure that these sites have legal protection in perpetuity, and that they are fully resourced for integrated pest control.

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

6. Remove or eradicate, where possible, large pest animals such as goats, deer, pigs, chamois, and tahr in those areas where they threaten important ecological values, including carbon storage, and restrict the range and density of the remaining population in cooperation with the community.

7. Significantly expand pest free offshore islands and intensively controlled 'mainland islands' as a first step to creating a predator free Aotearoa New Zealand.

8. Raise public awareness of the threats posed by pest animals and plants (including invasive exotic garden varieties) to Aotearoa New Zealand's biodiversity and ecological health, and the various pest control efforts being undertaken to reduce these threats.


10. Establish guidelines for farming of pest species (such as some introduced fish, goats and deer) to prevent the establishment of new pest populations by escapees, and prohibit the establishment of mustelid farms except for pest control purposes.

11. Introduce and broaden offences for the purposeful or neglectful release of pests into the wild, and ensure robust enforcement.

12. Facilitate and encourage local authorities to limit the impact of predatory pets (including cats and dogs) on indigenous species and ecosystems.

B. Use of Poisons in Animal Pest Control

Currently animal pest control in Aotearoa New Zealand involves the extensive use of poisons in ground and aerial operations because they are generally cost effective means of controlling animal pest species. Modern technology allows more precise
distribution of aerial poison such as 1080 than in the past, and the amount of poison per hectare has been reduced while still maintaining effectiveness. However, the use of poisons on a large scale, particularly near people's homes, poses ecological risks and raises community concerns. The Green Party Environment policy aims to minimise the use of all persistent, environmentally damaging, or non-sustainably produced poisons, especially when using aerial distribution, and we strongly support research and promotion of other pest control methods. 1080 poison is widely used to control pest species as it degrades relatively rapidly and is not bio-accumulative. Nonetheless it is acutely toxic to a number of non-target animals including dogs and native wildlife, is considered inhumane by many, and there may be as yet undiscovered long-term toxicological effects arising from its widespread use.

The Green Party aspires to see indigenous biodiversity and farm animal health maintained and enhanced, and eradication and control of pest animals achieved with minimal use of poisons, and without the use of genetically modified organisms. We recognise that currently it is not feasible to stop all use of poisons for animal pest control without unacceptable adverse impacts on biodiversity and forest health. However, we believe that current and developing integrated ground control methods offer opportunities, and that increased research and development will extend alternatives to aerial 1080 over time that are both affordable and effective.

The Green Party will:

1. In general, and wherever practical, support replacing poisons with humane and safe biological and physical controls.
2. Continue to support a ban on the release or field trial of genetically engineered organisms into the environment (see our Agriculture and Rural Affairs policy for further details).
3. Promote, support and fund ground-based methods of pest control by a properly trained workforce in preference to aerial poisoning wherever they could reasonably achieve the desired conservation outcomes, especially in areas of lowland forest, around farms, near people's homes (i.e. closer than 200 m) and near waterways that supply human and stock drinking water.
4. Establish and fund comprehensive ground control training schemes for people willing and able to do this physically demanding work.
5. Significantly increase funding for both research and implementation of innovative, safe and humane methods of ground based pest control.
6. Where possible, eliminate the uncontrolled use of bio-accumulative and persistent poisons for animal pest control.
7. Support greater involvement of local communities in maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity, and promote and fund a multi-agency approach to integrated animal pest control. Such an approach will include educating the community on biodiversity values, threats and pest control methods, and engaging the public in community-led ground based control programmes.
8. Coordinate and fund agencies to develop pest control schemes in collaboration with industries harvesting pest animals (e.g. the fur and textiles industry), in areas where pest animal harvesting and conservation outcomes can both be achieved.
9. Support poison-free integrated animal pest control in partnership with the local community, whānau, hapū and iwi. These areas will be regularly monitored to transparently assess the effectiveness of control methods to ensure that desired biodiversity outcomes are being met and control methods improved.
10. Investigate a strategy to progressively increase the proportion of ground control and progressively decrease the proportion of aerial control with the purpose of ensuring increased pest control coverage and effectiveness, and increased use
of alternatives to aerial poison. The strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure conservation outcomes were clearly being improved.

8. South Island High Country

Much of the South Island high country is under pastoral leases where farmers are allowed 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. There is currently a process of tenure review taking place that will result in more than half of the land being disposed of and becoming freehold to the occupiers while the remainder is being added to the conservation estate. The Green Party will:

1. Encourage and support high country farmers to work with DOC, whānau, hapū and iwi, and territorial authorities to improve conservation goals.
2. Require all leaseholders to develop sustainable management plans, in consultation with DOC and territorial authorities, for the land under lease.
3. Review the valuation system which currently undervalues the Crown's stake in the land.
4. Investigate the effectiveness of the Government's tenure review of pastoral leases programme to ensure it is fully protecting conservation values, public access and the Crown's interest.
5. Implement a moratorium on new, preliminary, or substantive tenure review proposals until the investigation is completed and any subsequent changes are implemented.
6. Amend the Overseas Investment Act to restrict the sale of high country property to Aotearoa New Zealand citizens or residents who reside in Aotearoa New Zealand for at least 185 days a year.

9. Public Access to the Conservation Estate

There are concerns that access to conservation land, waterways and the coast is being made difficult for the general public. The Green Party supports public access across private land to conservation lands and will:

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

10. Helping People Get Involved

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. To foster this, the Greens will make every effort to:

1. Ensure DOC works 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. Provide secure funding to assist these groups in carrying out conservation activities.
2. Restore and adequately resource DOC’s role in advocating for conservation and providing education about conservation to the wider community.
3. Incorporate environmental education into the core curriculum at all levels from pre-school to tertiary and teacher training.
4. Encourage expanded environmental education in the adult education network.
5. Build on the strengths and achievements of the conservation boards as independent voices for conservation, providing input to policy from tangata whenua and community.
6. Encourage and support local government to take more responsibility for implementing conservation goals through district and regional plans, and facilitate the involvement of the community and tangata whenua in formulating and implementing these conservation goals.
7. Foster community participation in environmental decision making, with better notification of development proposals and support for improved community and tangata whenua participation in resource management issues, including proposals for prospecting or mining in conservation lands and marine areas.
8. Work with communities to ensure that the costs of protecting our natural heritage for the "common good" are shared across communities, regions and the country as a whole, and ensure funding is made available for regions with a high proportion of protected areas.

11. Mining

Mining and extraction have adverse effects on landforms, oceans, waterways and ecosystems. Mining is currently prohibited in National Parks and various other types of reserve, but under the Crown Minerals Act 1991 it occurs contentiously in other parts of the conservation estate. The Green Party will:

1. Prohibit new exploration, prospecting and mining on or under conservation land.
2. Ensure there is tight control over existing mining (including post-mining rehabilitation) on conservation land and reserves, in partnership with tangata whenua, and through consultation with environmental groups, local communities and the public.
3. Require mining activities to be halted when rare, endemic species are found to be present on the mining site.
4. Reject the notion of trading conservation land for other land to facilitate extractive activities.
5. Gazette areas of conservation land deserving of schedule 4 (Crown Minerals Act) status which have been omitted from schedule 4 because of their mineral potential.
12. **Tourism**

Tourism has increased significantly over recent years and many tourists utilise the conservation estate. In some places this has led to overuse of facilities and adverse impacts on the natural values of the area. The Green Party will:

1. Review the concessions section of the Conservation Act, and DOC's management and administration of concessions, to determine how changes can be implemented to protect natural values and control visitor pressure at peak times.

2. Implement strategies to reduce the impact of high tourist numbers in some areas, including:
   a. Visitor quotas on land with high conservation value.
   b. Reviewing Civil Aviation Authority rules that allow air traffic over areas of natural quiet.
   c. Conservation education for visitors.
   d. Initiatives that set aside lower conservation value land for high volume tourism.

3. Raise a new levy on overseas visitors to Aotearoa New Zealand and use the new revenue stream to help fund pest control work on the conservation estate, and new regional tourism infrastructure.

4. Ensure that DOC has sufficient resources to protect and maintain classic back country huts and bivs.

5. Require consideration of the cumulative effect of visitor activities on the character of the conservation estate rather than just the effects of individual activities in isolation.

6. Ensure that Wilderness Areas remain protected as places where people can experience natural quiet, and consider proposals for new Wilderness Areas.

13. **Marine Conservation**

The Green Party will:

1. Work with whānau, hapū and iwi, DOC, fisheries stakeholders, and the community to identify and protect areas of the marine environment for conservation purposes, including through the development of a network of marine reserves and sanctuaries. See our Sea and Oceans Policy for full details.