



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

# *Statement of Intent*

2016–2020





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# Statement of responsibility

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**Responsible Minister's statement:**

I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by Ministry for the Environment is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Smith', written in a cursive style.

**Hon Dr Nick Smith**  
Minister for the Environment

6 October 2016

# Chief Executive's introduction

Tiakina te taiao ki tōnui a Aotearoa. He whenua mana kura mo tangata. The Ministry for the Environment is a long-term steward for the environment so that New Zealand can be prosperous. Our work is underpinned by an idea: to make New Zealand the most liveable place in the world. Over the next four years, our task is to set the direction and support people to make good decisions on how we manage our environmental system.

Being good stewards means making sure we are confident our mokopuna have the same opportunities we do: productive land, thriving cities, unique wildlife, outstanding scenery, a plentiful supply of water and healthy lakes, rivers and oceans and a connection to our environment that goes to the heart of who we are as Kiwis. The things New Zealanders want to be proud of in looking after our environment – healthy species through biodiversity, ecologically healthy land, air and water in our natural and built environment.

The Ministry cannot achieve this alone. We will need to inspire all New Zealanders to play their part. We will explore new ways to collaborate and innovate across our forests and factories, on our farms, in our cities and in our homes.

We need to take a long-term view because typically, the full implications of the choices we make only become clear generations later. You can see this today – serious erosion on the east coast of the North Island is a legacy of European settlement, when large tracts of bush were converted to pasture. In Canterbury, the effects of development a hundred years ago are still working their way through the waterways. In the same way, the choices we make today will impact on the state of our environment, and the quality of life enjoyed by New Zealanders, decades from now.

This plan describes how, over the next four years, we will take a leading role across the natural resources system to show how healthy strong economies, communities, and environments are, in the long run, one and the same. Equally, we will need to be at the cutting edge of how policy is made and problem-solving in new ways to improve the value we place on nature. We need to hold all of these issues simultaneously when we are advising on decisions for the future.

Strong purposeful partnerships will be key – Māori/iwi, businesses, environmental groups, local and central government, research institutions, and people throughout New Zealand will

be essential to help us find answers to our most pressing environmental issues and to take action to address these.

Getting it right will have a huge impact for Aotearoa. But to achieve this we will need people to have a deeper understanding of how we depend on our environment to thrive. New Zealand cannot be prosperous without valuing the natural and built resources we have. He oranganui na Taiao mo Aotearoa. Ko pai rawa o te ao.

He waka eke noa – we are all in this together.



**Vicky Robertson**  
Secretary for the Environment

6 October 2016

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## Chief Executive's statement of responsibility

In signing this information, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on strategic intentions for the Ministry for the Environment. This information has been prepared in accordance with section 38 and section 40 of the Public Finance Act 1989.

# Overview

The Ministry for the Environment was established under the Environment Act 1986 and is the Government’s primary adviser on the New Zealand environment and international matters that affect the environment. Our mission is that we are stewards for the environment, so that we continue to have a prosperous Aotearoa New Zealand, now and in the future. Our purpose is to make Aotearoa New Zealand the most liveable place possible.

**Our purpose**

*Aotearoa New Zealand is the most liveable place in the world*  
**Aotearoa – he whenua mana kura mō te tangata**

We are stewards for the environment, so that we continue to have a prosperous Aotearoa New Zealand, now and in the future

**Our liveable future**

**We are committed to New Zealand having:**

<p><b>Air</b> – Healthy, with world-leading quality</p> <p><b>Marine</b> – World-leading in sustainable ecosystem management</p> <p><b>Urban</b> – Sustainable, liveable cities</p>	<p><b>Atmosphere and climate</b> – Innovative, productive, resilient and low emission</p> <p><b>Fresh water</b> – Improving quality, increasing value</p> <p><b>Land</b> – Improving soil and ecosystems, increasing value</p>	<p><b>The system</b> – Developing practical policy, enabling good decisions and action</p>
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## Our context

### Environmental management system

The Ministry for the Environment operates within the environmental management system. The term ‘environmental management system’ describes the complex interactions and interdependencies between New Zealand’s environmental and social processes (see figure 1).

This system covers the way we use, manage, and value resources. It is a dynamic system made up of political, economic, cultural, and social drivers. The social system provides us with sets of rules and institutions (including regulation) that we interpret to make

decisions about using, managing, and valuing those resources.

Our environmental management system is heavily decentralised. Local government and the Environmental Protection Authority implement most of the legislation we administer. There is a broad range of participants with different views about how natural resources should be managed.

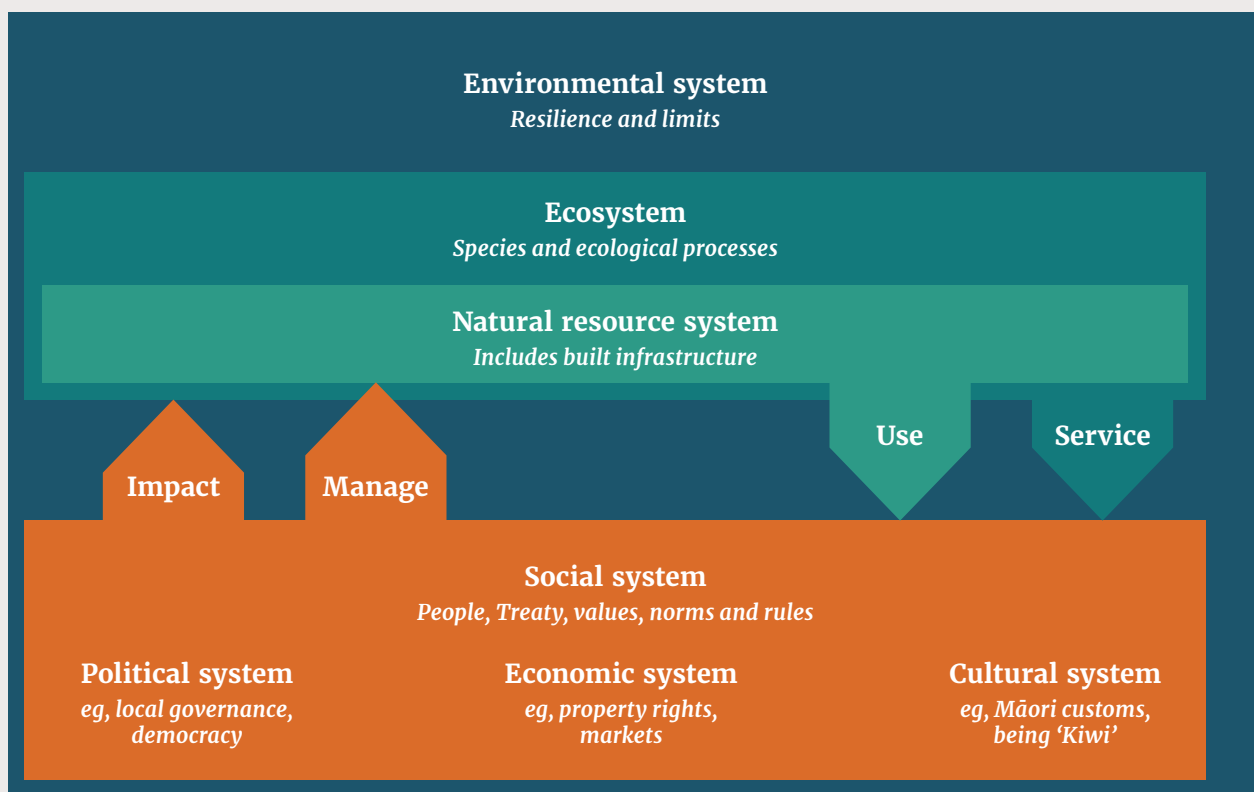
We administer the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), which is the key legislation for making decisions on the use of natural resources.

As well as managing air, soil, fresh water, and coastal marine areas,

the RMA regulates land use and the provision of infrastructure, which are integral components of New Zealand’s planning system. Local government, who also has a wider planning role in transport, infrastructure, and economic development, makes most resource management decisions.

Ecological systems and the demands we place on them change. The environmental management system must be able to adapt to changing circumstances. It must be supported by knowledge of what is happening in the environment, including an understanding of behaviour and performance that affects outcomes.

FIGURE 1: ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



### Natural Resources Sector

The Natural Resources Sector (NRS) is made up of eight agencies involved in the management and stewardship of New Zealand’s natural resources. We work together to create a more productive economy from our natural resources while improving the quality of the environment for New Zealanders. The NRS has a collective goal underpinned by six focus areas, shown in figure 2.

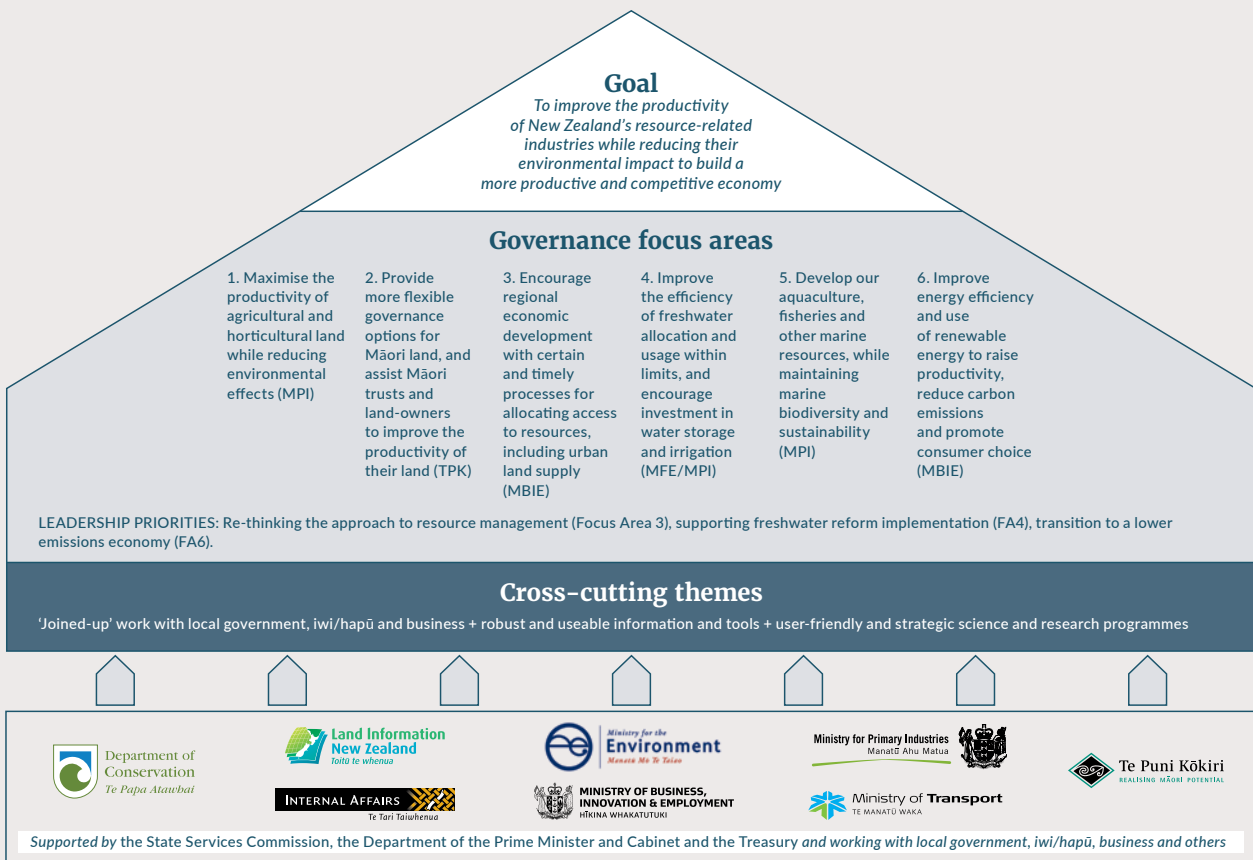
The Ministry for the Environment plays a lead role in supporting the NRS. Achieving our outcomes depends on the actions and support of other NRS agencies and partners.

The NRS’s focus reflects the Better Public Services principles of:

- putting New Zealanders at the centre of its thinking
- building on what works
- focusing on the vital few.

Ministers, Chief Executives, other leaders and key partners come together regularly to provide strategic leadership and drive progress towards the agreed goals and focus areas of the NRS. The Natural Resources Sector Support Unit is hosted by the Ministry for the Environment.

**FIGURE 2: NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR FOCUS AREAS**



The Ministry supports all NRS focus areas, with a particular focus on the following areas:

WE ARE WORKING ON	WITH	TO
Encouraging regional economic development with certain and timely processes for allocating access to resources, including urban land supply	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and other NRS agencies	Simplify and speed up plan-making processes and improve consenting processes.  Use appropriate tools to improve national direction, including by developing a National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity.
Improving the efficiency of freshwater allocation and usage within limits	Jointly led with Ministry for Primary Industries working with local government, iwi and business partners	Support local government to improve governance and allocation of fresh water.  Support local government to set effective limits for water quality and quantity and work with iwi to ensure iwi/hapū rights and interests are recognised.
Developing our aquaculture, fisheries and marine resources, while maintaining biodiversity and sustainability	In partnership with Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Department of Conservation and Ministry for Primary Industries	Amend the Exclusive Economic Zone Act to improve efficiency and effectiveness.  Support and investigate options for graduated marine protection, including supporting the passage of special legislation to give effect to the new Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary.
Improving energy efficiency and use of renewable energy to raise productivity, reduce carbon emissions and promote consumer choice	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Transport, Ministry for Primary Industries and Business NZ representatives	Continue transition to a lower emissions economy, increased use of renewable energy and other technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

# Our role

*Our mission is that we are stewards for the environment, so that we continue to have a prosperous Aotearoa New Zealand, now and in the future. Our purpose is to make Aotearoa New Zealand the most liveable place in the world. Making New Zealand liveable requires bringing together the environmental and economic bits of the jigsaw to support a strong and sustainable society, culture, economy, and environment.*

In a practical sense, this means understanding what is happening in the environment, using legislation and regulation to manage our natural capital, administering funds, and partnering with agencies, communities, businesses and NGOs to achieve our goals.

With this in mind, over the next four years we aim to be at the cutting edge of how policy is made and the difference it can make to people.

We:

- actively shape the agenda
- advise with impact
- problem solve in many ways
- harness our diverse perspectives and the skills of our workforce
- see the whole system and play a brokering role.

It also means bringing our ideas together with others' to give the best advice and delivery.

We:

- are clear about what we and others bring to the table and the results we all seek
- partner with Māori and iwi to make Aotearoa New Zealand uniquely liveable
- engage early in our thinking and doing, and others bring us into theirs
- work with people to inspire them to action and to get results.

These are our strategic priority areas.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	MINISTRY COMMITMENT
Leadership	<p>We are clear about what we and others bring to the table and the results we all seek.</p> <p>We engage early in our thinking and doing, and others bring us into theirs.</p> <p>We see the whole system and play a brokering role.</p> <p>We actively shape the agenda.</p>
Information	We advise with impact, including using insights from data.
Demonstrating understanding of te ao Māori (Māori world view)	We partner with iwi/hapū to make Aotearoa/New Zealand uniquely liveable.
System capability and capacity	We work with people to inspire them to action and get results.

## What does success look like?

By 2045:

- New Zealand's environment and natural resources will be sustainably managed and used to improve environmental, social, and cultural prosperity. Our natural resources will increase the economic returns from the activities they support.
- New Zealand will be a low-pollution, low-emission nation in which cleaner air, water, and marine environments enable people to lead healthy and productive lives. It will be a New Zealand where policy solutions encourage innovation for low-emission, climate-smart agriculture, transport, energy, and urban development. Cleaner production standards will spur innovation, and industry will be encouraged to innovate for new, clean technologies that provide jobs and support export-led, sustainable growth. Companies and communities will be held to account on their low-emission, low-pollution commitments.

- New Zealand will prepare for, be able to withstand shocks of, and will adapt effectively to climate change. We will be better prepared for more frequent natural disasters, more volatile weather patterns, and other long-term consequences of climate change. Our environment will be healthy, well-managed, and resilient, and so play a key role in reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts. Climate resilience is integrated into urban planning and infrastructure development.
- The relationship between the Crown and iwi will be strong and resilient, and iwi will have successfully developed their natural resources in ways that will make significant contributions to Māori communities and national growth, consistent with Mātauranga Māori values. The Crown actively partners with iwi/hapū to deliver kaitiakitanga. We learn from iwi about what works and apply it in other areas.
- Government and non-government groups work together seamlessly to deliver environmental outcomes.

Social and environmental processes are complimentary and enable people to engage in decisions about the environment and natural resources. Speed and effectiveness of decision making is improved in the resource management system.

### Wider capability improvements

Some of our other organisational improvements are:

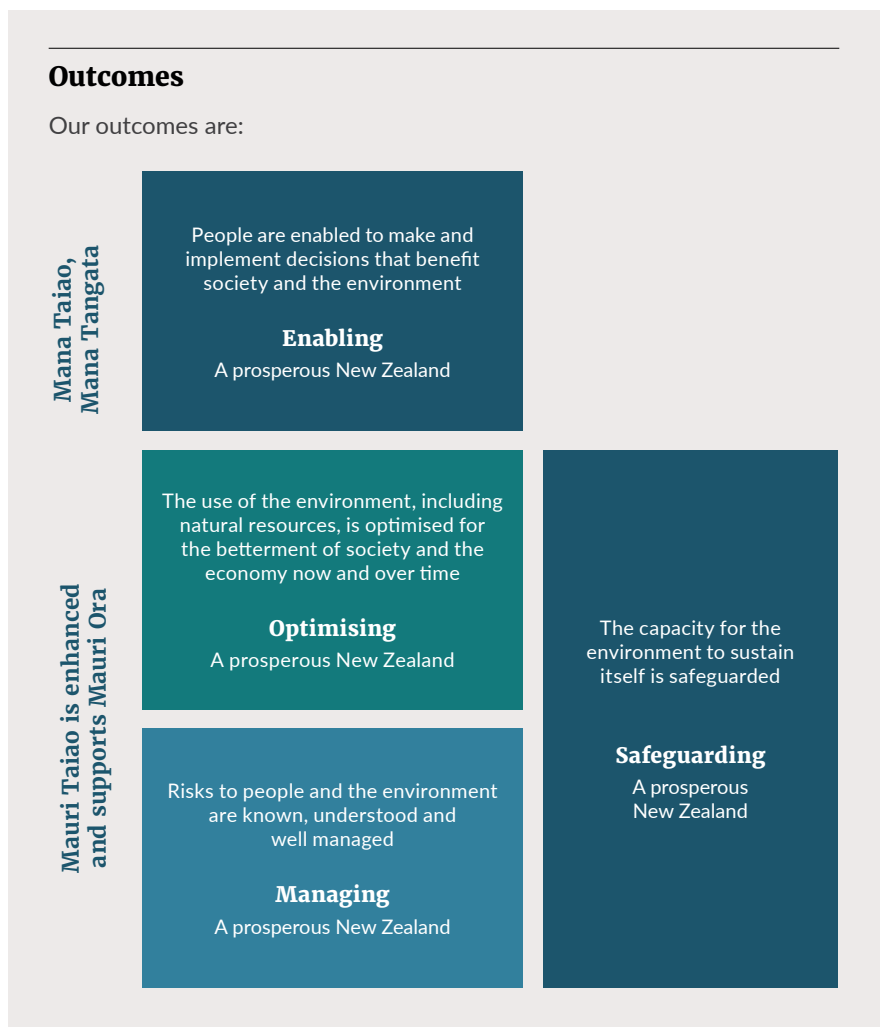
- a programme of work to improve our data and information management to support evidence-based policy and decision making
- supporting a more agile and flexible way of working.

### Equal employment opportunities

We pay careful attention to ensuring procedures for recruitment and selection, career development and progression, training, and conditions of employment provide equal opportunities.

# Our strategic intentions

*During 2015, we developed our Strategic Plan to 2045. The plan sets our aspirations for the environment in 2045. These strategic intentions are some of the steps we will take to achieve our goals.*



## Domains

Our outcomes framework is based on the domains we want to influence. Success in the seven domains in the diagram below should lead to achieving our outcomes. Domains do not operate in isolation from one another.

Activities, interventions, and ecosystems connect domains in many ways. Beyond work within the domains, we also want to understand these relationships better so we can:

- anticipate the effects of change in one part of an interconnected system
- understand causes, consequences, and cumulative effects
- develop solutions across multiple domains.



### Environmental management system

TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION WE NEED OUR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESSES TO WORK TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY.			
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p><b>People are enabled to make and implement decisions that benefit society and the environment</b></p>	<p>The environmental management system's processes and objectives are clear and provide certainties to users</p>	<p>National objectives and priorities guide decisions throughout the system</p>	<p>Percentage of new plans, plan changes and variations as a result of national direction</p>
		<p>Regulatory framework for land use and management has been evaluated for effectiveness and consistency</p>	<p>Percentage of new plans, plan changes and variations completed within statutory timeframes</p>
			<p>Number of local authorities making publicly available the findings of their policy statement or plan efficiency and effectiveness monitoring</p>
			<p>Percentage of resource consents processed within statutory timeframes</p>
	<p>Environmental and social objectives are aligned, mutually beneficial outcomes and trade-offs are achieved, and intergenerational impacts are taken into account</p>	<p>There is an effective framework for iwi/hapū engagement in resource management decisions</p>	<p>Number of iwi/hapū management plans and iwi/hapū agreements lodged with local authorities</p>
			<p>Number of local authorities with written iwi/hapū agreements</p>
	<p>The environmental management system uses current science and leads international best practice</p>	<p>We have robust data sets for all environmental domains</p>	<p>Increasing number of indicators that meet Statistics NZ standards</p>

**We are going to:**

- progress and support effective implementation of resource management reforms
- take a longer-term view of the resource management system with other agencies to determine how it might be improved
- monitor the system to ensure it is effective
- improve data acquisition and use, and report it.

## Air – Āngi

OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND IS A WORLD LEADER IN MANAGING RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT THAT RESULT FROM POOR AIR QUALITY.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Risks to people and the environment are known, understood and well managed	Health impacts from poor air quality are minimised	Health impacts from anthropogenic (human-made) sources are reduced by 10% from 2012 levels	Number of premature deaths and health complaints due to poor air quality

### We are going to:

- monitor the effect and implementation of legislation related to air quality
- amend the Air Quality National Environmental Standard and work closely with local government to implement changes to incorporate current findings on the health impacts of air pollution.

**Atmosphere and climate – Kōhauhau and āhua o ngā rangi**

**OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND HAS AN INNOVATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY, WITH FEWER GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, AND IS RESILIENT TO THE PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADVERSE CLIMATIC EVENTS.**

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG TERM-TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<b>The capacity of the environment to sustain itself is safeguarded</b>	New Zealand is carbon neutral by 2050, contributing to global efforts to reduce emissions	The vehicle fleet will comprise upwards of 250,000 (about 8%) electric vehicles (including plug-in hybrids) (by 2025)	Percentage of the total vehicle fleet that is electric or hybrid
		Net forest area has increased by 500,000 ha from 2015 (by 2040)	Total net gain in forest area
<b>The use of the environment, including natural resources, is optimised for the betterment of society and the economy, now and over time</b>	A carbon neutral New Zealand enables a more innovative and productive economy	There is a durable mechanism and effective pricing for greenhouse gas emissions (by 2020)	Percentage of total emissions covered by the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme

**We are going to:**

- undertake a domestic treaty ratification process for the Paris Agreement on climate change
  - negotiate the detailed rules of the new international agreement and identify the best policy mix for meeting our post-2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target
- complete and implement the review of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS)
  - update regulations to ensure the NZ ETS delivers on its objectives and adapts according to international progress
- update guidance manuals for local government on adapting to climate change
  - more actively manage the supply of units so the NZ ETS can meet its objectives and there is sufficient market certainty, while helping New Zealand to meet its international targets.

## Fresh water – Wai

OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND INCREASES THE VALUE FROM, AND IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF, OUR FRESH WATER.			
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<b>The capacity of the environment to sustain itself is safeguarded</b>	Freshwater ecosystems are healthy and resilient to pressures	Water quality is being maintained or improved	Trends for water quality factors including nutrients, macroinvertebrates and clarity are improving
<b>The use of the environment, including natural resources, is optimised for the betterment of society and the economy, now and over time</b>	New Zealand gets best value from freshwater resources	We are increasing the value we get from the use of fresh water	An increase in the number of hectares under irrigation (Ministry for Primary Industries data)
<b>Risks to people and the environment are known, understood and well managed</b>	Harmful health impacts from people's contact with fresh water are eliminated	Human health risks associated with the use of freshwater (eg, for recreation) are reducing	An increase in the percentage of rivers that are 'safe for swimming'

### We are going to:

- continue developing the regulatory framework
- provide freshwater management implementation and guidance
- work on tools to maximise the benefits from use of freshwater resources, improving the governance and allocation of fresh water
- work on providing for iwi and hapū rights and interests in fresh water
- administer fresh water funding, including developing a framework for investing \$100 million of funding in initiatives to improve freshwater quality.

**Land – Whenua**

OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF OUR SOILS AND TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS AND INCREASES THE VALUE FROM OUR LAND-BASED RESOURCES.			
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Risks to people and the environment are known, understood and well managed	Risks from contaminated land, hazardous substances and new organisms are known and managed, proportional to risk	The use of substitute substances with reduced human and environmental impact are incentivised (by 2025)	The number of highly toxic and eco-toxic substances approved is reduced
	The risks from natural hazards to people, property and the environment are reduced	Key indicators and baseline conditions are in place for monitoring the impact of new organisms	No unintended significant adverse environmental impacts reported arising from released new organisms

**We are going to:**

- improve the regulatory framework for using and managing land
- administer the Waste Minimisation Act and support local government to improve waste management planning, service delivery, and reporting
- provide advice on the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms framework including compliance with international agreements.

**Marine – Wai tai**

OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND IS A WORLD LEADER IN THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT NEW ZEALAND’S MARINE LIFE, SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY.			
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
The capacity of the environment to sustain itself is safeguarded	Marine ecosystems are healthy and resilient to pressures	Fewer species are threatened or endangered due to human activity (by 2025)	Proportion of threatened and at risk marine species, where human activity is identified as a causal factor
		Targeted interventions are in place to preserve or restore the ecological integrity of high priority ecosystems (by 2025)	Area and representativeness of marine protected areas

**We are going to:**

- continue to work towards a durable marine regulatory framework
- support the Government’s commitment to introduce a framework that will provide for a graduated system of marine protection
- support the passage of special legislation to give effect to the new Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary.

## Urban – Tāone

**OUR VISION IS THAT NEW ZEALAND IS A WORLD LEADER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CITIES, LEVERAGING THE BENEFITS THAT CITIES OFFER WHILE REDUCING THE COSTS AND IMPACTS THAT THEY IMPOSE.**

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM TARGETS	INTERMEDIATE TARGETS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Urban environments maximise social, cultural and economic exchange	Urban form supports liveable, connected and productive urban environments that are adaptable to changing needs	Urban environments are developed through coordinated urban and infrastructure planning	New Zealand cities improve their ratings on relevant national and international liveability indicators
			Regional councils in the high growth urban areas set minimum targets for sufficient residential development capacity in accordance with their housing assessment, and incorporate into regional policy statements by the end of 2018 (subject to the National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity being finalised)

### We are going to:

- continue to develop the National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity
- contribute to the Productivity Commission's work on land supply and urban planning
- contribute to work on the national infrastructure planning processes in Auckland.

### Our approach to measuring progress

Progress on the measures above will be reported in our annual report. We will also continue to:

- review and fine-tune the measures within our outcomes framework
- work towards developing common ways of measuring progress within the natural and built resources sector
- monitor and report on the environmental management system through the environmental reporting framework and the national monitoring system
- work with system participants (especially regional councils) to gather data to monitor and evaluate the environment, improve reporting systems, and build evaluation capability and capacity.



*Ministry for the*  
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*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

**New Zealand Government**

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