



National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity

Exposure draft summary for iwi/Māori

This document supports the release of the exposure draft of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB). It provides background about why we need the NPSIB and how it has developed and changed through consultation and engagement. It also provides a high-level summary of the provisions contained within the NPSIB that will be of particular interest for iwi/Māori. Those wishing to gain a deeper understanding of the NPSIB should read the summary of the provisions and the full exposure draft.

Hutia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea te kōmako, e kō?

Pluck the heart of the flax – where will the bell bird sing?

Protecting our native plants, birds and animals

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have a special relationship with our environment. Whether accessing areas for mahinga kai or gathering rongoā, te taiao is important to us. The health and wellbeing of te taiao is vital to the health and wellbeing of people, and dependence on the environment comes with a responsibility to look after it.

In te ao Māori, identity, wellbeing, knowledge and how the culture is nourished are indivisible from the health of Papatūānuku. Humans are embedded in the environment, not distinct from it.

However, our nature faces a crisis. Thousands of our indigenous plants and animals are threatened with, or at risk of extinction. Some will disappear forever if we don't work together to reverse the decline and restore what has been lost.

Further, our economic success relies on our natural environment. It gives us a competitive advantage that underpins two of Aotearoa's key sectors: tourism and primary production. Indigenous

biodiversity contributes to the success of farming, forestry and horticulture. It helps clean our freshwater, cycle nutrients, pollinate plants and protect against flooding. Safeguarding nature safeguards our future prosperity.

Climate and indigenous biodiversity are inextricably linked. What we do for one affects the other. Thriving biodiversity can increase resilience to changes in climate, and indigenous forests are an important carbon sink that helps keep our planet from heating.

The NPSIB is an essential part of our response to biodiversity decline in Aotearoa. The NPSIB aims to protect, maintain and restore our indigenous biodiversity.

The context for a National Policy Statement

The NPSIB sits in the wider context of the vision and goals for biodiversity set out in [Te Mana o te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020](#). The Biodiversity Strategy provides the overarching direction for biodiversity, while the NPSIB will be one of its regulatory tools.

The NPSIB responds to the recommendations in Ko Aotearoa Tēnei: Report on the Wai 262 Claim. It provides a strengthened role in the resource management system for tangata whenua in management and decision-making for indigenous biodiversity. It also provides a pathway for tangata whenua to identify and protect their taonga species.

The objective of the NPSIB is to protect, maintain and restore indigenous biodiversity in a way that:

- a) recognises tangata whenua as kaitiaki, and people and communities as stewards, of indigenous biodiversity; and
- b) provides for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities, now and into the future.

The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, called Significant Natural Areas (SNAs), is a requirement of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The NPSIB sets out consistent criteria and management provisions for councils to identify and manage SNAs.

SNAs and other provisions in the NPSIB will protect, maintain and restore indigenous biodiversity while enabling activities that are important for our social, economic and cultural wellbeing.

What the proposed policy means for Māori

Te Rito o te Harakeke

Te Rito o te Harakeke refers to the need for an integrated and holistic approach to maintain the integrity of indigenous biodiversity. It is a fundamental concept of the NPSIB. It recognises the intrinsic value and mauri of indigenous biodiversity as well as people's connections and relationships with it.

It recognises that our health and wellbeing depend on the health and wellbeing of indigenous biodiversity and that in return we have a responsibility to care for it. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of indigenous species, ecosystems, the wider environment, and the community.

It also acknowledges the status of iwi and hapū as kaitiaki in their rohe and the central role they have in protecting our indigenous biodiversity. Councils are required to work with tangata whenua to develop a local approach for Te Rito o te Harakeke.

The description of Te Rito o te Harakeke includes six essential elements to guide tangata whenua and councils in managing indigenous biodiversity. These are:

1. the intrinsic value and mauri of indigenous biodiversity
2. the bond between people and indigenous biodiversity through whakapapa (familial) relationships and mutual interdependence
3. the responsibility of care that tangata whenua have as kaitiaki, and that other New Zealanders have as stewards of indigenous biodiversity
4. the connectivity between indigenous biodiversity and the wider environment
5. the incorporation of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori
6. the requirement for engagement with tangata whenua.

Tangata whenua as kaitiaki

The NPSIB recognises the role of tangata whenua as kaitiaki and requires councils to involve tangata whenua in the management of and decision-making for indigenous biodiversity. Tangata whenua will be involved at all levels of the RMA processes for managing indigenous biodiversity – a significant shift in the role of tangata whenua in decision-making for Aotearoa’s indigenous biodiversity.

RMA mechanisms such as transfer of powers and joint management agreements enable tangata whenua to take this increased role. Councils must consider using these kinds of tools and publish reasons for their decisions about doing so.

The NPSIB requires early and meaningful consultation that considers the different levels of whānau, hapū and iwi decision-making structures. It also requires councils to develop processes for managing confidential information provided by tangata whenua.

The NPSIB requires the use of mātauranga Māori in managing indigenous biodiversity, with the consent of tangata whenua, for instance in resource consent application assessments of environmental effects and for monitoring of effects. Council plans must also provide for sustainable customary use according to tikanga.

Locally specific and flexible approach for Māori land and Treaty settlement land

The NPSIB addresses the management of biodiversity on all types of land, including public, private and Māori land to ensure nature can thrive. Much of Aotearoa’s indigenous biodiversity is on privately owned and managed land.

Māori lands, which include treaty settlement land, have specific management provisions for councils to work in partnership with tangata whenua and Māori landowners. Together they can develop planning provisions which balance the maintenance and protection of indigenous biodiversity and taonga species on Māori lands with the development of that land, including papakāinga, marae, dwellings, and associated infrastructure.

This framework recognises the historic development limitations on this land, as well as the prevalence of existing indigenous biodiversity on Māori land. However, the provisions about enabling development do not apply to land that is also subject to legislation to protect indigenous biodiversity such as the Reserves Act 1977 or the National Parks Act 1980.

A pathway for the protection of taonga species and ecosystems

Previously there has not been a clear RMA process for hapū and iwi to proactively identify their kaitiaki responsibility to taonga species and ecosystems. The NPSIB sets out a framework to enable councils and tangata whenua to work together to identify ecological taonga by describing (and mapping, if required) the taonga and its values. They can then work together to develop controls which involve tangata whenua in the management of these taonga, to the extent they prefer.

It is up to tangata whenua to determine how much information they provide and how to include it in plans at each stage of the process. Where tangata whenua choose not to provide details of taonga for inclusion in plans, these remain 'acknowledged taonga' and some protection can be provided for them, such as alert layers or notification to applicants for resource consent.

The NPSIB also requires councils to develop processes to manage information provided about taonga species and to ensure confidentiality where required. It clarifies that adverse effects on taonga species include effects on the mauri of the taonga; the identified values of the taonga; and the historical, cultural and spiritual relationship of tangata whenua with them. The NPSIB provides for the sustainable customary use of identified taonga species according to tikanga and consistent with their protection.

Geothermal Significant Natural Areas

Geothermal SNAs also have a specific management regime. Councils must work with tangata whenua to develop plans to protect geothermal SNAs. These plans must reflect the vulnerability of a geothermal SNA or the geothermal system classification (where councils already have a management approach in place). Provision is also made for new occupation, use and development by tangata whenua in accordance with tikanga.

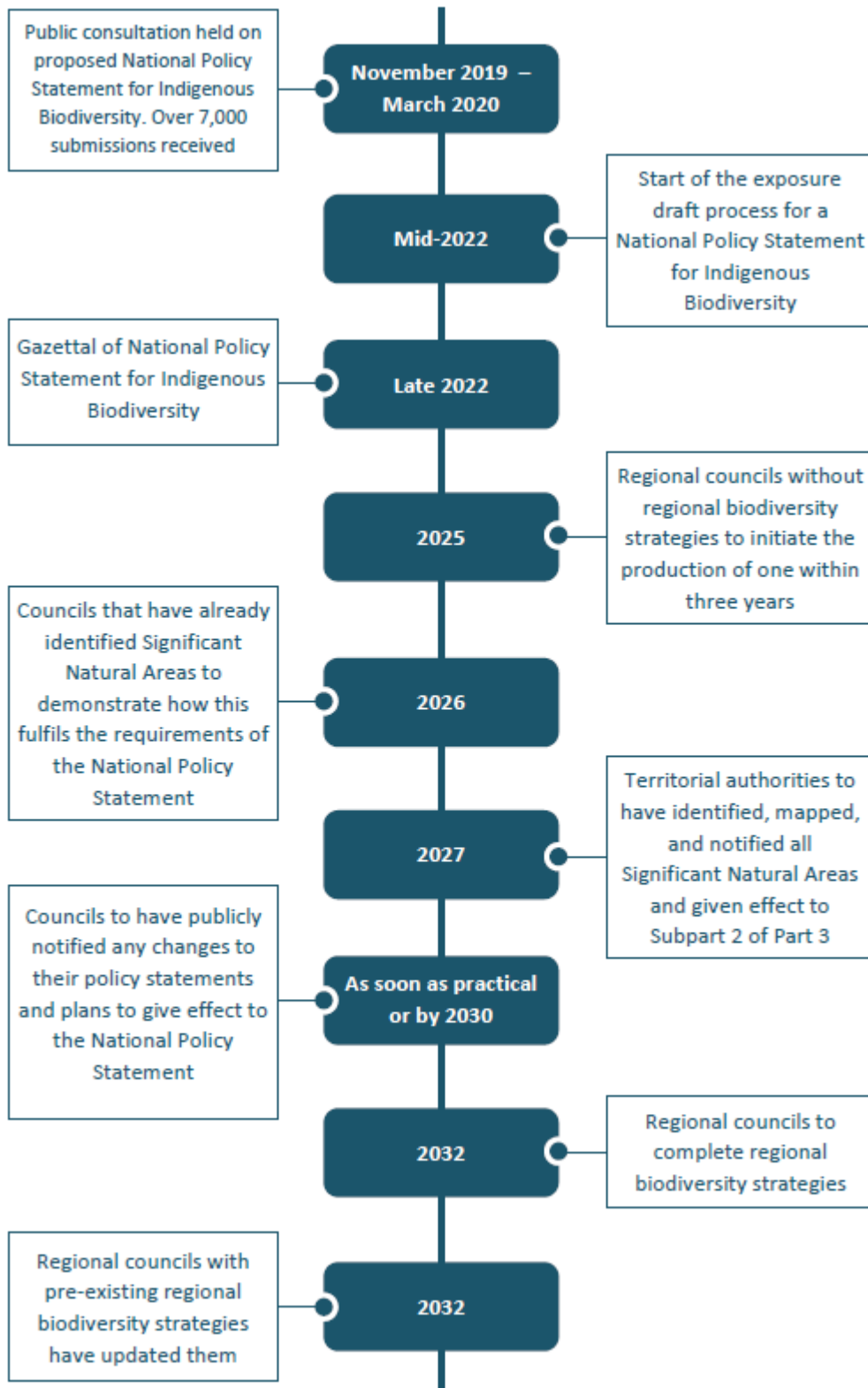
Other parts of the NPSIB

The NPSIB also includes specific provisions for:

- identifying SNAs, including the principles such as partnership and transparency that councils must use when doing this
- managing the adverse effects of new subdivisions, use and development on SNAs, allowing existing activities to continue so long as adverse effects do not increase
- specified highly mobile fauna
- maintenance of improved pasture
- plantation forests with SNAs
- restoring priority areas
- creating regional biodiversity strategies.
- More detail can be found in the [summary of the exposure draft](#).

Timeline

Implementation of the NPSIB will occur over a period of years after gazettal.



Published in June 2022 by the
Ministry for the Environment – Manatū Mō Te Taiao
Publication number: INFO 1058



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government