

## Submission on the 10-year Budget 2021-2031 (long-term plan)

**Date:** 22 March 2020

**To:** AK Have Your Say, Auckland Council, Private bag 92 300, Auckland 1142

**From:** Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. (Forest & Bird), PO Box 108 055, Auckland 1150, **Attention:** Lissy Fehnker-Heather, Regional Conservation Manager – Auckland/Coromandel

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### 1. Introduction

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Incorporated (Forest & Bird) is New Zealand's largest independent nature conservation organisation, with many members and supporters. Our mission is to be a voice for nature on land, in fresh water, and at sea.

We have 47 branches throughout the country, seven of which, are in the Auckland region and are involved in a wide range of conservation and advocacy activities.

Forest & Bird has for many years had a strong interest and involvement in the greater Auckland area. Our strategic vision for the region is as follows, which ties into our national Forest & Bird strategic objectives:

- **Climate Centred:** Auckland is resilient to the impacts of climate change. Any activities or developments in the region must actively mitigate their contribution to climate change. Aucklanders understand the threat and urgency of climate change and are supported in climate change practices.
- **Economy that Supports Nature:** Auckland's local economy and nature are interconnected. Unhealthy nature, equals an unhealthy economy.
- **Vibrant Landscapes:** Auckland's terrestrial native flora and fauna are protected and enhanced in urban and rural areas. Auckland's landscapes are free from pests. Development can occur without clearing and destroying landscapes and their respective ecosystems.
- **Oceans Alive:** Aucklanders recognise the health of the marine environment is a direct result of on-land activities. Auckland's three main harbours (Manukau, Waitematā and Kaipara) return to their original, healthy states. Fishing and aquaculture activities follow ecosystem-based management principles. Thirty percent of Auckland's marine environment is protected through a network of no-take marine protected areas.
- **Energised Water, Rivers and Wetlands:** Auckland's rivers and streams are clean, healthy and teeming with life. Wetlands are protected and enhanced.

## 2. Submission

2.1. Firstly, we wish to highlight and emphasize the Auckland Plan's 2050 Environment and Cultural Heritage Direction 2: Apply a Māori world view to treasure and protect our natural environment (taonga tuku iho) specifically to *“embed these concepts into our thinking and decision-making supporting a focus on the interrelationships between the natural environment and people”*. The current consultation document presents all key issues as isolated from one another and no emphasis has been put on exploring the interrelationships between each. For example:

2.1.1. We propose that the long term plan treats key issue 2 (*responding to climate change*) and key issue 5 (*protecting and enhancing our environment*) as interconnected issues. If one issue is not addressed, the other will not be achieved. All environmental issues are, in effect, climate change issues and it is important for Aucklanders that this is emphasized,

2.1.2. We propose that the long term plan accounts for the investments into environmental regulation/climate change initiatives having direct benefit to all other key issues outlined and the links should be acknowledged, and

2.1.3. We propose that linkages are highlighted between the Natural Environment Targeted Rate and Water Quality Targeted Rate as both are interconnected (e.g., improvement of management of priority native habitats will have benefit for water quality - water quality requires a 'whole-system' approach and it is important Aucklanders acknowledge and understand this). The two rates do not operate in isolation and for clarity and efficiency we propose that there is only one rate for the region (e.g., the Water Quality Targeted Rate is incorporated into the Natural Environment Targeted Rate).

2.2. Forest & Bird supports the proposal to extend and increase the Water Quality Targeted Rate until June 2031 for the ongoing funding of construction projects around the Manukau Harbour, Tāmaki Estuary and along the beaches between Parnell and Glendowie, and funding of additional litter traps, we further propose that:

2.2.1. Some funding is allocated for research around how green infrastructure and water sensitive designs could be used to further manage pollution entering the marine environment whilst providing access to more greenspace and biodiversity (green infrastructure) and mitigate the issues at the root (water sensitive designs),

2.2.2. At present, Auckland is one of the regions with the greatest number of wetlands lost or declining, according to Environment Aotearoa's 2019 [reporting series](#). Increasing wetland area is a natural way to increase water quality in the marine environment as wetlands naturally filter contaminants and pollutants from on land activities. Funding should be set aside from this targeted rate to protect, enhance, and expand existing wetlands in the region,

2.2.3. We propose that some funding is allocated for a litter education programme – installing litter traps is considered a 'band-aid' which fails to address the root cause of the issue – Aucklanders behaviours around littering. Litter traps must go hand-in-hand with education programmes. Stricter regulation and enforcement is needed to stop the issue at its source,

2.2.4. Auckland has seen the largest urban expansion and land fragmentation in comparison to the rest of New Zealand, according to Environment Aotearoa's 2019 [reporting series](#). The Auckland Plan 2050's development strategy anticipates that 40.0 percent of new dwellings will be built outside of the existing urban area, and the Auckland Unitary Plan identifies approximately 15,000 hectares of rural land for future urbanisation as outlined

in the [Auckland Future Urban Land Supply Strategy](#). We use this opportunity to stress the importance of future urban areas adopting best practice infrastructure to mitigate the issues of which the Water Quality Targeted Rate is now being used for to remedy, for example, integration of green infrastructure and water sensitive design mentioned in point 2.2.1.,

2.2.5. Alongside the construction projects listed, we highlight that better guidance and stricter controls are required for sediment run-off and management given that this is the key issue for water quality and ecosystem health in the Hauraki Gulf and Manukau Harbour and thus must be emphasised alongside construction projects as equal importance, and

2.2.6. We propose that the rate is not necessarily restricted to water quality and that further funding toward education for the general public is allocated of the importance of water conservation so less pressure is placed on reservoirs, aquifers and sewage systems and encouragement of re-use of greywater to avoid undermining the life-supporting capacity of rivers and groundwater.

2.3. Forest & Bird supports the proposal to extend the Natural Environment Targeted Rate until June 2031, we further propose that:

2.3.1. More of the funding is allocated to education programmes around importance each of the specified objectives outlined e.g., public information campaigns, etc. Given the outcomes rely heavily on individual actions, emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring individuals understand, and have the knowledge and tools to contribute to the effectiveness of the objectives,

2.3.2. According to the recent report – [The health of Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland's natural environment in 2020](#) – several forest ecosystem types are severely depleted and many of our remaining forests are small and fragmented and urban landscapes have more weeds and fewer native plant species. We highlight the importance of the rate being used to increase ecological corridors, protecting private land with high value biodiversity, improved management of priority native habitats and increased pest management,

2.3.3. The Plan should include explicit reference to, and commitment to fund Auckland Council's Regional Pest Management Plan – which is critical for protecting and enhancing Auckland's native flora and fauna which is currently one of the largest risks to Auckland's natural environment,

2.3.4. Higher priority is given to biodiversity recovery programmes with heightened commitment to fund implementation of the Auckland Biodiversity Strategy, for example, the most optimistic funding proposal would only see a quarter of threatened species under active management,

2.3.5. Forest & Bird branches stress the importance of on-going adequate funding for development of community-based biodiversity strategies and biodiversity supporting projects (e.g., Kelp Gardeners, Native Bird Rescue) that can foster community engagement and increase Aucklanders connections to nature which translate to both sustainability and health and wellbeing outcomes – it is important that funding for community based initiatives are not sacrificed, and

2.3.6. We further highlight the lack of reference to marine protection and restoration in the plan, and specifically no funding allocated from this rate toward restoration programmes of the marine environment (e.g., restoring mussel beds, etc.). This is a significant oversight particularly given the link between health of marine environments and climate change mitigation which is a key focus in the plan.

- 2.4. Forest & Bird supports all additional actions proposed under responding to key issue two - climate change. This is necessary to address the climate emergency that has been declared for New Zealand by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on 2 December 2020.
- 2.5. Forest & Bird supports alternative one – a larger investment package of \$320 million to significantly accelerate climate action work. Alongside the key areas identified, Forest & Bird proposes:
- 2.5.1. More funding allocated to education programmes focusing on why climate change is a threat to Aucklanders and what individual decisions and actions can be made to mitigate climate change, and
- 2.5.2. The link between healthy ecosystems and carbon sequestration is emphasized so that programmes contributing to healthy ecosystems are seen as being beneficial to climate change mitigation. Therefore, projects which undermine the health of an ecosystem are undermining the investment package of \$320 million.
- 2.6. For any further questions relating to the contents of this submission, please contact me below.

Nāku noa iti, nā,



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