

Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy

1 June 2021

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Cover image: Rakaia River Braid, South Canterbury. Credit: Kira Volkov

Background

Purpose

This strategy is a guide for our people at Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand; it is not a statutory document. It sets out our aspirational goals of how we will manage biosecurity and protect biodiversity on Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land, to seek better outcomes for New Zealanders, visitors, and future generations. It also outlines how we will implement this strategy, alongside our Treaty partners and national, regional, and local stakeholders.



Toitū Te Whenua and Waikato Regional Council staff at a geothermal restoration site. Treated wilding conifers are seen in the background. Wairakei area, Central North Island, 25 February 2021.

Our context

Toitū Te Whenua provides high value property and geographic information, manages Crown Property, and supports the government in decision-making regarding foreign ownership. As a manager of land information and Crown land, biosecurity and biodiversity are both very important to us.

Toitū Te Whenua manages 2 million hectares of land, including the Waikato River, South Island braided rivers and glacial lakes, and the iconic South Island high country. This land contains some of Aotearoa New Zealand's most threatened species and habitats, is of significant economic and cultural value, and attracts high recreational use and tourist numbers. As a Crown agency, Toitū Te Whenua is tasked with managing this land to ensure it is protected and used in line with our country's long-term interests, which includes responsibility for conducting biosecurity control work and protecting biodiversity values.

Our land is increasingly threatened by the spread of pests and weeds, which alter landscapes, reduce biodiversity, impact farming production, and prevent people from enjoying our natural environment. The people of Aotearoa New Zealand rely on our land for leisure and cultural pursuits, and the resources that our environment provides. The Crown land we steward includes 1.2 million hectares of South Island high country. This land offers some of the country's most unique farming environments, which requires a balance of economic activity and the impact to environmental and cultural values. As well as an environmental impact, pests and weeds like broom and gorse impact the economic viability of farming and our ability to compete globally; and aquatic lakeweeds impact the operations of power generating lakes in the South Island, a resource that underpins our ambition for greater renewable electricity generation. Changes in land and water use, climate change and other emerging threats place further pressures on our indigenous biodiversity and also need to be considered. As pests, weeds and other environmental threats do not respect property boundary lines, their management requires collaboration among government organisations, iwi/rūnanga, farming lessees, landowners and communities. Bold, collective action is required to enhance our biosecurity and counteract the ongoing decline of our indigenous biodiversity. This will protect the unique natural values of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Biosecurity partners

Aotearoa New Zealand's biosecurity system operates within central and regional levels of government and is supported by industry, community groups and non-governmental organisations.

The Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) is the lead agency for the national biosecurity system and administers the Biosecurity Act 1993. The Act covers research of potential threats before they reach our borders, how our borders are managed to exclude them, and how they are managed after they reach New Zealand. MPI lead the pre-border and border biosecurity operational work. Any threats that have already reached New Zealand are managed by MPI at a national level, but MPI may devolve responsibility of established pest species to regional councils, as outlined in the Biosecurity Act. Regional and unitary councils chose to enact their responsibilities largely through regional pest management plans (RPMPs), which outline how the region's pest species should be managed and to what standard. There are many other agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency, who have roles and responsibilities in the areas they administer.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) also performs biosecurity operations but with the aim of preserving indigenous biodiversity under legislation such as the Conservation Act 1987 and the Reserves Act 1977. DOC also administers legislation relevant to biosecurity such as the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. Like Toitū Te Whenua, DOC are large landholders but manage public conservation land, which has specifically been protected for the purpose of biodiversity conservation. This land totals around one-third of Aotearoa New Zealand's land area.

Iwi, as Treaty partners to the Crown, have a unique role as tangata whenua and kaitiaki (guardians) of their rohe (territory). This includes management of natural resources.

Obligations

As a manager of Crown land, Toitū Te Whenua administers the Land Act 1948 and Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998, which includes high country pastoral leases and many riverbeds and lakebeds. A large proportion of this land is managed on our behalf by leaseholders in long-term pastoral leases and biosecurity responsibilities of any leased land falls upon the lessee. We do take an interest in being stewards for this land in the long term and work with leaseholders to help them with better monitoring and information sharing of pest presence and impact on Crown land.

At a national level, as a Crown agency we work with MPI and DOC to support national biosecurity and biodiversity priorities, policies, and strategies. We do this primarily by leveraging our agency's strength to collect, manage and analyse geospatial data to produce valuable information to help the Crown make informed decisions about how to manage land, its biodiversity, and biosecurity threats. To ensure our internal strategic approach aligns with the national direction, our Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy was created in alignment with MPI's biosecurity strategy¹, Te Mana o Te Taiao - the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020², and relevant national policy statements under the Resource Management Act (RMA, Figure 1).

Toitū Te Whenua acknowledges the importance of Māori and iwi relationships with the land, and their place as tāngata whenua. We realise we have the potential to contribute to better outcomes for Māori through our land management and protecting their interests in Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land. This can only be achieved by effectively partnering with Māori.

Regionally, we work with councils where we have landholdings and align our biosecurity practices with their RPMPs to support regional biosecurity goals. As a Crown agency, we are required to abide by good neighbour rules set out in RPMPs. As funding allows, we look to prioritise sites where we go beyond compliance for the purpose of avoiding future non-compliance with RPMP rules; protecting high ecological, cultural and social values; supporting existing coordinated control operations or joint management plans; aligning with current Ministerial and government priorities. To inform our strategic direction and prioritisation, we consider regional biodiversity strategies and iwi management plans that identify opportunities for partnerships, and we also look for opportunities to partner with the private sector, industry groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to achieve mutual goals.

¹ Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement for New Zealand's Biosecurity System, Ministry of Primary Industries, November 2016

² Te Mana o Te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, Department of Conservation, August 2020

Internally, the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy aligns with our Toitū Te Whenua Kaupapa and Outcomes Framework, the Crown Property Strategy, and other internal strategies and guidelines.



Figure 1: Context of the Toitū Te Whenua Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy.

Our Strategy sits under relevant national statutory documents. Regionally, we are primarily guided by RPMPs, but are also looking to align with priorities and risks identified by regional stakeholders, biodiversity strategies, and iwi management plans to achieve mutual goals. Within Toitū Te Whenua, our Strategy is aligned with our Outcomes Framework, our Kaupapa, and other internal strategies and guidelines, such as the Crown Property Strategy.

Vision

The Toitū Te Whenua purpose is to understand, develop, and care for whenua, moana and arawai. To give effect to this purpose, the vision of our Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy is to ensure that Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land, including the waterways and land we administer, is in the best environmental state possible.

Our Strategy

We aim to realise our Strategy's vision by pursuing the following strategic goals and their associated objectives.

Goal 1: Proactive and effective land management

Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land is managed proactively and effectively to protect its economic, social, environmental, and cultural values from harm caused by invasive species and other pressures that threaten our indigenous biodiversity. By shifting our focus from biosecurity intervention for compliance purposes to intervention driven by biodiversity outcomes, we contribute to the enhancement of our nation's wellbeing and the preservation of global biodiversity.

Objectives

- 1 We will have the in-house capability and capacity to enable us to deliver our functional role as a land manager and as a Crown agency.
- 2 We will engage regionally and locally to manage and monitor the biosecurity and biodiversity work conducted on Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land.
- 3 We will implement ecological system-focused biosecurity and biodiversity work programmes.
- 4 We will create and implement a prioritisation framework that supports our decision making for biosecurity and biodiversity-related work.
- 5 We will create and implement a risk assessment model that considers the impact of emerging threats to the land we manage.

Goal 2: Data excellence for informed decision making

Data is collected, managed, and processed to produce valuable information on Crown land, which supports the planning and prioritisation of biosecurity control work, biodiversity protection and restoration. By leveraging our capability and capacity in geospatial asset management, Toitū Te Whenua plays a pivotal role in the coordination and management of data and information, supporting biosecurity and biodiversity programmes conducted by national, regional, and local partners.

Objectives

- 1 We will become a functional leader in the collection, utilisation, and visualisation of geospatial information to support national, regional and local biosecurity and biodiversity programmes.
- 2 We will implement a surveillance and monitoring programme to prioritise and justify our biosecurity and biodiversity investments.

Goal 3: Empowering connections and partnerships

Our services are organised flexibly, partnering with relevant central and local government organisations, iwi/rūnanga, and community groups, to ensure that the best biodiversity outcomes can be achieved across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Objectives

- 1 We will collaborate with other Crown agencies to provide input into national biosecurity and biodiversity strategic goals and policies.
- 2 We will collaborate with relevant councils to understand local and regional priorities, and where these can align with Toitū Te Whenua priorities.
- 3 We will engage with community groups, industry, and the private sector supporting and enabling them to be stewards of Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land.
- 4 We will contribute to large landscape scale biosecurity and biodiversity programmes to ensure the best biodiversity outcomes across Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 5 We will have a flexible service delivery model that includes the most appropriate mix of partners and service providers. This will create mutually beneficial partnerships and influence the effectiveness of the investments that we make.
- 6 We will support the community's understanding of our functional role, and mandate as a Crown agency and land manager.

Goal 4: Partnering with Māori as kaitiaki and as having mana whenua

We work with our Treaty partners in our programme development to ensure that Māori and iwi interests in Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land are incorporated into our work, which enables better outcomes for Māori.

Objectives

- 1 We will meaningfully engage with mana whenua, to offer long-standing relationships and opportunities for collaboration.
- 2 We will offer knowledge sharing and support to iwi, to build capacity and capability and support them in their aspirations as kaitiaki.
- 3 Where deemed appropriate by mana whenua, we will reflect Māori values in the work we do.

Our Strategy implementation

While the Strategy is owned by the Biosecurity and Biodiversity group, it is meant to guide our entire agency's approach to biosecurity and biodiversity on Toitū Te Whenua-managed Crown land. It is expected to endure as a long-term strategy for up to 30 years, alongside Te Mana o Te Taiao the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, but we recognise that our Strategy and resulting plans will remain living documents that are reviewed and adjusted over time as we monitor our progress and follow national guidance. Our Strategy is based on the purpose, vision and goals outlined in this document and is realised through our in-house capability (Figure 2). It will inform the creation of various sub-strategies for specific work programmes, such as our Strategic Management Area Plans (SMAPs), which set out our medium-term strategic approach to managing key ecological systems such as priority braided rivers, rivers, and lakes over 5-10 year timeframes.

The Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy and its sub-strategies will be implemented through 2-5 year action plans. Each action plan will break down our Strategy's goals into time-dependent milestones and measurable indicators will be used to monitor progress towards these milestones. The development of action plans will include collaboration with a range of stakeholders such as government agencies, iwi/rūnanga and community groups, and will consider national and regional priorities to leverage partnerships and achieve common goals. At the completion of each action plan, a review of our progress will be conducted to assess the action plan's success and new national guidance will be considered to determine if our Strategy, and any sub-strategies, are still fit for purpose (Figure 3).

Our Strategy and action plans will provide guidance for us to develop a suitable service delivery model and an operational plan (OP) that translates our strategic goals into action on the ground. Our workstreams include: the data and information workstream; an aquatic work programme; a terrestrial work programme; and our strategic projects which we conduct in partnership with a range of stakeholders such as our Treaty partners, other agencies, and community groups.

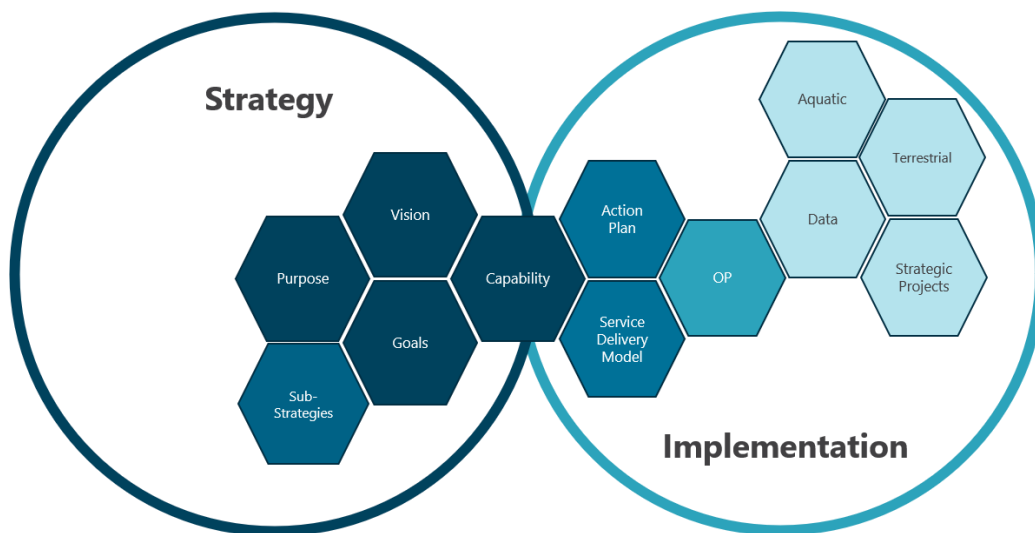


Figure 2: Connection between the Toitū Te Whenua Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy and the implementation of Toitū Te Whenua's related work programmes.

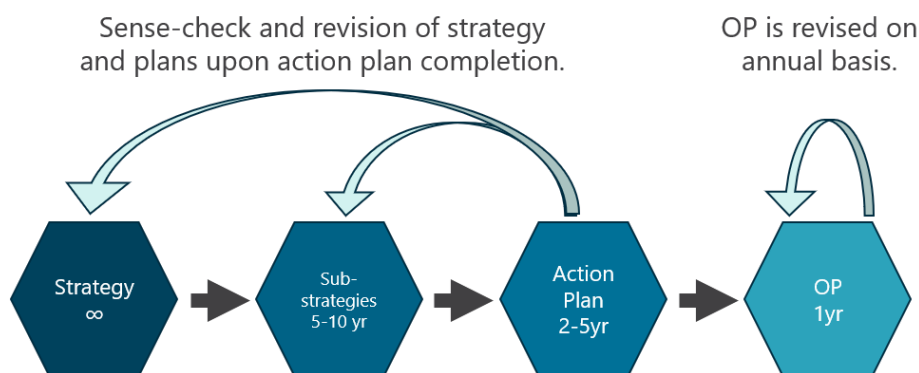


Figure 3: Toitū Te Whenua Biosecurity and Biodiversity Strategy and plan review cycle.

Regular reviews allow for an agile approach. The Strategy is designed to be a high-level enduring document, which informs sub-strategies such as our medium-term SMAPs, and our short-term action plans which feed into the creation of our operational plan. Our operational plan is revised on an annual basis. Upon completion of an action plan, we sense-check and revise our Strategy and associated plans to ensure they are still relevant and in line with national guidance and our lessons learned.