

National Party

1. Public Access to Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands

1. Will your party ensure public access to rivers and lakes is preserved and enhanced when land is subdivided, sold to an overseas owner, and conservation land is reclassified?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. Yes. Where legal access to rivers, lakes, and hunting opportunities has been provided for we expect that to be upheld. National implemented the Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation Land and Waters to ensure that recreational hunting and fishing on public conservation land and waters is recognised and safeguarded for current and future generations. It balances the rights and responsibilities of recreational users with the imperative to conserve New Zealand's natural heritage. We will place an expectation on other agencies that have an interest in landholdings and access to also adhere to the principles and commitments in the Charter. Where conservation land is reclassified, maintaining access to hunting and fishing opportunities will be a key requirement of any reclassification.

2. How will your party support the work of the Outdoor Access Commission, including getting new and restored public access for fishing and hunting?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. We will continue the multi-party approach to resolving access issues by ensuring the Minister for Hunting and Fishing's office takes a lead role in bringing together hunting and fishing organisations, such as NZDA and Fish and Game, with the Outdoor Access Commission, DOC, councils and other government agencies to find solutions to access disputes. The Minister for Hunting and Fishing's office is actively working on a number of access issues to find solutions which maintain or enhance access. We will also continue to support additional upland game preserves to provide more game bird hunting opportunities, support sensible freshwater game fishing regulations (such as increasing or decreasing bag limits where relevant) to ensure stronger numbers, and reform Fish and Game to focus more on maintaining and enhancing wetlands and game bird habitats. We will require the Game Bird Habitat Trust to be more proactive in supporting more hunting and fishing opportunities from the money raised through the game bird stamp. We will continue to support funding for organisations like the Backcountry Hut Trust to maintain and upgrade public huts.

2. Fishing and Game Bird Hunting Traditions

3. Does your party value our fishing and game bird hunting traditions and the benefits they bring to Kiwis - and what policies do you have to support people to go fishing and hunting?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. Absolutely. New Zealand's fishing and game bird hunting traditions are an important part of who we are. They connect people with the outdoors, bring families and communities together, support regional economies, and play a significant role in conservation. For many New Zealanders, opening weekend, a day on the river, or time spent in the maimai is a tradition passed down through generations. National values these traditions and recognises that hunters and anglers are some of our strongest conservation advocates. Hunters contribute directly to pest control and habitat management, while licence fees and volunteer effort help fund and support wetlands, waterways, and game bird populations across the country. Our focus is on ensuring these opportunities remain available and accessible for future generations. That means maintaining healthy fish and game habitats, investing in predator and wild animal control where it benefits ecosystems and recreational opportunities, improving access to public land and waterways, and ensuring regulations are practical, evidence-based, and proportionate. We have also backed significant investment in controlling wilding pines and other threats to New Zealand's landscapes, helping protect the habitats that support both game birds and recreational hunting. We continue to support a strong partnership with Fish & Game

and hunting organisations to ensure decisions are informed by the people who spend time on the land and water.

4. Will your party ensure freshwater frameworks continue to recognise and protect valued introduced species like trout and salmon, as well as game birds?

Yes. There are many animals present in New Zealand, introduced over time, that have special value to New Zealanders. These species have unique recreational, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits to society. These species are not pests and have a special cultural and social place in the biodiversity of New Zealand's ecosystem. Valued introduced species have been recognised as a specific category of animal in official Government documents such as the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, highlighting that non-indigenous species, when managed well, have a place in New Zealand's ecosystem. National has drafted legislation to formally recognise valued introduced species in legislation. The Valued Introduced Species Legislation Amendment Bill provides a statutory definition of what is considered to be a valued introduced species, states that the Department must ensure the sustainable management of valued introduced species for recreational, economic, environmental, or cultural purposes, and excludes valued introduced species from the general requirement in the conservation framework to exterminate introduced plants and animals.

5. Does your party think valued introduced species like trout and salmon should be provided for in legislation defining ecosystem health?

See above answer to question 4. There are many animals present in New Zealand, introduced over time, that have special value to New Zealanders. These species have unique recreational, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits to society. These species are not pests and have a special cultural and social place in the biodiversity of New Zealand's ecosystem. Valued introduced species have been recognised as a specific category of animal in official Government documents such as the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, highlighting that non-indigenous species, when managed well, have a place in New Zealand's ecosystem. National has drafted legislation to formally recognise valued introduced species in legislation. The Valued Introduced Species Legislation Amendment Bill provides a statutory definition of what is considered to be a valued introduced species, states that the Department must ensure the sustainable management of valued introduced species for recreational, economic, environmental, or cultural purposes, and excludes valued introduced species from the general requirement in the conservation framework to exterminate introduced plants and animals.

6. What is your party's position on recognising the importance of trout and salmon habitats when setting environmental thresholds?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. We recognise the importance of trout and salmon habitats when setting environmental thresholds. Our resource management, planning and environmental legislation factors in that importance in balance with other relevant considerations, including health of the waterway and habitat, economic value of both freshwater fish species and other uses of the waterway and habitat (including irrigation, drinking water, electricity generation, water storage, recreational use and economic development, and social and cultural benefits).

3. Wetland Protection and Restoration

7. What is your party going to do to support the protection, restoration and creation of wetlands?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. Wetlands are some of New Zealand's most valuable ecosystems. They improve water quality, reduce flood risk, store carbon, provide habitat for native species, and support the game bird populations that many hunters value. We support a practical approach that combines environmental outcomes with local knowledge and community action. We want to see continued protection of significant natural wetlands while making it easier for landowners, iwi, community groups, councils, and organisations such as Fish & Game New Zealand to undertake restoration and enhancement projects. We will invest in freshwater and biodiversity outcomes through programmes that improve water quality, control pests and predators, and restore habitat. We will reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers that can make wetland restoration projects difficult or expensive to

undertake, particularly where the outcome is a net environmental gain, by reforming legislation like the Resource Management Act, the Conservation Act and the Crown Pastoral Land Act. Many of New Zealand's most successful wetland projects have been driven by local partnerships between farmers, hunters, conservation groups, iwi, and councils. We want to encourage more of that work by ensuring funding programmes are targeted toward practical on-the-ground results and by recognising the contribution private landowners make when they protect or restore habitat on their own properties. We will continue to reform Fish and Game New Zealand to allow them to focus more on wetland restoration and habitat outcomes, and less on bureaucracy and administration.

8. What is your party's position on permitted activities for wetland maintenance, restoration, and creation?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. National's direction under the freshwater and RMA reform programme has been to make wetland maintenance, restoration and creation easier, not harder, while continuing to protect significant natural wetlands. Our 2025 freshwater reform consultation specifically proposed amending the freshwater regulations to make the creation and maintenance of wetlands a permitted activity, and to introduce new permitted activity standards for activities associated with wetland construction. It also proposed new policy direction to actively encourage wetland creation and edge-of-field mitigation projects. Reducing burdensome on-farm and on-land compliance and regulatory costs will provide more resources for landowners to invest in wetland restoration, as we have seen in examples around the country, particularly in the South Island high country.

9. What funding and/or support would your party provide for wetland restoration and creation programmes, including those delivered through Fish & Game and hunter-landowner partnerships?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. The International Visitor's Levy funding will be available for conservation projects that support wetland restoration and creation. Introducing charges for parts of the DOC estate for international tourists creates revenue which DOC can use for visitor infrastructure, but also for enhancing conservation values. Creating a leaner, more efficient Fish and Game through our reforms will free up more licence holder fees for investment into wetland restoration. Encouraging more fishing activity in general will bring economic growth to the regions and help local businesses and workers grow, generating more income to invest back into wetlands and fish habitats.

4. Sports Fish and Game Management Plans

10. What is your party's position on having regard to Sports Fish and Game Management Plans in plan-making and consenting decisions under resource management legislation?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. The RMA reform legislation as introduced did not contain specific provisions to have regards to Sports Fish and Game Management Plans, and at the time of responding to these questions, the select committee had not yet reported back on its consideration of the legislation. We support the enhancement of game bird hunting and sports fishing opportunities in New Zealand, but will wait and see what the Environment Select Committee recommends before making any further decisions.

11. What is your party's position on consulting Fish & Game in the preparation of policy, standards and frameworks that may affect the habitat of trout, salmon and game birds?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. We support engagement with all relevant stakeholders on change that may affect sports fish and game bird habitats, including Fish and Game as the statutory manager of game birds and sports fish in New Zealand. As Fish and Game remains an independent entity at arms-length from the Government, initial preparation of policy remains at the discretion of the relevant government agency. As Minister of Hunting and Fishing I work closely with Fish and Game on any policy which is relevant to their operations and to licence holders.

12. What is your party's position on Fish & Game New Zealand's status as an affected party in resource management plan-making and resource consent processes?

Our full hunting and fishing policy will be confirmed closer to the election. The RMA reform legislation as introduced did not specifically list Fish and Game as an affected party. At the time of responding to these questions, the select committee had not yet reported back on its consideration of the legislation. We support Fish and Game having a proactive role in helping to shape resource management legislation through the select committee process, and having input into resource management plan-making, when it directly impacts on game bird and freshwater fish habitats.

5. Water Conservation Orders

13. Will your party retain Water Conservation Orders and, if so, how will you ensure they are complied with?

The RMA reforms as introduced retain Water Conservation Orders (WCOs) and clarify that Regional Council have responsibility to monitor WCOs. New WCOs can be created, subject to the scope set in the Natural Environment Bill. The Bills retain the recently strengthened compliance and enforcement provisions from the RMA, including increased fines, improved cost recovery to fund monitoring, and simplified enforcement tools. We support this approach as introduced but await the Environment Select Committee's reports on how this process could be improved.

14. What is your party's position on the process for establishing new Water Conservation Orders?

The process for establishing new Water Conservation Orders is set out in schedule 4 of the Natural Environment Bill as introduced. In short: A person may apply to the Minister to make a Water Conservation Order. The Minister must either appoint a special tribunal to hear and report on the application, or reject the application. The Special Tribunal considers the application, including receiving submissions from the public, and give notice of its decision. The Special Tribunal's decision can be appealed to the Environment Court on points of law. If the Special Tribunal recommends making the WCO, the Minister can either reject the recommendation (and set out why) or recommend the making of the WCO via order in Council. We support this process as introduced but await the Environment Select Committee's reports on how this process could be improved.

6. Fish & Game's Statutory Role

16. What is your party's position on Fish & Game's statutory mandate to manage sports fish and game birds in the interests of anglers and game bird hunters?

We support Fish & Game's statutory mandate to manage sports fish and game birds, and would create a new Fish and Game Council Act to strengthen this mandate and the delivery of services to the hunting and fishing community.

17. What is your party's position on Fish & Game's freshwater advocacy role?

We support Fish & Game maintaining an advocacy role within sensible boundaries. As a statutory body, their advocacy should be mindful of the policies of the Government of the day, and should be aligned across the country as much as possible. We would require Fish and Game to maintain national policies on advocacy, encourage Fish and Game to limit spending licence fee money on unnecessary litigation and instead focus on habitat maintenance and restoration, and would require notification and approval of intended legal action by the National Council or Minister as appropriate.