

New Zealand First

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?

We will ensure that public access is protected because our party is committed to protecting New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage for all citizens. We specifically guarantee free access to the conservation estate for all New Zealanders.

Our approach is that subdivision, overseas ownership changes, and conservation land reclassification should trigger explicit consideration of public access, with default expectations that existing access is retained and opportunities for new access are explored, particularly where Fish & Game access points already exist.

We support using conditions on consents, covenants, esplanade reserves/strips, and access easements to secure enduring public access while respecting legitimate property rights.

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

We support the restoration and maintenance of access because we believe the preservation and enhancement of the environment is sound economics. We advocate for the sustainable management of wilderness areas for all users.

Specifically, we encourage local governments to utilise community wage schemes for the beautification and maintenance of waterways and beaches, ensuring these areas remain accessible and inviting for recreation.

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?

We highly value these traditions as they are a vital part of our national identity. To support participation, we advocate for sensible firearms laws that encourage safe and continued use. We also support the Game Animal Council, which was formed to oversee the management of major game species.

Crucially, we remain firmly opposed to any licensing system for recreational saltwater fishers.

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

We will ensure these species are protected because we recognise that introduced game species are now endemic to New Zealand. It is our stated position that they should be managed through sustainable hunting rather than eradication.

Through our coalition agreement, we have committed to replace National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 and the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater to better reflect the interests of all water users, including those who value sports fish and game.

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

We support an evidence-based approach to managing these species within our ecosystems. We believe that sustainable populations of species like browsing quadrupeds and by extension, managed game are essential to the ongoing health and regeneration of our natural environments.

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

We believe habitat protection is critical, which is why we have made addressing the pollution of streams, rivers, and beaches an absolute priority.

Our policy supports Farm Environment Plans administered at a catchment-by-catchment level by Regional Councils, allowing for thresholds that protect specific local habitats.

3. Wetland Protection and Restoration

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

We will actively support these efforts by assisting landowners in creating wetlands, supporting riparian planting, and fencing off waterways to improve overall river quality.

This includes but is not limited to supporting local government contestable funds where councils and landowners share costs for these initiatives and funding environmental programmes similar to Jobs for Nature.

We also advocate for the catchment level management and preservation of wetlands for all users.

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

We believe in slashing red tape and regulatory blocks that hinder environmental and infrastructure improvements.

Our goal is to ensure the planning system is responsive to the needs of environmental initiatives and not unnecessarily restricted by bureaucracy.

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?

We provide support through initiatives like Jobs for Nature and by establishing the Regional Infrastructure Fund with \$1.2 billion in capital for regional projects of significance.

We also support new initiatives for community groups, iwi, and conservation groups to participate directly in conservation projects.

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?

We support a planning system that is responsive to local needs.

We support retaining and strengthening the requirement for planning and consenting authorities to 'have regard to' Sports Fish and Game Management Plans.

These plans are statutory documents under the Conservation Act and represent the considered, science-based management approach of a user-funded body representing 175,000 licence holders.

With current RMA reform underway, it remains to be seen how it would affect decision making.

New Zealand First would support:

- Explicit reference to these plans in national direction; and
- A duty on councils and consent authorities to demonstrate how they have considered relevant Sports Fish and Game Management Plans in their 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?

We are committed to wide public and stakeholder consultation. Our policy is to take account of the views of key stakeholders when making environmental policy to ensure a balanced and pragmatic outcome.

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?

While we aim to reduce gross excessive time and costs by consolidating duplicate submissions, we recognise that the planning process must allow for adequate representation by community organisations to ensure all affected parties are heard.

5. Water Conservation Orders

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

We support the active management of rivers and flood protection, and by extension all extraordinary water bodies.

While our primary focus is to have laws and rules to reflect the interests of all water users, we remain dedicated to an evidence-based approach to protecting our most valued water bodies.

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

We support a robust but accessible process for establishing new WCOs.

Our position is that the threshold of “outstanding” values should remain high but clearly defined and consistently applied.

The process should allow thorough engagement with decisions grounded in strong science and evidence.

Timeframes should be reasonable and certain, avoiding unnecessary delay while ensuring proper scrutiny.

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 pragmatic, common-sense decision-making regarding New Zealand's resources. We support all statutory bodies' role in overseeing their respective game species and believe they are essential for successful resource management.

However, jurisdictional boundaries between DOC, councils, and game councils (like NZ Fish & Game) need to be made clearer.

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

We believe that government and industry should work together to achieve better environmental outcomes.

We value advocacy that is evidence-based and aimed at creating sustainable wealth while improving our competitive advantage through a healthy environment.

We strongly support Fish & Game's freshwater advocacy role. This advocacy is a practical expression of our own principle that “wise governments view the preservation and enhancement of the environment as sound economics.”

Additional Comments

New Zealand First's fifth pillar: “self-sufficiency and pragmatic environmentalism” underpins our approach to freshwater, fisheries and outdoor recreation.

We believe that protecting rivers, lakes and wetlands is not only an environmental duty but also an economic opportunity for New Zealand.

We support simplifying and improving the Resource Management Act while ensuring strong environmental safeguards, clear property rights, and meaningful roles for communities, iwi and statutory bodies like Fish & Game.