



Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee

Minute of Decision

McGuinness Institute title:
[ENV-22-MIN-0040] Emissions
Reduction Plan: Resource
Management Proposals to Manage
Exotic Afforestation: Release of
Discussion Document

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Emissions Reduction Plan: Resource Management Proposals to Manage Exotic Afforestation: Release of Discussion Document

Portfolio Environment / Agriculture / Forestry / Climate Change

On 22 September 2022, the Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee:

Background

- 1 **noted** that the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry) Regulations 2017 (NES-PF) provide national direction, under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), setting most of the rules to manage environmental effects associated with plantation forestry, and do not apply to permanent exotic forests;
 - 2 **noted** that a review of the NES-PF completed in 2020 found that technical amendments to the regulations could be made to improve environmental outcomes;
 - 3 **noted** that in February 2022, the Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee (ENV) agreed to:
 - 3.1 amend the NES-PF to include permanent exotic afforestation;
 - 3.2 consult on options to make national direction under the resource management system to allow for local discretion on the location of new afforestation based on both socio-economic and environmental grounds
- [ENV-22-MIN-0004]
- 4 **noted** that the Emissions Reduction Plan included a commitment to consult during 2022 on options to increase awareness of forest fire risk and improve planning for fire management (Action 14.5);

Problem

- 5 **noted** that increased exotic afforestation – particularly permanent forests – in recent years has prompted concerns about its long-term effects and risks to local and/or regional economies, communities, and the environment;
- 6 **noted** that the lack of national standards for managing the environmental effects of permanent exotic forests is resulting in varied approaches being taken to manage the effects of these forests;

Consultation

- 7 **noted** that the Minister for the Environment has decided, as required under section 46A(3)(b) of the Resource Management Act 1991, to establish and follow a process for amending the NES-PF that includes consultation with public and iwi authorities, which requires the Minister to provide notice, adequate time and opportunity to the public and iwi authorities to make a submission;
- 8 **noted** that the discussion document entitled *National direction for plantation and exotic carbon afforestation*, attached as Appendix 2 to the submission under ENV-22-SUB-0040 (the discussion document) outlines proposals, in four parts, to amend the NES-PF to:
- 8.1 manage the biophysical effects of permanent exotic (carbon) forestry (Part A);
 - 8.2 control the location of plantation and exotic carbon afforestation to manage social, cultural, and economic effects (Part B);
 - 8.3 improve wildfire risk management in all exotic forests (Part C);
 - 8.4 address key findings of the Year One Review of the NES-PF (Part D);
- 9 **authorised** the Minister for the Environment, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Forestry, and Associate Minister for the Environment (joint Ministers) to make minor and editorial amendments to the discussion document, including to align the content with any Cabinet decisions on the next steps for the permanent forest category of the NZ ETS;
- 10 **agreed** to the release of the discussion document for a minimum of six weeks public consultation subject to any minor, editorial or technical changes that may be authorised by joint Ministers before its release;
- 11 **authorised** joint Ministers to approve the publication of supporting documents that provide technical detail of the proposed regulatory amendments;

Announcement

- 12 **agreed** to joint Ministers making an announcement about the above proposals at an appropriate time;
- 13 **agreed** that the announcement will align with the communication of any Cabinet decisions on the permanent forest category in the NZ ETS, given the close relationship of these two workstreams;

Risks

- 14 **noted** that Māori and Iwi could potentially be disproportionately affected by the proposals due to their large ownership of forestry land, or land that is well suited to forestry, and their Treaty/Tiriti rights be impacted;
- 15 **noted** that the proposed engagement will enable joint Ministers to better understand the effects and impacts for Māori and Iwi and to advise on options;
- 16 **noted** that the potential requirement for a resource consent to plant forests has implications for councils, commercial forestry, wood production, meeting emissions budgets and targets, and development of the bioeconomy;

- 17 **invited** the joint Ministers to report back to ENV in February 2023 with finalised policy proposals.

Rebecca Davies
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Grant Robertson (Chair)
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Kiri Allan
Hon Phil Twyford
Hon James Shaw
Rino Tirikatene, MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for ENV