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**RE: Topics for Environmental Reporting discussion document**

I am writing on behalf of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society (WRPS) to submit on the discussion document *Topics for Environmental Reporting*.

*Background on the WRPS*

The WRPS was incorporated in 1973. Its purpose is the conservation and protection of the Waitakere Ranges and to oppose any activity that may threaten or adversely affect the natural environment in the area.

WRPS and its members are strong advocates for the conservation and protection of the natural environment of the Waitakere Ranges and was one of the key groups promoting the concept of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (WRHA) for 35 years before it was achieved through an act of parliament in 2008.

The topics chosen for environmental reporting will impact the information we have on the state of the Waitakere Ranges and data available, along with information on national level environmental indicators.

*Comment on discussion document issues*

In general we support the topics identified for each of the five domains and the cross cutting impacts. We consider that all the current topics indicated should be included. We have provided some specific comments on areas for expansion below.

The cross-domain impact on *biodiversity and ecosystem processes* is a vital topic as it will provide data on the health of our integrated environment, which does not work as independent land, marine, freshwater or air components. We support this impact and in particular the recording of conservation status of plant and animal species, but also the spread of pest and exotic flora and fauna. Therefore it is important that the topic 'pests, diseases and exotic species' under each of the land, freshwater and marine domains report on all known native and exotic flora and fauna to inform our understanding of biodiversity and the risks from the spread of exotic species.

Under the *land domain*, the topics should be expanded to include the pressure exerted by urban and built environments (including infrastructure) on rural land and natural areas. Urban centres are often situated near areas of high environmental value (such as the Waitakere Ranges) or high quality soils for farming. Demand for more urban land can put pressure on these environments and it is important that the amount of urban, rural and environmentally important land is recorded along with the change over time. These data will enable New Zealand to monitor the pressure of urban development on our environment.

Under *both the land and marine domains*, it would be useful to see a topic around protection status. This topic should cover the percentage and types of land in different forms of protection (e.g. marine reserve, scientific area, national park). It should also consider the range of different land and marine ecosystems and what proportion of each is protected.

Under the *atmosphere and climate domain* it would be useful to record the current and predicted levels of coastal erosion and its impacts. Given New Zealand's significant coastline, coastal erosion and its impacts on the land, biodiversity and infrastructure is going to be a major issue. Recording changes in coastal erosion now will help understand its impacts in the future.

Under the *freshwater domain*, there could be a topic relating to the quality and quantity of drinking water. We rely heavily on freshwater for drinking in New Zealand and it would be useful to have a specific topic recording the current status, and perhaps pressures or predictions, of access to drinking water.

There needs to be more consideration of *social issues in the cross-domain impact topics*. The impact of the environment, and particularly environmental degradation, on communities and social capital should be reported. For example, poor water quality in lagoons may impact recreational activities, but it also effects broader social interactions and building of social capital (e.g. knowing your neighbours). If local areas are unsafe for recreational activities, people will not informally meet and engage with each other. This could result in more individualised and less cohesive communities.

It may also be useful to include a topic on the public's attitudes to environmental issues, for example a regular survey that could be reported and include changing trends. Issues might include the public's awareness of environmental issues, perceptions of the quality of the environment compared to the data, and attitudes to methods of environmental intervention including pest control.



Yours sincerely  
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President