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I am writing on behalf of the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society (WRPS) to submit on **Te Tahua Pūtea Tau 2021-2031, the 10-year Budget 2021-2031 (Recovery Budget) consultation document.**

Background on the WRPS

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

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

Introduction

The WRHA is of local, regional and national significance due to its unique heritage features outlined in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act (WRHA Act) which (s7 (1) (2)) sets out that the heritage area is of national significance, with heritage features including that the area provides a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna; (s7 (a)) its terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character and (l) it's distinctive local communities. The WRHA is also unique because of the population it services; New Zealand's largest metropolitan area with a relatively low proportion of accessible natural/non-built environments. The WRHA Act clearly states that among the heritage features (s7) of the area are: (g) the opportunities that the area provides for wilderness experiences, recreation, and relaxation in close proximity to metropolitan Auckland (m) the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources. It is therefore of significant and increasing value as it constitutes an essential public amenity for an increasingly urbanised population.

The WRHA Act sets out objectives which include to protect, restore and enhance the WRHA and its heritage features. Adverse cumulative effects of activities on the WRHA's heritage features must also be recognised and avoided. Auckland Council is also obliged, when considering decisions that threaten serious or irreversible damage to a heritage feature, to endeavour to protect the heritage feature.

Kauri dieback disease is threatening one of New Zealand's most iconic species. It is the single greatest threat to conservation values in the Auckland region. The disease could, if not successfully managed, eliminate kauri from the region and from New Zealand. The Department of Conservation lacks the resources to manage its own lands, which leaves Auckland Council's regional parks in the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges as the "last chance for kauri" on the mainland of the Auckland Region and possibly in New Zealand.

Specific submissions

Key issue 2: Responding to climate change

Take matua 2: Urupare ki te huringa āhuarangi

We support the key outcome areas and areas for climate investment:

- Coastal investment and developing coastal management plans to respond to coastal erosion.
- Increasing permanent native forests.
- Increasing the numbers of street trees in urban areas, especially native trees.

- Address the issues of toxic burden from closed landfills (however it is inadequate to only protect 4 of the council's 85 closed coastal landfills)

Key issue 5: Protecting and enhancing the environment

Te take matua 5: Te tiaki me te whakapai ake i te taiao

7.5 Natural Environment Targeted Rate Proposal

- We strongly support the extension of the Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR) from 2028 to 2031 to invest further in measures such as addressing the spread of kauri dieback, and predator and weed control.
- In addition we believe an INCREASE in the Natural Environment targeted Rate, as well as the extension, is crucial to on-going adequate management and protection of important areas such as the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area.

7.6 Water Quality Targeted Rate proposal

WRPS supports:

- the proposed extension of the WQTR from 2028 to 2031.
- that this extension would be to deliver improved water quality in the Manukau Harbour

Monitoring information of West coast lagoons, wetlands, and streams indicates significant contaminant is due to poorly performing septic tanks and long drops, with additional sources including bird droppings, dog faeces, and ruminant sources – further possible sources include possums, rats, pets, and other mammals living in the bush.¹ Therefore, WRPS submits that:

- It is necessary to have specific plans to clean up important West coast areas such as the Piha lagoon, Karekare lagoon, and Te Henga lagoon.
- Appropriate management includes the serious involvement of Tanagta Whenua. The lagoons were historically highly regarded as taonga.
- There is no specific mention of septic tanks. It is essential to improve these systems for the health of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area.

¹ Ducker, D. (2015).

Part Six: Local board priorities

Te Wāhanga Tuaono: Aronha mātāmua a ngā poari ā-rohe

What is proposed for the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area:

Under Key advocacy initiatives for 2021-2031 in the draft Recovery Budget, we support that the WRHA is a local priority area for funding, but are disappointed at the three suggested initiatives. We would like to see key advocacy initiatives and priority areas which better reflect those set out in the Local Board Plan 2020.

We strongly support the Local Board Plan 2020 priorities as laid out in the Message from the Chairperson of the WRLB, where;

- 1) the WRHA is protected and enhanced and connections with surrounding communities are strengthened, and;
- 2) we work to respect, protect, and restore the environment are laid out as clear priority areas.

We would like to see these two clearly prioritise in the Recovery Budget, under priorities and key advocacy initiatives.

Other feedback

Under current policy only 50% of rural Auckland is under sustained possum control, and 66% of ecologically significant parkland under sustained pest plant and pathogen control - this is not good enough. Majority of ecosystems remain without co-ordinated management, and three quarters of threatened species remain without active management. Indigenous biodiversity in the region is under substantial stress due to invasive species.

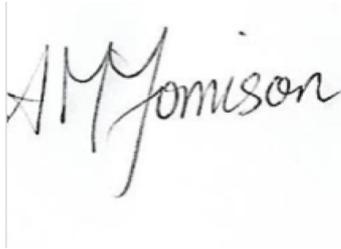
Without increased funding for, and continued active management of pest and threatened species, maintaining and increasing our native forests won't be successful, and our native forests have an essential role in future climate resilience.

The Waitākere Ranges Protection Society is concerned the proposal is not focussed enough in regards to long term environmental protection and management of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area.

With the growth of Auckland City the Waitākere Ranges are more important than ever before and are more than ever at risk with pressures from diseases and pests. We need immediate action on the following points:

- A strong NO to reductions in pest control programmes, delayed track upgrades for kauri dieback, cuts to kauri dieback research and environmental services staff redundancies.
- Ensure continuation projects that address flooding and pollution on our beaches
- Retain and INCREASE Local Board discretionary funding at current levels for our community

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "AM Fomison". The initials "AM" are written in a large, stylized font, and "Fomison" is written in a cursive script.

Anna Maria Fomison
President
Waitākere Ranges Protection Society