

# Status update on Nelson Nature Strategy 2017-2020

Prepared March 2023



## Background

Nelson Nature is Nelson City Council’s programme to protect, restore and enhance Nelson/Whakatū natural environment, from the mountains to the sea. This report provides an update on progress to meet the objectives and implement actions of the [Nelson Nature Strategy 2017-2020](#). The Strategy is due for review and updating, although the objectives and ongoing actions remain priorities for Council. An update to the Strategy has been postponed over the last three years in anticipation of the release of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB). Council, together with the [Nelson Biodiversity Forum](#), is planning for the development of a collaborative regional biodiversity strategy to replace and bring together the Nelson Nature Strategy and the [Nelson Biodiversity Strategy](#), and meet the draft requirements of the NPS-IB. The revised Nelson Biodiversity Strategy will also reflect Nelson-specific objectives from the 2021 [Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Strategy](#), which brings together the goals of Councils, iwi and the Department of Conservation (DOC) to restore natural landscape across the whole Top of the South.

## Nelson Nature Strategy (2017-2020) Projects, Objectives and Priority Actions

*Green: Excellent/good progress. Orange: Some progress*

1. Dun Mountain and inland hill country mineral belt, limestone outcrops and forest ecosystems	
<b>Objective:</b> The unique and/or rare plant and animal species and communities in the mineral belt, limestone outcrops, and the forests of Dun Mt and upper Maitai and Roding catchments are protected and enhanced.	
Priority Actions:	Status update 2023:
1. Manage impacts of wilding conifers on mineral belt as per wilding conifer operational plan	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Initial control completed of wilding conifer infestations on Council land in the Maitai and Roding catchments. Follow up control will be required in future years as residual seedlings grow, but at much lower costs The wilding conifer operational plan for this area is being reviewed and updated in 2023.</p> <p>Retirement (or proposed retirement) of all Council plantation forestry sites that are high risk for wilding spread.</p> <p>Continued work with TDC, MDC, DOC and forestry companies on the strategic and coordinated control of key sites at risk to wilding conifers across Mt Richmond Forest Park and Nelson.</p>
2. Develop and implement an Ungulate Management Plan to protect vegetation communities	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Ungulate control plan developed for Maitai &amp; Roding and annual control implemented since 2019. This plan is being reviewed and updated in 2023.</p>

	Reinvasion to this area has been reduced by annual ungulate control in adjacent front country Parks & Reserves and Ngāti Koata land since 2022.
3. Manage the impacts of gorse and Spanish heath on the mineral belt as per the Gorse & Spanish Heath Operational Plan	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Key infestations of gorse and heath in the mineral belt have been under control for several years, including sites supported by DOC funding through Forest and Bird.</p> <p>Follow up control of gorse and heath is integrated into the annual Maitai and Roding weed management programme.</p>
4. Develop and implement a <i>Powelliphanta hochstetteri consobrina</i> snail management plan	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Distributional surveys for snails have been completed in partnership with DOC. DOC has taken over as lead for the management of this species across its wider range.</p> <p>Long term snail monitoring established by DOC for sites across the snail's range, including on Council land.</p> <p>Long term security of the species requires ongoing management of ungulates, possums at key snail sites across lands managed by DOC, NCC, Ngāti Koata.</p> <p>Translocation of snails to Brook Waimarama Sanctuary in 2022 will provide a secure population if successful.</p>
5. Develop and implement a strategic weed management plan to protect high value forest areas within the upland parts of the Maitai and Roding catchments	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Weed management plan for Maitai and Roding has been developed and is implemented annually. Weed management will be ongoing, but key infestations of weeds have been reduced significantly.</p>
6. Establish impact of possums and hares on flora values within limestone, forest and mineral belt ecosystems and feasibility of management	<p><b>Some progress. Further work required.</b></p> <p>Initial monitoring to understand possum densities has been completed. Possum control has been completed in the Maitai in 2021 and 2022 as part of Jobs for Nature Project Mahitahi project. Analysis of impact of control on possum densities is underway in 2023 and will inform future management.</p> <p>There is limited knowledge on the threat and management of hares across NZ, which limits our ability to assess or manage this potential threat.</p>
7. Establish impact of predators on fauna values within limestone, forest and mineral belt ecosystems and feasibility of management	<p><b>Some progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>See Objective 6. The impacts and management of predators in the Maitai Roding are discussed in the <a href="#">Nelson Nature Halo Operational Plan</a>. Reducing densities of all key predators over the wider area will be expensive and require significant public consultation as the only cost-effective method currently available is aerial toxins. Predator control using traps is currently underway at one 40 ha site to protect a known site of vulnerable species.</p>

<p><b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Excellent progress on developing understanding of the values and threats to the site, developing operational plans to manage key threats and initial management threats (e.g. wilding conifers). Ongoing management of threats will be required to protect the site, although with reduced effort. Further work required to understand impact and potential management of more complex threats to the values of the site (e.g. possums and rats).</p>	
<p><b>2. Waterways</b></p>	
<p><b>Objective:</b> Aquatic biodiversity of Nelson/Whakatū's freshwater streams and rivers is protected and enhanced.</p>	
<p><b>Priority Actions:</b></p>	<p><b>Status update 2023:</b></p>
<p>1. Develop catchment operational plans for key rivers and streams.</p>	<p><b>Good progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Ecological restorations plans developed for many rivers and streams (e.g. Orphanage S, Maitai R). Comprehensive catchment plans are yet to be developed and will be done with iwi and community as part of the implementation of the Essential Freshwater package by Council's new catchments team.</p>
<p>2. Protect and enhance habitats for fish spawning</p>	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Spawning habitat restored for a range of fish species throughout Nelson's waterways. Remedial restoration will be required in some areas due to the impacts of riparian loss and gravel extraction from the August 2022 weather event.</p>
<p>3. Remove native fish barriers</p>	<p><b>Excellent progress. Small amount of further work required.</b></p> <p>Fish barriers removed for all urban streams and larger rural rivers. Fish barrier on some smaller tributaries on private land yet to be removed. Remedial work required to some streams due to August 2022 weather impacts.</p>
<p>4. Establish and maintain riparian margins to protect and enhance freshwater biodiversity</p>	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Large area of riparian margins restored through implementation of ecological restoration plans on Council land and through environmental grants programme on private land.</p>
<p>5. Facilitate stock exclusion from riparian margins</p>	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Stock excluded from most riparian margins on private land by landowners and supported through environmental grants programme.</p>
<p>6. Advocate for maintenance of minimum flows for instream biodiversity values</p>	<p><b>Good progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Stocktake on water-takes from groundwater and surface water completed. Maintenance of minimum flows supported through annual water conservation messaging.</p>
<p>7. Advocate and/or support for reduction in contaminants and sediments into freshwater</p>	<p><b>Good progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p>Advocacy delivered through industry training, erosion and sediment control guidelines for developers, site guides for builders, consent condition suite for standardised erosion control conditions, drains to</p>

	harbour programme for school students, and stormwater pollution campaign. Successful application of second tranche of MPI Hill Country Erosion funding to support reduction of erosion and sediment into waterways.
<b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Excellent progress in restoring and excluding stock from riparian margins, removing fish barriers and advocating for minimum flows and erosion reduction through Nelson Nature, Healthy Streams and Sustainable Land Management programmes. Future work to develop and implement comprehensive catchment plans with community and iwi, as part of the Essential Freshwater package.	
<b>3. Coastal Habitats</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Key coastal and estuarine ecosystems, sites and species are protected and enhanced	
<b>Priority Actions:</b>	<b>Status update 2023:</b>
1. Prioritise key sites for protecting coastal and estuarine biodiversity, including provision for sea level rise	<b>Completed.</b> Sites identified and prioritised in North 2018 <i>Nelson City Coastal Ecosystems – site values, threats and management priorities</i> (unpublished report)
2. Develop and implement management plans for high priority coastal and estuarine sites	<b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b> Ecological Restoration Plans prepared and restoration underway for most coastal sites on Council land (e.g. Whakatu Drive, Wakapuaka sandflats, Airport Peninsula). Restoration of priority coastal sites on private land being supported as part of SNA and MPI-funded Hill Country Erosion projects. Collaborative projects underway in the Waimea Inlet with iwi, TDC, DOC and community under the Waimea Inlet Strategy and Action Plan. Innovative projects for estuarine restoration and carbon sequestration (blue carbon) being trialled in in Waimea and Haven estuaries in collaboration with Cawthron, Tasman Environment Trust, DOC, iwi, The Nature Conservancy, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao and others.
<b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Excellent progress with restoration of coastal sites on Council land and innovative estuarine restoration projects. Restoration of private land sites dependent on the interests of landowners. Further work required to understand full impact of climate change on coastal sites and options for mitigating future ecosystem loss.	
<b>4. Significant Natural Areas on private land</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Protect and enhance remaining significant biodiversity sites on private land.	
<b>Priority Actions:</b>	<b>Status update 2023:</b>
1. Prioritise SNAs and potential SNAs to determine engagement and support offered	<b>Completed.</b> Sites prioritised and support offered through Environmental Grants Scheme.
2. Respond to requests from landowners to support survey on potential SNAs	<b>Good progress. Ongoing Action.</b>

	Surveys completed where these are requested by landowners to protect SNA values.
3. Work with landowners to protect and manage highest priority SNAs	<b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b> Interested landowners supported with fencing, pest control and restoration planting to protect SNA values through Environmental Grants Scheme and Jobs for Nature Wakapuaka Whangamoia project.
4. Prioritise requests from landowners to protect/manage SNAs outside the top priorities	<b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b> Landowner requests assessed and prioritised as part of annual Environmental Grants Scheme.
<b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Excellent progress in enhancing biodiversity values of SNAs where landowners are supportive. However, difficulty in protecting values of SNAs at other sites due to lack of strong regulatory protection of SNA values in current Resource Management Plan.	
<b>5. Biodiversity corridors &amp; networks</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Enhance the connection and condition of fragmented parts of the terrestrial and/or freshwater environments through corridors or networks.	
<b>Priority Actions:</b>	<b>Status update 2023:</b>
1. Define, identify and prioritise key biodiversity corridors and networks	<b>Some progress. Action underway.</b> Consideration of ecological connectivity included in the development of site restoration plans. Report and spatial mapping to identify and prioritises sites for protection and restoration of ecological connectivity underway (to be completed July 2023). Report will build on existing knowledge of sites identified through previous work completed for Nelson Biodiversity Strategy and Forum's 2010 corridor workshop, Nelson Resource Management Plan development and Ecosystem Prioritisation.
2. Develop and implement a management plan for high priority corridors and networks	<b>Good progress. Ongoing Action.</b> Restoration of sites important for ecological connectivity underway and ongoing through implementation of ecological restoration plans on Council land (e.g. Project Mahitahi) and support of private landowners through Environmental Grants Scheme.
<b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Some progress on restoring connections of fragmented ecosystems through restoration work on Parks and private land. Further work required to develop a strategic approach to prioritise sites and to develop methods to prevent further fragmentation (e.g. through Resource Management Plan).	
<b>6. Wildlife Halo</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Protect key native bird species in the Halo area.	
<b>Priority Actions:</b>	<b>Status update 2023:</b>
1. Develop an independent feasibility study for the protection	<b>Completed.</b>

of key native bird species in the Halo area.	Harper 2017. <i>The Nelson Halo: "Bringing kaka to the suburbs"</i> . Unpublished report.
2. Develop and implement an operational plan to control predators and enhance wildlife habitat in the Halo area.	<p><b>Excellent progress. Ongoing Action.</b></p> <p><a href="#">Halo Operational Plan</a> developed in 2019 and actively being implemented, with review of plan planned for 2023.</p>
<p><b>Summary of progress on objective:</b> Excellent progress in increasing the number of community groups and individuals controlling introduced predators in Council Parks and backyards, supported by the Halo project and Park's Adopt a Spot programme. Since 2019, the number of trapping groups in Nelson has increased from 8 to over 33 and more than 500 subsidised traps have been sold to Nelson residents for their backyards. Monitoring of native birds has been completed throughout the Nelson Halo (and Brook Waimarama Sanctuary by Sanctuary volunteers) since 2015. However, it is still too early for significant trends in native bird populations to be observed.</p>	