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VANISHING NATURE – THE NEXT TERM

How does the government's reform agenda stack up?

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“The Department of Conservation has existed on the smell of an oily rag,”... “The major restructurings, the loss of over 200 staff, the piecemeal funding, the cuts to the baseline, had demoralised the department – had put it on a downward trajectory.”

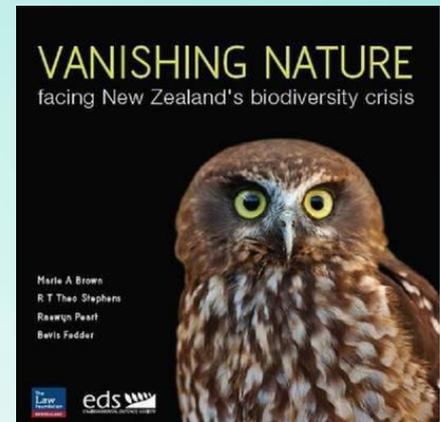
Hon Eugenie Sage, 2018

Background

- New coalition government – October 2017
- Came in with a strong reform agenda after nine years under a National government
- DoC – the key national agency for conservation – was not in great shape



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What did Vanishing Nature say?

Key drivers of biodiversity decline must be addressed, or ongoing loss is inevitable

Solutions exist at three levels

- Strategic
- Tactical
- Practical

Solutions are interdependent





What did Vanishing Nature say?

Strategic		Partnerships	Environmental Protection Fund	Environmental consumption tax	National conversation on biodiversity	Payments for ecosystem services	
	Threatened species legislation	Key threatening processes	Core funding for DOC	Mandatory national reporting on state of biodiversity	Provide for Maori world view	Policy for mitigation of ecological harm	Market tools for biodiversity
Tactical	Regional biodiversity planning	Biodiversity guidance to RCs	Agency accountability	Improve CME	Expand tools for private land protection	Improved covenant management	Support for landowners
	Deploy tools to protect freshwater ecosystems	Close policy gaps for wetlands and estuaries	Reform marine law and policy	Allocate stewardship land	Strengthen public interest litigation	Strengthen Freshwater NPS	
Practical		Improve conservation methods	Improve pest control methods	Improve biodiversity information	Ensure access to biodiversity data		



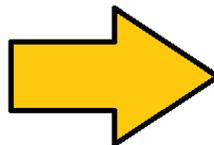
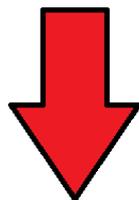
What did Vanishing Nature say?

	Partnerships	Environmental Protection Fund		National conversation on biodiversity		
		Core funding for DOC				
		Reform marine law and policy				



Focus areas

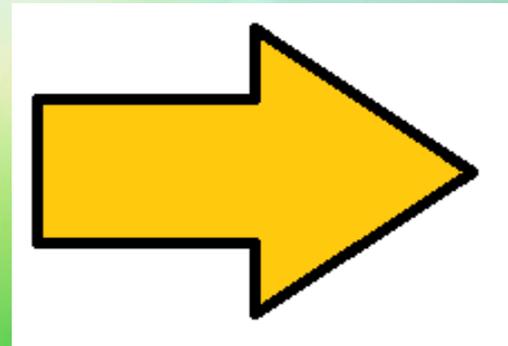
- Partnerships
- Environmental Protection Fund
- National conversation on biodiversity
- Core funding for DoC
- Reform marine law and policy





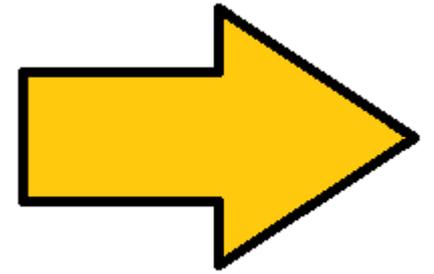
Partnerships

- Partnerships have their place where they align interests and raise significant money for conservation
- Build a stronger strategic basis for conservation partnerships so that they deliver for nature
- November 2017 strategy developed to guide Partnership team workload and restructure to correct team alignment



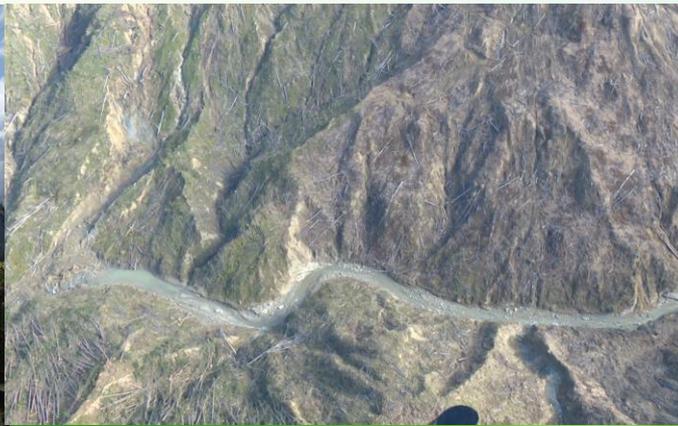


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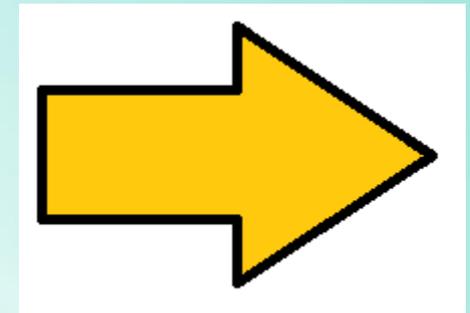
Environmental Protection Fund

- Consumptive uses of nature are not paying their way, contributing to ongoing environmental harm and loading the costs of recovery onto the general public including future generations
- Consultation on international visitor levy current underway (including proportion heading to conservation)
- Limited strategic movement at this stage but possible following outcomes of the Tax Working Group (second term?)





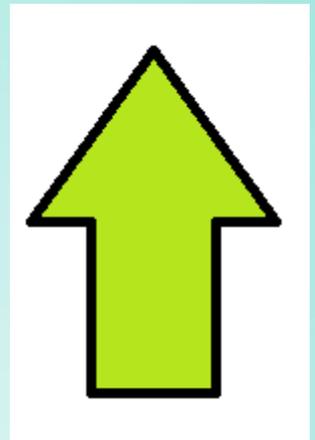
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National conversation on biodiversity

- Biodiversity loss lacks prominence in New Zealand
- Absence of a coherent national strategy makes collective effort difficult to direct
- A public-facing process that engages all parties in conservation would generate action in powerful ways
- Must be science and outcome focussed





Increased core funding for DOC

Underfunding had resulted in systemic weakening of DoC

- Loss of technical expertise/specialist capacity
- Limited advocacy (section 6, Conservation Act 1987)
- Loss of focus on statutory role more widely

Budget 2018 - \$181 m in new funding over 4 years . Biggest increase in DoC's operational funding since 2002. It ramps up to an extra \$60 m annually on baseline in 2021.

An injection of funding enables a slow reinstatement of that lost capacity



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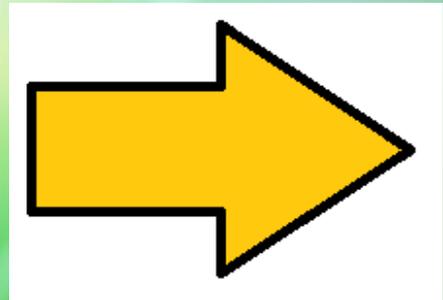
Reform marine law and policy

Marine law and policy currently not fit for purpose

Limited status for conservation interests vs private interests *e.g. oil and gas permit in Maui's dolphin habitat*

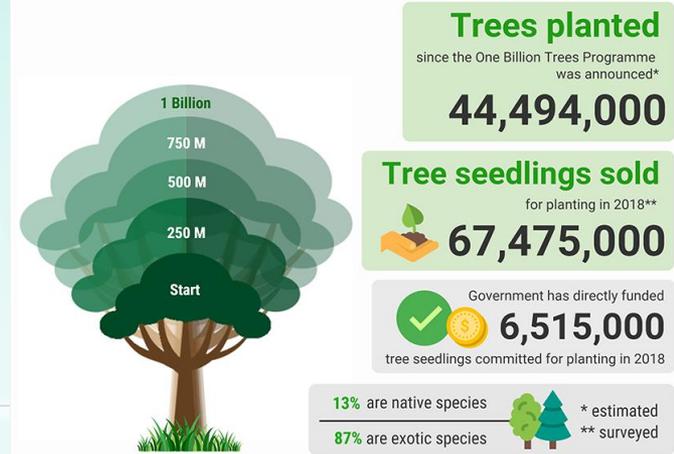
Gaps in protection *e.g. no deep sea protected areas*

Much falls within conservation portfolio and work is underway (*e.g. NZ Sealion threat management plan, ban on deep sea oil and gas exploration*)



A cautionary note....

- Progress in one portfolio can be offset by environmental impact in others
- One Billion Trees
- Only 13% native investment to date
- Limited sign of a strong R&D basis to consider other investment pathways
- There is a risk of one billion public subsidies...how about one billion birds?



As at 16 July 2018





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Summary

- Positive trajectories, although its an early evaluation
- Political imperatives may still prevail, but with bravery there is every chance biodiversity stands to gain
- Strategic changes will beget better and more long-lasting change and lock in change more effectively