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ECOLOGICAL  
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## **Changes to environmental legislation will threaten New Zealand's biodiversity**

'The Coalition government's changes to a raft of environmental laws will decrease protections to New Zealand's unique and threatened plants, animals, fungi and ecosystems' says Dr Jo Monks, Vice-President of the New Zealand Ecological Society. 'We ask the government to slow down and take time to consult widely with iwi, experts, other stakeholders, and the public, and allow for thorough parliamentary scrutiny.'

'New Zealand's biodiversity (its plants, animals, fungi and ecosystems) is globally renowned and underpins our economy, particularly the tourism and primary production sectors but is [also threatened with extinction](#). We must do more to protect our endemic species and ecosystems, but the proposed legislative changes will undermine decades of environmental progress.'

The New Zealand Ecological Society today joined nine other scientific societies that promote research into Aotearoa's native biodiversity, which together represent thousands of members with expertise in this field, in writing an [open letter](#) to the New Zealand government expressing our collective concern at these legislative proposals.

'In their own [coalition agreement](#) the Coalition government commits to evidence-based decision-making. However, the approach they have taken here is not evidenced-based. Without thorough consideration of scientific evidence, it is highly likely that the proposed legislative changes will come at the cost of our natural environment, ecosystems, and native biodiversity on which our economy and well-being depends', says Dr Monks.

The Coalition government has proposed a number of legislative changes, including: the introduction of the Fast-track Approvals Bill to Parliament on 7 March 2024; repeal of both the Natural and Built Environment Act 2023 and Spatial Planning Act 2023; proposed changes to the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023 (including ceasing implementation of new Significant Natural Areas); and replacing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020.

'These legislative changes value short-term economic gain over long-term consideration of the natural environment and the ecosystem services, such as provision of food, drinking water, and mitigation of storm events, it delivers now and for future generations' said Dr Monks.

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For comment:

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