



NEW ZEALAND ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Fast-Track Project List includes those judged to have profound ecological impacts

'The New Zealand Ecological Society (NZES) is deeply concerned by a number of the [projects identified by the Government](#) to be listed in Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Bill', says Dr Jo Monks, NZES Vice-President.

Several of these projects have already been assessed via legal processes as having profound ecological impacts that were too great for them to proceed, or are recognised to have such important environmental values that a full assessment process open to public submission is vital.

The projects include:

Taranaki VTM Project - This project will extract up to 50 million tonnes of seabed material per year. In 2021, the Supreme Court [unanimously confirmed](#) the High Court's decision to quash resource consents granted to Trans-Tasman Resources Limited to mine iron sands in the South Taranaki Bight. The decision pointed to a failure to provide adequate protection of important ecological values including seabed communities, a diverse range of seabirds and marine mammals, including critically threatened species such as Māui dolphin, killer whale and Bryde's whale, as well as a failure to properly engage with Māori interests.

Balmoral Station Solar Array (Canterbury) - While renewable energy is a vital industry for NZ, solar farms must be [located in the right place](#) to avoid impacts on indigenous biodiversity. This project was [refused consent](#) on the grounds 'that permanent and irreversible loss of threatened land environments and Threatened and At Risk indigenous species from the site would be a significant adverse effect' (p.42). These impacts relate to glacially-derived threatened ecosystems, Threatened and At Risk indigenous plant species and invertebrates, and the loss of open breeding habitat for braided river birds. At least two other solar projects are within one of

the busiest known bird flyways in the Mackenzie Basin, and pose a collision risk that could add significantly to the risk of extinction for a number of threatened bird species.

Buller Plateaux Continuation Project (West Coast) - The Buller Plateaux, formed 40 million years ago, are recognised as exceptional landscapes containing [rare sandstone pavements](#), boulder fields and wetland ecosystems and many threatened and at risk indigenous species of flora and fauna, some of which are found nowhere else. Examples of threatened species include giant land snails (*Powelliphanta*), great spotted kiwi and West Coast green geckos. Expansion of mining on the Buller Coal Plateaux without rigorous environmental assessment will result in rapid destruction of a unique and irreplaceable 40 million year old ecosystem to extract coal for international companies to make steel.

Bream Bay Sand Extraction Project (Northland) - Applications to mine sand in areas immediately to the south of Bream Bay at Pakiri and Mangawhai have been repeatedly denied by the courts, the latest being by the Environment Court earlier this year. The Court's decision favoured the 'protection of flora and fauna for all New Zealanders, including providing an active voice for those we cannot hear from in the resource management process' (particularly the critically endangered New Zealand fairy tern), as well as whakapapa, history and identity, over commercial profit and the production of concrete. Fast-tracking sand extraction in this place risks all of these values and leaves the public without a say.

Vice-President Dr Jo Monks said that 'the NZES calls on the Government to insert evidence-based, robust, environmental bottom-lines into the final version of the Fast-track Approvals Bill.'

'Not doing so will result in short-term financial gain at the expense of permanent ecological damage.'

ENDS

For comment:

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