

Biodiversity

Biodiversity in the Bay of Plenty

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is short for "biological diversity" - the number and variety of living things (animals, plants, insects, micro-organisms) found within a particular area and the complex relationships between them.

Why should we conserve biodiversity?

New Zealand's native biodiversity is unique due to its isolation as small islands in a vast ocean. The high percentage of endemic species (those found naturally nowhere else in the world) makes this biodiversity both special and highly vulnerable. It shapes our national identity and upholds our economy. We have an obligation to protect it for ourselves, our future generations and the rest of the world.

New Zealand's native biodiversity is in serious decline. Although New Zealand was one of the last places on earth to be settled by humans, it has one of the worst records of native biodiversity loss. Fire, land clearance, overexploitation of resources and introduced species have had a negative effect on native biodiversity. As a result, dozens of species have become extinct and an increasing number are now threatened with extinction.

We also need to protect our native biodiversity as it provides us with many 'services' such as water purification and regulation, creating and maintaining soils, nutrient cycling, pollination, valuable compounds (e.g. manuka oil), regulation of local climates and prevention of soil erosion. Protected areas also offer huge recreational and tourism opportunities. There is also untapped potential on the international market for carbon credit income from regenerating bush.

What is the status of biodiversity in the Bay of Plenty?

Within the Bay of Plenty Region we are lucky to have about 70 percent of our original native vegetation cover remaining. Most of this is in the large areas of native forest in the hills and mountains of the eastern part of the region and the Kaimai Ranges. However in the lowland areas of the coastal plains and the Kaingaroa plateau much less remains and native birds and animals have few refuges.

Of particular concern are our wetlands, dunelands and geothermal areas. Less than 3 percent of our former wetland extent remains in tiny pockets. Most of the rest has been drained and converted to agricultural land. These small wetland remnants contain quite different plants, animals and birds, many of which are now quite rare. Much the same applies to our unique geothermal areas and dunelands which are also home to rare plants and animals.

All of this remaining biodiversity is threatened by introduced animals such as possums, rats and stoats. The remaining pockets of lowland vegetation are also threatened by invasive weeds and are often grazed by domestic stock.

But we are still blessed with a rich and varied heritage of remaining wetlands, dunelands, geothermal areas and native forests and the special birds and animals for which they are home.

What are we doing about it?

The future of this rich heritage relies on people to protect and carefully manage it.

Many private landowners across the region have long recognised this and are working hard to protect the places that are special to them on their land. Environment Bay of Plenty is keen to support them in this work and we have put in place a biodiversity programme to help them. There are also many community groups engaged in similar work on public land and we are able to support them too in collaboration with the Department of Conservation and district councils.

To find out more about the Biodiversity Programme contact us at Environment Bay of Plenty on 0800 ENV BOP (368 267) and ask to speak to a Land Management Officer or go to www.envbop.govt.nz.



Stuart Slade of the Nukuhou Saltmarsh Care Group monitoring bird calls. Animal pest control has resulted in a dramatic increase in marsh bird numbers.

What is the Biodiversity Programme?

Environment Bay of Plenty has developed a voluntary programme to empower landowners and community groups to protect valuable sites of native biodiversity across the Bay of Plenty. There are two avenues through which we can provide assistance.

Firstly we have identified sites with particularly high biodiversity values on private land across the region. These are the largest, best quality of only remaining examples of a particular biodiversity type. We will work in partnership with landowners who would like to protect these sites. Larger sites may include parts of several land holdings where a group of landowners may wish to work together to protect the whole site.

Secondly there will be many other places, such as small bush remnants that have not been identified as being of outstanding value but which are still of great significance to those who own them. If a landowner is keen to protect such a place, then we are able to help there too.

Similarly, we are also able to support community care groups who wish to carry out protection work on publicly owned land in their local area which has significance for them and their community. Both Environment Bay of Plenty and the group work collaboratively with the landowner (the Department of Conservation or a district council for example).

In each case a management plan based on clear objectives is drawn up collaboratively by the landowner(s) and an Environment Bay of Plenty Land Resources staff member. We can provide financial and technical assistance with the implementation of this plan. In some situations it may be appropriate to include assistance from other agencies with an interest in biodiversity protection and management.

If a landowner doesn't want to take this path, we are still always available to give advice.



Bird numbers may increase significantly with the control of rats and stoats.

What is involved in the management of a site?

In discussion with Environment Bay of Plenty staff, the landowner determines the ecological objectives for the site and agrees to a collaborative management plan and its associated works within a specified timeframe of up to five years. Assistance and technical support is provided to carry out the agreed work but the landowner maintains ownership of the process. Once the initial protection work is completed, continuing support and regular monitoring of the site is provided. Landowners and the community are encouraged to take increasing ownership of the ongoing protection work and to seek additional sources of assistance.

The native biodiversity of a site is likely to be under threat from one or more sources. A number of interventions may be necessary to minimise those threats depending on the ecological objectives for the site:

- Stock may need to be excluded from the site which will usually involve fencing
- Animal predators and browsers and invasive weeds will often need to be controlled
- Restoration work such as enhancement planting may be required

Monitoring of the sites is provided and regular adjustment of control programmes may be required.



Wayne O'Keefe is proud of the improvement in the health of the forest in his fenced QEII National Trust Bush covenant as a result of fencing and possum control.



What is involved in the long term protection of a site?

Protection of the site from land use change is important. Covenants are the preferred type of protection but sometimes other options might be more suitable. There are a number of covenant options available. An information sheet explaining the various options is available from Environment Bay of Plenty staff.

What are the landowner's rights and obligations?

All protected sites remain in the ownership of the landowner and no right of public access is created.

The landowner will ensure that the management work agreed to in the management plan is carried out each council financial year.

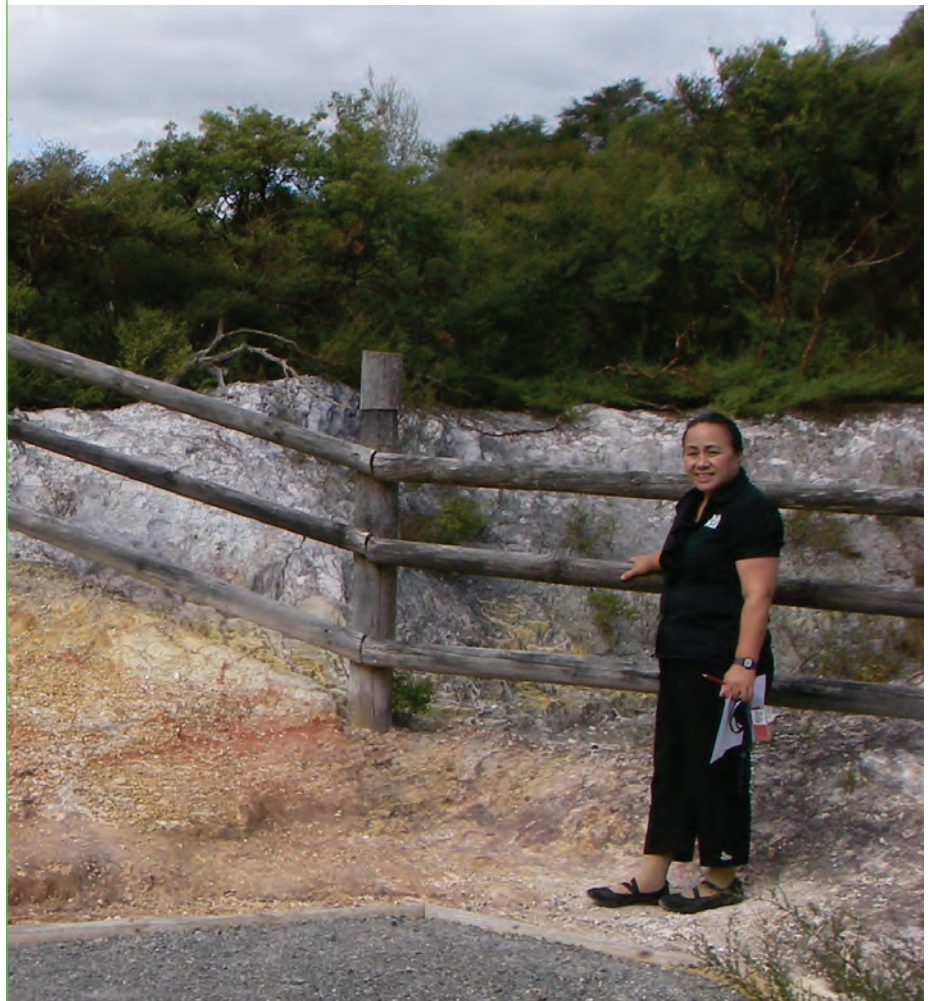
What support is provided?

We are able to provide:

- Information about the current ecological and archaeological state of the site at no cost to the landowner
- Aerial photos, maps etc
- Management advice and technical expertise
- A management plan
- Financial support through grants. The level of financial support will vary, depending on the nature of the site and the type of work required, ranging from 25 percent to 75 percent of the total cost
- Assistance and support in organising and implementing planned works
- Ongoing monitoring of protection work and biodiversity outcomes at no cost



Remnants of coastal sand country vegetation (left) and lowland forest (right) are few and far between and future generations will appreciate their protection.



Comprehensive weed control will help protect this unusual prostrate kanuka at Whakarewarewa. Poihaere Knight of Te Puia is a partner in our Biodiversity Programme aiming to conserve this valuable geothermal habitat.

The Management Plan Development Process

1. The landowner or community group contacts Environment Bay of Plenty Land Resources staff, from either the Tauranga, Rotorua or Whakatāne offices, with an expression of interest in the programme
2. A staff member will be allocated to discuss biodiversity objectives for the site with all those involved
3. A decision is made by the partners in the project to proceed or not
4. A management plan is developed for the site in close collaboration with the landowner or community group and possibly other agencies with an interest in the site
5. The management plan is signed by all parties and will include an initial programme of work for up to five years, the costs associated with that work and the way the costs will be shared
6. A covenant is obtained
7. The landowner or community group can begin the planned work
8. The staff member and landowner will meet regularly to discuss progress and to plan ahead
9. Once the initial work is completed, the landowner maintains that work
10. Environment Bay of Plenty will monitor the work annually and also monitor the outcomes as required at no cost to the landowner
11. At the end of the agreed timeframe, the landowner, staff and any other agencies involved will review the management plan and its objectives and discuss management options for the future.



Landowners are hoping to protect this extensive wetland on Matakana Island through the Biodiversity Programme.

Other useful information

To find out more about the Biodiversity Programme contact us at Environment Bay of Plenty on 0800 ENV BOP (368 267) and ask to speak to a Land Management Officer or go to www.envbop.govt.nz. We also offer a range of factsheets and other publications which provide advice on various aspects of land management. Other agencies such as DOC and Landcare Research are also able to provide useful background and practical information.

Go to www.envbop.govt.nz for more information.



Orchids, such as this *Thelymitra longifolia* flourish in healthy bush.

Other sources of assistance

Agency	Offers legal protection	Possible funding assistance	Offers management advice
Department of Conservation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environment Bay of Plenty	Yes	Yes	Yes
District Councils	Yes	Yes	Not generally
Nga Whenua Rahui	Yes	Yes	Yes
QEII National Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes
Landcare Trust	No	No	Yes



For further information and advice, contact Environment Bay of Plenty:

Telephone: 0800 ENV BOP (368 267)

Facsimile: 0800 ENV FAX (368 329)

Pollution Hotline: 0800 73 83 93

Email: info@envbop.govt.nz

Website: www.envbop.govt.nz

Address: 5 Quay Street, P O Box 364, Whakatane 3158, New Zealand

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