

## Significant Natural Areas submission to Waikato District Council 2020

Warwick Cheyne

Foreword

Recommendation to hearing panel Waikato District Council

I realise that this idea has come in late in the scheme of things but have only thought of it on 20 October 2020 and how it might/could work with existing structures in place. Since this idea formulated I have made notes, read extensively, as mentioned, I would hate to tally hours on this but it far exceeds what I put into on the original submission.

I have had to submit the whole idea, lacking some of the details that can only come from ministries, departments, other rural stakeholders. Time constraints and slow response from these bodies have meant a partially complete idea. Having come this far with the idea, I will push on to achieve outcomes that I believe will benefit NZ. Even after this has been submitted. I believe that it would involve a number of discussions with all parties if I can find/identify the ones I need to be talking with to help further this idea into reality. Including seeing the Prime Minister directly.

I also realise that councils have been told by ministers to push it through or face ministerial intervention under RMA authority. They haven't provided any guidance or ideas on how this might be achieved without alienation and conflict. This to me represents Bullying in the inappropriate unconstitutional sense. Sourced from cabinet papers, press releases, reports on websites. They do this so that any litigation further actions will fall onto council pockets and rate payers. Placing valuable resources into an unproductive cycle.

The pressure on the council is immense and uncalled for as the panel has to represent stakeholders and Government at the same time and somehow steer an uncharted course before them.

If you believe that this idea has merit and needs to be properly explored by all parties

- That you defer implementing SNA part of the plan say 3 years
- If Deferring is not an option then remove it, SNA, from the property 648 Waipuna Rd
- Remove SNAs from all privately owned property until there is clarity surety of compensation to these land owners.
- Assist submitter in finding those individuals whose knowledge would help to bring idea to fruition.
- Pass it around to other Councils, Ministries, Government officials for comment

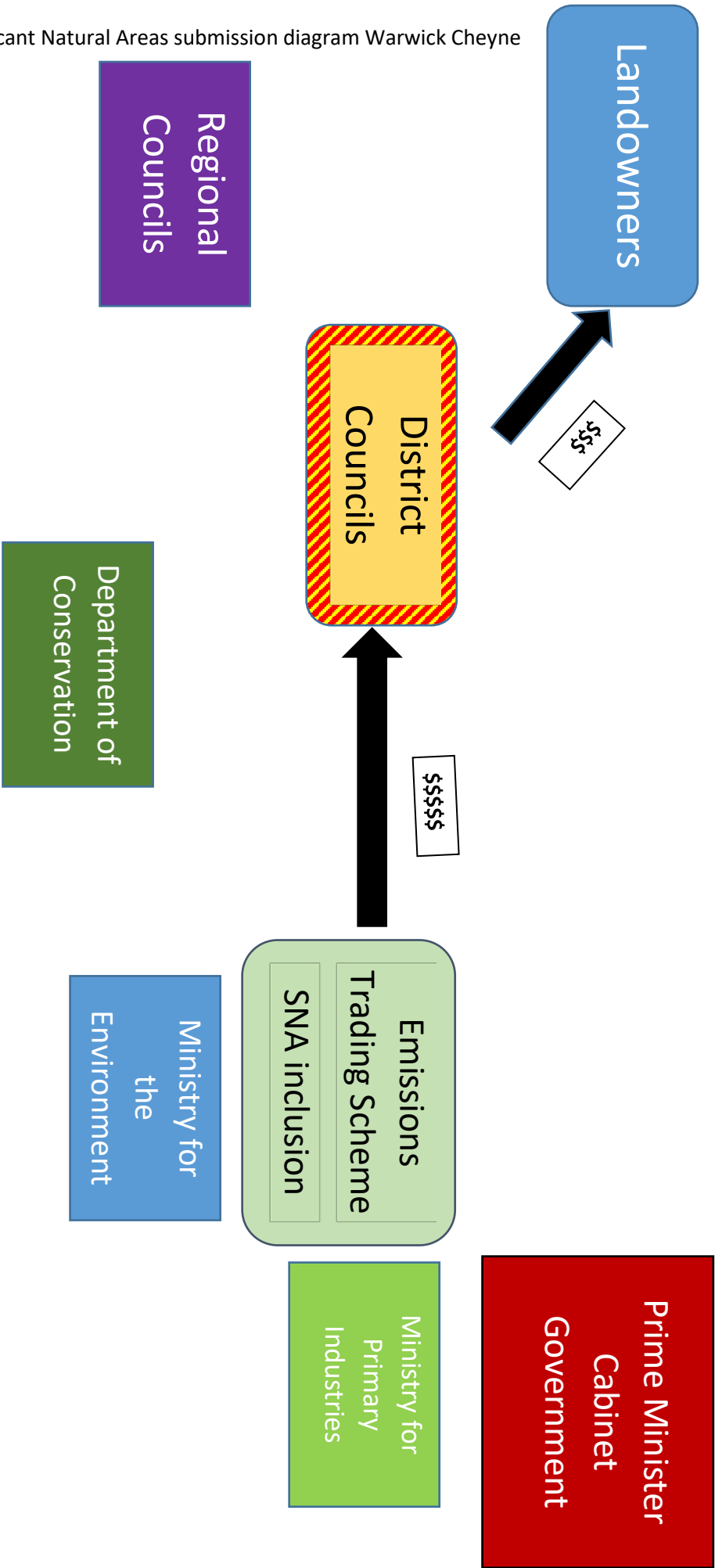
Yours sincerely,

Warwick Cheyne

0272125522

diggitydude@gmail.com

Significant Natural Areas submission diagram Warwick Cheyne



## Significant Natural Areas Submission to Waikato District Council 2020

Warwick Cheyne

## Introduction Notes

The goal of this submission is to show you a potential solution regarding Significant Natural Areas (SNAs). I have read extensively on the websites for the Ministry for the Environment, Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation, along with the Waikato Regional and District Councils; including pages of submissions, reports, articles and statements. Across all these writings is a common theme that there needs to be landowner buy-in (contribution and consultation) but little explanation of how this will work in order to achieve the necessary environmental outcomes. Stephen Hawking said the downfall of the human race would be greed and stupidity. Landowners are not stupid so that leaves greed.

In my view the biggest problem is obtaining buy-in from landowners who haven't cleared sections of native timber on their property and kept them in a range of states from poor to excellent. The other problem is getting the public and the government to agree to trial a new idea. As part of my initial submission I mentioned that the cost of planting 1 hectare (ha) of native bush is about \$1.2 million, at a generously low estimate. Landowners should expect a return from their native bush at least equal to what they would achieve if it were pasture. This would be incentive enough for landowners to buy-in to the SNA scheme, and needs to be achieved nationwide. A main objection is also being told that this is compulsory by those who charge rates equal to productive pasture. Landowner objection is justified when implementation costs are considered. Fencing these areas and meeting council requirements re: slope retirement is a significant additional cost to landowners, many of whom do not have the economic stability to afford it. Lack of compensation for this undertaking is a sore point.

This problem has been raised by many landowners all in the same difficult position, and the only acknowledgement to the problem is confirmation from the Minister for the Environment that there will be no compensation. The Minister can say this as she is protected by the Resource Management Act (which will hopefully be overhauled as promised by the incumbent government, and most other parties in parliament during the election campaign period). Even under eminent domain there is some sort of compensatory value. Should the SNA endeavour fall under the Public Works Act instead? Landowners have no incentive to implement these changes and unsatisfactory solutions could be considered to alleviate the problem. Climate change is here, and fires are rife.

To put it into an urban context if the Minister for the Environment decided that every lawn should have an SNA in the middle of it, fenced to a certain height at the landowners expense, with allowance for 1 plant removal per annum (weed or not ), with the added task of maintaining the fence and keeping the area pest free, the Minister would probably receive a resounding refusal from all. Landowners that have kept native strands of bush for generations should be rewarded, not punished by unrealistic strategies. Property rights need to be respected.

From the Cabinet paper 'PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY'

*76. For properties where an SNA has been identified, a landowner will only need to do something (and incur costs) if they want to change the way they use the land within the SNA, triggering a resource consent process. Where the intended land use is not suitable, there could be indirect costs, for example if development opportunities are limited. This impact will be to both rural and urban*

*landowners if undertaking new activities on their land where significant indigenous biodiversity is present.*

My personal prejudices around this scheme stem from years of injustices relating to the Resource Management Act and the lack of creditable changes made to it by any sitting government. The added layers of bureaucracy and consultants have muddied the water of any meaningful environmental progress.

My proposed solution requires cooperation across multiple Ministries and additional input from those with the required specific policy and legislation knowledge (which exceeds mine). The groups required for the implementation of this proposal include the Waikato District and Regional Council, The Ministry for the Environment, Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, and political will from the whole of government.

### Significant Natural Areas

Purpose is to protect remaining areas of biodiversity. To achieve this SNAs need to become a part of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) which means a change in thinking from the Government and Ministries. A new definition allowing permanent native stands of timber (or restricted to identified SNAs) to be included.

#### Landowners needs/considerations

- Incentive to agree to buy-in
- To give permission to be included. It is their land with all rights and responsibilities pertaining to it.
- Recognition that these areas have been left uncleared by landowners from councils and central government.
- Loss of potential harvesting rights through selective logging (helicopter)
- Remuneration to pay for fencing of SNA (if not already). Costly endeavour at an average of \$25/m for an 8 wire 3 batten fence. Additionally, the maintenance cost of fence repairs. Pest proof fences options?
- Loss of potential development rights (glamping, eco tramping, camping tours etc.)
- Pest (including plant) management strategies
- Minimum money input at least equal to lease agreement involving pasture
- Option for landowners maybe crowd funding or private company/business funding landowner to improve SNA area
- Allow inspection once a year for monitoring progress of SNA and that fences are in good repair.
- Recommend to MfE and MPI that ETS scheme if adjusted would be a buy in for SNAs

#### District Council need to consider

- To ask landowners whether they wish to have SNA designation and respect their wish as a landowner. No pressure and allowing landowners to join at any time. Flexibility if they change their minds due to unforeseen circumstances to allow them to adapt or withdraw from the SNA.

- Offer incentives which may include; zero rated area of SNA (kapaiti), zero rated rates for total property for 3 years while fencing undertaking is being done around SNA and a management plan (cost free to landowners due to fact they are the ones who will be implementing it) to be put in place case by case basis
- Case by case basis consultation with landowners
- Funding for fencing (via council or Mfe funds (perhaps managed by Council))
- To purchase outright the identified area
- Allow one tree a year firewood/selective logging. (this perhaps could be at a different levels of SNAs )
- Offer pest (including plant) management services (at cost)
- Allow tracks not more than 2 m wide (enough to allow a four wheeler to travel along safely) to be constructed through areas for fence maintenance and pest control. Subject to a management plan put together by DOC (experience and knowledge) Council (what may be acceptable and not) and Landowner.
- Transferable titles as per original submission
- SNA to be included in LIM report as well as a copy of management plan
- Transferable Develop rights.
- Short term lease arrangement whereby councils lease the SNA while landowner uses the money's from the lease to fence off.

#### Regional Council issues to consider

- Landowners need incentive to inspire changes to their environment. Punitive actions generally only inspire animosity.
- Any SNA identified by district council area should be considered as retired or slope zone. For example, if a 300ha property has a maximum of 50ha retirement, which then has a 24ha SNA. That amount should be removed from the requirement i.e  $50\text{ha} - 24\text{ha} = 26\text{ha}$  to retire to freshwater requirement.
- Zero rated area in regional rates as a start

#### Other issues for consideration

- If ETS is approved for SNAs then perhaps councils (regional and district) could be responsible for the management of funds or returns from the ETS
- MFE and MPI could treat each district as a block i.e. 70000ha for Waikato
- Returns based on area of SNA to council for distribution within that area. Administration fee not more than 1%
- Proceeds to landowners as a per SNA or credit to rates landowner to decide options
- Zero rate for the first year, then business as usual as ETS returns are processed
- Monitoring the funds for first 3 years to track what landowners are using it for e.g. fencing. This will require a buy-in from landowners with respect to how much is spent on maintaining SNAs integrity.

#### Department of Conservation considerations:

- Current reserves and habits being identified in district plans as SNAs should also be eligible under ETS and receive funding so that effective pest and maintenance can be better resourced. This would support a more regulated and consistent approach to resourcing rather than depending on budget allocations from the government.
- Help councils and landowners in developing management plans for SNAs as invaluable knowledge and experience would help environmental outcomes desired.
- Provide inspection services to councils once a year to check on progress and that fences are up to scratch

#### Ministry for the Environment considerations:

- Have a political will to see changes through
- Change National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity to reflect change of SNAs being included in ETS. This would encourage landowner buy-in. This concept was touched on in the NZ Beef and Lamb submission but there was a lack of ideas for implementation.
- Allow district councils to manage return from ETS as a block
- Allow offsetting by landowners against any SNAs on their property
- Allow regional councils to be able to reduce requirement of freshwater grab if SNA is present on property

#### Ministry for Primary Industries

- Have a political will to see changes through
- Change ETS to allow identified (by district councils) SNAs to be included
- Introduce a new definition of identified indigenous (native) permanent forests
- There will be no separate title as it will be attached to LIM reports with management plans
- As there are yearly inspections (Could be carried out by DOC) to vouch for integrity of fences and pest management other requirements could be monitored
- Changes to ETS Bill
- Changes to Zero Carbon Bill
- Changes to Climate Change and Response Act
- Advance funding as a no-interest loan to landowners who need to fence off SNAs and repaid via the ETS Scheme over 5-year period
- Tax rebate to companies/businesses who wish to buy carbon credits in new SNA ETS scheme. Individual crowd funding by landowner to achieve goals in fencing pest strategy
- Tax break for landowners with identified SNAs

Prime Minister, Cabinet, Government

- Have a political will to see changes through
- Clarification around the reasoning behind not including native forests/reserves in the ETS.
  - Is this in relation to the Kyoto Protocol? Research would suggest native forests/swamps are a much more effective carbon sink than exotic forests.
- Take the initiative and be the first to show the world how to get resources from one side of the problem to the other
- Public Campaign “Take pride in NZ” issuing Environment Bonds, allowing Dad and Mum investors, corporate, investment funds, to purchase bonds which are targeted for direct resourcing of SNAs or IBs. Help DOC and SNAs on privately owned Land.
- Nothing good is ever going to be easy

I have not been able to find much more additional information about these schemes and their related policies, plans and strategies, or an idea similar to what I have outlined above on the websites of the Ministry for the Environment, Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation, Federated Farmers, NZ Beef and Lamb, Forestry Assn., Forest and Bird, Fish and Game, Waikato District Council or Waikato Regional Council. If there is any information available that may be relevant to the ideas outlined above please let me know where I can access it so I can review and revise my submission.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Warwick Cheyne

0272125522

diggitydude@gmail.com