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Corporate Plan Output: Conservation Planning Policy Advice	

The Department of Conservation and the Ministry for the Environment have recently released a draft strategy document entitled *New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy – Our Chance to Turn the Tide*. Submissions to this document close on 16 April.

The document begins by discussing the concept of biodiversity (maintaining viable populations of all plants and animals) and the social, cultural, educational and economic benefits of maintaining biodiversity. The document acknowledges that biodiversity in New Zealand includes both native and introduced species. In global terms, however, New Zealand's primary contribution is to manage those species found only in New Zealand. The bulk of the document therefore focuses on the state of New Zealand's native species and examines a range of methods for ensuring their survival. A focus of the document is determining which level of restoration we as a country want and can afford. Options range from doing nothing, to protecting only representative habitats, to full ecological restoration.

A number of the methods discussed in the document for maintaining biodiversity have implications for the Council. The Resource Management Act requires that the Council 'recognise and provide for' the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna (animals). Central Government has established a number of funding agencies charged with the responsibility of protecting significant areas of native vegetation that are currently in private ownership. On the Port Hills especially, these agencies, through covenants of the QEII Trust and funding from the Nature Heritage Fund, have contributed to a number of bush areas being protected.

The Council has been active in a number of ways that enhance and maintain biodiversity, including:

- The City Plan contains policies and rules designed to maintain significant natural areas and ecological sites from the adverse effects of inappropriate land use.
- A large number of planting and habitat restoration programmes are undertaken each year, primarily through the Parks and Water Services programmes along waterways and within, for example, Travis Wetland.
- The Council is gradually acquiring natural areas for recreation, conservation, landscape and drainage reasons. The recent purchase of land on the Port Hills is an example. It has been shown that these programmes are already resulting in significant increases in the number of native birds within the city.

- Along the coast, the “Coast Care” programme.
- Education through Keep Christchurch Beautiful and publications such as “Our Environment”.
- Maintenance of Riccarton Bush.
- Developing new projects such as the “Canterbury Grasslands”.

It is proposed that the Council submission on this draft strategy support the concept of protecting and enhancing a comprehensive and representative range of New Zealand’s biodiversity. The submission would also support a number of initiatives such as encouraging landowners to voluntarily covenant and protect land, and the development of incentive mechanisms which could be used by local authorities to promote the protection of indigenous biodiversity on private land. The continuation of government funding bodies such as the Nature Heritage Fund, which enable natural areas to be acquired and landowners fully compensated, is also seen as a method which the Council would support.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the submission on the Draft New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy be made supporting the concept of protecting and enhancing a comprehensive and representative range of New Zealand’s biodiversity.
 2. That monitoring programmes be developed for the City in line with the draft strategy.