

Date: 10 April 2024

Submission: Against the Fast Track Bill: Protecting Nature, Democracy, and Te Tiriti

From: Tāngaroa Tuia te Ora - Endangered Species Foundation

Introduction:

Tāngaroa Tuia Te Ora – The Endangered Species Foundation, convenes, collaborates and resources positive change for Aotearoa’s most endangered species. We have thousands of supporters from all over Aotearoa and the world, who support our kaupapa through donations, advocacy and taking action on the ground to restore and revive habitats for our most endangered species and their habitats.

Currently, New Zealand is facing a biodiversity crisis:

- Over 7500 native species are at risk of extinction.
- Of these, 800 are listed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as being at a high risk of extinction.
- Only 25% of these high-risk species are currently able to be actively managed by the DOC.

Tāngaroa Tuia Te Ora vehemently oppose the proposed Fast Track Bill put forth by the New Zealand government. This legislation represents a direct assault on nature, democracy, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. If passed, the bill would grant unprecedented powers to corporations, allowing them to exploit Aotearoa's resources without any input from experts or the public. This submission outlines our grave concerns and urges the government to reconsider the far-reaching implications of this bill.

Concerns with the Bill:

Exclusion of Public Input:

The Fast Track Bill would override crucial environmental protection legislation, including the Conservation Act, Reserves Act, and Wildlife Act, effectively silencing the voices of the public and environmental groups. By excluding meaningful public consultation, this bill undermines democratic principles and deprives citizens of their right to participate in decisions that impact their environment and communities.

Corporate Interests Over Nature:

The proposed legislation prioritises corporate interests over the protection of nature and the well-being of people. By fast-tracking projects such as mining, drilling, and infrastructure development, the bill places profits above environmental sustainability, jeopardising the health of our ecosystems and the survival of endangered species. We reject this blatant disregard for the intrinsic value of nature and the importance of preserving biodiversity for future generations.

Threat to Indigenous Rights:

Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be honoured and upheld in all decision-making processes. However, the Fast Track Bill fails to recognise the rights of tangata whenua and undermines their role as kaitiaki (guardians) of the land. By excluding meaningful engagement with Māori communities and ignoring customary rights protected under Te Tiriti, the bill perpetuates historical injustices and erodes the relationship between the Crown and Māori.

Environmental Degradation:

Fast-tracking resource extraction projects poses grave risks to New Zealand's environment and natural heritage. From mining operations on conservation land to sand and seabed mining, and irrigation and industrial developments, these activities threaten fragile ecosystems, freshwater habitats, and

endangered species. The loss of biodiversity and degradation of natural resources will have far-reaching consequences for the health and resilience of our environment.

Lack of Sustainable Development:

The Fast Track Bill fails to promote sustainable development practices. Instead, it promotes short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability, undermining efforts to address climate change, protect biodiversity, and ensure the well-being of present and future generations. We advocate for a holistic approach to development that respects the limits of our natural resources and prioritises the health of ecosystems.

Proposed Amendments:

If the bill proceeds, it must be amended to address the following concerns:

- Mandate public notification and consultation for all proposed projects, ensuring adequate time for scrutiny and input.
- Incorporate provisions to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including meaningful engagement with Māori communities and recognition of customary rights.
- Include the Minister of the Environment in the decision-making process to ensure environmental considerations are adequately represented.
- Replace the fast-track approach with a comprehensive resource management framework that promotes sustainable development and protects the environment.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Tāngaro Tuia te Ora, the Endangered Species Foundation:

- Does not support this bill in its current state and proposes significant amendments.
- Wishes to be heard in support of this submission.
- Opposes including McCallum Brother's Ltd Pākiri / Mangawhai sand mining operation to the fast-track list.
- Opposes any fast tracking of mining in national parks, regional parks and any areas of environmental significance, especially areas where there are endangered species.
- Opposes new irrigation and water-usage projects that do not involve community and expert input.
- Opposes seabed mining.
- Opposes any new legislation or development projects that do not include scientific, legal, iwi, community consultation and feedback.

The Fast Track Bill represents a dangerous precedent that prioritises corporate interests over nature, democracy, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As guardians of Aotearoa's endangered species and habitats, we urge the government to reject this bill and uphold its commitment to environmental protection, democratic governance, and indigenous rights. Together, we must work towards a future where development is sustainable, equitable, and respectful of the interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems.

Signed,



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