

# Foundation North submission on DOC's Predator Free 2050 Strategy Review

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Prepared with



## Description

Foundation North was established in 1988 as one of twelve regional community trusts. Our purpose is to enhance lives through responsible guardianship of our investments and focused funding, anchored by our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The value of Foundation North's funds under management on 31 March 2025 was over \$1.79 billion, with over \$1 billion returned in grants since our inception to not-for-profit initiatives in Tāmaki Makaurau and Te Tai Tokerau.

## Why

1. Our interest in this consultation is driven by our communities, who are at the heart of everything we do. We are privileged to occupy an enabling role, with our funding and other support empowering community mahi and projects that make positive differences to our region, both now and for future generations.

2. Our strategic plan is our pathway to the achievement of our vision of enhanced lives. We are committed to increasing equity (Hāpai te ōritetanga); enhancing social inclusion (Whakauru mai); regenerating the environment (Whakahou taiao) and enabling community support (Hāpori awhina) across our rohe.

**Predator free focus:** For many years we have been contributing to mana whenua and community efforts to be predator free across the region of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) and Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). To give insight into the breadth and depth of Foundation North support, over the last five years we have funded around 60 predator free initiatives totalling over \$27 million. Of this, nine of the predator free initiatives are collaborations with the about to be dis-established Predator Free 2050 Ltd.

In addition to funding, Foundation North has formed strong relationships with the many

predator free initiatives, understanding that the desired system transformation of a predator free Aotearoa will only be achieved through long-term relationships and trust.

**Systems change:** A strategic refresh in 2024 further embedded our commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Climate Action into our overall Foundation North strategy. To achieve our goals, we take a holistic approach to understanding the total system, not just parts of it, working in partnership with grantees and other funders to achieve projects of greater scale and impact in our region.

Along with environmental outcomes, our investment in predator free initiatives has provided key learnings and insights for us about the kinds of landscape-scale approaches that work eg. Tangata Whenua-led, mountains to sea approaches that value and implement Mātauranga Māori.

We have also learnt what is effective and enabling when supporting and advocating in this space eg. convening networks of common interest, leading from behind to amplify community voices, and action for systems change.

We have also witnessed the power of Kotahitanga (togetherness) when working in partnering ways with Tangata Whenua, other community stakeholders, and with other funders, including local and central government.

These insights are particularly relevant to this Strategic Review of PF2050.



## Foundation North Submission

The following submission has been formed after conversations with the many predator free Foundation North grantees and consideration of issues that we at Foundation North believe are important to achieve a Predator Free Aotearoa. Overall, Foundation North supports the PF2050 strategy for 2025-2030 and our submission comments on the target species, the four focus areas and general points to be considered by DOC as essential to systemic efforts for PF2050.

**Eradication as priority:** Foundation North submits that it is essential that DOC keep a priority focus on eradication and not just control and suppression of target predators.

**Efficacy of DOC:** With the dis-establishment of the company Predator Free 2050 Ltd and management moving to DOC, there is a chance that the crucial 'laser-focus' on eradication will be watered down into DOC's general business. This brings a risk to community buy-in and subsequent loss of momentum to the national predator free goal. The budget announcement to close the company in a cost-cutting drive was unexpected and will have implications for implementation of this Strategy Review.

Foundation North has concerns for the following and requests that DOC implement these recommendations:

- PF2050 Limited was a company that did well to be agile, work with and advocate for mana whenua, community and stakeholders, and dedicate long-term funds to achieving predator-free status. For Foundation North, working with PF2050 Limited felt like collaborating with an ally. Foundation North hopes that DOC continue the learned behaviour of centring mana whenua and place to achieve strong relationships and enduring predator free outcomes.
- The Minister of Conservation said closing

the company is saving \$12.6m in operating costs over four years and the costs of managing Predator Free 2050 Ltd's projects and contracts will be absorbed into DOC's baseline. Foundation North hopes that a large portion of this \$12.6m is tagged to predator free activity and does not get lost in the many demands of caring for public conservation land (PCL). Use of the funding by DOC should include having staff dedicated to PF2050 and continued empowerment of those doing the predator free work on the ground, across all land tenures.

- Foundation North encourages DOC to consider the new Niwa-led research that native forests are absorbing far more carbon dioxide than previously thought as reason to further fund and prioritise co-ordinated large-scale pest control on public and private land to protect these vital natural carbon sinks.

**National target species list:** Foundation North submits that feral cats should be added to the current target list for the following reasons and with specific conditions:

**Reasons:** Feral cats are not only apex predators, but they are also one of the deadliest predators. In each of the landscape scale sites that Foundation North support, feral cats have had a major impact on native wildlife. Various groups have undertaken successful feral cat trapping programmes that have built community trust (including with domestic cat owners) through effective communication and safety practices. Auckland Council is an active partner in this feral cat work.

By continuing to not include feral cats on the national target species list, DOC is undermining the entire predator free 2050 'moonshot'. The feasibility assessment by DOC in Appendix A rates feral cats the same as stoats, weasels, Norway and Ship

rats – all being assessed as “beyond current capability”. Foundation North believe that the growth in both social understanding about feral cat impacts and knowledge on methods to combat these impacts are indicators to keep going. There is a risk of the public hearing a ‘slow down’ message rather than accelerate.

**Conditions:** Specific funding for feral cat work is required to accompany the addition of feral cats to the national target species list. Existing funding for the various landscape sites is fully committed to the existing target species. Foundation North also suggests that those landscape sites that have demonstrable feral cat impact on vulnerable native species are listed for research, so that their knowledge gains are shared nationally.

### **Draft goals for 2030:**

**Maintain the gains:** Foundation North support this focus area as the number one priority as DOC takes on PF2050 Ltd operations. Reinforcing points already made in this submission, Foundation North strongly encourages DOC to do things differently in the next five years and beyond, taking on the lessons that PF2050 Ltd were able to learn and support the full potential of our people, forests and oceans to adapt and thrive.

**Mobilise:** Foundation North fully supports the ongoing inspiring and empowering of New Zealanders to take action. This is most effective through sharing narratives and embodied experience in active predator free programmes. A specific mobilisation objective should be:

### **Recommendation for Predator Free**

**Tikapa Moana:** Foundation North supports a new and explicit objective in the revised Predator 2050 Strategy, to achieve a predator free Hauraki Gulf by connecting the existing predator free initiatives in Aotea Great Barrier, Kawau and Waiheke Islands to the 47 existing predator free islands. The Hauraki Gulf predator free programmes

will provide valuable insights into predator free and biosecurity practices for human populated areas and important social lessons on aligning eradication methods with community acceptance and support. The Hauraki Gulf islands are located in a globally recognised seabird superhighway. Being predator free, the islands will act as sanctuaries for vulnerable seabirds and contribute to international biodiversity regeneration.

**Innovate:** Foundation North shares the worry of some of its grantees that DOC may reduce the efforts on private land and by private operators. Predator free work on PCL is crucial and is only part of the equation needed to reach PF2050 nationally. This focus area is directly linked to the certainty that comes with long term funding and belief in the creativity and capability of those on the ground. Foundation North would like to see new technology and innovation to catch trap-shy predators, especially in human populated landscapes.

**Accelerate:** Foundation North supports evidence-based planning and action and encourages DOC to link this focus area to ‘maintain the gains’ with a commitment over the next five years to have no reduction in mana whenua development, Predator Free staff capacity and support of thousands of private landowners. Attracting additional funding external to central government will likely be most effective with the direct sharing of success stories around the country to potential funders. Foundation North recommends that mana whenua and community be directly involved in the assessment of feasibility to get to PF2050.

**Support needed:** The single biggest barrier and therefore the most important support needed is long-term certainty with funding and non-funding support through to 2050. Funding is something that Foundation North is deeply engaged with, being in the business of giving to enhance lives. This includes a long

track record of funding predator free and predator control work. Foundation North has learned that

- funding needs systemic thinking and collaboration,
- funding spikes and cliffs (like Jobs4Nature) need to be better managed,
- funding those closest to the work on the ground and providing non-funding support around relationships and innovation is most effective for sustained impact.

Philanthropy is only a part of the support system required for predator free efforts.

Further to the earlier comments about DOC taking on the roles that PF2050 Ltd had, Foundation North supports the call from its predator free grantees for DOC to maintain essential functions including:

- Advice and guidance on project planning, implementation, and monitoring, ensuring projects are designed for maximum impact
- Facilitated connections between projects and Predator Free New Zealand Trust and the Department of Conservation, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Investment in research and development to improve predator control tools and techniques, making these advancements available to landscape-scale initiatives
- Meaningful assistance with accessing funding opportunities via industry fundraising experts
- Navigating the complexities of large-scale predator eradication efforts and supporting projects to learn by doing.

**Conclusion:** Foundation North continues to contribute to the PF2050 goal and would like to work closely with DOC, and the predator free projects, aiming to uphold the

momentum of the predator-free movement through strong partnerships and shared goals.



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