



Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

Submission Template

We would like to hear your views on the proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL).

Please feel free to use this template to prepare your submission. Once complete please email to soils@mpi.govt.nz.

You can also make a submission using the online submission tool. A link to the online submission tool is available at www.mpi.govt.nz/HighlyProductiveLand.

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If yes, which organisation are you submitting on behalf of?

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Questions for submitters

The questions for submitters that are included throughout the discussion document are provided below. We encourage you to provide comments to support your answers to the questions below. You do not have to answer all questions for your submission to be considered.

The page numbers mentioned below indicate where further information about the question is located in the discussion document.

Section 2.3: Defining highly productive land [page 19]

What are the values and benefits associated with highly productive land?

They are versatile in terms of different uses because of a their combination of soil properties, slope and climate. This enables a range of productive uses (e.g. wastewater irrigation, crop types) with a minimum of inputs or issues compared to other land.

What are the values and benefits associated with existing food growing hubs and how can these be maximised?

Existing food hubs utilise the efficiencies of combined scale for crops, expertise, labour and machinery. Uses that prevent this efficiency, such as reverse sensitivity and small lot size, need to be prevented.



Section 3.1: Problem statement [page 23]

Does the RMA framework provide sufficient clarity and direction on how highly productive land should be managed? Why/why not?

No. The RMA does not give clarity or certainty.

Does the RMA framework provide sufficient clarity on how highly productive land should be considered alongside competing uses? Why/why not?

No. Political pressure for addressing the immediate desire for subdivision and housing overtakes the intergenerational long-term community benefit of reserving productive land for future needs. The future benefits of retaining productive land cannot compete with multi-million property gains from subdividing productive land today.

How are values and wider benefits of highly productive land being considered in planning and consenting processes?

No. They are being considered, then largely discarded in favour of subdivision. For example, cumulative effects of incremental subdivision are not considered. No council has a threshold or limit as to when enough is enough. Council staff have a high turnover and politicians are local and only in for 3 years. They don't want problems and it's easier to grant subdivision than defend saying no.

Section 3.2: Urban expansion on to highly productive land [page 24]

How is highly productive land currently considered when providing urban expansion? Can you provide examples?

In most cases it's not provided for. For example, Cambridge is expanding onto Class 1 highly versatile land. This is pushing out high value uses such as dairying, horse training and breeding and land used for irrigation of dairy factory wastewater.

The assumption is that towns have the right to grow. But Hamilton is near, there is less productive land to the east and south, but away from the town.

There is also the assumption that people have the right to have almost unlimited access to lifestyle blocks. Experience shows these are the vanguard of urbanisation and largely a wasteful use of productive land.

How should highly productive land be considered when planning for future urban expansion?



Highly productive land is rare in NZ and an intergenerational asset. Much is currently underutilised under pasture, but this will not be the case in the future.

Highly productive land should be excluded from future expansion and zoned as strategic food areas for current and future use. If there is limited land for expansion then housing growth should be upwards, or in another location.

Section 3.3: Fragmentation of highly productive land [page 25]

How is highly productive land currently considered when providing for rural-lifestyle development? Can you provide examples?

Generally, lifestyle development is considered a productive use of rural land – which it isn't. Excellent land around Hamilton and south Auckland e.g. Karaka is being turned into lifestyle blocks.

How should highly productive land be considered when providing for rural-lifestyle development?

It should not be used for lifestyle development. There are reverse sensitivity issues, fragmentation of land reducing its efficient use, and future pressure for its further subdivision.

Section 3.4: Reverse sensitivity [page 26]

How should the tensions between primary production activities and potentially incompatible activities best be managed?

There should be buffer distances and clearly demarked zoned areas to minimise reverse sensitivity issues. Lower class land within areas of highly productive land should not be allowed to be further subdivided for housing or lifestyle blocks. This would create reverse sensitivity issues and impact on the efficient production of the larger area of productive land.

How can reverse sensitivity issues at the rural-urban interface best be managed?

By having defined food producing zones that are not compromised by allowing subdivision for urban or lifestyle use within them, even on the less productive land contained within them.



Section 3.5: These issues are being seen throughout New Zealand [page 26]

Do you agree that there is a problem? Has it been accurately reflected in this document?

Yes there is a problem. I have been mapping soils for 35 years and completed may for subdivision purposes. I have seen highly productive land subdivided for residential and lifestyle use despite it being against the district plan.

Are you aware of other problems facing highly productive land?

Subdivision of lower productive land within highly productive land is an issue. This creates fragmentation and reverse sensitivity issues.

Soil contaminants are potentially an issue. Treated timber is burnt, leaches, and spreads arsenic in the soil. This issue is not well known with landusers.

Loss of topsoil carbon is a potential issue. Vegetable growing is known for this, but dairy farming is also having an impact that could be a problem over time.

Section 4.5 Preferred option – a National Policy Statement [page 31]

Which option do you think would be the most effective to address the problems identified in Chapter Three? Why?

NPS is the best option. It has more regulatory and policy weight than the other methods.

Are there other pros and cons of a National Policy Statement that should be considered?

Flexibility is dangerous in the hands of councils. In my 15 years experience working as a regional council science manager I have seen 'flexibility' used as a political expedient to grant developments that are not in line with policies or their intent.

Productive land will continue to be lost unless councils are forced to protect it and have no flexibility to opt out of their duty. Developers, politicians and those with a narrow short-term view will always lobby that a few hectares of highly productive land for housing. They will justify its loss as minor in the scheme of things. Cumulative impacts will not be apparent and then it's too late.

Are there other options not identified in this chapter that could be more effective?



Section 5.2 Purpose of the proposed National Policy Statement [page 34]

Should the focus of the National Policy Statement be on versatile soils or highly productive land more broadly? Why/why not?

The focus should be on highly productive land. It is possible to have highly productive land that is not classified as versatile soil. Versatile soil is a sub-set of highly productive land. Highly productive land may also contain small areas of lower productive land, but the parcel of land is still regarded as highly productive.

Should the focus of the National Policy Statement be on primary production generally or on certain types of food production activities? Why/why not?

The focus should be on primary production generally. Land use and crops change over time. Once there were no kiwifruit or avocado orchards, in the future there will be other crops such as tea. Climate change will allow other crops to be grown that are currently not in New Zealand.

Section 5.3 The scope of the proposal [page 35]

Do you support the scope of the proposal to focus on land use planning issues affecting highly productive land? Why/why not?

Yes. Highly productive land is being lost to housing, lifestyle blocks and fragmented. Highly productive land is not valued correctly for its strategic, economic and food security importance for New Zealand. It is being considered in terms of today and not in terms of future and intergenerational needs. The view of highly productive land needs to be refocused on its strategic value for New Zealand.

Highly productive land should be able to include areas of less productive land. It is unusual to have homogeneous areas of solely highly productive land.

What matters, if any, should be added to or excluded from the scope of the National Policy Statement? Why?



Should future urban zones and future urban areas be excluded from the scope of the National Policy Statement? What are the potential benefits and costs?

No they need to be included. Urban areas are often founded in areas of highly productive land. Therefore, they need to be included to ensure the remaining land is protected.

Should the National Policy Statement apply nationally or target areas where the pressures on highly productive land are greater?

It should be applied nationally. This is planning for the future. Those areas of highly productive land outside pressure areas need to be protected for future use.

Section 5.4 The proposed National Policy Statement [page 37]

What would an ideal outcome be for the management of highly productive land for current and future generations?

Councils have strict planning rules and are audited. The outcome is defined zones of predominantly highly productive land that cannot be subdivided or used for purposes that would compromise the efficient use of the land for food production.

Policy 1: Identification of highly productive land [page 41]

If highly productive land is to be identified, how should this be done and by whom?

I have been mapping land for decades and very experienced in this work. This has been with Landcare Research and as a private contractor.

The method of identification of highly productive land depends on the scale of the planning that is used.

- 1) If the intention is to zone large tracts of predominantly highly productive land bounded by boundaries that are roads etc then Landcare Research digital S-maps based on soil-landscape models (scale 1:25,000) would be appropriate. These zoned areas would contain less productive land but the whole zone would be defined as highly productive land and all land within it treated the same.



- 2) If the intention is to assess each property then no maps are sufficiently accurate to show the distribution of high and lower productive land. A detailed property map (scale 1:5,000) needs to be done on-site by a suitably experienced and qualified person.

Are the proposed criteria all relevant and important considerations for identifying highly productive land? Why/why not?

Using LUC is a good method to use, climate is within the LUC classification and does not need to be done separately. Some locations such as Pukekohe, have frost-free areas but even with frost the land is still highly productive land. I think the LUC classification alone is suitable and a separate climate component isn't needed unless further detail is needed.

The size and coherence of the land should not be a criteria. In Pukekohe for example, small lots are leased and cropped. Small size does not preclude it from being part of a productive larger unit. Also new crops and uses may mean small size is not an impediment. Small size can be used as a reason for further subdivision. As can economic viability. Both should not be a criteria.

An area of highly productive land should be allowed to contain some less productive land. It is usual to have less productive land contained within an area of highly productive land.

Policy 2: Maintaining highly productive land for primary production [page 42]

What are the pros and cons associated with prioritising highly productive land for primary production?

The term 'consider giving greater protection' is a waste of time including. Councils will ignore this. They can consider then do as they please.

If councils are to consider labour, transport etc in deciding if land is highly productive then they will use these ephemeral factors as reason/excuses to allow subdivision. The short term politics and interests of councils will not result in protection of highly productive land if there is discretion to 'consider'. More directive rules are required.

Alignment with the Urban Growth Agenda [page 43]

Do you think there are potential areas of tension or confusion between this proposed National Policy Statement and other national direction (either proposed or existing)?



How can the proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land and the proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development best work alongside each other to achieve housing objectives and better management of the highly productive land resource?

Policy 3: New urban development on highly productive land [page 45]

How should highly productive land be considered when identifying areas for urban expansion?

It shouldn't be considered for urban expansion. At the present rate of urban expansion and lifestyle block growth there will be no highly productive land left around our urban areas. Sooner or later we need to address urban expansion. That will mean new towns, redirection of growth upwards and in other directions. Best to do this sooner rather than later.

Policy 4: Rural subdivision and fragmentation [page 46]

How should the National Policy Statement direct the management of rural subdivision and fragmentation on highly productive land?

It would stop further subdivision.



Policy 5: Reverse sensitivity [page 47]

How should the National Policy Statement direct the management of reverse sensitivity effects on and adjacent to highly productive land?

Policies 6 and 7: Consideration of private plan changes and resource consent applications on highly productive land [page 49]

How should the National Policy Statement guide decision-making on private plan changes to rezone highly productive land for urban or rural lifestyle use?

It should make it a prohibited activity. There should be firm rules for zoned areas of predominantly highly productive land.

How should the National Policy Statement guide decision-making on resource consent applications for subdivision and urban expansion on highly productive land?

It should be more directive, removing council discretion. Councils are biased toward subdivision and don't like to be seen as 'anti-growth'. They also avoid difficult decisions like how to stop or manage urban expansion.

Section 5.6 Implementation [page 52]

What guidance would be useful to support the implementation of the National Policy Statement?



Specific / technical questions

The questions below are included in the outline of the proposed NPS-HPL (Chapter Five of the discussion document) and may assist technical experts when providing a submission.

Specific questions

Section 5.3: The scope of the proposal [page 35]

How should the National Policy Statement best influence plan preparation and decision-making on resource consents and private plan changes?

Should the National Policy Statement include policies that must be inserted into policy statements and plans without going through the Schedule 1 process? What are the potential benefits and risks?

What areas of land, if any, should be excluded from the scope of the proposed National Policy Statement? Why?

Specific questions

Section 5.4: The proposed National Policy Statement [page 37]

What level of direction versus flexibility should the objectives provide to maintain the availability of highly productive land for primary production?

Should the objectives provide more or less guidance on what is “inappropriate subdivision, use and development” on highly productive land? Why/why not?

Specific questions

Policy 1: Identification of highly productive land [page 41]

What are the pros and cons of requiring highly productive land to be spatially identified?

Identification of areas gives certainty to land users. It clearly shows where things can, and can't, happen. It prevents a lot of anxiety and wasted money applying for or fighting land use changes.



Cost is a potential issue but depends on scale. It is more expensive at a district scale but in terms of protecting the district economy and intergenerational resource it is cheap. At the property scale it is also cheap in terms of the expected financial gains of a subdivision.

The definition of highly productive land could be different for each region but must include LUC class 1 land and LUC class 2s, 2e land (i.e. highly versatile soil). Highly productive land can include up to 20 per cent of other land.

Is the identification of highly productive land best done at the regional or district level? Why?

Identification can be done at the regional level. That would provide consistency across districts. The region can direct the district approach to give consistency. The result would be applied by the district and audited by the region.

What are the likely costs and effort involved in identifying highly productive land in your region?

Some regions e.g. Waikato have already employed Landcare Research to develop more accurate soil maps for their area. It would be a relatively simple and inexpensive process for these to be used as a basis for providing more accurate LUC mapping.

Individual properties cost \$3k to \$20k (depending on size) for an on-site LUC map. This is minor in relation to other subdivision costs and potential benefits.

Technical mapping expertise is currently keeping up with demand. If demand increases then it would take 3 years for more experts to be trained. This would be similar to producing farm environment plans. Initially there was a lack of expertise but this rapidly increased with certainty of demand.

What guidance and technical assistance do you think will be beneficial to help councils identify highly productive land?

A definition is essential. If it's just highly productive land based on LUC classes then there could be a problem with fragmentation caused by lower class land within predominantly highly productive areas. The definition could be different for each region but must include LUC class 1 land and LUC class 2s, 2e land (i.e. highly versatile soil). Highly productive land can include up to 20 per cent of other land.

Technical expertise exists in Landcare Research and in the private sector (e.g. I have 14 years regional council policy & science experience; 15 years with Landcare research mapping land and as a private contractor mapping land)



Specific questions

Appendix A: Criteria to identify highly productive land [page 41]

Should there be a default definition of highly productive land based on the LUC until councils identify this? Why/why not?

Yes. A definition is essential, and many councils have one based on LUC. The definition could be different for each region but I recommend it must include LUC class 1 land and LUC class 2s, 2e land (i.e. highly versatile soil). Councils can add other LUC classes such as LUC 3 or other criteria.

If it's just highly productive land based on LUC classes then there could be a problem with fragmentation caused by lower class land within predominantly highly productive areas. Therefore, mapped highly productive land can include up to 20 per cent of other land.

What are the key considerations to consider when identifying highly productive land? What factors should be mandatory or optional to consider?

Mandatory should be

- LUC class 1 land and LUC class 2s, 2e land (i.e. highly versatile soil).
- Mapped highly productive land can include up to 20 per cent of other land (as buffer areas and to prevent fragmentation).

What are the benefits and risks associated with allowing councils to consider the current and future availability of water when identifying highly productive land? How should this be aligned with Essential Freshwater Programme?

Crop types change and water use may no longer be a relevant consideration. Also, future water storage may increase, and water shortage may no longer be an issue. For these reasons water supply should not be a consideration.

Should there be a tiered approach to identify and protect highly productive land based on the LUC class (e.g. higher levels of protection to LUC 1 and 2 land compared to LUC 3 land)? Why/why not?

Yes. LUC class 1 and part of LUC class 2 land (e.g. LUC 2e, 2s) is the best of the best (highly versatile soil). Some LUC 3 land from volcanic ash is also exceptional.



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Specific questions

Policy 3: New urban development on highly productive land [page 45]

How can this policy best encourage proactive and transparent consideration of highly productive land when identifying areas for new urban development and growth?

How can the proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land best align and complement the requirements of the proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development?

Specific questions

Policy 4: Rural subdivision and fragmentation [page 46]

Should the National Policy Statement provide greater direction on how to manage subdivision on highly productive land (e.g. setting minimum lot size standards for subdivisions)? If so, how can this best be done?

Should the proposed National Policy Statement encourage incentives and mechanisms to increase the productive capacity of highly productive land (e.g. amalgamation of small titles)? Why/why not?

Specific questions



Policy 5: Reverse sensitivity [page 47]

How can the National Policy Statement best manage reverse sensitivity effects within and adjacent to highly productive land?

Specific questions

Policy 6 and Policy 7: Consideration of private plan changes and resource consent applications on highly productive land [page 49]

Should these policies be directly inserted into plans without going through the Schedule 1 process (i.e. as a transitional policy until each council gives effect to the National Policy Statement)? What are the potential benefits and risks?

How can these policies best assist decision-makers consider trade-offs, benefits, costs and alternatives when urban development and subdivision is proposed on highly productive land?

Should the policies extend beyond rural lifestyle subdivision and urban development to large scale rural industries operations on highly productive land? Why/why not?



Specific questions

Section 5.5: Interpretation

Do any of the draft definitions in the National Policy Statement need further clarification? If so, how?

Are there other key terms in the National Policy Statement that should be defined and, if so, how?

Should there be minimum threshold for highly productive land (i.e. as a percentage of site or minimum hectares)? Why/why not?

Specific questions

Section 5.6: Implementation [page 52]

Do you think a planning standard is needed to support the consistent implementation of some proposals in this document?

If yes, what specific provisions do you consider are effectively delivered via a planning standard tool?



Specific questions

Section 5.7: Timeframes [page 52]

What is the most appropriate and workable approach for highly productive land to be identified by council? Should this be sequenced as proposed?

What is an appropriate and workable timeframe to allow councils to identify highly productive land and amend their policy statements and plans to identify that land?



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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.