

Biodiversity & deforestation commitment

Meridian's purpose of **Clean energy for a fairer and healthier world** is at the heart of all we do. It is why we are committed to making meaningful contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) that are most relevant to us. As they relate to biodiversity and deforestation, our goals include: Climate Action, Responsible Consumption and Production, Life on Land, and Clean Water and Sanitation.

Aotearoa New Zealand is full of unique and rich biodiversity, much of which is both nationally and globally significant. As such, Meridian's goal to increase its renewable energy generation capacity to meet Aotearoa's decarbonisation and Net-Zero by 2050 target means that, at times, we must weigh the cost-benefits of operating and developing in natural environments that contain or are in 'close proximity' to 'critical biodiversity' or 'critical habitats'.

Close Proximity: sites which either contain (i.e. overlapping) or are adjacent (between 0 and 2km from nearest site) to critical biodiversity.

Critical Biodiversity: nationally and globally significant indigenous flora and fauna.

Critical Habitats: habitats of nationally and globally significant indigenous flora and fauna.

In order to minimise any negative impacts that our operations have on biodiversity, we comply with all environmental legislation including resource consent conditions across our assets. We acknowledge that the sphere of impact we have goes far beyond Meridian's own

operations which is why our Supplier Code of Conduct also sets out our expectation that our suppliers will also comply with national and international environmental policy and legislation.

Our biodiversity commitments:

- All Meridian asset sites will be assessed and mapped for biodiversity values according to the Resource Management Act 1991. This Act provides that the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna are matters of national importance. The information required in application for resource consents are visible [here](#).
- We maintain biodiversity by applying avoidance, remediation, mitigation, restoration and compensation approaches.
- A Fatal Flaws Assessment is conducted on all new land prospects including the ability to avoid intolerable impacts on Critical Biodiversity or Critical Habitats where practicable.
- We mitigate the impacts of our activities through a combination of design, consent conditions, operational parameters and mitigation agreements with external stakeholders. Examples of mitigation, restoration and compensation partnerships conducted with external stakeholders include:
 - Project River Recovery run in partnership with Department of Conservation- working to preserve and restore braided river habitats in the Waitaki catchment.
 - Waiau River Restoration project run in partnership with the Waiau Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Trust, including Takiroa Wetlands project.
 - Elver Trap and Transfer under the guidance of Ngāi Tahu.
 - Monitoring New Zealand native bat or falcon populations at specific times, then reporting findings. [See more here](#).
 - Providing fencing and predator-reduction to protect the habitat of New Zealand's native falcon. [See more here](#) (pg 19).
 - Covenants registered over land to protect ecological plantings and wetlands. As seen by the addition of 110 hectares to the 40 hectares of red tussock protected at White Hill wind farm. [See more here](#) (pg 19).
- We report our environmental compliance to local government who oversee our resource consent and operational performance. We report to specialist statutory guardians appointed to oversee our operations and environmental outcomes in [Guardians of Lakes](#), [Manapōuri](#), [Monowai](#) and [Te Anau](#). We also report on our environmental performance in our publicly available and independently assured Integrated Annual Report, and on our website, as well as through our consent compliance reporting, reporting to stakeholder groups, and reports to government.



Meridian.

The Power to
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Our no net deforestation commitment

Meridian has committed to no net deforestation* across our operations (excluding Wilding conifers[^]). During FY23 we implemented a monitoring programme for this commitment, including measurement of recent years, and are pleased to confirm we have most likely achieved a net-afforestation position across our operations since FY20 when our Forever Forests programme began.

Meridian has a range of voluntary biodiversity and afforestation projects

- Meridian committed to [Forever Forests](#) in 2019 with a vision to maintain a direct relationship with the atmosphere and remove emissions, investing in permanent forests in Aotearoa that also provided broader biodiversity and social benefits. Meridian's Forever Forest emission removals are sized to align with our residual operational emissions in FY30, after achieving our 'Half by 30' gross emissions reduction target. Meridian has adopted a mixed model of exotics and natives, planting predominantly on our own land, and will transition these forests to 100% natives over time. To ensure a native forest's survival, forest management will include extensive and ongoing pest eradication, fencing and weed control as

well as monitoring of outcomes. Some recent highlights from this programme have included:

- Securing 100% of the land required
- 288,000 stems planted
- 660,000 stems ordered for 2023-25 planting seasons
- Ensuring we involve our people and communities in the plantings. Meridian has had 6 native-only plantings involving Meridian staff.
- As a part of our afforestation efforts, we are seeking other opportunities such as the Tūi Corridor - partnering with the Christchurch Foundation and Sustainable Coastlines to bring the Tūi bird species back to Christchurch by planting a 'corridor' of native plants across Christchurch. See more at: [Let's Plant Tūi Corridor Together | Meridian Energy](#).
- We have been working with local authorities in the Waitaki District to remove wilding pines and replace them with a mixture of sterile *pinus radiata* and natives endemic to the area. For example, our work to control [wilding conifers in Lake Benmore](#).

- Consistently working closely with Land Information New Zealand with biosecurity control programmes. For example, the removal of invasive weeds that pose a threat to conservation or biodiversity values. This includes the spraying of gorse, broom, old man's beard, other woody weeds and the lake weed species **Lagarosiphon major** - [report seen here](#).
- Since 2016 we have been the National Partner of the Department of Conservation's Kākāpō Recovery Programme. That partnership has contributed to critical research to help the species recover and has had a real impact in raising awareness of the plight of these precious native parrots. It's not just our partners who benefit from these programmes; our staff also find them inspiring and many volunteer to help out in their spare time.

* Adopting the [Accountability Framework deforestation definition](#), deforestation is considered to be the loss of natural forest as a result of: conversion to agriculture or other non-forest land use, conversion to a tree plantation, or severe and sustained degradation.

[^] Wilding conifers is the term for introduced conifers that spread across the landscape from natural generation. Meridian considers it appropriate to exclude Wilding conifers from the scope of our no net deforestation commitment because they are recognised as posing threats to New Zealand's ecosystems, and a National Wilding Conifer Control Programme is in place to address this. Meridian also considers it appropriate to exclude Wilding conifers from the scope of our no net deforestation commitment, on the basis most Wilding conifer species are defined as 'tree weeds' under the Climate Change Response Act 2002 (CCRA) - see the [Climate Change \(Forestry\) Regulations 2022](#). Land on which tree weeds grow are excluded or are eligible (following an application process) to be declared as exempt from the New Zealand Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme under the CCRA.