

The Point Solar Farm avifauna compensation options DRAFT

Compensation activities:

1. Predator control

DOC currently undertakes predator control in the Godley and Cass River areas, but the funding for this through the International Visitor Levy is due to run out in 2029 [to confirm timing]. This proposal would fund continuation of that work to retain the gains made. Protection is targeted at kakī, black-fronted tern, banded dotterel and black-billed gulls, and is improving survival for all species and allowing release of captive-reared kakī into the area.

Cost estimate: \$595,000 over 7 years.

Outcome: maintain kakī and black-fronted tern populations in the Godley and Cass rivers, and provide co-benefits for other species in those areas.

2. Transmitter project

One of the biggest issues for kakī is the low survival of released birds in the 1-2 year age range, which leads to reduced recruitment to the adult breeding population. This project would provide a dedicated ranger position to lead transmitter tracking work, with the aim being to improve understanding of the movements of birds post-release and causes of decline of 1-2 year old birds. As part of this, the tracking would also help understand kakī movements in relation to solar farms.

Cost estimate \$405,000 spread over a 3-year research project.

Outcome: Improved understanding of the causes kakī losses at 1-2 years, to allow future work to better target those causes and improve survival to breeding. Also better understanding of exposure to solar farm collision risk.

3. Wetland enhancement

Wetland habitat in the Mackenzie Basin continues to be lost. Wetlands are important to all of the threatened bird species in the Basin, and for kakī are particularly important during flood events which are becoming more frequent. This would include Dead Horse swamp pond development for improved habitat in the Tasman Valley and regular maintenance of weirs and ponds in Mailbox and Inlet and Micks Lagoon.

Cost estimate: \$35,000 over 3 years (with scope to expand or extend this if more funding was available)

Outcome: Improvement of habitat for threatened bird species, and improved resilience for kakī. Will also provide compensation for loss of habitat to solar arrays.

4. Instream invertebrate research

Understand instream invertebrate abundance over the calendar year to better understand food availability for birds, including kakī, at various times of the year. This may mean adjustments to release timeframes and hopefully better survival post release.

Cost estimate: \$15,000 over 1 year as a specific project.

Outcome: Improved management of kakī release and survival.

Suggested consent conditions to provide for this:

1. The Consent Holder shall ensure that an Avifauna Compensation Strategy (ACS) is prepared and undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Conservation
2. The objective of the ACS is to improve the survival and resilience of threatened species of birds which use or traverse the solar farm site (including kakī / black stilt, matuku-hūrepo / Australasian bittern and kōtuku / white heron and tarapirohe / Black-fronted tern) including by:
 - a) Targeting predators within the range of the bird species within the Mackenzie Basin, through trapping and other methods in order to increase birds' likelihood of survival;
 - b) Improving key habitat within the range of the bird species within the Mackenzie Basin;
 - c) Undertaking research which will support more effective management of the bird species.
3. *(Timing and certification requirements to align with other ecology conditions, and to provide for review of the strategy - eg if research indicates ways of improving effectiveness)*
4. The Consent Holder's financial contribution to the ACS shall comprise a payment to the Department of Conservation of \$1,000,000 to be used for implementation of the ACS, payable upon commencement of the construction of the solar farm.

These conditions are based on conditions agreed by DOC for the proposed Contact Energy Southland Wind Farm under Covid-19 Fast-track, and structured to operate via a one-off payment up front.

In terms of the FTAA, the recent decision for Waihi North includes a similar approach (joint Hauraki District and Waikato Region consents, conditions C30-C42). However, that is structured as an ongoing arrangement, so is more complex.

Note, as per DOC s53 comments, the ACS would still need to sit within a standard framework of management, monitoring, reporting etc, along the lines of the FNSF 18 Feb condition set.