

Conservation Amendment Bill

Climate Justice Taranaki Submission

1st July 2026

1. Founded in 2010 and incorporated in 2015, Climate Justice Taranaki (CJT) is dedicated to environmental health, social justice and inter-generational equity. Our vision is founded on, and underpinned by, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding document of government in Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. Composed of a broad range of people with varied expertise and life experiences, CJT has engaged with the government at all levels on numerous matters and submitted on many bills and policies. Our members are gravely concerned about the government's push for an increasingly utilitarian, neo-liberalism driven approach to exploiting our land, rivers and sea, at the expense of democracy, community wellbeing and long-term sustainability and resilience of Aotearoa as a nation.
3. The Conservation Amendment Bill¹ is a case in point. If passed into law, it would put 'economic use and development' over protection of conservation land. The proposed replacement of Section 6(e) with 6(ea), changing the functions of the Department of Conservation (DOC) from primarily conservation to recognising economic opportunities and enabling the "*use and development to the greatest extent practicable*" is totally unacceptable.
4. New Zealand has ratified international treaties, notably the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These are being dishonoured by the Bill which facilitates environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate disruption, even as Minister Tama Potaka promised to scrap the disposal and exchange clauses of the Bill^{2, 3}, under tremendous public pressure. During an election year however, government and ministerial promises ought to be weighed against political expediency, and some should be taken with a grain of salt.
5. Moreover, the Bill could undermine the rights of iwi and mana whenua when some conservation land becomes downgraded or privately owned. It becomes unavailable for return through the settlement process, removing future options for redress and limiting the ability of future generations to reconnect with, govern, or seek the return of ancestral whenua⁴.
6. In the wider context, this Bill is just one of numerous pieces of legislative and policy changes this coalition government has passed or is pursuing, to strip away the protection of te taiao, erode kaitiakitanga and weaken the ability of the public to see clearly or to act. This follows the typical 'far right playbook'⁵, to embolden the extractive, exploitative agenda for corporate profiteering. Resource Minister Shane Jones' adamant push for a critical minerals deal with the US before the election demonstrates this⁶. The Fisheries Amendment Bill⁷ is another example, albeit delayed due to internal and public oppositions⁸.

7. Wider still, humanity globally has breached seven of the nine planetary boundaries⁹ beyond which the safety and functioning of societies are at risks, let alone economy. We are already seeing the early results of climate breakdown, ecological collapse, ocean acidification, disruption of water cycles, and others. The interplay of such problems is creating a polycrisis that we cannot ignore, but to tackle with care and priorities given to restore and regenerate ecological and social wellbeing. The sooner we acknowledge and tackle ‘the reality of everything’¹⁰, the better.

8. CJT is thus strongly opposed to the Conservation Amendment Bill and requests that it be rejected in full and does not proceed into legislation.

¹ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2026/309/en/latest/>

² <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/minister-tama-potaka-to-remove-controversial-disposal-and-exchange-clauses-from-conservation-act/BGHOZIKFXBCZZNNSM4Q3YYCD5E/>

³ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/620847/controversial-clause-in-conservation-amendment-bill-that-allows-sale-of-conservation-land-to-be-removed>

⁴ <https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2026/06/25/concerns-grow-over-conservation-bill-and-weakened-land-protections/>

⁵ <https://farrightplaybook.nz/>

⁶ <https://newsroom.co.nz/2026/06/26/ministers-lock-horns-over-critical-minerals-funding>

⁷ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/cjt-sub-on-fisheries-amendment-bill-29apr26-final.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/598593/controversial-fisheries-amendment-bill-delayed-after-shane-jones-request>

⁹ <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

¹⁰ <https://realityofeverything.org/>