



SRARNZ
*Society for Research on
Amphibians and Reptiles in New Zealand (Inc.)*



Position Statement on Environmental Sustainability

As a society, SRARNZ has the following aims:

- to promote the scientific study of the biology of amphibians and reptiles of the New Zealand Region
- to promote the conservation of those species that are indigenous to the New Zealand Region.

Further, we acknowledge the unique connection that, firstly, mana whenua have in each of their respective tribal rohe (tribal areas) and, secondly, that Māori as tāngata whenua have with Aotearoa New Zealand and its biodiversity, a connection that helps all people to see ourselves as part of our natural environment.¹ We acknowledge and respect the role that Māori play as kaitiaki (guardians) of biodiversity, including taonga species (treasures). We encourage all members to engage with mana whenua over proposed research in line with the directive of the Conservation Act 1987 to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi).

Achievement of our aims and giving effect to our values depends on a healthy planet for biodiversity, including amphibians, reptiles and people and their relationships with the rest of te taiao (the natural world).

However, the health of our planet is currently at grave risk. The statistics are alarming for many environmental indicators. In particular, rising greenhouse gas emissions have created a climate emergency in which a rapid transition to zero-carbon lifestyles is needed to avoid catastrophic harm.^{2, 3} In Aotearoa New Zealand also, many indicators of environmental health are

¹References

Department of Conservation. 2020. Te Mana o Te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020. Department of Conservation, Wellington. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/biodiversity/aotearoa-new-zealand-biodiversity-strategy/te-mana-o-te-taiao-summary/>

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Ripple WJ, Wolf C, Newsome TM, Barnard P, Moomaw WR, and 11,258 scientist signatories from 153 countries. 2020. World scientists' warning of a climate emergency. *Bioscience* 70: 8-12.

³ Steffen W, Rockström J, Richardson K, Lenton TM, Folke C, Liverman D, Summerhayes CP, Barnosky AD, Cornell SE, Crucifix M, Donges JF, Fetzer I, Lade SJ, Scheffer M, Winkelmann R, Schellnhuber HJ. 2018. Trajectories of the Earth system in the Anthropocene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1810141115.

worsening; for example, the percentage of frog and reptile species considered as threatened or at risk of extinction is now about 80%.⁴ Unsustainable and increasing human consumption of resources is the underpinning cause of the climate emergency, and this has been driven by the wealthiest nations, including New Zealand.

The SRARNZ Council accepts the reality of these environmental indicators and the need for transformative change to low-carbon lifestyles at all levels of society⁵, including in our organisation.

As a society, we therefore commit as of 27th April 2022 to:

- Viewing all our activities with consideration of their environmental impacts, including the need to reduce our carbon footprint
- Specifically considering environmental impacts when planning future conferences, by:
 - continuing to discuss with our members and conference organisers how to reduce our estimated carbon emissions from travel over time by considering a range of conference formats
 - encouraging members to consider alternatives to travelling by air (for example, by using a web-based justification checklist⁶)
 - encouraging members to follow best practice for carbon-offsetting using an accredited certification scheme⁷ or donating equivalent funds to a native forestry project, where flights are considered unavoidable
 - making this a requirement for future projects financially supported by SRARNZ research awards or travel to conferences which is funded by SRARNZ
 - encouraging group travel and/or use of transportation methods with minimal carbon emissions where travel is undertaken by land, including on conference field trips,
 - minimising waste, including plastic waste, food waste and “give away” items
 - providing meatless meals as the default option
 - including discussion about environmentally sustainable practice as part of conferences

⁴ Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ. 2019. Environment Aotearoa 2019 *New Zealand's Environmental Reporting Series ME 1416*: Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ
<https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Environmental%20reporting/environment-aotearoa-2019.pdf>.

⁵ He Pou a Rangi – Climate Change Commission. 2021. Advice and evidence reports.
<https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/get-involved/our-advice-and-evidence/>

⁶ For example, the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education offers this tool:
https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/eaucscotland_air_travel_justification_tool_version_2.pdf

⁷ For example, <https://ekos.org.nz>

- requiring conference organisers to report back to Council on their success with these initiatives (including for our 2021 conference, which became fully online due to an elevation in COVID-19 alert levels in the days prior to the conference, but was intended as a semi-virtual conference with regional hubs)
- Reviewing our bank's investment policies for compatibility with this statement and making alternative banking arrangements if it is found to be incompatible
- Encouraging all members to consider the environmental impact of their research and other herpetological activities
- Sharing our concerns with the wider community.

We commit to reviewing this statement on an annual basis.