Environmental Subdivision Opportunities

A practical guide to exploring unlocking land value through environmental enhancement

E-BOOK

Restore Native
Trees for the land, birds and the people



One restoration partner
One point of accountability
From plan to performance

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Trees for the land, birds and the people

Introduction

Environmental Benefit Lots (EBLs) are often raised in planning conversations, but rarely explained clearly or consistently.

An Environmental Benefit Lot (EBL) is a planning pathway that may allow an extra lot to be created, or a development right to be transferred, in return for protecting or improving an area of environmental value.

An EBL does not automatically provide resource or subdivision consent. The pathway must be available under the relevant District Plan, and council approval is still required.

This guide provides a practical overview of Environmental Benefit Lots, focused on what is typically involved and how environmental delivery fits into the wider process.

EBL rules and requirements differ between councils. The process, environmental standards and timing will also depend on the site and the conditions of any consent. This guide provides a general introduction only, so it is important to get planning, ecological and legal advice for your property.



Terminology across different districts

While “Environmental Benefit Lot” is a commonly used term, different councils may use different names for the same underlying mechanism within their district plan rules.

The name may differ between districts, but the general idea is similar:

> *A planning pathway that may allow subdivision or a transferable development right in return for a protected, long-term environmental benefit. Council consent and approval are still required.*

Why landowners explore EBLs

In practice, EBLs are usually considered as part of a broader land-use or planning discussion.

Common drivers include:

- unlocking an additional subdivision entitlement
- creating a lifestyle or residential lot where rules allow
- supporting succession planning or long-term land strategy
- extracting value from land that is steep, wet, marginal, or inefficient to farm

While environmental stewardship is often part of the conversation, many landowners begin exploring EBLs from a practical standpoint:

- What options exist for this land, and what pathways are realistically available?
- EBLs provide a structured mechanism through which environmental enhancement can support those wider objectives.

What types of land do EBLs commonly relate to?

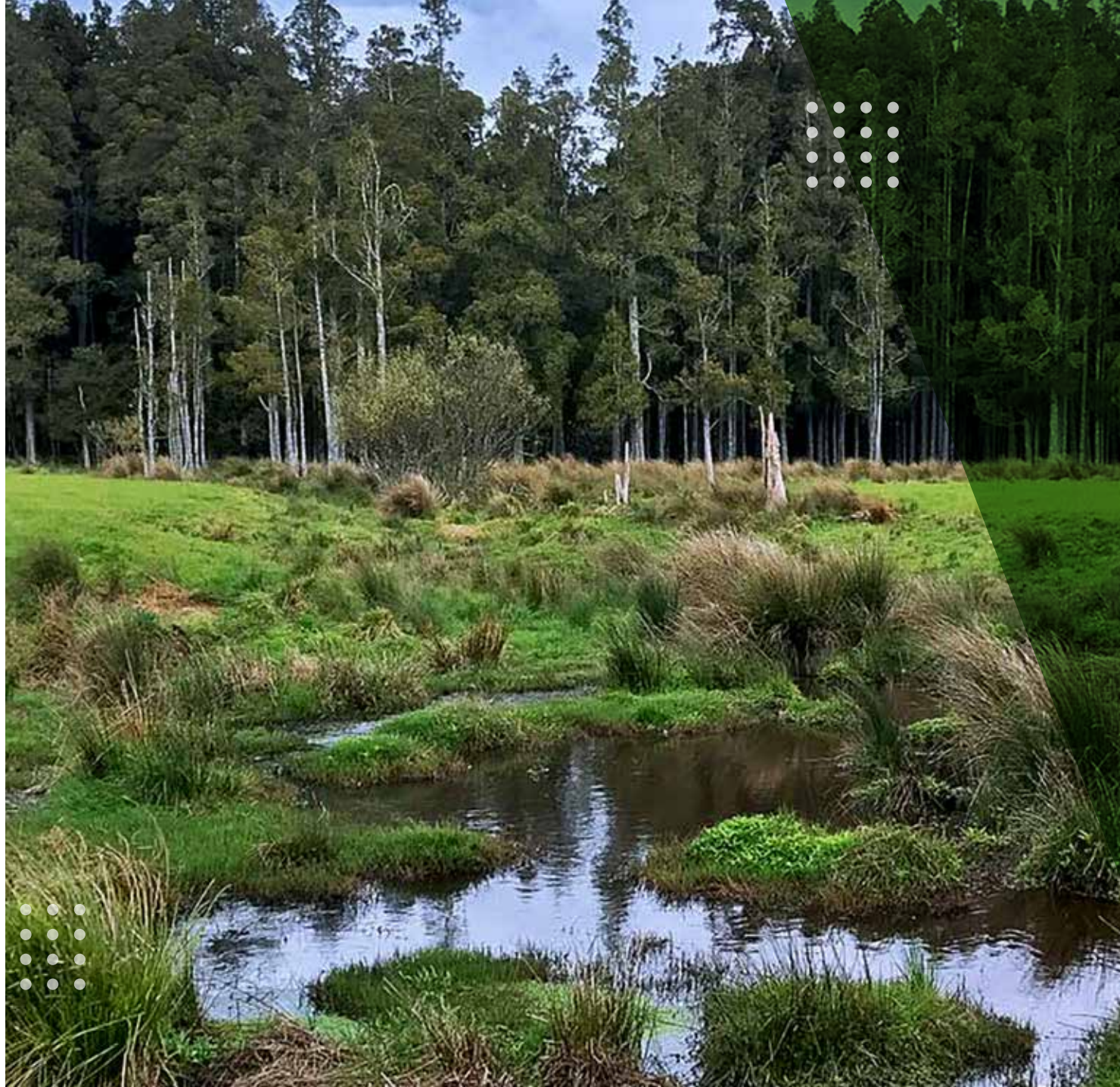
EBLs are typically associated with land that already contains, or has the potential to deliver, recognised environmental value.

This often includes:

- **existing native vegetation**, such as gullies, sidelings, or bush remnants
- **wetlands or wet area**s, including natural wetlands
- **stream margins and waterways** where riparian protection and enhancement can be achieved
- **areas set aside for restoration,** often land that is steep, marginal, or less suitable for ongoing farming

The defining factor is not the label applied to the land, but whether the environmental values can be secured and enhanced in a way that delivers a durable outcome over time.

Where an EBL pathway is pursued, the environmental benefit is expected to be ongoing and actively supported — not simply identified and left unmanaged.



The environmental benefit and what councils are looking for

Environmental Benefit Lots are assessed on the quality and durability of the environmental benefit being provided to the district — not simply the presence of land that appears environmentally valuable.

In practice, councils are looking for outcomes that are intentional, measurable, and capable of being secured long-term.

Environmental benefit may be recognised where land is provided for outcomes such as:

- **the protection or creation** of biodiversity corridors
- **the restoration, fencing, and ongoing protection** of ecologically significant areas
- **the enhancement** of wetlands, waterways, or riparian margins
- **in specific circumstances, the provision of public access** where this aligns with district plan objectives

What councils typically require

Where the District Plan provides an EBL pathway, councils will commonly require the environmental area to be:

- **legally secured on the land title** (for example via a covenant, consent notice, or QEII National Trust covenant)
- **protected in perpetuity,** regardless of future ownership changes
- **supported by an Ecological Management Plan (EMP)**

The EMP sets out how the area will be established, protected, and managed over time, ensuring the intended outcome is not just proposed — but delivered and sustained.

The standards and timing will vary for each project.

As a general guide, restoration planting may need to reach around 80% canopy cover within approximately 3–5 years.

Wetlands can often be planted more densely and may be ready for release within approximately 1–3 years.

The actual requirements will depend on the council, District Plan, consent conditions, site and type of ecological work.

The EBL application pathway

While requirements vary between councils, EBL pathways generally follow a structured, multi-disciplinary process

1. Check whether an EBL pathway is available

A planner or surveyor checks the relevant District Plan to confirm whether an EBL pathway is available and whether the property may qualify. An EBL cannot be used if the District Plan does not provide for it.

2. Assess the environmental opportunity

An ecologist assesses the site and recommends how the environmental area should be protected, restored and managed. Their report and a draft Ecological Management Plan usually support the consent application.

3. Apply for and secure the required consent

The landowner applies for the relevant resource or subdivision consent using the EBL pathway. This consent generally needs to be secured before all the environmental targets have been reached — the EBL itself is not a consent, and can only be used where the District Plan already provides for it.

Approval is not automatic. Council must assess and approve the proposal under the relevant District Plan rules.

4. Complete and monitor the environmental work

The required planting, fencing, pest control and other environmental work is carried out in line with the Ecological Management Plan and consent conditions.

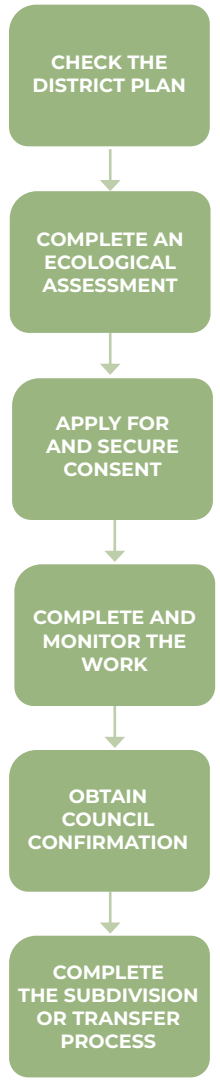
The area may then need to be maintained and monitored for several years before it meets the agreed performance standards.

5. Ask council to confirm the conditions have been met

Once the required standards have been achieved, evidence is provided to council. Council then decides whether the relevant conditions have been met and whether the subdivision benefit or transferable development right can be released.

6. Complete the subdivision or transfer process

Any remaining subdivision, certification and title requirements must also be completed.





Roles and responsibilities in an EBL project

Environmental Benefit Lot projects are inherently multi-disciplinary. Each party plays a distinct role in achieving a successful outcome.

Planners and surveyors

Interpret district plan rules and manage the consent and subdivision process.

Ecologists

Assess ecological values, define protection and enhancement requirements, and prepare ecological reports and management plans.

Council

Reviews proposals and supporting information, confirms entitlement numbers, and sets legal and compliance conditions.

Environmental delivery partners

Deliver the on-the-ground work required to establish and maintain the environmental outcome, ensuring planting, protection, and ongoing care align with consent conditions and ecological requirements.

Successful EBL projects depend on these roles being well aligned — particularly where environmental delivery underpins subdivision outcomes.

Why environmental delivery matters

Receiving consent and completing the environmental work are two separate stages of an EBL project.

The relevant consent generally needs to be secured before all the environmental targets have been reached — not after — which is why getting this sequencing right from the outset matters.

The work may include:

- **fencing and keeping stock out**
- **restoration planting or wetland enhancement**
- **weed and pest control**
- **carrying out and monitoring the Ecological Management Plan**
- **maintaining and legally protecting the environmental area.**

There can be a significant wait between starting the environmental work and being able to use or release the subdivision benefit. Council may need evidence that the planting or other work has become successfully established and meets the agreed standards.

The exact standards, timing and approval process will depend on the council, District Plan, consent conditions, site and type of ecological work.







Why work with Restore Native

At Restore Native, we specialise in delivering the environmental work that sits behind Environmental Benefit Lot outcomes — and making sure it stands up over time.

EBL projects rely on environmental delivery being practical, well-planned, and executed properly on working land. That's where our experience matters.

Restore Native brings this perspective not just as a delivery partner, but from firsthand experience establishing and managing environmental enhancement on our own working farm.

We work closely alongside planners, ecologists, surveyors and councils to deliver the on-the-ground outcomes that underpin EBL approvals — translating environmental intent into durable, real-world results.

What sets us apart

Full-service, end-to-end restoration delivery.

We manage the full scope of environmental delivery, including:

- **Practical site planning and layout input**
- **Locally sourced native plant** supply from our Waikato nursery
- **Restoration planting** using experienced in-house crews
- **Weed and animal** pest control
- **Establishment** and ongoing maintenance

This provides clarity, consistency, and accountability from planning through to long-term outcomes.

FULL-SERVICE
FULL ACCOUNTABILITY

Scale, reliability & delivery

Restore Native is the largest full-service native planting provider in the Waikato, with the capacity to deliver complex projects at scale.

- **Over 1 million native plants grown annually**
- **600,000+ trees planted by our team each year**
- **Proven systems, experienced crews, and local knowledge**

EBL outcomes depend on more than initial planting. They rely on establishment success, ongoing management, and environmental areas that continue to improve year after year.

Our focus is on delivery that protects both the ecological outcome and the long-term integrity of the protected land.



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Let's talk about your land

If you're exploring an Environmental Benefit Lot as part of a wider land or subdivision strategy, a practical conversation can be a useful place to start.

If you'd like to talk through the environmental delivery side of an EBL project, Adam is always happy to share practical insight based on real-world experience.

Adam is a passionate conservationist, farmer and founder of Restore Native.

Through Restore Native, Adam has worked alongside planners, ecologists, councils, and landowners to deliver large-scale environmental projects across working farms and rural land. His approach is practical and grounded — focused on outcomes that work in the real world and continue to deliver over time.

In 2023, Adam received national recognition at the Primary Industries New Zealand Awards, winning the Kaitiakitanga / Guardianship & Conservation Award. He also founded the Te Miro Kiwi Project, a community-driven effort to return kiwi to the local bush.

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