

OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES

The Ruapehu District contains a number of outstanding natural features and landscapes. The majority of natural and landscape features are volcanic land forms and scenic river valleys. These features and landscapes are widely appreciated by the district, regional, national and international communities.

Section 6 of the Act requires the Council, in exercising its powers and functions under the Act in relation to managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources, to recognise and provide for the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development. This is a matter of national importance.

The Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council also has responsibilities with regard to these matters. These have been addressed in the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Manawatu-Wanganui as changed by decisions on Submissions (May 1995). Within this document a list of outstanding natural features and landscapes has been developed and district councils should provide for the protection of these in district plans and when considering applications for resource consents.

Land within the Protected Areas Zone has not been included as Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes as the land is subject to protection in the Protected Areas Zone. This does not imply that land within the Protected Areas Zone is of lesser value.

NL 1.0 ISSUE

- (a) Loss of the natural values of the outstanding natural features and landscapes caused by human actions.**

NL 1.1 OUTCOME

- (a) Retention of the natural values associated with outstanding natural features and landscapes.**

NL 1.2 OBJECTIVE

- (a) The protection of the values of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.**

NL 1.3 POLICIES

- (a) To protect outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. In determining inappropriate subdivision, use and development the following will be taken into account - the degree to which the activity:**
 - (i) would adversely affect the values specified in Policy NL 1.3(c); and**

- (ii) is necessary to provide for the social or economic well being of communities, or to provide essential utilities or services to the public; while ensuring that, in all cases, any modification of the features or landscapes is consistent with the purpose of the Act.
- (b) To recognise other agencies role in the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes.
- (c) To protect, from inappropriate subdivision, use and development, the specified values associated with the following outstanding natural features or landscapes:
 - (i) Whakapapa River and river valley, including all of the river catchment, specifically:
 - (a) its recreational and scenic values; and
 - (b) its importance in providing a habitat for the blue duck.
 - (ii) Whanganui River and river valley, upstream of Aramoana, specifically:
 - (a) its scenic qualities provided by the gorge landscapes;
 - (b) its ecological value provided by the presence of original forest remnants;
 - (c) its importance to tangata whenua; and
 - (d) its recreational value provided by the water, the riparian margins and the rock formations.
 - (iii) Rangipo Desert, specifically:
 - (a) its scenic qualities provided by its contrast to adjacent landscapes; and
 - (b) its ecological value provided by extensive tussock grasslands and wetlands supporting rare indigenous flora.
 - (iv) Hautapu River and adjacent river valley including the area to either the level covered by an annual flood or to the top of the first river terrace, specifically:
 - (a) its recreational value as a brown trout fishery protected by a local water conservation notice; and
 - (b) its scenic qualities provided by the deeply entrenched river and steep gorge.
 - (v) Manganuioteao River and river valley, including the Makatote and Mangatururu Rivers and their valleys, and the Waimarino and Orautoha Streams, (but not the Waimarino and Orautoha valleys, nor the Ruatiti Stream or valley), specifically:
 - (a) its scenic qualities provided by its river gorges and riparian margins;
 - (b) its importance in providing a habitat for the blue duck; and
 - (c) its outstanding wild and scenic characteristics and wildlife and fisheries values protected by a national water conservation order.
 - (vi) Kaimanawa Ranges, in particular the ridgeline and the south eastern side of the ranges, specifically:

- (a) its scenic qualities provided by the visual prominence of the ridgeline in much of the Region; and
 - (b) its contribution to the national conservation estate.
- (vii) **Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps (Irirangi Swamp) near Waiouru, specifically:**
- (a) their scenic qualities provided by the drowned landscape features of the extensive wetland system that surrounds former hilltops; and
 - (b) their ecological values provided by the extensive wetland systems of peat bog, remnant shrublands and wet tussockland fringes; and their ecological importance as habitat for threatened indigenous plant species and the fernbird.

Explanation of Policies

The policies seek to provide for the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development and in particular the amenity and intrinsic values of these features. Inappropriate has been defined to provide some certainty of interpretation.

The policies provide for the protection of the specific values and attributes of outstanding natural features and landscapes within the District. Further they provide consistency with the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Manawatu-Wanganui as changed by decisions on Submissions (May 1995). The consistency reflects the Council's duty to have regard to a proposed regional policy statement when preparing its district plan. Each feature and landscape identified in the list has been included for the following reasons:

Whakapapa River and River Valley

The Whakapapa River extends from its headwaters to the Whakapapiti and Whakapapanui Rivers in the Tongariro National Park, to its confluence with the Whanganui River, near Kakahi.

This river valley has relatively unmodified natural bushland habitats. The Whakapapa River and its valley is an outstanding natural feature and landscape.

Whanganui River and River Valley Upstream of Aramoana

The Whanganui River flows from its headwaters in the Tongariro National Park to the west coast near Wanganui. The area being protected is the river valley from its source to Aramoana, near the Gentle Annie Road (Map Reference NZMS: S22 930 508). It does not include the valleys of the tributaries, such as the Retaruke, Ohura, Tangarekau, Whangamomona and Ongarue Rivers. Only part of this feature is located within the Ruapehu District.

The Whanganui River and its valley provides a valuable recreational resource for canoeing, jetboating, fishing, tramping and hunting. The river has importance to tangata whenua, both spiritually and culturally, with a large number of marae found along the banks of the river.

The Whanganui River and its valley, upstream of Aramoana, is an outstanding natural feature and landscape.

Rangipo Desert

Rangipo Desert is located on the eastern side of Mount Ruapehu, and extends from Waiouru north to the district boundary. It is partially within the Tongariro National Park and the Taupo

District. State Highway 1 traverses the middle of this feature. The Rangipo Desert is defined, for the purpose of this list, as the area bounded by the northern boundary of the District, Waiouru, the eastern edge of Mount Ruapehu at the national park boundary and the forested foothills of the Kaimanawa Ranges

The Rangipo Desert contains the most extensive tussock grasslands in the North Island, including large stands of relatively unmodified red tussock. This contrasts with the adjacent areas of pasture or forest.

Hautapu River and Adjacent River Valley

The Hautapu River extends from its headwaters, south east of Waiouru, to its confluence with the Rangitikei River south of Utiku. Only a small part of this feature is located within the Ruapehu District.

The Hautapu River (from its source to its confluence with the Oraukau Stream including the Waiouru and Irirangi Streams) is protected by a local water conservation notice in recognition that its recreational brown trout fishery is of regional significance. The deeply entrenched nature of the river means that the channel is largely unmodified and stable.

Manganuioteao River and River Valley, including the Makatote and Mangatururu Rivers and their Valleys

The Manganuioteao River rises at the south-western base of Mount Ruapehu and extends to its confluence with the Whanganui River, south of Whakatana.

The Manganuioteao River and its main tributaries (including the Waimarino, Makatote, Orautoha and the Mangatururu Rivers) are protected by a notional water conservation order in recognition of the outstanding wild and scenic characteristics, and wildlife and fisheries values of these rivers.

Kaimanawa Ranges

The Kaimanawa Ranges, in particular the ridgeline and the south eastern side of the ranges, are located to the east of the Tongariro National Park and extend northwards towards Taupo. The Kaimanawa State Forest Park is partially located within this District and extends into the Waikato and Hawke's Bay Regions.

The ridgeline is prominent throughout much of the central North Island, and provides a scenic vista separating the central plateau and Hawke's Bay.

Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps (Irirangi Swamp)

The Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps (Irirangi Swamps) are part of an extensive wetland systems, set partly in native tussockland against mainly forested hills. Kutaroa Swamp covers about 400 ha and Otahupitara Swamp about 64 ha. They occupy hill country which was infilled by volcanic debris then peat, which flattened the topography. This results in a "drowned landscape" formed by the extensive peat bogs that have infilled and surrounded former hilltops. These swamps provide an excellent example of a "drowned landscape" consisting of hilltops rising out of wetlands and visible from several public roads, including SH 1 south of Waiouru.

The core of the wetlands is low nutrient peat bog, with higher nutrient wetlands along streams and the margins. The irregular shape of the wetlands has protected some parts from fire for variable lengths of time, given a mosaic of different wetland shrub communities. The wetlands have ecological importance in providing habitat for regionally threatened flora (the swamp hood orchid, and the unnamed *Prasophyllum* orchid also known as the scented orchid) and the regionally threatened North Island fernbird.

NL 2.0 METHODS

- (1) To co-operate with other agencies that have roles in the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes.
- (2) To manage Tongariro National Park, the Whanganui National Park and the Pureora Forest Park as outstanding natural features and landscapes through the Protected Areas Zone.
- (3) To consider the effects of any activity which requires a resource consent on the values of the outstanding natural features and landscapes identified in this Plan.

Principal Reasons for Adopting the Objectives, Policies and Methods

The principal reasons for adopting the objectives, policies and methods is that the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes is a matter of national importance. The Council must recognise and provide for these matters. This recognition has been provided through the identification of those outstanding natural features and landscapes.

The values of these features will be considered when any resource consent application is made which may affect these features. The features identified are generally the same as those identified in the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Manawatu-Wanganui as changed by decisions on Submissions (May 1995). The objectives, policies and methods have been developed so that they are not inconsistent with the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Manawatu-Wanganui as changed by decisions on Submissions (May 1995).

There are other features and landscapes which are considered to be outstanding such as the Tongariro National Park, Whanganui National Park and Pureora Forest. However these features are identified in the Protected Areas Zone. The provisions relating to that zone are considered to be adequate to protect these outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

In developing its approach the Council carefully weighed up the option of utilising rules that directly target the outstanding natural features and landscapes. However, it was determined not to proceed with such a prescriptive regulatory approach as:

- (a) Protection does not equate to outright preservation;
- (b) Given the attributes identified that make the natural features and landscapes outstanding, the different activity status in the District Plan, and in particular the Rural and Protected Areas Zone provide the necessary protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;
- (c) Given the above specific rules are not efficient or effective as they would unnecessarily restrict subdivision and land use; and
- (d) Specific and direct rules are not necessary to achieve the purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991.

These matters will be considered when dealing with any resource consent application. The effects of the activity on the outstanding natural feature and landscape will be taken into account.

NL 3.0 CROSS REFERENCES

As a guide only, any person referring to the above should also refer to the parts of the District Plan addressing the following issues:

- Information Requirements
- Rural Zone
- Protected Areas Zone

