



## OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES - POLICY

### NL2.1 Introduction

The Ruapehu District contains a number of outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL). 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 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 "One Plan" (combined Regional Policy Statement, Regional Plan and Regional Coastal Plan). Within this document a list of ONFL has been developed. These include the following areas, which are within the District:

- (a) The Whakapapa River and River Valley.
- (b) The Whanganui National Park.
- (c) The Manganui o te Ao River and River Valley.
- (d) The Kaimanawa Ranges.
- (e) The Tongariro National Park.
- (f) The Rangitikei River and River Valley.

In addition, the following landscapes have been identified:

- (a) The Rangipo Desert (Te Onetapu).
- (b) The Hautapu River.
- (c) The Raketapauma Wetland (previously known as Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps or Irirangi Swamp).
- (d) The Whanganui River and River Valley (in addition to the National Park).
- (e) The State Highway 47 Lahar Mounds

### NL2.2 Issues

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

#### NL2.2.1 Objective

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

#### NL2.2.2 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 2.2.2(c).
- (ii) Is necessary to provide for the social or economic wellbeing of communities, or to provide essential utilities, infrastructure or services to the public; and
- (iii) Has functional, technical and operational constraints which require it to be located and designed in the manner proposed; and
- (iv) Avoids any significant adverse cumulative effects on the characteristics and values of those outstanding natural features and landscapes.

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:**

- (1) Its recreational and scenic values.
- (2) Its importance in providing a habitat for the blue duck.

The extent of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation as it applies to the Whakapapa River as shown on the Planning Maps should be read as incorporating the "riverscape" of the waterway. The 'riverscape' is defined to mean:

- (1) Escarpment faces (eg, those high vertical walls) adjoining and adjacent to the waterway when viewed from the waterway.
- (2) The river/stream bed and associated shingle banks and floodplains.
- (3) Areas of vegetation whether native or exotic, that adjoin the waterway and, when viewed from the waterway, form the immediate ridgeline. This could mean that, in some instances, areas of vegetation contained on land held in private ownership will be regarded as part of the riverscape for assessment purposes.

The Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation excludes any land that appears visually as grazed pastoral country that is distinctively different in terms of vegetation cover, land use (eg, predominantly farming activity) and landform scale to that within the 'riverscape'. The pastoral country excluded from the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation is that which is not unique to the area in question and is characteristic of such pastoral country found throughout the Ruapehu District.

Particularly in the areas south of Owhango where pastoral farming use occurs, the riverscape does not extend west of the cadastral property boundaries where they adjoin the Whakapapa River.

**(ii) Whanganui River and river valley, (as shown on the Planning Maps) specifically:**

- (1) Its scenic qualities provided by the gorge landscapes.
- (2) Its ecological value provided by the presence of original forest remnants.
- (3) Its importance to tangata whenua.
- (4) Its recreational value provided by the water, the riparian margins and the rock formations.

**(iii) Rangipo Desert (Te Onetapu), specifically:**

- (1) Its scenic qualities provided by its contrast to adjacent landscapes.
- (2) 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:**

- (1) Its recreational value as a brown trout fishery.
- (2) Its scenic qualities provided by the deeply entrenched river and steep gorge.

**(v) Manganui o te Ao River and its margins, including the Makatote and Mangatururu Rivers and their margins, the Waimarino and Orautoha Streams, and the Ruatiti Stream and its margins, specifically:**

- (1) Its scenic qualities provided by its river gorges and riparian margins.
- (2) Its importance in providing a habitat for the blue duck.



(3) Its outstanding wild and scenic characteristics and wildlife and fisheries values.

The River is protected by a national water conservation order.

The extent of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation as it applies to the Manganui o te Ao River as shown on the Planning Maps should be read as incorporating the 'riverscape' of the waterways included in the notation. The 'riverscape' is defined to mean:

- (1) Escarpment faces (eg, those high vertical walls) adjoining and adjacent to the waterway when viewed from the waterway.
- (2) The river/stream bed and associated shingle banks and floodplains.
- (3) Areas of vegetation whether native or exotic that adjoin the waterway and, when viewed from the waterway, form the immediate ridgeline. This could mean that in some instances areas of vegetation contained on land held in private ownership will be regarded as part of the riverscape for assessment purposes.

The Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation excludes any land that appears visually as grazed pastoral hill country that is distinctively different in terms of vegetation cover, land use (eg, predominantly farming activity) and landform scale to that within the 'riverscape'. The pastoral and hill country excluded from the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape notation is that which is not unique to the area in question, and is characteristic of such pastoral and hill country found throughout the Ruapehu District.

(vi) **Kaimanawa Ranges, in particular the ridgeline and the south eastern side of the ranges, specifically:**

- (1) Its scenic qualities provided by the visual prominence of the ridgeline in much of the Region.
- (2) Its contribution to the national conservation estate.

(vii) **Raketapauma Wetland (previously known as Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps or Irirangi Swamp) near Waiouru, specifically:**

- (1) Their scenic qualities provided by the drowned landscape features of the extensive wetland system that surrounds former hilltops.
- (2) Their ecological values provided by the extensive wetland systems of peat bog, remnant shrub lands and wet tussock land fringes and their ecological importance as habitat for threatened indigenous plant species and the fernbird.

(viii) **Tongariro National Park (particularly the volcanoes) and specifically its:**

- (1) Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly its visual prominence.
- (2) Recreational values.
- (3) Scientific value, particularly the volcanic landscape.
- (4) Ecological value, particularly the mountainous ecology and the extensive tussock grasslands and wetlands supporting rare indigenous flora.
- (5) Cultural values and importance to tangata whenua.

(ix) **Rangitikei River and River Valley, specifically its:**

- (1) Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly its gorges, and the Rangitikei alluvial terraces and high bluffs.
- (2) Scientific and educational value.

(x) **Lahar Mounds immediately to the north of State Highway 47, specifically:**

- (1) Their geological, scientific and historic values.

(d) To recognise and provide for the operation, maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure within an area identified as an outstanding natural feature and landscape.



### NL2.2.3 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 recognise that development not only within but also adjoining outstanding natural features and landscapes has the potential to generate significant adverse effects on such features.

Each feature and landscape identified in the list has been included for the following reasons:

(a) **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 bush land habitats. The Whakapapa River and its valley is an outstanding natural feature and landscape.

(b) **Whanganui River and River Valley**

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 (as shown on the Planning Maps). It does not include the valleys of the tributaries, such as the Retaruke, Ohura, Tangarakau, Whangamomona and Ongarue Rivers. Only part of this feature is located within the Ruapehu District.

The Whanganui River and its valley provide 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 is an outstanding natural feature and landscape.

(c) **Rangipo Desert (Te Onetapu)**

Rangipo Desert (Te Onetapu) is located on the eastern side of Mt 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 (Te Onetapu) is defined, for the purpose of this list, as the area bounded by the northern boundary of the District, Waiouru, the eastern edge of Mt Ruapehu at the national park boundary and the forested foothills of the Kaimanawa Ranges.

The Rangipo Desert (Te Onetapu) 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.

(d) **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 in recognition of its significance as a recreational brown trout fishery. The deeply entrenched nature of the river means that the channel is largely unmodified and stable.

(e) **Manganui o te Ao River and River Valley, including the Makatote and Mangatururu Rivers and their Valleys**

The Manganui o te Ao River rises at the south-western base of Mt Ruapehu and extends to its confluence with the Whanganui River, south of Whakatana.

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



- (f) **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.
- (g) **Raketapauma Wetland (previously known as Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps or Irirangi Swamp)**  
The Raketapauma Wetland is part of an extensive wetland systems, set partly in native tussock land 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.
- (h) **Tongariro National Park**  
Tongariro National Park was the first National Park within New Zealand and has been accorded dual World Heritage status by UNESCO'S world heritage committee recognising the natural landscaping features, as well as its association with cultural and spiritual values.
- (i) **Rangitikei River and Valley**  
The Rangitikei River and its valley has outstanding scenic values produced by its incised gorges, high bluffs and alluvial terraces. The river and its valley also contains elevated scientific and educational values produced by its sedimentary and alluvial environment.
- (j) **State Highway 47 Lahar Mounds**  
These distinctive "lumpy" mounds provide a physical and visual record of the explosive nature of the volcanic activities that formed the landscape of the central north Island. While the existing setting of the mounds is highly modified through ongoing farming activities, the mounds themselves still retain their geological, scientific and historic sense of place.

*In the application of Policy NL2.2.2(a)(iv) and the assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects and their significance for the repowering of existing wind farms, consideration should be given to Policy 7-7 and its explanation in the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Policy Statement.*