

10 The Coast

10.1 Significant Issues

Effects on the natural character of coastal areas and the need to preserve this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Cumulative effects on the amenity, social, intrinsic, ecological, cultural and landscape values of coastal areas, due to subdivision, use and development.

Lack of adequate public access to and along coastal areas.

Certain activities have a functional need to be located adjacent to the coast or in the coastal management area.

A lack of knowledge about the coastal environment, particularly where it relates to coastal processes and the effects of, and on, activities.

Tangata whenua have a close cultural relationship with the coastal environment and that must be recognised.

The potential effects of natural hazards, such as coastal erosion and the environmental impacts of coastal protection works.

10.2 Overview

A distinctive feature of the District is its long and varied coast. The coastline is made up of rugged cliffs and rocky headlands, mangrove-lined harbours and estuaries, sandy beaches and sheltered bays.

The coastal environment is rich in both cultural and natural heritage features. It was extensively settled by early Maori and contains many archaeological sites. Over the years, the coast has been substantially modified, with coastal forests, dune vegetation and indigenous wetlands being largely replaced by farmland. A significant proportion of the District's population live in or near the coastal environment, and there are a large number of coastal settlements of varying size along the coastline.

The coastal environment has high amenity, landscape, intrinsic, cultural and ecological value. Due to the demands placed upon this resource, and the potential effects on its values, it is important that the coast, including coastal settlements, is managed to ensure that its use and development does not exceed the capacity of the environment to absorb the adverse effects of such activities.

The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment is a matter of national importance (section 6(a) Resource Management Act 1991). It is necessary to protect the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Whether a subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment is appropriate will in part be determined by the extent to which that location still has natural character, and the extent to which the activity will affect this character.

10.3 Objectives

10.3.1

Preservation and protection of the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use or development.

10.3.2

The maintenance or, where appropriate, enhancement of the amenity, landscape, cultural, intrinsic and ecological values of the coastal environment by taking account of the cumulative effects of subdivision development.

10.3.3

Maintain and enhance public access, where appropriate, to and along coastal areas.

10.3.4

Recognise those activities which have locational requirements and/or effects on both sides of the Coastal Marine Area boundary.

Explanation and Reasons: The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment is a matter of national importance under section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991. Due to the finite nature of the coast, and the demands placed upon this resource, it is necessary to carefully manage the effects of its use (including cumulative effects). It is therefore desirable that development be confined to those areas where the values listed above will not be compromised by the effects of subdivision, use and development activities. Consideration must be made as to the level of services available in an area, the degree of existing development and the effects of further development or use of an area. People and communities generally desire, and expect to be able to gain access to, and enjoy areas of the coast for recreational and cultural pursuits. It is therefore important to provide for this desire and, where possible, enhance access to the coast.

10.4 Policies

10.4.1 Natural Character

To ensure that subdivision, use and development is managed in a manner that seeks to preserve, enhance and restore (where appropriate) the natural character of the coastal environment. Particular consideration should be given to:

- Landscapes, seascapes and landforms;
- Significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna;
- Intrinsic values of ecosystems;
- Sites of Significance to Maori;
- Significant places or areas of historic or cultural significance;
- Heritage values, including cultural, historical, spiritual and intrinsic values;

- Amenity values.

Explanation and Reasons: It is a matter of national importance that the natural character of the coastal environment be preserved (section 6(a) Resource Management Act 1991). Furthermore, it is desirable that where activities are carried out in the coastal environment, measures are taken to restore the natural character and thereby mitigate the effects of activities. In assessing whether an activity is appropriate, it is necessary to assess the degree to which an area has retained its natural character, and the extent to which this natural character will be affected by the proposed subdivision, use or development.

10.4.2 Natural Character

To recognise, in assessing the actual and potential effects of an activity, that most parts of Whangarei District's coastal environment have some degree of character which requires protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Explanation and Reasons: While modified areas of the coastal environment may have lost a portion of their natural character, that which remains defines the environmental quality of the area, provides its life-supporting capacity, and contributes to a fuller human experience of the coast.

10.4.3 Location of Activities

To ensure that, as far as practicable, subdivision, use and development is located in areas where the natural character has already been substantially modified.

Explanation and Reasons: Subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment should be undertaken in areas where the natural character has already been compromised. The cumulative effects of activities must also be taken into consideration, especially in areas where there is a lack of infrastructure to cater for the servicing needs of such activities.

10.4.4 Services and Infrastructure

To avoid adverse effects on the natural character, amenity, landscape, cultural, intrinsic and ecological values and functioning of an area by ensuring that subdivision, use and development occur where there is adequate infrastructure, services and on-site mitigation measures.

Explanation and Reasons: Many coastal areas of the District have few or no services, such as effluent and storm water disposal or a potable water supply. Road access to some areas is also limited. Subdivision, use and development should be conditional upon adequate servicing or the ability to provide extra or upgraded services. Therefore, areas that are already serviced, or areas where services can be provided, are the preferred areas for new development.

10.4.5 Public Access

To ensure that subdivision, use and development of the coastal environment provides for, and where possible enhances, public access to and along the coast, except where it is desirable to restrict public access for the following reasons:

- To protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and/or significant habitats of indigenous fauna;

- To protect Maori cultural values;
- To protect public health and safety;
- To ensure a level of security consistent with the purpose of a resource consent; or
- In other exceptional circumstances sufficient to justify the restriction notwithstanding the national importance of maintaining that access.

Explanation and Reasons: The maintenance and enhancement of access to, and along, the coast is a matter of national importance under section 6(d) of the Resource Management Act 1991. Activities in the coastal environment should therefore be designed to provide for this access, except in the limited circumstances outlined above, in which it is appropriate that the public's right of access be restricted or displaced.

10.4.6 Cautious Approach

To adopt a cautious approach to the effects of, subdivision, use and development, where knowledge is lacking as to the effects of those activities on coastal processes.

Explanation and Reasons: The ability to manage activities in the coastal environment in a sustainable manner can be hindered by the lack of full understanding of coastal processes and the effects of activities on coastal processes. Therefore, an approach that is cautious, but responsive to increased knowledge, is required for coastal management.

10.4.7 Future Development

To ensure that subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment for business and residential use is located within existing coastal settlements. Subdivision, use or development should only occur in other areas where there will be no more than minor adverse effects, taking into account:

- The objectives and policies in this chapter (Chapter 10);
- Landscape values, landform and scenic values;
- Indigenous flora and habitats of indigenous fauna;
- Heritage values including archaeological sites and sites of significance to Maori;
- Amenity values;
- The degree of modification from the natural state;
- Infrastructure and services, particularly roads;
- Water and soil quality;
- Cross boundary conflicts;
- Human health and safety.

Explanation and Reasons: It is important to avoid sporadic and sprawling residential and business development in the coastal environment, due to the adverse effects that such development can have, particularly on the natural character of the coastal environment. Intensive or large scale development should therefore be confined to those areas that are already within the bounds of existing coastal settlements. Structure Plans and the Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy help to identify appropriate future development areas.

10.4.8 Integrated Management

To better integrate management of the coastal environment by taking into account cross-boundary issues, in particular, the purposes of adjoining Marine Management Areas of the Regional Coastal Plan for Northland when considering subdivision, use and development near the coast.

Explanations and Reasons: Activities located in the coastal environment can have an impact across the boundary (Mean High Water Springs) between that area of the coast which is mainly the responsibility of the District Council and that area which is mainly the responsibility of the Regional Council (Coastal Marine Area). Management of the effects of activities in the coastal environment therefore needs to be undertaken in an integrated manner, having regard to the need to address possible adverse effects and land-based activities on the Coastal Marine Area, and vice versa.

10.4.9 Tangata Whenua

To ensure that the relationship of tangata whenua and their cultural and tradition with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga is recognised and provided for when undertaking subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment.

Explanation and Reasons: The coastline (including sand dunes, sand spits, beaches, native flora and fauna, tauranga waka and waahi tapu) has special significance to tangata whenua, due to the historical settlement of coastal pa and associated warfare. The coastline is also a major contemporary food source for tangata whenua. Provision for, and protection of, the relationship of tangata whenua and their culture and traditions with the coastal environment includes the customary rights to manage kaimoana and other mahinga kai.

10.5 Methods

10.5.1 Regulatory Methods

- Identification of a Coastal Countryside Environment on the Planning Maps (Policies 10.4.2, 10.4.5, 10.4.6).
- Environment rules relating to the location, type and effects of activities in the Coastal Countryside Environment (Policies 10.4.2, 10.4.3).
- Subdivision rules relating to minimum lot sizes in the Coastal Countryside Environment (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- Resource Area rules relating to Outstanding and Notable Landscape Areas (Policy 10.4.1).
- Resource consent conditions (Policies 10.4.1, 10.4.3, 10.4.4, 10.4.7).

10.5.2 Other Plans and Legislation

- The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- The Regional Policy Statement for Northland (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- The Northland Regional Coastal Plan (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- Iwi/Hapu Environmental Management Plans (Policy 10.4.7).
- Coastal bylaws (Policy 10.4.2).
- Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.8).

10.5.3 Information, Education and Advocacy

- Liaison with the Northland Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Fisheries (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- Liaison with adjacent territorial authorities (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).
- Liaison with iwi authorities (Policy 10.4.7).
- Educate and inform resource users of the values of the coastal environment (Policy 10.4.6).
- Promote voluntary protection of significant ecological and landscape features (Policy 10.4.1).
- Encourage the development of knowledge systems in relation to the physical, cultural and ecological functioning of the coastal environment (Policies 10.4.1 to 10.4.7).

10.5.4 Council Works and Services

- Council works and services relating to the development of new infrastructure and services (Policy 10.4.3).

10.6 Anticipated Environmental Results

The following results are expected to be achieved by the foregoing Objectives, Policies and Methods. The means of monitoring whether the Plan achieves the expected outcomes are set out in the Whangarei District Council Monitoring Strategy.

- The preservation and/or enhancement of the natural character of the coastal environment, and its protection from inappropriate subdivision, inappropriate use and inappropriate development. Included here are landscapes, seascapes and landforms; significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna; air, water and soil quality; the intrinsic values of ecosystems, including biodiversity along with other ecological values.
- The maintenance and/or enhancement of the historic and cultural heritage of the coastal environment, and the protection of it from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Included here are cultural, historic and spiritual values; amenity values; places and areas of historic or cultural significance; and sites of significance to Maori.
- A settlement and development pattern in the coastal environment that does not adversely affect natural and cultural/historic heritage values, is able to be serviced efficiently, and does not result in sporadic, sprawling or ribbon development. Future intensive development is largely confined to existing settlements where the above values are already compromised.
- The maintenance and/or enhancement of public access, to and along the coastal marine area, except where it is desirable to restrict public access to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, Maori cultural values, public health and safety; to ensure a level of security consistent with the purpose of a resource consent or a permitted activity; or in other exceptional circumstances.