

Significant Natural Area Mapping-- Progress

Meeting: Council Briefing
Date of meeting: 6 May 2020
Reporting officer: Paul Waanders, District Planner

Purpose/Ngā whāinga

To inform Council on the progress being made by Wildland consultants to identify Significant Natural Areas (SNA's) in Kaipara prior to engagement with affected parties.

Context/Horopaki

Section 6(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) deems the “*protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna*” as a matter of national importance. Section 31 RMA requires Kaipara district Council (KDC) to control any actual or potential effects of land use and/or development for the purpose of protecting and maintaining indigenous biological diversity.

The Proposed National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB), presently under consideration by central government will require all local authorities to identify and preserve Significant Natural Areas. A decision is imminent on how the NPSIB is to be implemented.

In the Regional Policy Statement 2016 (RPS) Policy 4.4.1: Monitoring and Protecting Significant Ecological Areas and Habitats; KDC is instructed to avoid adverse effects in the coastal environment and avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects of subdivision, use and development outside the coastal environment on areas of indigenous biodiversity. Appendix 5 of the RPS outlines the significance criteria to be applied. In Method 4.4.3, KDC is instructed to amend the District Plan to give effect to the provisions of the RPS which includes the mapping of these SNA's.

The Operative Kaipara District Plan contains a chapter on Ecological Areas https://www.kaipara.govt.nz/uploads/districtplan_operative/Operative%20Kaipara%20District%20Plan%20-%20Chapter%206%20-%20Ecological%20Areas.pdf but only areas under control of the Department of Conservation and a few Kaipara District Council forests are identified. This covers about 35,000ha of conservation land. This does not include the Council Covenants or QEII covenants that were created mainly through the benefit lot subdivisions.

Policy 6.6.1 of the District Plan promotes the progressive improvement of the level and accuracy of information on Significant Ecological Areas, so that it can be effectively used for information, education, non-regulatory and regulatory methods and monitoring. Additionally, the policy encourages KDC to work with other agencies and landowners to identify those areas in the District of significance which warrant monitoring, investigation and protection.

This project aims to achieve all the above requirements and is not limited to public land but includes privately owned land as well.

Discussion/Ngā kōrerorero

The three Northland territorial authorities entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on the SNA project. Wildland consultants were appointed to map each district's SNAs as Stage One of the projects. The project outline was reported and discussed at a briefing of Council on 4 July 2019.

<https://www.kaipara.govt.nz/uploads/meetings/briefings/2019/CB%20agenda%2004%20July%202019.pdf>

Stage 1 deals with the identification of the SNA's according to the set criteria and has now been completed (**Attachment A** with the Map as **Attachment B**).

Stage 2 Task A involving the ground truthing has also started by using oblique photography. This will be followed by a further contract of site visits both project-initiated, and on request of affected

landowners, once notified. After consultation with the landowners the SNA maps and descriptions will be updated and submitted to Council for approval.

Staff will also be developing Stage 3 of the project dealing with the Objectives, Policies and performance standards that will be applicable in these SNA's.

Summary of Analysis

The following information summarises details regarding the SNA's in the Kaipara District. From the initial Stage 1 analysis there were:

- **501** SNA's.
- **44** that straddle district boundaries with Whangarei and the Far North.
- **92** potential new sites which require further assessment and possible site visits.
- **637** total potential SNA sites.

Wildland consultants used oblique photography in Stage 2 to assess these new sites and reported that:

- **27** site visits required to assess significance
- **30** new sites confirmed as significant
- **13** deleted sites
- **22** sites merged with existing SNAs
- **92** total new sites

Conclusion reached there are **545** potential SNA sites in the Kaipara District. The information below provides a statistical overview on what this means in terms of property and parcel¹ details.

¹ A primary parcel is any parcel that is or is intended to be:

- owned by the Crown, with the exception of a movable marginal strip
 - held in fee simple
 - Māori freehold land or Māori customary land
 - part of the common marine and coastal area
 - the bed of a lake or river
 - road or railway
 - vested in a local authority
- <https://www.linz.govt.nz/kb/741>

	Number	% of District
Number of parcels affected by the SNA layer * includes 904 hydro, railway and road parcels	6217	22%
Number of rateable properties affected by the SNA layer	3579	23%
		% of District
% of the district (land area) (311,638ha) covered by 59,209 ha SNA		19%
		% of SNA
% of SNA's on public vs private land (land area)		46% Public 54% Private
		% of SNA
Number of public vs private parcels affected by the SNA layer	1323	
	Public	21.3%
	4894	
	Private	78.7%
		% of SNA
% of SNA's on Maori Land (Maori Purpose: Maori Land and Maori Purpose: Treaty Settlement Land)		8.3%
% of SNA's on Maori Purpose: Maori Land		6.0%
% of SNA's on Maori Purpose: Treaty Settlement Land		2.3%
		% of SNA
% of SNA's within an Outstanding Natural Landscape		53.9%
		Number
Number of parcels with 100% SNA coverage	219	
Number of parcels with 90% - 100% SNA coverage	493	
Number of parcels with 80% - 90% SNA coverage	207	
Number of parcels with 50% - 80% SNA coverage	679	
Number of parcels with <50% SNA coverage	4619	
Average SNA parcel coverage = 32%		

Important for KDC to consider, is that 19% of the district is covered by SNA's of which 46% is public land and 54% private. Of the total parcels (6217), 219 are fully covered by a SNA whilst 4619 parcels are covered by at least 50% SNA. The total area of SNA's is 60,000ha whilst about 35,000ha (58%) is already under protection as DOC land or covenanted land. An additional 25,000ha is being investigated as potential SNA's. 54% of the proposed SNA's are already covered by the Outstanding Natural Landscapes in the District Plan.

Stage 2 of the SNA Project

Stage 2 deals with the ground truthing (partially undertaken) followed by consultation with affected parties and site visits to be undertaken or discussions with the affected parties through engagement processes appropriate to Covid 19 alert levels and best practice engagement.

Council will receive a presentation on the report and maps of the proposed SNA's for consideration. Discussion will be aimed at providing guidance on how staff and the Wildland consultants should best socialise the report and maps with Mana Whenua, the public and affected parties.

The three Territorial Authorities intend to develop a combined press release on the project explaining the statutory requirements as well as the necessity to preserve Northland's biodiversity. This will require KDC's support for such a release.

Staff from the three Territorial Authorities also prefer that the Objectives, Policies and Performance criteria be developed collaboratively so the whole of Northland administers the Significant Natural Areas in the same way. After the SNA's have been refined and validated further briefings and peer reviews will take place before the SNA's are confirmed.

Covid-19 and the lockdown requires careful consideration of consultation process. FNDC are now considering not undertaking pre-consultation due to Covid 19 restraints. As a result, FNDC will probably notify a Draft District Plan as part of their consolidated district plan development process which will include the SNA mapping and provisions for submission. WDC are still finalising their SNA plan provisions and as part of their rolling review will after lockdown consult with the affected parties. The associated Plan Change Chapter will then be notified.

Kaipara District Council will need to consider our preferred option. As with other parts of the District Plan review, pre-consultation and early buy-in to any proposed changes, is considered to be best practice. Currently, the preferred strategy is still to complete the mapping and ground truthing whilst staff work on developing new plan provisions (Objective, Policies and Rules). Whilst this is contemplated to be Stage 3 of the project, staff can as soon as allowable undertake the affected party consultation before the Chapter of the District Plan is finalised.

Next steps/E whaiake nei

After Council consider the report and associated maps and what this means for the Kaipara District, staff will prepare a press release to make the proposed SNA's known. Staff will also notify affected parties by sending them maps pertaining to their property for their consideration and discussion. Site visits may be required where boundary disputes arise and conducted by the ecologist at extra cost to Council.

Attachments/Ngā tapiritanga

	Title
A	Map of SNA's in the Kaipara District
B	Examples of Attribute tables for SNA's
C	Report on Significant Natural Areas in the Kaipara District