

ISSUES

The Plan identifies four main objectives for Reserves and Open Space (R&OS). The broad objectives and key issues for each of these objectives, are:

1. Ensuring that R&OS areas provided by the council are adequate. With the support of the Long Term Plan, the Open Space Strategy and other reserve management plans, the Council has effectively provided enough, equitably distributed, and the right types of R&OS across the District.
2. The use of R&OS for recreation and amenity. The objective of having appropriate use of R&OS to meet the community needs for recreation and amenity has been achieved.
3. The identification, protection and enhancement of areas of significant natural and scientific value. Beyond the Conservation (DOC) estate, this objective has not been adequately achieved. Several policies, and aspects of the objective have not been implemented and not achieved the outcomes sought.
4. Managing activities and facilities that have the potential to cause adverse effects on R&OS areas. And also managing the effects that activities and facilities can cause on residential or rural areas that surround R&OS areas. The evidence suggests that these outcomes have been successfully achieved.

Strategically, the chapter is dated and many parts are obsolete because it was written before the LGA 2002 came into force. Many of the policy outcomes in this chapter are now implemented by Community Development staff and are planned through the LTP and AMP processes.

The Chapter does not acknowledge the Mātauranga Māori worldview that multiple values can be contained and provided for within public spaces.

MANDATORY STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

There are several matters of national importance within Section 6 of the RMA that are linked to the provision of reserves. These include: (1) the preservation of the natural character of the coast, wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins; (2) the protection of significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna; (3) the maintenance and enhancement of public access along the coast, lakes and rivers. Section 7 also prioritises amenity values and the values of ecosystems. Many of these outcomes are provided for through the provision of reserves, open space and conservation areas.

The Proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (currently being consulted on) includes a requirement for at least 10 per cent indigenous vegetation cover in urban areas, and where that is not currently achieved, a target for increasing indigenous vegetation cover to at least 10 per cent. Council reserves areas are likely to play a key part in achieving those outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retain (with updates) the direction of the objectives and the policies that work well. Also retaining the tools that work well, including showing indicative reserves on the planning maps, use of appropriate zones, and retaining the requirement for financial contributions.
2. Reduce duplication across Council planning documents for R&OS management, particularly relating to design and process requirements as many design outcomes are achieved through other Council planning documents.
3. Provide a Mātauranga Māori perspective to the provisions, including to recognise that R&OS and conservation areas can fulfil a range of functions.
4. Thoroughly review the policy settings for the conservation of areas of significant value. In doing so, better integrate the policies with biodiversity values, and reconsider the purpose and function of the Conservation Zone. Provide stronger directions and methods to enhance biodiversity outcomes.
5. Take a more proactive and strategic approach to the identification of sites of natural and scientific value that should be conserved. Once these are identified in planning documents, they can be better managed by the Council and addressed if and when RC applications are lodged that may affect those sites.
6. Review the assessment criteria and matters of control/discretion to ensure that appropriate provisions are in place to be able to effectively require necessary R&OS outcomes, including on applications for land use consent.
7. Consider better differentiation between Open Space and Recreation zones with the expectations for off-site effects.
8. Protect Open Space and Recreation zones from reverse sensitivity effects from new residential dwellings in close proximity.

