

Outstanding Natural Features (ONFs) and Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs)

We are reviewing and updating our current District Plan – looking ahead to the next 10 to 15 years. The Kaipara District Plan is essentially the ‘rule book’, which is applied to manage development, activities and the environment within the district.

The District Plan influences the future shape and feel of our district, which is why it’s important for Kaipara communities to be informed and get involved. Its purpose is to protect our environment, historic locations and cultural tāonga for future generations, through sustainable management of our resources, while supporting our communities to develop and grow.

We’re seeking input on our initial draft ahead of the statutory process, scheduled to commence in mid-2023. This Draft District Plan does not have any ‘legal weight’ and the Operative District Plan must continue to be relied upon.

Kaipara has a diverse range of landscapes ranging from exposed coasts, sheltered estuaries, rivers, steep bush clad hills, riverside flats and rolling farmland.



Natural features of the district are distinct geographic and/or geological landforms, or other features formed by natural processes, which include mountains, hills, valleys, lakes, streams, wetlands, native forests, sand dunes and beaches.

Collectively, these varied landscapes and features contribute to the character and identity of the Kaipara district and are highly valued by the community. They can also bring economic benefits by attracting people to the district.

Council has responsibilities under the Resource Management Act, New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, and the Northland Regional Policy Statement to protect ONFs and ONLs from inappropriate land use and subdivision.

What are we proposing?

The Draft District Plan identifies outstanding natural features (ONFs) and outstanding natural landscapes (ONLs) using criteria included in the Northland Regional Policy Statement. However, for Kaipara, the mapped areas will be slightly different because the original mapping undertaken by the Northland Regional Council did not include some of Kaipara’s valued landscapes and features.

The new approach recognises the different values associated with these outstanding

natural features and landscapes by placing them into five categories, depending on how fragile or robust they are. In doing this, the new rules provide targeted levels of protection that respond to the specific values of each category and whether a site is within the coastal environment as well. This means that some rules will be more restrictive than others. For example, subdivision or the construction of a new building may be controlled within some features or landscapes to ensure these highly valued areas are protected.

How much is changing?

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Overall, the level of change is a 5/10 with the mapping and identification of ONFs a new aspect.

The Operative Kaipara District Plan 2013 already identifies some outstanding natural landscapes and includes provisions to manage land use and subdivision within these areas. The Draft District Plan will introduce some new mapped landscapes and features, with more targeted provisions.



How will I know if my property is within an outstanding natural landscape or has an outstanding natural feature on it?

These will be mapped in the Draft District Plan. This means that when you search for your property in the e-plan, it will show up in the online maps.

Will I need to get a resource consent to build on my property if it is within an identified outstanding natural landscape or has an outstanding natural feature on it?

That will depend on what you are doing and if you are inside or outside of the Coastal Environment overlay as well. Some buildings and structures required for production activities can be constructed without a resource consent where they comply with the relevant performance standards. If this cannot be achieved then resource consent will be required.

Will there be higher costs to obtain a resource consent in an ONF or ONL?

If you need to get a resource consent, there may be increased costs to obtain your consent.

Can I do earthworks on my property if it is within an outstanding natural landscape or has an outstanding natural feature on it?

That depends, if the earthworks are directly associated with repairing roads, putting in a new driveway, planting vegetables or putting in a garden, or preparing a farm or forestry track you will be able to undertake earthworks without getting a resource consent. If the earthworks are for preparing a building platform, or are associated with indigenous vegetation clearance, you will need to comply with the relevant performance standards.



Summary

- Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONL) and Outstanding Natural Features (ONFs) provide significant public benefit for the district, including the economic benefits of tourism, recreational use, as well as providing and protecting aesthetic and cultural values.
- Subdivision, use and development particularly activities such as buildings, earthworks and vegetation clearance can act to reduce the quality of landscapes.
- In the coastal environment the interaction between land and sea often provides a dynamic and scenic environment and is also a popular place to live and visit. Pressures related to natural landscapes therefore tend to be more explicit in the coastal environment.
- Some outstanding natural landscapes are located on ancestral Māori Land, as defined under Te Ture Whenua Act 1993. This land is ancestral land and, through Māori culture and traditions, is the central focus of papakāinga and other development opportunities for the iwi, hapū and/or whānau concerned.
- Currently, the District Plan does not map and identify any outstanding natural features. The Draft District Plan has carried out a new assessment which identifies and recognises the values of more of these valued places across the Kaipara district.
- The Draft District Plan introduces more rules for the types of activities and subdivision that can take place without getting a resource consent, however, these are more targeted and depend on the sensitivity of the environment.