

## 7.3 PROTECTION OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES

### 7.3.1 BACKGROUND

Section 6(b) states that all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act in relation to managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matter of national importance:

*The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.*

For the most part, nationally important natural features and landscapes have been identified and acquired by the Department of Conservation and its preceding organisation. Most of these are protected by reservation or covenant, eg the Kōpūtaia Peat Dome which has formal reserve status.

There are other natural features and landscapes that are outstanding either regionally or locally and that should be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Section 6(b) relates to such features as well as nationally recognised features.

Some important landscape features are included within the Department of Conservation estate and are either zoned Conservation (Forest) or Conservation (Wetland) in this Plan. These are conservation orientated zones and features within such zones will be afforded a significant level of protection by virtue of the Objectives, Policies and Rules of these zones.

There are other features that contribute to the character of the District which should be recognised in terms of S.6(b). Council has, with (in some cases) assistance from the Geological Society of New Zealand Inc. identified a list of areas/features considered to be locally outstanding and which warrant a level of protection. The features are:

#### **Karangahake Gorge (Mackaytown - Waikino)**

Scenic corridor route for both State Highway No. 2 and the Karangahake Walkway. It is important to retain vegetation within Gorge as seen from the road and the track.

#### **Black Rocks**

Important visual features providing a visual backdrop to Paeroa.

#### **White Rock**

Exposed portion of a gold bearing quartz reef. This feature is prominent from State Highway 2 and other points in the Paeroa area.

#### **Queen's Head**

Land form feature near Waikino which resembles the head of Queen Victoria.

#### **Parakawai Andesitic Neck**

Columnar jointed andesite neck located in a disused quarry at the end of Parakawai Quarry Road, Otahu Valley.

#### **Whiritoa Blowhole**

The most spectacular active blowhole on the Coromandel Peninsula located at southern Headland of Whiritoa Beach and is active during easterly storms.

#### **Waitawheta Andesitic Columns**

Columns of andesite adjoining the Taieri Stream.

#### **Owharoa Falls**

Spectacular waterfall on Taieri Stream. Access is from Waitawheta Road.

#### **Mount Karangahake**

Substantial feature at entrance to the Karangahake Gorge which provides a visual backdrop to Paeroa. The lower slopes are largely in private ownership and partly in pasture. The summit area is in regenerating forest and scrub and is part of the DOC estate.

### 7.3.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

It is important to ensure that these features are protected and particular attention should be paid to ensuring proposals do not adversely affect the Scheduled features where applications for land use consent are being considered.

The area/feature which is probably most susceptible to damage is the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor. The removal of existing vegetation (indigenous or otherwise) would have a significant and detrimental effect on the scenic quality of the area.

The Department of Conservation is developing the Karangahake Walkway as a tourist attraction. The extension of the concept into a heritage trail focusing on past mining activities is being mooted. The visual quality of the area should be maintained and enhanced to augment the walkway experience and the scenic highway experience.

### 7.3.3 ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

The resource management outcome sought is to provide adequate protection to the District's outstanding natural features and landscapes.

### 7.3.4 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

#### **Objective 1**

*To identify and protect outstanding natural features and landscapes of the District.*

#### **Policies**

Objective 1 will be achieved by the implementation of the following policies:

1. Including the main areas of the Department of Conservation estate in the Conservation (Forest) and Conservation (Wetland) zones.
2. Maintaining a Schedule in the District Plan of outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes and identifying these on the Planning Maps.
3. Enabling features to be added to or removed from the Schedule by way of Change to the District Plan.
4. Requiring particular attention to be paid to the achievement of this objective in considering applications for resource consent for activities that may affect scheduled features.
5. Providing a Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor Policy Area within the Rural zone to identify and provide a measure of protection to the important visual character of this locality.
6. To require consent for a discretionary activity where significant land use change within the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor Policy Area is proposed.

## Reasons

1. The achievement of Objective 1 is a matter of national importance. Other than in the case of the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor area, identification of the features will provide a reasonable measure of protection, given the relatively limited level of threat they are considered to be exposed to.
2. In the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor special measures are required in addition to those applying in the balance of the Rural zone to ensure that changes in land use do not adversely affect visual amenity. In particular, the clearance of any more than a minimal area of existing vegetation requires a discretionary activity consent.

The definition of the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Protection Policy Area generally follows the boundary separating areas of forest/regenerating forest from surrounding land in pasture. As such the Policy Area boundary does not follow land title boundaries in all areas.

### 7.3.5 METHODS TO IMPLEMENT OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

- ≠ By identification of the features in the Plan, by means of the Policy Area method for the Karangahake Gorge and by "site specific" identification for the other features.
- ≠ By providing Conservation zones to apply to the main areas of the DOC estate.
- ≠ By Rules.

### 7.3.6 ACTIVITIES

#### 7.3.6.1 Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor Policy Area

##### A. Permitted Activities

Any activity which is a permitted activity in the Rural zone other than those which are included as discretionary activities in 7.3.6.1.C below.

##### B. Controlled Activities

There are no controlled activities.

##### C. Discretionary Activities

Any activity which is a controlled activity in the Rural zone.

Any activity which is a discretionary activity in the Rural zone.

Forestry.

Removal of more than 100m<sup>2</sup> of existing vegetation other than where that vegetation is existing pasture, provided that this rule shall not apply to the land contained within part Section 89 Block XIII Ohinemuri Survey District being the land comprised and described in Certificate of Title 31D/624 as long as an agreement between the owner and the Hauraki District Council relating to clearances of exotic vegetation is in force.

Extractive industry as provided for in the Conservation (Indigenous Forest) zone (refer Section 5.2).

##### Assessment Criteria for Discretionary Activities in the Karangahake Gorge Scenic Corridor Policy Area

1. In the case of Whanau marae, the criteria for controlled activity set out in Rule 5.1.6.3(B) Rural zone.

2. The general assessment criteria for discretionary activities in the Rural zone (Rule 5.1.6.3.A and the degree to which any relevant performance standards applying in the Rural zone (Rule 5.1.8) are met.
3. Whether the subdivision, use or development is appropriate having regard to Objective 1 of this Section.
4. The requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991.
5. In the case of proposals to develop forestry, whether activities including land preparation, planting, management, silviculture and harvesting are to be undertaken in a way which ensures the visual amenity of the area is not significantly affected. Important in this regard is the retention of the existing landform; the need to retain existing indigenous vegetation; the need to ensure that areas are planted immediately following ground preparation, that harvesting is carried out in sections of a scale such that the visual impact is minimised and the land areas so cleared are replanted or otherwise rehabilitated within one year of harvesting.

##### D. Prohibited Activities

There are no prohibited activities.

### 7.3.7 GENERAL RULE

In considering applications for resource consent, Council will pay particular attention to ensuring that features included in the Schedule of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes are not adversely affected.

### 7.3.8 TABLE 1 - SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES