

Section 2.4 Coastal Environment

The coastal environment encompasses those parts of the Fiordland/Rakiura Zone and Rural Zone located within the Coastal Environment Overlay. The coastal environment within the Fiordland/Rakiura Zone is largely unmodified and recognised for its natural and wilderness qualities. In contrast the coastal environment within the Rural Zone is recognised as predominantly being a ‘working’ rural landscape. The coastal environment also has characteristics and natural physical resources of significant value for a number of activities, including renewable energy resources. The coastal environment is generally influenced by exposure to coastal processes and is characterised by natural character, natural features, landscapes and visual qualities associated with the coast. Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes have been identified in the District’s coastal environment within the Rural Zone and Fiordland/Rakiura Zone. Visual Amenity Landscapes have also been identified within the coastal environment in the Rural Zone. Identified natural features and landscapes within the coastal environment were identified in the Southland Coastal Landscape Study 2006.

Inappropriate subdivision, land use and development activities, including coastal protection works and coastal infrastructure, can compromise coastal influences, processes and values. Activities within the coastal environment should take account of coastal influences, processes and values and give particular consideration to the avoidance or mitigation of significant risks from natural hazards, the protection of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna, the preservation of natural character, the protection of natural features and landscapes, the relationship of tangata whenua with the Coastal Environment, and the maintenance and enhancement of visual qualities, amenity values and public access to the Coastal Marine Area (the CMA). The wider coastal environment extends beyond the District’s administrative boundary and encompasses the CMA. While the Southland Regional Council has primary responsibility for managing the CMA, Council recognises the need for the integrated management of the wider coastal environment, this reflects the objectives of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010.

The policy framework for the coastal environment is contained within various sections within the plan. Objective CE.1 below refers to a number of different matters which are all significant to the coastal environment but are also addressed within their own section of the plan. Therefore, policies which support this objective can be found throughout the plan, in particular in the Natural Features and Landscapes, Tangata Whenua, Historic Heritage, Biodiversity, and Natural Hazards sections.

Objective CE.1

The coastal environment is managed in an integrated and sustainable that:

1. Preserves the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, land use and development.
2. Protects Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, land use and development.
3. Maintains Visual Amenity Landscapes.
4. Recognises and provides for the importance of coastal resources to Māori.
5. Provides for the protection of items of historic heritage.
6. Protects areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.
7. Takes into account coastal hazard risks.
8. Provides for the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the Coastal Marine Area.

Policy CE.1

Avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of subdivision, land use and development on the Coastal Environment.

Explanation: Subdivision, land use and development can give rise to adverse effects on natural character, visual qualities, amenity values, historic heritage, cultural values, areas of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna and public access associated with the coastal environment. Intensive development has the potential to compromise the natural character of the coastal environment. The location, design and nature of subdivision, land use and development activities, within the coastal environment, should be responsive to their context and integrate and reflect natural character. Buildings and structures can have a significant effect on natural character and should be designed to be sympathetic to the visual qualities and amenity values associated with natural features and landscapes. In some cases it may be appropriate to decline an activity.

Policy CE.2

Avoid subdivision, land use and development in areas at significant risk from coastal hazards.

Explanation: The coastal environment is prone to coastal hazards, including sea level rise, coastal erosion and inundation by storm surge or tsunamis. These hazards pose risks to people, property, communities, businesses and infrastructure. The intensity, frequency and risk of coastal hazards vary and are likely to be exacerbated over time by climate change. Activities intended to be located in areas at significant risk from coastal hazards should demonstrate that the activity is suitable for that location and careful consideration must be given where significant risks cannot be avoided, often it may be appropriate to decline that activity. Activities should not exacerbate coastal hazard risks at the site, or elsewhere. The avoidance of inappropriate activities in areas prone to coastal hazards support community resilience and safeguard health, safety, socio-economic and cultural wellbeing. It also lessens the need for further coastal hazard protection works.

Policy CE.3

Mitigate the adverse effects of coastal hazards, by controlling subdivision, land use and development in areas other than those at significant risk.

Explanation: Where coastal hazard risks cannot be avoided, activities located within areas prone to coastal hazards should adopt appropriate mitigation measures. An activity should demonstrate that it is suitable for that location and should not exacerbate coastal hazard risk at the site, or elsewhere. Often, effects can be mitigated through land use control and the location, nature and design of the activity, this relates to both new and existing activities. Where coastal hazard risks are not fully understood, a precautionary approach should be adopted.

Policy CE.4

Recognise the benefits of coastal protection works, including the protection or restoration of natural defences to coastal hazards.

Explanation: Coastal protection works, including physical protection works and natural features and landforms can avoid or mitigate the risk of coastal hazards. Natural defences such as beaches, sand dunes and wetlands, should be protected and retained wherever possible, and their benefits should be considered instead of, or in partnership with, physical protection works. Physical protection works may be

appropriate where activities exist in a known coastal hazard risk area and those risks that cannot be avoided or mitigated by, for example, managed retreat.

Such works should only be undertaken where all alternatives and opportunities to avoid or mitigate the natural hazard risks, including relocation of the activity, have been exhausted.

Careful consideration should be given to the form, location and design of the physical protection works to mitigate any adverse effects on the coastal environment.

Policy CE.5

Recognise that coastal development activities including infrastructure and renewable electricity generation facilities may have a functional, technical or operational requirement to be sited within the coastal environment.

Explanation: Coastal development, such as boat ramps, jetties and infrastructure including roads, ports, marine farms and renewable electricity generation projects often need to be located within the coastal environment due to functional requirements.

Coastal development and infrastructure can give rise to adverse effects, including effects on the natural character, public access, visual, landscape and ecological values of the coastal environment. Careful consideration should be given to the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of coastal infrastructure to ensure that adverse effects on the Coastal environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated. Where practicable, consideration should be given to locating new infrastructure where existing infrastructure is already located.

Policy CE.6

Maintain or enhance public access to and along the Coastal Marine Area.

Explanation: Subdivision, land use and development should facilitate public access to and along the Coastal Marine Area. Public access to the Coastal Marine Area can provide recreational and open space benefits, promote a sense of place and identity and support public health and wellbeing.

Policy CE.7

Recognise that subdivision, land use and development activity within the coastal environment may be appropriate where it contributes to consolidation of existing coastal settlements and urban areas.

Explanation: Coastal subdivision has the potential to change existing settlement patterns and contribute to a loss of the rural and remote character of parts of the District's coastline. This policy recognises that coastal development and subdivision could be accommodated without creating significant adverse effects in areas capable of absorbing landscape change.

Coastal Environment Rules

Rules relating to the coastal environment are contained within the Fiordland/Rakiura Zone, Rural Zone and Subdivision sections of the District Plan.