

Appendix B – Recommended Amendments to Natural Character chapter

KEY

Green Underlined – Recommended Additions from Supplementary Evidence

~~Green Strikethrough~~ – Recommended Deletions from Supplementary Evidence

Natural Character - NATC

Overview

The Natural Character Chapter sets out the overarching directions in response to section 6(a) of the RMA, which requires the preservation of the natural character of *rivers* and their margins; and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. To achieve the purpose of the RMA and promote *sustainable management*, the District Plan must identify and manage these areas as a matter of national importance.

Natural character is generally described as an area or *waterbody's* distinctive combination of natural characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness, abiotic and biotic aspects, and how the area or *waterbody* is perceived, experienced and appreciated by humans. Appendix 6 describes the characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character of the *rivers* and *streams* generally to provide guidance for assessment and decision making purposes. The duty to preserve natural character values of rivers and their margins entails a broad obligation to preserve the level of natural character that exists, whether outstanding, high, or significantly modified, and does not preclude restoration and/or enhancement of natural character values where this is proposed.

The *rivers* and *streams* of the Gore District range in size and prominence, with the Mataura River being the largest and most recognisable *river* in the district. The Mataura River is also subject to a Water Conservation Order which identifies the Mataura River as having outstanding fisheries and angling amenity features and is a Statutory Acknowledgement Area which recognizes Ngāi Tahu's cultural, spiritual, historic, and traditional association to the Mataura River. The tributaries of the Mataura River including Waikaia River, Otamita Stream, Mimihau Stream and Mokoreta River and each of their tributaries are an integral part of the Mataura River system and its functioning and health. Other *waterbodies* in the district similarly contribute to other *river* catchments such as Hedgehope and Titipua Streams which are part of the wider Oreti River catchment, and Kaiwera Stream and Waipahi River which

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ultimately form part of the Clutha catchment. The natural character values of the various *streams* and *rivers* within the district will vary both along their alignments and between different *waterbodies*.

The riparian margin contributes significantly to the natural character of a *river* or *stream* and is also to be preserved and protected. The extent of the margin associated with a *river* or *waterbody* depends on the attributes and context of the *river*, topography and other factors, it is influenced by the size of the *waterbody*, the topography of the area, and the surrounding land use. For the purposes of this Plan the River and Stream order as outlined in Appendix 3, has been used to determine *river* setback standards that are broadly reflective of the extent of *river* margins for the different *waterbodies* present in the district.

Activities that can erode the natural character values of *waterbodies* include *buildings* and *structures*, *earthworks*, *indigenous vegetation* removal, mineral extraction, and motorised activities on the surface of the water. The objective and policies of this chapter seek to manage these activities when undertaken within the riparian margins of *rivers* and *streams* to ensure that natural character values are preserved.

The *river* and *stream* order is shown on the planning maps and in Appendix 3; and the characteristics and values to be preserved are described in Appendix 6. Rules relating to the preservation of the natural character of *rivers* and *streams* are addressed within the stream setback standards included within the zone and district wide matters chapters.

This chapter leaves the articulation of activity specific and zone/location specific objectives, policies and rules to the relevant chapters of this Plan.

Objectives

NATC-O1 Natural character values of *rivers*, *streams* and their margins are preserved and protected from inappropriate *subdivision*, *land use* and development.

Policies

NATC-P1 Avoid adverse *effects* on the natural character values of *rivers* and *streams* described in Appendix 6 by:

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1. Avoiding development and *land* use that results in significant adverse *effects* on natural character values and avoiding or appropriately mitigating other adverse *effects* on natural character values; and
2. Managing activities that affect the natural character values, including *structures* within close proximity to the *river* margins, mineral extraction and *earthworks*, *indigenous vegetation* removal and activities on the surface of the water.

NATC-P2

Provide for and encourage the restoration and/or enhancement of the natural character of *rivers*, *streams* and their margins where:

1. Restoration and/or enhancement will achieve long-term improvement in natural character; and/or
2. It will assist in the restoration of indigenous *biodiversity* or ecosystems and angling fisheries species; and/or
3. It will support improved health and abundance of taonga species; and/or
4. Riparian margins provide a buffer from activities that may adversely affect the natural character values of the *river*; and/or
5. Riparian margins provide spawning or other significant habitats for at risk or threatened species.

NATC-P3

Avoid the placement of ~~*critical*~~ *infrastructure* within *rivers* and their margins, unless, having regard to the operational needs or functional needs of the activity

1. There is no reasonable alternative due to the *operational need* or *functional need* for the location; and
2. Adverse *effects* on natural character values can be avoided or appropriately mitigated.→, or
3. Notwithstanding NFL-P1 clauses (1), (3) and (4), for the National Grid,
 - a. enabling the reasonable operational, maintenance and minor upgrade requirements of established National Grid assets;
 - b. seeking to avoid adverse effects of the development of the National Grid on landscape values, including by having regard to the extent to which any adverse effects have been avoided, remedied or mitigated by the route, site and method selection

NATC-P4

When assessing resource consents within close proximity to *river* margins, include consideration of~~consider~~ the *effects* on natural character values of the *waterbody*, taking guidance from the values identified in Appendix 6 and the following matters:

1. The extent to which adverse *effects* on any natural character values described within Appendix 6 can be managed, avoided or appropriately managed; and

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2. The extent to which the proposed activity preserves or enhances any natural character values of the *waterbodies*; and
3. The *operational need* and *functional need* ~~for the activity to be undertaken within close proximity to rivers and their margins.~~
4. The benefits of the proposed activity to the health, safety and well-being of people and communities.

Notes

Note 1 Rules in Other Chapters

The objectives and policies in this chapter apply to the provisions of other chapters in the District Plan, including the following:

- Infrastructure
- Public Access
- Zones – Setbacks from Rivers and Streams.
- Natural Features and Landscapes
- Subdivision
- Activities on Surface of Water
- Earthworks
- Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity