

Section 7 – Coastal Environment

7.1 Background

7.1.1 What is the Coastal Environment?

The Coastal Environment is the inland area from mean high water springs subject to coastal processes and influences and where coastal qualities are significant. The [2010 New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement](#) (NZCPS) requires the Council to define the landward extent of the Coastal Environment in the District Plan and recognises that its extent will vary from region to region and locality to locality.

The NZCPS says the following about identifying the Coastal Environment:

Policy 1 Extent and Characteristics of the Coastal Environment

1. Recognise that the extent and characteristics of the coastal environment vary from region to region and locality to locality: and the issues that arise may have different effects in different localities.
2. Recognise that the coastal environment includes:
 - a) The coastal marine area:
 - b) islands within the coastal marine area:
 - c) areas where coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant, including coastal lakes, lagoons, tidal estuaries, saltmarshes, coastal wetlands, and the margins of these:
 - d) areas at risk from coastal hazards;
 - e) coastal vegetation and the habitat of indigenous coastal species including migratory birds:
 - f) elements and features that contribute to the natural character, landscape, visual qualities or amenity values:
 - g) items of cultural and historic heritage in the coastal marine area or on the coast:
 - h) inter-related coastal marine and terrestrial systems, including the intertidal zone: and
 - i) physical resources and built facilities, including infrastructure, that have modified the coastal environment.

The Waikato Regional Policy Statement (RPS) contains the same description of the Coastal Environment as the NZCPS. The RPS maps the landward extent of the Coastal Environment for the Region at an indicative level. It also sets out that district plans shall map or otherwise identify the landward extent of the coastal environment by either using the indicative line in the RPS or undertaking a detailed investigation. It goes on to set out what a detailed investigation shall consider.

In this plan reference to the Coastal Environment is reference to its landward extent only, as the Coastal Marine Area (CMA) (the seaward extent) is managed by Waikato Regional Council.

7.1.2 Why is the Coastal Environment important?

The District is a diverse area, that includes dramatic landscapes, areas of outstanding scenery, a nationally significant surf break and world class beaches along its 400 km coastline. The Coastal Environment is subject to coastal processes including erosion and inundation and the effects of climate change. The Coastal Environment also contains indigenous ecosystems and habitats and areas of natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes that are particularly sensitive to modification.

While the Coastal Environment is appreciated by many for its open space qualities, natural character, landscape, and recreational opportunities, activities such as aquaculture, farming, plantation forestry and marine service industries also depend on the use of its natural and physical resources. The Coastal Environment is also important for tourism. These activities contribute and are important to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities and need to be carefully balanced.

The economic and social wellbeing of the District and wider region is dependent on electricity, telecommunications and road infrastructure located in the Coastal Environment. The Coastal Environment also has potential for small-scale local renewable energy generation: wind turbines, solar panels and run-of-river hydroelectric turbines.

Tāngata whenua in the District also have an on-going and enduring relationship with the Coastal Environment which requires specific recognition.

7.1.3 How was the Coastal Environment determined?

The NZCPS and RPS require the District Plan to include provisions to manage the Coastal Environment. This necessarily entails a need to define the Coastal Environment and to that end the definition in the RPS includes a number of criteria that must be used as well as an indicative Coastal Environment Line (CEL) around the district.

However, the NZCPS and RPS do not explain how to identify the limits of the Coastal Environment. Current best practice in this area suggests that it should encompass those areas in which coastal processes, landforms and vegetation are prominent and in which there is a strong sense of interaction with the Coastal Marine Area (CMA), which is the area below mean high water springs. Consequently, the RPS defines the Coastal Environment as "the environment where the coast is a significant part or element", comprising at least those matters set out in the list above.

Based on these directives, the Council has employed the following to identify the extent of the Coastal Environment:

A. Areas that are physically linked to the Coastal Marine Area (i.e., the area below Mean High Water Springs) ("CMA"):

1. Areas that are directly subject to wave action and tidal inundation/movement and which contain/define the inter-tidal margins of the CMA;
2. Coastal drainage systems, including estuarine environments: and
3. Landforms and vegetation cover that are directly affected/modified by exposure and proximity to the CMA - through wind action, wave action and salt exposure.

B. Areas whose character is substantially defined by their proximity to the CMA:

4. Areas within which the CMA is a dominant to significant visual entity:
5. Locations whose landscape character and amenity is clearly influenced by proximity to the CMA: and
6. Locations within which items of cultural and historic heritage are found that are linked to, or within the CMA.

7.1.4 Management approach

In the Planning Maps the Coastal Environment is shown as an overlay. Specific features and values within the Coastal Environment are addressed in separate overlay provisions. These include:

- Biodiversity;
- Natural Character of the Coastal Environment;
- Natural Hazards;
- Historic Heritage;
- Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes.

The Coastal Environment Overlay is implemented through the overlay, zone and subdivision policy and rules. Where an activity occurs in the Coastal Environment, policies and rules within the applicable zone and overlay(s) that state "in the Coastal Environment" apply to the activity.

7.2 Issues

1. The protection, preservation, restoration and enhancement of the special values and characteristics of the Coastal Environment, including the effects of climate change, need to be carefully balanced with meeting people's inherent interest in using the Coastal Environment as a place to work, live and play.
2. Areas of modified or degraded natural character provide opportunities for restoration or rehabilitation through subdivision, use and development.

7.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1

Subdivision, use and development in the Coastal Environment:

- Enables people and their communities to provide for the social, economic, and cultural well-being and their health and safety; and
- Maintains or restores the integrity, form, functioning and resilience of the Coastal Environment; and
- Protects the indigenous biodiversity values of the Coastal Environment in relation to the biodiversity values present; and
- Preserves the natural character of the Coastal Environment in relation to the level of natural character present; and
- Protects natural features and landscapes values of the Coastal Environment in relation to the level of natural feature and landscape values present; and
- Recognises and provides for the relationship of tāngata whenua with the Coastal Environment; and
- Maintains and enhances public open space and recreation opportunities in the Coastal Environment; and
- Manages coastal hazard risks, including the long-term projected effects of climate change; and
- Protects and enhances historic heritage values; and
- Avoids sprawling or sporadic patterns of development and enabling consolidation of existing settlements.

Policy 1a

New subdivision, use and development along the coast shall provide a setback from the coastal edge to allow for:

- a) Preserving natural character; and
- b) Maintaining and enhancing public access to public areas; and
- c) Natural ecosystems functioning; and
- d) Natural functioning of physical processes, including the ability of natural features and ecosystems to migrate inland.

Policy 1b

Subdivision, use and development in the Coastal Environment (outside of the Natural Character and Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape Overlays) shall:

- a) avoid significant adverse effects on the values and characteristics of natural character, natural features and natural landscapes; and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects on the values
- b) and characteristics of natural character, natural features and natural landscapes.

Objective 2

Opportunities for restoration or rehabilitation of modified or degraded areas of natural character are promoted.

Policy 2a

The restoration or rehabilitation of modified or degraded natural character in the Coastal Environment shall be promoted.

In addition to the policies contained in this section, other policies to achieve the Objectives are found in the following sections of the Plan:

Section 6	Biodiversity
Section 8	Natural Character of the Coastal <u>Environment</u>
Section 9	Historic Heritage
Section 10	Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes
Section 11	Natural Hazards
Section 16	Development and Growth
Section 17	<u>Subdivision</u>
Section 18	Tangata Whenua