

Section 15 – Mining Activities

15.1 Background

The Coromandel Peninsula is one of the most mineral-rich areas of New Zealand. Mineral resources include precious metals and minerals that are necessary for industrial purposes and for constructing and maintaining infrastructure in the District. The Peninsula has many historic mines and several operating quarries. The location of mineral deposits can coincide with areas that have competing land uses (urban, forestry, agriculture, tourism or others) or values (landscape, lwi significance, natural character biodiversity or others). Deciding whether, where and how to extract minerals is an important resource management issue for the District.

The Plan separates mining activities into separate components that reflect the potential effect these activities have on the environment. These activities are: prospecting, exploration, underground mining, surface mining, mineral processing, waste rock/tailings storage and quarrying.

Prospecting is a low impact activity that may involve small scale limited rock, soil or vegetation sampling. Exploration on the other hand involves more detailed sampling of areas that have been identified during the prospecting phase as having minerals of possible extractive potential. Exploration may involve trenching, drilling and removal of tonnes of material for testing purposes. Effects of mining activities straddle District and Regional Council functions and require co-ordination.

As well as the historic mining areas, there are known but not yet quantified mineral resources throughout the District and the potential for undiscovered mineral deposits. The Plan includes provisions to enable the Council to take the presence of mineral resources into account when assessing proposals for the subdivision, use and development of land. (Section 16 Development and Growth, Section 17 Subdivision, Section 25 Rural Area).

While mining can have social and economic benefits to the District, mining operations also have the potential to adversely affect the natural, built, social, and cultural environment, heritage and amenity values. These impacts depend on the sensitivity and importance of the area, the scale of the operation, and how well the operation is managed.

Crown mineral permits issued under the [Crown Minerals Act 1991](#) do not give the permit holder automatic right of access to any land except for specified minimum impact activities. Access to land held or managed by the Department of Conservation to undertake minimum impact activities still requires consent under the [Crown Minerals Act 1991](#) from the Department of Conservation. The permit holder is required to negotiate an access arrangement with each landowner and occupier. Access arrangements and rights to access land for minimum impact activities are not conferred until a minerals permit is granted.

Industrial rock and aggregate is currently extracted from small local quarries and it is used primarily within the local area for roads, building materials, access tracks and other infrastructure as part of farming and forestry

operations. There are options for the resource to be exported outside the District, especially by barging to Auckland.

Some mining activities require consents from both the Regional and District Council. An integrated approach will be used when considering applications for mining activities.

Matters of national importance (Section 6 of RMA) are provided for in this Plan through the use of overlays and district wide rules that afford targeted protection for areas with high landscape, natural character biodiversity and historic heritage and cultural values.

Note:

1. All other sections of the Plan apply, where relevant

15.2 Issues

1. The District's minerals are a natural resource that have the potential to create social and economic benefits.
2. The location of the District's mineral resources are controlled by geology, the amount of interest is controlled by economic factors. The availability of these mineral resources to mining or quarrying is controlled by access arrangements with landowners and occupiers of the land. The use of these minerals is dependent on access to them; most mining activities can only practically and economically be undertaken where the mineral resource is located. Access to minerals can be constrained by development.
3. Enabling the potential economic and social benefits of mineral extraction whilst recognising the District's geological and climatic conditions and its richness in natural values that attract people including tourists in growing numbers to the District is a complex task and warrants comprehensive consideration and careful management.
4. Mineral extraction and processing can result in the degradation and loss of:
 - a) Biodiversity, natural character and landscape values
 - b) Coastal, rural and residential amenity
 - c) Cultural and heritage values
 - d) Public land access and enjoyment
5. Mineral extraction and processing can result in contamination of the environment and has the potential to adversely affect the health and safety of communities.
6. Mining activities can increase use and maintenance demands on roads, utilities and other infrastructure beyond their planned capacity.
7. Mineral extraction is a temporary land use and once the economically viable part of the mineral resource is extracted, mining will cease. Mined areas are likely to require rehabilitation.

15.3 Objectives and policies

Objective 1

Mining activities provide economic, social and environmental benefits to the District and avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the environment.

Policy 1a

The potential social and economic benefits of mining activities for the District should be recognised while avoiding, remediating or mitigating any potential adverse social and economic effects of such activities.

Policy 1b

New mining activities should be located outside the Coastal Environment Overlay to recognise and protect the special values and characteristics of the Coastal Environment, where these new activities would have more than minor effects on these values.

Policy 1c

New mining activities should not locate near existing sensitive activities unless adverse effects (such as vibration, dust and land subsidence) can be avoided, remedied or mitigated to a level that is no more than minor.

Policy 1d

New mining activities should not be located within the area that is described as the Northern Coromandel Restricted Area as shown within Figure 1 Section 39 of the Plan to recognise the cultural significance of the area.

Policy 1e

Applications for new mining activities should generally be considered together with any relevant applications for Regional Council consents that are required to ensure integrated management of environmental effects.

Objective 2

People, property and the environment are protected from contamination and risks posed by mining activities, including residual risks.

Policy 2a

The identification, assessment and management of the potential effects of mining activities shall ensure that these activities avoid contamination of people, property and the environment.

Policy 2b

Mining activities shall be located so that any residual risks to people, property and the environment, particularly arising from soil and water contamination, are minimised.

Objective 3

Land used for and modified by mining activities is rehabilitated to be safe and stable and capable of sustaining an appropriate post-mining land use and to, where practicable, restore landform and (as appropriate considering the pre-existing environment) indigenous biological diversity.

Policy 3a

Land used for or modified by mining activities shall be fully rehabilitated as set out in a Mine Closure Plan to be submitted with a resource consent application and to be reviewed according to the mining lifecycle so that:

- Mining activities and operational decisions do not result in any additional costs to the community once the operation ceases;
- Mine site rehabilitation is designed to achieve long-term stability of the landforms and an appropriate post mining use of the land and soils modified by mining activities;
- Land used for or modified by mining activities is fully rehabilitated to allow for re-establishment of ecosystem capacity to provide habitats for indigenous biodiversity and ecosystem services for people and where the opportunity arises it is enhanced; and
- Mine site rehabilitation is designed to prevent pollution of the surrounding environment.