



**KAIKARA
DISTRICT
PLAN REVIEW**

AUGUST 2021

**Kaipara District Plan Review
Discussion Document Summary**

ECOSYSTEMS AND INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity includes all the plants and animals that occur naturally in the area and have evolved or arrived without any assistance from humans. Our Ecological and Indigenous Biodiversity in the Kaipara District is unique and special and includes significant areas of indigenous forest, shrubland, wetlands, dune lakes and dunelands of high ecological value.

Section (6c) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires district councils to recognise and provide for the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna (commonly referred to as Significant Natural Areas or SNAs). The management approach in the Regional Policy Statement for Northland 2016 (RPS) sets out a tiered protection structure, with the highest level of protection provided to ecosystems, habitats and species most at risk of irreversible loss. The RPS also recognises that regulation only plays a partial role in safeguarding and enhancing SNAs and that councils should support voluntary efforts of landowners, Mana Whenua and community groups to protect, restore or enhance biodiversity values.

The benefits of identifying and protecting areas of SNAs in a district plan mean that these areas will not be further degraded by land-use and subdivision development, for example through vegetation clearance or earthworks. However, as Central Government is still developing provisions for biodiversity protection through the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS IB), Council has paused any further SNA work until the NPS IB is finalised. Central Government will be consulting on this document towards the end of this year, and Council will use this opportunity to encourage Central Government to find pragmatic solutions that meet the needs of Mana Whenua, communities and stakeholders.



KEY ISSUES

Section 75(3)(c) of the RMA requires district plans to give effect to the RPS for the region. However, the Operative Kaipara District Plan was developed before the RPS was made operative, so it does not give effect to the SNA related provisions of the RPS. In particular, the Operative District Plan does not fully apply the criteria set out in Appendix 5 of the RPS for identifying these areas.

The Operative District Plan contains a chapter on Ecological Areas but only areas managed by the Department of Conservation as well as a few Kaipara District Council forests are identified. This covers about 35,000ha of conservation land. It does not include Council covenants or QEII covenants that were created mainly through environmental benefit lot subdivisions. An environmental benefit lot subdivision is a lot that has been created for the legal protection of an area of indigenous vegetation or wetland.

Kaipara District Plan Review Discussion Document Summary ECOSYSTEMS AND INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The content of a district plan ranges from fulfilling legal requirements made by Central Government and regional councils, to proposing specific provisions that meet the needs of our District and its communities.

Council has not formed any views regarding possible changes to management/protection of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) within the Kaipara District. Presently (August 2021), we are awaiting further direction from Central Government, as we currently have no direction about the potential

requirements in the NPS IB and what this might mean for the district plan review.

Regardless of any potential future provisions in the new District Plan, Council does consider that there would be merit in supporting Mana Whenua, landowners and the community to protect and enhance indigenous biodiversity through co-operation and a range of non-statutory options and protection mechanisms.