



Riparian habitats and the One Plan

Information for affected landowners

Introduction

The One Plan regulates activities in the beds of rivers. If you are planning to do something within the bed of a river or stream – including taking gravel, putting in a culvert, constructing a ford or bridge, building a dam, or installing, maintaining, upgrading, removing or demolishing any type of structure in the bed, or disturb the bed in any way – then there are rules in the One Plan that will affect how you do it.

The One Plan also recognises that some reaches of rivers have special values, and one of these is the presence of riparian habitats. This fact sheet provides information about these habitats and how their presence may affect your ability to carry out an activity.

What is special about the riparian zone?

The riparian zone is the interface between land and a river or stream. The ecology of riparian habitats is strongly influenced by the area periodically being covered by flood waters. As a consequence, riparian habitats contain flora and fauna specifically adapted to cope with life in the riparian zone, making the biological diversity in riparian habitats distinctive from the land (terrestrial) and river (aquatic) habitats that surround them.

The recognition and protection of significant habitats of indigenous fauna is a matter of national importance. This requirement is just as important when considering riparian habitats that may be essential or critical habitats of native species.

One of the ways Horizons has catered for the protection of significant habitats of riparian fauna is by identifying Sites of Significance – Riparian (SOS-R) within the One Plan. This factsheet explains the different types of SOS-R, the indicator species you need to look out for, and how you may be affected.

Sites of Significance – Riparian

SOS-R are associated with specific reaches of rivers in the Region, and they are listed with their map co-ordinates in Schedule B of the One Plan. They include three types of habitat.

Gravel and sand (nesting) habitat

Gravel beds and beaches are critical nesting habitats for a number of native wading birds. The SOS-R reaches for gravel nesting habitat are identified using the known extent of banded dotterel (tūturiwhatu) and black-fronted dotterel as indicator species. These species were chosen because they prefer to nest in shingle areas on river margins.

Neither of these species is common, and they are considered to be an at-risk species for conservation. Their nests and chicks are very well camouflaged and can be difficult to spot.



Banded dotterel © Ormond Torr



Black-fronted dotterel © Craig Steed



Juvenile banded dotterel © Phil Battley



Dotterel nest © Ormond Torr

These photographs were all sourced from NZ Birds Online www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Mud and silt habitat

The mud and silt habitats of tidal estuaries are critical feeding grounds for a great number of migratory and residential wading birds. The SOS-R reaches for mud and silt habitats are identified using the known extent of royal spoonbill (kōtuku-ngutupapa) and wrybill (ngutuparore). Wrybill were chosen because they are considered a threatened species for conservation. Royal spoonbill were chosen because their habitat requirements overlap with most migratory and vagrant waders and they are not particularly common.



Royal Spoonbill © Ormond Torr



Wrybill © Ian Armitage

These photographs sourced from NZ Birds Online www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Nankeen night heron roosts

This is the only truly species-specific SOS-R. It was especially designed to protect two known habitats for Nankeen (rufous) night heron along the Whanganui River. Nankeen night heron was selected as an indicator of significant riparian habitats because the Whanganui population is the only known self-introduced population of this species in New Zealand.



Nankeen night heron © Peter Frost



Juvenile Nankeen night heron © Ormond Torr

These photographs were all sourced from NZ Birds Online www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Blue Duck and native fish

Blue duck (whio) and a number of native fish species also have critical riparian habitat requirements. However, because these species also have strongly aquatic habitat requirements as well, the protection of their habitats through the One Plan is regulated as Sites of Significance – Aquatic (SOS-A) rather than SOS-R.

Activities affecting Sites of Significance – Riparian

The One Plan regulates activities in the beds of rivers, where SOS-R are located.

Most activities that will affect SOS-R do not need resource consent provided you can meet all the applicable permitted activity conditions of the relevant permitted activity rule, along with all the applicable 'life-supporting capacity' and 'riparian' general conditions set out in Table 16.1. There are fact sheets available about the different activities, as well as the *General conditions – beds of rivers and lakes* fact sheet.

The life-supporting capacity conditions that help protect SOS-R include:

- a limit to the amount of sediment that may be discharged during the activity
- avoiding the use of materials that are toxic to aquatic ecosystems
- avoiding refuelling of machinery where spills may enter surface water.

The riparian condition relates specifically to SOS-R, to minimise the disturbance of nesting birds (primarily dotterel) between 1 August and 31 December.

Activities on gravel beaches, in the bed of a reach of a river identified as a SOS-R, can only occur

- if the activity takes place within 7 days of a flood of the area where it will be carried out, or
- where the disturbance commenced before 1 August and has not been interrupted for more than 7 days.

There are no specific conditions controlling the disturbance of Nankeen night heron habitats; Horizons instead works with landowners and other conservation agencies to advocate for the protection of these habitats.

It is important to note that reaches of streams and rivers can have multiple values and SOS-R may only be one of them. There are specific rules, and general conditions in Table 16-1, relating to the other values too, such as trout fishery, whitebait migration or reaches within a flood control or drainage scheme. Contact Horizons for advice about what values apply at a specific site and what you will need to consider before carry out any activity in the bed of a river or lake.

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