

# RPS – NFL – Natural features and landscapes

## Scope and background

### Scope

This chapter addresses the preservation and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate use and development

The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate *subdivision*<sup>\*</sup>, use and development is a matter of national importance. Outstanding natural features and landscapes are memorable, affording aesthetic pleasure and experiences that are shared and valued by a wider community. Outstanding natural features and landscapes have natural and cultural dimensions that are central to a community's identity and sense of belonging. They are places that reveal a community's history and a coherence and connectedness of people's lives through time and space.

A number of outstanding natural features and landscapes and their associated values are identified in RPS-SCHED7. These outstanding natural features and landscapes exist on both public and private *land*<sup>\*</sup> and were originally identified by the Regional Council, in consultation with the *Territorial Authorities*<sup>\*</sup> and the Department of Conservation, and included in the Regional Policy Statement for the Manawatū-Whanganui Region (August 1998). In determining these natural features and landscapes as being "outstanding and regionally significant" specific matters were considered, including geographical and geological features and their contribution to the Region's character, ecological significance, the cultural significance of the *site*<sup>\*</sup> or area, amenity, intrinsic, scientific and recreational values, and any recognised (national or regional) level of protection.

Territorial Authorities have the responsibility of managing the *effects*<sup>\*</sup> of *land*<sup>\*</sup> use, through district plan provisions and *land*<sup>\*</sup> use resource consents. Consequently, the management of competing pressures for the *subdivision*<sup>\*</sup>, use and development of *land*<sup>\*</sup> that may affect outstanding natural features and landscapes is most appropriately dealt with at a territorial level. However, to aid local decision-making, regional policies provide guidance for managing the *effects*<sup>\*</sup> of *subdivision*<sup>\*</sup>, use and development of *land*<sup>\*</sup> that may affect outstanding natural features and landscapes. In addition, a revised set of factors to be considered when assessing landscapes and natural features is provided, to aid decision making, and includes natural science factors, aesthetic values, expressiveness (legibility), transient values, shared and recognised values, cultural and spiritual values for *tangata whenua*<sup>^</sup> and *historic heritage*<sup>\*</sup> values.

RPS-NFL deals with outstanding natural features and landscapes of the non-CMA portion of the coastal *environment*<sup>\*</sup> landward of mean high water springs and *wetlands*<sup>\*</sup>, *rivers*<sup>\*</sup>, *lakes*<sup>\*</sup> and their margins.

## Issues

**Planning standards advice note:** RPS-NATC-I1 and RPS-NFL-I1 are duplicates of One Plan – 2014 Issue 6-2. They will be replaced with separate NATC and NFL issues to give effect to the National Planning Standards using a Schedule 1 process as soon as practicable.

### NFL-I1: Outstanding features, landscapes and natural character

1. The Region's outstanding natural features and landscapes can be adversely affected by *land\** use activities and development. Adverse *effects\** of development on outstanding natural features and landscapes include the potential for significant adverse cumulative *effects\**. Developments with the potential for greatest impact include wind farms, residential *subdivision\** and other major *structures\**.
2. The natural character of the coastal *environment\**, *wetlands\**, *rivers\**, *lakes\** and their margins can be adversely affected by *land\** use activities and development, particularly new *river\** works, drainage and *subdivision\**.

## Objectives

**Planning standards advice note:** RPS-NATC-O1 and RPS-NFL-O1 are duplicates of One Plan – 2014 Objective 6-2. They will be replaced with separate NATC and NFL objectives to give effect to the National Planning Standards using a Schedule 1 process as soon as practicable.

### NFL-O1: Outstanding natural features and landscapes, and natural character

1. The characteristics and values of:
  - a. the Region's outstanding natural features and landscapes, including those identified in RPS-SCHED7, and
  - b. the natural character of the coastal *environment\**, *wetlands\**, *rivers\** and *lakes\** and their margins
 are protected from inappropriate *subdivision\**, use and development.
2. Adverse *effects\**, including cumulative adverse *effects\**, on the natural character of the coastal *environment\**, *wetlands\**, *rivers\** and *lakes\** and their margins, are:
  - a. avoided in areas with outstanding natural character, and
  - b. avoided where they would significantly diminish the attributes and qualities of areas that have high natural character, and
  - c. avoided, remedied or mitigated in other areas.
3. Promote the rehabilitation or restoration of the natural character of the coastal *environment\**, *wetlands\**, *rivers\** and *lakes\** and their margins.

### NFL-O1: Ngā tohu kōhure me ngā mata whenua motuhake me te āhuatanga māori

1. Ko ngā āhuatanga me ngā ūara o
  - a. ngā tohu kōhure me ngā mata whenua motuhake o te Rohe ehara tonu ko ērā ka tautuhia i roto i Pukapuka Apiti 7, me
  - b. te āhuatanga māori o te taiao takutai moana, ngā papa waiwai, ngā awa, me ngā roto me ngā tapa o ērā

ka whakamarumarutia i te wehewehe whenua, te whakamahi me te whakaahu whenua kāore i te tika.

2. *Ko ngā pānga kino, ehara tonu ko ngā pānga kino katoa, ki te āhua māori o te taiao takutai moana, ngā papa waiwai, ngā awa, ngā roto hoki, me ngā tapa o ērā:*
  - a. *ka parea i roto i ngā wāhi tino rawe te āhua māori,*
  - b. *ka parea i ngā wāhi ka kaha te whakamemeha i ngā āhuatanga me ngā kounga o ngā wāhi nui te āhua māori, ā,*
  - c. *ka parea, ka whakatikaina, ka whakaitingia rānei i wāhi kē atu.*
3. *Ka whakatairanga i te whakaora ake, te whakahou ake rānei i te āhua māori o te taiao takutai moana, ngā papa waiwai, ngā awa, ngā roto me ngā tapa o ērā.*

## Policies

### NFL-P1: Regionally outstanding natural features and landscapes

The natural features and landscapes listed in RPS-SCHED7 Table 48 must be recognised as regionally outstanding and must be spatially defined in the review and development of district plans. All *subdivision*\*, use and development directly affecting these areas must be managed in a manner which:

1. avoids significant adverse cumulative *effects*\* on the characteristics and values of those outstanding natural features and landscapes, and
2. except as required under (1), avoids adverse *effects*\* as far as reasonably practicable and, where avoidance is not reasonably practicable, remedies or mitigates adverse *effects*\* on the characteristics and values of those outstanding natural features and landscapes.

### NFL-P2: Assessing outstanding natural features and landscapes

The Regional Council and *Territorial Authorities*\* must take into account but not be limited to the criteria in Table 8 when:

1. identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes, and consider whether the natural feature or landscape is conspicuous, eminent, remarkable or otherwise outstanding, and
2. considering adding to, deleting from, or otherwise altering, redefining or modifying the list of outstanding natural features or landscapes listed in Table 48 of RPS-SCHED7, or
3. considering the inclusion of outstanding natural features or landscapes into any *district plan*^, or
4. establishing the relevant values to be considered when assessing *effects*\* of an activity on:
  - a. outstanding natural features and landscapes listed in Table 48 of RPS-SCHED7, or
  - b. any other outstanding natural feature or landscape.

**Table 8** Natural Feature and Landscape Assessment Factors

Assessment factor	Scope
1. Natural science factors	<p>These factors relate to the geological, ecological, topographical and natural process components of the natural feature or landscape:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representative: the combination of natural components that form the feature or landscape strongly typifies the character of an area.</li> <li>2. Research and education: all or parts of the feature or landscape are important for natural science research and education.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Rarity: the feature or landscape is unique or rare within the district or Region, and few comparable examples exist.</li> <li>4. Ecosystem functioning: the presence of healthy ecosystems is clearly evident in the feature or landscape.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Aesthetic values</b>	<p>The aesthetic values of a feature or landscape may be associated with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coherence: the patterns of <i>land*</i> cover and <i>land*</i> use are largely in harmony with the underlying natural pattern of landform and there are no, or few, discordant elements of <i>land*</i> cover or <i>land*</i> use.</li> <li>2. Vividness: the feature or landscape is visually striking, widely recognised within the local and wider community, and may be regarded as iconic.</li> <li>3. Naturalness: the feature or landscape appears largely unmodified by human activity and the patterns of landform and <i>land*</i> cover are an expression of natural processes and intact healthy ecosystems.</li> <li>4. Memorability: the natural feature or landscape makes such an impact on the senses that it becomes unforgettable.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Expressiveness (legibility)</b>	The feature or landscape clearly shows the formative natural processes or historic influences that led to its existing character.
<b>4. Transient values</b>	The consistent and noticeable occurrence of transient natural events, such as daily or seasonal changes in weather, vegetation or wildlife movement, contributes to the character of the feature or landscape.
<b>5. Shared and recognised values</b>	The feature or landscape is widely known and is highly valued for its contribution to local identity within its immediate and wider community.
<b>6. Cultural and spiritual values for <i>tangata whenua</i><sup>^</sup></b>	Māori values inherent in the feature or landscape add to the feature or landscape being recognised as a special place.
<b>7. Historic Heritage values</b>	Knowledge of historic events that occurred in and around the feature or landscape is widely held and substantially influences and adds to the value the community attaches to the natural feature or landscape. Heritage features, <i>sites*</i> or <i>structures*</i> that are present and add to the enjoyment and understanding of the feature or landscape.

## Methods

The main non-regulatory methods the Regional Council will pursue are outlined below as action plan summaries.

<b>NFL-M1 District Planning – Natural Features and Landscapes</b>	
<b>Description</b>	<p>The Regional Council will formally submit on resource consent applications received by <i>Territorial Authorities*</i> for <i>land*</i> use activities where there is potential for <i>effects*</i> on outstanding natural features and landscapes.</p> <p>The Regional Council will formally seek changes to district plans if necessary to ensure provisions are in place to provide an appropriate level of protection to natural features and landscapes.</p>
<b>Who</b>	Regional Council and <i>Territorial Authorities*</i> .
<b>Links to Policy</b>	This method implements RPS-ECO-P1, RPS-ECO-P3, RSP-ECO-P4, RPS-NFL-P1, RPS-NATC-P1 and RPS-NATC-P2
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submissions completed on consent applications.</li> <li>• District plan changes sought if necessary after this Plan becomes operative.</li> </ul>

NFL-M2	Consistent Landscape Assessment
<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>The aims of this method are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to develop a consistent and robust characterisation of the landscape within the Region and consistent identification of outstanding natural features and landscapes, and</li> <li>2. to include specified areas in any future landscape assessments.</li> </ol> <p>The Regional Council will collaborate with <i>Territorial Authorities</i>* to develop and adopt consistent methodology for undertaking any assessment of landscape including for the purposes of identifying the outstanding natural features and landscapes within the Region. The methodology will include consideration of RPS-NFL-P2 and the factors detailed in Table 8.</p> <p>The Regional Council will make available relevant resource data including maps suitable for the study area description.</p> <p>A number of areas have been identified by the Regional Council that should be included during landscape assessments undertaken by the Regional Council and <i>Territorial Authorities</i>* and include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Central North Island tussocklands</li> <li>2. Eastern Desert Road landscape</li> <li>3. Moawhango Ecological Region including the Moawhango Gorge, Makirikiri Tarns and Reporoa Bog, and the Kutaroa and Otahupitara Swamps (Irirangi Swamp)</li> <li>4. Waimarino - Erua - National Park fault scarp</li> <li>5. Western Edge of the Volcanic Plateau</li> <li>6. Landguard Bluff</li> <li>7. Lake Horowhenua and its margins</li> <li>8. Lake Papatonga and its adjacent scenic reserve.</li> </ol> <p>The Regional Council will assist <i>territorial authorities</i>* undertaking landscape assessments to define more specifically areas of high natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes within the coastal <i>environment</i> of the Region.</p>
<p><b>Who</b></p>	<p>Regional Council and <i>Territorial Authorities</i>*.</p>
<p><b>Links to Policy</b></p>	<p>This method implements RPS-NFL-P2.</p>
<p><b>Targets</b></p>	<p>Methodology for assessment of natural features and landscapes agreed between the Regional Council and <i>Territorial Authorities</i>* within one year of this Plan becoming operative.</p>

## Principal reasons

### NFL-PR1

The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate *subdivision*\*, use and development is a matter of national importance. While the regulation of *land*\* use with regard to competing pressures for the *subdivision*\*, use and development of *land*\* that may affect natural features and landscapes is most appropriately dealt with at a *Territorial Authority*\* level, it is considered important that this document should continue to provide a list of regionally outstanding natural features and landscapes and their associated characteristics and values. The objectives, policies and methods provide guidance and direction for the protection of these values. For example, the policies require avoidance of significant adverse cumulative *effects*\* (ie., cumulative *effects*\* that are so adverse that

they have the potential to significantly alter or damage the essential characteristics and values of the natural feature or landscape).

In the application of RPS-NFL-P1(1) to the repowering of existing wind farms within their consented site or footprint, the assessment of cumulative landscape and visual *effects*\* and their significance should not be limited to the consideration of one factor, such as changes in *height*\*. Instead the changes to the existing *environment* should be considered in their entire context including any benefits from reduced density and a more visually coherent pattern of development with respect to the characteristics and values of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFL). In this context, 'repowering' means the replacement of turbines that have reached the end of their economic life with updated turbine technology to continue to make the best use of the available energy resource.

## Anticipated environmental results

Anticipated Environmental Result	Link to Policy	Indicator	Data Source
<p><b>NFL-AER1</b></p> <p>Except for change because of natural processes, or change authorised by a resource consent, at 2017 the characteristics and values of all outstanding landscapes and natural features identified in the Region (RPS-SCHED7 Table 48) will be in the same or a better state as assessed prior to this Plan becoming operative.</p>	<p>Indigenous biological diversity, landscape and <i>historic heritage</i>* RPS-NFL-P1 and RPS-NFL-P2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of RPS-SCHED7 outstanding landscapes and natural features where identified characteristics and values have been damaged</li> <li>• Level of protection afforded to RPS-SCHED7 outstanding landscapes and natural features in <i>Territorial Authority</i>* district plans</li> <li>• Ratio of successful Regional Council submissions versus total Regional Council submissions made on outstanding landscapes and natural features to <i>Territorial Authority</i>* consent planning processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding landscapes and natural features characteristics and values assessment survey</li> <li>• Regional Council's incidents database</li> <li>• Regional Council's Subdivision Enquiry Database (SED)</li> <li>• <i>Territorial Authority</i>* district plans</li> <li>• <i>Territorial Authority</i>* consent decisions</li> </ul>