

2013

Plan Topics

Landscape



Landscape

The purpose of this guidance note is to assist Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) practitioners understand the key principles and issues relating to the sustainable management of landscapes. It also identifies the range of potential approaches to dealing with landscape issues - in regional policy statements, regional and district plans and in resource consent applications.

At a general level there is some consensus on the meaning of landscape and the value of landscape assessment methodologies and management tools. However, different approaches and techniques are used in relation to landscape issues in the pursuit of sustainable management. This, in part, reflects both the diverse nature of landscapes and the subjective nature of landscape assessment.

Not only are landscapes important to us (as individuals and as a nation) they are also constantly undergoing change. Sometimes the change is rapid, such as, the impact of natural disasters and changes in land-use such as conversions from farming to vineyards. At other times change is very slow, almost imperceptible such as the colonisation and regeneration of native vegetation or the spread of gorse on land retired from farming. Many of the effects on landscape occur from interrelated drivers of change – including agriculture, forestry, housing, transport and energy requirements among others. Consequently, landscape assessment needs to recognise landscape as a four-dimensional concept in space and time within a given environment.

This guidance note emphasises that a transparent methodology, community engagement, and understanding the drivers of change are key principles that can increase both the understanding and acceptance of landscape assessment findings. Ultimately, this guidance note encourages an adaptive, integrated approach to managing the competing uses of our landscapes in a sustainable manner.

Guidance note

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The legislative context

Resource Management Act

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is the principal statute governing the management of New Zealand landscapes. Part II of the RMA contains a number of directives regarding its protection and management of landscapes as follows:

- Section 6 (a): The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;
- Section 6 (b): The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;
- Section 6 (f): The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;
- Section 7 (c): The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values; and
- Section 7 (f): Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.

Section 6(e), which relates to the protection of 'the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wahi tapu, and other taonga', can also overlap with landscape matters.

In addition to the Part II matters outlined above, there are also national policies that impinge on landscape management. Those of particular relevance include:

- [New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement](#) (2010): Policies 13, 14 and 15.
- [National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission \(2008\)](#): Policies 4 and 8
- [National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation \(2011\)](#): Policy C1

To assist with the interpretation and implementation of the NZCPS 2010, the Department of Conservation has produced a number of [guidance publications on specific NZCPS 2010 policies](#) which is available on their website. Further information to help practitioners to understand the intent of the national policy statements on electricity generation and renewable energy generation and to guide their implementation is available on the Ministry for the Environment website in the following publications:

- [National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission: Implementation Guidance for Local Authorities](#)
- [National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011: Implementation Guide](#)

Other legislation

Although the RMA is the primary legislation that guides landscape management, other legislation such as the Local Government Act 2002, National Parks Act 1980, Historic Places Act 1993, QEII Trust Act 1977, Conservation Act 1987 and Reserves Act 1977 also assume an important complementary role in assisting in the protection and management



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of landscapes (e.g. protection of outstanding landscapes contained within national parks; management of associated landscapes through reserve management plans).

Responsibility for exercising the functions of these various Acts falls on a number of government departments and organisations, including the Department of Internal Affairs, Department of Conservation, local authorities, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the QEII National Trust.

Defining Landscape

As our appreciation of landscape continues to evolve so too does the meaning we ascribe to it. Landscape means more than just 'a physical tract of land' or 'a view or scene'. Put simply, landscape can be explained as a reflection of the relationship between people and place.

All landscapes are dynamic to some extent as are our perceptions of landscape which are in a constant state of evolution. While this change is implicit it is not always predictable. Landscapes can be subject to change from various natural or human-induced processes and change can occur at a range of scales, from incremental to sudden sweeping change.

Although the term 'landscape' is not defined in the RMA or the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) 2010, various descriptions have emerged through evolving practice and case law. The New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA), for instance, describes landscape as reflecting 'the cumulative effects of natural and cultural processes'.

Assessment Criteria / Factors and Landscape Attributes

The Environment Court decision C180/1999 Wakatipu Environment Society and others vs Queenstown Lakes District Council established a number of principles that assist when considering landscape and visual matters. This included a set of factors referred to as the 'Amended Pigeon Bay Criteria'[\[2\]](#) which are relevant when assessing the significance of landscape.

These factors have been widely used, often in a formulaic way, and have faced criticism of potential 'double counting' or applying an overly formulaic framework to landscape that misses the 'essence' or 'spirit' of a section 6(b) landscape[\[3\]](#).

In response to this criticism, NZILA Best Practice Guidance and recent Environment Court decisions have grouped assessment criteria to identify three broad categories or 'landscape attributes' which should be considered. These are as follows[\[4\]](#):

1. Biophysical elements, patterns and processes;
2. Associative meanings and values including spiritual, cultural or social associations; and
3. Sensory or perceptual qualities.

Landscape classification under the RMA

In response to emergent practice and case law, provisions in RMA policies and plans have tended to rely on the classification of 'significant' landscapes which require special protection and management because of their elevated values under the RMA. These landscapes include:



Landscapes with high natural character in the coastal environment (and wetlands, lakes, rivers and their margins) - s6(a)

The term 'natural character' is used to describe the natural attributes of waterbodies where there is a land-water interface – in particular coastal environments, wetlands, lakes, and rivers. The [New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement \(NZCPS 2010\)](#) provides the national policy framework to manage the coastal environment under the RMA. For more information see the [Coastal Land Development Guidance Note](#). The Department of Conservation has compiled a series of [guidance publications on the implementation of the NZCPS](#) to assist RMA practitioners consider and give effect to specific policies. The Department of Conservation website also includes a report on the discussion and outcomes of the [natural character workshop](#) which was held in 2011 in relation to the NZCPS 2010.

Outstanding natural features and landscapes - s6(b)

An Outstanding Natural Landscape or Outstanding Natural Feature (often referred to as ONL and ONF) is determined through an assessment process that identifies whether the sum of its values equates to it being considered "conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence" or "remarkable in"[\[5\]](#).

However, an Outstanding Natural Landscape must be a 'natural landscape', and other values may result in the landscape being considered 'outstanding'[\[6\]](#). The Courts have recognised that a spectrum of naturalness exists which extends from pristine natural landscapes to cityscapes, within which a 'cultured nature' landscape may still be an outstanding natural landscape. In general such landscapes should usually be obvious enough that no further need for expert analysis is required aside from determining where the particular landscape begins and ends[\[8\]](#).

Cultural landscapes - s6(f)

The concept of cultural landscape is implied in the definition of 'historic heritage' in s2 of the RMA through the inclusion of '...surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources'. Further guidance with respect to 'cultural landscapes' is included in the [Historic Heritage Guidance Note](#).

Heritage issues can include built, cultural, historic, and natural heritage and these frequently overlap. Historic heritage is the only one of these terms actually defined in the RMA (s2). However, there is a relationship between ss6(a), 6(e) and 6(f) with each representing a different context which requires different landscape considerations. It is important that practitioners provide clear explanations on the terms 'heritage', 'historic' and 'cultural' in the context of landscape matters to limit confusion. Specialist historic and/or archaeological advice should also be sought if buildings or sites of historic heritage value exist within an area.

Amenity landscapes - s7

Amenity landscapes are those landscapes which offer visual amenity at a district or regional level or are outstanding but insufficiently natural[\[9\]](#). Under s7 'particular regard' is to be applied to such landscapes. Various territorial authorities throughout New Zealand have identified such landscapes as 'Visual Amenity Landscapes', 'Rural Amenity Landscapes', 'High Amenity Landscape', 'Significant Amenity Landscapes' and 'Special

Amenity Landscape’.

[1] Refer to: C180/1999 Wakatipu Environment Society and others vs Queenstown Lakes District Council; C432/2010 - Upper Clutha Tracks Trust vs Queenstown Lakes District Council.

[2] The Pigeon bay criteria include but are not restricted to: the natural science factors - the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape; its aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness; its expressiveness (legibility): how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it; transient values: occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year; whether the values are shared and recognised; its value to tangata whenua; its historical associations.

[3] The Pigeon bay criteria include but are not restricted to: the natural science factors - the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape; its aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness; its expressiveness (legibility): how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it; transient values: occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year; whether the values are shared and recognised; its value to tangata whenua; its historical associations.

[3] C11/2009 Unison Networks vs Hastings District Council, para 95

[4] Refer to: C11/2009 - Unison Networks Limited v Hastings District Council; C103/2009 - Maniototo Environmental Society Incorporated and others v Central Otago District Council and Otago Regional Council; and Decision of Board of Inquiry (2011) Hauāuru mā Raki Wind Farm and Infrastructure Connection to Grid

[5] C180 / 99, Wakatipu Environmental Society Inc v Queenstown Lakes District Council para 82.

[6] C432/2010, Upper Clutha Tracks Trust vs Queenstown Lakes District Council, para 65.

[7] C78/2008, Long Bay-Okura Great Park Society Incorporated vs North Shore City Council, para 135.

[8] C180 / 99, Wakatipu Environmental Society Inc v Queenstown Lakes District Council para 99.

[9] Ibid, para 113.



Landscape Assessment

Effective landscape management is underpinned by landscape assessment. If robustly and rigorously applied, landscape assessment should inform both the approach and decision making process relating to how landscapes are managed, and thereby reduce subsequent costs in the policy-making process or proposed project.

Landscape assessment in New Zealand focuses on ensuring landscape is sustainably managed and developed. The process for each particular assessment is specifically tailored to the area, issue or proposal being considered and the decision making context. The methodology and scope of a landscape assessment is usually determined by the purpose for which it is required. It is important to identify the most appropriate scale and/or particular landscape pressures in order to select a methodology that is suitably fit for purpose.

Landscape assessments in New Zealand can be broadly separated into two categories – **'area-based'** and **'proposal-driven'** assessments. A third type, the **'capacity-driven'** or **'issue-driven'** assessment is part of the larger area-based assessment process but can also be undertaken as a stand-alone assessment. Landscape description and characterisation undertaken as part of an area-based landscape study typically provides much of the **'baseline information'** from which judgements determining landscape evaluation, landscape capacity or the effects of a proposal are based.

'Area-based' landscape assessments and studies

Area-based landscape assessments can be carried out at regional, district, city or catchment scales to identify landscape areas and values. Such assessments help determine where landscape management is required and the appropriate approach. The following components are widely accepted as part of the area-based landscape assessment process:

- Landscape Description/Inventory
- Landscape Characterisation
- Landscape Evaluation

Landscape Description/Inventory

'Landscape description' involves a process of data compilation during which the layers or components that make up the landscape are identified. In New Zealand, 'land typing' has proved a useful basis from which such information has been gathered. This can include: landform, soil, geology, drainage patterns, vegetation cover, land uses, built development, infrastructure, heritage sites, cultural meaning and associations etc, as well as associations with water bodies such as lakes, rivers and the sea.

Clear, concise descriptions of the types of landscape that exist within a Council's administrative area can provide objective base information. Such descriptions are usually generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country (e.g. coastal dunes or glacially sculptured valleys). This is usually based on an understanding of geomorphology, ecology and cultural patterns and may include a description or inventory of how the landscape has come about.



Landscape Characterisation

Landscape character is derived from a combination of landscape components (i.e. landform, land cover and land use) that distinguishes one area from another. It normally follows a process of landscape description, and is not concerned with ranking or evaluating landscapes or identifying which areas of landscape are better or worse.

'Landscape characterisation' is the term used to encapsulate the process of identifying, mapping and describing landscape character areas. Each character area has a distinguishing combination of biophysical and cultural factors that make it distinctive. Characterisation provides a sound basis for the understanding of landscape diversity and change. Put simply, landscape characterisation aids understanding of what makes an area of landscape distinctive or unique.

Landscape character assessment can be applied at a number of different scales from the national to local levels. Ideally assessments at different scales should fit together as a nested series or a hierarchy of landscape areas so that assessment at each level adds more detail to the one above.

As there are currently no nationally agreed assessment criteria (i.e. as part of a landscape related national policy statement or national environmental standard), the criteria used to characterise landscapes need to be well-defined and consistently applied within the context of a region, district or local level at the outset of the assessment.

Landscape character areas should be mapped to communicate their location and general spatial extent. The factors that distinguish one character area from another often do not conveniently stop and start at a particular boundary. Consequently, boundaries should be treated as 'zones of transition' rather than precise lines that mark absolute points of change between adjacent character areas. Such zones can be further refined through consultation with the community.

Landscape characterisation should also include a description of the combinations of elements that make a particular contribution to landscape character. These can form a set of 'key characteristics' used to describe the particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement that create a particular sense of place. The processes of change and specific threats to landscape character can also be identified as part of the landscape characterisation process.

Landscape Evaluation

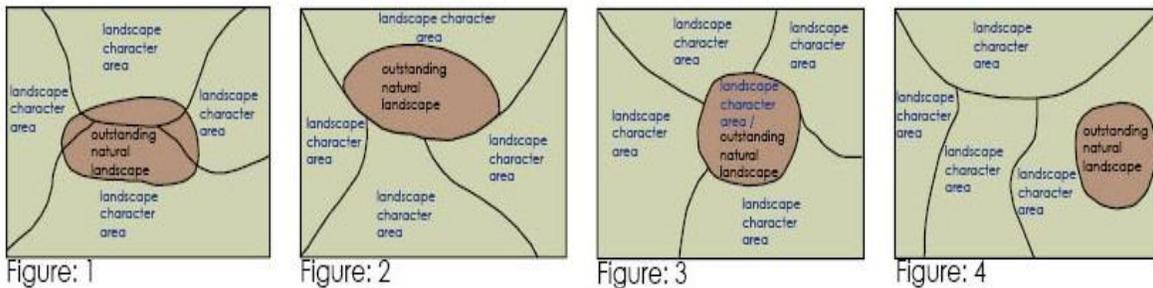
Landscape evaluation (i.e. assigning value) should identify important landscapes and natural features. The rationale for their importance or the important characteristics of particular landscapes should also be defined. The judgements required when undertaking landscape evaluation are based on the application of a clear understanding of landscape characterisation.

The findings of a landscape evaluation require an explicit description and weighing up of the landscape values recognised. This stage also includes engagement, as appropriate, with tangata whenua, communities, stakeholders and interest groups. Values are generally identified according to criteria that have been agreed through practice and case law which assist in determining an appropriate threshold.

As with any type of valuation, landscape assessment presents significant issues in terms of defining values, assigning rankings and prioritising management. Assessments to address these issues should normally be carried out by trained practitioners as they have the appropriate skill set to exercise professional judgements which acknowledge and address the range of possible perceptions relating to landscape issues. However, it is also good practice to validate expert opinion by gauging it against local opinion as well as using expert peer review to comment on the methodology to be used and the draft study findings.

Where to draw the line when mapping outstanding landscapes and natural features can be contentious. The legal system often drives the use of legal/ownership boundaries but this can cause problems as landscapes are generally defined by topography with obvious linear boundaries rarely occurring on the ground. Affected landowners also want certainty concerning whether their land is 'in or out'. In practice it may be more logical to define landscape areas in terms of natural elements such as landform where possible, but with careful consideration aligning outstanding natural landscapes and features with cadastral boundaries is achievable.

The process of landscape evaluation relies on the information gathered during landscape characterisation however the boundaries that result from landscape evaluation do not necessarily coincide with boundaries identified during the landscape characterisation process. Landscape evaluation boundaries can overlap landscape character areas, occur entirely within a landscape character area, or share common boundaries either in part or in their entirety as illustrated in **Figures 1 to 4** below.



Source: Boffa Miskell Limited (2010) RMLA/LGNZ Seminar



'Capacity-driven' or 'Issue-driven' landscape assessments

This approach is usually undertaken in response to a particular development pressure or landscape management issue that has arisen in a given area. Examples might include demand for increased residential subdivision on a particular coastline or public concern about landscape change brought about by changed land uses. Assessment involves an analysis of the factors that potentially influence the capacity of a landscape to accommodate change as well as consideration of opportunities for enhancement.

A capacity assessment can be undertaken as part of a full area-based assessment or as a separate study. Understanding the ability of an area to accommodate the impacts of a particular pressure can be useful to gain a focussed understanding of a particular issue or place.

Decisions about capacity of the receiving environment reflect the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the way that landscape is valued, and the type and extent of change proposed (if that is known or can be assumed). Capacity assessments usually assist in determining appropriate management mechanisms and thresholds for identified landscapes, and typically consider the following issues:

- In what ways are the identified landscapes and features in the district or region threatened? (e.g. urban expansion from rapid population growth).
- What are the specific threats to them? (e.g. demand for development on a particular lake margin).
- What are the hidden threats? (e.g. the cumulative effects of residential development and the rate of change).
- What would be inappropriate subdivision, use, and development of these landscapes and how can this be avoided?
- What opportunities are there for compatible subdivision, use and development?

'Proposal-driven' landscape assessments

Proposal-driven landscape assessments are submitted with development proposals and typically accompany an application for resource consent. Such assessments range in scale from small subdivisions to large infrastructure developments such as wind-farms, transmission lines and roads. Their purpose is to identify the effects of a proposal on landscape values.

Where required, an assessment of landscape and visual effects forms part of the assessment of environment effects (AEE) in accordance with Schedule 4 of the RMA. Landscape and visual effects can form a key to planning decisions by identifying the effects of new development on the landscape and/or in relation to views.

Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The existing landscape and its existing visual context all contribute to the existing 'baseline' for landscape and visual effects assessment. The types of effects considered within proposal-driven landscape assessments can be summarised as follows:



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Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.

As an initial step in any 'proposal-driven' landscape assessment, both the existing landscape character and the action being undertaken under the proposal are described. The area involved generally includes both the site of the proposal and the surrounding area which could be affected by the proposal. This typically draws on an area based assessment as part of the 'baseline' assessment and normally sets out:

- The terms of reference specific to the proposal and assessment;
- A description of the assessment methodology used;
- The landscape policy context which must be addressed; and
- A description of the landscape and visual context within which the proposal is located including the potential viewing audience.

Professional judgement forms an important element in assessing actual, potential or cumulative landscape and visual effects. While there is some scope for quantitative measurements (i.e. the numbers of trees planted or lost) much of the assessment relies on qualitative judgement (i.e. relating to visual amenity or the change in character of an area of landscape). Depending on the scale and nature of the proposal, 'proposal-driven' landscape assessments will typically contain:

- A detailed assessment of the physical changes to the landscape that will result from the proposal;
- A description and analysis of the impact that physical changes will have on identified landscape values, visual impacts from key locations and cumulative effect of the proposed activity;
- A detailed assessment of the extent to which the changes will affect the existing landscape character and the way in which affected parties' perception and experience of the landscape including visual amenity values is likely to be affected;
- An evaluation of the significance of natural character, landscape, visual and amenity effects in relation to statutory requirements; and
- Identification of landscape mitigation measures, including enhancement or rehabilitation and assessment of the effectiveness of such measures.

To ensure that the identification of likely significant effects is as transparent as possible, such effects need to be identified and accurately described and the basis for their determination clearly explained. This should also include a determination as to whether landscape and visual effects are positive, negative or in some cases neutral.

There are no hard and fast definitions in what makes a significant effect. When making findings in relation to landscape and visual effects it is important that a robust and consistent rating scale is used for the sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effects. In this regard the following seven point scale devised by NZILA can act as a useful guide:



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Extreme / Very High / High / Moderate / Low / Very Low / Negligible

Best Practice Considerations

- Landscape studies and assessments should be carried out by people with skills and experience in the field of landscape assessment, such as qualified landscape architects or landscape planners. They, in turn, can determine appropriate methodology, including definition of assessment criteria, based on individual and collective professional experience, and the scale and purpose of the study or assessment.
- An interdisciplinary approach will broaden the credibility of landscape assessments as the identification of landscape values involves a range of specialist areas including natural science, cultural and historic heritage. It is also good practice to involve statutory planning expertise in the assessment process to advise on the legislative framework and development of management mechanisms. Appropriate recognition of land-water associations can also be useful to the achievement of an integrated approach to sustainable management.
- Community engagement and consultation should be carried out in order to determine how the community perceives and values the landscapes and natural features and why. Community engagement prior to or as an integral early phase of a professional assessment can provide useful baseline information, aid issue identification and educate the community. Consultation on the findings of an assessment can also help to validate the professional assessment.
- Professional judgement is a very important part of landscape assessment. Ideally and especially for complex projects, more than one person should be involved in the assessment to provide checks and balances, especially in terms of identifying the significant effects that are likely to influence decisions. Ideally reports should be peer reviewed and made publicly available. Having peer reviewed technical reports available can give the community confidence in the findings and the decisions made.
- Ensure criteria used and the limitations to studies and assessments are made explicit in the landscape assessment and the reasons for their selection are clear (e.g. confining a visual assessment to key viewpoints).
- Illustrative material, including land-based photographs, aerial photographs with information overlays, GIS datasets, and diagrams can all be used to support and clarify text. Computer aided techniques including geospatial and visualisation techniques are also a powerful tool to assist landscape assessment (e.g. Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and visual simulations / photomontages). Visual simulations should be prepared in accordance with good practice guidance.
- It is better not to formally define RMA terms that are not interpreted in Part II (natural character, natural, landscape, natural feature) as interpretive case law continues to evolve. However, it is important to clearly state the way in which these elements are important within the district or region and why their sustainable management is an issue.
- Terms used should be clearly defined and used consistently, to avoid confusion between similar words with different meanings (e.g. ridgeline, ridgetop, ridge and skyline). Additionally, as landscape assessment often draws upon theoretical or academic research in which specialist terms have been coined, such terms should be translated into everyday language so that they can be readily understood and their intended meaning taken.



Other Relevant Landscape Assessment Guidance Material

- [Best Practice Note 10.1: Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management \(2010\)](#)
Prepared by Simon Swaffield and Frank Boffa and published by the NZILA Education Foundation to set out the principles for an integrated approach to landscape assessment.
- [Best Practice Guide 10.2 Visual Simulations \(2010\)](#)
Published by the NZILA Education Foundation to promote best practice standards and procedures in the preparation and use of visual simulations by the landscape profession.
- **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (2013)**
Published by Routledge and Produced jointly by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) and sponsored by English Heritage, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales. The third edition of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) sets out the principles and approach for identifying and assessing the landscape and visual impacts of development proposals.
- [Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland \(2002\)](#)
Prepared by Carys Swanwick Department of Landscape University of Sheffield and Land Use Consultants on behalf of The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage to inform the process of landscape characterisation.



Landscape Management Methods

Regulatory Instruments

The use of regulatory controls should be responsive to the particular landscape values and natural character that apply to a particular area or feature. Regulatory instruments that are typically used to manage landscapes include:

- Regional Policy Statements
- Regional Plans and Regional Coastal Plans
- District Plans

Regional Policy Statements

Regional policy statements provide the overarching policy direction for protecting outstanding landscapes and natural features in a region. Regional Policy Statements may:

- Establish robust criteria for assessing the significance of landscapes;
- Set clear policy direction on the landscape evaluation process and possible management techniques to be adopted by territorial local authorities; and
- Identify significant landscapes. If identified, specific policy direction and tools should be described to ensure territorial local authorities can effectively manage the identified landscapes.

Regional Plans and Regional Coastal Plans

Very few regional plans explicitly address landscape management as an issue. However, landscape can be indirectly managed through other issues, such as erosion management, floodplain management, vegetation clearance, activities in the coastal environment or involving the margins and beds of rivers and lakes. Regional coastal plans apply to the coastal marine area and can provide useful direction and mechanisms for managing coastal landscapes and natural character values in the coastal environment.

District Plans

District plans are a principal regulatory instrument used to manage effects on landscapes. As land use and subdivision are primary issues and drivers of landscape change, they are the focus of objectives, policies and associated methods (including rules) in many District Plans.

Landscape assessments should be used to inform the District Plan by providing background on the landscape character of the area, and an evaluation of the landscape's values. It is important there is community input into these assessments through effective engagement and consultation.

If particular landscapes are sensitive to landscape change, under higher pressure, or valued higher by the local community, they should be identified in the District Plan and spatially identified on the Planning Maps to provide a high level of certainty about their location and extent.



Regulatory Management Approaches

Accurate mapping of landscapes and natural features provides certainty about the areas where landscape management provisions and rules apply. Schedules of the mapped areas, with summary information about the important landscape characteristics to be managed, can be useful as they provide a clear basis for policies and rules.

Assessment criteria (e.g. siting buildings within an outstanding natural landscape or feature) should clearly relate to the important aspects or values of the landscape or feature requiring protection. These are generally more useful if they are area-specific so that the criteria provide some overall guidance about managing a particular landscape or feature.

Consideration of differences in scale is essential when formulating rules relating to landscapes and features. Rules for landscapes that cover large areas may need to be more generic, whereas rules for natural features may need to be more site-specific. In either instance, the rules must manage the elements or values recognised and be clearly tailored to the particular landscape characteristics to be managed.

Landscape issues necessarily require a degree of case-by-case consideration and judgement. Consequently, the use of restricted or full discretionary activity status (instead of permitted or controlled) to manage activities that could affect important landscapes is recommended as it enables proposals to be turned down or modified if necessary, and can better take into account the cumulative effects of activities.

The range of regulatory approaches that can direct the provisions for landscape management can include:

- Landscape categorisation and character areas
- Identification of Special Areas or Zones
- Ridgeline, Viewshaft or Feature Protection
- Structure Plans
- Activity status and thresholds
- Resource Consent Conditions

Landscape categorisation and character areas

Under this approach landscape character areas or features are classified according to identified landscape values. The classification and mapping of these landscapes is then supported by a suite of objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria which align with the values and significance of the different landscape categories defined (e.g. 'general landscape issues', 'protection of outstanding natural landscapes and features', 'maintenance and enhancement of visual amenity landscapes' and 'other rural landscapes').

Identification of Special Areas or Zones

This approach is essentially a zoning technique whereby specific areas are identified based on their sensitivity to and ability to absorb landscape change.

Ridgeline, Viewshaft or Feature Protection

This approach involves the identification of particular ridges and/or viewshafts and/or



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features often highly valued by the community and potentially under threat from forestry, inappropriate tree planting, earthworks, buildings, utilities and vegetation clearance, and the development of appropriate statutory planning provisions to manage the effects of such activities. Accurate mapping and a description of the key characteristics of the landscape being managed are important elements of this process.

Structure Plans

Structure Plans are high level plans that illustrate the spatial arrangement of land use types in a defined area, and identify associated infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools) and existing natural features. They can be used, for example, to deter development in areas of high landscape value, or to apply a specific management framework to different areas based on the landscape values.

Activity status and thresholds

As a subset of area wide or area specific rules, activity status and associated thresholds are a common method used by regional and territorial authorities to manage effects on landscapes. This typically involves more stringent thresholds or higher activity status being applied to identified areas which are more sensitive to landscape change, under higher pressure, or valued higher by the local community.

Resource Consent Conditions

Resource consent conditions often apply or adapt the findings of proposal-based landscape assessment to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects on the landscape.

Conditions can cover:

- Floor levels and earthworks – floor levels may be specified and details regarding earthworks, final contours and stormwater treatment provided;
- Built form details – specific standards (e.g. maximum height of structures and/or buildings, size and position of building platforms and maximum site coverage, colour of materials, reflectivity of materials);
- Curtilage areas - specific standards (e.g. the size of curtilage areas, the size and heights of decks, patios or fences) and rules regarding the type of activities permitted such as restrictions on the use of exotic plant species outside the curtilage area;
- Landscaping - preparation and implementation of detailed landscape plans. They may require final approval by a design committee or a council landscape architect. They are likely to include lists of appropriate species and conditions regarding ongoing maintenance and the timing of implementation (e.g. implementation of planting may be linked to completion of earthworks);
- Access – the design and maintenance of the access roads; Utilities – power, phone, sanitary pipe work and water tanks may be required to be addressed in terms of their siting and level of visibility;
- Protection of buffer/natural areas – specialist advice may be required to determine appropriate buffer areas; and
- Promotion of ecosystem restoration – this could include the restoration of indigenous ecosystems and processes.



Non-regulatory Approaches

Often the best means of protecting and maintaining and enhancing landscapes is to support landowners in protecting and managing recognised values. Strategic documents linked to annual planning documents are also an effective way for councils to work towards landscape management objectives, through planning and budgeting for land acquisition, education programmes, community projects, and incentives schemes. The range of non-regulatory instruments used to achieve sustainable landscape management can include:

- Guidelines/practice notes
- Design Review Panels
- Non-statutory strategies/plans
- Education/Information/Stakeholder Groups
- Land Acquisition/Reserves
- Covenancing
- Transferable Development Rights
- Incentives
- Monitoring landscape change

Guidelines/practice notes

Design guides can encourage good design outcomes for a number of activities. Several councils have prepared such guidelines, typically relating to rural subdivision and earthworks. Good design guidelines are based on a robust understanding of the local landscapes and the particular character and features that are important and valued, and how activities can be designed in an appropriate manner.

Design Review Panels

Design panels can be a successful, cost effective approach to sustainable landscape management. Although they are most commonly used in urban situations they can be equally effective in a rural landscape context. Their key strength is that they provide a means whereby the applicant and the design panel can collaborate on proposals that are appropriate to the circumstances and that comply with resource consent requirements.

Non-statutory strategies/plans

Pressures on a particular resource (such as a landscape) may require a targeted management response. A non-statutory document provides a level of flexibility to investigate and understand a particular issue, and develop a suite management mechanism for the particular resource. These management mechanisms can include implementation through statutory tools, such as a District Plan.

Education/Information/Stakeholder Groups

Targeted education programmes and the provision of information can raise community awareness and understanding of the landscape. Additionally, the establishment of landcare groups (e.g. coast care group) provides an opportunity for resources to be pooled to implement specific projects. These groups and projects are not often solely for landscape reasons, but for a wide range of purposes.

Land Acquisition/Reserves

Some of the most highly valued landscapes are owned by the Crown and administered by a government department or local authority. The acquisition of land can be an



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appropriate mechanism where landscape values are extremely high, and/or risks to landscape change is likely to have an irrevocable effect on the landscape. The management of these areas is often also controlled by other legislation, including the Conservation Act 1987 and Reserves Act 1977. Partnerships between agencies to manage such landscape issues jointly can help ensure efficient and co-ordinated efforts (e.g. input into conservation management plans for land administered by the Department of Conservation within an outstanding landscape).

Covenancing

Applying covenants to land can be an effective way of protecting valued landscapes on private land. There are different levels/strengths of covenant and they include the QEII National Trust and under the RMA, ss 108 & 109.

Transferable Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a tool that involves the exchange of zoning privileges to manage growth. The intention behind the system is to enable subdivision to occur in areas considered more suitable for it while reducing development options in areas that may be less suited.

Incentives

Incentives can be used to encourage landowners to adopt recommended measures to protect landscape values: for example, assistance with the cost of fencing and managing forest remnants and wetlands.

Monitoring landscape change

Environmental indicators that provide a good indication of changes in landscape character can be difficult to capture meaningfully. A comprehensive landscape characterisation process can provide a useful base of information to draw upon as specific attributes to be measured should be selected from key characteristics that have been identified in an area.

