9. Indigenous biodiversity

9.1 MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

Background to the issue

Biological diversity (or biodiversity) is the variability among living organisms and their habitats, and the ecological systems of which they are part.

Indigenous biodiversity here refers to biodiversity that is native to New Zealand, and much of which is found nowhere else in the world. Native forest and shrub land cover extensive areas of Taranaki (approximately 40%). These areas, along with Taranaki's rivers and streams, wetlands and coastal marine area provide significant habitats for indigenous flora and fauna species, including threatened species.

Since human settlement and the introduction of accompanying pests, indigenous biodiversity has been in a steady state of decline. Managing land for specific purposes (e.g. residential subdivision and landscaping, pastures optimised for agricultural productivity, and plantation forests) almost always reduces biodiversity and the richest ecosystem habitats as a consequence.

Historical land clearance and drainage have contributed to much of the reduction of indigenous habitats and the disproportionate loss of some types of terrestrial habitats such as wetlands, lowland forests and coastal environments. Because of their rarity, the protection of these habitats as self-sustaining ecosystems assumes added value and significance. Freshwater habitats and indigenous aquatic life are also affected by use and development of land and water, e.g. point and diffuse source discharges that reduce water quality, loss of habitat such as wetlands and riparian margins, and the presence of barriers to fish passage.

The impact of pest animals and weeds is the key threat to the condition of remaining indigenous habitats and the continued survival of some threatened species in Taranaki. The release and proliferation of pest fish such as koi carp and other undesirable aquatic plant and algal species in the region is also a potential issue of concern in some waterways.

Many remnant areas are also isolated and are surrounded by highly modified environments such as farmland. Furthermore, many are of a size or shape that makes their long term ecological viability uncertain unless ecological linkages with other areas can be maintained or enhanced.

There is a lack of accurate and reliable information on the marine environment. However, there is some evidence to suggest that significant threats to marine biodiversity exist from illegal fishing or over fishing (particularly kaimoana and commercial fish stocks), the by-catch of non-target fish and of threatened wildlife, and habitat destruction attributable to inappropriate fishing practices. Biosecurity incursions of harmful marine organisms pose a further risk.

Many important biodiversity issues faced in Taranaki arise on privately owned land in productive agricultural areas. Others are on publicly owned lands or in marine and freshwater areas managed by agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries and the Taranaki Regional Council. These areas may also be used and developed for community benefits, including social and economic benefits. The Taranaki Regional Council and the region's three district councils have statutory responsibilities to maintain indigenous biodiversity when carrying out their functions under the Act and to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity from resource use and development. This means that policies for indigenous biodiversity protection and enhancement must consider other community and regional interests (including social and economic benefits) from the use and development of resources in achieving the overall sustainable management purpose of the Act.

Other agencies, community groups and trusts have also been established to assist in biodiversity protection. The wide range of stakeholders who are involved in or who may influence biodiversity outcomes means there is a need to work with these agencies and groups and with landowners and resource users to encourage integration and co-ordination to achieve common biodiversity goals in an efficient and effective way.

While historical land clearance and drainage have significantly reduced the extent of the region's indigenous habitats and ecosystems, considerable areas still remain. Some 40% of the region is covered in native forest and shrub land with approximately half this area (143,000 ha) being on private land outside of public conservation areas. The presence of significant vegetation on most of this private land is there as a result of the stewardship of the landowner. Considerable work is undertaken by landowners to maintain these areas much of which is unseen by the wider public. These activities range from voluntary retiring and foregoing opportunities to develop and use natural areas, to the creation of wetlands, the planting of riparian margins and pest and weed control. Many landholders have also supported biodiversity

protection through covenants with the QEII Trust and participation in initiatives by the Taranaki Tree Trust and Taranaki Kiwi Trust.

Maintaining indigenous biodiversity on private land will require the active assistance of willing landowners. There is therefore a need for continued recognition and support for private landowners if objectives for the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki are to be successfully achieved.

The significant issues in relation to maintaining or enhancing indigenous biodiversity in the Taranaki region are:

BIO ISS 1	**Protecting under-represented habitats of terrestrial and aquatic indigenous flora and fauna.**
BIO ISS 2	**Reducing the impact of pest animals and plants, particularly where they threaten ecosystems, habitats and areas that have regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values.**
BIO ISS 3	**Encouraging connectivity between remnant habitats to maintain or enhance indigenous biodiversity values.**
BIO ISS 4	**Reducing threats to freshwater and marine habitats, flora and fauna.**
BIO ISS 5	**Recognising the community benefits of appropriate use and development of resources when maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity.**
BIO ISS 6	**Working with others to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity values.**

Indigenous biodiversity means the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are a part (including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems) that are indigenous or native to New Zealand. The objectives, policies and methods in this part of the Regional Policy Statement therefore focus specifically on this dimension or aspect of the environment. It is recognised that indigenous biodiversity values may be an important component of other issues, objectives and policies in this Regional Policy Statement, for example those dealing with the natural character of the coast, water allocation, wetlands and natural features and landscapes. This is unavoidable given the complexity and interconnectedness of the environment and the requirement of the Act that the Council focus on specific resource management issues of significance for the region. This section of the Regional Policy Statement on indigenous biodiversity must therefore be considered in the context of other related issues, objectives, policies and methods.

OBJECTIVE

BIO OBJECTIVE 1

To maintain and enhance the indigenous biodiversity of the Taranaki region, with a priority on ecosystems, habitats and areas that have significant indigenous biodiversity values.

POLICIES

Promotion of indigenous biodiversity

BIO POLICY 1

The maintenance, enhancement and restoration of indigenous biodiversity will be promoted throughout the Taranaki region and at different scales within the region and will include ecological landscapes, ecosystems, and ecological processes, habitats, communities, species and populations.

Adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity

BIO POLICY 2

Adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity in the Taranaki region arising from the use and development of natural and physical resources will be avoided, remedied or mitigated as far as is practicable.

Ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant indigenous biodiversity values

BIO POLICY 3

Priority will be given to the protection, enhancement or restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, habitats and areas that have significant indigenous biodiversity values.

Identifying significant indigenous biodiversity values

BIO POLICY 4

When identifying ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant indigenous biodiversity values, matters to be considered will include:

(a) the presence of rare or distinctive indigenous flora and fauna species; or
(b) the representativeness of an area; or
(c) the ecological context of an area.

Once identified as significant, consideration should be given to the sustainability of the area to continue to be significant in future when deciding on what action (if any) should reasonably and practicably be taken to protect the values of the area.

Other ecosystems, habitats or areas with indigenous biodiversity values

BIO POLICY 5

The maintenance, enhancement or restoration of indigenous biodiversity will be promoted in ecosystems, habitats and areas not covered by Policies 3 and 4 above, but still important for the

continuing functioning of ecological processes, including those aspects important for the maintenance, enhancement or restoration of:

(a) connections within, or corridors between, habitats of indigenous flora and fauna;
(b) ecosystems, habitats and areas that provide buffering of habitats of indigenous flora and fauna;
(c) botanical, wildlife, fishery and amenity values;
(d) biological and genetic diversity;
(e) water quality, water levels and flows; and
(f) soils, substrate, minerals, nutrients or other physical factors or processes necessary for the survival of any indigenous flora or fauna species or community.

Working with others

BIO POLICY 6

The Taranaki Regional Council will work with landowners, resource managers and resource users and will co-ordinate and liaise with other agencies and community groups to promote the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity in an integrated and cost-effective way.

Appropriate use and development

BIO POLICY 7

In the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki consideration will be given to the social and economic benefits of appropriate use and development of resources.

Eco-sourcing

POLICY 8

When re-establishment or restoration of indigenous vegetation and habitat is carried out, preference should be given to the use of local genetic stock.

Explanation of the policies

Policy 1 states that the Council will promote indigenous biodiversity throughout the region and in so doing will recognise the many levels (e.g. ecosystems, habitats, communities, species and populations), at which indigenous biodiversity exists in both unmodified and modified environments. Policy 1 also recognises that while the policy and management focus is on protecting habitats and species rare and uncommon, there is a general public desire to also maintain more common indigenous biodiversity elements in the landscape such as tui, bellbird and kereru in urban gardens.

Policy 1 is supported by a number of mechanisms that can be used to maintain, enhance or restore indigenous biodiversity. These range from the provision of information and advice through to RMA plans and other forms of legal protection such as provided for under the Wildlife Act and Conservation Act.

To give effect to Policy 1, Policy 2 seeks to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity arising from use and development of natural and physical resources. Adverse effects are to be avoided, remedied or mitigated, as far as is practicable. This recognises that it will not always be practicable or appropriate to avoid, remedy or mitigate all adverse effects in all situations. However, avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse environmental effects as far as practicable does not necessarily mean that any use and development of resources that avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse environmental effects as far as practicable, will be acceptable - adverse environmental effects must be managed in a way that gives effect to the Act's sustainable management purpose. Consideration should be given to such things as the nature and scale of effects, the significance of the values affected and the overall purpose of sustainable management.

Policy 3 recognises that a targeted approach to indigenous biodiversity is appropriate in recognition that resources are limited and that some terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, habitats and areas are more highly valued or at risk than others. That is, controls or measures to be adopted to protect, enhance or restore indigenous biodiversity values will be focused on particular ecosystems, habitats and areas deemed to be 'significant'. These include not just terrestrial areas but also aquatic habitats such as rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries and coastal areas.

Policy 4 sets out criteria considered in determining and identifying ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant indigenous biodiversity values. To be considered significant, a site must have values that meet at least one of the first three criteria (criterion (a), (b) or (c)) **and** be sustainable (criterion (d)), which takes into account the quality of the area, its naturalness and inherent ecological viability.

The **rarity and distinctiveness** criterion (criterion (a)) refers to the presence of threatened indigenous flora and fauna species or the presence of species distinctive because they are at their national distributional limit, only occur in Taranaki, or, although common elsewhere, are particularly uncommon in Taranaki. The **representativeness** criterion (criterion (b)) refers to an area being significant because it supports ecosystems that are now much reduced in relation to their former extent. The **ecological context** criterion (criterion (c)) refers to an area being significant because it enhances connectivity between fragmented indigenous habitats; buffers or similarly enhances the ecological values of a specific site of value; or provides seasonal or core habitat for specific indigenous species.In applying the criteria, the 'weighting' given to certain matters will differ between

a regional or district perspective. Once identified as significant, the sustainability of the area to continue to be significant in future should be considered in deciding what management response (if any) should be taken to protect the values of the area. This will involve an overall assessment of costs, benefits and risks. For example an area may be considered sustainable if key ecological processes remain viable or still influence the site, key ecosystems within the area are known to be or are likely to be resilient to existing or potential threats under appropriate management, and existing and potential land and water uses around the site can, if necessary, be modified to protect ecological values. This criterion considers the size and shape of the area and its degree of isolation; the type of ecosystems, habitats and species present and their ecological requirements; the presence of threats or disturbances to the area; and the conservation management required to achieve self-sustainability. For example, the Taranaki Regional Council, when applying the criteria will consider what is regionally significant, while district councils would consider areas significant at the local level.

Policy 5 seeks to promote the maintenance, enhancement or restoration of ecosystems, habitats and areas, other than those identified in Policies 3 and 4 as 'significant', which contain aspects that are important for the overall functioning of ecological processes (e.g. wildlife corridors that improve ecological linkages). Policy 5 identifies some aspects important for the continued functioning of ecological processes. Other aspects not identified may still apply.

Policy 6 recognises that making positive contributions to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity will often require working with the community and offering practical support and encouragement for such things as fencing, planting and pest control work. Policy 6 has also has been adopted to achieve co-ordination of policies and programmes on indigenous biodiversity. This is necessary in light of the many stakeholders involved and limitations on the resources that could potentially be applied to the issue. An integrated approach will result in more cost-effective solutions in achieving the objective of this Regional Policy Statement, for indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki.

Policy 7 recognises the need to consider the social and economic benefits of appropriate use and development of resources in achieving the Regional Policy Statement's objectives and policies to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity values in Taranaki. The balancing of biodiversity values and community benefits will need to take into account the issues, objectives and policies for biodiversity set out in this section of the Statement and the relevant provisions of other sections.

Policy 8 states that maintenance of genetic integrity of Taranaki flora and fauna during restoration work will prevent genetic contamination of Taranaki stock and reduce the loss of regional adaptation.

Related policies

All policies in **Sections 5.1** [Soil erosion], **Section 5.2** [Soil health], **Section 5.3** [Hazardous substances and contaminated sites]; **Section 6.1** [Sustainable water allocation]; **Section 6.2** [Surface water quality]; **Section 6.4** [Wetlands]; **Section 6.5** [Land drainage and associated diversions]; **Section 6.6** [Use of river and lake beds]; **Section 6.7** [Public access to rivers and lakes]; **Section** 7.**1** [Air quality]; **Section 7.2** [Climate change]; **Section 8.1** [Natural character of the coastal environment]; **Section 8.2** [Coastal water quality]; **Section 8.3** [Public access to the coastal environment]; **Section 10.1** [Natural features and landscapes]; **Section 10.2** [Historic heritage]; **Section 10.3** [Amenity values]; **Section 11** [Natural hazards]; **Section 12** [Waste management]; **Section 13** [Minerals]; **Section 14** [Energy]; **Section 15.1** [Sustainable urban development]; **Section 15.2** [Regionally significant infrastructure]; and **Section 16** [Issues of significance to iwi].

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Taranaki Regional Council will:

BIO METH 1 **Identify and monitor** natural areas and key species, waterways, wetlands, and other areas with significant or outstanding indigenous biodiversity values.

BIO METH 2 **Monitor and gather information** on barriers to fish passage and promote their removal or an alternative efficient and effective way to ensure fish passage.

BIO METH 3 Consider the use of **financial incentives**, such as grants, subsidies and rate relief, to promote the maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity including to:

(a) assist with the protection of indigenous biodiversity values on privately owned land with a priority on ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant biodiversity values;
(b) promote the protection of wetlands; and
(c) promote the maintenance and enhancement of freshwater biodiversity including through the use of riparian planting and the removal or alteration of structures that are a barrier to indigenous fish passage.

BIO METH 4 Prepare and implement **pest management strategies or undertake other actions** under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to address the management of harmful animals or plants that have regionally significant actual or potential adverse and unintended impacts on indigenous biodiversity values.

BIO METH 5 Consider other **pest and weed control** to protect indigenous biodiversity values on privately owned land with a priority on ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant indigenous biodiversity values.

BIO METH 6 Maintain a **regional plan or plans** with objectives, policies and methods of implementation addressing accelerated erosion, soil health, discharges to land, air and water, the taking of water, fish passage, riparian management, use of river and lake beds, the protection of wetlands and the management of the coastal marine area including estuaries and other areas of outstanding coastal value.

BIO METH 7 Apply **regional rules** to regulate, mitigate or prohibit resource use and development activities that have potential or actual adverse environmental effects on indigenous flora and fauna in relation to soil conservation, air quality, fresh water and the coastal marine area.

BIO METH 8 Prepare a **Biodiversity Operational Strategy** to guide the biodiversity actions of the Council and which identifies programmes and actions for indigenous biodiversity on land, freshwater biodiversity and coastal and marine biodiversity.

BIO METH 9 Provide **technical advice, information and assistance** through the Council's sustainable land management advisory services to promote:

(a) the voluntary identification, protection and restoration of ecosystems, habitats and areas with significant biodiversity values;
(b) the voluntary identification, protection and restoration of other ecosystems, habitats and areas with indigenous biodiversity values; and
(c) the voluntary retirement and planting of riparian margins.

BIO METH 10 Provide **information and guidelines** to resource users and the public that generally promote awareness of:

(a) the principles and practices for maintaining, enhancing, or protecting indigenous biodiversity;
(b) the mechanisms for protecting natural areas;
(c) the importance and values of regionally significant natural areas, waterways, wetlands and areas of outstanding coastal value;
(d) the importance and values of indigenous flora and fauna species, particularly those species that are locally rare or distinctive;
(e) the benefits of and the techniques for undertaking riparian planting; and
(f) techniques for constructing and maintaining in-stream structures in a manner that avoid or reduce adverse effects on in-stream values, fish passage and other users.

BIO METH 11 Prepare biodiversity related **'practice notes'** and include consideration of biodiversity issues in **'checklists'** for consent processing.

BIO METH 12 When implementing the Taranaki Regional Council's **Riparian Management Programme and Sustainable Land Management Programme**, promote the protection, re-establishment or restoration of areas of indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna.

BIO METH 13 **Advocate** to relevant agencies, the use of **other legislation** (such as the Conservation Act 1987, the National Parks Act 1980, the Reserves Act 1977, the Wildlife Act 1953, the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust Act 1977, the Fisheries Act 1983 and the Biosecurity Act 1993) or mechanisms (such as the Forest Heritage Trust Fund, Biodiversity Fund and Sustainable Management Fund) to protect or restore areas of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna.

BIO METH 14 **Advocate** when appropriate, to relevant agencies, the sustainable use of the marine environment and the establishment of **marine protected areas, including marine reserves,** to protect areas with regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values.

BIO METH 15 Participate, as a trustee, in the affairs of the **Taranaki Tree Trust**, and provide servicing and support to the Trust.

BIO METH 16 **Monitor and gather information** on the state of indigenous biodiversity, pressures on it, and responses to management.

BIO METH 17 **Encourage the involvement of** central government and other relevant agencies in **research or investigations** relating to indigenous biodiversity issues and seek the consolidation and sharing of existing and new information about indigenous biodiversity.

BIO METH 18 Promote **integrated management** of indigenous biodiversity in the Taranaki region by:

(a) liaising and maintaining linkages with territorial authorities, the Department of Conservation, the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, iwi and other relevant agencies, groups and individuals regarding indigenous biodiversity issues;

(b) encouraging and facilitating, when appropriate, the development of joint databases and information systems including community based sources of data such as those from Trusts, societies and individuals and make available and exchange technical information and advice; and

(c) undertaking joint initiatives where and when appropriate.

Management responsibilities – control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity

In accordance with section 62(1)(i)(iii) of the Resource Management Act, the three **territorial authorities** of the region will be responsible for specifying the objectives, policies and methods for the control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biological diversity except where the control of the use of land relates to the Taranaki Regional Council's functions under the Act regarding:

- the coastal marine area; and
- the beds of rivers, lakes and other waterbodies.

Territorial authorities will consider the following methods:

BIO METH 19 Include in **district plans,** objectives, policies and methods, including rules, relating to the control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity in areas of significant indigenous or other vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna.

BIO METH 20 Include in **resource consents,** conditions relating to the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity.

Territorial authorities may also wish to consider the following methods:

BIO METH 21 Provide **information and other assistance** to resource users and the public that generally promote the maintenance, enhancement and restoration of indigenous biodiversity.

BIO METH 22 **Advocate**, as appropriate, for the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna.

BIO METH 23 Grant **rate relief** on land mandatorily or voluntarily protected, for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing indigenous biodiversity values

Principal reasons for adopting the objective, policies and methods

The objective, policies and methods of implementation give effect to the requirements of the Resource Management Act. In particular, they address matters of national importance under the Resource Management Act – namely, the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna (section 6(c) of the Act) and, in part, the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, and lakes and rivers (section 6(a) of the Act).

The objective, policies and methods establish a policy framework for indigenous biodiversity in the Taranaki region. Their aim is to maintain or enhance indigenous biodiversity in the Taranaki region.

The policies are not listed in any priority order and each serves a different but complementary purpose. Overall, the preferred approach is to focus on protecting, enhancing or restoring ecosystems, habitats and areas that have significant indigenous biodiversity values, for the reasons set out in the explanation of Policy 3 and because the protection of significant areas and habitats is a matter of national importance that the Council must recognise and provide for under the RMA. The maintenance of indigenous biodiversity in other areas will be promoted under Policy 5. Adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity arising from the use and development of resources are to be avoided, remedied or mitigated as far as practicable under Policy 2. This reflects the Council's broad obligations under the Act to avoid,

remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of activities on the environment.

A range of methods are proposed to implement the policies and achieve the objectives. Where these methods involve private land, this Regional Policy Statement seeks to build on the ethic of stewardship of landowners and to work with the landowners to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki. Where regulatory tools are to be applied these should be carefully targeted to important areas or values to be protected, not prevent appropriate use and development and be developed in consultation with those affected. They should also be supported wherever possible by non-regulatory methods such as those identified in this Regional Policy Statement.

This overall approach is more likely to result in stakeholder acceptance and support for biodiversity protection initiatives.

Through the implementation of the policies and methods, the Taranaki Regional Council can manage adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity. The policies and methods build on current approaches applied to the protection and enhancement of wetlands and for improving fish habitat and passage and have been expanded upon to address other elements of indigenous biodiversity.

Managing indigenous biodiversity crosses a number of administrative boundaries involving a plethora of different statutes and regulations. In accordance with the management responsibilities set out below, the three territorial authorities of the region are responsible for specifying the objectives, policies and methods for the control of the use of land to maintain indigenous biodiversity (except where controls relate to the Taranaki Regional Council functions under the Act). The methods may include land use controls and other methods relating to Significant Natural Areas or other vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna. these methods have proven to be successful to date in terms of achieving desired environmental outcomes and are considered appropriate having regard to their efficiency and effectiveness and their benefits and costs.

Note that the Taranaki Regional Council's resource management functions do not apply to the control or management of fisheries under the Fisheries Act 1983. Furthermore, government agencies such as the Department of Conservation (in relation to the management of public conservation areas and wildlife) and the Ministry of Agriculture (in relation to controls on the harvesting of indigenous forests) have significant responsibilities relating to indigenous biodiversity. Accordingly, effective integrated management (Method 15) between the different agencies assumes added importance.

Environmental results anticipated

BIO ER 1

Maintenance of the areal extent of indigenous ecosystems and habitats in the Taranaki region and the indigenous species of flora and fauna which occur in the region.

BIO ER 2

An increase in the number and areal extent of ecosystems, habitats and areas with regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values in the Taranaki region, and which are formally protected or covenanted.

BIO ER 3

Maintenance and enhancement of the ecological condition of ecosystems, habitats and areas with regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values in the Taranaki region.

BIO ER 4

An increase in the areal extent of planted riparian margins along Taranaki ring plain waterways.

BIO ER 5

Reduction in barriers to indigenous fish passage in the Taranaki region.

BIO ER 6

Maintenance and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity values of water, ecosystems and habitats of indigenous aquatic flora and fauna.

Significant Natural Areas

The South Taranaki and New Plymouth district councils have identified areas with locally important indigenous biodiversity values, which are referred to as 'Significant Natural Areas'. Rules apply protecting these areas from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

In south Taranaki, the District Council has identified 35 Significant Natural Areas and included these in the South Taranaki District Plan. The Significant Natural Areas are restricted to land, which is wholly, or partly, in private ownership and not legally protected by conservation covenants.

Through its District Plan, the South Taranaki District Council has established the Significant Natural Areas Programme. The District Council's Programme focuses on advice, information and support to promote the voluntary protection of indigenous vegetation in south Taranaki. Financial assistance is available for projects that protect or enhance Significant Natural Areas such as fencing.

Through the subdivision consent process the District Council also has an opportunity to negotiate the formal protection of affected Significant Natural Areas and other areas with indigenous biodiversity values.

In addition to the above, the *South Taranaki District Plan* contains rules that control land use aspects of an activity (e.g. subdivision and vegetation clearance) that may adversely impact on the 35 significant natural areas and indigenous biodiversity generally.