

# SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS

This colour identifies the Local Significant Natural Areas on the Planning Maps



Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) are areas of significant native vegetation or important habitats of native species. The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires Council to protect SNAs and to avoid their loss or degradation in the first instance. We must also maintain or enhance indigenous biodiversity outside of SNAs

## How were SNAs identified?

- In our district, only areas that an ecologist assesses as meeting the criteria prescribed in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement are identified and mapped as an SNA
- We identified SNAs using a desktop study and then wrote to each landowner asking them to help us refine the information. As a result, some SNAs grew in extent and some were reduced or removed entirely
- Our ecologists also introduced some minimum viable sizes for SNAs in different areas and visited some sites which were particularly complex
- Now the proposed SNAs are mapped [here](#)

## Before we go any further

- Despite what you may have heard, this is not a land grab - you are the landowner. Your land remains private land and members of the public cannot visit an SNA on your property without your permission. Council cannot take your land from you and does not require you to fence your SNAs. We will not stop you undertaking any lawfully established activity in an SNA and you can continue to allow stock access
- Actually, we would like to thank you for looking after these areas. The SNAs are only still there because you and generations before you have kept them safe
- If you live in the part of our district which is in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, these rules do not apply to you. The clearance or removal of indigenous vegetation is controlled by the provisions of the Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Plan

## How are the draft rules different from the current rules?

- Our current district plan has contained rules protecting SNAs for 25 years
- Part of the problem with these rules is that they require significant cost to the landowner to undertake an ecological assessment before any kind of development could be considered and a resource consent sought
- The draft rules rely on mapped SNAs which are assigned one of four categories. SNAs of local significance can be used for more activities than an SNA that is internationally, nationally or regionally significant

## Will I still be able to clear indigenous vegetation?

Yes – within limits, our draft rules provide for some clearance of SNAs for reasons including:

- To remove indigenous vegetation presenting an imminent danger to human life
- For perimeter fences for stock exclusion
- Within 2m of existing roads, driveways, farm tracks, fences or water intake/discharge structures for maintenance
- To reconstruct or relocate a track destroyed by a natural hazard that cuts off access to an existing farming activity or residential unit
- To manage fire risk
- For pest control and conservation management activities
- To create a building platform
- For small scale renewable energy generation such as micro hydro or a small wind turbine
- To sustainably remove manuka or kanuka

## Can I remove native vegetation for other reasons?

- Yes, there are some circumstances where this might be okay. You may want to manage a tourism operation or undertake some sustainable harvesting, but you will need a resource consent
- There are also some concessions for Māori land as Council is required to balance two competing matters of national importance under the RMA

## How many SNAs do we have?

- Our district has been very good at looking after our indigenous biodiversity. Approximately 35% of the district (that is in the Waikato region) is SNA and over half of this is permanently protected
- There are 122,896 hectares of SNA across 708 sites
- We understand our district has the highest number of QEII covenants in the country
- 81% of our SNAs are nationally or internationally significant

**Please note this factsheet is a summary and does not include the full set of rules. You can read the full set of rules [here](#)**