

PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN VARIATION

Topic summary:

ECOSYSTEMS & INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

KEY OUTCOMES

- *Leveraging our heritage*



INTRODUCTION

Napier is home to some special native vegetation and habitats, mainly around the nationally significant Te Whanganui a Orotu (Ahuriri Estuary) and on nearby hills. Protecting these areas helps maintain biodiversity and supports a healthy environment for the community.

Many landowners and community groups are already contributing to Napier's biodiversity efforts. With the Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity chapter, we aim to build on this work by safeguarding critical areas of native vegetation and providing a framework to prevent harm from subdivision, earthworks, and other land uses that could damage these ecosystems.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT PROVISIONS

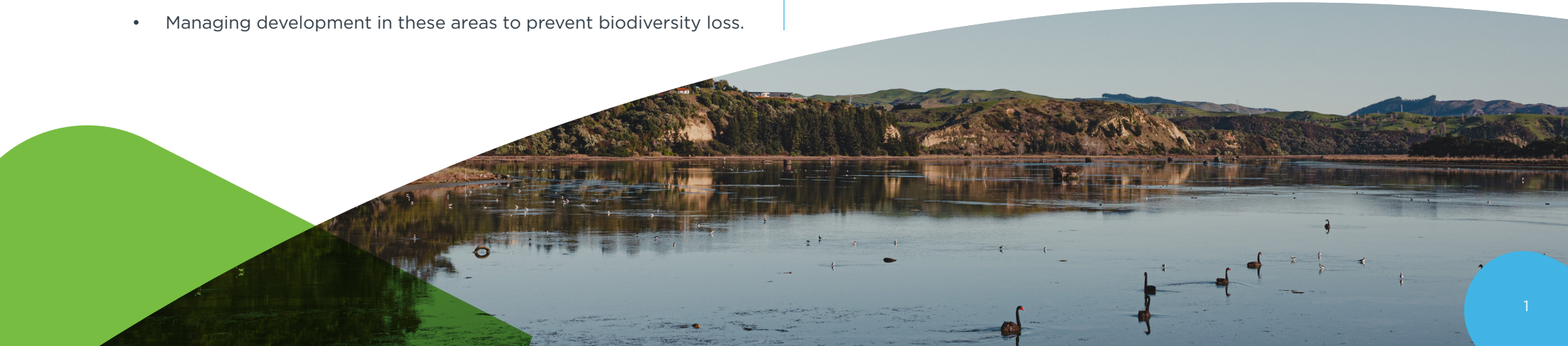
This chapter seeks to protect and enhance Napier's biodiversity by:

- Safeguarding significant vegetation and habitats.
- Encouraging ecological restoration and biodiversity corridors to support local flora and fauna.
- Managing development in these areas to prevent biodiversity loss.

WHAT'S WORTH PROTECTING?

Napier's unique indigenous vegetation and habitats play a crucial role in our city's ecology. Ecological assessments were completed in 2019 and 2024 including areas around Te Whanganui a Orotu and Napier's hills. This was verified and built upon in the review. This includes approximately 30 areas identified as Restoration Areas and Significant Vegetation or Habitats under Section 6(c). Restoration Areas cover around 15.5 hectares and hold locally significant ecological value, while SBAs span about 573 hectares and meet the high ecological threshold set by Section 6(c) of the RMA.

The assessment revealed that these areas account for less than 6% of Napier's total land area, underscoring the need for targeted protection to maintain and enhance these valuable ecosystems



WHAT CHANGES ARE PROPOSED?

The Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity chapter introduces a structured, tiered approach to managing and protecting Napier's biodiversity. This approach tailors regulations based on the ecological value and sensitivity of specific areas and activities, focusing on the following:

- **Tiered Protection:** Areas are classified by their ecological importance, with higher protection levels for more sensitive areas.
- **Permitting Low-Impact Activities:** Routine activities with minimal impact on biodiversity, such as maintenance and restoration work, are permitted without a resource consent.
- **Consent Requirements for High-Impact Activities:** In more ecologically valuable areas, activities with potentially significant impacts will require resource consent to protect biodiversity values.
- **Precautionary Approach:** Where the effects of activities are uncertain, a precautionary stance will be taken to prevent unintended damage.



WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED RULES AND HOW MIGHT THEY IMPACT ME?

Many activities that maintain and enhance biodiversity are encouraged and do not require resource consent. Here are some examples:

- **Conservation and Maintenance Activities:** Actions like conservation planting, removing dead or diseased plants, pest plant removal, and maintaining fences, tracks, or structures are permitted in significant biodiversity areas.
Why? These activities contribute to preserving ecological health without requiring consent.
- **Building Maintenance:** Upgrading or maintaining existing structures is allowed as long as it doesn't expand the footprint.
Why? This rule allows essential maintenance without affecting biodiversity.
- **Minor Earthworks:** Small-scale earthworks within set thresholds for maintenance or restoration purposes are permitted.
Why? Limiting the scale of earthworks helps reduce environmental impacts.
- **Vegetation Clearance Outside Significant Areas:** Clearing indigenous vegetation outside of Section 6(c) areas is permitted within annual limits.
Why? This approach maintains ecological balance by limiting vegetation removal in less critical areas.
- **Emergency Tree Works:** Immediate removal of hazardous trees is allowed in response to safety risks or biosecurity threats.
Why? This prioritizes urgent actions to protect safety while respecting ecological values.

PROPOSED CONSENT REQUIREMENTS

In certain cases, activities may require a resource consent to protect sensitive ecological areas, particularly within Section 6(c) areas and restoration areas. These consent requirements are designed to ensure that activities with higher potential impacts are carefully managed to prevent harm to Napier's biodiversity.

Activities that would require consent include:

- **Earthworks Exceeding Thresholds:** Any earthworks beyond specified limits in Section 6(c) areas or restoration areas would require consent.
Why? Larger earthworks can disrupt the environment, posing risks to ecological values that need careful oversight.
- **Vegetation Clearance in Section 6(c) Areas:** Indigenous vegetation clearance that exceeds a certain percentage of the total area would require consent.
Why? Exceeding these thresholds could threaten the ecological integrity of the area.
- **Vegetation Alteration in Riparian Margins:** If vegetation is altered within a designated buffer along rivers, a consent would be required.
Why? Vegetation near waterways is vital for preventing sedimentation and supporting local wildlife habitats.
- **Infrastructure Development in Section 6(c) Areas:** New infrastructure projects, such as utilities or other specified developments, would require consent.
Why? Infrastructure developments may have lasting effects on biodiversity, so they need to be managed carefully within significant ecological areas.

- **Subdivision of Land Containing a Section 6 Area:** Subdividing land that includes a Section 6 area would require consent.
Why? Subdivisions can fragment natural habitats, affecting connectivity and biodiversity.
- **Unspecified Activities:** Any activity within Section 6(c) areas or restoration areas that isn't specifically provided for in the rules would need a non-complying consent.
Why? Activities not covered by existing rules require close examination to avoid potential harm to biodiversity.



WHAT IF I THINK THERE IS AN ERROR WITH THE MAPPING OR THE ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT?

Please let us know! We understand that landowners have detailed knowledge of their own properties and that there are many indigenous biodiversity experts within our community. We welcome your feedback and any questions you have about the values identified in Napier's assessment and mapping. Your insights can help ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of our biodiversity protections.

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO HELP ME LOOK AFTER BIODIVERSITY ON MY PROPERTY?

Several organizations and funding opportunities can help landowners protect and enhance biodiversity on their properties:

- **Biodiversity Hawke's Bay:** Offers resources and funding for biodiversity projects in the region. Find more information at biodiversityhb.org
- **Napier City Council (NCC):** Provides grants for community-based biodiversity initiatives through the NCC Community Development Grant. Details at napier.govt.nz/community-development-grant
- **Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC):** Offers biodiversity restoration programs and pest control resources. Learn more at hbrc.govt.nz/biodiversity and hbrc.govt.nz/animal-pests

- **Predator-Free Organizations:** Predator Free Hawke's Bay (pfhb.nz) and Predator Free Urban Hawke's Bay (predatorfreeuhb.com) work to reduce predators and protect native biodiversity.
- **Department of Conservation (DoC):** Provides resources on pest control and supports the national "Predator Free 2050" initiative. Visit DoC's website for more information (doc.govt.nz).

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are seeking your feedback on how best to manage and protect Napier's indigenous biodiversity. After the submission period ends, a summary of submissions will be publicly available, followed by hearings for those wishing to present their views in person.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

You can explore detailed maps of Biodiversity Areas and review the proposed rules on our website. Submissions can be made online via the Say It platform at sayitnapier.nz or in person at our council offices or libraries.