

## Steps for safeguarding farm ecology

For landowners interested in conserving areas identified as ecologically significant, by either the Marlborough District Council (MDC) or the Department of Conservation (DoC) contracted survey teams, a first point of contact is the MDC Landowner Assistance Programme which helps assess practical protection and funding options.

Under the Resource Management Act, the MDC has a role in promoting the protection of significant natural areas on private land in Marlborough. Its Landowner Assistance Programme is aimed at achieving this protection by working positively with landowners to identify appropriate management.

A number of Marlborough farmers are moving towards the protection of ecological "museum pieces" on their properties, following the ecologists' discovery of remnants of native vegetation that have grown in the district since long before human settlement. Others are also looking at broader management issues, including the development of guidelines for protecting native biodiversity without impacting on production (see article at bottom of this page).

A typical package for fencing significant South Marlborough sites has involved central Government meeting half the costs through the Ministry for the Environment and DoC-administered Biodiversity Condition fund, with the remainder split between the landowner (often as labour), the MDC and, (in some cases), the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust. This means that the landowner has only to contribute between 16% and 25% of the total cost.

Since South Marlborough ecological surveys were completed, successful applications have been made to the Governments

Condition fund for 12 new fencing projects, five re-vegetation projects (in sites already fenced), one wilding pine removal project and one wetland restoration project. Several of these sites are to be covenanted through the QEII National Trust.

**Want to know more about voluntary protection of ecological sites?**

**Contact Nicky Eade at the Marlborough District Council**



Looking for protection opportunities, ecologist Geoff Walls and landowner Susan King

### Reports identify ecological values

**The findings of ecological surveys of South Marlborough are now available in two reports.**

Landowners whose properties were surveyed by the Department of Conservation's Protected Natural Areas (PNA) programme will have received a copy of the "Wairau Ecological Region" report summarising findings. This report is available from DoC's South Marlborough or Nelson offices.

Those surveyed under the Marlborough District Council's Significant Natural Areas (SNA) programme will have each been sent a report summarising ecological values on their property, including the identification of significant areas and a description of values found.

The MDC has also produced a "South Marlborough Biodiversity Overview", summarising the results of both the DoC and MDC surveys over South Marlborough. This covers each of the eight ecological districts surveyed, along with key findings and issues identified. Copies are available from the MDC.

## Guidelines for the sustainable management of native vegetation on farms - farmers plan for protection

Several South Marlborough farmers and the Marlborough District Council are working together to develop guidelines for the sustainable management of native vegetation areas, without compromising productivity.

The programme has been trialled by Ward farmers Kevin and Carol Loe, and Simon and Lynda Harvey who farm at Glenorkney in the Medway.

A series of headings and questions are used to guide landowners through a process of clarifying their objectives, issues and options for the property in relation to both production and the protection of native vegetation.

Farms are then mapped and divided into three zones; **A** - Farm Reserves (fenced to exclude stock), **B** - Protection Management Areas - (where protection and production values are balanced) and **C** - the remainder of the property (not identified as ecologically significant but where natural values should still be considered).

"Going through this exercise helped sharpen our thinking about our goals and vision for the property," says Kevin. "It focused our management by requiring that we identify areas where production or protection values - or a combination of the two - will predominate, and develop farm management principles which would

ensure both farming and ecological sustainability."

The highlighting of opportunities - such as diversification into eco-tourism or carbon "farming" - is an added advantage, says Kevin.

The guidelines are available from the MDC.

### MDC CONTACTS:

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[environment/ecology and biodiversity](http://www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/ecology_and_biodiversity)

## South Marlborough; an ecological snapshot

**Existing protected natural areas cover less than 5 % of South Marlborough, leaving protection largely in private landowners' hands.**

South Marlborough covers about 700,000 hectares of hill and high country, alluvial valleys and coastline. Eight Ecological Districts make up the bulk of the privately owned land in South Marlborough. They are: Blenheim; Grassmere; Flaxbourne; Wither Hills; Hillersden; Kekerengu; Medway and Waihopai. (see MAP below)

The area was selected for survey because of the highly modified and fragmented nature of remaining areas of native vegetation and habitats, the small degree to which these are formally protected and the significant threats posed to their survival.

With the completion of the ecological surveys carried out from 2001 to 2003, we now know that original native vegetation survives on only about 2% of South Marlborough's total land area and secondary native regeneration on about 10%.

South Marlborough is one of five areas in New Zealand where important concentrations of native plant species are found, many of which are endemic (found nowhere else in the world), and some of which are rare and threatened.

Looking after what is left is important if the area is to retain its special identity and so that future generations can experience its richness and diversity.

South Marlborough sites identified on private land		
Ecological Districts	Number of Sites Identified	Total Area of Sites (ha)
Kekerengu	54	1333
Medway	70	4656
Waihopai	55	5274
Blenheim	9	268
Wither Hills	13	4905
Grassmere	10	152
Flaxbourne	24	1165
Hillersden	29	3680
<b>Totals</b>	<b>264 sites</b>	<b>21433 ha</b>

## Ecosourcing provides best results

Ecosourcing means using plants grown from local seed. This has several advantages including :

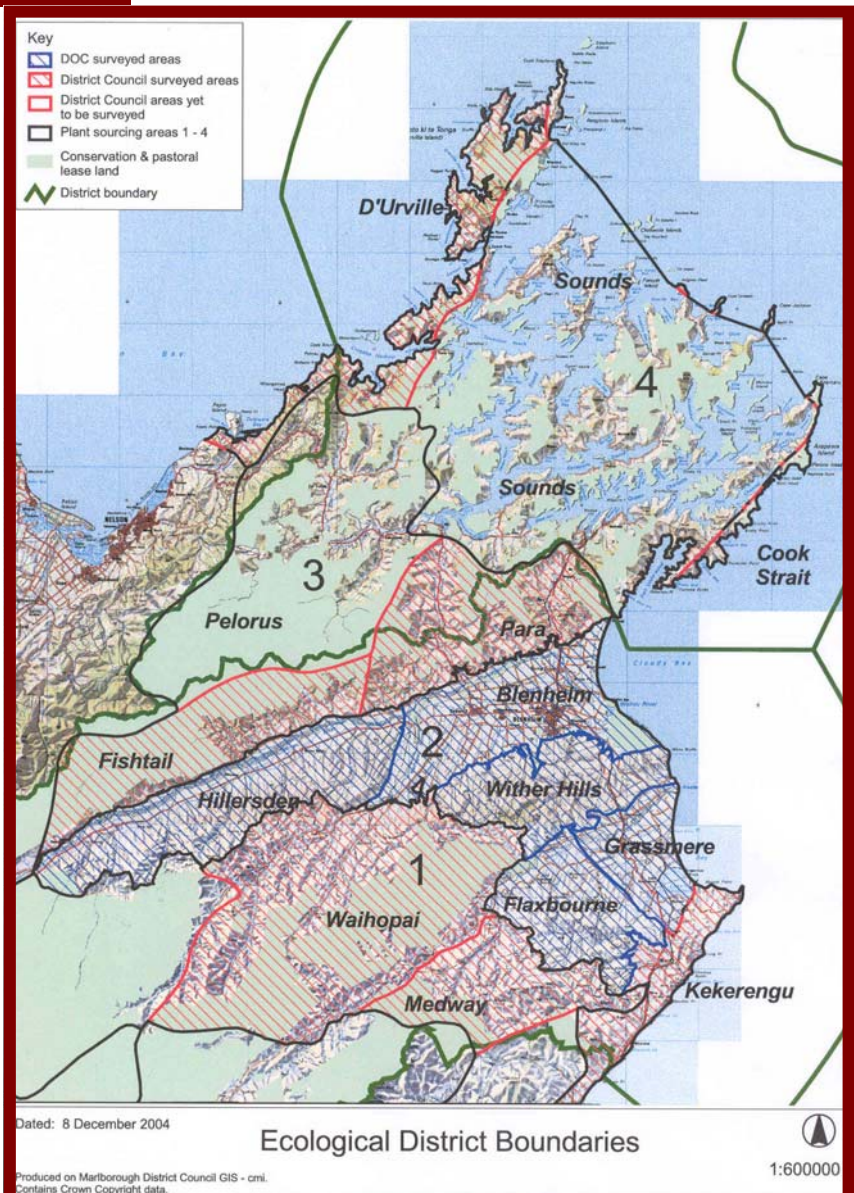
- ◆ protecting the diversity within local populations;
- ◆ protecting the character of local ecosystems from being swamped by imported varieties from other areas and
- ◆ providing the best chance of planting success, by using plants that have adapted to local conditions.

The MDC, DoC and QEII National Trust support the division of South Marlborough into a minimum of two broad ecosourcing zones; Inland South Marlborough (Waihopai and Medway ecological districts - Area 1 on MAP) and Lowland/Coastal South Marlborough (Hillersden, Grassmere, Flaxbourne, Wither Hills, Blenheim and Kekerengu ecological districts - Area 2 on MAP).

At a minimum, seed or cuttings for propagation in a planting project should be collected from within these two broad ecosourcing zones, but ideally as close as possible to the site and within the same ecological district. However, this is not always possible in South Marlborough because many species - particularly in lowland and coastal areas - are under threat in the wild or locally extinct. Examples include native tree species: kahikatea, matai and lowland totara. Seeds rather than cuttings should, if possible, be used, as they maximise genetic diversity.

The cost of ecosourcing seed is a barrier to commercial nurseries, however its worth asking as generally seed and plant material is sourced locally where possible. It may be that in the future the Council could help by identifying sites on private land for collection of propagation material and liaison with landowners to arrange access.

Keen landowners can collect their own locally-sourced plant material for propagating by a local nursery, using their own or neighbour's sites as a source. This will involve a couple of years delay before planting but should ensure ecologically worthwhile results and high plant survival. Collecting from the Conservation Estate requires a permit.





## Landowners and Maori share conservation commitment

On November 20, Cape Campbell landowners Rob and Sally Peter, along with Ngai Tahu and Rangitane representatives, signed a management plan cementing their joint commitment to protecting a coastal site with high cultural, historical and botanical significance.

The QEII Trust, the Historic Places Trust and Marlborough District Council also signed the Plan and a QEII covenant is being put in place.

Before the signing, those involved worked together to pile driftwood onto eroded areas to stabilise sites, which will next year be planted in locally occurring species including spinifex, pingao, mingimingi, tauhinu and hebes. "We were humbled by the special gift of a beautiful carving by Reg Thompsett, with special significance to the area" say Rob and Sally

The Cape Campbell coastline has been settled by Maori since moa-hunter days, providing an abundance of food. There has also been a colourful European history based around whaling, seafaring (there are 18 shipwrecks between the Cape and Waima River mouth), and settlement by a succession of lighthouse keepers and their families until the light was automated in 1986, and farming.

Last winter the Peters and Maori planted karaka trees at Mussell Point as a reminder of the many karaka nurtured here as a source of food and medicine, then felled by Te Rauparaha. Muelenbeckia, mingimingi, akiraho, totara and five finger were also planted.

Cape Campbell was one of the first properties surveyed through the Marlborough District Council's Significant Natural Areas survey.



The Peter family with representatives from Ngai Tahu, Rangitane, MDC and QEII.

## Survey progress in the Sounds

An ecological survey of the Marlborough Sounds is now well underway, following on from the South Marlborough survey.

Contract ecologists Geoff Walls and Philip Simpson have completed surveys on a good number of D'Urville Island properties and are now working in other parts of the Sounds. The response from landowners has been generally positive, with many already aware of the natural values of the Sounds' environment and committed to protecting these.

The Marlborough Sounds' steep topography and huge length of coastline, has created a great diversity of landforms and habitats, reflected in the variety of ecological communities and species present, including many that are unique.

The original forest cover would have been a mix of species forming a lush rainforest. Much of the natural pattern still remains, with broadleaved forest in gullies, black beech forest on headlands and lowland spurs, hard beech forest on lower slopes, red beech forest on mid slopes and silver beech forest at higher altitude. Most of the bay heads and lower slopes have

been logged of the giant podocarps (totara, rimu, matai and kahikatea) that used to grow there. Pastoral farming has led to the clearance of forest, but a lot of that land has since regenerated into

vigorous shrubland and low forest of manuka, kanuka and tauhinu, within which are growing numerous secondary native trees and tree ferns. Distinctive vegetation grows on the ultramafic "mineral belt" geology in the western Sounds, and there is a pocket of true alpine vegetation on the highest point, Mt Stokes. The flora is diverse and rich in species and there are quite a few rare and unusual plants. About a third of the land area is protected in reserves and there are an increasing number of private covenants.

The Marlborough Sounds are also an important freshwater habitat and stronghold of two of the five whitebait species. The short jawed kokopu and banded kokopu require streams running through forest to the sea to support their lifecycle.

The main threats are wilding pines, old man's beard, feral pigs, deer and possums. As the ecological survey work continues the MDC will be working with landowners to promote protection in ways that are relevant to the Sounds' situation.



Ecologist Geoff Walls at his Durville island office!

## QEII gets out-and-about in Seddon

In the 25 year history of the QEII National Trust, some 23 covenants have been registered in the Marlborough region, protecting 940 hectares on private land.

"Until the SNA and PNA ecological surveys got going, only three covenants were in South Marlborough," says QEII Nelson/Marlborough regional representative, Philip Lissaman. "Since the surveys and follow-up work through the MDC, there have been seven more approved and now progressing with fencing, plus several other expressions of interest."

Three landowners on the north side of the Wairau River are also considering QEII covenants.

The QEII Trust board cemented its relationship with South Marlborough landowners, by meeting at Seddon in November. The possibility of protection by way of covenants over padDoCks or grazing blocks was among the issues discussed.

"Appropriate management could protect the key biodiversity features while optimising grazing production says Philip. "This reflects the scattered nature of interesting vegetation, which usually cannot be fenced or where it may be undesirable to stop grazing completely. What is needed is prevention of the more extreme management practices which could adversely affect the desired native vegetation".

"An appropriate vehicle could be the "Sustainable Management of Native Vegetation Areas in South Marlborough" guidelines being developed by the MDC and landowners, which provide a framework for the protection of natural values while continuing productive use."

### WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT QEII?

Contact: Philip Lissaman  
Ph (03) 5403442 025778605  
plissaman@xtra.co.nz



## Old Man's Beard confirmed as threat

The MDC is considering ways it could help with the control of old man's beard in catchments where landowners have protected ecologically significant sites.

A study of old man's beard in South Marlborough has confirmed that the weed is a major threat to remaining areas of native vegetation. Fencing areas of high ecological value to exclude stock carries the risk that the highly palatable vine could run rampant, destroying the very vegetation landowners are trying to protect.

Pest management consultant Tom Stein was contracted to study the extent of old man's beard in Marlborough, so that

options for control could be formulated.

The survey confirmed that while old man's beard is scattered over a wide area of South Marlborough, there are many areas that are free or nearly free of infestation. These include much of the Awatere, Waihopai and upper Wairau River Valley, and land east of State Highway One. There are large infestations in the lower Wairau and Medway and mid Awatere, Waihopai and Waima Rivers.

The MDC does not fund old man's beard control. However, based on the result of Stein's study, it is considering targeted control on and around protected ecologically significant sites.

**A brochure outlining old man's beard control options is available from the Marlborough District Council.**

### Other biodiversity related projects and contacts in Marlborough

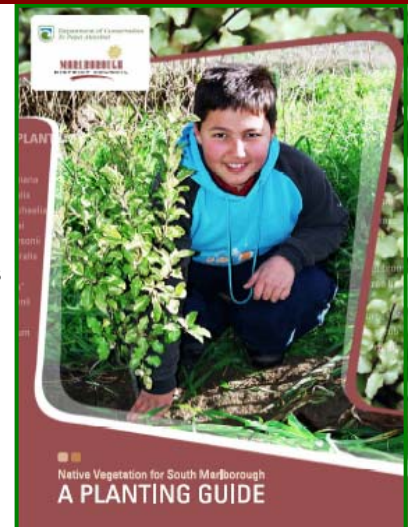
- **Wairau Plains Landscape Plan** working groups  
*Ian Shapcott, MDC, 578 5249*  
*ish@marlborough.govt.nz*
- **Grovetown Lagoon Community Restoration Project** *Lynda Neame, MDC, 578 5249*  
*lne@marlborough.co.nz*
- **Koromiko Deer Park Restoration Project**  
*Robin Dunn, MDC, 578 5249*  
*rdu@marlborough.govt.nz*
- **Marlborough Rural Environment Awards**  
*Nicky Eade, MDC, 578 5249*  
*nea@marlborough.co.nz*
- **Rarangi Landcare Group**  
*Trudie Lasham 570 5073*
- **Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society**  
*Andrew John 5735509*

### South Marlborough planting guide to be published

A new book, "Native Vegetation for South Marlborough; a Planting Guide", will be available by autumn this year, in plenty of time for the winter planting season.

The Guide aims to ensure that efforts to protect and plant indigenous South Marlborough vegetation are well rewarded. It advises on the selection, establishment and maintenance of natives for a range of conservation, aesthetic and practical purposes from native forest restoration projects to shelter-belts.

Publication of the Guide is supported by funding from Government's Biodiversity Fund, the MDC, DoC and QEII Trust. The guide is available from the MDC at a cost of \$10.00.



### Getting onto goats

Goats:

- ◆ Are widely distributed over a significant part of the Marlborough region
- ◆ Are mobile and agile getting to inaccessible places like bluffs and cliffs
- ◆ Can double their population in two years or less and are gregarious
- ◆ Are very detrimental to biodiversity because they selectively graze and favour a number of South Marlborough's vulnerable native species including the Marlborough rock daisy, Heliohebe species and Carmichaelia (broom) species

The MDC is planning to investigate the feasibility of goat control in two target areas with high biodiversity values in South Marlborough.

The feasibility study will involve close consultation with landowners, to assess goat numbers and the most effective methods to reduce them to a low level. The aim will be to scope costs and benefits of control in certain areas, so that the MDC and other agencies can make informed decisions in the future.

The MDC does not currently carry out any goat control but the DoC culls goats on conservation and adjoining private land.

### Some opportunities for protection

#### Marlborough District Council Landowner Assistance Programme

This programme is a first point of contact for farmers wanting to protect sites identified as significant in Protected Natural Area (PNA), or Significant Natural Area (SNA) surveys.

Contact *Nicky Eade, Marlborough District Council, 578 5249*

#### Biodiversity Condition and Advice Funds

Established by Central Government to encourage the protection of indigenous vegetation and species on private land.

[www.biodiversity.govt.nz/land/nzbs/land/condition.html](http://www.biodiversity.govt.nz/land/nzbs/land/condition.html)

**NZ Landcare Trust** encourages land user groups to integrate the conservation of native species with sustainable production. Grants are available to help with relevant projects.

Contact *Barbara Stuart, 03 545 0443*

**QE II National Trust** Contact *Philip Lissaman, 03 540 3442*

**Nature Heritage Fund** Central Government administered, the fund will purchase important natural areas at a fair market price if the landowner wishes to sell.

Contact *Simon Moore, DoC Nelson 03 546 9335*

**Nga Whenua Rahui** Provides funding to help Maori owners identify and protect land with significant indigenous forest.

Contact *Jack Hayward, DoC Nelson 03 546 9335*

