11.0 Rural Environments

11.1 Introduction

This discussion seeks to establish the circumstances surrounding the sustainable use of rural resources and how the effects of those uses contribute to the environment.

The rural environment is composed of landforms and settlement patterns dominated by land use. These landscapes have a distinctive character which largely reflects the use of resources.

The Plan seeks to make the possibility of changes in activities that promote sustainable management of rural resources easier than has been the case in the past. The resources of the rural environment result from the interaction of climate, topography and soil type, and the effects of their use and development: soil is the result of interaction between similar physical conditions. These conditions collectively impose long-term limitations on sustainability of rural resources.

The structure and land use pattern reflects the multitude of individual decisions made by resource users. These decisions have led to an increase in the variety of enterprises. This has, in turn, led to increased diversity in the rural environment. It is not the role of the Council or the Plan to direct the use of resources and equally neither should they unduly restrict activities which promote the sustainable management of rural resources.

Resource use in the rural environment may result in:

- Removal of indigenous vegetation resulting in the destruction of habitats;
- Development of roading to accommodate increased traffic;
- Shading of frost susceptible roads;
- Use of agrichemical inputs, including pesticides and fertilisers;
- Creation of smell, dust, noise, health or other nuisance;
- Discharge of wastes; and
- Land disturbance, including cultivation, tracking and fire breaking;
- Changes to surface, ground, and coastal water quality, and wetlands.

As well as primary production, rural activities include:

- Provision for tourism and recreation activities based on rural resources and the lives and settlements of rural dwellers involved in primary production;
- Intensive farming; and
- Industrial activities ancillary to primary production.

Rural amenity values include: landscape and scenic values, individual privacy, open rural outlook, spaciousness, ease of access, clean air, unique odours, overall quietness, water availability, and wellbeing of resident people and communities.

The rural environment has a great variety of landforms, encompassing mountains, hills, valleys and coastal cliffs that support a wide range of soils, vegetation

and water resources. The rural character is both physical and visual. The distinct rural character is reflected by a mosaic of areas, being:

- Native shrublands;
- Native grasslands;
- Exotic grasslands;
- Exotic forests and woodlots;
- Exotic shrublands; and
- Remnant indigenous forest mainly on steeper, privately owned land.

Rural activities are a mix of:

- Pastoral farming in the outer Sounds and hinterland valleys based mainly on sheep, cattle, and deer;
- Dairy farming on the fertile valley soils;
- Exotic forestry in the Sounds and hinterland areas;
- Mineral extraction, especially aggregate for road construction and maintenance, although some extraction of precious metals continues; and
- Service facilities for rural activities.

Tourism and recreation based on rural resources and the lifestyles of rural based dwellers is becoming increasingly significant. There is a continuing demand for rural land for rural tourism and recreation use.

The present trend towards diversification of rural land use patterns leads to an overall landscape which reflects the decisions of individuals. These changes occur to the physical development of rural areas, the social fabric of rural communities and demand for services in them.

As well as direct forms of planning controls Council is able to influence rural resource users by providing advice designed to:

- Increase their use of new, innovative technologies; and
- Provide access to results of research.

Factors restricting appropriate use and development may include risk from natural hazards, presence of areas of high ecological value, landscape or recreational values.

11.2 Issue

The adverse effects on resources from activities in the rural environment.

The rural environment in the Marlborough Sounds is intimately linked with settlements and protected open spaces and ecosystems that combine to produce a unique environment. The rural environment is typified by close economic, social and physical links between the rural resources and the people who live and work within them.

Despite the active utilisation of rural resources, people living in the rural environment should not be subjected to loss of character and amenity value, and unreasonable noise, odours or risks from hazardous substances.

Dairy farming has the potential to have significant adverse effects on the quality of surface, ground, and coastal water resources, and wetlands. These effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated by using environmentally sound farming practices that include strategies to manage the effects of dairy farming on water quality.

Some industrial and commercial activities choose to locate in the rural environment because of the need to be in close proximity to resources. Other activities locate in rural areas because they serve activities based in the coastal marine area and need to be in close proximity to the water. These activities can affect rural amenities and water and air quality. Intensive farming may also adversely affect the rural environment. However, these effects can be avoided or mitigated by:

- The siting and design of buildings and enclosures; and
- Management practices and waste disposal methods.

Urban styles of development can adversely affect the rural environment through the visual effect of large scale buildings and ancillary structures, increased traffic generation, and loss of amenity including privacy, rural outlook, spaciousness, and quietness.

The Rural One zone has been identified as a high risk area for particular potentially adverse effects of forestry operations. The characteristics of the Rural One zone that can contribute to its higher risk are:

- A large number of waahi tapu sites;
- A particularly long coastal/land boundary;
- Slopes that generally drop steeply and directly into the sea;
- Large areas of public land set aside for conservation purposes;
- Areas of pastoral land that are reverting to scrub and bush;
- Areas of commercial and woodlot forestry;
- A unique “drowned valley” topography;
- A public road network that is not designed for high intensity, heavy vehicle traffic;
- The Marlborough Sounds is characterised by a large Rural One Zone, as well as a widespread scattering of residential properties, most of which are within the Sounds Residential Zone.

The potentially adverse effects of forestry operations that require particular assessment through the resource consent process and that are not adequately addressed by rules, permitted activity criteria and guidelines mentioned above are:

- Planting of areas that may not be acceptable to Maori and which Maori may not wish to publicly identify;
- The effects of land use change on legal water supplies;

- Exotic wilding tree spread to reverting shrublands that are susceptible to wildling establishment;
- An industry that can involve high intensity, heavy vehicle transport use of the public road infrastructure at harvest time.

11.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1	**Sustainable management of rural resources and integrated resource use to protect the character and amenity of rural areas and avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects of activities.**
Policy 1.1	Promote the sustainable management of air, water and soil resources in the rural environment.
Policy 1.2	Avoid, remedy, and mitigate adverse environmental effects of activities on the natural character and amenity values of the rural environment by: avoiding unnecessary visual intrusions into the rural landscape by limiting the height and controlling the siting of buildings and ancillary structures; and avoiding erection of structures and other developments on headlands, skylines, and areas between roads and water where significant views occur.
Policy 1.4	Resolve conflicts between rural activities and non rural uses and users of rural resources by avoiding an indiscriminate mixture of activities with incompatible effects.
Policy 1.5	Provide for subdivision of rural land to enable sustainable management of rural resources.
Policy 1.6	Maintain and enhance the amenity values and environmental qualities of open space and quietness that contribute to the distinctive character of the rural environment.
Policy 1.7	Enable the establishment of rural based industrial and commercial activities that avoid, remedy and mitigate adverse effects.
Policy 1.8	Avoid, remedy, and mitigate the effects of unreasonable noise in the rural environment.
Policy 1.9	Avoid, remedy, and mitigate the adverse effects of agrichemicals and encourage their use in a safe and sustainable way.
Policy 1.10	Require land use consent for the establishment and operation of any new dairy farm.
	Approve land use consent applications for new dairy farms where the proposed farming would have no more than minor adverse effects on ground, surface, or coastal water quality, and wetlands. A land use consent application must identify the risks of new dairy farming and provide measures to address those risks, including as a minimum: (a) Measures, including fences, bridges, culverts, to prevent stock entering onto, or passing across, the bed of any river, stream, creek, lake, wetland, significant

Policy 1.11	ephemeral stream, and any drain; (b) Provision of an appropriate, non-grazed, buffer along the margins of any water body, including a river, stream, creek, lake, wetland, significant ephemeral stream, and any drain, to intercept the runoff of contaminants from grazed pasture, with reference to Appendices H and I of the Plan; (c) Provision for storage of dairy effluent, with all storage ponds sufficiently sized to enable deferral of application to land until soil conditions are such that surface runoff and/or drainage do not occur; (d) Demonstration of appropriate separation distances between effluent storage ponds and any surface waterbodies to ensure contamination of water does not occur (including during flood events); (e) A nutrient management plan that includes nutrient inputs from dairy effluent, animal discharges, fertiliser, and any other nutrient input.
Policy 1.12	To recognise that activities permitted or provided for in rural areas may result in effects such as noise, dust, smell and traffic generation but that these will require mitigation where they have a significant adverse effect on the rural environment.

Protection of the rural environment includes the maintenance of vegetation cover to provide a significant visual, and soil and water conservation function by protecting the land from erosion. The rural character and amenity is especially sensitive to development that removes the vegetative cover, alters existing landforms, and introduces extensive impervious surfaces.

The quality and quantity of the District's water resources are essential to the prosperity and pleasantness of the Marlborough Sounds, in terms of their life supporting capacity and availability for domestic and productive use.

The aim of these policies is achieving the best rural environment for dwellers, users and visitors that maintains existing, and encourages new activities and sources of employment; allows sustainable distribution of utilities and services; and protects rural resources.

The benefits of these policies are not directly quantifiable. They are intangible, and include improvement in rural environmental quality, saved rural land, and rationalisation of settlements and transport patterns within rural areas.

The long term adverse effects of extractive industries need to be remedied by appropriate site rehabilitation that allows later establishment of alternative rural activities.

Restrictions on subdivision seek to ensure that subdivision does not lead to loss of rural amenity or character, or increase the potential for conflict between adjoining activities.

Significant ecological values should be protected from fragmentation through subdivision into small land holdings.

11.4 Methods of Implementation

Rules	Plan rules provide for activities which: a) Avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the character and amenity values of the rural environment; b) Control subdivision to protect the rural environment; c) Establish performance standards to protect the rural environment from the adverse effects of activities; and d) Set establishment and operational standards for specific activities including factory farms.
Guidelines	Provision of information indicating how buildings, structures, works and plantings can harmonise with the rural character. Provision of guidelines to encourage wise planning for land development to mitigate adverse effects.
Education	Assist resource users to understand and implement the results of research into the effects of land use patterns and land management practices on the sustainable management of rural resources. On land adjacent to water courses not identified for regulatory methods of riparian management, Council will work with a riparian management working group comprising of relevant organisations and individuals. The aims of the group will be to review and prioritise waterbodies for non-regulatory methods of riparian management and determine appropriate methods of management. This may for example, include provision of information relating to the adverse effects of stock grazing, especially cattle and deer, in riparian areas and means to avoid, remedy and mitigate those effects. This working group will complete the initial prioritisation of water bodies by the end of the year 2000.
Management Plans	Water Quality Management Plans will be required as a means of demonstrating on an ongoing basis that any adverse effects on water quality resulting from dairy farming will be avoided, remedied, or sufficiently mitigated. They provide the ability to consider all farm management practices that have the potential to adversely affect surface water and groundwater and manage these risks in an integrated way. This also enables the dairy farmer to progressively plan farm upgrades based on priority or, in the case of new farms, at the time of establishment. Water Quality Management Plans can be used to support applications for land use consent to convert the use of land to dairying. Nutrient Management Plans will be required as a means to demonstrate how nutrient inputs associated with dairy farming are to be managed to ensure any adverse effects on water quality will be avoided, remedied, or mitigated. Nutrient Management Plans should be written documents that

	incorporating a nutrient budget developed by an accredited nutrient adviser using OVERSEER® or similar, that describes how the major plant nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur and potassium, and any other of importance to specialist crops) will be managed, including all sources of nutrient, for example discharges from farm dairy effluent systems, animal discharges, atmospheric nitrogen fixation.

Rules to control subdivision are essential to ensure lot sizes remain large enough to enable sustainable management of rural land that results in the productive use of the land, allows for a range of future potential productive uses of the soil resource, retains the character and amenity values of the rural environment, and minimises conflict between activities in rural areas.

Management Plans as part of resource consents for new dairy farm conversions will enable rural land to be used in such a way as to avoid adverse effects on water quality, while providing farmers the flexibility to manage their activity in a manner best suited to achieving the outcomes they are seeking.

Guidelines and education allow flexibility of approach to accommodate new information, changes in community perceptions, and take account of management systems and the needs of crop rotations.

Rules limit the use of rural resources to include those activities that are rural land based activities in nature, require a rural setting or are necessary to enable rural communities to provide for their social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

11.5 Anticipated Environmental Results

Implementation of the policies and methods for the management of the rural environment will result in:

- Evolution of a rural environment that exhibits harmony and balance between retention of its character and amenity, and provision for the wellbeing of people and communities dependent on the utilisation of rural resources;
- Enhancement of the character and amenity values of rural areas;
- Protection of the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems;
- Subdivision of land which promotes the sustainable management of rural resources, and makes provision for tourism and recreation based on rural activities and lifestyles while avoiding the undesirable fragmentation of existing larger rural lots;
- Promotion of sustainable resource management practices through encouragement of different lifestyle opportunities;
- Retention of amenity and character in the rural environment by maintenance of low density development, residential development compatible with the rural character and supportive of rural communities, and establishment of small scale community facilities which directly serve the needs of the rural community; and
- Maintenance of rural contribution to regional social and economic wellbeing.