

## 6. Natural Character

### Introduction

'Natural character' is the term used to describe the degree of naturalness in an area, and includes the natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities~~ attributes of an environment. The natural character of the coastal environment, and freshwater bodies and their margins, is comprised of a number of ~~key components~~ attributes which include:

- ~~• coastal or freshwater landforms and landscapes (including seascape);~~
- ~~• coastal or freshwater physical processes (including the movement of water and sediments);~~
- ~~• biodiversity (including individual indigenous species, their habitats and communities they form);~~
- ~~• biological processes and patterns;~~
- ~~• water flows and levels, and water quality; and~~
- ~~• the ways in which people experience the natural elements, patterns and processes;~~
- abiotic systems - physical processes, geomorphology, topography, landform, and water quantity/quality;
- biotic systems - species, communities, habitats, and ecological processes; and
- experiential attributes - the way in which people including tangata whenua experience the natural elements, patterns and processes.

Collectively, these combine to create the overall natural character of the environment. The degree of natural character present in an area is commonly described on a continuum. Some environments have very high natural character due to the lack of human induced modification and may even be in a natural state. In other areas, there may be little natural character remaining due to extensive human modification.

This chapter provides the basis from which to determine the degree of natural character present:

- the classification of areas of natural character;
- the management of natural character to recognise and provide for section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991;
- to give effect to Policies 13 and 14 of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS);
- to give effect to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2017 (NPSFM).

The chapter includes objectives, policies, and methods to guide activities within both coastal and river environments.

The natural character characteristics that have been identified are included in Appendix 2 (coastal), Appendix 5 (freshwater). ~~and~~ Specific areas of high, very high, and outstanding natural character are identified on the planning maps in Volume 4. The difference between areas of high natural character and very high coastal natural character is one of degree on the spectrum of assessment of natural character rather than one of legal effect.

Comment [ 1]: COMPLETE CHAPTER UNDER APPEAL

Comment [ 2]: Friends of Nelson Haven & Tasman Inc  
ENV-2020-CHC-33

Comment [ 3]: Marine Farming Assn Inc & Aquaculture NZ  
ENV-2020-CHC-74

Comment [ 4]: The New Zealand King Salmon Co. Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-51

Comment [ 5]: Amended to accurately reflect decision. Clause 16.

Comment [ 6]: Clause 16

Comment [ 7]: Amended to accurately reflect decision. Clause 16.

Provisions included elsewhere in the Marlborough Environment Plan (MEP) ~~target address~~ the individual components of natural character and provide direction on how adverse effects on particular ~~values characteristics~~ can be managed. These include:

- Chapter 5 - Allocation of ~~Public Freshwater~~ Resources
- ~~Chapter 7 - Landscape~~
- Chapter 8 - Indigenous Biodiversity
- Chapter 9 - Public Access and Open Space
- Chapter 13 - Use of the Coastal Environment ~~and the Allocation of Coastal Space~~
- Chapter 15 - Resource Quality (Water, Air, Soil)

Comment [ 8]: Clause 16

Comment [ 9]: Clause 16

This chapter does not address the natural character of wetlands. The natural character of wetlands has been established through an integrated process of assessing wetland values. Provisions to preserve the natural character of wetlands are included in Chapter 8 – Indigenous Biodiversity.<sup>6</sup>

~~However, there is a need for this management to be integrated in order to preserve natural character in coastal and freshwater environments. This ensures that the management of the individual components of natural character is co-ordinated to achieve a common end in the context of Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS) and of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014 (NPSFM).~~

### **Issue 6A – Resource use and changes in resource use can result in the ~~degradation~~ modification of the natural character of the coastal environment, and of lakes, rivers and their margins.**

Section 6(a) of the RMA requires the Council to ~~preserve~~ recognise and provide for the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, and lakes, rivers and their margins and to protect this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. ~~The NZCPS sets a similar objective for the coastal environment. Policies 13 and 14 of the NZCPS and the NPSFM provide more specific direction on the preservation and restoration of natural character in the coastal environment, and lakes and rivers respectively.~~

The entire coastal environment and all freshwater bodies possess some or all of the ~~components characteristics~~ of natural character (natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities attributes~~) and therefore all hold some degree of natural character. The extent of human-induced modification has a significant influence on the level of natural character that exists in the coastal environment and in and adjacent to freshwater bodies. Some environments will have high natural character due to the lack of human-induced modification and may even be in a natural state. In other areas, there will be little remaining natural character due to extensive human-induced modification of the environment.

Preservation of natural character is a matter of national importance and there is a real risk that further human-induced modification within coastal or freshwater environments will have adverse effects. This risk is greatest in unmodified environments, as it is more likely that subdivision, use and development will change the existing natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities attributes~~. As the degree of existing human-induced modification in the coastal or freshwater environment increases, so too does the ability of the environment to assimilate change into the components that contribute to natural character.

Even in areas with low overall natural character, components of high natural character may remain and the protection of this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development may still be important to the local community, wider public and intrinsically. These areas could also become the focus of restoration efforts.

[RPS]

**Objective 6.1 – Establish the degree of natural character in the coastal environment, and in lakes and rivers and their margins.**

Marlborough's coastal and freshwater environments are diverse, reflecting a range of landforms and landscapes, natural processes and characteristics, and biodiversity. The degree of human-induced modification in our coastal environment and in our wetlands, lakes and rivers also varies significantly. Some areas are in a relatively natural state, while others have been significantly modified as a result of human activity. This variation explains why it is necessary to establish the degree of natural character in coastal and freshwater environments. Achieving this objective will assist in establishing which activities are inappropriate in the context of Section 6(a) of the RMA.

The natural character of wetlands has been established through an integrated process of assessing wetland values. Provisions to preserve the natural character of wetlands are included in Chapter 8 - Indigenous Biodiversity.

[RPS]

**Policy 6.1.1 – Recognise that the following natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities~~ attributes contribute to natural character:**

- ~~(a) (g) (Deleted) areas or water bodies in their natural state or close to their natural state;~~
- ~~(b) coastal or freshwater landforms and landscapes (including seascape);~~
- ~~(c) coastal or freshwater physical processes (including the natural movement of water and sediments);~~
- ~~(d) biodiversity (including individual indigenous species, their habitats and communities they form);~~
- ~~(e) biological processes and patterns;~~
- ~~(f) water flows and levels and water quality; and~~
- ~~(g) the experience of the above elements, patterns and processes, including unmodified, scenic and wilderness qualities.~~
- (a) abiotic systems - physical processes, geomorphology, topography, landform, and water quantity/quality;
- (b) biotic systems - species, communities, ~~and~~ habitats, and ecological processes; and
- (c) experiential attributes - the way in which people experience natural elements, patterns and processes.

Comment [ 10]: Clause 16

This policy describes those matters ~~considered to that~~ contribute to the natural character of coastal and river environments. This provides MEP users with a clear understanding of the meaning of natural character.

Comment [ 11]: Errata 14

Comment [ 12]: Environmental Defence Society ENV-2020-CHC-67

[RPS]

**Policy 6.1.2 – The extent of the coastal environment is identified in the Marlborough Environment Plan to establish the areas of land and coastal marine area to which management may need to be applied in order to protect the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.**

The coastal environment includes the coastal marine area, an active coastal interface area (where the sea is the dominant element and influence on landform, vegetation and perception) and a coastal significance area (which generally includes the land up to the first coastal ridge) - see Figure 6.1. This recognises the characteristics set out in Policy 1 of the NZCPS. All of the Marlborough Sounds is considered to be coastal environment, while the south coast of Marlborough is more complex due to variation in landform.

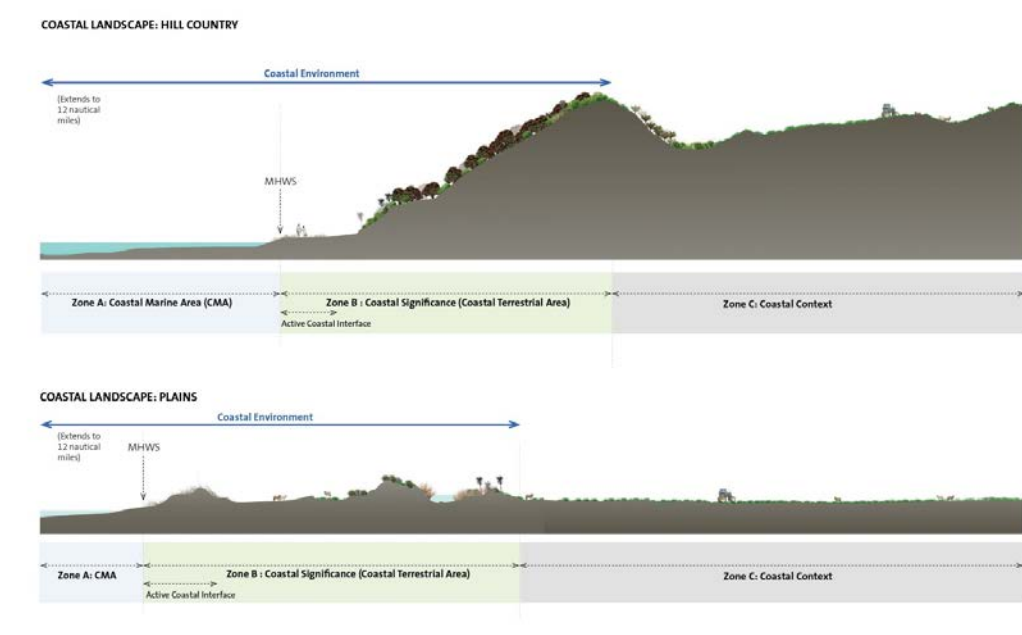


Figure 6.1: Extent of the coastal environment.

The landward extent of Marlborough's coastal environment is mapped in the MEP. Establishing the extent of the coastal environment defines the areas in which activities may need to be managed in a particular way to preserve the natural character of this environment in accordance with Section 6(a) of the RMA, [and relevant policies of the NZCPS](#). This will provide resource users and the community with certainty as to the spatial area to which the natural character and other provisions of the NZCPS apply.

[RPS]

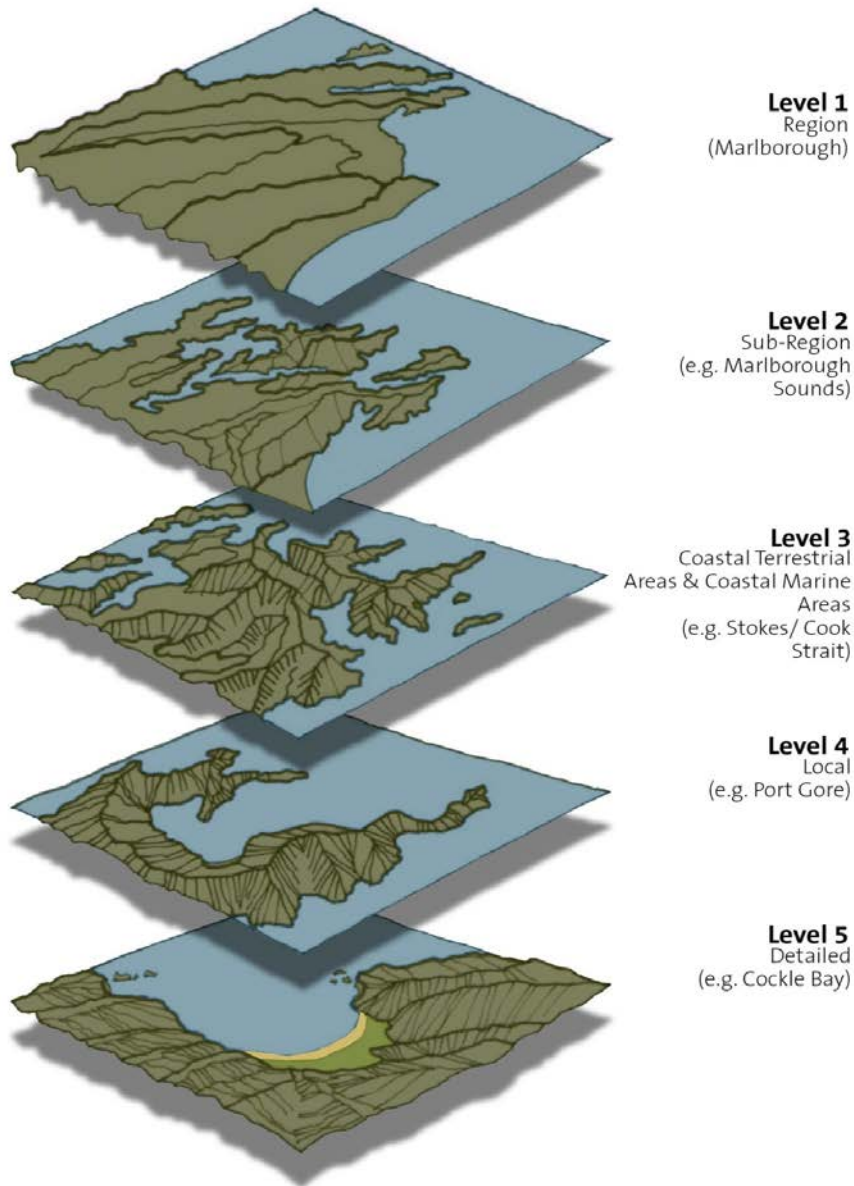
**Policy 6.1.3 – Determine the degree of natural character in both the coastal marine and coastal terrestrial ~~components~~ areas of the coastal environment by assessing:**

- (a) **the degree of human-induced modification on abiotic and biotic systems ~~and landforms, marine and terrestrial biotic systems and experiential qualities~~, including those listed in Policy 6.1.1; ~~and~~**
- (b) **the way in which people experience the natural elements, patterns and processes; and**
- (c) **natural character at a range of scales.**

The natural character of the coastal environment can vary significantly from place to place. An evaluation of the degree of natural character in Marlborough's coastal environment has been undertaken. This comprised an assessment of the extent of human-induced modification in the coastal marine area and on land within the coastal environment. To assist this process, Marlborough's coastal environment was divided into nine distinct coastal marine areas and 17 distinct coastal terrestrial areas based on land typology. For each area, abiotic systems and ~~landforms~~, biotic systems and experiential attributes were assessed. Freshwater values within the coastal environment were identified in the coastal terrestrial areas.

The analysis of natural character was undertaken at a range of scales from broad (i.e. at the Marlborough Sounds or South Marlborough level) through to a more detailed scale, which in some cases was bay-level assessment. As a result, natural character can be perceived at different

levels and different scales, depending on the level of information that is available. The scales at which the assessments have been undertaken can be seen in Figure 6.2.



**Figure 6.2: Natural Character Assessment Scale**

Appendix 2 identifies the [values-characteristics](#) that contribute to high and very high coastal natural character in each of the discrete natural character areas (reaching Levels 4 to 5 on the assessment scale). [The difference between areas of high natural character and very high coastal natural character is one of degree on the spectrum of assessment rather than one of legal effect.](#) The [values-characteristics](#) for areas with outstanding coastal natural character are also included within Appendix 2.

[RPS]

**Policy 6.1.4 – Identify and map those areas of the coastal environment that have high, very high or outstanding natural character.**

Policy 13 of the NZCPS requires that areas of at least high natural character be mapped or otherwise identified. The Council considers that the most effective form of identification is mapping, as it provides certainty on the location and extent of those spatial areas. For this reason, the MEP identifies through mapping areas of the coastal environment that have high or very high natural character following an evaluation in accordance with Policy 6.1.3. Because of the gaps in knowledge of marine ecosystems, it is difficult to map an exact line where natural character shifts from high to very high. For this reason the maps show a 'transition' area between areas of high and very high natural character in marine areas.

Policy 13(1)(a) of the NZCPS specifies requirements for areas of outstanding natural character. For the purposes of the MEP, those areas of the coastal environment that have very high natural character and which also exhibit a combination of natural elements, patterns and processes that are exceptional in their extent, intactness, integrity and lack of built structures (and other modifications) compared to other areas in Marlborough, are identified as having outstanding coastal natural character. These areas are also mapped in the MEP.

The mapping of high, very high and outstanding natural character through this policy will enable appropriate management to be applied to relevant parts of the coastal environment to give effect to the NZCPS.

[RPS]

**Policy 6.1.5 – Determine the degree of natural character in and ~~adjacent to~~ within the margins of lakes and rivers by assessing the degree of human-induced modification on abiotic and biotic systems, and experiential attributes, including those listed in Policy 6.1.1 to the following:**

- ~~(a) (b) — (Deleted) channel shape and bed morphology;~~
- ~~(b) — flow regime and water levels;~~
- ~~(c) — water quality;~~
- ~~(d) — presence of indigenous flora and fauna in the river channel;~~
- ~~(e) — absence of exotic flora and fauna;~~
- ~~(f) — absence of structures and other human modification in the river channel/lake;~~
- ~~(g) — vegetation cover in the riparian margin;~~
- ~~(h) — absence of structures and other human modification in the riparian margin; and~~
- ~~(i) — the experience of the above elements, patterns and processes including unmodified, scenic and wilderness qualities.~~

The natural character of rivers can vary significantly from place to place. An evaluation of the degree of natural character in Marlborough's rivers has been undertaken, involving the assessment of a range of natural elements, patterns, processes, and experiential attributes.~~The matters identified in (a) to (i) are those elements, patterns, processes and experiential qualities that contribute to the natural character of Marlborough's lakes and rivers and their margins. The extent to which these have been modified by human activities will determine the degree of natural character. Where the matters in (a) to (i) have not been modified or have been only been slightly modified, then the natural character will be assessed as being very high. As the degree of human-induced modification of the river and its margins increases, the degree of natural character will reduce from high, through moderate, low and finally, very low (where the river environment has been heavily modified). The degree of natural character is identified as part of the range of values identified for Marlborough's rivers in Appendix 5.~~

[RPS]

**Policy 6.1.6 – Identify and map those rivers or parts of rivers that have high or very high natural character.**

Although there is no specific requirement for the Council to identify rivers that have high or very high natural character, the Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the natural character values of a number of Marlborough's rivers. This has been carried out to recognise and provide for Section 6(a) of the RMA. Using the criteria in Policy 6.1.5, a five-point assessment scale on the significance of the waterbodies has allowed natural character to be determined. The rivers with high or very high natural character have been mapped in the MEP. Further information on a range of values for Marlborough's rivers, including natural character values, is set out in Appendix 5.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Objective 6.2 – Preserve and promote the restoration of the natural character of the coastal environment, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and protect them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.**

This objective meets the expectations of Section 6(a) of the RMA, which establishes that preservation of natural character is a matter of national importance. Policy 14 of the NZCPS requires the Council to promote the restoration of the natural character of the coastal environment. The Council also considers it appropriate to promote the restoration of the natural character of lakes and rivers and their margins.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.1 – Avoid the adverse effects of subdivision, use or development on areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character values and on lakes and rivers and their margins with high and very high natural character values ~~the characteristics that contribute to areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character.~~**

Where the natural character of the coastal environment is outstanding, Section 6(a) of the RMA indicates that this level of preservation should be retained, particularly when coupled with the similar direction in Policy 13 of the NZCPS. This means that any adverse effects on natural character ~~values~~ characteristics should be avoided. That is not to say that no subdivision, use or development can occur within the coastal environment – activities may not adversely affect the natural character of the surrounding environment, or may include features or benefits that maintain the existing levels of natural character.

~~For freshwater bodies there is also a requirement in Section 6(a) to preserve the natural character of wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins and to protect this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Having regard to Policy 6.1.5, the Council has assessed the values of rivers and lakes and their level of significance in order to give effect to Section 6(a). In undertaking this assessment, the Council has determined that where the freshwater values are high or very high, then adverse effects on these values should be avoided.~~

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.2 – Avoid the significant adverse effects of subdivision, use or development, and otherwise avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the characteristics that contribute to coastal natural character, having regard to the significance criteria in Appendix 4, within:**

- (a) all areas of the coastal environment outside of areas of outstanding natural character; and**
- (b) lakes and rivers, and their margins of high and very high natural character.**

The degree of adverse effects on coastal natural character is an important consideration under Policy 13(1)(b) of the NZCPS. Where the extent of change in the coastal environment from subdivision, use or development causes significant adverse effects on natural character, the NZCPS states those effects should be avoided.

**Comment [ 13]:** Environmental Defence Society  
ENV-2020-CHC-67

New policy: that seeks to protect the values of high, very high and outstanding natural character areas by controlling the activities listed in Policy 7.2.7

**Comment [ 14]:** Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

**Comment [ 15]:** Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

**Comment [ 16]:** Environmental Defence Society  
ENV-2020-CHC-67

**Comment [ 17]:** Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

For freshwater bodies there is also a requirement in Section 6(a) to preserve the natural character of wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins and to protect this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Having regard to Policy 6.1.5, the Council has assessed the attributes of rivers and lakes and their level of significance in order to give effect to Section 6(a). In undertaking this assessment, the Council has determined that where the freshwater attributes are high or very high, then significant adverse effects on these attributes should also be avoided.

There is therefore a threshold in these areas beyond which remediation and/or mitigation of ~~these~~ adverse effects is not an appropriate management option. That threshold will be determined on a case-by-case basis through the resource consent or plan change process. The significance of the adverse effect will depend on the nature of the proposal, the natural character context within which the activity is proposed to occur and the degree of change to the attributes that contribute to natural character in that context. Where adverse effects are not assessed as significant, then adverse effects should otherwise be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.

In addition to using information in the appendices on the degree of natural character at particular locations, consideration should also be given to other chapters of the MEP, which help to inform how adverse effects can should be avoided. For example, the policies in Chapter 7 - Landscape, Chapter 8 - Indigenous Biodiversity and Chapter 13 - Use of the Coastal Environment and the Allocation of Coastal Space, target the individual components of natural character and therefore provide a framework on how to avoid significant adverse effects on natural character values characteristics.

[RPS, R, C, D]

~~Policy 6.2.3 – Where natural character is classified as high or very high, avoid any reduction in the degree of natural character of the coastal environment or freshwater bodies.~~

~~The degree of adverse effects on coastal natural character is an important consideration under Policy 13 of the NZCPS. This policy establishes a threshold for the extent of further change that can be made in coastal environments that have high or very high natural character. Any activity that would have the effect of reducing the natural character at or near the site to a classification below that which exists at the time of making a resource consent application or plan change request, will be considered a significant adverse effect in the context of Policy 13(1)(b) of the NZCPS and should therefore be avoided. Although there is no equivalent direction in a statutory sense for freshwater bodies that reflects Policy 13(1)(b) of the NZCPS, the Council considers that the same policy approach is relevant given that freshwater bodies are included within the direction in Section 6(a).~~

~~The extent of change in natural character at or near a site will be determined on a case-by-case basis through the resource consent or plan change process. The change will depend on the nature of the proposal, the natural character context within which the activity is proposed to occur and the degree of change to the attributes that contribute to natural character in that context. For the coastal environment specifically, Appendix 2 contains information on the elements, patterns, processes and experiential qualities that give discrete areas high or very high natural character. For freshwater environments, information on a range of values for Marlborough's rivers, including natural character values, is set out in Appendix 5. This will help to inform any assessment of environmental effects on natural character of Marlborough's rivers and the coastal environment. (Deleted)~~

[RPS, R, C, D]

~~Policy 6.2.3 – Where resource consent is required to undertake an activity within coastal or freshwater environments with high, very high or outstanding natural character, regard will be had to the potential adverse effects of the proposal on the elements, patterns, processes and experiential qualities that contribute to natural character.~~

(a) have regard to the potential adverse effects of the proposal on the elements, patterns, processes and experiential attributes that contribute to natural character;

Comment [ 18]: Clause 16

Comment [ 19]: Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

Comment [ 20]: Port Marlborough New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-49  
WITHDRAWN: 28 May 2021

Comment [ 21]: Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Incorporated  
ENV-2020-CHC-64

WITHDRAWN: 4 March 2021

Comment [ 22]: Environmental Defence Society  
ENV-2020-CHC-67

Comment [ 23]: Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

Comment [ 24]: Trustpower Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-50



(b) in the case of the development of the National Grid, seek to avoid adverse effects on the characteristics that contribute to natural character;

(c) recognise that minor or transitory adverse effects may not need to be avoided;

(d) recognise the functional and operational requirements of regionally significant infrastructure.

Where it is proposed that an activity will take place in an area of high, very high or outstanding natural character, it is appropriate that the applicant assesses the impact of the proposal on natural character at the site and in the surrounding environment. To undertake the assessment, regard must be had to the elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities~~ attributes that contribute to natural character. For the coastal environment, Appendix 2 of the MEP contains information on these matters for each area, which will assist the assessment process. The level of assessment undertaken should reflect the scale of the proposed activity and the potential adverse effects on the attributes that contribute to the natural character in the coastal environment. The values of freshwater bodies, including natural character values, can be found in Appendix 5.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.4 – Recognise that development in parts of the coastal environment and in those rivers and lakes and their margins that have already been modified by past and present resource use activities is less likely to result in adverse effects on natural character.**

Modified coastal and freshwater environments have greater potential to absorb change than those that have not been modified previously or that have low levels of modification. For this reason, the Council will use a combination of regional and district rules, zoning and overlays to provide direction about where development should be located. This will help to preserve the natural character of coastal and freshwater environments.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.5 – In assessing the appropriateness of subdivision, use or development in coastal or freshwater environments, regard shall be given to the potential to ~~enhance~~ restore natural character in the area subject to the proposal.**

It may be possible to improve the natural character of coastal environments and freshwater bodies through appropriate subdivision, use and development of natural resources. Any improvement to the ~~landscape, natural processes, biodiversity, water flows or quality~~ natural elements, patterns, processes and those experiential attributes incorporated into the proposal will be considered in this regard. ~~Enhancement~~ Restoration of natural character is particularly desirable where the coastal environment and freshwater bodies have been substantially modified by past resource use activities. ~~Enhancement~~ Restoration in this context is to be used in its broadest term and can include ~~restoration~~ enhancement and rehabilitation. However, for the purposes of this policy it does not include addressing the effects of a proposal. Any actions proposed by an applicant or imposed by the consent authority (through consent conditions) begin the process of remedying past resource use impacts on natural character. The policy also implements Policy 14 of the NZCPS.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.6 – In assessing the cumulative effects of activities on the natural character of the coastal environment, or in or near lakes or rivers, consideration shall be given to:**

- (a) the effect of allowing more of the same or similar activity;
- (b) the result of allowing more of a particular effect, whether from the same activity or from other activities causing the same or similar effect; and
- (c) the combined effects from all activities in the coastal or freshwater environment in the locality.

Although individual activities may not adversely affect the natural character of the coastal environment or freshwater bodies, when combined with the effects of similar activities or other

Comment [ 25]: Trustpower Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-50

Comment [ 26]: Transpower New  
Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

Comment [ 27]: Environmental  
Defence Society  
ENV-2020-CHC-67

activities with similar effects, the activities may collectively have cumulative effects on natural character. This policy describes how the cumulative effects of activities on the natural character of the coastal environment or freshwater bodies will be considered. For the coastal environment specifically, any consideration of cumulative effects should take into account scale and may need to include consideration of the intactness of the coastal terrestrial and coastal marine natural character areas.

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.7** – Require land use activities to be set back from rivers, lakes and the coastal marine area ~~in order~~ where practicable and reasonable to preserve natural character while recognising the functional and operational requirements of regionally significant infrastructure.

**Comment [ 28 ]:** Trustpower Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-50

The proximity of land use activity to rivers, lakes and the coastal marine area has a significant influence on the potential for adverse effects on natural character. The closer the activity, the greater the potential for modification to the elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities~~ attributes that contribute to natural character. For this reason, land use activities will be required to be set back from rivers, lakes and the coastal marine area. The setback will be implemented through permitted activity standards and application can be made for resource consent to undertake an activity within the setback. The adverse effects of any such proposal will be assessed against the provisions of this chapter.

**Comment [ 29 ]:** Trustpower Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-50

[RPS, R, C, D]

**Policy 6.2.8** – Encourage and support Marlborough's tangata whenua iwi, private landowners, community groups, businesses, and others in their efforts to restore the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes and rivers.

**Comment [ 30 ]:** Transpower New Zealand Limited  
ENV-2020-CHC-68

Not all of the responses to preserving natural character need to be achieved through regulatory methods, particularly when restoring natural character in parts of the coastal environment and in wetlands, lakes and rivers already significantly modified by historic human activity. This policy acknowledges the significant efforts of Marlborough's tangata whenua iwi, private landowners, community groups, businesses and others to restore natural character in modified coastal and aquatic environments. The Council will seek to support existing restoration initiatives and will encourage new restoration initiatives to be established, in order to give effect to Policy 14 of the NZCPS. Given that natural character consists of a range of abiotic, biotic and experiential attributes, methods elsewhere in the MEP targeting an improvement in the quality of the environment will also contribute to the restoration of natural character.

New policy: Provide for the National Grid by:

- Recognising the national, regional and local benefits of sustainable, secure and efficient electricity transmission
- Manage the adverse effects of new National Grid infrastructure by all of the following:
  - Recognising there may be some areas in the coastal environment where avoidance of adverse effects is required to protect the identified special values of those areas.
  - When undertaking a route, site and method selection process, seeking to avoid adverse effects on the values of the following:
    - Areas with indigenous biodiversity value identified in Policies 8.3.1 and 8.3.2;
    - Outstanding natural features and Outstanding natural landscapes;
    - Areas of Outstanding natural character;
    - Places or areas of historic heritage values of Category A heritage resources identified in Schedule 1 of Appendix 13 and sites and places of significance to Marlborough's tangata whenua iwi identified in Schedule 3 of Appendix 13
  - Where it is not practicable to avoid adverse effects on the values of the areas listed in ii above because of the operational or technical requirements of the National Grid, consider utilising the more modified parts of these areas;
  - Any remaining adverse effects which cannot be avoided, are remedied or mitigated, having regard to the activity's technical and operational requirements;
  - Avoiding, remedying or mitigating other adverse effects.

**Comment [ 31 ]:** Clause 16

## Methods of implementation

The methods listed below are to be implemented by the Council unless otherwise specified.

[RPS, R, C, D]

### 6.M.1 Regional and district rules

*As necessary, apply district or regional rules to activities that have the potential to threaten identified attributes that contribute to natural character, particularly areas with high, very high and outstanding natural character. The status of activities will depend on the severity of the threat and range from permitted activity standards through to prohibited activities. Activities to be regulated include:*

- *subdivision;*
- *erection and placement of structures, especially location, scale, density and appearance;*
- *land disturbance; and*
- *indigenous vegetation removal; and*
- ~~*the planting of certain species of exotic tree.*~~

[A permitted activity standard will be used to establish an appropriate setback for structures and activities from rivers and the coastal marine area in order to preserve natural character.](#)

[RPS]

**6.M.2 Identifying natural character within Marlborough’s freshwater and coastal environments**

An assessment of Marlborough’s coastal and freshwater environments has identified areas of high, very high and outstanding natural character. For freshwater environments, the assessment is included within the document “The Natural Character of Selected Marlborough Rivers and Their Margins,” and identifies rivers and parts of rivers that have high or very high natural character. For Marlborough’s coastal environments, the assessment is included within the document “Natural Character of the Marlborough Coast.” The results of the assessments are mapped in the MEP. Appendix 2 of the MEP also identifies the attributes that contribute to the high, very high or outstanding natural character of these mapped areas of coastal environment, while Appendix 5 identifies the values of Marlborough’s rivers, including natural character values.

[R, C, D]

**6.M.3 Information**

The Council has made available background information on the natural character of Marlborough’s coastal and freshwater environments. This information is included in the documents identified in Method 6.M.2. The contents of the documents is useful reference material generally, but can also be used by resource consent applicants to assist any assessment of adverse effects on natural character.

[R, C, D]

**6.M.4 Restoration of natural character**

The document “Natural Character of the Marlborough Coast” provides information on potential actions that can be taken to restore the natural character of the coastal environment. This information will help land owners and resource users to implement measures to restore natural character on their property or as part of their operations.

**Anticipated environmental results and monitoring effectiveness**

The following table identifies the anticipated environmental result of the natural character provisions of the MEP. The anticipated environmental result is a ten year target from the date that the MEP becomes operative. An indicator that will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the natural character provisions is also identified.

Anticipated environmental result	Monitoring effectiveness
<p><b>6.AER.1</b></p> <p>The natural character of Marlborough’s coastal environment and of lakes, rivers and their margins is retained.</p> <p>The intactness of the individual coastal marine and coastal terrestrial areas of the Marlborough Sounds is retained in order to preserve the natural character of the Sounds.</p>	<p>Only appropriate development is allowed to occur within the coastal environment and in lakes, rivers and their margins, as measured by reassessment of the degree of natural character within these environments.</p> <p>The abiotic systems and landforms, biotic systems and experiential attributes that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment are retained, as measured by reassessment of Marlborough’s natural character.</p>

6.AER.2

The natural character of Marlborough's coastal environment and of lakes, rivers and their margins is restored where it has already been degraded.

The number of successful restoration projects undertaken by Marlborough's tangata whenua iwi, private landowners, community groups, businesses and others to restore natural character.

The abiotic systems, biotic systems and experiential attributes that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment are enhanced in areas where restoration projects and efforts have occurred, as measured by reassessment of Marlborough's natural character.

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As the natural character of coastal and freshwater environments is formed by a number of natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential ~~qualities~~ attributes, the anticipated environmental results and indicators in the following chapters will also help to determine whether the anticipated environmental result above is achieved:

- Chapter 5 - Allocation of ~~Public~~ Freshwater Resources;
- Chapter 7 - Landscape;
- Chapter 8 - Indigenous Biodiversity;
- Chapter 9 - Public Access and Open Space;
- Chapter 13 - Use of the Coastal Environment and the Allocation of Coastal Space;  
and
- Chapter 15 - Resource Quality (Water, Air, Soil).

**Comment [ 34]:** Clause 16

**Comment [ 35]:** Clause 16

**Comment [ 36]:** Friends of Nelson Haven &  
Tasman Inc  
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