

# 1. **Biodiversity Executive Summary**

## 1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.0.1 Biodiversity includes all life, the genes it contains and the ecosystems that support it. Resilience to environmental stress and an improved ability to adapt to change result from greater biodiversity within an ecosystem.
- 1.0.2 New Zealand's biodiversity and natural environments provide direct economic benefits as well as important indirect "ecosystem services". These include flood, climate, pest and erosion control; nutrient recycling; pollination and contamination filtration. Many of New Zealand's native plant and animal species are endemic (found only in this country) and their protection is internationally significant. If these species are lost here, they are lost to the world.
- 1.0.3 Southland's location, geography, climate and rich human history, combine to make it a particularly interesting and biologically diverse area. It has a range of important and unusual natural features, native plants and animals. However, major species extinctions have occurred through loss of habitat due to land clearance and predation by introduced species. These activities are ongoing and may cause additional species to become extinct.
- 1.4 The Resource Management Amendment Act 2005 gave Environment Southland more explicit responsibilities for maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity in the region. Therefore, the focus of this discussion paper is the management of issues relating specifically to Southland's native biodiversity, natural areas and ecosystems.

## 2.0 **Relevance of existing regional and district provisions– a brief synopsis**

- 2.0.1 Are the existing issues relating to **biodiversity** in the Regional Policy Statement (including those issues within **rivers and wetlands chapter**) still relevant to the management of biodiversity in Southland? Do the objectives, policies and methods in the RPS address those issues appropriately?

## 2.1 **Relevance of biodiversity chapter**

- 2.1.1 There are eight issues relating to biodiversity in Southland in the existing Regional Policy Statement. In summary they are that:
- human activities and exotic pest plant and animal encroachment have reduced and continue to reduce the physical extent and ecological value of areas of significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native species;
  - we lack information to accurately determine the value and location of areas of significant native habitat and the species they contain;
  - biodiversity within individual ecosystems can be adversely affected by activities, and the effects of activities;
  - changes to ecosystems can, because of food-chain linkages, adversely affect ecological values beyond the immediate area;

- reductions in biodiversity impact upon the values of the tangata whenua;
- we lack information on the region's ecosystems, ecosystem change, the rate of change, and the consequences for species contained in them;
- there is a general lack of awareness of ecological processes and potential environmental impacts of activities;
- introduced plants and animals have impacted adversely upon biodiversity.

2.1.2 We believe that most of those issues are still relevant because:

- human activities, such as vegetation clearance for pasture, can reduce the extent of native vegetation and make it easier for pest plant and animal species to become established and take over. This can lead to a loss of species diversity and a reduction in the ecological value of the ecosystem because often the remaining vegetation is vulnerable and fragmented;
- the flow-on effects of localised modification to habitat or species through activities driven by human wants can have wider adverse environmental implications;
- the introduction of plants and animals has destabilised ecosystems or left them unable to adapt to changes in land-use or the effects of climate change;
- there is a lack of understanding and awareness of ecosystem process and services and the effects of human activities when biodiversity is degraded;
- the protection of native biodiversity for future generations is important to Ngai Tahu ki Murihiku;
- there is no inventory of sites and values of native vegetation and species remaining on private land in the region and only a few on Crown land so there is no accurate measure of their current state or condition;
- there is inadequate information regarding the region's ecosystems, ecosystem change and the rate of change. The effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems are little known and information regarding the interaction between biodiversity and ecosystems in the Southland region is insufficient.

2.1.3 Each objective, policy and method that relates to each issue has been assessed for relevance. This analysis has shown that the basic framework remains relevant, with some amendments required to some of the policies and methods in particular.

## **2.2 Relevance of lakes, rivers and wetlands chapter**

2.2.1 The existing Rivers and Wetlands chapter of the Regional Policy Statement lists six issues with respect to biodiversity in Southland:

- loss of habitat for wildlife and freshwater fish and impediments to fish passage are affecting the viability of some populations;
- significant wetlands have already been lost and it is difficult to protect all of those which remain. The loss of values on the margins of the Waituna wetlands is of particular concern, given its status as a Wetland of International Significance;

- many wetlands are valued by recreational enthusiasts and these areas have also traditionally been used by the tangata whenua for gathering food and flax;
- agricultural runoff and inappropriate riparian management can adversely affect water quality, wetlands and estuaries;
- vegetation clearance and landscape modification can increase sediment loads in streams and rivers;
- the unsustainable harvesting of sphagnum moss adversely affects the ecological values of wetlands.

2.2.2 Each of these issues has also been reviewed and we consider that most are still relevant. The objectives, policies and methods that relate to each issue have also been analysed in detail to check that they are still relevant. We believe that the basic framework remains relevant, with some amendments necessary to the objectives, policies and methods.

### **2.3 Relevance of Existing Southland District Plan**

2.3.1 The existing Southland District Plan does not specifically identify biodiversity in a stand alone section of the Plan, however, biodiversity issues are covered in the existing Plan in a number of sections.

2.3.2 As a result of the 2005 amendments to the RMA the Southland District Council now has specific functions under the RMA in relation to controlling the effects of the use, development, or protection of land for the purpose of maintaining indigenous biodiversity.

2.3.3 Many of the biodiversity issues identified in the existing District Plan are still relevant but biodiversity issues need to be reframed in the formation of the second generation Southland District Plan. Specific areas that need to be addressed in the new plan include:

- most of section 1.7 'Native Fauna and Flora' of the existing District Plan focuses on native forestlands. It is important that other areas of significant native vegetation such as wetlands and tussock grasslands are identified when biodiversity issues are framed in the second generation District Plan;
- figures in the existing District Plan provide a breakdown of ownership and land areas of native forest in the district, based on information sourced in 1992. The figures are dated and new estimates of native vegetation cover within the district will need to be sourced for inclusion in the second generation District Plan. As noted above identification and recognition of wetlands and other important areas of indigenous biodiversity will also be required;
- Rule HER.3 – 'Native Flora and Fauna' forms the main regulatory control relating to areas of native vegetation in the Southland District. Since the District Plan became operative the Council has processed a significant number of resource consent applications to modify native vegetation and there have been several problems administering this rule. Instances where native vegetation clearance or modification has taken

place have given rise to problems when legal action has been initiated. The existing rule has been found to be open to more than one interpretation, particularly when the Council has sought to take enforcement action.

### **3.0 What has changed and what are the issues now and for the future?**

#### **3.0.1 Issues identified at a regional level**

3.0.1.1 Since the Regional Policy Statement became operative over a decade ago, science and ecology have come a long way. We know much more about biodiversity and recognise the urgency of addressing existing issues but have also identified new issues worth discussion. These are discussed below.

#### **3.0.2 Lack of Biodiversity**

3.0.2.1 There are virtually no areas of public conservation land in the Southland plains and the remaining areas of native vegetation are generally very small and fragmented. This makes them more vulnerable to further degradation and affects their ability to support significant populations of native species. Increased isolation reduces the ability of such areas to regenerate naturally, which gives rise to questions about their long term ecological viability.

#### **3.0.3 Vegetation clearance and wetland drainage**

3.0.3.1 Small-scale vegetation clearance and drainage activities still occur throughout Southland. Even small-scale activities may have irreversible impacts on the ecological functioning of critical habitats or on scarce and rare indigenous plants and animals that are present in the area. In Southland, areas most vulnerable to vegetation clearance and land drainage are the smaller fragmented natural areas on the lowland plains.

3.0.3.2 The systematic draining of Southland's wetlands over the last 150 years has had a profound impact on aquatic ecosystems. The fish species, the giant kokopu, was once common in the wetlands and streams of Southland but is now rare because of reduced habitat. While Southland's Proposed Regional Water Plan has in place a rule protecting "naturally occurring wetlands" from drainage, landowners are still clearing native vegetation from the margins or in the wetlands, therefore affecting the hydrological functions of the wetland and without the presence of native vegetation, the wetland essentially falls outside the scope of the rule. The wetlands can only be fully protected if District Plans have provisions in place to prevent the clearing of native vegetation so that wetlands remain in their "naturally occurring" state.

#### **3.0.4 Pest animals and pest plants**

3.0.4.1 Environments modified by human activity are more vulnerable to invasion by exotic species. Pest plants can invade and displace native species, particularly in open habitats where light conditions allow them to out-compete smaller or less vigorous native species.

3.0.4.2 Feral animals and pest animals such as pigs, deer, goats, possums, ferrets, stoats, weasels, rodents and cats are widespread and numerous in Southland, although several off-shore islands are predator-free. They impact on natural areas and biodiversity by consuming native vegetation and by preying on and competing with native species for habitat. A programme to reduce the incidence of bovine Tb in Southland by controlling possum numbers has produced local gains for biodiversity. However, funding from the Animal Health Board (AHB) has reduced, a trend which is likely to continue as progress toward Tb eradication is made. Local biodiversity gains will be lost if this programme is halted.

### **3.0.5 Discharges**

3.0.5.1 Point and diffuse source discharges to water threaten freshwater habitats and aquatic life by reducing water quality. Overall, the quality of Southland's freshwater is good. However, freshwater quality and habitats tend to deteriorate towards the lower reaches of catchments, which impacts on the ecological functioning of native wildlife habitat, aquatic flora and fauna and ecological values. The deterioration in freshwater quality is due to stormwater runoff of fertiliser, animal excreta and sediments and the increasing absence of riparian vegetation downstream. Small-scale vegetation clearance and drainage activities are ongoing throughout Southland.

### **3.0.6 Coastal Threats**

3.0.6.1 Many of these threats pose even greater risks to the sensitive Southland coastal marine environment. Drainage and land reclamation has already destroyed many areas of Southland's estuaries. The biodiversity values of embayed coastlines and poorly flushed estuarine areas are at particular risk from polluted river plumes, wastewater discharge, oil spills, litter and the consequences of these activities, such as eutrophication, sedimentation and increased disease risk. Furthermore, most of Southland's dune systems are vegetated by marram grass, an introduced species which tends to out-compete the native sand-binders such as pingao. This causes long term dune instability and loss of biodiversity and natural character.

3.0.6.2 Coastal shoreline habitats function best when protected from developed areas by a naturally vegetated margin. This margin acts as a barrier to weeds, increased sediment and nutrients, and provides valuable ecological habitat. Currently, most of Southland's coastal terrestrial margin is highly modified through cattle and sheep grazing. Stock grazing in dunes reduces the height of plants and encourages mobilisation of dunes. Furthermore, vehicle use on Southland beaches and dunes is widespread and is very damaging to plants and animals. The sea provides a valuable food source, but harvesting fish stocks can adversely affect biodiversity. The effects of harvesting can include a reduction in genetic diversity within a species by overfishing, habitat destruction resulting from using certain fishing techniques and the accidental catching of non-target species, 'bycatch'.

## **3.1 Changes in Land-Use**

### **3.1.1 Farming Intensification**

3.1.1.1 The intensification and expansion of farming practices can reduce biodiversity. As demands for greater productivity increase development of areas of high biodiversity, such as wetlands and steep terrain can occur. These areas were previously protected by the fact that they were unfavourable or uneconomic to farm. Grazing and trampling by domestic stock in these areas destroys native vegetation, prevents regeneration and opens the way for weed invasion.

### **3.1.2 Dairy Conversions**

3.1.2.1 Recent land development for dairy farms has resulted in numerous resource consent applications to divert and straighten streams to increase the efficiency of farm operations. Changing small meandering streams into straight channels with sculptured sides severely reduces the areas of available habitat for instream life. Native riparian vegetation has been largely replaced by exotic willows and shrubs, which support few native invertebrates. This adversely affects native fish species that rely on native invertebrates falling onto the water for food.

### **3.1.3 Residential Development**

3.1.3.1 A national trend toward increased residential development in coastal areas is also evident in Southland. The introduction of pets in the wake of residential activity can increase predation on native species. Furthermore, Invercargill is surrounded by several significant alluvial forest remnants and wetlands, which would be affected by residential or industrial expansion because of vegetation clearance, hydrological modification, and/or introduction of weeds and pets. Residential development has been shown to be the most important factor influencing weed invasion in lowland forest remnants.

### **3.1.4 Greenfield Development**

3.1.4.1 Southland supports many large industries in greenfield sites (i.e. previously undeveloped land) including those involved in wood processing, meat processing, fertiliser manufacturing, dairying, and aluminium smelting. In general, industries such as these are sited in highly modified areas, but they can affect biodiversity values in surrounding parts by discharging to air and water and via landfills. The Southland plains are rich in natural resources, have abundant flat land, well-developed transport infrastructure, and access to natural water supply. These factors mean that future development of greenfield industries is likely.

### **3.1.5 Energy Production**

3.1.5.1 The arrival of 'peak oil' and consequent increases in the price of fuels is sharpening the focus on the development of alternative, renewable fuel sources. Current government policy is to reduce reliance on thermal energy generation facilities that are associated with significant CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, and

increase the proportion of renewable energy generation in New Zealand's electricity network. This has seen a 'gold rush' of wind farm 'prospecting' and a renewed focus on hydro-electricity generation. Hydro-electric developments are increasingly pushing into areas with natural values because the easy options in more modified landscapes have already been taken.

- 3.5.1.2 The increasing use of dams to capture and store water has the potential to impact natural areas and biodiversity. The diversion of water from its natural course for power generation or irrigation, for example, can be a serious threat to the fauna and flora that rely on the aquatic and braided gravel systems. Furthermore, remnant terrestrial habitats in gullies may be flooded and downstream flows limited. Inappropriate design may also cause the dam to act as a barrier to fish movement, but appropriate design and surrounding plantings can provide small areas of habitat for native plants and animals.

### **3.1.6 Extractive Industry Development**

- 3.1.6.1 Southland has nationally significant reserves of lignite and peat. Raised peatlands are mined for horticultural use and are vulnerable to the effects of extractive peat mining. Exploitation of the coal resource has the potential to affect native and exotic species overlying or adjacent to coal deposits. Oil exploration off the southern coast and associated coastal facilities could affect coastal biodiversity. Furthermore, there is an increased risk of oil spills, which are one of the few human activities that pose a significant threat to southern island ecosystems.

### **3.1.7 Forestry**

- 3.1.7.1 Exotic forestry plantations in Southland are generally concentrated on land that is marginal for farming. These areas often support native tussock grassland and shrubland vegetation that are vulnerable to conversion to forestry use. Exotic trees such as Douglas fir, which are generally planted in these upland sites, are associated with significant wilding spread which adversely affects biodiversity values in adjoining areas.
- 3.1.7.2 Logging of timber from native forests on private land in Southland is an ongoing land use that has direct adverse effects on native biodiversity. Logging mature podocarps has adverse effects on food resources, nest and roost sites for native birds and bats and other plants such as mistletoe, hosted by Southland beech trees. Ground-based logging can also adversely affect waterways and stream quality, while road networks facilitate weed invasion.

### **3.1.8 Tourism**

- 3.1.8.1 Tourism's effects on biodiversity are usually localised to specific sites. Effects can include the disturbance of wildlife and the intrusion of tourism facilities into ecologically sensitive sites and natural areas.

## **3.2 Other Issues**

### **3.2.1 Climate Change**

3.2.1.1 The most recent climate change predictions from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research indicate that Southland's climate is likely to be warmer and wetter by 2090. Altered climatic conditions will impact on ecosystems and their functions. This has the potential to decrease habitat availability for native species. A reduction in native biodiversity allows the succession of exotic pathogens and species already successful in surrounding areas and better adapted to warmer and wetter environments.

### **3.2.2 Lack of Information**

3.2.2.1 Baseline information such as the location and abundance of individual native species and their range is not available at a regional or district level. Ecological values have been surveyed under the Protected Natural Areas Programme (PNAP), which has its basis in the Reserves Act 1977. The criteria this programme uses to assess Recommended Areas for Protection (RAPs) are similar to many of those used to assess ecological significance under Section 6(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991. However, the purpose of assessments differs. Assessments under S6(c) are likely to identify a wider range of significant natural areas, with RAPs likely to represent some of the best quality sites within this range. Without good baseline and on-going information it is difficult to identify what local or regional contribution is needed, where the priorities lie, and the effectiveness of the management actions being undertaken.

## **3.3 Additional Issues specific to Southland District Council**

### **3.3.1 Waituna**

3.3.1.1 Public concern is increasing regarding land modification and loss of biodiversity in the Waituna area; specifically around the periphery of the Awarua Wetland Reserve, which is recognised as a RAMSAR internationally significant site. This area has recently experienced an increase in the number of dairy farm conversions taking place which has given rise to land development pressure. There is also pressure to clear areas of indigenous vegetation on existing pastoral and dairy farms that have been unmodified for some time. The potential on-site effects from indigenous vegetation clearance as well as related ecological effects on the wetland itself are causes for concern.

### **3.3.2 Te Anau Basin**

3.3.2.1 Public concern has also been expressed about the modification of red tussock grassland in Northern Southland and the Te Anau Basin. Grazing and conversion of these areas associated with deer and dairy farming practices has caused the loss of some of this indigenous vegetation.

### **3.3.3 Rule HER.3 – ‘Indigenous Flora and Fauna’**

3.3.3.1 The District Council has limited in-house expertise in the area of indigenous forest management and therefore relies on outside expertise when processing consent applications relating to this rule. No inventory of all areas of significant indigenous vegetation in the District has yet been undertaken. Therefore the Council’s knowledge of significant habitats of indigenous flora and fauna has not increased significantly since the existing District Plan became operative. This gives rise to problems when areas of indigenous vegetation are cleared without a resource consent application having been made. Detailed knowledge of what has been removed is often not available and this is problematic in terms of potential enforcement action and also in the processing of any retrospective resource consent applications.

## **4.0 Options for addressing Biodiversity issues and any further comments**

4.0.1 The Regional Policy Statement has an important role in developing a biodiversity vision that incorporates valued and functioning ecosystems within the landscapes where people live, work, and recreate. However, biodiversity policy in the current Regional Policy Statement appears to be based on securing the status quo. While maintaining existing biodiversity is important, very little indigenous biodiversity remains in many areas of Southland, and particularly on the Southland Plains. In these areas, biodiversity policy needs to promote *restoration* of indigenous vegetation.

4.0.2 A suggested strategic framework follows.

4.0.3 The Regional Policy Statement and the Southland District Plan should adopt recent central government initiatives, new sources of information and other developments in the conservation, use and management of indigenous biodiversity to ensure they remain relevant. For example, the recently developed Statement of National Priorities identifies four priorities for protecting biodiversity that effectively capture many of Southland’s biodiversity issues, and through the Regional Policy Statement the Council could adopt these priorities as a basis for setting policy on biodiversity. The national priorities are:

1. to protect indigenous vegetation associated with specified land environments that have 20% or less remaining in indigenous cover;
2. to protect indigenous vegetation associated with sand dunes and wetlands; ecosystems that have become uncommon due to human activity;
3. to protect indigenous vegetation associated with ‘originally rare’ terrestrial ecosystem types not already covered by Priorities 1 and 2;
4. to protect habitats of acutely and chronically threatened indigenous species.

## 5.0 Ecological networks and corridors

- 5.0.1 Biodiversity restoration on riparian margins remains important for the persistence of alluvial plains forests, as habitats that filter nutrients and water before they enter the waterways, and as evidence of the environmental sustainability of adjacent land practices. Most Southland towns are associated with rivers, providing good opportunities to involve communities in restoring indigenous vegetation in riparian sites. Land use consents in these areas could potentially have indigenous restoration conditions attached.
- 5.0.2 The adoption of more explicit criteria with better definitions for the evaluation of the significance of indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna is required in order to assess potentially significant sites. It is important to increase the District Council's knowledge of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous flora and fauna. The best way to achieve this might be through the identification of priority areas where assessments of the significance of the indigenous vegetation and associated biodiversity values could be undertaken first. Mapping these areas for inclusion in the second generation Southland District Plan would help clarify the Southland District Council's approach towards indigenous vegetation and help to address the problems associated with the HER.3 Rule.
- 5.0.3 There are a number of regulatory and non-regulatory options that the Regional Council and territorial authorities could make use of to address biodiversity issues. A number of these options are already utilised while others have yet to be used or have had very limited use. Regulatory and non-regulatory options available for addressing biodiversity issues include:
- 5.0.4 Regulatory:
- policies, plans, rules or performance standards set by Regional Councils and territorial authorities in plans prepared under the RMA;
  - other RMA rules;
  - requiring an assessment of ecological effects as part of the resource consent applications affecting indigenous vegetation and indigenous fauna habitats;
  - requiring biodiversity offsets as a condition of land use consents;
  - decisions on applications and the imposition of conditions of consent that protect biodiversity values;
  - water conservation orders and heritage orders;
  - land use consents issued with indigenous species restoration conditions attached
  - monitoring consent conditions;
  - undertaking enforcement or abatement actions when consents and rules are breached;
  - restricting access to sites with sensitive biodiversity values.
- 5.0.5 Non-regulatory
- negotiated agreements between parties, including charters, accords, contracts or covenants;

- the purchase of land for reserves that include biodiversity values, or enable their restoration;
- the acquisition of land through reserves contributions;
- regional pest management strategies;
- biodiversity strategies;
- provision of works and services, e.g. pest and weed control, indigenous revegetation, wetland restoration;
- promote practices which protect biodiversity;
- provide for voluntary heritage preservation and protection;
- provide rates relief for legally protected biodiversity sites;
- assist individuals and groups with biodiversity fund applications;
- establish contestable regional and local biodiversity funds;
- establish awards for individuals and groups undertaking biodiversity work;
- promote media coverage of biodiversity successes;
- foster local biodiversity care groups;
- encourage resource users and interested parties to sign and act in accordance with voluntary accords (e.g. the New Zealand Forest Accord);
- work with/facilitate other organisations (e.g. DOC, NGOs, farming stakeholders);
- liaise with territorial authorities;
- monitor and gather information;
- advocacy in resource consent processes;
- providing biodiversity information to the public and schools;
- encourage research relating to indigenous biodiversity;
- encourage and support community involvement in biodiversity management;
- provision of advice, information, and guidelines;
- schedule of potential fish barriers and options to allow fish passage;
- consultation with landowners, public, tangata whenua, and other stakeholders;
- hold field days and seminars;
- fund a Bio-diversity Southland Co-ordinator
- repeated one-on-one consultation with owners of land having biodiversity values.
- continue to encourage the use of covenants via the QEII National Trust.

5.0.6 Biodiversity Southland has drafted a Biodiversity Strategy for Southland. This will be a non-regulatory tool specifically developed to identify areas that are facing the greatest risk and require action from Southlanders. The Regional Policy Statement could name and endorse the strategy as a guide to what needs to be done. If the Biodiversity Strategy is to be used, then it will be critical to include reference to it in a statutory document such as the Regional Policy Statement.

5.0.7 The development of a Land Plan would link together the policy framework based on the central government initiatives, the identification of biodiversity in Southland, regulatory & non-regulatory tools and a biodiversity strategy. It

could be an RMA Plan based with Environment Southland or it could be part of a joint Land-Use Plan involving the three territorial local authorities and Environment Southland.

5.0.8 The management of native vegetation in Maori ownership needs to be considered in light of their history and significance to Maori and their potential to provide for the economic, social and cultural security of their owners. The Southland District Council recognises the concept of kaitiakitanga in respect to these areas of indigenous vegetation. Given the history of these areas and the principles of kaitiakitanga, the Southland District Council seeks to assist and encourage owners towards a sustainable management regime. This would enable them to obtain some financial returns from these landholdings while also recognising the national importance of the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna under Section 6 (c) of the RMA 1991.

5.0.9 For best results and in order to receive central government backing, community support is essential. One way to obtain community support is to create pest-free sanctuaries which are major centres for intensive biodiversity conservation, often combining the resources of national and local government, business and community involvement. Southland could also adopt a regional native species to represent biodiversity values and ecosystem processes within the region. Support for active landcare groups will facilitate the enhancement and protection of areas with high biodiversity values. Biological corridors, important in regions with fragmented pockets of indigenous vegetation, could be maintained and enhanced by community-driven riparian restoration.

## **6.0 Questions for Discussion**

6.0.1 This is a time for the reader to think about the issues, both existing and emerging, raised in this discussion document and the options to address them.

6.0.2 Regional Policy Statement

1. Do you agree with the issues identified? Are there other issues relating to the biodiversity of Southland that need to be addressed?
2. What are the biggest threats/pressures on the remaining areas of indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna in the region?
3. Do you have a vision for biodiversity in Southland? If so, please elaborate.
4. What do you think of the ways of dealing with the identified issues? (e.g. using National Priorities, significance criteria, directive toward restoring biodiversity instead of protecting status quo, regulatory (land-use consent conditions) vs. non-regulatory (funding from an environmental enhancement fund) methods, etc. Can you think of other ways to deal with the issues?

### 6.0.3 Southland District Plan

1. Should priority be given to protection of those areas of indigenous vegetation that are under the most development pressure e.g. in the Waituna area?
2. Should the areas of the District for example the lowland plains and some coastal areas with the least amount of indigenous flora and fauna remaining on them be prioritised?
3. How should the District Council approach/engage with private property owners in regard to areas of indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous flora and fauna located on their properties?
4. Given the large size of the District and the large amounts of indigenous vegetation located on private land what is the best approach towards obtaining information about indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous flora and fauna?
5. What are the best ways through which Southland District Council can meet its obligations under section 6 (c) of the RMA 1991 to recognise and provide for the protection of areas of indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna within the Southland District?