

4.3 FIORDLAND

The Fiordland area is a unique New Zealand landscape with steep, mountains, large glaciated valley systems, largely unmodified vegetation patterns and few permanent settlements and is the habitat of rare, unusual and endangered species of flora and fauna.

Fiordland National Park (which occupies 40.7% the land area of Southland District) comprises the majority of this area. A relatively small area of land extending from the north boundary of the park to the boundary with Westland District has been included as it shares the same high degree of naturalness and remoteness.

The Manapouri Power Station lies within the Fiordland Resource Area. The construction of this power station and all its related works have been authorised under the Manapouri-Te Anau Development Act 1963.

Council has responsibility for resource management throughout Southland District including Fiordland. In all lands administered by the Department of Conservation the department has a limited exemption to undertake activities on public land without the prior approval from the Council provided that any effects of those activities do not transcend the park boundaries. Other than recreation activities permitted by Rule FDL.1 activities in the Fiordland Unit require Council approval.

The area is important to the rest of the District because of its influence on the District's climate, and its effect on water quality.

It is also important for Southland based recreationalists as well as visitors. The Park is part of the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area and is important to the economy of New Zealand as well as that of the District.

Four landscape units have been identified within the Fiordland area. These are as follows:

4.3.1 - INLAND FIORDLAND UNIT

(i) General Description

All of this unit is within the Fiordland National Park and is described in detail in the Park Management Plan. It is a unique part of New Zealand having rock types, landforms, habitats and landscapes found nowhere else in such a combination. The drama of this landscape is unmatched elsewhere in New Zealand.

The boundary of this unit is taken along the eastern shore of Lake Te Anau, excluding the township, although there are many cross-boundary concerns at this point. State Highway 94 from Te Anau to Milford, the road into Deep Cove, the road down the Hollyford valley and the road to Lake Hauroko are the only vehicle access routes into the unit. There is some modification of lake levels for hydro-electric power production at Monowai and Manapouri. The modification at Lake Manapouri is controlled by the Southland Regional Council under guidelines gazetted pursuant to the Manapouri Te Anau Development Act 1963.

(ii) Landscape and Ecological Values

The characteristics which are important in this Unit are:

- the internationally significant landscape (World Heritage Area)- reflecting its vividness, naturalness and coherence and scale
- the highly sensitive landscape
- the peace and serenity (absence of human intrusions) particularly on the lakes and in many of the fiords
- the high number of visitors, (especially overseas tourists) concentrated into parts of the unit
- the presence of a State Highway through the park which enables people to have easy access to part of the park
- the environmental awareness and high expectations of many of the visitors to the unit
- the extent and naturalness of the vegetation cover and habitats
- the intact connections between land and sea
- the rare species of plants and animals
- the unusual rock types and landforms
- important habitat for trout.

(iii) The Issues

While most of this unit is managed by DOC, there are areas of private land, which Council will need to address. The tourism potential of the area is of great importance to the District, and Council may seek to work with the Department on some issues.

The issues identified for this unit include:

- retention of wilderness and ecological values, by managing the effects of tourism and recreational use
- threats to native fauna through presence of predator species

- retention of lake qualities while developing activities in and around Te Anau and Manapouri townships
- management of inter-use conflict as recreational use of the surface of the lakes increase
- retaining landscape and ecological values if any essential buildings or structures are required
- recognition of the adverse effects of introduced browsing animals or indigenous vegetation.

4.3.2 - PYKE UNIT

(i) General Description

This is the small area of land which lies within the Fiordland Landscape Type but outside Fiordland National Park. It is almost all in Pyke Forest, which lies between Mt Aspiring National Park and the coast. The lowland areas are quite flat and swampy with forest and shrub cover, rising through beech forest to the bare Red Hills inland which are considered a significant land form. The forest cover has not been logged although there have been mining and some farming activities in the area. There are some blocks of private land, but most is Crown owned.

(ii) Landscape and Ecological Values

The important characteristics in this unit are:

- the landscape's natural values
- the Red Hills unusual geology and associated plants and animals
- continuous vegetation sequence from coastal communities to lowlands to mountains
- naturalness of vegetation and habitat.

(iii) Issues

This unit is mostly under the management of DOC; however, there is some private land which Council must address. It is one of the more remote parts of the South Island, and has many affinities with the West Coast (eg access). Change in the area could come from increased mining activity or tourism development.

The issues identified for this unit include:

- the management of conflicts between natural values and mining activities to ensure that wilderness and ecological values are retained
- retention of wilderness and ecological values by managing the effects of tourism and recreational use

- proposals to provide a transportation link between the West Coast and Southland
- threats to native fauna through introduction of predator species.

4.3.3 - FIORDLAND COAST UNIT

(i) General Description

The Fiordland coast is long and diverse, and has numerous unique, unusual and outstanding natural features and processes. It is totally within the Fiordland National Park, with the exception of some small pieces of freehold land of historical interest. The indentations of the fiords brings the coastal factor far inland and the strong influence of the oceanic climate makes it difficult to say exactly where the "coast" stops.

The settlement at Milford Sound is in this unit.

Most of this area is under the management of DOC, although there is freehold land at Cromarty, Kisbee Bay, Jamestown and Martins Bay. Buildings have recently been constructed at Cromarty.

(ii) Issues

This is a coast unit of outstanding visual and ecological quality, and of recognised international significance. Because of that, it offers outstanding experiences to the visitor. Allowing people to have those experiences without damaging the environment is one of the challenges facing the Department of Conservation and the Council in managing the area.

The issues identified in this unit include:

- threats to coastal processes and quality from effects of developments
- threats to outstanding natural character of the coast through developments on private land
- threats to outstanding natural character through effects of increasing tourist popularity of the area
- threats to wilderness values and ecological quality through increased tourist popularity
- limited use being permitted on existing freehold land.

4.3.4 - BIG BAY COAST UNIT

(i) General Description

This is a very small piece of coastline between the northern boundary of Fiordland National Park and the northern boundary of Southland District. It includes some rocky reefs, but is mainly the large sand and gravel beach area at Big Bay, backed by a large dune and wetland system. Most of the land is in Pyke Forest which extends far inland but there is some freehold land. This is one of the more natural parts of the coast. While there are significant Maori occupation sites and early Europeans settled briefly, there are few permanent residents now. Whitebaiting and fishing focus around the Awarua River mouth and off the Fiordland coast.

(ii) Landscape and Ecological Values

The important characteristics in this Unit are:

- the naturalness of habitats and landscape
- high water quality protected by intact forest and dune vegetation
- intact, unusual landforms (dunes, lagoons).

(iii) Issues

This unit is significant because of its remote and unspoilt landscape. However, the growth of tourism and increased interest in the “remote experience” make it a possible location for tourism and recreation related development.

The issues identified for this area include:

- outstanding landscape quality and visual sensitivity to any major change
- threats to fragile coastal communities through spread of weeds
- threats to coastal water quality through unplanned developments
- threats to natural character and ecological values from increasing tourism and recreation.

4.3.5 - OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND METHODS

Objective FDL.1

To preserve and protect the outstanding natural and wilderness qualities of the areas landscapes, landforms, waterbodies and indigenous vegetation and habitat from inappropriate subdivision use and development.

Objective FDL.2

To maintain and where possible enhance public access for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment of the area where that access will not create adverse effects or cause damage to ecosystems and landscape values.

Policy FDL.1

To ensure that development and activities under District Plan control have regard to the Fiordland and Mt Aspiring National Park Management Plans, and appropriate Conservation Management Strategies.

Explanation

*In areas of such outstanding landscape quality, any activities on the fringe of the National Park must be compatible with the aims and values of the parks Management Plans.
(Refer Rule FDL.1)*

Policy FDL.2

To ensure development involving structures is:

- (a) **demonstrably beneficial to the public’s enjoyment of the Park, and**
- (b) **will not adversely affect the environment, and that there is**
- (c) **no appropriate alternative locations beyond the park.**

Policy FDL.3

To minimise the adverse impact of structures where these are visible from the Parks or approaches to the Parks

Explanation

*Policy FDL.2 and 3 recognise the adverse effect structures can have on outstanding landscape areas. Where buildings are deemed to be required, high design standards will be required to offset their visual impact.
(Refer Rule FDL.2)*

Policy FDL.4

To assess any proposed development on a case by case basis.

Explanation

All developments will require a resource consent to ensure all aspects of the proposal are complementary to the amenities of the area.
(Refer Rule FDL.3)

Policy FDL.5

To ensure that priority is given to the protection of landscape and ecological values in the consideration and assessment of all development.

Explanation

The objective of this area is to protect landscape and ecological values. This will be paramount in any assessment of a resource consent application.
(Refer Rules FDL.2 and 3)

Policy FDL.6

To ensure that any amenity planting associated with development does not include exotic species.

Explanation

The planning of amenity plantings must recognise that exotic plants can threaten the natural values of the area.
(Refer Rule FDL.3)

Policy FDL.7

To co-operate and consult with other agencies on any studies of existing or proposed developments.

Explanation

To ensure the values of the area are not compromised, all agencies that have a role in the management of the area need to be involved, to some degree, in the development and consent procedures of other agencies. This would apply to development in such places as Milford, Cromarty and Jamestown.

This approach also extends to Iwi who have significant historical links with this area.
(Refer Rule FDL.2)

Policy FDL.8

To work closely with the Department of Conservation to identify cross boundary issues between the land administered by the Department of Conservation and adjacent areas.

Explanation

As for Policy FDL.1 and 7, development in adjacent areas must recognise the aims and values of the management for the Conservation Estate.
(Refer Rule FDL.1 and Method FDL.1)

Rule FDL.1 - Permitted Activities

(a) Recreational activities (excluding the erection of buildings) that are permitted in National Park areas by the National Park Management Plans and Conservation Management Strategies are permitted activities in the Fiordland Resource Area.

Reason

Provided they are compatible with the adjoining conservation estate, recreational activities should have little adverse impact in the area, and enable the public to enjoy the quality of the area.

(b) Any activity for which resource consent has been previously granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1953.

Reason

Previous consents had been granted under the Town and Country Planning Act for a tourist activity at Cromarty. This development is in an advanced stage of completion and the provisions of the Plan should recognise consents that have previously been granted.

Rule FDL.2 - Controlled Activity

Residential activities involving the erection of a dwelling house or building on an area of land which existed in one or more certificates of title as at the date of public notification of this Plan and which are owned by a person who did not own contiguous land shall be considered as controlled activities.

Provided that all relevant rules and standards of this Plan are complied with and are controlled in respect of:

- * Bush clearance being limited to a maximum of 300 m²
- * The visual impact of any building, structure or dwelling on adjoining national park values
- * The extent of bush clearance that is required
- * The material and external finishing to be used in the construction of the dwelling
- * The height of the building being restricted to 4.5 metres
- * The total floor area of the building being limited to 150 m²

Rule FDL.3 - Discretionary Activity

All activities excluding those provided in Rule FDL.2 involving the disturbance of any land, vegetation, waterbody or involve the erection of any building or structure, shall be considered as discretionary activities.

Any application requires a comprehensive assessment of environmental effects to accompany it. In assessing the merits of the proposal, Council will consider the following:

- the public benefit of the proposal as opposed to its effect on the ecosystem and landscape values of the area
- the ecological sensitivity, and inter-connections between landscape and ecological values
- the visual impacts
- impact on water and soil qualities
- the impact of any amenity planting associated with the development
- impact on any adjoining conservation land
- alternatives considered
- consultation carried out.

Reason

Discretionary activities status allows a full consideration of the adverse effects and the ways in which these can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Rule FDL.4 - Prohibited Activities

No further subdivision is permitted within this resource area.

Method FDL.1 - Consultation

Consultation will be carried out with all relevant parties, including Iwi, on any development proposed for the area.

Reason

This will ensure development is compatible with the aims of the adjoining National Parks.

4.3.6 - ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

- (a) The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment, lakes and rivers, and their margins.
- (b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- (c) The avoidance of significant adverse effects from activities.