



## KAIKOURA'S SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS PROJECT — SOME COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS...



### ***Firstly, what is the project about?***

It's basically about promoting the protection and management of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and fauna through partnership agreements with landowners.

The project has been on the go since about 2004. A Significant Natural Areas Land Care Group was formed to work with Council staff in managing the project. The group is made up of private landowners/farmers, Federated Farmers, Councillors, local runanga, Council staff, Environment Canterbury and the Department of Conservation. An independent ecologist has been engaged to do site assessment work and update existing information on potential significant areas in Kaikoura. This is so that there is adequate and accurate information and so that we can see what may be the best way to continue managing the areas.



### ***What is an "SNA"?***

"SNA" stands for 'significant natural area'. It is a short hand way of referring to Section 6(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991. Section 6(c) requires every Council to recognise and provide protection for areas of significant indigenous (native) vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna (animals) as a matter of national importance.



### ***Why is the Council doing this project?***

Councils are required by law to recognise and provide protection for areas of significant indigenous (native) vegetation and habitats of indigenous animals (Section 6C of the Resource Management Act 1991). While National Parks and Reserves have tended to provide protection for some of the inaccessible steep hill and mountain country, these generally do not cover lowland and hill country areas, which are mostly held in private ownership. These are the areas where many indigenous vegetation types are no longer well represented but often exist because landowners have chosen to protect & look after them.

Council wants to build good working relationships with our districts landowners hence the importance of this project being **voluntary** – we are not here to tell you how to run your farm; you are the experts at that, as it is your livelihood. It is fair to say that the landowner is just as important in this project, as the 'potential' SNA itself!



### ***Is it voluntary or do I have to take part in this project?***

Completely voluntary and that's the way we want to keep it - as noted, the Kaikoura District Council initiated this project to identify potentially "significant" areas in the Kaikoura area and to work through possible options for protecting these areas where possible, and practical. One thing to make clear right at the beginning is that this process is completely voluntary on

the landowner's behalf and council's intention is to assist in protective management of such areas.

During the earlier stages of the Proposed District Plan it was decided that rather than 'lock up' these significant natural areas with site specific rules and regulations that penalise landowners, a 'partnership' concept was pushed. This recognises that the Council has certain duties under the Resource Management Act, but more importantly the landowners who have owned, managed and cared for these sites over the generations & possess the skills and knowledge, to continue as 'SNA stewards'.

See also '*Are there any rules I need to be aware of?*' on page 5.



### ***How did Council know about my property anyway?***

Some earlier work was carried out during the Proposed District Plan process in 1997, and was done in conjunction with the Department of Conservation to identify areas of significance throughout our district. This was generally done by way of desk top exercises using earlier existing reports, topographical maps, aerial photos and limited landowner contact. Therefore some potential sites of significance have already been identified but these will need to be rechecked as some of the information at the time was fairly old and site values may have changed

The information that Council currently holds is available for you should you wish to come into the Council offices and read through it.



### ***Who will be coming to my property?***

Should you be interested and willing, an independent ecologist (Geoff Walls) will visit your property and assess the site(s). He may or may not be accompanied with perhaps myself (Jodie Denton, Biodiversity Officer, Council). However if you wish for the ecologist to come on his own, that is fine.

I think it is important to note that Geoff has had many years of experience in the ecology field and is nationally known for his work & expertise. He specialises in ecological survey and site assessment, conservation management advice and rural conservation, to name some of the areas he covers. He has been involved with the Marlborough District Councils SNA project for several years already.



### ***Am I liable for their safety?***

No, the ecologist will be responsible for his own safety while on your property, and will also be covered by a safety plan previously approved by Council. It would be beneficial for the landowner though, to advise the ecologist of any hazards etc that he should be aware of on your land, and maybe provide any tips you have on the safest way to go about his work while out there.

The ecologist will endeavour to meet with you prior to heading out to do his field work and also to catch you (or someone there) when he leaves. Also he will endeavour to report in to either his own home or to Jodie Denton (project coordinator) at night time, if coverage permits.

You may or may not wish to seek your own information on safety of others on your property etc.



***Will they do their own thing, or do I need to be with them while they are here?***

The ecologist will be able to do his own thing, however if you wish to accompany him during his work, you would be more than welcome.



***Will they look at my whole farm or just a particular part?***

In the first instance, just the particular site(s). However if you know of a special site on your property that you would like assessed, this again is entirely up to you – if you are interested in having your whole property assessed, the project allows for this and the ecologist can adjust his schedule to do so. On the other hand, if you want for him to only assess the identified site(s) and leave it at that, then that is fine too. It's your land, it's your call!



***Are other landowners involved?***

Yes, other landowners are involved throughout the district - ranging from the Kekerengu area, Clarence, Blue Duck Valley, Puhī Puhī Valley, the lower Mt Fyffe area, Inland Road and back towards the coast, Goose Bay/Oaro area, and various areas along the coast line.



***Why is this information useful to Council anyway?***

The information is actually primarily for the landowners benefit, although it does assist Council with their obligations under section 6c of the Resource Management Act 1991.

It is important to reiterate that it is our intention to keep the information confidential, should that be your request. However it is important to note that currently under the Meetings & Official Information Act, a request can be made to Council to release any information it holds. We cannot guarantee that we can avoid being forced to release it, however would not take any such request lightly, should any ever be received.

Marlborough landowners participating in the same 'Significant Natural Areas' identification process earlier, found the report provided by the ecologist to be very informative and of great value. Once landowners were made aware of the values on their farm they had a renewed sense of responsibility and began to think about how they could manage those areas differently. Pest control is often the biggest threat, and in some cases farmers are co-ordinating their control programmes with neighbours and DOC. There is a direct result of gathering the information and then knowing what values exist.



### ***What happens to the information they collect?***

Firstly.....Council staff anticipate working with willing landowners and the ecologist to discuss the project, clarify current information held and how that compares to what is actually 'on the ground'. Discussing options that are available for protection/management of the areas, should the landowner wish to do so is also covered.

A report will be compiled of the information gathered from your site(s), including special features, species, threats etc and possible management options.

These ecological reports will be given to the landowner for your own record and information. It will contain an outline of the special features of your property (or of specific areas), ecological values, biodiversity and conservation values (including landscape and amenity values). These reports may outline other suggested management options, should the current way in which the areas are being managed, be adapted to get better results.

A copy of that report will also be held at Council, and should you wish for that info to remain confidential, Council will endeavor to do so for you.



### ***What is it going to cost me and how long will it take?***

Cost? For Council to discuss the project with you , arrange an ecological site visit, for the visit to occur, for the report to be produced and provided and for any follow up assistance you may be happy to accept.....costs you absolutely nothing!!!! Now that doesn't happen often!!!

Time? Depends entirely on the size of the site(s) or of your property and of the logistics of getting around. We try to work out an approximate time before your property is visited and would let you know how long we expect it would take.

Thereafter in terms of protection costs, if you choose to head in that direction.....In order to protect an area, there are a few options available for the actual protection process. Queen Elizabeth the Second Trust (QEII) is probably one of the most commonly used agencies around the country. They will generally pay the survey costs, legal registration costs and usually half of the fencing costs. The landowner cost is therefore the remaining fencing cost, pest and weed control and the ongoing maintenance. However there are other funding opportunities that can be used to supplement the landowner costs. (See below).

In terms of length of time it takes to complete the process of covenanting – approximately 4-24 months – it will vary depending on amount of fencing required, contractor availability, survey difficulty and turnaround time of documentation. Bare in mind this is just one means of protection, there may well be other opportunities we can investigate, that you may prefer.

And please keep in mind that there are funds available for the likes of fencing, pest & weed control – all of which I can help source on your behalf.



### ***What kind of assistance is Council offering?***

Council has its own 'Biodiversity Contestable Fund' to which landowners can make funding applications to, for various work/projects relating to either Significant Natural Areas or general biodiversity. Keep an ear open for opening dates or give me a call. Although this is only a small set amount of money per year for three years at this stage, it is still there for the offering.

Council also has a Rates Relief Policy, which can be offered to owners of covenanted land, meaning that the landowner can ask for the protected portion of land not to incur rates as per normal.

The function of my role is to assist you wherever possible – whether that be by pointing you in the right direction for various protection methods/agencies, seeking sources of funding for you, assistance with funding applications, general advice and to also facilitate this project with the SNA Land Care Group – that’s what I am here for!



### ***Are there other sources of assistance for me?***

Yes – quite a few! There are many different options for funding available now and I can help you with deciding on the best options and offer help in making applications should you wish. Some examples are – KDC’s own Biodiversity Contestable Fund, the Biodiversity Advice or Condition funds, Transpower Landcare Trust Grants Programme, The Environment Enhancement Fund to name a few.

Kaikoura is in the lucky position of being fairly new to the protecting of private land areas for its biodiversity and conservation values as such, and therefore applications for funding assistance are generally looked upon quite favourably by other agencies.



### ***What’s the story with public access if I agree to protect some land?***

This again, is entirely up to you; public access is with landowner’s permission only. Should you not wish to allow public access, then that is fine.



### ***Are there any rules I need to be aware of?***

One of the main aims of this entire project, right from word go, has been to ensure it is of a voluntary approach and not governed by rules that tell people they ‘have’ to do something. There are rules within the District Plan that apply to the ‘Rural’ zone, however and these relate to indigenous forest clearance and indigenous vegetation clearance. These can be sent out to you should you wish to have a copy for your reference.



### ***Council’s commitment to landowners.....***

Council is committed to a voluntary approach rather than rules and regulations in the plan, and the information and management actions that follow from working with landowners will assist Council to meet their requirements under the RMA 1991.

Council is also committed to assist landowners wherever possible - through providing advice, assistance in sourcing and making funding applications, funding assistance through Councils first ever contestable fund, assistance in sourcing the most appropriate mechanism for protection, providing the option for rates relief and so on.

The bottom line is that we would like to work together to manage and protect what is left of the districts indigenous biodiversity – whether that be a wetland, remnant of native bush, rocky outcrops that has provided a habitat for a rare and endangered species, or something similar. It's all very important.



*Is there someone I can talk to about this?*

You are more than welcome to get in touch with myself, Jodie Denton, (Biodiversity Officer for District Council and the coordinator for the project), if you would like to discuss the project further. I can be contacted on 03 319 5026 (wk), 03 319 7344 (hm) or [jodie.denton@kaikoura.govt.nz](mailto:jodie.denton@kaikoura.govt.nz).



Hopefully that has been of some help – if you have any other questions, please let us know, otherwise we look forward to meeting with you soon.