

7 THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Grey District has approximately 60km of coastline forming the western boundary of the district. The coastline is characterised by rugged natural features, including estuaries behind low-lying dunes, gnarled rocky outcrops and isolated sandy beaches. Mixed sand and gravel beaches dominate the coastline south of Cobden and in the vicinity of Barrytown Flats, it is well supplied with sediments from the Grey, Taramakau, and Punakaiki Rivers which flow to the coast. With the exception of Blaketown Beach to Karoro these coastal beaches are typically prone to erosion.

All of the Greymouth coast is characterised by steep headrock outcrops and the Paparoa and Rapahoe Ranges largely resist the sea's force. The sand and gravel beaches interrupt this otherwise rugged coastline.

Coastal settlements include Greymouth, Cobden, Southbeach, and Rapahoe. A number of bodies have a role to play in the management of the coast. The District Council is responsible for the area above mean high water springs and the Regional Council is responsible for the management of the area below this mark, which is known as the Coastal Marine Area. The Regional Council has prepared a coastal plan for this area. The Minister of Conservation has prepared the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) identifying national policies, which the District Plan cannot be inconsistent with. This [Act](#) places special emphasis on the coast by way of **Section 6(a)** which states that a matter of national importance is the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment and its protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

The term "coastal environment" is not defined in the [Act](#). However it can be said that coastal environment is an environment in which the coast is a significant part and generally will include the coastal marine area, all tidal waters and foreshore above the mean high water springs, dunes, beaches, areas of coastal vegetation, areas subject to coastal erosion and flooding, salt-marshes, and estuaries.

Again the [Act](#) does not define natural character but the NZCPS suggests some important elements that contribute to it, including:

1. The level of existing modification.
2. Significant indigenous species of flora and fauna.
3. Landscape, seascapes, and landforms.
4. Coastal processes.
5. Special spiritual values and significant historic and cultural places.
6. Water quality.

The Grey Coastline has all of these elements present to a greater or lesser degree depending on location. The critical matter is the impact (if any) that use, development and subdivision will have on the coast. Public access to and along the coast is generally good although [Council](#) proposes to take, where appropriate, esplanade [reserves](#) on subdivisions of less than four hectares.

7.2 ISSUES

1. The adverse affects of inappropriate use, development and subdivision affecting the natural character of the coastal environment.

Activities such as [buildings](#), structures and [earthworks](#) in the coastal environment can create adverse effects in terms of visual impact, risk of natural hazards, obstruct public access, damage Iwi sites and heritage sites and modify flora and fauna.

7.3 OBJECTIVE

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| 1. To preserve the natural character of the coastal environment and the protection of it from inappropriate subdivision, use or development. |
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7.4 POLICIES

1. Development, use or subdivision affecting the natural character of the coastal environment shall have particular regard to the following:
 - a) The extent of existing and likely potential modification as a result of human presence in the area, such as port development and operation.
 - b) The presence of significant indigenous vegetation or natural habitats.
 - c) The life supporting capacity of ecosystems.
 - d) The presence of distinctive landscapes, seascapes and landforms.
 - e) The presence of special spiritual, heritage, cultural values including those of significance to Maori.
 - f) The maintenance and enhancement of high water quality.
 - g) Coastal natural hazard areas.
2. Any development within the coastal area should take place in modified areas such as existing settlements in preference to unmodified areas.
3. Development in unmodified areas should only take place where the setting is integral to the development proposal and adverse effects on those items identified in Policy 1 can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.
4. Improvement and enhancement of public access by taking of, where appropriate, esplanade [reserves](#) on coastal subdivision.

7.4.1 EXPLANATION AND REASONS

[Council](#) is required to preserve the natural character of the environment and protect it from inappropriate use and development. The policies stated above give guidance as to how this can be achieved by specifying particular criteria, all of which are integral to the natural character. It is noted that in respect of 1(a) an existing port operates at the mouth of the Grey River and a deep sea port is proposed at Rapahoe, which has been recognised by the Regional Plan.

7.5 IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

1. Rules are included in the plan that require development located in proximity to mean high water springs to obtain resource consent.
2. Rules that require esplanade [reserves](#) on coastal subdivision.
3. Liaison and co-operation under relevant management agencies such as the West Coast Regional Council and Department of Conservation.
4. Reference to the West Coast Regional Coastal Plan particularly on cross boundary issues relating to habitats, landscape and coastal hazards.

7.5.1 REASONS

Council will require activities to obtain resource consent if they are within a specified distance (100m) of the coastline.

This will enable the effects on the natural character of the coastline to be assessed particularly as it relates to visual impact, ecosystems and the presence of natural hazards. Generally those areas contained in the Commercial and Industrial Environmental Areas are modified to the extent that natural character does not exist.

Liaison with other agencies such as the Regional Council will also be critical in dealing with activities that potentially cross mean high water springs. This will primarily be by way of the Regional Coastal Plan.

7.6 ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS ANTICIPATED AND MONITORING

Anticipated Environmental Results	Monitoring and Review Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preservation of the natural character, coastal environment and the establishment of appropriate uses, subdivision and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource consents and conditions• Regional Council records