Porirua Landscape Management Strategy for Rural and Open Space Areas

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Overview

Strategy Aim

The aim of the Landscape Management Strategy for Rural and Open Space Areas is management of rural landscapes in Porirua in a way that:

- enables landowners to continue to use and enjoy their land; and
- enables landscape values to be appropriately managed.

This document outlines the landscape strategy. It contains information that has informed the strategy, and identifies issues in managing landscape values, as well as outcomes/principles to be applied to management of Porirua landscape, and potential methods for managing landscape values.

The diagram shows the relationship between the strategy and other Council documents.
What is Landscape

The landscape is a complex environment which comprises the visible features of an area of land including:

- the physical elements of **landforms** such as mountains, hills, water bodies such as rivers, lakes, ponds and the sea;
- living elements of **land cover** including indigenous vegetation;
- **human elements** including different and changing forms of land use, buildings and structures; and
- **transitory elements** such as lighting and weather conditions.

What are Landscape Values

Landscape values reflect how people perceive, define and value the landscape, and are always changing. They are challenging to manage due to complex inter-relationships of variables affecting landscapes. Values may be derived from various aspects of the landscape including:

- Visual features of the landscape and their prominence;
- Associative values such as historical and cultural context of an area;
- Influence of environmental constraints on land use choices including natural hazards and the presence of vegetation.
- Effects of development (including earthworks).
- The rate of change in landscapes and the sensitivity of the landscape to changes.
Why have a Landscape Strategy?

Landscapes define places and contribute to community wellbeing. There are a range of demands for use of land that can impact on landscape values. A strategic approach to landscape management can help guide land use choices in a way that ensures communities are able to agree on landscape management priorities as rural landscapes transition into the future. The Strategy provides outcomes which are sought to be achieved and principles that will underpin management.

**Strategy Objective**

To provide strategic guidance for management of important rural landscapes which are valued by the communities of Porirua and to identify appropriate methods to enable existing land uses to continue, whilst at the same time maintaining the important landscape values both now and for the future.

**Landscape Management Methods**

The strategy identifies rural area landscapes of importance to Porirua's communities and provides guidance for appropriate management. Suggested are a range of tools including regulatory and non-regulatory methods to assist with achieving the outcomes and principles. The strategy recognises and provides for rural landowners to continue to undertake farming and other activities on their land to provide for their social, cultural and economic wellbeing.
Outcomes of the Landscape Strategy

The Landscape Management Strategy for Rural and Open Space Areas aims to assist the Porirua City Council in fulfilling its obligations under the RMA in managing its rural landscape values by achieving the following outcomes:

- Enabling rural activities that contribute to the rural character and landscape values
- Providing for appropriate subdivision, use and development that maintain the rural landscape values

Managing important identified landscape values including protecting outstanding natural features, and maintaining and enhancing special amenity landscapes.

In achieving the outcomes the strategy will seek an integrated and co-ordinated management approach that combines a mix of regulatory and non-regulatory methods.

Rural Landscape Management Philosophy

- **Protect** the most significant and sensitive areas of the rural landscape.
- **Enable** more flexible, appropriate rural use of rural land, having regard to the sensitivity of the landscape to change.
- **Enhance** the rural landscape through appropriate forms of rural subdivision and development.
Principles of Landscape Management

Key principles to be addressed through the strategy include:

1) Shared understanding of what landscape values are.
   - A shared understanding of the values of the landscape including through education and awareness enables management decisions to be well informed.

2) Recognition and appropriate management of outstanding landscape values and significant landscape values
   - Outstanding natural features need to be protected from inappropriate development & subdivision, and significant landscapes are to be managed to maintain their contribution to 'place'.

3) Enabling land use that recognises and supports the values the community regards as being important.
   - Appropriate development can enhance landscapes, particularly when coupled with appropriate land retirement, re-vegetation or feature protection.
   - Operation and maintenance of existing structures, buildings and network utilities should be able to continue.

4) Sustainably managing landscape
   - The rural landscape should be managed so that it can be passed onto future generations. This will require a practical mix of regulatory and non-regulatory landscape management methods.

5) The integrated management of landscape including partnership with landowners
   - Landscape management requires an integrated approach including working with landowners to sustainably manage rural landscape values.
The Porirua Rural Landscape

Past - 95 percent of Porirua's rural area is privately-owned with many of today’s rural landscape values created and managed by rural landowners undertaking primary production activities on a small number of large landholdings.

Present - The rural landscapes within Porirua contribute to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of its landowners and the overall community in terms of providing a physical resource that is utilised, as well as a visual resource that is appreciated. In effect it is a “working landscape” in which people live, work and play.

Future - However, the City’s rural landscape has the potential to change with significant landscape values lost or compromised. Changes arise from:

- A changing rural economy, including increase in property values, which is seeing pressure to move away from traditional pastoral farming.
- A growth in peri-urban development and associated urban related activities.
- Enhanced accessibility, including Transmission Gully Motorway and associated demand for low density development in proximity to the road.
- Increased pressure for infrastructure development.
Components of the Porirua Landscape

In order to manage the landscape it is first necessary to describe the landscape and values within. Porirua’s rural landscape is made up of a number of components which can be broadly categorised into three terms of reference as follows:

- **Landscapes of High Value (Important values)** – which relate to natural features and landscapes that are important to the City’s sense of place and are considered to be 'outstanding' or have special 'amenity values' in the context of the Resource Management Act 1991.

- **Landscape and Coastal Environment Identity Areas (Community Catchments)** – which relate to physical catchment areas defined mainly by water drainage catchments (e.g. Kakaho valley catchment). and may contain varied topography and landscape features.

- **Landscape Character Types (Biophysical)** – which relate to the underlying landforms (such as valley floors, steeper upper slopes hilltops and ridgelines).

The above three components (Important values, Catchment Communities and Biophysical) have been comprehensively investigated, defined, and assessed in accordance with current best practice and relevant provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991 and form the basis of the Landscape Strategy.
Component 1 – Landscape Character Types

The biophysical characteristics of the City’s rural landscape which form the underlying ‘bones’ or physical units of the landscape have been identified and described in terms of five basic ‘landscape character types’, as follows:

- Valley Floors and Low Foothills (Character Type 1) – typically flat or gently sloping landform <15°
- Mainly Foothills and Rolling Tops (Character Type 2) – typically rolling country containing low foothills with spurs and valleys and gullies, between 15-25°
- Steeper Upper Slopes (Character Type 3) – typically steep elevated slopes rising up towards the higher hilltops and ridgelines, with slopes >25°
- Hilltops, Ridgelines and Significant Spurs (Character Type 4)
- Wetlands, Streams and Tidal Area (Character Type 5)

Each of the five character types has been assigned a numerical number (as shown in brackets above), and are shown graphically on the map.
A range of Landscape Character Types may be present within an area. Horokiri is comprised of valley floors, foothills, steep upper slopes, and hilltops and ridgelines as well as some wetland in the Horokiri Stream delta.
The Whitireia Peninsula contains the upper-most ridgelines and hilltops, with steep slopes below and small pockets of valley floor and low foothills adjacent to the shoreline.
Component 2 - Landscape and Coastal Environment Identity Areas

The second category of landscape assessment to inform the Landscape Management Strategy is the delineation of the rural environment into discrete visual catchments, each with distinctive characteristics. These catchments are described as “Landscape Identity Areas” (LIAs) and “Coastal Environment Identity Area (CIA’s)” and are based on water drainage catchments.

There are 16 distinct landscape catchments, 5 of which are part of the outer coastal environment and drain directly to the open sea, forming the Outer Coastal Edge.
Component 3 - Landscapes of High Value

Building upon Landscape Character Types and Identity Areas, the 3rd component to inform the strategy is that of high values landscapes.

The City’s Outstanding Natural Features and Special Amenity Landscapes essentially comprise three key features:

- The coastal escarpment;
- The principal ridgelines and prominent spurs; and
- Wetlands, streams and harbour edge.

Outstanding Natural Features are those that ‘stand out’ or are exceptional amongst other natural features and landscapes.

Special Amenity Landscapes are those that are highly valued for the contribution they provide to the amenity and quality of the rural environment.

The landscapes of high value are shown on the map with each of the features labelled in terms of whether they are an outstanding natural feature (ONF) or a Special amenity landscape (SAL).
Combined Landscape Strategy Components

The Strategy combines the three frames of reference to result in an integrated management approach of landscape values.

The Strategy is intended to compliment other strategies and information concerning the future development of the rural area including access, servicing and hazards.

The three components are shown on the map.
Management – Risk and Sensitivity Issues

In determining which management tools may be used to manage the characteristics and values of different landscape areas, there are two key considerations that need to be taken into account:

- The degree of sensitivity – how sensitive is the characteristics and values of a particular landscape to adverse change?
- The level of risk from change – what is the current and anticipated level of risk that the characteristics and values of a particular landscape may be subject to change?

Assessing the level of sensitivity of a particular landscape to adverse change and the actual risks that such change may occur can assist in identifying the most appropriate management tools for each landscape area. Those tools that involve a higher level of intervention could be used to protect those landscape elements with the greatest level of sensitivity, which are at the highest risk from change. Conversely, landscapes with low sensitivity and/or low risk from change need less intervention. This relationship between risk, sensitivity and management is shown in the triangle diagram.

As an example, the Plateau of Mana Island is highly sensitive to change given its high visibility and accessibility. However it has a low risk of actual change given its administration by DOC and classification as Wāhi Tapu and Scientific Reserve.
## Management – Tools

There are a range of tools that can be used for landscape management purposes, ranging on a spectrum from those methods that involve the greatest amount of intervention/regulation through to those with the least invention/non-regulation. Often the methods are not mutually exclusive and regulatory methods can be supported by non-regulatory methods such as information, guidelines and advocacy to guide and optimise the desired outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greatest Intervention</th>
<th>Least Intervention</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Acquisition (i.e., for reserves)</td>
<td>Advocacy – Council working with landowners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA Heritage Protection Orders and Enforced Restrictive Covenants, and RMA Heritage Registrar</td>
<td>Voluntary covenanting and management</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMA District Plan controls on subdivision, development and land use.</td>
<td>Active financial assistance with landscape management and rate relief for landscape protection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protective covenants on Property pursuant to S108 or 221 of the RMA</td>
<td>Advocacy – Council working with landowners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve Management Plans in terms of the Reserves Act 1977</td>
<td>Working with individual landowners or groups of landowners</td>
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<td>Conservation Management Plans in terms of the Conservation Act 1987</td>
<td>Education – provision of Information</td>
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<td>Queen Elizabeth II National Trust Open Space Covenants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary covenanting and management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active financial assistance with landscape management and rate relief for landscape protection.</td>
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Porirua City Council – June 2013
Landscape Management Framework – Planning Options - Providing for Landscape Values

Given its application across the entire rural environment, the District Plan is the primary regulatory method. Council is currently reviewing the District Plan with this strategy anticipated to feed into the review of the Rural Chapters. Notwithstanding other issues such as hazards, servicing or infrastructure, a potential landscape management framework within the District Plan is that of two Rural Landscape Value Areas and three overlays, as follows:

- Valley floor and foothills - (comprising Character Types 1 and 2)
- Steeper upper slopes and hilltops and ridgelines - (comprising Character Types 3 and 4)
- Overlay 1 – Outstanding Natural Features
- Overlay 2 – Special Amenity Landscapes + Inner Harbour Influence
- Overlay 3 – Special Amenity Landscapes
## Framework – Potential District Plan Standards

Notwithstanding other issues and constraints including hazards, access, services, heritage and infrastructure constraints, the following activities and standards are potential standards to accompany the District Plan rural landscape management framework:

| Activities | Valley floor and foothills  
(Landscape Character Area Types 1 and 2) | Steeper upper slopes and hilltops and ridgelines  
(Landscape Character Area Types 3 & 4) | Special Amenity Landscapes (SAL) | Inner Harbour Influence and Special Amenity Landscapes (SAL) | Outstanding Natural Features (ONF) |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subdivision</strong></td>
<td>Subdivision of lots should have 2.5ha minimum average with 1ha min lot size. This type of rural lifestyle subdivision should be linked to a requirement to revegetate or retire land in order to gain enhancement of rural landscape amenity from allowing more intense subdivision. Protection of outstanding natural features, identified ecosites or appropriate established vegetation may also be considered as trigger for subdivision entitlements. Smaller lots than this should be considered only on a case by case basis. Where there is an esplanade reserve to vest, subdivision of lots should have 2ha minimum average with 1ha min lot size. <strong>Motukaraka Point and Pauatahanui Village</strong> For the existing small residential sites at Motukaraka Point and Pauatahanui Village, there should be no further subdivision.</td>
<td>Subdivision of lots should have 4ha minimum average with 2ha min lot size. This type of rural lifestyle subdivision should be linked to a requirement to revegetate or retire land in order to gain enhancement of rural landscape amenity from allowing more intense subdivision. Protection of outstanding natural features, identified ecosites or appropriate established vegetation may also be considered as trigger for subdivision entitlements. Smaller lots than this should only be considered on a case by case basis. The creation of smaller lots could be linked to incentives for the preservation of the landscape values e.g. covenants on lots on a case by case basis.</td>
<td>Refer to the suggested standards for the underlying Landscape Character Area. Because of the SAL status, subdivision should be considered on a case by case basis taking into consideration the specification of identified building platforms and associated curtilage area for ancillary residential activities. Building platforms for dwellings and associated curtilage should accommodate a 30m diameter shape factor circle which is clear of building setbacks.</td>
<td>Refer to the suggested standards for the underlying Landscape Character Area.</td>
<td>Minimal subdivision is anticipated within ONF and that which does occur should be carefully assessed having regard to a range of matters including size, location and visibility on a case by case basis.</td>
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<td>Rural Dwellings</td>
<td>Dwellings and related accessory buildings should be allowed subject to suggested standards including:</td>
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<td>- A maximum height of 10m;</td>
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<td>- A setback requirement from all yards of 5m;</td>
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<td>- A maximum site coverage of 500m² with the maximum coverage area of any one separate building being 350m².</td>
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**Motukaraka Point and Pauatahanui Village**

For the existing small residential sites at Motukaraka Point and Pauatahanui Village, the following standards should apply:

- A limit of one dwelling per site.
- The maximum height of any dwelling or accessory building should be 8m;
- All buildings should be contained with an envelope determined by height recession plane receding at an angle of 45 degrees over the site, commencing at an elevation of 3m vertically above the site boundary;
- For the dwelling and accessory buildings in these areas, the maximum area of site covered by all buildings should be 30 percent of the total site area or 350m² whichever is the lesser;
- Setbacks of:
  - 5m from front yards,
  - 1.5m from side and rear yards,
  - 20m from MHWS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Buildings</th>
<th>Buildings associated with rural activities and structures should be allowed subject to suggested standards including:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buildings associated with rural activities and structures should be allowed subject to suggested standards including:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The construction of buildings in these areas may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Matters that will need to be considered are:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The suggested standards for the underlying Landscape Character Area would apply except that the following standards should apply:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any buildings or structures should be carefully assessed in terms of their location and visual effects on a case by case basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where such dwellings and accessory buildings are on lots under 40 ha in area, then the buildings should be situated within approved building platforms identified at the time of subdivision. A maximum site coverage of 500m² with the maximum coverage area of any one separate building being 350m². Setback requirement from all yards of 10m; 20m setback from waterways and streams; Buildings should have a non-reflective exterior comprising either natural cladding or low reflectively if painted to ensure appropriate provision of rural landscape values. (This may be expressed as guidance). Otherwise the construction of buildings in these areas may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Matters that will need to be considered are building density, height, bulk, location and impacts on the values these areas contribute to city wide landscape amenity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earthworks</td>
<td>Earthworks should be allowed where cut or fill is less than 1.5m high and doesn’t exceed a maximum area of earthworks of 3,000m². There should be no restrictions on internal farm access roads and tracks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Plantation forestry should not be restricted because of its prevalence in the district, and harvesting is anticipated in any event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Rural Activities</td>
<td>Non rural activities (excluding Network Utilities) should be carefully assessed on a case by case basis.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A low-lying valley floor – Landscape Character Type 1 (for example in the Pautahanui Identify Area) may only need a low level of intervention as these areas are not visually accessible and could readily absorb a wide range of changes. As such the focus would be on minimum regulatory controls with permissive District Plan standards and an emphasis on non-regulatory methods including education and advocacy.

Potential tools to be applied to Landscape Character Types 1 and 2

Regulatory Tools

- The main regulatory tool would be District Plan Standards potentially providing for rural activities and buildings, rural dwellings, earthworks, and plantation forestry as permitted activities subject to meeting minimum standards. Non-rural activities would likely require resource consent.

- Subdivision could be undertaken with a 1ha minimum and 2 – 2.5ha average lot size. Notwithstanding other development issues (such as servicing and natural hazards) there is potential for peri-urban development. Nevertheless, this type of subdivision should be linked to a requirement to revegetate or retire land for enhancement of rural landscape amenity. Protection of outstanding natural features, identified ecosites or appropriate established vegetation may also be considered as trigger for subdivision entitlements.

- Other regulatory tools could potentially apply to select areas or features and may include heritage protection orders, protective covenants, reserve management plans and open space covenants. It is not anticipated these tools would be widely applied.

Non-regulatory tools

- Use of guidelines to provide information on building form, styles and materials that would be compatible with the landscape.
Methods – Application to Character Types 3 & 4

The steeper upper slopes (over 25°), hilltops, ridgelines and significant spurs (Landscape Charter Types 3 and 4) cover a large area of the rural environment. As these areas are prominent and generally highly valued, they are more sensitive to change from development (because of new structures, earthworks etc) and therefore may require a higher level of intervention and regulation from particular types of development through tools ranging from District Plan controls through to perhaps ultimately requiring acquisition and/or protection through reserve management plans. Non-regulatory tools could also be applied.

In contrast to this, continued use of such areas for pastoral farming or plantation forestry and associated activities, may strengthen the rural open space character of these areas.

Potential tools to be applied to Landscape Character Types 3 and 4

Regulatory Tools

- The main regulatory tool would be District Plan Standards potentially providing for rural activities and buildings, rural dwellings, earthworks, and plantation forestry as permitted activities subject to meeting minimum standards.

- Subdivision could potentially be undertaken through the District Plan regulatory framework with a 2ha minimum lot size and 4ha average lot size. Nevertheless, this type of subdivision should be linked to a requirement to re-vegetate or retire land for enhancement of rural landscape amenity. Protection of outstanding natural features, identified ecosites or appropriate established vegetation may also be considered as trigger for subdivision entitlements.

- Non-rural activities could potentially require resource consent through the District Plan regulatory framework, with consideration of landscape effects and mitigation measures relating to prominence, visibility, density, screening, rural character, privacy and access.

- Given the visual prominence of these areas, other regulatory tools that could be more commonly applied include heritage protection orders, protective covenants, reserve management plans and open space covenants.

Non-regulatory tools
Methods - Application to ONF’s and SAL’s

Outstanding Natural Features within the rural environment are those that ‘stand out’ or are exceptional amongst other natural features and landscapes. Special Amenity Landscapes are those that are highly valued for the contribution they provide to the amenity and quality of the rural environment. Such areas are generally prominent and highly visible and given the values, they are more sensitive to change from development (because of new structures, earthworks etc) and therefore may require a higher level of intervention and regulation from particular types of development through tools ranging from District Plan controls through to perhaps ultimately requiring acquisition and/or protection through reserve management plans. An emphasis on non-regulatory tools could also be applied.

Potential tools to be applied to Outstanding Natural Features and Special Amenity Landscapes (ONF’s and SAL’s)

Regulatory Tools
- Within SAL’s, potential standards for the underlying Character Area would likely apply. However, more restrictive standards could apply in relation to buildings and earthworks.
- Subdivision could be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Within ONF’s, any activity would likely require resource consent.
- Given the visual prominence of these areas, other regulatory tools that could be more commonly applied include heritage protection orders, protective covenants, reserve management plans and open space covenants.

Non-regulatory tools
- Given the visual prominence and values of these areas, strong emphasis could also be placed on guidelines, advocacy, and targeted active financial assistance.
### Glossary
The following terms used for the purpose of the document are defined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INTERPRETATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>Definition</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIA</strong></td>
<td>Coastal Identity Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlled Activities</strong></td>
<td>Resource consent is required and Council must grant consent, but may impose conditions on some matters, such as a requirement for landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Matters (and effects) Council would have regard too in considering a resource consent application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discretionary Activities</strong></td>
<td>Council has full discretion to deny or grant consent, and may impose conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIA</strong></td>
<td>Landscape Identity Area</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MHWS</strong></td>
<td>Mean High Water Springs (mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mitigation measures</strong></td>
<td>Measures taken to avoid, reduce the severity of, or eliminate an adverse impact. Such measure include methods to reduce the effects of an activity, such as planting to enhance or screen or stabilise the ground area, use of certain building materials and building design measures to reduce the prominence of a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-complying Activities</strong></td>
<td>Council may deny or grant consent, where effects are minor and activity not inconsistent with the District Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONFs and SAL’s</strong></td>
<td>Outstanding Natural Features and Special Amenity Landscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PDF</strong></td>
<td>Porirua Development Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permitted Activities</strong></td>
<td>An activity allowed without a consent (but must often meet certain standards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permissive District Plan framework</strong></td>
<td>Provisions within a District Plan that permit activities with a minimal number of standards that have to be met. Generally the more permissive a District Plan framework, the greater the likelihood that resource consent is not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource Consent</strong></td>
<td>A permission required from Council for an activity that might affect the environment, and isn't allowed 'as of right' in the district plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restricted Discretionary Activities</strong></td>
<td>Resource consent is required and Council may deny or grant consent, with conditions, but only decided on matters set out in the plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restrictive District Plan measures</strong></td>
<td>Provisions within a District Plan that restrict more activities. Generally the more restrictive a District Plan framework, the greater the likelihood that resource consent is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RLMA</strong></td>
<td>Rural Landscape Management Areas</td>
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<td><strong>RMA</strong></td>
<td>Resource Management Act 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RPS</strong></td>
<td>Regional Policy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Activity</strong></td>
<td>Comprises pastoral and primary production activities and structures, and associated residential activities and dwelling(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards</strong></td>
<td>Refers to the requirements for activities to meet acceptable levels of environmental effect and includes conditions and terms that need to be met. Standards are often also referred to as Rules</td>
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</table>
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