

# Draft Nelson Plan – Frequently asked questions

## Ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity

### **Why is the Council identifying Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) now?**

The Council has an obligation under the Resource Management Act to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. These areas are commonly referred to as “Significant Natural Areas” or “SNAs” for short.

As currently written, the draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, expected to be finalised in early 2021, will also direct Councils throughout the country to better maintain, restore and enhance indigenous biodiversity and the ecological integrity of ecosystems. This national guidance will require Council to identify and map all areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitat of indigenous fauna, using a standard set of ecological criteria. This will support Council in managing activities which could negatively impact our natural environment. Council is seeking to ensure that measures in the Draft Nelson Plan would meet these obligations across terrestrial environments, including those located in and around coastal and freshwater environments.

Council is also required to work with landowners to identify, assist in the protection of and manage adverse effects on SNAs on private land. The operative Nelson Resource Management Plan (NRMP) does not provide sufficient protection in that respect, as the provisions it contains are based on the limited ecological information available at the time of its development. The preparation of the Draft Nelson Plan provides an opportunity to address this.

The Council is keen to hear your comments. We would also be interested to hear your views regarding how we can best manage the region’s indigenous biodiversity, both within and outside SNA’s.

### **How has the Council identified SNAs?**

The Council has used ecological assessment criteria to identify SNAs. These criteria are used by other councils including Marlborough and Tasman District Councils and align with national guidance and practice. Copies of the criteria and the results of the assessment are available on request.

The Council has also sought input and advice from professional ecologists in identifying the SNAs, including using publicly-available aerial photography and professional ecological expertise and knowledge. Where owners have provided permission, the Council has used field-based ecological reports to identify the attributes and map the boundaries of SNAs.

### **What can I do if I disagree with the mapping of the SNA?**

While the Council is confident that the identification and mapping of SNAs has been carried out using a robust methodology, particularly where an on-site assessment has been carried out, there may be instances where landowner knowledge since that assessment was undertaken will be key to improving the accuracy of information on SNA attributes and boundaries.

There are some mapped SNAs where on-site ecological assessments are yet to be carried out. The Council is ready to meet the cost of field surveys where they have not been carried out. Such

surveys can refine our mapping information and provide owners with a detailed report on the SNA boundaries, detailing its ecological values and its state of health. If you have any concerns about the identification and mapping of the SNA on your property please let us know.

Work is ongoing regarding the identification and confirmation of SNA sites and the Nelson Plan provisions relating to managing Whakatū Nelson's ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity. This ongoing work may result in changes resulting from the gazetting of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, and new survey information following public engagement.

### **What does it mean if parts of my property are identified as an SNA?**

If an area is identified as an SNA in the Proposed Nelson Plan, there are likely to be rules about how you can develop and use that part of your property. An explanation of these potential rules as currently contained in the Draft Nelson Plan is set out in the Key information sheet titled **Ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity**.

Until the Draft Nelson Plan is publicly notified as the Proposed Nelson Plan (likely in early 2022), the Nelson Resource Management Plan (NRMP) rules relating to ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity still apply.

SNAs are eligible for support through Council's Nelson Nature programme, for assistance with weed and pest control, fencing, advice on native tree planting and advice on protecting and restoring SNA values.

### **Why are the Draft Nelson Plan SNAs identified only on private land and not public land?**

Public land is generally given a Natural open space zoning. That zoning includes the same sorts of controls on vegetation clearance and other activities as would apply under the SNA layer. However, as noted earlier, the Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity would require that all areas of significant indigenous vegetation or significant habitat of indigenous biodiversity be identified and mapped. In anticipation that this direction will be included in the final version of the statement, Council has identified and mapped most of the SNA sites on Council land and is working on identifying and mapping SNA on Crown-owned or administered land.

In the Draft Nelson Plan, privately-owned land is zoned to provide for a broad range of rural, residential, commercial or industrial purposes, and the SNA layer then acts as an 'overlay' which allows for specific activities such as vegetation clearance to be managed.

If significant ecological values are present, they are proposed to be given protection in the Proposed Nelson Plan regardless of whether the land is public or private.

### **What is a biodiversity corridor?**

Biodiversity corridors provide an ecological connection between habitats to assist in the movement and survival of species. The connections can be between the same or different habitats and geography (such as from the hill country to the coast). They can be associated with the margins of rivers, streams and coastal margins. Council is seeking to focus the acquisition of reserves for habitat protection and restoration purposes where they coincide with biodiversity corridors.

Biodiversity corridors are separately identified on the planning maps and can be protected, created or enhanced as areas of Whakatū Nelson are developed for urban purposes through the creation of reserves or covenants.

### **What assistance is available to help me as an SNA landowner to control invasive pests and weeds?**

Nelson Nature is a Council-funded and managed initiative to protect and enhance our region's natural environment. Working in partnership with the Department of Conservation (DOC), private landowners, and many local volunteers, Nelson Nature aims to bring the wild back into our lives so our indigenous vegetation and wildlife can thrive.

Nelson Nature can help SNA landowners with:

- Advice and support for weed control
- Advice and support for animal pest control (e.g. possums, goats, predators)
- Advice and support for planting native species from the ecological districts of the Nelson area that are appropriate to the SNA to help buffer or enhance the values within them (<http://www.nelson.govt.nz/assets/Environment/Downloads/living-heritage-nelson-native-plants.pdf>)
- Assistance with fencing grants to prevent stock access
- Linking to existing volunteer groups.

For more information contact [nelson.nature@ncc.govt.nz](mailto:nelson.nature@ncc.govt.nz)

### **Links to the Draft Nelson Plan**

This 'frequently asked questions' sheet addresses a few of the key provisions in the Draft Nelson Plan. It should not be used as a definitive representation of content. To view actual Draft Nelson Plan content, please go to [shape.nelson.govt.nz](http://shape.nelson.govt.nz).