

Dear Landowner,

Our District is home to a range of unique landscapes, species and habitats, many of which are under threat. Far North District Council is required to identify these habitats and to protect them through a District Plan. While there are already rules in the current District Plan to manage these habitats, we are now required to identify these areas and manage them more specifically in a new District Plan.

Last year, we collaborated with the other Northland councils on a project to map and identify Significant Natural Areas (SNA) within each district. The new mapping has increased the accuracy and knowledge of natural areas in Northland and has identified that approximately 42% of our district contains potentially sensitive environments. This is an increase from around 30% when last mapped in the 1990s.

The new mapping project was undertaken by consultant ecologists, Wildland Consultants, using existing information, inspection of new aerial photography and site visits. The mapped SNAs are included in the Draft Proposed District Plan that will be released in early March 2021.

You are receiving this letter because a potential Significant Natural Area (SNA) has been identified on your property.

We have enclosed an ecological report which details the plants and habitat within the SNA. Please note that the report covers the whole SNA, which may overlap with a neighbouring property, and therefore all species listed in the report may not be found on your property.

The inclusion of Significant Natural Areas in a new District Plan is a requirement under the Regional Policy Statement for Northland. It is also likely to be required under the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, which is scheduled to be published later in 2021. For more information on how this may affect you, please read the questions and answers on the reverse side of this page.

To have your say, please fill in the feedback form enclosed in this envelope or visit our website at fndc.govt.nz/sna to complete a detailed survey. You can also send feedback to submissions@fndc.govt.nz. Please note that this is not a formal submission process, and that formal submissions under the Resource Management Act 1991 can be made when the Proposed District Plan is publicly notified later this year.

Kind regards,

Greg Wilson

Manager – District Planning

What is a Significant Natural Area?

A Significant Natural Area (SNA) is an area of native plants and habitat that has high ecological value. An SNA is selected based on criteria contained in Appendix 5 of the Northland Regional Policy Statement.

How did we map SNAs?

In 2018, we engaged Wildland Consultants to undertake an assessment of SNAs in the Far North. This has involved an analysis of existing information, including the Department of Conservation's Protected Natural Area maps, as well as using updated aerial imagery and site visits to ensure that our SNA mapping is accurate.

Why do we need SNAs?

Council currently uses Department of Conservation Protected Natural Areas Programme maps. These maps have not been updated since the 1990s. Far North District Council is required by Northland's Regional Policy Statement to identify SNAs. The Council also has a responsibility under the Resource Management Act 1991 to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna as a matter of national importance.

How many SNAs are in the Far North District?

A total of 685 SNAs have been identified by Wildlands Consultants. This covers 282,696 hectares, which is approximately 42% of the area of the Far North District. Of that 42%, approximately half of that area is public land (already zoned as conservation land) and half is in private ownership.

I have an SNA on my property. What does that mean I can and can't do?

If you are not planning on developing your land, then an SNA on your land means business as usual. However, the proposed District Plan will have rules around SNAs in terms of vegetation clearance and protection through the subdivision process. This means that you may need to apply for a resource consent if you are planning on clearing vegetation or establishing new uses of land within a SNA.

Will I be required to fence or formally protect the SNA on my property?

No. If you are not planning on developing or subdividing your property, there will be no requirement to formally protect the SNA through fencing, covenants or other methods. However, the proposed District Plan will have land use and subdivision rules associated with SNAs that may require you to protect the SNA if you plan to develop the land or clear vegetation. There may also be options for you to voluntarily protect the SNA formally, either through a Council conservation covenant or a private covenant (i.e. QEII).

Will I be compensated for having an SNA on my property?

No. However, there are a number of schemes that may incentivise protection; including rates remission for conservation covenants that are voluntarily applied to natural areas with ecological values. More information on conservation covenants: <https://www.fndc.govt.nz/District-Plan/Conservation-covenants>

How is this managed under the operative District Plan?

- Rules around vegetation clearance are covered in Chapter 12.2 of the Operative District Plan. The criteria relate to the amount of vegetation to be cleared, and the age of trees.
- Chapter 13 on Subdivision refers to the DOC Protected Natural Areas maps when assessing the effects subdivision will have on indigenous flora and fauna. The new Indigenous Biodiversity chapter will refer directly to the SNA maps, which are contained in the plan.

Tell us more about the plants and habitats on your property

Please visit our website at [fndc.govt.nz/sna](https://www.fndc.govt.nz/sna) to complete a detailed survey. Make sure you include your unique SNA reference number. This is not a formal submission process. You will have the opportunity to make a formal submission under the Resource Management Act when the Proposed District Plan is publicly notified later this year.