

Natural Areas



Vegetation Alteration

Introduction

Waitakere City's Operative District Plan uses a two-layered zoning system. Every property in Waitakere City has at least one Natural Area and one Human Environment zoning. When you undertake vegetation alteration as part of the development of the site, you will have to consult the rules for both the Human Environment and the Natural Areas.

Human Environments

Waitakere is divided into 11 Human Environments which reflect the human character of the City. (See Human Environment Maps). These Environments are governed by rules managing the effect of people on other people. For example, the effect of noise or night time lighting, car parking, or building a house.

Natural Areas

Every part of Waitakere City also fits into one of six natural areas (see Natural Area Maps). These Natural Areas are governed by rules managing the effect of people's activities on natural resources. For example, bush and tree removal and earthworks. The Policy Section of the Operative District Plan provides further explanation of these Natural Areas, and the natural resources contained within these areas.

The Natural Area Maps also indicate natural landscape elements, which are the subject of separate rules within the Human Environment Rules, for example special soils or sensitive ridge lines.

Vegetation in Waitakere City

Waitakere City is fortunate to contain areas of outstanding landscape and ecological value. In particular, the City has one of the largest remaining areas of native forest in the Auckland region – the Waitakere Ranges. These ranges contain a diverse array of plants and animals:

- Approximately 25% of all New Zealand's native flowering plants
- 66% of all New Zealand's native ferns; and
- 71 species of bird, including the Tui, Kereru, Silver eye and Fantail.

Most of the original forest cover has gone from the developed parts of the City, with only 10% remaining. Although most of the native forest has vanished, there is still a valuable "urban forest" which consists of both native and introduced species.

Vegetation in the Ranges and urban areas is valued for its:

- Visual amenity and landscape appearance;
- Cultural identity and heritage;
- Importance as a wildlife habitat;
- Role in improving air and stream quality;
- Role in storm water control and ability to reduce erosion; and
- Role in recreation and tourism.

These important values are under threat from subdivision, general development, noxious and invasive weeds and pests and unauthorised clearance.

The Role Of Waitakere City Council

The RMA promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Waitakere City Council has an obligation under the RMA to protect areas of significant native vegetation, wild life and trees within urban areas. The Council has therefore included rules in the Operative District Plan that limit vegetation alteration.

Important District Plan Definitions

Vegetation means plant life, and includes shrubs, trees, grasses, monocotyledons, mosses, lichens, liverworts and ferns, and includes parts of such plant life.

Vegetation Alteration means any pruning, clearance or work within the drip line of vegetation.

Clearance means removing or killing any native vegetation of any height or any exotic vegetation with a height of 1.0m or more, including any alteration of the root structure of such vegetation likely to result in plant death. This does not include pruning, removal of vegetation that, in the opinion of an expert recognised by Council, is dead or suffering from an untreatable or dangerously infectious disease, or removal or alteration necessary to avoid injury to people or damage to property.

Dripline means all that area (including the ground and beneath the ground) below the canopy spread of a plant.

General Rule That Applies To All Natural Areas

Where development involves land that has more than one Natural Area identification on it, each part of the development shall comply with the Natural Area Rules applying to the Natural Area in which that particular part of the development is located.

(1) The General Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
Native and exotic vegetation greater than 6m in height or greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m).
- **Vegetation clearance exceeds 500m²:**
This includes environmentally damaging plants and tree species, which are identified on the Removable Vegetation Appendix of the Operative District Plan.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

(2) The Restoration Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
Native vegetation greater than 6m in height and greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m) if within 3m of the eaves of a dwelling; and
Exotic vegetation greater than 6m in height or greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m).
- **Vegetation clearance exceeds 500m².**
This includes environmentally damaging plants, exotic vegetation smaller than the above thresholds, and tree species which are identified on the Removable Vegetation Appendix of the Operative District Plan.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

(3) The Managed Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
Native vegetation greater than 6m in height and greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m) within 3m of the eaves of a dwelling; and
All other native vegetation regardless of size and location.
- **Vegetation clearance exceeds 500m².**
This includes environmentally damaging plants, exotic vegetation and tree species which are identified on the Removable Vegetation Appendix of the Operative District Plan.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

(4) The Coastal Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
Native vegetation greater than 6m in height and greater than 600mm girth (measured at any point above 1.4m) within 3m of the eaves of a dwelling; All other native vegetation regardless of size and location; and
Exotic vegetation greater than 6m in height and greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m).
- **Vegetation clearance exceeds 500m².**
This includes environmentally damaging plants, exotic vegetation smaller than the above thresholds and tree species, which are identified on the Removable Vegetation Appendix of the Operative District Plan.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

(5) The Riparian Margins/Coastal Edges Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
All native vegetation regardless of size; and
Exotic trees greater than 6m in height and greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m).
- **Vegetation clearance** of environmentally damaging plants and exotic vegetation smaller than the above thresholds when the area exceeds 10% of the site.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

(6) The Protected Natural Area

You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

- **Undertaking clearance and work within the drip line of:**
Native vegetation greater than 6m in height or greater than 600mm in girth (measured at any point above 1.4m) if within 3m of the eaves of a dwelling;
All native vegetation that is not within 3m of the edge of a dwelling; and
Clearance of all exotic vegetation including environmentally damaging plants.
- **Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.**

7) Heritage Trees

Heritage trees are listed in the Heritage Section of Rules Volume 1 of the Operative District Plan. These trees have been identified as heritage trees because they have special historical, cultural or visual significance to a local area. These trees are also shown on the Human Environment Maps. You will need to apply for a Resource Consent when:

Undertaking clearance of Heritage Trees, and any activity or temporary activity within the drip line of any Heritage Tree.

Pruning removes more than 20% of a tree's foliage in any one calendar year.

Please note that professional arborists can assist with the best management of your trees. Look in the Yellow Pages under 'Tree Services' for a current list of arboricultural contractors.

There is no charge for a resource consent application for vegetation alteration.

This brochure is only a guide to vegetation alteration. The current Rules are found in Volume One of the Rules Section of the Operative District Plan. If you have any queries, or require further information please ask the Civic Centre Counter Staff or telephone the Council Call Centre on (09) 839 0400.