

Tasman District Council

Reserve Classification: Richmond Ward and Lakes-Murchison Ward (due 18 November 2024)

Submission by:

Nature and Climate Group, Nelson Tasman Climate Forum

The focus of this feedback is to represent the voice of nature in the classification and management of reserves and to take a strategic overview for TDC, highlighting key principles and points relevant to the management of all reserves across the Tasman region.

Our submission is divided into two parts. Part 1 outlines key principles and points that will enhance indigenous ecosystems and biodiversity in a changing climate. Part 2 contains our feedback on specific reserves.

Part 1: Key Principles and Points

Key Principles for Reserves Classification and Management

- Classify reserves in such a way as to maximise protection for native ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Manage all reserves to enhance the resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity in a changing climate;
- Wherever possible, plant native species rather than exotic species;
- Engage with iwi, neighbouring landowners and local communities to encourage stewardship of reserves and to educate the community about native ecosystems and biodiversity.

We also urge TDC to consider prioritising indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems in **all** decisions made across **all** Council operations (not just management of reserves), so as to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.

Key Points for Reserves Classification and Management

Restore Connectivity

As the owner and manager of large areas of public open space, TDC plays a key role in ensuring that our unique indigenous ecosystems and biodiversity are protected and flourishing, with the region's many reserves providing critical habitat for biodiversity. Our group encourages TDC to adopt a holistic, landscape-scale approach to the management of all reserves, including waterways, walkways and cycleways.

1. *Connection along Waterways*

- Maximise connectivity of both terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems between the mountains and the sea, with healthy waterways delivering high quality water to the Waimeha Estuary and beyond, with low/non-existent sediment and pollutant loads.
- For example, maintaining healthy waterways draining from Kingsland Forest to the Waimeha Estuary such as Saxton Creek, Reservoir Creek, Jimmy Lee Creek and Bateup Stream, will help to protect the estuary from sediments and pollutants that arise in the adjacent urban areas.
- Waterway and ecosystem health will benefit from the restoration of wide, native-dominated riparian buffer zones, planted with a diverse range of native species.

2. *Connection across Terrestrial Landscapes*

- Plant biodiverse indigenous communities along walkways, cycleways and waterways to create corridors that increase landscape connectivity.
- Protect and connect established vegetation communities, particularly large native trees, and revegetate in these areas to build healthy, regenerating, biodiverse communities.
- Interplant with suitable natives under existing tree canopies, and fence and protect from browsing mammalian pests, to bolster the understorey and foster regeneration.
- Focus limited public resources on areas with highest ecological value – protect the best, while catalysing the input of additional resources (financial, human) from private and community sources.
- Manage local reserves to provide a nucleus of indigenous species and biodiversity, in concert with both existing and increased native planting on neighbouring properties, enhancing the halo effect.
- Consider the strategic opportunities arising from strengthening connectivity to link native plantings in local reserves and notable plantings on nearby private land – maximise the gains.
- Ensure plantings along road verges prioritise native species to increase landscape connectivity, maximise biodiversity outcomes and decrease maintenance costs from mowing and weeding.
- Strengthen biodiverse native links/corridors by connecting vegetation communities across the landscape, for example:
 - Kingsland Forest – Richmond Hills – NCC forests to the Maitai and beyond (i.e. extending the NCC Right Tree Right Place task force recommendations for holistic management regardless of land tenure, across Council boundaries); and their waterways that connect to the ocean;
 - Baigents Bush through Pigeon Valley to Teapot Valley, and to Faulkners Bush and Snowdens Bush – build connectivity between these small remnant lowland forest fragments through the landscape, for example by planting native species along the cycleway that connects Snowdens Bush to Baigents and Faulkners Bush.

3. *Connection in a Changing Climate*

- Increase connectivity between ecosystems across the landscape to increase the resilience of these ecosystems and the biodiversity therein, and their ability to withstand some of the impacts of a changing climate – increased frequency and severity of droughts, intense rainfall events, increasing temperatures, increased risk of fire, increased weed and pest populations.
- Maximise reserve areas to increase the ratio of interior areas to edges to protect against climatic impacts such as wind and warmer temperatures. This is particularly significant in forests, where temperatures and humidity fluctuations are moderated under well-developed tree canopies, with edges more exposed to wind, drying and temperature extremes.
- Maximising reserve areas will also decrease weed loads by reducing entry points into reserves, and reduce the potentially increasing impact of weeds as climate changes.
- Reconnect waterways and their wetlands, and restore them with indigenous species to maximise flood mitigation effects and biodiversity outcomes.
- Plant indigenous drought-resistant native species in reserves.
- Plant fire-resistant native species in urban and urban-fringe areas to provide protection against the spread of wildfires. Species could include kōhūhū and tarata (*Pittosporum* spp.),

various *Coprosma* species, ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*), harakeke (*Phormium tenax*) and five-finger (whauwhaupaku, *Pseudopanax arboreus*).

Waterways, Wetlands and Estuaries

Many reserves include waterways, wetlands and tidal areas. Riparian, wetland and estuarine buffer zones need to be wide enough to allow the establishment of healthy, native, regenerating, biodiverse communities. The width of vegetated buffers should be sufficient to maintain appropriate water temperatures, to provide shade to limit invasion by aquatic and riparian weeds, and to mitigate flows during high intensity rainfall events.

Infrastructure such as walkways and cycleways need to be located far enough from vegetated buffers to prevent damage to vegetation and to protect infrastructure from the effects of high flow events.

Healthy waterways buffered by substantial healthy native vegetation provide habitat for a diverse range of biota; moderate water temperatures; decrease sediment and pollutant loads; mitigate the impacts of high intensity rainfall events and storm surges; attenuate both high flows and low flows over time; decrease the risk of fire; and provide refuges for biodiversity in times of drought, with cooler water and less loss to evaporation.

We encourage TDC to use climate change-appropriate parameters for all waterway infrastructure and plantings. The parameters used to determine extreme weather events in the past, such as a 1 in 50 or 1 in a 100 year flood event, are no longer fit for purpose, as Cyclone Gabrielle showed us. It is more realistic to consider 1 in 1,000 year events as the basis for managing all waterways and their associated buffer zones and infrastructure. Enhancing waterway resilience to reduce the adverse impacts of flood events on adjacent infrastructure will protect both Council and private properties, thereby reducing costs, such as insurance premiums, for all neighbouring landowners.

Climate change will also impact our extensive coastline and as such, management of coastal reserves must take into account increasing sea levels, and the increasing severity of storm surges and extent of salt-water intrusion.

We encourage TDC to manage all reserves to optimise waterway, wetland, estuary and marine health and resilience, in ways that support adaptation to a changing climate.

- Ensure riparian, wetland and estuarine buffer zones are large/wide enough to effectively provide ecosystem services.
- Plant native species to provide shade to waterways to increase waterway health, moderate water temperatures, provide habitat and food for diverse native biota, decrease aquatic and terrestrial weed populations, and decrease the risk of wildfires during dry conditions.
- Enhance the health of all wetlands and surrounding vegetation in reserves by planting native species, to enhance biodiversity outcomes and to provide ecosystem services such as water flow attenuation in flood events and during dry conditions, and to decrease the fire risk during potential wildfire conditions.
- Remove exotic species from all waterways, such as willows, which decrease flow rates, exacerbate erosion during flood events, and have multiple detrimental impacts on native biodiversity.

- Ensure TDC resource consents require all ‘developers’ leave and /or make sufficient room for waterways, wetlands, ponds and tidal areas to move during extreme weather events, the frequency of which are likely to increase with climate change.
- Ensure coastal reserves are managed to account for sea level rise, increased storm surges and salt water intrusion, with vegetation and infrastructure appropriate for long-term climate change scenarios.
- Continue planting natives into low lying reserves identified as threatened by sea level rise.
- Facilitate the restoration of salt marshes on public and private land to sequester carbon and enhance estuary health, potentially using blue carbon credits to finance these activities. Purchase, where possible, adjoining properties to enhance connectivity, flood protection and recreational opportunities.

Engaging Communities

Local communities value their reserves and the opportunities to use these open spaces in a variety of ways. Natural environments are conducive to enhancing cultural needs and well-being.

We urge TDC to empower and support all local iwi in their roles as kaitiaki/guardians of the natural world, and encourage iwi to practice kaitiakitanga in their local reserves, particularly those of significance to them.

We also urge TDC to work with local communities to encourage and support communities to enjoy and value their local reserves. This could be through engaging local communities in planting days, weeding and other activities. Use these events to educate the local community about native biodiversity, how to plant and care for native species on their properties, and how to control significant weeds. Work with the community to tackle weed issues that span public and private land.

In concert with this, we urge TDC to continue to engage with landholders (urban and rural) to encourage increased planting of native species along waterway, in gullies, in non-productive areas, in suburban backyards, and wherever possible. It would ideal if TDC can provide support for such plantings and, where appropriate, guide the development of community support groups to facilitate planting, maintenance and restoration activities.

In reserves, where appropriate, continue to incorporate some low maintenance tree crops, e.g., citrus, figs, feijoas, hazelnuts and almonds, for those who do not have the space or resources to grow their own food, and let the local community know about the resources available at these sites for their use.

In housing developments immediately adjacent to reserves, we advocate for cool roofing that reflects heat away from nearby plantings, which has the added benefit of creating significant cooling for households, reducing the electricity required for cooling.

New Reserve Areas

Ensure TDC resource consents require all ‘developers’ to set aside meaningful reserve contributions, with the size to vary with the size of development, but to be no less than ½ ha within any development. Create rules that designate the minimum size and number of reserves within new development, based on the development size, intensity and location in the landscape. Developers must be responsible for

establishing and maintaining appropriate native plantings in these reserve areas for at least 3 years after planting has been completed.

Where possible, all new reserves should add to, and connect with, existing reserve areas, open spaces, waterways and other landscape connections, to enhance biodiversity outcomes.

We also urge TDC to invest the Richmond development fund in high quality reserves across Richmond that protect indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems, and/or allow for their restoration. These new reserve areas should be located in such a way as to increase connectedness across the landscape, decrease fragmentation and maximise biodiversity outcomes in both the short term and long term.

In these reserves, and in existing reserves where possible, ongoing maintenance costs and carbon emissions can be reduced by replacing grassed areas (excluding areas required for recreation) with native ground cover species. Planting species such as *Coprosma acerosa*, native grasses, sedges, reeds and carex species will reduce the costs associated with mowing, weeding and spraying, as well as the carbon emissions from these management activities.

Active Free Play

In a number of reserves in Richmond, group members have been saddened by the loss of native species (both established and newly planted) as a result of children engaging in a variety of play activities such as building forts and creating bike tracks.

With urban development and intensification decreasing the size of backyards and squeezing wild areas from suburbia, there is little room left for tamariki to safely and creatively engage in these sorts of activities. Activities that are very healthy for their development. How many backyards these days contain trees big enough to climb or build a tree house in?

We recommend that TDC provides areas in local communities where tamariki can create their own play structures (e.g. forts, small bike tracks) without damaging native biodiversity. One way to do this would be to plant micro-forests of quick growing species (native and/or exotic) in a number of smaller urban reserves where tamariki can engage in free play activities without endangering themselves or native biodiversity. Engaging with tamariki and their families in the development and design of these spaces would help to ensure that these areas would be fit for purpose, and would provide opportunities to educate tamariki about the value of native biodiversity, to discourage further destruction.

We encourage TDC to work across the region to identify reserve sites where active free play opportunities can be developed, through micro-forests or other appropriate means, in the most appropriate areas to protect native biodiversity.

Dogs

Many reserves are great places for people to exercise their dogs, but in reserves with significant biodiversity, dogs can be detrimental to biodiversity. Where appropriate, designate reserves with significant biodiversity as dog-free, either all year round or during key times such as nesting. Include educational interpretation to encourage buy-in and compliance.

Designate other reserves as dog-friendly, with the majority of reserves requiring dogs to be on-leash, particularly if they are predominantly linear access ways carrying other foot traffic. In selected reserves, such as the open space at Bill Wilkes Reserve, allow dogs to play off-leash. Build dedicated dog parks (such as the one in Marsden valley) to create dog-friendly play spaces.

Ensure there is a mix of dog-free and dog-friendly reserves in local communities to provide local options for dog owners.

Benefits of Planting Indigenous Species

- Flourishing native communities creating healthy native ecosystems bursting with abundant microbes, plants and fauna, on land and in water;
- Healthy biodiversity better able to thrive in a changing climate with increased extremes of drought, wildfires, intense rainfall and increasing temperatures;
- Increased community engagement and appreciation for native biodiversity;
- Healthier waterways, better able to mitigate flood events;
- Healthier waterways enhancing the health of Waimeha Estuary;
- Decreased fire risk as native species generally less flammable;
- Lower management costs as planting native vegetation communities will decrease weed populations over time and will be self-sustaining through natural recruitment;
- Lower carbon emissions with reduced on-going management, and higher carbon sequestration in the longer term;
- Increased native tree canopy in suburban areas reducing the heat island effect from the built environment and ameliorating air temperatures on sunny days;
- Happier people.

Part 2: Feedback on Individual Reserves

Caveat

Members of the group are relatively familiar with a number of reserves within the Richmond Ward and with Baigents Bush Scenic Reserve, but less familiar with reserves in the Lakes-Murchison Ward. Therefore our feedback on the reserves in this Ward is based on examination of the material contained in the documentation provided by TDC, rather than from local knowledge.

Baigents Bush Scenic Reserve, Wakefield

Pigeon Valley

- We fully support this reserve being classified as a Scenic Reserve;
- Furthermore, we encourage Council to seek opportunities to add adjacent land area to this Scenic Reserve over time, particularly along both the Wai-iti River and Pigeon Valley Stream;
- Increasing the size of this reserve and restoring native flora has the potential to create a significant parcel of high quality lowland forest and riparian forest that would provide multiple ecological, environmental and social benefits.

Richmond Ward

No Scenic Reserves

It is disturbing to see that there are no reserves within the Richmond Ward that are classified as Scenic Reserves. We urge TDC to consider whether it is appropriate to reclassify some coastal reserves as Scenic Reserves, to increase the protection of indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems within these reserves, particularly in the light of the expected impacts of climate change.

We also urge TDC to invest the Richmond Development Fund into areas that can create Scenic Reserves that protect, enhance and restore large areas of native biodiversity and native ecosystems.

Kingsland Forest

It is unclear to the group why much of the area within Kingsland Forest is not subject to the Reserves Act (1977) – the reasoning is not explained in the consultation document.

The significant change in land use across the Kingsland Forest area provides an excellent opportunity to prioritise the protection and restoration of indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems throughout this large (150 ha) hillslope area. Approximately one third of the area already contains native vegetation in moderate to good condition, and with tens of thousands of new native plants being established across the site currently and in the future, it is expected that within a decade much of the area will have flourishing native communities. These need to be protected.

We urge TDC to ensure that areas currently in native vegetation, or which are being restored with native species, are either formally classified as Scenic Reserves, or are managed as such in areas where the land is not subject to the Act. Where appropriate, reclassification of land so it becomes subject to the Act should be considered for areas of native vegetation (such as Wills Gully) and for restoration areas, so these areas can be classified as Scenic Reserves.

We urge TDC to reserve Kingsland Forest to ensure the highest protection for all native biodiversity. In areas currently without mountain bike tracks, we recommend a classification of Scenic Reserve. In areas currently with mountain bike tracks, we recommend a classification of Recreation Reserve.

In areas classified and/or managed as Scenic Reserves, we urge TDC to install signage to make it very clear that these areas are not accessible to mountain bikes, and that no mountain bike tracks are to be developed therein. If dogs are allowed in these areas, signs also need to make it clear that they need to be on-leash.

In areas classified and/or managed as Recreation Reserves, we urge TDC to install signage to make it very clear that mountain bikers must stay on designated mountain bike tracks, and not develop new tracks without TDC consent, to prevent erosion and destruction of native vegetation.

If the Upper Reservoir Creek Traverse mountain bike track (proposed in the 2020 Kingsland Park Development Plan) has yet to be developed, we urge TDC to prohibit its development. As far as can be discerned from the 2020 Plan, its route appears to traverse large areas of native bush. There is already a considerable network of mountain bike tracks through the forest area and an additional track in this area is not required, particularly when the trade-off is negative impacts on native biodiversity.

Of the areas in, or immediately adjacent to, Kingsland Forest that are subject to the Act, we urge TDC to reclassify them as Scenic Reserves:

Kingsland Forest Park 2, 3

Map 14.8, 14.9

- These two reserves on Marlborough Crescent, south and south-west of Easby Park, are proposed as Recreation Reserves;
- We urge Council to classify these reserves as Scenic Reserves.

Jimmy Lee Creek, Reserves 1, 2, 3

Map 18.3, 18.4, 18.5

- Currently proposed as Local Purpose (Esplanade and Utility) Reserves;
- Due to high native biodiversity values in these reserve areas, we urge TDC to classify these three reserves as Scenic Reserves.

Lakes-Murchison Ward

Proposal to Classify

Alpine Forest Scenic Reserve, Tophouse

Wairau Valley Highway, Map 9.1

- We fully support this reserve being classified as a Scenic Reserve.

Already Classified

Riverview Recreation Reserve, Murchison

Kawatiri-Murchison Highway, Map 13.2

- This reserve is 27 ha in area and is contiguous with the 3 ha Riverview Scenic Reserve (Map 13.3);
- Without local knowledge of the current vegetation communities on either reserve, we encourage Council to consider restoring indigenous vegetation communities to all or part of the Recreation Reserve and expanding the area that is classified as Scenic Reserve, to provide higher levels of protection for indigenous biodiversity across as much of the 30 ha as possible;
- We encourage Council to work with the local community to undertake such a restoration project to educate, engage and empower the community in caring for their local biodiversity and ecosystems;
- Restoration of indigenous biodiversity across an area of this size would provide significant ecological, environmental and social benefits.

Murchison Recreation Reserve, Murchison

Hampden St, Map 15.3

- This reserve is 6 ha in area;
- Without local knowledge of the current vegetation communities on the reserve, we encourage Council to consider restoring indigenous vegetation communities to all or part of the reserve through community involvement, as above;
- Should such restoration be feasible, we recommend Council reclassify the reserve as a Scenic Reserve to provide the highest level of protection for indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems.

Prepared by:

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