Dunes Trust Website

Project Title: Adapting productive coastal landuses to Climate Change

Funding
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Project Purpose
This scoping study aims to identify both opportunities and barriers to better integrate and sustain productive pastoral farming and production forestry land uses with coastal ecology along our coasts in the face of projected sea level rise and other climate change effects.

Project Description
The project will focus on coastal dunelands and coastal/estuarine wetlands – critical coastal ecosystems where conflicts commonly occur between sustainable productive use and coastal ecology and where adaptation to climate change poses particular challenges in both the short and longer term.

This scoping study will focus on working with farmers and foresters with coastal dunelands and wetlands to:

1. Clarify the issues from the land user perspective; and
2. Identify barriers and opportunities to better integration of productive landuse and critical coastal ecosystems, and examples of best present practice (particularly those building resilience to cope with the effects of climate change).

Background
Coastal lowlands in most regions throughout NZ are among our most intensively farmed and forested lands; so productive coastal landscapes often interface with critical coastal ecosystems.

At present, economic pressures often result in the productive land uses encroaching significantly on the coastal ecosystems and coming into increasing conflict with environmental values. Work with estuarine wetlands and coastal dunelands, two of the environments most significantly impacted, indicates that farmers are often acutely aware of the environmental issues but feel powerless to address them. They feel that withdrawing from these areas would significantly affect the economics of their farms. They are also concerned that environmental regulation will be unsympathetic and tend to resolve the conflicts in favour of environmental values without adequate regard to productive interests. This can lead to considerable resistance and antagonism towards environmental concerns; despite the fact that the individual farmers are often, at heart, quite sympathetic to these values.

These "coastal squeeze" conflicts will become even more significant with projected climate change and ongoing pressure for intensification of land use.

There is a critical need to develop adaptation strategies that enable both productive land uses (and associated communities) and critical ecosystems to be better integrated and sustained in coastal margin environments. This will build resilience that will enable landuses to adjust with the projected effects of climate change.