

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 and its Relevance to Dunes.

Graeme Lacock, Department of Conservation, Whanganui

Introduction

The New Zealand coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS) was released on 4 November 2010, and took effect on 3 December 2010. Its main purpose was to state policies in order to achieve the purpose of the Resource Management Act (RMA) in relation to the coastal environment of New Zealand.

The NZCPS has four main sections, i.e. Preamble, Application of this policy statement, Objectives, and Policies. Not all of these pertain to coastal dunes. For the purposes of this exercise I've focused on the sections of the NZCPS that I consider to be relevant to dunes and their management. You may consider other sections to be relevant as well, so I recommend that you read the policy yourself.

"there's a lot of really exciting stuff in the policy statement, such as the precautionary principle, strong statements on strip development, climate change and the need to plan in a 100 year timeframe, and a really strong message about vehicles on beaches"

I know many of you will find the topic boring and won't read any further, so I'll sum it up now by saying that there's a lot of really exciting stuff in the policy statement, such as the precautionary principle, strong statements on strip development, climate change and the need to plan in a 100 year timeframe, and a really strong message about vehicles on beaches. There's plenty for coastal management advocates to work with, and progressive councils can make a lot of friends (and enemies – can you have one without the other?). I won't cover everything to do with dunes here, but I will list the relevant sections, and elaborate on some of the more exciting stuff.

Preamble

The Preamble lists characteristics, qualities and uses that mean there are particular challenges in promoting sustainable management. Key issues are also identified in the preamble. These include loss of natural character, landscape values and wild or scenic areas, continuing decline in species, habitats and ecosystems, compromising open space and recreational values, continuing coastal erosion and other hazards exacerbated by climate change, and use of vehicles on beaches causing ecological damage and conflicts with other users.

Application of this policy statement

This section deals with how people acting under the RMA must apply the NZCPS. For me the critical statements here were that regional policy statements, regional and district plans must give effect to the NZCPS, local authorities must amend policy statements and plans as soon as practicable (a potential loophole – what is practicable?), and that for resource consent applications authorities must consider the provisions of the NZCPS. I find the use of the word "must" quite encouraging.

Objectives

There are seven objectives, of which the first six are relevant to dunes. These are:

- To safeguard the integrity, form, functioning and resilience of the coastal environment and sustain its ecosystems, including., dunes.
- To preserve the natural character of the coastal environment and protect natural features and landscape values;
- To take account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi;
- To maintain and enhance the public open space qualities and recreation opportunities;
- To ensure that coastal hazard risks taking account of climate change, are managed;
- To enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and their health and safety, through subdivision, use, and development;

Each objective has a few bullet points on how it is to be achieved. For instance, the objective about social, economic and cultural wellbeing recognises that the protection of the values of the coast does not preclude use and development in appropriate places and forms, and within appropriate limits, and that some activities can only be done at the coast.

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The policy on vehicles is far reaching and includes the use of vehicles on beaches, foreshore, seabed and adjacent public lands. Photo: Auckland Council

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Continued...

Policies

This is the longest section of the NZCPS. There are 29 policies. Of these numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 29 are particularly relevant to dunes. Each policy contains a number of points that need to be taken into account.

From a dune management point of view I consider the most important policies to be:

- 3) Precautionary approach
- 11) Indigenous biological biodiversity
- 13) Preservation of natural character
- 14) Restoration of natural character
- 15) Natural features and natural landscapes
- 18) public open space
- 19) Walking access
- 20) Vehicle access
- 21) Identification of coastal hazards (including tsunami; at least 100 years!)
- 25) Subdivision, use and development in areas of coastal risk (100 years!)
- 26) Natural defences against coastal hazards (never thought I'd see this!)
- 27) Strategies for protecting significant existing development from coastal hazard risk (pt 2(a): focus on approaches to risk management that reduce the need for hard protection structures and similar engineering interventions).

Policy 20 (vehicle access) is worth a read. I think it has far-reaching implications, because it controls use of vehicles on beaches, foreshore, seabed and adjacent public land where any of the following might result:

- Damage to dune or other geological systems and processes;
- Harm to ecological systems or to indigenous flora and fauna (no mention of threatened status)
- Danger to other beach users;
- Disturbance of the peaceful enjoyment of the beach environment;
- Damage to historic heritage;
- Damage to habitats of fisheries resources (commercial, recreational, customary);
- Damage to sites of significance to tangata whenua.

I've highlighted a few of the statements that demonstrate the power and possibilities of New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement. As I said earlier, this is my view of the highlights of the document. I'm sure you'll identify your own pet statements that are relevant to your situation when you read the policy statement.

Conference 2011 - out and about



Participants talking about nursery operations at Naturally Native Whakatane (left) and discussing dune erosion and management at Ohiwa Beach (below).





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