

Groundswell NZ

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## Submission on Proposed Far North District Plan

### Introduction

1. Groundswell NZ was founded by Southland/Otago farmers in response to frustration with the National Policy Statement Freshwater Management. Since then, the Groundswell NZ campaign has grown to include a nationwide network of coordinators and a focus on unworkable regulations. The Resource Management Act (and associated Freshwater Management and draft Indigenous Biodiversity National Policy Statements) is one of the main concerns having unfair and detrimental impacts on people and property owners throughout the country.

### Submission

2. One of the complaints Groundswell NZ has consistently received from across the country relates to private land being captured under various zones. The main ones include:
  - Significant Natural Areas
  - Outstanding Natural Landscapes, Outstanding Natural Features and other landscape zonings coming under various names.
  - Sites of Significance to Maori, cultural sites, and cultural landscapes.
  - Wetlands
3. Over the past 18 months we have identified major failings with the RMA approach to these zonings. This is causing considerable stress and financial hardship for thousands of property owners throughout NZ. The public outcry and protest in the Far North over SNAs last year evidence of the grief these unworkable regulations are causing.
4. Principal concerns relating to these zonings include:
  - Turns natural and cultural values into a liability rather than an asset. We are aware of landowners throughout the country removing these values not because they don't value them but because they live in fear of having them on their property.
  - Penalizes environmental endeavour with those property owners most proactive in protecting natural and/or cultural values penalized the most.
  - Impacts property values with, in some cases, substantial loss of property values for those that have most, or all of their property captured under zones. Many property owners are facing multiple regulatory zones on their properties.

- Forces councils into conflict with their communities and their most conservation minded constituents.
5. While the Far North District Council has obligations to meet the Northland Regional Policy Statement, the use of the RMA zoning approach to protecting natural and cultural values is delivering worse outcomes for those values and failing to achieve the sustainable management purpose of the RMA. These zonings also conflict with councils' other obligations to their communities in terms of well-being and representation.
  6. For these reasons our submission is for the Far North District Council to pause the district plan process until the failings of the RMA outlined in this submission are addressed, and there is clarity around the NPS Indigenous Biodiversity and the RMA replacement the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA). If this is not accepted, then our submission would be the sections relating to the zoning issues outlined above be paused or removed altogether. S465.001
  7. Groundswell NZ is committed to seeing the unworkable regulations fixed. Our preference is to work with local government in addressing these issues and we have appreciated support from councils like Hurunui and Grey District in opposing zonings like SNAs. Hurunui District is the first in the country to remove all mapped SNAs from its district plan because of the failings of this approach.
  8. Groundswell NZ submits it is critical to have the buy in and support of property owners when developing policies relating to the protection of natural and cultural values on private land. We are also advocating a shift away from the current policies in silos approach of environmental regulations and are advocating for a holistic, integrated environmental policy framework.

We wish to be heard.

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