

Tasman Rural Futures

Community Discussion Paper on Rural Development Policy

November 2004

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**Send written submissions on the matters raised in this Tasman Rural Futures
Community discussion paper to Council by Monday 28 February 2005.**

Please address these comments to:

**Tasman Rural Futures
Tasman District Council
Private Bag 4
Richmond**

1. Why this discussion paper?

1.1 Introduction

The Tasman District Council wants up-to-date information on:

- ∞ the values and attitudes of the rural community about the rural environment and rural land use activities in Tasman District;
- ∞ the results you want to see in the long term future for each part of the District's rural environment, its economy and its communities of people.

To this end, the Council seeks from you information and views to help provide answers to three key questions:

- ∞ What is sought for the future for rural areas?
- ∞ What are the biggest threats and opportunities in regard to achieving a desired future – the issues?
- ∞ How should land use development and change in rural areas be managed – the solutions?

The questions raised in this discussion paper focus on land use, but associated water and other resource uses or values are also important.

The Council is asking these questions of the rural community for the following reasons:

- ∞ Significant time has passed since Council sought community views on values, outcomes and issues in rural development in Tasman.
- ∞ Council's present management policies in the Tasman Resource Management Plan (TRMP) are not always being achieved as indicated by trends in rural development.
- ∞ Recent rural land use policy changes in the TRMP (e.g. the coastal Tasman area) have raised issues concerning management of the ongoing effects from subdivision and development across the District.

From November 2004 to February 2005 you can be involved in shaping the future of Tasman's rural areas, through the following opportunities:

- ∞ Provide a written response to this discussion paper
- ∞ Fill in a feedback form from the Rural Development summary flyer (sent to all rural property-owners and available on request)
- ∞ Attend a public workshop
- ∞ Visit the council stand at your local A & P show this summer.

The programme for public workshops will be advertised in the 'Newsline Update' in the *Nelson Mail* and in *Newsline – the Mag*, Council's monthly newsletter to ratepayers.

For enquires on the community process, please contact:

Rochelle Selby-Neal Phone (03) 543-8565 or
Steve Markham Phone (03) 543-8427

1.2 Background

Since the early 1990s the Tasman District Council has been developing policies and methods for integrated management of rural land and other resources under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). Following local government reform in 1989, and the formation of the Tasman District, the RMA in 1991 provided for a new approach to management of the rural resources of the District. From 1992 the unitary authority status of the Council allowed policy for all resources – land, water, coast, settlements and infrastructure – to be developed and carried out together. Council is both a regional council and a territorial authority.

The Council and community together developed the Tasman Regional Policy Statement (TRPS) some 10 years ago. This policy document is the overview or framework for resource management in the District. It sets out important policy for rural areas and particularly focuses on:

- ∞ Sustaining the District's high quality land resource;
- ∞ Management of the adverse effects of land fragmentation;
- ∞ Protection and enhancement of significant indigenous vegetation, habitats and natural and heritage features; and
- ∞ Management of the adverse effects of land use activities across property boundaries;

along with specific policy for the coastal environment and the margins of rivers and lakes. The TRPS has not been amended for several years.

Within the framework of the TRPS, the proposed Tasman Resource Management Plan (TRMP) was developed to replace the multiple district plans which had until the mid 1990's guided rural change in the District. The TRMP was introduced in 1996, and contains a framework of policies, methods and rules for management of the District's rural land resources. The TRMP manages rural development by addressing the effects of land use or development. It provides a framework of controls and guidance on how to assess and manage the effects of potential development. The TRMP does not state what development must occur. Nor does it control the effects of existing lawful development.

Following public notification of the TRMP, many submissions were made and this led to significant changes to the rural provisions of the TRMP. there has been some further changes since made to the TRMP but these have been either limited in scope or restricted to particular geographic locations¹.

Despite this, it is at least eight years since the community had an opportunity to respond to the TRMP through submissions, and longer since direct consultation was undertaken on rural development issues. It is considered important to know whether the present policy framework is still supported by the community, and whether it is meeting the needs and aspirations of:

- ∞ those who use the land productively;
- ∞ those who live in rural areas;
- ∞ those who visit rural areas as tourists or for recreational purposes;

¹ For example, Variation 32 to the Plan brought in the Rural 3 and 3A zones and also added new policy relating to the district's rural landscapes.

- ∞ those who live in towns but benefit from views over or proximity to rural areas.

As well, the Council and the community have not considered whether the TRMP has successfully delivered the planning results as stated in the TRMP. The TRMP uses the method of zoning with associated rules to manage effects of rural subdivision and land development. There are five rural zones, Rural 1 and Rural 2 Zones, the Rural Residential zone in locations near towns, and the Rural 3 and 3A zones in the coastal Tasman area. These methods may not be generally understood, and not everyone may agree with their form. The TRMP also sets out other methods such as education and advocacy to achieve some results. Up to the present, very little work has been done to assess the effectiveness of all the various planning policies and methods for rural development. The discussion paper in Section 3 describes and assesses the effectiveness of the key policies and methods for rural development in the TRMP.

The introduction in the coastal Tasman area of the Rural 3 and 3A Zones from December 2003 has set in place a specific approach to managing rural residential development, in a part of the rural area with the highest apparent demand for such development. Subdivision and development in this area requires detailed design and layout controls and has to meet potentially significant costs of servicing. Ironically, the management framework in the rest of the rural area may appear less restrictive and is certainly less costly for developers. This raises the question of whether this kind of approach is appropriate in other parts of the District, as well as whether development pressure will continue unabated in other rural areas despite the intention of the new rural zones. These are important issues that need to be considered for the wider rural area.

In addition, there are some unresolved planning appeal issues concerning the values of productive land and approaches to its assessment and protection, including the regulation of rural subdivision, and the Environment Court has commented on several occasions that the approach taken in the TRMP to managing rural landscape change is inadequate.

The Council has agreed to review its rural development planning policy framework including the zoning methods that are used in the TRMP, to help it to more effectively guide the District's rural future for at least the next decade, and beyond.

1.3 The Tasman Rural Futures Community Discussion Paper

This discussion paper:

- ∞ describes features of the rural area in the District and outlines recent trends in land use and development
- ∞ describes the present planning and management objectives and policies for the rural area and outlines the main methods by which the TRMP endeavours to achieve them;
- ∞ comments on the effectiveness of these provisions, based on information available from monitoring change in the District, and issues raised through administering the TRMP (for example through the resource consent process), or through Environment Court decisions; and
- ∞ sets out questions, issues and options on which the Council seeks your views or preferences;

and your answers will contribute to a review of the TRMP's objectives for rural areas and its policies and methods for managing rural development.

While the discussion paper focuses on the effects on rural land use from rural subdivision and built development, issues concerning the effects of other land uses in the rural area can be raised in the review.

2. What's happening in the rural areas of Tasman District?

2.1 Description of Tasman's Rural Areas

Tasman District is an area of 966,500 hectares². Of this, approximately 618,560 hectares or 64%, is within the public estate and has formal protection from most land use change. This land largely comprises the mountainous backdrop to the District's foothills and plains, but reaches to the coast on the northwest coast and at Abel Tasman.

About 332,200 hectares or 34% of the District is privately owned rural land in a range of productive, conservation or other land uses. Of this, 52,190 hectares or 5.4% of the total District land resource is of high productive value (Class A or B land, the top two classes in an 8-class system of classifying inherent productive value, that takes into account physical factors including soil qualities, climate, topography, etc). These highly productive lands³ are found predominantly on the Waimea, Motueka & Riwaka, Takaka and Aorere river plains. Most, but not all lands, have access to adequate water supplies for productive purposes. Most parts of the District have a satisfactory road network, providing access to rural areas.

The pattern of rural land cover in three geographic areas of the District as at 2001 is shown on the following table:

Rural Land Cover of Tasman District as at 2001⁴					
Golden Bay (Golden Bay Ward) Rural Land ~56 000 ha		Lowland Tasman Bay (Motueka, Waimea- Moutere, Richmond Wards) Rural Land ~119 900 ha		Inland Tasman Bay and Upper Buller catchment (Lakes–Murchison Ward) Rural Land ~156 250 ha	
Grasslands	55.5%	Grasslands	33%	Grasslands	33%
Plantation forestry	4%	Plantation forestry	43%	Plantation forestry	30%
Croplands	0.5%	Croplands	7.5%	Croplands	0.5%
Shrublands	24%	Shrublands	10%	Shrublands	12.5%
Indigenous forest	16%	Indigenous forest	6.5%	Indigenous forest	24%

Some 9665 hectares or about 1% is in urban land use. The District contains a dispersed pattern of over 30 small settlements. Only Richmond and Motueka have populations of more than 8000 people, with Takaka having 900. In addition to the pattern of urban settlements, the District contains a growing number of residential lifestyle or low-density dispersed residential areas in lowland Tasman Bay (on and around the Waimea plains, coastal and inland Moutere area, and around and north of Motueka) and Golden Bay (continuously from Pohara to Tata beach, around the Takaka plains, and in isolated clusters along coastal Golden Bay). The rural area also contains some processing industries and some specific areas of development to serve the tourist industry.

² This is the dry land part and excludes foreshore and seabed.

³ This land is not necessarily at present in productive purposes, but it has inherent qualities that mean it is potentially both highly productive and versatile: that is, suitable for a wide range of productive purposes.

⁴ Source is Land Cover Database Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, available July 2004.

⁵ The region includes Tasman District and Nelson City. From "Nelson Tasman: a Smart, Sustainable Region" November 2002.

The District has a significant length of coastline. A number of key settlements are located alongside the coast, but most of the coastline length is rural. Apart for two main areas of public lands (Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National Parks) most of the rural coastal area is privately owned.

The District's land resource - its soils and climate - provides an essential input to most of the \$640 million gross output or \$280 million value added (1998 figures) from primary production for the region, or 15% of the total regional economy⁵ through approximately 2,500 productive units: primarily through horticultural, pastoral farming and plantation forestry activities, but also through increasingly important specialist crops. The productive rural sector at 2001 directly employs some 5,600 people (FTEs) and indirectly a further 2,200 people (FTEs).

As well as district land-based production, the District's rural area contributes significantly to and supports the region's growing tourism sector. The cluster of activities associated with tourism in the region employed almost 3,000 people in 2001, having grown 27% between 1997 and 2001. The diversity and complexity of the rural landscape and its visual, recreational and "experiential" opportunities particularly attracts freedom tourists who tend to stay longer and spend more than people on organised tours.

2.2 Rural Land Use Trends

The Council has undertaken some limited monitoring of trends in the rural area, within the last decade. The TRMP includes a range of monitoring indicators, by which to measure the success of its rural area policies. These indicators focus on rural subdivision trends, rural land use changes including from rural to residential or urban, and complaints arising from rural activities.

The available data indicate the following patterns and trends in relation to changes in land use; and rural subdivision and dwellings:

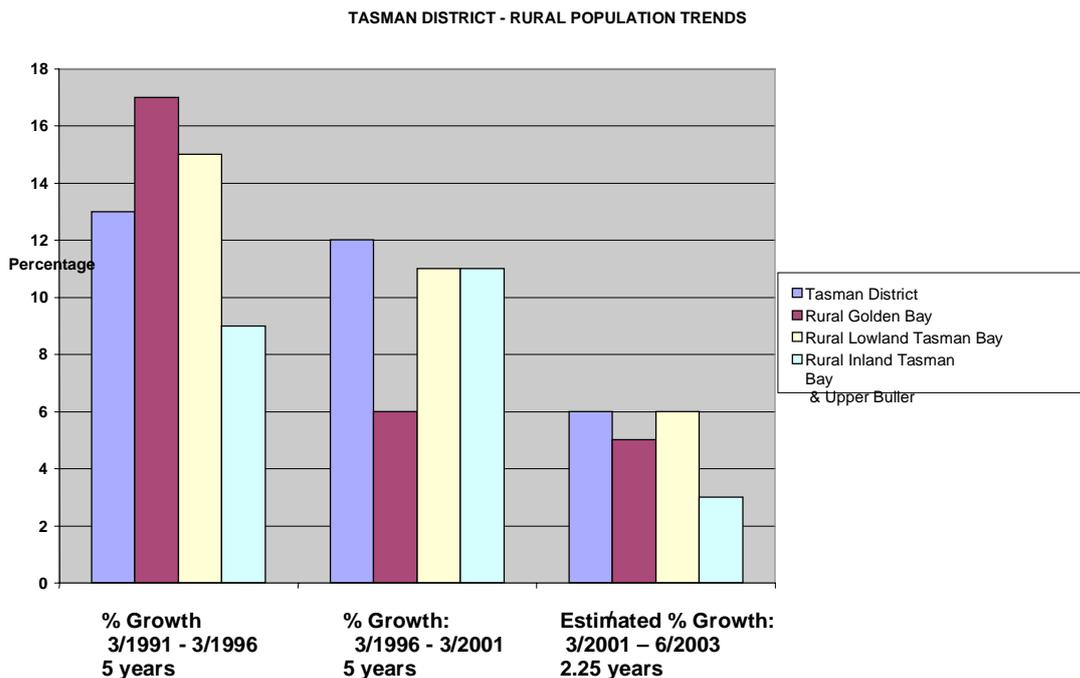
- ∞ In the Golden Bay rural area (Golden Bay ward) over a recent five year period (1996 – 2001) there has been little change in production land uses; a very small decline of pastoral use to plantation forestry. The pattern of rural subdivision and houses over the 8-year period from 1996 to 2003 is dispersed; with a high increase in the rate of subdivision over the period, and variable but slight rise in the rate of residential developments across all rural zones.
- ∞ The lowland Tasman Bay rural area is covered by the rural parts of the Motueka, Moutere-Waimea and Richmond wards. In the Motueka ward area, there has been a significant change from pastoral use to horticulture, with some change to plantation forestry and reversion to shrubland, over the period 1996 - 2001. There has been a dispersed pattern of rural subdivision and houses over the 8-year period of 1996 - 2003 in this coastal area and a moderate increase in the rate of these activities across both Rural 1 and 2 zones.
- ∞ The Moutere-Waimea Ward area has changed relatively little in productive land use over 1996 – 2001, with a minor increase in horticultural and urbanised areas. However, over the 8-year period of 1996 - 2003 there has been a large increase in the rate of subdivision, dispersed across both Rural 1 and 2 zones, and a constant rate of housing establishment similarly dispersed. In the Rural Residential zoned areas (near Mapua and Waimea Inlet), an increasing rate of subdivision and high rate of housing has occurred over the same period.

- ∞ In the rural part of the Richmond Ward (including the Waimea plains) land use change over the 5-year period includes a high increase in land under horticulture, from pastoral, in the Rural 1 zone, and not much change elsewhere. The 8-year trend for subdivision and houses has been a general increase in both, and dispersed across the lowland parts of both Rural 1 and 2 zones, with a moderate increase in uptake of Rural Residential zoned sites.
- ∞ The inland Tasman Bay and Upper Buller area (the Lakes-Murchison Ward) has seen over the period 1996 - 2001 a moderate decline in pastoral areas into both plantation forestry and reversion to shrublands and indigenous forest. For subdivision and houses, the pattern is a clustering of houses in the valley floors with a constant rate of development, but a rising rate of subdivision, over the eight years looked at.

Maps and graphs showing patterns and trends in land use change, and in subdivision and houses, are to be displayed for everyone to examine, at the public workshops, A & P shows around the District and at the Council's Richmond office and some libraries, throughout the comment period.

2.3 Rural Community Trends

Census data reveals the following growth rates for the District's rural areas:



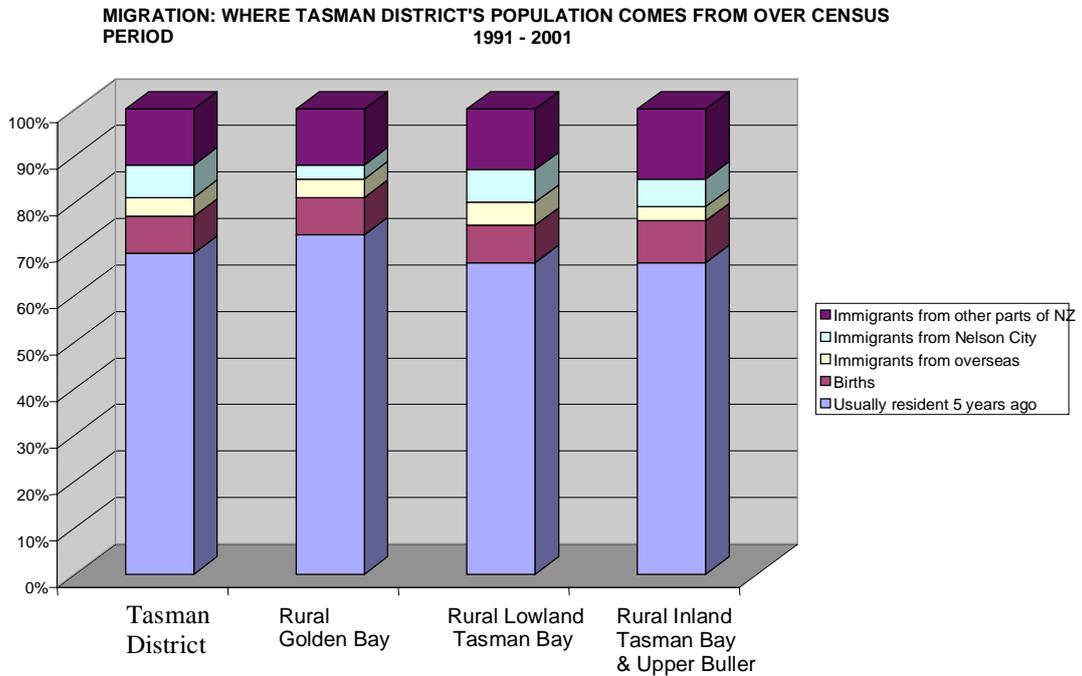
Tasman District is one of the fastest growing areas in New Zealand. With a population increase of 2.8% in the year ending June 2003, it is growing second only to Auckland, which for the same period, experienced an increase of 3.1%. Between the 1996 and 2001 census years, the population of our district grew faster than the New Zealand average (12 % compared with 3.3%) increasing our population from 37,959 by 4,680 to 42,639 people.

This growth has not been evenly spread throughout the district. Areas close to the Tasman and Golden Bay coast have experienced the greatest increases. Richmond has grown 19% between 1996 & 2001, making the town one of the fastest growing

communities in the country. For the same 1996-2001 period, Mapua-Ruby Bay grew 30% whilst Tapawera experienced a population decline rate of -8 %.

Migration: Where does Tasman District's population come from?

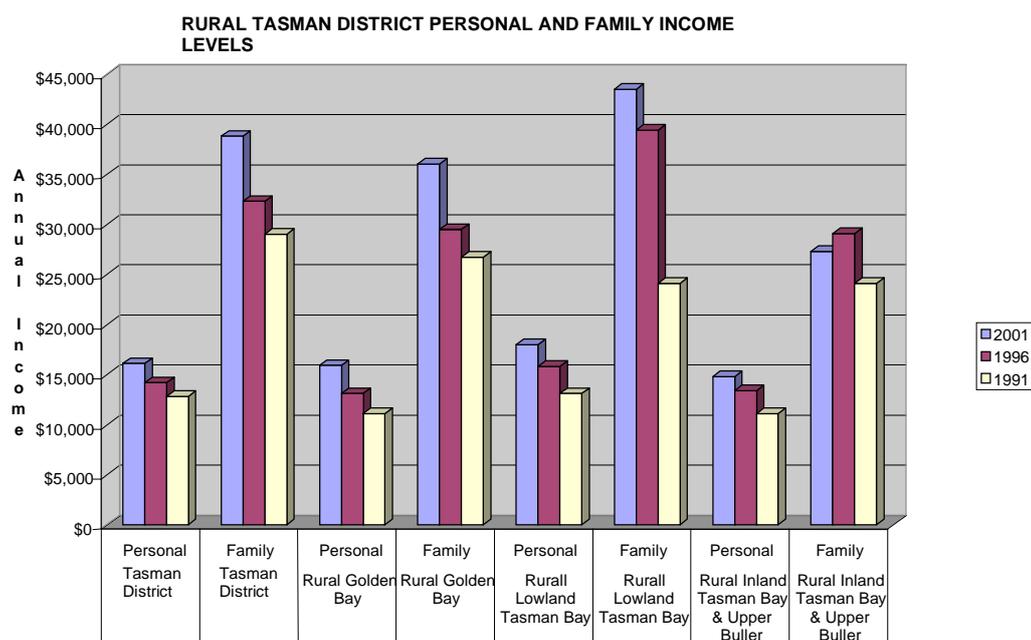
Census data over the period 1991 – 2001, on an average basis, is shown below:



Population Age

The Tasman population profile indicates that people in Tasman District form an average aged New Zealand community. Notably, at the 2001 census, the percentage of people over 65 years was 1% higher than the national average.

Incomes



In Tasman District, at the 2001 Census, the median annual personal income of Tasman people was \$16,100 compared with \$18,500 for all of New Zealand.

The census data indicate that Tasman District rural area income levels are substantially higher in rural lowland Tasman Bay than in rural inland Tasman and rural Golden Bay.

Workforce Profile – Industry Employment

Census data indicates that for 1991 – 2001, the largest employing industry in terms of full-time equivalent persons engaged (FTEs) in the Tasman District was (collectively) agriculture (including horticulture), forestry & and fishing. At 1991 and 1996 census years, this employment sector employed about 33% of the workforce. By 2001 census year, this had declined to about 25% of the workforce.

This indicates that over the 1996 – 2001 inter censal period, the percentage of Tasman residents employed in the agriculture forestry & fishing sector has declined significantly. At February 2004, the three largest employing industries (FTEs) were:

1. Manufacturing, which employed 20.7% of all FTEs.
2. Retail trade, which employed 14.9% of all FTEs.
3. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing which employed 10.3% (excluding agricultural production) of all FTEs⁶.

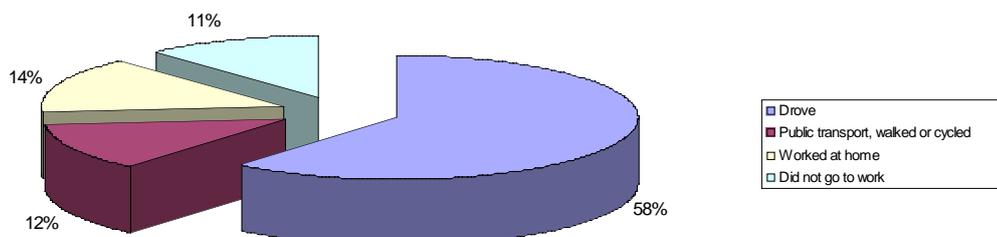
Unfortunately we cannot separate out the employment data for rural areas only.

⁶ Statistics New Zealand: Tasman Quarterly Review, June 2004

Transport

In Tasman District, at the 2001 Census, 20,300 people or 48% of the usually resident population were employed. Of this employed population, to get to work on census day:

MEANS OF TRAVEL TO WORK ON CENSUS DAY 2001



For the rural areas of the District, the data indicate that just under half of the people living in Tasman rural areas are employed and if people go out to work, they mostly use private, motorised transport to get there.

In rural lowland Tasman Bay, substantially more people go out to work than in rural Golden Bay & inland Tasman where more people work at home.

Housing

At the 2001 Census, 75.8% of houses in the District were owned with or without a mortgage compared with 67.8% for the whole of New Zealand.

For houses that were rented, the average weekly rent paid for a permanent private houses was \$145 compared with \$174 for New Zealand as a whole.

Tasman median house prices have moved up by 40% for the 12-month period December 2002-2003 and by 73% in last five years. The 40% increase of last year exceeds the New Zealand increase of 20.5% for the same period.⁷ The sharp rise in prices has affected home affordability particularly for first time home owners. The AMP Household Affordability index indicates that the Top of the South region topped the decline in the home affordability index for the 12 month period December 2002-2003. The region experienced a decline in affordability of 36.5%, followed by Southland at 21.6%, in contrast to a nationwide decline of 7.6%.⁸

The number of consents issued for new dwellings in Tasman District increased by 11% for the year ending December 2003 from the previous year ending December 2002 and by 68% since December 1999. The dollar value of the new dwellings for which

⁷ Real Estate Institute of New Zealand

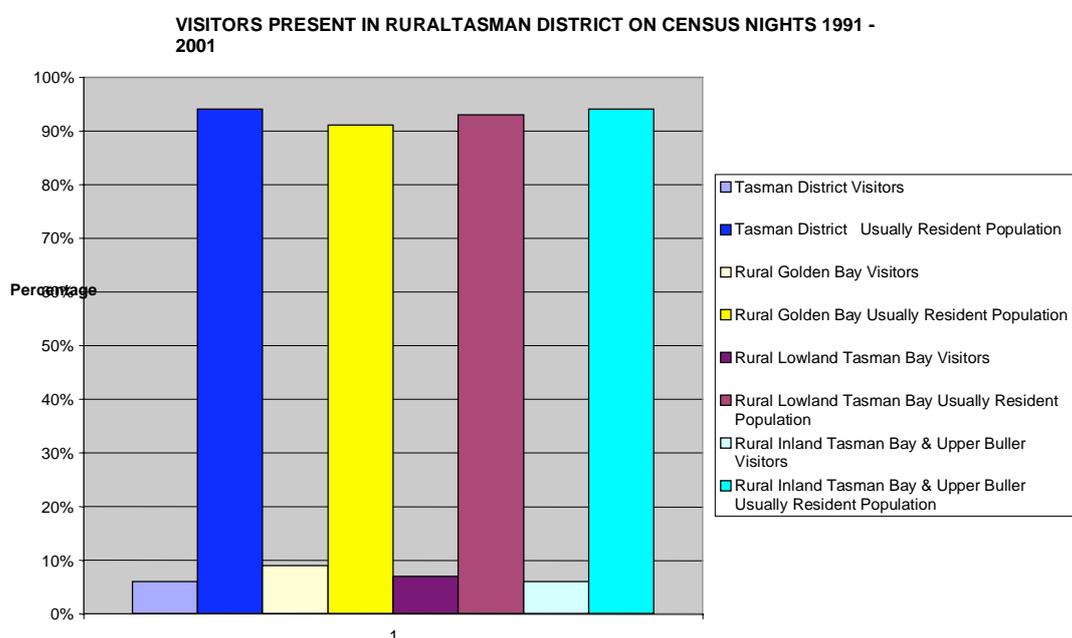
⁸ AMP Affordability Report, Vol. 13, No. 4

consents were issued increased from \$43,307,948 in December 1999 to \$99,664,485 in December 2003.⁹

Tourism

In 2002, the Nelson Tasman region received 1.0 million visitors who stayed 4.1 million nights and generated NZ \$353 million in tourism expenditure. That means, that on average, there were 2,700 visitors in the region every night of the year. The Tasman District share of this regional total is about 22% (220,000) of visitors and 13% (550,000) of visitor nights.¹⁰

By 2009, visits to the region are projected to increase to 1.3 million visitors who stay for 5.1 million visitor nights in the years. This represents an increase in visitors of 21% (in line with the national average of 25% in visitor nights).



2.4 Rural Development Values and Issues

The District's rural land and associated resources thus:

- ∞ Provide the basis for a significant part of the region's economy through productive activities, manufacturing, and service industries including tourism.
- ∞ Are where an increasing amount of the District's population lives, represented by a growing number of rural residential "lifestylers".
- ∞ Provide an outstanding setting and backdrop for urban settlements.
- ∞ Provide high quality recreational opportunities for local people and visitors.
- ∞ Are highly valued in visual and symbolic terms as landscapes, and as a great place to live – nationally and internationally.

⁹ Tasman District Council

¹⁰ Tourism Research Council www.trnz.govt.nz

The District's rural areas can also be:

- ∞ Areas of conflict between residential and rural production uses.
- ∞ Areas where competing uses and/or development pressures result in land market values, which are unsustainable for productive activities.
- ∞ Areas undergoing some intensification in land use with changing landscape character.
- ∞ Areas subject to actual or potential contamination of water, land or air through past and present land uses and lack of adequate services.

The following section of this discussion paper looks at the formal resource management planning process that has applied to the District's rural areas over the past eight or so years, and considers in the light of the pattern and trends for change and development, where that process has led the rural area.

3. Management of Rural Development under the Tasman Resource Management Plan

3.1 Overview of the Planning Process

Council manages development and change in Tasman District's rural area through a framework of resource policies and development controls in the proposed Tasman Resource Management Plan (TRMP). Chapter 7 (Rural Environment Effects) has the most important set of policies on rural land and the management of its development. Key policies are also in Chapter 5 (Site Amenity Effects), Chapter 8 (Margins of Rivers, Lakes, Wetlands and the Coast), Chapter 9 (Landscape), and Chapter 10 (Significant Natural Values and Cultural Heritage). Together, provisions in these policy chapters provide an integrated set of intentions and approaches relating to rural resources and their development or protection.

Chapters 16, 17 and 18 of the TRMP provide rules for regulating land use activities; in particular, Chapter 16 covers subdivision in the rural zones and Chapter 17 provides rules for land uses in the Rural 1, 2, 3/3A and Rural Residential zones. Chapter 18 has rules over what are called special areas, and covers such activities as land disturbance, coastal environment development, and protection of heritage sites and special landscapes.

This framework of rules and other methods of management is then applied through decisions by Council on resource consent applications for subdivision, new houses, or other rural proposals such as tourism activities or industry. The consents process is subject to a wide range of considerations: what the framework of policies and rules says, the environmental effects assessed for each proposal, the whether the application is advertised for submissions or not, and the views of submitters; and also whether the decision is appealed to the Environment Court.

Consent applications come in several kinds; controlled activity applications must be granted and are not advertised for submissions. Discretionary applications can be granted or declined, and may be notified. Non-complying activities face strict tests in order to be granted. Often it is difficult for the assessment of effects of each proposal to account for its contribution to change in an ongoing way, across the area or through time.

The following section outlines the planning framework is and considers how well it has done to achieve the TRMP's objectives; not whether the framework is the most appropriate. In Section 4 the discussion paper raises some questions for your consideration, concerning the current framework.

3.2 Planning Policy Description and Evaluation of Effectiveness

Chapter 7 of the TRMP contains policy under three key sets of objectives and policies, that reflect the development issues facing the District's rural areas. The table below sets out these rural policies and the methods by which the policies are intended to be achieved through the Plan, together with a commentary on their effectiveness over the past 8 years.

Assessment of Policies concerning Productive Use of Rural Land	
Policy	<p>Objective 7.1.0 and Policies 7.1.1 to 7.1.5</p> <p><i>“Avoid the loss of potential for all land of existing and potential productive value to meet the needs of future generations, particularly land of high productive value.”</i></p>
Explanation	<p>These policies focus on protecting the productive values of the rural land resource now and in the future, by minimising fragmentation of land parcels (including by subdivision and overcapitalisation by dwellings and other urban infrastructure), and encouraging amalgamation of land parcels.</p>
Methods	<p>The District’s rural land is managed through two rural zones – Rural 1, which has the highest inherent productive values, and Rural 2, which has lower but still important productive values. Plan rules provide for controlled subdivision to the minimum of 12ha lots in the Rural 1 Zone and 50ha lots in the Rural 2 Zone. Rules require a resource consent for new houses on Rural 1 lots below this size, and allow one house per lot on Rural 2 land. Rules also require consent for commercial, industrial and community activities throughout the rural area.</p> <p>Some defined areas, generally of lower productive land values, are set aside as special locations or zones for rural-residential, industrial and tourism purposes and are managed under different sets of rules.</p> <p>The new Rural 3 and 3A zones have been recently introduced to meet pressure for rural lifestyle housing while retaining the productive values and landscape values of the coastal Tasman area, in lowland Tasman Bay located between Richmond and Motueka and close to the coast.</p>
Assessment of Effectiveness	<p>In the eight years of the Plan, the Rural 1 Zone, particularly in locations in the vicinity of Richmond, Mapua, Motueka and Takaka, has been under continuing pressure for further subdivision and housing establishment. The Rural 1 Zone occupies the most accessible land from towns and is regarded as very suitable for rural housing development by the property market.</p> <p>While subdivision in inappropriate locations and scales has largely been resisted, every approved subdivision is a precedent for the next to be granted, so the pressure for more has not diminished. The pattern of both subdivision and houses across the Rural 1 zone over the 8 period suggests the policies have not been effective in limiting the rate of fragmentation on the most productive lands in the District. There is also ongoing pressure for residential, commercial and industrial uses of rural land close to Richmond in particular. Rural land values are increasing at least partly in response to</p>

	<p>the interest in rural living and the possibility that subdivision consents may be granted. This is the case in both Rural 1 and Rural 2 land in proximity to the main urban centres and along the coast.</p> <p>The Environment Court has been critical of inconsistent Council decisions on subdivision and land uses in the Rural 1 Zone and has generally upheld the Council's decisions where consent has been refused. This indicates that the policies can be effective at least for protection of highly productive land. The Court has also commented on the mismatch between strong policies concerning protection of productive opportunities, and the discretionary status of subdivision in the Rural 1 zone.</p> <p>Policy to protect productive values has generally not been effective in limiting ongoing subdivision in the Rural 2 zone. Fragmentation of this land has occurred in coastal and more accessible Rural 2 zone areas - almost "on demand" - except where other policies (eg under 7.3.0 or Chapter 9) have been effective (see assessment of policies about landscape character below).</p> <p>A small amount of potentially highly productive land (formerly zoned Rural 1) in the coastal Tasman area was rezoned for rural residential use through submissions on the Plan. This has led to increased interest in development on nearby Rural 1 locations, and confusion about the strength of the policies concerning productive value.</p> <p>More recently, the Council has tried to address ongoing pressure for residential or "lifestyle" development through the specific provision of the Rural 3 and 3A zones. Council is to hear submissions on these proposals in early 2005. While the Rural 3A zone (previously Rural 1 lands) has stringent controls on subdivision there is in the submissions a wide range of views on the value of this new zone. It is still too early to assess whether these new rural zones can achieve their purpose.</p>
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Assessment of Policies concerning Rural Living and Business Opportunities	
Policy	<p>Objective 7.2.0 and policies 7.2.1 to 7.2.4</p> <p><i>“Provision of opportunities to use rural land for activities other than soil-based production, including papakainga, tourist services, rural residential and rural industrial activities in restricted locations, while avoiding the loss of land of high productive value.”</i></p>

Explanation	<p>These policies recognise the interest in the rural area as a place to live or carry out business, other than land-based production. The policies direct that such activities should be located in areas that do not have high productive value. The policies set out the issues for consideration when applications for new uses of these types are being evaluated. These issues include cross-boundary effects such as noise, shading, discharges and odour.</p>
Methods	<p>Methods to achieve these policies include specific zones – Rural Residential, Rural Industrial, Tourist Services, Papakainga, and to a limited degree, the Rural 3 and 3A zones – and rules applying within those areas that allow specifically for the type of activity the zone has been set up for. There are restrictions on such activities throughout the Rural 1 and Rural 2 zones.</p>
Assessment of Effectiveness	<p>The Rural Residential Zone locations have provided space for rural residential development but the high demand for this has meant that the uptake of the zone locations has been rapid (only a few of the more remote locations have not yet been fully developed), and pressure has remained on the Rural 1 and Rural 2 zones.</p> <p>The Rural Residential Zone was intended to provide for a range of lifestyle choices, providing for different types of location with different minimum lot sizes (the minimum lot sizes also reflect a locality’s environmental characteristics, servicing availability or limitations, and the need to protect the rural character of the area). Pressure is coming on some of these locations for resubdivision as people find typical 1 to 2 hectare blocks too much to handle. This has resulted in some urbanised character.</p> <p>The new Rural 3 Zone in the coastal Tasman area endeavours to provide for more rural residential development, in a location of high and apparently sustained demand, at a range of lot sizes that people and developers can choose for themselves but subject to design and topographic considerations. As noted above, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this zone.</p> <p>Rural Industrial Zones and Tourist Services zones are usually specific locations where historically such activities have located; and have had a mixed history of up-take.</p> <p>Despite this careful zoning framework, these policies have been used by developers to argue the right to undertake specific subdivision and development throughout the Rural 1 and 2 zones, with varying and sometimes inconsistent outcomes.</p>

Assessment of Policies concerning Rural Landscape Character and Amenity Values	
Policy	<p>Objective 7.3.0 and Policies 7.3.1 to 7.3.9</p> <p><i>“Avoidance, remedying or mitigation of the adverse effects of a wide range of existing and potential future activities, including effects on rural character and amenity values.”</i></p>
Explanation	<p>The objective and its range of policies recognise and seek to maintain the particular qualities that give the rural area its character and amenity values, or “pleasant country feel and look” of places. They endeavour to achieve adequate management of effects including cross-boundary effects, and those relating to inadequate servicing, contamination and reverse sensitivity (complaints about existing rural activities by new residential neighbours).</p>
Methods	<p>Methods include the rural zoning framework, and rules (which are largely the same throughout the Rural 1, 2, 3 and 3A Zones). The zones manage intensity of development and thus influences on rural character. Specific rules address site amenity effects including reverse sensitivity, through setbacks, coverage of the site, onsite services provision, and controls over discharges. These rules are intended to allow for ongoing productive activities in rural areas with limited regulation.</p> <p>As well as regulation, education (including design guidance and encouraging self-management of effects) are to be used to achieve the objective and policies.</p>
Assessment of Effectiveness	<p>These policies appear to have been effective (along with Chapter 5 policy on site amenity issues) in addressing the cross-boundary effects of productive activities and generally achieving appropriate site specific standards of rural amenity. However, they have not always been particularly effective in maintaining rural character, and wider amenity values in all rural parts of the District, particularly where progressive, more intensive subdivision that the Plan allows has led to an area taking on semi-urban characteristics. Design and size of modern dwellings and the desire to set them prominently in rural landscapes has resulted in loss of rural character in some areas.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the policies has been hampered by a lack of a clear description in the Plan as to what defines rural character and rural amenity values generally, and how rural character and amenity value differ in different parts of the District. Similarly, the lack of policy relating to rural landscape values, until introduced by the recent amendment to the TRMP for the coastal Tasman area (Variation 32), has meant that this aspect has not received much consideration in</p>

	<p>managing development. There are no management methods that seek to retain distinctive rural landscapes, within the rural area generally. However, in two locations, there are landscape-based controls over special visual values (at St Arnaud and on Takaka hill).</p>
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Other areas of TRMP policy interrelate with Chapter 7 policy, as described earlier. For example, the policy of urban containment and managed growth of settlements is included in Chapter 6 to protect rural land from site-specific, unplanned urban expansion pressures. This approach of urban containment has not always been successful and the availability of urban accommodation for rural workers is an issue in parts of the District such as Mapua, Motueka and Takaka. While this problem may be symptomatic of other pressures such as nationally-increasing house prices, it has had the effect of increasing pressure for housing within the District's rural land resource.

TRMP policy is to protect the natural character of coastal environments and the margins of rivers and lakes, seeks to limit development in such areas, and if it does occur, to manage it so that adverse environmental effects are minimised. No general monitoring of this policy has been undertaken, but there are continuing applications to subdivide and develop in such locations. A number of Rural Residential zone locations in coastal settings provide for such living, and seek to assist in achieving the environmental outcomes in Chapter 5.

Policy in the TRMP recognising and supporting the qualities of the rural landscape (Chapter 9) has until recently been minimal. This has attracted criticism from the Environment Court, and some general policies to protect rural landscape values were introduced in late 2003 through the amendment introducing the coastal Tasman area development plan (Variation 32). It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of this change, but there is lack of detailed explanation of both the general qualities of the District's rural landscapes and any distinctive landscapes in specific locations. An investigation for Council into the character of coastal landscapes is under way, and the results of this are to be made available to the community for comment soon.

3.3 Planning Policy Gaps in Rural Development

The above assessment shows that there are some areas where key rural development policies appear to be not very effective, and a number of areas for review are flagged. In addition, there are some policy gaps.

There is no clear policy that explains the range of different subdivision density standards for Rural Residential Zone locations around the District. There is no policy that directly addresses accommodating rural workers (although rules to allow for a specific type of workers' accommodation in rural areas are being introduced through an Environment Court Consent Order). There is no policy that relates to home occupations or tourist accommodation in rural areas although rules allow for these activities. There is no policy that deals with quarrying in locations that are important sources of aggregate for the future. And, the cumulative results of intensive rural development, such as servicing, transport demands, long-term loss of productive land-use opportunities, long term landscape change, and the risk of land and water contamination from domestic wastewater systems and land uses, are also not well-addressed.

4. Rural Development Issues Arising

4.1 General Causes and Direction of Rural Change

The rural development issues and questions for consideration in this section of the discussion paper have emerged from:

- ∞ the information on recent trends of rural change and development;
- ∞ recent patterns from the Council's ongoing process of deciding on resource consent applications;
- ∞ consultation on recent development planning initiatives including the Rural 3 and 3A zones in the coastal Tasman area, the Mapua-Ruby Bay Development Planning Study and the Richmond Development Study.

Tasman District is continuing to experience significant pressure for subdivision and residential development of its rural area, as well as in the present urban areas. This pressure comes from the general demand for living space in the District, particularly from those coming into the District; the limited availability of houses or urban land for housing; and the interest in living in rural areas, especially areas relatively close to the larger towns. While this rural living pressure may bring the benefits of more population supporting rural services and contributions to a more diverse economy, it is a powerful force for change to the rural area. There are three main areas of change occurring:

- ∞ Changes to the opportunities for continuing productive activity and in some areas, a decline in the extent of land available for production, where rural areas have become relatively urbanised
- ∞ Changes to rural character and landscape qualities, particularly in coastal locations, through buildings, land disturbance, vegetation removal, or new plantings
- ∞ Implications for servicing through increasing demand for water and road upgrading, and with wastewater contamination risk all leading to the need for higher standards of basic services.

In addition to these changes, there are ongoing changes in productive activity, such as shifts toward more land in horticultural activities, with some of which may be seasonal and others more permanent. While the issues raised in this discussion paper focus on changes to properties and the built environment, production changes have causes and results that are important to the rural economy and community. Issues from production changes may also relate to the natural resource base of the rural environment, such as water availability for irrigation, groundwater and surface water contamination, soil loss from land use practices and weather events, and other issues. These natural resource matters have a long history of Council investigation and policy. While issues to do with productive land use changes are not detailed in this discussion paper, they are also open for comment.

4.2 Land Fragmentation Effects on Productive Opportunity

Successive rural subdivision and residential development is an intensifying trend in the rural area, which suggests there is a risk to the continuing productive use of rural land in many areas of the District, through:

- ∞ increased land values,

- ∞ inefficiencies of scale where economic versatility reduces with size of holding, particularly if the property is capitalised with a house,
- ∞ neighbours who complain about rural activities, and
- ∞ direct loss of land available for productive purposes through residential development.

A relatively small amount of the privately owned rural land in the District, is land having a high inherent productive value (see page 6). Much of this land with high inherent productive value is highly fragmented at present, where most properties are of a size that is below the threshold for automatic subdivision approval. Much of this land may not be used to its productive potential, because of the following cycle of influences. The small size of these properties makes them inefficient to produce from and each property has a high market value making it potentially inaccessible for land-based production. The high value may be because of an existing house on the property or the expectation that the land may be subdividable for houses. While much of the land may still be available on these often small rural sites for production of some kind, the effective (economic) productive potential of such land may be quite limited. This may be used as a reason for seeking subdivision approval. Subdivision then adds to the unavailability of the land for any production over time.

Questions on Productive Opportunity

- ∞ **How important is the productive rural sector to the future of the District?**
- ∞ **Do you agree that the fragmentation of productive rural land is an important issue in the District?**
- ∞ **Is it important for the TRMP to continue to try to protect the District's most highly valued productive lands? If so, why? If not, why not?**
- ∞ **How should the land's productive value be assessed? Which factors, including soil and climatic qualities, property size, economic value for specific crops, neighbouring activities, location, or access, should be used?**
- ∞ **Is controlling rural subdivision and houses the most effective way of maintaining the District's productive potential, or are there other methods that would work as well or better?**
- ∞ **How should pressure for subdivision and houses in rural areas be managed: in the District as a whole; and in areas under pressure (near to urban centres and along coasts and rivers)?**
- ∞ **Are there effects of farming, horticulture, plantation forestry that need to be controlled?**

4.3 Methods for Control of Rural Subdivision and Housing Development

The Rural 1 Zone is land that has high productive value. The minimum lot size for automatically approved (controlled) subdivision is 12 hectares. This threshold size tries to allow for a range of potential economic land-based productive activities. The Rural 2 Zone has generally lower productive values. Here the minimum lot size is 50 hectares for controlled subdivision. This threshold is set on the basis of protecting rural character (eg. open space) and amenity values, and partly on the basis of productive

values, as well as limiting demands for upgraded services in more remote parts of the District. Subdivision in the Rural 1 and 2 zones appears to be driven by the desire of landowners or developers to create the opportunity for additional dwellings in rural areas. This should not necessarily be the case in the Rural 1 Zone, as new dwellings on lots under 12 hectares are fully discretionary and it is possible for the Council to refuse consent to build a dwelling on existing or new lots under the 12 hectare size threshold. However, the recent development pattern suggests otherwise, as there are substantial numbers of houses across the Rural 1 zone approved over the past 8 years. In the Rural 2 Zone, one dwelling per lot is a permitted activity, regardless of lot size.

In the Rural 1 Zone, where amalgamation of productive units by purchase has taken place, there are often surplus houses which owners seek to subdivide off. This is a further driver for subdivision, and experience indicates that consent may be sought to build a new house on the vacant lot. Houses on small lots in a rural setting are often the source of complaints about rural productive activities – noise, odour, spray drift and dust.

In some parts of the District, monitoring of wastewater discharges has shown that there is high potential for land and water contamination from on-site wastewater systems. There is also a growing risk of domestic water shortages in the drier parts of lowland Tasman Bay particularly the Moutere.

Questions on the Control of Subdivision and Houses

- ∞ **Is the Rural 1/Rural 2 zone distinction still appropriate in controlling rural subdivision and houses? Are the zone boundaries sufficiently accurate?**
- ∞ **Should there be further degrees of control – for example, restricting further subdivision or houses on areas of “elite” or very high productive value land because of soils and climate, or on areas that are remote or still relatively unfragmented?**
- ∞ **Are there other considerations such as the need for services (or risks from lack of services), or existing rural activities whose effects are experienced by more people living nearby, that should be taken into account in categorising rural land into zones?**
- ∞ **Are there parts of the District where no further subdivision should be allowed?**
- ∞ **On what basis should the Plan prevent further subdivision of rural land? For example, should there remain a consent process, or should subdivision be prohibited?**
- ∞ **Are there any areas or circumstances where subdivision controls should be reduced and more residential development allowed (such as when production faces difficult economic conditions)?**
- ∞ **Is it reasonable to provide for subdivision with no expectation that a dwelling may subsequently be built on each lot?**
- ∞ **Should “surplus” housing be allowed to be subdivided off?**
- ∞ **Where amalgamation or resubdivision takes place, what methods can be used to ensure that this does not lead to new dwellings and future pressure for subdivision?**

- ∞ **Should the Council be looking to provide more reticulated services for houses in rural areas?**

4.4 Workforce Housing in the Rural Area

There are indications that limited housing is making farm labour difficult to get. With the rising cost of urban housing in Tasman and Nelson, farming families are sometimes seeking to build a second or third dwelling on their land to accommodate family members. In the past, such situations have been a prime driver for subsequent subdivision.

At present a second dwelling needs a land use consent as a discretionary activity in the Rural 2 Zone, but in the Rural 1 Zone is a non-complying activity.

Rural dwellings can, as-of-right, have a second subsidiary unit within or attached to them. This provision was introduced to provide for family members and resident workers, but it is not known how effective this provision is.

Seasonal employment needs are also difficult to fill in the District partly due to lack of accommodation. The Council has recently worked with the local horticultural sector to agree to introduce special provisions in the Plan for a particular type of workers' accommodation in rural zones (all housekeeping functions in separate buildings, for use by workers). This is currently awaiting Environment Court approval. So how this provision might work has not yet been tested.

Questions on Workers' Accommodation

- ∞ **How should the Plan provide for the accommodation needs of rural workers, both seasonal and permanent, without setting in place a situation that results in future subdivision pressure?**
- ∞ **Should special provisions allow for accommodation of family members?**
- ∞ **Under what circumstances should rural land become available for housing?**

4.5 Rural Living Opportunities in the Rural Residential Zone and Rural 3 Zone

Rural residential zones were first introduced into the District in the late 1980s in the plans preceding the TRMP. These included "legacy areas" of fragmented rural land, particularly in Golden Bay, and land for "farmlets" where people could undertake hobby farming. More such zones were added in the early 1990s, specifically to divert pressure for residential lifestyle housing away from the most productive land and onto areas with lower productive values. New locations for the Rural Residential Zone were also introduced when the proposed TRMP was publicly notified in 1996, and later in the 1990s as a result of Council decisions on submissions by landowners seeking to rezone their land. These later decisions did not necessarily involve the careful analytical process that had identified the earlier zoned areas, and they included some prime Rural 1 zoned land in prominent or sensitive coastal locations.

There have been concerns about the visual impact and the servicing of some of these rural residential zone locations. The different lot sizes provided for in the Rural Residential Zone in different locations reflects environmental qualities, or the intention

of providing for variety of rural living situations, unfortunately this rationale is not well-expressed in the TRMP and so not well understood by developers. The use of minimum or threshold lot sizes for different locations of the zone results in inappropriately regular-sized layouts, where the underlying land contour and natural drainage pattern is ignored and subsequent dwellings are often very prominent in the landscape. There has also been pressure for resubdivision as people find several hectares too much to look after. If the land is not looked after, Rural Residential Zone areas can become neglected and weed-infested.

Recently, the Council has introduced the Rural 3 and 3A zones in the coastal Tasman area through Variation 32 to the TRMP. This is to provide additional opportunities for rural and coastal residential development in a convenient but visually sensitive location, with lot sizes and servicing that meet people's needs, while retaining the most productive land in the area, for present or future production. This development planning proposal relies on discretionary controls including design, layout, lot sizes and building appearance, and includes an important design guide and a reticulated servicing commitment by Council. This new approach is only now being tested in practice. It is not directly the subject of review through this community process, but does raise many of the same issues found elsewhere in the District. As well, it provides an alternative and a comparison with the more traditional way of providing rural residential living opportunities in the District.

Questions on Rural Living Opportunities

- ∞ **How successful has the Rural Residential Zone been in meeting demand for housing in the country?**
- ∞ **Should this zone be applied in other parts of the District, and if so where?**
- ∞ **What are the problems with the Rural Residential Zone, and how could they be addressed?**
- ∞ **Should resubdivision of these areas be allowed or encouraged? Or should they be considered as “end-state” plans?**
- ∞ **Should there be a standard approach to lot sizes throughout the Rural Residential zone? Or should local features or limitations continue to drive the subdivision controls?**
- ∞ **Is the quality of the living opportunity on Rural Residential zone sites satisfactory – both within and outside each zone location? If it is not, how could this be improved?**

4.6 Commercial, Tourist and Industrial Activities in Rural Areas

At present, home occupations or small-scale commercial, tourist and industrial activities can take place in rural areas as-of-right subject to limits on employment, scale and some locational requirements. Beyond these limits, consent is required. Larger established rural industrial activities are provided for in some specific Rural Industrial zoned areas, or through site-specific rules on some lots. A small number of tourist areas or attractions are also provided for by the Tourist Services zone or site specific rules. Commercial activities and most industrial or tourist activities must seek consents to establish in rural zoned areas, and their effects are managed through conditions, if consents are granted.

Questions on Rural Business Opportunities

- ∞ **Is the present framework for these types of activities appropriate?**
- ∞ **Are the home occupation rules in the plan allowing for an appropriate range of small commercial, tourist-related and industrial activities?**
- ∞ **Are there any unrecognised adverse effects – individually or cumulatively – associated with home occupations? What changes may be needed?**
- ∞ **Are the rules requiring consents for larger commercial, industrial and tourist activities that seek to establish outside specifically zoned areas, in the rural zones, reasonable and effective?**
- ∞ **Are there any specific new areas that should be zoned for these activities?**

4.7 Rural Character, Amenity and Landscape Values

Rural character, amenity and landscape values are all concepts currently used in the TRMP. They refer in broad terms to “the rural look and feel of the place”, with amenity value also meaning a level of quality of the site because of an absence of adverse effects across property boundaries. In addition, rural landscape has both visual, natural, cultural or historic aspects. These values are not well developed in the TRMP, and their occurrence across the rural area is not well described or appreciated in the same way by the rural community or visitors. The physical aspects of these values vary throughout the District but are generally characterised by: the openness of the landscape; the extent of green in trees, pasture and crops; separation distances between buildings or groups of buildings; low levels of services (roads, overhead lines, street lighting); the type and character of rural development (fences, farm buildings); and natural features (topography, rivers and streams, wetlands, naturally occurring native vegetation, and natural ridgelines and coastal edges). These values are particularly vulnerable to cumulative or compounding effects of change through development which may take place, usually but not always, as a consequence of subdivision.

Rural character and landscape values are indirectly protected by controls over subdivision (ie lot size), and to some extent by the rules that limit the total area of buildings (other than dwellings and glasshouses) on rural lots. Rules limiting building height and requiring boundary setbacks have some effect in protecting rural character and site amenity value. There are a small number of protected ridgelines in the District. These rules do not control location of dwellings (other than setbacks from boundaries) and dwellings have been built on prominent hillsides and on ridgelines. Land disturbance undertaken for production or for preparation for residential development e.g., for access, building areas; and associated removal of vegetation, can have a lasting effect on the landscape. New controls have been introduced to apply to larger scale, publicly visible land disturbance in the coastal margin to 200 metres inland, while there is limited control only for large scale disturbance in the general rural area. In two distinctive or special areas, near St Arnaud and on the Takaka hill, there are controls over buildings and plantation forestry to maintain the current landscape qualities in those locations.

No work has been done to explicitly describe what factors are most important in Tasman’s rural landscapes; what areas or characteristics are most important to local people and visitors; and what levels of change different parts of the rural area can absorb before there is a loss of rural character or unacceptable modification to important

rural landscape values. The Council has recently commissioned work on identifying distinctive coastal landscape values, and this work is expected to become available to the public later in the Rural Futures community process.

Questions on Rural Character, Landscape and Amenity Values

- ∞ **How important are rural character and rural landscape values in the District – to residents, to visitors and to the region’s urban dwellers?**
- ∞ **What do you consider important in maintaining or enhancing rural character throughout the District’s rural area?**
- ∞ **Are there any areas that have rural character or amenity values that are so special or distinctive that they should have greater levels of protection or management than the rest of the rural area?**
- ∞ **Are there any areas that have landscape values that you consider are high or outstanding, and that should have greater protection?**

5. Where to from here?

This Tasman Rural Futures Community discussion paper has provided information, commentary and a series of issues and questions concerning change and development in the District's rural areas. Council encourages you to think about the issues and options suggested, and to attend any of the public workshop meetings scheduled for early 2005, and to write your views as a submission on this paper.

The programme for this community process is set out below:

Action	Date/Method
Notification/advice of opportunity to make submissions	November 2004
Series of targeted stakeholder meetings	End November - mid December 2004 – dates and venues to be advised
Public workshop meetings in main rural centres	Late January - early February 2005 – see Council's Newslines Update in the Nelson Mail dates and venues to be advised
Written submissions and feedback forms closure	28 February 2005
Summary and analysis of submissions and feedback	March - April 2005
Council decision-making on options for change to the Tasman Resource Management Plan	June 2005 onwards

GLOSSARY

Controlled activity – any activity or development that under the RMA, needs a resource consent to proceed, but the consent has to be granted, there is no public advertising for submissions, and conditions of approval are in the council plan and may be set on the consent.

Discretionary activity – any activity or development that under the RMA, needs a resource consent to proceed, the consent may be granted or declined, the application may be advertised for submissions, and conditions of approval may be both in the council plan and be set on the consent.

Indigenous vegetation – plants naturally occurring in an area.

Land fragmentation – in any area, the progressive growth in numbers of properties with associated buildings such as houses.

Non-complying activity - any activity or development that under the RMA, needs a resource consent to proceed, the consent may be granted or declined, the application may be advertised for submissions, and there are requirements regarding its effects and its relation to plan objectives and policies, to be satisfied before any application can be granted.

Permitted activity – any activity or development that doesn't need a resource consent but which may have to comply with requirements in plan rules.