

Part 1

Introduction

Part 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Chatham Islands resource management document (hereafter called “the document”) provides a framework for the integrated management of natural and physical resources of the islands including the sea area out to the 12 mile territorial limit.

The document is created by the Chatham Islands Council Act 1995. Section 26 of the Act states that Council shall have such a single resource management document and that it shall contain all the information that the Resource Management Act 1991 (hereafter called “the Act”) requires to be contained in:

- A regional policy statement
- A regional coastal plan
- A district plan

The document may also contain provision for contents of regional plans as set out in Section 67 of the Act and also regional rules in accordance with Section 68 of the Act.

The Resource Management Act defines “natural and physical resources” to include land, air, water, soil, minerals and energy, all forms of plants, animals and structures. However, the management, ownership and allocation of the fisheries resource is not included within the document or the Act and is a matter dealt with by separate statute - The Fisheries Acts 1996 and 1983. It is the purpose and function of that law to provide for all matters relating to the sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources.

The Council is therefore able to make provision in the document for a range of matters as set out in Parts I and II of the Second Schedule of the Act, including the control of:

- The effects of any use of land
- Subdivision
- Natural hazards
- Hazardous substances
- Activities on the surface of the water
- Discharge of contaminants into or onto land, air or water
- Taking and diverting water
- Noise
- Activities and occupation in the Coastal Marine Area

The level of control necessary to achieve the integrated management of natural and physical resources of the islands is dependent on the particular circumstances which relate to the islands.

The document is therefore a unique one in the New Zealand context, containing aspects of a regional policy statement, a district plan, a coastal plan and regional plans in one document administered by the Chatham Islands Council rather than separate plans administered by different authorities.

1.2 Structure of the Document

Sections 62, 67 and 75 of the Act generally prescribes the contents of the document. The document has to state the:

- Significant resource management issues
- Objectives sought to be achieved
- Policies in regard to the issues and objectives
- Methods used or to be used to implement the policies, including any rules
- Principal reasons for adopting the objectives, policies and methods
- Information to be submitted with an application for a resource consent
- Environmental results anticipated
- Review of these matters and how the effectiveness of the document will be monitored

All of these elements are incorporated into the document which is structured as follows:

Part 1 - Introduction

Part 1 contains an overview, the structure of the document and description of the management environment and the context of resource management in the Chatham Islands.

Part 2 - Implementation and Procedure

Part 2 explains how to use the document's various statutory procedures and outlines procedural and information requirements when applying for a resource consent.

Part 3 - Significant Resource Management Issues

Part 3 identifies the significant resource management issues for the Chatham Islands which require some kind of action or intervention.

Part 4 - Territory Wide Objectives and Policies

Part 4 contains the objectives and policies intended to address the issues raised in Part 3 and apply throughout the territory. An explanation/reason for adopting these objectives and policies is also given. Methods of implementing the objectives and policies are identified and include rules contained in the document and non-regulatory methods such as advocacy, incentives and works and services. Anticipated environmental outcomes are stated at the end setting out the consequences of implementing the document's objectives, policies and methods.

Part 5 - Management Areas

Part 5 contains five management areas on the islands as follows:

- Rural
- Settlement
- Industrial
- Coastal Marine Area
- Off Shore Islands

Each of the management areas generally contain similar natural and physical resources which make them distinct from one another. Each area contains objectives and policies specific to that area (as opposed to territory wide) although the document should be considered as a whole.

The management areas also contain the rules referred to in the methods. The rules implement the objectives and policies, both territory wide and in the management area.

Part 6 - Definitions

Part 6 defines key terms and phrases used in the document.

Part 7 - Appendices

Part 7 contains schedules of designations, heritage items and significant natural values.

Part 8 - Planning Maps

Part 8 of the document includes a series of planning maps which cover the whole territory. The maps show:

- The five management areas
- Natural Hazard areas
- Designations
- Significant Natural Values

1.2.1 Heritage Sites

These items are referred to in the document and their identification is for information and statutory purposes depending on the nature of a method or rule.

1.3 The Management Environment

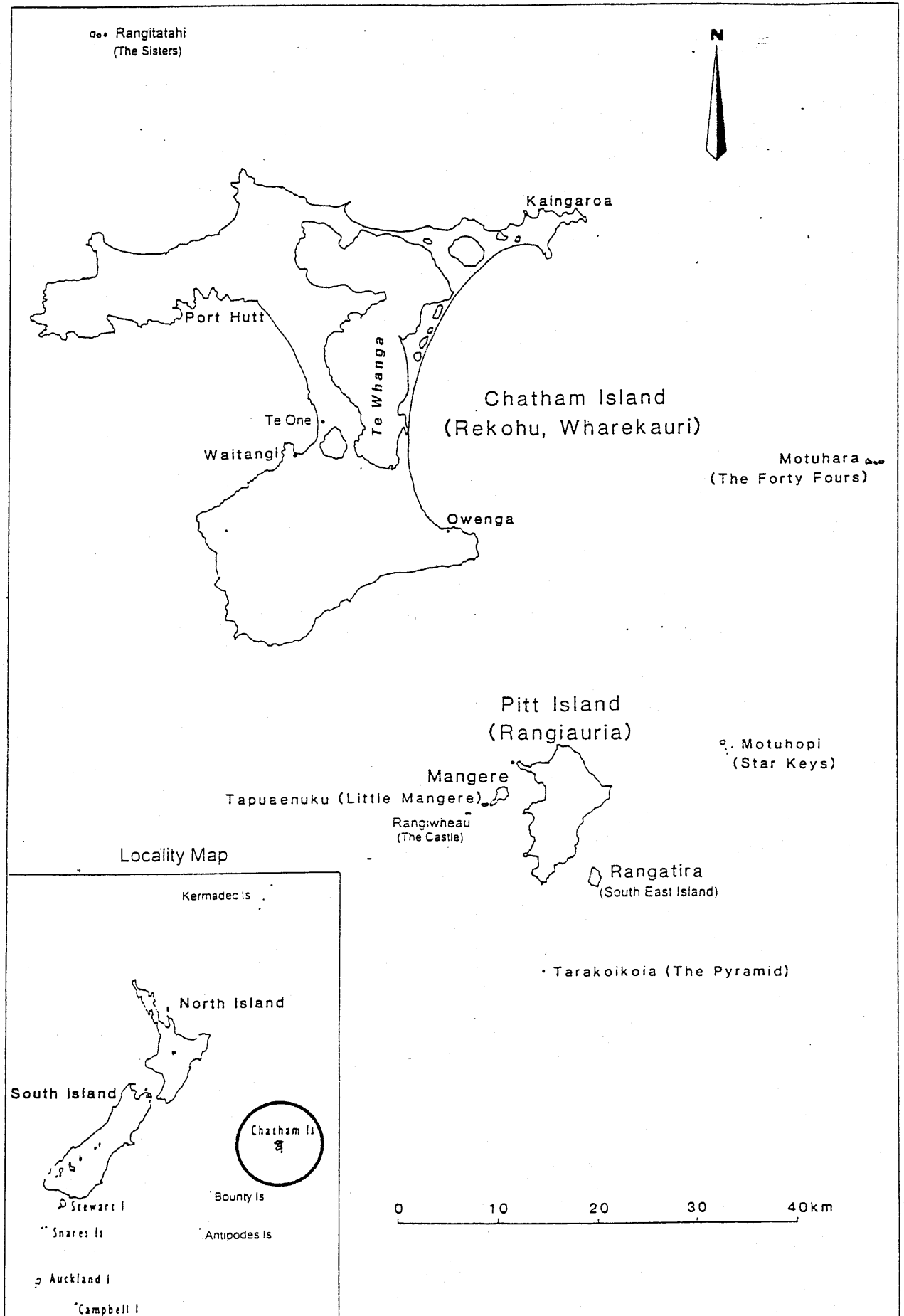
1.3.1 Location and Physical Description

The Chatham Islands territory is situated in the south west Pacific, 850 km east of Christchurch (44 degrees south, 176 degrees west). Isolation from mainland New Zealand since the submergence of the Chatham Rise about 70 million years ago, has resulted in a territory that has a unique physical and cultural environment (See Figure 1 for Location).

The Chatham Island group consists of ten larger islands and numerous smaller outlying rocks and islets. The total land area covered by the islands is approximately 960 square kilometres (96,000 hectares). The three largest islands are Chatham (Rekohu/Wharekauri) (90,038 hectares), Pitt (Rangiauna) (6,325 hectares) and Rangatira (218 hectares). The islands sit atop the eastern end of Chatham Rise, an oceanic system of deep troughs and sea mountains which stretch westwards to mainland New Zealand.

The main island, Chatham Island, has a wide variety of landscapes and topography. The northern part consists of rolling landscape with some isolated volcanic cones and coastal sand dunes. The central part of the island is lower, flatter and contains Te Whanga, the largest inland waterbody on the island. In contrast, the southern area comprises dissected tablelands which reach a maximum height of 286 metres backed by steeply rising rocky coastal cliffs. Small lakes and Te Whanga make up approximately 19, 966 hectares (22%) of the island.

Figure 1 : Location of the Chatham Islands



Pitt island is about 9 km south-east of Chatham Island. The landscape in the northern half is predominantly rounded and undulating, with sand beaches backed by extensive weathered consolidated sandy and sandstone cliffs. The southern area of Pitt Island is a dissected plateau with several prominent hills of volcanic origin.

The smaller islands in the main are steep sided and rocky.

1.3.2 Geology

The oldest rock found in the territory is the Chatham Schist (160 millions years), a metamorphic rock of continental origin similar to that found in Canterbury and Otago in the South Island, New Zealand. The Schist is confined to the coastal fringes along the northern part of the main island. The southern part of Chatham Island and parts of southern Pitt Island were formed through volcanic action in the late Cretaceous period (70-80 million years). These areas are dominated by steeply rising inaccessible cliffs of basalt interbred with volcanic ash and rubble. Since that time several smaller basalt eruptions have resulted in the low hills scattered over northern Chatham Island.

The major part of central and southern Chatham Island has undergone numerous cycles of marine submergence and emergence with changing sea levels, resulting in the undulating, and low-lying topography of sedimentary origin. This area is largely covered by peat which started to accumulate about 40,000 years ago and is up to 10m in thickness in places. Evidence of peat, indicates the dominance of the cool moist marine environment which has been present in the Chatham Islands since that time.

1.3.3 Climate

Situated in the southern Pacific ocean, the climate is strongly controlled by the surrounding oceanic and prevailing westerly and south westerly winds. Waitangi receives on average 895 mm of rain per year, although this is expected to be significantly higher in the southern tablelands. Peak rainfall occurs in autumn/winter, May (114 mm), with an average of 16 rain days occurring in this period. Rainfall minimum is between October to March with an average of about 55 to 60 mm rainfall per month.

Mild summers with an average daily maximum of 17.6⁰ C and average daily minimum of 11.4⁰C (Waitangi, January) and cool winters of average daily maximum of 10.2⁰C and average daily minimum of 5.3⁰C (Waitangi, July) are experienced. Due to the maritime influences, air temperatures extremes are not common. Ground temperatures vary between a maximum of 10.5⁰C in February and a minimum of 3.7⁰C in July with an average of 4.5 frost days per year. Sunshine occurs for approximately 1450 hours per year which represents about 35% of the possible time.

The prevailing winds are from the westerly quarter with south-westerlies predominating. Mean annual wind speed is about 14 knots (25 km/hr) with gale force winds of greater than 34 knots (63 km/hr) occurring on average 14 days per year.

1.3.4 Flora and Fauna

The Chatham Islands are rich in the variety of indigenous biodiversity which is found on main Chatham Island as well as the off-shore islands/islets stacks and in the marine environment. Many of the plants and animals are endemic, found nowhere else. Many species lack the ability to cope with the scale of change introduced by human activity and survive only in small isolated populations.

The original vegetation on Chatham Island was probably extensive swamp forest, scrub dominated by tree daisies, koromiko and dracophyllum, wiwi rush and ferns. Karaka forest would have dominated near the coast, with cushion bog and moorland inland. This original vegetation is now limited principally to the southern tablelands on main Chatham Island, parts of Pitt Island and some of the smaller islands.

Although pastoral farming has transformed much of the Chathams, small amounts of karaka and tarakinau (*Dracophyllum arboretum*) forest remain on the rolling areas. Mixed broadleaf forest (mahoe, matipo, akeake and nikau palm) are confined to steeper areas and *Sproandanthus* moorland on poorly drained areas. Between the main vegetation types are wetland and coastal plant communities.

The territory has some unique fauna, although some are threatened. Examples are the parea (Chatham Island pigeon), taiko (Chatham Island petrel) and black robin.

The fresh waterways contain native fishes including the long and short finned eel giant kopupu, lamprey and red finned bully.

The wetlands provide important areas for waders, waterfowl and other waterbird species, while some of the coastal headlands support breeding colonies of endemic Chatham Island and Pitt Island shags. The outlying islands are seabird breeding areas of international significance.

A number of insect species are present on the islands, including twenty species of spiders, beetles and weevils.

The coastal waters around the islands are generally very productive. They are unusually clear because of the absence of coastal runoff from a large land mass. The islands straddle a subtropical convergence, where warm and cold currents coincide producing a variety of marine life associated with the different currents. The waters provide habitat for hapuka, blue cod, orange roughie as well as scallops, paua and crayfish. The rocky shores produce a variety of seaweeds and kelps as well as kina, paua and redfishes. Marine mammals including fur seals and sea lions are found in the intertidal zone.

1.3.5 History

The Chatham Islands have a long history of Moriori, Maori and European settlement. European settlement on the Chathams coincided with whaling and sealing activities in the early 1800's. Since this period the Chathams have been characterised by a unique ethnic composition, with a high proportion (61.3%) of its population claiming New Zealand Maori descent.

Whaling and sealing marked the beginning of a series of exploitative industries which were to become a major feature of the Chatham Islands history. Other industries since that era have included potatoes, wool and crayfish. Lack of appropriate management and control in the past has seen the benefits from these industries leave the islands.

Economic activity has been the major controlling factor over population numbers in the territory since about 1840. The population is currently about 730 persons which has been reasonably stable since the "crayfish bonanzas" in the 1960's when the population was estimated to be 1100 in 1969.

1.3.6 Population and Settlement

Approximately 675 people live on Chatham Island and 55 on Pitt Island. There are no permanent populations on any of the other islands.

The main settlement in the territory is Waitangi (population 270 approximately). The four other main settlements are Kaingaroa (population 90 approximately), Owenga (population 90 approximately), Te One (population 80 approximately), and Port Hutt (population 30 approximately).

Waitangi is the administrative centre of the Chatham Islands and most of the community and commercial facilities are located in or near there. The other settlements are residential, each with a jetty and fish factory, except for Te One. There is also a jetty at Flower Pot, Pitt Island.

Education is represented by four primary schools. The largest school is at Te One with the other smaller ones at Kaingaroa, Owenga and Pitt Island.

Internal communication of Chatham Island is made possible by roads and telephone to most properties. External communication is available by a regular sea and air service while advances in recent years in telecommunications (direct dial, fax, internet etc) has increased ease of communication.

1.3.7 Economic Activity

Farming, principally of sheep and cattle, is the major land use on the islands occupying approximately 70,000 hectares.

Farming is carried out throughout the main Chatham Island although a significant proportion of the island is bracken covered scrub peat land. The most intensive farming is concentrated on the large pockets of the island which have been converted to pasture in the north and middle of the island and the lower northern regions of the southern part of the island.

There is potential for further farm development primarily on the bracken covered scrub peat land in the north and centre of the island. However, current returns on farming do not make this a viable proposition, particularly given the costs and dependency on the shipping service. On Pitt Island, farming is mainly concentrated on the northern half of the island.

Fishing is critical to the state of the economy. There are about 60 fishing vessels operating from the Chathams landing finfish, crayfish, kina, paua and scallops. These are processed at the fishing factories in Waitangi, Kaingaroa, Port Hutt and Owenga and exported to New Zealand and overseas markets. The quota management system introduced in the 1980's has resulted in much of the quota which was held for the Chathams being transferred off the islands. This has meant that profits are not necessarily invested in the islands and can presently constitute a barrier to local entry to the fishing industry because of the high costs of acquiring quota.

Forestry planting has commenced in pockets of Chatham Island and in the near future should provide fencing and building materials for most of the islands' needs and take some of the pressure off native trees as a fuel source.

The harvesting of sphagnum moss has occurred sporadically on the island in the past but has been very dependent on variable export markets.

There are extensive peat resources on Chatham Island which have been evaluated for mining. Although not viable at present, it is a potential industry in the long term.

Tourism is starting to increase on the islands with approximately 750 visitors per year. Visitors include family and friends, organised groups and independent travellers.

Conservation activities also contribute to the Chathams' economy through direct employment and contract work.

1.4 Context of Resource Management on the Islands

The islands have a minimal history of statutory resource management. There has not been a statutory planning document in place and planning has generally proceeded on an ad-hoc basis. There has not been the same degree of control and regulation as in New Zealand and as a consequence there has not been the same contact with the bureaucracy. People tend to be more self reliant and self sufficient, which itself reflects the isolated nature of the islands. At the same time there has not been the need for rules and regulations in many cases because of the absence of pressure on resources and community structures and networks in place. There is an absence of detailed records and background information and the Council itself also has limited resources for enforcing, implementing and monitoring its document.

As indicated in Part 1.1, the extent of control necessary is an issue in itself. In many existing circumstances, little control is required but the effects of future development, which may be low in probability but of high potential impact cannot be ruled out. An appropriate balance must therefore be struck. Part 2.18 refers to the ability to make changes to the document if this is deemed necessary.

While Council is obliged to meet its functions and duties under the Act, it is nevertheless true that the uniqueness of the Chathams means that "New Zealand" solutions may not be applicable. Local perspectives will not necessarily coincide with other perspectives held in a national or New Zealand context.

The document is a first generation one which undoubtedly will become refined as the practical aspects of resource management are worked through in the context of the requirements of the islands. In addition to the resource management document the Chatham Islands Act allows Council the option of preparing specific plans for resources such as water and air.

All of the above factors are relevant therefore in approaching resource management issues on the islands.