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A new national policy statement will give councils clearer direction on protecting and managing New Zealand's coastal environment, including our top surf breaks, says Minister of Conservation Kate Wilkinson.

“The Government made a commitment to deliver more national guidance on implementation of the Resource Management Act,” Ms Wilkinson says.

“The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) 2010 that I’m recommending does that.”

The NZCPS sets out policies on coastal issues including protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes, planning for subdivision, use, and development, protection of biodiversity and water quality, and management of coastal hazard risks.

Ms Wilkinson says the new statement will replace the NZCPS 1994 and is more specific about how some matters of national importance under the RMA should be protected from inappropriate use and development. Key differences include:

- Direction on protection of natural character, outstanding landscapes, biodiversity and nationally significant surf breaks.
- Stronger requirement to identify where water quality is degraded and should be enhanced.
- Direction on maintenance of public access to and along the coast, identifying walking access as the basic priority and better management of vehicles on beaches.
- Updated policy on the management of coastal hazard risks.

“The emphasis is on local councils to produce plans that more clearly identify where development will need to be constrained to protect special areas of the coast.

“This new statement supports positive planning for growth. I have also included policies specifically on

aquaculture and ports. Councils and decision-makers are directed to recognise the potential value of aquaculture and plan for it in appropriate places.

“They are also required to recognise the importance of ports in the national transport system and plan for their development.”

Ms Wilkinson says she appreciated the hard work of the Board of Inquiry, chaired by Environment Court judge Shonagh Kenderdine, which conducted a public submission and hearing process on a draft NZCPS statement released in 2008.

“The Board provided invaluable advice on this very challenging area of resource management and the new statement owes a great deal to its work.”

The new Coastal Policy Statement will be officially gazetted next Thursday and come into force on December 3. Until then, the NZCPS 1994 remains in effect.

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Questions and Answers

How does the Coastal Policy Statement work?

The NZCPS is a policy document under the Resource Management Act that provides direction to how local authorities and decision-makers should approach the management and protection of coastal resources in planning documents (regional plans, district plans, regional policy statements etc). It is not a law or regulation, but plans must ‘give effect’ to relevant provisions of the statement. Decision-makers on resource consents must ‘have regard’ to relevant provisions, among other matters (eg environmental effects).

Where does it apply?

The seaward limit is 12 nautical miles offshore from the line of the mean high tide line. The inland limit is not defined in law, but is usually indicated in regional plans as it varies according to local geography.

What effect will it have on coastal property development?

The new statement provides more specific direction to councils on strategic and spatial planning, including where new subdivision and development is likely to be appropriate and where it should not happen. It is up to local authorities to develop and implement their plans.

Why have policies on ports and aquaculture been included?

The Government is actively working to advance aquaculture development as the industry has great potential. It is important that local authorities think about where aquaculture can fit with their regional planning. Similarly, ports are integral to the New Zealand economy and the statement provides greater direction about planning for the needs of ports, including their integration with the rest of the transport system.

What are the nationally significant surf breaks and how were they chosen?

This policy attracted significant interest and the list was developed by the Board of Inquiry after taking submissions from national surfing organisations and individual surfers, as well as related environmental evidence. The surf breaks listed come from seven regions:

- **Otago:** The Spit, Karitane, Whareakeake (Murdering Bay), Papatowai;
- **Kaikoura:** Mangamaunu, Meatworks;
- **Taranaki:** Stent Road breaks, Waiwhakaiho;
- **Gisborne:** Makorori Point, Wainui breaks, The Island;
- **Raglan:** Manu Bay, Whale Bay, Indicators;
- **Coromandel:** Whangamata Bar;
- **Northland:** Peaks (Shipwreck Bay, Super tubes, Mukie 1&2).

Did the Minister accept all of the Board's recommendations?

The bulk of the Board's recommendations were accepted, with some proposed policies amended or excluded (such as a recommended policy on protecting dunes). The policies on aquaculture and ports were additional to the Board's recommendations.

Why is there no policy on protecting dunes of national significance?

The policy recommended by the Board will be explored further. Landowners and other affected parties had not been able to comment on this proposal, so it is intended they will be provided the opportunity to do so before any decision is made.

What will the new policy mean for vehicle access on beaches?

The statement gives councils stronger direction on the need to consider where vehicle use on beaches is causing issues and where it is actually needed. Other action is still necessary for an effective response, such as collaboration between councils and police on enforcement.

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