



Significant Natural Areas Fund

Fund Criteria & Application Guidelines

Significant Natural Areas Fund Criteria & Application Guidelines

***Please read the fund criteria & guidelines
BEFORE filling in your application form.
Reading these will save you time!***

Please Note: These guidelines specify procedures and conditions that are legally binding for successful applicants.

Aim of the Significant Natural Areas Fund

“The Timaru District Council’s Significant Natural Areas Fund aims to assist and actively encourage landowners and members of the Timaru District community to manage, protect and enhance significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna.”

Funding Categories

Applications must fall into one of the following categories to be eligible for funding:

- 1 Preservation - Significant natural area preservation includes fencing off and permanently protecting ie covenanting, areas of significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna.
- 2 Management - Significant natural area management includes activities like plant and pest management in areas of significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna.

Note:

- 1 The Significant Natural Areas Fund is a contestable fund and each application will be assessed on its merits on a case-by-case basis.
- 2 Funding is only available for projects taking place on land within the boundaries of the Timaru District Council.
- 3 Sites that meet the criteria for significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna and that are subsequently listed as Significant Natural Areas.

Preservation Projects

For a project to be eligible in this category it must meet all of the following criteria:

- a) It is for an area of significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna;
- b) It shall not be planted with any exotic vegetation once protected;
- c) Significant native vegetation and significant habitats of native fauna shall not be damaged, disturbed or destroyed;
- d) Domestic stock must be excluded from the area to be protected;
- e) It must have a protective covenant registered on the title of the land (or be entered into as part of the funding application);
- f) It must meet the General Criteria listed in this document; and
- g) It must have a management plan.

Preservation is limited to those areas which require permanent retirement from forestry, farming or general landuse activities.

The General Criteria may be changed in the future following the completion of the district wide survey.

Management Projects

For a project to be eligible in this category it must have a significant natural area management plan.

The funding for significant natural areas in this category may go towards maintenance of the significant natural area.

General Criteria

As contained in the Timaru District Plan.

Note: The General Criteria may be changed in the future following the completion of the district wide survey.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE - AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT NATIVE VEGETATION AND SIGNIFICANT HABITATS OF NATIVE FAUNA

In determining whether an area is significant in terms of section 6(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991 the Council will use the following criteria:

Primary Criteria

A The ecological values of the area - the values of the place itself

- (i) *Representativeness - Whether the area contains one of the best examples of an indigenous vegetation type, habitat or ecological process which is typical of its ecological district.*
- (ii) *Rarity - Whether the area supports or is important for the recovery of, an indigenous species, habitat or community of species which is rare or threatened within the ecological district or is threatened nationally.*
- (iii) *Diversity and Pattern - The degree of diversity exhibited by the area in:*
 - *vegetation*
 - *habitat types*
 - *ecotones*
 - *species*
 - *ecological processes*
- (iv) *Distinctiveness/Special ecological character - The type and range of unusual features of the area itself and the role of the area in relationship to other areas locally, regionally and nationally, including:*
 - *presence of indigenous species at their distribution limit*
 - *levels of endemism, (eg, the presence of endemic species)*
 - *supporting protected indigenous fauna for some part of their life cycle (eg breeding, feeding, moulting, roosting), whether on a regular or infrequent basis*
 - *playing a role in the life cycle of migratory indigenous fauna*
 - *containing one of the best examples of an intact sequence, or substantial part of an intact sequence of ecological features or gradients*
 - *supporting predominantly intact habitats with evidence of healthy natural ecosystem functioning*

Other Criteria

B The ecological context of the area including its relationship with its surroundings

- (v) *Size and Shape - The degree to which the size and shape of an existing area is conducive to it being, or becoming ecologically self-sustaining.*
- (vi) *Connectivity - The extent to which the area has ecological value due to its location and functioning in relation to its surroundings. An area may be ecologically significant*

because of its connections to a neighbouring area, or as part of a network of areas of fauna habitat. For example an area may act as a corridor or stepping stone for movement/migration of species between or to areas of important habitat.

C The future ecological value of the area

- (vii) Long Term Sustainability - The degree to which an area is likely to maintain itself, taking into consideration.
- extent to which criteria in paragraphs A and B above are met
 - degree of historic modification to the area and its surroundings which affects its future
 - degree of resilience of species and habitats present
 - the effects of current management on identified ecological values
 - the extent to which the area has achievable potential, with management input, for restoration of ecological values which are significant in the ecological district

Note: the application of some ecological criteria such as representativeness, rarity and connectivity may not be able to be confirmed until a extensive number of properties have been surveyed in a particular locality and the overall pattern of remnant indigenous vegetation and habitats can be assessed.

Final consideration

- D** Before deciding whether or not any identified area should be confirmed as being significant, Council will have regard to the following matters:
- (a) existing land use and the degree of modification associated with the site;
 - (b) economic effects on the landowner (eg, management costs, lost development potential);
 - (c) other options for ensuring the identified values and their needs are recognised and protected;
 - (d) presence and level of animal pests and weeds;
 - (e) resources required to implement effective protection;
 - (f) whether or not identified values are under threat;
 - (g) the extent to which values are or are not protected elsewhere;
 - (h) any other relevant factor.

Glossary of Terms

Endemic: Refers to species of plants and animals, which are unique to an area, or animals, which may migrate but only to breed in the area.

Ecological District: One of the major levels used for the ecological classification of land. New Zealand has been divided up into 85 ecological regions and 269 ecological districts according to geological, topographical, climatic and biological features and processes. This reflects the small-scale variability of New Zealand's ecological patterns. An ecological district is a land where topographical, climatic, soils and biological features and broad cultural patterns produce a characteristic landscape of biological communities. An ecological region comprises adjacent ecological districts with closely related characteristics, or may only include one ecological district with very distinct features.

Habitat: The environment in which a particular species or group of species live. It includes the physical and biotic characteristics that are relevant to the species concerned. For example, the habitat of who/blue duck consists of swift water with an abundance of freshwater insects.

Ecotone: A transitional zone between two habitats, which has distinct species or ecological characteristics of its own.

Resilience: The ability of a community or species to recover quickly (return to its original state) from perturbation, disturbance or displacement.

Community: The species that occur together in the same place at the same time.

Population: A group of individuals of one species in an area.

Ecosystem: A biological system comprising a community of living organisms and its associated non-living environment (such as sunlight, air, water, minerals and nutrients), interacting as an ecological unit.

Rare: Species with small world populations that are not at present endangered or vulnerable but are at risk of extinction. The species are usually localised within restricted geographical areas or habitats, or thinly scattered over a more extensive range.

Endangered: Species in danger of extinction and whose survival is unlikely if the factors causing their decline continue to operate.

Vulnerable: Species likely to move into the endangered category in the near future if the factors causing their decline continue to operate.

Threatened species: A species or community that is vulnerable or endangered.

Biological diversity: The variability among living organisms from all sources, this includes diversity within species, between species and ecosystems. Components include genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

Representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contains an ecosystem that is underrepresented or unique in the ecological district *
Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains threatened ecosystems *; contains threatened species *; contains species that are endemic to the ecological district *
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diversity of ecosystems, species, vegetation *
Distinctiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains large/dense population of viable species *; largely in its natural state or restorable *; uninterrupted ecological sequence *; contains significant land forms *
Continuity & Linkage within Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides, or has potential to provide, corridor/buffer zone to an existing area *
Cultural Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> traditionally important for Maori recreational values significant landscape value protection of soil values water catchment protection recreation or tourism importance aesthetic coherence
Ecological Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ability to be restored * reasonable cost and time for restoration (eg up to \$5,000)
Landscape Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> significance to the original character of the landscape isolated feature, does it stand out or blend in does it have a role in landscape protection

Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>size and shape of area</i>• <i>activities occurring on the boundaries which may affect its sustainability</i>• <i>adjoins another protected area</i>• <i>links</i>• <i>easily managed</i>
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Note:

- 1 Sites listed as a Significant Natural Area may be inspected by the Timaru District Council prior to the consideration of an application.
- 2 The Timaru District Council will inspect sites not already listed as a Significant Natural Area so as to ensure that the project is eligible for funding.

Significant Natural Area Management Plans

Significant Natural Area Management Plans are required for any Significant Natural Areas Fund application under the categories of Preservation or Management.

The landowner must comply with the significant natural area management plan once an application has been approved for funding.

A significant natural areas management plan:

- a) Is a document which sets out the approach to works and/or maintenance of the feature/site for future years;
- b) May have conditions (as is appropriate) that the landowner will be required to meet such as fencing, weed and pest control, keeping stock/domestic animals out of the area and restoration;
- c) Will help ensure that the site is managed in a manner that protects and enhances the significant natural area;
- d) Does not have to be complex and typically involves the following:
 - A line drawing of the property/farm on a A4 aerial photograph (photo can be obtained free of charge from the GIS Unit or Planning Unit) showing the area of concern and the proposed management measures;
 - A description of the current problem/threats to the area (eg cattle grazing undergrowth of remnant forest, plant pests or animal pests like possums, goats, stoats etc which need controlling/eradicating);
 - The proposed annual work/maintenance programme to be carried out over the next 3-5 years.

Information to assist you in preparing your management plan to the standard required by Council is available from the Timaru District Council's Planning Unit.

Timing of Applications

In each financial year, there will be one round of funding under the Significant Natural Areas Fund. Each round will be allocated a portion of the total annual funding amount set aside. It is not essential that all funding be allocated for a particular funding round. Any funding not spent can be rolled over into the next funding round.

Applications will be considered by the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee. All applications will need to be received by the Planning Unit by the end of the advertised application period.

Financial Details

In the application form sufficient details are required to enable the proposed project to be fully costed.

- If you are registered for GST please **do not** include GST in your costs.
- Please attach **quotes** and any other supporting documentation to your application.

The following costs are **not** eligible:

- Project costs incurred prior to the lodging of the application;
- Any costs involved in preparing the application; and
- Debt servicing.

The purchase of equipment is generally NOT eligible for funding unless it can be demonstrated that it is essential for the project (ie it cannot be leased, rented/hired etc) and is a reasonable cost. Each item of equipment will be evaluated on its relative merit to the project.

It is recognised that labour contributions (and associated tools and machinery) are an important component of many projects. However, this scheme is not a subsidised employment programme. Labour contributions are eligible as a project cost but should ideally not form more than a third of the total project cost.

What level of grant assistance can I get?

The maximum total grant allocated under the scheme is **\$5,000** (excl GST). There is no minimum grant amount.

A maximum grant of **\$500** (excl GST) applies to administration costs (includes photocopying, mailouts/postage etc) and the reimbursement of resource consent fees.

All grants are allocated on the basis of a cost sharing arrangement. The maximum grant rate for all projects is a cost sharing of 50:50, ie the Council will only fund up to half of the project cost. The applicant must make a contribution to the costs.

Example: Project cost \$2,000 at 50% (excl GST):

Significant Natural Areas Fund Grant	-	\$1,000
Individual share	-	\$1,000

The applicant's share of the cost can be by way of in-kind contributions (eg labour), or cash.

GST will be paid in addition to the grant where:

- the applicant is GST registered;
- the project is part of the applicant's taxable activity; and
- the GST number is supplied on the application form.

How can the District Planning staff assist me?

Applicants are encouraged to complete the application form themselves. Anyone experiencing difficulty in filling in the form should contact the Planning Unit for assistance. (Note: Staff assistance does not imply success or preferential treatment in the approval process).

The Council will also assist the applicant with their applications by making freely available to them all information about the natural values of the site recorded by the Council when inspecting the Significant Natural Area.

Inspections of projects allocated funding will be undertaken by Planning Unit staff.

How will the Council select successful applications?

As the number of projects and their total value may exceed the amount of grant money made available by Council each year, funding will be prioritised.

Significant Natural Areas Funding will be prioritised by the following criteria:

- 1 The significance of the site.
- 2 The natural vales that will be protected by the project.
- 3 The likely benefits/outcomes of the project.
- 4 The urgency of the project.
- 5 The sustainability of the project.

Note:

- 1 Funding will only be allocated for projects taking place on land within the boundaries of the Timaru District Council.
- 2 Only sites listed as Significant Natural Areas in the District Plan are eligible for funding.
- 3 Discussion and consultation will be undertaken with other agencies such as the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury and the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, as is appropriate.

How will applications be processed?

Applications shall be forwarded to the Planning Unit. All applications will be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt.

Applications will be checked by staff to ensure they have been completed correctly and sufficient detail has been provided. Where applications are considered incomplete or deficient, they will be returned to the applicant for further information or clarification.

Where an application is referred back to the applicant for further clarification or information, the applicant will be given a set period to respond.

At the close of the application period, applications will be sorted into two categories:

- 1 Applications that will be given to the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee for full consideration; and
- 2 Applications that are considered to fall outside the criteria and/or contain insufficient information.

Meetings of the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee are advertised and any member of the public is welcome to attend.

The applicant will be notified in writing within 10 working days of the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee making a decision on their application.

Where an application is approved, the applicant will be sent a letter of approval specifying the grant and conditions and requesting acceptance of the offer by entering into a formal agreement.

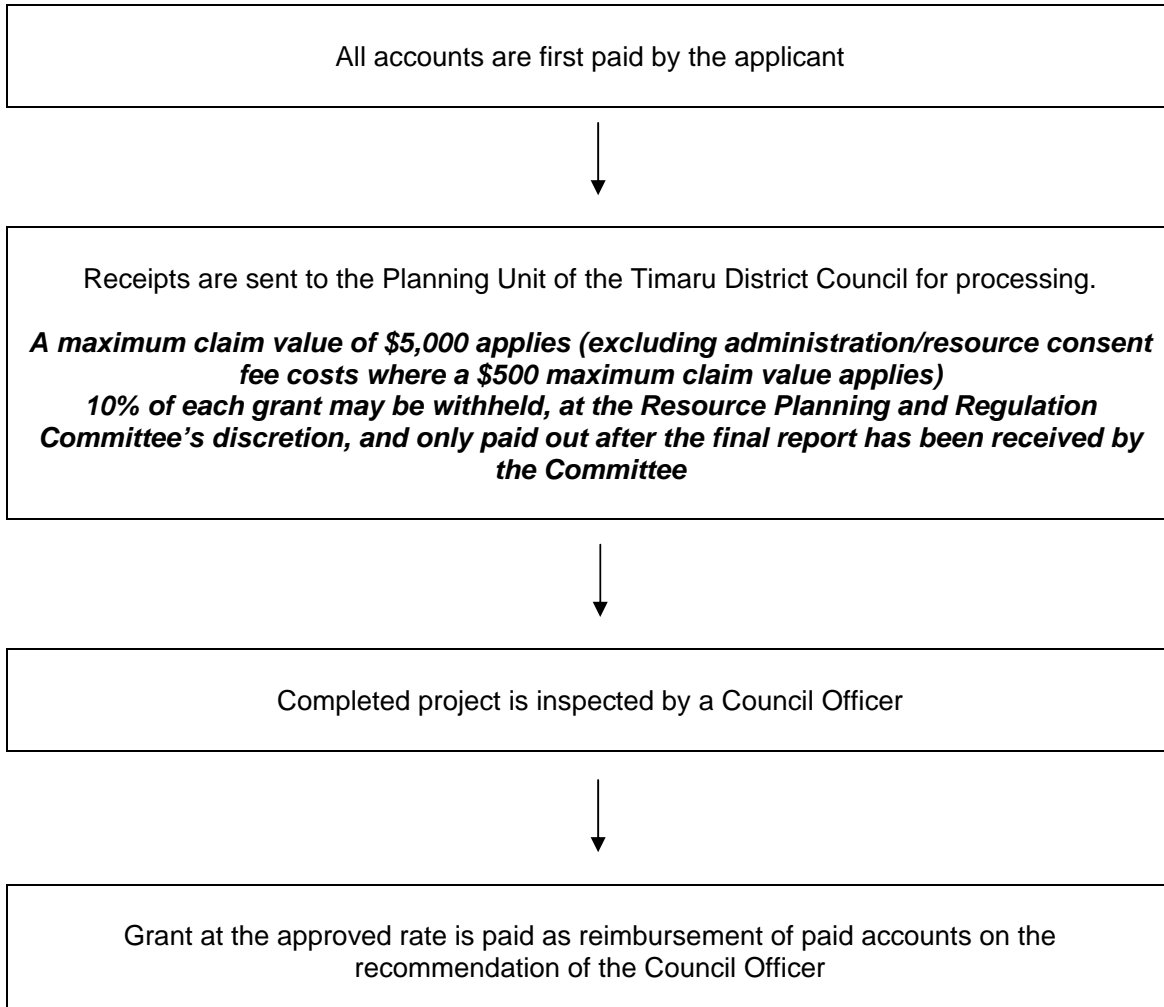
The following conditions apply to any grants made:

- 1 The applicant must notify the Planning Unit of the acceptance of the grant by signing the legal agreement supplied with the letter of offer and returning it.
- 2 Any expenditure on a project prior to the application being lodged will not be accepted for funding.
- 3 All costs associated with the project are first paid by the applicant. Receipts should be forwarded to the Planning Unit for processing. The grant will only be paid for approved costs on the basis of original invoices matched to original receipts.
- 4 The applicant must notify the Planning Unit once the project has been completed, and at this time a final report on the project must be prepared by the applicant and forwarded to the Planning Unit. The final report shall be presented to the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee. Ten percent of each eligible claim may be withheld and only paid out after the final report is received.
- 5 Any grant approval is personal to the applicant and cannot be reassigned without the written approval of the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee.
- 6 Grants must be uplifted within the time specified in the approval. The Resource Planning and Regulation Committee may consider an extension on request.

- 7 Grants are made subject to the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee being satisfied that the information given is true and correct and that there has been no omission of any relevant fact or any misrepresentation given. The Resource Planning and Regulation Committee retains the right to refuse payments to approved applicants in cases where it determines that it has been misled by the applicant or if the applicant has been placed in receivership, voluntary liquidation or declared bankrupt.
- 8 In all cases, the decision of the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee shall be final and there will be no rights of appeal or review.
- 9 The Timaru District Council reserves the right to visit any project or use it for promotional purposes where grant assistance has been given. In all cases the applicant will be notified of a visit.
- 10 The Timaru District Council reserves the right to suspend and to refuse further grant payments if in the opinion of the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee the grantee willfully or through neglect causes the project to fail. The decision of the Council shall be final and there shall be no rights of appeal or review and no right to compensation or damages of any nature.

Note: Additional conditions maybe imposed at the discretion of the Timaru District Council.

Once I have an approved grant, how do I claim it?



Can I change the contract?

Once the cost of a project and the grant rate has been approved by the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee that amount may not be increased or any new categories of expenditure be introduced.

Progress reporting and notification of project completion

All successful applicants will be required to report back to the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee on a regular basis detailing their progress in completing the project, particularly the completion of significant milestones.

Successful applicants must notify the Planning Unit once their project has been completed. At this time a final report on the project must be prepared by the applicant and forwarded to the Planning Unit. The final report will be presented to the Resource Planning and Regulation Committee.

Council staff who can help

Planning Unit

Duty Planner:

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District Planner - Andrew Hammond:

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