

South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan

Consultation Summary

TIMARU



DISTRICT COUNCIL

Te Kaunihera ā-Rohe
o Te Tihi o Maru

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What's this all about?

South Rangitata Reserve is a multi-purpose recreational reserve located near the Rangitata River mouth.

The reserve (a 'Local Purpose Reserve' under the Reserves Act) is one of many recreational spaces managed by the Timaru District Council.

The current Management Plan for the reserve is 22 years old. Things have changed since then and the plan needs to be updated to reflect these changes.

In 2025, we asked for community feedback on what should (or should not) be included in the updated plan.

We have since considered all the feedback and used it to inform development of an updated Draft South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan (RMP).

Now we want to hear what you think of the Draft RMP before it is finalised.



See inside or visit timaru.govt.nz/tell-us/current-consultations for more details and to make a submission.

Consultation closes 5pm, 19 April 2026.

What is a Reserve Management Plan?

All the land in the South Rangitata Reserve is gazetted under the Reserves Act 1977 (the Act). The Act requires us to classify all reserve land for its primary purpose and to manage it by preparing a Reserve Management Plan (RMP).

A RMP describes the purpose of a reserve and what we are aiming for by managing it. It also sets out rules to guide decision-making on how the reserve should be used, managed, protected and preserved, and developed, so that all users of the reserve can benefit.

The RMP not only needs to consider current users, it also needs to have an eye to the future – including the potential impact of natural hazards, and protecting soil and vegetation.

Reserve Management Plans enable us to establish the desired mix of uses and activities for a reserve. They ensure the right mix of public enjoyment, maintenance, protection, preservation and development of a reserve.



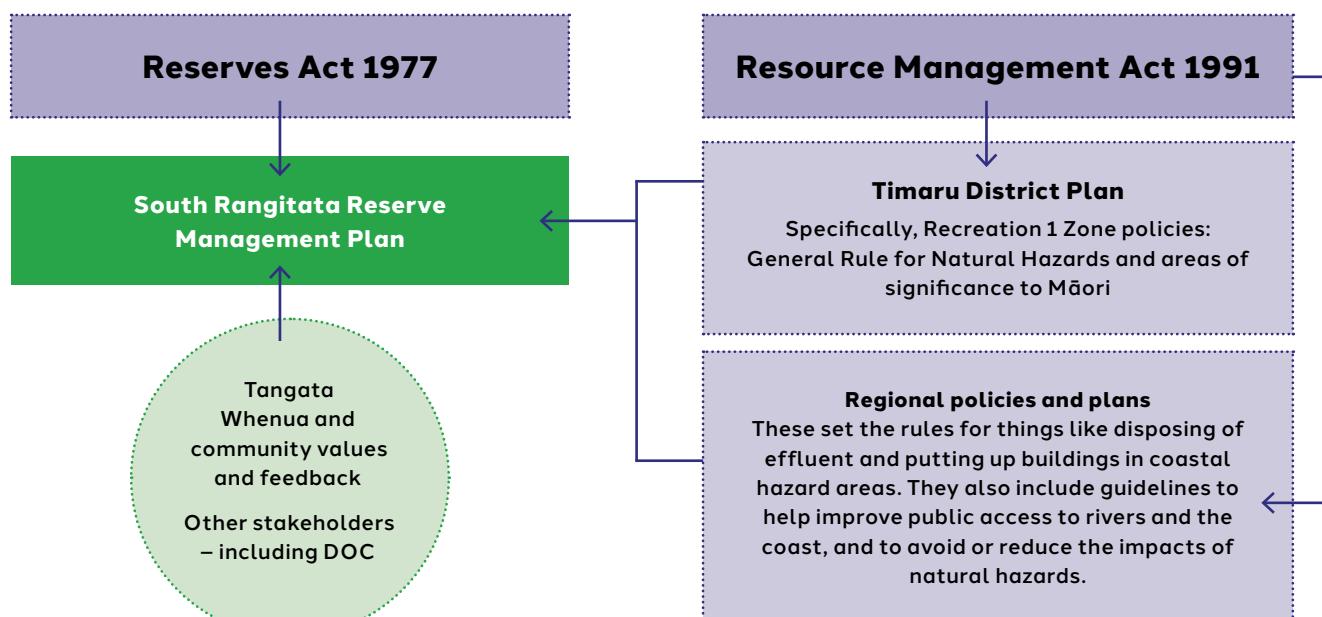
What the plan must consider

While Council owns and manages the South Rangitata Reserve, there are multiple people and organisations with interests in the area.

In addition to the Reserves Act, we have to consider the Resource Management Act 1991 – and all the plans and policies in place for the area under that act.

We also acknowledge and must consider the area's special value to Tangata Whenua.

The following diagram outlines what influences the RMP's development:



Looking back

The Reserve area has been used for a variety of purposes from pre-European days to now.

Over time the Reserve status and its management has evolved. It has become a popular spot for camping, fishing and other recreational activities for both locals and visitors.



A snapshot of key changes:

The 1890s - There were a handful of one-roomed fishing huts at the river mouth. As access to the site improved, the number of huts grew.

The 1930s - Significant changes to the river channels and surrounding environment. Transport was the main factor limiting hut development at that time - any significant development of huts in the area didn't occur until after the Second World War.

1968 - The purpose of the reserve was changed from "a reserve for river protection purposes" to a "reserve for soil conservation and river control purposes, recreation and site for fishing huts".

1969 - The Geraldine County Council was appointed to manage the reserve. The remaining area, except for the former camping ground, was divided into further sites, which have since been built upon.

The reserve has been managed by Timaru District Council since 1989, following amalgamation of several smaller local councils.

Left: South Rangitata Reserve 1935-1939
Below Right: 2020-2024
Source: Canterbury Maps

The Reserve today

In recent years, the Reserve's layout has become more organised – with the number of huts and dwellings on the site increasing to 113. The fishing huts are now well-established as holiday accommodation and used for fishing at various times throughout the year.

Use of the huts tends to depend on the quality of the fishing and location of the river mouth, which has changed regularly over the years.

Hut owners currently have lease agreements with the Council to occupy the site and pay an annual fee. Most hut owners are collectively represented by the South Rangitata Reserve Incorporated Trust.

The reserve has a public toilet for casual day visitors (not campers or hut owners), a playground and other recreational spaces, and allows for access to the river mouth and coast.

It is a popular spot over holiday periods – notably in the warmer months – and is used by self-contained campers and day visitors. Many people use it as a base, or for access to the river mouth for fishing.

In addition to trees and shrubs planted by hut owners, Council and the Department of Conservation (DOC) have also planted native



species in the area to help stabilise the soil and provide shelter for native birds and wildlife.

While the Reserve has become more populated and organised, its proximity to the coast and the Rangitata River – a major braided river – means it will always be at the mercy of the elements. The dynamic nature of the coastline and river, and the natural hazards continue to be risks of the site.

Looking to the future

In a nutshell, when planning for the Reserve's future management, we have needed to account for and balance several factors ►

To reflect this, we have included the following objectives. These set out what we want to achieve by implementing the RMP.

- Its purpose and requirements under the Reserves Act, and other plans and policies, and associated organisations
- Hut owners and existing lease terms
- The needs of all other Reserve users
- Tangata whenua values
- Potential impacts of natural hazards in the area
- Soil conservation and protection of native plants and wildlife

Our objectives for South Rangitata Reserve

- Retaining the Reserve for the enjoyment and recreational use of the district's residents and visitors.
- Administering the Reserve in accordance with relevant acts, bylaws, policies, and regulations including National Policy Statements, Regional Plans, the Timaru District Plan.
- Maintaining the appropriate level of presentation of the Reserve, and ensuring these specified maintenance standards are achieved.
- Maintaining access to the Reserve as a recreational resource.
- Preserving natural environment and soil conservation values within the Reserve (e.g. flora, fauna, and their habitats), and increasing public awareness of these.
- Providing attractive open spaces that are part of the network set aside for enhancing the quality of life for residents.
- Providing an environment that allows for family activities within the Reserve.
- Retaining hut sites within the Reserve, and leasing these sites.
- Providing ancillary services such as car parking, public toilet and roads to support the major objectives above, without detracting from them individually.
- Acknowledging the natural hazard risks of the site.
- Maintaining an awareness of and preparedness for flooding events that may affect the settlement.
- Acknowledging the dynamic nature of the coastline, potential erosion and long term retreat.

Key elements of the RMP

There are several elements of the RMP that are particularly important, or which submitters held strong views about.

Topic	Motor Camp Sites
Our position	Only permit self-contained vehicles.
Potential alternatives	Allow non-self-contained campers, if achievable.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	<p>Council made the decision to not permit non-self-contained campers when the current wastewater system failed and had reached its end of life. To be environmentally responsible, Council believes that a wastewater system would be required on-site if non-self-contained campers were to be allowed to reside.</p> <p>However, it is considered too expensive to install a new septic system due to the high water table and likely consent conditions (if one was granted at all). It was therefore decided to retain the camp sites for self-contained motor homes and caravans only, without on-site effluent disposal, as this is a more cost effective and environmentally responsible approach.</p>

Topic	Parking of motor homes and caravans in lanes
Our position	To restrict their use to leased hut sites or the designated self-contained camping sites.
Potential alternatives	Allow more widely or impose a full ban.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	Parking these vehicles for extended periods in access lanes is contentious and can interfere with others' access. Our position is an attempt to balance the issue. A more permissive or restrictive approach would likely have more disadvantages than advantages.

Topic	Opening the River Mouth
Our position	Not included in the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	None considered viable.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	This was not included in the Draft RMP because the river is outside the legal boundaries of Reserve 5266, and Timaru District Council does not have jurisdiction over the opening of the river mouth. However, under Policy 4.1 Management, liaison with Environment Canterbury is included.

Topic	Creating a gutter along the frontage of the huts to the river mouth
Our position	Not included in the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	None considered viable.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	As per the above, this is a jurisdictional issue. Most of the frontage of the huts, towards the sea, is outside of the Reserve, and Timaru District Council does not have control of this land. Care also needs to be taken that earthworks do not create an erosion hazard.

Topic	Reconsidering rules for hazard lines
Our position	Not include these in the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	Include them in the Draft RMP.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	<p>The rules for hazard lines (for example, for coastal erosion and coastal inundation) are contained within the Timaru District Plan. This Reserve Management Plan is subordinate to the Timaru District Plan, so</p> <p>1) the Draft RMP does not have the ability to arbitrarily state hazard lines and 2) stating them in the RMP would be inefficient duplication; it would require the RMP to be updated if the District Plan amends the hazard lines.</p>

Topic	Water source quality
Our position	Utilise the current bore, which sits on land outside of the Reserve.
Potential alternatives	Truck water in on a regular basis.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	<p>It is important to note that the bore is located on adjacent Crown land; it is a service provided, like electricity. Water supply rules and provision are evolving and are likely to be under the control of other entities. Liaison with Environment Canterbury and other parties will be helpful on this subject.</p> <p>The alternative to utilising this external water source and providing greater assurance on water quality would be to truck water in on a regular basis; however, it is deemed that this would be uneconomical and unnecessary at this time. Like other settlements in the district, water can be trucked in on an as-required basis.</p>

Topic	Permanent residency
Our position	To not manage this via the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	To state an explicit position in the Draft RMP, e.g. to allow or not allow.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	<p>Council's preference is that the reserve does not host permanent residents. We appreciate that there is a benefit to the community by having some degree of constant occupation by different people, for example through the security presence and the ability to operate the fire appliance.</p> <p>There is currently not an effective and cost-efficient way to identify or monitor permanent residents, and therefore this policy was not included in the Draft RMP.</p>

Topic	Lease tenure
Our position	To not manage this via the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	For Council to prepare a formal view on lease tenure and renewals, and include this in the Draft RMP.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	<p>Council has not yet made a formal decision about the possibility of renewals, and the terms that may be attached if offered. This is a matter that requires additional consideration – separate to the timeframe of this RMP review –, as it comprises planning, climate change and financial elements. It will likely be a topic for the 2027-37 and 2030-40 Long Term Plans, which contain submission opportunities.</p> <p>Additionally, to avoid duplication of documents, this is a matter best recorded in and managed by the leases themselves. The current leases expire in June 2028, with a right of renewal to June 2033. Non-compliance with lease provisions can result in the cancelling of the lease.</p>

Topic	Financial disclosure
Our position	This is not included in the Draft RMP.
Potential alternatives	Include a reference to financial disclosure.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	Some hut owners are not members of the collective association but may benefit from their work and the financial contributions of members. Financial disclosure to help manage this is publicly available now, and communicating this to lessees is an operational matter. Likewise, input into discretionary expenditure, including enhancements, can be handled in a similar way. Apportionment of costs is best handled through lease agreements and payments.

Topic	Planning, including Emergency Management
Our position	This is not included in the RMP.
Potential alternatives	None considered viable.
Rationale for our position relative to alternatives	Duplication of planning documents is cumbersome and would require updating the RMP every time another document changed. This is not efficient. Other processes are in place to manage this.

How feedback informed the updated RMP

After notifying our intention to update the RMP in February 2025, we received three submissions (one being from South Rangitata Reserve Incorporated on behalf of the majority of hut owners).

All feedback was carefully considered against the factors noted above. We could not include some feedback in the updated RMP because it related to matters outside the plan's scope, or because it did not align with the Reserve's purpose or the range of factors we had to consider in setting the objectives for its management.



**Other feedback provided was integrated into the revised draft RMP.
Some key changes include:**

Topic	Changes or inclusions
Rangers	Provision for the appointment of honorary rangers to monitor the reserve and adherence to bylaws and regulatory requirements was removed from the RMP.
Maintenance	The Reserve will be maintained to ensure that it meets the standard specified for Rural Parks.
Services	In addition to general maintenance, services at the Reserve are to include an access road, public toilet, and water supply.
Refuse and litter	Recycling and refuse disposal is to occur off the site via transfer stations or approved landfills. All users of South Rangitata Reserve must remove their own litter, or place in any transfer station where they have been provided. Household refuse originating from within the Reserve must be placed in the adjacent transfer station, if provided, or removed from the Reserve.
Closure to the public	On occasions, and with approval, it will be possible to close part of the Reserve to the public for the purpose of holding an event. An admission charge may be made for people to attend the event.
Camping ground	Camping will be at designated self-contained camping sites only, for self-contained campers.
Fishing huts	Conditions of leases may be updated at the time of expiry with consideration of renewal or review. No further hut sites will be developed within the Reserve.
Campervans	Use of caravans and motor homes will be restricted to within the leased sites (with conditions) or within any designated self-contained camping site. Any caravan or motorhome not within an individual leased hut site must comply with self-containment regulations and display the necessary proof of certification. Grey or black wastewater must be disposed of off-site in an approved dump station. It is not permitted to use the public toilet for disposal. There is no liquid waste dump station on-site.
Fencing	Fencing of the Reserve can fulfil several purposes. These include containing or excluding stock, defining leased sites, protection of plantings, areas of conservation and recreation and allowing an admission charge to be made at times.
New vegetation	Planting of lanes and other public areas will be by arrangement only, where this is appropriate and does not adversely impact access.
Public toilet	Lessees of fishing huts and self-contained motorhomes and caravans must have their own toilet facilities and are not catered for by a public toilet.
Playground	To ensure prudent financial management and effective maintenance of equipment, only one children's playground will be maintained within the Reserve.

More details on the above topics and others included in the updated RMP can be found in the full Reserve Management Plan available on Council's website at www.timaru.govt.nz/tell-us/current-consultations. Hard copies can also be viewed at the main Council building or any Council Library or Service Centre.

Now it's time to have your say on the updated South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan.

To make a submission on the RMP you can:

- [use the attached form](#)
- [go to timaru.govt.nz/tell-us/current-consultations](http://www.timaru.govt.nz/tell-us/current-consultations)
- [email \[submission@timdc.govt.nz\]\(mailto:submission@timdc.govt.nz\)](mailto:submission@timdc.govt.nz)

Make your submission before 5pm, 19 April 2026.

