

Chapter 16

MINERALS

PREAMBLE

The purpose of the Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources (See Chapter 1 on the Resource Management Framework).

Natural and physical resources are defined in section 2 of the Act as including:

...land, water, air, soil, minerals, and energy, all forms of plants and animals (whether native to New Zealand or introduced), and all structures.

Minerals have the same meaning as in section 2(1) of the Crown Minerals Act, which:

means a naturally occurring inorganic substance beneath or at the surface of the earth, whether or not under water; and includes all metallic minerals, non-metallic minerals, fuel minerals, precious stones, industrial rocks and building stones, and a prescribed substance within the meaning of the Atomic Energy Act 1945.

Maori were drawn to the West Coast by the beauty and power of pounamu (greenstone). To them it was a taonga of immense material and spiritual value. It remains so today. The Crown has returned the ownership of this mineral to Ngai Tahu.

The discovery of gold in 1864 led to the first of a number of gold rushes on the West Coast and was the beginning of the mining industry in the region. Gold and other forms of mining are part of the tradition and folk lore of the West Coast. The sites of many West Coast towns and the associated infrastructure is the direct result of mining. In particular the towns of Westport, Reefton, Greymouth and Hokitika owed their existence to mining and continue, in part, to do so today.

Since the early gold rushes other minerals have been extracted, notably coal, limestone and aggregate. Mining has been, and will continue to be, a significant contributor to the region's economy, both in terms of income and employment. The level of mineral reserves remains high and new discoveries continue to be made. Certain of these reserves are of high national strategic and economic importance.

Mineral resources will continue to be important for the people and communities of the West Coast in providing for their present and future well-being. This chapter overviews the two resource management issues identified and the objectives, policies and methods to address these.

mineral resources as a result of land uses above or in close proximity to mineral deposits.

ISSUE 16.2 Adverse effects of the use and development of mineral resources on other natural and physical resources.

Minerals are fixed in location and can only be extracted from where they are found. Most other forms of development are flexible in this respect. Land uses, developments and protective land status over and near minerals can be incompatible with mineral extraction and vice versa. In practice this can mean that the ability to extract minerals may become compromised.

The use and development of minerals is governed by factors such as topography, flora, fauna, overlying and neighbouring land use patterns, and market forces, all of which impact on the environmental, social and economic viability of the resource. As such present and future land use patterns affect or will affect resource availability, which will in turn impact on the integrated management of natural and physical resources. The Regional Council can recognise the importance in providing for the evaluation of minerals when preparing regional plans and considering resource consent applications. However it must also balance this against the benefits associated with changing land use patterns and any adverse effects resulting from mineral use and development.

The issue of loss of opportunity is distinct from that of 'tenure' and the associated agreement or arbitration required with the land owner/manager. However the 1986 West Coast Accord specifically provides for evaluation of mineral potential on some of the land administered by the Crown within the region. For any such land where an economic resource is identified, the Accord provides for an evaluation of conservation values against the social and economic benefits of mineral extraction. If the social and economic values are found to outweigh conservation values, then conservation status can be revoked. The purpose of Objective 16.2 is to ensure this is recognised in the RPS.

The adverse effects on other natural and physical resources of activities, which include those arising from the use and development of minerals, have been addressed in Chapters 5 to 16 and relate closely to section 5 of the Act. Objective 16.1 and Policy 16.2 clearly reflect this. The allocation of minerals, including physical access is subject to provisions under the Crown Minerals Act 1991. This leaves only one outstanding matter the RPS can address - the reduction in options to utilise minerals as a result of the use and development of other natural and physical resources.

OBJECTIVE 16.1 Options for the evaluation, use and development of mineral resources are not unnecessarily hindered while other natural and physical resources are sustainably managed.

OBJECTIVE 16.2 The ability to evaluate mineral resources is protected.

MINERALS POLICIES

POLICY 16.1 Recognise known mineral resources and have regard to the effects of changes in land use patterns on potential options to extract them

Cross reference
policies 16.1 and
16.2

when making resource management decisions.

POLICY 16.2 Recognise that the extraction of mineral resources may be incompatible with other land uses and vice versa.

POLICY 16.3 Ensure that the adverse effects of the extraction of mineral resources are managed in a manner that is consistent with objectives, policies and other provisions elsewhere in this RPS.

All policies in this RPS.

METHODS

- 16.1 Develop an inventory of known mineral resources based on accurate and reliable information provided to the Regional Council. This information will be made available to interested parties on request.
- 16.2 When developing regional plans and considering resource consent application the Regional Council will consider the:
- (a) Importance of providing for the evaluation of mineral potential;
 - (b) Effects of allowing potentially incompatible land uses or activities to locate above or adjacent to mineral resources and the ability to extract those resources.
- 16.3 Territorial authorities will be encouraged to consider the matters stated in Method 16.2 when developing district plans and considering resource consent applications.

EXPLANATION

The West Coast contains a variety of mineral resources that are regionally and nationally significant. For example it has the most extensive bituminous coal resources in New Zealand. In 1992 it produced over 800, 000 tonnes, 30% of the national total. Recoverable reserves are in excess of 350 million tonnes and there are a number of projects being investigated which are expected to increase annual regional production to 4 million tonnes. Gold, limestone, rock and aggregate are other significant minerals extracted from the region. Aside from an expected increase in coal production, expansion of other parts of the mining industry is possible.

It is important to enable opportunities for the extraction and utilisation of minerals to continue while meeting the purpose and principles of the Act. Section 30(1)(a) of the Act gives the Regional Council the function of establishment, implementation and review of objectives, policies and methods to achieve the integrated management of natural and physical resources of the region. Section 31(a) of the Act gives territorial authorities the function of establishment, implementation and review of objectives, policies and methods to achieve the integrated management of the effects of the use, development or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources of the district. Failure to consider minerals in the RPS in this chapter by way of objectives, policies and methods, could mean that reduction in land use options for the extraction would not be explicitly considered in relevant planning documents at regional and district council levels, nor when considering resource consent applications. This could in turn hinder the efficient use and development of natural and physical resources, and consideration of their finite characteristics, matters which the

Regional Council is required to have particular regard to under sections 7(b) and 7(g) of the Act.

ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

16. Consideration of the importance of mineral resources in resource management decision making, while other natural and physical resources are sustainably managed.