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5. In my view, this gives appropriate protection for ONFL’s but also recognises the potential for utilities to locate within them as non-complying activities. The Transpower lines across the Rangitikei River could be maintained as a permitted activity, so it is only new lines that would need to be assessed as non-complying activities. Their effects would be unlikely to be minor, but in the Rangitikei River crossing situation they would be unlikely to offend the key characteristics that cause the feature to be outstanding (geomorphology). In other ONFL’s identified throughout the district, linear networks already exist within ONF’s (parallel to roads) and their maintenance would be permitted. New works would either need to avoid the ONF or be assessed as a non-complying activity. However, with the proposed policy wording in place, they would be acceptable if they met the three criteria. If not, designation remains an option.

6. ONFL’s are tightly confined within the District and generally located in river valleys, apart from the Ruahine Ranges ONL. They are a rare resource and activities within them should be limited. Such limitations are reflected in the three criteria listed in the proposed policy wording above. To lessen the activity status to Discretionary would, in my view, give an inappropriate indication of the value of these resources and the level of protection sought by the District Plan.

John Hudson
16 December 2016
Hudson Reply

1. A number of submitters, particularly utility network providers, has requested Discretionary Activity status for their facilities in ONFL areas rather than Non-Complying. While not being a planner, in my limited appreciation of planning principles I understand that a difference between the two is that activities are anticipated to occur if given discretionary status, and not anticipated to occur if given non-complying status. The latter does not rule out such activities, with the gateway test providing the filter to them being considered.

2. Transpower has two sets of high voltage lines that cross the Rangitikei River ONF near Mangaweka. While the ONFL plan change has not been notified yet, the draft ONFL assessment shows that the Rangitikei River ONF is different to all other ONF’s in the district due to the fact that continuation of its working character is provided for. The essential characteristic that causes the Rangitikei River to be assessed as outstanding is its geomorphology, with incised white cliffs creating a distinctive feature through the landscape. Farming practices do not threaten this characteristic and it is anticipated that this feature will have particular recognition in the policies that allow for continuation of productive activities. This is not the case for all other ONF’s, which have land cover as a distinctive characteristic contributing to their values. For this reason, there is potential for the Transpower lines to pass the policy aspect of the gateway test.

3. ONFL’s have characteristics and values that are unique within the Manawatu District, being typically a combination of geomorphology and native vegetation cover. Apart from the Ruahine Ranges, they occupy a minimal portion of land within the rural zone, the rest of which is typically pastoral farmed where network utilities are present and anticipated. Importantly, s6(b) requires their protection as a matter of national importance. I am of the opinion that Non-Complying remains an appropriate activity status for network utilities in ONFL’s throughout the district as their presence is not something that is anticipated in any of these areas.

4. Consideration has also been given to the wording of Policy 3.2. Below is the marked up version of policy showing the officer’s proposed changes in response to submissions:
Suggested wording for Policy 3.2 would be:

To restrict the development of network utilities, except within an existing road corridor carriageway, within areas scheduled of significant heritage and landscape value in Appendix 1A (Wetlands, Lakes, Rivers and their Margins), 1B (Significant Areas of Indigenous Forest/Vegetation (excluding Reserves), 1C (Outstanding Natural Features), 1D (Trees with Heritage Value), 1E (Buildings and Objects with Heritage Value) and 1F (Sites with Heritage Value) unless

1. there is no practicable alternative location; and
2. the infrastructure is of national or regional importance; and
3. the development substantially protects the value of the scheduled resource.

5. In my view, this gives appropriate protection for ONFL’s but also recognises the potential for utilities to locate within them as non-complying activities. The Transpower lines across the Rangitikei River could be maintained as a permitted activity, so it is only new lines that would need to be assessed as non-complying activities. Their effects would be unlikely to be minor, but in the Rangitikei River crossing situation they would be unlikely to offend the key characteristics that cause the feature to be outstanding (geomorphology). In other ONFL’s identified throughout the district, linear networks already exist within ONF’s (parallel to roads) and their maintenance would be permitted. New works would either need to avoid the ONF or be assessed as a non-complying activity. However, with the proposed policy wording in place, they would be acceptable if they met the three criteria. If not, designation remains an option.

6. ONFL’s are tightly confined within the District and generally located in river valleys, apart from the Ruahine Ranges ONL. They are a rare resource and activities within them should be limited. Such limitations are reflected in the three criteria listed in the proposed policy wording above. To lessen the activity status to Discretionary would, in my view, give an inappropriate indication of the value of these resources and the level of protection sought by the District Plan.

John Hudson
16 December 2016