

Water Protection Creates Subdivision Rights

There was once a time when farmers would clear land including swamps and stream margins to increase their pasture area. It is now recognised that there are significant benefits to retaining this land in wetland and native vegetation. Protection of our water resource has become a big issue and this is more significant to farmers than most. The subdivision credits on offer may very well make it financially worthwhile as well.

The public benefit of retaining these environmentally significant features is being recognised more and more by local Councils across the region as they move to give landowners credit for its protection. Most District Councils in the region promote the protection of native bush, wetland and the margins of streams and rivers by giving landowners a subdivision bonus lot when they agree to register a protective covenant over these features on their property.

Western Bay District Council has been proactive in this regard for some years, having established rules to protect bush, scrubland, wetland and stream margins. As in Thames/Coromandel and Franklin Districts the restoration of these features is encouraged where the land has earlier been drained and cleared for farming. This is an excellent way to convert marginal land back into a natural ecosystem, picking up some financial gain along the way.

As an example, in Western Bay an area as small as half a hectare of restored wetland can be enough to justify subdivision of an additional lot. If you have a stream through or bordering your property with native vegetation adjoining it, there is a good chance that you can get a credit for a subdivision – you need 500m of stream with a 20m strip of vegetation along one side. Then there is established forest or regenerating scrubland that also qualifies with various size limits.

Franklin has moved in its Proposed District Plan to require an area of one hectare of ecologically significant wetland or bush in order to qualify for a subdivision, from an earlier size of half a hectare. Waikato, Waipa, Hauraki, South Waikato, Matamata Piako, South Waikato, Whakatane and Opotiki Districts all now recognise the benefits of protecting these ecological features to some extent.

If your land has a feature similar to those mentioned in this article and you want to subdivide your property you should immediately contact a professional surveying company experienced in these rules.

By Brent Trail – Managing Director

Published August 2010 Coast & Country