Christchurch District Plan Site of Ecological Significance

Site Significance Statement

Site name: Decanter Bay Valley

Site number: SES/H/2

Physical address of site: Decanter Bay

Summary of Significance:

This site is significant because it contains a large example of forest, treeland, scrub and shrubland that is typical of indigenous vegetation on steep lowland slopes in the ecological district and indigenous vegetation on basic cliffs, scarps and tors which are an originally rare ecosystem. It supports a high diversity of indigenous plants, moths and cicadas including species that are nationally At Risk and/or endemic to Banks Peninsula, uncommon within the ecological district or region or at their distributional limits on Banks Peninsula. It also provides important habitat for indigenous fauna.

Site Map



Additional Site Information

Ecological District: Herbert

Area of SES (ha): 142.09

Central point (NZTM): E1598083, N5165621

Site Description

The site is situated on the north-west side of Decanter Bay Valley. It includes the steep coastal headland above the bay and south-east facing slopes that extend inland. The altitudinal range of the site is from sea level to approximately 380 m. A layer of bluffs cut a line across the steep slopes on the north-eastern half of the area. Several small tributaries of Duncan Stream, which is on the valley floor below the site, flow down the steep slopes within the site. 3.7 ha of the SES is protected by a Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust (BPCT) covenant.

The area is a mosaic of forest, treeland, scrub and shrubland over steep short tussock grassland and pasture. Scrub and regenerating forest occupy many of the gullies with treeland and shrubland over extensive grassland. Open grassy spurs descend between forest and shrubland from the main spur to the valley floor. Common tree species are kanuka, kowhai, mahoe, ngaio and Hoheria angustifolia and common shrubs include Coprosma virescens, C. crassifolia, Hebe strictissima, Helichrysum lanceolata and Melicope simplex.

The land rises from bluffs at sea level up to 400 m and this altitude range is reflected in a gradient of coastal vegetation merging into montane shrubland/forest at higher levels. There is a diverse flora and regeneration is vigorous with many seedlings and saplings establishing on the forest floor and into shrubland. Plants of note include *Olearia fragrantissima*, *Parietaria debilis* and a single young matai on the valley floor. The fenced BPCT covenant contains several *Olearia fragrantissima* and there are many more outside the fenced area. Together this population is the largest on Banks Peninsula (Walls 2001, 2010). With the exception of the fenced covenant the site is grazed by cattle and sheep and in places where stock have access, the forest floor is bare.

Common indigenous bird species recorded from the site are bellbird, grey warbler, swamp harrier, South Island fantail and silvereye (Walls 2010). South Island riflemen, a species that is uncommon within the Herbert Ecological District, has also been recorded at the site (Jensen 2014).

Extent of Site of Ecological Significance

The site includes the indigenous forest, treeland, scrub and shrubland communities on the east to south-east facing slopes of Decanter Bay Valley. There are some large areas of silver tussock and pasture on steep slopes within the site that have been

included because excluding them would fragment the site and reduce its ecological integrity.

Assessment Summary

The Decanter Bay Valley Site has been evaluated against the criteria for determining significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna listed in Appendix 3 of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (Environment Canterbury, 2013) (see below) referring also to the Wildland Consultants (2013) Guidelines and advice from the relevant Specialist Ecologist Groups. Under these criteria the site is ecologically significant because it meets the representativeness (criteria 1 and 2), rarity/distinctiveness (criteria 3, 4, 5 and 6) and diversity and pattern criteria (criterion 7).

Assessment against Significance Criteria

Representativeness

1. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that is representative, typical or characteristic of the natural diversity of the relevant ecological district. This can include degraded examples where they are some of the best remaining examples of their type, or represent all that remains of indigenous biodiversity in some areas.

The site is significant under this criterion.

The mosaic of forest, treeland, scrub and shrubland over steep short tussock grassland is typical of indigenous vegetation on steep lowland slopes on the drier northern side of the Herbert Ecological District. Although largely second-growth, the vegetation on the higher slopes also contains large old totara (*Podocarpus totara*, *P. hallii* and hybrids) and broadleaf which are remnants of the original forest cover (Jensen 2014, Walls 2010). Although the structure and composition of the vegetation has been modified by grazing, the flora is diverse and representative and regeneration is vigorous with many seedlings and saplings establishing on the forest floor and into shrubland (Jensen 2014).

The indigenous invertebrate assemblage is diverse and representative of the habitat types that occur within the site (Wildland Consultants 2014).

2. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that is a relatively large example of its type within the relevant ecological district.

The site is significant under this criterion.

It is a large example of indigenous forest, treeland, scrub and shrubland on lowland hill slopes in the Herbert Ecological District.

Rarity/Distinctiveness

3. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that has been reduced to less than 20% of its former extent in the Region, or relevant land environment, ecological district, or freshwater environment.

The forest within the site is significant under this criterion.

At the ecological district (and ecological region) scale indigenous forest has been reduced to less than 20%. Banks Peninsula, including the Akaroa Ecological District, was almost entirely forested prior to the arrival of humans (Harding 2009, Wilson 2013). The present extent of all indigenous forest in the ED is estimated to be 7% (10.9% including manuka and/or kanuka) (New Zealand Landcover Database (Version 4)).

There is no accurate information to assess the change in extent of indigenous scrub and shrublands within the ecological district, but the extent of all indigenous vegetation (as a percentage of the ecological district) as mapped by the New Zealand Landcover Database (Version 4) is only 14.5%.

4. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that supports an indigenous species that is threatened, at risk, or uncommon, nationally or within the relevant ecological district.

The site is significant under this criterion.

It supports a number of indigenous plant and invertebrate species that are nationally At Risk and/or endemic to Banks Peninsula and plant, invertebrate and bird species that are uncommon within the ecological district or region.

Plants

The site contains the largest population of *Olearia fragrantissima* on Banks Peninsula. This species has a conservation status of the nationally (At Risk – Declining). There are an estimated 150-200 *Olearia fragrantissima* trees on the north-western slopes above Duncan Stream and Decanter Bay within three adjacent sites with a combined area of about 40ha. A few more plants grow near the Menzies Bay Road (Walls 2001).

Nationally At Risk plant species (de Lange et al. 2013) recorded from the site (Jensen 2014, Walls 2010, Walls 2001) are:

- Aciphylla subflabellata (At Risk Declining)
- Chenopodium allanii (At Risk Naturally Uncommon)
- Coprosma virescens (At Risk Declining)
- Olearia fragrantissima (At Risk Declining)
- Raoulia monroi (At Risk Declining)
- Hebe strictissima (At Risk Naturally Uncommon, endemic to Banks Peninsula)
- Leptinella minor (At Risk Naturally Uncommon, endemic to Banks Peninsula)
- Pseudopanax ferox (At Risk Naturally Uncommon)
- Senecio glaucophyllus subsp. basinudus (At Risk Naturally Uncommon)

Four of these nationally At Risk plants occur within the BPCT covenant (Walls 2010):

- Brachyglottis sciadophila (At Risk Declining)
- Coprosma virescens (At Risk Declining)
- Hebe strictissima (At Risk Naturally Uncommon, endemic to Banks Peninsula)
- Olearia fragrantissima (At Risk Declining)

Plant species recorded from the site (Jensen 2014) that are "uncommon to rare or very local" on Banks Peninsula (Wilson 2013) are:

- Epilobium cinereum
- Histiopteris incisa
- Pyrrosia eleagnifolia

Invertebrates

Nationally At Risk invertebrate species recorded from the site (Wildland Consultants 2014) are:

- Kikihia new species (Banks Peninsula green cicada) (endemic to Banks Peninsula)
- Zelleria sphenota (mistletoe miner) (At Risk Declining)
- Gadira petraula (At Risk Naturally Uncommon)
- Declana griseata (mistletoe moth) (At Risk Declining)
- Tatosoma agrionata (mistletoe carpet moth) (At Risk Declining)
- Bityla sericea (At Risk Naturally Uncommon)

Invertebrate species recorded from the site (Wildland Consultants 2014) that are uncommon within the ecological district are:

- Rhodopsalta microdora
- Phycomorpha metachrysa (milktree fruit moth)
- Meterana octans (milktree moth)
- Asterivora chatuidea (Helichrysum jet)
- Nola parvitis

Birds

South Island rifleman, a species that is uncommon within the Herbert Ecological District, occurs within the site (Jensen 2014).

5. The site contains indigenous vegetation or an indigenous species at its distribution limit within Canterbury Region or nationally.

The site is significant under this criterion.

There are four species that are at their southern national or regional distributional limits on Banks Peninsula and one that is at its northern national limit (Wilson 2013). These species are (Jensen 2014):

- Alectryon excelsus (southern regional limit)
- Asplenium oblongifolium (southern national limit)
- Passiflora tetrandra (southern national limit)
- Piper excelsum (southern national limit)
- Olearia fragrantissima (northern national limit)
- 6. Indigenous vegetation or an association of indigenous species that is distinctive, of restricted occurrence, occurs within an originally rare ecosystem, or has developed as a result of an unusual environmental factor or combinations of factors.

The site is significant under this criterion.

There are igneous bluffs, scarps and rock outcrops throughout the site. At a national scale, basic cliffs, scarps and tors are an originally rare ecosystem (Williams et al. 2007). Where indigenous vegetation occurs on these features within the site they are significant under this criterion.

Diversity and Pattern

7. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that contains a high diversity of indigenous ecosystem or habitat types, indigenous taxa, or has changes in species composition reflecting the existence of diverse natural features or ecological gradients.

The site is significant under this criterion.

It supports a very diverse range of indigenous plant taxa. Ninety-six species were recorded at the site in a recent botanical survey (Jensen 2014). Vegetation composition and canopy varies across the site in a complex pattern depending on slope, substrate, altitude, moisture availability, exposure, distance from the coast and historic human disturbance. Species such as native iceplant (*Disphyma australe*), *Passiflora tetrandra, Senecio glaucophyllus subsp. basinudus* and *Apium prostratum* are only found near the coast. The occurrence of titoki, ngaio, kawakawa and shining spleenwort also reflects the influence of the coastal environment (Jensen 2014).

A high diversity of indigenous moths and cicadas were also recorded at the site, including a number of nationally At Risk and uncommon species (Wildland Consultants 2014).

Ecological Context

8. Vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that provides or contributes to an important ecological linkage or network, or provides an important buffering function.

The site is not significant under this criterion. The forest, treeland, scrub and shrublands that make up the site are surrounded by farmed grassland and are distant from other areas of indigenous forest, treeland, scrub and shrublands in the surrounding landscape.

Indigenous vegetation buffers the small steep tributary streams that drain into Duncan Stream and canopy cover is dense along the riparian margins. However, this buffering function is not important enough to meet the threshold for significance under this criterion at this site.

9. A wetland which plays an important hydrological, biological or ecological role in the natural functioning of a river or coastal system.

The site is not significant under this criterion. There are no wetlands within the site that meet this criterion.

10. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that provides important habitat (including refuges from predation, or key habitat for feeding, breeding, or resting) for indigenous species, either seasonally or permanently.

The site is significant under this criterion.

The size, diversity and relative intactness of the vegetation means that the site provides important habitat for common indigenous birds, three species of lizard (Walls 2010) and a diverse range of invertebrates including a number of nationally At Risk and uncommon species (Wildland Consultants 2014).

Existing Protection Status

3.7 ha (approximately 2%) of the site is protected by a BPCT covenant. The remainder of the site is not legally protected.

Threats and risks	Management recommendations	Support package options
The BPCT covenant is fenced (although Walls (2010) noted that at the time the covenant was still accessible to sheep). The remainder of the site is grazed by stock.	Consider fencing other areas within the site. High priority areas are those with more mature forest and unfenced areas of Olearia fragrantissima.	 Discussion with landowner about the benefits to biodiversity of fencing and the options available for stock control. Assistance available as appropriate.
Biodiversity pest plants. There are few weeds of ecological concern and no serious woody weeds (Jensen 2014, Walls 2010). Pigs ear is present on coastal rocks.	 Consider controlling pigs ear to protect rock out-crop and shrubland values. Consider ongoing surveillance for, and control if detected, of other biodiversity pest plants such as banana passionfruit and sycamore that are known to occur in the vicinity of the site. 	 Advice and guidance for landowner about monitoring and control of pest plants. Assistance available as appropriate.
Pest animals. Possums and rabbits numbers are low as a result of wider control programmes on Banks Peninsula but Walls (2010) noted some damage to seedlings in BPCT covenant. An increase in rabbit and/or possums populations would threaten the establishment and survival of Olearia fragrantissima seedlings.	Consider controlling rabbit and possum numbers if populations increase. Any additional pest animal control (e.g. trapping or poisoning of hedgehogs, stoats, cats and rats) would benefit native fauna (birds, lizards and larger invertebrates).	 Advice and guidance for landowner about monitoring and control of pest animals. Assistance available as appropriate.

References

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Assessment completed by: Scott Hooson

Date: 17 December 2014

Statement completed by: Scott Hooson

Date: 17 December 2014

Statement updated by: XXX Date: XXX

PLEASE NOTE THIS STATEMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF ECOSYSTEMS, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THE SITE MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE OF ITS ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

Appendix 1: Plant Species List

Sourced from Jensen unpubl. data (2014).

N.B. exotic species were not recorded during this survey.

Scientific Name	Common Name(s)
Indigenous species	
Indigenous species	
Acaena anserinifolia	bidibidi, piripiri
Acaena juvenca	bidibidi, piripiri
Aciphylla subflabellata	grassland speargrass
Alectryon excelsus	titoki
Apium prostratum	New Zealand celery
Asplenium appendiculatum	ground spleenwort
Asplenium flabellifolium	necklace fern
Asplenium gracillimum	Heckiace lefff
Asplenium hookerianum	Hooker's spleenwort
Asplenium oblongifolium	shining spleenwort, huruhuruwhenua
Athnosachne solandri	<u> </u>
Blechnum fluviatile	native wheatgrass, blue wheatgrass kiwakiwa
	little hard fern
Blechnum penna-marina	
Calystegia tuguriorum	NZ bindweed, pōwhiwhi
Carex resectans	a - Constant and a second by a constant
Carmichaelia australis	native broom, common broom
Carpodetus serratus	marbleleaf, putaputāwētā
Chenopodium allanii	
Clematis afoliata	leafless clematis
Clematis foetida	yellow clematis
Convolvulus waitaha	grass convolvulus
Coprosma areolata	mingimingi, mikimiki
Coprosma crassifolia	thick-leaved coprosma, mikimiki
Coprosma propinqua	mingimingi, mikimiki
Coprosma rhamnoides	mingimingi, mikimiki
Coprosma rotundifolia	round-leaved coprosma, mikimiki
Coprosma virescens	mikimiki
Cordyline australis	cabbage tree, tī kōuka
Corokia cotoneaster	korokio
Corynocarpus laevigatus	karaka
Crassula colligata	stonecrop
Cyathea smithii	Smith's tree fern, kātote
Dichelachne crinita	plume grass
Dichondra repens	dichondra
Disphyma australe	NZ iceplant
Einadia triandra	pigweed
Epilobium cinereum	willow herb
Fuchsia excorticata	tree fuchsia, kōtukutuku
Fuchsia x colensoi	
Griselinia littoralis	broadleaf, kāpuka
Hebe strictissima	Banks Peninsula hebe

Helichrysum lanceolatum	niniao
Histiopteris incisa	water fern, mātātā
Hoheria angustifolia	narrow-leaved lacebark, houhere
Hydrocotyle moschata	pennywort
Ileostylus micranthus	green mistletoe
Juncus distegus	wiwi
Juncus edgariae	leafless rush, wi
Kunzea robusta	kānuka
Leptinella minor	Banks Peninsula button daisy
Libertia ixioides	mikoikoi, native iris
Lophomyrtus obcordata	rōhutu, NZ myrtle
Luzula banksiana var. orina	woodrush
Melicope simplex	poataniwha
Melicytus alpinus	porcupine shrub
Melicytus ramiflorus	māhoe, whiteywood
Metrosideros diffusa	white climbing rātā
Microsorum pustulatum	hounds tongue, kōwaowao
Muehlenbeckia australis	large-leaved pōhuehue
Muehlenbeckia complexa	scrub pōhuehue, wire vine
Myoporum laetum	ngaio
Myrsine australis	red māpou, red matipo
Myrsine divaricata	weeping matipo, weeping māpou
Olearia fragrantissima	fragrant tree daisy
Oxalis exilis	yellow oxalis
Parietaria debilis	NZ pellitory
Parsonsia capsularis	native jasmine, akakaikiore
Parsonsia heterophylla	native jasmine, akakaikiore
Passiflora tetrandra	native passion vine
Pennantia corymbosa	kaikōmako, ducks foot
Piper excelsum	kawakawa
Pittosporum eugenioides	lemonwood, tarātā
Pittosporum tenuifolium	kōhūhū, black matipo
Plagianthus regius	lowland ribbonwood, mānatu
Poa cita	silver tussock, wī
Poa matthewsii	Matthew's poa
Podocarpus cunninghamii	mountain tōtara, thin-barked tōtara
Polystichum oculatum	shield fern
Prumnopitys taxifolia	mataī, black pine
Pseudopanax crassifolius	lancewood, horoeka
Pseudopanax ferox	fierce lancewood
Pteridium esculentum	bracken, rārahu, rauaruhe
Pyrrosia eleagnifolia	leatherleaf fern
Raoulia monroi	fan-leaved mat daisy
Ripogonum scandens	supplejack, kareao
Rubus cissoides	bush lawyer, tātarāmoa
Rubus schmidelioides	bush lawyer, tātarāmoa
Rubus squarrosus	leafless bush lawyer, tātarāmoa
Scandia geniculata	climbing aniseed
Senecio glaucophyllus subsp. basinudus	yellow rock groundsel
Senecio quadridentatus	cotton fireweed, pekapeka
Solanum laciniatum	poroporo
Sophora microphylla	small-leaved kōwhai
Streblus heterophyllus	small-leaved milk tree, tūrepo
St. Solds Hotorophyllas	Januar louvou mint troo, turopo

Urtica ferox	ongaonga, tree nettle
Wahlenbergia gracilis	

Appendix 2: Invertebrate Species List

Sourced from Wildland Consultants unpubl. data (2014)

NEUROPTERA	lacewings
Hemerobiidae	
Drepanacra binocula	
*Micromus tasmaniae	
HEMIPTERA	
Tibicinidae	cicada
Amphipsalta zelandica	clapping cicada
Kikihia new species	
Rhodopsalta microdora	
Pentatomidae	shieldbug
Dictyotis caenosus	
Miridae	
Bipuncticoris species 1	
Bipuncticoris species 2	
ORTHOPTERA	
Tettigoniidae	katydid
Conocephalus bilineatus	
Gryllidae	cricket
Pteronemobius bigelowi	
Acrididae	grasshoppers
Phaulacridium marginale	
Rhaphidophoridae	cave weta
Isoplectron armatum	
COLEOPTERA	
Carabidae	ground beetles
Neocicindella latecincta	tiger beetle
slender species	
Coccinellidae	
Coccinella leonina	ladybird
Scarabaeidae	chafers
Costelytra zelandica	
Odontria striata	striped chafer
HYMENOPTERA	
Colletidae	native bee
Leioproctus huakiwi	
Formicidae	ant
Monomorium antarcticum	
Ichneumonidae	
Netelia producta	
Pompilidae	spider wasp
Epipompilus insularis	
LEPIDOPTERA	
Hepialidae	porina moths
Wiseana copularis	
Nepticulidae	leaf miners
Stigmella ilsea	
Tineidae	

Erechthias fulguritella	
Psychidae	
Liothula omnivora	
Glyphipterigidae	
Glyphipterix cionophora	
Glyphipterix triselena	
Elachistidae	
Cosmiotes ombrodoca	
Cosmiotes ochroleuca	
Copromorphidae	
Phycomorpha metachrysa	
Momphidae	
Zapyastra calliphana	
Lyonetiidae	
Bedellia psammitis	
Yponomeutidae	
Zelleria sphenota	
Plutellidae	
Orthenches chlorocoma	
Plutella antiphona	
Gelechiidae	
Anisoplaca achyrota	
Kiwaia brontophora	
Oecophoridae	
Gymnobathra parca	
Hierodoris s-fractum	
Izatha huttoni	
Izatha katadiktya	
Izatha convulsella	
Leptocroca species	
Stathmopoda horticola	
Tingena melinella	
Trachypepla euryleucota	
Choreutidae	jets
Asterivora chatuidea	jets
Tortricidae	leaf rollers
Apoctena flavescens	lear follers
Capua semiferana	
Catamacta gavisana	
Ctenopseustis obliquana	
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Harmologa amplexana Planotortrix notophaea	
Planotortrix notopriaea Planotortrix excessana	
New genus and species	
Strepsicrates ejectana	
Thyrididae	
Morova subfasciata	
Pyralidae Pyralidae farinaria	
Patagoniodes farinaria	
*Stericta carbonalis	
Crambidae	
Deana hybreasalis Eudonia cymatias	
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Eudonia mangangutia	
Eudonia manganeutis	
Eudonia philerga Eudonia leptalea	
Eudonia sabulosella	
Eudonia submarginalis	
Gadira acerella	
Gadira petraula	
Orocrambus enchophorus	
Orocrambus flexuosellus	
Orocrambus ramosellus	
Orocrambus vittellus	
Orocrambus vulgaris	
Udea flavidalis	
Udea marmarina	
Uresiphita maorialis	kowhai moth
GEOMETRIDAE	
Anachloris subochraria	
Asaphodes abrogata	
Asaphodes beata	
Austrocidaria gobiata	
Austrocidaria similata	
*Chloroclystis filata	
Chloroclystis inductata	
Cleora scriptaria	
Declana griseata	
Declana leptomera	
Declana junctilinea	
Epyaxa lucidata	
Epyaxa rosearia	
Epyaxa venipunctata	
Epiphyrne undosata	
Epiphyrne verriculata	
Gellonia pannularia	
Homodotis megaspilata	
Helastia cinerearia	
Helastia corcularia	
Helastia triphragma	
Hydriomena deltoidata	
Hydriomena rixata	
Ischalis fortinata	
Pasiphila testulatus	
Pasiphila urticae	
Poecilasthena schistaria	
Pseudocoremia indistincta	
Pseudocoremia pergrata	
Scopula rubraria	
Tatosoma agrionata	
Xyridacma ustaria	
Xyridacma veronicae	
Xanthorhoe semifissata	
Noctuidae	
Agrotis ipsilon	
Bityla defigurata	
Dityla doligalata	

Bityla sericea	
Cosmodes elegans	
Graphania insignis	
Graphania beata	
Graphania lignana	
Graphania morosa	
Graphania mutans	
Graphania plena	
Graphania ustistriga	
Meterana decorata	
Meterana octans	
Meterana ochthistis	
Mythimna separata	
Persectania aversa	
Tmetolophota atristriga	
Tmetolophota propria	
Erebidae	
Celama parvitis	
Nyctemera annulata	magpie moth
Rhapsa scotoscialis	
Lycaenidae	coppers/ blues
Lycaena "comon copper" complex	
Zizina oxleyi	
Nymphalidae	admirals
Vanessa gonerilla	red admiral
Pieridae	white butterfly
*Pieris rapae	
PHASMIDA	stick insects
Pachymorpha hystriculea	lesser spiny