



## Understanding the RMA and how to get involved

1.1



## **Disclaimer**

Although every effort has been made to ensure this guide is as accurate as possible, the Ministry for the Environment will not be held responsible for any action arising out of its use. If you are uncertain about issues raised in this guide then direct reference should be made to the Resource Management Act and further expert advice sought if necessary.

This document may be cited as: Ministry for the Environment. 2021.  
*Understanding the RMA and how to get involved. An everyday guide to the Resource Management Act: 1.1.* Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.

Published in February 2021 by the  
Ministry for the Environment  
Manatū Mō Te Taiao  
PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143, New Zealand

ISBN: 978-1-99-003318-6  
Publication number: ME 1530

© Crown copyright New Zealand 2021

This document is available on the Ministry for the Environment website:  
[environment.govt.nz](https://environment.govt.nz).

# Contents

---

Introduction	4
About the everyday guides	4
About the Resource Management Act and why we need one	5
Who looks after the environment and how	6
All about plans	8
How a council develops a plan	8
How you can have a say about plans	9
When you need a resource consent	11
Notifying a consent application	12
Decision	12
How you can have a say on a resource consent	13
Appealing a decision	14
Playing by the rules	16
Resolving RMA concerns	17
Who to contact first	17
Your local council	17
Who else you can go to	18
Glossary	24

# Introduction

---

Most people have heard of the Resource Management Act (RMA), but not everyone is sure what the Act means to them. This guide explains what the RMA does, how it works, and how it affects you in your daily life.

It is the first in a series of 13 guides called An Everyday Guide to the Resource Management Act (see more details below).

The guide has a glossary of RMA terms at the end. Words defined in the glossary are coloured [light green](#).

## About the everyday guides

These guides are intended to help people work with their councils. If you're dealing with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), a board of inquiry, or the Environment Court (see the glossary to learn more about these), you might need more technical advice from the EPA ([www.epa.govt.nz](http://www.epa.govt.nz)) or the Environment Court ([environmentcourt.govt.nz](http://environmentcourt.govt.nz)).

For more information about specific parts of the RMA process, see the [full set of guides](#) on our website.

# About the Resource Management Act and why we need one

---

The Resource Management Act 1991 (usually called the RMA) is the main piece of legislation that sets out how we should manage our environment. It's based on the idea of the sustainable management of our resources, and it encourages us (as communities and as individuals) to plan for the future of our environment.

The RMA means that councils set rules and requirements to manage activities ranging from building houses, clearing vegetation and moving earth, to taking water from a stream. Its purpose is to ensure activities won't harm our neighbours or communities, or damage the air, water, soil and ecosystems that we and future generations need to survive.

The RMA encourages us to get involved in deciding what's best for the environment by telling our local councils what we value about it. This is because you – as locals – are best placed to know your own surroundings, and you should be involved in deciding what we need to protect and how.

Although the RMA is a guide to what's important in our environment, it generally leaves the decisions about how to manage it in the hands of the local community. However, in matters of national significance (which could affect everybody in the country), central government can direct how environmental resources will be used, through national direction.

## The RMA:

- helps to look after the environment
- is based in the idea of sustainably managing resources
- encourages us to get involved in decisions about our environment.

## WHAT ARE RESOURCES?

In the context of the RMA, resources include air, land, soil, water, minerals, energy, plants, animals and structures.

# Who looks after the environment and how

---

Three different types of councils have day-to-day responsibility for looking after the environment under the RMA.

The EPA, board of inquiry and the Environment Court sometimes get involved with larger (or nationally significant) projects.

The Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Conservation also play a part in environmental management.

Councils have one of the biggest jobs under the RMA. New Zealand currently has three types of councils:

- Eleven **regional councils**. Among other things, they manage the rivers, the air, the coast and soil – resources that are not usually owned by individuals.
- Sixty-one **territorial authorities** (11 city and 50 district councils). They do a lot of their work under the Local Government Act – like catching stray dogs, mowing rugby fields, removing abandoned cars and collecting your rubbish. But the RMA also requires them to look at the ways local people use land and how this can affect the environment: noise; new subdivisions and land development; plans to clear native bush or change historic buildings; or anything else that might affect what the community has agreed is important.
- Six **unitary authorities**. These do the jobs of both regional councils and territorial authorities.

The RMA also provides for the **Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)** to process applications for nationally significant proposals instead of local councils. These proposals might involve certain **resource consent** applications or requests to change a district plan, among other matters. The EPA processes the applications, while the actual decisions are made by a **board of inquiry** or the **Environment Court**. Under the RMA, the EPA can also have a role in compliance, monitoring and enforcement.

The other key players involved in looking after the environment are the **Ministry for the Environment** and the **Department of Conservation**.

- The Ministry advises the Government on environmental issues and helps the Minister for the Environment keep an eye on the way councils do their jobs under the RMA.
- The Department of Conservation and the Minister of Conservation have a particular role under the RMA to oversee the way the coastal environment is managed.

The **Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment** is an office with an overview of the way the environment is managed in New Zealand. The commissioner investigates emerging environmental issues and may also examine concerns raised by the public. The commissioner usually makes recommendations to the appropriate agency on how to improve its performance.

# All about plans

---

District and regional plans are one of the most important aspects of the RMA. The RMA says councils must prepare plans to help them manage the environment in their area and perform their roles. These plans tell you what you can or cannot do, and if you might need specific permission to use a resource.

There are several different types of plans. Some councils have these plans integrated into a single document.

- **Regional policy statements** set the basic direction for integrated environmental management in a region.
- **Regional plans** tend to focus on particular parts of the environment, like the coast, soil, a river or the air.
- **District plans** concern the use and development of land, including managing subdivision, noise, natural hazards and contaminated land.
- When central government wants to direct local councils on environmental issues, it can issue **national policy statements**, set **national environmental standards** or **national planning standards**, or pass regulations. To find more about this, see **Understanding national direction**.

## How a council develops a plan

### Planning processes

The processes for councils to develop a plan are set under **Schedule 1 of the RMA**.

- **Standard plan-making process**. This is the most common pathway, which involves:
  - notifying the new or amended plan (called a proposed plan)
  - allowing people to have a say on it (making **submissions**)
  - holding a public **hearing**
  - making a final decision on what the plan should say
  - allowing people to make appeals to the **Environment Court**.



There are also two alternative methods:

- **Freshwater planning process.** If a regional council or unitary authority develops a regional policy statement or regional plan that deals with freshwater, it must follow this process.
- **Streamlined planning process.** For plans that deal with any other matters (not freshwater), councils can request permission from the Minister for the Environment to use this option.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [Getting involved in council plans](#) provides details of these three processes.

## How you can have a say about plans

We all have an opinion on what we like about living in an area, how the environment is being managed or where we might like to see change in the future. The RMA encourages people to get involved and provides a number of opportunities for you to tell the council or resource consent applicants what you think.

Your council will have information about plans on its website, and whether it is reviewing or changing an existing plan or developing a new one. These processes can take several years and involve a number of steps. So contact your council and let them know you are interested and would like to receive information about this.

Rates notices can also contain information about a council's plans and when it might be seeking views from the public. Councils will often want to get a sense of how the community feels about issues in their district or region by holding workshops, drop-in sessions, information evenings or meetings. They may also use social media to seek comments, and some provide a draft plan for comments before seeking any formal submissions. Councils must provide a draft plan to iwi for comments.

All councils have plans in place already under the RMA. However, this does not mean you no longer have a say on a development in your neighbourhood, or areas of concern. Councils often decide to change a plan. They do this by preparing a change (or a variation if their first plan is not **operative**). These changes have to go through the same process outlined above, so you can still have your say. Also, every council has to review each provision of its plans at least every 10 years. Members of the public can also propose changes to a plan.

## Making a submission

When the council is ready to invite [submissions](#) it will put a summary notice in the newspaper as well as information on its website. You can also check out a physical or digital copy of the proposed plan at the local public library, and copies are usually available on the council website.

In most planning processes, anyone can make a submission on what is (or isn't and should be) in a policy statement, or a council's proposed plan. This involves writing down what you think about the statement or plan. The council has to consider all the submissions it gets.

**Submission forms:** If you want to make a submission, you need to use the appropriate form. The council can provide you with the right form to use.

## Further submissions

In some cases, you also get the opportunity to comment on other people's submissions by making a [further submission](#). The council normally holds public [hearings](#), so you can speak about your submission if you want to.

## What happens next

The plan only comes into full effect once everybody's comments have been dealt with. At this point, the plan is said to be '[operative](#)'.

### MORE INFORMATION

- [Getting involved in council plans](#)
- [Making a submission about a proposed plan or resource consent](#)
- [Appearing at a hearing about a proposed plan or resource consent](#)

# When you need a resource consent

You might have heard of the requirement to get a **resource consent** under the RMA. This applies when you want to do something that your district plan doesn't allow as of right. Or, in the case of a regional plan, the plan will tell you when you need to get a resource consent.

This could be the case if you're thinking about buying some land, a business or a building, or you want to subdivide land – so it's a good idea to talk to your local city or district council first. Council staff can help you look through the plans and work out whether you'll need a consent.

Resource consents are obtained from regional, district and city councils. When carrying out this function, councils are known as **consent authorities**. In some cases, a **board of inquiry** or the **Environment Court** may also authorise a resource consent.

The table below lists the types of consents, the authorities that issue them and examples of activities.

## Consent types and authorities

Consent type	Consent authority	Examples
Land-use consent	Regional councils and/or district and city councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To erect a building.</li><li>To convert a garage in a residential neighbourhood into a shop.</li><li>To undertake earthworks to construct a residential building platform.</li></ul>
Subdivision consent	District and city councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To divide a property into two or more new titles, using fee simple or unit title mechanisms.</li></ul>
Coastal permit	Regional councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To build a wharf on the coast below the mean high-water springs mark.</li><li>To discharge stormwater into coastal waters.</li></ul>
Water permit	Regional councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To take water from a river for irrigation.</li><li>To build a dam in the bed of a river.</li></ul>
Discharge permit	Regional councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To discharge stormwater from a service station through a pipe directly into a lake.</li><li>To discharge exhaust fumes from a wood-curing kiln into the air.</li></ul>

# Notifying a consent application

The council can process your application in one of three ways, depending on what the RMA, [national environmental standard](#), or relevant [plan](#) says and the kind of activity you're proposing. Your council will tell you whether or not your application will be limited or publicly notified.

1. **Non-notified.** The council may decide the general public need not be involved. In fact, most resource consent applications fall into this category, which means there is no submission or hearings process.
2. **Publicly notified.** In this category, the council may decide that a proposal will, or is likely to, have an effect on the environment that is 'more than minor', or there are special circumstances which mean the public need to be notified and have the opportunity to provide a submission.
3. **Limited notification.** The council notifies only those people who it considers might be affected by your proposal.

## Publicly notified applications

Anyone can make a submission on applications that have been publicly notified. The only exception is if you're a trade competitor to someone else's business and you want to oppose their application only for trade or business reasons. A public [hearing](#) is usually held to give applicants and submitters a chance to speak, and there may also be informal pre-hearing meetings.

## Decision

Councils can decide to either grant or decline a consent application.

## Controlled activities

Some proposals are for [controlled activities](#), which means that applications to do these activities must be granted, with a few exceptions. Even so, when granting consent, the council usually puts some conditions on it. It will also probably check later that what you are doing is in line with your resource consent. This could mean a council officer will visit the site and assess compliance with consent conditions, or require you to monitor the activity.

## Duration of consent

Councils also decide how long to grant resource consent for. Some consents (like subdivision) last forever, while others might last only for a couple of years (for example, a permit to discharge a contaminant into air or water).

### MORE INFORMATION

- [Applying for a resource consent](#)
- [Compliance, monitoring and enforcement](#)

## How you can have a say on a resource consent

### You can give or refuse your approval for projects that could affect you directly

The resource consent applicant might approach a person for written approval for something they want to do.

If the person gives their written approval, the council will not consider any effects on that person when assessing the resource consent application. If a written approval is not obtained, the council might notify the application if it considers the effects on the person are at least minor. This means it will inform the person and give them an opportunity to make a submission to the council.

### MORE INFORMATION

- [Information for affected persons](#)

### You can make a submission on limited notified applications

If the effects of a proposed activity on the environment generally are not more than minor, the council might decide to notify the application only to people it considers are affected. This is called limited notification. Anyone who has already given written approval is not considered affected – and is not notified.

Those directly notified by the council can make a [submission](#) on the consent application. The council will consider all the submissions it receives, together with the application, and decide whether or not to grant the resource consent. If everyone affected has given their approval, the application will generally not be notified.

## You can make a submission on publicly notified applications

Sometimes a council will notify the public about a resource consent application. When this happens, generally anybody can make a submission. The council will consider all the submissions it receives, together with the application, and decide whether or not to grant the consent.

To publicly notify an application, the council puts a notice on its website and a summary of this in the newspaper, with the web address for more information. The notice should stay on the website while submissions are able to be made. If you want to make a submission, you should give the council an email or other electronic address for future correspondence.

### MORE INFORMATION

- [Making a submission about a proposed plan or resource](#)

## Appealing a decision

If you make a submission on a plan under the standard planning process, have applied for a resource consent or submitted on an application, but you don't like the council's decision, you can ask the [Environment Court](#) to overturn it.

The Environment Court is made up of judges and commissioners who review the case. It will consider the council decision and the positions of all parties who appear before it. You should get legal advice before you file an [appeal](#), because the court process can be expensive and time consuming for everybody. In some cases, you may need to prove you have enough money to pay for the applicant's legal fees, in case you lose the appeal and the Environment Court decides you were not justified in lodging it.

However, in many cases you may be able to sort out your case in [mediation](#), so you wouldn't have to go to court.

Only applicants or people who made a submission on a plan or resource consent application can appeal a council decision (with some restrictions

on appeals by trade competitors). But you might still be able to have your say in court. Even if you don't file an appeal, and someone else does, you could get involved by joining the appeal and appearing in court:

- as someone who made a submission, or
- as someone who has an interest greater than the general public.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [You and the Environment Court](#)

#### How can you have a say?

- Give your written approval to a project happening close to you.
- Make a submission on a plan or resource consent application.
- Appeal a council decision to the Environment Court.

# Playing by the rules

---

In life, we are all expected to bear the consequences of our actions. The RMA is no different. It sets out rights and responsibilities for all New Zealanders.

If you are not authorised to undertake a development that is not permitted by a rule or standard or authorised by a consent, you could face enforcement action, including prosecution. A range of penalties can apply, depending on the offence. Some offences have a maximum fine of \$1500. For others, you can be jailed for up to two years or fined up to \$300,000 (for individuals) or up to \$600,000 (for any parties other than individuals). It doesn't matter whether you deliberately set out to cause an offence or not.

Councils can also issue instant [infringement notices](#), which are a bit like traffic tickets. You might get one for dumping a car or some other minor offence. These fees can range from \$300 up to potentially \$2000 for an individual or \$4000 for a company or trust.

Councils can also give out [abatement notices](#), which mean people have to stop doing something that is affecting the environment. If you are served with an abatement notice, you can appeal to the Environment Court if you don't think it's fair, but this doesn't mean you can ignore the notice. If you don't comply with the notice you will be committing an offence and are likely to be prosecuted by the council.

Councils can also issue [excessive noise directions](#). These are often used to get someone to turn down their stereo or stop doing something else that's keeping the neighbours awake.

Anybody, including the council, can apply to the Environment Court for an [enforcement order](#) to get someone to stop doing something that may be affecting the environment. The Environment Court will hold a hearing. Enforcement orders are best suited to ongoing issues rather than urgent problems that need to be fixed quickly. However, the court can issue an interim enforcement order immediately to protect the environment while it considers the full enforcement order. Again, if you don't comply with an enforcement order, you are committing an offence.

## MORE INFORMATION

- [Compliance, monitoring and enforcement](#)



# Resolving RMA concerns

---

The RMA allows you to participate in decisions that affect you. However, if you are unhappy with a decision made under the RMA, there are several actions you can take and agencies you can approach for help.

## Who to contact first

If you've seen something happening that you think is bad for the environment – such as someone burning harmful waste or cutting down a stand of native trees – then you should first approach the person who's actually doing it, if you are comfortable with doing that. They might have approval from the council or have some other explanation. However, if you're not happy with their answer or not comfortable approaching them, you should contact your local council.

## Your local council

If you think something has been done or is about to be done that will affect your property or the environment, or you disagree with the way your council is handling a resource issue in your area, get in touch with the council.

**District and city councils** are generally responsible for making decisions about:

- the effects of land use
- the effects of activities on the surface of rivers and lakes
- noise
- subdivision.

**Regional councils** are generally responsible for making decisions about:

- discharges of contaminants to land, air or water
- water quality and quantity
- the coastal marine area
- soil conservation
- land use to avoid natural hazards.

People must undertake their activities in accordance with the RMA, and any rules in a national environmental standard, regulation or resource

consent. If a council has received a complaint or has been checking and thinks someone is not obeying these rules, they can make someone comply by taking enforcement action.

If you have made a complaint and you are not happy with how council staff or management have addressed your concern, you can take the matter up with the chief executive officer or an elected representative (councillor or community board member).

For details about your local council, visit:

- [Local Government New Zealand](#)
- [www.localcouncils.govt.nz](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz).

## Who else you can go to

If you have tried to resolve your concern with the council, but are not satisfied, there are other people, organisations or agencies you can approach. Each has a different role and responsibilities, which are set out here.

### Local RMA advice

Agencies in your local community who can give advice include:

- the [Citizens Advice Bureaus](#)
- environment and legal centres
- [legal advisers](#)
- planning consultants.

Check your community directory or the [Yellow Pages](#) for contact details.

### The Environment Court

This is the main judicial decision-making body under the RMA. It hears appeals from people who disagree with decisions made by local councils under the RMA. The court can uphold a council's decision, or it can overturn it. You can ask the court to overturn any council decision to do with a plan or resource consent application – but only if you have already made a submission, you fit the criteria,<sup>1</sup> or you have become a party to an appeal started by another submitter.

---

<sup>1</sup> To join as a party you have to have an interest greater than the public generally and not be raising trade competition matters.

The court will expect all parties to try to resolve the matter first through [mediation](#), or at least narrow down the matters in dispute through this process. If the matter is resolved through mediation, a consent order will be signed setting out the agreed decision – this avoids a court hearing. You should get legal advice before you file an appeal.

There are other circumstances where you may want to pursue a matter in the Environment Court:

- You can apply to the court for an [enforcement order](#) to stop someone doing something that may be affecting the environment. Enforcement orders work best for ongoing rather than urgent problems. The court can quickly issue an interim enforcement order so the environment is protected while it considers a full enforcement order.
- You can lodge an [appeal](#) if you disagree with an [abatement notice](#) that a council has sent you.
- You can apply for a declaration to seek clarification on uncertainties in the interpretation of the RMA, or inconsistency between documents under the RMA. Your lawyer can advise you on whether this is necessary.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [You and the Environment Court](#)
- [Contact the Environment Court](#)

## The District and High Court

If you disagree with a decision from the Environment Court or district court, you can appeal to the High Court. The appeal can only be on points of law. You cannot ask for a re-hearing of everything heard by the Environment Court when it made its decision.

District courts deal with RMA prosecutions. Councils or individuals can prosecute parties who fail to comply with the RMA, for example by discharging contaminants illegally. The District Court can award fines of up to \$300,000 or up to two years in prison to individuals, or \$600,000 to companies who are found guilty.

The district court also deals with unpaid or challenged infringement notices.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.justice.govt.nz/courts/high-court](http://www.justice.govt.nz/courts/high-court)
- [The Environment Court: Awarding and securing costs](#)
- [www.ombudsman.govt.nz](http://www.ombudsman.govt.nz)

## Office of the Ombudsman

The [Office of the Ombudsman](#) is independent of any other government agency and reports to Parliament. It investigates complaints about processes run by central, regional and local government organisations or agencies. It can look into any decision made by a government agency that affects an individual personally. It also decides whether a Minister of the Crown, or central, local or regional government, should have to release information that someone has asked for.

The office doesn't investigate decisions made by Ministers of the Crown or local bodies as a whole, although it can look into any advice they have been given. The office can't investigate matters that are subject to legal action, such as appeals before the Environment Court.

The Office of the Ombudsman will usually investigate a complaint only after you've tried to resolve it with the organisation concerned. It will look at whether the matter you are concerned about:

- appears to have been contrary to law
- was unreasonable, unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory
- was in accordance with a rule of law or a practice that is or may be unreasonable, unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory
- was based on a mistake of law or fact
- was wrong.

The Office of the Ombudsman usually resolves issues informally. But if it believes someone's complaint is well founded, it can recommend a local council puts things right. Local councils don't have to accept these recommendations, but usually do.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.ombudsman.govt.nz](http://www.ombudsman.govt.nz)

## Office of the Controller and Auditor-General

The **Office of the Controller and Auditor-General** (the office) is independent of any other government agency and reports to Parliament. It ensures government departments and ministries, state-owned enterprises, local councils and other public bodies are doing their jobs properly and according to the laws they work under.

The office can investigate how local councils spend public money. This includes keeping an eye on how they apply the RMA in their areas, and their processes and procedures. It cannot investigate local council policies.

The Office of the Controller and Auditor-General will sometimes follow up inquiries from members of the public about how a public body has used its resources. As well as financial issues, this includes accountability, performance, governance and behaviour. For example, it can investigate how a council has delegated its decision-making powers (as allowed under the RMA) to council officers. The office may report to Parliament or any other person following an investigation. While the office can make recommendations, it can't compel organisations to accept them.

### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.oag.govt.nz](http://www.oag.govt.nz)

## Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

The **Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment** (the commissioner) is also independent of other government agencies and reports to Parliament. The commissioner's primary objective is to contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of the environment in New Zealand. This is achieved through giving information and advice to Parliament, councils, businesses, **tangata whenua**, communities and other public agencies.

You can contact the commissioner if you have a complaint or are concerned about how a council or other body is managing the environment or their planning processes. The commissioner may provide advice or decide to investigate your concerns in more detail, depending on their significance and on the commissioner's current strategic direction.

The commissioner can investigate and report on any matter where the environment may be, or has been, adversely affected. The commissioner

has wide powers to obtain information and protect the confidentiality of information where appropriate. The commissioner can report findings and make recommendations, but cannot make binding rulings or reverse decisions made by public authorities.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.pce.parliament.nz](http://www.pce.parliament.nz)

## Minister and Ministry for the Environment

The [Ministry for the Environment](#) advises the Government on the environment and anything that might affect it. It is responsible for administering the RMA, drawing up environmental guidelines, developing national policy statements and national environmental standards, and working on any environmental problems that can't be fixed locally.

The Ministry helps the Minister for the Environment carry out their statutory powers under the RMA.

While the Ministry can, on behalf of the Minister, look into complaints on local issues and discuss the matter with the council, it can't reverse local council decisions or handle objections.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz)

## Environmental Protection Authority

The [Environmental Protection Authority](#) (EPA) is a Crown entity that receives and processes applications for proposals of national significance under the RMA. EPA staff can help if you have any queries or concerns about the processing of the applications it is managing. The EPA can also undertake compliance, enforcement and monitoring functions under the RMA.

#### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.epa.govt.nz](http://www.epa.govt.nz)

## Minister and Department of Conservation

Under the RMA, the Minister of Conservation has particular responsibilities for the coastal environment. These include preparing and adopting the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, approving regional coastal plans, and monitoring relevant permits and plans. The [Department of Conservation](#), in its role as a conservation advocate, can also take part in proceedings under the RMA.

You can contact the Minister of Conservation if you disagree with the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement or how the regional coastal plan or coastal permits are administered in your area.

### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

# Glossary

---

The purpose of this glossary is to help you understand the meaning of terms used in this guide. Some of these terms have specific legislative definitions in section 2 of the RMA.

<b>Abatement notice</b>	A request for compliance with the RMA within a specified time. Only councils and the EPA can issue these notices, which are used to get someone to stop or to start doing something.
<b>Appeal</b>	Request for a decision to be changed, predominately to the Environment Court.
<b>Board of inquiry</b>	A special board appointed by the Minister(s) to hear and decide a proposal of national significance.
<b>City or district council</b>	The bodies primarily responsible for managing the environmental effects of activities on land.
<b>Consent authority</b>	Regional, district or city councils when they are carrying out resource consent functions.
<b>Controlled activity</b>	Activities outlined in the RMA, plan or regulations as 'controlled' that require a resource consent. Resource consents for controlled activities must be granted except in certain circumstances.
<b>Department of Conservation (DOC)</b>	Administers land under the Conservation and National Parks Acts, and under the RMA it has a role in overseeing the management of the coastal environment.
<b>District plan</b>	A plan prepared by city or district councils to help them carry out their functions under the RMA.
<b>Enforcement order</b>	A way of getting someone to comply with the RMA. It differs from an abatement notice in that anybody (not just the council) can apply for an enforcement order against somebody else. These are issued by the Environment Court rather than the council.
<b>Environment</b>	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. ecosystems, including people and communities</li><li>b. natural and physical resources</li><li>c. amenity values</li><li>d. social, economic and cultural matters that affect the above.</li></ul>



<b>Environment Court</b>	A specialist court where people can appeal decisions made by councils on a policy statement or plan, or on a resource consent application; or where they can apply for an enforcement order, or seek a declaration.
<b>Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)</b>	Receives and processes applications for proposals of national significance under the RMA, and can have a role in RMA compliance and enforcement.
<b>Excessive noise direction</b>	Issued by a council to get people to reduce excessive noise to a reasonable level.
<b>Freshwater planning process</b>	Specific plan-making process councils must use for proposed regional policy statements and regional plans (including plan changes) that relate to freshwater.
<b>Further submission</b>	An opportunity for certain people to comment on other people's original submissions on a proposed plan or variation, by supporting or opposing these.
<b>Hearing</b>	Gives people who have already written submissions the chance to speak to the decision-maker, about what a council or an applicant is proposing.
<b>Infringement notice</b>	A written notice, accompanied by a fee, which informs a person that an offence has been committed under the RMA.
<b>Limited notification</b>	A council only notifies people who are affected by a resource consent application or proposed plan or plan change, and only those people can make a submission.
<b>Mediation</b>	A process to resolve disputes.
<b>Ministry for the Environment</b>	Advises the Government on policies, laws and other means to improve environmental management in New Zealand.
<b>National direction</b>	Supports local decision-making under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). This is provided using national policy statements (NPS), national environmental standards (NES) and national planning standards (planning standards).
<b>National environmental standards (NES)</b>	Regulations that prescribe technical and non-technical standards, methods or other requirements for land use and subdivision, use of the coastal marine area and beds of lakes and rivers, water take and use, discharges, or noise. Each regional, city or district council must enforce the same standard. In some circumstances where specified in the NES, councils can impose stricter or more lenient standards.

<b>National Planning Standards</b>	Are issued by the Minister for the Environment or the Minister of Conservation (for coastal marine area matters) to standardise elements of RMA plans and policy statements.
<b>National policy statements (NPS)</b>	Enable Government to prescribe objectives and policies for matters of national significance, which are relevant to achieving the sustainable management purpose of the RMA. A NPS may also give particular direction to local authorities as to how they need to give effect to the policies and objectives of the NPS.
<b>Non-notified application</b>	A resource consent application that a council decides does not require submissions (see publicly notified and limited notification).
<b>Office of the Ombudsman</b>	Investigates complaints about processes run by central, regional and local government organisations or agencies.
<b>Office of the Controller and Auditor-General</b>	Ensures that government departments and ministries, state-owned enterprises, local councils and other public bodies are doing their jobs properly and according to the laws they work under.
<b>Operative plan</b>	A proposed plan will only be 'operative' when the plan has gone through the full plan preparation process.
<b>Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment</b>	An independent adviser to the Government on environmental issues. The commissioner investigates emerging environmental issues, and concerns from the public.
<b>Plan</b>	A plan defined under the RMA, including regional plans and district plans.
<b>Publicly notified resource consent</b>	Means any person can make a submission on the consent application before the closure date.
<b>Regional council</b>	Primarily manage resources like the air, water, soils and the coastal marine area.
<b>Regional plan</b>	Can be prepared by regional councils, to help them manage the resources they are responsible for.
<b>Regional policy statement</b>	Must be prepared by all regional councils. They help set the direction for managing all resources across the region.

<b>Resource consent</b>	Permission from the local council for an activity that might affect the environment, and that isn't allowed 'as of right' under the district or regional plan.
<b>Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)</b>	New Zealand's main piece of environmental legislation. It provides a framework for managing the effects of activities on the environment.
<b>Standard plan-making process</b>	The regular process for a council to develop a plan or plan change, involving notifying people, receiving submissions and holding hearings.
<b>Streamlined planning process</b>	An alternative option to the standard planning process for a council to prepare an RMA plan or plan change. The proposed RMA plan or plan change must meet certain criteria, and must be directed by the Minister for the Environment (or the Minister of Conservation in the case of a regional coastal plan).
<b>Submission</b>	Comments, opinions, concerns, support or opposition about a proposed development, a designation, or a proposed policy statement or plan.
<b>Tangata whenua</b>	Tangata whenua in relation to a particular area, means the iwi, or hapū, that holds mana whenua over that area.
<b>Territorial authority</b>	City or district councils.
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Carry out the roles of both regional and district councils.
<b>Working day</b>	Any day except for a weekend day, Waitangi Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day, the Sovereign's birthday and Labour Day, and those days between (and including) 20 December and 10 January. Note: If Waitangi Day or Anzac Day falls on a weekend day, the following Monday is excluded.