

The shoreline of the West Coast region does not stay in one place. It changes position in response to storms, large waves and high tides. Landward movement of the shoreline, or coastal erosion, is usually in response to these natural processes.

However, many coastal properties on the West Coast have been built too close to the shoreline to accommodate these natural fluctuations or future landward trends in the position of the shoreline.



Coastal erosion: Reducing the risk to your property

◆ Treat your back garden as a buffer zone

Slow down the rate of landward retreat of the shoreline by planting as wide a buffer zone as possible of natural coastal vegetation, such as flax, between the shoreline and your property.

Where dunes are present, help enhance the protection afforded by the dunes by planting native species such as Spinifex and Pingao these are two of the most effective native sand-trapping plants.

◆ Get some advice

Check the information reports on the West Coast Regional Council website: www.wcrc.govt.nz. Reports have been prepared for Granity, Hector, Rapahoe and Blaketown. Further advice can be sought via the Council. However, there are no magic solutions, and ultimately retreating back from the coast may be the only option if erosion continues.

Be aware a resource consent is needed from the Regional Council for any earthworks within 50 m of the Coastal Marine Area on an open coastline, or 20 m elsewhere (i.e., the sides of a river mouth). Removing soil or other material too close to the coastal strip can accelerate the erosion process.

◆ Plan a retreat

Determine whether there is scope to relocate the buildings on your property, either further landward on your section, or to another location. This should be a particular consideration when planning to re-develop, upgrade or extend the property. Despite the up-front costs, on severely eroding coasts, relocation can often be the most cost-effective and appropriate solution in the longer-term. Relocating your dwelling may require a permit from the District Council.

The traditional 'solution' to such coastal erosion problems is to build a seawall to 'hold' or 'advance the line'. Such actions unfortunately are rarely the most effective option in the long-term, often being only effective for a few years, and can lead to a false sense of security and further development behind the seawall. Seawalls can also exacerbate erosion along adjacent sections of coast.

Locations on the West Coast where erosion is a problem include:

Karamea
Mokihinui
Hector
Ngakawau
Granity
Carters Beach
Charleston
Barrytown
Punakaiki

Rapahoe
Cobden
Karoro
Okarito
Bruce Bay
Hunts Beach
Hannahs Clearing
Neils Beach
Jackson Bay

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