

**Submission to Marlborough District Council  
Dog Control Policy and Bylaw Review 2020:  
Relevant parts:**

Our submission is focused on Marlborough's east coastline from the Awatere river to the south of Marlborough.

**Submission from:** East Coast Protection Group Inc  
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**We conditionally Support the proposed Marlborough District Council proposed Dog Control Bylaw 2020.**

We support councils efforts to manage dogs in Marlborough.

We support the on going education into responsible dog ownership.

We support the prohibition of dogs from areas such as Havelock Wetland and Ward Beach that exhibit high biodiversity values and habitat values.

We do not support all beaches and river berms being off-leash dog areas.

**We would like to be heard.**

**A Summary of the reason for our submission:**

Dogs are a predator and pet dogs are having an impact on the biodiversity of Marlborough's East Coast.

**Decision we would like Council to make:**

Utilising the coastal biodiversity studies and the studies on the impacts of dogs on birds and marine mammals, place appropriate restrictions on access to dogs to coastal areas with high biodiversity and habitat values.

Choose restrictions that are enforceable, recognising that much of the success of restrictions is reliant on education by community members.

Restrict access to dogs in the area from Marfell's Beach to south of the Waima (Ure) River.

**Expansion on the reasons for our submission:**

1. The objectives of the ECPGI are:

To protect and enhance the coastal environment and biodiversity of the East Coast of Marlborough from Marfell's Beach to the Waima (Ure) River;

To inform and educate visitors and the community of the special nature of this coastal environment.

To recognise the special geological effects from the Kaikoura Earthquake on the flora and fauna and the marine environment.

2. The MDC Marlborough Coastal Study 2014 highlights the very high level of natural character and the diversity of species within this area. The natural isolation afforded to the area by landforms and tide had historically limited people access to much of this coastline.
3. There has been a steady increase in the human use of the area as our standard of living and tourist numbers have increased, and as machines that aid access have become more available. The uplift that occurred during the 2016 earthquake removed some of the natural land and tide barriers. The result has been many more people using the area, with some people choosing to bring their dogs.
4. The ECPGI recognises predators as a major threat to the biodiversity of the coastline. Ferrets, stoats, weasels, rats, mice, hedgehogs, possum, cats and dogs have all been identified as predators impacting the fauna and flora.  
Mustelids and cats eat ground dwelling birds, nesting birds such as Banded Dotterel, chicks, eggs, lizards, eels, frogs, and insects.  
Rats are omnivores and eat birds, eggs, chicks, seeds, snails, lizards, fruit, insects, larvae and flowers. Their varied diet makes them both predators and competitors with native wildlife for food sources.  
Hedgehogs are mainly insectivorous, with key prey being slugs, snails and larger insects, but also eat birds eggs and chicks, some plant material, and prey on lizards particularly in cooler periods when lizard activity slows.  
Domestic dogs run through feeding, roosting, and breeding birds, disturbing their patterns, damaging their nests, injuring and killing both chicks and adults. Dogs run at seals in haul-outs and breeding colonies, disturbing their rest, intimidating and distressing both adults and pups.
5. The coastline from Marfell's Beach to the Waima (Ure) River is a regionally significant site for many species including breeding and non-breeding birds. It supports the highest density of breeding Banded Dotterel and breeding Variable Oystercatcher on the East Coast of Marlborough. It hosts nesting colonies of Red Billed Gulls, Black Billed Gulls and White Fronted Terns. Historically it has also been a breeding, moulting and resting area for Little Penguin. It provides important winter habitat and non-breeding roost sites for many species of birds including Wrybill, Banded Dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, White Faced Heron, Pied Stilt, NZ Pipit, Ruddy Turnstones, Red Billed and Black Billed Gulls, Black Fronted, White Fronted and Caspian Terns, and at least 4 species of Shag.  
  
Seals also utilise this piece of coastline to complete their lifecycles. There are NZ Fur Seal haul-outs at Cape Campbell, Chancet Rocks and the Needles. NZ Fur Seal, and occasionally Elephant Seal, breed at Cape Campbell.
6. ECPGI, in conjunction with adjacent landowners, have embarked on a predator control programme in an effort to protect the biodiversity. Traplines have been established between Marfell's Beach, Mussel Point and Snapper Point; between Cape Campbell and Canterbury Gully; between Chancet Rocks and Ward Beach; and around Lake Elterwater. Hedgehogs, feral cats, ferrets, weasels, stoats, and rats are all being removed.
7. Dogs are a special case. They do not live on the coast, they come as visitors with people on day trips. There is existing legislation that allows dogs to be off leach on the beach. As members of the community the only difference we can make is through education. Signs have been erected at major entry points along the coast informing people about the birds and seals and requesting dog owners keep their dogs on leash. However many people elect to have their dogs off leach, free to disturb birds and seals.



8. There is a need for off leash dog exercise areas, and in our towns designation of public spaces into off-leash, on-leash and prohibited dog areas has become common. However currently the Marlborough beaches and river berms (*with the exception of those areas specifically identified*), irrespective of their biodiversity and habitat values are off-leash dog exercise areas. Is this really the correct way to manage our precious biodiversity? Or should we be identifying areas where dogs are unlikely to cause disturbance and distress to our native birds and marine mammals and utilising these areas to provide a beach environment for their owners to exercise them?

Above is a photograph of a sign in Tasman District restricting dog access in high value areas for resting and nesting birds. By understanding the wildlife and habitat value of the various parts of the coast we can protect our fauna and flora from the unintended consequences of exercising our dogs.

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the ByLaw.