Regional landscape study of the Taranaki coastal environment

Review of the Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki

Taranaki Regional Council
Private Bag 713
Stratford 4352

November 2015

Document: 1526678

Executive summary

The purpose of this study is to undertake a preliminary assessment and identify:

- areas of high and outstanding natural character; and
- outstanding natural features and natural landscapes;

within the Taranaki coastal environment.

The study will inform targeted consultation to identify coastal areas of high outstanding natural character, features and landscapes. It contributes to the Taranaki Regional Council's (the Council's) review of the *Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki* (the Coastal Plan) and has been specifically undertaken to meet the requirements of Policies 13 and 15 of the *New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010* (NZCPS).

The existing Coastal Plan identifies eight areas of 'outstanding coastal value'.
Areas of outstanding coastal value are categorised as Coastal Management Area A. This approach is proposed to continue.

Geographically, the existing Coastal Plan only covers the Coastal Marine Area (CMA) as required by the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). However, constraining attention only to resource management issues which fall within the CMA fails to recognise the integrated nature of the wider coastal environment. For this reason, it is proposed to extend the coverage of the reviewed Coastal Plan to include the wider coastal environment.

While values inland of the CMA can be recognised through the Coastal Plan, rules will only apply within the CMA area where the Council has jurisdiction. Values inland of the CMA are directly managed under other regional plans and district plans.

This landscape study is based on best practice methodology, having regard to New Zealand landscape assessment methodologies, case law and guidance notes given through the Quality Planning website and the Department of Conservation.

The participants involved in the study and preparation of this report have a varying range of backgrounds including in marine biology, terrestrial ecology, geomorphology, geology, geography, hydrology and policy as well as having local knowledge and familiarity with the Taranaki coastal environment.

The following areas have been identified as having outstanding natural character (ONC) and/or as an outstanding natural feature and landscape (ONFL) through this study.

ID	Area of outstanding natural character	New or existing area
ONC 1	Parininihi	New
ONC 2	Mimi Estuary	Existing
ONC 3	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	Existing
ONC 4	Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)	New
ONC 5	Whenuakura to Waipipi	Existing
ONC 6	North and South Traps	Existing
ONC 7	Waitotara	Existing

ID	Outstanding natural features and landscapes	New or existing area
ONFL 1	Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point	Existing
ONFL 2	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	Existing
ONFL 3	Hangatahua (Stony River)	New
ONFL 4	Oaonui (Sandy Bay)	New
ONFL 5	Kaupokonui	New
ONFL 6	Kapuni Stream mouth	New
ONFL 7	North and South Traps	Existing
ONFL 8	Waverley Beach	Existing
ONFL 9	Waitotara	Existing

The study largely confirms existing areas identified as being outstanding in the current Coastal Plan. However, through the assessment, six new areas have been identified as having ONC and/or being an ONFL. This is primarily due to recognising the inland component of the coastal environment.

Waiinu Reef is the only area which is currently recognised as having outstanding coastal value that has been assessed as not meeting the criteria for an area of ONC and/or being an ONFL.

Targeted consultation with organisations having a broad range of interest in the CMA confirmed the areas identified as outstanding as listed above.

It is recommended that these areas are mapped in the Coastal Plan as Coastal Management Area A and that policy and rules are developed for their protection. The values listed in summary tables under section 8 would also be transferred to a schedule of the proposed plan.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

1.1 Purpose 1
1.2 Background 1
1.3 Study area 2
1.4 Overview of study methodology 3
1.5 Structure 3

2. Overview of the Taranaki coastal environment 5

2.1 Geology and topography 5
2.2 Māori and European settlement 6
2.3 Land cover and resource use 6

3. Landscape characterisation 7

Coastal Unit 1 Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point 8
Coastal Unit 2 Pariokariwa Point to Waiau Stream 10
Coastal Unit 3 Waiau Stream to Bell Block 12
Coastal Unit 4 Bell Block to Paritutu 14
Coastal Unit 5 Paritutu to Oakura River 16
Coastal Unit 6 Oakura River to Hangatahua (Stony River) 18
Coastal Unit 7 Hangatahua (Stony River) to Stent Road Beach 20
Coastal Unit 8 Stent Road Beach to Oaonui (Sandy Bay) 22
Coastal Unit 9 Oaonui (Sandy Bay) to Mangahume Stream 24
Coastal Unit 10 Mangahume Stream to Ohawe 26
Coastal Unit 11 Ohawe to Patea Beach 28
Coastal Unit 12 Patea Beach to Waiinu 30

4. Natural character 33

4.1 Statutory considerations 33
4.2 What is 'natural'? 34
4.3 How is the level of natural character determined? 34
4.4 Importance of context in assessing naturalness 35
4.5 Assessment methodology for mapping outstanding natural character 36
4.6 Proposed draft policy for identifying high natural character 38

5. Areas of outstanding natural character 41

5.1 Areas identified as having outstanding natural character 41

6. Natural features and landscapes 59

6.1 Statutory considerations 59
6.2 What is a 'feature' and 'landscape'? 60
6.3 How is the significance of a natural feature or landscape determined? 60
6.4 Relationship between natural character and natural features and landscapes 60
6.5 Assessment methodology 61

7. Outstanding natural features and landscapes 65

7.1 Natural features and landscapes identified as outstanding 65

8. Summary tables of areas of outstanding natural character, features and landscapes 87

9. Recommended changes to areas currently identified as outstanding within the Regional Coastal Plan 93

10. Summary and recommendations 95

Appendix I: Feedback received from targeted consultation on the Draft study. 97

Appendix II: Existing areas identified within the Taranaki coastal environment 107

Coastal Plan 108
District plans 110

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to undertake a preliminary assessment and identify:

- areas of high and outstanding natural character; and
- outstanding natural features and natural landscapes;

within the Taranaki coastal environment.

The study will inform targeted consultation to identify coastal areas of outstanding natural character, features and landscapes. It contributes to the Taranaki Regional Council's (the Council) review of the *Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki* (the Coastal Plan). Areas identified in this study as outstanding will be mapped as Coastal Management Area A (outstanding coastal value) in the draft Coastal Plan.

1.2 Background

The Coastal Plan is required to give effect to the *New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010* (NZCPS) This study has been undertaken to meet the requirements of Policies 13 and 15 of the NZCPS.

Policies 13 and 15 of the NZCPS directly relate to giving effect to sections 6(a) and 6(b) of the *Resource Management Act 1991* (RMA) which, respectively, require the Council to recognise and provide for:

- the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment, and its protection from inappropriate use and development (section 6(a)); and
- the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate use and development (section 6(b)).

Policy 13 of the NZCPS requires an assessment of the natural character of the coastal environment by mapping or otherwise identifying at least areas of high natural character. Policy 15 requires that natural features and landscapes of the coastal environment are identified and assessed.

In giving effect to Policies 13 and 15 of the NZCPS the objective of this review is to:

(a) Assess the coastal environment and identify outstanding natural features and landscapes and areas of outstanding natural character;

(b) Map areas of the coastal marine area which:
  (i) contain outstanding natural features and landscapes or areas of outstanding natural character; and/or
  (ii) are adjacent to land above mean high water springs (MHWS) within the coastal environment which contain outstanding natural features and landscapes or areas of outstanding natural character (for the purposes of managing the effects of activities undertaken in the coastal marine area on these values); and

(c) Develop a draft policy framework that identifies areas of high natural character within the coastal environment (again, for the purposes of managing the effects of activities undertaken in the coastal marine area on these values).

This approach will align with the proposed continuation of Coastal Management Areas (discussed below).

Currently, the Coastal Plan identifies eight areas of 'outstanding coastal value'. These areas, identified through using similar criteria to that of the 2010 NZCPS, include outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant habitats of marine life or bird life, and significant or unmodified natural character. The eight areas of outstanding coastal value and evaluation criteria used are set out in Appendix I of this report.

The Coastal Plan currently divides the coastal marine area (CMA) into four Coastal Management Areas.

Coastal Management Area A: Areas of outstanding coastal value

Coastal Management Area B: Estuaries

Coastal Management Area C: Open coast

Coastal Management Area D: Port Taranaki.

This approach is proposed to continue. One of the benefits is that it provides a direct link to policy and rule classifications which recognise the different characteristics and values of each of these four geographic areas and how they should be managed. It has also proven to be a simple, user-friendly structure for plan users.

Some adjustments to the existing Coastal Management Areas are anticipated through the Coastal Plan review. In terms of this study and Coastal Management Area A, some adjustments are proposed through taking a 'coastal environment' approach and better recognising values that span across the line of MHWS. Currently, values above MHWS are recognised for some areas but not others.

While values above MHWS can be recognised through the Coastal Plan, the provisions of a coastal plan principally apply to the CMA. Values above MHWS are directly managed under other regional plans and district plans.

Additionally, significant habitats of marine life or bird life (currently identified as a discrete component within areas of outstanding coastal value) will be addressed separately through the review process, although it is recognised through this study that these values contribute to the status of outstanding natural features and landscapes, and areas of high and outstanding natural character.

Also of note, surf breaks are considered to be components of natural character. However, given the large number of surf breaks identified by the *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* to be of regional significance (80), the different management needs for protecting the quality and experience of surf breaks, and that the NZCPS contains separate policy on surf breaks, surf breaks will be addressed as a separate component of the Coastal Plan review.

The NZCPS requires both regional and district councils to give effect to Policies 13 and 15. This study was undertaken at a regional scale and thus is independent of any future district council study which will be undertaken at a district scale.

Assessments of natural character and natural features and landscapes are related to scale meaning that the coastal environment can be perceived as having different levels of natural character at different scales. Accordingly, an area assessed as outstanding at a district scale may not be considered to be outstanding at a regional scale and vice-versa.

1.3 Study area

Geographically, the existing Coastal Plan only covers the CMA as required by the RMA. However, constraining attention to only resource management issues which fall below the line of MHWS fails to recognise the integrated nature of the wider coastal environment.

For this reason, it is proposed to extend the coverage of the reviewed Coastal Plan to include the wider coastal environment for the following purposes:

- to provide a set of objectives, policies and methods that will enable the Council to assess the effects of activities proposed within the CMA on some aspects[1] of the wider coastal environment – including natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes; and
- to promote integrated management between the Council and the territorial authorities across the line of MHWS.

Notwithstanding the above, this approach of including the wider coastal environment is further supported because:

- coastal natural features and landscapes under this study span the line of MHWS;
- the Council is responsible, through a delegation of powers, for managing hard protection structures (e.g. seawalls) which typically sit on the line of MHWS; and
- the RMA requires local authorities, such as the Council, to provide for s6 matters irrespective of jurisdiction.

[1] *The aspects covered include the matters of national importance set out under section 6 of the RMA (natural character, natural features and landscapes, significant areas of flora and fauna, public access, cultural values, historic heritage), natural coastal hazards and public health and safety – being matters where an integrated management approach is considered paramount.*

Of note, the Coastal Plan will not include rules to regulate activities inland of the CMA (above MHWS) as this is a function of other regional plans and district plans.

1.4 Overview of study methodology

This landscape study is based on best practice methodology, having regard to New Zealand landscape assessment methodologies, case law and guidance notes given through the Quality Planning website and the Department of Conservation.

The participants involved in the study and preparation of this report have a varying range of backgrounds including marine biology, terrestrial ecology, geomorphology, geology, geography, hydrology and policy as well as having local knowledge and familiarity with the Taranaki coastal environment. Those involved from the Taranaki Regional Council included:
Angela Lenz, Dex Knowles, Emily Roberts, Dean Caskey, Halema Jamieson, Kevin Cash, Sam Tamarapa, Don Shearman, and Nicolette West.

The study was also informed through input from South Taranaki District Council and Boffa Miskell for the component of the study relating to the south Taranaki district. Of note, this study and that done for the south Taranaki district use a consistent methodology.

Tangata whenua were also consulted for preliminary input into the study, particularly in terms of their values which are inherent in the landscape. It is acknowledged that tangata whenua have strong linkages to their landmarks of cultural significance. Some of these landmarks may not meet the criteria for outstanding status but nonetheless their important values will be able to be recognised and protected as sites of significance to tangata whenua through the reviewed plan (in accordance with s6(f) of the RMA).

Targeted consultation on the draft study was undertaken with feedback being sought from the following organisations who have a broad range of interest in the CMA.

- Department of Conservation
- Fish and Game New Zealand
- Forest and Bird
- Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society
- Ngati Tama
- Ngati Mutunga
- Te Atiawa
- Taranaki iwi
- Ngāruahine
- Ngati Ruanui
- Ngaa Rauru
- New Plymouth District Council
- South Taranaki District Council
- Surfing Taranaki.

Responses were received from Surfing Taranaki, Ngāruahine, South Taranaki District Council, via Boffa Miskell, and the Department of Conservation. Copies of all feedback received are included as Appendix I.

Comments received were generally supportive and confirmed the areas that had been identified as outstanding.

1.5 Structure

This report contains 10 sections.

Section 1 introduces the study, including its purpose, background, scope and structure.

Section 2 provides an introduction to the main landscape types within the Taranaki coastal environment including geology, topography, land-use and cultural landscape elements.

Section 3 sets out the 12 landscape units of the Taranaki coastal environment, which were delineated through their similar characteristics, and a general character description of each.

Section 4 outlines the statutory context for assessing natural character and how it is evaluated, including criteria used to evaluate the degree of natural character in this study.

Section 5 sets out the areas identified as having outstanding natural character and an evaluation of their criteria.

Section 6 outlines the statutory context for assessing outstanding natural features and landscapes and how they are evaluated, including the criteria used to determine outstanding natural features and landscapes.

Section 7 sets out natural features and landscapes identified to be outstanding and an evaluation of their criteria.

Section 8 provides an overview and summary of the areas identified to have outstanding natural character (ONC) and outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFLs), including a summary of their values and attributes.

Section 9 sets out the recommended changes to areas previously identified as having significant natural character or landscape values in the Coastal Plan.

Section 10 provides a summary of the study findings and recommendations including policy recommendations for managing areas identified as outstanding.

Appendix II sets out areas identified within existing regional and district statutory planning documents (including the Coastal Plan) as having significant natural character or as being an outstanding natural feature or landscape within the Taranaki coastal environment.

Parininihi (White Cliffs), north Taranaki

2. Overview of the Taranaki coastal environment

2.1 Geology and topography

Referring to Figures 1 and 2, the region comprises the Taranaki peninsula protruding into the Tasman Sea. It is dominated by Mt Taranaki and its surrounding ring plain which slopes gently seaward to the west and abuts the sedimentary hill country to the east. At the coastline, the sedimentary hill country is fronted by uplifted marine terraces.

The coastline extends for some 295 km from Waihi Stream in the north, situated immediately south of the Mokau River, to Waiinu located near Waitotara at the southern extent of the region. Along the coastline there are two distinctive types of geology – the laharic coast of the volcanic ring plain terrace and, both north and south of the ring plain, the sedimentary coast of the uplifted marine terraces. The surface of both the laharic and marine terraces generally comprises flat to easy undulating contours.

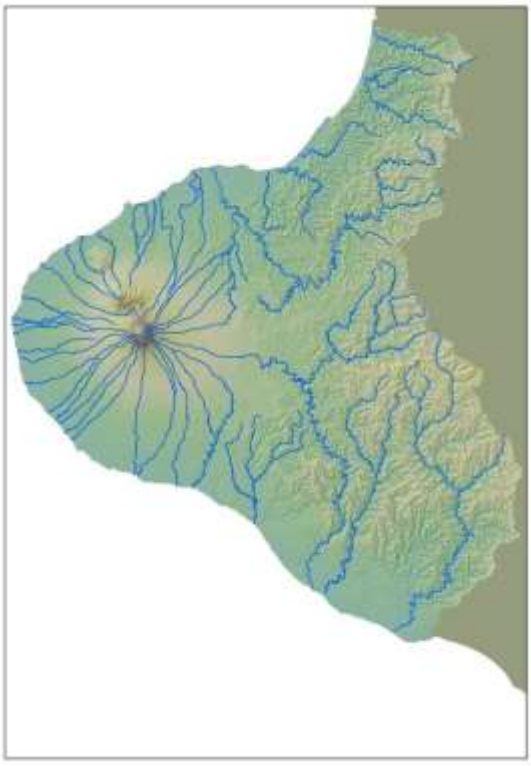


Figure 1 *Contours and major rivers of the Taranaki region*

The above formations coupled with the high energy and erosive environment of the Tasman Sea has led to approximately 90% of the coastline being comprised of coastal cliffs. Taranaki's coastline is eroding due to the high energy sea and the exposure to frequent storm-generated swells originating from the Tasman Sea.

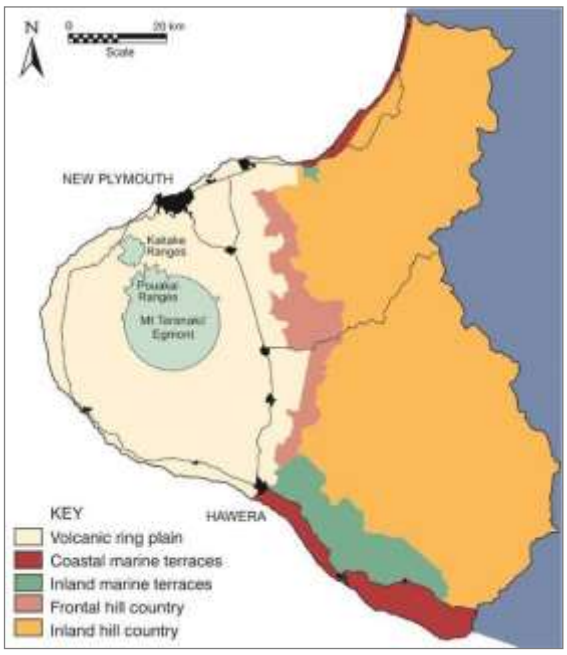


Figure 2 *Broad landscape types of Taranaki*

The erosion is greatest along the marine terraced coastline of the north and south where the sedimentary rock is softer than that of the laharic material of the ring plain coast. High erosion rates combined with areas of soft sediment have resulted in a highly irregular coastline with numerous small embayments. Erosion also results in the formation of coastal stacks, small islands, caves and arches (for example around Tongaporutu, Onaero and Waverley). Small sedimentary reefs exist within some intertidal areas although these are not overly obvious.

The laharic coast is much more regular than that of the sedimentary coast. Further to the material being harder, the extensive laharic reefs made up of boulders and cobbles also offer some protection against erosion. In some areas, the laharic deposits within the intertidal area are continuously forming more of an apron or fringe rather than discrete rocky reefs. The headlands are much more

prominent and the embayments larger than the sedimentary coast, particularly between Opunake and Ohawe. The cliffed terrace of the laharic ring plain coast is dissected by the intensive radial drainage pattern of the ring plain – more than 300 rivers and streams drain the mountain and ring plain.

There is an abundant sediment supply to the coast from the large number of rivers and erosion of Mt Taranaki. However, because of the high energy coastline and northerly littoral drift pattern the sediment is highly mobile and does not settle long enough to greatly assist with the beach building process. Subsequently, there is a prominence of small narrow beaches with larger beaches only existing near some of the larger river mouths. In many cliffed areas, the sea tends to lap at the cliff face at high tide.

Active dunelands exist at some of the major river mouths, particularly where past channel migration has resulted in a large break in cliffed sections. Active dunelands dominate the low-lying coast from Patea Beach to the southern extent of the region. Many of the dunelands are extensive in area and are relatively unmodified nearer to the coastline where natural dune processes are uninterrupted.

Cliff-top dunes, which are a unique feature of the Taranaki coastline, are historic sand dunes that occur on the cliff tops. In Taranaki, these were most likely formed through the landscape being lower in relief (prior to major uplift) and gently sloping towards the sea (prior to being eroded to a cliff), which allowed sand to advance inland. Apart from some sections of the frontal edge of the ring plain and marine terraces, the majority of the cliff-top dunes have been extensively modified by agricultural, industrial and urban development.

2.2 Māori and European settlement

Māori occupation of the region began around 1250-1300 AD. Many low coastal terraces and headlands were selected for defended settlements. The earthworks of the many pā built within the coastal environment still remain today, even with the effects of coastal erosion. A large number of these sites have also been used as urupa (burial sites).

There are several known archaic sites at the mouths of rivers comprising a number of diverse bird, sea mammal and fish bone deposits, including moa species, as a result of hunting/cooking activities. Other archaeological sites include petroglyphs (rock carvings) and tauranga waka (canoe landing sites).

Systematic Pākehā settlement by the Plymouth Company (a branch of the New Zealand Company) commenced in 1841. From 1860 more than a decade of conflict ensued between Māori and Pākehā over land and sovereignty.

2.3 Land cover and resource use

Prior to humans arriving, Taranaki was one of the most densely forested areas of New Zealand. Māori partially cleared the forest within the coastal environment over several hundred years. The arrival of Europeans saw the majority of the remaining ring-plain forests, and much of the inland hill-country bush, cleared for dairy and pastoral farming.

The dairy farming industry has been the basis of Taranaki's economy since the 1880s. The oil and gas industry has also had substantial economic input since the 1960s, sheltering the regional economy during times of low dairy and wool prices. Ironsand mining for iron production has been sporadic since the arrival of Europeans, however, interest in this resource still continues today.

Given that pastoral farming continues to be the dominant land use of the ring plain and marine terraces, indigenous vegetation is generally only found within several discrete areas of coastal forest, stable cliff faces, cliff tops and dunes, and the riparian margins of some watercourses.

Traditional and evolving cultural relationships of tāngata whenua with the coastal environment continue today with kaimoana being of significant importance. Customary practices involve tending, harvesting and preserving the resource. Other areas of importance include the recognition and preservation of sites of significance including pā and urupa.

3. Landscape characterisation

For the purposes of this study, the Taranaki coastline has been divided into 12 coastal units through landscape characterisation.

'Landscape characterisation' is the term used to encapsulate the process of identifying, mapping and describing landscape character areas (referred to as coastal units for the purposes of this study).

Landscape characterisation is the interrelationship of landform, landcover and land use and is valuable in identifying distinguishing characteristics which make one part of a region different from another. It provides an informative basis for the identification of significant landscapes.

The Taranaki coastline was divided into 12 coastal units through:

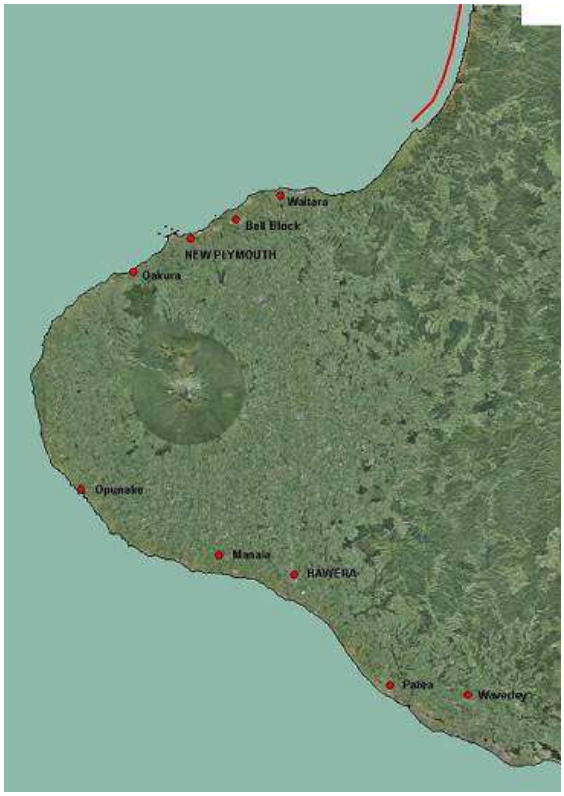
- analysing the landscape through the review of GIS data, land typing (gathering information on landscape attributes such as landform, soil, geology, vegetation cover), aerial and land-based imagery, and field survey;
- identifying landscape character types; and
- describing each character area objectively.

The 12 coastal units set out below share a similar character and are broadly homogenous. They range in length and overall size, depending on the coastline type and characteristics, and particularly on the underlying geology and topographical similarities such as cliff formation.

Waipipi Dunes located south of Whenuakura Estuary, South Taranaki

Coastal Unit 1 Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point

Character area



Character description

The coastal environment from Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point is dominated by a narrow marine terrace comprising sedimentary mud and silt stones.

The cliffs of the marine terrace, with heights ranging from 10-20 m, are subject to undercutting and result in a retreating coastline. This is more evident where the sedimentary material is softer and the retreat line is irregular. The surface of the terrace consists of gently undulating contours. Two large rivers (Mohakatino and Tongaporutu) which form estuaries near their mouths, and numerous smaller streams, dissect the terrace.

A 3 km section of the coastline extends into the hill country exposing Mount Messenger sedimentary material. Here the cliffs rise up to 245 m at their highest point. The exposed mud-stones of the cliff face create an obvious coastal feature known as Parininihi or the White Cliffs. Parininihi Marine Reserve, situated in the shadow of the White Cliffs, contains abundant and diverse marine life.

Much of the marine terrace and foothills behind have been cleared for pastoral farming, however, some important coastal wetlands and herbfields remain. Indigenous vegetation is also found along the riparian margins of some watercourses and along some sections of the frontal edge of the terraces. Active erosion processes prevent vegetation from colonising on the majority of the cliff faces.

The hill country backing the terraces is predominately covered in indigenous forest, the majority of which is protected through conservation areas. This indigenous forest borders the coast in three main areas – at Mohakatino and Tongaporutu estuaries, and at Parininihi (White Cliffs), which is a rare feature for the region's predominately pastoral landscape.

Expansive views of the marine terrace, Parininihi (White Cliffs) and the significant backdrop of Mount Taranaki are offered from SH3 and various areas which can be accessed by the public along the coastline.

Mohakatino Estuary and swamp area has significant cultural and biodiversity values

Tongaporutu Estuary, one of the few places where indigenous coastal forest adjoins the coastal marine area. The north Taranaki marine terrace can be seen stretching into the distance

Kawau and Te Puia Pā. Kawau Pā, an island pā, is a well known Ngāti Tama stronghold. Both pā are covered in vigorously regenerating coastal scrub and forest

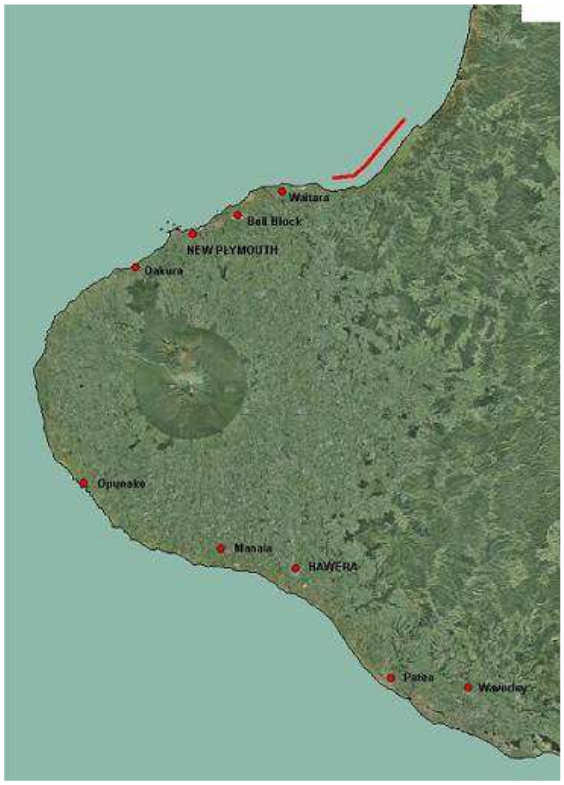
Highly renowned scene of Parininihi/White Cliffs, Pariokariwa Point and Mount Taranaki from Tongaporutu

Rapanui Wetland situated to the left of the Rapanui Stream and at the right of the photos, part of Rapanui Petrel Colony which is the only mainland nesting site of grey-faced petrel in Taranaki

Pariokariwa Point and Opourapa Island where the marine terraces widen. From afar the point is a natural boundary to the coastal landscape unit as can be seen in the photo above

Coastal Unit 2 Pariokariwa Point to Waiau Stream

Character area



Character description

The coastline extends in a similar pattern from Pariokariwa Point to Waiau Stream. It comprises uplifted sedimentary marine terraces that are wider than Coastal Unit 1. Cliff heights are on average 15 m but drop in elevation from Onaero to the southern extent of the unit. Extensive areas of softer material give rise to frequent cliff erosion. However this erosion is irregular due to sections of harder material and dense vegetation.

The surface of the marine terrace consists of very gently undulating contours particularly where the terrace is dissected by three large rivers (Mimi, Urenui and Onaero) which form estuaries at their mouths and numerous smaller streams.

Agiculture now dominates the landscape. Apart from small fragments of indigenous vegetation along the terrace edge, stable cliff faces and the riparian margins of some watercourses, productive land has been cleared.

Promontories carved from the soft sedimentary material of this coastline are orientated to the predominant swell direction

Representative landscape around Waiiti and Mimi Estuary

Rock armoured knob of Titoki Ridge

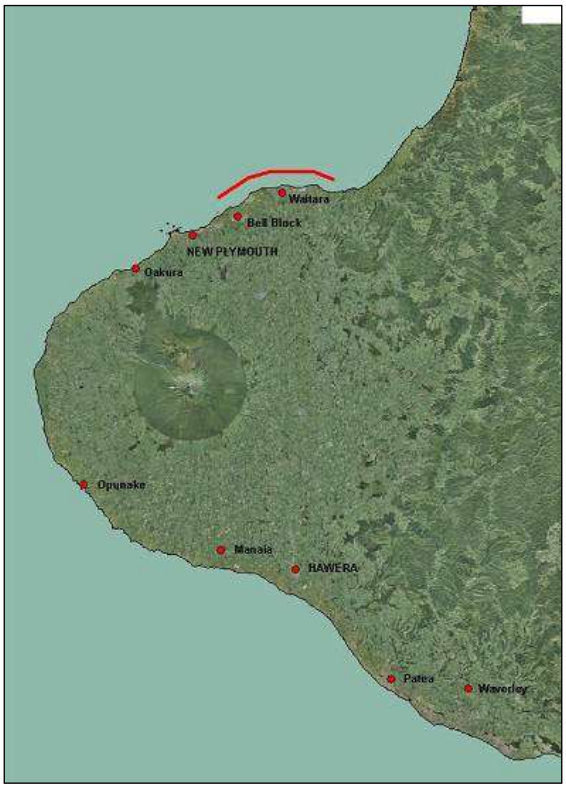
The Mimi Estuary is one of the least modified estuaries in North Taranaki

Onaero Estuary and coastal stacks

The mouth of the Mimi River/Estuary

Coastal Unit 3 Waiau Stream to Bell Block

Character area



Character description

Near Waiau Stream, the geology transitions into the volcanic ring plain formation and comprises a cliffed coastline. Average cliff heights are 5 m and the region's most extensive reef systems – some extending up to 5 km - are offshore.

The surface of the laharic terrace consists of very gently undulating contours. The frontal edge of the terrace is overlain by cliff-top dunes in some sections which are largely modified by agricultural and urban development. Narrow active frontal dunes are pushed up against the toe of the cliffs and where the cliffed terrace edge is lower the dunes dominate and extend inland.

The entire section is subject to occasional erosion although the laharic reef systems offer some protection.

The Waitara River, one of the region's most significant rivers, is subject to up to a 4 m tidal range which contributes significantly to the estuarine characteristics of its lower reaches. The Waitara township is centred around the river.

The land here has also been cleared for agriculture and urban/industrial development. Some indigenous vegetation remains on sections of the frontal dunes, stable cliff faces and the riparian margins of some watercourses. A small pocket of estuarine vegetation is present within the Waitara estuary.

Volcanic ring plain terrace north of Waitara

Waitara Estuary contains a regionally significant wetland despite being heavily modified

Reef and dunelands around Epiha Road

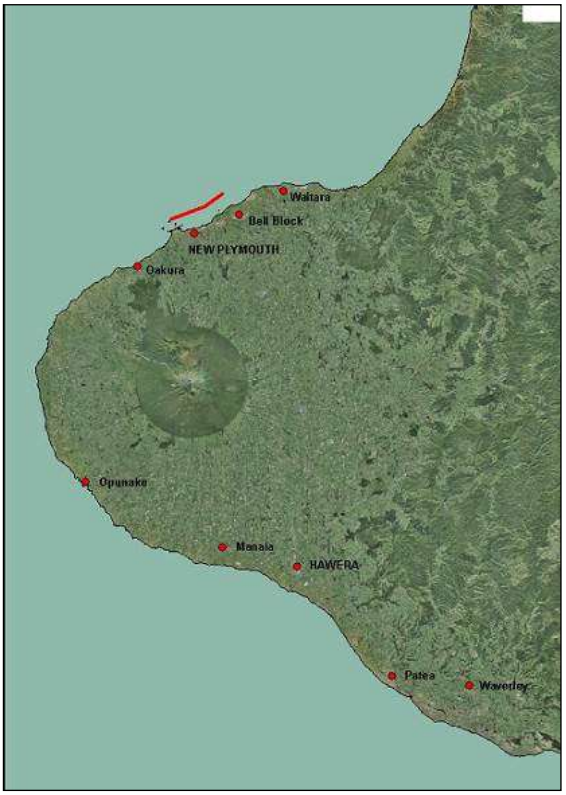
Landscape between Waitara and Waiongana Stream

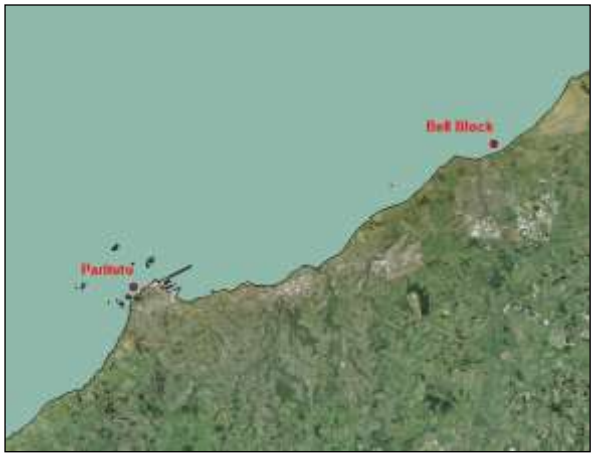
Taioma (Airedale) Reef is an extensive laharic reef system comprising cobbles and boulders

Waiongana Stream and Waitara West Marginal Strip Lagoon which was created as a result of historic river diversion works. The lagoon provides a significant habitat for native and migratory birds

Coastal Unit 4 Bell Block to Paritutu

Character area





Character description

The coastline extends in a similar pattern from Bell Block to Paritutu. It comprises lower relief laharic deposits with no evidence of cliffs. The surface of the laharic terrace is gently undulating. Extensive laharic reefs extend offshore.

From Mangati Stream to the East End Surf Life Saving Club, a narrow high tide beach exists along the coastline backed by a stable and low-lying frontal dune system. The dunelands are much more extensive at major river mouths, namely the Mangati and Waiwhakaiho. Urban development exists around the township of Bell Block and at Fitzroy Beach.

From the East End Surf Life Saving Club to Paritutu, the coastal environment is heavily modified due to the location of New Plymouth city and the region's port. A continuous rock protection structure extends along the coastline to control erosion.

The unit is devoid of indigenous vegetation apart from the narrow band of duneland between Mangati Stream and the East End Surf Lifesaving Club and the margins of some coastal waterbodies.

The Coastal Walkway, popular with locals and tourists, is a sea-edge promenade stretching from the eastern side of Bell Block Beach to Pioneer Park at Port Taranaki.

Hickford Park Bell Block includes sand dunes and pockets of exotic and indigenous vegetation

New Plymouth City

Hickford Park fore dunes and planted stands of indigenous and exotic vegetation

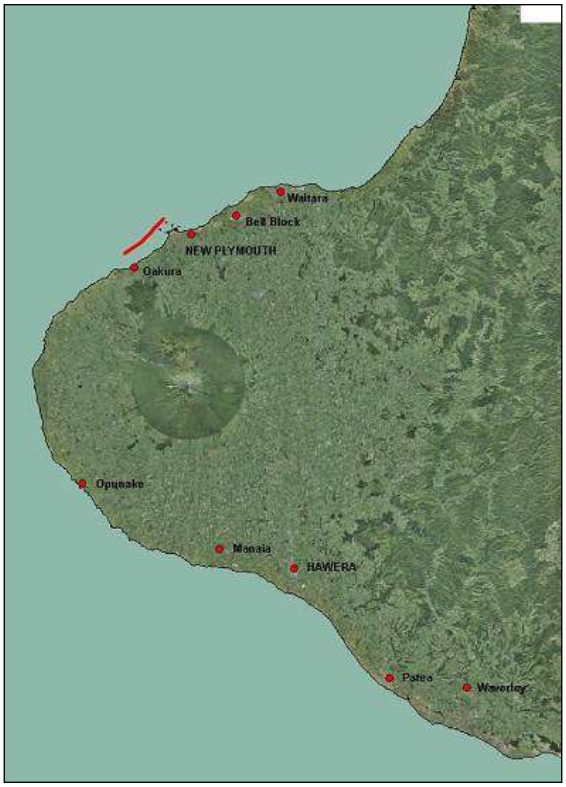
Kawaroa Reef fronting New Plymouth City. Although modified, the sheltered environment means that the reef has high species diversity

Te Rewa Rewa Bridge can be seen linking the coastal walkway across the Waiwhakiho River. Lake Rotomanu, a man-made lake popular for recreational use, is located behind the bridge

Port Taranaki

Coastal Unit 5 Paritutu to Oakura River

Character area



Character description

The coastal environment between Paritutu and Oakura River, and including Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands, is dominated by lava and laharic formations as a result of volcanic activity.

Paritutu and its neighbouring Sugar Loaf Islands are the remnants of an old volcano and are thought to be volcanic plugs (lava extruded in a nearly solid form). Considerable modification of several of these islands has resulted from historic use of material for port construction.
Nga Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area and the adjoining Tapuae Marine Reserve contain abundant and diverse marine and bird life.

On the peninsula/mainland, moderately to strongly sloping wind deposited sands are wedged up against the cliff face of the laharic terrace and have been subsequently vegetated by predominately indigenous shrubs and grasses.

Although this formation is relatively stable, the toe of these dunes is subject to occasional erosion by the sea. Extensive laharic reef systems offer some erosion protection.

In the very northern section of the unit at Centennial Park, the surface of the laharic terrace comprises a narrow band of stable cliff-top dunes which are well vegetated with indigenous species, backed by either residential and industrial development. For the remainder of the unit, pasture is grown right up to the terrace edge. The surface of the laharic terrace is gently rolling. Several small streams, originating from the ring plain, dissect the laharic terrace.

Given that vegetation has been cleared for agricultural land use purposes, the indigenous vegetation that remains is that of the un-modified cliff-top dunes, stable cliff faces, riparian margins of some watercourses including a few regionally significant wetlands, Paritutu and some of the Sugar Loaf Islands.

The Taranaki Volcano sequence comprising the heavily eroded Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands and Paritutu, and into the distance the Kaitake Range, Pouakai Range and Mount Taranaki

One of the near-shore islands, Motuotamatea (Snapper Rock), with Back Beach and Centennial Park in the background. The base of Paritutu can be seen at the left

Motumahanga (Saddleback), the outer-most island of Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands)

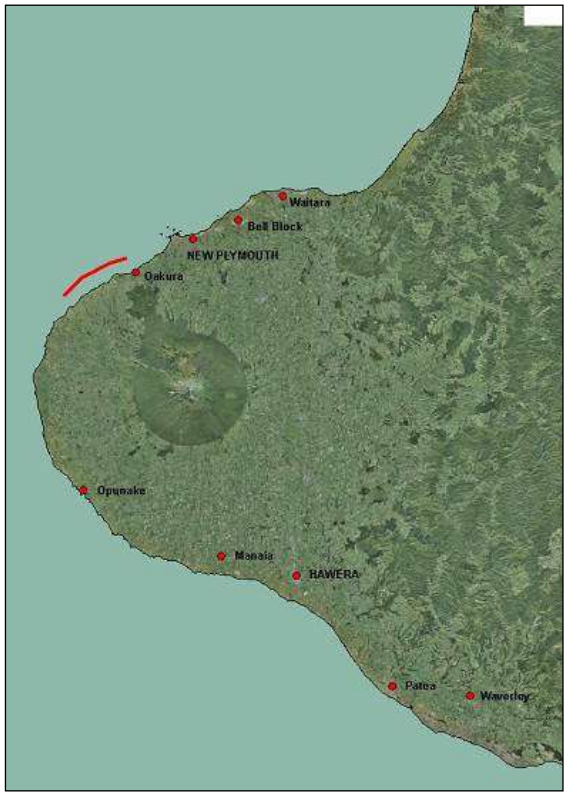
The rolling pastoral landscape at Omata.

Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Island Marine Protected Area and Paritutu adjoining the mainland. Tapuae Marine Reserve adjoins the Marine Protected Area and stretches south into the distance

Tapuae Stream mouth which marks the boundary of the Tapuae Marine Reserve

Coastal Unit 6 Oakura River to Hangatahua (Stony River)

Character area



Character description

The coastline extends in a similar pattern from the Oakura River to the Hangatahua River (Stony River). It comprises lower relief cliffs up to 5 m in height with a narrow and patchy frontal dune system wedged up against the cliff face. Where present, the dunes are relatively stable and are largely covered in indigenous vegetation.

Immediately south of the Oakura River is the Oakura township. The township is situated behind a narrow band of frontal dunes at the base of the moderately rolling foothills of the Kaitake ranges.

South of Oakura, the surface of the ring plain is relatively flat with the exception of areas where streams dissect the laharic terrace. The land has been cleared for agricultural purposes and, remnant indigenous vegetation is largely confined to the frontal dunes, cliff faces and the riparian margins of some watercourses. Maitahi Scientific Reserve near Leith Road has a small strip of coastal vegetation and has been described as the largest coastal forest remnant on the main ring plain.

Southern extent of Oakura township and beach with the foothills of the Kaitake Ranges in the background

Lifestyle development around Greenwood Road

Ahu Ahu Beach and reef

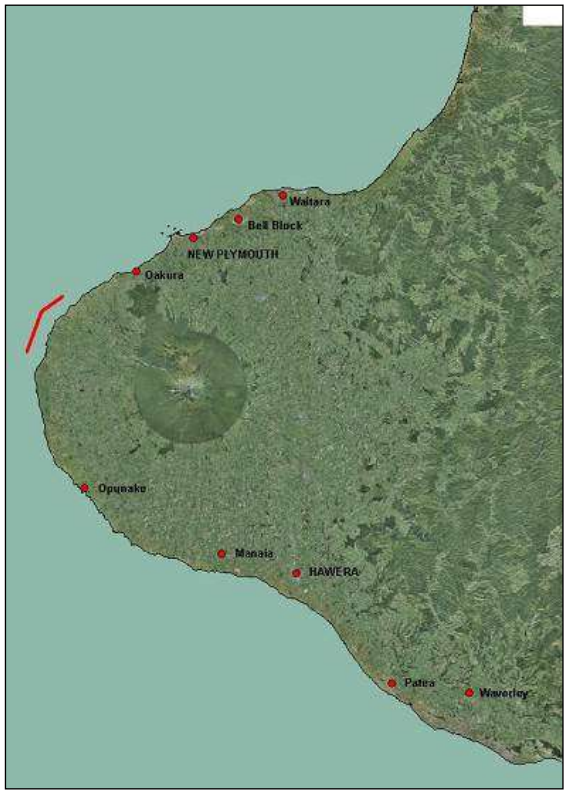
Indigenous vegetation covers Tataraimaka Pā near Kaikara Stream

Landscape at Timaru Road

Landscape at Kahihi Road, situated north of the Stony River

Coastal Unit 7 Hangatahua (Stony River) to Stent Road Beach

Character area



Character description

The coastal environment from the Hangatahua (Stony) River to Stent Road Beach comprises the lowest lying topography of the region. This is due to the most recent volcanic activity where a hot pyroclastic flow avalanched down the Stony River catchment, smoothing out the landscape. In general, the terrace edge of the ring plain is only around 1 m in height and the surface of the terrace, extending inland, is flat.

The coastline is relatively stable in terms of erosion and wind blown sand – this is evident by pasture colonisation right down to the coastline, and is likely to be a result of the extensive laharic reefs providing some protection.

The land has been cleared for agricultural use. However, some nationally and regionally important herbfields and coastal turfs remain along the terrace edge.

At Komene Beach, on the south west flank of the Stony River, the low lying nature of the landscape coupled with the significant bed load of the Stony River has resulted in a relatively wide sandy beach compared to much of the laharic coast. The beach is backed by a dune system which contains some indigenous vegetation. Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon), a nationally rare ephemeral coastal wetland, is situated within the dune system.

Hangatahua (Stony River) and Waikirikiri Wetland are unique and rare features for the region being the only braided river system and an ephemeral wetland

Flat surface of the ring plain at Paora/Coast roads

Waikirikiri Wetland during a dry period

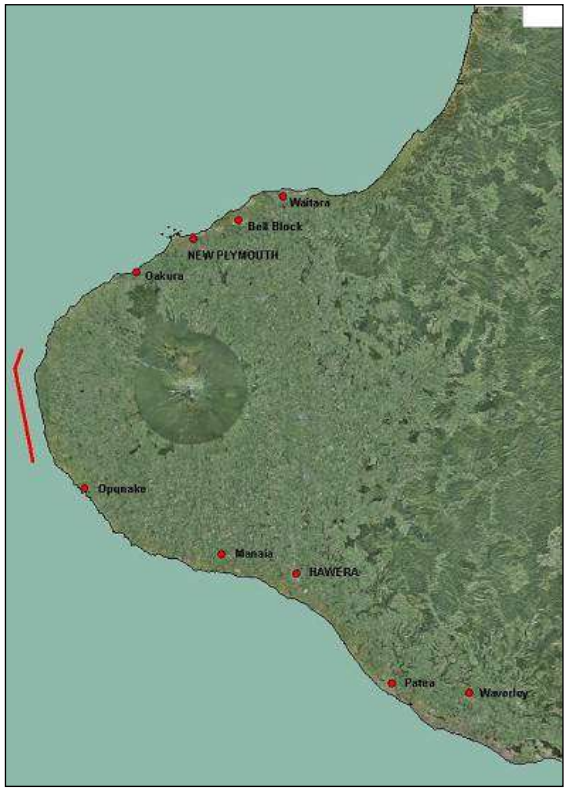
The laharic reefs form a continuous fringe around the coastline between Hangatahua (Stony River) and Middleton Bay

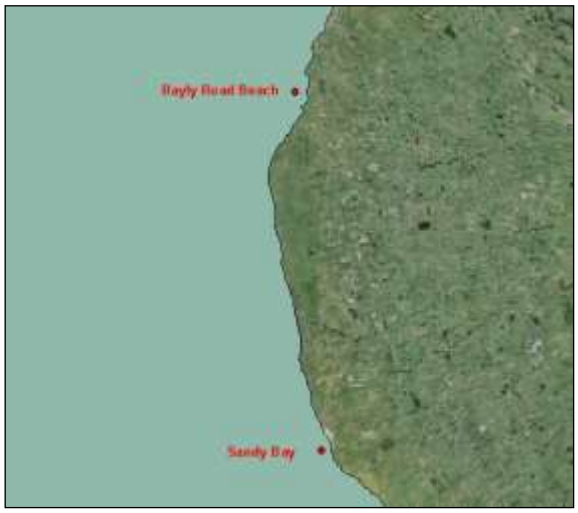
Small subdivision at Puniho Road

Stent Road Beach

Coastal Unit 8 Stent Road Beach to Oaonui (Sandy Bay)

Character area





Character description

The coastal environment is dominated by the laharic terrace of the ring plain overlain by interspersed laharic domes and, at the frontal edge of the terrace, a narrow band of duneland which becomes more extensive towards the southern extent of the unit.

The laharic domes are the result of an immense debris avalanche from the volcanic cone of Mount Taranaki collapsing before it rebuilt in the form it takes today. The laharic domes are much more prominent and significant inland of the coastal environment, particularly around Pungarehu and Parihaka.

The terrace edge of the ring plain is of low relief, being an average height of 1-3 m. With the exception of areas with laharic domes or duneland, the surface of the terrace is relatively flat. The land has been cleared for agricultural purposes, with the only remaining indigenous vegetation located on some of the more stable duneland, stable cliff faces and the riparian margins of some watercourses.

Oaonui (Sandy Bay), which is situated at the southern-most extent of the unit, comprises a regionally significant sand dune system (approximately 38 hectares in area). This is a unique feature for the rocky laharic coast.

Cape Egmont Boat Club at Bayly Road Beach

Dune system at Lower Kahui Road

Cape Egmont with the Cape Egmont Lighthouse positioned upon a laharic dome

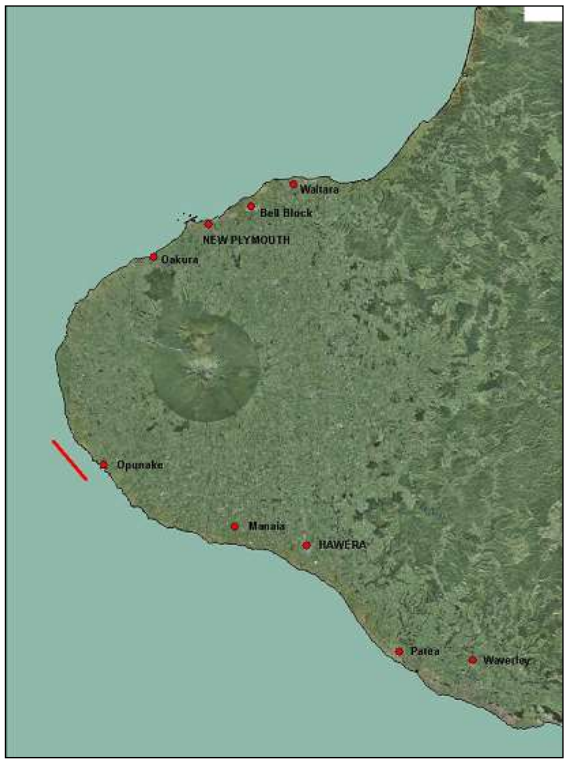
Dunes at Lower Manihi Road

Laharic domes overlying the flat ring plain terrace at Tipoka Road

Sandy Bay, an extensive dune system in Oaonui

Coastal Unit 9 Oaonui (Sandy Bay) to Mangahume Stream

Character area



Character description

The coastal environment is dominated by rugged coastal cliffs which increase in height with distance south towards Mangahume Stream – increasing from 3 m through to 15 m in height.

The surface of the laharic terrace is flat to mildly rolling and is dissected by numerous rivers and streams. A narrow band of cliff-top dunes exists along a few sections of the terrace edge. The form of these is relatively unmodified. However, they are predominately covered in pasture for stock grazing.

Largely there is an absence of sandy beaches apart from the sheltered beaches of Middleton Bay, Opunake Beach and Mangahume Beach which are situated between prominent and reefed headlands. Wind-blown sand wedges up at the base of the cliffs in occasional embayments. Extensive cobble and boulder reefs extend offshore and with the exception of the aforementioned beaches, the sea generally washes at the cliffs at high tide.

The land has been cleared for agriculture and for urban development at Opunake township. However, some regionally and nationally important herbfields remain along some sections of the terrace edge.

Arawhata Road Beach, the cliffs are gradually starting to increase in height south

Opunake Beach and township situated behind

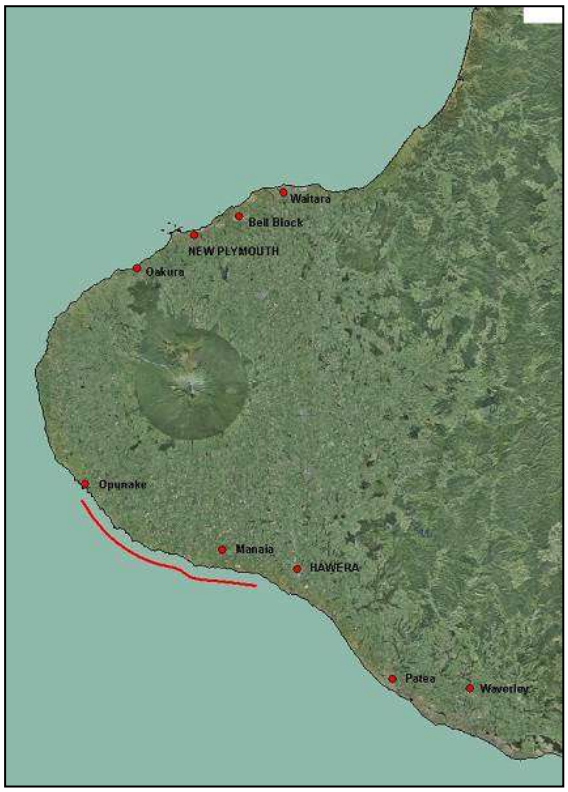
Cliff-top dunes north of Opua Road

Waiaua River mouth immediately south of the Opunake township

Promontory between Middleton Bay and Opunake Beach. Opunake township is in the background

Coastal Unit 10 Mangahume Stream to Ohawe

Character area



Character description

The Mangahume Stream mouth marks the transition into older volcanic deposits where the composition is different and more weathered in comparison to the units of the laharic coast.

Coastal cliffs rise to an average of 7 m with the exception of the southern extent of the unit where cliff heights rise up to 20 m.

The cliff faces are generally gently sloping rather than vertical, and are relatively stable where vegetated. A narrow band of cliff-top dunes exist along some sections of the terrace edge. In some areas their form is relatively unmodified. However, they are covered in pasture and are grazed by stock.

The surface of the terrace is flat to mildly rolling and the land has been cleared for pastoral use. The only indigenous vegetation that exists is along stable cliff faces, some stream margins and the margins of an ephemeral wetland. Regionally important indigenous herbfields are also situated in some areas of the terrace edge.

Numerous streams and several rivers dissect the laharic terrace. There is a large break in the cliffs at the mouth of the Kaupokonui Stream as an incidence of stream mouth oscillation, here active dunelands dominate which contain some indigenous species but are predominately covered in exotic species such as boxthorn.

Cliff-top dunes south of Punehu Stream are in pasture

Indigenous vegetation in the deeply incised Waiokura Stream

Coastal environment and promontories around Puketapu Road End

Kapuni Stream mouth and remnant channel

Kaupokonui Stream valley, dunelands and beach

Waingongoro River mouth and Ohawe township

Coastal Unit 11 Ohawe to Patea Beach

Character area

Character description

Around Ohawe the geology transitions into uplifted marine sedimentary material.

The coastal environment extends in a similar pattern from Ohawe to Patea Beach. It is dominated by uplifted marine terraces, cliff-top dunes and associated dune lakes.

The coastal cliffs are rugged and very unstable with cliff heights rising to a height of 20 m. Cliff faces are largely un-vegetated and areas of collapse are evident as a result of the sea undercutting the cliff toe and groundwater seepage in the cliff face.

Areas of cliff-top dunes exist along long sections of the marine terrace frontal edge. The forms of some dunes are relatively unmodified. However, they are covered in pasture and other exotic species such as boxthorn, and are grazed by stock. Several large and regionally significant dune lakes, as well as some smaller ones, are situated at the back of the remaining dune forms.

In general, the surface of the marine terrace is flat to mildly rolling. Other than the Tangahoe and Manawapou rivers and the Waihi and Kaikura streams, short small streams drain the frontal edge of the terrace. When the streams are flowing they discharge over the cliff face.

The land has been cleared for pastoral farming with the only indigenous vegetation remaining on stable cliff faces and within incised stream gullies. A small beach settlement exists at Ohawe.

Ohawe Beach coastal cliffs

Rolling landscape around the Tangahoe and Manawapou river catchments.

Waihi Beach and Reserve

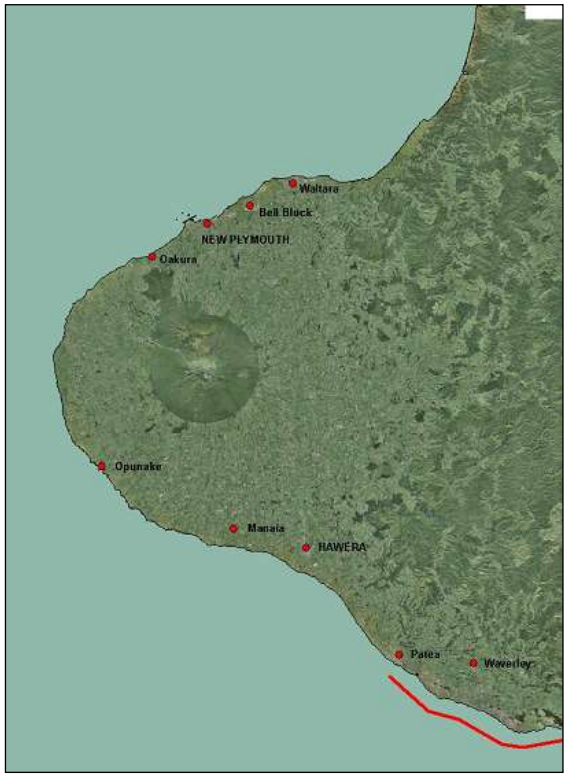
Manawapou River mouth

Nowell's Lakes and areas of cliff-top dunes

Cliff-top dunes in front of Lake Taumaha, the form of which are relatively unmodified

Coastal Unit 12 Patea Beach to Waiinu

Character area



Character description

From Patea Beach to Waiinu the coastal environment is dominated by uplifted marine terraces overlain by active dunelands and associated dune lakes.

The dunelands are extensive and almost continuous along the coastline apart from where the marine terrace edge is higher in relief, and therefore dominates. The marine terrace is evident in small sections south of the Patea and Whenuakura rivers and between Waipipi Dunes and Waitotara River. At these locations the terrace edge is typically 2-8 m in height. Cliff-top dunes, modified through agricultural land use, overlie the frontal area of the terrace in some locations.

At Waipipi and Waitotara River the dunelands are extensive and extend several kilometres inland. However, apart from dunes situated along the coastline and immediately surrounding the Waitotara River, the dunelands have been extensively modified by ironsand mining and agricultural land use. The unmodified and extensive dune areas of Waipipi along the coast and Waitotara are regionally significant features and are noted for their indigenous vegetation and uninterrupted natural dune processes.

Several large and regionally significant dune lakes and wetlands, as well as some smaller ones, are also situated within the dune systems found along the unit. The dunelands are dissected by small drainage patterns.

Dunes which are unmodified or relatively unmodified contain indigenous vegetation. Indigenous vegetation is also situated on the margins of some of the streams and coastal watercourses including estuaries, wetlands, lakes.

The coastal environment of Patea township, including Patea Estuary, is highly modified. Small beachside settlements exist at Waverley Beach and Waiinu.

Patea Estuary and beach

Waverley Beach settlement

Whenuakura Estuary and duneland

The cliffs at Waverley Beach are an example of unusual cliff erosion

Waipipi Dunes are valued for their unmodified dune processes

Waitotara Estuary and surrounding duneland. A fossilised forest is seen on the right hand side of the estuary.

4. Natural character

4.1 Statutory considerations

As previously noted, the reviewed Coastal Plan is required to give effect to Policy 13 of the NZCPS which reads as follows:

Policy 13 Preservation of natural character

(1) To preserve the natural character of the coastal environment and to protect it from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:

(a) avoid adverse effects of activities on natural character in areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character; and

(b) avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on natural character in all other areas of the coastal environment;

including by:

(c) assessing the natural character of the coastal environment of the region or district, by mapping or otherwise identifying at least areas of high natural character; and

(d) ensuring that regional policy statements, and plans, identify areas where preserving natural character requires objectives, policies and rules, and include those provisions.

(2) Recognise that natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes or amenity values and may include matters such as:

(a) natural elements, processes and patterns;

(b) biophysical, ecological, geological and geomorphological aspects;

(c) natural landforms such as headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, wetlands, reefs, freshwater springs and surf breaks[2];

(d) the natural movement of water and sediment;

(e) the natural darkness of the night sky;

(f) places or areas that are wild or scenic;

(g) a range of natural character from pristine to modified; and

(h) experiential attributes, including the sounds and smell of the sea; and their context or setting.

Additionally, the Council is also required to give effect to its *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* (RPS) through the Coastal Plan review. The RPS became operative in January 2010 and will be amended in due course to ensure that it gives effect to the NZCPS in its entirety (the existing RPS already goes some way towards meeting the requirements of the NZCPS). The RPS contains the following policy of particular relevance:

CNC POLICY 1

Management of the coastal environment will be carried out in a manner that protects the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use, development and occupation and enhances natural character where appropriate.

In determining the natural character of the coastal environment, matters to be considered will include:

(a) the degree of modification from a natural state;

(b) the amenity values of the environment, which collectively give the coastal environment its natural character including rural amenity value;

(c) the importance of landscapes, seascapes and landforms, including visually or scientifically significant geological features and wild and scenic areas;

(d) the contribution of Taranaki's historic heritage to the natural character of the coastal environment[3];

(e) the degree to which the coastal environment provides for the continued functioning of ecological and physical processes including consideration of the diversity, productivity, variability and importance of marine ecosystems and marine ecosystems typical or representative of the region, and links between marine and terrestrial ecosystems;

(f) the natural quality of water and air; indigenous biodiversity values; the characteristics of special spiritual, historical or cultural significance to tangata whenua; and

[2] As noted in section 1.2 of this report, surf breaks will be addressed as a separate component of the Coastal Plan review.

[3] These criteria were developed in accordance with the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 1994. However, cultural associations with the environment, including historic heritage, are no longer recognised to be a component of natural character by Policy 13 of the NZCPS (2010) and therefore will not be considered within the assessment.

(g) *the degree of integration of human use, development and subdivision with the above components.*

4.2 What is 'natural'?

Neither the RMA nor the NZCPS define the term natural character.

In *Harrison v Tasman District Council [1993] W42/93* the Court determined that *the word 'natural' does not necessarily equate with the word 'pristine' except in so far as landscape in a pristine state is probably rarer and of more value than landscape in a natural state. The word 'natural' is a word indicating a product of nature and can include such things as pasture, exotic tree species (pine), wildlife… and many other things of that ilk as opposed to manmade structures, roads, machinery.*

This case has been referenced as the *(now) conventional approach to what is natural*[4] and is considered to be consistent with a 'cultured nature' landscape which is more accepting of exotic vegetation and productive rural uses as opposed to a pristine landscape which, where it can be found, is considered to be a very natural landscape[5].

In *Long Bay Okura Park Society v North Shore City Council [2008] A078/08* the Environment Court extended a suggested list of criteria of 'natural', defined within the '*Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated v Queenstown Lakes District Council*', to include:

- *relatively unmodified and legible physical landform and relief;*
- *the landscape being uncluttered by structures and/or obvious human influence;*
- *the presence of water (lake, river, sea);*
- *the presence of vegetation (especially native vegetation) and other ecological patterns.*

The Court went on to note that *the absence or compromised presence of one or more of these criteria does not mean that the landscape or coastal environment is non-natural, just that it is less natural. There is a spectrum of naturalness from a pristine natural landscape to a cityscape, and a 'cultured nature' landscape can still be an outstanding natural landscape.*

[4] *Upper Clutha Tracks Trust v Queenstown Lakes District Council [2010] NZEnvC 432.*
[5] *Long Bay-Okura Great Park Society Inc v North Shore City Council [2008] A078/08.*

4.3 How is the level of natural character determined?

It is generally accepted that the degree of natural character is determined by the extent to which natural elements, patterns and processes occur; and the extent to which these factors are modified by human intervention[6].

As an outcome to a recent DOC convened national workshop on natural character[7], the majority of the attendees agreed on the following definition - being a slightly adapted version of a definition developed by a consultative group with the Ministry for the Environment,[8] which has been accepted by the Environment Court in a number of cases (including *Pigeon Bay Aquaculture Ltd v Canterbury Regional Council [2003] C179/2003*):

Natural character is the term used to describe the natural elements of all coastal environments. The degree or level of natural character within an environment depends on:

1. *The extent to which the natural elements, patterns and processes* occur;*
2. *The nature and extent of modification to the ecosystems and landscape/seascape;*
3. *The degree of natural character is highest where there is least modification;*
4. *The effect of different types of modification upon natural character varies with context and may be perceived differently by different parts of the community.*

** For the purposes of interpreting the NZCPS 2010 Policy 13(2), 'elements, patterns and processes' means: biophysical, ecological, geological and geomorphological aspects; natural landforms such as headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, wetlands, reefs, freshwater springs and surf breaks; and the natural movement of water and sediment.*

While the above definition usefully relates 'natural elements, patterns and processes' to the criteria listed in Policy 13(2) of the NZCPS,

[6] *Brook Weatherwell-Johnson and others v Tasman District Council [1996] W181/96.*
[7] *Department of Conservation. 2012. Natural Character and the NZCPS 2010, National Workshop – Summary of Discussion and Outcomes.*
[8] *Ministry for the Environment. 2002. Environmental Performance Indicators, Landscape Aspect of Natural Character, Stage 1 – Initial Findings – A report prepared by Boffa Miskell Ltd for the Ministry for the Environment.*

there are many explanations which help to further describe what each of these factors mean and what sorts of things they encompass. One of the most helpful explanations is from evidence presented to the NZCPS Board of Inquiry on behalf of Future Ocean Beach Trust, which reads as follows:

Natural elements: natural elements are the products of ecological, erosional and depositional processes; the biophysical characteristics of the landscape, such as landforms, rock outcrops, hydrological features and vegetation communities;

Natural patterns: patterns are formed through the interactions between landscape elements and the processes operating on them. Patterns are apparent though the interactions of plants, soils, aspect and slope, or through the erosion of the coastline through wave action. The regimented character of a forestry plantation or apple orchard compared with the apparently random patterns of trees in an indigenous forest, illustrates how natural and unnatural patterns might be understood; and

Natural processes: natural processes are the dynamic processes at work on the biophysical landscape, shaping landform and vegetation communities through processes of erosion and deposition, soil forming processes, colonisation and succession, regeneration and energy and nutrient flows.

As can be seen, there are many factors which contribute to natural character. Typically, these are broadly grouped into biotic (living) and abiotic (physical) features. Biotic and abiotic factors combine to create an ecosystem. Accordingly the two are interrelated and it is their collective whole which defines the natural character of an area.

The assessment matrix in Table 1 below outlines the key criteria that need to be considered when assessing the natural character of the coastal environment. The criteria have been devised from the interpretation of case law, Policy 13 of the NZCPS and best practice to reflect the different factors of natural patterns, processes and elements of the coastal environment and the extent of modification present.

Context, referred to in the accepted definition (above), is also a factor to be considered and is discussed in a section 4.4 below.

Natural character is assessed along a continuum, or scale, from pristine wilderness, where no evidence of human intervention is apparent, to wholly developed, where little evidence of natural character remains.

A schematic by Maplesden[9] below describes this continuum of low to high natural character.

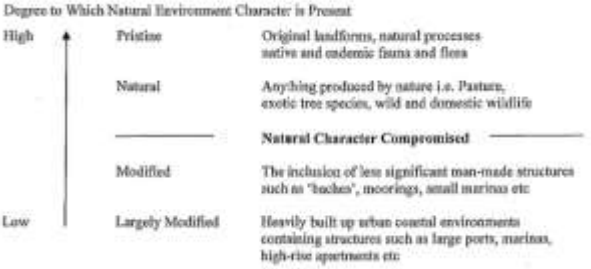


Figure 3 *Degree to which natural character is present (Maplesden, 1995)*

4.4 Importance of context in assessing naturalness

Different coastal environments have different levels of natural character remaining. In Taranaki, pasture is a significant component of the coastal environment as well as a large part of the region's identity or sense of place. As Lucas[10] notes, the degree of natural character is context dependant. Different ratings can be obtained depending on the degree of modification in the region or district. For example, extensive pasture may have 'high natural character' in coastal environments of some regions but moderate or low natural character in others.

The Board of Inquiry for the NZCPS heard evidence from Lucas[11] in relation to her concern about the "*regular belittling of stable, long-term pastoral coastal landscapes as 'working landscapes'*". Lucas highlighted to the Board that pastoral landscapes can be perceived as highly natural and can be managed

[9] *Maplesden, R.F, 1995. Preserving the Natural Character of the Coastline, A Judicial Analysis of Section 3(1)(c) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1997) and Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act. (1991), unpublished Honours thesis, Massey University.*
[10] *Department of Conservation, 2012. Natural Character and the NZCPS 2010, National Workshop – Summary of Discussion and Outcomes. Convened by the Department of Conservation 2 August 2011, Wellington.*
[11] *Statement of Di Lucas, Landscape Architect on behalf of the Future Ocean Beach Trust Incorporated, 20 November 2008.*

sustainably provided that the land is stable, biodiversity is integrated and water quality protected through the likes of adequately vegetated riparian margins.

In support of this, *Brook Weatherwell-Johnson*[12] emphasises the need to assess a particular site in context with the wider environment, thus taking into account other components that may contribute to natural character. In terms of the environment in question the Court ruled:

We consider that the mix of rural forestry development over the years has compromised some of the site's natural cover but not its natural character which is of a prominent hill in an estuary in a coastal setting. It is largely unbuilt and the regenerating bush in the steep gullies, when seen in context of the surrounding wetland and placid waters of the estuary, offsets any textural compromises to a large degree.

4.5 Assessment methodology for mapping outstanding natural character

The assessment of natural character within Taranaki's coastal environment involved the following steps:

1. Research into previous landscape assessments (district and regional level).
2. Aerial survey of Taranaki's coastline, from which video and aerial imagery was produced.
3. Collation of relevant GIS data, technical information, aerial imagery.
4. Landscape characterisation through desktop analysis to determine broad and similar coastal units.
5. Confirmation and refinement of coastal units by study team.
6. Development of assessment criteria (refer to Table 1).
7. Identification of areas of outstanding natural character and their extent through assessment criteria and evaluation scale (refer to scale below Table 1), and through a comparative assessment.
8. Field surveys of those areas which required closer examination.
9. Drafting of assessment report.
10. Verification of the location and extent of areas of outstanding natural character and their values by study team.
11. Finalisation of draft assessment report for internal and external review/input.
12. Draft report amended to incorporate feedback/input, and finalised and applied as a part of the review process.

In undertaking the study, the Taranaki coastline was divided into 12 coastal units that share a similar character and are broadly homogenous. The coastal units range in length and overall size, depending on the coastline type and character.

The assessment of areas of outstanding natural character along the coastline was completed through examining areas which display a combination of natural elements, patterns and processes that are superior in their extent, intactness, integrity and lack of built structures and other modifications. The criteria in Table 1 (and evaluation scale situated below Table 1) were applied in identifying the extent of natural elements, patterns and processes and level of modification.

It is well accepted that the term 'outstanding' *is a comparative evaluative term meaning; to stand out, exceptional, pre-eminent, clearly superior to others in the same group or category*[13]. Accordingly, consideration was given to whether the combined significance of the relevant attributes met the threshold of 'outstanding' when compared to other areas of the coastal environment.

In general, areas on land determined to be outstanding were mapped with a 500 m offshore buffer to ensure that the intertidal component of the coastline, including sandy beaches and reefs, were also captured.

Seascapes (e.g. marine reserves, subtidal features) identified to be outstanding were also mapped with a 500 m buffer to ensure that adequate separation distances occur for permitted activities. For consented activities, policy is proposed to protect the values of outstanding areas regardless of what Coastal Management Area the activity is situated in.

[12] *Brook Weatherwell-Johnson and others v Tasman District Council [1996] W181/96.*

[13] *Boffa Miskell Limited 2011 internal workshop.*

Table 1: Criteria for assessing the degree of natural character

Attributes		Indicators	Information sources
Abiotic	**Natural landforms, systems and processes**	Abiotic systems, including: • the degree of activeness of the tide and tidal range; • waves, currents and wind; • landform and coastal formations (e.g. reefs, stacks, caves); • erosion and accretion; • river mouth processes including sedimentation; • geomorphology, identification of different types of landforms and landforming processes (e.g. headlands, cliffs, dunes, lagoons).	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in geomorphology • Site visits • Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database • Inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region • Geopreservation inventory and spreadsheet
	Modifications	The physical modifications to natural landforms, systems and processes such as built structures, discharges, changes to flow regimes, earthworks and reclamation are an important consideration.	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Site visits • Resource consent GIS layer
Biotic	**Marine, freshwater and terrestrial habitats**	Biotic systems, including: • the distribution, expression/appearance and abundance of natural ecological processes; • diversity of species, communities and habitat.	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in biodiversity/ecology • Site visits • Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database • Inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region • Marine reserves or protected areas • Land/reserves managed by DOC
	Land cover and land use	Land cover and associated land use, including the composition, distribution and condition of vegetation cover.	• Aerial photography • Site visits • Taranaki Land Cover GIS layer • Resource consent GIS layer • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in biodiversity/ecology • Site visits • Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database
Perceptual and experiential		How natural the experience is in seeing, feeling and perceiving. Includes smells, sounds, visual; sense of wildness, remoteness, isolation. Includes ephemeral human activity such as recreation, commercial activities, walking, vehicles, fishing, camping and settlements, boats.	• Inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region • Site visits • Local knowledge of study team • Recreational use of coast, rivers and lakes in Taranaki 2007-2008 (TRC publication)

In line with best practice, the degree of natural character is ranked on a seven point scale ranging from very low (greatest amount of modification) to very high (least amount of modification).

Very low	Low	Low-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High	Very High

4.6 Proposed draft policy for identifying high natural character

Policy 13 of the NZCPS requires that at least areas of 'high' natural character are mapped or otherwise identified.

Areas of high natural character occur where nature predominates, but not to the same degree as the more pristine areas of outstanding natural character. They may include areas of pasture and a minor level of modification, but the overall lack of built development and modifications to the landscape means they retain a high natural character value.

Setting aside the more pristine areas of outstanding natural character, much of the remaining Taranaki coastal environment has retained its high natural character. It contains large areas with little or no development or modification, and is generally under no significant pressure for use, development or protection.

For the purposes of this study and the wider review of the Coastal Plan, the following draft policies have been developed which identify areas of high natural character (draft Policy 1.1) and set out how effects on natural character and natural features and landscapes, including high natural character areas and values, are to be managed (draft Policy 3.2).

Policy 1.1: Coastal Management Areas

Management of the coastal marine area will be carried out in a way that recognises that some areas have values, characteristics or uses that are more vulnerable or sensitive to the effects of some activities, or that have different management needs than other areas.

In managing the use, development and protection of resources under the Plan, recognition will be given to the following Coastal Management Areas (identified in Schedule 1) and their values, characteristics and uses:

(a) Coastal Management Area A comprises of areas of outstanding coastal value and characteristically:

(i) are areas of outstanding natural character and/or outstanding natural features or landscapes;

(ii) contain values and attributes that are exceptional including in relation to landforms, land cover, cultural and heritage associations, and visual qualities (specific values identified in Schedule 2; refer corresponding Policy 3.1);

(iii) contain marine areas with legal protection including Parininihi Marine Reserve, Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area and Tapaue Marine Reserve (identified in Appendix 3);

(iv) includes diverse areas of significant indigenous biodiversity value (specific values identified in accordance with Policy 3.4);

(v) includes areas of high amenity value (specific areas identified in Schedule 3; refer corresponding Policy 4.2);

(vi) contribute to cultural, amenity, recreational and tourism values; and

(vii) are iconic to the region's identity and sense of place.

(b) Coastal Management Area B comprises of estuaries (not included in Coastal Management Area A) that are permanently open to tidal movements and characteristically:

(i) have significantly different and more complex natural processes than the open coast;

(ii) provide habitats, migration paths, breeding areas and nursery areas for marine and bird life;

(iii) may contain significant indigenous biodiversity values (specific values identified in accordance with Policy 3.4);

(iv) provide natural focal points for human activity and, in some cases, are modified or are surrounded by urban or extensively modified environments;

(v) contains areas of high amenity value (specific areas identified in Schedule 3; refer corresponding Policy 4.2);

(c) Coastal Management Area C comprises of the open coast and characteristically:

(i) is subject to a high energy westerly wave environment and the coastal land behind the foreshore is generally eroding;

(ii) may contain significant indigenous biodiversity values in some areas (specific values identified in accordance with Policy 3.4);

(iii) contains areas of high amenity value (specific areas identified in Schedule 3; refer corresponding Policy 4.2);

(iv) *contains regionally and nationally important infrastructure;*
(v) *includes reef systems that provide habitat to marine life, and are valued by Māori for mahinga kai;*
(vi) *includes nationally and regionally important surf breaks (specific surf breaks identified in Schedule 4; refer corresponding Policy 4.3);*
(vii) *is largely of high natural character, including the adjoining land dominated by the coast, except for in the vicinity of the New Plymouth urban area and other discrete areas where built form dominates such as coastal subdivisions and settlements, and in areas of substantial river mouth or coastal protection works;*
(viii) *contains large tracts of representative coastline, and is generally under no significant pressure for use, development or protection;*
(ix) *contains fisheries that are recreationally, culturally and commercially valuable.*

(d) *Coastal Management Area D comprises of the highly modified environment of Port Taranaki which characteristically:*
(i) *enables people and communities to provide for their economic well-being;*
(ii) *has low levels of natural character;*
(iii) *provides some natural habitat and supports some marine species, although these are generally less significant than other areas of the coastal marine area;*
(iv) *contains regionally and nationally important infrastructure;*
(v) *contains port related activities which are accepted as appropriate uses of this Coastal Management Area;*
(vi) *can have significant effects on areas outside of the Port, including contributing to coastal erosion along the New Plymouth foreshore;*
(vii) *contains areas valued for recreation.*

Policy 3.2: Natural character and natural features and landscapes

For all other areas of the coastal environment not identified by Policy 3.1:

(a) *avoid significant adverse effects on natural character and natural features and landscapes by having regard to the extent to which the activity:*
(i) *contributes to the enhancement or restoration of natural character;*
(ii) *is compatible with the existing level of modification to the environment, including by having particular regard to Policy 1.1;*
(iii) *the context of the area within the surrounding landscape, its representativeness and ability to accommodate change;*
(iv) *is of an appropriate form, scale and design to be sympathetic to the existing landforms, features and vegetation (excluding high visibility markers required for safety or conservation purposes) or is of a temporary nature and any adverse effects are of a short duration and are reversible;*
(v) *maintains the intactness of significant areas of indigenous vegetation;*
(vi) *maintains the integrity of significant historic and cultural heritage;*
(vii) *maintains physical, visual and experiential attributes that significantly contribute to the scenic, wild or other aesthetic values of the area;*
(viii) *maintains the integrity of sites of geological significance identified in Schedule 4;*
(ix) *will not significantly alter the integrity of landforms and features, or significantly disrupt natural processes and ecosystems; and*

(b) *avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects on natural character and natural features and landscapes.*

5. Areas of outstanding natural character

5.1 Areas identified as having outstanding natural character

An assessment of each coastal unit was undertaken to determine whether any area(s) of the unit contained outstanding natural character.

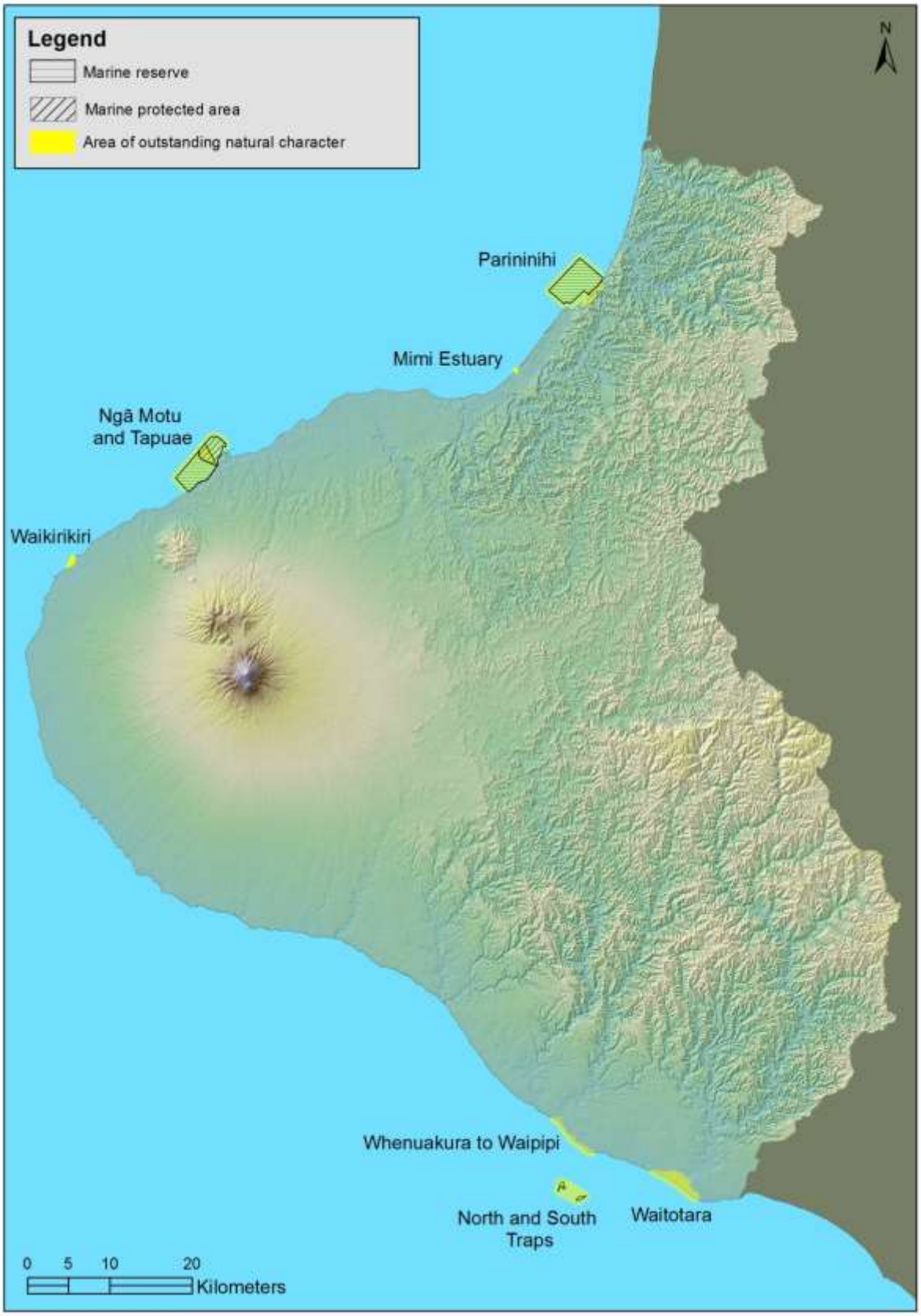
In summary and based on the assessment methodology outlined in section 4.5, for an area to have outstanding natural character it must display a combination of natural elements, patterns and processes that are superior in their extent, intactness, integrity and lack of built structures and other modifications compared to other areas of the coastal environment in the region.

Based on this assessment, the following seven areas (refer Figure 4) are considered to have outstanding natural character (ONC):

ONC 1	Parininihi
ONC 2	Mimi Estuary
ONC 3	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapaue
ONC 4	Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)
ONC 5	Whenuakura to Waipipi
ONC 6	North and South Traps
ONC 7	Waitotara

Of note areas highlighted in the maps in yellow define the indicative extent of the outstanding natural area, landscape or feature in the coastal environment.

Coastal areas with outstanding natural character in Taranaki



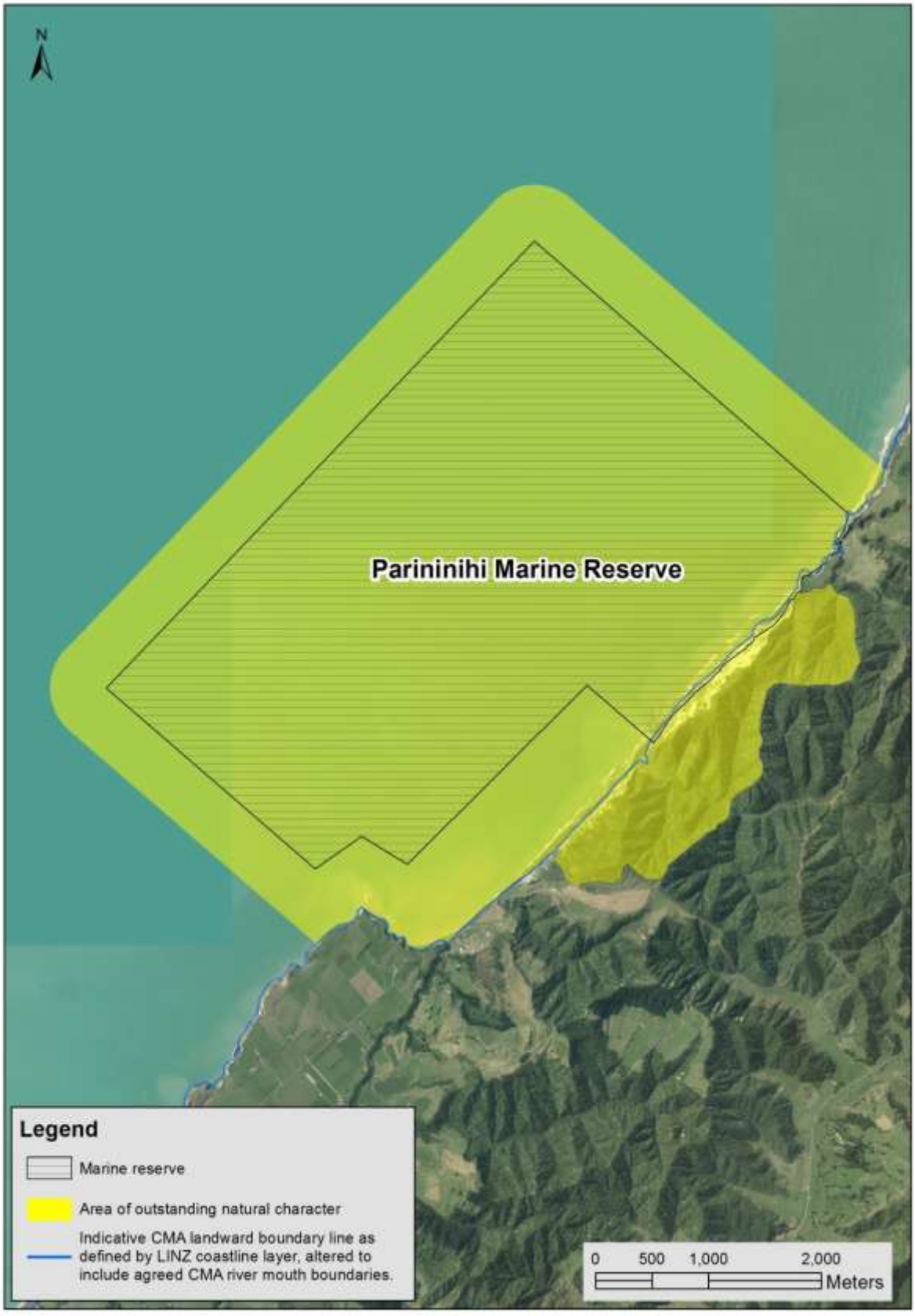
ONC 1 Parininihi

Coastal Unit 1: Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point

Parininihi includes intact coastal forest, spectacular coastal White Cliffs, and a marine reserve which provide exceptional and unique biotic and abiotic values along an unmodified and wild section of coastline

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Unmodified and diverse habitats comprising coastal forest, Waipingau Stream and dune system, and offshore reefs • The spectacular and prominent White Cliffs coastal cliffs are identified as a well defined landform of scenic value • An extensive offshore reef system – unique for the generally sandy North Taranaki coastline	Very High
Biotic	• The marine reserve contains internationally important sponge gardens, a high diversity of fish species and important habitat for crayfish and pāua • Part of a larger indigenous forest feature, the coastal margins contain one of the best remaining examples of primary coastal hardwood and podocarp-hardwood forests on the west coast of the North Island • The forest provides core habitat for many threatened species and contains a large number of regionally significant species • Dune system at the mouth of Waipingau Stream supports the only natural population of pingao (*Ficinia spiralis*) in the New Plymouth district	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Human activity is minimal associated with low key recreation use • The experience maintains a high sense of wildness and remoteness encountered along a dynamic coastal edge	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Parininihi



ONC 2 Mimi Estuary

Coastal Unit 2: Pariokariwa Point to Waiau Stream

Mimi Estuary is relatively unmodified providing exceptional biophysical values and high scenic associations

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Diverse and rare range of habitat types including riverine estuary, small tidal bays, estuary margins, and sandy foreshore • Unmodified natural processes including sand spit and dune processes and river mouth oscillation	Very High
Biotic	• Small tidal bays contain a variety of specialised native flora. 'Regionally Distinctive' species include natural populations of saltmarsh ribbonwood (*Plagianthus divaricatus*), coastal tree daisy (*Olearia solandri*) and koromiko (*Veronica stricta var. macroura*) • Provides important habitats for a diverse range of resident and migratory birds including the 'Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)' Northern New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus aquilonius*), Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and red-billed gull (*Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus*) • Margins of the south side of the estuary contain a well established variety of mainly native plants • A small population of 'At Risk (Relict)' pingao (*Ficinia spiralis*) has established from planting on the foreshore beach area • The estuary contains diverse and regionally distinctive native fish	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Human activity is minimal associated with low key recreation use • The experience maintains a sense of remoteness and high scenic associations	High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Mimi Estuary

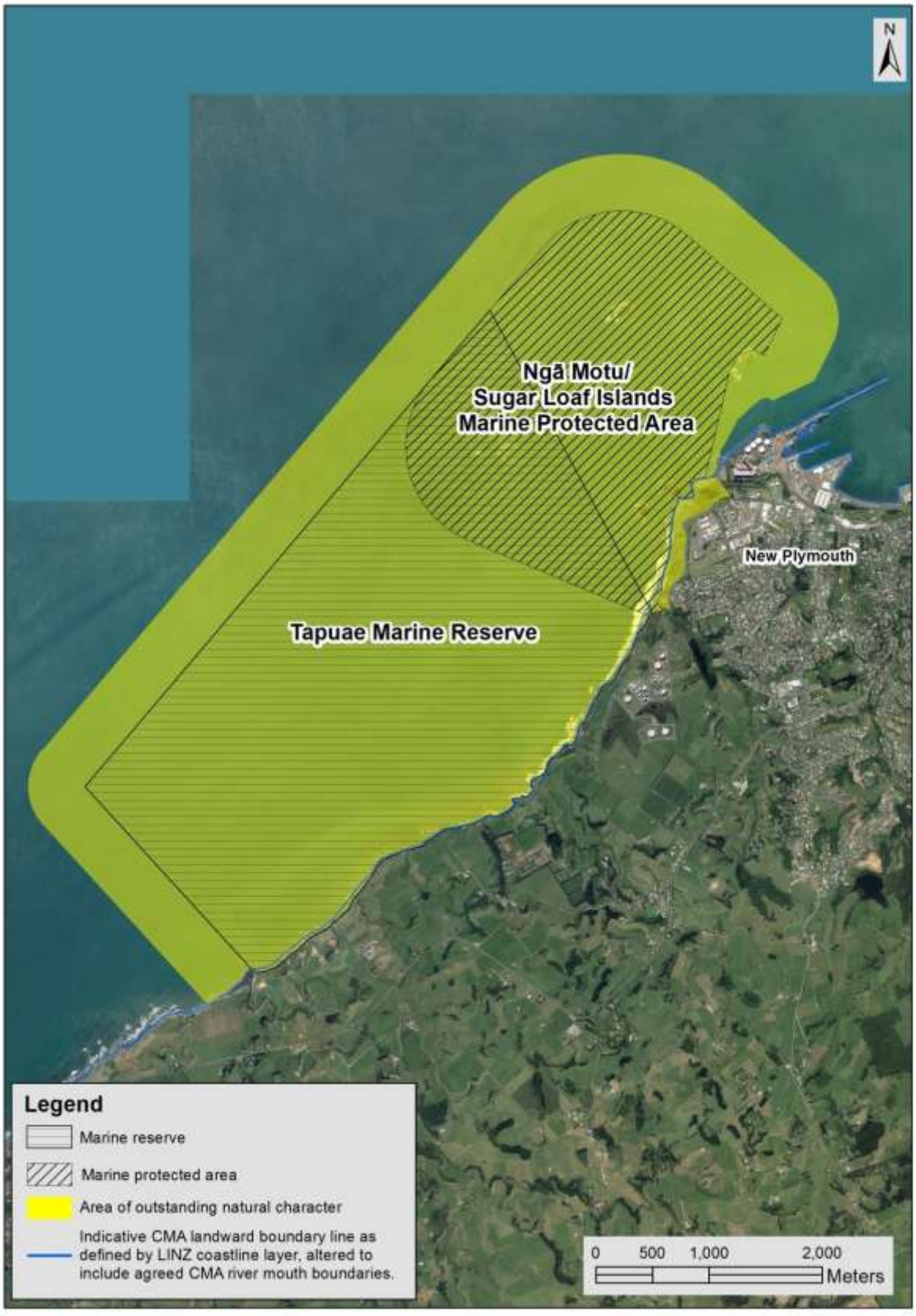
ONC 3 Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae

Coastal Unit 5: Paritutu to Oakura River

Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae express a relatively unmodified seascape that includes volcanic islands and subtidal formations which provide exceptional biophysical values and very high wild and scenic associations

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• A diverse range of habitats including islands and stacks, and subtidal canyons, caves, large pinnacles, boulder fields, rock reefs and sand flats • Sugar Loaf Islands have significant scientific and educational value	Very High
Biotic	• The islands support a diverse range of indigenous plant species including 'Threatened (Nationally Endangered)' Cook's scurvy grass (*Lepidium oleraceum*) • The islands contain a diverse range and significant number of nesting birds including the ' Threatened (Nationally Endangered)' reef heron (*Egretta sacra sacra*) • The marine protected area and marine reserve contain a diverse range of fish species, encrusting sponges and bryozoans • The marine protected area and marine reserve provides important habitat for crayfish and pāua • Contains the largest fur seal breeding colony on the west coast of the North Island • Marine mammals observed at times include common dolphins, pilot whales, orca, humpback whales and southern right whales	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Within the marine protected area and marine reserve, human activity is minimal associated with low key recreational use • Expansive seascape with minimal apparent modification to retain wild scenic associations	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapaue



ONC 4 Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)

Coastal Unit 7: Hangatahua (Stony River) to Stent Road Beach

Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon) contains exceptional and unique biotic and abiotic values along an unmodified and wild section of coastline

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Active and uninterrupted natural processes including extensive dune system and a wide sandy beach which contains an ephemeral wetland and nationally rare coastal habitat • Dynamic accreting coastline resulting from the high sedimentary load of the Hangatahua (Stony) River – unique for the generally eroding Taranaki coastline	Very High
Biotic	• The unmodified coastal dune system hosts a diverse range of indigenous plant species including semi-aquatic species pondweed (*Potamogeton cheesemanii*), water milfoil (*Myriophyllum propinquum*) and sharp spike sedge (*Eleocharis acuta*), with flax (*Phormium tenax*) and taupata (*Coprosma repens*) on the margins • The wetland and foreshore contains a diverse range of resident and migratory bird species with up to 59 bird species recorded (including several threatened and at risk species) • Threatened and at risk flora and fauna species present including 'Acutely Threatened (Nationally Endangered)' sneezeweed (*Centipeda minima subsp. Minima*) • Protective fencing and restoration planting has been undertaken as part of the Waikirikiri Lagoon and Beach Restoration Project including supplementary planting of flax and taupata on the inland margin	High
Perceptual and experiential	• Within boundary fencing, human activity is minimal associated with low key recreation use • The experience maintains a high sense of wildness and remoteness encountered along a dynamic coastal edge	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)

ONC 5 Whenuakura to Waipipi

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

Whenuakura to Waipipi expresses a coastal sequence that includes a relatively unmodified estuary and intact coastal dunes which provide exceptional coastal habitat with significant native vegetation and wildlife

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Whenuakura Estuary is relatively unmodified with diverse habitats comprising extensive mudflats, tidal lagoons, an adjacent perched freshwater lagoon, a sand bar and an island forming intermittently • The Waipipi Dunes consist of a highly dynamic complex of low (less than 4 m) dunes and small wet sand flats and depressions (swales) extending from the coast inland 200-300 m to taller (15 m) more stable relic foredunes • Identified as the only sizeable area with no artificially induced erosion caused by livestock or recreational vehicle tracks, however some dairy grazing is evident • Most of the area remains dynamic and is continually being eroded by wind and wave action	Very High
Biotic	• Threatened and at risk native flora and fauna present • Dunes contain significant population of pingao (*Ficinia spiralis*). sand spike sedge (*Eleocharis neozelandica*), sand gunnera (*Gunnera arenaria*) and sand daphne (*Pimelea villosa*)is also present (all identified as species at risk and declining) • The ' Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable)' Caspian tern (*Sterna caspia*), northern New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus aquilonius*) and banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*) and the 'At Risk' (Declining) New Zealand pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae)* inhabit Whenuakura Estuary and adjacent dunes • The migratory route of several bird species including the variable oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) and royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*)	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Expansive open coastline with minimal apparent modification to retain wild scenic associations • The dune system creates a vast uninterrupted coastal edge which retains a strong natural experience	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Whenuakura to Waipipi

ONC 6 North and South Traps

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

The North and South Traps comprise a large reef system located approximately 6 km offshore from Patea.

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Two large adjoining pinnacle reefs – unusual features on a shelf region dominated by sand	Very High
Biotic	• Important kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*) beds • Diverse range of fish and encrusting sponge species • Valuable habitat for crayfish	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Human activity is minimal associated with low key recreational use • The experience maintains a high sense of wilderness and remoteness	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of North and South Traps and buffer area

ONC 7 Waitotara

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

Waitotara contains exceptional biophysical values along an unmodified coastal edge which retains very high wild and scenic associations

Natural character attributes	Evaluation	Degree of natural character
Abiotic	• Actively eroding broken foredune, and extensive series of undulating dunes with hollows and relic foredunes further inland parallel to the beach • Contrasting limestone and sedimentary rock outcrops amongst foredune areas • Piliocene section along bank of Waitotara River together with fossilised totara stumps and ventifacts which have high scientific and educational interest	Very High
Biotic	• The area contains a diverse range of habitat types including riverine, lacustrine and palustrine wetland systems • The foredune is made up of spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*) and the ' 'At Risk' (Declining)' pingao (*Ficinia spiralis)* with scattered exotic marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) interspersed with outcrops containing iceplant and glasswort • The wetlands and dune systems provide core habitat for threatened and at risk native plant and animal species including the 'Threatened (Nationally Critical)' erect herb Sebaea (*Sebaea ovata*) • The reserve also provides habitat for coastal and migratory birds and is occasionally visited by the ' Threatened (Nationally Critical)' kotuku or white heron (*Ardea modesta*)	Very High
Perceptual and experiential	• Human activity is minimal associated with low key recreation use • The experience maintains a high sense of wildness and remoteness retained along the coastal edge	Very High
	Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Waitotara

6. Natural features and landscapes

6.1 Statutory considerations

As previously noted, the reviewed Coastal Plan is required to give effect to Policy 15 of the NZCPS which reads as follows:

Policy 15 Natural features and natural landscapes

(1) To protect the natural features and natural landscapes (including seascapes) of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:

(a) avoid adverse effects of activities on outstanding natural features and outstanding natural landscapes in the coastal environment; and

(b) avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy, or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on other natural features and natural landscapes in the coastal environment;

including by:

(c) identifying and assessing the natural features and natural landscapes of the coastal environment of the region or district, at minimum by land typing, soil characterisation and landscape characterisation and having regard to:

(i) natural science factors, including geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components;

(ii) the presence of water including in seas, lakes, rivers and streams;

(iii) legibility or expressiveness - how obviously the feature or landscape demonstrates its formative processes;

(iv) aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness;

(v) vegetation (native and exotic);

(vi) transient values, including the presence of wildlife or other values at certain times of the day or year;

(vii) whether the values are shared and recognised;

(viii) cultural and spiritual values for tangata whenua, identified by working, as far as practicable, in accordance with tikanga Māori, including their expression as cultural landscapes and features;

(ix) historical and heritage associations; and

(x) wild or scenic values;

(d) ensuring that regional policy statements, and plans, map or otherwise identify areas where the protection of natural features and natural landscapes requires objectives, policies and rules; and

(e) including the objectives, policies and rules required by (d) in plans.

Again, the reviewed Coastal Plan must also give effect to the RPS which contains the following relevant policy:

NFL Policy 1

Outstanding natural features and landscapes are to be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development, including protection of:

(a) the special scenic, recreational, scientific and Māori cultural and spiritual values associated with Mount Taranaki;

(b) the volcanic landforms and features of regional significance on the Taranaki ring plain;

(c) the special scenic, recreational and scientific values associated with the coastal environment and coastal features of regional significance;

(d) the natural character and natural features and landscapes of regional significance associated with Taranaki's rivers and lakes and their margins;

(e) the rural features and landscapes of regional significance, including the scenic and landscape qualities of the raised marine terraces of south Taranaki[14] and inland Taranaki hill country; and

(f) landscape features associated with areas of indigenous vegetation that are of regional significance.

[14] *The raised marine terraces identified are located inland of Hawera, beyond the coastal environment.*

6.2 What is a 'feature' and 'landscape'?

Determining whether an area is a 'landscape' or a 'feature', in *Wakatipu Environmental Society v Queenstown Lakes District Council [2001] C129/01* the Court considered that 'feature' means *a distinctive or characteristic part of a landscape.*

As to the term 'landscape', a definition was considered in *Wakatipu Environmental Society and others v Queenstown-Lakes District Council [2000] C180/99* where the Court determined 'landscape' to be a large subset of the environment which involves both natural and physical resources themselves and also various factors relating to the viewer and their perception of the resources.

Whether any given area is large enough to be able to be considered as a landscape, in *Wakatipu Environmental Society & Others v Queenstown Lakes District Council [2003] C73/02* the Court found *that the more open a landscape is, the greater the area it must contain to be seen as a landscape.*

For the purposes of this study an area is not identified as being either a landscape or a feature given that they are afforded the same significance and level of protection, and the difference being only a matter of scale.

6.3 How is the significance of a natural feature or landscape determined?

In *Wakatipu Environmental Society and others v Queenstown-Lakes District Council [2000] C180/99* the Court built upon a previously established set of values referred to as 'Pigeon Bay Factors' which have been used to assess natural features and landscapes against in determining their level of significance. Additional criteria were added in this case and thus became known as the 'Amended, or Modified, Pigeon Bay Factors'. The Court also noted that the list was not frozen. Policy 15 of the NZCPS (set out in section 6.1) replicates this criteria except for the addition of the presence of water, vegetation (native and exotic), and wild or scenic values.

The assessment matrix in Table 2 below uses and expands upon this criteria in evaluating the significance of natural features and landscapes. The application of this criteria directly is an accepted form of evaluation.

It is generally accepted that outstanding natural features and landscapes must be both natural and outstanding. Naturalness may be the first criterion to be satisfied, and is discussed above in section 4.2. Associated with this is the consideration of context, also discussed above in section 4.4.

The importance of context in determining the significance of a natural feature or landscape was highlighted by the Environment Court in *Unison Networks Limited v Hastings District Council*:

"We also have some concern about evaluating landscapes using (predominately) vegetation patterns as the most significant criterion. May there not be instances where the landform itself is so striking, even when clothed by pasture, the landscape is outstanding?"

In *Wakatipu Environmental Society*[15] the Court concluded that the term 'outstanding' means conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence and remarkable in. The Court also found that a landscape may be magnificent without being outstanding and that usually an outstanding landscape should be obvious (in general terms) that there is no need for expert analysis.

6.4 Relationship between natural character and natural features and landscapes

In *Meridian Energy Ltd v Wellington City Council [2007] W031/07* the Court defined natural character as a baseline from which other issues such as outstanding natural landscapes and visual amenity flow.

Lucas[16] explains the differentiations as well as the similarities between natural character and natural landscapes through stating:

'Natural character' involves both the physical character of an area AND the perception of that

[15] *Wakatipu Environmental Society and others v Queenstown-Lakes District Council [2000] C180/99.*
[16] *Department of Conservation, 2012. Natural Character and the NZCPS 2010, National Workshop – Summary of Discussion and Outcomes. Convened by the Department of Conservation 2 August 2011, Wellington.*

character. 'Natural landscape' involves the physical character of an area, the perception of that character AND the associations with that area. So too does 'natural feature'.

Natural character is shown to address different but overlapping resources from those of natural features and landscapes. The associative dimensions of cultural, spiritual, historic and heritage are addressed within natural features and landscapes, but are not dimensions of natural character.

6.5 Assessment methodology

The assessment of outstanding natural features and landscapes within Taranaki's coastal environment involved the following steps, similar to and in association with the outstanding natural character assessment:

1. Research into previous landscape assessments (district and regional level).
2. Aerial survey of Taranaki's coastline undertaken, from which video and aerial imagery was produced.
3. Collation of relevant GIS data, technical information, aerial imagery.
4. Landscape characterisation through desktop analysis to determine broad and similar coastal units.
5. Confirmation and refinement of coastal units by study team.
6. Development of assessment criteria (refer to Table 2).
7. Identification of outstanding natural features and landscapes through a comparative assessment.
8. Field surveys of those areas which required closer examination.
9. Drafting of assessment report.
10. Verification of the location and extent of outstanding natural features and landscapes and their values by study team.
11. Finalisation of draft assessment report for internal and external review/input.
12. Draft report amended to incorporate feedback/input, and finalised and applied as a part of the review process.

As set out previously, in undertaking the study, the Taranaki coastline was divided into 12 coastal units that share a similar character and are broadly homogenous. The coastal units range in length and overall size, depending on the coastline type and character.

Outstanding natural features and landscapes were identified using the criteria in Table 2 below where the natural feature or landscape is exceptional or out of the ordinary under one or more of the criteria and the natural components dominate over the influence of human activity.

There are many natural features and landscapes that are of significance, but do not meet the threshold required for outstanding. Furthermore, small and sporadic features, such as wetlands and indigenous vegetation remnants, while regionally important, have not met the scale or standard required for outstanding natural features and landscapes in the coastal environment.

As referred to above, the term 'outstanding' means conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence and remarkable in and that usually an outstanding landscape should be obvious (in general terms) that there is no need for expert analysis.

In general, areas on land determined to be outstanding were mapped with a 500 m offshore buffer to ensure that the intertidal component of the coastline, including sandy beaches and reefs, is captured.

Seascapes (e.g. marine reserves, subtidal features) identified to be outstanding were also mapped with a 500 m buffer to ensure that adequate separation distances occur for permitted activities. For consented activities, draft policy is proposed to protect the values of outstanding areas regardless of what Coastal Management Area the activity is situated in.

Table 2: Criteria for assessing the significance of natural features and landscapes

Attributes		Components	Information sources
Biophysical	**Natural science values**	How the following elements: • geological (e.g. volcanic debris/outflows, windblown sands impeding drainage); • topographical characteristics (e.g. bed form); • ecological (e.g. vegetation, wetlands);and • natural processes (e.g. erosion, accretion); display particular representativeness (are clearly and recognisably characteristic of the region) or rarity within the region; or are important for science research and education.	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Geopreservation inventory and spreadsheet • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in geomorphology and biodiversity/ecology • Site visits • Taranaki Land Cover GIS layer • Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database • Marine reserves or protected areas • Land/reserves managed by DOC • Inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region
Sensory	**Legibility or expressiveness**	How clearly formative natural processes or historical influences which helped create the feature or landscape are expressed.	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Site visits • Geopreservation inventory and spreadsheet • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in hydrology and geomorphology • Landscape characterisation information
	Aesthetic and scenic values	How the feature or landscape displays characteristics important to aesthetic/scenic values including: • Coherence: the patterns of land cover and land use are largely in harmony with the underlying natural pattern of the landform. • Memorability: the way in which a feature/landscape remains in the memory and may form part of a person's recollection of an area. • Vividness: the landscape/feature is visually striking, widely recognised within the local and wider community, and may be iconic or symbolic to the area. • Naturalness: the landscape/feature appears to be largely unmodified by human intervention and appears to comprise naturally functioning and healthy ecosystems. • Wildness: the landscape or /feature displays rugged, untamed characteristics.	• Coastal aerial survey video footage and photographs • Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database • Study team local knowledge • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in hydrology, geomorphology and biodiversity/ecology • Research of tourism and local information • Resource consent GIS layer • Land cover GIS layer
	Transient values	How the regular occurrence of transient features, for example seasonal changes in natural water level fluctuations or wildlife concentrations, contribute to the character of the feature or landscape.	• Key Native Ecosystem GIS layer and inventory/database • Site visits • Study team local knowledge • Input from study team participants with backgrounds in hydrology and biodiversity/ecology
Associative	**Shared and recognised values**	How the feature or landscape is widely known and highly valued by the local and wider community for its contribution to a sense of place.	• Study team local knowledge • Research of tourism information, artists and photographers

Attributes		Components	Information sources
	Tangata whenua values	Tangata whenua values inherent in the feature or landscape add to the feature or landscape being recognised as a special or widely known place.	• Preliminary consultation with tangata whenua • Mana whenua mana moana report
	Historical associations	Knowledge of historic activities that occurred in or around the feature or landscape is widely held and substantially influences and adds to the value the community places on the feature or landscape.	• Historic Places Trust register • Archaeological Scoping Study • District plans • Study team local knowledge

In line with best practice, the significance of landscape attributes were judged using the seven-point scale below along with the criteria and components identified in Table 2 above.

Very low	Low	Low-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High	Very High

A view of Oaonui dune fields (Sandy Bay) from the rocky coast south

7. Outstanding natural features and landscapes

7.1 Natural features and landscapes identified as outstanding

An assessment of the data and findings from the desktop and field surveys were used to determine the significance of a landscape's combined biophysical, sensory or associative value. The evaluation criteria in Table 2 above were applied as a part of the assessment.

The following Court findings were also kept in mind to assist with the assessment:

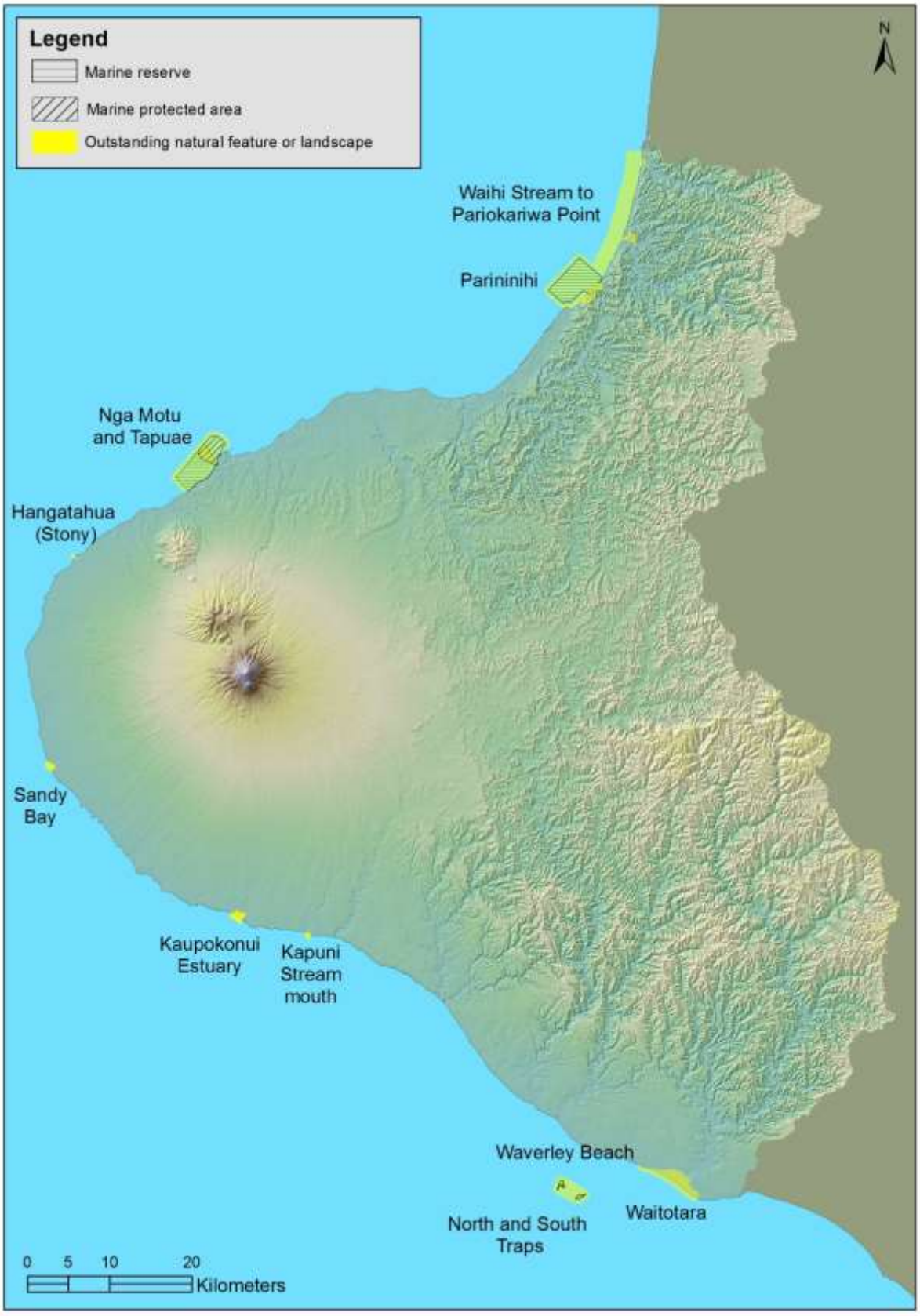
The term 'outstanding' means conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence and remarkable in and that usually an outstanding landscape should be obvious (in general terms) that there is no need for expert analysis.

Based on this assessment, the following nine areas (refer Figure 5) are considered to be outstanding natural features and landscapes (including seascapes):

ONFL 1	Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point
ONFL 2	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapaue
ONFL 3	Hangatahua (Stony River)
ONFL 4	Oaonui (Sandy Bay)
ONFL 5	Kaupokonui
ONFL 6	Kapuni Stream mouth
ONFL 7	North and South Traps
ONFL 8	Waverley Beach
ONFL 9	Waitotara

Of note areas highlighted in the maps in yellow define the indicative extent of the outstanding natural area, landscape or feature in the coastal environment.

Coastal areas with outstanding natural features or landscapes in Taranaki



ONFL 1 Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point

Coastal Unit 1: Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point

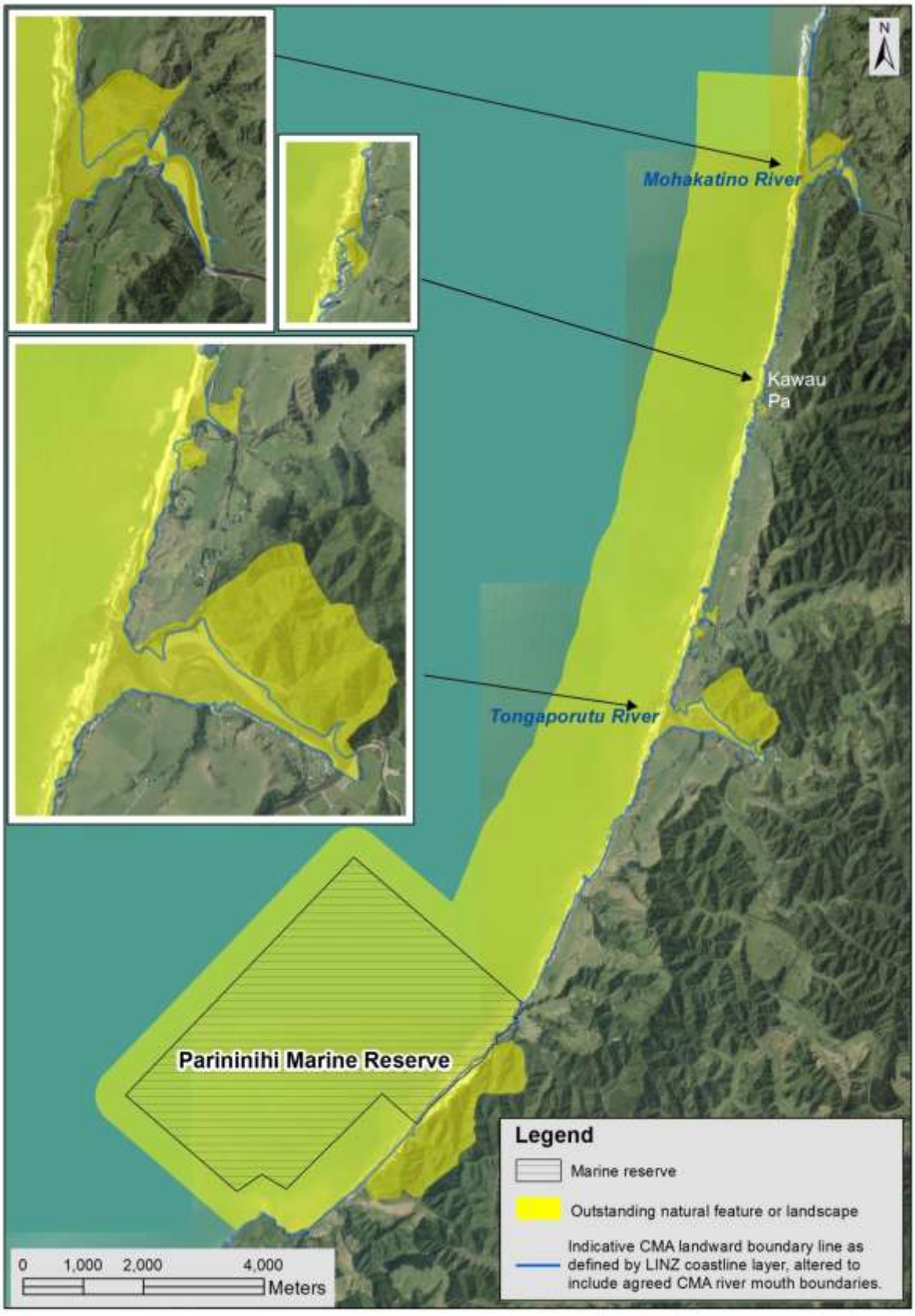
Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point reveals an exceptional sequence of elevated marine terraces and striking coastal White Cliffs with erosion along the soft sedimentary rock creating an impressive array of formations. The Coastal Management Area extends out 1 nm (1.85 km) covering offshore spawning grounds, and areas frequented by marine mammals..[17]

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Uplift and active erosional processes have carved an impressive sequence comprising a narrow marine terrace dissected by two estuaries, towering coastal cliffs, and a diverse range of coastal stacks, islands, caves and arches • Several Geopreservation Sites which encompass the North Taranaki uplifted marine terraces (from Tongaporutu north), Mohakatino Estuary and unusually squat sandspit and swamp, spectacular caves, arches and sea stacks carved out of the sedimentary cliffs at Mohakatino and Tongaporutu, exposed sedimentary structures at Tongaporutu, the spectacular and prominent coastal White Cliffs, and the only reef and shore platform north of New Plymouth at Pariokariwa Point • Mohakatino, Tongaporutu and Parininihi are the few remaining areas in the region that support true coastal forest • Offshore fish breeding grounds within open coastal waters • Marine reserve contains significant scientific and ecological values including internationally important sponge gardens • Mohakatino and Tongaporutu estuaries contain important breeding areas for native fish. Tongaporutu Estuary contains abundant shellfish with high species diversity and excellent examples of saltmarsh communities • The only mainland nesting site for grey-faced petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera gouldi*) in Taranaki at Rapanui • Offshore stacks and cliff edges have breeding colonies of a number of seabirds • At Risk (Declining) northern blue penguin (*Eudyptula minor iredalei*) recorded as nesting in the area • A variety of threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive flora and fauna species present	Very High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The marine terrace and associated coastal stacks, arches and caves and coastal White Cliffs are highly legible of formative and continuing erosional processes and uplift	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• The narrow marine terrace, coastal stacks and the White Cliffs are striking features that remain strong in the memory • The form of the narrow marine terrace is accentuated by pastoral cover and the steep hill country behind • Highly natural and scenic values within Mohakatino and Tongaporutu estuaries • Small and sporadic coastal edge development remains subordinate to the landscape	

[17] *Marine mammal sanctuary extends up the coast along here but goes out to 12nm. There is also a mineral and mining exclusion zone at 2nm and 4nm. More info see* http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/marine-and-coastal/marine-protected-areas/mineral-minning-exclusion-zone.jpg.

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
	Transient values	• Presence of wildlife throughout different times of the day and year • Climatic changes and changing moods, sounds and smells of the sea remain highly apparent • Lighting exemplifies the coastal White Cliffs and black volcanic sand at their base at different times of the day	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The area is used for swimming, diving and fishing and has high scenic value • The high scenic values of the landscape are the subject of many photographs and paintings • The White Cliffs are iconic to the region • Popular walking track along the terrace edge, White Cliffs and beach	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• Ngāti i Tama is the northern most of the Taranaki iwi. They are the decendants of Whata, Rakeiora amd Tamaariki of the Tokomaru waka who came ashore and landed at the Mohakatino River • This coastline contains a number of significant pā sites including Kawau, Katikatiaka and Pukearuhe. • This coastline is dotted with pūkāwa (reefs) predominantly of papa or sandstone where mātaitai (seafood) such as kuku/mussels and koura/crayfish were harvested from and further out to sea were the rich fishing grounds where tāmure/snapper and kahawai were plentiful. Most of this area is now included in the Parininihi Marine Reserve.	
	Historical associations	• River baches at Tongaporutu • SS Alexandra shipwreck in shallow waters offshore from Pukearuhe • Recognised former pā sites at Tongaporutu, Kawau, Te Puia and Pukearuhe and redoubt at Pukearuhe • Former sea stacks the 'Three Sisters' and Maori petroglyphs carved into cave walls were recognised as important natural geological formations and cultural and historic site, respectively, at Tongaporutu	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point



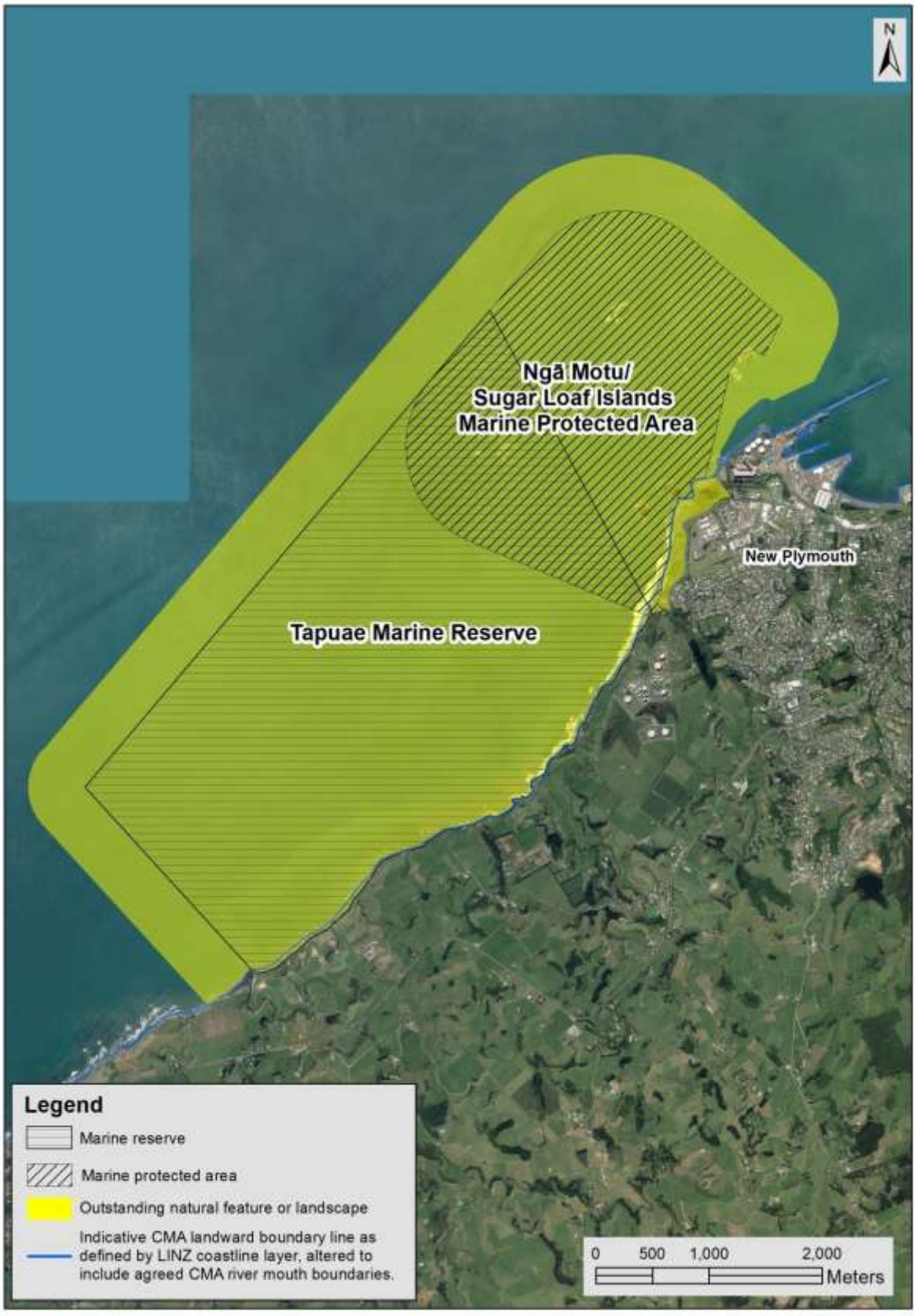
ONFL 2 Parītutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae

Coastal Unit 5: Parītutu to Oakura River

Parītutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae form a distinctive seascape which has been formed by volcanic and erosional processes and contributes significant ecological, scientific, cultural and recreational values

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• The Sugar Loaf Islands are the oldest volcanic formations in Taranaki, and the type locality for taranakite (phosphate mineral deposit found on the islands) (recognised as a Geopreservation Site) • The area contains a diverse range of subtidal landforms including spectacular canyons, caves, large pinnacles, and boulder fields • Diverse range and significant number of nesting sea birds present on the islands • The islands are important breeding and haul-out sites for kekeno/New Zealand fur seals, and the area represents the largest breeding site for this species on the west coast of the North Island • Diverse range of fish species, encrusting sponges and bryozoans • Threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive species present	Very High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• Parītutu, the islands and subtidal landscape are highly expressive of their geological formation through volcanic and erosional processes	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• Limited coastal edge development and modification of the islands retains a very high level of naturalness and exposed coastal edge experience • Striking contrast between the water and cone shaped Parītutu and islands which protrude steeply out of it • Parītutu and the islands are striking features that remain strong in the memory	
	Transient values	• Lighting and shadow exemplifies Parītutu and the islands at different times of the day • Presence of wildlife throughout different times of the day and year • Climatic changes and the changing moods, sounds and smells of the sea remain highly apparent • Two of the near-shore islands connect with the mainland at low tide	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The area is popular for walking, swimming, diving, fishing and kayaking • Parītutu and the islands are iconic to the region • The high scenic values of the landscape are the subject of many photographs and paintings	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• Parītutu, Ngā Motu.(Area returned to Te Atiawa and Taranaki Iwi as part of Treaty settlement agreements with the Crown and local authorities) • Area of cultural, historical and spiritual importance to Taranaki and Te Atiawa Iwi. Ngamotu was occupied at differing times by Taranaki and Te Atiawa Iwi. Sites of significance include Parītutu, Motu-o-Tamatea, Mataora, Motumahanga, Moturoa, Whareumu, Pararaki, Waikaranga, Tokatapu, Tokamāpuna (Tokomāpuna), Koruanga (Motukūkū) and Onukutaipari. The wider area provided for a rich source of seafood and fish species such as tāmure/snapper, koura/crayfish and kahawai. The islands were also occupied in seasonal times and evidence of occupation can also be found. The sandy beaches of Moturoa and Onukutaipari provided ease of launch for waka within a short distance to the fishing grounds and areas for setting nets and pots. • The traditions of Taranaki Iwi illustrate the ancestral, cultural, historical associations to this area. The Tapuae coastal marine area is of high importance as it contains a number of significant pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs).	
	Historical associations	• Remnants of small port developments on some of the islands • Refuge and/or pa sites located on Parītutu and the islands • Petroglyphs (Māori rock art) in the area	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae



ONFL 3 Hangatahua (Stony River)

Coastal Unit 7: Hangatahua (Stony River) to Stent Road Beach

Hangatahua (Stony River) forms a striking boulder lined braided river which carries water from between Mount Taranaki and the Pouakai Range. It is referred to in Maori mythology and frequently represented in art and literature as the most sacred river of the Taranaki region

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• The only braided river within the Taranaki region and largest and most prominent river carrying water from Mount Taranaki to the sea • The rounded boulders lining the river channel form a striking feature associated with the geology of the river • A source of sphagnum moss wetlands in the headwaters supports clean water with strong biotic associations • High native fish diversity and presence of threatened species	High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The formative processes associated with a braided river form and rounded boulders which roll down the river in high water is highly legible	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• Most of the river bed retains a high natural form with limited modification • The margins of the river typically define an abrupt edge with a working rural landscape • The configuration of a large boulder lined braided river and crystal clear water are striking features within the landscape which remain strong in the memory • Limited discordant elements disrupt the distinctive pattern of boulders along the river bed channel	
	Transient values	• Stony River catchment is exposed to some of the heaviest rain in New Zealand with rocks rolling down the river in accelerated river flows frequently changing its course • At other times the river is recognised for having waters so clear that it appears that it isn't there, however this has declined in more recent years due to natural erosion higher up the catchment in the national park	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The river is iconic to the region and identified in literature and art as being the most sacred river in Taranaki • Popular for angling and swimming, and tramping and walking along river margins	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• The river and the surrounding area has strong cultural and spiritual associations for Taranaki Iwi. The area contains significant pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs)	
	Historical associations	• The outstanding natural characteristics and features of the waters of the Stony River were formally recognised and protected through the first water conservation order in New Zealand (the Local Water Conservation (Stony (Hangatahua) River) Notice 1985) Numerous former pā and village sites situated along the river banks	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Hangatahua (Stony) River mouth

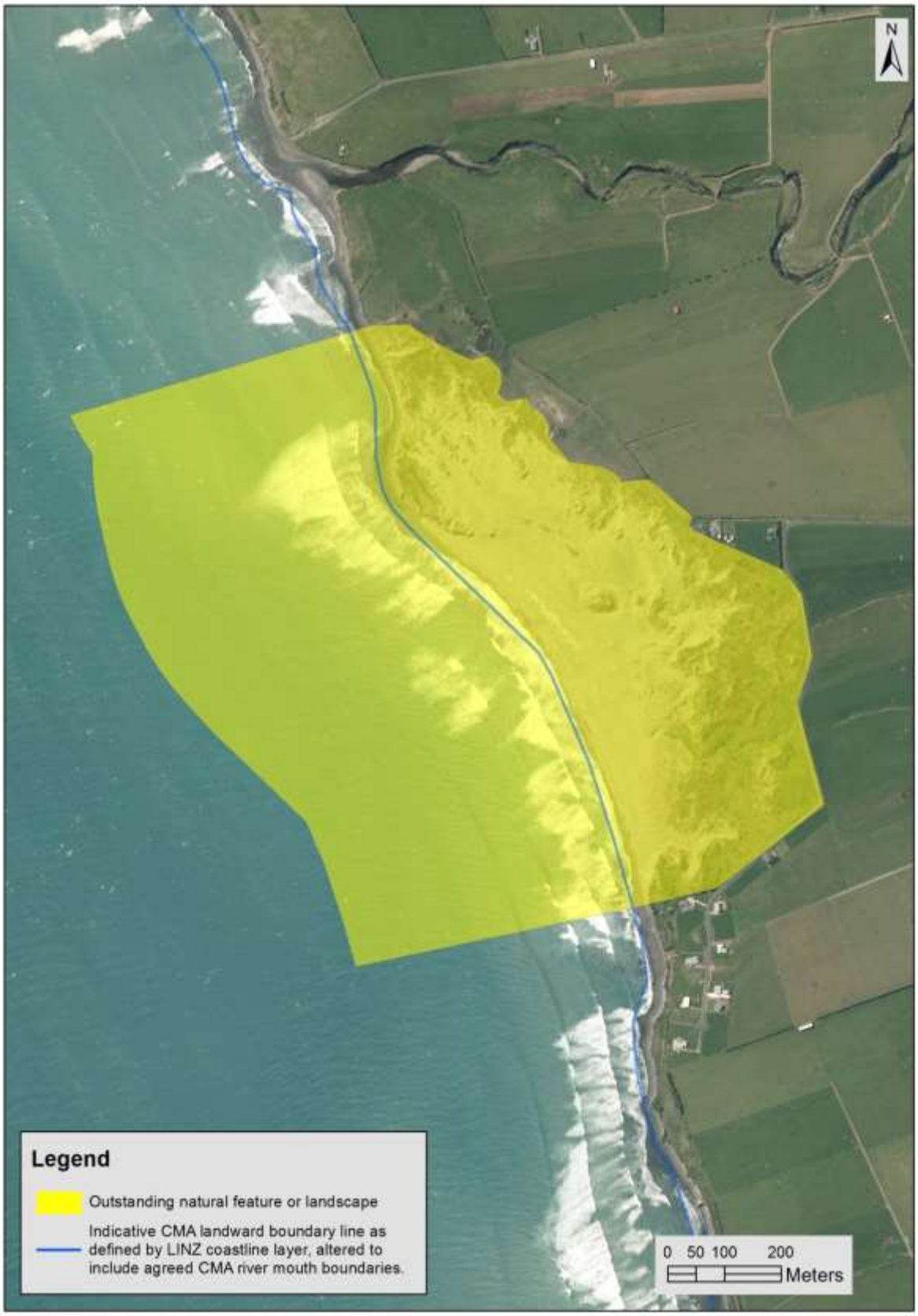
ONFL 4 Oaonui (Sandy Bay)

Coastal Unit 8: Stent Road Beach to Oaonui (Sandy Bay)

Oaonui (Sandy Bay) forms the largest area of intact dune lands in the ring plain and supports a diverse range of dune habitat with very high associated recreation, community and cultural recognition

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Oaonui (Sandy Bay) is largely unmodified and forms the only significant remaining area of coastal sand dunes within the volcanic ring plain (recognised as a Geopreservation Site) • The main sand dune area has been retired from grazing and is vegetated with mixed native and exotic colonising species • Some pingao (*Ficinia spiralis*), which is identified as 'At Risk (Declining)', is also present • Important seabird and shorebird feeding, breeding and resting area • The beach provides core habitat for a wide variety of threatened and rare flora and fauna species	High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The sand dune system is highly expressive of its geological formation revealing legible sand and wind patterns	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• The sand dune system appears largely intact and uncompromised by modification (the Maui pipeline passes beneath part of the shoreline without disrupting the form of the overlying dunes) • Vegetation established throughout the dunes appears functional and healthy and has been enhanced through an ongoing community restoration project • As the only area of expansive sand dunes within the volcanic ring plain the sandy beach and adjoining dunes are a striking feature along the predominately rocky coastal edge • Low level dune vegetation appears in harmony with the overlying sand	
	Transient values	• Changing sand patterns through moving sand • Presence of wildlife including influx of migratory birds	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The beach is renowned for windsurfing • Popular surf casting spot and provides for a range of active and passive recreational experiences	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• The area contains a number of pā and kainga including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs)	
	Historical associations	• Several pā and occupation sites occur in the vicinity as well as a urupa (burial ground) • The shipwreck 'Northern Monarch' lies offshore	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Oaonui (Sandy Bay)



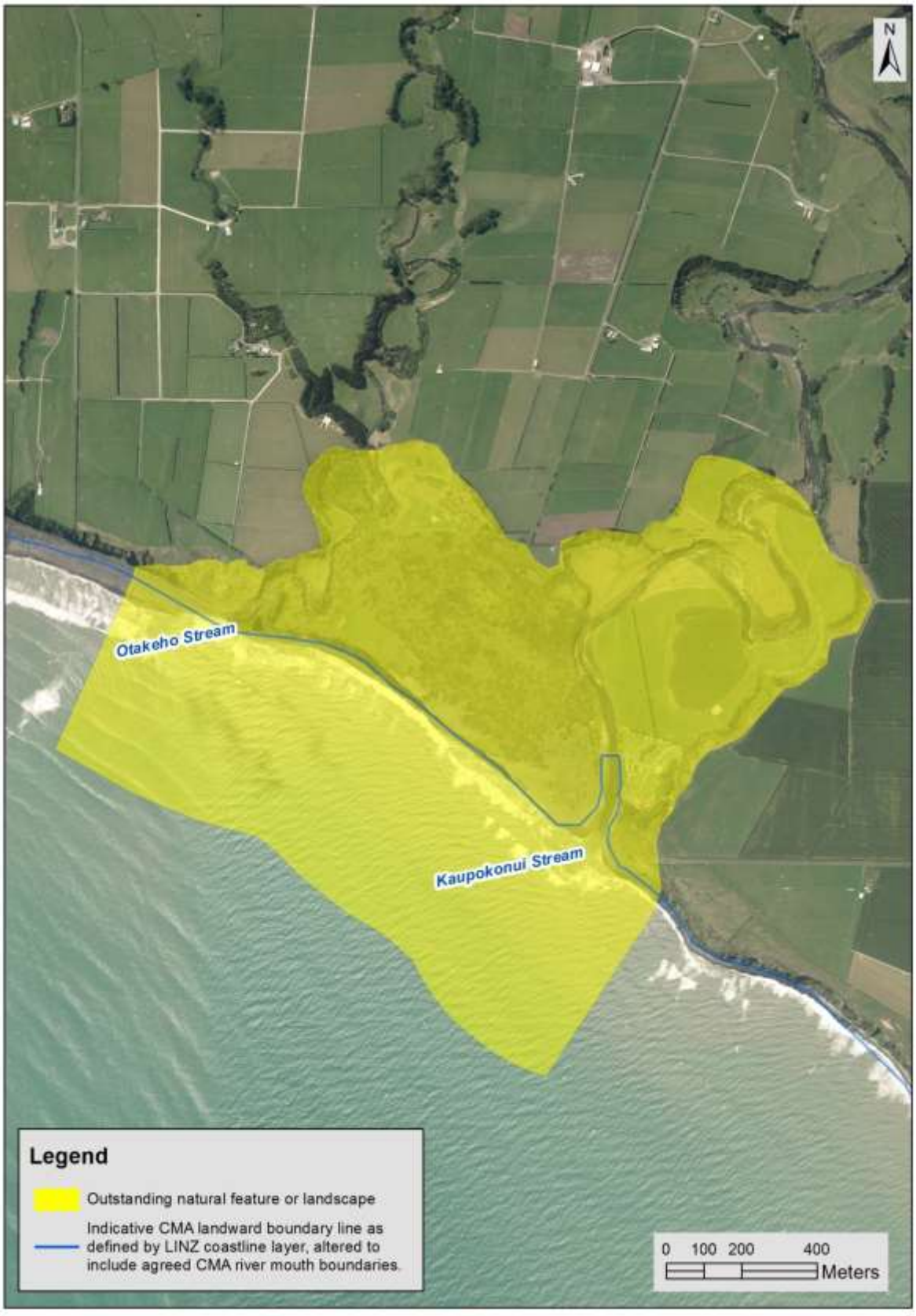
ONFL 5 Kaupokonui

Coastal Unit 10: Mangahume Stream to Ohawe

Kaupokonui forms a distinctive coastal edge which has been cut into South Taranaki's rugged coastline through stream mouth oscillation and contributes important recreation and cultural values associated with lowered river terraces and accessible dunes

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Steep enclosing terrace scarps which reach approximately 40 m above the coastal edge • Significant scientific values including the remains of several species of moa and other extinct birds • Presence of threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive flora species • Inanga spawning site	High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The formative processes of stream mouth oscillation are clearly expressed and reveal down cutting resulting in a large break in the cliffs	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• Low key recreation and camping facilities contained along the true left bank of the Kaupokonui River • The area of dunes retain a high level of naturalness and intact forms • A vivid contrast between the flat terrace of the ring plain and the open and deep valley encompassing the terraces adjoining Kaupokonui Stream • The camping ground and associated buildings remain low key and ensure the coherence of natural values in the wider area are retained	
	Transient values	• Changing patterns in the dune fields through moving sand • Presence of wildlife throughout different times of the day and year	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The landscape is highly valued by locals and tourists for camping, swimming, fishing and surfing • Kaupokonui is commonly cited as the 'jewel of South Taranaki' in terms of amenity values	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• The area is significant to Ngā Ruahine Iwi in that the river was named by Turi the captain of the waka Aotea Utanganui. The flat lands adjacent was also named by Turi (Maraekura) where an ancient ceremony was performed to enhance his mana.	
	Historical associations	• Former pā site identified at mouth of the Otakeho Stream • Midden site at Kaupokonui/Otamare Māori Reservation • Important moa hunting archaeological site with nine species of moa and 59 species of other birds being found in the area	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Kaupokonui



ONFL 6 Kapuni Stream mouth

Coastal Unit 10: Mangahume Stream to Ohawe

The mouth of the Kapuni Stream together with an eroding coastline have carved adjoining peninsula and island forms with very high historical and Māori importance

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Steep river scarp terraces and a retreating coastline have carved an impressive configuration of a natural peninsula and flat topped island along the coastline • Threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive flora and fauna species present	High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The remnant stream channel and associated island and peninsula are highly legible of the formative fluvial processes along steep cliffs formed along an eroding coastline	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• Whilst the area gains much of its significance from historic structures and events which occurred, the river escarpments and terraces have limited levels of modification and retain a strong sense of naturalness • The steep natural peninsula and island forms striking and memorable features along the coastal edge • The steep coastal scarps remain formidable along the coastal edge with no significant discordant elements in the vicinity of escarpment edges	
	Transient values	• Lighting and shadow exemplifies the steep natural cut forms at different times of the day • Opportunities to encounter a variety of wildlife through different times of the day and year	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• Widely recognised as a former pā site as a distinctive flat topped island marking the entrance to Kapuni Stream	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• This area contains significant pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and pūkāwa. • Waimate Orangi-tuapeka are fighting pa on the banks of the Kapuni stream where the last battle (1830) between the Taranaki tribes and the Waikato tribes was fought. The outcome being ever lasting peace being agreed to between the Paramount Waikato Chief Potatau Te Wherowhero and the Taranaki Chiefs.	
	Historical associations	• The site of several pā, villages and archaeological sites along the island and lowered terraces adjoining the margins of the river • Waimate is the site of the first clash between Māori and British troops in New Zealand	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Kapuni Stream mouth

ONFL 7 North and South Traps

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

The North and South Traps are two high-relief rocky reef systems that form a distinctive seascape and contribute significant ecological, cultural and recreational values

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Two adjoining reef systems comprising tall underwater pinnacles – a rare feature for the sandy coast • Biotic values, particularly kelp (Ecklonia radiata) beds, diverse fish and sponge communities and valuable habitat for crayfish. • Significant ecological values including kelp beds (*Ecklonia radiata*) and a diverse range of fish and sponge communities and species • Important habitat for crayfish	Very High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• Unique marine feature for this part of the coast	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• Strikingly colourful reef walls due to a diverse range of different encrusting organisms including seaweeds, sponges and anemones • Seascape is largely unmodified by human intervention and comprises a naturally functioning and healthy ecosystem	
	Transient values	• Presence of wildlife throughout different times of the day and year • Climatic changes influence seawater clarity affecting the perception of aesthetic values	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• Popular recreational fishing and diving area • Perceptual and experiential values including a high sense of wildness and remoteness; minimal human activity associated with low key recreation use	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• This area was and still is known by the local iwi and hapu as a rich fishing ground. • Source of kaimoana including crayfish	
	Historical associations		
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of North and South Traps

ONFL 8 Waverley Beach

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

Waverley Beach reveals an exceptional cross section through the elevated marine terraces with erosion along the soft sedimentary rock creating an impressive array of rugged and varied coastal cliff forms

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Part of the South Taranaki uplifted marine terraces, New Zealand's most complete sequence of uplifted marine terraces • Varied eroded coastal edge with a diverse range of coastal stacks, caverns, ravines and blow holes carved into the cliffs by wave erosion (recognised as a Geopreservation Site) • Fossilised totara tree stumps and logs in the intertidal area (recognised as a Geopreservation Site) • Fossil shellbed located at the base of the cliffs, north of the settlement • There are native herbfields on the cliff tops containing a diverse range of specialised coastal cliff species • A thriving population of the Threatened (Nationally Vulnerable) minute succulent *Crassula manaia* • Threatened and at risk species present	Very High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• Coastal cliffs are highly expressive of soft uplifted marine terraces becoming eroded along an exposed coastal edge	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• No apparent coastal edge development and limited inland modification within the southern component of the landscape retains a very high level of naturalness and exposed coastal edge experience • Varied cliff forms generate a highly memorable experience along the coastal edge • Sand lined beaches along steep rugged coastal cliffs are void of discordant elements which disrupt their rugged character	
	Transient values	• Climatic changes and the changing moods, sounds and smells of the sea remain highly apparent	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• The area is used for swimming and fishing and has high scenic value • The setting sun in the west has formed the subject of many paintings and photographs taken from within the coastal cliffs	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• The area is of significance for mahinga kai to Māori and Ngā Rauru • This area contains significant pā and kainga including tauranga waka and mātaitai (kaimoana) reefs.	
	Historical associations	• Archaeological finds recorded on NZAA database • Former Waverley arch was recognised as an important natural geological formation in this area	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Waverley Beach

ONFL 9 Waitotara

Coastal Unit 12: Patea Beach to Waiinu

Waitotara contains exceptional biophysical values along an unmodified coastal edge which retains very strong wild and scenic associations

Landscape/feature attributes		Evaluation	Assessment
Biophysical	Natural science values	• Combined river mouth, low promontory of shell-limestone outcrops and a very dynamic dune system • Several Geopreservation Sites which encompass Wilkies Bluff Plioscene section (on the true left bank of the Waitotara River), the prominent remains of a totara forest that has been drowned and preserved by rising sea-level or local subsidence, the best example of an area abundant in ventifacts (hardened rocks shaped by wind-blown sand) in the country and one of the largest relatively un-modified dune systems in the Taranaki region • Two distinct vegetation types associated with the dunes and outcrops • One of the best examples of native pingao-dominated dune fields in the region with the foredune near the Waitotara River covered almost entirely in native spinafix • Seabird feeding, breeding and resting area • Various threatened and at risk species present	Very High
Sensory	Legibility or expressiveness	• The Waitotara Estuary and surrounding dune system are highly expressive of their geological formation through erosional and depositional and inundation processes	Very High
	Aesthetic and scenic values	• No apparent coastal edge development and limited inland modification retains a very high level of naturalness and exposed coastal edge experience • Striking contrast between native plants on outcrops and dune areas • Wild coastal influences retain a highly memorable experience along the coastal edge • Whilst some recreational tracks are evident, the area predominately lacks any discordant elements	
	Transient values	• Climatic changes and the changing moods, sounds and smells of the sea remain highly apparent • Presence of wildlife throughout different times of the day and year • Changing dune forms and water drainage patterns through moving sand and changing hydrological conditions • Fossilised forest evident in estuary at low tide	
Associative	Shared and recognised values	• Considerable public interest and education value associated with Geopreservation Sites • Popular fishing area with whitebaiting along the Waitotara River	Very High
	Tangata whenua values	• Evidence of historic coastal settlement with the area being of significance for mahinga kai/ food gathering • Area contains significant pa and kainga, including tauranga waka and mātaitai (kaimoana) reefs.	
	Historical associations	• The area provided a ferry punt landing from early European settlement and the site of the original Waitotara Hotel the 'Rising Sun', which used a cave in the cliff for the cellar	
		Overall rating	**Outstanding**

Map of Waitotara

8. Summary tables of areas of outstanding natural character, features and landscapes

This section sets out summary tables of proposed areas of outstanding natural character (Table 3) and outstanding natural features and landscapes (Table 4) and associated values as they might appear in the schedules of a reviewed Coastal Plan.[18]

Table 3: Areas of outstanding natural character and associated values and attributes

ID	Area of outstanding natural character	Values and attributes
ONC 1	Parininihi	• Abiotic values associated with unmodified and diverse habitats comprising coastal forest, Waipingau Stream and dune system, and offshore reefs; spectacular and well defined landform of the White Cliffs coastal cliffs; extensive offshore reef system unique for the generally sandy north Taranaki coastline. • Biotic values, particularly the presence of primary coastal hardwood and podocarp-hardwood forest (part of a larger indigenous forest feature); forest provides core habitat for threatened and regionally significant species; high diversity of fish and internationally important sponge gardens in marine reserve; dune system at the mouth of Waipingau Stream supports the only natural population of pingao in the New Plymouth district. • Perceptual and experiential values including a high sense of wildness and remoteness; minimal human activity associated with low key recreation use.
ONC 2	Mimi Estuary	• Abiotic values associated with unmodified natural processes including sand spit and dune processes and river mouth oscillation; diverse and rare range of habitat including riverine estuary, small tidal bays, estuary margins, and sandy foreshore. • Biotic values, particularly the range of specialised native plants within small tidal bays; diverse and regionally distinctive native fish; diverse range of resident and migratory birds including threatened species; foreshore and estuary margins contain a well established variety of mainly native plants. • Perceptual and experiential values including a sense of remoteness and high scenic associations; minimal human activity associated with low key recreational use.
ONC 3	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	• Abiotic values associated with diverse range of habitats including islands and stacks, and subtidal canyons, caves, large pinnacles, boulder fields, rock reefs and sand flats; significant scientific and educational value of Sugar Loaf Islands. • Biotic values, particularly diverse range of plant species including threatened species; diverse range and significant number of nesting birds; diverse range of fish species, encrusting sponges, bryozoans and marine mammals (at times); largest fur seal breeding colony on the west coast of the North Island. • Perceptual and experiential values including wild scenic associations with expansive seascape with minimal apparent modification; minimal human activity associated with low key recreational use.
ONC 4	Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)	• Abiotic values associated with active and uninterrupted natural processes including extensive dune system, wide sandy beach, and ephemeral

[18] *Of note, native flora and fauna species present in an area are not listed on purpose – to keep it open and not limit any new ones discovered.*

ID	Area of outstanding natural character	Values and attributes
		wetland and nationally rare coastal habitat; dynamic accreting coastline (resulting from the high natural sedimentary load of the Hangatahua (Stony) River) unique for the generally eroding Taranaki coastline. • Biotic values, particularly the diverse range of indigenous plant species including semi-aquatic species; threatened and at risk native plant and animal species; diverse range of resident and migratory bird species; and protective fencing and restoration planting. • Perceptual and experiential values including a high sense of wildness and remoteness; minimal human activity associated with low key recreation use.
ONC 5	Whenuakura to Waipipi	• Abiotic values associated with unmodified and diverse habitats including Whenuakura Estuary with extensive mudflats, tidal lagoons, an adjacent perched freshwater lagoon, a sand bar and an island forming intermittently; Waipipi Dunes comprising extensive and highly dynamic complex of low dunes, small wet sand flats and swales and more stable relic foredunes. • Biotic values, particularly threatened and at risk native plant and animal species; dunes contain a significant population of pingao; numerous resident and migratory bird species. • Perceptual and experiential values including minimal apparent modification retaining wild scenic associations; the dune system creates a vast uninterrupted coastal edge which retains a strong natural experience.
ONC 6	North and South Traps	• Abiotic values associated with two large adjoining pinnacle reefs, which are unusual features on a shelf region dominated by sand. • Biotic values, particularly kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*) beds, diverse fish and sponge communities and valuable habitat for crayfish. • Perceptual and experiential values including a high sense of wildness and remoteness; minimal human activity associated with low key recreation use.
ONC 7	Waitotara	• Abiotic values associated with extensive dune system comprising an actively eroding broken foredune, series of undulating dunes with hollows and relic foredunes further inland; contrasting limestone and sedimentary rock outcrops amongst foredune areas; Pilioscene section along the bank of the Waitotara River together with fossilised totara stumps and ventifacts. • Biotic values, particularly the diverse range of habitat types including riverine, lacustrine and palustrine wetland systems; wetlands and dune systems provide core habitat for threatened and at risk native plant and animal species; reserve provides habitat for coastal and migratory birds. • Perceptual and experiential values including a high sense of wildness and remoteness; minimal human activity associated with low key recreational use.

Table 4: Outstanding natural features and landscapes (including seascapes) and associated values and attributes

ID	Outstanding natural features and landscapes	Values and attributes
ONFL 1	Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point	• Geological and landform values including uplifted marine terraces; Mohakatino Estuary sandspit and swamp; Mohakatino sea stacks, arches and caves; Tongaporutu stacks and cliffs, and Miocene sedimentary structures; White Cliffs coastal cliffs; Pariokariwa Point shore platform. • Ecological and scientific significance including indigenous coastal forest; threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive native plant and animal species; Parininihi Marine Reserve; various fish, mammal and seabird feeding, breeding and resting areas; diverse range of marine species. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the visual prominence of the marine terrace and associated coastal stacks, arches and caves; the visually striking and iconic coastal White Cliffs; high level of naturalness within areas of the Mohakatino and Tongaporutu estuaries. • Recreational values, particularly for swimming, diving, fishing and walking. • Significant to tangata whenua.The area contains a number of pā and kainga, including a rich fishing ground which is now mostly contained inside the Parininihi Marine Reserve. • Historical values associated with the Tongaporutu River Baches, SS Alexandra shipwreck, various recognised former pā sites and a redoubt.
ONFL 2	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	• Geological and landform values including Sugar Loaf Islands, Paritutu and taranakite type locality; and diverse subtidal features. • Ecological and scientific significance including threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive native plant and animal species; Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area and Tapaue Marine Reserve; marine mammal and seabird feeding, breeding and resting areas; diverse range of marine species. • Aesthetic and scenic values including visually striking Paritutu and Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands. • Recreational values particularly for walking, swimming, diving, fishing and kayaking. • Significant to tangata whenua.The area is of huge cultural, spiritual and historical significance to Te Atiawa and Taranaki Iwi with the islands now considered wāhi tapu or places of reverence.The area was also recently returned to both iwi as part of the Treaty settlement agreements. • Historical importance including refuge and pā sites, and petroglyphs.
ONFL 3	Hangatahua (Stony River)	• Geological and landform values including boulder lined, braided river form; largest and most prominent river carrying water from Mount Taranaki to the sea. • Ecological and scientific significance including high native fish diversity; threatened and regionally distinctive native species; clear, clean waters with strong biotic associations. • Aesthetic and scenic values including the configuration of a large boulder lined braided river and crystal clear water; and the high natural form of the river with limited modification. • Recreational values particularly for angling and swimming, and tramping and walking along margins. • Significant to tangata whenua.The river and surrounding area contained a number of pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs)

ID	Outstanding natural features and landscapes	Values and attributes
		• Historical values associated with numerous pā and village sites.
ONFL 4	Oaonui (Sandy Bay)	• Geological and landform values being the only significant remaining area of coastal sand dunes within the volcanic ring plain. • Ecological and scientific significance including threatened and rare native plant and animal species; seabird/shorebird feeding, breeding and resting area. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the visual prominence of the large dune system and its contrast along the predominately rocky coastal edge. • Recreational values, particularly for surf casting and windsurfing. • Significant to tangata whenua. The area contains a number of pā, urupa and kainga including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs) • Historical values associated with several pā and occupation sites, urupa, and Northern Monarch shipwreck offshore.
ONFL 5	Kaupokonui	• Geological and landform values from former stream mouth oscillation resulting in a large break in the cliffs and steep enclosing terrace scarps. • Ecological and scientific significance including threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive native plant and animal species; inanga spawning site; remains of several species of moa and other extinct birds. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the vivid contrast between the flat terrace of the ring plain and the open and deep valley encompassing the Kaupokonui Stream terraces; and high level of naturalness and intact form of the dunes. • Recreational values, particularly for camping, swimming, fishing and surfing. • Significant to tangata whenua. The river and surrounding area was named by Turi the captain of the waka Aotea Utanganui. • Historical values associated with former pā site; midden site and moa hunting archaeological site.
ONFL 6	Kapuni Stream mouth	• Geological and landform values associated with a configuration comprising a natural peninsula, flat topped island and remnant stream channel. • Ecological and scientific significance including threatened, at risk and regionally distinctive native plant and animal species. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the visually striking steep natural peninsula and island; and high level of naturalness and intact form of the river escarpments and terraces. • Significant to tangata whenua. The area contains a number of pā and kainga including tauranga waka and pūkāwa (reefs) • Historical values associated with several pā, villages and archaeological sites; Waimate is the site of the first clash between Māori and British troops in New Zealand.
ONFL 7	North and South Traps	• Geological and landform values including two high-relief rocky reefs – a rare feature for the sandy coast. • Ecological and scientific significance including kelp beds, important crayfish habitat and diverse fish and sponge communities. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the visual prominence of the steep reef walls and high level of naturalness.

ID	Outstanding natural features and landscapes	Values and attributes
		• Recreational values, particularly for diving and fishing. • Significant to tangata whenua. A well known rich fishing ground for local iwi and hāpu.
ONFL 8	Waverley Beach	• Geological and landform values including serrated cliffs, coastal stacks, caverns, ravines and blow holes; fossilised forest; and fossil shellbed. Part of the South Taranaki uplifted marine terraces. • Ecological and scientific significance including native herbfields on the cliff tops; threatened and at risk native plant species. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the visual prominence of the varied cliff forms and high level of naturalness. • Recreational values, particularly for swimming and fishing. • Significant to tangata whenua.The area contains a number of pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and mātaitai (kaimoana) reefs • Historical values.
ONFL 9	Waitotara	• Geological and landform values including Waitotara Estuary fossil forest; Wilkies Bluff Pliocene section; Waitotara ventifacts and dune system. • Ecological and scientific significance including threatened and at risk native plant and animal species; seabird feeding, breeding and resting area. • Visual and scenic characteristics, particularly the very high level of naturalness, striking contrast between native plants on outcrops and dune areas and wild coastal influences. • Recreational values, particularly for fishing and whitebaiting. • Significant to tangata whenua.The area contains a number of pā and kainga, including tauranga waka and mātaitai (kaimoana) reefs. • Historical values. The area provided a ferry punt landing and the site of the original Waitara hotel which used a cave in the cliff for the cellar.

9. Recommended changes to areas currently identified as outstanding within the Regional Coastal Plan

As noted within section 1.2 of the report and Appendix I, the existing Coastal Plan identifies eight areas of 'outstanding coastal value'. These areas include the existence of outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant habitats of marine life or bird life, and significant or unmodified natural character.

As previously discussed, significant habitats of marine life or bird life will be addressed as a separate component of the Coastal Plan review.

The landscape study/review process has led to some recommended changes to areas currently identified within the existing Coastal Plan as having outstanding natural character or that are outstanding natural features and landscapes.

The majority of these recommended changes result from including the inland component of the coastal environment within the study area in accordance with the proposed new geographic coverage of the Coastal Plan.

This results in two key change factors associated with a) the values identified and b) the areas identified. These two factors are discussed in turn below.

The values recommended to be scheduled better recognise values within the inland component of the coastal environment i.e. above MHWS (the existing Coastal Plan already goes some way towards recognising these values in some areas).

The areas identified differ from those currently mapped as Coastal Management Area A mainly due to recognising the inland component of the coastal environment. This has resulted in the identification of new areas and boundary adjustments to some areas.

Additionally, one area, Waiinu Reef, has been assessed as not meeting the critera for an area of outstanding natural character and/or being an outstanding natural feature or landscape and is therefore recommended to be removed from being identified as Coastal Management Area A. It is more appropriate that this area be recognised and protected by policy relating to reef systems.

The recommended changes to areas currently identified, including the addition of new areas, are summarised within Table 5 below.

Table 5: Overview of areas assessed as having 'outstanding coastal values' and proposed changes

Areas currently identified as having outstanding coastal value	Recommended ONC	Recommended ONFL	Proposed changes to scheduled values	Proposed changes to the CMA area identified as Coastal Management Area A
Pariokariwa Point to Waihi Stream	Parininihi		New - discrete component of landscape identified in recognising natural character values	New
		Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point	Values updated in line with ONFL criteria	Boundary adjustments to incorporate Parininihi Marine Reserve and 500 m buffer.
Mimi Estuary	Mimi Estuary		Values updated in line with ONC criteria	Slight boundary adjustment to include 500 m offshore buffer.
Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area	Parītutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae		Values updated in line with ONC criteria	Boundary adjustments to incorporate Tapuae Marine Reserve and 500 m buffer
		Parītutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	Values updated in line with ONFL criteria	Boundary adjustment to incorporate Tapuae Marine Reserve and 500 m buffer
		Hangatahua (Stony River)	New	New
	Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)		New in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment	New
		Oaonui (Sandy Bay)	New in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment	New
		Kaupokonui	New in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment	New
		Kapuni Stream mouth	New in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment	New
Whenuakura Estuary	Whenuakura to Waipipi		Values of dune system adjacent to estuary recognised	Boundary adjustment in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment and to include 500m offshore buffer.
North and South Traps	North and South Traps		Values updated in line with ONC criteria	Boundary adjustment to include 500 m buffer
		North and South Traps	Values updated in line with ONFL criteria	Boundary adjustment to include 500 m buffer
Waverley Beach		Waverley Beach	Values updated in line with ONFL criteria	Boundary adjustment in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment.
Waitotara Estuary	Waitotara		Values of dune systems either side of estuary recognised	Boundary adjustment in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment and to include 500m offshore buffer.
		Waitotara	Values of dune systems either side of estuary recognised	Boundary adjustment in recognising values of the inland component of the coastal environment and to include 500m offshore buffer.
Waiinu Reef			To be recognised and protected through policy relating to reef systems	Remove

10. Summary and recommendations

The following areas have been identified as having outstanding natural character (ONC) and/or as being an outstanding natural feature and landscape (ONFL) through this study.

ID	Area of outstanding natural character	New or existing area
ONC 1	Parininihi	New
ONC 2	Mimi Estuary	Existing
ONC 3	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	Existing
ONC 4	Waikirikiri (Komene Lagoon)	New
ONC 5	Whenuakura to Waipipi	Existing
ONC 6	North and South Traps	Existing
ONC 7	Waitotara	Existing

ID	Outstanding natural features and landscapes	New or existing area
ONFL 1	Waihi Stream to Pariokariwa Point	Existing
ONFL 2	Paritutu, Ngā Motu (Sugar Loaf Islands) and Tapuae	Existing
ONFL 3	Hangatahua (Stony River)	New
ONFL 4	Oaonui (Sandy Bay)	New
ONFL 5	Kaupokonui	New
ONFL 6	Kapuni Stream mouth	New
ONFL 7	North and South Traps	Existing
ONFL 8	Waverley Beach	Existing
ONFL 9	Waitotara	Existing

The study largely confirms existing areas identified as being outstanding in the current Coastal Plan. However, through the assessment, six new areas have been identified as having ONC and/or being an ONFL. This is primarily due to recognising the inland component of the coastal environment.

Waiinu Reef is the only area which is currently recognised as having outstanding coastal value that has been assessed as not meeting the criteria for an area of ONC and/or being an ONFL.

Targeted consultation with organisations having a broad range of interest in the CMA confirmed the areas identified as outstanding as listed above.

It is recommended that these areas are mapped in the Coastal Plan as Coastal Management Area A and that policy and rules are developed for their protection. The values listed in summary tables under section 8 would also be transferred to a schedule of the proposed plan.

Appendix I: Feedback received from targeted consultation on the Draft study.

Te Korowai o Ngāruahine Trust

Sam Tamarapa
Taranaki Regional Council
Via email: Sam.Tamarapa@trc.govt.nz

Thursday 10 September 2015

Draft Regional Coastal Landscape Study

Tēnā koe Sam,

1. On behalf of Te Korowai o Ngāruahine Trust (TKONT) thank you for sending to us, on 4 August the draft Regional Landscape Study for the Coastal Environment; a document that will inform the review of the Regional Coastal Plan.

2. TKONT has had the opportunity to undertake a cursory review of the document and has some comments to make.

3. As the landscape study is only a draft document, and not a formal part of the consultation on the draft Coastal Plan, TKONT has set out a few thoughts on the document as they relate to the specified areas within the Ngāruahine rohe.

4. The big question is why coastal areas 10 (Mangahume Stream to Ohawe) and 11 (Ohawe to Patea Beach) are not identified as important areas to be protected. Within each of the areas we have identified a number of issues which would warrant protection, to aid restoration. I have summarized these below.

5. Coastal Unit 10 is characterised by a lack of indigenous vegetation, is heavily pastured with the margins of an ephemeral wetland and a large prevalence of exotic species. Coastal Unit 11 is unstable and largely vegetated, inhabited by a large number of exotic species, is grazed heavily be stock and there is little indigenous vegetation. The question is why the two coastal units identified above, in the Ngāruahine rohe will not be afforded the higher level of protection. From our perspective there is a risk of further degradation without protection. We should not just accept the present state of the landscape; we should endeavour to improve it.

6. We were however pleased that the Kaupokonui and Kapuni areas were recognized for their outstanding natural features and landscape (ONFL). In respect of ONFL5 - Kaupokonui and ONFL6 - Kapnui we agree with the assertions made about the features of the landscape. We were particularly pleased to see recognition of the cultural values of these areas.

7. In respect of the NZ Coastal Policy Statement and the Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki, TKONT was unable to find an assessment about how the 'special spiritual, historical or cultural significance to tangata whenua' had been addressed for the Coastal Units. A cultural assessment may have afforded a different recognition of status, in respect of Coastal Units 10 and 11. TKONT would also wish for a clearer statement about how the environment provides for ecological and physical processes as they relate to the marine environment, and how they relate to the terrestrial environment, for each of the Coastal Units. This is an important consideration for TKONT because of the existing land uses and impacts on the environment. As stated above, it is important that we strive to improve the quality and integrity of the coastal environment, and not simply accept its current state.

8. TKONT is unsure as to why the marine life and bird life will be addressed separately. It would have been useful for us to be able to consider the total values present (or absent within the coastal areas). That said, we look forward to the opportunity to review this document in due course.

Conclusion

9. In conclusion TKONT will be particularly interested in the next stage of this process that is what the additional protections mean in a practical and policy sense, particularly for those areas within the Ngāruahine rohe. We look forward to an on-going dialogue about this Coastal Plan, as it develops.

10. Should you require any further information or clarification about the comments in this letter, please contact us.

Naku iti noa, nā

Louise Tester
Kairangahau Matua (Social Initiatives and Policy Manager)

Mr Basil Chamberlain

The Chief Executive Officer

Taranaki Regional Council

Private Bag 713
Stratford 4352

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991;

A N D IN THE MATTER of the Regional landscape study of the *Taranaki coastal environment:*
Review of the Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki

Dear Basil,

I am Allen Pidwell, QSM, secretary of Surfing Taranaki the Regional Sports organisation for surfing in Taranaki. I am also the Taranaki representative for the national environmental organisation, Surfbreak Protection Society.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with Nicolette West and Emily Roberts to discuss the DRAFT REGIONAL LANDSCAPE STUDY OF THE TARANAKI COASTAL ENVIRONMENT.

Paul Shanks, the President of Surfbreak Protection Society, asked me to convey to your Council that this draft was the "best he had seen of any Regional Council thus far".

The focus of our discussions with Nicolette and Emily was to determine the status of the 81 surfbreaks protected under the Taranaki Regional Plan. The discussions resolved the fact that these surfbreaks will be the focus of another study; the results of which will be translated into the draft Taranaki Regional Coastal Pln.

Both Surfbreak Protection and Surfing Taranaki welcome the Taranaki Regional Council's proactive approach to not only protecting surfbreaks as areas of outstanding natural features and of high recreational value, but also the protection of the natural character of the Taranaki coastal environment as a whole.

We look forward to having further input into the forthcoming study and making available to the Taranaki Regional Council data from other similar studies, which we have been involved in, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Allen Pidwell. QSM
Secretary
Surfing Taranaki
P O Box 3364
Taranaki 4341

Surfbreak Protection Society
PO Box 58846
Botany
Auckland
2163

Nicolette West

From: Callum Lilley <clilley@doc.govt.nz>
Sent: Tuesday, 29 September 2015 11:36 AM
To: Nicolette West
Cc: Nicola Palmer; Jim Clarkson; Gareth Hopkins; Darryn Ratana
Subject: Comments on Regional landscape study of the Taranaki coastal environment

Kia ora Nicolette,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Regional Landscape Study of the Coastal Environment. Apologies for the delay in getting DOC comments back to you and thanks for the understanding and extension of time.

I have tracked changes/added comments on the CD you sent me and will shortly get it in the post to you.

In terms of the inventory of natural features and landscapes themselves, we don't really have any suggestions to add or delete sites/features – it is fairly comprehensive with good justification for inclusion / exclusion.

One of the main comments is that is just isn't really clear how this study document fits together with the Coastal Plan... whether the Coastal Plan will point to this document, or whether the features outlined in this document will be directly incorporated into/covered in detail in the Coastal Plan. I would suggest ensuring this is very clear.

I would hope this study will also be used for review of other plans, whether District or Regional Council documents, for activities that occur above MHWS. It is those activities that potentially impact upon many values highlighted in the document. I would also hope that issues such as sprawling subdivision and other cumulative impacts (spread of predators (dogs/cats/other), weed incursion, habitat degradation/loss) on blue penguins, coastal herbfields, shorebirds and other values can be effectively managed through appropriately addressing these sorts of issues during Plan reviews.

Also, has this document been reviewed by Taranaki Iwi groups? (Or will it be?) This would ensure you have appropriately captured tangata whenua values.

I found a few sections a little hard to read... I actually had to read them a few times to get my head around them. I have suggested some rewording that you may wish to consider... or alternative wording if I haven't quite got it right. I've also marked up typos/formatting errors/added macrons etc (I can't help myself with that sort of thing, but good to have another set of eyes over it because inevitable small things seem to slip through to the printing stage!)

Ngā mihi,
Callum

Callum Lilley
Senior Ranger, Services - Marine | *Kaitiaki Matua - Taimoana*
Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*

Ngāmotu / New Plymouth Office | P.O. Box 462 | 55A Rimu Street | New Plymouth 4310
Tel: 06) 759 7169 | Fax: 06) 759 0351 | Mob: 027 206 5842 | VPN: 8959

www.doc.govt.nz

Nicolette West

From: Hamish Wesney <Hamish.Wesney@boffamiskell.co.nz>
Sent: Friday, 14 August 2015 3:46 PM
To: Nicolette West
Cc: Chris Spurdle; Blair Sutherland; Rhys Girvan
Subject: Feedback on TRC Regional Landscape Study
Attachments: W13043_Kaupokouni_Cultural_Areas.doc; W13043_STDC_Landscape_Assessment_20150814_rts.pdf

@AfterMailServer: http://archivemanager
@Attachments:
```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<aftermail xmlns:xsd="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance">
  <attachment checksum="072babfe-1b07-c795-7d47-1d7310be6f90"
displayname="W13043_Kaupokouni_Cultural_Areas.doc" filename="W13043
_Kaupokouni_Cultural_Areas.doc" pathname="" position="-1" type="1" flags="0"
number="0" size="3207744" hidden="false" />
  <attachment checksum="949eae2c-d052-926d-02da-a85a8814b313"
displayname="W13043_STDC_Landscape_Assessment_20150814_rts.pdf"
filename="W13043_STDC_Landscape_Assessment_20150814_rts.pdf" pathname=""
position="-1" type="1" flags="0" number="1" size="11377054" hidden="false" />
</aftermail>
```
@CheckSum: 73b77349-d5df-5d99-ffca-b4d3fe05d7ee
@Message:
```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<aftermail xmlns:xsd="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema"
xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance">
  <message checksum="73b77349-d5df-5d99-ffca-b4d3fe05d7ee" type="3" />
</aftermail>
```
@OriginalMessageClass: IPM.Note

Hi Nicolette

Thank you for sending us the draft Regional Landscape Study of the Taranaki Coastal Environment.

We note that the TRC Landscape Study has adopted the areas of outstanding natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes identified in the South Taranaki District Council's draft Landscape Assessment. We support consistency in the methodology and application between the two studies.

In this respect, we consider more explicit reference to consistent methodology be recognised in Section 1.4 of your report. For example, at the end of the 1st paragraph in Section 1.4, the following text could be added: "In addition, the methodology generally aligns with the methodology used by Boffa Miskell in the South Taranaki Landscape Assessment". This sentence would complement the 3rd paragraph in Section 1.4 about consistent application in the South Taranaki district.

Also, the draft South Taranaki Landscape Assessment was also circulated to parties with a known interest in the topic earlier this year. In addition, consultation occurred with landowners within the specifically identified areas.

As a result of this consultation, a few changes have been made to the South Taranaki assessment (which have subsequently been incorporated into the notified Proposed District Plan). The changes relevant to the areas identified as outstanding in your draft Regional Landscape Study, are as follows:

Kaupokonui ONF/L
Kaupokonui Beach Society requested that the Kaupokonui ONF/L area be extended to the northeast to encompass Pokeohe Pa with additional pa tawhito and papakainga, taonga and part of the scarp face known as pariroa. These areas include wahi tapu and urupa sites. This request was in line with a plan of the historical sites which was prepared by Hori Manuirirangi Jnr (Ngatui Tu) as part of Environment Court evidence presented by Landscape Planner Paul Quinlan in 2011 relating to the Kaupokonui quarry Environment Court hearing (W030/2008) (attached). Rhys Girvan considered the values which resulted in this area of ONF/L being identified, and the above request and agreed to modify the ONF/L boundary as recommended. His report has been updated to reflect this.

Coastal Protection Area - Waitotara and Patea River mouths
A review of the location of the Coastal Marine Area and the inland extent of the revised STDC Coastal Protection Area has been undertaken. The location of the Coastal Protection Area has been revised (moved further inland) to

ensure that it is on the landward side of the Coastal Marine Area particularly at the Waitotara and Patea River Mouths. The boundary of the Waitotara ONF/L and ONC has also been altered for consistency with the inland extent of the coastal environment.

The revised draft STDC Landscape Assessment, updated to reflect these changes, is attached for your information.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Rhys if you have any questions or need any further information.

Best regards

Hamish

Hamish Wesney | Senior Principal | Senior Planner

email: hamish.wesney@boffamiskell.co.nz | ddi: +64 4 803 27 87 | tel: +64 4 385 93 15 | mob: +64 27 487 75 33
PO BOX 11 340 | LEVEL 4, HUDDART PARKER BUILDING | 1 POST OFFICE SQUARE | WELLINGTON 6142 | NEW ZEALAND
www.boffamiskell.co.nz

From: Nicolette West [mailto:Nicolette.West@trc.govt.nz]
Sent: Thursday, 30 July 2015 10:05 a.m.
To: 'astancliff@fishandgame.org.nz' <astancliff@fishandgame.org.nz>; 'johnsonj@npdc.govt.nz' <johnsonj@npdc.govt.nz>; 'blair.sutherland@stdc.govt.nz' <blair.sutherland@stdc.govt.nz>; 'dratana@doc.govt.nz' <dratana@doc.govt.nz>; 'jsteven@doc.govt.nz' <jsteven@doc.govt.nz>; 'clilley@doc.govt.nz' <clilley@doc.govt.nz>; 'gis.smith@clear.net.nz' <gis.smith@clear.net.nz>; 'jhunt@ihug.co.nz' <jhunt@ihug.co.nz>; 'dave.digby@xtra.co.nz' <dave.digby@xtra.co.nz>
Cc: Rhys Girvan <Rhys.Girvan@boffamiskell.co.nz>; Hamish Wesney <Hamish.Wesney@boffamiskell.co.nz>; Chris Spurdle <chris.spurdle@trc.govt.nz>; Sam Tamarapa <Sam.Tamarapa@trc.govt.nz>
Subject: Feedback sought on TRC Regional Landscape Study

Hi All

As part of TRC's review of the *Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki* (Coastal Plan) we have prepared a *draft Regional landscape study of the Taranaki coastal Environment*, which is attached. This study identifies areas within Taranaki that have outstanding natural character and/or are outstanding natural features and landscapes. It is intended that these areas will be given the highest level of protection within the revised Coastal Plan.

To date this study has largely been undertaken by internal Council staff. We are now keen to involve other parties, who have extensive local knowledge, to confirm the coastal areas in Taranaki with outstanding natural character, features or landscapes, as well as document their values.

Council welcomes your feedback and comments on this study by **Friday 11 September**. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this study further or alternatively if you have any questions or matters requiring clarification please contact me. Please fee free to forward this document on to any of your colleagues within your organisation who may be interested in commenting.

Regards

Nicolette West

Policy Analyst

Taranaki Regional Council

47 Cloten Road, Private Bag 713
Stratford 4352, New Zealand
Phone: 06 765 7127
Fax: 06 765 5097
www.trc.govt.nz

Working with people | caring for Taranaki

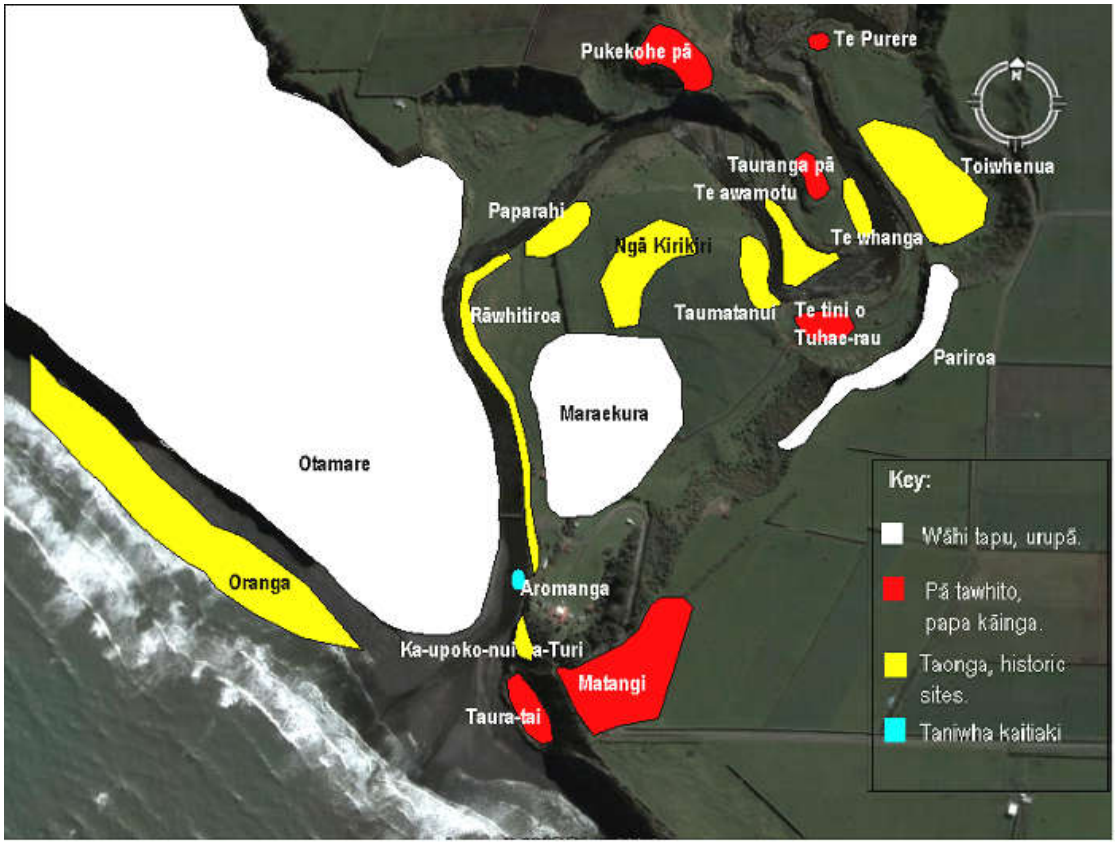


Figure 2: *Historic Sites of Kaupokonui (highlighted in colour).*

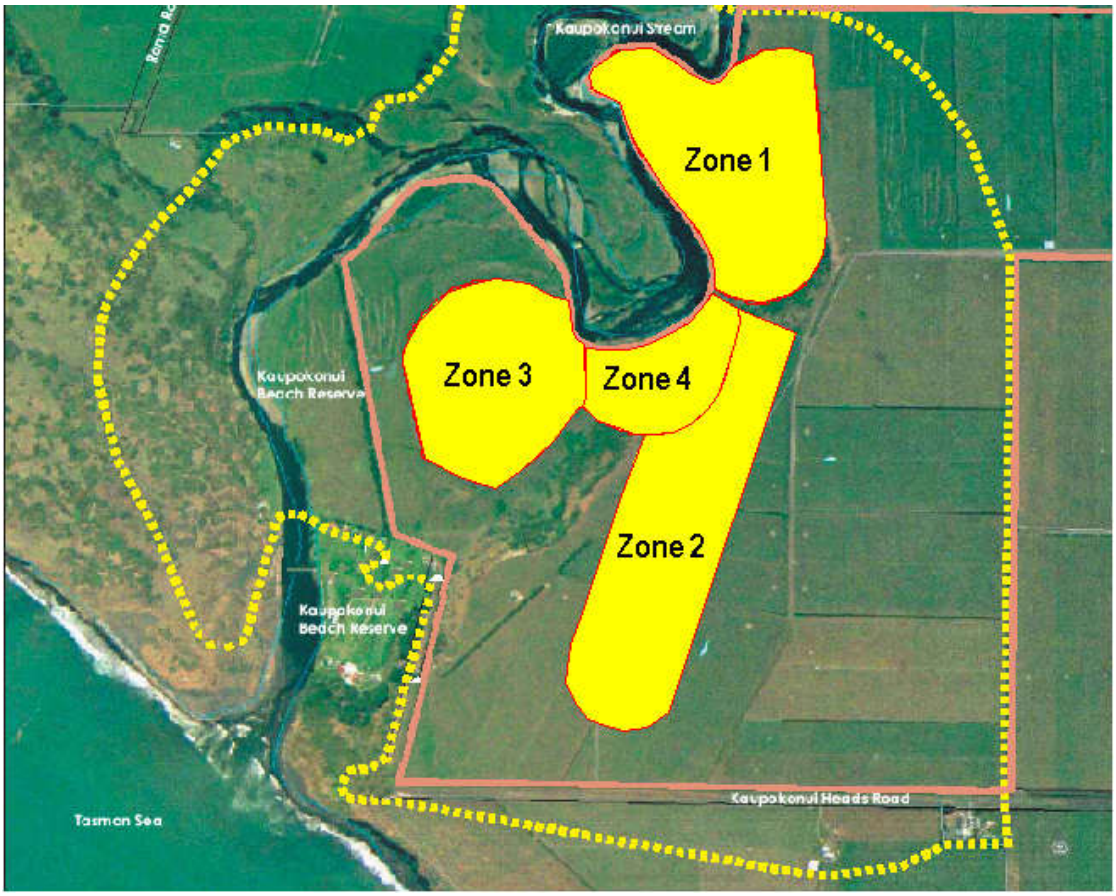


Figure 3: *Map of proposed quarry zones (Source: Architect Richard Bain).*

Appendix II: Existing areas identified within the Taranaki coastal environment

This appendix sets out areas identified within existing regional and district statutory planning documents as having significant natural character or as being an outstanding natural feature or landscape within the Taranaki coastal environment.

Coastal Plan

The existing Coastal Plan identifies eight areas of 'outstanding coastal value'. The Coastal Plan notes that such areas include the existence of outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant habitats of marine life or bird life, and significant or unmodified natural character. These values were identified in 1994 in accordance with the RMA and the previous NZCPS (2004).

The following criteria were used in identifying the eight areas of outstanding coastal value identified in the current Coastal Plan:

- **Protected areas**. Any gazetted or notified marine reserve, marine mammal sanctuary, marine park or other marine protected area, including adequate buffer areas, or any proposal which is under current investigation.

  Where there are protected areas above mean high water springs, consideration may be given to whether the adjoining area below mean high water springs should be identified as an area of significant conservation value.

- **Wetlands, estuaries and coastal lagoons** in the coastal marine area which are of national or international importance, including those:
  (a) necessary to act as buffer zones;
  (b) that are important spawning grounds or nurseries for marine and freshwater species;
  (c) where related catchments, marginal land and tidal flats have been minimally modified;
  (d) strategically situated to act as stepping stones for migratory species along coastal tracts.

- **Marine mammals and birds**. Areas including or near any:
  (a) marine mammal breeding or haul out site;
  (b) habitats of endangered, vulnerable, rare or threatened bird species;
  (c) important roost sites, or feeding areas of wading birds.

- **Ecosystems, flora and fauna habitats**. Any area that contains regionally, nationally or internationally significant or threatened ecosystem or plant or animal species.

- **Scenic sites**. Any part of the coastal marine area that forms a land or seascape of national or international importance.

- **Historic places** of national or outstanding significance (including archaeological sites adjoining mean high water springs), especially places where the values relate to the seabed as well as the land.

- **Coastal landforms and associated processes**. Representative examples of nationally significant or outstanding coastal landforms and their associated sediment transport systems and sources including:
  (a) submerged landforms (eg fiords, drowned river valleys, banks, reefs, moraines, and drowned shorelines);
  (b) erosional landforms including those that have been carved out of the land by the sea (eg shore platforms and submarine canyons); and
  (c) geologically rare or unusual features of very high quality.

Note: This assessment was carried out in light of the Second Schedule of the Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (1994). That schedule was removed from the gazetted NZCPS. However, the Council was satisfied that the areas identified are of significant value within the region.

Table 6 lists the eight areas identified and their associated values.

Table 6: Areas of outstanding coastal value as identified in the existing Coastal Plan

Area	Outstanding coastal values
Pariokariwa Point to Waihi Stream	• Fur seal haul-out and seabird roosting area on Opourapa Island; • Offshore reef connected to Opourapa Island contains abundant marine life; • Outstanding natural landscape at White Cliffs; • White Cliffs walkway uses the foreshore between Pukearuhe and Te Horo stock tunnel; • Shipwreck ('Alexandra') in shallow water offshore; • Fluttering shearwaters breed on cliffs and northern blue penguins burrow near stream mouths; • Outstanding natural features and landscape at Tongaporutu, particularly offshore stacks, cliffs and caves; • Breeding area for grey-faced petrels on offshore stacks; • Tongaporutu Estuary contains abundant shellfish with high species diversity; • Coastal marine area surrounds Te Kawau Pa Historic Reserve; • Mohakatino Beach Conservation Area adjacent to Mohakatino Estuary; • Australian bittern and caspian tern roost on sandflats and in wetland adjacent to the estuary; • Mohakatino Estuary supports whitebait, flounder and shellfish.
Mimi Estuary	• Tidal mudflats, saltmarsh and sand dune habitat, uncommon in north Taranaki; • Habitat of migratory and wading birds; • Whitebait spawning area in upper estuary; • Feeding ground for snapper and trevally; • Nursery area for juvenile marine species and flounder; • Blue penguin breeding site (periodic).
Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area	• Oldest volcanic formations in Taranaki; • Islands provide important nesting habitat for 27000 seabirds per year; • Moturoa and Motumahanga islands are free of exotic predators; • Vulnerable indigenous plant species (Cook's Scurvy Grass) on islands; • New Zealand fur seal breeding ground; • Diverse range of underwater habitats; • Marine urupa (Motukuku reef) of Ngati-te-whiti hapu; • Diverse and abundant marine life.
Whenuakura Estuary	• Relatively unmodified estuary; • Habitat of threatened caspian tern and rare variable oyster catcher; • Part of route for migratory birds; • Whitebait spawning on north bank.
North and South Traps	• Large seaweed (Ecklonia) forests, diverse and abundant marine life; • Unusual feature on sandy coast.
Waverley Beach	• Outstanding natural landscape; • Eroding stacks, caverns and tunnels produce unique landforms at land/sea interface; • Blow holes.
Waiinu Reef	• Limestone rock outcrops extending from mean high water springs to 500 m offshore; • Hard rock platform contains many well-preserved fossils; • Abundance of marine life forms.
Waitotara Estuary	• Unmodified, representative estuary; • Adjacent to existing conservation area which is the habitat of threatened australian bittern, NZ shoveller, black swan; • Stopover for migratory wading birds (royal spoonbill, banded dotterel) and international migrant birds (eastern bar-tailed godwit); • Sub-fossil totara stumps in estuary; • Whitebait spawning area in Waiau Stream.

District plans

District plans are the principal means of managing land use activities on the landward side of MHWS.

Through their respective district plans, the New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) and the South Taranaki District Council have developed objectives, policies and methods to sustainably manage resource use, development and subdivisions within the landward component of the coastal environment (above MHWS).

New Plymouth District Plan

The New Plymouth District Plan (NPDP) identifies outstanding landscapes, at a district level, and 'regionally significant landscapes' (albeit within the New Plymouth district).

In terms of the coastal environment, the following landscapes are identified – all of which are classified as regionally significant landscapes:

- Coastal terrace between Mohakatino and White Cliffs
- White Cliffs and associated conservation forest
- Sugar Loaf Islands and Paritutu
- Eight river mouths as follows:
    - Mohakatino
    - Tongaporutu
    - Mimi
    - Urenui
    - Onaero
    - Waiongana
    - Tapuae
    - Hangatahua (Stony).

In identifying the above landscapes, an initial assessment was undertaken by an independent landscape architect which was then audited by a focus group set up by the NPDC.

The NPDP also identifies outstanding natural features within the New Plymouth district. These are based on landforms and geological features identified within the Geopreservation Inventory for the Taranaki and Wanganui regions. For the coastal environment, these are:

- Sugar Loaf Islands and Paritutu
- Tongaporutu Coast Miocene fossil sequence
- White cliffs.

Natural character is also provided for in the NPDP through the identification of a coastal policy planning area. The coastal policy area shows areas of land adjacent to the coast where it is considered appropriate to control activities to ensure that the natural character of the coastal environment is preserved. Furthermore, 'significant coastal areas' are identified within this zone in terms of their natural character values. The significant coastal areas are based on those areas identified in Coastal Management Areas A and B of the existing Coastal Plan and comprise:

- Mohakatino River mouth
- Tongaporutu River mouth
- Mimi River mouth
- Urenui River mouth
- Onaero River mouth
- Waitara River mouth
- Waiongana Stream mouth
- Waiwhakaiho River mouth
- Centennial Park/Sugar Loaf Islands (Nga Motu)

- Oakura River mouth.

South Taranaki District Plan

The South Taranaki District Plan (STDP) includes a policy framework aimed at preserving the natural character of the coastal environment. The STDP also seeks to protect outstanding natural features and landscapes of the district and states that these will be identified through a landscape assessment and then incorporated into the Plan.