

Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

Unit / Landscape Ref No.	Unit name – OTAIKA VALLEY BUSH TO TE WAITI FOREST
DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION	
Component	Comment
Land Types Central rolling hills; strongly undulating land type	The unit forms an island of elevated and vegetated land, which influences the character of the landform most notably when viewed from the south – on State Highway 1 and from Otaika Valley Road.
Geology (including geopreservation sites)	Fault block of Torlesse Terrane greywacke and argillite capped by (unknown – probably Te Kuiti Group and Northland Allochthon), and Kerikeri Volcanics basaltic lava flows in the vicinity of Cemetery Road.
Soil Types	Upper slopes of the unit are overlain with Rangiora clay loam and silty clay loam, whilst the soils of the lower slopes comprise Te Ranga steepland soils, light brown clay loam and stony clay loam.
Ecology (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	<p>The site is identified within the Whangarei Ecological District PNAP report at Q07/023. It is a Level 1 site and comprises 548.3 ha of forest, and 10 ha of shrubland.</p> <p>The site is of significance due to its scale as a large area of forest with a high diversity of vegetation types. The site contains 39 ecological units; the highest number recorded within the Whangarei Ecological District.</p> <p>The forest is a representative site for kauri forest, kanuka/manuka-tanekaha-towai forest, kanuka-manuka forest, taraire-totara forest, puriri forest, rewarewa-taraire forest, kanuka/manuka-totara forest, tanekhaha forest, tanekeha-totara forest, kauri-tanekaka forest and puriri-totara forest.</p> <p>It is also the only site in the Ecological District where kanuka/manuka-towai forest, puriri-towai forest, matai-taraire-towai forest, karaka-puriri forest, kanuka-manuka-puriri forest, tanekaka-kauri forest, manuka-tanekaha shrubland, puriri-tanekaha-taraire forest and kanuka/manuka-tanekaha forest have been recorded.</p>
Archaeological sites	The Ruarangi Block to the north is known to have significant archaeological and cultural values and it is anticipated that these may also apply to the unit. Numerous pa sites are recorded on peaks within the unit.
Heritage Landscapes	None known.
Landscape characterisation (including the identification of any specific characteristics)	
<p>Located to the south of Whangarei City, the Otaika Valley bush, or Te Wai-iti forest forms a visible feature for travelers approaching the city from the south. It occupies a landform, which rises to a maximum height of some 245 metres. Aligned approximately south east – north west, parallel to Otaika Valley Road, the hills are some 5.0 – 6.0 km in length, but only a maximum of approximately 2.0 km wide. They form the catchment boundary between the Otakia Stream and Te Wai-iti Stream.</p> <p>The steep forested hillside which forms the southern edge of the hills dominates the Otaika valley and presents a strongly natural appearance with a near contiguous cover of vegetation. The hills are also visible from State Highway 1 travelling north.</p>	

Viewed from the north and north east, the forest is less evident, and is seen in the context of the Winstones Otaika Quarry and pine plantations to the north. The edge of the forest is visible, as it is when viewed from the west, and whilst it lacks the drama of the southern side of the hills, hints at a more extensive forested area over the ridge beyond.

EVALUATION		
Criteria	Rank	Comment
Natural Science Factors		
Representativeness Natural landscapes are clearly characteristic of the area, district or region. The key components of the landscape will be present in a way that defines the character of the place and distills its character and essence. Endemic associations.	4	The Otaika Valley bush, forms one of the sequence of forested hills that characterises the Northland landscape. Along with Pukenui and Parihaka it provides a strong and natural to the Whangarei urban centre.
Rarity Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.	4	The landscape forms one of a number of forested hills that display little modification from built development. They contribute to and characterize the landscape. Along with the other forested hills, they relate strongly to each other to form a landscape of considerable drama and presence.
Aesthetic Values		
Coherence The patterns of land cover and land use are largely in harmony with the underlying natural pattern of the landform of the area and there are no significant discordant elements of land cover or land use.	5	The landscape displays a high level of coherence. It reflects the form and pattern of the underlying topography with a largely contiguous vegetation cover of some 500 ha in area. The coherence of the feature is most evident from the south, from where virtually no built development is visible.
Diversity & Complexity The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.	5	The forest displays a high level of diversity and complexity whilst visually maintaining coherence and harmony.
Vividness Natural features and landscape are widely recognised across the community and beyond the local area and remain clearly in the memory; striking landscapes are symbolic of an area due to their recognisable and memorable qualities.	3	The landscape lacks the extensive visual catchment of other similar vegetated features and therefore appears less dramatic over a wider area. Within the visual catchment of the Otaika Valley however the landscape dominates the area and is a memorable feature that characterises the area.
Naturalness How affected by human activity is the landscape? Does human activity intrude on the landscape? Eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of buildings and associated built development. • Presence of infrastructure services. • Extent of indigenous forest cover. • Homogeneity of exotic vegetation. • Presence / extent of modified agricultural land use. • Strength of natural processes / ecological patterns. • Unmodified and legible physical relief and landform. • Presence of water. 	4	The landscape possesses a high level of naturalness with little evident built development or infrastructure services. The contiguous forest cover contrasts with the rural character of the surrounding landscape and this heightens the perception of its naturalness. The PNAP report indicates that natural processes and ecological patterns are strong and in good health.
Intactness Natural systems are intact and aesthetically coherent and do not display significant visual signs of human modification, intervention or manipulation.	4	The Otaika Valley bush forms a large area of forest with a high diversity of vegetation types. The contiguous vegetation, although modified in the past for logging,

visually intact and highly aesthetic natural landscapes.		displays a high level of intactness with aesthetically coherent vegetation patterns.
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Experiential Values

Expressiveness The 'legibility' of the landscape. Natural features clearly demonstrate the natural processes that formed them.	4	The landscape displays a high level of legibility in terms of the hydrological processes that have shaped the valleys and ridges. The complexity and spatial arrangement of vegetation reflects the underlying topographical form of the ranges.
Sensory qualities (These are landscape phenomena as directly perceived and experienced by humans, such as the view of a scenic landscape, or the distinctive smell and sound of the foreshore).	3	Primarily limited to the smells and sounds of the forest, with occasional views to the wider landscape from high points within the forest.
Transient Values The consistent and repeated occurrence of transient features that contributes to the character, qualities and values of the landscape; landscapes are widely recognised for their transient features and the contribution that these make to the landscape.	3	Strongly influenced by light and weather conditions. Seasonal influences of the blooming of trees and shrubs.

Remoteness / Wildness Does the landscape display a wilderness character, remote from and untouched by human presence? Eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of remoteness • Accessibility • Distance from built development 	3	The Otaika Valley Walkway, a DoC maintained access bisects the unit between Otaika valley Road and Raumanga Heights Road. The proximity of the landscape to settlement and the ease of access diminishes the wildness and remote experience. Some sense of remoteness can be gained within the forest however.
Shared and recognised values Natural features and landscape are widely known and valued by the immediate and wider community for their contribution to a sense of place leading to a strong community association with, or high public esteem for the place.	4	The proximity of the unit to the urban centre and settled areas ensures a high degree of recognition. Similarly, as a backdrop to Otaika Valley, the forest has gained a strong community association.
Spiritual, cultural and historical associations Natural features and landscapes can be clearly and widely known and influenced by their connection to the spiritual, cultural and historical valued in the place and includes associative meanings and associative activities valued by the community. These can include both activities and meanings associative meanings are spiritual, cultural or social associations with particular landscape elements, features, or areas, whilst associative activities are patterns of social activity that occur in particular parts of a landscape, for example, popular walking routes or fishing spots.	4	Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period. The bush contains a number of pa sites and adjoining areas are known to have significant cultural values.

Rank scale between 1 (low) and 5 (high)

Land Types

Coastal cliffs / escarpment
Low escarpment
Bays and headlands
Beach
Dune complex
Reefs and islands
Estuarine / inlet
Open harbour
Coastal plain
Rolling hills
Steep hills; moderate to high relief

Ranges; high relief
Strongly rolling land
Low rolling land
Valley floors and flats
Plains
Volcanic cones
River mouth
Wetland
Watercourses
Lakes and water bodies

Photographs of unit



View to Otaika Valley bush from State Highway 1



View to Otaika Valley bush from south west



View to Otaika Valley bush from south east, with Winstones Quarry.