

NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL NORTHLAND MAPPING PROJECT

OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPES WORKSHEETS

(including amendments following Council decisions)

FEBRUARY 2014



Outstanding Natural Landscapes Mapping Methodology Report

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Northland Regional Council has commissioned a comprehensive study to identify and map the landward extent of the coastal environment, high and outstanding natural character areas in the coastal environment, and outstanding natural features and landscapes.

The purpose of this undertaking has been to allow the Council to fulfill its responsibilities under the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 and to provide a resource to assist with the development of a new Regional Policy Statement.

This particular assessment has been prepared by Littoralis Landscape Architecture and Simon Cocker Landscape Architecture, with peer guidance from Mary Buckland Landscape Architect, to identify outstanding landscapes in the Region. Other volumes address the coastal environment, natural character and natural features components of the mapping exercise.

Outstanding landscapes were originally identified within the first generation assessments for the three Districts that comprise the region, with these having been prepared between the years of 1995 and 1999. A recent review has highlighted a number of inconsistencies in the way in which those earlier assessments identified outstanding natural landscapes in relation to subsequent Environment Court decisions and contemporary best practice.

This report details the changes arising from case law, and from the development of theory and practice that are applied to the identification of outstanding landscapes. It describes the methodology developed to undertake the assessment, and explains how the proposed methodology is consistent with the recent case law and refined 'best practice' approach.

The report concludes by summarising some broad observations and findings that have emerged. A second, related, volume provides technical worksheets that have been prepared for each of the identified areas of outstanding landscape.

2.0 Background

2.1 Why is the study being undertaken?

Northland Regional Council (NRC) commissioned the Northland Mapping Group in 2011 to “...identify and map within the Northland Region:

- *The landward extent of the coastal environment;*
- *High and outstanding natural character areas in the coastal environment, and;*
- *Outstanding features / landscapes”*

The project was initiated in response to the requirements of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS 2010) and to provide a resource to assist with the development of a new Regional Policy Statement (RPS). The brief listed the aims of the project as follows:

1. Provide consistent identification of the Region’s outstanding landscapes to inform and assist Council with their development of the new Regional Policy Statement for Northland (RPS), and subsequent district and regional plans. Regional Policy Statements are required to give effect to the NZCPS 2010 “as soon as practically possible”.

2. Give effect to several key policies listed in the NZCPS, these being:

- *Policy 1_ Extent and characteristics of the coastal environment*
- *Policy 13_ Preservation of natural character*
- *Policy 14_ Restoration of natural character*
- *Policy 15_ Natural features and natural landscapes*

The full text of these policies is contained in Appendix 1.

3. Linked to the above, the third aim of the project was to address inconsistencies in the identification of outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL) across the region.

Approaches to identifying and managing ONL in district and regional planning documents across the region vary widely. This has resulted in inconsistent management, duplicated processes and created inefficiencies. A recent study commissioned by the NRC¹ confirmed these inconsistencies and also noted that the various approaches were unlikely to align well with Policy 15(c) of the NZCPS 2010.

As required by the brief, this report focuses only on the identification and mapping of *outstanding* natural landscapes. Other reports prepared in response to the brief address the mapping of outstanding natural features, the landward extent of the coastal environment and the identification of areas of high and outstanding natural character in the coastal environment.

The NRC brief specifically noted the potential for the policy direction of the NZCPS 2010 to impact on Northland.

“In progressing this project Council therefore seeks to minimize socio-economic impacts by implementing a regime that is affordable, fit for purpose, is consistent with the aim of the Resource management Act 1991.....”²

The scope and methodology of the assessment has been ‘tailored’ to fulfill these stated aims and to complete the study in a cost-effective manner. To that end the landscape assessment was undertaken to identify outstanding natural landscapes and does not address amenity landscapes or other categories of landscape.

2.2 Historical landscape assessments

Since 1995 each of the Districts in Northland have undertaken independent landscape assessments. These are:

- Whangarei District Landscape Assessment Report (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995);
- Far North District Council Landscape Assessment (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995);

¹ Boffa Miskell Ltd for Northland Regional Council: Northland Regional Landscape Review: Review of the Landscape Assessment Methodologies used in the District Councils for Northland’s Outstanding Natural features and landscapes. October 2010.

² Northland Regional Council. Request for proposal – Northland Mapping Project 2011.

- Kaipara District Landscape Assessment (LA4 Landscape Architects & Littoralis Landscape Architecture, 1999, and Littoralis Landscape Architecture 2009).

The landscape assessments undertaken in 1995 calculated that the area of land recommended by those reports as being outstanding landscape in Northland as equating to approximately 16% of the region. The Kaipara district (7.5%) had a lower proportion of outstanding landscapes when assessed in 1999, in comparison to the Far North (25%) and Whāngārei (20%) Districts.

Whilst the 1999 Kaipara District assessment reported a total of 4.5% and 7.5% of the District being assessed as Significant and Outstanding respectively, the 2009 landscape assessment identified a total of 11.5% as Outstanding Landscape Areas.

The LA4 assessments identified outstanding landscapes without distinction of land ownership. The majority of land in public ownership identified as an outstanding landscape is administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC). A majority of privately owned land that had been identified as an outstanding landscape was near the coast, with a large proportion of this land owned by Māori. Approximately 118,736 ha (56% region-wide) of outstanding landscapes in Northland are privately owned according to these earlier studies.

The Northland Landscape Review report identified a number of shortcomings, or 'gaps', in these assessments and it listed these as follows:

- The lack of depth of description of underlying landscape resources as a basis for deriving a logical and robust spatial framework of landscape units and therefore a weakened basis for landscape management mechanisms;
- an emphasis on sensory and perceptual landscape attributes over bio-physical and associative landscape values;
- a questionable approach adopted with respect to the use of landscape vulnerability in determining overall landscape values;
- no clear distinction between identification of High Natural Character Areas (HNCA) of the coastal environment and ONF&Ls; and
- the evaluation factors used for the identification of ONF&Ls are not consistent with current best practice.

2.3 The Statutory Context

2.3.1 Resource Management Act (1991)

Part 2 of the Resource Management Act (1991) (RMA), (which sets out the overarching purpose and principles of the Act), requires that a regional council, in exercising the functions under Section 30 of the RMA, shall recognise and provide for matters of national importance. Those matters which have a direct relationship with the management of natural character and landscape values are:

- *The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area) wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development (S.6a)*
- *The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision use and development (S 6b)*

- *The relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga; (S.6e)*
- *The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development (S.6f)*

Furthermore Part 2 of the RMA also requires that particular regard be had to:

- *The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values (S.7c)*
- *Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment (S.7g)*

Significantly, the key terms used in Part 2 of the RMA (i.e. natural character, landscape, natural, outstanding) are not defined within the RMA. Accordingly difficulties have arisen in the interpretation of these terms and methods of assessment. This has led to variable assessment methodologies, policy responses and management methods by regional and district authorities throughout the country.

2.3.2 Regional Policy Statement for Northland (1999)

The Regional Policy Statement (RPS) refers to those outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes (ONFL) identified in the various district plans. In Chapter 19 (Part iv) the RPS sets out objectives and policies to recognise and provide for the protection of ONFL in terms of Sections 5 and 6 of the Act.

Relevant objectives and policies from the RPS are included in Appendix 1.

2.3.3 Regional Coastal Plan (1994)

Sections 7 and 8 of the NRC Regional Coastal Plan for Northland (1994) (RCP) are of relevance and focus on the preservation of the natural character of the coastal marine area (CMA). The identification of, and management of landscapes is addressed in Section 7, and Section 8 identifies a number of features or landscapes recognised as outstanding at the time of the RPS becoming operative.

Relevant objectives and policies from the RPS are included in Appendix 1.

2.3.4 Relevant Case Law

Direction on the meaning of key terms, particularly 'natural character' and 'landscape', has been provided by decisions handed down by the Environment Court. It is therefore useful to identify some of the key interpretations which have come out of this case law.

The Environment Court has recognised that the concept of landscape encompasses more than just natural and visual values, and includes cultural values (*refer W129/97, New Zealand Marine Hatcheries (Marlborough) Ltd v Marlborough District Council*).

The Environment Court's decision (*refer Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated and others v Queenstown- Lakes District Council C180/1999, commonly referred to as the 'WESI Decision'*) in relation to the landscape provisions in the Proposed Queenstown-Lakes District Plan made a number of significant findings on the classification and assessment of landscapes.

Key findings of the WESI Decision, as summarised in 2005³, are:

- (i) *A précis definition of 'landscape' cannot be given. However a working definition includes the following elements:*
- *Landscape is a subset of the environment.*
 - *Landscape involves both natural and physical resources and various factors relating to the viewers and their perception of the resources*
 - *Landscape is a link between individual resources and the environment (as defined in the RMA) as a whole. It considers a group of natural and physical resources together. It also emphasises that attitudes to those resources are affected by social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions.*
- (ii) *Any criteria for assessing landscape should include consideration of the following factors:*
- *The natural science factors: - the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of landscape*
 - *Its aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness*
 - *Its expressiveness (legibility) how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it*
 - *Transient values: occasional presence of wildlife, or its values at certain times of the day or of the year*
 - *Whether values are shared or recognised*
 - *Its value to tangata whenua and*
 - *Its historical association.*

Further assessment criteria are also referred to in *Pigeon Bay Aquaculture Ltd v Canterbury Regional Council, C32/99*. ('the Pigeon Bay Criteria')

- (iii) *The word 'outstanding' in section 6(b) of the RMA means "conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence" and "remarkable". If considered by a regional council then 'outstanding' is considered on a regional basis. If being considered by a district council, then outstanding is to be considered in terms of the district. In relation to a district plan, what is outstanding can only be assessed on a district-wide basis because the sum of the district's landscapes are the only immediate comparison that the district council has.*
- (iv) *The criteria for 'naturalness under Section 6(b), RMA includes:*
- *The physical landform and relief;*
 - *The landscape being uncluttered by structures, and/or obvious human influence;*
 - *The presence of water (lakes, rivers, sea)*
 - *The vegetation (especially native vegetation) and other ecological patterns;*
 - *The absence, or compromised presence, of one of these criteria does not mean that the landscape is not natural, just that it is less natural. There is a spectrum of naturalness.*

The meaning of "natural" has further been ruled upon in decisions Harrison v Tasman

³Community Guide to Landscape Protection under the Resource Management Act 1991. Environmental Defence Society (2005)

District Council) and W042/93; Weatherwell-Johnson v Tasman District Council, W181/96.

In the Harrison v Tasman District Council, the Court stated:

“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 man-made structures, roads, machinery.”

In Weatherwell-Johnson v Tasman District Council it determined that *“...the degree of naturalness goes beyond just the visual. It depends on the presence of natural elements, patterns, and processes and addresses the largely unbuild”*.

As recognition of the importance of the WESI case, and the general acceptance of the factors therein as part of best practice, this decision has guided the use of criteria for landscape evaluation since 1997. Since that time there has been a gradual increase in the understanding of the WESI factors (otherwise known as the ‘amended Pigeon Bay criteria’), as more recent cases have explored these terms further. Some of these explorations have been accepted by the Court and others have not. More recently there has been some consensus reached amongst the members of the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) in the interpretation of key terms⁴. This ‘Best Practise Note’ document also represents a broadly accepted approach to the assessment of landscape.

Accordingly there is now a level of professional consensus in the use of these criteria as basis of any landscape assessment framework. However it is also increasingly recognised by landscape practitioners that whilst they are useful, the WESI “criteria” also have certain limitations. It is accepted that they are not to be treated as exhaustive criteria (and it would appear that the Court did not anticipate that being the case) but rather as ‘factors’ to be taken into account and, according to the particular landscape situation being assessed, that there may be other key contributing factors.

This consideration was echoed by the Board of Inquiry into the Hauauru ma raki Wind farm decision which criticised the manner in which the ‘Pigeon Bay factors’ had become something of a formula for landscape assessments.

“We find these (Pigeon Bay) factors to be a mix of objective and subjective matters and not sufficiently differentiated to clearly address the effects of change on people and communities identified in Section 5 of the Act. We acknowledge that they have been used in Environment Court decisions but conclude they should not be adopted as a formulaic framework for landscape assessment”

In addition, the Court has been critical of the use of a mathematical formula or mechanical approach when applying landscape evaluation factors (Waiareka Valley Preservation Society inc, Kakanui Riverwatch Society and Holcim NZ Limited and Renaison v. Waitaki District Council and Otago Regional Council CO58/2008). That same adverse reaction to attempting to use quantifying formulae when assessing landscape values has been well documented internationally.

The generally accepted preference within the landscape profession is now to apply a simple three or five point scale (low-medium-high, or low-medium low-medium-medium high-high) and the use of overall profiles or cumulative assessments.

⁴ Best Practice Note “Landscape Management and Sustainable Management 10.01” NZILA, March 2010

The Board of Inquiry in the Parkins Bay decision (Upper Clutha Tracks Trust v Queenstown Lakes District Council NZ EnvC 432/2010) provided an indication of how case law appears to be shifting toward the description of landscape under three broad categories, being the biophysical, perceptual and associative aspects.

3.0 Assessment Methodology

3.1 The Process

As described previously, a primary focus of this study was to identify and delineate outstanding natural landscapes within the Northland Region. To achieve this goal, the assessment process followed 3 key stages:

1. Preliminary desktop analysis, including review of previous landscape assessments, GIS and other data to form a broad initial understanding of areas of elevated landscape value structured around various land types;
2. ground and aerial survey to verify identified units, to refine boundaries, identify other areas with the potential to be recognized as ONL through the assignment of values to the units; and,
3. detailed delineation of outstanding natural landscapes and description of values for each unit using worksheets.

3.2 Landscape Description, Characterisation and Evaluation

The New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects have developed Best Practice guidelines for the assessment of landscape⁵. This document recommends that landscape assessment be undertaken by employing three widely recognised common stages. These stages reflect guidance set out by the Environment Court in various decisions that have been described previously, and are as follows:

1. Description

A systematic account of *landscape attributes* in the assessment area. These will include:

- Biophysical elements, patterns, and processes.
- Sensory qualities.
- Spiritual, cultural and social associations, including both activities and meanings.

2. Characterisation

Expert interpretation of *landscape character* based on *classification* of different types of landscape, through:

- Identification of patterns of natural and cultural features, processes and influences.
- Analysis of their characteristics and spatial location, and the extent to which they are distinctive, representative or typical at the different scales.

3. Evaluation

An explicit account and weighing up of the *landscape values* of the existing landscape in relation to a range of criteria which have been largely defined in response to the statutory context of the assessment.

⁵ NZILA Best Practice Guide - Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management: 10.1 2010

3.3 Land Types

In order to facilitate the characterisation of the landscape resource, a desktop exercise was undertaken in which the broad delineation of land units, based on geomorphologic land types and using existing landscape assessments, and national data sources including detailed aerial mapping, for those areas considered to have the potential to be identified as ONL.

Eighteen land types were delineated, and separated into eight coastal land types, and ten inland land types. The land types identified are as follows, and photographic examples of a number of land types are included below.

Coastal Land Types

- Off-shore islands land type
- Coastal cliffs / escarpment land type
- Low coastal escarpment land type
- Bays and headlands land type
- Ocean beach land type
- Reefs and islands land type
- Estuarine / inlet land type
- Fluvial and coastal plains land type
- Sandspit land type
- Dunes land type

Images of coastal land types



Ocean beach land type: Bream Bay, Uretiti



Reefs and islands land type: Rimariki Island



Bays and headlands land type: Tutukaka Coast



Coastal cliffs / escarpment land type: Bream Tail



Reefs and islands land type: Marotere Islands

Inland Land Types

- Northern and eastern dissected ranges; high relief land type
- Northern and eastern dissected hills; moderate to high relief land type
- Central ranges; high relief land type
- Volcanic plateau; high relief land type
- Volcanic plateau; moderate to high relief land type
- Central rolling hills; strongly undulating land type
- Central rolling hills; low undulating land type
- Valley floors and flats land type
- Plains land type
- Volcanic cones land type

Images of Inland land types



Northern and eastern dissected ranges; high relief land type: Mereretu Range



Central ranges; high relief land type: Tangihua Range



Volcanic cones land type: Maungatapere



Volcanic plateau moderate to high relief land type: Pukenui Forest

3.4 Assignment of values to the landscape

As part of the evaluation process, the landscape units were assigned values relative to a range of criterion contained in assessment worksheets to determine whether they should be identified as ONL.

The character descriptions provide important information with respect to those aspects that contribute to landscape character, but provide little assistance to the 'valuing' of that landscape.

The worksheet was developed to assist in this regard. The worksheets 'deconstruct' each landscape so that the various components of that landscape, and the various ways in which it can be appreciated, can be assessed and valued individually.

The categories listed in the worksheet were based on guidance provided by case law, described and discussed previously, and from recent landscape assessments that have been endorsed by the Court in terms of their process.

The framework of the worksheet has been included below, with commentary to explain the origin and intent of the various sections and components.

As described previously, the Court has indicated that it does not favour the use of a mathematical or mechanical approach when applying landscape evaluation factors. To be consistent with best accepted practice, a conscious decision was made to avoid a 'score and total' approach to ranking landscape, since it was recognised that a landscape may be deemed outstanding whilst only satisfying a minimal number of the listed natural science, aesthetic or experiential characteristics.

Instead, each of the evaluation criteria was ranked using a five point scale. Under this scale 1 = low, 2 = low-medium, 3 = medium, 4 = medium-high, and 5 = high.

The final determination of whether an individual feature or landscape merits being identified as an ONL is based on an expert evaluation and judgmental weighting of the 'ratings'. Thus landscapes can be assessed against the three tier framework described by the Court, which are outstanding natural landscapes, visual amenity landscapes and the balance of landscapes which have no significant resource management issues associated with them (in terms of s6 and 7 of the Act).

As stated previously, the brief provided by the NRC was for the identification of ONLs, so in response the assessment has sought to identify and delineate only those areas which satisfy that upper rank.

Outstanding Landscapes

As the top tier of the three levels indicated by the Court in its WESI decision, ONLs are deemed to be those units of landscape which most strongly display natural science, aesthetic and experiential characteristics, and are prominent in the landscape, lending them a sense of spectacle and unity with a minimum of development or modification.

3.5 Explanation of the worksheet

Description and Characterisation	
<p>This first section reflects the first of the Pigeon Bay factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The natural science factors: - the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of landscape</i> <p>It is also consistent with direction provided by recent Court decisions such as Parkins Bay and the Te Waka Wind Farm decisions by providing a description of the natural science values / biogeographical elements patterns and processes.</p> <p>It is also consistent the NZILA Best Practice Guidelines in terms of describing, and the characterisation of, the landscape.</p>	
Factor	Comment
Land Types	A brief summary of the land types included within the landscape. These are broad land types which describe the geomorphological land characteristics and include volcanic cones, steep hill country, sand spit, freshwater wetland. This section also includes a brief description of the composition of, and relationships between, the various land types listed.
Geology	Broad geological overview, using information sourced from geological publications and the NZ Geopreservation Inventory.
Soil Types	Guided by LENZ and LRi
Ecology	Information sourced from Ecological District PNAP reports, latest versions of NRC's Wetlands of Regional Importance, dune-lands database, SSWI database
Archaeological sites	Location and density broadly sourced from Archsite and mapped info.
Heritage Landscapes	General description of known and acknowledged historical and cultural relationships with landscapes.
Landscape Characterisation	A description of and commentary on the landscape values of the landscape and its relationship to the contextual and wider landscape. Includes consideration of the land types, topography, vegetation and hydrological patterns.
EVALUATION:	
<p>This section reflects the third section of the NZILA Best Practise Guidelines, and is consistent with the Pigeon Bay factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>aesthetic values including memorability and naturalness</i> - <i>expressiveness (legibility) how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it</i> - <i>Transient values: occasional presence of wildlife, or its values at certain times of the day or of the year</i> - <i>Whether values are shared or recognised</i> - <i>value to tangata whenua and</i> - <i>historical association</i> 	

In addition, it reflects the Parkins Bay and the Te Waka Wind Farm decisions with respect to the first category (natural science values / biogeographical elements, patterns and processes). It provides context for the natural science factors by evaluating the representativeness and rarity of the feature or landscape.

The second category as listed in the aforementioned decisions ('aesthetic quality' / perceptual aspects), is evaluated using the aesthetic values and expressive values factors that are entitled coherence, diversity and complexity, vividness, naturalness, intactness, expressiveness, sensory qualities, transient values and remoteness / wildness.

The third category (community held values / associative or relationship contribution of the landscape) is evaluated using the factors entitled shared and recognized values, and spiritual, cultural and historical associations.

Each of the above factors is given a value between 1 and 5 (1 being low and 5 being high). This method of evaluation is consistent with the accepted evaluation method and with the direction of recent Court decisions.

Natural Science Factors:

As described above, this subsection evaluates and provides context for the natural science factors by determining their value in terms of representativeness and / or rarity at a regional or national level.

Representativeness	<p>Consideration of the level of importance of the landscape with regard to how clearly characteristic the landscape is of the area, district or region. This section includes comment on the key components of the landscape define the character of the place and distills its character and essence.</p> <p>It also contains consideration of any endemic associations that are present.</p>
Rarity	<p>Assessment of whether the landscape or feature has components that are unique or rare in the region or nationally.</p>

Aesthetic Values:

The aesthetic values subsection assigns value to the landscape using a series of objective factors.

Coherence	<p>Coherence is used to describe the patterns of land cover and land use and whether they are 'in harmony' with the underlying natural pattern of the landform of the area, and whether there are any significant discordant elements of land cover or land use. It is a method of assessing how 'natural', or unmodified the landscape is.</p>
Diversity & Complexity	<p>This factor allows consideration of the extent to which elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony. For example, an old growth forest such as Waipoua would typically include climax forest canopy species and multi layered subcanopy species.</p>

Vividness	Vividness describes, in simple terms, the ‘wow-factor’ which results in the feature or landscape being widely recognized across the community and beyond the local area, and remain clearly in the memory. Remarkable or striking landscapes can be symbolic of an area due to their recognisable and memorable qualities.
Naturalness	<p>This factor evaluates the extent to which the feature or landscape appears affected by human activity. It determines whether human activity intrudes on the landscape and includes consideration of the following matters (although consideration is not limited to these matters)</p> <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 / nature of modified agricultural land use. • Strength of natural processes / ecological patterns. • Unmodified and legible physical relief and landform. • Presence of water.
Intactness	In contrast to the above factor, this focuses on the intactness and aesthetic coherence of natural systems (being ecological, hydrological and geomorphological processes). It assesses whether these systems display significant visual signs of human modification, intervention or manipulation, and whether they are visually intact and highly aesthetic natural landscapes.
<p>Experiential Values: The first four factors of this subsection assign value using more subjective experiential factors, whilst the latter two evaluate the shared community values and associations of features or landscapes.</p>	
Expressiveness	Expressiveness describes how clearly a feature or landscape demonstrates the processes by which it was formed – the ‘legibility’ of the landscape. Sea cliffs, river gorges and volcanic cones are examples of landscapes or features that are highly expressive, when they are unmodified by human activity.
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.
Transient Values	The experience of a feature or landscape can be heightened by the consistent and repeated occurrence of transient features that contribute to the character, qualities and values of the landscape. This may include the flowering of kowhai , or pohutukawa, bird migrations, or a more regular event such as tidal movement within an estuary, changes in light level or sun direction.

Remoteness / Wildness	<p>The evaluation of remoteness considers whether the landscape displays a wilderness character that is remote from and untouched by human presence? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of remoteness • Accessibility • Distance from built development
Shared and recognised values	<p>Natural features and landscapes can be widely recognised 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. Examples of this may include Maunganui Bluff, Waipoua Forest or Whangarei Heads / Manaia.</p>
Spiritual, cultural and historical associations	<p>This factor recognises that landscapes can be clearly, widely known and influenced by their connection to the spiritual, cultural and historical values in the place and includes associative meanings and associative activities valued by the community.</p> <p>These can include both activities and meanings and associative meanings. These can be 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.</p>

4.0 The Resource – The Northland Landscape

The Northland region comprises a great diversity of landscapes, both inland and coastal, as well as marine environments including off-shore islands. This landscape represents an equal diversity of underlying geologies, soil types, natural drainage, vegetation patterns and land uses. The landscapes of Northland also carry very rich cultural and historical associations for both Maori and Pākehā. This diversity of landscapes represents a broad range of landscape management challenges and increasing, and often competing, demands aligned to wider environmental management of the regions natural, physical and cultural resources.

The Operative Regional Policy Statement for Northland (NRPS) 1999 describes the Region's wider environment in the following way:

As a peninsula isolated from much of the rest of the country, Northland is home to many rare plants and animals. Lakes, rivers and inland and coastal wetlands including mangrove forests, are vital to the regeneration of valuable fish populations and harbour many species of native birds, aquatic plants and fish which are found nowhere else in the country. In addition, a myriad of offshore islands, including the Poor Knights, Hen and Chickens, Three Kings and Cavalli Islands provide a safe home for many rare and endangered plants and animals.

Over the past century, Northland's natural environment has been greatly modified by the advance of pastoral farming, forestry, horticulture, industry and increased human

habitation. Only a very small proportion of the region's total land area remains in native forest and shrubland, while most natural wetlands have been lost, largely due to artificial drainage.

Continued change is inevitable; as long as human beings populate the region, they will leave their imprint on land, sea and air resources. Sustainable management of resources is one way to ensure that the adverse effects of human activity on the quality of the environment, and the long term viability of natural resources are successfully avoided, remedied or mitigated.

5.0 General Findings

The detailed mapping and descriptions contained in the worksheets convey the specific findings of the assessment, but there are some general themes that emerge at a broader scale.

- The majority of Northland's outstanding landscapes are to be found either along the region's coastline or the blocks of elevated, bush-clad terrain that are scattered over inland parts of Northland.
- Others are represented by smaller and localised 'features' such as volcanic cones that are widely recognised by the community.
- Outstanding landscapes that emerge from this 2012 assessment are generally closely aligned to those identified in the earlier district assessments.
- A superior mapping base in the form of high resolution aerial photographs and satellite imagery has allowed more accurate mapping than was possible during the mid 1990's when most of Northland's previous assessments were undertaken.
- Some of the areas identified as outstanding in earlier assessments have seen landuse change in the interim that has diminished their values.
- Other areas have seen natural vegetation cover develop from early shrubland associations to more diverse forest canopies, or from plantation forestry or pastoral land cover to initial indigenous colonisation.
- Broadscale restoration or mitigation plantings established as part of "management plan" types of large-lot subdivision are beginning to establish comprehensive landscape patterns that create a positive change in character that typically more than offsets the presence of new buildings in these carefully controlled developments.
- Fire and exotic weed invasion have had a noticeable impact in a number of areas, particularly on remote sites in the northern-most parts of the region.

Appendix 1

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (2010)

Policy 1_Extent and characteristics of the coastal environment

- (1) *Recognise that the extent and characteristics of the coastal environment vary from region to region and locality to locality; and the issues that arise may have different effects in different localities.*
- (2) *Recognise that the coastal environment includes:*
 - (a) *the coastal marine area;*
 - (b) *Islands within the coastal marine area;*
 - (c) *areas where coastal processes, influences or qualities are significant, including coastal lakes, lagoons, tidal estuaries, saltmarshes, coastal wetlands, and the margins of these;*
 - (d) *areas at risk from coastal hazards;*
 - (e) *coastal vegetation and the habitat of indigenous coastal species including migratory birds;*
 - (f) *elements and features that contribute to the natural character, landscape, visual qualities or amenity values;*
 - (g) *items of cultural and historic heritage in the coastal marine area or on the coast;*
 - (h) *inter-related coastal marine and terrestrial systems, including the intertidal zone; and*
 - (i) *physical resources and built facilities, including infrastructure, that have modified the coastal environment.*

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;*
- (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*
- (i) their context or setting.*

Policy 14_ Restoration of natural character

Promote restoration or rehabilitation of the natural character of the coastal environment, including by:

- (a) identifying areas and opportunities for restoration or rehabilitation;*
- (b) providing policies, rules and other methods directed at restoration or rehabilitation in regional policy statements, and plans;*
- (c) where practicable, imposing or reviewing restoration or rehabilitation conditions on resource consents and designations, including for the continuation of activities; and recognising that where degraded areas of the coastal environment require restoration or rehabilitation, possible approaches include:*
 - (i) restoring indigenous habitats and ecosystems, using local genetic stock where practicable; or*
 - (ii) encouraging natural regeneration of indigenous species, recognising the need for effective weed and animal pest management; or*
 - (iii) creating or enhancing habitat for indigenous species; or*
 - (iv) rehabilitating dunes and other natural coastal features or processes, including saline wetlands and intertidal saltmarsh; or*
 - (v) restoring and protecting riparian and intertidal margins; or*
 - (vi) reducing or eliminating discharges of contaminants; or*
 - (vii) removing redundant structures and materials that have been assessed to have minimal heritage or amenity values and when the removal is authorised by required permits, including an archaeological authority under the Historic Places Act 1993; or*
 - (viii) restoring cultural landscape features; or*
 - (ix) redesign of structures that interfere with ecosystem processes; or*
 - (x) decommissioning or restoring historic landfill and other contaminated sites which are, or have the potential to, leach material into the coastal marine area.*

Policy 15_ Natural features and natural landscapes

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 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.*

Appendix 2

Regional Policy Statement for Northland (1999)

19.3 Objectives

1. *The identification of outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes and their protection of from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.*
2. *To recognise, in the identification and protection of outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes, that their values include intrinsic values of ecosystems, ecological, heritage, cultural, spiritual, and amenity aspects.*
3. *Any adverse effects of human activities on natural and physical resources are avoided, remedied or mitigated so that the qualities and values of any outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes are maintained.*

Policies

1. *To identify and classify the variety of natural features and landscapes found within the region, using a consistent methodology and consultation with landowners, tangata whenua and community groups, to define which natural features and landscapes are of outstanding value.*
2. *To ensure protection of outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes, particularly those important to the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, by avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects from inappropriate subdivision use and development, which may include activities such as earthworks, structures and vegetation clearance.*
4. *To recognise and provide for outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes and associated intrinsic values of ecosystems, and for heritage, ecological, cultural, spiritual and amenity values.*
5. *To recognise and provide for the protection of outstanding landscapes by avoiding those effects of subdivision, use and development which adversely impact on the integrity of an outstanding landscape unit.*
6. *To recognise that productive uses, such as farming and forestry, do occur within some outstanding landscape units.*

2.2.3 Regional Coastal Plan (1994)

Section 7.4

1. *In assessing the actual and potential effects of an activity to recognise that all parts of Northland's coastal marine area have some degree of natural character which requires protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.*

2. *As far as reasonably practicable to avoid the adverse environmental effects including cumulative effects of subdivision, use and development on those qualities which collectively make up the natural character of the coastal marine area including:*
- (a) natural water and sediment movement patterns*
 - (b) landscapes and associated natural features*
 - (c) indigenous vegetation and the habitats of indigenous fauna*
 - (d) water quality*
 - (e) cultural heritage values, including historic places and sites of special significance to Maori,*
 - (f) air quality;*

and where avoidance is not practicable, to mitigate adverse effects and provide for remedying those effects to the extent practicable.

5. *To ensure a consistent approach to the assessment of the natural character of Northland's coastal marine area.*
6. *To promote an integrated approach to the preservation of the natural character of Northland's coastal environment as a whole.*
7. *To promote, where appropriate, the restoration and rehabilitation of the natural character of the coastal marine area where it has been significantly degraded.*

Section 8.4

1. *To recognise and provide for the protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development of outstanding landscape values, such as those identified in the landscape assessment studies that have been commissioned by district councils of the Northland region of the following areas:*
- Cape Maria van Diemen/Cape Reinga/North Cape*
 - Kokota sandspit, Parengarenga Harbour entrance*
 - Matai Bay, Cape Karikari*
 - Whangaroa Harbour entrance including Pekapeka Bay*
 - The Cavalli Islands*
 - The islands of the outer Bay of Islands*
 - The Cape Brett peninsula including Motukokako (Piercy) Island*
 - Bream Head and Mount Manaia*
 - The Poor Knights Islands*
 - Ngunguru Sandspit*
 - The Hen and Chickens Islands*
 - Mangawhai sandspit*
 - Whangape Harbour entrance*
 - Hokianga Heads*
 - Maunganui Bluff*
 - North Head, Kaipara Harbour entrance*