

# Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

	Unit name – <b>RUAKAKA FOREST AND REMNANTS</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION</b>	
<b>Component</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Land Types</b> Northern and eastern dissected ranges; high relief land type	Visible as an elevated vegetated landform, the unit forms a recognisable feature within the landscape and one of a number of similar elevated landform features which contributes to the character of the lower part of the region.
<b>Geology</b> (including geopreservation sites)	Steep hill country with deeply incised valleys and gullies; predominantly underlain by Mesozoic greywacke (Waipapa Terrane), but with small areas of Miocene sandy mudstone (Waitemata Group).
<b>Soil Types</b>	The predominant soil type within the unit is Rangiora clay, clay loam and stony clay loam whilst on the northern slopes Waikere silty loam and Okara clay and silty clay predominates. An area of Rangiora silty clay loam is evident on the north western slopes.
<b>Ecology</b> (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	<p>Identified in the Waipu Ecological District PNAP report as Q07/121 (Ruakaka Forest) and comprises 1,653.4 ha of forest, 5.9 ha of shrubland, and 39.9 ha of wetland).</p> <p>It appears that all indigenous vegetation within Ruakaka Forest is secondary in origin, varying in age from decade-old shrublands to c. 150–200 year-old forest. The major ecological unit is kanuka–rimu–tanekaha forest with frequent kauri (a), which occurs over large areas of broad ridges and moderately to steeply sloping terrain, generally with a northern aspect.</p> <p>Ruakaka Forest is the second largest contiguous area of indigenous forest in the ED (after Mareretu Forest Q08/220). Wilson's Dam is the largest freshwater body in the ED, though it has only recently been created and indigenous fauna are not yet well established. Except for the dam (which is constructed) all of the ecological units are representative individually of their types. When considered collectively the different ecological units are representative of a secondary forest sequence on greywacke and sandy mudstone. Several threatened and regionally significant species have been recorded here (four regionally significant plant species—maire tawake, gully tree fern, tree fuchsia, and hard beech; five threatened fauna species—kukupu, longfin eel, shortjaw kokopu, kauri snail, and North Island kaka; and two regionally significant fauna species—tomtit and banded kokopu). Feral browsing animals, pigs and stock are present and there are several localised weed infestations, e.g. Mexican fireweed and mistflower (SSBI Q07/H055). 442 ha is within McKenzies of Limestone Hill Park Scenic Reserve and Pohuenui Scenic Reserve (DOC-administered) collectively cover 442 ha of the site, and 294.3 ha lie within the Ruakaka Forest Conservation Area.</p>
<b>Archaeological sites</b>	None known.
<b>Heritage Landscapes</b>	None known.

## Landscape characterisation

(including the identification of any specific characteristics)

Forming the a part of the northern end of the 'horseshoe' of largely vegetated elevated land, that curves inland from Bream Tail on the eastern coast up to the Takahiwai Range on the southern side of Whangarei Harbour, the Ruakaka Range is part of a representative sequence of ranges that typifies the Northland landscape and is a repeated theme evident when travelling north along State Highway 1.

Viewed from the State Highway, this sequence of forested ranges is visible as a backdrop of bush clad hills to the west. These hills are at their most evident when most proximate – as the Mereretu Range to the south, and as the Ruakaka Forest.

The forest covers some 1,700 ha in area and is largely contiguous although fragmented on its margins. The forest comprises two main areas. Kukumui is the high point of the northern portion at 262 m. A southern area, which rises to a maximum height of some 264 m, is linked by a narrow and fragmented area of vegetation to the south of Wilsons Dam.

The southern portion of the forest possesses a large area of contiguous forest, although exotic forestry at its western end, and the Mountfield Road Quarry on its southern edge have degraded landscape values.

The northern portion is the larger and less fragmented of the two areas. Its western end forms the headwaters of the Waipapa Stream, which eventually flows into the Ruakaka River. The extreme eastern end contains the catchment of Wilsons Dam, a relatively recently constructed dam which forms part of the water source for Whangarei.

## EVALUATION

Criteria	Rank	Comment
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### Natural Science Factors

<b>Representativeness</b> 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.	<b>5</b>	The landscape is strongly representative of the sequence of ranges vegetated with native forest that occurs between the Brynderwyns and Takahiwai Range. These features characterise the landscape within this part of the region, and are representative of Northland as a whole.
<b>Rarity</b> Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.	<b>5</b>	Whilst a number of examples of this land type exist, the strength lies partly in the repeated occurrence within the region. They are characteristic of Northland and rare in a national sense.

### Aesthetic Values

<b>Coherence</b> 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.	<b>4</b>	The main body of the range displays a high level of coherence, with the forest clearly reflecting and emphasizing the underlying landform. The vegetation within north east part of the ranges is more fragmented, however the natural patterns still display a level of coherence where vegetation has been retained on steeper valley sides and within gullies.
<b>Diversity &amp; Complexity</b> The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.	<b>5</b>	Detailed and vegetated skyline visible from a wide catchment.  Convoluted site slopes with multitude of minor catchments. and a diverse ecology.
<b>Vividness</b> 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.	<b>5</b>	The unit has a scale that draws the eye and forms a dominant backdrop to views from the coast. This characteristic is heightened due to the presence of a contiguous covering of native forest, the dark hue of which contrasts with the surrounding undulating pastoral landscape.

<p><b>Naturalness</b> How affected by human activity is the landscape? Does human activity intrude on the landscape? Eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of buildings and associated built development.</li> <li>• Presence of infrastructure services.</li> <li>• Extent of indigenous forest cover.</li> <li>• Homogeneity of exotic vegetation.</li> <li>• Presence / extent of modified agricultural land use.</li> <li>• Strength of natural processes / ecological patterns.</li> <li>• Unmodified and legible physical relief and landform.</li> <li>• Presence of water.</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	<p>The majority of the landscape displays a high level of naturalness with minimal evident human activity. Past clearance for agriculture is evidenced by the diversity of the kanuka forest, but the contiguous character of the forest lends the ranges a high level of natural character when viewed from the southern quadrants.</p> <p>Fragmentation of the vegetation on the margins of the unit,, and particularly on the margins of the southern portion tends to diminish the apparent naturalness, but this modification is not readily apparent from the majority of the main public viewpoints.</p> <p>Vegetation types and patterns are clearly representative of topography, drainage patterns and slope aspect, and this suggests a high level of strength of natural processes.</p>
<p><b>Intactness</b> Natural systems are intact and aesthetically coherent and do not display significant visual signs of human modification, intervention or manipulation, visually intact and highly aesthetic natural landscapes.</p>	<b>4</b>	<p>The main body of the landscape area displays a high level of intactness.</p>
<b>Experiential Values</b>		
<p><b>Expressiveness</b> The 'legibility' of the landscape. Natural features clearly demonstrate the natural processes that formed them.</p>	<b>4</b>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Sensory qualities</b> (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).</p>	<b>3</b>	<p>The ranges form a dominant and ever present skyline backdrop to the wider landscape to the east. For individuals living in close proximity to the ranges they form an island of fauna that influences activity in the surrounding area.</p>
<p><b>Transient Values</b> 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.</p>	<b>3</b>	<p>Strongly influenced by light and weather conditions, although light conditions on the southern side tend to be more muted in scope. Ridges create extremely distinctive silhouettes during dawn and dusk. Seasonal influences of flowering trees and other plants.</p>
<p><b>Remoteness / Wildness</b> Does the landscape display a wilderness character, remote from and untouched by human presence? Eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of remoteness</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Distance from built development</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>	<p>The roading network in the area provides reasonably easy access around the range, and the prevailing sense from the margins is of a rural landscape. A greater sense of remoteness can be gained from within the forest where its scale and elevation provide a sense of separation from the surrounding rural landscape.</p>
<p><b>Shared and recognised values</b> 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.</p>	<b>3</b>	<p>The ranges tend to be less widely recognised than the Brynderwyn ranges to the south but form part of a wider sequence of elevated and vegetated landscape features.</p>
<p><b>Spiritual, cultural and historical associations</b> Natural features and landscapes can be clearly and widely known and influenced by their connection to the spiritual, cultural and historical valued in the</p>		<p>Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period.</p>

<p>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.</p>		
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Rank scale between 1 (low) and 5 (high)

<b>Land Types</b>
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



Ruakaka Forest and Wilsons Dam from east



Ruakaka Forest from north east