

Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

	Unit name – TAUROA PENINSULA DUNEFILED & COASTAL FLANK
DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION	
Component	Comment
Land Types (refer to list overleaf) Beach Dune complex Reefs and islands Steep hills; moderate to high relief Watercourses	<p>Extensive areas of dunefield, much of it active and unvegetated. Several streams draining from inland.</p> <p>Expansive sandy coast frequently exposed to high wave energy. Sand deposits run inland to bank against steeper volcanic origin land that in turn transitions to the substantial plateau occupied by the Ahipara gumfields.</p>
Geology (including geopreservation sites)	<p>More elevated land based upon allochthonous Tangihua volcanic, ophiolitic rock overlaid to the west by substantial volumes and areas of Pleistocene and Holocene dune sand.</p> <p>NZ Geopres. Inventory: Ahipara gumfield relics – the best preserved area of remains relating to kauri gum digging and processing.</p>
Soil Types	Te Kopuru sand; Tangitiki sandy loam and sand; Mangonui clay.
Ecology (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	<p>The Ahipara Ecological District contains one of the largest areas of relatively natural dunelands remaining in New Zealand, with large expanses of open sand. The foredunes are dominated by spinifex with native sedge, knobby clubrush, and pohuehue. Pingao occurs in isolated patches. In many areas marram, lupin, kikuyu and other exotic species occur also. Coastal toetoe is common.</p> <p>Manuka-kanuka shrubland occurs on areas of consolidated sands. Cabbage tree, flax and coastal toetoe are common, with occasional puriri, lancewood and kowhai. Within these shrublands, divaricating shrubs, both forms of mingimingi, broom, pohuehue, and sedge.</p> <p>Inland rocky outcrops support rengarenga lily, <i>Astelia</i>, flax, <i>Gahnia</i> and <i>Machaerina sinclairii</i>.</p> <p>Duneland ecosystems are nationally uncommon, especially on this scale. The coastal manuka shrublands and monocotyledonous associations on the rock outcrops constitute assemblages verging on the unique. Some parts have been heavily modified by ranging stock and off-road vehicles.</p> <p>Gumlands characterise the majority of the habitat on the Ahipara Uplands and are dominated by manuka up to 1 m tall. Noteworthy plants in poorly drained areas include the vulnerable <i>Lycopodium serpentinum</i> and the uncommon bladderwort <i>Utricularia delicatula</i>. Indigenous orchids also feature, including two threatened species.</p>
Archaeological sites	Includes pa, terraces and midden (archaic) on the plateau edge and coastal sands. Maungatapere, Rokika and Apungi Pa on elevated land within the unit. Recorded archaeological sites are numerous, being positioned primarily along the foredune and backdune areas, and in relation to the gumfields. Few are noted inland of the line prescribed by the positions of the pa listed above.
Heritage Landscapes	Ahipara gumfields are acknowledged by Historic Reserve status.

Landscape characterisation

(including the identification of any specific characteristics)

This extensive area of coastal landscape extends from just south of Tauroa Point down to the mouth of Herekino Harbour, and projects inland to incorporate the Ahipara Gumfields. The two most graphic components are the western dunefields and the extensive inclined plateau of the gumfields.

The dunes are highly active and mobile, the influence of prevailing southerly quarter winds graphically laid across the land, particularly across the neck of the Tauroa peninsula, where the most extensive areas of exposed sand reach across the landform and spill into the Ahipara Bay catchment. Those elevated masses of sand emerging through surrounding vegetation then become a striking feature of the peninsula when seen from Ahipara and some distance up 90 Mile Beach. A large extent of similar volumes of exposed sand continues a little further south before the dunefield narrows when the upland plateau pushes west to more closely meet the coast.

An interesting matrix of primarily indigenous vegetation lays across this varied terrain. Dunefield associations bind parts of the foredune and backdune sequence, including windshorne manuka, kanuka and mingimingi that is little more than knee high. Inland, those areas that aren't mobile are colonised primarily by manuka-dominant shrubland, with more specific associations on rocky outcrops and pockets of coastal hardwood species lying within more sheltered valleys and gullies that cut back into the inclined gumfield plateau.

Ahipara Gumfields, an historic area and substantially modified area associated with hand extraction of kauri gum in the late 1800's and early 1900's, is also distinctive in visual and ecological terms. Extensive extraction workings, repeated burning and underlying podzolised soils result in an area that is impoverished and poorly drained. This has led to a cover of predominantly stunted manuka, little more than a metre high, with other components of the vegetation being species that favour wet soils and low nutrient regimes. The landscape that results is an almost stark, simple place, with limited topographic diversity and a consistent vegetation cover. The windswept starkness and inclined plateau landform character of this stunted shrubland makes it both rare and very distinctive, and a candidate for a landscape unit of its own. Equally, it can be seen as part of a geophysical continuum that runs inland of the west coast shoreline.

This landscape is generally quite inaccessible. Gumfields Road cuts partway through those fields, but appears to be little travelled. Tracks through the gumfields are used by quad bikes, whilst others reach the area by 4WD around the coast from Tauroa Point. Once again, numbers are expected to be limited.

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.	5	Highly distinctive, with every part of the landscape being both evocative and representative of local conditions and ecologies.
Rarity Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.	4	Rare, particularly the gumfields component. Similar dunefield areas are found around Te Paki and the Hokianga mouth, but are uncommon on a regional level and rare nationally.
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	Highly cohesive, with landscape character serving as a direct reflection of underlying and climatic influences, both natural and cultural.
Diversity & Complexity The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.	5	One of the most diverse landscapes in Northland, containing a microcosm of several types and numerous ecological assemblages. Despite that variety, the resulting landscape remains very cohesive and legible.

Vividness Natural features and landscape are widely recognized 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.	5	Extremely distinct and vivid. Whilst it is likely that the local community has a high level of awareness of this landscape, limited accessibility means that it is unlikely to be known by a wider sector.
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. 	5	Highly natural and expressive of functional natural influences and processes. Very limited development confined to a road, some limited buildings and access tracks, and areas of pasture associated with gumfields land. Whilst the gumfields can be seen as hugely disturbed and modified as a result of past activities, the recovery of those areas into a “new ecology” has that ecological type taking on its own natural dynamic and responses. As a “big landscape”, the powerful, broad forms of the terrain are seen as intact and legible.
Intactness 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.	5	Putting aside the cultural disturbance discussed above, this unit is very intact and coherent.
Experiential Values		
Expressiveness The ‘legibility’ of the landscape. Natural features clearly demonstrate the natural processes that formed them.	5	Very graphic and expressive, one of the most clear collectives of various ecological and physical responses to natural forces and processes.
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).	5	A richly evocative landscape that brings strong sensory responses. Sounds and salt spray of the west coast shore and dunefield. Very exposed and rugged generally.
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.	5	Highly responsive to sea conditions (which are typically quite rough) and light conditions emphasizing the contrast between the dark colours and coarse textures of native shrubland or forest, and the highly reflective nature of the active sand dunes.
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 	5	The majority of this area is difficult to access and lightly used. Brings a strong sense of remoteness, particularly in the western part away from the road and few buildings found on the gumfields land.
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.	3	Thought to be little visited due to access issues. Local people are thought to know of this area and that influences perception of the context of Ahipara.
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. 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.	5	Very strong associative values connecting Maori and European migrants to the gumfields – one of the early economic and social drivers of upper Northland. Pre colonial use of this area is reflected by archaeological records and the presence of a number of pa. Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period
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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







