

# Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

	Unit name – <b>OMAHUTA / PUKETI BUSHLANDS</b>
DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION	
Component	Comment
<b>Land Types</b> (refer to list overleaf)  Ranges; high relief	An elevated landmass, dissected and with a complex catchment system, much of it draining into the Mangapa / Waipapa River that runs centrally through the unit and falls to the headwaters of the Hokianga. The western segment of the Omahuta Forest drains more directly to the Hokianga via a number of much smaller streams.  The highest point of this ONL reaches 560m, with numerous lesser ridges and subtle apexes ascending to between 300m and 500m.
<b>Geology</b> (including geopreservation sites)	Dissected horst of Waipapa Group greywacke and minor basalt, capped by outliers of Te Kuiti Group calcareous mudstone and glauconitic sandstone, Mangakahia Complex mudstone and Kerikeri Volcanics basalt flows.
<b>Soil Types</b>	Te Ranga steepland soils, clay loam and sandy clay loam prevails. A belt of Rangiora clay, clay loam and silty clay loam runs across the top of the unit. Small areas of Otangaroa clay and sandy clay loam lie near the eastern edge of the unit.
<b>Ecology</b> (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	A very large and complex area involving some 27 ecological units.  At more than 21,000 ha, this forest tract is the second largest but most intact forested habitat in the Eastern Northland Ecological Region. With over 360 indigenous species of plants, this forest is one of the most diverse in New Zealand. It supports five species of threatened plants, three species of local distribution, one endemic and two plant species at their northern limits as well as nine threatened fauna species and several others which are endemic, or regionally significant.  The mature kauri forest remnants are especially important in that less than 1% of the original cover of this forest type is left (Northland CMS). The kauri-hard beech association in the Pukekohe Stream area is a rare forest type in Northland. The lowland mixed kauri forest is one of the best remaining examples of this type.  Omahuta is recognised as a regionally important soils site due to the intact nature of many soil:vegetation associations (and related parent material)
<b>Archaeological sites</b>	Very limited presence of recorded sites over the majority of the unit. A small concentration of sites is found immediately to the north of the ONL near Te Rotomanoao. A small string of sites is located near Borneo Creek on the western side of Omahuta Forest, an area that also has one of the few pa in the unit.
<b>Heritage Landscapes</b>	History of kauri and other native timber species being extracted across most of this area.

## Landscape characterisation

(including the identification of any specific characteristics)

An extensive area in excess of 20,000ha that is topographically complex, elevated and rugged. On its eastern side, inland of Kerikeri, the adjacent land rises up steadily, so the scale of this landform is not evident. From the lower terrain near Kaeo and through the Waihou Valley, the topography of this unit is seen as more imposing and majestic.

Whilst roads skirt the margins of this landscape, and the lightly travelled Waiare and Omataroa Ridge road pass through parts of Puketi Forest, the access points to this substantial unit are remarkably limited. The Manginangina Scenic Reserve kauri walk is well-known and frequently visited, particularly by tourists. This facility provides the opportunity to experience a grove of substantial kauri, with an impressive, wet forest understorey. A similar grove has vehicle access at the opposite end of the unit, coming off of Omahuta Road, but this is a more remote and little visited location.

The Waipapa River's emergence through the gorge that exits near Forest Road is dramatic, very natural and features the stony bottomed river – a relatively unusual occurrence in northland – against the backdrop of the rising, bushclad hills.

The forest range acts as a backdrop to a number of small, rural communities, particularly through the Waihou Valley. Parts of the unit are interrupted by pockets and belts of pine forest, but the majority of the ONL is strongly indigenous in its character and features areas of highly diverse and lofty forest of varying compositions. The majority of this unit is in conservation estate, but it includes some areas in private ownership around the margins and outer flanks.

## EVALUATION

Criteria	Rank	Comment
<b>Natural Science Factors</b>		
<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.	5	Strongly related to Northland's identity as one of the primary strongholds of kauri forest. Has a more detailed local contribution through a range of ecological values and a habitat for a range of vulnerable or threatened species.
<b>Rarity</b> Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.	5	One of the few areas remaining with substantial kauri groves, along with a range of other characteristics such as very high species diversity and a number of special soil / vegetation associations.
<b>Aesthetic Values</b>		
<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.	4	Despite containing a range of ecological types, these merge seamlessly and subtly. Contains a few remaining pockets of pine, and some coniferous shelterbelts, that are clearly disparate with the prevailing indigenous character.
<b>Diversity &amp; Complexity</b> The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.	5	High levels of diversity recorded through ecological assessment and these are reflected by the visual characteristics of the unit.
<b>Vividness</b> 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.	4	This ONL has a strong identity, especially when seen from the south as a wider entity. Public access into some of the most mature groves allows people to appreciate the scale and complexity of the forest; an experience that is very evocative and memorable.

<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>	5	<p>Almost entirely free of buildings, roads and infrastructure.</p> <p>Indigenous forest and shrubland cover is almost entire and often features a high measure of canopy diversity.</p> <p>Natural processes, primarily in terms of the dynamics of the forest ecology and responses of the draining streams and rivers to weather conditions of the time, appear to be largely function.</p> <p>Landform, whilst not exceptional diverse, is imposing and predominantly spared of modification.</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>	5	<p>Forest has predominantly advanced as a second-growth phase to a point where various ecological units are discrete and functional, with high levels of diversity.</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>	5	<p>The covering of forest, with its developed complexity, is a reflection of underlying soils, geology, drainage, aspect and elevation. Underlying geomorphology and expression of those materials and processes is therefore subtly translated through its vegetative cover.</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>	4	<p>The forest and the underlying terrain influence a surrounding area, particularly to the south and west. In these areas people have a sense of its presence, but not the detail of its composition. The richest sensory experience comes from entering the forest, particularly the kauri groves, to witness the buffered temperature, air humidity, scents, sounds and scale of the forest. Local tourism operators are now providing services to visit the forest during the day and the night to experience those aspects.</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>	3	<p>These are subtle and suppressed. The forest buffers changes and extremes through its composition and structure, which in turn allows for heightened diversity and aids the endurance of the composite species.</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>	4	<p>Whilst the margins of the forest range and road corridors are somewhat accessible, the core areas are much less available due to limited tracks and the ruggedness of terrain and forest cover. As such, much of the range has a strong sense of wilderness, despite relative proximity to settled areas.</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>	4	<p>A well known forest area within Northland and becoming increasingly accessed by international and domestic travelers. One of the few places to gain easy contact with groves of mature kauri.</p>

<p><b>Spiritual, cultural and historical associations</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>***</p>	<p>Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period.</p> <p>History of harvesting and timber-based commerce. Now the focus of an increasingly energetic, community-driven pest control and biodiversity effort.</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**



