

# Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

	Unit name – <b>NGUNGURU SANDSPIT</b>
DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION	
Component	Comment
<b>Land Types</b> Sandspit land type Dunes land type	The spit is of a dramatic scale that is best appreciated from within the unit or from elevated locations to the north and south. It creates shelter for the Ngunguru Estuary which contrasts markedly with the exposure of the open ocean beach on its eastern side.
<b>Geology</b> (including geopreservation sites)	Holocene sandspit at the mouth of Ngunguru Estuary, comprising a sand beach and foredune on the seaward side, and dune and deflation areas to landwards.  The sandspit is a site of regional geological significance, and is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an excellent example of an unmodified sand barrier beach and dune field developed between a tidal estuary and a broad open bay,</li> <li>• a significant example of a rapidly disappearing coastal feature (Kenny &amp; Hayward 1996).</li> </ul>
<b>Soil Types</b>	The unit is predominantly mobile sand, although a pocket of Marsden sand is recorded at the northern end.
<b>Ecology</b> (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	The sandspit is identified in the Whangaruru Ecological District PNAP report as Q06/102. The report ranks the feature as a Level 1 site with 75 ha of dunelands, 16 ha of shrubland and 4 ha of estuary.  The site provides habitat for a high diversity of bird species, including many threatened species. It is a breeding site for both northern NZ dotterel and variable oystercatcher, both of which face a reduction in their habitat due to pressure from coastal development. Ngunguru Sandspit supports the largest population of <i>Succinea archeyi</i> in the Ecological District, and the third largest population of this species in New Zealand. It also supports other threatened invertebrates, and threatened and regionally significant plants.  The Ngunguru Sandspit is an example of a habitat type, which is now very rare both in Northland and nationally, and is one of the least modified sandspits remaining in private ownership. Its ecological value is further increased by its proximity to other significant natural areas, and its continuity with coastal forest at site Q06/101.  Representative site for coastal sandfield type.
<b>Archaeological sites</b>	Legends tell that the waka Tūnui-ā-rangi, which brought Ngāi Tāhuhu to New Zealand, visited Ngunguru on its way from the Bay of Islands to Whangarei. The area was named by Puhi, captain of another waka, Mataatua.  In pre-European times, there was a substantial Māori population in the area. The Ngunguru sandspit was the scene of a battle between southern tribes and Te Waiariki in 1838.
<b>Heritage Landscapes</b>	The Ngunguru area has a long history of both Maori and European settlement.

## Landscape characterisation

(including the identification of any specific characteristics)

Sandspits are created by the accumulation of sand as it moves along the coast by tidal movements. With the Ngunguru spit, as with the spit at Waipu and Whananaki, the feature has developed at the mouth of a river, forcing the river northwards to create a new river mouth.

The spit at Ngunguru largely retains its natural form with the majority of the dune formations being intact and the vegetation largely indigenous, although scattered exotic trees – wilding pines – and other weeds are present in places. The scale of the spit is striking, being some 2.0 km in length and 300 m wide at its narrowest point.

The beach on the ocean side of the spit presents a remote and wild character due to the difficulties of access, whilst the estuary side of the spit is influenced by the proximity of the Ngunguru settlement and activity on the river.

At the landward end of the spit, the vegetated and elevated form of Whakareora adds to the sense of naturalness and 'grounds' and contains the feature.

## 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	The spit is a recognizable element and characterises the settlement of Ngunguru. It displays strongly endemic associations in relation to the vegetation and fauna present.
<b>Rarity</b> Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.	4	The Ngunguru spit is one of four spit features of any scale on the east coast of northland. Along with the Mangawhai spit it represents the largest and least modified example of a spit.
<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.	5	The lack of modification, retention of dune formations and vegetation lends the feature a high level of coherence. The largely unmodified presence of the Whakareora at the southern end of the spit, and its associated forested context contributes to the high level of coherence.
<b>Diversity &amp; Complexity</b> The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.	5	The spit displays a high level of diversity and complexity in terms of its ecological values.
<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.	5	Highly visible across the estuary from Ngunguru, the spit is an essential component of the character of the settlement. Although appearing as a low profile sand feature, akin to dunefields from the west, viewed from elevated locations to the north and north west from where the scale of the spit is apparent, it is highly vivid.  Similarly, the experience of walking on the feature creates a memorable impression – primarily of its scale and naturalness.
<b>Naturalness</b> How affected by human activity is the landscape? Does human activity intrude on the landscape? Eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of buildings and associated built development.</li> </ul>	4	The feature retains a high level of naturalness, although scattered wilding pines are evident singly and in clusters. No built development is visible on the spit itself with only small buildings being visible at the foot on low lying ground. These buildings tend not to be highly visible.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>		The feature demonstrates intact and strong natural processes and an unmodified and legible topography.
<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.	<b>4</b>	The spit does not display signs of human modification and appears visually intact.

### Experiential Values

<b>Expressiveness</b> The 'legibility' of the landscape. Natural features clearly demonstrate the natural processes that formed them.	<b>5</b>	Being formed and continually modified by coastal processes, the spit clearly demonstrates the natural processes which led to its formation.
<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).	<b>5</b>	Although difficult to access other than by boat, the spit offers a variety of sensory experiences. Within the main body of the spit, the sand dunes, screen views of the adjoining settlement and create shelter from the wind. The silence and stillness provided by the dunes contrasts with the exposure and noise of the ocean beach.
<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.	<b>3</b>	Movement and migratory activities of sea birds contribute to the transitory values of the spit, as well as the daily rhythms of the tides and the changes resulting from the weather.

<b>Remoteness / Wildness</b> Does the landscape display a wilderness character, remote from and untouched by human presence? Eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of remoteness</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Distance from built development</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>	Despite its proximity to the Ngunguru settlement, the spit can provide the illusion of a high level of remoteness and wildness, primarily due to the separation provided by the river, and lack of access from the south.
<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.	<b>5</b>	The spit is widely valued and recognised as an important landscape feature worthy of protection. Recent and historic attempts to develop the spit has galvanized the community into opposing development.
<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 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.	<b>5</b>	Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period.  The spit is highly valued by the local community for in terms of its spiritual, historical, cultural and ecological 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



Ngunguru Sandspit