

# Northland Regional Landscape Assessment Worksheet

	Unit name – NORTH HEAD COAST AND WESTERN DUNE LAKES
DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISATION	
Component	Comment
<b>Land Types</b> (refer to list overleaf)  Dune complex Lakes and water bodies	Cluster of dune lakes within an extensive sand dune complex.
<b>Geology</b> (including geopreservation sites)	<p>Holocene beach sands, transverse and parabolic sand dunes, and interdune wetlands; coastal cliffs eroded in mid-late Pleistocene (Karioitahi Group) consolidated dune sand at Kaipara North Head.</p> <p>The Northland Geopreservation Inventory identifies the Pouto sand dunes as being an excellent, unmodified example of the North Kaipara Head active dunelands system. It classifies the feature as a moderately well defined landform of scientific/educational and scenic value.</p>
<b>Soil Types</b>	The unit is entirely overlain by drifting and recently stabilized sands.
<b>Ecology</b> (including protected vegetation / features, PNAP Level 1 and 2 sites)	<p>Identified in the Kaipara Ecological District PNAP report as P09/001 (Western coast: Pouto dune system), this Level 1 site is 5798 ha in area. It comprises a range of vegetation types including sandfield, kanuka shrubland and forest, freshwater wetland and reedland, pohuehue vineland.</p> <p>The Pouto dune system is identified as being of extremely high national and international importance, representing the best remaining example of a large, relatively unmodified sand dune system. It supports an impressive range of threatened plant and animal species, including a nationally and regionally important populations of northern New Zealand dotterel and significant populations of grey duck.</p> <p>The PNAP report notes the following significant flora. The Pouto dune system is the Northland stronghold of marsh fern (Gradual Decline) (including AK 252344) and sand spikesedge (Gradual Decline) (including 2003, AK 284635). Pingao, recorded during this survey, also in Gradual Decline. <i>Gunnera dentata</i> (Cameron et al. 2001), <i>G. prorepens</i> (2000, AK 248035), <i>Myriophyllum votschii</i> (including AK 252641), <i>Glossostigma elatinoides</i> (Lake Mokeno: Wells et al. 2007). Ladies' tresses (2001, AK 252671), <i>Psilotum nudum</i> (1996, AK 228957), rohutu (1987, AK 180267), <i>Hebe diosmifolia</i> (1987, AK 180253), thick-leaved coprosma, and sand coprosma, both recorded during this survey, are all Regionally Significant.</p> <p>A number of significant fauna species have also been identified within the site. These include: Northern dunes P09 015 467: Northern New Zealand dotterel (Nationally Vulnerable), Caspian tern (Nationally Vulnerable), banded dotterel (Gradual Decline), variable oystercatcher (Regionally Significant), Australasian bittern (Nationally Endangered), grey duck (Nationally Endangered) and Wrybill.</p>
<b>Archaeological sites</b>	Not known.

Heritage Landscapes	Not known.
<p><b>Landscape characterisation</b> (including the identification of any specific characteristics)</p> <p>In the wider context, this vast dune system stretches from the small un-named lakes in the north to Pouto Lighthouse at North Kaipara Head in the south. It is bordered by plantation and pasture in the east and by the Tasman Sea in the west. Between the semi-consolidated rear dunes to the west and the largely afforested older consolidated dunes to the east lies a string of substantial lakes and associated wetlands, the largest of which is Lake Mokeno.</p> <p>The unit comprises the coastal duneland landscape at the apex of North Head on its western side, and is bounded by pine plantations to the east. It is between half a kilometre and two kilometres in width although on the western edge, the unit widens to an average of some three kilometres including lakes Whakanene, Mokeno and Karaka.</p> <p>Inaccessisble and with a strongly remote character, the unit is very exposed along its western edge, with a spacious character. This spaciousness is due to most of the unit lacking the coastal bank of the beach to the north. Instead the predominant character is formed by the extensive duneland and low shrubland vegetation.</p> <p>Behind the mobile dunefield lies the largest three dune lakes and a number of smaller freshwater lakes. Surrounding these features is an extensive area of wetland supporting indigenous swampland vegetation.</p> <p>Wetlands occur within hollows and adjacent to the lakes, their presence belied by wetland vegetation patterns.</p> <p>Lakes of varying scale are scattered through the landscape, but assume a coherent sequence. The inland lakes are larger in scale and occur on a linear pattern, dictated by the sand dune patterns. The pattern of lakes nearer the ocean reflects the curve of the beach. These lakes are more fragmented in scale with a mosaic of wetland and open water.</p> <p>Shrubland sequences within the inland areas comprising low sand dune pioneer shrubland species</p> <p>Stands of pine contrast in terms of colour and scale with the native vegetation patterns and provide a measure of enclosure that contradicts the open character of the landscape.</p>	

<b>EVALUATION</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Natural Science Factors</b>		
<p><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.</p>	<b>5</b>	A sequence of dunefields and dune lakes is found on the west coast of the North Island, in conjunction with the larger harbours – Manukau, and Hokianga. The unit is therefore highly representative of the landscape typologies of the west coast and displays a highly endemic character.
<p><b>Rarity</b> Natural features are unique or rare in the region or nationally, and few comparable examples exist.</p>	<b>5</b>	The scale of the dunefield and the number of lakes exceeds that found on the northern side of the Manukau entrance, and is rare in a national sense.
<b>Aesthetic Values</b>		
<p><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.</p>	<b>4</b>	The pattern of relic and recent dune formations, the lakes, and the patterns of vegetation are highly coherent and are clearly in harmony. Thus, the sequence of lakes sits comfortably within the dune landform and draws the eye through the landscape along that sequence.

		<p>Grazing on the coastal dunefields to the north has resulted in a degradation of the ecological character of these areas and has led to their omission from this, and the adjoining unit to the north.</p> <p>Extensive pine plantations have been established on more stabilized areas on the Pouto peninsula, and these form the eastern edge of the unit.</p>
<p><b>Diversity &amp; Complexity</b> The elements contributing to overall landscape character are diverse and complex (particularly in ecological terms) without creating disharmony.</p>	5	The unit shows a high degree of diversity and complexity with respect to natural and ecological patterns.
<p><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.</p>	5	<p>The backdune landscape is gently undulating with limited level changes and mild slopes.</p> <p>The repetition of these topographical patterns and the scale of the landscape lends the landscape a strength and simplicity that reflects the scale and simplicity of the ocean – visible as part of the horizon. Against this, the intense azure of the lakes on sunny days is very striking.</p>
<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>	4	<p>With the exception of the pine plantations, and tracks associated with that landuse, the unit retains a highly natural appearance.</p> <p>No buildings nor infrastructure services are visible.</p> <p>The duneland vegetation reflects topographical and hydrological patterns and clear seral sequences through from terrestrial vegetation to wetland marginal types are visible.</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>	4	The unit appears to be highly intact with minimal disturbance and a highly aesthetic appearance.
<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	The landscape displays a high level of dynamism by virtue of the visible sand dune processes. In addition, vegetation patterns reflect landform and hydrological patterns in a coherent way that reinforces their formative processes.
<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>	5	The proximity of the sea, and lack of shelter on the spit enables the observer to experience views and the smell of the ocean, as well as the sound of the surf. Shelter from wind is provided by dunes, and within dune hollows, the power of the wind and sound of the surf is stilled.
<p><b>Transient Values</b> The consistent and repeated occurrence of transient features that contributes to the character, qualities</p>	4	The presence of native dune plant species and native fauna lend the feature a distinct endemic character. In addition,

and values of the landscape; landscapes are widely recognised for their transient features and the contribution that these make to the landscape.		<p>the coast displays a unique NZ character.</p> <p>Cycles of roosting / nesting of native fauna, as well as migratory cycles provide a transient element to the endemic character.</p> <p>In addition, seasonal changes also contribute to the transient values of the unit.</p>
---	--	---

<p><b>Remoteness / Wildness</b></p> <p>Does the landscape display a wilderness character, remote from and untouched by human presence?</p> <p>Eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of remoteness</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Distance from built development</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>	<p>The area displays a strong sense of remoteness and naturalness.</p> <p>The site has limited accessibility and has limited numbers of visitors, although the beach is used as an access north.</p> <p>The site is some 9-10 km from Pouto, although the limited distance belies the difficulty of accessibility.</p>
<p><b>Shared and recognised values</b></p> <p>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 isolation of the unit has reduced the awareness of the community to its values, however the isolation and wild character of North Head is appreciated by the community.</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. 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>		<p>Consultation was initiated during the mapping process, but has not led to any feedback within the required period.</p>

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



View of western dune lakes



View south east to Kaipara Harbour entrance and southern tip of Pouto peninsula with western dune lakes