

Waitomo District

LANDSCAPE STUDY 2021

SEPTEMBER 2022



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Section A: Executive Summary

Waitomo District Council engaged Bridget Gilbert Landscape Architecture Limited (**BGLA**) in November 2017 to investigate and identify the Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs) and Landscapes of High Amenity Value (**LHAV**) within the Waitomo District (the '**Waitomo District Landscape Study**'). The purpose of the Waitomo District Landscape Study is to inform the forthcoming District Plan Review process, which is (amongst other considerations), intended to give effect to s6(b) of the Resource Management Act 1991 and Policy 15 of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010; and s7(c) of the Resource Management Act.

The Waitomo District Landscape Study report is structured as follows:

- Section A:** Executive Summary
- Section B:** Waitomo District Landscape Study Methodology
- Section C:** ONL Schedules and Mapping
- Section D:** LHAV Schedules and Mapping

Waitomo District ranges from the west coast from Te Maika, on Kawhia Harbour, to the north of Taharoa, to Mokau in the south and extends inland to Maniaiti / Benneydale and Mount Pureora.

The district generally corresponds to the northern portion of the King Country (named for the Māori King Tāwhiao, who lived in exile there from 1864 until the early 1880s) and takes in the distinctive 'limestone country' in and around the Waitomo Caves.

The uniqueness of the district, particularly in terms of its geology and history, together with its popularity as a recreational destination, the relatively low level of development across the district and typically low intensity farming character, results in quite varied and distinctive landscapes. They include: the highly attractive and complex landforms framing the Kawhia Harbour; the seemingly wild and remote western coastline; the dense bush-clad ranges and hills throughout the southern and western areas; the expansive swathe of rolling hill country peppered with dramatic limestone features throughout the central portion of the district; the more rolling pastoral lowlands interspersed with sculpted landforms throughout the eastern portion of the District; and the edges of the volcanic plateau throughout the far eastern margins of the district.

In summary, a total of five **ONLs** have been identified in the Waitomo District as follows:

- ONL 1 Northern Coastline
- ONL 2 Western Coast
- ONL 3 Mokau Hills
- ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai
- ONL 5 Rock Peak Bush

The land area identified as ONL amounts to 21% of the District area. Importantly, 95% of the area identified as ONL is conservation land or Significant Natural Area (**SNA**), with 5% corresponding to pastoral land. In turn, this means that 1% of the District that is in pasture cover is identified as ONL.

A total of four **LHAV** are identified in the Waitomo District as follows:

- LHAV 1 Kawhia Harbour
- LHAV 2 Awakino Gorge
- LHAV 3 Limestone Country
- LHAV 4 Rangitoto Range and Waipa River

By far the majority of the land mapped as LHAV corresponds to land in private ownership.

Figure 1 overleaf provides an overview of the location and extent of the identified ONLs and LHAVs within the Waitomo District. Detailed mapping together with a schedule of the attributes and values associated with each ONL and LHAV are attached in **Sections C** and **D** respectively.

The ONL Schedules detail the landscape attributes and values that need to be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development. The LHAV Schedules detail the attributes and values that should be maintained and enhanced.

It is acknowledged that the Waitomo District Landscape Study is the first step in developing appropriate landscape policy as part of the District Plan Review. It is envisaged that as the Council works through the plan review process, detailed site investigations may be required to verify the ONL and LHAV mapping and schedules at a finer grain.



Photograph 1: Typical character Totoro Gorge (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)

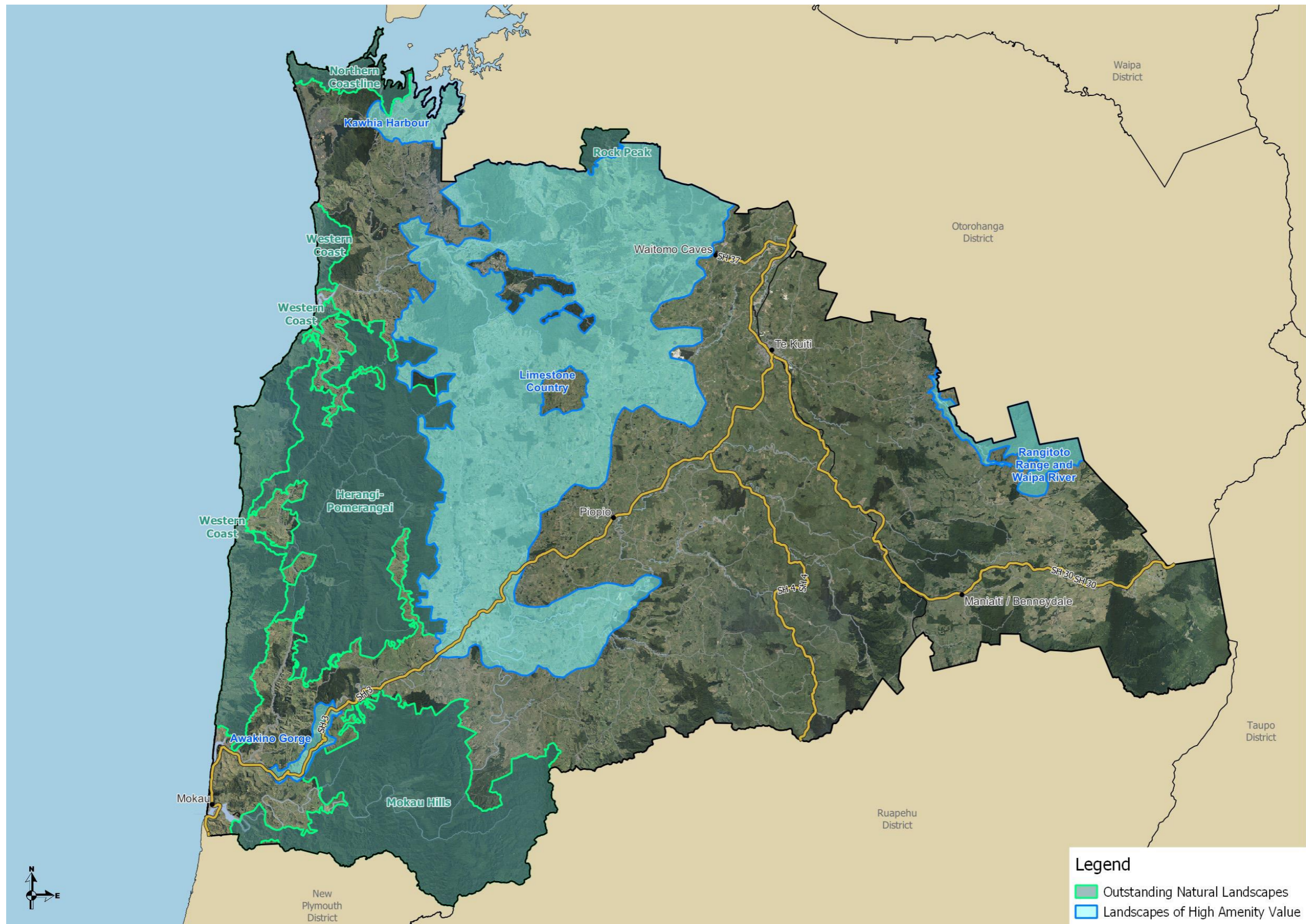


Figure 1: Overview of the location and extent of the identified ONLs and LHAVs within the Waitomo District

Section B: Introduction to the Waitomo District Landscape Study

BACKGROUND

To date, there has been no districtwide (or region wide) landscape study of the Waitomo District.

An assessment was undertaken of the Waikato Region's landscapes in 2010¹ (the Waikato Region Landscape Assessment (WRLA)). That work sought to identify Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFLs), High Value Amenity Natural Features and Landscapes (HVANFLs) and Significant Natural Landscape Features (SNLFs) throughout the Waikato Region.

One ONFL was identified within the district, coinciding with the Northern Herangi Range (ONFL3), and is mapped in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (2016) (WRPS 2016) – see Figure 2.

HVANFLs identified in the WRLA within the Waitomo District are as follows:

- Herangi Range South (HVANFL2).
- Rangitoto Range (HVANFL3).
- Parts of the Western Coastline: River Mouths, Harbours and Islands (HVANFL13) – specifically in relation to Kawhia, Marokopa, Waikawau, Awakino and Mokau.

The 'Limestone Bluffs, Outcrops and Caves in the Waitomo Area' (SNFL4) were the only SNLF identified within the District. It should be noted that the HVANFLs and SNLFs identified in the WRLA have not been included in the WRPS 2016.

The landscape assessment methodology applied in the WRLA is broadly in keeping with current landscape assessment best practice in that it considered the landscape in terms of its biophysical, perceptual and associative values.

However, the extremely large area and widely varied landscapes covered by the WRLA suggests an assessment (and methodology) that is inevitably relatively coarse grained and broad brush. The mapping in Figure 3 conveys the vastly different scale of the Waikato Region in comparison to the Waitomo District.

Further, since the time of the WRLA there have been considerable advancements in the data used to inform such studies, largely in relation to GIS datasets.

For these reasons, it has been agreed that the Waitomo District Landscape Study should comprise a landscape assessment of the district 'afresh' rather than simply adopting or 'building on' the WRLA.

This approach also provides the opportunity for the Waitomo District Landscape Study methodology to respond to relevant case law since 2010² and current landscape assessment best practice.

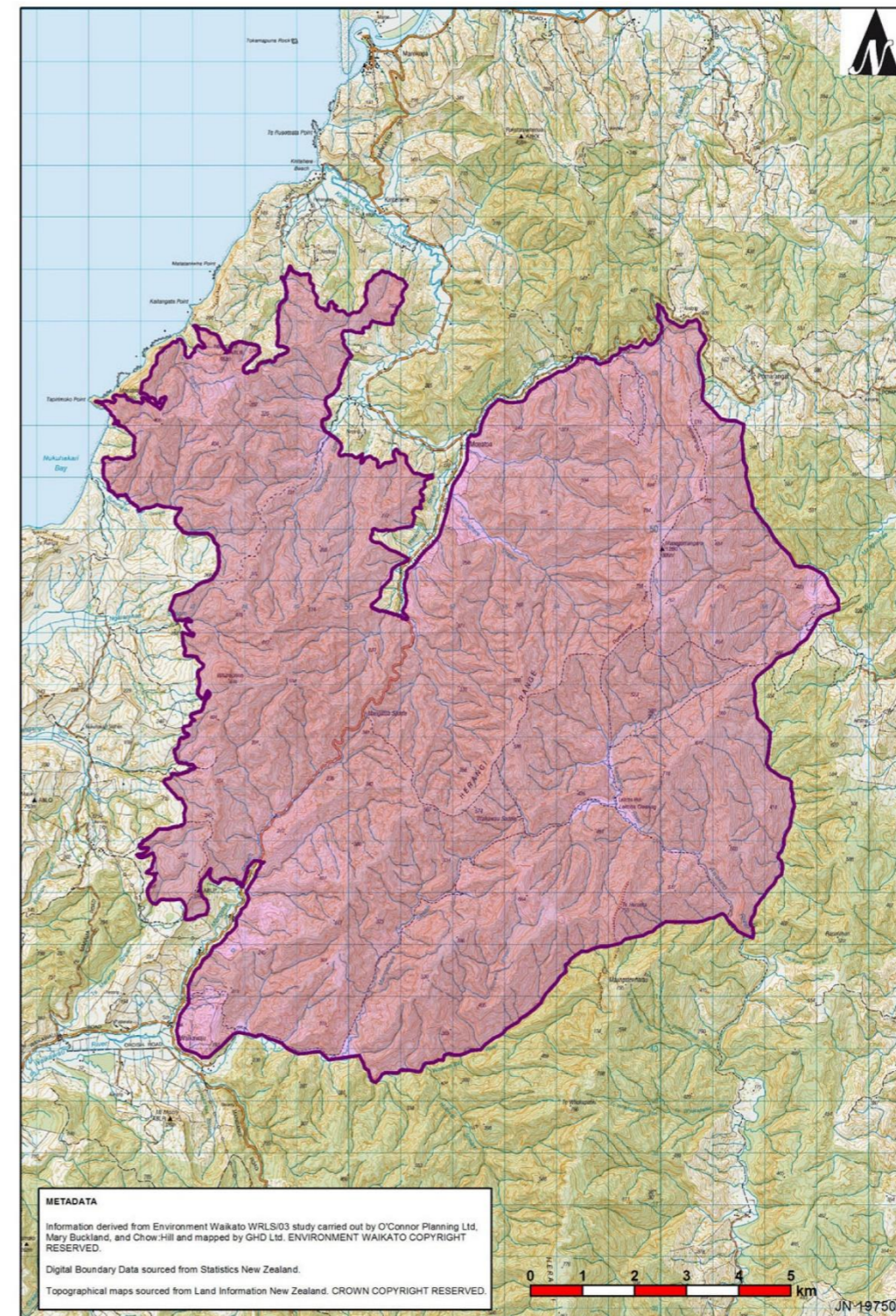


Figure 2: Waikato Regional Policy Statement (2016) ONFL 3 mapping

¹ The WRLA can be accessed via the Waikato Regional Council website <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/WRC/WRC-2019/TR201012.PDF>

² In this regard, a key Environment Court decision guiding the development of the Waitomo District Landscape Study is the Western Bay of Plenty (Matakana Island) decision (Decision No. [2017] NZEnvC 147) which includes a very useful summary of key Environment Court decisions over the last twenty years in relation to landscape matters.



Figure 3: Extent of Waitomo District within the Waikato Region

Source: <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/community/about-the-waikato-region/>

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT 'PRINCIPLES'

It is widely accepted by the Environment Court³ and landscape experts that for a landscape to rate as an ONL, three key questions need to be satisfied:

- a. Is the area a 'landscape'?
- b. Is the landscape 'natural' enough to be considered for identification as an RMA s6(b) landscape?
- c. Is the natural landscape 'outstanding'?

For the purposes of the Waitomo District Landscape Study, the following definition of 'landscape' has been adopted:

"Landscape is the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area, including human perceptions and associations."

— Source: NZILA Best Practice Note 10.1 'Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management'

This definition points to the concept of 'landscape' embracing three broad components:

- a. **Physical attributes:** The physical elements of the landscape, including its geomorphological, ecological and biological elements, buildings and settlements. This typically involves more objective and quantifiable data.
- b. **Perceptual attributes:** Sometimes referred to as the 'sensory' aspects of the landscape and involving consideration of: aesthetic characteristics; the degree of naturalness of a landscape; its memorability, legibility and expressiveness; transient matters; and experiential aspects such as smells, sounds and a sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity.
- c. **Associative attributes:** Sometimes referred to as the 'meaning' of the landscape and including: cultural; historic values; shared and recognised values; and recreational and scenic values.

The scope of this definition of 'landscape' is in keeping with the range of factors (commonly referred to as the *WESI* or *modified Pigeon Bay factors*) that have been widely accepted by the Environment Court and landscape experts to provide a useful starting point in understanding landscape values and determining the location and extent of ONLs and amenity landscapes (noting that a number of more recent Environment Court decisions have provided greater guidance on the scope and meaning of the various factors⁴). These factors are also listed in Policy 15(c) of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010, albeit with slightly different wording and the addition of reference to the presence of water and vegetation (including exotic vegetation), wild and scenic values, cultural values being identified in accordance with tikanga Māori, and the expression of cultural and spiritual values as cultural and landscape features.

Put another way, it is generally accepted that a thorough description and evaluation of landscape in terms of these three components assists in identifying 'the landscape' and answering the questions as to whether it is 'natural' and 'outstanding'.⁵

³ For example, see [2011] NZEnvC 387 (Rosehip), paragraph 74.

⁴ For example, see *Western Bay of Plenty District Council v Bay of Plenty Regional Council* [2017] NZEnvC 147.

⁵ To this end, it is noted that clearly there is a degree of overlap between many of the factors, for example 'naturalness' and 'remoteness' are both an associative and a perceptual/sensory value raising potential issues as to how the factors are 'grouped'. However overall, the

key consideration is the inclusion of a comprehensive range of factors for consideration within a landscape assessment that enable a thorough understanding of landscape values.

This tripartite approach equally assists with identifying **Amenity Landscapes**, whose values 'sit' between s6(b) landscapes, and more 'ordinary' rural landscapes.

The *Landscape Planning Guide for Peri Urban and Rural Areas* (2005) by Raewyn Peart provides a useful explanation of Amenity Landscapes and how they fit within the RMA framework. Amenity Landscapes are those which contribute to people's appreciation of the pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural or recreational attributes of an area. Landscapes which contribute to visual amenity and the quality of the environment are given special recognition under s7(c) (and 7(d)) where 'particular regard' is to be given to the 'maintenance and enhancement of amenity values' and the 'maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment'.

Unlike s6(b) ONLs, there is an expectation of some degree of change in Amenity Landscapes as land uses, technology, and settlement patterns modify over time. However, typically some changes need to be carefully managed in Amenity Landscapes to ensure the overall amenity and environmental quality of the area is maintained or enhanced.

Turning to the task of landscape assessment itself, this typically involves a two-step sequential process comprising:

- a. Landscape Characterisation; and
- b. Landscape Evaluation.



Photograph 2: Dramatic bluff landforms and sculpted valleys (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)



Photograph 3: Mangapohue Natural Bridge (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)



Photograph 4: Aerial view of limestone bluff framed rural valleys (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

Landscape Characterisation typically involves the 'land typing' of a district (or region) to identify a series of landscape character areas or **landscape character units** (LCUs). The process of landscape characterisation relies largely (although not entirely) on objective information and is intended to form the foundation for the subsequent task of landscape evaluation (which is a more subjective process).

This 'unit' approach to landscape assessment is widespread throughout New Zealand and is generally considered a pragmatic response in the description and analysis of what are often extensive, complex and highly varied areas.

Typically, LCUs display a homogeneity of characteristics such that they are distinctive from adjacent landscape areas and can be identified and mapped. However, in some circumstances the attributes are more subtle and/or common to more than one area, making it more difficult to define an LCU. In such circumstances it may be appropriate to focus on whether the landscape area can be meaningfully perceived as a particular 'landscape type'. It is important that where this approach to the identification of an LCU is applied, it is clearly transparent in the assessment.

The following definitions have been developed to help draw this distinction:

Landscape Character Types: These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern.

Landscape Character Areas: These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each will have its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type.

Source: Natural England (2014) An approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

This stage of the Landscape Study involved the mapping of the LCU areas and the preparation of LCU worksheets contained in **Appendix A: LCU Mapping and Worksheets**.

The configuration of the **LCU mapping** derives from expert landscape analysis drawing from GIS resources and field survey.

The notions of scale and context are also of importance in determining the extent of an LCU. For the Waitomo District Landscape Study, the scale of the study area and the grain of information available means that the landscape was interrogated at an approximately 1:50,000 scale within which individual features will usually form part of a broader landscape.

In general, LCU boundaries have been aligned to coincide with geomorphological features and patterns (e.g. landform, hydrological and/or vegetation features) or marked changes in land use.

Inevitably there will be debate as to where the appropriate LCU boundaries lie. However given that the primary purpose of the identification of LCUs is as a tool to enable the interrogation and understanding of landscape attributes and values at a manageable scale, where the line 'falls' becomes of lesser importance, particularly where a clear and consistent approach to describing and evaluating the landscape is employed for each LCU (as is the case in this study).

Further, it should be noted that the LCU delineation does not seek to pre-empt the identification of the outstanding or amenity landscape areas within the district as the evaluation of the landscape is a separate 'step' to landscape characterisation and description. For this reason only parts of an LCU may be identified as an ONL or Amenity Landscape and conversely, an ONL or Amenity Landscape may straddle two (or possibly more) LCUs.

The **LCU worksheets** record a consistent series of landscape descriptors that assist an understanding of the landscape character of the unit. The descriptors draw from the three broad components of landscape (ie biophysical, perceptual and

associative attributes), and focus on describing the landscape character 'as it is' rather than rating or evaluating it as a landscape or feature.

A thorough description of each LCU in terms of these three broad components sets the scene for a clear understanding of the landscape character and values associated with either all, or part of each LCU; and provides a meaningful basis for the identification of significant and important landscapes within a subsequent landscape evaluation exercise. The inevitably subjective nature of some of the landscape descriptors (for example, a description of the 'naturalness' of a unit) entails a degree of expert judgement. However, importantly, this stage of the Waitomo District Landscape Study makes no attempt to evaluate the landscape values of the unit either as a whole or in part.

A total of 10 landscape character units were identified across the district.

It should be noted that LCU do not necessarily form landscapes and conversely, there can be landscapes nested within LCUs.

In many instances the LCU displays a homogeneity of characteristics such that they are distinctive from adjacent areas and can be identified and mapped (for example, LCU 5 Herangi - Pomarangai, LCU 6 Mahoenui Valley and LCU 3 Mokau Hills).

However, in some circumstances the attributes are more subtle and/or common to more than one area, making it more difficult to define an LCU. This condition applies to much of the lower lying rolling and dissected productive rural landscape throughout the central and eastern portions of the district. In such circumstances factors such as whether the landscape can be meaningfully perceived as 'a whole' or a distinctive area in its own right were considered (for example: the 'limestone country' around Waitomo where there is a proliferation of bluff, outcrop and cave features (LCU 10 Elevated Central Hills); LCU 4 Awakino Gorge; and the margins of the central plateau with its distinctly sub alpine feel (LCU 9 Central Plateau Margins and Pureora)). In other instances, the definition of the LCU was more blurred and an approximation in a noticeable change in elevation patterns underpinned the unit delineation (for example, LCU 7 Central Rolling Lowlands and LCU 8 Eastern Hills).

LANDSCAPE EVALUATION

This stage of the Waitomo District Landscape Study focusses on expert analysis to determine the RMA s6(b) and s7(c) landscapes within the District.

This is a complex and iterative phase requiring a significant component of expert judgement by the landscape assessor, and typically including input from Council officers (planning and GIS support) and other expert disciplines. For the Waitomo District Landscape Study, 'other' expert input considered to be critical includes: geological, ecological and cultural landscape considerations.

Expert judgement in relation to **geological features and values** derives from the NZ Geopreservation Inventory and the WDC ONF Study undertaken by Dr Bruce Hayward in 2018.

Expert judgement with respect to **ecological** considerations primarily derives from the findings of the Waikato Region SNA work.

A critical aspect of understanding and evaluating associative landscape attributes and values is the integration of **Mātauranga Māori** into landscape assessment.

Landscapes, places and features can be of historical, cultural and spiritual significance to mana whenua. These areas are valued for their natural resources which sustain life. For mana whenua, it is critical to manage and protect these resources in order to fulfil the obligation of kaitiakitanga or guardianship.

In identifying the ONLs and LHAVs, Waitomo District Council discussed with mana whenua representatives whether specific values of significance or associative narratives should be recognised and recorded for each scheduled landscape.

It was the view of mana whenua that specific values of significance and associative narratives should not be recorded in the District Plan. Wider landscape settings symbolise life and the narratives of the local tribal guardians (mana whenua), as well as providing a tangible connection to ancestors, whenua and significant historical events. Landmarks and discrete features can carry deep levels of meaning and association. These settings are valued for their holistic connection to the local tribal custodians as a collective, through the generations. The particular historical and traditional associations associated with an area might relate to a place where a ritual or ceremony is performed, demark the boundary of ancestral lands or be significant in tribal oratory. These matters are sacred and integral to the proper exercise of tikanga and the maintenance of mauri.

Mana whenua representatives acknowledge the contemporary relationships that exists between local tribal custodians and these landscapes and features. This includes valuing customary resources and appreciating these areas for their naturalness, solitude and recreational opportunities. However, the role and obligation of kaitiakitanga precludes sharing the symbolism, values and significance of these sites. The narratives and sacred representations of these natural resources are taonga because they express through the physical manifestation of a place, the relationship of the local tribal custodians with the intangible.



Photograph 5: Rugged and eroded coastline (ONL 2 Western Coast)



Photograph 6: Typical character of sculpted pastoral hills and ridgelines within ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai

IS IT A 'LANDSCAPE' OR 'FEATURE'?

Addressing the first of the key questions for consideration in the identification of RMA s6(b) areas, typically, 'landscapes' display characteristics such that they are distinctive from adjacent landscapes and can be identified and mapped. Smaller landscapes may be nested within larger landscapes.

In some circumstances, the attributes are more subtle and/or common to more than one area, making it more difficult to define a 'landscape'. In such circumstances, it may be appropriate to focus on whether the landscape can be meaningfully perceived as 'a whole'. It is important that where this approach to the identification of a landscape is applied, it is transparent in the assessment.

A 'feature' typically corresponds to a distinct and clearly legible landform, physical system or exposure of geological material. A 'feature' is an entity that is generally smaller than a 'landscape'. A 'landscape' also usually displays a broader range of sensory and associative values in addition to biophysical values when compared to a 'feature'. Context will also play a role in determining whether the area is a 'feature' or 'landscape'.

In general, landscapes and features are differentiated as follows:

Landscapes are larger areas that are perceived as a whole and can include a number of features within them. Landscapes can be either experienced from within (e.g. from the road network within [LHAV 2 Awakino Gorge](#)), or seen as the whole of an outlook (e.g. looking towards the eastern flanks of [ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai](#) from SH 3). All mapped landscapes (or ONLs) have been identified relative to the Waitomo District.

Features are discrete elements within a landscape, which are generally experienced from outside the features' boundaries. Features display integrity as a whole element and can often be clearly distinguished from the surrounding landscape. Generally, features are defined by their geomorphological landform boundaries. However, in some instances, landscape features such as native bush can also play a role in defining the extent of a landscape feature.



Photograph 7: Te Maika Peninsula



Photograph 8: Dramatic coastal landforms within ONL 2 Western Coast



Photograph 9: Typical character of dense bush clad ranges, ridgelines and distinctive peaks within ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai

THRESHOLD FOR 'NATURAL'

With respect to the second of the key questions for consideration in the identification of RMA s6(b) areas, the RMA provides no specific definition or guidance as to what qualifies a landscape (or feature) in terms of its 'naturalness'. Over time, a number of Environment Court cases have endeavoured to assist in this regard, and the following comments draw from that material together with landscape expert practice.

The degree of naturalness of a landscape largely reflects the degree of human modification the landscape has undergone. Typically, there is an inverse correlation between built modification and naturalness: landscapes with a lesser degree of built modification rate more highly in terms of naturalness; and as the level of modification increases, the naturalness rating decreases.

The 'criteria' for naturalness stated in *Long Bay*⁶ include:

- a. relatively unmodified and legible physical landform and relief;
- b. the landscape being uncluttered by structures and/or obvious human influence;
- c. the presence of water (lake, river, sea);
- d. the presence of vegetation patterns (especially native vegetation) and other ecological patterns.

Further, it is widely accepted by the Environment Court and landscape experts that naturalness occurs across a continuum, from a pristine natural landscape to a cityscape.⁷ It is also generally agreed that a degree of modification does not disqualify a landscape (or feature) from consideration as an RMA s6(b) landscape on the basis of its naturalness.⁸

In *High Country Rosehip Orchards v Mackenzie District Council*,⁹ the Environment Court indicated approval for a seven-point scale of naturalness and signalled that the threshold for naturalness in relation to an ONL lay approximately at the boundary between a rating (for naturalness) of **Moderate to High** and **High** (author's emphasis added). The Waitomo District Landscape Study has adopted this approach as a 'starting point' for determining the landscapes within the District that qualify for consideration in terms of their naturalness.

Of the five ONLs recommended in this study, four having a rating for naturalness of **Very High** (**ONL 2 Western Coastline**, **ONL 3 Mokau Hills**, **ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai**, **ONL 5 Rock Peak Bush**), with the other ONL rated as having **High** naturalness values (**ONL 1 Northern Coastline**).

Of importance to note is the distinction between an evaluation of '**landscape**' naturalness (as part of a Landscape Study) and the concept of '**ecological**' naturalness (which is often mentioned within the context of RMA s6(a) Natural Character Assessment). It is widely accepted by the Environment Court and landscape experts that a landscape (or feature) may qualify in terms of naturalness for consideration under RMA s6(b), largely on the basis of the 'look' or 'appearance' of the landscape (or feature) and its degree of apparent modification. This is quite different to the 'condition' of the landscape (or feature) which largely informs an evaluation of 'ecological' naturalness.



Photograph 10: Steep coastal cliffs with narrow sandy beach and rock outcrops within ONL 2 Western Coast



Photograph 11: Typical bush character with stunted subalpine type vegetation throughout the higher ridgelines within ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai

⁶ A078/2008 [135].

⁷ For example: Upper Clutha Tracks [2010] NZEnvC 432 [61].

⁸ For example, see Western Bay of Plenty District Council [2017] NZEnvC 147 [86].

⁹ High Country Rosehip Orchards v Mackenzie DC [2011] NZEnvC 387 [93]-[101].

THRESHOLD FOR ‘OUTSTANDING’

In a similar vein to the issue of ‘naturalness’, the RMA provides no definition or guidance as to what qualifies a ‘natural landscape’ as ‘outstanding’. Again, the Environment Court has endeavoured to assist in this regard:

- a. The concept of outstanding refers to something that is ‘conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence’, ‘remarkable in’¹⁰ and ‘remarkable, exceptional ... exceptionally good’.¹¹
- b. It is recognised that in many cases ONLs ‘should be so obvious (in general terms) that there is no need for expert analysis’.¹²
- c. The observation that decisions about ‘outstandingness’ are not made lightly; and in some instances, ‘handsome’ South Island landscapes have not been found to be outstanding.¹³

However, in some cases, expert assessment will be needed (e.g. where associative values or less obvious biophysical values are present) and may include a range of disciplines. For the Waitomo District Landscape Study the landscape assessor is also required to undertake a ‘coordination and overview’ role to draw the various strands of information together (including information from other expert disciplines) and ensure methodological consistency across the district, particularly in terms of determining the threshold for ‘outstanding’.

The evaluation of the biophysical, perceptual and associative attributes, values and overall ‘outstandingness’ requires a non-linear (or iterative) process that includes both an ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ analysis. For example, in some instances the proximate, albeit scattered, arrangement of a series of high value natural features may be such that the wider (and more ordinary) landscape within which the features are nested qualifies as outstanding.

The evaluation method generally employed involves describing the attributes and values of the landscape and rating them. However, an overall judgement is also required with respect to the significance of the landscape or feature, and its ‘outstandingness’. It is widely accepted by the Environment Court and landscape experts that there is no set rating threshold (e.g. **High** or **Very High**) for each of the attributes and values that are required to be reached for a landscape (or feature) to ‘qualify’ as outstanding. Further, a landscape may qualify as ‘outstanding’ despite only rating highly for one or two attributes (for example, on the basis of cultural attributes and values alone). The absence of hard and fast rules in this regard emphasises the need for transparency in landscape assessments as to the factors that make the particular landscape or feature truly exceptional.

It is recognised by the Environment Court and landscape experts that an assessment of ONLs requires a comparative judgement¹⁴ and that scale may play a role in setting an appropriate threshold for ‘outstandingness’. For example, an area or feature may qualify as outstanding at a district scale, but may not reach the exceptional threshold at a regional scale and vice versa.

With respect to the rating of landscape attributes and values, consistent with landscape assessment best practice, a seven-point rating scale has been applied in the Waitomo District Landscape Study:

Very Low	Low	Low / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / High	High	Very High
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Photograph 12: The dramatic, distinctly stratified and actively eroding Tirua Point landform (ONL 2 Western Coastline)



Photograph 13: Awakino Gorge Tunnel (LHAV 2 Awakino Gorge)

¹⁰ [1999] NZEnvC Decision C180 (WESI), paragraph 82.

¹¹ [2010] NZEnvC Decision 248 (Owhiti Bay), paragraph 76.

¹² [2011] NZEnvC 387 (Rosehip), paragraph 102.

¹³ Ibid, paragraph 104.

¹⁴ NZILA Best Practice Note Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1 (dated 02.11.10), page 5.

SHARED AND RECOGNISED VALUES

An evaluation of the Shared and Recognised Values of a landscape (or LCU) relates to whether the wider community acknowledges and values the various qualities identified by experts. Like many parts of New Zealand, this aspect of landscape values is interpreted in the Waitomo District Landscape Study by landscape experts. The popularity of areas for tourism activity and the presence of recreation features such as walking tracks are key tools to assist in the expert evaluation of this aspect of associative values.

It is expected that the subsequent District Plan Review processes which allow for public input (via public notification, public submission, Council hearing and potentially, Environment Court appeal processes) will play an important role in refining this aspect of landscape attributes and values.

GIS DATA SOURCES AND MAPPING

A full list of the GIS data and their sources relied on to inform the landscape assessment is attached in [Appendix B](#).

One difficulty the study team faced was the variance in mapping scales between different GIS datasets. For example, the LCUs of the district are mapped at 1: 50,000 scale, the Natural Character dataset is recorded at 1:10,000 scale and the Land Cover Data Base (LCDB) mapping is plotted at 1:50,000 scale. In short, this means that the grain of data sources that may be determinative of landscape and feature boundaries varies; in some cases, quite substantially.

To reconcile such potential mapping 'discrepancies', a checking process at 1:10,000 and 1:5,000 scale for the district was undertaken by BGLA and Kate Turner (GIS Specialist) to ensure the location of mapped boundaries accords with 'real' boundaries utilising aerial photographs, Google Earth, and contour data in particular.



Photograph 14: Kawhia Harbour

ONL AND LHAV MAPPING

Detailed mapping (along with schedules) for each of the recommended ONLs is contained in [Section D: Outstanding Natural Landscapes](#) and [Section E: Landscapes of High Amenity Value](#) of this report respectively.

Geomorphological boundaries (such as ridgelines, rivers, and marked changes in landform gradient) are the preferred boundary delineation method for mapping ONLs and LHAVs. Where geomorphological features are not evident, the 'next preferred' delineation methods include: large-scale indigenous vegetation features; and marked changes in land use patterns (e.g. settlement edges, production forestry). Where none of these methods are available or adequately legible, then major road corridors and cadastral boundaries may be relied on to delineate ONLs and LHAVs.

It should be noted that there is generally a decreasing degree of 'legibility' and 'defensibility' associated with these various delineation methods, with the geomorphological boundaries rating the most favourably, and cadastral boundaries rating least favourably in this regard.

Further, in determining the extent of an ONL (and LHAVs), it is generally preferred to avoid 'cut outs', i.e. excluding localised areas from the broader ONL as a consequence of the level of development evident in that specific location. Rather, an evaluation is usually preferable that considers whether the level of development (in the localised area) is such that the 'landscape' within which it is located no longer qualifies as 'natural' and/or 'outstanding'; or conversely, is of a scale and/or character such that the overall 'landscape' still rates as outstanding despite the level of modification apparent in the localised area.

For the Waitomo District Landscape Study, the delineation methods favoured in the mapping of ONLs include:

- a. The extent of large scale, contiguous areas of elevated bush covered terrain (e.g. eastern end of [ONL 1 Northern Coastline](#), [ONL 3 Mokau Hills](#) and [ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai](#)).
- b. Landforms (e.g. western end of [ONL 1 Northern Coastline](#) and [ONL 2 Western Coast](#)).

In a limited number of locations 'carve out' mapping methods have been used as a pragmatic method of reconciling the boldly contrasting character of the localised landscape within the broader (and very large-scale) ONL or LHAV context. For example:

- a. The reasonably large-scale pasture dominated valley around Waikawau within [ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai](#).
- b. The reasonably large-scale blocks of production forestry within [LHAV 3 Limestone Country](#).

The treatment of [pastoral areas](#) is often a difficult issue in the mapping of ONLs. Generally speaking the favoured delineation methods outlined above point to the exclusion of pasture dominated areas due to the level of landscape modification that they display. However, in some instances the inclusion of extensive areas of pasture in an ONL was unavoidable. This is particularly the case in [ONL 2 Western Coastline](#). Here, the scale and character of the pastoral areas is such that they are dominated by the high and very high biophysical, perceptual and associative attributes and values of the broader ONL within which they are located, despite their more modified character. To excise these areas from the broader ONL would be artificial.

As explained earlier, pastoral land use is a common characteristic of Amenity Landscapes and for this reason much of the district that is identified as LHAV is in pasture cover.

Modern GIS mapping tools enable relatively accurate spatial mapping of ONLs and LHAVs as part of District Plans. To assist with efficient plan administration, this mapping is typically provided as a 'layer' that can be viewed in online mapping alongside other District Plan mapping sets (zonings etc.), contour mapping, and cadastral information.

The scale of ONL and LHAV mapping resolution is approximately 1:10,000.



Photograph 15: Typical character of the view to the Awakino River and steep bush clad slopes from the highway (LHAV 2 Awakino Gorge)



Photograph 16: Hairy Feet limestone feature (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)



Photograph 17: Typical character of rolling rural valley within Amenity Landscapes of the District



Photograph 19: Typical character of bush lined rural road within LHAV 3 Limestone Country



Photograph 18: Marokopa Falls walkway (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)



Photograph 20: Omaru Falls

ONL AND ONF SCHEDULES

To support the development of appropriate landscape policy and effective plan administration, schedules for each of the recommended ONLs and LHAVs have been prepared and are attached in [Section C](#) and [Section D](#) respectively (along with the ONL / LHAV mapping).

The ONL and LHAV schedules:

- a. In the case of ONLs, clearly articulate the attributes and values that make the landscape outstanding and that need to be protected from inappropriate development (i.e. 'more than minor' adverse effects¹⁵);
- b. for LHAVs, clearly articulate the attributes and values that confer an amenity landscape classification and which should be maintained and enhanced; and
- c. outline the sorts of activities and developments that are likely to be appropriate / inappropriate within the ONL or LHAV. In many circumstances, this has involved the consideration of such notions as landscape resilience, capacity, sensitivity and vulnerability.

Such an approach for ONL and ONF Schedules is in keeping with the landscape assessment discussion outlined in [Western Bay of Plenty](#).¹⁶



Photograph 22: Elevated pastoral terraces sharply defined by steep bush clad valleys (ONL 3 Mokau Hills)



Photograph 23: Dramatic rock formations within farmland (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)



Photograph 21: Marokopa Falls (LHAV 3 Limestone Country)

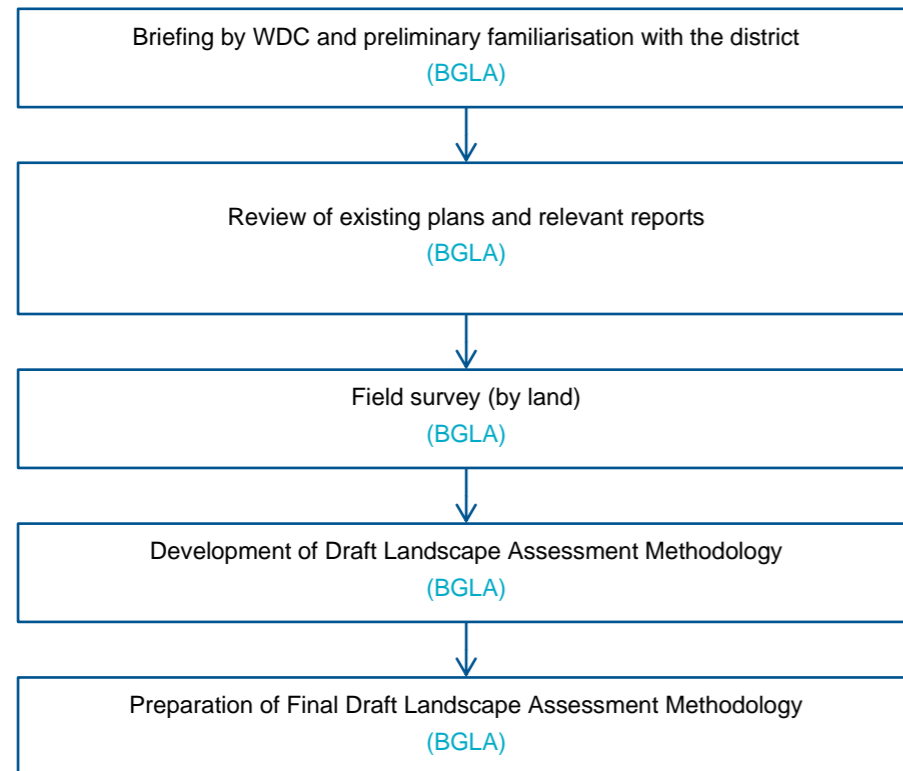
¹⁵ Deriving from [King Salmon](#) which stipulates a tolerance for minor or transitory adverse effects in (coastal) ONLs.

¹⁶ For example, see [Western Bay of Plenty District Council v Bay of Plenty Regional Council](#) [2017] NZEnvC 147 paragraph 111.

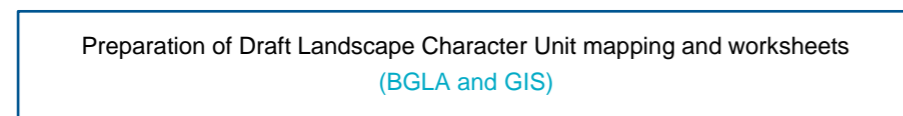
Section C: Waitomo District Landscape Study Methodology

Drawing from the preceding discussion of landscape assessment 'principles', the following diagram sets out the landscape assessment methodology applied in the Tasman District Landscape Study.

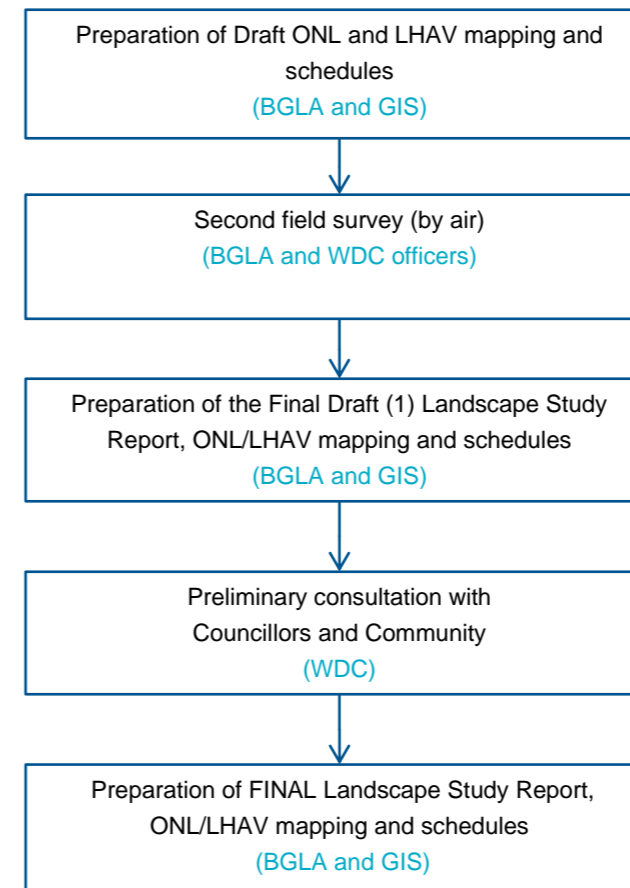
STAGE 1: LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY



STAGE 2: LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION



STAGE 3: LANDSCAPE EVALUATION



ASSUMPTIONS

Field Survey

The extensive nature of the district (some 353,500ha), combined with its relatively limited road network means that a pragmatic approach to field survey was necessary. Two separate and detailed field visits were made by BGLA. The first visit comprised a detailed survey by road to get a 'feel' for the landscapes of the entire district. The second survey involved a detailed survey by air, with WDC officers. This visit was deliberately timed once a 'first draft' of the landscape assessment methodology, LCU mapping and worksheets and ONL/LHAV mapping and worksheets had been prepared, to allow the group to discuss and test in the field such matters as: thresholds for 'naturalness', the 'outstanding' threshold and mapping delineation methods.

This level of field survey will inevitably result in a certain 'coarseness' in the grain of the LCU, ONL and ONF mapping and scheduling (or worksheets for the LCUs). However, it should be noted that this approach to landscape field survey is not unusual in relatively remote and large-scale districts within New Zealand that display a relatively low rate (or 'risk') of landscape change. Further, it is often the case that as the Council work through the Plan Review process, detailed site investigations may be required to refine the ONL and LHAV mapping and schedules in particular.



Photograph 24: Mature bush and the Timber Trail cycle route in Pureora Forest



Photograph 25: Typical character of extensive and bush clad hill country of ONL 3 Mokau Hills

Section D: Outstanding Natural Landscapes

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NB Refer WDC GIS mapping resource for the spatial extent of each ONL.

ONL 1: Northern Coastline

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	Northern Coast ONL 1 relates to the densely bush covered ridgelines, slopes and stream valleys throughout the western portion of the LCU 1a and the bush covered coastal hill slopes, wetlands and coastal cliff areas within LCU 1b (- see LCU Mapping). ONL 1 also includes the Te Maika peninsula which defines the western edge of the Kawhia Harbour and is flanked on either side by the bush clad coastal landforms.
QUALIFIES AS 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of the Kawhia Harbour and Northern Coastline ONL 1 corresponds to the extent of high-quality bush and wetland dominated coastal landforms and dramatic coastal cliffs throughout the north-western portion of the district. The sheer scale of the area together with its relatively coherent, consistent and highly memorable character means that it reads as a 'landscape'. Whilst other landcover varies in places to include limited tracts of pastureland / weed cover and some buildings, the limited extent and subservience of these elements to the dominant more 'natural' landscape elements means that they do not read as separate landscapes.
QUALIFIES AS 'NATURAL'?	The very limited level of human modification together with the very high ecological values of the area, means that it qualifies for consideration in terms of naturalness. Whilst development is evident in places (for example, at the northern end of Te Maika peninsula and at Arohaki Bay), its modest scale and informal character means that it remains subservient to the more 'natural' landscape features, patterns and processes.
QUALIFIES AS 'OUTSTANDING'?	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Kawhia Harbour: richly indented harbour coastline with rolling to steeply dissected lowland bush clad hill country backdrop. Coastline characterised by a mix of sandy beaches and mud flats interspersed with highly attractive and distinctive coastal cliffs and rock outcrops.</p> <p>West of the harbour: shallow black sand beaches backdropped by steep and dramatic coastal cliffs along north facing coastline interspersed with rocky outcrops, reefs and dramatic coastal cliff promontories culminating in the distinctive landform of Albatross Point.</p> <p>Several sites of geological significance including: around the coastline at Te Maika (Jurassic sequence), Totara Point and Captain Springs Shellbed (Jurassic fossils), Heteri Point (Jurassic macrofossils), Ohaua Point (Jurassic fossils), around Albatross Point (Jurassic sediments and syncline), Anaomaki Point (volcanic) and the Arataura Point-Uruoa Point cliffs (Jurassic sequence with fossil bed). Extensive and contiguous high-quality coastal forest. Identified as Nationally Significant SNA. Kiwi habitat. Large example of an underrepresented habitat type.</p> <p>Kawhia Harbour and its margins are habitat for many species of shore and wading birds, including threatened species such as black stilt, Australasian bittern, banded dotterel, banded rail, spotless crane and North Island fernbird. Other species include New Zealand dotterel, black-fronted tern and Caspian tern. The harbour is also used by international migrant species such as bar-tailed godwit, lesser knot, turnstone, Asiatic whimbrel and eastern curlew.</p> <p>Strongly tidal harbour setting.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive and memorable panoramic coastal views to the area from the Kawhia Harbour, Kawhia settlement, Whakapirau Road, the DoC track, the air and the surrounding rural and rural residential context in which the area reads as a relatively untouched tract of coastal bush country backdropping the harbour or coastal cliffs.</p> <p>The complex patterning of fingers of bush covered headlands extending into the highly tidal Kawhia Harbour create a complex, dramatic and dynamic outlook that is highly engaging.</p> <p>The highly dynamic waters of the Tasman Sea seen against the dramatic coastal cliffs and backdropped by a continuous mantle of bush is both striking and impressive.</p> <p>The visual coherence arising from the contiguous bush cover throughout the area adds to the memorability of the outlook.</p> <p>In places the visibility of Mt Taranaki, Mt Karioi and Pirongia in combination with the bush covered hill slopes, coastal cliffs, and/or highly dynamic sea/harbour waters add to the memorability and drama of the outlook.</p> <p>High degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the strong influence of the tidal harbour and/or exposed coastal waters; the very low level of built development and its modest and low key/informal character (which includes a dark night sky); the dramatic coastal landforms (cliffs, rocky outcrops and reefs) and the scale and dominance of bush cover.</p> <p>Highly memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of richly dissected landform patterning.</p> <p>Harbour and coastal margins strongly expressive of coastal processes.</p> <p>The highly tidal nature of the harbour and avifauna values imbue a high level of transient values. The extreme weather associated with the exposed Tasman Sea coastline also contributes to the transient values.</p> <p>Generally a high perception of remoteness as a consequence of the very limited built development, the inaccessibility of the area and the humble and very modest character of existing built development.</p>

Associative Attributes and Values	
<p>Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values</p>	<p>Coastline richly endowed with cultural heritage sites. Harbour is the birthplace of Te Rauparaha (Ngāti Toa) who lived in the area until the 1920s when he and his tribe, along with Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Koata, migrated southwards. DoC tracks together with the popularity of the Kawhia Harbour for boating and expert level surf break at Albatross Point (subject to landowner permission to access private land) confers recreational values.</p>
OVERALL EVALUATION	<p>Generally the area qualifies in terms of outstanding-ness as a consequence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. its very high ecological values; b. the high degree of naturalness arising from: the wild and/or dynamic coastal context; the very limited human modification which, where visible is subservient to the more natural landscape elements, patterns and processes by virtue of its modest and very low key /informal character; and the dramatic coastal landforms and the dominance of indigenous bush cover; c. the strong sense of remoteness and 'getting away from it all' as a consequence of the very limited level of development and the relative inaccessibility of the area; d. the high aesthetic and memorability values of the area as a consequence of its highly attractive and dramatic visual character and context; and e. cultural landscape values. <p>The more pasture dominated and inhabited eastern portion of LCU 1a is excluded from ONL 1 as a consequence of the level of human modification combined with the considerably more fragmented patterning of indigenous vegetation. However, the highly attractive character of the area dominated by its almost unbroken visual connection with the dynamic and scenic waters of the harbour means that it is considered to comprise an RMA s7(c) Amenity Landscape – refer LHAV 1 Kawhia Harbour.</p>
Key characteristics and qualities of ONL1 to be protected from adverse effects	<p>Landform and stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and wetland features. Very low-key, modest and informal built development character (including roading). Cultural landscape features. Sense of remoteness and 'getting away from it all'. Highly attractive views of the dynamic and generally unmodified harbour and wider landscape context. Darkness of the night sky.</p>
Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within ONL1	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Intensive farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

ONL 2: Western Coast

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	Western Coast ONL 2 relates to the stretch of coastline extending from Motunau to the flat land around Awakino and encompasses the coastal environment throughout that area together with the bush covered hill slopes extending up the ridgeline system that serves to separate the coastal environment from the Mangatoa and Manganui valleys to the east.
QUALIFIES AS 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of Western Coast ONL 2 corresponds to the almost continuous sequence of steep and large-scale, often stratified, coastal cliffs and dramatic coastal shelves edged, for the most part, by narrow black sand beach and/or rocky edges and shelves, and interspersed with small sandy bays complete with small spits, dunes and coastal flats. Steeply dissected and often rugged and highly sculpted coastal hills atop the cliffs extending to the elevated bush clad slopes and ridgelines that roll over into the (inland) Mangatoa and Manganui valleys. The overwhelmingly dramatic character of the area together with its relatively coherent, consistent and highly memorable character means that it reads as a 'landscape'. Whilst the landcover and land use varies in places to include appreciable tracts of low intensity pastureland and some buildings, the subservience of these elements to the dominant more 'natural' landscape elements means that they do not read as separate landscapes. In particular, the pastoral areas serve to reinforce the ruggedness of the landscape through the legibility of the landform patterning that this landcover enables.
QUALIFIES AS 'NATURAL'?	The very limited level of human modification together with the dominance of the 'wild west coast' context and the very high ecological and geological values of much of the area, means that it qualifies for consideration in terms of naturalness. Whilst development is evident in places (for example, at Waikawau), its very modest scale and informal character means that it remains subservient to the more 'natural' landscape features, patterns and processes.
QUALIFIES AS 'OUTSTANDING'?	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Highly dramatic coastal cliff and shelf sequence interspersed with: rocky ledges, shoals and reefs; sandy bays with spits, dunes and coastal flats.</p> <p>Several sites of very high geological significance (i.e. ONF) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal cliffs to the north and south of Kiritehere. (North of Kiritehere: well-exposed examples of submarine slumps, excellent series. Excellent series of numerous zeolitised vitric tuff beds in sedimentary sequence. Important for invertebrate and pollen stratigraphy and best Triassic sequence in the North Island. Rich gastropod fauna. South of Kiritehere: oldest Triassic strata in the North Island.) Marokopa River mouth sandspits and dune field. Coastline in the vicinity of Waikawau. Paparahia Cave feature. <p>Extensive and, for the most part, contiguous SNA (of national and international significance) identified throughout the steep elevated bush-clad slopes throughout the eastern portion of the unit and the steep-sided gullies (on the western side) draining to the coast. Rare ecological sequences (eg black beech), nationally endangered plant and avifauna species, under-represented vegetation types (eg coastal forest, scrub and dunes) and under-represented habitat types evident.</p> <p>Numerous intact wetlands.</p> <p>Shore bird and whitebait habitat (in river mouths).</p> <p>Highly dynamic west coast setting.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive views of the coastal cliffs, bays, Waikawau Tunnel, river mouths/dune and spit landforms, Tasman Sea, western coastal cliffs/shelves and bush-clad hill backdrop. From the water and air, the unit reads as a dramatic and highly memorable west coast landscape.</p> <p>The complex patterning of highly sculpted coastal landforms (cliffs, shelves, ledges) backdropped by the moulded pasture covered slopes and rugged bush clad ridge slopes seen alongside the forceful waters of the Tasman is impressive and highly engaging.</p> <p>The patterning of steeply dissected bush clad stream valleys and small-scale bays adds further complexity and interest resulting in an extremely striking coastal landscape.</p> <p>The visibility of Mt Taranaki and Mt Karioi together with the vast stretches of coastal cliffs extending to the north and south of the area, add to the memorability and drama of the outlook.</p> <p>On a clear day, the location enables a quite unique appreciation of the 'shape' of the Taranaki Bight.</p> <p>Very high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the strong influence of the exposed coastal waters; the dramatic coastal landforms; the extremely low level of built development and inaccessibility of the majority of the area; the extensive areas of bush; and the low-intensity character of the farmland.</p> <p>Highly memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above. The extreme weather and high dynamism associated with the coastal cliffs and shelves often associated with the area adds to its memorability.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of bold landform patterning including the coastal cliffs and shelves, the steeply dissected hill slopes and the rugged and prominent ridgeline landforms. In places, the pasture cover throughout some of the steeply dissected hill slopes adds to their legibility.</p> <p>Sandy bays, spits, dunefields, eroding cliffs/shelves and bush lined gullies strongly expressive of landscape shaping processes.</p> <p>The extreme weather associated with the exposed Tasman Sea coastline contributes to the transient values with active cliff/shelf erosion evident in numerous locations.</p>

	Generally a high perception of remoteness as a consequence of the very limited built development, the inaccessibility of the area and the low key and very modest character of existing built development.
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	Coastline richly endowed with cultural heritage sites. Waikawau Tunnel together with the DoC track near Pehimatea confer some recreational values. The regionally significant surf breaks at Marokopa and Kiritehere are also of some relevance, albeit likely to be outside of the ONL itself.
OVERALL EVALUATION	<p>Generally the area qualifies in terms of outstanding-ness as a consequence of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> its very high geological values; its very high ecological values; the very high degree of naturalness arising from: the strong influence of the exposed coastal waters; the dramatic coastal landforms; the extremely low level of built development and inaccessibility of the majority of the area; the extensive areas of bush; and the low-intensity character of the farmland; the strong sense of remoteness and 'getting away from it all' as a consequence of the very limited level of development and the relative inaccessibility of the area; the very high aesthetic and memorability values of the area as a consequence of its highly attractive, impressive and striking visual character and context; and cultural landscape values. <p>ONL 2 excludes the coastal flats around Marokopa, Kiritehere, Awakino and Mokau as these are assessed to comprise a smaller 'settled' landscapes nested within the wider western coast landscape. The level of modification in each of these areas together with their generally reduced sense of drama, memorability and remoteness is such that they do not qualify for consideration as ONL.</p> <p>Similarly LCU 2 Taharoa Ironsands and LCU 3 Dune Lakes which are also located within the coastal environment are excluded from ONL 2. Whilst there are a number of very high value landscape features within LCU 3 Dune Lakes (for examples the lakes themselves and the wetland/bush features), overall the influence of the nearby sand mining operation, production forestry, quarry, settlement and generally more fragmented land use patterns are such that despite the highly attractive lake and wetland features, exhibits a reduced sense of naturalness and aesthetic quality such that it does not qualify as outstanding.</p>
Key characteristics and qualities of ONL 2 to be protected from adverse effects	Coastal cliff and shelf features. Coastal hill/ridgeline landforms and stream patterning. Dune and sand flat features. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully and coastal fringe vegetation. Very low-key built development character (including accessways). Relatively low-intensity farming. Cultural landscape features. Sense of remoteness and wilderness. Highly attractive views of the wild and dynamic Tasman Sea and wider landscape context. Darkness of the night sky.
Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within ONL 2	Large-scale earthworks. Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Intensive farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.

ONL 3: Mokau Hills

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	ONL 3 Mokau Hills relates to the extensive patterning of bush clad hills and steeply incised valleys in the south-western quadrant of the district, inland of Mokau and to the south of the Awakino Gorge.
QUALIFIES AS 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of ONL 3 corresponds to the continuous sequence of high-quality bush dominated rugged hills and dissected valleys that serves to separate the Waitomo District from the Taranaki Basin. The sheer scale of the area together with its relatively coherent, consistent and highly memorable character means that it reads as a 'landscape'.
QUALIFIES AS 'NATURAL'?	The very limited level of human modification together with the dominance of the rugged bush country context and the very high ecological values of much of the area, means that it qualifies for consideration in terms of naturalness. Whilst development is evident in places (for example, logging tracks), its very modest scale and informal character means that it remains subservient to the more 'natural' landscape features, patterns and processes.
QUALIFIES AS 'OUTSTANDING'?	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Steeply dissected and rugged bush clad terrain.</p> <p>Vast expanse of contiguous SNA with the majority ranked as being of National significance. Habitat for threatened or at-risk flora and fauna.</p> <p>Mokau River and estuary, together with complex network of tributaries.</p> <p>Mahoenui Coal Mine.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	<p>Attractive views of the rugged, bush-clad terrain from the air and DoC tracks throughout the area.</p> <p>The mature character of much of the bush cover together with its continuous cover confers a strong sense of 'indigenous New Zealand' and a high level of aesthetic coherence.</p> <p>Forms rugged bush clad hill backdrop in views from SH3 to the north and south of Awakino Gorge.</p> <p>Very high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain interspersed with numerous watercourses; the inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident.</p> <p>Memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of bold landform and watercourse patterning including the steeply dissected hill slopes and the rugged and prominent ridgeline landforms.</p> <p>Complex ridgeline patterns, steeply incised valleys and winding streams/rivers expressive of landscape shaping processes.</p> <p>Generally a very high perception of remoteness/wilderness as a consequence of the strongly endemic character of the landcover, very limited built development, the inaccessibility of the area, and the low key/very modest character of existing built development.</p>
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	<p>Some cultural heritage sites throughout unit, largely along stream and river margins. Historically the Mokau River was an important boundary between the Tainui and Taranaki tribal areas.</p> <p>DoC tracks and popularity of the area for hunting and whitebaiting confers some recreational values.</p>
OVERALL EVALUATION	<p>Generally the area qualifies in terms of outstanding-ness as a consequence of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> its very high ecological values; the very high degree of naturalness arising from: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain interspersed with numerous watercourses; the inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident; the very strong sense of remoteness and wilderness as a consequence of the strongly endemic character of the landcover, very limited built development, the inaccessibility of the area, and the low key/very modest character of existing built development; the high aesthetic and memorability values of the area as a consequence of its attractive visual character and context in both closer range and long-range views (including from DoC tracks and SH3); and cultural landscape values. <p>The recreational values of the area associated with its use for tramping, hunting and whitebaiting also contribute to these values.</p>

	<p>The more gently sloping pastoral terraces interspersed with bush lined stream valleys throughout the northern margins of the unit are excluded from the ONL 3 as a consequence of: the level of human modification combined with the considerably more fragmented patterning of indigenous vegetation. The location of these terraces on the edge of the wider bush setting reinforces their perception of a smaller and slightly different landscape nested within the wider Mokau Hills landscape unit.</p>
<p>Key characteristics and qualities of ONL 3 to be protected from adverse effects</p>	<p>Hill landform and river/stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and river/stream edge vegetation. Cultural landscape features. Very low-key development character. Off the beaten track recreational values. Darkness of the night sky.</p>
<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within ONL 2</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Mining Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Intensive farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

ONL 4: Herangi-Pomarangai

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	ONL 4 Herangi-Pomarangai relates to the extensive patterning of bush clad and rugged ranges, foothills and narrow inland valleys along the western side of the District.
QUALIFIES AS 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of ONL 4 corresponds to the almost continuous sequence of high-quality bush dominated rugged ranges /hills and narrow pastoral valleys stretching from Manganui in the south to Puketaruwhenua in the north and including the Herangi Range and Whareorino Conservation Area. The sheer scale of the area together with its relatively coherent, consistent and highly memorable character means that it reads as a 'landscape'.
QUALIFIES AS 'NATURAL'?	The very limited level of human modification together with the dominance of the rugged bush country context and the very high ecological values of much of the area, means that it qualifies for consideration in terms of naturalness. Whilst development is evident in places (for example, scattered rural dwellings, farm buildings, DoC huts), its very modest scale and informal, 'old school NZ' character means that it remains subservient to the more 'natural' landscape features, patterns and processes.
QUALIFIES AS 'OUTSTANDING'?	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Steeply sloping and dissected landforms interspersed with numerous stream valleys.</p> <p>Dramatic and distinctive ridgelines and peaks in places.</p> <p>Highly sculpted pastoral landforms frame stream valleys in places.</p> <p>Fossil features at Rauoa Stream.</p> <p>Vast expanse of contiguous SNA with the majority ranked as being of National significance. The proximity to the west coast provides an unusually cold and moist climate. Whareorino features tawa, hinau, kamahi, and rewarewa as well as podocarps, and is particularly valued for its range of vegetation, from coastal and lowland vegetation types to subalpine and montane. At the top of the Herangi Range, 600–800 m above sea level, the ridges are covered in low scrub and kaikawaka along with neinei, pepperwood and divaricating shrubs interspersed with areas of cushion bog. This vegetation is sub-alpine and uncommon in the King Country. Riroriro (grey warbler), miromiro (tomtit), tītiti pounamu (rifleman) and koekoeā (long-tailed cuckoo), kereru (wood pigeon), korimako (bellbird), pōpokotea (whitehead), kārearea (bush falcon), kaka, kiwi, kokako, native bats, Archey's frogs and Hochstetter's frog recorded in Whareorino Forest. Habitat for threatened or at-risk flora and fauna.</p> <p>Much of the bush cover is in DoC ownership or protected by way of QE II Covenant.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive and memorable views of the rugged and dramatic large-scale bush-clad ridgeline and peak landforms, and steeply incised valleys from local roads and walking tracks. Longer range memorable views to the bush clad ranges and distinctive peaks from the lower lying land to the east (including SH3) and west (eg Waikawau Valley).</p> <p>The dense and extensive bush mantle extending throughout the dramatic ridgelines and peaks, together with the very low intensity pastoral farming and modest buildings throughout valleys confers a strong sense of 'indigenous and old school New Zealand' that is highly attractive and generally displays a high level of aesthetic coherence.</p> <p>Very high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain; the relatively inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident. Localised areas of reduced naturalness associated with pastoral farming, although the limited scale within the wider footprint and/or with its limited visibility means that it does not contribute an appreciable landscape character-shaping influence on the wider ONL.</p> <p>Highly memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Gully vegetation patterning serves to reinforce landscape legibility in places.</p> <p>Complex ridgeline patterns, winding streams and gully remnant patterning expressive of landscape shaping processes.</p> <p>Generally a very high perception of remoteness/wilderness as a consequence of the strongly endemic character of the landcover, very limited built development, the inaccessibility of the area, and the low key/very modest character of existing built development.</p>
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	<p>Some cultural heritage sites throughout unit.</p> <p>DoC tracks and popularity of the area for tramping, hunting, fly fishing and as a scenic route (Pomarangai Road, Mangatoa Road and Manganui Road) confers high recreational values.</p>

<p>OVERALL EVALUATION</p>	<p>Generally the area qualifies in terms of outstanding-ness as a consequence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. its very high ecological values; b. the very high degree of naturalness arising from: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain interspersed with numerous watercourses; the inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident; c. the very strong sense of remoteness and wilderness as a consequence of the dramatic scale of the rugged terrain, peaks and ridgelines, the strongly endemic character of the landcover, the (relative) inaccessibility of the area, the very limited built development, and the low key/very modest character of existing built development; d. its high recreational values associated with the network of walking tracks, scenic route and popularity of the area for tramping, hunting and fly fishing; e. the high shared and recognised values associated with the area, borne out in its popularity as a place to visit and recreate in; f. the high aesthetic and memorability values of the area as a consequence of its highly attractive visual character and context in both closer range and long-range views (including from DoC tracks, local roads and SH3) and its remoteness / naturalness qualities; and g. the cultural landscape values associated with the area. <p>The majority of the narrow inland pastoral valleys within the Herangi-Pomarangai LCU are included within ONL 4. This includes pastoral land and slivers of production forestry around Moeatoa and Paparahia Station, straddling the road corridor and pastoral land along the Gribbon Road valley. The relatively small scale of these pastoral/production forestry areas within the wide bush clad hill and range landscape is such that they do not read as separate landscapes deserving of exclusion. Further, the highly sculpted landforms evident in these areas means that they also make a positive (albeit slightly different) contribution to the values of the wider landscape setting.</p> <p>The exception to this is the broader pastoral valley system around Waikawau. This area is of sufficient scale and contrasting character (small scale settlement with extensive flat and gently rolling pastoral farming areas and some larger areas of production forestry) to warrant consideration as a smaller landscape nested within the broader Herangi-Pomarangai landscape. The level of human modification within the area coupled with the paucity of indigenous vegetation means that it does not qualify for inclusion within the ONL.</p> <p>Elsewhere, the extent of ONL 4 is defined by bush edges.</p>
<p>Key characteristics and qualities of ONL 3 to be protected from adverse effects</p>	<p>Landform and river/stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and river/stream edge vegetation. Cultural landscape features. Extremely low-key development character. Off the beaten track recreational values. Darkness of the night sky.</p>
<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within ONL 2</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Mining Indigenous vegetation removals. Extensive production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Intensive farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

ONL 5: Rock Peak Bush

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	ONL 5 Rock Peak Bush relates to the steep bush clad terrain in the northern margins of LCU 13 Elevated Central Hills and Valleys. NB the extent of ONL 5 corresponds to extent of International Significant Bush adjoining the Otorohanga ONL.
QUALIFIES AS 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of ONL 5 corresponds to the continuous sequence of extremely high-quality bush dominated rugged hills and steeply incised valleys generally referred to as Hauturu Forest that takes in Rock Peak, Otuaakahi, Ngawhakatarata, The Dome and Omarama straddling Waitomo District and Otorohanga District. The sheer scale of the area together with its relatively coherent, consistent and highly memorable character means that it reads as a 'landscape'.
QUALIFIES AS 'NATURAL'?	The very limited level of human modification together with the dominance of the rugged bush country context and the very high ecological values of the area, means that it qualifies for consideration in terms of naturalness.
QUALIFIES AS 'OUTSTANDING'?	
Biophysical Attributes	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Steeply sloping and dissected landforms interspersed with numerous stream valleys.</p> <p>Dramatic and distinctive ridgelines and peaks in places.</p> <p>Vast expanse of contiguous and extremely high-quality SNA with the majority ranked as being of International or National significance. Habitat for threatened or at-risk flora and fauna.</p> <p>Much of the bush cover is in DoC ownership or protected by way of QE II Covenant.</p>
Sensory Attributes	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive and memorable views of the rugged and dramatic large-scale bush-clad ridgeline and peak landforms, and steeply incised valleys from local roads and walking tracks (including Te Araroa).</p> <p>The dense and extensive bush mantle extending throughout the dramatic ridgelines and peaks, confers a very strong sense of 'indigenous New Zealand' and aesthetic coherence.</p> <p>Very high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain; the relatively inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident.</p> <p>Highly memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above.</p> <p>Complex ridgeline patterns and winding streams expressive of landscape shaping processes.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns.</p> <p>Generally a very high perception of remoteness/wilderness as a consequence of the strongly endemic character of the landcover, the very limited level of built development and the inaccessibility of the area.</p>
Associative Attributes	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values Transient values	Te Araroa confers high recreational values.

<p>OVERALL EVALUATION</p>	<p>Generally the area qualifies in terms of outstanding-ness as a consequence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. its extremely high ecological values; b. the very high degree of naturalness arising from: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain interspersed with numerous watercourses; the inaccessibility of the area; and the very limited level of human modification evident; c. the very strong sense of remoteness and wilderness as a consequence of the dramatic scale of the rugged terrain, peaks and ridgelines, the strongly endemic character of the landcover, the (relative) inaccessibility of the area and the very limited built development; d. its high recreational values associated with Te Araroa; e. the moderate-high shared and recognised values associated with the area, associated with Te Araroa; f. the high aesthetic and memorability values of the area as a consequence of its highly attractive visual character and context in both closer range and long-range views (including from DoC tracks and local roads) and its remoteness / naturalness qualities. <p>The extent of ONL 5 is defined by bush edges. NB ONL 5 adjoins and ONL in the Otorohanga District adjacent (to the north)</p>
<p>Key characteristics and qualities of ONL 3 to be protected from adverse effects</p>	<p>Landform and river/stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and river/stream edge vegetation. Extremely low-key development character. Off the beaten track recreational values. Darkness of the night sky.</p>
<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within ONL 2</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Mining/quarrying. Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

Section E: Landscapes of High Amenity Value

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NB Refer WDC GIS mapping resource for the spatial extent of each LHAV.

LHAV 1: Kawhia Harbour

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	LHAV 1 Kawhia Harbour relates to the more pasture dominated and inhabited eastern portion of LCU 1a.
QUALIFIES AS A 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of LHAV 1 corresponds to the network of rolling pasture dominated hills and valleys bordering the Kawhia Harbour. The relatively coherent and consistent character of the area deriving from the landform and vegetation patterning, together with its almost unbroken visual connection to the Kawhia Harbour, means that it reads as a 'landscape'.
AMENITY LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Richly indented harbour coastline with rolling to steeply dissected lowland hill country backdrop. Coastline characterised by a mix of sandy beaches and mud flats interspersed with highly attractive and distinctive coastal cliffs and rock outcrops.</p> <p>Sites of geological significance including: Waiharakeke Bridge-Kinohaku (Jurassic sediments) and Puroa Creek (Jurassic fossils).</p> <p>Areas of high-quality bush (identified as SNA). Habitat for threatened and at-risk flora and fauna.</p> <p>Kawhia Harbour and its margins are habitat for many species of shore and wading birds, including threatened species such as black stilt, Australasian bittern, banded dotterel, banded rail, spotless crane and North Island fernbird. Other species include New Zealand dotterel, black-fronted tern and Caspian tern. The harbour is also used by international migrant species such as bar-tailed godwit, lesser knot, turnstone, Asiatic whimbrel and eastern curlew.</p> <p>Strongly tidal harbour setting.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive panoramic coastal views to the area from the Kawhia Harbour, Kawhia settlement, Whakapirau Road, the DoC track, the air and the surrounding rural and rural residential context. The complex arrangement of fingers of pastoral hill slopes and ridgelines interspersed with gully remnants and edged with an intricate patterning of coastal vegetation around the indented harbour edges, all set within the context of the vast Kawhia Harbour setting creates an attractive composition that is highly engaging.</p> <p>The generally low key, modest and informal character of built development means that it sits comfortably within the wider rural coastal outlook.</p> <p>The visibility of Mt Karioi and Pirongia, adds to the drama of the outlook in places.</p> <p>Generally high aesthetic values as a consequence of the perceptual values described above.</p> <p>A moderate-high degree of naturalness across much of the unit, as a consequence of the dominant influence of the low-intensity pastoral landscape. The low key, modest and informal character of built development means that it generally comprises a sympathetic element within this context.</p> <p>A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of the richly dissected landform patterning.</p> <p>Harbour and coastal margins strongly expressive of coastal processes.</p> <p>The highly tidal nature of the harbour and avifauna values imbue a high level of transient values.</p>
Associative Attributes	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	<p>Coastline richly endowed with cultural heritage sites.</p> <p>Harbour is the birthplace of Te Rauparaha (Ngāti Toa) who lived in the area until the 1920s when he and his tribe, along with Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Koata, migrated southwards.</p> <p>Some recreational values associated with the DoC track around the coastal edge and the adjacent harbour.</p>
OVERALL EVALUATION	<p>Generally the area qualifies as an Amenity Landscape as a consequence of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural landscape values. The highly scenic qualities of the area as a consequence of: the complex arrangement of fingers of pastoral hill slopes and ridgelines interspersed with gully remnants and edged with an intricate patterning of coastal vegetation around the indented harbour edges, all set within the context of the vast Kawhia Harbour setting; the generally modest, low key and sympathetic character of existing built development; and the views across the harbour to Mt Karioi and Pirongia afforded from much of the area. <p>The area stands apart from the more 'ordinary' working rural landscapes in the district (e.g. LCU 10 Central Rolling Lowlands and LCU 11 Eastern Hills) largely as a consequence of its almost unbroken visual connection to the highly scenic Kawhia Harbour in combination with the scenic qualities of the area itself as described above.</p> <p>Whilst LHAV 1 stands apart from the more 'ordinary' working rural landscapes of the district, it is not assessed to qualify as Outstanding. The values of the area primarily derive from its scenic and aesthetic qualities which aligns it with an amenity landscape classification (that is valued for its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreation attributes) rather than as an ONL.</p>

<p>Key characteristics and qualities of LHAV 1 to be appropriately managed</p>	<p>Landform and stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and wetland features. Very low-key, modest and informal built development character (including roading). Cultural landscape features. Highly attractive views of the dynamic harbour and wider landscape context. Darkness of the night sky.</p>
<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within LHAV 1</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Intensive farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

LHAV 2: Awakino Gorge

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	LHAV 2 Awakino Gorge relates to the gorge landform stretching from the south end of the Mahoenui Valley to the eastern end of the Awakino Valley.
QUALIFIES AS A 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of LHAV 2 corresponds to the continuous gorge landform enclosing SH3 and the Awakino River. The consistent landform character of the gorge together with its well-established identity as a 'place' (or 'gateway') in its own right and its highly contrasting character to the valley landscapes at either end, means that it reads as a 'landscape'.
AMENITY LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	Steeply incised gorge alongside the Awakino River. The rugged Mokau hill system and elevated terraces (LCU 6) frame the south side of the gorge, and similarly rugged hills and terraces associated with the southern foothills of the Herangi Range define the northern side. Spectacular limestone bluffs in places. Awakino Gorge Tunnel (Oligocene and Miocene record). Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA of Local or Regional Significance. Convoluted course of the Awakino River runs alongside SH3.
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	Highly attractive and memorable views of the river winding through the dramatic and richly textured bush-clad (gorge) cliffs, with spectacular views of limestone bluffs towering over the gorge in places. Markedly contrasting enclosed and (predominantly) densely vegetated character of this stretch of the highway serves to heighten its visual impression and appeal. Distinctive road tunnel through natural rock adds to the scenic/aesthetic appeal. At southern end of gorge, highly attractive and memorable views open up to the coast and Mt Taranaki. The large-scale and striking (predominantly) vegetation-clad cliff landforms and limestone bluffs create a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy. The convoluted nature of the route through the gorge promotes a sense of mystery. Close-range views of: the winding river flanked by richly textured native vegetation; the rock tunnel; and the towering bluffs serve to enrich the overall experience. The vivid contrast of the gorge with the more open valley landscapes at either end serves to heighten this experience. For southbound travellers, the gorge reads as somewhat of a gateway to the 'wild west coast' and for northbound travellers, the gorge reads as a gateway to the more sheltered and working rural landscapes associated with the lower portion of the Waikato region. Generally a moderate to high degree of naturalness and remoteness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale and dramatic vegetation-clad landforms that enclose the road corridor; and the limited extent of built development. The highway itself, presence of production forestry and, to a lesser degree, pasture cover contribute a moderating effect in this regard; however, it is fair to say that the generally quite modest scale of the highway together with its winding character (such that long range views of the highway are not available) serves to limit its influence on the sense of naturalness associated with the unit. Memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above and its identity as a 'gateway' highway corridor. Bluff features and winding river expressive of landscape-shaping processes.
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	Awakino Gorge Tunnel. Awakino Gorge- scenic route.

<p>OVERALL EVALUATION</p>	<p>Generally the area qualifies as an Amenity Landscape as a consequence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The highly scenic qualities of the gorge as a consequence of: the striking (predominantly) vegetation-clad gorge landforms and expressive limestone bluffs; the highly attractive and expressive winding river course alongside the road; the distinctive rock tunnel; the overall sense of mystery accruing from the convoluted nature of the road alignment through the gorge; and the enclosed and intimate character of the area arising from the landform and vegetation patterns, which is amplified by the contrasting more open landscapes at either end. b. The role the gorge plays as an attractive and memorable 'gateway' landscape. c. A sense of naturalness and remoteness as a consequence of the relatively limited extent of built development (acknowledging the presence of the SH3) and the area's aesthetic/scenic qualities. d. Its moderate - high ecological values. <p>An appreciable portion of the gorge is in bush cover, although there are sizeable areas of pasture and production forestry cover. Whilst these latter landcover types tend to be of lesser amenity value (than indigenous bush cover), the overall legibility of the gorge as a cohesive landscape means that it would be artificial to exclude these areas.</p> <p>The narrow gorge landform and 'gateway' character of the area means that the area stands apart from the more ordinary working rural landscapes of the district.</p> <p>The values of the area primarily derive from its scenic and aesthetic qualities which aligns it with an amenity landscape classification (that is valued for its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreation attributes) rather than as an ONL.</p>
<p>Key characteristics and qualities of LHAV 2 to be appropriately managed</p>	<p>Cliff, bluff and steep gorge landforms and river patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush and river edge vegetation. Road tunnel. Relatively low-key development character. Views from the highway to the surrounding cliffs and bluffs, river and bush.</p>
<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within LHAV 2</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Indigenous vegetation removal. Extensive production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Inappropriate built development (including roading, signage, lighting) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

LHAV 3: Limestone Country

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	LHAV 3 Limestone Country relates to much of LCU 13 Elevated Central Hills and Valleys throughout the central portion of the District that sit between the Herangi Ranges and rugged hills to the west, and the rolling lowland hills to the east (roughly following the course of SH3). It also captures the western portion of LCU 10 Central Rolling Lowlands where there is a proliferation of scenic features.
QUALIFIES AS A 'LANDSCAPE'?	The extent of LHAV 3 corresponds to the parts of the district where there is generally a concentration of karst and cave features, waterfalls and popular scenic routes. The distinctive and highly memorable character of these features together with their spatial arrangement (i.e. frequency) makes a significant contribution to the identity of the Waitomo District such that the area is perceived as a 'landscape'.
AMENITY LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	<p>Highly complex patterning of steeply incised hills, ridges and stream valleys.</p> <p>Numerous extremely high value limestone bluffs, rock outcrops, tomos and cave features throughout. Often within highly attractive bush setting or as highly sculptural elements within pastoral landscape.</p> <p>Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA of Local or Regional Significance.</p> <p>Highly complex patterning of streams throughout the unit. Several highly scenic waterfall features.</p>
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	<p>Highly attractive and memorable close and mid-range rural views to: dramatic limestone bluffs, rock outcrops and landforms; intimate stream valleys and gorges (e.g. Totoro Gorge); and impressive waterfalls.</p> <p>Highly attractive and memorable views of large-scale bush-covered hills at varying ranges, including views to the Herangi Ranges.</p> <p>Attractive rural views across low intensity farmland in which the complex landform patterns and arrangement of vegetation (exotic and indigenous) create a pleasing composition.</p> <p>Attractive rural views from highpoints on Te Anga Road and Troopers Road.</p> <p>Generally high aesthetic values as a consequence of the perceptual values described above.</p> <p>A moderate degree of naturalness across much of the unit, as a consequence of the dominant influence of the low-intensity working rural landscape and, to a lesser extent, production forestry and the prevalence of tourism activities (signage, parking, traffic etc). The frequent occurrence of dramatic limestone bluffs and outcrops within the pastoral areas confers a sense of naturalness. In general, the relatively low-key built development character (outside of Waitomo Caves village) assists the perception of naturalness.</p> <p>Localised areas of higher naturalness on the more 'off the beaten track' unsealed roads towards the margins of the unit and in areas dominated by extensive tracts of bush cover.</p>
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	<p>Several scattered cultural sites throughout the unit.</p> <p>Very high public profile as a consequence of Waitomo Caves, numerous waterfalls and walkway features, local tourism operations, Te Araroa and scenic routes. The close proximity and relatively easy access of the unit to SH3 confers a higher public profile than, many other parts of the District.</p> <p>Very high recreational values associated with the as a result of the proliferation of a range of varied and highly engaging features including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible caves offering a wide range of recreational experiences on offer ranging from glow-worm boat tours to blackwater rafting and abseiling adventures. • Accessible limestone bluff and rock outcrops (and associated tourism facilities e.g. Hairy Feet). • Quad biking, rock climbing, clay bird shooting, heli flights and farms shows. • Te Araroa. • Numerous other tracks, including: the Gorge and Double Falls Tracks (south of Te Anga); the Mangaotaki Scenic Reserve; Waitanguru Falls; Ruakuri Walkway; Mangapohue Natural Bridge, Piripiri Caves, Marokopa Falls. • Several scenic routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piopio – Waitanguru – Pungarehu - Mairoa Road. Features along the way include: numerous dramatic bluff and limestone outcrops with bush (including Hobbit filming location) along the highly attractive Mangaotaki Road between Piopio and Waitanguru; Mangaotaki Scenic Reserve walkway; and Waitanguru Falls. - Waitomo - Te Anga Road- Marokopa- Kiritehere – Pomarangai- Mangaotaki Road- Piopio. Features include: Marokopa Falls, Piripiri Caves, Mangapohue Natural Bridge; Ngahuinga Bluffs beside Te Anga; the sleepy old school NZ settlement of Te Anga. - Mahoenui - Aria - Piopio via Totoro Road (highly attractive and intimate, winding rural stream valley with numerous limestone bluff and rock outcrops) and Aria Road (attractive old school NZ rural settlement at Aria) passes through part of the unit. Features along the way include the Wairere Falls.

	A high level of shared and recognised values as demonstrated by the popularity of the above recreational features.
OVERALL EVALUATION	<p>Generally the area qualifies as an Amenity Landscape as a consequence of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the very high biophysical values associated with the various karst and cave landform features and waterfalls scattered throughout the area. its moderate-high ecological values in places. the highly scenic qualities of the area as a consequence of: the attractive views of dramatic limestone bluffs, rock outcrops and landforms; intimate stream valleys and gorges; impressive waterfalls, bush clad hills and sculpted low intensity pastoral slopes and valleys. The very high recreational values (as described above). cultural landscape values. <p>LHAV 3 includes the bush and pastoral areas in between the various karst and cave features. These areas display a level of visual appeal in their own right and effectively form the 'glue' between the more unique and dramatic limestone features, culminating in a highly attractive and generally cohesive landscape character that stands apart from the more 'ordinary' working rural landscapes in the district (e.g. LCU 11 Eastern Hills and the majority of LCU 10 Central Rolling Lowlands).</p> <p>The exception to this description is the northern portion of LHAV 3 adjoining the Otorohanga District where there is generally a paucity of karst and cave features. Here it is the dominance of very high-quality bush cover together with the recreational values of at least part of the area (e.g. Te Araroa Trail) and relatively limited extent of human modification that confers the aesthetic (and ecological) values such that the area for inclusion within LHAV 3.</p> <p>East of SH3 in the vicinity of Aria, it is the highly attractive patterning of the rolling lowlands, sculpted landforms, karst features, waterfalls and bush features interspersed with pasture that merit the inclusion of this part of LCU10 Central Rolling Lowlands within LHAV 3.</p> <p>Areas of LCU 13 Elevated Central Hills and Valleys excluded from LHAV3 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inland hills and valleys north, west and southwest of Te Anga where there is a general paucity of limestone features and high value bush cover; A central area roughly in the vicinity of Ngapaenga and Mairoa where again there is a general paucity of limestone features and high value bush cover; The very high value bush covered hills in the vicinity of Rock Peak that adjoin an ONL in the Otorohanga District – see ONL 5 Rock Peak. <p>Whilst LHAV 3 stands apart from the more 'ordinary' working rural landscapes of the district, it is not assessed to qualify as Outstanding largely as a consequence of the influence that human modification (particularly in the form of buildings, pastoral farming and production forestry) exerts on the landscape character of the area. It is acknowledged that this is very finely balanced as clearly this part of the District plays a critical role in shaping the identity of the wider Waitomo area suggesting very high associative values. However overall it is considered that the values associated with this portion of the District more closely align with an amenity landscape (which are valued for their pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreation attributes), rather than as an ONL.</p>
Key characteristics and qualities of LHAV 3 to be appropriately managed	<p>Limestone bluff, rock outcrop and cave features. Strongly sculpted hills and valleys. Stream patterning. Waterfall features. Walkways. Indigenous vegetation features including bush and stream edge vegetation. Cultural landscape features. Low-key and informal development character. Older rural buildings.</p>
Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within LHAV 3	<p>Earthworks. Mining or quarrying. Indigenous vegetation removal. Extensive production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Inappropriate built development (including roading, signage, lighting and buildings) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>

LHAV 4: Rangitoto Range and Waipa River

DESCRIPTION OF AREA	LHAV 4 Rangitoto Range and Waipa River relates to the bush covered southern slopes of the Rangitoto Range that fall within the District and the Waipa River together with its steep bush clad margins.
QUALIFIES AS A 'LANDSCAPE'?	The scale and continuity of the bush cover in combination with the coherent and bold patterning of the riverscape and range landforms means that this area reads as a landscape.
AMENITY LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS	
Biophysical Attributes and Values	
Landform Geology Vegetation Ecology Hydrology	Steeply incised bush clad gorge alongside the Waipa River and rugged southern slopes of the Rangitoto Range. The latter form the eastern boundary of the King Country. Streams on the eastern slopes drain into the Waikato River. Spectacular limestone bluffs in places. Waipa River exhumed fossil forest Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA of National Significance. Habitat for threatened or at-risk species. Endangered species present include North Island kōkako, kaka, whio falcon, North Island brown kiwi, blue duck, long tailed bat and Hochstetter's frog. Much of the area is in either DoC ownership or subject to QE II Covenant.
Perceptual (Sensory) Attributes and Values	
Views to the area Views from the area Visual prominence /importance of the area in shaping the wider landscape character Naturalness Memorability Legibility and Expressiveness Transient values Remoteness/wildness	Attractive and memorable views of the rugged and dramatic large-scale bush-clad foothills and ridges and steeply incised river valleys from local roads and walking tracks (albeit noting the relatively limited extent of the latter). The continuity of bush cover together with the bold and sculpted landforms create a high level of aesthetic coherence. The dense and extensive bush mantle extending throughout area, confers a strong sense of 'indigenous New Zealand'. High degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the rugged bush-clad terrain; river gorge landforms, the relatively inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident. Memorable landscape as a consequence of the perceptual values discussed above. Complex ridgeline patterns and winding streams expressive of landscape shaping processes. A relatively high level of legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Generally a high perception of remoteness/wilderness as a consequence of the strongly endemic character of the landcover, the very limited level of built development and the inaccessibility of the area.
Associative Attributes and Values	
Cultural values Historic values Shared and recognised values Recreation values	The Waipa River is a tupuna (ancestor), a taonga (treasure), and the mauri (life force) of Ngati Maniapoto.
OVERALL EVALUATION	Generally the area qualifies as an Amenity Landscape as a consequence of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> its high to very high ecological values; The highly scenic qualities of the area as a consequence of: the attractive views of the rugged and sculpted bush clad hills river gorge landforms with little human modification evident; and the cultural landscape values associated with the area. The extent of LHAV 4 is defined by bush edges. NB LHAV 4 adjoins a LHAV in the Otorohanga District throughout the balance of the Rangitoto Range (to the north).
Key characteristics and qualities of LHAV 4 to be appropriately managed	Landform and river/stream patterning. Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully, and river/stream edge vegetation. Cultural landscape features. Extremely low-key development character. Off the beaten track recreational values. Darkness of the night sky.

<p>Types of development that are likely to be inappropriate within LHAV 4</p>	<p>Large-scale earthworks. Mining/quarrying. Indigenous vegetation removals. Production forestry. Large-scale infrastructure. Farming. Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>
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NB Refer WDC GIS mapping resource for the spatial extent of each LCU.

LCU 1a: Northern Coastal: Kawhia Harbour

Extent of LCU	LCU 1a corresponds to the parts of the District that sit within the coastal environment adjoining the Kawhia harbour, including Te Maika peninsula.
LCU boundaries	South: ridgeline landforms coinciding with the proposed WDC coastal environment line. East: district boundary. North: coastline. West: ridgeline defining the south side of the Kawhia Harbour (Unit delineated to include the Te Maika peninsula).
Landform features and patterns	Highly indented harbour coastline with rolling to steeply dissected lowland hill country backdrop. Coastline characterised by a mix of sandy beaches and mud flats interspersed with cliffs and rock outcrops. Located within the coastal environment.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly greywacke with smaller areas of argillite. Harbour comprises a drowned valley system following post Aranuian sea level rise which, like the surrounding terrestrial areas, has also been influenced by numerous faults. NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites around the coastline at Te Maika (Jurassic sequence), Totara Point and Captain Springs Shellbed Jurassic fossils), Heteri Point (Jurassic macrofossils) and Ohaua Point (Jurassic fossils), Waiharakeke Bridge-Kinohaku (Jurassic sediments) and Puaroa Creek (Jurassic fossils).
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Extensive tracts of high-quality bush (identified as SNA 2018) largely in private ownership, with much of it being rated to be of National and International significance. In the more pasture dominated portions of the unit, fragments of coastal vegetation throughout steep coastal slopes, gullies, headlands and atop cliffs and rock outcrops. Gully remnants also evident in places throughout pastoral hill backdrop, albeit to a limited degree. Impressive sequence of native vegetation through to estuarine vegetation evident in places. Kawhia Harbour and its margins are habitat for many species of shore and wading birds, including threatened species. The harbour contains sites of national importance for wintering indigenous and international migratory shorebirds.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous steep-sided and winding valleys. Strongly tidal in character.
Land use	Mix of bush cover (predominantly in western portion of the unit) with areas of pastoral farming throughout the elevated hill country in the central and eastern portion of the unit. Some small pockets of forestry on steep land in eastern portion of unit.
Settlement patterns	Settlement is limited to scattered dwellings, holiday homes and baches along the few coastal roads, and very scattered farm dwellings throughout the pastoral hill backdrop. Generally, built development is relatively informal, modest and low key in character. Distinct nodes of settlement are evident at Kinohaku, Te Waitere and Te Maika (near the mouth of the harbour and accessed by boat only). Little by way of visitor accommodation despite the highly attractive coastal context.
Access and proximity to key route	Reasonably difficult to access. Off the beaten track, metal roads and significant portions of the unit (and coastline) are not served by roads.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Coastline richly endowed with cultural heritage sites. Harbour is the birthplace of Te Rauparaha (Ngāti Toa) who lived in the area until the 1920s when he and his tribe, along with Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Koata, migrated southwards.
Recreation features	DoC track in the western portion of the unit, linking to LCU 1b Northern Coastal: Tasman Sea through bush country and along the coastline. Adjacent harbour popular for fishing, boating etc.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping (other than roads).
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Predominantly Rural zone. Te Maika Zone applies to northern portion of peninsulas associated with Urawhitiki Point and Totara Point (Special zone that the WDP describes as providing for very low-key development that is sympathetic to the area's high cultural values and wilderness character). ONF (2018) applies to coastal NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites.

Waikato RPS	Outstanding Natural Character overlay applies to extensive tracts of bush within the western portion of the unit (and adjacent harbour waters). Harbour identified as being an Area of Significant Conservation Value by WRC. Significant Natural Landscape feature identified in relation to Pakawharau.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	Otorohanga District: A Coastal Policy Area overlay applies to much of the coastal margins on the north and east side of the Kawhia Harbour. (Policies generally relate to effects of earthworks and buildings on natural environment. PA: earthworks that do not affect listed aspects of natural environment; CA: 6m/350m ² buildings that comply with colour/mirror glazing controls and do not extend above significant ridgelines (undefined)). A High Amenity Value - Coastal overlay applies to some areas.
Visibility/prominence	Viewed from the harbour and northern coastline, including Kawhia settlement (outside of WDC). CSL zoning applies to much of the land on the north-western side of the harbour within Otorohanga District. Limited and unsealed road access suggests a relatively limited 'visitor' viewing audience within the unit.
Key views	Highly attractive panoramic coastal views out over the Kawhia Harbour to Mt Karioi and Pirongia from Whakapirau Road. Highly attractive closer range harbour views from the coastal roads across the harbour inlets and wider waterbody.
Naturalness	High degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the strong influence of the tidal harbour; the very low level of built development; the extensive areas of bush; and the relatively low intensity of farming activities evident.
Complexity	In the more open pastoral portions of the unit, a high level of complexity as a consequence of the steeply dissected landform patterning with remnant gully and coastal fringe vegetation adding to the complexity in places. In the bush-dominated areas in the western portion a more limited level of complexity as a consequence of the more 'uniform' landcover.
Coherence	A high level of coherence in the western portion of the unit where bush cover dominates. A lower level of coherence in the more open pastoral areas.
Legibility	High level of legibility as a consequence of richly dissected landform patterning. Reinforced in places by gully remnants.
Expressiveness	Harbour margins strongly expressive of coastal processes.
Sense of Place	Generally the area displays a reasonably high degree of naturalness, a sense of remoteness and 'getting away from it all' and a highly attractive character as a consequence of: its strong connection with the expansive and highly dynamic harbour waters; the intricate patterning of the coastline and landform backdrop; the extensive tracts of bush and coastal vegetation; the limited level of vehicular access to the unit; the relatively limited level of modification; and the generally modest and low character of built development where it is evident.



Photograph 26: Typical character of low intensity farmland throughout coastal hills.



Photograph 27: Aerial view westwards out over deeply carved inlets on south side of Kawhia Harbour.



Photograph 29: Typical character of bush clad harbour edges at the western end of unit.



Photograph 28: Te Maika.



Photograph 30: Typical low-key built development character around the harbour margins.



Photograph 31: Tidal inlet and typical patterning of coastal vegetation fringe and scattered baches / rural dwellings.



Photograph 32: Long range views out over coastal hills to Mt Karioi (obscured in cloud).



Photograph 33: Low key harbour edge settlement at Te Waitere with pastoral/bush clad coastal hill backdrop.

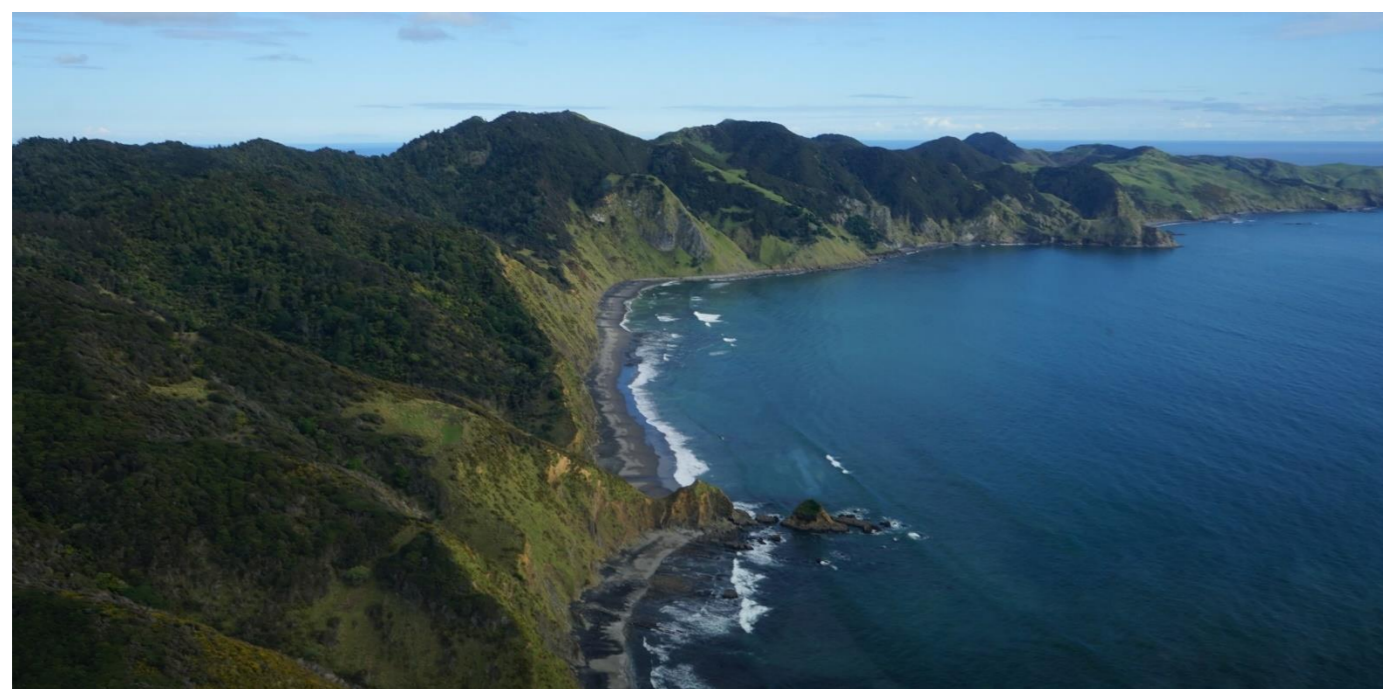


Photograph 34: Typical patterning of low intensity pastoral land use throughout rolling coastal landforms with coastal vegetation and gully remnants in the eastern portion of the unit.

LCU 1b: Northern Coastline: Tasman Sea

Extent of LCU	LCU 1b corresponds to the north facing parts of the District that sit within the coastal environment adjoining the Tasman Sea.
LCU boundaries	South: ridgeline landforms and Industrial zone boundary (Taharoa Ironsands). East: ridgeline defining the south side of the Kawhia Harbour (LCU delineated to exclude the Te Maika peninsula). North: coastline. West: coastline.
Landform features and patterns	Shallow black sand beaches backdropped by steep coastal cliffs along north facing coastline interspersed with rocky outcrops, reefs and dramatic coastal cliff promontories culminating in the distinctive landform of Albatross Point. Western coastline characterised continuous sequence of large-scale and dramatic coastal cliffs. Overall coastal margin backdropped by elevated, rugged and dissected coastal hill patterning. Located within the coastal environment.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly mudstone or fine siltstone with areas of greywacke at either end of the unit. NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites around Albatross Point (Jurassic sediments and syncline), Anaomaki Point (volcanic) and the Arataura Point-Ururoa Point cliffs (Jurassic sequence with fossil bed). Taharoa Fault extends almost parallel with the coast.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Extensive tracts of high-quality coastal bush and wetland areas (identified as SNA) at the eastern end of the unit, becoming more fragmented throughout the central and western areas. Tracts of bush in eastern portion of National or International Significance. Gully remnants also evident in places throughout pastoral hill backdrop albeit to a limited degree.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous steep-sided and winding valleys.
Land use	Mix of bush cover (predominantly in eastern portion of the unit) with areas of pasture throughout the elevated hill country in the central and western portion of the unit.
Settlement patterns	Settlement is limited to a scattering of very modest baches around Arohaki Bay and the odd modest farm dwelling/building in the hill backdrop.
Access and proximity to key route	Very difficult to access. LCU is not serviced by public roads. A limited network of farm tracks provide access to the existing baches and dwellings.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Numerous cultural heritage sites throughout the unit.
Recreation features	Expert level surf break at Albatross Point of regional significance (subject to permission to cross private land). DoC track in the eastern portion of the unit, linking to LCU 1 Kawhia Harbour through bush country and along the coastline.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Rural zone. ONF (2018) applies to coastal NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites.
Waikato RPS	Outstanding Natural Character overlay applies to the extensive tracts of bush within the eastern portion of the unit. Very High Natural Character overlay applies to waters adjoining the LCU. High Natural Character overlay applies to the western portion of the unit coinciding with the more fragmented patterning of bush and degraded pastureland.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A
Visibility/prominence	Views limited to marine craft users and people flying over the area. From the water and air, the unit reads as a dramatic and highly memorable west coast landscape. Potentially some long-range views from elevated locations on the north side of Kawhia Harbour and the coast to the south (in the vicinity of Taharoa Ironsands). Absence of road/walking track access suggests no 'visitor' viewing audience within the LCU.
Key views	Expected to enjoy highly attractive and dramatic panoramic coastal views out over the Tasman Sea and coastline northwards to Mt Karioi and southwards to Mt Taranaki.

Naturalness	High degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the strong influence of the exposed coastal waters; the dramatic coastal landforms; the extremely low level of built development; the extensive areas of bush; and the relatively unkempt character of the farmland.
Complexity	In the more open pastoral portions of the unit, a high level of complexity as a consequence of the steeply dissected landform patterning with remnant gully and coastal fringe vegetation adding to the complexity in places. In the bush dominated areas in the eastern portion, a more limited level of complexity as a consequence of the more 'uniform' landcover.
Coherence	A high level of coherence in the eastern portion of the unit where bush cover dominates. A lower level of coherence in the more pastoral areas.
Legibility	High level of legibility as a consequence of richly dissected landform patterning. Reinforced in places by gully remnants.
Expressiveness	Coastal margins strongly expressive of coastal processes.
Sense of Place	Generally the area displays a very high degree of naturalness, a sense of remoteness and a highly attractive and highly memorable character as a consequence of: its strong connection with the wild and highly dynamic Tasman Sea; the dramatic coastal cliff sequences; the extensive tracts of bush and coastal vegetation; its inaccessibility; the relatively limited level of modification and unkempt character of much of the farmland; and the generally modest and low key character of built development in the few locations where it is evident.
Summary of the key landscape characteristics of the Landscape Character Unit to be protected, maintained and/or enhanced (in terms of the biophysical, perceptual and associative attributes)	<p>Landform and stream patterning.</p> <p>Indigenous vegetation features including bush, gully and coastal fringe features.</p> <p>Very low-key built development character (including accessways).</p> <p>Relatively low intensity farming.</p> <p>Cultural landscape features.</p> <p>Sense of remoteness and wilderness.</p> <p>Highly attractive views of the wild and dynamic Tasman Sea and wider landscape context.</p> <p>Screening of the area from the Taharoa Ironsands mine.</p>
Activities that are likely to detract from the landscape values of the LCU	<p>Large-scale earthworks.</p> <p>Indigenous vegetation removals.</p> <p>Production forestry.</p> <p>Largescale infrastructure.</p> <p>Intensive farming.</p> <p>Inappropriate built development (including roading) as a consequence of its location, scale and/or design.</p>



Photograph 35: Typical character of steep bush and scrub covered coastal cliffs.



Photograph 36: Steep cliffs with pastoral backdrop at western end of unit and Albatross Point.



Photograph 37: Typical character of farmland.



Photograph 38: Aerial view looking southwards along the west coast of the District from approximately Albatross Point.



Photograph 39: Typical character of farmland and coastal hill topography.

LCU 2: Taharoa Ironsands

Extent of LCU	LCU 2 corresponds to the land zoned for sandmining at Taharoa.
LCU boundaries	WDP Industrial zone boundaries.
Landform features and patterns	Taharoa dunefields comprises windblown dune landforms. Changing landform due to current mining activity. Located within the coastal environment. Continuous sweep of black sand beach forms western edge.
Geological features and patterns	Titomagnetic sands (iron sands) up to 50m depth. Geopreservation site of particular interest as tephra are interbedded in the iron sand dunes. Taharoa Fault extends almost parallel with the coast.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Continuous fringe of along exposed western coastline. Bush fragments (SNA) identified in south-eastern quadrant.
Hydrological features and patterns	Watercourses roughly along eastern, southern and northern edges of dunefield and through the centre (draining from Lake Taharoa). Extensive man-made ponds throughout working area.
Land use	Commercial sand mining operation with sand pumped to ships anchored offshore. Production forestry in eastern portion of LCU on dunes.
Settlement patterns	Utilitarian buildings and sand mining infrastructure including extensive security fencing and lighting, and a small airstrip.
Access and proximity to key route	Located on a dead-end road.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Numerous cultural heritage sites throughout the unit.
Recreation features	Public lookout on the coast at the end of the road with a small carpark.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping. Extensive electricity infrastructure evident associated with the mine.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Industrial zone.
Waikato RPS	Very High Natural Character overlay applies to waters adjoining the LCU. High Natural Character overlay applies to the north-western dune margins of the LCU.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A
Visibility/prominence	Variable visibility of the existing sandmine operation as a consequence of surrounding landform patterns and/or bunding within the working area. However, highly visible from many locations including those of marine craft users, employees at the sand mine, and users of the dead-end road/public lookout. Long-range views from elevated locations to the north (LCU 1b Northern Coastline: Tasman Sea), and the east and south (LCU 3 Dune Lakes). Discordant visual character of the mining operation within an otherwise wild coastal landscape setting serves to heighten its memorability. Utilitarian character of the area together with signage discouraging public access/security fencing etc. means that 'visitor' viewing audience likely to be very limited.
Key views	Dramatic panoramic coastal views out over the Tasman Sea, somewhat compromised by the strongly utilitarian and large-scale sandmine context.
Naturalness	Low degree of naturalness as a consequence of the sandmine operation. Dune areas that are screened from the (current) operation display a high degree of naturalness, although their inevitable 'connection' with the sandmine as a consequence of their proximity, together with their industrial zoning, has an appreciable diminishing effect in terms of naturalness values.
Complexity	Complicated patterning of infrastructure and buildings creates a high level of visual complexity, albeit in a negative manner.
Coherence	A low level of coherence as a consequence of the built modification and highly engineered landform patterning.
Legibility	A low level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the highly modified environment associated with the sandmine operation.
Expressiveness	Unmodified coastal dune areas strongly expressive of coastal processes.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area displays a very low degree of naturalness as a consequence of the large-scale and highly visible existing sandmine operation. The contrasting visual character of the area with the surrounding more wild coastal setting serves to heighten its memorability as a discordant element. Despite the coastal setting and dune landforms, generally the area has a very low aesthetic appeal and the existing mining activity would seem to be at odds with the very high cultural values associated with the area.



Photograph 40: Aerial view of existing sandmine operation. Lake Taharoa in midground of view.



Photograph 41: Existing sandmine buildings and infrastructure.



Photograph 42: Aerial view of existing sandmine looking southwards along the west coast of the District.



Photograph 43: Typical character around the edges of the sand mine.



Photograph 44: Signage near coast discouraging public access.



Photograph 45: Sandmine infrastructure across dunes.



Photograph 46: Ship anchored offshore to which the sand is pumped.

LCU 3: Dune Lakes

Extent of LCU	LCU 3 captures the dune lakes to the south and southeast of Taharoa Ironsands and includes the hill slopes framing the area.
LCU boundaries	South: ridgeline landforms terminating in the vicinity of Motunau Rocks. East: ridgeline separating LCU 1a Northern Coastline: Kawhia Harbour from the Dune Lakes catchment and coastal environment line. North: ridgeline separating the LCU 1b Northern Coastline: Tasman Sea from the Dune Lakes catchment. West: coastline.
Landform features and patterns	Dune lakes (formed by dunes drowning streams to form impounded waterbodies) and surrounding dune landforms and wetland areas rising to complex patterning of lowland coastal hills. Localised section of attractive coastal cliffs at southern end of unit. Located within the coastal environment. Continuous sweep of black sand beach and dunes along western edge.
Geological features and patterns	Ash and greywacke with areas of alluvial silts. NZ Geopreservation Inventory site at Whakapirau Road (Jurassic section). Taharoa Fault extends almost parallel with the coast.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Extensive SNA and, for the most part, contiguous SNA (2018) identified over bush, wetland and lake features throughout central and western portion of the LCU. Numerous fragments of SNA identified throughout the hills in the eastern portion of the unit corresponding to steep hill and gully slopes.
Hydrological features and patterns	Lake Taharoa, Lake Numiti, Lake Rotoroa, Lake Piopio, Lake Rototapu and Lake Harihari. Lake Harihari is described by WRC as a mesotrophic lake (i.e. has moderate levels of nutrients and algae). Numerous watercourses and wetland features (large-scale in places) draining into the dune lake network and direct to coast (south end).
Land use	Quarry on Taharoa Road near the intersection with Whakapirau Road. Limited blocks of forestry throughout the hillslopes around Lake Taharoa. Fragmented and degraded pastoral land in the northern portion of the unit. Extensive low-intensity, high-quality pastoral farming throughout the southern portion of the unit around Lake Harihari.
Settlement patterns	Taharoa settlement overlooking Lake Taharoa established to support the nearby Taharoa Ironsands mine. Scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings on pastoral properties.
Access and proximity to key route	Public road access limited to northern portion of the unit adjacent Lake Taharoa (north-eastern edge) and through Taharoa. Metal roads and 'off the beaten track'.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Numerous cultural heritage sites throughout the south end of unit (farmland) and around the lake margins/throughout dune areas.
Recreation features	Small fragment of DoC land at south end of LCU adjacent coastline.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping. Extensive electricity infrastructure evident associated with the nearby sand mine.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Residential/Industrial zonings applying to Taharoa settlement, and Conservation zone applying to DoC land at south end of the unit and an odd rectilinear fragment on the bush clad hills south of Lake Taharoa.
Waikato RPS	N/A
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	ONF (2018) applies to the dune lake features.
Visibility/prominence	Variable visibility as a consequence of the hill and dune landform patterning. Viewed (in part) from road network, Taharoa settlement and rural dwellings. Limited and unsealed road access suggests a relatively limited 'visitor' viewing audience within the unit.
Key views	Highly attractive views of the dune lakes, coastline and Tasman Sea where the nearby Ironsands mine is screened from view. Where the mine is visible, this tends to significantly detract from the quality of the outlook.
Naturalness	Variable degree of perceived naturalness as a consequence of the varying influence of the sandmine operation, settlement, quarry and production forestry. Lake, wetland, bush and coastal areas display a relatively high level of naturalness where the sandmine and forestry areas are obscured from view.
Complexity	Relatively high level of complexity as a consequence of the landform and land use patterning.
Coherence	A low level of coherence in places as a consequence of the fragmented land use patterning. In areas of extensive bush or high-quality pasture cover, the level of coherence is higher.
Legibility	A reasonably high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of dune, dune lake, wetland and remnant gully features.

Expressiveness	Coastal dune, dune lake and wetland features strongly expressive of landscape-shaping processes.
Sense of Place	The area includes localised areas that display a high degree of naturalness, remoteness and are highly attractive. In general, this relates to the lake, bush, wetland and coastal areas in the southern portion of the unit that are well separated from Taharoa Ironsands mine. The balance of the area is more strongly influenced by the nearby sand mining operation, production forestry, quarry, settlement and generally more fragmented land use patterns such that despite the highly attractive lake and wetland features, exhibits a reduced sense of naturalness and aesthetic quality.



Photograph 47: Aerial view of Lake Taharoa and its mixed bush and pine backdrop.



Photograph 48: Coastal hills framing the Dune Lakes with Taharoa Ironsands in the foreground of view.



Photograph 49: Lake Harihari to the right of view with typical coastal hill and stream flats/wetland context.



Photograph 50: Coastal dunes and flats at the southern end of the unit. Motunau to the right of view



Photograph 51: View westwards out over Lake Taharoa from Taharoa Road.



Photograph 52: View of Lake Taharoa and surrounds looking southwards on the south side of Taharoa settlement. Wetland to left of view.

LCU 4: Western Coastline

Extent of LCU	LCU 4 relates to the stretch of coastline extending from Motunau to the flat land around Awakino and encompasses the coastal environment throughout that area.
LCU boundaries	<p>South: toe of coastal hill slopes flanking the north side of Awakino.</p> <p>East: proposed WDC coastal environment line.</p> <p>North: ridgeline separating the LCU 3 Dune Lakes catchment from the Western Coastline area.</p> <p>West: coastline.</p> <p>NB LCU 4 includes the flat coastal land around Marokopa and Kiritehere which sits within the above coastal sequence.</p>
Landform features and patterns	<p>Between Motunau and Tirua Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost continuous sequence of steep and large-scale, often stratified, coastal cliffs edged, for the most part, by narrow black sand beach. • Erosion evident in numerous places, including extensive slip at Tirua Point. • Cliff sequence interrupted by 4 bays (Tauhua Stream mouth, Marokopa, Kiritehere and Nukuhakari Bay) with associated dune/spit and estuaries at Marokopa and Kiritehere. • Broad dune and sandflat system at Tauhua Stream mouth and Nukuhakari Bay. • Rock outcrops, rocky reefs and shoals in places. • Steeply dissected and often rugged coastal hills atop the cliffs, rising to the ridgeline separating the coast from inland valley that runs approximately parallel with the coastline and comprises the northern foothills of the Herangi Range. Inland ridgeline coincides with Te Iringa (418m), Puketaruwhenua (456m) and Pehimatea (483m). Erosion evident throughout pastoral slopes. <p>South of Tirua Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied and dramatic sequence of exposed coastal shelves interspersed with steep coastal stratified cliffs and black sand bays. • Erosion evident in numerous places, and in places, the coastal shelves appear to be slumping into the high energy sea. • Rocky promontories, ledges and reefs in places. • Varied patterning of more moderately rolling, sculpted and steep coastal hill landforms backdropping the coastal edge, rising to the ridgeline separating the coast from inland valley that runs approximately parallel with the coastline and coincides with the western margins of the Herangi Range. Inland ridgeline approximately coincides with Whareorino (649m), Mt Duthie (372m) and Mt Brookes (332m). Erosion evident throughout pastoral slopes. <p>At Marokopa and Kiritehere:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marokopa River and Kiritehere Stream mouths (approximately midway between Motunau Rocks and Tirua Point). • Dune formations have created winding river/stream mouths with a small spit at Marokopa. • Low-lying flat coastal flats, alluvial floodplains and wetland areas inland.
Geological features and patterns	<p>Predominantly greywacke with mudstone or fine siltstone and sandstone at south end in the vicinity of Tirua Point. Pockets of ash south of Tirua Point.</p> <p>NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites of national importance identified on coastal cliffs to the north and south of Kiritehere (North of Kiritehere: well-exposed examples of submarine slumps, excellent series. Excellent series of numerous zeolitised vitric tuff beds in sedimentary sequence. Important for invertebrate and pollen stratigraphy and best Triassic sequence in the North Island. Rich gastropod fauna. South of Kiritehere: oldest Triassic strata in the North Island).</p> <p>Coastline in the vicinity of Waikawau also identified.</p> <p>NZ Geopreservation Inventory site also applies to Marokopa River mouth sandspits and dunefields.</p> <p>Numerous faults bisect the area.</p>
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	<p>Extensive and, for the most part, contiguous SNA identified throughout the steep elevated bush-clad slopes throughout the eastern portion of the unit and steep-sided gullies draining to the coast.</p> <p>Pockets of QE II bush south of Kiritehere.</p> <p>Sizeable area of QE II bush in the vicinity of Mt Duthie.</p> <p>Sizeable areas of SNA along the banks of the Marokopa River and Kiritehere Stream.</p>
Hydrological features and patterns	<p>Numerous streams and rivers draining to coast.</p> <p>Dunes, spit landforms, sand flats and floodplains in the few broader bays along this stretch of coastline.</p> <p>Estuarine and wetland areas at Marokopa and Kiritehere.</p>
Land use	<p>Low-intensity pastoral farming throughout coastal hills with bush (and to a lesser degree, scrub) cover dominating steeper and/or more elevated land.</p> <p>Very limited pockets of production forestry south of Kiritehere.</p> <p>Dune restoration community groups active at both Marokopa and Kiritehere.</p>

Settlement patterns	Established beachside settlements with a distinctive, old-world, 'getting away from it all' charm. Of the two, Marokopa is the larger and has more facilities (camping ground, tennis courts, small camp shop etc). Dwellings generally located on flat land around stream/river/beach; however, some more elevated properties at Marokopa sited to enjoy long-range coastal views. Very small beachside settlement at Waikawau, set back from the coastline and tucked into the bush-clad hillsides overlooking the Waikawau River. Elsewhere, the odd bach or rural dwelling/farm building along the coastline.
Access and proximity to key route	No public road access to this section of coastline other than to Marokopa and Kiritehere (unsealed), the (unsealed) dead-end road to Waikawau Bay and Te Marama Road (dead-end and one-way) providing access to Nukuhakari Station, north of Waikawau Bay. Generally, very much an area that is 'off the beaten track'.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Numerous cultural heritage sites throughout unit.
Recreation features	Patches of DoC-owned bush in the vicinity of, and straddling, Pehimatea; with a DoC track across the area (track predominantly in LCU 14 Herangi Pomarangai). Waikawau Tunnel which comprises a narrow tunnel through the sandstone cliffs from the sheltered river side of the bay to the exposed western coastline. Originally constructed to provide stock access for Nukuhakari Station on the hills above. Patches of DoC-owned bush in the land to the north and south of Waikawau. Surf breaks of regional significance at Marokopa and Kiritehere. Kiritehere popular for fossil hunting. Popular fishing spots with road access enabling boat launching at Marokopa and Kiritehere. Strip of DoC reserve around northern edge of Marokopa settlement river frontage.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Conservation zoning applying to DoC land. ONF (2018) applies to the coastal cliff features to the north and south of Kiritehere (corresponding with the NZ Geopreservation Inventory sites in the area). ONF (2018) identified at Waikawau encompassing the coastal cliff features (NZ Geopreservation site), bush-clad hills seaward of the tunnel and the lower reaches of the Waikawau River including its vegetated banks adjacent Waikawau Road. Residential zoning at Marokopa with Conservation zoning applying to DoC land, reserve areas and settlement's western river frontage (esplanade strip). Kiritehere Rural zoning.
Waikato RPS	Very High Natural Character overlay applies to coastal cliffs and waters adjoining the LCU. High Natural Character overlay applies to the large-scale bush features within the unit (noting that the WRC coastal environment line is closer to the coast than the proposed WDC coastal environment line). All of the identified HNC bush features south of Tirua Point are identified as SNA (2108). High Natural Character overlay applies to the Marokopa spit and the dune area to the north of Marokopa. Significant Natural Landscape feature overlay applies to two elevated, bush-clad areas between Huikomako and Mt Duthie. Outstanding Landscape overlay associated with the Herangi Range extends into the margins of LCU 4 south of Kiritehere and south of Tirua Point.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A.
Visibility/prominence	Very limited visibility of much of the area due to inaccessibility. For the more inaccessible areas, visibility limited to landowners, farm workers, residents and visitors at Waikawau, marine craft users and people in aircraft flying over the area. At Marokopa and Kiritehere viewing audiences include road users, residents, bach owners, visitors, marine craft users and people flying over the area. Generally relatively limited due to the 'off the beaten track' nature of the area.
Key views	Highly attractive views of the coastal cliffs, bays, cliff tunnel, river mouths/dune and spit landforms, Tasman Sea, western coastal cliffs and bush-clad hill backdrop. From the water and air, the unit reads as a dramatic and highly memorable west coast landscape.
Naturalness	High degree of naturalness in the majority of the LCU as a consequence of: the strong influence of the exposed coastal waters; the dramatic coastal landforms; the extremely low level of built development and inaccessibility of the majority of the area; the extensive areas of bush; and the low-intensity character of the farmland. At Marokopa and (to a lesser degree) Kiritehere, a more moderate level of naturalness. Wider context of the highly dynamic and exposed coastal waters and the dramatic coastal landforms is moderated by the extent of built modification, albeit of a relatively modest and informal, low-key character.
Complexity	For the bulk of the LCU, a generally high level of complexity as a consequence of the landform and/or bush patterning. Relatively high level of complexity at Marokopa as a consequence of the built patterning. Reduced at Kiritehere due to decreased level of built development.

Coherence	A high level of coherence largely as a consequence of the dominant and relatively consistent landform patterns. Reduced in settled areas at Marokopa and (to a lesser extent) Kiritehere.
Legibility	A high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Gully vegetation patterning serves to reinforce landscape legibility in places.
Expressiveness	Coastal cliff features, sculpted hills, winding streams/rivers and dunes strongly expressive of landscape-shaping processes. Highly visible erosion a reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sense of Place	For the majority of the 'undeveloped' portion of the LCU, the area displays a very high degree of naturalness, a sense of remoteness/wilderness and a highly attractive and highly memorable character as a consequence of: its strong connection with the wild and highly dynamic Tasman Sea; the dramatic coastal cliff sequences; the extensive tracts of bush and coastal vegetation; its inaccessibility; the relatively limited level of modification and the low-key character of much of the farmland; and, the generally very modest and low-key character of built development in the few locations where it is evident. Marokopa and Kiritehere display a distinctive and highly memorable 'old school NZ' charm that evokes a sense of idyllic isolation. Key factors include: the strong connection with the wild and highly dynamic Tasman Sea; the dramatic coastal cliff flanking each area; the rugged coastal hill backdrop; the dune landforms, wetlands/estuaries and winding watercourses; the relatively limited accessibility of the area; the absence of extensive facilities; the low-key character of much of the farmland; and the generally very modest and low-key character of built development.



Photograph 53: Typical character of coastal cliffs and rugged, dissected coastal hill backdrop at the northern end of the unit.



Photograph 54: Steep coastal cliffs with narrow sandy beach and rock outcrops.



Photograph 55: Stratified coastal cliffs and reefs.



Photograph 56: Steep cliff faces backdropped by rugged coastal hills.



Photograph 57: Typical character of valley draining to coast with modest buildings (Tauhua Stream valley).



Photograph 58: Typical character of steep cliff landforms south of Kiritehere.



Photograph 59: Dramatic coastal landforms.



Photograph 60: Typical character of rugged coastal cliffs near Tapirimoko Point.



Photograph 61: Coastal vegetation atop exposed coastal cliffs.



Photograph 62: Typical character of the rugged coastal hill country backdrop to the south of Kiritehere.



Photograph 63: The dramatic, distinctly stratified and actively eroding Tirua Point landform.



Photograph 64: Typical character of bay (with dunes, sand flats and winding stream) along this stretch of coastline with modest buildings (Nukuhakari Bay).

LCU 5: Awakino-Mokau Coastline

Extent of LCU	LCU 5 relates to the coastal settlements at Mokau and Awakino and their low-lying hinterland.
LCU boundaries	South: District boundary and toe of coastal hill slopes flanking Mokau. East: toe of slopes or bush edges framing the valleys immediately behind Mokau and Awakino (e.g. Mackford). North: toe of slopes flanking the north side of Awakino. West: coastline.
Landform features and patterns	Almost continuous sweep of black sand beach backdropped by dunefields, coastal flats and more moderately sloping and undulating foothills, rising to steep coastal hill backdrop. The Awakino and Mokau River mouths interrupt the sequence and are characterised by dunes, spit landforms and winding river courses flanked by alluvial floodplains (e.g. Mackford). Forms a distinctive stretch of 'easier' country adjacent the west coast that contrasts markedly with the steep coastal cliff landscapes to the north and south. Located within the coastal environment.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly sandstone or coarse siltstone with pockets of ash. NZ Geopreservation Inventory site applies to the dunefields at Awakino. Numerous faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Extensive patterning of SNA along the banks of the Mokau River, the northern side of the Awakino River, throughout the Awakino dunefields and along the coastal frontage between the two settlements.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous streams and rivers draining to coast. Dunes, spit landforms, sand flats, wetlands and floodplains associated with the lower reaches of the Awakino and Mokau Rivers. Natural lagoon at Awakino formed by spit patterning.
Land use	Small-scale lifestyle lots and hobby farming throughout lower lying coastal areas flanking the settlements. Larger scaled low-intensity pastoral farming throughout floodplains extending into steeper land. Bush (and to a lesser degree, scrub) cover dominating steeper and/or more elevated land to the north of Awakino. Elsewhere steep land in pastoral use with erosion evident. Very limited pockets of production forestry.
Settlement patterns	Small mixed permanent and holiday settlement at Awakino configured on the south banks of the river, east of SH3 and behind the spit. Larger mixed permanent and holiday settlement at Mokau straddles SH3 on the north side of the Mokau River and across the (relatively small-scale) spit. Sea level rise/dune erosion threatening the seaward margins of the existing settlement. Almost continuous scattering of dwellings and holiday homes alongside the coastal highway running between the two settlements. Scattered small dwellings throughout floodplain hinterland behind Mokau.
Access and proximity to key route	Located on SH3, a national state highway that serves the west coast of the North Island and forms a link between SH1 and SH2. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Numerous cultural heritage sites throughout unit.
Recreation features	Rivers popular for whitebaiting, backcountry fishing and kayaking. Settlements both stopover points for travellers using SH3. Pocket of bush in DoC ownership north of Awakino. Extensive tracts of DoC-owned land in bush cover throughout the steep land on the north and south sides of the more inland reaches of the Mokau River (i.e. extending eastwards to Mackford). Surfbreaks of regional significance at Awakino and Mokau.
Infrastructure features	Gas line extends from the coast south of Mokau, roughly north eastwards towards Mahoenui.

Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Residential zone applying to the Mokau 'settlement' area (not at Awakino) and Conservation zoning applying to DoC and reserve land. Landscape Policy Area applies to land on the west side of SH3 at Awakino and the stretch of coastline to the south, terminating at the north end of Mokau. Policies seek to protect rural landscape values and the natural features of the area. ONF (2018) identified at Awakino encompassing the dunefield (NZ Geopreservation site), a landform feature east of Pahaoa (258m) and the lower reaches of the Mokau River, including parts of its margins (to which an SNA also applies).
Waikato RPS	Very High Natural Character overlay applies to beach and waters adjoining the LCU. High Natural Character overlay applies to Awakino dunefield. Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to the foothill landform at the south end of the Manganui, near Fraser Smith Road and Manganui Road.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	The coastal area immediately to the south is identified as Coastal Policy Area . The Mohakatino River and coastline further south is identified as Regionally Significant Landscape (but not an Outstanding Landscape). The coastline immediately to the south of Mokau is proposed as ONL in TRC Proposed Coastal Plan 2018.
Visibility/prominence	High public profile as a consequence of exposure to SH3.
Key views	Attractive views of the coastal cliffs, river courses and mouths, dunefields, Tasman Sea, western coastline and coastal hill backdrop. Dramatic views open up to Mt Taranaki from Awakino.
Naturalness	Generally a moderate-low degree of naturalness as a consequence of the dominant influence of human modification associated with the highway corridor (including bridges), settlement areas and scattered dwellings/holiday homes and baches along the road network. Localised areas of higher naturalness associated with secluded areas of the dunefields, beach and river margins where built development is screened from view.
Complexity	Relatively high level of complexity largely as a consequence of the landform patterning and built modification.
Coherence	A reasonably low level of coherence largely as a consequence of fragmented nature of the landcover and land use patterns.
Legibility	A high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Gully vegetation patterning serves to reinforce landscape legibility in places.
Expressiveness	Coastal cliff features, winding streams/river and dunes strongly expressive of landscape-shaping processes. Highly visible erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a relatively developed portion of the Waitomo western coastline as a consequence of the existing level of residential development and the busy state highway route that passes through the area. The unit also stands out as one of the few sizeable areas of flatter land that is easily accessible along the west coast.



Photograph 65: Aerial view looking southwards over Awakino dunefields, coast, settlement and backdrop.



Photograph 66: Awakino River and settlement. SH3 to left of view by river edge.



Photograph 67: SH3 between Awakino and Mokau. Lifestyle and holiday home development.



Photograph 68: Northern end of Mokau.



Photograph 69: Mokau settlement and river mouth.



Photograph 70: Erosion along coastline at Mokau.



Photograph 71: Aerial view of Mokau looking northwards along coast towards Awakino.



Photograph 72: Valleys and bush/scrub clad hills behind Mokau.



Photograph 73: Valleys and hills behind Mokau. SH3 (south of Awakino Gorge) in centre of view.

LCU 6: Mokau Hills

Extent of LCU	LCU 6 captures the predominantly bush clad hills/steeply incised valleys and elevated pastoral terraces in the south-western quadrant of the district, inland of Mokau and to the south of the Awakino Gorge.
LCU boundaries	South: District boundary. East: bush edges. North: upper edge of Awakino Gorge. West: proposed WDC coastal environment line and steep slopes/bush edges that frame the valleys behind Mokau and Awakino.
Landform features and patterns	Forms part of the rugged and extensive hill system that extends between the south-western end of the Waitomo District around to the Taranaki Basin. Highpoints up to 564m. Steeply incised and dissected terrain. Areas of raised terraces along southern edge of Awakino Gorge (LCU 7) edged with an intricate patterning of (bush-clad) steep cliff faces and gullies (in the vicinity of Bexley Station).
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly sandstone and mudstone with ash and coal deposits. Numerous faults bisect the area. Coal deposits.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA resulting in a vast expanse of contiguous SNA. Generally comprises original conifer-broadleaf forest cover. Limited pockets of production forestry. One isolated patch of QE II bush in north-western margins of the unit. Scrub cover in places.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous streams and rivers draining to the coast eventually via the Mokau River.
Land use	Predominantly in bush cover with some (relatively limited) areas of production forestry and scrub cover. Low-intensity pastoral farming on easier and lower slopes and throughout the raised terraces (e.g. Bexley Station). Erosion evident. Several disused mines. Some active quarrying.
Settlement patterns	Very scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings. Logging operations in places with associated utilitarian buildings/tracks etc.
Access and proximity to key route	Although the area is close to SH3, very limited road network makes it relatively inaccessible.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Some cultural heritage sites throughout unit, largely along stream and river margins. (NB considerably less than that associated with the western coastline nearby). Historically the Mokau River was an important boundary between the Tainui and Taranaki tribal areas.
Recreation features	DoC track in south portion of unit east of Mackford with hut on the Mokau. Popular hunting and whitebaiting area. Extensive tracts of DoC-owned land in bush cover throughout the steep land on the north and south sides of the unit.
Infrastructure features	Gas line extends from the coast south of Mokau roughly north eastwards towards Mahoenui through the north-western margins of the unit.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Conservation zoning applying to DoC and QE II land.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the distinctive (roughly) flat-topped hill system extending between Paehere (307m), Papakauri (471m) and Puketawa (475m). the distinctive landform in the vicinity of Bexley Station comprising raised terraces edged with intricately indented, steep bush-clad cliff faces, gullies and slopes. the network of bluffs and ridge landforms to the southeast of the Mokau near Panirau Island.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	No Regionally Significant Landscape or Outstanding Landscape overlay applies to New Plymouth District land abutting the LCU. No ONFL classification on land adjoining the LCU located within the Ruapehu District.
Visibility/prominence	Very limited visibility due to inaccessibility. Visibility limited to landowners, farm/forestry workers, visitors (predominantly hunting and fishing related) and people in aircraft flying over the area.

Key views	Attractive views of the rugged, predominantly bush-clad terrain. The raised terraces edged with bush-clad steep slopes and dramatic bluff and ridgeline features form distinctive and memorable visual elements.
Naturalness	Generally a high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain interspersed with numerous watercourses; the inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident. Localised areas of reduced naturalness associated with pastoral farming.
Complexity	Relatively high level of complexity largely as a consequence of the intricate landform patterning.
Coherence	A reasonably high level of coherence largely as a consequence of almost continuous mantle of bush cover over the extensive rugged hill system.
Legibility	A high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Gully vegetation patterning serves to reinforce landscape legibility in places.
Expressiveness	Complex ridgeline patterns, steeply incised valleys and winding streams/rivers expressive of landscape shaping processes. Erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a relatively undeveloped and untouched part of the District that, for the most part, displays a very high degree of naturalness, a sense of remoteness/wilderness and an attractive and memorable character as a consequence of: the dramatic and rugged terrain; the extensive and original conifer-broadleaf forest cover; the intricate and extensive patterning of rivers and streams; and the very limited level of human modification.



Photograph 74: Bush and scrub covered Mokau Hills and Mokau River, inland of Mokau settlement.



Photograph 75: Typical character of extensive bush clad hill country of LCU 6.



Photograph 76: Elevated pastoral terraces sharply defined by steep bush clad valleys and flanked by extensive bush clad hills. Awakino Gorge (and SH3) glimpsed to left of view.

LCU 7: Awakino Gorge

Extent of LCU	LCU 7 encompasses the Awakino Gorge.
LCU boundaries	South: upper edge of Awakino Gorge. East: eastern end of Awakino Gorge where it opens out into the Mahoenui valley. North: upper edge of Awakino Gorge. West: western end of Awakino Gorge where it opens out into the Awakino valley.
Landform features and patterns	Steeply incised gorge alongside the Awakino River. The rugged Mokau hill system and elevated terraces (LCU 6) frame the south side of the gorge, and similarly rugged hills and terraces associated with the southern foothills of the Herangi Range define the northern side. Spectacular limestone bluffs in places.
Geological features and patterns	Complex mix of greywacke, mudstone, limestone, alluvium and glacial drift, fine siltstone. Numerous faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA of Local or Regional Ecological significance. One isolated patch of QE II bush in north-western margins of the unit.
Hydrological features and patterns	Convoluting course of the Awakino River runs alongside highway.
Land use	Bush and production forestry cover (very approximate 50:50 split). State highway (SH3) with distinctive tunnel.
Settlement patterns	No dwellings/buildings evident. Logging operations in places with associated utilitarian buildings/tracks etc.
Access and proximity to key route	SH3 passes through the unit, a national state highway that serves the west coast of the North Island and forms a link between SH1 and SH2. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit, although much slower through the gorge. This stretch of the road is highly prone to slips and rock falls.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	No mapped cultural sites on WDC mapping.
Recreation features	Scenic road corridor. Some bush areas in DoC ownership although no tracks evident.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features on WDC mapping (other than SH3).
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Conservation zoning applying to DoC.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to: the distinctive (predominantly bush-clad) landforms framing the south-eastern side of the gorge and on its north side at the eastern end (where it opens to the Mahoenui Valley LCU 12).
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A.
Visibility/prominence	High public profile as a consequence of exposure to SH3.
Key views	Highly attractive and memorable views of the river winding through the dramatic and richly textured bush-clad cliffs, with spectacular views of limestone bluffs towering over the gorge in places. Markedly contrasting enclosed and (predominantly) endemic character of this stretch of the highway serves to heighten its visual impression and appeal. Distinctive road tunnel through natural rock adds to the scenic appeal. At southern end of gorge, highly attractive and memorable views open up to the coast and Mt Taranaki.
Naturalness	Generally a moderate to high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale and dramatic vegetation-clad landforms that enclose the road corridor; and the absence of built development. The highway itself and presence of production forestry and, to a lesser degree, pasture cover contribute a moderating effect in this regard; however, it is fair to say that the generally quite modest scale of the highway together with its winding character (such that long range views of the highway are not available) serves to limit its influence on the sense of naturalness associated with the unit.

Complexity	Relatively high level of complexity largely as a consequence of the intricate landform patterning.
Coherence	A reasonably high level of coherence largely as a consequence of virtually continuous vegetation cover and absence of built modification other than the highway.
Legibility	A high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns.
Expressiveness	Bluff features and winding river expressive of landscape-shaping processes.
Sense of Place	Generally the area reads as a highly memorable and dramatic scenic highway corridor. The large-scale and striking vegetation-clad cliff landforms and limestone bluffs create a strong sense of enclosure and intimacy. The convoluted nature of the route through the gorge promotes a sense of mystery. Close-range views of: the winding river flanked by richly textured native vegetation; the rock tunnel; and the towering bluffs serve to enrich the overall experience. The vivid contrast of the gorge with the more open valley landscapes at either end serves to heighten the experience. For southbound travellers, the gorge reads as somewhat of a gateway to the 'wild west coast' and for northbound travellers, the gorge reads as a gateway to the more sheltered and working rural landscapes associated with the lower portion of the Waikato region.



Photograph 77: Southern end of Awakino Gorge looking westwards.



Photograph 78: Awakino Gorge and River to right of view. Bush clad Mokau Hills to right of view. Steeply dissected foothills of Herangi Range to left of view.



Photograph 79: Typical character of the dramatic views from the highway to the vegetation draped limestone bluffs.



Photograph 80: Typical character of the view to the Awakino River and steep bush clad slopes from the highway.



Photograph 81: Dramatic limestone bluff in the Awakino Gorge. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sondyaustin/3036178730>



Photograph 82: Mix of bush cover and production forestry flanking the gorge.



Photograph 83: Awakino Gorge tunnel.

LCU 8: Herangi-Pomarangai

Extent of LCU	LCU 8 encompasses the elevated hills, foothills and narrow inland valleys along the western side of the District, roughly extending from Manganui in the south to Puketaruwhenua in the north and including the Herangi Range.
LCU boundaries	South: upper edge of the Awakino Gorge and ridgelines defining the Mahoenui Valley. East: bush cover boundary. North: bush line with 200m contour line used to define extent across pastoral 'slivers' between bush slopes throughout northern end (east of Marokopa) and the 300m contour used to define extent across pastoral 'slivers' between bush slopes to the northeast of Pomarangai. West: proposed WDC coastal environment line.
Landform features and patterns	Complex network of steep rugged hill country extending from Puketaruwhenua (456m) to the northern edge of the Awakino Gorge in the south. Includes the Herangi Range (Whareorino Conservation Area) that rises to 1280m at its highest point (Maungamangero) and the unit also takes in the eastern side of the ridgelines that frame the coast to the west. Steeply sloping and dissected landforms interspersed with numerous stream valleys. Dramatic and distinctive ridgelines and peaks in places. Some broader valleys evident: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at the south end of the coastal hills (near Waikawau); - between the coastal hills and north end of Herangi Range/Puketaruwhenua in the vicinity of Moeatoa and the inland valley behind Kiritehere, around the north that rise to form part of the rugged and extensive hill system that extends between the south-western end of the Waitomo District around to the Taranaki Basin. Highpoints up to 564m; and - along the south-eastern margins of the unit in the vicinity of Gribben Road. Highly sculpted pastoral landforms frame stream valleys in places (some in pasture cover). Towards the south end, the ranges give way to more moderately sloping foothill type landforms that frame the northern edge of the Awakino Gorge and the inland valley behind Awakino. D (High Significance) and E (Local Significance) cave features at the south end of the unit in the vicinity of Taumatamaire Road. Coal deposits.
Geological features and patterns	Very high value geological fossil features at Rauroa Stream. Very high value Paparahia Cave feature at Paparahia Station. Predominantly greywacke with pockets of limestone, mudstone, fine siltstone towards the southern end of the unit. Numerous faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Virtually all of the bush cover in the area is identified as SNA of National Significance resulting in a vast expanse of contiguous SNA. Whareorino features tawa, hinau, kamahi, and rewarewa as well as podocarps, and is particularly valued for its range of vegetation, from coastal and lowland vegetation types to subalpine and montane. Its proximity to the west coast provides an unusually cold and moist climate. At the top of the Herangi Range, 600–800 m above sea level, the ridges are covered in low scrub and kaikawaka along with neinei, pepperwood and divaricating shrubs interspersed with areas of cushion bog. This vegetation is sub-alpine and uncommon in the King Country. Riroriro (grey warbler), miromiro (tomtit), tititi pounamu (rifleman) and koekoeā (long-tailed cuckoo), kereru (wood pigeon), korimako (bellbird), pōpokotea (whitehead), kārearea (bush falcon), kaka, kiwi, kokako, native bats, Archey's frogs and Hochstetter's frog recorded in Whareorino Forest. The majority of bush areas are in DoC ownership. Sizeable areas of QE II covenanted bush around the southern margins of the Herangi Range. Isolated patch of QE II bush in north-western margins of the unit.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous streams and rivers bisect the area with some wetland areas in inland valleys.
Land use	Predominantly in bush cover with some (relatively limited) areas of production forestry and scrub cover. Low-intensity pastoral farming throughout the broader inland valleys and flanking hill country, and throughout the foothills at the south end of the Herangi Range. Erosion evident.
Settlement patterns	Very scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings. Generally a relatively low key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character.
Access and proximity to key route	Accessed via unsealed winding one lane roads. Generally relatively inaccessible and 'off the beaten track'.
Historic heritage features	No mapped heritage points in WDC mapping.

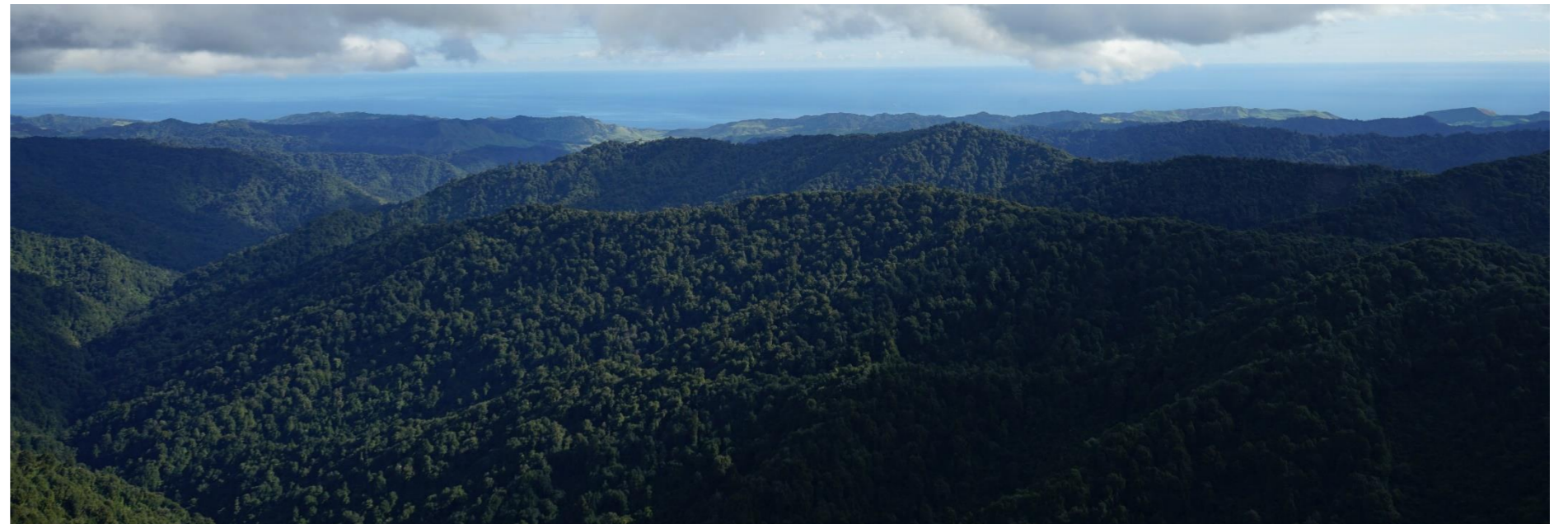
Cultural landscape features	A few cultural heritage sites throughout unit.
Recreation features	Network of DoC tracks (intermediate and advanced ratings) throughout Whareorino Conservation Area with a hut at Leitch's Clearing. Popular hunting area. Awakino River popular for fly fishing. Scenic route through Pomarangai Road, Mangatoa Road and Manganui Road.
Infrastructure features	Gas line extends from the coast south of Mokau roughly north eastwards towards Mahoenui through the southern margins of the unit.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Generally Rural zone with Conservation zoning applying to all DoC land and an area of private land to the east of Manganui Road and Mt Misery. D and E Cave overlays at the south end of the unit in the vicinity of Taumatamaire Road. (High Significance and Local Significance respectively).
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to the "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" at the southern and south-western margins of the unit. High Value Amenity Natural Features and Landscapes overlay applies to the southern portion of the Herangi Range (noting that this does not correspond to the southern end of the unit). Outstanding Landscape overlay applies to northern portion of Herangi Range, roughly extending from Pomarangai Road southwards to the hills east of Waikawau and capturing the majority of the coastal bush clad between Kiritere and Waikawau.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A.
Visibility/prominence	Despite the relative inaccessibility of the area, the very high landforms make the unit prominent in views from the wider landscape, including the accessible areas of the coastline to the west (e.g. Waikawau) and parts of the low-lying catchment to the east.
Key views	Highly attractive and memorable views of the rugged and dramatic large-scale bush-clad ridgeline and peak landforms, and steeply incised valleys from local roads and walking tracks. Longer range views to the bush clad ranges and distinctive peaks from SH3.
Naturalness	Generally a very high degree of naturalness as a consequence of: the dominant influence of the large-scale rugged bush-clad terrain; the relatively inaccessibility of the area; and the generally very limited level of human modification evident. Localised areas of reduced naturalness associated with pastoral farming, although the limited scale within the wider footprint and/or with its limited visibility means that it does not contribute an appreciable landscape character-shaping influence on the wider unit.
Complexity	Relatively high level of complexity largely as a consequence of the intricate landform patterning.
Coherence	A reasonably high level of coherence largely as a consequence of almost continuous mantle of bush cover over the extensive rugged hill system.
Legibility	A high level of landscape legibility as a consequence of the bold landform and watercourse patterns. Gully vegetation patterning serves to reinforce landscape legibility in places.
Expressiveness	Complex ridgeline patterns, winding streams and gully remnant patterning expressive of landscape-shaping processes. Erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Character Unit boundaries	South: upper edge of the Awakino Gorge and toe of slopes defining the Mahoenui Valley. East: bush cover boundary. North: bush line. West: proposed WDC coastal environment line.
Sub character areas within the Landscape Character Unit	N/A
Sense of Place	Generally the area reads as an untouched part of the District that displays a high degree of naturalness/'endemic-ness', a sense of remoteness/wilderness and an attractive and memorable character as a consequence of: the dramatic and rugged terrain; the extensive and diverse bush cover; the rich fauna values; the intricate and extensive patterning of streams; and the very limited level of human modification. The very low-key scale of pastoral farming and dwellings/farm buildings together with their relatively limited extent is such that they do not detract from the overall sense of place as a more unmodified part of the district.



Photograph 84: More moderately to steeply sloping network of pastoral foothills at south end of unit.



Photograph 85: Typical bush character with stunted subalpine type vegetation throughout the higher ridgelines.



Photograph 86: Relationship of ranges to coastline - line of intervening coastal hills and ridgelines separates the Herangi Range 'proper' (i.e. east of Manganui Road and Mangatoa Road) from the coast.



Photograph 87: Typical character of dense bush clad ranges, ridgelines and distinctive peaks.



Photograph 88: Typical character of steeped sided and relatively narrow inland valley.



Photograph 89: Typical character of LCU11- limited pastoral land use evident in places throughout elevated areas.



Photograph 90: Looking eastwards from above the Herangi Range to the wider rural landscape that dominates the central and eastern portions of the district.



Photograph 91: Typical character of sculpted pastoral hills and ridgelines along the central stream valley coinciding with Mangatoa Road and Manganui Road.



Photograph 92: Typical character of highly attractive bush views available from road network.



Photograph 93: Typical character of pastoral farming within inland valley.



Photograph 94: Typical character of pastoral farming within inland valley.



Photograph 97: Limestone outcrop near Gibbon Road.



Photograph 95: Typical character of scenic route.



Photograph 96: One of several DoC tracks that provide tramping and hunting access throughout the area.



Photograph 98: Typical low key and 'old school NZ' settlement character.



Photograph 99: Production forestry in places.



Photograph 100: Erosion in places associated with pastoral farming.



Photograph 101: Dramatic views of vegetation draped limestone bluffs in the south-eastern margins of the unit (Gibbon Road environs).



Photograph 102: Typical character of sculpted landforms within inland valley.

LCU 9: Mahoenui Valley

Extent of LCU	LCU corresponds to the flat valley extending between the north end of the Awakino Gorge and (approximately) the intersection of SH3 and Totoro Road.
Character Unit boundaries	South: (approximately) ridgeline landforms framing the south side of the valley. East: (approximately) the rising landforms in the vicinity of the SH3-Totoro Road intersection. North: (approximately) ridgeline landforms framing the north side of the valley. West: the northern end of the Awakino Gorge.
Landform features and patterns	Irregularly shaped alluvial floodplain flanking the Awakino River. E cave features (Local Significance) on the northwest side of the unit in the vicinity of Taumatamaire Road.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly floodplain alluvium with greywacke along the northern valley edges. Pockets of ash. Numerous faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Original wetland throughout the valley has been drained for agricultural use. Very limited fragments of SNA identified around the margins of the valley and along the edges of the Awakino River. Other vegetation features include: roadside plantings; shelterbelts and hedgerows along fencelines; production forestry, scattered shade trees for stock; amenity plantings around dwellings and rural buildings. Mix of indigenous and exotic species. Some riparian remnants in places.
Hydrological features and patterns	Numerous tributaries draining for the north and south to the Awakino River as it winds its way south westwards across the floodplain.
Land use	Predominantly in pastoral land use with a mix of intensive farming, cropping and low-intensity farming. Generally regarded to be one of the more productive parts of the District primarily due to the easy terrain (predominantly Land Use Capability rating 2). Predominantly gley soils - prone to flooding. Limited pockets of production forestry mainly around valley margins.
Settlement patterns	Scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings. Some larger scale structures associated with more intensive farming operations. Settlement node at Mahoenui (hall etc). Generally a relatively low-key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character.
Access and proximity to key route	SH3 traverses the valley, a national state highway that serves the west coast of the North Island and forms a link between SH1 and SH2. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit.
Historic heritage features	No mapped Heritage Points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Two mapped archaeological sites in WDC mapping along the banks of the Awakino River to the southwest of Mahoenui.
Recreation features	No notable features.
Infrastructure features	Gas line extends on a southwest to northeast orientation through the entire unit.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Rural zone. Quite extensive network of Esplanade Strips/Reserves along the margins of the Awakino River (predominantly zoned Road with a few in DoC ownership/QE II covenant). E Cave overlays on the northwest side of the unit in the vicinity of Taumatamaire Road (Local Significance).
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to the "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" towards the south-western portion of the unit.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A.
Visibility/prominence	High public profile as a consequence of exposure to SH3.

Key views	Attractive rural views out to Herangi Ranges (and foothills) and the Mokau Hills from parts of SH3. Particularly memorable view to the Herangi Ranges for southbound road users through the more elevated section of SH3 at the northern end of the unit where the motorist moves from the more enclosed Elevated Central Hills area to the more open valley landscape.
Naturalness	Generally a low degree of naturalness as a consequence of the dominant influence of the working rural landscape.
Complexity	Variable level of complexity largely as a consequence of the vegetation patterning throughout farmland and around dwellings. The winding river and its vegetated margins provide additional complexity in places.
Coherence	Despite the simplicity of the floodplain landform, generally a relatively low level of coherence as a consequence of the fragmented vegetation patterns.
Legibility	Landscape legibility derives from convoluted river patterning (typical of floodplains) and is reinforced by riparian remnants in places.
Expressiveness	The winding river course and alluvial flat plains are expressive of landscape-shaping processes.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a working rural landscape that is valued as a place to live and work in, and to travel through. The relatively contained nature of the valley, together with its reasonably consistent land use patterning and contrasting landform character to the surrounding rolling and steep hill country results in a legible 'place' within the district.



Photograph 103: Aerial view of Mahoenui Valley looking north-westwards.



Photograph 104: Mahoenui Valley roughly corresponds to the flatter land in the centre of view.



Photograph 105: Cropping throughout the floodplains and looking westwards to the Herangi Range.



Photograph 106: Typical character of pastoral hill slopes framing valley.



Photograph 107: Typical working rural landscape character throughout the valley.



Photograph 108: Typical low key and modest settlement character at Mahoenui.



Photograph 109: Typical hill and range backdrop on the western side of the unit.



Photograph 110: Typical working rural landscape character straddling SH3 within the unit. LCU 10 Central Rolling Lowlands forms backdrop.
Source: Google Earth.



Photograph 111: Typical working rural landscape character straddling SH3 within the unit. LCU 10 Central Rolling Lowlands in midground with LCU 6 Mokau Hills forming backdrop.
Source: Google Earth.

LCU 10: Central Rolling Lowlands

Extent of LCU	<p>LCU10 very roughly corresponds to the rolling hills (and internal valleys) that sit within the 80m-200m contour range that extend from the Mahoenui Valley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - westwards to take in Aria, Mokaiti, Ngatamahine; - north westwards, including Te Mapara, Piopio, Arapae, Eight Mile Junction, the lower reaches of the Mangapehi River catchment, Tanehopuwai and the rural margins of Te Kuiti (including Mangatea, Waiteti and Hangatiki). <p>Topography and land use are key determinants in the extent of LCU 10.</p>
Character Unit boundaries	<p>The unit very roughly corresponds to the 80m - 200m contour range with the very approximate boundaries as follows:</p> <p>South: (approximately) the 200m contour i.e. the toe of the steeper hill country running along the southern edge of the District (LCU 14 Elevated Eastern Hills).</p> <p>East: (approximately) the 200m contour and corresponding to the rising landforms in the eastern portion of the District (LCU 14 Elevated Eastern Hills).</p> <p>North: (approximately) the 200m contour and roughly corresponding to the swathe of rolling hills around and to the north of Te Kuiti.</p> <p>West: (approximately) the 200m contour and roughly corresponding to the edge of the LCU 13 Elevated Central Hills and Valleys. Excludes margins that are dominated by Karst and Cave overlays to the west of Te Kuiti, Piopio and around Waitomo, where generally follows 80m contour.</p>
Landform features and patterns	<p>Intricate and complex patterning of rolling hills and valleys interspersed with more open and gently undulating valleys/floodplains areas in places. Steep razorback ridges in places.</p> <p>Scattered patterning of cave features C (Regional Significance), D (High Significance) and E (Local Significance) throughout the Totoro Road area (extends between SH3 and Aria) and nearby along the Gribbon Road and Mangaoronga Road valleys on the north side of SH3.</p> <p>Highly sculpted pastoral landforms in places.</p>
Geological features and patterns	<p>Complex mix of predominantly greywacke and ash with areas of limestone and sandstone.</p> <p>Numerous faults bisect the area.</p>
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	<p>Fragmented patterning of SNAs throughout the area, generally corresponding to more elevated and steeper land (that is less suited to agricultural use) and riparian remnants.</p> <p>Other vegetation features include: roadside plantings; shelterbelts and hedgerows along fencelines; scattered shade trees for stock; amenity plantings around dwellings and rural buildings. Mix of indigenous and exotic species.</p> <p>Some very limited fragments of QE II bush/riparian remnants in places.</p>
Hydrological features and patterns	<p>Highly complex patterning of rivers and streams throughout the unit.</p> <p>Land to the north of Eight Mile Junction generally drains northwards to the Waipa River.</p> <p>Land to the south of Eight Mile Junction generally drains to the Mokau and Awakino Rivers.</p>
Land use	<p>Predominantly in low-intensity pastoral land use. Some intensive farming throughout easy terrain. Swathes of land with higher landscape use capability ratings around the Wairoroma Stream valley/Mokau River margins, Aria, Piopio, Arapae, Eight Mile Junction and the Mangaokewa River margins to the north of Te Kuiti.</p> <p>Predominantly allophanic and brown soils with some areas of gley (coinciding with valley floors). Gley soils - prone to flooding.</p> <p>Limited pockets of production forestry mainly around south edges of the unit. Localised pockets on steeper and elevated land (that is less suited to agricultural use).</p> <p>Numerous quarries throughout the area.</p>
Settlement patterns	<p>Scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings. Some larger scale structures associated with more intensive farming operations.</p> <p>A scattering of small rural settlements (e.g. Aria). Generally a relatively low-key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character.</p> <p>Larger settlements at Piopio and Te Kuiti (both on SH3) that function as important rural service towns and important tourist stopping points.</p>
Access and proximity to key route	<p>SH3 traverses the unit, a national state highway that serves the west coast of the North Island and forms a link between SH1 and SH2. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit.</p> <p>SH4 extends from Eight Mile Junction south westwards through the unit and 'primary collector road' that forms a shortcut between two points on SH3, thereby avoiding Taranaki and the coasts of the North and South Taranaki Bights. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit.</p> <p>Network of sealed and unsealed roads provide access throughout. Dead-end unsealed single-lane roads in southern portion of the unit.</p>
Historic heritage features	<p>Heritage building (H4444) near Te Kumi north of Te Kuiti.</p>

Cultural landscape features	Scattered cultural sites throughout the unit, particularly along stream and river corridors.
Recreation features	Popular scenic route forms a loop route between Mahoenui, Aria and Piopio via Totoro Road (highly attractive and intimate, winding rural stream valley with numerous limestone bluff and rock outcrops) and Aria Road (attractive old school NZ rural settlement at Aria) which partially coincides with LCU 10. Features along the way include the Wairere Falls. Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve southeast of Te Kuiti. Te Araroa Trail passes through the unit. Frederick Miller Memorial Reserve walkway (near Eight Mile Junction).
Infrastructure features	Gas line extends on a southwest to north east orientation through the entire unit.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Rural zone (excepting urban zonings at Piopio and Te Kuiti). Limited Conservation zoned areas that apply to some of the DoC owned land. C, D and E Cave overlays throughout the Totoro Road area (extends between SH3 and Aria) and nearby along the Gribbon Road and Mangaoronga Road valleys on the north side of SH3. (Regional, High and Local Significance respectively.) ONF (2018) applies to Wairere serpentinite, rodingite and rosenhahnite and Wairere Falls and karst in the vicinity of Aria, Totoro Gorge karst near Totoro Road, Mangaoronga Gorge and natural bridges in the Mangaoronga Road valley and Lower Mangaotaki Gorge approximately midway between the SH3 Totoro Road intersection and Marmont.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to an extensive area of "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" throughout the unit. NB this mapping is likely to be considerably coarse-grained (by virtue of the regionwide study from which it is derived and the datasets that were available at the time of the study) and is quite different in extent to the Cave, Karst and ONF overlays mapped by Dr Bruce Hayward for the Waitomo District in 2018.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	N/A.
Visibility/prominence	High public profile as a consequence of exposure to SH3, and to a lesser degree, SH4. Popular scenic route along Totoro Road/Aria Road. Te Araroa Trail also suggests moderate public profile through part of the unit.
Key views	Highly attractive rural views out to the Herangi Ranges (and foothills) and the Mokau Hills from parts of SH3. Highly attractive and dramatic views of limestone bluffs and outcrops from SH3 south of Te Kuiti. Highly attractive western views from SH3 to the rolling hill country in places. Attractive rural views from SH4 in places. Highly attractive rural views along the numerous quiet rural roads including: Totoro Road (intimate, winding rural stream valley with numerous limestone bluff and rock outcrops) and Aria Road (attractive old school NZ rural settlement at Aria). Views from Te Araroa. Views within and to Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve. Attractive panoramic views out over the central hills/valleys and rolling lowlands and across the Herangi Range from the Frederick Miller Memorial Reserve, near Eight Mile Junction. Attractive panoramic views out over the central hills/valleys and rolling lowlands and across to the Herangi Range from Kumara Road.
Naturalness	Generally a low degree of naturalness as a consequence of the dominant influence of the working rural landscape, and presence of settlements and highways. Localised areas of higher naturalness on the more 'off the beaten track' unsealed roads towards the margins of the unit.
Complexity	Variable level of complexity largely as a consequence of the intricate landform patterning and the vegetation patterning throughout farmland and around dwellings.
Coherence	Generally a relatively low level of coherence as a consequence of the fragmented vegetation patterns, varied farm management approaches and complex landform patterning.
Legibility	Landscape legibility derives from landform and watercourse patterning and is reinforced by riparian remnants in places.
Expressiveness	The limestone bluffs/rock outcrops, winding river courses and alluvial plains are expressive of landscape shaping processes. Visible erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a working rural landscape that is valued as a place to live and work in, to visit (in parts. E.g. around Totoro Road /Aria, Te Araroa and Mangaokewa Scenic Reserve) and to travel through. The highway network traversing the unit together with the location of the District's two main settlements within this unit confer a sense of this part of the area forming the 'working heart' of the district.



Photograph 112: Typical character of rolling rural landscape.



Photograph 113: Sculpted landforms in places.



Photograph 114: Typical character of open pastoral valleys framed by pastoral sculpted hills.



Photograph 115: Open pastoral valleys framed by more rolling hills.



Photograph 116: Typical character of low key and 'old school NZ' rural settlement character.



Photograph 117: Typical character of rolling hills and valleys.



Photograph 118: Typical character of rolling working rural landscape with broad valleys towards the southern end of the unit.



Photograph 119: Typical character of attractive and intimate rural roadscape.



Photograph 120: Typical character of low intensity pastoral landscape to the southern margins of the unit.

LCU 11: Eastern Hills

Extent of LCU	LCU 11 very roughly corresponds to a complex network of elevated hills that extend eastwards from the central lowlands and to the margins of the central plateau near Benneydale. Very broadly speaking, the extent of LCU 11 coincides with land in the eastern portion of the district that falls between the 200m and 400m contours taking in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the-bush clad hills along the south boundary of the district adjoining the Ruapehu District; - the swathe of hills that stretches from Tangitu in the south through Mapiu, Aratoro, Kopake, Mangapehi, Mangaokewa to Rangitoto to Pururu in the north. Topography and land use are key determinants in the extent of LCU 11.
Character Unit boundaries	The unit very roughly corresponds to the 200m - 400m contour range with the very approximate boundaries as follows: South: (approximately) the 400m contour i.e. the district boundary (adjacent the Ruapehu District) and the toe of central plateau margins towards the southeast (LCU 15 Central Plateau Margins). East: (approximately) the 400m contour i.e. the toe of central plateau margins towards the southeast and east side of the district (LCU 15 Central Plateau Margins). North: (approximately) the District boundary (adjacent the Otorohanga District) and the 200m contour and roughly corresponding to the swathe of rolling hills around and to the north of Te Kuiti. West: (approximately) the 200m contour and roughly corresponding to the swathe of rolling hills stretching between the north end of the Awakino Gorge through to the north side of Te Kuiti (LCU 13 Central Rolling Lowlands).
Landform features and patterns	Intricate and complex patterning of moderately to steeply sloping dissected hills and valley system interspersed with more open and gently undulating valleys/floodplains areas in places. Dramatic limestone bluff and rock outcrops in places. Dramatic rhyolite cliffs elsewhere. Highly variable patterning of razorback ridges interspersed with more rolling and sculptural hills and ridgelines.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly ignimbrite with areas of mudstone, greywacke, limestone, sandstone and volcanic alluvium. Faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Fragmented patterning of SNAs throughout the area, generally corresponding to more elevated and steeper land (that is less suited to agricultural use) and riparian remnants. Some larger bush features in places e.g. Waipa Stream valley, Mangaokewa Stream valley, Raepahu Ridge/Mokau River margins, Mokau hill margins to the south. Other vegetation features include: roadside plantings; shelterbelts and hedgerows along fencelines; scattered shade trees for stock; amenity plantings around dwellings and rural buildings. Mix of indigenous and exotic species. Some fragments of QE II bush/riparian remnants in places (all identified as SNA).
Hydrological features and patterns	Highly complex patterning of rivers and streams throughout the unit. Land roughly to the north of a 'line' extending from Eight Mile Junction to Mangaokewa generally drains northwards to the Waipa River. Land to the south of a 'line' extending from Eight Mile Junction to Mangaokewa generally drains southwards to the Mokau and Awakino Rivers.
Land use	Predominantly in low-intensity pastoral land use. Limited swathes of land with higher landscape use capability ratings around stream valleys e.g. Pururu, Rangitoto, Kopaki, Puketutu, Mangapehi. Predominantly allophanic with some recent and raw soils. Large areas of podzols in eastern portion of the LCU near the central plateau margins. Areas of brown soils towards the southern portion the unit. Varyingly scaled and scattered blocks of production forestry with some extensive plantings in places. Generally located on steeper and elevated land (that is less suited to agricultural use). Several quarries throughout the area, particularly throughout the northern portion of the unit.
Settlement patterns	Benneydale forms main service centre in this portion of the district. The town has a police station, a garage, a corner store that sells hot food and basic groceries, a cafe with accommodation, and a primary school. More recently it has become one of the hubs for the Timber Trail cycle route in Pureora Forest Park. Scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings throughout the balance of the unit. A scattering of small rural settlements. Generally a very low-key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character. Many of the mapped 'settlements' are barely discernible 'on the ground'.
Access and proximity to key route	SH4 extends from Eight Mile Junction south westwards through the unit and comprises a 'primary collector road' that forms a shortcut between two points on SH3, thereby avoiding Taranaki and the coasts of the North and South Taranaki Bights. Two-lane single carriageway, generally 100kmph speed limit. The provincial state highway of SH30 traverses the unit. SH30 links Te Kuiti to Whakatane via Mangakino and Rotorua. With the exception of SH4, SH30 has junctions with every national state highway (single digit highway). Network of sealed and unsealed roads provide access throughout. Dead-end unsealed single-lane roads in southern and northern portions of the unit.
Historic heritage features	No mapped Heritage Points in WDC mapping.

Cultural landscape features	Several scattered cultural sites throughout the unit.
Recreation features	Popular scenic route extends between Aria and SH4 via Mokauiti Road. Also includes Pukerimu Road (linking from SH4 to Kopaki Road). Features along the way include the Madonna Falls, Omaru Falls (walking track), the Aramatai Garden and Mapara Conservation Wildlife Reserve. Te Araoa Trail passes through the unit via the Mangaokewa Stream valley to cross into the Waipa River valley.
Infrastructure features	Two HV transmission lines traverse the central portion of the unit. North Island Main Trunk railway line traverses the unit roughly following the course of SH30 between Te Kuiti and Mangapehi, then veering southwards to Porootarao to follow the Ongarue River valley to Taumarunui.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Rural zone. Fragmented patterning of Conservation zoned areas that apply to DoC owned land and reserve areas. Urban zonings around Benneydale. ONF (2018) applies to Omaru Falls, Hikurangi Falls to the northwest of Kopaki, Puketutu ignimbrite amphitheatre and waterfall south of Puketutu by SH30, Waipa River exhumed fossil forest in the Waipa Stream Valley and Lake Rotokotuku north east of Waiteti.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to fragmented pockets of "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" throughout the unit. NB this mapping is likely to be considerably coarse-grained (by virtue of the region-wide study from which it is derived and the datasets that were available at the time of the study) and is more expansive in extent to the ONF overlays mapped by Dr Bruce Hayward for the Waitomo District in 2018.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	Otorohanga District Plan Landscapes of High Amenity Value (Hinterland) overlay applies to Waipa River valley and Rangitoto Range.
Visibility/prominence	Reasonably high public profile as a consequence of exposure to SH4, and to a lesser degree, SH30 and Te Araroa. Also popular scenic routes/destinations in the area (as described above).
Key views	Highly attractive close and mid-range rural views to limestone and rhyolite bluffs and rock outcrops, sculptural hills and ridgelines from the highways and local roads. Highly attractive waterfall and stream valley views at Omaru Falls and Madonna Falls. Highly attractive bush and bluff views in the Mangaokewa Stream valley and the Waipa River valley (where accessible). Attractive rural views from SH4 and SH30 in places. Highly attractive rural views along the numerous quiet rural roads including: Mokauiti Road, Kopaki Road and Pukerimu Road. Views from Te Araroa (and in particular within the Mangaokewa Stream valley and the Waipa River valley).
Naturalness	A variable degree of naturalness across the unit, as a consequence of the complex landform patterns which serve to limit visibility across the wider unit. Perception of naturalness is largely contingent on the extent of indigenous vegetation features and / or the dominant influence of bold landform/hydrological features (ridgelines, rock outcrops, river), weighed against the character of the working rural landscape (including production forestry). Apart from the highways, transmission line corridors and production forestry areas, there is the generally an impression of a relatively low-key character human modification throughout the unit, typical of low-intensity farmed landscapes.
Complexity	Variable level of complexity largely as a consequence of the landform and vegetation patterning.
Coherence	Generally a relatively low level of coherence as a consequence of the fragmented vegetation patterns, varied farm management approaches and complex landform patterning.
Legibility	Landscape legibility derives from landform and watercourse patterning, the localised landform features (bluffs etc) and is reinforced by riparian remnants in places.
Expressiveness	The limestone and rhyolite bluffs/rock outcrops, winding river courses, and associated floodplains are expressive of landscape-shaping processes. Visible erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a working rural landscape that is valued as a place to live and work in, to visit (in parts eg Te Araroa Trail, Madonna Falls, Omaru Falls (walking track), the Aramatai Garden and Mapara Conservation Wildlife Reserve) and to travel through. The more elevated and dissected terrain in comparison to the rolling lowland hills adjacent (LCU 10) generally results in a less intensive working rural landscape that is highly complex. In places, views to the dramatic limestone and rhyolitic bluff features, sculpted pastoral landforms and bush features are attractive and memorable.



Photograph 121: Transmission line and rail corridor in the unit.



Photograph 122: Typical character of views to dramatic bluffs within pastoral setting.



Photograph 123: Typical character of views to rock outcrops.



Photograph 124: Typical character of views to vegetation draped dramatic bluffs.



Photograph 125: Typical character of rural valleys framed by mixed pasture and bush covered hills.



Photograph 126: Mangaokewa Stream valley.



Photograph 127: Dramatic bluff views around Omaru Falls.



Photograph 128: Omaru Falls.



Photograph 129: Sculpted landforms with remnants.



Photograph 130: Typical working rural landscape outlook within the unit.



Photograph 131: Production forestry and scrub cover in places.



Photograph 132: Aerial view of Eastern Hills and Waipa Stream valley.



Photograph 133: Aerial view of Eastern Hills.



Photograph 134 Eastern Hills.



Photograph 135: Omaru Falls.

LCU 12: Central Plateau and Pureora

Extent of LCU	LCU 12 very roughly corresponds to the margins of the central plateau that fall within the District in the vicinity of Benneydale. Very broadly speaking, the extent of LCU 12 coincides with land above the 400m contour taking in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the swathe of farmland throughout the undulating plateau between Benneydale and Pureora; - the north-western portion of Pureora Forest Park; and - the south-western margins of the Rangitoto Range (Otorohanga District). Topography, elevation and land use are key determinants in the extent of LCU 15.
Character Unit boundaries	The unit very roughly corresponds to land above the 400m contour with very approximate boundaries as follows: South: the district boundary adjoining the Ruapehu District. East: the district boundary adjoining the Ruapehu District and the Taupo District. North: the district boundary adjoining the Otorohanga District. West: (approximately) the 400m contour roughly corresponding to the change in landform patterning from the swathe of dissected hills to the more undulating plateau landform in the vicinity of Benneydale which marks a transition to the central plateau.
Landform features and patterns	Extensive sequence of undulating and hummocky plateaux interspersed with steeply to moderately rolling hills throughout the central portion of the unit. Distinctive hillocks and razorback ridges in places. Rhyolitic rock outcrops in places. Steeply sloping hills to the northern and eastern margins coinciding with the Rangitoto Range and Pureora respectively.
Geological features and patterns	Predominantly ignimbrite with large areas of ash, greywacke and volcanic alluvium. Faults bisect the area.
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	Fragmented patterning of SNAs throughout the area, generally corresponding to more elevated and steeper land (that is less suited to agricultural use) and riparian remnants. Some larger bush features in places e.g. Rangitoto Range margins, around Mapara Stream (near Porootarao) and Waimiha Stream (south of Benneydale). Other vegetation features include: roadside plantings; shelterbelts and hedgerows along fencelines; and scattered shade trees for stock. Mix of indigenous and exotic species reflective of the sub alpine conditions. Some fragments of QE II bush/riparian remnants in places. The portion of Pureora Forest that is located within the unit comprises mainly production forestry. Some Pureora Forest bush areas in DoC ownership.
Hydrological features and patterns	Highly complex patterning of rivers and streams throughout the unit. Numerous wet areas in localised hollows throughout undulating plateau areas. Land in the northern portion of the unit drains to the Waipa River. Land in the central portion of the unit drains to Mokau River, and land in the southern portion of the unit drains to the Ongarue River.
Land use	Intensive farming on easier terrain around Tiroa and Barryville. Elsewhere low-intensity pastoral farming (or forestry/bush cover). Almost entirely podzol soils. Limited pockets of allophanic and brown soils. Extensive tracts of production forestry throughout the northern portion of the unit (Rangitoto Range margins) and Pureora Forest. Smaller scale blocks elsewhere, generally located on steeper land (that is less suited to agricultural use). Three quarries in the unit (Tapuwae and Tiroa). Abattoir near Tiroa (Crusaders Meats).
Settlement patterns	Very sparse patterning of rural dwellings and farm buildings. Generally a very low-key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character. Many of the mapped 'settlements' are barely discernible 'on the ground'. Relatively modest camping, accommodation and other cycling-based tourism infrastructure at Pureora Village associated with the Timber Trail.
Access and proximity to key route	The provincial state highway of SH 30 traverses the unit. SH 30 links Te Kuiti to Whakatane via Mangakino and Rotorua. With the exception of SH4, SH30 has junctions with every national state highway (single digit highway). Network of predominantly unsealed roads elsewhere with significant parts of the unit inaccessible by public road.
Historic heritage features	No mapped Heritage Points in WDC mapping.
Cultural landscape features	Several scattered cultural sites throughout the unit.

Recreation features	Western portion of the unit coincides with the highly popular Timber Trail cycle route that winds its way through Pureora Forest (within the Hauhungaroa Ranges which serve to separate Lake Taupo from Taumarunui) from Pureora to Ongarue. Many of the larger bush blocks in the unit are in DoC ownership. Te Araroa Trail passes through the unit.
Infrastructure features	No mapped infrastructure features in WDC mapping (other than roads).
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Rural zone. Fragmented patterning of Conservation zoned areas that apply to DoC-owned land and bush reserve areas.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to fragmented pockets of "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" to the north and south of Benneydale. NB this mapping is likely to be considerably coarse-grained (by virtue of the region-wide study from which it is derived and the datasets that were available at the time of the study) and is more expansive in extent to the ONF overlays mapped by Dr Bruce Hayward for the Waitomo District in 2018.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	Otorohanga District Plan Landscapes of High Amenity Value (Hinterland) overlay applies to the margins of the Rangitoto Range that fall within the unit.
Visibility/prominence	Moderate public profile as a consequence of exposure SH30, users of the Timber Trail and users of Te Araroa.
Key views	Attractive close and mid-range rural views in places. Rolling plateau areas have a distinctive subalpine character that contrasts with the balance of the district. Views from Te Araroa. Attractive rural views from SH4 and SH30 in places.
Naturalness	A relatively low degree of naturalness across the unit, as a consequence of dominant influence of the working rural landscape, including extensive tracts of production forestry, an abattoir and intensive farming. Localised areas of higher naturalness on the more 'off the beaten track' unsealed roads.
Complexity	Variable level of complexity largely as a consequence of the landform and vegetation patterning.
Coherence	Generally a relatively low level of coherence as a consequence of the fragmented vegetation patterns, varied farm management approaches and landform patterning.
Legibility	Landscape legibility derives from landform and watercourse patterning and is reinforced by riparian remnants in places.
Expressiveness	The winding watercourses and undulating hummocky plateaux are expressive of landscape shaping processes. Visible erosion a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sub character areas within the Landscape Character Unit	N/A
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a working rural landscape that is valued as a place to live and work in, to visit (in connection with the Timber Trail, Te Araroa) and to travel through. The area very much feels a part of the central volcanic plateau, complete with a seemingly more inhospitable climate and sense of isolation and remoteness. The undulating terrain in places has enabled more intensive farming. Throughout the steeper and less accessible parts of the unit, production forestry or bush dominates. In places, views to the sculpted pastoral landforms, distinctive plateau landforms interspersed with gully remnants/bush features are attractive and memorable.



Photograph 136: Aerial view of undulating plateau landforms with gully remnants.



Photograph 137: Intensive farming with Pureora in the backdrop to the right of view.



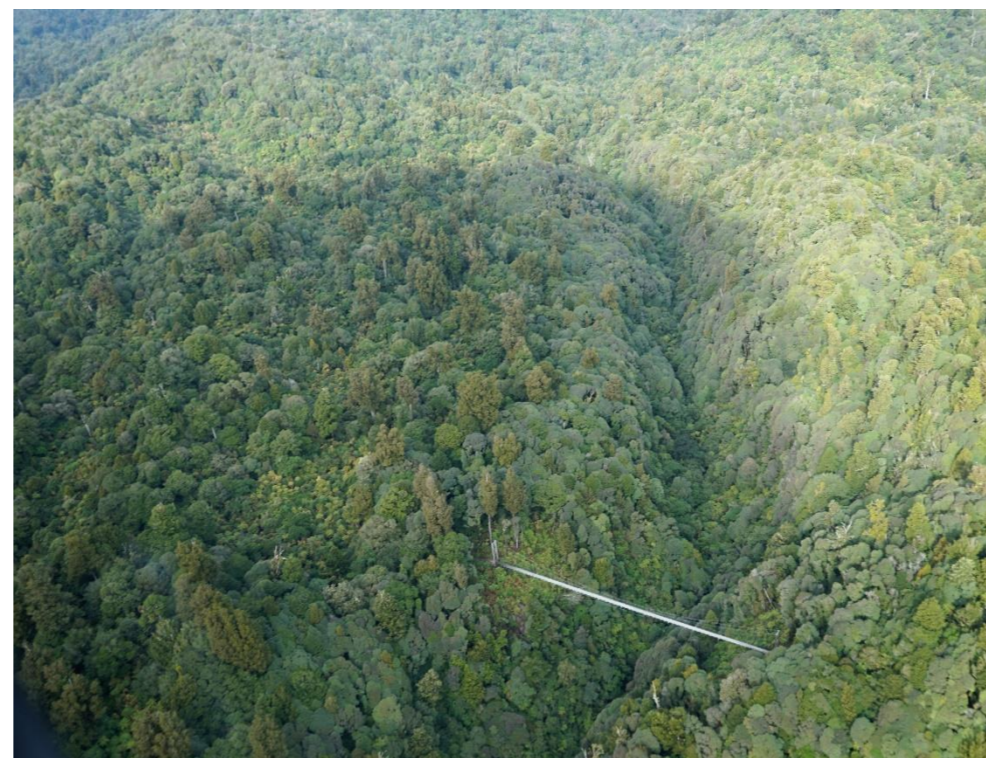
Photograph 138: Production forestry throughout Pureora.



Photograph 139: Regenerating bush and production forestry cover.



Photograph 140: Typical character of farming throughout plateau area.



Photograph 141: Mature bush within Pureora Forest (generally outside Waitomo District).



Photograph 142: Hut within Pureora Forest (outside of Waitomo District).



Photograph 143: Abrupt edge to forestry edges.



Photograph 144: Bush and gully remnants.



Photograph 145: Sculpted landforms throughout plateau area.



Photograph 146: Typical character of working rural landscape throughout plateau as seen from SH 30.



Photograph 147: Typical character of working rural landscape throughout plateau as seen from SH 30.



Photograph 148: Typical rural outlook from SH 30. Crusaders Abattoir to left of view.



Photograph 149: Typical rural outlook from SH 30 across undulating plateau.

LCU 13: Elevated Central Hills and Valleys

Extent of LCU	<p>LCU 13 very roughly corresponds to the elevated hills and valleys throughout the central portion of the District that sit between the Herangi Ranges and rugged hills to the west and the rolling lowland hills to the east (roughly following the course of SH3). The unit encompasses the parts of the District where there is a concentration of karst and cave features including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Waitomo valley and Waitomo Caves area; - Te Anga; - Waitanguru and Mangaotaki; and - Totoro Gorge in the south. <p>Topography, landform features and land use patterns are key determinants in the extent of LCU 13.</p>
Character Unit boundaries	<p>The unit very roughly corresponds to land above the 80m contour with very approximate boundaries as follows:</p> <p>South and East: the lowland rolling hills that sit within the 80m-200m contour range that extend from the Mahoenui Valley northwards to Hangatiki roughly following the course of SH3. Includes margins that are dominated by Karst and Cave overlays to the west of Te Kuiti, Piopio and around Waitomo, where generally follows 80m contour.</p> <p>North: the district boundary adjoining the Otorohanga District.</p> <p>West: generally the bush edge of the steep rugged hill country along the western side of the District and corresponding to LCU 8 Herangi-Pomarangai.</p>
Landform features and patterns	Highly complex patterning of steeply incised hills, ridges and stream valleys.
Geological features and patterns	<p>Numerous extremely high value limestone bluffs, rock outcrops, tomos and cave features throughout. Often within highly attractive bush setting or as highly sculptural elements within pastoral landscape.</p> <p>Predominantly limestone with large areas of sandstone. Also mudstone, sandstone, greywacke and ashes.</p> <p>Faults bisect the area.</p>
Vegetation/ecological features and patterns	<p>Extensive patterning of SNAs throughout the central, northern and western margins of the unit generally corresponding to more elevated and steeper land (that is less suited to agricultural use) and riparian remnants. Bush of national/international significance in the vicinity of Rock Peak (noting that the contiguous bush area within Otorohanga District is identified as ONL).</p> <p>Other vegetation features include: roadside plantings; shelterbelts and hedgerows along fencelines; scattered shade trees for stock; and attractive amenity plantings around rural dwellings/buildings and driveways.</p> <p>Some fragments of QE II bush/riparian remnants in places.</p> <p>Several bush areas in DoC ownership.</p> <p>Areas of production forestry. Generally small-scale blocks excepting: along the southside of Te Anga Road and west of Piripiri; and the east side of Waitomo Valley Road.</p> <p>Scrub cover in places on steeper land.</p>
Hydrological features and patterns	<p>Highly complex patterning of streams throughout the unit.</p> <p>Land in the north-western portion of the unit drains to the Kawhia Harbour. Land in the northern and central portion of the unit drains to the Waipa River, and land to the south of the unit drains to the Mokau River.</p> <p>Numerous impressive waterfall features.</p>
Land use	<p>Low-intensity pastoral farming throughout valley floors and moderately sloping hillsides. Some steeper land in pastoral cover revealing distinctive sculptural hill topography in places.</p> <p>Almost entirely allophanic soils. Limited pockets of podzols, brown and recent soils.</p> <p>Production forestry (as described above) generally throughout steeper land unsuited to agricultural use.</p> <p>Numerous quarries in the unit.</p> <p>Tourism facilities around and at Waitomo Caves.</p>
Settlement patterns	<p>Scattered rural dwellings and farm buildings.</p> <p>Waitomo Caves village is an important tourist destination within the District. Tourist information office, DoC office, numerous tourism operators, grocery shop, cafes/restaurants, camping ground, hotel/ motels, gift shops, theatre, conference centre facilities etc. The area has seen a relatively modest level of development to date; however, the recent construction of the new Waitomo Glowworm Caves Visitor Centre and The Rock development (under construction) signals renewed development interest in the area.</p> <p>A scattering of small rural settlements (e.g. Te Anga). Generally a relatively low-key and informal, modest character of built development. Some older buildings contribute the impression of an 'old school NZ' rural landscape character. Many of the mapped 'settlements' are barely discernible 'on the ground'.</p>

Access and proximity to key route	The provincial state highway SH37 traverses the unit providing access between SH3 and the Waitomo Caves. Elsewhere a network of sealed and unsealed roads. Road markings reminding drivers of the need to 'stay left' indicate the popularity of many of the local roads with tourists (particularly Mangaotaki Road where parts of The Hobbit movie were filmed – Hairy Feet etc).
Historic heritage features	Mapped Heritage Point associated with Puketutu Pa south of Piripiri.
Cultural landscape features	Several scattered cultural sites throughout the unit. .
Recreation features	Numerous bush and waterfall walkways in the area. Many of the caves are accessible with a wide range of recreational experiences on offer ranging from glow-worm boat tours to blackwater rafting and abseiling adventures. Also quad biking, rock climbing, clay bird shooting, heli flights and farms shows. Accessible limestone bluff and rock outcrops and associated tourism facilities (e.g. Hairy Feet). Many of the larger bush blocks in the unit are in DoC ownership. Te Araroa traverses the northern portion of the unit (predominantly in bush, via Hauturu) to pass through the Waitomo Caves area then heading south eastwards to the western edges of Te Kuiti (across pasture and bush areas). Numerous other tracks in area, including: the Gorge and Double Falls Tracks (south of Te Anga); the Mangaotaki Scenic Reserve; Waitanguru Falls; Ruakuri Walkway; Mangapohue Natural Bridge, Piripiri Caves, Marokopa Falls. Several scenic routes in the unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piopio – Waitanguru – Pungarehu - Mairoa Road. Features along the way include: numerous dramatic bluff and limestone outcrops with bush (including Hobbit filming location) along the highly attractive Mangaotaki Road between Piopio and Waitanguru; Mangaotaki Scenic Reserve walkway; and Waitanguru Falls. - Waitomo - Te Anga Road- Marokopa- Kiritehere – Pomarangai- Mangaotaki Road- Piopio. Features include: Marokopa Falls, Piripiri Caves, Mangapohue Natural Bridge; Ngahuinga Bluffs beside Te Anga; the sleepy old school NZ settlement of Te Anga; Marokopa and Kiritehere (see LCU 6) - Mahoenui - Aria - Piopio via Totoro Road (highly attractive and intimate, winding rural stream valley with numerous limestone bluff and rock outcrops) and Aria Road (attractive old school NZ rural settlement at Aria) passes through part of the unit. Features along the way include the Wairere Falls.
Infrastructure features	The gas line corridor (two lines) running along the west side of SH3 passes through the eastern margins of the unit.
Zoning and 'landscape overlays'	Predominantly Rural zone. Appreciable areas of Conservation zoned areas that apply to DoC owned land and bush reserve areas. Urban zonings throughout Waitomo Caves village area. Landscape Protection overlay applies to Waitomo Caves area and the SH37 corridor linking to SH3. Policies seek to protect rural landscape values and the natural features of the area. Five Karst Overlay (2018) areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Throughout the hills to the north and south of Te Anga Road between Waitomo Caves and Piripiri (extensive area); - The Waitomo Caves area; - The hills and valleys south of Boddie Road; - The hills and valleys south of Oparure Road; and - The area around Haku Road (west of Piopio). Numerous Cave (2018) overlays are identified throughout the unit (including several features of International, National and Regional Significance). Numerous ONF (2018) overlays throughout the area. Refer Bruce Hayward ONF Report for Cave and ONF schedules. Generally, features tend to be scattered throughout the unit. The only portions of the unit where there is a distinctive paucity of Karst (2018), Cave (2018) and/or ONF (2018) features are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The inland hills and valleys north of Te Anga; - The northern margins of the unit adjoining the Otorohanga District; - A central area roughly in the vicinity of Ngapaenga and Mairoa.
Waikato RPS	Significant Natural Landscape Feature overlay applies to areas of "limestone bluffs, outcrops and caves" throughout the majority of the unit. NB this mapping is likely to be considerably coarse-grained (by virtue of the region-wide study from which it is derived and the datasets that were available at the time of the study) and is more expansive in extent in comparison to the ONF overlays mapped by Dr Bruce Hayward for the Waitomo District in 2018.
Landscape overlays in adjacent districts	Otorohanga District Plan Landscapes of High Amenity Value (Hinterland) overlay applies to the extensive areas of the bush cover at the eastern end of the northern boundary of LCU 13. An Outstanding Natural Landscape overlay (roughly corresponding to the Rock Peak, The Dome and Lake Koraha bush area) and Landscapes of High Amenity Value (Coastal) (roughly corresponding to the bush slopes east of Owhiro) applies to the extensive areas of the bush cover at the western end of the northern boundary of LCU 13.
Visibility/prominence	Very high public profile as a consequence of Waitomo Caves, numerous waterfalls and walkway features, local tourism operations, Te Araroa and scenic routes. The close proximity and relatively easy access of the unit to SH3 confers a higher public profile than, say, the more remote west coast and Kawhia harbour areas in the District.

Key views	Highly attractive and memorable close and mid-range rural views to dramatic limestone bluffs, rock outcrops and landforms; intimate stream valleys and gorges (e.g. Totoro Gorge); and impressive waterfalls. Highly attractive and memorable views of large-scale bush-covered hills at varying ranges, including views to the Herangi Ranges. Attractive rural views across pastoral land in which the complex landform patterns and arrangement of vegetation (exotic and indigenous) create a pleasing composition. Attractive rural views from highpoints on Te Anga Road and Troopers Road.
Naturalness	A moderate degree of naturalness across much of the unit, as a consequence of the dominant influence of the low-intensity working rural landscape and, to a lesser extent, production forestry and the prevalence of tourism activities (signage, parking, traffic etc). The frequent occurrence of dramatic limestone bluffs and outcrops within the pastoral areas confers a sense of naturalness. In general, the relatively low-key built development character (outside of Waitomo Caves village) assists the perception of naturalness. Localised areas of higher naturalness on the more 'off the beaten track' unsealed roads towards the margins of the unit and in areas dominated by extensive tracts of bush cover.
Complexity	Variable level of complexity largely as a consequence of the landform and vegetation patterning.
Coherence	The highly complex landform and vegetation patterns suggest a relatively low level of coherence; however, the recurrent views of limestone bluff and rock outcrops serve to somewhat counter this fragmentation.
Legibility	Landscape legibility derives from landform and watercourse patterning and is reinforced by riparian remnants in places.
Expressiveness	The limestone bluff and rock outcrops are strongly expressive of landscape-shaping processes. The sculpted pastoral landforms and winding streams also contribute to the area's expressiveness. Visible erosion in places, a clear reminder of some of the processes at play.
Sub character areas within the Landscape Character Unit	N/A
Sense of Place	Generally, the area reads as a highly attractive rural landscape that is valued as a place to live and work in and to visit. Aesthetic values derive from the attractive patterning of natural landform and vegetation features and the generally low-key character of the working rural landscape and the small-scale rural settlements. In places, tired and/or visually cluttered/discordant tourism infrastructure (e.g. buildings/signage) detracts from the aesthetic values (e.g. around Waitomo Caves village). The dramatic and very high-value natural features (above and below ground landforms; vegetation) distributed throughout much of the unit make it a highly memorable area. The numerous walkways, (accessible) caves, scenic routes and adventure tourism facilities, together with the attractive character and accessibility of the area, results in a unit with very high recreational values. Bush-dominated areas and stretches of unsealed roads convey a sense of remoteness. Cultural values.



Photograph 150: Typical outlook to limestone bluff in pastoral setting.



Photograph 151: Typical outlook to vegetation clad limestone bluff.



Photograph 152: Hairy Feet.



Photograph 153: Typical outlook to rock feature in farmland.



Photograph 154: Typical character of highly attractive, intimate and quiet unsealed roads.



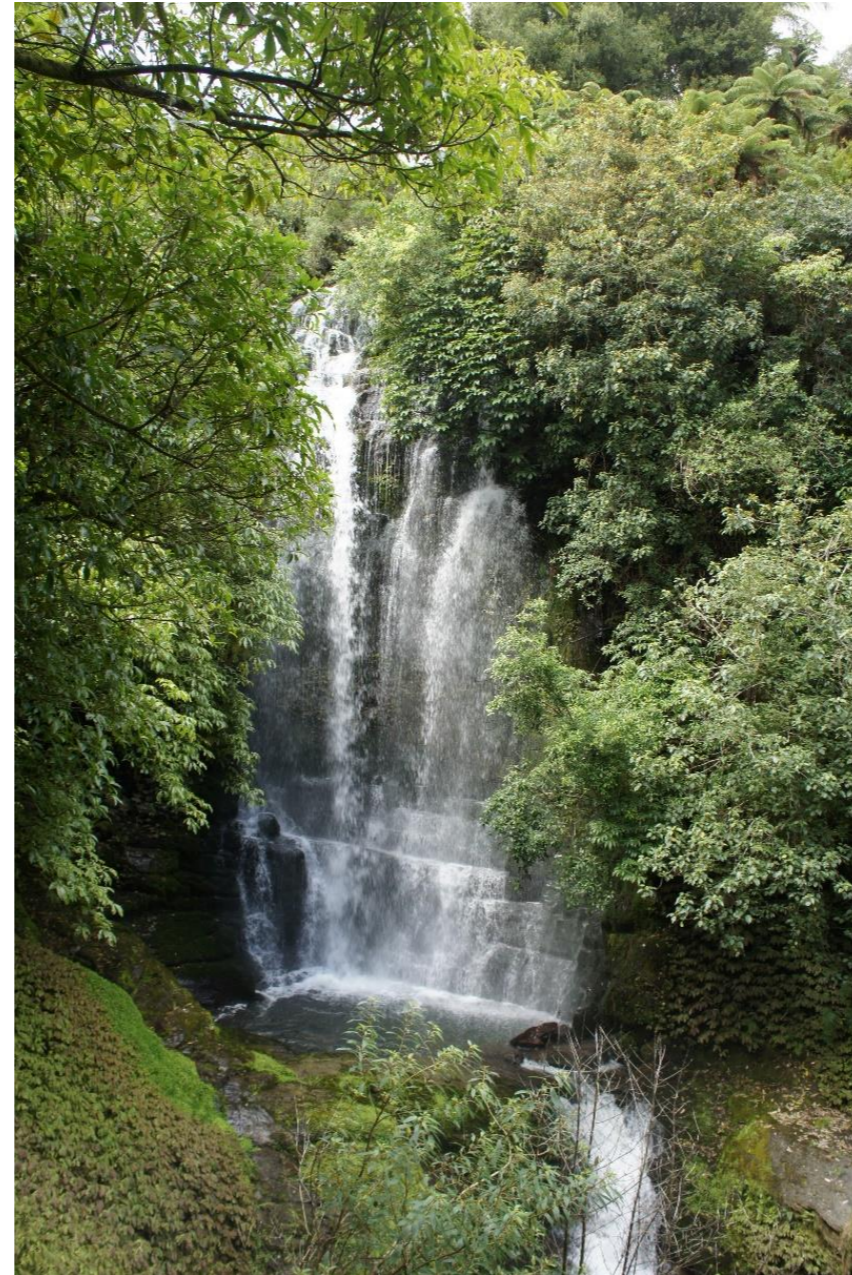
Photograph 155: Typical outlook to vegetation clad limestone bluff.



Photograph 156: Typical character of highly attractive bush clad streams.



Photograph 157: Typical outlook to vegetation clad rock outcrops.



Photograph 158: Waitanguru Falls.



Photograph 159: Typical character of working rural landscape.



Photograph 160: Sculpted hills.



Photograph 161: Typical character of working rural landscape.



Photograph 162: Typical character of attractive pastoral outlook on quiet scenic road.



Photograph 163: Aerial view of the central hill country.



Photograph 164: Aerial view of extensive patterning of limestone bluffs (in the vicinity of Hairy Feet).



Photograph 165: Incised valleys and rock outcrops.



Photograph 166: Limestone bluff framed valleys.



Photograph 167: Bluff and vegetation patterning.



Photograph 168: Dramatic rock formations.



Photograph 169: Scattered rock outcrops litter working rural landscape.



Photograph 170: Dramatic bluff landforms and sculpted valleys.



Photograph 171: Typical character Totoro Gorge.



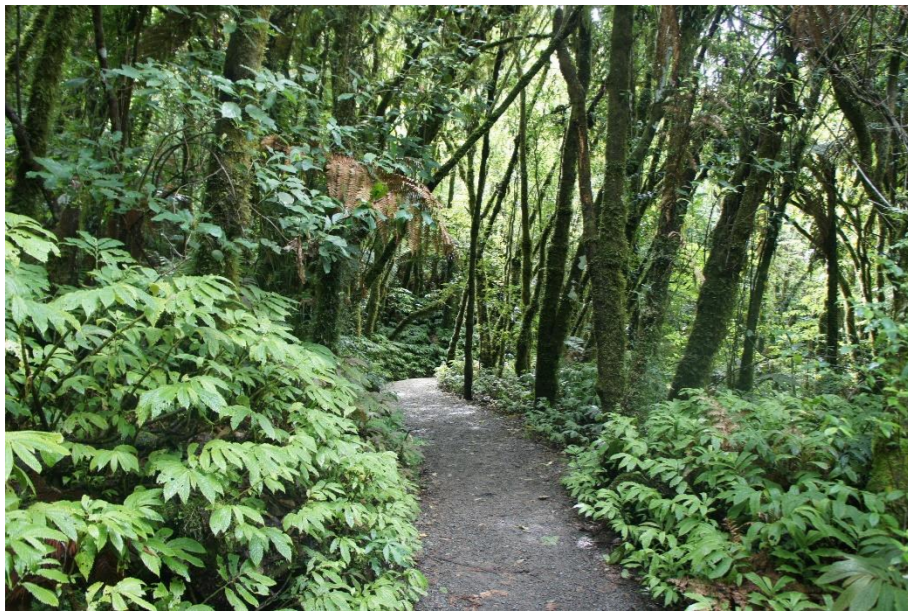
Photograph 172: Mangapohue Natural Bridge



Photograph 173: Mangapohue Natural Bridge



Photograph 174: Attractive rural outlook with sculpted hills.



Photograph 175: Marokopa Falls walkway.



Photograph 176: Marokopa Falls



Photograph 177: Highly attractive outlook across farmland to bush draped limestone bluffs.

Appendix B: GIS Data Sources

The following datasets were used in the Waitomo District Landscape Study:

REFERENCE LAYERS	SOURCE
Contours	LINZ
Cadastre	LINZ
Road, State Highway	LINZ
Walking and Biking Tracks	DOC, LINZ, WDC
Recreation\Tourism features	WDC
Crown Land	LINZ
Public Conservation Land	DOC
Reserves	WDC ODP Zoning
Conservation Zones	WDC ODP Zoning
HVANFLs and SNLFs	WRC
Significant Natural Areas	WRC
Archaeological Sites	NZ Archaeological Association
Heritage Sites	Heritage NZ
Geopreservation Sites	Geomarine Research
Waterbodies	LINZ
Land Cover Database v4.1	Landcare Research
Soils\Land Use Capability	Landcare Research
Geology\Land Use Capability	Landcare Research
Cultural Sites	TDC
High, Very High and Outstanding Natural Character mapping	V Froude/Pacific Eco-Logic/WRC
Adjacent ONL mapping	Adjacent District Plan mapping
Current ODP landscape protection areas	WDC
Landform 3d Model (Elevation, Slope, Aspect, Ridgeline)	WDC derived from contours
Aerial Photos	LINZ, Google Earth, WDC, NZ Aerial Surveys