

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>2.0 BRIEF</b>	2
<b>3.0 LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY DOCUMENTS</b>	
<b>3.1 Resource Management Act 1991</b>	3
<b>3.2 NZ Coastal Policy Statement 1994</b>	4
<b>3.3 Far North District Plan(s)</b>	6
<b>3.4 Draft Objectives and Policies for the District Plan</b>	6
<b>3.5 Proposed Regional Policy Statement</b>	8
<b>3.6 Proposed Regional Water and Soil Plan</b>	9
<b>3.7 Proposed Regional Coastal Plan</b>	9
<b>3.8 Draft Conservation Management Strategy</b>	11
<b>4.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY</b>	12
<b>4.1 The Assessment Process</b>	13
4.1.1 Landscape Units	13
4.1.2 Landscape Assessment	14
4.1.3 Landscape Character Categories	14
4.1.4 Outstanding Landscapes	15
<b>5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNITS AND CATEGORIES</b>	
<b>5.1 Discussion</b>	16
<b>5.2 Description of Landscape Categories</b>	16
A. Exposed rocky coastline	17
B. Reef lined coast	18
C. Rocky coast interspersed with beaches	18
D. Expansive exposed beaches	20
E. Coast dominated by prominent sandhills	21
F. Harbour mouths	22
G. Estuarine inlets and harbours	23
H. Coastal villages	24
I. Heritage landscapes	25
J. Farmed flats	26
K. Intensive orcharding	27
L. Gently undulating pasture / scrub	27
M. Pastoral hill country with pockets of scrub / bush	28
N. Scrub-clad hill country	30
O. Bush-clad hill country	30
P. Plantation forests	31
Q. Extensive valleys	32
R. Wetlands and small lakes	32
S. Large lakes and margins	33
<b>6.0 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS</b>	
<b>6.1 Analysis of Findings</b>	35
<b>6.2 Key Findings</b>	37
<b>7.0 MECHANISMS FOR LANDSCAPE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	39
<b>8.0 LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES FOR FAR NORTH DISTRICT</b>	41
<b>9.0 RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE POLICIES FOR FAR NORTH DISTRICT</b>	
<b>1.0 Generic Landscape Policies</b>	43
<b>2.0 Topical Landscape Policies</b>	47
<b>3.0 Specific Landscape Policies</b>	49

## ATTACHMENTS

- Plans 1-5: Landscape Units and sensitivity ratings
- Plans 6-10: Character Areas
- Plans 11-15: Sensitive Ridgelines under Immediate Threat and  
Extent of Areas of Landscape Significance

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report examines the entire Far North District, an area of some 6,820 square kilometres extending from a boundary running between Waipoua and just south of Cape Brett, to North Cape. The District landscape assessment is structured as follows:

### **Brief:**

Far North District Council's brief to LA4 is defined.

### **Legislation and Statutory Documents:**

Outlines the requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991 as it relates to the management of the nation's landscape, refers briefly to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 1994, the transitional Far North District Plan(s), the Draft Objectives and Policies for the District Plan, the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Northland, the Proposed Regional Water and Soil Plan for Northland, and the Proposed Regional Coastal Plan for Northland, before considering the Draft Conservation Management Strategy prepared by the Taitokerau Northland Conservancy of the Department of Conservation.

### **Methodology:**

A summary of the assessment process and the criteria used to analyse the landscape.

### **Landscape Character Categories:**

19 landscape character categories are described and outstanding landscape units within each category are identified. The mean value, vulnerability, and overall sensitivity ratings for the category are presented; and issues are identified in relation to both the landscape categories and individual units.

### **Overview of Findings:**

Highlights a number of issues which consistently emerged from field assessments.

### **Mechanisms for Landscape Resource Management:**

Discusses statutory controls and educational strategies for managing the District's landscape resource.

### **Landscape Resource Management Mechanisms:**

Introduces the concept of combining regulatory approaches with educational initiatives.

### **District objectives:**

Identifies a series of principles and proposes several objectives for the sustainable management of the Far North Landscape.

### **District Policies:**

Recommends three tiers of landscape policy with which to address the objectives identified previously.

## 2.0 BRIEF

LA4's brief was to prepare a report about the landscape value of the terrestrial and coastal landscape of the Far North District and to provide potential management strategies for these landscapes. More specifically, in order to enable the District Council to meet its obligations under Part V of the Resource Management Act 1991, the Far North District Landscape Assessment set out to:

- Identify landscape units on the basis of consistent landscape character and to describe their main visual and physical characteristics.
- Classify and group landscape units into categories on the basis of landscape character
- Assess landscape values in order to identify outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes.
- Determine the landscape's visual absorption capability, on the basis of certain physical characteristics, and its vulnerability to change taking into account different viewing audiences and user groups. This leads to an evaluation of the landscape's sensitivity to subdivision, use and development or change in general.
- Provide objectives and policy refinement, including identification of the coastal environment, and indicate methods for the statutory management of the landscape, having due regard for the sensitivity and absorption capacity of the rural and future urban landscape.

### 3.0 LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

#### 3.1 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

The RMA largely addresses the country's landscape in Part II – “Purpose and Principles”.

Under section 5 of Part II, the Act states its purpose as promoting “...*the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.*” “Natural and physical resources” are defined by the act as including “*land, water, air, soil, minerals, and energy, all forms of plants, animals (whether native to New Zealand or introduced), and all structures*”. Landscape is the embodiment of a combination of these components and can therefore be considered a resource in itself. The Act's definition of “Environment” incorporates human perception and appreciation of the landscape through “amenity values” and reference to social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions.

“*Sustainable management*” is defined as: “*managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while –*

- a) *Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*
- b) *Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and*
- c) *Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment”*

Section 6, “**Matters of national importance**”, is specific in stipulating that all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:

- “
- a. *The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivisions, use and development:*
  - b. *The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivisions, use and development:*
  - c. *The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna: ...*
- ”

A significant requirement under the Act is therefore to assess the landscape of territorial areas, to specifically examine the character of coastal environments and to identify outstanding landscapes.

Section 7, “**Other matters**”, requires those exercising functions and powers under the Act to have particular regard to:

- a) *Kaitiakitanga*
- b) *The efficient use and development of natural and physical resources:*

- c) *The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*
- d) *Intrinsic value of ecosystems:*
- e) *Recognition and protection of the heritage values of sites, buildings, places, or areas:*
- f) *Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:*
- g) *Any finite characteristics of natural and physical resources:...*

Reference to the definitions of the key words in these clauses illustrates that the visual landscape and heritage landscapes and their management are central components of the environment required to be considered under Section 7 of the Act.

### **3.2 NEW ZEALAND COASTAL POLICY STATEMENT 1994**

The purpose of the Coastal Policy Statement is to set out in Section 56 of the Resource Management Act which states:

*The purpose of the New Zealand coastal policy statement is to state the policies in order to achieve the purpose of this Act in relation to the coastal environment of New Zealand.*

Of particular relevance to the coastal landscape is Chapter 1 – National priorities for the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment including protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

#### **Policy 1.1.1**

*It is a national priority to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment by:*

- a) *encouraging appropriate subdivision, use or development in areas where the natural character has already been compromised and avoiding sprawling or sporadic subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment;*
- b) *taking into account the potential effects of subdivision, use, or development on the values relating to the natural character of the coastal environment, both within and outside the immediate location,*
- c) *avoiding cumulative adverse effects of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment.*

#### **Policy 1.1.2**

*It is a national priority for the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna in the environment by:*

- c) *protecting ecosystems which are unique to the coastal environment and vulnerable to modification including estuaries, coastal wetlands, mangroves and dunes and their margins; and*

- d) *recognising that any other areas of predominantly indigenous vegetation or habitats of significant indigenous fauna should be disturbed only to the extent reasonably necessary to carry out approved activities.*

**Policy 1.1.3**

*It is a national priority to protect the following features, which in themselves or in combination, are essential or important elements of the natural character of the coastal environment:*

- a) *landscapes, seascape and landforms, including:*
- (I.) significant representative examples of each landform which provide the variety of each region;*
  - (II.) visually or scientifically significant geological features; and*
  - (III.) the collective characteristics which give the coastal environment its natural character, including wild and scenic areas;*

**Policy 1.1.5**

*It is a national priority to restore and rehabilitate the natural character of the coastal environment where appropriate.*

Chapter 3 – Activities involving the subdivision, use or development of areas of the coastal environment

**3.1 Maintenance and enhancement of Amenity Values**

**Policy 3.1.1**

*Use of the coast by the public should not be allowed to have significant adverse effects on the coastal environment, amenity values, nor on the safety of the public nor on the enjoyment of the coast by the public.*

**Policy 3.1.2**

*Policy statements and plans should identify (in the coastal environment) those scenic, recreational and historic areas, areas of spiritual or cultural significance, and those scientific and landscape features, that are important to the region or district and which should therefore be given special protection; and that policy statements and plans should give them appropriate protection.*

**Policy 3.1.3**

*Policy statements and plans should recognise the contribution that open space makes to the amenity values found in the coastal environment, and should seek to maintain and enhance those values by giving appropriate protection to areas of open space.*

**3.2 Providing for the Appropriate Subdivision, Use and Development of the Coastal Environment**

**Policy 3.2.1**

*Policy statements and plans should define what form of subdivision, use and development would be appropriate in the coastal environment, and where it would be appropriate.*

**Policy 3.2.2**

*Adverse effects of subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment should as far as practicable be avoided. Where complete avoidance is not practicable, the*

*adverse effects should be mitigated and provision made for remedying those effects, to the extent practicable.*

**Policy 3.2.4**

*Provisions should be made to ensure that the cumulative effects of activities, collectively, in the coastal environment are not adverse to a significant degree.*

**3.3 FAR NORTH DISTRICT PLAN(S)**

The Far North District's new plan will supersede the transitional District Plan(s) for the component counties that were amalgamated to form the District.

The most comprehensive of these Plans, in terms of addressing landscape resource, was that for the Bay of Islands County. Much of the Plan's direction for landscape management comes from The Bay of Islands Visual Assessment (1987), a coastal study which utilized the Ministry of Works' VAMPLAN methodology. The assessment distinguished between Landscape Character and Landscape Quality in defining strategies and controls appropriate to managing the landscape of the Bay.

Conclusions emerging from the study were that:

- (I.) great care will be needed in managing change within the Bay of Islands Coastal Area to lessen the likelihood of a loss of quality;
- (II.) there are limited areas of the coastline where there is a potential for improvement through change;
- (III.) no units could be identified which could accommodate major development without special consideration and control;
- (IV.) the frequency of high ratings for coherence and sensitive areas indicated that the type and location of proposals are important and need to be carefully managed, the majority of units.

The goals, objectives and policies promoted by the plan acknowledged these and many other issues relating to the landscape of the County (as it was), providing a reasonably comprehensive basis for sustainable management of the landscape.

The other County Plans have not considered landscape in any depth, other than incidentally through the conservation of heritage values in settings such as Manganui.

**3.4 DRAFT OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES FOR THE DISTRICT PLAN – DISCUSSION PAPER**

The discussion paper was released by Council to indicate the likely direction that the District's new Plan was to take as a basis for public discussion and comment. Whilst the Discussion Paper was prepared in the knowledge that detailed information about the landscape resource of the District would be embodied in this assessment, several of the sections of draft objectives and policies are of relevance. Chapter 3 of this document includes:

**6.0 landform and landscape**

**6.2 Objectives**

- A *The recognition and protection of outstanding natural landforms and landscapes of the district.*
- B *The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values of landscapes.*

### **6.3 Policies**

- A *To control subdivision, use and development in order to avoid, remedy, or mitigate adverse effects on outstanding natural landforms and landscapes.*
- B *To encourage the voluntary protection by property owners of outstanding natural landforms and landscapes.*
- C *To co-ordinate with other agencies involved in the identification and protection of outstanding natural landforms and landscapes on developing and implementing protection programmes.*
- D *To allow for the use of outstanding natural features and landscapes where this does not have an adverse effect on the visual amenity of the site.*
- E *To require development to be sensitive to the amenity values of the landscape.*

An explanation follows which makes reference to relevant section of the RMA, alludes to the value of many of the districts landscapes and the potential for these to be modified or destroyed by inappropriate activities.

## **9.0 coastal environment**

### **9.2 Objectives**

- A *The protection and enhancement of the natural character of the coastal environment.*
- B *The provision for subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment only where and to the extent that the activities do not adversely affect its natural character, natural functions or natural, amenity, cultural and spiritual values.*
- C *The provision of public access to and recreational use of the coastal environment where and to the extent that this is compatible with the maintenance of its natural character and functions, and the protection of its natural amenity, cultural and spiritual values.*
- F *The acknowledgment of the interrelationships between water and land and protection of water from adverse effects of land use activities.*

### **9.3 Policies**

- A *To generally consolidate subdivision and development to existing built-up areas within the coastal environment.*
- B *To encourage protection and enhancement of the natural character of the coastal environment.*
- C *To ensure that activities allowed in the coastal environment have only minor environmental effects or can remedy or mitigate any adverse effects on the environment..*
- E *To identify where access to the coast is desirable and is compatible with its natural character and functions, and its natural, amenity, cultural and spiritual values.*
- G *To ensure that the built development in the coastal setting is subservient in siting, design, materials, and colours to the natural form and physical character of the coast, except as may be provided for in established urban areas.*

The explanation refers to obligations imposed by Section 6 of the RMA and New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement. A brief discussion then alerts the reader to the

scale of the district's coastline, its varied characteristics, and the range of values which relate to the coast, whilst intimating the pressures for conservation, development and access that surrounds the coastal resource.

Section 10 of the same chapter refers to Settlements and Structures, and proposes objectives and policies which address the relationship between future built development and the character and amenity values found in the district.

Recreation and Open Space are considered in Section 12. Issues of public access and use, and conservation of natural values and amenity values are confronted.

Section 13, Heritage Resources, is of relevance to the cultural or heritage components of the district landscape, and reference to the heritage values and amenity are made in this section.

Chapter 4 begins with Section 1, entitled Land Uses. Objectives and policies focus, in part, upon providing for development to the extent that is compatible with amenity and heritage values, natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes.

The next section, Subdivision, also seeks to make provision for subdivision development, whilst conserving amenity and heritage values, natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes.

### **3.5 PROPOSED REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR NORTHLAND**

The Regional Policy Statement tends to take a bias towards management of the productive capacity of soils, water quality, natural hazards and the maintenance of ecological values. Amenity values and landscape management are addressed only in passing.

Section 20 – Soil Conservation and Land Management – comes closest to considering terrestrial landscapes. Objectives and policies focus upon soil resource management and the control of plant and animal pests. Incidental outcomes of relevance to landscape value are likely to emerge from policies aimed at retirement and revegetation of erosion – prone areas and the improvement of natural ecosystems resulting from reduced pest populations.

Coastal Management is covered in Section 22. The requirement to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment that is imposed by Section 6 of the RMA is acknowledged. Amongst the coastal management issues highlighted are the need for integration of land and water management amongst authorities, the impacts of subdivision and development on the coastal environment, the damage caused to sand dunes and mangrove or salt marsh areas, the cumulative impacts of marine farming. The biotic effects associated with these issues appear to have been more clearly identified than the visual implications.

Two of the four emerging objectives are of relevance:

1. *The minimisation of adverse effects of development and subdivision activities on the ecological and scenic values of the coastal environment.*
3. *Enhancement of public use and enjoyment of the coast.*

Four areas of the policy are proposed as mean to achieve the objectives. The first is:

(a) Preservation of natural character

*Policies*

1. *To ensure that subdivisions and structures are designed to fit in and not dominate the natural landscape and ecological values of the coastal environment.*

Other policies in this section are focused upon reclamation, ecological values and other indigenous vegetation, all of which have ramifications in terms of landscape.

A range of methods of implementation are recommended, several of which require provision to be made in District Plans for the management of natural coastal character. Also included are the value of educational approaches and assistance to DOC and the QEII National Trust to acquire or protect sites.

### **3.6 PROPOSED REGIONAL WATER AND SOIL PLAN FOR NORTHLAND**

This document continues the somewhat limited scope of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement. The Plan principally addresses issues related to soil conservation and water quality. Matters of visual amenity and landscape value are addressed only through the implications of measures designed to sustainably manage the physical properties of soil and water resources.

Prominent amongst the measures proposed by the Plan with significant landscape implications are those which encourage the retention and enhancement of streamside vegetation, the rehabilitation and protection of wetlands, and retirement of erosion-prone to vegetation cover which will not be removed.

Although more subtle, most of the other issues addressed by the plan would, in some form, be perceived in the landscape. Water clarity and colour, for example, is an important facet of many of the Far North's coastal landscapes, so measures which protect and enhance water quality will contribute to the retention of this facet of the landscape's value.

Rules proposed by the plan remain focused on soil conservation and water quality matters.

### **3.7 PROPOSED REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN FOR NORTHLAND**

Section 7 of Northland Regional Council's Proposed Regional Coastal Plan for Northland (1994) is of pertinence to this assessment and examines the Preservation of Natural Character. The emerging objective is *the preservation of the natural character of Northland's coastal marine area* (CMA). Policies focused on achieving this objective emphasise:

That all parts of Northlands CMA have some degree of natural character requiring protection from inappropriate use and development.

The importance of avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse environmental effects of use and development on landscapes and associated natural features, and on indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna.

Adopting a conservative approach to defining appropriate uses and development outside of areas of existing intensive use and development.

The importance of a consistent and integrated approach to the preservation of the natural character of Northland's coastal environment as a whole.

Section 8 addresses Natural Features and Landscapes. Its focus is particularly upon outstanding natural features or landscapes, noting also the importance of recognising of geological features identified by the NZ Geopreservation Inventory as being of regional, national, and international importance. Outstanding natural features (or landscapes) recognised by the Proposed Regional Coastal Plan which fall within the Far North District include:

- Cape Maria van Diemen / Cape Reinga / North Cape
- Kotakota sandspit, Parengarenga Harbour entrance
- Maitai Bay, Cape Karikari
- Whangaroa Harbour entrance including Pekapeka Bay
- the Cavalli Islands
- the Cape Brett peninsula including Motukokako (Piercy) Island
- Whangape Harbour entrance
- Hokianga Heads

All of these landscape features are also recognised for their landscape values by *this* assessment, either as outstanding landscape units, outstanding landscape features, or within Areas of Landscape Significance.

The Plan then proceeds to highlight three "Issues". In brief these:

- Recognise the contribution of outstanding natural features and landscapes to the natural character of Northland's coastal environment and the need to protect them from significant alteration.
- Lament the lack of a region-wide assessment of natural features and / or coastal landscape values, and the difficulty in identifying natural features or landscapes which may be outstanding.
- Note the importance of natural features / landscapes to amenity values of both the coastal marine area and adjacent coastal land and the consequent need for their integrated management.

The emerging Objective is *The identification and protection from inappropriate use and development, of outstanding natural features and landscapes which are wholly or partially within Northland's coastal marine area.*

Four policies follow:

*Particular consideration of maintaining or enhancing the landscape values of the Outstanding Landscapes listed above in making decisions on the use, development and protection of the coastal marine area.*

*Particular consideration to the protection of landforms and / or geological features of regional, national, and international significance.*

*Identification and protection of other significant natural features and landscapes within the coastal area in coordinated and consistent manner.*

*To promote the identification and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes immediately adjacent to Northland's coastal marine area in a coordinated and consistent manner.*

### 3.8 DRAFT CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Draft Conservation Management Strategy for Taitokerau Northland (CMS) (1995) prepared by the Department of Conservation (DOC) approaches the conservancy from a habitat value perspective rather than the visual landscape aspect examined by this assessment. Of particular relevance are a number of "Special places for conservation in Northland" identified by the Draft CMS. These are:

- The entire northern section of Aupouri peninsula, including Parengarenga Harbour, Motupao Island, and the dune lakes north of Te Kao.
- Kaimaumau wetland, Rangaunu Harbour, Lake Ohia, the Karikari Peninsula, Mangonui township and Oruru River valley.
- The Whangaroa Harbour, surrounding reserves and Cavalli Islands.
- The Bay of Islands, including all waters, islands and reserves in the immediate vicinity of the Bay of Islands and Kerikeri basin, but not including Russell Forest.
- The Waipoua/Waima/Mataraua forest tract and associated coastal reserves to Maunganui Bluff and Trounson.
- Puketi/Omahuta forest, Warawara forest and Hokianga Harbour and associated reserves.
- The Ahipara plateau from Ahipara to Herekino Harbour.

Virtually all of these areas are also recognised for their landscape values by *this* assessment, either as outstanding landscape units, outstanding landscape features, or as Areas of Landscape Significance. This recognition highlights the contribution made by natural and heritage elements to landscape value and sensitivity.

For each area the Draft CMS describes the reasons for selection as a Special Place, usually with passing reference to landscape character or landscape elements. Management issues are then identified, leading to some general objectives and a series of strategies for implementation.

The primary actions emerging through the implementation sections are of habitat and species protection, archaeological and heritage site management and management of visitor and concessionaires. As such the Draft CMS strives to manage and conserve most of the landscape elements found in DOC estate.

## 4.0 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The origins of the assessment method date back to 1984, when the then Auckland Regional Council undertook a landscape assessment of the Auckland Region. That study sought to establish priorities for landscape conservation by identifying areas that were considered to have high scenic value and were also likely to be most sensitive to land use change in a visual sense.

This assessment did not address the landscape of the urban area, airports or quarries. The reasons for not including the majority of the urban area in the 1984 study are explained in detail in the regional assessment technical manual.

An important component of the 1984 study was a large public preference survey (with over 1100 respondents) which sought to gauge the general public's reactions to different kinds of landscape, and assess the range of values that should be attached to the diversity of landscapes found within the region.

A representative sample of the 633 landscape units identified within the (then) region was used in the survey, and associations between individual units and the 'typical' landscapes used in the survey allowed findings to be extrapolated throughout the region. Some of those findings are of relevance to the Far North District, assuming that landscape perceptions are reasonably consistent across the national population.

For instance, a high degree of preference was indicated by the public of Auckland for landscapes that are coastal and natural. Strong preferences were shown for landscapes that contain **coastlines, indigenous vegetation (trees)**, the more continuous / extensive the tree cover the higher the rating; **large rivers and lakes**, and **vegetation generally**. (refer p20 of *An Assessment of the Auckland Region's Landscape*). At the other end of the spectrum, more obviously productive and developed landscapes consistently featured at the 'bottom of the heap'.

However, the 1984 study had some weaknesses, one of which was requiring respondents to focus purely on scenic, 'chocolate box' values when assessing various landscape scenes and to overlook environmental, heritage, Maori and recreational associations that could also affect reactions to the landscape.

The other variable examined in the 1984 study was the Visual Absorption Capability (VAC): the ability of any landscape to accommodate and absorb change within its existing visual structure without detriment to its character and scenic values. VAC was assessed using a number of key variables, such as the type of land uses currently found within a landscape unit and the sort of vegetation cover and topography within it that might help to integrate or screen new developments and modification of land uses.

Since the 1984 study, LA4 have further researched and refined the visual and landscape assessment methodology. It still incorporates analysis of "Aesthetic Values" and "Visual Absorption Capability", but now addresses other landscape attributes and issues that were left unaddressed in 1984. These include:

- "Heritage Value": The landscape of any area (the Far North District, New Zealand, wherever) may have certain natural characteristics and features that render it unique from anywhere else, often through a combination of locally found landform, water bodies or vegetation. This section of the

assessment also considers the contribution of cultural associations in the landscape, such as pa sites or historic buildings.

- “Rarity”: Consideration of how rare or unusual a landscape unit, or important component elements of the unit, are within the region. Rarity may result either from natural elements or from cultural modifications to the landscape.
- “Exposure / Visibility” rates the degree of visual exposure of the unit to viewing audiences and identifies how the audience is composed and its relative size, from a few rural landowners to large numbers of State Highway One travellers.

#### **4.1 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

At its most basic, the process of assessing the Far North District landscape (including analysis of the above variables) involves the following stages:

1. Identification of landscape units, and the terrestrial limits to the ‘coastal’ area.
2. Use of Landscape Assessment Worksheets, which include analysis of “Aesthetic Value”, “Heritage Value”, “Rarity”, “Visual Absorption Capability” and “Exposure / Visibility” to assess individual units, with annotated description of key physical elements, landscape patterns and compositional features for each unit.
3. Allocation of ratings on a 1 to 7 scale for each of the above variables for all landscape units.
4. Allocation of overall ratings for each unit – called SENSITIVITY ratings – based on the accumulation of ratings for all 5 variables. Ultimately, these SENSITIVITY ratings provide one of the bases for application of policies to the District landscape. They are also central to the identification of Outstanding Landscapes and Landscape Features.
5. Identification of those units which have a certain commonality of character and landscape elements, so that they can be grouped into landscape character categories for the purposes of describing the basic types of landscape found around the Far North.
6. Identification and description of main findings (see Section 7), development of objectives (Section 8), and recommendations for policy (see Section 9).

##### **4.1.1 Landscape Units**

The assessment process initially involves subdivision of the district into a series of individual coastal and terrestrial units (see Plans 1-5 – Landscape Units and Sensitivity Ratings) which display a homogenous and consistent landscape character. This character is derived from the combination of land uses, vegetation cover, topography, and the relationship with the sea and/or other bodies of water (if any).

The edges of individual units were deemed to occur wherever significant changes in landscape character occur. The inland boundaries of coastal landscape units necessarily extend well beyond the Mean High Water Springs limit because the coastal landscape is a continuous entity whose influence usually extends well

beyond the land in direct contact with a maritime water body. Typically, the inland limits for each unit therefore fall at either the first point of change in landscape character behind the coastal edge or at the first major ridge beyond the same edge.

In prescribing such limits, though, it is important to appreciate that individual units are often influenced and affected to some extent, in terms of their character and general appeal, by the visible parts of units to either side of them. They are also quite often affected by the more distant backdrop of hills and terrain well beyond their boundaries. This area of influence and visual association is the area's *visual catchment*, which is frequently larger than the *landscape unit* itself.

#### 4.1.2 Landscape Assessment

The study commences with an initial aerial survey conducted from a fixed wing aircraft, generally flying at an altitude of approximately 1,000 – 1,500 feet. This was followed by a more detailed ground based survey from the District's roads. This fieldwork enabled the identification of landscape unit boundaries and the assessment of each unit using a "Landscape Assessment Worksheet".

A photographic record of the unit was attached to each worksheet and an assessment made on a scale of 1 (low) – 7 (high) for the key criteria mentioned at the beginning of this section: Aesthetic Value, Heritage Value, Rarity, Visual Absorption Capability and Exposure / Visibility. These were then combined to establish **SENSITIVITY** ratings for each unit. A sample assessment worksheet is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.

The next step was to identify and record on Landscape Assessment Worksheet the specific elements which contribute to the value and vulnerability ratings, and to assess their relative importance. They include:

- *Physical Elements that Enhance Landscape Character and Value*
- *Patterns and Compositional Factors that Enhance Landscape Character and Value*
- *Elements and Patterns that Adversely Affect Landscape Character and Value*
- *Elements that Contribute to Visual Absorption Capability*
- *Audiences Exposed to the Unit and their Relative Scale*

For each landscape unit, the importance of those elements identified is evaluated and categorized in a manner which indicates whether its **critical**, **important**, or just **evident** in helping to determine the individual unit's Value and Vulnerability.

#### 4.1.3 Landscape Character Categories

112 landscape units were identified and delineated within the study area. These units were grouped into 19 landscape categories (see Plans 6-10 – Landscape Categories). The categories incorporate between 1 and 21 units which display a reasonable consistency of landscape character.

Overall, the assessment establishes the relative importance that should be attached to different types of landscape and their individual components. The likely sensitivity of both individual units and landscape categories to different forms of development can also be gauged. By relating the potential effects of development upon those

landscape features and components that have been identified, it is possible to extrapolate development impacts to a wider area of similar landscape character, i.e. the landscape character categories. In much the same fashion, looking at development options in relation to key factors that affect Visual Absorption Capability and specific audiences means that other important landscape management issues can be identified.

#### **4.1.4 Outstanding Landscapes**

Section 6 (b) of the Resource Management Act requires the protection of outstanding landscapes.

It is proposed that landscape units with an overall sensitivity rating of “6” and “7” be classified as being Outstanding Landscapes in terms of the Act. Units assigned a rating of “5” are deemed to be ‘Significant’.

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CATEGORIES

### 5.1 DISCUSSION

The Far North landscape is one of the most complex and varied to be found within any district of New Zealand. The strong influence of the coastline is a major contributing factor, bringing a range of characters extending from placid, mangrove fringed inlets, through exposed rocky shores, to sweeping ocean beaches. Often the influence of the sea extends a considerable distance inland, particularly around the Hokianga Harbour.

Such diversity follows on in the terrestrial landscape, with tracts of native forest, contained valleys, scrub-clad hills, manicured dairy farms, orcharding areas, and plantation forests. Cultural patterns and features overlay the land with a commentary starting from Maori settlement and continuing through early European colonisation to contemporary development.

Changes await the observer around almost every bend, making classification and succinct description of the landscape extremely difficult. There are recurring themes of landform, vegetation pattern, land use, or relationships with water bodies however, which provide a certain degree of consistency and opportunity to classify landscape within an ordered framework. If anything, the most consistent aspect of the Far North's landscape is its sheer diversity.

### 5.2 DESCRIPTION OF LANDSCAPE CATEGORIES

The Landscape Units identified during the assessment contain individual segments of landscape that have a relatively homogenous and consistent landscape character. However, across the District there is a certain repetition of landscape types; many landscape units have a character that is similar to that of other landscape units elsewhere in the Far North.

In order to help describe and analyse the character of the District's Landscape, and address the range of landscape types found within it, individual landscape units have been grouped together into the following descriptive categories:

#### COASTAL LANDSCAPE CATEGORIES

- A. Exposed rocky coastline
- B. Reef lined coast
- C. Rocky coast interspersed with beaches
- D. Expansive exposed beaches
- E. Coast dominated by prominent sand hills
- F. Harbour mouths
- G. Estuarine inlets and harbours
- H. Coastal villages

#### TERRESTRIAL LANDSCAPE CATEGORIES

- I. Heritage landscapes
- J. Farmed Flats
- K. Intensive orcharding
- L. Gently undulating pasture / scrub
- M. Pastoral hill country with pockets of scrub / bush
- N. Scrub-clad hill country

- O. Bush-clad hill country
- P. Plantation forests
- Q. Extensive valleys
- R. Wetlands and small lakes
- S. Large lakes and margins

It is important to recognise however, that whilst the units amalgamated into categories may share the majority of their characteristics with other units in the same category, there may be elements of their composition that they share in common with other units in other categories – for example elements of heritage landscape are often found within a unit whose overriding characteristic is that of farmed flats. Such variability is particularly applicable in the diverse landscape of the Far North. As a result, the usefulness of character categories is largely restricted to providing a descriptive grouping, rather than an unequivocal basis for applying policy.

## **A. Exposed rocky coastline**

### **Description:**

This category incorporates 5 landscape units. They are:

- Terakihi Point to Rawhiti Point (Unit C1) (Pages 1-3 Coastal)
- Poraenui Point to Black Rocks (Unit C16) (Pages 46-48 Coastal)
- Cavalli Island Group (Unit C19) (Pages 55-57 Coastal)
- Stephenson / Mahinepua Island (Unit C24) (Pages 70-72 Coastal)
- Karikari Peninsula Rocky Coast (Unit 32)

These units are distributed along the east coast of the district and share a rugged, rocky coastline. The exposure of the units to the periodic pounding by big seas leaves a craggy shore of eroded bedrock. Much of the shore covered by this category is backed by cliffs which attest further to the power of the ocean.

Vegetation tends to be stunted and kept well inland in these severe conditions. Pohutakawa are the dominant trees within the units, although frequently rather scattered in their distribution and somewhat dwarfed by the harsh conditions.

Built development is extremely limited, with only a few farmhouses or baches to be found within the composite units of this category.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features**

All of these units, other than the Karikari Peninsula Rocky coast, are rated as outstanding. The Karikari unit is considered significant, with an overall rating of 5.

The key landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- The rugged and dynamic relationship between land and sea.
- The ever-changing range of sea conditions to be found around these units, extending from placid, clear waters in calm periods, to pounding, turbulent swells.
- A predominant sense of remoteness and naturalness.
- The extremely limited intrusion by built development experienced around these portions of the coast.

- The convoluted alignment of the coast, with small promontories and rocky embayments bringing a sense of mystery and anticipation.

Landscape features found within these units which are recognised as being outstanding include Piercy Island, Cape Brett and Cape Wiwiki.

## **B. Reef lined coast**

### **Description:**

3 landscape units are included in this category. They are:

- Wairoa Point to Onewhero Bay (Unit C9)
- Between Herekino and Whangape Harbour Mouths (Unit C47)
- Between Hokianga Harbour Mouth and Maunganui Bluff (Unit C53)

A consistent theme of these units is that of extensive reef platforms extending from above the MHWS mark to beyond the intertidal zone. In the case of the Onewhero Bay unit, this rocky character also extends some way inland, reflecting the volcanic origins of this part of the coast.

None of the units are unduly influenced by built development, indeed the 2 west coast units are almost entirely devoid of buildings and the Wairoa Point to Onewhero Bay unit contains a single farmhouse and a couple of ancillary buildings.

Vegetation associations don't make a strong contribution to these units – pasture dominates much of the coastal margin over the majority of all three.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

The Wairoa Point to Onewhero Bay unit rates as outstanding with an overall sensitivity rating of 6. The two remaining units are considered to be significant and are accordingly rated 5.

The key landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- The continuity and connection between land and sea that is provided by the reefs.
- A dynamic interplay between the reef-line and the sea.
- The high degree of sensitivity of the coastline in the absence of screening vegetation or topography.

## **C. Rocky coast interspersed with beaches**

### **Description:**

This category incorporates 12 landscape units. They are:

- Islands of the Bay of Islands (Unit C2)
- Rawhiti Point to Tapeka Point (Unit C3)
- Ti Point to Onewhero Bay (Unit C8)
- Onewhero Bay to point adjacent Motutapu Island (Unit C10)

- Moturoa Island (Unit C11)
- Black Rocks to Haimama Pa (Unit C17)
- Haimama Pa to Whangaroa South Head (Unit C18)
- Whangaroa North Head to Hihi Beach (Unit 25)
- Hihi Beach to Puketū Island (Unit 26)
- East Rangaunu Harbour Mouth (Unit 34)
- Perpendicular Point to Paxton Point (Unit 38)
- Ngātehe Point to Tarawamaomaō Point (Unit 42)

The characteristic that draws these units together is a series of small to moderate sized beaches defined by stretches of rocky coastline. Frequently the craggy profile of the rocky portions of the coast extends into the sea as reefs or small islets. Low rocky cliff lines or extremely steep coastal banks are a feature of the category.

Most of the units follow a rather convoluted line when viewed from the air, forming a combination of pronounced headlands and small scalloped bays containing beaches. Their position on semi-exposed sections of coastline means that the units in the category are periodically battered by moderate seas, but generally lapped by more placid sea conditions.

Strong vegetation patterns are common to virtually all of the units. Pohutakawa are a recurring theme, dominating the headlands and steepest cliffed portions of the coast, and frequently providing a backdrop to the beaches found in the units. Coastal scrubland dominated by manuka predominantly runs inland from the cliff edge, although such vegetation feature is less prevalent in units which have been prepared for grazing, such as Moturoa Island.

Several of the units, most particularly those around the southern coastline of the Bay of Islands, containing residential development or are immediately adjacent to housing contained in an adjoining terrestrial unit. This ranges from sporadically placed homes through to more intensive development in areas such as Parekura Bay.

A combination of broken terrain, varied coastal alignment and extensive vegetation assist in integrating housing into the landscape. Further development of settlements such as Parekura Bay will however, overstep the threshold of what the landscape can successfully absorb into a level of built development which dominates the landscape setting. The colour, form, scale and location of buildings have a significant bearing upon the level of impact they create.

### **Outstanding Landscape and Features**

The majority of these units are rated highly when completing the landscape assessment worksheets. Units C11, C17, C26 and C34 are considered significant, with a rating of 5. Units C3, C8, C10, C18, C25, C38 and C42 achieved an overall sensitivity rating of 6 and are therefore considered outstanding, as is unit C2 with a rating of 7. None of these units in this category rated less than 5 for overall sensitivity.

Characteristic of the units that contribute to their high ratings are:

- A varied and interesting coastal alignment, bringing a strong sense of mystery and anticipation.
- Strong vegetation patterns, dominated by pohutakawa and frequently reinforced by coastal scrubland associations.

- The variety provided by the combination of rocky coast and sandy bays which characterises the category.
- The extreme sensitivity of most of the headlands, clifflines, and coastal ridgelines found in the units.
- A largely successful integration of existing buildings in more modestly developed portions of the units.

#### **D. Expansive exposed beaches**

##### **Description:**

This category includes 6 landscape units. They are:

- Tokerau Beach (Unit C31)
- Karikari Beach and Puheke Beach (Unit C33)
- East Beach (Unit C34)
- Great Exhibition Bay (Unit C39)
- Ninety Mile Beach (Unit C44)
- Between Hokianga and Whangape Harbours (C50)

The theme that these units share is their expansive sweeping beach, which brings a sense of expansive openness, verging on infinity in some cases, to the coastline. Their spaciousness is emphasised by exposure to the open ocean. The pounding that these units absorb explains their form, as the sea and wind shift and redeposit massive volumes of sand, either in the changing form of the beach itself or the varying profile of the dunes that back it.

The severe conditions and ever changing morphology of these units means a virtual absence of large indigenous vegetation. Plant associations tend to be much smaller species that bind in the dune fields or inhabit backshore dune wetlands. In the least modified of the units, such as East Beach and Great Exhibition Bay, the sombre colouring and inconspicuous size of the coastal plant associations contributes to the exposed natural character of the unit, reinforcing both the sense of openness and naturalness of the coast.

The introduction of pine forests on the backshore of Ninety Mile Beach has unfortunately compromised both the sense of spaciousness and the sequence of natural vegetation patterns that would have once progressed inland across the dunefields.

Whilst built development is very limited within the units found in the category, that which exists provides a strong message of potential pitfalls for future housing in this type of coast. The most vivid examples are found along Tokerau Beach (unit C34), where two storey homes built atop the highest (possibly as a result of recontouring) backdune totally dominate the adjacent shoreline and are visible from a considerable distance. A small subdivision in the middle of this beach is the most glaring example of such inappropriate development, for there is no backdrop to this part of the beach and virtually no natural vegetation with which to integrate the housing.

Back developments on the more exposed Ninety Mile Beach provide an illustration of a far less imposing form of housing, although the more severe the conditions of the west coast should perhaps take credit for this lower visual impact. Here the blast of the sea and wind, combined perhaps with the threat of shifting dunes, has confined housing to shelter inland of the most prominent dunes. As a result the single storey

baches remain below the profile of the first sequence of the dunes and cannot be seen from the beach itself.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

These landscape units also featured high overall ratings, Significant landscape units included C44 and C45, whilst units C31, C33, C36, and C39 are all considered to be outstanding with an overall sensitivity rating of 6.

Aspects of these units that are particularly notable are:

- The sense of expansive spaciousness experienced in the units.
- The limited extent of built development found within these units.
- A largely “natural” sequence of coastal dune field / wetland vegetation, whilst acknowledging that exotic species of sand binding plants often contribute to this matrix of vegetation.
- The association between the sweeping beach and the field of dunes found extending inland as a backdrop.

## **E. Coast dominated by prominent sand hills**

### **Description:**

This category includes 2 landscape units. They are:

- Tarawamaoma point to Kahokawa Beach Headland (Unit C43)
- Ahipara to Herekino Harbour Mouth (Unit C45)

The huge dunes found in these units is what sets them apart from units assigned to other categories. In both cases the presence of the dunes is highlighted by their relationship with adjacent terrain, for the sand has built up against coastal banks or headlands, often spilling over a ridge and down the other side. As such these piles of exposed sand reach up to 100m above the adjacent sea, ensuring that they are a dominant feature within the coastal landscape.

They also bear testimony to the very active coastal processes of both Cape Maria van Diemen and western coastline, where high winds and severe waves transport huge volumes of sand.

The severity of conditions experienced in both of these units, very likely in combination with the tenure of land, has meant that neither has seen significant built development, although some portions of unit C45 immediately south of Tauroa Point has recently be planted in pines. Pine plantations are thought to be the greatest threat to the future of the elevated dunes, for *Pinus radiata* has proven to be versatile enough to grow in virtually pure sand, provided that supplementary minerals are provided.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

The unit spanning the coast between Ahipara and Herekino rates as being significant, whilst unit C43 is outstanding with an overall rating of 6.

Amongst the ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- The visual prominence of the sand hills in the overall coastal setting.
- A sense of the dynamism of local coastal process that is conveyed by the presence and form of the sandhills.
- The natural vegetation patterns that are found in close association with the dunes, particularly in the more northern of the two units.

## **F. Harbour mouths**

### **Description:**

This category includes 4 landscape units. They are:

- Whangaroa Harbour Mouth and Pekapeka Bay (Unit C20)
- Mangonui Harbour Mouth (Unit C27)
- Whangape Harbour Mouth (Unit 48)
- Hokianga Harbour Mouth (Unit C51)

These units share a common role and visual identity in forming the threshold or gateway between some of the District's most sheltered harbours and the open sea beyond. They enframe vistas from within the containment of the harbour to the expanse of the ocean outside, or for those approaching from the sea, the promise of shelter lies within.

The aspect of their form which distinguishes these units from the balance of the harbour or the coast outside the harbour, is the sense of narrowing and enclosure that they offer in passing through.

Each is highlighted by a distinctive and dramatic landform, as if acting as a beacon to the open sea. At Whangaroa this takes the form of soaring rocky bluffs, topped with distinctive limestone formations. Mangonui's harbour entrance is overlooked by a conical hill which carries the distinctive formations of Rangikapiti Pa. whilst Whangape Harbour is entered through a dramatic trench in the surrounding coastal hills, rather reminiscent of a carved glacial valley.

Further to the south, Hokianga Harbour's entry is marked by the towering Te Pouahi sand dune to the north and Mount Pukekohe to the south.

Vegetation patterns are somewhat variable across the units comprising the category. The two east coast harbour mouths are dominated by pohutakawa and coastal shrubland. The west coast units are less luxuriously vegetated and convey a rather more stark image as a result.

The Hokianga Harbour mouth is the only unit in the category which contains significant development. The combined impact of Opononi and Omapere settlements along the shores of this largely contribute to the lower overall rating that this unit receives.

Kingfisher Lodge nestled in the mouth of the Whangaroa Harbour is also worthy of passing comment. While intrusive upon the otherwise natural character of the entry to the harbour, the lodge has been well sited at the head of a small inlet and disrupts the atmosphere of the harbour considerably less than would have been the case if it had been built on one of the adjacent ridgelines or headlands.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

The Whangaroa, Mangonui and Whangape harbour mouths are particularly notable, achieving an overall sensitivity rating of 7 (outstanding). The Hokianga Harbour mouth is considered significant, with an overall sensitivity rating of 5.

The key landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- The role of these units as a threshold between the sheltered and contained harbour within and the expansiveness and exposure of the ocean beyond.
- The sense of drama and variety in passing or looking through these units from a considerably different coastal character found to either side.
- A dramatic land form setting, or elements of dramatic landform.
- A limited level of built development.
- A strong sense of “naturalness”, albeit somewhat modified.

## **G. Estuarine inlets and harbours**

### **Description:**

This category is the largest of the assessment, covering some 20 landscape units:

- Tapeka Point to Veronica Channel (Unit C4)
- Waikare Inlet and Kawakawa River (unit C5)
- Veronica Channel (Unit C6)
- Waitangi River Inlet (Unit C7)
- South Coast Kerikeri Inlet (Unit C12)
- Inner Kerikeri Inlet (Unit C13)
- North Coast Kerikeri Inlet (Unit C14)
- Te Puna Inlet (unit C15)
- Milford Island and Associated Coves (Unit C21)
- Inner Whangaroa Harbour (Unit C23)
- Inner Mangonui Harbour (Unit C28)
- Taipa River Inlet (Unit C30)
- Rangaunu Harbour (Unit C35)
- Houhora Harbour (Unit C37)
- South Parengarenga Harbour (Unit C40)
- North Parengarenga Harbour (Unit C41)
- Herekino Harbour (Unit C46)
- Inner Whangape Harbour (Unit C49)
- Inner Hokianga Harbour (Unit C52)
- Waimamaku Inlet – Kaikai Beach (Unit C54)

These units are characterised by a sense of detachment from the open coastline – a strong degree of shelter and enclosure, and a rather serene quality. In their upper reaches many of these units extend a considerable distance inland, and in doing so assume many qualities in common with fresh water rivers – a narrow, winding channel, containment by banks on either side, and a limited expanse of water.

The ubiquitous presence of the mangrove continues throughout all but the steepest sections or most exposed sections of these coasts, with mangrove trees reaching a considerable size in parts of the Hokianga in particular. In the least developed

portions of this coastal type, the mangroves are backed with salt marsh associations, containing subtly coloured rushes, mat forming plants, and divaricating shrubs. Excellent examples still exist adjacent to the Rangaunu, Whangaroa and Hokianga Harbours. In many areas however, the estuarine marshes have been severed from the sea by stop-banks, drained and converted to pasture.

The pohutakawa continues as the dominant tree fringe in units which meet steep coastal banks, frequently backed by manuka scrubland. Those that are found amongst flatter terrain are often without such explicit definition at their edge and therefore have a much more expansive character.

Levels of development are highly variable, ranging from a few scattered houses to small settlements. Several of the oldest of these settlements maintain a strong and positive relationship between the natural setting of the coast and human development. The intrinsic character of villages such as Kohukohu, Rawene and Horeke is attributable in part to a sense of history, the scale of the buildings, and the subtle blending of built structures and coastal form. It is unfortunate that more recent developments, such as a modern toilet block recently constructed at Rawene, look likely to gradually erode this relationship.

Another important cultural relationship found across many units, but most markedly around the Hokianga harbour, is that formed between marae, associated chapels and the harbour edge. Almost without exception the interplay between the built structures of marae, particularly the meeting house and chapel, and the coastal edge creates a rich and interesting image. The interpositioning also symbolically restates the importance of the coast to the people. These subtle visual relationships are very fragile – a newly constructed building sited in the wrong position is often all that would be needed to destroy the pleasing connection between marae or the sea.

### **Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

Most highly rated of these units are C15, C41 and C46 which are considered outstanding with a rating of 6. The majority of the remaining units – C4, C5, C6, C7, C13, C23, C30, C37, C40, C49, C52 and C54 – rated as significant. The five remaining units in this category rated as 4 for overall sensitivity.

Prominent amongst the landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- A degree of containment and individual identity conveyed by units.
- The unifying fringe of mangrove found around the fringe of most of the units.
- Natural salt marsh associations that continue above the intertidal area.
- Vegetation found on the coastal banks, particularly where this is largely comprised of indigenous coastal species.
- The strong visual relationship between many marae and the coast.
- Cultural patterns between historic coastal settlements such as Horeke, Rawene and Kohukohu and the sea.

## **H. Coastal villages**

### **Description:**

Just two landscape units are covered by this category. They are:

- Whangaroa Village / Totara North (Unit C22)
- Mangonui Village (Unit C29)

These units continue themes previously discussed in relation to some of the Hokianga Settlements. The primary distinction between the units assigned to this category and the villages on the Hokianga is the size and area of influence covered by each. The two areas of settlement covered by this category are somewhat larger and justify assignment as units in themselves.

The primary theme of this category is that of *coastal* villages, that is settlements that are entirely unrelated to the sea in their function and character. Common elements that link the units in this category are their heritage character, the prominence and focus of their main wharf, their containment by landform and their positioning within the shelter of a harbour.

History has had a major role in the development of these settlements, not just in providing a dominant theme of historic buildings, but also through a functional role as small working ports which continues (to a much reduced extent) in the present life of each.

Vegetation plays a significant part in the appearance of both units. Pohutakawa and other indigenous coastal species are mixed with mature exotic species to create a strong vegetative framework which integrates the various built structures.

### **Outstanding Landscape and Features:**

Mangonui is outstanding, with an overall rating of 6, whilst the Whangaroa / Totara North unit rates as significant.

The key landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- The prevailing heritage character of villages.
- The integrated relationship between the villages and the adjacent coast.
- The pleasant human scale of the villages and component buildings.
- The containment and responsive siting of townships in relation to both the alignment of the coast and surrounding landform.

## **I. Heritage Landscapes**

### **Description:**

This category covers just one landscape unit. It is:

- Waimate / Okaihau Area (Unit T23)

The over-riding characteristic of this unit is its strong heritage signature. A range of elements contribute to the sense of history conveyed by the landscape of the area. Evidence of Maori heritage is conveyed by pa site formations on many of the prominent cones within the unit.

The most obvious heritage elements of European settlement of the unit are the historic buildings, most graphically represented by the Waimate Mission House and the adjacent church. Other built elements such as stone walls and thorn hedges are widespread throughout the unit.

Groves of mature indigenous vegetation are surprisingly prevalent. Totara is the prevalent species within the unit, but large specimens of puriri, complete with perching epiphytes, are also prominent. Exotic species such as oaks, pines, macrocarpa, and Norfolk Island pines are scattered around homesteads, but are considerably less conspicuous than the native vegetation.

The unit is not without more recent development, but fortunately most of the modern houses are well set back from the road and generally well screened. Inevitably the most visible modern homes tend to detract from the heritage character of the unit.

Recent subdivision of the eastern portion of the unit for lifestyle blocks is a trend which will inevitably erode the historic theme of the unit, particularly when development includes prominently sited homes and/or strong boundary delineation with shelterbelts.

**Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

The unit is considered outstanding, with an overall sensitivity rating of 6. Elements which contribute to this rating are:

- A pervading natural character
- Historic buildings and associated fences, gardens etc.
- The presence of historic stonewalls and hedgerows.
- Groves of mature native trees.
- Notable exotic trees that are associated with historic buildings, particularly specimens of oak and Norfolk Island pines.

**J. Farmed flats**

**Description:**

This category includes two landscape units. They are:

- Flats south of Kaikohe (Unit T17)
- Kaitaia / Awanui Flats (Unit T47)

These units represent the majority of flat land to be found in the Far North. Both have been developed from previous wetland and consequently are extensively drained, particularly the Awanui unit.

A rectilinear pattern of paddocks predominates, bringing a very controlled production atmosphere to the landscape. Shelterbelts logically follow these alignments, but are so sporadic to be considered a dominant feature. Accordingly the landscape has a rather broken appearance, ranging from expansive open areas to more intimate spaces in closer proximity to shelter. Occasional pockets of totara and a more regular pattern of shelter prevail on the flats to the south of Kaikohe, and this clearer landscape image is reflected in a higher overall rating for this unit.

Housing is quite prominent in both units and tends to be rather poorly integrated. Obviously landform has very little to offer as a screening element, so that those homes that are well integrated rely upon extensive planting to do so.

With overall sensitivity ratings of 4 and 3 respectively, neither landscape unit is of outstanding or significant status.

## **K. Intensive orcharding**

### **Description:**

One landscape unit is covered by this category. It is:

- Kerikeri Horticultural Area (Unit T30)

This unit reflects, in part, the distribution of high quality soils in the Kerikeri area. The intensity and extent of horticultural activity in the unit stands it apart from smaller pockets of orcharding elsewhere in the District. A combination of factors contribute to a very clearly defined character.

A framework for the unit is provided by extensive belts of eucalyptus, occurring both as ordered shelterbelts and more informal woodlands that run through some of the least productive lands.

Within the largely informal framework offered by the gums, a more ordered rectilinear pattern of shelterbelts divides the rolling landform into grids, and it is within these grids that the precise lines of crop trees march across the terrain.

The lush, glossy foliage of citrus is dominant amongst the crops and provides a rather tropical atmosphere to the area.

Despite the intensity of horticultural activity in the unit, built development is not as intrusive as might be expected. A number of facets contribute – a tendency to site houses and implement sheds in the centre of properties, the relatively low profile of most buildings, extensive screening by shelterbelts, and amenity planting, and rolling terrain which provides opportunity to integrate built development more readily.

Commercial activity along the main roadsides is perhaps the most prominent detracting element in this landscape, and one which seems to be escalating. A combination of more extensive roadside retail facilities (largely for selling produce) and more emphatic signs are primarily to blame.

### **Significant Landscapes and Features:**

The unit is considered significant in recognition of:

- The strong spatial framework and backdrop provided by groves of eucalyptus throughout the unit.
- The ordered hierarchy of trimmed shelterbelts and rows of citrus crops in the landscape, and the contrast between these and the informality of the areas of eucalyptus.
- The relatively inconspicuous presence of built development within the setting.

## **L. Gently undulating pasture / scrub**

### **Description:**

This category includes 10 landscape units. They are:

- Manawaera Farmland (Unit T3)

- Towai Rolling Farmland (Unit T8)
- Backshore of Kerikeri South Inlet (Unit T28)
- Purerua Peninsula (Unit T32)
- Otoroa Plateau (Unit T35)
- Ahipara Gumfields (Unit T45)
- Around Kaiangaroa and Lake Ohia (Unit T49)
- Scrubland at Foot of Karikari Peninsula (Unit T50)
- Karikari Peninsula Undulating Farmland (Unit T51)
- Spine of Aupouri Peninsula (Unit T54)

This landscape category groups units on the basis of the rolling terrain which underlays them. The topography of the unit extends from subtly undulating terrain through to the more dramatically rolling country that characterises ancient dune fields that have been modified as pasture.

Vegetation is also somewhat variable, extending from dense manuka shrubland, such as that covering the Ahipara Gumfields and the base of the Karikari Peninsula, through to the open pasture that is found on parts of the spine of the Aupouri Peninsula. Broadly spaced shelterbelts, predominantly of pine, are a feature of many units.

An over-riding attribute of most of the units in the category is that of simplicity, a characteristic which generally results in a limited degree of interest or complexity being conveyed by the unit. In some cases, such as the Ahipara Gumfields, a sense of simplicity adds to the vividness of the unit – making it all the more legible.

Built development is generally widely distributed, although buildings that are present are too frequently poor sited or integrated within the landscape.

#### **Significant landscapes and features:**

Only two of these units received any particular recognition from the assessment process; the Ahipara Gumfields and the unit of scrubland at the foot of the Karikari Peninsula, both of which are rated as significant (5).

The landscape elements that contribute to these ratings are:

- A very simple and graphic landscape image.
- Predominant cover with indigenous shrubland, thereby conveying a strong “native” signature.
- Extremely limited built development.
- In the case of the Ahipara Gumfields – an underlying commentary on the heritage of the area.

#### **M. Pastoral hill country with pockets of scrub / bush**

##### **Description:**

13 landscape units are included in this category. They are:

- Rawhiti Road Adjacent Wairoa Stream / Puhinui Stream (Unit T2)
- Orongo Bay Isthmus (Unit T5)
- South-east Hill Country (Unit T6)
- Ruapekapeka Hills (Unit T7)

- Hills around Marlow (Unit T9)
- South-west Hills (Unit T13)
- Waimamaku Valley (Unit T20)
- Wharau / Te Kume Hills (Unit T29)
- Inland Hills (Unit T34)
- Hill Country East of Whangaroa (Unit T36)
- Akatere Hill Country (Unit T43)
- Foothills between Kaitaia and Taipa (Unit T48)
- Te Paki Rolling Hills (Unit T57)

These units cover the majority of the steepest portion of the District that is utilised for grazing, including the extensive “Inland Hills” unit which encompasses much of the terrain in the centre of the Far North. Encompassed within the hill country that is the focus of this category, are many small valleys and basins which have a much more fertile image attached to them.

Many of the units convey an impression that pastoral farming is an extremely difficult use for the land. Extensive evidence of erosion, recolonisation with manuka shrubland, and infestation with weed species all contribute to a rather untamed yet fragile landscape.

The steepness of the terrain has precluded clearance of some areas, or dictated the retirement of land – allowing native shrubland to regain a foothold. These remnants and recolonised portions of the units bring an indigenous theme, as well as creating elements of interest and variety in the landscape. Frequently vegetation patterns relate to the form of the land, echoing a valley or emphasising a ridgeline. As such it increases the legibility and coherence of the landscape.

Pine plantations are an increasingly common element in these units, particularly in the very steepest terrain. Most plantings relate quite well to other localised patterns in the landscape and to the form of topography. A few, however, contradict the lie of the land or impose rectilinear boundaries across the face of hillsides or ridges. Such intensive plantations provide a graphic message of the visual costs that accompany poorly considered alignments or forms.

Most of the built development in these units is relatively inconspicuous, for it is usually located on the more stable lower slopes and frequently well screened by vegetation. The scarring that accompanies farm tracks in step country has a far more disruptive visual effect, reaffirming the impact of more extensive soil creep and slipping that is frequently seen in nearby pasture.

### **Significant Landscapes and Features:**

Just three of the units are acknowledged as being of particular merit – units T5, T7, and T29 – all of which are rated as significant. The aspects of their landscape that contribute to these ratings are:

- The legibility of the landscape.
- The indigenous character imparted by native vegetation.
- The relationship between open pastoral hillsides and pockets of bush or scrub.

## **N. Scrub-clad hill country**

### **Description:**

Five landscape units are covered by this category. They are:

- Russell Peninsula Hills (Unit T4)
- Kerikeri / south Te Puna Inlet flanks (Unit T31)
- Rangiahia Range (Unit T52)
- Houhora Headland (Unit T56)
- Northern Hill Country (Unit T58)

This category is determined by a combination of steep terrain and a continuous cover of indigenous shrubland which is dominated by manuka. It shares several characteristics with those described for the previous category, particularly the form of terrain.

Erosion also affects the visual quality of this category, where the scarring associated with slips and road formation is heightened by a strong contrast with the dark colouring of the manuka shrubland. The Rangiahia Range unit on Cape Karikari provides a vivid example of this form of degradation, with a combination of poorly aligned tracks, extensive tracts of erosion and a substantial portion of the steepest hill country burnt off.

The impact of housing varies considerably across the units represented in the category. The majority are almost entirely devoid of built structures, but the exception is the Kerikeri / south Te Puna Inlet flanks unit which includes a considerable amount of housing. Despite a relatively intensive level of development, the overriding theme of vegetation flows between houses and therefore assists in their integration. Most intrusive are those buildings which are sited on ridgelines or headlands, or finished in pale, highly reflective colours.

### **Significant Landscapes and Features:**

All five units share an overall rating of 5 and are therefore recognised as significant.

The characteristics of these units that contribute to their significance are:

- The continuity of indigenous shrubland that extends across them.
- The limited level of built development found in the majority of the units.
- The sense of wilderness and remoteness of most of the units.
- The high level of visual sensitivity of ridgelines and exposed flanks.

## **O. Bush-clad hill country**

### **Description:**

This category includes eleven landscape units. They are:

- Russell Forest (Unit T1)
- Tokawhero Native Forests (Unit T14)
- Kirioko Native Forest (Unit T16)
- Waima and Waipoua Forests (Unit T18)
- Pukewharariki Forest (Unit T21)
- Opuia Forest (Unit T26)

- Puketi Forest (Unit T37)
- Warawara Forest (Unit T38)
- Maungataniwha Range (Unit T41)
- Mangonui Forest (Unit T42)
- Herekino Forest (Unit T44)

A continuous cover of indigenous forest characterises these units, much of it secondary regenerating growth, but some still in a virgin state. Most notable amongst the intact areas of forest perhaps, are the groves of mature kauri that are found in Puketi and Waipoua Forests.

The forests tend to occupy the steepest and most elevated topography, and therefore act as a backdrop and focus for a considerable area of lower terrain. Accordingly the outer flanks and ridgelines are visible over a wide expanse and are extremely sensitive.

Built development is almost non-existent, although there is a telecommunications mast constructed on an elevated bush-clad peak in the southern extent of the District.

#### **Outstanding Landscape and Features:**

Ten of the units are rated with 6 or 7, indicating that they are outstanding. Unit T21 (Pukewharariki Forest) is considered significant, with an overall rating of 5.

The key landscape ingredients that contribute to these ratings are:

- A rich and diverse composition of indigenous forest.
- A high degree of continuity and coherence.
- The role of most units as a sub-regional backdrop and landmark.
- The extreme sensitivity of exposed flanks and ridgelines.
- A strong atmosphere of naturalness and wilderness.

#### **P. Plantation forests**

##### **Description:**

This category includes 7 landscape units. They are:

- Tarakihi Plantation Forest (Unit T10)
- Rakautao Forest and associated plantations (Unit T11)
- Mangakahia River Plantation Forest (Unit T15)
- Waipoua Plantation Forest (Unit T19)
- Waitangi Forest (Unit T27)
- Hokianga Heads Plantation Forest (Unit T39)
- Aupouri Forest (Unit T55)

A consistent monocultural cover of pine plantation is the primary characteristic that unites these units in a category. The terrain that these units occupy varies considerably, from the rolling sand dunes overlaid by the Aupouri Forest, to the steep, dissected terrain of the Rakautao Forest. The strong signature of the pine forest reads consistently from both.

Key characteristics of this landscape character category are a consistency of colour, texture and form. The resulting landscape therefore lacks interest and variety, tending even to mask any underlying variations the terrain may offer.

The most prominent impacts associated with monocultural pine forests arise upon harvesting, when a total loss of land cover combines with the scarring of logging tracks. The overall ratings of the units found in this category are amongst the lowest of any found in the assessment – the majority rating as a 2 or a 3.

## **Q. Extensive valleys**

### **Description:**

This category includes three landscape units. They are:

- Upper Waitangi River Valley (Unit T24)
- Waihou Valley (Unit T38)
- Victoria Valley (Unit T46)

These units share their general morphology in common, that of an expansive valley floor contained by more elevated terrain to either side.

The rich alluvial soils of the valley base are suited to extensive dairying and horticulture, and the units represented in this category are accordingly more intensively developed than the surrounding landscape.

Each has evolved around the course of a stream, a feature which continues to play a prominent role in the visual structure of the landscape.

Vegetation patterns tend to combine stands of indigenous trees, predominantly totara, and exotic shelterbelts. Amenity plantings of exotic trees generally assist in integrating homesteads and farm buildings.

### **Significant Landscapes and Features:**

The upper Waitangi River Valley rates as significant in recognition of the following characteristics:

- A partial continuity of themes and patterns from the adjoining Waimate / Okaihau unit.
- Pockets of indigenous vegetation.
- The limited impact of built development.
- A sense of drama created by the landform – a deep valley depressed below the more elevated surrounding terrain.

## **R. Wetlands and small lakes**

### **Description:**

Just one landscape unit is covered by this category:

- Motutangi / Waihuahua Swamp (Unit T53)

This extensive unit of wetland located to the north of Rangaunu Harbour occupies an area enclosed by the dune fields of East Beach.

Whilst subtle rises in topography mark remnant dunes, the majority of the unit is low-lying, creating small ponds and watercourses dotted across the expanse of the wetland.

Vegetation consists of rush beds and low divaricating shrubs across the lowest of the terrain, with shrubland composed of manuka and, unfortunately, gorse, occupying the higher terrain. The overall image is one of simplicity and naturalness.

Built development is extremely limited within the unit. The settlement of Kaimaumau perches between the wetland and the harbour but its presence does not extend into the wetland itself.

**Outstanding Landscapes and Features:**

This unit rates as outstanding, with an overall sensitivity score of 6. Important aspects of the unit that contribute to its high rating are:

- The rarity of extensive wetlands within the District.
- The sense of naturalness that pervades the unit.
- The subtle indigenous plant associations that are found across the unit.
- The extremely limited intrusion of built structures or human activity within the swamp.

**S. Large lakes and margins**

**Description:**

This category includes three landscape units. They are:

- Lake Owhareiti (Unit T12)
- Lake Omapere (Unit T22)
- Lake Manuwai (Unit T33)

The characteristic that unifies these three units within a category is their shared expanse of open water and their associated littoral fringe. Areas of manuka shrubland extend a small distance inshore across some of the marshy portions of Lake Omapere’s edge.

All three units are set within a pastoral context, although Lake Manuwai, an irrigation reservoir, is largely contained within a framework of planted trees. Scattered specimen trees provide something of a broken framework for the other two units.

Built development is extremely limited, the only buildings to be found in any of the units being some small utility structures on the edge of Lake Manuwai. A few scattered dwellings are to be found in the immediate vicinity of the lakes (in adjoining units) but the intrusive effect of these units is minimal.

The low-lying nature of the lakes, limited access, and a paucity of elevated viewing points in the near vicinity means they are a somewhat “invisible” element in the Far North landscape, an area where coastal water bodies have a particularly dominant presence.

**Significant Landscapes and Features:**

Lake Omapere rates as significant (5) for the following reasons:

- Its relationship with the surrounding landform and, in particular, the adjacent cones.
- The extremely limited extent of built development visible from the lake.
- The scarcity of large fresh water bodies in the Far North landscape.
- The fringe of reeds and other littoral vegetation supported by the lake.

## 6.0 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

### 6.1 Analysis of Findings

The following matrix summarises the assessment results for all nineteen categories by showing the different SENSITIVITY RATINGS accorded to Landscape Units within each character category (the numbers with in the boxes are the Landscape Unit numbers):

**TABLE 1: LANDSCAPE UNITS WITHIN EACH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CATEGORY & EACH SENSITIVITY RATING:**

#### Coastal Landscape Categories

CHARACTER CATEGORIES:	SENSITIVITY RATINGS						
	(NO SENSITIVITY.....EXTREME SENSITIVITY)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A. Exposed rocky coastline					C31	C16 C19	C1 C24
B. Reef lined coast					C46 C53	C9	
C. Rocky coast interspersed with beaches					C11 C17 C26 C34	C3 C8 C10 C18 C25 C38 C42	C2
D. Expansive exposed beaches					C44 C50	C31 C33 C36 C39	
E. Coast dominated by prominent sand hills					C45	C43	
F. Harbour mouths					C51		C20 C27 C48
G. Estuarine inlets and harbours				C12 C14 C21 C28 C35	C4 C5 C6 C7 C13 C23 C30 C37 C40 C49 C52 C54	C15 C41 C46	
H. Coastal villages					C22	C29	

**Terrestrial Landscape Categories**

	<b>SENSITIVITY RATINGS</b>						
	(NO SENSITIVITY.....EXTREME SENSITIVITY)						
<i>CHARACTER CATEGORIES:</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
I. Heritage landscapes						T23	
J. Farmed flats			T47	T17			
K. Intensive orcharding					T30		
L. Gently undulating pasture / scrub			T25 T28 T35 T49 T51 T54	T3 T8 T32	T45 T50		
M. Pastoral hill country with pockets of scrub / bush			T6 T13 T48	T2 T9 T20 T34 T36 T43 T57	T5 T7 T29		
N. Scrub-clad hill country					T4 T31 T52 T56 T58		
O. Bush-clad hill country					T21	T1 T14 T16 T26 T41 T42	T18 T37 T40 T44
P. Plantation forests		T15 T19 T55	T11 T27 T39	T10			
Q. Extensive valleys				T38 T46	T24		
R. Wetlands and small lakes						T53	
S. Large lakes and margins			T12	T33	T22		

**Plans 1 – 4: Landscape Units and Sensitivity Ratings** – show the results of the district Landscape Assessment and the ratings attributed to each landscape unit. The colours shown on the plans denote the various ratings attributed to units, with the “warm” colours indicating the highest scores.

Some clear patterns emerge from these plans, from Table 1 above, and from the following Table 2, which summarises the percentages of the District’s area that have been accorded with various ratings.

The first is the consistently high ratings accorded to most of the coastal units of the district, with the majority of the coast being rated significant (5), and outstanding (6 and 7). Generally the highest ratings are achieved by those coastal units which have been least modified by human activity, predominantly those found on the most exposed portion of the shore.

Highest rating amongst the inland units also tend to be those with the highest degree of naturalness, particularly units covering areas of largely unmodified indigenous forest. The majority of these units are under the stewardship of DOC. Modification of the landscape does not preclude high ratings however, as indicated by the ratings assigned to the “cultural” landscapes found in the Kerikeri orcharding area and the heritage setting of Waimate / Okaihau unit.

The lowest rating of the units are those which support monocultural pine forest, a testimony to the degrading effect that this land use typically brings. The majority of the farmed portions of the District, and some of the most modified of the estuarine coastal units (whether by built development or farming activities) are rated in the range 3 to 4, indicating a limited to moderate range of overall sensitivity.

The following table provides a summary of the range of overall sensitivity ratings (1 – 7) found across the District, expressed by the area of landscape attributed with each score as a percentage of the entire District’s land area:

**Table 2: Percentage of the District’s land area that has been attributed with each of the overall sensitivity ratings.**

	NO / VERY LOW SENSITIVITY.....EXTREME SENSITIVITY						
RATINGS:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PERCENTAGE OF ENTIRE DISTRICT:	0%	4%	30%	29%	12%	14%	11%

It should be noted that the area of the District that achieves a certain rating has little correlation with the number of landscape units that are attributed with the same rating. This is because the size of the units varies considerably, most noticeably demonstrated by the narrow strips that typically comprise the coastal units when compared with some of the expansive inland hill country units.

**6.2 KEY FINDINGS**

The following are the other major key findings to emerge from the Far North District Landscape Assessment:

- As a whole, the Coastal Marine Area is inseparable from the terrestrial landscape which frames it. Consequently, impressions of the coastal

landscape and its value are influenced as much by what is seen in conjunction with that water and land-sea interface as by the nature of that interface.

- There is a strong correlation between ‘naturalness’ and landscape value and sensitivity, and between cultural and historic landscapes and landscape quality and sensitivity. Though much of the Far North landscape is modified, the patterns and elements of primarily early settlement give parts of the District a very distinct character which contributes positively to landscape values.
- The landscape of the District has a high level of diversity, from district-wide distinctions to localised variability. Such diversity is being compromised in some areas, either by the introduction of new, small scale activities (such as rural residential development) or large scale monocultural modification (such as pine forestry).
- Several parts of the District have a very distinctive character of their own. These usually incorporate several units and include a combination of coastal and terrestrial landscape. The distinctiveness of these areas contributes to the overall identity and variety of the Far North landscape. They need to be recognised and managed to maintain their special characteristics.
- Most of the landscape units of the District, other than those already supporting extensive built development, have a low Visual Absorption Capability – that is – a low capacity to accommodate change without appreciable impact.
- There is an increasing level of development of land as monocultural forest plantations. Negative effects relating to loss of landscape variety and diversity, the location of forest in respect to landform, the alignment and composition of forest edges, and the visual impacts of harvesting are emerging issues as existing plantations mature.
- Tracts of indigenous shrubland and mature native specimen trees continue to be cleared from areas of pasture, with resulting losses in terms of landscape diversity and character.
- The high negative impact generated by housing located on ridgelines, sensitive hill flanks and coastal headlands, with most of this type of activity being restricted to areas in close proximity to centres of urban development, such as Russell and Kerikeri.
- Urban margins are “creeping” out into adjoining rural landscapes, resulting in a loss of distinction between rural and urban character on the edges of settlements.
- Signs are creating negative impacts in many rural areas. A large percentage of these signs are temporary, often advertising the current price of produce for sale in roadside stalls.
- High impacts are frequently generated by road development in the district, particularly in steep or unstable terrain. Usually the effects result from

cuttings, retaining walls, barriers and roadside signs, rather from the actual road platform or surfacing.

## **7.0 MECHANISMS FOR LANDSCAPE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The wide range of issues discussed above which arose from the landscape assessment, range from those which are readily addressed through 'rules', such as the prevention of native forest clearance through to those which are less easily addressed, such as the siting of new residences in response to landform.

There also needs to be acknowledgment that many of the factors that are critical to the character and value of the coastal edge lie within the Coastal Marine Area and the Regional Council's area of control, e.g. intertidal vegetation associations, the visual effects of marine farms.

In order to respond to the range of issues identified, a combination of three basis strategies is recommended:

1. Readily defined and monitored elements, such as development location and form, are issues that can be managed through a combination of policies and rules.
2. Such regulatory management should be supplemented by an educational approach when it comes to addressing matters such as the relative impact of various colours and textures in the landscape and the effects of different approaches to incorporating plantation forests. To attempt to address such effects solely through a regime of controls is still likely to be considered excessively bureaucratic by most landowners and would be difficult to enforce.
3. Incentives could also be offered, in recognition of any sacrifices that land owners may take in protecting landscapes or landscape features on their properties. It is likely that incentives would only be offered for protection of landscapes rated 6 or higher, although this approach could be extended to landscape elements which policies suggested by this study seek to conserve, such as blocks of indigenous vegetation.

In carrying out this assessment it has become clear that design guidelines for some landscape areas and units would be extremely beneficial. These could take the form of information sheets or booklets, with which to educate landowners about identifying the characteristics of their local area, the different landscapes found within the Far North, and suggested strategies for successfully integrating proposed and existing development / land use in response to landscape character. Such guidelines could also help define those sorts of structure and land use patterns which typically detract from landscape character and value.

The use of written and illustrated guidelines should ideally be supported by an advocacy role initiated by those with a statutory responsibility for managing the District's landscape – District Council, the Regional Council and government departments such as DOC. This may extend to jointly convened workshops and forums with interest groups like Federated Farmers, branches of professional institutes and community boards.

Regulations would continue to stipulate the parameters within the effects of the activity will be acceptable while guidelines would provide landowners with more

detailed information about how the regulatory requirements can be met and surpassed.

To be entirely effective in shaping the emerging nature and quality of the coastal landscape, however, such guidelines would need to cross the boundaries of the CMA, so that there is a consistency and coherence about management above as well as below Mean High Water Springs.

## 8.0 LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES FOR THE FAR NORTH DISTRICT

The extent of human modification of the Far North landscape, both coastal and terrestrial, have been considerable. Although some of this modification has contributed valuable cultural elements to the landscape, much has resulted in an overall degradation of value and character. Objectives and policies should aim at stringently protecting the remaining “natural” landscapes, outstanding landscapes and landscape features, and the coastal edge.

At a very general level, the following series of principles should form the basis that management of the landscape is derived from:

- The range of landscape characters found within the District, particularly those of coastal areas, is particularly evocative of the Far North.
- The District contains sub-regional areas of landscape character which contribute to the overall imagery of the Far North, but convey a unique signature of their own location.
- The Far North landscape is subject to an ever increasing range of pressures and prospective uses.
- The value and quality of the landscape of the District is an important influence upon the community’s appreciation of the amenity of their surroundings.
- The natural and cultural landscape is a central attraction and resource for the tourism industry of the Far North.

An overall objective evolves from these principles:

**To conserve the present character and values of remaining “natural” landscapes, the coastal edge and those landscapes or landscape features which are outstanding. Equally, to recognise and conserve cultural elements and patterns which contribute to landscape quality and identity**

Expanding on this encompassing statement, the following District Objectives related to sustainably managing the landscape are proposed:

- 1. *to protect the interface between the land and the sea, lakes, wetlands and rivers from development that might compromise important natural or indigenous qualities that exist.***

Section 6 (a) of the RMA 1991 requires the recognition of, and provision for “The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development”.

- 2. *To preserve and protect landscapes and landscape elements and features of***

**outstanding value.**

RMA 1991 s6 (b) "The preservation of the outstanding natural features and landscapes and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development".

**3. To preserve and protect landscapes which are characterised by significant indigenous ecosystems.**

RMA s6 (c) "The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna".

**4. To acknowledge and protect cultural and heritage landscape and landscape elements.**

Section 6, (e) of the RMA 1991 requires recognition and protection of "The relationship of the Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, Waahi Tapu and other taonga" as a matter of national importance.

**5. To maintain the diversity of the Far North landscape.**

RMA 1991 s7 (c) "The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values".

**6. To conserve and enhance the Far North's landscape identity.**

RMA 1997 s7 (c) "The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values".

**7. To protect the landscape resource of the Far North as it relates to recreational and tourist use – both existing and potential.**

RMA 1997 s7 (c) "The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values".

**8. To maintain and enhance the distinctive character and value of landscape units and landscape categories.**

RMA 1997 s7 (c) "The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values".

## 9.0 RECOMMENDED LANDSCAPE POLICIES FOR THE FAR NORTH DISTRICT

Emerging from the above objectives, the following policies are suggested for application. These are organised in three levels:

- Generic – generalised policies that apply to the entire District.
- Topical – policies targeted to classes or types of landscapes.
- Specific – focussed on defined landscapes or specific features.

### 1.0 GENERIC LANDSCAPE POLICIES

**1.1 *That all pohutakawa and other indigenous terrestrial vegetation found within the coastal landscape units should be priority areas for protection.***

**1.2 *That areas of saltmarsh, rushbed or mangrove vegetation should be protected from degradation or removal, and that the District Council support the Regional Council in discouraging any modification or development that jeopardises indigenous vegetation associations established below MHWS.***

References: Objective 1  
Proposed Regional Coastal Plan – policy 7.4.2

### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

The coastal landscape is one of the strongest parts of the Far North's overall landscape signature. In many cases indigenous vegetation associations are a vital element in the coastal landscape, yet frequently appear under threat from existing or potential land uses, or the ravages of pests and / or stock.

In estuarine settings the coastal vegetation commences below MHWS with mangroves and rushbeds, frequently extending inland to manuka and pohutakawa, and very occasionally, coastal forest. This continuum of coastal ecosystem highlights the importance of an integrated approach to management which seamlessly spans the MHWS boundary.

**1.3 *In recognition of the intrinsic relationship between the Coastal Marine Area and the terrestrial component of the coastal landscape, that the District Council take an active role to ensure that the policies and strategies of bodies charged with managing the coastal environment, in its broadest sense, are well integrated and make due provision for the conservation and enhancement of coastal landscapes within the district.***

Reference: Objective 1  
Proposed Regional Coastal Plan – policy 7.4.6

**1.4 *That areas of indigenous vegetation in excess of 1 hectare and 5 years of age, and individual indigenous trees in excess of 15 years of age, should be protected from degradation or inappropriate development.***

Reference Objective 3

### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Whilst several large forested areas throughout the Far North are rated amongst the most valuable and sensitive areas in the District, smaller pockets of bush, regenerating shrubland, and individual indigenous trees make a significant contribution to the landscape value of a substantial proportion of units. This is particularly so when patterns of indigenous vegetation reinforce and strengthen other physical features of the landscape – defining a stream corridor or forming the foreground to a dramatic geological feature, for example.

Consequently, whereas an individual tree or copse of vegetation may not qualify as an “outstanding” landscape feature, the collective presence of such trees and bush pockets is an integral component of much of the Far North landscape. Clearance of such vegetation, as witnessed in several areas during the site surveys for this assessment, invariably results in a reduction of landscape value.

Degradation of vegetation, as distinct from clearance, is often more insidious and subtle, but frequently has the same ultimate result – the loss of the vegetation. Examples of activities that may contribute to degradation include:

- grazing of stock – which contributes to root damage, loss of the important understorey of vegetation, and browsing on the foliage or bark of the canopy trees themselves.
- power-slashing of trees, frequently totara for clearance of overhead power lines – a practice which leaves some of the most important roadside landscape features, the trees, extremely disfigured. Careful pruning with a chainsaw by suitably trained personnel will avoid the majority of the brutal damage inflicted by power-slashing.
- damage resulting from track formation, road works and other civil construction – trees or vegetation are frequently “preserved” during the works, leaving the trunk and the crown unscathed. Unfortunately major reshaping of the ground around the tree’s root system often leads to their death several years later.

**1.5 *That cultural heritage landscapes and landscape elements should be preserved by avoiding use and development which would modify or damage them or their landscape setting.***

*Reference: Objective 4*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

Cultural elements, patterns and landforms can contribute to the overall value of landscapes, in the same way as natural features. A landscape does not have to be unmodified to be highly valued. The “Heritage Value” section of the Assessment Worksheet provides the opportunity to recognise cultural associations in the assessment procedure.

A range of landscapes and features contribute to the cultural heritage of the District. These are found across a considerable variety of scales and types of landscape, as indicated by the following examples:

- the Kerikeri orcharding unit – a contemporary land use that contributes to landscape character,
- the Waimate landscape unit – a heritage landscape, articulated by pa sites, stone walls, hedgerows, historic buildings, mature exotic trees and remnant groves of mature indigenous trees,

- the Kerikeri Basin, part of a larger unit, embodying a pa site, historic buildings, vegetation, and a coastal interface.
- Individual landscape elements, such as indigenous or exotic trees, elements of stone walls, or the setting of individual historic buildings. Whilst usually noted on the relevant Assessment Worksheet, these elements don't tend to be the overriding factor that dictates the landscape character category that a unit is placed within.

It is important to note that cultural landscapes or features need not to be historical to be of value – positive contemporary modifications can receive equal recognition.

Further work should be targeted towards establishing an inventory of these cultural landscape features which identifies them, provides reasons for their importance, and establishes specific guidelines and rules for their management.

The assessment process only acknowledges those elements that contribute to the visual composition of a landscape, so spiritual and traditional associations are not considered. These important aspects of a society's relationship with its landscape setting are better dealt with in a separate process of consultation, with the outcome contributing another layer to the information base upon which policy is founded, rather than trying to relate them to the aesthetic / ecological base used for this study.

Further work should therefore be focussed upon establishing landscapes and landscape features of cultural significance which may not have a strong visual presence, following detailed consultation with the tangata whenua and other residents of the District.

- 1.8 That the diversity of the terrestrial and coastal landscapes found in the Far North District should be maintained as far as practicable. Aspects of diversity warranting particular attention include:  
The complexity found locally within landscape units.  
The diversity of landscape characters, on a landscape unit scale, found across the district**

*Reference: Objective 5*

#### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Landscape diversity is one of the fundamental elements that contributes to landscape value and the interest of viewing audiences. A landscape without diversity is one with out variation or change. At the other end of the spectrum are those who embody such a diversity of elements that the resulting landscape suffers from visual chaos.

It follows that landscape diversity can occur across a spectrum of levels, from the components of a landscape vista, right through to the range of landscape character types found across the entire district.

- 1.9 That the interface between urban and rural activities should be managed such that the rural landscape remains largely free of ad hoc urban activities.**

*Reference: Objectives 5, 6 and 8  
Policy 1.8 – Signs*

EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Urban activities that have the potential to compromise rural qualities include:

- intensive residential development
- extensive rural residential subdivision
- retail development (other than produce stalls)
- industrial development
- petrol stations

The character and identity of several townships in the District suffer from pockets of commercial and residential uses extending out into the rural landscape setting of the settlement.

Generating the most impact are large commercial premises with associated signs, although the cumulative effects of seemingly more innocuous development, such as rural residential, can dramatically reduce rural landscape values.

**1.10 That subdivision of rural land into titles of less than 10ha should be restricted to areas with an overall sensitivity rating of 4 or less, or to areas specifically identified by the Far North District Council as being suitable for small holdings.**

*Reference: Objectives 2, 5, 6 and 8.*

**1.11 That the erection of signs in rural areas should be avoided, unless, by virtue of design, size, colour and siting, the adverse effect of the sign can be proven to be minimal. That signs with the purpose of advertising a service or product should be located on the same site as the business or activity.**

*Reference: Objectives 2, 5, 6 and 8.*

EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

The definition of signs considered by this policy covers the full range of signs used in the Far North landscape, from those with a commercial purpose, to information signs, road signs and “Welcome to...” signs. Also included are the temporary signs scattered along the roadside by mobile vendors and produce stalls. By virtue of their usual intention to stand out from their setting and be noticed, usually by motorists, signs are generally visually forceful by nature.

This policy therefore aims to encourage consideration of the effects that signs may have on their landscape setting and to avoid unnecessary proliferation of signs.

**1.12 That rural land uses should be responsive to the underlying form and pattern of the land.**

*Reference: Objectives 5 and 7*

EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Many land uses carry the potential to dramatically modify and compromise the landscape. Examples include changes in crops which occur running up a hillside, a shelterbelt which runs perpendicular to a steep slope, even a deer fence which cuts across the terrain on an insensitive alignment.

Probably generating the most impact however, are large scale monocultural forests. These generally compromise landscape value, due to the lack of variety found within them, their limited capacity to respond to local character, and frequently the clearly defined straight edge of the plantation, that contradicts the form of the underlying landforms, as it follows a property boundary.

This policy aims to avoid or reduce some of the potential negative visual effects associated with virtually all rural land uses, but particularly those resulting from large monocultural forests.

Preparation of guidelines which encourage forest developments to incorporate species compositions and configurations that are responsive to landscape character will assist. A Ministry of Forestry publication, "On the Edge – Management Options for Plantation Edges" (1991) illustrates how this can be achieved.

## 2.0 TOPICAL LANDSCAPE POLICIES

- 2.1 *That further development should be prohibited within units rated 6 and 7 for overall sensitivity by the District Landscape Assessment, unless for exceptional and over-riding reasons that have been fully assessed.***

Reference: Objective 2

- 2.2 *That further development should be prohibited on landscape elements and features identified and scheduled as being outstanding, or in their immediate landscape setting.***

Reference: Objective 2

- 2.3 *That landscape units rated as 5 for overall sensitivity by the District Landscape Assessment should only accommodate development that is wholly sympathetic to the existing aesthetic and physical nature of such areas, and that would not compromise the value found in elements identified within the Landscape Assessment Worksheets for the unit.***

Reference: Objective 2

- 2.4 *That any development within the urban or rural landscape corridors which contain State Highways 1, 10 and 12 should be undertaken in a manner which avoids, remedies or mitigates any adverse effects on the value of landscapes or landscape features.***

Reference: Objective 7

### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

The State Highways are the primary viewing corridors from which much of the landscape of the Far North is viewed, both by locally based travellers and tourists. As the busiest thoroughfares of the District, the roadside corridor is also likely to see increasing pressure from commercial activities that seek to benefit from passing motorists.

The “corridors” cited above are the tracts of landscape that the highways pass through, in effect the belt of terrain most closely associated with and seen from, the road. In most cases the corridor will be a matter half a kilometre to a kilometre wide, but may also contain more distant portions of elevated terrain.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the highway corridors remain largely representative of the surrounding landscape, and that neither rural nor urban developments be allowed to compromise the essential qualities of the corridors. Included in this range of activities are future road modifications or realignments, which should be planned and executed in a manner which is responsive to landscape character.

It is emphasised that this policy does not intend to promote a “window dressing” or roadside beautification programme for main highways.

**2.5 That built development upon coastal headlands should be avoided.**

*Reference: Objective 1.*

**2.6 That built development on identified sensitive ridges should be avoided.**

*Reference: Objectives 5, 6 and 8.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

The potential for a single building or prominent structure that has been poorly sited on a ridgeline to compromise the value of a considerable area of surrounding landscape is high for most of the hilly terrain of the Far North. Much of the impact of such development results from the extensive area from which it can frequently be seen, but it also relates to modification of prevailing natural character, modifying the scale of the landscape, and breaking the skyline. Accompanying development such as access tracks and retaining walls also generate considerable impact.

Farm water tanks bring similar, although lesser, effects.

It is likely that quests for expansive views, coupled with improving technology for accessing and building upon ridge sites, will see increasing pressures for development in this highly sensitive parts of the landscape. Similar pressures are likely to exist for the siting of communications structures on the most elevated areas of the District’s terrain.

Treating the ridgeline developments as discretionary activities will allow an opportunity to assess potential effects.

Three levels of sensitive ridgeline are noted:

- i.) Those under immediate threat.
- ii.) Those which are not under immediate threat but where development would result in severe negative visual effect.
- iii.) Those where the cumulative effect of successive development would result in negative visual effect.

Category i.) ridgelines have been identified on maps (see appendices) as part of the District Landscape Assessment. Future work should focus on identifying and mapping category ii.) and iii.) ridgeline types.

**2.7 That any overhead or buried service corridors should be aligned to avoid passing through landscape units rated 5 or above and should be designed and installed so as to minimise effects on the landscape.**

**2.8 Exposed service structures, such as pylons, pumping stations and substations, should be of a design and colour that mitigates, as far as practicable, any visual effects that such structures may generate.**

*Reference: Objectives 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8.*

#### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Of particular concern are the effects accompanying large exposed high tension pylons, although the earthworks, watercourse bridging and vegetation clearance that may accompany pipelines and other buried services may result in considerable impacts.

Whilst large scale works are the primary focus of this policy, the effects generated by lighter services, particularly overhead power/telephone lines in the coastal environment are also identified as worthy of specific consideration.

**2.9 That new roads or road realignments undertaken in rural areas should avoid modifying, damaging or destroying significant landscape elements, whether natural or cultural, and should be planned, designed and executed with an objective of minimising or mitigating general impact upon the landscape.**

*Reference: Objectives 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8.*

#### EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES

Road construction frequently involves substantial earthworks and site modification. Of particular relevance to this policy are:

- the responsiveness of alignment to the natural topography;
- the shape and treatment of cut and fill barriers;
- the appearance of bridges, walls, barriers, and signs within the landscape setting;
- the effects of the proposed works on existing patterns and natural and cultural landscape elements.

The policy implies a need for the landscape setting to be considered in future road planning and the visual effects of works to be analysed with a similar weighting to engineering and economic feasibility.

### 3.0 SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE POLICIES

The following policies apply to areas of landscape identity or corridors of varied landscape which are experienced by travellers moving through the District. As such the areas covered do not relate to specific landscape units, but cut across landscape boundaries to incorporate all or part of a number of units. Therefore the values, vulnerability and overall sensitivity identified on the Landscape Worksheet for each of these component units relates only to the portion of the area or corridor identified on the Landscape Units plans (plans 1 to 5) as comprising that unit. Any management decisions should therefore relate to the characteristics of all the component landscape units.

**3.1 That the Bay of Islands and its visual catchment be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in consideration of the area’s consistently high landscape values and level of sensitivity, and its importance as a focus for tourism and recreational activity.**

*Reference: All objectives.  
All previous policies except 2.4.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

The Bay of Islands, for this purpose, is defined as being the area of land and water lying inside Cape Brett and Cape Wiwiki, including associated inlets and estuarine rivers, but excluding areas of intensive existing urban development that lies within this area. The extent of the Bay of Islands Area of LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE is illustrated in plans 11–15.

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The continuum of varied landscape characters and ecosystems that extends from the most sheltered and enclosed inlets of the inner bay, to the rocky exposed coast of the defining capes.
- The largely “natural” landscape of the majority of the islands, with only Roberton, Urupukapuka and Moturoa Islands supporting any significant built development.
- The extensive areas of indigenous vegetation, both as blocks of regenerating forest and coastal edge / riparian associations.
- The opportunities for future development be associated with existing built areas, leaving predominantly natural areas intact.
- The extreme sensitivity of undeveloped headlands and coastal ridges and spurs.

**3.2 That Whangaroa Harbour and its visual catchment be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in recognition of the area’s powerful geological features, the heritage character of Whangaroa village and Totara North settlement and the natural character of the upper harbour estuarine environment.**

*Reference: All objectives.  
All previous policies except 3.1.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The drama and sense of rugged wilderness found at the harbour mouth.
- The cultural heritage character of Whangaroa village, and more especially, the Totara North Area.

- The sense of enclosure and identity created by the predominantly natural surrounding hillsides.
- The largely contained extent of existing built development.
- The range of coastal character found within a relatively small area.

(NOTE: THE EXTENT OF THE WHANGAROA HARBOUR AREA OF LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE IS ILLUSTRATED IN PLANS 11-15)

**3.3 That Parengarenga Harbour and its visual catchment be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in consideration of the area’s strong landscape image and predominant sense of naturalness.**

*Reference: All objectives.  
All previous policies except 2.4, 3.1 and 3.2.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The prominence of the Kokota sandspit as a local landmark and a backdrop to views to the east.
- The importance of water clarity and colour (in part a function of the white silica sands lining the harbour floor) to the overall identity of the harbour.
- The sense of naturalness and remoteness conveyed by the area, in both the coastal margin and the terrestrial backdrop.
- The largely contained extent of existing built development.

(NOTE: THE EXTENT OF THE PARENGARENGA HARBOUR AREA OF LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE IS ILLUSTRATED IN PLANS 11-15)

**3.4 That all the terrain and coastline north of a line extending from inland of Te Hapua and Waitiki Landing to the northern extent of the Aupouri Forest be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in consideration of the area’s rugged and remote coastline, predominant indigenous regenerating vegetation, wetland environments, importance for tourism, and symbolic significance to the national community.**

*Reference: All objectives.  
All previous policies except 3.1 – 3.3.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The high sensitivity of the coastal ridges and headlands, and extreme sensitivity of the North Cape, Cape Reinga and Cape Maria van Diemen headlands.

- The predominantly natural character of the area, with existing built development restricted to station buildings and homesteads and minor DOC structures.
- The range of coastal character found in the area, ranging from sheltered estuarine inlets to ocean beaches to exposed rocky coast.

(NOTE: THE EXTENT OF THE NORTH CAPE - CAPE REINGA HEADLAND AREA OF LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE IS ILLUSTRATED IN PLANS 11-15)

**3.5 That the western coastline between the southern end of Ahipara and Maunganui Bluff and the visual catchment of this segment of coast be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in consideration of the area’s consistently high landscape values and level of sensitivity, its sense of remoteness and the very limited extent of existing built development.**

*Reference: All objectives  
All previous policies except 2.4, 3.1-3.4.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The very limited accessibility of much of this section of coastline and the sense of remoteness that this contributes to this coastal landscape.
- The containment of existing built development within Matihetihe and Mitimiti.
- The importance of the generally imposing hill backdrop lining the coast.
- The dynamic relationship between the open coast and the Herekino, Whangape, and Hokianga Harbour mouths.

(NOTE: THE EXTENT OF THE SOUTH WEST COASTLINE AREA OF LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE IS ILLUSTRATED IN PLANS 11-15)

**3.6 That the Hokianga Harbour and its visual catchment be recognised and managed as an “Area of Landscape Significance” in consideration of the area’s heritage importance and the intrinsic relationship between natural landscape characteristics and cultural elements.**

*Reference: All objectives  
All policies except 3.1-3.5.*

**EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL MEASURES**

This Area of Landscape Significance includes the majority of the shoreline of the Hokianga Harbour and much of the terrain directly associated with the harbour setting. Specifically excluded are the most urban of the harbour-edge settlements – Omapere and Opononi. The extent of the Hokianga Harbour Area of Landscape Significance is illustrated in plans 11-15.

Specific elements or relationships that should be acknowledged and conserved in the management of this Area of Landscape Significance include:

- The highly diverse landscape character that surrounds the Hokianga and the threat posed to the character of the area by potential large-scale landuse changes, such as monocultural plantation forests or expansion of residential development up the hillsides to the south of Opononi and Omapere.
- The predominantly natural riparian vegetation associations of the Harbour, particularly areas of mangrove forest and saltmarsh.
- The importance of the Te Pauahi sand dune as a feature of the Omapere / Opononi landscape, and as a identifiable icon of the Hokianga area.
- The visual relationship between many marae, their chapels and the coastline, and the need to retain this relationship free of unsympathetic built development or landuse.
- The visual relationship between many isolated chapels and the coastline, and the need to retain this relationship free of unsympathetic built development or landuse.
- The visual relationship between many isolated chapels and the coastline, and the need to retain this relationship free of unsympathetic built development or landuse.
- The visual relationship between many marae and / or chapels and a backdrop of natural hillside, frequently clad in bush or indigenous scrub, and the need to retain this relationship free of unsympathetic built development or landuse.
- The relationship identified above as they apply to European mission houses and chapels.
- The prevailing heritage character of Rawene and Kohukohu and the importance of future development being sensitive to this character in terms of form, mass, colour and siting, if the identity of these townships is to be conserved.
- The importance of preserving buildings constructed on piles over the harbour edge at Horeke as one of the very few remaining representative examples of this historically common relationship between the harbour and settlement.

It is appropriate to emphasise here the distinction between urban scale settlements which have been excluded from the study, such as Russell, Paihia and Opononi / Omapere, and smaller settlements such as Rawene or Kohukohu. The position taken by the assessment has been to exclude areas of settlement when the urban character of the built environment dominates the natural characteristics of the setting. In cases such as the smaller Hokianga settlements, the structures of the village are subservient to the harbour.