

Kāpiti Coast Coastal Natural Character Assessment (2021)



Why was this assessment undertaken?

- **Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act (1991)**

“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”

- **Policy 13(1)(c) of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (2010)**

“assessing the natural character of the coastal environment of the region or district, by mapping or otherwise identifying at least areas of high natural character”

- **Policy 3 of the Regional Policy Statement (2013)**

What is Natural Character?

Natural character is the term used to describe the natural characteristics and qualities of the coastal environment.

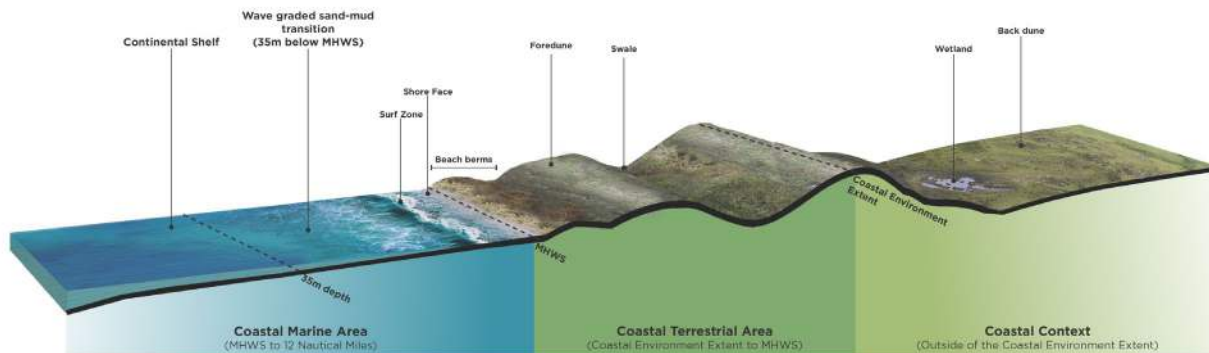
The degree or level of natural character within an environment depends on:

1. The extent to which the natural elements, patterns and processes occur (the matters listed in policy 13(2) are relevant to this matter);
2. The nature and extent of modification to the ecosystems and landscape/seascape;
3. The degree of natural character is highest where there is least modification;
4. The effect of different types of modification upon natural character varies with context and may be perceived differently by different parts of the community.

The Team:

- **Joint GWRC and KCDC**
 - Covered the entire coastal environment including the CMA
- **Boffa Miskell**
 - Landscape architects, terrestrial ecologists
- **NIWA**
 - Geologist, Marine Ecologist, Marine Biologist and Coastal Physicist
- Included input from **Jacobs** on current storm inundation to delineate the inland extent of the coastal environment

The Assessment Process:



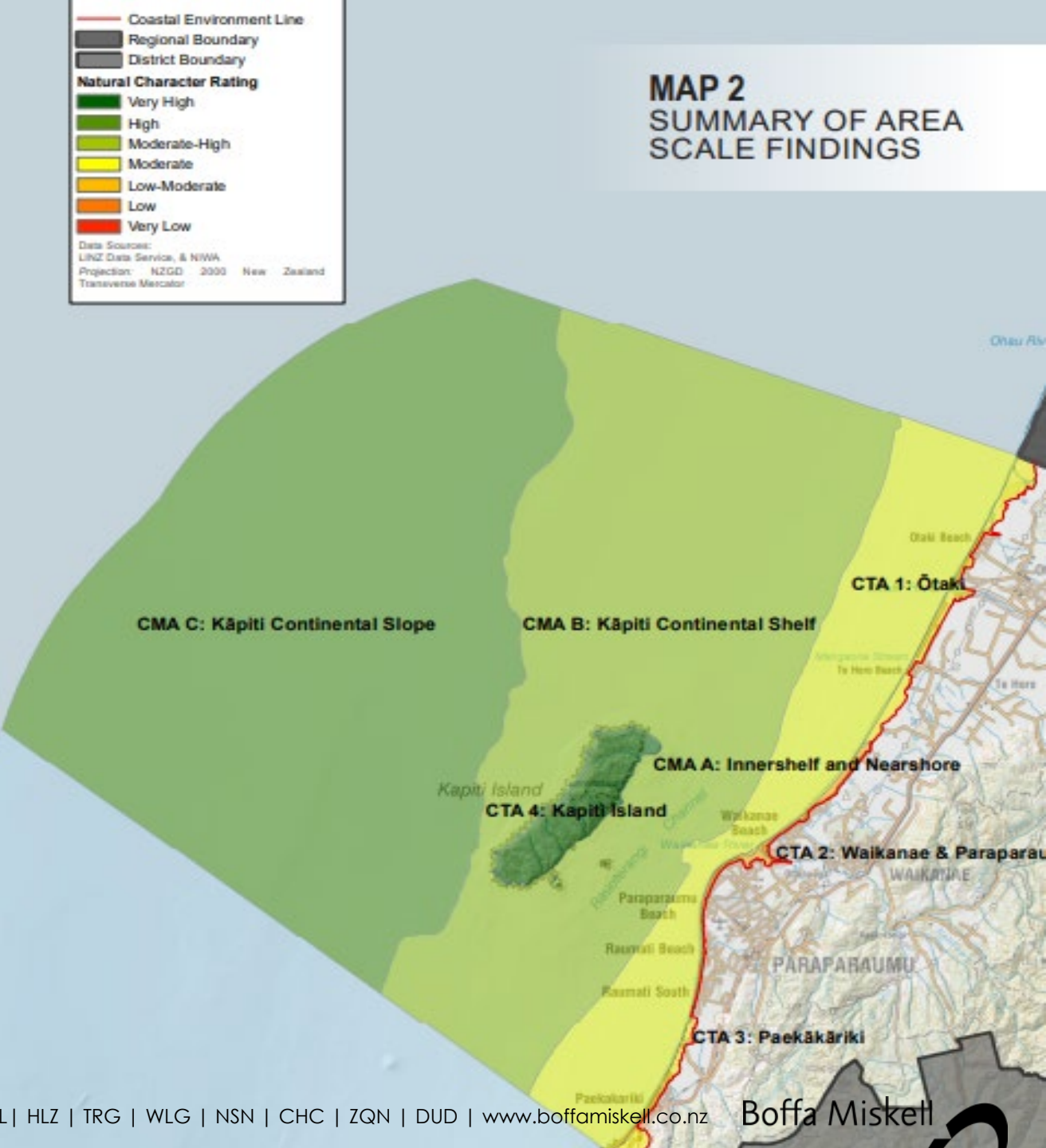
- 1 Identify and confirm the extent of the coastal environment, including the inland extent (study area);
- 2 Identify the marine and terrestrial coastal areas within the coastal environment and provide a description and documentation of each area;
- 3 Evaluation of the levels of natural character for each marine and terrestrial areas and identify “hot spots” or potential components within each area that may have at least high natural character;
- 4 Identify and confirm the spatial extent and attribute ratings of natural character components with high or very high levels of natural character at a finer scale; and
- 5 Evaluate outstanding natural character; that is, assess the combination of components with high or very high natural character to determine if all or any part of the coastal environment qualifies as having outstanding natural character.

Key Findings:

- The coastal environment differentiated across of 7 coastal areas (**4 coastal terrestrial areas** and **3 marine coastal areas**).
- The natural character of Coastal Areas ranges from **Moderate-Low** (Waikanae and Paraparaumu) to **Very High** on Kapiti Island
- 16 components of **high** and **very high** natural character identified across the coastal environment (including within the CMA)
- **Kāpiti Island** identified as an area of **Outstanding Natural Character**

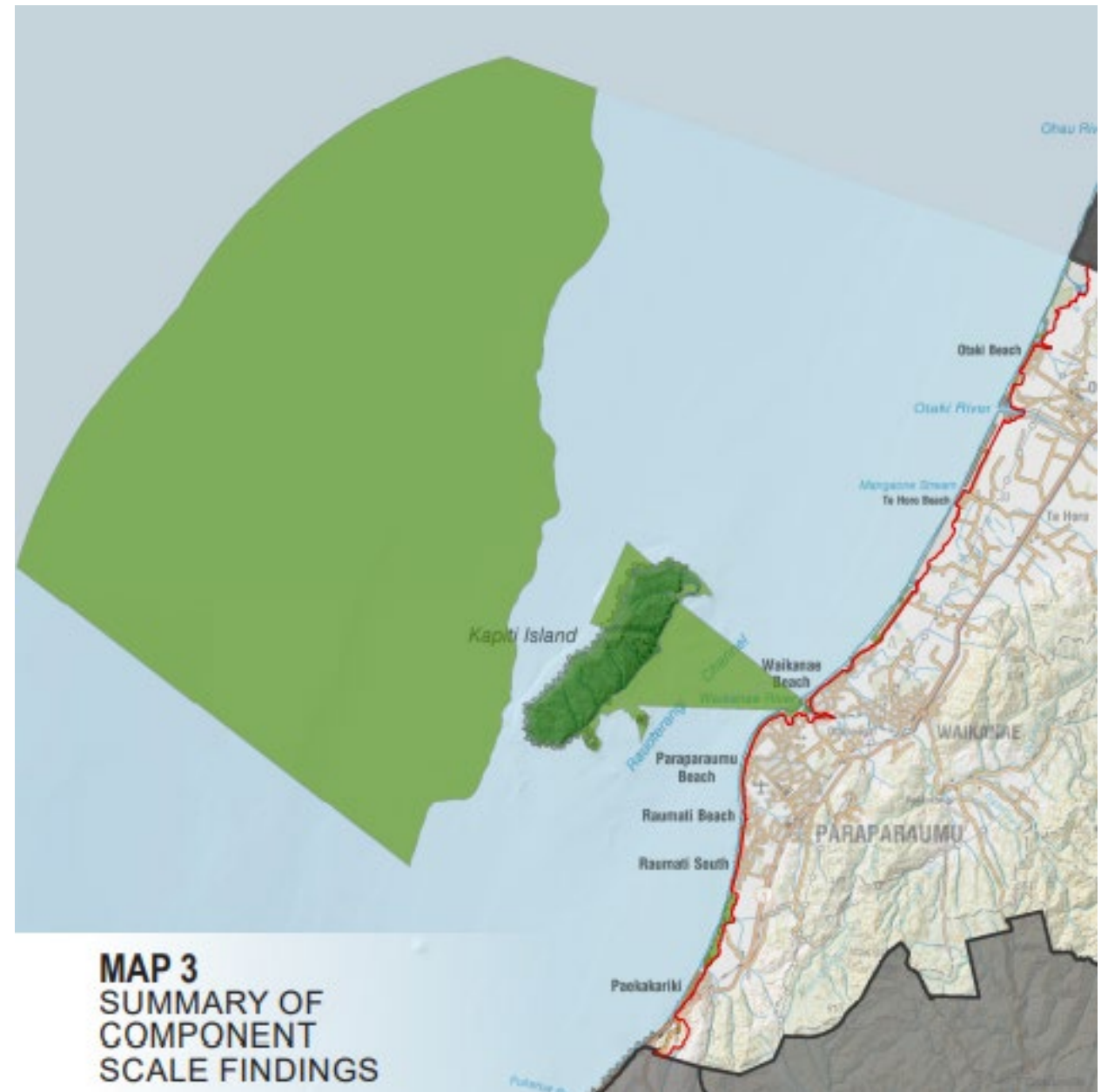
Area scale ratings (CTA / CMA)

SUMMARY OF AREA SCALE FINDINGS			
LEVEL OF NATURAL CHARACTER			
COASTAL MARINE AREA			
Innershelf and Nearshore	A		Moderate
Kāpiti Continental Shelf	B		Moderate-High
Kāpiti Continental Slope	C		High
COASTAL TERRESTRIAL AREA			
Ōtaki	1		Moderate
Waikanae and Paraparaumu	2		Low-Moderate
Paekākāriki	3		Moderate
Kāpiti Island	4		Very High



Components of High Natural Character

SUMMARY OF COMPONENT SCALE FINDINGS		
MARINE AREA	MARINE COMPONENTS	OVERALL LEVEL OF NATURAL CHARACTER
Innershelf and Nearshore	Marine Reserve (Inshore)	High
Kāpiti Continental Shelf	Marine Reserve East Coast Kāpiti Island	High
	Marine Reserve West Coast Kāpiti Island	High
	Norther Kāpiti Island Reefs	High
	Southern Kāpiti Island Reefs	High
Kāpiti Continental Slope	Kāpiti Continental Slope	High
TERRESTRIAL AREA	TERRESTRIAL COMPONENT	
Ōtaki	Ōtaki Dunes	High
	Te Horo Dunes	High
Waikanae & Paraparaumu	Peka Peka Dunes	High
	Waikanae Estuary	High
Paekākāriki	Queen Elizabeth Park	High
Kāpiti Island	Kāpiti Island Settlement	High
	Kāpiti Island	Very High
	Tahoramaurea Island	Very High
	Motungarara Island	High
	Tokomapuana Island	Very High



CTA1: Otaki

SUMMARY OF NATURAL CHARACTER			
NATURAL CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES			
DEGREE OF NATURAL CHARACTER	ABIOTIC	BIOTIC	EXPERIENTIAL
VERY HIGH			
HIGH			
MODERATE TO HIGH			
MODERATE	★		★
MODERATE TO LOW		★	
LOW			
VERY LOW			
OVERALL NATURAL CHARACTER RATING	Moderate		

Abiotic (Moderate)

- Part of the relatively recent Waitarere Dune phase
- Natural dune forms typically modified by exotic vegetation
- Some further existing modification resulting from farming, housing, pine plantations and flood protection works

Biotic (Moderate-Low)

- Vegetation is largely exotic (pastoral grasses in farmland and marram grass in dunelands), weed species, pine forestry and shelterbelts
- Revegetation works has resulted in native foredune restoration in some areas

Experiential (Moderate)

- Some apparent coastal edge settlement and structures with formed access to the beach
- Frequent opportunities to experience wildness, isolation and remoteness

High Natural Character Components

- Otaki Dunes
- Te Horo Dunes



CTA2: Paraparaumu and Waikanae

SUMMARY OF NATURAL CHARACTER			
NATURAL CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES			
DEGREE OF NATURAL CHARACTER	ABIOTIC	BIOTIC	EXPERIENTIAL
VERY HIGH			
HIGH			
MODERATE TO HIGH			
MODERATE			★
MODERATE TO LOW	★		
LOW		★	
VERY LOW			
OVERALL NATURAL CHARACTER RATING		Low-Moderate	

Abiotic (Moderate-Low)

- Paraparaumu cusplate (tapering) foreland
- Holocene dune systems largely modified inland to accommodate urban development
- The Waikanae Estuary is a prominent feature
- Many of the smaller streams channelized and influenced by flood protection
- Coastal hazard measures are common

Biotic (Low)

- Unbuilt areas largely dominated by exotic species and some restoration planting
- Waikanae Estuary important intertidal habitat for coastal and seabirds

Experiential (Moderate)

- Access to this Coastal Terrestrial Area is well established, including four-wheel drive access
- Some limited opportunities to experience a sense of wildness and remoteness

High Natural Character Components

- Peka Peka Dunes
- Waikanae Estuary



CTA3: Paekākāriki

SUMMARY OF NATURAL CHARACTER			
NATURAL CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES			
DEGREE OF NATURAL CHARACTER	ABIOTIC	BIOTIC	EXPERIENTIAL
VERY HIGH			
HIGH			
MODERATE TO HIGH			
MODERATE	★	★	★
MODERATE TO LOW			
LOW			
VERY LOW			
OVERALL NATURAL CHARACTER RATING	Moderate		

Abiotic (Moderate)

- Holocene sand dune deposits often eroded and occasionally exposing older Foxton Soils
- Dunes within Queen Elizabeth Park remain a prominent feature which are relatively intact
- Coastal foreshore often modified through seawall, roading and railway line

Biotic (Moderate)

- Vegetation cover is a mix of both native and exotic species, including several ecological weed species
- Habitat for several native species

Experiential (Moderate)

- Limited opportunities to obtain wild and remote experiences
- Silhouette of Kāpiti Island often viewed from beach

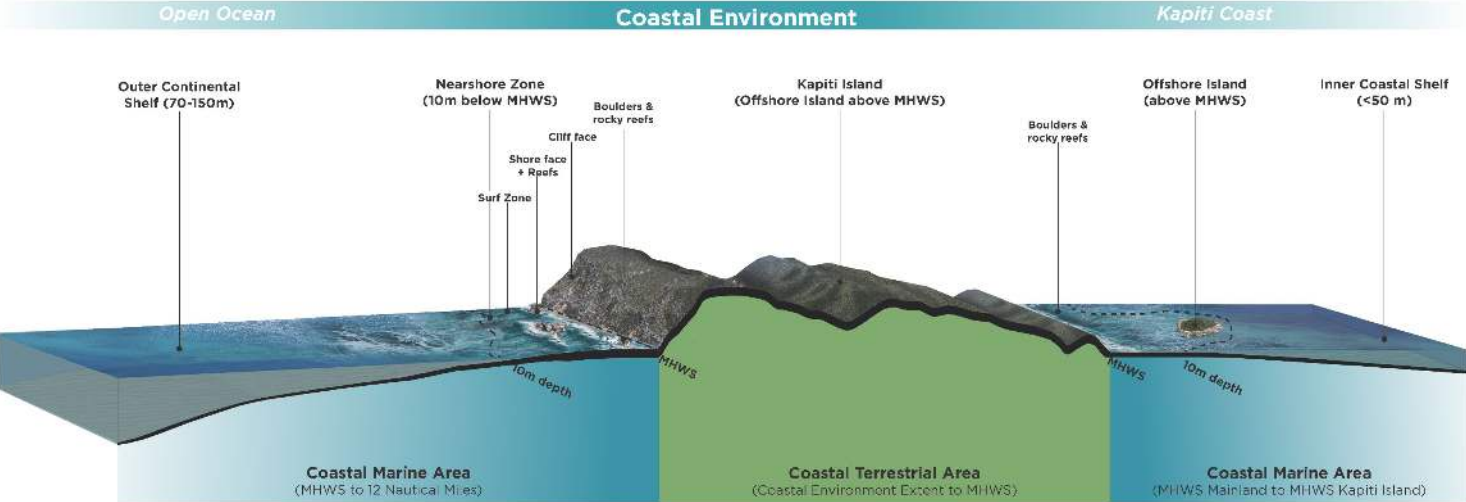
High Natural Character Components

- Queen Elizabeth Park



CTA4: Kāpiti Island

SUMMARY OF NATURAL CHARACTER			
NATURAL CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES			
DEGREE OF NATURAL CHARACTER	ABIOTIC	BIOTIC	EXPERIENTIAL
VERY HIGH	★		★
HIGH		★	
MODERATE TO HIGH			
MODERATE			
MODERATE TO LOW			
LOW			
VERY LOW			
OVERALL NATURAL CHARACTER RATING		Very High	



Abiotic (Very High)

- Offshore exposed regional bedrock
- Topography remains largely unmodified due to inaccessibility
- Small settlement at Waiorua Bay with houses to the south of Waiorua Bay at Rangatira Point and on Motungarara Island

Biotic (High)

- Regenerating vegetation following extensive forest clearance through fire and conversion to pastoral farming in 19th century
- High biodiversity values including plant species with a national threat status and very high diversity of birds

Experiential (Very High)

- Frequent opportunities to experience wildlife and the islands wild and remote character

High Natural Character Components

- Kāpiti Island
- Tahoramaurea Island
- Motungarara Island
- Tokomapuna Island

Kāpiti Coastal Marine Areas

- Innershelf and Nearshore (Moderate)
- Kāpiti Continental Shelf (Moderate-High)
- Kāpiti Continental Slope (High)

- Modification includes riverine inputs, ongoing fishing activity and increased sea surface temperatures from human induced climate change



High Natural Character Components

- Marine Reserve (Inshore)
- Marine Reserve East Coast Kāpiti Island
- Marine Reserve West Coast Kāpiti Island
- Norther Kāpiti Island Reefs
- Southern Kāpiti Island Reefs
- Kāpiti Continental Slope

Outstanding Natural Character

‘those areas that exhibit a combination of natural elements, patterns and processes that are exceptional in their extent, intactness, integrity and lack of built structures (the ‘clutter’ factor) and other modifications compared with other areas in the Wellington Region’

Next steps:

GWRC to engage with community and mana whenua partners

