

# Whenua Aromatawai

Assessing Landscapes

05

96. See 'Blueskin Energy' [2017] NZEnvC150/17, paragraph 168. "Rather than enumerate the attributes of the landscape which they value, [the residents'] evidence tended to focus on the landscape's character—being the combination of attributes that give the area its identity..."

97. These Guidelines take a different approach to some overseas guidance that would limit the description of character to physical characteristics and make a sharp distinction between character and value. To clarify the difference, other approaches conceptualise character as the tangible physical aspects and conceptualise values as what we would describe as associative attributes (the intangible aspects). By contrast, these Guidelines consider that character is the combination of tangible and intangible characteristics, and values are the reasons the landscape is valued.

98. Tangible and intangible attributes comprise the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions (and their constituent factors) discussed in Chapter 4 of the Guidelines. For comparison, the UK guidelines likewise recognise that character includes both tangible and intangible characteristics. "Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of the landscape that make different places distinctive." GLVIA op cit, section 2.19.

99. Generic character or type are abstractions of each landscape's specific character.

100. Online Oxford Languages.

101. Cambridge online dictionary.

102. Collins online dictionary (all emphases added).

103. Some documents, such as the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), refer to "characteristics and qualities". This makes clear that character covers both tangible and intangible attributes. In these Guidelines, 'attributes' covers both physical characteristics and intangible qualities.

## Landscape character and value

- 5.01 To assess a landscape is to assess its character and values.
- 5.02 While landscape assessment methods vary, they are all based on landscape character and values. Character is an expression of the landscape's collective attributes.<sup>96</sup> Values are the reasons a landscape is valued. Values, though, are embodied in attributes. Effects are consequences for a landscape's values resulting from changes to attributes. The landscape's values are managed through managing such attributes.
- 5.03 There are logical connections, therefore, between the definition of landscape (Chapter 4), how landscape character and values are assessed (Chapter 5), how effects on landscape values are analysed (Chapter 6), and how a landscape's values are managed (Chapter 7).<sup>97</sup>

### Character

- 5.04 Landscape character is each landscape's distinct combination of physical, associative, and perceptual attributes. A landscape's character entails:
- both tangible and intangible attributes<sup>98</sup> and
  - the attributes in combination (as a whole) and
  - especially the combination that makes a place distinct.<sup>99</sup>

#### Character

*The distinctive nature of something.*

*The quality of being individual in an interesting or unusual way.<sup>100</sup>*

*The particular combination of qualities in a ...place that makes (it) different from others.<sup>101</sup>*

*...all the qualities that make...a place...distinct from other ... places. If something has a particular character, it has a particular quality.<sup>102</sup>*

- 5.05 Landscape character is more than its physical elements. Character encompasses everything about a landscape—its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions. As used in these Guidelines, 'attributes' means the same as 'characteristics and qualities'.<sup>103</sup>

### Values

- 5.06 Landscape values are the various reasons a landscape is valued—the aspects that are important or special or meaningful. Values may relate to each of a landscape's dimensions—or, more typically, the interaction between the dimensions. Values can relate to the landscape's physical condition, meanings associated with certain landscape attributes, and



104. Online Oxford Languages.  
105. Cambridge online dictionary.  
106. Collins online dictionary  
(all emphases added).

a landscape's aesthetic or perceptual qualities. Importantly, landscape values depend on certain physical attributes. Values are not attributes but are embodied in attributes (see paragraph 5.28).

#### Value

*The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something*<sup>104</sup>

*The importance or worth of something for someone*<sup>105</sup>

*The value of something such as a quality...is its importance or usefulness. If you place a particular value on something, that is the importance or usefulness you think it has*<sup>106</sup>

#### All landscapes have values

<sup>5.07</sup> Landscape values are not limited just to special landscapes. Ordinary landscapes, where we mostly live our lives, have value to those who live in them and pass through them. Such 'everyday landscapes' collectively contribute to New Zealand's overall landscape quality. Landscape management requires managing the values of all landscapes.

#### Potential values

<sup>5.08</sup> Landscape values include potential values. Landscape management is not limited to maintaining existing values but includes realising new values and restoring those values that have been lost or degraded.

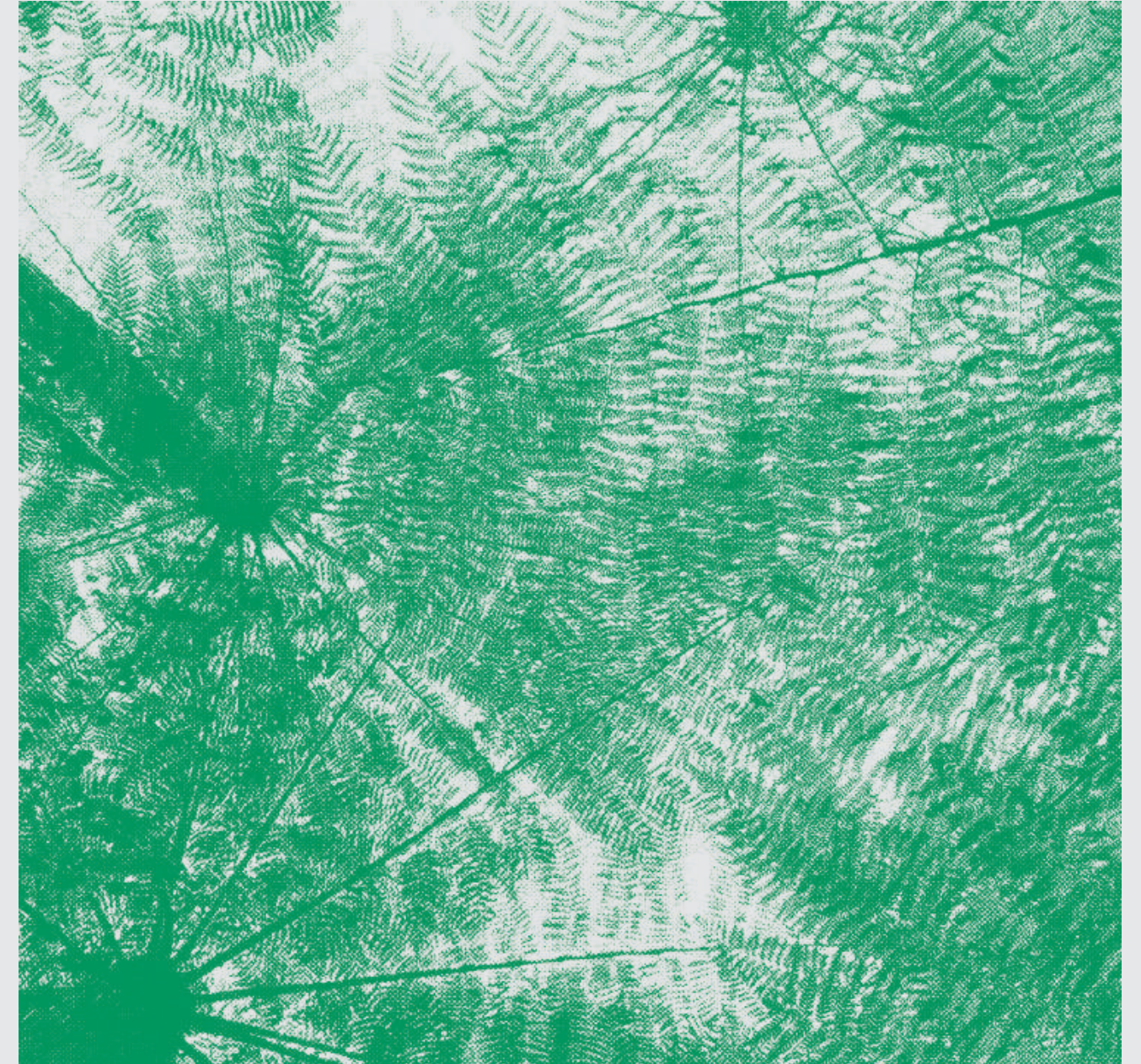
#### Values are ascribed

<sup>5.09</sup> Values are ascribed by people. Even natural values, which may be referred to as 'intrinsic', are ascribed by people.

<sup>5.10</sup> Contested landscape values are often at the heart of resource management issues. Differences in how landscape values are perceived can reflect different interests and perspectives. As discussed at paragraph 2.23, the role of landscape assessors is to provide an impartial assessment of landscape character and values (and effects on values) to assist decision-makers and others. Decision-makers will use the information provided by landscape assessors in conjunction with submissions and the relevant statutory provisions.

It is not a new thing that  
has appeared here—  
it comes from Hawaiki

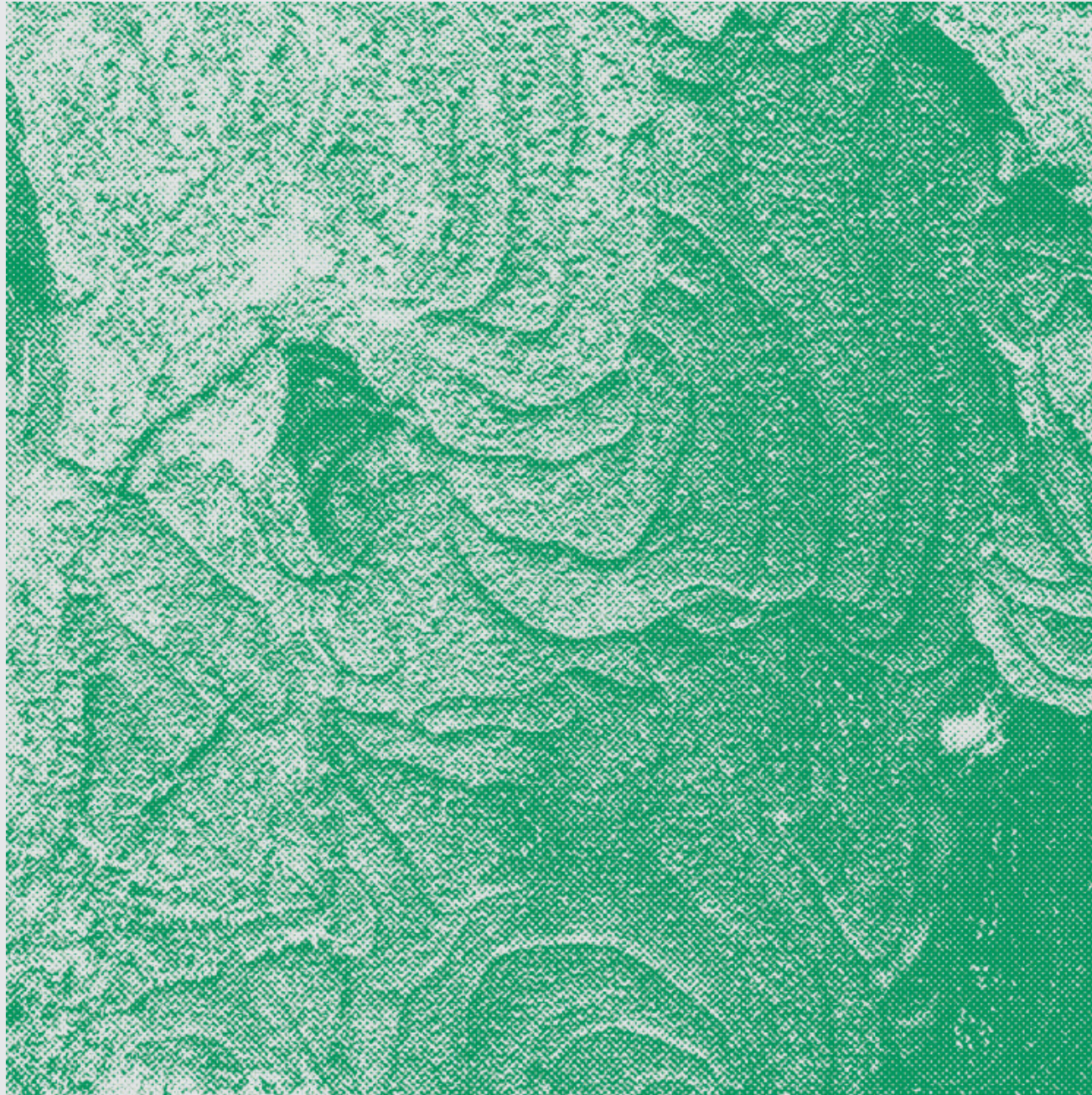
**Ehara i te mea poka hou mai—  
nō Hawaiki mai anō**





If something is too small for division, do not try to divide it

## He iti kai mā te kotahi e kai, kia rangona ai te reka



Above: Kauri tree bark in the Hunua Ranges  
Image: Sophie Fisher

107. 'Kennedy Point Marina' [2018] NZEnvC 81, paragraph 192. In that instance, the landscape assessors agreed that it was appropriate to assess effects at three nested scales.

108. 'Clearwater Mussels' [2018] NZEnvC 88, paragraph 171. "...it is inherent that a person will perceive and respond to landscape values in a local setting in terms of the values they remember of that setting's wider context."

109. 'Clearwater Mussels' [2018] NZEnvC 088, paragraph 230. "A landscape should not be too finely sliced and diced in assessment terms." See also paragraph 175, "[Witness A] quite rightly noted that it is important 'that the scale of landscape must be credible and must not be diced up into too small components'. Conversely, as [Witness B] put it, stepping back too far results in the specific attributes associated with that landscape becoming a blur."

### **Difference between process and presentation**

- 5.11 The assessment process differs from the presentation of information in a report or evidence.
- While the assessment process can be described as a sequence of steps, in practice it is often iterative and typically canvasses more information than is selected for inclusion in the report.
  - Presentation, on the other hand, entails organising selected information in a logical structure.
- 5.12 Assessing landscape character and values entails both reductive and synthesising tasks:
- analysing the landscape to better understand its parts (reductive)
  - interpreting how the parts come together—are integrated—as character and value (synthesising).
- 5.13 The process can be described as having the following steps although, as discussed above, in practice it is often non-linear:
- identify the relevant landscape (its extent and context)
  - describe and analyse the attributes
  - interpret how the attributes come together as the landscape's character
  - evaluate and explain the landscape's values and the attributes on which the values depend.
- 5.14 The following paragraphs elaborate on these steps.

### **Identify the relevant landscape (its extent and context)**

- 5.15 Identify the spatial extent of the relevant landscape. This is a key matter that has implications for what is deemed to be an area's character and values. Differences between assessments are sometimes down to the extent of landscape considered relevant.
- 5.16 Small landscapes nest within larger landscapes. As a guide to selecting the relevant spatial extent:
- take a practical approach having regard to the purpose of the assessment
  - identify the spatial extent most relevant to the purpose of the assessment—but also outline that landscape's place in the wider context<sup>107 108</sup>
  - consider each landscape as a whole<sup>109</sup>
  - be mindful that landscapes can overlap and have blurred boundaries—often it is enough to identify the general extent rather than the precise delineation
  - determine the spatial extent from each landscape's own character and attributes—the sense that you are in a particular landscape as opposed to another—it may be a hydrological catchment, a visual catchment, or a neighbourhood, for example, depending on the purpose of the assessment.



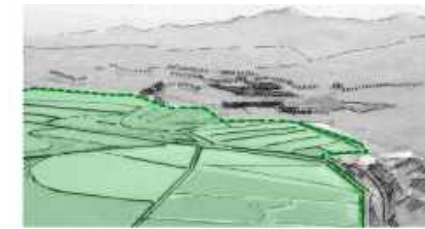
- 5.17 As with all matters of judgement, explain the reasons for the identified relevant landscape. This need not be complicated. It is generally obvious and straightforward.

### Mapping landscape boundaries

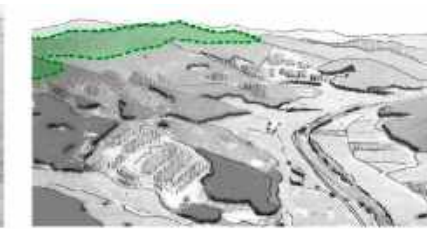
- 5.18 For some purposes, the spatial extent of landscapes should be mapped. For example, it is important to delineate and map boundaries for area-based assessments such as identifying Outstanding Natural Features (ONFs) or Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs), the coastal environment, and landscape character areas. In other instances (for example, most assessments of landscape effects), the spatial extent can be defined in general terms as described above without the need for precise mapping.
- 5.19 Mapping of boundaries should reflect the purpose of the assessment and be in response to landscape character and values. For instance, boundaries are likely to follow physical attributes such as topography, a ridge, contour, river, or highway; or significant change in land cover—especially when it relates to underlying conditions, for example a change in landform, soil type, or coastal exposure. While property boundaries may be appropriate for some purposes, they often do not follow the natural landscape. Boundaries are sometimes not obvious—they may be blurred transitions rather than a sharp demarcation. Remember that such boundaries are artificial constructs. Focus on the purpose for mapping, and on the landscape character and values, in deciding which landscape elements to settle on. Explain your rationale for the selection of boundaries.
- 5.20 Likewise, landscape assessors should treat mapped boundaries in a reasoned way. While boundaries are mapped as lines, they are often less sharp on the ground. Boundaries identified in a statutory plan may have been mapped at a large scale without precise ground-truthing. Landscape values and attributes can spill across boundaries in both directions. It is important, therefore, that assessors look beyond lines on maps to the actual landscape (see also paragraph 8.30 with respect to ONF/ONLs).

### Describe and analyse the attributes (characteristics and qualities)

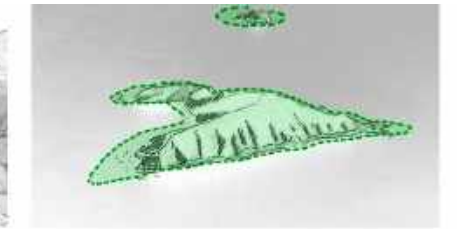
- 5.21 Describe and analyse the attributes, paying attention to each of the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions and the range of typical factors described in Chapter 4.
- 5.22 Practitioners often conceptualise this task as a series of landscape layers, although there are thematic and other approaches. It may help to refer to factor lists such as those outlined at paragraph 4.29 but treat such lists as a memory aid and not as a way to structure your assessment. To put it another way, consider the list of factors but do not focus on factors that are not pertinent in your assessment report.



**DIAGRAM ONE : LAND TYPING BOUNDARY APPROACH**  
Boundary follows edge of landform / land type. This mapping style would suit either the identification of Features or Landscapes.



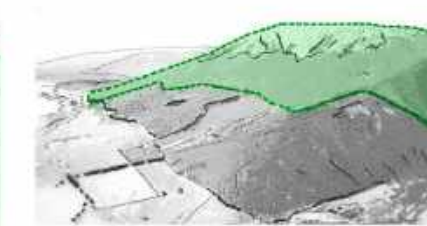
**DIAGRAM TWO : CONTOUR LINE APPROACH**  
Boundary follows a specific or a number of specific contour lines. This mapping style would suit the identification of Features.



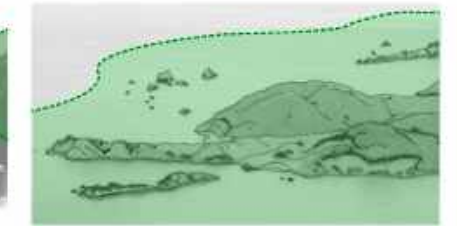
**DIAGRAM THREE : CONTAINED LANDSCAPE FEATURES APPROACH**  
Boundary follows contained landscape features and allows where appropriate, for a curtilage, to include, in this example, the rocky shore line and outlying rocks. This mapping style would identify Features.



**DIAGRAM FOUR : RIDGES AND SPURS APPROACH (VISUAL CATCHMENT)**  
Boundary follows ridgelines and spurs and can also be used to define the visual catchment. This mapping style would suit the identification of Landscapes. Features can nest within Landscapes.



**DIAGRAM FIVE : LAND USE APPROACH**  
Boundary follows Landuse patterns, such as the division between commercial forestry land and conservation land. This mapping style would suit the identification of Features.



**DIAGRAM SIX : SEASCAPE APPROACH**  
Whilst the land based ONFLs are mapped using approaches 1-5, the extent of seascape ONFLs have been determined predominately by the marine component of the coastal natural character study 2014. This captures the land/sea interface, where information of marine based-values is generally the greatest. Refer to Appendix 6 of *Natural Character of the Marlborough Coast* [Boffa Miskell et al, 2014] for further explanation. Other landscape factors have also been considered in determining this mapping approach.

- 5.23 Analysis entails site survey and desk-top research. It is a reductive phase to better understand the landscape components.
- Draw on information from a variety of sources such as other environmental disciplines, local histories, iwi documents, ecological databases, online community pages, landscape research...etc. Reference the sources. Note any gaps you think may be relevant.
  - Take an historical perspective. Analyse how the attributes reflect the landscape’s history and trajectory over time (see paragraph 4.35).

- 5.24 Sources of information that may be useful include:
- geological maps (Q Series) and incidental GNS and Geoscience Society publications
  - geopreservation inventory—<https://services.main.net.nz/geopreservation/>
  - significant natural area (SNA) reports
  - soil maps
  - Ecological District maps and reports
  - land use capability database and maps
  - iwi and hapū management plans, GIS/mapping databases, and atlases (e.g. [www.kahurumanu.co.nz](http://www.kahurumanu.co.nz))
  - archaeological studies and NZ Archaeological Association database
  - Waitangi Tribunal Reports (e.g. Treaty settlement reports)
  - Māori land online
  - local histories
  - local natural histories
  - tourist information (how an area presents its sense of place, what it considers its key features)
  - previous landscape studies
  - background information in statutory and non-statutory documents such as regional policy statements and district plans, reserve and conservation management plans, DOC conservation strategies and national park management plans specialist reports from other disciplines (such as geomorphology, ecology, historic heritage, cultural values assessment, etc).

- 5.25 Visual matters are integral to landscape rather than a separate category. Physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are each experienced visually (and through other senses). Assessing the ‘physical landscape’ and the ‘visual environment’ separately, for example, is less straightforward and integrated than simply treating them as aspects inherent in the landscape.

#### ***Interpret landscape character***

- 5.26 The essential step, following analysis, is to interpret each landscape’s character—how the parts come together as character. This step will synthesise the dimensions and explain how they interact. It requires both insight and clarity to see the landscape as an entity and the role

110. Even degraded landscapes have values that may benefit from restoration as discussed at paragraph 5.08.

111. The UK guidelines promote evaluation as a separate step following a description of character. Canadian heritage landscape practice promotes the opposite approach: first identifying value and then describing the attributes that support value (Refer to Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA, Review of Other Guidelines, December 2020, paragraph 2.74). Such reversibility highlights that character and value are interdependent and open to iterative analysis.

112. As discussed above at paragraph 5.10, contested values are often at the heart of landscape issues. Decisions may turn on whose values are to hold sway, or the relative weight given to different values. For example, wind farms may involve resolving tensions between values relating to aesthetics and renewable energy. Competing values are often expressed at hearings by parties with different interests. As discussed at paragraphs 2.23–2.25, the role of a landscape assessor is to provide an impartial and integrated professional assessment to assist the decision-makers consider different perspectives. Competing values may also be resolved through design (see Chapter 7).

113. Managing landscape values through physical attributes is consistent with the approach of the RMA. The RMA’s purpose is sustainable management of natural and physical resources. RMA Schedule 4 refers to “physical effects on a locality including any landscape and visual effects” as matters to be addressed by an assessment of environmental effects.

114. As discussed at paragraph 5.07, the values of all landscapes are important. Protecting only certain special landscapes (such as outstanding natural features and landscapes) is not sufficient to achieve the purpose of sustainable management.

115. A range of criteria already exist in statutory plans. As noted above, a competent landscape assessor will be able to contextualise and work with different criteria.

the relevant attributes play. It cannot be done mechanistically but requires intelligent, creative, and critical interpretation.

- 5.27 It is essential that the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions are integrated (synthesised). While teased apart for the sake of analysis, it is only when bound together that the dimensions make sense as landscape—that the landscape comes to life.

#### ***Evaluate landscape values (and valued attributes)***

- 5.28 Character and value are different but interdependent. All landscapes have character and value.<sup>110</sup> Identifying each landscape’s values is fundamental to its management. While evaluation can be conceived of as a subsequent step to characterisation,<sup>111</sup> values typically become apparent through the process of interpreting a landscape’s character. Interpreting a landscape’s character will point to its values and evaluating a landscape’s values will point to the attributes on which those values depend. Interpreting character and values is therefore typically an iterative process.
- 5.29 The purpose of identifying landscape values is to maintain and improve such values.<sup>112</sup> But landscape values are managed through the physical attributes<sup>113</sup> that embody the values. It is important that the values are explained in terms of the physical attributes on which they depend. For example, the values of a settled valley enclosed by open pastoral hills may depend on avoiding buildings on skyline ridges. Conversely, the values of a of an incised landscape of bush-clad valleys may depend on building on the ridges and avoiding the valleys.<sup>114</sup>
- 5.30 Consider potential values as well as existing values. Such potential may entail enhancing landscape values or restoring areas that have been degraded. Potential values can be realised through design (see Chapter 7).
- 5.31 Criteria are sometimes used to evaluate landscapes. Such criteria should be consistent with the concept of ‘landscape’ as defined in Chapter 4. That is, the criteria should recognise landscape’s physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions and reflect the fact that character and value arise from the interaction between the dimensions.<sup>115</sup>
- 5.32 However, criteria can be problematic. Values are specific to each landscape in its context. While desired outcomes are sometimes framed as generic criteria (such as the extent of naturalness, openness, or rural character), such matters are a generalisation of each landscape’s specific character. Do not let a focus on generic parameters lead you to overlook each landscape’s values that arise from its specific character and unique context. For example, district plans often have policies about maintaining rural character. Such character ranges from sheep-and-beef hill country, to orchards, cropping, dairying, and lifestyle landscapes. The specific attributes of



116. Presentation may comprise, for instance, a proposal-based assessment of landscape and visual effects, or a policy-based assessment of an area, or evidence to a hearing. In addition to tailoring the presentation to the subject matter, there are also particular presentation requirements for AEEs that are set out in the RMA Schedule 4, particular requirements for some policy-based assessments as set out in RMA s32, and requirements for Environment Court evidence that are set out in the Court's Practice Note 2014.

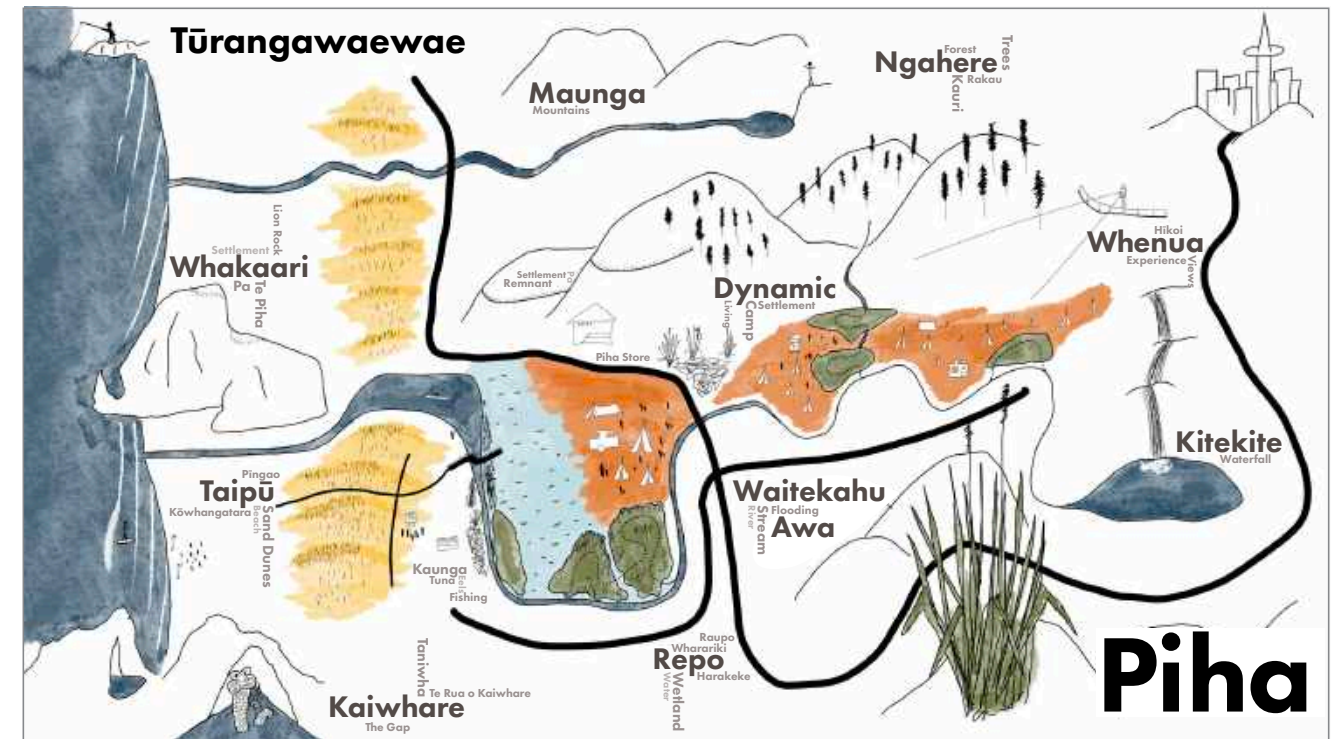
117. See paragraph 5.11.

rural character, therefore, vary considerably, and will determine what may or may not be appropriate. Context is everything.

- 5.33 Be cautious with rating (scoring) individual attributes to evaluate landscapes for the following reasons:
- Conceptually, landscape is the interplay of dimensions—not the sum of their parts.
  - Value is embodied in specific character and attributes, not the generic criteria/factors that typically make up a scoring framework.
  - The relative significance of any criterion/factor depends on context.
  - While in practice a high score for one dimension is often mirrored by high scores in the other dimensions (given that the physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions typically resonate with each other), such self-reinforcing tendencies do not always hold true and should not be misconstrued. It is possible for a landscape to have a single over-riding reason for its value.
  - Some criteria/factors, particularly in more detailed schema, may be in opposition (for example, rarity vs representativeness, historic heritage vs naturalness).
- 5.34 It is more credible to treat landscape criteria as pointers than part of a mathematical formula. Ultimately, reasons and explanation in support of professional judgement are more important than prescribed criteria.

**Present relevant, organised information**

- 5.35 While the assessment process should be thorough, the presentation in a report or evidence<sup>116</sup> should be to-the-point and cover only what is relevant.<sup>117</sup> Tailor the format and limit the content to best address the resource management issues (refer paragraph 2.09).
- 5.36 An assessment process will canvass more information than is included in the report. It will never be possible to record everything there is to know about a landscape, nor would that be helpful. Rather, relevance is key. Report writing requires skilful selection and organisation of information. In making such selections, bear in mind that the purpose is to assist decision-makers. Their decisions about landscape matters are likely to turn on landscape values, attributes, and the means to manage them.
- 5.37 Be wary of templates and standard headings. They are likely to hinder the skilful selection and organisation of information needed to suit the specific landscape context and the relevant issues.



—Molly Parker

‘The landscape you grow up in speaks to you in a way that nowhere else does’

118. Landscape is a resource to be managed under the Resource Management Act. Landscape values are managed through the management of "natural and physical resources".

119. Landscape assessments for private plan change requests can sometimes have characteristics of both proposal-driven and policy-driven assessments. Such private plan changes may be requested to enable specific development of a certain site and may seek little change to plan provisions other than, for example, re-zoning the land. In those circumstances the landscape and visual effects assessment will resemble a proposal-driven assessment. Nevertheless, the focus will still be the anticipated outcomes of the proposed provisions (rather than the effects of a specific development per se), and the assessment should still be framed with regard to the requirements of RMA s32.

### Tailor assessment to assessment types

- 5.38 Different types of assessment have different methods and report structures:
- **Proposal-driven assessments**, such as those for resource consent applications or notices of requirement, will be specific and targeted. The assessment of the existing landscape will focus on those landscape values (and attributes) potentially affected by the proposal, and the provisions in the statutory plan(s) relating to landscape values. The proposal, its site, and the relevant statutory provisions will all be known and definite.
  - **Policy-driven assessments**, on the other hand, are more strategic. They are often commissioned by territorial authorities to help inform statutory plans and policy statements. Examples include area-based assessments to identify and manage the landscape resource of a region or district, and issue-based assessments to address a specific resource management matter (e.g. the capacity of an area to accommodate development while retaining rural character). While the existing landscape will be definite, such assessments anticipate the future. They anticipate future activities and recommend provisions to manage landscape values into the future.
- 5.39 Each of these reports will look quite different and follow different methods, but each will follow the same landscape concepts and assessment principles outlined in these Guidelines (see also paragraphs 6.34–6.36).<sup>118 119</sup>



Above: Napier Landscape Study, Isthmus Group  
Sketch: Sophie Fisher



Top: Tairua Harbour, Coromandel Peninsula. Middle: Mouth of Mokau River, Waikato.  
Bottom: North of the Aldermen Islands, Coromandel Peninsula  
Images: Rebecca Ryder





Above: Rock lichen  
Image: Rachel de Lambert

<sup>120</sup> A potential pitfall is to rely solely on documentary research at the expense of engagement with tāngata whenua. Engagement is more important.

<sup>121</sup> <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/publications-and-resources/waitangi-tribunal-reports/>

<sup>122</sup> Statutory acknowledgements are recognition by the Crown of the mana of tāngata whenua over specified areas. Statements of statutory acknowledgements are set out in Treaty of Waitangi settlement legislation. Such 'statutory areas' relate only to Crown land. They are often recorded by regional and district councils in policy statements and district plans or on council websites.

### Engaging with tāngata whenua when assessing landscapes

- <sup>5.40</sup> Effective engagement between landscape architect and tāngata whenua when describing and evaluating an area's landscapes can be a complex and sensitive process which depends, among other things, upon the following:
- Establish effective working relationships with tāngata whenua based on acknowledgement, respect, and understanding.
  - Maintain long-term and on-going relationships with tāngata whenua. Consistency will engender confidence and increase the strength of such relationships. While such relationships typically rest with territorial authorities and public agencies in the first instance, it is desirable for landscape architects to also establish channels of communication with tāngata whenua in areas where they work.
  - Provide for active participation in decision-making and management (for example through such mechanisms as co-design and co-management) in keeping with the articles and principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
  - Listen well.
  - Be sufficiently aware to appreciate key landscape character components from a Te Ao Māori perspective.
  - Ensure that tāngata whenua are appropriately resourced to respond effectively to engagement processes.
  - Undertake background work (doing the mahi kāinga (homework)) before engaging. For example, review relevant iwi management plans and other information that is in the public domain.
- <sup>5.41</sup> A landscape architect would not normally speak for tāngata whenua unless delegated to do so. For example, they may have whakapapa and be granted the authority by tāngata whenua with respect to that whenua. However, while it is the prerogative of tāngata whenua to interpret their relationship to landscape, landscape assessors should acknowledge tāngata whenua perspectives and endeavour to integrate such information into a landscape assessment. There are several ways of finding out relevant information and weaving it into an assessment, including:
- direct engagement with tāngata whenua<sup>120</sup>
  - cultural impact assessments (CIA) or cultural landscape assessments (CLA)
  - iwi management plans
  - reports of the Waitangi Tribunal<sup>121</sup>
  - statutory acknowledgements made as part of Waitangi Tribunal settlements<sup>122</sup>
  - district plans
  - general publications
  - internet searches including marae websites which often contain hapū background.



123. Don't let perfect get in the way of better. The principles outlined in these Guidelines are subject to situation and context. In some situations, information may not be available, or full engagement may not be warranted or achievable. Engagement on the part of tāngata whenua may not be possible, for example, because of unwillingness or lack of capacity to engage within the timeframe. Adjust your method to suit. Do not let the lack of full engagement get in the way of making progress in the meantime. Do the best with what is achievable and be transparent about any assumptions or gaps.

- 5.42 Landscape architects should alert clients where and when they should engage with tāngata whenua to properly address landscape matters. A proper process should be followed in establishing such dialogue. For instance, territorial authorities and Crown entities have established relationships with tāngata whenua groups that often provide a channel to establish dialogue between an applicant and tāngata whenua. A landscape architect would generally establish dialogue through the client and territorial authority—unless they already have established relationships.
- 5.43 Some landscape architects lack the skills and experience to engage effectively with tāngata whenua or may consider it outside their area of expertise. Some clients and local authorities may also think that landscape and tāngata whenua matters are to be treated separately. In such situations, the best compromise may be to draw on CIA or other published documents. However, such siloed approaches can lead to tāngata whenua landscape perspectives being limited to the associative dimension, overlooking the integration of physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions in a holistic manner (see paragraph 4.15). It can lead to erosion of trust between tāngata whenua and others involved in resource management. An integrated approach and on-going relations are aspects of good practice that help to build trust.
- 5.44 By way of further explanation:
- A cultural landscape assessment (i.e. in a CIA or separate CLA/CVA) and an independent professional landscape assessment are separate but complementary.
  - Information derived from a CIA/CLA and other sources can be incorporated in a professional landscape assessment to the extent that it contributes to a general understanding and appreciation of a landscape.
  - The absence of a CIA/CLA does not mean tāngata whenua aspects should be ignored when relevant to a landscape assessment. There are other means of finding information discussed above. You (or your client) could also engage a pūkenga endorsed by tāngata whenua to contribute to a landscape assessment.
- 5.45 While it is for tāngata whenua to describe their cultural values, perspectives, and associations with respect to their whenua, a landscape architect should weave such matters—as far as they are known—into a broad understanding and appreciation of a landscape. Identify gaps where information cannot be obtained. As a guide, it is useful to remember that a landscape architect's role in this context is to assist decision-makers within your landscape expertise, not as an expert in tāngata whenua matters (unless you are).<sup>123</sup>

- 5.46 Remember, tāngata whenua landscape perspectives are not limited to the associative dimension but entail the interplay of physical, associative and perceptual dimensions in an holistic manner (see paragraph 4.15), and in the context of mātauranga and Te Ao Māori concepts relevant to landscape discussed earlier (e.g. whakapapa, kaitiakitanga, wairua and mauri).







124. 'Matakana Island (1st Interim Decision)' [2017] NZEnvC 147, paragraphs 112–114.

### Additional Notes

5.47 The following notes elaborate on certain aspects of landscape assessment.

#### Analytical and integrative approaches (reduction and synthesis)

5.48 The importance of combining analytical and integrative approaches was described in a recent Environment Court decision.

[112] In reviewing the relevant case law on the interpretation and application of s 6(b) RMA, one may discern some tension between two apparent approaches: a relatively schematic approach of using the list of Pigeon Bay/Wakatipu [WESI] or Maniototo [Lammermoor] factors as quasi-criteria; and a more generalised approach of seeing those factors in the round and then standing back to form an overall judgment on the evidence.

[113] We think that the tension may be reduced, if not fully resolved, by observing that both approaches are part of the whole exercise required by s6(b). Even in the cases which are based squarely on a list of factors, there is ample guidance to bring the overall context back to the forefront of the decision-making process. This is assisted by identifying a conceptual framework common to the more recent cases (although sometimes expressed in slightly different terms) which gathers the list of factors into the broad areas of:

- (a) The natural and physical resources of the landscape (including the scientific understanding of those resources);
- (b) How the attributes of those resources and their values can be perceived (including aesthetic assessment of those attributes and values); and
- (c) The associations that people and communities make with and among the resources and their attributes and values (including those associations based on their social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions).

[114] This grouping might be described as the dimensions of the assessment of features and landscapes. It may help both the analyst and the decision-maker always to remain aware that by describing these groupings as dimensions it is necessary to regard them all as essential to a full understanding of landscape. Analysis of a thing which is limited to fewer than the full set of dimensions of that thing will lead to the cognitive errors or biases that have been warned of since at least Plato's allegory of the cave.<sup>124</sup>



125. ‘Sensitivity’ might be used in circumstances where the thing to which the landscape is sensitive is known. For example, the relative sensitivity of different landscapes to a highway might be used in the route selection process.

126. See paragraphs 5.15–5.17 with respect to landscape scale.

127. ‘Landscape characterisation’ means describing and interpreting landscape character, sometimes to identify landscape character areas.

128. Like ‘landscape character area’, ‘landscape unit’ has been used variously to mean parts of a landscape, or groups of landscapes, and sometimes simply as jargon for a ‘landscape’. See ‘Parkins Bay’ [2010], NZEnvC 432, paragraph 52. “At a district level smaller landscapes may nest within larger landscapes. But there comes a point where that no longer applies. Care needs to be taken by local authorities not to divide a landscape into units...and then to treat units as landscapes.” See also ‘Port Gore’ [2012] NZEnvC 72, paragraph 83.

129. ‘Project Hayes’, [2009], NZEnvC C103, paragraph 267, “A unit is usually seen as part of a whole, and a landscape unit is thus a part of a landscape. [...] A ‘type’ on the other hand is ‘a class of things...having common characteristics’. In our view any landscape type includes a set of landscapes and each of those in turn includes a set of landscape units (and/or features).”

130. See, for example, Simon Swaffield and Di Lucas, A land systems approach: Bay of Plenty, Landscape Review 1999:5 (1), pages 38–41.

131. We have adopted the term ‘attribute’ rather than ‘characteristic’, to describe the things making up character because characteristic is often taken to mean only the tangible aspects of a landscape. Character, as defined in these Guidelines, includes both tangible and intangible aspects. The phrase ‘characteristics and qualities’ is sometimes used to refer to tangible and intangible aspects. ‘Qualities’ is sometimes conflated with ‘values’. We consider a quality is an intangible aspect, for example bleakness or intimacy, whereas a value is a reason a landscape is valued.

132. Qualities in this context can be positive or negative. Dullness and

### Specific vs generic attributes (sensitivity and capacity)

5.49 ‘Sensitivity’ and ‘capacity’ are widely used generic parameters. Such parameters can be useful where future proposals are not yet known (e.g. for issue-based assessments). In those circumstances, ‘sensitivity’ means the susceptibility of a landscape’s values to the potential effects of certain types of activity—for example, the susceptibility of an area’s rural character to life-style development. ‘Capacity’ is an estimate of how much of that activity could be accommodated while still retaining the specified values. ‘Vulnerability’ and ‘resilience’ are related parameters. The following caveats apply to the use of such generic parameters:

- Sensitivity and capacity (and other such generic parameters) derive from a landscape’s specific attributes (the generic depends on the specific) and relate to a certain type of activity (a landscape is sensitive to something). It is meaningless to simply state that a landscape has a certain degree of sensitivity without explaining the context.<sup>125</sup>
- The reasons are key when assessing such parameters. For example, a landscape may be sensitive to lifestyle development (say) because it has certain wildlife values, or because it is the backdrop to a scenic location, or because it is adjacent to an historical place or wāhi tapu that warrants a contemplative setting. It is essential to provide the reasons.
- Generic attributes such as sensitivity and capacity are necessarily imprecise because they estimate a future. They can be useful and necessary in policy-based assessments, or in comparing alternative routes/localities, but they become redundant once the actual effects of a specific proposal can be assessed directly (see paragraphs 6.43–6.44).

### Landscape, landscape character area, landscape type, feature

5.50 A landscape is the primary unit (single and complete) for landscape assessment. Small landscapes nest within larger landscapes. Identify the landscape at the scale (i.e. spatial extent) most appropriate to the purpose of the assessment.<sup>126</sup> The following terms are also useful:

- ‘Landscape character areas’<sup>127</sup> are areas with a common character. The term can be applied to large areas containing many landscapes with a common character (e.g. the South Island high country) or to areas of distinct character within a landscape (e.g. a village within a rural landscape).<sup>128</sup>
- A landscape type is a kind or class of landscape sharing certain generic characteristics.<sup>129</sup> While a type may describe a specific set of landscapes in an area (e.g. the South Island high country could also be described as a landscape type), it may refer to a more general kind or class (e.g. karst landscapes, urban landscapes). A typological approach can also be applied to landscape elements, such as hillslope, terrace, scarp.

ugliness, for example, are qualities. The meaning is different from that of ‘quality’ as a measure of positive attributes such as in s7(f) RMA “maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment”.

133. Landscape values are not to be anthropomorphised or conflated with people’s moral values. They are quite different.

134. This section will become redundant with the passing of the replacement resource management legislation anticipated in 2023. While the future provisions are not known, the consultation draft of the Natural and Built Environments Bill does not include an equivalent to either s7(c) or 7(f). The draft does state that the purpose of the Act is to enable (a) Te Oranga o te Taiao to be upheld, including by protecting and enhancing the natural environment; and (b) people and communities to use the environment in a way that supports the well-being of present generations without compromising the well-being of future generations. To achieve the purpose of the Act “(a) use of the environment must comply with environmental limits, (b) outcomes for the benefit of the environment must be promoted, and (c) any adverse effects on the environment of its use must be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.” ‘Environment’ is defined as meaning, “as the context requires, (a) the natural environment: (b) people and communities and the built environment they create: (c) the social, economic, and cultural conditions that affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) or that are affected by those matters.” While there is no equivalent s7(c) or 7(f), the consultation draft sets out a new section 8 that addresses environmental outcomes to be promoted, several of which use phrases such as “protected, restored, or improved”.

135. Some overseas guidelines refer to landscape as a function of environment and people (“people turn environment into landscape”). The RMA definition of environment (and the definition in the consultation draft of the proposed NBE Act discussed above) includes people and social, economic, and cultural influences. In an RMA context landscape can be conceptualised as a subset of ‘environment’. Item (d) of the RMA definition is almost a definition of landscape.

– Regional landscape character assessments sometimes adopt a hierarchical model with specific landscape character areas nesting within generic landscape character types (a species-genus kind of approach).

5.51 Land typing, on the other hand, is a specific approach to assessing areas based on biophysical elements and processes.<sup>130</sup> The approach includes assessing the interaction between land systems and their component landform elements, bioclimatic zones, ecological districts as indicated by historical indigenous vegetation, and ecological units. It includes assessing current land use and condition and recommending landscape management.

5.52 A feature is a discrete and distinct element (hill, river, island, rock, headland, wharf, building, park, street). While normally part of a landscape, a feature may be large enough to encompass several landscapes (e.g. a large island such as Waiheke) or long enough to traverse different landscapes (e.g. a river, highway). The essence of a feature is not so much its size, as its singularity and distinctness.

### Dimension, attribute, parameter, characteristic, qualities, factor, criteria, values

5.53 For clarity, the following compares terms used in these Guidelines to describe landscapes.

- Dimension describes the three main types of attributes (i.e. physical, associative, and perceptual) that comprise landscape character.
- Attribute refers to both a landscape’s tangible characteristics and its intangible qualities.
- Parameter is a derived factor that can be measured or quantified.
- Characteristic is a tangible attribute of a landscape that contributes to its distinct character.<sup>131</sup>
- Qualities are intangible attributes (e.g. bleakness, intimacy). The phrase “characteristics and qualities” as used in such documents as the NZCPS, therefore, can be interpreted to mean ‘attributes’, as defined above.<sup>132</sup>
- Factor is a type of attribute used in assessing (describing and evaluating) a landscape. Factors are sometimes listed as checklists. Each factor may have a criterion against which it can be evaluated.
- Criteria are principles or standards against which attributes or factors can be evaluated.
- Values<sup>133</sup> means the reasons a landscape is valued, embodied in certain attributes.

### “Quality of the environment” and “amenity values”<sup>134</sup>

5.54 Section 7(f) of the RMA requires decision-makers to have regard to “the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment”. Section 2 of the Act defines environment<sup>135</sup> to include:



136. Final Report and Decision of the Board of Inquiry, New Zealand King Salmon Requests for Plan Changes and Applications for Resource Consents, 2013, paragraph 596, "Landscape does not require precision definition. It is an aspect of the environment and includes natural and physical features and social and cultural attributes."

137. Similarly, the term 'special amenity landscapes' is sometimes used for landscapes that have certain special landscape values. The simpler terms 'special landscapes' or 'significant landscapes' provides scope for broader landscape values than those limited to amenity values. As noted the consultation draft of the proposed Natural and Built Environments Bill does not include a provision for amenity values.

- (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and
- (b) all natural and physical resources; and
- (c) amenity values; and
- (d) the social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) or which are affected by those matters.

5.55 Section 7(c) of the RMA requires decision-makers to have regard to "the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values". Section 2 of the Act defines amenity values as:

*...those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.*

5.56 These two sections of the RMA, and their elaboration in the lower order statutory documents such as district plans, provide the framework for most landscape assessment. Landscape is relevant to both the quality of the environment and amenity values. The concept of landscape outlined in these Guidelines (i.e. the relationship of people with its physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions) mirrors the approach taken in the RMA in the definitions of 'environment' and 'amenity values'.<sup>136</sup>

5.57 Sections 7(c) and 7(f) refer to maintenance and enhancement. The RMA provides for positive effects and environmental enhancement, including restoration and rehabilitation, which can be overlooked in focusing on avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects.

5.58 Hybrid terms such as 'visual amenity', 'rural amenity', and 'natural amenity', are shorthand for 'landscape values that contribute to amenity values'. While such shorthand is widely understood and occurs in some statutory plans, a pitfall is the potential to overlook the whole landscape by jumping to certain aspects. A sound approach is to identify landscape values first, and then explain how such landscape values contribute to amenity values and the quality of the environment. Remember too, that "environment" includes amenity values as a subset. "Quality of the environment" covers a broader range of matters in a more integrated way. Aspects of the landscape can be overlooked by focusing too early on amenity values.<sup>137</sup>

—Gabriel Garcia Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude

'The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.'









A problem is solved  
by continuing to  
search for solutions

## I orea te tuatara ka patu ki waho

## Whakarāpopototanga

### Summary

To assess a landscape is to describe its character and values.

Landscape character includes:

- the tangible and intangible attributes, and
- the attributes in combination (as a whole), and
- especially the combination that makes an area or place distinct.

Assessing landscape character involves analysing the attributes and interpreting how they combine as character.

Values are the reasons a landscape is valued (e.g. why it is special, or meaningful, or healthy). Values are embodied in physical attributes: values are managed by managing those physical attributes.

Assessing character and values is iterative. Interpreting a landscape's character will point to its values and evaluating the landscape's values will point to the attributes on which those values depend.

Tāngata whenua perspectives are integral to Aotearoa's landscapes. Accessing such perspectives depends on active and effective engagement.

The assessment process should be thorough and canvass information widely. Presentation of information in a report or evidence, on the other hand, should be to the point: it should comprise skilfully selected and organised material relevant to the purpose, context, and issues.

All landscapes have values. Values include potential values. Even degraded landscapes have potential for their values to be restored.