

# WAIRARAPA

## LANDSCAPE STUDY 2010

Landscape Character Description  
Report August 2010



Boffa Miskell





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## DISCLAIMERS

- Please Note: At the time of releasing this draft, some additional material on cultural aspects for each of the landscape character descriptions which is being prepared by Rangitane o Wairarapa and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa has yet to be finalised; this material will be included in the final version of the document.*
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*Kaiwhata River mouth*

## SECTION A: BACKGROUND

# BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

This *Wairarapa Landscape Character Description* documents stage two of the three-part *Wairarapa Landscape Study*, a comprehensive landscape assessment of the Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa districts.

The flow chart opposite shows the study’s three-stage structure; each stage informs the next. The spatial information gathered in Stage One was used for this Stage Two landscape character description. In turn, the character description will be used as the basis for Stage Three.

## STUDY AREA

The study area encompasses the combined area of the Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa districts, referred to, for the purposes of the study, as the Wairarapa (refer to map, p11).

The study area does not, however, include the urban areas. These areas have been excluded due to the greater density of urban residential and commercial development, where the character is heavily dependent on the scale, age and design of the building stock, together with the pattern and scale of streets, and the location and extent of open space. Assessment of urban character is, therefore, carried out in much greater detail than for the wider landscape and does not come within the scope of this study.

## PURPOSE OF THE WAIRARAPA LANDSCAPE STUDY

The *Wairarapa Landscape Study* has been initiated to assist in developing planning measures for managing landscape change in the Wairarapa District. All landscapes are dynamic; they continually change as a result of natural processes and changing land uses. However, people and groups can have conflicting views about the nature and rate of change that is acceptable in some landscapes, so regional and local councils seek to enable divergent views to be considered and addressed through planning provisions.

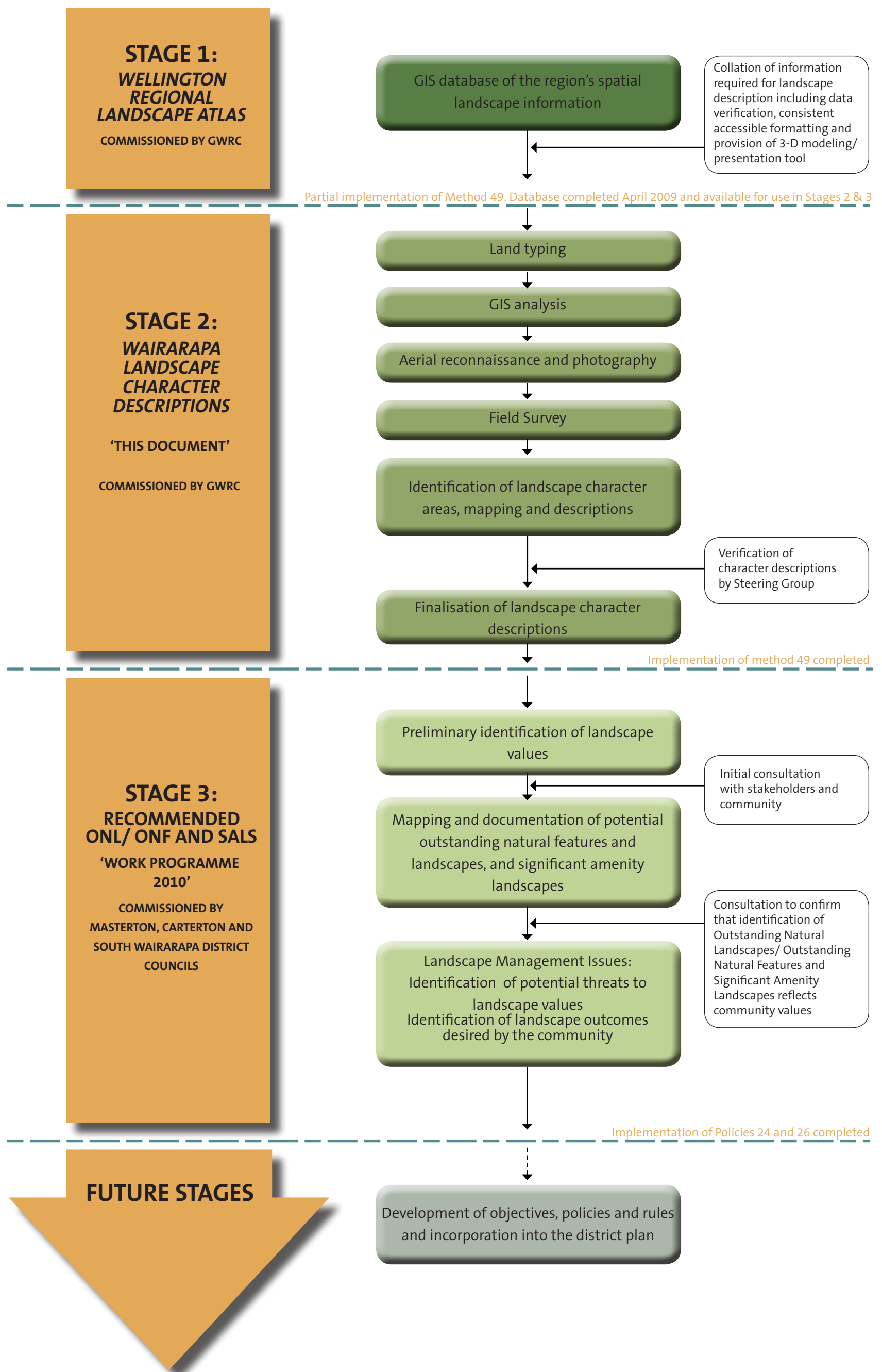
Policies 24 and 26 in the *Proposed Wellington Regional Policy Statement* (Proposed RPS) require that the region’s outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFs and ONLs), and significant amenity landscapes (SALs), be identified in district and regional plans. While the *Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan* does identify ‘outstanding landscapes’ and ‘outstanding natural features’, these were not identified as part of a comprehensive assessment. The *Wairarapa Coastal Strategy*, produced in 2002, involved a landscape and ecology assessment of the entire Wairarapa coastal area, but a similar level of assessment has not been carried out over the whole district. The *Wairarapa Landscape Study* has been commissioned to remedy this situation and to provide the basis for implementing the RPS policies mentioned above.

Cabbage trees along the western margin of Lake Wairarapa





# WAIRARAPA LANDSCAPE STUDY METHODOLOGY



## PURPOSE OF THE WAIRARAPA LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

In the Proposed RPS, one of the methods for implementing policies 24 and 26 (mentioned above) is method 49, which requires the Wellington Regional Council, together with city and district councils, to: *“Develop and disseminate a regional landscape character description that describes and categorises the region’s landscapes to assist with identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes, and significant amenity landscapes.”*

The overall purpose of method 49 is to provide a comprehensive and consistent inventory of the region’s landscapes for local authorities to use as the starting point for implementing policies 24 and 26. This *Wairarapa Landscape Character Description* document provides the landscape inventory for the Wairarapa part of the region. As stated earlier, its purpose is to provide the basis for identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes, and significant amenity landscapes in Stage Three of the Wairarapa study.

## WHAT IS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND CHARACTERISATION?

Landscape character is defined as *“a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse ”*<sup>1</sup>. Put simply, landscape character is that which makes an area unique.

New Zealand has been referred to as a land of ‘*little landscapes*’<sup>2</sup>. That is, there is considerable variation in New Zealand’s landscape over relatively short distances and areas. These ‘little landscapes’ are distinct from one another and they more often than not occur in regional patterns. Within a region, communities identify with ‘their’ landscapes and often refer to them as having a particular combination of attributes and features that give them a distinctive ‘character’<sup>3</sup>.

Understanding landscape character is important because landscape character not only influences how we interact with and feel about the places where we live, work and play – it influences our culture and our imaginations. Conversely, we seek to shape the landscape to meet our needs. It is by paying proper regard to the existing character of our landscapes that informed and responsible decisions can be made regarding their management. We can endeavour, through understanding how places differ, to ensure that future development will be sensitive to location, and will contribute to environmental, social and economic objectives<sup>4</sup>.

‘Landscape characterisation’ is the term used for the process of identifying, mapping and describing character areas. Each character area has a distinguishing combination of biophysical and cultural factors that makes it distinctive from adjacent character areas. Characterisation provides a sound descriptive and analytical basis for the understanding of landscape diversity and change; it also provides a context for the evaluation of ‘special landscapes’ such as outstanding natural landscapes and significant amenity landscapes. In turn, the recognition of these special landscapes provides the basis and justification for managing them in a particular way.

1 Landscape Character Network web site. [www.landscapecharacter.org.uk](http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk)

2 pp33-41, Our Changing ‘Natural’ Landscapes, by John Hayward, & Kevin O’Connor. in New Zealand, Where are You?(1981), Wellington, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.

3 Ibid

4 Landscape Character Network web site. [www.landscapecharacter.org.uk](http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk)

Scientists and other specialists such as geologists, ecologists, climatologists, categorise the landscape for different purposes relating to their specific disciplines and there is a wealth of information available from their work. Landscape characterisation draws upon that work, aiming to bring it together in a way that is meaningful to non-scientific people and relates to the way people experience the landscape.

Essentially, landscape character is the interrelationship of three broad factors – landform, land cover and land use. Within these broad factors there are many variables; for instance, land cover can include a myriad of vegetation types and built forms. The way these varied factors combine produces areas of distinctive character. As with most regional and district landscape studies, the *Wairarapa Landscape Study* classifies the study area into a series of landscape character ‘units’, by analysing these factors. It is a pragmatic approach which enables the complexity of often extensive and highly diverse areas of land to be described in a way that communities can readily recognise.





DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



## HOW WILL THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION BE USED?

The landscape character description will be used as a basis of the next, Stage Three, evaluation phase of the study (refer to flowchart, p9). The evaluation phase involves the value judgments that are required to identify and assess outstanding natural features and landscapes, and significant amenity landscapes.

The landscape character descriptions can also be used in a number of other ways, including:

- Providing a spatial framework for helping to develop district-wide policy in documents such as the District Plan, the Long Term Council Community Plan or Long Term Community Consultation Plan;
- Providing a resource document about the Wairarapa landscapes to assist landowners/applicants in preparing assessments of environmental effects (AEEs) and resource consent applications;
- Helping to assess development potential, (i.e. identifying appropriate areas for managed development / growth on the urban fringes and in rural environments);
- Informing the siting, scale and design of particular types of development, such as rural residential development, wind farms, industrial areas, etc;
- Contributing to landscape capacity studies, to identify areas suited to the supply of land for housing, rural activities and forestry use;
- Providing spatial information relevant to ensuring that local policies and practices are consistent with regional and national policy initiatives;
- Providing a base line against which future landscape change and the effect of landscape protection and management measures in the district plan can be monitored;
- Informing work on special areas, such as mapping and the rationale for having special policies for those areas.

## LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION METHODOLOGY

The methodology for carrying out the Wairarapa Landscape Study is summarised in the flow diagram shown on page 9. The different stages and various steps involved are shown. Stage One, the collation of spatial information within the Wellington Regional Council's geographic information system (GIS) database, was carried out in 2009.

Stage Two, (this landscape character description) has involved the the following steps:

- analyse the landscape through review of GIS data, maps, aerial and land-based photographs, and field survey;
- identify character areas and their boundaries;
- map the landscape character areas; and
- describe each character area objectively.

In describing each character area, the aim is to create a mental image of that area through words, maps and photographs – and evoke a sense of what sets that area apart from any other.

The descriptions mention sites or features within landscape character areas that are significant components of the wider landscape, such as a geological formation, a stand of native forest, a stretch of coastline or an historic feature. These sites and features have often been identified by various specialists as having some particular importance. Communities, too, identify with them and seek to recognise them in some way – through naming them, featuring them in art and literature, or assigning a special status or protection.

It should be noted, however, that the descriptions are not intended to assign value to sites, features or character areas. That will be addressed in Stage Three of the study. Nor will any particular courses of action be prescribed at any stage of the study in terms of value or how areas should be managed; that will be addressed once all three stages of the *Wairarapa Landscape Study* are complete.

### MAPPING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Landscape character areas are mapped to communicate their location and general spatial extent. However, the varied factors discussed above that distinguish one character area from another do not conveniently stop and start at a particular point or boundary. Consequently the mapping lines should be considered as 'zones of transition' rather than precise lines that mark absolute points of change between adjacent character areas.

The boundaries for this character study are mostly based on topographical features such as the tops of escarpments, ridgelines or hills, or waterways. Ridgelines form natural boundaries to visual catchments (as experienced from the ground) and, as such, are often logical boundaries for character areas, but that is not to say every ridgeline is a boundary to a character area. Nor is the top or bottom of a ridge or hill always the boundary for a character area; in some locations, such as where the plains adjoin the hills, the toe and lower slopes of the hills have been included in the plains character areas because they are an integral part of those local environments.

As noted earlier, urban areas and settlements have been excluded from the study area. The character area boundaries simply skirt around these urban areas, though the proximity of urban development can influence the character of the adjoining landscapes.

Each of the character areas has been assigned a one-word name. These are simply labels to distinguish one character area from another; there has been no attempt to assign names that encapsulate the full extent of all localities in each character area. For example, the Flat Point character area extends further than just the environs of Flat Point but the label will assist people to visualise the general geographic location of the whole character area.

DATA SOURCES

Use of spatial data through geographic information systems (GIS) has been integral to this study. GIS is a powerful tool used for analysing, visualising and mapping spatial and non-spatial digital geographic data. GIS systematically organises graphic data to enable a person reading an electronic map to select or deselect specific information about the area under review.

Data from Greater Wellington Regional Council’s *Wellington Region Geodatabase*<sup>5</sup>, was the primary source of data for this study. The Geodatabase was commissioned specifically for the landscape characterisation description project, prescribed in Method 49 of the Wellington Regional Policy Statement to be undertaken throughout the region.

The maps from the *Wellington Region Geodatabase* used in this study are: Geology, Geopreservation Sites, Soils, Elevation, Slope, Identified ‘protected’ natural areas, Identified Maori Cultural and Heritage Sites, and topographical features.

Landcare Research Limited undertook a land types assessment specifically for the Wairarapa Landscape Study, which provided an important additional database. The land types boundaries were digitised and included as a separate GIS information layer for the study.

The maps presented in this report, based on sources other than *Wellington Region Geodatabase* are:

- Land Cover – Land Cover Database, version 2 (LCDB 2) from Terralink;
- Land Types - mapped by Landcare Research and digitised by Boffa Miskell Limited;
- Landscape Character Areas - created by Boffa Miskell Limited.

These maps, together with a brief description of each map are included in Appendices 2-10 at the end of this report. Further information and details on each map can be obtained by interrogating the datasets in the *Wellington Region Geodatabase*.

Appendix 1, contains brief outline of Wairarapa’s Maori and European history, and land use - past and present.

NAMING

It is acknowledged that many places in the Wairarapa have both Maori and English names. In some cases, the Maori name in common usage may differ from the original spelling, or preferred spellings may differ between iwi which can lead to some confusion. The approach adopted in this report is to consistently use the LINZ Topo50 map series naming, and note in brackets the Maori name preferred by local iwi. For simplicity, the Maori name will be noted only once, where it first occurs on any given page.

The following glossary includes the English - Maori translations for common place names throughout the Wairarapa.

GLOSSARY

BULL HILL	AORANGI MAUNGA
CASTLEPOINT	RANGIWHAKAOMA
FLAT POINT	TE UNU UNU
GLADSTONE CLIFFS	TE ANA O PARAKAWHITI
KAIWHATA RIVER	KAIHOATA RIVER
LAKE ONOKE & WAIRARAPA	WAIRARAPA MOANA
MASTERTON	WHAKAORIORI
MOUNT BARTON	TUHIRANGI MAUNGA
MOUNT BRUCE	PUKAHA
MOUNT HECTOR	PUKEMOUMOU
MOUNT HOLDSWORTH	TARATAHI
MOUNT ROSS	HIKAPU MAUNGA
NGAWI POINT	TE KAWAKAWA/ BLACK ROCKS
ROCKY POINT	MATAKITAKI A KUPE
RUAKOKOPUTUNA	RUAKOKOPATUNA
SEVENTY MILE BUSH	TE TAPERE NUI O WHATONGA
SUICIDE ROCK	TE RERENGA O TE AOHURUHURU
TE KAUKAU	TE KAKAU
THE SAILS OF KUPE	NGA RA A KUPE
THE WAKA	NGA WAKA A KUPE
WELLINGTON	TE WHANGANUI O TARA

5 Wellington Regional Landscape Atlas Prepared by Isthmus Group for Greater Wellington Regional Council, May,2009.