
Draft Auckland Regional Policy Statement

Background Report – Surf Breaks

Prepared by Kath Coombes and Brad Scarfe, Environmental Policy and Planning, ARC

March 2010



**Auckland
Regional Council**
TE RAUHĪTANGA TAIAO

Contents:

1. SURF BREAKS AND THE DRAFT REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT	4
1.1 Introduction	4
1.2 Components of a surf break.....	4
1.3 Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2008	5
1.4 Surf breaks under the Resource Management Act.....	6
1.5 Surf breaks under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000.....	7
1.6 New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 1994.....	9
1.7 ARC Regional Strategy and Planning Committee consideration of surf breaks.....	10
1.8 Recognition of surf breaks in planning processes	10
1.9 Alternative approaches – Proposed Taranaki Regional Policy Statement	12
1.10 Alternative approaches – surf break definition.....	13
1.11 Identification of surf breaks and their values.....	13
2. DRAFT SURF BREAK POLICY	14
3. ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUES OF AUCKLAND'S SURF BREAKS.....	15
3.1 Assessment criteria.....	15
3.2 Auckland surf breaks list and values assessment	16
3.3 Surf break rarity rating.....	18
REFERENCES	19
APPENDIX 1 – Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki as Amended Following Decisions on Submissions (February 2009)	20
APPENDIX 2 – Maps of Auckland's Surf Breaks	22

1. SURF BREAKS AND THE DRAFT REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

It is recommended that the new Regional Policy Statement (RPS) for Auckland include a policy on surf breaks. Auckland's surf breaks are an important resource for the region as they contribute to tourism, economic development and amenity values as well as being recreational assets. Surf breaks can be adversely affected by activities in the coastal marine area (CMA) (eg sand extraction, reclamation, shoreline stabilisation, artificial beach nourishment, jetties, dredging, dredge spoil, structures, discharges) and on the adjacent land (eg developments resulting in loss of access or amenity of a break, or erosion of sediment). Such influences can be some distance from a surf break and yet affect a swell corridor or sediment source that maintains the break. It is important to consider such matters in developing district and regional plans, and in resource consent processes.

Consideration of whether to include a specific surf break policy in the new Auckland RPS reflects the debate generated by the inclusion of surf breaks in the proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2008 (NZCPS), consideration of how surf breaks relate to the purpose and principles of the Resource Management Act (RMA), the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act (HGMPA), ARC councillor concerns, and consideration of relevant literature and alternative options.

This report sets out the background to why it is recommended that the new RPS should include a specific policy on surf breaks, suggests draft policy wording, and then describes the process that has been undertaken to identify Auckland's surf breaks and their values.

1.2 Components of a surf break

The Surfbreak Protection Society made substantial submissions to the NZCPS (2008) Board of Inquiry. The Society experts developed the following definitions in response to a request from the Board:

Surf break – means a natural feature that is comprised of swell, currents, water levels, seabed morphology, and wind. The hydrodynamic character of the ocean (swell, currents and water levels) combines with seabed morphology and winds to give rise to a surfable wave. A surf break includes the swell corridor through which the swell travels, and the morphology of the seabed of that wave corridor, through to the point where waves created by the swell dissipate and become non-surfable.

Surfable wave – means a wave that can be caught and ridden by a surfer. Surfable waves have a breaking point that peels along the unbroken wave crest so that the surfer is propelled laterally along the wave crest.

Swell corridor – means the region offshore a surf break where oceanographic swell travels and transforms. Such areas are relatively easily mapped. (Skellern *et al.* 2009)

A surf break occurs where waves peel at a suitable angle or rate and breaking intensity for the size of the wave and the surfer style and skill level. There are five main geomorphic types of surf break - headland or point, beach, river or estuary entrance bar, reef or ledge – depending on the seabed morphology which leads to a wave breaking (Scarfe 2009b). There are no clear boundaries between the different types and sometimes breaks fall under more than one category.

1.3 Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2008

Surf breaks are not referred to in the operative New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (1994). However, the proposed NZCPS (2008) includes the following policy:

Policy 20 Surf breaks of national significance

The surf breaks at Ahipara, Northland; Raglan, Waikato; Stent Road, Taranaki; White Rock, Wairarapa; Mangamaunu, Kaikoura; and Papatowai, Southland, which are of national significance for surfing, shall be protected from inappropriate use and development, including by:

- (a) ensuring that activities in the coastal marine area do not adversely affect the surf breaks; and
- (b) avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects of other activities on access to, and use and enjoyment of the surf breaks.

This policy was included in the proposed NZCPS in response to feedback on the earlier NZCPS discussion document produced by the Department of Conservation. The policy generated a large number of submissions from surf clubs and groups such as the Surfbreak Protection Society. Several submissions supported the policy but sought that it be extended to cover other sites or matters, such as protection of a representative range of surfing breaks and “surfing nurseries”. Other submissions argued that the policy was not necessary as surf breaks were adequately covered by other policies on matters such as natural character and recreation. The NZCPS Board of Inquiry members noted during the hearing that there was a need to single out surfing breaks in the NZCPS because there are no simple legal mechanisms that promote their protection (such as reserves), unlike other activities and resources (Skellern *et al.* 2009).

The ARC submitted in support of the recognition of the importance of surf breaks but noted concern at including only a list of nationally significant sites. If such a list was to be retained, the council sought that sites in Auckland be included to recognise the significance related to their high levels of use due to the high numbers of people able to access them.

The ARC submission also sought that the policy be amended to provide more generally for the consideration and protection of surf breaks, and to provide robust assessment criteria for their identification at the local level. It was noted that nationally and locally significant breaks could be identified in regional policy statements and regional coastal plans, with appropriate policies and rules providing different levels of protection depending on the importance and sensitivity of different breaks.

The NZCPS Board of Inquiry has reported to the Minister of Conservation but that report has not been publicly released. It is not known when the Minister will finalise a new NZCPS or whether it will include a policy on surf breaks. There is no requirement under the RMA for the RPS to give effect to a proposed NZCPS and so strictly, the ARC does not need to take policy 20 into account in developing the new RPS for Auckland. However, the submissions and evidence relating to policy 20 have raised valid matters relating to surf breaks and ARC councillors have asked that these matters be taken into account. Nationally and internationally surfing breaks are continuing to be modified and destroyed (Scarfe 2008) prompting numerous grass roots campaigns. It is considered appropriate to pre-empt such conflict in mixed use coastal areas by providing strategic direction on the issue in the RPS. It is considered that there is adequate basis under the RMA in part 2 and in the purpose of an RPS, and under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act (HGMPA), to include specific recognition of Auckland's surf breaks in the new RPS.

1.4 Surf breaks under the Resource Management Act

The maintenance and protection of surf breaks is relevant to several aspects of the RMA, particularly the purpose and principles of the Act (sections 5, 6, 7) and the purpose of RPS's (section 59).

Section 5 *Purpose*

- (1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.
- (2) In this Act, sustainable management means 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.

Surf breaks are a “natural and physical resource” to be sustainably managed under the Act. Surf breaks contribute to the “social, economic and cultural wellbeing” of people and communities by providing for the recreation activities of surfers, but also have wider benefits in terms of the economic activity of the local area and creation of a distinctive ‘sense of place’ and identity for communities close to surf breaks. International research demonstrates that surfing breaks can have significant social and economic values (Lazarow *et al.* 2007; Nelsen *et al.* 2007). There are several places in Auckland, such as Piha, Muriwai and Great Barrier Island, where surfing is an important element of the character and culture of the local area. Surfing is an activity which draws people to live in the local area and attracts tourists and visitors. In total, the variety and scale of surf breaks around the Auckland region contribute to the character and attractiveness of the region. The coast and beaches are consistently given as a key reason why people choose to live in Auckland (ARC 2004, 2008). It is not known how much this attractiveness relates to the opportunities for surfing, but it is clear that the accessibility of the coast and the range of different activities possible around the coast contribute to the wellbeing of Aucklanders.

Globally the numbers of people involved in surfing has increased significantly over recent decades and is expected to continue to increase. At the same time, pressures for development along the coast are growing (Scarfe *et al.* 2009a). Ensuring appropriate management of any potential conflict between such uses of limited coastal space is part of the council's meeting the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations and of avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

Section 6 *Matters of national importance*

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, 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 subdivision, use, and development:
- (b) the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development: ...
- (d) the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers: ...

The matters of national importance in section 6(a), (b) and (d) are relevant to the consideration of surf breaks because breaks are natural features and their use depends on public access to the coastal marine area. Surf breaks are an element of natural character in that they rely on the natural formation of swell corridors and reefs, bars, headlands, ledges or beaches for a wave to break. There are currently no artificial surf breaks in the Auckland region. Nationally and internationally

numerous surf breaks have been modified by coastal engineering activities, but they still contain a degree of natural character.

The nature of the surfing experience is also affected by the natural character of the surrounding area. In some places, the lack of built elements adds a remote, wilderness value to the surfing activity. At breaks in more developed areas, the natural elements of cliffs and vegetation along the coast contribute to the surfing experience. In some places, surf breaks will also be an outstanding natural feature or part of an outstanding natural landscape.

Public access to a surf break is fundamental to its use. Such access can be enhanced by works such as walkways and car parks, or can be diminished through activities such as subdivision which block informal accessways.

Section 7 *Other matters*

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to—

- (c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values¹: ...
- (f) maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:
- (g) any finite characteristics of natural and physical resources: ...

Surf breaks can be a major element of the amenity values of an area. They contribute to recreation, and also to the pleasantness of a site, for those people surfing and for others who watch the surfers from the land. The maintenance of the quality of the environment is important for retaining the value of the surfing experience. Surf breaks are a finite characteristic of the environment as they only occur at specific sites and can be difficult to replicate if the natural processes creating the break are disrupted.

Section 59 *Purpose of regional policy statements*

The purpose of a regional policy statement is to achieve the purpose of the Act by providing an overview of the resource management issues of the region and policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the natural and physical resources of the whole region.

Surf breaks are a relevant matter for inclusion in the Auckland RPS as the maintenance of their values depends on the integrated management of activities both in the coastal marine area (CMA) and on the adjacent land. Activities in the CMA, such as dredging, can affect the processes which result in surfable waves forming, while water quality and discharges can affect the quality and safety of the surfing experience. Activities on land, such as development and vegetation clearance, can affect the nature of the surfing experience and the access to surfing locations. Land based sources of contamination (sediment, nutrients, pathogens) can also affect the use of a surf break.

Maintenance of the coastal environment is a significant issue for Auckland because of the high levels of use of the coastal area, and the importance the community place on the coast. Surf breaks are an important element of Auckland's coastal environment for many people and warrant specific consideration in the resource management of the region.

1.5 Surf breaks under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000

Sections 9(5) and 10(1) of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act require that the RPS give effect to sections 7 and 8 of the HGMPA as a national policy statement and New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement under the RMA.

¹ RMA Section 2 (Interpretation) - Amenity values means 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.

Section 7 *Recognition of national significance of Hauraki Gulf*

(1) The interrelationship between the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments and the ability of that interrelationship to sustain the life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf and its islands are matters of national significance.

(2) The life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Gulf and its islands includes the capacity—

(a) to provide for—

(i) the historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship of the tangata whenua of the Gulf with the Gulf and its islands; and

(ii) the social, economic, recreational, and cultural well-being of people and communities:

(b) to use the resources of the Gulf by the people and communities of the Gulf and New Zealand for economic activities and recreation:

(c) to maintain the soil, air, water, and ecosystems of the Gulf.

Section 8 *Management of Hauraki Gulf*

To recognise the national significance of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments, the objectives of the management of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments are—

(a) the protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments:

(b) the protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments:

(c) the protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of those natural, historic, and physical resources (including kaimoana) of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments with which tangata whenua have an historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship:

(d) the protection of the cultural and historic associations of people and communities in and around the Hauraki Gulf with its natural, historic, and physical resources:

(e) the maintenance and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the contribution of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments to the social and economic well-being of the people and communities of the Hauraki Gulf and New Zealand:

(f) the maintenance and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments, which contribute to the recreation and enjoyment of the Hauraki Gulf for the people and communities of the Hauraki Gulf and New Zealand.

Surf breaks fall within the ambit of HGMPA section 7(2) as they can make an important contribution to the social, economic, recreational, and cultural well-being of people and communities. They are used for recreation which supports economic activities in the surrounding area.

Several aspects of section 8 are also relevant. Surf breaks are a natural and physical resource of several parts of the Gulf (8(b)). In many surfing areas, people and communities have cultural and historical relationships with the surf break (8(d)). Surf breaks are a resource which contributes to social and economic wellbeing (8(e)) and to recreation and enjoyment of the Gulf (8(f)). Giving effect to sections 7 and 8 requires that the values of surf breaks be protected or maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced.

1.6 New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 1994

In preparing a new RPS, the council must give effect to the NZCPS (1994) (RMA s62(3)). Policies of the NZCPS (1994) of particular relevance to surf breaks include policies 1.1.1, 1.1.3 and 3.1.2.

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; and
- (c) avoiding cumulative adverse effects of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment.

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, seascapes and landforms, including:
 - (i) significant representative examples of each landform which provide the variety in 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;
- (b) characteristics of special spiritual, historical or cultural significance to Maori identified in accordance with tikanga Maori; and
- (c) significant places or areas of historic or cultural significance.

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, which 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.

Specific consideration of surf breaks in the RPS gives effect to these policies by recognising the natural character values of surf breaks and the contribution that they make to Auckland's recreation and culture.

1.7 ARC Regional Strategy and Planning Committee consideration of surf breaks

The direction to give specific consideration to the inclusion of surf breaks in the new RPS was provided in the following resolutions of the Regional Strategy and Planning (RSP) Committee:

RSP resolutions 28 October 2008

- d) That the following matters discussed by the Committee be incorporated into the draft policy: ...
- iii) Identification and protection of nationally and regionally significant surf breaks.

RSP resolutions 4 November 2008

- e) That the following matters discussed by the Committee be incorporated into the draft Auckland Regional Policy Statement: ...
- iv. Incorporate points raised in Auckland Regional Council's submission to the draft NZ Coastal Policy Statement 2008, including surf breaks, and swell corridors, Maui's dolphins.

RSP resolutions regarding the draft coastal chapter (16 March, 7 April, 15 April 2009)

- b) That officers further develop and refine the policies and methods contained in the coastal environment chapter in particular to reflect the following matters:
- the ARC's responsibilities under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act;...
 - protection of coastal values;...
 - public access;
 - recreation including surf breaks
- c) That officers address the detailed feedback from the committee on this chapter.

Councillor comments recorded in the RSP meeting of 16 March, 7 April, 15 April 2009 regarding the draft coastal chapter

Coney	Need to acknowledge that surf breaks have economic as well as a recreational value. Are we going to identify them?
Walbran	Could a schedule be developed in time?
Walbran	Need to acknowledge current as well as potential effects.

This direction from ARC councillors has been responded to through specific consideration of surf breaks in the policies of the coastal chapter of the draft RPS, and the development of a schedule of surf breaks.

1.8 Recognition of surf breaks in planning processes

There is considerable evidence internationally that surf breaks can be altered or destroyed by coastal development (Corne 2009; Scarfe *et al.* 2009a, b). Surf breaks can be destroyed by large scale works, such as an LPG terminal in Mexico (Corne 2009). The quality of a break can be affected by smaller works such as construction of seawalls (eg St Clair, Dunedin), jetties (eg Mission Bay, San Diego, California), boat ramps (eg Manu Bay, Raglan), piers (eg Oil Piers, Ventura, California) and beach nourishment (eg The Cove, Sandy Hook, New Jersey) (Scarfe *et al.* 2009a). In the case of Mundaka, a Spanish venue for World Tour Championship competitions, the 2005 event was cancelled due to a lack of wave quality blamed on increased dredging and dumping of sand in the adjacent harbour (Skellern *et al.* 2009). However, many surf breaks have also been inadvertently enhanced or created by engineering works, for example jetties and breakwaters that create or extend a surf break (Scarfe *et al.* 2009a). Any modifications to surfing breaks needs to be strategic and not by chance to avoid accidentally destroying or degrading the surf break resource.

In New Zealand, concerns about potential effects on surf breaks have been central to protracted processes regarding consents for the Whangamata marina dredging and Pakiri sand mining. Surfers' concerns regarding the quality of the surfing experience have contributed to community pressure for upgrades to wastewater discharges in Whangamata, Gisborne, Dunedin and Wellington. Such issues have demonstrated the depth of community concern about surf breaks and potential adverse effects from activities in the CMA or on nearby land. Decisions made at the RPS planning level could facilitate more expedient outcomes when such conflicts arise.

It is expected that the number of people participating in surfing will grow as the regional population grows. At the same time, there will be pressure for increased development and works along the coast in response to demands for other activities or in response to the effects of climate change. Although there have been no documented cases of surf breaks being destroyed by development in Auckland, this is fortuitous rather than indicating any regional resilience of surf breaks to damage. The Auckland urban area is largely sheltered from ocean swells and so only rarely experiences surfable conditions. The consequent remoteness of most of Auckland's surf breaks, partly explains why they have remained in a natural condition. There is a need to consider the potential effects of new developments on surf breaks as growth pressures increase.

Corne (2009) noted that whether or not crowd levels at a break were affected, after an activity decreased wave quality, depended on the proximity of alternative breaks. If the affected break is the only surfing resource in a large area then the effect of the reduction in wave quality is less likely to have an impact on crowd numbers. The surfers may be less satisfied with their surfing experience but will continue surfing at that location due to a lack of alternatives.

Scarfe *et al.* (2009a) emphasised the need for consideration of surf breaks in strategic planning and in baseline environmental monitoring, as well as in one-off assessments of environmental effects for particular developments near a surfing break. The RPS is an important means of requiring such consideration as it can influence planning for the land and the coastal marine area, and guide decision making in resource consents and other processes.

A variety of factors need to be addressed in a policy on surf breaks. These include:

- integrated consideration of potential effects on the physical processes that form a break
- the quality of the surfing experience
- access to the break.

Consequently, the policy needs to cover the wider swell corridor and seabed, adjacent land and facilities, as well as the area of the surf break itself.

It is important to retain the existing variety of surf break types in the region to encompass a range of surfing skill levels and provide variety in the spectrum of surfing opportunities. There is a gradient in skill level that needs to be provided for so that beginner to advanced surfers can be accommodated. It would be inappropriate to only protect surf breaks of the highest quality or skill level, or only those in highly natural settings or those closest to the urban area. Such attributes should be considered in any assessment of effects but it is preferable at the more strategic (RPS) level to identify a variety of break types and to provide information on the particular values of the different sites.

Explicit inclusion of surf breaks in the RPS will provide regional direction on the need to consider the breaks in RMA decision making. The policy will be implemented through the regional coastal plan, district plans and resource consents. It is not intended that the policy will stop all future development in the proximity of surf breaks but to ensure that adequate regard is given to potential effects. Recognition of the breaks as an important part of the region's coastal environment will reinforce the need to consider whether new developments will enhance or adversely affect the values of the breaks. In some cases such assessment will lead to proposals being modified or declined. Equally, there may be cases where the social and economic benefits of a proposal justify some decrease in surf break quality, particularly if there are similar breaks in close proximity.

1.9 Alternative approaches – Proposed Taranaki Regional Policy Statement

The only other RPS known to include specific consideration of surf breaks is the proposed Taranaki RPS (as amended following decisions on submissions, TRC 2009a). In the coastal environment chapter of that RPS, surf breaks are referred to in three background sections relating to natural character, coastal water quality and public access (see Appendix 1). The objectives and policies which then follow do not actually refer to surf breaks specifically but it is clear that they are to be considered under the objective or policy from the preceding background sections. The objectives and policies use quite general wording such as protecting natural character from “inappropriate subdivision, use, development and occupation” (see Appendix 1).

The maps included as Appendix II to the Taranaki RPS do identify “high quality or high value surf breaks of regional importance”. The introduction at the beginning of that appendix notes that Taranaki’s surf breaks attract surfers from throughout New Zealand and overseas as well as locally. It is noted that the surf breaks have been identified using the council’s inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region (2004), the New Zealand Surfing Guide (2004) published by Wavetrack and by consultation with local surfers. No information is provided within the RPS regarding the values of the different breaks or whether some are more significant than others. Several breaks are identified with simply a dot whereas others have a line extending along the coast. Some breaks are within a yellow shaded area identified as a “coastal area of local or regional significance” but it is not clear if the extent of the shading reflects the spatial area of the surf break.

The references to surf breaks in the explanations and maps were added in response to submissions. The decision report prepared by Taranaki Regional Council noted that there were policies already in place to protect natural features, water quality and promote public access, but the changes would provide further contextual information relevant to the Taranaki region and improve clarity and understanding of the RPS and implementation of the NZCPS (TRC 2009b, page 4).

The TRC approach of specifically including surf breaks in RPS explanations, but not objectives, policies or methods, has some advantages and disadvantages. The explanations can include examples and description of what is meant and provide useful context to the policies. In addition, having more general objectives and policies allows a more concise form of RPS than is created if a greater level of specific detail is included within the statutory provisions. However, it is the objectives, policies and methods that actually have statutory weight and this approach does not give any greater statutory recognition of surf breaks than was present before the amendments were made in response to submissions. This approach could result in a lack of recognition of surf breaks unless plan users continually refer back to the background sections of the RPS. There is also no statutory link between the wording of the policies and the surf breaks shown in the RPS maps. There is scope for future uncertainty regarding whether the policies relate to activities on land affecting the areas shown in the maps and whether aspects such as swell corridors are to be considered or only the break area as included in the maps.

It is considered preferable to explicitly recognise surf breaks within a policy rather than only in explanations and background sections of an RPS. Using only explanations continues the approach of relying on consideration of general values such as natural character and water quality that are important throughout the coast. Such values are important at surf breaks, but the break should also be recognised as a relatively unique location where natural processes create an important recreational resource that has social and economic benefits for the wider community. It may be necessary to place a greater weighting on protection of surf break values than would occur elsewhere along the coast. Given the pressures on Auckland’s coast and importance of maintaining the range of surf breaks, it is important that the RPS give a more directive approach to protecting surf break values than the existing RPS.

1.10 Alternative approaches – surf break definition

As noted earlier, the NZCPS (2008) Board of Inquiry has considered whether the NZCPS should include a definition of surf break and asked for expert advice on what such a definition may cover. It is not yet known whether the final version of the new NZCPS will include a surf break policy or a definition.

There is no clear disadvantage to including such a definition in the Auckland RPS. However, it is not considered necessary to include such definitions as the term “surf break” is generally understood. It should be noted that specific aspects of the definition are important concepts to include in an RPS policy. For example:

- Swell, currents, water levels, seabed morphology, and wind are all components of surf breaks and any activities that impact these physical processes could impact surfing wave quality.
- The definition of a surfing break covers a large spatial extent, far beyond the location of water riding. The swell corridor of a surfing break could extend far out to sea, and activities such as aquaculture and wave energy facilities at certain scales could block or modify waves travelling through the swell corridor.

1.11 Identification of surf breaks and their values

The surf breaks in Auckland were identified from the Wavetrack (2004) surfing guide, surfing websites, information provided by the Auckland branch of the Surfbreak Protection Society, and local knowledge of council officers. A list of all known sites was collated and then the values of the sites were assessed from the same sources.

The criteria used in the assessment of surf break values are shown below in section 3. The different criteria were developed from consideration of the physical and social/cultural attributes of surf breaks. Some values such as wave quality are directly from ratings in the Wavetrack (2004) guide. Where sites were not included in the guide, local knowledge was used to determine a break with similar characteristics. Other criteria, such as amenity values, were determined by council officers through a comparison between sites using a ranking of best =10 and worst = 1.

The values criteria have not been used to distinguish the surf breaks into categories such as regionally and locally significant. Such assessment would be arbitrary and does not appear necessary at this stage. The values assessment does provide information on why each break is of importance, and the aspects of a break that should be given particular regard when considering potential effects of nearby activities.

The extent of the surf break areas shown on the maps is based on the general area that is known to be surfed at each particular site. In cases such as Muriwai and Pakiri, the physical break is known to extend for further along the coast but only the area where people generally surf is shown on the map.

Consultation on the list of surf breaks and their values has not been undertaken at this stage. It is intended that such consultation would be undertaken in the ongoing development of the RPS.

2. DRAFT SURF BREAK POLICY

The following is proposed for inclusion as a policy in the new Auckland RPS:

Protecting surf breaks

The natural character, landscape, recreational, amenity, and economic values of regionally significant surf breaks shall be maintained and enhanced by having particular regard to any existing and potential effects of activities on land or in the coastal marine area on access to, and use and enjoyment of surf breaks, including effects on water quality, and on any coastal processes, currents, water levels, seabed morphology and swell corridors that contribute to surf breaks.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUES OF AUCKLAND'S SURF BREAKS

3.1 Assessment criteria

All criteria are ranked on a 1-10 scale (1 = worst, 10 = best).

All criteria other than wave quality and rarity are based on local knowledge of ARC officers Matthew McNeil, Brad Scarfe, Jarrod Walker and Kath Coombes.

Physical and natural values:

1. Wave quality (height, length, etc) when optimum conditions are present². Determined using the Wavetrack (2004) surfing guide "stoke rating" or determination of an equivalent site when the break is not included in Wavetrack.
2. Frequency/consistency of surfable conditions. Sites which are able to be surfed frequently throughout the year are rated higher than those which only break rarely.
3. Size of break area. Based on whether the break can accommodate many surfers at once. Larger breaks have a higher rating than smaller breaks.
4. Naturalness. Indicates the level of naturalness retained and value as a wilderness experience. Some breaks are valued particularly for their sense of remoteness and retention of natural surroundings. Sites with a low level of modification of the surroundings rate higher than sites adjacent to urban areas.
5. Rarity. Relates to whether the break is a rare type of break for the region. Determined from the average of rarity ratings assessed for geomorphic break type (headland or point, beach, bar, reef or ledge) and surfing skill level (all surfers, competent surfers only, intermediate-expert, experts only) (see attached rarity rating table). Categories are from Wavetrack (2004) (or an equivalent break where the break is not in Wavetrack). Ratings are based on the frequency of break type within the region ie the least common geomorphic type of break is headland/point and the least common skill level type is experts only, so a break that is a headland/point and experts only gets the highest rarity rating. Beach breaks and breaks for competent surfers are the most common types so get the lowest rarity rating.

Social, economic, cultural values:

6. Level of use. Based on a general assessment of how many surfers regularly use the particular break. Sites which extend over a larger length of coastline and are of surfable quality consistently throughout the year rate higher than breaks which are small and break infrequently.
7. Amenity. Reflects proximity to populated areas, ease of access, presence of ancillary services and facilities (eg surf clubs, toilets, car parks, shelters, accessways to beach, nearby accommodation and shops). Some breaks are valued for their proximity to facilities and services. Sites with greater levels of such facilities are rated higher than those with few facilities.
8. Significance to the local community. Relates to whether the break is a key aspect of the local sense of place or contribution to local economy.
9. Value as a national / internationally recognised site (ie competition site, attracts tourists, frequently sited in surfing guides). Determined from knowledge of locations of surf competitions, frequency of mention in surfing websites and guide books. Sites with frequent competitions and mentions rate higher than those that are only locally known.

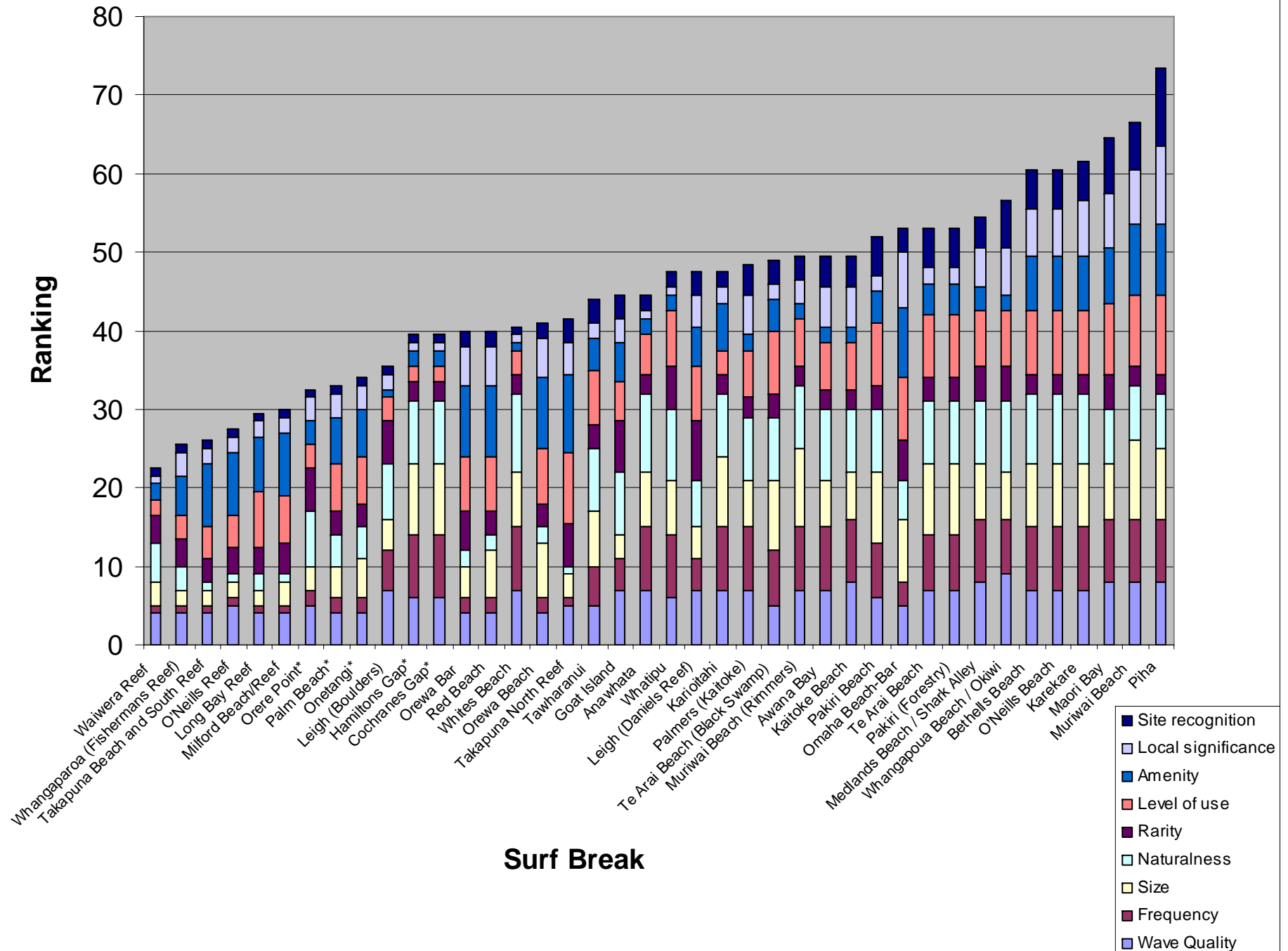
² Stoke rating – "The Wavetrack New Zealand Surfing Guide rates surf breaks on their quality when a swell is running. Breaks are not rated on their area's swell consistency. This is to ensure that this guide offers an accurate appraisal of each break's potential when optimum conditions are present." (Wavetrack, 2004; page 7)

3.2 Auckland surf breaks list and values assessment

Coast	Surf Break	Wave Quality	Freq	Size	Natural	Rarity	Level of use	Amenity	Local signif	Site recog	Total
East Coast	Waiwera Reef	4	1	3	5	3.5	2	2	1	1	22.5
East Coast	Whangaparoa – Fishermans Reef	4	1	2	3	3.5	3	5	3	1	25.5
East Coast	Takapuna Beach and South Reef	4	1	2	1	3	4	8	2	1	26
East Coast	O'Neills Reef	5	1	2	1	3.5	4	8	2	1	27.5
East Coast	Long Bay Reef	4	1	2	2	3.5	7	7	2	1	29.5
East Coast	Milford Beach/Reef	4	1	3	1	4	6	8	2	1	30
East Coast	Orere Point *	5	2	3	7	5.5	3	3	3	1	32.5
Waiheke Is	Palm Beach*	4	2	4	4	3	6	6	3	1	33
Waiheke Is	Onetangi*	4	2	5	4	3	6	6	3	1	34
East Coast	Leigh (Boulders)	7	5	4	7	5.5	3	1	2	1	35.5
West Coast	Hamiltons Gap*	6	8	9	8	2.5	2	2	1	1	39.5
West Coast	Cochranes Gap*	6	8	9	8	2.5	2	2	1	1	39.5
East Coast	Orewa Bar	4	2	4	2	5	7	9	5	2	40
East Coast	Red Beach	4	2	6	2	3	7	9	5	2	40
West Coast	Whites Beach	7	8	7	10	2.5	3	1	1	1	40.5
East Coast	Orewa Beach	4	2	7	2	3	7	9	5	2	41
East Coast	Takapuna North Reef	5	1	3	1	5.5	9	10	4	3	41.5
East Coast	Tawharanui	5	5	7	8	3	7	4	2	3	44
East Coast	Goat Island	7	4	3	8	6.5	5	5	3	3	44.5
West Coast	Anawhata	7	8	7	10	2.5	5	2	1	2	44.5
West Coast	Whatipu	6	8	7	9	5.5	7	2	1	2	47.5
East Coast	Leigh (Daniels Reef)	7	4	4	6	7.5	7	5	4	3	47.5
West Coast	Karioitahi	7	8	9	8	2.5	3	6	2	2	47.5
Great Barrier Is	Palmer's (Kaitoke)	7	8	6	8	2.5	6	2	5	4	48.5
East Coast	Te Arai Beach (Black Swamp)	5	7	9	8	3	8	4	2	3	49
West Coast	Muriwai (Rimmers)	7	8	10	8	2.5	6	2	3	3	49.5
Great Barrier Is	Awana Bay	7	8	6	9	2.5	6	2	5	4	49.5
Great Barrier Is	Kaitoke Beach	8	8	6	8	2.5	6	2	5	4	49.5
East Coast	Pakiri Beach	6	7	9	8	3	8	4	2	5	52
East Coast	Omaha Beach-Bar	5	3	8	5	5	8	9	7	3	53
East Coast	Te Arai Beach	7	7	9	8	3	8	4	2	5	53
East Coast	Pakiri Beach (Forestry)	7	7	9	8	3	8	4	2	5	53
Great Barrier Is	Medlands Beach / Shark Alley	8	8	7	8	4.5	7	3	5	4	54.5
Great Barrier Is	Whangapoua Beach / Okiwi	9	7	6	9	4.5	7	2	6	6	56.5
West Coast	Bethells Beach / O'Neills	7	8	8	9	2.5	8	7	6	5	60.5
West Coast	Karekare	7	8	8	9	2.5	8	7	7	5	61.5
West Coast	Maori Bay	8	8	7	7	4.5	9	7	7	7	64.5
West Coast	Muriwai Beach	8	8	10	7	2.5	9	9	7	6	66.5
West Coast	Piha	8	8	9	7	2.5	10	9	10	10	73.5

* – Sites not in Wavetrack, wave quality and rarity rating determined by ARC officers based on equivalent sites in Wavetrack.

Surf Break Values



3.3 Surf break rarity rating

Coast	Surf Break	Break type	Rarity rating	Experience level	Rarity rating	Combined rarity rating
East Coast	Te Arai Beach (Black Swamp)	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Te Arai Beach	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Pakiri Beach (Forestry)	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Pakiri Beach	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Goat Island	Reef	4	E	9	6.5
East Coast	Leigh (Daniels Reef)	Point	8	I-E	7	7.5
East Coast	Leigh (Boulders)	Reef	4	I-E	7	5.5
East Coast	Omaha Beach-Bar	Bar	6	A	4	5
East Coast	Tawharanui	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Waiwera Reef	Reef	4	C	3	3.5
East Coast	Orewa Beach	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Orewa Bar	Bar	6	A	4	5
East Coast	Red Beach	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Whangaparoa (Fishermans Reef)	Reef	4	C	3	3.5
East Coast	Long Bay Reef	Reef	4	C	3	3.5
East Coast	Milford Beach/Reef	Reef	4	A	4	4
East Coast	O'Neills Reef	Reef	4	C	3	3.5
East Coast	Takapuna North Reef	Reef	4	I-E	7	5.5
East Coast	Takapuna Beach and South Reef	Beach	2	A	4	3
East Coast	Orere Point*	Point	8	C	3	5.5
West Coast	Muriwai Beach (Rimmers)	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Muriwai Beach	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Maori Bay	Beach	2	I-E	7	4.5
West Coast	Bethells Beach	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	O'Neills	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Anawhata	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Whites Beach	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Piha	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Karekare	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Whatipu	Beach	2	E	9	5.5
West Coast	Hamilton's Gap*	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Cochran's Gap*	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
West Coast	Karioitahi	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
Great Barrier Is	Whangapoua Beach / Okiwi	Bar	6	C	3	4.5
Great Barrier Is	Awana Bay	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
Great Barrier Is	Palmers (Kaitoke)	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
Great Barrier Is	Kaitoke Beach	Beach	2	C	3	2.5
Great Barrier Is	Medlands Beach / Shark Alley	Beach	2	I-E	7	4.5
Waiheke Is	Onetangi*	Beach	2	A	4	3
Waiheke Is	Palm Beach*	Beach	2	A	4	3

Break type	Number	%	Rating
Headland or point break	2	5	8
Beach break	27	68	2
River or estuary entrance bar	3	8	6
Reef breaks	8	20	4
Ledge breaks	0	0	10
Total	40	100	

Experience level	Number	%	Rating
All levels of surfers	13	33	4
Competent surfers only	20	50	3
Intermediate - Expert surfers	5	13	7
Experts only	2	5	9
Total	40	100	

REFERENCES

Auckland Regional Council (2004) *Environmental awareness survey of households 2003/04 full-year report*, ARC.

Auckland Regional Council (2008) *Environmental awareness survey 2007/08 final report*, ARC, July 2008.

Corne, N.P., 2009. The implications of coastal protection and development on surfing, *Journal of Coastal Research*, vol 25, no 2, pages 427 – 434.

Lazarow, N., 2007. The value of coastal recreational resources: a case study approach to examine the value of recreational surfing to specific locales. *Journal of Coastal Research*, Special Issue No. 50, pages 12–20.

Nelsen, C., Pendleton, L., and Vaughn, R., 2007. A socioeconomic study of surfers at Trestles Beach. *Shore and Beach*, Vol. 75(4), pages 32–37.

Scarfe, 2008. *Oceanographic considerations for the management and protection of surfing breaks*. PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 308p.

Scarfe, B.E., Healy, T.R., Rennie, H.G., Mead, S.T., 2009a. Sustainable management of surfing breaks: case studies and recommendations, *Journal of Coastal Research*, vol 25, no 3, pages 684 – 703.

Scarfe, B.E., Healy, T.R., Rennie, H.G., 2009b. Research-based surfing literature for coastal management and the science of surfing – a review, *Journal of Coastal Research*, vol 25, no 3, pages 539 – 557.

Skellern, M., Rennie, H.G., Davis, M., 2009. Working towards the protection of surf breaks, *NZ Planning Quarterly*, Issue 172, pages 12 – 15.

Taranaki Regional Council 2009a. *Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki as amended following decisions on submissions*, February 2009.

Taranaki Regional Council 2009b. *Taranaki Regional Council Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki, decisions on submissions*, February 2009.

Wavetrack 2004. *New Zealand Surfing Guide*, published by Greenroom Surf Media Ltd, November 2004, 549p.

APPENDIX 1 – Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki as Amended Following Decisions on Submissions (February 2009)

Note: Emphasis added to show all examples of explicit recognition of surf breaks.

7.1 Protecting the Natural Character of our Coast

Background to the issue

... Natural features of Taranaki's coastal environment that contribute to its natural character include natural coastal processes, marine life and ecosystems including indigenous flora and fauna (including those distinctive to the Taranaki coast) and biodiversity values, coastal landscapes and seascapes, **surf breaks** and areas of forest, shrub land, open space and farmland. ...

CNC Objective 1 To protect the natural character of the coastal environment in the Taranaki region from inappropriate subdivision, use, development and occupation by avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment.

CNC Policy 1 Management of the coastal environment will be carried out in a manner that protects the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use, development and occupation and enhances natural character where appropriate.

CNC Policy 4 Areas in the coastal environment of importance to the region will be identified and priority given to protection of the natural character, ecological and amenity values of such areas from any adverse effects arising from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

In the assessment of areas of importance, matters to be considered will include: ...

(d) scenic sites and recreational sites of outstanding or regional or national significance;

7.2 Maintaining and Enhancing Coastal Water Quality

Description of the issue

... Maintaining excellent water quality is also important for protecting amenity, cultural, recreational and commercial values associated with the coast including the use and enjoyment of **surf breaks**, swimming, boating and fishing. ...

CWQ POLICY 1 Waste reduction and waste treatment and disposal practices, which avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse environmental effects of the point source discharge of contaminants to the coastal marine area will be required.

In considering policies for plans or proposals in relation to the discharge of contaminants to the coastal marine area, matters to be considered will include:

- (a) the relationship of tangata whenua with the coastal environment;
- (b) the natural character, ecological and amenity values of the coastal environment, including indigenous biodiversity values and fishery values;
- (c) the effect on areas where shellfish and other kaimoana are gathered for human consumption;
- (d) the actual or potential risks to human and aquatic health and amenity values arising from the discharge;
- (e) the significance of any historic heritage values associated with the coastal environment;
- (f) the degree to which the needs of other resource users might be compromised; ...

7.3 Maintaining and Enhancing Public Access to and along the Coastal Environment

Description of the issue

In some cases, it will be appropriate to promote and enhance public use and enjoyment of the coast, particularly where there are synergies with regards to promoting and enhancing public use and enjoyment of the coastal environment with high natural character and amenity values such as Taranaki's valued **surf breaks**.

CPA POLICY 1 Encourage, as far as is practicable, public access to and along the coastal environment, except where circumstances make restrictions necessary to:

- (a) preserve the natural character of the coastal environment and ecological values associated with coastal areas of outstanding coastal values and areas with significant indigenous biodiversity values;
- (b) protect private property rights;

- (c) avoid conflicts between competing uses;
- (d) protect cultural and spiritual values of tangata whenua;
- (e) protect archaeological and historic heritage values;
- (f) protect the health and safety of the public where these may be adversely affected by an activity in the coastal environment; and
- (g) provide for other circumstances that are sufficient to justify the restriction, notwithstanding the national importance of maintaining access.

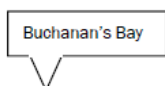
Appendix II: High Quality or High Value Areas of the Coastal Environment

... Taranaki is recognised nationally and internationally for its **surf breaks**. Surf breaks depend on the presence of a combination of suitable seabed shape, swell direction and power, swell corridors that allow swells to arrive at the surf break and wind direction and force. High quality or high value surf breaks in Taranaki attract surfers from throughout New Zealand and overseas as well as locally. High quality or high value surf breaks of regional importance are also shown in Figures 7 to 19. The surf breaks have been identified using the Council's inventory of Coastal Areas of Local or Regional Significance in the Taranaki Region (2004), the New Zealand Surfing Guide (2004) published by Wavetrack and by consultation with local surfers.



Figure 10 High quality or high value areas of the coastal environment - Waipua Lagoons to Ngamotu Beach

Key:



Epiha Road

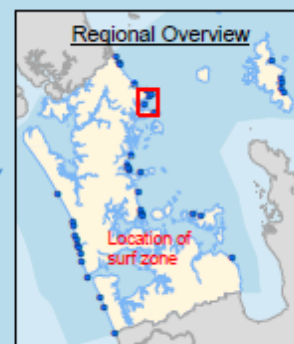


Buchanan's Bay Coastal area of local or regional significance

High quality or high value surfbreak

APPENDIX 2 – Maps of Auckland’s Surf Breaks





0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

Legend

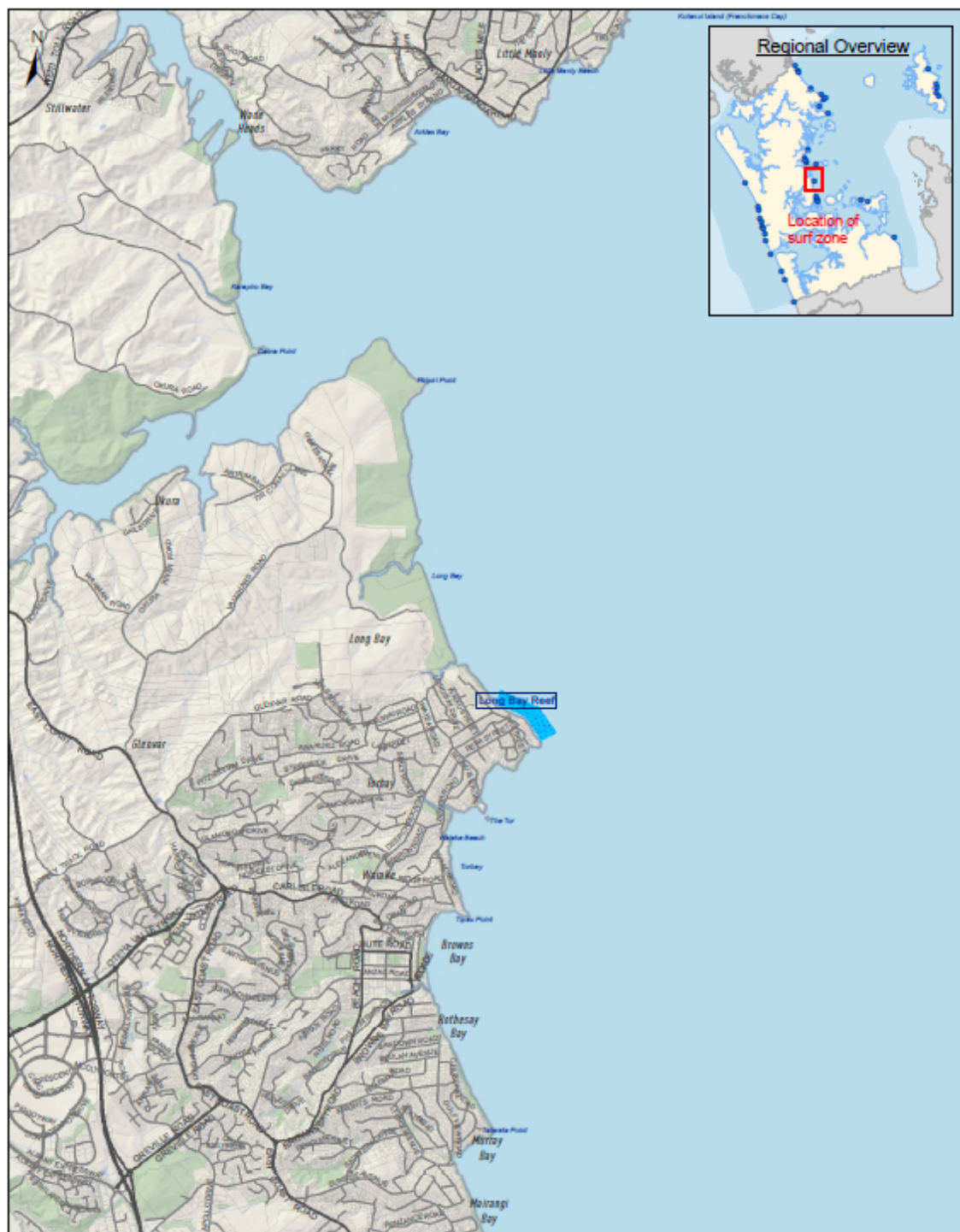
- Approximate area of surf zone
- Property Parcel
- Arterial Road
- Major Road

Tawharanui - Goat Island

Map Produced 4th Dec 2009
by GIS, Information and
Communications Technology
Auckland Regional Council







<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximate area of surf zone Property Parcel Arterial Road Major Road 	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Long Bay</h2>	<p><small>Map Produced 4th Dec 2009 by GIS, Information and Communications Technology Auckland Regional Council</small></p>  <p>Auckland Regional Council <small>TE Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri</small></p>
---	--------------------------------------	---

