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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Report

To Matt Heale
Gore District Council

From Mike Moore

Date 17 February 2023

SUBJECT Gore District Plan Review – Natural Features and Landscapes. Preliminary Assessment

Introduction

This report outlines preliminary assessment work to identify potentially important natural features and landscapes in the Gore District. This work has included review of existing landscape studies relevant to the Southland Region and Gore District, as well as field work to view the landscapes of the district, carried out on 15 and 16 September 2020. It is also responsive to some preliminary feedback from representatives of the Hokonui Runanga.

The report is structured as follows:

- Gore District – landscape overview
- Literature Review summary
- Assessment methodology
- Potentially important natural landscapes and features

Gore District – Landscape Overview

Broadly speaking, Gore District can be divided into the following large scale landscape character areas:

- Northern plains and downlands including the eastern Waimea plain, and downlands and valleys associated with Otama Creek, Waikaka Stream and Pukerau Stream catchments.
- Southland syncline hill country including the Hokonui Hills and the inland Catlins area.
- Southland Pains including the Maitara Valley and the downland country associated with the Hedgehope, Titipua, Waimumu and Charlton Stream catchments.

Two landscape features dominate the landscape of the district and these are the Hokonui Hills, reaching over 600m in height, and the Maitara River which runs through the District and adjacent to the two main urban areas of Gore and Maitara, and which drains most of it.

Most of the district can be described as 'working rural landscape', much of it with high rural amenity values, based to a large extent on coherent natural landforms under pasture cover and open space qualities. Population centres include Gore, Maitara, Pukerau, Mandeville and Waikaka. Main roads include State Highway 1 (running up the Maitara River Valley from the southern boundary to Gore, and continuing eastward via Pukerau), State Highway 93 (traversing the inland Catlins area between Maitara and Clinton, and State Highway 94 (running northwest from Gore up the Waimea Plain).

Literature Review Summary

The following reports of relevance to the landscapes of the Gore District have been reviewed. The key findings of relevance, are as follows:

Southland Regional Landscape Assessment (Boffa Miskell, 1997)

- The Gore District landscapes are discussed as 'working landscapes' generally lacking the qualities of outstanding landscapes, but containing many highly prized landmarks, special features, views, and remnant natural areas of importance.
- The Hokonui Hills are mentioned as having a high profile, probably resulting from visibility from main highways. The Waterfall Range is noted as being of particular importance and recognized by many as being particularly expressive of Southland's syncline, and the remaining natural vegetation areas are also noted as being of importance.

- The Inland Catlins area is discussed for its unique combination of vegetation, landform and sweeping pasture, and skyline features as viewed from the Southland Plains.

Southland / Murihiku Regional Landscape Study (Boffa Miskell, 2019)

- The only area within the Gore District recommended for a landscape overlay at the Regional level, is the Waterfall Range / Hokonui ONF, which also extends into the Southland District. The values of this area are outlined in terms of biophysical, sensory and associative attributes.

Clutha District Landscape Management Recommendations (Moore, 2015)

- This report makes recommendations regarding landscape management in the adjacent Clutha District and is relevant in terms of cross-boundary issues. The North Catlins area (adjacent to the Gore District boundary) is recommended as a 'Significant Natural Landscape'. Values discussed include:
 - The distinctive Southland Syncline landform
 - Significant areas of indigenous vegetation (including native bush and tussock grasslands).

Assessment methodology

The landscape assessment method adopted is as follows:

- Review relevant documents and on-line material to identify natural features or areas considered to be potential candidates for outstanding or significant status. Documents / websites reviewed have included the following:
 - New Zealand Geopreservation Inventory (www.geomarine.org.nz)
 - Geology of the Murihiku Area (Turnbull I M and Allibone A H, 2003)
 - Gore District Plan
 - Southland Regional Landscape Assessment (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 1997)
 - Southland Regional Water Plan
 - Southland / Murihiku Regional Landscape Study (Boffa Miskell, 2019)
 - Te Tangi a Taurira – The Cry of the People. Ngai Tahu ki Murihiku Natural Resource and Environmental Iwi Management Plan, 2008.
 - KāHuru Manu – Ngāi Tahu Atlas (<https://www.kahurumanu.co.nz>)

- Hokonui Runanga website (<https://www.hokonuirunanga.org.nz>)
- Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998
- Southland Murihiku Conservation Management Strategy, Department of Conservation, 2016.
- Field inspection of the district from public roads and other public viewpoints to identify natural features or areas considered to be potential candidates for outstanding or significant status.
- Assess the areas considered potential candidates for outstanding or significant status based on the assessment criteria and rating scale below.

The landscapes of the district have been assessed in accordance with the assessment factors outlined in Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017 (SRPS) Policy LNF.1 (see Appendix A). For consistency with current best practice as discussed in the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Best (NZILA) Practice Note 10.1, the assessment factors are organized in terms of three broad categories as follows:

1. Biophysical attributes

- a. Natural Science factors, including geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components.
- b. The presence of water including in seas, lakes, rivers and streams.
- c. Vegetation, particularly native vegetation.

2. Sensory attributes

- a. Legibility or expressiveness – how obviously the feature or landscape demonstrates its formative processes.
- b. Aesthetic values, including memorability, naturalness and other sensory experiences
- c. Transient values, which specifically includes the occasional presence of wildlife or its values at certain times of the day or of the year.
- d. Wild or scenic values.

3. Associative attributes

- a. Whether the values are shared and recognized
- b. Value to tangata whenua
- c. Historical and heritage association

Each factor is considered and each attribute category is rated on a 7 point scale from Very low – Very high, with ratings also given as a composite overall. A qualitative judgement with reasons, rather than a quantitative approach, is used in these ratings. The rating scale used is as follows:

Very low	Low	Moderate - low	Moderate	Moderate - high	High	Very high
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A natural feature is distinguished from a landscape on the basis that it is a discrete geographical area / element, typically viewed from outside rather than within.

Potentially important landscapes / features

The following landscapes and / or features have been identified for assessment:

- Hokonui / Waterfall Range
- Inland Catlins Strike Ridges
- Landslip Hill
- Mataura Falls
- Mt Wendon Hill Country
- Mataura River

The location and generally identified extent of these landscapes / features is shown on the attached A3 maps.

Hokonui / Waterfall Range



Brief description

This area includes that part of the Hokonui Hills within the boundaries of the Gore District including the Waterfall Range, East Peak / Hokanui, Dolamore Park and Croydon Bush / Haumuri.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		High
Natural Science	Some of New Zealand's most distinctive strike ridges and trellised drainage pattern along the Southland Syncline (Geological Society of New Zealand, 1998).	
The presence of water		
Vegetation	Croydon Bush Scenic Reserve is the only substantial area of native forest remaining near Gore. This supports a range of successional communities that show recovery from fire and logging including kahikatea and matai (Department of Conservation, 2000).	

	- A flora of at least 240 native species has been recorded from Dolamore Park and the adjacent Croydon Bush. The flora also contains several nationally threatened and locally uncommon species (Gore District Council, 2017). - At least 35 indigenous birds breed within the forest remnants, including the koparapara / bellbird, piwakawaka / fantail, pipipi / brown creeper and kereru / New Zealand wood pigeon (Gore District Council, 2017). - Red tussock is found on the summit areas, often with Manuka (Department of Conservation, 2000).	
Sensory		Very High
Legibility / Expressiveness	Very legible part of the broader Southland Syncline	
Aesthetic	- A distinctive and memorable landform with its pattern of repeated pyramidal peaks and ridge forms. - Naturalness varies but is high in areas with indigenous bush cover and naturalistic vegetation patterns. Largely free of structures.	
Transient	Values associated with indigenous birdlife.	
Wild or scenic	The area has naturalness / wilderness qualities as experienced from within, and is a scenic feature of the district.	
Associative		High
Shared and recognised	- This area is a well-recognized and valued feature of the Gore area (often referred to in promotional material), and is already identified as a significant landscape in the Gore District Plan. - The Southland Murihiku Regional Landscape Study (Boffa Miskell, 2019) identifies this area as an ONF. - Croydon Bush / Haumuri is managed as a Scenic Reserve and used predominantly by the Gore population for recreation including walking and tramping and the Hokonui mountain bike track through Dolamore Park.	
Value to tangata whenua	- The area has important Ngai Tahu associations including traditions associating the taniwha Matamata with the creation and distinctive profiles of the hills, as well as the Otamatea Stream being linked to the Takitimu tradition (Boffa Miskell 2019) - Mānuka (Charlton Stream) and Waimumu Stream are important waterways for Ngai Tahu, as are the peaks of	

	Hokanui (East Peak) and Whakaoma (Ship Cone) as well as Haumuri (Croydons Bush) (Boffa Miskell, 2019). • A number of Maori Reserves, including the Waimumu blocks are nearby.	
Historical / heritage association	• The Croydon area was the site of one of the earliest European settlements in inland Southland. One of the first of these was Run 116, Hokonui Station; which later became Croydon Bush Scenic Reserve (Gore District Council, 2017).	
Overall value		Very high

Preliminary recommendation

The Hokonui / Waterfall Range has high – very high attribute ratings across the board and is well established as a significant landscape / feature. It is my assessment that it qualifies as an outstanding natural landscape at district level.

Inland Catlins Strike Ridges



Brief description

The features identified as Inland Catlins Strike Ridges are distinctive lineal hill forms, visually prominent from State Highway 93 in the Otarua area, which rise up to approx. 200m above the surrounding land. These hills are comprised of harder sandstone, exposed when softer mudstone layers have eroded. The land is farmed and the hills are largely pasture covered, with some scrub on steeper rocky areas, making the landforms highly legible.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		Moderate - high
Natural Science	These hill forms are a visually distinctive example of strike ridges – a typical landform of the Southland Syncline. They are not however, identified in the New Zealand Geopreservation Inventory.	
The presence of water		
Vegetation	Largely exotic pasture cover with some remnant native scrub	
Sensory		High

Legibility / Expressiveness	The key feature of these hills is their highly legible expression of the Southland Syncline – i.e. strike ridges composed of harder rock remaining after softer rocks surrounding have eroded.	
Aesthetic	These hill forms are distinctive and memorable. Their natural contours are highly legible under mainly pasture cover. Naturalness is however, reduced by modification to the natural vegetation cover associated with rural land use.	
Transient		
Wild or scenic	There are scenic values associated with these distinctive hill forms.	
Associative		Low
Shared and recognised	These hill features have no formal recognition in Statutory documents	
Value to tangata whenua	None known	
Historical / heritage association	The history of the area is mainly associated with farm development from @1875 when the larger runs were subdivided. There is also some illicit whiskey distilling history (TrustPower, 2007).	
Overall value		Moderate - high

Preliminary recommendation

At this stage, and subject to further cultural landscape assessment advice, the main landscape values associated with these ridge features are aesthetic – relating to their visually interesting form and expressiveness of the Southland Syncline. Their visual prominence from State Highway 93 adds some significance. Overall, their values are not assessed as outstanding, but they could be considered for a Section 7 landscape / feature category.

Landslip Hill



Brief description

Landslip Hill is a large debris flow feature within the Pukerau Stream catchment and to the east of Landslip Valley Road.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		High
Natural Science	- Landslip Hill landslide and mid tertiary plant beds is listed in the New Zealand Geopreservation Inventory. - The feature is described as 'unusual sedimentary environment of plant beds, well preserved in silcrete, and an excellent example of a landslide. Outstanding preservation of Late Oligocene to Early Miocene diverse fossil flora of leaves and cones in silcrete. National scientific, aesthetic or educational importance	
The presence of water		
Vegetation	The land is farmed and the vegetation cover is largely pasture with some scrub. There are no shelter of plantation trees – making the landform highly legible.	

Sensory		Moderate - high
Legibility / Expressiveness	The slump feature is highly legible beneath its predominantly pasture cover	
Aesthetic	- The feature has at least moderate – high memorability for its distinctive slump / cater like landform - Naturalness is moderate – given the rural land use	
Transient		
Wild or scenic	There are no particular scenic values of significance	
Associative		Low
Shared and recognised	This feature currently has no recognition in the Gore District Plan. Although the immediate area is named for the feature, public awareness of it generally appears to be low.	
Value to tangata whenua	None known	
Historical / heritage association	None known	
Overall value		Moderate - high

Preliminary recommendation

This is a legible landscape feature of national scientific importance. Its outstanding values are scientific rather than landscape values more generally. It is my assessment that it be considered for a Section 7 landscape / feature category.

Mataura Falls / Te Au nui pihpiha kanakana



Brief description

The Mataura Falls are a natural feature of the Mataura River located adjacent to the town of Mataura, just north of the State Highway 93 bridge. The falls are natural insofar as they are the result of natural geological and hydrological processes, however, they have been much modified by human activity and their setting is now industrial. They are considered here, mainly for their cultural significance.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		Moderate
Natural Science	- The falls are the result of the Mataura River flowing over a bed of resistant sandstone. Their natural form is now much modified due to blasting. - The falls are traditionally renowned for their abundance of kanakana (Lamprey) and are within a mataitai reserve (Kā Hura Manu)	
The presence of water	The falls are a hydrological feature, with natural processes still operating in a modified context.	

Vegetation	The river margins are highly modified with no indigenous vegetation character remaining.	
Sensory		Moderate
Legibility / Expressiveness	The falls still express natural hydrological processes but these are obviously modified by the weirs and water races upstream.	
Aesthetic	The falls have an austere memorability based on the juxtaposition of powerful natural hydrological processes with grim industrial buildings. There are naturalness qualities associated with the river flow but the natural river forms are now much modified and the setting is highly modified.	
Transient	There are transient values associated with the various flow regimes of the river i.e. different moods.	
Wild or scenic	The river in this area retains some wildness values associated with its powerful flow in a constrained channel. Scenic values are low due to the industrial setting.	
Associative		Very high
Shared and recognised	Public accessibility to the falls is limited to more distant downstream viewpoints and generally recognized value is fairly low (e.g. not particularly highlighted in tourist promotional material, or recognized in statutory documents).	
Value to tangata whenua	- The Maitake River generally, has high spiritual significance to Kai Tahu, Ngati Mamoe and Waitaha to do with associations with an ancestor Ngatoro-i-rangi, tohunga of the Arawa waka. The river was also the site of various battles, a highway, meeting place and mahinga kai. (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and DoC – site information boards). - There is a Statutory Acknowledgement for the Maitake River. - Te Au Nui (Maitake Falls) is a nohoaka (special food gathering site) associated with the taking of kanakana (Lamprey) (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and DoC – site information boards). - Paroparo Te Whenua (a Kati Mamoe tupuna) is credited with the discovery of kanakana in the Maitake.	
Historical / heritage association	The falls were once a spectacular tourist attraction for early European settlers prior to blasting to minimize spray for a pedestrian bridge and works associated with hydro-	

	electricity schemes for industrial uses (paper mill and freezing works) on the adjacent banks. (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and DoC – site information boards).	
Overall Value		High

Preliminary recommendation

The degree of modification of this feature along with the highly modified character of its setting, would usually preclude ONF status. In this case however, due to the value to tangata whenua significance, it potentially has high enough associative values to warrant such a designation, or a lesser Significant Natural Feature status. Preliminary consultation with Hokonui Runanga suggests that ONF status is appropriate.

Mt Wendon Hill Country



Brief description

The area identified comprises Mt Wendon (844m) and associated higher hill country to the north and south, within the Gore District. The land is extensively farmed and contains some areas of indigenous forest and shrubland.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		Moderate - high
Natural Science	There are no recognized natural science values of significance, however, The hill country represents the southern end of the Waipounamu Erosion surface (a continuation of the Black Umbrella Range), and the steep western slopes express a fault scarp.	
The presence of water		
Vegetation	There are corridors of indigenous forest and shrubland in the gullies.	
Sensory		Moderate - high

Legibility / Expressiveness	The hills, with their pattern of bush in the gullies and grassland on the tops and spurs, have a legible natural landform that expresses the Waipounamu Erosion surface and fault scarp.	
Aesthetic	The area has moderate – high naturalness qualities associated with legible natural landforms, presence of indigenous vegetation and minimal built elements. It is not particularly memorable but has rural amenity values and is visually prominent from surrounding areas.	
Transient		
Wild or scenic	The area is not particularly wild, but has a degree of natural character and associated scenic values.	
Associative		Low
Shared and recognised	No particular significance	
Value to tangata whenua	None known	
Historical / heritage association	None known	
Overall Value		Moderate - high

Preliminary recommendation

If supported by the local populace, this area is a candidate for a Section 7 significant / amenity landscape at the district level, on the basis that it is visually prominent and has some natural character values.

Mataura River



Brief description

The area identified for assessment includes the entire main stem of the Mataura River within the Gore District, including the river margins. These are defined as including the active river flood plan to the top of the defining terraces.

Values Assessment

Landscape Attributes	Evaluation	Rating
Biophysical		Moderate - high
Natural Science	The Mataura River has been designated an 'important bird area' by Birdlife International because it supports breeding colonies of endangered Black Billed Gulls (en.wikipedia.org)	
The presence of water	The river is a major natural hydrological feature, responsible for the creation of many of the adjacent landforms and subject to powerful natural processes.	
Vegetation	The natural character of the river margins are now generally highly modified by farming, and the presence of exotic tree, scrub and grass species.	
Sensory		Moderate - high

Legibility / Expressiveness	The river corridor morphology strongly expresses the natural fluvial processes in features such as gravel beds and channels, river terraces and meander loops. In some areas the margins are modified by flood protection stop banks.	
Aesthetic	- Perceptual natural character remains due to the flowing water and river landforms but has been significantly modified by agricultural land use on the floodplain. Indigenous vegetation presence is minimal. - The river is a memorable natural feature for its scale and power but memorability is reduced by its modified natural character.	
Transient	There are transient values associated with various flow regimes, and the presence of bird and fish life.	
Wild or scenic	The river has wildness qualities due to its scale and power but these, and its scenic values are modified by the exotic character of the vegetation along its margins and by the presence of urban development in the vicinity of the towns of Gore and Mataura.	
Associative		High
Shared and recognised	- The Gore District Plan discusses the river as an ONF - The river is covered by a Water Conservation Order (1997). Outstanding values relate to fisheries and angling amenity. The river is famous for its Brown Trout fishery.	
Value to tangata whenua	- The Mataura River generally, has high spiritual significance to Kai Tahu, Ngati Mamoe and Waitaha to do with associations with an ancestor Ngatoro-i-rangi, tohunga of the Arawa waka. The river was also the site of various battles, a highway (to Central Otago), meeting place and mahinga kai. (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and DoC – site information boards). - There is a Statutory Acknowledgement for the Mataura River. - The mauri of the Mataura represents the essence that binds the physical and spiritual elements of all things together. Mauri is a critical element of the spiritual relationship of Ngāi Tahu Whānui with the river (Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998).	

Historical / heritage association	The river breached in 1984, causing significant flooding	
Overall Value		Moderate - high

Preliminary recommendation

The Mataura River is clearly a significant natural feature of the District, with high associative landscape values. Its biophysical and sensory values have been reduced by land use modifications on its flood plain but it remains a candidate for ONF or SNF status at the district level. The natural character of the river and its margins is required to be protected under RMA Section 6(a), which may be the most appropriate primary context for its management.

Mike Moore

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Appendix A: Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017 (SRPS) Policy LNF.1

Policy LNF.1 – Identify and assess outstanding natural features and landscapes

To identify and assess Southland's outstanding natural features and landscapes using, but not limited to, the following regional factors:

- (a) natural science factors, which specifically includes the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape;
- (b) aesthetic values, including memorability and naturalness;
- (c) expressiveness (legibility), which is how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes which helped to create it;
- (d) transient values, which specifically includes the occasional presence of wildlife or its values at certain times of the day or of the year;
- (e) whether the values are shared and recognised;
- (f) value to tangata whenua;
- (g) historical and heritage association;
- (h) the presence of water including in seas, lakes, rivers and streams;
- (i) vegetation, particularly native vegetation; and
- (j) wild or scenic values.

Explanation/Principal Reasons

Policy LNF.1 seeks to achieve a consistent process for the identification and assessment of outstanding natural features and landscapes across the region, including in the coastal environment. Whether a natural feature or landscape is considered 'outstanding' depends on its degree of naturalness and if it is conspicuous, eminent or remarkable. The factors listed in Policy LNF.1 should be used in the assessment of natural features and landscapes to identify the values associated with Southland's outstanding natural features and landscapes. Collaboration with tangata whenua will be particularly important to assist local authorities in identifying tangata whenua values associated with outstanding natural features and landscapes. Assessing the natural features and landscapes of the coastal environment should be done by land typing, soil characterisation and landscape characterisation and having regard to the factors listed in Policy LNF.1. This process, undertaken by local authorities, will enable the consistent identification and preparation of appropriate methods for sustainable management and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.