

Natural Character of the Marlborough Coast

DEFINING AND MAPPING THE MARLBOROUGH COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

June 2014



MARLBOROUGH
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research



Prepared for Marlborough District Council (MDC)

June 2014

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Acknowledgements are contained within Appendix 1

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A typical bay found within the Inner Sounds, sheltered, often secluded and difficult to access by road. Native bush predominates, although, exotic introductions such as eucalyptus and pines provide a distinctive 'character' change to the landscape.



Lower slopes (foreground) of Weld Cone, located along the limestone coast south of Cape Campbell.

Front Cover: The striking blue waters of Tennyson Inlet are largely enclosed by forest-clad peninsulas extending out from the inland mountain ranges.

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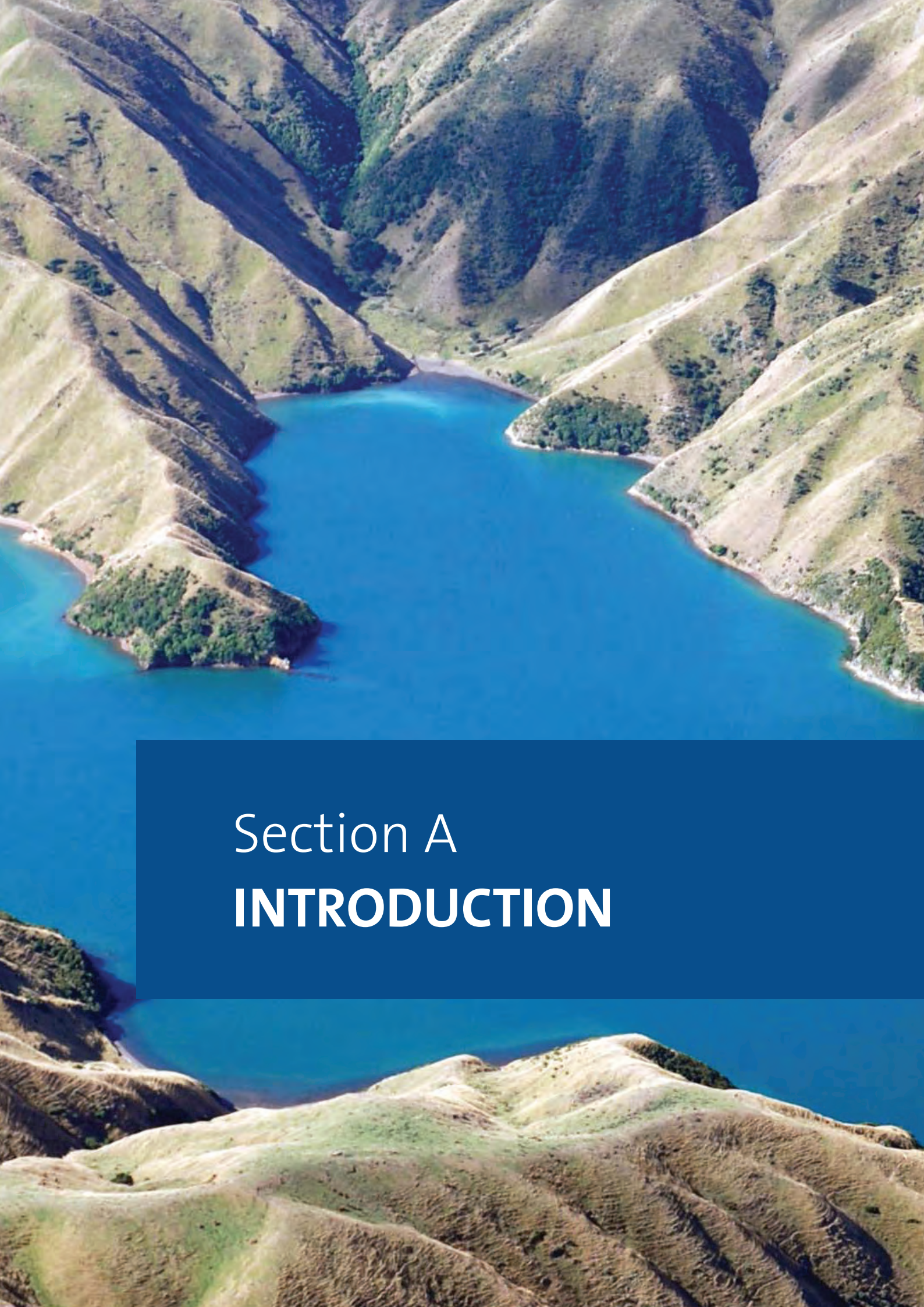


Mussel farms at Karaka Bay, Port Underwood.



Bull kelp, Durvillea antarctica at the shores of North Brother Island.





Section A
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Marlborough District Council (MDC) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) engaged Boffa Miskell Ltd (Boffa Miskell) and Lucas Associates to review and update its information about the natural character of the Marlborough coastal environment in light of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS). This report contains the results of the study, which MDC will use in its review and policy development of its resource management documents, including the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement (MRPS), the Marlborough Sounds Resource Management Plan (MSRMP) and the Wairau Awatere Resource Management Plan (WARMP)

Background

When the NZCPS was released in December 2010, local authorities were tasked under Policy 13 to map or otherwise identify (at least) areas of high natural character in the coastal environment. The NZCPS also introduced the new term, 'outstanding natural character'. Local authorities had, at the time, no guidance on how to undertake the necessary natural character assessments. It was, therefore, necessary to develop a methodology for coastal natural character assessments and interpretation of NZCPS terms as part of this study. Since then, some guidance has emerged from the Department of Conservation (Natural Character and the NZCPS 2012).

Assessing natural character is not new and the methodology developed draws on the considerable experience gained from evaluating coastal landscapes over the past 20 years and on case law. As MDC is one of the first regional councils to undertake an assessment of its coastline under the NZCPS 2010, it is possible that the methodology will be further refined through ongoing peer review processes, workshops and eventually through case law.

Study Focus

The study team aimed to develop a consistent assessment approach (refer to Section B, Study Approach) that incorporates both landscape and ecological expertise in developing a method for:



The front covers of 'Natural Character and The NZCPS' (2010), left; 'Draft Coastal Natural Character Report' (2011), centre, which precedes and informs the findings of this report; and 'Ecologically Significant Marine Sites in Marlborough' (2011), right;

- determining an inland extent for the Coastal Environment, which relates to Policy 1 of the NZCPS (Extent and characteristics of the coastal environment), and
- addressing Policy 13 of the NZCPS, which concerns and is entitled the 'Preservation of natural character'.

These are two different topics under the NZCPS but are closely aligned under Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).

The potential for restoration of natural character in Marlborough (Policy 14 of the NZCPS) is also briefly summarised in Appendix 4. This study does not address Policy 11 (indigenous biological diversity) nor Policy 15 (natural features and natural landscapes).

Study Process

The study has been undertaken as an independent technical assessment by Boffa Miskell with input from Lucas Associates, Landcare Research, MDC and DOC.

The initial methodology was developed and applied in the Boffa Miskell Draft Coastal Natural Character Report, September 2011.

A workshop, organised by DOC, was held soon after, in late September 2011, to 'test' the methodology via peer-reviewing and to assist DOC in producing guidance notes on policies 1, 13 and 14 of the NZCPS 2010. (This was the second of two DOC-run workshops held in 2011 to look at providing greater guidance over these three NZCPS policies.)

The September 2011 workshop, hosted at MDC by Pere Hawes, was attended by DOC personnel, including planner Sarah McRae, marine ecologist Andrew Baxter; by landscape practitioners including Di Lucas (Lucas Associates), James Bentley and Boyden Evans (Boffa Miskell); and, Victoria Froude (Pacific Eco-Logic). Participants discussed the methodology, including terminology, natural character attributes and alternative methodologies to implement NZCPS Policy 13. Natural character provisions and associated descriptive material already in the MSRMP and WARMF were also examined, including the 'systems framework' set out in Chapter 2 of the MSRMP, where the natural character of the whole (i.e. the Marlborough Sounds) is preserved by caring for the individual parts that comprise it.

It was agreed that a combination of the existing 'systems framework' and the evaluation methodology developed by Boffa Miskell would be an effective way to implement NZCPS Policy 13. In combination, these approaches would enable the component parts that make up Marlborough's coasts 'whole' to be described, and those areas considered to be 'outstanding natural character' identified.

The study team has subsequently held numerous meetings and discussions to further develop the methodology and discussed the direction contained in Policy 1 (Coastal Environment) and Policy 13 (Natural Character) of the NZCPS.

The methodology outlined in this document has therefore been developed through an iterative process involving a range of professional environmental and planning practitioners.

It has also been developed and applied in tandem with other regional and district coastal environment studies, which have been peer reviewed by other landscape architects, resulting in further amendments to the methodology to reflect agreed outcomes.

Another part of this study was to update, complete and interpret, in relation to Policy 13 the biophysical data describing the individual land and marine natural character management areas already in the MSRMP and equivalent information about the South Marlborough coast. This work was carried out by DOC,

Landcare Research and Lucas Associates – substantially the same team that originally produced this systems framework in 1997 in relation to the Marlborough Sounds. Additional work was required to ensure that all aspects of Policy 13 are covered, including experiential attributes, which was added by Boffa Miskell and Lucas Associates.

The study team has a high level of familiarity with the Marlborough coastal environment. While no specific or new sites visits were undertaken as part of this present study, recent other work including the Ecologically Significant Marine Sites in Marlborough study (2011) and the Marlborough Landscape Study (2009) greatly informed the process.

The mapping of the coastal environment was predominantly undertaken at a local scale of 1:50,000. The mapping was assisted through the Land System (or land typing) exercise provided by Landcare Research as well as the terrestrial, freshwater and marine biotic data from DOC. This is a nested hierarchy approach, which can be applied from broad to detailed scales. It is acknowledged that the information provided for this study will range in detail and mapping scale. The question of scale is outlined further within this section

The methodology applied in carrying out this study is explained in Section B, Study Approach.



DOC NZCPS guidance material on Policies 1 and 13
Previous spread: East Arm, D'Urville Island.

