

### **Submission point 1 continued**

Although conservation park status means that the land is less vulnerable to being disposed of by the Department than the current stewardship area status, national park status would provide a far higher level of protection against destructive activities (e.g. logging).

There is no doubt that the Aotea public lands meet the criteria for protection as a National Park. These lands contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems, or natural features so beautiful, unique or scientifically important that their preservation is in the national interest. These values are largely articulated in the Revised Draft Auckland Conservation Management Strategy 2013 (pp 63/64) as follows:

In the Island's centre, spectacular bluffs and ridges rise to the highest peak, Mt Hobson (Hirakimata) (627 m). The coastline is relatively undeveloped. Coastal features of note include the tidal inlet, estuary and dune systems of Whangapoua, Awana and Kaitoke, the spectacular drowned valley system of Port Fitzroy; and the sea cliffs of the northwest and southwest coasts of the Island.

Along with Rakitu and other small islands and groups of rocks along its coast, Aotea forms a separate ecological district. The island is well known for its extensive indigenous habitats of outstanding significance, including kauri forests, shrubland associated with rhyolitic rocks and areas of pohutukawa-dominated forest.

Threatened fauna on Aotea include:

- Thirteen species of lizard, including niho taniwha/chevron skink (*Oligosoma homalonotum*), which is found only on Aotea and Hauturu/Little Barrier Island;
- Taiko/black petrel (*Procellaria parkinsonii*), which nest principally on Hirakimata and other high points on Aotea as well as on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island;
- Titi/Cook's petrel (*Pterodroma cookii*), which breeds only on Aotea, Hauturu/Little Barrier and Codfish Islands;
- Stronghold populations of North Island kaka (*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*) and mohopereru/banded rail (*Rallus phillipensis assimilis*);
- The only island population of pepeketua/Hochstetter's frog (*Leiopelma hochstetteri*).

At least 75 taxa of regionally and nationally threatened vascular plants, including the endemic prostrate kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides* var. *microflora*) and Great Barrier tree daisy (*Olearia allomii*) are present on Aotea, making it one of the richest areas for plant biodiversity in the DOC Auckland Region.

Aotea contains the largest area of forest in New Zealand that is known to be possum-free. Mustelids, Norway rats and hedgehogs are also absent.

### **Additional points:**

#### **Distinctiveness & representative nature**

Aotea is home to other rare and unique biodiversity including an endemic terrestrial paua slug (*Schizoglossa novoseelandica barrierensis*) which occupies a habitat confined to the forest around Needle Rock in the Tryphena Scenic Reserve.

The area around Hirakimata is part of an Important Bird Area (IBA) for seabirds (see attached map) which means that it is recognised as internationally important for bird conservation and known to support key bird taxa. [Please note that the final documents for NZ Seabird IBAs will be available by the end of February.]

The island is also the world's major stronghold for pateke/brown teal (*Anas aucklandica chlorotis*).

The representativeness and range of vegetation types and ecosystems on Aotea is not found on other northern Islands (e.g. Kaitoke freshwater swamp and Okiwi mangrove swamp). The yellow silver pine-kauri association on the summit of Hirakimata is unique to this site which makes it nationally and internationally very important scientifically. This association also includes *Metrosideros parkinsonii* which is found only on Aotea and in the Nelson area.

Aotea's rare and unique biodiversity could be enhanced and restored comparatively easily by means of appropriate reintroductions together with appropriate weed and pest animal control.

### Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

Aotea is an integral part of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park (HGMP) which is recognised as New Zealand's first national park of the sea that was created to recognise and protect the unique features and environments of the Gulf. It is appropriate that the conservation lands that make up over 60% of the largest Island within the marine park boundary should be accorded the equivalent.

Section 7 of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 states:

"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."

Also, Section 8(b) of the Act requires "the protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the natural, historic and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands and catchments."

All of the land covered by the Act is therefore recognised in legislation as being of national significance. All of the conservation land on Aotea is covered by the HGMP Act, so the reclassification of that land should reflect this underlying national significance. That would be best done by making it a national park rather than a conservation park.

### National Park network

An Aotea National Park would be a great opportunity to give northern New Zealand representation in the national park network (particularly at a time when national park status is being removed from Te Urewera National Park) while at the same time including accessible coastal ecosystems. It would also provide representation of kauri forest which is currently lacking in the national park system.

Also, it would join Abel Tasman and Rakioura National Park as New Zealand's third national park to have easily accessible coastal features. While Fiordland National Park has the greatest amount of coastline in any national park, very little of it is easily accessible to the public.

Aotea is an area of great cultural, historical, spiritual, ecological and economic significance to the people of Auckland. An Aotea National Park would provide a national park close to the country's biggest population centre.

National park status is recognised around the world and has many diverse formulations. Aotea will gain an added enhanced reputation with this status, especially with overseas visitors. This in turn will give the island a better chance for a more all-year-round economy.

For all of those reasons, we strongly advocate for the Department to commence discussions with the New Zealand Conservation Authority on a proposal to create an Aotea National Park.

**Submission point 2 continued**

Other significant natural areas which should be included in an Aotea National Park include:

- The Harataonga and Okiwi Recreation Reserves which do not have a status matching their conservation values;
- The Harataonga and Tryphena Scenic Reserves should be included in any 'Park' concept due to their important values and location;
- Rakitu/Arid and Kaikoura Islands Scenic Reserves have great restoration potential especially for wildlife values;
- The Wairahi Forest Sanctuary and Hirakimata-Kaitoke Ecological Area have a stronger cultural and legislative status than a conservation park;
- Claris Recreation Reserve, which needs an assessment of its ecological values.