

# 1 WAIROA DISTRICT PROFILE

## 1.1 GENERAL

- 1.1.1 The Wairoa District is located in northern Hawke's Bay and extends north from the Waikare River to its boundary with Gisborne District beyond Mahia Peninsula, and contains the Mohaka River Catchment, Lake Waikaremoana and much of Te Urewera National Park.
- 1.1.2 The District has a total area of about 4,118 square kilometres, including approximately 130km of coastline. It lies within the Hawke's Bay Region and is bordered by Taupo District to the west, Whakatane District to the north-west, Gisborne District to the north, and Hastings District to the south.

## 1.2 POPULATION AND SETTLEMENT

- 1.2.1 The (usually resident) population of the Wairoa District in 1996 was 9,900. The District population has declined since 1971. Between 1991 and 1996, the population has declined by 2.2% (compared to the population growth for New Zealand as a whole, of 7.2%).
- 1.2.2 At the 1996 Census:
- 14.2% of the people in the Wairoa District were aged over 60 compared to the national average of 15.4%.
  - The proportion of preschool-age children living in the Wairoa District was 9.8% compared with 7.7% for all of New Zealand.
  - 57.8% of the population considered themselves to belong to the Maori ethnic group compared with all of New Zealand at 15.1%. This has increased significantly since 1991 when 45% of the District's population considered themselves to be Maori.
- 1.2.3 Wairoa is the main settlement. It functions primarily as a servicing, administrative and educational centre for the district. A number of small settlements serve the rural population.

## 1.3 TANGATA WHENUA LANDSCAPE

- 1.3.1 The Wairoa District is the cherished ancestral homeland of the District's tangata whenua. Through their long association with the District the tangata whenua have developed special relationships with their ancestral landscape – the hills and mountains, lakes, rivers, streams, springs, wetlands, coasts, bush, and special places. The landscape and these relationships are extremely important to the identity, culture and traditions of the tangata whenua.

## 1.4 COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

- 1.4.1 The quality of life enjoyed by people in Wairoa is dependent on a variety of factors such as:
- Good living accommodation,
  - Good infrastructure services (potable water, the safe disposal of household sewage and wastes, electricity reticulation),
  - Ability to earn an income through full or part-time employment,

- Access to community services (marae, schools, hospitals) and facilities (landfills, roads),
- Opportunity to participate in formal and informal recreation (reserves, recreational facilities, sports fields), and
- The presence of supportive networks in the community.

1.4.2 Many of these issues cannot be addressed through the District Plan.

## **1.5 ECONOMY**

- 1.5.1 The economy of the District is based on the rural sector. Approximately 60% of the total land is in productive use, of which some 48% is in pasture.
- 1.5.2 Pastoral farming has been the basis of the economy since the first European settlement. Forestry is of growing importance and there is the potential for the further development of horticulture and cropping.
- 1.5.3 The pattern of rural land use has changed significantly since the 1980's largely due to changes in government policies aimed at reform of many sectors of the New Zealand economy. There are now fewer beef and dairy cattle, pigs and sheep. There has been a substantial increase in plantation forestry.
- 1.5.4 Recent petroleum exploration has resulted in findings of natural gas in the northern Wairoa area, and may also result in findings elsewhere. Further exploration is taking place to appraise the nature and extent of the resource. The discoveries offer potential to distribute natural gas regionally and to link with national networks, to provide reticulation to Wairoa environs, and for other forms of energy development.
- 1.5.5 Hydrocarbon resources provide potential to assist diversification of the District's economic base, particularly if end uses of the resource are developed locally or regionally.
- 1.5.6 Mineral exploration has been an activity in the district for many years. While the concept of sustainability does not apply to minerals, the sustainability of land use activities associated with mineral exploration and extraction does.
- 1.5.7 A Council publication, "Wairoa 1998. A Profile of Wairoa District. Social, Economic, Environmental" provides a comprehensive guide to the community that is known as Wairoa District.

## **1.6 PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 1.6.1 Infrastructure services are essential to the functioning of communities and important to the well-being of people within Wairoa District.
- 1.6.2 The District is served by road and rail networks, telecommunication and power generation, transmission and reticulation networks. These all comprise physical resources of value to the District.
- 1.6.3 A natural gas pipeline from Wairoa to link national distribution networks will also be a significant physical resource. Existing hydro-power generation facilities make a significant contribution to the national reticulation system and provide for the District's electricity needs.

- 1.6.4 Most settlements in the District do not have reticulated water supply or a sewerage system. There are only two settlements, which have all the standard services provided and they are the Wairoa Township and Tuai. Frasertown and Mahanga have reticulated water supply.
- 1.6.5 New public toilet facilities are provided now in Wairoa Township, Mahanga, Tuai and Nuhaka. There is also the new community centre in Wairoa. Various waste transfer stations have been identified throughout the District, with extensions to the landfill in Wairoa anticipated in the near future.

## **ROADING**

- 1.6.6 The District's roading network and State Highway system in particular, is an essential physical resource to the every day functioning of people and communities. It contributes significantly to social and cultural needs, access, communication and the economic well-being of the District. In addition, the roading network provides access to widely scattered rural communities, farming and other rural industries, which form the basis of the District Economy.
- 1.6.7 Ease of access to settlements and their rural environs influences how people use land. Heavy vehicle traffic occurs throughout the district but is concentrated along State Highways 2 and 38. In some areas, the roads have not been designed, built, and maintained to carry the volumes of traffic that will be using them in the future. This expected increase in traffic is likely to come from the forestry sector and the harvesting of the timber resource in the district.
- 1.6.8 The high costs of road maintenance means that all roads cannot be maintained to standards that the community may wish. It is important however that roads are maintained and where possible, upgraded in a timely manner to meet the reasonably foreseeable demands to be placed on them.
- 1.6.9 A roading hierarchy for the District is intended to manage and ensure the safe and efficient function of the roading network to meet the economic and community welfare aspirations of the district.

## **1.7 NATURAL RESOURCES**

- 1.7.1 The majority of the region is hill country, merging with mountains in the west and often deeply dissected with gorges. Areas of coastal and river flats of versatile soils give greater variety to the landscape. The Mahia Peninsula is a prominent landform on the coast. The north-western part of the district includes Lake Waikaremoana, surrounded by Te Urewera National Park.
- 1.7.2 Te Urewera National Park is the largest natural feature in the district. However, there are numerous other natural areas of significance comprising native bush, habitat and natural waterways. Whilst Wairoa District is fortunate to have a relatively large amount of conservation estate within its boundaries, the historic loss of areas of indigenous vegetation and habitats (and consequently, biodiversity) is an issue.
- 1.7.3 The District also contains numerous lakes, rivers and wetlands. A number of these are of local, regional and national importance. These include the Mohaka and Wairoa Rivers and stretching along the coast from the Wairoa River to the Nuhaka River, a series of interconnected wetlands, the largest of which is Lake Whakaki. Within the District, there are high quality trout fisheries, and coastal lagoons that are important for providing waterfowl habitat and game bird hunting opportunities.

## LANDFORMS AND GEOLOGY

- 1.7.4 The landforms of the district fall into five recognisable categories:
- (a) **The Western Hill Country** *The Huiarau, Panekiri, and Ngamoko Ranges are part of the main axial ranges of the North Island and, in many places, are over 1200 metres high. The western hill country is more rugged and more prone to erosion than the eastern hill country.*
  - (b) **The Eastern Hill Country** *These hills seldom rise to more than 600 metres, but the land contrasts sharply with that of the lowlands and river valleys. The hills are formed predominantly of sedimentary rocks.*
  - (c) **The Lowlands** *Land less than 30 metres above sea level is confined to the lower part of the Wairoa River valley, coastal plains to the east of Wairoa, and the Mahia Peninsula. Much of this land has drainage problems and is liable to flood, yet its natural fertility is high.*
  - (d) **The Mahia Peninsula** *The Mahia Peninsula forms the eastern-most part of the district. It is a significant landscape/amenity resource and provides an important recreational resource for the region.*
  - (e) **Coastal Wetlands** *The coastal wetlands between Wairoa and Mahia are of national significance in providing refuge for wildlife and habitat for the area's freshwater fishery, and in terms of scientific and ecological value.*

## SOILS

- 1.7.5 The District comprises an underlying layer of greywacke and argillite rocks, covered by a thick layer of younger sedimentary rock. Problems arise from the softness of the rocks, causing erosion and foundation difficulties for structures. The region is tectonically active and earthquakes are relatively common.
- 1.7.6 The steep land soils are the most extensive group of soils in the district. They are mostly found on steep slopes where they are relatively unstable and periodically erode. Some of the soils are shallow with hard rock a few centimetres below the surface. Others are deep with silt loam or sandy loam textures overlaying soft or fragmented rock at depths of one metre or more. The natural fertility ranges from very high to low depending on the nature of the underlying rocks and the indigenous vegetation under which they were formed.
- 1.7.7 The coastal flats north of Wairoa and the Wairoa River valley contains soils of high natural fertility and versatility. The more fertile lowland and river terrace soils have the potential for a range of intensive productive uses, but is limited in area. The versatility of these soils for present and future uses derives from its flatness, its generally good to moderate soil quality and its proximity to settlements and/or transport routes.

## GRAVEL EXTRACTION

- 1.7.8 Gravel suitable for roading and construction is a natural resource in the district. The coastal environment and rivers, particularly the Mohaka, are the principal sources. Gravel extraction may be acceptable provided that the activity can be managed to minimise adverse effects on the environment, including effects on the values held by the tangata whenua associated with the locality.

## 1.8 HERITAGE RESOURCES

- 1.8.1 Within the District, there are some important historic buildings, sites, waahi tapu and notable trees. All these have special heritage value to the Wairoa community and require protection.