

# SECTION E: OUTSTANDING COASTAL NATURAL CHARACTER

## Introduction to Outstanding Coastal Natural Character

As outlined within Section B, under Policy 13 of the NZCPS 2010 there is a requirement that an evaluation is made as to whether the natural character in the existing coastal environment is at least high (in order to then be able to determine whether Policy 13(1)(a) or 13(1)(b) is triggered).

Following on from the evaluative work undertaken within Sections C and D of this report, a further level of assessment was undertaken to determine which parts of the Waikato Coastal Environment would reach the high threshold of Outstanding Natural Character. This is outlined within the NZCPS Policy 13 (1)(a) *'avoid adverse effects of activities on natural character in areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character'*.

It was determined by the study team that outstanding natural character should be assessed separately, re-assessing the High and Very High's at the most detailed scale (i.e. Level 4). It should combine, where possible, both terrestrial and marine components. This is described further within Section A of this report. Combining both terrestrial and marine components means that where sequences of ecological naturalness are considered important in a regional context (such as from the top of a ridge above ground to the bottom of the adjacent sea), these aspects are captured. Also, Outstanding Natural Character (referred to as ONC areas below), by its very term determines the highest rated area, including systems that interconnect with each other.

As outlined, all areas hold high or very high natural character abiotic, biotic or experiential attributes. Map 34 provides an overview of all ONC's for the East Coast of Waikato and Map 43 outlines an overview of all ONC's for the West Coast of Waikato, with each 'area' being specifically mapped and values articulated at 1:10,000 scale (i.e. the most detailed scale of mapping at Level 4).

Outstanding Natural Character was only considered at the most detailed scale (i.e. Level 4). Mapping ONC areas at this scale provides the council with greater certainty as to where these 'most highest rated' areas are located, as opposed to mapping ONC at the Level 3 'Area' scale, where greater levels of modification can be apparent.



Under the methodology an area of outstanding natural character must be:

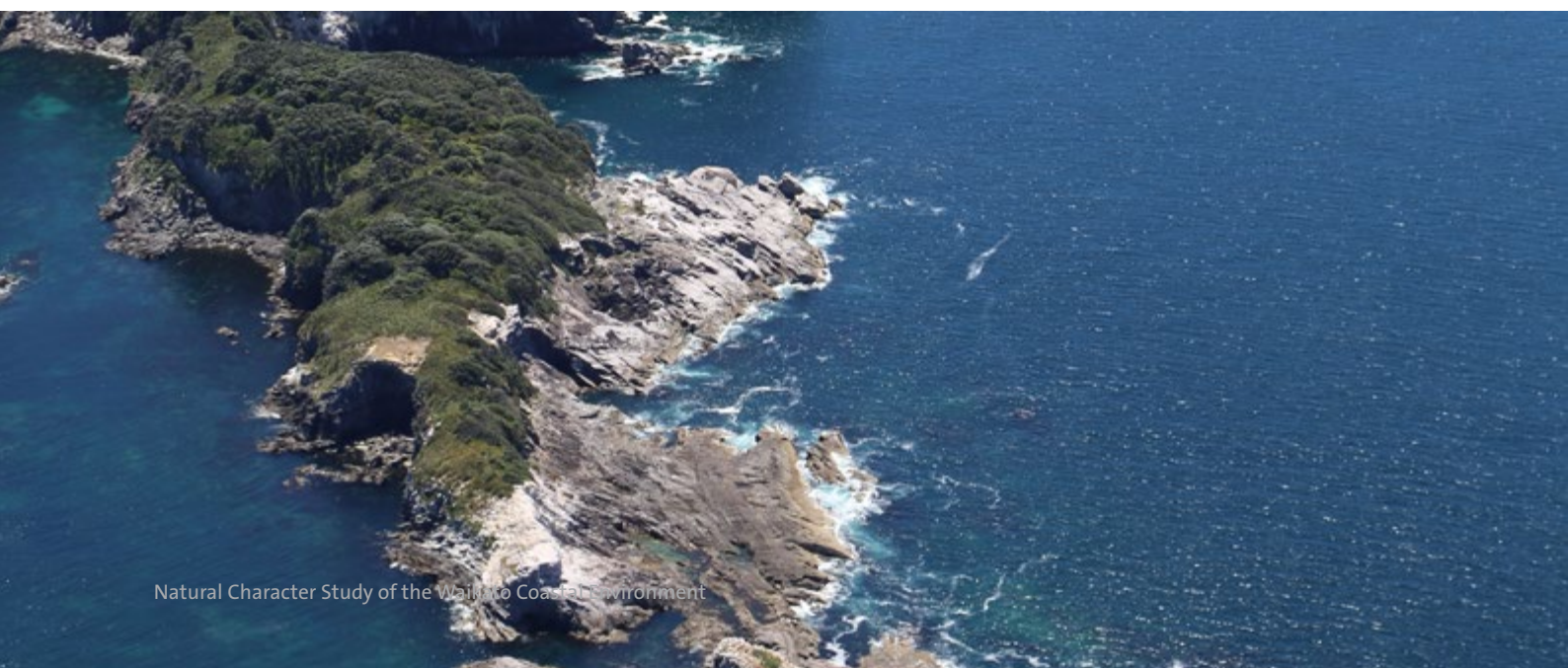
*‘those areas that exhibit a combination of natural elements, patterns and processes that are exceptional in their extent, intactness, integrity and lack of built structures (the ‘clutter’ factor) and other modifications compared to other areas in the Waikato Region’.* (BML statement)

The following pages outline the result of this separate assessment. Of all of the areas holding high and very high levels of natural character at the Level 4 scale, only eleven areas were mapped as outstanding natural character. These eleven areas were considered by the study team to meet the threshold statement outline above. Their individual characteristics and values are listed on the following pages. There was of course debate around areas that did not reach this threshold, while rated as holding either high or very high levels of natural character.

## Waikato’s East Coast

On Waikato’s East Coast, seven Outstanding Natural Character Areas (ONCs) have been identified. They are listed in the table below, identified collectively on the facing map and described in the following pages. ONCs for Waikato’s West Coast are listed after ONC No. 7 below.

Outstanding Natural Character Areas for Waikato’s East Coast	
1	Chenier Plains and Miranda Wetlands (Map 35)
2	Motukawao Island Group (Map 36)
3	Coastline between Fletcher Bay and Kennedy Bay (Map 37)
4	Coastline, coastal waters and islands off Cathedral Cove (Map 38)
5	Remote coastline and coastal waters of Tapuaetahi (Map 39)
6	Aldermen Islands and coastal waters (Map 40)
7	Mercury Islands and associated coastal waters (Map 41)
8	Curvier Island and associated coastal waters (Map 42)



- Legend**
- Extent of Coastal Environment
  - Outstanding Coastal Natural Character Areas**
  - 1 Chenier Plains and Miranda Wetlands
  - 2 Motukawao Island Group
  - 3 Port Charles and Kennedy Bay
  - 4 Cathedral Cove Waters
  - 5 Tapuaetahi Bay and adjacent land
  - 6 Aldermen Islands
  - 7 Mercury Islands
  - 8 Cuvier Island Repanga

Map 34

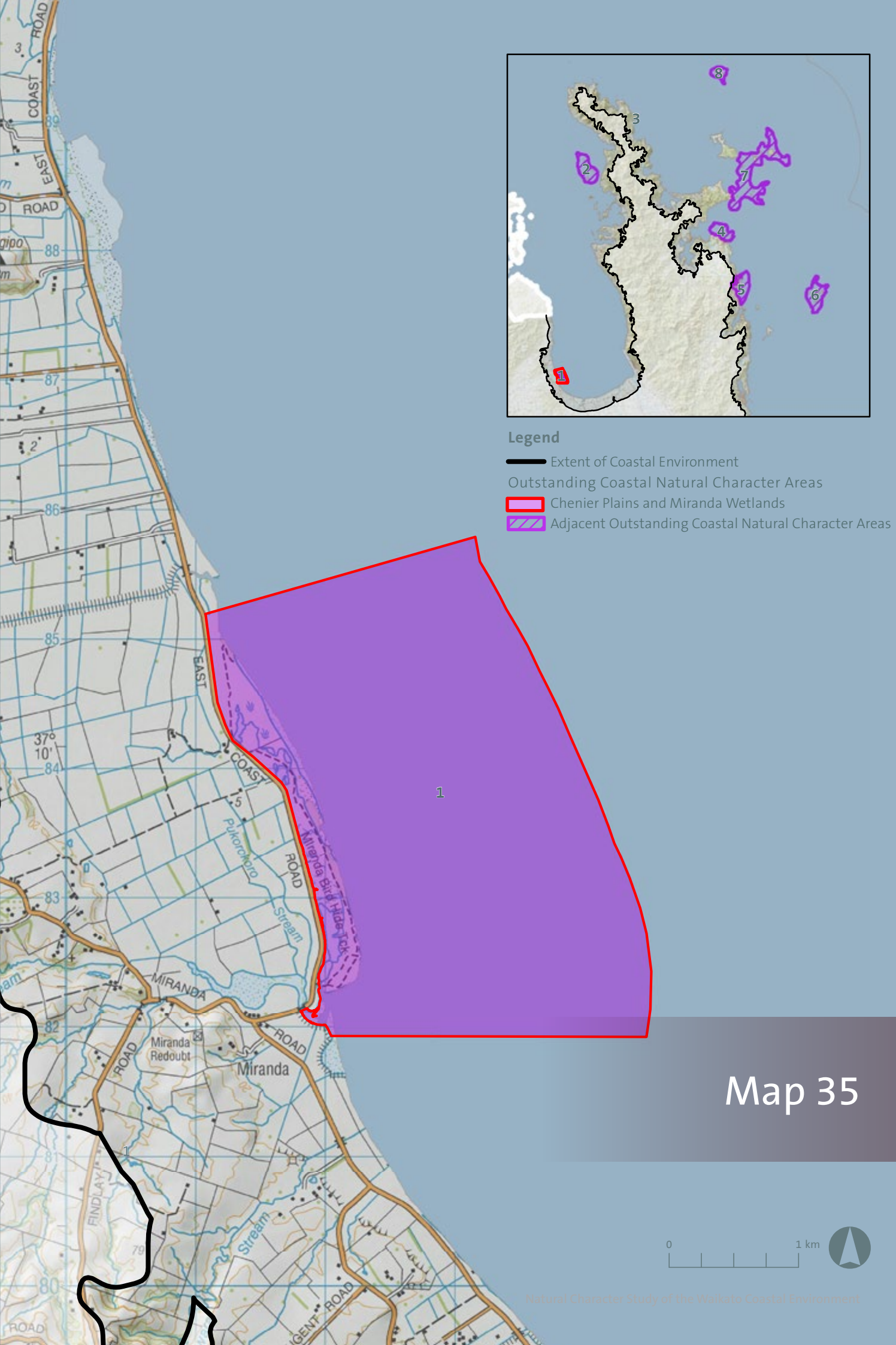






# Chenier Plains and Miranda Wetlands

*This area of Outstanding Natural Character includes the intact and internationally significant shell barrier beach (Chenier Plains) as well as the country's most important location for coastal and wading birds harboring a wide range of biotic assemblages.*





Chenier Plains and Miranda Wetlands Outstanding Natural Character Attributes (Level 4)	
CTA and rating (Level 3)	Hauraki (Low)
CMA and rating (Level 3)	Firth of Thames (Moderate- High)
Values	
Abiotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The shell barrier beach at Miranda is the largest in New Zealand and is the only one of its type that is actively aggrading</li><li>• Chenier Plains: Internationally significant landform at Miranda</li></ul>
Biotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Firth of Thames contains a Ramsar site of international significance to migratory wading birds, including the rare New Zealand Dotterel</li><li>• Associated mangroves add to biotic sequences from land to sea</li></ul>
Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Largely remote unmodified shores amplifies perceived naturalness</li><li>• Tidal changes promote ephemeral activity</li><li>• Presence of birds amplifies perceived level of naturalness</li></ul>
<b>Mapped extent</b> <p>The mapped extent of this Outstanding Natural Character Area is defined by the following:</p> <p>For the marine area, the extent follows the high marine mapping at the Level 4 scale, which is approximately 2km off shore. The 2km limit was decided by the marine experts as an appropriate offshore distance with respect to understanding the marine environment, where greatest knowledge is around the areas closest to land. Although not always the case, it was concluded that this would be appropriate for this Outstanding Natural Character Area.</p> <p>The mapped extent inland includes the Ramsar site (so much as it extends onto land), the unmodified sections of the Chenier Plains and any ecological sequences between land and sea that remain intact. This is consistent with the Very High terrestrial rating.</p>	
Chenier Plains and Miranda Wetlands Rating	Outstanding

Right (above): Miranda wetland and Chenier Plains

Right (below): Waters off Miranda and the Chenier Plains

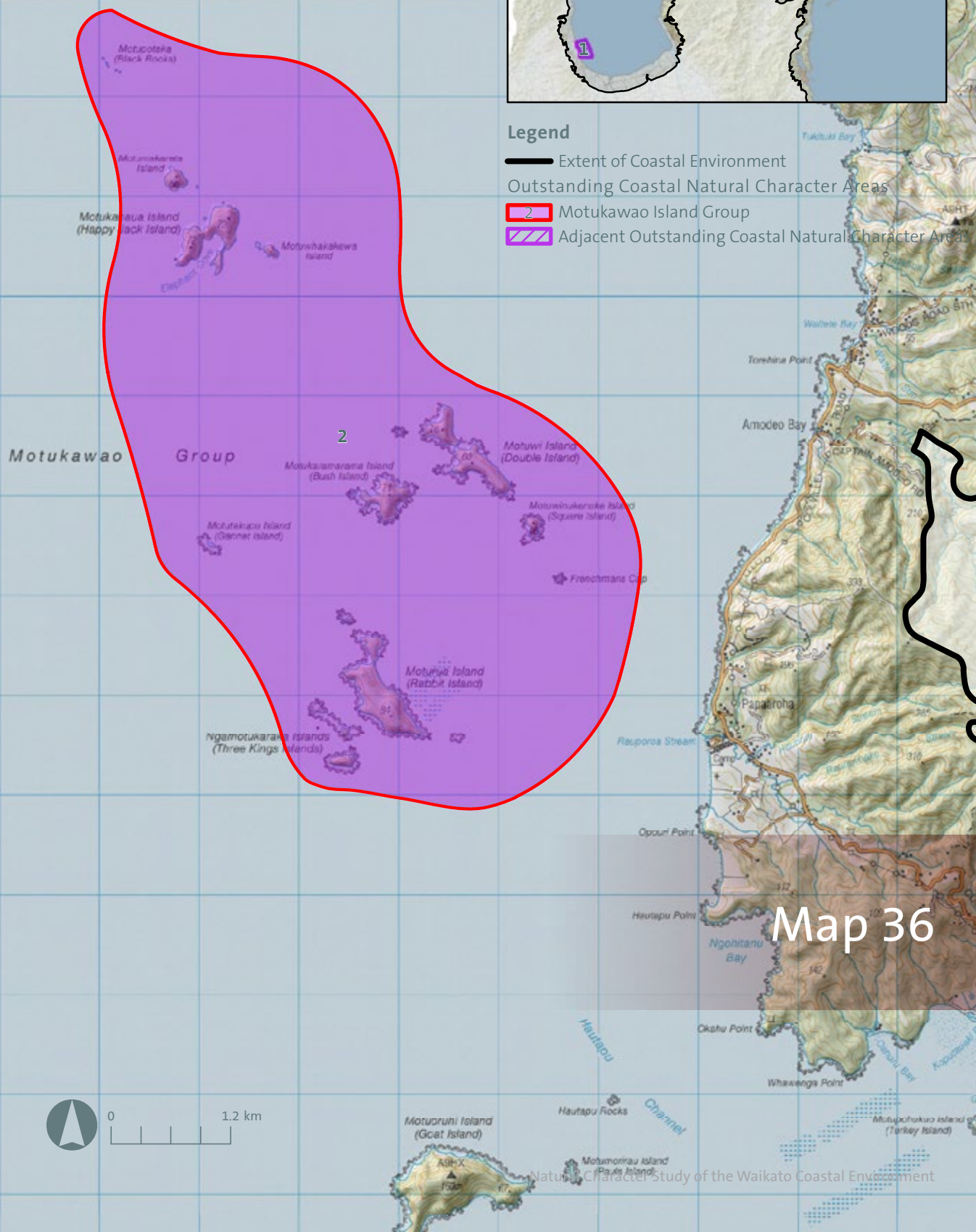




# Motukawao Island Group

*This area of Outstanding Natural Character includes the most northwesterly remote and unmodified island group off the west coast of Coromandel's peninsula. Encompassing steep and rocky coastlines and indigenous vegetation, this island group harbors some endangered and threatened biota.*





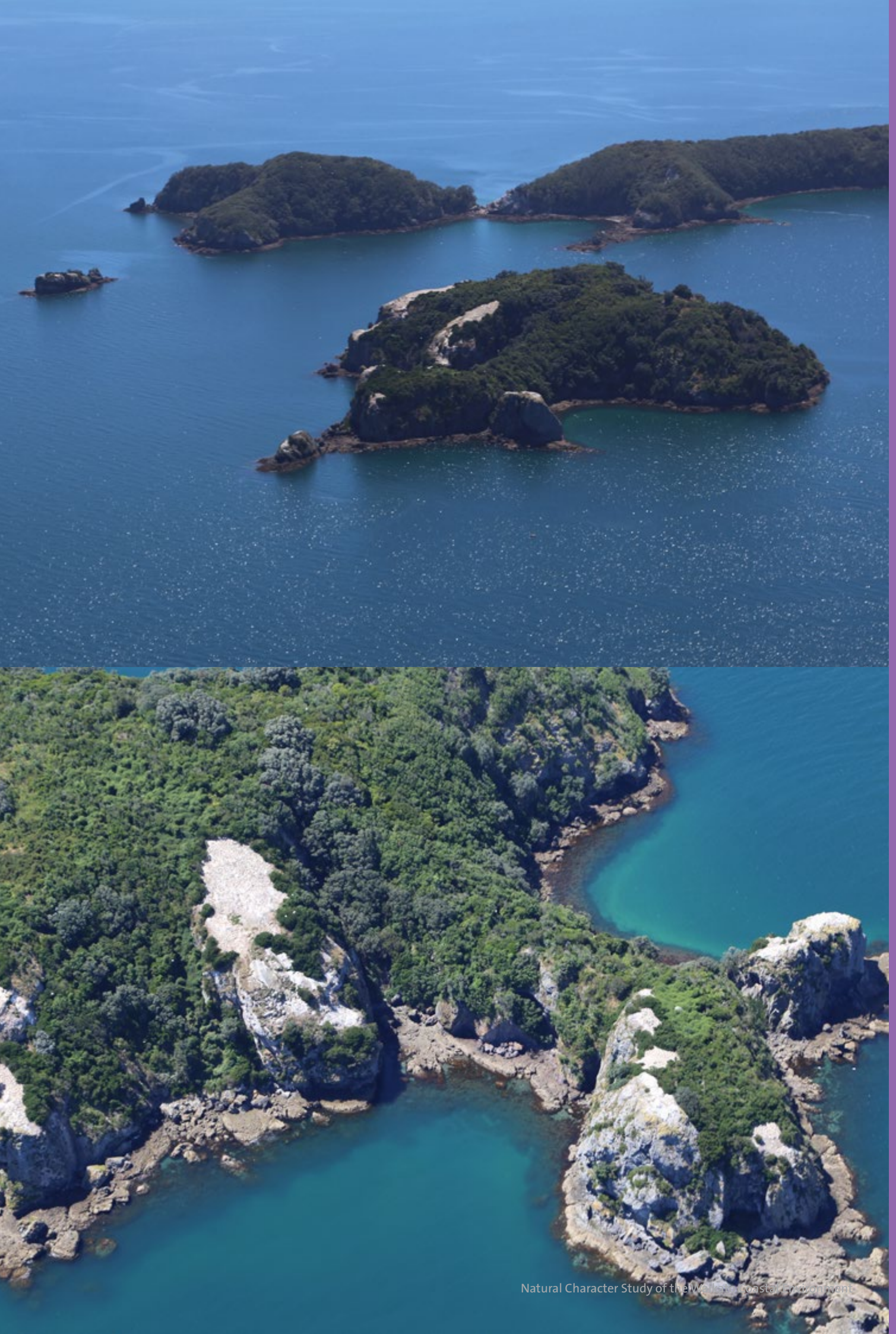
0 1.2 km

Motukawao Island Group Outstanding Natural Character Attributes (Level 4)	
CTA and rating (Level 3)	Colville (Moderate- High)
CMA and rating (Level 3)	Western Coromandel (High)
Values	
Abiotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Islands are surrounded by unmodified rocky shelves and open waters</li><li>Prominent and unmodified volcanic island group</li></ul>
Biotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Area of very high conservation value for demersal fish occur around Mouoruhi Island</li><li>Unmodified vegetation sequences between islands and sea floor</li></ul>
Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A sense of isolation and remoteness</li><li>High levels of perceived naturalness due to lack of modification</li></ul>
<p><b>Mapped extent</b></p> <p>The mapped extent of this Outstanding Natural Character Area is defined by the following:</p> <p>For the marine area, the extent follows uses bathymetric data to inform the extent of the identified Coastal Marine Area of the Outstanding Natural Character Area.</p> <p>Although not always the case, it was concluded that this would be appropriate for this Outstanding Natural Character Area. This extent includes the marine farm off Moturua Island (Rabbit Island).</p> <p>Terrestrially, this covers the entire Motukawao Group, as identified at the Level 4.</p>	
Motukawao Island Group Rating	Outstanding

*Right (above):  
Motukaramarama Island  
(Bush Island), foreground,  
with Motuwi Island (Double  
Island) in the background*

*Right (below): Exposed,  
unmodified rocky shores*



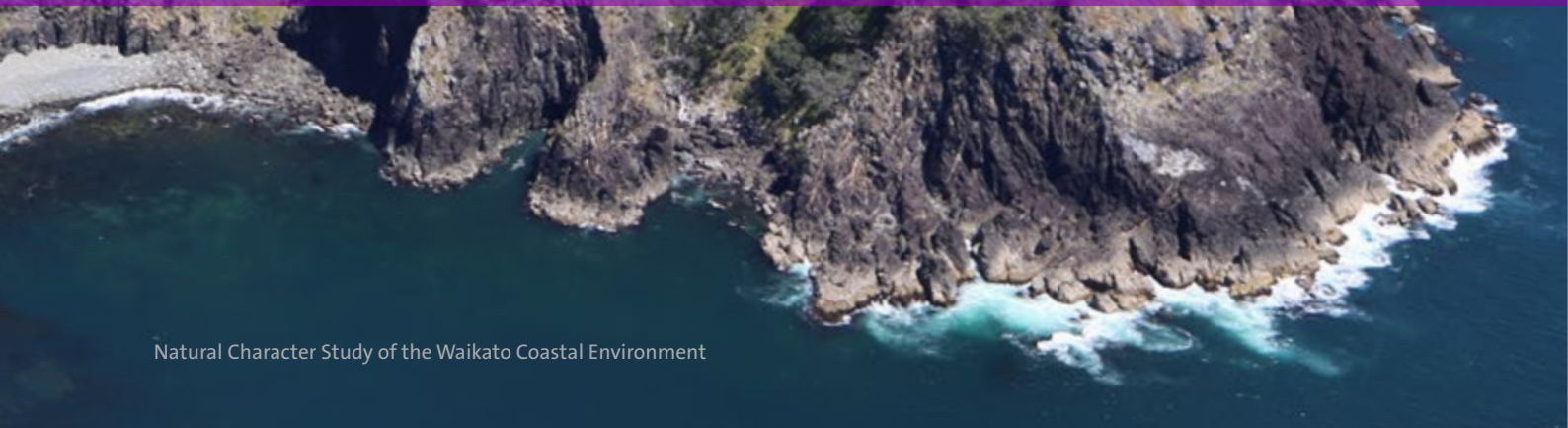




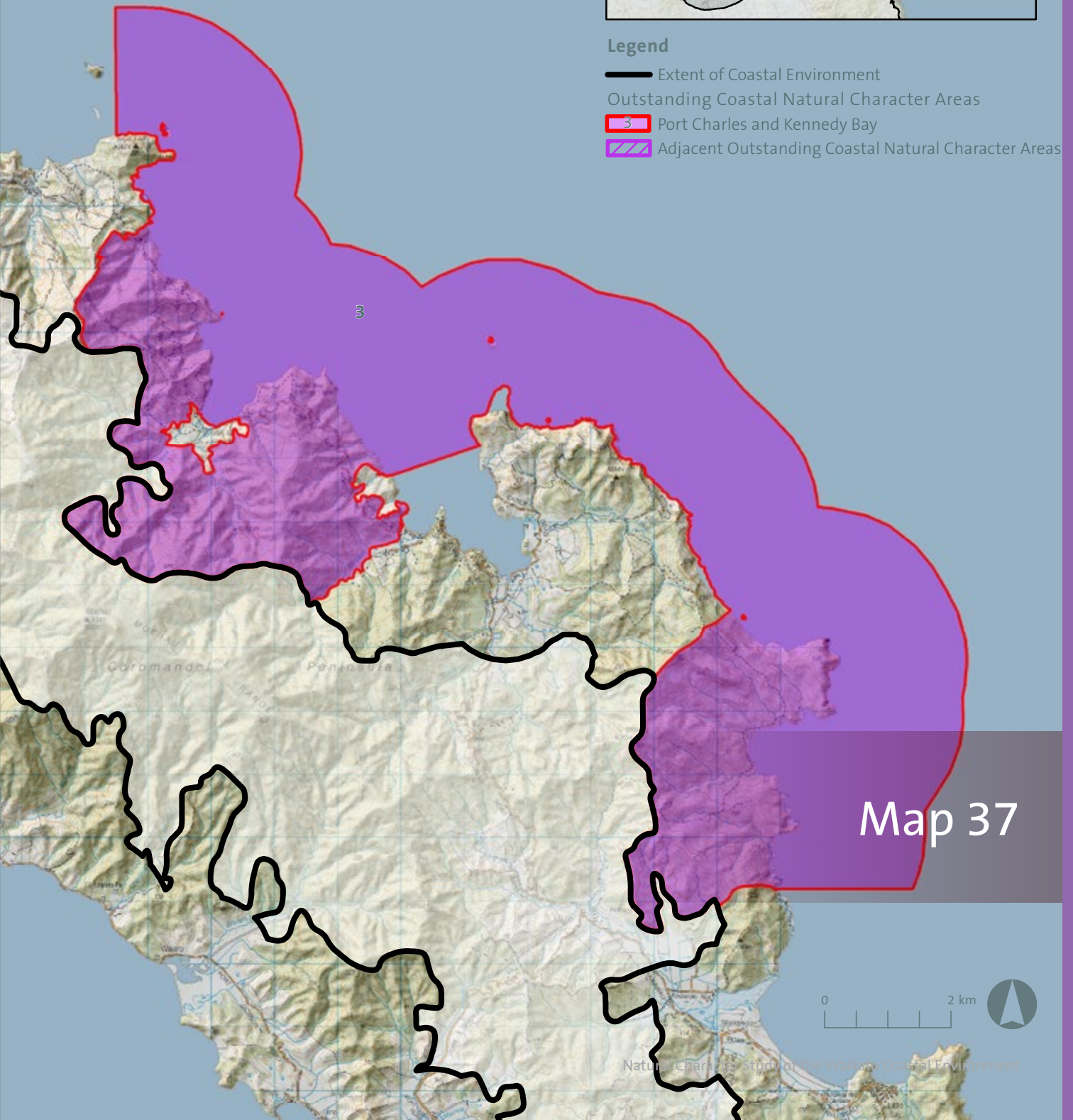


# Coastline between Fletcher Bay and Kennedy Bay

*This area of Outstanding Natural Character includes the most remote and unmodified parts of the mainland, encompassing a steep and dramatic coastline where vegetation sequences are broadly intact.*







Coastline between Port Charles & Kennedy Bay Outstanding Natural Character Attributes (Level 4)	
CTA and rating (Level 3)	Port Jackson (Moderate-High); Kennedy Bay (High)
CMA and rating (Level 3)	Eastern Coromandel (High)
Values	
Abiotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Limited modification to wild and rugged coastline;</li><li>Dramatic cliffs and exposed rocky shores amplify areas unique geology</li></ul>
Biotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Entire coastal near shore indented coastal waters hold an array of high biotic habitats with limited modification</li><li>High reef fish richness between Port Jackson and Tuataewa</li><li>Steep valleys and spurs contain a mixture of unmodified native shrub land and forest.</li><li>Extensive areas under formal protection in Conservation Areas, QEII covenants. The Moehau ecological area in particular, supports an almost complete altitudinal sequence of plant and animal communities from near sea level to sub-alpine conditions. It is home to a number of rare or endangered endemic species (e.g. land snails, Archey's frog).</li></ul>
Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unmodified coastal edge forms majority of coastline, amplifying perceived naturalness;</li><li>Wild and remote feel within more open waters</li></ul>
<b>Mapped extent</b> <p>The mapped extent of this Outstanding Natural Character Area is defined by the following:</p> <p>For the marine area, the extent follows the high marine mapping at the Level 4 scale, which is approximately 2km off shore. The 2km limit was decided by the marine experts as an appropriate offshore distance with respect to understanding the marine environment, where greatest knowledge is around the areas closest to land. Although not always the case, it was concluded that this would be appropriate for this Outstanding Natural Character Area.</p> <p>For the terrestrial component, the extent follows the very high Level 4 mapping, which is delineated broadly by the extent of intact indigenous forest. Areas of modification have been excluded from this area.</p>	
Coastline between Port Charles & Kennedy Bay Rating	Outstanding

*Right (above): Sequences of vegetation from land to water are in many cases unmodified*

*Right (below): Exposed, unmodified rocky shores*





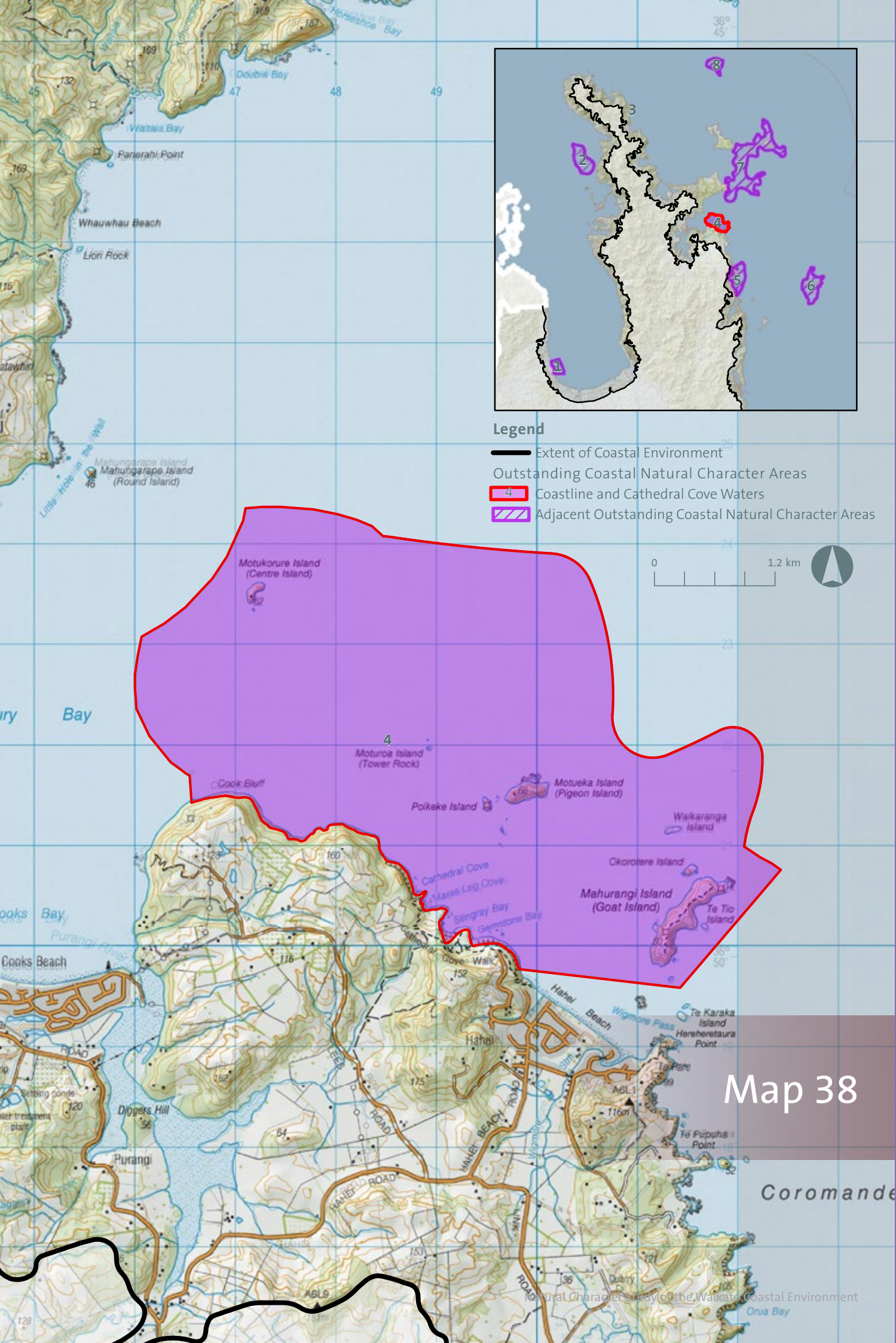




# Coastline, coastal waters and islands off Cathedral Cove

*Ecologically rich coastal waters of this marine reserve are defined by unmodified forest clad islands and dramatic natural sculptural landforms that exemplify outstanding degrees of naturalness.*





Coastline, coastal waters and islands off Cathedral Cove Outstanding Natural Character Attributes (Level 4)	
CTA and rating (Level 3)	Whitianga (Moderate)
CMA and rating (Level 3)	Eastern Coromandel (High)
Values	
Abiotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spectacular coastal arch, isolated stack (Te Horo Rock) and impressive cliffs of white ignimbrite at Cathedral Cove cumulatively read as an extremely well defined set of landforms of scientific and educational value that are unmodified;</li></ul>
Biotic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Te Whanganui-A-hei (Cathedral Cove) Marine Reserve contains a variety of habitats including hard rock, soft sediment, caves and arches with high levels of ecological naturalness</li><li>Ribbon of indigenous bush skirts the steep coastal fringe</li></ul>
Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cumulatively, the off shore islands hold high degrees of perceived naturalness due to their modified form;</li><li>High experiential values due to the bush lined white sands and recognisable landforms of Te Horo Rock and Cathedral Cove</li><li>Visually dramatic eroded coastal landforms that are etched into the psyche of New Zealanders and visitors</li></ul>
<b>Mapped extent</b> The mapped extent of this Outstanding Natural Character Area is defined by the following: Includes the entire Te Whanganui-A-hei (Cathedral Cove) Marine Reserve including adjacent Mahurangi Island (Goat Island) and the bathymetric data of the sea floor.	
Coastline, coastal waters and islands off Cathedral Cove Outstanding Natural Character Attributes Rating	Outstanding

*Right (above): Picturesque Cathedral Cove*  
*Right (below): Wave-cut peninsulas pepper this coastline*









# Remote coastline and coastal waters off Taupuaetahi

*Unmodified forest clad slopes extend towards remote coastline holding comprising rugged and heavily eroded headlands and small intimate sandy bays with rich coastal waters*

