



# Tauroa Point Dune Middens Heritage Assessment



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June 2012

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Cover Image: Completely deflated scatter of shell and oven stones, probably recorded as archaeological site N05/322 or 223.

## *Site Overview*

The Tauroa Point dune middens are located on the western side of the Ahipara Conservation Area, west of Ahipara at the southern end of 90 Mile Beach/Oneroa. The Conservation Area is 3484ha in size and the midden are scattered around the foredunes between the coast and the higher ground which rises to the Ahipara Plateau. The reserve is accessible either side of low tide by 4WD vehicle across the 19 ha Tauroa Point Conservation Area (which also contains a number of midden). That Conservation Area consists of a narrow strip of land between the sea and the foredunes around the rocky wave platform of Shipwreck Bay and the beachfront to the south-west.

The two conservation areas contain more than fifty recorded sites but due to the environment, shifting sands regularly cover and/or erode and destroy previously recorded sites and uncover new ones. Midden are also affected by ongoing erosion from streams and storm events, as well as stock trampling and 4WD vehicles. In addition to the midden there are several pa and terrace sites located on the two Conservation Areas, and several patches of taro and historic house sites.

A map of the known site locations and the other sites in the Conservation Area has been produced by digitising marked up NZMS 260 metric topographic maps prepared by DOC Historic staff for sites on the DOC estate, based on the original site records. The locations shown here are more accurate than those in ArchSite (which require updating). They have been overlaid in a Geographic Information System along with recent aerial imagery and other geographic data; the location of features is approximate only but provides a picture of the archaeological features in the context of the surrounding landscape (Figure 1-3).







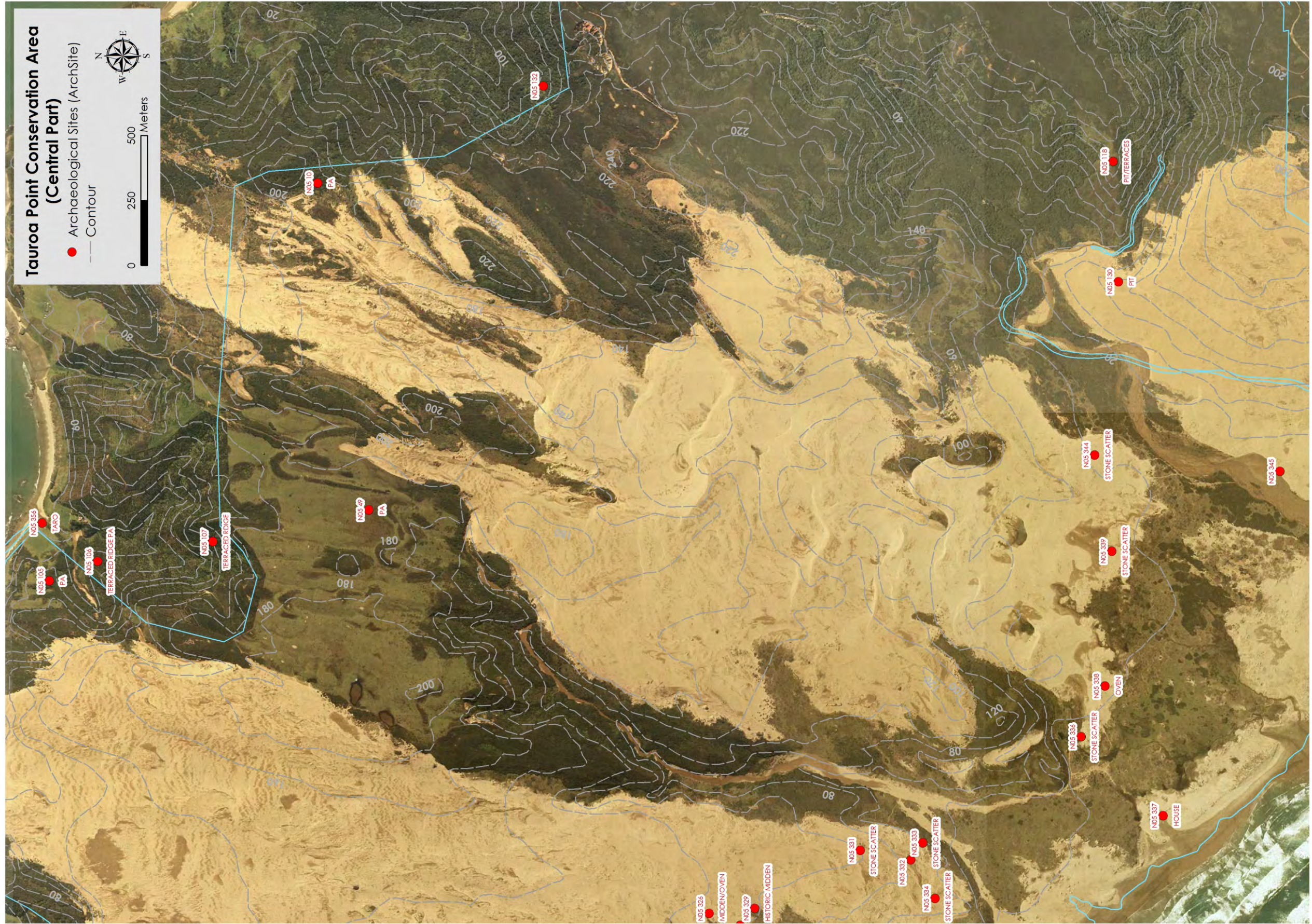


Figure 2: Tauroa Point Conservation Area (central part).



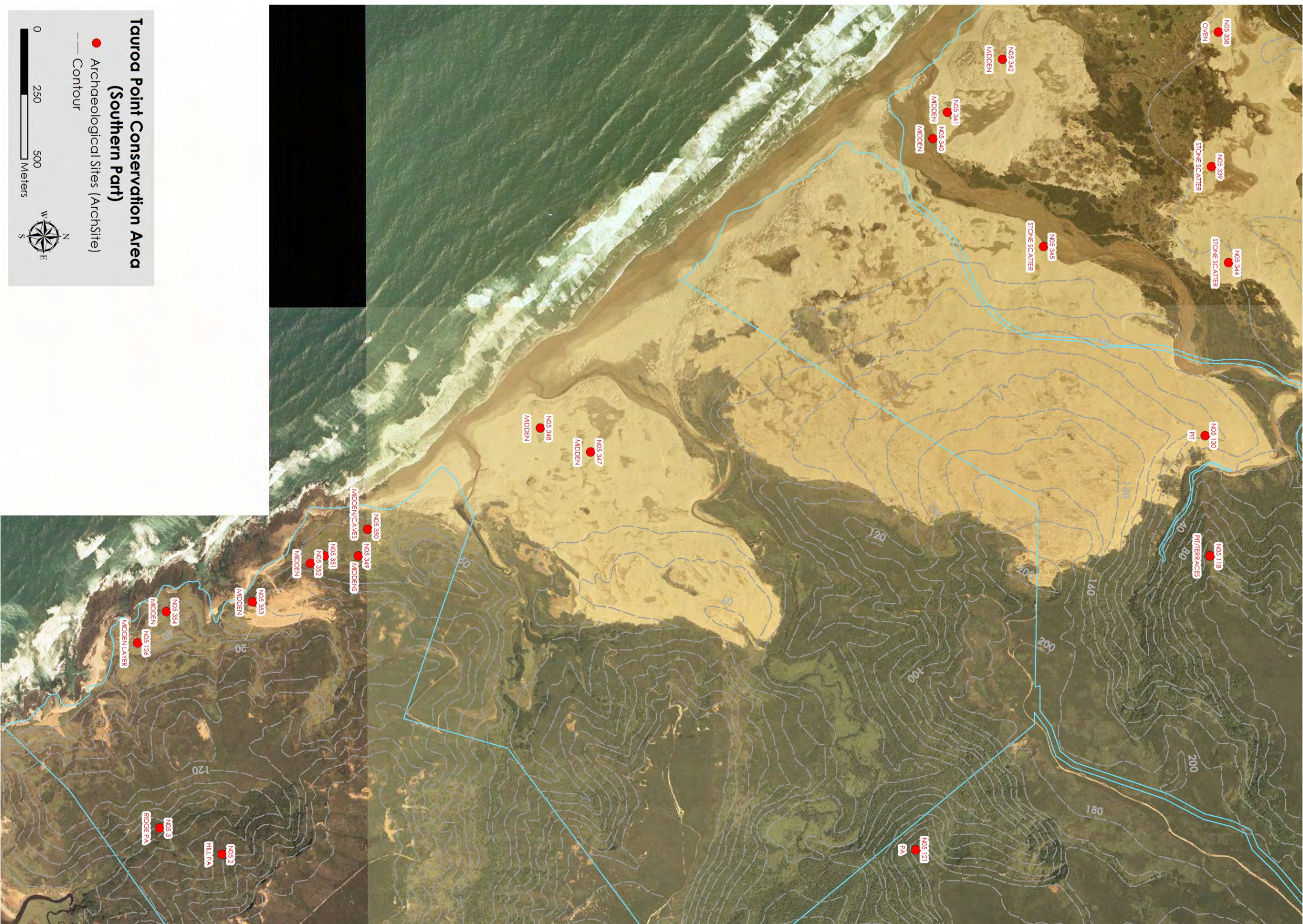


Figure 3: Tauroa Point Conservation Area (southern end).



## *History Description*

Archaeological investigations indicate that the Tauroa dunes were occupied or at least visited as early as 1220-1390 AD based on radiocarbon dates from an earth oven at site N05/302. The Polynesian ancestors of the Maori probably made use of the area to collect seafood from the rocky shoreline and beyond, attracted by the fresh water available from the nearby stream and the break or channel in the rocks on the shore opposite. As well as fish and shellfish, seals, dogs, bird and whale were also represented in the food remains. The nearby environment was characterised by kanuka, pohutakawa, cassinia and akeake which provided fuels for the camp fires. As well as hunting and fishing, the inhabitants worked bone to make fish hooks. Obsidian flakes found in the site have been sourced to Mayor Island in the Bay of Plenty and other stone tools came from sources at Houhora and Herekino. Burials found on the other side of the stream at N05/301 suggested the occupation was long enough to necessitate the burial of several people nearby.

The dates are as early as any in New Zealand suggesting the area may have been one of the first settled or otherwise utilised. At the same time, similar camps were established at Tom Bowling Bay/Kapowairua and Twilight Beach near Cape Reinga, and a substantial village was located at Mt Camel at Houhora.

The area continued to be occupied or utilised after the original settlement with several major changes over time. After 1400 there was no tool or fish hook making on-site and few artefacts were left. There was more emphasis on collecting shellfish and less on fishing, suggesting more fleeting visits for the purpose of shellfish gathering rather than a longer term and/or more general occupation. After 1600 the large communal ovens vanish from the archaeological record, as does evidence for sea mammal and bird butchery. Pohutakawa disappears from the charcoal record, suggesting even this otherwise hardy and fire-tolerant species had become rare on the coast,

Te Aupouri were the inhabitants of the area in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Te Aupouri, first known as Ngati Ruanui, originally landed at the Hokianga on the Mamari canoe. They settled on the north shore of the harbour and ultimately extended as far as Whangape. After coming into conflict with people already resident at Whangape and Mitimiti, a series of tragic events culminated in 1824<sup>1</sup> when Te Aupouri fought Ngapuhi, Te Rarawa and Ngati Kahu under Hongi Hika of Ngapuhi and Nopera Panakaraeo of Te Rarawa at Hukatere Hill on 90 Mile Beach. Te Aupouri were outnumbered and retreated east to Houhora and then north to the centre of their rohe fighting a number of rear-guard actions. This led to the iwi taking on the name of Te Aupouri and moving north, via Herekino, Ahipara, and Pukepoto, to Te Kao. Here they were given the pa Tawhitirahi (Te Kao Pa) by their Ngai Takoto relatives and Te Kao, named after the local process used to dry and preserve kumara, is still the heart of Te Aupouri (Cloher 2002). Te Rarawa subsequently settled the land around Tauroa Point.

Te Rarawa emphasise descent from the *Tinana* canoe, captained by Tūmoana. Tūmoana's descendants spread throughout the northern Hokianga and eastward to Maunga Taniwha.

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<sup>1</sup> Crosby (1999: 150-153) puts the battle in this year; Metge (2002) notes tribal experts putting it one to two years later.

Tūmoana later returned to Hawaiki, leaving his son Tamahotu and daughter Kahutianui-o-te-rangi at Tauroa. Te Rarawa also trace descent from the canoes Matawhaorua, captained by Kupe, Kurahaupō, captained by Pōhutihanga, Ngātokimatawhaorua, captained by Nukutawhiti and Māhuhu-ki-te-rangi, captained by Rongomai and Whakatau.

The Te Rarawa chief Panakaraeo who bested Te Aupouri at Hukatere Hill welcomed the first missionaries to the area and supported European settlement for the economic benefits to his lands and people. He signed the Treaty of Waitangi, although he became increasingly disillusioned as government purchases after the treaty saw the loss of 131,000ha between 1840 and 1865 on top of the 60,000ha of pre-treaty purchases subsequently confirmed and granted by the Crown.

By 1865, the land from Ahipara south to the Whangape Harbour and including Tauroa Point was the only Maori land in Muriwhenua untouched by European land purchases. From 1870 the purchase of land in the area was given impetus by Julius Vogel during the Fox Ministry, under the Immigration and Public Works Acts of 1870 and 1873, and the Native Land Act of 1873. Between 1872 and 1879 three government land agents purchased 64,000 acres including the 10,500 acre Te Tauroa Block and the 1600 acre Epakauri Block in March 1877, for £175 and £27 respectively.

The Waitangi Tribunal's Muriwhenua Land Report (1992: 312) states:

*“In the district from Ahipara to Herekino...what was left of Maori land from the 1877 sale of the Tauroa and Epakauri Blocks was probably the poorest in Muriwhenua. The Waitaha native reserve on the coast<sup>2</sup>, and the northern aspects of Herekino Harbour, which were still in Maori lands, included large sand dune areas. The balance of the Maori land was hilly, in forest and scrub. It was later to be devastated by gumdigging and the removal of the millable timber. Attempts to establish farms there in the 1930s were unsuccessful: they were abandoned by the 1960s and reverted to scrub.”*

The lands on the Ahipara Plateau and the coastal dunes were unsuited to farming, the latter previously being covered in kauri forest, leached of its nutrients then cut over by sawyers, and later thoroughly worked over by gum diggers. Farm development was possible only on the lower land in the immediate vicinity of Ahipara. In 1901 much of the crown land was gazetted as kauri gum reserves and the Ahipara Plateau became a thriving gum digging community for a time, before kauri gum was replaced as a valuable commodity (Ibid: 355, 379).

## ***Fabric Description***

Site recording at Tauroa Point began in the early 1970s when the first dune midden site there was recorded by L. Knott as part of her university coursework in 1974. However the earliest sites recorded in the area were four pa and a terrace complex recorded by C. and R. Lawn on the Ahipara Plateau between Shipwreck Bay and the Hukatere and Hanuhanu Streams in 1971. Leahy and Walsh (1979) undertook the earliest systematic survey in the area on behalf of the Historic Places Trust, focussing on the coast and hinterland between Tauroa Point and Herekino. The next major survey was undertaken by L. Johnson in 1989 for the Department of Conservation.

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<sup>2</sup> At the southern end of the reserve at Waitaha Stream.



The parlous state of a number of apparently early or otherwise significance sites identified by Johnson at Tauroa Point led to archaeological investigations by DOC staff in 1991 and DOC and a University of Auckland archaeology Field School in 2003. The excavations in the 1990s have only been partially reported (Johnson n.d.) while the most recent excavation results have been reported on or published in Allen (2006a and 2006b), Allen et. al. (2005), and Wichman 2006.

There are eleven sites recorded on or in the immediate vicinity of the Tauroa Point Conservation Area including five midden, five taro patches and a historic house site. Between the northern end of the Ahipara Conservation Area where it abuts the Tauroa Point Conservation Area and the Okura Stream there are ten recorded midden and eight stone working areas, with a pa site and several stone working sites recorded on the adjacent privately owned farm.

The dunes between the Okura and Tanutanu Streams have advanced up to 4km to the north-west from the west coast. There are eleven midden recorded along this section of the coast along with 15 stone scatters and two terraces or house sites. There are also six pa or terraced ridgelines on the northern boundary of the Ahipara Conservation Area on high ground overlooking Ahipara, in areas not yet reclaimed by the sand.

Between the Tanutanu Stream and the southern end of the Ahipara Conservation Area just north of the Hunahuna Stream there are eight midden (two of which lie in the Waitaha Maori land block which is surrounded by the Conservation Area) and a stone scatter. Two kilometres inland on the high ground above the Tanutanu Stream are two sites recorded as pits and terraces with Maungatapere Pa. Another three pa are recorded on the Conservation Area on the high ground above the Hunahuna Stream.

The midden tend to be nearer the coast and the stone scatters are further inland. Most of the sites are within 500m of the coast although there are several further north towards the centre of the dunes. Sites cluster around the stream valleys, with midden, ovens and working floors on the foredunes 20-60m above the high tide line, and village and pa sites, represented by complexes of terraces, pits and defensive works, further up the valleys on the higher ground. Cultivation probably occurred on the valley floors. In contrast the gum lands on the Ahipara Plateau contain few archaeological sites apart from those associated with more recent timber extraction and gum digging. This settlement pattern was noted by Mckay (1982) in her archaeological assessment for the Ahipara Land Use Study.

Most of the midden are from the mid to late pre-historic or proto-historic "Classic" period of Maori occupation and contain predominantly tuatua shell, fire cracked rock and charcoal with some fish bone. A few of the sites including those excavated by DOC staff in 1991-92 (sites N05/301 at the small stream north of Okura Creek) and DOC and the University of Auckland archaeology field school in 2003 (sites N05/302 opposite N05/301, and N05/314 at Okura Creek) contained material from the "Archaic" period of occupation by the Polynesian ancestors of the Maori. The archaic sites include fish and shellfish and oven material but also contain a range of bird and mammal bone (whale, seal, dog) and a greater range of artefactual material including non-local stone tools and production waste. The stone scatters are areas where stone tools made from obsidian, chert or other usually exotic stones were worked, and/or collections of whole or fire-cracked cobbles from hearths where all the other associated archaeological material has been completely destroyed/dispersed and only the hardy oven stones remain.





Figure 4: N05/301, excavated in 2003.



Figure 5: Excavated section of N05/301.





Figure 6: N05/302, excavated in 2003.



Figure 7: Partially deflated hearth on N05/302.





Figure 8: Fencing and vehicle tracks, N05/302.



Figure 9: Midden with servicable fencing, probably part of N03/322 or 323.





Figure 10: Completely deflated scatter of shell and oven stones probably N05/322 or 223.

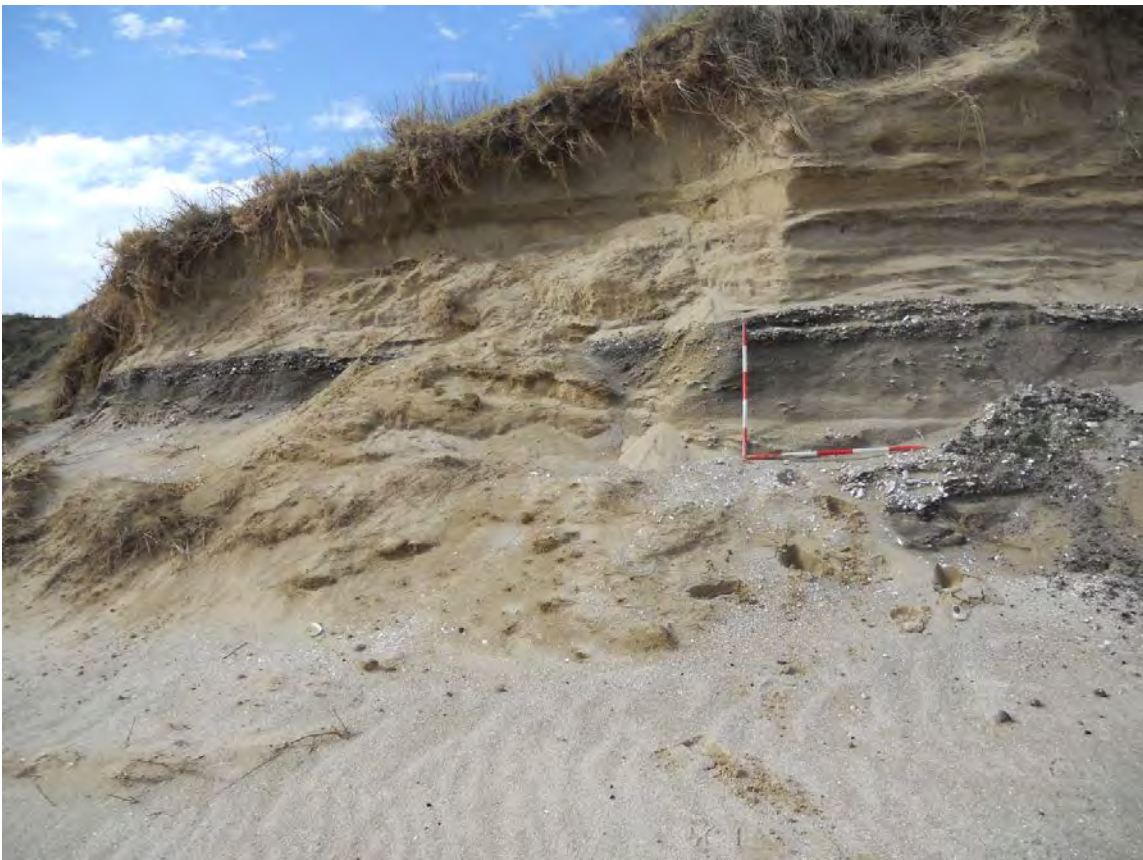


Figure 11: Stratified midden in eroding dune.



## *Cultural Connections*

The Tauroa Point dune middens are in the rohe of Te Rarawa.

Te Rarawa became the dominant iwi between Ahipara and Herekino after forcing Te Aupouri northwards in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This culminated in the battle of Hukatere Hill north of Ahipara where Te Aupouri were comprehensively defeated by Te Rarawa who were allied with Ngapuhi.

## *National Context Sources*

There is no national context source available in order to provide a comprehensive basis for assessing the national (representative) significance of the Tauroa Point dune middens. However there are general references for midden including those by Davidson (1982, 1984). Welsh (2008) has provided an overview of middens in dune sites which is a useful summary of their values, and the various reports on the Southland Coastal Heritage Inventory Project, undertaken by South Pacific Archaeological Research (SPAR) supported by the DOC Southland Conservancy, Environment Southland, the Murihiku rununga, NZ Historic Places Trust and NZ Archaeological Association, provides a useful approach to valuing and managing coastal midden sites (SPAR 2007, 2008, 2011).

L. Furey has also produced a Northland Archaeological Resource Statement which summarises the archaeology of the region, its values, and the threats that it faces, for the Department of Conservation. This document remains in draft form and limited circulation, however section 10.2 of the document discusses dune midden including the Tauroa Point sites in some detail and concludes the section by stating that:

*“dune areas indicates that an important site type is disappearing rapidly, with significant loss of information about how people used the coastal resources through time. These sites span the full period of Maori settlement, and into the historic period as European items such as clay pipes and bottle glass have been found in association with more traditional materials in some sites. The main emphasis has been on the large areas of dunefields, but other beaches and bays also have eroding sites which warrant attention, either in rescue archaeology or in protection. There needs to be a well-thought out and comprehensive research programme implemented to recover information from dunes in the very near future. It is apparent from archaeological assessments over 40 years, and from artefact collections made in the early part of the 20th century, that some of these areas have been eroding for some time. Archaeological sites are a finite resource, and the amount of intact material left is reducing all the time” (Furey n.d.: Section 10.2).*

*In her general conclusions, Furey states that:*

*“A project of recording and recovering information from sand dunes in the north is a high priority, and is of national significance. The case study on dune sites has highlighted the vulnerability of these sites, and the destruction of information about the early period of settlement of New Zealand. A research project could address settlement in Northland in the early period with implications for understanding stone*



*technology, trade, communication and resource use (discovery of geological resources)*  
(Furey n.d.: Section 11.0).

### ***Historic Significance***

There are no historic events or personalities associated with Tauroa Point dune midden. While the late prehistoric or classic period midden are relatively ubiquitous the early or archaic midden, containing evidence for the earliest occupation of New Zealand, are highly significant for the information they can provide about the social organisation and subsistence strategies and material culture of New Zealand's earliest inhabitants.

### ***Fabric Significance***

The Tauroa Point dune middens are largely late prehistoric and protohistoric midden consisting mainly of shellfish, fire-cracked rock and charcoal. Many of the midden are deflated or lagged deposits where the sand from beneath and around the archaeological material has been removed by the action of the wind leaving a scatter of archaeological material. Although this is out of its primary context and is potentially a palimpsest of material from different periods, it still contains information that can be retrieved by archaeological investigation.

### ***Cultural Significance***

The Tauroa Point dune middens are of high significance to Te Rarawa and Roma Marae, who are the kaitiaki of the sites. Given the early dates for some of the sites, other iwi formerly resident in the area such as Te Aupouri, or their ancestors, may also have connections with the sites.

### ***Management Recommendations***

The Tauroa Point dune middens exist in an exceedingly dynamic environment beset by coastal geomorphological forces which are exacerbated by human-induced impacts, chiefly 4WD activity and stock trampling via unserviceable farm fences.

#### Monitoring and Re-survey

Currently informal monitoring of the dune middens occurs during trips by Kaitia Area historic staff three or four times a year. It would be appropriate to undertake more formal monitoring four times a year, including the establishment of photo points and photo monitoring on critical sites and recording new exposures as they are identified.

Given that almost twenty years has elapsed since the last survey of sites in the dunes it would be useful to undertake another intensive survey to re-record known sites, identify recently exposed sites, make management recommendations and identify significant sites for further investigation, in the short to medium term. This also fits with the Department of Conservation's undertaking to complete the NZ Archaeological Association Site Recording upgrade on the DOC estate.



The results of the re-survey could be used to leverage a more intensive investigation as proposed by Furey and which is currently occurring with DOC support in Southland.

#### Fencing and 4WD Management

The Kaitaia Area has developed a good working relationship with members of the local 4WD club who, along with the Tangata Whenua, are the most regular users of dunes (and which, apart from natural erosion, have the greatest potential impact on the dune midden). The 4WD club members undertake ad-hoc repairs to the existing fencing and have undertaken several more formal fencing projects in 2001 and 2007.

DOC should continue to support the fencing effort.

#### Interpretation

There is no detailed information about the dune middens available on the internet, apart from visitor information. On-site signage refers generally to the archaeological/historic sites present in the area, their fragility and significance. The signage does not talk about specific sites or site locations or contents in order to prevent fossicking. It would be appropriate to make the general results of the archaeological investigations available to the public along with general comments about dune midden.

This Heritage Assessment and other public documents such as the results of the previous investigations should be made available on the DOC website.

### ***Management Chronology***

- 1877 Tauroa Block and Epakauri Block purchased by the Crown.
- 1901 Ahipara Kauri Gum Reserve gazetted by the Crown.
- 1989-90 Archaeological survey of Tauroa Point dunes records more than a dozen sites along 10km coastline for the Ahipara Gumfields Stewardship Management Plan. Plane table and alidade drawing of N05/302 undertaken.
- 1991-1992 First rescue excavation on the largest midden 7km south of Reef Point, at Tairua Point, N05/314 and N05/323.
- 1998 Re-vegetation project in cooperation with Peter Woods of Ag Research begins.
- 2001 HAMS costed remedial specification for dune midden developed. First protective fencing of midden established.
- 2002 Burials noted at N05/301 exposed by stock.
- 2003 University of Auckland archaeological field school excavation.
- 2006-7 4WD Club repair fences. Discussion of sourcing funding for a management plan for the sites.



- 2007 Tauroa Point Visitor Survey undertaken by DOC concludes that midden fencing has been effective in defining sites and reducing unintentional visitor impacts, although stock encroachment was still causing problems. Visitors also desired more information about the sites.

## *Management Documentation*

Tauroa Point Midden. AMHP 15. HAMS costed specification.

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