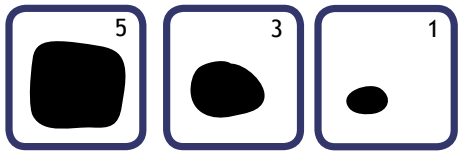
Score each site using the following categories **Site** _____ **Total:**

Size



Generally larger sites are able to support more species, a variety of habitats and larger populations.

However, if the site is extremely large you may find it too difficult to manage adequately - only include sites you feel you can manage in this assessment.

Score:

Shape

The 'rounder' or 'squarer' a site is, the less 'edge' it has. This is important for practical reasons (e.g. fencing), but also to minimise 'edge effects'. However, many natural areas like wetlands and gullies are naturally long and skinny. Only compare similar types of areas - don't compare a square peat bog with a skinny gully wetland. When comparing gullies, riparian areas and wetlands, still look for sites with wide zones. Note also that open water bodies with irregular shapes are better than round ponds with no bays.

Score:

Connection to other natural areas

Sites in or next to other natural areas, (e.g. one forest near another forest, scrub area, or wetland) let you manage several habitats at one location. Such links are ideal for wildlife that use several habitats. Wetlands next to forests are already well buffered from run-off and 'edge effects'. Forests next to pine forest are also buffered from edge effects (temporarily). Connected wetlands allow animals to travel to access resources (e.g. food) and mates.

Score:

Complexity

Natural areas that have a range of habitats, such as open water, dense vegetation, islands, and different vegetation types such as kahikatea forest, manuka scrub, sedges and reeds, will enable a greater variety of plants and animals to live there.

Score:

Special features

Does the site have any rare plants or special population of native animals that you know of? Is it a rare or depleted type of natural area (e.g. dune, geothermal, lowland forest)? Department of Conservation (DOC) or local council staff can help you with information.

Also consider cultural values (features of special significance to iwi) and special landforms (such as limestone outcrops).

Score:

Access

You will need to visit the site regularly and carry equipment to it. You will find more eager volunteers if the site is easy to reach, especially by car.

If the site is virtually inaccessible it may not be a good candidate for a community management project. Note that wetlands can be hard to access during rainy periods, and geothermal areas can be dangerous.

Score:

Management need

If the site does not have any management needs, or is being looked after already, then it is not a high priority for action. Check that each site is legally protected, secure from stock, weed/pest-free. Check with DOC and your local council to find out if they are doing any pest control. If the site has huge and expensive management needs, and an uncertain future, it may not be worth including in this assessment.

Score:

Ownership

In general if the site is a public reserve more people can enjoy the fruits of your labour and may also be willing to help. If it is a covenant (e.g. QEII) or in some similar form of legal protection, your hard work is more secure - a future landowner can't ruin your efforts.

Also consider the number of owners. It may be difficult to get lots of people to agree to look after the site, but if you're successful you have plenty of helpers!

Score: