The question is often asked: how ‘rare’ is it to have an undeveloped sandspit in this day and age in New Zealand? First, a definition, ‘undeveloped’ means: a sandspit that retains its natural character; has not been built on or modified for agriculture or forestry. The corollary to this question is: what is the intrinsic value of Ngunguru Sandspit and its associated environs?

There are 7 sandspits in the region north of Auckland. All are Holocene sand barrier beaches formed by near shore marine processes during the rise of sea level after the last Glacial Maximum in New Zealand. On the northeast coast of northern NZ, sandspits are oriented northward in response to north-directed long shore drift. All are built across coastal embayments and enclose an estuary. Ngunguru Sandspit is the only one that remains in a natural, unmodified, state. ALL of the other sandspits have been subdivided for residential housing or are being used for commercial forestry or agriculture (mainly grazing). In addition, the Ngunguru sandspit is highly significant to Maori culture as a site with many archaeological sites and as a site of a major battle (1832) during the Maori Land Wars.

Ngunguru Sandspit may not be the only undeveloped sandspit in New Zealand, but it is the only one in Northland. Much of the Northland Experience, is centered on the coastal beaches and estuaries. They have “always” been there for summer camping, swimming, fishing, boating, family holidays, long walks with loved ones or alone, and as a buffer to city-life in the big smoke. Twenty years ago, or even 10 years ago, the coast was still open and accessible. Now, all of a sudden, we’re faced with the reality that a corner-post of our coastal psyche will be taken away. And, the proof is that all the other sandspits have been changed beyond recognition by house-building or commercial enterprises.
Rarity Value of a Natural Ngunguru Sandspit

Ngunguru Sandspit, Estuary and Bay to the Horahora River estuary and Pataua North. Sacred Whakairiora Mountain is at the base of the sandspit.

The local community has spoken its wishes; and there is support far and wide throughout New Zealand and even throughout the world: protect Ngunguru Sandspit. Let’s work on a solution to get it into public ownership and protective, cooperative, management. Ngunguru Sandspit is to be protected for the whole of our diverse New Zealand community and the intention is for its management to reflect the diverse community.

Comparison of Northland Sandspits

1. **Ngunguru Sandspit**: undeveloped, vegetated, adjacent to estuary and Whakairiora Mountain with coastal forest; very high biodiversity in habitats from coastal forest, estuarine, dunes and marine environments. No residential development; no agricultural or forestry development. Owned by property development company Todd Property who have a dormant proposed 350-lot subdivision. An active community objects to this development and is working toward public ownership and cooperative management with all parts of the community as a reserve or heritage park-type concept. This is within the Whangarei District and Northland Regional Council area; approximately 30 km from Whangarei by road.

   [http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-35.63972,174.510441&spn=0.037598,0.084543&t=h&z=14](http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-35.63972,174.510441&spn=0.037598,0.084543&t=h&z=14)

2. **Mangawhai Sandspit**: distal end is unvegetated active dunes; commercial forestry operation on about half of the spit and along the barrier beach. The spit breached in recent decades and the outlet channel in-filled. Subsequent dredging re-opened...
Rarity Value of a Natural Ngunguru Sandspit

the original outlet. Location: access from Kaiwaka; at the very South edge of the Whangarei District and Northland Regional Council area.

http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-36.107785,174.609747&spn=0.074752,0.169086&t=h&z=13

3. Whananaki Sandspit and estuary: commercial forestry and grazing paddocks; distal end is undeveloped active sand sheet that changes seasonally and with changing wave/sea conditions (true of the distal end of all sand spits).

http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-35.515042,174.46671&spn=0.018828,0.042272&t=h&z=15

4. Kokota Sandspit: the distal end is an active, unvegetated dune field and the rest is in commercial forestry; very large sandspit composed of very pure quartz sands that are mined for the glass industry; encloses the Parengarenga Harbour. Location: access from State Highway 1, North of Te Kao; Far North District and Northland Regional Council area.

http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-34.592802,172.992783&spn=0.152336,0.338173&t=h&z=12&lci=org.wikipedia.en

5. Hokianga Harbour, sandspit on the north side. Active dunes and commercial forestry. Location: west coast, State Highway 12, North of Dargaville. Far North District and Northland Regional Council area.

http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-35.498413,173.38623&spn=0.075328,0.169086&t=h&z=13

6. Kaipara Harbour, North and South spits: unusual occurrence of sand spits on both sides of the harbour entrance; encloses a very large harbour and estuary. Recent sand dunes are built on Pleistocene, and possibly older, dunes. Both spits have been utilised for commercial forestry for many decades. Location: west coast; North Kaipara spit is accessed from State Highway 12 and Dargaville; South Kaipara spit is accessed from State Highway 16 and Helensville. North Spit is in the Kaipara District and Northland Regional Council area. South Spit is in the Rodney District and Auckland Regional Council area.

http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-36.377068,174.388733&spn=0.595964,1.352692&t=h&z=10
7. Omaha Sandspit: covered with houses; the distal end is modified with groins in an attempt to control the long shore drift of sand. Location: access from Warkworth, 45 minutes drive N of Auckland; Rodney District, Auckland Regional Council area. Residential development in the 1970s. Beach erosion problems began immediately due to strong winter storms. [http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-36.335456,174.780807&spn=0.074535,0.169086&t=h&z=13](http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=-36.335456,174.780807&spn=0.074535,0.169086&t=h&z=13)

Housing subdivision on Omaha Sandspit. Sand builds up along the groins in an attempt to control erosion/accretion processes.