

Description of the District

The Wairarapa covers a land area of over 500,000 hectares and has a population of over 45,000 (2018 census). It is a predominantly rural area, with a range of pastoral, horticultural, and forestry land uses. A number of towns service the area, including Masterton, Carterton, Greytown, Martinborough, and Featherston, as well as numerous smaller rural and coastal settlements. The area is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the south and east, the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges to the west, and hill country to the north. Numerous significant and unique natural and physical resources enable the community to provide for its economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.

The Wairarapa has a long distinctive coastline, a substantial lake, rivers, streams, and numerous wetlands. At a broad level, the characteristic natural features include mountain ranges, undulating hill country, broad plains, rocky headlands, and sand dune coastlines. Lake Wairarapa and its adjacent wetlands form the largest wetland complex in the lower North Island and are considered to be the central natural feature and taonga of the Wairarapa. Other specific examples of outstanding features include the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges, Castlepoint, The Pinnacles, Waingawa Faulted Terraces, and the Uriti Point Dunefields.

The Wairarapa has strong inter-regional transport connections, with a commuter rail service to Wellington and State Highway 2 running through Masterton, Carterton, Greytown, and Featherston. State Highway 53 connects Martinborough and Featherston.

The area is experiencing steady population growth, an aging population, a decrease in household size, and strong demand for housing. Population growth in some parts of the Wairarapa is putting existing infrastructure under pressure and generating demand for urban expansion. Increasing recreational and tourism development is also placing pressure on the natural and physical resources of the area such as the coast, lakes, rivers, and natural areas.

There are two iwi in the Wairarapa, Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, as explained in the Tangata Whenua chapter.