

## The mineral potential of Northland

### Introduction

Mining in Northland began with the discovery of coal at Kawakawa in the 1860s, followed by cement-making trials at Portland near Whangarei in the 1870s. Since then, antimony, copper, diatomite, kaolinite clay, kauri gum, manganese, mercury, peat, serpentine, silica sand and silver have been mined in Northland, along with aggregate and sand for building, and limestone.

Today Northland has a significant mining industry, dominated by:

- Cement – the Golden Bay Cement plant at Whangarei is New Zealand's largest, and makes more than half of the cement being used throughout New Zealand.
- High quality china clay for export from Matauri Bay
- Aggregate, being produced at more than 50 quarries throughout the region
- Limestone, mainly used as fertiliser in farming from more than 20 quarries
- Sand, both onshore and offshore, for building and industrial use

The value of Northland's mineral output is the fifth largest of the 15 regions of New Zealand, and the mining sector is a significant source of employment in the region at present. In February 2006 it employed nearly 600 people, more than half of them in the Whangarei District.

### New Studies

Two new studies on Northland's mineral potential and its value have recently been completed.

The mineral resource and economic studies demonstrate that there is potential to expand the minerals industry in Northland and its contribution to Northland's economy. The mineral potential across a wide range of minerals has been investigated by GNS Science within their Foundation of Research, Science and Technology (FRST) funded minerals research programme. The potential economic benefits of discovering and developing Northland's mineral resources have been quantified in a study by the NZ Institute of Economic Research (NZIER). The economic study has been funded by Crown Minerals (Ministry of Economic Development) and the Far North and Whangarei District Councils. The results are presented in two reports which can be downloaded from this website.

### Reports:

Christie AB, Barker R G, 2007. Mineral resource assessment of the Northland Region, New Zealand. [GNS Science science report 2007/06 \[5.9 mB PDF\]](#)

Walton, M, 2007. [Northland's mineral resources – potential economic impact \[375 kB PDF\]](#). Report by NZ Institute of Economic Research to Crown Minerals, Northland Regional Council and Far North and Whangarei District Councils.