

Consulting on the protection of native taonga species in the Hutiwai and Mohakatino Conservation Areas

The Department of Conservation's (DOC) Ngāmotu/New Plymouth Office plans to reduce possum, rat and stoat numbers to protect North Island brown kiwi, pekapeka, and forest canopy species from local extinction in the Hutiwai and Mohakatino area.

Values

The Hutiwai and Mohakatino Conservation Areas form a large tract of forest which extends across North Taranaki into Waikato and Manawatu-Wanganui. It is dominated by tawa and kāmahī with interspersed beech forest, and is home to taonga such as North Island (NI) brown kiwi, yellow-crowned kākārīki, and pekapeka (long and short-tailed bats).

The ancient ngahere, cleanses and protects the quality of the water flowing through the region and retains the health of the forest for all inhabitants and beyond.

Why we are controlling possums and rodents

Possums browse the canopy and damage the integrity of the forest. Northern rātā, kamahi and other plants are favoured by possums and the canopies of these trees are in danger of collapse. These predators must be controlled to allow the native forest to regenerate and flourish to ensure the survival of the natural inhabitants - the native birds, bats, lizards and invertebrates.

Rats and stoats eat birds' eggs and prey on chicks. This predation severely impacts the ability of these taonga species to survive.



Yellow-crowned kākārīki in Hutiwai and Mohakatino Photo: Emma Rowe

Controlling predators allows native species to breed and reach adulthood.

Kiwi are long lived and slow breeding. Stoat control is known to improve kiwi survival rates. The decline of the NI brown kiwi population without control is likely to be between 2-3% per year. Without pest control, kiwi chick survival is about 6%, largely due to predation by stoats.

Where are we proposing to control predators?

DOC is planning predator control over an area of 29,958 ha (see attached map) in the Hutiwai and Mohakatino Conservation Areas.

Consultation – Have your say

DOC is continuing to consult closely with local iwi Te rūnanga o Ngāti Tama, and Te rūnanga o Ngāti Maniapoto on this planned operation. It is also seeking feedback from adjacent landowners and the affected community on the effects of this control plan and would like to hear your views. We are here to listen to you.

DOC staff from the Ngāmotu/New Plymouth Office or our contractor EcoFX Limited would like to contact you at a convenient time to discuss the proposed operation; how it affects you, and what we can do to mitigate these effects.

How we are proposing to protect the area

Cereal baits containing biodegradable 1080 would be applied aerially over the planned area. Helicopters with calibrated buckets will distribute bait along pre-determined and monitored flight paths.

Use of a range of predator control methods to protect native species

Aerial application of cereal pellets containing 1080 is the most effective control method over large areas. It is the only viable method in large, remote, and rugged areas. Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, however the number of possum/rodents and stoats can overwhelm trapping networks. In those areas aerial 1080 may be used to supplement the existing ground-based work. Aerial 1080 operations target possums and rodents, and stoats are also reduced effectively as they eat rodents/possums.

Time frame

At this stage, this operation is planned to occur during the winter of 2021. The operation is weather dependent.

Planning

DOC engages and works closely with iwi for all predator control. DOC also consults with stakeholders and affected landowners.

Following feedback from this consultation, there will be decisions on what changes can be made to the



North Island brown kiwi found in Hutiwai and Mohakatino. Photo: Andrew Walmsley

operational plan to mitigate the effects of the operation on you.

DOC or our contractors will provide an update to confirm the outcomes of the consultation and any resulting changes to the operational boundary plan, and a more precise timeframe.

Also, the contractor EcoFX Limited will contact all neighbours, place a notice in the local newspaper and put up warning signs at entrances to public conservation land immediately prior to the operation starting.

DOC will contact iwi, landowners and affected stakeholders and the local community after the operation to inform them the operation has been completed successfully and provide details of reduction of predator numbers. When possible, DOC will also provide iwi and affected parties with updates on the positive outcomes for native species following this protection,

Use of 1080 requires permission from the local Public Health Unit.

DOC assesses vertebrate predator control operations that use a toxin on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). DOC staff follow procedures approved by the EPA. These regulations ensure the toxin is applied safely to safeguard the public and the environment.

Key Facts: What you need to know

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate is salt occurring naturally in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa and Brazil. It does not accumulate. It is broken down naturally by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds

and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.

DOC complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the aerial application of biodegradable 1080.

All operations begin with an aerial pre-feed of non-toxic bait to prime possums/rodents to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.

- The toxic cereal bait pellets contain 0.15% of 1080. They are about 2 cm long, cylindrical and dyed green.
- Non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 2 cm long, cylindrical and sandy coloured (not-dyed).



Pekapeka (long-tailed bat) found in Hutiwai and Mohakatino. Photo: Colin O'Donnell

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. Dogs are highly susceptible. In areas where the toxin has been applied, the risk to dogs will remain until

poisoned carcasses have disintegrated, which can be more than six months. These risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait.

WATCH children at all times.

DO NOT EAT animals from this area.

Toxic baits and carcasses are **DEADLY to DOGS**.

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These warning signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and animals. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area.

For more information

Please contact:

Department of Conservation

Biodiversity Ranger

Ngāmotu/New Plymouth Office

55A Rimu Street

New Plymouth

Email: newplymouth@doc.govt.nz

Phone: 06 759 0350

Or

EcoFX Limited

Email: admin@ecofx.co.nz

Phone: 07 873 8130

www.doc.govt.nz/tiakina-nga-manu

Map of proposed predator control of 29,958ha in the Hutiwai and Mohakatino Conservation Areas.
 The boundary is indicative and may change subject to consultation.

