

Consultation for the protection of native taonga species in Whareorino

The Department of Conservation's (DOC) Maniapoto office and Waikato Regional Council (WRC) plan to reduce rat and possum numbers to protect the Archey's frog from local extinction in the Whareorino Conservation Area and Herangi range.

This area has significant cultural values for the Maniapoto iwi. Threatened native species for the area include the nationally vulnerable parasitic plant *Dactylanthus taylorii* and the 'critically endangered' Archey's frog (*Leiopelma archeyi*). This steep rugged forest supports rare ecological habitats connecting coastal to alpine environments. This includes Northern Rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), Mountain Cedar (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) and Hard Beech (*Fuscospora truncata*) which all support an abundance of native bird species.

Why we are controlling possums and rodents

Predation by possums and rodents causes populations of threatened native species such as the *Dactylanthus taylorii*, Archey's frog and pekapeka/long tailed bat to decline. Browsing by possums causes canopy defoliation, leading to tree mortality and inhibits the regeneration of native seedlings. Northern rātā are favoured by possums. Significantly high possum and rat number in some cases causes our most important and vulnerable native taonga to face local extinction.

In Whareorino, DOC and WRC are planning to conduct predator control to protect threatened native species over 31,667 ha (see attached map).



Archey's frog (*Leiopelma archeyi*) Credit: © JamesReardon.org

This will give the *Dactylanthus taylorii*, Archey's frog and pekapeka/long tailed bat a chance to recover.

Reducing the number of possums browsing Whareorino means fewer trees will die and new plants will have a chance to establish. The result – a healthy forest. A healthy forest improves the stability of the catchment, reducing the amount of soil eroding into the surrounding rivers and streams. A healthy forest acts like a sponge, catching and temporarily absorbing rain, so less water ends up in rivers and streams when it rains heavily.

Predator control works

Archey's frog monitoring in Whareorino has been ongoing since 2005. At sites where sustained rodent control (ground methods partnered with cyclic aerial 1080 control) is carried out, the Archey's frog populations have increased. Whareorino remains a critical strong hold for the ongoing recovery of these frog species.

Foliar Browse monitoring has shown a net improvement in canopy condition since aerial possum control increased in frequency from the early 2000's in the Whareorino Conservation Area.

Consultation – Have your say.

WRC is consulting closely with Maniapoto iwi, hapū, and whānau. We are also consulting with affected landowners, key stakeholders and the community.

The Council is consulting on the effects of this planned predator control operation and would like your views. We are interested in understanding how you consider the proposed operation could impact you.

EcoFX has been assigned by WRC to carry out consultation with landowners and other affected parties. EcoFX 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 planning to protect the area

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

Neighbouring landowners have given their permission for farmland to receive ground-based control. This involved cereal pellets in bait stations containing Brodifacoum or Cholecalciferol and Diphacinone, along with Potassium cyanide (Feratox pills) and Cholecalciferol (Feracol) in biobags.

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

Aerial application of cereal pellets containing 1080 is the most effective predator control method over large landscapes. It is the only viable method in remote, rugged terrain. Ground-based methods are effective in

smaller more accessible areas, however the number of rats, can overwhelm ground-based control networks. In those areas aerial 1080 may be used to supplement the existing ground-based work. Aerial 1080 operations target possums and rodents. Stoats are also reduced effectively as they eat poisoned possums and rats.

Time frame

At this stage, this operation is planned to occur between the 1 st of April and 30th June 2023. The operation is weather dependent, and you will be kept informed for specific dates

Planning

WRC and DOC engage and work closely with iwi and hapū for all predator control operations. WRC and EcoFX will also consult with key stakeholders, affected landowners and affected communities.



Dactylanthus taylorii female inflorescence Photo Credit: D. Gordon
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Following the feedback from consultation, decisions will be made on what changes are practical to the operational plan to mitigate the effects of the operation on you.

A notification fact sheet will be distributed closer to the time to confirm any changes to the boundary plan and a more precise timeframe.

Also, EcoFX will contact all neighbours and place a notice in local newspapers. Warning signs will be installed at entrances to public conservation land and private land immediately prior to the operation starting.

Whenever possible, WRC will also update iwi, affected landowners, stakeholders and the local community about

the conservation outcomes for the area resulting from this predator control.

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) on PCL. Council is running the operation and will follow all 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 that occurs 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 and WRC comply with all relevant regulations and take 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).

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 still be present in baits and animals. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area.

For more information

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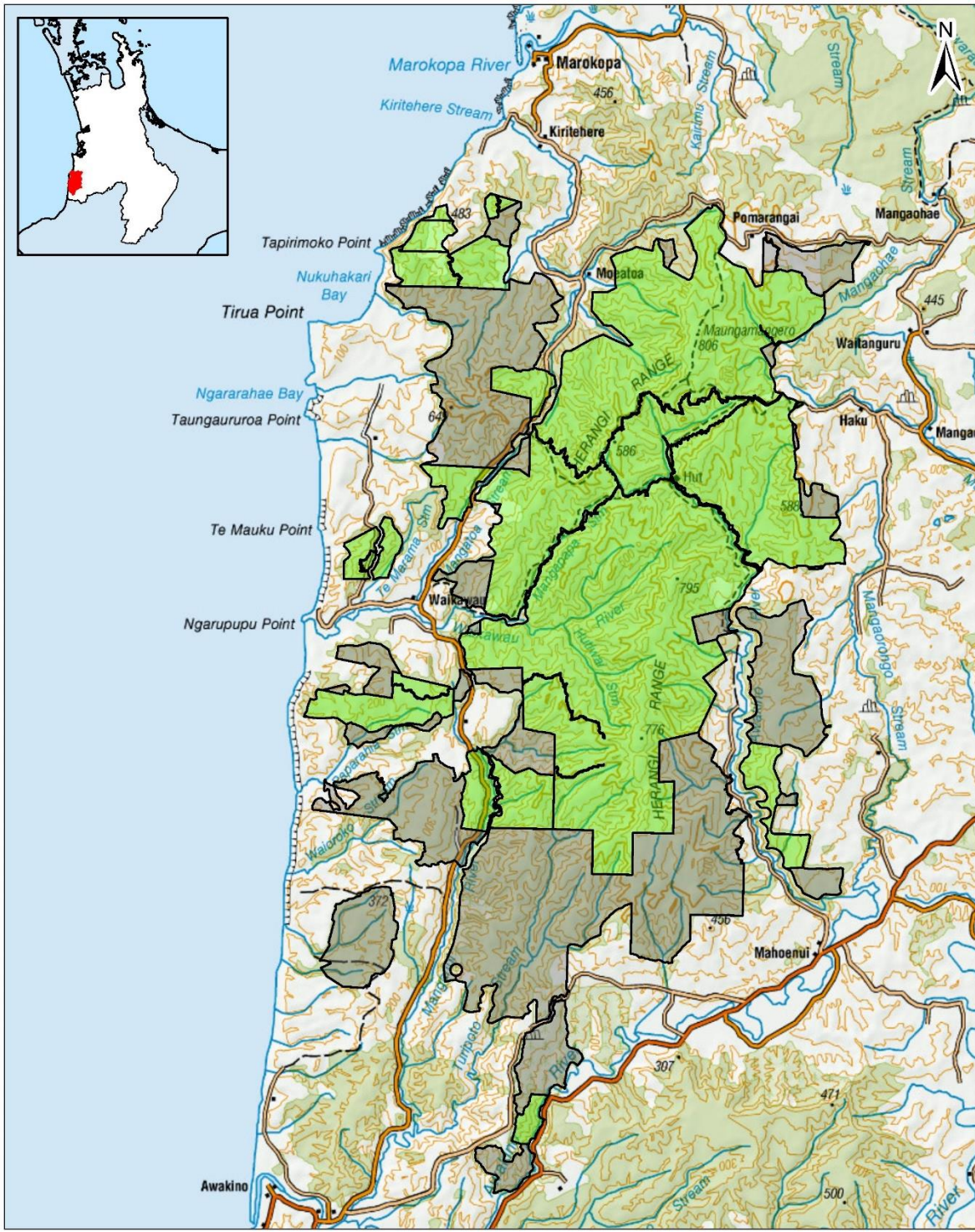
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Proposed Whareorino predator control area

This map shows the planned application area for predator control. It is indicative: the boundaries may change subject to consultation and other operation planning requirements.



Acknowledgements and Disclaimers
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Legend

- Proposed Operational Area
- Public Conservation Land

Proposed Aerial Operation

Whareorino



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