Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass

Consulting on the protection of native taonga species in the Mt Messenger and Parininihi conservation areas

A key goal of the Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass project is the reduction of pest populations over 3,650 hectares of forest in and around the new highway alignment.

This enduring pest management commitment is part of a broader environmental programme for Te Ara o Te Ata, which seeks to leave the area in a better condition than its current state.

Pests like rats, possums and stoats have seriously damaged local mature native forest and habitat, and decimated populations of native species such as kiwi, lizards and pekapeka (long-tailed bats).

Through the Te Ara o Te Ata: Mt Messenger Bypass project, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, the Mt Messenger Alliance, the Department of Conservation and iwi partner and mana whenua Ngāti Tama are committed to:

- offsetting the ecological effects of the construction and operation of the bypass
- supporting the forest's recovery from pest damage
- improving the diversity and abundance of native plants and animals
- reducing all significant pests to low levels (rats, possums, stoats, deer, goats, feral pigs, feral cats, ferrets and weasels).

Consultation: Have your say

We are seeking feedback from adjacent landowners and the affected community on the effects of this control plan, and would like to hear your views.

Our contractor EcoFX will be in touch to arrange a convenient time to discuss the operation, how it affects you, and what we can do to mitigate these effects.

Aerial pest control operation

Among the methods required to achieve this reduction in pest populations is the aerial application of pellets containing 1080 – a manufactured biodegradable toxin – over an area of approximately 5,000ha covering Mt Messenger and Parininihi (see map on back page).

Given the high tree canopy of this forest, an aerial treatment is necessary to achieve the required knock-down in pest numbers, particularly of rats.

This joint Waka Kotahi and DOC initiative will supplement current ground-based work to create an additional 250km network of traps and bait stations - complementing the existing Parininihi network.

WAKA KOTAHI NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY

Te Ara o Te Ata

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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, forest-covered 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 dead rodents/possums.

Engagement

Following feedback from this consultation, there will be decisions on what changes can be made to the operational plan to mitigate the effects of the operation on you.

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

We 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, we 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.

Timeframe

At this stage, this operation is planned to occur during July 2023. The operation is weather dependent.

Pekapeka (long-tailed bats) are under threat from rats, stoats and possums. Photo: Colin O'Donnell, DOC.

Key Facts: What you need to know

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient fluoroacetate is a 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 non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 2 cm long, cylindrical and sandy coloured (not-dyed)
- the toxic cereal bait pellets contain 0.15% of 1080. They are about 2 cm long, cylindrical and dyed green.

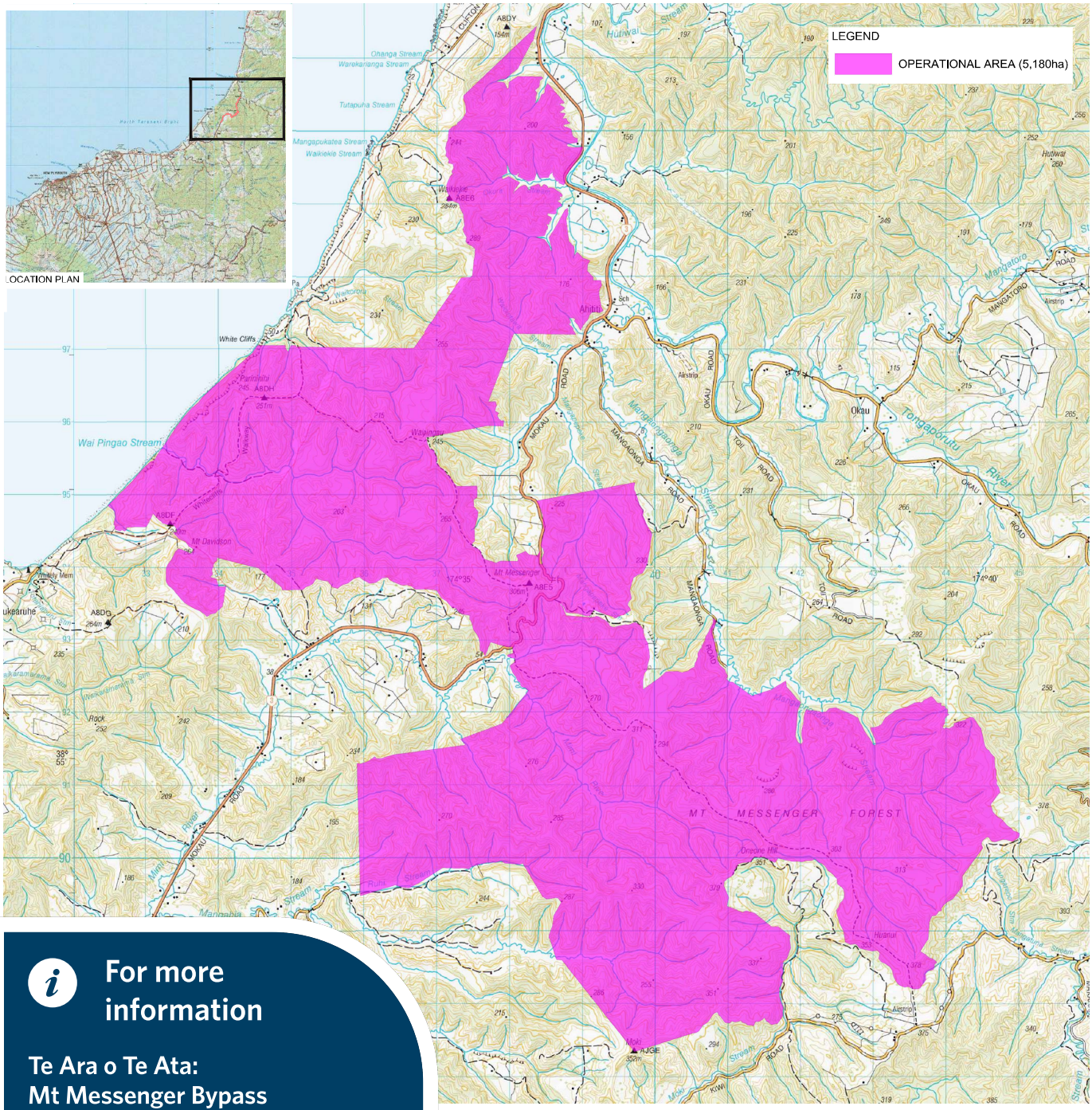
Managing risk

1080 is toxic 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.

The North Island brown kiwi is under pressure from pests in Parininihi and Mt Messenger.



The boundary is indicative and may change subject to consultation.

For more information

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0800 BYPASS

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For predator control information please visit **doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme**

For project updates please visit **nzta.govt.nz/tearaoteata**

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