Consulting on the protection of native species in Whenuakite

The Department of Conservation (DOC) wants to reduce rats, stoats and possums to protect native species

Native wildlife and forests need protection

The Whenuakite block of Coromandel Forest Park is among the most valuable conservation sites in New Zealand.

There are kiwi, Archey's frogs, kererū, kākā and many other native species living here.

It has a mixture of mature coastal forest and younger regenerating trees, with stands of kauri in selected areas and pōhutukawa aligning the coast.

Local community groups, volunteers and the regional council have recognised the importance of this area and contributed to conservation efforts since 2001.

The establishment of the Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group and a sustained predator control programme for more than two decades has increased the profile and protection of native flora and fauna in this region.

Why we need to control introduced predators

Rats are the most significant predator of small forest birds and threaten the long-term survival of many native species. Rats eat lizards, insects, eggs, young birds and a wide range of native fruits and plants.

Rat numbers need to be reduced sufficiently in Whenuakite on average every three years to protect native birds and enable them to breed and increase their numbers. Stoats also need to be controlled because they eat kiwi and other vulnerable native birds.

In 2023, our team in Hauraki District is planning to reduce predators across approximately 1400 hectares of the forest to protect native species. This will support Coromandel brown kiwi and other threatened native species to continue to recover.

Predator control has broad benefits including protection for native trees and plants eaten by possums.

North Island brown kiwi. Photo by Neil Hutton

Monitoring native species and predators

Through sustained predator control, there is a significant increase in breeding success for birds, their food source is more abundant, and the forest canopy is healthier.

Coromandel brown kiwi are monitored at this site by the Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group. The group was set up in 2000 and it has been monitoring kiwi ever since. The group also manages a trapping network across 1422 hectares.

Since predator control began here 22 years ago, kiwi have been increasing every year between 2-3 %+. This has been achieved through regular aerial 1080 operations and ground trapping.

The Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group has also observed increasing numbers of kererū in the area.

Did you know?

Kiwi chick survival is 20% without predator control and 80% with predator control.

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Our plan to protect Whenuakite

The most effective tool we have to control predators over large areas is biodegradable cereal pellets containing 1080.

Bait pellets are distributed across the forest by helicopters using technology that enables precise and accurate placement to best target predators.

Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas. However, the number of predators can overwhelm trapping networks. The use of 1080 supports the trapping network managed by Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group.

This work is part of DOC's National Predator Control Programme, and it's critical to achieving New Zealand's goal of becoming predator free by 2050. We are protecting the remaining populations of threatened native species while tools continue to be developed to eradicate possums, rats and stoats from the mainland.

Proposed timeframe

Predator control operations are done when monitoring shows predators have reached levels threatening the populations of native species. Operations are weather dependent. The operation in Whenuakite is planned to occur between August and November 2023.

Key facts about 1080

Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) is a biodegradable toxin that is used to control rats, stoats and possums on public conservation land.

Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate, is found in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa and Brazil. It is also found at lower levels in our native plants.

1080 has been extensively researched and it is proven to effectively protect native wildlife populations.

1080 bait is broken down naturally in the environment by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.

The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the application of 1080.

Operations begin with the distribution of pre-feed non-toxic bait to prepare possums/rodents to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.

Archey's frog. Photo by James Reardon

Have your say

DOC consults with iwi, hapū and key stakeholders including adjacent landowners for predator control operations where 1080 is the proposed method. We aim to understand people's views and answer any questions they may have.

The DOC Hauraki District team or its contractor EcoFX would like to contact you to discuss the proposed operation. This includes how you think it could affect you and your wellbeing, native flora and fauna, natural resources and your ability to protect, manage and use these resources.

As part of this consultation process, we will consider what we can do to mitigate any effects.

Consultation next steps

Your feedback during consultation will help guide decisions about the operational plan.

DOC or its contractor will update you about the outcomes of the consultation and any changes to the operational boundary plan. This update will be in the form of a notification fact sheet, and it will include a more precise timeframe for the operation.

Use of 1080 requires permission from the Ministry of Health. DOC is delegated the power of the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC. DOC ensures that all legal and policy requirements are met, and any potential risks of the operation are managed.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer. Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary. The standard buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Always report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor of hospital
- The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 or dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals

For more information

Please contact:

EcoFX Ltd

32 Huiaputea Drive, PO Box 248, Otorohanga 3900

Email: admin@ecofx.co.nz Phone: (07) 873 8130

www.ecofx.co.nz

OR

DOC Hauraki Office, Operational Planner

3/366 Ngati Maru Highway (SH25)

Email: thames@doc.govt.nz Phone: 07 867 9180

Visit the DOC website

More information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme is available on our website

doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

You can also see operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land on the DOC website

doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators.

doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

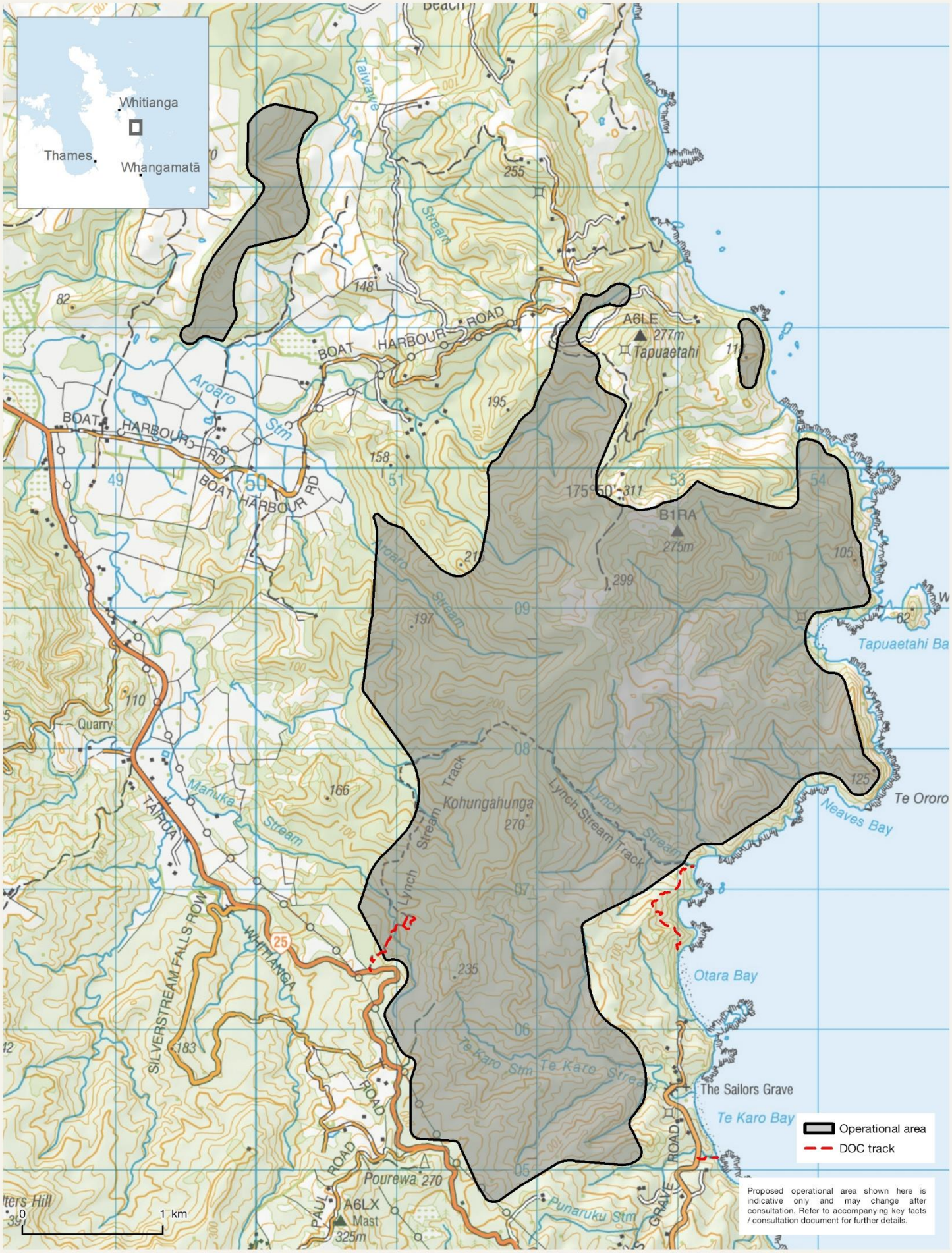
Information about 1080 and how to keep your dog safe.

doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080/1080-and-dogs/

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050

Map of planned predator control area (1,281 hectares) within Whenuakite



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Whenuakite

Aerial Predator Control 2023

Proposed operational area: *1,281 ha*

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NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
Not for navigation | 1:34,000

DOC, Geospatial Services | 30/11/2022

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