Consulting on the protection of native species in Papakai

The Department of Conservation (DOC) in Whitianga wants to reduce rodents, possums and stoats to protect the Papakai ecological area

Native wildlife needs protection here

Native species are fighting for survival due to predation from rats, stoats, and possums. Without ongoing protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within the Papakai ecological area.

Papakai is a nationally significant habitat for Coromandel brown kiwi, Archey's frog, and Coromandel striped gecko. It is also an important conservation area for kākā, kererū and ruru/morepork, as well as a variety of rare and unique plants. This includes lowland podocarp to sub-alpine forest of kauri, tawa, and northern rātā.

Rats are having a negative impact through predation of native lizards, birds, and insects. The varied diet of rats also makes them competitors with native wildlife for food. Stoat numbers also need to be controlled as they have a devastating effect on New Zealand's unique birdlife. They are voracious and relentless hunters.

Possums are browsing large amounts of native vegetation. This significantly impacts the health of the forest. Northern rātā, kohekohe, kāmahi, and Halls tōtara are favoured by possums and will die if possum numbers are not periodically controlled to low numbers. Possums, like rats, raid nests for eggs and chicks and compete with native animals for food. Reducing predators helps native forest habitats to recover.

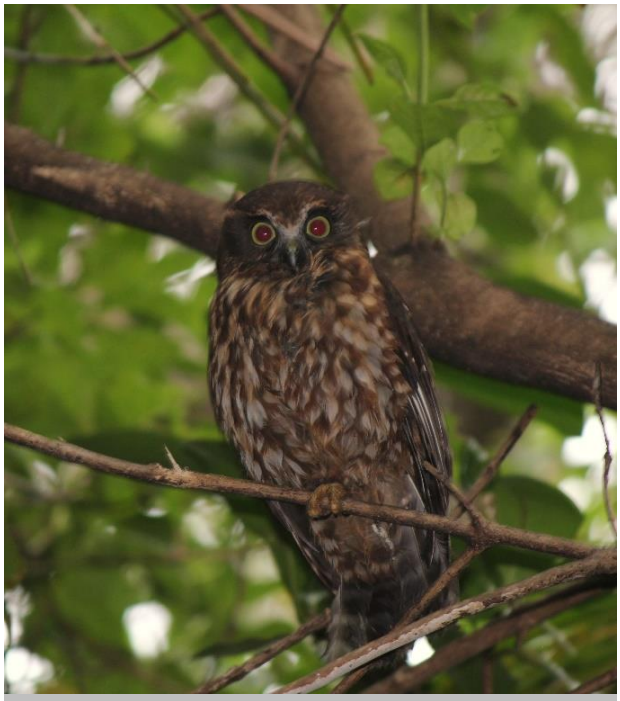
The plan to control introduced predators

To protect native species, our team in Whitianga is planning to reduce predator numbers across 11,335 hectares of the forest.

The most effective tool to control predators over large areas is bait pellets containing sodium fluoroacetate (1080). Helicopters distribute bait across the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the only way to control possums, rats and stoats across vast, remote and rugged landscapes.

Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, however the number of predators can overwhelm trapping networks.

This work is part of DOC's National Predator Control Programme. We are protecting the remaining populations of threatened native species while tools continue to be developed to eradicate possums, rats and stoats across New Zealand.



Ruru/morepork
Photo by Steve Bolton

Monitoring native species

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

Research shows kererū, kākā and kiwi breed more successfully with intensive predator control. Coromandel brown kiwi chicks are especially vulnerable to stoats because they are defenceless until they weigh 1kg.

The proposed Papakai aerial 1080 operation will reduce predators ahead of the kiwi nesting season, giving chicks the best possible chance to reach adulthood.

Map of planned predator control area

The map on the last page shows the planned area of 11,335 hectares for predator control. The boundaries may change subject to consultation and other operational planning requirements.

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawbai

Key facts about 1080

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. 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 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.

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

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

Proposed timeframe

Predator control operations are done when monitoring shows predators have reached levels that threaten the populations of native species. Operations are weather dependent. At this stage, the operation in Papakai is planned to occur between July and November.

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 team at Whitianga or our 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.

2-Mile Pinnacle
Photo by Ben Gordon

Consultation next steps

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

DOC or our contractor will update you about the outcomes of the consultation and any changes to the treatment 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 authority by 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 that 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 or 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:

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Phone: 07 869 5639

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www.ecofx.co.nz

Visit the DOC website:

See more information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme

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

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

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

See operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land

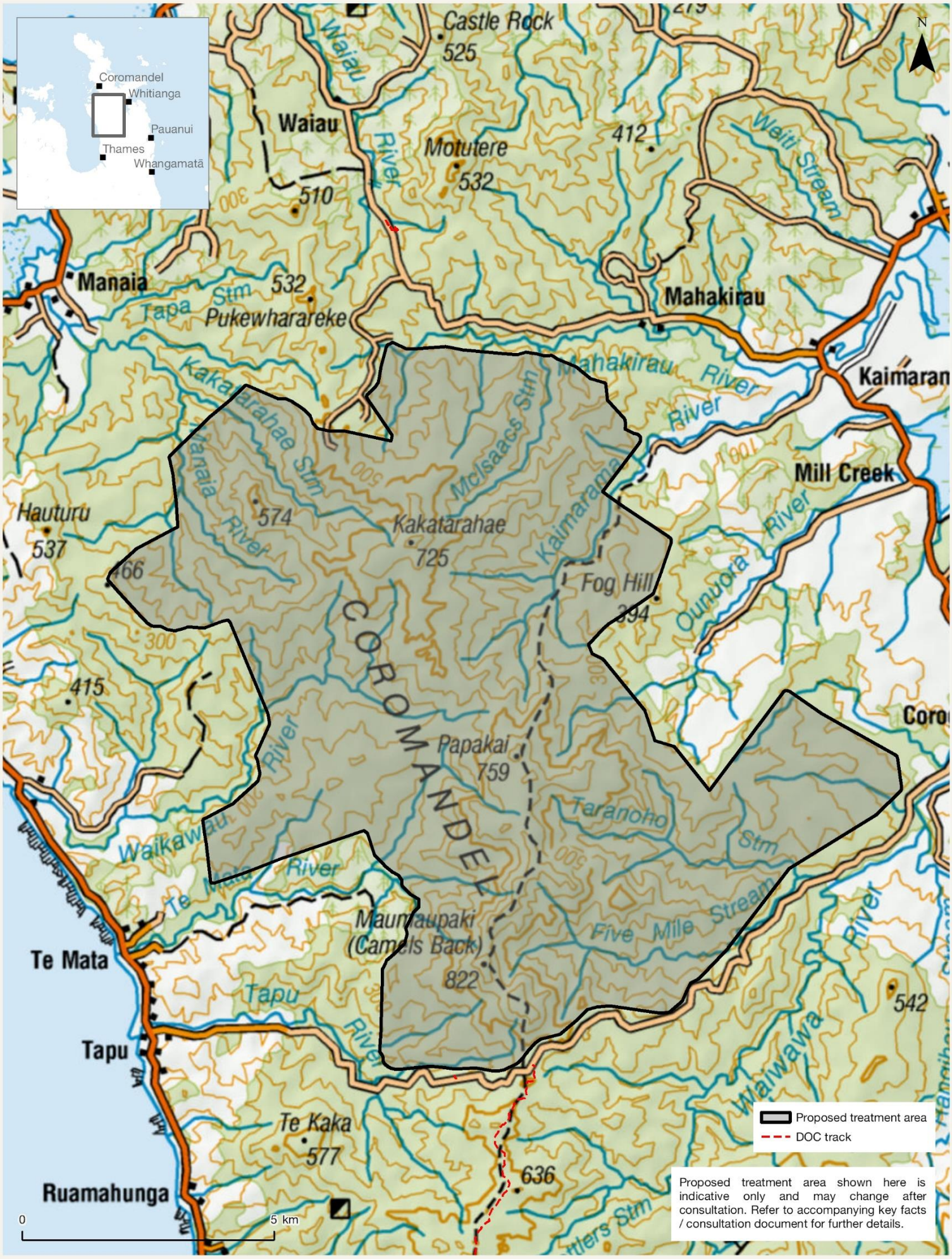
www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

See updates about track access and safety

www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/alerts

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

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



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Papakai

Aerial Predator Control 2024

Proposed treatment area: *11,645 ha*

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government