

HOK_50 – Waitaha Riverbed (590.4892 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Waitaha Riverbed	367.7791	2805634	2
Conservation Area - Waitaha Riverbed	222.7101	2805643	2

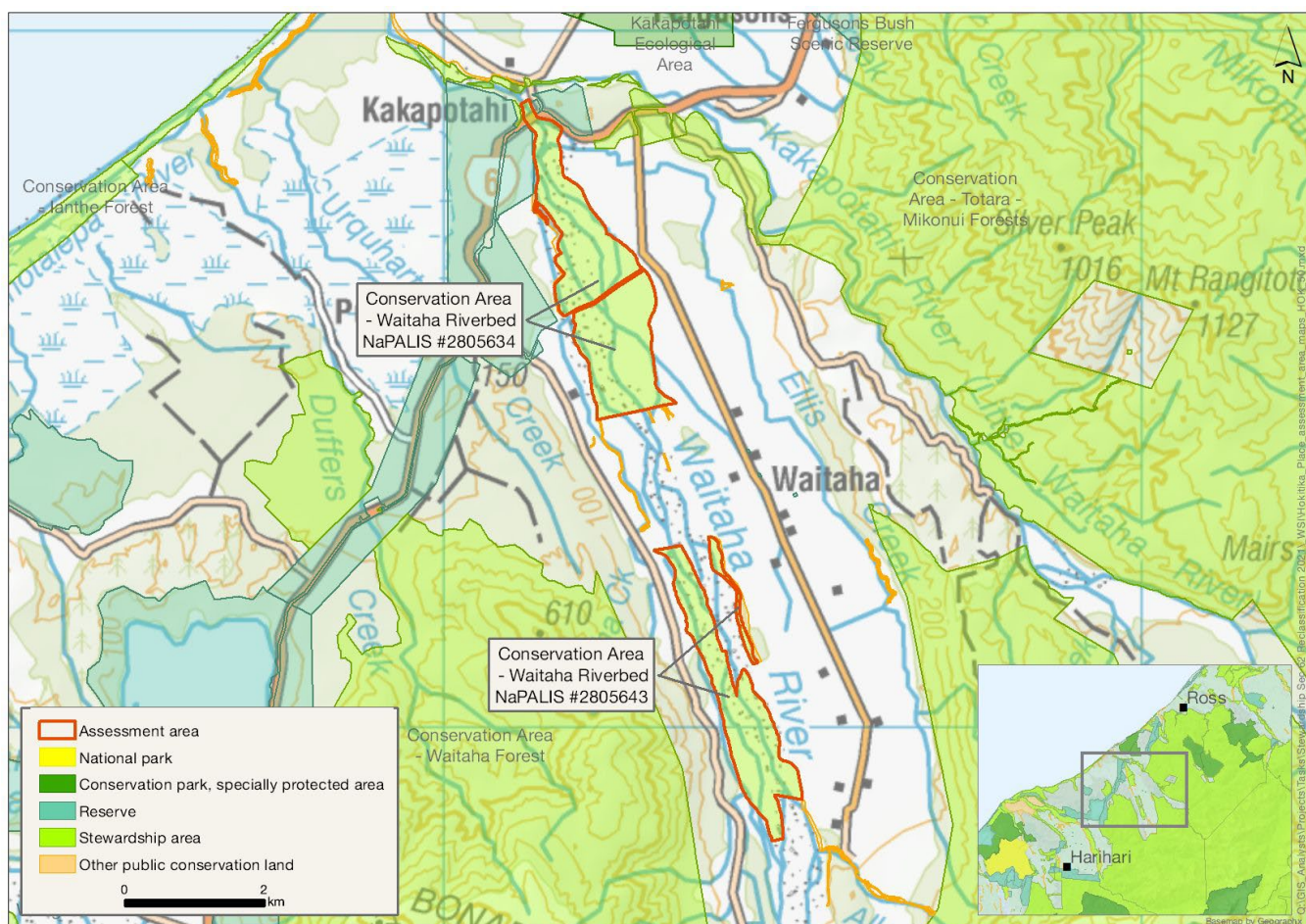
Location

The lower Waitaha Valley, largely above SH6 at Kakapotahi.

Brief Description

This area contains a mixture of active and stable riverbed (including islands), and alluvial flats. The vegetation largely comprises sparsely vegetated braided riverbed, improved pasture, and rough pasture. Water quality is predicted to be high, however, the surrounding land use is intensive dairy farming – grazing concessions are active on most of the area of these conservation areas. There are no DOC-managed tracks or facilities, although the occasional packrafter or kayaker may paddle down the Waitaha River. No historic sites or heritage values are recorded. The Waitaha Hydro Scheme proposal is located here.

Map



Ngāi Tahu Values and Interests

Mo tātou, a, mo ka uri, a muri ake nei – for us and our children after us

There is a deep connection between Ngāi Tahu and all of the whenua in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā. A section 4 Conservation Act and Te Tiriti principles perspective is required, and it may be that areas of land are significant to Ngāi Tahu from that broader perspective. To avoid doubt, nothing in the proposed classification affects, limits or derogates from the rangatiratanga of Ngāi Tahu over its takiwā, including in relation to freshwater; and/or any other rights or interests Ngāi Tahu may have.

Further, Ngāi Tahu may have future aspirations for this land (such as from an economic wellbeing and development perspective) and so those aspirations must be considered and provided for as well.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

The area contains a mixture of active and stable riverbed (including islands), and alluvial flats. The vegetation largely comprises sparsely vegetated braided riverbed, improved pasture and rough pasture. Also present are areas of shrubland, wetland and drainage channels. The area lies within the Harihari Ecological District, and the vegetation is only modestly representative of that district. These discrete areas cover the braided riverbed of the Waitaha, including a considerable area of active channels and riparian margins. Water quality is predicted to be high, but the surrounding land use is intensive dairy farming. The riparian margin is of variable quality (as a buffer), and most reaches have very little vegetation. Grazing concessions are active on most of the area of these areas. Braided rivers are a highly threatened environment.

Diversity and pattern

The area extends from c. 10–70 m above sea level and contains three level 4 land environment units, which is considered to reflect moderate environmental diversity. There has been very little survey effort in this area. Species found within these areas include giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*) and brown trout (*Salmo Trutta*) (Introduced). However, this catchment is also predicted habitat for torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*), īnanga *Galaxias maculatus*, dwarf galaxias (*Galaxias divergens*) and banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*). Brown mudfish (*Neochanna apoda*) will likely also be present at low altitudes where habitat is remaining.

Rarity and distinctiveness

The assessment area contains much braided riverbed which is a naturally rare ecosystem type. The area contains some of the M2.1a land environments, which is classified as At Risk, i.e., 20–30% remaining in indigenous vegetation. No terrestrial threatened species are recorded from the sites. Of the species found or predicted here, shortjaw kōkopu is Nationally Vulnerable and many of the others are At Risk: Declining.

Ecological context

The northernmost area is adjacent to the Waitaha and Kakapotahi scenic reserves, but it is largely surrounded by farmland. There is an important whitebait fishery at the mouth of the Waitaha. The riparian zones of this riverine ecosystem have been highly modified within the block, often resulting in a lack of riparian vegetation along the main stem, as well as smaller side channels. These smaller, slower flowing side channels could offer habitat for species such as giant kōkopu, but there has been a lot of land intensification in the valley floor of the Waitaha. These areas are largely surrounded by private land or under a grazing concession. Reinstating riparian vegetation, particularly along secondary channels away from the main flow, would create habitat for the giant kōkopu. Any remaining wetland fragments could contain mudfish.

Recreation Values

Setting

These areas are in a Backcountry-remote zone. There are no tracks or facilities managed by the Department.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The occasional packrafter or kayaker may paddle down Waitaha River.

Access

Access from SH6 and Waitaha Rd (north bank), and Allen Rd (south bank).

Heritage Values

Historical overview

No historic sites or heritage values recorded

Permissions Summary

Seven concessions:

- Grazing licence for grazing 86.02 part Waitaha Riverbed, known as the Waitaha Commonage
- Grazing licence for grazing 139.6 ha part Waitaha Riverbed, known as the Waitaha Commonage
- Extraction permit for gravel extraction x 11 sites: Hokitika 4.1 ha, Kokatahi, Waitaha, Wanganui, Waiho, Cook, Arawhata, Whataroa, Poerua, and Jackson Rivers, Docherty Creek
- Extraction permit for the collection of schist and granite from creeks and rivers for sale as decorative stone and paving
- Grazing licence for grazing part bed of Waitaha River 26 ha Mt Bonar SD
- Grazing licence for grazing part bed of the Waitaha River Crown Land 49.5 ha.
- Grazing licence for grazing part bed of the Waitaha River 4.3 ha

Map (aerial photo)

