

HOK_18 – Blue Spur and Kaniere Forest (1522.0291 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Blue Spur Range	577.7356	2806246	4
Conservation Area - Blue Spur Road	168.5618	2805688	3
Conservation Area - Kaniere Forest	775.7317	2805691	17

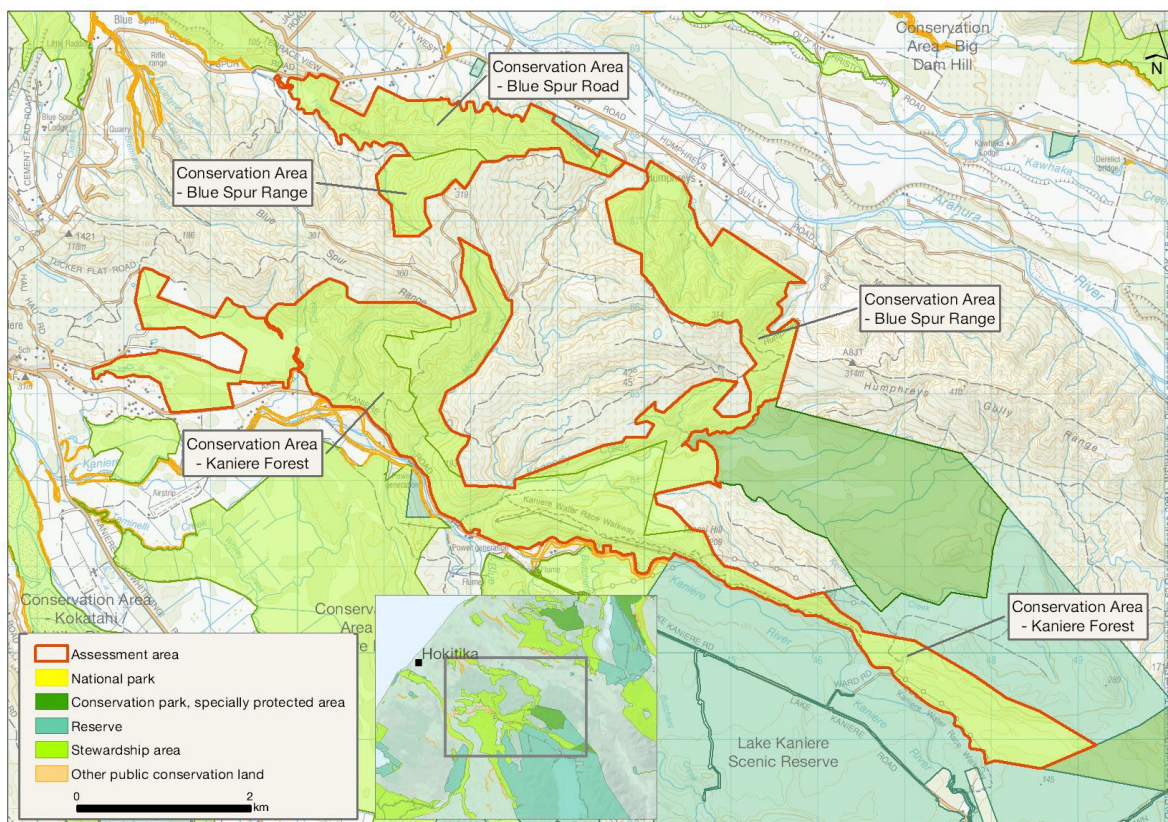
Location

Areas of forest between the Hokitika and Arahura Rivers, north of the Hokitika to Lake Kaniere road.

Brief Description

Relatively large remnant areas of podocarp/hardwood forest between extensive areas of plantation forestry. There is a very large habitat diversity – forest, pākihi and swamp wetlands, small lakes and numerous streams and creeks. The Bio18 Migratory Species programme deems waterways here significant for shortjaw kōkopu and longfin eel. The absence of dams suggests that the upper reaches of these waterways are important for many different migratory species that require connectivity between freshwater and salt water. There are various popular walking, tramping and cycling tracks, some managed by DOC and others by other parties. Further sections of the West Coast Wilderness Trail may be built here to get sections of this trail off the road. There is historic interest from goldmining and power generation. The historic Kaniere Water Race is here, with many associated archaeological sites. A large number of permissions are in place, mostly to do with current mining.

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. 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.

These conservation areas are adjacent to Ngāi Tahu Forestry, an indication of Ngāi Tahu presence, interest and use of the land in this area. Further assessment of the values and opportunities of these conservation areas for Ngāi Tahu is required, as provided for by section 4 Conservation Act and Te Tiriti principles of informed decision making and active protection. Ngāi Tahu may have future aspirations for this land (such as forestry) and so those aspirations must be recognised, considered and provided for, when determining a suitable classification for this land.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

This assessment area is a hodgepodge of large areas, mostly connected to each other or to other areas of conservation land. The landscape is dominated by central cores of old-growth podocarp and late secondary forest occupying the hillslopes of Blue Spur Range, which sits inside the northern part of the Hokitika Ecological District. There is a very large habitat diversity – forest, pākihi and swamp wetlands, small lakes and numerous streams and creeks that feed into the Kaniere and Arahura rivers. Although some areas of the vegetation have been modified by historic clearance (mostly associated with successive gold rushes in mid to late 1800s), they still contain many ecologically important and highly representative examples of lower altitude forest in the ecological district, of which very little remains intact. Approximately half the area still contains old-growth forest, mostly dominated by rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), miro (brown pine, *Prumnopitys ferruginea*) and tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*) over *Quintinia* and kamāhi (*Pterophylla racemose*).

Large areas of induced pākihi-like wetland are present around and inside the areas, particularly where the adjoining lands are still farmed. These are likely to have formed during historic mining and contemporary farming activity with associated land development. These areas will eventually revert to forest cover, often dominated by kahikatea where land is flat and wet.

The waterways here are predicted to have high water quality and naturalness, representing swamp and pākihi wetlands, small lakes and a number of streams. This area includes the Kaniere Swamp Species Management Unit and Lake Kaniere Forest Ecological Management Unit.

Diversity and pattern

There are many different ecosystems occurring in this area including forest (both primary and all stages of secondary), headwaters of tributaries, wetlands, Kaniere River to the south and Arahura River to the north. There are strong altitudinal gradients, with areas ranging from 40–320 m above sea level. The many streams and creeks are also often associated with small areas of wetland, and much larger areas of wetland are present in the south and east of the area, each containing their own diversity.

There is also a ‘recovery from disturbance’ gradient present in the landscape which can be both spatial and temporal.

The areas contain a high number of freshwater survey points and an extremely diverse array of freshwater species, including populations of lamprey (kanakana, *Geotria australis*), shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*)

(Nationally Vulnerable), giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*) and kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), kōura (freshwater crayfish, *Paranephrops planifrons*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), common bully (*Gobiomorphus cotidianus*), freshwater shrimp (*Paratya*) and banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*). All five galaxiid whitebait species are present here, making this an important area for whitebait diversity.

Rarity and distinctiveness

Despite the large proportion of inland and montane forests that are protected, lowland forest on outwash terraces, moraines and on alluvial surfaces have been substantially reduced, probably by at least 90%. Any areas containing remnants such as this are therefore rare in the ecological district, especially when containing the habitat diversity presented by these two areas.

Without proper survey, no terrestrial species have been recorded from these areas, but many rare, notable and threatened species are likely to be present, particularly around the wetland areas that connect to the eastern parts of the area. Newman's speckled skink (*Oligosoma newmani*) (At Risk: Declining) has been recorded near the site, which is at its southern limit.

Many threatened or at-risk freshwater species are present, making this area of high conservation concern, including lamprey and shortjaw kōkopu (both Nationally Vulnerable) and the longfin eel, bluegill bully, torrentfish, īnanga, kōaro and giant kōkopu (all At Risk: Declining).

Additional to this, the Bio18 Migratory Species programme has deemed waterways here to be of significant habitat for shortjaw kōkopu and longfin eel, and the absence of dams suggests that the upper reaches of these waterways are important for many different migratory species that require connectivity between freshwater and salt water for various stages of their life history. Arahura River to the north is a Ngā Awa catchment.

Ecological context

The assessment area is large overall and contains very important linkages to other existing public conservation land, particularly southeast with the Kaniere Ecological Area and Lake Kaniere Scenic Reserve. It also links to another area of stewardship land at Blue Spur and numerous marginal strips.

There are also many historic and contemporary activities that are causing ongoing disturbance and fragmentation of the areas or the surrounding landscape. These include an active mine site (part of the Kaniere Forest Conservation Area) and farming, mining and land development occurring around many edges and possibly inside the area. Other areas of native regenerating forest are being sprayed with herbicide.

Further, a very large area which occupies the middle of the assessment area is being managed as plantation forestry, most of which has been recently (<10 years ago) cleared and replanted. While there is very little ongoing disturbance during the period of tree growth, the harvest period creates enormous damage to connectivity of the landscape. There are also numerous roads and tracks crossing this landscape that create a small degree of ongoing fragmentation and the opportunity for both animal and plant pest migration.

There are no ecological management units, but Lake Kaniere Forest Ecological Management Unit is adjacent to the southeast, being conifer (rimu) dominant forests on glacial outwash with small areas of pākihi.

Ngāi Tahu forestry is adjacent to some of these conservation areas.

Recreation Values

Setting

These areas are in a Backcountry-remote zone and include a DOC-managed Frontcountry site, the Kaniere Water Race Walkway. The area also includes a section of the West Coast Wilderness Trail, managed by a trust on behalf of the Grey and Westland district councils. There are also 4WD tracks to Blue Spur and the Golf Ball weather station, not managed by the Department, and used by local walkers and trail bike riders.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The West Coast Wilderness Trail (cycling) and Kaniere Water Race Walkway are very popular with locals and domestic visitors from all over the country. The mountain bike ride is a multiday trail between Greymouth and Ross and is a great introduction to riding. Further sections of the West Coast Wilderness Trail may be constructed in the area to get remaining sections of this trail off the adjacent road.

Other activities include 4WD and occasional hunting. Areas away from the formed tracks are likely to get little recreation use.

Access

Access from Lake Kaniere Road, Blue Spur Road and Humphreys Gully Road.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

Houhou Creek and Blue Spur Range were prospected prior to 1865 with the area being subject to a small rush in that year. Houhou lead was a buried black-sand beach lead running parallel to the coast. Initially this was mined through tunnelling and shafting. Houhou lead terminated at Big Paddock, the area of tableland north of the Kaniere goldfield, an area very rich in gold. Between Blue Spur Range and Big Paddock the lead ran through Little Paddock.

The main settlement for the rush was Blue Spur township (located north and west of the stewardship land) with another large settlement at Big Paddock. New ground was constantly being opened until the end of 1867 after which work began to slow and the tailings of older workings began to be reworked. Sporadic small rushes occurred throughout the late 1860s as new leads were found but by 1874 the area had been largely abandoned with only a few operations continuing. The initial rush to Kaniere occurred in April 1865 and following further gold discoveries the population of the field had reached 4,200 by the end of 1866.

In 1869, when the boom of the gold rush started fading, the idea to construct a large water race from Lake Kaniere to the Kaniere diggings was mooted. Selling water to miners was a lucrative venture that could revive the gold field. Despite ambitious hopes for its economic potential, local enthusiasm, and central government investment, the race was not built for another six years. The Kaniere Water Race is located within the stewardship land.

From 1875 the race was used sporadically for alluvial mining until 1907 when Ross Goldfields Ltd purchased it. The company planned to mine the deep alluvial deposits at Ross but water in the workings hindered this. A number of solutions were unsuccessfully tried, until finally the notion surfaced to build a power station 25 km away at Kaniere Forks. Electricity from here could be used to pump the excess water from the flooded mine. Nine km of the Kaniere Water Race were brought back into service, and electricity flowed from the Kaniere Station to Ross from 1909 to 1916.

The race was in demand again in 1921 to supply the electricity needs of a large gold dredging operation at Rimu. In its 31 years of operation the dredge recovered 320,000 ounces of gold. As powering the dredge was the

priority, power fluctuations often occurred in Hokitika. To remedy this, a second power station was built at McKays Creek in 1931.

Sites recorded

One actively managed heritage place: Lake Kaniere water race and track (Equipment ID: 100038885)

12 recorded archaeological sites:

- J33/15 Pioneer water race
- J33/16 Hokitika-Kaniere tramway
- K33/67 Kaniere Water Race
- J33/137 ground sluicing including tailings and sluiced faces
- J33/138 sluice faces
- J33/139 stream bed workings comprising amorphous mounds of tailings
- J33/140 alluvial gold mining including four worked areas with tail races, tailings, sluice faces, pipes
- J33/141 ground sluicing using water from the Pioneer water race, hand stacked tailings
- J33/142 ground sluicing with sluice faces and tailings
- J33/143 alluvial gold workings over three areas including sluice faces, tail race made from hand stacked tailings
- J33/144 two bush tramway branches built on tailings – possibly associated with Taminella's sawmill who milled the area from 1885
- J33/210 logging tramway used from c. 1923 to the 1950s for transporting logs from Stuart and Chapman mill to the Hokitika-Kaniere tramway

Heritage values

The Lake Kaniere Water Race is associated with the post-rush era of mining and was built to supply water to mining operations at Kaniere forks. It is also associated with the development of hydro-electric power generation in the Hokitika area and the strong connection between the mining industry and early electricity generation is seen in other areas such as Reefton and Bullendale.

The other recorded mining features within the assessment area likely date to the gold rush period, while the bush tramways represent a later industry.

Modifying factors

The archaeological features are representative of mining technology, water race and foot track construction. There will almost certainly be more unrecorded archaeological sites within this assessment area.

The Kaniere Water Race and walkway is in largely good condition and is used as a modern recreation track. The other recorded sites have been affected by modern mining operations around Striplands Creek.

Permissions summary

Three concessions.

- Variation to a low impact access arrangement for alluvial mining at Kennedy's Creek, Kaniere
- Non-notified easement for an underground power cable at McKay Creek Road, Blue Spur
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing of land in Kennedy Creek

Eleven Concessions.

- Medium impact access arrangement for alluvial gold mining at Stoney Creek, Kaniere

- Variation to a medium impact access arrangement for alluvial gold mining at Stoney Creek, Kaniere, to extend term
- Variation to a low impact access arrangement for alluvial gold mining at Stoney Creek, Kaniere, variation to add area 6
- Variation to a low impact access arrangement for alluvial gold mining at Stoney Creek, Kaniere, variation to add area 6
- Variation to a low impact access arrangement for alluvial gold mining at Kennedy's Creek, Kaniere
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing of land in Kennedy Creek
- Non-notified easement for an underground power cable at McKay Creek Road, Blue Spur.
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing north side of Lake Kanerie Rd, Area A only (.81 ha)
- Non-notified easement for a water race - PT R 1622, Block VI, Kaniere SD McKays/Kaniere Scheme
- Non-notified easement for a water supply pipeline easement at Kaniere River
- Non-notified easement being the addition of easement access roads to water supply pipeline agreement

Map (aerial photo)

