

INA_16 – Boatmans Creek – Caplestone (381.5974 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Boatmans Creek - Caplestone	381.5974	2807893	2

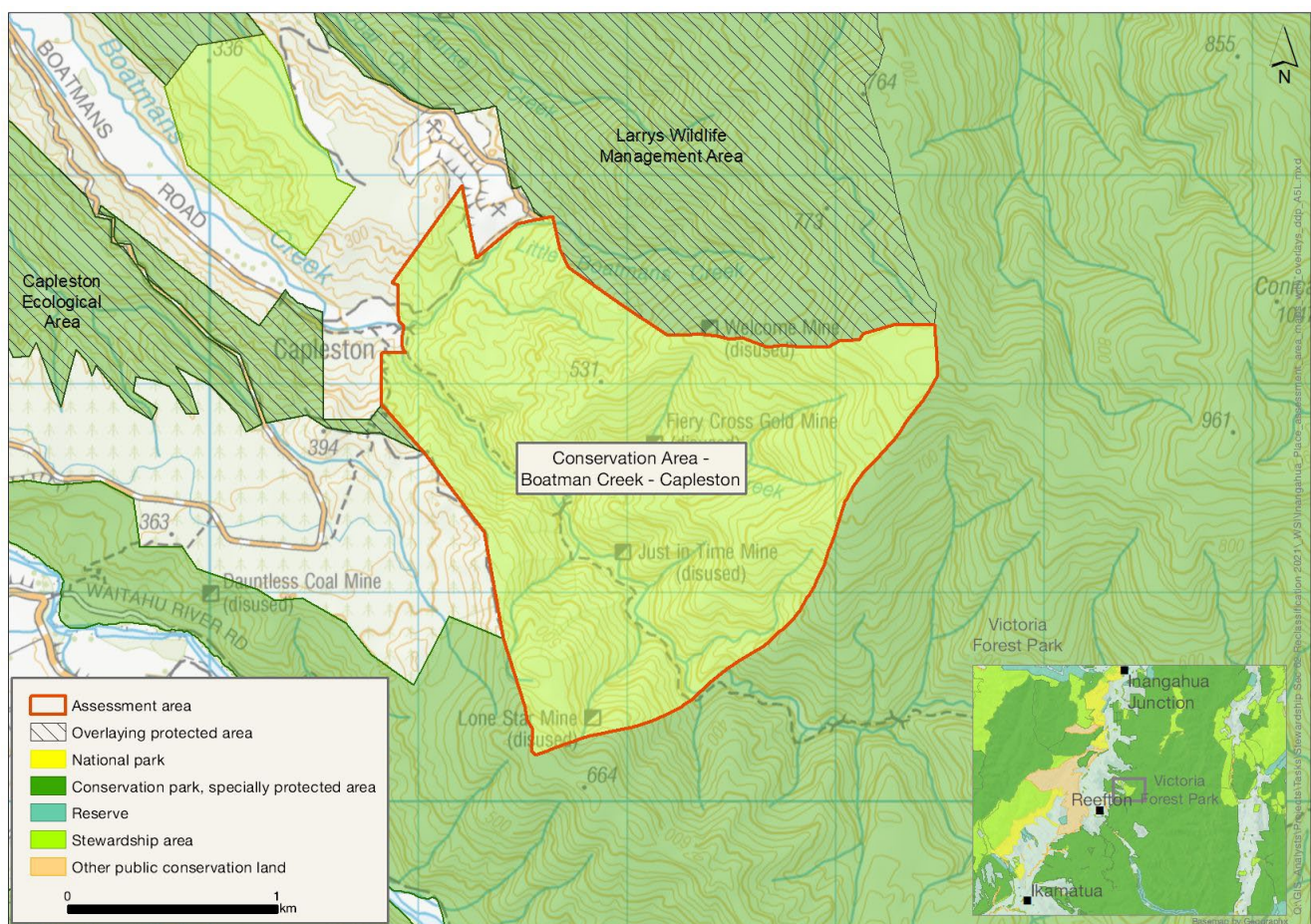
Location

At the end of Boatmans Road on the eastern side of Inangahua River, north of Reefton.

Brief Description

A bell-shaped area of modified forest in various stages of regeneration, which has been mined both historically and currently. There are tracks, huts and relics associated with its mining history. There are no freshwater species recorded here. The mines in this area have historical value for their success and contribution to Reefton. Mining and exploration are ongoing for gold, including drilling pads and accommodation, as well as new coal adits and tracks. DOC-managed tracks start here, based on historic pack tracks, and are popular for tramping, mountain biking and hut stays.

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.

This conservation area is adjacent to Ngāi Tahu Forestry, an indication of Ngāi Tahu presence, interest and use of the land in this vicinity. Further assessment of the values and opportunities of this conservation area 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

Beech (tawhai, *Fuscopora* and *Lophozonia*)/podocarp (*Podocarpaceae* and *Phyllocladaceae*) forest modified by logging, fire and mining. The vegetation is at varying stages of recovery, from open land, recently cleared land, shrubland to secondary forest. Representative of the more modified areas of the Reefton Ecological District. This is a well-vegetated area among several historic gold mines. Waterways include Caples Creek, Little Boatmans Creek and Boatmans Creek. Adjacent to Victoria Forest Park.

Diversity and pattern

Some diversity and pattern as a result of a history of modification from logging, fire and mining. No freshwater species are recorded here, but nearby are giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), upland bully (West Coast) (*Gobiomorphus breviceps*), trout (introduced), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*) and bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*).

Rarity and distinctiveness

No threatened or at-risk terrestrial species are recorded. This is level 4 land environment, P5.1d and O1.4b, both have a decrease in indigenous vegetation cover (1997–2002), No Threat category. There are no freshwater species recorded here, but nearby there are giant kokopu, longfin eel, kōaro and bluegill bully (all At Risk: Declining).

Ecological context

This block is at a range of stages of revegetation. One third of the forest has been cleared within the last 10–20 years by fire, and could be weedy. Some older native vegetation remains within gullies. It is part of an active mine present on the northern part. Another third is in regenerating shrubland, cleared by fire 20–30 years ago. The last third is in old growth or original forest, and backs onto Victoria Forest Park. This is a 381.5 ha area, with three mines present. Adjacent land use – farming, mining, and plantation forestry. Mining and exploration are ongoing for gold, including drilling pads and accommodation, as well as new coal adits and tracks.

Recreation Values

Setting

This area is in a Backcountry-remote zone. DOC-managed Kirwans Track and Gannons to Caplestone Track both start within the assessment area.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

These historic pack tracks are popular for mountain bikers and trampers accessing the 12-bunk Kirwans Hut and historic mine site. The Gannons to Caplestone Track provides for a multiday round trip via the Kirwans and Montgomery huts.

Access

Access via Boatmans Road.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

The 1870s saw a hard rock mining boom centred around Reefton. One of the key areas was at Boatmans Creek. The first discovery at Boatmans was made in 1872, which precipitated a rush to the area. Although several claims were staked, the two most important were the Just-in-Time and Fiery Cross. Both these mines were profitable and were among the most important in Reefton from 1873. A third mine, on the northern margins of the conservation area, the Welcome, which started not long after the others, was the most successful and out-produced them all. The other mine visible on topographic maps in the SW corner of the area, the Lonestar, was worked in the 1880s.

The first track up Boatmans Creek from Caplestone was built to transport materials for constructing the Fiery Cross/Just-in-Time battery near the junction of Boatmans and Caples creeks. The track was extended as required, with the upper section built around the end of the 19th century when mining developed on Kirwans Hill. The Fiery Cross mine site originally had a shaft to access workings and there are remnants of the winding engine boiler still present on the site. The other mine sites would need inspection to ascertain what surviving remnant of the mining operations remain.

Sites recorded

- One actively conserved heritage place: Caplestone to Kirwan's Hut track (Equipment ID: 100066798)
- One recorded archaeological site: L30/66 pack track from Caplestone to Kirwans Hill

Heritage values

The mines in this area have historical value for their contribution to Reefton, as a result of their success and the large dividends they consistently yielded. The pack track provided access to the Kirwans Reward mine, one of the country's earliest opencast gold mines.

Modifying factors

In and of themselves, the individual heritage features within this area are not rare or unusual. Their value lies in their relationship to the wider heritage landscape, which is relatively intact. With the exception of the township of Caplestone (just to the west of this area), which was destroyed by modern mining in the 1990s, the other

components are still present, including the mines themselves and the transportation network required to establish and service the mines.

The pack track is one of only two on the West Coast, which climbs to over 1,000 m above sea level (the other being Croesus Track at the southern end of the Paparoa Ranges). The pack track is in good condition and contains evidence of borrow pits, stone retaining, cuttings, embankments and fords. The condition of the mines is unknown.

Permissions Summary

- Low impact access arrangement for exploration of approximately 2,423 ha of Victoria Forest Park
- Variation of access arrangement for gold exploration
- Medium impact access arrangement for underground coal mine and re-opening of old open-cast coal mine – Caplestone, northeast of Reefton
- Variation to medium impact access arrangement for underground coal mine and to re-open an old open-cast mine – Caplestone, northeast of Reefton. One exploration drill hole

Map (aerial photo)

