

KAR_18 – Little Wanganui-Kongahu Point hillslopes (1191.4041 ha)

Protected Areas	Area (ha)	NAPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Little Wanganui River	39.6482	2807733	2
Conservation Area - O'Connor Creek	792.9577	2807735	6 (+4 unsurveyed)
Conservation Area - Boulder Creek	357.5294	2807737	5

Location

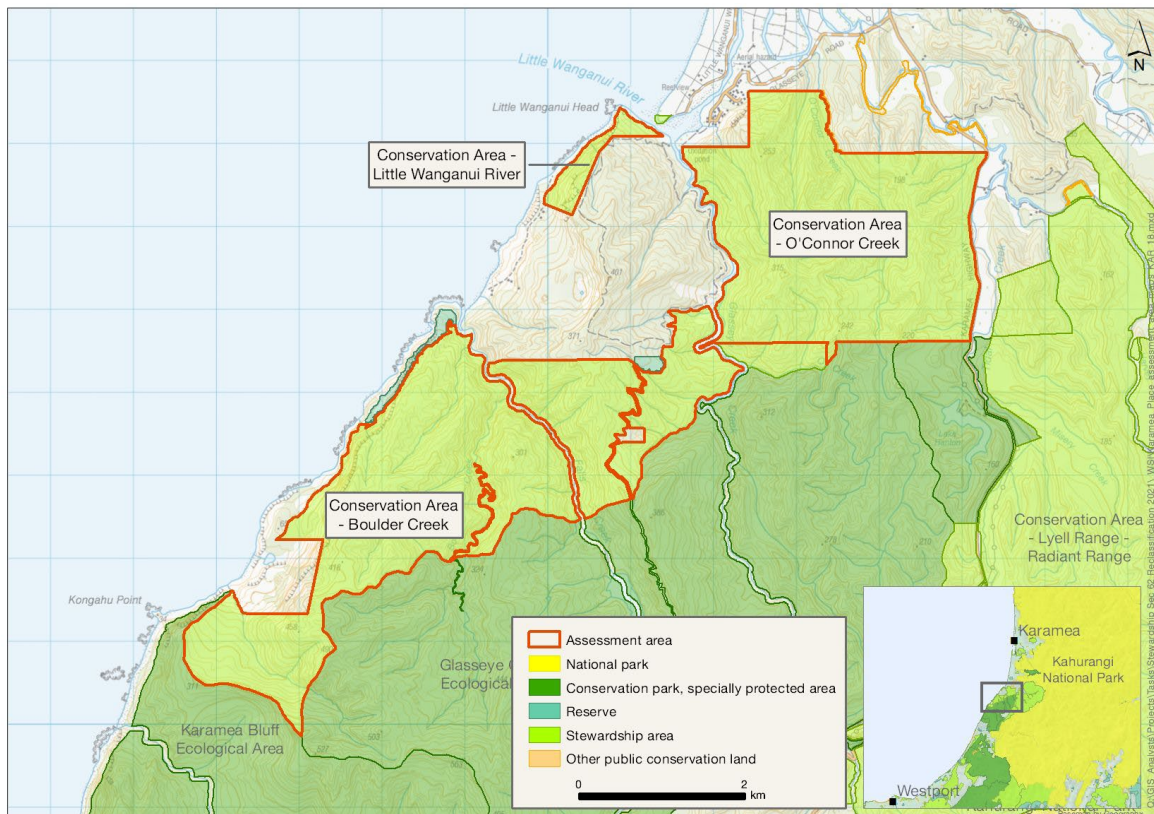
West of the Mokihinui-Karamea road and north of Karamea Bluffs between Little Wanganui River and Kongahu Point, at the southern end of the Karamea Ecological District.

Brief Description

The assessment area is largely dissected hill country draining the lower reaches of Glasseye Creek, Falls Creek, Boulder Creek and many unnamed tributaries. There is a designated Species Management Unit which covers all of this assessment area. This large area straddles a wide variety of habitats from coastal sandspit, sea cliffs, inland streams, ridges, and valleys which, in conjunction with a high rainfall, mild climate and alkaline soils has led to a rich assemblage of flora and fauna. This includes a substantial proportion of the global population of the threatened large land snail *Powelliphanta lignaria lusca* (Nationally Vulnerable).

The Karamea Bluffs were used as markers by old Poutini Ngāi Tahu.

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.

Along the Karamea Bluffs and coastal zone, there are well-worn trails, these being highways of old Poutini Ngāi Tahu. Within the coastal conservation areas (Little Wanganui and Boulder Creek), travellers had to leave the coast and make a difficult climb around the cliffs at Otahu. The cliffs are a highly visible landmark and were used as markers by Poutini Ngāi Tahu. A high point a few miles inland from the coast was used to light signal fires to give warning to neighbours of advancing raiding parties.

Ngāi Tahu has a strong connection to these coastal conservation areas that must be recognised and provided for, when determining a suitable classification for this land.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

Coastal lowland forest on Tertiary limestone in the south and calcareous mudstone in the north. The climate is warm and wet but despite some leaching, soils are moderately fertile on limestone and beside streams where alluvium has accumulated.

The area is highly representative of the vegetation, habitats and species in southern hill forest country of the Karamea Ecological District, transitioning into coastal podocarp (*Podocarpaceae* and *Phyllocladaceae*) broadleaf forest then into windshorn shrubland and finally prostrate herbs on steep sea cliffs. A representative suite of fauna is highly likely to be present including bats, geckos and forest birds. Much of the assessment area has high naturalness value despite carrying many of the common mammalian pest species. Rivers maintain natural character and there is high predicted water quality.

Diversity and pattern

This large assessment area straddles a wide variety of habitats from coastal sandspit, sea cliffs, inland streams, ridges, and valleys which, in conjunction with a high rainfall, mild climate and alkaline soils, has led to a rich assemblage of flora and fauna. On the mid-slopes of dry ridges, hard beech (*Fuscospora truncata*) with scattered rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) predominate, with silver beech (*Lophozonia menziesii*) and an understorey of horopito (*Winteraceae*) and tree fern (ponga, *Cyathea* and *Dicksonia*) on the more fertile wetter alluvium soils beside the streams. In the semi-coastal forest northern rātā (*Metrosideros robusta*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) and miro (brown pine, *Prumnopitys ferruginea*) occur with a dense kiekie (*Freycinetia baueriana* subsp. *Banksia*) understorey. Tree ferns predominate in slips and dense stands of nīkau (New Zealand palm, *Rhopalostylis sapida*) occur close to the coast.

These forests are highly likely to provide habitat for a full suite of common native birds and invertebrates, as well as a range of threatened and at-risk fauna and flora. The streams are likely to support populations of four whitebait species – kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), banded kōkopu

(*Galaxias fasciatus*), īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*) and giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*) – making these streams important for whitebait diversity.

Rarity and distinctiveness

The three large conservation areas in the assessment area together support a substantial proportion (~25%) of the global population of the threatened large land snail *Powelliphanta lignaria lusca* (Nationally Vulnerable), found only in the catchments of the streams draining the mid-Radiant Range between Kongahu Point and Little Wanganui.

In addition to common shore and forest birds, South Island robin (toutouwai, *Petroica australis australis*), kea (*Nestor notabilis*), kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*) and kākārīki (yellow-crowned parakeet, *Cyanoramphus auriceps*) are present. The area is within the distributional range for threatened great spotted kiwi (roroa, *Apteryx maxima*) (Nationally Vulnerable). The threatened long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) (Nationally Critical) has been recorded within the nearby area and may use the habitat. The freshwater fish species likely to be present include kōaro, īnanga and giant kōkopu (all At Risk: Declining).

Ecological context

This large assessment area covers 1889 ha from Little Wanganui River in the north to Kongahu Point in the south west. It is an irregular shape, including one disconnected conservation area. It spans approximately 11 km on a northeast to southwest line with a very narrow section in the south. The two large conservation areas are contiguous, but the 39 ha Little Wanganui River Conservation Area is separated by a block of freehold land, connected by forest cover.

The southern part of the assessment area is bounded in the west by the sea cliffs of Hiwinui Scenic Reserve, in the south by Karamea Bluff Ecological Area, and on the east by Glasseye Creek Ecological Area, as is the northern part of the assessment area. A small inaccessible gravel reserve abuts the northwest corner of the northern O'Connor Creek Conservation Area. The hill at the south head of the river mouth has been logged and burnt but is now regenerating native shrubland.

Forests on the edges on the northern, eastern and northwestern boundaries of the O'Connor Creek block have been cutover. However, this assessment area is overwhelmingly native forest connected to other significant conservation land, and beyond the vicinity of the Karamea Highway and Glasseye Road, predominantly unlogged. Cyclone Ita in 2014 flattened trees over large parts of the northfacing slopes and ridges, particularly near the eastern end of this conservation area. Despite the lack of big old trees in the windfall-affected areas, the seral forest has retained its ecological integrity, thanks to the absence of weed species and dense regeneration of native species. This area makes an important contribution to the adjoining natural areas, provides for continued natural functioning of ecological processes such as disturbance, and connects the alpine and coastal areas.

Recreation Values

Setting

A number of larger land parcels located in a Backcountry-remote zone, with no tracks or facilities. There has been some past interest in a coastal track from Mokihinui to Little Wanganui cross country to Falls Creek Coastal settlement.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The area is likely to receive little recreation use. Hunters may use the areas accessible from the road.

Access

Part of the area can be accessed from Karamea Highway.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

The area was occupied intermittently by Ngāi Tahu, and later by European sealers in 1836 and gold miners in 1864. Organised settlement started in the 1870s, helped by a government settlement scheme. In the early 1900s there were monthly arrivals of supply ships from Westport, which would continue on to Karamea to load up on butter, timber, and flax. By the 1920s there were several sawmills in the area, serviced by a busy port.

Before WWI, families had begun to settle in the remote upriver areas of Wangapeka Valley and Blue Duck Creek. Wangapeka children walked to school in Little Wanganui, several miles away, until a schoolhouse was built in 1921. In the 1930s, the Marris and Wollett sawmill began operating in the valley, but the population of Wangapeka gradually fell until the school closed in 1935. At Blue Duck Creek, children attended a Household School from 1917 until a schoolhouse was built. On 17 June 1929 the magnitude 7.3 Murchison earthquake struck the area, causing extensive slips and damage to buildings. A huge natural dam formed in the Little Wanganui gorge and burst three months later. The flood of mud and boulders destroyed 4 miles of road and numerous structures, but caused no loss of life.

Sites recorded

None recorded.

Heritage values

No value statement possible.

Modifying factors

None recorded.

Permissions summary

None recorded.

Map (aerial photo)

