

MAW_27 – Sewell Peak, Brunner Forest, Taylorville, McLeans Creek and Batty Creek (3614.6387 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Sewell Peak	422.0541	2806498	2
Conservation Area - Ex Harbour Board Endowment, Sewell Peak	564.4175	2806571	2
Conservation Area - Brunner Forest	1694.4275	2806795	6
Conservation Area - Taylorville	4.4766	2806808	5
Conservation Area - Mcleans Creek	897.9726	2806809	28
Conservation Area - Batty Creek	31.2904	2808805	1

Location

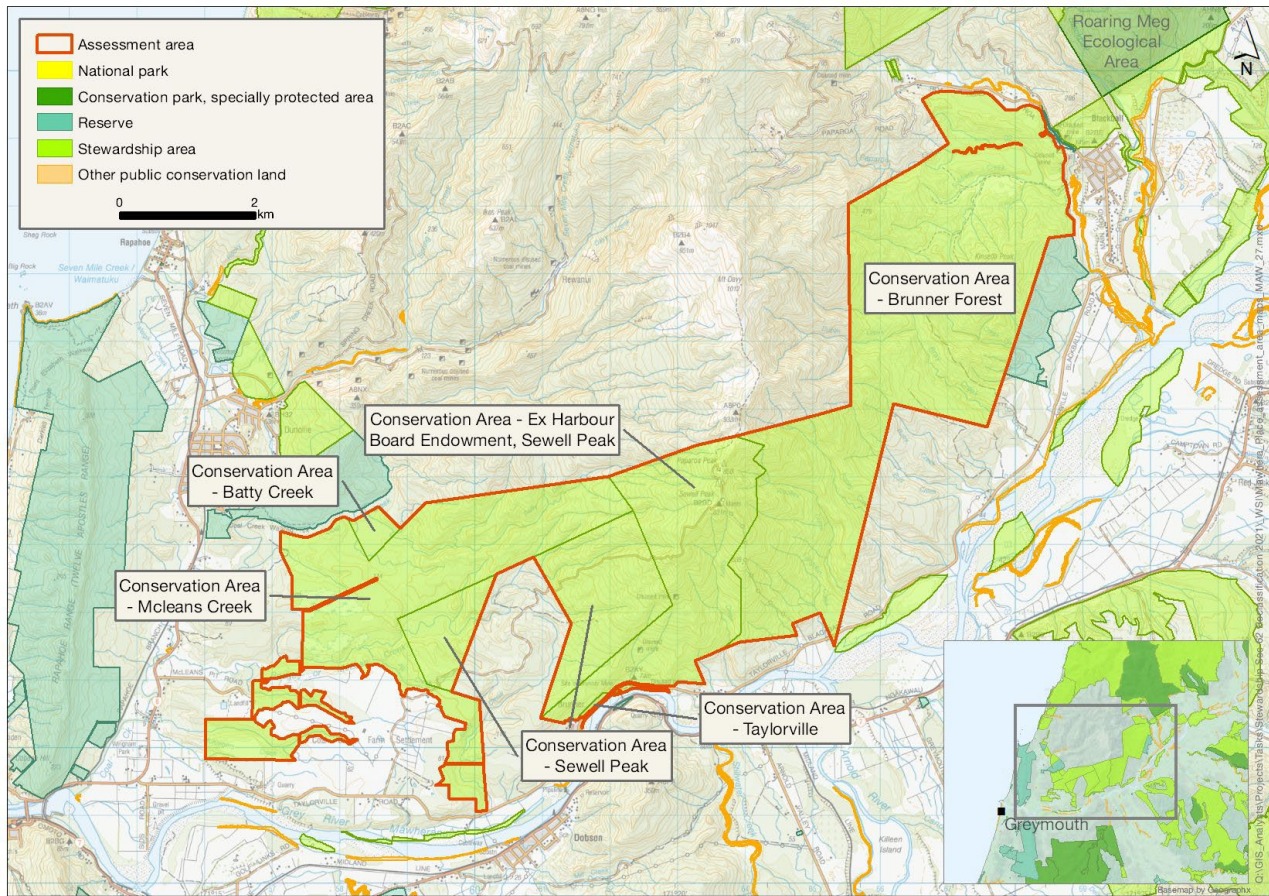
On the north side of the Grey River/Māwheranui between McLeans Pit Road and Runanga west to Blackball.

Brief Description

A large area of podocarp-beech forest, shrublands, numerous valleys, catchment areas, streams and open wetland areas at the southern end of the Paparoa Ranges. The forest is relatively intact and where it has been modified by logging or burning is strongly recovering. The area includes multiple tributaries of the lower Grey River/Māwheranui from their headwaters in the southern Paparoa Range to their lower reaches and captures the full altitudinal range of these streams.

The area includes the DOC-managed historic Brunner Mine site, a large mines complex which embodies the story of the development of the vast coal mining operation that began in the 1860s and was once New Zealand's largest coal mining area. There are various community tracks also. There are six concessions held, all relating to the telecommunications on Sewell Peak.

Map



Ngāi Tahu Values and Interests

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

From the preliminary desk top assessments, there do not appear to be any site specific Ngāi Tahu values identified. However, there is a deep connection between Ngāi Tahu and all of the whenua in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā, and the absence of site specific values in the preliminary analysis does not detract from that connection, nor does it confirm that site specific values are not present. Further, a section 4 Conservation Act and Te Tiriti principles perspective is required as well, 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.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

This assessment area is a mix of original and modified beech (tawhai, *Fuscopora* and *Lophozonia*)/podocarp (*Podocarpaceae* and *Phyllocladaceae*) forest. The forest over the majority of the block is representative of the original vegetation of the ecological district. It is a relatively intact and where it has been modified by logging or burning is strongly recovering. It includes multiple tributaries of the lower Grey River/Māwheranui from their headwaters in the southern Paparoa Ranges to their lower reaches. It captures the full altitudinal range of these

streams from subalpine source to valley floor, and therefore a full range of freshwater habitat and high level of naturalness and water quality is predicted. The McLeans Creek block collectively covers the entire catchment of McLeans Creek and Batty Creek, which flows into Coal Creek. Brunner Forest and Sewell Peak ex-Harbour board endowment land covers the entire catchment of Stony Creek, a highly natural catchment with indigenous forest and high predicted water quality.

Diversity and pattern

Although there are no freshwater fish records from within this assessment area itself, numerous species have been recorded in the lower reaches of the multiple tributaries immediately downstream of these blocks of land, including dwarf galaxias (*Galaxias divergens*), lamprey (kanakana, *Geotria australis*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), kōura (freshwater crayfish, *Paranephrops planifrons*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*) freshwater shrimp (*Paratya*) and trout.

Rarity and distinctiveness

There is a high level of distinctiveness with a wide range of available freshwater habitat covering an altitudinal range of freshwater habitat from 850 m above sea level to near sea level.

A diverse community of freshwater fish and invertebrates is likely to reside in the tributaries within this block, including numerous threatened species which have been recorded in the lower reaches of Stony and other nearby similar tributaries, including dwarf galaxias, torrentfish, longfin eel and bluegill bully (all At Risk: Declining) and lamprey (Nationally Vulnerable).

Ecological context

A large area (3615 ha) of indigenous forest, shrublands, numerous valleys, catchment areas, streams and open wetland areas from Blackball west down to McLean's Pit Road and the Landfill. This area includes the Southern extent of the Paparoa Ranges (Paparoa Peak (850 m above sea level) and Sewell Peak (831 m above sea level) and associated subalpine and alpine vegetation. Wetlands (MFE 2001-2016) present on the flat areas from McLeans Pitt Road towards Runanga settlement. Wetlands were once widespread in these lower altitude areas according to wetland historic data. There are great spotted kiwi (roroa, *Apteryx maxima*) (Nationally Vulnerable) records from 1990-2020 throughout the area. Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) (Nationally Endangered) habitat is identified for most of the area.

A Species Management Unit for the snail *Powelliphanta gagei* (Nationally Critical) is a short distance north along the ridge line from Paparoa Peak. This species may be present within the area, if their distribution is along the Paparoa Ranges. The assessment area is in Blackball and Greymouth ecological districts.

The area adjoins both Tini Kaiwai Scenic Reserve and freehold land to the east and LINZ coal reserve land to the north. The mountainous streams are likely to have trout barriers that will enhance habitat for the dwarf galaxias in upstream reaches, although there is a lack of surveying to determine the extent of this non-migratory species.

The area includes the road to Sewell Peak telecommunications site.

Recreation Values

Setting

These six areas are located north of Taylorville Blackball Road, with most in a Backcountry-remote zone.

The historic Brunner Mine site on the southern boundary is managed by the Department as a Frontcountry site and Tohu Whenua site. A gated road provides access to the communication masts on Sewell and Paparoa Peaks. The historic Coolgardie Track climbs steeply from near the Brunner Mine site to connect with Sewell Peak Road and a historic miner track also goes from Sewell Peak to Mt Davey – these are not maintained by the Department.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The Brunner Mine site is easily accessible, comprises short walks (less than an hour) and includes good interpretation. It is popular with locals, domestic and international visitors. There are a number of community-maintained tracks and trapping lines. The other historic tracks are used by local people exploring the mining history in the area and occasional expert mountain bikers.

Access

The areas can be accessed from the Taylorville Blackball Road.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

The large Brunner Mines complex, located on and connecting both the north and south banks of the Grey River/Māwheranui, tells the story of the development of the vast operation that began in the 1860s and was once New Zealand's largest coal mining area (the conservation area only covers the north side of the river).

The complex grew dramatically once mining started in the 1860s, with expansion and change right through until the early 20th century. Closely associated are the mine sites of Coal-pit Heath, Tyneside, Coolgardie, Pig and Whistle, St Kilda and North Brunner. With a history of fluctuating outputs and viability, accidents and incidents, periodic closures and re-openings, expansion and abandonment, the Brunner Mine complex provides an understanding of the serious endeavours involved in the pivotal activity of coal resource development.

Explorer Thomas Brunner recorded coal in the Grey Gorge in early 1848. In the 1860s, Brunner Mine was established, followed in the 1870s by neighbouring Coal-pit Heath on the north side of the river, and Tyneside (originally known as Wallsend No. 1) on the south side of the river opposite the Brunner site. Construction of a railway and suspension bridge in the mid-1870s and improvements at Greymouth port aided business. By the 1880s and 1890s Brunner and Coal-pit Heath were among New Zealand's most productive coal mines, and their high quality coal for industrial and domestic purposes was shipped to all parts of New Zealand. As such, the mines were the basis for the growth of Greymouth. A new part of the Brunner lease, the Coolgardie or Brunner Rise section, opened in 1893 and worked in conjunction with the Brunner mine without being physically connected to it. Tragedy struck in 1896 when an explosion at Brunner Mine killed 65 men and boys.

In the first decade of the 20th century, a further three new mines opened – the Pig and Whistle, St Kilda and North Brunner Mines. Tyneside, with its railway, was a key transport hub for the Brunner Mine, and Tyneside Mine itself picked up many of the orders previously supplied by the Brunner Mine in the years immediately after the latter's closure. All the mines, to a greater or lesser degree, either augmented the output of Brunner or continued to utilise the Brunner plant even after Brunner Mine's closure in 1906.

Sites recorded

Listed historic area (# 7051) covers approximately 149 ha on both sides of the river although most is on the northern side.

One actively managed heritage place:

- Brunner Mine historic complex (Functional location: DS-34-110-5028)

Two recorded archaeological sites:

- K31/19 Industrial complex
- K31/130 cairns on Coolgardie route

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- Heritage Icon
- Tohu Whenua

Listed Historic Place (# 4996) Brunner industrial site (falls within the extent of the Historic Area).

Part of the Brunner heritage complex with one actively managed heritage asset in this area:

- Brunner small lower coke oven (part of Brunner Mine Historic Place)

Seven recorded archaeological sites:

- J31/10 area of shallow gold workings including tail races, prospecting pits, stone walls and tailings
- J31/11 gold working comprising terrace sluicing with tail races, stacked tailings, sluice faces, head races and hut site
- J31/12 gold working including tailrace with laterals, stacked tailings and sluice faces
- J31/13 gold working comprising tailrace, stacked tailings and sluice face
- J31/8 gold claims comprising series of drives into terrace escarpment, fan type tailings, water races and small storage dams
- J31/9 small sluicing claim with tail race partially destroyed by modern mining
- J31/7 extensive evidence of gold mining along Sulky Creek and its tributaries including tailings, races, fluming, sluice box, dam, hopper feeder, riffle, tracks, artefacts. Has been damaged by modern mining

Heritage values

The Brunner Mines complex has high historical significance. The discovery of coal and the setting up of a major mining industry in this area of the West Coast is an important representation of the initial developments that contributed to the growth of colonial New Zealand. As such, the mines in this area hold a major place in New Zealand's history of coal mining.

Brunner and its surrounding mine sites are integral to understanding the way in which this area operated and developed as an industrial area. The completion of the Brunner Railway and the Suspension Bridge in 1876 were pivotal developments, allowing the transformation of the 'Coal Gorge' and the growth of Greymouth to begin in earnest. Collectively, the mines have historical value in understanding the roles of government, individual investors and personnel in establishing an early industry extracting the country's mineral wealth. They also have historical importance as the site of New Zealand's worst mining disaster in 1896, with respect to the high number of fatalities. They are a poignant reminder of the high-risk nature of coal mining.

The complex has technological significance. In particular, the main Brunner mine is well recognised for the technological significance of its coke ovens, which illustrate the former industrial process. The complex at Brunner, with its progressive degrees of ruin, makes it possible to fully appreciate the structure of the ovens and the techniques involved in their building. The high quality of the coke produced in the ovens was regarded

internationally at the time, and the ruins of the beehive coke ovens are some of the last examples of these types of structures left in the world.

The complex also has social significance. The stories of each of the mines demonstrate the serious effort, infrastructure, physical and financial commitment necessary for coal mining from the early days of mining, as has continued to be the case throughout the 20th century.

The close-knit miners were hard-working men committed to physically demanding work in tough environments that required a coordinated team approach at each mine. The terrible explosion at Brunner in 1896, resulting in the deaths of 65 men and boys – almost half of the Brunner workforce – had a devastating effect not only on the local community but throughout the country. For the miners of the surrounding mines, it was not only a terrible reminder of their vulnerability but those close at hand (especially Coolgardie) were involved in the recovery effort. There is commemorative value with respect to the disaster, centred especially around the Brunner Mine Disaster Memorial.

The health and safety realities particular to coal mining endeavours are as relevant to the coal resource industry today as they were when such mining first commenced in New Zealand. Despite the dangers and costs, the attraction to extract coal was and remains very important to the West Coast economy, with the mines having provided significant employment for locals for the past century and a half.

The Brunner Mines complex continues to have social value. The main part of the Brunner and Tyneside sites, either side of the suspension bridge, is maintained as an interpreted visitor attraction and is well visited by tourists and locals, attracting around 30,000 visitors each year.

Modifying factors

The coal mining features within this conservation area are closely associated with those in MAW_26 Blackball.

A photograph from 1948 shows a number of structures along the edge of Ford Creek including industrial and residential. These are now gone but there are likely to be remains of them still present within the area.

There are no archaeological sites recorded associated with gold mining within the conservation area. It is likely that they are present, particularly around Langdon and Woolley creeks, but these have never been archaeologically surveyed.

Permissions summary

Six concessions all related to telecommunications on Sewell Peak

Map (aerial photo)

