

TWP_31 – Gillespies Beach (112.3469 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area – Gillespies Beach	112.3469	2805316	2

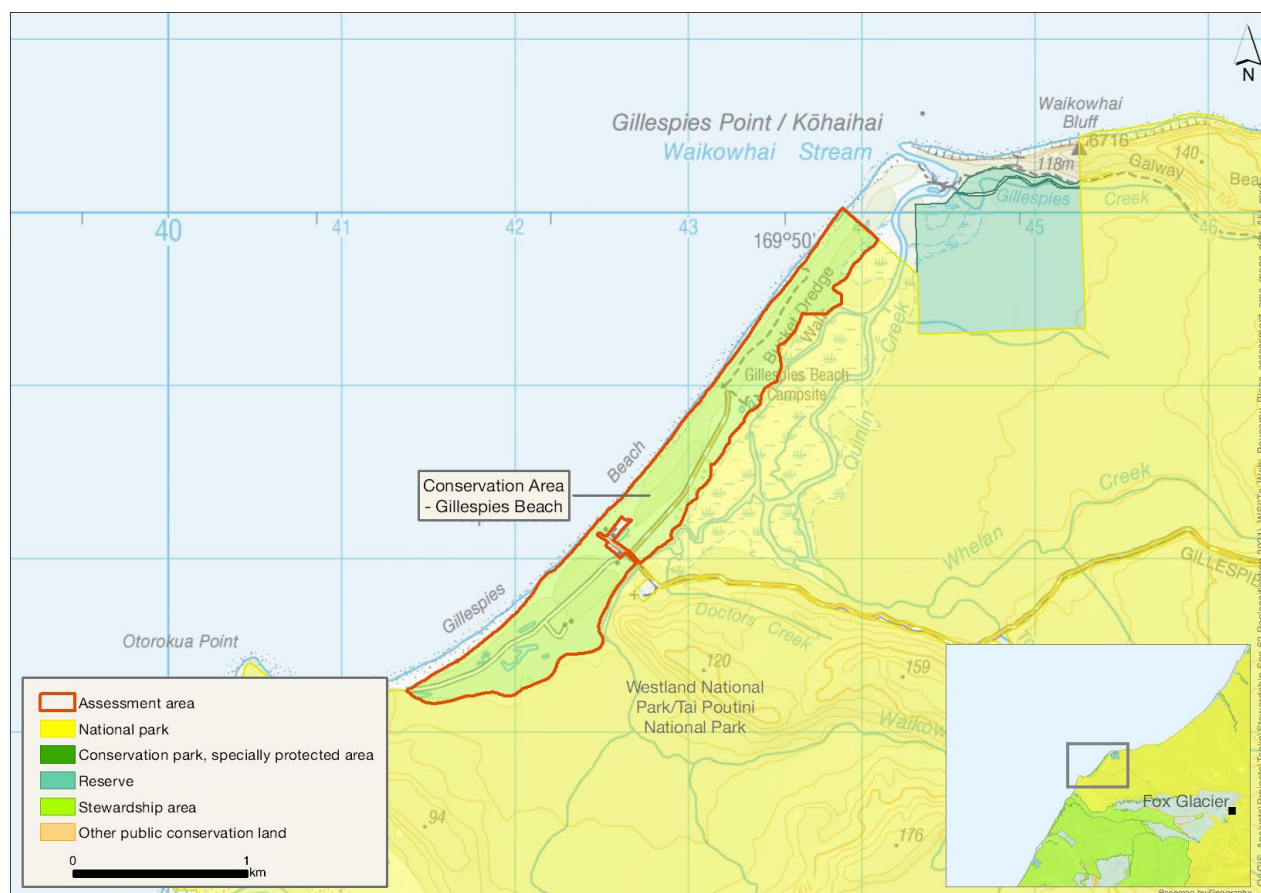
Location

A coastal conservation area west of Fox Glacier.

Brief Description

A conservation area containing shrubland and wetlands, set back from Gillespies Beach. The area overlaps with the large Ōmoeroa Ecological Management Unit (EMU No. 409353). It captures the mouth of several small catchments that are mostly covered in native vegetation and provides a valuable buffer to the highly valued Gillespies Lagoon. It includes walking tracks, a DOC campsite and a history of goldmining (including dredging technology) and occupation. The area of Waikowhai is a significant site for Ngāi Tahu, including historic occupation sites and significant mahinga sites.

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.

The area of Waikōhai is a significant site for Ngāi Tahu, including historic occupation sites, urupā and significant mahinga kai sites. The beach has a direct view of Aoraki, the maunga tīpuna of Ngāi Tahu and central to Ngāi Tahu creation traditions. This visual link to Ngāi Tahu whakapapa adds to the importance of this area to Ngāi Tahu. This area is also adjacent to Māori Reserve land in recognition of the significant occupation within this area. The significance of this site to Ngāi Tahu must be recognised and provided for, when determining a suitable classification for this land.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

This conservation area is set back from beach, and consists of coastal shrubland and wetland. It captures the mouth of several small catchments, which are mostly covered in native vegetation. The adjacent lagoon has a high score in the Waters of National Importance assessment (2008), and a high level of naturalness is predicted of the freshwater amenities there. There is also high predicted water quality in the waterbodies present.

The area has some vehicle tracks and dwellings although no permissions are recorded.

Diversity and pattern

The area contains sequences from coastal shrubland to wetlands behind the beach, with a single land environment. It likely supports common native forest birds such as tomtit (ngirungiru, *Petroica macrocephala*), bellbird (korimako, *Anthornis melanura*), kererū (New Zealand pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), tūī (*Prothemadera novaeseelandiae*), Australasian bittern (matuku hūrepo, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*) and fernbird (mātātā, *Bowdleria punctata*).

The area sits at the mouth of catchments that have records of redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachia*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*) and banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*), all of which are migratory. This area is considered to be of high ecological value.

Rarity and distinctiveness

Includes gravel beach with extensive low fixed sand dunes. Stable dunes are a naturally uncommon ecosystem classified as Threatened-Endangered (Holdaway et al. 2012). Pīngao (golden sand sedge, *Ficinia spiralis*) has been recorded on the dune systems (Johnson 1992).

Fernbird (At Risk: Declining) and bittern (Nationally Endangered) are highly likely to use the wetland areas. Bittern have been recorded in the adjacent (western) wetland area. The conservation area is within mapped kea (*Nestor notabilis*) (Nationally Endangered) habitat. Kārearea (New Zealand falcon, *Falco novaeseelandiae*) (Nationally Endangered) are likely present.

Forest gecko (*Mokopirirakau granulatus*) (At Risk: Declining) have been recorded here, as has an undetermined *Oligosoma* species of skink, which may include the Newman's speckled skink (*Oligosoma newmani*) (At Risk: Declining) or a rarer taxon. The threatened long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) (Nationally Critical) was recorded within 5 km in the 1980s and may still use this habitat.

There are records of rare freshwater species upstream of this area that are likely to be present, including longfin eel and kōaro (both At Risk: Declining).

Ecological context

The area is coastal-facing and otherwise surrounded by Westland Tai Poutini National Park. The area is part of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

The area is an integral component of this catchment for freshwater fisheries values (migratory fish). It provides a valuable buffer to the highly valued Gillespies Lagoon.

Recreation Values

Setting

This area is managed as a Frontcountry site. The area includes the Gillespies Beach campsite and short walks to the remains of historic gold mining dredges. The area also includes a section of the walking track along the beach to Gillespies Lagoon and Galway Beach Track. The area adjoins Westland Tai Poutini National Park.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

Overnight camping, short walks and half day walks. Visitors get stunning views of the Main Divide.

Access

Access via Gillespies Beach Road.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

Gold was discovered at Gillespies Beach in April 1866 and by June the diggings had reached their greatest extent and peak production. As with other West Coast beaches, alluvial mining continued at low levels until new technologies were introduced.

The 'Try Again' suction dredge, the first at Gillespies Beach, started operation at Gillespies Beach in 1891. The dredge was a Von Schmidt suction dredge and was shipped to Gillespies Beach by the schooner Prince Rupert. The schooner became grounded after it had been beached to unload the machinery and kauri timber used in the construction of the dredge. As was the case with most dredges of this type on South Westland beaches, the venture was unsuccessful, as the pump was unable to compete with stones and timbers in the beach sands. With the suction pump and main shaft of the engine being connected, the machinery was constantly put under great pressure and caused significant wear and tear. This venture too eventually failed.

After only about a year the company collapsed. They had expended 5000 pounds and had not even passed a ton of sand over their gold collection tables. The dredge was sold to a party of 12 men, who converted it to a bucket dredge.

Dredging successfully occurred during the Depression up until the end of World War II.

Sites recorded

One actively conserved Heritage place: Gillespies suction dredge parts (Equipment ID: 100071664)

Four recorded archaeological sites:

- H35/33 gold dredge
- H35/12 dredge pond and machinery
- H35/32 gold dredge
- H35/36 drill rig

Heritage values

The Try-Again Dredge represents a good example of 19th century technology that is no longer in use. Suction dredges of this type were initially thought to be ideal for sand dredging, but their universal failure soon meant that they were replaced on beach claims by the more common bucket dredge. The Try Again Dredge is the only sand suction dredge of its type remaining on the West Coast.

Modifying factors

It is unusual to have the remains of at least three dredges in one location. These dredges represent mining endeavours from both the late 19th century and the Depression era.

It is almost certain that Gillespies Beach will have been used by Māori, however no sites have yet been identified. Such sites may well have been destroyed by mining activity.

Permissions summary

None recorded.

Map (aerial photo)

