

# HOK\_43 – Tōtara – Mikonui Forests, Mcleods Road and Mine Creek (27793.8655 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Mcleods Road	5.7834	2805513	3
Conservation Area - Mine Creek	0.3697	2809720	1
Conservation Area - Tōtara - Mikonui Forests	27787.7124	2806269	59

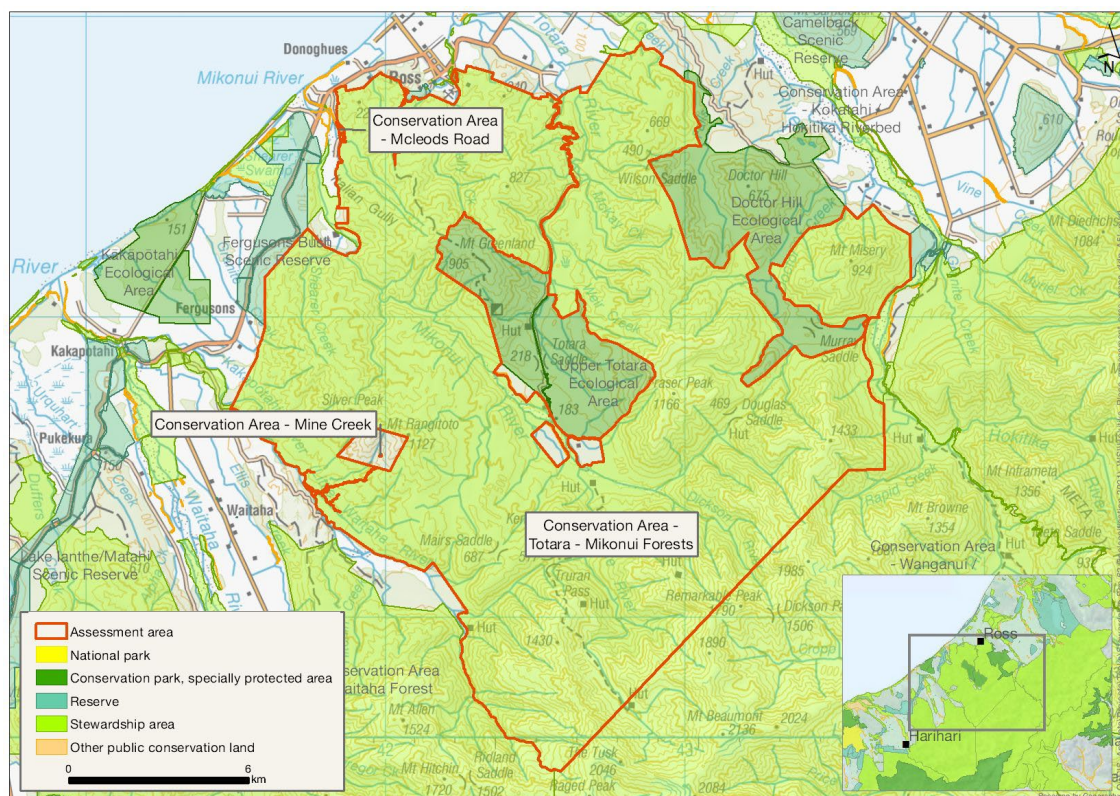
## Location

The assessment area lies between the Hokitika and Kakapotahi (Little Waitaha) rivers, in central Hokitika.

## Brief Description

The assessment area is extensive and spans from lowland forest to mountain top. This very large block of native forested land contains numerous streams and rivers, and covers most of the pristine Mikonui and Tōtara river catchments. The Department and volunteers manage a network of tramping routes in the Mikonui catchment that provide access to multiple huts. A 4WD road provides access to Mt Greenland. Kayaking, rafting and hunting also occur. Helicopter companies provide air charter services and can carry out irregular landings in the area to position trampers and hunters. There are multiple historic sites associated with mining and the area has one of the few recorded silver mine operations. Fifteen concessions are recorded for activities including mining, grazing, hydroelectric power, gravel extraction and limestone quarrying.

## 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 an extensive area that extends from the lowlands (c. 20 m) to the alpine zone (c. 1900 m). The vegetation is dominated by forest and contains diverse forest associations, forming sequences up to the treeline/subalpine shrubland zone. Along some larger rivers are areas of braided riverbed and within the forest are localised wetlands. There is extensive subalpine shrubland, above which alpine tussockland dominates. The alpine zone also includes rocky areas/bluffs, rock outcropping areas, and associated rubblefield and boulderfield, along with localised wetland areas and other alpine vegetation.

The area contains numerous valleys and gullies, some with braided rivers, river flats and terraces. The area contains the southern portion of the Hokitika Ecological District and the northern portion of Harihari Ecological District. Overall, the area is considered highly representative of the Hokitika Ecological District and moderately to highly representative of Harihari Ecological District.

Some roads bisect part of the area, particularly Tōtara Valley Road and to Mt Greenland. There is current and past mining activity in parts of the areas, particularly adjacent to Ross and in the eastern portion of the area. In addition, there is some grazing of river flats, notably in the Mikonui Valley.

The area contains indigenous podocarp forest, and straddles the lower reach of Squatters Creek below Mcleods Rd. The predicted water quality is high (however this was at least intermittently affected by mining just upstream for a few years; especially fine sediment inputs), and highly natural. This very large block of native forested land contains numerous streams and rivers, and covers most of the pristine Mikonui and Tōtara river catchments. Very high level of naturalness and water quality, and pristine headwaters sourced in mountainous ranges of Tiritiri o Te Moana. The many waterways flow from alpine zones >1700 m down to near sea level. This offers extensive and varied habitat to many freshwater species.

### Diversity and pattern

This assessment area extends from c. 20–1900 m, contains a wide range of landforms, and has a full range of aspects. The area contains some major ecological sequences, including altitude, rainfall, and soils. These contribute to a rich diversity of vegetation being present. The area contains at least 13 level 4 land environment types, which reflects the high level of environmental diversity. As a consequence of the large size, the rich diversity of landform and large altitudinal range and associated ecological gradients, the area is considered to be highly diverse and to have considerable ecological patterning.

There are survey records from just upstream in Squatters Creek: īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), kōura (freshwater crayfish, *Paranephrops planifrons*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), common bully (*Gobiomorphus*

*cotidianus*) and freshwater shrimp (*Paratya*). This is extremely high diversity in native freshwater fish species, with a lot of survey effort to prove this. In the Mikonui and Tōtara rivers are shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*), giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), longfin eel, kōaro, torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*), īnanga, banded kōkopu, redfin bully, common bully, kōura, freshwater shrimp and brown trout (*Salmo Trutta*) (Introduced). There is an enormous amount of area that will offer habitat for all of these species across the 27,000 ha.

## Rarity and distinctiveness

The assessment area includes braided rivers, cushionbog and flushes/seepages that are naturally rare ecosystems. Several threatened plants have been recorded here. The area contains locations of the M2.1a land environment, which is classified as At Risk (i.e., 20–30% remaining in indigenous vegetation). Westland greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis cernua*) (Naturally Uncommon) has been recorded in the area. Additional threatened species recorded from adjacent land include creeping iris (mīkoikoi, *Libertia peregrinans*) (Nationally Vulnerable), bloodwood (*Coprosma wallii*) and stout water milefoil (*Myriophyllum robustum*) (both At Risk: Declining). Forest gecko (*Mokopirirakau granulatus*) (At Risk: Declining) is recorded nearby. Suitable habitat for all these species is present.

A number of threatened fish species have been found in Squatters Creek, which is likely to harbour further species beyond the records listed. This block not only has a notably high diversity of freshwater fish species across both the Mikonui and Tōtara catchments, but there are many creeks that harbour a distinctive and unusual mix of fish species. Jones Creek near Ross township is an example, providing habitat for species that are not usually seen so close together, (shortjaw, giant and banded kōkopu), due to the highly heterogenous nature of the in-stream habitat. See shortjaw kōkopu monitoring report (DOC DM-501663 by Dave Eastwood). The Tōtara catchment also has multiple records of shortjaw kōkopu (Nationally Vulnerable). High habitat heterogeneity is a feature of this area and, coupled with pristine naturalness, it confers very high freshwater ecological values.

## Ecological context

The assessment area spans from the lowlands to mountaintops, and while being largely forest-covered includes subalpine shrublands, alpine tussock land, wetlands and numerous streams and rivers. The area connects the lowlands to alpine areas and forms part of a sequence of public conservation land, extending to the summit of the Southern Alps and beyond. The area contains a portion of the Tōtara Valley Ecological Management Unit (EMU no. 300813) and is adjacent to the Shearers Swamp Ecological Management Unit (EMU no. 300378). It completely encompasses Upper Tōtara Conservation Area and adjoins the large Wanganui / Otira Catchments Conservation Area (90,074 ha) and Waitaha Forest Conservation Area (30,815 ha) to the west; Doctor Hill Ecological Area (2,524 ha) to the northwest, and Ferguson Bush Scenic Reserve (730 ha) to the east. Therefore, it forms an integral part of an extensive protected natural area that extends to and along the Southern Alps. To the northwest is an area of private land that has a QEII covenant in place. The area contains some small areas of privately-owned freehold land.

This area is viewed as having high freshwater ecological values. This is a pristine area with a diverse range of freshwater habitat from >1700 m down to near sea level. Butlers Mining Company (active minerals mining permit) and Coast Gold Ltd (Prospecting Permit - Mt Greenland) both have an interest in this block for extracting gold. This area is almost unmatched in the degree of value it has for our native (fluvial) freshwater biodiversity, and offers extensive and undisturbed habitat for multiple threatened species.

# Recreation Values

## Setting

These areas are in a Backcountry-remote zone. The Department and volunteers manage a network of tramping routes in the Mikonui catchment that provide access to Mikonui Flats Hut, Mikonui Spur Biv, Dickie Sput Hut, and the route to Top Tuke Hut, Healey Spur Hut, and Explorer Hut. Polluck Creek Hut is in the Kakapotahi Valley. A 4WD road provides access to Mt Greenland.

## Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The area is used by backcountry adventurers and remote seekers. The routes in the Mikonui allow for trampers to carry out and connect with adjoining catchments. Some 4WD clubs and experienced 4WD users drive up Mt Greenland Rd. Kayakers and occasional rafters put in at the Tōtara Valley Road end and paddle down Mikonui River. The area is also popular with hunters.

## Access

Gravel roads up the Tōtara Valley and Kakapotahi provide access to the start of tramping tracks. Helicopter companies provide air charter services and can carry out irregular landings in the area to position trampers and hunters. The 4WD road to Mt Greenland is accessed from the Ross township.

# Heritage Values

## Historical overview

SO 9547 (1915) indicates this as the location of Rangitoto Mine; also shown on SO 5700. Gold was first found in the vicinity of Ross in October 1864, in Tōtara River and in a branch of the Tōtara that became known as Donnelly Creek. A rush ensued, but this was quickly superseded by subsequent rushes to Waimea Creek (November 1864), Kaniere (May 1865), and the Grey District (July 1865). Interest in the Tōtara area was rekindled in July 1865, when gold was found in Donoghue's and Jones creeks, with the latter becoming the centre of the new diggings. Jones's Flat was to become one of the richest pieces of gold-bearing ground in New Zealand, with work concentrated on a compact block of land only approximately 5 km square.

Cradling was the main means of mining in the creeks themselves and shallow-sinking was undertaken on the terraces. Mining continues in the area today.

## Sites recorded

J34/1 - silver mine; 32 recorded archaeological sites: I33/4 Mcleods Terrace workings; J33/4 Ross United Co. No 1 water race; J33/46 Dam; I33/48 hand stacked tailings; I33/45 tailings; I33/46 tailings; I33/47 sluicing, tailings, prospecting pit; I33/44 extensive workings; I33/43 tailings and working in stream bed; I33/42 tailings; I33/41 possible dam; I33/40 tailings; I33/15 water race; I33/14 Prince of Wales water race; I33/53 Sweenys water race; I33/51 mining, sluicing; J33/47 water race tunnel; J33/tailings; J33/49 water race; J33/46 dam; J33/51 iron fluming; J33/55 dam; J33/29 gold camp; J33/30 mine; J33/50 water race; J33/31 mine; J33/211 tailings; J33/57 shaft, dray track, tailings heaps; J33/163 stacked stone and tailings; J33/38 Mine; J33/39 gold mine, battery; J34/2 track Ross to Mt Greenland.

Adjacent to listed Ross Historic Area.

## Heritage values

The area has some heritage values associated with the silver mine, but little is known about this site. The northern area of this block sits adjacent to the Ross Goldfield Historic Reserve. Ross's historical significance relates to its mining history. The place forms an important part of the history of gold discovery on the West

Coast and New Zealand as a whole, and the resultant settlements. The alluvial gold fields here were the most productive in New Zealand 1865–1914. The vast amount of gold that was found provided good returns for the early prospectors, using the simplest methods.

Within the large block there are examples of a wide range of mining techniques and methods, including some from the earliest rushes through to operations in the 1960s. Also included in the area is evidence of a silver mine, operating during the early part of the 20th century. As gold deposits in the area were found to be deep, very quickly the need for deeper searches encouraged the development of more sophisticated technology, making Ross the most imposing mining works on the West Coast. It is anticipated that there are a large number of unrecorded archaeological sites within the larger area of the block, with evidence by identification of features on survey plans, e.g., SO 1991, showing water races and dams.

## **Modifying factors**

This is one of the few recorded silver mine operations. Sites in the area provide a good example of a wide range of mining techniques, as well as pack tracks and transport. While there has been some modification to sites as a result of more modern mining, particularly close to Ross, it is anticipated that many of the sites remain in relatively good condition. This would need further research to confirm.

## **Permissions Summary**

Fifteen concessions:

- Mining access arrangement for alluvial gold exploration and associated activities (including 27 test pits, associated tracking and 10 water take points as well as drilling for up to 27 drill holes)
- Mining access arrangement for alluvial gold mining on Tōtara River
- Mining access arrangement variation for alluvial gold mining on Tōtara River – extension of term
- Mining access arrangement for alluvial mining, on Tōtara River – extension of term.
- Mining access arrangement variation for alluvial gold mining on Tōtara River – assignment of AA & 3rd variation
- Mining access arrangement for alluvial gold mining in approximately 6 ha of Mikonui Valley Area
- Mining access arrangement being a mining licence for gold at Ross Recreation Reserve and Donnelly Creek
- Mining access arrangement for alluvial gold mining in approximately 7 ha of Tōtara-Mikonui Forests – Clear Creek
- Mining access arrangement to quarry limestone at Tōtara-Mikonui
- Variation of an access arrangement to extend original term under mining licence
- Grazing licence
- Easement
- Easement for a micro-hydroelectric power scheme at Mcleods Rd, Mikonui
- Grazing permit for grazing over part bed of Mikonui River
- Extraction permit for gravel extraction sites within Hokitika and Kokatahi rivers

## Map (aerial photo)

