

HOK_17 – Blue Spur – (215.0461 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Blue Spur	64.8684	2809289	2
Conservation Area - Blue Spur Road	150.1777	2809286	2

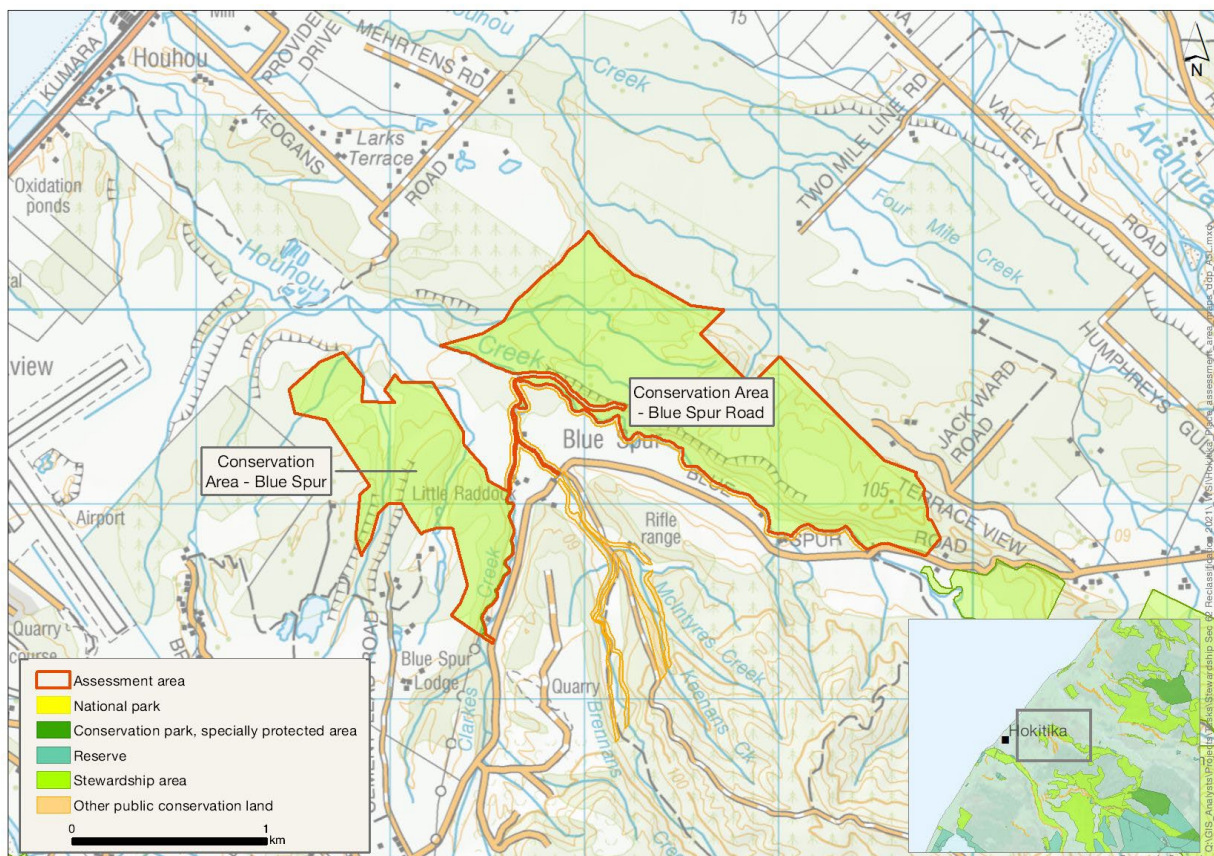
Location

Two areas of forest off Blue Spur Road northeast of Hokitika airport, between Hokitika and Arahura River.

Brief Description

Two large, unconnected patches of forest and wetland on outwash and river terraces. Despite historic clearance, they are still ecologically important examples of this lower altitude forest, of which very little remains intact in Hokitika Ecological District. Both sites would warrant further botanical and ecological field survey. Active gold mining occurs around most of the western area and has intruded over the legal boundary – the continued application and associated impacts of mining activities will present an ongoing threat to the integrity of this area. There are no DOC-managed tracks or facilities but the Blue Spur walkway is maintained and used by the local community. Houhou Creek and Blue Spur Range were prospected before 1865. The technology deployed in the Houhou goldfield was unusual on this part of the West Coast as a result of the black-sand gold lead, and there is a large cluster of associated archaeological sites. There are two permissions for power lines.

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

The area is dominated by two large but unconnected patches of forest occupying the terraced landscape ('tablelands'), both containing substantial habitat diversity – pākihi wetlands, cliff edges, terraces and spurs, small lakes, numerous streams and creeks which feed into Houhou Creek. Although large areas of the vegetation have been modified by historic clearance (mostly associated with successive gold rushes in mid to late 1800s), they are still ecologically important and representative examples of this lower altitude forest, of which very little remains intact in the Hokitika Ecological District. A small proportion of both areas still contains old-growth forest, mostly rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) and tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*) over *quintinia* and kamāhi (*Pterophylla racemosa*).

Small areas of pākihi-like wetland are highly likely to have been induced during historic mining activity and subsequent land development. These will likely eventually revert to forest cover.

The area includes several coastal hillslope creeks including parts of Houhou Creek, Brennans Creek, Foley Creek, Clarkes Creek and a number of small unnamed tributaries. The creeks within the native forest blocks would have reasonably high natural character but Clarkes and Brennans Creeks where the area only includes the river channel has low natural character as it passes through a modified farmland environment. The predicted water quality for these streams is high.

Diversity and pattern

The assessment area contains bluffs, valleys, wetlands and forest, and several tributaries that eventually form Houhou Creek. Strong gradients would be expected with the steep terrace risers and the flatter areas on tops of the terrace treads. The streams and topography also occasionally create small areas of wetland vegetation. Strong ecological gradients are also present in the age of regenerating forest and distance from older stands of trees. There are three level 4 land environment layers, showing a medium level of diversity.

There is only one freshwater survey recorded here, which found populations of longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*) and banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*). Nearby records upstream in these creeks mean the presence of the following species within the area is highly likely and the streams here are certainly used as migration pathways for these species: shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*), giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*), longfin eel, torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), kōura (freshwater crayfish, *Paranephrops planifrons*), lamprey (kanakana, *Geotria australis*) and freshwater shrimp (*Paratya*).

Rarity and distinctiveness

Despite the large proportion of inland and montane forests that are protected, lowland forest on outwash terraces, moraines and on alluvial surfaces have been substantially reduced, probably by at least 90%. Remnants such as this are therefore rare in the ecological district, especially when containing the habitat diversity presented by these two areas.

Both sites would warrant further botanical and ecological field survey. No terrestrial threatened species have been recorded. The freshwater fish present or highly likely to be present include lamprey and shortjaw kōkopu (both Nationally Vulnerable), and longfin eel, kōaro, bluegill bully, giant kōkopu, īnanga and torrentfish (all At Risk: Declining). The presence of all five of the galaxias whitebait species in this area makes it an important area for whitebait diversity.

Ecological context

There is a small creek with a narrow associated marginal strip that connects these two larger pieces of assessment area. This waterway and associated buffer pass through developed farmland, but with stronger advocacy and rehabilitation efforts, could provide a much stronger ecological link. Similarly, there are small corridors of native vegetation stretching inland from the northern area, including a large area of public conservation land and many areas of private land covered in similar forest.

Active gold mining is occurring around most of the western area and has intruded right up to, or even over the legal boundary. Given the history of the surrounding area, the continued application and associated impacts of mining activities will present an ongoing threat to the integrity of this assessment area.

Regeneration of previously cleared sites to native forest cover is advanced, meaning that very few weed issues are present. The usual array of introduced mammalian pests will be present.

Recreation Values

Setting

These areas are in a Backcountry-remote zone. There are no DOC-managed tracks or facilities but there is the Blue Spur walkway, maintained by the local community.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

These areas are likely to receive low levels of recreation use except locals who know about the access tracks.

Access

Access via Blue Spur Road.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

Houhou Creek and Blue Spur Range were prospected before 1865, with the area being subject to a small rush in that year. There is a large cluster of archaeological sites recorded associated with Houhou lead recorded within the stewardship land (see below). The Houhou lead was a buried black-sand beach lead running parallel to the coast. Initially this was mined through tunnelling and shafting. The Houhou lead terminated at Big Paddock, the area of tableland north of the Kaniere goldfield, an area very rich in gold. Between Blue Spur Range and Big Paddock the lead ran through Little Paddock.

The main settlement for the rush was Blue Spur township with another large settlement at Big Paddock. New ground was constantly being opened until the end of 1867 after which work began to slow and the tailings of

older workings began to be reworked. Sporadic small rushes occurred throughout the late 1860s as new leads were found but by 1874 the area had been largely abandoned with only a few operations continuing.

Sites recorded

12 recorded archaeological sites:

- J32/71 area of black sand workings, driving and blocking out operations, shafts, sluicing claims, tail races, stacked tailings and head races
- J32/310 gold working including prospecting pit and hillside cut out
- J32/311 gold workings including sluice face, tunnels and races
- J32/312 two shafts with prominent spoil heaps and other prospecting evidence
- J32/313 gold workings including stacked stone walls, deep tail races and sluice faces
- J32/314 excavated reservoir with evidence of feeder race and other races
- J32/315 two shafts with prominent spoil heaps
- J32/316 reservoir with control gate structure, spillway and occupation area
- J32/317 dam and possible prospecting pit
- J32/318 group of prospecting/mining features including three deep shafts and water race
- J32/319 extensive gold working including ground sluicing, stacked stone walls, tunnels and water races
- J32/320 two shallow prospecting pits, one with a tunnel

SO 6153 shows an old track running north-south towards Houhou Creek. It appears that Cement Lead Road follows the southern alignment of this track. It is likely that there are unrecorded archaeological sites associated with gold mining within this area.

Heritage values

The Houhou rush provided additional economic stimulus to the district just as the Kaniere workings were beginning to slow down and miners were turning their sights elsewhere.

The technology deployed in the Houhou goldfield is unusual on this part of the West Coast as a result of the black-sand gold lead. This was much more common around Charleston and these sites have the potential to provide useful comparative archaeological information and to investigate different methodologies employed in this particular goldfield over time.

Modifying factors

It is likely that there will be further unrecorded archaeological sites within this area.

Permissions summary

- Non-notified easement for Blue Spur power line
- Non-notified easement for a power line for a subdivision at Blue Spur

Map (aerial photo)

