

HOK_48 – Waitaha River / Kakapotahi River (33.2109 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area – Waitaha River / Kakapotahi River	33.2109	2805517	8

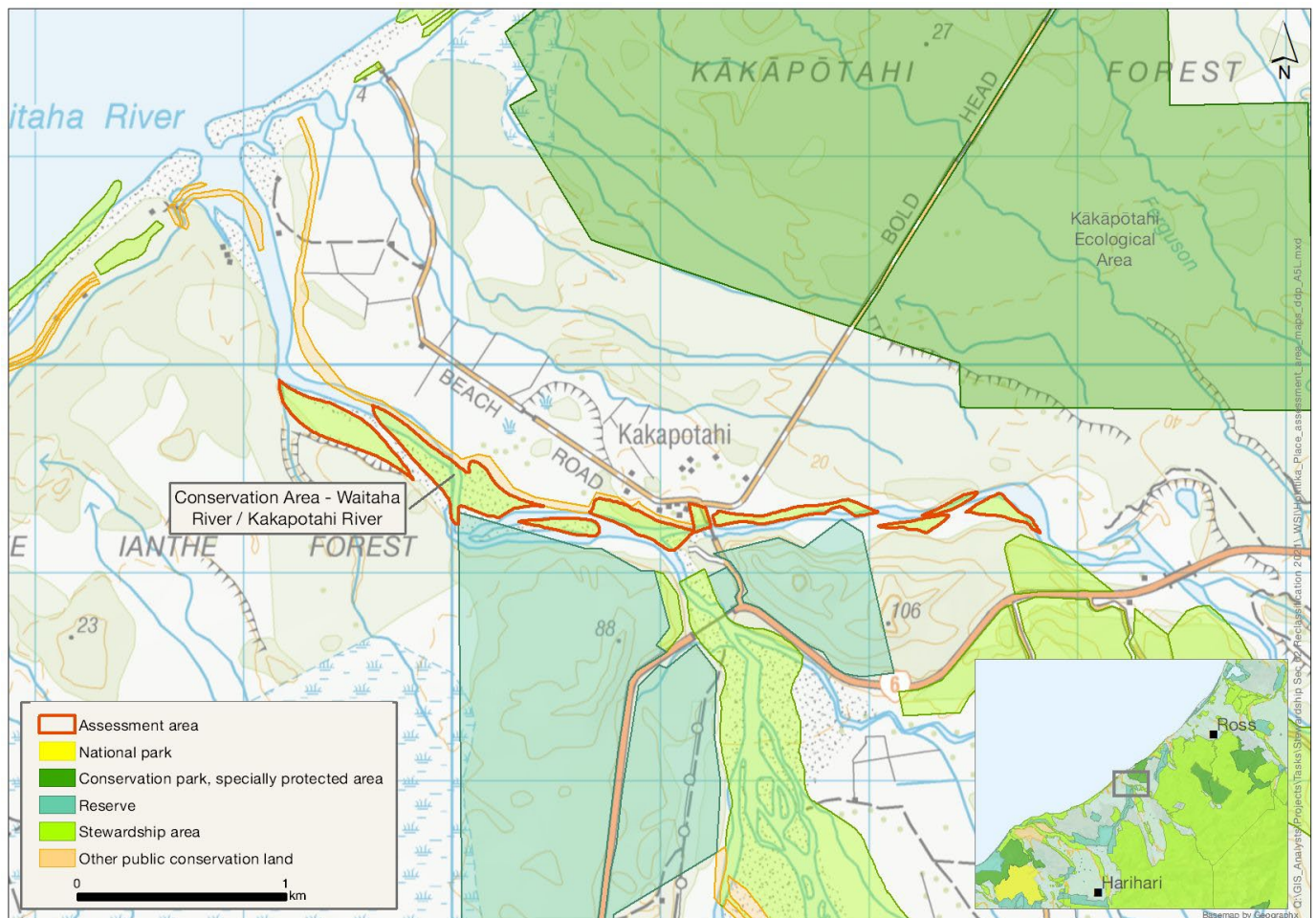
Location

Along the Waitaha Valley above and below SH6, adjacent to Kakapotahi.

Brief Description

Several areas of adjacent land along Waitaha Valley, including areas of river, riverbed gravel and alluvial flats. No terrestrial threatened species are recorded here. The vegetation includes a mix of mature riparian forest, treeland, shrubland/regenerating forest (some that appears to be weedy), wetlands, rough pasture, and improved pasture. The area contains a considerable section of habitat for native freshwater fish. There are no DOC-managed tracks or facilities, and the river is used by kayakers and the occasional fisher. A grazing concession is in place. No historic sites or heritage values are recorded.

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 assessment area consists of several conservation areas, between c. 10–20 m above sea level, along approximately 4 km of the riverine habitat of the Kakapotahi and Waitaha rivers. They include areas of river, riverbed gravel and alluvial flats. The vegetation includes a mix of mature riparian forest, treeland, shrubland/regenerating forest (some that appears to be weedy), wetlands, rough pasture, and improved pasture. The area contains a considerable section of habitat for native freshwater fish. Much of the riparian area of this catchment is in a reasonably natural state, and water quality is predicted to be high. There is a continuously good quality buffer of vegetation along most of this length, with a mix of indigenous regenerating bush and scrubland (gorse). There is minimal direct impact from farming practices, however there is a grazing concession on the area furthest downstream. The area is in Harihari Ecological District and is modestly representative of that district.

Diversity and pattern

The area contains a mixture of riverine, riverbed and alluvial flats habitat. The area contains three level 4 land environment units, which is considered to represent moderate environmental diversity. There are no survey records from within this reach of the Kakapotahi, however, it is a popular whitebait river, and all whitebait species will use this reach of the river to access habitat upstream. There are likely to be longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*) and torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*) as well. Collectively, this represents a high level of diversity in freshwater fauna.

Rarity and distinctiveness

The area contains much braided riverbed, which is a naturally rare ecosystem. The area contains the M2.1a land environments, which are classified as At Risk, i.e., 20–30% remaining in indigenous vegetation. No terrestrial threatened species are known here. There is a high level of diversity in freshwater fauna, with numerous species of conservation concern: shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*) (Nationally Vulnerable), giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), longfin eel, kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), torrentfish and īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*) (all At Risk: Declining) and banded kokopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*). There is extensive habitat for spawning īnanga downstream, with a registered site.

Ecological context

These areas link to Waitaha Scenic Reserve (c. 459 ha), the Kakapotahi Scenic Reserve (c. 38 ha), the Little Waitaha River Conservation Area (HOK_49; c. 136 ha), and the Waitaha River Conservation Area (HOK_50; c. 368 ha). The area also adjoins a marginal strip that links the area to the mouth of Waitaha River.

These areas are not well connected to other areas of public conservation land, except for the Waitaha Scenic Reserve to the south of three of the areas. There is private land surrounding this riverine habitat, with the settlement of Kakapotahi close by. Despite this, the riparian margin of much of these reaches is in good condition with a healthy vegetation buffer, and the catchment has a high level of naturalness. There is likely to be a high diversity of native fish species that use this habitat, many on migration upstream.

Recreation Values

Setting

These areas are in a Backcountry-remote zone. There are no tracks or facilities managed by the Department.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

The river is used by kayakers and occasional fisher.

Access

The areas are not easy to access. The riverbed can be accessed from Beach Rd, Kakapotahi.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

No historic sites or heritage values recorded.

Permissions summary

Grazing licence for grazing part beds of the Kakapotahi and Waitaha rivers

Map (aerial photo)

