

HOK_03 – Taramakau River / Ōtira River (3779.9403 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Taramakau River / Ōtira River	3779.9403	2806316	19

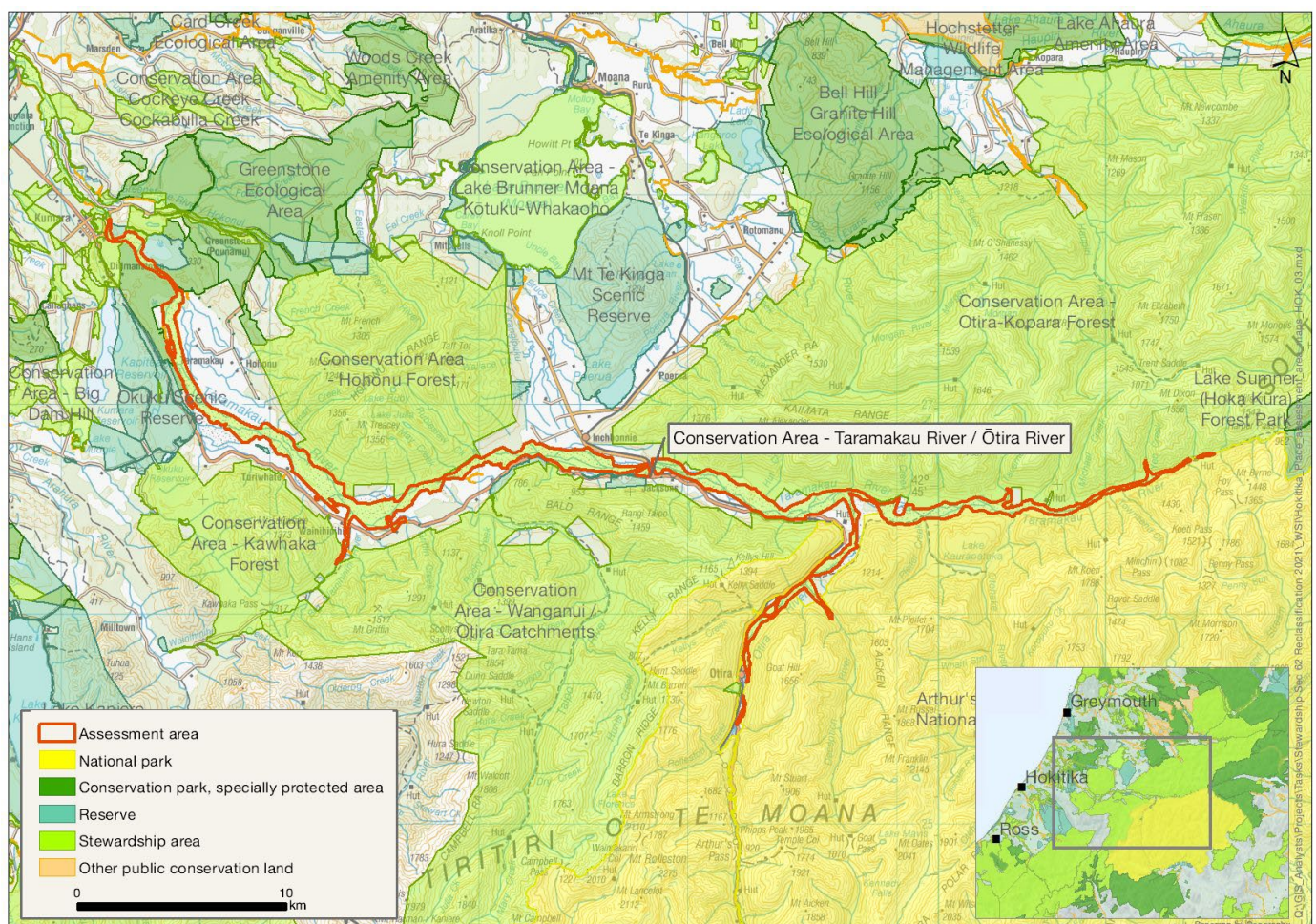
Location

The Taramakau River riverbed and valley floor from to Kumara to its headwaters including sections of the Big Wainihinihi and Ōtira rivers.

Brief Description

This is a very large area that extends down the bed of Ōtira River from Otira and the bed of Taramakau River from Locke Stream to Kumara. It is approximately 60 km of Taramakau River from its headwaters in Arthurs Pass National Park to Kumara. It includes braided riverbed, islands and alluvial flats, and was used by both Māori and Pākeha as a key transport route. Taramakau River is a Deed of Recognition area and Statutory Acknowledgement Area. DOC-managed tramping routes pass through the upper area. 14 concessions are in place, mainly non-intensive grazing licences but also a large number of gravel extraction permits.

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.

Tarahanga e Toru – Three Passes

The narrative that follows applies to Conservation Areas MAW_09, MAW_44, MAW_53, HOK_01 (in part), HOK_03, HOK_05 (in part) and HOK_19 (in part) as they are all linked by pounamu traditions ki uta ki tai (from the mountains to the sea).

From the snowy peaks to the sea waters of the taniwha Poutini, the central West Coast is of immense significance to Poutini Ngāi Tahu. From the earliest times, pounamu was the reason for settlement on Te Tai o Poutini and this central region is the heart of Poutini Ngāi Tahu legends, customs and traditions.

Every foot of this region was explored, named and utilised. The mountains are criss-crossed by pounamu trails connecting the pā of Arahura, Taramakau and Māwhera with the great Ngāi Tahu trading centre of Kaiapoi Pā. Three passes in particular were lifelines for Poutini Ngāi Tahu as trading routes for pounamu and kai in times of war and peace.

Rakimaurikura, the alpine crossing at the head of the Taramakau (Harpers Pass) was the easiest and favourite route. It started at the great pounamu pā at the mouth of the Taramakau, crossing over to Kōtukuwhakaoko (Lake Brunner) via the Ōhonu (Greenstone Creek) to avoid the swift rapids, re-emerging in the Taramakau valley at the foot of Kaimatau (Mt Alexander) – a tohu whenua or notable landmark visible from all over the Taramakau and inland Grey Valley as a beacon for travellers. Whakamoemoe was the resting place just before ascending or descending the pass.

Another important trail follows the Kokatahi (Styx River) into the Arahura headwaters and then across Te Tarahanga o Kaniere (Brownings Pass, also known as Nōti Raureka). This trail has carried 500 years of pounamu trading and numerous water parties since the first footsteps of Raureka, who innocently disclosed the path up the Kokatahi.

The next great alpine route is up the Ahaura River and over Amuri Pass for a more direct route to Kaiapoi Pā, and was favoured by war parties, including Tuhuru. This route was marked by another tohu whenua, Mt Whakarewa.

These three pathways are also markers in the 1860 Arahura Deed of Purchase with the Crown.

The varied and plentiful mahinga kai resources in this area supported pā and kainga nohoanga (temporary settlements) throughout the region, and were critical to the success of the pounamu pathways. Ngāi Tahu tīpuna had vast knowledge of these resources, their availability and sustainable practices for their use.

Pounamu legends associated with this area abound, from the hills of Ōhonu (Hohonu Range) – where Māori in 1864 struck gold that sparked the West Coast gold rush and settlement – to Turiwhate, the entire Arahura and environs, including Kawhaka, Tuhua, Timuaki, Raparapahoe, Mt Tara o Tama (the great mountain of the pounamu explorer Tama Ahua) and as far as Mt Kaniere (Mt Harman), named for sawing the pounamu. These places are all remembered in whakapapa, waiata and oral histories.

War parties trod these lands, and battles for ascendancy of this taonga see-sawed at Kokatahi, Kaniere, Māhinapua, Arahura and Kōtukuwhakaoko. Brunner and Heaphy, the first Pakeha explorers, found a thriving pounamu pā at the mouth of the Taramakau at the head of the lagoon Ohinerata, and from here, jewellery, hei tiki and mere were expertly crafted and then traded up the coastline to Whakatu (Nelson) and across the Taramakau to Kaiapoi. Historical and contemporary associations with pounamu are integral to Poutini Ngāi Tahu identity.

Poutini Ngāi Tahu ancestors and their stories are literally embedded in this landscape and the immense historical, spiritual and cultural significance of this area cannot be understated. The Kokatahi, Arahura, Taramakau and Ahaura catchments, along with Kōtukuwhakaoko, are inextricably linked and integral to Poutini Ngāi Tahu history and identity. Parts of this cultural landscape have been recognised through provisions in the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, including Statutory Acknowledgements for the Taramakau River and Kōtukuwhakaoko.

The reclassification of these lands must recognise and provide for the ability for Ngai Tahu whānui to reconnect to their ancestral lands, provide for the mana and rangatiratanga of Ngāi Tahu and to exercise kaitiakitanga and mahinga kai, as well as the protection of natural and historic resources.

Treaty Settlement obligations

Taramakau River is a Deed of Recognition area and Statutory Acknowledgement Area. Under Schedule 56, [Deed of Settlement] Taramakau River was and still is a significant indigenous fishery and source of manu (birds). The river remains a source of rich and abundant harvests. The area is noted particularly for its tuna (eel) and īnaka (whitebait) fisheries.

The tūpuna had considerable knowledge of whakapapa, traditional trails and tauranga waka, places for gathering kai and other taonga, ways in which to use the resources of the river, the relationship of people with the river and their dependence on it, and tikanga for the proper and sustainable utilisation of resources. All of these values remain important to Ngāi Tahu today.

There was a pā at the mouth of the river, and kainga nohoanga (temporary settlements) were established along the length of the river which were related to the taking of mahinga kai and, in particular, the retrieval of pounamu. The river itself was, therefore, a significant part of the pounamu trail, via which the taonga was transported from its source to be traded up and down the country.

The tūpuna had an intimate knowledge of navigation, river routes, safe harbours and landing places, and the locations of food and other resources on the river. The river was an integral part of a network of trails which were used in order to ensure the safest journey, and incorporated locations along the way that were identified for activities including camping overnight and gathering kai. Knowledge of these trails continues to be held by whānau and hapū and is regarded as a taonga. The traditional mobile lifestyle of the people led to their dependence on the resources of the river.

The mauri of Taramakau represents the essence that binds the physical and spiritual elements of all things together, generating and upholding all life. All elements of the natural environment possess a life force, and all forms of life are related. Mauri is a critical element of the spiritual relationship of Ngāi Tahu Whānui with the river.

There are a number of actions the Department must undertake in relation to Deed of Recognitions Areas. These are outlined in more detail in HOK_01.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

The assessment area is largely braided riverbed and channels but includes gravel islands and alluvial flats – these are often bare but some have rough pasture and shrubland (both native and exotic) – and isolated pockets of riparian forest, and wetland for c.60 km from c.20–540 m above sea level.

The head of Taramakau and Ōtira rivers is less modified grassland, with more expansive shrubland and fringes of forest. It is largely natural flow and natural channels with limited river protection works, except on the north bank around the Taramakau Settlement. The area is largely within the northern portion of the Hokitika Ecological District and extends into the adjacent Brunner and Whitcombe ecological districts.

The assessment area includes significant sections of the upper Taramakau River and much of Ōtira River. The river is braiding with good natural character in terms of river form and flow and high predicted water quality.

Diversity and pattern

The area contains several landforms including braided riverbed with channels and islands, alluvial flats and some limited bluff habitat. The vegetation includes mainly river gravels and river channels, with some shrubland (both native and exotic) and rough pasture and limited areas of forest, wetland and improved pasture. The diversity is increased as the area spans from lowland to montane. The area contains at least six level 4 land environments, which represents a moderate level of environmental diversity. Taramakau and Ōtira rivers within the assessment area support a highly diverse array of freshwater fish species, including populations of kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), inanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*), upland bully (West Coast) (*Gobiomorphus breviceps*), dwarf galaxias (*Galaxias divergens*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*), kōura (freshwater crayfish, *Paranephrops planifrons*) and brown mudfish (*Neochanna apoda*). The high number of whitebait species present makes this an important area with regard to whitebait diversity.

Rarity and distinctiveness

The assessment area includes some of the M2.1a land environment, classified as At Risk (i.e. 20–30% remaining in indigenous vegetation). There are historical site records of the stalked adder's tongue fern (*Ophioglossum petiolatum*) (Nationally Critical), also the herb *Gratiola concinna* (Nationally Endangered), bloodwood (*Coprosma wallii*) (At Risk: Declining) and the Westland greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis cernua*) (Naturally Uncommon) from nearby areas. The freshwater fish species present include kōaro, torrentfish, inanga, dwarf galaxias, longfin eel, redfin bully, bluegill bully, brown mudfish and giant kōkopu (all At Risk: Declining), making this a significant area for freshwater fish species.

Ecological context

This Area is mainly braided riverbed that adjoins extensive protected areas, including Arthurs Pass National Park and a number of stewardship land areas that are under consideration: Otira-Kopara Forest Conservation Area (MAW_09; 79,168 ha), Hohonu Forest Conservation Area (MAW_53; 10,596 ha), Kawhaka Forest Conservation Area (HOK_19, 5,124 ha), as well as Dillmanstown Amenity Area (718 ha), Three Mile Hill Ecological Area (387 ha), Paynes Gully Wildlife Management Area (268 ha), Paynes Gully Road Conservation Area (MAW_55; 204 ha) and Taramakau Riverbed Conservation Area (394 ha). It extends from the Alps to where it joins HOK_01, and then to the coast. It also adjoins three large ecological management areas: Hohono (EMU no. 300332), Otira (EMU 300333) and Otehake (EMU 300334).

Recreation Values

Setting

The area is in a Backcountry-remote zone. DOC-managed routes pass through the upper area: Te Araroa Trail from Harpers Pass to the Morrison footbridge over Ōtira River passes through it, and the start of the Townsend route to Townsend Hut and the Deception Valley route to the adjacent Arthurs Pass are also there. The area downriver from Aitkens at the confluence of the Ōtira and Taramakau rivers has no tracks or facilities managed by the Department.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

Tramping.

Access

Access from SH73.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

The Taramakau River and valley was used by both Māori and Pākeha as a key transport route. A number of the archaeological sites within the stewardship land and in close proximity to it relate to accommodation for people travelling through the area.

Sites recorded

- K33/10 site of accommodation house (Alexander House) built in 1865 and washed away in floods
- K33/12 site of accommodation house built by Kelly and burnt down in 1870. The site sits on the border of stewardship land
- K33/5 Māori village Taua Tiki Rangi recorded on the basis of historical information, this site appears to be sitting just outside the stewardship land
- Possibly K33/13 Wright's Camp (1865). Later, by 1870, accommodation house was owned by Wright which was destroyed by floods in 1888. This site sits adjacent to the stewardship land likely on flats just beyond the edge of the assessment area
- K33/9 possibly Māori campsite comprising stone fire features (may have been eroded by river)

Heritage values

The accommodation house sites have historical value through their role in the early transport route between the east and west coasts. If still present, all of the sites will have archaeological values through their potential to provide information about the use of the river valleys by both Māori and post-colonial travellers.

Modifying factors

Most of these sites are recorded on the basis of historical documentation and the presence of any archaeological remains is unknown.

Permissions summary

14 concessions, mainly non-intensive grazing licences but also a large number of gravel extraction permits.

- Low impact access arrangement for extracting schist from alluvial gravels at Lynch Creek and Wainihinihi River

- Non-notified re-issue of a grazing licence for grazing in Taramakau River bed
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing over part beds of the Otira & Deception rivers
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing on part of the Ōtira River bed (at Aitkens Corner)
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing the upper Taramakau valley
- Non-notified easement for a legal right of way for the associated right to construct and maintain proposed rock groynes; maintain existing rock groynes; maintain existing rock armouring (rock protection walls/revetments); and construct proposed temporary gravel bunds for river diversion, for the purposes of flood and erosion protection and access (including vehicular) for construction, maintenance and inspection of the structures within various parts of the Conservation Area – Taramakau River / Ōtira River
- Non-notified permit for gravel extraction from the dry bed Grey River, Taramakau River, Haast River
- Non-notified grazing licence for grazing part bed of the Taramakau River bed
- Non-notified easement for Kumara Dillmanstown hydro-electric easement
- Non-notified easement for rock groyne 12 x 7.5 m at Taramakau River/Ōtira River
- Non-notified extraction permit for gravel extraction from the built-up gravel beds of Taramakau River near Turwhate, West Coast, for upgrading the Old Christchurch Road
- Re-issue of a non-notified grazing licence for grazing part bed of Taramakau River
- Non-notified extraction permit for rock extraction from Kokatahi River, MacGregor Creek, Wainihinihi Creek and Waitaha River
- Non-notified grazing licence for grazing and planting crops for silage within part of Taramakau River bed

Map (aerial photo)

