

MAW_09 – Otira-Kopara, Granville, Grey River/ Māwheranui and Robinson River Forests (99351.1449 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area – Granville Forest	19153.6968	2807465	9
Conservation Area – Grey River/Māwheranui	1033.4252	2807468	2
Conservation Area – Grey River/Māwheranui	92.5957	2807469	1
Conservation Area – Otira-Kopara Forest	78872.8757	2807512	67
Conservation Area – Robinson River	105.8755	2807517	2
Robinson River Conservation Area	81.2696	2954675	2
Conservation Area – Crane Creek – Haupiri Road	11.4064	2807522	1

Location

A very large assessment area extending from Mt Harātā on the true left of the Upper Grey River to the true right of the Taramakau.

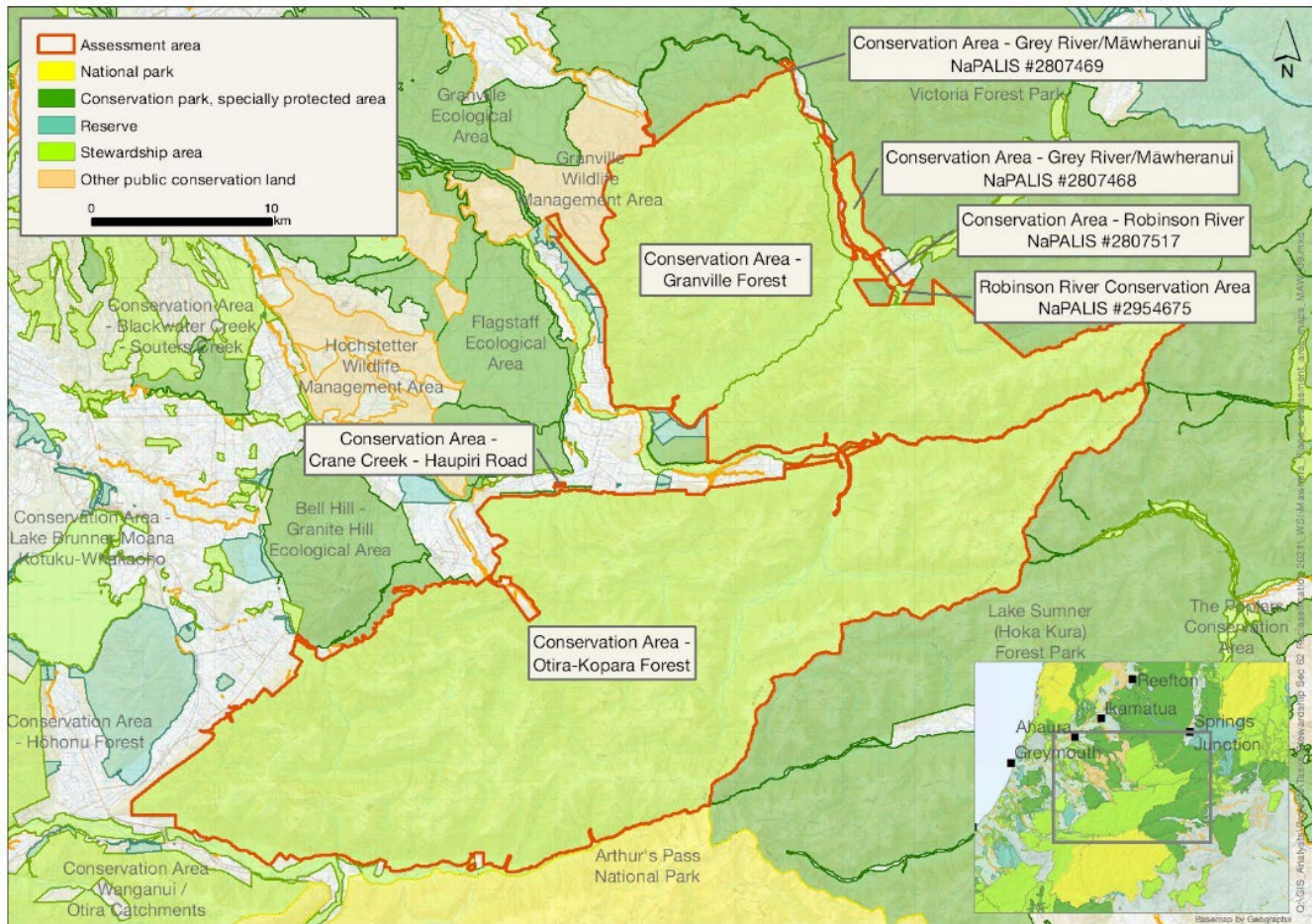
Brief Description

A very large area of forested land on the western side of the Southern Alps made up of seven conservation areas which contain numerous streams in the headwaters of Ahaura River, Haupiri and Taramakau Rivers, many of which flow from alpine zones >1750m down to the valley floors with very high water quality. There is a wide range of avifauna including whio, roroa/great spotted kiwi, South Island kākā, kea and rock wren. The southern end of the Tai Poutini Mt Te Kinga Predator Free project falls within this area.

This area is well-known for recreation, including long treks via huts and popular tramping tracks (including part of Te Araroa Trail), river rafting (commercial), commercial fishing, guiding and horse trekking. Slaty Creek Hut is an actively conserved heritage place. There are three grazing concessions and one concession for a structure at Mt Mason.

This area is very significant to Poutini Ngāi Tahu for a number of reasons, including ara tawhito (traditional travel routes).

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. The Tārere (Crooked River) runs through the middle of this block and was a favoured mahinga kai of Poutini Ngāi Tahu for upokororo and tuna.

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.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

High representativeness and naturalness values. Covers several ecological districts (Totara Flat, Hope, Whitcomb, and Greymouth). Low altitude conifer/beechn (tawhai, *Fuscopora* and *Lophozonia*) forest to alpine scree with red beech (*Fuscospora fusca*) on slopes with kamāhi (*Pterophylla racemose*) and Westland *Quintinia* common. Pure silver beech (*Lophozonia menziesii*) dominates at higher altitudes with southern rātā (*Metrosideros umbellata*) and New Zealand cedar (pahautea, *Libocedrus bidwillii*) at mid altitudes. The cedar is also present in the south of the assessment area in the Taramakau catchment.

This very large block of forested land contains numerous streams, with a very high level of naturalness, in the headwaters of Ahaura River, Haupiri and Taramakau rivers.

The catchment vegetation is indigenous forest and the predicted water quality very high. The many waterways flow from alpine zones >1750 m down to valley floors of tributaries of Grey River/Māwheranui, and the southern edge of the assessment area has multiple tributaries that feed into the Taramakau River. Highly natural catchments with very high water quality. The headwaters of the Upper Grey River flow along the western edge of this assessment area, and the block covers three tributaries that feed into the Upper Grey. A much smaller parcel to the north also adjoins the Upper Grey River and with equally high level of naturalness.

The two Robinson River parcels in the northeast adjoin the lower reaches of Robinson River, close to where it transitions into the Upper Grey River. Approximately half of this parcel looks to be converted to farmland, and the other half is indigenous forest. Much of the riparian margin has been converted to pastoral land, and there is a limited riparian buffer on the true right of Robinson River. High water quality is predicted. The Crane Creek-Haupiri is a somewhat anomalous outlier, not joined with the larger blocks of public conservation land. It has no waterways that flow through it; however, this forested block borders two high quality creeks (Crane Creek and an unnamed creek).

Diversity and pattern

This assessment area has very high diversity and pattern value. It covers a range of ecosystems from forest, subalpine, alpine, rivers, valleys and includes the Southern Alps. The northern part around Mt Harātā is a typical altitudinal sequence of lowland conifer-beech to montane beech forest and subalpine grasslands on granite; including grass and scrub successions and gravel riverbed habitats. The diverse vegetation patterns reflect the variations in geology (granite, schist, sandstones, and glacial deposits) soils, altitudes and aspects.

There are surprisingly few freshwater records within the actual parcels' waterways, There is one record of freshwater fish within the reach of Robinson River that flows alongside these two blocks: and numerous records just outside the boundaries. Within the same sub catchments are records from a diverse range of freshwater species: longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), dwarf galaxias (*Galaxias divergens*), torrentfish (piripiripōhatu, *Cheimarrichthys fosteri*), kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), upland bully (West Coast) (*Gobiomorphus breviceps*), redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*) and brown trout (*salmo trutta*).

Rarity and distinctiveness

Great spotted kiwi (roroa, *Apteryx maxima*) (Nationally Vulnerable) are present throughout, with whio (Blue Duck, *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*) (Nationally Vulnerable) recorded in some of the streams. Habitat for kea (*Nestor notabilis*) (Nationally Endangered) is also throughout the entire area. Rock wren (tuke, *Xenicus*

gilviventris) (Nationally Endangered) is present and the South Island (*Nestor meridionalis*) (Nationally Vulnerable) use these forests.

Threatened plants recorded nearby and likely to be present include red mistletoe (*pikirangi*, *Peraxilla tetrapetala*) and scarlet mistletoe (*pirita*, *Peraxilla colensoi*) (both At Risk: Declining). The Threatened Environments of New Zealand classification identifies Acutely and Chronically Threatened land environments within the assessment area. Naturally Uncommon Ecosystem types including cliffs, scarps, and tors are here.

Although there is a lack of records of freshwater fish species within this large, forested block, there is a high diversity of native fish of conservation interest (see Diversity section). It is very likely that all the species listed reside in waterways within this large assessment area.

Ecological context

This very large assessment area (99351 ha) is an irregular polygon which narrows to 1 km at one point. It contributes significantly to the wilderness of the backcountry in these ecological districts. It is important for natural functioning of the indigenous flora and fauna. This parcel is almost entirely surrounded by public conservation land, including Arthur's Pass National Park and Lake Sumner and Victoria Forest Park, Mt Harātā Ecological Area and Granville Wildlife Area. There are four ecological management units adjacent to this assessment area and one (Mt Harātā) which is congruent in the north of the assessment area.

It contains many streams that flow from alpine zones to the valley floors of substantial rivers, that ultimately reach the Grey River/Māwheranui. The southern edge of the parcel is highly significant in its location, as it rests on the main divide between the west and east (Hope Pass and Harpers Pass), from which the headwaters of the Taramakau and the Hurunui rise.

The riparian margin along much of the length of Robinson River sections are used as pastoral farmland, reducing its level of naturalness. There is nevertheless a high level of naturalness from a water quality perspective, and a reasonable level of predicted freshwater species diversity. This parcel is surrounded by private land and adjoins Haupiri Rd. There are no freshwater values within the Crane Creek - Haupiri Road CA.

Recreation Values

Setting

These seven areas are located in the headwaters of the Upper Grey and Ahaura Rivers and include the Waiheke, Haupiri, Crooked and Trent rivers and part of Taramakau River, and comprise steep hill country west of the Southern Alps. The Granville Forest stewardship area is managed as part of the Harātā Remote zone, and there are no tracks or facilities in this area. The remaining areas are within Backcountry-remote zone, with a number of tramping tracks and routes providing access to the Mid Robinson Hut, Waikiti Hut, Jacko Flat, Top Crooked and Lake Morgan huts, Cone Creek, Top Trent and Elizabeth huts and Camp Creek Hut. Parts of the tramping track to Harpers Pass are on the southern boundary of the Otira-Kopara Forest stewardship area. This track is a section of the Te Araroa Trail.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

Visitors are typically those who seek tramping, hunting or fishing in more challenging natural settings. Some people will use tramping routes to cross passes on the Main Divide. The level of recreation use is generally low, except for a higher number of people, (500 plus per annum) tramping Te Araroa Trail.

Access

Road access is available to the start of tracks and routes.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

Slaty Creek Hut in Waiheke River was constructed in 1952 by government deer cullers employed by the Internal Affairs Department, and it represents an important change in the development of back country hunting infrastructure. The land area was earmarked as reserve (scenic) at least as early as 1939 (SO 4154).

Sites recorded

One actively conserved heritage place:

- Slaty Creek Hut (Equipment ID 100075434) (at the confluence of Slaty Creek and Waiheke River)

One recorded archaeological site:

- L32/1 Slaty Creek Hut

There is one adze findspot (L32/4) recorded just on the margin of the conservation area bordering on Robinson River and there are several artefacts find spots (obsidian and adzes) recorded just outside the area on the farmed flat near the confluence of the Upper Grey and Robinson Rivers (many of these now in Canterbury Museum).

Heritage values

As the last traditional slab hut built before the advent of air transportation to supply building materials to hut sites, Slaty Creek is an important landmark in the history of back country deer control with high historic and technical values.

Modifying factors

Slaty Creek is one of three slab huts remaining on the West Coast. Of the other two, one was associated with Depression era gold mining (derelict Meikles Hut), and the other with government deer culling (Prices Flat Hut built in 1949). Nationally, there are only four other extant deer culling slab huts.

Local context

This is a large important area and well known for recreation, including long treks and popular tramping tracks, river rafting (commercial), commercial fishing, guiding and horse trekking through Amuri-Ahaura Pass, Waiheke, Harper and Hope Pass. It includes substantial Great Spotted Kiwi habitat in Waiheke and Alexander. occasional whoio sitting in the northern section, long tailed bats and kea and it also includes the southern end of the Tai Poutini Mt Te Kinga Predator Free project.

Permissions summary

Four concessions for grazing and structures in Otira-Kopara Forest.

- A grazing concession at Waikiti Downs, Ahaura, two grazing licences close to Robinson River, and one in the Taramakau Riverbed
- A concession for a structure at Mt Mason

Map (aerial photo)

