

PAP_02 – Northern Paparoa Range and Little Tōtara River (16,889.472 ha)

Protected Area(s)	Area (ha)	NaPALIS #	# of Primary Parcels
Conservation Area - Ananui Creek	12.9924	2806955	1
Conservation Area - Northern Paparoa Range	11407.2753	2808295	13
Conservation Area - Little Tōtara River	5469.2043	2808369	4

Location

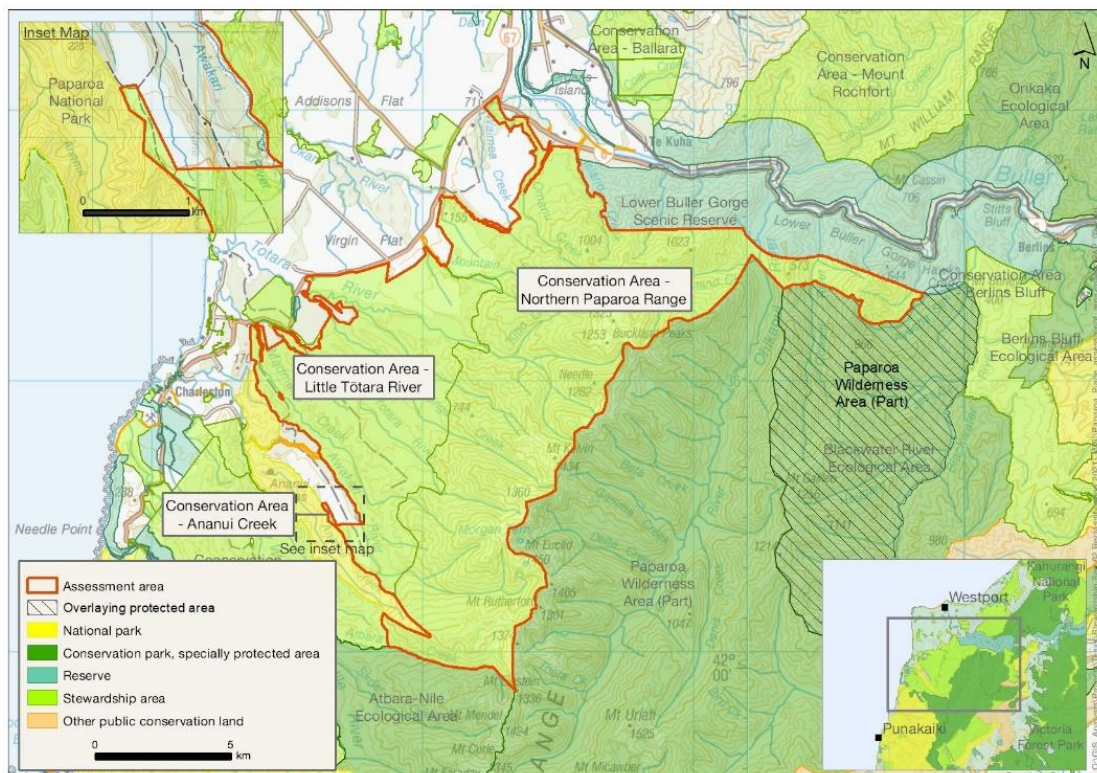
Predominantly the western slopes of the northern end of the Paparoa Range from Buller River in the north to Four Mile (Tiropahi) River in the south.

Brief Description

This assessment area is composed of two large conservation areas and a small 12 ha block in the south-west adjoining Little Tōtara (see map inset). The area has a wide range of landforms, vegetation associations and ecosystems from recent river terraces to steep and dissected granite and gneiss, limestone bluffs and alpine crests. It is almost entirely in unmodified native vegetation and its connectivity to other public conservation lands is critically important for protecting functioning ecosystems and processes. This assessment area protects the headwaters of many streams and rivers that run through wetlands and modified farmlands further down the catchment close to the river mouths. Amidst the abundance of wildlife, including threatened and at-risk species, are three undescribed *Powelliphanta* land snail taxa, restricted to this assessment area.

Buckland's Peak Track and its hut are in the Northern Paparoa Range Conservation Area, and there are tracks not maintained by DOC. The rest of the area is remote and difficult terrain. There is history of (unsuccessful) uranium prospecting. Some easements and licences are in place.

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. Further, Ngāi Tahu may have future aspirations for this land (such as from an economic wellbeing and development perspective) and so those aspirations must be considered and provided for as well.

Ecological Values

Representativeness

This assessment area contains characteristic features of the Foulwind, Buller and Punakaiki ecological districts. There is a wide range of landforms, vegetation associations and ecosystems from recent (Pleistocene) river terraces in the west, the steep and dissected granite and gneiss of the north-western Paparoa Range, limestone bluff systems, to alpine crests and the plunging valley of Buckland Creek in the Ōhikanui catchment with its cooler mountain climate to the east. It is almost entirely in native vegetation and mostly unmodified. The vegetation ranges from natural and human-induced pākihi on the lower terraces, through mixed beech, podocarp-hardwood-beech, broadleaf forest and montane beech forest to alpine tussocks and herbfields.

The area is a high value avifauna site with a full suite of common, threatened and at-risk birds (Morse 1981). It contains a highly representative sample of the vegetation, geography and habitats associated with these ecological districts and is highly natural despite the presence of a full suite of common pest animals including deer, goats, possums, rodents and mustelids.

There is high level of naturalness in freshwater environments and high predicted water quality according to the Macroinvertebrate Community Index. This assessment area protects headwaters of many streams and rivers that run through wetlands and modified farmlands further down the catchment close to the river mouths. Swamp, marsh, seepage and pākihi wetlands are present.

Diversity and pattern

Highly varied geology, aspect, exposure and altitude over this large area creates a high diversity of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and habitats. The altitudinal sequence is intact from 20 m above sea level at the Tōtara River to 1450 m at the highest point, Mt Euclid. This assessment area contains a full suite of habitats and intact vegetation gradients from coastal terraces to alpine tops. It supports high avifauna values with good species richness and abundance with almost all possible native forest birds represented as well as some marine, wetland and alpine species (Morse 1981). The diversity of native vegetation associations is high as is the species richness of the flora, both vascular and nonvascular (Fife 1984). There is a high diversity of micro-mollusc fauna in the high fertility limestone sites (McEwan 1987). The diverse freshwater fish assemblage includes redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*), longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), lamprey (kanakana, *Geotria australis*), and three whitebait species – kōaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*) and shortjaw kōkopu (*Galaxias postvectis*) – making these important streams for whitebait diversity.

Rarity and distinctiveness

There are two Naturally Uncommon Ecosystems (Williams et al 2007) within the assessment area; Townson Tarn on Buckland Peak, and the pākihi east of the faultline. The area is congruent with four wetlands in the West Coast Regional Council Schedule of Wetlands. Three undescribed *Powelliphanta* land snail taxa in the north, central and southern alpine zones respectively are restricted to this assessment area. A subfossil *Powelliphanta*

of unknown species is present on the Lockington pākihi in the lowland sector of the conservation area (K Walker; pers comm).

Great spotted kiwi (roroa, *Apteryx maxima*) and kea (*Nestor notabilis*) (both Nationally Endangered) and kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*) (Nationally Vulnerable) are present along with pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*), fernbird (mātātā, *Bowdleria punctata*) and South Island robin (toutouwai, *Petroica australis australis*) (At Risk: Declining). Parkinson's rātā (*Metrosideros parkinsonii*) (Nationally Vulnerable) is present in this area, as are several of the other threatened myrtle species.

The freshwater fish present include longfin eel and kōaro (both At Risk: Declining) and shortjaw kōkopu and lamprey (both Nationally Vulnerable), making this is an important site for protection of freshwater species. Longfin eel, bluegill bully (*Gobiomorphus hubbsi*) and brown mudfish (*Neochanna apoda*) are At Risk: Declining.

Ecological context

This very large area is somewhat compact with a narrow extension in the north, approximately 400 m wide. The area makes an important contribution to the connectivity of a vast forested landscape through the Northern Paparoa Range east into the Buller Ecological District connecting the western terraces to the Paparoa Wilderness area, east into Blackwater River Ecological Area and Four Mile Scenic Reserve and south into the Atbara-Nile Ecological Area. It borders an isolated fragment of Paparoa National Park to the south and the Lower Buller Gorge Scenic Reserve in the north. The size and diversity of the vegetation associations within the area, and its connectivity to other public conservation lands is critically important for protecting functioning ecosystems and processes.

The area is congruent with large parts of a Species Management Unit for brown mudfish and a pākihi ecological management unit.

Recreation Values

Setting

These are large areas in a Backcountry-remote zone. Bucklands Peak Track is in the Northern Paparoa Range Conservation Area and provides access to the 6-bunk Bucklands Peak Hut. The rest of the area is fairly remote and difficult terrain.

Visitor type and activities typically undertaken

Backcountry Adventurers (BCA) trampers use Bucklands Peak Track. The assessment area includes a small section of the Ōhikanui River valley, used for fishing, walking and hunting.

Access

Bucklands Peak Track is accessed via Lower Buller Gorge road.

There is also an unmaintained alternative route to Bucklands Hut joining up to the current track mid-point. It is important to retain access if the easement for the main route is ever compromised. It was seen as an alternate route and was to have a carpark at the end, not built due to cost but still a possibility. The route is not maintained, and only has occasional marking, through old gold workings, junk and rusty relics.

This assessment area also includes a route up what is locally called Baldy on the Paparoa Range ridge and a marked route to Mt Kelvin from the Big Tōtara. The Mt Kelvin route is an old bush road, branching off via a 4wd track. It is not maintained by DOC but seems to be by volunteers.

Heritage Values

Historical overview

The westernmost extent of the assessment area extends over the Hawks Crag Breccia which contains uranium deposits. The discovery of these deposits in 1955 triggered a rush to the Buller Gorge, Fox River and Bullock Creek. For 25 years prospectors funded by both the New Zealand and UK governments were active in these areas. The finds were never economic and prospecting finished in 1979.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century survey plans show several mining claims and water races on the terrace land in the western portion of the conservation area.

Sites recorded

No sites associated with the uranium prospecting have been recorded.

Heritage values

Any sites associated with uranium prospecting have heritage values through their association with the global rush to find uranium to make atomic weapons and fuel nuclear power stations in the aftermath of WWII. The Buller Gorge rush represents New Zealand's attempt to join the search. The discovery of uranium by prospectors in 1955 raised (unrealised) hopes of enormous wealth.

Modifying factors

Permissions summary

- Two easements for access.
- One appurtenant easement right of way (term ends 2064).
- License for storage of baleage, storage of gravel, and grazing for 25 sheep.

Map (aerial photo)

