

Consulting on the protection of native species in Whareorino

The Department of Conservation (DOC) wants to reduce rats, possums and stoats to protect native species

Native wildlife needs protection here

Native species are under threat from rats, possums and stoats. Without protection, we risk losing the native plants and animals that make Whareorino a unique and special place.

The Whareorino Conservation Area contains nationally significant areas of kaikawaka forest (*Libocedrus bidwillii*). There are only three kaikawaka forests on the western side of the North Island (Mt Pirongia, Herangi Range and Taranaki Maunga), making them unique forests and habitat for native species. Threatened native species found at Whareorino include:

- Archey's frog | pepeketua – a globally critically endangered frog that are considered living fossils because of their ancient lineage.
- Hochstetter's frog | pepeketua – a speckled and nocturnal native frog.
- Dactylanthus | te pua o te rēinga – our country's only indigenous fully parasitic flowering plant.
- Long-tailed bat | pekapeka – our country's smallest native bat at the length of a thumb or smaller.

The plan to control introduced predators

To protect native species, our team in Maniapoto is planning to reduce predator numbers across 4,558 hectares of the forest.

The most effective tool to control predators over large areas is bait pellets containing sodium fluoroacetate (1080). Helicopters distribute bait across the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the only way to control possums, rats and stoats across vast, remote and rugged landscapes.

Over 1,000 A24 traps targeting rats are installed across the core frog protection area covering approximately 650 hectares. However, the number of rats invading from the wider landscape can overwhelm the network, making it difficult to maintain rat populations at low levels.

Pepeketua/Archey's frog are also vulnerable to predation by stoats, ferrets and cats.



Archey's Frog. Photo: James Reardon

This work is part of DOC's National Predator Control Programme. We are protecting the remaining populations of threatened native species while tools continue to be developed to eradicate possums, rats and stoats across New Zealand.

Monitoring native species

Through sustained predator control, there is a big increase in breeding success for native wildlife, their food source is more abundant, and the forest canopy is healthier.

During a 12 year study in Whareorino Conservation Area, researchers investigated how sustained control of rats impacted pepeketua/Archey's frog. They studied frog survival, their number of offspring, and their population abundance (Germano et al. 2023). They compared frog populations in areas with predator control and areas with no predator control. The areas with predator control had higher adult frog survival rates, more independent juveniles per adult frog, and more abundant adult frogs over time when compared to the areas with no predator control. Frog numbers declined in areas without predator control showing the importance of protecting pepeketua from rats using 1080 and traps.

Key facts about 1080

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate is found in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa and Brazil. It is also found at lower levels in our native plants.

1080 bait is broken down naturally in the environment by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.

The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the application of 1080.

Operations begin with the distribution of pre-feed non-toxic bait to prepare possums/rodents to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators.

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

Proposed timeframe

Predator control operations are done when monitoring shows predators have reached levels that threaten the populations of native species. Operations are weather dependent. At this stage, the operation in Whareorino is planned for autumn or spring 2026. Final dates will be confirmed closer to the time.

Have your say

DOC consults with iwi, hapū and key stakeholders including adjacent landowners for predator control operations where 1080 is the proposed method. We aim to understand people's views and answer any questions they may have.

The DOC team at Maniapoto or our contractor EcoFX would like to contact you to discuss the proposed operation. This includes how you think it could affect the following:

- You and your wellbeing, native flora and fauna, natural resources and your ability to protect, manage and use these resources.

As part of this consultation process, we will consider what we can do to mitigate any effects.



Long-tailed bat. Photo: Colin O'Donnell

Consultation next steps

Your feedback during consultation will help guide decisions about the operational plan.

DOC or our contractor will update you about the outcomes of the consultation and any changes to the treatment boundary plan. This update will be in the form of a notification fact sheet, and it will include a more precise timeframe for the operation.

Use of 1080 requires permission from the Ministry of Health. DOC is delegated authority by the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC.

DOC ensures that all legal and policy requirements are met, and that any potential risks of the operation are managed.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer. Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary.

The standard buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Always report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor or hospital
- The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 or dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals

Map of planned predator control area within Whareorino

The map on the next page shows the planned area of 4,558 hectares for predator control.

For more information

Please contact:

Operational planner

Department of Conservation Te Kuiti Office

Phone: 0800 ASK DOC

Email: tekuiti@doc.govt.nz

OR

Aerial Operations Manager

EcoFX

Phone: (07) 873 8130

Email: ecofx-office-nz@rentokil-initial.com

Visit the DOC website:

See more information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme

www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators.

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

See operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land

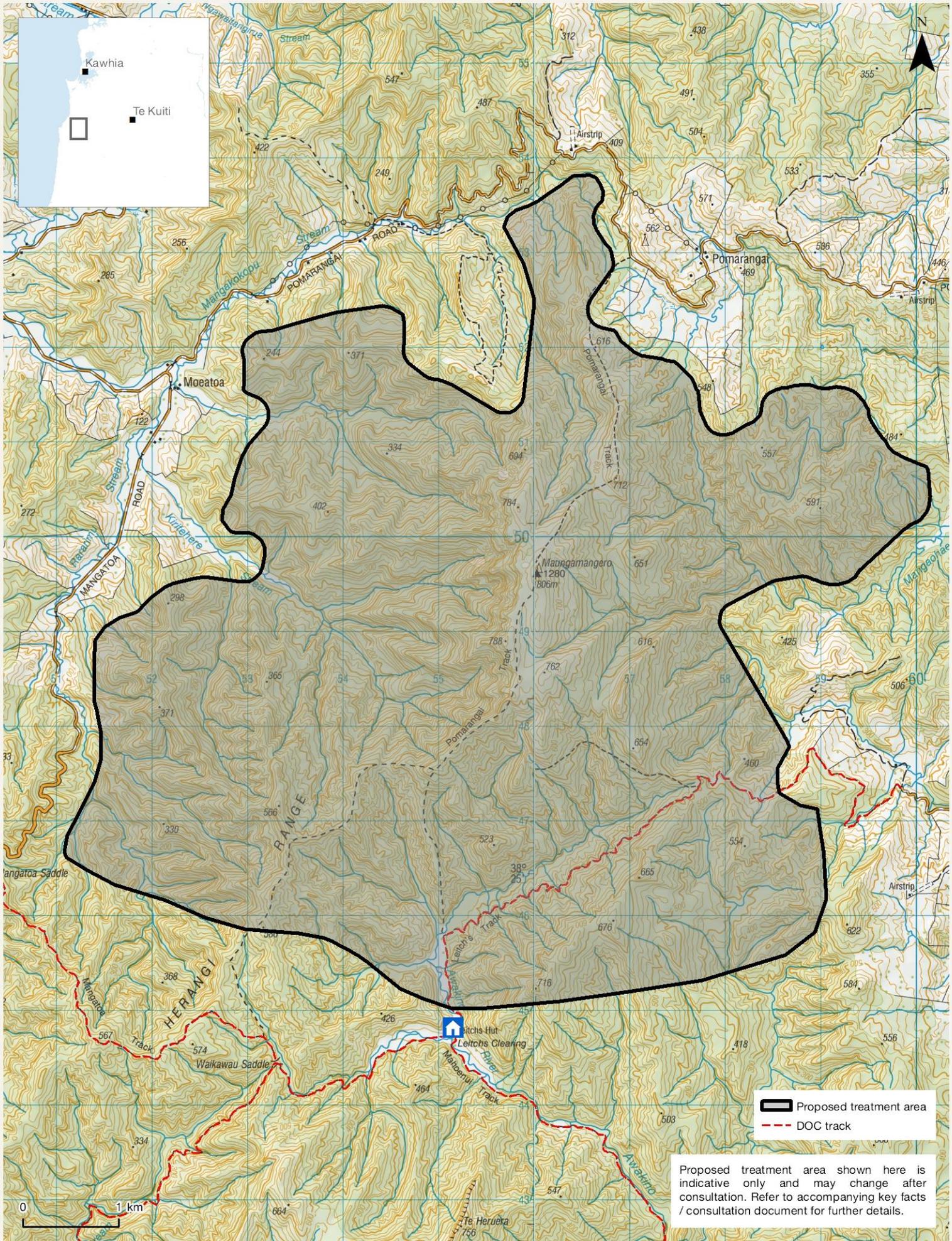
www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

See updates about track access and safety

www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/alerts

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050



 Proposed treatment area
 DOC track

Proposed treatment area shown here is indicative only and may change after consultation. Refer to accompanying key facts / consultation document for further details.