

Consulting on the protection of native species in Rotoehu Forest

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

Native wildlife and forests need protection here

Rotoehu Forest, which includes the Pongakawa Ecological Area, is home to a nationally significant population of North Island kōkako and is classified as one of five priority sites for the species.

The Pongakawa Ecological Area was logged, mainly for Rimu, in the early 1940s and is now dominated by Tawa. The canopy structure is predominantly Rata/Tawa-Kohekohe-Kamahi forest with smaller areas of Rewarewa-Kamahi and Rata/Tawa-Pukatea.

This proposed operation is part of an ongoing program for Rotoehu Forest where predators have been regularly controlled since the 1990s. A reduction in predators will allow native species to continue to recover. Regular kōkako surveys have shown predator control is enabling the population to grow and spread.

Why we need to control introduced predators

Native species are fighting for survival due to predation from rats, stoats and possums. Without ongoing protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within Rotoehu Forest.

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

Our team in the Rotorua District is planning to reduce predator numbers across approx. 3000ha of forest to protect native species. A map is included on the last page. This will help kōkako, karearea, titiponamu, tui, ruru and pekapeka populations to recover and grow.

This work is part of DOC's National Predator Control Programme, and it's critical to achieving the nationwide vision of Predator Free 2050. We are protecting the remaining populations of threatened native species while tools continue to be developed to eradicate possums, rats and stoats.



Kōkako with chicks

Monitoring native species and predators

Predation on young chicks and their parents in their nests by rodents and possums causes threatened native species such as kōkako to decline. The ongoing combination of aerial and ground based predator control methods in Rotoehu Forest is reducing rodent and possum numbers to below 5 - 2% annually before November when birds begin breeding. This gives them protection they need to grow.

We also monitor the effects of possum browsing on the forest canopy within the Pongakawa Ecological Area as part of our efforts to protect native trees and plants.

Did you know

The 2023 kōkako survey found the Rotoehu kōkako population has increased by 84% since 2019 from 157 pairs to 289 pairs!

Rotoehu Forest is now home to one of New Zealand's largest kōkako populations. This increase can be largely attributed to on-going predator control in the area



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Our plan to protect Rotoehu Forest

The most effective tool we have to control predators over large areas is biodegradable cereal pellets containing 1080.

The method involves helicopters distributing bait across the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the only viable way to control possums, rats and stoats across vast, remote and rugged terrain.

Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, however the number of predators can overwhelm trapping networks.

Aerial 1080 operations support ground control efforts at Rotoehu forest by DOC, iwi and community groups.

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 Rotoehu Forest is proposed to occur between September to October 2023.

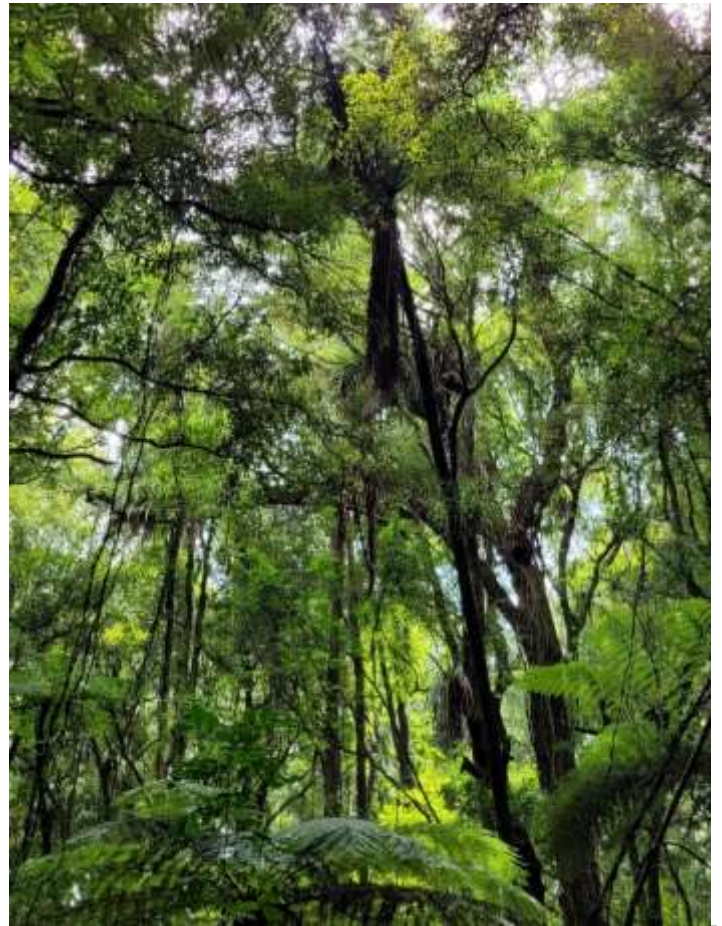
Have your say

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 in Rotorua or our contractor Epro Ltd would like to contact you to discuss the proposed operation.

We want to understand how you think it could affect 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 of the aerial control method that has been chosen for Rotoehu Forest protection. We will follow up with you again soon. Thank you for your time.



Kamahi and Ferns at Rotoehu Forest

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 the responsibility of 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.

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.

What happens to 1080 in Water ?

Decades of research shows that 1080 breaks down in water very quickly. Studies have shown when a pellet lands in water it will leach 50% of 1080 in the first 2 hours and the rest in the 24 hours – Imagine a teaspoon of salt being dripped into a steam - it is diluted very quickly.

We also know that it is broken down by bacteria in the water into a harmless substance, then it is gone. This also happens when it hits the soil, soil bacteria breaks it down, then it is gone.

1080 does not build up or stay in our environment. It does not affect eels, fish or invertebrates.

The Ministry of Health has stringent guidelines that 1080 can only be present at levels below 2 parts per billion. 1080 has not been detectable in water samples taken from Rotoehu Forest during previous operations.

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 Rotoehu Forest

The map on the next page shows the planned area of 3009 hectares for predator control.

For more information

Please contact: Operational planner,

Department of Conservation Rotorua District Office,

Ph: 07 349 7400

Email: rotorua@doc.govt.nz

OR Epro Ltd

Ph: 0800 ASK EPRO

Email: control@epro.co.nz

Visit the DOC website:

More information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme is available on our website

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

You can also see operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land on the DOC website

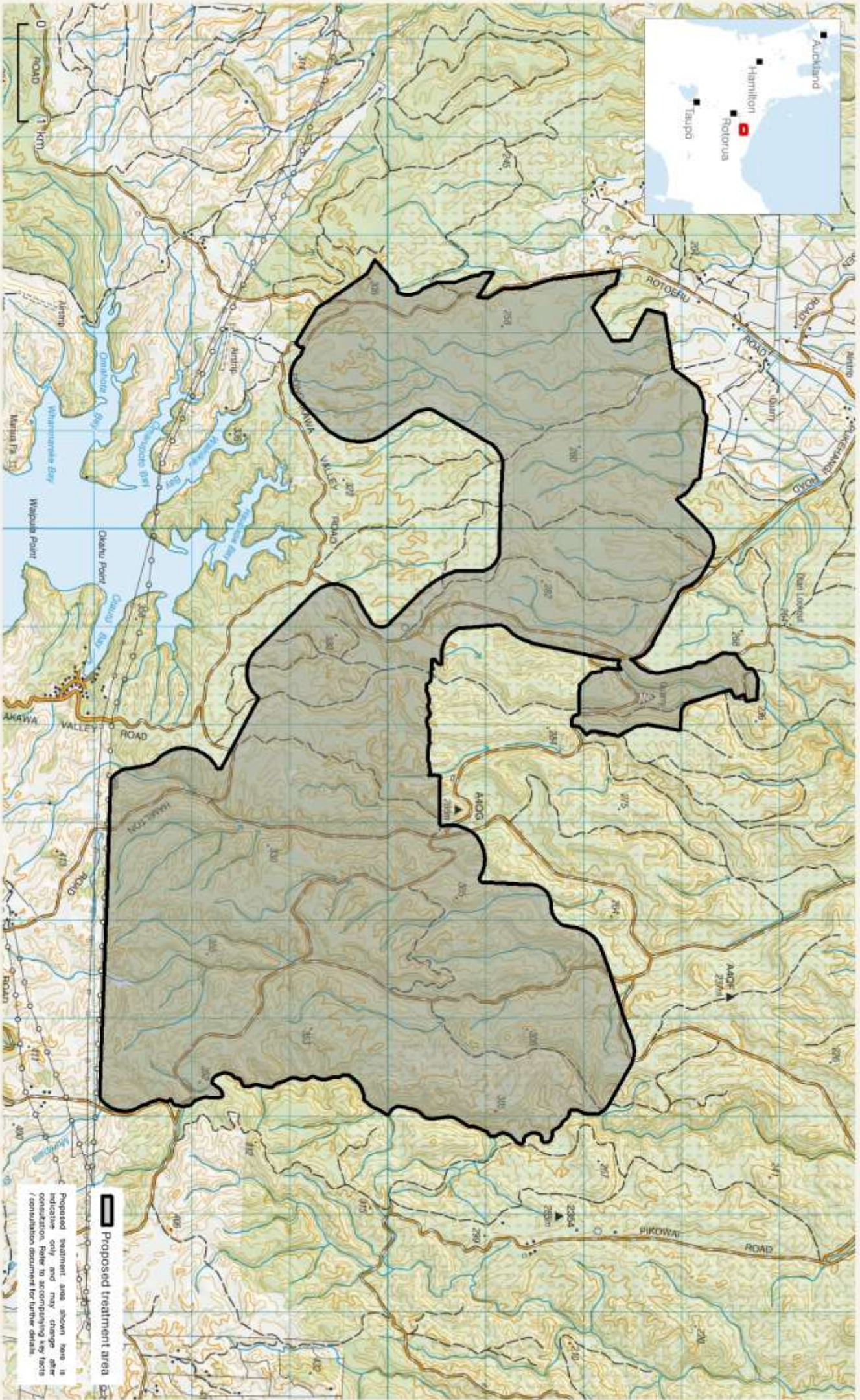
doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

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

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

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

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



Proposed treatment area

Proposed treatment area shown here. It indicates soil and may change after consultation. Refer to accompanying key facts / consultation document for further details.

Rotoehu Forest

Aerial Predator Control 2023

Proposed treatment area: 3,009 ha



NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
Map for navigation | 1:50,000
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