

Ecological restoration in Waitutu Forest



What's so special?

The iconic Waitutu Forest in Fiordland is one of New Zealand's largest unmodified lowland forests. It has 30 threatened species of birds, fish, lizards and bats and 29 threatened plant species. Waitutu is also a nationally significant mistletoe site, a stronghold for South Island kākā and has a remnant mōhua population. The values are so significant that the Nature Heritage Fund has committed further funding to continue and expand the ecological restoration of this special part of New Zealand.

Possoms, stoats and rats are severely affecting the overall health of the ecosystem, so the Department of Conservation (DOC) has established the Waitutu Forest Restoration Programme.

As part of this programme, DOC's Fiordland District staff will carry out predator control in the forest between August and October 2014 to protect the native plants and animals from possums, rats and a by-kill of stoats. A similar aerial operation in 2010 targeted possums and achieved excellent results and further control is now needed for long-term protection of the special values in the area. Native birds in the area will have greater nesting success as a result of the operation due to there being fewer predators to attack chicks and nesting females.

The operation is timed to address the rebounding numbers of possums and is planned around the anticipated beech mast, which will put our native species at further risk. It will involve helicopter distribution of cereal baits containing 1080 toxin over 30,000 ha using GPS technology.



Caption: Waitutu Forest, home to over 50 species of threatened native plants and animals

Why we are using this method?

DOC and key stakeholders have worked through the specific issues and values at this location and have selected aerially applied 1080 as the most effective way of carrying out this restoration. This method was used with good results in Waitutu Forest in 2010.

Since then, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has further assessed the use of 1080 for predator control and strongly advocates for not only continuing, but expanding, its use where appropriate.

Helicopter sowing of baits using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology achieves even coverage of bait across the extensive and, in some places, difficult terrain. This technology also allows the pilot to be sure of the boundaries and to exclude sensitive areas, such as huts, waterways and tracks, from being sown with baits.

The use of helicopters also means bait can be applied over a short timeframe (one to two days), rather than over a period of weeks or months as with other forms of control. This means bait can be applied when it will be most effective, providing better protection for our threatened species and less inconvenience to the public.



Caption: Mistletoe is highly palatable to possums



Caption: A family of kaka, especially vulnerable in mast years

Timeframe

The operation will take place in late winter/early spring 2014, as soon as several days of fine weather are forecast.

Pesticide operational area

Waitutu Forest, Fiordland National Park

See map overleaf.

Operational planning

Use of this pesticide requires the consent of the Medical Officer of Health and a resource consent from Environment Southland.

As part of the consent process, a detailed assessment of the risks involved has been completed (Assessment of Environment Effects - AEE). The resource consent imposes conditions on the operation to further safeguard the public and the environment.

DOC has consulted key stakeholders and has worked closely with iwi before finalising the operational detail. This involved considering their concerns and needs regarding the operational method and its timing. Copies of the AEE and a more detailed map are available from your local DOC office. DOC welcomes enquiries about this project.

For more information

Please contact:

Colin Bishop

Department of Conservation

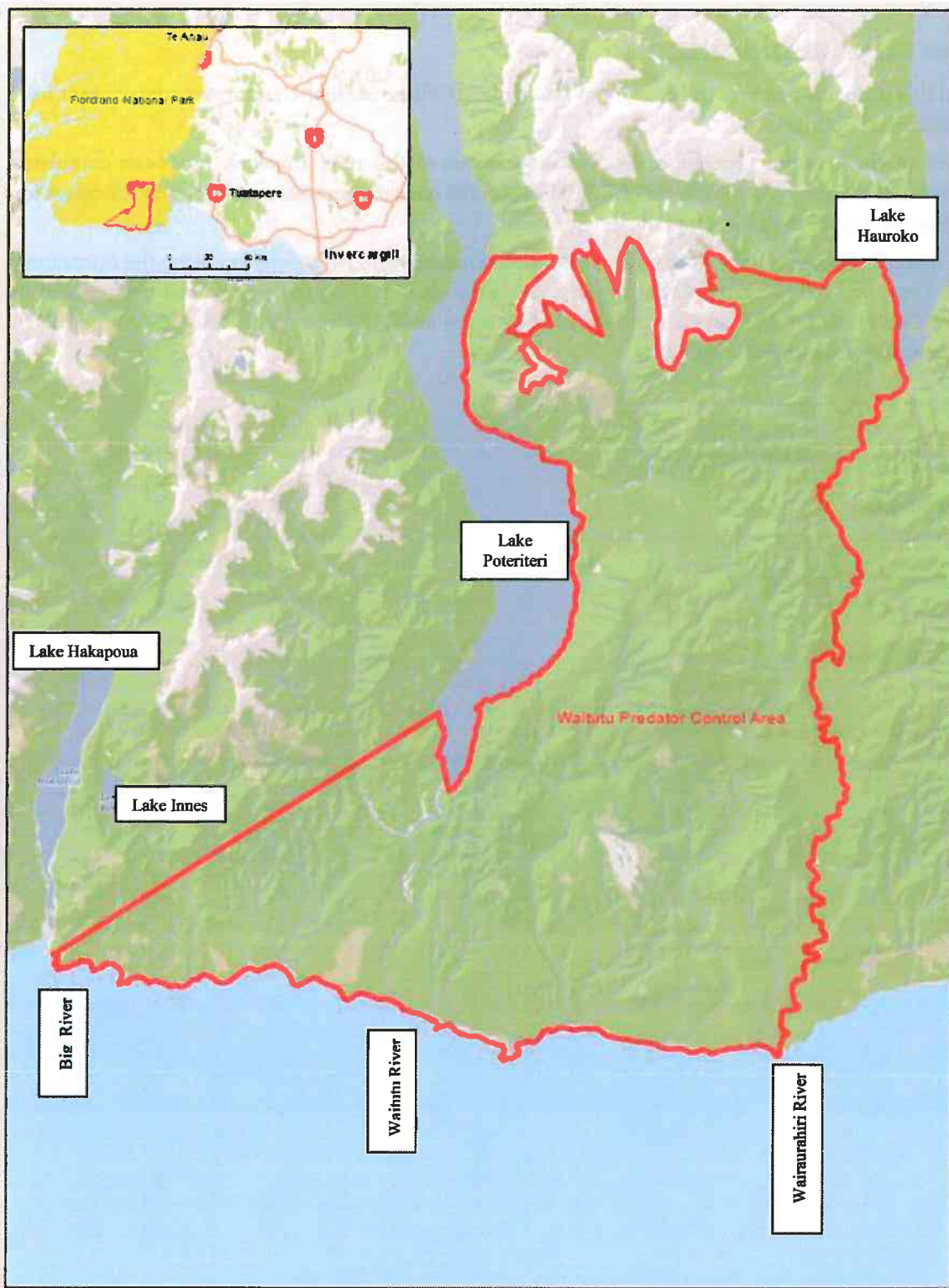
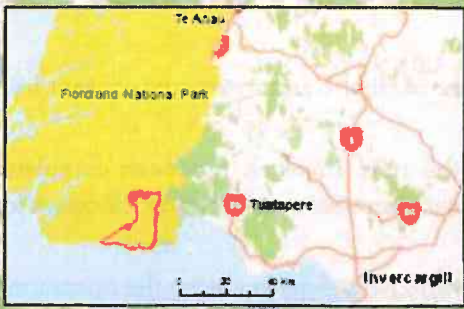
PO Box 743

Invercargill 9840

(03) 211 2400

cbishop@doc.govt.nz





NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator
 Crown Copyright reserved
 Produced by W. Gemble
 Date Produced: 7/07/2014
 Group: 0101 - 00000000



Map 1a - Waitutu Predator Control 2014
 Total area = 30,000 ha



Department of
 Conservation
 Te Papa Ataturu

newzealand.govt.nz