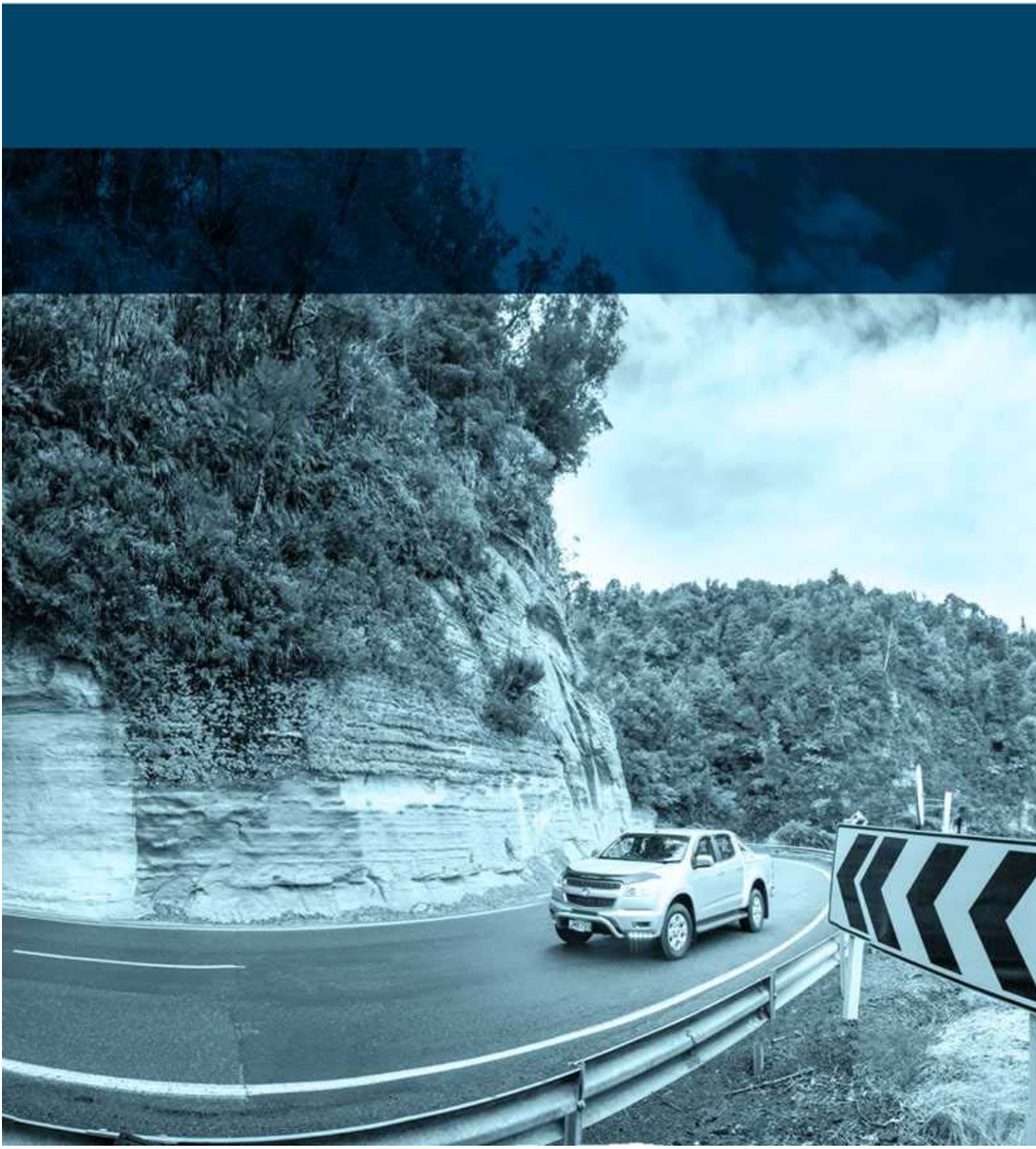
Section 8 – Existing Environment



8 Existing Environment

8.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the natural environment (including the topography and catchments, the geology, ecological values, landscapes and soil quality) and the human environment (including cultural values, recreational uses and communities) of the Project footprint and the wider Project area. Regional context is also provided where relevant.

More detail on the existing environment is included in the Technical Reports included in Volume 3 of the AEE.

8.2 Location

The Project is located in North Taranaki, approximately 57km north of New Plymouth (See Figure 8.1 below). The Project alignment is to the east of existing SH3, between the settlements of Uruti and Ahititi, approximately 20km south of the boundary between the Taranaki and Waikato regions. Hamilton is approximately 184km to the north of the site.

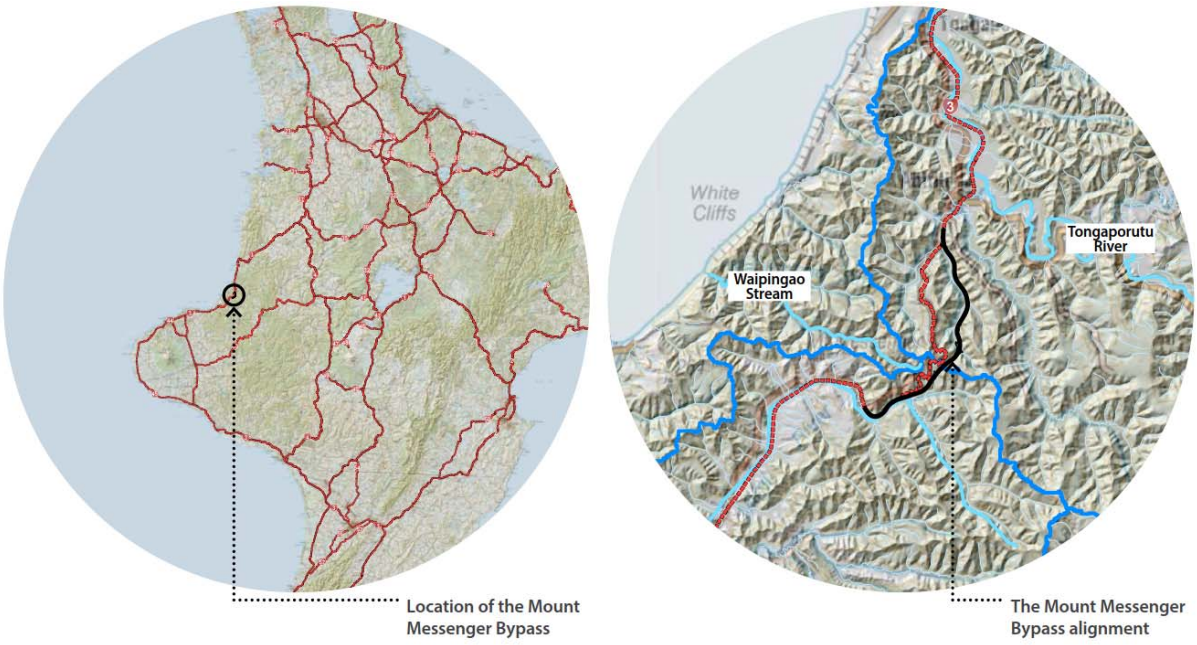


Figure 8.1 – Location plan

8.3 Natural environment

8.3.1 Topography and catchments

The existing SH3 corridor north and south of Mt Messenger follows relatively open rural valleys. These lowland areas are separated by very steep, topographically complex hill country. The landscape context of the wider Project area includes the steep to very steep hill country from the coastal terraces south of the Tongaporutu River; south to the pastoral flats of the Mimi Valley; west to the coast and the Parininihi Cliffs; and east to the Mt

Messenger Forest. In general terms, the wider Project area is predominantly steep to very steep hill country.

The Project alignment is contained within two valley systems, being the Mangapepeke Valley in the north (3.4km of the 6km route), and the south facing slopes of the upper Mimi Valley in the south (2.4km of the route). The Mangapepeke Stream flows north-west to the Mangaongaonga Stream and the Tongaporutu River, which enters the coast at Tongaporutu, about 7km north of the Project footprint. The Mimi River flows south-west to enter the coast between Waiiti and Urenui. (Refer to Figure 8.2).

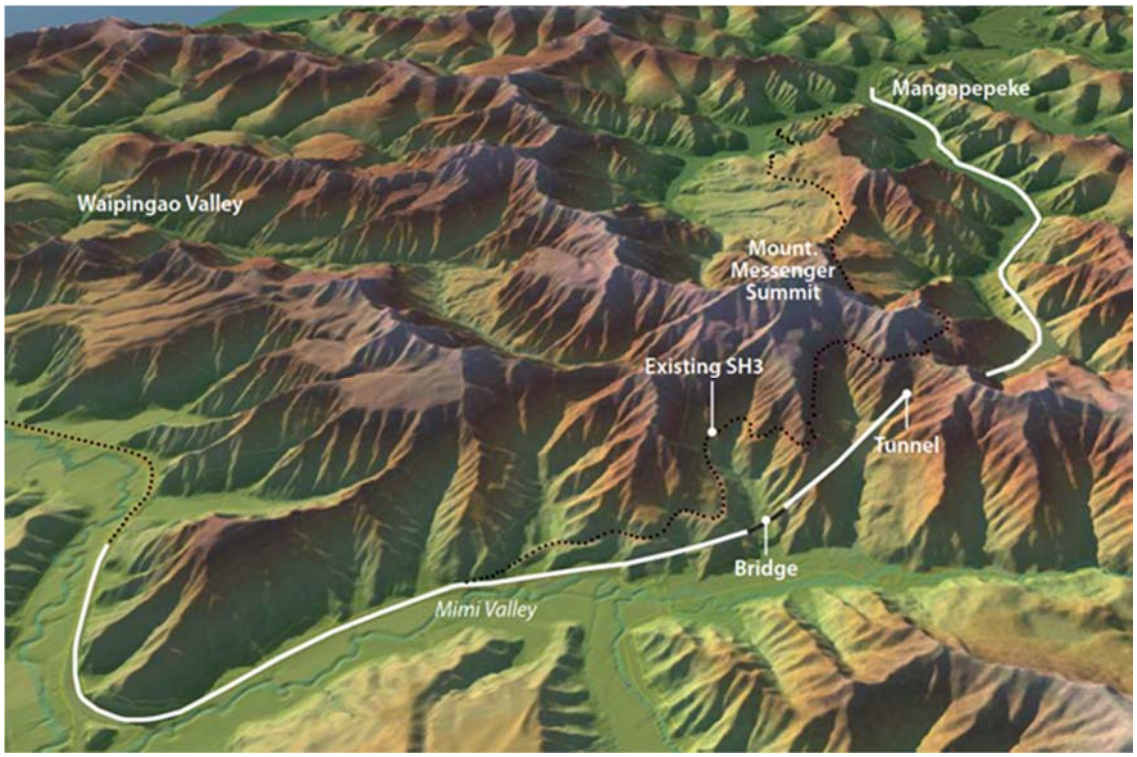


Figure 8.2 – Topography of area (Project alignment shown in white)

8.3.2 Climate

Taranaki generally has a temperate climate, with relatively high sunshine hours and rainfall distributed relatively evenly throughout the year. The prevailing wind direction in the Taranaki Region is from the southwest, and this aligns with what has been measured locally at the Uruti climate data station – a mean wind direction of 198 degrees (or SSW), (Taranaki Regional Council data from August 2016 – July 2017).

Median annual rainfall in the vicinity of the wider Project area is approximately 1,800mm to 2000mm per annum: higher than the average across New Zealand.[45] Monthly average rainfall for Urenui ranges from approximately 75-100mm (in November, and January-March) to 115-155mm for the other months.[46]

[45] Compared with approximately 600mm – 1,600mm in most regions, according to NIWA data.
[46] Based on data from January 2003 to December 2016.

More detail on the meteorology, wind conditions and rainfall in the wider Project area is set out in Section 4 of the Air Quality Assessment (Technical Report 11, Volume 3 of the AEE).

8.3.3 Geology

The Project is located within the Taranaki Basin, within a wider geological region comprising Late Tertiary (Miocene-age) sediments of the Wai-iti Group. In the area of the Project alignment, the surface geology is dominated by the Mt Messenger Formation (Mim). This formation comprises marine turbidite sands and muds deposited in outer shelf to basin floor settings in the Taranaki Basin during the Late Miocene period. These typically soft rocks include a continuum of silty, fine-grained sandstones to silty mudstones. Volcanic ash from Mt Taranaki has mantled the landscape and remains as a component of soil in the area.

The geology of the wider Project area is shown in more detail in Figure 8.3 and described in the Geotechnical Appraisal Report (Technical Report 14, Volume 3 of the AEE). The Project alignment crosses recent alluvial deposits within both the Mimi and Mangapepeke catchments. These deposits range in depth from relatively shallow in the higher gullies (3-5m), to deeper adjacent to the lower gradient streams (such as 5-10m in the Mimi Valley). Preliminary investigations in the Mangapepeke Stream catchment indicate very soft to soft (becoming firm) soils to depths in excess of 30m in some locations.

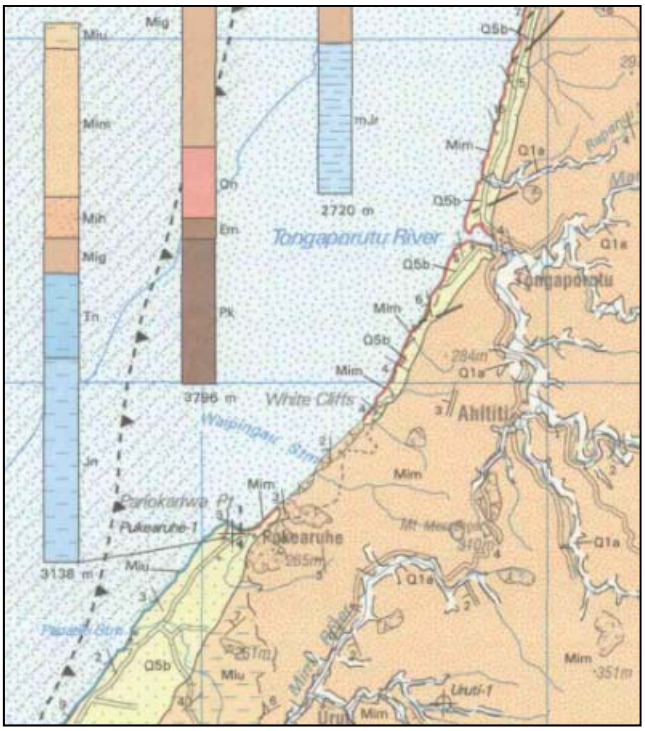


Figure 8.3 - Geology of the wider Project area (Copyright GNS 2005)

8.3.4 Ecology

8.3.4.1 Overview of ecology and terrestrial vegetation

The ecological values of the wider Project area and the Project footprint are described in detail in Technical Reports 7a-7g, in Volume 3 of the AEE.

The Project footprint sits within a wider area of forested indigenous native vegetation running from the coastal margins inland to the lowland mountains. This area includes the Parininihi land and the Mt Messenger forest, which combined are in the order of 4,430ha in size, (Figure 8.4). This area is located in the North Taranaki Ecological District and straddles an ecological boundary between two broad forest classes with podocarp, broadleaved forest largely in the Mimi catchment and the upper Mangapepeke Valley, and podocarp, broadleaved, beech forest within the lower Mangapepeke Catchment and northwards.

The Parininihi land to the west of SH3, previously known as "Whitecliffs Conservation Area", is a tract of mainly primary forest approximately 1332ha in size and centred on the Waipingao Stream catchment. This area, which will not be affected by the Project, encompasses a rare continuous forest sequence through coastal, semi-coastal and lowland bioclimatic zones. As such, the area is regarded as being ecologically significant, and is described as the best example of primary coastal hardwood-podocarp forest on the west coast of the North Island (refer Technical Report 7a).

Pest management on the Parininihi land west of SH3 was started in the early 1990s by the DOC, and involved possum and goat pest control activities. Since the land was returned to Ngāti Tama in 2003, intensive management of these pests has continued, and control of rodents, mustelids and feral cats has also been carried out. The vegetation in the area is now healthy and ecologically functioning, with vulnerable browse-sensitive plants regenerating.

The dominant forest on the Ngāti Tama block to the east of SH3, through which the Project alignment traverses, would have originally been very similar to the Parininihi land to the west, however it has not had consistent pest control. Consequently, the ecological condition of this area is diminished. The forest composition along the Project alignment is now dominated by canopy trees of lower palatability such as tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*), nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) and tree-ferns.

Within the Mangapepeke Stream catchment, vegetation communities have been affected by long-term stock grazing, fire and logging, with the result being a transition to large open and grazed rushlands and poor quality pastureland further down the valley towards SH3. This in turn means the quality of the habitats in this area for birds, bats, herpetofauna, invertebrates and fish is much lower than the surrounding forest. This valley bottom would once have been covered by dense swamp forest.

There are several large, emergent trees either within or immediately adjacent to the Project alignment, and larger numbers across the wider area, with rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) and miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*) being most common, as well as large northern rata and thin-barked totara which support a diverse range of epiphytes. These large, old trees play a significant ecological role in the forest ecosystem and provide important habitat for wildlife (e.g. roosting and nesting sites for bats and birds).

Of greatest ecological significance in immediate proximity to the Project alignment is the area of swamp forest and non-forest wetland in the valley floor of the northern Mimi River catchment (Mimi swamp forest) (refer Figure 8.4). The valley floor sequence within the northern tributary of the Mimi River represents a full range of swamp forest, scrub and non-forest wetland communities that would once have been more common throughout this area. The Project alignment sits immediately to the west of this wetland, and has been aligned to avoid physical impact. The bridge structure has been specifically developed to avoid impact on the valley floor and wetland.

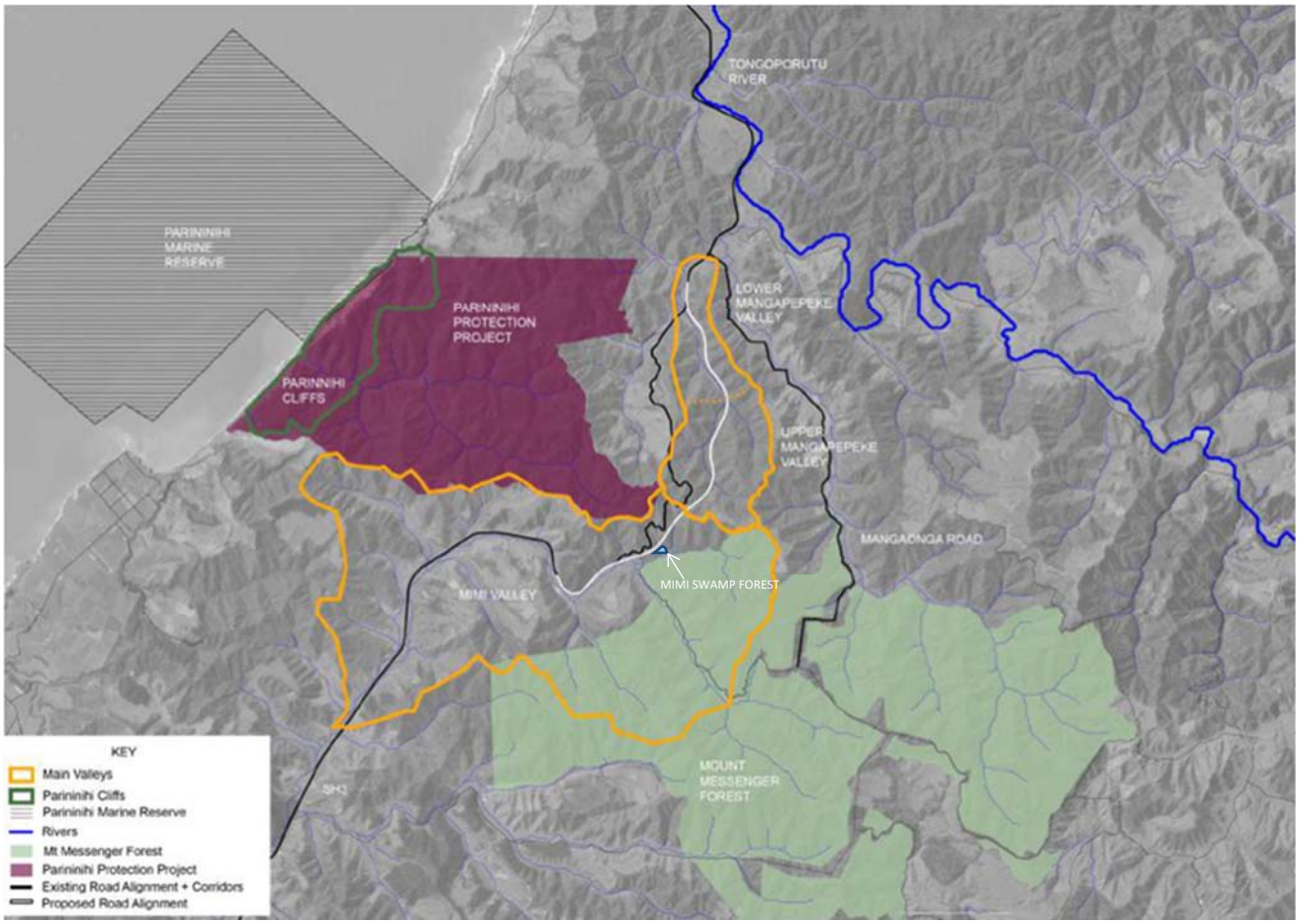


Figure 8.4 – Project footprint and wider Project area (the Project alignment shown as white line)

8.3.4.2 Terrestrial fauna

Given the dominance of indigenous vegetation within and adjacent to the Project alignment, the area provides habitat for a range of largely indigenous terrestrial fauna. These include terrestrial invertebrates, herpetofauna (frogs and lizards), birds and bats.

The quality of the habitat varies along the alignment. The ecological values of the Project alignment for terrestrial fauna are summarised below (refer Technical Reports 7c – 7f in Volume 3 of the AEE for detail).

(a) Terrestrial invertebrates

The invertebrate fauna in the wider Project area (refer Technical Report 7c (Volume 3 of the AEE) is expected to be 'typical' of communities inhabiting native forests of in the southern North Island and northern South Island. Invertebrate fauna in the wider Project area include earthworms, coleoptera (beetles, including the seldom seen *Blosyropus spinosus*), butterflies and cicada.

Reflecting the diminished ecological condition of vegetation along the Project alignment, invertebrate habitats have also been degraded due to the absence of consistent pest control and stock access.

There are no species on the 'Threatened' list that are known to inhabit the wider Project area. There are records of the forest ringlet (*Dodonidia helmsii*), one of New Zealand's rarest butterflies, recorded at Waitaanga (approximately 17km northwest of Mt Messenger) and at Uruti (approximately 6km south of Mt Messenger). Mt Messenger may be an important site for *Cyrtorhinus cumberi*, an endemic plant bug only known from a few populations. Two beetles recorded in the Mt Messenger area are only known from eight populations in the North Island (*Parabaris lesagei* and *Selenochilus omalleyi*).

(b) Herpetofauna

Based on available records, up to 13 species of herpetofauna including skinks, gecko and frogs could potentially be present within the wider Project area and in the vicinity of the Project alignment (refer Technical Report 7d, Volume 3 of the AEE). This includes the 'Threatened' Archey's frog (*Leiopelma archeyi*) and a number of 'At Risk' species. Given a range of factors, including habitat suitability, known species ranges, distances from historical records and predator effects, it is unlikely that all of these species will be present within the Project footprint.

(c) Birds

The habitats along the Project alignment support a range of bird species (refer Technical Report 7e, Volume 3 of the AEE). Some 38 species are recorded in the wider Project area, 23 of which were indigenous. Of these, nine are listed as 'At Risk', including fernbird, spotless crake, New Zealand Falcon, North Island brown kiwi, North Island robin, long-tailed cuckoo, whitehead and black shag.

20 North Island kōkako were released into the Parininihi land to the west of SH3 in winter 2017. It is currently unclear to what extent these kōkako will disperse, and ongoing monitoring is being carried out to assess this. Although the release occurred some distance from the Project footprint, there is a possibility that kōkako will disperse into the forests to the east of SH3 over time.

(d) Bats

There are two native bat species in New Zealand: long-tailed and short-tailed bats (refer Technical Report 7f, Volume 3 of the AEE). Surveys carried out along the Project footprint and in the wider Project area indicate the presence of 'Nationally Vulnerable' long-tailed bats. The distribution and levels of long-tailed bat activity recorded indicate that a population is present in the wider Project area, and that long-tailed bats are found within the Project footprint. There were no short-tailed bats recorded during surveys, and they are unlikely to be located in the vicinity of the Project footprint.

8.3.4.3 Freshwater ecology

As noted above, the Project alignment is located within two catchments, the Mangapepeke and Mimi catchments. A summary of the existing freshwater ecological values in the affected watercourses is set out below (refer to Technical Report 7b Volume 3 of the AEE for detail).

(a) Mangapepeke Stream

The Mangapepeke Stream drains north-west to the Mangaongaonga Stream and the Tongaporutu River, which enters the coast at Tongaporutu, about 7km north of the Project footprint.

The northern section of the Mangapepeke Stream (near the current SH3) is a small low gradient stream about 1.4m wide and 0.4m deep. Substrates are silty, with occasional woody debris becoming more common further up the catchment. Aquatic macrophytes common in the stream include watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*) and native charophyte (stonewort) Chara sp. The lower section of the Mangapepeke Stream has moderate habitat values, with the aquatic macroinvertebrate community indicating good water quality and habitat (MCI score 106 – 111) with a good diversity of fish present. Adult inanga are present as well as longfin eel, common bully, redfin bully, freshwater crayfish (koura) and Paratya shrimp. Stock have direct access to the stream in this lower reach, and there are signs of physical habitat degradation, such as pugging, bank erosion and sedimentation.

The upper section of the Mangapepeke Stream tributary is narrow and shallow (0.3 to 0.7m wide). The main stem of the stream has high habitat scores, and aquatic macroinvertebrate communities indicative of excellent water quality and habitat (MCI score 120). Waterfalls in the headwaters form natural fish barriers, so abundance of fish in these reaches is low.

The Tongaporutu River, which the Mangapepeke Stream discharges into, is listed in Appendix 1A of the Freshwater Plan as a river and stream catchment with high natural, ecological and amenity values. The Freshwater Plan notes that the waterways in the catchment have a good diversity of native aquatic fauna including eels, inanga, bullies and torrent fish.

(b) Mimi River

The Mimi catchment includes steeper, narrower tributaries in the upper Mimi River catchment (including some crossed by the Project) and meandering, low gradient stream near the existing SH3, approximately 2.1m wide and approximately 0.5m deep. The Mimi swamp forest is located in close proximity to the alignment.

Fish species found in the lower reaches of the Mimi River include: longfin eel, adult inanga, redfin bully, giant kōkopu and banded kōkopu. Paratya shrimp, kōura and freshwater mussel (kākahi) are also common. Steeper sites tend to have banded kōkopu, and kōura.

In steeper gullies of the Mimi tributaries, cattle have been excluded and these sections have moderate to high habitat values and the macroinvertebrate community indicates good to excellent habitat/water quality (MCI = 119 to 135). There are some natural fish barriers and the headwater streams are relatively narrow. No fish were observed during the surveys but kōura were observed.

The Mimi River is listed in Appendix 1A (Rivers and stream catchments with high natural, ecological and amenity values) of the Freshwater Plan due to the presence of inanga, as well as diverse other fauna such as eels, bullies and torrent fish.

8.3.4.4 Marine ecology

An assessment of the marine ecology values of the local coastal environment is set out in the Assessment of Ecological Effects – Marine Ecology (Technical Report 7g). The key marine ecological features identified for the coastal environment between Urenui and the Tongaporutu estuary (the relevant study area for the Project) include:

- Estuarine habitat;
- Intertidal habitat;
- Subtidal reef habitat in the Parininihi Marine Reserve;
- Subtidal soft sediment habitat;
- Marine mammals, including the Threatened Māui's and Hector's dolphins;
- Fishery resources, including commercial fisheries, and protected great white shark;
- Kaimoana; and
- Seabirds, including At Risk wading species and blue penguins.

The Parininihi Marine Reserve is noted for its extensive offshore reef system with internationally imported sponge gardens, a high diversity of fish species and important habitat for crayfish and pāua.

8.3.5 Landscape and natural character

The landscape and natural character values of the areas associated with the Project alignment are described in Technical Report 8a (refer Volume 3 of the AEE). As noted above, the Project alignment is contained within two valley systems, being the Mangapepeke Valley in the north, and the upper Mimi Valley in the south.

The Mangapepeke Valley is characterised by rough pastoral land on the flats in the north (lower Mangapepeke) transitioning into steeper hill country in the upper valley. The lower pastoral flats have a relatively low elevation, gentle topography, and modified landscape character. The steeper slopes at the head of the valley have higher naturalness characteristics.

The Mimi Valley similarly includes bush on the steeper slopes of a tributary of the Mimi River, transitioning to a modified pastoral rural landscape on the lower valley flats that include the existing SH3 corridor. The steeper slopes have higher naturalness

characteristics, particularly the Mimi swamp forest, whereas the lower topography in the southern part of the valley represents a modified landscape character.

The lower Mangapepeke Valley is considered to have moderate – low landscape and natural character value. The upper Mangapepeke Valley is considered to have moderate – high landscape and natural character. The area of the Mimi Valley affected by the Project, which is the northern part of the upper catchment, overall is of moderate landscape and natural character value, particularly given the modified nature of the adjoining valley flats and the presence of SH3 on the flanking hills to the west.

The Parininihi landscape to the west of the existing SH3, away from the Project alignment, is scheduled in the District Plan as a regionally significant landscape. This area, is made up of the peak of Mt Messenger adjacent to SH3, with ridgelines running in a westward direction towards the coast.

8.3.6 Ground contamination

A Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI) of the Project alignment has been undertaken in general accordance with the NES Soil (refer Technical Report 12, Volume 3 of the AEE).

The PSI identifies one activity on the Ministry for the Environment's (MfE) Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL) that has potentially been carried out within the alignment. This was waste disposal to land associated with potential farm dumps at the northern and southern ends of the alignment. Fly tipping has also occured along parts of the existing SH3.

8.4 Human environment

8.4.1 Cultural values

8.4.1.1 Ngāti Tama

Section 0 identifies the cultural significance of the Mt Messenger area to Ngāti Tama. Ngāti Tama exercise mana whenua for this part of Taranaki.

The history of Ngāti Tama's settlement in their rohe is detailed in the Ngāti Tama Deed of Settlement (dated 2003)[47]. Ngāti Tama have provided a Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) to the Transport Agency, which highlights cultural values in relation to the wider Parininihi area and the Project alignment. This CIA may be updated as the Project progresses and as Ngāti Tama's cultural aspirations are addressed in the Project designs.

[47] Settling Ngāti Tama's pre-1992 claims in respect of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi by the Crown.

The CIA highlights the cultural significance of Parininihi to Ngāti Tama. Ngāti Tama have highlighted this significance through consultation with the Transport Agency and during their participation in the options evaluation process.

1. AREA

The area to which this Deed of Recognition applies is the area referred to in the Deed of Settlement as Part of the Mount Messenger Conservation Area in the Area of Interest (the, "Area"), the general location of which is indicated on SO 14706.I

2. CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL, HISTORIC AND TRADITIONAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE AREA

2.1 This is an important area containing Ngati Tama pa sites and mahinga kai sources of birds and fish.

2.2 The once great Katikatiaka Pa was located here, inhabited by the descendants of Uerata who were among the fighting elite of Ngati Tama. It was an important vantage point, built in two divisions, and extending to the seaward clifftops. Tihi Manuka, a refuge pa, also situated in the area, was directly connected to an important inland track.

2.3 Kiwi, kahurangi, kereru, eels, inanga and the paua slug were traditional resources found here. Papa clay types found here were used for dyeing muka. A range of temperate zone flora was also available to Ngati Tama from this area including beech, rata, rimu, and a variety of ferns. Important mahinga kai streams include Te Horo, Ruataniwha, Waipingao and Waikaramarama.

The deed of recognition for the Mt Messenger Conservation Area (Parininihi) is recorded in the Deed of Settlement (Schedule 2 – Cultural Redress Schedule) as follows:

An extensive number of places of significance for Ngāti Tama are illustrated by the following account of their rohe by reference to sites around the perimeter:

Mai Te Titoki ki Pukehinau
No Pukehinau ki Puau
No Paua ki Wairarawa
No Wairarawa ki Pukekuri
No Pukekuri ki Mokino
No Mokino ki Tapuitautu
No Tapuitautu ki Mangatitoko
No Mangatitoki ki Waitara
No Waitara ki Makarakia
No Makarakia ki Te Ahu
No Te Ahu ki Rereua
No Rereua ki Potaka
No Potaka ki Kahikatoa a Tute
No Kahikatoa a Tute ki Tieketangiroa
No Tieketangiroa ki Te Pou Atakirau
No Te Pou Atakirau ki Haumapu Kahu ki te Whakarua
No Haumapu ki Takoraparoa
No Takaraparoa ki Pou Arohutu
No Pou Arohutu ki Nehunui
No Nehunui ki Tepora
No Te pora ki Te Pou Whakairo
No Te Pou Wakairoa ki Tiritirimatangi
No Tiritirimatangi ki Kaihapuku

No Kaihapuku ki Matukumaitua
No Matukumaitai ki Panirau a Kahu Whaka te Ngutu o Mokau
No Panirau ki Pukeruru a Tawariki
No Tawariki ki Te Totara
No Totara ki Tauwhare
No Tauwhare ki Haumapu
No Haumapu ki Te Ranginga
No Te Ranginga ki Oturi
Konei te rohe o Ngāti Tama

In the interior of the rohe Ngāti Tama also prize the ngahere (forests), awa (rivers) and maunga (mountains and ridgelines) and there is a series of important tracks providing connections between the coastal area and the important mahinga kai and other inland resources.

Places of particular significance include:

- **Pukearuhe** – Ngāti Tama's primary southern pā site.
- **Pukukarirua** – Ngāti Tama's northern pā site, located on a prominent hill above the coastal flats around 1.5km south of Mokau. North of Pukukarirua on the south bank of the Mokau River was the hill known as Pukekahu, where Ngāti Tama would light a fire warning of the coming of hostile forces from the north. This could be seen as far south as Pukearuhe.
- **Katikati-aka** – a pā on the cliffs three and a half miles from Pukearuhe, which helped reinforce Ngāti Tama's control of the area.
- **Tongapōrutu** and **Mōhakatino** – settlements and landing places of the Tokomaru waka.
- **Mount Messenger** – the tihi or peak has particular cultural significance to Ngāti Tama as the source of the mauri and important waterways which flow to the coast. Ngāti Tama considers the peak and surrounding flora and fauna to be taonga.
- **Treaty settlement sites** – the sites transferred and otherwise recognised in the Ngāti Tama Treaty settlement were identified for Treaty settlement because of their significance, but have become more significant because they symbolise the commitment of the Crown and Ngāti Tama to put the breaches of the past behind them and forge a new future in partnership together. The largest transfer sites were part of the Whitecliffs Conservation Area (1308ha) that was originally confiscated, as well as the Mt Messenger Scenic Reserve and part of the Mt Messenger Conservation Area (295ha).

Ngāti Tama note that these sites, along with its awa and maunga, are of cultural and spiritual importance to Ngāti Tama. The Parininihi lands returned to Ngāti Tama provide the base for restoring sustenance and connection to the whenua, awa and moana. They provide the opportunity for customary practices and modern activities to reconnect Ngāti Tama to this whenua. The area affected by the Project has been and remains an area of major importance to Ngāti Tama as an important part of their rohe, traditions, customs and identity.

The Project presents a number of unique design opportunities to recognise Ngāti Tama's culture and relationship to the land and the environment, and for Ngāti Tama to express their mana whenua and kaitiakitanga. Ongoing engagement with Ngāti Tama will occur as

the Project progresses to ensure that Ngāti Tama's aspirations are incorporated into the Project development and into designs and will continue through construction and operation.

8.4.1.2 Other iwi

The Transport Agency has also consulted with iwi located to the north and south of Ngāti Tama, including Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Mutunga.

Ngāti Maniapoto claims ongoing interests into the northern part of the Ngāti Tama rohe, including the Project area, but have deferred to Ngāti Tama in relation to this Project.

The northern boundary of the Ngāti Mutunga rohe is Waiiti. In the Ngāti Mutunga historical Treaty of Waitangi settlement, the Crown issued a statutory acknowledgment in favour of Ngāti Mutunga over the southern part of the Mt Messenger Conservation area, within the Ngāti Mutunga rohe. This area is adjacent to, but outside the Project area.

Consultation with these two iwi will continue as the Project progresses.

8.4.1.3 Others with cultural interest

Another group called Poutama claim interests through the Ngāti Tama rohe. Ngāti Tama, other Taranaki iwi and Ngāti Maniapoto consider there is no separate Poutama iwi grouping, but that those who describe themselves as Poutama are in the main, members of Ngāti Tama iwi. Nevertheless the Transport Agency has engaged with the representatives of the Poutama group separately, as a group who claim a cultural interest in the Project Area.

8.4.2 Historic heritage

An assessment of the historic heritage of the Project area has been completed and is presented in Technical Report 9 (in Volume 3 of the AEE). That assessment reports that Māori arrived in Taranaki during the 13th and 14th centuries. The area offered a wealth of both marine and land resources. The coastal plains of Taranaki were particularly suitable for habitation and the majority of settlement was focused along the coast.

Māori trails through the Taranaki region were foot-tracks along the beaches and coastal flats, and into the inland forests using canoe navigable rivers and valleys. In the vicinity of the Project, only the Tongaporutu River enabled canoe-access into the interior. The Tongaporutu River leads into the Mangaongaonga Stream valley east of Mt Messenger and links up with the Tihi-Manuka Māori track from the coast inland.

The NZ Archaeological Association site record database (ArchSite), shows approximately 20 recorded archaeological sites within a 7km radius of Mt Messenger and the Project alignment. Almost all of these sites are located on or close to the west coast. These sites consist of pā, middens, pits and terraces, ovens, a stock tunnel, Māori cultivations, a track and artefact findspots (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.5 – Archaeological sites within the wider vicinity of Mt Messenger and the existing SH3 (source: ArchSite)

No archaeological or other historic heritage features were identified within the footprint of the Project alignment, either through historical information, previous investigations, or field surveys completed for this AEE. Near to the southern end of the Project alignment in the Mimi River valley there is a recorded pā site, Maukuku Pā (archaeological site Q18/74) and related cultivations on a relatively flat spur overlooking the Mimi River valley. A site recorded as 'old clearing' ('Nga oko oko') was also identified from early survey plans adjacent to Maukuku Pā, indicative of the type of location that favoured Māori settlement in these inland locations. The steep inland bush country around Mt Messenger would generally have been unsuitable for Māori settlement, which was focused along the coastal plains, but would have provided a source of raw materials.

There is unlikely to have been any significant occupation of the Mangapepeke Valley because of its frequent flooding and steep inaccessible valley sides, although the valley may have been used by Māori to access inland areas, travelling up from the lower reaches of the Tongaporutu River. Where the Tongaporutu River meets the coast, there are numerous sites relating to earlier Māori occupation. The Tihi-Manuka Māori trail, south of Ahititi and Mt Messenger, leads into the Tongaporutu Valley and is a more likely inland route.

The first Europeans to live in Taranaki landed at Ngamotu (present-day New Plymouth) in the late 1820s, where a trading station was established. The majority of these men were transient whalers and traders. The hilly and densely forested terrain of north Taranaki was extremely difficult to navigate, and was a significant barrier for European settlers. Around

1890, the Government bought land at Pukearuhe and opened it up for settlement and made a new road over Mt Messenger.

The Main North Road (SH3), particularly the section over Mt Messenger, was muddy, narrow, winding, steep and difficult to negotiate and a concern for locals and travellers (Photo 8.1). Around the turn of the century the worst parts of the road were metalled. In 1935 the Main Highways Board designated the route a State Highway.

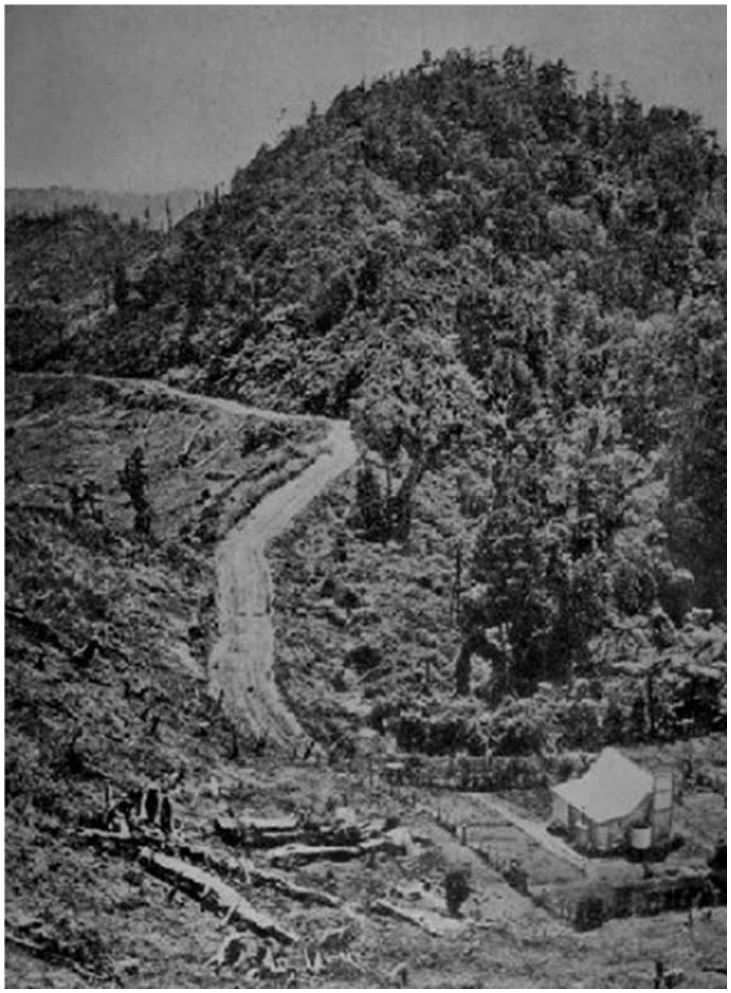


Photo 8.1 – The northern ascent of Mt Messenger c.1921 (source: Puke Ariki Ref PHO2007-244)

8.4.3 Community

8.4.3.1 Local community

SH3 at Mt Messenger is remote, being some 57km north of New Plymouth and 184km south of Hamilton. The nearest towns are Te Kuiti to the north and Waitara to the south, 150km apart.

The nearest settlement to the south of the Project is Uruti, located approximately 11km south of the SH3 summit of Mt Messenger. Uruti is a small farming service settlement which has a school and a number of houses close to its centre. Mimi and Urenui are located further south along SH3, 21km and 27km from the SH3 summit of Mt Messenger

respectively. To the north, the settlements of Ahititi and Tongaporutu are 5km and 11km from the SH3 summit respectively.

Community facilities within the local area include:

- Ahititi and Uruti Primary Schools. Both have a decile 4 rating and an average roll of 20 and 13 students respectively.
- Uruti Hall and Community Centre.
- At Urenui there is a small number of shops, a motor camp and a motel. There is a volunteer fire brigade with one fire appliance which has vehicle rescue equipment.
- The nearest medical practice is at Waitara and nearest after hours facility is in New Plymouth.
- Sports facilities are located at the Urenui Sportsfield and Community Centre.
- At Mokau, north of Tongaporutu, there is a St Johns Ambulance Station and rural fire team.

The area is served by the Clifton Community Board, which covers the area from just north of Waitara to New Plymouth District Council's northern boundary (just south of Mokau).

8.4.3.2 Properties within proposed designation

Table 8.1 below lists the properties affected by the proposed extension to the designation, indicating the areas of each property within the proposed designation footprint (refer also drawing MMA-DES-PRP-C0-DRG-1000 in Volume 2). These include eight privately owned rural farms, and the 'cultural redress land' to the east of SH3 owned by Ngāti Tama.

Table 8.1 - Properties within the Project footprint

Owners	Appellation	Title reference	Parcel area (ha)	Designation area (ha)
Gordon Andrew Thomas Keighley, Joy Keighley, Keighley Nominees Limited	Section 38 Block VIII Mimi Survey District	G3/168	0.0535	0.0161
Gordon Andrew Thomas Keighley, Joy Keighley, Keighley Nominees Limited	Section 50 Block VIII Mimi SD	G3/168	41.324	0.3675
Rodney John Barlow	Section 55 Block VIII Mimi SD	J1/249	38.2106	1.5677
Debbie Ann Pascoe, Tony James Sofus Pascoe	Section 51, Blk VII Mimi SD	H1/1387	22.1389	0.2708
Debbie Ann Pascoe, Tony James Sofus Pascoe	Section 9 SO 457513	627642	155.6634	31.7031
Ngāti Tama Custodial Trustee Limited	Section 1 Survey Office Plan 313242	149437	182.74	31.0128
Kevin George Beard	Lot 1 Deposited Plan 5816	145/198	23.9726	0.0474
Ngāti Tama Custodial Trustee Limited	Section 1 Survey Office Plan 313243	149437	44.2683	5.7017

Owners	Appellation	Title reference	Parcel area (ha)	Designation area (ha)
Allan George Robin Thomson	Part Section 13 Block XII Mimi Survey District	G2/1020	80.3375	2.4518
Allan George Robin Thomson	Section 16 Block XII Mimi Survey District	G2/1393	0.0141	0.0141
Allan George Robin Thomson	Section 17 Block XII Mimi Survey District	G2/1394	0.2744	0.0948
Allan George Robin Thomson	Section 18 Block XII Mimi Survey District	G3/57	0.0603	0.0603
Allan George Robin Thomson	Section 19 Block XII Mimi Survey District	G2/1395	0.1995	0.1995
Russell Alister Gordon	Section 35 Block VIII Mimi Survey District	G1/238	52.6303	3.2465
J R B Anglesey, W A Anglesey	Section 20 Block XII Mimi SD	G2/1181	60.1	0.2209
C J Scott, T C Scott	Lot 1, DP 16494	H4/333	82.8796	0.2028
Total private land within proposed designation				**77.1778ha**

8.4.4 Recreation

The Project sits in an area with relatively low levels of recreation activity. An assessment of recreation values (Technical Report 6, Volume 3 of the AEE) identifies uses including tramping in the Whitecliffs area, and tramping and hunting in the Parininihi and Mt Messenger Conservation Area forests, along with whitebaiting in the local streams.

The Whitecliffs – Mt Messenger track adjoins SH3 on the southern approach to Mt Messenger, and links on to the Kiwi Road track which provides access into the Mt Messenger Conservation Area forests in a general south-easterly direction (refer Figure 8.6).

There are no waterways in the Mimi or Tongaporutu catchments identified as trout fisheries in the Fish & Game Council national angler surveys[48]. The Taranaki Regional Council identifies the Tongaporutu River as having significant whitebait fishery values, as well as canoeing values.

[48] Unwin, M. 2009. *Angler usage of lake and river fisheries managed by Fish & Game New Zealand: results from the 2007/08 National Angling Survey*. Niwa client report.

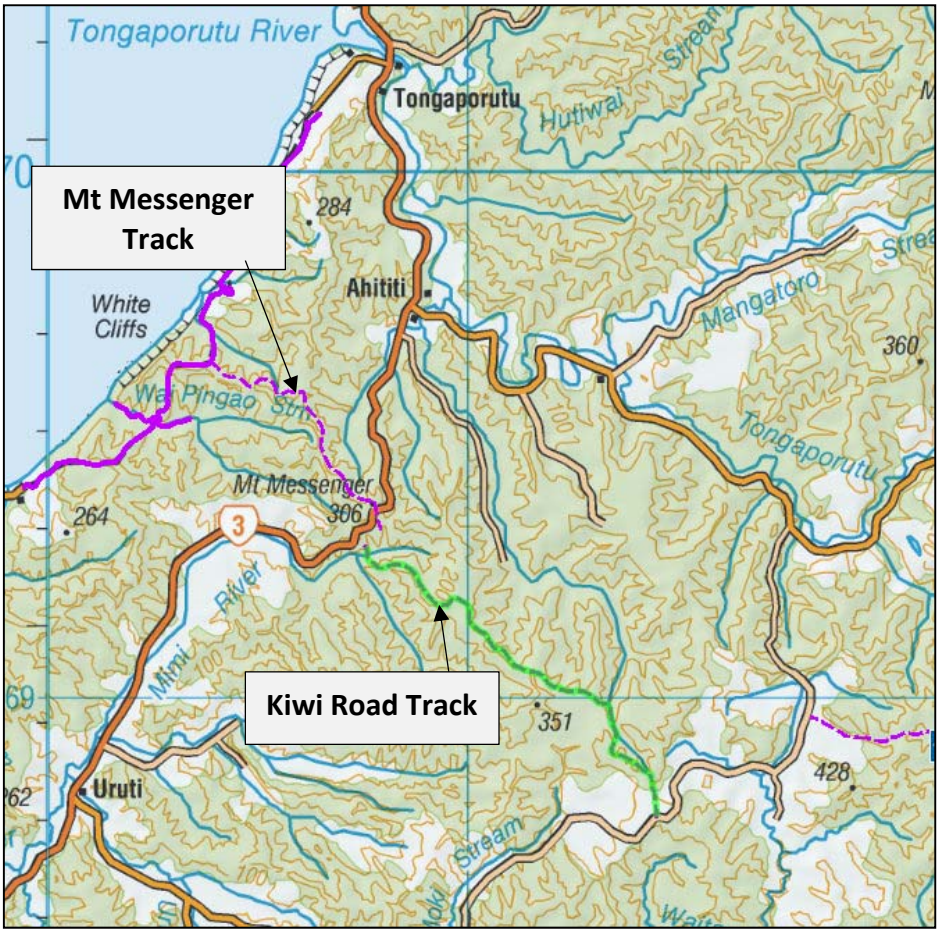


Figure 8.6 – Recreational Walking Tracks (DOC website)