

# Huntly project update

Februray 2019

## Pest crackdown sees bush flourish

Three years of pest control is seeing great results in the bush alongside the Huntly section of the Waikato Expressway.

The project borders the 650ha Taupiri Scientific Reserve which had been struggling against a tide of goats and possums, while other predators like stoats and rats had hit the native bird population. Resource consent conditions requires the project conduct pest control in the reserve for 10 years. It has also targeted lowland pests like rabbits, hares and possums to make sure planting around waterways has the best chance to thrive.

A professional pest control company has been engaged by the Fulton Hogan-HEB Joint Venture to implement the 10-year programme. It was determined early on that a bait station network would be the most effective control method, and these were established in late 2015. A pre-control benchmark exercise showed that the possum population was very high - measured as a Residual Trap Count (RTC) of more than 80 per cent. The management plan requires possums counts of less than 5% while the Rat Tunnel Index (RTI) is also less than 5%.

The 2018 monitoring showed the possum count had been slashed to 1.34%, and the rats to 2%.

Goat reduction started in the reserve and surrounding farmland in 2016 and as of last month 1320 goats had been removed from the reserve and the buffer zones.

While pest reduction can be measured it's a little harder to specifically quantify the benefits to the bush. But significant change has been observed within the reserve, with saplings grow rates, rata flowering, and native birds returning.

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A flowering rata thriving in the buffer zone beside the expressway.

## Roading man has second string to bow



The man overseeing pest management is Mike Cassidy who has been with Fulton Hogan for 24 years, and is actually a specialist in pavements and surfacing of roads.

"The ecological mitigation for this job is quite large, and it's an area close to my heart. I do a lot of hunting and tramping in the New Zealand bush," says Mike, who has been a bow hunter for more than 30 years.

"Going into the third year [of pest control on the site] the amount of bird life is already noticeable, with a good population of morepork (ruru) in particular. I can see the bush coming away with the lack of browsing and the rata flowering is a sure sign possums are under control.

"This is all good and I am really interested to see what it will all look like in 10 years."



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# What's been happening over summer



Planting continues at the Evans Road wetland.



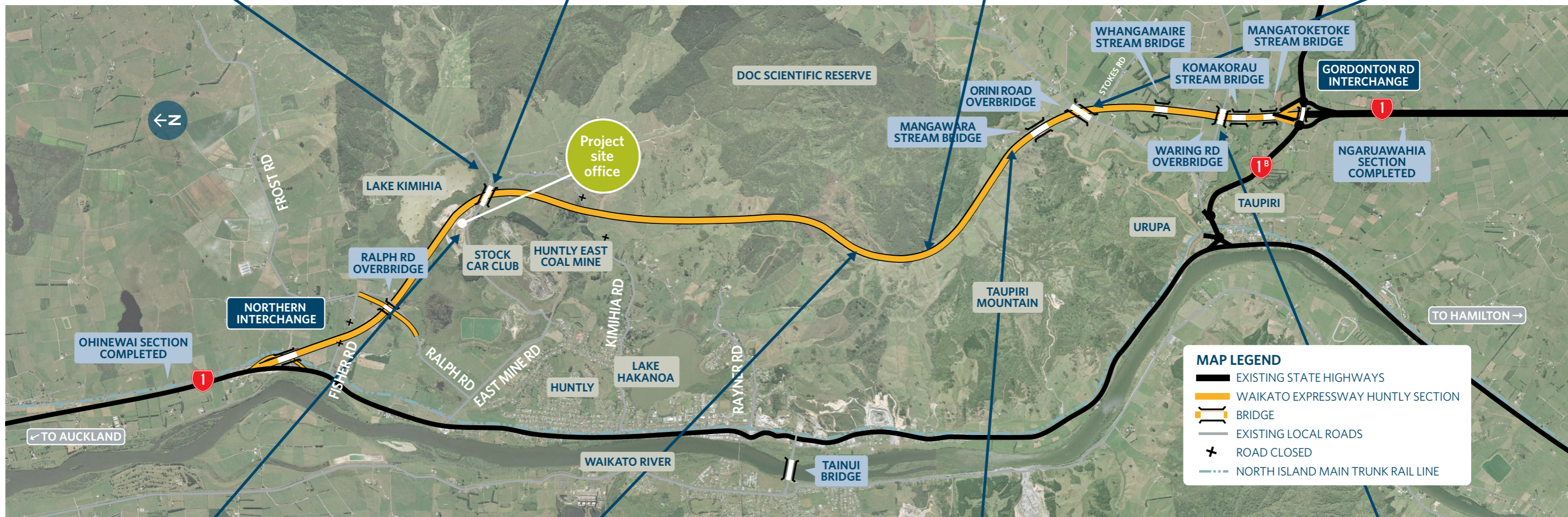
McVie Road bridge earthworks.



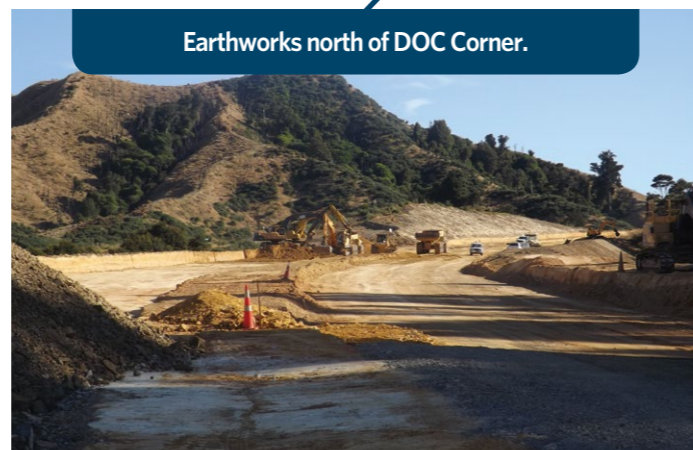
Getting ready for pavement at DOC Corner.



Orini Road bridge spanned and decked.



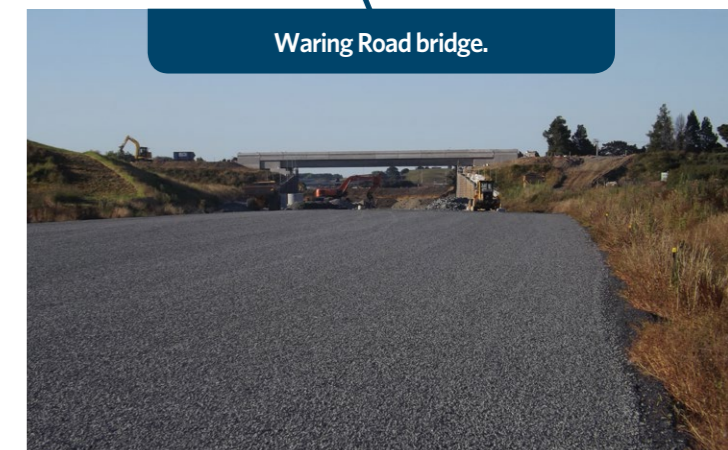
A good crowd attended the on-site open day.



Earthworks north of DOC Corner.



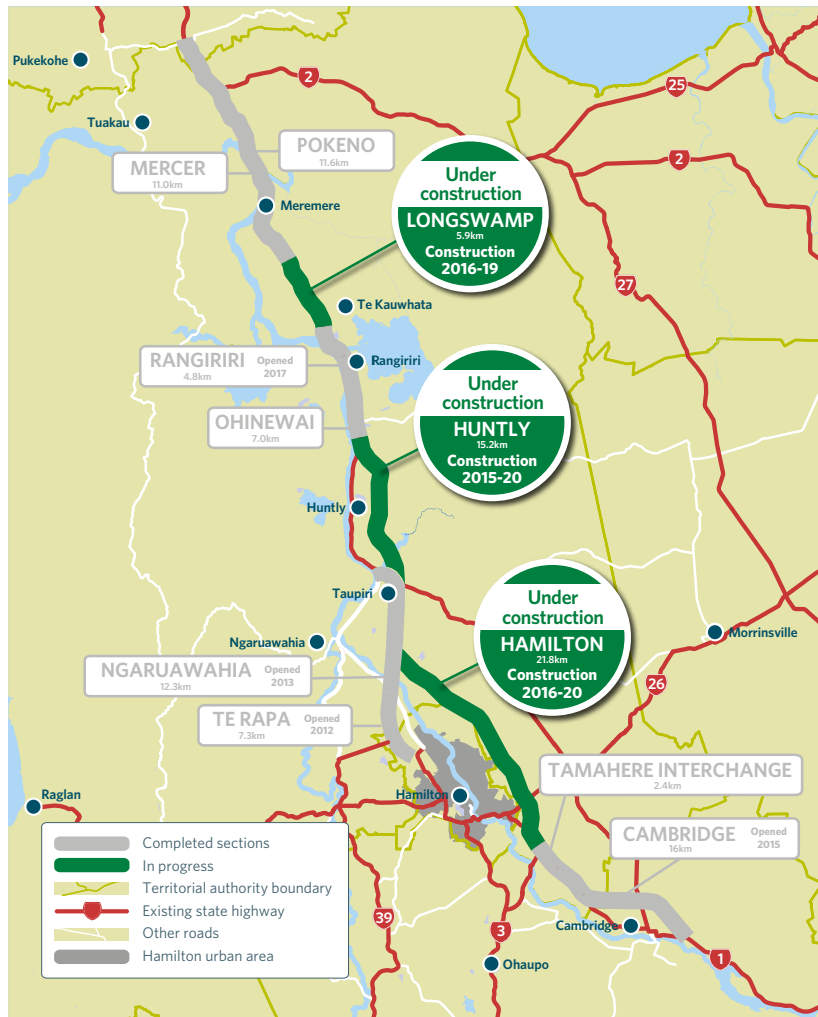
Start of pavement works alongside Te Iringa Lagoon.



Waring Road bridge.

# Expressway overview

The Waikato Expressway will improve safety and reliability, and reduce travel times and congestion on State Highway 1 by delivering a four-lane highway from the Bombay Hills to south of Cambridge. The Expressway is being built in seven sections.



## Making most of great weather

Fine weather makes a project team smile and there has been plenty to beam about over the summer months.

The bulk earthworks are nearing completion with just 20,000 cubic metres to go out of the 3.4 million m<sup>3</sup> cut to fill operation at the start of the project back in the spring of 2015.

McVie Road overbridge was blessed and opened to the public in December. Another local road bridge at Waring Road is on target to be blessed and opened to the public in March.

There are nine bridges on the project and all bridge decks have been poured and now it's the tie-in and completion works remaining, with bridge construction being approximately 90 per cent complete throughout the entire project.

Landscape planting, which includes the wetland plantings, is at 68 per cent complete, with the final push for all 1.3 million plants to be in the ground this next planting season of May to September.

Pavement construction is increasing with 32 per cent of the project already having the first seal in place.

The Huntly section is due to open to traffic early in 2020.



Beams going up on the Waring Road bridge at the southern end of the project.

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Lakes and streams alongside the project have also benefited from the enhancements to flora and fauna.

The Red Rivers network – which covers the Mangawara, Whangamaire, Komakorau and Mangatoketoke streams – has seen large areas fenced off and planted. Possums, hares and rabbits have been targeted. Te Iringa Lagoon has benefited from similar treatment.

The surrounds of Lake Kimihia and farm drain tributaries to the east have seen the willows killed, perimeters fenced and extensive native planting. There has

also been a significant reduction to the possum, goat, rabbit and hare populations to give these plantings protection.

As of the end of 2018, 20.4ha of planting has been undertaken along with 16km of fencing. Five years of pest plant control follows the planting to make sure they get well established. There are still some areas to be completed that are adjacent to the expressway works, and that will be done this year.

Approximately 700,000 plants are in the ground, with the remaining 600,000 to be planted this autumn and winter seasons.



### Information

**Project site office**  
199 McVie Road



**Freephone**  
0800 HUN INFO (486 463)

#### Lorraine Pennington

Fulton Hogan HEB Joint Venture, Stakeholder liaison manager

**Phone** 07 828 0137

**Mobile** 027 503 6749

**Email** lorraine.pennington@huntlyproject.co.nz

#### Simon Brandon

NZ Transport Agency, Communication and stakeholder liaison manager

**Phone** 07 958 7888

**Mobile** 021 615 461

**Email** simon.brandon@nzta.govt.nz