

DRAFT RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

KAI IWI LAKES (TAHAROA DOMAIN) 2015

Introduction



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INTRODUCTION..... I

DUNE LAKES I

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INTRODUCTION

This Kai Iwi Lakes (Taharoa Domain) Reserve Management Plan 2015 has been developed to provide strategic guidance to the custodianship and enhancement of Taharoa Domain (an area commonly known as Kai Iwi Lakes). The reserve covers an area of some 538 ha and contains three dune waterbodies: Lake Taharoa, Lake Kai Iwi and Lake Waikare.

Dune lakes

Kaipara District has a number of dune lakes associated with the length of its western coastline. These form part of a wider sequence that runs from Aupouri to Pouto Peninsula. The Kai Iwi Lakes are part of this lake system and are arguably amongst the best known dune lakes in New Zealand.

Lakes Taharoa, Waikare and Kai Iwi are all ranked as outstanding¹. Lake Taharoa, the largest of the three lakes and deepest (37m) in Northland receives the most activity due to its size, with a number of recreational activities occurring. Lake Taharoa has been recognised as *'probably the best example of a clear-water lake in Northland with the deepest recorded (24m) submerged vegetation in Northland'*².

Like most dune lakes, the Taharoa Domain waterbodies have little or no continuous surface inflows or outlets, being primarily fed directly by rainfall or by groundwater from the surrounding catchment. As a result, water levels fluctuate to reflect climatic patterns.

Lake Waikare has historically been the base for formalised water skiing activities; Lake Taharoa is the focus of camping and much of the Domain's recreational pursuits; whilst Lake Kai Iwi, as the smallest of the three lakes, provides for very little active recreational use. Each lake has its own individual characteristics, but they have a collective identity that shapes an outstanding natural environment.



¹ Northern Lakes Ecological Status 2013. NIWA

² Ibid.



Collectively the lakes support a spectrum of endangered endemic species, providing one of only a few remaining known habitats or strongholds for a range of biota. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the lakes is a currently limited impact of invasive species on the lakes' biota. They are highly complex and sensitive ecosystems that need collective assessment and monitoring programmes to take into consideration human activity and the interactions between the lakes physical environment and the biological communities that live within them. These matters are central to a continued healthy and outstanding natural feature and for the benefit and enjoyment of those who interact with it.

Taharoa Domain

The Domain is legally held as Crown land and its administration is currently vested in Kaipara District Council. It lies some 30km to the northwest of Dargaville, 2km inland of the west coast Tasman Sea and 30km south of Waipoua.



An aerial view of the Domain and surrounding terrain. Source: Google Earth.

Taharoa Domain is an iconic place, boasting a fascinating cultural history, outstanding landscape values, a fast-recovering ecology and water quality that is amongst the highest of any dune lakes in New Zealand. Collectively these characteristics give the Domain a distinctive identity that is unmatched elsewhere in the country.

The lakes provide a much-loved destination for day visitors and campers, with many families having a relationship with the Domain that goes back to the early times of its formation as a reserve. It is not uncommon for camping groups to consist of three generations staying together.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

For as long as has been recorded, people have lived in and around what is known today as Kai Iwi Lakes (Taharoa Domain). It is thought that the first Maori ancestor associated with the lakes is Tuputupu Whenua (alias Tumutumu Whenua) who dwelt at Rangirerekura Pa in the nearby Waihopai Valley. The Waihopai Valley at this time provided an ideal settlement for early Maori, as it was rich in resources. Tuputupu Whenua's 16th century Te Roroa descendent, Ngaengae, is believed to have lived in the same pa and is known to have fished in the lakes, as did his son Rangiwhatuma and his grandson Ikataora.

By the 1870's, the Kai Iwi area had become a major gum digging area, with the largest gum digging camp was located at Johnsons's Swamp, south of Lake Kai Iwi³. Gum digging expanded to include to the eastern shores of Lake Taharoa and supported a general store that was established at Pine Beach in 1892. In the 1920's there was approximately 100 people said to have lived on the shores of the lakes and most were gum diggers. Around this time there were various attempts to extend gum retrieval in the area and flax was harvested as a local industry.

An extensive tract of land known as the Maunganui Block was sold to the Crown in 1876 by the Chiefs Tiopira Kinaki and Parore Te Awha. Subsequently, a small 250 acre portion of that area which was centred on Lake Kai Iwi was cut out the wider area that had been purchased and granted back to Parore Te Awha to provide for perpetual access to food resources, protect important sites and provide a sheltered place to live. This parcel became known as the Taharoa Native Reserve and was to become the subject of a Treaty of Waitangi claim after it was sold to the Crown in 1950 without the involvement of Parore's descendants.



An 8.5ha block of land on the eastern shore of Lake Taharoa was set aside as a scenic reserve in 1928. The Crown then purchased Taharoa Native Reserve from the legal Maori owners in 1950, but in so doing was later judged to have breached the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi by the Waitangi Tribunal. Surrounding land was added to the scenic reserve in 1952, followed a decade later by Lake Kai Iwi being added to the reserve. In that same year, land around Lake Taharoa and Kai Iwi was gazetted as the Taharoa Domain Recreation Reserve.

1964 saw the first plantation forestry in the Domain, with the planting of 10,000 pine seedlings. Forestry operations continued until mid-2000's. It was also in 1964 that recreational use of the Domain started to be

³ Taharoa Domain Reserve Management Plan (1987) Dunn, M.J. Hobson County Council



promoted. Lake Waikare became popular for water-skiing during this period and a water-ski club was established in the late 1960's.

Lake Waikare was added to Taharoa Domain Recreation Reserve in 1968 and in that same year administration and control of the reserve was entrusted to Hobson County Council (now Kaipara District Council), through the Taharoa Domain Board which was formed under the Reserves and Domains Act (1953). 1968 also saw a survey of Lakes Kai Iwi and Taharoa by the Departments of Marine and Internal Affairs, which found conditions in the lakes favourable for the 10,000 rainbow trout fingerlings that were then released into Lake Taharoa later that year. Trout were introduced to Lake Waikare the following year and trout fishing at the Domain commenced.



Lake Taharoa in 1966, Whites Aviation Ltd : Photographs. Ref: WA-66060-F.
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22587705>

The 1970's was a busy time for development in the domain, with the roading and amenity blocks seen today being established. Amenity improvements continued into the early 1980's to cater for increasing numbers of day-trippers and campers who were being drawn to the lakes.

During 1986 the first of a number of Treaty of Waitangi claims was lodged on behalf of Te Roroa and this included Taharoa Native Reserve within its scope. The Waitangi Tribunal addressed the claim in a report



released in 1992, which judged that there were breaches of the Treaty in the way that the purchase of that Native Reserve was conducted and recommending a number of avenues of redress.

Taharoa Domain received its first reserve management Plan in 1987, when the then Hobson County prepared a document in response to the requirements of the Reserves Act (1977). The gravel road that connected Kai Iwi Lakes Road with Pine Beach was sealed in the 1990's, leading to a further increase in visitor numbers.

A review of the 1987 reserve management plan began in 1999, concluding with the second Taharoa Domain Reserve Management Plan being adopted in 2002. Three years later a new wastewater plant was installed at Pine Beach. A further two years elapsed before all of the pines established from 1964 onwards were harvested and major habitat restoration works began. Those ecological initiatives have continued to the present, with an increasing focus upon managing plant and animal pests, along with a number of research initiatives. Improvements to 1970's-era amenities around the Pine Beach area and the beginnings of a comprehensive upgrading of the Domain's tracks (as signalled by the 2002 Reserve Management Plan) have been progressing during 2015. A review of the 2002 Reserve Management Plan was initiated in 2013, leading to the preparation of this document.



MANAGING THREATS

Taharoa Domain has seen some significant changes in its management over the years. In early times much of the perimeter of the lakes was grazed and that use perpetuated through to the 1980s. Extensive forestry was established during the late 1960s and harvesting has occurred over the past 20 years, sometimes with dramatic effects. That impact is now healing and a new phase has commenced where restoring the natural ecology of the lakes and their setting has become a primary focus.

Growing populations of people, particularly in Auckland, and constant improvements in transportation will inevitably lead to increasing user numbers and associated pressures. A significant challenge is to ensure that the outstanding status of all three lakes within Taharoa Domain is conserved as demand grows. Amongst the goals of this reserve management plan is to significantly enhance the qualities of the Domain whilst addressing use pressures.

The aquatic environment of the lakes is particularly vulnerable, with a potential for aggressive exotic species to be accidentally introduced and to then rapidly colonise the lakes. Threats to water quality from the wider catchment that influences the lakes is another significant matter. Reducing the risks and the likelihood of damage to water quality and aquatic ecology requires proactive management will involve a number of



organisations. There is a need to identify potential and pathway risks along with developing measures aimed at risk reduction (particularly education), surveillance, incursion response, readiness and monitoring. Continuing to build knowledge about the natural resources and processes that influence the Lakes will allow a fuller understanding of both the characteristics of the waterbodies and the ways those could be compromised.

The Domain's terrestrial environment faces a comparable suite of threats, many of which are already well-established. Addressing those land-based environmental challenges also requires scientifically-based programmes and monitoring which are supported with ongoing commitment.

It is the intention of the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee to implement actions within the Reserve Management Plan that enable the Domain and its environment to be enjoyed by all visitors while simultaneously enhancing the area and reducing risks through knowledge and active management.



Centrolepis strigosa at shore of Lake Waikare. Current conservation status: 2012 - threatened - nationally critical, still seasonally abundant at Kai Iwi Lakes. Photograph by Lisa Forester NRC 2014-10-13

CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

The first Maori ancestor probably associated with the lakes is Tuputupu Whenua (alias Tumutumu Whenua), whose name means a sprout from the land. He dwelt at Rangirerekura Pa in the nearby Waihopai Valley close to the fishing grounds at Maunganui Bluff, the mussel and toheroa beds of Ripriro Beach, the swamps and kumara gardens of the Waihopai Valley and the eels of the Ngakiripara Stream and the lakes. The Waihopai Valley provided an ideal resource rich settlement for early Maori. Tuputupu Whenua's probably 16th century Te Roroa descendent, Ngaengae lived in the same pa and is known to have made use of the lakes for fishing purposes, as did his son Rangiwhatuma and the latter's son Ikataora.



A close, long-standing relationship with the lakes and surrounding land leads to Maori regarding them as a taonga (treasure) and important food source. They have fished, lived in the area around the lakes, and buried their dead there. Two urupa (burial grounds) are known to exist and a pa site overlooks Lake Kai Iwi from just outside the legal boundaries of the reserve.

The Taharoa Native Reserve was defined in an effort to conserve iwi access to the Lakes when broader land holdings were sold by local Maori.



Evidence presented in relation to the Te Roroa claim (Wai 38) paints an engaging picture of early life⁴. Mr Te Rore tells of packs of 18 horses following the Ngakiriparauri Track between the lakes and Kaihu carrying loads of kauri gum to load onto the train. The importance of the Taharoa eel fishery is acknowledged, being known to complement mussels and toheroa that were gathered from the nearby coast.

Life around the gum kainga (village) was relayed to Mr Te Rore by kuia, who spoke of large nikau-clad “dance houses”, where the ground was levelled, kauri gum dust spread and set to burn. The melted gum then hardened to form a smooth and durable dance floor. Mr Te Rore describes how rama, kauri splinter torches, were constructed in readiness for tuna (eel) fishing expeditions. Another preparation was felling and splitting ti kouka (cabbage trees). The very white wood was laid in the floor of the drain so that the passing eels could be seen against that pale background in the night. This technique was described as being “our x-ray”.

Evidence by Mr Eruera Makoare to the same hearing focussed particularly upon eeling activities at the lakes, with the bounty providing for Kaihu people. Eeling was particularly directed toward the historic drain between Lakes Kai Iwi and Taharoa, and selected shallow spots on the margins of the lakes. In good times up to 50 eels of 4.5-5 feet in length would be caught in a single evening. Lake Kai Iwi was known as being the best of the lakes for catching eels. Mr Makoare talks of young people approaching him to teach them the traditional eeling methods.

Settlers of Dalmatian origin were amongst the first Europeans to have an association with the area, forming relationships with local Maori and devoting their energy to digging kauri gum. Unfortunately there is little documented history of this period, but a number of small, gnarled grape vines at Pine Beach and Promenade Point are thought to be part of the Dalmatian legacy.



⁴ Te Rore, T, R (Lovey). Statement of Evidence in relation to a claim by E D Nathan and ors. Te Roroa claim Wai 38



TREATY OF WAITANGI CLAIM

Tangata whenua's long-standing relationship with Taharoa Domain and the wider surrounding area has been varied and on-going. This status was recognised in a Treaty of Waitangi claim that included land embodied in the Domain. In numerous places in its report The Waitangi Tribunal recognised that the Kai Iwi lakes were, and still are, an essential mahinga kai for tangata whenua⁵. As a result of its findings, the Tribunal recommended:

That the 250 acre Taharoa Native Reserve, granted as from 8 February 1876 to Parore Te Awha, be restored "as wahi tapu, papakainga and mahinga kai for tangata whenua" as originally intended.

That recommendation is supported both by tangata whenua and the Office of Treaty Settlements in relation to Taharoa Domain. The Tribunal also acknowledged that there are wahi tapu in and around the Reserve, leading to a recommendation for the participation of tangata whenua with Council in the management of the reserve. In response, Kaipara District Council voluntarily established co-governance arrangements that provide for the active and equal decision making that tangata whenua have with Local Government representatives on the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee.



⁵ The Te Roroa Report 1992. Waitangi Tribunal. Ministry of Justice



The background image is a scenic landscape featuring a calm body of water in the foreground, likely a lake or a wide river. In the middle ground, there are rolling green hills and a small, rocky island or headland. The background is dominated by large, rugged mountains under a clear sky. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

VISION

To protect and enhance Taharoa Domain as taonga of global significance for the benefit of present and future generations.

Kia tiaki kia whakareia enei taonga tuku iho ara ko nga roto o Taharoa, hei taonga hiranga o te ao ma te pārekareka o nga whakatupuranga o tenei me tena ao.