

Predator control on Mt Te Kinga and the Hohonu Range

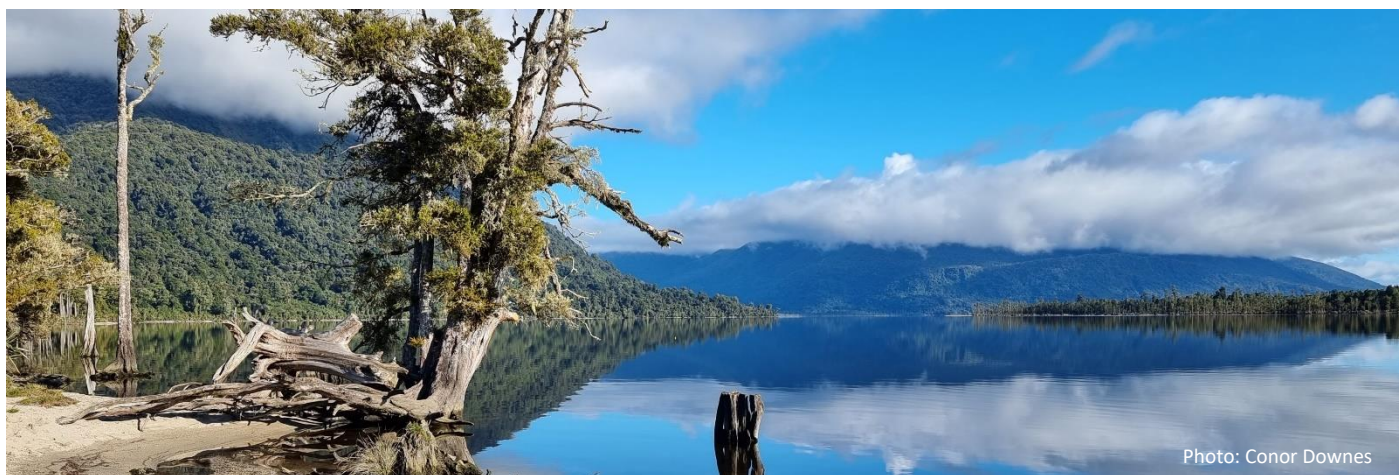


Photo: Conor Downes

To protect native biodiversity and to support the TBFree programme, possum population reduction is proposed

A Joint Approach

The Te Kinga Predator Free Project and OSPRI are collaborating on predator control operations in the region in 2024. Working together mutually supports separate goals; OSPRI is a disease management agency working towards bovine tuberculosis (TB) eradication, and Te Kinga's project looks to protect our native species.



Goal 1: Protecting native species through predator control

Between them, Mount Te Kinga and the Hohonu Massif consist of a diverse range of habitats, including podocarp forest, beech forest, and alpine tussock. They are home to vulnerable native species including great spotted kiwi.

Predator control will increase the survival rate of vulnerable native species in the region.

Introduced predators, possums, rats, and stoats eat the adults, chicks, and eggs of these native species. Possums can have a devastating impact on forest health by browsing

foliage and fruit, and rats eat a large amount of seed, reducing the amount available for forest regeneration.

Without predator control these already vulnerable populations are at serious risk. Key goals of Predator Free Te Kinga's predator control:

- Maintain and improve the health of natural areas of public conservation land.
- Protect and enhance native wildlife in those areas.

Goal 2: Targeting possums to eradicate TB

There is a long history of TB infection in cattle herds and wildlife in the Grey TB Management Area which includes Te Kinga and Hohonu.

Possums are the main carrier of TB in wildlife, so can cause spreading from wildlife to farmed cattle and deer. Reducing and keeping the possum population low reduces the risk of TB being spread.

OSPRI's TBfree programme uses possum control, along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions to achieve bovine TB eradication goals. Information from wild animal surveys, recent and historic findings of TB in wild animals, herd testing results and the operational history of the region are used when planning operations.

TBfree eradication goals are:

- TB freedom in cattle and deer herds by 2026
- TB freedom in possums by 2040
- TB freedom in all wildlife by 2055.

Roroa/Great Spotted Kiwi

There are great spotted kiwi populations throughout the west coast, including populations on the Alexandra Range and on Te Kinga.

Without Predator Control:

Nine out of 10 kiwi chicks die before they reach breeding age.

With Predator Control:

A study of kiwi chick survival in Kahurangi National Park has shown that aerial 1080 can increase chick survival by up to 70%.



Verifying results

Predator Free Te Kinga undertakes predator population assessments before and after operations are completed. In addition, the Te Kinga Project has camera and audio monitoring data before the operation and will continue monitoring after. This information provides information on effectiveness of the operation and helps refine future work practices.

The results of rodent and stoat control are measured using tracking tunnels to assess predator numbers before and after control operations. The status of vulnerable species and natural areas are assessed through a range of methods, including trail cameras and audio recording devices.



Photo: Jo Halley



Timeframe

The proposed aerial operations will begin in August 2024. There will be a pre-feed application of non-toxic cereal baits to prime the possums and rodents to eat the toxic baits which are applied 1–2 weeks afterwards. Toxic cereal pellets contain 0.15% of 1080 and are dyed green. The pre-feed cereal baits are sandy coloured (not dyed). Dates will be weather dependant.



Photo: Conor Downes

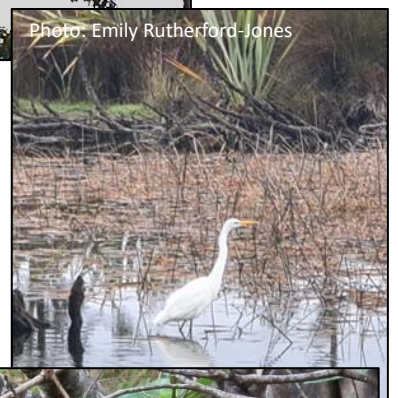


Photo: Emily Rutherford-Jones



Notification

Affected landowners and occupiers will be contacted again before operations start, notices will be published in local newspapers and warning signs will be placed at all likely access points to the operational area.

Planning

Before any proposed work occurs, Vector Control Services (VCS), will visit the affected landowners and occupiers to consult its impact. They will discuss boundary issues, water supply safety, the management of any risks to dogs and livestock and how to reduce any effects of the operation.

Consents from Iwi, affected landowners, the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Health are required for this operation.





Aerial Control:

Aerial control using 1080 means large areas can be effectively treated in a short time frame. It is often used in remote and rugged areas that are otherwise difficult to treat. It supports current ground control in the surrounding farmland and limits reinvasion.

Application rates are low, between 2-4 kg per hectare, with each bait containing 0.15% 1080.

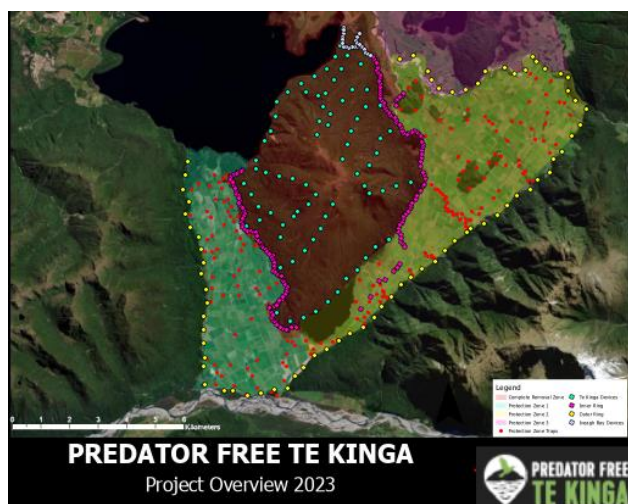
✓ Biodegradable

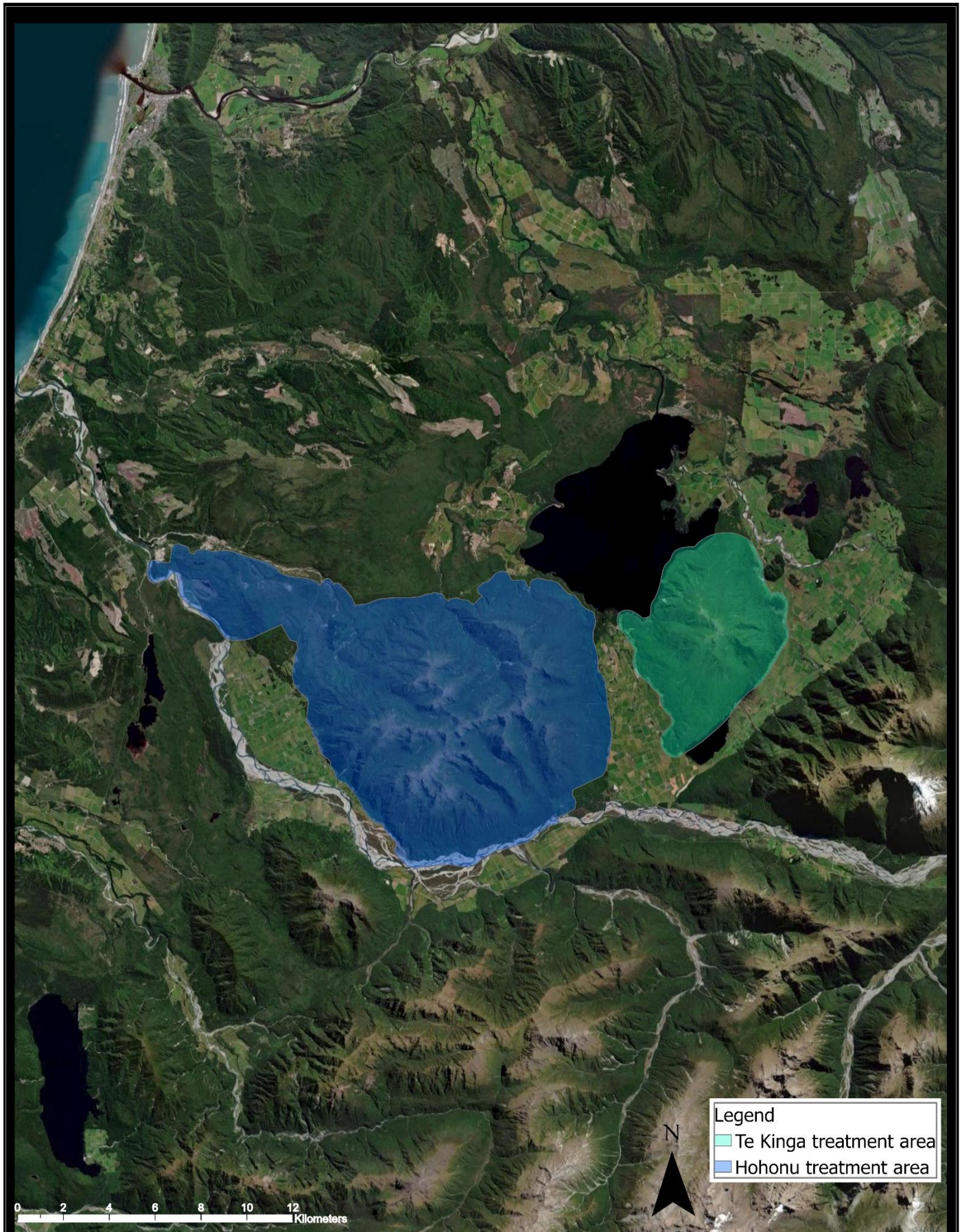
1080 is biodegradable which means it is broken down by micro-organisms in water and soil into harmless elements. It does not leave permanent residues in water, soil, plants, or animals.

Trapping in the Te Kinga Project

Trapping is used extensively in the more accessible areas of the Te Kinga Project, both to reduce possum numbers and to prevent reinvasion from surrounding ranges.

The trap network consists of an inner ring of traps (pink) close to the base of Te Kinga, and an outer ring (yellow) closer to the base of surrounding ranges, plus a scatter of traps within the surrounding farmland (red). Trap lines on Mt. Te Kinga (blue) will be established in early 2024 when new trap technology with artificial intelligence is available.





Plan of Aerial Operations 2024

Important Information

Warning signs will be placed at all main access points to the operational area. Everyone must follow the cautions on the signs. There's no health risk when using this area as long as you follow these instructions:

Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised. Cereal baits containing 1080 are dyed green.

Do not hunt or take game from within a two-kilometre radius of the operational area for human or pet consumption. It is an offence to sell meat products that have been exposed to 1080. Hunting can resume approximately four months following the control work. Please observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about the pesticide. These signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in the baits or carcasses. When the signs are officially removed, you can resume normal activities in the area.



Do not bring dogs into the area until the warning signs have been officially removed.

Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access into the treatment area whilst it is under caution.



Drinking water recommendations

1080 is water soluble and quickly dilutes to unmeasurable, non-toxic concentrations before it biodegrades. Tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years have shown no threat to water supplies. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not affected, and mitigations can be put in place where necessary.



What to do if you suspect poisoning

Contact your local hospital or doctor, or **dial 111**

National Poisons Centre
0800 POISON (764 766)

If a domestic animal is poisoned, contact a local veterinarian.



Further Information

Information and operational factsheets are available online at: ospri.co.nz

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