

Ruakituri River



Key Values

Cultural

Recreation (angling, rafting, kayaking)

Ecology (fisheries, wildlife)

Landscape (scenic)

Natural character

Table 1: List of documents reviewed

Year	Name	Author
1979	64 New Zealand Rivers	Egarr, Egarr & Mackay
1981	New Zealand Recreational River Survey	G & J Egarr
1982	Submission on the draft Inventory of Wild and Scenic Rivers of National Importance	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
1986	A List of Rivers and Lakes Deserving Inclusion in A Schedule of Protected Waters	Grindell & Guest
1994	Headwater Trout Fisheries in New Zealand	NIWA
1998	Conservation Management Strategy, East Coast Conservancy 1998 – 2008	Department of Conservation
2002	The Ruakituri River - A hidden gem	Whitewater New Zealand
2004	Potential Water Bodies of National Importance	Ministry for the Environment
2012	River Values Assessment System (RIVAS)	Lindis Consulting
2012	Te Urewera Act 2014 – Section 126 Ruakituri Wilderness Area	New Zealand Legislation
2013	Huiarau Range	Wilderness Magazine

2013	Te Urewera-Tūhoe Bill - Submission to the Māori Affairs Committee From the Eastern Fish and Game Council	Fish and Game Council
2014	Ruakituri River	Fish and Game New Zealand Eastern Region
2016	Iwi and Hapū of Te Rohe o Te Wairoa Deed of Settlement + Documents Schedule	Iwi and Hapū of Te Rohe o Te Wairoa and the Crown
2017	Timeline Wilderness Protection	Wildlife
2018	Cultural Values Table	Hawke's Bay Regional Council
2018	Ruakituri River Trout Fishing	NZ Fishing website
2018	Waterfalls in Hawke's Bay and East Coast	Waterfalls New Zealand Website
2018	Land Air Water Aotearoa (LAWA)	Hawke's Bay Regional Council
2018	Famous New Zealand Rivers	Fishing New Zealand

Discussion

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to assist the RPC members to determine whether any of the values of the Ruakituri River are outstanding for the purposes of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM).
2. This report presents the summarised findings of the values attributed to the Ruakituri River in those documents referred to in Table 1, above.

Overview

3. The Ruakituri River rises on the slopes of the Huiarau Ranges in *Te Urewera* flowing southeast until it merges with the Hangaroa River just above Te Reinga Falls, around 35 km north of Wairoa. Te Reinga Falls marks the beginning of the Wairoa River.
4. The Ruakituri River is around 70 km long and is widely regarded as a premier trout fishery known for its large trophy trout and impressive scenery. Angling on the river is restricted to fly fishing only, with the use of spinners prohibited. A number of international visitors come to the area each year.
5. The Ruakituri River traverses through vastly different landscapes over its length. The headwaters of the river is a rugged wilderness area with a number of steep limestone gorges. The Ruakituri Gorge is particularly valued by canoeists who know it as a short but challenging run. The middle and lower reaches of the river are predominately surrounded by native bush and farmland areas.
6. Above the Waitangi Falls, the Ruakituri River is located in a 23,000 hectare Wilderness Zone where only foot access is permitted. Access is difficult, with no huts or tracks in the wilderness area and helicopter landings are not permitted.

Location

7. The Ruakituri River is a major tributary for the Wairoa River, flowing southeast from *Te Urewera* towards Wairoa. The major tributaries of the Ruakituri River are the Anini Stream and the Waipaoa Stream.
8. The location and extent of the Ruakituri River can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, below.



Figure 1: Location Map – Ruakituri River

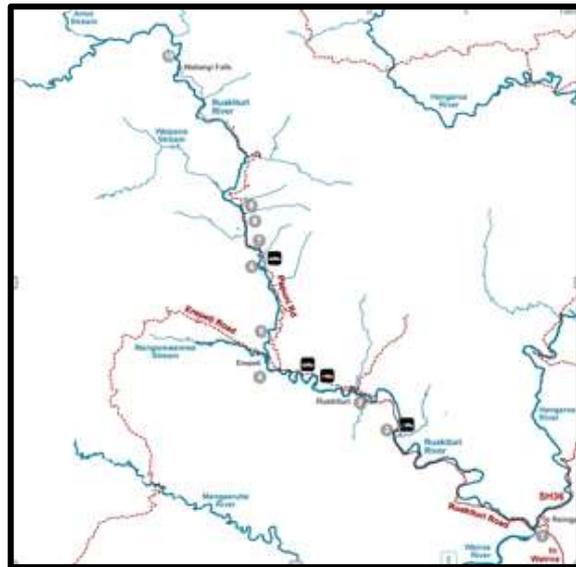


Figure 2: Ruakituri River Map

Cultural values

9. The Ruakituri River is culturally significant for the people of Te Rohe o Te Wairoa.
10. Ngāi Kohatu have a korero about the formation of these rivers. According to tradition, Ruamano and Hinekorako were kin taniwha. Atop a hill one day Ruamano and Hinekorako heard the sound of the sea. Deciding to heed its call they began to race to the sea. Ruamano came via the Ruakituri River and Hinekorako via the Hangaroa.
11. Ruakituri River was one of several important locations for Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, and Ngāti Ruapani. From these locations, they travelled, often considerable distances, to utilise resources seasonally. Traditional settlements on the Ruakituri River included Te Reinga and Erepeti.
12. Te Kooti Arikirangi would also use this route in his escape into Tūhoe country. He built a pā at Puketapu on the Ruakituri River and was there joined by upper Wairoa chiefs Te Waru and Nama, along with some of their followers.
13. Attachment 1 contains a more detailed explanation of the cultural values associated with the Ruakituri River.

Recreation values

14. The Ruakituri River is a high valued trout fishery which supports a variety of fishing experiences along its length. The river contains both brown and rainbow trout and is one of the few rivers in North Island that is reserved for fly fishing only.
15. While angling is by far the most popular recreational activity on this river, it has been paddled by Hawke's Bay kayakers for some years who know it as a short, sharp challenging run.
16. The recreational activities associated with the Ruakituri River have been discussed in a number of nationally published documents over the last 40 years, and are consistently described as outstanding, nationally important and exceptional.
17. The recreational activities which take place on the Ruakituri River are discussed in more detail below.

Angling

18. The Ruakituri River is an internationally renowned trout fishery often described as containing some of the strongest, wildest trout in the world. It contains a large population of both brown and rainbow trout which can reach trophy size.
19. The river has a high number of international visitors each year. In 2013, the National Angling Survey results show that over 16% of the annual effort on the Ruakituri River came from international visitors.

20. The river contains a variety of fishing opportunities from wilderness fishing in the headwaters to easily accessible river fishing in the middle and lower reaches. The upper, middle and lower reaches of the Ruakituri River are described in more detail in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Description of Ruakituri River reaches

River section	Description
Upper reaches Te Urewera National - Waitangi Falls	The headwaters of the Ruakituri are isolated, with the river flowing for many kilometres through thick bush and, rugged and remote backcountry. This part of the river is difficult to access and requires considerable walking. The waters in this section can be crystal clear. Only rainbow trout are present in this section of river. The upper river and headwaters are classed as a 'wilderness fishing' area, known for its impressive scenery and trout size. On average trout caught in this area weigh between 2- 3 kg, however many weighing 5 kg plus are caught each year.
Middle reaches Waitangi Falls - the Ruakituri Bridge	This section of river is characterised by bush and farmland, is as known as open and easy to fish. The water is a series of pools, rapids and long flat areas. The area is generally very accessible, making it the most popular section for angling on the river. There are high numbers of both brown and rainbow trout present in the middle reaches, which average around 2 kg in size.
Lower reaches Ruakituri Bridge - Erepeti road junction	This section of river is wide and slow. The surrounding landscape is mostly farmland. Both brown and rainbow trout present in this section of river, which on average are between 1 – 2 kg in size.

21. In 1982, the Ruakituri River was identified by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as being a river of national importance for wilderness and scenic salmonid angling. Only one other river in New Zealand was identified as being nationally important for these attributes.
22. In 1986, the Ruakituri River was placed in 'Group one'¹ in the Government's list of rivers and lakes deserving protection, for its exceptional scenery, fishing, recreational, wildlife and wilderness qualities. The report specifically notes "*it is an outstanding trout fishery for trophy sized rainbow trout in the upper reaches and for both brown and rainbow in the middle and lower reaches*".
23. In 2013, results from the National Angling Survey show the Ruakituri River was the river most enjoyed by anglers in the north island, and the third most enjoyed river by anglers across New Zealand². The enjoyment score is considered to be a reasonable proxy for the importance of a fishery on a national scale in the survey.
24. In 2012, the Ruakituri River was identified as nationally significant salmonid angling in the Hawke's Bay RiVAS assessments.

Boating

25. The Ruakituri River is locally renowned amongst Hawke's Bay paddlers for its impressive scenery and its short, sharp Grade 2 and 3 rapids. The gorge is particularly notable, with the 1981 Recreational River Survey stating the Ruakituri River has "*a short but strikingly beautiful gorge that offers some of the best rafting and canoeing in water south of Gisborne*".
26. Above the gorge, the rapids are numerous and easy and below the gorge the rapids ease and the river becomes quite flat. The river is usable at a range of flows however, during summer low flows boats need to be carried around a number of the rapids. At high flows most rapids are runnable but there are some big holes.
27. The lower Ruakituri River does not appear to be highly used for jet boating. While navigable by jet boats, the lower parts of the river have no rapids and numerous snags which need to be avoided. The Ruakituri River does not feature on the 2014 Jet Boating New Zealand rivers information document.

¹ Group One = Excellent rivers or lakes containing an outstanding cultural, fisheries, wild flora, location, recreation, scenic, scientific, tourism, wildlife habitat, value(s). Group One contains the very best examples of these values.

² Fished by at least 10 survey respondents, out of a total of 431.

28. The 1981, the Recreational River Survey assigned the Ruakituri River an 'exceptional'³ scenic rating and a 'high'⁴ recreational rating within the gorge, and a 'moderate' scenic rating and a 'intermediate' recreational rating below the gorge.
29. In 1986, the Ruakituri River was placed in 'Group one'⁵ on the Government's list of rivers and lakes deserving protection, for its exceptional scenery, fishing, recreational, wildlife and wilderness qualities. The report specifically notes the river is popular for canoeing and rafting.
30. In 2002, the Ruakituri River was added to the fifth edition of New Zealand Whitewater, where Graham Charles presents information on over 180 kayaking runs in New Zealand.
31. In 2012, Hawke's Bay RiVAS assessments for whitewater kayaking concluded the upper Ruakituri River was nationally significant for kayaking, with the middle and lower reaches deemed regionally significant for kayaking.

Ecology values

32. The Ruakituri River flows through large areas of native forest and isolated backcountry in its upper reaches, with hill country pasture and commercial forestry surrounding its middle and lower reaches. The surrounding landscape generally translates into higher ecological values in the upper reaches and lower ecological values in the lower reaches.
33. In 2004, the Ruakituri River was identified as a Potential Water Body of National Importance for aquatic biodiversity values by the Ministry for the Environment.

Fish

34. The Ruakituri River provides a highly valued habitat for introduced salmonid fish species (trout). In particular, the habitat is largely natural with high water quality. The river supports good populations of both rainbow and brown trout, which are self-sustaining.
35. The Ruakituri River did not specifically feature in the RiVAS assessment undertaken in Hawke's Bay for native fish.

Wildlife

36. The globally endangered blue duck (whio) are known to inhabit parts of the Ruakituri River, however the exact population estimate is uncertain. Whio are extremely rare, more so than the kiwi with around 23 kiwi for every Whio.
37. In 1985, the Ruakituri River was given a Site of Special Wildlife Interest (SSWI) rating of 'moderate' by the Fauna Survey Unit of the former New Zealand Wildlife Service.
38. In 1986 the Ruakituri River was placed in 'Group One' on the Government's list of rivers and lakes deserving protection, with its wildlife qualities specifically identified as one of the factors contributing to its outstanding classification.
39. In 2012, the Ruakituri River was identified as regionally significant by Hawke's Bay RiVAS assessments for native birdlife. Grey duck were been identified as being present at the river during this assessment however, it is unclear whether the grey ducks present are pure bred grey ducks and further investigations are necessary.

Flora

40. The Ruakituri River is classified as a scenic reserve in the 1998 East Coast Conservancy Conservation Management Strategy, by the Department of Conservation. Specifically, the area is identified as having 'very high' botanical conservation value with podocarp-tawa forest on its terraces, steep bluffs alongside the Ruakituri River and the presence of kaka beak.

³ Recreational values graded on a five point scale: insignificant, low, intermediate, high, exceptional

⁴ Scenic values graded on a six point scale: dull, uninspiring, moderate, picturesque, impressive, exceptional.

⁵ Group One = Excellent rivers or lakes containing an outstanding cultural, fisheries, wild flora, location, recreation, scenic, scientific, tourism, wildlife habitat, value(s). Group One contains the very best examples of these values.

Landscape /scenic values

41. The exceptional scenic values of the upper Ruakituri River have been described in a number of nationally published documents over the last 40 years. The upper reaches are recognised as being strikingly scenic, with the remaining parts of the river described as having more ‘moderate’ scenic values.
42. Over its length, the Ruakituri River traverses through vastly different landscapes. The headwaters of the river begin within the native forest areas of *Te Urewera*. This area is a rugged wilderness zone with no huts or tracks.
43. The Ruakituri River is clean and clear as in its upper reaches as it flows through a number of steep gorges, past giant limestone cliffs, and finally over the Waitangi Falls which marks the beginning of the river’s middle reaches.
44. The Waitangi Falls are 72m high and known as a spectacular scenic attraction. The walk in to see the falls takes around three hours. The falls are not identified on the NZ waterfalls website and due to their inaccessibility they are not highly visited.
45. The middle section of the Ruakituri River is narrow with the surrounding area characterised by steep hills covered with native bush and bluffs. Below the Puhoro Station Bridge the river enters the Ruakituri Gorge Scenic Reserve. In its lower reaches the river becomes wider and flatter and the surrounding landscape becomes more modified, with farmland on either side.
46. Photographs of the Ruakituri River are contained in Attachment 2.

Naturalness/intactness of waterbody

47. The headwaters of the Ruakituri flow through *Te Urewera* which is the largest untouched native forest reserve in the North Island. These waters are isolated, flowing for many kilometres through thick bush and rugged, remote backcountry. The middle and lower reaches of the river are surrounded by a more modified landscape.
48. In 2012, the Ruakituri River was identified as nationally significant in the Hawke’s Bay RiVAS assessments for natural character. The RiVAS assessment did not discuss the different sections of the river.

Water Quality

49. Hawke’s Bay Regional Council regularly monitors the water quality of the lower Ruakituri River at Doughboy Bridge which is classed as a lowland rural site (see Table 3). The nitrate and ammonia attribute bands provide an indication of the chronic toxicity risk to aquatic animals.
50. The Hawke’s Bay Regional Council does not monitor the water quality of the upper reaches of the Ruakituri River, however water quality is expected to be in a near natural state due to its surrounding environment.

Table 3: Water quality – Ruakituri River (2016)

Monitoring site	Water clarity	Nitrogen	Phosphorus	Microbiological Indicator (<i>E. coli</i>)
Ruakituri Sports Ground (Doughboy Bridge)	Turbidity = 5.4 NTU NTU; Black disk = 1 metres. Both within the worst 25% of like sites within New Zealand.	NOF BAND A Total Nitrogen = 0.1875 g/m ³ ; Total Oxidised Nitrogen = 0.0144 g/m ³ (Annual median) and 0.236 g/m ³ (95 th percentile); Ammoniacal Nitrogen = 0.0069 g/m ³ (Annual median), 0.0219 g.m ³ (95 th percentile). All are in the best 25% of like sites in New Zealand	Dissolved Phosphorus, and Reactive Phosphorus are within the best 50% of ‘like’ sites within New Zealand. Dissolved Phosphorus = 0.006 g/m ³ , Total Phosphorus =0.0135 g/m ³ .	NOF Band A E. coli = 60 n/100ml (annual median) In the best 50% of like sites in New Zealand

Note 1: NOF BAND A for E.coli = water suitable for designed use with les 1% risk of infection from contact with water during activities with occasional immersion (such as wading and boating). Band A is suitable for swimming.

Note 2: NOF BAND A for Nitrogen = high conservation values system. Unlikely to be effects even on sensitive species.

Values Summary

Overarching Value	Sub-value	Description	Outstanding Yes/no	Comments
Cultural	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Recreational	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Ecological	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Landscape	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Natural Character	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

8. Resource Management Plans

The following tables list any relevant resource management plans developed by regional council or territorial authorities. The tables include any specific provisions that apply to the. They do not include all of the general policies or rules that may apply. Water quality and water quantity provisions have been included as it is recognised that these aspects can significantly impact on cultural values.

Iwi and HapResource Management Plans

Kahungunu ki Uta, Kahungunu ki Te Tai & Freshwater Fisheries Strategic Plan

WairoaDistrict Plan

Significant Takes and Rives (Schedule 5)

Attachment 2: Photographs – Ruakituri River



Ruakituri River (upper reaches)



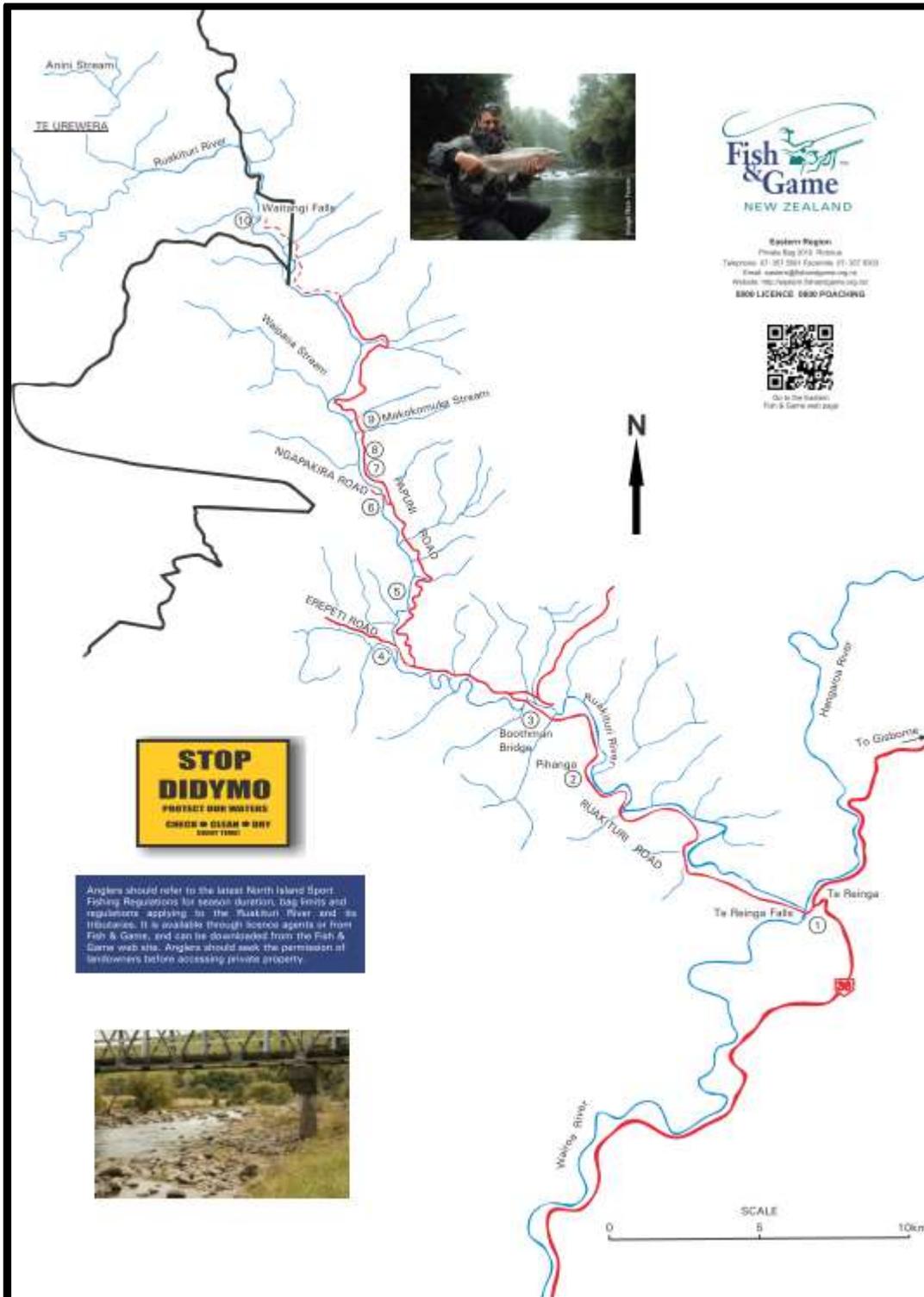
Waitangi Falls



Ruakituri River (middle reaches)



Lower Ruakituri River (at Sports Ground)



Extent of Ruakituri River