From:	s 9(2)(a)		
To:	s 9(2)(a)		
Cc:	Fast Track Consenting		
Subject:	RE: Application for referral under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020		
Date:	Wednesday, 23 September 2020 5:37:11 pm		
Attachments:	image001.png		
	image002.png		
	image003.png		
	4797c Keena Road marina site 12-7-19 (A1549493) ndf		

Hi Rebecca

Further to my earlier email and memo, this email is to provide you the remaining item you requested in your email from yesterday (Item 1).

Prior to forwarding the Wildlands report you requested, I wanted to inform Willie Shaw (the report's writer), not just so he knew we were forwarding on his report to a third party, but because he is underway with a new refined scope of works with a variety of assessment criteria for the favoured northern channel entrance. I felt a few words about the current work may be helpful, which he explains below.

Willie has also provided a statement regrading the particular scope he followed when he completed his survey and reporting in July 2019.

2019 Report

While we looked closely at the project area, the southern side of the existing channel at the northern end of the site was the effective boundary of our assessment and we did not evaluate the actual channel or the area on the northern side of it. We also looked at the site as a 'blank canvas' and did not evaluate any particular options for channel access to the marina.

2020 Assessment

This will involve consideration of a slightly larger project area, including the existing northern channel and the area to the north of that channel. Detailed field mapping and evaluation of vegetation and habitats will be undertaken in this area, including assessment of whether this area could accommodate an access channel to the marina, and the ecological effects associated with that option. Options to avoid, minimise, and mitigate potential adverse effects will be addressed. In addition to consideration of effects, we will also be having a close look at opportunities for ecological restoration across the entire wider project area as there are undoubtedly opportunities for wetland creation and enhancement, indigenous revegetation, and pest control. There may also be opportunities for enhancement of inanga spawning habitat, but this requires further evaluation in relation to the tidal wedge.

If J, or Willie can answer any questions please just ask.

Kind regards, Phil..

From: Phil Wardale

Sent: Wednesday, 23 September 2020 11:27 am

To: 'Rebecca Perrett' s 9(2)(a)

Cc: Fast Track Consenting <fasttrackconsenting@mfe.govt.nz>

Subject: RE: Application for referral under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020

Please find attached a memo which I hope addresses the three points under item 2. I'll revert to you on the first item shortly. Kind regards, Phil.

From: Rebecca Perrett \$ 9(2)(a)
Sent: Tuesday, 22 September 2020 5:18 pm
To: Phil Wardale \$ 9(2)(a)
Cc: Fast Track Consenting < fasttrackconsenting@mfe.govt.nz >
Subject: RE: Application for referral under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020

Hi Phil,

Thank you for your time on the phone. As advised MfE and DOC have looked through the information in your application and had a couple of initial information requests as below:

- 1. A copy of the preliminary ecological report by Wildlands.
- 2. Clarity on the scope of the project, in particular:
 - a. The location of the boat harbour facilities (including facilities on land, in the CMA and in Freshwater)
 - b. The proposed channel, including clarity on the location of the southern channel that is not shown on the diagram (if it is intended that the southern channel is proposed in the project as an alternative site or otherwise).
 - c. The intended project staging as noted in the application in relation to the diagram provided (i.e. Stage 2 appears to include the training centre but in the application is included in Stage 1).

Please call if you have any questions.



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DRAFT 12-7-19

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS FOR A POSSIBLE MARINA SITE AT KEEPA ROAD, WHAKATĀNE

20100

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PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS FOR A POSSIBLE MARINA SITE AT KEEPA ROAD, WHAKATĀNE



Raupō-dominant wetland between the possible marina site and the Whakatāne River.

Contract Report No. 4797c

July 2019

Project Team:

Chris Bycroft - Report author William Shaw - Report author

Prepared for:

Whakatāne District Council Private Bag 1002 Whakatāne 3158

WHAKATANE OFFICE: SUITE 4, 108 THE STRAND, WHAKATANE 3158, Ph 07-308-9791

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Reviewed and approved for release by:

W.B. Shaw Director/Principal Ecologist Wildland Consultants Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

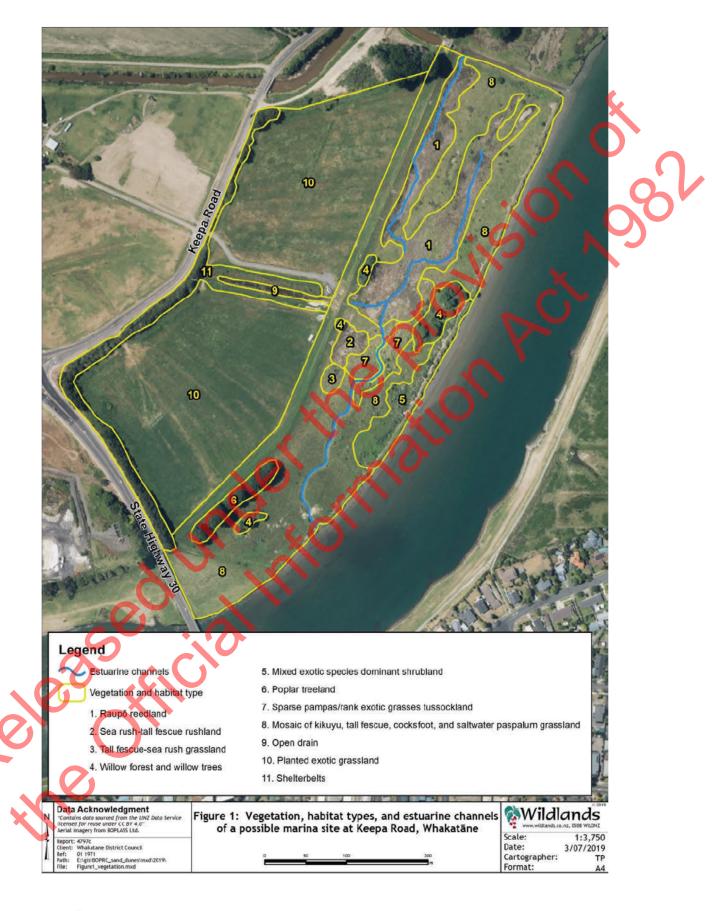
Whakatāne District Council is considering options for marinas, widening of the existing navigation and mooring channel adjacent to the Whakatāne wharf, various works in the vicinity of the Yacht Club, a proposed new marina in the lower Kopeopeo Canal area, and a pedestrian bridge across the river. The first stage of ecological evaluation was reported on by Wildland Consultants (2019).

This report assesses the potential ecological effects on vegetation and habitats of a possible site for a marina closer to the Landing Road Bridge on State Highway 30, adjacent to Keepa Road (See Appendix 1 for the potential layout). A new channel about 50 metres wide - would also be required for boat access to the marina. The project area is shown in Figure 1 and the location and layout for the possible marina site is shown in Appendix 1. In brief, the proposal is to construct a marina to the west of the stopbank with runs north to south though the site. The western side of the stopbank is developed land, currently paddocks with recently-planted grasses. The eastern side, between the stopbank and the Whakatāne River, is mostly wetland and rank exotic grassland.

In terms of planning context, the site (primarily the area east of the stopbank), is within an Indigenous Biodiversity Area recognised in the Bay of Plenty Regional Coastal Environment Plan. The planning framework requires that no adverse effects will occur within this type of overlay. An ecological assessment is required of the existing environment, including vegetation and avifauna.

This report provides an ecological assessment of the project area and describes and evaluates ecological values and their significance, and provides an assessment of potential effects.

- 2. METHODS
 - Relevant existing information was collated and reviewed.
 - The site was visited on 20 June 2019.
 - A walk-thorough field survey was undertaken of all areas to the east of the stopbank. Paddocks to the west of the stopbank were viewed by walking around the margins of this part of the site.
 - A list of vascular plants was compiled during the site visit.
 - An avifauna survey was undertaken while undertaking the vegetation and habitat survey.
 - A selection of representative photographs was obtained during the site visit, and these are presented in Appendix 3.
 - Potential ecological effects were assessed.





3. ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Whakatāne Estuary is a relatively diverse site that includes intertidal flats, alluvial plains, estuarine channels, and wetlands. The Estuary has significant wildlife habitat values for various threatened bird species (Beadel *et al.* 2011). Whitebait spawn at the salt wedge.

Various parts of the potential Keepa Road marina site and adjoining areas in the Whakatāne harbour system are recognised in the Whakatāne District Plan and the Bay of Plenty Regional Coastal Environment Plan. Some of the site is protected within a Department of Conservation administered reserve: Keepa Road Scenic Reserve. Refer to Appendix 2, which shows these areas.

Whakatāne Estuary and its surrounds is part of a larger site identified in the Proposed Whakatāne District Plan (2012) as a Significant Indigenous Biodiversity Site (SIBS); Whakatāne Estuary (c.149 ha). This site was previously identified as being significant in the Te Teko Ecological District PNAP survey report (Beadel *et al.* 2011) and also in an early assessment of significant natural areas in the Whakatāne District (Beadel *et al.* 1996a). It was identified as a Category 1 area in Beadel *et al.* (1996b); and in an assessment of all sites in the Bay of Plenty coastal zone in 1994 it was identified as significant and ranked as being of "District" level botanical significance (Beadel 1994).

4. VEGETATION AND HABITATS

4.1 Site overview

West of the stopbank, the site is flat land, recently planted with pasture grasses, between the stopbank and Keepa Road. A shelter belt is present between the paddocks and Keepa Road and State Highway 30. A sizeable drain is present between the two paddocks, with a pump building.

Land on the eastern side of the stopbank is low-lying and relatively flat approximately 100-130 metres wide, and 750 metres long - with local estuarine channels, as shown in Figure 1. Wetlands with varying degrees of estuarine influence are present in the northern two-thirds of this area. The wetlands are surrounded by rank exotic grassland with local areas of exotic and indigenous trees and shrubs and a few small areas of widely-dispersed pampas (*Cortaderia selloana*) tussocks within rank grassland.

The southern third of this part of the site (i.e. east of the stopbank) is mostly rank exotic grassland with local exotic trees and shrubs. An estuarine channel is present, 1-2 metres deep with steep banks with rank exotic grasses on both sides (see Figure 1 for location of major channels). A fence in the southernmost part of this area indicates that this area has been grazed.

Remediation work on the Kopeopeo Canal is currently taking place to the north of the site.

4.2 Type descriptions

Eleven vegetation and habitat types were identified and are mapped in Figure 1. Descriptions are provided below for two defined parts of the project area:

- East of the stopbank.
- West of the stopbank.

Vegetation and Habitats East of the Stopbank

1. Raupō (*Typha orientalis*) reedland (c.2.1 ha)

Raupō is dominant with small local areas of sea rush (*Juncus kraussii* var. *australiensis*), kukuraho (*Bolboschoenus fluviatilis*), and oioi (*Apodasmia similis*). Scattered marsh ribbonwood (*Plagianthus divaricatus*) are present throughout. A few small areas of *Isolepis cernua* are present on the margins of estuarine channels. Local pampas and ti kouka (*Cordyline australis*) are present.

2. Sea rush-tall fescue (Lolium arundinacea var. arundinacea) rushland (c.0.2 ha)

A small area towards the southern end of the wetland is dominated by sea rush with local patches of tall fescue. There is more sea rush than Type 3 (below), and is dominated by indigenous species, and the water table is higher, with some areas of open water.

3. Tall fescue-sea rush grassland (<0.1 ha)

A small area of scattered sea rush amongst rank exotic grasses dominated by tall fescue, with some kikuyu (*Cenchrus clandestinus*) and saltwater paspalum (*Paspalum vaginatum*) present.

4. Willow forest and willow trees (c.0.4 ha)

Small willow stands and individual willow trees are present on the eastern side of the stopbank, scattered throughout the southern two-thirds of this area. Most trees appear to be crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) but some grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) are also present. Occasional indigenous shrubs are present in the understorey, including kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*), and *Coprosma repens*. Local patches of blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Janpanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) are present. Exotic grasses and other herbs dominate the ground cover. One Phoenix palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) was present.

Mixed exotic species dominant shrubland (c.0.6 ha)

A mosaic of a broad range of exotic shrubs within tall exotic grassland similar to the type described in Type 8. Scattered willows emergent over a wide range of exotic species including blackberry, buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*), pampas, Japanese honeysuckle, and woolly nightshade (*Solanum*)

mauritianum). A few indigenous shrubs are present including kawakawa, *Coprosma repens*, and kānuka (*Kunzea robusta*).

6. Poplar (*Populus* sp.) treeland (c.0.3 ha)

A row of poplar trees is present along the eastern edge of the stopbank, in the southern part of the site. One poplar had fallen over the top of the stopbank.

7. Sparse pampas/rank exotic grasses tussockland (c.0.4 ha)

Widely scattered pampas are present at varying densities towards the southeastern end of the wetland. The tussocks of pampas are surrounded by rank exotic grasses similar to the description in Type 8, below.

8. Mosaic of kikuyu, tall fescue, cocksfoot, and saltwater paspalum grassland (c.6.9 ha)

This type is present in all the non-woody and wetland areas east of the stopbank. Kikuyu and tall fescue are abundant with almost a complete monoculture in many places, with scattered creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens), broad-leaved dock (Rumex obtusifolius), lotus (Lotus pedunculatus), narrow-leaved plantain (Plantago lanceolatum), California thistle (Cirsium) arvense), Chinese mugwort (Artemisia verlotiorum), and purpletop (Verbena *bonariensis*). A 'feature' of this type is the semi-tussock growth forms making travel by foot through this type very slow. Cocksfoot is most abundant in the southern part of this type. A few small patches of abundant saltwater paspalum are present in areas with some estuarine influence. The channels that pass through this type are steep-sided (1-2 metres tall) and usually dominated by tall fescue and kikuyu. Local plants and patches of pampas, woolly nightshade, blackberry, and Japanese honeysuckle are present. A scarp usually c.2 metres tall is present along the eastern margin of this type, adjacent to the Whakatane River. A few small patches of kukuraho are present alongside the scarp edge. This type also includes grass-dominated vegetation on the stopbank, which is almost entirely kikuyu.

Vegetation and Habitats West of the Stopbank

Open drain (c.0.1 ha)

A large drain is present between the two paddocks, and an associated pump station.

Planted exotic grassland (c.8.9 ha)

Most of the area to the west of the stopbank is a monoculture of recentlyplanted grasses. A few exotic herbs are present, including broad-leaved dock, creeping buttercup, and narrow-leaved plantain. The species of grass was not determined during the field visit, but may be a variety of oat (*Avena* sp.). Between the paddocks and shelter belts there is a narrow band of rank exotic grasses and herbs.

11. Shelterbelts (c.1.2 ha)

Shelterbelts are present between the paddocks and Keepa Road and State Highway 30, with a mixture of she-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) and various planted indigenous species including karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*). *Coprosma repens*, tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus*) *dacrydioides*). Some exotic species have also established including tree privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), and Phoenix palm.

5. FLORA

A list of indigenous and introduced plant species recorded at the site is presented in Appendix 4. Twenty-six indigenous species (many planted in shelterbelts) and 43 introduced species were recorded.

One species, kānuka, is classified as rare or threatened, as per de Lange *et al.* (2018). All *Kunzea* species are in the myrtle family (Myrtaceae) and the threat ranking of these species as Threatened or At Risk is based on a precautionary principle due to the unknown consequences of the recent arrival of myrtle rust into New Zealand. The conservation of *Kunzea* is not of ecological concern at this site.

6. FAUNA

6.1 Avifauna

A list of avifauna recorded at the site during the field visit on 20 June 2019 is presented in Appendix 5. Twenty-three bird species were recorded, including 16 indigenous species and seven introduced species.

Six of the species observed during the June survey have a threat ranking in Robertson *et al.* (2017):

Kāruhiruhi/pied shag (Phalacrocorax varius varius): At Risk Recovering.

- Little black shag (Phalacrocorax sulcirostris): At Risk-Naturally Uncommon.
- Kōtuku-ngutupapa/royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*): At Risk-Naturally Uncommon.
- Tarāpunga/red-billed gull (Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus): At Risk-Declining.
- Taranui/Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*): Threatened-Nationally Vulnerable.
- Mātātā/North Island fernbird (Bowdleria punctata vealeae): At Risk-Declining.

Other wetland species that could be present include matuku/Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*; Threatened-Nationally Critical), mohopereru/banded rail (*Gallirallus philippensis assimilis*; At Risk-Declining) and puweto/spotless crake (*Porzana tabuensis tabuensis*; At Risk-Declining), which have been recorded in other wetlands along the Whakatāne River.

Recordings of calls of mohopereru/banded rail and puweto/spotless crake were played at the wetland, but no responses were obtained. These species are very cryptic so one field survey may not be sufficient to find these species. Areas of mud in channels were inspected for footprints, but none were observed.

Mātātā/fernbird were heard calling regularly (one bird was seen) in the wetland, with pairs of birds calling. At least 8-10 mātātā/fernbird were present throughout the raupō habitat. Key threats to mātātā/fernbird include wetland drainage, land conversion to pasture and other land uses, and predation by introduced mammals (Miskelly 2013). The network of wetlands along the lower Whakatāne River provide significant habitat for this species. Pukeko were abundant in the wetland, but are not of conservation concern.

Matuku/Australasian bittern may occasionally utilise the wetland habitats. The raupo wetland is suitable for puweto/spotless crake. Saltmarsh habitat suitable for mohopereru/banded rail is present, and they may also utilise the wetland.

6.2 Fish

Refer to Wildland Consultants (2019) for an overview.

Mitchell (1990) surveyed inanga/whitebait spawning sites in the Whakatāne River in 1988. Spawning was found further upstream, on the other side of the Whakatāne River, amongst tall fescue, similar to river margin habitat in the area of interest.

Another spawning site is known to be present further upstream (A. Suren, BOPRC, pers. comm., and K. Hughes, pers. comm.) in the vicinity of the entrance to Awatapu Lagoon. It is possible that there are other spawning sites.

6.3 Introduced mammals

The project area will have a typical suite of terrestrial pest fauna, such as feral and domestic cats (*Felis catus*), Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), ship rats (*R. rattus*), mice (*Mus musculus*), hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and mustelids (stoats - *Mustela erminea*, and weasels - *Mustela nivalis vulgaris*).

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

The project area was evaluated using the following broad land use and habitat types:

- Developed land west of the stopbank, including the stopbank.
- Wetland habitats.
- Rank exotic grassland and local treeland and shrubland east of the stopbank.
- River margins.

Developed Land West of the Stopbank, Including the Stopbank

This is grazed farmland dominated by introduced species, and is of low ecological value.

Wetland Habitat

Mapped as Vegetation and Habitat Types 1-3 in Figure 1. The most significant habitat is the wetland habitat located east of the stopbank, in the northern two-thirds of the site. The wetland is significant habitat for indigenous bird species, including some species with a threat rankings. The wetlands also support a good population of mātātā/North Island fernbird. Matuku/bittern (Threatened-Nationally Critical) have been recorded at or very near the wetlands. The wetland is of high ecological value.

Rank Exotic Grassland and Local Treeland and Shrubland East of the Stopbank

This area includes relatively wild vegetation but is dominated by exotic species. The northern part of this zone has an estuarine channel system (see Figure 1) which is of ecological significance. The channels are relatively narrow but are nevertheless an important part of the wetland system. Vegetation surrounding the channels is dominated by exotic species and is of low ecological significance. The southern quarter of this area has no channels and is of lower ecological value.

River Margins

These could potentially provide inanga spawning habitat, although there is no evidence to date of use at this site.

8. ECOLOGICAL VALUES AND CONSTRAINTS

Based on the above assessment the site has been divided into three constraint zones, as shown in Figure 2:

- The wetland area is of high ecological value and should be avoided.
- If possible it would be better to avoid the estuarine channels.
- East of the stopbank, the southern part of the site is dominated by exotic species and is of low ecological constraint.
- Developed areas west of the stopbank have few ecological constraints.

The channel required for access to the marina site, subject to its final location, is likely to be within an area recognised in the Bay of Plenty Regional Coastal Plan as an Indigenous Biodiversity Area (IBDA area). The proposed canal could also be required to pass through a Department of Conservation-administered reserve.

If the boat access channel is positioned to the south of the tidal channel draining the wetland on the eastern side of the stopbank, then ecological effects will be minor and of no consequence. No criteria in Policy 11(a) in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (2010) would be triggered.







9. POTENTIAL FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Ecological restoration could be undertaken between the stopbank and the Whakatāne River. This could include enhancement of the wetland habitats present and maintenance of natural water tables in the wetlands present. Control of pest animals would improve habitat for avifauna such as mātātā/fernbird. Willows, pampas, and other weeds should be controlled. There is also potential to expand the area of wetland. Indigenous planting could be undertaken in the rank grassland.

10. CONCLUSION

An ecological assessment was undertaken of a possible marina and associated access canal adjacent to Keepa Road, Whakatāne. The possible marina site - to the west of the stopbank - would involve development of farm land and there are few ecological constraints in this area. Access to the marina would require construction of a boat access canal through flat land to the east of the stopbank. This area includes significant wetland habitat and a series of estuarine channels, but closer to the bridge there is an area of extensive rank grass and ecological values are low (noting that it would be advisable to check whether inanga are spawning in this area).

The wetland is dominated by raupō with smaller areas of sea rush and oioi and other wetland species, and is of high ecological significance. It provides good habitat for mātātā/fernbird, with multiple pairs present during the field survey in June 2019. It may also provide habitat for other wetland bird species of conservation concern.

Care will need to be taken to ensure that any canal constructed for access to the marina does not adversely affect the wetland, and the hydrological regime for the wetland must be maintained.

The access channel should be positioned to the south as the ecological constraints in this part of the site are considerably lower (see Figure 2). The tidal channel draining the wetland on the eastern side of the stopbank should be avoided. If this is done there will be only minor effects on ecological values.

Land to the east of the stopbank not required for an access canal could be subject to ecological restoration, involving indigenous planting, pest control, weed control, and other enhancement and establishment of more wetland habitat.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project liaison was provided by Nicholas Woodley (Whakatāne District Council).



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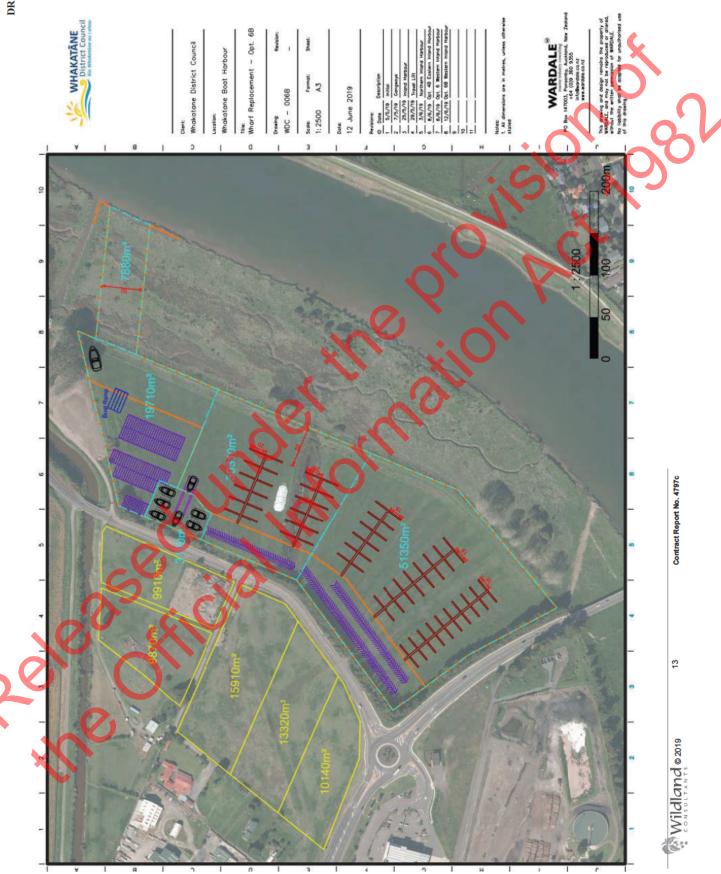
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APPENDIX 1



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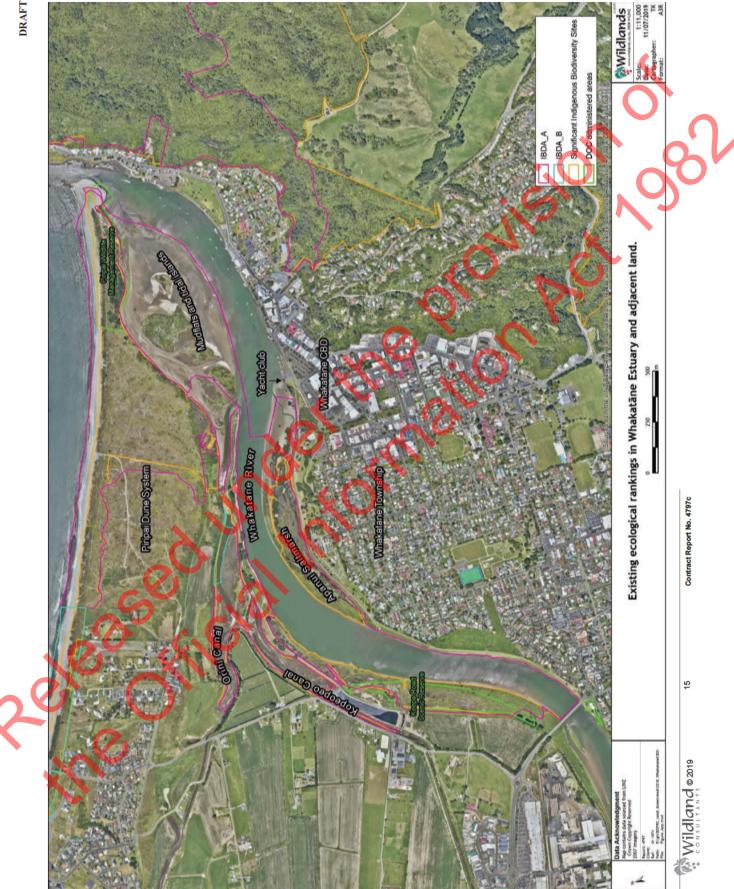


APPENDIX 2





DRAFT 12-7-19



APPENDIX 3

