

Before an Independent Hearings Panel

The Proposed Waikato District Plan (Stage 1)

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

IN THE MATTER OF hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed
Waikato District Plan (Stage 1):
Topic 25 – Zone Extents

**HIGHLIGHTS PACKAGE
TIMOTHY JAMES MARTIN ON BEHALF OF TATA VALLEY LIMITED
(ECOLOGY)**

12 May 2021

BUDDLE FINDLAY

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1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 My full name is Timothy James Martin. I am a consultant ecologist with Wildland Consultants, based in Auckland.
- 1.2 I have provided ecological evidence in relation to the proposed rezoning sought by TaTa Valley Limited¹ of land at 242 Bluff Road² and 35 Trig Road, Pokeno (**Site**). The Site covers 227 hectares and lies in the Meremere Ecological District on the northern banks of the Waikato River. The Meremere Ecological District has been extensively modified by human settlement. Most of the rolling hill country has been converted to farmland as the easy terrain and associated access facilitated extensive indigenous vegetation clearance.
- 1.3 Most of the site (167.1 hectares) comprises exotic terrestrial habitats of low ecological value (refer to **Appendix A** of this summary).
- 1.4 Eight indigenous forest and or scrub vegetation types occur at the site. Collectively, these cover 32.3 hectares.
- 1.5 Exotic-dominated wetlands cover 18.0 hectares and indigenous wetlands cover 17.6 hectares.
- 1.6 Long-tailed bats have been recorded at the site using Automatic Bat Monitoring devices. Pekapeka/long-tailed bats occur widely in the Waikato Region, and have been previously recorded near Puni, approximately 12 kilometres to the northwest, and approximately 14 kilometres downstream of the property near Aka Aka. The Site provides suitable foraging habitat for long-tailed bats, with watercourses, forest patches, and areas of open farmland. Foraging calls were abundant in the kahikatea forest and wetland habitats alongside the river, but were also recorded, in much lower numbers, in farmland near the Potter Road entrance to the Site. The relatively high frequency of bat foraging alongside the river, combined with the abundance of potential roost trees within the property, suggest that roost trees may be present within the Site. However the presence of long-tailed bat roosts at the property is unknown and is difficult to confirm. The habitats most likely to contain important or multiple bat roosts are the larger, more mature forest remnants in close proximity to the Waikato River, but roosts could potentially occur in any woody vegetation within the Site.

¹ Submitter 574 and further submitter 1340.

² Also known as 42B Potter Road.

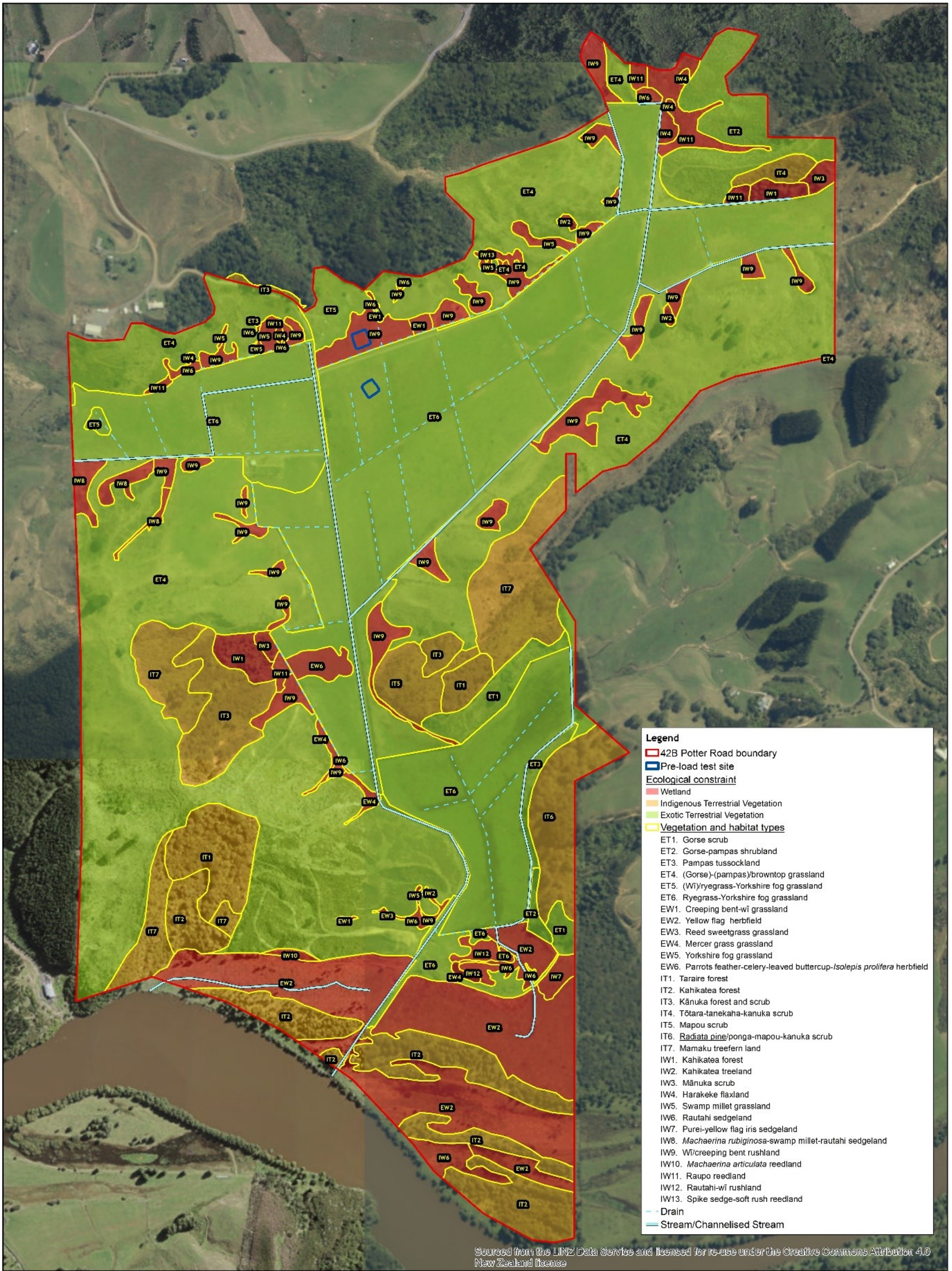
- 1.7 The Site is also habitat for indigenous fish species, at least nine indigenous bird species, and is likely to be habitat for indigenous skinks and geckos, including species classified as 'At Risk'. Cryptic wetland bird species, such as matuku/ Australasian bittern (Threatened-Nationally Endangered) and puweto (spotless crane; At Risk-Declining) are likely to be present in wetland habitats, at least as visitors. The streams and channelised streams within the site support populations of migratory indigenous aquatic fish and meet the criteria for significance of indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement.
- 1.8 Collectively, 53 areas that meet the criteria for significance of indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement cover 67.7 hectares (28.6% of the total land area of 236.7 hectares). A map of these areas is provided in **Appendix B** of this summary. Habitats that do not meet the criteria as significant indigenous biodiversity (ie pasture, gorse scrub, and some smaller exotic wetlands) cover the remaining 71.4% of the Site.
- 1.9 Of the 53 areas of significant indigenous biodiversity, 48 meet the threshold for local significance. Most of these, by number, are indigenous wetlands, but there are also some sizeable forest remnants on hillslopes.
- 1.10 Five areas of kahikatea forest on the river floodplain are of at least regional significance; these forest stands are degraded examples of a nationally rare habitat type.
- 1.11 If long-tailed bat roosts were to be confirmed as present as part of future surveys, this may lift the significance of areas containing roosts to nationally significant.
- 1.12 The 53 areas (and 67.7 hectares) of significant indigenous biodiversity pose an ecological constraint to the development of these areas. Only three of these areas are currently mapped as significant natural areas (**SNAs**) under the proposed District Plan.
- 1.13 Ecological surveys have identified an additional 50 discrete areas (of varying sizes) within the Site that meet the criteria of an SNA. The TaTa Valley Concept Plan attached to Mr Scrafton's primary evidence includes identification of 49 of these areas outside of the Hotel Precinct,³ and one area within the Hotel Precinct (Polygon 38 - for which resource consent for removal has been granted).

³ Tata Valley Precinct Plan 12-02-2021. Revision 11.

- 1.14 The mapping and identification of habitats within the Site that meet the criteria of an SNA is an appropriate step for the rezoning, and will facilitate appropriate management of ecological effects of development going forward.
- 1.15 The areas of significant biodiversity value within the Site should be recognised and afforded appropriate protection. Subsequent development of the Site will then be firmly guided by the ecological constraints posed by these areas.
- 1.16 The Site provides considerable opportunities for the enhancement of ecological values, such as fencing of forests and wetlands to exclude livestock, and pest plant and pest animal control. These opportunities can be further explored at the resource consent stage for the development.

Tim Martin

12 May 2021



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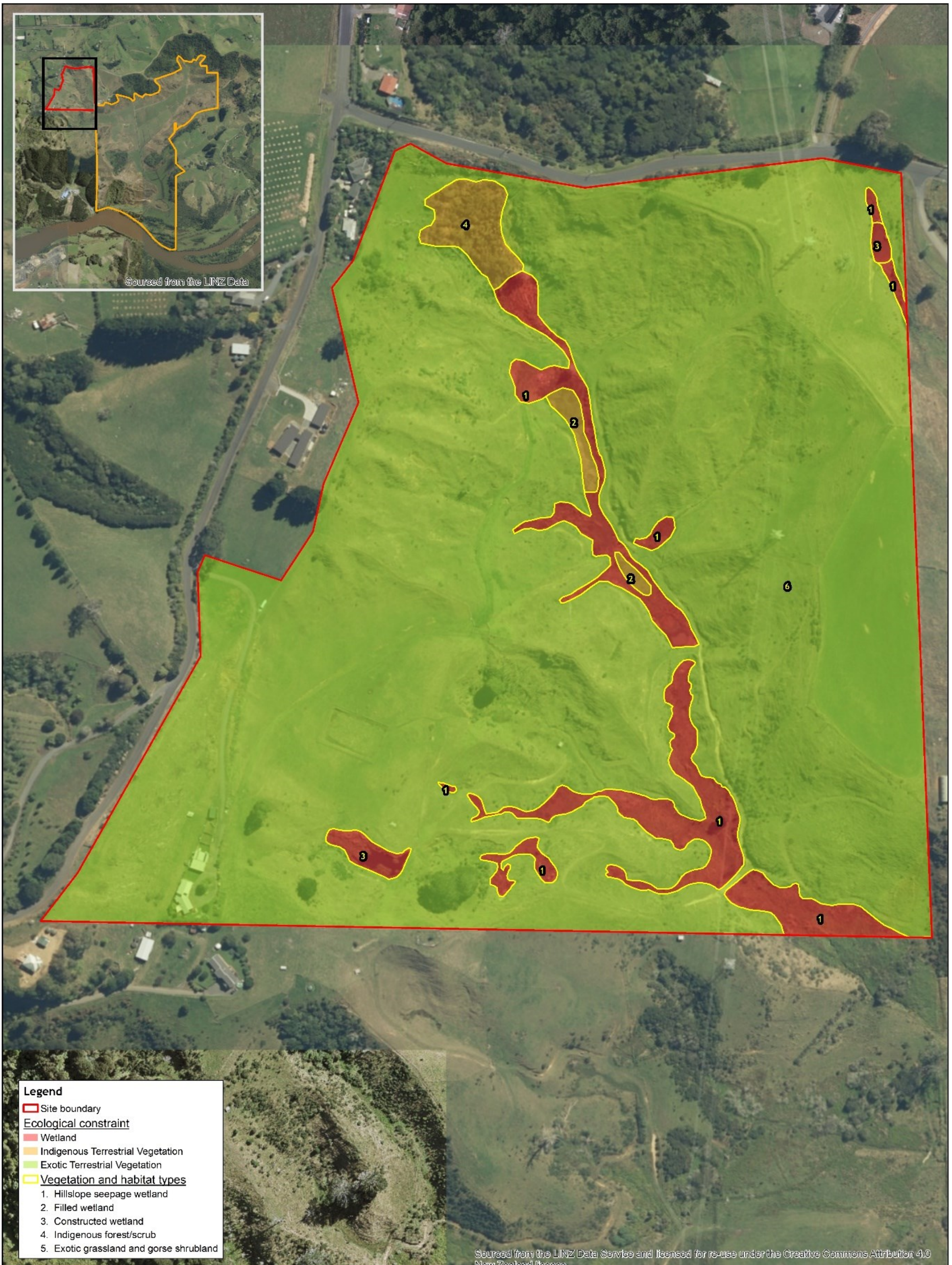
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Vegetation and habitat types at 42b Potter Road, Pokeroa



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Scale: 1:7,200
 Date: 3/12/2020
 Cartographer: KM
 Format: A3



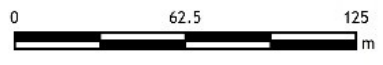
Legend

- Site boundary
- Ecological constraint**
- Wetland
- Indigenous Terrestrial Vegetation
- Exotic Terrestrial Vegetation
- Vegetation and habitat types**
- 1. Hillslope seepage wetland
- 2. Filled wetland
- 3. Constructed wetland
- 4. Indigenous forest/scrub
- 5. Exotic grassland and gorse shrubland

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Ecological constraints at 35 Trig Road, Pokeno



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Areas of significant indigenous biodiversity at 35 Trig Road and 42B Potter Road according to the Waikato Regional Policy Statement

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Scale: 1:8,300
 Date: 4/12/2020
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