

Reducing possum numbers in the Hutt Water Collection Area

Important information – 1080 possum control operation

We are undertaking an aerial possum control operation in the Hutt Water Collection Area (HWCA) using the pesticide sodium fluoroacetate (1080) in May 2023.

This operation was part of a larger project that was treated in May 2022. Weather conditions slowed the application of 1080 baits in 2022, which meant this area couldn't be treated at that time.

Area

The operational area covers approximately 3,100 hectares, located in the southern foothills of the Tararua Ranges. We need to protect this area from possums to preserve its distinctive forest, which has been largely unchanged since Europeans arrived in New Zealand.

All land within treatment area is managed by Greater Wellington, and has been set aside as a source of water for treatment and supply to the cities of Wellington, Porirua, Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt, or for recreation purposes.

Previous aerial 1080 possum control operations have been completed in the HWCA in 2003, 2009, 2014 and 2022.

Why is it being done?

One of the key management principles is to preserve raw water quality and minimise the extent of water treatment necessary.

Our Key Native Ecosystem programme identifies and protects some of the most significant natural sites in the region, ensuring natural habitats are healthy and able to support our native plants and animals. The operational area is ecologically diverse with eight different forest types, four wetlands, numerous major and minor watercourses, and sub-alpine and alpine flora present.

Healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems have a positive impact on water quality. This means that managing the key threats to our biodiversity also manages those associated with our water quality. Possums threaten both of these and need to be managed. If the health of the forest is allowed to degrade, it will eventually impact the catchment's ability to provide healthy fresh water for our communities.

This method has the additional benefit of controlling rats and stoats. Rats will die when they consume possum baits, while stoats will be killed when they consume the carcasses of poisoned rats and possums.

A reduction in these introduced predators will further protect native plants and birds, especially prior to spring bird fledging.

Timeline

2 May 2023 onwards: the application of non-toxic, tan coloured prefeed pellets will occur.

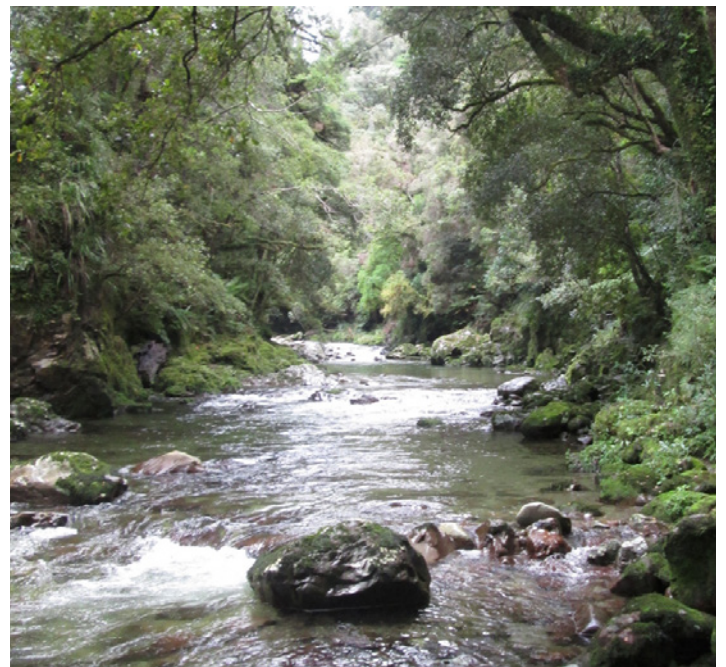
9 May 2023 onwards: the application of green coloured pellets containing the biodegradable pesticide, 1080 will occur.

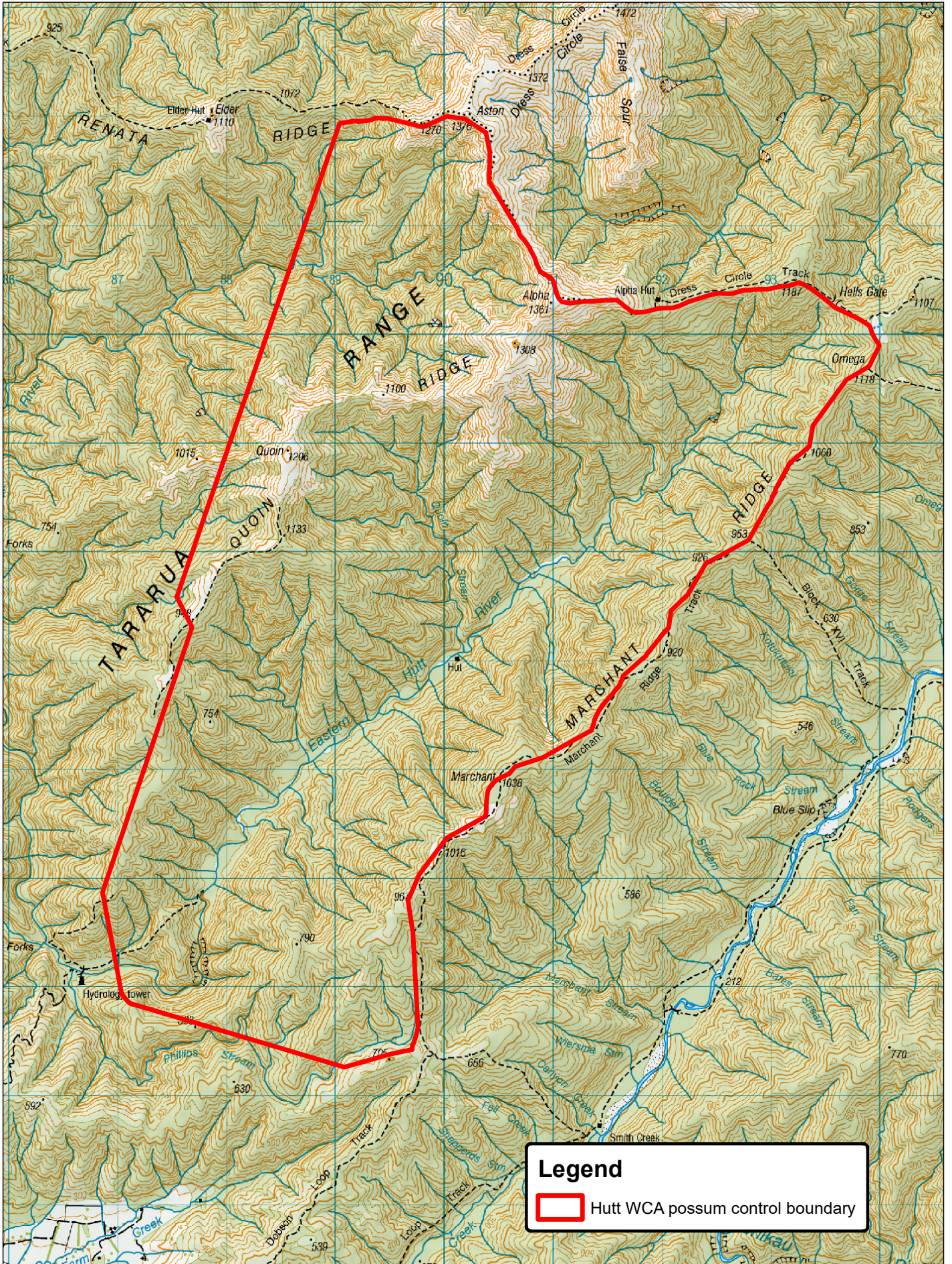
Both applications are subject to suitable weather conditions. If the prefeed application is delayed the 1080 application will also be delayed.

Planning and permissions

The operation is subject to strict safety, quality-assurance and monitoring requirements. Helicopters will be equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) navigational technology to ensure the bait is accurately placed within agreed operational areas, and identified 'exclusion zones' are avoided.

The use of 1080 requires consent from the Medical Officer of Health. We must comply with the Hazardous Substances & New Organisms Act, the Resource Management Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act.





Hutt Water Collection Area - Possum Control

Control method

First, non-toxic tan-coloured “pre-feed” cereal pellets will be sown by helicopter across the forest. This gives possums a taste for cereal pellets, encouraging them to consume the 1080 pellets sown at a later date making the operation more effective.

About seven to ten days after the non-toxic pellets are sown, helicopters will sow cereal pellets containing the biodegradable pesticide sodium fluoroacetate (1080). 1080 pellets are 20mm in diameter, coloured green and are cinnamon lured to make them unattractive to birds.

Each pellet contains 0.15% of 1080 and will be applied at a rate of 2kg per hectare. That’s approximately one small box of laundry powder per rugby-field-sized area.



Who will be affected?

The park will not be closed during the operation; however, some recreation activities will be restricted in the short term. Other recreational activities will be permitted provided that precautions on the poison warning signs are followed.

Hunters – Hunting in the Hutt Water Collection Area will not be closed during this operation. However, we advise that game animals within a 2km radius of the treatment area should not be taken for human consumption.

People with dogs and commercial dog walkers – are advised to stay clear of the treatment area until all baits have become non-toxic and possum carcasses have decomposed. Decomposition is climate dependant but expected to take approximately five months following the 1080 application.

Walkers and Trampers – access is permitted provided that precautions on the poison warning signs are followed.

Camping at Kaitoke – is permitted provided that precautions on the poison warning signs are followed.

Adjoining landowners and graziers – The area to be treated does not adjoin any land grazed by livestock.

Why are we using this method?

Possum densities indicate that a response is required to prevent serious damage to the fragile ecosystem. Aerial control is particularly suited for this operation given the size and nature of the area to be treated. 1080 is a highly effective, cost-efficient and a safe method of controlling mammalian pests, particularly possums, rats and stoats.

In June 2011, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment strongly endorsed the continued use of 1080 in New Zealand.



Interested parties

Information sheets and operational maps are provided to all known local interested parties, including:

- Recreational user groups (Including hunting and tramping clubs).
- Schools and early childhood centres.
- Police, medical centres and veterinary clinics.
- Upper Hutt City Council.

We will put up warning signs and information boards before the operation starts. These will remain in place until poison residues are no longer present.

We will issue statements and updates to the media, including local newspapers. We will also provide detailed information on our website gw.govt.nz/1080ops.

SAFE DRINKING WATER

1080 is an organic, water soluble and biodegradable substance that is readily broken down by bacteria and other micro-organisms in the environment. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not contaminated. Safety has been confirmed by tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years.



KEY INFORMATION

The proposed operation presents no risk to human or pet health as long as these precautions are followed:

- If entering the operational area, follow the advice on warning signs at all main access points.
- Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised in the area.
- Do not bring dogs into the operational area. Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access to bait or poisoned carcasses, which remain toxic to dogs until they have fully decomposed.
- Possums may consume 1080 baits and die outside of the operational boundary, treat the area outside the operation boundary with care as well.
- The NZ Food Safety Authority recommends avoid taking deer, goats and pigs for consumption within a two-kilometre radius of the operational area. They also advise that hunting should cease in an area for four months following a 1080 drop.
- Greater Wellington will be monitoring the breakdown of toxic baits and possum carcasses, when these have decomposed the poison warning signs will be officially removed.
- The public will be able to resume normal activities in the area once we have removed the poison signs. We'll also put a notice up on our website gw.govt.nz/1080ops when this occurs.

Further information

Looking for more information on 1080?

Check out 1080: The Facts, facebook page at facebook.com/1080facts

Wanting an operation update?

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