PRELIMINARY EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

Pouarua Water Storage Project

April 2026

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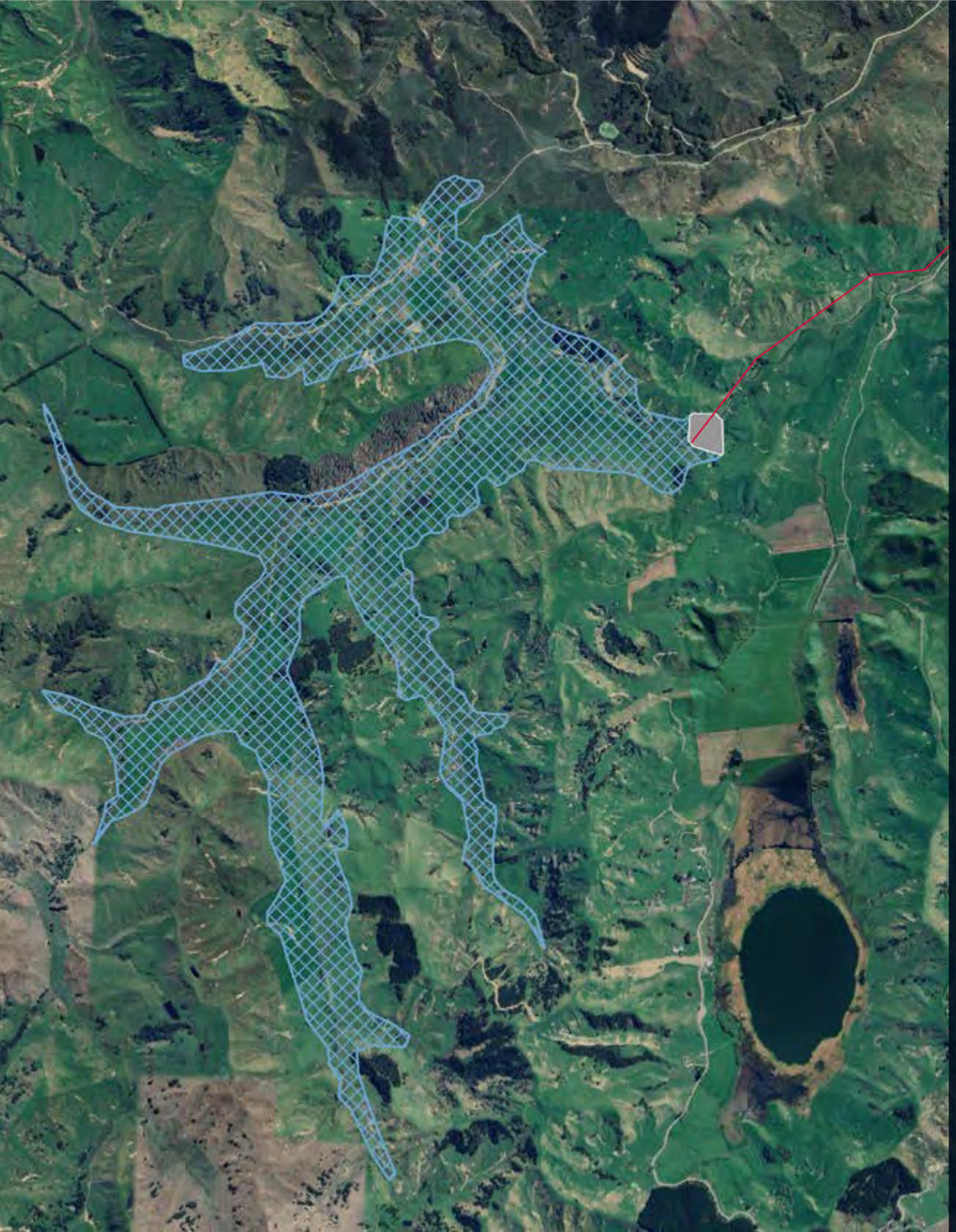

SCOPE

- This preliminary landscape & visual assessment has been prepared by Wayfinder Landscape Planning & Strategy Ltd to inform the application for the Pouarua Water Storage Project.
- The assessment is principles-based and tailored to the scale and nature of the proposal, with a focus on identifying relevant landscape values and understanding how those values are embodied in landscape attributes. It then considers the nature and magnitude of potential effects.
- The approach is designed to assist decision-makers by providing a transparent, reasoned account of the potential landscape and visual change resulting from the proposal.

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METHODOLOGY

- The overarching framework used for the the assessment is *Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*. The nature and magnitude of effect is considered using the 7-point scale (very-low to very-high) outlined in these guidelines.
- At this preliminary stage, attention was paid to landform, land-use patterns, vegetation structure, and the way natural and built elements relate to underlying topography.
- Perceptual aspects such as openness, coherence and legibility were also considered.
- However, as an initial assessment, associative values (including mana whenua values) have been considered at a very high level only.

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SITE VISIT & DESKTOP ANALYSIS

- A site and locality visit was undertaken on 7 April 2026 to inform this preliminary assessment. During this visit some aspects of the site were visited. A full, detailed site and locality vist has not been completed at this time.
- The assessment has also been supported through a desktop review of preliminary scheme plans and publicly available maps, LiDAR and planning overlays.

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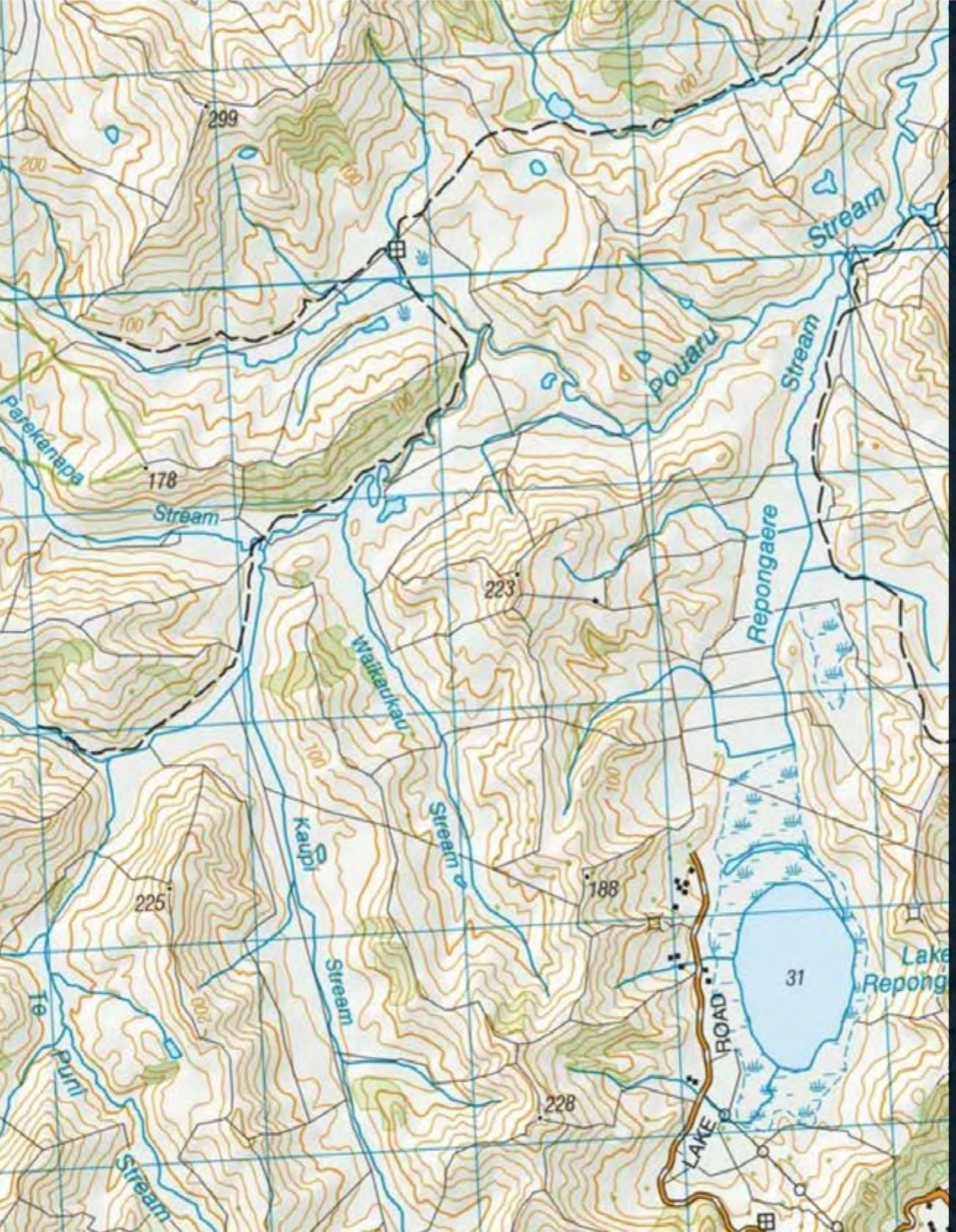

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT; PHYSICAL

- As a preliminary assessment, the proposal sits within steep and varied hill country that is characteristic of the wider area, part of a broader transition from the broad alluvial plans to the east and steep, erosion-prone hinterland to the west.
- The geology is primarily soft sedimentary rock dissected by small gullies and tributaries to the Waipaoa River.
- Overall, the site is contained within the hill country. The hilly margins and steep gullies result in an enclosed and somewhat intimate character, with various ridges and spurs creating a patchwork of visual 'rooms' or areas.

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LANDSCAPE CONTEXT; PHYSICAL

- The vegetation around the site is highly modified, primarily exotic grassland.
- There is evidence of some remnant wetland species in wetter areas, and manuka/kanuka dominated scrub on some steeper slopes.
- Exotic pine forestry and other exotic plantings are scattered across the broader landscape, especially on steeper areas to assist with bank stability.
- The landscape features roads, trails and tracks that follow ridge spurs, terraces and floodplain margins.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT; PERCEPTUAL

- Hills direct travel and outlook, creating hidden views and moments of discovery. The enclosing hills, open floodplains, and shifting rivers generate a strong sense of movement and change.
- Experiential values are likely expressed through landscape patterns that reflect past events (floods, slips).
- The landscape is often perceived as both productive and vulnerable, shaped by cycles of flood, recovery and intervention.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT; ASSOCIATIVE

- The proposal is located within the wider Waipaoa River catchment, which is a highly significant landscape to mana whenua.
- The site is on land owned by the Wi Pere Trust which is associated with Te Aitanga a Mahaki iwi. Some of the reservoir will also extend onto neighbouring land.
- The catchment has come to be strongly associated with pastoral farming, foresty and water management with collective experience of extreme weather events and land instability.

STATUTORY CONTEXT

- The site is zoned Rural General under the Tairawhiti Resource Management Plan.
- The Plan guides consideration of rural amenity values, effect on natural landform characteristics, indigenous vegetation and habitat, scale and nature of the activity, and effects on rural activities.
- The site is not within or adjacent to any Outstanding Natural Features or Landscapes.

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POTENTIAL EFFECTS; NATURAL CHARACTER

- Natural character is relatively low due to the highly modified nature of the Pouarua Stream, but is higher for the Waipaoa River.
- Pumping structures associated with the Waipaoa River intake may impact on natural character of the river but that is subject to final design.
- It is considered that effects on natural character would be low to low-moderate.

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POTENTIAL EFFECTS; VISUAL

- There are expected to be limited to no views toward the site from within the immediate valleys and from elevated ridgeline routes and farm tracks, with limited to no long-distance visibility from the wider floodplain or coastal areas due to intervening landform.
- No views from public roads of the reservoir are anticipated, and views of the intake structure are likely to be distant and very limited if any.
- Installation of the rising main pipeline and the water intake may result in temporary construction effects but this will be limited when viewed from publicly accessible locations and are readily mitigated if necessary.
- The proposal is considered to result in low to very-low visual effects.

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POTENTIAL EFFECTS; LANDSCAPE

- The Proposal may be perceived as a continuation of the long-standing relationship between people and water management in the Waipaoa catchment, with effects experienced not as a singular intrusion but as part of an evolving landscape narrative linked to resilience and adaptation.
- Temporary construction effects associated with the dam and pipeline/s are anticipated to be very limited.
- It is considered (depending on the design) that the intake structure would result in moderate effects.
- Overall, at this stage with proposed mitigation in place, it is considered that landscape effects would be low.

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DESIGN RESPONSE

- Mitigation is focused on principles rather than detailed measures, with the intent of shaping the Proposal in a way that responds to landscape values rather than attempting to mask its presence.
- Mitigation would consider the relationship of reservoir edges, earthworks, and structures with existing landform patterns, where this would conflict with the surrounding gullied, alluvial and irregular terrain.
- Vegetation strategies would focus on integrating existing landscape structure and ecological patterns, including indigenous species where planting is proposed. Planting would be designed to support land stability, visual integration, and cultural values associated with waterways and land stewardship, rather than as visual screening.

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DESIGN RESPONSE

- Further mitigation and design refinement would be informed by engagement with mana whenua, with the aim of embedding cultural landscape values into the layout, treatment, and ongoing management of the Proposal.
- This may include consideration of how water bodies are shaped, accessed, and understood, as well as opportunities for restoration or enhancement of areas as part of an integrated landscape response.
- It is anticipated that subject to further refinement, these design measures will achieve the low landscape effects anticipated by this high-level assessment.

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