



Tahimana subdivision, Tasman

Fast Track Substantive Application Draft Native Freshwater Fish Capture and Relocation Plan

Report prepared for

Tahimana Limited

Prepared by

RMA Ecology Ltd

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BETTER ECOLOGICAL OUTCOMES

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1.0 Background and scope

1.1 Background

Tahimana Ltd has been granted Fast Track consent (**consent number xxx**) (the 'Consent') to undertake the subdivision and development of approximately 70 hectares of land on Stagecoach Road, Tasman to establish residential and rural lifestyle lots, including works within Stagecoach Road, Dicker Road and Williams Road reserves, hereafter referred to as 'the site' (**Figure 1**).

The project will include:

- (a) Subdivision to create approximately 145 allotments, including 4 allotments for reserve, roading and services, and enable construction of approximately 141 residential units across a range of densities;
- (b) Development of an open space network including a public reserve and walkways, and upgrades to shared pathways;
- (c) Landscape planting and restoration and enhancement of waterways and wetlands; and
- (d) Associated infrastructure including three waters services and transport (including external road upgrade works).

The Concept Plan is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Condition(s) xxx of the Consent requires that a Native Freshwater Fish Capture and Relocation Plan be prepared prior to the start of land disturbance at the site, and that a fish capture and relocation process be undertaken by a suitably qualified freshwater ecologist within areas identified as potentially supporting native freshwater fish:

Details of the Condition to be added on approval of consent.

This Native Freshwater Fish Capture and Relocation Plan relates to four farm ponds that are within or adjacent to areas of proposed earthworks that are required for the construction of stormwater detention dams or for excavation of the detention basins.



Figure 1: Map of the site showing the locations of the four farm ponds and the network of streams.

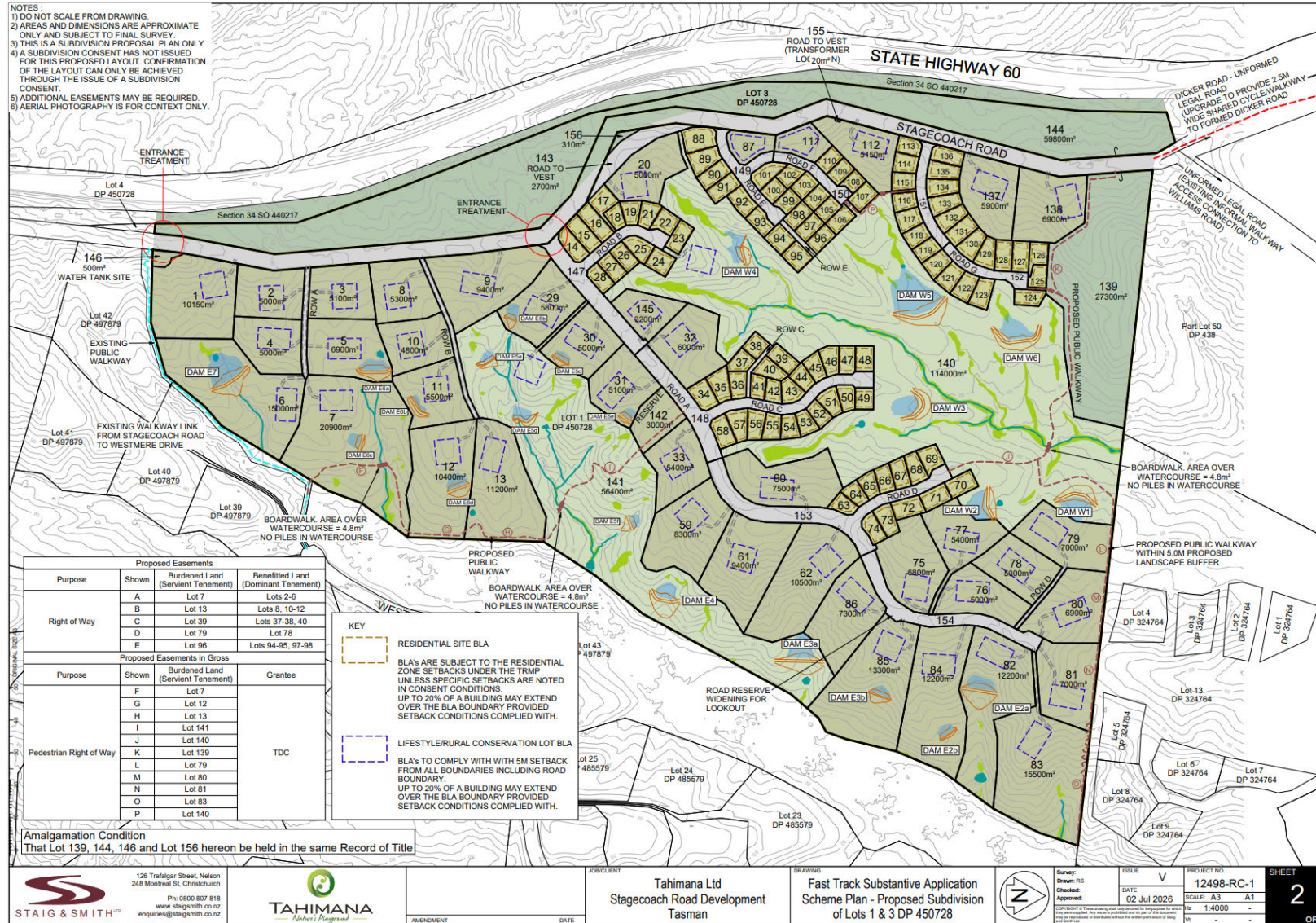


Figure 2: Concept Plan.

2.0 Site description

2.1 Overall description of the site

The site is located within a typical Tasman rural environment. The original natural ecology has been heavily modified or removed through past and current farming activities; however, the site still supports freshwater ecosystems which are of ecological value. Historic photographs indicate that the land has been cleared of native vegetation for many decades for farming and/ or forestry activities. The site is currently used for livestock grazing.

2.2 Fish habitat

There are 13 watercourses present on the site, which are in overall poor to very poor condition as a result of past and current land use activities. The streams are typically intermittent in nature in the upper catchments, but flow permanently at the lower end of the catchments. They support little in the way of in-stream habitat, and most have little riparian vegetation other than pasture species and therefore receive little to no shading.

Fifty-four natural inland wetlands have been identified on the site, of varying sizes, covering 1.25 ha in total. They are of poor ecological quality, supporting only a low diversity of common wetland plant species, both native and exotic.

A number of farm ponds exist of the site that are located in existing gullies or depressions in areas of natural seeps and springs, and collect water from existing catchments. They support little in the way of vegetation other than the pasture species around the margins.

The streams, wetlands and ponds form a network of aquatic habitat, that may provide habitat for native freshwater fish, particularly in periods of higher rainfall. In times of low rainfall, many of the streams and wetlands will not support the levels of water required for native fish survival.

The New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database¹ and surveys undertaken by Fish and Wildlife Services² records a number of native fish species from the wider Moutere Inlet catchment, indicating that some native fish may be present, at least on occasion, in the network of aquatic habitats on the site. Table 1 provides a summary of fish records for the Moutere Inlet.

Table 1: Summary of fish records for the Moutere Inlet.

Species	Common name	Waterbody name	Date	Source
<i>Anguilla australis</i>	Shortfin eel	Wetlands/ streams off Awa Awa Road and Horton Road	2008	F&WS
		Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD

¹ <https://nzffdms.niwa.co.nz/download>

² Fish and Wildlife Services Ltd. Report for Landmark Lile Ltd dated 23 March 2015.

<i>Anguilla dieffenbachia</i>	Longfin eel	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
		Wetland/ stream off Awa Awa Road	2008	F&WS
<i>Galaxias argenteus</i>	Giant kōkopu	Wetland off Horton Road	2006	F&WS
		Wetland/ stream off Awa Awa Road	2007	F&WS
<i>Galaxias fasciatus</i>	Banded kōkopu	Wetlands/ streams off Awa Awa Road and Horton Road	2008	F&WS
		Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Galaxias maculatus</i>	Inanga	Wetland off Awa Awa Road	2008	F&WS
		Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Gobiomorphus cotidianus</i>	Common bully	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Gobiomorphus gobioides</i>	Giant bully	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Gobiomorphus huttoni</i>	Redfin bully	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Paranephrops</i> sp.	Koura	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Paratya curvirostris</i>	Freshwater shrimp	Wetland off Horton Road	2008	F&WS
		Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD
<i>Retropinna retropinna</i>	Common smelt	Unnamed tributary, Moutere inlet	2014	NZFFD

Given the severely degraded nature of the streams, wetlands and ponds on the site, it is likely that, if any fish are present at all, only native eels (longfin *Anguilla dieffenbachia* and shortfin *Anguilla australis*) will be present, as these species are tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions including higher water temperatures and elevated nutrient levels.

2.3 Description of ponds identified for fish salvage

Four ponds have been identified as potentially requiring native fish salvage prior to earthworks to construct either a stormwater detention bund, or to excavate the detention basin. These ponds are all small, have been deliberately excavated to collect and provide water for stock, and support little in the way of riparian vegetation. They are connected to the wider network of streams and wetlands via overland flow paths or ribbons of wetland. The four ponds are located close to the following stormwater detention dams:

- Pond 1 – Dam E7
- Pond 2 – E6a

- Pond 3 – Dam E3a
- Pond 4 – Dam W2

The ponds and dams across the site are illustrated in the Concept Plan in **Figure 2** and Ponds 1-4 are clearly labelled in **Figure 1**. Images of Ponds 1-4 are provided in **Plates 1-4** below.



Plate 1: Pond 1 – close to detention Dam E7.



Plate 2: Pond 2 – close to detention Dam E6a.



Plate 3: Pond 3 – close to detention Dam E3a.



Plate 4: Pond 4 – close to detention Dam W2.

3.0 Fish salvage

A suitably qualified freshwater ecologist will assess each pond prior to the commencement of earthworks, to determine the necessity of a fish salvage i.e., if the pond is completely dry at the time of the assessment, with no flow of water in or out of the area, native fish are unlikely to be present and a salvage may not be required.

Equally, if, at the detailed design stage, earthworks will not encroach into a pond, and there will be no disturbance of the pond, a fish salvage will not be required.

3.1 Fish capture

Fish capture and relocation will be undertaken by a suitably qualified freshwater ecologist.

The methods that will be applied constitute good practice for native fish capture, and include:

- Installing fish stop nets upstream and downstream of the works area, if there is any overland flow in or out of the pond at the time of the salvage;
- Fishing the pond using hand-nets;
- De-watering the pond (natural gravity flow and pumped de-watering with a 3 mm mesh size fish screen over the inlet);
- Continuation of fish salvage within the pond as it de-waters;
- Use of an excavator with a toothed bucket to carefully muck out the pond, spreading materials over the surrounding banks to salvage fish from within bed sediments.

We anticipate only a small number of fish will be present within each pond given the poor quality of the habitat:

- **Ponds 1-4:** shortfin and/ or longfin eel ≤ 10 eels per pond

Use of the capture methods outlined above will follow the guidelines and advice contained within the NIWA 2013 publication 'New Zealand Freshwater Fish Sampling Protocols'³.

The following methods will be undertaken to minimise stress to fish:

- All fish shall be handled with wet hands;
- All fish shall be temporarily held in a covered container away from direct sunlight for less than 1 hour before being transported to the release site (see below);
- Fish storage containers will be dosed with the recommended level of Stress Coat; and
- Large eels will be stored in separate containers to elvers (juvenile eels) or other fish species.

³ Joy *et al.* 2013. *New Zealand Freshwater Fish Sampling Protocols: Part 1 – Wadeable Rivers and Streams*. Massey University, Palmerston North.

3.2 Pest plant and animal transfer risk

The following procedures are standard for the transfer of native fish to new locations, and will be applied as native fish are caught:

1. Any exotic species will be euthanised humanely (by pithing or chemically induced euthanasia) and disposed of off-site, as required by Native Fish Transfer Permits.
2. Only native fish will be transferred to capture containers. Fish will be carefully brushed clean (with a wet hand to gently remove any plant materials on the fish). Plant material will not be transferred with fish.
3. Only healthy fish will be transferred. If visual inspection detects abnormalities, lesions, deformities or other out-of-the-normal features, the fish will not be transferred and will be humanely euthanised (by pithing or chemically-induced euthanasia), as required by Native Fish Transfer Permits. It is important to note that over many years of undertaking fish salvage from rural and urban locations throughout New Zealand, we have not encountered any abnormal or diseased fish, and we do not expect any from these ponds.

3.3 Accidental discovery protocol

If, in the unlikely event that unexpected aquatic fauna is discovered during the fish salvage operation (i.e., nationally threatened species as per the Conservation Status of Freshwater Fishes in New Zealand⁴), which requires specialised handling and relocation effort that is not otherwise covered in the standard methodologies described above, the following actions will be implemented:

- All fish salvage and stream works will cease immediately (including de-watering) and Tasman District Council will be notified;
- The unexpected aquatic fauna will be left in a suitable environment where they will be unharmed whilst the Native Freshwater Fish Capture and Relocation Plan (NFCRP) is updated;
- The NFCRP will be updated to address the handling and relocation protocols for the unexpected aquatic fauna, and submitted to Tasman District Council for re-certification; and
- Capture and relocation of aquatic fauna will only re-commence after re-certification of the NFCRP.

3.4 Fish relocation

An appropriate release site needs to have the necessary refugia and habitat for native fish, and it also needs to be within a relatively large catchment to ensure the fish released into the watercourse do not risk over-populating the system beyond carrying capacity.

⁴ Dunn, N.R.; Closs, G.P.; Crow, S.K.; David, B.O.; Goodman, J.M.; Griffiths, M.; Hicks, A.S.; Hickford, M.J.H.; Jack, D.C.; Kitson, J.C.; Ling, N.; Waters, J.M.; Wylie, M.J.; Hitchmough, R.A.; Makan, T. 2025: Conservation status of New Zealand freshwater fishes, 2023. New Zealand Threat Classification Series 46. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 66 p.

The site supports a network of streams, and those in the western catchment flow into a permanently flowing stream (Stream R5) at the northern end of the site. This section of Stream R5 will be a suitable location for the relocation of any native fish caught during salvage operations. Locating native fish into Stream R5 ensures the fish remain within similar habitat, and within the same catchment, meaning there is no risk of over-populating another system.

The proposed location for fish release is shown in **Figure 3** and illustrated in **Plate 5**.

Fish will be released from covered buckets or bins by dipping the edge of the bucket or bin into the water and allowing fish to exit the container.

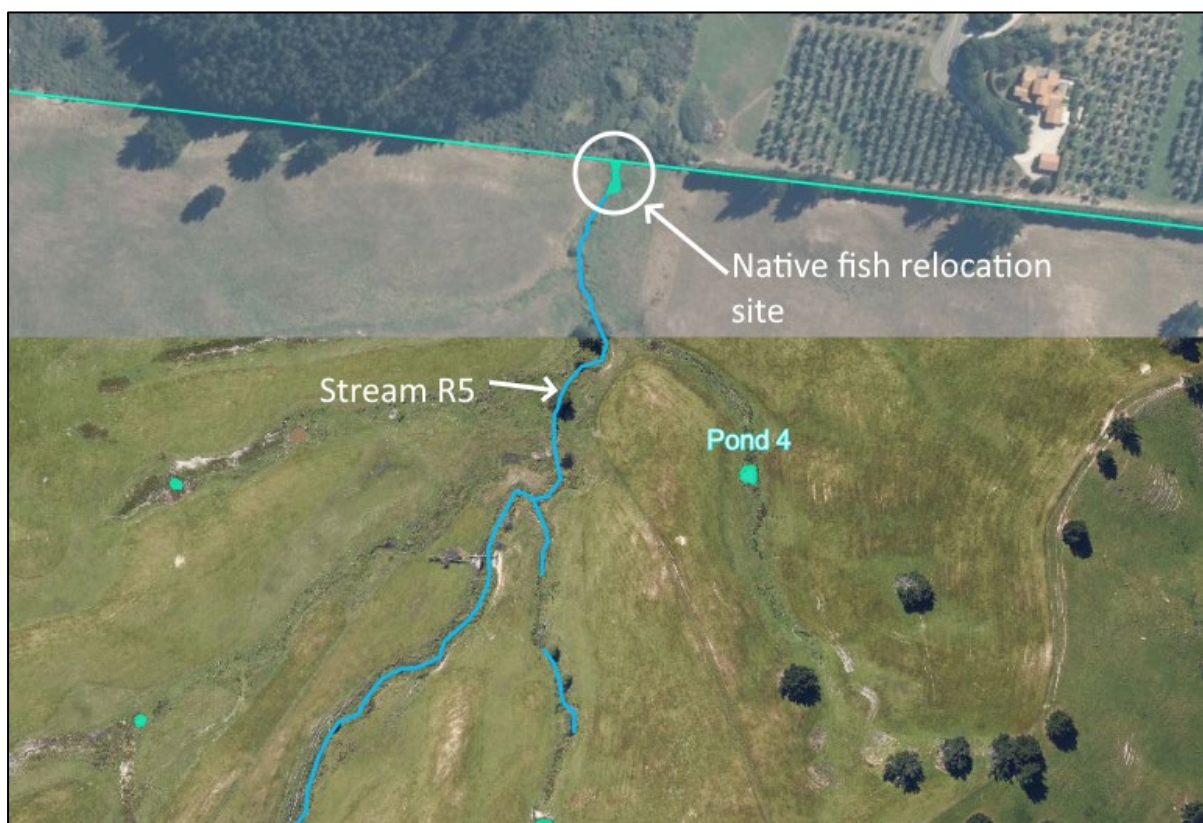


Figure 3: Location for fish release at the downstream end of Stream R5 at the northern end of the site.



Plate 5: Stream R5 at the downstream end, located at the northern end of the site.

4.0 Reporting

A report will be submitted to Tasman District Council following the completion of each salvage and relocation operation, providing a summary of the number and species of fish caught, location of release sites, and dates of relocation.

Fish salvage data will be submitted to the Ministry of Primary Industries for inclusion in national fish catch records, and will be lodged with the National Freshwater Fish Database managed by Earth Sciences New Zealand (formerly NIWA).

5.0 Appropriately qualified personnel

The fish salvage and relocation will be undertaken by appropriately qualified staff of RMA Ecology Ltd.

RMA Ecology Ltd is permitted to undertake native freshwater fish salvage and survey under Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) Special Permit 904-2 and fish transfer (relocation) under MPI permit NFT440.

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