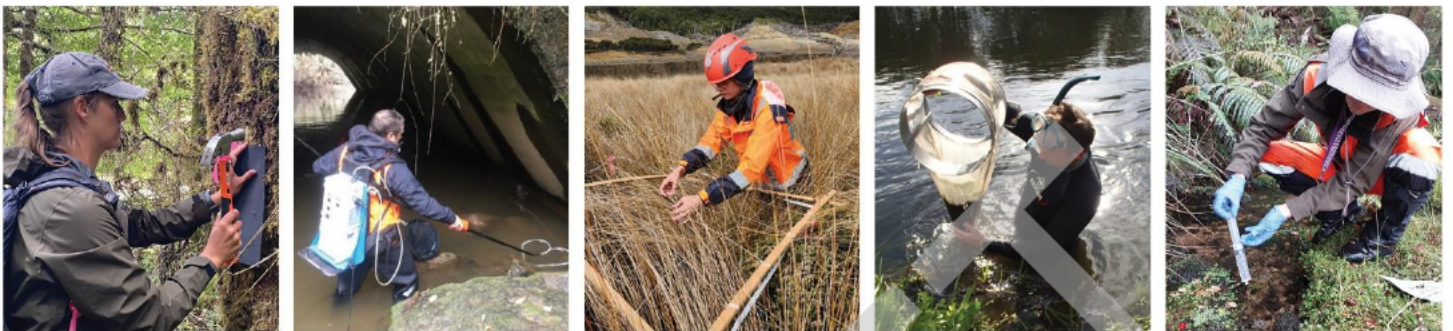


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Environmental Consultants



September 2026

Te Kowhai East – Industrial Development Lizard Management Plan (LMP)

Prepared for:

Te Kowhai East Limited Partnership



water



fauna



flora



land

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Lizard Management Plan (LMP) sets out the framework for managing the adverse effects of the Te Kowhai East Industrial Development on indigenous lizards within the Project Area, located on the northwestern edge of Hamilton City (Figure 1). The Project Area comprises approximately 187.5 ha and is commonly referred to by the primary addresses of 270 Te Kowhai Road and 28 Mathers Road. The development involves vegetation clearance and bulk earthworks across the Project Area. While the site is predominantly pastoral with limited high-value lizard habitat, the precautionary principle requires that pre-clearance survey, salvage capture and relocation, and post-clearance management measures be in place to address any indigenous lizards that may be present.

Indigenous lizards in New Zealand are absolutely protected under the Wildlife Act 1953. Several species in the Waikato region carry threat classifications under the New Zealand Threat Classification System. The most likely indigenous species to be present in the Project Area is the copper skink (*Oligosoma aeneum*), listed as 'At Risk – Declining' (Hitchmough et al. 2026). Copper skinks are relatively ubiquitous across the Waikato lowlands and habitat on the site is consistent with those used by copper skink more broadly in the Waikato rural region. The Project Area did not contain habitat that could support arboreal lizards given the rural farming history of the site, the complete removal of the original vegetation cover, lack of habitat connectivity and the absence of systematic predator control over the site.

This LMP has been prepared as part of the Te Kowhai East Limited Partnership's substantive application for approvals under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). The mitigation framework follows the Department of Conservation's key principles for lizard salvage and transfer in New Zealand (DOC 2019). Specific Wildlife Approval requirements under Section 42(4)(h) of the FTAA and how the substantive application complies with these requirements are outlined in Volume C of the Substantive Application Report (SAR) (BBO 2026).



Figure 1: Location of the Project Area.

1.2 Purpose and Objective of Management

The purpose of this LMP is to minimise the potential for injury or mortality of indigenous lizards during vegetation clearance and earthworks and to provide for the appropriate capture, handling, transfer and release of any indigenous lizards encountered.

This LMP outlines the timing and methods to achieve:

- The pre-clearance capture of native lizards within the development footprint from identified lizard habitat areas to be affected by vegetation clearance and;
- Their relocation to the identified release site.
- Enhance/augment lizard habitat within the release site through the construction of artificial refuges (e.g., eco-stack/ piles of logs/branches/stones). A minimum of five artificial refuges will be constructed in advance of lizard salvage, with any additional refuge required to be established concurrently with lizard release. Additional refuges will be provided at a ratio of one new refuge for every one lizard captured and released.

1.3 Permits

This LMP is has been prepared to support an application for a Wildlife Approval under section 42(4)(h) and Schedule 7 of the FTAA. The Wildlife Approval is sought to authorise the capture, handling, salvage, transfer, and relocation of protected indigenous lizards affected by the Project, together with any incidental injury or mortality arising from those authorised activities. Specific Wildlife Approval requirements under Section 42(4)(h) of the FTAA and how the substantive application complies with these requirements are outlined in Volume C of the SAR (BBO 2026).

1.4 Related Documentation

This LMP should be read alongside the following related documentation (Table 1).

Table 1: Related Documentation.

Plan code	Plan name	Interface with this LMP
TKE-EcIA-001	Ecological Impact Assessment (Ecological Solutions 2026a)	Source for baseline habitat assessment, effects characterisation and application of effects management hierarchy.
TKE-EWMP-001	Earthworks Management Plan (Maven Associates 2026b)	Bulk earthworks programme and vegetation clearance timing. Lizard pre-clearance survey is a hold point precondition for affected areas
TKE-CMP-001	Construction Management Plan (Maven Associates 2026a)	Overall construction management, incident reporting, and pre-commencement notification per TKE-CMP-001.
TKE-BMP-001	Bat Management Plan (Ecological Solutions 2026b)	Coordinated approach to tree felling protocols where trees may support both bat and lizard habitat.

2.0 Lizard Habitat

2.1 Site Description

The Project Area comprises a contiguous landholding of approximately 187.5 ha on the north-western edge of Hamilton, bounded by Te Kowhai Road to the south, Koura Drive and State Highway 1C to the east, and Onion Road to the north. The site is predominantly pastoral and has been used for grazing for several decades.

Native vegetation is largely absent, having been cleared historically for pastoral land use. Some structural cover for lizards is present in the form of rank grass along pasture and drain margins (Figure 2), fencelines, dense hedgerows (Figure 3) and shelterbelts as well as organic and inorganic debris around farm buildings (Figure 4). These areas provide potential copper skink habitat.

There is no arboreal gecko habitat within the Project Area.

Typical habitat structure that may be utilised by ground dwelling skinks at the Project Area is summarised in Table 2 and a map of the spatial distribution of this habitat across the Project Area is presented in Figure 5.



Figure 2: Potential skink habitat – rank grass along a drain.



Figure 3: Potential skink habitat – dense hedgerow.



Figure 4: Potential skink habitat – inorganic debris

Table 2: Coverage of potential skink habitat area on-site.

Habitat Type	Quality of habitat for native skinks on-site	Area (m ²) of lizard habitat proposed to be cleared	Likelihood of presence
Rank Grass	Low	40,653	Low
Inorganic Debris	Low	19,901	Low
Hedgerow	Low	16,377	Low
Shelterbelt	Low	6,186	Low
Organic Debris	Low	449	Low

In total, 83,566 m² (8.36 ha) of potential skink habitat has been identified within areas proposed to be cleared. This habitat is generally fragmented and surrounded by intensively managed pasture, and therefore assessed as low quality. Indigenous lizards were not detected during manual searches undertaken for the EcIA (Ecological Solutions 2026a). Copper skink may nevertheless occur at low densities within these areas.

The EcIA (Ecological Solutions 2026a) identifies the principal potential effect as the risk of disturbance, injury or mortality during vegetation clearance and earthworks. Prior to effects management this effect has been assessed as 'Moderate'. Implementation of this LMP, including pre-clearance salvage and relocation, is expected to reduce the residual effect on lizards to 'Low'.

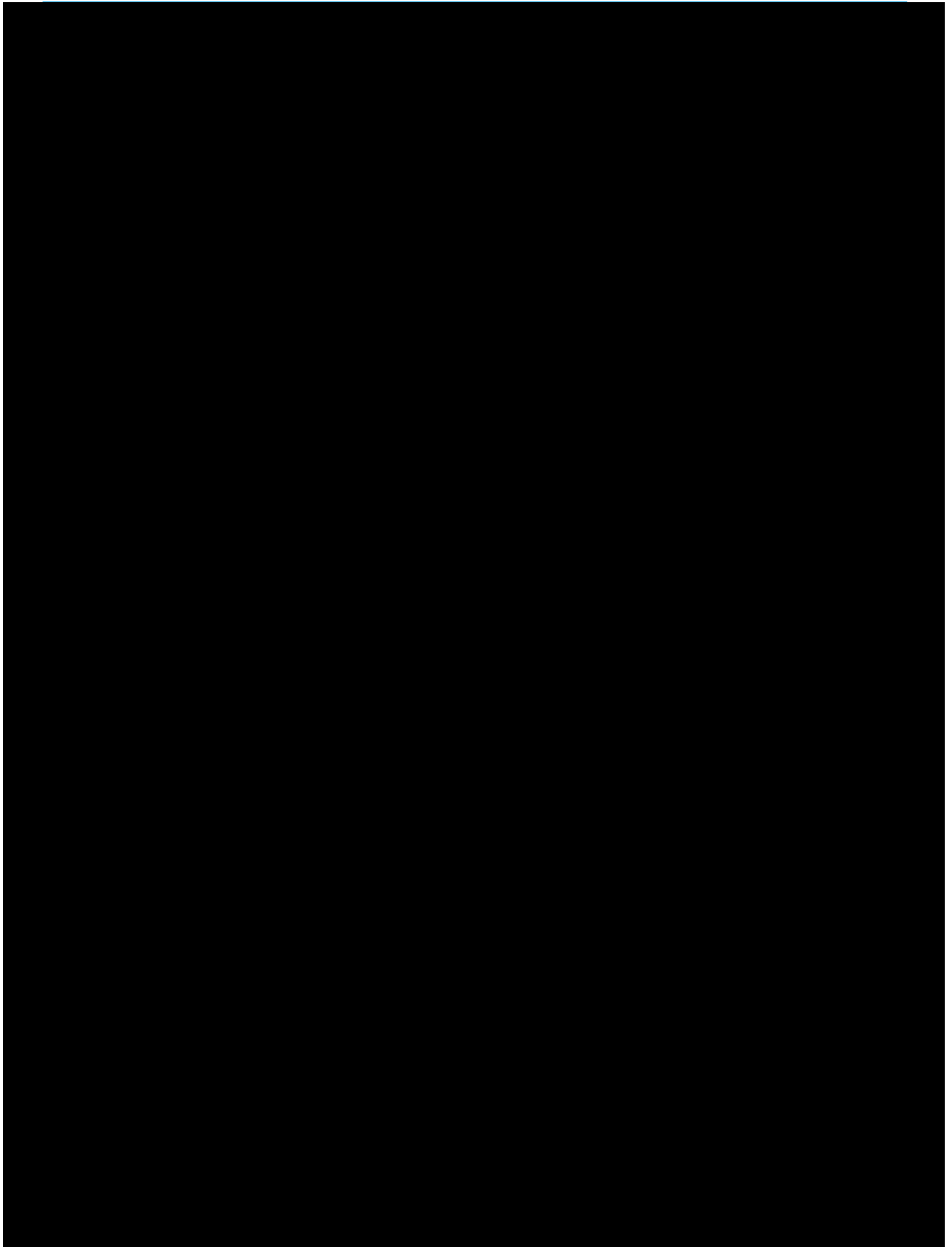


Figure 5: Skink habitat distribution across the Site.

3.0 Managing Effects on Lizards

3.1 Introduction

Manual searches of suitable lizard habitat undertaken as part of the ecological impact assessment (EcIA) (Ecological Solutions 2026a) did not identify any indigenous lizards. However, this does not confirm their absence from the wider Project Area given the cryptic nature of native lizards and the limitations of available survey methods. Accordingly, there remains some uncertainty as to the number of copper skink that may be present within the Project Area and whether another protected wildlife species may be unexpectedly encountered.

The number of copper skink likely to be impacted cannot be confirmed until pre-clearance survey and salvage have been undertaken. However, based on the modified and fragmented nature of suitable habitat within the Project Area, copper skink are expected, if present, to occur at low densities within localised habitat patches.

Complete avoidance of actual or potential adverse effects on indigenous lizards and their habitats cannot be achieved due to the proposed extent of the Project and the practical difficulty of searching for and capturing ground dwelling lizards at low densities. Therefore, managing adverse effects will involve the implementation of a lizard capture and relocation (salvage) campaign in accordance with a Wildlife Approval, combined with release site habitat enhancement and augmentation as a means of providing additional resources for released and resident indigenous lizards.

This LMP provides a precautionary framework for responding to uncertainty in the number of copper skink present. If the number of copper skinks captured differs from that anticipated, the Project herpetologist will review the proposed management and release arrangements before further relocation occurs, and any additional measures required will be implemented in accordance with the LMP and Wildlife Approval conditions.

The likelihood of finding indigenous lizard species other than copper skinks is low; however, should ornate skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*), listed as At Risk - Declining (Hitchmough et al. 2026), be discovered they will be managed in accordance with the applicable Wildlife Act requirements, the same lizard management protocols used for copper skink and the conditions of the Wildlife Approval.

The lizard salvage methods described in this report are reflective of best practice and are designed to capture ground dwelling lizards. The approach to lizard management will follow the key principles for lizard salvage and transfer in New Zealand (DOC 2019).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Site Demarcation

Prior to undertaking any lizard salvage activities, the extent of the vegetation clearance and earthworks will be clearly marked (e.g., flagging tape, tree dazzle or pegs) to ensure the project herpetologist clearly understands the full extent of the area of impact. Lizard salvage will be required where vegetation clearance is to be undertaken within identified lizard habitat (Figure 5).

3.2.2 Lizard Salvage

A DOC authorised herpetologist and suitably qualified assistant ecologist(s) will undertake targeted search and salvage campaigns prior to and during vegetation clearance within all mapped potential skink habitat identified in (Figure 5), as well as any other areas at the discretion of the Project herpetologist. Vegetation clearance within lizard habitat areas, and therefore lizard search and salvage campaigns, are to be undertaken between October and April inclusive. The search and salvage campaigns will be undertaken in two phases.

- *Phase 1:* Pre-vegetation clearance systematic manual habitat searches, use of artificial cover objects and a live capture and relocation programme.
- *Phase 2:* Within Phase 1 areas where native lizards are detected, machine assisted destructive search (vegetation clearance supervision).

The specific salvage methods for each of the Phases are detailed below.

Phase 1: Pre-vegetation clearance systematic searches and live trapping programme

Systematic Searches

Diurnal (day) searches will be undertaken.

- Day time systematic manual habitat searches will be undertaken within lizard habitat areas to be cleared on days when temperatures are expected to be between 12–20°C, and there is no rain. Manual searches will include lifting debris (e.g., logs, rocks, and organic and inorganic material), searching through vegetation foliage, scrub/rank grass, and rock piles by hand or with the assistance of rakes (Hare 2012).

Live Trapping

The following trap types will be used prior to vegetation removal:

- Artificial Cover Objectives (ACO) or Retreats (Lettink 2012).

ACOs are an effective means of salvaging skinks. ACOs comprise 475 mm x 500 mm sheets of corrugated Onduline™ (a bitumen saturated material) laid in double or triple stacks with a 5 – 10 mm gap between the sheets and between the sheet and the ground. ACOs will be installed in areas of potential habitat to be cleared and where lizard encounters are considered possible, including where vegetation is dense and supports good ground cover for skinks.

- ACOs will be installed at least six weeks to allow colonisation by lizards after which time they will be checked over a minimum 4-day trapping period before vegetation clearance and earthworks commences.
- All native lizards captured will be held only for the minimum time necessary before release at the designated release site (set out in Section 4.1) in accordance with the protocols outlined in Section 3.2.3.

Phase 2. Vegetation clearance supervision and machine-assisted searches

Vegetation clearance supervision and machine assisted searching is a contingency measure, recognising that not every lizard may be captured during Phase 1.

- Machine assisted destructive searches will involve searching through potential habitat during vegetation removal, and with the assistance of an excavator fitted with a toothed bucket or rake.

- Machine assisted searches will cover all habitat where native lizards have been detected during Phase 1 works, and anywhere that the Project herpetologist determines that suitable habitat remains and further salvage is warranted within the vegetation clearance area. Searches will continue until the Project herpetologist or supervising ecologist is satisfied that the potential habitats are sufficiently removed or degraded and that indigenous lizards are unlikely to be present.

Coordination and communication between the supervising ecologist and vegetation clearance contractors will be important to ensure injury to lizards, and the supervising ecologist, is avoided.

3.2.3 Lizard Handling and Temporary Containmentment

All lizards will be placed in a temporary containment box, which will be filled with local vegetation matter and leaf litter and misted with water. Lizards will only be held temporarily for the period of the active searches or retreat inspections, or in all cases less than two hours, after which the lizards will be transported to and released at the approved relocation site set out in Section 4.1 below.

It is not anticipated that any lizard taxa with threat classifications higher than 'At Risk' will be encountered within the Project Area. However, if this were to occur, the individual(s) will be captured and held temporarily in a containment box, and work will cease in a 20 m exclusion radius around the relevant capture location while DOC (Waikato Office) is notified, and further advice and instruction is given to the herpetologist.

3.2.4 Morphometrics

When a native lizard has been captured, the following morphometric and geospatial information will be recorded:

- Species of native lizard;
- Sex;
- Time and date of capture;
- Age class (adult, sub-adult, juvenile);
- Net weight (minus holding container);
- Length – snout-vent, regenerating tail and original tail;
- Reproductive status;
- Photograph taken of animal (dorsal and ventral view to record colour and scale patterns) and habitat; and
- GPS coordinates of capture site and physical mark on high-definition aerial map of location.

In addition, the total time spent searching and number of personnel involved will be recorded to obtain an estimate of captures per unit search effort across days, habitats, and species.

3.2.5 Unintentional Lizard Injury or Death

Injured lizards will be kept in an appropriate portable enclosure (i.e., a clean, well-ventilated plastic container) under the direction of the project herpetologist to ensure the animal is handled appropriately until the lizard(s) can be assessed and treated.

The following steps will be implemented if any injured or dead lizards are found during the salvage campaign:

- The project herpetologist will notify DOC (0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468) at the earliest opportunity within 24 hours after any injured or dead lizard is found;
- Injured lizards found during salvage will be assessed by the Authorised Personnel named on the Authority, and a decision made to either euthanise the individual on site, or for the injured lizard to be taken to the Hamilton Zoo Native Wildlife Rehabilitation team (07 838 6720 - 183 Brymer Road, Hamilton) as soon as possible for assessment and treatment.
- Any 'Threatened', 'At Risk' lizard species death shall be sent to Massey University Wildlife Post-mortem Service for necropsy, or alternatively – subject to mana whenua approval - will be buried on the site or at a site nominated by mana whenua in keeping with tikanga.

Appropriate measures will be undertaken to minimise any further lizard deaths.

3.2.6 Lizard Salvage Timeframe

The duration of the pre-clearance manual habitat searches will be undertaken over a period of four days of suitable weather (i.e., temperatures between 12–20°C). However, the following contingency plan is proposed to ensure that all reasonable effort is made to salvage every lizard. If:

- No lizards have been caught over the 4-day search period or the herpetologist has determined that the habitat is no longer suitable to support lizards, the salvage operation will cease, OR
- Lizards are still being caught on day four, searching will continue until no lizards are captured within a 24-hour period employing the same search effort.

4.0 Lizard Release

4.1 Release Site

The successful transfer, re-establishment, and sustainability of relocated lizards is dependent on the quality and suitability of the relocation site. A relocation site should offer equal or greater opportunity (i.e., shelter, food resources, access to mates) for survival and long-term health of lizards compared to the habitat of origin.

The primary release site is Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park, an approximately 60 ha area of native forest, with an abundance of ground cover in the form of low-lying vegetation, leaf cover and wood debris providing natural lizard refugia. The Natural Heritage Park is approximately 3.5 km from the Site (Figure 6) and is secured by the Reserves Act 1977. The land is Crown land administered by Hamilton City Council (HCC).

HCC has advised that it is supportive of Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park being used as a release site for lizards salvaged from the Project. A formal agreement is currently being developed with HCC to formalise this arrangement. No lizards will be transferred to the release site until the necessary agreement to use and manage the site has been secured.

Lizard habitat at Waiwhakareke is well developed, with several log/eco stacks previously constructed as part of habitat augmentation for other lizard release projects (Figure 7), and a predator proof fence is proposed to be erected around the perimeter of the park in the

near future¹. A pest animal and plant control programme is currently ongoing within the park and is administered by Hamilton City Council.

Discussions are ongoing with HCC with regard to how the Project can contribute to lizard habitat enhancement within the reserve beyond the construction of artificial refuge structures (ie. eco-stacks).

This LMP proposes to construct a minimum of five artificial refuge structures prior to the commencement of lizard salvage with one new refuge constructed for every one lizard relocated. The number and size of the eco-stacks to be constructed beyond this minimum, if deemed necessary, will be decided by the Project Herpetologist in consultation with HCC.

The proposed release site location is identified in Figure 6 and an example of the current habitat is presented in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

The specific factors assessed to evaluate the suitability of the proposed release site are outlined in Table 3 below.

¹ <https://hamiltonzoo.co.nz/about/stories/predator-proof-fence-at-waiwhakareke-natural-heritage-park>



Figure 6: Release site relative to salvage site.



Figure 7: Eco-stack constructed at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park.



Figure 8: Natural lizard refuge at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park.

Table 3: Proposed release site suitability.

Suitability factor	Release site description
Suitability of existing habitat	Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park includes large areas of indigenous forest, with well-developed leaf litter with woody debris and several pre-constructed eco-stacks.
Long-term protection of the site	Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park is secured by the Reserves Act 1977 and the protection principles associated with the overlay classification.
Accessibility for release	There are several walking tracks and predator control trails, as well as vehicle accessways, providing easy access to much of the available habitat.
Size of the release site and its connectivity to other habitat	The release site is approximately 60 hectares of indigenous forest. It is expected that the habitat available is more than large enough to accommodate the relocated lizards (and any resident lizards).
Existing lizard populations	The existing population of lizards at the proposed release site is unknown; however, the abundance of available habitat and the low number of lizards expected to be captured provides confidence that the carrying capacity will be adequate.
Existing predator control or opportunities to enhance predator control	There is existing predator control at the release site as well as a proposed predator proof fence. In 2023, TrapNZ data showed catches of nearly 400 rats, over 20 possums, and nearly 20 hedgehogs. Predator control is intended to continue until a switch to an eradication scheme post-construction of the predator proof fence.

4.2 Release Strategy

All lizards will be hard released (i.e., no staging pens) into appropriate indigenous forest habitat within the release site. It is expected that the abundance of available natural habitat and ongoing predator control will assist in achieving high survival and sustainability of relocated lizards at the release site. Lizards will be released in groups of no more than five, with gaps of at least 100 m between groups.

All relocated lizard species will be recorded and measured with basic morphometric features photographed where possible.

4.3 Department of Conservation Principles of Salvage

Table 4 details how the lizard management described in this plan addresses the Department of Conservation's Nine Principles of Lizard Salvage (Department of Conservation Lizard Technical Advisory Group, 2019).

Table 4: Department of Conservation Principles of Lizard Salvage.

Principle	Steps to address principle
Principle 1: Lizard species' values and site significance must be assessed at both the development and receiving sites	As part of the ecological assessment of the site, surveys to determine lizard populations at the impact site were undertaken (though no lizards were found). Suitability, carrying capacity, area, habitat improvements, and long-term management required at the release site were also considered.
Principle 2: Actual and potential development-related effects and their significance must be assessed	Effects have been assessed in the Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken by Ecological Solutions (2026a) and included with the Fast Track application associated with this proposed development. This included an assessment of the values, significance, and adverse effects of the development proposal.
Principle 3: Alternatives to moving lizards must be considered	Alternatives to moving are inappropriate in this instance, due to the potential for mortality if lizards are not moved. However, the release site has been selected so lizards can be moved into a nearby, protected suitable habitat.
Principle 4: Threatened lizard species require more careful consideration than less-threatened species	It is not anticipated that any 'Threatened' species will be found on this site. However, if any are found, DOC will be contacted immediately for advice on how to proceed.
Principle 5: Lizard salvage, transfer, and release must use the best available methodology	Methods will be applied in accordance with the DOC handbook on salvage methods, as well as developing refinements to these for specific environments where pre-clearance salvage methods can be used to extract a greater number of lizards than the DOC methods assume. ACOs, manual search, machine assisted search (log rolling), and machine assisted clearance are proposed to be used. Lizards caught will be held in pre-prepared terraria with damp leaf litter, and are kept out of sun. Release will happen in shortest possible time.
Principle 6: Receiving sites and their carrying capacity must be suitable in the long term	The release site is protected in perpetuity under the Reserve Act 1977. Given the small number of lizards expected to be found, the release site's carrying capacity is expected to be suitable.
Principle 7: Monitoring is required to evaluate the salvage operation	Measures of success or failure with a relocation is inherently difficult, and this is particularly true with the expected number of lizards to be captured at this site. Monitoring of existing pest control being undertaken is ongoing. However, monitoring techniques for a small lizard population will involve a large amount of habitat destruction. If the population relocated is large enough for a reliable and non-destructive monitoring scheme, then a monitoring plan will be developed in that eventuality.

Principle 8: Reporting is required to communicate outcomes of salvage operations and encourage process improvements

Results of lizard salvage including the methods applied, number of lizards salvaged and where they were released and will be reported to the DOC by way of an Amphibian and Reptile Distribution Scheme (ARDS) card and in accordance with any specific Wildlife Approval conditions

Principle 9: Contingency actions are required when lizard salvage and transfer activities fail

Contingency actions are relevant only if monitoring can be undertaken.

5.0 Reporting and Closure

The project herpetologist will report the results of the lizard relocation work to the Approval Holder and Waikato Regional Council within 20-days of completion. Results of lizard salvage including the methods applied, number of lizards salvaged and where they were released and will be reported to the DOC by way of an Amphibian and Reptile Distribution Scheme (ARDS) card and in accordance with any specific Wildlife Approval conditions.

Results will include the following information:

- Date and time of capture.
- Capture method(s).
- Lizard species caught.
- Number caught (including any accidentally killed).
- Length range.
- Health/condition (i.e., visible disease or injury).
- Location of release.

The Project herpetologist will notify DOC at the earliest opportunity within 24 hours after any injured or dead lizard is found. All lizard capture data will be uploaded to the DOC Herpetofauna Database.

6.0 References

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