

Waihi North Project

ECOLOGY



OVERVIEW

If the Waihi North Project is approved, we will be required to comply with consent conditions for ecological management granted by the Waikato Regional and Hauraki District Councils. Under the conditions of those consents, OceanaGold Waihi expects a requirement to submit several Management Plans that set out procedures for monitoring and managing the ecology of the project areas.

Ecological assessments have been conducted within the Wharekirauponga area and wider footprint of the proposed Waihi North Project area. This study included vegetation, frogs, lizards, birds, long-tailed bats, and aquatic ecology. The study found that the Wharekirauponga area, while made up of regenerating bush, is considered to be of high ecological value. There are also two fragments of vegetation adjacent to the Tailings Storage Facilities which are identified in the District Plan as Significant Natural Areas (SNA). The remaining areas of The Waihi North Project are mostly considered to be of low ecological value.

OceanaGold has designed the Waihi North Project to have the smallest surface expression possible within the Forest Park to minimise any impacts on the ecology of the area. The only surface expression proposed in the Forest Park would be up to four ventilation shafts that each take up roughly the same area as half a tennis court.

KEY EFFECTS

ARCHEY'S FROG

The Wharekirauponga area is home to several native and endemic species. Measures to improve future outcomes for biodiversity, including the Archey's Frogs, will be integral to the project.

Archey's frogs are widely distributed throughout the Wharekirauponga catchment. Our distribution and population study is currently indicating their numbers are greater than first considered.

One of the largest threats to Archey's Frogs is predation by mammals; including rats, pigs, stoats, hedgehogs, possums, and cats.

Due to the underground nature of the Wharekirauponga Underground Mine, there are only localised, minor effects to Archey's frog expected. To further minimise our impacts and create potential for an overall biodiversity net gain, a pest control programme designed to benefit the Archey's frog and other native and endemic species in the Forest Park project area has been proposed within our consent application.

MOKO SKINKS

Moko skinks are localised in a small area on the outer northern edge of both fragments of the SNA and the north-facing edge of a separate pine-block in between the two fragments.

There were no Moko skinks identified within the area affected by The Waihi North Project.

LONG-TAILED BATS

Bats are highly mobile and only exhibit minor shifts in their range between seasons. Historic and current bat surveys do not record any long-tailed bats, and they are not considered likely to be present in the Waihi North Project area.

While they are unlikely to be using the area currently, it is acknowledged that their flight paths may change over time. As a result, pre-clearance surveys for bats would be undertaken as a precautionary management measure where any vegetation removal involves large trees, including pines.



RESTORATION PLANTING

To offset any potential adverse effects on local ecology, and to ensure no net loss of ecological function, OceanaGold is proposing an extensive restoration planting regime. A minimum of 16.2 ha near areas of the project has been identified for replacement planting. This exceeds the total area of existing plantings that would be removed for the project.

The locations for restoration planting have been chosen due to both their proximity to areas of removal, and their ability to act as ‘ecological buffers’ to existing areas of ecological value. For example, areas buffering current vegetation at Union Hill, Ohinemuri River riparian plantings, and the Ngāti Koi Domain have been identified.

These strategic plantings further improve nearby water courses by:

- Helping to stabilise banks.
- Removing and filtering impurities.
- Providing areas of shade, and thus reducing water temperature.
- Improving habitats for the endemic and native fauna in the area.
- Creating ‘ecological corridors’ reconnecting ecological areas that were previously detached.

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MANAGEMENT MEASURES

We are dedicated to maintaining operations in a responsible manner. If the Waihi North Project is approved, we will apply an effects management hierarchy to ensure that any adverse effects associated with the projects are as small as is practicable, and any residual effects are offset.

Potential mitigation and offset measures may include:

- Intensive and adaptive pest control at the surface area directly above the Wharekirauponga Underground Mine, with a focus on improving outcomes for frogs.
- Removal of exotic flora species such as pines and wattles surrounding the Gladstone Open Pit and TSF3, and re-planting with native species.
- Extending areas of native plantings to replace any areas of loss.
- A focus on connecting the remaining ecological features.
- Enhancement of Moko skink habitat and providing an appropriate lizard habitat as part of the rehabilitation of Gladstone Hill.
- For Gladstone Pit, avoiding any wetlands when siting ancillary works such as stockpiles and providing appropriate erosion and sediment control around those works.
- For the Northern Rock Stack and TSF3 area, constructing stream diversions that enhance habitat and related ecological values.
- Undertaking appropriate riparian planting along both the diversions and unaffected stretches of streams.
- Where any stream diversions need to take place, fish climbing systems are integrated within our constructed drains to improve aquatic migration.
- Expanding the areas of existing riparian plantings along watercourses and streams on OceanaGold-owned land.

Our objective is to achieve an overall enhancement of ecological values.





ENVIRONMENTAL NET GAIN AND THE BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

A key project commitment is to create a sustainable initiative that will lead to a biodiversity net gain throughout the life of the project and beyond.

As part of this commitment, if the Waihi North Project is approved, as an additional conservation outcome not required for effect mitigations or offset, OceanaGold Waihi will enter into a predator control programme in the wider project area of the Forest Park. This programme is anticipated to cover up to 18,500 hectares of the Forest Park and be designed and shaped in collaboration with local iwi and the Department of Conservation.

The Biodiversity Project represents a significant, long-term commitment to the ecological values of the Forest Park and would support an environmental net gain in the area, as well as New Zealand's vision of a Predator Free 2050.

The Waihi North Project, including the Biodiversity Project, have been designed such that the immediate project area and environment is left in an improved state from an ecological perspective than had the project not taken place.

CONCLUSION

Considerable planting has been undertaken across the Waihi site and surrounding area by OceanaGold Waihi and its predecessors, with over 455,000 plantings since 1995 covering over 35 ha. Additional plantings as part of the Waihi North Project, combined with a comprehensive pest trapping and eradication programme will improve the ecological value and function of the project areas.

We understand that native bush and its biodiversity is precious to all of us. Our extensive ecological studies in the Forest Park and wider project area, are already providing the scientific and ecological community with a greater insight into the species that inhabit these areas.

A key project commitment is to initiate and sustain an environmental net gain throughout the life of the project, such that the immediate project area and environment is left in an improved state from an ecological perspective. Our proposed predator control programme in the wider project area of the Forest Park is just one example of this commitment.

INFORMATION ACCURATE AS AT JUNE 2022



IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA, CONCERN OR QUESTION, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

You can contact us via our website; waihinorth.info or visit our Project Information Office; **86 Seddon Street, Waihi.**

Our Free Community Engagement Line **0800 924 444** is available 7 days.