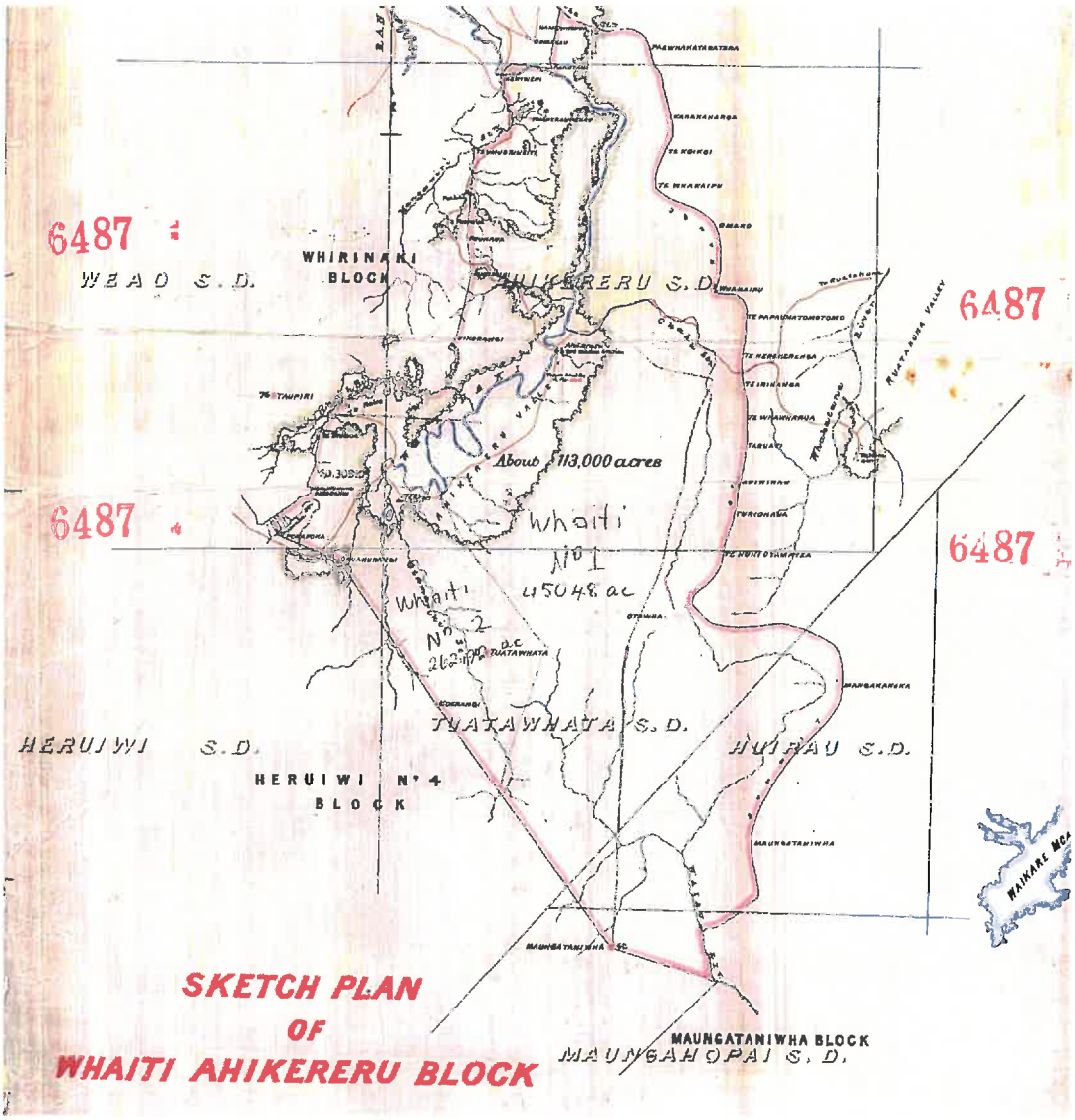
Whirinaki tourism development
CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

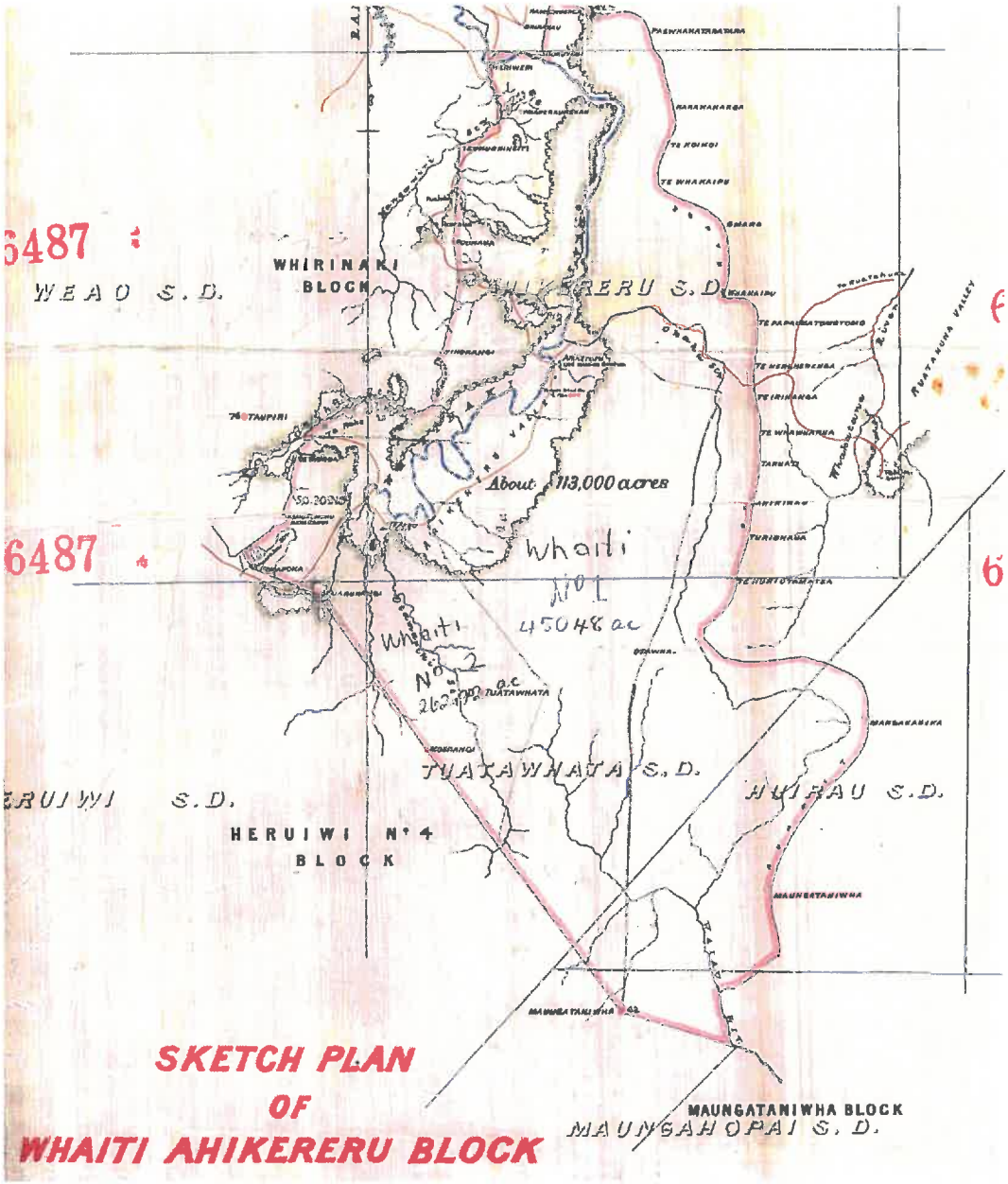


Chris Birt for Manaaki Group Holdings Ltd

May 2018

Whirinaki tourism development

CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Chris Birt for Manaaki Group Holdings Ltd

August 2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been produced at the request of the Department of Conservation to consider any relevant cultural issues which may arise from the proposal to utilise two small areas of leased land within Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park (formerly Whirinaki Forest Park) as a base for tourism operations by the applicant company, Manaaki Group Holdings Ltd.

The Applicant Company has as its sole shareholder and director Chris Birt of Taupo whose experience in the tourism industry - principally within the Central North Island and most particularly within the Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi and Mohaka River areas - and his long career as a writer, researcher and author is recorded in Section 2 of this report.

As an introduction, Mr Birt been a commercial tourism operator in the rohe of Ngati Whare iwi - indeed the pioneer of multi-day guided walks - since February 1989, having been issued with a long-term Lease/Concession for that purpose by the Department of Conservation in August 1988.

A critical element of his tourism operation has been use of a leased site in the Okahu Valley of Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park, deep within the forest, since October 1989. This tourism facility has operated under the name Robert Collins Camp and is located about fifteen kilometres due south of the Okahu Valley Road end (3.9 kilometres south of the historic Te Wairoa public hut). A map showing relevant parts of the area is attached as Appendix 1.

As early as the year 2000, Mr Birt began signalling to the Department of Conservation, as statutory land manager of the Whirinaki Forest Park, that he intended to seek a formal Lease on a second small area of land in the Moerangi River Valley, aligned with the intention of DoC to construct a new walking track between Te Wairoa and Moerangi huts.

In January 2001, Department of Conservation officers joined Mr Birt on a site survey to the proposed site upstream (due south) of the public hut and subsequently provided written confirmation that they considered this was an appropriate location for a second tourism base for his tourism operation.

The completion in 2009 of the 39-kilometre dual-use walking and mountain-biking track which commences at the Okahu Road end and concludes at the River Road carpark, and the determination of Treaty of Waitangi hearings into claims by Ngati Whare iwi have now provided the Applicant Company with the opportunity to pursue its tourism development plans, which have their genesis in the late 1980s.

This report canvasses any matters that may be material to the application for a long-term lease of the existing Okahu Valley site known as Robert Collins Camp and the new site identified within the Moerangi River Valley for tourism accommodation purposes as they may relate to identification of cultural issues arising from the proposed use.

The report has been prepared following an exhaustive study of available documentary material on the public file, a full summary of which is provided in Section 3.

2. CREDENTIALS OF REPORT AUTHOR

The author of this report is the principal of the Applicant Company, Chris Birt, a Taupo-based journalist, researcher and author.

His literary works have been widely published during a career spanning almost 45 years, both within New Zealand and internationally by newspapers, magazines and in books.

George Koia* states: ... *we found he was particularly successful at investigative work.*

Due to Mr Birt's professional and personal experience and interests (which are detailed below) and the availability to him of detailed accounts of Maori cultural association with the area, Mr Birt is well placed to undertake this Cultural Impact Assessment.

2.1 Long association with Te Whaiti Nui-aToi and Ngati Whare

Mr Birt has had a long association with Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi and the people of Ngati Whare and the adjacent iwi, most notably Tuhoe to the east. His introduction to the lands of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi came in 1985 when he attended a public open day hosted by the Murumurunga Marae Committee and the then New Zealand Forest Service (NZFS). This day involved site visits to both Te Tapiri and Okarea Pa, in the company of Ngati Whare kaumatua the late Pita Iraia, marae members and locally-based representatives of the NZFS.

As a result of his interest in the region and its people, Mr Birt gained support from the Minginui Village Council, the Whirinaki Forest Park Advisory Committee and tangata whenua of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi (through the Murumurunga Marae Committee) for a Lease/Concession to establish commercial tourism in the then Whirinaki Forest Park (now Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park). This was granted by DoC in August 1988.

Mr Birt is a keen scholar of the tikanga of the peoples of Te Urewera and their history, particularly as it relates to the Land Wars era of the 1860s and early 1870s and the Great Depression of the 1930s. He has travelled by car, by foot and by horse through the region for more than 30 years, following the Maori trails and the routes taken by the mid 1800s prophet Te Kooti and his followers to Matawhero, Waioeka, Ruakituri, Ngatapa, Papuni, Onepoto, Maungapohatu, Ruatahuna, Te Haroto, Tarawera, Te Waewae, Te Hoe, Waiau, Horomanga, Okahu, and extensively within the other valleys of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toe and has amassed his own collection of documents, plans, photographic images, maps and books relating to the wider region of Te Urewera.

*George Koia: Editor of Taranaki Herald 1974

A series of typographical maps covering the travels of the prophet Te Kooti from the day he arrived back from the Chatham Islands in 1868 until he disappeared into the King Country four years later is one of Mr Birt's biggest (unpublished) research projects.

Mr Birt's continued interest in and support for the kaitiaki role of Ngati Whare is reflected in the culturally-appropriate tourism activity he now seeks to consolidate there through the proposed tourism development in Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park.

2.2 Tourism-related research work

Mr Birt has also undertaken research assignments and undertakings for a wide range of Local Body and corporate entities, including (but not restricted to):-

a) Tourism development potential of the Motu Trails cycleway project (Opotiki District Council)

b) Opportunities for multi-day tourism packages in the East Coast region (Opotiki District Council)

c) Feasibility study for potential of a coastal walkway in East Coast region (Toi-EDA, Eastern Bay of Plenty Economic Development Board)

d) Feasibility study for new multi-day cycling holiday tour of Central North Island (Lake Taupo Cycling Trust)

e) International market development planning (Lake Taupo Cycle Challenge)

All of the projects above involved extensive research.

John Funnell* states: *I have known Taupo media and communications specialist Chris Birt for many years. During this time he has proven himself to have excellent qualities in regard to communications strategies, the provision of media services and in-depth research projects.*

*John Funnell: Chief Pilot Philips Search and Rescue Trust and Managing Director of Helicopter Services Ltd

2.3 Maori tourism sector involvement

In the last two decades Mr Birt has played a role in tourism affairs at both a regional and local level, particularly in the Maori cultural tourism sector.

After serving on the national executive of the New Zealand Adventure Tourism Council (1993-1996) he was appointed as a founding Director of Central North Island Maori Tourism Inc (the Maori Regional Tourism Organisation) and remains in that role, and a Director of Maori Experienz Ltd, an international marketing consortium of tourism, kai, arts and entertainment operators. His standing in the Maori tourism sector led to an invitation by Tourism New Zealand to participate in the first-ever Maori cultural tourism trade mission to North America (2003).

Mr Birt is a regular editorial contributor to Nau Mai, the quarterly magazine of New Zealand Maori Tourism, the national organisation for this sector.

3 CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Cultural Impact Assessment is to investigate and report upon potential impacts which the development proposed (ie to lease two sites within the Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park for visitor accommodation) may generate in terms of the cultural values of the area generally, and also on particular sites of significance to tangata whenua. In this case tangata whenua is recognised as being Ngati Whare who exercise the role of kaitiaki in this rohe.

This Cultural Impact Assessment does not canvass the many thousands of pages of historical records which exist in the records of a multitude of Commissions, Courts, Tribunals, Government Departments and iwi agencies. Rather this Cultural Impact Assessment reflects the knowledge gained by Mr Birt during his many years of expeditions throughout Te Urewera, much of it within Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park, and discussions with senior members of this iwi over more than three decades, including the late Pita Iraia and the late Pahiri Matekuare, among others.

It also draws on the numerous historical records available, including evidence from witnesses for Ngati Whare iwi to the various Commissions, Tribunals and Courts during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, through the Twentieth Century and into this Century.

In more recent times, evidence from Ngati Whare kaumatua has also been tended to the Waitangi Tribunal in support of various claims and where appropriate in relation to this Cultural Impact Assessment this is referred to, with the source being recorded.

The principal source of information for this report centres on evidence to the:-

a) Native Lands Court investigations (1880s-1890s)

b) Hearings of the First Urewera Commission and decision (1901)

c) Hearings of the Second Urewera Commission and decision (1907)

d) Urewera Consolidation Scheme (1919-1927)

e) Working paper of Anita Miles to the Waitangi Tribunal (1999)

f) Panui of Te Runanga o Ngati Whare Iwi Trust (2006)

g) Submission of Te Runanga o Ngati Whare Iwi Trust to Maori Affairs Select Committee (2009)

h) Claimant Report to Waitangi Tribunal by Richard Peter Boast (1999)

i) Published work of Elsdon Best (1925)

j) Published work of James Cowan (1922)

k) Published work of James Belich (1986)

l) Historical records held by the Department of Conservation and Archives New Zealand, many of which emanate from the former New Zealand Forest Service

m) Report of Robert Kingi James Wiri to the Waitangi Tribunal (2004)

n) Evidence of Robert Kingi James Wiri to the Waitangi Tribunal (2004)

o) Evidence of Jack Tapui Ohlson to the Waitangi Tribunal (2004)

This Cultural Impact Assessment relies heavily, but far from exclusively, on the documentation furnished by the latter two parties, as detailed in sub-sections m, n and o above.

3.3 Ngati Whare and Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi: An Overview

From the publicly available information, it is clear that Ngati Whare from its establishment following the conquest of the aboriginal tribe Te Marangaranga by its founding chief Wharepakau in the early to mid 1600s has had occupation of the lands of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toe until the present.

It is also clear that in the intervening period, covering some four hundred or so years, Ngati Whare were a somewhat nomadic people, utilising the resources of the forest, rivers and lakes for kai, rongoa and shelter materials. They did however have fortified pa and kainga, especially from the early 1800s onward.

A recent panui states: *In their utilisation of the resources of the forests and the waters of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, Ngati Whare followed te maramataka (the ancestral Maori calendar) as reflected in te Takina Nekeneke, the seasonal migration of whanau and hapu around the rohe to hunt and gather resources. This migration is reflected in the large number of pa, kainga, mahinga manu, awaawa mahinga and waahi tapu situated throughout Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, many of which are now within the boundaries of the Whirinaki Conservation Park*

3.4 Cultural Significance of Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane

Ngati Whare considers all of the land of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi to be culturally significant to them as an iwi, including those within the boundaries of Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park. This emanates from these lands being the place of their founding ancestor Wharepakau. Within this area there are places of particular significance, where their ancestors lived, fought and gathered kai. These sites of special significance are places sensitive to development.

Ancestral sites, sacred sites and places of traditional food gathering are the areas which could create cultural sensitivities, were any of them located on, or within immediate proximity to, the two tourism sites proposed in the Lease application. For the purposes of this report, it is accepted that both proposed tourism sites are within the pou rahui, that is the accepted ancestral boundaries of Ngati Whare, as the historic maps in the Appendices clearly demonstrate.

3.4.1. Specific sites of Cultural Significance

Overall, 95 pa (fortified villages), kainga (unfortified villages), waahi tapu (sacred sites) and mahinga kai (cultivation sites) have been identified within the rohe of Ngati Whare, as recorded in evidence and reports to the Waitangi Tribunal, and earlier in published works, historical records and on survey maps covering the pou rahui of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, an area of some 64,750 hectares, much of it dense forest.

Some 24 pa sites - fifteen of them pre-European and nine of the post-European era - have been identified and recorded. Ten kainga built prior to the coming of the European missionary Rev James Preece (1847) have been recorded, with a further three since that event. Twenty four traditional food resource sites are recorded, sixteen of them being bird hunting areas and eight used for harvesting water-borne animals, mainly tuna (eels), koura (freshwater crayfish) and native trout. It is understood that several dozen waahi tapu sites also exist within the pou rahui of Ngati Whare, but the location and nature of these remain confidential to this iwi.

Consistent with the practice of Ngati Whare to dwell predominately in, or close to the valleys of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, almost all of the pa, kainga, waahi tapu and mahinga kai identified in evidence and reports to the Waitangi Tribunal - and also in reports and maps from the 1860s to early 1900s - were on the lower levels, usually in the fern covered valleys. The exception is some of the fortified pa which, by necessity, were built on hills, often with sheer cliff faces to stave off attack.

The following summary canvasses the various sites of significance to Ngati Whare and other iwi groups which have, from time to time, occupied Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi. This summary is provided for the purposes of demonstrating the proximity (or otherwise) to the two sites (at Okahu and Moerangi) proposed by the Applicant Company for its tourism developments.

- Pa

On the northern end of the Okahu Valley, Oromaitake stood. This was located 800 metres west of the settlement of Ngaputahi and 500 metres south of the Okahu Stream (just above State Highway 38). This has been described as a Ngati Whare pa, but in some accounts this is disputed. However it was occupied by Ngati Pukeko, a hapu of Ngati Awa, who were in occupation of parts of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi for perhaps five to six years before being expelled by Tuhoe in the early 1820s. Following this event Oromaitake was occupied by the Ngati Tuahiwi hapu of Ngati Whare under the leadership of Te Onewatahi.

To the north of the sacred maunga Moerangi, Te Wairoa stood. This pa was located on the southern bank of the Wairoa Stream, in mountainous country, 1.5 kilometres north east of the Tarapounamu summit. Te Wairoa was associated with the Ngati Mahanga hapu of Ngati Whare. This Te Wairoa Stream is not the Te Wairoa River (variously named also as the Moerangi Stream) alongside which Moerangi hut stands. There is some significant distance between the two, although they are in general proximity to each other, but unconnected.

These two pa are the closest of the former fortified villages to the proposed tourism sites at Okahu Valley (south of Te Wairoa hut) and in the Moerangi Valley (south of Moerangi hut). However both pa are significant distances from each of these tourism sites, in the case of Oromaitake pa some 26 kilometres and in the case of Te Wairoa Pa, some eight kilometres.

The pa sites are distant from the proposed tourism lease sites and accordingly it is not anticipated that adverse effects on the cultural values of the pa sites will result from establishment of these accommodation sites.

- Kainga

Manganui was situated by the Manganui Stream one kilometre east of the intersection of the Okahu Valley with State Highway 38. This kainga was used by Ngati Whare and Ngati Manawa as a base for bird hunting.

Popotehe was a kainga pumau, or permanent occupation place for Ngati Whare and was located 500 metres directly to the east of the Okahu Road, adjacent to Manganui.

Te Waiariki was located in the headwaters of the Waiariki Stream, a tributary of the Okahu River. It is located about one kilometre northwest of Mapouriki maunga and was an old kainga of Ngati Whare.

The closest of these old kainga sites to the proposed tourism sites is Te Waiariki, but even that is some nine kilometres from the existing Robert Collins Camp facility and more than ten kilometres from the Moerangi Valley site, as the kaka flies.

[As an aside, research for this report revealed the former existence of several kainga to the east of the Okahu Valley, well outside the pou rahui of Ngati Whare. They are being recorded here as a matter of historical record only.

The old map showing these three kainga and their location has been attributed to Elsdon Best, who lived at Te Whaiti in the 1886 and later served as secretary to the First Urewera Commission. However this map does not appear in his most recognised work - Tuhoe, the Children of the Mist. The authorship of this useful old map therefore is not able to be authenticated.

These three kainga are Te Puta Kiore-a-Waipari , O-tangi-moana and Tutae-te-Hono(a) and they are located on the western side of the Omawake Stream, west of the upper reaches of the Waiau River, due south of Heipipi. Adjacent to these kainga is a significant pa of the Ngati Tawhaki hapu of Tuhoe named Te Weraiti and hence it may be safely assumed that these three habitation sites of old - they are not recorded on any more recent plan or map that has been located during the research for this report - were indeed Tuhoe. Access to the Omawake Stream was more likely from the Waiau (named Te Wairoa River on some old maps) than from the Okahu Valley to the west as there is a significant range between each valley.]

The kainga discussed above are distant from the proposed tourism lease sites and accordingly it is not anticipated that adverse effects on the cultural values of the kainga will result from the establishment of these accommodation sites.

- Food Gathering Sites

Sixteen bird gathering sites (nga mahinga manu) and eight water resource sites (nga awaawa mahinga kai) have been identified in the reports and evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal in relation to the recognised lands of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi. These are mainly dotted to the north and west of Minginui village, with the bird hunting areas being in the forest, as logic would dictate. The water resource sites are along the rivers and at the Arohaki Lagoon.

No sites are listed within the Okahu Valley or Moerangi Valley in close proximity, or at, the two proposed tourism sites, although as observed above, Manganui was used as a base during the bird hunting period (the Cold Season - May to October). As previously recorded Manganui is 26 kilometres away from the Okahu Valley proposed tourism site and a slightly greater distance from the Moerangi site, in a direct line.

As discussed above, nga mahinga kai (food gathering sites) are distant from the proposed tourism lease sites and accordingly it is not anticipated that adverse effects on the cultural values of nga mahinga kai will result from the establishment of these accommodation sites.

- Waahi Tapu

Due to the confidentiality that exists for Ngati Whare iwi, there is no research publicly available which can determine the issue of sacred sites at, or in proximity to, the two proposed tourism sites. However information provided to the author by Ngati Whare iwi members over the last twenty nine years is that there was only one such site in the Okahu Valley, that being not a great distance into the forest from what is the road end carpark today. It is not known if that was an urupa or some other form of waahi tapu site. Irrespective of the status of that site, it is at least fifteen kilometres from the Robert Collins Camp site and about a similar distance from the proposed Moerangi tourism site.

No evidence has been located, nor any material information provided by Ngati Whare iwi members that would indicate that there are waahi tapu sites at the two locations of these two tourism sites. Accordingly it is not considered that granting approval to the accommodation sites at the two locations proposed will result in adverse impacts on waahi tapu sites of Ngati Whare.

3.4.2. General matters of Cultural Significance

- **Cultural awareness**

The principal of the Applicant Company (Mr Chris Birt) has, for almost thirty years, paid great heed and attention to the customs and protocols of Ngati Whare iwi and has embedded this knowledge in the training of the guides, drivers, camp staff and marae hosts, of which there have been many - mostly those resident on the lands of Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi. This is an on-going commitment from him personally and from his company.

The attributes of the Grand Forest of Tane and its long-held significance and importance to Ngati Whare iwi over at least four centuries - and their ancestors prior to the coming of Wharepakau and his followers - is an integral component of the tourism offering from the Applicant Company and will remain so. Regular discussion is held with kaumatua of Ngati Whare, as it has been for almost three decades, about the appropriateness of what can be shared with the travellers of the world and what should not be.

- **Naming of sites**

Comment has been made by some members of Ngati Whare in more recent times that the 'Pakeha' name applied to the Okahu Valley tourism site in 1989 is not appropriate. For the record, Robert Collins Camp was so designated in recognition of the significant role the former Head Ranger of the New Zealand Forest Service provided to the Principal of the Applicant Company in obtaining the very first Lease/Concession for the Whirinaki Forest Park at that time. This Government servant did so at that time because he knew that the disestablishment of the NZFS would create significant unemployment in the region and because he believed that tourism could offer long-term prospects for the local residents.

It is noted that there was no suggestion from local iwi members in 1989 that this was not an appropriate name for the Okahu Valley site and indeed many Ngati Whare (including kaumatua Pita Iraia and Pahiri Matekuare) were in attendance for that opening ceremony, which was held at Murumurunga Marae on Sunday 8 October of that year.

Nonetheless, the Applicant Company recognises that this is a new era in terms of Ngati Whare's formally recognised role as kaitiaki of Whirinaki and an undertaking has been given that appropriate names for both the Okahu Valley and Moerangi Valley sites will be adopted upon receiving advice from kaumatua of this iwi.

- **On-going Commitment to Cultural Matters**

The Applicant Company gives an assurance that it will do its best to honour the tikanga of Ngati Whare iwi as it has done during the twenty five years of its tourism operations in Whirinaki Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park. It has a strong and effective relationship with Ngati Whare members (including the employment of guides and support staff) and will continue to refer any issues surrounding cultural sensitivities to the mandated representative body for this iwi.

4 CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of an extensive review of all the publicly-available information, from both a historic or contemporary perspective, no issues have been identified in relation to the use of these two tourism sites which might result in adverse cultural impacts for Ngati Whare.

No pa (pre or post European), kainga, waahi tapu or mahinga kai sites have been identified, either on or in close proximity to these proposed tourism sites. No evidence has been identified from the extensive minutes of the Maori Land Court or the hearings of the two Urewera Commission hearings in which witnesses refer to anything but bird hunting areas, and even these references (and their associated maps) point to use of areas adjacent to the Whirinaki River Valley, not in the Okahu or Moerangi Rivers. Logic is backed by the documented record that dwelling sites were generally not located in the depths of the forest.

Ngati Whare historian John Hutton states that he has not found any mention in the minute books of any hearings relating to Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi of potentially significant archaeological sites in the two areas proposed for tourism use, namely in the Okahu Valley 3.9 kilometres south of Te Wairoa hut and in the Moerangi Valley about one kilometre south of Moerangi hut.

Accordingly it is the conclusion of this Cultural Impact Assessment that approving the two proposed tourism sites will not impact the cultural values of the locality as considered by Ngati Whare, being the kaitiaki of Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park.

LIST OF APPENDICES

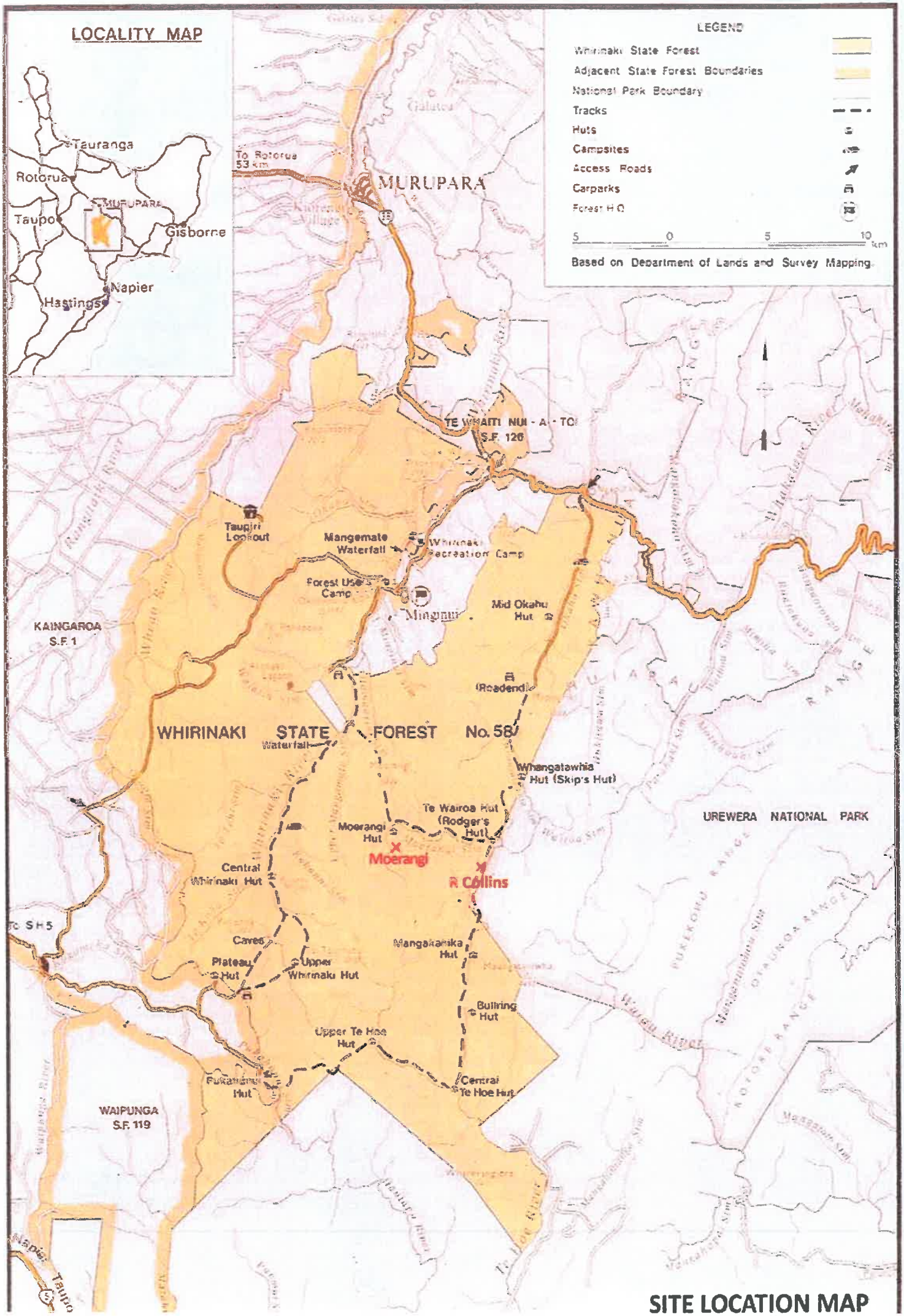
Appendix 1 Map of Locality and Tourism Sites

Appendix 2 Nga Pou Rahui o Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi

Appendix 3 Nga Pa o Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi

Appendix 4 Nga Kainga o Te Whaiti-Nui-a-Toi

Appendix 5 Nga Mahinga kai me te takina nekeneke o Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi



SITE LOCATION MAP

NGA POU RAHUI O TE WHAITI – NUI – A –TOI

The Boundary of the Great Canyon of Toi

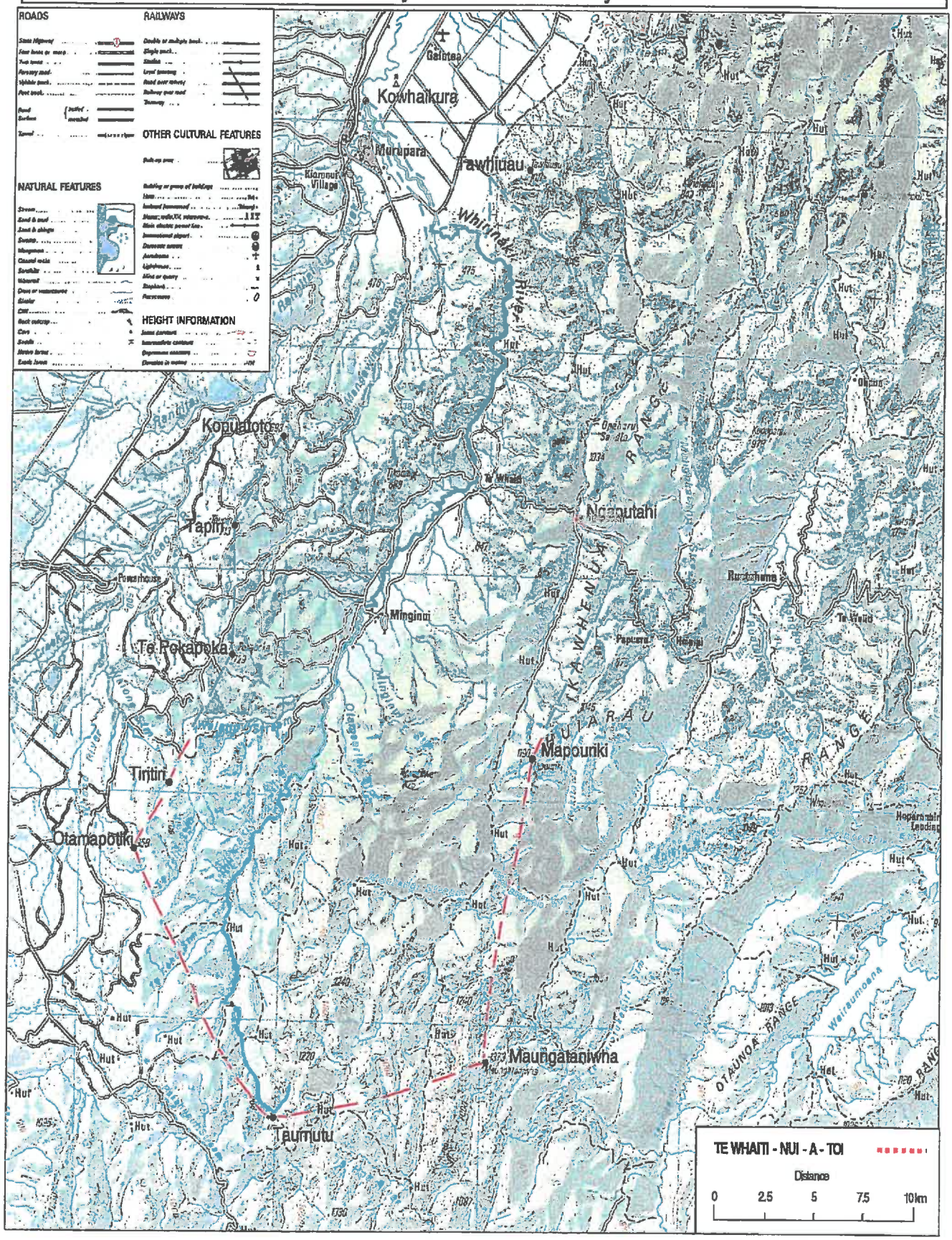


Figure 6.1

Land Information NZ Map Licence: Crown Copyright Reserved

NGA PA O TE WHAITI NUI A TOI

The Historic and Contemporary pa sites of the Great Canyon of Toi

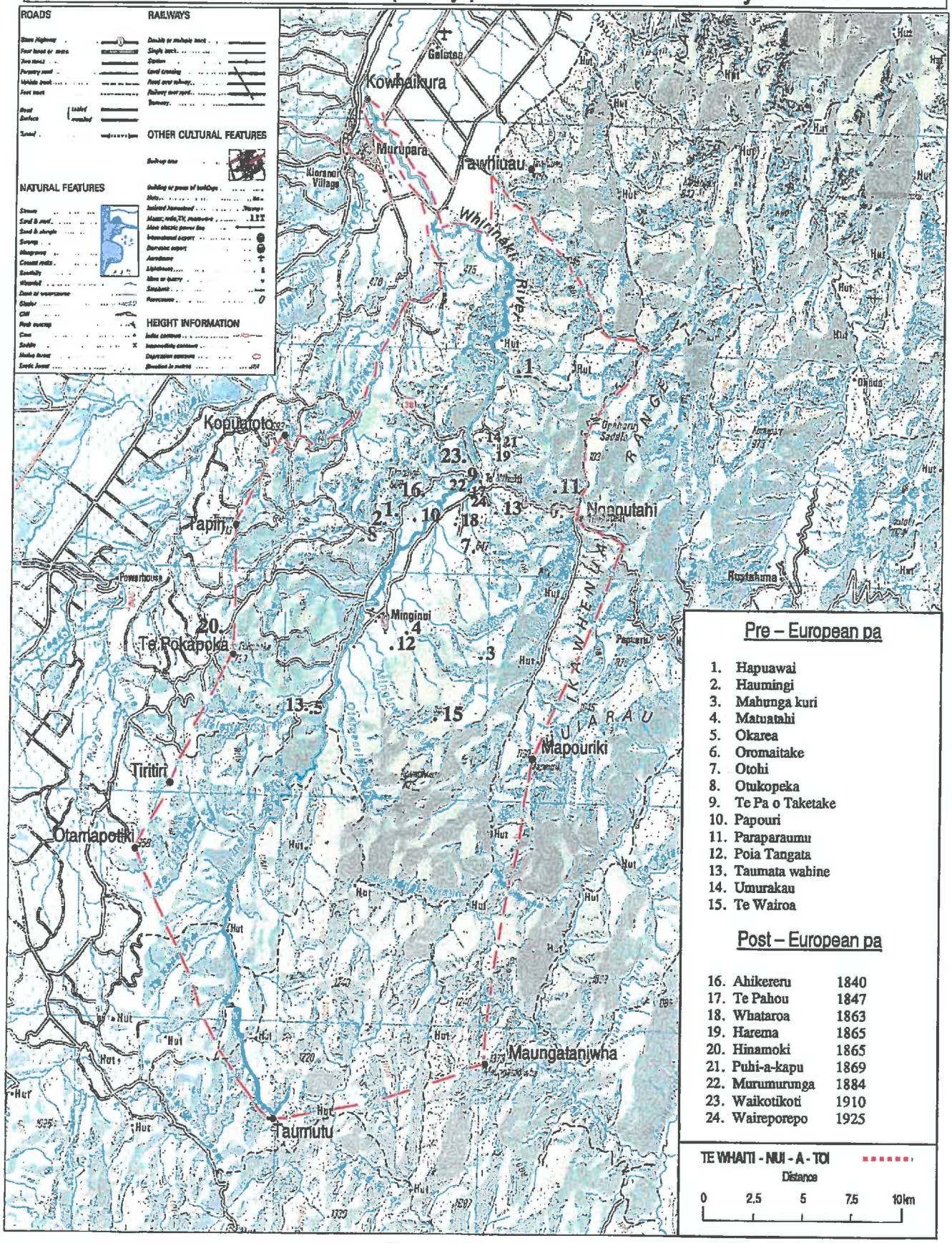


Figure 6.4

NGA KAINGA O TE WHAITI-NUI-A-TOI

The Seasonal Occupation Sites of Te Whaiti – nui – a - Toi

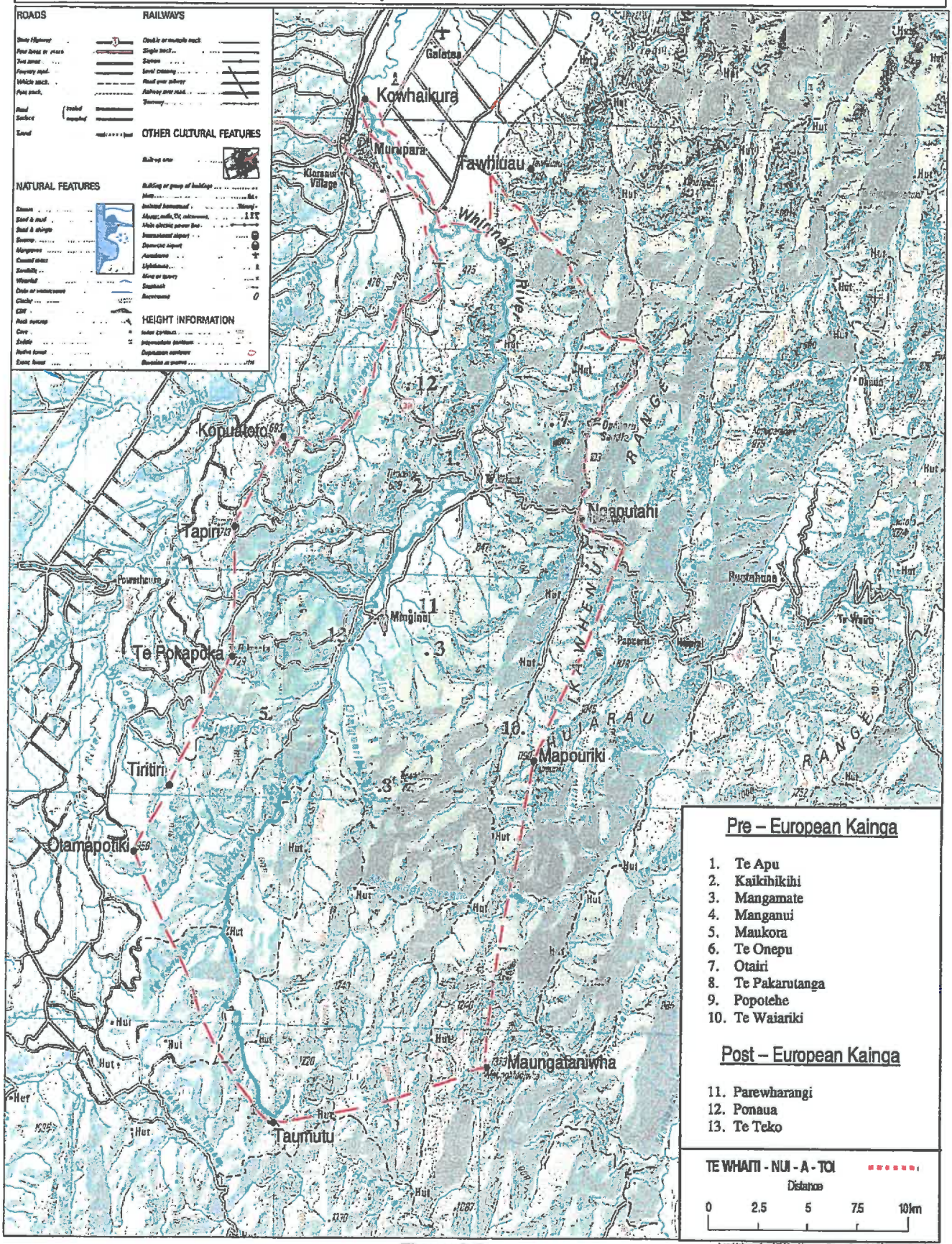


Figure 6.5

NGA MAHINGA KAI ME TE TAKINA NEKENEKE O TE WHAITI–NUI–A–TOI

Traditional Food Resource Sites indicating the Seasonal Migration Cycle

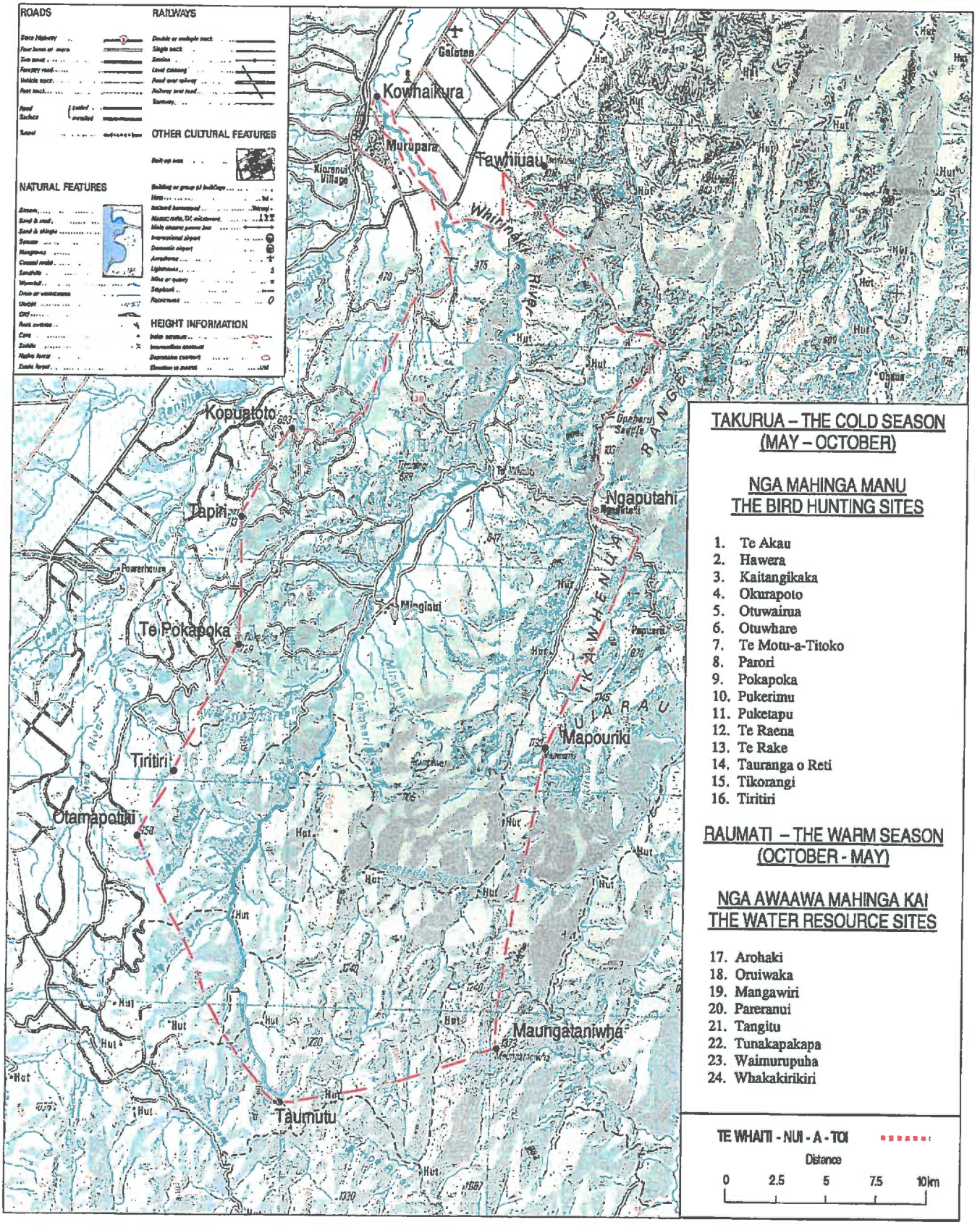


Figure 6.7

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