

# Into the Gorge

Photo courtesy of Kathryn Dennis



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



Venture only 20 minutes from Palmerston North and you will discover the beautiful natural landscape of the Manawatu Gorge.

We are restoring native forest and enhancing biodiversity in the Gorge.

Take a peek inside and you'll be surprised at what the Gorge has to offer...

## Our goal

Preserve, sustain and enhance the biodiversity, scenic and recreational values of this unique site.

### How are we going to achieve this?

Partners and the community will work together with a focus on...

#### Getting rid of pests

We are controlling pest animals (e.g possums and stoats) and plants (e.g old man's beard) that are threatening the native habitats in the Gorge.

#### Planting

We will be planting beautiful native species. People used to travel to see the red rata flowers... they will again soon.

#### Recreation area

The track is being upgraded to make a superior walking experience, and the Gorge carpark (at the Ashhurst end) will be developed into a great place to stop for a picnic or visit. There will be better access to the river with parking and new picnic tables. There will be a walking link to the Ashhurst Domain and the wetlands area.



Photo courtesy of Tourism NZ



### The project team

The Manawatu Gorge project is proudly supported by Horizons Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, Palmerston North City and Tararua District Councils, Transit NZ, ONTRACK, the Rangitaane Iwi and local landowners.



### Ten Year Vision

- Biodiversity threats are assessed and are appropriately and sustainably managed.
- The site is managed as a sanctuary and as a 'Mainland Island' with high visitor use and strong community support.
- The project receives national recognition.

## Flora and fauna

The Gorge Scenic Reserve contains an interesting mix of forest species. Tawa and podocarp species dominate while nikau palms give the forest a tropical feel. Flowers of the once common northern rata can be seen in December. This tree is being reintroduced to the reserve by local conservation groups and schools.

Regional and national rare plant species found in the reserve include the giant maidenhair fern, (*Adiantum formosum*) which is found nowhere else in New Zealand.

A large rare beetle (*Megadromus turgidiceps*) also makes its home in the reserve and Gorge. Birds include the tui, miromiro (tomtit), kahu (harrier hawk) and riroriro (grey warbler). Kaka have also been seen flying over the bush.



## Gorge history

Long before the formation of the dividing ranges about 1.5 million years ago, the Manawatu River flowed along its path to the west. As the land rose around the river it continued to cut its way through the mountains, creating the steep-sided Gorge.

Known as Te Apiti, the Gorge was later travelled by Maori who would haul their canoes upstream through the rapids.

By 1872 the 'road' existed but remained a perilous journey for coaches.

The railway line was completed in 1891 and the first train over it carried 1500 passengers in 18 double carriages. Today the road is a busy transport link between Hawke's Bay and the Manawatu and Wellington areas.



## Things to do

- **Manawatu Gorge Track**  
Walk the beautiful Gorge Track (10 km)
- **Totara Loop walking track**  
This walk at the Northern end of the Gorge track is an easy grade walk (approx 1 km)
- **Take a walk through our Wetland area by the Ashhurst Domain**
- **Kayaking**
- **Bird watching**
- **Photography**
- **Nature watches**

Please refer to your DOC leaflet



## The Geography of the Gorge

The Manawatu Gorge is a magnificent geographical structure formed over thousands of years by the Manawatu River.

The Gorge itself is unique, as it is the only place in New Zealand where a river begins its journey on the opposite side of the main divide to where it joins the sea. At that time the area would have existed as a series of islands, when the Gorge was part of a sea strait.

## Get Involved

To find out how you can get involved in the Manawatu Gorge Restoration Project contact

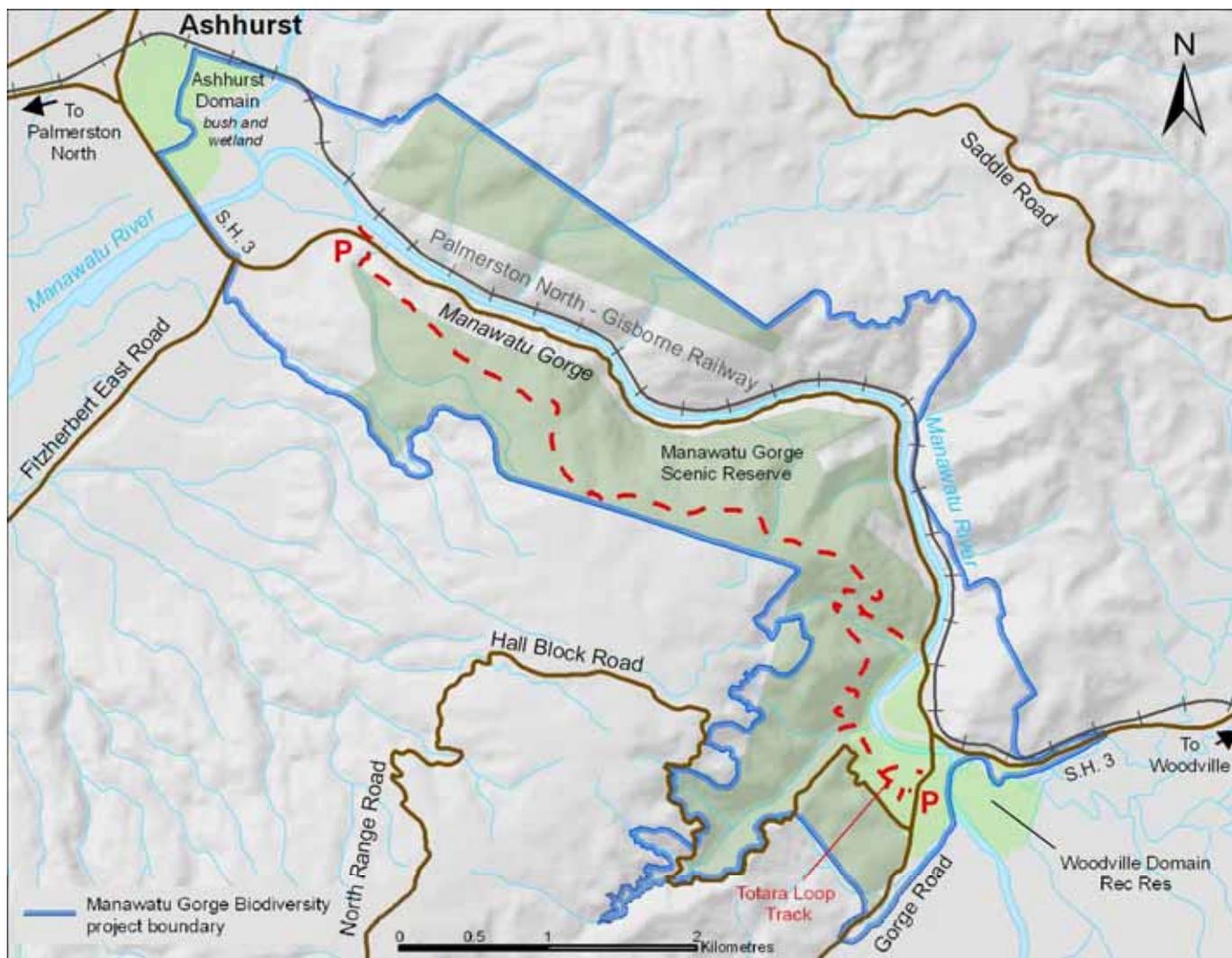
- Horizons Regional Council 0508 800 800 or
- DOC Palmerston North Office 350 9700

### Te Apiti -

#### Rangitaane spiritual story

The name Te Apiti, meaning the narrow passage, was bestowed upon the Manawatu Gorge by Rangitaane, the tangata whenua, as it was recognised as one of the main routes connecting the eastern and western parts of their 700-year-old rohe.

In Rangitaane history, Okatia, a spirit who possessed a giant totara tree on the Puketoi Ranges, gouged out the Gorge.



For more information have a look at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or  
[www.horizons.govt.nz](http://www.horizons.govt.nz)



### Want to know more?

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