Notification about predator control in the Hollyford Valley

To protect native species, the Department of Conservation (DOC) is going to reduce rats, stoats and possums in the area.

Why we are controlling introduced predators

The Hollyford Valley is a special place. Fiordland's tallest and most rugged mountains tower over the mighty Hollyford River as it winds its way to the sea. Glaciers and rock give way to tussock and then lush forest of beech, broadleaved species and podocarps such as rimu and kahikatea.

These habitats are home to a variety of native species and are particularly important for kea, tuke/rock wren, kākā, kererū, rare lizards, whio, toutouwai/robin, pekapeka/long-tailed bat and mistletoe. The Hollyford – Whakatipu Ka Tuka – has significance to Ngāi Tahu and is rich in Māori heritage.

Native species are fighting for survival due to predation from rats, stoats and possums. Without protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within Fiordland National Park.

Rodent numbers are currently climbing due to abundant seed in the forest. This will drive a boom in stoat numbers unless we act now.

How are we going to achieve this

The safest and most effective method to control introduced predators over large areas is to use biodegradable bait pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums. Stoats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the carcasses of the dead rodents.

Helicopters will accurately distribute bait across the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the safest and most effective way to control predators in the Hollyford due to the vast and rugged terrain. Bait will not be aerially applied to roads and car parks; instead we will place bait in white plastic bait stations adjacent to roads.

In the Routeburn and Milford Road areas we also have a large trap network in place, which protects many native species from stoats when stoat numbers are low. However, high numbers of predators can overwhelm trapping networks. The best option for managing predators in the Hollyford is to combine ongoing trapping with aerial 1080 in years of high predator numbers.



Tuke rock wren live in the special Hollyford Valley. Photo: Craig McKenzie

We will measure success by the percentage of baited ink cards that collect rat tracks overnight. The last operation in 2025 successfully reduced tracking rates from 44 % before the operation, to 0.7 % afterwards.

Consultation and consent outcome

DOC has consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the treatment area. This involved discussing the operational plan, listening to any concerns and considering ways to mitigate them. We have responded with changes to boundaries and the management of water intakes.

Popular tramping tracks will be sown over, and some will be closed for a short time while bait is applied in the immediate area around them. We plan to minimise any disruption by removing bait from family-friendly tracks as soon as possible. We aim to open popular tracks like the Routeburn by mid-morning following the operation.

DOC is delegated authority by the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC. The operation will only proceed once EPA and Ministry of Health permissions have been obtained.

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Timeframe

The operation is planned for a clear weather window between 20 March and 31 May 2027. The timing is weather dependent.

This operation begins with the distribution of non-toxic pre-feed bait pellets (dyed brown) to prepare rodents and possums to eat the toxic bait (dyed green) that is applied afterwards. Both baits are about 16 mm in diameter and cylindrical shaped.

Next steps

Adjoining landowners and other stakeholders will be notified and there will be a public notice in the local newspaper/s. There will also be warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the operation.

After the operation, DOC will contact iwi, hapū, and stakeholders about the results of the operation. We also aim to share insights about the outcomes for native species overtime.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary. The standard buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Always report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor or hospital
- The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 or dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals

Map of predator control area

The map on the next page shows the confirmed area of 31,335 ha for predator control.

For more information

Please contact:

Operational planner, Department of Conservation, Lake Front Drive, Te Anau

Email: teanauadmin@doc.govt.nz

Phone: 0800 275 362

OR

Contract Wild Animal Control New Zealand

Email: office@cwacnzl.co.nz

Phone: 0800 292 269

Visit the DOC website:

See more information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme

www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

See operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

See updates about track access and safety

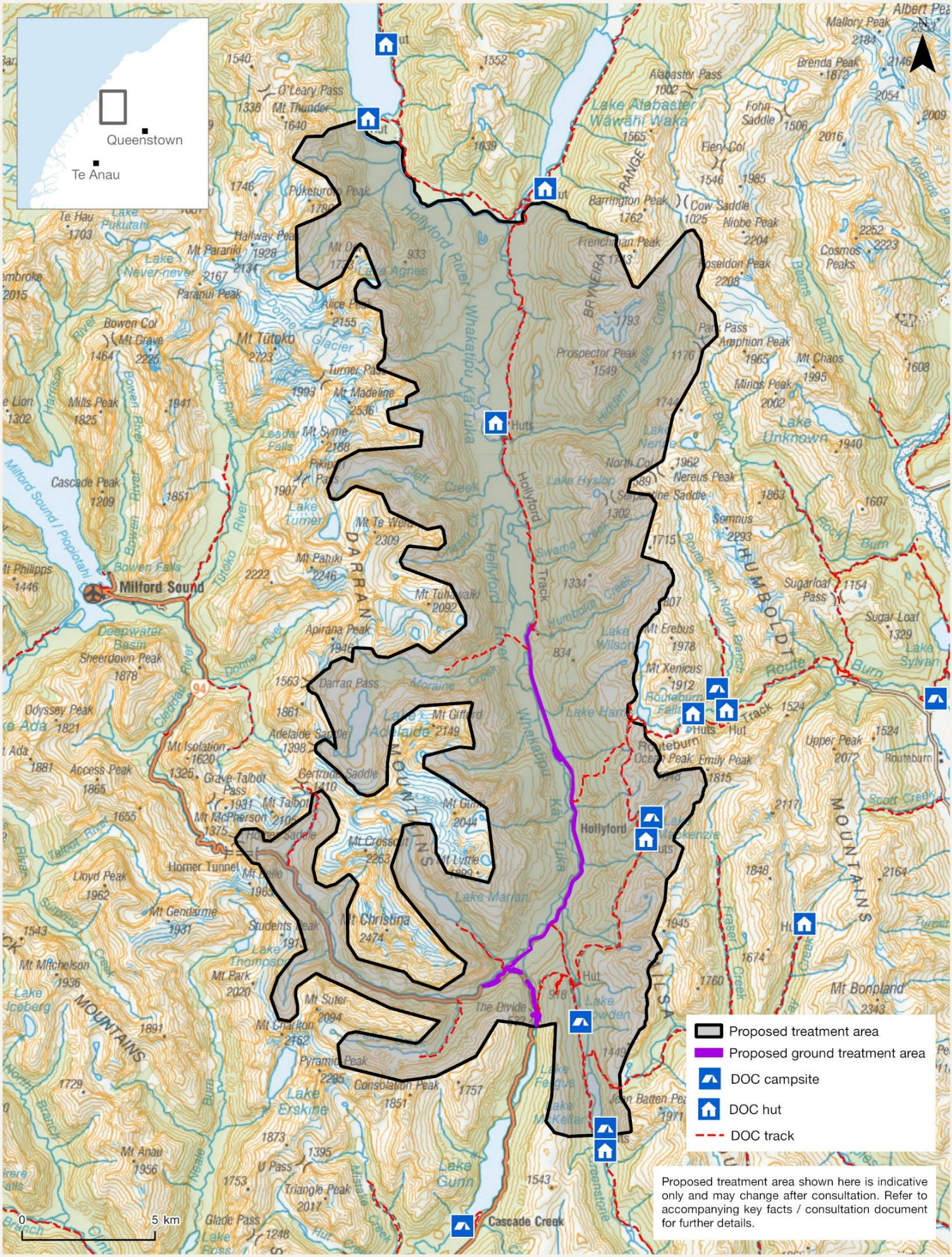
www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/alerts

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050



Hollyford

Aerial Predator Control 2027

Proposed treatment area: *35,335 ha*

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator | Not for navigation | 1:180,000 | Crown Copyright Reserved | Basemap from: LINZ CC-BY, © CrownEagle Technology, Land Information New Zealand | DOC, Geospatial Services | 7/10/2026