

New marine reserves for the southeast of the South Island

The Minister of Conservation has approved six new marine reserves along the southeast coast of the South Island from Timaru to Waipapa Point in Southland. These are the first marine reserves in this coastal region and are part of a proposed network of marine protected areas.

The marine reserves will protect important and unique coastal and estuarine habitats and the marine life within them, and contribute to Aotearoa New Zealand's marine protection goals and international commitments to protect marine biodiversity.

The protected habitats include estuarine and tidal lagoons, rocky reefs, offshore canyons, giant kelp forests, deep water bryozoan (lace coral) thickets and seagrass and red algae beds, which support an array of fish and other marine species.

The six new marine reserves are:

- Waitaki Marine Reserve, 101 km²
- Te Umu Kōau Marine Reserve, 88 km²
- Papanui Marine Reserve, 168 km²
- Ōrau Marine Reserve, 29 km²
- Ōkaihae Marine Reserve, 5 km²
- Hākinikini Marine Reserve, 6 km².

Marine reserves

Marine reserves provide the highest level of marine protection in Aotearoa New Zealand. The main aim of a marine reserve is to create an area that is free from human alteration to marine habitats and life, which provides a useful comparison for scientific study and allows ecosystems to recover to a more natural state.

Marine reserves are also special places where people can see rare and abundant sea life, and enjoy activities such as boating, snorkelling and diving.

When the marine reserves will be in place

The marine reserves will come into force following an Order in Council and gazettal process, which is likely to be completed by mid-2024. More information will be provided closer to this time.

Activities in these areas are not restricted until the marine reserves are formally in place.

Recognition of customary rights

The six marine reserves are in the takiwā (tribal area) of iwi Kāi Tahu. Kāi Tahu will be closely involved in managing the marine reserves in partnership with the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC).

Measures to recognise the customary rights of Kāi Tahu include allowing continued access to the marine reserves for the enhancement of mātauraka Māori (traditional knowledge) through wānaka (intergenerational sharing of knowledge). The retrieval of koiwi tākata (ancestral remains), artefacts, marine mammal remains and some beach materials will also be provided for.

Southeast marine protection network

The new marine reserves are part of a network of marine protected areas designed to protect the important marine habitats and biodiversity found in this coastal region.

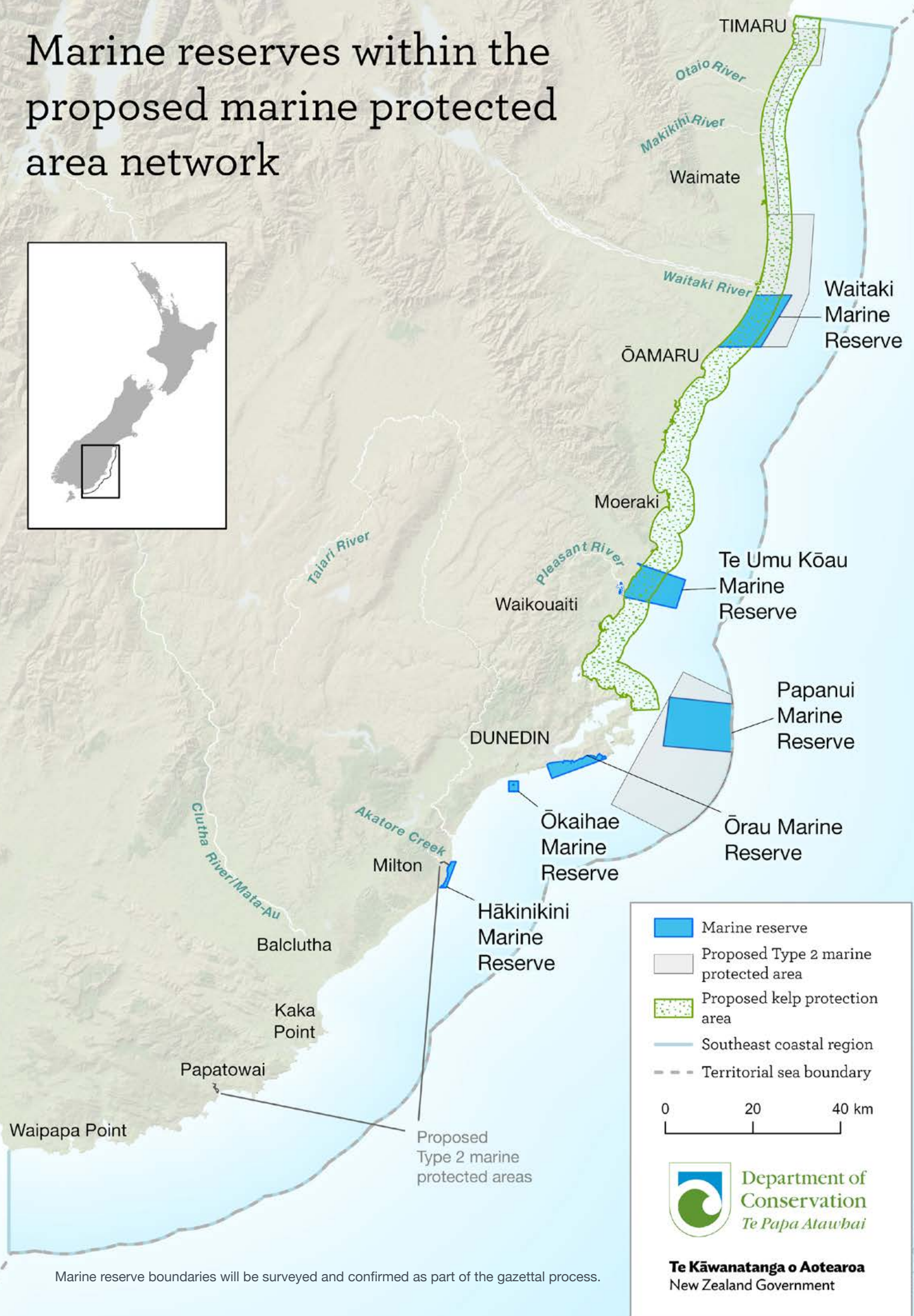
The rest of the proposed network consists of five Type 2 marine protected areas (where some forms of fishing would be prohibited) and a kelp protection area, which will be considered by the Minister for Oceans and Fisheries under the Fisheries Act.

The South-East Marine Protection Forum/Te Roopu Manaaki ki te Toka (with representatives from Kāi Tahu, commercial and recreational fishers, environment, science and tourism interests and local communities) worked extensively to develop proposals for a network of marine protected areas from 2014 to 2018. The Forum made their recommendations to Ministers in 2018.

DOC and Fisheries New Zealand led public consultation on the forum's network one proposal in 2020.

For more information, visit www.doc.govt.nz/southeast-marine-reserves.

Marine reserves within the proposed marine protected area network



Marine reserve boundaries will be surveyed and confirmed as part of the gazettal process.