

Proposal for

Establishment and design funding

for the

Wainuiomata/Puketahā eco-sanctuary project

Prepared by:

**Greater Wellington Regional
Council (GW)
and**

Taranaki Whānui (TW)

For:

The Minister of Conservation

**To submit to the Prime Ministers
Emerging Priorities Fund.**

1. Executive summary

- This proposal is for establishment funding to complete all the design and pre-construction action required to obtain resource consents and funding, and move to the development phase for the Puketahā Sanctuary at Wainuiomata.
- The proposal is for funding of **\$1,863,000** for a two-year period.
- This proposal is submitted by the Chairs of GW and the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) through the Minister of Conservation to the Prime Minister's Office for consideration under the EMERGING PRIORITIES FUND.
- The Puketahā Sanctuary proposes to pest exclusion fence the 3,313 ha Wainuiomata Water Catchment, reintroduce critically endangered species such as kakapo, kiwi, and hihi and establish the area as a biodiversity, social and economic hub. This initiative will transform the surrounding Remutaka Range and local communities, and pioneer an alternative national strategy to insure against further forest species extinction.
- The project fits well with Te Mana O Te Taiao the 2020 NZ Biodiversity Strategy and offers an unusual combination and quantity of significant national benefits.
- The Puketahā Sanctuary would be managed by a charitable trust as a joint venture partnership between Greater Wellington Council (GW), the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) and the Department of Conservation (DOC).
- The establishment funds sought are for the following activities.

| Summary of costs | \$ |
|---|-----------------------|
| • Trust Formation and operating costs | 550,000 |
| • Engineering, legal and Architectural design fees | 409,000 |
| • Ecology and resource consent management fees | 315,000 |
| • Other advice for consents and design | 120,000 |
| • Resource consent administration costs (GW) | 200,000 |
| • Communications | <u>100,000</u> |
| • Total | 1,694,000 |
| • Contingency sum (10%) | <u>169,000</u> |
| • Total | 1,863,000 |

2. The Proposal

- This proposal is for establishment funding to complete all the design and pre-construction action required to obtain resource consents and funding and move to the development phase for the Puketahā Sanctuary at Wainuiomata.
- The proposal is for funding of **\$1,863,000** for a two-year period.
- This proposal is submitted by the Chairs of GW and the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) through the Minister of Conservation.
- We understand it will then be forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office for consideration under the Prime Ministers Emerging Priorities Fund.

3. Background and Context

- The Wainuiomata water catchment is a 3,313-hectare forested valley which forms the headwaters of the Wainuiomata River. It has been a cornerstone of Wellington's water supply since 1880 and its forest is regarded as one of the finest podocarp/rata/broadleaf forests in the North Island.
- Its value for biodiversity has long been recognised and in 2020 James Lynch QSM proposed that the catchment be pest-exclusion fenced and fully utilised as a biodiversity, social and economic hub, (with particular value for nationally threatened forest species), and as a 'nursery' (kōhanga) to repopulate the surrounding 40,000 ha Remutaka Range.
- In November 2020 the GW Environment Committee agreed to conduct a feasibility study to assess the merits of the project and a working party was formed. James Lynch was contracted to conduct a feasibility study which was duly completed in October 2021 and received by GW, DOC and Taranaki Whānui in early 2022.
- The feasibility study confirmed that the project is feasible and projected the costs for the first ten years as \$32 million capital and \$10 million operating with an annual projected operating budget of \$2.5 million pa.

4. National Significance

- Due to its size, habitat quality and proximity to suitable surrounding habitat and supportive iwi and communities, Wainuiomata offers an opportunity to establish partnerships which will materially advance several key aspects of Te Mana o Te Taiao the 2020 NZ Biodiversity Strategy: specifically threatened species recovery, large scale forest ecosystem recovery, iwi engagement and cultural recovery, community engagement and economic opportunity for lower income communities.
- Because of its size and the outstanding quality of its habitat, the Wainuiomata catchment will materially improve the threat status of three nationally endangered forest bird species (kākāpō, rowi kiwi (or little spotted kiwi) and hihi) by providing suitable habitat that could nearly double their existing populations. These species require high quality pest free habitat to thrive, and such habitat is extremely rare on the mainland.

- It will also materially improve the status and range of at least eight other species at risk (kōkako, tieke, kākā, red crowned kākārīki, toutouwai, pāteke, tuatara, Cook Strait giant wētā). It is rare to find a site with such a concentration of value for so many threatened or at risk species.
- In addition, due to its size and proximity to adjacent quality habitat, Puketahā has great potential value as a ‘nursery’ (kōhanga) to repopulate or supplement the surrounding 40,000 ha Remutaka Range with the more common species such as tui, bellbird, rifleman, kereru, etc through the ‘halo effect’. Such an outcome could pioneer the co-ordination of pest-exclusion fencing with a landscape scale ‘predator-free’ style operation to restore large tracts of degraded forest.
- Due to its proximity to supportive communities, Wainuiomata also offers considerable scope for cultural recovery by iwi, engagement with communities, education and research, and economic opportunity. It could pioneer the concept of a biodiversity, social and economic hub to create maximum value, similar to what has been done at Zealandia in Wellington City but at an unprecedented level.
- It also offers an alternative for a viable interim national strategy to prevent further forest species extinctions in the event ‘Predator-free NZ’ should not meet all its ambitious objectives.

5. Objectives and Specifications for the design Phase

- The objective for the design phase of Puketahā for which we seek special funding is:

Complete all design and pre-construction actions required to obtain resource consents and funding, and achieve readiness to move to the funding acquisition and development phase of the Wainuiomata/Puketahā project by 31 December 2024.

- The specifications to be met are as follows:
 1. Propose and secure support for key elements necessary to incorporate a charitable trust to manage the establishment, development and operation of the Wainuiomata/Puketahā eco-sanctuary
 2. Undertake specialist technical design tasks necessary to complete the scoping and feasibility of the project – namely the design of the river weir and fish passage, design of office accommodation and field base, and the design and specifications for the pest-exclusion fence.
 3. Formalise permissions from the landowner (GW) and obtain resource and building consents for the weir, fenceline, buildings and the overall project, including an assessment of environmental and cultural effects and any biodiversity offsetting required.
 4. Update the costs with any new information discovered.
 5. Prepare a final funding case for bidding and solicitation of funds.

6. Project Methodology

The following methodology will be used during the project:

- This application is for the preparatory phase as set out in the attached feasibility study (Lynch 2022).
- Formalise the “working party” into a Steering Committee, with an agreed structure, reporting lines and work programme to manage the preparatory phase. This may require recruitment of further members from partner agencies and co-opting other specialist advisors.
- Propose formation of a joint venture charitable trust comprising representatives of the partner agencies (GW, DOC, PNBST).
- GW will contract a Project Manager on agreed terms to manage the preparatory phase, co-ordinate the specialist teams and develop a communications strategy.
- A design and planning team reporting to the Project Manager, will be formed from contractor specialists consisting of.
 1. Consents planner. (Resource consent process)
 2. Consulting engineers and surveyors (weir design and fence/road design)
 3. Ecologists (fish passage, road design and effects)
 4. Cultural specialist (Cultural and archaeological effects)
 5. Architect (office and field base design and costing).
- GW, DOC and TW will consider making available additional assistance and team member expertise to the project and will confirm arrangements.
- The Project Manager will prepare and execute a plan to manage the process through to the granting of all consents and the re-costing of the project ready for a funding bid/campaign.

7. A review of key tasks

- This project involves the completion of the following key tasks.
 1. **Trust formation and servicing.** GW, DOC and PNBST will need to agree on the establishment of a joint venture charitable trust. Funds will be required for legal fees, recruitment to an establishment board, board fees and expenses for three years, and administration assistance. This Trust will be necessary to provide a vehicle for funding and for commissioning the following works.

The output is a fully functional governance structure to establish the project, and a Project Manager to develop and lead implementation of a project plan.

Personnel involved. Steering committee and GW and DOC legal teams.

Start immediately funding is approved and completion date two months from start.

Estimated costs for two years \$250,000 plus a Project manager for a two-year contract. \$300,000. TOTAL \$550,000

2. **Develop consenting strategy.** The consenting strategy will review the RMA framework that will apply to the proposal, including pre-engagement with relevant councils, and confirm both the requirements and a pathway for obtaining the relevant resource consents for the project.

The strategy will also identify key impacts of the activities, measures to mitigate these impacts, any offsetting requirements, any risks to “consentability” or the ability to comply with conditions that may be imposed. The consenting strategy will also include a summary of supporting information that will be required for the consent applications, and details of any potentially affected parties (including whether limited or full notification of the applications is likely).

The output will be a consenting strategy report that identifies the consenting requirements, pathway, risks and mitigation, supporting information and potentially affected parties for the project. It will set out the tasks required to progress the project through the consenting process.

Personnel involved: Planners, with some input from the wider project team.

Start: immediately upon appointment of project manager. The consenting strategy will be completed within eight weeks.

Estimated costs: \$30,000 (included in ecology cost estimates).

3. **Secure Landowner Permissions:**

Neighbouring landowners. The current fenceline and access track on the north and western sides encroaches on private land in several locations. The land upon which the predator fence and maintenance access track are built need to be secured to avoid any potential landowner disputes (it is likely that legal agreements can be formalised, as well as any land swaps or transfers, after resource consents for the main project are obtained.) In addition, the fenceline as currently defined will extend in some locations onto conservation estate (Remutaka Forest Park) and will impact on the existing Whakanui Track (Between spot heights 644m and 800m / chainage 23600 to 25700). This requires agreement with the Minister of Conservation.

A boundary survey may be required to establish the legal boundaries of adjacent privately owned land parcels to ensure that the fence is placed within the GW land boundary, or where formal access may be required e.g. easements. It is important that the fence route is established with the agreement and support of neighbours, and that arrangements endure future changes of land ownership.

The tasks are:

- GPS mapping of preferred fenceline and maintenance track routes
- Legal opinion / GW/neighbour discussions on preferred mechanisms to secure permissions for construction
- Discussions with neighbouring landowners, including DOC, over fenceline encroachments and potential realignment of Whakanui Track.

- Mechanisms to formalise landowner permissions for fence construction e.g. Affected Party permissions, Cadastral Survey, easements, boundary variation or subdivision consents

The output: Agreement with all neighbouring landowners through appropriate mechanisms (e.g. easements) to allow the construction and ongoing operation of the perimeter track and fence.

Primary landowner and Water supply permissions. GW and Wellington Water (WW) will need to agree to the use of the land for the purposes of a sanctuary and under what conditions this would need to operate.

The output: Governance approval and Service Level Agreements with GW and WW.

Personnel involved. Property law advisor, Beca (Survey), GW, DOC, Trust Project Manager and GW and WW legal teams.

Start immediately upon appointment of project manager and completion date six months from start.

Estimated costs \$110,000 for legal advice, survey, registration of easements, boundary variations.

4. **Fenceline construction and maintenance road design.** The feasibility study included a preliminary route and environmental assessment. While this was sufficient to identify the fence feasibility and obtain fence pricing quotes, it still requires further work to fine tune the route, especially on the steeper sections, and estimate such things as cut and fill, drainage, and erosion/sediment control. A ‘preliminary’ design will be prepared to inform the assessment of environmental effects and resource consent applications (building and earthworks).

To ensure flexibility, and subject to consent application requirements, the preliminary design is intended to refine the fenceline and road alignments but rely on representative cross sections to describe the scale of works and level of potential effects.

To support preparation of resource consent applications several expert assessments will be needed. As a minimum they will include:

- A comprehensive design package for the project including all earthworks and structures.
- An ecological impact assessment covering vegetation clearance, threatened species, and fish passage, including a description of current ecological values, an assessment of the scale of adverse effects, and confirmation of the ability to avoidance, minimisation, remedy and offset any effects.
- A Cultural Impact Assessment (\$50,000)
- An Archaeological Assessment (\$20,000)

The output will be information of sufficient depth and quality to be submitted as part of resource consent applications to both Greater Wellington and Hutt City

Council. Following receipt of consents and associated conditions, the finalised designs will be of a form that may be submitted to contractors for pricing.

The output will be a finalised GPS mapped fence route, formal agreement through appropriate mechanisms with neighbouring landowners, engineering drawings and assessments signed off by ecologists and cultural consultants and a complete AEE and CIA ready to supply with the resource consent application. More detailed versions may need to be submitted to contractors for pricing (as noted previously).

Personnel Involved. Property Law Specialist, Ecologists, Civil Engineers, Surveyors, Cultural specialist. Consents Planner, Archaeologist

Start immediately upon appointment of the Project Manager and complete within 12 months

Estimated costs \$220,000 civil engineering, legal, ecologists plus cultural and other experts. (included in civil engineering and ecology estimates)

- 5. Weir and fish passage design.** The feasibility study included a preliminary schematic solution to pest-proof the Wainuiomata River. A weir is required which can exclude all pest access via the river, survive flood events, and connect to the perimeter fence while still retaining an acceptable level of fish passage. It is intended to use an existing dam and spillway site near the GW Wainuiomata Water Treatment Plant and modify this structure to become the predator-proof crossing of the Wainuiomata River. A design of the weir schematic will be needed to a) submit for the consent application and b) obtain up to date costings from construction firms. (A broad estimate was included in the study).

The output will be preliminary engineering drawings signed off by ecologists and providing sufficient information to be included in the consent application. Detailed design may be undertaken at a later stage following consenting and funding, for submission to contractors for pricing.

Personnel involved. Specialist engineers and ecologists; resource consent planner.

Start immediately the governance structure and Project Manager are in place and complete within six months.

Estimated costs \$150,000 (Included in civil engineering and ecology estimates).

- 6. Service buildings design.** The feasibility study identified the need for additional service buildings namely, a) basic office accommodation for up to fifteen permanent staff and b) a field base for storage and servicing of field equipment and vehicles which will be used by teams of up to 40 personnel during the pest eradication phase and an operations team of ten for the ongoing operation. Architectural; services will be required to a) survey the existing buildings for any that can be repurposed to meet the requirements and b) design any new facilities needed.

The output will be preliminary Architectural drawings signed off by GW General Managers and sufficient to accompany the application for building consent. Subject to changes required, they may be submitted to contractors for pricing.

Personnel involved: Architect, Project Manager. Advice of the GW Parks Construction team will be required.

Start immediately the Project Manager is on the job and complete within 9 months

Estimated costs. \$100,000 plus disbursements (5,000).

7. **Preparation of resource consent applications.** Resource consents will be required from GW for construction of a weir in Wainuiomata River, and for earthworks and vegetation clearance to construct the road and pest exclusion fence around the perimeter of the site. Resource consent are also required from Hutt City Council for construction of new structures and earthworks.

The consenting strategy in Task 2 will confirm consent requirements for the project.

The Assessment of Effects on the Environment (AEE) report will be informed by the design work and ecological assessment described above. The consenting strategy may identify additional technical information that is required to support the application.

The output will be resource consent applications lodged with GW and HCC for the project.

Personnel involved. Planner, with input from wider project team.

Start immediately upon Trust approval of the consenting strategy. The applications will be completed and ready for lodgement within six weeks of all technical information being finalised.

Estimated costs: Indicative cost of \$200,000 for GW process plus the ecology and other advice of \$200,000 Plus \$9,000 disbursements. Total \$409,000.

8. **Resource consent – post-lodgement tasks.** The scope of work required is not yet clear and will depend on the number and scope of s92 requests for further information received, and whether the application is non-notified, or subject to limited or full notification.

Estimated costs \$20,000.

9. **Communications.** Due to the widespread interest in this project, it would be prudent to allow a sum for a public and sponsor communication programme. This would involve procurement of communications expertise, the commissioning of a website, public talks and site visits to host potential funders.

Estimated costs. \$100,000

10. **Re-costing and preparation of a funding bid/campaign.** The information gained from task 1 to 5 will be used to fully re-cost the project for construction of the fence, weir and facilities, eradication and ongoing operations.

The output will be an updated project costing ready for a funding bid and/or campaign.

Personnel involved. Project Manager.

Start. Immediately consents are granted. Complete in six months.

Estimated costs. No additional.

8. Cost estimate

- Following are estimates of costs for this proposal based on the estimates brought forward from section 7 above.

Trust Formation and operating costs \$

| | |
|--|----------------|
| • Legal costs and advice | 50,000 |
| • Board. Project Manager and consultant recruitment | 20,000 |
| • Board fees and support. 6 board members @ \$10k pa for two years | 120,000 |
| • Secretarial and office support | 60,000 |
| • Project manager. Two years at \$150 - 160K pa. | <u>300,000</u> |
| Total | \$550,000 |

Engineering, Legal and Architectural design fees

| | |
|---|--------------|
| • Boundary survey. | 25,000 |
| • Civil engineering design preliminary. Weir and road | 154,000 |
| • Architectural design. Buildings. | 50,000 |
| • Contingency design and legal advice beyond preliminary. | 175,000 |
| • Disbursements | <u>5,000</u> |
| Total | \$409,000 |

Ecology and resource consent management fees

| | |
|---|---------------|
| • Consenting strategy | 30,000 |
| • Compile technical reports, AEE, consent app, and S92 process | 60,000 |
| • Attend hearings | 30,000 |
| • Site investigations and technical reports (veg, bats, FW) | 66,000 |
| • Assist engineers with weir design and fish passage | 12,000 |
| • Write draft management plan for consenting | 14,000 |
| • Confirm effects, mitigation, prepare ecological impact assessment | 27,000 |
| • Consultation and respond to S92 draft conditions | 18,000 |
| • Prepare evidence | 36,000 |
| • Team co-ordination and consent management | 7,000 |
| • Disbursements and expenses | <u>15,000</u> |
| Total | 315,000 |

Other advice for consents and design

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| • Cultural | 50,000 |
| • Archaeological | 20,000 |
| • Miscellaneous | <u>50,000</u> |
| Total | 120,000 |

Resource consent administration costs (GW and Hutt CC)

- GW and Hutt CC process 200,000

Communications

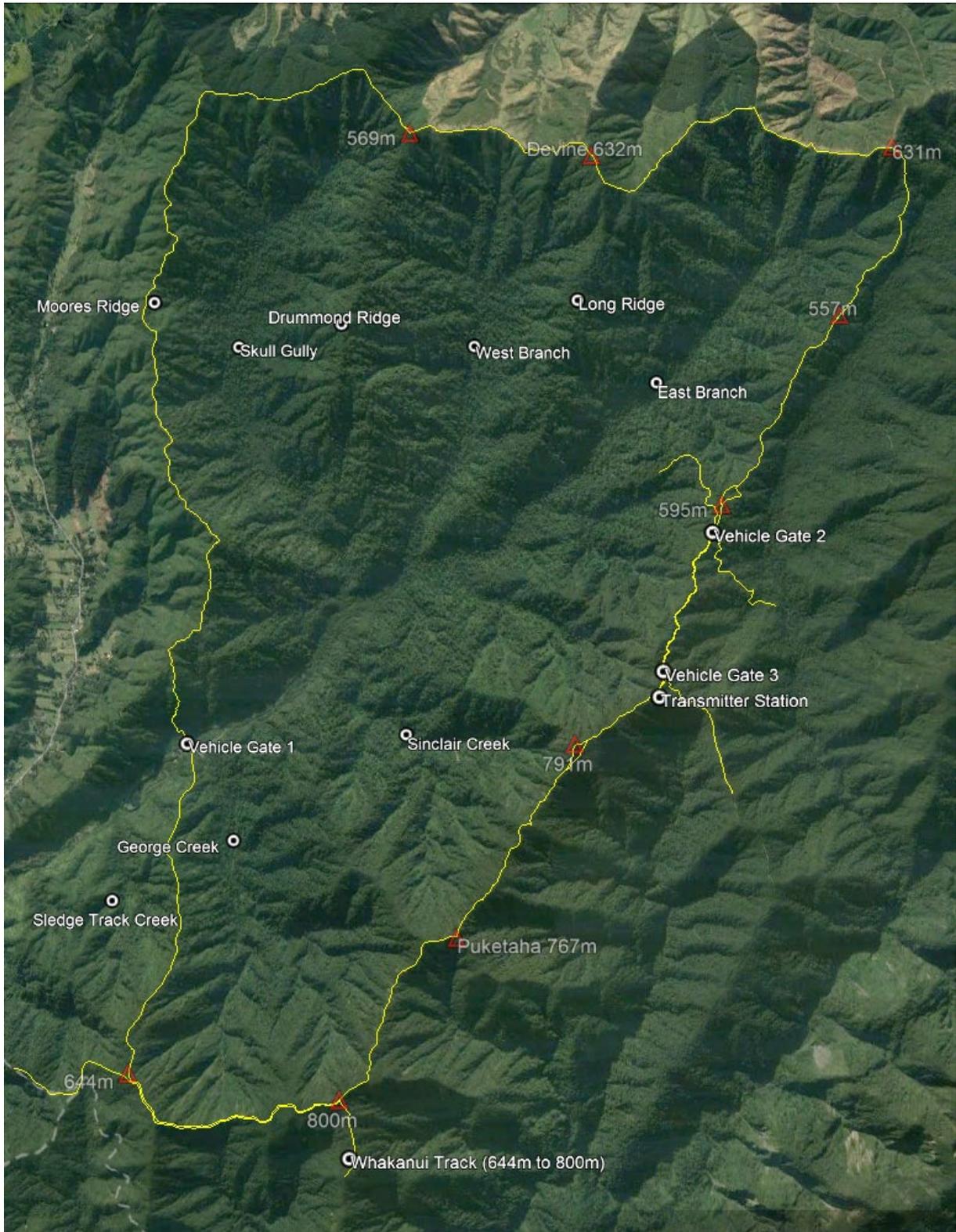
- Website design and maintenance and general communications 100,000

Summary of costs

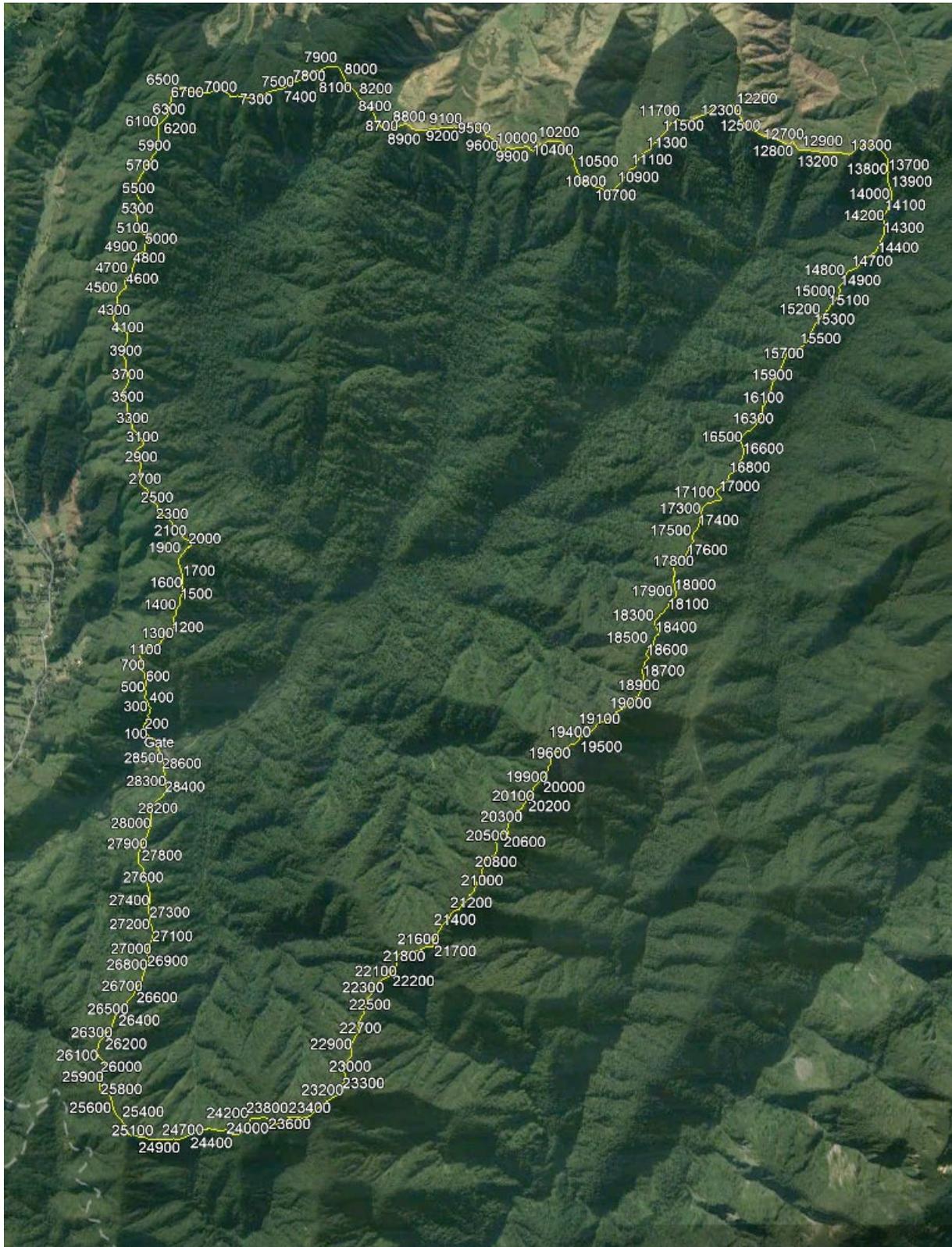
- **Trust Formation and operating costs** 550,000
- **Engineering, legal and Architectural design fees** 409,000
- **Ecology and resource consent management fees** 315,000
- **Other advice for consents and design** 120,000
- **Resource consent administration costs (GW)** 200,000
- **Communications** 100,000
- **Total** \$1,694,000
- **Contingency sum (10%)** 169,000
- **Total** 1,863,000

9. Attachments.

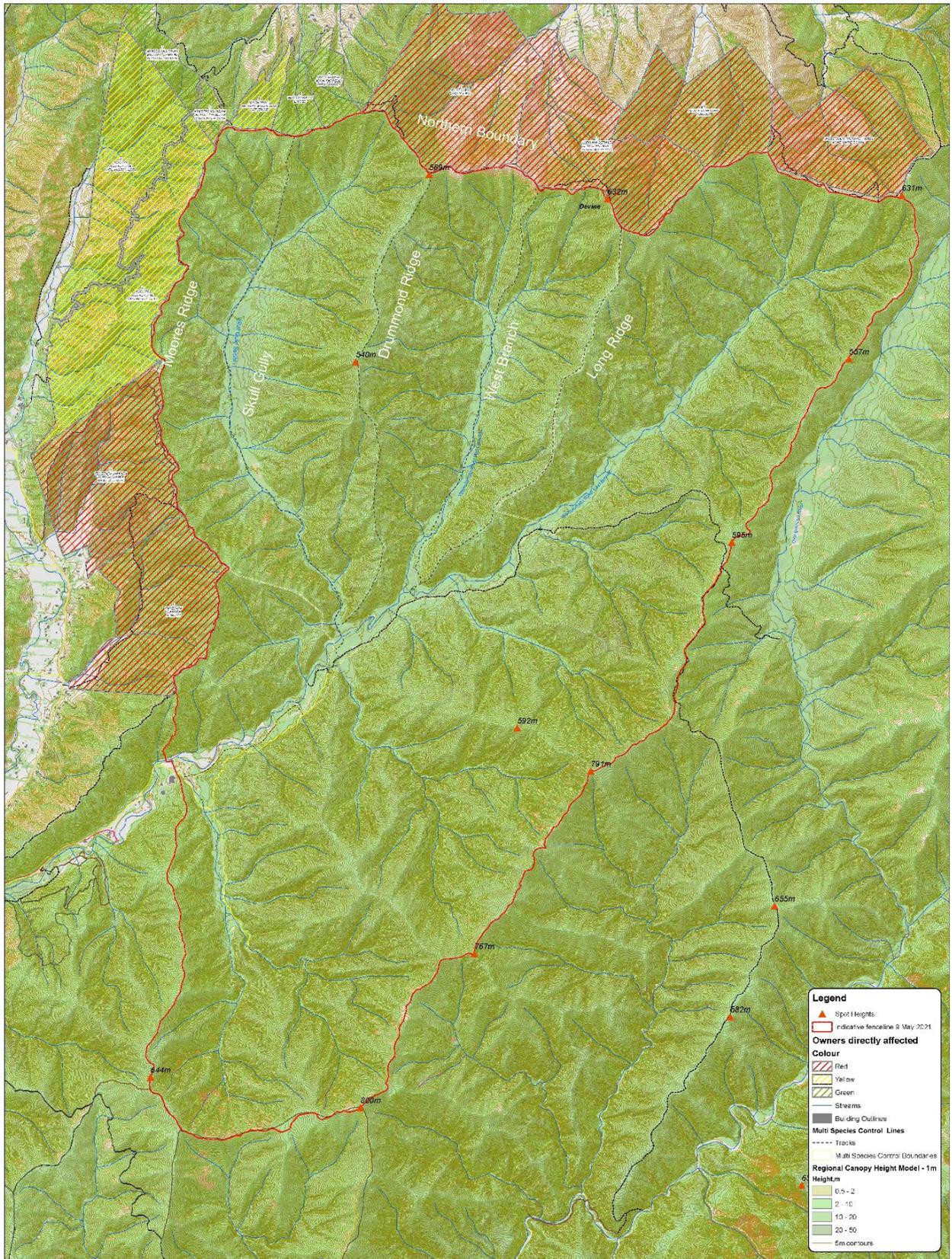
- **Attachment one;** *Wainuiomata- Puketahā Feasibility Study October 2021.*
- **Relevant Site Maps:** It would be helpful to establish a set of standardised base maps for all the team to work from, so we are all referring to the same things, see maps attached.



Map 1: Indicative fenceline, features and access.



Map 3: Project boundary chainage (0 at main access gate, clockwise).



Wainuiomata Mainland Island -
indicative fenceline



Map 2: Neighbouring landowners.