Whanganui Headwaters Trout Fishing

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO



Fish & Game NEW ZEALAND

Continued Angler Access – it's primarily up to you!

Less than 50% of the rivers in the Auckland/Waikato region are covered by esplanade reserves (the "Queens Chain"). But notwithstanding the presence or absence of an esplanade reserve, anglers are dependent upon landowner goodwill to fully enjoy angling opportunities.

Accordingly make sure you take the time to extend to landowners the common courtesies that you would expect:

- Ask their permission before you cross their land.
- Don't
  - clamber over fences
  - walk through crops
  - disturb stock
  - leave gates other than as you found them
  - deposit rubbish
  - take your dog onto a landowners property unless you square it away with them that it is OK to do so. Hydatids and sheep measles can pose a serious threat to a farmers livelihood; so leave your dog at home unless you're certain that the farmer doesn't object to it on their land.

In our experience very few landowners will refuse access to genuine anglers.

Check the Walking Access Commission site for up to date public access maps www.wams.org.nz.

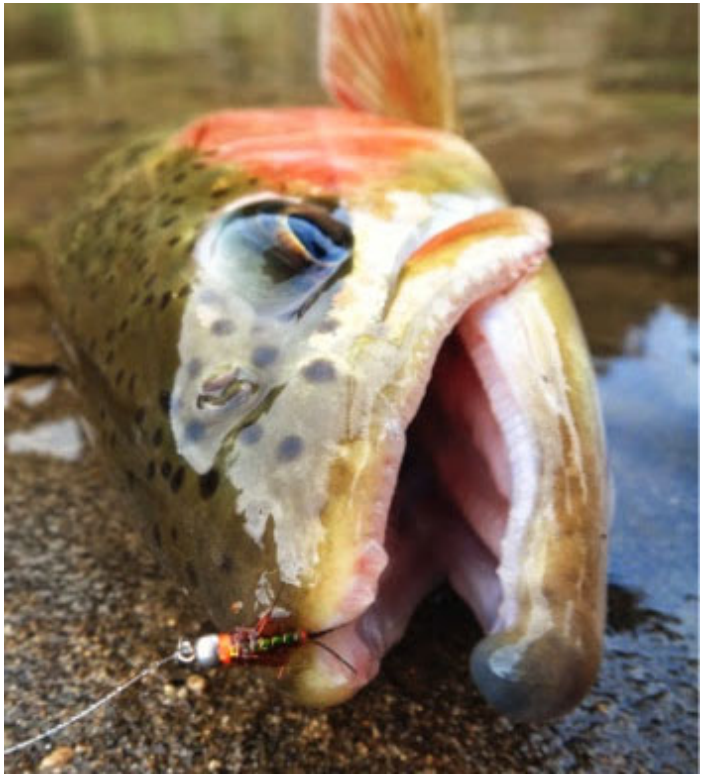
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For further Information

The most up to date access information is located on the Fish & Game Access page. The pamphlets listed below contain more detailed information and maps pertaining to the various types of fisheries in the Auckland/Waikato region. These are available on the website or the Auckland Waikato Fish and Game office.

- South Waikato Spring Creeks.
- The Mighty Waipa.
- Waitomo & Kawhia.
- Coromandel Ranges.
- Waikato Rivers.
- Auckland/Waikato Lakes.



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Whanganui Headwaters

There are many rivers in the Whanganui headwaters with numerous trout, easy access and clear water. Several of these rivers, including the Ongarue and Waimiha, are only a moderate drive (1.5 hours) from the central Waikato, but to fish more southern waters, anglers are best advised to spend a weekend in this district that abounds with spectacular trout fisheries.

There are many places to stay in this major tourist district with motels and bunkhouses at Taumarunui, Owhango and National Park. In addition, there are numerous good campsites in the backcountry for the more adventurous angler seeking outstanding wilderness fishing.

This pamphlet only describes those Whanganui rivers in the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game region. The rivers south of National Park, including the outstanding trout fisheries in the Manganuiateao and the Retaruke Rivers, are in the Taranaki region and information on these fisheries can be obtained from Taranaki Fish & Game.

More detailed and up-to-date information on access to the Whanganui headwaters can be obtained from the interactive access map provided by the Walking Access Commission on their website (www.wams.org.nz).



Whakapapa River

The Whakapapa is a large river that flows from the northern slopes of Mt Ruapehu, along the edge of the Tongariro Forest, before joining the Whanganui River at Kakahi. It is one of New Zealand's finest trout fisheries with rainbow and brown trout averaging 2kg.

Generally, the water quality is pristine, very cold and crystal clear - in the upper reaches water clarity can exceeds 10 metres.

For most of its length the Whakapapa flows through native forest alternating between turbulent rapids, deep pools and long boulder runs. This is certainly not a river for the faint hearted - there are few easy places to cross and some caution is required.

Access to the lower reaches is from the end of Te Rena Road via the village of Kakahi. This is the most popular fishing area on the Whakapapa, providing the easiest fishing as well as giving good access to the nearby Whanganui River by crossing the island. Upstream from Kakahi there is good access at the end of Stone Jug Road. Park at the end of Stone Jug Road and walk down the hill for good access up and downstream.

Access to the middle reaches is from Ohinetonga Road in Owhango where a good metal road leads to bridge across the river. Midway down the hill from Owhango village a track leads to good fishing downstream to several large pools before a narrow gorge prevents further access. The track leading downstream from the bridge is no longer safe to use. Upstream from the bridge a short road on the right leads to several paths providing access to many kilometres of spectacular wilderness fishing with a procession of productive pools and boulder runs.

South of Owhango, access is available at several locations across private farmland from State Highway 4 (Taumarunui - National Park). Permission is not always given. Some maps show a road leading from Mansons Siding to the river, but this is a farm road and closed to public access.

Access to the upper reaches of the Whakapapa via Intake Road has been temporally closed by the new landowner despite a public easement across the property and staff are actively working to reopen the legal public access.

Access to the upper river and tributaries are from HW 47. The Whakapapa-iti and Whakapapa-nui Streams converge to form the Whakapapa River. Both streams hold only a few fish, generally large rainbows (3kg+) in very clear water, with the best fishing in the lower reaches. Fishing this area requires frequent, difficult river crossings and is not recommended for the inexperienced.



Several tributaries of the Whakapapa also offer good fishing. The Piopiotea Stream flows across farmland adjacent to State Highway 4. Access is across farmland at Mansons Siding (permission required from the farmhouse). Here the Piopiotea has been detrimentally affected by erosion but there is good fishing both up and downstream. The Tepure Stream, which joins the Piopiotea at Mansons Siding, also holds trout.

Fishing tips

The Whakapapa is deep so most anglers use a Tongariro setup with a float and bedhead nymphs often with additional split shots. Make sure you get your gear deep as the holes are often 3+ m. Czech (or European) Nymphing is also very effective in swift bolder patches.





Whanganui River

Within the Auckland/Waikato Region, the Whanganui River offers a wide variety of fishing waters. Below Taumarunui the Whanganui River receives the full flow of the Ongarue River and along with the considerable increase in flow acquires a brownish tinge. This section offers a unique experience for North Island anglers of a very large river that still has an interesting sequence of pools and runs. Access is easy as the river runs adjacent to River Road.

Between Taumarunui and Kakahi there are numerous good fishing pools please see the map on the Fish & Game web page for further details. This section of the Whanganui consists of long boulder runs and large deep pools with numerous trout, both rainbows and browns, averaging about 1.2kg. Access can be gained from Taumarunui, Mahoe (Mahoe Rd), Piriaka (from the power station), Manunui, Kakahi (Ako Street), and Pukehou Road. Access to the Kakahi side of the river can be gained form walking north on the paper road along the railway off of Waitea Branch Road.

Above the confluence with the Whakapapa, the Whanganui changes to a relatively sedate river flowing over pebbles and sand through a pleasant rural landscape. Access can be obtained from the end of Te Rena Road (Kakahi) by crossing the Whakapapa River and taking the short path across Whakapapa Island. Otherwise access can be gained by walking downstream from Hohotaka Road (permission required from landowner).

Above Hohotaka Road, the Whanganui provides typical backcountry fishing with deep pools, long boulder runs and clear water. Permission is required from the landowner at the farmhouse by the bridge (Whangaipeki X Trust). Hohotaka Road is a metaled road about 8 km east of Manunui on State Highway 41 (Taumarunui - Turangi). Transport and accommodation is also offered by Go Bush Adventures (www.gobush.co.nz).



Access to the headwaters within the Tongariro National Park is via Te Araroa Trail from Owhango or State Highway 47 (Sir Edmond Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre). A 4-wheel drive vehicle, motor bike or mountain bike is required, but access does require a map or GPS. This section is rugged backcountry fishing requiring an above average level of fitness and the occasional deep crossing. Good numbers of fish averaging about 2kg can be expected. There is little fishable water above the confluence of the Whanganui with the Mangatepopo Stream because of water abstraction by the Tongariro Power Scheme. This section of the river is suitable for pack rafting for more information visit www.packraftingtrips.nz.

Pungapunga River

A small and easily wadable stream that offers good fly fishing with a high trout population including the occasional large trout that has moved upstream from the Whanganui River. The Pungapunga is best fished in the lower reaches where the stream flows across farmland with the occasional patch of scrub and willow. The river has very little public access so access must be obtained by asking permission from landowners.



Ongarue River

Despite its relative remoteness the Ongarue is a popular river offering a good catch rate of large rainbow trout as well as many kilometres of fishing water.

The lower reaches below the confluence with the Waimiha are rarely fished, somewhat surprising as this section offers some very good spin fishing waters especially in the gorge downstream from the Waimiha Township. Access is from the Waimiha-Ongarue Road which runs parallel to the river.

Access to the middle reaches can be gained across farmland from the Ongarue Stream Road, which runs parallel to the river (landowners permission required). The first public access via an unformed paper road is about 1.6 km past Kokomiko Road. Here there is attractive water as the river meanders across pastoral land with good deep pools, wadable shingle runs and lots of fish. Further upstream the Ongarue flows through extensive bush areas and short stretches of farmland offering superb water for nymph and summer cicada fishing. From the road, this looks a rugged impassible river but experienced backcountry anglers should have little difficulty and will often be rewarded with a high catch rate.

An upper tributary, the Okauaka Stream, also offers excellent fishing. Although from the bridge the Okauaka looks a rugged impassable stream, it does hold much attractive water a short distance upstream and is easily wadable.

The Blackfern lodge (www.blackfernlodge.co.nz) is a great place to stay when fishing the Ongarue River with ample public access to some great fishing water at the lodge. The owners do require guest to release trout.

An esplanade reserve provides ample public access on both sides of the Ongarue River, including the Okauaka Stream, but there is private land along the river so please check the Walking Access Commission on their website (www.wams.org.nz). Printing an access map of the area is recommended.

Taringamotu River

A small river that joins the Ongarue River at Taumarunui, and provides about 10 kilometres of fishing across pastoral land. Rainbow trout averaging about a 1kg are common. There is public access near the confluence from the Ongarue Back Road and Downstream of Jurgen Road.



Waimiha Stream

A delightful stream holding large numbers of rainbows and the occasional big brown. The lower reaches offer clear, low banks providing relatively easy fishing - a perfect place for the beginner. Further upstream, the Waimiha flows through scrub and native forest providing attractive fishing waters. Some good fish are taken from this section. Access is from Waimiha Road across farmland. Although there is a sign at the gate stating otherwise the Waimaiha Valley Road is a paper road and there is public access to the river about 5 km from the gate. Please get permission from the farmhouse just north of the Waimiha-Ongarue Road turnoff or call the number on the gate.

In the upper reaches the Waimiha is a small stream that meanders across farmland with stable pools and runs. The streambed consists primarily of papa rock, and in common with other papa bed rivers holds an abundance of fish. This section is highly regarded for its dry fishing for big brown trout and smaller but more abundant rainbows. The upper reaches run parallel to State Highway 30 (Te Kuiti - Mangakino) east of Benneydale, with access across private farmland.

Waione Stream

A large stream that flows across farmland and through patches of bush with a good population of rainbows, averaging about 1 kg. Public access is limited to the mouth (not easily accessible) and the forest park. The Pureora Forest has typical backcountry fishing with a low population of large rainbows. Access from Waione Road is by permission only.

Maramataha River

The Maramataha is a large backcountry river that receives little fishing pressure due to difficulties of access compared to the nearby Ongarue. Nevertheless the Maramataha offers a different fishing experience from other southern rivers and is well worth the effort.

From its confluence with the Ongarue River the Maramataha meanders for about 5 kilometres across farmland providing pleasant fishing on browns and rainbows averaging about 1.2kg. This is an easy section to fish, mostly wadable with clear banks. Access is gained by crossing private farmland from Waione Road.

Upstream from Waione Road the Maramataha River becomes much more rugged, flowing through a bush clad gorge. This section holds a low population of large rainbow trout, averaging 2-3kg, in generally very clear water. Access to the Maramataha can be gained across farmland from Kokomiko Road or through the Pureora Forest from Maramataha track (4-wheel drive required). A long, steep walk requires a reasonable level of fitness.