

3.5 MONIKA LANHAM RESERVE

3.5.1 DESCRIPTION

Monika Lanham Reserve is a dominant feature in the Town's natural landscape. It is approximately 39ha in size and rises to approximately 90m above sea level at its northern end. A trig station known as 'Opunoke' identifies this point.

The reserve is bounded by residential streets, housing, Rautahi Marae, the Ron Hardie Recreation Centre and two schools. Pedestrian access is from various points from River Road, Onslow Street, Glasgow Street, Fenton Mill Road, Savage Street and Fraser Street. There is a vehicle/pedestrian entry from Fenton Mill Road. The main vehicular access is from River Road near the Intermediate School. This also provides access to the water reservoirs on the northern end of the reserve, which store the town water supply.

There are various unformed walking tracks around the reserve including a set of steps from the Fenton Mill Road entry to a plateau near the water reservoirs. Mountain biking is encouraged in the reserve with several marked trails which include wooden features. A BMX track with starting facilities and humps is on the northern edge of the Reserve alongside Glasgow Street.

Soil in the area is of very recent origin and associated mainly with eruptions from the Okataina Caldera. The rhyolitic pumice subsoil is free draining, but of only moderate to low fertility. The Tarawera eruption in 1886 covered the area in an alkaline basaltic scoria shower, which is potentially highly fertile, but has yet to break down.

An area of approximately 1000m² on the northern side of the reserve is geothermally active. Some steam comes through vents in the ground and a sulphur smell is evident but the surface is not hot. While it is not considered dangerous this part of the reserve is surrounded by a low fence to discourage entry. A geothermal bore which extracts steam to heat the water in the town swimming pools is located just outside the fence. The geothermal character of this area influences the vegetation which grows nearby.

Darkly coloured scoria combined with high sunshine hours in the region cause natural dryness, which creates difficulty in establishing tree species. The vegetation cover at the time of

European settlement is reported to have been grassland with stands of small native trees and plants on the eastern and western slopes. Vegetation included Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) Manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), Harakeke/Flax (*Phormium tenax*) and Coprosma (*Coprosma Robusta*).

Extensive planting of exotic trees was undertaken in the 1970's. Species introduced included the London Plane Tree (*Platanus x acerifolius*), various Gums (*Eucalyptus*), Tasmanian Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), Black Italian Poplar (*Populus nigra*), Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*), and Cypress (*Cypressus spp*). Pest plants such as Blackberry, Privet, Ivy, Honeysuckle and Buddleia also established in large areas of the Reserve during this period.

The Reserve is home to one threatened native species – a dwarf, leafless Mistletoe (*Korthalsella salicornioides*). This is an 'At Risk' species classed as naturally uncommon¹. This population of dwarf mistletoe is one of only eight known to exist in the Bay of Plenty. It is thought to be one of the largest populations, estimated to be around a thousand plants. It is also reported to be one of the best examples of the plant in its natural habitat. The mistletoe is present on the slopes above the geothermal area once used as a sulphur mine, parasitic on Kanuka. The plant is doing well but the habitat in which it survives is threatened by competing exotic plants in the area, such as Australian Blackwood, Cotoneaster, Heather and Eucalyptus.

In the area behind Rautahi Marae, Council has developed a flax plantation. Part of the collection was donated to Kawerau by Landcare Research at Lincoln, which now looks after a collection started by Mrs Rene Orchiston of Gisborne in the 1950s. The original collection included over 100 cultivars of harakeke and whaariki considered by Maori on the East Coast and other parts of NZ as the most desirable for weaving. This part of the collection is not to be harvested.

¹ De Lange, P.J., Norton, D.A., Courtney, S.P., Heenan, P.B., Barkla, J.W., Cameron, E.K., Hitchmough, R.A., Townsend, A.J., (2009): *Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand (2008 Revision)*. New Zealand Journal of Botany 47: pp. 61-96.

Seven cultivars of locally-sourced Harakeke/Flax have been added to the collection, and are used by the Rautahi Marae Weavers other local weaving groups for many years.

3.5.2 HISTORY

From the late 1800's until 1894 the northern part of the reserve was mined for sulphur. Before the development of the town, the area was grazed as part of the surrounding Lands and Survey farm. From the late 1950s and into the 1960s, it was used by the local pony club as a grazing paddock.

In the 1950's a reservoir was constructed at the northern end of the Reserve to supply water to the town. The area became known as 'Reservoir Hill'. In 1968 a second reservoir was erected adjacent to the existing one to meet the increased need for water supply to the growing town.

In the early 1970's a Government funded Labour Department work scheme provided people to plant exotic trees grown at the Ministry of Works Nursery at Newstead in Hamilton. Large numbers of trees were planted. Council staff supervised these schemes.

On 13 November 1973 the Minister of Lands approved 'Reservoir Hill' as a reserve for recreation purposes. It was vested in Council. The first management plan was adopted by Council in 1973. While not comprehensive, it recognised the reserve as an area for passive recreation, and defined walking tracks and grazing areas for stock, and allowed for tree planting. The plan also allowed the radio transmission hut and aerial (since removed) to remain on the reserve under licence and recognised that a reservoir had been constructed in the reserve.

In 1977 Council renamed the Reserve 'Monika Lanham Reserve', in recognition of Councillor Monika Lanham's contribution to the community of Kawerau. In response to residents' concerns about the growth on the reserve in 1978, Council implemented a management regime which included policies to manage this problem. A 2001 review of the management plan brought a new focus on developing and restoring native habitat and including recreational opportunities in the reserve. Between 2003 and early 2012, Council's focus was on removing all of the remaining exotic trees from the reserve and replanting with native species.

The Trees for Babies Project, whereby trees are planted for babies born to Kawerau families, was initiated in 2002 and the first trees planted in 2004. 2004 was also the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Kawerau Township. The community gathered in the Reserve on Arbor Day to plant native trees. Both events became annual events.

By 2010 the restoration programme had seen the planting of approximately 20,000 native trees each year.

3.5.3 STATUS

Monika Lanham Reserve is vested in and administered by Council. It comprises two parcels of land classified as recreation Reserves. The legal descriptions of these is:

Allot 983 SO 46774 Matata Parish Recreation Reserve 19.5513ha

Allot 984 SO 46775 Matata Parish Recreation Reserve 19.5007ha

The Reserve is 39.0520ha in size.

The Reserve was formally named and classified as a Recreation Reserve, as per New Zealand Gazette Notice reference 1970 170 NZGZ. The Reserve is zoned Recreation under the Council's District Plan.

The Reserve contains archaeological sites (kumara pits, a sulphur mine and a pa site) which Council manages in accordance with the requirements of the Historic Places Act 1993.

3.5.4 POLICIES

Landscape Character

1. The classification for the Reserve shall be retained.
2. The management and control of the Reserve shall be retained by Council with support from the community.
3. Liaison and cooperation with any organisation, group or individual, shall be maintained and encouraged.

Vegetation

1. Sound horticultural techniques shall be used in the management of the Reserve's vegetation.
2. Planting shall be carried out in a manner that is sensitive to the landscape integrity of the Reserve.
3. Prior to the removal of any vegetation its historic, ecological or aesthetic merit must be assessed.
4. Noxious and aggressive exotic plants shall continue to be controlled and where possible, eliminated.
5. The Kanuka stand above the geothermal area will be preserved to maintain the habitat of the native mistletoe.

Access/Parking

1. Existing pedestrian access to the Reserve shall be maintained.
2. Pathways throughout the Reserve shall be maintained for the enjoyment of the public.
3. Vehicle access through the Reserve shall be maintained.
4. Designated parking areas shall be marked and developed where necessary.

Biking Facilities

1. Mountain biking tracks and the BMX track shall be maintained for the enjoyment of the public.