

**DISTRICT WIDE INTRODUCTION****DI 1.1 Introduction to the District**

The Ruapehu District covers 6,700km² (673,019 ha) and, in early 2009 had 9,700 properties, of which 8,719 are rateable. The land can be divided by type as follows:

- (a) 28% Recreational land (mainly Department of Conservation estate).
- (b) 51% Primary use land (agriculture, forestry, etc.).
- (c) 8% Defence estate.
- (d) 13% Other (ie, urban).

The District is primarily bordered by the Whanganui River in the west, the Hauhungaroa Range in the north-east and stretches towards the peaks of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe, and Ruapehu, with the latter rising to 2,797 metres from the surrounding countryside. The District also includes Ohakune and the southern-most town of Waiouru and the NZ Defence Force lands.

Within the District there are two National Parks, the Tongariro National Park; which has dual World Heritage status for culture and landscape; and part of the Whanganui National Park. Pureora Forest Park, Kara Forest, Tongariro Forest and Waitaanga Forest are also significant areas of indigenous vegetation.

Early history shows that the Whanganui River and its tributaries were used by Māori to facilitate trade and communication between the Waikato, Taranaki, Taupo, and Bay of Plenty regions. Clusters of archaeological sites are found at the confluences of major rivers such as the Retaruke and the Ohura with the Whanganui, where smoked and dried seafood were consumed in winter after being gathered at the coast during summer months.¹ There are also many early European historic sites in the District such as the flourmills along the Whanganui River, and sites relating to riverboat and railway activities.

The stunning natural beauty means that the traditional agricultural economy is added to by growing tourism.

More information about the Ruapehu District can be found in Council's Ruapehu 2008 State of the District Report and online at www.ruapehudc.govt.nz

DI 1.2 Population and Growth

A resident population of 13,572 was recorded for the District in the 2006 Census. The population of the District has been declining over the last two census periods.

Location	1996 Census	2001 Census	2006 Census
Owhango	216	207	189
Ohura	375	222	165
Rural Ohura	1,128	1,071	930
Taumarunui	5,832	5,139	5,052
Rural Taumarunui	1,836	1,611	1,584
National Park Village	237	234	240
Rural National Park	672	588	555
Ohakune	1,389	1,293	1,101

¹ 1991, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 'Historic Places Inventory, Ruapehu District'.



Location	1996 Census	2001 Census	2006 Census
Raetihi	1,167	1,068	1,035
Waiouru	2,478	1,647	1,380
Rural Waimarino/Waiouru	1,413	1,218	1,344
Total	16,743	14,295	13,569

However, there is still development occurring within the District. Much of this development is driven by demand for holiday home accommodation. The following information, based on Non Resident Ratepayers Surveys in 2008 and 2010, provides some insight into this:

- (a) The number of holiday homes is growing by almost 2.5% per year.
- (b) Over 38.7% of all the District is owned by people living outside the area.
- (c) 24.5% of people who own land in the Ruapehu District live outside the District.
- (d) The four areas which have the highest number of people who own property living outside the District are:
 - (i) Rangataua (60.9%), near Turoa Ski field.
 - (ii) National Park (47.1%), near Whakapapa Ski field.
 - (iii) Ohakune (41.4%).
 - (iv) Raurimu (41.4%).

DI 1.3 Social Overview

Income levels within the District are lower than the New Zealand average, with the figures for both Median Personal Income and Average Hourly Earnings below the national average. (The Median Personal Income for Ruapehu in the 2006 census was \$21,100, while nationally the median was \$24,400.)

The ethnic diversity is less variable than the national population of New Zealand, but contains an above-average percentage of Māori, with 36.5% of the population stating that they were of Māori ethnicity, compared with the national average of 14%. Meanwhile 58.7% of the population said that they were of European ethnicity compared with 64.8% nationally (the census allowed recording of more than one ethnicity per person).

The District's population is young, compared with the rest of New Zealand, with the median age being 32.7 years. 25% of the population is under 15 years compared to the national average of 21.5%. 9.9% are aged 65 and over, compared to the national average of 12.1%.

Other key facts about the District are:

- (a) The population is made up of 52% males and 48% females.
- (b) Overseas migrants represent 7% of people.
- (c) 84.3% (91.6% nationally) of households have access to a telephone and 47.5% (60.5% nationally) to the internet.
- (d) 32.3% of the population over the age of 15 has no formal qualifications compared with 28.4% nationally.
- (e) Approximately 47% of householders own their own homes compared with the national average of 54.5%.
- (f) 42% (same as national figure) of households consist of couples with children and 20% (18.1% nationally) consisted of single parents and children.

Council services a large geographic area with the costs shared across a relatively small rating base. The larger the rating base or the more prosperous the community, the more affordable the rate requirement becomes. Council must balance affordability with investment in the future sustainability of the District. This translates into investment to create economic growth, to maintain existing assets to meet community



expectations and legislative requirements and to ensure the capacity of infrastructural assets continue to meet the needs of growth in the District.

DI 1.4 Economic Overview

Economic indicators such as median personal income and average hourly earnings in the District show steady increases but remain well behind the national averages. This reflects the situation of resident families, but around 40% of the District is owned by non-resident ratepayers, with a very different socio-economic profile.

The Ruapehu District is primarily rural and this sector provides 28% of total employment and 23% of total GDP. Taumarunui, the District's largest town, is primarily a rural servicing centre. Its location also means there are some tourism activities.

The District is home to a major NZ Army base at Waiouru. Although the base has been scaled back in recent years, it is a major employer for the District.

Tourism-related industries of retail, accommodation, cafes and restaurants are also a significant part of the District's economic wellbeing, particularly closer to the Tongariro National Park and the south of the District. Ohakune is an area of significant growth.

Council has planned for increased demand in the areas where growth is anticipated. Its assets must be able to cope with the extra demand placed on its services during the typical peak winter season and the growing summer visitor market. More visitors to the area also create the need to develop infrastructure.

DI 1.5 Environmental Overview

Abundant natural resources and world-renowned scenery are defining characteristics of the Ruapehu District. Nearly 90% of land value is in the rural sector, which includes farming, forestry and reserve land. The National Parks, rivers and more than 150 other varied reserves in the area provide recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for residents and draw visitors to the District.

The rural landscape sustains large farming, forestry and horticulture industries. As a result, maintaining the quality of the environment is also essential to economic wellbeing in the District.

Issues surrounding fresh water quality and quantity are growing in importance both nationally and globally. The District is fortunate to have relatively plentiful water sources but growing demands on drinking water supplies, in terms of both health standards and capacity, will present challenges in the future. The overall water quality in the rivers and waterways is still good, but must be protected to ensure it does not become degraded over time. The middle and lower reaches of some of our rivers are affected by human activities such as sewerage, industrial discharges and land use practices.

In comparison to most parts of the country, the District has a relatively large area of indigenous natural habitats remaining under Conservation management. This includes around 20% of land being protected by the Department of Conservation under several different types of protected areas. There are also numerous privately protected areas, with 86 Nga Whenua Rahui covenants on Māori land and 43 Queen Elizabeth II Trust covenants registered in 2007.



DI 1.6 Cultural Overview

The Ruapehu District is rich in Māori heritage. Taumarunui was originally a Māori settlement, positioned at the junction of canoe and trade routes linking the central North Island with downstream villages. Taumarunui is where the boundaries of three predominant Māori tribes come together. The area surrounding the town is described as a quiet spiritual place where the four winds meet. European settlement in Taumarunui began in 1874.

Mt Hikurangi, Taumarunui's closest mountain, is historically and spiritually connected to Ngati Maniapoto. Near Taumarunui, are the "White Cliffs", the recognised "friendship gateway" of the Ngati Tuwharetoa tribe. The Whanganui River that flows around Taumarunui contains the ancestral spirit of the Ngati Haua tribe.

The Waimarino's European history began around 1850 with the construction of the Main Trunk Railway Line. Other early industries that have shaped the District's history included timber milling, farming and market gardening. In recent years, tourism has added to the growth of the area, aided by the opening of Turoa and Whakapapa ski fields on Mt Ruapehu.

The Tongariro National Park, surrounding and including the three great volcanic mountains - Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro - is one of New Zealand's most outstanding natural habitats and was gifted by the Tuwharetoa people. The original gifted area of 2,600ha was subsequently extended by acquisition of surrounding lands to the present size of 75,000ha, to become New Zealand's first National Park and the fourth in the world, and is recognised as a World Heritage Area.

In 2006, the District Plan Working Party held meetings with several iwi and hapu groups throughout the district as a first round of consultation with regard to developing the Proposed District Plan. The Council established the Māori Council in 2009. The Māori Council is to encourage communication between Council and local iwi. Consultation relating to resource consent applications is however undertaken directly with local iwi.

In 2009 two hui were held: one in Taumarunui and one in Ohakune. The key issues that arose from the meetings were:

- (a) The degree to which Māori resource management principles have been addressed in the Proposed District Plan. In the Māori worldview, humans are connected physically and spiritually to land, water, air, forests; people are an integral part of ecosystems and ecosystems are an essential part of people's heritage or genealogy (whakapapa).
- (b) The ability for iwi and hapu to adequately participate in the resource management process given the resources available to them, and the need for Council to partner with tangata whenua on an ongoing basis to ensure meaningful opportunities for tangata whenua.
- (c) Concern from iwi and hapu that waahi tapu and other sites of significance should be protected by Council, but that their locations should not be made public through the Proposed District Plan process. This "non-disclosure" approach has thus been adopted in the Proposed District Plan and does not differ from that of the Operative District Plan.
- (d) The ability for marae and papakainga housing to be developed to allow for the wellbeing of tangata whenua without hindrance from the District Plan. This is recognised by the Proposed District Plan



- (e) The maunga (mountains) and awa (river) of the District should be recognised and protected so that their values are sustained. In this regard the relationship of iwi and hapu with the Whanganui River and the maunga of the District and the ability for iwi and hapu to participate in and have equal rights in management of the maunga and awa were important issues for iwi and hapu. They were also eager to ensure that any controls placed on the activities that could be carried out on the surface of the Whanganui River recognised the existing use rights tangata whenua have for legally established activities on the awa. Iwi and hapu also identified the need for the carrying capacity of the Whanganui to be ascertained before any resource management regime is put in place. In this regard, the relationship of tangata whenua to the awa and the lack of identification of its carrying capacity have been recognised in the provisions for the awa in the Proposed District Plan Whanganui.