

## ABOUT THE WAITAKI

The Waitaki River is popular for trout and salmon angling and was ranked as the 6th most fished river in New Zealand in the 2014-2015 National Angling Survey.

The fishery as we know it today was established in the 1930's by the construction of the Waitaki Dam which separated the lower 65km of river from the greater Waitaki Catchment.

The River has a formidable flow and can be a challenge to access and fish. A healthy population of brown and rainbow trout awaits any angler willing to take that challenge and if the conditions are right some truly phenomenal fishing can be experienced.

The Waitaki River is famous for being the birthplace of salmon fishing in New Zealand. A hatchery located on a small creek of the Hakataramea River, a major tributary of the Waitaki, produced the first recorded salmon run in New Zealand in 1905. The salmon fishery is now a shadow of its former glory but still attracts a dedicated following of anglers each season.



Spin fishing the stable waters at Kurow

Within the lower Waitaki River Catchment other fishing options exist. Two notable tributary fisheries; the Hakataramea and Maerewhenua Rivers offer great small river fishing when flows are adequate. Additionally, Bells and Bortons ponds are irrigation offtake ponds that offer still-water fishing options.

## ANGLER ACCESS

The Kurow area offers the most consistent and easy walking access fishing on the Waitaki and makes a great starting point for any anglers first trip to the Waitaki. A four-wheel drive vehicle can save some long walks to the river as many of the access ways have rough terrain and wet and muddy areas to traverse.

Both trout and salmon anglers who access the river by jet boat have a major advantage over the shoreline angler as they can access kilometres of braids and pools that are inaccessible by foot. The only fully formed boat ramp on the river is located between the bridges at Kurow and is popular with jet boat anglers, especially on opening day of the new season. Other popular spots for launching jet boats includes Duntroon, Bells Pond intake and the Te Maiharoa Rd access points.



An exceptional Waitaki catch - a large sea-run brown trout

The middle and lower river is subject to changeable access and fishing conditions as the braided channels can change on a regular basis. It is common for access points to be great one year and then offer no good fishing water the next, so anglers need to be adaptable to the current conditions and re-visit access points over the years.

The thick riparian vegetation of willow, blackberry and broom can smother access ways over a single summer and affect access. A short section of river or a single braid is often all that can be accessed from a single access point. Many access points only remain usable for anglers because they are maintained by farmers or Environment Canterbury for farm access and flood protections works.

## KNOW THE FLOW

The single biggest factor influencing fishing success on the Waitaki is the flow.

There is a flow recorder on the river at Kurow and many anglers use this to gauge the "fishability" of the river. The flow information can be sourced on the Environment Canterbury website at: [www.ecan.govt.nz/data/riverflow/](http://www.ecan.govt.nz/data/riverflow/).

The upper river above the Hakataramea River confluence offers reliable fishing conditions through normal flow levels as its water is sourced from the generally clear waters of Lake Waitaki and it is confined to distinct channels.

Below the Hakataramea confluence the river opens on to the Waitaki flood plains and becomes braided and unstable. Fishing opportunities from here down to the mouth vary greatly dependant on the flow levels.

As a guide, fishing is best when flows are below 300 cumecs but some good opportunities still exist between 300-350 cumecs. Many locals regard the river downstream from the Hakataramea confluence as "unfishable" when flows reach 400 cumecs.

## FISHING ADVICE

The trout of the Waitaki are susceptible to all classic and modern baits, lures and flies. The key to success on the Waitaki is finding good holding water and fishing it at the right flows.

A mix of rainbow and brown trout are generally encountered and fish of 1 to 4 pounds are common. Salmon of 8 to 14 pounds have made up the bulk of the salmon catch in recent years.

Popular baits include worms and scented soft baits while traditional spinners like black n gold toby's or veltic's and modern soft plastic lures are used to great success. Fly anglers commonly use tungsten beaded hare and copper or pheasant tail nymphs and caddis imitation dry flies.

Didymo is a feature of the river and can be an inconvenience to remove from your hooks, however trout fishery remains in good shape and it is worth persevering through this annoyance.

Salmon anglers favour the months of February and March.

Access to the mouth is possible from the beach on both sides but one side usually provides easier access. The position of the mouth and the shape and size of the lagoon can change substantially throughout the year with the environmental conditions. Some local anglers use boats to cross the lagoon on the north side to access the mouth.

Several access points on the Waitaki involve access through private land and/or working farms. In many cases this access is provided generously by the landowners out of good will alone and to maintain this privilege anglers must abide by all signage and landowner requests. Gates should be left as you found them.

## ANGLER SAFETY

Your personal safety is your responsibility. The Waitaki river is huge and its everchanging flows present a hazard to anglers who choose to wade and boat its waters. Anglers must always assess the flows before entering the water and at regular intervals during each outing.

Meridian owns and operates the Waitaki Power Station and controls the flows into the Waitaki River. Flows released from the dam can fluctuate relatively quickly throughout the day and night in response to the need for hydro-generation and to manage high inflows occurring in the catchments above the Waitaki Dam.

During high rainfall events tributary rivers like the Hakataramea and Maerewhenua will have a significant influence on flows additional to managed flows from the dam.

There is a flow recorder at Kurow which can be viewed on the Environment Canterbury Website: [www.ecan.govt.nz/data/riverflow/](http://www.ecan.govt.nz/data/riverflow/). As a rule of thumb, typical flows measured at the Kurow flow recorder originated from the Waitaki Dam less than an hour before hand and will arrive at the SH1 Bridge 9 to 10 hours later.

## CONTACT

Central South Island Fish & Game Region  
32 Richard Pearse Drive, PO Box 150, Temuka, New Zealand  
Telephone (03) 615 8400 Email [csi@fishandgame.org.nz](mailto:csi@fishandgame.org.nz)  
Web [www.fishandgame.org.nz](http://www.fishandgame.org.nz)

Shoreline anglers generally target salmon between the mouth and Ferry Road access points while Jet boat anglers usually target salmon in the stretch of river between the mouth and Duntroon. Zed spinners in a range of sizes from 14-44 grams are a go-to option for salmon.

Walking access for trout anglers is popular in the area from the Otekaieke River access point up to Kurow Island. There are some stable side braids here that offer consistent fishing options and some access to braid-islands when flows are suitable. During early summer some prolific caddis hatches occur in the upper river making for great evening-rise and night fishing.

The lagoon area and mouth are worth a cast for resident and sea-run brown trout that key into the prey fish species that live in the area.



Aerial view of the rivermouth

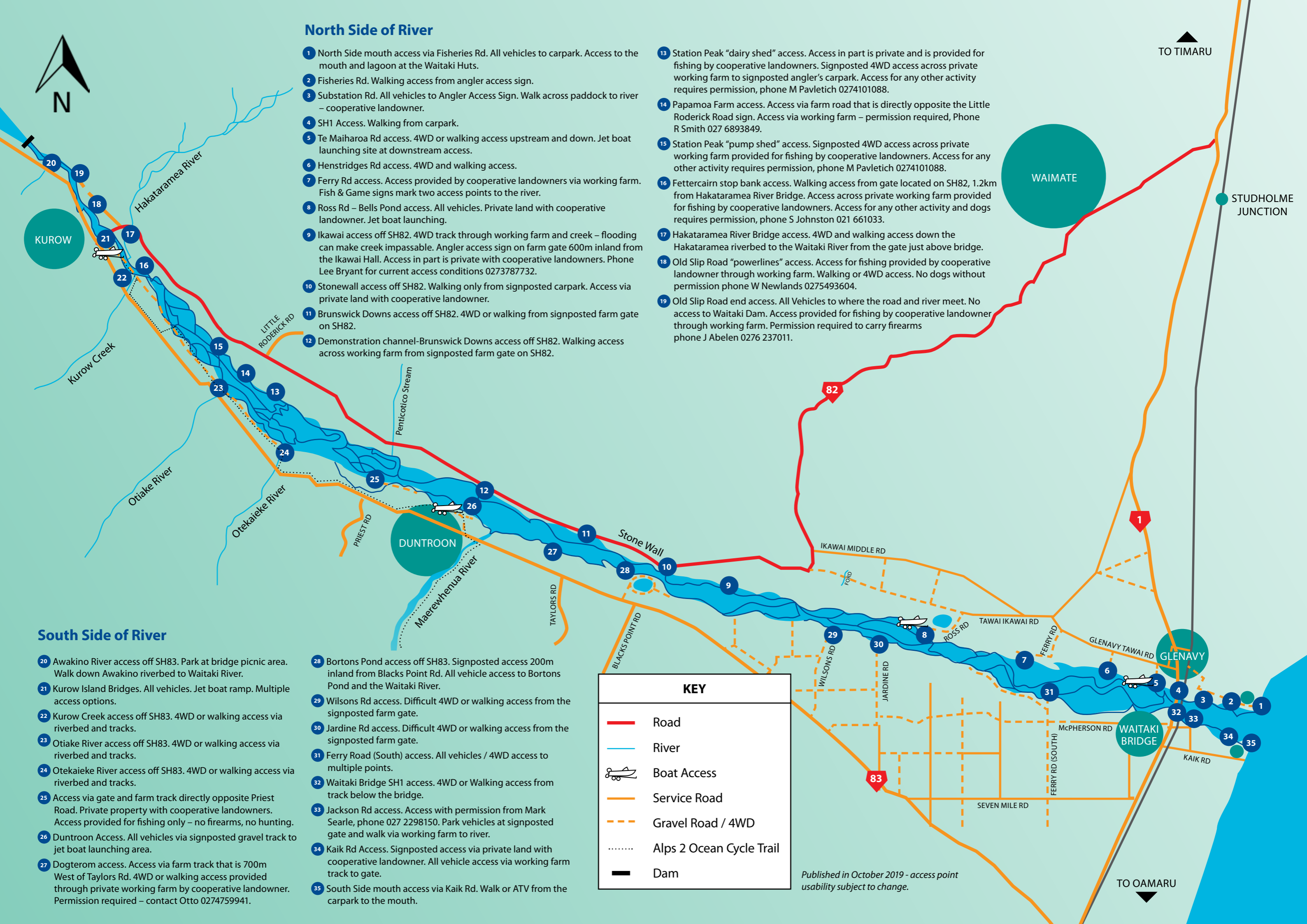
## RULES AND REGULATIONS

All anglers are required to hold a valid sports fishing licence and must adhere to regulations which are contained within the South Island Sports Fishing Regulation Guide. The regulation guide is available in digital or pamphlet form when you purchase your licence and can be found on the Fish & Game NZ website [www.fishandgame.org.nz](http://www.fishandgame.org.nz). Regulations are subject to change on a seasonal basis. If you need any clarification, please contact the Central South Island Region office.

# Waitaki River



Central South Island Region



### North Side of River

- 1 North Side mouth access via Fisheries Rd. All vehicles to carpark. Access to the mouth and lagoon at the Waitaki Huts.
- 2 Fisheries Rd. Walking access from angler access sign.
- 3 Substation Rd. All vehicles to Angler Access Sign. Walk across paddock to river – cooperative landowner.
- 4 SH1 Access. Walking from carpark.
- 5 Te Maiharoa Rd access. 4WD or walking access upstream and down. Jet boat launching site at downstream access.
- 6 Henstridges Rd access. 4WD and walking access.
- 7 Ferry Rd access. Access provided by cooperative landowners via working farm. Fish & Game signs mark two access points to the river.
- 8 Ross Rd – Bells Pond access. All vehicles. Private land with cooperative landowner. Jet boat launching.
- 9 Ikawai access off SH82. 4WD track through working farm and creek – flooding can make creek impassable. Angler access sign on farm gate 600m inland from the Ikawai Hall. Access in part is private with cooperative landowners. Phone Lee Bryant for current access conditions 0273787732.
- 10 Stonewall access off SH82. Walking only from signposted carpark. Access via private land with cooperative landowner.
- 11 Brunswick Downs access off SH82. 4WD or walking from signposted farm gate on SH82.
- 12 Demonstration channel-Brunswick Downs access off SH82. Walking access across working farm from signposted farm gate on SH82.

- 13 Station Peak “dairy shed” access. Access in part is private and is provided for fishing by cooperative landowners. Signposted 4WD access across private working farm to signposted angler’s carpark. Access for any other activity requires permission, phone M Pavletich 0274101088.
- 14 Papamoa Farm access. Access via farm road that is directly opposite the Little Roderick Road sign. Access via working farm – permission required, Phone R Smith 027 6893849.
- 15 Station Peak “pump shed” access. Signposted 4WD access across private working farm provided for fishing by cooperative landowners. Access for any other activity requires permission, phone M Pavletich 0274101088.
- 16 Fettercairn stop bank access. Walking access from gate located on SH82, 1.2km from Hakataramea River Bridge. Access across private working farm provided for fishing by cooperative landowners. Access for any other activity and dogs requires permission, phone S Johnston 021 661033.
- 17 Hakataramea River Bridge access. 4WD and walking access down the Hakataramea riverbed to the Waitaki River from the gate just above bridge.
- 18 Old Slip Road “powerlines” access. Access for fishing provided by cooperative landowner through working farm. Walking or 4WD access. No dogs without permission phone W Newlands 0275493604.
- 19 Old Slip Road end access. All Vehicles to where the road and river meet. No access to Waitaki Dam. Access provided for fishing by cooperative landowner through working farm. Permission required to carry firearms phone J Abelen 0276 237011.

### South Side of River

- 20 Awakino River access off SH83. Park at bridge picnic area. Walk down Awakino riverbed to Waitaki River.
- 21 Kurow Island Bridges. All vehicles. Jet boat ramp. Multiple access options.
- 22 Kurow Creek access off SH83. 4WD or walking access via riverbed and tracks.
- 23 Otiake River access off SH83. 4WD or walking access via riverbed and tracks.
- 24 Otekaieke River access off SH83. 4WD or walking access via riverbed and tracks.
- 25 Access via gate and farm track directly opposite Priest Road. Private property with cooperative landowners. Access provided for fishing only – no firearms, no hunting.
- 26 Duntroon Access. All vehicles via signposted gravel track to jet boat launching area.
- 27 Dogterom access. Access via farm track that is 700m West of Taylors Rd. 4WD or walking access provided through private working farm by cooperative landowner. Permission required – contact Otto 0274759941.

- 28 Bortons Pond access off SH83. Signposted access 200m inland from Blacks Point Rd. All vehicle access to Bortons Pond and the Waitaki River.
- 29 Wilsons Rd access. Difficult 4WD or walking access from the signposted farm gate.
- 30 Jardine Rd access. Difficult 4WD or walking access from the signposted farm gate.
- 31 Ferry Road (South) access. All vehicles / 4WD access to multiple points.
- 32 Waitaki Bridge SH1 access. 4WD or Walking access from track below the bridge.
- 33 Jackson Rd access. Access with permission from Mark Searle, phone 027 2298150. Park vehicles at signposted gate and walk via working farm to river.
- 34 Kaik Rd Access. Signposted access via private land with cooperative landowner. All vehicle access via working farm track to gate.
- 35 South Side mouth access via Kaik Rd. Walk or ATV from the carpark to the mouth.

KEY	
	Road
	River
	Boat Access
	Service Road
	Gravel Road / 4WD
	Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail
	Dam

Published in October 2019 - access point usability subject to change.