Lower Manawatu River Fishery

The Manawatu River is a river of unique change over its 170km. It is very small where it emerges from the eastern Ruahine Range west of Norsewood, with virtually all its headwaters readily available to the angler as it passes through farmed rolling hill country. The river quickly becomes medium sized and then comparatively large after the Tiraumea and Mangatainoka Rivers join it at Ngawapuru, before it disappears through the Manawatu Gorge to meet the sea at Foxton. This pamphlet describes angler access to the river between the Manawatu River gorge and Foxton Beach. A separate pamphlet provides access information to the river upstream of the gorge.

There are healthy populations of brown and rainbow trout throughout, with perch around Palmerston North and downstream. The large majority of angling effort takes place between the gorge and Palmerston North. There is very good access to and along the river off the Palmerston North City walkway, however there are only a modest number of access points to the river upstream and downstream of Palmerston North.

Sports fishing opportunity is limited downstream of the Opiki bridge (Rangitane Rd) due to few access points and often discoloured water. With the right conditions the sports fishing can be as good as further upstream and in addition to trout and perch, there are some non-sports fish fish species - e.g. mullet, kahawai and herring.

Anglers!

Most of the river covered by this pamphlet is in private ownership which means anglers do not have a right of access (i.e. there is no “Queens Chain”). Access to and along some specified reaches of this private land (please refer to “Access Points”) has been willingly granted by the landowners - PLEASE respect the privilege of access. Conditions of access are (unless otherwise specified): Leave GATES as you find them. NO dogs. NO firearms. NO camping. NO fires.

Please Note: The Wellington Fish and Game Council has endeavoured to show where legal public access exists to and along this river. Because of a variety of factors beyond our control this is a guideline only. The onus of avoiding trespassing on private land rests with the angler and where doubt arises landowner permission should be sought. If any difficulty occurs through the use of this information please contact Fish and Game, Palmerston North.

GENERAL Fishing Information

All methods are suitable throughout the river and traditional bait fishing especially so in the reaches downstream of Palmerston North where the river slows and there is a good prospect of catching perch, mullet and herring. This part of the river is where spin fishing comes into its own and with experience can out fish fly fishers. Spoons (copper over black) and blade spinners (copper with black, green or red bodies) work the best as will rapalas in faster water and/or discoloured water conditions.

Access points

Please Note: The True left and True Right sides of a river are on your left and right respectively as you face downstream.

1. Ashhurst Bridge
On the Ashhurst side of the river, turn off SH3 on the upstream side of the bridge and follow gravel track onto the river bed. This access provides excellent access to a considerable length of fishing water on the Manawatu River and also the lower Pohangina River. It is a great area to take the family fishing combined with picnics and swimming.

2. Raukawa Road
Raukawa Road runs off SH3, direct to the river, about 3km towards Palmerston North from Ashhurst. Park at the end of the road and DO NOT block any gateway. Climb over the stile at the fence by the stop bank (sign posted) and walk directly to the river. Access along the river is permitted courtesy of Higgins Aggregates Ltd (downstream for approximately 2km) and Blackleys Construction Ltd (upstream for approximately 1.5km). Both these companies have gravel quarrying operations adjacent to the river and it is VERY important anglers do not wander through these areas. PLEASE KEEP TO THE RIVER’S EDGE. The floods in 2004 have caused bank erosion upstream of Raukawa Rd and heavy machinery will be operating beside and in the river - keep clear of these operations at all times. If fishing upstream, it is possible during summer flows for anglers competent at crossing rivers to cross to the true left side.

All access within the reaches described is over private land so please comply with the conditions (see Anglers) of our negotiated access.

3. Orns Road
Orns Road runs off Fitzherbert Road East, which runs from the Ashhurst bridge to Aokautere. Drive to the end of Orns Road and park about 100m past a big red barn that is on your left-hand side and before the gate (locked). Walk down the gravel track to the bottom of the river terrace and either turn right off the track and cross the paddock to the river to fish upstream or carry on about 1km on the gravel track to the river.

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4. Te Matai Road
Access to the river is possible through Higgins Aggregates Plant at the eastern end of Te Matai Road. Anglers MUST call in to the plant office to check that access is okay and ask the best way to the river. PLEASE be aware that this is a quarry site where heavy machinery operates and where deep holes are being excavated. The quarry site is privately owned - please respect this and please report to Higgins any suspicious activity around their plant and machinery. Vandalism can be a problem and anglers can help by being vigilant.

5. Palmerston North
On the true right of the river between Riversdale Road (off the city end of Te Matai Road) and Maxwells Line there is a public walkway. Access to mid sections of the walkway is possible from a number of streets within the city - for example Ruahine Street, Albert Street, Fitzherbert Ave, Dittmer Drive. The river can be fished using the walkway as access although much of the bank to the water’s edge is steep and tree lined.

6. Staces Road
From Aokautere travel down Staces Road to its end. Park without obstructing any gateway. SHUT any gate you open, and walk across the paddock directly to the river. Alternatively, off Staces Road turn left into Pinfold Road, travel to its end, park without obstructing any gateway and walk directly to the river.

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7. Maxwells Line
Access is possible off the end of Maxwells Line in two places. First, travel to the end of Maxwells Line and go straight ahead over the stop bank to Punei Park, and park in the gravelled car park 150m from the stop bank. Walk over the rough ground directly to the river - about 200m. Alternatively, turn right immediately before the stop bank, through gates onto the road that goes to the Palmerston North City Landfill. The gates at the entrance to this road are open from 7am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday and 12noon to 4pm Sundays and Public holidays. Drive past the landfill entrance down to the Higgins Aggregates Plant (1.6km from the end of Maxwells Line) and call in to the Plant office to ask the best way to the river and where to park safely. PLEASE be aware that this is a quarry site where heavy machinery operates and where deep holes are being excavated. The quarry site is privately owned - please respect this and please report to Higgins any suspicious activity around their plant and machinery. Vandalism can be a problem to and anglers can help by being vigilant.

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8. Camp Road
From the end of Camp Rd park without obstructing any gateway and proceed directly to the river. Anglers are NOT permitted to fish upstream from the end of the road. There is only legal public access downstream from the end of Camp Rd and this extends for about 1.8km to the NZ Pharmaceutical factory.
9. Karere Road
Karere Road runs off SH56 3km south-west of Longburn. Travel to the end of the sealed road up and over the stop bank. From here the road becomes a gravel and dirt track suitable for two-wheel drive only when dry. Follow the track all the way to the river bed.

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10. Jacketytown Road
Jacketytown Road runs off SH56 7km south-west of Longburn. Travel to the end of the road (just over the stop bank), park without obstructing any gateway, and walk directly, about 300m across the paddock, through some trees to the river. Fishing downstream for about 700m is over private land (where your access has been negotiated) then a marginal strip (public land) starts and progresses downstream for another 1.5km or so. Legal public access also exists on the opposite side of the river and if the river is wadeable, this side can be fished within the highlighted (red) area on the map (please note there is no organised access to this reach from the Linton side).

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11. Opiki Bridge
Access to the river on the true right can be obtained by phoning Robert Brookes, 06 329 0087. The Brookes’ will explain how best to get access and where to park safely. The extent of this access covers from about 500m downstream of the Opiki bridge to about 4.5km of river length upstream of the bridge. This then links to the legal public access (1.5km marginal strip) leading toward Jacketytown Road (refer to Access 10 - Jacketytown Road).

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12. Moutoa Conservation Area
Whirokino Bridge (upstream access): Turn off SH1 on the north (Foxton) side of the river and drive up Whirokino Road about 1.7km. Before the road curves away from the stop bank go through a gate onto a track (only suitable when dry). Alternatively carry on along Whirokino Road to Vickerman Road and travel to the end (or access Vickerman Road by turning left off the Foxton Shannon Road into Springs Road, right into Kere Kere Road and left into Whirokino Road). Park up and walk directly to the river. DO NOT use the formed track that links Kere Kere Road and Vickerman Road - this is private.

13. Matakarapa Road
Whirokino Bridge (downstream access): Turn off SH1 on the north side of the river and drive down Matakarapa Road to fish the area from the bridge to about 1.5km downstream of the boat ramp. Alternatively it is possible to park on the south side of the bridge where there is a rest area and walk downstream.

14. Foxton Beach
Travel to Foxton Beach. Fishing for mainly non-sports fish species (mullet, kahawai, herring) is popular at the boat ramp and at the river’s mouth. To get to the boat ramp turn left off Seabury Ave (the main road through Foxton Beach) into Linklater Ave then left into Hartley Street and the ramp is about 300m along. Alternatively go to the end of Seabury Ave, turn left and follow road around to the Foxton Beach Camp, turn left again just before the camp onto a well formed dirt road, go past the Yacht Club, and follow tracks out to the river’s mouth. Once past the camp you are driving on sand suitable only for two-wheel drive vehicles if it has been compacted.