Upper 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 Tiraukai and Mangatainoka Rivers join it at Ngawapuru, before it disappears through the Manawatu Gorge to meet the sea at Foxton.

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 Dannevirke and Palmerston North. Because of the length of fishable water, and the reasonably even spread of angler access points to the river, it is unusual to encounter other anglers except perhaps during the Christmas/New Year period.

Anglers!

Several kilometres of the river covered by this pamphlet are 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: NO dogs. Leave GATES as you find them. 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 over most of the river. Use lighter gear as the river gets lower and warmer. The evening rise, although variable, provides great fishing. The upper most reaches of the Manawatu River (access points 1,2,3) are very small (about 2-8m wide) and hold very few adult trout.

In the vicinity of Ormondville and Makotuku (access points 4,5,6 and 8) the river is 6-12m wide, confined between stable high banks. Willow growth is prolific in places, especially at access points 4 and 5, and this makes bank walking and casting very challenging. It is most suited to anglers who prefer sight fishing for cruising trout.

The river becomes increasingly open as it gains in size and downstream of the Tamaki River confluence, there are large gravel beaches with some scrubby and willow lined margins, making river travel and casting for anglers comparatively easy. The river can be crossed mostly at will although stones can be very slippery.

Downstream of the Ngawapuru Bridge the river is substantially larger and river crossings need to be chosen with care. The river remains open, with large gravel beaches and the banks fringed with willows. Good opportunity to fish all methods.

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. Ellison Road
   Access is off SH2 onto Jens Andersen Rd, then right onto Ellison Rd. Park at bridge NC02.

2. SH2 Road Bridge
   Access is at the SH2 bridge. Anglers please exercise great care if parking any way near the bridge as often vehicle traffic on SH2 is heavy. Do not obscure travelling drivers' vision of the road or bridge - park well off the road.

3. Kopua Road
   Access is at the Kopua Road Bridge. Going upstream much of the access is in the riverbed which is confined between high banks or banks liberally covered in blackberry. Although the crossings are not deep, anglers must be prepared to wade.

4. Ormondville-Tc Uri Road
   Access is at the Ormondville-Tc Uri Road and Bolton Rd junction(75m over bridge). Bankside travel is difficult with willow, blackberry and other plant growth. It is very challenging fishing.

5. Donghi Road
   Access is from the bridge where Donghi Rd crosses the river. Park away from gates. It is difficult fishing because of the tree and scrub growth. Remember there is no legal public access downstream of the bridge - to fish here you must contact the landowners.

6. Rakaiatari Road
   Access is at the bridge. Park on the open ground on the left side before crossing the bridge. Park out of the way of any truck wanting access to the loading race - there is plenty of room. Upstream there is legal public access along the true right bank only.

7. Mangatewainui Stream Confluence
   This is not an access point but the confluence of the Mangatewainui Stream where, upstream of this point, the river is closed from May to September inclusive. Bag and trout length limits may also be different upstream of this point, please check your regulation guide.

8. Maunga Road
   Access is at the bridge. Do not block gateways. As there is no legal public access immediately upstream or downstream of the bridge Fish and Game has organised access, on your behalf, with the landowners adjoining the river. Please comply with the conditions (see Anglers) of our negotiated access, as the continuing goodwill of the landowners depends on it.

9. Aerodrome Road
   Access is off the end of Aerodrome Road. Go past the last house (on right), across the cattle stop, and follow the track, which will take you to within about 30m of the river. There is only legal public access downstream of this point on the true right, but it extends for 6.7km to the confluence with the Tamaki River. Although after 2.4km, there is legal public access on the true left as well for the next 2.4km.

10. Oringi Road
    Access off Oringi Rd (signposted). Please park at the parking area near the gate. Do not drive through the gate and up the track. As there is no legal public access either upstream or downstream of this point Fish and Game has organised access, on your behalf, with the landowners adjoining the river. This negotiated access covers both sides of the river (except about 800m on the true right downstream of the Tamaki) between Kumeroa and the confluence of the Tamaki River confluence. Please comply with the conditions (see Anglers) of our negotiated access, as the continuing goodwill of the landowners depends on it.

11. Beatson’s Corner
    Access is off Jackson Rd (signposted). From Hopelands Rd, travel about 5.7km to a sharp left turn (400m after crossing the Raparapawai Stream) and park on the wide grass verge. If travelling southwards down Oringi Rd, it is a sharp right turn, about 3 km after the Gaisford Rd intersection. Walk through the double pipe and wire gate, 250m down the track to the river. Fish and Game has organised this access, on your behalf, with the landowners adjoining the river. Please comply with the conditions (see Anglers) of our negotiated access, as the continuing goodwill of the landowners depends on it.

12. Kumeroa Village. Kumeroa Domain and Potter Road. Kumeroa Village: Turn left into Township Rd, then left again at the Little Rd “T” intersection. Follow the Little Rd extension, through the gate, down to the river. Kumeroa Domain: At Kumeroa Village, turn left into Domain Road. At the Little Road intersection, leave the sealed road and go straight ahead through the gate and follow the fenced off lane for 700m (after dropping down the river terrace, follow the fence on your right) to the river. Please close the gates. The gate may be locked during lambing or other stock sensitive times.

Potter Road: Continuing up Little Rd, turn left into Potter Rd, go to end of seal, and continue along private gravel road and ask for permission and direction to the river at any of the houses. Upstream of Kumeroa, please comply with the conditions (see Anglers) of our negotiated access, as the continuing goodwill of the landowners depends on it.
13. The Honey House
Cross the river at the Hopelands Bridge, turn left up Kumeroa Rd, and after travelling 2.3km, turn left off Kumeroa Rd, through the second set of double pipe and netting gates onto the riverbed. Please close the gates.

14. Jacksons Road metal pit
Access is off Jacksons Rd. From Hopelands Rd, travel about 1.7km up Jacksons Rd to where the river comes closest to the road. Park beside the road and walk through gates to the river.

15. Hopelands Bridge
This is not an access to the river point, rather a landmark to other access points.

16. Oak Tree
From Hopelands Rd, travel down Bluff Rd about 2.5km (or, if travelling upstream on Bluff Rd, it is 5.6km from SH2) and park off the road near the Oak tree (signposted). Please do not drive through the gate, or obstruct it, and be careful parking here if the ground is wet and/or muddy. Walk to the river. Please shut the gate.

17. Bluff Road Bluff
From SH2, travel up Bluff Rd about 2.6km. Where the road comes close to the river there is a dip in the road and a sharp turn to the left. Do not take the sharp turn left, instead go straight ahead down a steep gravel track and through the gate to the river (signposted). Once on the river berm there is ample room for parking. Please do not wander onto adjoining paddocks. Alternatively, stay on Bluff Rd, go around the sharp left corner for another 150m, where the next gate on the right can be seen. Park at the gate taking care not to block it, and walk to the river (signposted). Please close the gates.

18. Haukopua Scenic Reserve
From either Kohinui Rd or Thompson Rd turn into Oete Rd and from the end of the seal go 1.8km, passing the Haukopua Scenic Reserve sign, and turn right into a metal pit extraction area and the river bed.

19. Ngawapuru Bridge - SH2
Access to the river at the Ngawapuru Bridge is off SH2, 800m south of the bridge, or 100m south of the Ngawapuru rail overbridge. Turn off to the left, if heading south, onto an old sealed road, go 200m to a metal gate (signposted) and through the gate (please shut the gate). Continue on a good metal track to pass under both the rail and road bridges then right onto the river bed.

20. Troup Road
Access to the river off Troup Rd requires the permission of the landowner. Troup Rd runs off both SH2 (about 2km north of Ngawapuru Bridge) and SH3 (just on the Manawatu Gorge side of Woodville). Access to the river is through Mr and Mrs Ball’s property located on the river’s side of Troup Rd at the right angle bend. Please phone Mr and Mrs Ball (06 376 5252) and follow their instructions.

21. Ormond Road
Drive down the Ormond Rd extension from its intersection with Troup Rd for 1.3km. At the 1.3km mark the road is partially boarded with a metal gate (signposted). Please park here but do not block the gateway. Proceed on foot along the track, through a narrow band of willows, and across the paddock to the river. The walking distance to the river is about 500m. Access along the true right bank within the area shown by the blue line on the map has been organised. Please comply with the conditions of our negotiated access, as the continuing goodwill of the landowners depends on it.

22. Recreation Reserve
Turn off SH3 across the Ballance Bridge onto Gorge Rd and park next to playground (about 100m from the bridge). Walk into the playground to a fence along the top of the river terrace, then through the bush in an upstream direction following a distinct but unmarked track for about 100m until you see a white arrow directing you down the terrace. The drop down the terrace is steep and a bit tricky to negotiate and it requires a great deal of care if the ground is wet. Head out of the bush in an upstream direction to the river’s edge.

23. Woodville Ferry Reserve, SH3.
Turn off SH3 into the Woodville Ferry Reserve, which is between the two bridges over the river at the eastern end of the Manawatu Gorge. Please shut the gate. The reserve is very big and offers plenty of parking and scope for family activities. Please be aware that this access can be closed for vehicle access during lambing.