

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



## Baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek

Opus International Consultants Limited



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## and Corner Creek

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### Baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This purpose of this report is to assist the Department of Conservation in managing the phasing out of private baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek on the South Wairarapa Coast. This is in line with the policies outlined in the Conservation Management Strategy for Wellington Conservancy, Section 26.2.2, Objective 1.

The report outlines the environmental impact of the baches on the physical, visual and recreational values on the surrounding landscape. Overall, the baches were found to have no significant long-term adverse effects on the environment other than the potential fire risk from chimneys or the spread of weeds into the conservation zone. Due to their scale and location, the presence of the baches was not considered to have any significant adverse impact on recreational use of the area except potentially that of camping in the Rimutaka Forest Park.

Recommendations are made, based on findings from both a broad scale visual assessment and a detailed structural inspection of individual baches. These recommendations range across the entire spectrum from minor maintenance items to complete dismantling and removal of some baches.

#### Key recommendations are :

- *Those baches found to have a high impact be phased out within a shorter time period than the time limit of 2019 issued to existing licenced baches.*
- *Baches that are structurally unsound (where repairs would amount to rebuilding) are to be dismantled and removed immediately and the area reinstated to blend with the natural surroundings.*
- *Maintenance work is to be undertaken as outlined in the individual checklists for each bach and shall be maintained in this condition for the length of the bach licence.*
- *All baches are to be painted in an approved colour to blend with the surrounding landscape (as outlined in section 7.2.2).*
- *All non-indigenous plant material in the vicinity of the baches shall be removed from Conservation land and controlled to prevent any spread of these species.*
- *All inorganic rubbish is to be removed from the vicinity of the baches and the area kept free from long grass and vegetation which may pose a fire risk (except regenerating Kanuka within the Rimutaka Forest Park).*

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**Baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

At Ocean Beach and Corner Creek on the south-west Wairarapa coast, there are 51 baches, the majority of which are on land administered by the Department of Conservation. Of the ten baches on land that the Department does not administer, four are on private land and six are on unformed legal road, the uplifting of which is currently under review. If uplifted, these six baches will be included in land that is administered by the Department.

Opus International Consultants Ltd (Formerly Works Consultancy Services Ltd) have been commissioned by the Department of Conservation to provide an independent environmental assessment of these 47 baches. A copy of the brief for this assessment is attached as Appendix 1.

**2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of the environmental impact and possible mitigation measures of adverse effects of the 47 baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek on public land. This information is intended to assist the Department of Conservation in managing the phasing out of the private baches in terms of the Conservation Management Strategy for Wellington Conservancy Section 26.2.2, Objective 1.

The report outlines the environmental impact of the baches on the physical, visual and recreational values on the surrounding landscape. It does not include any assessment of the legal right of the bach owners to occupy the site. It also does not include any assessment of the architectural significance of the baches. An assessment of the historical and cultural values of the baches is being undertaken concurrently with this report.<sup>1</sup> The findings of that assessment will be used along with this environmental assessment as background information by the Department in preparing licence conditions for each bach.

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<sup>1</sup> McCracken H. 1997, *Ocean Beach Baches, A cultural heritage assessment*, Department of Conservation, Wellington Conservancy

### 3. BACKGROUND TO CURRENT SITUATION

In recent years there has been much debate on the issue of allowing private baches to remain on public land. Attempts have been made by the various public authorities who have administered the land on the South Wairarapa coast, to remove the baches since the early 1960's. Prior to that time it was generally believed that the baches were built on private land belonging to the farmer who owned the land adjacent to the beach. A description of events leading up to the current CMS policy is contained in the cultural heritage assessment referred to in the previous section.

In summary, after the decision was made in 1964 that all baches would be removed by 1980 (with none being removed by this date), the land was incorporated into that managed by the newly formed Department of Conservation (DoC) in 1987. In 1988 the Minister of Conservation introduced a system which allowed bach holders to keep their baches for their lifetime. During the preparation of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) provisions were made to phase out existing private accommodation and prevent the construction of new baches. While the Ocean Beach Residents Association submitted a strong case against this proposed policy, the strategy was adopted in this form with minor amendments as recently as February 1997.

A submission was lodged against the proposed South Wairarapa District Plan (1994) by the Ocean Beach Residents Association for the baches to be granted settlement status. By identifying Ocean Beach as a settlement, this would allow the existing baches to remain and provide for further upgrading and possible future development. A further submission by the Minister of Conservation opposed the Residents Association submission. The Residents Association submission was rejected by the Council in its decision on this matter. Under the policies of the proposed South Wairarapa District Plan, rebuilding or relocation of the baches are non-complying activities within the Coastal Protection Policy Area.

The current policy is as outlined in section 26.2.2 of the CMS, a copy of which is included as an attachment in the brief for this project (see Appendix 1). The philosophy behind this policy for phasing out of the baches is that conservation land is for the benefit of all New Zealanders, and private use without public benefit is not acceptable, even if environmental effects are minor. One of the methods by which this policy is being implemented and the reason behind the preparation of this report is to:

*“Evaluate the effect of baches on natural and historic resources and recreational opportunities and set a time limit and licencing arrangement for removal of existing baches on conservation areas at Ocean Beach, at Lake Wairarapa, and the scenic reserve at Te Kopi;”* (from page 2 of project brief, Appendix 1).

#### **4. METHOD USED TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

This environmental assessment has been undertaken in three stages. The first stage involved an assessment on a broadscale level by a Landscape Architect of the overall effect of the baches collectively in the context of the surrounding landscape. The second stage involved assessing the baches on an individual level by a Clerk of Works using a checklist to determine their structural condition and effects on the immediate bach surrounds. The final stage involved assessing these combined impacts to establish clear recommendations for each bach.

In assessing the overall effects on a broad scale, the landscape character was determined and factors which contributed to visual impact were considered. These factors are described in Section 5.2. and included such elements as landscape context, bach location, setting and grouping, scale, physical condition and colour/materials. The effect of the baches on recreation use was assessed and the general impact of the activities of bach users on the surrounding environment was considered. The details of the overall assessment are outlined in Section 5.

The environmental impact of each individual bach was assessed using a checklist to determine structural soundness and the impact, both existing and potential on the immediate surrounds. Factors considered included whether timbers or other materials needed to be repaired, replaced or painted; the location and necessity of any ancillary structures such as sheds, toilets, fences; and whether any unauthorised works had been carried out since the last inspection 3 years ago. Other factors with potential for significant environmental effects such as fire risk and rodent infestation were also considered. The assessment of these factors is outlined in Section 7 and a Summary Checklist is attached as Appendix 2.

#### **5. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT OF BACHES**

##### **5.1 Landscape Character of Bach Surrounds**

The baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek are located along a 3.7 km stretch of remote coastline 45 km south west of Featherston on the south Wairarapa Coast. Along this 3.7 km length there is a distinct change in landscape character between the settings of the first and last baches from grassland and steep cliffs at Ocean Beach to kanuka shrubland almost down to the waters edge at Corner Creek. The baches along this length can be separated into three groups with their own distinct landscape character. Refer to aerial photographs A, B and C attached as Appendix 3 marked up to show each grouping.



### 5.1.1 Bach Groupings

#### Group One

The first group of baches is at Ocean Beach where baches are set at the edge of a wide stoney beach at the base of a steep grass slope rising abruptly to cliffs behind. The cliffs are vegetated with large patches of native coastal species such as Flax, Toi Toi and Taupata which form a strong backdrop to the baches in this area. The front of the baches is grassland which slopes gently down to the unformed gravel road separating the grassland area from the wide flat beach to the sea edge. Generally these baches are unobtrusively located at the interface between the grass slope and the abrupt cliff face. In many cases they sit behind a small undulation or ledge formed as part of the natural formation of the beach over time.

#### Group Two

The second group of baches is located between those at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek. This group of ten baches (four of which are on private land) are built on a broad sloping plain of grassland and regenerating native scrub between Wharekauhau Stream and Corner Creek. Their setting appears distinctly different from the other two groups in that the baches appear centrally located in the slope rather than set back towards the cliff face or set within the vegetation as with the other two groups. While several of the baches in this group sit discreetly amongst the regenerating vegetation, there are some which are more prominently located on outcrops or open grassed slopes which result in a higher visual impact. This effect is emphasised where the landform surrounding the bach has been obviously altered using gravel and retaining walls or rock gardens.

#### Group Three

The third group of baches at Corner Creek are separated from the other two groups by the large shingle fans formed by material washed down from Wharekauhau Stream and Corner Creek. Past Corner Creek the landscape changes immediately from regenerating grassland and shingle fans to kanuka shrubland almost down to the waters edge. The baches here are set within clearings in the kanuka shrubland at the edge of Rimutaka Forest Park. The visual impact of these baches is lessened by the fact that they are generally set back from the road and under the trees. Their presence does however extend beyond the immediate bach surrounds and may have the effect of deterring other visitors from camping or using this area (see comments section 5.3.3) located as it is at the edge of the Forest Park.

## 5.2 Factors considered in Environmental Assessment

The factors which were considered in assessing the level of visual impact for the baches on a broader scale are as follows :

5.2.1 Landscape character of setting :

- Landform (steep, gently sloping, abrupt, flat)
- Vegetation (native or exotic, grassland or shrubland/trees, regenerating or established)
- Proximity to other structures - (less impact if several baches grouped close together than single and spaced far apart)
- Proximity to water - sea, lagoon, river, stream (higher impact if baches located close to water)
- Visibility from road (obscured, distant or highly visible, close - will also depend on scale, colour, numbers of structures)

5.2.2 Location of Baches

- relationship to landform - whether set back or prominent to cliffs/slopes
- number and scale of grouping
- effect on recreation potential of other users
- amount of apparent 'space' taken up by each grouping or individual bach (determined by presence of ancillary buildings, gardens, fences, tracks, rubbish and how permanent these appear - includes colour, whether recessive or dominant)
- general condition and maintenance levels of individual baches - (poor maintenance levels degrade the quality of experience for other users and pose potential safety and fire risk).

## 6. BROADSCALE EFFECT OF BACHES

The visual and recreational impacts of the baches for each group is outlined, taking into consideration the factors listed in the previous section. Recommendations are highlighted in italics.

### 6.1 Visual Impact

In the context of the wider setting of the baches within this remote coastal environment, the baches are considered to have a moderate to low visual impact overall. They are generally small in scale and of a similar style and age which gives them a coherent quality. Some areas do however have a higher impact than others depending on several factors as outlined in the previous section. An assessment of the broadscale impact of the baches in each of the three groups is outlined.

- 6.1.1 Group One Generally low level of visual impact due to location of baches at base of cliff slope and set behind minor landforms such as mounds and ledges. The relatively small scale of the baches is emphasised when seen against the dramatic backdrop of the cliffs behind. Most baches are small scale and set back from road. Exceptions are No.'s 1, 20, 21 and 22 which have a higher visual impact, described as follows.

Bach no. 1 is the first bach to be seen on arrival at this remote location. It therefore has a higher visual impact which is accentuated by its close proximity to the road edge and its poor state of repair. Bach no.'s 2 to 19 are further set back from the road, closer to the base of the cliffs and in many cases set behind a minor landform, resulting in a lower visual impact. *It is recommended that Bach No. 1 be removed.*

The baches at the far end of this group, no.'s 20, 21 and 22, have a higher visual impact although overall still moderate to low impact overall. They are spaced far apart but have as much visual impact as would a larger number of baches covering the same stretch of land. *It is therefore recommend that baches 20, 21 and 22 be phased out over a shorter time period.*

- 6.1.2 Group Two High level of visual impact of all baches on public land in this grouping (except 24 set behind landform). These are prominently located on an unstable shingle slope (26 & 27) or in the middle of a prominent grass slope and taking up an extensive area with recently added rock walls and ancillary structures (32 & 33). Removal of baches 32 and 33 will return a large open area of prominent landform to a less modified state.

*Recommend removal of 26, 27, 32 and 33 for reasons of high visual impact and/or instability of slope (26 & 27). Baches 26, 27 & 31 are structurally unsound (refer to summary checklist, Appendix 2) and should be removed for this reason alone. Baches 32 & 33 are in a sound state of repair but due to their high visual impact in this*

*location should be phased out over a shorter time frame. Bach No. 25 will be the only bach left on private land in this grouping which will increase it's visual impact in this location. It is therefore recommended to be phased out over the same shorter period as baches 32 and 33.*

- 6.1.3 Group Three Low visual impact but moderate potential environmental impact (fire risk, weed infestation). Chimneys under trees pose a potential fire risk with significant consequences for the Park. Several baches are in poor structural condition including no. 52 which is the only bach located on the seaward side of the road. There is one permanent resident in this group of baches.

*Recommend phasing out of all baches in this grouping in the longer term. Those baches which are structurally unsound (41, 50 & 53) should be removed in a shorter time frame for this reason. Bach 52 also intrudes onto the coastal side of the road - the only bach in the entire area that does so and should also be removed within a shorter time frame.*

## 6.2 Recreational Impact

The coastal area in which the baches are located is used to gain access further around the coast and to gain access to Rimutaka Forest Park. Historically the area has been used by hunters and trappers, with some limited river fishing within the park. Sea fishing remains a popular activity, both for recreational and commercial purposes. Other activities for which the area is used today include walking, mountain biking, horse riding, surfing, four-wheel driving, hang gliding and boating. Generally speaking, visitors to the area are likely to be attracted by the wild, remote and scenic qualities of the area and anything that detracts from these qualities will impact on the quality of experience for visitors.

Recreational, environmental and visual impact are inextricably linked so that where visual or environmental impact is high, there will tend to be a corresponding impact on the quality of recreation experience. There is no recorded information available on actual numbers of visitors to the area or their perceptions and reasons for visiting the area. It is likely however, that many of these visitors are the bach users themselves. The following assessments of each group are based on site observations by the author. If more definitive information is required on user frequency, number or perception, it is recommended a user survey be undertaken to verify these conclusions.

- 6.2.1 Group One Low impact on recreational use by visitors (other than bach users). Recreational users are likely to be passing through on the road or beach either walking, cycling or driving. The presence of the baches is unlikely to deter other recreational users due to the baches location where they are set well back from the beach and tucked unobtrusively into the landform at the base of the cliff slopes in most cases.

- 6.2.2 Group Two Low recreational impact given that most visitors are likely to be passing through on the road or beach. Exceptions are the two baches (32 and 33) located on a prominent grassed landform identified as having a higher visual impact (see clause 6.1.2). Their presence may deter visitors from seeking camp or picnic sites in this area.
- 6.2.3 Group Three This group of baches has a moderate impact rating given that these baches are located within the Forest Park and under trees where visitors are likely to seek campsites. The harsh climate of the area makes it largely unsuitable for camping other than in the summer months and in sheltered areas under trees. The location and grouping of the baches around the clearings are likely to deter campers who may have a sense of “trespassing” within the territory of the baches.

## **7 ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL BACHES**

### **7.1 Checklists used for Inspection**

To assess the level of impact on the surrounding environment and to determine mitigation measures required to minimise such impacts, each bach was inspected from the outside. A checklist was used to determine structural soundness, impacts on the immediate surroundings and actions required to bring the bach up to an acceptable standard of maintenance. A copy of the checklists used is included as attachment 2 in Appendix 1.

On closer inspection, the condition of baches was generally habitable for infrequent use with most in need of some maintenance to improve structural soundness and to maintain a neat and tidy appearance. Varying degrees of occupation are apparent ranging from very infrequent use, say once or twice a year, to fairly regular weekend use. Four baches appeared to have full-time occupants at the time of inspection and there was one permanent resident - a commercial fisherman at Corner Creek. The level of occupation does not appear, however, to correspond with the level of maintenance of each bach.

A Summary Checklist has been prepared for quick reference of recommended actions for each bach (see Appendix 2). This sheet is to be read in conjunction with the checklists prepared for each bach on the day of inspection, details of which are available from the Wellington Regional Conservator of the Conservation Department.

### **7.2 Main points arising from Checklists**

The main points that arose from the checklists are outlined below. Comments are made on the recommended mitigation measures and how reasonable those measures are considered to be.

#### 7.2.1 Condition of Bach Structure

An assessment was made of the foundations, floor, walls, windows and roof of each bach. The external inspection revealed that of the 47 total baches, 26 had inadequate ventilation to the foundations. As a result, 13 baches were found to have rotting bearers and floor joists requiring replacement. In many of these cases it is considered fundamental to the structural soundness of the bach to have these timbers replaced and for ventilation to be included in any repairs undertaken.

*In four cases (26, 27, 41 and 50) the rot was found to be so extensive in the foundations and throughout the structure as to recommend demolition of the entire bach.*

#### 7.2.2 Additions to baches

There were eight cases where additions to the bach exterior were noted. These were observed noted on site by comparing photographs taken on the 30th of March, 1994. Details of dimensions of extended areas are included in the individual checklists for each bach. The additions noted were as follows:

Bach No. 3 ramp added to front door

Bach No.6 rear extension, paving and shed added

Bach No. 33 rear extension and stone wall added

Bach No. 37 rear extension

Bach No. 48 front porch/verandah extension

Bach No. 50 front verandah rebuilt

Bach No. 51 front wall reclad, window replaced and deck added

Bach No. 53 rear porch added

*It is recommended that the extended floor area of each bach be incorporated into any evaluation of licence fees for each bach.*

#### 7.2.3 Painting with an Approved Colour

Many of the baches require painting as a matter of maintenance. Some have recently been painted using colours that are not considered appropriate in the context of this landscape if their visual impact is to be minimised. As a general principle, colours for walls, roofs and windows should be of a low reflectivity (not white) and of a muted

tone, preferably in colours that already exist in the surrounding landscape. A suggested colour range is attached as Appendix 4.

It is important that the landscape backdrop be considered when selecting a colour. The baches located at Ocean Beach are largely set within a grassland environment while those at Corner Creek are predominantly surrounded by scrubland. The colour chart is set out to correspond with the grassland and bushland settings. It is also important that the baches are painted using a consistent colour scheme - several baches were painted using different colours for different walls and this should be avoided.

The use of white around the windows and trim of baches was observed in many cases. White is considered to increase the visual impact of the structure and should be avoided in this landscape. While many bach owners may prefer lighter colours for reasons of greater durability, it is considered reasonable that an off-white, grey or pale-green be used to reduce the overall impact of the baches. Cost should not be the sole determining factor in selecting paint colours for the baches as they are generally small in size.

It would be reasonable to add other colours to the colour chart provided they are not highly reflective and are of an "earthy" hue, ie white or bright colours are to be avoided, for windows as well as other surfaces. If bach owners wish to use another colour, it is recommended this be approved by a DoC officer who is familiar with the concept of using colour to blend with the environment. Some colours may be considered appropriate even though they are not visible in the surrounding landscape, for example barn red, terracotta or turquoise. Other colours could be appropriate provided they have a component of brown or grey mixed with them to reduce their brightness or reflectivity. To provide some degree of choice, the colour range on the colour chart could be extended accordingly.

*It is recommended that all baches be painted every 3 to 5 years, depending on the condition of the paintwork. Those that require painting immediately should be painted using an approved colour. It is recommended that those that have been painted within the last 2 years be repainted using an approved colour within the next 3 years.*

#### 7.2.4 Display of Hut Numbers

Hut numbers were visible in only 8 of the 47 total baches inspected. The display of hut numbers is considered important to assist both land managers and visitors in identifying the baches. These could be provided by the Department of Conservation when licences are issued to provided a consistent and easily recognisable format.

*It is recommended all baches display clear hut numbers at all times.*

#### 7.2.5 Condition of Bach Interior

This was not visible from an external inspection in nearly all cases. It was noted that in all but 8 cases, the chimney was not considered to pose a fire risk as visible from the outside (ie above the roof line). The risk of fire and rodent infestation could have significant impacts on the wider landscape through loss of vegetation and wildlife and is therefore considered reasonable to mitigate by actions that would minimise such risk.

*It is recommended that an interior inspection is undertaken for all baches to assess the structural condition of the floor, any likely fire risk from the stove, the presence of rodents or any other factors which pose a potential environmental threat to the area.*

#### 7.2.6 Ancillary Buildings & Structures

Ancillary buildings such as old woodsheds, unused long-drops and storage sheds were observed in 15 cases. Where present, these structures were assessed in terms of their proximity to the existing structure in terms of whether they were appropriately located, concealed and the apparent necessity of that structure. It was considered appropriate for most baches to have a small storage area (for wood or equipment). Car storage was considered excessive in this situation of short term visits and small scale structures.

Other structures such as walls, fences and timber frames were also assessed in terms of their visual impact. Together with sheds and outhouses, these structures increase the perceived sense of space taken up by the baches which is likely to be perceived as private space by other users.

The level of impact of these additional elements is related to the type of materials used. Those with the least impact tend to be made of locally sourced materials such as stone or driftwood. These can simply be returned back to the environment when no longer required and do not create the same level of intrusion as more permanent materials such as corrugated iron and metal pipework. In some cases stone walls have been built using concrete and mortar and in one case the rocks are painted using bright colours. This reduces the "naturalness" of the element and therefore increases its visual impact.

*It is recommended that the area taken up by semi-defined spaces be incorporated into any evaluation of licence fees for each bach unless all evidence of these elements are removed. Removal of fences is recommended except in those cases where their primary function appears as a wind shelter and where maintained to an acceptable standard. In terms of environmental impact, the use of plants for wind shelter is preferable to structures, provided the plants used are indigenous to the area and do not pose any fire risk. A suitable species is Coprosma repens (Taupata).*



#### 7.2.7. Water Supply

Several baches at Ocean Beach obtain their water from ground water reticulated through strata at the base of the cliff face piped via alkathene pipes to tanks on the roof. Most others including those at Corner Creek appear to collect water from the roof of the bach. It is unlikely that either of these methods deplete the natural water source to the extent that they effect natural watercourses or vegetation so these methods are considered acceptable given the concentration of baches and likely water use.

*Recommendations with respect to water supply include burying the alkathene pipes which connect the water source to the tanks and painting the water tanks an approved colour. Many baches use a bright blue or black plastic water tank. The checklist shows these as not acceptable for reasons of non-approved colour. Black is however considered an acceptable colour for a small item. Only those tanks that are bright blue plastic or some other material (such as metal) are recommended to be painted in an approved colour - to match the approved colour of the bach.*

#### 7.2.8 Toilet

Most baches had a flush toilet connected to a septic tank. Some had long-drops which were no longer in use as they had been replaced with flush toilets. There did not appear to be any contamination of the surrounding environment from toilets.

*It is recommended that all long-drops no longer in use be removed as shown on the checklists. Where the toilets are housed in a separate structure, these are recommended to be relocated within the main bach structure and the defunct long-drop structures be removed.*

#### 7.2.9 Vegetation clearance

An assessment was made of the fire risk of the vegetation within 4 metres surrounding each bach. Where long grass was present, this was recommended to be cleared. Native vegetation was considered to be acceptable provided it was a fire resistant species. *Coprosma repens* (Taupata) or *Phormium cookianum* (Wharakiki) were therefore considered acceptable for within 4 metres of the bach as they do not pose a fire risk.

*It is recommended that all long grass be cleared within 4 metres of each bach. There were 17 baches which require action to remove long grass or vegetation other than those species considered to have a low fire risk.*

#### 7.2.10 Introduced Plant Species

Introduced plants (exotic or native species not indigenous to the area) were present around several baches. Some bach users have over the years attempted to establish gardens, some of which are fenced off (no. 14A) or set within extensive rock gardens

(no. 32). The introduction of exotic plants poses a potential threat of invasion into this coastal conservation area bordering a native Forest Park. While it could be argued that these gardens add character and individuality to the baches, they are not appropriate in this area and should be removed. The exotic plants seen growing in the immediate vicinity of the baches included the following : Comfrey, Crocosmia, Convolvulus, *Lotus major*, Artemesia, Hydrangea, Grape, Citrus, Peach, Plum and Pine. As well as the threat of plant invasion into the conservation zone, the gardens increase the area of land affected by the baches.

*It is recommended that all introduced and self seeded garden plants should be uprooted and any plant remains removed off site. Some on-going management should be undertaken to ensure no further spread of these plants into the conservation zone.*

#### 7.2.11 Rubbish

Rubbish was present in 34 out of 47 cases (72%). This ranged from old building materials to collapsed sheds and old vehicles. This was the most frequently noted item on the checklists and possibly one of the most readily mitigated items that would have a significant effect on the environmental and visual quality of the area.

*It is recommended that all rubbish be removed from the vicinity of the baches immediately and baches be kept in a tidy state at all times. It is suggested that DoC could assist this process by organising rubbish collection points on set days over a set period to facilitate this objective.*

#### 7.2.12 Impact of Vehicles

The impact of vehicles on the foreshore and stream beds is one of the most obvious signs of human presence in the area, that is, apart from the presence of the baches themselves. The road is an unformed gravel strip which winds its way through the grassland area of the foreshore and across the stream beds which can become unpassable after heavy rain due to the amount of gravel and debris washed downstream. It is unlikely that the ecological effect of the vehicles in the stream bed would be greater than the natural effects caused by heavy rain.

The effects of vehicles in the immediate vicinity of the baches are largely temporary, such as worn grass areas and driveways. There are some instances of greater impact where bach users have delineated "driveways" to baches with half-buried tyres or painted white stones. In some cases, extensive gravel areas have been formed and garages built. While it may be beneficial to control vehicle movement within certain areas to prevent compaction and erosion of the surface, this needs to be weighed up against the visual effect of the delineated driveways.

*It is recommended that all evidence of driveways be removed and/or reinstated back to the existing grassland.*

## 8. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of all recommendations in this report is to mitigate or minimise any environmental or recreational impacts of the baches along this stretch of coast until such time as all baches have been phased out. The recommendations are summarised as follows :

- *Those baches found to have a high impact be phased out within a shorter time period than the time limit of 2019 issued to existing licenced baches.*
- *Baches that are structurally unsound (where repairs would amount to rebuilding) are to be dismantled and removed immediately and the area reinstated to blend with the natural surroundings.*
- *Maintenance work is to be undertaken as outlined in the individual checklists for each bach and shall be maintained in this condition for the length of the bach licence.*
- *All baches are to be painted in an approved colour to blend with the surrounding landscape (as outlined in section 7.2.2).*
- *All non-indigenous plant material in the vicinity of the baches shall be removed from Conservation land and controlled to prevent any spread of these species.*
- *All inorganic rubbish is to be removed from the vicinity of the baches and the area kept free from long grass and vegetation which may pose a fire risk (except regenerating Kanuka within the Rimutaka Forest Park).*

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations in this report are based on findings from both a broadscale visual assessment and a detailed structural inspection of individual baches. Recommendations range across the entire spectrum from minor maintenance items to complete dismantling and removal of some baches.

On a broadscale level, the baches were divided into three distinct groups based on the landscape character of their surroundings (refer to maps in Appendix 2). The baches in group one were considered to have a low visual impact due to their scale and location at the interface between grassland and the vegetated cliff backdrop. The baches in group two were located on a more prominent landform mostly at the edge of regenerating shrubland with some on an unstable gravel slope. Those located out in the open grassland were found to have a higher visual impact. The baches in group three were found to have a high impact on recreational and environmental impact due to their location within the Rimutaka Forest Park.

On an individual level, a total of 4 baches were found to be structurally unsound to the point where the extent of repairs would amount to rebuilding the bach. Rebuilding or relocation were not considered as this would be contrary to the policies of the CMS and the proposed District Plan. Many of the other baches require repair or repainting to approved colours. There were no baches that complied with every item on the checklist although several required only minor action such as repainting of walls or window surrounds and removing rubbish or weeds (refer to Appendix 2 for Summary Checklist).

Overall the baches were not found to have any significant adverse long-term environmental effects other than potential fire risk from chimneys or the spread of weeds into the Forest Park. Due to their scale and location, the presence of the baches was not considered to have any significant adverse impact on recreational use of the area except potentially that of camping in the Rimutaka Forest Park. The recommendations outlined are intended to assist DoC in managing this coastal environment until it is returned to a remote and natural state.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Project Brief**



File: G08-400  
R01-111

Date: 8 January 1997

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF OCEAN BEACH/CORNER CREEK BACHES: PROJECT BRIEF

### Background

At Ocean Beach and at Corner Creek in the south-west Wairarapa there are 51 private baches, some of which are on land administered by the Department of Conservation (refer Figure 1). The baches have been erected at various times, and are in varying states of repair. Occupation of most is short-term but frequent. The bach-owners are represented by an Association who are seeking to retain the baches as a feature of the coast.

Ten (10) of the baches at Ocean Beach are on land that the Department does not administer. Of these 4 are on private land and 6 are on unformed legal road. The Department has to date been reluctant to proceed with closing of this portion of unformed legal road without the land owners agreement. This is under review. The objective is to have the management of all baches on public land under the same regime. The 6 baches on unformed legal road are 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, and 33. The 4 baches on private land are Numbers 28, 29, 30, and 34.

Attempts have been made by public authorities for a couple of decades to remove the baches or to move them onto private land, but have largely proved unsuccessful. During preparation of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (CMS), provisions were prepared to express a management intent to remove the baches. Provisions with that intent are still in the CMS.

The CMS (section 26.2.2)<sup>1</sup> has management objectives of:

- "Phase out existing private accommodation on land managed by the Department;
- Prevent the construction of any new private baches."

The philosophy is that conservation land is for the benefit of all New Zealander's, and private use without public benefit is not acceptable, even if environmental effects are minor.

<sup>1</sup> Refer pages 221 - 223 in the draft Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (Attachment 1).

These will be implemented by (inter alia):

- "Phase out the occupation on baches at Corner Creek (Rimutaka Forest Park) by 2019, by issuing and monitoring non-transferrable life-time licences;
- Seek the transfer to the Department of the remaining area of unformed legal road at Ocean Beach, South Wairarapa, containing baches;
- Consider the acquisition of the licensee's interest in a bach before the expiry of the licence where the bach is located in an area of high public use or an area is needed for other management purposes;
- Expedite removal of baches at Corner Creek by considering providing existing bach owners with the right to transfer to a licensed bach at Ocean Beach, if one becomes available;
- *Evaluate the effect of baches on natural and historic resources and recreational opportunities* and set a time limit and licensing arrangement for removal of existing baches on conservation areas at Ocean Beach, at Lake Wairarapa, and the scenic reserve at Te Kopi;
- Where natural and historic resources or public recreation opportunities are adversely affected and the bach is out of context with the surrounding environment and management objectives, remove the bach as soon as possible in negotiation with the bach owner."

#### **This assessment project**

The CMS indicates that an environmental assessment will be carried out to evaluate the effect of the baches on natural and historic resources and recreational opportunities. It will eventually be carried out at Ocean Beach, Corner Creek, Lake Wairarapa and Te Kopi, but the initial focus and the content of this project will be on Corner Creek and Ocean Beach. This assessment will assist with the determination of an appropriate management regime for each bach on land administered by the Department.

The intention of the CMS is to phase out the baches on land administered by the Department. The 19 baches at Corner Creek within Rimutaka Forest Park are intended to be phased out in advance of those at Ocean Beach. 11 of these baches are already under licence for a term expiring in 2019 or the lifetime of the owner (if deceased prior to 2019). Once available, use

will be made of an assessment of the effects of the other 8 baches to determine the licence conditions, and a timeframe for removal ranging from 0 - year 2019.

Corner Creek is the main entrance to the Forest Park on the south-west Wairarapa coast, and it is the most likely place in the vicinity for the Department to develop a self-registration camping area.

#### Requirements for the Assessment

- 1 The Assessment should be prepared by **31 March 1997** in a loose-leaf format. It is required to cover all of the 41 baches on conservation areas and the 6 baches on unformed legal road at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek.
- 2 It should describe each of the following attributes of each bach, and provide an assessment of the effects of each bach, individually and cumulatively in terms of:
  - a description of each bach detailing dimensions, a physical description including building materials, the Department reference number<sup>2</sup> (new photographs only required if the appearance of the bach differs from the department's 1994 catalogue).
  - location and physical effects of the occupation of the bach site and access track(s) including any outhouses, mown areas, gardens, weed infestations, clotheslines, firewood supply areas, storage structures, vehicle parks, and other related occupation effects as detailed on the attached checklist (Attachment 2)
  - sewage and refuse disposal (there should not be any refuse pits or incinerators)
  - water supply
  - colour scheme of the bach at present, and the state of repair of the bach according to the attached checklist
  - landscape effect of the bach
  - the effect of each bach on the natural and historic resources and recreational opportunities of its locality (historic resources assessment is to exclude architectural historical merits of the baches)

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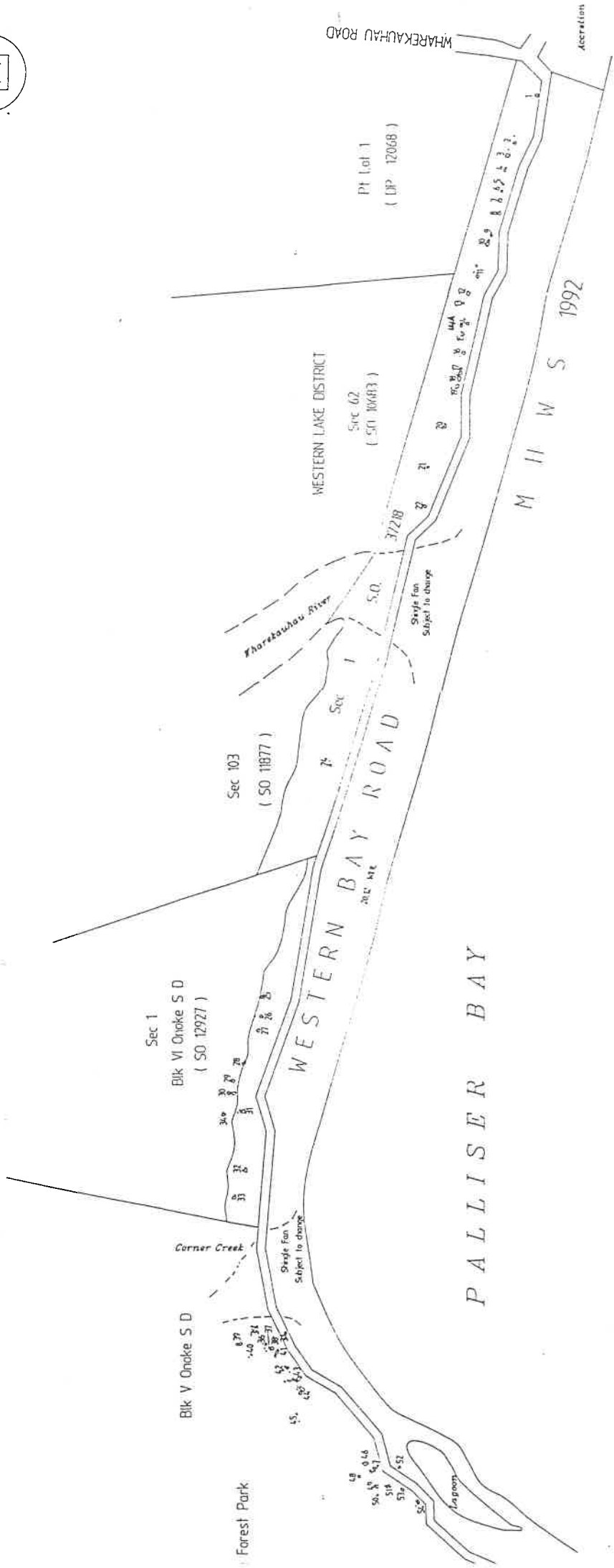
<sup>2</sup> Department reference numbers are as detailed on Figure 1 (attached) prepared by DOSLI and dated March 1994.



- 3 Where adverse effects are identified measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate these effects are to be recommended together with comment on whether these remedies are reasonable and practical in physical terms as well as in terms of the scale of operation at that bach site.

For additional information, please contact Jeff Flavell or Adrian Griffiths at the number above. Expressions of interest to carry out the work, including a detailed quotation of cost should be sent addressed to the undersigned by **31 January 1997**.

Allan Ross  
Regional Conservator



COASTAL AREA PALLISER BAY

BLOCKS V & VI ONOKE SURVEY DISTRICT

WELLINGTON LAND DISTRICT

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT SCALE 1:8000

Attachment 1

— Extract from Wgtn CMS

Explanation

26.2.2 Private Baches

Buildings and structures have been erected on land administered by the Department to provide private accommodation. The buildings are baches, maimai with sleeping facilities, or huts.

The Department believes that public land should not be used for private accommodation. Existing private accommodation will be phased out. New private baches will not be permitted.

Where baches have cultural or historic values, adding to their surroundings but not compromising natural resources or public use, the Department will accept their existence for the lifetime of the tenants.

A draft policy "Private Baches on Land Administered by the Department of Conservation" 1991, has been developed. It provides guidance to conservancies but, as it has not been approved, the CMS will provide the statutory basis for the policy on private baches in the Conservancy.

Wellington Conservancy

Private baches are located in Rimutaka Forest Park, Orongorongo Valley and Corner Creek, on conservation areas at Ocean Beach, South Wairarapa, Lake Wairarapa and a scenic reserve at Te Kopi.

The owners of baches in Orongorongo Valley have been issued licences for their personal lifetime or for a term of 60 years, whichever is earliest. Any licence running for 60 years would expire in 2050. Licences are non-transferable and contain conditions to protect the environment, and ensure buildings are maintained to a reasonable standard and not extended. [refer Section 8, p 95]

At Corner Creek, in Rimutaka Forest Park, 12 baches have been granted life-time licences or till 2019, whichever is the earliest. The length of licence is shorter as the area is the only suitable place for a camping ground at the south eastern entrance to the park and is an important entry point to it. The Department will continue to seek to license or remove 7 unlicensed baches depending on their effect on the environment (including visitors).

Until 1991 most of the Ocean Beach baches were on legal road. The road has been re-aligned and 23 baches are now unlicensed buildings on conservation land, and 6 remain on unformed legal road.

At Lake Wairarapa and Te Kopi, baches are as yet unlicensed.

#### Management Issues

##### *Phasing Out Baches*

Bach owners think they should be able to continue to enjoy the recreational opportunities their baches offer to them, their families and friends, and they consider that the effect of the baches and their use on the environment and the recreational experiences of others are minimal.

The Department believes that the effects of baches are not minor, especially in areas where there are concentrations of baches, such as in Orongorongo Valley, at Corner Creek and Ocean Beach, and where they occur in remote areas. Private baches do have an adverse effect on public use of back country areas. The baches are not considered to have sufficient cultural or historic merit to justify their long-term retention.

The process established for phasing out of baches needs to take account of the effects on the environment and other visitors and any historical rights granted to bach owners. The effects of baches in Orongorongo Valley has been mitigated by conditions attached to their licences, based on site visits and evaluation by the Department.

Where baches are unlicensed, the Department will assess their effects before setting a timetable for their removal and appropriate licences. Some baches may need to be removed in the short term due to their effects or because of other management needs for the land concerned.

Land held under the Conservation Act and Reserves Act is for the benefit of all citizens, and private use without public benefit is not acceptable, even if environmental effects are minor.

#### Objectives

- 1 Phase out existing private accommodation on land managed by the Department.
- 2 Prevent the construction of any new private baches.

#### Implementation

- 1 Phase out the occupation of sites in the Orongorongo Valley, Rimutaka Forest Park by 2050. Monitor the non-transferable life-time licences and their conditions.
- 2 Phase out the occupation of baches at Corner Creek, (Rimutaka Forest Park) by 2019, by issuing and monitoring non-transferable life-time licences.
- 3 Seek the transfer to the Department of the remaining area of unformed legal road at Ocean Beach, South Wairarapa, containing baches.
- 4 Considering the acquisition of the licensee's interest in a bach before the expiry of the licence where the bach is located in an area of high public use or an area is needed for other management purposes.
- 5 Expedite removal of baches at Corner Creek by considering providing existing bach owners with the right to transfer to a licensed bach at Ocean Beach, if one becomes available.
- 6 Evaluate the effect of baches on natural and historic resources and

recreational opportunities and set a time limit and licencing arrangement for removal of existing baches on conservation areas at Ocean Beach, at Lake Wairarapa and the scenic reserve at Te Kopi.

- 7 Where natural and historic resources or public recreation opportunities are adversely affected and the bach is out of context with the surrounding environment and management objectives, remove the bach as soon as possible in negotiation with the bach owner.
- 8 All bach owners will be charged a market rental for a licence to occupy land administered by the Department.

#### 26.2.3 Easements

#### Eplanation

The most common form of easements the Department deals with relate to access and to the right to convey water, sewerage, telephone and transmission lines over areas managed by the Department.

Easements may be granted where:

- The legal right sought cannot be located on private land.
- Natural and historic resources are not adversely affected.
- Existing public use is not significantly restricted.

Applications for easements under the Conservation Act require public notification. Notification under the Reserves Act is not required if the work is of a minor nature and will have no adverse impact on the land.

Electricity transmission lines which existed before 1 January 1988 are covered by the Electricity Act 1992. Under this Act all existing works can remain lawfully installed on and traversing land not owned by Trans Power. The Act also provides for Trans Power to enter the land to inspect, maintain and operate the lines.

#### Objectives

- 1 Granting of easements only where the proposal will not significantly affect landforms, landscapes or natural and historic resources and recreational opportunities and where sites are not available off an area managed by the Department.

#### Implementation

- 1 Assess easement applications for their impact on landforms, landscapes and other natural and historic resources and recreation opportunities; applications may be refused if they have significant adverse effects. Applicants will need to demonstrate no viable alternative site or location exists off land administered by the Department. An EIA may be required by the Department.
- 2 Easement conditions will protect natural and historic resources and public use of the area.
- 3 Compensation and, where appropriate, rental will reflect fair market price, except that non-commercial communication facilities may have market rent discounted.
- 4 All actual and reasonable costs associated with the processing of an easement application will be borne by the applicant.
- 5 Public use of the sites will not be restricted any more than is essential for safety and security.

OCEAN BEACH BACH		BACH NO. _____		Inspected by _____		Date _____ / _____ / _____	
CHECK LIST		Bach Owner present/ not present		NOTES; repairs, upgrading, materials required etc			
Bach	Materials	Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
Foundations		Secure/solid (no rot)					
Floor (Exterior Inspection)	Walls	Ventilated					
		Safe (no damage)					
Windows and Frames (if observable)	Door	Structurally Sound					
		Painted (approved colour range)					
		Intact (painted)					
Roof		Complete and secure					
Steps and Verandah	Hut Number	Secure and safe					
		Painted (approved colour range)					
Interior (if observable)	Fireplace or stove	Secure and safe					
		Clearly evident					
Ancillary Buildings (detail)		Presentable (rodent free)					
		Functional (no fire risk)					
Chimney safe		Chimney safe					
		Location (appropriate, concealed)					
		Structurally sound/painted					
		Location (appropriate, concealed)					
		Structurally sound/painted					
		Location (appropriate, concealed)					
		Structurally sound/painted					
		Location (appropriate, concealed)					
		Structurally sound/painted					
		Location (appropriate, concealed)					
		Structurally sound/painted					

Note: Include comment on necessity for the structure.

**FACILITIES AND BACH SURROUNDS**

		Acceptable	Not Acceptable	Notes: repairs, upgrading, materials required etc.
Water Supply	Tank - secure/painted approved colour range)			
	Collection/reticulation method			
Toilet (note type)	Location (appropriate, concealed)			
	Structure secure/painted (approved colour range)			
	Hygenic			
	Drainage (no contamination of surrounds)			
	Bach clear of vegetation against fire (max 4m clearance)			
	Area tidy			
	Clothes line (no damage to vegetation)			
Unauthorised works (detail if any)	New renovations/extensions			
	Cutting of tracks			
	Trees removed, trimmed			
	Rubbish pit installed			

- You are deemed to be in breach of your licence if there are any items identified on this report as "not acceptable". You have 14 days (until / / ) to contest the report. If your submission is not upheld, or if you fail to reply, the department requires the work identified to be completed by / / . To avoid unnecessary reinspection costs it would be in your interest to advise the department as soon as the work has been completed. Failure to comply with the identified work requirements will result in the termination of your licence.
- If no work requirements are identified the department wishes to thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

Regional Conservator

## **APPENDIX 2**

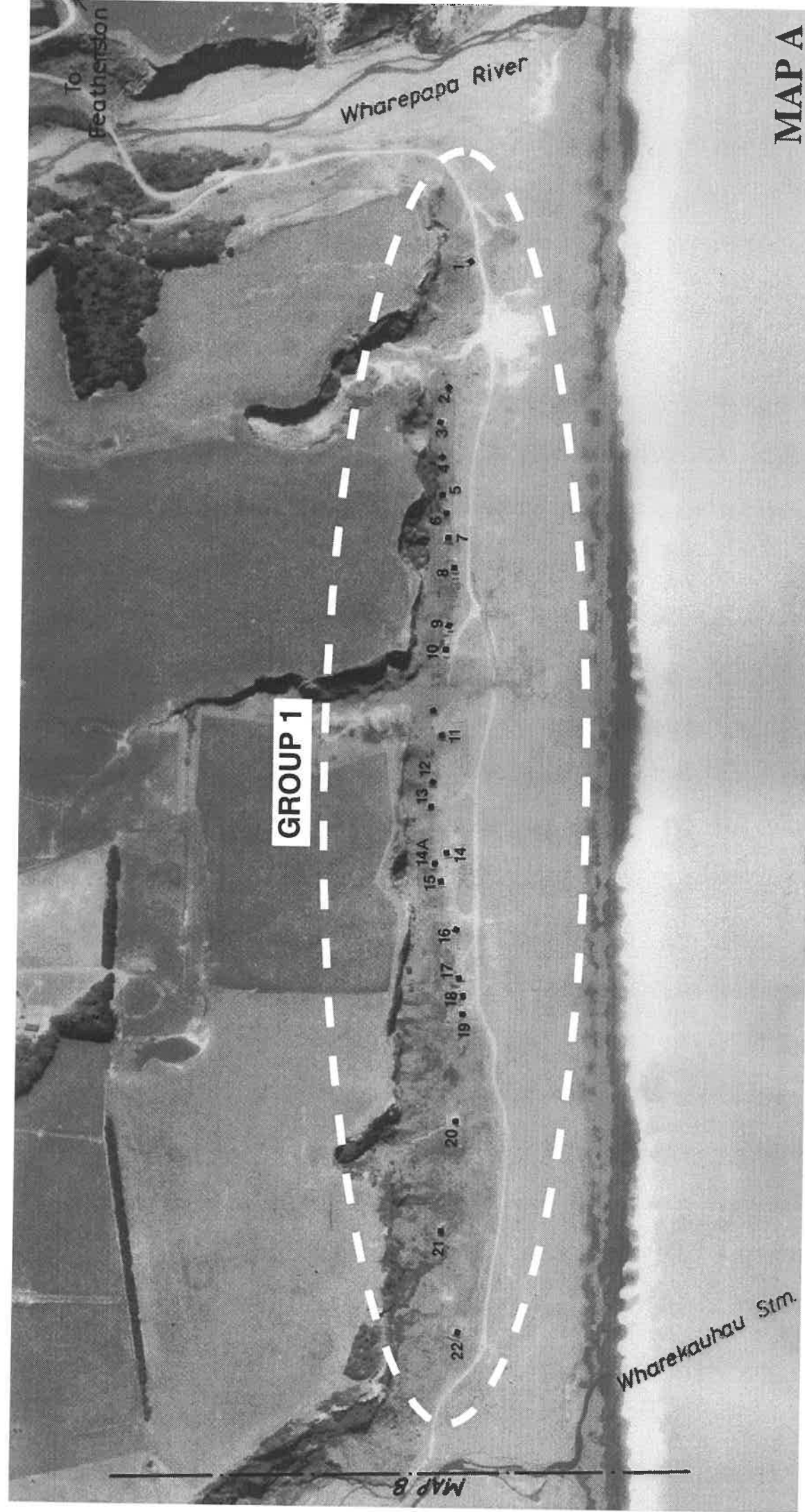
### Summary Checklist





**APPENDIX 3**

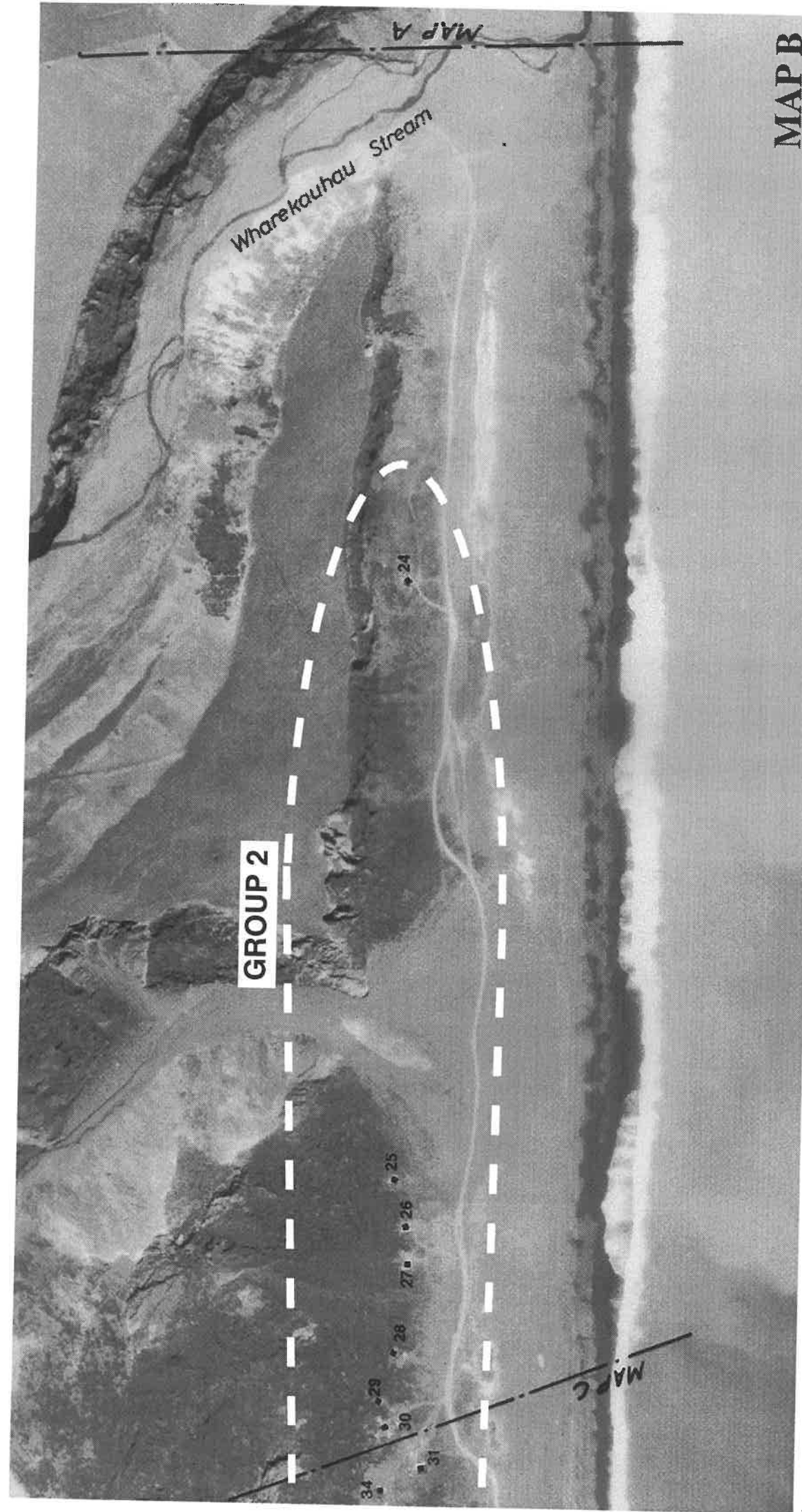
Aerial photographs A, B & C  
showing groupings



MAP A



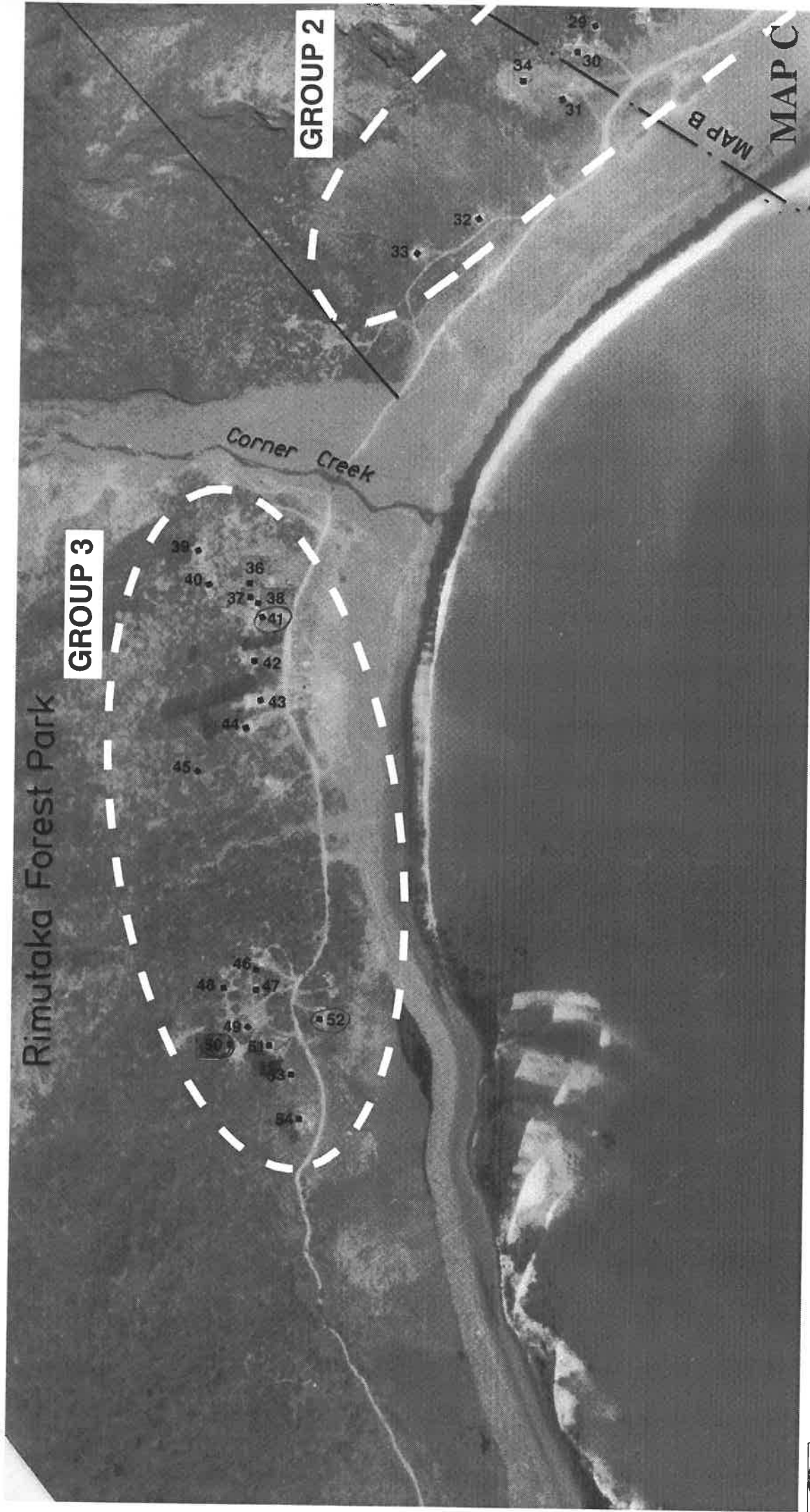
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35



MAP B

APPENDIX 3  
Environmental Assessment  
Baches at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54



## COLOUR GUIDE For Baches at Ocean Beach & Corner Creek

### Appendix 4

The following colours have been selected for their ability to blend with the surrounding landscape at Ocean Beach and Corner Creek. Their low reflectivity and grey/brown tones give them a low visual impact.

Select a combination that best fits with the surrounding setting of the bach, either grassland or bushland. The colours below have been selected for each setting. As a general principle, the grassland colours tend to be lighter and with more yellow/browns. The bushland setting tend to be darker and more green/brown.

Other colours may be selected but must be checked with a DoC officer for approval.

GRASSLAND SETTING			
Roof	Hemlock Resene 3G010	Schooner Resene 5B030	Bitter Resene 5G020
Walls	Winter Hazel Resene 5Y010	Bud Resene 6G020	Waikawa Grey Resene 4B60
Windows	Half and Half Resene 7Y010	Woodland Resene 3G020	Winter Hazel Resene 5Y010
BUSHLAND SETTING			
Roof	Sandstone Resene 4B030	Black Forest Resene 1G020	Gunsmoke Resene 4GR10
Walls	Bandicoot Resene 5G010	Eagle Resene 6G010	Finch Resene 4G020
Windows	Kangaroo Resene 7G010	Half and Half Resene 7Y010	Mint Julep Resene 6Y010