

Patea Saltmarsh

At a glance

TRC Reference: BD/9735	National:	Priority 1 – Threatened Land Environment
Ecological District: Manawatu Plains		Priority 2 – Sand Dunes and Wetlands
Land Tenure: District		Priority 3 – Originally Rare Ecosystem
Area(ha): 7.3		
GPS: 1726917X & 5598294Y		
	Regional:	Representative ecosystem type
Habitat: Coastal/Wetland		State of Environment Site
Bioclimatic Zone: Coastal		Regionally Significant Wetland
Ecosystem Type: SA2: Searush, oioi, glasswort and sea primrose rushland/ herbfield	Regional Ecosystem Loss:	Key Native Ecosystem
	Protection Status:	Less reduced >50% left
	Catchment:	Local Government
		Patea (343)

General Description

The Patea Saltmarsh consists of a significant patch of saltmarsh vegetation covering several hectares along the tidal reaches of the Patea River. The main area of habitat occurs just upstream of the SH3 road-bridge on the true right (town) side of the river and is the largest area of saltmarsh ribbonwood/sea rush vegetation between the Manawatu River and the Tongaporutu estuary. South Taranaki District Council administer the majority of the land adjacent to the saltmarsh and the Patea River. Included in the KNE is an adjacent area of brackish/freshwater swamp with associated wetland vegetation such as raupo and marsh clubrush.

Ecological Features

Flora

Saltmarsh ribbonwood is abundant at this site along with several other native species associated with this type of estuarine wetland habitat, including a scrambling sea celery (*Apium prostratum* sub sp. *prostratum* var. *filiforme*). The saltmarsh has few weeds or other evidence of human disturbance. There is a zone of freshwater and brackish swamp between the saltmarsh and State Highway 3, which is more weedy, but also has plants not common to the district e.g., kukuraho (*Bolboschoenus fluviatilis*). The slopes above this wetland, however, are much more weedy.

Fauna

Provides habitat for a variety of common bird species although few were observed during the site visit. Freshwater fish such as eels, bullies and native galaxiids are likely to use the river and intertidal areas of the saltmarsh. Other species are likely to be present or use the area, such as reptiles and migratory wading birds.

Ecological Values

Rarity and Distinctiveness - High Contains notable species including saltmarsh ribbonwood and New Zealand celery. Other notable flora and fauna species are likely to be present.

Saltmarsh habitats are rare in Taranaki and this site is possibly the largest in the region.

Ecological Context - Medium	This site lacks buffer vegetation, but the saltmarsh is relatively intact and connected to the estuary, providing links to the wider catchment.
Representativeness - High	Contains indigenous vegetation on 'Acutely Threatened' (C3.1a) LENZ environment. Estuaries are nationally rare/naturally uncommon ecosystems.
Sustainability - Positive	In good vegetative condition. Key ecological processes still influence the site. Under appropriate management, it can remain resilient to existing or potential threats.

Other Management Issues

Habitat Modification - Medium	The natural buffer vegetation around this wetland is completely modified and is dominated by exotic pasture. There is a medium risk of modification to wetland area from pest plant invasion.
Herbivores - Medium	Fenced from large herbivores, however the site is vulnerable to possums, hares etc.
Possum Self-help	The site is outside the current possum self-help program boundary and does not receive possum control. High possum numbers have the potential to impact on ecosystem health.
Predators - Medium	Predators including rodents, mustelids, possums, feral cats and hedgehogs will be having an impact on native species at the site.
Weeds - Medium	A small number of willow are present that have potential to impact the natural values of the wetland.

