



Evaluation of koura in hydro lakes



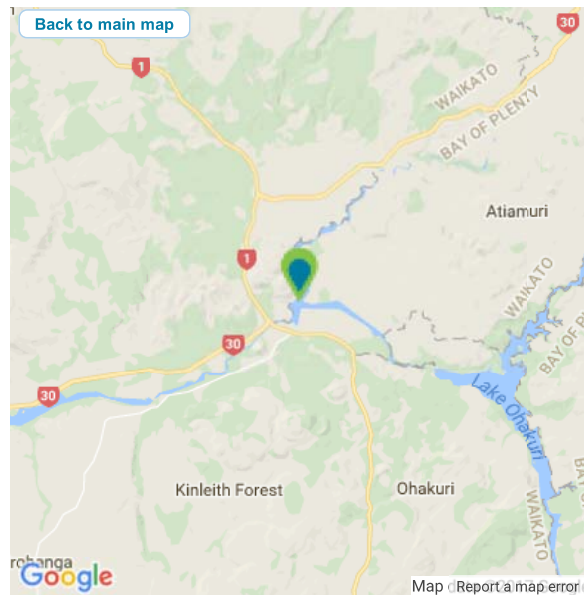
To improve the health and well-being of the Waikato River by examining the apparent decline of the koura fishery in the Upper Waikato and the potential causes.

In October 2012 a WRA-funded survey of kōura populations in Lakes Atiamuri and Ohakuri indicated that since the mid 1990's there has been a precipitous decline in the koura population in the main stem of the Upper Waikato River. Potential causes include increased predation by exotic fish or tuna, disease, habitat-changes caused by flow-ramping or decreased water quality. Since the mid 1990's elvers have been transferred up river as far as Lake Ohakuri.

The earlier survey was limited to the inshore zone of the lakes and small tributaries. We propose a strategic survey of koura populations in the deep, less accessible zones of the river from Huka Falls through Lakes Aratitia, Ohakuri and Atiamuri. A dive and tau koura survey will be complemented by a selective electric-fishing survey of tributaries to the up- and downstream of barriers to tuna passage. The survey results will be combined with a (desktop) review of the elver transfer programme and exotic fish introductions with respect to potential impacts on the koura fishery. The survey will be undertaken by NIWA and Kusabs & associates and would support decision-making in a related kōura restoration project (proposed in this funding round) in the upper tributaries of the region. All four phases of the project including reporting will be completed by June 2014.

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