Proposed Marlborough Environment Plan

Response to Minute 10 of the Hearing Panel

Wetland Site Visits

From: Peter Hamill

Minute 10 arose after the hearing in relation to significant wetlands where several of the submitters felt that they were not consulted in an appropriate manner and their wetlands needed to be verified before it was included in the Marlborough Environment Plan. The original Minute 10 was solely in relation to Nelson Forests Limited however it was expanded to include Port Marlborough New Zealand Limited and Mr Rodney Parkes as they had similar concerns with wetlands on their property.

The minute instructed me to carry out site inspections and verify that the wetlands were significant in relation to the assessment criteria.

I have assessed the wetlands based on the assessment criteria and reviewed their boundaries on a technical bases and made recommendations on either the deletion of the wetlands or changes to the boundaries, subject to scope.

Nelson Forest Limited

1. In submissions heard on Tuesday 13 March 2018, Nelson Forests Limited challenged the consultation process and methodology of the wetland identification of ten areas within forests owned or managed by it.

2. It was agreed that I would undertake a site verification process of the wetlands once authority to undertake the sites verification was obtained from the landowners.

3. Ms Arnold provided documentation that eight of the ten wetlands were under the ownership of Nelson Forests Limited and hence no other permission was required.

4. The remaining two wetlands are located in land owned by Te Ātiawa o Te Waka-a-Māui. Permission to visit these wetlands was gained after discussion with Ian Shapcott representing Te Ātiawa o Te Waka-a-Māui.

5. Site visits of the ten wetlands were carried out on 9 May 2018 and 23 May 2018.

Wetland W87 – Zoning Map 155

6. Upon visiting the area identified as wetland W87 in the proposed Marlborough Environment Plan (pMEP) it was evident that the area was a constructed fire pond in the foot of a valley. The vegetation surrounding the fire pond consisted predominately of gorse and broom. The area did not meet the criteria in the pMEP that would mean that it would be considered significant. (Photo 1). It is my opinion that this wetland should be removed from the mapped areas of significant wetlands in the MEP.

Wetland W92 – Zoning Map 157

7. Wetland W92 is a relatively large valley floor wetland that is dominated by open water (Photo 2). There is a manmade bund at the south end of the wetland that has artificially raised the water levels to form the area of open water. The margins of the majority of the open water area of the wetland are dominated by crack willows. There are however scattered areas of *carex secta*, raupo and flax amongst the willows. In the northern end of the wetland the open water gives way to a more vegetated wetland that is dominated by raupo and flax with *carex secta* on the margins (Photo 3). Valley floor wetlands of this size are relatively rare in the ecological district and these wetlands will provide refuge, shelter and breeding sites for native duck species such as grey teal. Cryptic wetland species such as spotless and marsh crake will also utilise this type of wetland. In my assessment the wetland ranks as M in terms of rarity and as a result is considered to be significant. The originally mapped margins of the wetland are not particularly accurate and I suggest that the wetland boundaries are redefined to those marked on Map 1.

8. On 8 August 2018, Ms Arnold from Nelson Forests Limited emailed me advising me that a storm event had eroded the small bund away which has resulted in a drop in water level of the open water area by between 500 and 600mm. It is my view that the removal of the bund wall will return the area to a more natural lowland valley floor wetland and therefore retain its values as a significant wetland.

Wetland W203 – Zoning Map 165

9. Wetland W203 is a wetland that has formed at the foot of a terrace. Prior to straightening of the nearby stream, the wetland area would have been the main bed of the stream. The diversion of the nearby stream has taken the fast flow water from the wetland but has not been able to divert the underlying groundwater and hence the wetland has formed where the stream once would have flowed. The wetland is dominated by a mixture of wetland sedges, rank pasture grass and flax (Photo 4). The wetland has some weed species present but still retains a dominance of indigenous species. The wetland has expanding into the neighbouring farmland and reclaiming some of the original lowland areas with rushes establishing themselves. The originally mapped margins of the wetland are slightly inaccurate and I suggest that the wetland boundaries are redefined to those marked on Map 2. The area is fenced from stock. In my assessment, the wetland ranks as M in terms of rarity and representativeness and as a result is considered to be significant.

10. For an unknown reason there are two W203 in the pMEP and it is therefore suggested that this wetland be renamed for clarity sake.

Wetland W377 – Zoning Map 121

11. Wetland W377 is a valley floor wetland surrounded by a plantation forest. The wetland is a very nice wetland that is dominated by raupo, swarding sedges and ferns (Photo 5). The southern margin of the wetland has a small stand of kahikatea trees scattered along the edge. The northern margin of the wetland has a stand of forest that consists of a mixture of native trees including, beech, lancewood, rimu and kahikatea. Even though the wetland is surrounded by a variety of plantation conifer species the wetland is one of the best intact wetland ecosystems that I have visited in the Rai/Pelorus area. In my assessment the wetland ranks H in terms of both rarity and representativeness and is considered to be significant. The originally mapped margins of the wetland are slightly inaccurate and I suggest that the wetland boundaries are redefined to those marked on Map 3.

Wetland W777 – Zoning Map 166

12. We were unable to visit wetland W777 on the site visits with Nelson Forests Limited due to access issues. However, looking at the latest aerial photographs it is evident that the

wetland is actually much larger than originally mapped. The area is an old meander channel of the Top Valley Stream that has become isolated from the main channel. Only a small portion of the wetland as notified in the pMEP encroached onto land that Nelson Forests Limited has an interest in. The small area looks to be dominated by willows and other weed species and therefore the movement of the boundary of the wetland to not include it as part of the significant wetland will have minimal impact of the wetland as a whole. It is my view that the significant wetland boundary should be extended to include the area of wetland that was not originally identified in the pMEP (Map 4).

Wetland W779 – Zoning Map 155

13. When visiting wetland W779 with Nelson Forests Limited it was discovered that the area in question that had been identified as a significant wetland was in fact an incised stream gully with steep banks that were dominated by gorse, blackberry and broome. (Photo 5) The bed of the gully was also dominated by theses weed species with one or two struggling carex and flax plants poking their head through the weeds. It is my view that W779 does not meet the significance criteria and therefore can be removed from the Marlborough Environment Plan.

Wetland W989 – Zoning Map 134

14. Wetland W989 is a wetland that has formed in an ancient river channel at the foot of a slope. A seep from the side of the slope adjacent to the wetland provides an additional input of water to the wetland. It is dominated by swarding sedges, rank pasture grasses and the occasional willow. (Photo 6) Very few of this type of wetland remain in Marlborough as they are relatively easily drained and converted to pasture, however, in this situation the seep from the slope means that drainage is not easily achieved. The originally mapped margins of the wetland are inaccurate and I suggest that the wetland boundaries are redefined to those marked on Map 5. In my assessment the wetland ranks as M in terms of rarity and as a result is considered to be significant.

Wetland W1368 – Zoning Map 156

15. Wetland W1368 is a wetland in a small gully high up in the foot hills of the Richmond Ranges. The waterway has not eroded out to a typical steep incised gully due to the presence of a bedrock outcrop. Upstream of the outcrop the valley floor is relatively flat allowing the formation of a wetland. The wetland dominated by flax and *Carex secta* with one or two invasive willows present.(Photo 7) It is a stunning wetland with a natural community that has not been impacted by drainage attempts. The wetland is surrounded by commercial plantation forestry on relatively gently slopes. The forest has been harvested relatively recently and has been replanted. The recent harvest seems to have had very little impact on the condition of the wetland. It is my assessment that the wetland ranks as H for both rarity and representativeness and as a result is considered to be significant. The boundary of the wetland as notified in the pMEP is not particularly accurate and is smaller than the wetland actually is. I suggest the boundary of the wetland is adjusted to more accurately reflect the extent of the wetland as shown in Map 6.

Wetland W1369 – Zoning Map 156

16. Wetland W1368 is a small wetland in a small gully high up in the foot hills of the Richmond Ranges. The wetland has formed behind a bedrock outcropping. Upstream of the outcrop the valley floor is relatively flat allowing the formation of a wetland. The wetland dominated by flax and *Carex secta* (Photo 8). The wetland is surrounded by commercial plantation forestry on relatively gently slopes. The forest has been harvested relatively recently and has been replanted. The recent harvest seems to have had very little impact on the condition of the wetland. It is my assessment that the wetland ranks as M for both rarity and representativeness and as a result is considered to be significant.

Wetland W972 – Zoning Map 158

17. Wetland W972 has formed in the floor of a valley in an area of rolling hills. The hill slopes around the wetland are in plantation forestry and an area of land that has in the past been used for the illegal dumping of sawdust. While on site assessing the wetland it was clear that parts of the area that had been identified as wetland in the pMEP were not a wetland but rather an area of rank pasture grass and the toe of a ridge covered in pine trees. The western area of the wetland is dominated by raupo and swarding sedges while the eastern end of the wetland is dominated by flax and Carex secta. There is a large number of invasive weed species present in the eastern part of the wetland. Based on the site visit it is my view that the wetland is significant however the boundaries need to be adjusted to those marked on Map 7.

Mr Rodney Parkes

18. In submissions heard in March 2018, Mr Rodney Parkes questioned Council's methodology and consultation for the identification of significant wetlands on his property. It was his belief that he was not contacted in regards to the wetlands and therefore he did not request a site visit. Council followed the same procedure with Mr Parkes as they did with all other property owners throughout the process. At the hearing it was agreed that there was still the opportunity for a site visit to refine the boundaries of the wetland.

Wetland W108 – Zoning Map 149

19. I accompanied Mr Parkes to wetland W108 on 16 August 2018 and carried out a visual assessment of the wetland area. The area is located at the downstream extent of the Para Wetland. A causeway and drainage channel have been constructed at some stage in the past to try and isolate the area form the Para wetland to allow the establishment of pasture. The efforts to drain the area have been partially successful and some of the areas that were identified as significant wetland in the pMEP are actually paddocks that are occasionally grazed. It is suggested that the boundaries of wetland W108 are amended as shown in Map 8.

Port Marlborough New Zealand Limited

20. Port Marlborough made a submission to the Hearings Panel that the southern portion of wetland W991 should be removed from the schedule as they did not believe that the area was significant. Their reasoning was that when they had covenanted the northern area of the wetland the southern area was not included and therefore it must not have significant values otherwise it would have been covenanted as well. An offer was made to make an onsite assessment of the area to determine its significance. I visited wetland W991with Rose Prendeville from Port Marlborough New Zealand Limited (Port Marlborough) on 20 June 2018.

Wetland W991 – Zoning Map 138

21. The area that Port Marlborough wants removed from the schedule is in Shakespeare Bay and on the south side of Queen Charlotte Drive. It is separated from the main portion of the wetland by the road. It is a relatively small gently sloping area at the junction of two small waterways. A series of manmade ponds have been developed in the area to intercept silt from runoff from activities occurring higher up in the catchment (Photo 11). While there is some wetland vegetation present, it is all associated with the riparian margins of the two waterways rather than a separate wetland (Photo 12). The remainder of the vegetation in

the area is a mixture of low stature blackberry and rank pasture grasses growing on a dry terrace above the waterway.

22. It is my view that the part of wetland W991 south or Queen Charlotte Drive does not meet the criteria to be determined to be a significant natural wetland in the Marlborough Environment Plan.

23. Looking at the boundaries of the portion of the wetland that is north of Queen Charlotte Drive it is evident that the boundaries are not particularly accurate, and if scope allows, that it be amended to those shown in Map 9.

Photo 1 – Wetland W87

Photo 2 – Wetland W92 open water area

Photo 3 – W92 Northern end

Photo 4 – W203

Photo 5 – W779

Photo 6 – W989

Photo 7 – W1368

Photo 8 – W1369

Photo 9 – W972 – Eastern end

Photo 10 – W 972 – Western end

Photo 11 – W991 – Man made ponds

Photo 12 – W991 Riparian Vegetation

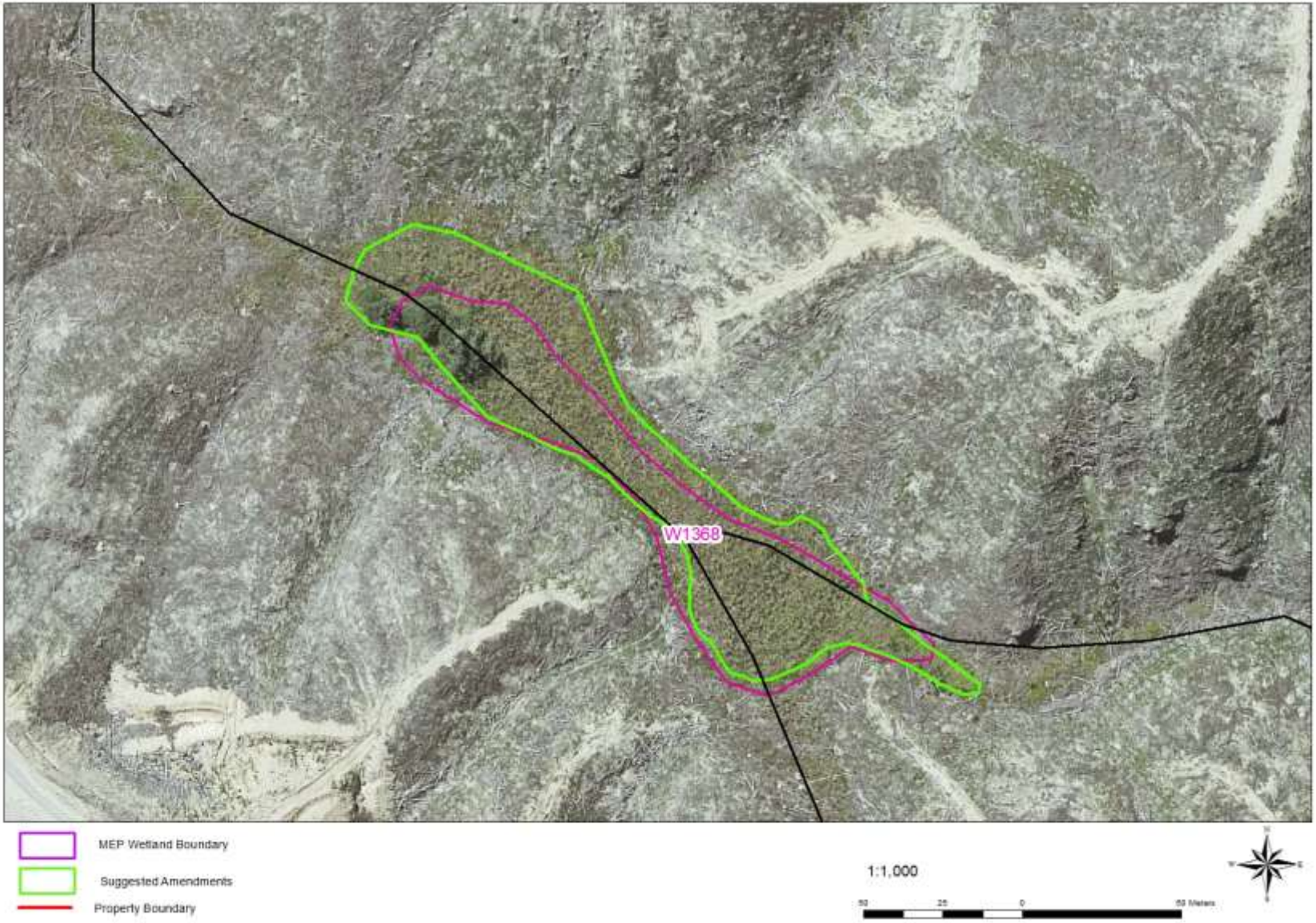
Map 1 – Wetland W92

Map 2 – Wetland W203

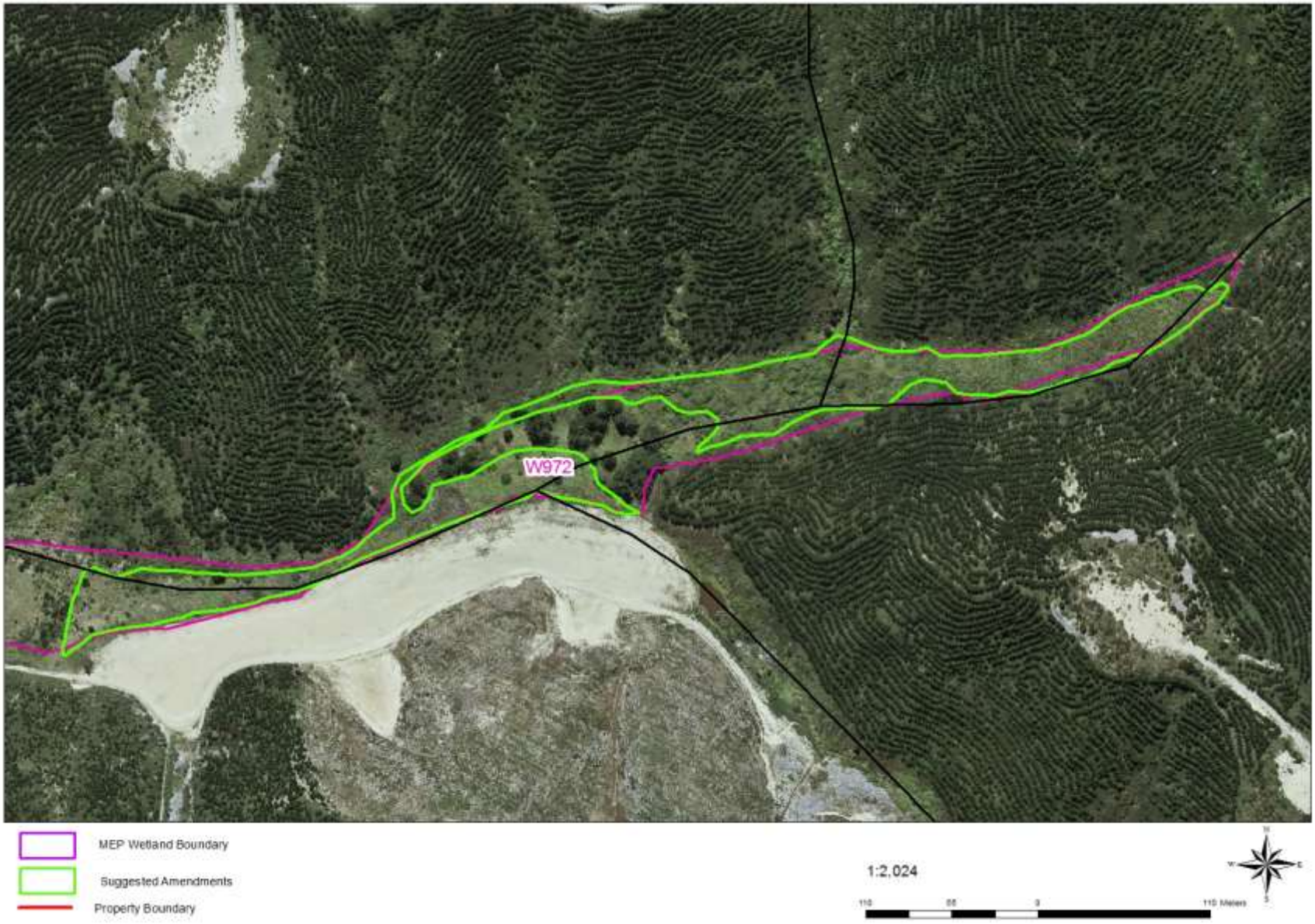
Map 3 – Wetland W377

Map 4 – Wetland W777

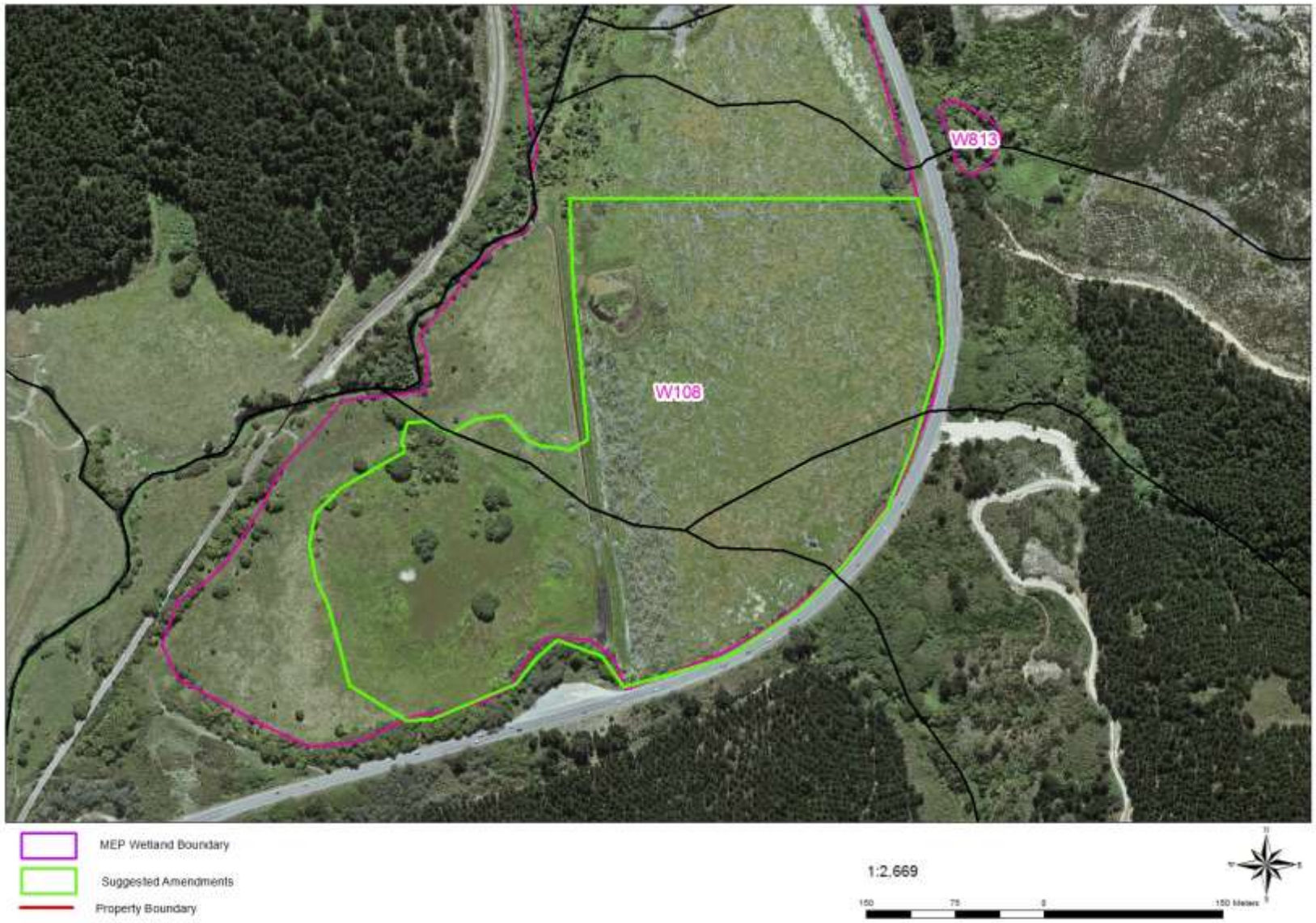
Map 5 – Wetland W989



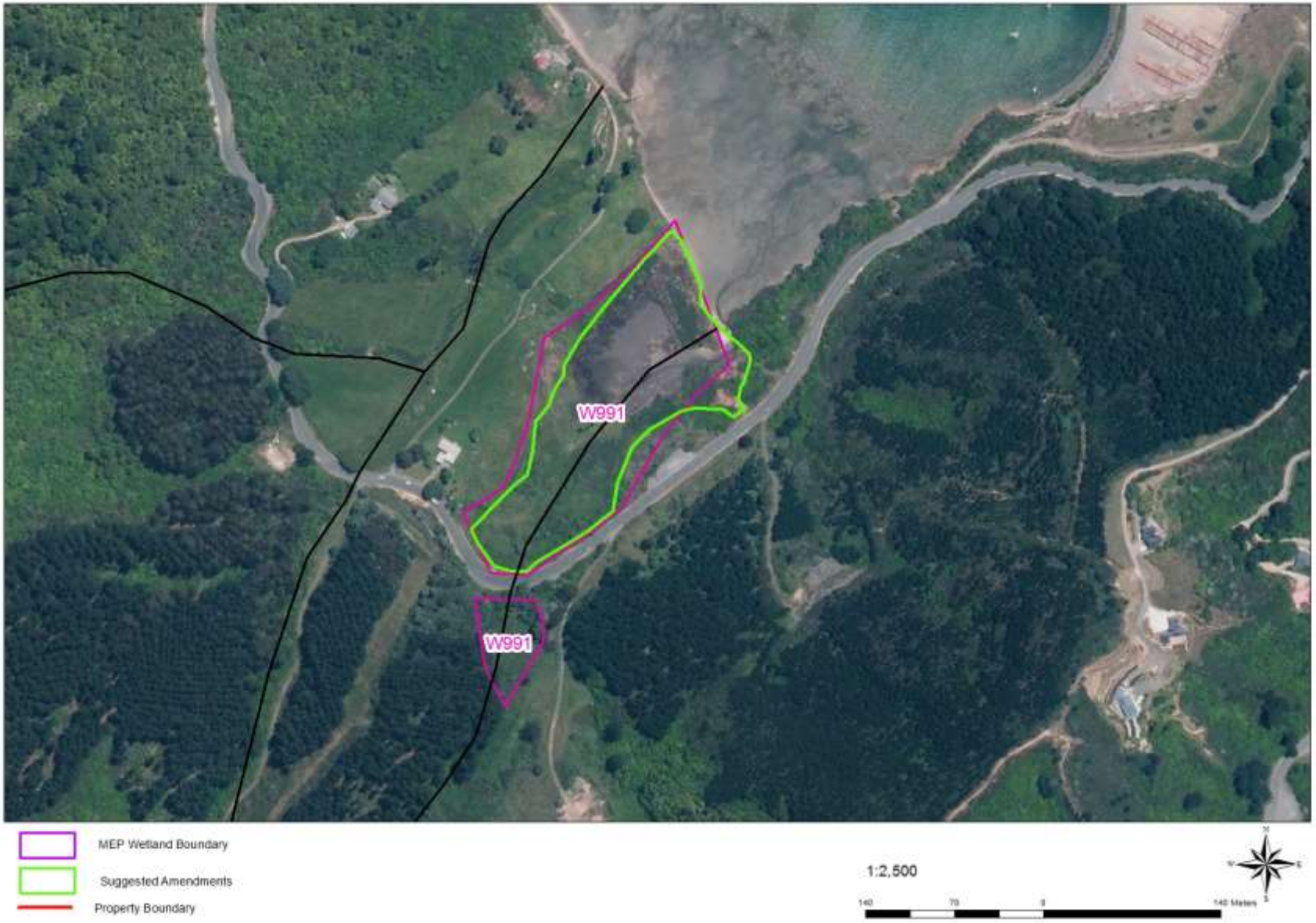
Map 6 – Wetland W1368



Map 7 – Wetland W972



Map 8 – Wetland W108



Map 9 – Wetland W991