Regional Fact Sheet

Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington/Te Upoko o te Ika a Māui May 2025

Current state of the forestry and wood processing industries in these regions

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Te Uru Rākau New Zealand Forest Service

Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington regions make up the Southern North Island (SNI) wood supply region.

The topography of the SNI ranges from coastal plains in the west and east, through rolling and steep hill country to mountains in the middle. Forests in the region are on a wide range of sites, from the sand dunes on the west coast, to the hill country of Taranaki and the Wairarapa.

Regional GDP for year ended March 2024

Taranaki	$11,140 million
Manawatū-Whanganui	$15,683 million
Wellington	$51,008 million

Share of national GDP in percent

Taranaki	3%
Manawatū-Whanganui	4%
Wellington	12%

GDP per capita for year ended March 2024

Taranaki	$85,362
Manawatū-Whanganui	$59,834
Wellington	$92,776

GDP in forestry, fishing and mining for year ended March 2023

Taranaki	$1,564 million
Manawatū-Whanganui	$298 million
Wellington	$178 million

Estimated regional population, year ended June 2023

Taranaki	127,900
Manawatū-Whanganui	259,100
Wellington	546,800

Estimated regional Māori population, year ended June 2023

Taranaki	24.4%
Manawatū-Whanganui	27.3%
Wellington	17.0%

Number of new dwelling consents, year ended December 2024

Taranaki	437
Manawatū-Whanganui	1,162
Wellington	1,883

Source: StatsNZ

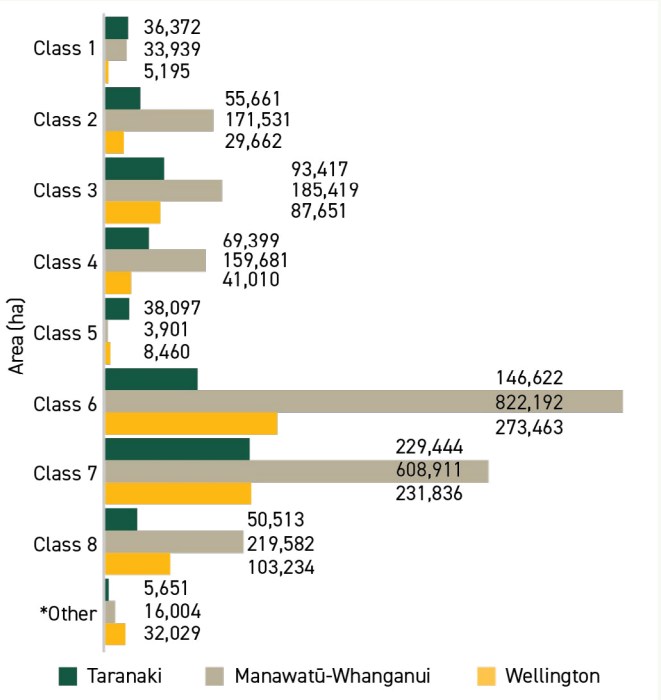
Land Use Capability

The Land Use Capability (LUC) system classifies land into 8 categories based on its ability to support various productive uses over time. The classification considers physical attributes of land such as climate, soil, slope, vegetation and erodibility. Classes 1 to 4 are generally suitable for all ranges of cultivation. Classes 5 to 7 tend to be suitable for pastoral farming and forestry. Class 8 has severe limitations for primary production or forestry use.

Table 1. Percentage of the land area in LUC classes. Source: LUC database 2021.

Region	LUC 1-4 (%)	LUC 5-7 (%)	LUC 8 (%)
Taranaki	24.8	64.6	9.9
Manawatū-Whanganui	35.1	57.1	7.0
Wellington	20.1	63.2	12.7

Figure 1. Area in hectares (ha) by LUC class. Source: LUC database 2021.



*Other: estuaries, lakes, quarries, rivers, towns.

Sources: Our Environment - Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research *and* Target land and land use capability classes - MPI

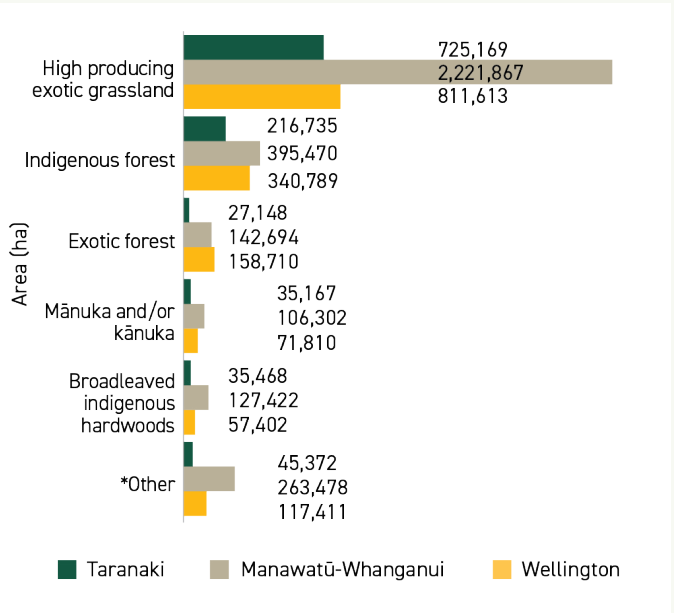
Existing land cover

Manawatū-Whanganui region's total land area is 2.22 million hectares (ha), making up 8% of the total area of New Zealand. Indigenous forest and broadleaved indigenous hardwoods cover 24% of the area while exotic forests cover 6% of the region. Fifty-three percent of the region has high producing exotic grassland. Significant areas of the region are protected as part of the conservation estate, including the Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks.

Taranaki's total land area is 725,450 ha, making up 3% of the total area of New Zealand. Indigenous forest and broadleaved indigenous hardwoods cover about 63.8% of the region, while the exotic forests cover 3.7% of the region.

Wellington's area is 804,947 ha, making up 3% of the total area of New Zealand. Indigenous forest and broadleaved indigenous hardwoods cover about 26.7% of the region. Tararua Forest Park (the Tararuas) is a protected area in the region, with a diverse range of indigenous vegetation, including kahikatea, rimu, tōtara, rata and various species of ferns and shrubs. Exotic forests cover 8.8% of the region.

Figure 2. Area (ha) of land cover types in the regions. Source and forest type definitions: Land Cover Database (LCDB5, 2018).



*Other includes orchard, vineyard or other perennial crop, tall tussock grassland, gravel or rock, short-rotation cropland, deciduous hardwoods, harvested forest, urban settlements, lakes, rivers, and sand, among others.

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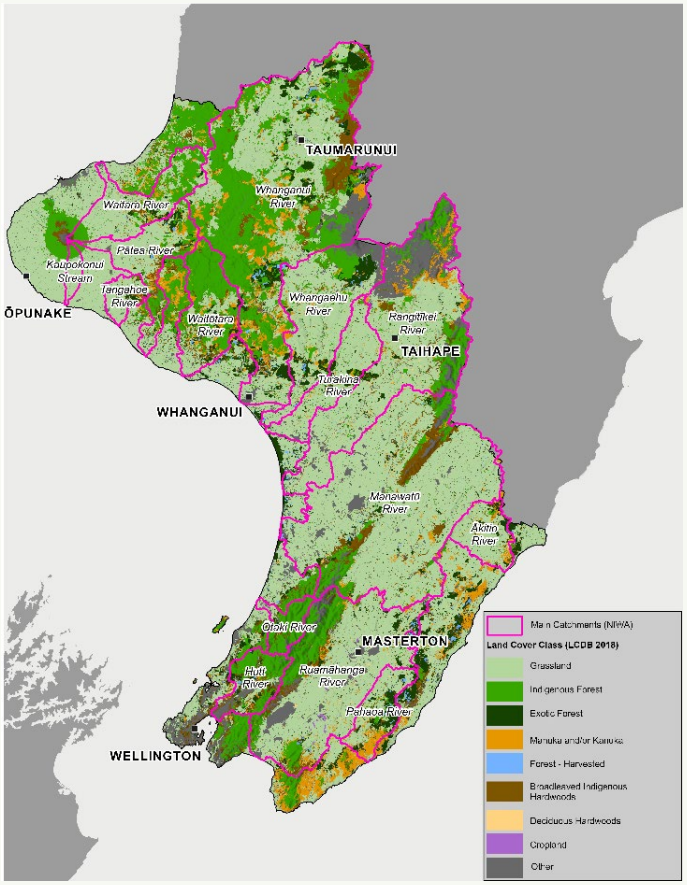
Figure 3. Map: Land cover in SNI.

Data source: Land Cover Database (LCDB5) – LRIS 2018/19.

View a high-resolution version of the land cover map



Source: Geographic boundary viewer - Stats NZ

New Zealand's regions are primarily determined by areas of water collection into rivers, known as catchments. There are 16 river catchments in the Manawatū-Whanganui region and the largest is the Whanganui River catchment (709,153 ha). The other major catchments are the Manawatū River (582,490 ha), the Rangitikei River (392,152 ha), and the Whangaehu River (198,044 ha).

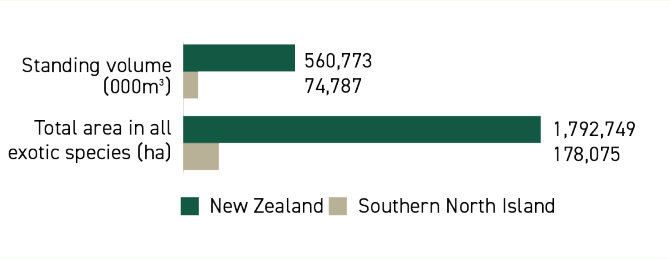
There are 7 river catchments in the Taranaki region and the largest in the region is the Waitotara River catchment (115,910 ha).

There are 5 river catchments in the Wellington region, the largest is the Ruamahunga River (341,913 ha).

Forestry in the region (National Exotic Forest Description, NEFD 2024)[1]

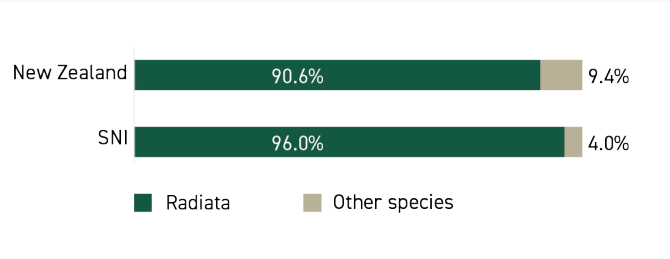
For NEFD purposes, Taranaki, Wellington and the Manawatū-Whanganui regions are combined into the SNI wood supply region[2]. The SNI wood supply region has a well-established forestry sector accounting for 10% of New Zealand's exotic forest area. 48% (84,690 ha) of SNI forests are in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, 41% (72,971 ha) in the Wellington region and 11% (20,414 ha) in the Taranaki region. Around a quarter (41,680 ha) of the SNI region's forests are in the Masterton District.

Figure 4. Comparing the SNI wood supply region and New Zealand on exotic forestry facts. Data source: NEFD 2024.



The average age of exotic forest in the SNI wood supply region is 22.4 years, compared to 18.6 years nationally.

Figure 5. Proportion of exotic forest species in the SNI wood supply region in comparison to New Zealand. Source: NEFD 2024



The SNI region's exotic forests are 96% radiata pine (170,871 ha) compared to about 91% nationally. Other exotic forestry species are: 0.4% Douglas-fir (747 ha), 2.3% other softwoods such as redwoods (4,076 ha), 0.8% other hardwoods such as acacia and blackwood (1,413 ha), 0.3% cypress (544 ha), and 0.2% eucalyptus (415 ha).

1 The 2024 National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD) – MPI provides a detailed description of New Zealand's planted production forest.

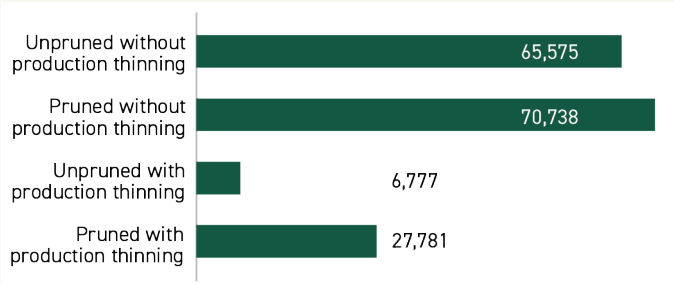
2 The Southern North Island wood supply region includes New Plymouth District, Stratford District, South Taranaki District, Whanganui District, Rangitikei District, Manawatū District, Palmerston North City, Tararua District and Horowhenua District, Wellington City, Lower Hutt City, Upper Hutt City, Porirua City, Kāpiti Coast District, Masterton District, Carterton District, South Wairarapa District.

In 2024, 33% (57,099 ha) of the total planted area of radiata pine forest in the SNI wood supply region was at harvestable age (26–30 years). This compares to 21% of the national total planted area of radiata in the same age range.

Silviculture regimes in the region

Around 58% of the radiata pine forest in the region is in pruned regimes (Figure 6), ensuring the supply of pruned logs to the region's wood availability (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Number of hectares of pruned and unpruned regimes of radiata pine in the SNI wood supply region. Data source: NEFD 2024.



32% of the SNI wood supply region's forest belongs to <99 ha size class and around 60% of the region's forest belongs to <999 ha size class.

Table 2. Number of forest owners and total forest area by national size class in Southern North Island wood supply regions. Data source: NEFD 2024.

Southern North Island wood supply region		National Size Class					
		<40 ha	40–99 ha	100–499 ha	500–999 ha	1,000–9,999 ha	10,000+ ha*
	Total Entities	NA	204	182	19	11	8
	Total ha	45,255	12,427	37,731	12,625	14,021	56,004

*At least one of the 10,000+ha owners have forests outside the Southern North Island wood supply region hence the total number of ha is <80,000.

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Wood Availability Forecast (WAF)

Figure 7. Radiata pine wood availability forecast (WAF) scenario 3 for the SNI wood supply region. Data source: WAF 2021.
Scenario 3 assumes that large-scale owners harvest at stated intentions then at non-declining yield, and total wood availability is modelled at a split non-declining yield.

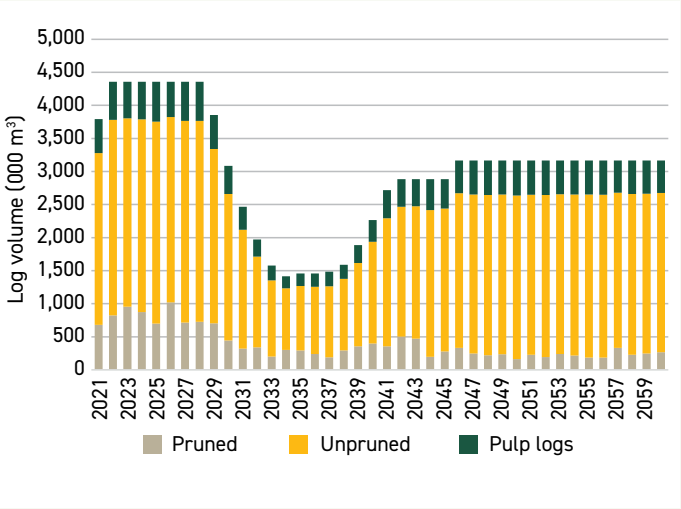
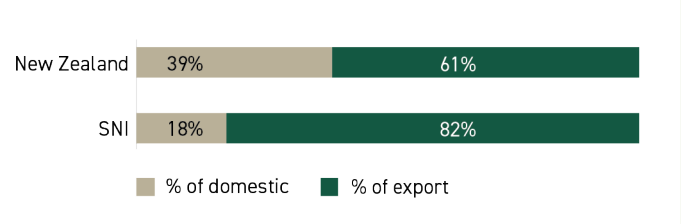


Figure 7 shows the forecasted volumes of pruned, unpruned and pulp logs between 2021 and 2060, for the SNI wood supply region. Near-term pruned volume remains high, while in the longer-term pruned log volume reduces, as areas of pruned forest are replanted into an unpruned regime. From 2023–2028 the wood availability forecast is around 4.5 million cubic metres per year. This gradually drops to about 1.5 million cubic metres per year from 2033 to 2038, before increasing to just over 3 million cubic metres per year from 2046 onwards.

Source: WAF August 2021 - Scenario 3 - Canopy

Markets for the SNI wood supply region

Figure 8. Percentage of exports vs domestic processing of logs for New Zealand, the SNI wood supply region for the year ended in December 2024. Data source: Levy trust data for year ended December 2024.



In 2024:

- 82% of total logs produced in the SNI were exported, and 18% were domestically processed.
- 1,448,006 tonnes of logs were exported from CentrePort Wellington, 799,760 tonnes of logs were exported from the port of Taranaki. Additionally, 231,550 tonnes of logs were processed at the Masterton inland port/rail hub.
- 547,229 tonnes of logs went to sawmills in the SNI wood supply region contributing to 4% of the total log volume processed in New Zealand.

Indigenous forestry

For the year ending June 2023, tōtara was the indigenous species that had the largest volumes delivered to mills in the Southern North Island wood supply region.

Table 3. Log volumes delivered to mills from July 2022 to June 2023 in the SNI region. Source: Indigenous forestry - MPI.

Species	Cubic metres
Tōtara	301
Rimu	20
Mataī	15
Black maire	11
Northern rātā	6.5

Forestry and wood processing

Nurseries

There are at least 42 nurseries in the Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington regions producing exotic and native seedling stock.

Of note is the Manawatū-Whanganui region producing at least 13% of the total radiata seedings sold in New Zealand (113 million), in 2023. Some nurseries have increased the volume of seedlings they produce by automating seed sowing, topping, root pruning/undercutting and spraying, among other processes.

Wood processing

There are at least 31 wood processors in the Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington regions, including three sawmills processing at least 100,000 m³ per year. These produce structural and appearance grade timber, finger-jointed structural timber, veneer, plywood, laminated veneer lumber (LVL) and poles and posts. Logs are mainly sourced from this region, with smaller volumes sourced from the Hawke's Bay.

Woody biomass

The Regional Energy Transition accelerator program (RETA) is conducted by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). The RETA has estimated current demand for bioenergy and woody biomass supply available for bioenergy in Taranaki region from 2024-2050. Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington region's RETA studies are currently in progress.

On average, over the next 15 years, in the Taranaki region, approximately 126,652 tonnes of woody biomass could be available for bioenergy annually, comprising:

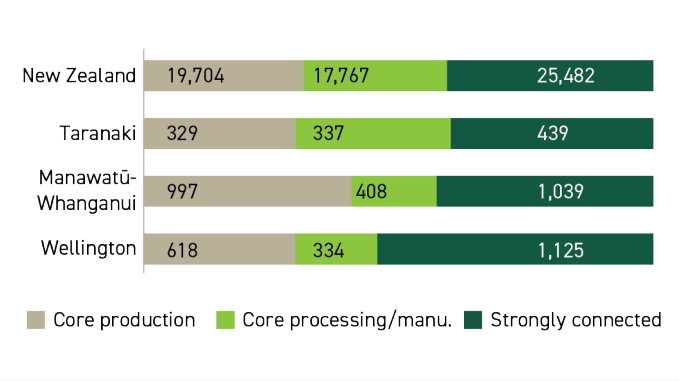
- 12,558 tonnes of harvest residues;
- 30,672 tonnes of wood processing residues;
- 83,421 tonnes of KI and KIS export grade logs and pulp logs.

Source: RETA Taranaki

Workforce

For the year ending March 2023, an estimated 42,589 people worked in the forestry and wood processing sectors in New Zealand. Nearly 14% of them worked in the Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington regions.

Figure 9. Comparing the numbers of workers in forestry and wood processing for Manawatū-Whanganui, Taranaki and Wellington regions with New Zealand. Source: www.workforceinsights.govt.nz/workforce-today/forestry-wood.



Core production	Core production includes forestry, logging and forestry support services.
Core processing/ manufacturing	Core processing/manufacturing includes log sawmilling, wood chipping, timber resawing and dressing, veneer and plywood manufacturing, reconstituted wood product manufacturing and pulp, paper and paperboard manufacturing.
Strongly connected	Strongly connected activities include wooden structural fitting and component manufacturing, other wood product manufacturing, corrugated paperboard and paperboard container manufacturing, paper bag manufacturing, wooden furniture and upholstered seat manufacturing, timber wholesaling.

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Erosion

Figure 10. Erosion Susceptibility Classification (ESC) for SNI. Source: MPI.

View a high-resolution version of the Erosion Susceptibility Classification map.

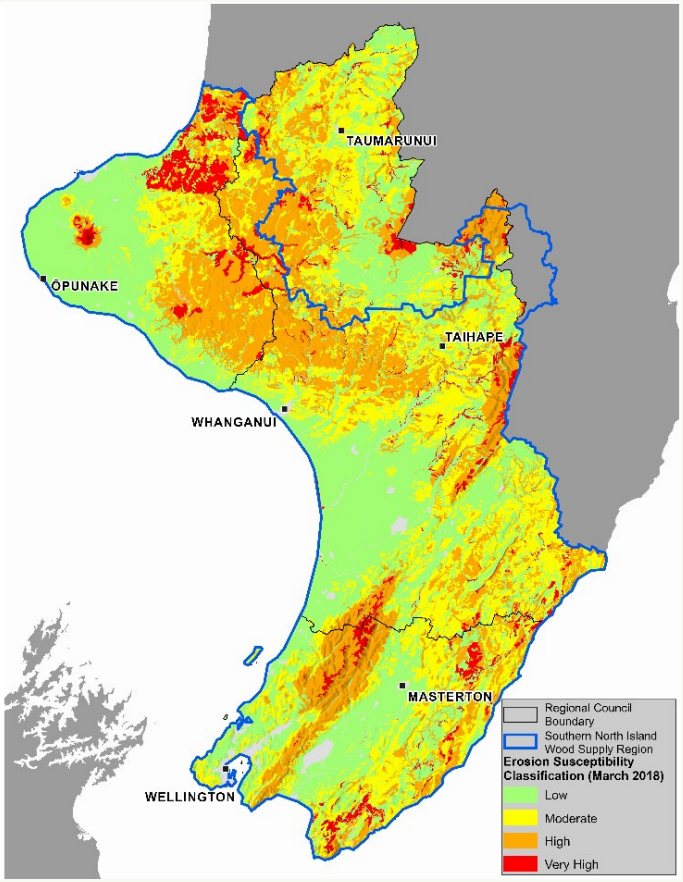


Table 4. Number of hectares (ha) and the percentage of the total area in each of the Erosion Susceptibility Classes (ESC) in Taranaki, Manawatū-Whanganui and Wellington regions compared to New Zealand.

Region	Taranaki (ha)	%	Manawatū-Whanganui (ha)	%	Wellington (ha)	%	New Zealand (ha)	%
Low	332,969	46	813,317	37	305,220	38	11,127,668	42
Moderate	109,879	15	686,394	31	234,541	29	5,824,733	22
High	200,698	28	613,268	28	194,249	24	5,083,031	19
Very High	73,550	10	84,678	4	42,339	5	3,472,477	13
Other	8,040	1	24,225	1	35,332	4	1,026,649	4

Government funding

One Billion Trees

As of January 2024, $10.2 million in funding has been approved for direct landowner and partnership grants in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, $2.4 million in the Taranaki region and $5.2 million in the Wellington region. From the fund, 3,479 hectares have been planted in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, 826 hectares have been planted in the Taranaki region and 968 hectares have been planted in the Wellington region.

The One Billion Trees Fund, part of the One Billion Trees Programme, is now closed to new applications. The programme's goal is to plant a billion trees by 2028.

Progress towards planting one billion trees

Hill Country Erosion (HCE) Programme

The HCE Programme is a partnership between the MPI, councils and landowners to support regional erosion-control projects.

Between 2023 to 2027, the HCE Programme has invested $3.64 million in the Manawatū-Whanganui region, $3.64 million in the Taranaki region and $3.64 million in the Wellington/Wairarapa region. The funding is supporting erosion control and revegetation work through land use capability mapping, poplar/willow planting, reversion to native cover, small-scale forestry (where appropriate) and supporting community soil conversation efforts.

Hill Country Erosion Programme for councils – MPI

Wood Processing Growth Fund (WPGF)

The WPGF is designed to help wood processors increase New Zealand's onshore wood processing capacity.

Woodspan, a manufacturer and fabricator of Parallel Laminated Timber (PLT) mass timber panels based in New Plymouth, has received a $87,500 grant from the WPGF. They also make glulam engineered wood products. The grant allows Woodspan to look into producing a mass-timber PLT ground floor system. This system would be for residential use. It could offer a cheaper alternative to traditional concrete or timber subfloor systems.

Gourmet Wood, a small-scale mill based in Otaki received a $125,406 grant. It supplies non-pine timbers to the lower North Island. The grant will fund a new kiln to reduce processing bottlenecks caused by drying time for the mill's timber. The new kiln will increase production from 1,200 cubic metres to 14,000 cubic metres per year. This will also increase log intake from local suppliers and provide high quality timber to construction businesses.

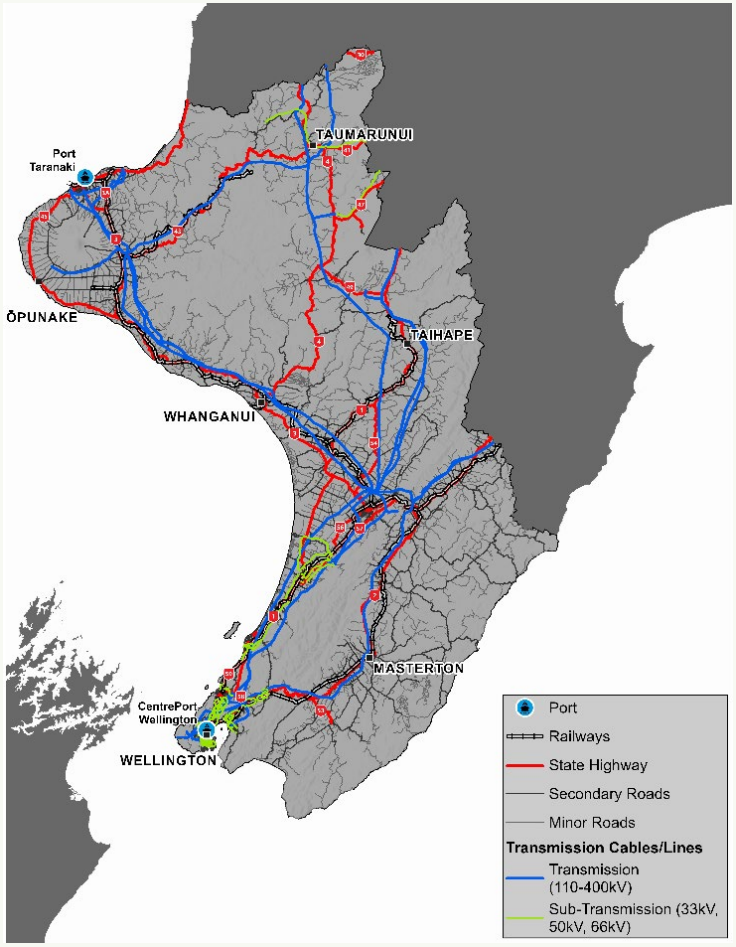
Wood Processing Growth Fund

Infrastructure

Figure 11. Map of key infrastructure across Southern North Island.

View a high-resolution version of the infrastructure map.

Disclaimer: The power lines information on this map may be incomplete. The information that is currently displayed is what MPI had authorised access to at the time of creating this fact sheet.



Roads

The SNI region has extensive State Highway and local authority road networks, and forestry companies and growers make use of this. State Highway (SH)1 runs from the north to the south of the SNI region. SH2 is connecting the eastern SNI region to Hawke's Bay. SH3 is the main route along the coast that connects the Taranaki region to the rest of the SNI region. SH43 is the inland route connecting south Taranaki with the rest of the SNI.

Rail

Rail is vital for transporting logs in the region. Logs are transported by rail from the Waingawa rail hub to CentrePort in Wellington. The capacity of the Waingawa rail hub in the Wairarapa has been increased through collaboration efforts between CentrePort, Kiwirail, McCarthy transport, Qube Ports NZ, and forestry companies. Logs can also be stored at the hub, extending capacity at the port to manage shipping demand. Generally, there are 5 trains per week from the Waingawa hub to CentrePort, each train of 36 wagons transporting 1,200 tonnes of logs. Log transportation by rail helps reduce congestion and road safety on the Remutaka Hill road, which is the only road directly connecting Wairarapa to Wellington. Train transport also helps to reduce transport emissions.

Since January 2025, log trains have resumed transporting logs from Whanganui to Kiwirail's New Plymouth rail depot. From the depot the log wagons are then shunted (moved by a smaller locomotive) to Port Taranaki.

Ports

The SNI region has 2 seaports:

CentrePort Wellington is located in the southern tip of North Island, providing a central hub for both domestic and international shipping routes. The port handles containers, bulk trades (logs, petroleum, vehicles, cement and other bulk cargo), cruise, and interisland ferries.

In 2024, CentrePort Wellington exported logs (8% of New Zealand log exports) and forestry products worth $274,718,038.

Table 5. CentrePort export volumes and value (Free on board-FOB) for forestry and wood products for the year ending 2024. Data source: MPI Overseas Merchandise and Trade.

Product	Unit	Quantity	Value – FOB ($NZ)
Logs	Cubic metre	1,675,700	267,838,606
Other Forestry Products*	Mixed	–	453,927
Panels	Cubic metre	1,845	1,284,694
Paper & Paperboard*	Tonne	2,325	496,719
Sawn timber and sleepers	Cubic metre	3,478	4,644,092

*Quantity cannot be provided as other forestry products are reported in different units of measure.

Port Taranaki, in New Plymouth is the only deep-water port on the west coast of New Zealand. It services bulk liquids (serving the region's oil and gas industry), dry bulk (logs, fertiliser, stock feed and cement) and general cargo. Port Taranaki has an in-port debarker.

In 2024, Port Taranaki exported logs (4% of New Zealand log exports) and forestry products worth $169,039,452.

Table 6. Port Taranaki export volumes and value (Free on board-FOB) for forestry and wood products for the year ending 2024. Data source: MPI Overseas Merchandise and Trade.

Product	Unit	Quantity	Value – FOB ($NZ)
Logs	Cubic metre	905,953	168,989,250
Chips	Bone dry unit	12	44,624
Sawn timber and sleepers	Cubic metre	1	5,578

Sources: CentrePort — CentrePort Wellington

Home | Port Taranaki

Electricity

Transpower owns the transmission lines in the region, which consist of one 350 kilowatt (kV) double circuit tower, multiple 220 kV double and single circuit towers, 110 kV double and single circuit towers, and 110 kV single circuit pole lines. There are around 30 sub-stations in the region.

The main power generation methods in the region are hydro, wind and thermal. The Turitea Wind Farm in the Tararua Ranges is the largest wind farm in New Zealand (221 MW, Mercury Energy). Amongst some of the wind farms in the region are: Tararua wind farm in the Tararua ranges (161 MW, Mercury Energy), Te Apiti located north of the Manawatū gorge (91 MW, Meridian Energy) and West Wind located at Terawhiti Station and Mākara, west of Wellington (143 MW, Meridian Energy). Taranaki has 4 thermal power stations, Kapuni (25MW, Vector/BOP energy), Whareroa (68 MW, Fonterra/Todd Energy), Stratford (577 MW, Contact Energy) and McKee (102 MW, Nova Energy). Taranaki also has two hydropower stations Mangahao (38 MW, King Country Energy) and Pātea (32 MW, Manawa Energy).

Sources: Transpower transmission network - North Island (PDF, 773KB)

New Zealand Power Plants - Open Infrastructure Map

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Useful links

Forestry

Southern North Island Wood Council

The sustainable management of indigenous forests - MPI (PDF, 3 MB).

New Zealand forest data – MPI

Afforestation and deforestation intentions survey 2023 – MPI (PDF, 943 KB)

Wood processing

Invest in New Zealand wood processing (March 2020) – New Zealand Trade and Enterprise

Information releases - Overseas merchandise trade – Stats New Zealand

Regional statistics

Regional Economic Activity Web Tool

Regional updates – New Zealand Transport Agency

2023 Census regional and national data

Infrastructure

Maps and Geospatial data – Kiwirail

Transmission lines – Transpower

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Contact email: info@mpi.govt.nz

Published by: Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service, Forestry Insights Directorate

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