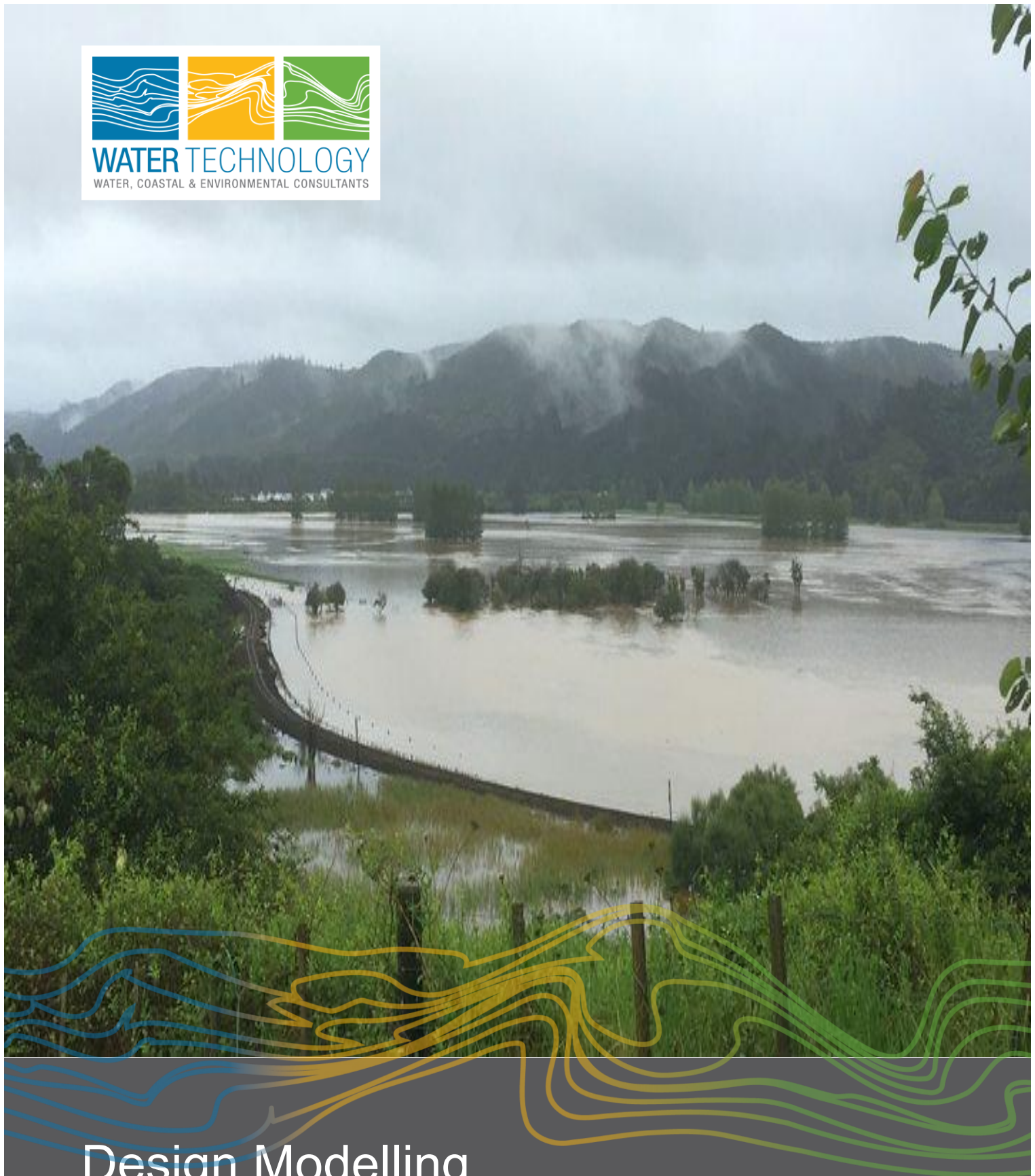




Design Modelling

Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi
Catchment (M17)

Northland Regional Council

16 October 2025



Document Status

Version	Doc type	Reviewed by	Approved by	Date issued
01	Draft	Lachlan Inglis	Ben Hughes	25/05/2021
02	Final	Lachlan Inglis	Ben Hughes	16/10/2025

Project Details

Project Name	Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi Catchment (M17)
Client	Northland Regional Council
Client Project Manager	Sher Khan & Matt De Boer
Water Technology Project Manager	Bertrand Salmi
Water Technology Project Director	Ben Hughes
Authors	Alvin Mingjun Li, Lachlan Inglis
Document Number	M17_20010434_R02V02_Validation_Report



Cover Photo: Helen Beech (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/350285/flooding-in-northland-forces-school-and-road-closures>)

COPYRIGHT

Water Technology Pty Ltd has produced this document in accordance with instructions from Northland Regional Council for their use only. The concepts and information contained in this document are the copyright of Water Technology Pty Ltd. Use or copying of this document in whole or in part without written permission of Water Technology Pty Ltd constitutes an infringement of copyright.

Water Technology Pty Ltd does not warrant this document is definitive nor free from error and does not accept liability for any loss caused, or arising from, reliance upon the information provided herein.

6 Churchill Place
Cambridge New Zealand 3434
Telephone +64 27 777 0989
NZBN 94290481 881 80





CONTENTS

1	PROJECT OVERVIEW	3
2	STUDY AREA	5
3	DESIGN MODELLING	7
3.1	Overview	7
3.2	Model Parameters	7
3.2.1	Rainfall Intensity-Duration-Frequency	7
3.2.2	Design Rainfall Temporal Patterns	8
3.2.3	Losses	9
3.2.4	Boundaries	12
4	MODELLING RESULTS	13
4.1	Modelled Result Processing/Filtering	13
5	VERIFICATION OF DESIGN FLOWS	18
5.1	Flood Frequency Analysis	18
5.2	Regional Estimation Methods	19
5.3	Verification Results	21
6	SUMMARY	24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1	Model delineation	4
Figure 2-1	Study area	6
Figure 3-1	Example of design rainfall grid (12-hour, 1% AEP rainfall) for M17	8
Figure 3-2	Temporal pattern for design rainfall of 12-hour, 1% AEP event	9
Figure 3-3	Hydraulic model material layer	11
Figure 4-1	Design modelling of 1% flood depth	14
Figure 4-2	Design Modelling of 1% AEP flood velocity	15
Figure 4-3	Design modelling of 1% AEP Flood hazard	16
Figure 4-4	Design modelling of 1% AEP flood depth zoomed at a township	17
Figure 5-1	Available streamflow gauges within Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment	18
Figure 5-2	Example of flood frequency curve of Log Pearson III distribution fit	19
Figure 5-3	Verification of design modelling results against hydrological estimates	23

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1	Key Modelling Information	7
Table 3-2	1% AEP Design rainfall depth	9
Table 3-3	Design model parameters	10
Table 4-1	Flood hazard classification	13
Table 5-1	Summary of 1% AEP peak flow comparison	22



1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Overview

Water Technology was commissioned by Northland Regional Council (NRC) to undertake a region-wide flood modelling study. The study area encompassed the entire Northland Regional Council area which covers an area of over 12,500 km², with the exclusion offshore islands. The aim of this project was to map riverine flood hazard zones across the entire Northland region and update existing flood intelligence.

Modelling approach

This project used a 2D Direct Rainfall (also known as Rain on Grid) approach for hydraulic modelling and has provided flood extents for a defined range of design storms. The hydraulic modelling software TUFLOW was used. TUFLOW is a widely used software package suitable for the analysis of flooding. TUFLOW routes overland flow across a topographic surface (2D domain) to create flood extent, depth, velocity and flood hazard outputs that can be used for planning, intelligence and emergency response. The latest release of TUFLOW offers several recent advanced modelling techniques to improve modelling accuracy which where practical, were tested and adopted in this project.

This study delineated and modelled 19 catchments, shown in Figure 1-1. To validate the adopted methodology and model parameters used in the design modelling, 9 catchments were calibrated against recent (and historic) flood events. The calibration/validation methodology is documented in a standalone report *NRC Riverine Flood Mapping - Calibration Report – R01* and is referred to throughout this document as the *Calibration Report*.

This report documents the design modelling methodology for Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi Catchment (M17), noting that this catchment was not calibrated however, model parameters reflected regional parameters and assumptions relied upon for Catchments M01, M13, M14 and M15, located within close proximity to Catchment M17 and which were calibrated.

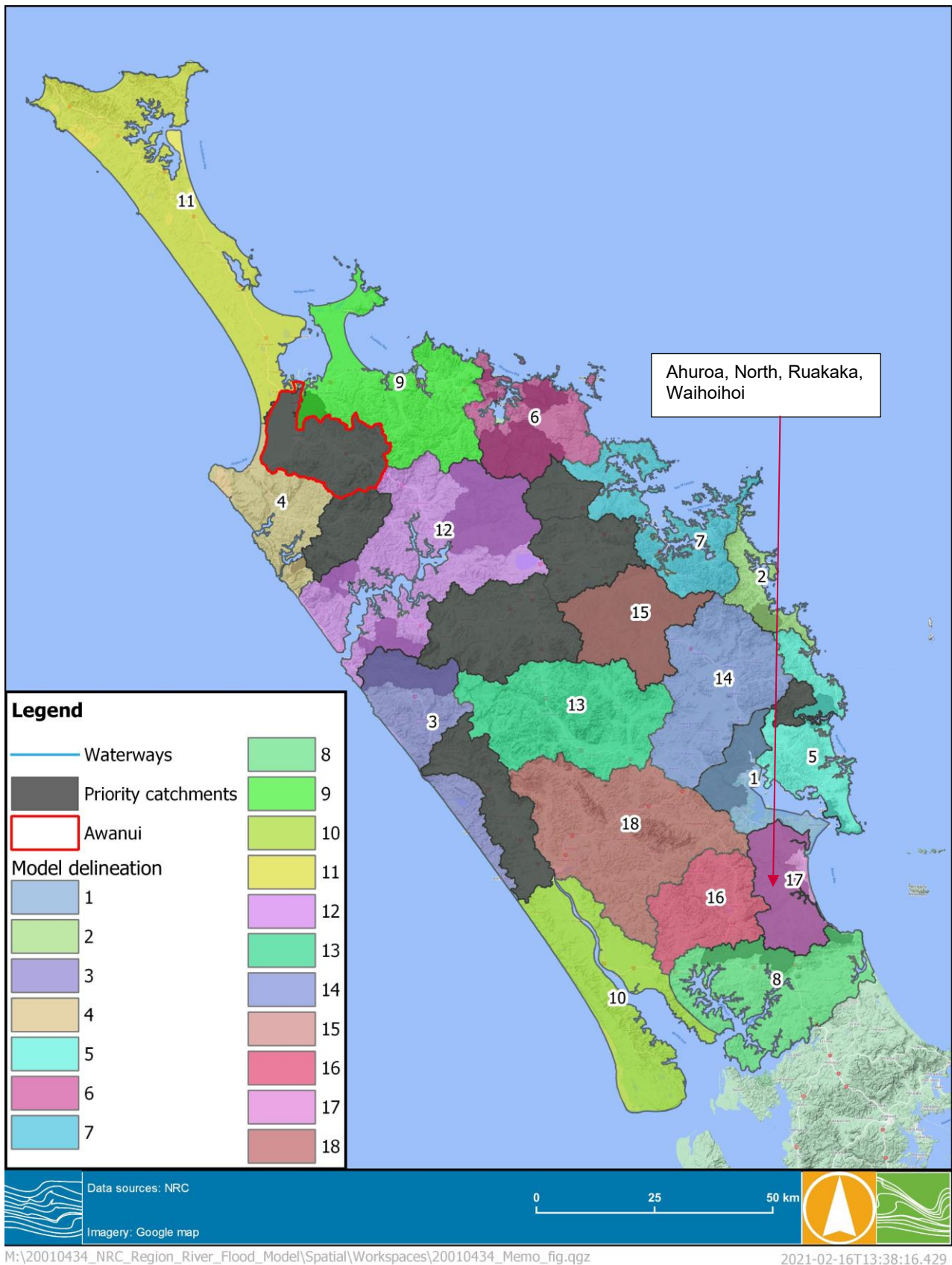


FIGURE 1-1 MODEL DELINEATION



2 STUDY AREA

The model 17 catchment is a coastal catchment, covering a total area of approximately 321 km² with Ruakaka its largest township. Ruakaka River, North River and Waipu River are the major waterways within the catchment flowing from west to east before discharging into Bream Bay. Figure 2-1 displays the study area of the catchment model 17.

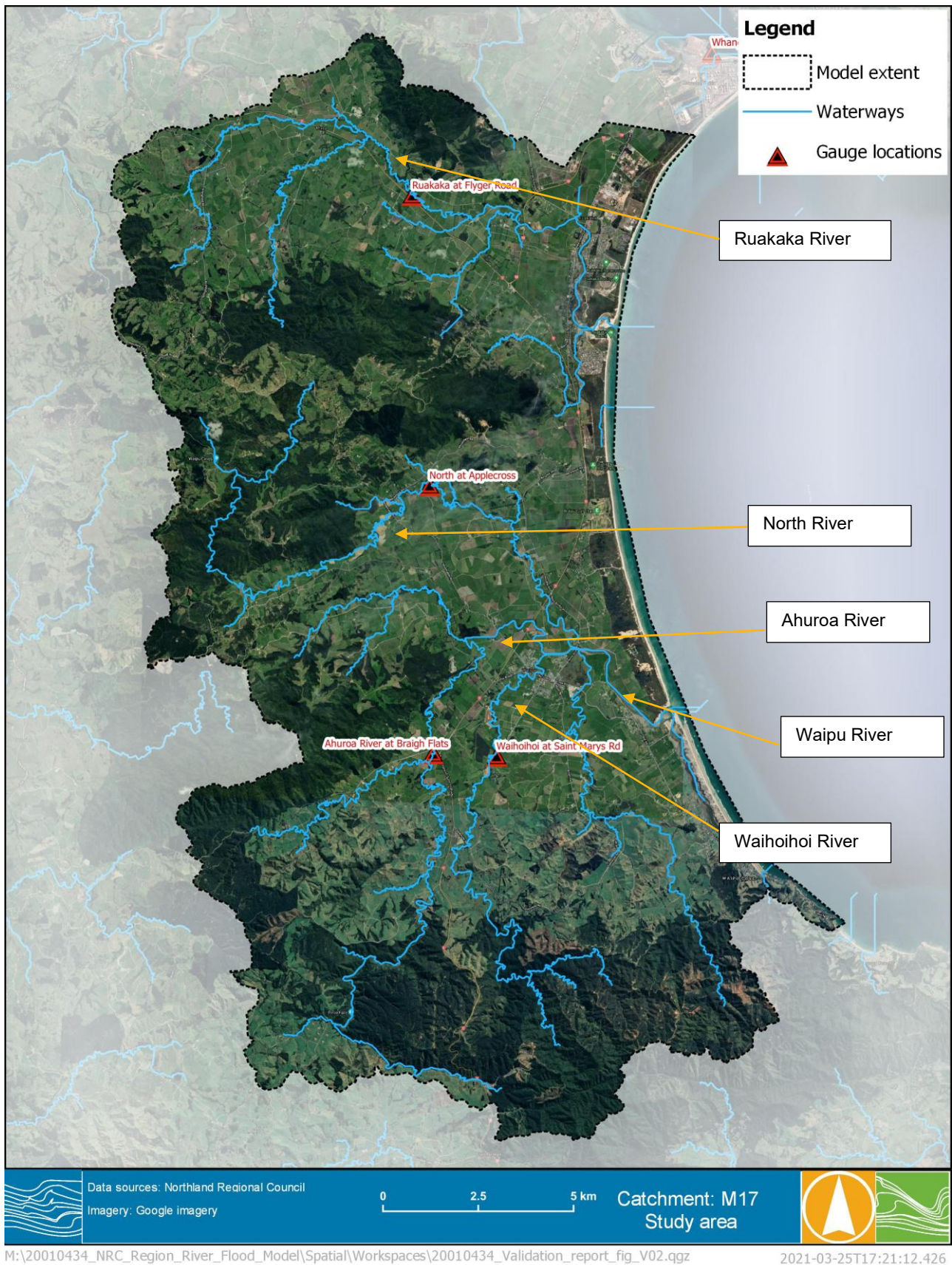


FIGURE 2-1 STUDY AREA



3 DESIGN MODELLING

3.1 Overview

A hydraulic model (TUFLOW) of the Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment (M17) was constructed to model overland flooding. A range of storm durations were run and results for each Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) event were enveloped to ensure the critical duration was well represented across each part of the study area. The merged results captured the maximum flood level and depth of the range of design event durations modelled.

Table 3-1 and the following sections detail the key modelling information used in the development of the hydraulic model.

TABLE 3-1 KEY MODELLING INFORMATION

Terrain data	NRC 1m LiDAR without filling of sinks but includes the “burning of creek alignments’ through embankments
Model type	Direct rainfall model
Model build	Build: 2020-10-AA-iSP-w64
Rainfall	See Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.4
Losses	See Section 3.2.3
Boundaries	See Section 3.2.4
Modelling solution scheme	TUFLOW HPC (adaptive timestep)
Modelling hardware	GPU
Modelling technique	Sub-grid-sampling (SGS)
Model grid size	10m with 1m SGS

3.2 Model Parameters

A range of model parameters were adopted, based on the calibration of catchments (i.e. M01, M13, M14 and M15) in the Whangarei District. Details of these are outlined below.

3.2.1 Rainfall Intensity-Duration-Frequency

Intensity-Duration-Frequency (IDF) tables were developed by NIWA through the High Intensity Rainfall Design System (HIRDSV4)¹. Design rainfall totals for durations from 10 minute up to 120 hours were developed for design modelling and were developed at 179 rainfall gauge sites across the wider study area. The IDF tables cover a range of magnitude events from 1 in 1.58 ARI through to 1 in 250 ARI along with climate change predictions (Representative Concentration Pathway 4.6, 6 & 8.5) up to the year 2100. For this catchment, nine rainfall gauges were used with a spatially weighted grid of rainfall totals created for design modelling. Figure 3-1 shows the 12-hour cumulative rainfall grid for the 1% AEP event along with the rainfall gauge locations used to create the grid.

¹ Accessed via <https://hirds.niwa.co.nz/>

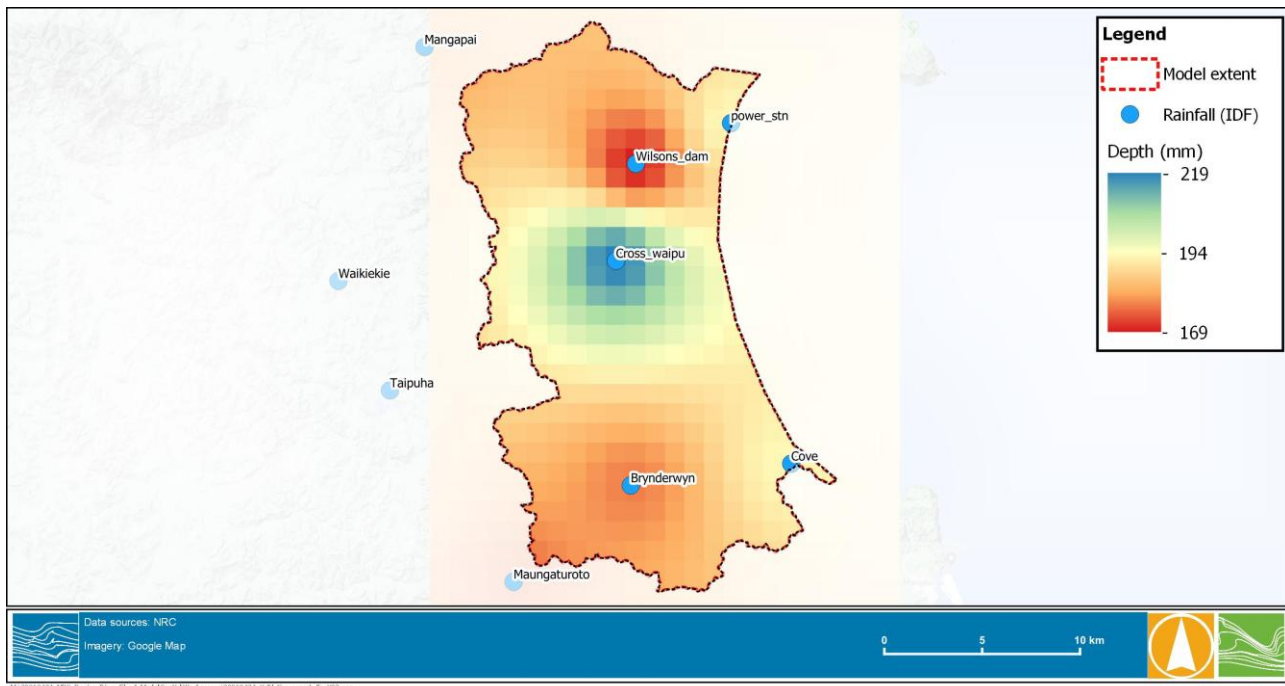


FIGURE 3-1 EXAMPLE OF DESIGN RAINFALL GRID (12-HOUR, 1% AEP RAINFALL) FOR M17

3.2.2 Design Rainfall Temporal Patterns

Design temporal patterns (rainfall hyetographs) were provided by NRC for design modelling. These were developed as part of a previous project undertaken by Macky & Shamseldin (2020)². The project aimed to provide multiple design hyetographs and a better representation of rainfall variability across the Northland region, replacing the single set of design hyetographs previously developed.

The HIRDS design temporal pattern is recommended for design modelling of Northland catchments². Hence, the design hyetographs for the rainfall gauges were developed using the rainfall IDF data at available rainfall gauges for the catchment. Although a 12-hour hyetograph is suitable for design modelling for most Northland catchments as suggested², a range of durations were selected; including 1-hour, 6-hour, 12-hour and 24-hour for each of the following AEP's: 10%, 2% and 1% AEP to ensure that the event critical duration was identified across the catchment. The shorter durations were critical in the upper parts of the catchment, while the longer 24-hour durations were critical in the lower catchment, where flood volumes are generally the predominant factor in generating peak flood levels.

Table 3-2 summarises the 1% AEP rainfall depth (based on IDF from HIRDSV4) for different event durations at each rainfall gauge and Figure 3-2 shows the design cumulative rainfall across the different gauges for the 12-hour duration event. Considering a single temporal pattern is assigned (i.e. HIRDS hyetograph), the proportional amount of rainfall applied through time for a given duration (e.g., 6-hour) is generally consistent (as shown in Figure 3-2) across the catchment area.

² Macky & Shamseldin (2020) - Northland Region-wide Hyetograph review



TABLE 3-2 1% AEP DESIGN RAINFALL DEPTH

Gauge location	1% AEP (mm)			
	1-hour	6-hour	12-hour	24-hour
Ahuroa at Brynderwyn 640436	62	137	178	223
AppleCross Waipu A54942	62	160	220	288
Mangpai A54821	62	140	181	228
Marsden power stn A54842	66	148	193	242
Paparoa at Maungaturoto 641213	61	138	176	218
Taiphua A64021	58	139	188	247
Waikiekie A54921	57	136	185	245
Waipu Cove A64051	68	152	193	238
Waiwarawara Rain at Wilsons Dam 548412	59	130	169	215

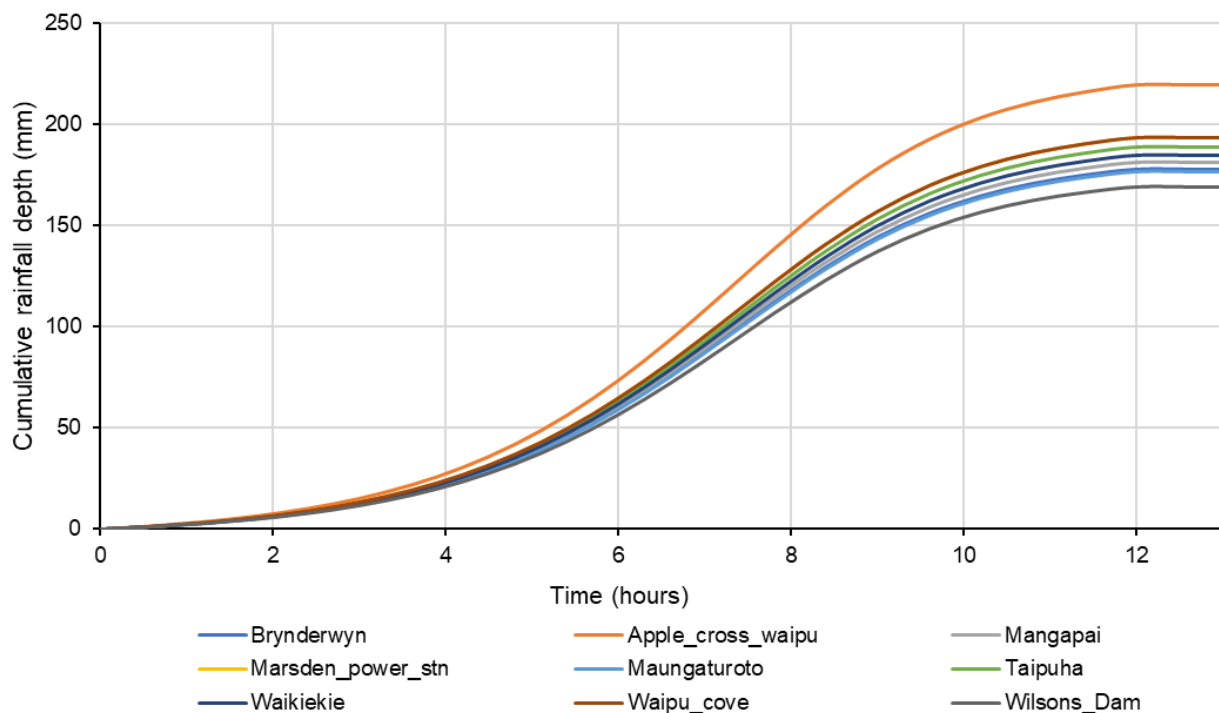


FIGURE 3-2 TEMPORAL PATTERN FOR DESIGN RAINFALL OF 12-HOUR, 1% AEP EVENT

A climate change scenario (for the 1% AEP events) was modelled for the 2081-2100 timeframe, for the RCP 8.5. This is based on the increases in rainfall intensity of 35%, 30%, 26% and 22% respectively for 1-hour, 6-hour, 12-hour and 24-hour duration events.

3.2.3 Losses

Model cells were assigned a Manning's "*n*" (surface roughness), initial loss and a continuing loss based on land use types and hydrologically important characteristics. Table 3-3 summarises the adopted roughness and loss parameters. It should be noted these parameters were adopted based on the calibration to a historic event



where streamflow gauges were present in other Whangarei District catchments (i.e. M01, M13, M14 and M15). Figure 3-3 displays the roughness layer based on the land use type, showing most land use is forest and grassland.

TABLE 3-3 DESIGN MODEL PARAMETERS

Hydrological areas	Land use types	Manning's n	Initial loss (IL) – mm	Continuing loss (CL) – mm/hr
Entire M17 catchment	Forest	0.08	34	5.3
	Grassland	0.06	34	5.3
	Cropland – perennial	0.04	20	2
	Cropland – annual	0.04	20	2
	Wetland – open water	0.04	0	0
	Wetland – vegetated	0.05	10	1
	Urban areas	0.10	5	1.5
	Waterways	0.06	0	0
	Other	0.06	15	1.5

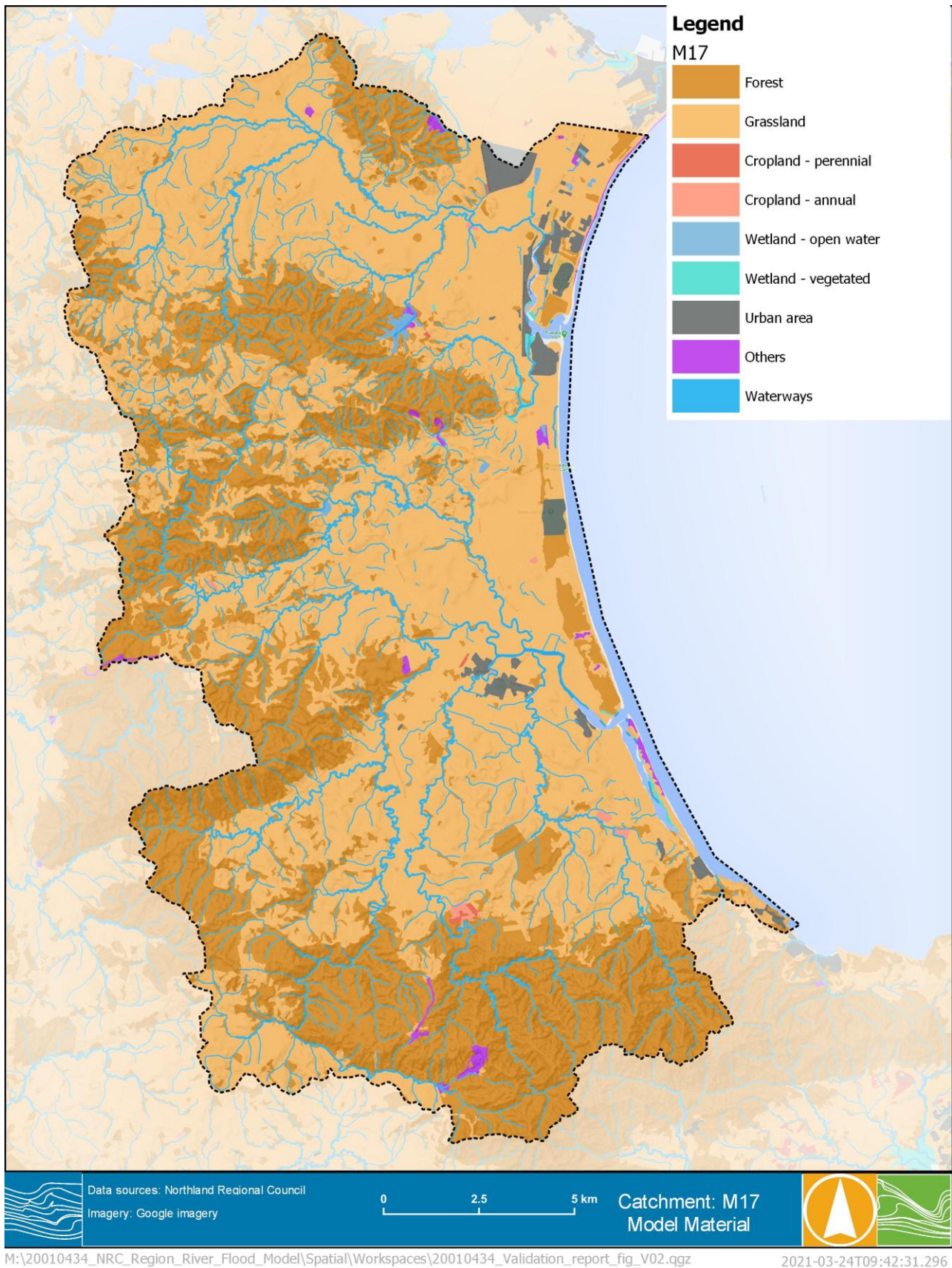


FIGURE 3-3 HYDRAULIC MODEL MATERIAL LAYER



3.2.4 Boundaries

As the Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment is a coastal catchment, a static tailwater (i.e. 1396 mm OTP) outflow boundary based on the 2 year ARI tide level³ at Marsden Point gauge was used in the design modelling. A 1.2 m sea level rise was adopted for climate change runs based on the project brief.

There is no upstream inflow coming from upstream catchments applied in this catchment model.

³ MWH, 2010 *Priority Rivers – Flow Assessment, Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge*, prepared for Northland Regional Council



4 MODELLING RESULTS

4.1 Modelled Result Processing/Filtering

Design modelling consisted of running the model for four storm durations (1-hour, 6-hour, 12-hour and 24-hour) with the results enveloped for each design event (i.e. 1%, 2% and 10% AEP) to ensure the critical duration was well represented across each part of the catchment. Each model run produced gridded results, including depth, water surface elevation (WSE), hazard (Z0) and velocity. Several post-processing steps were required to produce the final design modelling outputs. These are described as follows:

Step 1:

- The modelling results are firstly merged to produce the maximum outputs of the range of storm durations modelled. For example, the flood depth output is produced by merging the depth results of the four different durations within each AEP. This allows for the critical storm duration across each part of the catchment to be represented (i.e. the short intense storms in upper reaches and longer duration storms in the lower parts of the catchment).

Step 2:

- The maximum gridded results are then remapped to a finer DEM grid using the 5-m LiDAR data. This allows the flood extent to be more accurately displayed on the map and the higher resolution gridded results (i.e. same resolution as the 5-m DEM) to be produced.

Step 3:

- Finally, the remapped results are post-processed by filtering out depths below 100mm and puddle areas less than 2000m² as agreed with NRC.

Figure 4-1, Figure 4-2 and Figure 4-3 respectively show the final post-processed flood depths, velocity and hazard of the 1% AEP design event modelled for M13. Figure 4-4 shows the flood depth map zoomed in at a township as an example. It is noted that the hazard classification is based on the following criteria:

TABLE 4-1 FLOOD HAZARD CLASSIFICATION

Hazard classification	Hazard – VxD (m ² /s)
Low	< 0.2
Low to Moderate	0.2 to 0.4
Moderate	0.4 to 0.6
Moderate to High	0.6 to 0.84
High	> 0.84

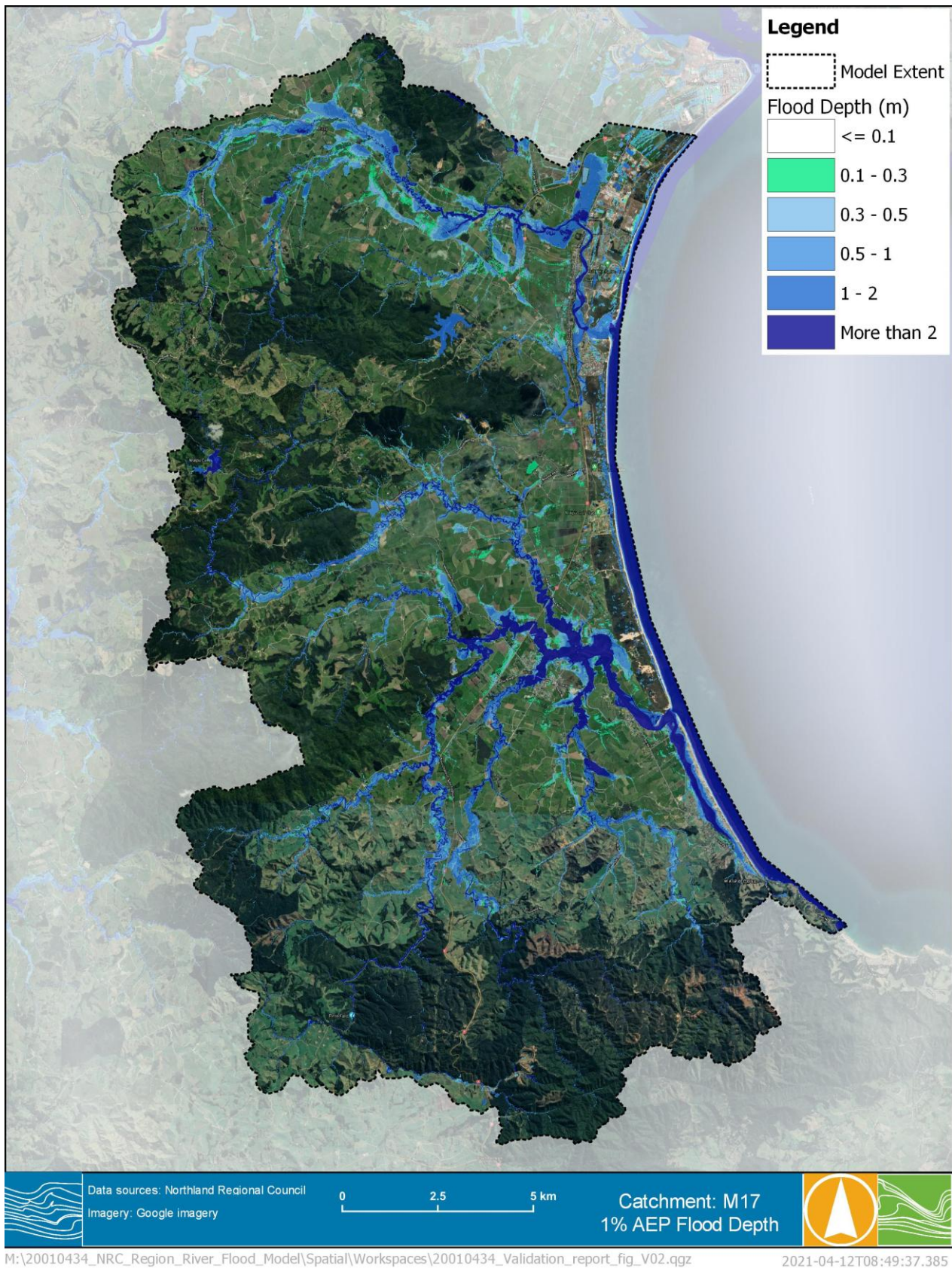


FIGURE 4-1 DESIGN MODELLING OF 1% FLOOD DEPTH

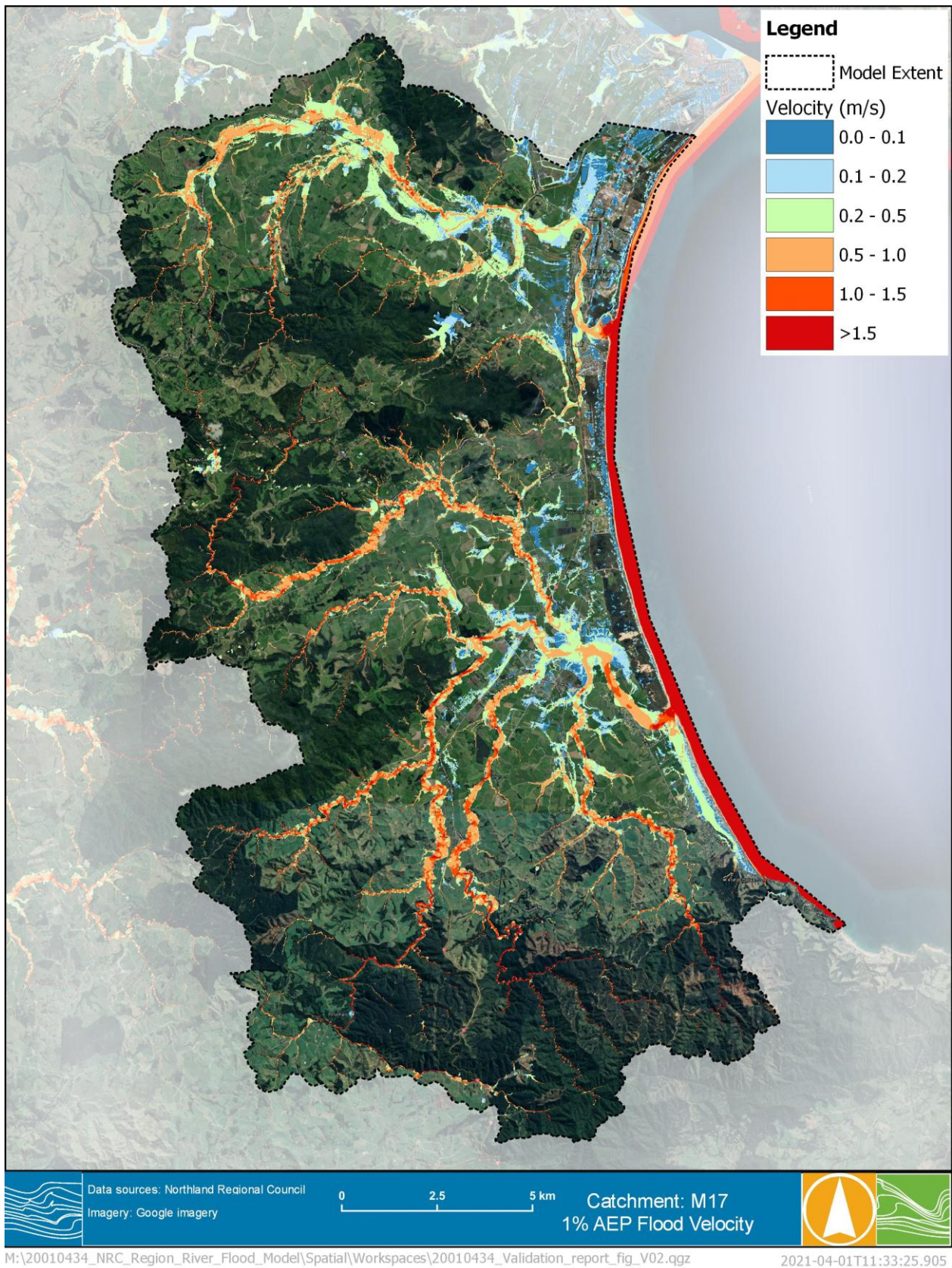


FIGURE 4-2 DESIGN MODELLING OF 1% AEP FLOOD VELOCITY

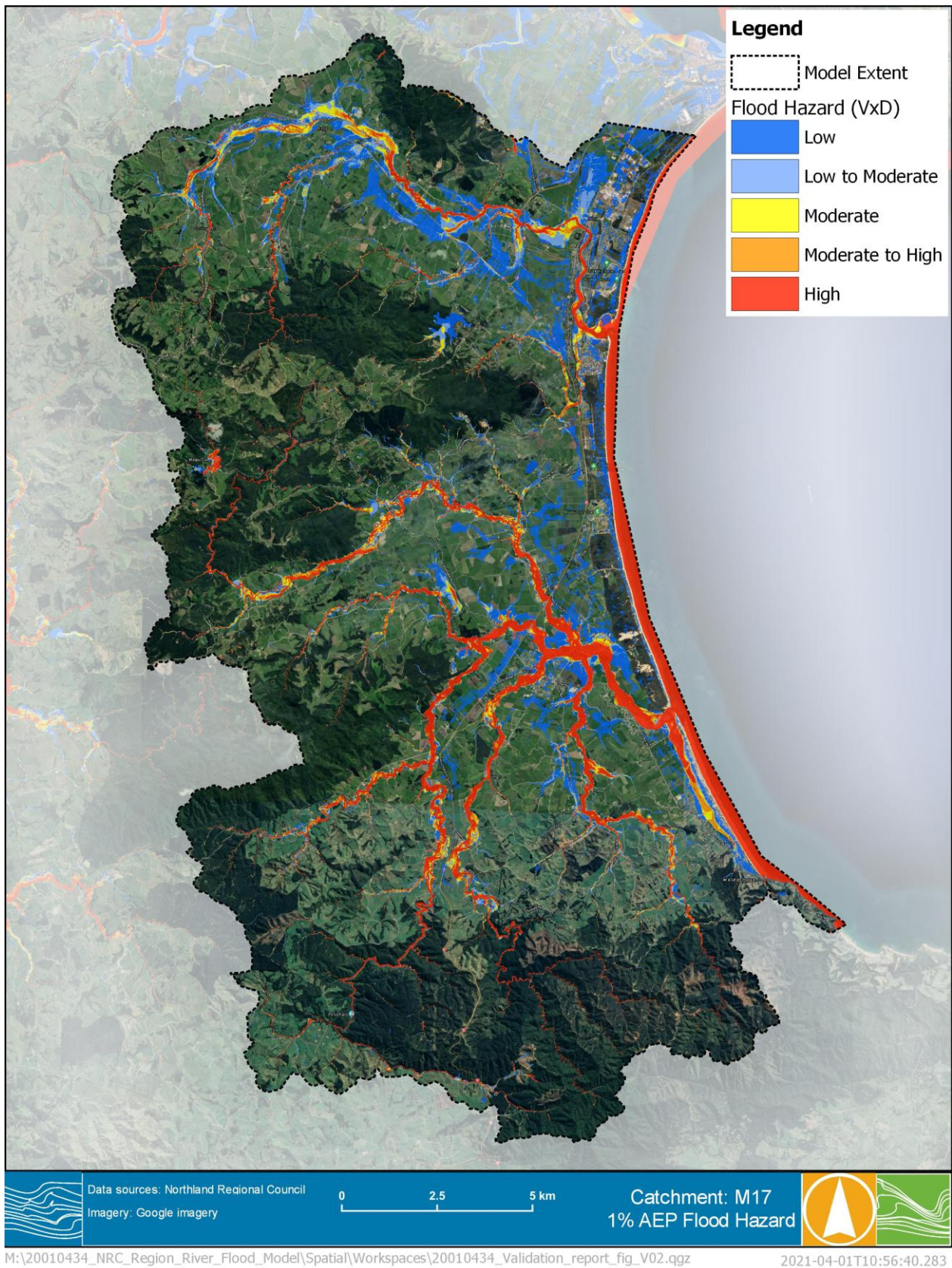


FIGURE 4-3 DESIGN MODELLING OF 1% AEP FLOOD HAZARD

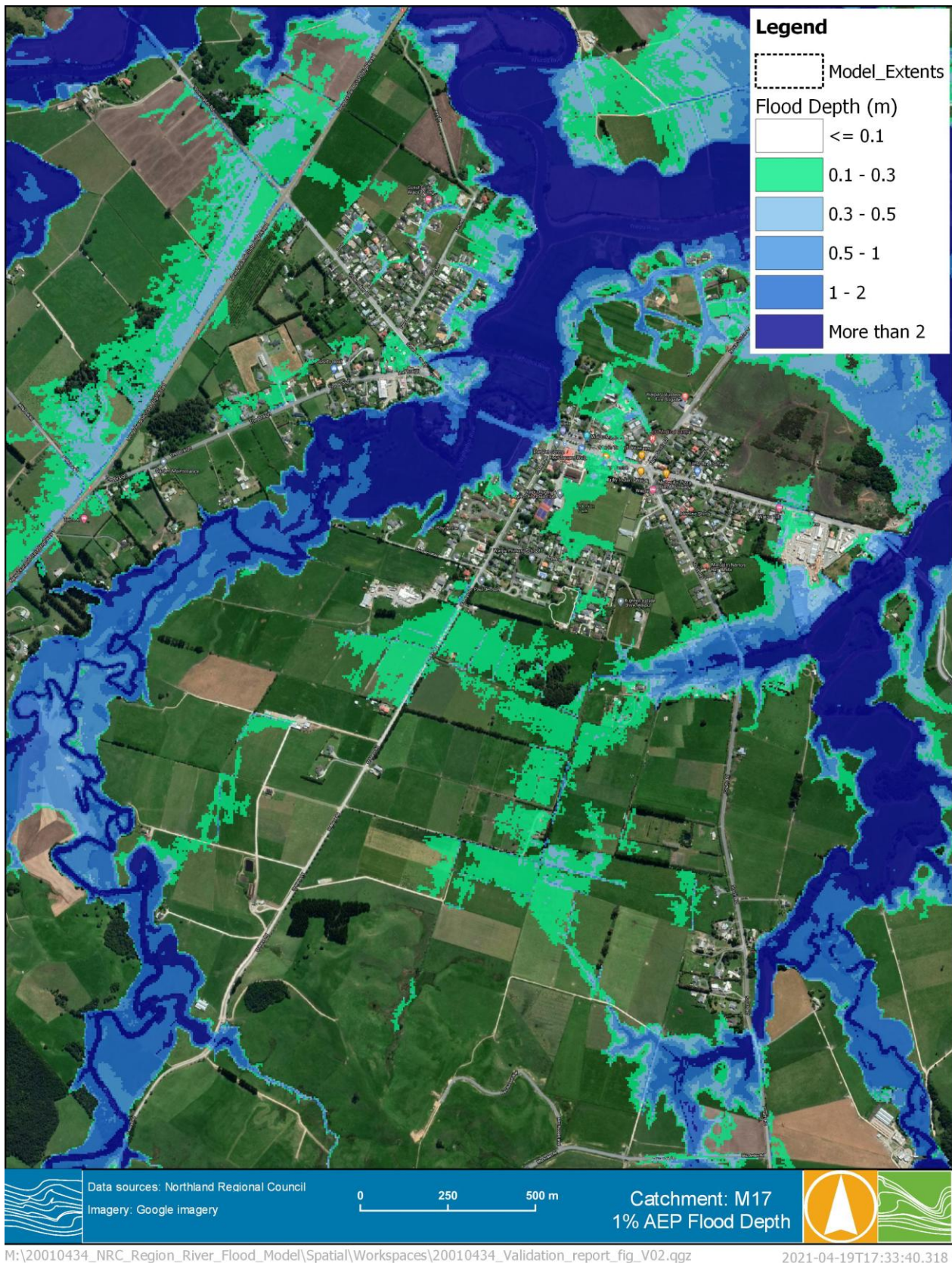


FIGURE 4-4 DESIGN MODELLING OF 1% AEP FLOOD DEPTH ZOOMED AT A TOWNSHIP

5 VERIFICATION OF DESIGN FLOWS

Figure 5-1 displays the streamflow gauges found within the Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment. Flow lines were included at several waterways in the hydraulic model as 2D Plot Output (2D PO) for design events. This allows flow hydrographs and peak flows to be extracted at these locations.

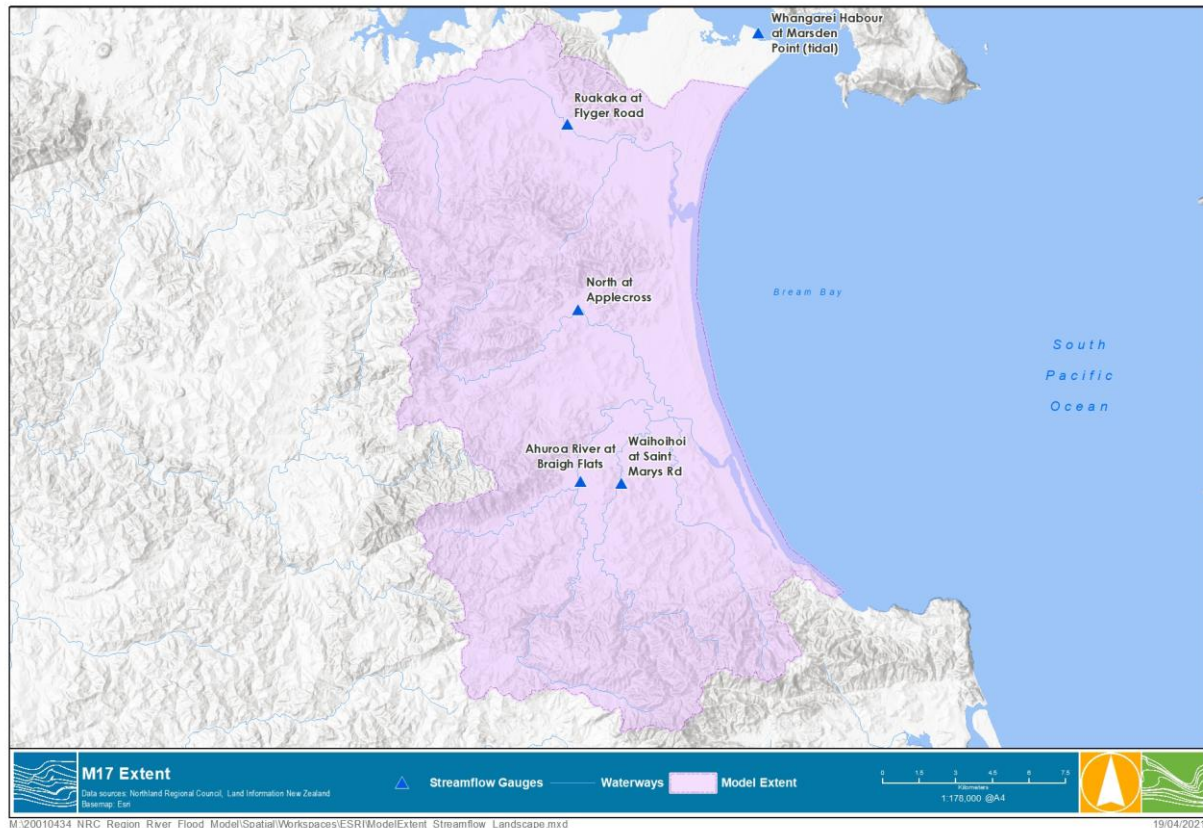


FIGURE 5-1 AVAILABLE STREAMFLOW GAUGES WITHIN AHUROA, NORTH, RUAKAKA, WAIHOIHOI CATCHMENT

The modelled peak flow for the 1% AEP design flood was compared with hydrological estimates, including FFA, rational method and SCS method, as well as observations from 2011 and historic maxima from streamflow gauge records.

5.1 Flood Frequency Analysis

A Flood Frequency Analysis (FFA) was undertaken for streamflow gauging stations with at least 25 years of record. The length of record for can affect the reliability of the FFA especially for the estimation of major flood events (e.g. 1% AEP). The design flow estimates provided additional verification against the design hydraulic modelling results. The streamflow gauging stations that were selected for FFA and the corresponding 1% AEP flow estimates can be found in the Calibration Report (R01).

The annual series (maximum streamflow values for each year of gauge record) were calculated and input into FLIKE. FLIKE is a software package used for FFA and provides five different probability distributions for fitting the historical records. Log Pearson III distribution is commonly used across New Zealand and south east

Australia to fit streamflow records and was used for all gauges within the study area. The FFA results showed that the probability distribution had a relatively good fit at all stations.

An example flood frequency curve fitting the annual maximum streamflow values with the Log Pearson III distribution is shown in Figure 5-2. The design curve generated by the probability distribution shows a good fit with the historic records in more frequent events (i.e. 1 in 10 year or more frequent) but may slightly overestimate the design flows for rare events (e.g. 1% AEP flow). The flattening of the historic points may also suggest limitations with the current rating curves. Overall, the design curve shows a good fit with the tight confidence intervals indicating low uncertainty within these estimates.

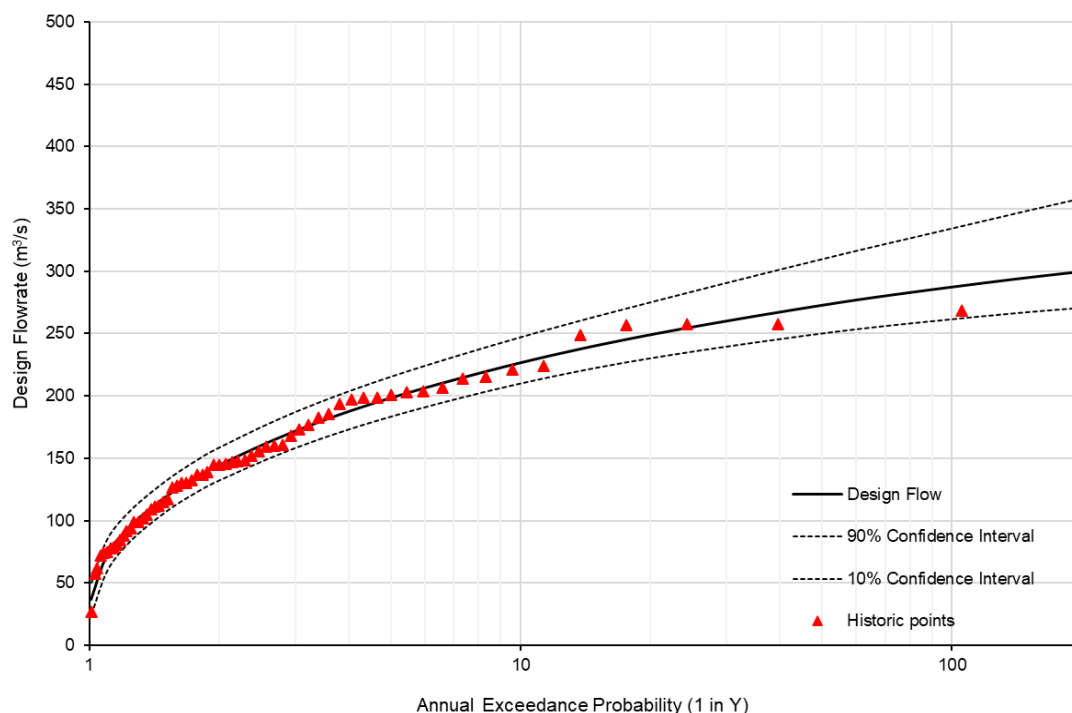


FIGURE 5-2 EXAMPLE OF FLOOD FREQUENCY CURVE OF LOG PEARSON III DISTRIBUTION FIT

5.2 Regional Estimation Methods

For catchments where a suitable streamflow gauge record was not available, additional estimation methods were used to provide design flow verification. These methods are based on empirical estimations using catchment area and design rainfall totals to estimate peak design flows. These methods were checked for each flow line location within the study area and are described below.

NIWA New Zealand River Flood Statistics Portal

The New Zealand River Flood Statistics portal⁴ provides peak flood estimation at streamflow gauging stations and the entire river system in New Zealand completed in 2018. The design estimates can be extracted from the portal are:

- Flood Frequency estimates (at flow gauge).
- Flood Frequency estimates, noted as Henderson & Collins 2018 (at river reach).

⁴ NIWA Flood Frequency tool, accessed via: <https://niwa.co.nz/natural-hazards/hazards/floods>



- Rational Method HIRDS V3 (at river reach).

The flood frequency estimates given by the portal are determined using the Mean Annual Flow method developed by Henderson & Collins (2018)⁵.

SCS method

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) method, first developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, calculates peak flood flow based on rainfall and land-cover-related parameters. It is the recommended method for stormwater design in the Auckland region, providing a useful comparison. The peak flow equation is:

$$Q = (P - I_a)^2 / (P - I_a + S)$$

where:

- Q is run-off depth (millimetres)..
- P is rainfall depth (millimetres)
- S is the potential maximum retention after run-off begins (millimetres).
- I_a is initial abstraction (millimetres), which is 5 millimetres for permeable areas and zero otherwise.

The retention parameter S (measured in millimetres) is related to catchment characteristics through:

$$S = (1000/CN - 10) 25.4.$$

The value of the curve number (CN) represents the run-off from 0 (no run-off) to 100 (full run-off) and it is influenced by soil group and land use. A CN value of 50 was used for the SCS estimation of this catchment.

The run-off depth (Q) is then converted to a peak flow rate using the SCS unit hydrograph.

Rational Method

The Rational Method is widely used across both New Zealand and Australia. The equation is based on catchment area and design rainfall. The equation is:

$$Q = C i A / 3.6$$

where:

- Q is the estimate of the peak design discharge in cubic metres per second
- C is the run-off coefficient
- i is rainfall intensity in mm/hr hour, for the time of concentration
- A is the catchment area in km².

⁵Henderson, R.D., Collins, D.B.G., Doyle, M., Watson, J. (2018) *Regional Flood Estimation Tool for New Zealand Final Report Part 2*. NIWA Client Report



5.3 Verification Results

Table 5-1 summarises the comparison of 1% AEP peak flow estimates with the modelled values at streamflow gauges in the Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment and the differences between the estimation methods and modelled results can be visualised in Figure 5-3.

The Rational Method and the SCS are only applicable for relatively small catchment with SGS method limited to 12km². The catchment sizes of the streamflow gauges range from 25 to 60 km² so these two methods are subject to great uncertainty in summarising catchment characteristics.

As shown in Figure 5-3, the modelled design flow at the Flyger Road gauge and Applecross gauge tend to sit within a reasonable range of all the design flow estimates.

In Saint Marys Road gauge, the empirical estimates tend to underestimate the design flow. The modelled design flow however, has a good match to the HIRDS v3 Rational method from NIWA.

In Braigh Flats gauge, the modelled design flow is significantly greater than all design flow estimates. It should be noted that this catchment model was not calibrated to any of these streamflow gauges.

The use of empirical method estimations provides an additional degree of verification for streamflow gauges with less than 25 years of record. It is also noted that the calibration process (i.e. calibration on other Whangarei District catchments, noted that this catchment is not calibrated) identified uncertainty with the streamflow records for high flows. The uncertainty of high flow extrapolation at these gauges could result in further uncertainty of flow estimate methods that rely solely on streamflow gauge data. Despite this, results are fit for purpose of mapping riverine flood hazard zones across the entire Northland region and to update existing flood intelligence



TABLE 5-1 SUMMARY OF 1% AEP PEAK FLOW COMPARISON

PO line location	Hydraulic model (m ³ /s)		Records at gauge (m ³ /s)			Empirical estimates (m ³ /s)		NIWA Flood Frequency Tool 2018 (m ³ /s)		
	Critical duration	Modelled peak	Jan 2011 peak	Highest on record	FFA	SCS	Rational method	NIWA – FF at gauge	NIWA – Rational method	NIWA – H&C 2018
Ruakaka at Flyger Road	12 hr	95.5	152.4	152.4	174.4	89.0	59.7	N/A	N/A	110
North at Applecross	12 hr	156.3	65.3	70.5	78.0	196.6	58.6	100	N/A	130
Ahuroa River at Braigh Flats	6 hr	398.5	130.0	170.0	165.9	72.4	113.4	176	N/A	152
Waihoihoi at Saint Marys Rd	6 hr	208.4	46.8	65.3	65.5	16.0	50.1	60	166	72

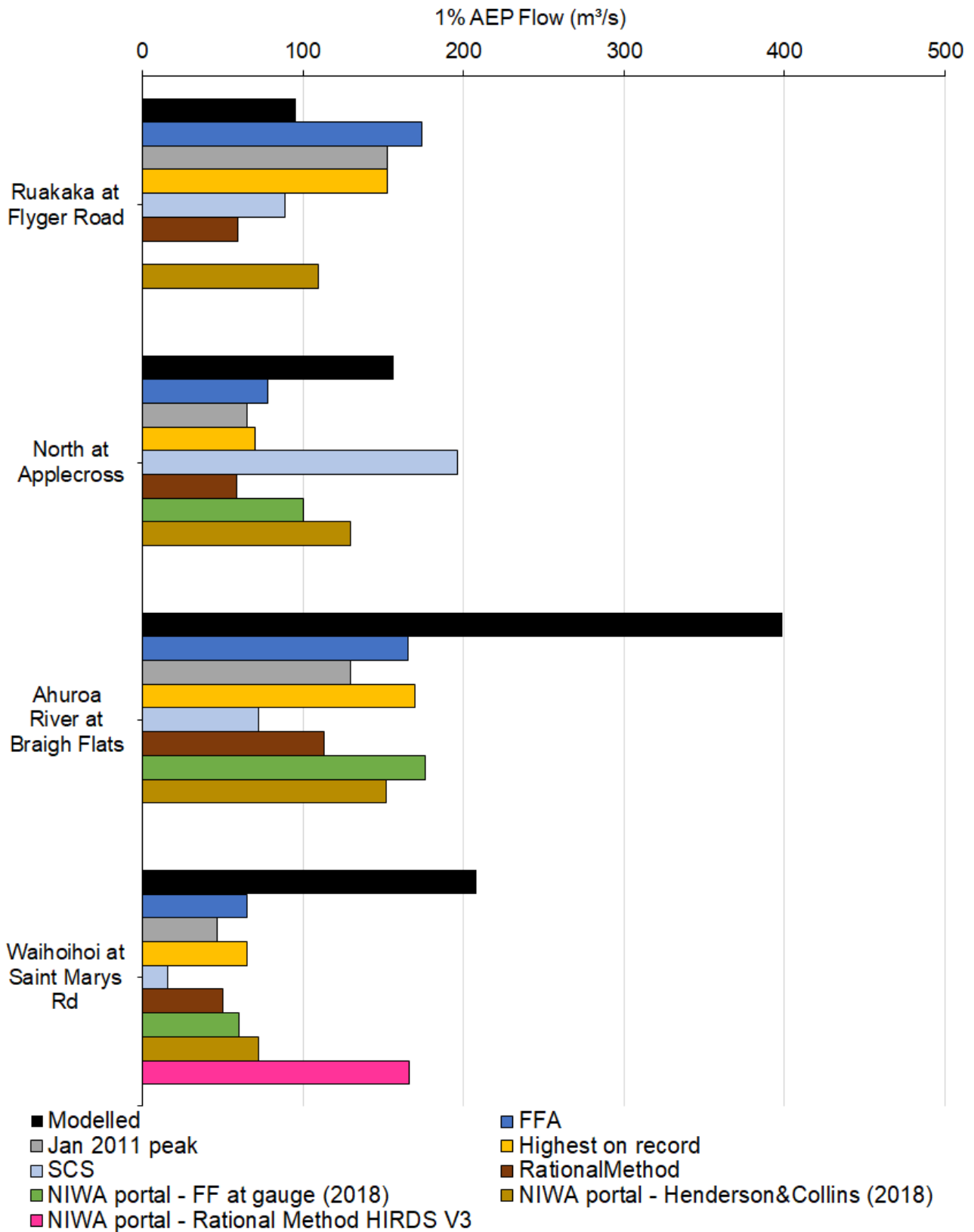


FIGURE 5-3 VERIFICATION OF DESIGN MODELLING RESULTS AGAINST HYDROLOGICAL ESTIMATES



6 SUMMARY

The Ahuroa, North, Ruakaka, Waihoihoi catchment model (M17) was not calibrated and its model parameters were adopted based on calibrated catchments (i.e. M01, M13, M14 and M15) in the Whangarei District. The design modelling of this catchment consisted of four storm durations (1-hour, 6-hour, 12-hour and 24-hour) for each design AEP (i.e. 1%, 2% and 10% AEP). Design flood extents and gridded results, including depth, water surface elevation, velocity and hazard were produced and delivered to NRC.

The modelled 1% AEP design flows at the streamflow gauges were verified against several design flood estimation methods. In most of these streamflow gauges, the modelled design flows sit within a reasonable range of the design flow estimates with the exception of the Ahuroa River at Braigh Flats gauge.

When considering the scope and the scale of this project, the current modelling results are considered fit for use. Modelling outputs can be used to identify flood hazard and potential flood risk. It can also inform planning decisions, infill flood mapping between detailed flood studies and provide a basis for broad emergency management exercises.

