

Iwi buys prison land

Ngati Tuwharetoa has signed an agreement to buy most of the land occupied by Tongariro-Rangipo Prison.

Some 8500ha of Crown land to the south and east of Turangi is being purchased by the iwi group, comprised of the Tuwharetoa Settlement Trust and six other Tuwharetoa entities, including forestry and farm trusts and a collective hapū entity.

The conditional sale and purchase agreement was announced last week by the Tuwharetoa Settlement Trust chairman Dylan Tahau and Corrections Minister Peeta Sam-Lotu-Iiga.

Tongariro-Rangipo Prison is due to be upgraded and its farm and forestry operations downsized later this year with the loss of 67 jobs. After the land sale goes through, the Crown will lease the land for the prison from Tuwharetoa. The iwi group paid about \$20 million for the land and the price paid for the forestry crop on the land is undisclosed.

The Central North Island Forest Collective Settlement deed, which was signed by the Crown and eight central North Island iwi in 2008, granted the iwi collective the right to purchase Crown-owned land from Corrections. Negotiations to buy the land have taken a year.

The land is important to Ngati Tuwharetoa as it includes several wahi tapu and two rivers, Tongariro and Waiotaka.

Under the terms of the



A map of the full Tongariro-Rangipo prison site showing the current prison land bordered in red, which is to be purchased by Ngati Tuwharetoa. The future Corrections land to be leased is bordered in yellow.

sale, Corrections will retain the prison buildings and ancillary buildings and lease the land under them, together with about 700ha for a training farm, from the Tuwharetoa Settlement Trust.

Tuwharetoa Settlement Trust chairman Dylan Tahau said the deal has significant strategic and commercial benefits for the iwi partners, but most importantly the purchase sees the return of Tuwharetoa land.

"This is a great milestone for our iwi and we are really pleased that the partnership has been able to work closely to get to this point.

"Purchasing this property and agreeing a lease-back is a major benefit for Tuwharetoa, and will support our economic, social and cultural development."

Tuwharetoa Settlement Trust through its Tuwharetoa Property Investment Limited Partnership has also purchased the land under nine schools in Taupo, other Corrections property, and the Taupo Courthouse through the deferred settlement process. These purchases make the iwi one of the largest landowners in the Taupo township. The deal will be formalised at a ceremony on June 30.