

Arawhata River Mouth (west coast), South Island, New Zealand.

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Arawhata River Mouth (west coast), South Island, New Zealand. The Arawhata River rises 70 km inland in the Southern Alps (shown in the background). The Alps receive between 3000–4000 mm of snow and rain annually, leading to high river discharge, peaking during the spring snow melt. The river commences below 3724 m high Climax Peak and flows through deeply incised fluvial and previously glaciated valleys to reach the southern end of the accessible coast at Jackson Bay. The river is also fed by the Olivine Ice Plateau and the Five Finger Range. Like several other rivers that drain the Alps, the Arawhata has infilled its coastal valley forming a pocket of coastal plain bordered by more densely forested rugged terrain, together with a wave-dominated delta consisting of an up to 5-km wide regressive barrier, shown forested to the left. The barrier extends northward connecting with the Waitoto River and delta 9 km to the northeast. The braided river deposits a mixed range of sediment, from mud to boulders, with the coarser material reworked northwards to form high tide cobble and low tide sand beaches along much of the west coast. The river, its channel, and its mouth are all extremely dynamic responding to high summer discharge and occasional floods. The southern-most settlement on the west coast is at Neils Beach, which is located just to the right of image at the following coordinates: 44.0008°S, 168.6778°E. (Photograph taken on 5 October 2006 by Andrew D. Short, School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.)