

Greater Wellington Parks

Draft Regional Parks Network Management Plan

Prepared by Parks and Forests Department
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GREATER WELLINGTON PARKS DRAFT REGIONAL PARKS NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Chairperson’s Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The Future of Our Parks – Our Vision	4
Purpose of this Network Plan	4
How to use this Document - Overview of the Plan	5
Section 1 - Wellington Regional Parks – An Overview	6
Why do we have Regional Parks?	7
Legal and Ownership Status of the Regional Parks	8
Parks – Places Worth Keeping	10
The Relationship of Regional Parks to Other Public Lands	11
Relationship of this Plan to other Regional Council Plans and Documents	14
Section 2 - The plan for Greater Wellington Parks	16
Part A – Partnerships in Parks	17
Working Together with Tangata Whenua	18
Involving Local Communities and Neighbours	20
Part B – Conserving our Environment and Cultural Heritage	22
Sustaining our Environment	23
Preserving Landscapes	29
Protecting Cultural Heritage	31
Part C – Sustaining Community, Recreational and Commercial Opportunities and Use	36
Providing Opportunities	37
Managing Use to Protect Values	38

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

To be added

INTRODUCTION

The Future of Our Parks – Our Vision

To enhance quality of life in the Wellington region by providing regional parks where:

- *Tangata Whenua rights and interests are respected.*
- *The community is actively involved and connected.*
- *Our environment and cultural heritage is protected for current and future generations.*
- *People can fully and actively use, enjoy, and learn from these lands in a sustainable manner.*

This vision recognises that:

- Tangata Whenua maintain strong links with the lands on which regional parks are established, and continue to have customary rights and guardianship roles in relation to them, consistent with the Council's management role and reasonable public use and enjoyment.
- Continuing and enhancing community involvement, education, enjoyment and experiences by providing opportunities to visit and learn about the parks, while providing for their protection, is a fundamental purpose of their management.
- Regional parks are part of a network of lands managed (but not necessarily owned or occupied) by the Wellington Regional Council, containing resources that are, and will increasingly be, important for the long-term sustainable future of the region and its people.
- Regional parks need to protect our environment¹, cultural heritage and the activities legally established therein, and provide opportunities for community use, enjoyment, and recreation in ways that provide for the needs of current and future generations.

Purpose of this Network Plan

This network plan sets out the future direction for management of regional parks in the Wellington Region. It provides a framework for addressing issues common to all regional parks, and managing them in a comprehensive and consistent way. Park specific management plans will be developed to provide detailed policy for each park, consistent with the direction set in the network plan.

In developing this network plan, we have looked ahead 20 years, to identify the important values, challenges and priorities we may face, and how we will manage these. The network plan itself will be reviewed in 5 years time. This will provide an opportunity to assess our objectives and consider new issues and circumstances, and ensure that the plan continues to be relevant and provides a clear direction to guide park management into the future.

¹ The definition of environment is taken from the Resource Management Act 1991 "Environment" includes--- (a) Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities; and (b) All natural and physical resources; and (c) Amenity values; and (d) The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the matters stated in paragraphs (a) to (c) of this definition or which are affected by those matters".

How to use this Document - Overview of the Plan

Section 1 - Wellington Regional Parks – An Overview

This explains the role of the Wellington Regional Council, our vision for the region, and why we have regional parks. It provides important background on the values and benefits of regional parks and forests.

Section 2 - The Plan for Greater Wellington Parks

This section sets out how we will manage the regional parks to protect the environment and cultural heritage values and provide for sustainable use.

This section is divided into three main parts:

Part A – Working with Communities

Relationships with Tangata Whenua
Involving Local Communities and Neighbours

Part B – Conserving our Environment and Cultural Heritage

Sustaining our Environment
Preserving Landscapes
Protecting Cultural Heritage

Part C – Sustaining Community, Recreational and Commercial Opportunities and Use

Providing Opportunities
Managing Use to Protect Values

Each of these parts contains:

- A context section to briefly explain the background and our approach.
- Objectives – our broad aims for the parks.
- Policies – what we will do to achieve our aims.

SECTION 1

WELLINGTON REGIONAL PARKS – AN OVERVIEW

The Role of the Wellington Regional Council

The Wellington Regional Council has two closely related roles of environmental and land management. The Council has an important role in looking after the region's natural resources, like air, soil and water, so that these are sustained for the needs and enjoyment of our own and future generations. Our specific responsibilities include environment management, flood protection and land management, provision of regional parks, public transport planning and funding, and delivering a drinking water to the cities of the Wellington metropolitan area.

We manage and care for large areas of land containing resources that are important for the long-term sustainable future of the region and its people, including:

- Regional parks – to provide the community with outdoor recreation opportunities, and for environmental and heritage management and protection.
- Regional forests - for use as future water collection areas, plantation forestry, recreational access, and environmental and heritage management and protection.
- Water collection areas - from which water is collected to supply much of the western part of the region.
- River corridors - for flood protection, recreational access, and environmental and heritage management and protection.

The Regional Council has historically had a role in land and environmental management, through its roles in water supply provision, soil control and regional parks. However, the introduction of the *Resource Management Act 1991* gave the Council new roles and responsibilities for ensuring sustainable management of natural resources across the region. This responsibility extends all lands (both private and public) and natural resources in the region including those that the Council is responsible for managing. Many of the areas under Council management are important to the region's biological diversity and ecosystem functioning, contain sites of historic and cultural heritage importance, and have significant public value for use and recreation. In carrying out its roles as land manager, the Council has regard to its wider management responsibilities, other land and resource managers in the region, to ensure that the resources of the region are sustained to meet needs of the community both now and in the future.

Why do we have Regional Parks?

The Council may hold, manage and purchase land for regional parks to protect natural, environmental, landscape, educational, heritage and archaeological values or if it is of recreational significance or potential (under the *Local Government Act 1974*). The original concept of regional parks for the Wellington area was based on an identified need for “semi-remote” outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly on the fringe of urban areas. The regional parks provide accessible open space and recreational opportunities for the regional community while protecting important landscape, heritage and environmental values.

The Council manages five regional parks (see Map 1):

- Queen Elizabeth Park (on the Kapiti Coast).
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park (on the Paekakariki Hill Road).
- Belmont Regional Park (on the hills between Lower Hutt and Porirua).
- Kaitoke Regional Park (north of Upper Hutt off State Highway 2).
- East Harbour Regional Park – Pencarrow (on the hills behind Eastbourne, and the Pencarrow Lakes and Baring Head).

Legal and Ownership Status of the Regional Parks

While the Regional Council manages the five regional parks, it does not own or occupy all the land within them. For example, Queen Elizabeth Park owned by the Crown and the Regional Council has been appointed to control and manage it as a regional park, while Belmont Regional Park and East Harbour Regional Park contain land owned by other agencies.

All five parks are designated as regional parks under the Local Government Act 1974. But in addition, some areas are also reserves under the Reserves Act 1977 (see Table 1 below and Map 1). The majority of reserves are recreation reserves, with some areas of scenic and local purpose reserve. The whole of Queen Elizabeth Park, along with parts of Belmont and East Harbour Regional Parks are recreation reserves. The Reserves Act specifies allowed uses of areas, and conditions on these uses that are linked closely to the purpose of the reserve. The Council is also required to develop management plans under the Reserves Act, and this network plan, along with subsequent park specific plans will meet this requirement.

Table 1: Legal and Ownership Status of the Regional Parks

Regional Park	Title Held By	Legislative Status
Battle Hill Forest Farm Park	Wellington Regional Council	Regional Park under Local Government Act 1974
Belmont Regional Park	Porirua City Council Wellington City Council Wellington Regional Council Landcorp Farming Hutt City Council Department of Conservation (WRC appointed to control and manage)	Regional Park under Local Government Act 1974 Parts under Reserves Act 1977: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC, DoC and PCC land are all recreation reserve • HCC land soon to be declared recreation reserve (Kilmister) • Some HCC land at Korokoro is also local purpose reserve for drainage purposes There are also walkways under the Walkways Act 1990 across Landcorp farm. WRC manages the walkway.
East Harbour Regional Park	Hutt City Council Department of Conservation (WRC & HCC appointed to control and manage some of DoC lands) Wellington Regional Council	Regional Park under Local Government Act 1974 Majority is also Recreation Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977.
Queen Elizabeth Park	Department of Conservation (WRC appointed to control and manage)	Regional Park under Local Government Act 1974 Whole park is also Recreation Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977.
Kaitoke Regional Park	Wellington Regional Council	Regional Park under Local Government Act 1974

[Insert map of Wellington Regional Parks and Forests Reserve Lands]

Parks – Places Worth Keeping

Parks Protect Unique and Diverse Values

Each park provides a different experience and contains unique features and values. For example:

- Kaitoke Regional Park – high quality indigenous forest, bush walks, rivers, swimming, rare plants and animals, native fish, water supply facilities.
- Belmont Regional Park – wide open spaces and hill tops, excellent views and recreation opportunities, rare geckos, World War II heritage features.
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park – a working farm and plantation forestry area, educational opportunities, a New Zealand Wars site, indigenous forest remnant.
- Queen Elizabeth Park – sandy beaches, coastal dune systems, rare native fish, World War II and Maori archaeological features, indigenous forest remnant.
- East Harbour Regional Park – a rugged rocky shore, lakes and wetlands, rare plants and animals, Maori archaeological features, historic lighthouses.

Parks Conserve Cultural, Scenic and Spiritual Values

Parks protect natural, scenic and cultural values that contribute significantly to the identity of the Wellington region and its people. The parks conserve important natural areas such as native bush, wetlands, and dunes that are home to many unique plants and animals.

Scenic landscapes, cultural values and historic sites in parks represent the living history of our relationships with the land. All these values are special and irreplaceable parts of our identity and should be protected for future generations.

Tangata Whenua maintains links with the lands on which the parks have been established. The parks contain many areas and values of significance to the Tangata Whenua, who continue to have a guardianship role and customary rights, consistent with the Council's management role and reasonable public use and enjoyment.

Parks provide important open spaces near urban areas and contribute to the scenic backdrop in the region. By protecting a diversity of landscapes, they provide an important opportunity for people in the region to experience, enjoy, and connect with, our natural and cultural heritage.

Parks give Social and Economic Benefits

Our children visit the parks through their schools to learn how to look after the environment. They plant trees there on Arbor Day. Members of the community are involved in projects to protect or restore the natural and historic features of the parks. The parks also provide venues for community and sporting events.

We all benefit from having to pay lower taxes for health services because people use the parks and forests to keep fit and healthy or to reduce stress. We receive economic benefits from commercial activities that occur at the parks and forests by increasing visitors to the region or providing jobs in recreation or tourism related areas.

Parks Provide Opportunities for Enjoyment and Relaxation

Parks are popular places to visit for walking, biking, and picnics with the family plus a whole lot more. People can relax and enjoy the surroundings, take small or long walks, or engage in more adventurous activities such as mountain biking. Parks can also be places for organised recreation such as guided trips. Together the parks provide a wide range of opportunities for different activities in different environments – from open hilltops to dense forests to coastal dunes.

Parks are Important Places to Protect

As natural places and open space become rarer with increasing urbanisation and development, the challenge for park management is to balance use with the protection of natural and cultural heritage values.

Key points from the “WRC Parks, Forests and Recreation Areas” study (2002):

- Three-quarters of regional residents have visited one or more regional parks, forests or recreation areas in the past year.
- People choose areas for their natural setting, good views and quiet or isolation.
- The main activities undertaken in the parks, forests and recreation areas are walking or running (including walking the dog), tramping, swimming, cycling and picnicking.
- Maintaining the natural setting and continuing environmental protection are of great importance to the community.
- There is strong support for ongoing protection of regional parks, forests, and recreation areas.

The Relationship of Regional Parks to Other Public Lands

Regional parks are an important recreational and conservation resource in the region, alongside local parks, forest parks, conservation areas, and our rivers and coastline. However, regional parks are not the only parks and recreation areas available to the community. The Department of Conservation and territorial authorities (district councils) also manage a number of parks and reserves for the public, while the Regional Council manages other lands that contribute to recreational opportunities (see Map 2)².

The various levels of government provide different opportunities in terms of recreation and conservation, although they overlap to some extent. Each differs in terms of the emphasis they place on recreation and conservation, and the scale and nature of parks they provide, as indicated in the *Governance Continuum* (below).

Under the Conservation Act 1987, the Department of Conservation is charged with conserving the natural and historic heritage of New Zealand for present and future New Zealanders. It generally focuses its efforts (and manages land) in areas of national conservation and recreation significance (e.g. National Parks). The lands managed by the Department lands are predominantly distanced from urban areas, and recreational opportunities tend to be low impact, such as tramping. In the Wellington region, the Department’s lands range from ‘back country drive-in’ to ‘remote’³.

² The attached map indicates a section of land as managed by the WRC in Karori. However, this land has passed to the Wellington City Council and now forms the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.

³ These categories are based on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum - a tool for classifying land in terms of the recreational opportunities it provides. There are eight classifications ranging from most to least accessible and serviced: urban, urban fringe, rural, back country drive in, back country four wheel drive, back country walk in, remote experience, and wilderness. All types exist in the Wellington region except for wilderness.

[Insert map of Parks and Reserves of the Wellington Region]

At the other end of the spectrum, territorial authorities focus on meeting local community and recreation needs, and provide smaller parks, sports fields, playgrounds, local reserves and urban beaches. These parks are usually managed under the Reserves Act 1977 and are much less focused on natural and historic heritage conservation than DoC reserves and parks. Some territorial authorities also provide larger, multi-purpose parks, and while these can contain large natural areas, they are usually smaller than regional parks. In the Wellington Region, city and district council reserves generally fall in the 'urban' and 'urban fringe' range.

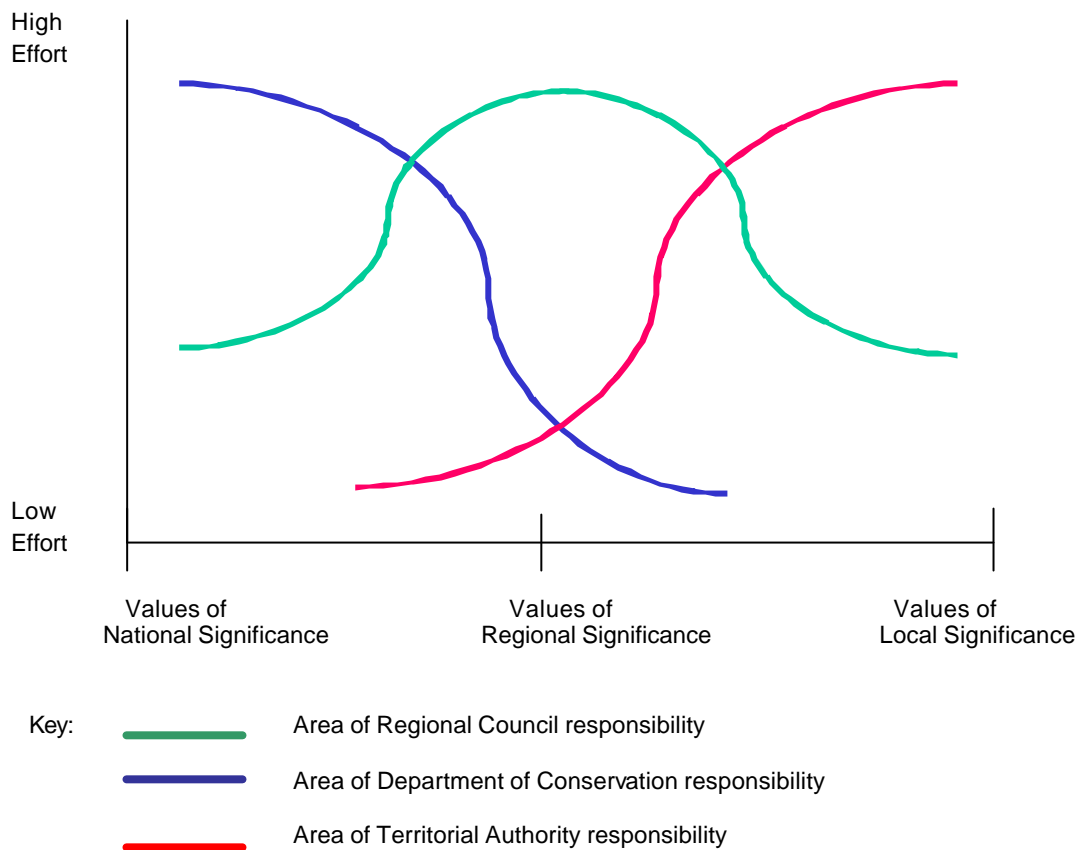
Regional parks lie somewhere in between, in terms of both their scale and focus. Regional parks provide a mix of conservation and recreational opportunity, focusing on protection of values of regional significance. In recreational terms, regional parks span the middle range from 'urban' to 'back country'. They are large open spaces or areas of bush near to urban areas that are visited by people across the region.

Other areas of land managed by the Regional Council contribute to the protection of environmental and heritage values and the provision of recreation opportunities. The Akatarawa and Pakuratahi forests, while held for future water supply, are large areas of land that provide extensive recreational opportunities complementing those of other public lands. For example, the Akatarawa Forest caters for a range of users, which differs from that of any other regional park or recreation areas administered by the Regional Council. The Forest is used less frequently for passive activities such as walking, and more for mountain biking, and is a key area for use by trail bikers and 4WD groups.

River corridors, such as the Hutt River trail, also provide public access to rivers for recreation and key linkages between recreational areas. River corridors can also be important linkages between remaining areas of native bush.

Together these various public lands offer a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities and meet a wide range of community, environmental and conservation needs. The Regional Council, DoC and territorial authorities work together to ensure that environmental and heritage values are protected in the most appropriate ways, and that recreational opportunities across the region enhance and compliment one another to address the needs of communities.

Governance Continuum



Relationship of this Plan to other Regional Council Plans and Documents

This plan has been developed in the context of other Regional Council plans, documents and strategies. *Towards a Greater Wellington* the Council’s ten-year plan for the region and the Long Term Council Community Plan provide the strategic context for this plan. It is also influenced by other key Council documents and policies such as the Regional Policy Statement, Regional Plans and programs arising from these such as the bio-diversity program.

The Regional Parks Network Management Plan will in turn provide direction for the park specific plans, asset management plans and a range of parks related plans and policies. It will also guide the annual plan and operating plans that establish how our management plans will be implemented and what will be delivered each year.

The chart on the following page indicates the relationship of the network plan to other relevant Council plans and documents.

[Insert flow chart showing relationships between different aspects]

SECTION 2

THE PLAN FOR GREATER WELLINGTON PARKS

PART A – PARTNERSHIPS IN PARKS

Working Together with Tangata Whenua

Ongoing Relationships

Tangata Whenua seek to enjoy rights and relationships in respect of the lands on which the regional parks are established and to continue traditional practices for protecting natural and cultural heritage resources. The Council will work with Tangata Whenua to recognise and provide appropriately for these as a fundamental element of park management. Tangata Whenua rights and interests will be recognised and provided for appropriately in all areas of park management. Park management and experiences will in turn be enhanced through the involvement of Tangata Whenua and the greater acknowledgement of traditional customs, knowledge and interests.

The Charter of Understanding

The *Charter of Understanding* establishes the relationships between Tangata Whenua and the Council in the context of the Treaty of Waitangi and guides our relationships in all areas of Council business. The Charter recognises the right of the Council to govern and carry out its statutory functions, in exchange for the protection of the rangatiratanga of the Tangata Whenua. The relationship is intended to be mutually beneficial and based on good faith, co-operation and understanding.

Tangata Whenua Interests

Tangata Whenua have said that they want to be involved in the parks through:

- The expression of kaitiakitanga (traditional guardianship role of Tangata Whenua) in the parks.
- Customary care and use of natural resources such as mahinga kai (food gathering areas) or plants for weaving or medicinal purposes.
- Participation in the management of their cultural heritage and wahi tapu (sacred places).
- Informing and educating the public about their history, tikanga (custom and culture) and interests in the parks.
- Reflection of Tangata Whenua status throughout the parks, e.g. in signage.
- Employment opportunities for Iwi members.
- Providing opportunities and activities of interest and relevance to Maori in the parks.

Treaty Claims

Tangata Whenua have also highlighted the importance of their Treaty claims. There are a number of claims registered with the Waitangi Tribunal throughout the region that cover the regional parks. Claims over central Wellington (the Port Nicholson Block) have been heard by the Tribunal and a report is due out soon. It is likely that the claimants and the Crown will then negotiate a settlement. Many other claims are potentially years away from a Tribunal hearing and resolution.

In managing the parks, the Council needs to remain aware of the status of Treaty claims and settlements and ensure that its actions do not compromise the ability of the Crown and iwi to settle these longstanding grievances. For example, it will be important for the Council to consult with Tangata Whenua over any potential acquisitions of land, any changes of ownership to current park lands, or any major developments within the parks.

Working Together

We need to work together to determine arrangements that provide for the Council's wider public interests responsibilities *and* protect Tangata Whenua interests. The specific mechanisms for this will vary depending on the nature of each party's interests and the circumstances of the case. The management objectives and policies outlined below provide a starting point. We will work towards developing relationships, and appropriate arrangements, with Tangata Whenua at a range of levels that work for both parties and the parks.

The relationship between Council and Tangata Whenua is important in all aspects of park management. The objectives and policies outlined in this section are relevant to, and should be read in conjunction with, the remainder of the plan.

Objectives

- A. Regional parks are managed in partnership and co-operation with Tangata Whenua.
- B. The traditional authority and guardianship role of Tangata Whenua is recognised and provided for.
- C. Tangata Whenua interests in respect of their lands, forests, fisheries and other taonga (treasures) are actively protected.

Policies

To work with Tangata Whenua so as, consistent with the Council's management role and reasonable public use and enjoyment, to:

1. Develop and maintain relationships based on good faith, co-operation and understanding.
2. Determine opportunities for practical expression of traditional authority and guardianship roles of Tangata Whenua and the maintenance of mauri⁴.
3. Recognise and provide for the customary use of natural resources by Tangata Whenua within the context of sustainable management and in accordance with relevant legislation.
4. Recognise Tangata Whenua authority in defining the cultural importance of areas, the information provided to the public, and the interpretation of Tangata Whenua histories.
5. Provide appropriate opportunities for Tangata Whenua participation in the management and protection of wahi tapu (sites of significance).
6. Promote awareness of, and respect for, Tangata Whenua culture, interests, heritage, language, and place names within the parks.
7. To take account of relevant Treaty of Waitangi claims when developing policies and plans and making management decisions, and acquiring or disposing of lands.
8. To identify and make provision for the specific recreational needs of Tangata Whenua.

⁴ Defined in the Regional Policy Statement as the "Life principles present in all things".

Involving Local Communities and Neighbours

The Importance of Relationships

Continuing community involvement through opportunities to enjoy, visit, learn about, participate in, and protect, parks is a fundamental purpose of their management. This involvement is important and relevant to all areas of park management.

Co-operation with neighbours and local communities is vital for the effective management of the parks. There is a flow of social, economic and ecological effects between the parks and surrounding community. Plants, animals, fire, air and water do not recognise park boundaries and we can't manage parks in isolation from their surrounding environment. For example, problems of weed invasion, water pollution and impacts of domestic animals need to be addressed in co-operation with neighbours.

Other agencies play an important complementary role. The Department of Conservation manages large amounts of land for conservation and recreation. Local Authorities are responsible for a range of reserves and controlling land use.

Community partnerships and involvement with park management offers benefits for all parties including:

- Greater understanding between park managers and the community about values and needs.
- Establishment of communication and trust.
- Exchange of knowledge and skills between Council and the community.
- Greater community support for the parks, their values, and their protection.
- More eyes and ears on the ground, providing informal monitoring and reducing the need for get work done than might enforcement and control.
- Additional help to otherwise be achieved.

Participation of Volunteers

There are currently hundreds of volunteers who enhance our parks through a range of activities – from weed control, raising and planting native seedlings, restoration projects, or participation in policy development. These include groups of local residents, local environmental associations, park user groups, “Friends” of the parks groups, individuals and many more. It is likely that volunteers will have a greater role in the future – for example in guiding and interpretation. We want to provide a volunteer programme that:

- Is effective, satisfying and has benefits for volunteers, the Council and the parks.
- Provides for different levels and types of involvement to encourage wider community involvement.
- Has a long-term focus to contribute to the long-term vision and goals for park management.
- That is planned and undertaken in collaboration with the community.
- Ensures that both Council and volunteers have the necessary resources and skills to make their contribution.

Information Exchange

We need to provide up to date and relevant information to the public about the parks. People not only want to know where the parks are and what they can do there, but they also want to learn about the park histories and values. With changes to technology and the increasing use of 'Internet', we need to ensure that our communication strategies are effective and reaching our communities. Encouraging learning about the parks is another important aspect of management, and we want to place a greater focus on interpretation of park values in the future. It also increases ownership and stewardship for the parks amongst the community, as we come to appreciate the wonderful natural and cultural heritage of the region.

Objective

- A. Consistent with the Council's management role, regional parks are used and valued by the community who are actively involved and connected with them.

Policies

1. To encourage and support community involvement in regional parks and forests, and in particular "Friends" of the Parks groups.
2. To provide an effective volunteer programme which fulfils both the needs of the parks and the volunteers.
3. To promote the parks and provide accessible and relevant information to the community about park management and values.
4. To support the use of regional parks and forests as places that encourage increased learning about the environment, cultural heritage, and best practice for sustainable management of the environment.
5. To consult and work with park landowners in the development of park management plans and ongoing park management.
6. To be a good neighbour and work with neighbours to ensure that issues of interest and concern are addressed in park management
7. To co-operate with local and central government, other agencies and the community to protect the values of the regional parks and forests and maximise the benefits from them.

PART B – CONSERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Sustaining our Environment

Parks in Context - Our Regional Environment

The Wellington region has a diverse environment – from built up cities to pasture lands and forest clad mountain ranges, crossed by rivers and surrounded by sea. While the entire region has been modified to some extent, there is a range from highly modified areas to those that have retained their natural, indigenous character.

As we have changed our environment, we have also affected the ecosystems⁵ within it. As a result of our activities there has been a drastic reduction in the biological diversity of native species and ecosystems – or bio-diversity⁶ – in the region and the nation. In the Wellington region, as throughout New Zealand, we have had the most impact on lowland areas. While steep mountainous areas were sometimes cleared, it was generally the flat lowlands that were modified. Through the clearance of indigenous forests, the draining of wetlands and the development of coastal areas, some ecosystems in the region - and the species living in them are now very rare.

Much of what does remain has been seriously damaged by plant and animal pests, and continues to be at risk. The challenge now is to halt the decline in our native bio-diversity, so that no more of our precious and unique native species are lost forever, and to minimise the adverse impacts of our activities on the environment.

The Regional Council's Response

The Council has recognised the need to halt the continued loss of remnant areas, species, and ecosystems by expanding its biodiversity programme to address the key ecosystem types, which are depleted or under threat in the Region:

- Wetlands
- Rivers and streams
- Estuaries
- Dunes
- Lowland bush
- Coastal escarpments
- Marine ecosystems

Each of these ecosystem types is addressed by the Council in different ways - through plans, strategies, and a variety of programmes and projects.

⁵ An ecosystem is a community of different species – plants, animals (including humans) and micro-organisms – interacting with one another and their surrounding environment. An indigenous ecosystem is one where significant elements are native to New Zealand.

⁶ The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part. This includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.

Environmental Values of the Regional Parks

The regional park network protects a range of natural areas and a number of the most threatened ecosystems in the region including:

- Kaitoke Regional Park contains 2490 ha of lowland indigenous forest that includes unmodified podocarp/broadleaf forest. A nationally rare mistletoe and a diversity of birdlife is found in the area. The Hutt and Pakuratahi rivers, and a number of small streams run through the park and provide important habitats for native fish species and aquatic vegetation.
- The Northern Block of East Harbour includes a large area of regenerating indigenous forest, with regionally significant species in gullies and hill tops, and a wide range of bird species. The Southern Blocks include Lakes Kohangatera and Kohangapiripiri, which are nationally significant wetlands and breeding areas for rare native birds. These lakes, Butterfly Creek and Gollans stream contain native fish species such as the rare giant kokopu, while the park is home to many rare coastal and swamp plants.
- Queen Elizabeth Park contains the last relatively unmodified coastal dune systems on the Kapiti Coast. It is also home to small patches of coastal forest of mahoe, kanuka, kaikomako and ngaio. There is a remnant stand of native bush containing kahikatea forest, whilst adjoining wetlands have rare native plants. A number of native bird species are also found in the park, and the rare native fish – giant kokopu is present in one of the streams.
- Belmont Regional Park contains significant indigenous forest remnants in Korokoro Valley surrounded by regenerating indigenous forest. Other smaller remnants of indigenous forest exist throughout the park. A variety of native birds, lizards and freshwater native fish are also been recorded in the park.
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park is home to one of the last remaining areas of kohekohe forest in the region and the regionally rare plant *Rabdothamnus solandri*. Nationally threatened native fish have also been found in the Horokiri stream catchment.

Plant and animal pests are a major threat to the preservation of indigenous ecosystems within the regional parks. Possums, deer, rodents and mustelids (such as ferrets) continue to weaken natural ecosystems and cause a loss of biodiversity. Pest animals impact by browsing on native plants – leaves, flowers and fruit – competing with native fauna for food, and in some cases preying on native fauna. Plant pests, such as Old Man's Beard have the potential to smother large areas of native forest. Other plant pests can interfere with the regeneration of indigenous ecosystems by competing for light and space, such as Spanish Heath and Boneseed. Insect or fungal invasions can also pose a threat.

Natural hazards such as fire and erosion may also impact on environmental values by damaging or destroying natural communities of plants and animals.

Visitor activities, management actions or park developments can pose a threat to ecosystems, by disturbing the habitat or species, impacting on soil or water quality.

Sustainable Management of Environmental Values

Wellington Regional parks contain a mix of indigenous areas of high ecological values and modified environments that contribute to their character and diversity.

This plan requires the parks to be managed through an ecosystem approach in a way that contributes to the sustainability of our regional environment. An ecosystem based approach:

- Recognises the complexity and interconnectedness of the environment.
- Recognises the character and dynamics of particular ecosystems.
- Seeks to manage the whole of the ecosystem rather than just some of its parts.
- Seeks to protect the life supporting capacity of ecosystems.

Areas of High Ecological Value

Ecosystems of high value:

- a. Are representative of the region's indigenous bio-diversity.
- b. Are regionally or nationally rare or vulnerable.
- c. Have special features such as regionally or nationally rare or vulnerable or unique species, populations of species known or likely to be valuable as a genetic resource, an unusually high diversity of indigenous species, unique or unusual geological features, or special cultural or spiritual values.
- d. Are, or have the potential to be, significant areas of indigenous vegetation or significant habitats of indigenous fauna⁷.

Areas of high ecological value will be managed primarily to protect and enhance these values, sustain their life supporting capacity, and contribute to the indigenous biodiversity of the region. We will seek to protect what remains of indigenous ecosystems and communities, and where appropriate, restore them to a sustainable and natural condition. Protection means preventing any further damage to the existing ecological values, while restoration is about enhancing or improving ecological values.

There are many choices to be made about what an area's "natural state" is, and what it should be "restored" to. In some areas, protection from alien pests may be enough to restore an area to a more natural state. In others, a more intensive programme of ecological restoration or active species management may be required. The level of intervention required will depend upon the priority of the ecosystem and its ability to restore itself.

Modified Areas

Parks include a range of modified environments such as pastoral farms, exotic tree plantations, visitor service areas or grassed picnic areas. These areas will be managed primarily for their sustainable use.

Modified areas such as farms can also include small remnants of native bush, or streams and rivers that will be managed for their ecological values. Where appropriate, they may be restored to a more indigenous state and/or used to develop ecological corridors between areas of high ecological values.

⁷ These criteria are based on those from the Regional Policy Statement (Ecosystems policies)

Information and Knowledge

We need information to ensure that we are managing the park ecosystems in the best possible way. We are working to build our understanding of the environmental values of the regional parks in order to improve our management and decision making. Information needs to be gathered regularly so that we are aware of changes in the ecosystems. This information also needs to be built up over time to indicate short and long term trends.

We regularly monitor forest health and conduct biological surveys. We carry out and encourage research that can add to our understanding of park ecosystems. Together with the information gathered by the Department of Conservation, other researchers, Tangata Whenua and the community, this helps us to see how our environment is changing over time, and how effective our management of areas is. It is important to acknowledge that our information is incomplete, and where knowledge is lacking, caution should be applied in decision making.

Objectives

- A. Ecosystems of high ecological value in the regional parks are actively protected and enhanced.
- B. The area and quality of indigenous ecosystems is increased.
- C. Both indigenous and modified ecosystems within the parks are healthy, their life supporting capacity is sustained, and they contribute to good quality water, air, and soil.
- D. Regional parks provide examples of best ecological practice and advocate such practice to the public.

Policies

Environmental Best Practice

- 1. To actively advocate and demonstrate best environmental practice through regional parks.

Information, Research and Monitoring

- 2. To increase understanding of ecosystems within the parks through research and information gathering.
- 3. To encourage a greater awareness of the range and significance of ecosystems in the parks within the community.
- 4. To acknowledge and incorporate Maori ecological knowledge and values in the management of regional parks.

Ecosystem Protection and Enhancement

5. To protect and enhance indigenous ecosystems within the regional parks.
6. To prioritise ecosystems within the parks for protection and enhancement that⁸:
 - ⇒ Are currently or are likely to be under a high degree of threat.
 - ⇒ Are representative of the region's indigenous bio-diversity.
 - ⇒ Are regionally or nationally rare or vulnerable.
 - ⇒ Have special features such as regionally or nationally rare or vulnerable or unique species, populations of species known or likely to be valuable as a genetic resource, an unusually high diversity of indigenous species, unique or unusual geological features, or special cultural or spiritual values.
 - ⇒ Are, or have the potential to be, significant areas of indigenous vegetation or significant habitats of indigenous fauna.
7. Protection and enhancement may include:
 - ⇒ Plant and animal pest control.
 - ⇒ Fencing.
 - ⇒ Removal of stock.
 - ⇒ Riparian management.
 - ⇒ Re-introducing plant and/or animal species.
 - ⇒ Restoring physical features (such as waterways).
 - ⇒ Control of recreational and commercial use.
 - ⇒ Fire control.
8. The nature and level of protection or enhancement will be based upon the values of the ecosystem and its ability to restore itself.
9. To allow for natural regeneration of modified or degraded native ecosystems where they are likely to regenerate without active intervention e.g. where there is a local seed source and the ecosystem has the capacity to restore itself.
10. When restoring areas, plants sourced from the local ecological district will be used wherever possible.
11. When assessing and implementing restoration projects, the Council will also consider:
 - ⇒ Opportunities for planting species that may be used for social and cultural purposes such as for medicinal uses, weaving, and plants of significance to Tangata Whenua.
 - ⇒ The contribution the area could make to ecological corridors within the region.
 - ⇒ The level of public support and involvement.
12. As far as practicable, to maintain the native ecosystems of waterways and minimise threats to the water quality and quantity in rivers, lakes and wetlands in regional parks

⁸ These criteria are based on those from the Regional Policy Statement (Ecosystems policies)

Pest Plants and Animals

13. To actively control pest plants and animals in regional parks to allow for the recovery of indigenous ecosystems and sustain their life supporting capacity.
14. To base animal and plant pest control on the:
 - ⇒ Vulnerability and ecological value of the ecosystem under threat.
 - ⇒ Nature and extent of the threat posed.
 - ⇒ Distribution and size of the pest population.
 - ⇒ Requirements of the Regional Pest Management Strategy.
15. To take all practicable steps to prevent new plant and animal pest infestations and to regularly survey for new infestations.
16. To control pest plants and animals using the most efficient and effective techniques available. Assessments of effectiveness will take into account the adverse effects on non-target species, the environment and human health.
17. To monitor the:
 - ⇒ Locations, nature and extent of pest plant and animal infestations in regional parks.
 - ⇒ Results of pest plant and animal control operations in terms of the distribution and size of the pest population.
 - ⇒ Ecological outcomes of pest plant and animal control.
18. Plant pest management will also take into account the need for a restoration plan for the area, to prevent re-infestation of weed species.

Introduced Plants

19. Introduced plants⁹ will only be planted where:
 - ⇒ They have a specific purpose or amenity value in accordance with the management objectives of the area; and
 - ⇒ The area has low indigenous ecological values; and
 - ⇒ They pose a known low threat to indigenous ecosystems.
20. Existing introduced plants may be removed for ecological purposes, except where they:
 - ⇒ Are of historical or cultural significance; or
 - ⇒ Are acting as a 'nurse crop' for native species; or
 - ⇒ Have a high amenity value; or
 - ⇒ Are necessary for farming or forestry activities; or
 - ⇒ Provide another important facility such as erosion control or protection of heritage features.

⁹ Introduced plants are those that do not naturally occur in a particular area. This can include plants from other countries and plants from other areas in New Zealand. For example, Pohutukawa are native to the northern areas of the North Island but not to Wellington.

Preserving Landscapes

Regional Landscapes

The landscapes of the Wellington region provide a backdrop to our communities. Be they the high rises, houses and hills around Wellington harbour, the green forested mountains of the Rimutaka ranges, or the river flats of the Hutt Valley or Wairarapa.

What is Landscape?

The landscape is essentially a combination of landform, land cover and land use. Landform is the soil and rocks shaped by geological and natural processes over time. It is the shape of the land, and includes rivers, lakes and wetlands. The land could be covered by asphalt and buildings, or lush natural forests. Human activities may leave a mark on the land – from the small and temporary to the large and long lasting.

Landscape is also about values, stories and people. Particular landscapes can conjure up intense feelings. Landscape has aesthetic, cultural and personal values. For Tangata Whenua, the land and the landscape represent many things including ancestors and their activities, history and genealogy.

Landscape, environment and heritage are all closely intertwined. Landscape is the combination of the natural environment and human interaction with it.

Landscape Values of the Regional Parks

Regional parks contain some diverse and important landscapes. For example, the open, golden hills of East Harbour and Belmont Regional Parks are significant features of the Wellington harbour landscape. These areas are enjoyed by many people who may never set foot in them. The raised beaches at Lakes Kohangatera and Kohangapiripiri in East Harbour Regional Park are nationally significant landforms. The forested valleys and hills, criss-crossed by streams and rivers in Kaitoke Regional Park contribute to the landscape values of the Hutt Valley. The open coastal dunes of Queen Elizabeth Park, and the colonial homestead and farm at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park also protect disappearing landscapes and settings in our region.

Threats to Landscape Values

Development, subdivision, land clearance, roading and a number of other activities potentially threaten our important regional landscapes and Tangata Whenua values in the land. The loss of natural character, such as indigenous forest remnants in the region can also impact on our landscape.

This makes the landscapes in the regional parks even more important. This plan aims to maintain the essential character of each of the regional parks and preserve their landscape values.

Objectives

- A. A diverse range of regionally important landscapes and settings are protected and enhanced through the regional parks network.
- B. Regional park landscapes protect values of significance to Tangata Whenua.

Policies

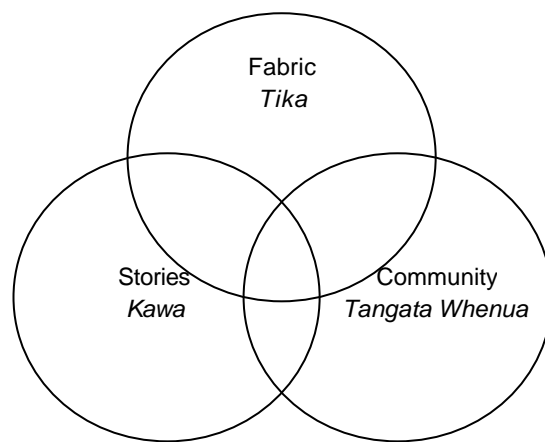
1. To assess development and management proposals for their likely effects on landscape values with a view to:
 - ⇒ Acknowledging and protecting Tangata Whenua values in the management of landscape within the regional parks.
 - ⇒ Conserving the dominant landscape features and visual patterns.
 - ⇒ Maintaining significant modified landscapes, such as pastoral farming settings.
 - ⇒ Managing the scale of development so it is appropriate to the setting in which it is located.
2. To identify key development nodes in each park where facilities and structures will be maintained and developed.

Protecting Cultural Heritage

What is Cultural Heritage?

Cultural heritage provides a living record of history which includes landscapes, important moments in the development of communities, peoples, tribes and the nation, the joys and sorrows of individuals, and the stories of our connection with places. Cultural heritage conservation in parks is sometimes regarded as the protection of historic places and objects of obvious heritage significance such as historic buildings or dams. But is much more than that! It is a dynamic process based on keeping alive associations with place, as well as protecting specific sites and structures.

The Department of Conservation has developed a useful model to describe heritage in both Maori and European terms as an intersection of three key components.



Tangata Whenua concepts of heritage are based on the directions of tikanga or custom and include:

- Kawa - traditional expressions.
- Tika - customary practices.
- Tangata Whenua - community and culture.

The European model includes:

- Stories - memories, archives, images etc.
- Fabric - the physical material of the heritage – land, structures, places, artefacts.
- Community - includes the community's perceptions, experience and skills.

The Diversity of Heritage

Heritage is diverse and may be tangible, intangible or a combination of both. Tangible heritage includes land, landforms, buildings, structures or archaeological sites. Intangible heritage includes stories, sites of significance or associations with place. Natural features such as springs, swamps or streams may also be associated with traditional activities or have particular historical or cultural significance.

Archaeological sites are places associated with human activity that occurred before 1900, where there may be evidence relating to the history of New Zealand. Archaeological sites in New Zealand include Maori pa sites, remains of cultivation areas and gardens, middens, rock art sites, shipwrecks or other historic sites containing evidence of whaling, trading, gold mining or other activities. In many instances physical evidence may not show on the surface. Architectural or built heritage includes buildings such as marae, houses, bridges and dams.

Any or all of these cultural heritage types may also be considered to be wahi tapu or wahi taonga of the Iwi, Hapu or Whanau concerned, based on the dictates of tikanga.

Legal Protection of Heritage

Both archaeological and architectural heritage are protected by the *Historic Places Act 1993*.

Tangata Whenua cultural heritage is protected as a “matter of national importance” under section 6(e) of the *Resource Management Act 1991*. Wahi tapu are also protected through the *Historic Places Act*, and the *Te Ture Whenua Maori Act* if they are designated as Maori reserves.

Heritage Values in the Parks

The regional parks contain many important heritage features that we know about. However, there are likely to be others that we know nothing or little about.

East Harbour Regional Park has exceptional heritage values. There are many signs of Maori occupation evident in the park. Around the Lakes at Pencarrow are stone walls, midden sites, dendroglyphs, cultivation sites. The park also contains an important route used by Maori and early European settlers from Lowry Bay to Wainuiomata. There are several shipwrecks on the edges of the park, and, possibly as a result of this, the first lighthouse in New Zealand was built at Pencarrow in 1859.

Queen Elizabeth Park is also rich in heritage. The area has been used extensively by Maori up to the present. There are many remains of Maori occupation from previous times including pa sites, midden sites, cultivation sites and urupa. The area was home to both Maori and pioneer coach routes along the coast. United States Marines had a camp sites in the park during World War Two. The park also contains a Tramway Museum.

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park is named after the hill that was the site of the last battle between Maori and the Crown in New Zealand in 1846. The park contains a colonial homestead, cottage, woolshed, stockyards, and gravestones. The area may also have been a Maori route along the ridge from Abbotts Trig.

Areas of Belmont Regional Park were important routes for Maori and later European settlers. In years gone by, the area was used for water collection and the Korokoro Dam and weir built in 1903 still remain. There were also flour and woollen mills in the 1800s. The hills in Belmont were used extensively during World War II for defence purposes, and many ammunition magazines remain there.

The history of logging in the area of Kaitoke Regional Park is evident through the old logging tramlines and sawmill sites. The area has been used for water supply for some time and the Kaitoke weir, flume bridge and aqueduct tunnel attests to this. The remains of an old homestead are evident at Te Marua in Kaitoke Regional Park.

Challenges for Managing Heritage Values in Parks

Identification and Information

The failure to recognise heritage areas, and the loss of stories and knowledge about heritage are potential threats to heritage protection. One of the key challenges in protecting heritage values is to identify the heritage values that exist. Assessing and recording heritage is a crucial first step. Alongside that, gathering information, knowledge, stories and memories brings life, context and history to the site or item. Collecting stories should be as much a part of the process as recording the physical site. In many cases, preserving information about heritage features and values is as important as the preservation of the feature itself. Where we can't maintain features, such as where they are being destroyed through coastal erosion - we can at least gather information about them.

The information that exists or is collected needs to be used appropriately – which means being provided to the public in some cases, and restricted in other cases where it is private or sensitive. This includes ensuring any information relating to Tangata Whenua cultural values is managed according to protocols and processes established by Tangata Whenua.

Protection

Protecting the fabric of heritage from physical damage – through decay, disaster or human activities - is the next important step. For example, improving access, increasing visitor numbers, or providing information to the public about the existence of heritage sites could lead to increasing use and pressure on areas, or potentially increasing vandalism. Some forms of recreation can damage heritage features through physical impact on the environment.

Environmental restoration projects can also have an impact. In carrying out these projects, we need to ensure that heritage sites are not being damaged, or features, which should be accessible, become obscured e.g. through planting over the top of heritage features.

Natural hazards pose a risk. Coastal erosion is occurring in Queen Elizabeth Park and as a result many archaeological sites are being exposed. We need to develop clear procedures for situations where artefacts or skeletal remains are uncovered, and how these will be dealt with.

Animals (pests and stock) can also cause damage to heritage features through browsing and land disturbance and need to be managed in areas where they pose a threat. Pest plants can either cause damage to heritage sites, or in some cases protect them from erosion.

Currently, we have conservation plans for our built heritage and structures, but not for archaeological sites or heritage areas. We need to develop policies and plans for how best to protect these other areas.

The framework for conservation of heritage buildings is the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value. Conservation processes in the Charter are: “Non-intervention; maintenance; stabilisation; repair; restoration; reconstruction; adaptation; and interpretation.” The selection of appropriate conservation levels is based on: “Retention of authenticity; retention of heritage values; minimum and reversible interventions; and complete documentation.”

Community Involvement

Relationships with, and celebration of, heritage occurs in communities of people. Consequently, one of the most important aspects of protecting cultural heritage is the involvement of the community. Cultural heritage is an important educational resource for us to learn about our history.

Tangata Whenua Kaitiaki

The Council has to work with Tangata Whenua to ensure that areas and values of significance are appropriately protected. Cultural heritage management also requires the involvement of Tangata Whenua as kaitiaki or guardians of their own cultural heritage, according to tikanga (custom).

The Challenge

The challenge is to care for and present the historic and cultural heritage values of the parks in a manner that recognises and respects the links, both past and present, between the land and its people, in a manner that celebrates our living cultures as well as the past.

Objectives

- A. Heritage values and features in the parks are identified, protected and interpreted, presented and promoted to the community.
- B. Knowledge, history and stories relating to heritage values in the parks are preserved.
- C. Tangata Whenua are appropriately involved in the management of their cultural heritage.
- D. The community has an understanding and appreciation of the heritage values of the parks, are involved in heritage management, and the parks contribute to the community's sense of place in the region.

Policies

Information Gathering

1. To identify, protect and preserve information and knowledge related to heritage sites and values of the parks:
 - ⇒ According to national standards and practice and Tangata Whenua tikanga.
 - ⇒ Having appropriate regard to relevant privacy issues and cultural requirements.
 - ⇒ In order to preserve knowledge and understanding about the features and values.

Management and Protection

2. To manage historic and cultural heritage features based on their significance and the level of threat to them.
3. Assessments of the 'significance' of features will take into account:
 - ⇒ Age, rarity, and representativeness.
 - ⇒ The nature and level of information available about the feature and values.
 - ⇒ The cultural, educational, and scientific value of the features.
 - ⇒ Whether the feature is a collective one, encompassing a number of heritage features.
4. To work towards the development of conservation plans for all significant heritage features.
5. To restore or enhance degraded heritage areas or features where possible and appropriate.

6. To adhere to nationally established procedures where historic and cultural heritage features are unearthed (e.g. those established by the Historic Places Trust).

Interpretation

7. To present and interpret heritage values to the community, except where they may be:
 - ⇒ At risk from damage or vandalism through increased knowledge or access.
 - ⇒ Particularly sensitive areas such as grave sites or wahi tapu, for which greater information and public access could degrade the areas physically or spiritually.

Working with Tangata Whenua in the Management of Historic and Cultural Heritage

8. To recognise the right of Tangata Whenua to conserve and protect their heritage and their privacy, and to present or permit the presentation of cultural heritage.
9. To manage sites of significance to Tangata Whenua in a manner determined through consultation, taking into account nationally and locally established protocols e.g. relating to the management of cultural artefacts or human remains.

Involving the Community

10. To work with relevant community groups and historical societies to identify, assess and interpret historical and heritage sites.

**PART C – SUSTAINING COMMUNITY, RECREATIONAL AND
COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND USE**

Providing Opportunities

Parks are for people. While we must protect the important values of parks, they also exist to be used and enjoyed by the community. Regional parks are important recreational and community resources providing diverse, accessible, open spaces and recreational opportunities near to the urban centres. Regional parks provide for a wide range of uses including recreational, community, educational, commercial, and Tangata Whenua customary uses.

Recreation and Relaxation

Parks are popular places to visit to take small or long walks, or engage in more adventurous activities such as mountain biking. Each park has its own characteristics and provides different opportunities for visitors, with diverse settings from open hilltops to dense forests or coastal dunes. The aim in Regional Parks is to balance the need to provide for facilities and recreational activities, where they are considered appropriate, with the protection of the environment, heritage values and open, unspoilt, landscapes.

Community Activities

Parks can be a space for community activities and events such as sporting activities, clubs or social events. Parks host community fundraising events, group picnics or walking groups. People can also get involved in the parks, through planting trees with a local care group, or being part of a vintage machinery club that restores and cares for heritage items in the parks.

Education and Research

The parks are used extensively for education. Many school children visit the parks to learn about the environment or participate in planting days. Many individuals and educational institutions also carry out research into the ecological or heritage values of the parks.

Customary Maori Activities

The continued practice of customary activities sustains the culture, values and traditional knowledge of Tangata Whenua. The exercise of customary practices of guardianship, stewardship and customary use of natural resources are part of the kaitiaki role of Tangata Whenua. The Regional Council has a role to play in supporting customary practices in regional parks. This can include working with Tangata Whenua to identify practical opportunities for the expression of customary practices and the sustainable management and use of the parks.

Hunting and Gathering

The parks provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, or collecting natural materials for food or arts and crafts. These activities are important to many people for social, recreational and cultural purposes and can be provided for within a framework of sustainable management. The Council also receives requests for people collecting seeds to grow native plants. This is generally on a non-commercial basis, although we sometimes receive requests from commercial growers.

Land Management

Farming or grazing of park lands is sometimes used as a management tool to maintain open spaces and control weeds. It can also provide an income stream to contribute to the management of the parks.

Commercial

Parks also provide for commercial activities. A number of commercial operators provide a range of services within the parks – including outdoor recreation and guided tours. The parks are also becoming increasingly popular sites for filming. These commercial activities not only provide direct returns to the Council to help run the parks, but they also contribute to the broader regional economy.

Current Uses of Regional Parks

The table below indicates some of the key uses of each of the parks:

Park	Current Recreational Opportunities	Other Current Uses
Battle Hill Farm Forest Park	Used by picnickers, campers, walkers, cyclists, runners, horse riders. Some 4WD and motor cycle events. Provides access to Puketiro Forest. Regionally important for horse riding. Battle Hill has 70,000 visitors/year.	Farming/grazing Schools use Ken Gray Education Centre. Network utilities St Bernard's College Woodlot
Belmont Regional Park	Used by picnickers, walkers, trampers, cyclists, runners, horse riders. Some camping. Regionally important for mountain biking. Belmont has 100,000 visitors per year.	Education and work skills training at ACTS Institute, Dry Creek Confidence course Network utilities Farming/grazing
East Harbour Regional Park	The bush tracks from Wainuiomata Hill to Days Bay and to Butterfly Creek are well used by walkers, trampers and runners. The Pencarrow coastal road is used by walkers, trampers, cyclists and runners to visit the lighthouse. Baring Head is a regionally important rock-climbing site. Estimated over 100,000 visitors per year.	Network utilities
Kaitoke Regional Park	Used by picnickers, campers, walkers, trampers, swimmers, anglers, rafters and canoeists. Provides access to Hutt Water Collection Area. Some hunting. Regionally important for picnicking. Kaitoke has 100,000 visitors per year.	Network utilities
Queen Elizabeth Park	Used by picnickers, campers (motorcamp), walkers, horse riders, swimmers, surfers, anglers, and sports events. Tram rides at MacKays Crossing. Regionally important for picnicking. Queen Elizabeth Park has 300,000 visitors per year.	Aeroclub Farming/grazing Guided horse riding Kennel club

Managing Use to Protect Values

Future Influences on Use

Many changes in society could influence the future use of, and demand for regional parks. We have considered some of the possible future influences on the use of parks, and what effect they might have.

Population changes in the region in the next ten years are expected to be moderate and should not place undue stress on parks beyond what is currently experienced in peak use periods in key park locations.

Changing work patterns mean that greater use of the parks may be expected mid-week and in traditionally non-peak times. Increasingly busy lives and a multitude of potential activities may lead to an increased demand for shorter walks. An ageing population is likely to reinforce these trends, and lead to greater:

- Use by walking groups.
- Demands for disabled access; and
- Pressure on accessible areas such as Queen Elizabeth Park.

Recent years have seen a decrease in organised sport, and a corresponding increase in individual, less formal sports such as walking, running, and biking. The 'leisure industry', including tourism, is now a major part of the economy and likely to continue growing. This may lead to more applications for concessions to carry out commercial recreation and tourism in the parks.

Throughout the community there is an increasing awareness of the environment and concern for environmental quality. Use of the parks for environmental education of the community has increased over recent years, and may continue to do so.

Trends in regional parks and forests include increasing demands for guided walks and interpretation, motorised recreation, and the use of the parks for large events and festivals. Over recent years filming activity has increased and is now the most significant commercial activity in the regional parks and forests.

Tangata Whenua are likely to play a greater role in park management, particularly as the settlement of Treaty claims in the Wellington Region begins to occur. Greater Tangata Whenua involvement and acknowledgement of traditional customs, knowledge and interests and will also enhance park experiences.

Balancing Use and Protection

As natural places and open space become rarer with increasing urbanisation and development, the challenge for park management is to balance use with the protection of natural and cultural heritage values.

Therefore, when assessing the appropriateness of activities and uses in regional parks, we will:

- Encourage activities and uses that are sustainable or enhance a sustainable region.
- Discourage or prohibit activities and uses that are unsustainable or detract from a sustainable region.

Where environmental or heritage values are high (e.g. in areas of native bush or archaeological sites), areas will be managed primarily to protect those values, and social and economic activities will be more constrained. Where environmental and heritage values are lower (e.g. in modified grasslands, areas of low heritage value), areas will be managed primarily for sustainable use, and social and economic activities are less constrained.

Removal of Natural Materials

The management plan provides for limited removal of plants, animals and natural materials, where it is ecologically sustainable. The removal of natural materials will be managed by a permit system and in accordance with relevant legislation.

Hunting of introduced animals is provided for, and will be managed through a separate permit system.

Types of Activities

This network plan identifies activities and uses that are allowed, managed, restricted or prohibited across all regional parks. Park specific plans will identify any additional restrictions or specifications required in each park.

Allowed activities are acceptable in most parks but may be restricted in order to protect the environment, cultural or heritage values, health and wellbeing of visitors and to facilitate park operations and the enjoyment of other users. These activities do not require the use of service or facilities other than those provided to all park users.

Permits or permission are required for *managed activities*. They generally need to be carried out in a specific location, which may involve the exclusive use or occupation of an area or resource and/or could adversely affect natural and cultural resources or other park users.

Restricted activities are those that are not ‘allowed’, ‘managed’ or ‘prohibited’. Applications need to be made to the Council, and will be considered in accordance with the factors outlined under the policy for “Assessing effects of activities” (below).

Prohibited activities are not considered appropriate as they would have long term adverse effects on the environment or would detract significantly from the enjoyment of other park users.

Objectives

- A. Parks provide for a range of sustainable uses, including recreational, community, Tangata Whenua customary, and commercial uses.
- B. A range of visitor and outdoor recreation opportunities are available across the Regional Parks network that compliments and enhances the opportunities available on other public lands in the region.

Policies

Sustainable Management

1. To provide for activities and uses that are sustainable and contribute to a sustainable region.
2. To discourage activities and uses that are unsustainable or detract from a sustainable region.
3. To actively advocate and demonstrate best environmental practice through regional parks.
4. To monitor the use and development of the parks and the resulting effects.

Range of Opportunities

5. To maintain a network of parks that provides for a wide range of opportunities. Not all opportunities will be available in all parks.
6. Maintain a network of tracks that provide access through the parks and a range of opportunities.
7. To provide varied opportunities for parks users by providing multiple use tracks and facilities wherever possible.
8. To separate or prohibit uses where it is necessary to protect health and safety, environmental or heritage values, or to prevent conflicts between different activities.

9. When developing new tracks, to give priority to:
 - ⇒ Developing links to other important recreational areas.
 - ⇒ Developing circuits and loop tracks.
 - ⇒ Protecting environmental and heritage features.
10. Promote accessibility, recreation opportunities and use of facilities for people of all cultures, ages, fitness levels and physical abilities.
11. To provide for educational and recreational programs within the parks.

Use and Development

12. To identify the key values within each park and provide for activities and uses that are appropriate the area's character and management objectives.
13. To identify key development nodes in each park management plan and concentrate intensive use and development at these nodes.
14. To provide facilities and services necessary to enhance visitor experiences and that contribute to environmental protection, maintaining recreational opportunities, interpretation and information, managing conflicting demands, and public health and safety.
15. To require park visitors and concessionaires to remove any rubbish they bring to, or generate in, the park (except at designated campgrounds, where limited rubbish facilities will be provided).

Access

16. To provide for free public access to all areas of the parks subject to necessary restrictions relating to:
 - ⇒ The protection of environmental, heritage and Tangata Whenua values.
 - ⇒ The maintenance of public health and safety.
 - ⇒ Management purposes¹⁰.
 - ⇒ Approved special events.
 - ⇒ Approved leases and licences.
17. To minimise the impact of any necessary restrictions on public access.
18. To facilitate access to regional parks by providing an adequate number and geographical spread of park entrances.
19. To improve accessibility of facilities and services to people with disabilities.

¹⁰ Including park maintenance and farming purposes

Farming

20. To allow pastoral farming where it:
 - ⇒ Contributes to the public use, enjoyment and educational potential of regional parks by augmenting the range of recreational and landscape settings available to visitors.
 - ⇒ Is consistent with the objectives for the protection and management of the natural and cultural resources of the parks.
 - ⇒ Does not adversely affect significant natural or cultural values.
 - ⇒ Is in accordance with, and models, good land management practices and animal husbandry.
 - ⇒ Complies with all relevant statutory requirements.

Removal of Natural Materials

21. The removal of materials (plants, animals, soil, rocks etc.) from the parks will be managed by a permit system. Permits will be granted or declined on the basis of the policies below¹¹.
22. The removal of natural materials will be permitted under the following circumstances, as may be agreed upon by the Council, and subject to any conditions imposed:
 - ⇒ By Tangata Whenua for customary purposes.
 - ⇒ By members of the community:
 - For authorised scientific or research purposes.
 - For authorised cultural or social purposes.
 - For conservation and ecological restoration projects.
 - To hunt introduced animals.
23. In assessing applications to remove materials from the park, the Council will consider:
 - ⇒ The ecological sustainability of the activity (in terms of impact on the area, ecosystem or species over time).
 - ⇒ The availability of alternative opportunities.

Recreational Hunting

24. Recreational hunting will be provided for, subject to the management of ecological values, and will not take priority over other pest animal management techniques.
25. Recreational hunting will be controlled through a permit system.

¹¹ The Regional Council does not have a role in regulating fishing within the regional parks (i.e. the removal of fish species from the parks). Fishing is regulated variously by the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Fisheries and the Fish and Game Council.

Research

26. Permission will be required to carry out research in the parks where it:
 - ⇒ Requires information or access beyond that provided to the general public and/or;
 - ⇒ Is intrusive or disturbs heritage features and would require Historic Places Trust consent.
 - ⇒ May cause disturbance of, or require removal of, plants, animals or natural materials.
27. A copy of all research undertaken in the parks must be provided to the Regional Council.

Natural Hazards

28. To avoid siting permanent facilities and structures in natural hazard zones associated with flooding, land instability and dune systems, and to remove existing structures when practicable.
29. To use practices that minimise erosion when carrying out works or activities.
30. Where erosion exists, to use appropriate mechanisms and practices to mitigate it, which are in sympathy with the ecological and landscape values of the area.
31. To treat coastal erosion as a natural process and avoid structural interference unless:
 - ⇒ Essential park facilities or visitor safety are threatened.
 - ⇒ There is a significant risk to environmental values or cultural heritage sites.
32. The public use of open fires is prohibited in all parks.
33. Portable gas barbecues and camping stoves may be used in the parks.
34. Open fires will only be used for operational purposes where the necessary fire permits have been obtained from the relevant authority.

Use and Occupation

35. Activities and uses that are allowed, managed, restricted or prohibited under this plan are outlined as follows:

Category	Activity/Use
Allowed	<p><i>General activities</i></p> <p>The following activities may be undertaken by individuals or groups, where it is not for financial gain, subject to restrictions outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking, running and tramping • Swimming • Barbecues at designated sites • Filming or photography for personal, family and non-commercial purposes • Informal individual family or group activities including sports and games <p>In order to protect the park environment, the health, safety and wellbeing of other users and to facilitate park operations, restrictions may be placed on the activities identified above relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of group • Location • Duration • Time of day • Season or time of year • Infrastructure conditions • Environmental conditions

	<p><i>Dogs</i> Dogs will generally be allowed in all areas except for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specified areas of high ecological values • Campsites • Designated farming areas • Any necessary restrictions to protect the park environment, the health and safety of park users and to facilitate park operations <p>Dogs must be under control at all times and owners must remove all droppings from the park</p> <p><i>Mountain biking</i> Mountain biking will generally be allowed on tracks, except where it is specifically prohibited. Restrictions may be implemented as necessary to protect the park environment, the health and safety of park users and to facilitate park operations.</p> <p><i>Horse riding</i> Horse riding will be provided for in designated areas and/or designated tracks. Restrictions may be implemented as necessary to protect the park environment, the health and safety of park users and to facilitate park operations.</p>
Managed	<p>Permission or a permit will be required for the following activities undertaken for non-commercial purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping • Picnic areas or space reservations for groups • Use of the Ken Gray Educational Centre or Stratton Street Woolshed • Recreational hunting in designated areas
Restricted	<p>Case by case assessments of activities is required where they are not 'allowed', 'managed' or 'prohibited' under this plan. This includes, but is not limited to, the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The removal of natural materials from parks • Conducting research • Commercial activities • Filming (e.g. documentary, movie, commercial or photo shoot) • Guided activities • Conducting events (e.g. triathlon, horse trial events etc.) • Conducting one-off activities involving site occupation or use (e.g. a festival or concert, a large group picnic, selling food or drinks) • Building structures • Use of an existing building (other than the Ken Gray Educational Centre or Stratton Street Woolshed) • Offering transport services • Offering hire services • Motorised recreation <p><i>Leases and licences</i> Leases and licences may be granted for the use of areas or sites within the parks where the use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides services or benefits to park users • is consistent with the objectives and policies of this plan and the relevant park management plan <p>Exclusive use of park resources will not generally be granted except to the extent necessary to enable the carrying out of a commercial or recreational activity which could not otherwise proceed, and which, in the opinion of the Council, is an activity which should be permitted in terms of the policies and objectives of this plan, and then under such conditions as the Council may impose.</p>
Prohibited	Any 'allowed' activity that is prohibited in a particular park, or area of a park or parks

Assessing Effects of Activities and Uses

36. To make an assessment of the effects of proposed activities and uses that are not specifically ‘allowed’, ‘managed’ or ‘prohibited’ under this plan.
37. To assess the positive and negative effects of these proposed activities and uses over time, in terms of the factors outlined in Table 2.
38. To undertake appropriate consultation with Tangata Whenua, the community, and affected parties, when assessing proposed activities and uses.
39. To determine whether permission for a proposed activity or use will be granted (and any necessary conditions) based on this assessment of effects.

Table 2: Factors to take into Account when Assessing Activities

Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bio-diversity ◆ Water ◆ Air ◆ Energy ◆ Land ◆ Waste
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tangata Whenua ◆ Landscape ◆ Cultural heritage ◆ Recreational opportunities ◆ Other users ◆ Community ◆ Park neighbours ◆ Access/Transport ◆ Safety/hazards (including to other users)
Park management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consistency with legislation ◆ Consistency with park plan (including the values and potential values of the area) ◆ Consistency with relevant policies ◆ Exclusivity of use ◆ Amount of land required/Duration of activity/Frequency of activity/Number of people involved ◆ Other consent/approval required ◆ Experience/capability of applicant ◆ Compliance with bylaws
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Cost to Council ◆ Return to Council ◆ Contribution to the regional economy