



Parks Network Plan



Quality for Life



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao



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Date of effect of plan


This Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan was adopted by the Greater Wellington Regional Council on December 2010 and came into effect on 1 January 2011. This is now the operative management plan for all Greater Wellington parks and replaces the previous management plans for each area:

- Regional Forest Lands Management Plan, 2006
- Regional Parks Network Management Plan, 2003
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, 2008
- Belmont Regional Park, 1996
- East Harbour Regional Park, 2007
- Kaitoke Regional Park, 2005
- Queen Elizabeth Park, 2006.

Minister of Conservation sign-off

Approval of management plan under Section 41(1) of the Reserves Act 1977

The Minister of Conservation, through her delegate the Conservation Support Manager of the Department of Conservation, Wellington Hawke's Bay Conservancy, approves the Park Network Plan as it pertains to the classified scenic reserves vested in Greater Wellington Regional Council and for those classified scenic reserves for which Greater Wellington holds a delegated appointment from Hutt City Council.

 date: 24/3/2011
Ben Reddiex
Conservation Support Manager
Acting pursuant to a delegation from the
Minister of Conservation dated 29.10.97

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Foreword

Wellington's regional parks are a precious community resource. They are valuable storehouses of biodiversity and a source of great pleasure for the ever increasing numbers of people who visit them. They provide a superb scenic backdrop to the urban settings of the Region.

This Parks Network Plan covers over 33,000 hectares, including five regional parks, Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests and Wainuiomata Recreation Area. Some areas are adjacent to city parks and trails while several are more remote forest areas. They each have their own special characteristics but they all share certain key qualities. This Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan is designed to provide a coherent, consolidated management regime for the network as a whole as well as specific management provisions for each park.

In the Wellington Regional Strategy, quality open space is recognised as a fundamental requirement of world class cities and regions. People are becoming more aware of regional parks' role in conserving vital ecosystems and the merits of linking the open spaces provided around the region by territorial authorities and the Department of Conservation.

Parks need to be places that are relevant to people. Although there will always be those who value the parks but do not visit them, many use the parks and appreciate the experiences they offer. Our aim is to maximise the availability of our parks network to as many sectors of society as possible.

Working with the community in developing the range of experiences in our parks will be a core element of the new management regime. There are clearly opportunities to develop new recreational and educational experiences and provide for sustainable economic activities where these are compatible with the local ecology and public amenity values.

We need to strike a balance between the needs of people and the needs of the environment. This is not always easy. It requires flexibility and imagination and a better public understanding of the interface between human activity and local ecology.

Nigel Wilson

Chair Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee,
Greater Wellington Regional Council

Introduction



1 Introduction to the plan

1.1 Purpose of the plan

This plan sets out the direction for managing the regional parks and forests in the Wellington region (referred to as “parks”). It provides a framework for addressing issues common to these areas and managing them in a comprehensive and consistent way. The plan highlights the unique nature and values in the different parks, and addresses the need for specific management of these areas. It represents a common understanding between Greater Wellington and the community about the future management of the parks network.

This plan will be known as the *Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan*, or “parks network plan”, and applies only to those lands that form the parks network of Greater Wellington (refer Map 1 inside cover), namely:

- Akatarawa Forest (between Upper Hutt and the Kapiti Coast)
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park (on the Paekakariki Hill Road)
- Belmont Regional Park (on the hills between Wellington, Lower Hutt and Porirua)
- East Harbour Regional Park (on the hills behind Eastbourne, Parangarahu Lakes, Baring Head)
- Kaitoke Regional Park (northeast of Upper Hutt off State Highway 2)
- Pakuratahi Forest (east of Upper Hutt, including the Rimutaka Rail Trail)
- Queen Elizabeth Park (on the Kapiti Coast)
- Wainuiomata Recreation Area (east of Wainuiomata).

As further land areas are identified as Greater Wellington parks, these areas will be added by a variation to the management plan.

While some lands have a specific primary purpose (such as future water supply¹), their management shares many common elements so the lands can be managed as a network. Each park provides a different experience and contains special features and values which contribute to the network.

The plan is not intended to deliver funding. However, it does guide the resourcing decisions that need to be made for existing parks.

The plan does not remove the need for consents or authorisations required by other plans or regulatory frameworks, in particular, the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Historic Places Act 1993.

¹ 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 park lands.

How to use the plan

The parks network plan is comprised of the following parts:

Part 1 – Introduction	Identifies why we have management plans and what land this plan covers
Part 2 – Greater Wellington Parks	Provides a context for how the parks evolved, the legislation that governs them and the values of parks
Part 3 – Management framework	Outlines the vision for Greater Wellington parks and the principles on which the outcomes and policies in the plan are based
Part 4 – General management outcomes and policies	States the generic policies (including biodiversity, landscape, heritage, land management) that apply across the whole of the parks network
Part 5 – Monitoring and review	Details the monitoring and review requirements of the plan
Part 6 – Park-specific management and policies	<p>Covers individual park areas and includes brief descriptions of each park</p> <p>Provides detail on park specific policies where they are different or need further explanation than just the generic policies. It also includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key characteristics of the park • The legal status of the park • The management focus for the park for the life of the plan • A list of any future changes that are anticipated • Park maps.
Part 7 – Rules for use and occupation of parks	Identifies what activities are allowed, where, and how the activities will be managed. This part also outlines the process for considering new activities: assessment, criteria for public notification and conditions for approval.

The general policies that apply across the network (found in part 4) are not necessarily repeated in the park-specific chapter (part 6). For example, the policies relating to natural hazards apply to all of the parks. In other cases, such as protection of significant landscapes, the general outcome and policies are outlined in part 6 with specific details in the park-specific section (i.e. which landscapes should be protected in Belmont). Therefore it is recommended that the plan be read as a whole.

The plan should also be read with reference to the individual current and future changes park maps. The physical layout of each of the

parks is shown in the “current” maps. These place each park in context by showing the surrounding area, including its natural and cultural features, along with existing facilities.

The “projected future changes” maps provide a picture of changes that may occur in the future. In particular, environmental, heritage and recreation based projects or programmes are identified, as are any park developments or external proposals.

1.2 Requirement for the plan

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002) and the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972² do not require park management plans to be developed, although they do allow for them. However, as many areas of our regional parks are held as reserves, Greater Wellington is required to develop plans under the Reserves Act 1977.

The Reserves Act 1977 requires reserve management plans. The purposes of these plans are to:

... provide for and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection, and preservation, as the case may require, and, to the extent that the administering body's resources permit, the development, as appropriate, of the reserve for the purpose for which it is classified, and shall incorporate and ensure compliance with the principles set out in ... this Act for a reserve of that classification [Section 41(3) Reserves Act].

Greater Wellington considers it best practice to prepare a plan that includes all land that contributes to the regional park network, whether held under the Reserves Act 1977, Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972, fee simple or any other legislation, to ensure an integrated management approach across the parks network. The process of preparing the plan requires a consultation and submission process which gives the public the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of policy and decision-making on matters that will affect the future of the parks. These processes meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2002 (Section 83, of the LGA 2002).

² And the Wellington Regional Council (Water Board Functions) Act 2005

2 Greater Wellington parks

2.1 History of Greater Wellington parks

The origin of lands managed today by Greater Wellington as a network of regional parks and forests can be traced back to the 1880s parks movement. In these very early days, parks were largely a means to provide the common people a respite from the crowding and pollution caused by industrialisation.

By 1911 New Zealand urban populations outnumbered their rural counterparts, and with a rising standard of living and greater leisure time, there was an increase in amateur and academic scholars exploring New Zealand's geology, botany and Maori history. Exploration of New Zealand's outdoors grew as tramping became a popular recreational pursuit for a wide range of social groups. The concept of protection of forests to moderate flooding, reduce erosion and ensure good water quality was generally well understood. The period from the 1920s to the 1950s was characterised by growing demand for greater quantity and quality of water for the growing urban areas of the Hutt Valley and Wellington. The early 1970s were characterised by a perceived decrease in landscape resources, lack of recreational resources and restricted rights of access. In the Wellington region, demand for public access to land for recreation was not reflected in how the water catchments were managed.

The *Local Government Act 1974* empowered the Wellington Regional Council to hold, manage and purchase land for regional parks. In 1976 the Wellington Regional Planning Authority prepared a document titled *Regional Parks for the Wellington Region* that recognised that a growing regional population, wealth, mobility and attitudes towards leisure and the environment created demands for outdoor recreation opportunities in the region. The document set the agenda for the formation of what was to become the Wellington Regional Council Parks Department and the regional parks and forests network. Managed public access through providing regional parks was seen as the key to addressing the conflicts and demands of public access to lands in the peri-urban Wellington Region.

In 1980 the Wellington Regional Council was formed, amalgamating the functions of the former Wellington Regional Water Board and Wellington Regional Planning Authority. A dedicated Parks Department operating within the Wellington Regional Council was created to manage and oversee the establishment of the regional parks and forests network.

The Parks Department established the groundwork for the parks at Battle Hill, Belmont, Queen Elizabeth and Kaitoke. Pencarrow, or East Harbour Regional Park, took a little longer to become part of the park network. A regional park at Makara did not eventuate.

For a fuller description of the regional parks network history, refer to Appendix 1 of this document.

2.2 Relevant legislation and policies

There are a range of regulatory frameworks affecting the parks network which regulate and determine its use and development.

Statutory framework.	Reserves Act 1977	Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972	Local Government Act 2002
Strategic planning		GW Parks Network Plan	
Operational planning		Individual Parks Operation Plans Asset Management Plans	
Funding		Long Term Plan Annual Plan	
Monitoring & evaluation		Annual Report Parks Annual Report	

Key legislation includes:

- **Local Government Act 2002**
This Act provides a framework for local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities through a sustainable development approach. The Act sets out principles and consultation requirements for local authorities in performing their functions. The only specific provisions relating to parks are about restrictions on disposal. It requires local authorities to consult before selling any park or part of a park that is not a reserve under the Reserves Act 1977. This Act also allows regional councils to apply for regional parks to be protected in perpetuity through an Order in Council and also create bylaws for managing reserves.
- **Reserves Act 1977**
Provides for the acquisition of land for reserves, and the classification and management of reserves (including leases and licences). The majority of Greater Wellington's parks classified under the Reserves Act reserves are "recreation" reserves, with some scenic and local purpose. Refer to "legislative status" for each individual park in part 6.
- **Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972**
Sets out Greater Wellington's legal responsibilities and powers over the forest lands. Greater Wellington officers and rangers are empowered by the Act's bylaws to control activities in the forests (see Appendix 3). In 2005 a local Bill was passed by Parliament allowing renewable energy generation to take place on land designated for water catchment or forestry purposes. This resulted in the *Wellington Regional Council (Water Board Functions) Act 2005*.

- **Resource Management Act 1991**
This plan must comply with regional and district plans prepared under the *Resource Management Act 1991*. Greater Wellington parks are located in a number of districts and therefore subject to the district plans (namely those of Wellington City, Porirua City, Hutt City, Upper Hutt City and Kapiti Coast District Councils).

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Conservation Act 1987
- Biosecurity Act 1993
- Historic Places Act 1993
- Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992
- Building Act 1991
- Crown Minerals Act 1991
- Treaty of Waitangi (State Enterprise) Act 1998
- Freshwater Fisheries Act 1983.

Other regulatory considerations relate to network utility providers, designations, roading and transportation, and Crown policies for settling claims under the Treaty of Waitangi. Iwi management plans provide another significant policy consideration.

Greater Wellington has a number of important policies and requirements that affect the management of parks including its:

- Regional Policy Statement
- Regional Plans
- Long Term Plan
- *Wellington Regional Open Space Strategy & Action Plan 2009*
- Environmental strategies, eg. *Wetland Action Plan, Strategy for Achieving Riparian Management in the Wellington Region*
- Regional Pest Management Strategy
- Regional Land Transport Strategy
- *Fire Protection Plan for Greater Wellington Regional Council Parks and Forests*
- *Greater Wellington Parks, Forests and Reserves Bylaw 2009*.

2.3 The relationship of Greater Wellington parks to other public lands

Open space in the Wellington region is made up of local parks, forests and conservation areas, as well as our rivers and coastline. The regional parks and forests (which make up Greater Wellington's parks network³) are an important part of the wider Wellington Region's open space network. The Department of Conservation, city and district councils also manage a number of parks and reserves for the public. It is important to recognise how each agency has different roles in the provision of open space opportunities, although they overlap to some extent. See Map 2 – Open space in the Wellington region.

The Wellington Regional Open Space Strategy & Action Plan is being implemented as part of the Wellington Regional Strategy by representatives of all of the region's territorial authorities, the Department of Conservation, Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, The Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust and Mana Whenua Iwi. This strategy is integrating planning by linking open space opportunities for organised sport/activities, informal recreation, ecological functions, landscapes and partnership programmes.

The lands that the Department of Conservation manages are predominantly distant from urban areas and tend to offer low-impact recreational opportunities, such as walking, tramping, picnicking and camping. In the Wellington region, the Department's lands range from "urban fringe" to "remote experience"⁴.

At the other end of the spectrum, city and district councils focus on meeting local

community and recreational needs by providing smaller parks, sports fields, playgrounds, local reserves and urban beaches in urban or peri-urban areas. Some territorial authorities also provide larger, multi-purpose parks and, while these can contain large natural areas, they are usually smaller than regional parks.

Regional parks lie somewhere in between the Department of Conservation areas, and city and district council parks in both scale and focus. They provide a mix of conservation and recreational opportunities, focusing on protecting values of regional significance. In recreational terms, regional parks span the range from "peri-urban" to "back country". They are large open spaces or areas of bush near urban areas that are visited by people across the region.

Together, these various public lands offer a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities and meet a wide range of community, environmental and conservation needs. Greater Wellington, the Department of Conservation and territorial authorities work together to ensure that environmental and heritage values are protected in the most appropriate way, and that recreational opportunities across the region enhance and complement each other to address the needs of communities.

As shown in Map 2, some of Greater Wellington's parks are adjacent to or near other ecological and recreational areas. Greater Wellington will continue to work with other agencies to enhance access to and values of these areas, eg, through developing ecological corridors, recreational linkages and complementary experiences.

Greater Wellington currently manages land owned by other organisations, including Hutt City Council, Wellington City Council, Porirua City Council, Department of Conservation, the Crown and tangata whenua. There are also a variety of agencies that Greater Wellington has potential partnership activities with, including recreation, health, justice and conservation.

³ Greater Wellington also manages other lands such as river corridors that contribute to recreational opportunities in the Region but are not covered in this plan. For example, the Hutt River Trail also provides public access to rivers for recreation and key links between recreational areas, as well as enabling links between remaining areas of native bush.

⁴ DOC also manages two marine reserves in the Wellington Region, Kapiti and Taputeranga Marine Reserve.



2.4 Relationship of Greater Wellington parks to the community

Greater Wellington recognises that it is important to develop partnerships with tangata whenua, private and public organisations, and community groups, including volunteers.

Tangata whenua

Tangata whenua have an ongoing relationship with and interests in the lands on which the regional parks are established. Greater Wellington works with tangata whenua to recognise and, where appropriate, provide for their interests in park management.

There are a number of claims registered with the Waitangi Tribunal that cover the regional parks. At the time of writing this plan the Tribunal has heard two claims that include the land areas managed by Greater Wellington. Other claims will be heard over the coming years with Tribunal resolution yet to be determined.

Whilst Crown land may be available for the settlement of Treaty claims, land owned by Greater Wellington is considered to be private land and is not available for Treaty settlements. Greater Wellington will be kept informed of the status of Treaty claims and settlements and may have some change in responsibilities as the Crown and tangata whenua settle these longstanding grievances.

Community groups and individuals

Throughout the parks network, a variety of “friends groups” and other similar groups and organisations support a range of Greater Wellington goals, activities and projects. These groups have often evolved through addressing park issues, and with discussion and identification of mutual activities and outcomes, relationships have been fostered to achieve the outcomes of this plan.

Greater Wellington, in partnership with individuals and groups, provides opportunities for people to achieve a variety of benefits

including: the sense of satisfaction of giving something to places they value and enjoy, physical exercise, social interaction with like minded people, learning a range of skills, and passing on knowledge to others.

2.5 Why our parks are valuable

Parks have long been recognised as major contributors to the physical and aesthetic quality of urban settlements. Traditional values identify parks as places of recreation and visual assets to communities. Over time, policymakers, practitioners and the public have begun to recognise the wider benefits of parks to the community as valuable contributors to biodiversity values, job opportunities, youth development, public health and community building. Parks can provide a wide range of values to the community.

Parks conserve nature, cultural and scenic values

Greater Wellington parks protect natural, scenic and cultural values that contribute significantly to the identity of the Wellington region and its people. In an increasingly urbanised environment, our parks conserve important natural areas of biodiversity and ecosystems such as lowland forests, wetlands and dunes which are home to many rare plants and animals, and contribute to healthy soils, ecosystems and ecosystem services.

Cultural features and historic sites in parks represent the living history of our relationships with the land, for both pakeha and Māori. These are special and irreplaceable parts of our identity and should be protected for future generations. Care of these places is particularly relevant from a Māori world view where the land is part of our ancestor (Papatūānuku). Greater Wellington parks contain many areas and values of significance to tangata whenua (as expressed in recent Treaty settlements), who continue to have interests in the lands.

Our parks provide important open spaces near urban areas and contribute to the scenic backdrop of 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 provide social and economic benefits and recreational opportunities

Our children visit parks with their schools to plant trees and learn how to look after the environment. Parks are available to be used as outdoor interactive classrooms to learn about conservation, farming and outdoor skills. Members of the community are involved in projects to protect or restore wetlands, native bush and historic features of parks.

Parks are often used for promotional and recreational activities and as places to meet and gather. They contribute to the development of cohesive and vibrant societies. Regional parks offer economic benefits from commercial activities. They are the location of local events, films and tours which attract visitors both locally and internationally. The Wellington region is actively promoted as a film location and has gained international attention in this way. As a destination, parks attract visitors to the region and provide jobs in recreation or tourism related areas.

Forestry and farming are not only tools to manage the land but also provide an income stream that can go back into park development. There are renewable energy opportunities in regards to both wind and hydro resources, particularly in the forests and water supply areas. For example, small hydro power development, in association with any new water source developments may be appropriate. The Wellington region has been recognised for its wind energy resource and there are potential wind energy sites on Greater Wellington land.

Parks contribute to healthy lifestyles and wellbeing

Our parks are popular places for walking, biking and picnics with the family, plus a whole lot more. People can enjoy a break from the city life, take small or long walks or engage in more adventurous activities, such as mountain biking and four wheel driving. Parks can also be places for organised recreation such as club events. Together, parks provide a wide range of opportunities for different activities in different environments. These activities contribute to healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. This role is increasingly important in the light of increasingly stressful and sedentary lifestyles⁵.

⁵ Healthy Open Space, Regional Public Health Information Paper (March 2010)