



Regional Parks Network Strategy

August 2009

Background Information for Councillor's Workshop

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Regional Parks Network Strategy

Background information for Councillors' workshop

Wednesday, 19 August 2009

1.30 pm, Level 5 Committee Room

- (1) Overview for the workshop
- (2) Legislative framework
- (3) Recreation, social and education
- (4) Environments within the Parks and Forest areas
- (5) Heritage features
- (6) Economic contribution of parks
- (7) Wellington Regional Strategy Open Space workstream
- (8) Iwi perspective
- (9) Qualitative public survey results - Peter Glen
- (10) Quantitative survey results - Peter Glen
- (11) Results of surveys and interviews with Government agencies and territorial authorities
- (12) Results of surveys and meetings with clubs and community groups
- (13) Recreation study, Lumin, October 2008
- (14) Environmental trends and priorities
- (15) Climate change
- (16) Healthy Parks, Healthy People
<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/resources/mhphp/pv1.pdf>
- (17) The Value of Parks – Parks Forum 2008
http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_puball/wcpa_pubsubject/wcpa_healthypub/

Attachment 1: Regional Parks for the Wellington Region -
Wellington Regional Planning Authority 1976

Attachment 2: Regional Parks Network Management Plan 2003

Greater Wellington Regional Council's role in providing regional parks

1. The purpose of the workshop

A workshop with Councillors is scheduled for 1.30 pm on Wednesday, 19 August 2009, in the Level 5 Committee Room. The purpose of the workshop itself is to confirm the fundamental purposes for holding parks and forests and develop a vision for their future. This includes articulating the long-term principles for the management and development of Greater Wellington Regional Council's (GWRC) parks and forests network for the next 20 years.

The workshop will identify the key issues facing the greater Wellington region that GWRC's regional park network can contribute towards and then develop fundamental principles for the development of our network.

2. Preparation for workshop

The material in this folder will help you to prepare for the workshop. This document provides you with information that is essential background to issues that will be discussed at that workshop. **Please read it before coming to the workshop.**

While reading all the information, please bear in mind the following questions:

- What do the regional public cherish about the regional parks and forest areas?
- What are the big issues that you think are facing our Region over the next 20 years that the regional parks and forests can help resolve?
- What should the regional parks and forests role be in resolving these?
- What fundamental principles do you think the network should be based on e.g.:
 - Should there be common elements in all the parks even though they provide different experiences. Should all parks offer the same experiences and services?
 - Should we differentiate ourselves from the types of parks provided by Department of Conservation and Local Territorial Authorities?
 - Should we be targeting our parks to appeal to certain groups in society i.e. ethnic, age, gender, disabled etc.?
- What do you think about the following issues?
 - Governance arrangements: Community and iwi involvement in governance, management and decision-making



- Park users and the activities they undertake
- The park environment
- Infrastructure development
- Need for future Regional Parks
- Commercial activities in the parks
- Funding and sponsorship

3. The status quo

GWRC is one of the leading providers of space for outdoor recreation in the Region.

GWRC currently offers outdoor recreation experiences that are more “front country”, easier to access and cater for a greater variety of user types than the Department of Conservation “wilderness” opportunities, yet more informal than the highly developed city parks.

The regional parks also preserve regionally and nationally important ecological functions and history.

In 1976 six criteria were developed by the then Wellington Regional Planning Authority to guide the establishment of regional parks in the Wellington Region (See Attachment 1). The focus was on providing for recreational pursuits not readily available within urban areas and parks in ways that did not detract from the natural or cultural features of the Region. These criteria are:

- (1) Protecting, conserving and enhancing open space, and natural and cultural features between or near to urban areas.
- (2) Providing the urban population with the opportunity to experience and study, without the need for excessive travel, a range of natural and cultural features occurring in the Region.
- (3) Being located so that they distribute and reduce recreation growth pressures on other natural areas.
- (4) Providing primarily for passive recreation pursuits requiring for their enjoyment large areas of open natural country.
- (5) Having some parks where there should be the provision for more intensive activities which, because of their nature, require a degree of remoteness from urban development.
- (6) Requiring that all recreational uses be balanced against conservation needs and the ability of natural areas to absorb the activity without detriment.

The purpose for providing Regional Parks has not fundamentally been re-examined since the Wellington Regional Planning Authority developed the framework for regional parks in 1976. However in 2003, GWRC developed the Regional Park Network Management Plan (see Attachment 2) that set out the direction for managing the **existing** regional parks. It provides a framework for addressing issues common to all regional parks and managing them in a comprehensive and consistent way.

The Network Plan articulated the “vision” of the Regional Parks as being:

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

- our environment and cultural heritage are managed for the benefit of current and future generations
- people can fully and actively use, recreate in, enjoy and learn from these lands in a sustainable manner
- the community is actively involved
- Tangata Whenua interests are respected.

This vision recognises that:

- Regional parks are part of a network of lands managed (but not necessarily owned or occupied) by Greater 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 environment and cultural heritage, and offer a wide range of recreational experiences and opportunities for the use and enjoyment of the whole community, in ways that provide for current and future generations. Regional parks are an important way of introducing our increasingly urban population to the outdoors.
- Continuing and enhancing community involvement in and education and enjoyment of the parks by providing opportunities to visit and learn about them is a fundamental purpose of their management.

Tangata Whenua maintain strong links with, and interests in, the lands on which regional parks are established.

4. How the Parks Network Strategy fits in with existing Park Management Plans

Currently, there are two “layers” of plans. Plans are available on the GWRC website if you wish to refer to them at <http://www.gw.govt.nz/section410.cfm>

4.1 Network Management Plans

The first layer (the Regional Park Network Management Plan (see Attachment 2) and the Regional Forest Lands Plan (not attached)) set out the direction for managing the **existing** regional parks and future water collection areas. They provide a framework for addressing issues common to all regional parks and managing them in a comprehensive and consistent way.

In developing the network plans, we looked ahead to identify the important challenges and changes that may face regional parks, and how we will manage them. The plans are reviewed every five years and as necessary. This provides opportunities to assess objectives, consider new issues and circumstances, and ensure that this plans continue to be relevant and provide a clear direction to guide park management.



The network plans focus on the management of the **current** park network managed by Greater Wellington rather than the acquisition of new areas.

4.2 Park Management Plans

Sitting under the network plans are the individual Park Management Plans themselves. These plans detail all the policies that are specific to each park or forest area and are intended to be consistent with the direction set in the network management plans. These plans highlight the unique nature and values of each park and set out the specific objectives and policies for managing them.

4.3 The Parks Network Strategy currently being developed

The new Network Strategy will sit above these documents and will articulate the role parks play in:

- The provision of open space across the region,
- Contributing to achieving GWRC's community outcomes,
- Identify focus areas for action for GWRC parks to achieve those community outcomes.

The strategy document itself will also be able to be used as a marketing and promotional tool. This relationship is shown diagrammatically in table 1

5. Looking towards the future

Parks' contribution to society is varied. Today's parks are not just seen to provide opportunities to recreate, while protecting the environment, landscape and cultural assets. They are also recognised as places of significant economic value that enhance a community's well-being, sustain life, mitigate the effects of climate change and provide health and rehabilitation, social engagement and crime reduction opportunities.

Since 1976, recreational and leisure requirements for the Wellington Region's citizens have changed. There is now much greater choice available and pressure on people's leisure time.

Coupled with this, GWRC has come under increasing pressure to provide alternative uses for its park network, especially easily accessible flat public land. GWRC has been approached to extend the use of its lands to include a heritage precinct, a railway reinstatement, motorised recreation facilities, golf driving ranges and at least one rowing lake (to name just a few), or to add new parks or adjoining land to the network of parks it manages. Added to that, GWRC has also encountered resistance from the public regarding the possibility of wind energy developments in the parks.

Local government is taking a much more integrated approach toward the development and growth of the Region, especially in terms of economic growth. In the Wellington Regional Strategy quality open space is recognised as a fundamental requirement of world class cities and regions. The Wellington Region has great potential to achieve high quality, well connected

natural areas close to our living areas and thus helps the Region to be seen as an attractive and sustainable place to live. On the other side of the coin, parks can help address many “lifestyle” associated wellness problems associated with increased urbanisation, such as a low levels of physical activity, less connected communities and the effects of stress and mental illness.

It is timely that we redefine the role of regional parks given to ensure they take these trends and the broader perception of how parks contribute into account and to ensure we continue to be sustainable and meet our community’s needs into the foreseeable future.

6. The process so far

It was important to Council that the process followed involved canvassing a wide and varied part of society, as well as having up-to-date technical and statistical information made available. To accommodate that, a data gathering process has been undertaken over the past few months that collected and reviewed all current thinking about the purpose of regional parks.

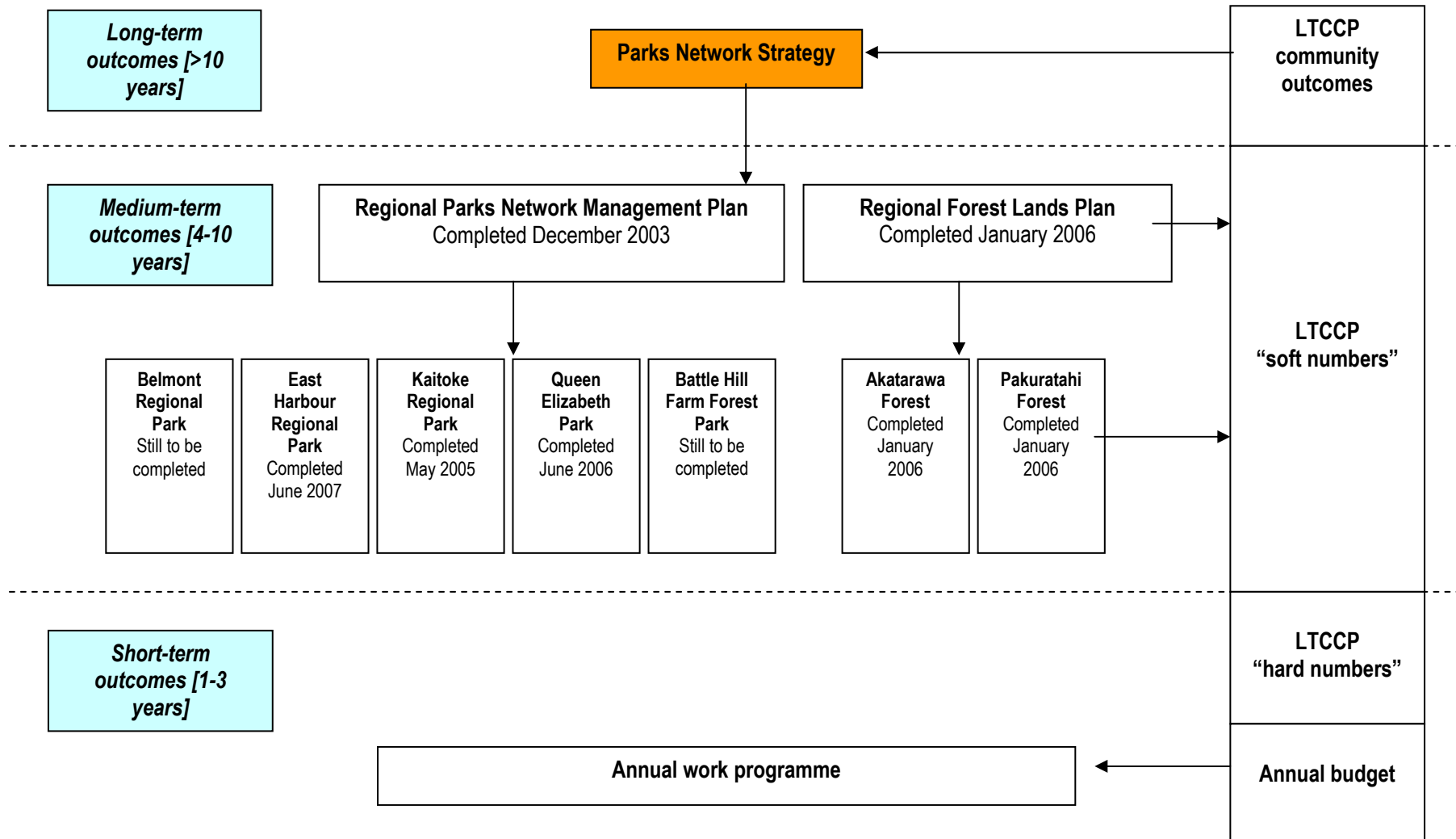
Research has been undertaken to gain the views of the general public, key stakeholders, central and local government agencies, iwi, community interest groups, non-Government organisations and clubs.

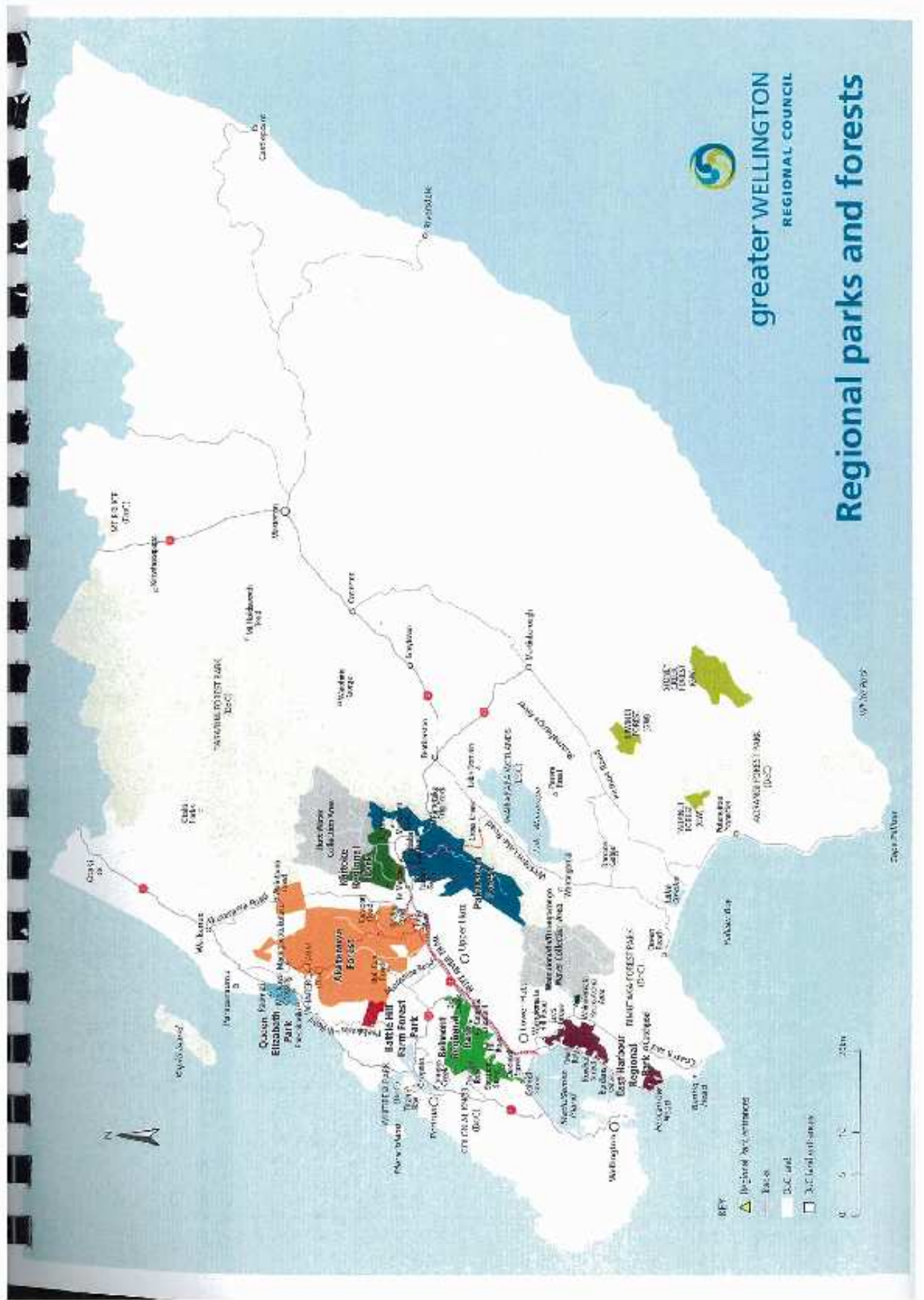
This has included:

- A comprehensive phone survey of 1,000 regional residents to determine their level of experiences they could have in regional parks and forests and their perceptions about the parks and forests. The survey was designed to question respondents about the nature of outdoor experience they would like to have when in the regional parks, and what other activities or developments could be undertaken in the parks that they would consider to be appropriate, tolerable, or prohibitive.
- A survey of key stakeholders
- One-on-one meetings with central and local government agencies
- A workshop with Ara Tahi
- Postal surveys and meetings with community interest groups and current park users, including individuals, groups and clubs

The results of these surveys are included in this document.

Table 1: Parks network documents framework





Regional parks and forests