



Parks Network Strategy

Questionnaire results from clubs and community groups

Sharon Thurlow

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Parks Department
Greater Wellington Regional Council
PO Box 11646
Wellington

T 04 384 5708
F 04 385 6960
www.gw.govt.nz

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Contents

Executive Summary	I
1. Background	1
2. Methodology	2
3. Findings/results	3
3.1 The demographic of respondents	3
3.1.1 Introduction	3
3.1.2 What respondents do in regional parks	3
3.1.3 Frequency of visitations to regional parks	4
3.2 What is it that people value about GW regional parks?	4
3.2.1 The activities available	4
3.2.2 The experience	5
3.2.3 The setting	6
3.3 Benefits of regional parks	8
3.4 What the future looks like - development options	8
3.5 What the future looks like - a vision of regional parks by respondents	9
3.5.1 Introduction	9
3.5.2 What respondents do not want to see	10
3.5.3 What respondents do want to see	10
3.5.4 Summary of the key elements in sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2	13
3.5.5 Size and location of regional parks	13
3.6 Working with groups in the future	14
4. Conclusion	15
5. Bibliography	16
APPENDIX	
1 Questionnaire and cover letter	

Executive Summary

Over 42 groups and individuals provided a response to a questionnaire sent out in April. Their responses, along with comments made in the meetings, form the basis of this report. While the response rate was low, their feedback paints a clear vision for the future of regional parks and forests.

Respondents enjoy using regional parks and forests¹ for a wide variety of recreational and community based activities but especially for walking/tramping, picnicking and volunteering (and capturing this on camera). Regional parks offer a “buffet” of outdoor experiences which caters for different interests, differing levels of fitness, where users can choose to do *as much or as little as suits me at the time*.

The appeal of regional parks for respondents is that they offer an alternative to what you see, hear and feel in the city. Parks are green spaces which energise the body and relax the mind. Because of the location of regional parks, all of this is available without having to travel too far from home.

According to respondents, the most important benefit of parks is that they are places which protect and conserve the natural environment. Secondly, they help build healthy communities.

The key elements that make regional parks is that they are:

- Diverse and contain a variety of natural landforms
- Close to, but yet removed from city life (with minimal man-made structures and associated features: shops, paving and buildings).
- Large areas, with a feeling of expanse and associated views
- Conveniently located near the city, with public transport options
- Places with forest and bush, flora and fauna.

These elements are interlinked together make up a unique “package” that is different from other types of open space.

In the future the conservation, environmental improvement, education and community interest roles should be developed. Parks themselves could be extended at the edges where it provides linkages between regional parks or other open space areas. New parks will be needed to provide for a growing population. These parks should have the same key elements as identified above. Refer to figure 3.9 for further detail on the vision for regional parks in the future.

Community groups have expertise, as well as volunteer time to offer regional parks. However, many groups are struggling with aging membership and other demands on people’s time and attention. They would like to work with Greater Wellington Regional Council in maintaining and enhancing the environmental aspects of the parks and increasing people’s awareness of the parks through education, events and friends groups.

¹ Where this document refers to *Regional Parks*, this includes the regional parks in the Wellington region and also Wainuiomata Recreation Area and the Pakuratahi and Akatarawa Forest s which are managed for recreation.

1. Background

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) is working towards a strategy for our regional parks network. With increasing pressure to develop parks in a different direction from their original framework in 1976, GWRC wants to articulate the fundamental purpose for holding parks and develop a vision for their future. We need to be asking ourselves, do we affirm the purposes for which the parks were first created, and if not, what focus is needed? We want to ensure that the way we manage parks will make the best possible contribution to our community and well-being over the next 20 years.

To assess the current situation and community perspectives, GWRC has undertaken a large body of research through various forms of data collection. This information will be collated and used to inform councillors (through workshops) and the subsequent development of a strategy for our regional parks' network. It is important that we hear these different perspectives prior to developing a draft strategy.

Over the first half of 2009, GWRC Parks Department has completed a number of surveys and met with organisations and iwi, as well as reviewing literature. Alongside the research described in this report, there have been two other surveys:

- (1) A telephone survey of 1,000 residents regionally (aim: to determine what residents of the Greater Wellington Region want from regional parks and forests over the next 20 years)
- (2) An email survey of territorial authorities, Government agencies and iwi (aim: to understand how regional parks complement policies and programmes or could contribute in the future.)

This questionnaire targets a different audience from the telephone survey. It was assumed that the telephone survey would give a statistically representative response from the community. The role of the questionnaire is to hear specifically from people who:

- Have an interest in community development
- Hold specific knowledge of the parks and a passion for them
- May have specialist technical knowledge

The questionnaire (refer to appendix 1) seeks to elicit mainly qualitative information on people's perceptions of the benefits of parks and what aspects they value. It asks people to consider how parks will look and be in the future, and specific questions on the preferred direction of development. Finally, recognising that working with community groups to achieve outcomes is important, there are also questions about the community group's own future and how regional parks fit alongside this.

2. Methodology

In April 2009 the GWRC Parks Department sent out a questionnaire to over 300 groups that are actively engaged in GWRC's regional parks and forests or community and interest groups that may have an interest above the general public. The following types of groups were contacted: tramping clubs, care groups and other environmental societies, 4WD and bike groups, community boards and associations, walking and harrier clubs, orienteering groups, pony clubs, those with leases or concession operators in the parks. These contacts are held in a database by GWRC and effort was made to update and broaden the database through other sources provided by territorial authorities.

The questionnaire (appendix 1) had a cover letter which gave a brief outline of the history behind the strategy and the current context driving the development of a strategy for parks. Recipients were also invited to attend one of four meetings in various locations around the Wellington Region during late April to hear more about the context and purpose of the strategy and have questions answered. Meeting minutes were taken in these meetings and are referred to in the findings of this report. Questionnaire respondents could complete the survey by mail or email according to their preference. All responses were required by 22 May 2009, although late responses were also included.

The questionnaire asked some closed ended questions to categorise the type of respondents but also a number of questions that required a short written response. It was hoped that the nature of these questions would encourage groups to spend time together discussing and trying to articulate their views and aspirations. Acknowledging that this is not always possible, the questionnaire required respondents to state if their responses represented a group or their own individual view. Note that the findings of this questionnaire are meant to complement other research being undertaken concurrently (as described in section 2). In early June the 42 questionnaire responses were collated and entered into a database to assist analysis. Other comments were also provided and where applicable these have also been included in the analysis.

3. Findings/results

3.1 The demographic of respondents

3.1.1 Introduction

Forty-two responses were received from throughout the Wellington Region, with the majority being from Lower Hutt. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of responses by district. The number of responses generally reflects the population spread, although Wellington City is under-represented. Interestingly, Wellington City is the only district that does not have a regional park (Wairarapa is in the early stages of the development of Lake Wairarapa as a regional park). This result is perhaps indicative of the attitude that people care more about what is happening in their locality.

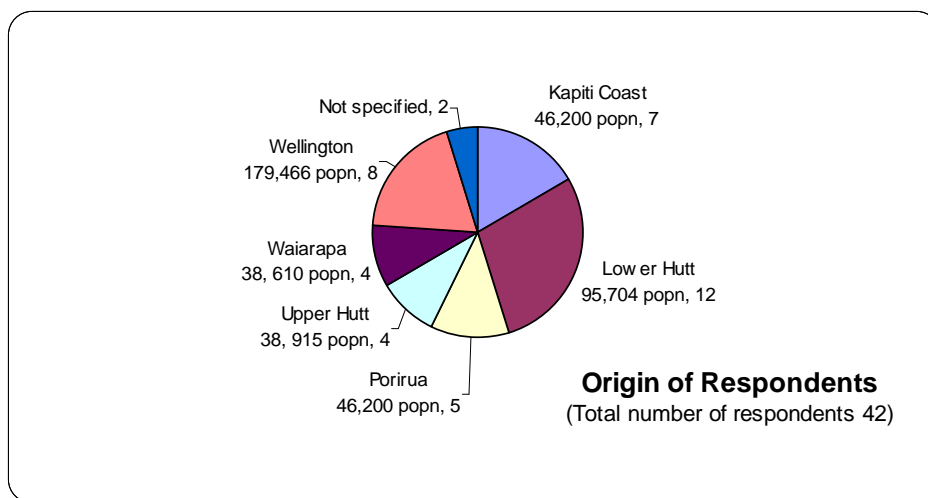


Figure 3.1 - Origin of respondents

3.1.2 What respondents do in regional parks

People in our parks enjoy a wide variety of recreational pursuits and community activities. Respondents were asked to indicate which activities they undertake in the parks and were given 22 categories to choose from. The results show that park users, whether they are individuals or groups, tend to engage in multiple activities. Twenty-nine of the 42 respondents enjoy using the parks for five or more recreation pursuits. Over 80% go for bush walks, an activity more popular than any other carried out in the park. A smaller percentage of people tramp (48%). Around half of respondents partake in activities with a group or with their families. This may mean a casual walk but also activities such as picnic's and barbeques or volunteer events (such as planting and restoration work).

Parks provide a way for people to be engaged together in an activity. This is an important element in developing social cohesion within a community (Buchan, 2007). Interestingly the results also show a number of respondents partake in photography (43%) and research (40%), a different kind of active engagement from volunteering events. When compared to other research of people's activities in the parks (Glenn, 2008), tramping featured comparatively high while mountain biking and cycling is surprisingly low.



Figure 3.2 - The top five activities people engage in our regional parks and forests: walking, picnics, volunteering, taking photos and tramping

3.1.3 Frequency of visitations to regional parks

Respondents were asked to categorise their involvement in regional parks, from having no direct involvement to being a frequent user or having some other kind of involvement (such as through planting or restoration). Within the 42 responses there was a wide range of level of involvement in the parks. All individuals noted that they got out and used the park at least occasionally and the majority at least on a regular basis. It is perhaps their vested interest as park users that motivated them to complete the questionnaire. By contrast, respondents who submitted on behalf of a group, on average, visited the park less frequently. However, a number of these groups are involved in projects and volunteering in the parks.

3.2 What is it that people value about GW regional parks?

The questionnaire asks people to explain what they value about regional parks, (as unique from other park types such as sports grounds, city reserves or National Parks) in terms of the setting, the activities and the experience that the parks provide. Their responses illustrate the positive attributes of regional parks; what the parks exist to provide and what attracts people to spend time in them.

3.2.1 The activities available

As figure 3.3 illustrates, 30% of respondents value highly that regional parks provide *a range of activities* to be engaged in. Where sports grounds may provide for only a few sports codes, regional parks provide for a whole spectrum from passive recreation (painting, photography) to active (mountain biking, horse riding and walking the dog). Regional parks are also unique in that they offer a range of focuses for people: ecological (restoration and planting days); social (barbecue and picnics); historical; or recreational (running, tramping).

As already highlighted in section 4.1.2, walking and tramping activities are particularly important for respondents (30% of respondents mentioned this specifically). The regional parks track network is made up of three track classes “walk”, “tramp” and “route” (refer to *Regional Parks Report 2006-07*, p.5); catering for a range of visitors and physical abilities. These opportunities are promoted in our parks’ brochures, which detail the different tracks and walking times. Where respondents said that they valued good facilities, these were generally references to tracks and bridges.

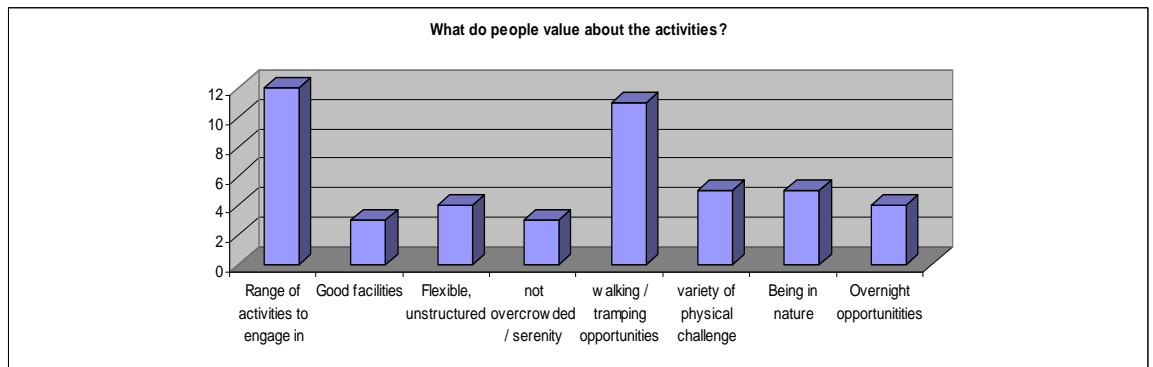


Figure 3.3 - What do people value about the activities

Notably almost all of these activities are self-motivated and unstructured (i.e., you determine the level that you want to engage in, when you start and stop). This flexibility and variety of physical challenge is very important for respondents. As one respondent states [I value the] *freedom to choose my own activities on each visit because there is enough space that my usage need not impact on others*, and another [I value.] *the ability to do as much or as little as suits me at the time*.

A few respondents referred to regional parks as places that provide opportunities to stay overnight (i.e., camping). This unique feature is not provided for in city parks and reserves. Given that regional parks are adjacent to major towns and cities, camping opportunities are more accessible than those provided for in the Department of Conservation estate. Currently, three of the regional parks have camping facilities.

3.2.2 The experience

When asked about what they valued about the regional park experience, the feeling of being in nature and isolated from others, were both very important features for respondents. Phrases such as [I value] *getting away from it all and just being in the bush and alone* were common. Regional parks provide enough space that people can distance themselves from other people and the urban environment without spending a large amount of travel time. This sentiment also came through strongly when respondents were asked what they value about the setting.

Respondents make a strong association between being in nature/isolated and the positive effect it has on emotional and physical being. From the graph (figure 3.4) you can see that respondents appreciate parks are places for relaxing, being restored and healed and feeling at peace (respite). As one respondent puts it, *The experience of regional parks is uplifting, healing and reassuring after the bustle of the city*. These statements align with an increasing body of research on the health and wellbeing benefits of parks. In a United Kingdom study of people suffering mental illness, over 90% had benefited from exercise in green spaces (Mind, 2007). Australian and New Zealand eco-therapy research also shows that the amount of “green” and access to open green spaces tends to improve people’s well-being (Regional Public Health, 2008).

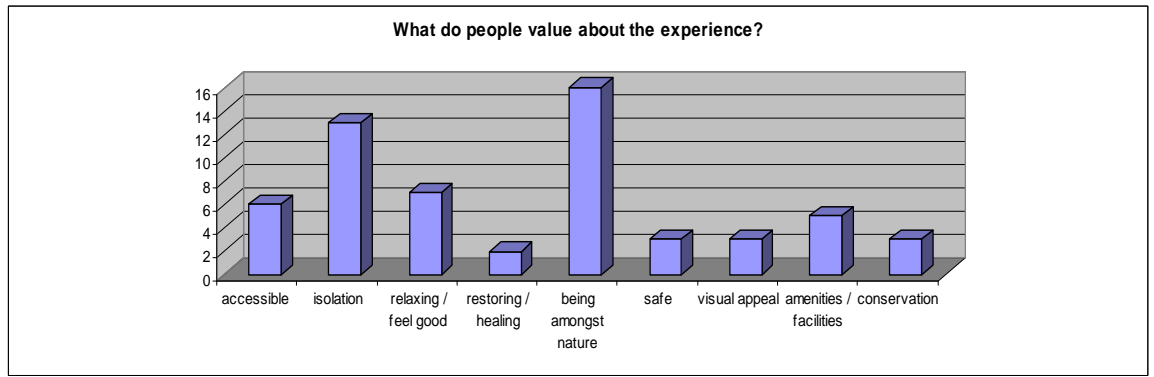


Figure 3.4

The importance of accessibility to regional parks is a common theme in responses throughout the questionnaire. Our current regional parks are considered to be conveniently located with reasonable proximity to urban areas and some respondents also believe with sufficient public transport available. At least one respondent from every district (except the Wairarapa) mentioned the importance of having the parks accessible.

The following quotes from respondents illustrate this.

I/we value...

Large, natural areas reasonable close to towns and cities (Kapiti Coast respondent)

Being close to urban areas, yet have the feeling of being far away (Lower Hutt respondent)

Rural/coast but easily accessible (Porirua respondent)

Public open space close to urban areas, usually accessible by public transport (Wellington respondent)

As these quotes show, respondents denote accessibility to mean that these places are close to the city but removed from city life (and its trappings). Within a very short timeframe, people can remove themselves *from the city's influences, pressures and strains of day to day life* and enjoy *the outdoors without other users intruding minute by minute, in solitude and in a natural state*.

3.2.3 The setting

Figure 3.5 shows the aspects about the setting of regional parks mentioned by respondents, from most frequently mentioned to least.

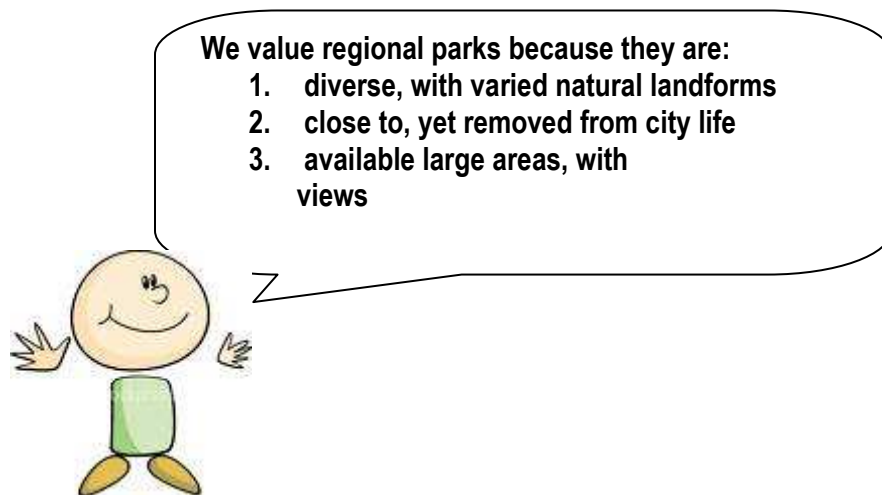


Figure 3.5

The most commonly stated aspect valued by respondents is the variety of natural (unmodified) landforms found in regional parks. Sea, dunes, wetlands, hills, lowland bush, streams, lakes and rivers are mentioned specifically by respondents. By contrast human-made features are not mentioned. These natural landforms offer scenic views which is experienced by both those using the park and also those with vistas towards bush covered hills or open pasture tops seen from their homes. Another consequence of retaining natural landforms is that these are also locations for ecosystems for native flora and fauna.

These values are in fact interconnected and cannot be entirely separated from the other or exist in isolation. As figure 3.6 demonstrates, parks provide a package of interrelated values, illustrated by the use of a Venn diagram. The overlaps show how the features are interlinked. The response from a tramping club sums up the unique “package”: *Proximity to urban areas but with natural landscapes and extensive undeveloped areas. Protection/retention of natural environments which are accessible.*

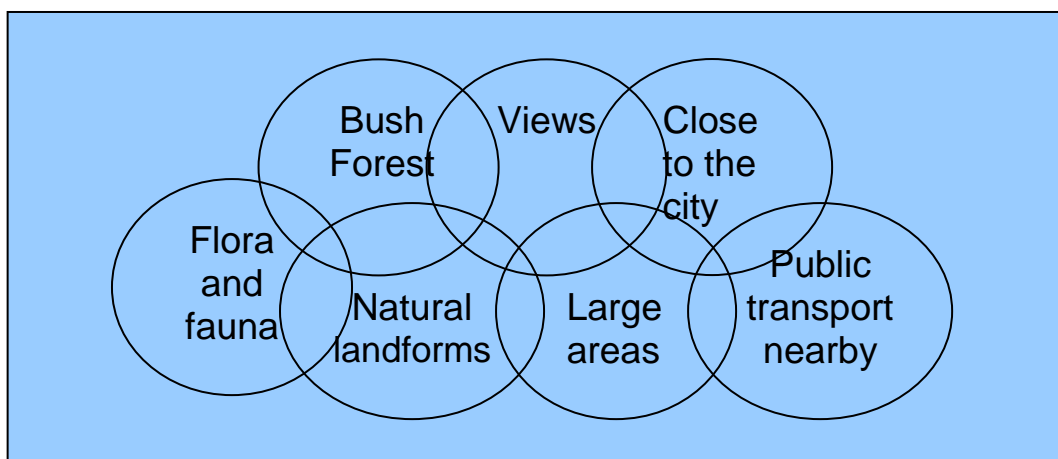


Figure 3.6 - The package that regional parks provide

3.3 Benefits of regional parks

The benefits of parks are well documented within literature and particularly through the Parks Forum (*Value of Parks*, 2008). Those surveyed were asked to rate how Wellington’s current regional parks benefit the community. Their responses are recorded in figure 3.7, where the benefit considered the most important is at the top. The findings show that respondents clearly value environment and social benefits over economic and cultural benefits. Some respondents mentioned economic benefits while only a few submitters recognised the importance of cultural heritage for tourism (both locally and attracting overseas visitors).

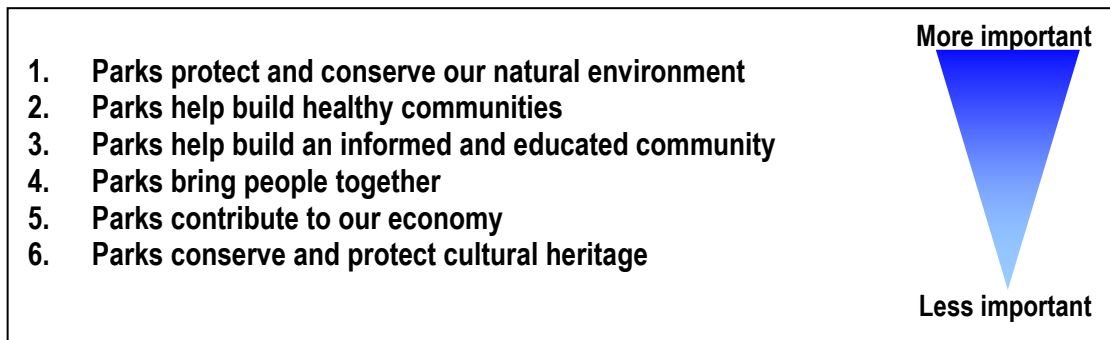


Figure 3.7 - The perceived benefits of regional parks as ranked by respondents

3.4 What the future looks like - development options

The value that parks are places to protect and conserve our natural environment is also reflected in respondents’ preferences for parks development in the future. Respondents were asked to state how acceptable a range of development options with different emphases. In short these options were:

- (1) To maintain the parks in their present form;
- (2) To develop the conservation, environmental improvement, education and community interest roles;
- (3) In addition to option 2, include some commercial activity with a recreational focus;
- (4) To diversify into alternative types of land use; or
- (5) In addition to option 4, place more emphasis on conservation, education and community roles.

The responses are shown in figure 3.8, where the left of the x-axis “acceptable” and the right is ‘not “acceptable”. An option with a high level of acceptability in the community will be clustered to the left of the x-axis. If views are polarised, there will be clusters on both the left and right ends. If the option is unacceptable, the responses will be clustered to the right. Figure 3.8 shows that options three, four and five did not gain much acceptance and some people who strongly disagreed. By contrast, options one and two were both considered acceptable, where very few people disagreed. The results show that it is reasonably acceptable for regional parks to be managed into the future as

they are today. However, option two - to develop the conservation, encourage environmental improvement, education and community interest roles - is even more popular than maintaining parks in their present form. While this survey is not representative of the whole community, there is a preference towards option two. Further research and consideration should be given in light of this preference when developing a strategy for regional parks.

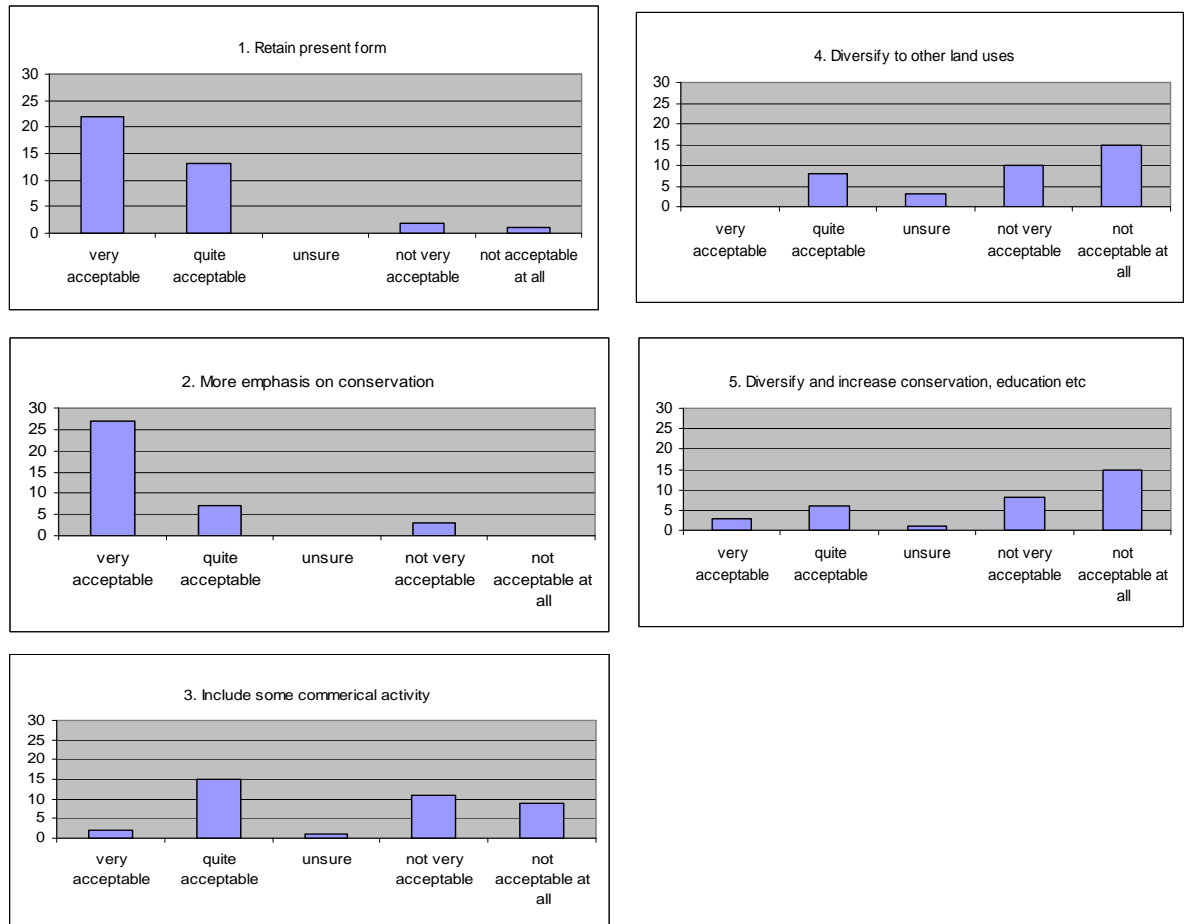


Figure 3.8 - Acceptability of posed options for the future

3.5 What the future looks like - a vision of regional parks by respondents

3.5.1 Introduction

Respondents were asked to imagine the future of regional parks (over a 20 year period) and complete these statements:

- Regional parks will be ...
- Regional parks will provide ...
- Regional parks will not be
- Enhancement means ...
- Development will not be/should not include ...

3.5.2 What respondents do not want to see

By far, the strongest image of the future of regional parks, are places that are not “over-developed” or “commercialised”. Over one-third of respondents stated that development should not include commercial activities. Examples of such activities might be vendors selling food or refreshments, shops or “theme park” type activities. Others are more amenable to small scale economic activities (such as guiding or concessionaires) but agree it must be managed carefully so that it does not degrade the surroundings in the park. Respondents maintain that private developers, whether housing, industry or other enterprises, must remain outside of park boundaries. “Urban features” or “activities that emulate urban development” are discouraged by respondents. Eight respondents agreed that development should not extend to concrete footpaths or roads. Eleven respondents also agreed that buildings or human-made structures (other than visitor centres and basic facilities) are not appropriate. This sentiment is summarised by the quotes in the textbox. Wind farms were specifically mentioned by a few respondents, although their views are polarised for and against such infrastructure developments.

Regional Parks should not include activities which detract from the outdoor natural experience. Roads, vehicle usage, industrial activities or structures which impose upon landscape, skylines or natural tranquillity of sites.
(Tramping club)

Development of landscape areas and Park infrastructure, e.g., tracks, will be in sympathy with the landscape and in a manner that facilitates minimum impact recreation and shared use.
(Friends group)

A large number of respondents do not want motorised recreation or other activities that cause noise and disturb users. One group hopes that *regional parks will not be used for motor sports, or other activities that impact on other users of the park and the neighbours*. Noisy activities are shunned, while peaceful surroundings for recreation endorsed. This is discussed further below.

A few respondents displayed wariness towards excessive signage. Interpretation panels are considered useful but placement of signage needs to be sensitive to the surroundings.

With regard to development and maintenance of the parks network, a number of respondents emphasise that regional parks, at a minimum, should be retained as they are. Respondents advocate that in 20 years time regional parks will:

[.. have been] *retained and enhanced (by restoration/revegetation) providing free and open access to natural open spaces.* (Tramping club)

[not be] *overcrowded with competing users, compromised by other land uses, owned privately, degraded.* (Environmental group)

3.5.3 What respondents do want to see

One-third of respondents agreed that enhancement of regional parks means, most importantly, finding ways to preserve and restore the natural environment.

People want more: more trees and vegetation; more birds and wildlife; more ecosystems and habitats restored. Similarly, they want less plant and animal pests. Pest control is recognised as an important aspect of enhancement (refer to text box).

Enhancement means restoration of indigenous ecosystems to a sustainable state, free of pest animals, wandering stock, pest plants and other weeds, and motorised recreational vehicles. (individual)

Respondents believe that regional parks in the future should be places that offer permanent protection of landscapes and ecosystems. Increased biodiversity is considered an important indicator of success.

Three other aspects that make up enhancement of parks are: involvement with the community; track development and improving facilities. With regard to community involvement, respondents maintain that regional parks need to reach a wider audience than those currently active in the parks. Encouraging involvement may be through schools and universities (education and research) or initiatives which partner with community groups. GWRC could run programmes or facilitate projects which raise awareness and provide opportunities for people to proactively care for their environment. As stated by an environmental group:

Allied to the wide ranging environmental features of the parks is the ongoing opportunity they offer to educate the community about our natural environment (eg summer walk programmes) and how we can go about protecting and improving the environment (involving the community in pest species control, restoration planting etc)

.... Such education will empower the community to take action to improve the ecosystems of the parks. Strong community support including that of Tangata Whenua will be vital in achieving any vision for the Parks.

With reference to track development, respondents refer specifically to designing tracks of varying difficulty and challenge (both for bikers and walkers). To maximise these opportunities, information on the suitability of the terrain needs to be easily accessible. Aside from tracks, basic recreational facilities are also considered appropriate enhancements to the parks such as camping, car parking, shelters and toilets.

Respondents feel that, within a natural environment, there can be provision for a limited range of *compatible* recreational experiences. One environment group believes that the balance should be as follows:

Where such high environmental values are present then environmental protection must take precedence over recreational uses of the Parks and in these areas consideration must be given to restricting recreational activities which are not compatible.

There should be policies which assist decision makers about the location and intensity of development of recreation assets while minimising impact on the natural landscape and ecosystems which provide the surrounding for recreational activities.

However, the requirement for *compatible* recreational experiences for some respondents does not imply that only passive recreation is desired. Respondents think that within the parks network GWRC should provide a range of experiences and activities and, as mentioned above, cater for a range of fitness levels. It is the variety of recreational opportunities available within our parks that particularly appeals to users. In order to cater for the variety of recreational uses within the park, there needs to be space or “buffer zones” so that one recreational group can operate without impinging on the experience of another.

Both at the meetings and comments from respondents emphasised the point that regional parks will become increasingly important places as people become busier and the communities more urbanised. Against a backdrop of a protected and restored natural environment, parks can be places that people can go for enjoyment and relaxation. As discussed in section 4.1, regional parks provide a refuge from urban life - respite from what people experience in the cities (i.e., concrete structures, noise, traffic, people). This idea that parks should provide a natural, peaceful setting for people to recreate and relax is affirmed by the quotes in the text box.

Regional parks and other green spaces are needed to be *part of the balance of green areas to continued urban growth*. They provide a green counter to urbanisation, providing environmental services which improve our resilience to the effects of climate change and so on.

“Regional parks are....

.... places for conservation and of the soul.”

.... more places for relaxation and experiencing a relatively unspoiled natural environment to recreate in.

.... highly valued as protected natural landscapes/ecosystems and as sanctuaries for people with busy lives.

.... a haven of beauty and peace for people to share with each other and to unwind.

.... space[s] to chill out and catch some fresh air and exercise.

In an increasingly urbanised society, visitors to the Regional Parks find solace and solitude to the benefit of their mental well being as their bodies benefit from the exercise the Parks afford. [Friends group]

Quotes from respondents

3.5.4 Summary of the key elements in sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2

<p>Development in regional parks should not include ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - commercial activities - buildings or other manmade structures (including accommodation) - concrete footpaths or roads - vehicles (including motorised activities) - private enterprises or other developments that exclude the public in favour of money. 	<p>Regional parks will be....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a variety of protected landscapes and ecosystems - places of increased biodiversity and pest free - available for enjoyment and relaxation - accessible (information and transport) - retained and increasingly important in an urbanised society
<p>Regional parks will provide...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a peaceful natural place for recreation - a range of experiences (from wilderness to farm) - a range of activities (from 4WD to walking) - ecosystem services - basic facilities and amenities 	<p>Enhancement of regional parks means ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preserving and restoring the natural environment - doing weed and pest control - developing tracks of varied difficulty - getting the community involved and educated - better facilities and signage / interpretation. <p>They will not be over-developed, commercialised, or degraded from their current state.</p>

Figure 3.9

3.5.5 Size and location of regional parks

Respondents were also asked to consider the number and size of regional parks and how this might look in the future. Right through the Region, people believe that parks should at least be retained in size and number. Figure 3.10 shows that the majority of respondents (93%) believes that regional parks should be expanded to include more parks and/or land. Respondents recognise that large areas are important for viable, resilient ecosystems. Further, that with population increases parks will come under pressure. Increases in number and size may be required to maintain the same experience without expense to the ecosystems and habitats that parks protect.

A number of respondents indicated appropriate locations for new parks such as coastal areas (Baring Head and South Coast), ridgelines (e.g., Mount Kau Kau skyline), and rivers (Waikanae River). A few respondents specifically mentioned the development of a park at Lake Wairarapa and Whitireia was mentioned at the meetings - both are proposed regional parks. Others mentioned expansion of existing parks where adjacent land becomes available (such as the farmed area south of Eastbourne and Whareroa). Respondents see benefits in creating recreation and ecosystem linkages.

Respondents affirm that regional parks differ both in function and form from other open spaces. One respondent reflects the distinctive nature of what regional parks provides:

Much of the value of the existing Regional Parks derives from their size and variety. Smaller local parks catering for specific activities that are more closely managed play a different social role from Regional Parks and Forests. (individual).

Again, the idea that regional parks are places that protect landscapes and associated ecosystems while being relatively accessible to the urban dweller remains important. Indeed the locations identified have the potential to encompass the key elements of regional parks, as identified by respondents (discussed in section 4.5.3).

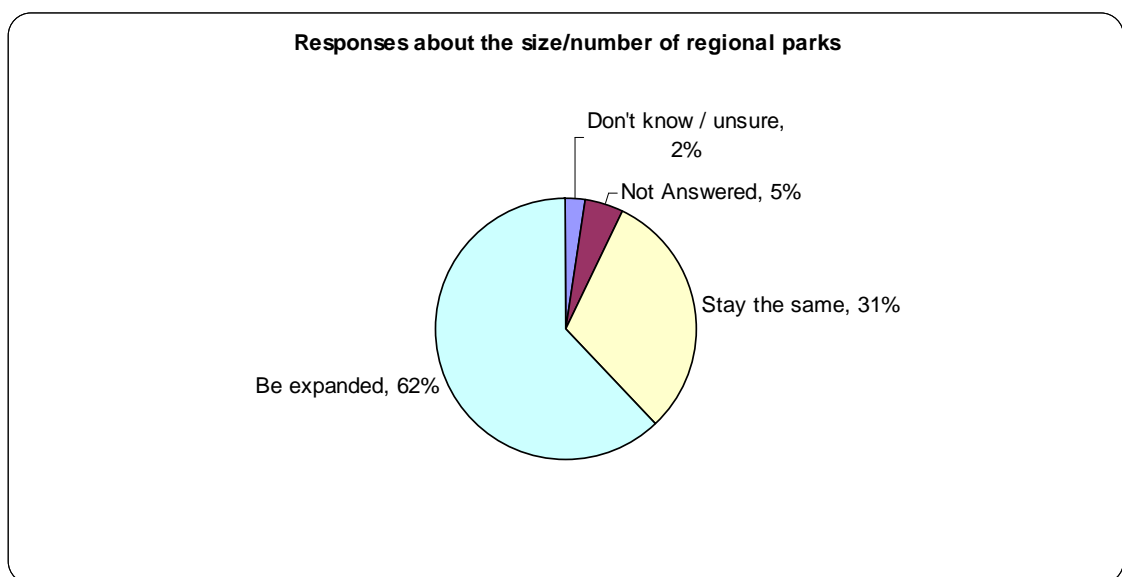


Figure 3.10

3.6 Working with groups in the future

Within each of our parks there are a number of community groups actively working. These groups are playing an increasingly important role of helping the public to engage in parks, facilitating restoration as well as promoting specific activities (e.g., horse riding, tramping). The questionnaire seeks to find out what the issues for these groups are and what the areas that we can work together in the future.

In general, these groups are facing an ageing membership, where it is increasing hard to get younger generations involved. Groups are also noticing it is difficult to encourage people into the outdoors. Increasing demands on people's time and competing activities are seen as contributors to decreasing or stagnant membership levels. Another issue is volunteer fatigue where ongoing maintenance of projects absorbs the group's energy making it difficult to embark on new initiatives. Conservation and restoration opportunities are plentiful but require long term efforts in planning and weed/pest control.

Groups were asked how GWRC can work together with them in the future. Those who responded had the following to say:

- We can provide expert advice to offer about a range of issues (from plant identification, how to introduce species, to safety in the outdoors).
- We can help planting, do monitoring and weed/pest control as well as track and facility development.
- GWRC can get involved in education, taking groups into the parks and running events such as the regional outdoors programme.
- GWRC can promote events and work alongside others who have the same focus (e.g., outdoor recreation, restoration day)
- GWRC can promote more Friends' groups within the parks.

4. Conclusion

Perhaps the most important message is that regional parks are a “package” of interlinked features. This report helps to identify the unique qualifiers of this package as appreciated by people today and what should be available to future generations.

The subtitle for the Parks Forum document *Value of Parks* is *inspire, refresh, conserve, protect, play*. These five words provide a useful summation of the messages from questionnaire respondents and have been applied below.

Inspire	Respondents believe that regional parks provide a practical learning space about the outdoors and the environment. Interpretation, community involvement and promotion are important tools to facilitate this.
Refresh	People appreciate being able to remove themselves from the pressures of work and city life. They recognise that quiet green spaces lower stress and improve mental and physical well-being.
Conserve	These are areas where land is managed to ensure that biodiversity values are conserved and enhanced. Pest control, restoration plantings and monitoring occurs.
Protect	Regional parks are effective ways to protect habitats, landscapes (whether natural landforms or farming and forestry) against urbanisation and other commercial developments. There are multiple community benefits from visual appeal to educational opportunities to building environmental resilience.
Play	The parks contain a range of recreational opportunities, catering for different abilities. They allow for flexible, unstructured recreation which can be communal or individual.

The results should be read with the understanding that is not representative of all the clubs, organisations and community groups. When comparing the types of activities respondents in this questionnaire undertake with previous community surveys (Peter Glen, 2008), there is under-representation from the mountain biking community for example. Nevertheless the results still present a consistent picture of what regional parks are, and should be in the future, as seen through the eyes of those who are regular users of the parks. This survey complements the phone survey of public opinion and should be read alongside that report (Peter Glenn, 2009).

5. Bibliography

Parks Forum

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Peter Glenn

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Submission on Draft Northern Reserves Management Plan (Wellington City Council), unpublished, 2008

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Appendix: 1

Questionnaire and cover letter

File No: PK/03/09/02
23 March 2009

PO Box 11646
Wellington 6142
142 Wakefield St
New Zealand
T 04 384 5708
F 04 802 0300
www.gw.govt.nz

Greetings from the Greater Wellington Parks team!

Towards a 20 year Strategy for Our Regional Parks: Have your say

What do you think Wellington's regional parks should look like in 2030? GW Parks department would like to invite you to participate in developing a vision for our Parks and Forests for ourselves and future generations.

We need a strategy for our Parks. It's been a long time (30 years) since our network of regional parks was first proposed. They were created to protect and enhance open space, natural and cultural features and be available for casual recreation. Since the 1970's five regional parks: *Battle Hill, Belmont, East Harbour, Kaitoke and Queen Elizabeth*, two future water collection areas: *the Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests* and other lands such as *the Wainuiomata Recreation Area, and Hutt River Trail* were developed. These parks are large areas of publicly owned land that border towns and cities as opposed to city gardens, sports fields or playgrounds. Each area contains unique qualities from expansive native forest, rolling farmland, plantation forestry to beach and dune lands. Together they form our network of open space areas maintained by GW Regional Council.

Today's context is very different. We need to re-think the purpose of these open spaces in light of:

- Changing leisure and recreation needs: with more choice available and less free time – outdoor activity now must compete with gyms and playstation!
- The focus on “preventative” and rehabilitation options to improve public health and wellbeing. Stress, mental illness and low levels of physical activity are costing our society.
- Growing realisation and recognition of the benefits of open space and bringing communities together.
- Needing to green the areas surrounding our cities to improve our resilience to the effects of climate change, particularly with more urbanisation.
- New demands for alternative uses of the Parks, especially on flat land. (e.g. a heritage precinct, motorised recreation facilities, or a golf driving ranges).

To address these issues, GW **intends to develop a Regional Parks Network Strategy (RPNS)**. We want to clearly articulate a vision for the parks and the fundamental purpose for holding them. This will guide Park management and direct development of parks for the next 20 years. We want to have your input in the RPNS to ensure that these parks will remain relevant to the regional community and make a valuable contribution to our wellbeing.

We want to hear your views. GW Parks is currently collecting the views of a wide range of individuals and groups prior to developing a strategy. We aim to have a draft RPNS in November and will consult with the public on the draft prior to Christmas 2009. At the moment we are doing a telephone survey of around 1,000 residents regionally.

In addition, we want to hear from groups of people (clubs, resident associations, non-government organisations), such as yours who may have a special interest in Parks either because of their proximity or your involvement in the Parks. Alternatively, you may be able to highlight gaps in our service and provide insight of how we make our Parks work better for our community.

Questionnaire enclosed. We would like you and/or your organisation to complete and return it to us by **22 May 2009**. Send your completed questionnaire to:

Regional Parks Network Strategy

PO Box 11646
Manners Street
Wellington 6142

Email: parks@gw.govt.nz
Fax: 04 802 0300

If you would like further information, we are holding 4 meetings in the Wellington region where we will talk about the context and purpose of the strategy and can answer any questions you may have on its development. You are welcome to attend in your area or as convenient. These are as follows:

Greytown Town Hall (Corner Main & McMaster Street)	7.30pm Monday 20th April
Belmont Hall (off Fairway Drive, adjacent to the school)	7.30pm Wednesday 22 nd April
Pukerua Bay School Hall (89 Rawhiti Road)	7.30pm Tuesday 28 th April
Greater Wellington Regional Council Centre Committee Room , Level 5 (Wakefield Street)	7.30pm Thursday 30 th April

RSVP: If you can come, you can RSVP to our Parks secretary (Nerisa Fa'aumu) 04 802 0327 or email: nerisa.fa'aumu@gw.govt.nz. If there are others who you think would also like to attend the meetings then they can contact Nerisa as above.

Information and regular updates on the strategy can be found on our website: www.gw.govt.nz/parks. We look forward to meeting you or hearing from you soon.

Regards

The Regional Parks team, Greater Wellington

Questionnaire: Greater Wellington Parks Network Strategy

Contact details for this response

Name:

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

Please tick: This questionnaire response is on behalf of a group _____ (write name)
 This is from an individual.

Greater Wellington regional parks currently include: Kaitoke, East Harbour (Pencarrow and behind Eastbourne), Belmont, Queen Elizabeth and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. We also manage recreation in the Akatarawa Forest, Pakuratahi Forest (including Tunnel Gully and Rimutaka Rail Trail) and the Hutt River Trail.

1. What activities do you or your group usually undertake in our regional parks? (circle the relevant number(s))

CODE ACTIVITIES:

Walking/bush walking	01	Driving for pleasure (e.g. 4WD, Trail biking) ...	12
Running/jogging	02	Participated in organised sports event	13
Walking/running with dog	03	Canoeing/kayaking/rafting	14
Mountain biking/cycling	04	Photography	15
Swimming	05	Painting/artwork	16
Fishing	06	Researching/nature study	17
Hunting	07	Family outings/recreation	18
Tramping	08	Outings with organised groups	19
Camping	09	Farm visits	20
Horse riding	10	Volunteer work (e.g. planting, restoration)	21
Picnics/barbeques	11	Other (specify) _____	22

2. What category would best fit you / your groups involvement in regional parks (circle the number):

No direct involvement or use	01
Occasional park user (up to 6 times a year).....	02
Regular park user (go every month or two weeks) ...	03
Frequent park user (weekly or more often)	04
Other (please explain) _____ (for example involved in projects, volunteering etc)	05

3. Please explain what you value about our Greater Wellington regional parks (as different from other park types such as sports grounds, city reserves or National Parks) in terms of:

..their setting	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
..the activities	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
..the experience	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

4. (a) How do you believe you (or your group) benefits from regional parks?
 How about the community as a whole?
 Rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 – no benefit, 10 - extremely beneficial)

	Personal / Group Rating (1 to 10)	Whole Community Rating (1 to 10)
A. Parks protect and conserve our natural environment	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
B. Parks help build healthy communities, by providing a place of recreation and exercise, away from the pressures of urban living	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
C. Parks bring people together, as family groups and with community activities	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
D. Parks help build an informed and educated community, which is in touch with nature and our local history	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E. Parks contribute to our economy, through employment of people, support of our recreational industry and through tourism	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
F. Parks conserve and protect the cultural heritage of early Maori and European settlement sites	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

4. (b) Over all, which of the above categories is:

- The most important _____ (enter letter)
- The 2nd most important _____
- Third most important _____

5. As you / your group imagine the future of our regional parks (say over the next 20 years), please complete the following statements:

Regional parks will be
Regional parks will provide....
Regional parks will not be
Enhancement means
Development will not be / should not include

6. How acceptable or unacceptable would each of the following development options be to you, for the regional parks of the future? (circle the number)

	<u>Very acceptable</u>	<u>Quite acceptable</u>	<u>Not very acceptable</u>	<u>Not at all acceptable</u>	<u>(Unsure)</u>
<u>Option 1:</u> That the regional parks are maintained for preservation, access and use, in their present form	01	02	03	04	05
<u>Option 2:</u> That the regional parks are developed, with even more emphasis given to their conservation, environmental improvement, education and community interest roles	01	02	03	04	05
<u>Option 3:</u> That the regional parks are developed as per Option 2, plus they include a limited amount of commercial activity that can enhance the recreational park experience, e.g. refreshment facilities, hirers of outdoor equipment such as bikes, tents, or clothing.	01	02	03	04	05
<u>Option 4:</u> That the regional parks are developed, with some of the land use going to other operations (e.g. built accommodation, wind farms), with some change to the current park experience	01	02	03	04	05
<u>Option 5:</u> That the regional parks assign some of their land resource for other operations (as per Option 4), but at the same time place more emphasis on the conservation, education and community interest roles (as per Option 2)	01	02	03	04	05

7. There are currently eight regional Parks and Forests in the greater Wellington region. Thinking about the future, should regional parks...? (please circle a number)

..stay the same in size and number (and location) as they are today	...	...	...	...	01
..be smaller and/or fewer in number than they are today	...	...	...	...	02
..be expanded to include more parks and/or land.					03
[Please state where and why: _____					
Don't know / unsure	...	...	...	...	04

8. What issues does your group (or the sector that you are part of) face in the next 20 years?

9. From your (own/group's/association's) perspective, what opportunities are there now and in the future, for us to be involved together in our regional parks?

10. Do you have any other comments?

Thanks for your comments...

They provide us with valuable perspectives and information to help us to develop a strategy for our regional parks. Note that there is no public hearing at this stage. We will however, add your contacts to our database and keep you updated with the Strategy.

Please send your completed questionnaire to:

Regional Parks Network Strategy
 PO Box 11646
 Manners Street
 Wellington 6142

or email: parks@gw.govt.nz
 (soft copies of this survey are also available)

Remember, the closing date for your feedback is: 22 May 2009