

# Parks Network Strategy

## Document outline:

- Foreword about the parks
- Vision (short inspirational statement)
- Mission (statement about who we are and what we do)
- Goals (3 overarching goals that we are trying to achieve through parks)
- Objectives (which gives more clarity to the goals)
- Guiding principles (statements about how you can expect Greater Wellington parks to operate)

## Foreword

Just beyond our back doorsteps there is a wealth of green spaces that conserve our natural environment, offer opportunities to experience the great outdoors, and provide dramatic backdrops to our Region. They are Greater Wellington's regional parks and forests, encompassing a stunning range of environments, from the duneland of Kapiti's Queen Elizabeth Park to the rolling farmland and bush-clad valleys of Belmont Regional Park.

These parks occupy an important niche between more developed city parks and the back country "wilderness" of the Department of Conservation estate. They are places that are unique to the Wellington Region – over half of our 50,000 hectares of parkland has some of the highest value ecosystems in the Region, including lowland forest, river systems, wetlands and dunelands.

There are considerable spinoffs for the community by having readily accessible parks. Research shows that being in green spaces – like those that we provide in our parks – can reduce stress and improve mental and physical health. Regional parks and forests are also outdoor "classrooms" where we can learn about our history, cultural heritage and environment. And they are places where people can be involved in conservation activities such as planting days and pest control operations.

As we become more urbanised, the value of these parks only increases. So it is important to ensure that parks remain in public ownership, for the health and well-being of both the community and our environment. They must also be as accessible as possible, allowing the whole community to enjoy their benefits. With this in mind, we have developed a *Parks Network Strategy* following extensive research and discussion. Greater Wellington's commitment to the future of regional parks is captured in this document, which gives a strategic direction for the parks and serves as a guide for our management plans.

Finally, the long-term success of the strategy is determined by the participation of the general public, local councils, Central Government, volunteers, non-Government organisations and industry. It is only by working in partnership that we can realise the vision of the strategy and have a parks network that continues to enrich the community for generations to come.

## Vision

Our vision for parks is:

*“Enriching lives by connecting people with healthy natural places”*



## Mission of Greater Wellington parks

To provide a variety of large natural areas that conserves our natural environment and reflects our cultural heritage for everyone in the Region to enjoy.

## Goals

This means that in our parks you will find...

1. Healthy natural ecosystems and the varied landscapes that sustain them.
2. Heritage features which tell the stories of human interaction with our landscape.
3. A variety of easily accessible natural settings for people to experience and enjoy.

## Objectives

Objectives are ***what we are trying to achieve*** through our network of parks, from now into the future. We can measure our progress towards these, and report.

### Environment

1. Protect and care for ecosystems of important ecological value.
2. Restore significant, degraded ecosystems to a healthy functioning state and increase indigenous biodiversity.
3. Sustainably manage modified ecosystems, such as those on farms.
4. Protect the visual quality of significant landscapes from inappropriate development and use.
5. Enhance ecological connections between natural areas.

### Recreation

1. Provide a range of outdoor recreation opportunities within the network that cater for varying age, ability and experience.
2. Develop trails, facilities and services so people can enjoy respite, explore nature and learn in a safe environment.
3. Encourage the development of conservation and outdoor skills.
4. Connect open spaces through recreation corridors such as walking trails and cycle tracks.

### Heritage

1. Identify and protect significant heritage features and associated history, stories and knowledge.
2. Provide interpretation, activities and learning experiences to enhance community understanding of the natural and cultural heritage in our parks.

## **Community**

1. Make parks more accessible to youth, the elderly, those with disabilities and a wider ethnic mix.
2. Promote community participation and sense of ownership by supporting volunteers and community groups working in Greater Wellington parks.
3. Provide spaces and activities that encourage the community to meet and enjoy the outdoors in Greater Wellington parks
4. Facilitate partnerships and commercial activities (e.g., hunting, farming, concessions) where they contribute to our overall goals.

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## Guiding principles

We want to communicate to the public how you can expect Greater Wellington parks to operate. These outline the way we do things rather than *what* we are trying to achieve. **Throughout our work we will strive to...**

### **Do our best**

*[about quality]*

... be leading examples in the way we manage land and the environment.

... develop quality facilities, services and programmes that meet the needs of the community.

### **Work together**

*[about teamwork]*

... manage lands in co-operation with tangata whenua

... work with other open space providers to offer a range of outdoor experiences that are accessible to the public.

... work in conjunction with other agencies to enhance community well-being and sense of place through programmes and activities.

### **Be good stewards**

*[about sustainability]*

... monitor natural and heritage features, assess changes over time.

... balance use and potential development with conservation needs and the ability to absorb activities without detrimental effect to the natural environment.

... take a “whole of catchment” approach in our land management.

... be innovative in our approach to managing parks considering needs of current and future generations.

### **Involve people**

*[about transparency]*

... engage the community when making important decisions about GW parks.

... share knowledge, skills and experience with the parks' industry.