

Summary of suggestions

Regional Parks Management Plan Review

January 2021



Thinking about all regional parks, what do you love about them and want to see protected or maintained?

We love the expanse of these areas within our growing city. The birds and the bush the rivers and the ocean are a delight.

Their ruggedness and non-developed nature... I go to regional parks because they are unmanicured and more off-road.

Beautiful areas with open spaces for walking, historic buildings with information boards in some parks, unspoilt areas for recreation, gorgeous views!

Protection of the ngahere from over-development and housing sprawl. Free access to all.

I love the amount of native bush and bird life that these parks contain as well as the views and hiking tracks.

The bookable baches are great. Thank you for completing the upgrade work to the Scotts bach in recent years.

The Regional Parks is a real asset to Aucklanders. It's where we take our families and where we get a chance to get a break from city living.

Their different nature and experiences - the farm parks are managed very differently from the wilderness parks and that is important to me.

The ability to get lost in nature. To be able to experience deep inner forest tramps.

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Service and Asset Planning

Front cover: Waitawa Regional Park. Photo: Michelle Edge.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Executive summary	4
1 Role and purpose of regional parks.....	6
2 Responding to climate change	9
3 Protecting nature and managing the land.....	11
4 Working with the community	13
5 Recreation on regional parks	15
6 Providing for visitors	22
7 Commercial and organised activities on parks	26
8 Revenue-raising suggestions	28
9 Comments about the 2010 plan	28
10 Suggestions for individual parks.....	30
11 Other matters raised	50
12 Submitters.....	51

Introduction

In August 2020 the Parks, Arts, Community and Events (PACE) Committee of the Auckland Council notified its intention to prepare a new regional parks management plan for Auckland's 28 regional parks.

The PACE Committee called for suggestions to inform the drafting of a new plan. The consultation period was from 1 September to 26 October 2020.

This report is the summary of suggestions

This report is the summary of the suggestions we received from more than 750 individuals and organisations and from a petition signed by 3681 people.

The purpose of this summary is to provide elected members and the community with an overview of the comments and suggestions. Our aim is to present what the community has said to us, not to provide analysis of the comments at this stage.

We acknowledge the huge wealth of insightful input, which included many important details about specific problems and locations provided by people who know areas of the regional parks well. This summary does not include every point made due to the breadth of input we received. We will refer back to original responses as well as to this summary when we prepare the draft Regional Parks Management Plan (RPMP).

Executive summary

Almost universally, submitters love and value the natural, undeveloped character of the regional parks. Most commented on the immense value of being able to freely access and experience wild, undeveloped places, views and open landscapes, and the coast. They consider this natural experience vitally important to retain in the face of Auckland's continued growth and intensification.

Many also value native biodiversity for its own sake and want to protect and restore the natural environment. Farming is valued by many for the visitor experiences it provides in retaining open space and vistas, and in providing opportunities to get close to animals and see farming in action. Others, including 3681 petitioners, called for a stop to the "slaughter" of farm animals living on regional parks for food production.

The issues the largest numbers of submitters felt strongly about were:

- impact of track closures on mental and physical well-being and recreational choices
- vehicles on Muriwai Beach causing safety and environmental concerns
- responding to climate change – the "beyond-urgent" problem
- dogs – passionate views both for and against
- plant and animal pest infestations.

The most often repeated priorities for council effort were for:

- more active visitor management, with more on-the-ground presence to educate and enforce rules

- more effort leading to opening tracks more quickly
- more effort into providing visitor information, history, nature education, and volunteering support
- more, and more effective pest control and pest eradication.

There is pressure for greater use of more parkland for many kinds of outdoor recreation pursuits, including short to multi-day walks, places for dogs, mountain biking, horse riding, use of 4WD vehicles, hang gliding and para gliding, disc golf, and sea and beach activities including fishing. Consideration of spaces and facilities for disabled people and for children was requested. Submitters said they love staying overnight on the regional parks and suggested more campgrounds and spaces for vehicle-based campers.

People suggested a more visible ranger presence to do more visitor management, conservation, volunteer support, and nature education.

To respond to the climate emergency most suggested continuing or accelerating the carbon sink potential of the regional parkland by planting more trees. To reduce farm emissions submitters suggested adopting regenerative / sustainable practices, diversifying into other types of farming, and revegetating more land.

Submitters said visitor emissions need to be tackled by enabling park access without using vehicles: developing cycle links to parks and running buses and shuttles at popular times to popular destinations. To handle congestion submitters also suggested active management of overcrowded carparks.

Some strong opposition was expressed to commercial development on parks. Others expressed support for commercial offerings that fit with park values, with suggestions such as sustainably-run events, cafes with information centres, or commercial transport options. Support was more generally expressed for nature and farming education, volunteering, and providing opportunities to understand more of the Māori history of the land.

Some commented that parks should not be made to “pay their way” due to the public good of having natural spaces. Instead donations could be sought to help fund particular projects.

The Waitākere Ranges drew the most comment by far of all the regional parks. Many submitters on the Waitākere Ranges suggested the review needed to find a way to protect kauri while facilitating access and recreation activities.

The Hūnua Ranges were seen to have considerable untapped potential for active recreation, with many suggestions for horse riding, mountain biking, tramping, day walks and cycle links.

1 Role and purpose of regional parks

We asked people what they love about regional parks that they want to see protected or maintained.

1.1 What people love about the regional parks

Some 70% of those who told us what they loved about regional parks said they valued them for being natural, open spaces that they could access and enjoy.

They valued:

- the parks' natural character and lack of development
- the experience of serenity and wilderness and the landscapes
- the ability to enjoy a range of outdoor experiences and informal outdoor activities
- access to the coast and sea.

Many mentioned they greatly valued and wanted to keep free access to the parks. They valued the public ownership of the parks.

In addition, about 30% valued and wanted to protect nature for its own sake – the biodiversity, wildlife, natural ecosystems.

They wanted the wild places to flourish, be restored, and be extended.

People valued the farmland for its open space and vistas, flexibility as recreation spaces, and for the opportunities to see farming in action and be near animals.

Many commented they appreciated the mix of open and bush areas on regional parks, as it contributes to the diversity of landscapes and visitor experiences across the network.

1.2 The role of regional parks and park management

Submitters considered the role of regional parks management to be:

- protecting threatened biodiversity and ecosystems
- protecting important cultural places and sites, and modern historic heritage
- clean water storage
- promoting guardianship of our shared natural and cultural heritage
- supporting visitors to offset and reduce carbon emissions
- providing a range of characteristics and experiences across the regional park network
- providing a public health benefit from exercise and refuge at time of stress, essential for physical and mental well-being and quality of life
- having a dual regional and local role to deliver services to all equitably and sustainably.

Some requested recognition that parks have a role as an essential service during emergencies. Several commented that the role of the parks was NOT to make money, rather the value lies in their uncommercial, undeveloped character.

1.2.1 Mixed views as to what comes first: conservation or recreation?

Some commented conservation is more important than recreation and the primary goal of the regional parks should be to protect biodiversity. Others considered protection of natural places while facilitating access for recreation to be the key guiding principle. People expressed variants of these two contrasting viewpoints:

Biodiversity and threatened species protection comes before recreation: e.g. protection of kauri is a primary outcome, not subservient to visitor demands (once lost, it's lost forever and with growth and climate change it's more important than ever to protect these natural areas)

We believe emphasis has been placed on saving species, and now more emphasis needs to be placed on incorporating human well-being, and incorporating recreation use while protecting the natural values. Look at creative ways of doing so.

1.2.2 Variety of experiences across the network is highly valued

Many submitters strongly defended the diversity of experiences available across different parks and commented on the importance of continuing to have remote and wild areas.

Visitor experiences must be tailored to the parks most suitable for them and not in all. It is extremely important to protect the wilderness, peaceful and quiet places despite demand.

Retain some areas as remote

The counter view to this was expressed in various ways by those who suggested recreation choices should be more widely available across the network to provide more choice and accessibility.

1.3 People reminded us of our legal obligations

Some submitters reminded us of our legal obligations relating to regional parks planning.

Some reminded us of the particular requirements for the Waitākere Ranges under Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008. A few commented that tracks are heritage features that require protection under this Act, and that access for recreation is provided for under this Act.

Others questioned whether permanent track closures were permissible under the Local Government Act 2002.

A group of submitters reminded us to recognise the gifting conditions of some parcels of land, QEII Trust expectations for land managed on its behalf, and to properly manage reserves as required under the Reserves Act 1977.

The International Play Association / Te Rōpū Tākaro Aotearoa New Zealand requested we recognise our obligations under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Disability advocates requested we consider our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The obligations include providing for and involving young or disabled people in decisions that affect them.

NZ Motor Caravan Association requested we make sure the RPMP is in line with the Freedom Camping Act 2011 and the council's own draft freedom camping bylaw. The

NZMCA suggested we rely on the default provisions of the Reserves Act 1977 to govern the activity with greater flexibility.

A couple of submitters considered that the parks should be treated as “significant infrastructure” under Local Government Act 2002 and reported as such in annual reports.

Communities Against Alcohol Harm asked that the RPMP be consistent with the council’s Public Safety and Nuisance Bylaw 2013 clause 6(1)(3) and not allow alcohol consumption on regional parks.

Some dog owners asked us to follow our 2019 Dog Policy – they commented the council must provide alternative areas for dogs when other areas are moved or restricted, which they say has not been occurring.

Various submitters reminded council of its legal obligations to consult and requested public participation be retained for related processes such as concept plans for specific parks.

1.4 Māori involvement in regional parks

Various organisations and individuals expressed support and encouragement for mana whenua input and involvement in regional parks management planning.

Various individual submitters also welcomed council working with Māori and in particular mana whenua on parks they associate with because:

- it adds to the diversity of experience for all park visitors and retains and strengthens iwi ancestral associations
- decisions relating to native flora and fauna are extremely important to tangata whenua.

Another suggested tangata whenua have places for cultural activities and access to resources. Ngāti Maraeariki expressed their desire to connect to their ancestral land at Mahurangi.

A couple of submitters requested that agreements between the council and mana whenua be transparent to the public and the public have some involvement where the outcome may affect the wider community’s recreational or conservation interests.

2 Responding to climate change

We asked what direction the management of regional parks should take in response to the climate emergency. More than 250 people responded to this question.

2.1 “Plant more trees”

The most common suggestion from more than half of those who responded was “plant more trees”.

A large sub-group specified they supported the planting of native trees or vegetation.

Most did not specify the extent of more tree planting. Of those who did views ranged from as much land as possible be “restored to its natural state”, to those who supported continuing tree planting at its current pace (around 20 hectares per year).

A few were comfortable with exotic trees being planted if they were better carbon sinks, but many others strongly expressed a preference for native plantings, including across a range of ecosystems including mangrove habitats, wetlands, dune systems, and marine systems.

Some suggested that more effort go into pest control to mitigate climate change than into planting new trees. Several people suggested a focus on fixing carbon in the soil would make a far greater contribution to reducing carbon emissions.

2.2 Evolve farming to reduce emissions

Many (more than 50 submitters and the petitioners) commented that council should change, reduce, or stop animal farming due to its associated greenhouse gas emissions.

I hate to point out the obvious, but farming creates phenomenal carbon emissions and planting trees reduce the carbon emissions. It's a no brainer. Plant more trees.

Some recognised farming was a way to maintain open spaces and suggested that it continue but evolve to emit the least possible emissions. Suggestions included trialling different breeds and sustainable animal management. A few noted their disappointment at seeing the use of urea as a fertiliser, which they considered a damaging and poor practice.

Other suggestions were to broaden land use to include community gardens, honey production, horticulture, or other animals from emu to deer as more sustainable alternatives to cattle and sheep that might continue to bring in some revenue. Others suggested council adopt regenerative farming practices and systems that will result in emissions improvements. One commented the revenue from farming is only valuable if sustainable and not generating emissions. Several submitters advocated for a focus on building up soil carbon to reduce climate heating.

In contrast others suggested farms should simply be run well, and the current mix of open pasture and tree cover was about right.

2.3 Diversify access to reduce visitor vehicle emissions

To reduce visitor vehicle emissions many submitters (more than 50) suggested developing alternative ways to get to the parks.

These suggestions included:

- public transport services to the more popular sites and/or to operate on nominated days of the year with bookings, and bike racks on buses
- develop cycle and walking trails to parks:
 - both regional links and links into local communities
 - the “greenway” corridors could also support biodiversity and become “long parks”
 - provide secure bicycle parking facilities and e-bike charging points
- encourage water access, e.g. kayaks and water taxis to the east-coast parks.

One proposed a carbon offset app to allow visitors to pay towards tree plantings.

Another suggested park development should only occur to respond to the climate crisis:

The direction of park development needs to be in support of the beyond-urgent climate crisis. There is now a clear need for visitors to be able to travel light (without their cars) and to purchase refreshments and accommodation within the parks.

Development of sub-regional cycle / walking trail networks were suggested by various people as a broader vision to rethink how people connect to regional parks, open space, and the coast. Several commented the choices made now will have flow-on effects for vehicle movements and emissions, and for travel choices for park users for years to come.

One suggested transport planning needed to consider transport to leisure destinations rather than only focus on commuting. The added benefit of encouraging exercise was noted.

Support was expressed for the cycle and walking trails that are being planned in the north-east and through the Hūnua Ranges. Other areas suggested as priorities for sub-regional trail networks were the Māngere area and the South Head area of the Kaipara.

2.4 Other climate responses on regional parks

Other suggestions for reducing carbon emissions on parks included:

- encourage lower visitor energy use, e.g. electric barbecues
- use solar power for lighting and on-site power needs, electric vehicles and tools
- new infrastructure to be “green energy positive”
- reduce use of plastics, e.g. in walkways and signage
- use less concrete and more permeable paving
- use parks to provide community education on climate change.

About 20 submitters suggested regional parks are already doing a great job for climate change by simply being natural and undeveloped places.

A handful of people commented on sea level rise, agreeing it will be necessary to plan the managed retreat of habitats and species from the coastal areas, and to manage increases in storm intensity. They suggested areas be set aside in individual park plans to provide for species retreat.

3 Protecting nature and managing the land

In response to various questions, many submitters raised matters relating to protecting nature and land management including farming.

3.1 Protecting existing biodiversity and habitats

A widespread interest in protecting biodiversity was evident. People raised concerns about threats in specific places to lizards and to nesting fairy terns, dotterels, petrels, little blue penguins, gannets, and other sea and shorebirds.

A small number of people specifically mentioned they wanted mature exotic trees in recreation areas and a couple suggested creating arboretums to showcase tree species.

3.2 Suggestions for managing threats to wildlife

Submitters raised concerns about threats to wildlife and to coastal ecosystems such as dunes. The threats most often mentioned were dogs, dirt bikes and 4WD vehicles, with some also mentioning cats and activities such as kite surfing that could disturb birds.

The sand dunes in this area are being destroyed by bikes. It's so sad to see, particularly when effort has gone into new spinifex plantings down the other end of the beach. [Muriwai]

Many submitters requested more communication, signage, enforcement of rules, and an active ranger presence to manage threats to the natural environment arising from visitor behaviour.

Concerns were raised in many locations in respect to many specific plant and animal pests, from cats, pigs, possums, stoats and rats, to exotic bird species and pest fish, to some of the region's top plant pests (land and aquatic). Several submitters requested pest management plans for specific locations.

3.2.1 Pest control

More than 50 people mentioned pest control. Pest control was highlighted as being important for the protection and restoration of native species and ecosystems, and to keep forests healthy so they store more carbon.

Efforts the council has made in pest control were acknowledged, yet many submitters made a plea for a greater focus and resourcing for pest control, including more leadership, training and resourcing for plant pest control. A strategy for managing cat predation was requested.

Some suggested pest control in buffer zones around regional parks and better council leadership to inspire, motivate and coordinate volunteer efforts. Several submitters requested limiting the use of agricultural sprays and toxins such as 1080.

3.2.2 Marine and fire

Several requested more marine reserves and extensions to marine reserves near regional parks and asked that their management be coordinated with regional park management.

Greater effort was also requested for fire management, including from a submitter concerned with pyrophytic vegetation developing in the Waitākere Ranges.

3.3 Farming on parks

About 200 people commented on farming and farmland in regional parks encompassing the following range of views:

- widespread support for retaining farmed areas for the open spaces and views, recreation, and visitor experiences with farmed animals
- high levels of support for steady replanting of marginal, unsuitable, steep or wet areas
- substantial support for farming to become more regenerative / sustainable and more diversified
- strongly expressed requests for animal farming for the purposes of food production to cease
- requests for farming to be phased out and the land to return to natural states
- appreciation of farming heritage.

Several commented they wanted the revenue from farms to go back into the parks.

3.4 Strongly mixed views on animal farming

A range of views were expressed on whether the council should be farming animals, which types of animals and for what purpose.

A change.org petition gathered 3681 signatures including 776 from Auckland residents, more than 770 from other New Zealanders, and the rest from other parts of the world.

The petitioners requested we “stop the slaughter of Ambury Farm’s cows” because they consider farming to be inhumane.

We received many additional comments with similar messages within the petition and in provided directly. The submitters wanted the animals to be looked after for their natural lifespan. Some also expressed concern about the climate emissions impact of farming.

I was horrified to learn that Ambury Farm's cows are bred and slaughtered every year to provide a park attraction.

I am writing to urge the Auckland Council to stop the forced insemination and slaughter of the Ambury Farm cows. Visitors to Ambury Farm care about these lovely animals and it is upsetting that the Council does not see them as anything more than commercial units. The cows should be allowed to stay at their current homes, or otherwise relocated to permanent homes to live out the rest of their natural lives.

Others were appreciative of and supported the educative value of showing what a working farm does.

The value of council farms to educate was a widely shared theme among other submitters.

It is a working farm, kids shouldn't be kept from the reality of the life cycle for those that choose to eat meat

*Love the opportunity to have a working farm in an urban area.
The South Auckland community has a large immigrant*

population which has a limited knowledge and understanding of how farms in Aotearoa work, or indeed about the animals we farm. Free access to this resource is invaluable.

Some submitters supported expansion of the Ambury Farm Experience Centre. Some suggested Ambury could showcase sustainable farming and educate where food comes from. Some suggested it explain how beef and dairy herds are managed and the ecological impact of this type of farming. Others suggested education on food plants be included.

4 Working with the community

More than 70 people commented in support of volunteering on parks, which many regarded as an essential aspect of park management. Comments focused also on the importance of collaboration and partnerships with volunteer groups and with other public agencies.

4.1 Volunteering needs council leadership

Volunteering suggestions focused on both conservation volunteering (pest control and planting) and volunteering to support, inform and educate visitors. Many comments focused on:

- general support for volunteering efforts
- the ethic of volunteering to build appreciation of the parks
- expansion of support for volunteering
- encouraging volunteering to take a greater role in regional parks.

Some suggested that a volunteer honorary ranger service, or “Ambassador” programme be developed, with volunteers trained to work alongside park rangers to educate and assist visitors, comparable to volunteer fire services.

Several recreational groups noted their record of volunteering in parks, which they regarded as part of giving back to the places that they enjoy.

4.2 With partnerships and collaboration more can be achieved

Some submitters requested the council establish partnership goals with the community to address current and emerging pests in a timely and co-ordinated way across public and private land, and communicate with its community partners, such as on weed control undertaken by contractors.

Various submitters proposed closer collaboration across agencies to align interests and management approaches. Auckland Conservation Board wishes to collaborate on areas of common interest including on visitor demand management, biodiversity threats and climate change.

The Hauraki Gulf Forum requested that council consider bringing the 21 regional parks that connect to Tīkapa Moana / the Hauraki Gulf, under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 through this review, because these parks have a direct role in helping restore the mauri of the Gulf and vice-versa. Inclusion of these regional parks in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

would allow for better recognition of their role in a healthy moana and would provide education opportunities.

4.3 Regional parks can play a big role in nature education

More than 90 people supported further development of the educational role of regional parks. Education and information already provided to visitors on parks was praised.

Many regarded regional parks play an important role in educating all, particularly children, about nature, conservation, and in connecting people to learn to care for the natural environment.

Farm education was valued by many, who appreciate children's free access to a variety of animals through regional parks.

Several submitters suggested education centres of various forms be developed in various parks. Other suggestions for education included:

- have more breeds of cattle, more kinds of animals (emus, alpacas, deer)
- educate about food production and the impacts of farming
- use orienteering and geo-caching to promote discovery of flora and fauna
- plant an educational arboretum of native trees.

Many suggestions were made for more informational panels and signs in many parks to enable people to appreciate and learn more about wildlife, plant life, and other features.

4.4 People want to connect with the history of the land

More than 60 people made suggestions relating to heritage, most requesting more information about heritage. They valued and wanted to know about the cultural and historical heritage of the parks.

Most requests were for more information about the Māori history of the parks.

A smaller number requested information about other historical heritage or archaeology.

Various submitters supported adoption of traditional Māori place names for and within the parks and requested information about the meaning of the place names. Submitters requested more Māori stories, art, and expressions of Māori culture on the parks. Some wanted to connect more to the heritage of the land. Others requested Māori-based learning about the area's resources within the parks.

I really like learning about the history of a place as I walk through it. It would be amazing to see more Māori art and stories that share the significance of the area.

With the Māori history of these parks it would be great to have a place of learning on one of the parks for groups to learn and participate in the traditional practices or stay in a whare on a sea journey through the parks

Several suggested that mana whenua themselves showcase Māori stories and culture such as through walking tours. Commenting on Ambury, one submitter suggested council work

with mana whenua to offer workshops on harakeke weaving, rongoā, history – creating business opportunities for the local community.

Others commented on the importance of preserving historical heritage, including heritage tracks (many of which are currently closed), buildings and (exotic) trees. Others suggested information be provided about historic events and activities.

Views on farming heritage were mixed. For example, one appreciated the acknowledgement of farming heritage in the current RPMP, as expressed through continuing to farm. Another supported retention of farm parks for their heritage but suggested the type of farming should expand into horticulture and be more sustainable. Yet another disputed that farming needed to be retained as “heritage” and suggested the farms be planted out.

Another submitter suggested planting an arboretum to reflect the heritage of varied cultures.

5 Recreation on regional parks

We asked: what changes could be made to better serve visitors, what would you like to be able to do on regional parks, and what concerns do you have about their use?

5.1 Growth pressures

Many submitters raised concerns that growth in visitor numbers in popular sites is resulting in crowded carparks and tracks, is impacting on the environment, leading to increased conflicts between recreational activities at popular sites and a poorer visitor experience.

To manage growth, many suggested more space be developed for recreational activities and visitors be encouraged to spread out more across the network.

Suggestions included:

- expand recreation options in existing parks
- increase visitor access to more of the regional park network’s 41,000 hectares, as only a small part of the land is currently used recreationally
- develop the newer regional parks more quickly to open them to the public
- reopen more tracks
- shift visitors to under-utilised parks
- survey visitors to plan better for growth
- don’t promote the parks (particularly the Waitākere Ranges)
- acquire new parks, expand existing parks and connections between open spaces

Many also suggested more active travel demand management at congested sites and development of alternative means of access.

Suggestions included:

- park and ride or park and walk: off-park parking with shuttle or walkways
- cycleways and walkways linking to local and regional routes

- public transport – with suggestions that shuttles would have a lower impact on entry areas than buses; some suggested the shuttles be free, while others suggested commercial services provide shuttles or water taxis
- close full carparks to limit numbers:
 - with real-time electronic signage at motorway exits so people can choose alternative destinations (such as at Waimauku for Muriwai)
- create a booking system for popular tracks
- increase carparking spaces (proposed by a few).

A few suggested equity of access would be improved by providing public transport.

Several specifically opposed any introduction of paid parking.

Free carparking was often equated with the principle of free access to parks. One family commented the additional cost would make going to the parks too expensive for them.

5.2 Outdoor recreation network planning is needed

More than 20 submitters requested the RPMP review take a network perspective to identify where to locate recreation activities on regional parks.

This suggestion came in various forms from representatives of outdoor recreation groups, who each requested more locations for their activities to provide their members with a range of experiences and a geographical spread of opportunities across the network.

Several urged network planning be coordinated with other agencies and look across all public space including local parks, land managed by the Department of Conservation and other public space.

Some also suggested we improve the data we collect on recreation activities as part of regional recreation planning.

How farmland is used and for what types of recreation was the subject of some comments. Some commented that farmland provides for multiple flexible recreational opportunities; others commented that paddocks with animals were not very useable for biking or walking without defined trails or facilities.

5.3 Walking and tracks

Most feedback on tracks relates to specific regional parks and issues around track closures and reopenings to manage kauri dieback principally in the Waitākere Ranges and Hūnua Ranges.

General suggestions for walking tracks included requests to consider:

- expanding the track network in regional parks to disperse increasing visitor numbers and provide more varied landscape settings for people to enjoy
- how the range of walking opportunities can cater for people with disabilities without these being confined to tracks that are already popular
- undertaking contingency planning to replace an equivalent length of lost backcountry forest tracks in case current track closures to protect kauri continue

- an integrated track network running both in/through and outside of a park.

Many appreciate having longer (day-long) walking and tramping opportunities in native forest settings and in hilly and rough terrain. These opportunities have been curtailed by kauri dieback closures, which has led to people having to seek these opportunities outside of Auckland. Various tramping club representatives suggested that the council needs to consider how to replace these opportunities within the regional parks network including accelerating the development of newer regional parks.

The different approach taken to track standards in response to kauri dieback between the council and the Department of Conservation was raised as a concern and calls were made for a consistent approach. Many submitters also commented on how use of boardwalks and stairs in the upgrades have reduced the “natural” experience of the upgraded tracks.

5.4 Dogs

Nearly 200 people commented on dogs in regional parks and views were in two opposing camps. Dog control, or (perceived) lack of, is a source of tension in many regional parks.

Many submitters reported that they loved and valued the dog-free aspect of some parks and wanted to retain that.

Strong sentiments were expressed for enforcing dog rules, keeping dogs away from breeding shore birds, and about conflicts between off-leash dogs with horse riders, children, and motorised vehicles. Suggestions to improve dog control included improving signage, information and education about dog rules, making all areas on-leash for certainty, Police enforcement, a visible ranger presence, and enabling rangers to issue spot fines.

Dog owners and dog groups were equally passionate in their calls for more areas where they can take their dogs. Many commented that most dog owners are responsible and trying to do the right thing. One person commented that based on registration numbers, about 20% of households include dogs, half of which are families – for these dog owners, leaving the dog at home when the family goes for a daylong outing is undesirable and those families’ choices are limited.

Dog owners requested the RPMP review identify spaces where dogs and their families can recreate across the regional park network.

Some suggested farmland could be easily repurposed for designated dog areas. They suggested there is a need for more off leash areas, dog friendly picnic spots for families and water areas for hot summer days. Some requested dog-friendly accommodation options on regional parks be provided, potentially to members of the responsible dog owners group.

Enjoying this area without dogs is better, it's flouted and I've had picnics ruined and my kids trampled in the water by off leash dogs at Cornwallis. Unfortunately bad dog owners ruin it for the rest of us.

Great park and lovely that we can take our dog. Wish more of our council parks had areas for dogs. (Shakespeare)

5.5 Horse riding

Horse riding on regional parks drew comments from more than 100 people.

Horse riders commented favourably about the access they have to various regional parks and beaches, which they appreciate and enjoy.

In the main horse riders wanted existing opportunities to be retained. One commented that horse riders have very few places to safely ride so continuing to enable access to suitable places is important.

Suggestions for additional horse riding trails were raised, including areas in the Hūnua Ranges, Waitākere Ranges along Watercare roads, Duder, Waitawa, Te Muri, Pakiri and Tāwharanui. One requested more horse trails that are not shared with mountain bikes.

Muriwai beach was mentioned by many as a source of conflict between horse riders, motorbikes and to a lesser extent 4WD vehicles.

Some other submitters requested horse riding continue to be a controlled activity restricted to particular areas and kept away from nesting birds on beaches.

5.6 Mountain biking

About 70 individuals and four mountain bike clubs requested more mountain biking opportunities within regional parks and made numerous specific suggestions.

Mountain bikers suggested opportunities for longer rides and dedicated trails. A common request was for beginner or intermediate level tracks.

The current range of tracks suitable for mountain biking are short, mainly on farm tracks and often shared with walkers. They commented that mountain bike tracks have different requirements to walking tracks which needs to be recognised when planning and building them.

Submitters asked us to take a regional perspective to fill in gaps in provision, make links with existing tracks on other land, and to build complementary trails to existing ones. They suggested linking Muriwai to Woodhill Forest and the South Kaipara area; linking Te Muri, Mahurangi and Wenderholm, and Ōmana with the Hūnua Ranges and other southern parks.

Many suggested specific places for mountain biking trails. 16 submitters supported retaining the current approach of entry level / family mountain biking in a range of parks, suggested development of more opportunities in both the Waitākere and Hūnua Ranges, and suggested parks such as Te Muri, Mahurangi and Waitawa could host off-road triathlons.

Other requests included a mountain bike skills area at Duder, a dedicated circuit for younger or beginner riders at Ōmana, expansion of tracks at Ambury, and other events for bicycles.

Some asked us to think about the potential for mountain biking trails to attract visitors to the region, and to consider developing leisure cycling loops from railway stations into regional parks.

A few other organisations considered mountain biking's growing popularity justifies providing more facilities to appropriately cater for it in regional parks among other public spaces.

A few opposed expansion of mountain biking in the Waitākere Ranges to prevent damage to tracks and vegetation, spread of kauri dieback and to avoid conflict with walkers.

5.7 Vehicle-based recreation

Two four-wheel drive (4WD) clubs requested that responsible vehicle use be allowed on regional parks, rather than access being blocked to all. The NZ4WD Association warned that experience shows that banning access leads to unauthorised driving and more damage to the environment and the better approach is to allow and promote responsible driving.

They acknowledged tensions exist between 4WD vehicles and other park and beach users, notably at Muriwai beach, and suggested taking the pressure of Muriwai by providing access elsewhere such as at Te Rau Puriri. Access for 4WD vehicles was requested for Pakiri, Shakespear, Muriwai, Waitākere Ranges, Awhitu, Orere Point, Hūnua and Te Rau Puriri.

Both 4WD organisations commented that four-wheel drives are a popular purchase and that recreational areas for 4WD drivers are needed.

They suggested unused areas within regional parks could be utilised for 4WD use. If specific areas were set aside for four-wheel drive use a fee could be charged for access.

They commented that motorised drivers want a wilderness experience, and members take part in planting days to help care for parks. The NZ4WD Association also noted that 4WD access enables people who might not otherwise seek access to regional parks to use the parks and enables people with disabilities and parents of young children to access natural areas.

A couple of individuals suggested controlled 4WD tours could occur on parks.

5.8 Other land-based activities

Other recreational activities that people suggested continue or expand on regional parks:

- the Auckland Paragliding and Hang Gliding Club requested hang gliding and paragliding activities be continued to be permitted on 19 parks, particularly as development elsewhere in the region is building out other sites. They commented the activity has had a minimal impact on the environment and other visitors over a long period of use
- a disc golf company suggested disc golf courses be installed, as disc golf is a low impact activity with minimal infrastructure and can occur alongside other activities and land uses
- orienteering and geo-caching
- dirt bike / motorbike riding, especially on Muriwai beach
- hunting in the Hūnua ranges.

5.9 Sea and beach activities

Many people commented that they greatly value the access to the coast provided by regional parks, and the ability to see and walk by the sea.

Many commented that they enjoy fishing and see it as a quiet activity that connects them with the natural environment and a family activity.

Others mentioned kayaking, boating, surfing, stand-up paddle-boarding and swimming.

There was support for more marine reserves to be created next to regional parks with coordinated management with the parks.

5.10 Visitor concerns and conflicts

Many submitters (at least 70) raised concerns over rules or bylaws not being followed, with a common call for increased monitoring, education and enforcement – variously by rangers, the Police, Māori wardens, or security guards.

In summary the submitters suggested rules should be enforced and communicated including before people get onto parks, and the messaging should be consistent.

The most often quoted concerns related to dogs (in many locations) and to vehicles on Muriwai Beach.

Some also raised concerns about a range of other visitor activities on parks that were disturbing others or damaging to the environment. Submitters in many cases suggested these activities be controlled or banned, and activities monitored and enforced.

A few submitters voiced concerns about car security in carparks and suggested more use of CCTV, security guards, and potentially locking gates to vehicle entry at night.

One submitter requested that the RPMP include risk assessment and plans, to show how staff will act if there is a civil emergency and if parks need to be closed for safety reasons.

Sea, beach and waterway activities causing concern included:

- overfishing and illegal fishing
- overharvesting of mussels and shellfish
- set netting as the catch is indiscriminate
- long fishing lines being a risk to horse riders
- jet skis or similar pleasure craft, as they are noise polluting, impact on Maui dolphin, and are a hazard for surfers
- fishing in waterways inside parks
- surf kiting during the dotterel season
- boating and fishing as these activities can be done elsewhere
- plastic rubbish on beaches – suggest visitors be encouraged to pick it up
- fireworks, including on adjoining land, and managed displays
- illegal freedom camping
- adventure tourism activities such as bungee jumping, canyoning, particularly at sites that have Outstanding Natural Feature status in the Unitary Plan.

These activities disturbed others' quiet enjoyment:

- use of radios and portable speakers
- inconsiderate mobile phone use
- drones (these also affected privacy and birdlife). About 15 submitters mentioned drones, all wanted them banned from recreational use in parks.

5.10.1 Smokefree, vape-free, and further restrict alcohol use?

The Cancer Society Auckland Northland requested regional parks remain smoke free, and that the smoke free ban be updated to include prohibiting vaping in line with recent Government policy. The concern is vaping can be a route to smoking, and that a smoke free and vape free environment is important to prevent the activities being role modelled as normal recreational behaviour to young people.

The health of Auckland's population is, to a large extent, determined by the environment in which people live, work and play. We recommend that Council actively promote the regional parks as smoke free and vape free

Communities Against Alcohol Harm suggested council further restrict the consumption of alcohol on regional parks. Two individuals were concerned about use of alcohol on regional parks and another was concerned about large unruly parties using alcohol.

5.10.2 Rubbish and littering – a common gripe

About 100 people commented they were unhappy about rubbish being left in the regional parks by other visitors. Some mentioned dog poo as a particularly disgusting form of rubbish.

Please can we look at more ways to deter people from littering (unfortunately) in these beautiful parks? Perhaps more signage or bins?

Submitters who understood the plan has a policy of zero waste (remove your own rubbish) supported continuing this approach. Many suggested more communication of the policy was needed to make it work. About 15 others suggested some parks needed rubbish bins.

A few suggested people be fined for littering. Others suggested volunteer groups or contractors, or groups like Sea Cleaners remove rubbish from beaches.

5.10.3 Collaborate on water safety

Water Safety NZ, Drowning Prevention Auckland and YMCA jointly commented they want to work with the council to improve water safety in freshwater and coastal environments, mentioning a particular water safety project at Hūnua Falls. They advised that drowning prevention strategies include use of standard signage, designation of hazardous water bodies, collaboration on water safety promotion, and provision of Personal Rescue Equipment at locations with a known drowning risk.

Friends of Regional Parks suggested water safety programmes be year-round, such as those focused on fishing off rocks. A comment made in Chinese requested more swimming warning signs in beach parks.

6 Providing for visitors

People commented on a range of regional park services and facilities.

6.1 Ranger service is appreciated

About 70 people commented on the park ranger service. In general, those who commented valued having a friendly uniformed presence on parks and wanted a greater ranger presence.

Rangers were valued for their knowledge and experience, friendliness, visitor advice, proactive maintenance of the parks, commitment to their role, and promotion of good behaviour.

Submitters commonly requested an increased ranger presence to enforce bylaws and moderate undesirable visitor behaviours, including uncontrolled dogs, vehicles on beaches, noise, freedom camping, misuse of barbecues, drones, or nudity.

Robust ranger service to manage visitor issues and conflicts, they are the uniformed policemen of the park and their presence helps everybody's enjoyment

Manage higher visitor numbers through ranger presence – education focused, not compliance as this is counter-productive

Rangers should be more visible and interact with public more, with authority to act to manage visitor conflicts.

Others suggested all park rangers needed to be trained in conservation and primarily dedicated to protecting the environment.

Submitters also asked that rangers provide more:

- interaction with the public
- information and education (walking tours, educational programmes)
- support to (increased numbers of) volunteers
- after hours support for those staying overnight.

Some considered the service “was not what it used to be” and requested it be enhanced. Diversity in the ranger service was encouraged.

Uniformed staff on the ground is the best way to engage with park users and ensure the best experience and outcome for both visitors and parks

Promote the important role of rangers as a vocation among Pacific groups.

6.2 Provide for people with disabilities and the elderly

About 20 people and the Disabled Persons Assembly NZ and Blind Citizens NZ commented in support of provision of access and enjoyment of the parks by people with disabilities and elderly people.

The organisations reminded us of the rights of disabled people to access and enjoy Auckland's regional parks. Provision for blind and low vision people should be considered as well as people with limited mobility.

Access to relevant, up-to-date, and most importantly, accessible information about facilities and options is necessary for disabled people to be able access and enjoy Auckland's parks.

They requested parks management:

- follow principles of universal design
- purchase accessible facilities including play equipment, seating, picnic furniture and toilets
- design accessible options to get to the coast and waterways and go swimming
- engage with disabled people when planning improvements
- prioritise spending on maintaining paths and tracks to safe use easier
- provide selected tracks for people with mobility issues that are not congested
- maintain sanitised toilet access for differently abled children and adults
- acknowledge that 4WD access enables people with disabilities and parents to access areas.

They supported development of a canopy walk at Arataki Visitor Centre, seeing it as an opportunity for people of all levels of mobility to appreciate the beauty of the forest.

Comments from individual submitters who requested support for elderly and disabled people mostly focused on requests for more seating, accessible toilets and their maintenance, accessible footpaths, and off-park information so people can plan their visit.

More toilet facilities, sitting areas and easier footpaths to trek for us disabled folk with limited mobility

One thing I love at Manurewa botanic garden is, wheel unfriendly sign. They show this sign when slope is too steep, and these are very accurate. This makes wheel population feel safe. We would love to see more of these "unfriendly" warning sign, for positive reason.

6.3 Provide wild spaces for children

The International Play Association / Te Rōpū Tākaro Aotearoa New Zealand requested safe and natural places for nature play, safe wadable streams and māra hūpara (traditional Māori playgrounds). It also suggested teenage hangouts.

The Association commented that building a connection to nature in children is important:

Manage the natural environment as natural, including keeping 'messy' parts messy, and help 'rewilding' of children.

Some individual submitters, including children, requested playgrounds at popular parks. Others commented that regional parks should not have urban-style playgrounds:

Prohibit urban style of children's playground in Regional Parks, they take up parking spaces and space for other park users is limited. Visitors come to play on the playground and never get to experience the wonderful natural environments.

6.4 More visitor information please!

More and better signage, particularly for way-finding signage and visitor information were common requests from the 65 people who commented on signage.

They requested more signage to find toilets, signage relating to dogs and litter, maps and walkways. One appreciated the lack of “bossy” signage. A few requested signs be kept to a minimum. Social media comments in Chinese requested more signs be translated.

Examples of requests for information:

- signs at carpark and track entrances noting hazards before people set out
- clearer statement of visitor rules at the entrance / start, such as don't litter, leave the wildlife alone, this track is closed
- more advice about any restrictions, such as dog rules, littering, speeding
- education about hiking for visitors, clear directions on noticeboards, better maps
- better online information.

6.5 Staying overnight

The experience of staying overnight on regional parks is highly appreciated by many, who enjoyed the minimal campground infrastructure providing a “back to basics” experience, the old baches, the affordability, access to the coast, and the ability to holiday without travelling far.

Pressures on numbers wanting to stay overnight prompted requests for a review of how accommodation is booked so that the limited resource is shared more widely. The barrier was not cost but the ability to secure a booking.

A recent upsurge in use regional park campgrounds was noted. Some requested the RPMP provide more for the growing needs for local, affordable holiday options.

6.5.1 Baches and camping

About 15 people commented very favourably on the existing baches. A few requested dogs be allowed to stay in some baches. One suggested a horse pen by a bach.

More than 130 people commented on the campgrounds, very favourably. They are highly valued and enjoyed.

Camping related requests include:

- allow dogs at some campsites
- more camping areas, more family-friendly campgrounds
- reopen closed campgrounds
- keep campgrounds at an accessible price
- build some tramping huts – there are none
- more low cost bach accommodation alongside camping areas.

6.5.2 Vehicle-based / freedom camping

A distinct group who highly enjoy staying at the parks are vehicle-based campers. They requested the ability to book more easily, to book for longer periods, and for more opportunities for motorhomes and self-contained vehicles to park up.

The NZ Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) requested council work with it to provide more camping opportunities for its members. It noted motorhome freedom camping is increasingly popular with many New Zealanders. Kiwi freedom campers value spontaneity, flexibility and mobility. They value the ability to travel without a fixed route and to make opportunistic stops: autonomy and freedom to explore and escape. The NZMCA asked us to consider these values when writing the RPMP.

In contrast, a few others disliked vehicle-based camping and other freedom camping, and asked for careful management and continued restrictions on numbers. One suggested hefty fines be imposed on those who camp or park overnight outside designated zones.

6.5.3 Should there be more accommodation?

Many requested more camping opportunities in appropriate places.

Various submitters requested that “higher end” accommodation NOT be developed on parks.

This was because:

- it conflicts with the nature and intent of the parks as being affordable to all
- park accessibility will be compromised by exclusive use
- it represents a “slow commercialisation” of the parks, degrading their valued lack of development
- high-end accommodation is available elsewhere.

A few others supported glamping or other accommodation opportunities if they were unobtrusive.

Some asked that council resources not be spent on providing more accommodation, and suggested concessionaires could provide accommodation on parks.

New accommodation should be concession based, not intrusive, not limiting public use of the parks.

6.6 Other facilities

Many submitters said they love the well-maintained facilities, picnic areas and barbecues, and free access.

More than 20 people mentioned they appreciated the barbecues. Various people requested electric barbecues, more barbecues, charcoal barbecues, and/or safety checking of barbecues more frequently. Some said they would be happy to pay to use the barbecues.

More than a dozen people requested more shade at various locations for visitors. Some requested more shade for farm animals.

Toilets drew a few comments, positive and negative. A few particularly liked or disliked the composting toilets. Many requested more toilets in particular locations or improved signage to help them find the toilets.

The booking systems received criticism and requests for improvements for campers, horse-riders, and those booking kilikiti, which they also requested be kept affordable.

Some noted their support for minimal infrastructure and zero waste, one even commenting that visitors bring their own water. Others suggested rubbish bins be provided. A few requested more tables and chairs and better mobile phone coverage.

Some suggested cafes be provided by concessionaires in appropriate places. Others requested volleyball facilities and improved boat launching facilities. Some requested more useful fruit trees be planted in regional parks.

Comments on park operations included suggestions that staff use electric cars and solar power to light facilities.

7 Commercial and organised activities on parks

7.1 The principle

Many submitters were strongly opposed to the development or commercialisation of regional parks on the basis that the value of the parks lies precisely in the parks remaining in a largely natural state. Some cautioned that development and promotion increases visitor pressures on the parks.

Making parks pay their way through commercialisation is not useful - the better approach is to acknowledge the value to the economy the parks provide by enhancing the region and making it a desirable place to live.

I love that they are open spaces where nature goes before commercial interest. With the increase in the population in Auckland, we need them even more now.

This view was particularly strongly represented by responses focused on the Waitākere Ranges, as they consider visitor numbers are already putting pressure on the natural environment. They asked that the ranges not be promoted, concessionaire activity not be increased, and tourists be encouraged to go to other parks.

7.2 Development suggestions

Individuals who responded online tended to suggest development ideas more frequently than submitters who have a longer history with the parks who responded by email.

Many submitters suggested some controlled commercial activity could enhance and fit with park values if low-key and unobtrusive.

Potentially acceptable activities included cafes and information centres, kayak hire, food carts, simple accommodation, events that fit with the park values, and concessionaire guiding that supports outdoor experiences in a controlled way. Some suggested there is a

role for commercial operators to help people access the parks through providing transport services such as shuttle buses, bicycles and water taxis.

In contrast, a few submitters suggested a wide range of commercial experiences could be provided.

Suggestions for destination or tourism activities on regional parks included:

- a kiwi bird sanctuary as a destination for Aucklanders and tourists
- organised 4WD outings and horse treks
- a treetop walkway and commercial operation of the bush tramway
- multi-day cycle trails that connect with regional parks.

7.2.1 Filming on parks

The few comments about filming in parks tended to be supportive. A film industry representative commented that access to the regional parks as well as swift processing of filming applications are important to the industry.

Others requested filming activities continue to be controlled.

7.2.2 Events

More than 50 people commented on events on parks, most in support. Suggestions included more family events, fairs, music festivals and community events such as movie nights. Others wanted more sporting and active events. Yet others suggested nature-based educational events and more volunteer days.

The reasons people gave for their support included making some revenue for the parks, attracting people to use the regional parks and encouraging people to connect with nature.

I like the idea of having more events in parks – e.g. a low cost kite festival at Shakespeare. It's a way to encourage more people to visit and enjoy the space with the potential to create a bit of revenue.

Keep it sustainable but continue to allow things like festivals that operate sustainably. Splore Festival is an outstanding example of council, local iwi, local community and festival goer cooperation and collaboration.

Think about ways you can get people engaging more with the parks - 'treasure' hunts for kids to spot different types of birds or trees ... camps for kids in areas where there is no cell phone reception so they have to get off their butt and engage with nature (learn how to pitch a tent, build a campfire, etc).

Others however voiced caution that too much emphasis on holding events and other organised activities could change the valued undeveloped natural character:

I am concerned about the view that parks are amenities for use, and the increased pressure for them to be venues for events and revenue-gathering experiences. As the city becomes larger, it is increasingly important that the parks stay 'green' rather than be developed for leisure and accommodation.

8 Revenue-raising suggestions

Various submitters requested any revenue made from regional parks go back into supporting the parks.

Several commented however that parks should not be made to “pay their way” as the social and environmental benefits provided by the parks justified public expenditure.

Various submitters suggested events, the destination and organised activities and accommodation could provide revenue for the parks. A few suggested cafes/restaurants and hiring out rooms or equipment including pay-per-use barbecues.

Some suggested council could widen the range of productive land uses to include honey production and low-key horticulture.

Others suggested the council turn to the community for volunteer help: several volunteered to put their own time into matters they wanted action on, such as helping reopen tracks, building mountain-biking trails, or monitoring and supporting wildlife.

Seeking donations was considered a viable option given the public good nature of the parks.

One suggestion was for council to package up projects for donors and set up a donation system targeting park visitors and philanthropists. Another suggested council “have a master plan way beyond the parks’ wildest dreams so that we can attract outside funding for projects beyond the scope of Council budgets”. Another suggested donations for memorial seats or boardwalks.

Central government funding and corporate sponsorship were also suggested.

A few suggested charging tourists for access to the parks if feasible. Several proposed Aucklanders or New Zealanders should get a discount at any destination activities on parks.

9 Comments about the 2010 plan

Some organisations and individuals who provided longer responses commented directly about the current 2010 RPMP. They suggested maintaining much if not all of the elements of the current RPMP including the vision, purpose, park values, management principles, the general policies, the framework for control of visitor activities, and use of concept plans for individual parks.

Several specifically voiced their support for retention of all or most of the 19 management principles in the current RPMP. One voiced support for retaining detailed plans for each park.

A few were concerned the actions in 2010 RPMP had not all been achieved.

9.1.1 Suggestions for the draft RPMP structure

Some tweaks were suggested to the park classification framework within the 2010 RPMP. The 2010 RPMP classifies each park into one of three classes (natural, mixed, or recreation-focused) and parks are managed according to the class. Modifications included:

- reassess which class each park should be in and the special management zones to better manage recreation alongside conservation
- differentiate revenue opportunities by park class
- do not allow “selfie” spots in the natural class as this increases visitor pressure.

A few suggested we split out the two largest parks to create individual park plans for the Waitākere and Hūnua Ranges due to their size and complexity, and special challenges and management needs. Others suggested separating out all the individual park plans from the RPMP’s general policies to enable more frequent review and better focus on individual parks at different times. They suggested the general policy document could remain on a ten-yearly review cycle.

9.1.2 People want to be involved in the review

Many groups have offered to be involved during the RPMP drafting. Requests, invitations or offers to support drafting relevant to their interests were received from groups such as Friends of Regional Parks, Auckland Tramping Club, Auckland Four Wheel Drive Club, Te Ārai Beach Preservation Society, NZ Motor Caravan Association, Muriwai Community Association, Auckland Hang Gliding and Para Gliding Club, Te Araroa Trail Trust, and others. Offers to collaborate came from the Department of Conservation and the Auckland Conservation Board.

9.1.3 RPMP should require monitoring and reporting on progress

Some asked for the RPMP to require more monitoring and regular reporting of both visitor activities and environmental health, to support better planning and community visibility.

Some suggested tying reporting to the Long-Term Plan to provide accountability and transparency.

10 Suggestions for individual parks

The suggestions for individual parks are presented in the order shown on this map (with the exception of six parks for which few comments were provided).



10.1 Āwhitu, Ōrere Point, Tawhitokino, Waharau, Whakanewha and Whakatiwai

Few people commented on these six parks. The comments we received generally related to operational matters such as toilet upgrades, signage, track maintenance and realigning gate latches for horse riders. Some submitters commented on Waharau as part of the wider Hūnua Ranges in terms of track closures and backcountry recreation opportunities. Four-wheel drive access was suggested for Ōrere Point and Āwhitu.

Park users loved the remoteness of some of these parks, the beaches, campgrounds and the natural areas. They tended not to want to see any changes in the parks.

10.2 Te Ārai

When we develop the draft plan for Te Ārai, we will also take all submissions to the 2017-18 consultation on a variation to the 2010 RPMP for this park into consideration.

19 individuals and 3 organisations provided comments on Te Ārai Regional Park.

Park users valued the remote, undeveloped and sparsely populated nature of Te Ārai, its unspoilt beach and natural dunes and its importance as a breeding area for New Zealand's most critically endangered bird, the tara iti (New Zealand fairy tern).

I love the undeveloped natural beauty of this park. It's a beautiful beach front park that's unique in mainland Auckland because it feels really remote. You'll really need to manage the development of the parks carefully to accommodate all the people wanting to visit.

Many submitters commented it was critically important to protect the breeding habitat of the tara iti. From a management perspective they suggested this means excluding vehicles and horses at all times and prohibiting access during the breeding season (November to March). The beach and shorebirds were also considered vulnerable to sea level rise.

Some suggested better signage and information are needed to advise park users including horse riders where the sensitive, off-limits areas are and where they can safely access the park. Signage and interpretation boards explaining the ecological, cultural and historic values of the park were also suggested.

Some suggested prohibiting drones above the beach during bird breeding and fledging and requested signage and more effective monitoring and enforcement of roped-off areas.

Other issues identified with park use included vehicles on the beach creating hazards for families; dogs on the beach; illegal freedom camping; and self-contained campervans not using the designated camping zone. One person suggested a fenced dog off-leash area be provided off Forestry Road away from the beach.

Some submitters requested that the management of the park must prioritise protection of over recreation, restricting recreation to passive, low impact use. They suggested restricting camping to the number permitted at present. Others suggested more camping and car parking areas, opening more recreational walking tracks, retaining access for horse riding, providing improved toilet facilities at Forestry Beach. A request was made for a year-round total fire ban, and adding an automatic gate to keep the park safe.

One submitter suggested a disc golf course could be developed at the park.

There was support for the protection of Little Shag Lake, Te Ārai Lake and the regenerating native bush surrounding both of these special dune lakes.

10.3 Pakiri

18 individuals and 3 organisations provided comments on Pakiri Regional Park.

Pakiri is highly valued by park users because of its isolated and pristine condition, its birdlife and the fact that it is undeveloped and allows for unrestricted views of the natural landscape.

A key issue identified by submitters was the need to provide access for dogs to Pakiri Beach in a safe way that still protects shorebird habitats. Many submitters were concerned about the sudden halt to access for dogs and felt the current situation was not acceptable, when clear solutions were available.

Other submitters wanted more walking tracks opened and clear signage on where people could walk within the park. Suggestions made included creating a loop track from M Greenwood Road to the beach, then to the proposed Puhoi-Pakiri walking track. This would open several options for day walks in the area. More access to potable water for Te Araroa Trail walkers was also requested.

Suggestions for park improvements included providing a picnic area at the south end of the park, developing a small basic campground with a compost toilet and potable water supply, providing access for horse riding and creating a space for self-contained motor homes.

One submitter suggested having a basic disc golf course on the parkland would open the park to visitors. Another opportunity identified was to create a dark sky retreat at the park.

The NZ 4WD Association suggested creating four-wheel drive access to the park.

10.4 Ātiu Creek

24 individuals and 3 organisations provided comments on Ātiu Creek Regional Park. Park users enjoyed the isolation and remoteness of the park, the views out over the Kaipara Harbour, seeing the farm animals and the fact that people could stay overnight in the park with their horses.

One submitter noted the park is demonstrating the regeneration of native cover while farming the land at the same time and suggested it would be useful to have some information on what the environmental goals were and why pest control was important. In contrast, another submitter considered the farm was in a very poor condition and needed to be managed properly by removing gorse regrowth and improving soil fertility, so it can be a display case for good economic farming practice. A particular concern raised was that the park was infested with wild pigs.

Suggestions for improvement included better directional signage to the park at State Highway 16, more information on the Māori history of the park and Kaipara district, increasing the number of self-contained camping sites, adding seats to some of the longer stretches of tracks so visitors can enjoy the views and maintenance on Courtyard House.

Other recreational activity suggestions included providing a disc golf course in the park, developing mountain bike trails, developing access to the coast and installing a boat ramp

facility. Horse riders suggested placing a combination lock at parking area for access and ensuring there were no locked gates within the park where riding is permitted.

10.5 Tāwharanui

31 individuals and 1 organisation provided comments on Tāwharanui Regional Park.

Tāwharanui is extremely popular for walking, camping and for its high-quality natural environment and the biodiversity within the mainland sanctuary park. The park is a special place for many visitors:

Tāwharanui is an exceptional regional park with its diverse landscapes, extensive walking trails, and its value as a mainland ecosanctuary and agree that its natural values must be protected. The key is to find a way to balance this with the reality of very high levels of public use.

I love Tāwharanui, it's my happy place, especially the beach at Anchor Bay and the Eco Trail. Highlights are baby stingrays in spring, the many birds to listen to and see, the old Pūriri and Nikau trees by the little bridge at the centre of the eco trail and the chance for a dip at the region's most beautiful beach.

The popularity of the park means camping spaces are often booked out. Some requested creation of more camping spaces, particularly for self-contained campervans.

Requests included maintenance of the park roads, extending the tar seal to the carpark, having more rangers on the park during summer to manage dogs on the beach, and extending the limited opening hours.

Some submitters questioned why the park was being used to breed cattle and felt that farming seems to be taking a priority over people having access and the revegetation programme. They felt parks should be first and foremost a space for people and conservation, not a place for intensive livestock farming.

The park classification was queried by several submitters, who suggested that park did not fit the criteria of a Class 1 park and this needed review.

Suggestions for facilities included seats at Anchor Bay for disabled people, elderly or those with injuries to enjoy the view, improving cell phone coverage for safety, installing a large rubbish bin at the entrance, adding picnic tables or benches on the walking tracks, more toilets in the park and some shade trees in the self-contained camping area.

One submitter suggested the park should be made vehicle free (in part) and only allow parking at Jones Bay to reduce congestion and trouble at Anchor Bay during the summer.

Recreation suggestions were to shift the surfboard lessons away from Anchor Bay, make the north and south coast a loop for disc golf, provide maps and signs for the bike trails, and allow access for horse riding on a bridle trail around the peninsula.

Some park visitors wanted more information on the marine reserve and wanted it extended around the whole coastline of the park, the inlet closed to fishing and continuation of the policy not to allow any boat launching facility within the park.

The Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society (TOSSI) and others suggested an information centre (staffed by volunteers) with an extendable education area, be developed near the

park entrance to highlight the sanctuary's ecology and the risks posed by predators to native species. TOSSI suggested a co-located commercial operation could help provide additional revenue.

Others suggested transforming the information hut at Anchor Bay into an interactive classroom for school groups staying in the campground to use as a base when helping with revegetation programmes, and restoring the original extensive wetlands.

Another suggestion was to consider putting in beehives to harvest the honey and provide revenue to help with maintenance costs.

10.6 Scandrett

12 individuals and 1 organisation provided comments on Scandrett Regional Park.

Visitors enjoy staying in Scandrett's baches, the wildlife and farm animals and the quietness. Visitors staying overnight particularly enjoyed having the park to themselves after the park closed for the day.

I love the baches here, they are so cute, and you are quite literally on the beach which is amazing!

This is a "best kept secret". Small but utterly stunning. The toilet block is quality and fits seamlessly into the surroundings. So close to civilisation yet so far. And a fascinating history. Easy to envisage life here long ago. Superb.

Suggestions to improve the visitor experience included opening up more walking tracks, naming the plants in the cottage garden, making the self-contained camping area more accessible and investigating the potential to have a concessionaire for kayak hire within the park.

Two submitters suggested the park should be accessible by local horse riders to enter the park and swim their horses at the beach at non-peak times.

One volunteer suggested there is a need for a clear, practical and effective policy to protect endangered species and their ecosystems from cat predation. They believe a "no cat" policy, like the one in place at Tāwharanui Regional Park, would greatly assist the work they have been doing to restore the threatened Pacific gecko at Scandrett.

10.7 Te Rau Pūiri

15 individuals provided comments on Te Rau Pūiri Regional Park.

Park users enjoy the remote feel of the park and the horse riding tracks and commented on the revegetation and pest control programmes. They encouraged the council to do more community planting and to restore the biodiversity lost from the land due to farming.

One submitter raised concerns about what they considered to be unsustainable farming practices in terms of pasture management. Another felt there was too many cattle on the park, causing damage to tracks and making running and biking difficult. A better balance between farmland and native bush and wetlands was suggested as one way to improve visitor experience.

There were mixed views about dog access to the park: some wanted part of the park to be off leash for dogs while others wanted the park to be dog-free all year round.

Other suggestions included reinstating the boat ramp at the Prawn Farm, opening more walking tracks and providing an online map and developing a vehicle accessible campground.

Some submitters referred to issues with the number of vehicles and motorbikes on the beach which made it dangerous for horse riding and dog walking. Others questioned how disabled, infirm or elderly people can get to enjoy the park, with no vehicle access.

One submitter saw an opportunity to link this park to Woodhill Forest via a mountain bike/walking track, which they considered would be great resource and attraction for Aucklanders from further afield.

Another suggestion was for council to work with the Department of Conservation and other authorities to establish short- and longer-day walks that extend across authority boundaries.

10.8 Mahurangi

42 individuals and 9 organisations provided comments on Mahurangi Regional Park, including the new Mahurangi East extension.

Park users love the natural beauty at Mahurangi, the pōhutukawa trees on the beach, the many options for walking, the views from the hilltop and that there is no vehicle access to the campground or baches. Many wanted the park to be kept the same, keeping water access only to Big Bay and Lagoon Bay and to avoid further development.

Lagoon Bay, my most favourite place to be. The views are awesome, great pristine campground, and hilltop walks. Thank you, [Auckland] Council to create such a beautiful place where you can enjoy nature as it should be.

We love using the kayak in Mahurangi and absolutely love the campgrounds and areas where cars can't access. It is so remarkable you can still enjoy the quiet and tranquillity so close to Auckland. Nature can still flourish with not too many visitors and noise pollution. So please make it water access only.

Some submitters questioned why the park was farmed and instead wanted the focus to be on restoring the biodiversity. One submitter wanted the farm to become a rescue sanctuary for animals. Another submitter suggested Mahurangi might be the perfect place to trial alpaca farming for education and diversity.

Issues raised included the closure of the Cudlip Loop track and the walk to Te Muri to dogs for four months during the lambing season. Submitters suggested the closure time is too long as these tracks are used regularly by locals and that this needed to be reviewed.

Suggestions for improvement included opening more recreational walking tracks, extending the limited opening hours, providing more sites for self-contained vehicles, and creating more space for families on the foreshore by moving the carparks back.

Ngāti Maraeariki expressed their desire to strengthen their traditional association with Otarawao (Sullivan's Bay) at Mahurangi, requesting permission to have a part-time marae in the area to enable them to re-establish their associations with the whenua. They also proposed to develop an ocean waka ama race for all between Mahurangi and Aotea / Great Barrier Island to celebrate the connections between Ngāti Maraeariki and Ngāti Rehua.

Comments on the proposed use of the new parkland at Mahurangi East extension included providing a vehicle accessible campground, providing baches, developing horse riding tracks, opening up the easement accessway as walking and cycling tracks before full development of the access road, and installing a security gate similar to the one at Scandrett.

A vision proposed for the north-east coast around Mahurangi was that it could be like the Abel Tasman National Park, with sea links, shuttle buses, low tide routes, sea kayaks, and connecting tracks linking the park to Scandrett Regional Park and Scott's Landing and to the Matakana Coast Trail Trust network. It was suggested commercial opportunities to provide sea links would be taken up as the network grows.

One submitter suggested offsite parking opportunities adjacent to the cycleway/walkway on the Mahurangi East peninsula be considered so that people could access with bicycles.

An offer was made to form a volunteer group for Mahurangi East similar to TOSSI at Tāwharanui to manage the peninsula as an open sanctuary (but without a fence).

Local residents at Martins Bay were concerned about possible impacts of large numbers of vehicles accessing the new park extension and suggested that if a road and designated parking on the reserve is developed, a toilet should be provided in this location for visitors.

There was support for revegetation and pest control on the new parkland, providing information on the cultural and heritage aspects of the park, and one submitter suggested that the Homestead could be used as an artist/writer/researcher in residence or for bookable accommodation.

10.9 Te Muri

37 individuals and 6 organisations provided comments on Te Muri Regional Park.

Te Muri is valued for its remoteness and undeveloped, quiet natural environment. Many submitters wanted to see a continuation of the environmental enhancement and protection activities already underway such as revegetation, pest control and fencing off the bush from cattle.

Access to the park was a key issue. Many submitters highlighted the importance of maintaining the lack of vehicle access to the park to keep the special nature of the place. Others suggested that vehicle access to the park needs to be opened via Hungry Creek Road and that all-tide access across the stream be provided for pedestrians and bikes.

There were mixed views on providing a footbridge over the estuary – some felt this would be visually obtrusive while others thought it was necessary to improve access to the park.

The NZ Motor Caravan Association asked for clarification of the potential for vehicle-based camping at Te Muri for self-contained vehicles.

Some supported retention of farming so the open pastureland could be used for a variety of recreation activities. Several submitters requested access for horse riding trails, mountain biking tracks as well as the development of more trails for walking and running, with the possibility of linking these to Mahurangi and Wenderholm.

New opportunities suggested included the possible use of the park as a venue for off-road triathlons, making the farm a kiwi sanctuary, a nursery for all endangered birds or a pet animal park.

Queen Salote of Tonga camped at Te Muri when she was sent to Auckland for schooling before she became Queen of Tonga. I would like to suggest an Information board is placed in the park.

10.10 Wenderholm

16 individuals and 2 organisations provided comments on Wenderholm Regional Park.

Most comments related to operational matters, such a request to upgrade the track in the western end of the park to make it useable all year round, as well as the perimeter track.

Two submitters noted the camping ground was barely above sea level and requested a plan for its retreat. Issues about the drainage and closure of the campground in winter were also raised. The glamping tent at Wenderholm was criticised for being in too prominent a position affecting the natural views.

Another submitter suggested better signage was needed to remind water users in the estuary of the rules around speed and avoiding other users.

One suggested a concession for a Sealegs ferry should be encouraged.

In terms of recreational opportunities, one person queried whether the park would benefit from some additional activities on offer at a multi-sport court, such as futsal, volleyball, netball or basketball. A playground for children was another suggestion, noting that Wenderholm was already a family friendly place and has a lot of space available.

Regarding visitor experience, two submitters raised the issue of loudspeakers ruining the park atmosphere for others, with one suggesting there may be an opportunity to promote a music free beach in this location.

10.11 Shakespear

48 individuals and 6 organisations provided comments on Shakespear Regional Park.

The park was noted for its popularity with families given its proximity to the Auckland urban area. Park users enjoy the combination of beach picnic areas, grassland, areas of old native forest and sanctuary for native wildlife. The network of walking tracks, beaches unspoilt by development, the predator proof fence that has contributed to the restoration and protection of endangered native birds and the views from the park out across the upper Hauraki Gulf were all noted as making this a desirable place for visitors to travel to.

The protected areas for Dotterel nesting are great and made me fall in love with the birds. They should be expanded and protected as much as is possible. [this comment was “up voted” by 46 people],

I love the Waterfall Gully track, Kanuka track, and the Tiritiri track. I especially love seeing the sprawling ancient Pūriri trees in Waterfall gully and both seeing and hearing the kereru, hihi, tui, bellbirds, and saddleback, among others.

It is wonderful to walk through the bush and hear critically endangered birds, such as Tieke and Hihi calling, and to hear and see little spotted kiwi at night! Thank you for protecting and translocating these species into a Regional Park! Anyone can drive to Shakespear and experience New Zealand's endemic species without having to pay. We need kaitiakitanga in Tamaki Makaurau.

The self-contained vehicle parking area received very favourable comments, with some park users saying they believe it sets the standard for other regional parks.

Provision of mountain biking access for entry level/family mountain biking was well supported.

Strong views were expressed about the farming of animals at the park, with most people saying the cattle should be removed as they can be intimidating to walkers. They were generally in support of sheep remaining but noted the value of the park is its biodiversity and ecological values and didn't believe farming should be the focus of the park.

I would like to see biodiversity values being treated better than that of the excessive farming that currently goes on. There should be more restoration of the ecosystem that was removed for pasture. Birds, invertebrates and reptile species should continue to be translocated into the Sanctuary to restore what was lost.

Some were concerned about "too many dogs roaming free" on the beaches at Army Bay and Okoromai Bay, and about people parking their cars on the beach at Army Bay in summer which some felt made the beach feel like a carpark rather than a recreational area. Proposed solutions were to have a separate off-leash dog area somewhere in the park, and policing of the bylaws preventing parking on the beach.

Suggestions included erecting shelters over the barbecue facilities, banning kite surfing at Te Haruhi Bay during the dotterel season to improve breeding conditions, continuing the current set netting restrictions within the park, improving directional signage within the park and the restoration of some existing signs, providing more information on local history of Māori and early European settlers in the area, and developing a disc golf course within the park.

One submitter suggested making the park vehicle free, after their experience during lockdown where hundreds of people were out walking, enjoying the green space. Four-wheel drive access was requested by the NZ 4WD Association.

Suggestions for new opportunities at the park included developing a playground for children, allowing the hire of kayaks and stand up paddle boards, developing a threatened native plants education walk at Te Haruhi Bay, rangers offering guided walks to educate visitors on the wildlife and native plant propagation workshops.

One submitter felt it would be great to have a visitor centre with information on native bird species and trees, interactive displays with bird calls and information on the importance of restoration and conservation, possibly with a café.

A similar suggestion was to create a space for educational groups to come and learn about the rich diversity of the park.

10.12 Long Bay

41 individuals and 3 organisations provided comments on Long Bay Regional Park.

Long Bay is another very popular park, close to central Auckland. The park is an excellent place for families and large groups, with its large open grassed areas with picnic sites, safe beaches and an extensive network of walking tracks.

Submitters loved that the park is used frequently by groups of children such as the Nature Kids Co-op, schools and other groups also attending the marine education centre.

Others enjoyed the opportunity for self-contained vehicles to stay in the park, watching the sunrise from Piripiri Point, using the coastal walkways to the marine reserve, seeing the regenerating bush blocks and the wildlife.

Issues with park use included overcrowding and congestion in summer, with some suggesting the park be vehicle-free at this time to reduce demand and make the park safer.

Some submitters also raised concerns about the behaviour of predatory behaviour of nudists at Pōhutukawa Bay, suggesting this needed addressing from a public safety aspect.

People raised concerns about use of drones in the park, dogs on the beach, and the spraying of Glyphosate in the park where children play.

Suggestions for improvement included adding more showers along the beachfront, creating a loop walk through the farmland to Okura River and back, putting shelters over the barbecue facilities, adding a second pathway into the park from the northern end, buoys in the water for open water swimming, and developing an off-leash dog area at Piripiri Park or a walking track that is away from protected areas.

The Te Araroa Auckland Trust requested some camping accommodation for Te Araroa trail walkers at Long Bay with access to toilet and water, even if provided on a seasonal basis.

There was strong support for continuing the revegetation, pest control and conservation programmes on the park, with one submitter suggesting considering a predator-proof fence be installed north of Vaughan's stream.

New opportunities identified included working with iwi to develop bilingual signage through the park and iwi-led interpretation information on the significance of the parkland.

A few submitters suggested developing a café or restaurant, or a combined café and information centre at the boundary of the park. One suggested this could be done in conjunction with the marine education centre, with shared revenue from the café.

Another suggestion was to incorporate adjacent local parkland into the regional park and over time create a parkland corridor along the southern shore of the Okura Estuary to link with the Department of Conservation managed reserve on the northern side.

10.13 Muriwai

98 individuals and 7 organisations provided comments on Muriwai Regional Park.

Park users enjoy the rugged beach and isolation of Muriwai. They value the undeveloped nature of the park, scenery and appreciate the unique wildlife in the park like the gannets and Muriwai gecko. Park users also value the opportunity to ride horses and motorbikes and

drive vehicles on the beach especially because there are few other places to do this in the region.

Muriwai is an incredible space for everyone to enjoy. The walking tracks, beach, dunes and forest are all an incredibly big part of my weekly life.

A key issue raised was the tension between vehicle drivers on the beach and other users.

Many submitters commented motorised two and four wheeled vehicles on the beach cause damage to the dunes, plants and wildlife. A large portion of comments from horse riders reported conflicts on Muriwai Beach with speeding motorbikes and with 4WD vehicles. Locals commented the beach was not safe and not enjoyable. Some 4WD owners and a bike rider also commented on tensions between themselves and horse riders at Muriwai and requested that room be made for everyone.

Most submitters agreed vehicle use on the beach was a problem which needed to be addressed. Suggestions for improvement included:

- limiting or controlling the number of vehicles on the beach
- speed control
- separating the vehicle and horse entrances to the beach and providing horse only and vehicle only zones on the beach to improve safety
- provision of four-wheel drive and dirt bike tracks elsewhere to reduce the number of vehicles on the beach.

Submitters also mentioned traffic congestion and car parking in the park is an issue, as over the summer period the car park is often at capacity. Some commented that tourist buses also cause traffic problems and don't respect the permit system. Some suggested opening up more vehicle entrances to the park and new car parking areas. Others commented there was plenty of car parking but it needed to be better managed.

There were a couple of suggestions to provide a bus service to Muriwai over the busy summer period to reduce pressure on the car parking.

Some raised concerns about people camping in their cars or on the beach and using the campground facilities without paying, and no monitoring of visitors arriving after 4pm. They suggested a security firm monitor behaviour and freedom campers after hours.

Some submitters also suggested a plan for the management and improvement of the park's ecology and wildlife, to include weed removal, protection of nesting areas and burrows.

Submitters identified the opportunity to link the coastal Muriwai park with Woodhill Forest. They suggested the links would substantially enhance the recreation potential for walkers and mountain bikers. The council could help broker access agreements with mana whenua and the forest managers. Some new tracks were suggested, including a walking track from the end of the Te Henga walkway to the beach.

Other suggestions for improvement included providing more food and drink offerings, provision of bilingual signage and information about local Māori history, perhaps through sculpture or signage.

10.14 Waitākere Ranges

155 individuals and 13 organisations provided more than 800 points of feedback on the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.

The volume of feedback is the largest for any of Auckland's regional parks. It reflects the challenging issues that we face for this park including:

- responding to the spread of kauri dieback throughout the Waitākere Ranges
- widespread frustration with closed access to the forested areas of the park
- how to manage the impacts of visitors and Auckland's growing population
- addressing growing weed infestations in the Waitākere Ranges.

10.14.1 The 2010 plan remains relevant

Many submitters provided feedback that the vision and broad direction that the RPMP 2010 provided in managing the Waitākere Ranges remains relevant ten years on:

- the park's natural, cultural and historic values and wilderness qualities to continue to be protected and enhanced
- people want to be able to experience the park in a way that is compatible with those values
- to build an ethic of kaitiakitanga (stewardship).

Continuing to manage the tension between visitor access and use, and the intrinsic qualities of different parts of the park through a series of special management zones was also supported.

We heard from submitters that they want the council to strengthen giving effect to the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008, which the council is required to do when developing the management plan. This includes considering more deeply matters such as:

- scenic and landscape qualities, quietness and wilderness values
- how the park provides for the wellbeing of the distinct communities living in the area
- the importance of the park as "an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources".

An overarching theme of the suggestions we received is that people feel an increasing disconnection between decisions being made about the Waitākere Ranges and the direction and management objectives set in the 2010 plan.

Some organisations and individuals thought that the Waitākere Ranges should have its own separate management plan to Recognise the unique and complex issues that need to be addressed.

10.14.2 Kauri dieback management and track closures were a key source of frustration

Decisions on kauri dieback management and the negative impact on recreation opportunities overwhelmingly received the most feedback from organisations and the public. The range of views expressed including the following.

- The impact of track closures on the wellbeing, health and recreation choices of the public has been significant and needs to be given greater consideration under this review.
- It was premature to consider permanent track closures until further surveying and research had been undertaken to determine the connection between kauri dieback and human activity.
- The rationale and robustness of scientific evidence for making decisions to close tracks was questioned by some submitters.
- Some felt that the precautionary approach to managing kauri dieback had gone too far and that the mass closures of tracks was unwarranted, especially where there were no or few kauri on a track.
- Decisions on track upgrades, closures, standards and maintenance in response to kauri dieback had exceeded the policy intent and direction in the RPMP 2010, which set a requirement for minimal infrastructure in the park.
- The council needs to accelerate the programme of reopening tracks and provide a broader range of experiences (e.g. rougher tramping tracks as well as short walks) and landscape settings.
- Some submitters mentioned that growing visitor numbers on the tracks that are open were starting to cause a negative effect on their experience.
- Submitters want to have a greater voice on kauri dieback management alongside the agreement between the council and Te Kawerau ā Maki.

Submitters strongly support protecting the natural values of the park and acknowledge the need to address kauri dieback. As noted above, different views were expressed about how this is done and what the tradeoffs will be for recreation outcomes. Some organisations expressed support for the rāhui and controlled area notice closing the forested areas of the Waitākere Ranges and supported that some tracks may need to stay closed to prevent the spread of kauri dieback to avoid an existential threat to kauri.

Many submitters want tracks that are reopened to have a more naturalised surface with drainage, minimal boardwalks and steps, and use of natural materials. The discrepancy between Auckland Council and Department of Conservation standards for upgrading tracks in response to kauri dieback was noted as a concern and impediment to having a range of walking and tramping opportunities.

Some people supported tracks being upgraded to a higher standard including boardwalks and compacted gravel surfaced track. In addition to protecting kauri, they mentioned the tracks bring other benefits such as improved accessibility.

Several submitters highlighted the history and heritage of certain tracks and that this heritage needed to be taken into greater account when considering which tracks to reopen.

Submitters also requested that policies be included in the plan to guide track upgrading in response to kauri dieback so that the environment, landscape values and the recreation experience are protected.

A significant number of submitters identified specific tracks that they would like to see reopened, some of which are part of the track reopening programme, and others that are pending further investigation or direction. Tracks identified were in the Cascades-Kauri area, Piha and Anawhata catchments, Karekare-Pararaha area, and Nihotupu catchment as well as other parts of the park. An underlying theme of the choices of tracks was that people want a variety of destinations for walking and tramping, with longer loops, a range of track

standards and access to the rugged interior of the Waitākere Ranges as well as to the coastal parts of park and to local communities.

10.14.3 Visitor management concerns and recreation opportunities

A range of themes relating to visitor management and recreation opportunities were expressed by organisations and individuals:

- Strong concern was expressed about dog control in various parts of the park. This included a lack of bylaw enforcement, dogs off leash, vandalism of dog control signs and the impact of uncontrolled dogs on wildlife and the risk of spreading kauri dieback.
- Some requested we “hold the line” on the range and type of recreation opportunities, and the level of development of visitor facilities in the park to ensure that the landscape values and character of the park are not irreversibly changed or that visitor pressure on Waitākere Ranges is not exacerbated.
- Conversely a moderate number of submitters expressed support for additional recreation opportunities such as expanding mountain biking (e.g. repurposing existing tracks and creating a framework for future development) and providing more camping areas and a backcountry hut.
- Improve some facilities such as parking where kauri dieback restrictions are channeling greater numbers of people into a more limited number of areas of the park.
- Maintain free public access to the park for informal recreation.
- Better manage visitor demand and implement strategies to control and disperse visitor numbers such as better public transport and developing parts of Waitākere Ranges that are more robust (e.g. Karamatura farm park).
- Illegal rubbish dumping and lack of knowledge of park rubbish rules was highlighted as a concern.
- Specific issues were raised about visitor impacts and management at Lake Wainamu, Anawhata, North Piha, Lion Rock, Tasman Lookout-The Gap, Wai o Kahu / Piha Valley, Mercer Bay Loop Walk and Whatipu.

We also received some specific requests about horse riding opportunities, hang gliding and paragliding, four-wheel drive access, and allowing dogs overnight in self-contained campervans where this aligns with daytime dog access rules.

Other than some specific exceptions, submitters preferred the current level of commercial activity in the park to remain the same as well as the current limits for discretionary activities provided in the 2010 RPMP. Support was expressed for investigating partnership or commercial opportunities to allow the Waitākere tramline (Rainforest Express) service to be reopened. Several people and organisations supported developing a treetop walkway at Arataki.

10.14.4 Areas highlighted for a greater conservation focus

Submitters requested more resources be directed to the eradication and control of weeds and animal pests including active restoration and pest-free zones. Areas of the Waitākere Ranges identified as needing a greater focus were Lake Wainamu, Karekare, Whatipu, Cornwallis, and the area between Paruroa / Big Muddy Creek and Laingholm. Specific issues regarding the protection of wildlife were identified at North Piha, Tasman Lookout-The Gap (Piha) and Karekare.

Support was expressed for developing a Waitākere Terrestrial Monitoring Programme to meet the requirements of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008. Three organisations identified the need to undertake long-term monitoring and reporting of all environmental and social impacts of recreation activities in the Waitākere Ranges.

10.15 Ambury

51 individuals and 1 organisation provided comments on Ambury Regional Park.

Most of the comments expressed opposition to the breeding and slaughtering of cows living at Ambury, as these submitters consider the animals should be left to live out their natural life span or sent to loving homes. Some of these submitters explained visitors form a bond with the animals and it is upsetting when they are no longer present at the next visit.

Other submitters enjoyed Ambury for the opportunity it provided for children to interact with the animals, get up close to a working farm environment in urban Auckland and understand where food comes from. Ambury is also a destination for walking and cycling along the Manukau Harbour esplanade and viewing the extensive shorebird habitats.

Some supported the existing Ambury Farm Experience Centre being expanded to demonstrate regenerative agricultural practice, connecting Aucklanders with where food comes from and engaging them on topics such as sustainable consumption, healthy and sustainable diets and sustainable living.

One submitter did not consider the scheduled winter closure of Ambury campsite was justified. They felt that large areas of the campground could be used as all-weather camping spots. They noted that Ambury park is an important last stop for many tourists, as it gives them a chance to prepare for the short trip to the campervan depot and airport the next day.

Suggestions for improvement included developing more bike trails, planting more trees for shade, developing community gardens and fruit tree orchards on site, working with Birds New Zealand to create a shorebirds educational display, providing information online and at the park on Pre-European and post-colonial history, and information about the park's biodiversity.

10.16 Mutukaroa / Hamlins Hill

23 individuals and 3 organisations provided comments on this regional park.

Submitters recognised the park has significant value to local iwi as it is one of the few intact non-volcanic maunga in Auckland. They also commented on the park's historic heritage, the present mixed use of the parkland, and the opportunity to replant some of the park with more diverse species that will provide food, shelter and nesting/roosting opportunities for birds and invertebrates. Submitters suggested farming should continue as long as the archaeological and sacred parts of the park were protected.

Suggestions for improvement included providing for entry level mountain biking, upgrading the fencing, planting larger trees that can support bird life, clearer track markings, more stiles or kissing gates to avoid having to open main livestock gates, and providing information on the significance of the site to Māori.

One submitter saw an opportunity to earn some revenue by installing some billboards on the motorway side of the park, out of sight of the rest of the park. Another suggested developing a Māori cultural centre at the park.

Transpower reminded us of the high voltage transmission lines that cross Mutukaroa / Hamlins Hill and the buffer around them required by the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Two submitters questioned whether Mutukaroa / Hamlins Hill should be a regional park at all. One person suggested the nearby Point England Reserve had more conservation value due to its shorebird breeding habitats. The other suggested that the present intent of the park is not enough to attract visitors, and that a review of the park's purpose was warranted. Options suggested were a dog park, a kite flying park, or an astronomy park.

Another submitter said they weren't aware it was a park and didn't know how to access the park.

10.17 Motukorea / Browns Island

10 individuals and 1 organisation provided comments on the island.

Many noted the importance of Motukorea as a historic reserve, valued primarily for its volcanic landforms, rich pre-European archaeology and shorebird breeding habitats for several threatened species. Sea level rise was considered a threat to those habitats.

Shorebird breeding habitat, Motukorea is named after Oystercatcher but breeding success is being impacted by sea level rise.

Suggestions on the priorities for management of the island included maintaining the natural and cultural heritage, replanting native vegetation and trees in part (but not all) of the island, creating better walking paths, restricting access to the beaches where shorebirds nest, weed management and keeping up with pest control. One submitter suggested having a "halo" pest control project on the mainland to protect the island against pest / predator invasions.

To manage recreational use and access to the island, suggestions were to keep access to small boats only, but also to install a small jetty to facilitate visitor landings. Some information and signage about the history of the island would also be desirable.

Others suggested a small campground with basic facilities could be developed, as the island was a perfect location for young people/clubs to kayak, row or sail small craft to and stay a night. They suggested providing basic open-sided shelters would avoid the need for tents and could be available by bookings only.

Classification as a Class 1 park or qualified Class 1 park was supported.

10.18 Ōmana

17 individuals and 1 organisation provided comments on Ōmana Regional Park.

Park users enjoyed the easy access to the park from the surrounding suburbs, that the park was well maintained, camping was allowed, there were nice beaches year round, the popular kids playground and the cycle way, although some felt it was a pity this stopped at Maraetai.

The dog off-leash area was very popular with dog users:

I LOVE the fact that the perimeter walk allows dogs to be off leash – especially in the heat of the summer it is great to be able to take the dog round the forest/mangrove side of the walk. Please never change this!

Suggestions for improvement included providing more trees for shade, better signage to the toilets and barbecue area, installing drinking fountains and undertaking more maintenance on the cliff trail.

Some new opportunities identified included developing a dedicated mountain bike circuit in the park, ideally aimed at beginner riders to compliment the nearby mountain bike trails in the Whitford Forest. Others thought fairs, music festivals and community events could also be held at the park.

Some submitters advised that safety issues were arising with mountain bikers and walkers on same track, which was dangerous for pedestrians and needed to be addressed.

One submitter suggested that Ōmana could be merged with the adjacent parks (Leigh Auton Reserve and Te Puru Park) to create a bigger park with longer tracks.

10.19 Duder

31 individuals and 5 organisations provided comments on Duder Regional Park.

Park users enjoy the freedom of the park, being able to walk where they liked and that the park is actively farmed with livestock to observe. Submitters commented the orienteering course was popular with families with children.

Suggestions for improvement included adding a small camping ground at the entrance to the park, providing an area where dogs are allowed on leash, adding more picnic tables and providing some designated parking spaces for horse floats when the park is busy.

Some submitters wanted to see more horse riding trails, access to ride horses on the beach, and a dedicated mountain biking circuit in the park, including a skills area for people to develop their mountain biking skills. Others did not want to see any increase in the mountain biking and horse-riding activities already allowed.

There was general support for continuing to plant native vegetation in gullies and in areas not suitable for farming. Two submitters suggested that consideration should be given to making Duder an open sanctuary.

Installing more historical interpretation signage to explain both Māori and Pakeha heritage was suggested by several submitters who recognised there was an important pa site within the park and wanted to know more about its significance and relation to the Wairoa river. Another suggestion was to develop an interpretive walk to Umupuia Marae.

New revenue opportunities suggested for the park included a sculpture walk, more events, and a concession to allow multi-day guided kayaking or walking options that could connect the park to the Pōhutukawa Coast Trail and to a proposed walkway along the Wairoa River.

10.20 Waitawa

22 individuals and 4 organisations provided comments on Waitawa Regional Park.

Park users enjoyed the views, the opportunity to have a safe place for horse riding, the disc golf course and the Te Ara Moana shore base facilities located here for people utilising the sea kayak trail along the coast.

Suggestions for additional recreational facilities included more trails through the park for horse riders and mountain bikers, the addition of a family style campground in the park and the placement of mounting blocks at key gates to make it easier for visitors to open and close the gates. One suggested safe overnight pens for horses, for park users staying in the park accommodation.

One submitter was concerned about access for less abled visitors, in particular within the accessible car parks where the deep gravel makes it difficult for a range of users of mobility equipment or older adults to navigate safely across this area to the toilet block. They suggested this could be easily remedied by extending the concrete path from the toilets to the accessible carparks.

Other opportunities identified for the park included that it could be a suitable venue for an off-road triathlon, or than an educational and recreational could be developed in conjunction with iwi at the park, similar to the Marine Education and Recreation Centre at Long Bay.

10.21 Tāpapakanga

7 individuals and 3 organisations commented on Tāpapakanga Regional Park.

Tāpapakanga was appreciated for its relative remoteness, the lagoon, long stretch of beach and pockets of forest, and for the campground experience and the Splore festival:

Tāpapakanga – love the little lagoon and beach front campground, takes me back to childhood camping trips in basic but beautiful spots. So glad can take still find places like this to take my kids to have similar experiences.

Being able to attend the Splore music festival with its perfect blend of fun, entertainment and beautiful scenery is a real privilege!

A new opportunity was suggested for the historical homestead at Tāpapakanga, which could be opened as a small museum or for accommodation.

10.22 Hūnua Ranges

79 individuals and 7 organisations provided comments on the Hūnua Ranges Regional Park.

The Hūnua Ranges were valued for its active recreational opportunities as well as for its rugged, isolated nature, vast native forest environment with significant natural, recreational and biodiversity values.

The Hūnua Falls is a popular site for short visits to the park by tourists, while the extensive network of tracks throughout the park provides routes suitable for both families and experienced trampers. Park facilities include accessible and remote campgrounds, prime picnic spots and selected areas for self-contained vehicles to stay overnight.

I absolutely love Hūnua Ranges and frequent the place often. I love the feeling of being 'remote' even though it is not far from Auckland City. The peacefulness of the place and the opportunity to be able to camp, tramp, walk and cycle. I like how there are different spaces within the park. For example - many people visit Hūnua Falls - it is popular, easy to park and has good facilities. It is great for families and individuals who like to get outside but don't want to venture too far into nature. Then you have other spaces like Upper Mangatawhiri campsite, which is a gateway to tramping and mountain biking, with the option of staying overnight but not commercialized.

Some suggested creating a few more family-friendly spaces on the fringes of the park to take the pressure off Hūnua Falls.

Park users acknowledged the kokako restoration and protection project and the focus on pest control, which has helped the birdlife rebound and protected the rare native bats and frogs. There was support for the large-scale pest control programmes to continue. Other suggestions included undertaking intensive pest control over larger areas of the park, including using recreational groups (mountain biking and tramping clubs) to assist with volunteer pest control.

A pig hunter expressed frustration that hunting is not currently allowed.

More information on the Māori and post-colonial history of the park, both online and at the park was suggested, and more information about the biodiversity.

A key issue identified by several submitters was the recent closure of public access to parts of the park from the north, restricting access to Kohukohunui from the Moumoukai Hill Road carpark as one example. Some people were extremely concerned that trespass notices had been issued to people trying to enter the park in these locations and that a better process would have been to inform the public on the reasons for this change.

Other submitters were concerned about some of the track upgrades that had been completed in response to kauri dieback. The Wairoa Loop track was cited as an example where the free-flowing track experience has now been spoiled by the addition of many steps.

Some of the ageing infrastructure, such as the toilets in the Upper Mangatāwhiri valley, were identified as needing an upgrade.

The Hūnua Ranges was highlighted as having potential to become Auckland's version of Rotorua's Whakarewarewa Forest, "The Redwoods" (a mecca for mountain biking).

- A number of mountain bikers requested retention of the current planning framework that allows for destination mountain biking in the Hūnua Ranges, and requested realignment and extension of the Challenge Track to improve its useability; extension of the Farm Loop and River Trail network in the area below the Mangatāwhiri Dam and further development of the National Downhill track.
- Several submitters requested recreational access to the gravelled Watercare roads (including Orum Rd and forestry roads).
- Another suggestion was a long-distance mountain bike loop to link to the smaller parks on the coast to the east of the park.
- The continued development of the Hūnua Trail connecting Clevedon to Kaiaua was supported by many, as this would provide a connection to the NZ Great Trail network and allow cyclists to travel "off road" for many kilometres away from public roads. The Te

Araroa Auckland Trust also supported the Hūnua Trail, to enable Te Araroa trail walkers to walk through forest rather than through industrial and residential areas as they travel through the south part of the region. One believed consideration must be given on how people are going to access the Hūnua Trail – whether it would be bookable, operated by concession or there for anyone to use.

Trampers and tramping clubs suggested more back country walking tracks, better connectivity between tracks and at least one large bookable tramping hut established within the park. Access to treated drinking water at strategic positions across the track network was requested.

Horse riders requested more trails, better horse trail signs, a more detailed map of the trails, and better parking for horse floats. Four-wheel drive access was proposed.

Two people requested more opportunities for self-contained vehicle camping within the park. Another suggested development of a Hūnua recreation plan as intended in the 2010 RPMP.

10.23 Glenfern Sanctuary

6 individuals and 2 organisations provided comments on Glenfern Sanctuary.

One suggestion was for the council to continue to work with the Department of Conservation to extend the sanctuary and keep the whole Kotuku Peninsula pest free, by keeping up pest control on rats and feral cats.

Other suggestions included providing guided tours on the history of the sanctuary and its nature and conservation programmes, while some submitters saw there was an opportunity to model and share sustainable ways of living and interacting with the natural world. One idea proposed was to consider, as part of the sustainability model, that the park provide a natural enviro-friendly cemetery or a place to scatter ashes for local people.

All submitters supported the proposal to develop an environmental education centre at the park and agreed that additional accommodation was a necessity to enable and support volunteer work in the park.

11 Other matters raised

Some comments we received related to operational matters such as the height of gate latches or difficulties in using the online booking system. We also received comments relating to the acquisition of additional regional parks, and to communications about parks.

These comments will be handed on to the appropriate teams for their consideration.

11.1.1 More communication about the parks was requested

Various people requested better and more regular communication and information about parks management and activities on parks. Suggestions included:

- regular reporting on progress under the next RPMP, with plans and related documents available online
- more useful website information for park visitors and elicit more feedback
- regular two-way communications with volunteers and the community covering park news, volunteering and education activities.

11.1.2 Buy more parks!

The largest number of out-of-scope comments were requests for more park purchases, to:

- keep pace with Auckland's population growth
- preserve space and green areas and help mitigate climate change
- provide more public access to the coast
- make pathways for wildlife preservation
- provide outdoor space for those living in more intensive housing areas.

Suggested priorities were near the Kaipara Harbour, South Auckland and Franklin West.

Pukekohe needs a large family park, similar to Hamilton gardens. There should be planning for parks in areas that are going to face population growth in coming years. And not just coastal parks (as magnificent as those are) but inland farm parks too.

Submitters suggested council develop a parks acquisition strategy and act when opportunities arise. Funding suggestions included a dedicated or ring-fenced acquisition fund, a rate and/or development contributions. Some suggested council aim to acquire access rights over private land.

A few people suggested regional parks be created within the urban area, for example by acquiring racetracks or golf courses, and classified as "urban park" within the RPMP.

Particular requests were made for particular local parks to convert to regional parks:

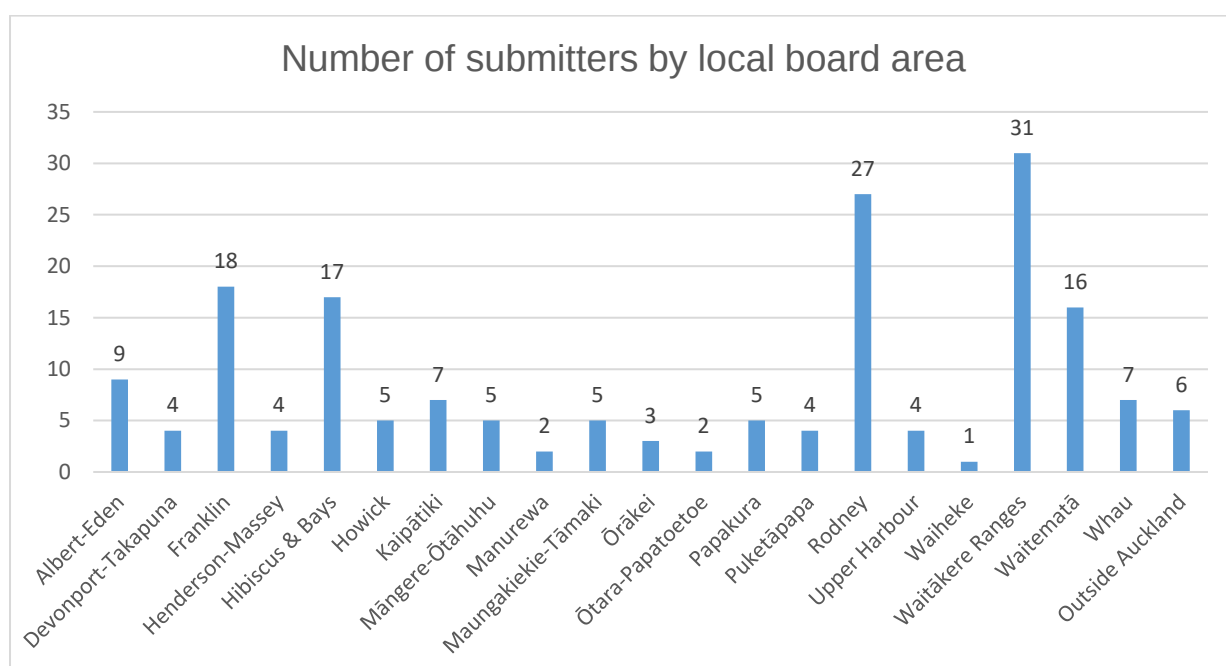
- Chelsea Estate Heritage Park and adjacent reserves, to enable better protection and management of the heritage assets, lakes and parkland and protection of the ecological values of the wider Kauri Point Uruamo headland
- Point England and adjacent reserves including Tahuna Torea Nature Reserve, to be a green interface between the city and Tāmaki Estuary, enable its significant cultural history to be told, improve water quality, provide a wild space for biodiversity in the midst of intensified land use, and meet community needs.

12 Submitters

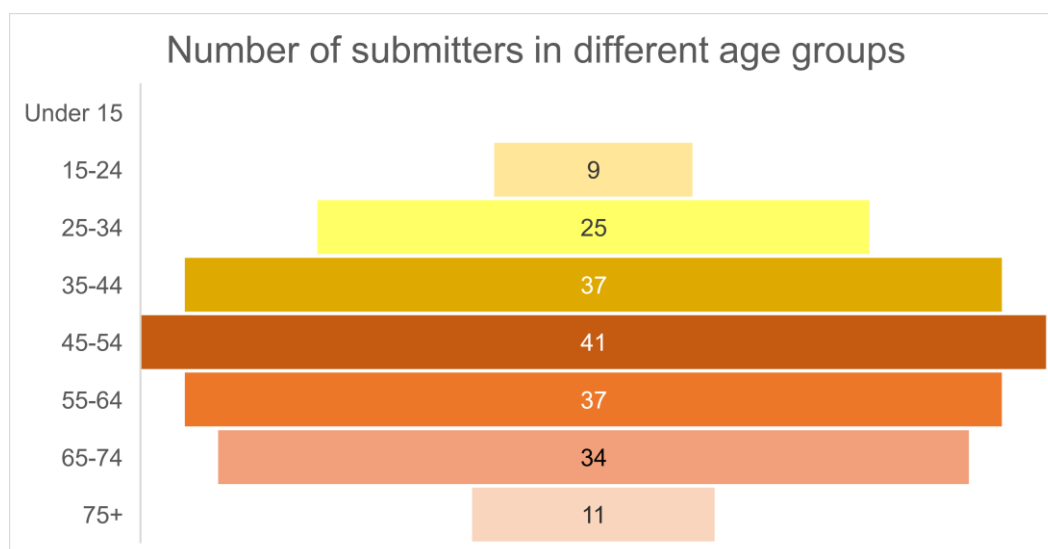
12.1 Individuals who provided suggestions

We received the following information on age, gender, ethnicity and local board area from the 707 individuals who provided written suggestions.

- 207 people provided their gender: 131 female, 75 male and one gender diverse
- 212 people provided information about their ethnicity: 139 identified as Pakeha/European, 19 as Māori, with other ethnicities and mixed ethnicities represented in small numbers
- 182 people provided us with the local board area they live in:



- 195 people provided information about their age:



12.2 Organisations who provided suggestions

53 organisations provided suggestions:

Auckland Conservation Board	Martins Bay Ratepayers Association
Auckland Four Wheel Drive Club	Muriwai Beach Campground
Auckland Hang Gliding and Para Gliding Club	Muriwai Community Association
Auckland Mountain Bike Club	Muriwai Environmental Action Community Trust
Auckland Tramping Club	NZ 4WD Association
Blind Citizens New Zealand	NZ Advertising Producers Group
Bush and Beach	New Zealand Motor Caravan Association
Cancer Society, Auckland Northland	Newmarket Mountain Bike Club
Chelsea Heritage Estate Regional Park Association (CHERPA)	Ngāti Maraeariki
Civic Trust Auckland	Piha Residents & Ratepayers Association
Communities Against Alcohol Harm	Pohutukawa Coast Bike Club
Department of Conservation, Auckland	Protect Piha Heritage Society
Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand	Save the Rainforest Express Committee
Discgolf Aotearoa	Shakespear Open Sanctuary Society
Federated Mountain Clubs – North	Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society
Forest and Bird Warkworth	Te Ārai Beach Preservation Society
Friends of Arataki & Waitākere Ranges Regional Parkland	Te Araroa Auckland Trust
Friends of Whatipu	The Tree Council
Friends of Regional Parks	Titirangi Residents & Ratepayers Association
Hauraki Gulf Forum	Totara Park Mountain Bike Club
Hibiscus Coast Dog Training Club	Transpower
International Play Association / Te Rōpū Tākaro Aotearoa New Zealand	Waikato Regional Council
Mahurangi College	Waitākere Ranges Protection Society
Mahurangi Magazine	Warkworth Area Liaison Group
Mahurangi Trail Society	Water Safety NZ / Drowning Prevention Auckland / YMCA (jointly)
	West Auckland District Tramping Club

12.2.1 Visitors to the AK Have Your Say RPMP consultation page:

AK Have Your Say analytics tells us:

- 3983 people viewed at least one RPMP review webpage
- 1049 visited multiple webpages
- 544 people downloaded our discussion paper

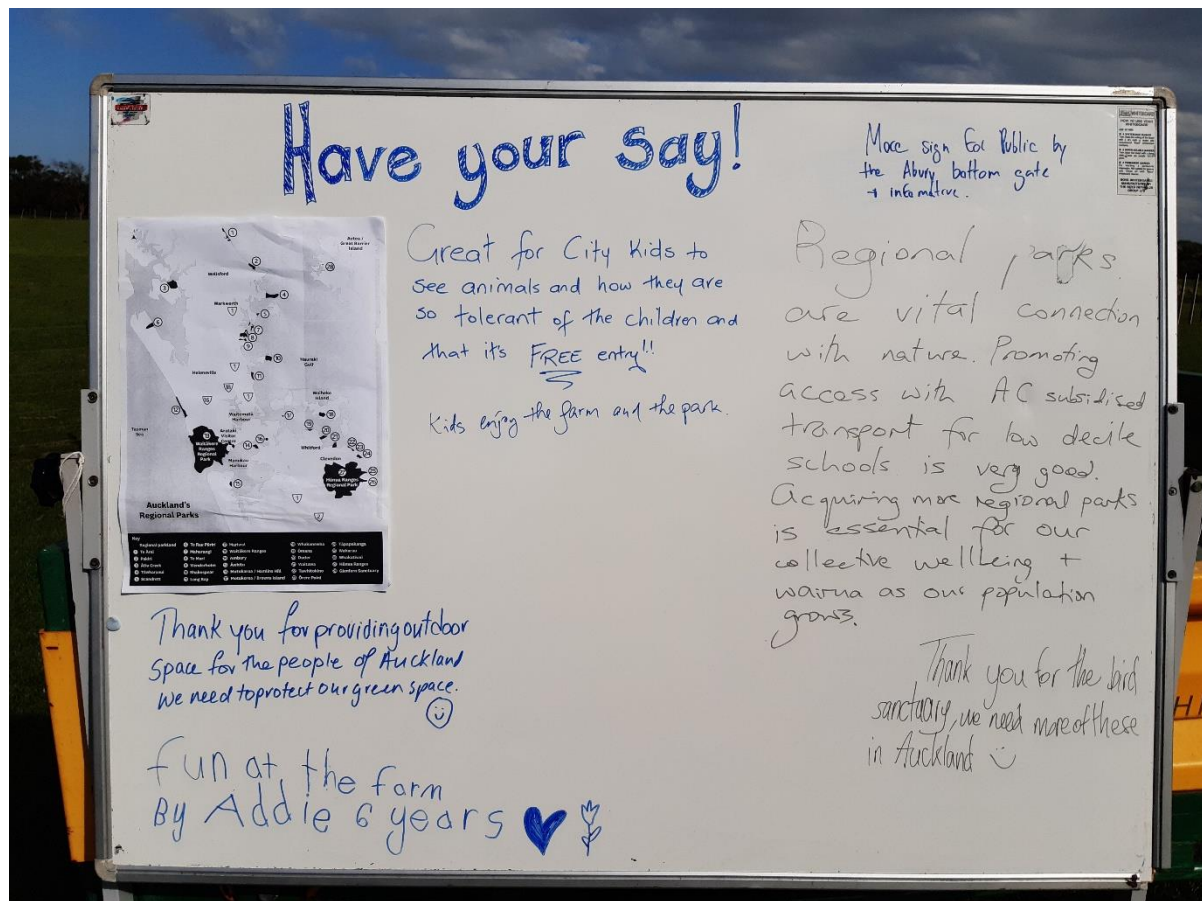
12.2.3 How we received the suggestions

We received suggestions and comments through multiple channels:

- 553 responded through the council's AK Have Your Say website (including commenting on the interactive map, suggestions board, general survey, Pasifika survey, and/or individual park surveys). In addition people "up voted" or "down voted" others' comments on the interactive map and suggestions board.
- 140 responded via email.
- 65 filled in feedback forms provided at face to face engagements, libraries, or downloaded from the website.
- We also received a petition with 3681 names.

Thanks also to our community partners and community media Auckland Youth Voice, Radio Sadeaala, and Skykiwi.com who provided us with comments posted on their social media sites.

Ambury Engagement Session on 26 September 2020 – Have Your Say whiteboard comments



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Find out more: visit
<https://akhaveyoursay.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/regional-parks-management-plan>