



caring about you & your environment

Report 01.822

20 November 2001

File: R/4/1/2, R/2/3/2

Report to the Landcare Committee
from Victoria Owen and Anne Manley, Landcare Planners - Policy, Parks and Forests (Strategy
& Marketing)

Review of the Regional Parks and Forest Lands Management Plans

1. Purpose

To update Councillors on the process for:

- reviewing the management plans for the five regional parks; and
- completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan, which covers the Council's forests in the western part of the Region. (The Utility Services Committee will also be notified about the timetable for completing this review.)

2. Review of the Regional Parks Management Plans

2.1 Introduction

The Council manages five regional parks - Belmont, East Harbour, Kaitoke, Battle Hill and Queen Elizabeth (refer **Attachment 1**). These parks are held primarily for their recreational, environmental and heritage values.

All the regional parks are managed under the Local Government Act 1974, while some (or parts of some) are also governed by the Reserves Act 1977. These Acts require the Council to develop and maintain management plans for each of the parks. The current management plans for all five regional parks are now due to be reviewed.

2.2 Proposal for Reviewing the Plans

We are proposing to carry out a joint review of the five park management plans and as a result develop:

- an overarching Network Management Plan addressing the common management issues across the five regional parks, (i.e., the regional parks network); and

- specific management plans addressing management issues particular to each regional park.

Park management plans provide a mandated framework to guide decision-making and day to day management of regional parks. In the past, management plans for each of the parks have been drafted and reviewed separately. While this has been an effective process for management of individual parks, it has not provided us with an overarching (strategic) and integrated policy document for management of the network as a whole.

A Network Management Plan will:

- provide a clear framework for overall management of the regional parks network;
- ensure a consistent approach to management issues across the parks network by setting general objectives and policy;
- guide the development of park specific management plans; and
- lead to efficiencies in the process for reviewing the five management plans for both Council and external parties (particularly during consultation).

The park specific management plans would continue to provide “park specific” objectives and policies.

The Auckland Regional Council (ARC) is currently in the process of reviewing management plans for its regional parks and has chosen to take a similar approach. The ARC has developed a network strategy outlining general management objectives and policies, along with more detailed objectives specifically relating to each regional park.

2.3 **Timetable for the Park Management Plans Review**

A detailed timetable for the review of the park management plans is attached as **Attachment 2**. The focus for the parks management plans for the current financial year and outyears would be:

- 2001/2002 - development and drafting of the Network Plan;
- 2002/2003 - consultation on the Network Plan and development and drafting of the five individual park plans; and
- 2003/2004 - public consultation processes and finalisation of the Network Plan and park plans (finalised and approved by 31 December 2003).

2.4 **Implications for the Current Work Programme**

We had wanted to notify our intention to review the following management plans in 2001/02:

- East Harbour Regional Park - October 2001; and
- Queen Elizabeth Park - February 2002.

The proposed approach has a minor impact on the timeline for the review of individual park management plans, with only the review of East Harbour being delayed. If we notify our intention to review the range of management plans in February 2002, then we will be four months behind target for East Harbour Regional Park, meet the target for Queen Elizabeth Park, and be ahead of time for the remaining three parks.

3. **Review of the Forest Lands Management Plan**

3.1 **Introduction**

In addition to the five regional parks, the Council owns and manages four forest areas (refer **Attachment 1**) in the western part of the Region. The forests comprise two water collection areas (the Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Areas) and two future water collection areas (Akatarawa Forest and Pakuratahi Forest). These areas are administered under the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972.

While the forests are held primarily for water supply purposes, there is a range of other activities permitted and taking place on the forest lands. The future water collection areas contain exotic plantation forestry as well as native forests and they are popular areas for recreation. Limited recreational access is also permitted in the water collection areas.

3.2 **Interim Management Plan**

The Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972 does not require the preparation of a comprehensive management plan, (although a working plan in respect of plantation forestry operations is required). However, in 1996 the Council chose to prepare a management plan for the (western) forest lands in the interests of good land management. This management plan was designated as an *Interim* Plan as the divisional structure of the Council had just changed and regional plans under the Resource Management Act 1991 were still being prepared.

The review of the (interim) Forest Lands Management Plan started last year. While a significant amount of preparatory work was undertaken, a process for completing the review was not finalised. To date there have been several Councillor Workshops to look at the vision for the forest lands in 20 - 40 years. More recently, Councillors “workshopped” issues associated with the plantation forests. Officers provided extensive background information for these workshops and worked on identifying key issues to be addressed.

We envisage that the revised Forest Lands Management Plan will be similar to the Parks Network Plan with an overarching policy document for the current and future water collection areas and separate chapters dedicated to management issues in specific locations. The Plan will include principles to guide strategic planning and should form a link between the various operational plans, e.g., the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area Access Plan and the Environmental Asset Management Plan. Most of the key operational plans have been revised or completed in the last 18 months.

3.2 **Timetable and Process for the Forest Lands Management Plan Review**

A detailed timetable for the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan is outlined in **Attachment 2**. The process this financial year involves establishing a cross-Divisional project team to identify/consider issues and develop principles for management, consultation with tangata whenua and public focus groups, and production of a draft plan for approval by the Utility Services and Landcare Committees in June 2002, before release for public comment.

We propose to hold Councillor workshops in February and May 2002, to look at policy issues and matters for inclusion in the Plans.

4. **Tangata Whenua Input**

The proposed review process for both the five park and the forest lands management plans has been presented to Ara Tahi for their comment. We have sought feedback on Ara Tahi's preferred processes for tangata whenua input into the management plan reviews. At this stage, we are proposing to liaise with iwi on issues in the parks and the forests at one time.

5. **Public Input**

To gain public input into both the Parks and Forest Lands Management Plan reviews, we plan to:

- carry out surveys to ascertain public views on current and future management of the parks;
- convene focus groups to obtain the views of park and forest users and other affected/interested parties;
- publicly notify our intention to review the plans and seek submissions; and
- publicly notify the draft management plans and seek submissions.

There will be two surveys to canvas public opinion on the current and future use and management of the regional parks:

- the biennial visitor satisfaction survey to get feedback from visitors on current facilities and park management, planned for February 2002; and
- a survey of the general public (through *Elements* and/or a telephone survey) to help us gauge the views of non-users of the parks¹.

Collectively, this survey information will guide the development of the overarching and park specific management plans. It will also contribute to broader strategy and marketing for the parks network and provide information on public opinion relating to any future land acquisition.

6. **Communications**

There will be communication with the public throughout the process, particularly at the stages outlined in section 5 above, (i.e., public notification, focus groups and surveys).

¹ While this survey will focus on the parks, we expect to receive feedback on the forests, particularly in relation to activities taking place in both areas. Focussing on the parks will keep the survey size manageable. A survey of visitors to the Akatarawa Forest was completed 18 months ago and as the Interim Forest Lands Management Plan is more recent than the parks plans, we already have a good body of information available on the forests.

7. Recommendations

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) *notes that the management plans for the five Wellington Regional Parks are due to be reviewed.*
- (2) *notes the development of:*
 - *an overarching Parks Network Management Plan addressing the common management issues across the five parks; and*
 - *specific management plans addressing management issues particular to each regional park.*
- (3) *notes the timetable (set out in **Attachment 2**) for completing the review of the regional park management plans, with all park management plans reviewed by December 2003.*
- (4) *notes that the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan is progressing.*
- (5) *notes the timetable (set out in **Attachment 2**) for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan in December 2002.*
- (6) *notes that the Utility Services Committee is also being notified about the timetable for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan in December 2002.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

VICTORIA OWEN
Landcare Planner - Policy
Parks & Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

SUSAN EDWARDS
Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

ANNE MANLEY
Landcare Planner - Policy
Parks & Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

ROB FORLONG
Divisional Manager, Landcare

Supported by:

JOHN DUGGAN
Projects Manager
Engineering Consultancy

DAVID BENHAM
Divisional Manager, Utility Services

Attachment 1 : Parks and Forests Location Map

Attachment 2 : Timetable for the Review of Park Management Plans