

Queen Elizabeth Park horse trekking and grazing changes FAQ

Updated 12 December 2022

Queen Elizabeth Park has been very accommodating to horse grazing for over 30 years, but the time has come to end the majority of it in favour of supporting casual equestrian uses, restoring our environment, and meeting the challenge of climate change by supporting natural resilience.

1. How does horse trekking and grazing operate in QEP?

Kāpiti Stables (KS) has had a five-year concession agreement to provide horse trekking and a licence agreement for associated grazing in the park. Kapiti Pony Club (KPC) has had a ten-year agreement.

Kāpiti Stables manages horse grazing which originally had a maximum number of 30 horses and 6 cattle on the park. In 2020 because of grass growth from La Niña (wet) summer conditions, this was increased to 40 and the cattle were removed from the agreement. Kāpiti Stables advise that the actual number of horses on the park at any time is variable and generally ranges from 30 to 35. They manage grazing not associated with their horse trekking via their own 'Grazing Agreement' with individual graziers.

As licence agreements come to an end, Greater Wellington commences a review process to determine if the activity remains beneficial for the park and to ensure that activities and practices align with the parks statutory management plan policies and rules. Amongst others, policies 11-20P apply as well as the Rules for grazing in Section 8. **The management plan identifies grazing a high impact activity and requires assessment of environmental impacts.**



Greater Wellington manages parks following the directions of a statutory management plan which is made under the Reserves Act. **In the management plan, all grazing types of grazing are classified as a 'Restricted Activity'**. Events such as those with temporary overnight horse grazing is identified as a 'Managed' activity. The management plan states **'Horse grazing is a high impact activity and licence applications, renewal and annual grazing plans are subject to AEE process'**. Appendices two and three outline the requirements of the Restricted Activity and AEE process. See the link to the Plan below.

The Kapiti Stables five-year agreements ends on 30 November 2022 and the Kapiti Pony Club licence is in the process of renewal. The process to review the two licences commenced in April 2022 in liaison with the licensees. The other main equestrian activity group in the park, Wellington Eventing is managed with an event permit. There is no grazing associated with this permit.

The management plan directions and vision are for restoring ecosystem health in parks. As Restricted Activity licences end or are due for renewal, Greater Wellington works through the Restricted Activity process of review and assessment to determine what improvements can be made to support the Plan vision and ensure the activity supports park values, delivers benefits and is low impact and sustainable as possible. Other GW directions are also considered.

2. Why is Greater Wellington making changes to horse trekking and associated grazing in QEP?

[Toitū Te Whenua, Parks Network Plan](#) is the management plan for regional parks and was adopted by Council in 2020. It sets a vision for restoring healthy ecosystems. In support of this it sets a high level of environmental due diligence and precaution to support restoration of environmental health across parks. Grazing activities are identified as high impact and require environmental assessment before they are renewed, or new licences offered.

Restoring the natural environment of the park is our focus, whilst improving facilities where we can for casual horse riding and events, such as the Wellington Eventing concession. The areas in the park where horse grazing has been taking place were reported (by concessionaires, and others) to be very wet and unsuitable for grazing. An investigation by our environmental scientists has identified that the areas currently grazed by Kāpiti Stables and the Kāpiti Pony Club have wetlands. Greater Wellington's scientists have also advised the steeper dune slopes were fragile and unsuitable for grazing by horses or ponies.

High intensity grazing has significant and unsustainable environmental impacts in areas such as wetlands and waterways. High intensity grazing contributes to sediment and nutrient run off and erosion of fragile dune lands. As such these activities are progressively being phased out in Regional Parks.



This paddock has been part of the Kāpiti Stables licence grazing area and has been subject to regular flooding. Three consecutive La Niña weather events have created wetter than usual conditions throughout the region. This is one of the areas of park which has now been identified as wetland and no longer considered suitable for grazing. The Parks Recloaking Papatūānuku restoration programme will support restoration work here. The photo was taken after heavy rainfall, on one of the many site walks in the park with GW officers to investigate horse grazing locations.

3. What is the Restricted Activity assessment process?

Toitū Te Whenua has a vision about restoration and benefits for people. It has policies, rules, and Actions for work in parks.

The Rules section is chapter 8.

The restricted Activity process considers park values, impacts, and benefits.

To achieve the Plan vision and goals high impact activities with little public benefit are not generally supported. Activities which support park values and the Plan vision and recreation experiences for many people are supported over those with greater impacts and benefits for a few. For high impact activities to be permitted in parks, overall benefits which support the Plan vision must be able to be demonstrated.

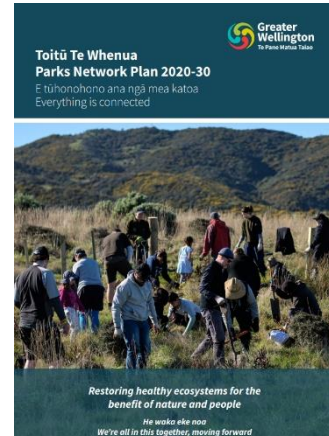
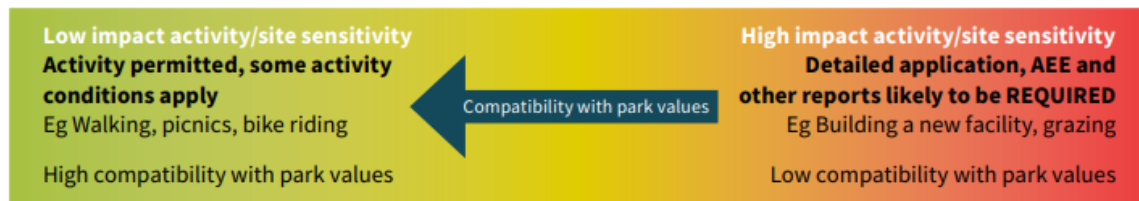


Table 1: Activity permission approach in parks. Refer section 8. 'Rules for use and development'



Activity permission levels

Allowed Activities	Managed Activities	Restricted Activities	Prohibited Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some activity rules apply eg Share with care codes Minimal impact activity codes Time, place, activity rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various activity rules apply to ensure park values are protected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed application including impact and benefit assessment required. Refer to Restricted Activity and AEE guides in Appendix 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities are incompatible with park values. Applications are not accepted

All

Restricted Activities are assessed using the headings and following the considerations detailed in Appendix 3, the Restricted Activity guide.

AEE requirements are outlined in Appendix 2. This includes vegetation assessments or other investigative work.

Ngā āpiti hanga / Appendix Two: Manaaki paka/caring for parks AAE guide

Ngā āpiti hanga / Appendix Three: Restricted activity application guide

For details see [Greater Wellington Regional Council — Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-2030 \(gw.govt.nz\)](http://www.gw.govt.nz)

4. What about the Kāpiti pony club, why are they still using the park for their activities and grazing?

Following advice from our scientists, a small, low impact pony club grazing area will be continued, with reduced numbers, on land deemed suitable for this activity. A lower impact area was found for reduced horse numbers for Kāpiti Pony Club away from wetlands and steeper duneland. You can check the Kāpiti Pony Club social media pages for information about their activities in the park.

To date only small areas of park around the McKay's crossing area have been deemed suitable for supporting horse grazing. These areas are insufficient to sustain a new horse trekking licence, so the decision was made not to offer a new concession opportunity via public process at this stage.

There may be opportunities in future for a similar horse trekking business utilising other park facilities such as the barn currently owned by Kāpiti Pony Club at the northern end of the park. This area is also surrounded by wetlands but has two areas where clean fill from the expressway development was introduced to the park. These small clean fill areas may be suitable for future equestrian arena development, but no decisions have been made and this has not been investigated in any detail (apart from consideration of the parking areas for float parking). Options for adaptive re-uses of the barn and associated area will be explored through the master planning process in 2023. After this later process could include a public expression of interest or request for proposal type process for use of this or other facilities. However, this area has also been identified as a possible public horse camping area for short overnight stays. The benefits and impacts of different options will be considered via the park master planning process and Toitū Te Whenua processes for consideration of different activities (Concession, Restricted Activities, AEE etc).



5. Why was a short notice period given for exit when horses have been in the park for a long time?

Greater Wellington offered Kāpiti Stables an extended period of exit through to the end of January to enable the horse trekking part of the business to operate over the summer school holidays. An exit period for non-trekking related horse grazing through to mid-December was also offered. Kāpiti Stables has extended this offer to its graziers and is actively supporting graziers to find new places on the Kāpiti Coast. Greater Wellington does not manage the current arrangements with individual graziers but is aware of how popular and important the park is for horse riding and activities.

Update: Greater Wellington has announced that a temporary community-led extension of the exit period via individual Agreements will be offered until the end of January 2023 for graziers who have been unable to find new grazing arrangements.

A consultative process was followed with Kāpiti Stables. Licence holder Rachael Martin informed Greater Wellington about flooding issues and made practical suggestions for alternative parts of the park to investigate. To support animal health in the winter horses were moved out of the inundated licence areas to the dune area beside Whareroa Road. Some of the areas that appeared to be acceptable for horses were found to contain wetland species following a detailed investigation. The basins within the duneland and the area between the old farm track and Whareroa Stream are examples of this. The latter was found to be a natural wetland.

6. What community consultation about horse grazing has taken place and why are environmental values so important?

Consultation to develop the new management plan for regional parks which sets the vision and policy directions was extensive between 2018 and 2020. This change is a result of work implementing an environment first approach – which is the direction sought for parks as expressed through the consultation processes to develop Toitū Te Whenua.

The Plan also focuses on recreation experiences and this work is ongoing and expanding. For example, Greater Wellington was recently successful in receiving a grant for development of the proposed 'Akatarawa Traverse' and wetland story telling in the park. Check the management plan for details about the Akatarawa Traverse, it's a long-distance riding and walking route from QEP to the Hutt Valley and horse riders will be a key user group.

To support the Toitū Te Whenua vision, plan policies support meeting and exceeding minimum environmental standards. Any new grazing licences must have overall benefits for the park and people and be low impact. In practice this means lower 'carrying capacity', protection of streams, waterways, wetlands, cultural sites and practical considerations about making good, shared use of facilities and minimising potential conflicts between activities. The current horse to hectare ratio of the two existing horse grazing concessions is insufficient. Finding larger, less vulnerable areas means that potential impacts can be more easily avoided or minimised. This is challenging.

Parks are governed by legislation such as the Reserves Act which has environmental protection requirements. QEP is Crown owned land. This means that the requirements of the Conservation Act also apply. A high level of environmental care is sought. The higher impacts of the past grazing legacy are being addressed through this process of progressive change with an environment first approach.

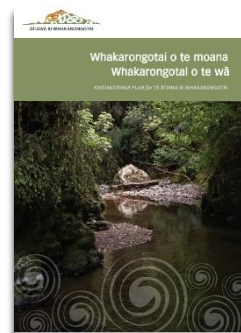
QEP has been very accommodating to horse grazing for over 30 years, but the time has come to phase-out the majority of it in favour of supporting casual equestrian uses, restoring our environment, and meeting the challenge of climate change by supporting natural resilience. ‘Allowing high intensity grazing to continue would have further degraded the park environment and denied the opportunity to re-establish the park’s natural environment’ says Al Cross, General Manager Environment. There are trade-offs that have to be made between re-establishing the park’s natural environment – and with it the return of native birds and plants – and providing facilities for horse riding.



This area between the Old Farm Track and Whareroa Stream is outside the Kapiti Stables license area but has been used temporarily for horse grazing. As part of the investigation into alternative grazing areas for horses GW scientists investigated this area and identified it as natural wetland. This area was previously grazed by stock for many years which contributes to its appearance of not looking like a typical vegetated wetland. Wetlands also have dry periods. It is often covered in birds (including non-native Canada geese) Wetland plants can be seen in the photo. Restoration and invasive species control activities will take place here in future.

7. Were mana whenua Ngāti Toa and Te Ātiawa Whakarongotai consulted?

Greater Wellington consulted extensively with mana whenua in developing the parks management plan. For this Restricted Activity review process (as outlined in Appendix three of Toitū Te Whenua), we reviewed Ngāti Toa and Te Ātiawa Whakarongotai written documents which expressed their values and kaitiakitanga relating to the park. Protecting cultural and environmental values continue to be primary considerations. The assessment process ended after no suitable grazing areas were found for horse trekking business with associated grazing.



8. Can't we just move the horses somewhere else in the park?

Greater Wellington has thoroughly investigated other possible horse grazing locations in the park. We sought larger areas of park for relocation of horse grazing so that the horse to hectare ratio could be reduced and any licence area land rotated and allowed time to rest and recover. This meant looking for larger areas of park or significantly reducing horse numbers in a future trekking business proposal. The possible suitable paddocks, or areas of paddocks found e.g. the eucalyptus tree paddock - approx. 1.4 ha, were small and would require a lot of additional fencing to avoid and protect the wetland and associated low lying areas within them. When we explored other areas, we found more wetlands, signs of erosion in dunes or incompatibility with other recreation activities such as aeromodellers or events. See question 11 for more details.

9. What directions from Toitū Te Whenua have driven this change?

The policies and rules of Toitū Te Whenua are the basis for the Restricted Activity assessment process (detailed in Appendix 2 and 3). Many policies were in the previous management plan (2016) and then they were refined through the two-year process in consultation with mana whenua, community and council to develop and refine Toitū Te Whenua. The policies support the Plan vision for returning more benefits for the environment and people in parks. There are 84 policies in the Plan. These are some of the most relevant ones:

Ngā pūnaha hauropi / Natural heritage

4P To utilise environmental science knowledge in the restoration of natural heritage. Restoration opportunities are identified strategically, prioritising:

- a. Benefits to overall natural heritage and the reduction of threats and impacts
- b. Contribution to biodiversity, freshwater quality and Greater Wellington's carbon neutrality targets
- c. Mana whenua values and kaitiakitanga priorities including sustainable customary use and mahinga kai
- d. Areas previously grazed by stock for restoration and erosion prone land
- e. Threatened Forest ecosystems and ecological corridor opportunities within and beyond park boundaries
- f. Community-lead and resourced initiatives where appropriate

5P To demonstrate highly sustainable practice in land management following Greater Wellington and territorial authority policies and rules, including District Plans, Greater Wellington Proposed Natural Resources Plan, Regional Pest Management Plan, Biodiversity Strategy **and other relevant plans and strategies are complied with and exceeded wherever possible.** This includes vegetation clearance, earthworks, discharges and nutrient impacts to land and water, works in and around waterbodies and wetlands and activities in the coastal environment.

6P To protect and restore soil health and minimise impacts on wetland soil types:

- a. Using appropriate methods to minimise erosion
- b. Undertaking soil quality restoration activities such as indigenous vegetation restoration
- c. Restoring peat formation processes
- d. Through Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) process, allowing beneficial and minimal impact land uses

11P To support a precautionary approach to minimising impacts on natural, cultural, landscape and

recreation values, also considering possible benefits, by incorporating the Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) into decision making processes (Refer AEE Guide, Appendix 2.)

12P To apply the management effects hierarchy prioritising the avoidance of impacts, then minimising, then remedying informed by an AEE

Recreation activities, visitor enjoyment and safety

40P To support good access and facilities for horse riding and implement appropriate access management systems

Planning processes

74P To meet, and exceed wherever practicable, the requirements of relevant statutes, National Policy Statements, other national policies and strategies and Greater Wellington policies, plans and strategies and consider network utilities and emergency service needs

Plan Rules (Section 8) identify all grazing as high impact Restricted activity and requires AEE assessment process and that ‘sustainability practices apply to all licences’. Appendices 2 and 3 outline requirements. Horse grazing directly supporting temporary recreation activities such as overnight camping events is identified as a Managed activity and also requires AEE consideration (via a check list and concession conditions for managing impacts).

Appendices two and three of Toitū Te Whenua outline the requirements of the Restricted Activity and AEE process. A detailed AEE was not prepared for a new horse trekking licence proposal with associated grazing, because site investigations found insufficient areas of park to support another horse trekking concession in the park.

The most relevant Toitū Te Whenua Actions are:

All parks Actions

A5 Develop and implement a planned approach to removing livestock and non-recreation related horse grazing from parks (except Battle Hill) to support conservation and recreation objectives.

QEP specific Actions

A328 Progressively reduce grazed areas classified as originally being wetland and over time restore hydrological functions and native flora following original habitat classification, water sensitive design, hydrology best practice and science expert advice. Progressively rewet peat land to stop further degradation and undertake riparian planting throughout the park.

A334 Where continual erosion is occurring, including sand blow outs, remove impacts such as stock or weeds and restore to native habitat.

A340 Identify a range of sustainable land use improvements to minimise impacts on soil and water health from recreation related horse grazing and incorporate changes into licences as they are reviewed.

A341 Protect and improve freshwater biodiversity through the implementation of a sustainable ‘farm environment plan’ for areas where grazing activities may continue including horse grazing.

A344 Equestrian opportunities (Recreation) – Explore options through master planning for co-location and improvement of equestrian facilities for all groups to enhance the park as a casual riding and equestrian sports destination.

A350 Investigate options for supporting equestrian events further

A351 Trail enhancements. Consider the identified community proposals for trails and improvements through the proposed master planning process for the park including:

- Bridle way trails for horse riders

A360 Develop and implement conservation management plans to ensure protection of significant cultural heritage sites and/or assets in liaison with mana whenua and others, such as:

- The modified landscapes of Whareroa and Wainui pa's
- The US Marine camp sites
- Mackay's Crossing Stables (listed as barn – horse stables under the Kāpiti Coast District Council District Plan)

A364 Support Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai in realising their goals so that 'Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai are able to protect the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of their people and all visitors to the park' and 'The Park and Whareroa catchment are nationally recognised due to them being returned to their natural state' Values and Aspirations Relating to QE Park Statement 2018

10. What other statutory plans and policies apply?

National Policy Statement. Amongst others, the requirements of the [Freshwater NPS](#) include:

Manage freshwater in a way that 'gives effect' to Te Mana o te Wai:

- *through involving tangata whenua*
- *working with tangata whenua and communities to set out long-term visions in the regional policy statement*
- *prioritising the health and wellbeing of water bodies, then the essential needs of people, followed by other uses.*

11. Which areas of park were considered and excluded from consideration for future horse trekking business related grazing or use, and what were the considerations?

The objective of the overall review was to ensure that decision making was as evidence based as possible, focusing on beneficial outcomes for the park and people (as outlined in Toitū Te Whenua).

Toitū Te Whenua identifies horses have been grazed on the same land for 20+ years (Action A340). Action A341 identifies the need to protect and improve freshwater biodiversity. Sufficient hectare areas to support resting of paddocks, and allow low horse carrying capacity to reduce soil compaction and other impacts and areas away from wetlands, streams (e.g. to reduce sediment and nutrient run off) were sought.

Areas investigated for possible future horse trekking business grazing were limited to:

- The formerly stock grazed areas of the park
- Those areas not already part of the Recloaking Papatūānuku Parks Restoration Programme or in the process of restoration by mana whenua, conservation and community groups

Areas of park deemed inappropriate for possible future horse grazing and excluded included:

- Coastal duneland and inland duneland slope areas over fifteen degrees, with wetland basins and areas with signs of erosion (identified during site visits)
- High value native ecosystems – all peat soils, the 'poplar avenue wetland extension', all KNE areas, all the kahikatea pukatea forest area, refer next map (which is Map 25 in Toitū Te Whenua).
- Areas where there was incompatibility with other existing recreation activities e.g., adjacent to aeromodellers or the main eventing area which is also regularly used for event parking

- Areas needed for park operations e.g., old dairy shed in northern park, or where there were known security or other operational issues
- Wetland areas (refer maps)
- Archaeological sites or areas/values identified by mana whenua as being important for protection
- Kapiti Pony Club licence and surrounding areas identified as wetlands, steeper dunelands or restoration areas. Approximately 1.6 ha of former clean fill site within the pony club licence was identified as possible grazing area. This area is set to become the main northern park entry off Poplar Avenue and could be a suitable location for overnight horse camping. Uses of this area including the Kapiti Pony Club barn (if it becomes available) will be investigated in the master planning process in 2023. The area is of insufficient size to support a horse trekking business with associated grazing but it could also be suitable as weekend holding paddocks for horse trekking horses. Kapiti Pony Club has reported ongoing security issues.

Investigation of possible future horse trekking business related grazing areas included officers from across GW areas of expertise including parks, biodiversity, environmental science, land management, strategic planning, and external consultants.

Both current horse grazing agreement holders were notified of the process and provided input in relation to their needs, practical knowledge of the park and operational considerations. Fragmented small areas of grazing far from park entrances or services were not considered to be an appropriate practical solution. Small holding paddocks for floating of horses for weekend treks was also not considered to be workable financially for a new horse trekking proposal. This will however be considered further through the master planning process in 2023.



Restoration plantings are progressing across the park by mana whenua, community groups and GW through the Low Carbon Acceleration Fund which supports the parks restoration programme 'Recloaking Papatūānuku'

12. What are the different groups of wetlands?

Three groups of wetlands have been identified:

Historic wetlands are areas that used to be wetland that no longer meet the RMA definition of wetland but are good areas for wetland restoration.

RMA wetlands, as used in this context, refer to areas that currently qualify as wetland under the definition in the RMA but don't meet the test to be included as "natural wetland" according to the [National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management](#) (i.e. they are wetlands that were not created for a particular purpose, geothermal in origin or qualify as improved pasture). They are good areas for wetland restoration.

Natural wetlands are those areas that meet the RMA definition of wetland and were not constructed by artificial means, geothermal wetlands; or qualify as improved pasture. Natural wetlands are protected under the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management and the regional Natural Resources Plan. They must not be grazed.

In addition to wetland 'groups' there are wetland 'types'. There are many different types of wetlands. Identification and further mapping of all the different types of wetlands in the park will be undertaken as part of wetland restoration planning work. To date 'peat bog', 'swamp' (flax or forest), 'marsh' and 'fen' type wetlands have been found. A natural spring was also found within the Kapiti Stables licence area during the Restricted Activity Assessment process.

Storytelling proposed in the park will help raise awareness of the importance and variety of wetlands and their functions they contribute to overall park and whenua ecosystem health.

13. Why won't GW continue to permit horse grazing on all the different groups and types of wetlands and what is the policy basis for this decision?

The Toitū Te Whenua policy basis for decision making is outlined above in question 8. Other national and regional policies apply, as well as the Resource Management Act.

Greater Wellington's Natural Resources Plan (NRP) policies and rules apply to private and public land in the region. In the NRP, the most relevant rule is Rule R98, Livestock access to a surface water body or the coastal marine area. Livestock is defined in NRP to include horses, except while they are being used for transportation. Under Rule R98(a) if the Natural wetland is identified in [Schedule A3 \(outstanding natural wetlands\)](#) or [Schedule F3 \(identified natural wetlands\)](#), then all livestock must be excluded.

Note: The QEP wetlands have only recently been identified so they are not yet within Schedule A3 or F3 of the NRP. To ensure that the currency of the NRP is maintained, these and other newly defined wetlands will be added in a future amendment.

Under Rule R98(d)(ii) if the natural wetland is more than 0.05ha then stock access, including by horses, shall not result in more than minor damage, e.g. to vegetation, water quality, aquatic ecosystems or by pugging of soil. This rule applies from the time a Natural wetland is identified.

This image shows an area of QEP to the west of the Old Farm Track. The field investigation by GW scientists has defined it as being a Natural Wetland. This area shows extensive pugging from temporary horse grazing. Horses were moved here from the Kapiti Stables licence area when these areas became too wet for grazing in winter 2022. Other areas of Natural wetland are defined on maps 2-5 below.



This image shows an area of park now defined as RMA wetlands. Whilst horses may be able to be grazed in this area without causing damage, GW is following the statutory policies of Toitū Te Whenua in its decision to no longer graze any wetland areas of the park and focus on restoration and low impact activities. Refer to Toitū Te Whenua policies above.



This image shows the park area to the west of the Kapiti Stables barn which scientists have identified as 'Historic' wetland. It is currently used for Kapiti Stables grazing and parking for events by groups such as Eventing Wellington. Refer map 2 below. This area will no longer be grazed, but event parking and some low impact activities may continue. GW's master planning and restoration planning processes will consider future directions for this area in more detail.



Restoring wetlands in the region is a priority given only 3% remain. GW has adopted a precautionary approach to avoid grazing any identified wetlands. This is to support Toitū Te Whenua policy directions and the Plan vision for restoring healthy ecosystems across parks. The Toitū Te Whenua vision is **'Restoring healthy ecosystems for the benefit of nature and people'**. This is Council and

communities long term vision for parks. Discontinuing high impact activities such as grazing of wetlands or fragile dune lands supports this vision.

14. What was the wetland assessment methodology?

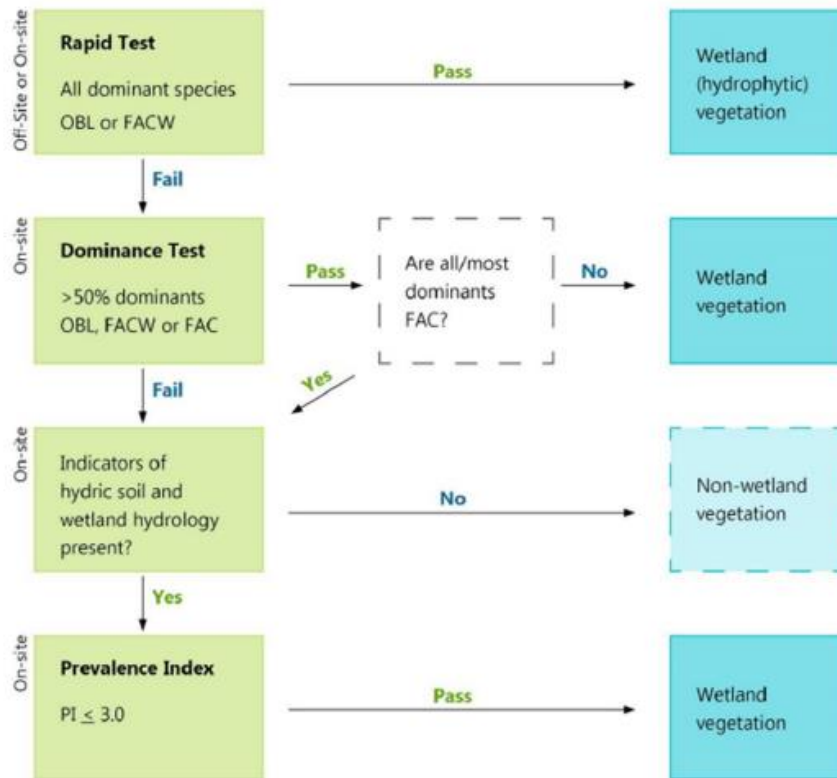
The assessment method used to identify the presence or absence of wetlands followed the 2020 Ministry For the Environment “Wetland Delineation Protocol”, using the 2021 Wetland Plant list.

Wetland ecologists walked the project area paddock by paddock, determined if normal circumstances existed, and carried out a “Rapid assessment for wetland presence” (see Figure 1 below). A delineation of each wetland area was then determined. There were three wetland states determined. 1) natural wetland – Subject to all the rules and regulations. 2) RMA wetlands – Not subject to the rules and regulations. Suitable for native ecological restoration, but not suitable for grazing. 3) historic wetlands – Not subject to the rules and regulations. Suitable for grazing or restoration. Maps showing each of these outcomes have been created. The maps below indicate the **extent of wetlands** found within the Kāpiti Stables licence area and adjoining areas.

Other considerations in determining areas suitable for grazing were dune stability, slope, native species present, mana whenua values expressed for the park, the presence of streams, other recreation activities and concessionaires such as Kāpiti Aeromodellers, and the compatibility or safety of proximity of these activities to horses and archaeological sites. The investigation process to see if we could find highly sustainable horse grazing areas was extensive (refer Q3 and Toitū Te Whenua Appendix 3)

Note these maps only show wetlands. They do not map anything else. Whilst the identification of wetlands was a key part of decision making, other key considerations are outlined in Q8 and Q9 above. All grazing on ‘Natural’ wetlands will cease at the end of the licence period on 30 November 2022.

Figure 1: Flow chart of steps for hydrophytic (wetland) vegetation determination. Wetland indicator status abbreviations: FAC= facultative; FACW = facultative wetland; OBL = obligate wetland.



7. The above procedure will be used in the vast majority of wetland delineations. However, recent disturbance or abnormal environmental conditions may result in atypical or problematic wetland situations in which one or more of the three criteria (vegetation, hydrology, soils) is/are absent. In these cases, more information and quantitative data will be required and the US procedures for these situations are recommended (sections E–G in Environment Laboratory 1987, and subsequent updates).

The survey results for the Kapiti Stables and surrounding areas were as follows and the findings are maps 2-5 below:

All sand dunes within this area of Queen Elizabeth Park with a slope greater than 15 degrees are unsuitable ecologically for horse grazing. Vegetation on the dunes during drought and dry periods is sparse and there is a strong likelihood of the thin organic layer being broken and the underlying loose sands being exposed to erosion.

Survey 2 – Kapiti Stables - leased paddocks and area options

Paddocks South of Whareroa road

Eventing paddock 1 south of Whareroa road (Water jump)

Natural wetland detected. Much of the remainder of the paddock RMA and historic wetland. The line of the eventing circuit was through the natural wetland in places, including the marines natural wetland. The native macrophyte pond plant *Myriophyllum propinquum*, was the dominant species in the constructed water jump.

Soil pit 1 = Wetland. Profile – Humic to 150 cm deep, 150cm – 300cm mottled dark organic silty loam, water table at 250cm.

Dominant wetland vegetation

Juncus effusus var. *effusus*, *Juncus planifolius*, *Juncus sarophorus*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Isolepis cernua* var. *cernua*, *Isolepis prolifera*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Holcus lanatus*, and *Rumex crispus*.

Eventing paddock 2 south of Whareroa road (First valley)

Natural wetland detected. Much of the remainder of the paddock RMA and historic wetland. The line of the eventing circuit was through the natural wetland in places. Obvious wheel ruts, occasional browse, and trampling noted.

Soil pit 1 = Wetland. Profile – Humic to 150 cm deep, 150cm – 300cm iron mottles, water table at 250cm.

Soil Pit 2 = Wetland. Profile – Organic/humic to 100cm, 1-200cm mottled organic silty loam, 2-300 Heavily iron mottled silty loam. Watertable 250cm

Dominant wetland vegetation

Eleocharis acuta, *Juncus planifolius*, *Juncus effusus* var. *effusus*'occ', *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Isolepis cernua* var. *cernua*, *Holcus lanatus*.

Eventing paddocks south of Whareroa road – Tanks & Yankee trail.

Natural and RMA wetland detected. These open water wetlands are situated amongst tall dunes. Light trampling and browse of the natural wetlands was observed.

No soil pits dug.

Dominant wetland vegetation

Glyceria declinata, Juncus sarophorus, Agrostis stolonifera, Rumex crispus, Juncus articulatus, Isolepis prolifera, paspalum distichum.

Paddocks north of the Whareroa road. (Map 2, Kapiti stables current licence area)

Map2 Paddock 3.3ha. – West of the farm road and adjacent between road and whareroa stream

Natural wetlands detected. The remainder of the paddock is RMA wetland with an area of historic wetland at the southern end.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 100mm, 100 -170mm decomposed peat, 170 – 300mm silty clay. Watertable – 270mm

Map 2 Paddock 2.47ha. Far flats – West of the farm road and adjacent between road and whareroa stream

Natural wetlands detected. The remainder of this paddock is either RMA or historic wetland.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 150mm, 150 – 170 organic silty loam, 170 – 300mm decomposed peat. Water table – 300mm

Map 2 Paddock 8.94ha? Southern hill – Long paddocks, true right of Whareroa stream

Natural wetlands detected adjacent to Whareroa stream. The remainder of the flat/depression areas of the paddock are probably historic (Not confirmed) or RMA wetland. Paddock becomes wetter and contains more natural wetland as you go south. Much of the northern portion of the paddock is historic wetland.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Mixed organic and silty loams 0 – 300mm. Water table – 300mm

Soil Pit 2 = Wetland – Profile Mixed organic and silty loams 0 – 300mm. Water table – 290mm

Map 2 - Paddock 13.63ha Model Airstrip

Two natural wetlands detected. The remainder of this large paddock contains a number of flat/depression areas of the paddock that are probably historic (Not confirmed) or RMA wetland amongst tall sand dunes in the south which become low and gentle closer to Whareroa stream. The natural depressions that flow north towards Whareroa stream are isolated from much of the remainder of the paddock and possibly good candidates from wetland restoration perspective.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Clay loams with iron mottles to 200mm, 200 – 300mm Sandy loam with reduced chromes'. Water table – 290mm.

Soil Pit 2 = Wetland – Profile Mixed sandy humic & loams to 200mm, 200 – 300mm sandy loam with occasional mottles.

Water table – 280mm Puddles on the ground surface.

Map 2 – Kapiti stables triangular horse paddock

No natural wetland detected. This paddock totally is made up of RMA and historic wetlands with the areas of RMA wetland containing mostly open water over pasture and buttercup.

No Soil Pits dug.

Map 2 - Paddock 0.47ha Stables horse paddock

No natural wetland detected. This paddock totally is made up of RMA and historic wetlands.

Map 2 - Paddock 14.18ha Horse paddock

Two natural wetlands detected. The remainder of the paddock is historic or RMA wetland. The paddocks closest to SH1 were extremely wet and much had a water depth of 400mm. The paddocks became drier closer to the main farm access road.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 70mm, 70 – 300mm Silty loam with mottles. Water table – 270mm.

Soil Pit 2 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 100mm, 100 – 300mm Silty loam with mottles. Water table – 300+mm. Soils below 300mm - pallic

Soil Pit 3 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 100mm, 100 – 280mm Sandy loam with mottles, 280 – 300mm Stoney gravels (Old stream bed?). Water table – 300+mm.

Soil Pit 4 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 100mm, 100 – 300mm Sandy loam with mottles. Water table – 250mm.

Soil Pit 5 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 130mm, 130 – 135 Stoney mottled soils, 135 – 300mm Silty loam with reduced chromes'. Water table – 250mm.

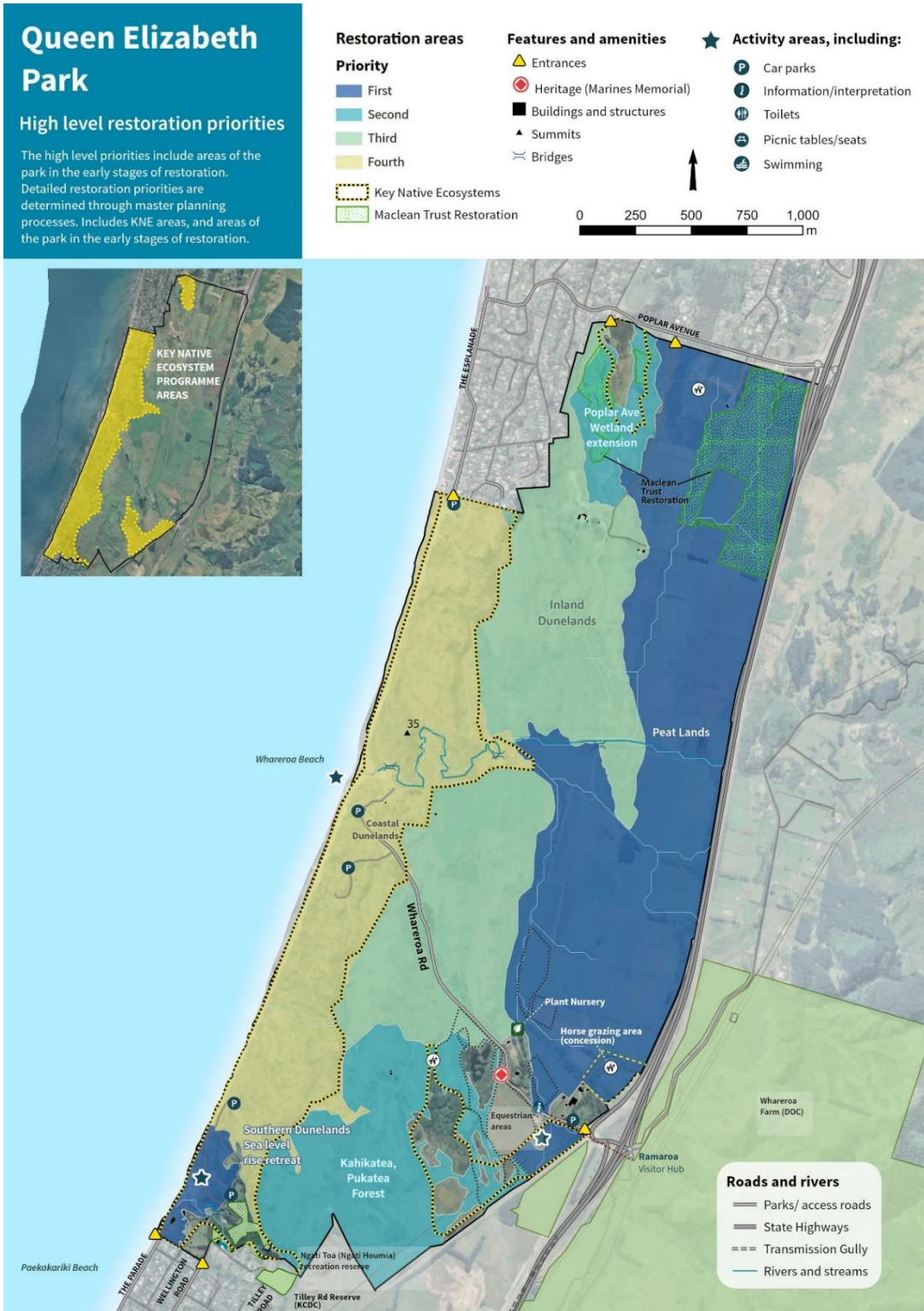
Map 2 - Paddock 5.73ha Horse paddock

Two natural wetlands detected. The remainder of the paddock is historic or RMA wetland. The paddocks closest to SH1 were extremely wet with a water depth of 400mm. The paddocks became drier closer to the main farm access road. A possible spring was also detected with a strong flow. However investigation of this spring is needed to positively determine it is natural.

Soil Pit 1 = Wetland – Profile Humic sandy loams to 200mm, 200 – 300mm silty loam with iron mottles. Water table – 220mm.

Soil Pit 2 = Wetland – Profile Humic to 150mm, 150 – 300mm highly degraded peats. Water table – 270mm.

Map 1.



KEY NATIVE ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME AREAS

Roads and rivers

- Parks/ access roads
- State Highways
- Transmission Gully
- Rivers and streams

15. How is Kāpiti Stables supporting their grazing agreement holders?

Rachael Martin of Kāpiti Stables has informed us that she has been actively working to find grazing opportunities on the Kāpiti Coast and has been successful in *'finding grazing for the graziers horses so far on the Kapiti Coast. There have been several offers of grazing on the Kapiti Coast, Horowhenua and Wellington which are being explored by the graziers.'*

Greater Wellington greatly appreciates the support that Rachael has provided throughout the review process to investigate other possible options for a horse trek business with associated grazing in the park. She has providing valuable operational considerations and information throughout this process and worked closely with QEP park rangers in moving horses where and when required.

16. We have 'plenty' of wetlands why do we need to restore these ones?

There are National, Regional and District level policies and regulations which aim to protect and restore the wetlands that remain in the Wellington Region. With less than three per cent of the region's wetlands remaining, it has become even more important to protect them from impacts such as grazing.

Wetlands are considered a priority for restoration and to support climate change mitigation and minimisation. The QEP peat wetlands are also very important from a climate change perspective, as degrading peat is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy wetland environments are more resilient and help to provide a buffer for flooding and storm events.

The identification of the wetland across QEP areas means they will now be prioritised for restoration via our regional park restoration programme, Recloaking Papatūānuku. For more information on why wetlands are important visit [this page](#).



Greater Wellington scientists also discovered what appears to be a significant spring in the park where the horses have been grazing. This area will be investigated further and protected



Natural wetlands in Eventing course area were also found



The basins of duneland such as this have also been found to be Natural, RMA or Historic wetlands. This area is no longer considered to be appropriate for grazing. Kapiti Stables grazing licence horses were temporarily moved here when the licence area paddocks became too wet to support good animal husbandry in the winter. Some of the Eventing Wellington cross-country jumps will be relocated in future to protect these areas.

17. Wont the removal of grazing lead to an increase in fire risk?

Fire history for the park indicates that most fires start with unattended beach fires. The small fire in the park in 2020 was also started by people (using machinery when conditions were dry). Working with others such as KCDC is important to help reduce fire threat from human activities. GW standard operating procedures have been updated. We have a fire threat management plan for the park which details a range of operational measures to manage seasonal fire threat and minimise risks of ignition (such as use of machinery when moisture content levels of vegetation are low). Restoring wetlands is one of these, along with mowing grass verges beside tracks, and actively working with others to reduce incidence of fire from unattended beach fires in Raumati South. Historically this and other human activities are the main cause of fire according to Fire and Emergency NZ data.



Restoring wetlands reduces fire threat and prevalence of weeds such as gorse and blackberry

18. How is gorse managed in the park?

Greater Wellington requires a resource consent to remove pest plant species from wetlands, which includes spraying and mulching. We are currently working towards getting this consent. All pest plant species in non-wetland areas will be controlled when those area are ready for restoration planting. We are planning to plant approximately 80Ha at QEP in the next planting season. Followed by a further 80Ha in the 24/25 planting season. The QEP nursery group, Friends group and others are also undertaking restoration works in the park.

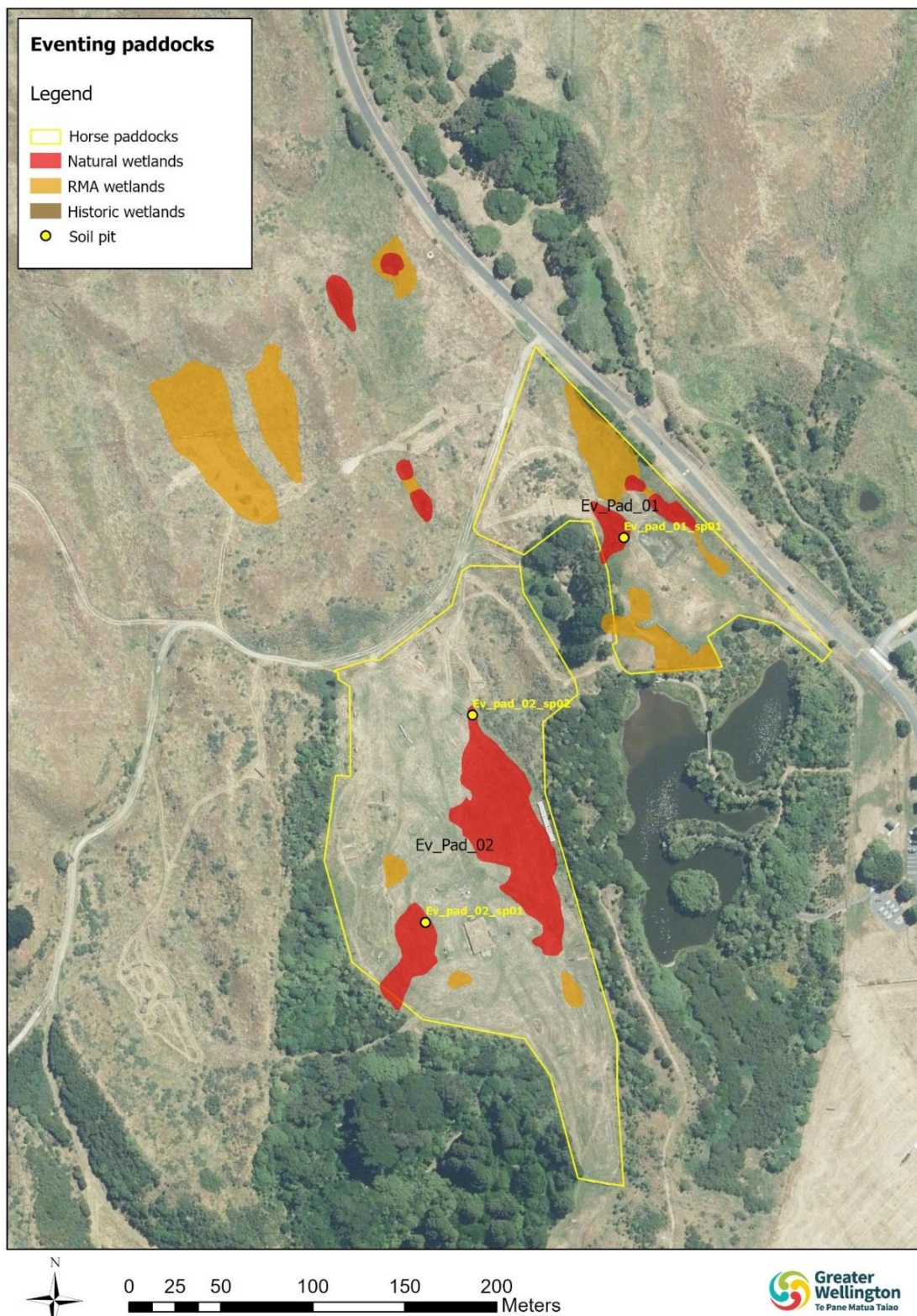
Map 2.



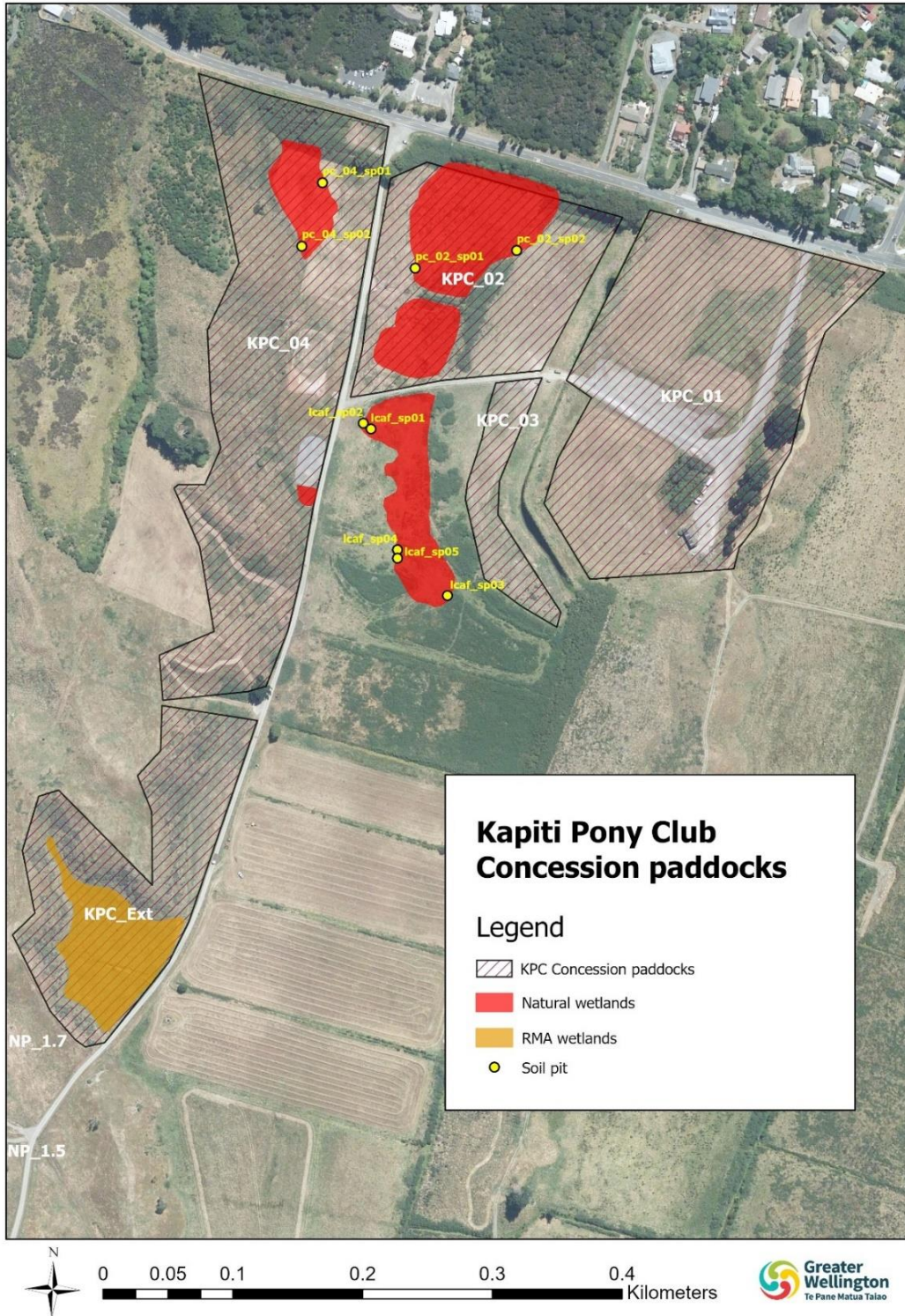
Map 3.



Map 4.



Map 5.



19. There aren't many riding opportunities in Kāpiti, why would Greater Wellington further reduce recreation opportunities and why can't recreation grazing continue at QEP without the commercial trekking activity?

Our focus is quite the opposite. We are working to improve facilities for casual equestrian use in the park. With the exit of commercial stock grazing in 2020 many new shared-use tracks have been opened for horse riding and more are planned. Park Rangers are currently working on opening a new entrance for horse floats off Poplar Avenue. This will be a quite large and enable riders to easily access the trails and beach starting from the northern part of the park.

The focus of Toitū Te Whenua is protection and enhancement of the natural environment for the benefit of people and nature. Any activity regardless of its commercial or non-commercial or recreation status is assessed based on **park values, impacts and benefits**. Refer back to Q3 for an illustration.

Impacts on park values and avoiding and minimising these is the primary consideration.

An insufficient area of park was found where natural values where natural, recreation or operational values would not be adversely impacted by a horse trekking business with associated grazing.

Fortunately, a new, more sustainable area was found for the pony club who had also been in a wetland and fragile duneland area.

For high impact activities to continue, overall benefits must outweigh impacts. When benefits are considered, in the case of Kapiti Stables, their licence agreement had two components, trekking horses and casual grazing. Trekking activities are more broadly beneficial than casual grazing for personal benefit.

The focus of GW management activities for broader equestrian benefits is improving trails and other facilities so many people can enjoy experiences in parks.



Park Rangers have installed mounting blocks such as this one for equestrian visitors to the park

20. How do we make our thoughts heard about equestrian facilities in the park?

In 2023 there will be two periods of public consultation to develop a detailed master plan for the park in liaison with mana whenua and community. This will build on the suggested improvements already outlined in [Toitū Te Whenua](#) see Map 24, page 24. The master plan will expand on the management plan in more detail and be focused just on QEP.

This will be a great opportunity for everyone to suggest changes about things such as new or linking tracks, spots for an equestrian arena, adaptive reuse of the current Kāpiti Pony Club green barn at the northern end of the park or other facilities. The Plan rules allow for camping in the park, suggestions about overnight horse camping facilities will be welcomed too. Greater Wellington fully supports casual riding in the QEP which is a recreation reserve, provided important cultural and environmental values are protected, preserved and enhanced. The interests of the equestrian community are important and want to encourage recreation in the park. Whilst horse grazing opportunities are limited, the focus is firmly on improved horse float parking and opening new tracks and welcoming increased casual riding and horse trekking throughout the park. We want to maintain equestrian activity and allow it to thrive, but without negative impacts on biodiversity, freshwater, cultural values and climate change mitigation opportunities



Map 6.

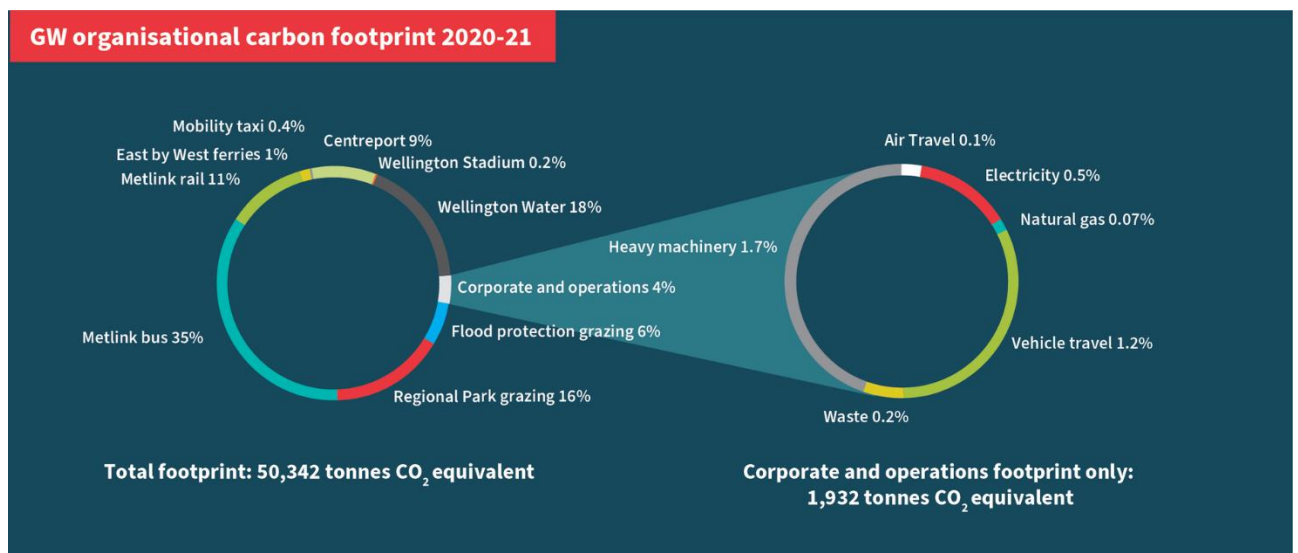


21. What uses are Greater Wellington planning for the Kāpiti Stables black wooden barn at Mckays Crossing?

No decisions have been made about this yet. There are interests from groups such as flax weavers and others. It’s an important park facility and its use will be considered carefully. Toitū Te Whenua policy for facilities is for shared uses wherever possible to ensure maximum benefits for more people.

22. Does grazing really impact Greater Wellingtons carbon footprint?

Yes. Grazing is a significant source of greater wellingtons emissions. We declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set a big, bold target to be carbon neutral by 2030. The carbon footprint for the GW Group of companies is compiled to show trends of greenhouse gas emissions (emissions) over time. GW has committed to an annual external audit by [Toitū Envirocare](#) this allows GW to track changes in emissions to understand where opportunities to reduce emissions exist. Grazing is a significant source of greater wellingtons emissions. To meet our 2030 target it is an emissions source we need to maintain focus on reducing. Toitū Te Whenua identifies ‘Healthy Park ecosystems are a natural solution, carbon sinks, resilient and reducing the effects of climate changes’.



23. What restoration work is planned for the former Kapiti Stables licence area?

In the 2022/23 planting season some initial plantings will be undertaken in the area surrounding the spring near the Old Farm Track. In the other Natural wetland areas (as per map xx) weed management work will take place to support natural processes of native vegetation regrowth.

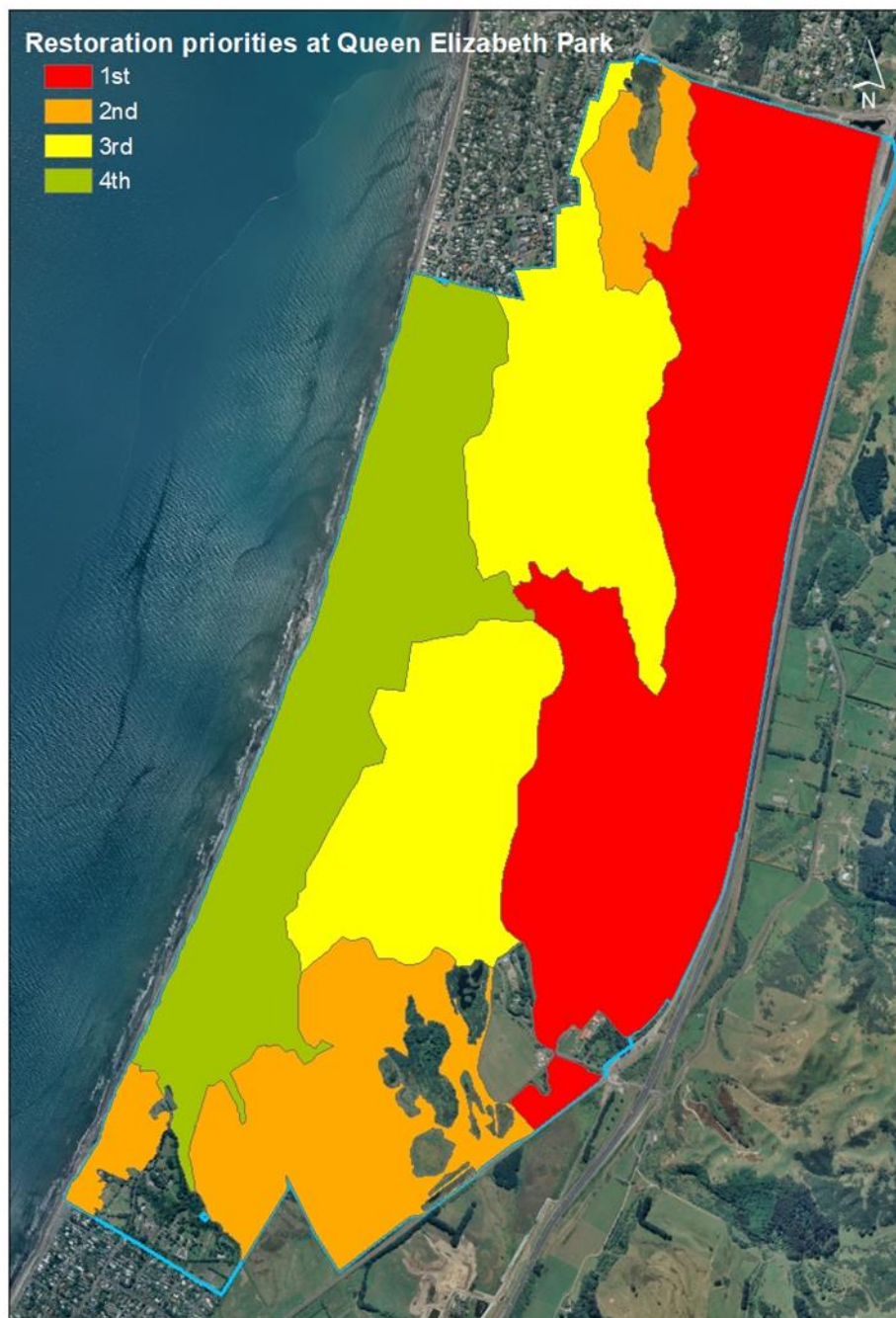
In 2023/24 there will be more extensive restoration work in these areas and GW is aiming to develop a short trail for viewing and storytelling in the spring area. Much of the farming and grazing related infrastructure including fences, water troughs and gates will be removed. These materials will be stockpiled and sold and also used to support other agency work to enhance horse grazing (such as KCDC Otara Park or DOC's Whareroa Park). Mana whenua Rongoa restoration work and various community group plantings is also taking place throughout the central areas of the park. The GW website pages will be updated with more details about the Recloaking Papatūānuku restoration programme and opportunities for everyone to get involved.



24. What are the overall restoration priorities at QEP?

This map identifies high level priorities determined by GW Environmental Science

Map 7



25. More information?

For more information about any of these questions and answers please contact parks@gw.govt.nz or parksplanning@gw.govt.nz

For information about Kāpiti Stables Trekking and grazing licence and concession please contact Kāpiti Stables directly via their website: [Kapiti Stables](http://www.kapitistables.co.nz) email or social media pages. Note that the business closes on 30 November 2022

If you wish to add your contact details to the database for correspondence about parks planning and master planning processes please email to opt in: parksplanning@gw.govt.nz

