



## **Feedback from Civic Trust Auckland**

### **Regional Parks Management Plan Review**

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#### **1. Civic Trust Auckland**

- 1.1. Civic Trust Auckland (CTA) is a non-profit public interest group, incorporated in 1968, with activities and interests throughout the greater Auckland region.
- 1.2. CTA wrote a submission on the 2010 Regional Parks Management Plan (RPMP).
- 1.3. The objects of the Trust which are relevant to the RPMP Review are:
- a) To promote the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, lakes and rivers (including their margins), associated flora and fauna, and protection of this natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
  - b) To promote the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers.
  - c) To promote the recognition and protection of the heritage value of sites, buildings, places or areas.
  - d) To promote the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and the quality of the environment.
  - e) To acknowledge the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wahi tapu and other taonga.

1.4. CTA's constitution aligns with the protection and enhancement of the current regional parks, as well as the expansion of them and the increase in their number.

#### **2. Value of Regional Parks**

2.1. There is nothing in the 2010 RPMP that CTA disagrees with. We strongly support all the 19 principles.

2.2. CTA values Auckland's regional parks as high-quality and well-regarded amenities for the city and region. This is partly due to their unbuild, natural character, where people can feel they are able to have some respite from the city.

**2.3.** The different characteristics of the individual parks mean that they have differing appeal and can also serve different functions. In general, in our view, the parks already provide all that can be expected of them, and we would like to see them unchanged, in order for them to continue to provide these functions and for future generations to enjoy them.

**2.4.** CTA recognises that the need to protect and enhance the regional parks becomes more important as the region's population increases and as the problems of climate change and loss of biodiversity become more urgent.

**2.5.** We also recognise that regional parks are important in preserving aspects of Auckland's unique landscapes, biodiversity and heritage, particularly in protecting the coast from development.

**2.6.** We recognise the value of the learning through experience programmes on regional parks which connect children to nature and raise their awareness of the natural, historic and cultural values of regional parks

### **3. Revenue Gathering**

**3.1.** Free entry to all regional parks (Principle 8 in the RPMP) is very important and should remain.

**3.2.** We do not consider making the parks pay their way through commercial and revenue-making activities to be a useful approach. As noted in the 2010 RPMP (page 10): "The regional parks make a contribution to the regional economy in a variety of ways. The parks provide the outdoor lifestyle that contributes to the quality of life that makes the Auckland region an attractive place to live and work. They attract people to the region and thereby enhance the economic viability of Auckland competing on the global stage. Enjoyed by over five million visitors each year, the parks also contribute indirectly to local service and retail economies through people travelling to the parks; and directly through the cost of developing, managing and farming the parks."

**3.3.** We are not of the opinion that Auckland Council should aim to gather more revenue through activities on parks.

**3.4.** We would not support, without a good case for it, regional parks hosting more large-scale events, a zipline adventure or a broader range of accommodation, though we would possibly support a revenue-gathering treetop walkway as long as there was minimal impact on the surrounding area and it was guaranteed to be safe.

**3.5.** We have the following suggestions for revenue gathering:

- a donations box at the entrance to each park
- community gardens/allotments on some parks, users paying an annual fee
- reinstatement of the Rainforest Express (perhaps an electric version)
- memorial seats
- boardwalks with donors names on the boards (a set cost per board)
- honey production from native manuka
- low-scale horticultural operations.

**3.6.** Cafes may be suitable in some parks but only if they do not detract from the natural environment or compete with businesses nearby.

#### **4. Activities**

**4.1.** Parks encourage exercise and this is becoming more important as our population becomes less healthy and more overweight, and as our cities become more polluted. They are of benefit for mental health and for providing a place to be in nature, and where people can take family members or those under their care where they may walk at their own pace in an uncrowded situation.

**4.2.** CTA supports improving public health by promoting more active lifestyles such as walking and cycling, as noted on page 52 of the RPMP. We support walking and cycling trails between communities and regional parks, to benefit human health, as well as to reduce emissions.

**4.3.** Visitor activities that cause damage in a particular park should be limited. There should be other public or private places where such activities could take place without harm.

**4.4.** CTA supports designated areas of some parks being sanctuaries for endangered wildlife, where the public are not allowed to go.

**4.5.** In general, we prefer less developed regional parks.

**4.6.** We strongly support all commercial activities being automatically treated as discretionary activities.

**4.7.** We do not support increasing new activities that make the parks unavailable to the general public.

**4.8.** We would like to see radios banned from the parks, including the use of car radios.

**4.9.** Visitors should be encouraged to be considerate of other park users as regards cell phone use.

#### **5. Volunteer Activities**

**5.1.** Volunteers, including neighbours of parks, could be encouraged to take a greater role in caring for the parks. Aside from the assistance afforded for park maintenance, there is great benefit to individuals in taking part in a positive activity and getting to know people who live in their local area.

**5.2.** Volunteer activities should be recognised and supported by Council, particularly weed and pest control.

**5.3.** Volunteer groups tend to have a wealth of knowledge, and their views should be directly sought when plans are being developed for the park with which the group is associated.

**5.4.** We support trained and certified honorary rangers to supplement paid staff.

**5.5.** Visitors to the parks can be encouraged to help with weeding (hand pulling) during their visit. This has been done elsewhere in New Zealand, e.g., on Queenstown Hill, where visitors who climb the hill are encouraged to help cull the wilding pines.

## **6. Climate Change Emergency**

**6.1.** CTA is very aware of the global climate emergency. We made a submission on the Auckland's Climate Action Framework, which included the following: "We agree with the seven climate action outcomes for Aucklanders. We consider that Auckland Council is headed in the right direction to bring about the change that is needed but that it is moving too slowly. The focus should be on action."

**6.2.** We support restoration programmes that provide ecological corridors to enable indigenous species to move and adapt to changing conditions.

**6.3.** We support improving connectivity and links between ecosystem types, sequences and gradients to increase the viability and resilience of indigenous plants and animals. We support changing stock breeds and grass species to those more suited to projected climate changes.

**6.4.** The impact of rising sea levels should be incorporated into individual park plans, including measures to address the effects on archaeological, cultural and heritage resources.

## **7. Farming**

**7.1.** We recognise that open farmed landscapes enable broad landscape views, countryside character, recreational opportunities, close encounters with farm animals, and the opportunity to see farming in action. However, regional parks should not necessarily be seen as fulfilling all these roles. There are farms throughout New Zealand that provide a farm experience.

**7.2.** Farming of animals for consumption contributes largely to emissions, and the land on which this takes place could be better used for planting, including food plants. Furthermore, people are increasingly recognising the benefits to themselves and the planet of eating less meat.

**7.3.** We would like Council to consider reducing the size of farms, reducing the number of animals, and gradually changing to grasses that are not the type that farm animals eat, that do not need constant maintenance, and that are more resistant to climate change.

**7.4.** Education about farming should include facts about how beef and dairy herds in New Zealand are managed, and the ecological impact of this type of farming.

**7.5.** Farming should not use fossil fuels, pesticides or fertilizer.

**7.6.** Honey production and horticulture are more sustainable alternatives to cattle and sheep.

## **8. Planting**

**8.1.** CTA supports planting more trees rather than fewer, including the controlled planting of some faster-growing exotic trees to store carbon more quickly, if the research supports this, and the planting of trees to provide shade in picnic areas and on beaches.

**8.2.** Indigenous species should be prioritised, especially where certain species are the only ones that support indigenous biodiversity. However, if exotics also support

the same biodiversity, it would seem that the climate emergency should overrule any preference for indigenous species.

**8.3.** CTA supported the rāhui on the Waitākere Ranges in order to protect kauri. Auckland Council has a responsibility to protect these trees. We support proactive prevention of the spread of kauri dieback, including temporary or long-term track closures and quarantining of parkland where necessary, but see that this needs to be backed up by evidence, supported by consultation, and communicated clearly to the public and to special interest groups.

**8.4.** In addition to more food plant growing, we support food plant education. We suggest that some regional parks institute community gardens, where practicable and suitable. Gardeners could pay a small annual fee for their plot.

**8.5.** We note that members of the community can provide a significant volunteer workforce for more planting.

## **9. Vehicle Trips**

**9.1.** As electric vehicle adoption continues, greenhouse gas emissions due to travel will decrease. Compared with the emissions from work day travel where most cars have only one person in them, it would seem that trips to regional parks should take less blame for emissions. We suggest that Council focuses more on reducing emissions from commuting.

**9.2.** Electric vehicle charging stations are supported.

**9.3.** We do not support paid parking.

**9.4.** Council could encourage car pooling to the regional parks through an online service. This could be alongside the proposed initiative to provide information about the real-time capacity of carparks at the regional parks.

**9.5.** CTA suggests public transport be provided on nominated days of the year, perhaps with bookings to reserve a seat. This could be timed to fit in with a feature of a particular park, e.g., the blooming of a particular type of tree.

**9.6.** Another option is a shuttle bus running from a nearby local centre to the park. This would reduce the need for car parking at the park

**9.7.** We support ferry or water taxi services to coastal regional parks.

## **10. Mana Whenua**

**10.1.** Mana whenua input is important for the development and implementation of management plans.

**10.2.** Page 17 of the Discussion Paper (September 2020) states that “Protection of Māori heritage tends to align with protection of the environment.” Where it does not align, there needs to be discussion of the values that are being protected and whether the interests of all Aucklanders and the biodiversity of Auckland are being served.

**10.3.** We support the reintroduction of original Māori names for regional parks and within regional parks.

## **11. Amenities**

**11.1.** Consideration should be given in all the parks to the provision of toilets and baby change areas that cater for special needs users who may need assistance with toileting.

**11.2.** Toilet facilities within the parks should include the provision of sunblock.

**11.3.** We support solar panels on buildings that are already in situ, but not if this detracts from the landscape values.

**11.4.** We strongly support the zero-waste policy where visitors take home their rubbish and recycling.

**11.5.** It is our view that basic accommodation only is appropriate for regional parks.

**11.6.** As regards tracks, we note that a safe design principle is that all steps in a flight should be of uniform dimensions.

## **12. Conflicts between Park Users**

**12.1.** We understand that dogs are currently allowed on more than half of the regional parks. We have observed conflicts between dog owners and other users of the parks because dog owners do not always obey the rules to keep their dogs on-leash. We support spot fines being given by rangers for this violation of park rules.

**12.2.** Dogs should be required to be under control at all times when in a regional park, meaning, on a leash at all times. On-leash at all times in all parks provides certainty for both dog owners and those who do not take dogs to parks.

**12.3.** We would prefer fewer of the parks being open to dogs rather than more, and we feel strongly that there should always be a number of parks spread across the region that remain dog free, for the protection of the wildlife (especially ground birds) and for the wellbeing of people who have a fear of dogs.

**12.4.** Drones and amplified sound systems should be banned from all regional parks, due to their nuisance value.

**12.5.** Mobile phone connectivity should not be an expectation in every regional park. Most visitors to the parks value the peace and quiet of the parks.

**12.6.** E-scooters should not be permitted to be ridden in regional parks. They are becoming a form of litter on city streets and they are at least, a nuisance, and at most, a threat to pedestrians. E-scooters in parks would bring these problems with them.

**12.7.** If alcohol becomes more of a problem in regional parks, then its prohibition could be considered. The 2010 RPMP plan states that: "Less than three per cent of visitors use public transport and the vast majority of visitors travel using private vehicles" (page 52). We assume that no more than two per cent of visitors walk or cycle to parks, meaning that 95% of people arrive in a private vehicle. We assume that many of the drivers drink alcohol while in the park. Drinking and driving is irresponsible behaviour.

### **13. Codes of Conduct**

**13.1.** Although there is reference a number of times in the RPMP to codes of conduct (see 13.2 below), it is unclear whether any of these have been made available, and if so, where to find them. Searching on the Auckland Council website (<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/parks-recreation/Pages/search-index.aspx>) under “Code of Conduct,” amongst the six pages of codes of conduct, we could find only the “Regional Parks Horse Riding Network Pass Application form” that is a code of conduct that applies to regional parks.

**13.2.** The RPMP states on page 105 that: “The activity-specific conditions and model codes of conduct, with additional information on park-specific issues, will be communicated to park visitors through the council’s website, the council’s contact centre, the activity pass or booking confirmation and the ranger service. The model Park Care Code (refer to Appendix 3) is a high-level code for all park visitors. It will be used in park information, e.g. brochures and notice boards, and in education programmes.”

**13.3.** Our internet search found the “Model Park Care Code” only within the RPMP.

**13.4.** The Model Park Care Code needs revising to make it quicker to read and so that the information relevant to before leaving on a trip is placed at the start.

**13.5.** A review of the information provided on the Auckland Council website with regard to regional parks could be helpful. Some of this is unclear and some of it seems to conflict with the RPMP. We acknowledge that some changes will have been made to policies since 2010 and that rules for regional parks are not all the same.

**13.6.** The statement on the website in the “You need to know” section for a number of the parks says “Dogs must be on leash at all times in our parks unless otherwise stated in the dog walking section.” However, it is not clear where the dog walking section is.

**13.7.** As regards alcohol, the RPMP states, at 13.1.5.2: “Alcohol is currently permitted on all of the regional parks.” For at least some of the parks, the “You need to know” section states: “Visible and excessive consumption of alcohol is prohibited.” This is perhaps easily understood by most people, but perhaps examples could be provided. However, another page states: “Alcohol is banned from some public places in Auckland. See [Alcohol bans](#) to find out the rules for each park and view ban maps.” Misunderstandings can result if information is unclear and/or hard to find.

**13.8.** If this “You need to know” section is the Code of Conduct, then it seems somewhat bereft of information, as, in most cases, it covers only:

- Animals
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Waste
- Fire

### **14. Smoking and Fire**

**14.1.** CTA strongly supports regional parks being smoke free, for the reasons stated in the RPMP, and in light of the fact that New Zealand is on track to becoming smoke free in 2025.

**14.2.** Perhaps it could be made clear whether smoking is permitted inside a private vehicle.

**14.3.** We do not think charcoal fires should be provided in some parks, as we do not think the protection measures would be sufficient and there is the danger of the public thinking that if such fires are allowed in some parks, then they are allowed in all parks.

**14.4.** All fireworks should be prohibited, including on adjoining land, and there should be no managed displays.

**14.5.** We support solid fuel barbecues being replaced with electric or gas barbecues in class III parks.

## **15. Feedback**

**15.1.** CTA considers that the people who live locally to a particular regional park and use it often, alongside those working in the ranger service and other Auckland Council staff involved in the management and maintenance of the parks, will potentially provide the best feedback on the RPMP.

**15.2.** We expect that a small number of members of the public will be giving feedback at this stage of the consultation process. We note that at the time of finalising this submission, the online suggestion board had 88 comments, a small number relative to the more than 6 million visits to regional parks per year (our estimation, based on the RPMP foreword).

**15.3.** We encourage Council to explore further ways of eliciting feedback, such as in the parks themselves, both through verbal answering of selected questions, by the distribution of short forms to park visitors for them to fill in, and by having forms available at such places as the Arataki Visitor Centre. Those who arrive in private vehicles in a group or who come by public transport could be encouraged to fill in the form during their journey home.

**15.4.** If visitors could be encouraged to sign visitor books and answer some basic questions, this would provide information as to park usage and the purpose of visits.

## **16. Individual Parks**

### **16.1. Ambury**

We strongly support 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. Healthy eating, including less meat and less sugar, is important in the face of New Zealand's growing obesity problem.

### **16.2. Glenfern**

We support the proposal to create an environmental education centre at Glenfern Sanctuary.

**16.3. Muriwai**

Vehicles on Muriwai Beach, including motorbikes, have been reported by locals to be out of control, dangerous and destructive to the environment, including for nesting sites, seals and the dunes. Section 13.3.5 of the RPMP is not clear about the use of vehicles on beaches. What is “legitimate use”? Are rules available somewhere?

**16.4. Mutukaroa**

We recognise the significant volcanic and landscape values of Mutukaroa/Hamllins Hill and encourage their protection and preservation through maintenance and through restricting certain activities.

**16.5. Waitakere Ranges**

This is such an extensive and diverse area, with issues particular to it, that it should have its own plan; even some small city parks have their own plan. This plan (as per all Council plans) should be developed in robust collaboration with stakeholders, including local residents.

**16.5.1.** We are of the view that some tracks should stay closed to prevent the spread of kauri dieback but that such decisions should be made in consultation not only with experts but with those who know this area intimately, including volunteers.

**16.5.2.** CTA supports the protection of the darkness of the Waitakere Ranges for the purpose of viewing, studying and enjoying a dark night sky free from light pollution.

Date: 26 October 2020

Signature:



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Audrey van Ryn". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Audrey van Ryn  
Secretary, Civic Trust Auckland