



Report 07.15
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Committee Landcare
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East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan

1. Purpose

To consider adopting the East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan review began in May 2005. The management plan review, including consultation and preparation of the new plan, has been undertaken in accordance with section 619 of the Local Government Act 1974 and has followed statutory processes set out in the Reserves Act 1977.

Two public meetings were held on 2 June 2005 and 6 September 2006 respectively.

Fifty-four submissions were received in the first round of public submissions which closed on 30 June 2005. A summary of these submissions was considered by the Landcare Committee in March 2006 (report 06.62).

The draft East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan was released for public consultation in July 2006. A summary of the major changes to the plan was considered by the Landcare Committee in June 2006 (report 06.247).

The submission period on the draft management plan concluded on 25 September 2006 with 72 written submissions received. A copy of all submissions was made available to Councillors on 10 October 2006. A summary of the key issues raised by written submitters was considered by the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee on 17 October 2006 (report 06.574).

4. Hearing submissions and the final Management Plan

Twenty-six submitters were heard in support of their submissions at a hearing on 27 and 28 November 2006. Minutes of the Public Hearing on the East Harbour Regional Park Draft Management Plan were made available to Councillors on 11 December 2006 (report 06.734).

The main issues raised in the oral submissions related to the matters outlined below.

4.1 Duck Shooting on the Lakes Block

Some submitters raised that duck shooting has been taking place at the Pencarrow Lakes Block for a long period of time, while others raised concern that if duck shooting was to be banned, then the lakes would become a refuge for exotic ducks.

Submitters also suggested that the Pencarrow Lakes Block is very accessible to a population base. These issues relate to Policy 3.18, Table 2 (Activity Table), Use by Zone) in the draft management plan.

It should be acknowledged that duck shooting activities in the Lakes Block are not controlled by Greater Wellington, but rather by the Department of Conservation.

After considering all the written and oral submissions by the public, and advice from officers, the Hearings Committee recommends the plan allow access to the Lakes Block for duck hunting activities permitted under Department of Conservation conditions. The final plan should also allow hunting dogs, firearms and associated duck hunting equipment permitted in the Lakes Block if they are there for the purpose of duck hunting with a permit from DOC.

Changes have been made to Policy 3.28, Table 2 (Activity Table), Use by Zone, and the explanatory notes below this policy to incorporate these provisions. New policy numbers 3.38 and 3.39 have also been incorporated. Minor re-wording of the explanation section below (Recreational Duck Hunting) has also been made to acknowledge the Port Nicholson Block Treaty Claim over the Lakes. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.2 Recreational Deer and Pig Hunting

A number of submitters expressed concern that Greater Wellington was proposing a ban on recreational hunting of deer and pigs within East Harbour Regional Park as proposed in Policy 3.18, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone of the draft Plan.

There was concern expressed that no justification had been offered for the banning of recreational hunting within the park. Some submitters also felt that that the opportunities for recreational hunting are limited in the Wellington region close to a population base.

Safety was a key issue raised by a number of submitters, and the perception that hunting is “unsafe.” Submitters suggested that hunting is not unsafe, and that by holding a firearms licence, the majority of hunters are responsible.

Submitters also expressed concern that Greater Wellington was willing to pay for professional hunters in East Harbour Regional Park for animal control, when recreational hunting was not being allowed in the draft management plan.

A number of suggestions for compromises by submitters included:

- Implementing a balloted permit system
- Restricting the number of permits issued
- A restricted time period for hunting within the park

At the Hearing Deliberations, the Committee felt that hunting should continue in the park, however, recognised that it needed to be strictly managed to guard public safety.

Since the Hearing deliberations, officers have met with local recreational hunting representatives to discuss how the hunting of deer and pigs could be managed in the Park in co-existence with other recreational activities. The details of these discussions have not yet been finalised, but officers have offered some compromises for hunting in the Park. Please note officer’s propose to undertake further consultation with hunting representatives, neighbouring landowners and the environmental groups involved with the park to ensure that the implications of a managed hunting regime in the park are discussed with key stakeholders prior to this management plan being implemented.

Feedback to date from stakeholders suggests that managing recreational hunting of deer through a balloted permit system would ensure an equitable opportunity for all hunters. It was also suggested that the hunting of deer is best during a restricted time period over the roar period.

A designated hunting zone has been proposed in Gollans Valley Remote area (excluding the Butterfly Creek Picnic Area) as identified on Map 3 in Attachment 1 of this report. Due to the small size of the designated deer hunting zone (480 hectares) it is likely that a maximum of 2 permitted deer hunters will be allowed in the deer hunting area at one time for safety reasons

Other feedback from stakeholders also suggests that managing recreational hunting of pigs through a permitted system in the Northern Block only would be acceptable to pig hunters. It was also suggested that it may not be necessary to restrict pig hunting numbers, however issuing permits for a 3 or 6 month period during a time period 1 April to 30 September would be an effective way to manage pig hunting in the Park.

After considering all the written and oral submissions by the public, and advice from officers, the Hearings Committee recommends that recreational hunting be included within the Northern Forest Area as a managed activity in designated areas this has resulted in changes to Policy 3.28, Table 2 (Activity

Table), Use by Zone, and the explanatory notes below these policies. New policy numbers 3.35, 3.36, 3.37 have also been included. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan (Attachment 1).

4.3 Mountain Biking

Some submitters suggested that there is potential for mountain biking to co-exist with other recreational activities in the Northern Forest of the Park. This related to Policy 3.20, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone as proposed in the draft management plan which did not allow mountain biking in the Northern Forest.

A number of options for mountain biking were suggested by submitters relating to the restricting mountain biking to designated areas of the Northern Forest Zone.

After considering all the written and oral submissions by the public, and advice from officers, the Hearings Committee was comfortable that mountain biking wouldn't compromise other recreational users in the park if it was kept to specific tracks. Therefore, the final plan allows for mountain biking in designated tracks within the Northern Forest zone (Main Ridge track between Lowry Trig and Rata Street, through to Stanley Street) as well as in the Lakes Block as already provided for.

The inclusion of mountain biking in the Northern Forest zone results in changes to existing Policy 3.20, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone. Three new policies (3.22 – 3.25) also incorporate changes to mountain biking provisions. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.4 Dog walking in Northern Forest Zone and Gollans Valley Remote Area

A number of submitters expressed concern that there was little need to ban dogs in the Northern Forest Zone and the Gollans Valley Remote Area. These submitters were referring to the draft management plan provisions for dog walking (Policy 3.19, Table 2 (Activity Table)).

After considering all the written and oral submissions by the public, and advice from officers, the Hearings Committee recommends the following changes be made to the draft plan to be approved by the Landcare Committee.

The Hearings Committee is comfortable with dog walking within the Northern Forest and Gollans Valley Remote Area as long as they kept under control. However, it is proposed that dogs not be allowed in the Lakes Block except for duck hunting activity purposes because of the threat they pose to the local avian population there.

The inclusion of dog-walking within the plan results in changes to Policy 3.19 and 3.21, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone. New Policies 3.20 and 3.21 have also been added.

4.5 Camping

Some submitters expressed disappointment over the proposed 1-night stay restriction for camping in the Butterfly Creek Area. This related to the proposed restriction in Policy 3.22, Table 2 (Activity Table), Use by Zone of the draft management plan.

After it is consideration the Hearings Committee agreed that low-impact camping within the Gollans Valley Remote Area is an appropriate activity, except for in the Butterfly Creek Picnic area which is more suited to day users. A restriction on the length of stay was not considered to be critical, hence reference to this provision has been removed from the plan.

Changes to the camping regime result in amendments to Policy 3.22, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone in the draft management plan. Policy 3.28 and 3.29 have also been re-worded. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.6 Hang-gliding and paragliding

One submitter expressed that the proposed aircraft policy restrictions in the draft management plan (Policy 3.33, Table 2 (Activity Table), Use by Zone)) did not allow hang-gliding and paragliding activities to continue. These activities were not allowed under the proposed Aircraft Policy.

After consultation, the Committee consider that hang-gliding and paragliding activities in the park would not result in adverse effects to other park users. Consequently, it is proposed that these activities be allowed in Zones 1 and 4.

To accommodate non-motorised flight, a change has been made to Policy 3.33, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone. Also, Policy 3.45 has been re-worded. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.7 Horse Riding

A number of submitters expressed disappointment that it was proposed that horse riding be banned in the Lakes Block (Policy 3.21, Table 2 (Activity Table), Use by Zone)).

After consideration, the Committee considered that horse riding in the Lakes Block was an acceptable activity on designated tracks as specified by the Ranger, and with the Ranger's prior agreement.

The inclusion of horse-riding in the Lakes Block requires a change to the existing Policy 3.21, Table 2 (Activity Table), and Use by Zone in the draft management plan, and rewording of policies 3.26 – 3.27. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.8 Cultural/Heritage

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust submissions suggested re-wording of a number of sections within the draft plan to tighten up provisions relating to the

management and protection of cultural heritage, partnerships with Tangata Whenua, procedures around the discovery of artefacts, and archaeological authority.

The Hearings Committee recommends that the rewording of policies 2.25, 2.26, 2.30, 2.31, and 2.35 are appropriate and be approved by the Landcare Committee. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.9 Community Partnerships

It was recognised that Eastbourne Forest Ranger's contribution to management of the park had not been adequately acknowledged in the draft management plan.

Accordingly, the "Partnership in the Park" text box has been re-worded. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.10 Firearms

The Committee consider that the use of firearms for permitted deer hunters in the designated deer hunting area is appropriate. It is not anticipated that firearms will be allowed for pig hunting activities. To incorporate changes to the firearms provisions in the plan, there has been a change to Policy 3.29, and Table 2 (Activity Table), and some re-numbering and re-wording of Policy 3.40 – 3.41. Officers have incorporated these changes into the final plan.

4.11 Change of status of Lakes Block to Scenic Reserve

Some submitters suggested that it may be more appropriate for the Lakes Block to be zoned Scenic Reserve rather than Recreation Reserve to better reflect its values.

The Committee consider that the reserve status of the Lakes Block should remain as "Recreation Reserve," and that this matter be investigated at a later date. No changes were recommended to be made to the plan.

4.12 Access (Burdans Gate entrance)

One submitter expressed concern that there is the potential for conflict between landowners and park users, particularly at the Burdans Gate entrance to the park.

The Committee consider that it would be more appropriate for Council officers to liaise with Hutt City Council on this matter. No changes were recommended to be made to the plan.

4.13 Fire

A few submitters were concerned that there is a risk of fire in the Lakes Block, particularly since grazing ceased. This matter refers to Policy 3.23-3.25 in the Plan.

The Committee consider that it would be appropriate that no changes be required to the fire policy in the Lakes Block, but that fire be permitted for vegetation management if necessary as already provided for in the Plan.

4.14 The spreading or burial of ashes

A few submitters suggested that it is unreasonable to have a ban on the spreading or burial of ashes within the park. This relates to Policy 1.29 in the draft management plan.

The Committee consider that no change be required to Policy 1.29 (spreading of burial ashes within East Harbour Regional), but that this policy be revisited when the Regional Parks network management Plan is next reviewed.

5. Next steps

Once the committee adopts the management plan, officers will begin preparing the document ready for publication. Some small editing changes may be required, prior to publication, but these will not affect the intent or meaning of the final plan, its objectives or policies.

6. Communication

Letters will be sent by the Chairperson of the Landcare Committee to submitters, advising them of the Committee's deliberations and decisions. A newsletter will be sent to all those people interested in the park and the plan review. Copies of the final plan will be made available to stakeholders, submitters, Council offices and libraries. The management plan's adoption will be announced with a media release and will be included in the next *Green Shoots* community newsletter.

The media release will also highlight that a number of changes have been made to the draft plan as a direct result of public submissions.

7. Recommendations

That the Landcare Committee recommend to Council that it:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Adopts the East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan subject to any minor technical or editorial amendments to be approved by the Committee Chair, and in accordance with section 619, Local Government Act 1974.***
4. ***Revokes the East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan adopted in 1995.***
5. ***Approves that Officers finalise publishing the East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan.***

6. ***Approves release of the Plan to DOC for approval for Scenic Reserves.***

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Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan