

Akatarawa Forest Track Protocol

The purpose of the Track Protocol is to identify the most important factors for consideration in management of tracks utilised for motorised recreation purposes in the Akatarawa Forest Park. The protocol key considerations outlined below are consistent with the PNP general management framework and policies.

1. Objective

The following general management objectives and Akatarawa Forest specific policies are outlined in the Parks Network Plan (2011)

General Policy:

Policy 21: To manage current and future water supply catchments to ensure their potential as a source of secure, sustainable, fresh and clean water for the region.

Akatarawa Forest Chapter:

6.1.5 g. To offer varied opportunities for park users by providing multiple use tracks and facilities where possible, appropriate and compatible with the primary management outcome of future water supply.

6.1.5 q. To support the partnership with ARAC (Akatarawa Recreational Access Committee) in meeting the outcomes of this plan.

2. Application

This protocol applies to:

1. The existing [formed] tracks in the motorised recreation track network of Akatarawa Forest as defined on Map 20
2. Tracks formed for other uses that may be appropriate for motorised recreation.

Applications for new [unformed] tracks are assessed as a 'restricted activity' under the Parks Network Plans rules for use and development. This protocol may also inform this assessment.

3. Protocols

3.1 Public Safety:

GWRC will work to improve public safety and minimise conflict between users.

In the case of safety or emergency, GWRC will act immediately to effect whatever measures are deemed necessary to fulfil their obligations. If this includes a specific track closure, a full assessment of the track will be carried out as soon as safe and practicable.

ARAC committee members have a delegated authority from GWRC to issue motorbike riding permits to forest users on site. When issuing permits, park rules for use and forest hazards are discussed, as well as incident reporting procedures and park users' obligations for notification of hazards and injuries.

Issues of safety and conflict are addressed under Policy 70 and 84 of the PNP

Policy 70: To separate or limit recreational activities and uses, where necessary, to protect health and safety, environment or heritage values or to prevent conflict.

Policy 84: To maintain discretion over other activities (including new activities and utilities) to avoid or limit impacts on the environment and key park characteristics, as well as ensure the safety of park users.

3.2 Track Assessment:

Tracks assessment may be:

- a) programmed [asset maintenance plans and monitoring] or;
- b) reactive, such as:
 - Hazards including severe weather events and fire risk
 - Results of monitoring recreational use e.g. type and level of use, diversion from centre line, enjoyment [experience]
 - Conflicts with other park developments, operations or users
 - Environmental impacts, sedimentation
 - At the reasonable request of ARAC, GWRC, user group or concessionaire

Track assessment may result in the following recommendations for part or all of a track:

- a) status-quo
- b) maintenance
- c) rehabilitation
- d) conditions for use (type of user, seasonal, weather related, events)
- e) monitoring programme (e.g. photo-points, track counters)
- f) closure: temporary or permanent
- g) opening (of existing unused tracks)

3.2.1 Total Track Provision:

There is at no time a minimum or maximum amount of track that can be in use.

Assessment may determine that a track is suitable for opening or that a track is temporarily or permanently closed. However, overall consideration is given to the ability to meet the objectives of the protocol and ultimately the Parks Network Plan.

Advice may be sought from specific GWRC departments such as biodiversity, land management or water supply re the accumulative effect on the catchments.

3.2.2 Track Assessment Tool:

The PNP provides decision making guidelines (Section 7.4.7) to assess the suitability for activities to occur within parks. The proposed track assessment tool aligns with the PNP guidelines as well as having operational [practical] criteria. This is to be used as a tool to support management decisions relating to tracks in the Akatarawa Forest.

3.3 Track Maintenance

Track maintenance will be based on GWRC's annual asset maintenance plans for the Akatarawa Forest, which will prioritise the various assets (mainly roads) and the nature of the work to be undertaken on an annual basis. GWRC will provide a list of the priority/core network of tracks that it seeks to maintain for operational, services and recreational amenity.

For tracks outside the GWRC core network, motorised recreation clubs will be permitted to undertake track clearing and cutbacks on these specified tracks. Anything in excess of clearing and cutbacks would require discussion with the GWRC Parks staff (refer to the Akatarawa Forest Access Permit for details).

3.4 Track Closure

Tracks may be closed in part or in whole, temporarily or permanently. Track closure will be considered due to:

- As a result of monitoring or assessment
- Accidental discovery PNP policy 30
- Park closures: PNP Policy 46 & 47

3.4.1 Park closures

Policy 46: To temporarily restrict or close access to a park, or part thereof where:

- a) There is a danger to public and/or animal health and safety*
- b) Where continued access will cause further environmental or cultural degradation to a particular site*
- c) An event or activity has been granted the right to restrict public access as part of its approval conditions*
- d) Park operations require temporary closure including but not limited to park maintenance, pest control, farming and forestry operations, and water collection and distribution*
- e) Restricting access is an obligation under a specific Act, such as the Biosecurity Act, Forest Rural Fire Act or the Public Health Act.*

Policy 47: To ensure that the public are adequately informed regarding closures, using signage or other media, including an explanation of reasons and the length of time an area will be closed.

3.5 Notification Procedures

Regular information sharing will occur at the quarterly meetings (refer MoU Section 11 for agenda items).

- Quarterly ARAC/GWRC meetings to notify and discuss planned works
- Notices posted on GWRC website or emails.
- Reactive events – Safety or Emergency, as soon as practical, after the event for both parties.
- To the Park Ranger or Principal Ranger in the first instance.
- Formal notifications – in writing or email to:

3.6 GWRC retains discretion

A dispute resolution procedure is identified in the MoU between GWRC and ARAC, section 21.

Policy 83: To manage and maintain discretion over specified activities to ensure appropriate allocation of park resources.

4.0 Track Assessment Tool

This assessment guidance outlines key considerations for determining a proposed track’s status and suitability for motorised recreation. The criteria are derived from the Parks Network Plan (2011). While the criteria and scoring are part of a track by track assessment, consideration is also given to the overall impacts and benefits of the proposed track network. A more detailed Protocol includes a score sheet.

Track assessment criteria

1	Strategic fit
	Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The primary management focus is a healthy and sustainable future water collection area and provision of water supply infrastructure as required - Secondary focus is on native vegetation; production forestry; back-country recreation motorised recreation and wind energy development

2	Ecological value
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of indigenous forest is a secondary management focus (6.1.4 (3)) - The track is to be evaluated as a whole - Is the track already in place? - The significance of ecological values and sites along the track - Key Native Ecosystem outcomes for Akatarawa Forest
3	Landscape & geological features
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent does use of the track affect the landscape and geological features of the forest? - Is the track already in place?
4	Cultural value
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect and preserve the historic and cultural features of the forest - Does the track provide an opportunity to showcase history and culture
5	Operational requirement
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How important is the track for GWRC, forestry, utilities, emergency services (core network track)? - Does motorised recreational use adversely affect the operational requirements for the track? - Tracks that have little operational use or value will score highly (e.g. negligible (5), low (4))
6	Recreational access
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the track facilitate access to key features (e.g. Orange Hut, viewpoints/Hydro Saddle) - To what extent does the track connect or link tracks - Key recreational routes: Karapoti Loop and Akatarawa Traverse - Authorised forest entrance track
7	Affected persons
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does motorised recreation effect other park users (walkers, bikers, horse riders, hunters) and wider community
8	Benefits
	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appeal and knowledge of the track within the community - The 'experience' the track provides for motorised recreation - Any benefits of this track for other recreational users