

Report 2016.361  
Date 28 September 2016  
File PKPL-4-393

Committee Council  
Author Fiona Colquhoun, Parks Planner  
Jimmy Young, Principal Ranger Eastern Sector

## **Minor amendments to retain currency of the Parks Network Plan 2011**

### **1. Purpose**

To recommend the adoption of minor amendments to the Parks Network Plan 2011 (PNP).

### **2. Background**

The PNP is the current policy and overall management plan for the majority of the park network managed by GWRC. The Reserves Act 1977 requires the administering body (Council) to keep management plans under continuous review, adapting to changing circumstances and increased knowledge (s41(4)).

Two minor amendments were proposed and approved by the Environment Committee on 21 June 2016 for a two month public consultation period.

The proposed changes were:

1. Revision of the maximum stay period for camping at designated camping areas in regional parks from one week to forty days within a twelve month period for each campground, and to fourteen days in the period 20 December to 31 January. Removal of Stratton Street, Belmont Regional Park as a designated camping area from the Plan.
2. A revision of the Parks Network Plan Akatarawa Forest Map 20 which defines trails permitted for use by motorised recreation vehicles in the Akatarawa Forest.

### **3. Feedback**

#### **3.1 Consultation and engagement activities**

A range of engagement activities were undertaken for the proposed amendments. Communication about the proposed camping policy amendments and how to comment and submit included:

- notices on sign boards in Kaitoke, Belmont and Battle Hill Regional Parks
- direct email to local iwi, camping peak bodies (such as NZ Motor Caravan Association), motor caravan clubs throughout the region, Territorial Authorities and park stakeholders such as Forest and Bird local branches.
- direct email to the NZ four wheel drive association and all clubs within the 'central region'.
- information notices on the GWRC website, in social media and news updates.

The Akatarawa Forest has many regular visitors and clubs with an interest in the future of particular recreation activities so additional engagement for the Akatarawa Forest amendment included:

- an evening casual drop in session at the GWRC Upper Hutt depot with over 20 people attending
- a Sunday afternoon drop by and chat session at Orange Hut in the Akatarawa Forest
- one to one stakeholder meetings to clarify issues and changes
- a press release and resulting editorial in the Hutt News about the opportunity to review the map and provide feedback.

### **3.2 Feedback received**

#### *Camping policy changes*

Three submissions were received, which are summarised in Table 1 of **Attachment 1**. Feedback included:

- Two of the submissions indicated support for the policy changes, and
- One supported the overall maximum stay period but did not support the proposal for extending the maximum stay from seven to fourteen days during the busiest period from 20 December to 31 January.

#### *Akatarawa Forest Draft Map 20*

Eighteen submissions were received and are summarised in Tables 2 and 3 of **Attachment 1**. Overall the submissions indicated:

- Good general support for the work GWRC has undertaken to establish strong relationships, identify and map tracks and manage use of the forest
- Support for closure to motorised recreation of the Whakatikei wetland area and all other areas of forest beyond the access tracks identified
- Concerns about unauthorised incursions by four wheel drives and trail bike park visitors into adjoining private properties, largely due to unclear property boundaries.

- Concerns about unauthorised off-track access and in particular the cutting of new trails to the Karapoti- Mt Barton area
- General concerns about shared use track behaviour and safety with tracks shared by walkers, runners, horse riders, mountain bikers, trail bike riders and four wheel drives / light vehicles.
- General concerns about the identification of particular tracks in the southern forest area (Puketiro), track identification on the map and access. This included some misconceptions about increasing the number of tracks accessible for motorised recreation (these were perceived to have increased in number rather than being better defined).
- A very detailed submission from the Cross-country Vehicle Club. The specific issues raised in this submission were discussed in detail in a meeting with Club representatives and GWRC officers. The Club also raised the issue of ARAC not representing their issues and needs. This matter is a matter of ongoing discussions with the club and ARAC at an operational level.

During the drop-in and chat sessions held at the Upper Hutt Depot and Orange Hut details of tracks missing from the map, incorrectly categorised or located were identified and noted on a copy of the map and other general issues discussed. From this feedback and the written submissions it was apparent that the map needed to be made clearer and more detailed.

## **4. Changes proposed**

### **4.1 Camping policy changes**

The proposed changes are still considered to be appropriate, these are:

1. Revision of the maximum stay period for camping at designated camping areas in regional parks from one week to forty days within a twelve month period for each campground, and to fourteen days in the period 20 December to 31 January.
2. Removal of Stratton Street, Belmont Regional Park as a designated camping area from the Plan.

### **4.2 Final Draft Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreation Map 20**

The recommended draft Map 20 Motorised Recreation Tracks for Akatarawa Forest encompasses a number of changes to respond to the feedback received. To address the issue of misunderstandings about particular tracks it is proposed that in addition to the management plan version, a more detailed 'recreation information' version of the map will be drafted with enlargements of key areas and additional supporting information such as the 'Motorised Recreational Users' Code' which fosters safety, minimal impact behaviour and responsible use of the forest. This is proposed to be similar in style to Akatarawa Forest recreation information for walkers and cyclists, and available with access permits and on the GWRC website.

The recommended Parks Network Plan version of Map 20 will remain in the same cartographic style as the original. Overall recommended Map 20 changes include:

- \* Identification of helicopter landing sites.
- \* Better identification of official park entrances and key river crossings.
- \* Better definition of adjoining private land. Additional on-site signage is also proposed to minimise park visitor incursions into these areas.
- \* Various minor corrections to track names, alignment and track difficulty categories as identified in the officer recommendations as set out in **Attachment 1**.

In the Parks Network Plan 'Managed Activity' explanatory text the following changes are proposed:

- \* A revision of the 'Explanation' for categories of motorised recreation to encompass reference to 'light utility vehicles' or 'side by sides' which are also four wheel drive vehicles and increasingly common in the park.
- \* Updating the text which refers to working with ARAC (Akatarawa Recreation Access Committee) to develop a track protocol which has since been drafted. The track protocol will be used to guide track management and assess and determine future minor changes to tracks and access.

The recommended Akatarawa Forest Map 20 is attached as **Attachment 2**.

The proposed PNP text revisions are attached as **Attachment 3**.

## **5. Communication**

Once approved, the updated Parks Network Plan will be published on the GWRC website and a link sent to stakeholders and all submitters. A more detailed 'recreation information' version of Akatarawa Map 20 will also be drafted, in a similar style to the recreation map for walking and cycling in the forest, published on the website, sent to submitters and other stakeholders and provided with access permits. A media release will be drafted and information published on the ARAC website. Information panels and onsite maps will be updated where required.

## **6. The decision-making process and significance**

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act). Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

## 6.1 Significance of the decision

Part 6 requires GWRC to consider the significance of the decision. The term ‘significance’ has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance and engagement policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

## 6.2 Engagement

Section 3 of this report sets out the consultation undertaken on the proposed amendments.

## 7. Recommendations

*That the Council:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Adopts the amendments to the Parks Network Plan 2011 as set out in attachments 2 and 3 of the report.*
4. *Delegates to the Chair ability to make minor edits and amendments.*

Report prepared by:

**Fiona Colquhoun**  
Parks Planner

Report prepared by:

**Jimmy Young**  
Principal Ranger Eastern  
Sector

Report approved by:

**Nicola Shorten**  
Manager, Corporate &  
Strategic Planning

Report approved by:

**Luke Troy**  
General Manager Strategy

Report approved by:

**Amanda Cox**  
Manager Parks

Report approved by:

**Nigel Corry**  
General Manager  
Environment Management

**Attachment 1:** Summary of submissions and proposed changes

**Attachment 2:** Recommended Map 20, Akatarawa Forest Park Motorised Recreation Tracks

**Attachment 3:** Proposed PNP text revisions