

**Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan Restricted Activity Assessment - Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) horse trekking and grazing**  
**September 2022**



## Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan Restricted Activity Assessment - Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) horse trekking and grazing (currently Kapiti Stables)

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### 1. Summary

GW officers, facilitated by Park Planning, have concluded a [Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-30](#) (Toitū Te Whenua) Restricted Activity Assessment process for consideration of options relating to possible future horse trekking and grazing related activities in QEP.

There are two current horse grazing related licences in QEP. Kapiti Pony Club licence has been operating month to month since it expired, and the [Kapiti Stables and grazing licence](#) ends on 30 November 2022. Kapiti Stables also has a 'horse trekking and riding instruction [Commercial Activity Concession](#)' which ends on 1 December 2022. The conclusion of agreements has provided the opportunity to determine if more sustainable options are available which better support the Toitū Te Whenua vision of '*Restoring healthy ecosystems for the benefit of people and nature*'.

Toitū Te Whenua policies and rules identify that commercial stock grazing will be phased out in regional parks and that horse grazing is a high impact activity requiring AEE type consideration.

This advice focuses on Kapiti Stables related grazing licence area and uses, and possible future environmentally sustainable horse trekking activities in the park. It is provided at the conclusion of a Restricted Activity Assessment Panel (Assessment Panel) collaborative process. Kapiti Pony Club related advice is addressed separately.

The current horse trekking business utilises approximately four horses however the original grazing licence allows grazing for up to 30 horses and 6 cattle on 25.6 hectares of park land. In 2020 the licence was amended by the Principal Ranger to remove cattle and allow up to a maximum of 40 horses in the same area. The increase in numbers was requested by due to summer grass growth. It is not known if any environmental assessment was undertaken at the time to inform this change. The current licence area is low-lying and subject to regular flooding. This number of horses per hectare is above carrying capacity rates considered to be good practice and sustainable land management which allows land to be rested and sees all waterways protected.

The review of possible future more sustainable options included input from officers from Parks, Parks Planning, Environmental Science, Land Management, Biodiversity, the licence holders, external consultants, and others such as KCDC (see section 4). Existing mana whenua values reports and other plans relating to the park were reviewed, including a Te Ātiawa Whakarongotai report specific to the park commissioned to inform the management plan development.

Areas investigated for possible future horse grazing were limited to the formerly stock grazed areas of the park and those areas not already part of the Recloning Papatūānuku Parks Restoration Programme (Restoration Programme) or in the process of restoration by mana whenua, conservation, and community groups. Duneland slope areas over fifteen degrees or dune areas with signs of erosion or where there was incompatibility with other existing recreation activities park operations were excluded from being suitable e.g. adjacent to aeromodellers. See section 2.3 for more details.

Numerous meetings and site visits were undertaken. From this a detailed brief for further investigation was provided to Environmental Science (ESci). Recommendations made here are based on evidence of wetlands and land suitability for grazing advice from ESci, and assessment team advice in relation to recreation and operational matters and other park values.

The objective of the overall review was to ensure that decision making was as evidence based as possible, focusing on beneficial environmental and recreation outcomes in the park. Due to insufficient sustainable area being found to support continuing the RFP process was concluded at this point.

## 1.2 Summary findings

Horse riding is an important local recreation opportunity in the park and recent Park Ranger work to enhance access and facilities has seen the equestrian community express their appreciation for this. Further day use facility enhancements were discussed through this review process and are proposed for progressive implementation. This includes new parking for horse floats at a new entry off Poplar Avenue. Facilities to support possible future overnight equestrian are also being explored.

Ecologists site investigations found that three groups of wetlands (Natural, RMA and Historic) are present in the current Kapiti Stables Licence area (**refer Map 1**) and in almost all the adjacent areas of park used for horse grazing on a temporary basis when the licence area becomes too wet.

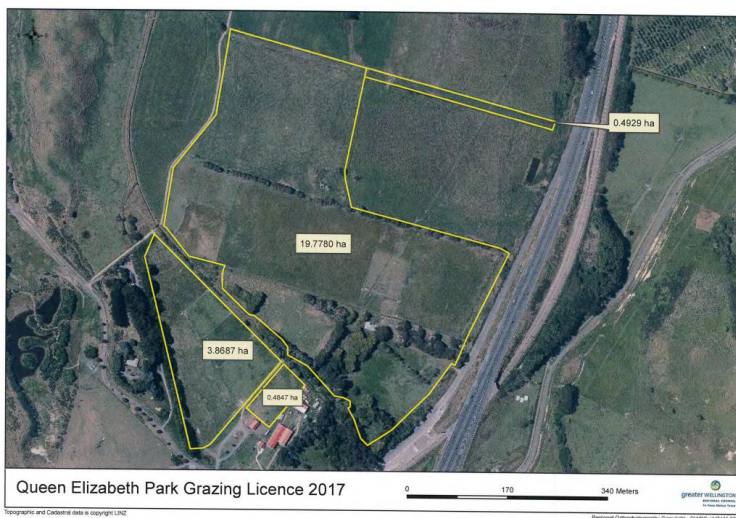
Most areas of park land used for horse grazing associated with the Kapiti Stables grazing licence have been found to be unsuitable for grazing. The licence area where wetlands were not present is too small to support another horse trekking concession (approximate 1.2 ha part of eucalyptus tree paddock). The duneland former grazing paddocks investigated were found to have signs of erosion, restoration in progress or planned, slopes over 15 degrees or be incompatible with existing recreation activities. Adjacent areas outside the licence areas were also identified to contain wetlands of different groupings.

All groups and types of wetlands are a priority for restoration in GW parks. This includes Natural, RMA and Historic groups of wetlands, and the many different types of wetlands (bog, fen, swamp etc).

Horse grazing use of the current licence areas and adjacent areas identified as wetlands, vulnerable duneland or restoration areas is incompatible with the Toitū Te Whenua vision and goals for restoration of ecosystem health.

Reducing impacts and allowing natural and human supported processes of restoration to commence will deliver multiple benefits. This includes carbon sequestration, biodiversity and freshwater quality benefits, potential flood reduction, mahinga kai and other Mātauranga Māori benefits, recreation experience and community capital benefits. Restoring wetlands will reduce seasonal fire risk and need for mowing to reduce fuel loads.

**Map 1. Kapiti Stables licence area (24.627ha)**



### 1.3 Recommendations

The following advice is provided by the Restricted Activity assessment panel after detailed investigation for a suitable site based on Toitū Te Whenua directions.

- a. Insufficient suitable and sustainable area was found to support a new trekking business with associated grazing.
- b. At the conclusion of the Kapiti Stables concession and grazing licence on 30 November and 1 December 2022, that no further horse trekking with associated grazing licence opportunity is provided in the park, and that options for exit are discussed and agreed with Rachael Martin, Kapiti Stables.
- c. That the licensee is advised of this recommendation in writing after an initial meeting on Wednesday 26 September.
- d. That the current RFP process for a new horse trekking licence at QEP is discontinued.
- e. That the possibility of a future horse trekking concession opportunity at the northern end of the park, utilising the former Kapiti Pony Club barn and adjacent small holding paddocks (subject to ESci advice) will be considered in the master planning process planned for the park in liaison with mana whenua commencing in 2022/23. If this area is deemed suitable for a small, low impact horse trekking business, then an EOI/ RFP type process may be appropriate at this time. However, these small pony club paddocks will also be considered as a possible location for horse camping or other recreation facilities deemed the most compatible with core park values.
- f. That progressively all the wetland areas as defined by the ESci advice are restored via the Recloaking Papatūānuku restoration programme or via other restoration work by mana whenua, conservation and community groups.
- g. That the advice provided by Environmental Science will also guide the preparation of the new event permit for the Wellington Eventing cross-country jumps course.
- h. That where any existing recreation activities deemed critical or highly important in the 'Historic' group of wetlands, utilise an AEE process to identify, avoid and minimise impacts. New activities should avoid all wetland groups, unless deemed beneficial through assessment processes.
- i. That Park Rangers continue to enhance park access and facilities for casual equestrian use including opening the Poplar Avenue entrance (former pony club entrance), float parking area and currently closed trails, relocate mounting blocks and hitching rails to this area and promote its use once open to the equestrian community. This will occur as soon as practically possible. Current float parking areas are limited in the Whareroa Road and McKay's Crossing area. This new large entrance with existing gravel car park will provide a much-improved opportunity and be beneficial to many people.

## 2. Toitū Te Whenua Assessment

### 2.1 Natural Resources Plan (NRP)

Natural wetlands are subject to NRP policies and rules. Under Rule R98(d)(ii) if the natural wetland is more than 0.05ha then stock access (includes horses) shall not result in more than minor damage e.g. to vegetation, water quality, aquatic ecosystems. Whilst this rule applies now, impacts will be progressively reduced via the short-term licence exit strategy which sees some horse grazing continue until the end of January and be relocated away from all Natural wetlands. Refer wetland groups section 2.5 below.

### 2.2 Toitū Te Whenua Policies, Rules and Actions

Key policies and rules informing this restricted activity assessment are:

**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

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

**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

In the **Plan Rules** (Section 8) all grazing is identified as a Restricted Activity and high impact, requiring AEE type process. Horse grazing which directly supports recreation activities is identified as a Managed activity and requires AEE. A detailed AEE was not subsequently prepared because ESci site investigations found insufficient areas of park to support another horse trekking concession and associated grazing.

### **Toitū Te Whenua Actions**

All parks

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

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 may activities 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

The enhancement of facilities for casual riding supports a number of the above Plan actions. This will be further explored through the master planning process. Exclusion of horse grazing in areas with dune slopes over fifteen degrees and progressive restoration of wetlands supports implementation of the above Plan actions.

### **2.3 Consistency with park values, benefits for the park, visitors and community**

Key characteristic of the park identified in Toitū Te Whenua (p164) include:

- 'Horse ride tours, equestrian events, pony club and casual rides'
- 'Progressive restoration plantings and wetland recovery'
- 'A place for mahinga kai and natural material gathering'

Horse riding stables are identified as a facility in the park.

The horse trekking business benefits members of the public wishing to experience horse trekking in a park. Horse trekking on the beach and in the park has been used in KCDC promotional material for the Kapiti Coast. The trekking business contributes some benefits to the regional economy and local community through recreation experiences. The casual grazing associated with the current licence has a private benefit.

Casual horse riding in the park is a popular activity. Many equestrian visitors float or truck their horse to the park and ride on the park trails and the beach. Toitū Te Whenua directions fully support casual riding in QEP which is a recreation reserve, provided important cultural and environmental values are protected and preserved. The interests of the equestrian community are important, as is collaboration between park conservation and recreation groups. An awareness and understanding of important park values is critical to ensuring protection and restoration of them.

Any new trekking licence with associated grazing 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 Kapiti Stables licence has been insufficient to support a high level of environmental care of park land. When horses have been moved out of the licence area, they have impacted other low lying or dune park land. Finding a larger, less vulnerable area of park for a horse trekking business will enable impacts to be more easily avoided or minimised. As a minimum for a new licence advertised through RFP process, a barn operational area and service area and sustainable, low impact grazing to support at least six horses for grazing was sought (approximately 12 hectares).

At the end of the assessment process, two disparate areas of 1.6 ha (off Poplar Ave) and 1.4 ha (eucalyptus paddock north of trams of which 1.2 ha is grazable) was found. This is an insufficient area to support a new horse trekking business proposal. Refer 2.6 for details of considerations and areas excluded.

### **2.4 Consideration of alternative locations/ current performance**

Neither the horse trekking business nor its casual grazing component is dependent on being located in a public park. Many horse trekking businesses and grazing in the Wellington region take place on private land. A horse trekking business offering beach trekking has been operating further up the coast and there are many private property signs along SH1 advertising horse aggristment (paddock rent). Properties to the east of the park within riding distance also offer aggristment.

The Kapiti Stables business has operated well and within licence conditions. They reported that their trekking customer base was adversely affected by the limitations of the Covid-19 period and the two consecutive high rainfall La Niña periods. Prior to this period in 2020 Kapiti Stables identified issues

with regular flooding of their licence area when consulted as a stakeholder for the renewal of the Wellington Tramway Museum Licence. Some remedial drainage work was undertaken but the issue has been ongoing.

Kapiti Stables freely provided generous advice about issues and opportunities in this assessment process. They suggested possible alternative locations for investigation based on their park experiences over the five-year period of the licence and also provided feedback about likely viable future business options.

## **2.5 Effects on park values (access, natural, cultural, historic, recreation, park operations) and degree of threat to park values created by the activity**

- Natural values have been diminished by long term horse grazing in a low-lying flooding prone area with several unfenced waterways and weed species. In adjacent areas natural processes of restoration have allowed recovery of wetland plants. Ongoing grazing has inhibited natural processes. An environmental science led wetland restoration programme is informing the restoration of these areas. The current licence area is within the first priority restoration area on Map 25 in Toitū Te Whenua. The area is largely peat soils and drained wetlands.
- Park amenity (and freshwater) values are impacted by impacts such as soil pugging, sediment and nutrient run off, horse grazing of streams and their riparian zones. Pugging is evident in all of the current licence area and the temporary grazing locations outside the grazing area.
- Park recreation experience values are broadly supported and enhanced with a horse trek riding opportunity in the park, however associated grazing is a threat to natural values if highly sustainable locations and practices including limitations on carrying capacity are not applied.
- For public safety reasons public access is generally not encouraged in horse grazing areas. Conflicts with dog walkers have been reported. The current location adjacent to the operational tram museum and tram line is not ideal. Tram bells scare horses, and this can present a significant safety risk, particularly for inexperienced riders and ‘flighty’ horses. Ideally these two activities should not be co-located or more separation between these activities achieved.
- The current licence area location and need to regularly support the relocation of horses because of flooding has diverted park operational time from other activities.
- Mana whenua were not directly consulted in this assessment process because the RFP process was discontinued when insufficient area was found to support a new horse trekking business. Mana whenua values as expressed through published documents, previous feedback and kaitiaki work in the park were primary considerations.
- During site visits many wetland birds were observed in the licence area and adjoining areas, most of which were later identified as natural, RMA or historic group wetlands.



## **2.6 Environmental stewardship and climate change effects**

Toitū Te Whenua identifies *'Healthy Park ecosystems are a natural solution, carbon sinks, resilient and reducing the effects of climate changes'*.

The current licence area is fully within the area identified in Toitū Te Whenua as the first priority restoration area ('peat lands' map 6). Restoration of this area will support carbon sequestration (climate action), freshwater quality and a range of other values.

Grazing is a significant source of Greater Wellingtons emissions. Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set a 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. To meet the 2030 target it is an emissions source we need to maintain focus on reducing.

The Recloning Papatūānuku parks restoration programme is funded from Council's Low Carbon Acceleration fund (LCAF) and is facilitating restoration work throughout QEP and the rest of the regional park network. Restoration plantings are taking place throughout the park with an initial focus on wetlands and vulnerable dunelands. All restoration areas are excluded from consideration for a future horse trekking business grazing area. The parks network of trails is being maintained and enhanced to support casual riding and events.

Avoiding grazing wetlands and fragile dunelands will enable them to be restored. Restored wetlands can help minimise the effects of flooding and support biodiversity in times of drought. Restored healthy ecosystems contribute significantly to reducing environmental vulnerability and support environmental resilience.

Delaying activities that are beneficial to supporting ecosystem health and continuing high impact activities does not support the Toitū Te Whenua plan vision or the activities of mana whenua and conservation groups working collectively to restore ecosystem health in the park.

## **2.7 GW officer investigation of existing licence area and possible sites for a sustainable low-impact horse trekking business**

- A horse trekking licence has operated on the park with associated grazing for more than 30 years (different licences), in the same location, using approximately 25 ha of park and temporarily using other areas in winter and spring when large parts of the licence area have become flooded. Paddocks within the licence area have not been rested from grazing over this time (other than by moving them outside the licence area on a temporary basis or after horse poo harrowing). The licence amendment in 2020 allows grazing of 40 horses and harrowing of paddocks.
- A GW officer site visit found that the overall appearance of the park licence area is degraded. Wetland plant species were present in all paddocks. There were unfenced waterways, an unbridged/ culverted stream, unmaintained fences, water ponding in paddocks, pugging of soil, weed plant infestation and narrow riparian margins where they are fences. There were many horses and little grass with supplementary feeding evident.
- Licensee horses have been moved outside the licence area to adjacent areas of park because of flooding, pugged land and lack of feed. There was also evidence of pugging in these areas.

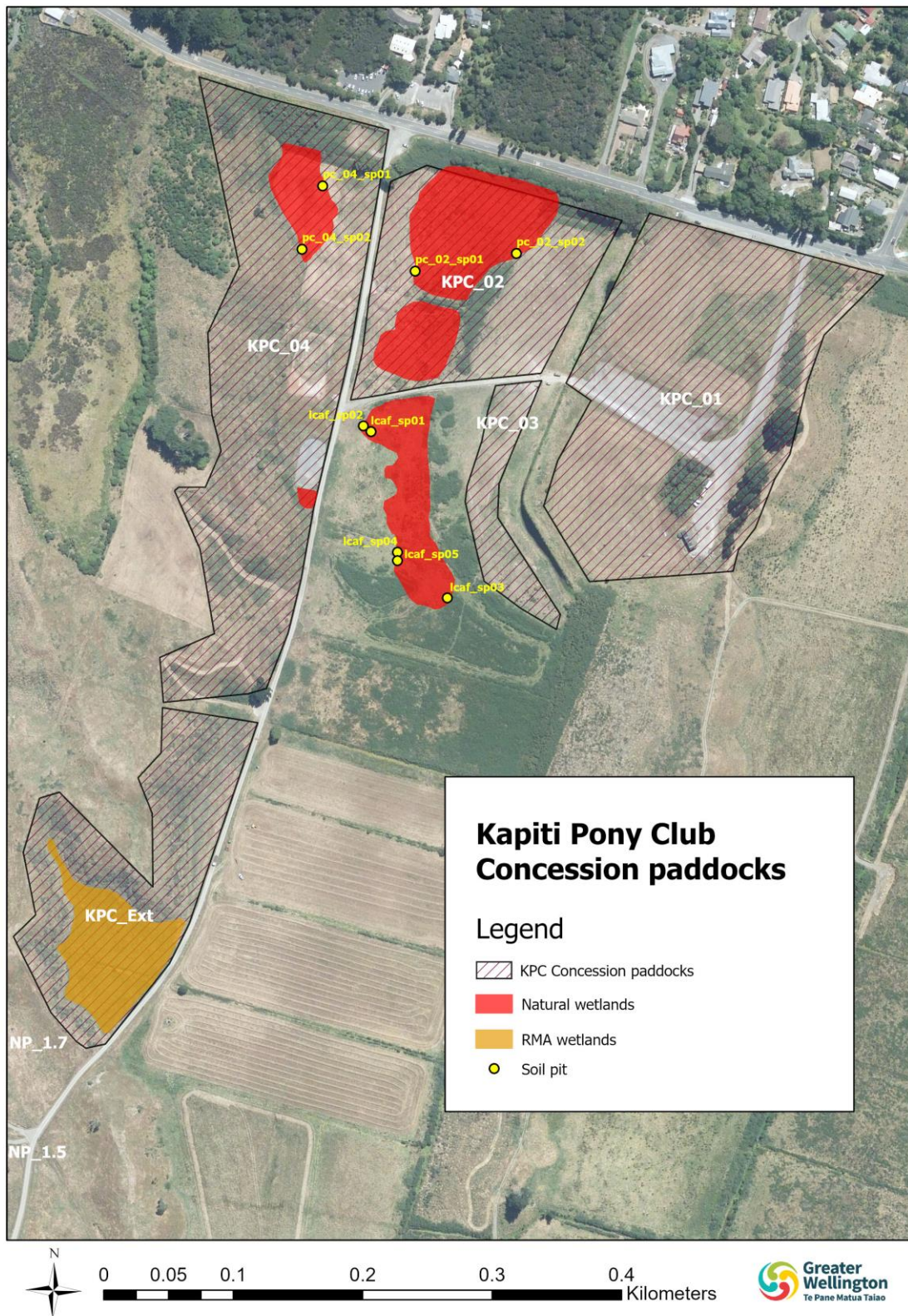
- The barn area near the park entrance had a highly grazed appearance. The paddock to west of stables is subject to regular flooding. The Stables building is well set up and tidy. It could be relocated or reused. It was previously relocated to this site. White boards indicate that 4 horses were used for trekking/ lessons, the remainder are casual grazing and recreation use is unknown.
- Possible future horse grazing paddocks to south of Whareroa Road were investigated. Evidence of dune erosion was found along with wetland type basins, steep dune terrain and large weedy areas. These areas are a priority for restoration plantings which are in progress. They were deemed unsuitable for horse grazing and further investigation was not warranted.
- Kapiti Stables suggested 'stationed on south/west side of Whareroa Road/ near Pine trees/beside Wellington Eventing paddocks'. This area is used for events and has been deemed unsuitable for horse grazing.
- Areas identified as being out of scope for future horse grazing and use by ESci and Biodiversity officers were all peat soils, the 'Poplar Avenue Wetland Extension', all KNE areas, all the Kahikatea Pukatea Forest area, and coastal duneland areas (unless flat), refer Map 6. All areas considered as high value native ecosystems are deemed inappropriate for high impact activities such as grazing. Any coastal duneland and inland duneland slope areas over fifteen degrees, dune wetland basins and areas with signs of erosion were deemed inappropriate. Archaeological sites or areas/values identified by mana whenua as being important for protection were also excluded e.g., the Rongoa Collective area.
- Areas of park deemed inappropriate for possible future horse grazing after site visits included any areas with duneland erosion, restoration planting area e.g. Friends of QEP and nursery group planting areas, areas needed for park operations or where there were known security or other operational issues. Small fragmented areas of grazing or areas away from services were not considered to be an appropriate option for a horse trek business.
- 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
- Evidence of wetland species was found in the Wellington Eventing cross-country jumps course areas. After site investigation Natural, RMA and Historic group wetlands were mapped by Environmental Science team. To avoid possible impacts in future it may be beneficial to relocate parts of the course in future including tracks through steeper duneland.
- A process of developing a landscape master plan for the park is scheduled for 2023-24. It will investigate and map opportunities for improving recreation facilities in the park. and the location of possible facilities such as arena and overnight horse camping places will be investigated through this process in conjunction with restoration planning work. DOC has also notified GW that they are considering horse camping options at Whareroa Farm.

## **2.8 Other possible future licence areas investigated**

- Environmental Science officers were asked to investigate other possible licence areas for horse trekking related grazing. North of Whareroa Road former stock grazed paddocks were investigated and all were found to have wetlands and deemed unsuitable. Areas south of Whareroa Road were investigated. All of the areas investigate here were found to have wetlands of all three groups

- South of Whareroa Road, the area identified on Map 6 below as ‘Kahakitea, Pukatea Forest’ was identified in the initial investigation as unsuitable for horse grazing and is the focus of LCAF Restoration Programme work.
- New Kapiti Pony Club licence areas, without wetlands or steep dunes near the old dairy, have been identified to support a maximum of six horses and two ponies utilising former grazed areas. The new pony licence will include conditions relating to monitoring.
- Map 2. Northern Park Kapiti Pony Club licence area. The area is unsuitable for the pony club. It has been subject to regular flooding, has large wetland areas and steeper dunes areas and overall little grass for horses. The club has reported ongoing safety and security issues.
  - Restoration plantings are planned for all of the areas on the map below marked KPC\_02, KPC\_03 and KPC\_04 and KPC\_Ext. Within these areas Natural RMA wetlands have been defined, however wetland species extend beyond the specially identified areas and the dune areas in the park entrance will also be restored.
  - The area identified as KPC\_01 was investigated for presence of wetlands. Some of it is known to be a former clean fill site. Environmental science officers reported that ‘there are no natural wetlands present in this area’. Some of the area has wetland species but they are not dominant enough to meet the wetland definition (refer section 2.5).  
  
The potential grazing area of KPC\_01 is approximately 1.68 ha (0.86 north of track and 0.82 south of track). If this area is used for ongoing grazing, it is only suitable for one horse (allowing one paddock to be rested). It has been identified as possible future short term horse holding paddocks to support overnight equestrian camping in the park or concessionaire/ event activities. Allowing horse camping here using these two small paddocks could be of benefit to many equestrians, including those travelling south to the ferry. New fencing will be required.
  - The KPC\_01 area is in the process of becoming the main northern park entry. A parking area will be opened to the public in the short term once fencing, new signs and other work is completed. A picnic area with amenity plantings will be developed in future. The McLean Trust wetland restoration area is adjacent, and a trail is planned here.
  - This northern park area is becoming increasingly popular with dog walking as former farm tracks are progressively opened as recreation trails.
  - A range of possible uses and recreation facilities for the KPC\_01 area will be considered via the master planning process including uses of the Kapiti Pony Club owned barn if this facility becomes available in future. This area has also been investigated for a possible golf driving range.

**Map 2. Kapiti Pony Club current licence areas**





## 2.9 Wetland groups

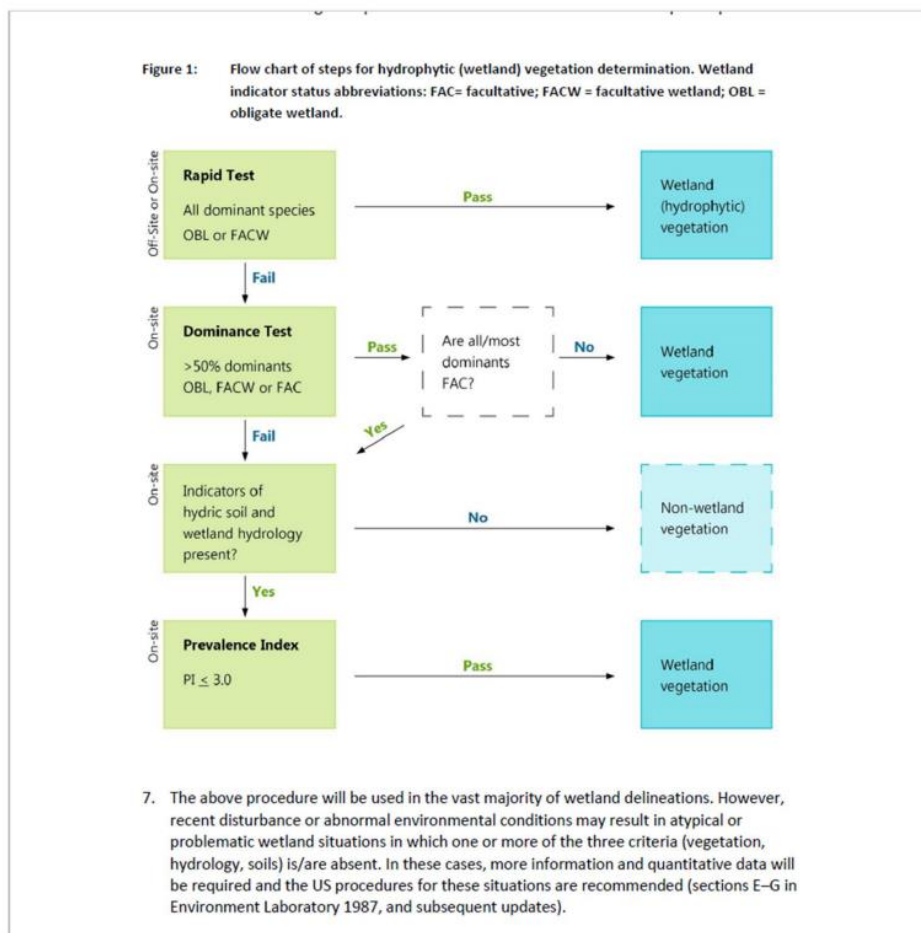
Three groups of wetlands have been identified:

**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.

During site investigation work to identify the presence or absence of wetlands, MFE's Rapid Test methodology was followed:



*Natural wetlands*

### *Wetland rules*

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. This rule applies now.

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.

### *Wetland types*

There are many different types of wetlands. Identification 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 wetlands have been found.

## **2.10 Restoration priorities and policy directions for licence exit**

Toitū Te Whenua policies 5P, 11P and 74P support park management practices meeting and exceeding minimum environmental standards. Refer section 2.2 above.

A precautionary, environment first approach has been adopted and horse grazing wetlands can be avoided by not continuing the grazing related parts of this licence. Restoring all groups and types of wetlands in parks will deliver multiple environmental and social benefits.

Map 6. Identifies overall restoration priorities and the extent of peat soils, coastal dunes, forest and inland dunes. Restoration priorities for the three groups of wetlands identified as identified on Esci maps are:

1. Natural wetlands – horse grazing will be exited from these areas as soon as possible and not be permitted beyond the end of the current licence on 30 November 2022
2. RMA wetlands – horse grazing beyond the end of the licence should avoid these areas if possible. They are the second priority for restoration.
3. Historic wetlands – recreation use such as trail riding or events may continue where essential, but the majority of areas will be restored in future.

In addition, dune slope areas over 15 degrees will be prioritised for restoration to support their stability. Areas of dune erosion are already present in the Eventing Permit areas outside the Kapiti Stables Licence area but have been temporarily used for grazing. These areas are no longer considered suitable for grazing due to their vulnerability to erosion.

Any phase out of grazing associated with the Kapiti Trekking and Grazing licence should be focused on areas not identified as Natural or RMA wetlands or dune slopes over 15 degrees e.g. Map 2. KS\_4

and the eucalyptus paddock with temporary exclusion fencing of the Natural wetland area in the south of this paddock and the entirety of the stream drain on the northern side. In accordance with Toitū Te Whenua policy, additional fencing or investment in other infrastructure should be avoided unless temporary (e.g. electric fences).

### **2.11 Licence conditions and considerations relating to exit**

5.2 The Licensee shall erect and maintain such internal fences as may be necessary for the management of the grazing of the Land.

- Any fences erected by the licensee must be removed at the conclusion of the licence or any short-term extension period agreed
- All gear and equipment in grazing areas and the Barn must be removed.

5.4 The Licensee shall regularly cause all rubbish and garbage to be removed from the Land and improvements, and shall keep any rubbish bins and containers in a tidy condition. The Licensee shall also at the Licensee's expense cause to be removed any waste boxes and other goods or rubbish not removable in ordinary collection by the local authority.

- All locks / keys must be returned to the Park Rangers
- Other operational arrangements as agreed by Principal Ranger, Park Rangers, Parks Manager (in consultation with Esci if required)

### 3. Environmental Science - advice summary & wetland maps

All the areas investigated contained wetlands of different groups and types. Wetland types are not detailed. This advice was provided after initial site visits. The report in full is attached as Appendix 1.

**Map 3. Kapiti Stables licence area wetlands**



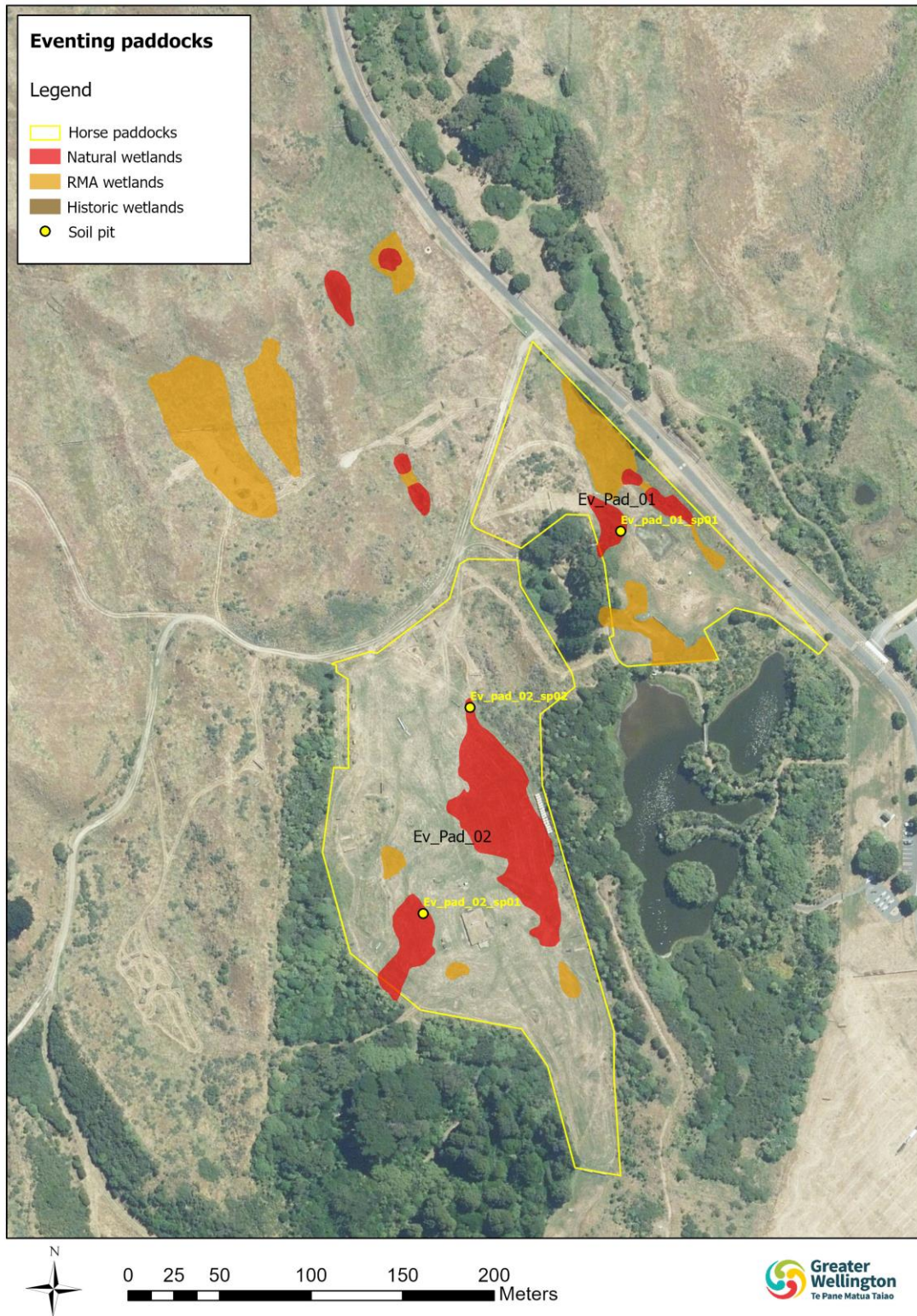


Map 4. Whareroa Stream area wetlands





Map 5. Wetland south of Whareroa Road





Map 6. Toitū Te Whenua Restoration Priorities (Plan Map 25, page 176)

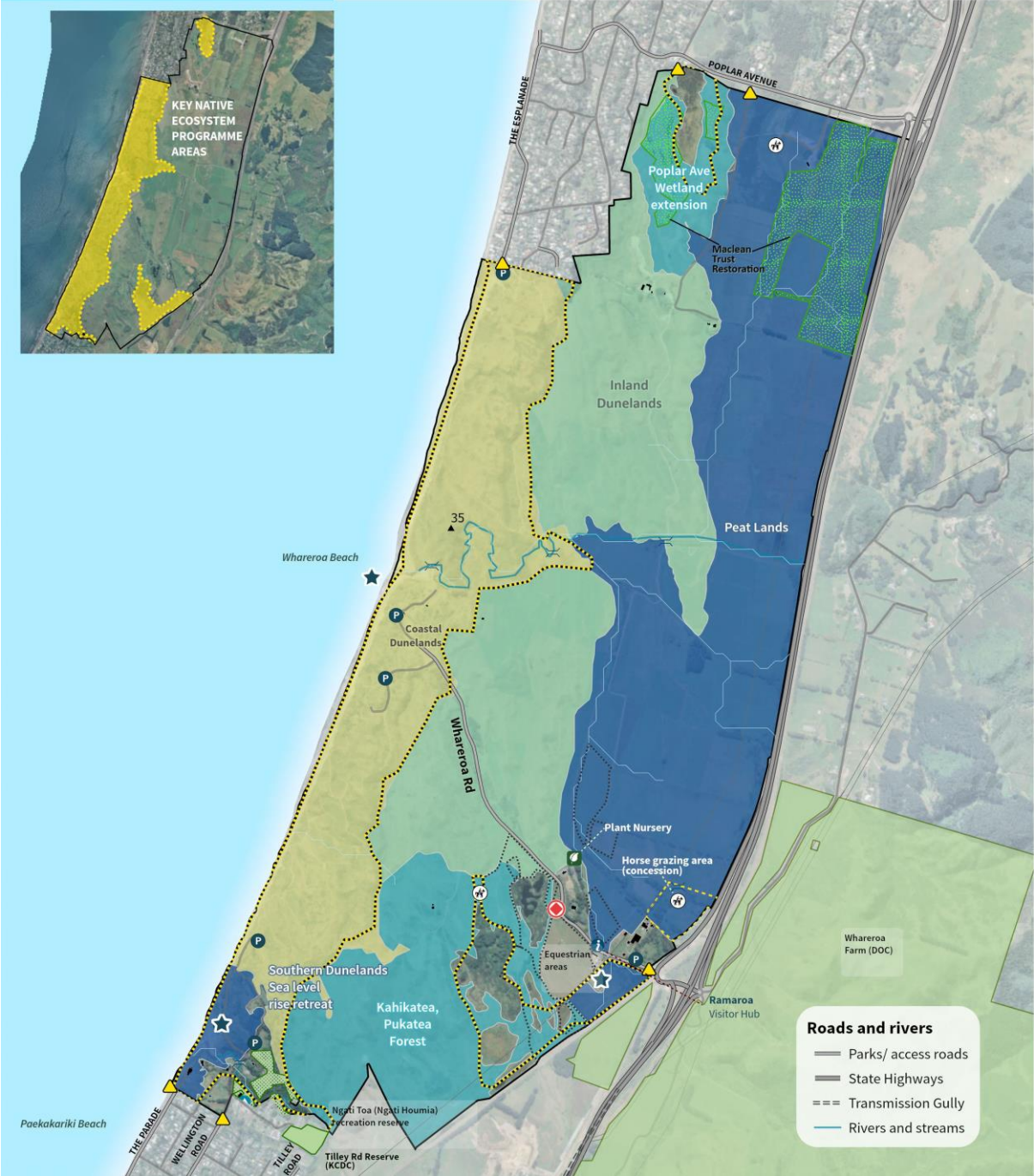
# Queen Elizabeth Park

## High level restoration priorities

The high level priorities include areas of the park in the early stages of restoration. Detailed restoration priorities are determined through master planning processes. Includes KNE areas, and areas of the park in the early stages of restoration.

<b>Restoration areas</b>	<b>Features and amenities</b>	<b>★ Activity areas, including:</b>
<b>Priority</b>	▲ Entrances	Ⓟ Car parks
■ First	Ⓡ Heritage (Marines Memorial)	ⓘ Information/interpretation
■ Second	■ Buildings and structures	🚻 Toilets
■ Third	▲ Summits	🪑 Picnic tables/seats
■ Fourth	⌒ Bridges	🏊 Swimming
▭ Key Native Ecosystems		
▭ Maclean Trust Restoration		

0 250 500 750 1,000 m



## 4. GW Restricted Assessment Panel

Fiona Colquhoun, Parks Planner, Strategy  
Jeremy Patterson, Acting Principal Ranger Western Sector Parks  
Brendan Bulliff, Park Ranger Queen Elizabeth Park  
Gary Wheaton, Mobile Ranger Western Parks  
Roger Uys, Senior Environmental Scientist  
Owen Spearpoint, Senior Environmental Monitoring Officer  
Krsto Lukic, Environmental Monitoring Officer  
Toby Barach, Project Lead Parks Restoration  
Kim Broad, Senior Biodiversity Advisor  
Catherine McManus, Land Management Advisor

Restoration programme advice - Peter Hanford and Associates

## 5. References

- a. [Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-30](#)
- b. [QEP Key Native Ecosystem Plan 2017-2020](#)
- c. [Corporate Carbon Neutrality Action Plan](#)
- d. [Queen Elizabeth Park Resource Statement 2008](#)
- e. Recloaking Papatūānuku Parks Restoration background document maps and consultant advice. Draft in progress.
- f. Whakarongotai o te moana Whakarongotai o te wa [Kaitiakitanga Plan for Te Ātiawa Ki Whakarongotai](#)
- g. [Te Ātiawa Values and Aspirations relating to QE Park](#)
- h. [Te Ātiawa submission on draft parks network plan](#)
- i. [Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Implementation Programme: Ngāti Toa Rangatira Statement](#)
- j. [Draft northern area recreation plan \(Cheryl Robillard\)](#)
- k. [QEP fire threat report](#)
- l. [QEP Sustainable Land Use Plan 2012](#)
- m. Environmental Science High value ecosystem maps (layer on GIS)
- n. [Peat restoration project](#) (PowerPoint)
- o. [Queen Elizabeth Park Peatland Survey](#), David McQueen, Environmental Science Department, January 2022
- p. ArchSite archaeological sites in QEP (via ArchSite)

## Appendix 1. Environmental Science advice



### MEMO

TO Fiona Colquhoun, Brendan Bulliff.  
COPIED TO Roger Uys, James Luty, Jeremy Paterson.  
FROM Owen Spearpoint; Krsto Lukic.  
DATE 11 September 2022.  
FILE NUMBER  
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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### **Environmental Science LEC Team, Assessment of Environmental Effects**

#### **Kapiti Stables horse grazing options QEP wetland survey**

##### Background

The Environmental Science Land, Ecology and Climate team received a request to assess the assess and delineate wetlands in Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Parks strategy provided a detailed brief and question regarding horse grazing options for the Kapiti pony club and Kapiti stables in the park. <https://ourspace.gw.govt.nz/ws/pksplan/layouts/15/DocIdRedir.aspx?ID=PKPL-4-2335>. A start for site visits to determine wetland extent was arranged, commencing on 6<sup>th</sup> July for the Pony club lease options and 10 August 2022 in the Kapiti stables area.

##### The brief

Provide the Parks strategic and Western ranger QEP team with advice regarding the presence of wetlands in Queen Elizabeth Park, their status under the rules and regulations, and the likely ecological effects on the associated sand dunes from horse grazing in the grazing lease options.

##### Site visit

Site visits commenced on 2 August 2022 with an initial visit 7hours with a further three full day visits to complete the survey of the paddocks west and north of the QEP depot. This included the eventing paddocks west of the Marines wetlands and memorial. The site visits were made in a variety of weather conditions from fine, partly cloudy weather to overcast and rain, but all days had warm conditions. We commenced the survey in the eventing paddocks then proceeded to map the paddocks north of the depot and west of the main farm access track and then west of Whareroa stream and finally the paddocks between the farm road and SH1 from the depot and tram buildings, working paddock by paddock north towards Waterfall stream.



## Survey Method

The Parks department determined the project area. We separated the large area into three units. One, the Kapiti pony club lease paddocks and possible use/gazing paddocks. Two, the McKay's entrance Kapiti stables eventing and grazing areas. Three, the remaining paddocks and restoration areas within the identified Parks project area.

The assessment method followed the 2020 MFE "Wetland Delineation Protocol", the recommended Clarkson et.al. method, "A vegetation tool for wetland delineation", and the associated 2021 Wetland Plant list, defining a plant species fidelity to wetlands under the RMA definition.

We then walked the project area paddock by paddock, determined if normal circumstances existed, and then carried out a rapid assessment for wetland presence. If the assessment determined a natural wetland was present in a paddock, a delineation each wetland boundary area was then undertaken. The survey resulted in three wetland states being identified. 1) Natural wetland – Subject to all the rules and regulations. 2) RMA wetlands – Not subject to the rules and regulations due to meeting an exclusion under the rules. Suitable for native ecological restoration, but not suitable for grazing due to wetness. 3) Historic wetlands – Not subject to the rules and regulations. Suitable for grazing or restoration. Maps showing each of these outcomes have been created.

There were several wetland outcomes from this process, these are outlined below.

1. If the dominant vegetation observed in an area obviously had a high fidelity to wetlands (Hydrophytic OBL and FACW), it immediately passed the rapid test and was assessed RMA wetland. The area was then assessed as to whether it was natural wetland. There were two outcomes from the assessment for natural wetland.
  - a) If the area did not meet any exclusions under the PNRP the wetland area was assessed natural wetland.
  - b) If the area was determined wetland, but not natural wetland due to meeting one of the exclusions, the area was determined RMA wetland.
2. If the dominant vegetation observed in an area was of species with an ambiguous fidelity to wetlands (FAC), or highly mixed with non-wetland species, it did not pass the rapid test. Soil pits were then dug to determine the soil type and hydrology of the area. A combination of the vegetative cover rapid assessment, soils, and hydrology were then assessed to determine whether the area met the criteria for RMA wetland.
  - a) If the area was determined wetland due to wetland soils and hydrology being present, and did not meet any exclusions under the PNRP, the wetland area was assessed as being natural wetland.
  - b) If the area was determined wetland but as meeting one of the exclusions, the area was assessed RMA wetland
3. If vegetation with no fidelity to wetland obviously dominated the area, and it was in a dune basin, or a flat paddock, the area was assessed as historic wetland. When there was doubt of historic wetland presence, pits were dug and the soils and hydrology also assessed as evidence of historic wetland presence. Where the soils and hydrology provided no evidence of historic wetland, the area was assessed as not wetland.

## **Survey results**

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.

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## References

Ministry for the Environment. 2020. *Wetland delineation protocols*. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.

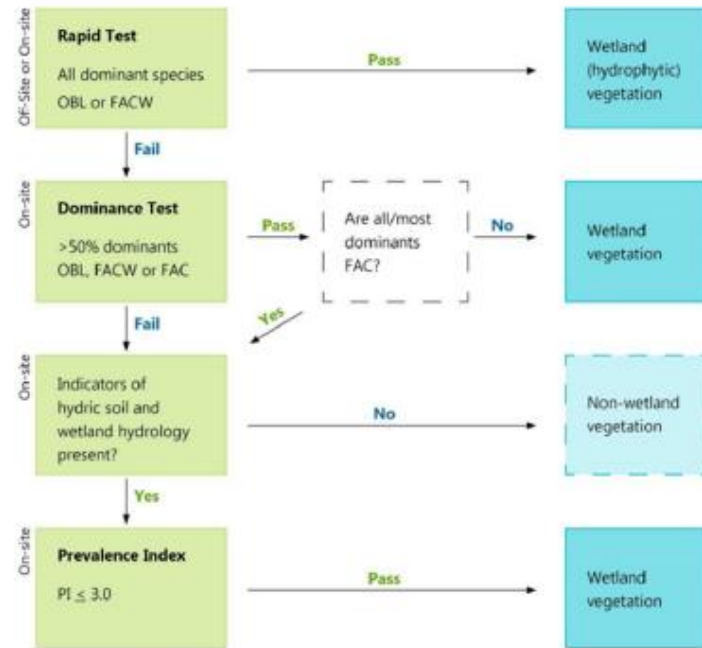
Clarkson BR 2014. A vegetation tool for wetland delineation in New Zealand. Landcare Research Contract Report LC1793.

Clarkson BR 2021. New Zealand Wetland Plant list. Landcare Research Envirolink Grant; 2123-HBRC259.

## Appendix

MFE Wetland Protocol Flow Chart

**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).