

WAITĀKERE RANGES REGIONAL PARK TRACK PLAN

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline how Council and Te Kawerau ā Maki will work together to enable public access within the rāhui area over the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park in a way that reduces the risk of kauri dieback disease and supports broader forest health. The outcome of implementing this plan will result in public enjoyment of the park in a way that respects tikanga.

Context

Kauri dieback is killing kauri in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park with significant spread of the disease confirmed by survey over a five-year period.

On 2 December 2017 Te Kawerau ā Maki placed a rāhui over Te Wao Nui a Tiriwa (roughly the forested area of Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area) to provide for the protection of the Waitākere forest through a cultural prohibition of human access and other activities that impact both physically and spiritually upon forest health.

On 10 April 2018 Auckland Council made a decision to close the forested areas of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park with some exceptions (commencing from 1 May 2018). The full council resolutions are appended as Attachment One.

The Ministry of Primary Industries, using their powers under the Biosecurity Act 1993, issued a Controlled Area Notice over open tracks in forested areas of the park requiring all footwear and goods to be free of visible soil on entering and exiting open tracks and making use of hygiene facilities compulsory also commencing from 1 May 2018.

To date, no cure has been found for kauri dieback and more importantly no method of eradication from an area once it is introduced. Kauri are integral to the wider ecosystem of the Waitākere forest, and the survival of the kauri forest is an existential matter for Te Kawerau ā Maki.

Te Kawerau ā Maki have also expressed a desire to see this track plan fit within a broader strategic plan for the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Act Area, providing for a more integrated approach to management involving mana whenua, Auckland Council and central government organisations.

Auckland Council is committed to working with mana whenua and central government to explore ways in which this might be achieved.

Track Re-opening

The decision to close the forested area in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park provided for the future opening of tracks. Included in the decision was a further resolution to prioritise upgrade and improvement work to re-establish coastal connectivity and multi-day walking opportunities, to mitigate the impact on park users and operators.

Staff were also directed to work with Te Kawerau ā Maki and jointly agree any further potential openings in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park of specific tracks. It was noted that that this would occur through planned site visits and be based as a minimum on meeting controlled area notice requirements. Auckland Council will involve Te Kawerau ā Maki in the process for other track re-openings inside the rāhui area as agreed.

With more than one million visitors a year, the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park is one of the few areas in mainland Auckland that can provide a range of walking experiences including overnight tramps and scenic attractions such as Kitekite Falls. There is significant demand for recreational opportunity in the Waitākere Ranges.

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There is a clear community expectation about opening tracks and many businesses rely on the ranges for their operations.

This plan sets out the outcomes to be achieved and the principles that will guide the re-opening of tracks and any associated work to support this. It is envisaged that further work will be required to manage changing visitor demands to the Waitākere Ranges, including rationalisation of the track network and that this will be considered as part of the review of the Regional Parks Management Plan in 2020.

Outcomes and Principles

A set of outcomes and principals have been developed through discussion with Te Kawerau ā Maki and will be applied when making decisions to re-open tracks in the Waitākere Ranges.

Outcomes

Re-open tracks that:

- a. Protect and support forest health, in particular that prevent the movement of soil to stop the spread of kauri dieback
- b. Reduce the risk of kauri dieback being spread to other forests
- c. Enable respectful public use in a rāhui area
- d. Provide an appropriate range of visitor experiences which where possible reflect cultural values (such as through interpretation and education)
- e. Avoid high value non-symptomatic kauri ecosystems

Principles

- a. Te Kawerau ā Maki and Auckland Council will work together in the spirit of partnership to protect, restore and enhance the mauri and mana of the forest. Specifically acknowledging that:
 - i. Te Kawerau ā Maki has the ability to control and manage the rāhui placed over Te Wao Nui a Tiriwa, in accordance with tikanga.
 - ii. Council is the statutory land owner and manager of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, with specific obligations under relevant legislation including engaging with iwi, and the resolutions of the 10 April 2018 Environment and Community Committee.

The spirit of partnership acknowledges the dual management approach to Waitākere forest (rāhui by Te Kawerau ā Maki and legal closures by Auckland Council) and the intent to respect each other's roles and interests and work collaboratively when considering track openings.

- b. The re-opening of tracks will focus on those in forest edge and coastal areas as well as a small number of iconic destinations. Multi-day walking opportunities will also be realigned where possible to the coastline to avoid densely forested areas.
- c. The track network, unless there is no viable alternative, will avoid areas of high biodiversity value and non-symptomatic kauri.
- d. Kauri-safe track construction will avoid or minimise ground disturbance as much as possible and may require engineering solutions.
- e. Track construction and standards will take account of best scientifically proven practice, tikanga and health and safety.

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- f. It is recognised that the track network is part of a larger network of tracks in Auckland and neighbouring regions and that not all recreational activities and experiences will be provided within the Waitākere Ranges.
- g. Recognise identified iconic visitor experiences (widely recognised and well established, strongly linked to a place) and upgrade visitor facilities, including tracks, associated with these experiences to meet high visitor demand.
- h. Reduce the number of track entrances by creating key entry points which provide visitor information, visitor facilities and hygiene facilities and are the starting point for a range of walking experiences.
- i. The condition of the track network will be assessed through regular monitoring, and the management approach will adapt if new decisions or information become available in respect of kauri dieback management or track surfaces change or degrade through use.

While not a principal of this track plan, Auckland Council will work with Te Kawerau ā Maki to identify opportunities for interpretation and re-naming of tracks to reflect the cultural significance of the forest.

Track standards and treatments

Standards will be applied after discussion and agreement with Te Kawerau ā Maki and a project team utilising expertise from Regional Parks, Biosecurity and Biodiversity to determine zones and best mitigation treatment.

- a. Treatment will use as a minimum, current national best practice.
- b. Forest isolation zones will be established in perpetuity to protect asymptomatic and healthy kauri catchments by excluding access.
- c. Avoid or minimise ground disturbance, root damage, and compaction.
- d. An adaptive management approach will be used i.e. new standards, treatments and methodology may be trialled as knowledge improves.
- e. At each track entrance there will be a hygiene facility appropriate for the level of use and which enables visitors to comply with any controlled area notice.
- f. Where relevant documented agreement on the treatment for individual track (an inspection form will be completed and signed by the Regional Parks team and Te Kawerau ā Maki)
- g. Where tracks traverse multiple zones consideration will be given to providing a consistent visitor experience and management of zone transitions.

Adaptive and effective management of the track network will be underpinned by monthly track auditing, monitoring, and by annual review.

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Management zones	Description	Treatment	Methodology
Isolation zone	Identified asymptomatic and identified high value healthy areas of kauri forest. Catchment sized areas in the interior of forest set aside from public access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of all public and non-essential access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers, signage and enforcement.
Kauri zone	Within 30 metres of any kauri and/or defined KDB zone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boardwalk Box stairs (filled with BAM and or sandstone with gravel cap. Jakmat or similar may be used to help prevent dishing) Boxed track (filled with BAM and or sandstone with gravel or sealed cap Jakmat or similar may be used) Raised stairs Barriers Geoweb (pending peer review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National standard for tracks around Kauri as a minimum.
Forested area	Native forest but not kauri zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boardwalk Box stairs (filled with BAM or gravel or local material) Raised stairs Geoweb or other Compacted gravel Boxed track Rafts Stringer stairs Concrete or sealed surfaces Exposed rock Natural sand surfaces Compact natural gravel/sandstone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard track build methods to achieve high quality dry foot Apply hygiene protocols

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Management zones	Description	Treatment	Methodology
Non forested area and exotic forest	<p>Outside of native forested area.</p> <p>N.B. when applying consideration needs to be given to connection to other zones in order to minimise soil movement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boardwalk • Box stairs (filled with BAM or gravel or local material) • Raised stairs • Geoweb or other • Compacted gravel • Rafts • Stringer stairs • Concrete or sealed surfaces • Boxed track • Geo textile cloth with gravel • Exposed rock • Natural sand surfaces • Compact natural gravel/sandstone • Compact soil surface • Natural surface (no mud bogs over ankle depth) • Grass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard track build methodology
Service Roads	Roads providing recreation access	<p>If they are maintained to agreed vehicle standards then will be appropriate for recreational access provided they do not increase risk of off-track activity or lead to forest interior. The vehicle standard will be developed separately.</p>	

The above standards provide a guideline and will be applied on a track by track basis using an adaptive approach.

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Agreed:


 Te Warena Taua
 Chair, Te Kawerau Iwi Tribal Authority & Settlement Trust

18 December 2018


 Councillor Penny Hulse
 Chair of the Environment and Community Committee

18 December 2018


 Councillor Alf Filipaina
 Deputy Chair, Environment and Community Committee

18 December 2018

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