



Waitakere Ranges
Heritage Area

WAITAKERE RANGES VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

BACKGROUND REPORT

AUCKLAND COUNCIL
COMMUNITY POLICY AND PLANNING WEST

APRIL 2013

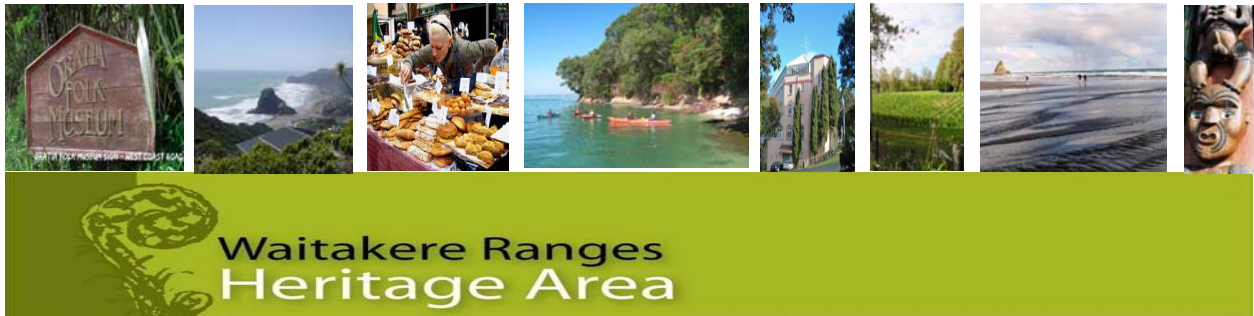


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1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- All year round, but especially in summer weekends and holidays, people converge on the Waitakere Ranges, particularly the Manukau Harbour and West Coast beaches, the Arataki Visitor centre, Lake Wainamu, and the tracks, waterfalls and viewpoints within the Regional Park. This Park is one of the most readily recognised and highly visited of all the Auckland Regional Parks.
- The west coast beaches are the most visited locations in the Heritage Area, and in particular Piha, although surf club data indicates that visitor numbers at Piha have declined in recent years. During the past 3 summer seasons the highest headcount (taken at the busiest time of day by the Piha surf club) was 2220 people on the beach at Piha on 7 February 2010. Estimates from vehicle counts indicate a daily average of nearly 8000 people visiting Piha over a fortnight during the summer holidays.
- Arataki Visitor Centre with 188,827 visits in the year 2011/2012 and Cascade Kauri Park with 85,837 visits over the same period are the most heavily visited locations within the Regional Park, while Kitekite Falls, Fairy Falls and Karekare Falls are also easily accessible Regional Park hotspots.
- Most visitors to the Regional Park are from West Auckland (33%) and the former Auckland City area (27%). A small number (15%) are from outside the Auckland region, with most of these being international visitors visiting places such as the Arataki Visitor Centre. A survey of visitors at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga Local Parks identified similar findings.
- Monitoring of trends in visitor activity at selected Regional Park locations has shown that there has been a steady increase in the use of the Park since 2008. The number of visits has, on average, grown at a rate faster than the regional population growth, with visits to the Arataki Visitor Centre increasing by 40% and visits to Piha's Glen Esk increasing by around 19% over a three year period. In contrast, visits to the wilderness destination of Whatipu have increased by only 2%.
- A significant proportion of the Heritage Area is occupied by the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, which is a heritage feature under the Act. Visitor management policies in the Regional Park are helping to achieve the objectives of the Act. Under the Regional Park Management Plan large areas are managed for low intensity use whilst areas identified as visitor hotspots are managed to accept the expected number of visitors, whilst minimising visitor impact. Monitoring results of visitor numbers have established that these management policies are working.
- Within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park there are 264km of walking and tramping tracks, including a nature trail at Arataki, the Montana Heritage Trail and the 70km Hillary Trail opened in 2010. In addition, there are 21.2 kilometres of trails in Local Parks in the Heritage Area.

- In addition to extensive track maintenance, work in the Regional Park in the past few years has included realignment and/or upgrading of the Montana Heritage Trail and Fairy Falls Track and construction of the Beveridge Track which is available for mountain bikes to use.
- Numbers of people using the Regional Park's accommodation facilities have increased, with 6186 over nights in the campgrounds and 561 nights booked in the baches in 2011/12 season. Notwithstanding the increase, the overall utilisation of camp sites is well below their design capacity.
- The use of the Regional Park for discretionary concession activities (managed through the Regional Parks Management Plan 2010 (RPMP)) has been steady over the last five years.
- By far the greatest impact on recreational activity in the Heritage Area has been the recent discovery of Kauri Die-back disease. The role of visitors in helping to spread this disease is clear with almost 70% of known Kauri Die-back sites within 50m of the track network, and popular visitor destinations such as Piha and the Cascades being the most affected. An extensive management programme has been put into place to try to prevent the spread of the disease. This includes the quarantining of 15 at-risk areas of land in the Regional Park (approximately 20% of the area of the Park) and the closure of over 27 kilometres of track (approximately 10% of the total length of track in the Park) to help check the spread of the disease to areas that are currently free of it.
- Consultation indicates that an adverse impact of visitors on the wellbeing of local communities stems from the behaviour of some visitors such as littering and dumping, vandalism, theft, graffiti and illegal parking. Data from the Regional Park indicates that the incidence of many of these behaviours is decreasing.
- Visitors help support the economic wellbeing of local communities. The accommodation and food services sector in the Heritage Area expanded in the period 2008 to 2011, with the number of businesses in the sector increasing from 45 to 55 and the number of employees from 190 to 265. Businesses in the other visitor-related sector – arts and recreation services – remained reasonably static.
- There is generally good data available for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park on visitor numbers and characteristics, and the level of visitor satisfaction with their experience. As well as 2012 information, there is baseline data for 2008 for comparison.
- There is little systematic information available on use made of local parks, or of positive and negative visitor impacts on the wellbeing of local communities across the Heritage Area as a whole. New data was collected over the summer of 2012-2013 (traffic counts at key beach locations and visitor surveys at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga beaches). This data could provide a baseline for tracking future trends.
- There is a need to provide a wider management framework for visitors and recreation in the Heritage Area, integrating the management of the Regional Park with the Local Park network, the roading network and privately owned areas. The framework should seek to provide a quality experience for visitors to the Heritage Area, while protecting heritage features and at the same time recognising the role visitors can play in the social and economic wellbeing of the communities in the Ranges.
- The funding set aside for 2013-14 by the Waitakere Ranges Local Board for preparation of a Visitor Management Plan will help to provide such a framework.

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2 INTRODUCTION

The foothills, bush, harbour and beaches of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, located on the western fringe of the Auckland urban area, are some of Auckland's taonga, treasured by the communities that live in them and the people who visit them and contributing to the liveability of the region. All year round, but especially in summer weekends and holidays, people converge on the area, particularly the Manukau Harbour and West Coast beaches, Arataki Visitor Centre, Lake Wainamu and the tracks and viewpoints of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. They are mainly day-trippers, coming predominately from the nearby urban area of Auckland.

The landscape and environment of the Waitakere Ranges is highly significant in the context of the region and New Zealand. Visitors have been coming for more than a century, in growing numbers as the population increases. As the rapid growth in Auckland's population puts more pressure on the area, concern has been expressed that the heritage values may be irrevocably changed or damaged, and the quality of the Waitakere Ranges experience degraded for residents and visitors alike.

The Council seeks to create and maintain a rich visitor experience in a way that protects and maintains the valued heritage features of the area for future generations. This task involves the balancing of competing demands and values within an area that is permeated by public roads, and with a very limited range of tools available for managing and directing the flow of visitors and visitor behavior.

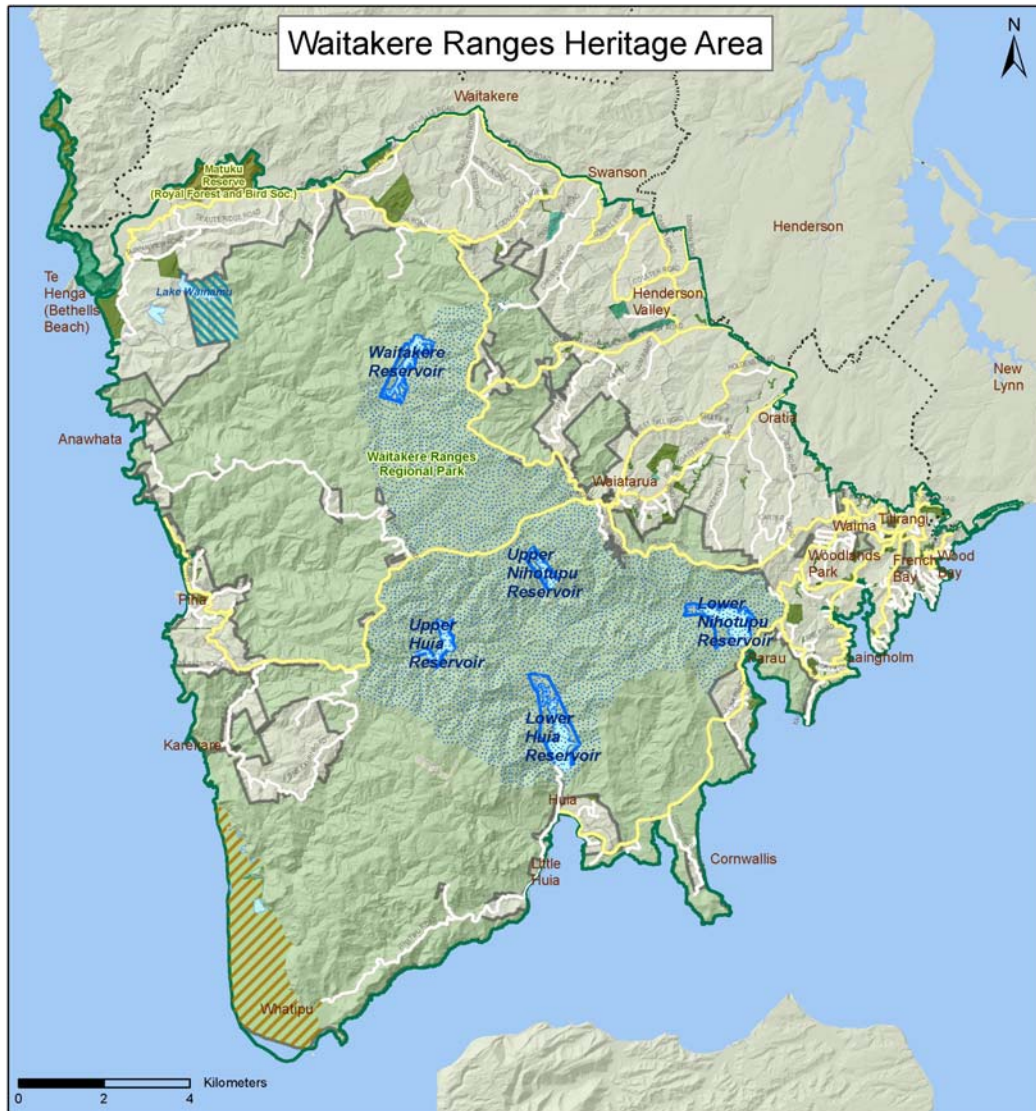
This report brings together the detailed information on visitors and their management in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, to assist in the development of a Visitor Management Plan for the area. It identifies the main visitor attractors in the Waitakere Ranges, sets out information available on visitor numbers to the Heritage Area and its many destinations and visitor satisfaction with their experiences. It outlines some of the impacts of visitors on the valued heritage features of the Waitakere Ranges, and on economic and social wellbeing of the communities within the Waitakere Ranges. It also outlines some of the tools available to the Council to foster positive visitor experiences, meet changing visitor needs for services and facilities, and to influence:

- The numbers of visitors
- The destinations chosen by visitors
- Actions of visitors that may impact adversely on environmental, social and cultural wellbeing
- The impact of visitor-related infrastructure on the environment and landscape of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area.

3 WAITAKERE RANGES LAND TENURE

Most (more than two thirds) of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is parkland under public ownership, land managed for water supply purposes or land owned by private interests and managed for conservation or scientific purposes. There is public/visitor access to much of the land in public ownership and limited access to some of the privately owned land.

Figure 1



- 17,000 hectares or around two thirds of the Heritage Area, is publicly owned parkland, mostly owned and managed by Auckland Council. This includes the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and a number of local reserves, mainly located along the Manukau foreshore and at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga beaches. The parkland of the Heritage Area is marked on the map at Figure 1.
- 972 hectares are owned by the Department of Conservation, including the 820 hectare Whatipu Scientific Reserve, which is managed by Auckland Council.
- Watercare Services Ltd manages 6,757 hectares of water catchment land for metropolitan water supply purposes, containing the five large water reservoirs located in the ranges - Upper and Lower Nihotupu, the Waitakere Reservoir and the Upper and Lower Huia Reservoirs, which themselves are visitor attractions. Of this area, 6,448 hectares are leased from the Auckland Council and the remainder (309 hectares), containing the dam lakes and water supply infrastructure, such as pipes and filter stations, are both owned and managed by Watercare.
- Approximately 9,000 hectares, or a third of the area of the Heritage Area, are privately owned.
- Of the privately owned land in the Heritage Area, about 192 hectares is managed mostly for conservation and scientific purposes, including 16ha owned by the University of Auckland, 14ha owned by the Auckland Acclimatisation Society and another approximately 42 ha under Queen Elizabeth II Conservation Covenants at Lake Wainamu, which is managed by the Auckland Council as part of the regional parkland. A further 120 hectares of bush and wetland is owned and managed by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (RF&B) at Matuku Reserve in the north of the Heritage Area. While technically Matuku Reserve is available only to RF&B members, the society welcomes people of goodwill to the reserve.

4 POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 WAITAKERE RANGES HERITAGE AREA ACT (2008)

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (the Act) provides a legal context for the development of the Visitor Management Plan. The boundary of the heritage Area is shown on Figures 1 and 2.

The Act recognises the national, regional and local importance of the Waitakere Ranges and foothills and promotes the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations. Two of the heritage features identified in Section 7 of the Act recognise the importance of the area for accessible recreation experiences.

S7 (g) The opportunities that the area provides for wilderness experiences, recreation, and relaxation in close proximity to metropolitan Auckland

S7 (m) the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural and recreational resources

It is recognised that many of the visitor attractors in the Waitakere Ranges are heritage features as defined in Section 7 of the Act, and that visitor activity has the potential to impact adversely on these heritage features. These features include, in particular:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>2(a)(i)</i> | <i>Indigenous ecosystems (rainforest, wetland, dune systems)</i> |
| <i>2(a)(iv)</i> | <i>Collection and storage of high quality water</i> |
| <i>2(a)(vii)</i> | <i>Landscape qualities</i> |
| <i>2(a)(viii)</i> | <i>Natural scenic beauty</i> |
| <i>2(e)</i> | <i>The quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges and the coastal parts of the area</i> |

While the main thrust of the Act is supporting the protection, restoration and enhancement of the valued heritage features, the Act recognises that people living in the Heritage Area must be enabled to provide for their well-being. Heritage Area objective 8(i) reads:

To recognise that people live and work in the area in distinct communities, and to enable those people to provide for their social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing.

Visitors to the Ranges may have both positive and negative impacts on community wellbeing, for example:

- Visitors can have positive impacts on the ability of people living in the communities of the Waitakere Ranges to provide for their economic wellbeing through spending on local businesses
- Visitors can have negative impacts on the social wellbeing of people in the Ranges (for example, from carparking overflow at peak visitor times, and from visitor behaviour such as theft and vandalism, graffiti and litter).

4.2 REGIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2010

4.2.1 Auckland Wide RPMP Policy

Reserve Management Plans guide the management of visitors and activities and the provision of infrastructure on parks. The Regional Park Management Plan 2010 (RPMP) embodies the visitor management strategy for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The boundaries of the Regional Park are identified on the map at Figure 2.

The RPMP is an omnibus plan covering the Waitakere Ranges and 22 other regional parks. It contains generic policies that apply to all regional parks and a section of specific management actions that apply to the individual parks, including the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.

This Plan is structured around the values people ascribe to the regional parks. It identifies the intrinsic, natural, landscape, tangata whenua, cultural, recreational and economic values to be protected and enhanced on regional parks generally. It sets out the socio-economic, development, recreation, environmental and management pressures on regional parks and identifies management principles and techniques¹ to be applied to ensure the parks' values² are protected and/or enhanced, including the ways of monitoring and managing visitor impacts and pressures on the parks.

4.2.2 Waitakere Ranges Regional Park

The Waitakere Ranges section of the RPMP identifies 28 'hot spots' known as 'special management zones'³ (refer Figure 2). These locations are considered to require specific management actions because they receive large numbers of visitors, are wilderness areas or contain sensitive natural features, such as wetlands.

The Plan identifies the primary purpose and values of the zone and sets out the management actions designed to protect and enhance these values. Emphasis has been placed on the protection of the wilderness values of the Waitakere Ranges and factors such as the "quietness" and "darkness" of the Ranges.

The special management zones help to place limits on activities in the more sensitive areas of the Regional Park, ensuring that visitor activity on the park is managed in a manner that protects the intrinsic natural, landscape and amenity values of the regional parkland. This includes the high value placed by many visitors on the feeling of "wilderness" within parts of the Waitakere Ranges.

4.2.3 Types of Activities on the Park

Activities on the park are classified as permitted, controlled, discretionary or prohibited.

The plan sets out the "permitted activities" (Section 13.3). These are generally the traditional informal and casual activities on regional parks, such as walking, tramping and running, picnicking, beach-related activities such as swimming and fishing, and the exercising of dogs. Some of these are limited as to place, season and time but generally people are able to enjoy these activities where and when they please. Some permitted

¹ Refer Section 7, Integrated Management Framework, RPMP 2010

² Refer Section Park Values, and Section 6 Management Principles, RPMP 2010

³ Refer Section 7.5 Special Management Zones, RPMP 2010

activities are prohibited in some locations, for example, dogs are generally prohibited from sensitive wildlife areas.

The second category of activity is “controlled activities” (Section 13.4). These are permitted but require the allocation of space or an entry approval. They include activities such as camping, staying in lodges and baches, recreational horse riding and the use of designated picnic sites. A permit issued by rangers for these activities subject to standard approval conditions.

The third category is “discretionary activities” (Section 13.5). These require specific approval from the council which may be delegated to specified officers or require formal approval by the council. This includes activities such as commercial concessionaires using park locations or resources, filming and the licensing of activities on the park. The criteria for decision making are set out in Section 13.5.1 of the RPMP.

The last category of activities managed by the RPMP is “prohibited activities” (Section 13.6). These include activities such as motorized sports, recreational hunting and the burial of bodies and scattering of ashes. Mountain biking is prohibited from the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park on the basis that the terrain, erodible soils and track types are not suitable for this type of activity.

4.2.4 How are the management zones applied?

This classification system is applied to the management zones in the RPMP in a way that helps achieve the objectives of the zone. Some zones are designed specifically to take visitors, such as Arataki Visitor Centre and arrival areas at locations such as Cascades – Kauri Park, Cornwallis, and Karamatura, while other zones are designed to retain their wilderness and intrinsic qualities, such as Whatipu and the Pararaha valley. In these locations discretionary activities, such as events, are limited in time, number or frequency.

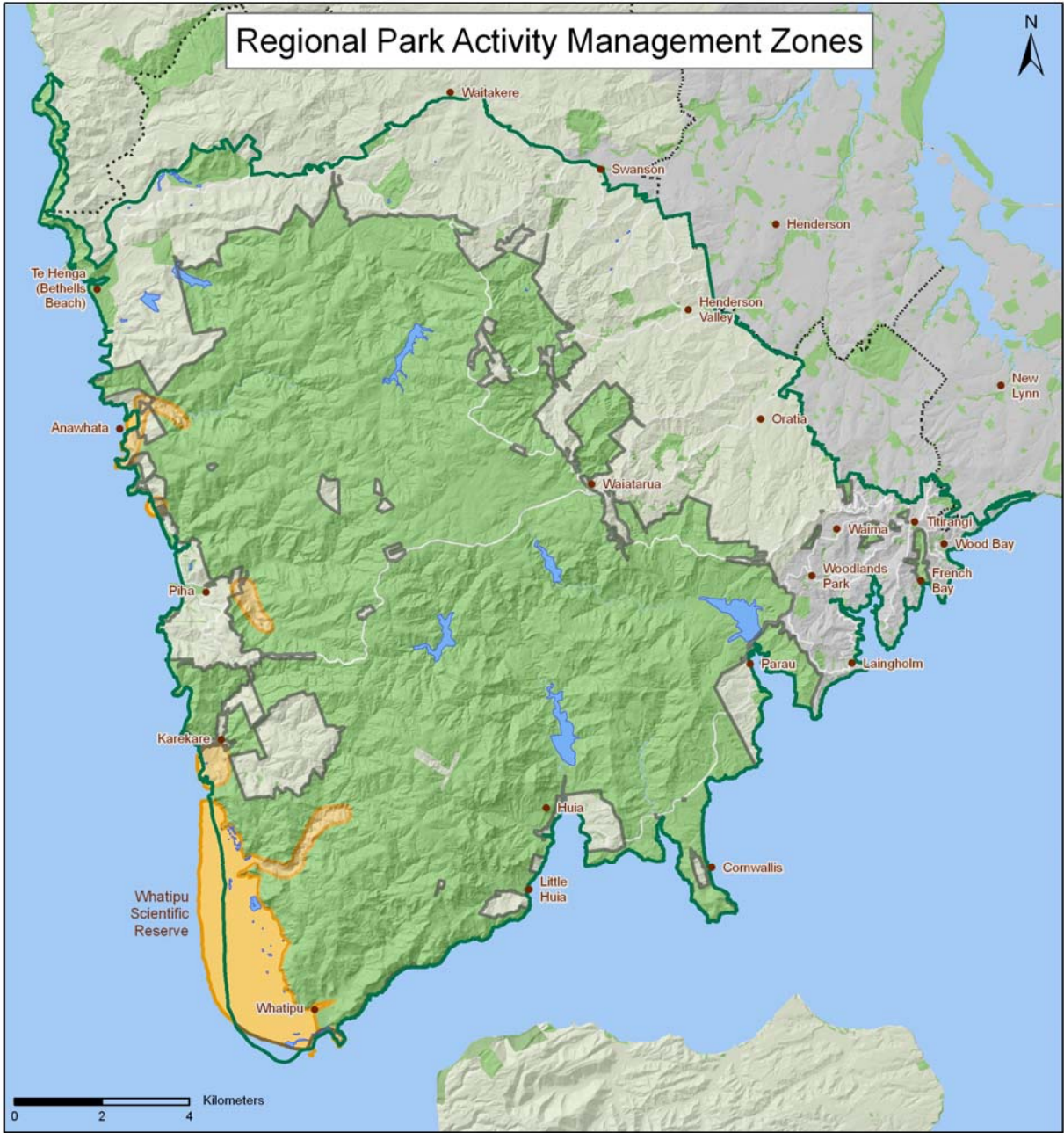
A series of practice guidelines ensure the RPMP policies are correctly applied by staff. These guidelines focus on the decision making procedures around discretionary activities.⁴ An important element of these procedures is ensuring that the relevant legislation, such as the Reserves Act 1977, Local Government Act 2002, Resource Management Act 1999 and the Waitakere Ranges Heritage area Act 2008 is properly considered. A checklist has been included to ensure that these matters are given effect to.

4.2.5 Infrastructure Design

RPMP Policy also seeks to ensure that the design and maintenance of visitor infrastructure, including tracks, roads and vehicle parking, is appropriate to the environments of the Ranges. For example, design and management objectives for the extensive track systems focus on ensuring that the design of tracks is compatible with the environment they traverse rather than adhering to simplified standard designs.

⁴ Refer Section 13.5 Discretionary Activities, RPMP 2010

Figure 2



- Legend**
- Activity Management Zones
 - Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area
 - Regional Park Boundary
 - Local Board Boundary
 - Metropolitan Urban Area

4.3 LOCAL PARK RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Reserve Management Plans and Concept Plans developed for Local Parks within the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area include:

- The French Bay Development and Public Space Concept (March 2012)
- The Swanson Reserves Management Plan 2003 (includes some reserves outside the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area)
- Te Henga Reserve Management Plan (2002)
- Manukau Harbour Foreshore Reserve Management Plan (2001)
- Piha Reserve Management Plan
- Piha Coastal Management Plan (2000)

4.4 PRE-2010 LOCAL COUNCIL VISITOR POLICY

Available information tells us that most visitors to the Ranges are from West Auckland and the wider Auckland area, with few originating from the rest of New Zealand or overseas. In general, this is because the Ranges have not been widely promoted as a tourist destination. There is a long-standing history of Council plans relating to visitors in the Ranges:

- In 1995, the former Waitakere City Council prepared a Tourism Strategic Plan⁵ which focused visitor activities away from the West Coast Area.
- In 2000 the council sought to draft a strategy that would enable the City to explore economic opportunities afforded by visitors to the area, with particular focus on the rural eastern foothills, while protecting the high natural and heritage values of the 'inner ranges'. This draft West Coast Visitor Strategy (by Synchro Consultants) was never ratified by the council, mainly due to:
 - community perceptions that growing the visitor economy was over-emphasised in the draft strategy at the expense of the environment
 - concern over active promotion of the Ranges and the downstream effects of increased visitor numbers
 - objection to the potential 'commodification' of the features of the Waitakere Ranges.
- In 2003-04 the former Enterprise Waitakere sought to brand the Waitakere Ranges as the 'Waitakere Rainforest' for promotional purposes, a proposal which drew significant community criticism.
- In 2007 Auckland Plus⁶ made the case for increasing the economic and social wellbeing of Auckland by transforming Auckland from a gateway to New Zealand into a world-class destination in its own right. The west coast bush and beaches were identified as a 'hinterland precinct' with potential for further development as visitor attractions.
- A proposed joint Visitor Management Strategy for the Waitakere Ranges by the former Auckland Regional and Waitakere City Councils in 2006/2007 failed to progress beyond a Visitor Stocktake report⁷.
- In 2009 three reports were authored by Lois Easton Consulting Limited for the former Waitakere City Council. These were titled "An Investigation of Economic

⁵ Waitakere City Council, 1996 'Waitakere City Tourism Strategic Plan'.

⁶ Auckland Plus 2007 'Bringing the World to Auckland: The case for Investment in Auckland's Visitor Economy'.

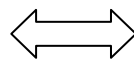
⁷ Jenny Macdonald Consulting Limited for the Auckland Regional Council and Waitakere City Council, 2007. 'A Visitor Strategy for the Waitakere Ranges: Information Stocktake.'

Development Potential in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area”. The reports analysed existing activities in the Heritage Area, considered case studies from other areas in New Zealand and overseas, and recommended a range of activities based on distinct areas and communities within the Heritage Area.

- A ‘Waitakere Economic Wellbeing Strategy’⁸ developed by the former Waitakere City Council in 2009 identifies as an issue that ‘the Waitakere Ranges and West Coast have unrealised marketing profile and regional value’. It provides a framework to help maximise local economic wellbeing and recommends a Rural Economic Activities Plan that will ‘facilitate development of appropriate commercial activity in the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area that is sensitive to the special nature of the area’.
- In 2010 the former Waitakere City Council proposed a plan change to the Waitakere City District Plan – Plan Change 36 ‘Rural Activities and Social, Cultural and Economic Wellbeing in the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area’. This plan change attracted considerable public interest, with 721 primary submissions and 25 further submissions (supporting or opposing a primary submission), and became operative in 2012. It provided for appropriate local and small scale social, cultural and economic non-residential activities that benefit the people and communities of, and visitors to, the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. These activities must be clearly connected to the wellbeing of those people and communities, or to the enjoyment, protection or enhancement of the natural and rural character and amenity of the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, and must be compatible with and/or enhance the character of the area.
- In 2010, the former Waitakere City Council, seeking to provide some guidance for the Auckland Council, produced a draft West Coast Tourism Strategic Plan⁹ covering the whole of the former council area. This draft plan has as an objective ‘to increase the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits of tourism in West Auckland’. The vision is ‘To showcase and deliver an authentic West Auckland visitor experience that builds on the tourism potential of the area, while enhancing the quality of life for local communities and safeguarding the environment’. While this draft plan outlines tourism activities, opportunities and issues, it identifies that some of the main attractions for visitors are sensitive environmental areas with national significance and protection. It acknowledges that there are various perspectives about the extent and approach to encouraging tourism, and the positioning of West Auckland tourism within regional destination promotion. It also notes that this debate may have overshadowed other attractors in West Auckland (not based on sensitive environments) such as the marine, film, cultural and creative sectors, which are yet to feature significantly in the regional context.

This brief outline of the history of Council Visitor Plans for the Ranges has highlighted the significant tension inherent in developing visitor management policy:

Protecting the Ranges from any adverse impacts of visitors by minimising marketing and limiting visitor facilities



Maximising the economic benefit/wellbeing of the community by developing and marketing attractors and destinations in the Ranges to overseas tourists and visitors from elsewhere in NZ

⁸ Waitakere City Council, 2009. ‘Best for the West – Economic Wellbeing Strategy for Waitakere ‘.

⁹

4.5 AUCKLAND COUNCIL PLANS (POST 2010)

Relevant post-2010 policy by Auckland Council includes, most significantly, the Auckland Plan (2012) and the Auckland Visitor Plan (2011).

4.5.1 The Auckland Plan (2012)

The Auckland Plan identifies the Waitakere Ranges as part of Auckland's 'blue and green environment', integral to the character, identity and lifestyle of 'the world's most liveable city'. The plan contains directives to ensure that 'our green and blue, rural, coastal, marine and natural environments can co-exist in a balanced way with the working activities that rely on them and help sustain us'.

The Auckland Plan contains measures such as 'Increase the number of annual guest nights in Auckland from 21.1 million in 2010 to 29.5 million by 2022', 'Develop opportunities to advance Auckland as a gateway and destination for visitors ...' and 'Increase the value added to the Auckland economy by rural sectors (including ...complementary rural enterprises, tourism and visitor experiences in rural areas) by 50% by 2040'. On the other hand, the plan seeks to protect the environmental values by ensuring 'no loss in the area of significant landscape, natural character and natural features'.

The Auckland Plan relies on the Auckland Visitor Plan to 'identify specific investments and interventions that will increase Auckland's appeal to visitors by enhancing visitor infrastructure and improving Auckland's amenity' (paragraph 424).

4.5.2 Auckland Visitor Plan (2011)

Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED), an Auckland Council Controlled Organisation, has developed a ten-year investment and action plan for Auckland's visitor economy - the Auckland Visitor Plan (December 2011).

The Plan outlines Auckland's present position as essentially a 'gateway city' rather than a legitimate visitor destination, and notes that it is the portfolio of attractors that draws visitors to the region and compels them to spend more time and money here. The Auckland Visitor Plan sets out 10 strategic goals to guide Auckland towards the economic aspiration of growing the visitor demand for Auckland and enhancing the visitor portfolio (in a way that increases spend at a higher rate than the number of visitors or visitor nights). Specific short and medium term actions have been identified for each of these goals. The most significant of these for the Waitakere Ranges are:

Goal 1: Improve marketing and distribution

Actions:

- Develop and invest in Auckland's destination brand (short)
- Review Auckland's offering and provide 'product groupings' to reflect needs of local, domestic and international markets (short)
- Develop, curate and manage Auckland's promotional content (medium)
- Partner with inbound tourism operators, airlines and wholesalers offshore to package tourism products (medium)
- Investigate the potential of special interest markets such as golfing, cycling and bird watching (medium)

Goal 5: Develop attractors

Actions

- Investigate the feasibility of a major attraction such as an “Auckland Great Walk’ or canopy walk in the Waitakere or Hūnua Ranges (with consideration to the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008)
- Promote the protection of Auckland’s biodiversity and natural environment

Goal 6: Enhance Auckland’s fabric

Actions

- Support and influence initiatives that have the potential to enhance the visitor experience (medium-long)
 - Food and beverage initiatives
 - Visual and performing arts
 - Supporting sustainability of natural assets
 - Input into Heritage Programmes in the future
- Create ways of communicating Auckland’s stories throughout the visitor experience (medium)

Goal 7: Improve visitor information and service levels

Actions

- Undertake a review of how Auckland is explained as a visitor region in terms of its localised parts and their unique offering. Reflect this new view in collateral, maps and other tools to improve the visitor experience and spread visitors across the region.

The Auckland Visitor Plan notes that tourism operators have identified eco-tourism and native bush experiences as one of the main opportunities to grow Auckland’s visitor economy, and the plan identifies Auckland’s native bush/rainforest assets and the rural townships and regional parks as two key areas of untapped potential. The key attractor opportunities listed in the plan for Auckland include:

- Bush and rainforest attractions – Auckland has around 30,000 hectares of native rainforest divided relatively evenly between the Waitakere Ranges in the west and the Hunua Ranges in the south. There are already many walking trails in these forests, including the 70km Hillary Trail, but they are not well used either by locals or visitors. Auckland has an opportunity to create a sustainable market for hiking and rainforest experiences through greater promotion of existing trails and the development of eco-tourism experiences in the Hunua and Waitakere Ranges (with consideration given to the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008).
- Wider Auckland Region – Auckland’s satellite towns and rural areas contain some of New Zealand’s best food and wine, beaches, scenery and wildlife. While these areas are relatively popular with locals, most visitors are unaware they exist or bypass them on the way to similar destinations on the main tourist routes. Auckland has an opportunity to capture more leisure tourism by developing and promoting its outlying areas.

4.6 COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON VISITORS

Residents within the Ranges have, in the past, voiced concern about the impact of visitors, and particularly the anticipated increases in visitor numbers as Auckland’s population grows. There has been significant local resistance to perceived attempts to seek economic benefit to both the wider and local community through promotion and

'commodification' of the Ranges. Local communities have, in general, sought that council efforts be directed solely to management of (mainly Auckland) visitors who arrive in the Heritage Area, avoiding promotion of the area, especially to overseas tourists. Two community groups (the West Coast Plan Liaison Group in 2000 and the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society (WRPS) in 2008) put together alternative visitor plans for the Ranges which avoid promotion of the Ranges as a tourism attraction. The WRPS document suggests development of alternative visitor attractions around the edges of the Heritage Area, such as cultural experiences, events, and farmers markets, to help take the visitor pressure off the natural features of the Ranges.

Documents outlining the views of the community on issues relating to visitors and their management are summarized below.

4.6.1 West Coast Plan (2000)

The West Coast Plan was facilitated by the former Waitakere City Council, and involved an intensive public consultation over a number of years based on consensus with west Coast communities and interest groups. Relevant goals, targets and actions are:

- *Goal Four – The West Coast is a place where everyone can experience and enjoy the wildness*
- *Target Eighteen – People appreciate, respect and have the opportunity to enjoy the West Coast and Waitakere Ranges*
- *Target Nineteen - Ensure the adverse recreational and visitor impacts on the environment are minimal*
- *Action 19.1 – Develop a co-ordinated visitor management plan, in consultation with local communities, which would cover:*
 - *Limits to tour bus activities;*
 - *Development of concrete measures /indicators of tourism impact;*
 - *Compulsory registration for tourism operators*
 - *Investigating ways to manage visitor numbers*
 - *Impacts on local communities*
 - *Encourage tourism operators to be responsible towards the environment*

4.6.2 The Waitakere Ranges Project: Phase One Community Consultation 2004

In September to November 2003 a consultation was undertaken in the Waitakere Ranges to 'stimulate discussion on the health of the Waitakere Ranges area, the issues threatening protection of the area and the gaps in management'¹⁰. Among the four key issues discussed as part of the consultation were visitors to the Ranges.

One workshop for the business community and fourteen community workshops were held in the Waitakere Ranges¹¹, with a total attendance of 498 residents and business people. In addition 102 comment forms were received.

A presentation was made at the workshops which included the slide in the text box below: An 'H diagram' technique (see below) was used to focus discussion on whether visitor numbers are a threat or a benefit to the Ranges and to individual communities.

¹⁰ Waitakere City Council, January 2004. 'The Waitakere Ranges Project: Phase One Community Consultation Summary and Workshop Notes'.

¹¹ Community workshops were held in Bethells/Te Henga, Piha, Karekare, Huia, Laingholm, Titirangi, Waiatarua, Oratia, Kelston/Henderson, Summerlands/Sturges, Swanson, Waitakere Township, Massey and Te Atatu Peninsula.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (please tick where on the line between 'disagree' and 'agree' best reflects your opinion)

'Visitor numbers are a major threat to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area.'

Agree										Disagree
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

'Visitors benefit the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area and should be encouraged.'

Agree										Disagree
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Visitors to the Ranges

- 2.6 million visits annually
- 10,000 visitors to Piha on the busiest days
- Visitors can contribute to livelihoods, but can also put pressure on:
 - The natural environment and heritage
 - Services and facilities
 - Spritual and wilderness qualities
- ARC and Waitakere City are starting to relook at the visitor issue.

Opinion over the workshops was widely spread on the issue of whether visitor numbers are a threat to the Ranges. Feeling that visitors can be a threat surfaced most strongly at the coastal villages of Bethells/Te Henga, Piha and Karekare, together with Waiatarua.

There was a strong message from many that the Ranges are not just for the locals and that they play an important part in the recreation needs of the region 'there is a need for Aucklanders to use their leisure more actively (Swanson workshop). A Piha participant observed that 'the needs of visitors for recreation must be balanced with the needs of residents'. Many are of the opinion that visitors can contribute positively to the environment.

Positive effects of visitors identified during the consultation focused on their contribution to the local economy, for example, 'need to continue selling organic fruit in the foothills as an economic base' (Massey workshop). Others doubted the economic benefits, for example 'visitors have little to spend their money on in the Ranges – tourism is not generally the answer to prosperity' (Laingholm workshop).

Discussion on commercial ventures in the Ranges brought some adverse comment, for example on the impacts of 'commercial visitors' that go off-track 'twenty to thirty people abseiling down a waterfall week after week has an impact (Waiatarua workshop). It was pointed out in a comments form that visitors are attracted to the Ranges as they are in their present condition, and any unsympathetic development would detract and discourage visitors – 'encourage visitors and job creation in the tourism and film industries that harmonise with the natural environment of the Ranges and helps provide funding for their preservation'.

Some participants pointed out that visitors can become an advocate for the area 'young people need to come out here to be educated about the environment so they can take care of the environment in the future' (Huia workshop). It was also noted that the energy of

visitors can be harnessed to help environmental protection projects such as trapping and baiting for animal pests and revegetation.

Adverse impacts that visitors can have were identified as:

- More traffic and bad driving/high speeds resulting in hazardous roads
- Weeds introduced by visitors 'visitors come in and bring weeds on their feet' (Kelston/Henderson Workshop)
- Wear on the tracks
- Overcrowding 'we need visitor management or we won't have an uncrowded experience' (Laingholm workshop)
- Destruction of nature
- Property vandalism
- Over-harvesting of shellfish
- Badly controlled dogs fouling the beaches and threatening people and wildlife
- Need for more facilities such as toilets, carparks and water supplies, their capital and maintenance costs, and the burden to ratepayers
- The visual impact of signage and facilities for the benefit of visitors 'Council toilets are on the skyline' (Karekare workshop).

There was also a level of concern about the safety of visitors and their property, for example, the lack of lifeguards at Whatipu and the security of cars in visitor carparks, and the misunderstanding by some visitors about the level of facility available at the beaches, for example some people don't know there is no petrol available.

In general, there was an acceptance that visitors will continue to come and the focus should be on managing their impacts and providing appropriate facilities that fit in with the natural environment. Much of the workshop discussions focused on the need to balance visitors' rights and needs and their impact on the environment, and methods for managing these impacts. Suggestions included:

- A ranger to look after facilities, manage visitors and enforce the rules
- Lock beachfront areas at night
- Properly authorise and manage eco-tourism operators
- Keep the roads to Whatipu and Anawhata unsealed to self-limit visitor numbers
- Set a 'sensible range of traffic speeds on the roads – not 100 km/hour'
- Develop traffic calming areas
- Redesign rubbish bins at beaches and provide for more regular rubbish collections
- Increase fines for littering/dumping
- Install video cameras at certain 'problem areas'
- Develop good local visitor management strategies and 'provide for a varied range of activities such as horse riding, mountain biking'
- Better co-ordination between agencies and between agencies and the community
- Develop mechanisms that would act as a deterrent as well as fund-raising for preservation initiatives and/or visitor facilities and roads, such as:
 - A toll barrier on beach access roads (with free swipe cards/stickers for residents)
 - Carparking chargesNote: one of the Titirangi groups voted by a show of hands on whether mechanisms for charging visitors should be investigated, with a result of nine for and seventeen against
- Limit carparking spaces
- Provide alternative means of transport to the private car

- Provide a weekend bus (two hour turnaround) as a cheaper alternative to more carparks, and provide a layby for buses
- Organise traffic reports at weekends about the beaches
- Develop more educational opportunities, materials and programmes. Suggestions included:
 - Signage near the beginning of the beach access roads to inform people what facilities are available
 - Education about respecting the environment
 - Promote the character/history of the area

4.6.3 Community Visitor Plans

- A community group – the West Coast Plan Liaison Group – drew up an alternative plan in 2000 in response to the Synchro report 2000. This plan closely mirrored the Synchro report but removed any policy that might be seen as promoting visitor activity, and clearly limited the plan to managing visitors who arrive in the Ranges.
- In 2008 the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society drew up the ‘Waitakere City Visitors Vision – An Alternative to Exploiting the Ranges’, a short alternative visitor plan that focused on development of alternative visitor attractions in the west such as cultural experiences, events, and farmers markets, to take the pressure off the natural attractions in the Ranges.

4.6.4 Local Area Plans (LAPs)

Three Local Area Plans developed under the WRHAA have been completed to date, for Henderson Valley/Opanuku, Oratia and Waitatarua.

Henderson Valley/Opanuku LAP (2010)

The community has identified a desired future in which the character and amenity values are retained and enhanced, and living, rural and recreation activities exist in harmony and sympathy with the environment. In addition, this Local Area Plan:

- Identifies opportunities for heritage trails, walkways/cycleways and bridal paths and interpretation /Information
- Seeks a precautionary approach to development that could damage heritage features or undermine the desired future character and amenity
- Seeks that any activity should have regard to the Regional Parks Management Plan

Oratia LAP (2009)

The Oratia community has identified a desired future in which

‘Oratia will be appreciated by people seeking rest, respite, recreation ... within a natural and rural environment. It will provide opportunities for people to connect with and experience nature, rural, wilderness, history, food, wine, creative endeavour, culture, gardens, ecology, landscape, health and wellbeing and the outdoors. Rural activities will ... maintain a rural character and a worked – in landscape. These will be small-scale, low impact rural activities such as culinary and eco-tourism, health and wellbeing, recreation and cultural experiences that will enhance social and economic wellbeing’.

Waitatarua LAP (2009)

The Waitatarua community has identified a desired future in which:

'Business activities will be based around existing facilities, with other small-scale home-based activities related to the area's outstanding beauty and recreation value.'

Parau/ Laingholm/ Woodlands Park/ Waima LAP (under preparation)

The main ideas emerging from the public consultation meeting on 18th September 2012 on the issues of recreation and visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area were:

Policy Issues

- The need to knit together Auckland Council recreation and economic policy and balance the two
- Need for caution about turning the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area into a museum/visitors should be made welcome/ need a good experience
- Keep Bethells Beach a wilderness
- More and better controlled dog walking areas

Vehicles/ Parking

- Car-parking and traffic management at the West Coast beaches is a major issue
- Car security/ break-ins at carparks
- Cyclists – road safety/ Road speeds

More information Needed

- More information needed about why people go to the beaches and what they do there
- Crash/injury data on roads out to the beaches needed
- Measure costs of visitors, eg overcrowding, erosion/widening of bush tracks and creation of informal dune tracks, weeds along tracks, size of tourist vehicles, noise pollution/ability to hear cars, light pollution/ability to see the stars, increase in infrastructure to accommodate visitors (eg signs, carparks, road/pavement widening, ice-cream stands, cafes), dog control, rubbish dumping and litter, cost of surf clubs to protect beach users, spread of Kauri Dieback disease
- Measure benefits of visitors, eg holiday accommodation available and visitor nights, involvement of visitors in environmental restoration and enhancement
- Measure sustainable behaviors by visitors, eg use of public transport

Management tools

- Ways to limit Kauri Dieback disease such as regulating numbers of people participating in events, measuring people's level of knowledge about the disease.
- Cycle ways and public transport to the beaches

4.6.5 People's Panel Survey during the period 24 January 2011 to 14 February 2011 on Auckland liveable City

Relevant comments posted by those in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Area included:

- I support the promotion of the Ranges as a tourist and recreational area but there needs to be more emphasis on supporting this with parking and toilets available.

- The fact that Lake Wainamu is promoted so much as a place to go but there are no facilities to support the amount of people visiting. eg only 1 portaloos halfway along the walkway. People are polluting the area and the water because of that.
- Beautiful location, great cultural wealth and diversity. Access to parks, coast and harbours and good markets for work.

5 WHAT DO VISITORS VALUE?

The Waitakere Ranges are a favourite place for Aucklanders. A telephone survey conducted in the Auckland Region in 2003, for the former Auckland Regional Council, found that 60% of people surveyed had visited the area in the past year, with most visiting the beaches and foothills areas. Subsequent surveys examining the public awareness and use of regional parks have repeatedly shown that the Waitakere Range Regional Park is the most readily recognised and visited of all the Auckland regional parks.

A 2003 Waitakere City Council background paper on the Waitakere Ranges¹² noted that “the Ranges are highly valued by iwi, residents and visitors for the following:

- Landscape, beauty, aesthetic value
- Recreational opportunities
- Native forests and wildlife
- Inspirational, artistic and spiritual values
- Associations and sites of significance to Tangata Whenua
- European heritage sites
- Clean water
- Quietness
- Importance to the tourism, recreation and filming industries
- Attractiveness as a living environment”

Studies of Auckland residents undertaken in 2005¹³ showed that Aucklanders value the Waitakere Ranges for the activities identified in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Activity of visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park	
Activity	%
Bush walk/tramping	44%
Walk on the beach/sunbathing	43%
Surfing/swimming/boogie-boarding etc	37%
Visiting friends/family	20%
Sightseeing	19%
Picnics	10%
Work	9%
Live in area permanently	9%

¹² ‘Protection of the Waitakere Ranges Area: Background Paper’ by the former Waitakere City Council, December 2003.

¹³ Residents’ views on the protection of Waitakere Ranges, undertaken by Gravitass for the former Auckland Regional Council, 2005

Fishing	7%
Visit cafes/restaurants/bars	6%
Adventure sports (canyoning, hang gliding etc)	4%
Inspirational, artistic and/or spiritual reasons	3%
Visiting heritage sites	3%
Wildlife	3%
“Sunday drive”	2%
Use Visitors’ Centre	2%
Participate in organised sport eg. golf	2%

Note: The total is more than 100% as some people valued more than one activity

Source: Survey undertaken for the former Auckland Regional Council in 2005

Questionnaire surveys¹⁴ were undertaken at Piha and Bethells Beaches in February and March 2013 found that walking, swimming, walking the dog, surfing and picnicking were the main purpose of visits to Bethells beach, while at Piha the main purposes were swimming, walking and surfing.

6 VISITOR ATTRACTIONS AND AMENITIES

The map at Figure 4 shows the major visitor attractions and facilities in the Heritage Area.

A number of landscape features are a focus of visitor activity, including waterfalls (especially Kitekite Falls, Karekare Falls and Fairy Falls) and popular lookout points such as Mt Donald McLean, Pae O Te Rangī, Lion Rock, Tasman View (Piha), Mercer Bay, Mt Donald McLean, Huia Lookout, Arataki, Pukematekao, Parkinsons lookout, McLachlans Memorial, Spraggs Memorial and Mount Atkinson.

The Arataki Visitor Centre on the Scenic Drive provides an information gateway for visitors to the Waitakere Ranges. The centre caters for short-term visitors, providing an overview of the Heritage Area as well as information for those seeking experiences within the Ranges on what is available and how to safely access those opportunities.

Within the regional parkland there are approximately 264 km of walking and tramping tracks, including a nature heritage trail at Arataki and the approximately 70 kilometer Hillary Trail, a multi-day tramping route linking existing trails and opened in 2010. Starting from Titirangi or the Arataki Visitor Centre, this trail takes trampers around the coast past Huia, Whatipu, Karekare, Piha, Anawhata, and thence to Lake Wainamu and either winding north to Muriwai via the Department of Conservation's Te Henga Walkway, or through Cascade Kauri Park and on to connect with the train at Swanson. It has proved popular with people seeking a more strenuous level of activity. In addition, there are a further approximately 22 km of walking trails on local parks in the Heritage Area. Dog walking is a popular activity, particularly at the designated off-leash areas (refer section 12.1.3 for more details).

Besides walking, other popular visitor activities in the Heritage Area include surfing and swimming, boating, fishing, barbeques and picnics, abseiling and bird-watching. The

¹⁴ The surveys were undertaken for Auckland Council by the summer Rangers at Piha and Bethells/ Te Henga in February and March 2013. The size of the samples surveyed were small – 53 at Bethells and 23 at Piha – so that the information gathered can be treated as an indication only.

main swimming beaches are Bethells/Te Henga, Piha, Karekare, Cornwallis, Mill Bay, Titirangi Beach and French Bay, and Lake Wainamu is also very popular. Surf Clubs are located at Karekare, Piha, Piha North and Bethells Beach. There are public boat launching facilities at Little Huia Beach (2), the end of South Titirangi Rd, Armour Bay, Foster Bay, French Bay (2), Laingholm, Cornwallis wharf and Wood Bay Reserve (2), as well as six private boat launching facilities located along the Manukau Harbour shoreline.

The regional park contains a large number of sites of significance to tangata whenua, and several heritage sites dating from early European settlement of the area, including remnants of kauri dams, for example at Pararaha Valley, and historic homesteads at Whatipu Lodge, Huia Lodge, Hinge House (Huia), Rose Hellaby House (Scenic Drive) and Kettle House (Anawhata. McCahon House in Titirangi, where the artist Colin McCahon lived from 1953 to 1960 has been restored and is open to the public on a limited basis.

Within the parkland are a number of lodges that are available for hire by groups. The Kiwanis Lodge (46 people) and Huia Lodge (24 people) at Huia are managed by the Auckland Council while the Whatipu Lodge (50 people) is managed under license. The Barr Cottage (6 people) at Huia and Kettle House (6 people) at Anawhata are available for casual visitor rental. In addition, there are a number of camp sites on the parkland. These can accommodate up to 290 people for 7 day visits and up to 30 campervans, which are permitted to stay for two nights at selected carparking areas.

Accommodation on private land in the Heritage Area is mostly of a small scale 'Bed and Breakfast' nature, apart from the Waitakere Estate Hotel on the Scenic Drive offering 19 guest rooms and a conference facility, the Bethells Beach Eco-Cottages with 6 bedrooms, Rangiwai Lodge in Titirangi (4 guest rooms) and Karanga Camp (Te Henga Road) with bunk rooms and self-catering facilities. A 'glamping' (glamorous camping) experience has been set up on private land near Lake Wainamu at Te Henga, close to the Hillary Trail.

Other visitor attractions in the Heritage Area include wineries (Babich, Sapich, Artisans and Pleasant Valley), galleries such as Lopdell House gallery (currently undergoing renovations), the West Coast Gallery at Piha and the Packing Shed Gallery in Oratia, antiques (Just Plane Interesting and Aranui Antiques) the Oratia Folk Museum, Crystal Mountain, the Bahai Centre and the Aio Wira Centre.

The Waitakere Golf Club is located on land at the Cascade Kauri Park in the northern Waitakere Ranges and Kiwi Valley Farm Park offers a country and farm park experience to visitors to Henderson Valley/Opanuku. Door sales of items such as arts and crafts and fresh produce are located throughout the area and there are also a number of markets – the Titirangi craft market, the Oratia farmers' market and the Swanson car boot sale. Cafes and restaurants are open for business at Titirangi, South Titirangi, Oratia, Candia Rd, Scenic Drive, Henderson Valley Road, Huia, Piha, and the Bethells Beach caravan (removed when not in operation).

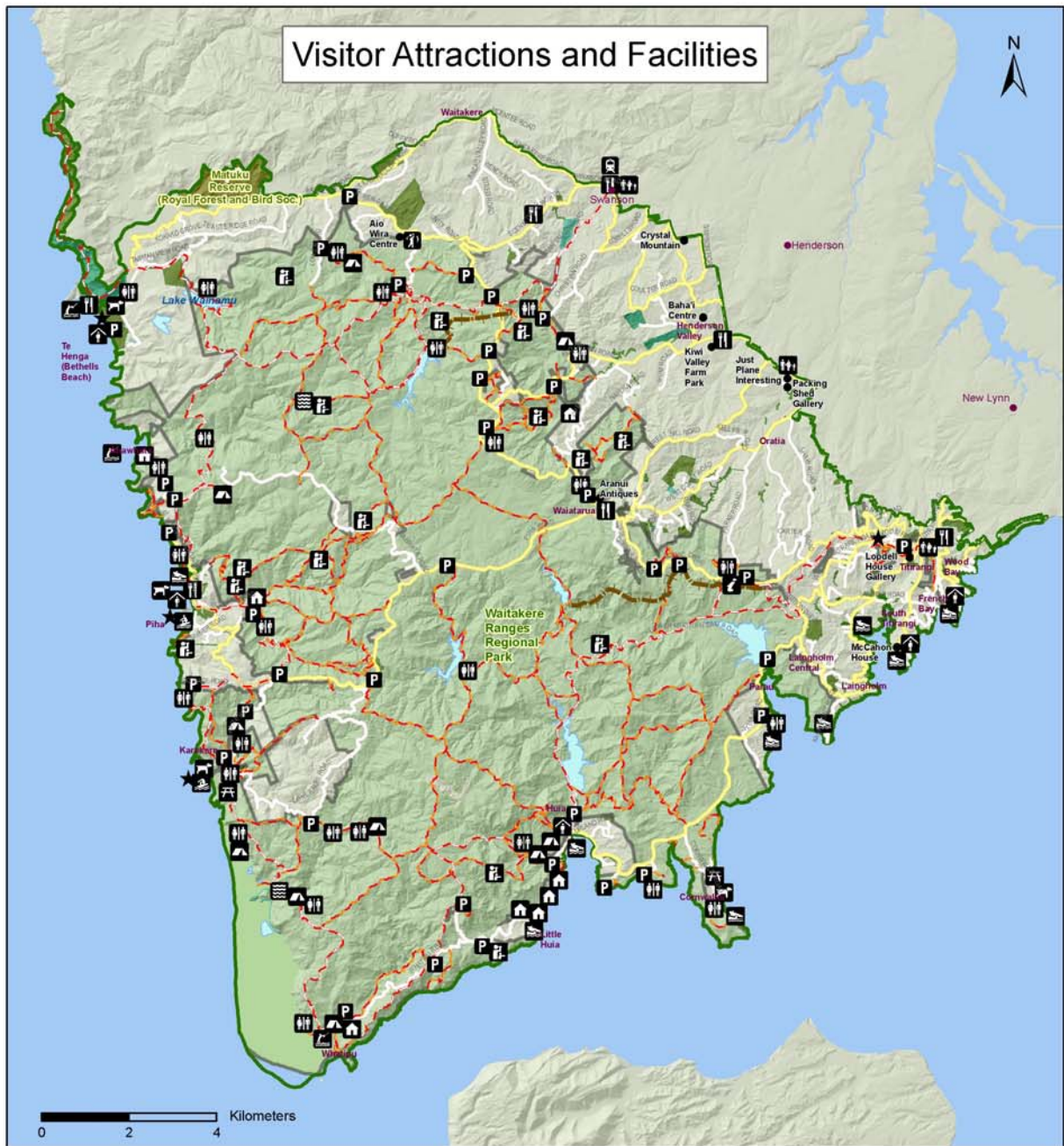
Regular events in the area include the Titirangi Festival of Music, Piha Big Boat Race, Karekare Beach Races, Bethells Community Day, Arthur Lydiard Marathon, Karamatura Farm Open Day, Lactic Turkey (a run at Whatipu), Westcoaster Fishing Contest, Easter weekend market (Huia) and the Labour Day Market (Huia-Cornwallis Ratepayers and Residents Association Hall).

Carparks and toilets are commonly supplied at most of the beaches, local parks and some of the regional park destinations, while the more heavily visited destinations also have changing rooms. Regular public transport into the area is represented by a train service from Brittomart in central Auckland, to stations near the eastern boundary of the Heritage

Area - Sunnyvale, Swanson and Waitakere Township. This service has improved significantly since 2008. Buses service Titirangi, Parau and the eastern part of the Heritage Area such as Swanson and the lower part of Henderson Valley. However, at least one report¹⁵ notes that Auckland's main strength is in its hinterland that contains *'exceptional natural attractions and offers outstanding experiences'* but that *'this strength is almost entirely negated by the lack of transport to these areas'*.

¹⁵ Auckland Regional Council 2008 'The Outlook for Tourism in the Auckland Region'

Figure 4



Legend

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| ● Business | 🏠 Accommodation | 🏊 Surf Club | 🚧 Narrow gauge tramlines |
| 🚂 Train station | 🚢 Boat ramp | 🌊 Lakes Dams | 👤 Hillary Trail |
| 🍽️ Cafe or Restaurant | 🏕️ Camping | 🗺️ Regional Park Boundary | 👤 Waitakere Hunua Tracks |
| 🚻 Change rooms | 👁️ Lookout | 🌿 Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area | 🛣️ Motorway |
| 🛒 Market | 🏠 Picnic site | 🌳 Department of Conservation | 🛣️ Major Road |
| 🏰 Old Kauri Dam | 🚽 Toilet | 🌳 Local Parks | 🛣️ Arterial Road |
| 🐕 Off-leash dog walking beach | 🅑 Parking | 🌳 Matuku Reserve (Royal Forest and Bird Soc.) | 🛣️ Medium Road |
| ★ Event | | 🌳 Regional Parks | 🛣️ Minor Road |
| 🏌️ Waitakere Golf Club | | | |

7 LEVEL OF VISITOR ACTIVITY

There are a number of data sources on visitor numbers to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, with very good information on numbers of visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park but less information on the level of visitors to local parks and visitor activity on private land (refer Figure 1 for the boundaries of the regional park and local parks). Available data includes:

- Traffic counts at strategic locations. Applying associated vehicle occupancy counts, these traffic counts may be used as approximations of visitor numbers.
- Track counts on regional parks
- 'Snapshot' visitor counts at the local park surf beaches by surf clubs
- information on number of park bookings on regional parks, for example beaches and camping grounds
- Information on number of activities on regional parkland that have gained consents, such as filming, sporting events and weddings
- Estimates of numbers attending events on local parks
- Number of passengers on the two narrow-gauge tramlines located on regional parkland and operating as tourist attractions in the Ranges
- Limited information on numbers at local markets and other attractions

None of these sources alone give a comprehensive picture of the level of visitors to the Heritage Area as a whole, and no estimate of the total number of visitors to the Waitakere Ranges has been attempted since Massey University estimated in 1998 that the Waitakere Ranges receive approximately 2.6 million visits annually. However, collectively, they help build up a picture of visitor numbers and the 'hotspots' of visitor activity.

7.1 VISITS TO WAITAKERE RANGES REGIONAL PARK

In the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, vehicle counters were relied on from 1980 until 2007 to provide an estimate of visit numbers. Vehicle counts at key locations in the park have been systematically recorded since 1997, thus allowing longer-term comparisons of number of visits, as in Figure 5 below. Vehicle counters can provide data on numbers of vehicles passing a particular location, and the date/time the vehicle passed. Number of visitors can be estimated from this data by applying a vehicle occupancy rate¹⁶.

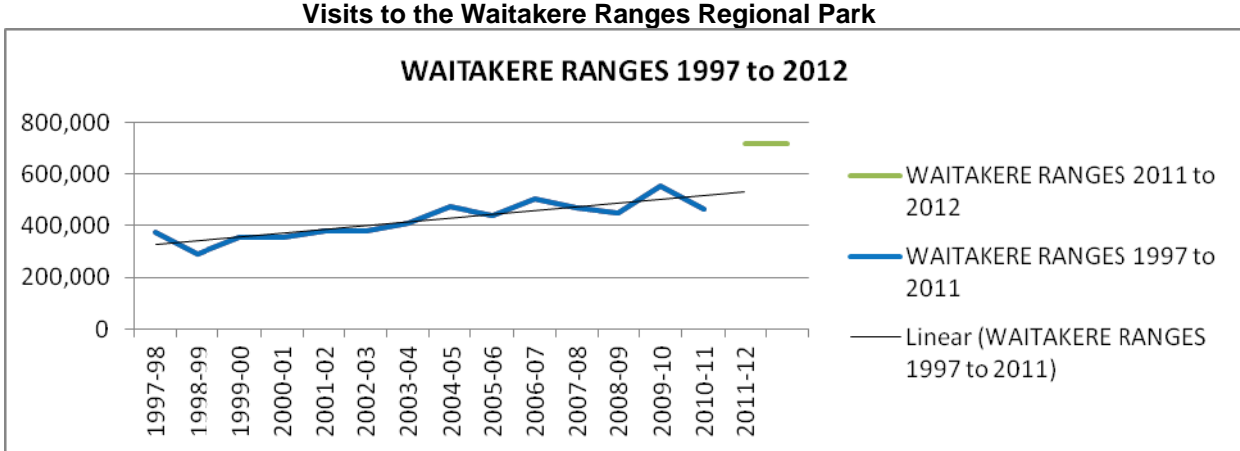
The use of infra-red track counters has been trialled since 2007 to monitor activity on selected tracks within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. Where practicable a 'cordon' was placed around all the tracks leading into a catchment within the park such as the Cascade-Kauri and Lake Wainamu catchment, the Piha catchment, the Kakamatua catchment and the Whatipu catchment. The areas of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park surveyed by cordoning included the north (2007/08), south (2008/09) west, Whatipu and Pararaha Valley (2009/10), and North Karekare (2010/11). After one year's capture all except the counter on the most visited track in the area were withdrawn and from the year 2011/12 the area's annual visit numbers will continue to be calculated as a percentage of the counts obtained from the remaining 'indicator' counter, which in some cases is a vehicle counter. This 'catchment' data is set out in Figure 7 for 2011-2012, and will, in future years, provide a much more comprehensive picture of the number of visits to the regional park, especially when combined with the vehicle counts.

¹⁶ The number of people per vehicle is calibrated from a survey carried out every five years on each Regional Park. The data is reviewed regularly and performed in a consecutive summer and winter to capture possible seasonal variations. The calibration also includes an estimate of visitor arriving by bus and walking into the park.

These figures are still likely to be underestimates of total numbers of visits to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, as the monitoring does not cover all possible entry points to the park. For example the visitor counts at Cornwallis are based on vehicle counts at Pine Avenue and do not cover Cornwallis Road to the wharf area, which is a popular destination for fishing.

The graph at Figure 4 below shows the visit estimates for selected locations of the Regional Park over the period 1997 – 2012, based mainly on the vehicle count data. In the year 2011/2012, data from infra-red track counters was introduced to supplement the vehicle count data and provide a fuller picture, and this is the reason that a new benchmark has been established in that year as the start of a new trend line.

Figure 5



Note: The total number of visits for 2011/12 now includes additional track data not available in earlier years.

Source: Auckland Council

These statistics show that the pattern has been one of steady growth in the number of visits to the park over the years, with some locations showing an increase significantly exceeding that of the population growth rate. The total numbers of visits to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park over the 2011/12 year has been estimated as 715,400. These numbers are estimates based on the best information available, which in some cases is incomplete, and for this reason the absolute numbers should be treated with caution. However, the data provides a useful impression of trends in park use over time.

Visit numbers to the Regional Park will continue to be monitored using vehicle counts at key regional park entrances. While these visit counts do not provide a total number of visits to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, as it is impracticable to effectively cover all entrances, the figures do identify changes in the level of visitor activity over time.

In the five key regional park locations in the table at Figure 6 below, the method of recording (vehicle counts) has been relatively consistent over time for the period since 2008 and it has been possible to make a rough comparison of the visit numbers to these Waitakere Ranges Regional Park locations between 2008/09 and 2011/12¹⁷. It also provides projected visit numbers for these locations for 2016 based on the assumption that the growth in visitor numbers will keep pace with the growth in Auckland’s population.

¹⁷ The data derived from the vehicle counts reflects the number of visits rather than the number of visitors. That is, it counts repeat visits and, as a consequence, is a reflection of the impact of visitors on the park resources and values.

These numbers are likely to be significantly under estimated, as past trends have shown a growth in visitors to the park that well outstrips the growth in Auckland's population.

Figure 6

Number of visits to key locations in the Regional Park 2008/09 to 2011/12 (based on vehicle counts) and projected visits 2016						
Location	2008/09	2011/12	% growth in visits 2008/9 to 2011/12	% Auckland region population change* 2008/09 to 2011/12	Projected Auckland percentage population change 2012- to 2016*	Estimated number of visits in 2016 #
Arataki	134,640	188,827	+40.0	+4.9	+7.1%	202,230
Cascade-Kauri	83,303	85,837	+3.0			91,930
Cornwallis (Pine Ave.)	61463	70087	+12.3			75,060
Piha (Glen Esk Rd.)	59531	70994	+19.3			76,040
Whatipu	53430	54504	+2.0			58,370
Totals (selected locations)	392,367	470,249	+16.6 average			503,630

* Department of Statistics estimate. Note, a high, medium and low projection is provided – this is the medium projection.

Auckland Council estimates. Note, the estimates assume the growth in visitor numbers keeps pace with the growth in Auckland's population. It is noted that this is likely an underestimate of visitor numbers, as explained in the text above.

Source: Department of Statistics, Auckland Council and former Auckland Regional Council

The visit data for the 2011/12 year for the Regional Park 'catchments', derived from both the track counts and the vehicle counts, is set out in the table below.

Figure 7

Number of visits to Waitakere Ranges Regional Park catchments 2011 / 2012			
Regional Park Catchments	Number of visits 2011/12	% of total visits to regional parks 2011/12	Source of data and location of track or vehicle indicator counter
Arataki	188,827	26.4	Vehicle counter at entrance to Arataki Carpark
Titirangi tracks	47,207	6.6	Estimated
North Waitakere Ranges (Cascade/Kauri/Wainamu)	95,164	13.3	Vehicle counter on Falls Road
Piha	41,730	5.8	Kitekite Falls track
Karekare	26,495	3.7	Zion Hill track
Cornwallis	70,087	9.8	Vehicle counter at entrance to Pine Ave
South Waitakere Ranges (Karamatura)	23,193	3.2	Vehicle counter at Karamatura carpark
Whatipu	51,568	7.2	Vehicle counter on Whatipu Road
Eastern Waitakere Ranges	72,453	10.1	Fairy Falls track
Roadside Carparks	61,672	8.6	Estimated
Camps and school visits	37,003	5.2	Council records
Total	715,400		

Source: Auckland Council and former Auckland Regional Council

The regional park location with the highest number of visits is the Arataki Visitor Centre with 188,827 visits in the 2011/2012 year, more than a quarter of visits to the entire Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. Arataki has also experienced the biggest surge in visit numbers, with 40% growth during the period 2008/09 to 2011/12. Visits to Arataki will likely be more than 200,000 by 2016.

Over the years, there have been fluctuations in numbers of visits at Arataki, with visitor numbers falling away to approximately 120,000 in the early 2000s. These numbers peaked again at 250,452 in 2003/04 then decreased again. The 2008/09 Arataki figures in Figure 6 above are based on door counts, and it is noted that Arataki use was at a low ebb in that year. The more recent increase to 188,827 is in part due to the opening of the Beveridge Track linking Arataki to Titirangi Village, which has proved very popular with park visitors and local residents. However, the 2011/12 number also includes the local tracks in the vicinity of Arataki and is showing some increase as a result of that. It is worthy of note that the outside-the-classroom education programmes run from Arataki are attended by between 6000 and 7000 primary school children from 60 to 70 schools each year.

The second busiest 'hot spot' is the north Waitakere Ranges Regional Park track catchment area (Cascade/Kauri and Lake Wainamu) with 95,164 visits, or 13% of the total. It is noted that Kitekite Falls, Fairy Falls and Karekare Falls are also particular hotspots, offering easily accessible visitor experiences.

Despite the fluctuations in numbers at some locations the average increase in visits over the period 2008/09 to 2011/12 of 16.6% is well in excess of the population growth in the Auckland Region over the same period of 4.9%. In particular, Arataki and Piha (Glen Esk Road) show an increase far exceeding that of the population growth rate. Long term, the pattern for visits to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park has been one of steady growth at about two to three times the regional population growth rate.

7.2 VISITS TO BEACHES

Estimates of number of visits to the beaches of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area are derived from both traffic count data and the counts taken by the Surf clubs.

7.2.1 Vehicle Counts at Key Beach Locations

To supplement the Regional Park information, new traffic counts were undertaken at key routes into selected West Coast and Manukau beach locations over two weeks during the peak summer holidays of 2012/13 (24 December 2012 to 6 January 2013). The locations chosen were Bethells/ Te Henga, Anawhata, Piha, Karekare, Cornwallis Road and Titirangi Beach.

Where possible, these counters were specifically located to capture vehicles heading to beach carparks, so as to exclude local traffic. At Bethells/ Te Henga, Anawhata and Titirangi Beach, the vehicle counters were able to be located at the entrance to the carparking areas where most visitors park. However, in the following locations this was not possible:

- Cornwallis Road (where the counter was technically unable to be located on the gravel road to the carpark) and hence may have picked up some local traffic.
- Karekare Road, where some local traffic would have been counted, and traffic coming in from Lone Kauri Road would not have been counted

- Piha, where visitor carparking is very dispersed along the beaches. The counter on the Piha hill would have picked up local as well as visitor traffic.

However, any exaggeration in the data at these destinations due to local traffic would likely be minimal because the dates of the counts would, for most local people, have been a holiday period. Many local residents would either have been away on holiday or at home (and likely at the beach), and thus may not have been driving over the counters.

The daily traffic averaged over the fortnight is set out in the table below.

A count was taken of the number of vehicles and the number of people in all vehicles entering visitor carparks at Piha and Bethells /Te Henga over four, hour-long periods in January 2013. From this information, the average number of people in each vehicle (vehicle occupancy) could be derived. The average number of people occupying each vehicle at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga was 2.4.

Figure 8

Counts of Vehicles Arriving at key West Coast and Manukau Harbour Beaches Summer 2012 - 2013				
Destination	Average daily traffic travelling to the destination (averaged over a two week period)	Number of vehicles to the destination in the busiest hour during the period		Average vehicle occupancy (2 beaches only, see Note 3)
		Peak Date/hour	No. of vehicles	
Bethells Beach (Vehicles arriving at the gate to the beach carpark)	766	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	103	2.7
Anawhata Rd (Vehicles arriving at the beach end of Anawhata Road)	69	6/1/2013 13:00 - 14:00pm	11	
Piha Rd (Vehicles travelling down Piha Hill) #	3330	6/1/2013 13.00-14.00pm	412	2.025
Karekare (vehicles travelling towards the beach from Piha Road)*	586	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	73	
Cornwallis Road (Near road to carpark)**	508	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	87	
Titirangi Beach – (Aydon Rd car park entrance)	324	6/1/2013 9.00-10.00am	43	

Source: Auckland Council

Because of the dispersed nature of visitor parking at Piha, the vehicle counter was located on the main road into Piha, just west of the junction with Karekare Road. Local traffic as well as visitors would thus have been counted. However, the period of the count (24 December 2012 to 6 January 2013) ensures most Piha residents were likely on holiday and not following their normal commuting patterns.

*The counter at Karekare was placed on Karekare Road. Vehicles arriving along Lone Kauri Road were not counted. The count likely overestimates visitors as it would have picked up local traffic as well as visitors.

**The Cornwallis count was taken at Cornwallis Road, one of the two entrances to the beach, so that the total numbers to Cornwallis will be underestimated.

Note 1: Vehicle counts for the beaches –Bethells Beach, Anawhata, Karekare, Piha, Cornwallis and Titirangi Beach- were undertaken over the 2012-13 summer, during a two week period 24th December 2012 to 6th January 2013.

Note 2: The weather conditions were changeable in the first week and fine during the second week of the count.

Note 3: The number of vehicles and the number of people in all vehicles entering visitor carparks at Piha and Bethells /Te Henga were counted over four hour-long periods in January 2013 and used to calculate average number of people in each vehicle (vehicle occupancy).

The weather conditions in the first week of the traffic count (ending 28 December 2012) were variable, with four fine days and three days of rain while the first week of 2013 was fine and warm. The weather was reflected in the fact that at each of the six locations the week ending 6 January was busier than the week ending 28 December.

The average daily traffic totals show that, of these 6 beaches, Piha Road had the highest traffic count, while Anawhata Road had the lowest traffic count. The number of vehicles visiting Piha Beach on the week of 06 January 2013 is significantly higher than any of the other locations. Karekare, Cornwallis and Bethells have similar traffic volumes. Aydon Rd

(Titirangi Beach) and Anawhata Rd have significantly lower traffic volumes than the other four locations.

7.2.2 Visitors to Key Beach Locations

An estimate of visitor numbers at key beach locations has been arrived at by calibrating the vehicle counts from the table above with average vehicle occupancy. The results are set out in the table below.

Figure 9

Estimates of Visitors arriving at key West Coast and Manukau Harbour Beaches Summer 2012 - 2013			
Destination	Estimated average daily visitor numbers arriving at the destination (averaged over a two week period, January 2013))	Estimated number of visitors to the destination in the busiest hour during the period	
		Peak date/ hour	Peak hour visitors
Bethells Beach (Gate to carpark)	1838	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	247
Anawhata Rd (from Piha Rd)	166	6/1/2013 13:00 - 14:00pm	26
Piha Rd to Piha Beach*	7992	6/1/2013 13.00-14.00pm	989
Karekare from Piha Rd	1406	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	175
Cornwallis (Road to carpark)	1219	6/1/2013 11.00-12.00pm	209
Titirangi Beach – (Aydon Rd car park entrance)	778	6/1/2013 9.00-10.00am	103
<i>Source:</i> Auckland Council			
<p>Note 1: The number of visits has been calibrated using the average of the vehicle occupancy for Piha and Bethells/Te Henga (2.4 people per vehicle), applied to the traffic count data for all of the beach destinations.</p> <p>Note 2: Traffic counts were taken over a two week period 24th December 2012 to 6th January 2013.</p> <p>Note 3: Due to their location, the traffic counters at Piha, Karekare and Cornwallis would have included local traffic as well as visitors. Many locals would have been on holiday over this period.</p> <p>Note 4: The Cornwallis count underestimates the number of visits to Cornwallis, as Cornwallis Road is only one of the two road entrances to the beach</p>			

The data indicates that with nearly 8,000 average daily visitors, Piha attracts more visits than the other beach locations combined, followed by Bethells/Te Henga with 1,800, Karekare (1,400) and Cornwallis (1,200). At the peak of visitor arrivals on 6 January 2013, almost 1,000 visitors arrived at Piha in a one hour period between 1.00pm and 2.00pm. It is difficult to compare the data from this two-week period with the annual counts taken at key regional park destinations. However, Arataki, the most visited regional park location with 188,827 visits in 2011/12, would have averaged around 525

visitors per day. Even taking account of seasonal fluctuations, it could be argued that Piha is the most heavily visited destination in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area.

The busiest hour for most coastal locations was around midday, except Titirangi Beach where it was significantly earlier. This likely reflects the importance of the boat launching facilities located there.

7.2.3 Surf Club Counts

The data above on visitors to selected West Coast and Manukau Harbour beaches is supplemented by information collected by the West Coast surf clubs.

The four west coast surf clubs at Bethells, United North Piha, Piha and Karekare undertake 'snapshot' head-counts of visitor numbers at a busy point during the day, each day during the summer surf club season (Labour Weekend to Easter). This data has been sourced from Surf Lifesaving Northern Region.

Seasonal totals of these daily counts for each of the past three seasons are set out in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10

West Coast Surf Beaches – Surf Club Data Seasonal Totals of Daily 'Snapshot' Counts of Visitors				
Summer Season- Labour weekend to Easter	Bethells	Kare Kare	Piha	United North Piha
2009-2010	14,480	10,551	45,248	18,766
2010-2011	15,935	11,128	31,459	16,948
2011-2012	13,059	9,302	28,223	16,662
Total - three summer seasons	43,474	30,981	104,930	52,376

*Seasonal total of the daily headcounts taken by surf club patrol members at peak time each day during the summer surf patrol season (Labour weekend to Easter weekend)

Source: Surf Lifesaving Northern Region

Surf club data on the highest headcount on a single day is set out in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11

Highest Headcount on a single day during the summer season*								
Peak Daily Count	Bethells		Kare Kare		Piha		United North Piha	
	Date	Count	Date	Count	Date	Count	Date	Count
2008-09	21/01/09	900	21/02/09	2,010	1/01/09	2,000	7/12/08	1,641
2009-10	26/12/09	800	26/12/09	350	7/02/10	2,220	9/01/10	1,600
2010-11	3/01/11	605	3/01/11	600	2/01/11	1,700	19/02/11	1,180
2011-12	30/01/12	580	25/01/12	416	30/01/12	1,220	30/01/12	750

*Taken from the daily headcounts by surf club patrol members at peak time each day during the summer surf patrol season (Labour Weekend to Easter)

Source: Surf Lifesaving Northern Region

The surf club counts indicate that the three season total for Piha and North Piha beaches combined (157,306 people) is more than twice the total for Karekare and Bethells surf beaches combined. The highest surf club head-count over the period since 2008 was 2,220 visitors at Piha Beach on 7 February 2010, while the highest number of visitors arriving at Piha in a one hour period was almost 1000 people.

The Surf Club data indicates that while numbers of visitors to Bethells, Karekare and Piha beaches have remained relatively stable over the past three years, visitors to Piha have fallen quite dramatically since 2009/2010 with a decrease in numbers of nearly 40%. One of the explanations may be the effect on would-be beach goers of the 'Piha Surf Watch' programme on television.

7.2.4 Summary of Beach Visitor Information

Both the visitor estimates based on traffic counts and the surf club counts indicate that Piha Beach is far and away the most popular coastal destination for visitors, and there is reason to believe that it is the most heavily visited destination in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. The traffic data shows that the next most visited beach – Bethells/Te Henga – experiences less than a quarter of the visits to Piha.

In locations such as Cornwallis, Whatipu, Karekare and Lake Wainamu, it is the combination of the beach/lake and bush environments that provides the recreational experience. Cornwallis is the most visited location on the Manukau foreshore, with 1219 average daily visitors (around 15% of the numbers visiting Piha). It is noted that the Cornwallis count was taken at only one of the two entrances to the beach, so that the numbers will be underestimated.

Many locations, such as Whatipu, Anawhata and the Pararaha valley, provide a sense of remote wilderness and are popular with experienced trampers. The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, where people are seeking primarily bush-related experiences such as walking and tramping, tends to receive fewer visits than the beaches.

8 CONSENTED ACTIVITIES

8.1 CONSENTED ACTIVITIES ON REGIONAL PARKLAND

Some visitor activities on the regional parkland need specific approval from the council under the Regional Park Management Plan (2010) (RPMP). These are either controlled or discretionary activities.

8.1.1 Controlled Activities

Controlled activities are permitted, but require the allocation of space or an entry approval.

Figure 12

: Controlled activity on regional parkland 2008-2009 and 2011-2012			
	Location	2008-2/09	2011-2012
Campgrounds	Craw homestead	Not open	660
	Opanuku Pipeline	27	118
	Pae o te Rangi	98	154
	Barn Paddock	1051	1253
	Karamatura	814	1511
	McCreadies Paddock	195	554
	Odmins 2	89	192
	Pararaha Valley	611	1133
	Tunnel Point	49	176
	Whatipu Caves	Not open	435
	Total persons camping	2934	6186
Baches (Note: there is no data on number of people)	Keddle (Anawhata)	193 nights booked	224 nights booked
	Barr (Little Huia)	230 nights booked	199 nights booked
	Craw (Anawhata)	Not open	49 nights booked
	Paturoa (S. Titirangi Rd)	Not open	89 nights booked
Lodges	Huia	65 bookings for 975 persons	81 bookings for 1674 persons
	Kiwanis	32 bookings for 739 persons	84 bookings for 3429 persons
	Project K	12 bookings for 72 persons	15 bookings for 114 persons
Designated bookable site	Cornwallis	90 bookings for 4165 persons	79 bookings for 4235 persons
Abseiling	Karamatura	24 bookings for 415 people	25 bookings for 392 persons
Recreational horse riding	Region wide pass (annual- free)	370 horse riding passes currently issued (only a portion of these utilise the opportunities at Pae o te Rangi.)	

Source: Auckland Council

Controlled activity in the Waitakere Ranges includes camping, staying in baches and lodges, recreational horse riding, abseiling at Karamatura and booking designated picnic sites. A permit issued for any of these activities is subject to standard approval conditions

that ensure they it is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the RPMP. “Controlled” activities are recorded in a central database. A comparison of activity in 2008 and 2012 is shown in Figure 12 above.

Camping has shown an increase in use but overall the utilisation of the campsites in the Waitakere Ranges is well below their designed capacity. The campsites are generally used by people as part of a tramping expedition. The lodges too are not being used to their full capacity, with most of the use being corporate training and school groups.

8.1.2 Discretionary Activities

“Discretionary” activities are defined by the RPMP as an activity for which a formal application must be made to the council. These applications carry a non-refundable application fee (currently \$275). The criteria for decision making are set out in the RPMP and the activity may be approved subject to conditions or declined if it is considered inappropriate on the park. Many applications for discretionary activity do not reach the point of being formally considered if staff feel the activity is unsuitable within the Waitakere Ranges and would be unlikely to meet the provisions of the RPMP.

There are three types of discretionary activity, with all applications recorded in a central database.

- Short-term activity. These are usually in the form of events lasting a matter of hours or at most a few days. They may be of a commercial nature or may be run by community groups or non-profit organisations.
- Concessions. These are usually of a commercial nature but usually only involve limited but regular use of park facilities, for example as part of a tour.
- Leases and licenses. These are longer-term and exclusive use of the park or a park facility.

The number and type of discretionary approvals issued since 2008/09 are outlined in the tables below. These are split into two categories; those of a non - commercial nature involving private individuals, community groups or non-profit organizations (figure 13), and those that are operated on a commercial basis (figure 14).

Figure 13

Non-commercial Discretionary Activity Approvals on Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland											
Type of Activity		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
E= No. events.	P= No. participants	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P
Air activity		1	18	-	-	-	-	3	69	1	1
Concerts/festivals		-	-	4	506	-	-	2	500	2	550
Filming/Photography		-	-	3	37	10	790	6	280	17	115
Large group activity		-	-	-	-	-	-	4	975	8	1200
Cultural harvest		-	-	1	12	-	-	1	5	4	39
Research (educational, mostly student groups)		6	6	25	931	15	548	24	438	8	36
Sporting events (incl. clubs)		1	301	4	379	9	384	5	435	9	995
Weddings		2	85	19	1128	23	1075	42	1515	32	1691
Totals		10	410	56	2993	57	2797	87	4217	81	4627

Source: Auckland Council

Figure 14

Discretionary Activity Approvals (commercial) on Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland											
Type of Activity		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
E= No. events.	P= No. participants	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P
Air activity		1	4	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Concessionaires*		13	345	23	1055	8	170	5	185	5	188
Filming/Photography		13	210	38	2344	25	1928	16	470	25	2112
Research (including seed collection)		6	6	8	190	3	110	6	20	16	353
Sporting events (incl. clubs)		-	-	-	-	2	36	1	600	3	522
Totals		33	565	69	3589	38	2244	29	1276	49	3175

* **Note:** The new concessionaires approved each year are in addition to those already operating and approved in prior years. The total number of concessionaires operating in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park in 2012 is 54.

Source: Auckland Council

More than half of the discretionary activities in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park are non-commercial in nature.

Of the non-commercial activities on regional park locations, weddings are increasing in popularity, and the number of sporting events has also increased. The increase in “adventure- sport” events seeking a “wilderness’ environment is a notable trend overseas,

and this trend is reflected in an increase in the popularity of these kinds of activities in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland. It is noted that the Council has recently refused such an application on the basis that it threatened to spread of Kauri- dieback disease.

There has been a decrease in non-commercial filming activity from a peak in 2010, but overall the number of participants in non-commercial discretionary activity has steadily increased.

Filming is by far the highest level of commercial activity on the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and is subject to agreed protocols and approval conditions.

There were 54 commercial concessionaires in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland registered with the council in 2012. Concessionaires are required to register with the council and pay an annual fee for use of the park and its resources. Their activities are monitored to ensure they adhere to their terms of entry and the cumulative impacts of their activities are monitored by ranger staff.

The data indicates that while numbers of concessionaires registering have fluctuated, neither the number of concessions granted or the number of clients involved in those concessions have shown an upward trend since 2008.

Many concessionaires make use of the Waitakere Ranges on a regular or infrequent basis. The majority of these are small owner-operator tour companies offering visits to west coast beaches or walks in the Ranges. They generally cater for approximately up to 8 to 12 people per visit. A smaller number of concessionaires offer recreational pursuits such as abseiling or surfing. A small number are nature photographers and two concessionaires provide food and beverages.

Two operators offer canyoning in the Cowans and Kitekite Streams. The environmental impact of these activities has been independently monitored by NIWA and has reported no demonstrable impacts of these activities on the stream environments. The companies have recently sought a minor increase in their permitted activity and their agreement is currently under review.

It is worth noting that between November 2012 and March 2013 an additional 16 concessions operating on regional parks have been registered. These arose mainly from public information on operators who were not formally registered with the council. They are all, except one, small tour operators who were by and large ignorant of the need to register with the Council.

8.1.3 Leases and Licences

Leases and licenses are agreements between the council and a third party to occupy park land or a park facility for a particular activity for a period up to but not exceeding 35 years, and in a manner that involves explicit rights and may exclude or limit use of the area by the general public. Leases and licences exceeding 10 years must be publicly notified. Leases and licenses on regional parks are processed as discretionary activities in terms of the RPMP. There are currently (2012) 20 licences, 3 leases, 1 management agreement, 1 MOU and 1 sponsorship agreement operating on the regional park. The nature of these agreements is described in the table below.

Figure 15

Leases, licences and other agreements			
Holder	Type	Expiry date	Notes
Adventure Camp Piha Trust Board	Licence	2011 under review	Piha Mill Outdoor Education Camp.
Aranui Antiques / Lockwood and Lawson	Licence	2014	Rose Hellaby House – Antiques sales business – open to the public.
Auckland Outdoor Activities Club	Licence	2013	Designated use of Keddle House for tramping club purposes; available for public use outside of these times.
Auckland University Tramping Club	Licence	2015	Tramping Hut at Anawhata - also available for public use
Boys Brigade Northern Regional Trust	Licence	2015	Nigel Hanlon Hut at Piha, beside old school, also available for public use.
Chorus	Licence	2029	Telecommunications mast at Waiaatarua.
D S Taylor	Licence	2020	Encroachment on park land at Karekare.
Huia Residents and Ratepayers Assoc. and the Huia Settlers Museum Society.	Licence	2029	Wastewater disposal field.
Huia Settlers Museum Society Inc.	Licence	2021	Use of building for museum; open to public.
K E Turner	Licence	2013	Grazing at Karamatura and Little Huia.
P and R Mansell	Licence	2015	Grazing at Huia.
Montana	Sponsorship	2020	Sponsorship of the Montana Trail.
National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research	Licence	2011 under review	Monitoring facility at Arataki.
National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research	Licence	2017	Sea level measuring device at Anawhata.
NZ Scouting Association	Licence	2011 under review	Scout den on Bishop Reserve, Titirangi. (Managed by Local and Sports Parks).
QEII (Queen Elizabeth II National Trust)	Management Agreement	2020	Lake Wainamu
Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Ark in the Park)	MOA	2011 under review	Undertaking conservation programmes over 1200ha in the Cascades area with ability to extend to 2000ha.
Teamtalk	Licence	2030	Telecommunications masts at 2 sites in Waiaatarua.
Telecom	Licence	2019	Telecommunications mast at Piha.
The Karamatura Heritage Farm Trust	Licence	2014	Grazing of part of the Karamatura Farm
Vector Ltd.	Licence	2030	Telecommunications at Laingholm.
Waitākere City Council (Sub-licence to Vodafone)	Lease	2028	Water dam at Exhibition Drive. (Telecommunications mast on the dam)
Waitākere Golf Club	Lease	2010 under review	Public golf course at Cascades- Kauri Park.
Watercare Services Ltd	Lease	2092	Metropolitan water supply catchments; open to public except for the exclusive zones around the water supply dams.
Whatipu Lodge and Campground Ltd.	Licence	2013	Whatipu Lodge, bach and campground accommodation.
D Woon	Licence	2015	Grazing at Huia.

Source: Auckland Council

8.2 PASSENGERS ON NARROW GAUGE TRAMLINES

Two narrow gauge tramlines are located in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and Watercare land within the Heritage Area. These were originally put in place for dam and water supply pipeline construction and maintenance, and both are now visitor attractions.

The 'Rainforest Express' run by Water Care Services runs 5.5 kilometres from Jacobson's Depot off Scenic Drive, Titirangi, through to the Upper Nihotupu Dam. Trip data since 2008-09 is set out in the table below.

Figure 16

Rainforest Express – Trips and Passenger Numbers				
Year*	Trips	Passenger Numbers		
		Adults	Children	Total
2008-2009	281	6,742	4,693	11,435
2009-2010	302	7,387	4,931	12,318
2010-2011	440	11,137	8,150	19,287
2011-2012	345	8,658	5,714	14,372

*Year from 1 July to 30 June

Source: Water Care Services Limited

Figure 17

The second narrow gauge tramline scenic service, run by volunteers from the Waitakere Tramline Society, departs from the Filter Station on Christian Road, Swanson and travels 2.5 kilometres through the Regional Park to the Waitakere Dam.

Waitakere Tramline – Trips and Passenger Numbers		
Year*	Trips	Passenger Numbers
1 May 2007 - 30 June 2008	265	4846
1 July 2008 - 30 June 2009	172	3065
1 July 2009 - 30 June 2010	185	2813
1 July 2010 - 13 August 2011	174	3571
14 August 2011 - 18 November 2011	39	726

*The data is collected for the year between the Annual General Meetings of the Society

Source: Waitakere Tramline Society

It is noted that reduced trips and passenger numbers since 2008/09 have been due to disruption to the Waitakere Tramline service, because of slips and trees down over the line. In particular, a large slip in December 2011 has meant the line has been closed

since that time, and data for 2011/12 is available only for a three month period prior to the slip.

8.3 EVENTS ON LOCAL PARKS

Data on estimated numbers of people at events booked on local parks are set out in the table below. While numbers fluctuate, there is no trend evident of an increase in the number of people attending events on local parks over the past five years.

Figure 18

Number of People attending Events on Local Parks in the Waitakere Ranges					
Event	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Titirangi Festival of Music	7,500		15,000		
Corona Super 16 Surfing (Piha)		500			
Piha Big Boat Race		1,000		1,200	1,350
World Junior Surfing Championships (Piha)			3,000		
Coca Cola Beach Summer Tour (Piha)			5,000		
Thundercat Racing (Piha)				350	
Movie on the Reserve (Piha)			150		
Bethells Beach Community Day		750	500	650	
Tarara Day (Karamatura)	3,500				
Arthur Lydiard Marathon (Ranges general)	2,000	2,220	3,000	3,400	5,000
Total people attending events on local parks	13,000	4,470	26,650	5,600	6,350

Source: Auckland Council

8.4 OTHER VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

There is very limited information available on number of visitors to attractions such as markets and cafes in the heritage Area. Lopdell House attracts around 40,000 visits per year, while approximately 800 people come along to the Oratia Farmers Market on Saturdays, with more in summer.

8.5 SUMMARY OF VISITOR ACTIVITY

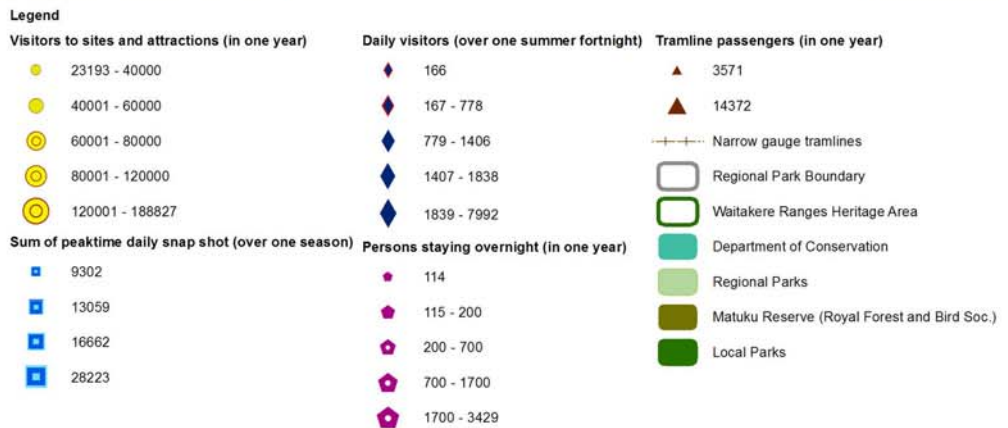
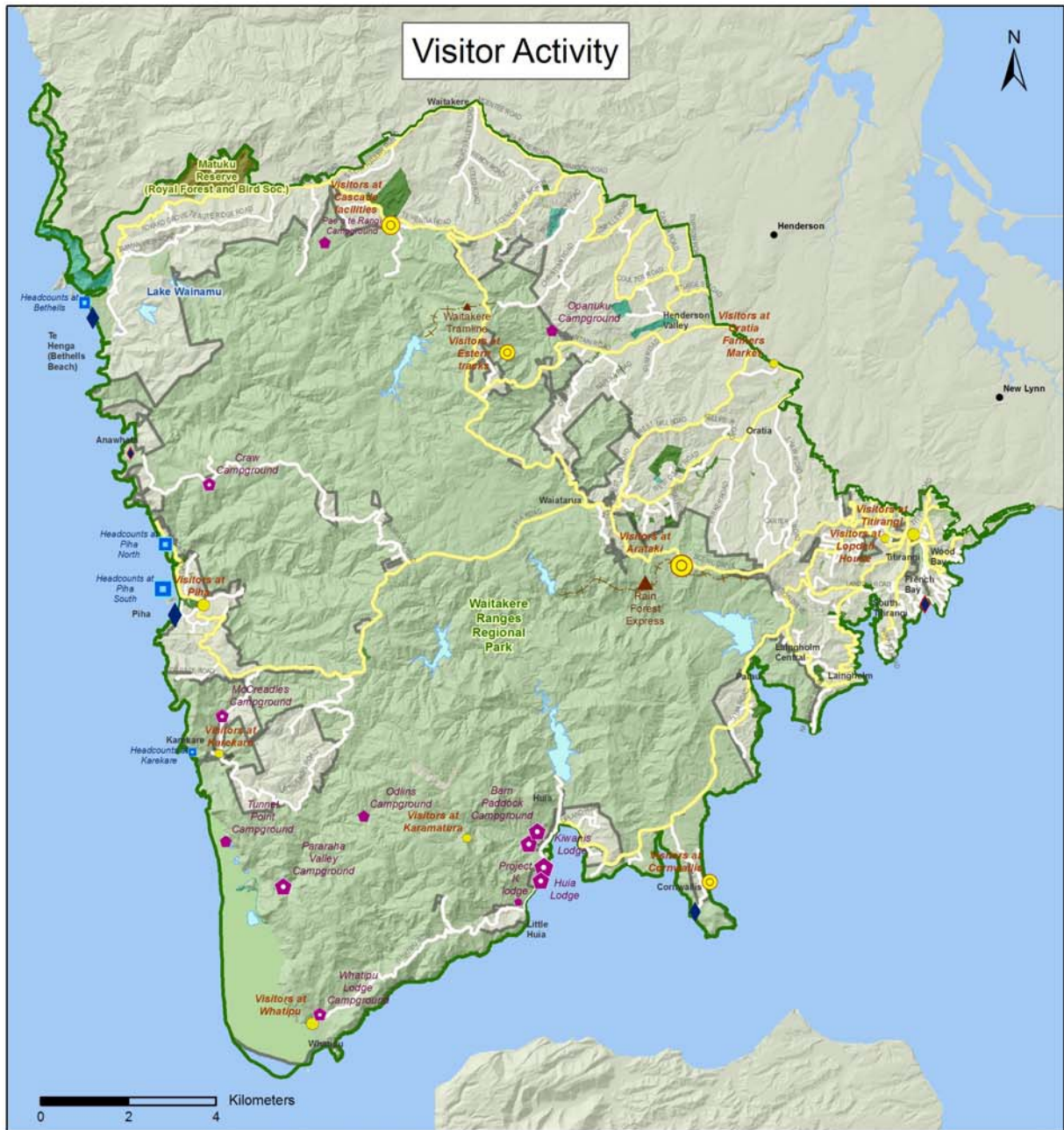
In summary, many of the data sets that are available on visitor numbers to the regional parkland and the beaches of the Heritage Area are over different timeframes and in different formats, and are therefore not readily comparable. However, it is clear that the most heavily visited destinations on a regular basis are:

- the West Coast beaches, particularly Piha beaches (north and south)
- the Arataki Visitor Centre
- the Cascade Kauri Park
- Cornwallis
- Lake Wainamu

Particular locations are very busy when large events are scheduled, for example Titirangi at the Festival of Music in 2010, Karamatura at the Tarara Day in 2008 and Karekare at the annual beach races.

The map at Figure 19 shows the scale of visitor activity at monitored locations in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. The map uses different legends for each data set, due to the difficulty in comparing data sets outlined above.

Figure 19



9 INFRASTRUCTURE

The location of infrastructure in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area such as roads, walkways, visitor information centres, toilets and changing sheds, picnic sites, boat ramps, camping sites and other park accommodation is shown on the map at Figure 4. Undue pressure on particular infrastructure is likely to be established through information from the park rangers, submissions to the Council's Annual Plan process or through the public consultation processes that are followed to develop reserve management plans.

9.1 CARPARKING

Past consultation has indicated that carparking available at the West Coast beaches of Karekare, Piha and Bethells/Te Henga and at Lake Wainamu is under pressure at peak visitor times (fine summer holiday periods and weekends, and during popular events). At such times, residents' driveways can be blocked by overflows of parked vehicles, and access for emergency vehicles obstructed.

There is little data available on the extent of the problem, but there are documented examples. On Waitangi Day, 6 February 2013, the overflow of vehicle parking at the Lake Wainamu carpark at Bethells/Te Henga, allowed one-way traffic only along a portion of Bethells Road leading to Bethells Beach. In the early afternoon when a tsunami warning was sounded, traffic trying to return up Bethells Road from the beach was gridlocked for approximately 20 minutes. As Bethells Road is the only access in to Te Henga and the beach, this is a significant safety issue for both visitors and the local community.



Overflow from Lake Wainamu carpark 6 February 2013

9.2 TOILETS

New toilets in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area need to be designed to be subservient to the natural environment. Since 2008 new toilet facilities have been constructed at Lake Wainamu as a result of local residents taking kaitiaki (stewardship) responsibility for the lake.

9.3 REGIONAL PARK

The walking tracks in the regional park are maintained on an ongoing programme budgeted annually. This includes routine clearance of encroaching vegetation, maintenance of drains and repair to track surfaces and boardwalks/viewing platforms/bridges. Regular engineering inspections of track structures are also undertaken to ensure their structural integrity and identify any works required. Over the last two years upgrade work has been completed involving vegetation clearance and management on 180 kilometres of tracks (about 70 % of all regional park tracks), track drainage maintenance on 150 kilometres and surface maintenance, involving re-metalling and installing board-walks, on 17 kilometres of tracks.

The maintenance programme for the 2012 financial year is summarised in [Figure 19](#) below;

Figure 20

2012 - Waitakere Regional Park Track Maintenance		
Maintenance type	Expenditure (\$)	Length of track maintained
Cutting	33,758	
Structural Inspection	28,176	
Structural repair	94,891	
Vegetation Clearance	8,267	
Surface / Drainage maintenance	116,629	
Total	281,724	127,199 meters

Source: Auckland Council

New tracks, major track upgrades and the re-routing of tracks in the regional park need to be funded annually as part of approved capital works programmes. Major upgrades and re-routings are usually the result of erosion damage to tracks or the need to remedy persistent wet areas and protect sensitive environments and trees, such as areas of Kauri currently unaffected by Kauri-dieback disease. Since 2008 significant works have been carried out on the following tracks;

- Construction of the Beveridge Track;
- Realignment of the Fenceline Track,
- Realignment of the Fairy Falls Track
- Upgrading the Montana Heritage Trail
- Major upgrading of the Hamilton Track is about to commence

In the regional parkland, areas identified as visitor hotspots have been designed to accept the expected number of visitors, and where wear and tear does occur, steps are generally taken to minimise visitor impact.

In the Local Parks, too, once demand for particular park infrastructure has been identified, and if considered appropriate to the objectives of the park as established through the Reserve Management Plan, the infrastructure is prioritized for funding and constructed.

10 VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

Information on the characteristics of visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is valuable in ensuring that facilities, and especially park facilities, are appropriate to the users.

10.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS TO PIHA AND BETHELLS/ TE HENGA

The questionnaire surveys at Piha and Bethells/ Te Henga beaches undertaken in February/ March 2013⁸ found that most visitors surveyed at these beaches were female (60%), and in the 25-64 age group (77%). The majority (54%) were of NZ European ethnicity with 12% New Zealand Maori and 11% Asian. While 23% resided in the Waitakere Ranges and 21% in West Auckland (outside the Ranges), most (38%) came

from other parts of the wider Auckland area. A significant minority (9%) were international visitors.

10.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS TO THE REGIONAL PARK

On the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park visitor profile surveys - intercept surveys of a random sample of visitors at a number of regional park locations - were undertaken in 1995, 2000 and 2007. The objective of the research was a better understanding of the characteristics of people that visit the Regional Park. The following factors were surveyed:

- i) Demographic profile:
 - a) Place of residence (incl. overseas)
 - b) Age
 - c) Ethnicity
 - d) Income
 - e) Gender
- ii) Visitation profile:
 - a) How many people they visited with (group size)
 - b) Who those people were
 - c) How often they visit an Auckland Regional Park
 - d) Whether it is the only Regional Park they visited in a day
 - e) Whether it is their main destination or on the way to somewhere else
- iii) Satisfaction with the park visit.

10.2.1 Origin of visitors

Visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park mainly came from the former Waitakere City (33%) and Auckland City (27%) areas. That is, 67% of visitors to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park come from outside West Auckland with most of those coming from the former Auckland City area.

On average approximately 15% of visitors to regional parks are from outside the region, with most of these being international visitors. A number of Waitakere Ranges Regional Park locations receive a significant proportion of these "tourists", including Arataki (27%), Glen Esk (24%), Karekare (21%), Cascades-Kauri (16%), and Whatipu (13%).

10.2.2 Visitors at key regional park locations

For eight selected regional park locations included in the visitor profile surveys, the following visitor characteristic patterns are evident:

Arataki Visitor Centre

Arataki is visited by commercial bus tours and casual visitors. It is also the centre for the council-operated school education programmes. The profile of casual visitors shows a disproportionately low level of people of NZ Maori and Pacific Island backgrounds.

Cascade- Kauri

Cascades- Kauri is popular with west Aucklanders (46%), who are mainly visiting with groups of friends. It offers easily accessible bush walks and picnic areas

Cornwallis

Cornwallis is very popular with young west Auckland families (68%). It is a popular and safe beach with pleasant picnic areas and the added attraction of a wharf for fishing.

Kakamatua

Kakamatua is very popular with older families from west (51%) and central (40%) Auckland for bush walks and picnics

Karekare

Karekare is a popular surf beach with younger couples from central (34%) and west (32%) Auckland.

Lake Wainamu

Popular with younger people from west (42%) and central (22%) Auckland.

Piha (Glen Esk)

Glen Esk and Kitekite falls are popular with younger groups and families from central (34%) and west (30%) Auckland, with a high proportion of Asian visitors. It offers easily accessible bush walks with a picturesque water fall.

Whatipu

Whatipu is popular with groups and families from west (30%), central (25%) and south (17%) Auckland. It is a popular fishing destination.

10.2.3 Trends

While there were no significant changes between the 1995, 2000 and 2007 data there are some trends worthy of note. These are;

- The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park is increasingly popular with older people (over 45) with New Zealand European backgrounds
- Young people (between the ages of 14 and 25) and New Zealand Maori, Pacific Island and Asians remain under represented in park visitors and this trend is increasing.
- There appears to be a fall-off in the proportion of people visiting with groups and, in particular, a significant decrease in families visiting regional parks (60% of visitors in 2000 to 48% of visitors in 2007).

A variety of factors are no doubt contributing to these patterns, such as changing family structures, an aging population, changing recreation preferences, changing work patterns, less available leisure time and the like. Nevertheless, the low participation rate of some ethnic groups and the fall off in visiting families are significant enough to warrant the need to continue to ensure that the regional parks are meeting the needs of all sectors of the community. There is a demonstrable need for short loop walks to cater for older and younger users and the need to provide for group food preparation and consumption as part of the park visitor experience for larger ethnic groups.

11 VISITOR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act (2008) identifies as a heritage feature the opportunities afforded in the Ranges for recreation and wilderness experiences, highlighting the importance of a high-quality experience for visitors to the Ranges.

11.1 SATISFACTION WITH REGIONAL PARKS

Information on visitor satisfaction with their experience in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park is monitored annually through visitor intercept surveys. Results show a very high level of satisfaction with the experience of visitors to the regional park. These surveys are periodically supplemented with "mystery shopper" surveys where park visitors report back on their visit and make suggestions on improvements. Consistently, over 95 percent of visitors say they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their visit to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The small levels of dissatisfaction are usually around factors such as the quality of facilities such as toilets, information boards and way-finding signage.

Qualitative research of Auckland park users undertaken in 2012¹⁸ found (in relation to all of Auckland's regional parks):

- A high level of satisfaction overall and appreciation for the provision of destination playgrounds, beaches, walkways, coastal integrated parks and beaches, and different park experiences – parks and beaches are a key contributor to everyday enjoyment of life in Auckland.
- Regional parks, local parks and reserves, and beaches are core to what is special about living in Auckland and one of the most valued aspects of living in Auckland. The free and equitable access to experiences and facilities in parks, reserves and beaches is a cornerstone of the Auckland experience.
- The day to day relevance for Aucklanders and high impact on a sense of wellbeing, make delivering and communicating about these services / experiences very important.
- Local parks, beaches and reserves are part of the fabric of everyday life for local people of all ages and life-stages. They are social meeting places where locals can go to relax, have fun, exercise, spend time with others, and spend time with their dog.
- A key issue is dogs:
 - A satisfaction barrier is dogs not being under control, owners not following the dog restrictions, and dogs impacting on people's enjoyment of parks, beaches, playgrounds and sports fields. There is also frustration with dogs fouling parks, footpaths and beaches, and owners not cleaning up.
 - From the dog owners' point of view, they value being able to spend time with their dogs, exercising them and taking them to places that they enjoy going, and feel that there is a real need for dog owners to be able to have places that they can go with their dogs off the lead and places that they can enjoy with their dogs on the lead. Dog parks, off lead parks and beaches are highly valued by dog owners
 - The main issue is non compliance with regulations around dogs being required to be on leads and a high degree of frustration that Council is not seen to be doing enough to ensure compliance and penalise non compliant dog owners.
 - Generally people were accepting of dogs in public parks so long as they were on a leash and owners acted responsibly
- Most parks and beaches exceed public expectations in terms of maintenance and facilities
- All believe that without rubbish bins parks will quickly become littered, which in turn will lead to vandalism. If rubbish bins are to be withdrawn there must at least be an interim measure where bags are provided for people to store their rubbish although there is still a major concern that the filled bags will be left behind
- Removal of rubbish bins is considered an unacceptable cost saving – mowing the grass less often is completely acceptable
- Designated or marked cycle tracks are becoming increasingly important
 - Parents don't feel it is safe for children to ride bikes on the road any more but still want the to know how to ride a bike
 - Increasing conflict between cyclists and walkers / runners in parks
- The experience is great – people are lacking awareness and knowledge. These need to be built to grow participation across all groups

¹⁸ Report for Auckland Council by Fast Forward Strategy and Planning', 2012. [Qualitative Research Programme for the 2011/12 Annual Report](#)

- Freedom and escape are key values of the Regional Park experience – however this means different things in different parks

11.2 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REGIONAL PARK SATISFACTION SURVEY

Targeted development potential

- Develop tiered parks and park experiences – from relative wilderness to comfortable adventure to easy experience

Build awareness

- The key current barrier to use of Auckland's Regional Parks is lack of awareness at every level. People cannot value or experience what they are not aware of or engaged with.
- Need to build an image in peoples minds of the experiences that are possible
- Building understanding of the possible and diverse experiences that are available by connecting to existing references (eg coastal biking trail) or clearly targeted themes and needs will help people understand clearly the experiences available and enable them to consider and visit.
- Key opportunity for communication that a great diversity of parks exists close to home

Branding

- Communicate clearly who these experiences are bought to you by – and that they belong to us all
- Communicate Council's role in preserving and protecting our unique environments

Commercialisation

- Whether commercialisation adds or detracts from the Regional Parks experience must be assessed on a park by park basis
- Regular park users were largely opposed to any commercialisation of Regional Parks, primarily because they place high value on the 'get away from it all' experience these parks offer but also because the fewer 'comforts' provided the less busy the parks will be
- Commercialisation can significantly change the Regional Park experience
- People are more willing to tolerate commercialisation, e.g. café, coffee cart, canoe hire, ice cream kiosk and so forth, in busier parks closer to the city such as Shakespeare Regional Park. In more remote, less developed parks there was greater opposition to commercialisation which is seen as either unnecessary or completely wrong
- Mobile coffee carts and food trucks would be more readily tolerated than permanent businesses although there was concern that providing licences to these vendors could have an impact on smaller local businesses who are heavily dependant on seasonal visitor trade for survival.

11.3 SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL PARKS

There is little information available for local parks in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, which includes many of the west coast and Manukau Harbour beaches. Questionnaire surveys of visitors to Piha and Bethells Beaches were undertaken over February and March 2013⁸. Results show that a vast majority (95% at Piha and 96% at Bethells/ Te Henga) are satisfied that their experience at the beach measured up to expectations.

Suggestions by Piha visitors to improve the experience included more motorbike parking, more rubbish bins, more resting stations with trees sheltering park benches and better dog control. Dog control suggestions were clearer signs about where dogs are allowed off-leash, more dog excrement bins in the areas where dogs are allowed, and more dog bylaw enforcement.

At Bethells/ Te Henga, visitors made a large number of suggestions to improve the visitor experience, as outlined in the table below.

Figure 21

Suggestions for improving the visitor experience at Bethells/ Te Henga	
New/Improved Infrastructure suggested	Keep Bethells as it is
Need recycling bins at the toilet and the café (5)	No more infrastructure at Bethells (1)
The rubbish bins need to be emptied more frequently	Dogs are fine on the beach (1)
More shade from the sun/shelter from the rain (3)	Keep planting native (1)
Better way-finding signage to the beach (3)	Don't commercialise Bethells (1)
Drinking water fountain	
Warning signs about sand temperature (2)	
Drinking water fountain (1)	
Stepping stones in the stream (1)	

Source: Questionnaire survey of visitors to Bethells/ Te Henga undertaken in February and March 2013⁸

12 MANAGEMENT OF IMPACTS ON HERITAGE FEATURES

Visitors coming to the area for recreation, wilderness and relaxation experiences can impact on a number of the other heritage features outlined in Section 7 of the Act, and may also affect the wellbeing of local communities (a factor that must be recognised under objective 8(i) of the Act). This section comments on these impacts and their management.

12.1 MANAGEMENT OF IMPACTS ON INDIGENOUS ECOSYSTEMS

Indigenous ecosystems are identified as a Heritage Feature in Section 7(2)(a)(i) of the Act.

The history of the Ranges is of a magnificent forest – the great forest of Tiriwa. Forests, with all their ecological features, are thus the core of the health of the Heritage Area. Visitors to the Heritage Area may adversely impact indigenous ecosystems in a number of ways, and management aims to avoid or reduce these impacts.

12.1.1 Kauri-Die-back Disease

By far the greatest impact on recreational activity within the Heritage Area has been the recent discovery of Kauri – dieback disease (Phytophthora Agathis) - the culprit in the disease and deaths of many ancient Kauri in the Auckland Region. The disease is spread by the movement of soil and water by means of, for example, transport on the shoes of

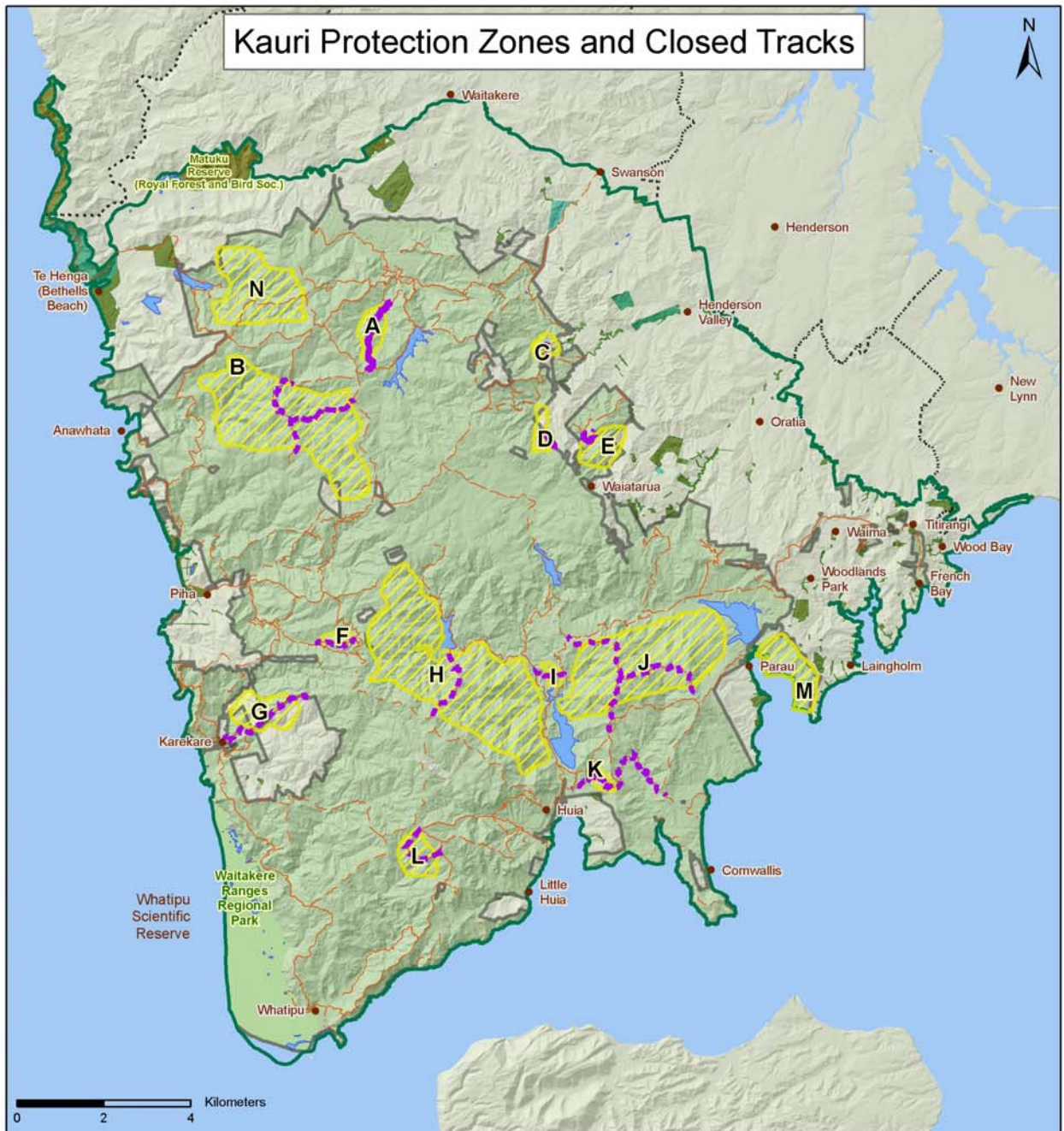
visitors to the area and the feet of animals such as possums and wild pigs. The role of visitors in helping to spread this disease is clear, with almost 70% of known kauri dieback sites within 50m of the track network, and popular visitor destinations such as Piha and the Cascade kauri Park being the most affected.

An extensive management strategy has been put into place to try and prevent the spread of the disease, and this has had a large impact on recreational activity. Strategies include:

- Reduction of human activity through creating protection zones for areas unaffected by the disease and closing tracks within these zones
- Education of local communities and user groups on the risk of continued use of affected areas.
- Increased public awareness of the risks of disease and the rationale for excluding people from areas.
- Establishing phyto-sanitary shoe-cleaning stations at key locations in the park track network.
- Emphasis on track maintenance, re-routing and upgrading to minimise the transfer of the disease

This strategy has resulted in the quarantining of 15 at risk zones (approximately 20% of the area of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park) as identified in the map below. Over 27 kilometres of track within these zones (approximately 10% of the total length of track in the park) is closed to check the spread of the disease to these areas that are currently free of it. It has also resulted in the decline of some sports events that could exacerbate the spread of the disease.

Figure 22



12.1.2 Tree root compaction

Some (surface rooting) native vegetation tree species, such as Kauri, are particularly vulnerable to compaction of their root systems by pedestrian (or cycle) traffic, and/or to changes of drainage caused by, for example, rutting and erosion on tracks. To avoid this impact, parks staff have identified areas of 'at risk' trees and have a programme of re-routing tracks or constructing boardwalks and rafts, on prioritized heavily trafficked areas. During the five years since 2008 boardwalks have been constructed to avoid trampling kauri root systems in a number of walkways including the Auckland City Walkway. Routing, earthworks and drainage of new tracks and track realignment are checked by an ecologist prior to construction, to avoid such impacts.

12.1.3 Impact of Dogs on indigenous ecosystems

People from local communities and throughout West Auckland visit locations in the Heritage Area to run their dogs, and this is recognised as a healthy activity for both the animal and its owner. However, dogs can have a devastating impact on wildlife, and particularly bird life.

The Council Dog Control Policy and Bylaw seeks to balance these two issues by prohibiting dogs from particularly sensitive wildlife areas (for example the Ark in the Park bird release area at Cascade Kauri Park, Lake Wainamu, Pararaha Valley, and Whatipu Scientific Reserve and adjoining Crown foreshore) while at the same time identifying designated on-leash and off-leash areas for dogs. It is noted that for other reasons dogs are also prohibited from a number of park places such as picnic areas and campgrounds.

The bylaw allows the Council to make (with public notice) temporary changes to the rules in relation to threatened or at-risk protected wildlife vulnerable to dogs, and pest control in any park and/or beach. The draft bylaw has undergone a submissions and hearings process, and regional guidelines have recently been adopted by the council. These guidelines set the parameters for amalgamating all of the legacy Dog Bylaws, and are based on the premise that Auckland should be a dog-friendly city. The current by-laws of each of the former councils stay in place until such time as the Local Boards decide to review them in terms of the regional guidelines.

Dog walking is permitted on most tracks in the Waitakere Ranges provided the dog is on a lead. Designated off-leash areas include:

- Cornwallis Beach sand area from sunrise until 9am daily (afternoon walking times will be permitted from July 2013)
- Kakamatua open sand area (operative from July 2013)
- Bethells Beach within the area allowed by marked poles and between sunrise and sunset
- Piha Beach within the area allowed by marker poles generally located north of Lion Rock and northern end of the beach between sunrise and sunset
- All parks not specifically identified as a prohibited or on-leash area

Maps of the Piha and Bethells off-leash and on-leash areas form part of the bylaw and are reproduced below. The off-leash areas have been carefully identified to avoid habitat and nesting areas of birds such as Little Blue Penguins.

To be effective, good enforcement of these bylaws are required, particularly near the off-leash areas.

Figure 23

On and Off-Lead Dog Areas, Piha and Bethells Beaches

Map 1 to Schedule 3



Map 2 to Schedule 3



Note: these general statements should not be relied upon and the detail of the individual dog by-laws should be referred to.

12.1.4 Potential for forest fire

The peak visitor season corresponds with the peak fire season, and records show that most fires are started by people, rather than natural causes. Visitors can contribute to the risk of fire catching the relatively flammable species that cover large tracts of the Heritage Area, such as the indigenous Manuka/Kanuka forest and the common weeds pampas and gorse. It is noted that older, mature native forest is much less flammable. Such fires can threaten people and property and destroy large areas of indigenous habitat and vegetation. Fortunately, there has not been a vegetation fire that has destroyed homes in the Waitakere Ranges for many years. However, there have been a number of fires, as outlined in the table below.

Figure 24

Vegetation fires in the Waitakere Fire District				
Year	Number of fires	Grass area / gorse burned (ha)	Indigenous forest burned (ha)	Total area burned (ha)
1/5/08 – 30/4/09	15	1 ha	6 ha	7 ha
1/5/09–30/04/10	12			7.5 ha
1/5/10-30/4/11	30*			*

Source: NZ Fire Service
Note: Breakdowns of the type of vegetation burned are not available for 2009/10 or 2010/11. Of these 30 fires in 2010-2011, the area burned is only recorded for 10, as follows: 75m² of gorse, 550m² of grass, 200m² of indigenous forest, 2 hectares of plantation forest and 1.1 hectares of 'scrub' (Manuka/Kanuka). A total area burned is unavailable.

The Waitakere Rural Fire District was dis-established in 2010 to become part of the Auckland Rural Fire District. There are five rural fire stations at Huia, Piha, Karekare, Bethells/Te Henga and Waitakere Township. Management tools in place to combat the fire risk include imposition of a 'fire season' between 1 December and 30 April when it is illegal to light a fire in the open air without a fire permit, and large information signs on forest fire danger at strategic locations in the Ranges. Regional park rangers act as "first-response" personal in the case of fire in the Ranges.

Availability of water for fire-fighting is an issue in many parts of the Heritage Area.



12.1.5 Spread of Weeds

Visitors to the Ranges can help spread weed-seed through tracks on their shoes. There are active weed control programmes operating and incipient weed outbreaks are identified and managed as part of the weed management programme.

12.1.6 Positive Impacts of Visitors on Indigenous Ecosystems

A force for positive change are the numerous individuals and volunteer groups both local and from the wider Auckland Region who are actively working to protect and enhance indigenous ecosystems in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area and raise public awareness, for example the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, the Royal Forest and Bird's 'Ark in the Park' project in the Cascades, Friends of Arataki, Piha Coast Care, the Lone Kauri Forest Restoration Group, the La Trobe Restoration Group, the Waitakere River Care Group, the 26 Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups created since 2008, and many others. Some of these groups have been active for many years, for example the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society was formed in 1973 and recently celebrated 40 years of conservation work in the Waitakere Ranges.

In addition, there are an increasing number of Auckland-wide clubs, church groups and places of business that contribute voluntary hours to environmental protection and restoration projects. For example, there were 26,808 hours of voluntary time contributed in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park in 2011/2012, and as the table below demonstrates, volunteer hours have been increasing every year since 2008.

Figure 25

Volunteer Hours Waitakere Ranges Regional Park				
	1 May 2008 – 30 April 2009	1 May 2009 – 30 April 2010	1 May 2010 – 30 April 2011	1 May 2011 – 30 April 2012
Volunteer Hours	8,000	12,572	16,114	26,808
Percentage Increase		57%	28%	66%

Source: Auckland Council

The increase in 2011/2012 is partly due to the employment of a volunteer 'partnership ranger' in the park during that period, who was able to organise a greater number of volunteers.

12.2 MANAGEMENT OF IMPACTS ON COLLECTION AND STORAGE OF HIGH QUALITY WATER

Collection and storage of high quality water is identified as a heritage feature in Section 7(2)(a)(iv) of the Act.

The five water supply dams and associated 6,757 hectares of catchment area in the Heritage Area managed by Watercare Services Ltd, are identified in the map at [Figure 1](#).

The water catchment areas are generally open for recreational use, including tracks such as Exhibition Drive track and the two small gauge trains that run public excursions in the catchment areas. Visitors are required to stay on tracks in the water catchment areas and are prohibited from a 50 meter buffer zone around the dams and contact with the water in the dams.

Discretionary activities in the Regional Park are not permitted by the RPMP in water catchment land without Watercare Services Ltd's written approval, and the Auckland

Council dog control policy and bylaw prohibits dogs from all water supply buffer lands and reservoirs.

12.3 MANAGEMENT OF IMPACTS ON LANDSCAPE QUALITIES AND NATURAL SCENIC BEAUTY

Landscape qualities and natural scenic beauty are identified as heritage features in Section 7(2)(a)(vii) of the Act.

As discussed in the landscape chapter of the monitoring report, much of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is outstanding natural landscape and areas of natural scenic beauty, and this is a significant attractor for visitors to the area. There is potential for infrastructure that has been built to cater for visitors, such as carparks, toilets and changing rooms, signage, boat ramps, paths, fences, boardwalks and some roads and footpaths, to detract from the natural scenic qualities of the Heritage Area. The behaviour of a few visitors can also impact on the scenic beauty of the landscape, including littering and graffiti.

Management tools in place to minimise these impacts include:

- Regional Park design guides, contained in the Regional Park Management Plan. These contain guidelines for landscape protection and enhancement, re-vegetation programmes and infrastructure design (for example, textures, colour, ensuring the structure is subservient to the natural landscape and appropriate to a natural setting)
- The Waitakere Ranges Foothills Design Guide (2010).
- Mountain biking is prohibited from the Regional Park on the basis that the terrain, erodible soils and track types are not suitable for this type of activity.
- Provision of rubbish bins in local parks and a well-publicised policy of 'pack in-pack out' for rubbish in regional parks.
- A Regional Park policy to remove all graffiti within a day of it being discovered.
- Principles in the Regional Park Management Plan relating to signage, such as co-location and avoiding clutter.
- Conditions on concessionaires and discretionary activities; such as obligations relating to conveying codes of conduct to patrons, staying on defined tracks, not removing vegetation or disturbing wildlife and adhering to Kauri dieback control measures such as cleaning footwear and the removal of litter.
- All major park concept plans are prepared with professional landscape advice.

There is a particularly fine balance between adequate infrastructure and protection of the quality of the landscape in relation to demand for additional carparking at heavily used destinations, and the need for signage for multiple purposes such as way-finding, health and safety information, natural and cultural heritage and history information and advertising of attractions.

12.4 MANAGEMENT OF THE QUIETNESS AND DARKNESS OF THE WAITAKERE RANGES AND THE COASTAL PARTS OF THE AREA

The quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges are identified as heritage features in Section (7)(2)(e) of the Act.

Demand for artificial outdoor lighting in the Heritage Area for safety and security purposes arises from both visitors and the local community. Regional Parks introduced a 'dark sky' policy for the Waitakere Ranges in 2010 to ensure development and approved activities paid special attention to protecting the quietness and darkness of the Ranges. Auckland

Transport has also developed a policy of providing down-lights (which shed less light into the night sky) in sensitive areas such as the Heritage Area.

A recent issue to attract adverse public comment in relation to lighting has been the introduction of large reflective road signs in the Heritage Area.

No motorized activities are permitted in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, and any application for a noisy activity is carefully assessed in light of this feature of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act.

13 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELLBEING

The Act recognises that people living in the Heritage Area must be enabled to provide for their well-being. Heritage Area objective 8(i) reads:

To recognise that people live and work in the area in distinct communities, and to enable those people to provide for their social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing.

Visitors can contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the communities in the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. They may also detract from community wellbeing.

13.1 ECONOMIC WELLBEING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Some people, both residents of the Heritage Area and outside operators, make their living from selling goods and services to visitors as well as local people. There are at least 70 visitor related businesses located in the Heritage Area, listed on the Destination Waitakere website, as follows:

Figure 26

Visitor Related Business in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area 2012	
Type of Business	Number of businesses
Accommodation	28 plus 2 campgrounds at Piha, a 'glamping' facility at Bethells/ Te Henga and facilities such as the Aio Wira Centre and Karanga Camp
Arts and Crafts	11
Guided tours and Activities	13
Vineyards	4
Cafes and restaurants	14

Source: Destination Waitakere website

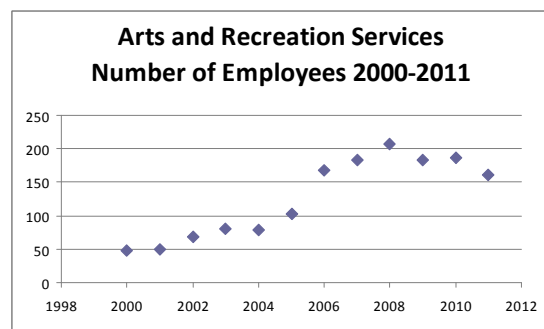
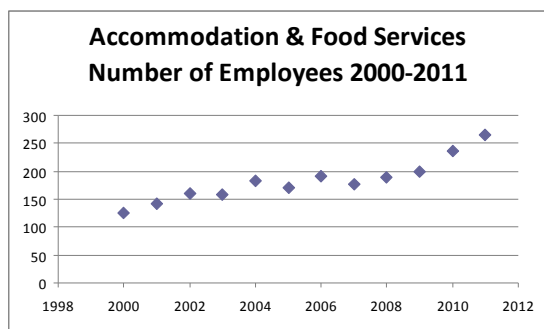
Businesses catering to visitors to the Waitakere Ranges are focused mainly in Titirangi and the adjacent Otimai and Opanuku catchments, with another grouping in Piha.

As the table and graphs below indicate, the accommodation and food services sectors in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area expanded in the period 2008 to 2011. During this time, the number of businesses increased from 45 to 55 and the number of employees rose from 190 to 265. Number of businesses in the other visitor-related sector– arts and

recreation services – remained reasonably static, while the number of employees has decreased since 2008.

Figure 27

Changes in the Visitor Related Business Sectors 2008-2011 Number of Businesses and Employees								
	Businesses				Employees			
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2008	2009	2010	2011
Accommodation and Food Services	45	46	53	55	190	200	237	265
Arts and recreation services	100	99	104	97	207	184	187	161



Source: Statistics New Zealand Business Demographics

The regulatory structure around establishment of businesses is provided by the Waitakere District Plan. On privately owned residential land in the Ranges, there is provision for only small-scale, low impact businesses or ‘Home Occupations’ to set up as of right, with rules to ensure the residential use remains the primary use of the site, and that effects on the neighbours and on rural character are minimized. Many of the small businesses set up under the home occupation provisions rely on visitors as well as the local community for their custom; for example, holiday house rental, bed and breakfast and WOOFer (workers on organic farms) accommodation, roadside produce and art and craft stalls.

A number of visitor studies¹⁹ have identified that the full economic benefit of tourism in the heritage area is not being captured by the local community, as most tourists tend to visit the area on a day-trip basis, while staying (and spending) outside the area.

An initiative to provide a more flexible regulatory environment for business in the Heritage Area, to better enable residents’ economic, cultural and social wellbeing, was Plan Change 36, notified by the former Waitakere City Council in 2010 in response to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act. This plan change amended the provisions for non-residential activities in the Ranges, providing for additional rural activities considered to be consistent with rural character in the Heritage Area. It became operative in 2012.

¹⁹ Auckland Regional Council 2008 ‘The Outlook for Tourism in the Auckland Region’, and Auckland Plus 2007 ‘Bringing the World to Auckland: The case for Investment in Auckland’s Visitor Economy’

It is noted that a new plan for the Auckland Council - the Unitary Plan - is currently being drawn up, and is scheduled to be released for public submissions in 2013.

13.2 SOCIAL WELLBEING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Past consultation undertaken would suggest that the greatest social impact that visitors have on local communities, are traffic related and behavioral issues such as crime, alcohol, noise, litter, and vandalism, particularly tagging.

13.2.1 Carparking

At peak visitor periods, carparks can overflow at popular destinations such as the west coast beaches, and local residents are inconvenienced (at best) and at worst, health and safety is threatened by vehicles parked over accessways to properties and blocking access for emergency vehicles (see the example documented in Section 10.2 of this report). There is, however, no 'hard' information available on the frequency, extent and impact of carpark overflows at the most popular local park destinations.

It is noted that there is significantly more visitor carparking at Piha Beach, spread over the length of the beach from Piha to Piha North. At Karekare and Bethells/Te Henga, on the other hand, parking is concentrated in small areas.

13.2.2 Road accidents

Members of the public attending the consultation undertaken for the Parau/ Laingholm Local Area Plan on 18 September 2012 requested data on crash statistics in the Heritage Area, as it was felt that visitors to the area are responsible for a large proportion of the local traffic crashes. This data has been collected for five of the major roads in the Heritage Area, for each month for the years 2008 to 2011. The data for these four years have been amalgamated in the table below.

Figure 28

All Crashes during 2008-2011 on Selected Routes in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area by Month												
Crash Month	Bethells Road		Huia Road		Piha Road		Scenic Drive		Shaw Road		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
January	-	-	7	9.2	5	6.0	4	4.9	1	12.5	17	6.5
February	-	-	8	10.5	4	4.8	15	18.5	-	-	27	10.3
March	1	8.3	4	5.2	6	7.1	5	6.2	2	25.0	18	6.9
April	1	8.3	6	7.9	10	11.9	9	11.1	-	-	26	10.0
May	-	-	6	7.9	8	9.5	11	13.6	-	-	25	9.6
June	2	16.7	9	11.8	6	7.1	4	4.9	1	12.5	22	8.4
July	3	25.0	3	3.9	8	9.5	4	4.9	-	-	18	6.9
August	1	8.3	1	1.3	7	8.3	6	7.4	-	-	15	5.7
September	2	16.7	9	11.8	11	13.1	4	4.9	-	-	26	10.0
October	-	-	7	9.2	7	8.3	4	4.9	2	25.0	20	7.7
November	-	-	10	13.2	10	11.9	5	6.2	1	12.5	26	10.0
December	2	16.7	6	7.9	2	2.4	10	12.3	1	12.5	21	8.0
Total 2008-2011	12	100	76	99.8	84	99.9	81	99.8	8	100	261	100

Source: Auckland Transport

This data would indicate that vehicle crashes are spread relatively evenly over the year; that is, the peak visitor times in the Ranges (summer months) are not reflected in higher crash statistics for these months, as would be expected if most crashes involved visitors to the area rather than local residents. While visitors and their unfamiliarity with the roads likely contribute to the number of crashes, other factors such as the weather are clearly just as important.

It is noted that this observation may be less relevant in locations such as Piha where the summer visitor peak is not so pronounced due to visitors arriving throughout the year for activities such as surfing and dog-walking.

13.2.3 Heavy Vehicles

Some of the roads in the Heritage Area are very narrow and winding and unsuited to large vehicles such as buses. On a particularly hazardous part of the Scenic Drive, movement of heavy vehicles is restricted by Clause 11 of the former Waitakere City's 'Use of Roads and Parking' Bylaw 2010, as follows:

'11. Heavy Vehicle Restriction – Scenic Drive

No person shall drive or operate or cause or permit to be driven or operated on along or over the portion of Scenic Drive, Titirangi, between its junction with Woodlands Park Road and its junction with Shaw Road –

- (a) Any vehicle which has a forward distance (as defined by the Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Dimensions and Mass 2002) of more than 7.4 metres;*
- (b) Any combination of vehicles containing one or more heavy vehicles.'*

13.2.4 Behavior of park visitors

The regional park rangers provide a level of ongoing surveillance as they go about their duties and park users are able to report incidents or failure of infrastructure on regional parks using comment cards, which are available at the main entrances. These issues are responded to by rangers as part of their weekly work programmes. The council records incidents reported to it in a central database. The total number of incidents and the most frequent incidents are shown in the table below.

Figure 29

Recorded incidents on the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park (1 July to 30 June year)					
Type of incident	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012*	Total
Litter and dumping	16	47	50	21	134
Vandalism	47	31	28	17	123
Illegal fires	30	44	26	8	108
Unapproved activity	12	54	26	9	101
Theft from car	20	14	29	16	79
Dumped vehicles	30	15	10	1	56
Theft/council property	8	19	13	3	43
Dogs	25	9	4	5	43
Search and rescue	11	15	11	6	43
Accident – public vehicle	4	5	4	-	13
Illegal parking	16	17	6	1	40
Personal injury	2	8	6	1	17
Marine fauna/flora incident	2	5	1	3	11
Undesirable behaviour	4	17	10	7	38
Miscellaneous other	25	32	23	16	96
Comment cards**	8	18	36	26	88
All incidents	260	350	283	140	1033

*The records for 2011/2012 are incomplete at time of writing

**Self-reported (recording issues on parks – can be positive comments)

Source: Auckland Council

This data indicates that there were around the same number of total incidents in the regional park over the three years since 2008 (where complete annual data is available). The main incidents relate to litter and dumping, vandalism and illegal fires. Theft from cars is also a significant concern.

14 TOOLS TO MANAGE VISITOR ACTIVITY AND IMPACTS

In general, visitors are able to go where they wish on public land within the Heritage Area, and there is a limited suite of tools available to the Council to manage visitor activity and minimize impacts. These are discussed below.

14.1 POLICY GUIDANCE

Policy documents that guide visitor and infrastructure management in the Waitakere Ranges include Council policies set out in the Auckland Plan (2012) and the Auckland Visitor Plan (2011), Reserve Management Plans, Infrastructure design guides, and community plans such as the Local Area Plans and the West Coast Plan. Plans under the Resource Management Act (1991) such as the Waitakere District Plan and Regional Policy Statement and Plans (to be replaced in the next few years with the Unitary Plan) also set some of the parameters within which tourism-based enterprises may operate.

Information on the Regional Park Reserve Management Plan and Reserve Management Plans prepared for Local Parks within the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, is contained in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

14.2 MANAGING DEMAND BY LIMITING ACTIVITIES, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

It may be possible to discourage visitors from visiting certain locations, or engaging in certain activities, by for example, leaving roads unsealed, as in the roads to Whatipu and Anawhata or closing tracks to areas needing additional protection from Kauri Die-back disease. These methods of managing the public 'demand' for a destination work best where there are no secondary effects from failure to provide facilities. For example, if people choose to use the unsealed Whatipu Road there is no inconvenience or damage to others, only themselves. However, if people park illegally because a carpark is full, they may be inconveniencing or even endangering residents and other visitors or damaging natural features such as sand dunes. In this case, demand management needs to be accompanied by other tools such as adequate enforcement.

Use of zoning techniques to restrict activities/uses is a type of demand management used extensively in protected areas such as the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. Both the District Plan and the Regional Park Management Plan use zoning techniques.

Use of zoning in the District Plan to place limitations on commercial uses helps keep visitor numbers lower than they would be for example, if there were a lot more shops and cafes at the West Coast beach settlements. The District Plan (Waitakere Section) provides for commercial activity in Titirangi and Oratia villages as well as a limited number of cafes/restaurants and shops in other locations such as Piha, Huia, Scenic Drive and Laingholm. Residents of the Ranges may set up home businesses (within certain defined parameters).

Use of zoning techniques by the Regional Park Management Plan is described at Section 4.2.

14.3 MANAGING DEMAND BY ENABLING VISITOR 'ATTRACTORS'

It is also possible to encourage visitors to certain locations by enabling provision of visitor 'attractors' to locations where it is considered more visitors could be accommodated. For example, the Arataki Visitor Centre attracts nearly 190,000 visits per year.

14.4 SITE HARDENING

Site hardening involves undertaking physical works to an area to ensure it is better able to withstand the impacts of visitors, and to reinforce the concept of zones. Site hardening is generally undertaken in areas where large numbers of visitors are expected. Examples of site hardening in the Waitakere Ranges Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area are:

- Providing boardwalks to prevent damage to vegetation such as the roots of Kauri trees, or to other natural or heritage features such as wetlands (for example on the City of Auckland Walkway in Cascade Kauri Park)
- Hard paving of paths and walkways
- Installing signs, for example to inform people of rules such as dog bans or shellfish take rules
- Providing facilities such as rubbish bins and toilets. Many of the local parks, for example at Titirangi and Piha beaches provide bins, while the regional parks, for example at Cornwallis, have a policy of 'pack your rubbish out'.
- Undertaking planting programmes – for example, to stabilize dunes that are subject to erosion such as the dune planting at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga.

Locations, such as the Arataki Visitor Centre and its environs, are specifically designed to cater for high levels of activity.

The disadvantages of site hardening are that projects are likely to be costly, and may have significant visual, amenity and environmental impacts. Signs, barrier fences, rubbish bins, lighting, carparks and other infrastructure can all detract from visual amenity, although good design can reduce these impacts. The exception is planting, which contributes to amenity. Significant site hardening can result in an area becoming less attractive to many people who value the natural state of the area.

It is possible that site hardening could create a vicious cycle whereby more facilities encourage more visitors, so more facilities are required, for example extending a carpark may encourage more visitors to the area so that within 5 years the new carpark may also be at capacity.

14.5 INTERPRETATION

By providing information that raises awareness or improves visitors' understanding of impacts, it may be possible to change behaviour. Interpretation can take many forms, including:

- Self guided trails, for example, the Nature Trail at Arataki and the Te Henga Wetland Walk organized in summer 2011 and 2012 by the Western Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Society.
- Outdoor displays such as the history and heritage information at Cascade Kauri Park
- Guided walks, such as the evening 'bat walks' run by the Regional park rangers and the walks run by concessionaires in the regional park.
- Visitor centres such as Arataki

Interpretation has the major advantage of improving the quality of visitor experience as well as influencing behaviour, but will only be effective with those visitors who choose to participate. Care must be taken to ensure structures do not compromise visual amenity. Facilities will require ongoing maintenance. Interpretation may be a medium cost tool, although if it takes the form of a tour run by a commercial operator, this cost may be passed on to the visitor rather than the ratepayer.

14.6 ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

These tools involve influencing behaviour through taxes, charges, financial incentives or other financial tools. Financial incentives are utilised to some extent, as in incentives to landowners to allow public access to their property, or to community groups or individual members to help manage visitor impacts by acting in a voluntary warden role.

Taxes and charges such as road tolls or charges on car parking to discourage visitors from using an area, have not been used to any great extent in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, due to concerns that they may work against the right of everyone to free access to public natural areas, and that those who cannot afford to pay may be excluded from using the area.

14.7 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing can be used to:

- Promote particular locations over others
- Promote a particular experience at a certain site
- Present experiences to attract a certain type of visitor
- Recommend certain types of behaviour.

There has been little active promotion of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area as a destination for overseas tourists and visitors from outside of Auckland over the past few decades, to help protect the valued qualities of the Ranges.

Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED), an Auckland Council Controlled Organisation, has developed a ten-year investment and action plan for Auckland's visitor economy - the Auckland Visitor Plan (December 2011). A summary of the aspects of this plan of significance to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is at Section 4.5.2.

14.8 REGULATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Examples include:

- District Plan and RPMP rules
- A 'rahui' or ban on shellfish collection at Karekare backed by a legal ban under the Fisheries Act
- By-laws relating to littering, lighting fires, dogs, alcohol consumption and so on.

These provide a high level of certainty provided they are enforced – which can be costly.

14.9 PRESENCE OF AUTHORITY

Regulations will not be effective unless they are enforced. This requires people 'on the ground' who have enforcement powers, although the main purpose for having people on the ground is not necessarily to catch people committing offences but to prevent people from doing so. In the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, authority is represented by the Ranger Service. Regional Park Rangers can enforce a range of bylaws, while the Local Park summer rangers appointed at Piha and Bethells/ Te Henga have more limited powers but generally carry communication equipment so that they can call for back up. Police have much wider powers including general powers to arrest people committing an offence

Presence of authority is effective in preventing certain behaviour and actions and can be effective in encouraging appropriate behaviours, but is costly in terms of staff time.

14.10 LICENSING OF OPERATORS

Councils have some powers under Section 54(1)(d) of the Reserves Act 1977 to licence commercial operators to undertake activities in reserves (for example, filming, bush tours). The main purpose of doing so is to control who is able to run tours to the area and to ensure that operators have a good local knowledge of the area and its issues. Introduction of Codes of Practice (see below) is only possible where operators are licensed.

Where concessions are granted in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, an annual fee is charged for use of the park and its resources, and conditions are set. The activities of the concessionaires are monitored to ensure they adhere to their terms of entry.

14.11 CODES OF PRACTICE

In any situation where the Auckland Council is involved in licensing an operator or giving approval for an event to go ahead, the Council could require the operator or events organisers to adopt a 'code of practice' that would require strict environmental standards to be maintained. This Code of Practice might involve briefing the participants or the operator's clients regarding environmentally sensitive issues in the area, and advising on appropriate behaviour, and for example, removing all rubbish from the site.

A major advantage is that it involves an educative component, both for the operator and participants. Ensuring that the code is maintained could be difficult in some circumstances, and there are some legal issues which may make it practical to licence only those events that are confined to a specific area.

An example of application of a code of practice is the filming industry, which is by far the highest level of commercial activity on the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, and has undertaken to develop and work within an agreed code of practice and protocols. A further example is the two operators offering canyoning in the Cowans and Kitekite Streams. These operators are also subject to strict standards, and independent monitoring of the environmental impact of their activities by NIWA has reported no demonstrable impacts on the stream environments.

The vast majority of visitors to the Ranges are not part of organised events or activities, and will therefore not be influenced by this tool. If the nature of tourism in the Waitakere Ranges changes towards more guided tours and events, Codes of practice could be a useful tool in addressing localised environmental impacts.

14.12 ACCREDITATION OF OPERATORS

Councils are able to encourage or require commercial operators in the Ranges to undertake accreditation under a recognised standard such as Green Globe 21, an international certification programme for sustainable travel & tourism covering companies, protected areas and communities.

There are three stages to the Green Globe 21 Programme: Affiliate is the introductory stage where you learn more about Green Globe 21, and prepare for Benchmarking and Certification. Benchmarking involves measuring a company's environmental performance over ten key performance areas including minimising, reusing and recycling waste, energy efficiency and management of fresh water resources. Certification is about developing an

environmental management system, being successfully benchmarked, independently certified and meeting the requirements of the Green Globe 21 Standard

The Nature of Good Business is a New Zealand industry initiative encouraging tourism operators and organisations to improve their environmental, social and business performance. Guidelines and supporting information have been developed to help businesses write an Environmental Plan or 'EP'. The EP has been integrated into the Qualmark Endorsement Systems, and is based on the Green Globe 21 programme. Over time all tourism businesses in New Zealand will require an EP to achieve a Qualmark endorsement. Those businesses that go on and become Green Globe 21 Benchmarked and Certified all receive a higher quality score as part of the Qualmark endorsement process.

Green Globe 21 was implemented in New Zealand during 2001 and there are now over 145 companies working through the programme's 'A - B - C' process. Over 50 companies are in the process of benchmarking and 25 have already reached this goal. Iwi management tools

14.13 IWI MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Iwi management tools are those tools traditionally used by Kaitiaki, to enable them to carry out their role of guardianship, custodianship and protection of tribal taonga. The main tools used are:

- *Tapu* – which involves declaring an area as sacred (and therefore not to be used). This may be permanent or temporary. For example, a *tapu* may be placed on an area for 9 days following a drowning in that location.
- *Rahui* – which involves placing a moratorium on an area for a certain period for the purpose of conservation. *Rahui* were traditionally used extensively on a seasonal basis.

It is the role of the Kaitiaki to apply or lift a *tapu* or *rahui*, and to determine when this is appropriate. Councils therefore need to do this in partnership with iwi, preferably within a joint resource management system framework.

Currently *rahui* and *tapu* have no legal status and must rely on the goodwill and understanding of non-Maori people about the importance of respecting these tools. However it is possible to support *rahui* with legislation, for example, the *rahui* or shellfish ban at Karekare was backed by a legal ban on shellfish collection under the Fisheries Act.

14.14 MONITORING

Visitor monitoring can help in developing strategy to assist in managing visitor impacts that are 'behavioural' in nature. For example, the activities of concessionaires in the regional parkland are monitored to ensure they adhere to their terms of entry and the cumulative impacts of their activities are monitored by ranger staff.

Monitoring could help establish what type of visitor was engaged in a particular activity, for what reasons and what it would take to get them to change their activity or modify the way in which they engage in that activity. Monitoring is likely to be more effective in helping to address safety issues resulting from peoples' lack of awareness, than issues associated with loss of visual amenity.

15 CONCLUSIONS

A significant proportion of the Heritage Area is occupied by the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, which is a heritage feature under the Act. The Regional Park management Plan provides a framework for the management of the park and the impact on heritage features of visitors to the park. There has been a review of the Regional Park Management Plan for the Waitakere Ranges, in light of the requirements of the Act and the need to protect the heritage features of the park. In line with the Act, large areas of high environmental sensitivity are managed for low intensity use, whilst areas identified as visitor hotspots are managed to accept the expected number of visitors, whilst minimising visitor impact. Results from the monitoring of visitor numbers have established that these management policies are working. The Regional park ranger service contributes significantly to the success of the Regional Park.

There is generally good data available for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park on visitor numbers and characteristics, and the level of visitor satisfaction with their experience. As well as 2012 information, there is baseline data for 2008 for comparison.

Data for visitors to privately owned parts of the Heritage Area such as cafes and markets, and to local parks such as Titirangi Beach, Piha and Te Henga (Bethells Beach) is more limited. New data was collected over the summer of 2012-2013 (traffic counts at key beach locations and visitor surveys at Piha and Bethells/Te Henga beaches). This data will provide a baseline for future monitoring.

There is a need to provide a wider management framework for visitors and recreation in the Heritage Area, integrating the management of the Regional Park with the Local Park network, the roading network and privately owned areas. The framework should seek to provide a quality experience for visitors to the Heritage Area, while protecting heritage features and at the same time recognising the role visitors can play in the social and economic wellbeing of the communities in the Ranges.

The funding set aside for 2013-14 by the Waitakere Ranges Local Board for preparation of a Visitor Management Plan will help to provide such a framework.



