

October 20, 2020

To: Auckland Council (AC)

Name of Submitter: Piha Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc (“the Submitter”)

Please find herewith our submission with regard to:

Regional Parks Management Plan Review

Background

The Submitter is an incorporated body that has been actively representing the Piha community 1939. Members include property owners, business owners, permanent residents, holiday and weekend dwellers and property tenants. The Submitter has an active membership who are necessarily affected by actions and activities of Freedom Campers that impinge upon the quiet enjoyment of their lifestyle and environment. The Submitter has an informative website and Facebook page with regular communications to members.

Introduction

This submission speaks to the Regional Park Management Plan (RMPM) and the Review of that Plan.

The submitter’s interest is in the areas within the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland and seeks to:

- Ensure free access to all areas and all tracks within the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland for recreational enjoyment.
- Ensure that the values and intents embodied in the existing RMPM with regard to ownership, public interest are maintained.
- Maintain protection of the landscapes and the environment.
- Continue the existing RPMP strategy NOT to promote commercialisation and tourism and/or ensure that any impact is minimised.
- Highlight new areas of interest or concern.

Issues

With regard to Kauri Dieback:

1. The historical agreements that provide for freedom of access to the Waitakere tracks and the heritage value of those tracks must be taken to account in the review
2. No tracks should be permanently closed.
3. The upgrade of tracks must be reviewed in the context of past use and amenity value. Traditional users of the Waitakere Ranges tracks do NOT want any upgrade beyond what is absolutely necessary to ensure Kauri are protected.

With regard to Infrastructure:

1. Tracks within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland should have a minimum of built structures such as boardwalks, steps, bridges, seats, signs and safety barriers. Users of the tracks want to enjoy a “natural NZ bush” experience.
2. Tracks should be reformed where necessary to allow natural drainage of rainwater without the addition of boardwalks, gravel or vegetation clearance.
3. Infrastructure to popular and more readily accessible positions should be minimised and where necessary comply with the Piha Design Guidelines or similar.
4. Signs identifying hazards should be placed at track entries where practical.
5. Formalisation of new roads should be avoided or minimised in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parklands.

With regard to Commercialisation:

1. The Waitakere Ranges Regional Parklands are owned by the ratepayers of Auckland. They should always be available for free and informal use.
2. Commercial concessions and activities within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland is already endangering the natural environment and should be discontinued.
3. There should be no charges or fees for using the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland or for carparking

With regard to **Activities:**

1. Continue policies to prohibit activities such as recreational hunting and fishing within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland.
2. No commercial activities or trading should be permitted in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parklands or beach fronts except in support of special events and only with approval of the Waitakere Ranges Local Board.
3. Continue to prohibit the use of all forms of cycling and motorised transport on tracks or where the environment will be subject to damage within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland.
4. Continue to prohibit the use of motorised vehicles at all beaches within the Waitakere Ranges Regional parklands except for emergency services, life-saving activities and boat launching at designated sites.
5. Continue to restrict horse riding to designated areas.
6. Prohibit Freedom Camping in all Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland areas.
7. Provide for designated campgrounds and camp sites where suitable toilet and ablution facilities are maintained.
8. Canyoning at Kitekite Falls, a Heritage Site, and all eco-sensitive areas should be forbidden.
9. Filming activities should be better controlled and restricted in environmentally sensitive areas, especially in crew sizes.
10. The use of Drones should be prohibited within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland areas except with express permission.

With regard to **RMPM Visions:**

1. The RMPM must give priority at all times to protecting the unique natural environment and ambiance of the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland.
2. The Regional Park visions and management principles as outlined in the existing RPMP should be retained without dilution.
3. Regional parks should continue to be grouped according to the class system and managed according to that class.

4. The entire Waitakere Ranges to remain a Class 1 park with the emphasis on wilderness and low-key appropriate recreation and minimal infrastructure.
5. Strategies should be put in place that will avoid creating over population by visitors, especially at holiday times, including the addition or the creation of new visitor attraction facilities such as “selfie bridges.”
6. The RPMP should retain the provision for management of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park by a ranger service.
7. The RPMP should ensure that areas within the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland listed in 17.19.3 will continue to be managed as Special Management Zones.

With regard to Other Areas of Concern:

1. Lion Rock:
 - a. Ensure that no further infrastructure is installed to enable access
 - b. Either make access to the top of Lion Rock available or reinstall the barriers previously in place.
2. Log Race Road
 - a. The RPMP should include a development plan to protect the Radar Station heritage site.
 - b. The Mercer Bay Loop Track should be retained generally as it is.
 - c. Ensure all lookout areas are safe but avoid obtrusive infrastructure as previously noted.
 - d. Deter the use of unsafe, informal access to Mercer Bay.
3. Taitomo
 - a. Implement the Taitomo variation to the existing RMPM.
 - b. Consult with the Piha community on the design for the Hillary Trail connection between Mercer Bay Loop Track and Tasman Lookout.
 - c. Undertake pest weed control and re-planting of the burned areas at Taitomo including the Gap to Tasman lookout track.
4. Piha / Glen Esk Valley to Kitekite Falls
 - a. Piha Mill Camp is a Heritage Site and should have free access for visitors.
 - b. Provide a story board at Piha Mill Camp to educate visitors on the history of the site.
 - c. Do NOT add bridges at Kitekite Falls or at the start of the Knutsen Track.
 - d. Maintain the natural ambiance of Piha Mill Camp by removing the unwanted fence and not adding infrastructure for parking.

- e. Protect the eels and endangered Lampreys and provide interpretive signage to reinforce their fragility.
- f. Provide interpretive signage to highlight and protect the Sir Algenon Thomas Green and enhanced access to the area of bush he donated to the people.

5. General

- a. The RPMP should address ~~dog control~~ and enforce dog control where the prohibited in the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland especially at Piha Beach areas, the Tasman Lookout Track and at The Gap where they fall within the Waitakere Ranges Regional parkland.
- b. The RPMP should address the protection of grey-faced petrels, little blue penguins and other endangered wild life, particularly at The Gap, Lion Rock and North Piha from dogs and humans.
- c. The RPMP should continue the recreational use of the Waitakere ranges as set out in the existing plan.
- d. The RPMP must include the statutory provisions of the WRHA as they apply to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.

Sincerely,



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