



Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (Inc)

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Parks Management Plan Review
Greater Wellington Regional Council
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Submission - Review of regional parks' management plans

This submission is from Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand. Our contact details are above.

Federated Mountain Clubs is the national organisation of tramping and mountain clubs. Our affiliated clubs include the tramping clubs based in the Wellington Region, including the Kapiti Coast and Wairarapa.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the future of Wellington's Regional Parks.

Our comments on each of your questions are below.

1. Comments on the Parks Network Strategy

We support the Strategy. It contains clear guiding framework and principles for the parks. Enhancing the natural environment and improving access to these areas is what we think should happen in these areas. We also welcome the focus on recreation being that which involves enjoyment of the environment. We also support involving the community and community groups in management.

If the real costs of travel increase then the value of accessible areas close to population centres are especially important.

2. What we'd like to see in the parks in the next 10 years

Federated Mountain Clubs would like to see the vision and strategy implemented so that people value the parks as public open space with a valued natural environment. We also see the areas as being important sites for recreation that are well used by locals. Use of these areas doesn't involve traveling out of the district.

Management of East Harbour and Kaitoke seems to us to be well planned. We would like to see additional work undertaken on parts of the Akatarawa block. At present the biodiversity provisions are good but the recreation provisions concerning the northern end merely deals with vehicle based recreation. There are valuable recreational assets for other users here, especially walking and good quality vegetation (in parts) and streams. We would like to see more effort in ensuring that these get recognized and people are encouraged to use them.

3. Comments on current management plans

Forest Lands – Pakuratahi and Akatarawa

This plan is good on managing the environment. It is not so good on recreation.

In the Akatarawa area use by off road vehicles, motorcycles and mountain-bikes and related activities are discussed at length. We don't have any objection to this and recognize the use and history of use.

However the Akatarawa Block contains areas of interest for others. Walking is an important, if neglected, activity, and we are aware that it is a popular area for off-road running. There are tracks over Mt Wainui and Maunganui that could do with some attention – they tend to be unsigned and in need of a little work in places. These are good walks that are reasonably heavily used. They are suitable in most weathers. At present only one – the track up the eastern ridge of Mt Wainui – is recognized in the management plan. It would be useful if the plan provided some guidance and commitment.

One other aspect is puzzling. Some years ago the Maungakotukutuku Valley was widely used for family camping. This was stopped because, it was claimed, of the impact on the environment and plans for protecting this. What actually happened has been neglect which has resulted in much less family use of the valley. In addition, some of the areas that were deemed to be too delicate for camping are now used by off-road vehicles and trail bikes so there has been a decline in the condition of the forest edge rather than an improvement. An example is the flat just in the valley opposite where the road turns above the stream. This valley could be much better utilised.

Some of the unlogged areas to the north and east of the block (outside of the focus of the motorized recreation) are also of interest.

Federated Mountain Clubs would like to see some thought given to this northern end of the block over the next couple of years. The possibilities for connections to the coast through the Whareroa Block should be looked at as part of this. The growth of the Kapiti Coast's population is adding to the need for improvement in this part of the Akatarawa.

The main uses of the Pakuratahi area, especially the old railway and associated sites, are reflected in the current plan. The use of large areas for commercial pine growing does limit the appeal of the area for more intensive recreational use. Whilst we recognise that the pines have financial value, some thought might be given to retaining some of the recreational value during and after logging. With the gorse other colonizing weeds that Wellington sites are prone to after clearance, we have a bit of an unattractive mess for some years after logging.

East Harbour and Kaitoke

We like the current plans for both of these parks.

Belmont

Belmont provides additional experience with open pasture. The existing management is supported.

4. Content of 'one stop plan' for GW's parks and forests

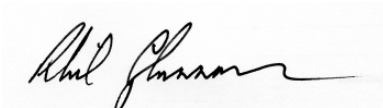
We can understand the desire to reduce the amount of planning documentation that needs to be prepared. However, any one stop plan would necessarily have to have some detail on each of the parks. This is necessary to give detail to each of the local areas and to provide a focal point in engaging local users and partners. East Harbour has a well established group assisting with management. There are groups involved with some of the other areas.

Provided you can accommodate this need for some local detail we have no problem with the suggestion of one plan.

5. Other comment

Please contact us if you wish to discuss any of this submission with us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Glasson', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Phil Glasson
Secretary