

4 Topic: Recreational use of the heritage area

4.1 What is included in this topic

This section of the report discusses the recreational uses within the heritage area, the impacts of visitors and how these impacts are being managed. Comparisons between the data used in the 2013 Monitoring Report and this report are used where possible. These determine the effectiveness of the management of recreational uses, visitors and how that achieves the objectives of the Act.

The area provides for opportunities for wilderness experiences, recreation and relaxation. This is identified as one of the heritage features of the area. The Act also recognises the importance of the regional park as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources. The objectives of the Act seek to protect, restore and enhance the heritage features and protect in perpetuity the regional park for (amongst other matters) the benefit, use and enjoyment of New Zealanders. Whilst the regional park covers a large proportion of the heritage area, local parks and reserves also have a vital role in meeting the recreational needs of local communities.

The Waitākere Ranges and the coastal beaches have been popular destinations for visitors since the late 1800s for swimming, picnicking, tramping, and camping.

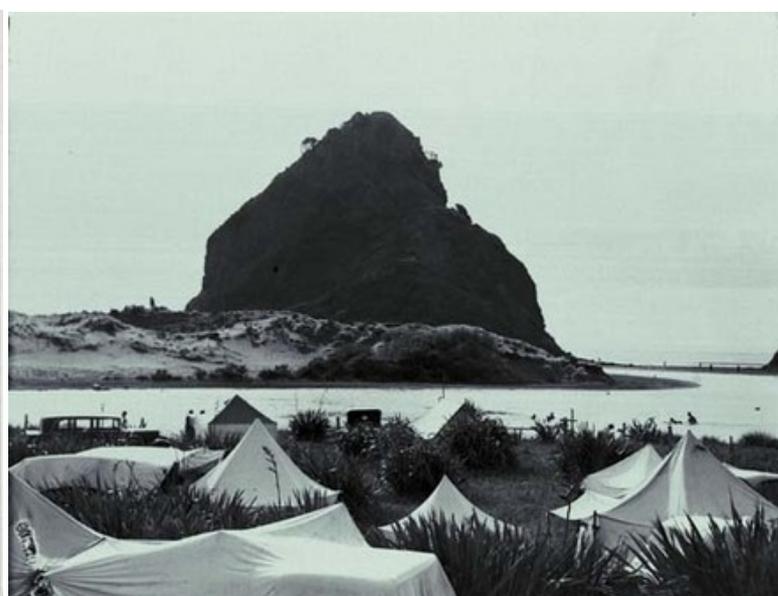
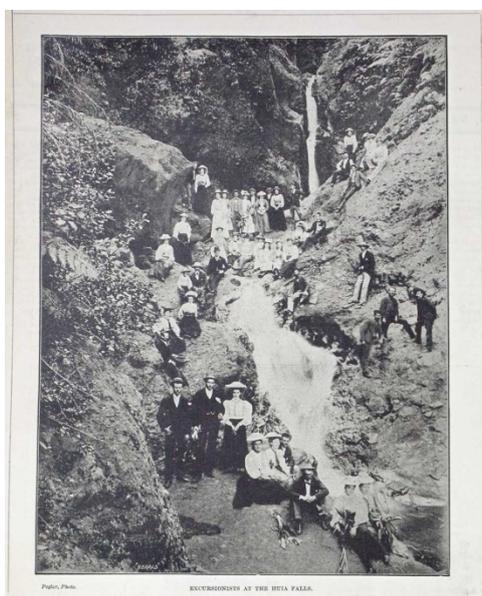


Image on left: A group portrait of men and women arranged beside the waterfalls at Huia (18 June 1898). (Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries (AWNS-18980618-2-1)). **Image on right:** Piha, view across stream to Lion Rock with group of tents and vehicles in foreground, circa 1910 (Source: New Zealand Herald Collection – Auckland Museum – PH-NEG-H1087).

Along with the increasing popularity of the various recreational “hotspots” such as Piha, Karekare and Te Henga / Bethells Beach, there are other ‘newly discovered’ areas which are beginning to experience more visitors. The coastal beaches, bush tracks and landscape features of the heritage area are also actively promoted by tourist agencies and businesses as destinations within Auckland for both domestic and international visitors. This promotion of the heritage area as a visitor destination puts pressure on these areas and the accompanying infrastructure.

As the population of Auckland increases, the regional park, along with the local parks and reserves, will continue to be an important recreational resource. The management of visitors will need to ensure that other values such as wilderness experiences, the quietness and darkness, and the needs of the local communities are provided for and protected.

Kauri dieback continues to be a significant issue within the regional park. Ongoing monitoring of visitors and the effects of visitor activity on the heritage features in conjunction with the management of the spread of kauri dieback will be essential in determining the requirements for future management within the heritage area.

4.2 Key findings

Relevant heritage features (section 7 of the Act): 2(e), (g), (m)

Summary – state and effects of recreational use

- The main reasons for visits continues to be for time-out and relaxation (picnics, water sports, beach, casual walks) or getting close to nature.
- The upward trend of visitor numbers to the regional park continues.
- Piha attracts more visits than the other beach locations combined, followed by Te Henga / Bethells Beach, Karekare and Anawhata.
- The number of concessionaires has increased from 54 in 2013 to 102 in 2017.
- Filming continues to be the largest commercial activity in the heritage area.
- Off-track and unmanaged activities, including geocaching, need to be monitored. Use of closed tracks and cycling on tracks (other than the Beveridge Track), needs to continue to be monitored. Evaluation of existing measures and potential new measures will also be required to ensure that these activities do not contribute to the spread of kauri dieback.
- There needs to be consistent and co-ordinated monitoring and methods of recording data across council and CCOs to be able to make robust comparisons.
- Coordination of activities and consistent communication is required with tourism agencies and businesses that promote the heritage area as a place to visit is required. This will ensure that messages are well communicated and understood such as those about kauri dieback and the reasons for track closures and phytostations.

Progress made towards achieving the objectives:

- Acquisition of additional areas of land at Taitomo, Karekare (next to McCreadies Paddock) and Piha (previously Ministry of Education land) and the development of new walkways in local reserves, contributes both to the opportunities within, and the public accessibility to the heritage area.
- The various plans and strategies (RPMP objectives, policies and special management areas, local reserve management plans, design guides, regional park designation etc.) are management tools which assist in giving effect to the Act.
- The council has a program of ongoing maintenance and upgrades to the tracks and other visitor related infrastructure which seeks to minimise the potential of visitor impacts on the other values of the heritage area i.e. kauri dieback measures such as boardwalks and gravelling tracks in high-use areas to prevent soil matter being transported from one area to another.
- Whilst there are a number of council departments and CCOs collecting data on visitor numbers, this is still largely an uncoordinated approach in terms of the methods used, locations monitored and information shared. There is also little systematic information on the visitor satisfaction with, or use of, local parks and reserves.

4.3 What we measure changes against

The 2013 Monitoring Report used the following indicators:

- popularity ratings for recreational activities – regional park and coast
- number of visitors to popular locations and tracks
- accommodation use
- permits granted for other controlled and discretionary activities in the regional park
- visitor satisfaction ratings.

Most of the data for these indicators was derived from the regional park monitoring programme and administrative and management records. This was supplemented by traffic counts outside the regional park during the 2012/2013 summer period and surf lifesaving club records.

This report uses the following indicators:

- number of visitors to popular locations and tracks
- accommodation use
- concessions and permits for controlled and discretionary activities in the regional park
- visitor satisfaction ratings
- traffic counts.

Comparisons have been undertaken to determine whether there are any new trends in the use of the regional park and the coastal areas. In some cases, it has been necessary to

use other data sources to establish whether there has been a change in visitor use. In some cases monitoring has not continued between 2012 and 2017 and sometimes inconsistencies in the data mean that reliable comparisons cannot be made.

There is still a lack of detailed information on the use of, or visitor satisfaction with local parks and reserves, as previously noted in the 2013 Monitoring Report. Local parks and reserves have been added as a new section to this topic of the report. Where possible data from other sources i.e. Annual Resident Surveys has been used to provide some indication of resident satisfaction with the provision of and frequency of visits to local parks and reserves.

A survey¹⁷ undertaken by Auckland Tourism Events and Economic Development (ATEED) to determine the number and origin of visitors to the Waitākere Ranges Local Board area has the potential to be used as a new source of data for the next monitoring report in 2023. ATEED intend to complete the survey approximately every two years, and the first survey could be used as a baseline.

4.4 Changes between 2013 and 2018

In order to be able to make comparisons between the 2013 Monitoring Report and this report the same format and headings have been used. In some cases, trends have been compared rather than a direct comparison between the individual data sets. This is because comparable data was unavailable or the monitoring has been undertaken in different locations using other methods.

4.4.1 Visitor attractions and facilities

Popular places to visit include the west coast beaches, the Manukau Harbour beaches, the local parks and reserves, and the regional park. Activities in these locations include surfing, swimming, barbeques, picnics, sight-seeing, boating, fishing, camping (where permitted), casual walking and tramping.

Landscape features such as waterfalls (Kitekite, Karekare, Cascades and the Fairy Falls) and popular lookout spots (such as Lion Rock, the Tasman Lookout, the Arataki Visitor Centre, Mt Donald McLean Lookout, and Parkinsons Lookout) are other foci of visitor activity.

The regional park contains approximately 264 kilometres of walking and tramping tracks which cater to a range of experience from the casual walker to the seasoned tramper. The Arataki Visitor Centre plays an important role in providing information about the regional park. It runs a range of educational programmes and conveys important messages about care and stewardship of the environment of the heritage area.

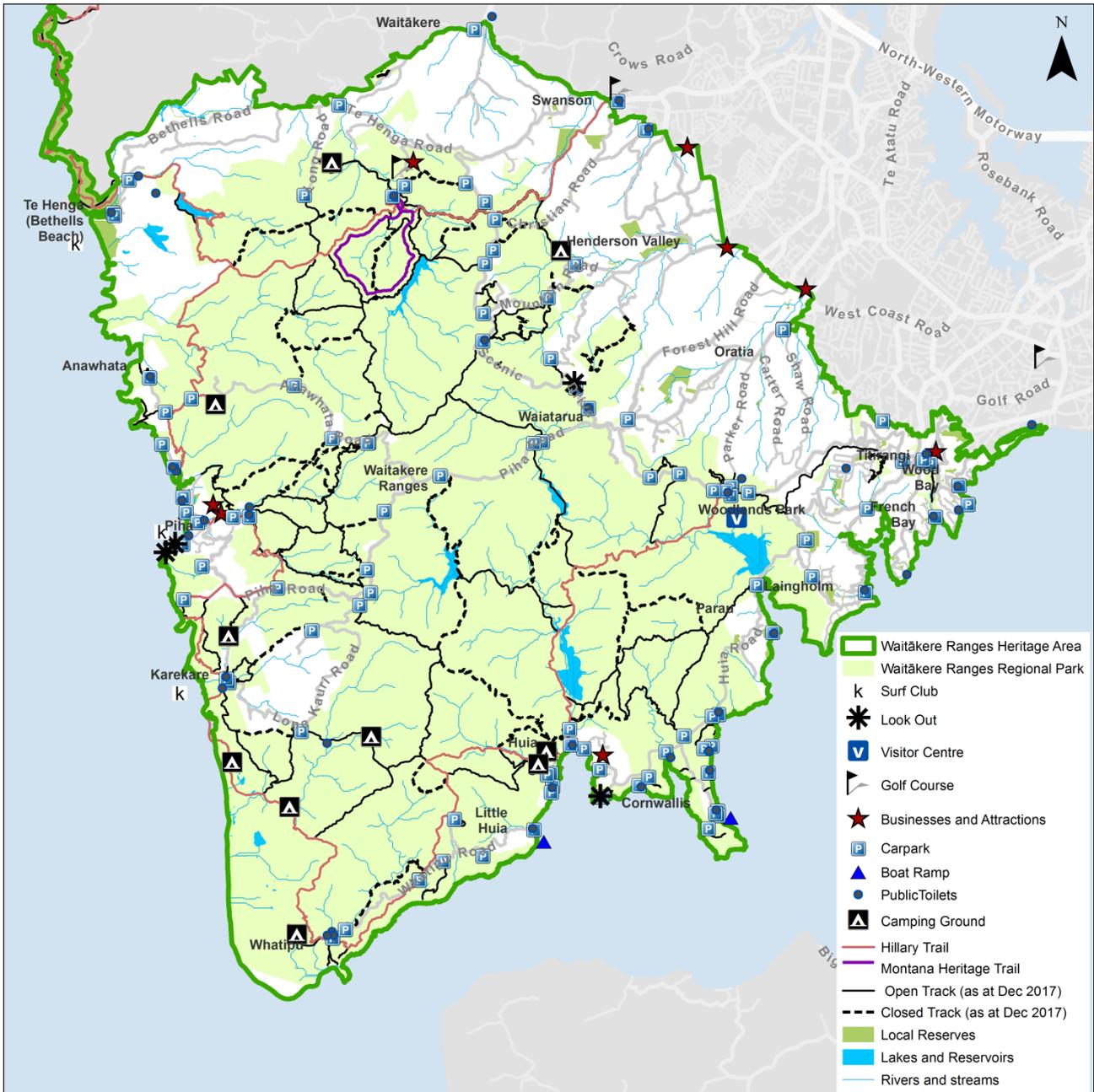
¹⁷ Visitor numbers to Waitākere Area, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development/Qrious, March 2017.



Arataki Visitor Centre.

Other visitor attractions include wineries and private visitor-based businesses and accommodation, galleries, cafes, restaurants, local markets, and regular festival and sporting events. This is discussed further below in this topic in the section titled ‘Visits to other attractions/events’. Map 9 shows the major visitor attractions and facilities in the heritage area.

Map 9: Major visitor attraction and facilities



4.4.2 Local parks and reserves

There are 120 local parks and reserves covering approximately 200 hectares within the heritage area. The local parks and reserves differ in size, character and use. The local parks and reserves network includes the Te Henga / Bethells Beach recreational reserve, 24 Piha reserves, seven reserves located within the Karekare Valley, and approximately 80 local parks and esplanade reserves throughout the rest of the heritage area.

Local parks and reserves serve an important purpose for the communities that surround them. They are often the location of playgrounds, community buildings, kindergartens, playcentres, open space for recreational use and community events. Some contain infrastructure such as picnic areas, toilets and boat ramps whereas others are protected bush-clad reserves and esplanades. Many have formed pathways and shortcut options for pedestrians in the residential communities.

These reserves also contribute to the wider network and offer areas of green space within the built-up residential environment. The Manukau Harbour foreshore reserves have a strong connection to the dynamic coastal process of the harbour environment and provide the predominant linkage, and in most cases, the buffer between the coast and residential areas.



Huia Domain Playground.

4.4.3 Main reasons for visits

The 2013 Monitoring Report identified that there was limited information on the use of local parks and reserves as there was little systematically collected data available. This continues to be the case. Therefore the following sections focuses more on the use of the regional park where there still has been a program of data collection similar to that in 2013.

A visitor profile and satisfaction survey was undertaken at key locations within the regional park by the council in June 2014¹⁸. In this survey, respondents were asked to provide details on ethnicity, age, income, gender, satisfaction with facilities provided, where they were visiting from, and the reasons for their visits. Table 9 below shows the reason for visits to the various locations which were included in the survey. The results show that visitors often had more than one reason to visit the heritage area.

Table 9: Reason for visit to regional park locations

Location	Reason for visit				
	To socialise in large groups (%)	Part of a group going for drive (%)	To get close to nature (%)	For time-out and relaxation (%)	For active sports pursuits (%)
Kakamatua (n=154)	18	15	51	77	21
Piha (Glen Esk) (n=75)	30	30	47	74	30
Arataki (n=120)	11	37	50	50	29
Karamatua (n=83)	18	30	77	67	48
Whatipu (n=108)	16	32	62	58	61
Cascade-Kauri (n=18)	18	35	89	71	78
Karekare (n=138)	13	35	68	69	30
Cornwallis (n=131)	30	20	56	85	15
Lake	32	28	40	66	33

¹⁸ Auckland Council Regional Parks 2013/2014 Visitor Profile and KPI Research Results, Captivate, June 2014.

Wainamu (n=92)					
<p>Notes: Results have been taken from individual park profiles/visitor satisfaction reports.</p> <p>n = number of individuals surveyed</p> <p>surveys undertaken twice in each park between January and May</p>					

The results above show the main reasons for visiting is for time-out and relaxation (picnics, swimming, visit beach, casual walks) or to get close to nature. Whilst the number of respondents is relatively low, Whatipu and Cascade-Kauri also appear to be used for active sports pursuits (such as orienteering, running and tramping). This is generally consistent with the 2013 Monitoring Report, which used data from a 2005 study of what Auckland residents valued about regional parks, where walking and tramping were the most popular activities followed by beach activities (walking, sunbathing, surfing, swimming etc.)



Image top left: surfers at Piha. **Image top right:** trampers on part of Hillary Trail.
Image bottom left: Piha Domain Campground. **Image bottom right:** Cornwallis Beach.

4.4.4 Level of visitor activity

The graph below (Figure 6) shows the visitor estimates for selected locations in the regional park over the period 2006 to 2016 (Note: the 2013 report included data from 1997 to 2012). Overall, there is a trend of increasing visitor numbers in the Waitākere Ranges.

Figure 6: 10 year trend of visits to the regional park

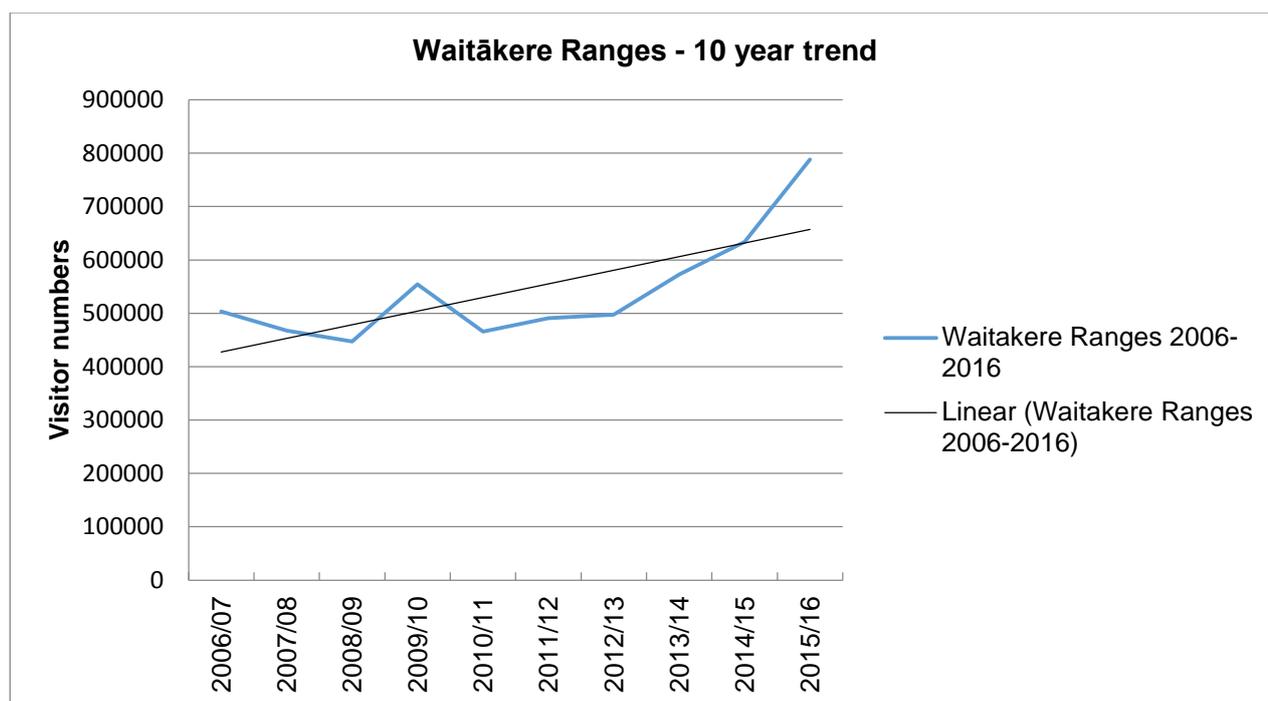


Table 10 below summarises estimated visitor numbers based on vehicle counts at several key locations in the regional park. The 2011/2012 figures have been used as the baseline. These numbers show there is an increasing trend of visits across four of the eight key locations (Cornwallis, Piha, Lake Wainamu and the Fairy Falls). Visits to the Arataki Visitor Centre and Whatipu have remained relatively stable. The increase of visits at Piha (Glen Esk) may be a result of the car park counter being relocated to include vehicles entering the parking overflow area at the entrance to the Piha Mill campground. There is no documented reason for the decrease of visits to the Karamatura and Cascades-Kauri tracks. There were several track closures within the vicinity of the Karamatura and Cascade-Kauri tracks in 2012 but this does not explain the continued increases after 2012 or the decrease between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

Table 10: Number of visits to key locations in the regional park

Number of visits to key locations 2011/12 to 2015/16					
Location	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Arataki	188,827	172,337	178,592	180,957	183,884
Cornwallis	70,087	74,490	91,239	84,451	92,340
Karamatura**	26,495	28,595	33,805	40,612	29,901
Whatipu	51,568	50,920	54,778	53,150	49,840
Piha (Glen Esk)	41,730	48,061	65,692	76,152	155,447
Cascades - Kauri	95,164	105,923	130,974	175,864	73,581
Lake Wainamu**	4478	4478*	3810	5206	5811
Fairy Falls**	12,419	12,419*	14,124	17,269	17,881
Totals	490,768	497,223	573,014	633,661	608,685
Notes:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *missing data (average adjacent months or equivalent months/years) • **Additional locations from 2013 report – Karamatura, Lake Wainamu and Fairy Falls • This data can only be used as indicative due to inaccuracies in the readings, changes to where monitors were placed and locations where not all entrances are covered by monitors. 					

4.4.5 Track monitoring

The 2013 Monitoring Report included track count data at certain locations within the regional park. A meaningful comparison using the same locations as in the 2013 Monitoring Report is not possible as the number of monitors was reduced between 2013 and 2017. This is partially due to mechanical failures with the monitors resulting in inaccurate data, and the concentration of monitoring on tracks closed for the purpose of kauri dieback protection. As at 31 November 2017, there were 27 tracks being monitored with 20 of these being closed tracks.

4.4.6 Vehicle counters

Piha and Te Henga / Bethells Beach, along with many of the beaches along the Manukau Harbour contain local parks outside of the regional park. Auckland Transport has undertaken annual vehicle counts at key routes into some of these west coast and Manukau Harbour beach locations (refer to Table 11 below).

Table 11: Vehicle counts at specific locations

Destination	Date	Total number of cars surveyed (in direction of destination)	7 Day Average Total (number of cars)	Estimated number of visitors	Total – estimated number of visitors (2 weeks)
Karekare (Piha Road to Bridge)	22/12/2016-28/12/2016	2257	322	5868	12719
	29/12/2016-4/1/2017	2635	376	6851	
Piha (Anawhata Road to Bridge)	22/12/2016-28/12/2016	14,190	2027	36,894	78887
	29/12/2016-4/1/2017	16,151	2307	41,993	
Anawhata Road (end of seal to Chateaux Mosquito Track*)	22/12/2016-28/12/2016	255	36	663	663
	29/12/2016-4/1/2017	-		-	
Te Henga - Bethells Road (Wairere Road to Duffy Road)	22/12/2016-28/12/2016	4833	690	12,566	24984
	29/12/2016-4/1/2017	4776	682	12,418	
South Titirangi Road (Tinopai Road to	10/2/2015-16/2/2015	-	948	2465	-

Wootons Lane)					
Cornwallis Road (Huia Road to speed restriction)	19/02/2015-26/02/2015	-	567	1475	-
Whatipu Road (Huia Road to speed restriction)	19/2/2015-26/02/2015	-	265	689	-
South Titirangi Road (Arapito Road to Boat ramp)	3/05/2017-09/05/2017	658	94	244	-

Notes:

- Estimated number of visitors has been calibrated using the average of the vehicle occupancy for Piha (2.6 people per vehicle) 2015/2016 and applied to all traffic count data for all of the beach destinations.
- Traffic counts have been taken during the holiday period and so will include local traffic as well as visitors.
- Traffic counts into Te Henga / Bethells Beach only capture one route so count may be underestimated.
- *Chateaux Mosquito track closed due to ongoing kauri dieback disease prevention measures.
- 2015 data is from a different source which did not include the total number of cars surveyed.

The traffic count data indicates that Piha, with approximately 5634 average daily visitors over the Christmas-New Year two-week period, attracts more visits than all of the other beach locations combined, followed by Te Henga / Bethells Beach, Karekare and Anawhata. Direct comparisons can't be made between the traffic count data in the 2013 Monitoring Report and the 2016 traffic count data as this data was collated differently. However, the trend shows a consistent order of popularity for the above destinations (Piha, Te Henga / Bethells Beach, Karekare, Cornwallis, Anawhata and Titirangi Beach).



Image on left: Southern end of Piha from Lion Rock (Anniversary Day 2018). **Image on right:** Karekare.

Vehicle counts for Cornwallis and several sections of Titirangi Road have also been included. However, traffic counts were undertaken during a different time period at the monitoring site locations, and from different data sources. This makes comparisons to the data in the 2013 Monitoring Report difficult. Whatipu Road traffic counts have also been included as a new piece of data. The inclusion of this data will provide a baseline on which to make comparisons going forward to the next five-year monitoring report.

4.4.7 Surf club visitor counts

The four west coast surf clubs at Te Henga / Bethells Beach, United North Piha, Piha (South) and Karekare undertake estimated visual head-counts of visitors on the beach. These head-counts are recorded during the peak of each day over the summer surf club season (Labour Weekend to Easter). Table 12 shows the sum of the estimated peak head-counts over the season. These counts continue to highlight the popularity of Piha as a destination of visitors to the west coast beaches.

Table 12: Estimated season totals of peak headcounts at beaches monitored by surf clubs (Surf Lifesaving Northern Region)

Summer Season	Te Henga / Bethells Beach	Karekare	Piha	United North Piha
2011-2012*	13,059	9,302	28,223	16,662
2012-2013	14,397	10,808	32,020	20,404
2013-2014	12,830	8,728	25,599	16,477
2014-2015	14,152	18,226	32,091	22,731
2015-2016	14,996	13,308	25,772	18,209
2016-2017	14,559	28,608	30,242	12,872

Notes:

- 2011-2012 figures taken from the 2013 Monitoring Report have been included to provide a base for comparison.



Image on left: surf lifesaving flag at Piha. Image on right: Te Henga/Bethells Beach.

4.4.8 Regulated activities in the heritage area

Certain activities occurring in the regional park are regulated under the RPMP and need approval from the council. These activities fall into two categories:

- Controlled activities – 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.
- Discretionary activities – a formal application must be made to the council for short-term activities, concessions (commercial and non-commercial), longer-term activities, such as leases and licences, and which involve exclusive use of parts of the regional park or a park facility. These will not be granted if they are considered to have a potential detrimental impact on the values of the regional park.

There is a limit of 50 people for casual groups visiting the regional park. There is also a limit on the number of organised sports involving 50 or more participants in some locations in order to protect sensitive environments and the experience of other casual visitors. However, the limits do not apply to filming, weddings, educational groups, conservation programmes, community fairs, or similar group activities and events or concessions. These are limited only to the extent that the activity needs to comply with the RPMP. Each application made to the council is assessed against a checklist of the objectives and policies of the RPMP and the purpose and objectives of the Act. The council can decline applications if, in its opinion, the frequency and extent of the activity will result in an unacceptable level of degradation of the park environment or the loss of the quality of visitor experience. Consent from Watercare is also required where these activities occur within Watercare's designations or within the water catchment area.



Karekare Horse Races, Karekare Beach (2017).

Controlled activities

A comparison of controlled activity approvals between 2012 and 2017 is shown below in Table 13.

Table 13: Controlled activities in the regional park - 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2017

		2011/2012*	1 July 2012- 30 June 2013	1 July 2013-30 June 2014	1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015	1 July 2015-30 June 2016	1 July 2016-30 June 2017	Total for 5 years
Campgrounds (all)	Total persons campgrounds	6186	6123	7458	7488	7483	8730	37282
Baches	Total nights baches	561	588	653	556	583	870	3250
Lodges	Whatipu	9338 persons	-	2111	4517	4902	5819	17349
Designated Bookable sites	Cornwallis – number of bookings	79 bookings	73	93	99	82	92	439
Recreational Horse Riding	2016-2017	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1346	1346
Notes:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2011-2012 figures taken from the 2013 Monitoring Report have been included to provide a base for comparison. 								

The figures show that there has been a steady increase in the use of the campgrounds, baches and the lodge at Whatipu from 2013 to 2017. The number of bookings at the designated bookable site at Cornwallis has remained relatively stable.

The types of discretionary approvals are outlined below in Tables 14 and 15. These are split into two categories: non-commercial activities involving private individuals, community groups or non-profit organisations; and commercial activities.

Table 14: Non-commercial discretionary activity approvals in the regional park

Types of activity	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017 (up to July)	
	Events	Estimated numbers on site	Events	Estimated numbers on site								
Air Activity	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Concerts/ Festivals	2	550	1	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Filming/ Photography	17	115	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
Large group activity	8	1200	11	2015	7	885	1	420	4	350	2	225
Cultural harvest	4	39	2	2	-	-	1	1	2	30	-	-
Research (educational, mostly student groups)	8	36	11	262	7	344	17	458	17	463	9	324
Sporting events (including clubs)	9	995	1	100	6	1351*	4	1080	2	350	1	200
Weddings	32	1691	29	1597	28	1893	15	778	16	1426	4	300
Totals	81	4627	55	4076	48	3372	38	2692	42	2623	16	1049
Notes:												
*Lactic Turkey (n=650)												

Table 15: Commercial discretionary activity approvals in the regional park

Types of activity	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017 (up to July)	
	Events	Estimated numbers on site	Events	Estimated numbers on site								
Air Activity	-	-	1	4	-	-	1	10	1	13	1	3
Filming/ Photography	25	2112	13	314	10	175	46	1703	36	1003	26	808
Research (inc. seed collection)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	44	1	2
Sporting events (including clubs)	3	522	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	675

Activities that are classified as non-commercial continue to be the main type of discretionary activity in the regional park. Large group activities, educational research and sporting events are the activities which have involved the larger estimated numbers of visitors on site. Weddings also continue to be popular.

With the exception of 2013 and 2014, filming continues to be the largest commercial activity in the regional park. The tables above do not reflect the larger proportion of filming which occurs within local parks and reserves where there was a total of 106 permits issued between January and December 2017. Filming activities include commercials, films and television series.

Concessionaires and other agreements

An individual, group or organisation may apply to council for a concession to undertake a discretionary activity on an ongoing basis for a fee, for example, tourism operators who run guided walks. These concessions go through an assessment before being granted and are often subject to conditions that the concessionaires need to comply with. There has been

an increase in registered concessionaires from 54 in 2013 to 102 in 2017. Ninety-two of the existing concessionaires are for outdoor related activities with seventy being for sight-seeing or nature and wilderness tours. Adventure and education for schools, canyoning, abseiling, kayaking and other water-based activities such as surfing makes up the remainder. Ten of the 102 concessionaires are for other activities such as food and beverage, private education and commercial bee keepers.

Licenses and leases are both formal agreements with council for the exclusive use of part of a park or a facility on the park for a fee. Within the regional park there are currently 24 licences; grazing (4), surf club (1), pedestrian walkway (1), bach (1), museum (1), camp (2), hut (2), telecommunication utilities (9), golf club (1) commercial (1) and wastewater disposal field (1). There is also one lease (Watercare), three management agreements (Forest and Bird – Ark in the Park, DoC - Whatipu Scientific Reserve and Lake Wainamu QE II Trust), one Memorandum of Understanding and one sponsorship agreement. These figures have remained relatively constant when compared to the 2013 Monitoring Report where there were 20 licences, three leases, one management agreement, one memorandum of understanding and one sponsorship agreement.

4.4.9 Visits to other attractions or events

There is still limited information available on the number of visitors to other attractions within the heritage area. There are several markets, including the Oratia Farmers Market, the Titirangi Village Market, and the Piha Labour Day Market. Other attractions include galleries and art studios (The Art Post Studio in Parau, West Coast Gallery at Piha, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery and the Upstairs Gallery in Titirangi), heritage buildings such as Lopdell House, Rose Hellaby House, Colin McCahon Cottage, the Huia Settlers Museum, and private businesses (Crystal Mountain and the Kiwi Valley Farm Park).

Waitākere Local Board endorsed an events policy in 2013 which covers local, regional and major events. Events and festivals which attract visitors to the heritage area include Music in Parks (Armour Bay Reserve, 25 February 2017), the Titirangi Festival of Music, Going West Readers and Writers Festival (Titirangi) and the Karekare Horse Races. In addition, there are other sporting events such as the Speights West Coaster at Te Henga / Bethells Beach (9 December 2017), the Trail Bush Karekare (12 November 2017) and The Hillary Trail Run/Walk. The Hillary Trail Run/Walk has been held annually since 2014 but the next event scheduled for 24 February 2018 was cancelled due to the organiser's decision to respect the rāhui. A list of the recorded events in local parks and reserves between 2014 and 2018 can be found in Appendix 11. This list does not include all events as generally permits are not required for small scale events.



Image on left: West Coast Gallery, Piha. Image on right: Hillary Trail sign.



Titirangi Village Market (held every last Sunday of the month).

4.5 Visitor satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction with their experience is monitored annually at Cascades-Kauri, Cornwallis and Piha (Glen Esk), and approximately every three years for the remaining locations within the regional park. This monitoring consists of intercept surveys at the following locations:

- Piha (Glen Esk)
- Cascade-Kauri
- Arataki
- Karekare
- Kakamatua
- Karamatura
- Lake Wainamu
- Cornwallis
- Whatipu.

The 2013 to 2014 results showed that over 95 per cent of respondents were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with their visit. However, visitors did suggest improvements to make their experience better. These included:

- increase number of bins and collection of rubbish (especially during summer)
- increase and improve toilets
- provide more parking and secure parking
- improve tracks
- improve signage – both directional and educational
- do not actively advertise as already too many people.

In 2017, a report undertaken by the council on visitor satisfaction with Auckland’s regional parks showed that 98 per cent of the 721 respondents surveyed thought that regional parks were important or very important to the Auckland region¹⁹ and that regional parks were important or very important in contributing to the conservation of the environment. The individual results for the areas included in the survey within the regional park (Glen Esk, Cornwallis and Cascades-Kauri) were consistent with the overall regional survey results.

Currently, there are no visitor satisfaction or demographic surveys undertaken on the use of the local parks and reserves within the heritage area. However an annual survey of residents is undertaken as part of the performance measures used to assess the level of service of the Waitākere Ranges Local Board agreements. The survey is conducted using a mix of online, phone and face to face interviews with respondents being Auckland residents aged 15 or over. The performance measures include the percentage of residents satisfied with the provision of local parks and the percentage of residents who visited a local park or reserve in the last 12 months. In 2015/16 this was 68 per cent (with a sample size of 183) and 89 per cent (with a sample size of 217) respectively with the Annual Plan targets going forward in 2017/2018 set at 75 per cent and 90 per cent.

4.6 Other data sources

Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development

ATEED, a council-controlled organisation, is the Auckland region’s economic growth agency. ATEED works with various partners to deliver multiple objectives, from growing Auckland’s innovation culture and key sectors, such as film and tourism, to attracting foreign investment, international events and visitors from around the world.

In its six-monthly report, dated 14 September 2017, to the Waitākere Ranges Local Board ATEED states that the visitor economy in Auckland continues to boom. The report also

¹⁹ Auckland Council Regional Parks 2016/2017 KPI Research Results, Captivate, February 2017.

states that the tourism spend for the year-ending May 2017 was \$7.7 billion, up 3.9 per cent on the previous year. International spend during the month of May grew by 15 per cent. Holiday visitor arrivals were up 12.9 per cent compared to the previous 12 months, and May holiday visitor numbers were up 6.8 per cent compared to May 2016.

ATEED commissioned research through Qrious, a Spark venture data analytics firm, on the numbers and origin of visitors to the heritage area between February 2015 and March 2017. The data was collected by using information from mobile phones when these devices were connected to the network for a call, text or data transmission. The data collection was anonymous, aggregated and did not include personal information such as phone number, address, gender or age. SIM cards that were identified by Qrious as being residents and visits with less than 30 minutes of duration were excluded. Domestic visitors are those visitors identified with a NZ SIM card whereas international visitors are those with an international SIM card. The research results showed the following:

- the majority of visitors to the heritage area come from within the Auckland region. The Waitākere Ranges, Henderson-Massey, Whau and Albert Eden local board areas combined account for 34 per cent of all local visitors
- visits to the area is highest during the summer peak season with visitor arrivals peaking at 141,000 in January 2017, up 8 per cent on the previous year
- despite seasonal variations, the trend showed a steady increase of visitor arrivals over the past two years with a compound monthly growth rate of 0.68 per cent overall (1.65 per cent, international 0.62 per cent domestic and 0.39 per cent Aucklanders)
- the majority of visitors are day trippers – around 80 per cent compared to 20 per cent who visit on an overnight trip
- more than half of overnight visitors from Auckland stayed for one night with seasonal patterns being less pronounced
- a larger proportion of domestic visitors stayed for one night or more with longer stays evident during the December/January holiday periods
- a large proportion of international visitors also stayed for one night
- the days with the most Auckland visitors to the heritage area are around Auckland Anniversary and Waitangi weekends. The peak occurred on 6 February 2017 with 14,000 visitors
- the weeks with the most visitors are around Christmas time and the other public holidays of Auckland Anniversary and Waitangi Day
- popular tourist destinations of Piha and Karekare show significantly larger numbers of international visits compared to domestic visits, primarily in the summer peak season.
- the differences between the number of international and domestic visits to Whatipu and Huia or Cornwallis were less pronounced than at the popular tourist destinations.

The data is only collected from those mobile devices which are connected to the network. The trends are comparable to the data captured by the Regional Parks Department, the Surf Lifesaving Club observations, and the traffic data in that it shows:

- there is an upwards trend in the number of visitors to the heritage area.

- Piha and Karekare are popular destinations for visitors
- the visitor numbers increased during the summer season with noticeable peaks around Christmas time, Auckland Anniversary and Waitangi Day weekends.

4.7 Infrastructure development

Regional Park

Tracks in the regional park are managed and maintained to target standards on an ongoing programme budgeted annually. This includes routine clearance of encroaching vegetation and repairs to track surfaces. Since 2013 significant works were carried out on the following tracks:

- Hamilton Track
- Muir Track
- Swanson pipeline surface renewal.

Other works include the replacement of a toilet at Pararaha and the Zigzag Track Bridge, and interpretation signs at the Piha RDF Radar Station site and the Arataki Visitor Centre. In addition in 2014 the council purchased an additional 78 kilometres of land, between the southern end of Piha Beach and Te Ahuaha Road, known as Taitomo. A Taitomo Draft Policy and Concept Plan had a public consultation process in July 2017.

Local parks and reserves

Ongoing renewals and maintenance of local park infrastructure (such as upgrades to tracks, playgrounds, signage and provision of new infrastructure) is provided for through the Local Board Local Parks Capex Programme.

Works occurring during the period from 2013 to 2017 included a mix of renewals and upgrades to existing tracks, signage, toilets and car parks. Larger projects include:

- the new toilets and shower block at the Piha Domain in 2014
- sections of the Little Muddy Creek walkway project (the Landing Road walkway (linking Tangiwai Reserve and Grendon Road)) in 2013
- a walkway between Rimutaka Place and Huia Road in 2017
- construction is underway in 2018 for the provision of a long-term solution to mitigate erosion along the coastline of Huia Domain
- sections of the Waitākere Ranges Foothills Walkway (Perris Road and Seibel Road to Coulter Road) began in 2017. The Seibel Reserve sections has been completed. The Perris Road section has been surveyed, fenced and entrances constructed, with the track still to be completed.

4.8 Visitor impacts and their management

Visitors coming to the heritage area for their recreation and relaxation needs can have impacts on other heritage features such as wilderness experiences, the quietness and darkness of the regional park and the coastal areas, and on the needs of the local communities. The council has strategies and plans which aim to reduce the impact of visitors.

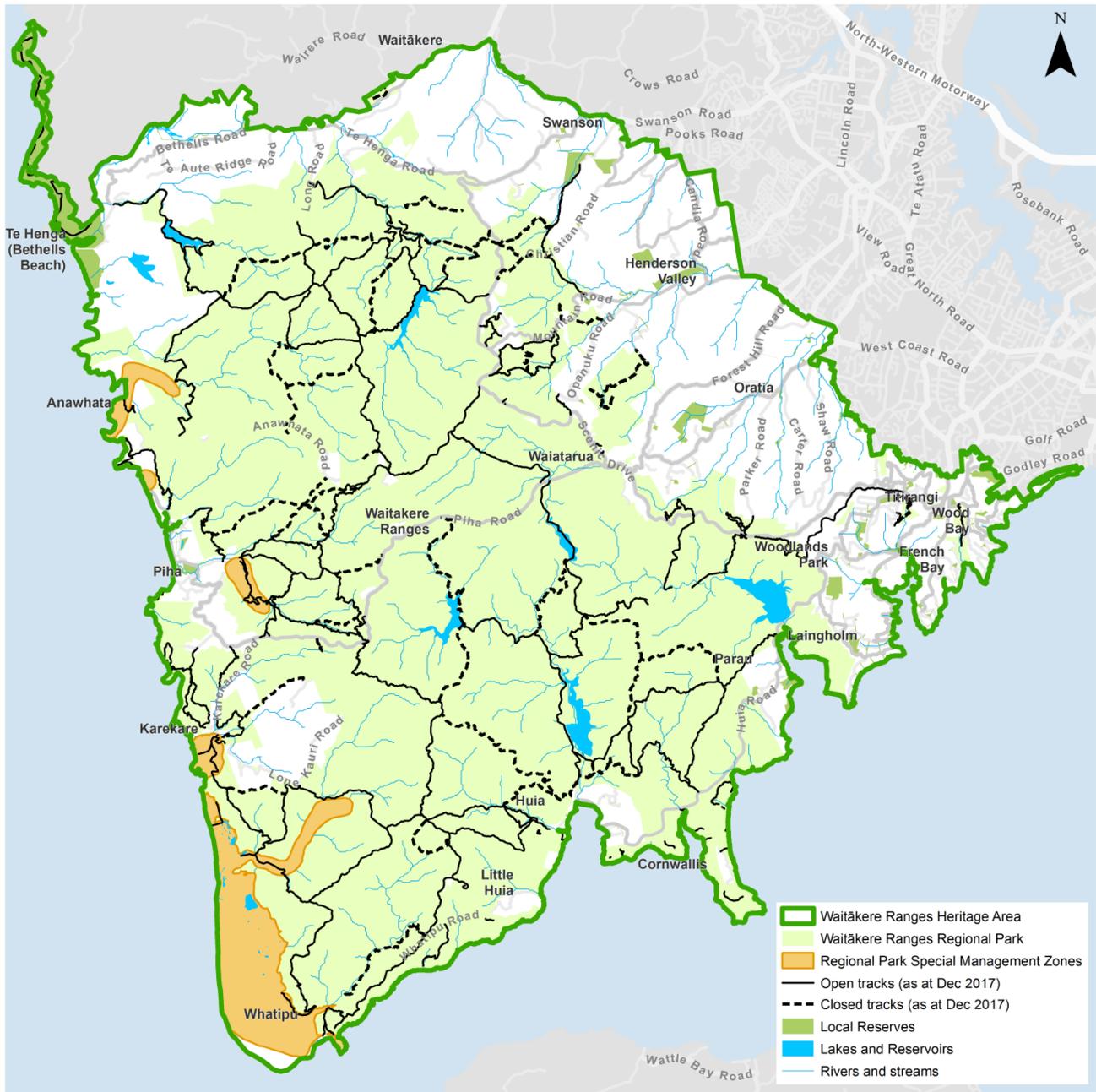
4.8.1 Overall management approach

The following plans seek to manage visitor impacts within the heritage area:

- Auckland Unitary Plan – through the use of the Public Open Space zones, Waitākere Ranges Overlay and the designation of the regional park.
- Local Reserve Management Plans – reserve management plans set out objectives and policies around the protection, development, access and use of local parks and reserves by both the local and wider community which may have different recreational requirements. Existing reserve management plans include the following:
 - Waitākere Ward RMP (2010)
 - Manukau Harbour Foreshore RMP (2001)
 - Te Henga RMP (2002)
 - Piha Reserves RMP (1999) and the Piha Coastal Management Plan (2000)
 - Swanson RMP (2004).
- Regional Parks Management Plan 2010
 - The general objectives and policies and the Waitākere Ranges section provides the framework for, amongst other matters, managing visitors. The RPMP was developed within the framework of the Act and identifies 28 ‘special management zones’ (refer to Map 10). The special management zones include both high use areas or sensitive locations. The areas within these zones offer a unique and special remote wilderness experience for visitors, often containing significant forest ecosystems and high natural, scenic and historic values. Many of these areas are relatively accessible and are becoming increasingly popular to casual visitors.
 - The objectives, and corresponding actions, for each special management zone ensure that visitor activity, and the level and type of infrastructure, is controlled so that the ‘special character of these locations is not threatened’.²⁰ This includes a cap on the number of organised sports events per year involving 50 or more participants ‘in some locations where sensitive environments or the experiences of casual visitors are to be protected’ (i.e. Anawhata, Karekare, North Piha, Pararaha Valley, Wai o Kahu (Piha Valley) and Whatipu)).
 - The RPMP is required to be reviewed in 2020 by Section 20 of the Act.

²⁰ Regional Parks Management Plan 2010, page 388

Map 10: RPMP Special Management Zones as at 7 December 2017 (note: that these are named Activity Management Zones in legend)



4.8.2 Actual and potential visitor impacts

Visitors to the heritage area, and the infrastructure to cater for these visitors, can have adverse impacts on indigenous ecosystems, landscape qualities and natural scenic beauty in a number of ways. Data shows that there has been increasing numbers of visitors to the heritage area over the last five years. Visitor use is increasingly influenced by social media. Impacts from visitor use include the potential spread of kauri dieback disease (particularly from off-track activities), unmanaged activities, weed seed spread, fires, off-leash dogs, infrastructure and freedom camping.

Spread of kauri dieback

The kauri dieback survey in 2008 indicated that visitors to the park were part of the reason for the spread of kauri dieback. Along with the closure of approximately 27 kilometres of tracks, phytosanitary stations were installed between 2008 and 2011 at a number of open tracks within the regional park. However, a follow-up report²¹ records that while the majority of visitors are aware of the issue and understand the importance of cleaning footwear, the average compliance with cleaning procedures is low. A more detailed discussion of this issue can be found in the Indigenous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems topic.

The Kauri Dieback 2017 report concluded that the highest risk vector for the spread of kauri dieback into new locations is through soil disturbance associated with human activity, including visitor tracks and informal routes. Current results from monitoring of activity along the closed tracks within the kauri protection zones used in the 2017 report is showing that while visitor numbers have been reduced in some instances, overall the usage remains high. Observations of off-track activity were also recorded in four zones (Zone B – Chateau Mosquito Track, Zone G – La Trobe Track, Zone H – Nugget Track and Zone J – Nihotupu Ridge Track).

Social media

Social media (Google, Facebook, Instagram etc.) is increasingly used by visitors to search for information on locations to visit and to communicate meeting points or locations for both informal gatherings and organised groups. This makes it harder to predict which areas will become popular and to plan where infrastructure may be required to be built or upgraded.

Social media has resulted in greater exposure of the heritage area. While social media can be used positively to highlight and inform users of environmental issues it can also lead to issues of crowding in already popular locations. There is also the potential for an increase in visitors seeking out wilderness areas or other destinations (such as local parks and reserves) that historically had very low visitor numbers, or to undertake an activity (including off-track), because it is shown in a social media post.

Off-track and unmanaged activities

Off-track and unmanaged activities can pose a threat to personal safety as well as the potential spread of kauri dieback disease. Park rangers have observed that these types of activities are occurring within the heritage area. These activities include, but are not limited to, abseiling, canyoning (other than that allowed by a concession), hunting, unpermitted casual group events (with over the allowed limit of 50 people) and

²¹ Kauri Dieback Report 2017, Auckland Council, June 2017

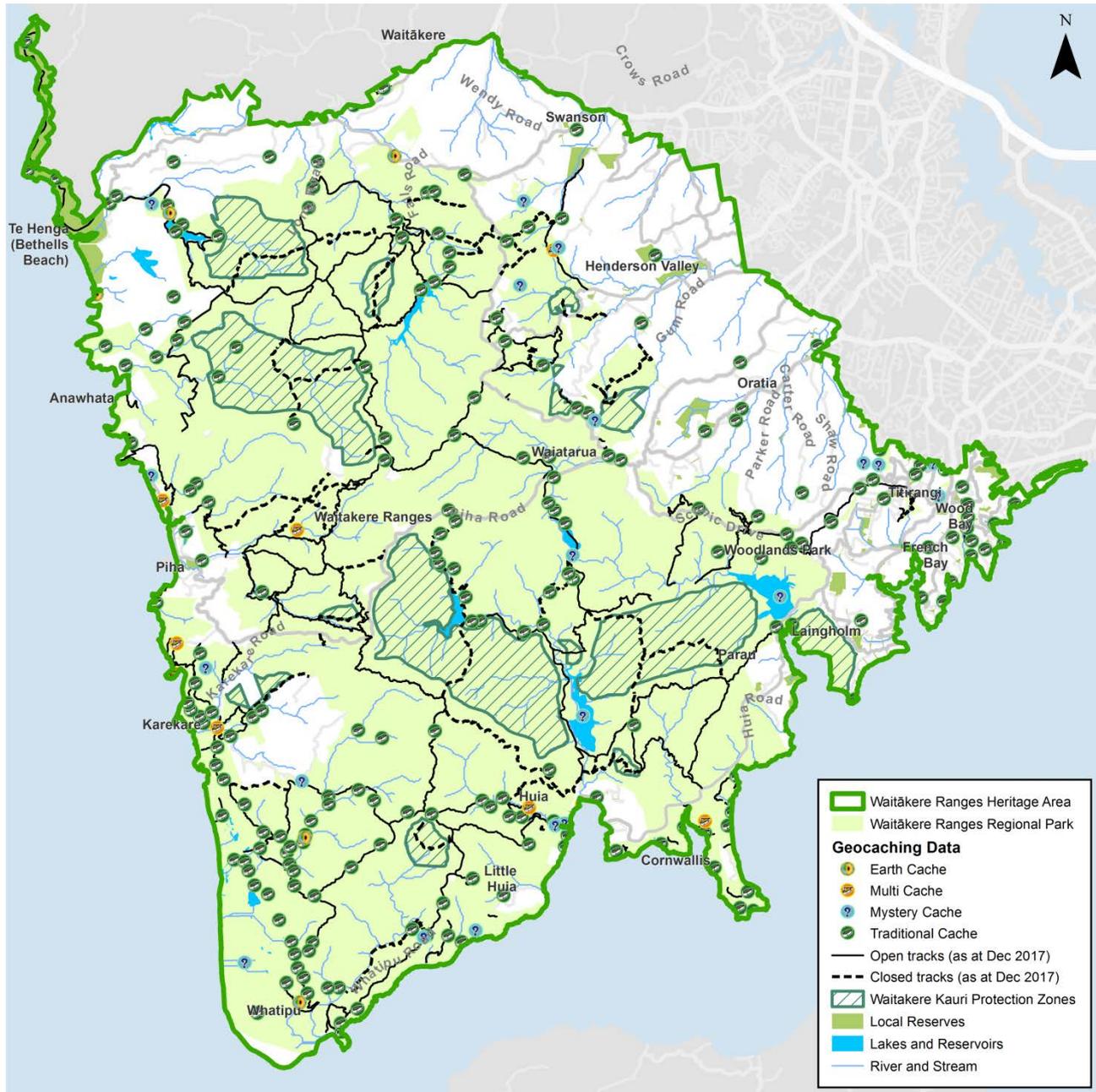
geocaching²². Similar observations of off-track activity were made during the kauri dieback surveillance process. The Kauri Dieback Report 2017, on page 20, discusses off-track activities and specifically 'the increasing popularity of geocaching' and that a number of geocache were found off-track within the regional park.

Map 11 below shows the number of geocaches located within the heritage area, as at 30 November 2017, using data from one of the popular geocaching websites (www.geocaching.com). The majority of these geocaches are located within the vicinity of open tracks. However, there are some geocaches hidden up streams and near to closed tracks, such as at Karekare, Anawhata, Pararaha Valley and off the Pararaha Valley track. Because of the rāhui, and further track closures by council, in December 2017, the number of geocaches on closed tracks has increased. In response, some owners of those geocaches have now disabled the electronic logs (making them unavailable online) in respect of the rāhui. Whilst geocaches are difficult to monitor or regulate, the council could register with the website which would enable identification of existing geocaches, notification of new geocaches and communication with the owners of the geocaches.

Another potential risk with people walking up the streams, along with that of the spread of kauri dieback disease, is habitat disturbance of the Hochstetters Frog. These frogs tend to hide under rocks and logs in wet habitats alongside shaded streams. The Hochstetters Frog is classified as 'at risk' and the Waitākere Ranges is a known habitat with frogs detected in many streams, including within the Karekare and Pararaha Valley stream catchments.

²² World-wide outdoor treasure hunting game using Global Positioning System (GPS) devices to find a geocache (hidden waterproof container holding a toy/trinket or traceable tag). Participants record their finds against an electronic log book.

Map 11: Geocache locations (as at 30 November 2017)



Spread of weed-seed

Visitors to the area can contribute to the spread of weed-seed on their shoes through the tracks. More detail of the management of pest plants and corresponding eradication and restoration programmes can be found in the Section 2: Indigenous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems topic and Section 6: People and Communities topic.

Fires

The peak visitor season corresponds with the peak summer fire risk season. There is an increased potential for accidental fires within areas that contain large tracts of relatively flammable species, such as mānuka-kānuka, gorse or pampas. Management is through

the imposition of a ‘fire season’ between 1 December and 30 April where it is illegal to light a fire in the open air without a council permit. Information signs show the level of fire risk and are placed at strategic locations i.e. at the eastern end of Piha Road. The RPMP has objectives prohibiting cigarette smoking and fireworks (unless part of an approved managed display) in regional parks. The council also has a smoke free policy²³ which applies to assets and facilities owned by council such as parks, reserves and playgrounds and outdoor public spaces including beaches.

Visitors walking dogs off-leash

Visitors walking dogs off leash can be an issue within sensitive wildlife areas especially during bird breeding seasons. The council’s ‘Policy on Dogs 2012’ and the ‘Dog Management Bylaw 2012’ balances provision for owners to take their dogs into public places while adopting measures to minimise problems caused by dogs. Schedule 2 of the Dog Management Bylaw 2012 includes a list of areas where walking dogs is prohibited, allowed under control off a leash or allowed under control on a leash. Examples of each of these areas are listed below:

- prohibited areas - Te Henga Recreation Reserve and Whatipu Scientific Reserve
- under control off a leash - Foster Bay, South Titirangi and Laingholm
- under control on a leash - Piha South Road Reserve, on all park areas adjacent to North Piha between Monkey Rock and the access track at Little Lion Rock Corner.



Image on left and in middle: information signs at Piha and Te Henga/Bethells. **Image on right:** informal leave no rubbish sign at Te Henga/Bethells.

Infrastructure built for visitors

The infrastructure built for visitors such as carparks, toilets, signage, boat ramps, tracks and fences can detract from the natural and scenic qualities of the heritage area. In addition, there can be issues with overcrowded carparks, litter, graffiti, and behaviour of

²³ Auckland Council. Smokefree Policy 2017-2025

visitors during large events or at popular spots. Management tools in place to minimise these impacts include:

- Regional Park Designation (418) –The conditions set out the nature of the permitted works in respect of the development and maintenance of park infrastructure, such as tracks, buildings, structures, utilities, car parking, roads and vegetation management. All works are required to be undertaken in accordance with the RPMP
- the RPMP contains principles relating to the location and design (form, scale, colours, textures and reflectivity) of infrastructure so it does not dominate the landscape, signage, preparation of concept plans, including landscape assessments, clustering of structures and removal of redundant structures
- Auckland Design Manual – Parks hub section sets out the best practice design guidance that should be applied within parks and open spaces
- provision of rubbish and recycling bins in local parks and a well-publicised policy of ‘pack in – pack out’ for rubbish and recycling in the regional park
- public awareness of potential impacts and actions to protect and safeguard threatened species is promoted through events, education programmes, interpretive material, and codes of conduct/agreements and accreditation for concessionaires
- Auckland Transport Code of Practice for design of roads
- Auckland Transport – Draft Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area design guidelines (yet to be adopted and incorporated into AT’s code of practice)
- Auckland Council requirements for events, in conjunction with Auckland Transport, for temporary traffic management and road closures
- Piha Area Design Guidelines for asset development on Auckland Council regional park land (September 2010)
- Draft Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area design guidelines for local parks (currently out for consultation as at 12 February 2018).



Image on left: Carpark at southern end of Piha. **Image on right:** Glen Esk overflow car parking sign, Piha.

Freedom camping

Freedom camping in the heritage area is still controlled through the legacy Waitākere City Council Public Places Bylaw 2010. This bylaw places restriction on the use of public places and freedom camping is not permitted other than at bookable sites available for that purpose. Bookable sites include the Huia Barn Paddock, Arataki, Craw Campground (Anawhata), Cascade-Kauri, Glen Esk Road, Log Race Road and Cornwallis parking areas for self-contained campervans, and the Whatipu Lodge campground.

Complaints are received by council from residents about the issues associated with freedom campers such as noise, rubbish, inappropriate behaviour and use of bushes and dunes as toilets. Prior to Christmas 2016, the Waitākere Ranges Local Board, some local residents and the council's enforcement and Parks teams put strategies into place at Piha to educate freedom campers. These strategies included regular visits to the area by the summer ranger, handing out information pamphlets and the placement of 'no camping' signs. An update to the local board on the portfolio in March 2017²⁴ notes that the strategies seem to have been effective. Whilst some freedom campers had relocated to other places in Piha, they were scattered more widely and did not seem to create the same nuisance.

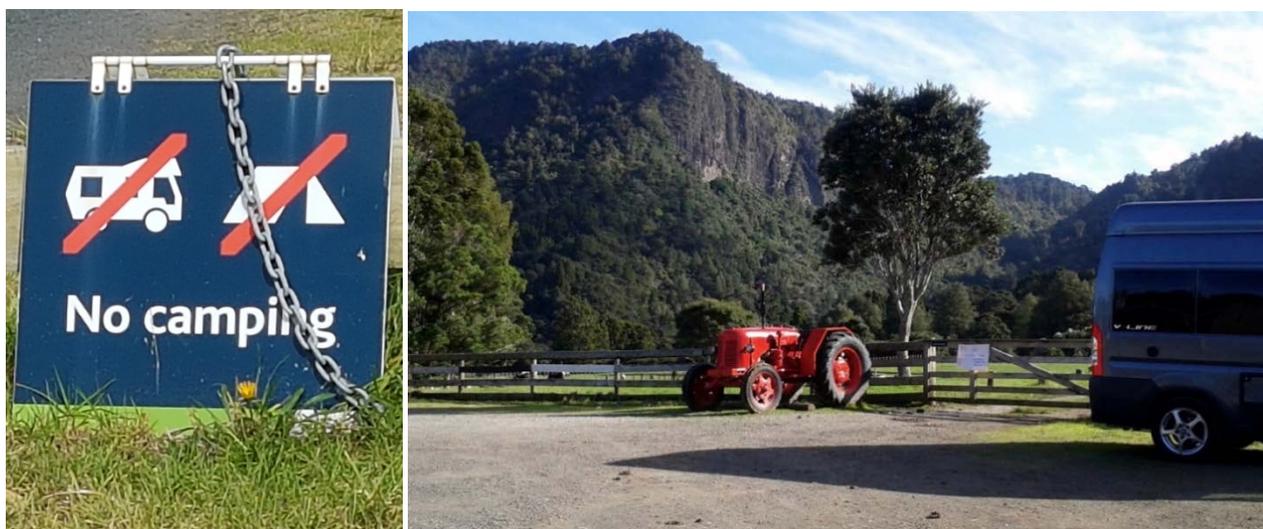


Image on left: No overnight camping sign at mid beach on Marine Parade North, Piha. **Image on right:** Barn Paddock Campground, Huia allows overnight parking for self-contained campervans.

4.9 Public feedback

Feedback on this topic received from members of the public at the meeting held on 15 June 2017 largely reflects the discussion above on the management of, and potential for, visitor impacts on the heritage area. Comments included the following:

²⁴ Historic Heritage/Character and Parks Portfolio Update Report, Waitākere Ranges Local Board, 23 March 2017.

- concern about spread of kauri dieback through human activity and closure of more tracks in infected areas required until these tracks are upgraded
- current track monitoring methodology - how the data is captured and analysed
- dog control and enforcement of owners not following the bylaw rules
- more tracks for mountain-biking requested
- enforcement for mountain bikers using tracks other than where it is permitted (Beveridge Track)
- overcrowded carparks – are “park and rides” required or should there be a limit?
- monitoring of, and engagement with, unofficial large groups of walkers is required.

4.10 Visitor related businesses in the heritage area

The Act requires the provision of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being for those people who live and work in the heritage area. Along with local residents, visitors help support the economic wellbeing of local communities.

The Waitākere Ranges Local Board undertook a stocktake of businesses within the heritage area with the results contained in a report dated September 2014²⁵. The objective of the stocktake was to get up-to-date data on the nature, location and number of businesses, understand the importance of home-based businesses, develop potential strategies for assistance and to support sustainable local economic development. Section 5.13 of that report states, that whilst the database is not an exhaustive list of all businesses, it provides a useful baseline to monitor changes and identify issues in local business activity.

The report provides data on 18 types of business activities within each of the surveyed locations. Further information on the stocktake including a map which shows the locations and types of business activities (refer to Map 15: Business Stocktake) can be found in Section 6: People and Communities topic. The businesses also serve the local communities with the following four business activities having the potential to also attract visitors:

- creative – artists, potters, book binders, photographers, art galleries, jewellers, film producers, sculptors, face painters, make-up artists, fashion designers, glass blowers and wood carvers
- cafes, restaurants, bakeries and takeaways
- sports and recreation – surf instructors, tour guides, horse treks, farm-based adventure parks, paintball, martial arts, garden tours, fancy dress equipment
- accommodation – bed and breakfasts, lodges, camping grounds and camps.

Table 16 below sets out the total numbers of the above business activities by area and sector.

²⁵ Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Business Stocktake, Auckland Council, September 2014

Table 16: Total numbers of businesses by area and sector

Area	Accommodation	Creative	Sports and Recreation	Cafes, restaurants and takeaways	Total
Titirangi	10	21	12	18	61
Piha/Karekare	24	7	7	3	41
Henderson Valley/ Swanson / Waitākere	8	15	14	1	38
Oratia	4	12	7	2	25
Te Henga / Bethells	7	2	1	0	10
Laingholm/Parau/Waima/ Woodlands Park	2	6	4	1	13
Huia/Cornwallis/Whatipu	4	3	1	0	8
Waiatarua	2	6	0	2	10
TOTAL	61	72	46	27	206

The results show there is a mix of business activity clustered at Titirangi, Henderson Valley, Swanson and Waitākere. Piha and Karekare have the highest number of businesses which provide accommodation.

The 2013 Monitoring Report noted that businesses catering to visitors in the heritage area are mainly in Titirangi and the adjacent Otimai and Opanaku catchments, with another grouping in Piha. The 2014 stocktake supports this.

4.11 Suggestions for the future (2018 to 2023)

To address the matters discussed above, and for the purposes of reporting in the State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2023 report, the following actions are suggested:

- that a review of the concessionaires and discretionary activities be undertaken to determine whether a capped limit is needed
- that a follow-up on the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Business Stocktake report be undertaken by 2022
- that a stocktake be undertaken on visitor information data from all council sources (i.e. ATEED, Regional Parks, Waitākere Ranges Local Board, Annual Plan etc.), including

visitor demographics, visitor satisfaction and use of both the regional park and the local parks/reserves. The purpose of the stocktake is to achieve a more comprehensive and co-ordinated understanding of the recreational use of the heritage area by:

- identifying who is involved in monitoring and collecting visitor information
 - identifying the type of information available
 - identifying any duplication or gaps
 - providing a database that can be used by council and CCOs
- that a co-ordinated approach be taken across council departments and CCOs for monitoring and data collection of visitor related information (including visitor counts, demographics, satisfaction and use of both the regional park and the local parks/reserves) to enable robust comparisons to be made in 2023 report. In order for comparisons to be made data will need to be collected at the same locations over the same time periods
 - that geocache sites are monitored and geocache participants contacted where required; either to provide education on where to place geocaches or to request removals where geocaches are in sensitive locations
 - that the current management and monitoring of the effects visitor use on track and off-track activities (including use of closed tracks and non-permitted activities) be evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation would be to determine whether additional measures are required to manage and monitor usage, such as the reinstatement of track counters or whether the provision of additional infrastructure or resources is required.
 - that council and CCOs undertake a coordinated approach with tourism agencies and businesses which promote the heritage area as a place to visit to ensure that consistent messages are given, such as those about kauri dieback and the reasons for track closures and phytostations.

4.12 Funding implications of activities

The funding for activities associated with managing the heritage area comes from a number of council departments including Biodiversity and Biosecurity, Regional Parks, Plans and Places, the local board, and CCOs.

Funding for infrastructure and maintenance within the regional park is from departmental operational budget which is allocated regionally rather than being based on its location within the heritage area.