



**Hawke's Bay Regional Parks Network**

**Waitangi Regional Park  
Individual Park Plan  
2015-2024**



Hawke's Bay Regional Council  
159 Dalton Street  
Private Bag 6006  
Napier 4110  
Hawke's Bay  
New Zealand

Telephone: 0800 108 838  
Website: [www.hbrc.govt.nz](http://www.hbrc.govt.nz)

### **Regional Parks Network Plan**

#### **Pakowhai Regional Park Individual Park Management Plan 2013-2017**

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Prepared by:



Boffa Miskell Ltd  
09 359 5319 [www.boffamiskell.co.nz](http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz)  
Author: [shannon.bray@boffamiskell.co.nz](mailto:shannon.bray@boffamiskell.co.nz)

## **Background**

The proposed Waitangi Regional Park is a coming together of a number of key open spaces around the estuaries of four key Hawke's Bay rivers – the Tutaekuri, Ngaruroro, Clive and Tukituki. It comprises of an approximately 5km section of the coastal environment between Awatoto and Haumoana, including the significant wetland areas known as Horseshoe Wetland and Muddy Creek, as well as large areas of significant estuarine habitat. Historically these various parts of the park have been individually managed under plans that include the Waitangi Estuary Management Plan and Tukituki River Management Plan.

The park has significant ecological importance. The estuaries include a mosaic of areas of open water, inter tidal flats, salt marsh and fresh water swamp, resulting in a diversity of flora and fauna communities. Significant changes have occurred (and continue to occur) to the river mouths, channels and coastline (particularly the shingle bank behind the beach) over the past 100 years – influenced by natural changes and weather events (such as cyclone Bola), as well as man made changes resulting from flood control works and pressure from recreation activity. However, there remain rare and significant areas of natural habitat within the park which need to be managed to protect biodiversity values. The estuaries of the Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro, for example, are classified as nationally significant ecologically. Additionally, Horseshoe and Muddy Wetlands support a community of the threatened bittern species. Unfortunately many of these areas are not considered by many to be visually attractive, and as a result face continued threat from inappropriate human activity. Detailed information about the ecological make-up of the park is contained in historical management plan documents and a number of scientific reports held by the Department of Conservation<sup>1</sup>.

The area is also known to be significant to Māori, who will have used the river mouths for their rich natural resources. Te Awapuni, the Maori name for the Ngaruroro River mouth (meaning 'crowded water' or 'closed mouth'), once had an important pa. In post-European times this was supported by a large Christian church and burial ground, although the area in which these were located were lost to the sea in the late 19th century. The pa was also significant for its strategic location, as it stood guard over the only navigable route to the 'interior' of Heretaunga. There are few tangible references to the historical heritage of the park, with the only memorial being that to the missionary William Colenso, located in the Hastings District Council Reserve adjacent to the park.

Key parts of the park continued to be managed for flood management purposes, and it is important that any policies relating to the management of this infrastructure shall be adhered to when considering development of the park.

Many parts of Waitangi Regional Park are popular for recreational activity. An important access area is located on the Awatoto side of Te Awapuni, this being frequented by people undertaking fishing and whitebaiting. The large gravel car park also attracts a degree of undesirable vehicle behaviour, although this beneficially reduces the effects of this activity on other less visible locations throughout the region. Fishing activity also takes place along the whole length of the coastline of the park, and the recent fencing of access points has had the desirable result of restricting vehicle access along the beach and encouraging walking. Whitebaiting is also a

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/hawkes-bay-cms/volume-1/volume-1-hawkes-bay-conservancy-cms-1994-2004-section-5-appendices-1-4.pdf>, and; <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/hawkes-bay-cms/volume-2-hawkes-bay-conservancy-cms-1994-2004.pdf>

common activity in the other river mouths and side channels. Licensed duck shooting also takes place along the Tukituki River, but has in recent years been prohibited from the Clive River mouth.

The introduction of the Regional Cycleways has seen an increase in patronage in the park in recent years. This includes recreational and commuter cyclists, as well as walking (with and without dogs). An informal (but signposted) equestrian track is infrequently used, but feedback suggests that it has potential to be more popular in time. Jet boating, sailing and rowing are also common activities within the Clive Estuary.

Understandably there is a degree of conflict between the different recreational activities currently existing within the park, and an increased pressure on the more sensitive ecological areas (such as Muddy Creek). This is something that needs to be addressed in its ongoing development and management.

The vision for Waitangi Regional Park is for it to be managed and developed as a Class 2 park, providing more focus on protecting and enhancing the natural habitat and biodiversity. However, as part of the Regional Park Network, this shall not necessarily preclude the provision of recreational activities, such that these are controlled in a way that provides for long term sustainable management. It is also considered that ways in which to enhance the heritage values of the park and reinforce iwi connections to both the land and water should be sought.

It is noted that bringing together several previous areas of management into one Regional Park provides an opportunity for holistic management of all of the values of this sensitive area. It is important that in achieving this outcome, alongside a more concise management reporting structure, that the individual attributes of areas are not lost in the planning and management of the park. Managing the park under the Regional Park Network Plan should provide for greater focus on the long term strategic needs of the park, allowing it to continue to provide strong ecological and recreational linkages between the significant Heretaunga rivers.

### **Park Values**

- An ecologically significant coastal and estuarine environment.
- An area of historical significance, but where some iwi connection has been lost.
- A location for a range of coastal recreational activity.

### **Park Visions**

Waitangi Regional Park is an ecologically significant coastal and estuarine environment, as well as a popular coastal recreational area. It is envisaged that it will be primarily managed to protect and enhance ecological and biodiversity values, however the following visions also apply:

- Allow for controlled recreation activities whilst minimising impacts on park ecological values. This may include limiting or discouraging some existing activity;
- Increase the educational opportunities within the park to encourage people to learn about the ecological value of some of the potentially less attractive areas of the park;
- Increase the opportunity for iwi to reinforce their connection to the land and sea in this area of the region, and promote this connection to the wider community through education.

### **Management Focus**

Waitangi Regional Park is to be managed as a Class 2 Regional Park. The park will provide for:

- Protection and long term enhancement of the sensitive coastal and estuarine environment;
- A habitat for common and threatened native flora and fauna;
- Controlled recreation including walking, cycling, fishing, white baiting and horse riding;
- A place to broaden public knowledge about the history of the area and its cultural significance;
- Opportunities for iwi to strengthen their connection and presence in and around the park;