



Hawke's Bay Regional Parks Network

**Pekapeka 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

Regional Parks Network Plan

Pekapeka Regional Park Individual Park Management Plan 2015-2024

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Prepared by:



Boffa Miskell Ltd
09 359 5319 www.boffamiskell.co.nz
Author: shannon.bray@boffamiskell.co.nz

Background

Pekapeka Wetland is a remnant of a former extensive wetland system covering most of the Poukawa Basin and is one of the few remaining large freshwater wetlands left in Hawke's Bay. The wetland has a high biodiversity value and is identified as a Recommended Area for Protection (RAP) under the Heretaunga Ecological District (DoC 1994). It has the second highest wetland rating in Hawke's Bay (Hawke's Bay Regional Resource Management Plan). This management plan is the first one developed for the newly created Pekapeka Regional Park, under the proposed *Regional Park Network Plan*.

Over the past 15 years the Council has been undertaking significant restoration works involving extensive aerial spraying, boundary fencing, land acquisition, water level management and large scale indigenous re-vegetation programmes. Exotic weed infestations within the wetland (particularly willow species) have been controlled to improve natural habitat and water quality. Many willows have been left to decay naturally, and in large parts of the wetland only a few decaying trunks remain visible today. In recent years the wetland has begun showing signs of recovery, particularly in the increase of indigenous vegetation cover and stabilised water levels in the central section of the wetland (HBRC Draft Wetland Monitoring Report 2012). This has provided follow on benefit for the fish and birdlife of Pekapeka.

The wetland area has waahi tapu status under the Historic Places Act (1993). Ngāti Kahungunu iwi claim kaitiakitanga rights over the wetland, linking back to periods where the wetland provided an important food and tuna (eel) source. There are three known pā sites within the wider wetland area, including 'Island Pā' which is located within the park boundaries. A tapu stone, *Te Ana O Te Aomutua*, is located outside of the park boundary in a relocated site opposite the Visitor Interpretation Area. Local people, especially in settlements at Pakipaki and Te Hauke, have in recent years been re-establishing their connection to the wetlands and have been invited to consider relocation of the tapu stone into the park.

Management of the pā site within the park boundary is governed by the Historic Places Trust, who seek protection of the kōruarua (pits) which are relatively well preserved due to the absence of grazing on the island. Planting plans previously prepared for the site have been determined unsuitable due to potential damage root systems may have on geological features and hidden taonga. Long-term management options for the site need to continue to be explored in association with local hapu. The other two pā sites within the wider wetland are outside of the park boundaries and not currently in the control of Council. It is known that continued cattle grazing is degrading the archaeological quality of these sites, and possible future acquisition should be considered.

Pekapeka wetland is an important landmark feature on SH2. Various locations along the road are afforded views to the open water (which have been enhanced by the removal of willows), and travellers along this road are able to appreciate its scale. The high visibility of the wetland has resulted in its development and change being closely monitored by the community.

In the past 5 years, Council has developed an extensive Visitor Interpretation Area on land owned by the New Zealand Transport Agency (and covered by a Licence to Occupy in

favour of the HBRC). This successful project has further enhanced the profile of the wetland, and increased visitor interaction within the park. Limestone trails and boardwalks, interspersed with interpretative signage, encourages public education about the importance of this, and other, wetland systems. An education resource has also been developed that is being used by school groups for more focussed learning.

Public involvement with the wetland has increased markedly over the past five years, with several community groups and numerous schools participating in planting programmes throughout the park. The Lotteries Grants Board, Friends of Pekapeka, Rotary, the Community Foundation and the Genesis Reforestation Trust, amongst others, have provided funding or locally sourced & grown plants for the park's development.

Public access into other areas of the wetland is currently more restricted. A secondary access is being developed in the southern section, but is subject to security issues. The southern portion of the wetland contains waterfowl hunting sites, managed via a 10-year Licence to Occupy (LtO) in conjunction with Fish & Game and the Pekapeka Shooters' Association (PPSA). A requirement of the LtO is that each shooter must manage their site in accordance with this management plan and contribute toward, plant and animal pest control as well as native planting programs. Additionally, the PPSA is developing an annual ballot system over three hunting sites to enhance hunting opportunities.

At the northern end of the park, the Council acquired a corridor of land along the margins of the Poukawa stream in 2009. This secured access in perpetuity for maintenance access as well as providing for future pedestrian and cycle access to the Pakipaki-Stock Road intersection. The longer-term vision is that this corridor will become a part of the Hawke's Bay Trails, although a railway crossing is required to provide access to the Visitor Interpretation Area.

The wetland is managed as part of a wider flood management regime serving as a flood detention area in times of heavy rainfall. A weir near the railway culvert, constructed in 2005, helps maintain water in the middle and southern portions of the wetland. Historical drainage channels at the southern and northern ends of the wetland, originally formed for pastoral management, significantly restrict the area of open water. More work is needed to understand water quality, and it is recommended that water quality monitoring be undertaken.

The long term vision for the park is for it to become one of the most significant ecological areas managed by the regional Council. At the same time there is to be a focus on education, both through the provision of information for schools and the facilitation of field trips, and through the development of interpretative signage and encouragement of the public to visit and contribute to the park's development, as well as encouraging iwi to reconnect with taonga & waahi tapu sites protected within the park.

Park Values

- Ecologically significant – a regionally important wildlife and fish habitat
- A key regional site for championing environmental awareness and providing educational opportunities
- Active and Passive recreation site with controlled access.
- Culturally significant with waahi tapu status

Park Visions

Pekapeka Regional Park is a regionally important wetland that needs to be primarily managed to enhance its ecological value, including continued plant pest control, re-vegetation, enhancement of wildlife habitat and monitoring of water quality. In addition, the key visions for the park are as follows:

- Explore opportunities to raise both the regional and national profile of the Park through communicating the successes of the regeneration, especially given the history of neglect and negative influences
- Extend public activity within the park, controlled to respect the character and value of the site in both ecological and cultural terms, and with a focus on education or ecological enhancement
- Continue focus on the management of cultural aspects of the park, including protection of the pā sites both within and outside of the park boundaries, and continued consultation with iwi over the relocation of the tapu stone to within the park
- Maintain waterfowl hunting opportunities
- Committed long term plant pest control and water level management

Management Focus

Over the long term, Pekapeka is to be managed as a Class 1 Regional Park. The park will provide:

- A protected and restored indigenous freshwater wetland that is regionally significant to Hawke's Bay
- A well maintained park asset
- Opportunities for local iwi to strengthen their connection to the wetlands, especially to the historical pā sites and to sustainable traditional hīanga (fishing) activities within the wetland, and to remain involved in longer term development decision making in ways which have regard to the practical expression of kaitiakitanga
- A place to broaden public knowledge about the importance of Pekapeka wetland (and other wetlands), and for people (especially school children) to learn about the natural eco-systems, indigenous wildlife, habitat and cultural values of the park
- The opportunity for people to closely interact with nature in a unique wetland environment, featuring boardwalks and bird-hides
- The opportunity for the community and school groups to remain engaged with the wetland through continued re-vegetation programmes and weed control
- The opportunity to add value to Hawke's Bay tourism through connection to the Regional Cycle Trail
- For and recognise the importance of Pekapeka as a migratory path for eels between Lake Poukawa and the sea
- Recreational opportunities for waterfowl hunters