

Whakarāpopoto: Te āhua o te Rohe o Te Ika Whenua o Waitākere 2018

Summary State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2018





Map of Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area



Monitoring the state of the heritage area

Why we monitor the state of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area

The Waitākere Ranges heritage area is of national, regional, and local significance and the heritage features described in section 7 of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (the Act) individually and collectively contribute to its significance.

Section 34 of the Act requires the council to monitor at five yearly intervals:

- the state of the environment of the heritage area
- the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Act
- the funding impact from activities to be undertaken to give effect to the Act.

This is the second report to be prepared under the Act. Changes over the last five years have been measured against the data used for the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Monitoring Report (Volumes 1 and 2) June 2013. Statutory changes and some new topics have been included in the 2018 report.

The results of the latest monitoring are discussed in detail in the State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2018 report.

This pamphlet provides a summary of the overall findings across the topics of the report.

The full report is available from the council website: aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



Mana whenua response



Te Kawerau ā Maki and Ngāti Whātua are mana whenua of the heritage area and played an integral role in the creation of the Act.

The issues they identified from reviewing the State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2018 report are that progress had been made towards achieving the objectives of the Act in some areas, but that a number of other areas need improvement, particularly in respect of:

- addressing the spread of kauri dieback disease
- managing the spread of pest plants and animals
- addressing the ecological quality of lakes
- allocating funding proportionate to the national significance of the area
- managing the uncontrolled growth of tourism and recreation activity in sensitive areas.

To address their concerns Te Kawerau ā Maki and Ngāti Whātua have recommended to Auckland Council and its council-controlled organisations:

- that a co-governance and co-management steering group be established for the heritage area
- that a strategic plan be developed for the heritage area to integrate and co-ordinate activities
- that baseline information gaps be identified and that measurement and monitoring processes be re-designed to align with both western science and tikanga Māori
- that progress be made to complete Deeds of Acknowledgement with Te Kawerau ā Maki and Ngāti Whātua (as enabled by the Act).



Overall findings

Achievements between 2013 and 2018

★ Indigenous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems

The heritage area contains approximately 21,200 hectares of indigenous forest, of which approximately 9,500 hectares (45 per cent) is kauri-podocarp forest. This is one of the largest blocks of continuous indigenous vegetation remaining in Auckland. Two of the most significant wetlands in Auckland are also located within the heritage area; at Te Henga / Bethells Beach and at Whatipu.

The indigenous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the heritage area are heritage features.

Over the last five years

The indigenous terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the heritage area have been enhanced through:

- the addition of 98 hectares of land as either regional park land, local reserve, or as covenanted land (eighty seven hectares of this land contains predominantly indigenous vegetation and 34 hectares contains ecologically significant habitat)
- a likely increase in the proportion of threatened species with stable or increasing population sizes
- key roosting sites of the long-tailed bat within the heritage area being identified
- identifying of a diverse range of ecosystems (Biodiversity Focus Areas) to ensure their long-term retention and as a focus for protection and restoration activities
- the on-going council and the Waitākere Ranges Local Board pest plant and animal control activities undertaken in the heritage area
- the significant effort that community groups and landowners have made in on-going pest plant and animal control, restoration activities and programmes to manage and stop the spread of kauri dieback disease.



Photo: Jacqui Geux



★ Natural landscapes and character

The natural landforms and landscapes, rural character of the foothills, urban and residential areas within the forest settings and the coastal villages are all heritage features. An objective of the Act is that the character, scale and intensity of subdivision and development does not adversely affect the heritage features.

Over the last five years

There has been a substantial and continuing decline in the number of resource consent applications for subdivision and development. The planning provisions that applied over this period have met the objectives of retaining:

- the natural landforms and landscapes which give the heritage area its distinctive character
- the subservience of the built environment to the heritage area's natural and rural landscape
- the identity, scale and character of the coastal villages
- the low-density residential and urban areas in forest settings
- the rural character of the foothills.

The darkness of the Waitākere Ranges and coastal areas are a heritage feature. During this monitoring period measurements of the night sky were taken and were found to correspond to the International Dark Sky Association's Bronze Standard.



Photo: Sean Shadbolt

Photo: Gail Allende



★ People and communities

The local communities, volunteer groups and land owners play a significant and valuable role in actively maintaining the natural, historical, cultural and recreational features of the heritage area.

The relationship of the people, communities and mana whenua with the heritage area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship is a heritage feature.

Over the last five years

The community organisations and volunteer groups within the heritage area have thrived and they continue to make a vital and significant contribution to maintaining the natural, historical, cultural and recreational values of the heritage area.



Photo: DPA Architects



★ Historic heritage

The Act refers to the heritage features including evidence of past human activities such as timber extraction, gum-digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, quarrying, extensive farming, and water impoundment and supply. Other past human activities such as Māori settlement and use are also historic heritage features.

Over the last five years:

The knowledge and understanding of historic heritage has been improved by:

- Survey and research work being underway, or completed, for over 250 historic heritage places.



★ Recreational use and wilderness experiences

The heritage area is located in close proximity to the city and is highly valued and used for a range of recreation activities and wilderness experiences. The Waitākere Ranges Regional Park and west coast beaches are major visitor destinations and the recreation and wilderness opportunities of the heritage area are a heritage feature.

Over the last five years

The opportunities for recreational use have been further enhanced by:

- the addition of park land at Piha; Taitomo (a 78 hectare addition to the regional park), at Seaview Road, Piha (a two hectare local reserve) and at Karekare; property next to McCreadies Paddock (a 1.2 hectare local reserve)
- the provision of new public infrastructure such as the Piha public toilets and sections of the Little Muddy Creek walkway (link between Tangiwai Reserve and Grendon Road) and walkway between Rimutaka Place and Huia Road.

★ Water catchment and supply

The water catchment and supply system and its operation, maintenance, and development to serve the people of Auckland are a heritage feature. An objective of the Act is to protect the features of the heritage area that relate to its water catchment and supply functions.

Over the last five years:

The operation, maintenance and development of the water catchment and supply system remains an important feature of the heritage area and presently provides 19 per cent of Auckland's water supply.





Overall findings

Key threats and pressures

Kauri dieback disease

The forest of the heritage area (Te Wao Nui ā Tiriwa – the great forest of Tiriwa) is a taonga (treasure) that has significant cultural and spiritual values for mana whenua. For Te Kawerau ā Maki the death of the forest is an existential threat. Kauri are tupuna (ancestors) and the rangatira (chiefs) of the forest. Their health is linked to the health of numerous other plants and animals within the ecosystem, and to the health of the iwi.

The heritage area contains approximately 2571 hectares of kauri forest as well as many individual trees. Kauri dieback disease is a major threat to the kauri forest ecosystem of the heritage area and all kauri is considered to be at very high risk of infection.

Over the last five years

Monitoring of kauri within the heritage area shows that:

- the number of trees infected by kauri disease has more than doubled from eight per cent in 2013 to 19 per cent in 2016 (with a further five per cent showing signs of infection)
- of the 91 distinct areas of kauri forest greater than five hectares in size (ecologically significant), 53 areas are exhibiting symptoms of kauri dieback disease

- there is a close relationship between kauri dieback zones and their proximity to the track network, with 71 per cent of kauri dieback zones within 50 metres of a track
- all of the kauri forest within the heritage area is at very high risk of being infected by kauri dieback disease.

Response

The recent (up to December 2017) response to the spread of kauri dieback disease has been:

- monitoring through aerial and extensive ground survey with the results reported in the Auckland Council report; 'Kauri Dieback Report 2017: An investigation into the distribution of kauri dieback, and implications for its future management, within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park Version 2: Update June 2017'
- to minimise the risk of spreading kauri dieback disease through the movement of soil (on footwear, vehicles, machinery, equipment & tools) by applying 'Standard Operating Procedures for Kauri Dieback' to apply to all council staff, Auckland Council Controlled Organisation staff, contractors, permit holders and concessionaries working in areas that kauri are present

- on-going community group and landowners initiatives, often in collaboration with the Ministry for Primary Industries, mana whenua and council (e.g. Keep Kauri Standing kauridieback.co.nz), trialling possible treatment (phosphite injections), providing public information and acting as ambassadors at tracks to ensure people use the phytosanitary stations
- in response to the spread of kauri dieback Te Kawerau ā Maki placed a rāhui (customary prohibition) over the Waitākere forest restricting use of, and access to the forest to safeguard it both physically and spiritually (the rāhui took effect on 2 December 2017)
- Te Kawerau ā Maki also sought that a Controlled Area Notice under the Biosecurity Act 1993 be implemented by the Ministry of Primary Industries to provide specific control and management methods to support the rāhui and help stop the spread of kauri dieback
- at its Environment and Community Committee meeting on 5 December 2017 the council supported the rāhui in principle and implemented a programme of high and medium risk track closures, and upgrading open tracks and cleaning stations (the success of this approach was to be reported back in February 2018).

The response to kauri dieback disease is on-going and subject to assessment and review by both the council and the Ministry of Primary Industries. The state of the environment reporting period for this report covers the period up to December 2017. Responses and changes after this period will be reported in the State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2023 report.



Pest plants and animals

Pest plants and animals are a major on-going threat to the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the heritage area. Pest plant and animal control is required at a level that (at a minimum) retains the ecosystem values of the heritage area.

Over the last five years

A considerable number of council (including the Waitākere Ranges Local Board), community and landowner pest plant and animal control programmes have been undertaken and are vital to maintaining the ecosystems of the heritage area.

The on-going challenge is to fund programmes at a level that will improve and restore the health of ecosystems.

Response to date

A number of pest plant and animal control programmes continue to be undertaken in the heritage area.

A substantial increase in funding through a natural environment targeted rate is being sought for biosecurity management in the council's Long Term Plan 2018-2028. This will determine the extent of pest plant and animal control programmes that can be undertaken within the heritage area over the next ten years.

Additional monitoring sites are needed in the eastern foothills (which act as buffer areas to the forest) and road corridors to enable accurate reporting and to measure the effectiveness of pest plant control programmes in these areas.





! Pressures of use – managing use to maintain heritage features

There has been a significant increase in the level of recreational use of the heritage area between 2013 and 2017. There is a growing concern that the level of use, unless appropriately managed, may be to the detriment of other heritage features, such as ecosystems, wilderness and historic heritage values.

Mana whenua have identified the uncontrolled growth of tourism and recreation activity in sensitive areas as a matter that needs to be addressed.

The challenge associated with managing kauri dieback disease has highlighted the need to better monitor and manage all uses of the heritage area.



Water quality of lagoons and beaches

Coastal lagoons form part of the dune systems and aquatic ecosystems that are heritage features under the Act. The adjoining beaches contribute to the recreational opportunities of the heritage area.

Water quality at five coastal lagoons and 12 beaches within, or adjoining the heritage area, are tested weekly over summer (from November to March) to determine if they are safe for swimming.

Five lagoons and seven beaches adjoining the heritage area were found to be unsafe for swimming. In most cases the source of contamination is from failing on-site septic tank systems.

The challenge for council is to work with the local communities to improve water quality at coastal lagoons and beaches through:

- upgrading septic tank systems
- ensuring proper septic tank maintenance
- riparian planting and stock exclusion fencing in the Te Henga / Bethells Beach catchment.



Emerging threat – Myrtle rust

An emerging biosecurity threat with potentially devastating effects is myrtle rust. Myrtle rust affects pōhutukawa and other myrtle tree species. Myrtle rust can easily be spread by the wind.

In December 2017 myrtle rust was discovered in west Auckland. It has not yet been found in the heritage area, but this needs to be closely monitored. An on-going seed collection programme (led by the Department of Conservation) is underway to ensure preservation of vulnerable species.



Overall findings

Matters raised

Adequate data to monitor changes

Robust data on the use of the heritage area is needed to measure changes and assess the impacts of activities on heritage features for the State of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area 2023 report.

An archaeological and built heritage survey and research programme has been initiated but significant work is still needed to establish the baseline state of the historic heritage environment and enable a comprehensive on-going monitoring programme.

Additional data is needed in some locations (areas adjoining the regional park and road corridors) to monitor changes in pest plant and animals and the success of control programmes.

Mana whenua seek that future data collection and monitoring programmes be designed to incorporate both western science and tikanga Māori in measuring and assessing changes to the heritage area. This will involve across topic consultation with mana whenua.

Integrated management

A number of council, council-controlled organisations and community programmes are undertaken within the heritage area, particularly relating to pest plant and animal control. These could be undertaken in a more integrated way and greater alignment of activities is likely to be beneficial.

Mana whenua have identified the integrated and strategic management of the heritage area as an issue that needs to be addressed and they recommend that an across-party management group and strategic plan be developed to better co-ordinate activities within the heritage area.

Implementation of the Auckland Unitary Plan provisions

Over the 2018 to 2023 monitoring period the Auckland Unitary Plan provisions will apply. While these are intended to maintain the heritage features, the achievement of this outcome needs to be monitored, particularly in the foothills and coastal villages (where most changes were noted).



Auckland Council disclaims any liability whatsoever in connection with any action taken in reliance of this document for any error, deficiency, flaw or omission contained in it.

ISBN 978-1-98-855576-8 (Print)
ISBN 978-1-98-855577-5 (PDF)

**Waitākere Ranges
Local Board**



**Auckland
Council**
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau