

Karekare Ratepayers and Residents Trust



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Karekare Residents & Ratepayers Trust (KKRRPT) Submission on the Draft Regional Parks Management Plan (DRPMP)

The Karekare Residents and Ratepayers Trust (KKRRPT) opposes changing our Park Category to 1b (Destination) and wants to retain our category as 1a (Natural and Cultural), removing all reference to Category 1b.

Karekare is a special natural area and a gateway to the wider wilderness; KKRRPT want it to remain that way. Furthermore, we want the entirety of the Waitakere Ranges to be Category 1a (as it is now), recognising its heritage, ecological, wilderness and recreational values and its national significance under the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act, passed into law by Parliament in 2008.

Karekare is accessed by two narrow, winding roads that are often steep, with tight bends. Karekare Road starts off steep and narrow and has a vehicle height restriction of 2.8 metres. Lone Kauri Rd is less steep, but has tight bends and is currently closed due to a major slip at the lower end.

KKRRPT members are concerned that the closing date for submissions is the 4th of March 2022. This will not allow the inclusion of results from the Kauri Dieback Scientific Survey being carried out for Auckland Council by Massey University which is due in April 2022. This survey will provide updated science and information regarding tramping tracks in the Waitakeres and therefore an important opportunity for submitters to comment in relation to the DRPMP.

KKRRPT believes **Karekare** should remain at Category 1a as follows:-

- We want visitors to Karekare to have a wilderness / remote experience.
- Road access to Karekare is difficult, and parking is limited.
- The beach and dunes are habitat for oystercatchers, New Zealand dotterel and little blue penguins, who breed in crevices and sea caves along the rocky coastline; grey-faced petrels breed on the Watchman promontory.
- Karekare is on the boundary of the Whatipu Scientific Reserve.
- Karekare's wilderness is an economic asset to Auckland Council e.g. filming permits for award-winning TV and movies (e.g. "The Piano").
- During Covid-19 lockdowns, Karekare has seen an influx of visitors and their rubbish; locals are left to pick up used nappies, sanitary pads, broken

bottles, facemasks, etc. Tagging and wilful damage to roadside barriers is also a regular occurrence.

- We want the green carpark at the back of the toilets to remain in grass so it can be used as a picnic area as well as for parking. This will also help reduce the severity of flooding as the ground will remain porous.
- We oppose formalising, sealing and marking the gravel carpark for the same reason.
- Access to the beach is currently available on the south side of the Karekare stream without the need to cross it, as is wrongly stated on page 217.
- We want to keep the Pohutukawa Glade free of car parking. This is a popular picnic spot and is used by local children for informal soccer and other games.
- Any changes to carparking in Karekare, for example, the beachfront access, Karekare Falls, Track entrances should involve significant consultation with the community.
- We support the retention of the Ranger services to manage regional parks and seek that the number of rangers is increased to pre-amalgamation levels, and even higher, given the growth in the population of Auckland, environmental threats and the greater need for access to outdoor spaces demonstrated during the pandemic. There should be a strong Ranger presence on weekends and public holidays when visitor numbers are high.
- We support the restoration of the dune systems and the control of lupins.
- We want to delay finalisation of the draft Regional Parks Management Plan for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park until the recreation/track plan is developed; the track upgrading is reviewed, including significant consultation with stakeholders and the community.
- We request that the Stakeholder list be reviewed to include a tramping/recreation group in the Waitakere Ranges Park. In fact, this should be consistent for all the Parks.
- We oppose charging for entry to parks or tracks as a tool of demand management. Oppose making some tracks one-way as a tool of demand management (page 112).
- Identify notable trees within the written part of the Plan and also on the maps.
- Reinstate and fund the Rock Fishing Safety Programme. Continue to provide angel rings at key rock fishing locations.

KKRRPT believes the **Hillary Trail** should remain as a Class 1a park:

- We oppose the Hillary Trail being upgraded to Great Walk Standard (or even higher, as it appears from the sections already completed, e.g. Comans Track); this undermines agreements made with coastal communities since the Trail's inception.
- We oppose commercial concessions on the track, except for transport providers and those providing formal youth education or development programmes, as at present.

- Commercial concessions are inconsistent with the legal requirements of the Scientific Reserve that the trail passes through between Whatipu and Karekare.

KKRRPT believes the **Whatipu Scientific Reserve SMZ** should remain a Category 1a park:

Background: Since 2002 Auckland Council has managed the Whatipu Scientific Reserve on behalf of DOC. A Scientific Reserve is the highest protective designation parkland can be given under the Reserves Act. The reserve exists for the purpose of scientific study and education. Recently, the reserve has suffered from inadequate pest plant control with a proliferation of pest plants:

- Council should urgently undertake pest plant control to protect the wetland systems at Whatipu Scientific Reserve with particular emphasis on implementing the Regional Pest Management plan. This requires control of gorse in low stature ecosystems. Pampas and alligator weed are also in dire need of control.
- This should not be “subject to resourcing being available” but is a duty incumbent on Council as the manager of a Scientific Reserve.
- Continue to prohibit organised recreational activities within the reserve as required by the Reserves Act.
- We oppose an interpreted walking trail on the Piha tramway alignment through the Reserve, as it will facilitate people entering this sensitive environment, and is inconsistent with the Reserves Act.

KKRRPT believes the **Pararaha Valley SMZ** should remain as a Class 1a park:

- We want Council to manage the Pararaha Valley as a remote wilderness area with limited infrastructure.
- We support plant pest control as a priority throughout the forested area, and in particular the wetlands.
- We oppose a new hut in the Pararaha Valley but retain the camp ground. Also retain the camp grounds at Tunnel Point, and McCreadies Paddock at Karekare. We note that Auckland Council has indicated closing the Whatipu Cave campsite because of vandalism.

The Karekare Residents & Ratepayers Trust would like Auckland Council to keep us informed of the outcome from the DRPMP consultations, and any other proposals that may affect the Waitakere Ranges in general, and the Karekare - Whatipu area in particular.

(signature on emailed submission)

Jenny Taylor
Secretary

On behalf of the Karekare Ratepayers and Residents Trust

28th February 2022