

# FOR Parks News

Auckland Friends of Regional Parks Newsletter - December 2018

## **Dear Friends and Supporters**

It's been an eventful and productive year for the Friends of Regional Parks. Recognizing the need for immediate action to control the spread of kauri dieback, Friends of Regional Parks supported the Waitakere Ranges rāhui, alongside the Tree Council, Forest and Bird and Waitakere Ranges Protection Society. We regret the impact the track closures are having on recreation experiences, especially in the Waitakere Ranges, but Auckland Council now is taking serious steps to protect kauri forests in our regional parks by upgrading and rerouting tracks, closing uninfected areas and installing sanitation stations. FOR Parks is working with other groups to help identify alternative areas suitable for tramping, which don't endanger kauri.

Along with many Auckland ratepayers, we supported the introduction of the Natural Environment Targeted Rate this July, much of which will be spent on improved pest and weed control in our parks and continuing stepped up measures to combat the spread of kauri dieback.

And recently we established the Auckland Regional Parks Legacy Fund to assist with regional park acquisition. Below is more information on these and a number of other activities in which we're involved.

## **Managing Kauri Dieback**

A volunteer audit of the effectiveness of the track closures by the Tree Council, Forest & Bird, and Waitakere Ranges Protection Society found serious deficiencies in the Council closure of the Waitakere Ranges forest. A report has been sent to Auckland Council highlighting the deficiencies in Council track closure management and requesting these be rectified urgently. The audit will be repeated over the Xmas holiday.

## **Strategy for Reopening Recreational Tracks**

FORParks is seeking easily understandable Council information on recreational tracks that are open in regional parks, tracks that are closed and a schedule of tracks due for reopening. FORParks is keen to see a range of upgraded tracks made available for public use before the Christmas holiday break. We understand Council will soon be seeking public input on their track reopening strategy and we encourage you all to complete the survey when it becomes available.

In the longer term FORParks believes major track restructuring must be undertaken as an amendment to the Regional Parks Management Plan and subject to extensive public input.

## **Rough Track Alternatives**

Tramping on rough tracks in wild areas is considered by many to be part of our kiwi heritage. With much of the Waitakeres now inaccessible for this experience due to the risk of spreading kauri dieback, alternative areas are desperately needed. FOR Parks recently

participated in a workshop convened by a group of tramping clubs, the Walking Access Commission, NZ Recreation Association and Auckland Council to identify areas where rough tracks could be opened. Areas which will be evaluated further include the Hunuas, the south head of the Kaipara and the Maungawhai to Mahurangi area. We will continue to participate in this process and will keep you updated.

### **How will the New Natural Environment Targeted Rate be used in Regional Parks?**

The Friends of Regional Parks welcomes the introduction of Auckland Council's targeted rate to fund a diverse range of activities including enhancement of natural streamscapes, development of new walkways and enhanced predator control and kauri dieback management. We are seeking more detail from Auckland Council into specifics as to how these funds will be spent in regional parks and expect to have this information before Christmas. The targeted rate is not intended for broader regional park acquisition or development, however FOR Parks is continuing to push for increased funding for these.

### **New Committee member Bruce Tubb**

We are delighted Bruce Tubb has joined our committee. Bruce recently retired from many years with Lands and Survey and DOC where he was instrumental in purchasing many coastal parks and islands in Auckland and Northland, keeping them for the public to enjoy in perpetuity. Bruce brings a wealth of experiences and knowledge to the committee. He has started off quickly with his proposal for a regional park at Belmont.

### **A regional park on Defence Land at Belmont?**

Bruce Tubb has raised an intriguing idea of a new regional park on public land formerly used for naval housing at Belmont on the North Shore. It would take unprecedented cooperation among iwi, Central government and Auckland Council to make it happen, and it could result in an urban park like the recently replanted Hauraki Gulf Islands and become a home for many endangered species including kiwi, gecko, tuatara, saddlebacks and weta.

### **Auckland Regional Parks Legacy Fund Progress**

The Auckland Regional Parks Legacy Fund is receiving donations for which we are most grateful. In time the fund will help acquire and develop new Auckland Regional Parks. All donations qualify for the tax credit and are very welcome and can be made directly through <https://aucklandfoundation.org.nz/donate> and selecting Auckland Regional Parks Legacy Fund. If you have any questions about the fund, please email [President@forparks.org.nz](mailto:President@forparks.org.nz)

### **Te Arai Regional Park**

Council is preparing a variation to the Regional Parks Management Plan to incorporate the new Te Arai Regional Park. Council expects to notify the public of this plan in March or April next year. Watch for details of a FOR Parks visit to Te Arai for members and supporters in the new year.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and happy holidays.  
Kind regards,

Bronwen Turner, Chair