



Te Mahere Whakahaere i ngā Papa Rēhia ā-Rohe

Regional Parks Management Plan

Annual Report

2023/2024

Prepared November 2024



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1. Introduction

This is the first Annual Report on progress implementing actions within the Regional Parks Management Plan (RPMP) since its adoption in September 2022.

The report summarises the projects and activities that were either underway, ongoing or completed during financial year 2023/2024, under the six key focus areas set out in the RPMP.

It includes commentary on some of the issues and challenges faced during this period, some key achievements and success stories and an introduction to some of the new, innovative processes recently introduced to enable efficiencies in park operations.

The last section gives an overview of the year-end financial position, and the process for preparing and engaging with mana whenua, key stakeholders and the public on the next annual implementation plan for financial year 2025/2026.

2. Our focus areas for delivery

These are the six key focus areas identified in the RPMP 2022.

<p>Council’s commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi • Acknowledging the importance of the regional parks to mana whenua • Continuing to build meaningful partnerships with mana whenua • Supporting expression of Māori identity in parks and park naming 	<p>Protecting biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding threatened species • Protecting current and future biodiversity • Partnering with kaitiaki • Linking landscapes and ecosystems • Building a culture of caring for nature 	<p>Adding value to the visitor experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering more tailored visitor experiences • Striking a careful balance to retain natural character • Prioritising and supporting mana whenua-led ventures • Connecting diverse communities to parks in their way • Retaining free access for informal recreation
<p>Adapting to climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing a retreat from coastal erosion • Creating more shade for visitors and stock • Planning for greater fire and hazards risks. 	<p>Mitigating climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising forest and ecosystem health to keep existing carbon stores • Setting an emissions target for farming • Promoting and enabling low emissions visitor access to parks. 	<p>Collaborating to achieve outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on current collaboration with others • Creating new collaborations that support park outcomes • Reviewing the framework for commercial activities • Communicating, consulting, and reporting on progress.

A summary of our achievements for each focus area are detailed on the following pages.

3. Achievements against key focus areas

3.1 Supporting council’s commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Auckland Council is committed to strengthening partnerships and working with mana whenua to identify opportunities for greater involvement in park management. Council acknowledges the importance of the connections with ancestral lands and taonga and supports the expression of Māori identity and culture on regional parks.

Regional Parks staff regularly engage with mana whenua at both an operational and project level to build on our existing relationships and explore options to support mana whenua aspirations and outcomes.

Examples of work undertaken in partnership with mana whenua during financial year 2023/2024 are highlighted below.

Table 1: Activities supporting council’s commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
Ngāti Manuhiri continue to support the Northern team during the translocation of indigenous threatened species (wētāpunga, hihi) to and from the open sanctuaries at Tawharanui and Shakespear regional parks.
Te Kawerau ā Maki remain involved in the operational management of kauri dieback in Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and supporting decision-making on the track reopening programme, as specified in the Track Reopening Plan 2019-2024.
Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki is working in partnership with the Southern team to protect Mataitai a at Waitawa Regional Park.
The Southern team are continuing to engage with Ngāi Tai ki Tamaki, Ngāti Tamaoho, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Paoa and Ngāti Tamaterā on their interest and potential involvement in the Kauri Ora surveys and monitoring of kauri health in the Hūnua Ranges Regional Park.
The Te Kete Rukuruku programme to adopt bilingual park names for regional parks has progressed over the past year. Tranche 1 includes reviewing names for Ambury, Ōmana, Shakespear, Wenderholm, Long Bay and Glenfern Sanctuary. Narratives associated with the proposed names identified by mana whenua are being completed and it is intended to report on the finalised names to the Parks Committee in February 2025.
Progress is being made in developing an agreed Deed of Acknowledgement under the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act with Te Kawerau ā Maki. This work also includes identifying opportunities for Te Kawerau to contribute to the management of the land within the Heritage Area.
A project to co-design and install interpretation at Te Piringa (Cascade Kauri) in partnership with Te Kawerau ā Maki was completed during November / December 2023 (see over the page for images).
New interpretation developed in partnership with Ngaati Te Ata was installed at Āwhitu Regional Park in August 2023, reflecting the cultural association with the parkland (see over the page for images).

Staff are working with the Parks and Community Facilities – Māori Outcomes team to develop a framework to engage with mana whenua over the long term, to better understand where their interests lie and the outcomes they are seeking. This will enable council to develop a consistent approach to how we honour mana whenua aspirations across the Regional Parks network.

New interpretation panels at Te Piringa (Cascade Kauri), Waitākere Ranges Regional Park



New interpretation panels at Āwhitu Regional Park

Haere mai - welcome

Ka whiri te Ra ki tua o Rehua ka ara a Kaiwhare i te rua
 Ko Puketapu te maunga ko moananui
 o Rehua te Manukatanga
 o Hōturoa me te Awa o Waikato nga awa.

A perfect place
 The Āwhitu Peninsula was once densely populated by Māori because it offered everything they needed to flourish.
 Ara (trails) connected the wild west coast to this more sheltered shoreline and connected Māori communities with each other.

Kaitara Pā
 Kaitara Pā (the highest point on the south-western corner of this park) was strategically situated as an observation post from where Ngāiwi te Atā could observe the movements of waka and boats on the Manukau Harbour. With panoramic views they were able to prepare for the arrival of friends, or foe. Defensive terraced pā further inland provided refuge when needed.

Ancestors' "footprints" and spiritual connections make Āwhitu a very significant place to mana whenua. The name of Āwhitu Regional Park comes from the āwhitu (yearning) for this place, felt by Hōkuroa, the commander of Tainui waka, on leaving the area.

Scan the QR code to learn more about this place from Kaumatua, George Flavell.





3.2 Protecting biodiversity

Activities carried out under this focus area include a wide range of conservation projects delivered across the whole parks network, in particular in the open sanctuaries at Tāwharanui and Shakespear regional parks, the Kokāko Management Area in the Hūnua Ranges, Ark in the Park in the Waitākere Ranges and Glenfern Sanctuary at Aotea Great Barrier Island.

Our primary actions are directed at:

- safeguarding threatened species
- protecting current and future biodiversity
- partnering with our kaitiaki partners
- linking landscapes and ecosystems and building a culture of caring for nature with park visitors and the wider public.

Examples of the work delivered in financial year 2023/2024 are shown in Table 2 below

Table 2: Activities supporting biodiversity protection
Targeted pest animal control programmes are in place across for rabbits, rats and mustelids using a network of traps and bait stations. Specific control programmes for feral cats and possums are in place at Whatipū Scientific Reserve and in the sanctuaries at Tāwharanui and Shakespear; while pig control is undertaken by the rangers across the Waitākere Ranges.
Threatened species programmes delivered at Tāwharanui and Shakespear have included the translocation of 1600 Wētāpunga in December 2023 and February 2024 – this is the first time this species has been returned to the mainland for decades. A total of 40 Hihi were translocated from Tiritiri Mātangi and released at Shakespear in May 2024, with more releases planned later this year. Ten Northern Island Brown Kiwi were exported from Tāwharanui to support the introduction of kiwi to Mt Tamahunga. There are plans to relocate a further 25 kiwi in 2025.
Management of kokāko within the Hūnua Ranges has been ongoing since the mid-1990s, when there was only 1 breeding pair of birds in existence. Since then, targeted pest management, including the introduction on aerial pest control in 2015, has enabled the population to expand from 116 pairs counted in 2018 to the 259 pairs recorded in the last full population survey in May 2022. Planning is underway for the next aerial control operation scheduled for July/August 2025.
Revegetation planting across all parks is ongoing. There were 53 planting events held during the 2023/2024 planting season, with around 114,000 trees/dune plants or shrubs planted across the park network during this period. Around 49,000 volunteer hours were spent during 2023/2024 supporting this and other work on regional parks.
A kauri dieback survey in the Hūnua Ranges during 2022/2023 has confirmed the ranges are still free from kauri dieback disease. The survey covered both public, private and Department of Conservation land. Mana whenua were involved in the survey field team, undertaking cultural monitoring of water sites.
An Ecological Management Plan for 5 Mile Strip, Muriwai was completed in February 2024. Baseline surveys on species present are continuing. In 2023 the rare, localised Muriwai gecko was formally recognised as a distinct species and gifted the name <i>Woodworthia korowai</i> (Korowai gecko) by Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara.

3.2.1 Revegetation planting

53 planting events in the 2023/24 planting season

113,922 trees planted across the park network



48,886 hours spent by volunteers on parks.

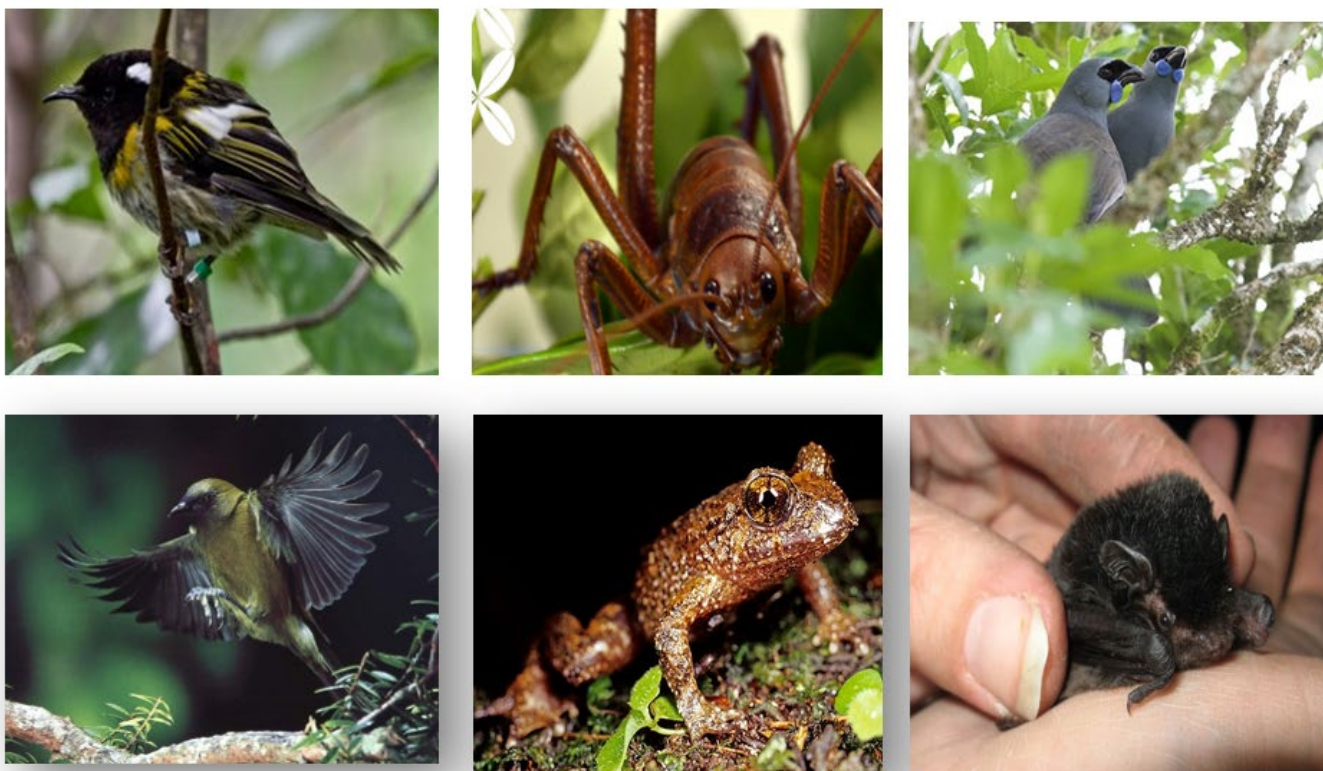


Tāwharanui planting day July 2024 by volunteers from Fulton Hogan

3.2.2 Natural Environment Targeted Rate

Regional Parks staff are responsible for delivering the Parks Integrated Site Management Programme which is funded by the Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR). This programme supports pest plant and animal control and conservation projects and is critically important in protecting and enhancing biodiversity across the parks network.

The total NETR budget for financial year 2023/2024 was \$5,025,000. The annual budget is projected to increase over the next few years from \$8.5m in financial year 2025/2026 up to \$10m by financial year 2027/2028. This will enable a continued expansion of targeted pest management and conservation projects in Biodiversity Focus Areas to be implemented across the network, supported by local volunteer groups.



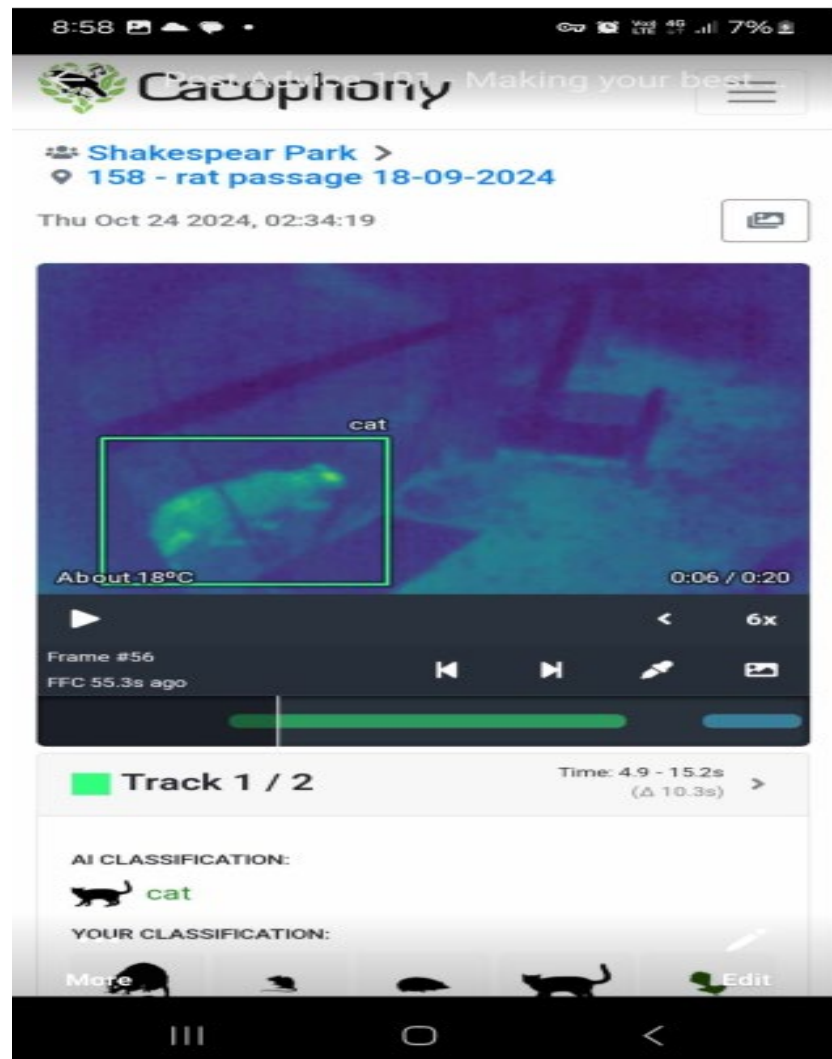
Some examples of threatened species found within regional parks include (from left, top) hiihi, wētāpunga, kokāko, bellbird, Hochstetter's frog and pekapeka (short-tailed bat).

3.2.3 Innovation

Additional NETR funding has also provided the opportunity to utilise more innovative technical tools to support our pest management operations. Examples include:

- automated trail cameras, located within the open sanctuaries and on Motukorea / Browns Island are used to monitor pest incursions. The cameras send real-time images and use AI technology to analyse and identify pests before alerting rangers.
- remote sensor nodes on cage traps, which sends an alert to rangers to notify them the trap needs checking.
- seabird acoustic attraction systems, utilising an audio playback, are used in coastal areas near the sanctuaries to make a site sound 'seabird busy' for other birds passing by to investigate during the breeding season. The system is solar powered and turns on at dusk and off at dawn.

The image below from a thermal camera at Shakespear Regional Park identifies a cat near this trap.



At Tāwharanui Regional Park, in a novel approach to responding to stoat incursions an impenetrable barrier of traps was set up at a location where a stoat was seen on a trail camera. The photo below shows the barrier of traps on the Lagoon boardwalk where one stoat was caught in the trap circled in red.



A similar response was employed at Shakespear Regional Park, where a hole was cut into the pest fence and filled with a trap, resulting in a highly successful increase in trapping rate for rats and stoats.



3.3 Adapting to and mitigating climate change

Chapter nine of the RPMP outlines council’s response to embedding climate adaptation and mitigation into our management approach.

Adaptation responses include:

- Sustainable management in respect of coastal hazards, inundation and sea level rise
- managing park infrastructure and heritage sites in vulnerable places
- planning to reduce the impact of drought on plants, wildlife and pastoral management
- being prepared for a higher level of fire risk
- responding to increased risks from plant and animal pests and pathogens
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mitigating climate change responses include:

- prioritising forest and ecosystem health to keep existing carbon stores
- setting an emissions target and pathway for farming
- promoting and enabling low emissions visitor access to parks.

Examples of work undertaken in both areas is outlined below.

Table 3: Activities supporting climate adaptation and mitigation
<p>Regional Parks staff continue to liaise with council’s Coastal Management team to identify options to address coastal erosion and the impacts of sea level rise on park assets. Actions undertaken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-routing a section of coastal track at Waitawa and Long Bay, due to ongoing coastal / cliff erosion • repairing and relocating sand ladders at Tāwharanui after storm events • protecting dunes by planting at many locations, e.g. Muriwai.
<p>A series of business improvement projects has been developed to improve the sustainable management of assets, water and energy across the parks network. For example, the automation of water tank monitoring, enables real-time visibility to staff via their cell phone of water tank levels in baches, farmed locations and some kauri dieback Sterigene tanks. This ensures leaks are quickly identified before water supplies are depleted, and reduces the staff travel time involved in manually checking water tank levels.</p> <p>Another initiative is the installation of solar-powered water pumps at Pae o Te Rangi and Anawhata for stock water supply. This has resulted in a reduction in emissions from previously petrol-powered pumps.</p>
<p>The 2013 Regional Parks Fire Response Plan has been reviewed and a new draft risk reduction plan is being prepared. Park-specific response plans have been drafted for Waitawa and Duder regional parks, with the remainder to be staged over the next one to three years.</p>
<p>Council aims to mitigate the impact of farming activities by reducing farm-related emissions. This entails a renewed focus on animal health and productivity, reviewing the carrying capacity of the land and stock numbers and prioritising planting more trees for shade and shelter. Guidelines have recently been developed on shade tree planting for grazed livestock to prevent heat stress and contribute positively to animal welfare. There are also plans to introduce in a new breed of sheep with low methane emissions that does not require docking or dagging and returns a premium for low methane wool. This change will result in more efficient animal management and a reduction in costs.</p>
<p>Several projects are planned to support prioritising ecosystem health. These include an expansion of the wetland at Shakespear via an offset planting project for the Milldale development; the proposal led by TOSSI to restore wetlands from paddocks at Tāwharanui, and additional planting of 36ha at Shakespear to offset the O Mahurangi / Penlink bridge.</p>

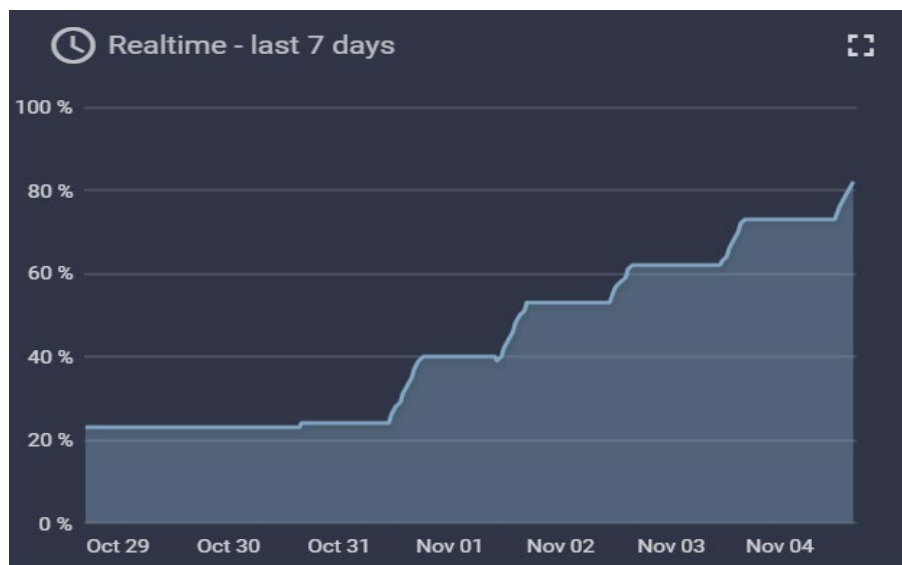
Repairing sand ladders at Anchor Bay, Tāwharanui after storm surges.



Solar water pump providing stock water at Pae o Te Rangi Farm, Waitākere Ranges Regional Park



Example of water tank level monitoring information, directly accessible by rangers through a phone app.

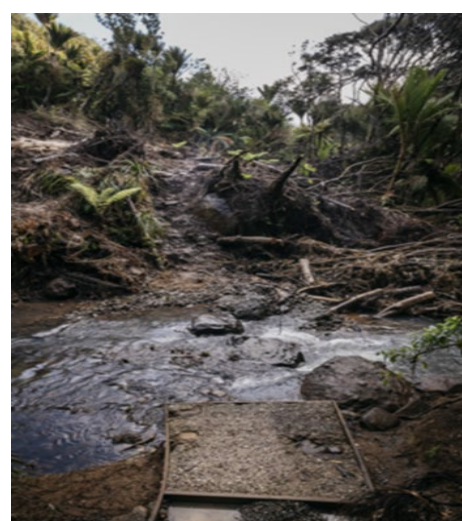
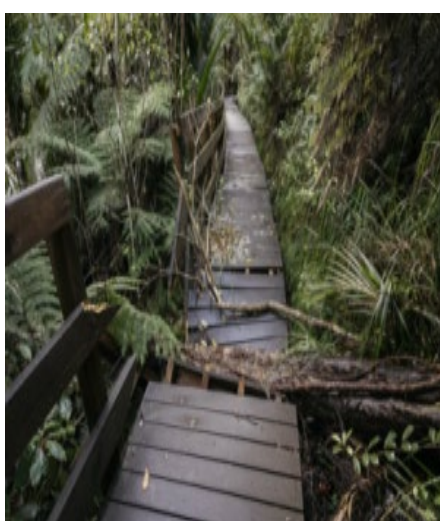


3.3.1 Responding to storm damage

Our primary focus in early 2023 was addressing the large-scale damage experienced across the whole regional parks network from the storm events in January, February and May of that year. Major slips, flooding and damaged roads resulted in a loss of access, track closures and significant work by rangers to make the parks safe for visitors once they were able to be re-opened.

The Western sector, including Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, was the most severely impacted from the storm events, resulting in the large-scale track closures and loss of access to the park. The Arataki Visitor Centre was closed for much of that year until its much-anticipated reopening on 5 December 2023.

Significant effort by the western ranger team, iwi, volunteers and contractors responding to the damage resulted in 15 tracks (from the 22 initially closed) within the Waitākere Ranges being partially or fully opened by the end of June 2024. Work is ongoing to address more complex structural repairs or slips, many of which are still awaiting geotechnical assessments to be completed. Future planned works will include considering the re-alignment of tracks in areas prone to land failure during high rainfall events. Some tracks may not be opened in the future due to budget restrictions.

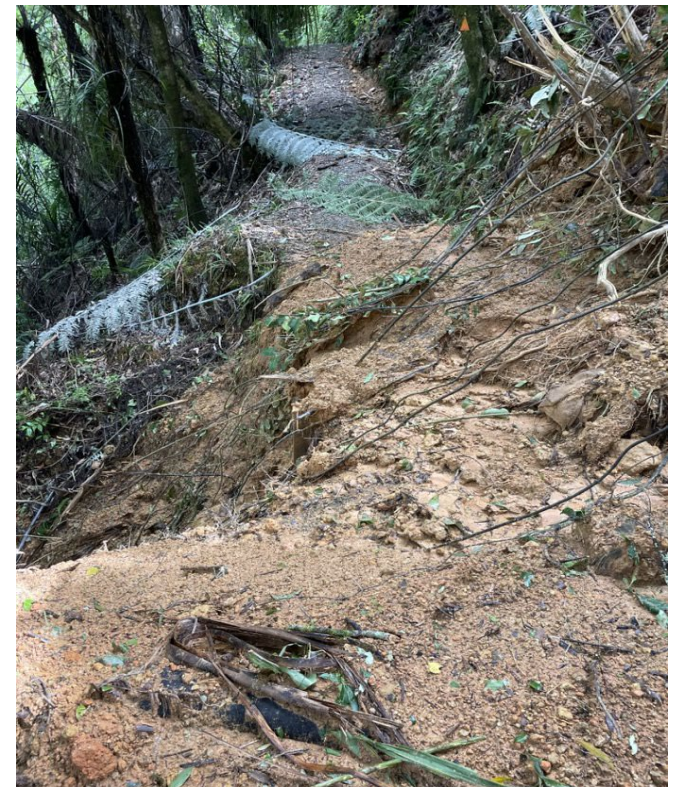


Storm damage at Marawhara walk, Zig Zag track and Kitekite track



Track repairs underway within the Waitākere Ranges.

Significant damage also occurred to multiple tracks across the Hūnua Ranges Regional Park, resulting in ongoing work to restore and reopen tracks



3.4 Adding value to the visitor experience

Regional parks provide a diverse range of recreation opportunities, activities and experiences for visitors. People value the parks for the relatively undeveloped and natural outdoor spaces that allows them to connect to nature and provide for their physical and mental wellbeing.

The provision of visitor services, facilities and information, including our dedicated ranger service, ensures park users have a safe and enjoyable recreation experience.

Adding value to that experience can come in a variety of ways, such as offering tailored cultural and education opportunities, looking to connect diverse communities to the parks in their way, while continuing to review the recreational activities on offer and changing trends.

Examples of work delivered under this focus area are highlighted below.

Table 5: Activities adding value to the visitor experience
<p>Arataki Visitor Centre delivered over 40 public workshops and events since it reopened in December 2023. Highlights included the Friends of Arataki Kids Day held in December 2023 which attracted over 1200 people, increasing to more than 1700 people at the October 2024 event. Three separate events were held at Arataki to celebrate Matariki in June 2024: the Whanau day, a Hautapu dawn ceremony and Konohete Po evening concert – more than 1800 people attended.</p>
<p>The Hunua Traverse cycleway, developed in conjunction with Franklin Local Board, officially fully opened in December 2023. The trail opens up sections of the forestry area within the Hunua Ranges, creating a link from Clevedon to Kaiaua.</p>
<p>A review of the commercial operators framework began in January 2024 to assess the commercial and council services delivered on regional parks, such as guiding tours, adventure sports, food outlets, etc. The purpose of the review is to proactively identify opportunities for a consistent approach to enhance visitor experiences and improve revenue generation, while remaining aligned with the vision and values of the RPMP. The review is expected to be completed in 2025.</p>
<p>New recreation activities included an orienteering course developed at Tapapakanga; renewal of the Disc Golf Course at Waitawa; an upgrade to the milking shed equipment at Ambury to improve visibility of the milk production process; and installation of new boardwalks through the wetlands at Awhitu.</p>
<p>Improvements to visitor facilities were implemented across the network. Examples included the installation of new toilets, car parking and interpretation at Te Piringa/Cascade Kauri; upgrades to the entry gates and CSC hardstand parking area at Tainui campground, Waharau; bach upgrades at Tapapakanga and Awhitu; and new interpretation and historical articles installed at Scandrett homestead, Vine House and Couldrey House</p> <p>Upgrading visitor safety and wayfinding signage is an ongoing activity across the network.</p>
<p>Around 200 events were held on regional parks, ranging from one-off individual school events to larger scale organised events such as festivals (Earthbeat at Atiu Creek, Splore at Tapapakanga), Auckland Trail Running events (Tawharanui and Shakespear) and targeted events such as Exploring Marine Reserves day at Tawharanui. A total of 62 permits were issued for filming events, primarily at locations sites in the western sector.</p>
<p>A review of Accommodation Service Standards for campground, baches, lodges and CSC (certified self-contained) parking areas has begun, to set a consistent level of service standards are maintained across the network.</p>

Peak visitor pressure at Long Bay Regional Park on New Year's Day 2024

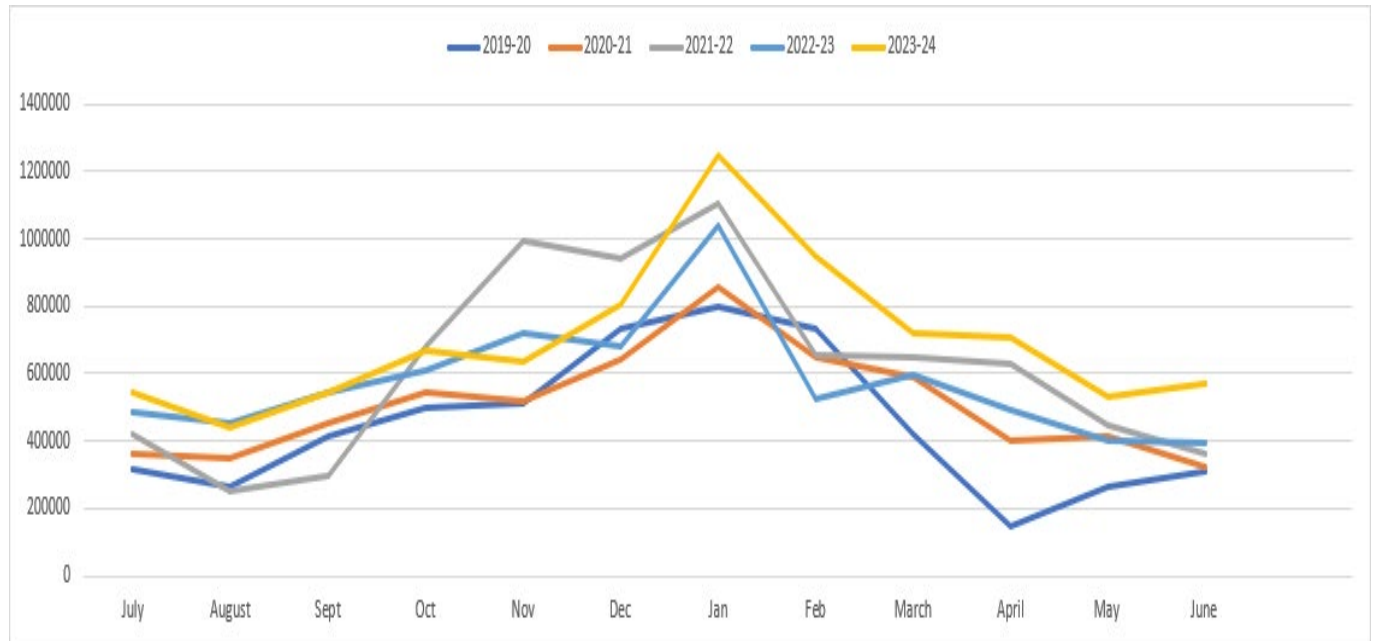


3.4.1 Visitor numbers

There has been a significant increase in park visitors to regional parks during the past year, which has been an ongoing trend since the Covid.

Visitor numbers for the 2023/2024 year peaked at **7,309, 965** – up from 6,000,885 during the 2022/2023 year. This included a 30 per cent increase in visitors to the Western section, a 14 per cent increase in the Northern sector and a 21 per cent increase in the Southern sector.

The graph below shows recent trends in recorded visitor numbers.



High visitor numbers during the peak summer period (Christmas-New Year, January- February) and public holiday weekends continued to put pressure on parks infrastructure and parking availability at popular parks.

Over the 2023 summer period we utilised Traffic Management support at Long Bay Regional Park to manage visitor flow by creating a one-way entry and exit route through the park. This was partially successful in reducing traffic congestion issues in the adjacent local community, although there were still people queuing in their cars for two hours or more to get into the park.



3.5 Collaborating with others

Many people support regional parks by volunteering and belonging to friends or community groups, societies or recreational groups. Volunteers contribute in several ways including pest plant and animal control, planting, restoring historical assets, developing and maintaining critical assets and supporting recreational activities. Groups bring people together, enable skills and knowledge to be passed on and helps build a sense of connection and a culture of stewardship when people look after their regional park.

Some volunteer groups are able to obtain funding from other organisations to support activities such as reintroducing threatened species and running community events. Recreational groups using the parks also volunteer for tasks such as track maintenance and vegetation clearance.

Volunteering and partnerships between council and others to help support the management of regional parks will continue to be essential.

Examples of work being delivered by our volunteers and partners are listed below.

Table 6: Collaboration actions
Our volunteers, community groups and other partners provide critical support to the ongoing management of the regional parks network. The total volunteer hours spent on working on regional parks during 2023/2024 was close to 49,000 hours and there are now around 450 volunteer groups actively working across the network. There is a renewed focus on providing more support for our volunteer programmes.
Arataki Visitor Centre collaborates with Auckland Libraries, Auckland Zoo and Birdcare Aotearoa to deliver programmes during the school holidays and for the wider community. Examples include night walks, story times for children and workshops on the geckos located at the centre.
Council continues to work in partnership with the Department of Conservation to support the delivery of key projects, such as the protection of Tara Iti (NZ Fairy Tern) at Te Ārai and the large-scale aerial pest control programme within the Hūnua Ranges.
Auckland Council, in partnership with Forest & Bird, continues to support the delivery of the Ark in the Park conservation programme within the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.
Regional Parks staff are meeting quarterly with Friends of Regional Parks to discuss matters of interest or concern and to identify opportunities for involvement in supporting the management of the parks network.
Northern parks staff are collaborating with Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society Incorporated (TOSSI) on their proposal to restore wetlands at Anchor Bay, Tāwharanui Regional Park. TOSSI have developed concept plans and will progress to source funding for implementing the proposal.
The Northern team has an agreement in place with Conservation Volunteers NZ that supports the revegetation programme being delivered at Ātiu Creek Regional Park.

Another example is the project delivered by our volunteers involved in building a new viewing platform / bridge at Waterfall Gully in Shakespear Regional Park (refer over the page for photos). Work onsite was led by the team of volunteers and involved transferring all materials manually down to the work area, the removal of the old structure and construction of the new platform.

This has greatly improved visitor safety and access to this popular site.



New viewing platform at Waterfall Gully, Shakespear Regional Park

4. Delivery of projects

Storm recovery works were completed across the network. This included a range of activities such as tree removal, fence repairs, repairing tracks, bridges, car parks and reinstating access

Some examples of parks infrastructure projects delivered are listed below.

Regional Park	Works completed
Te Rau Puriri	Automatic entrance gate installed (Dec 2023)
Long Bay	Mains water supply renewed throughout the park (Sept 2024)
Āwhitu	Platform/boardwalk and yards renewed (June 2023)
Waitawa	Toilet block refurbished at motorhome parking area (Feb 2024)
Āwhitu	Roof replaced at Āwhitu bach (May 2024)
Ōmana	Full upgrade of Perimeter Track (March 2024)
Hūnua Ranges	Main bridge reinstated at Hūnua Falls (Aug 2024). Shelter / water tank installed at lower Mangatawhiri campground (Mar 2024). Hūnua Traverse opened (Dec 2023).
Waitākere Ranges	Cascade Kauri – new toilet block installed (Dec 2023).
Shakespear	Carpark and driveway resealed at Army Bay (July 2023)

The completion of the new workshop at Shakespear Regional Park is a project a long time in the planning but now successfully completed. The workshop setup for the past 8 years (shown below) consisted of two containers joined by a shelter structure, set up in 2017 after the original workshop was no longer operational due to flooding.



Below is the new, purpose-built Shakespear Regional Park workshop which was formally opened in November 2023. Ngāti Manuhiri were present to bless the workshop and gifted the name Hau Taiao to the building.

This facility is designed to enhance the delivery of pest management programmes at the sanctuary and support the volunteers who help with this important work.



The workshop is now a hub for all the park operations, with space for woodworking including trap box building, storage of traps, baits and lures and a hygienic conservation room for supplementary feed for wildlife. The building includes toilets, and a kitchenette with spectacular views across Ōkoromai Bay, where staff and volunteers can enjoy a break.

The building design allows rainwater to be harvested, which will be used in the nearby nursery, and solar panels on the roof provide for the daytime needs of the workshop. Excess power is fed back into the grid to offset costs.

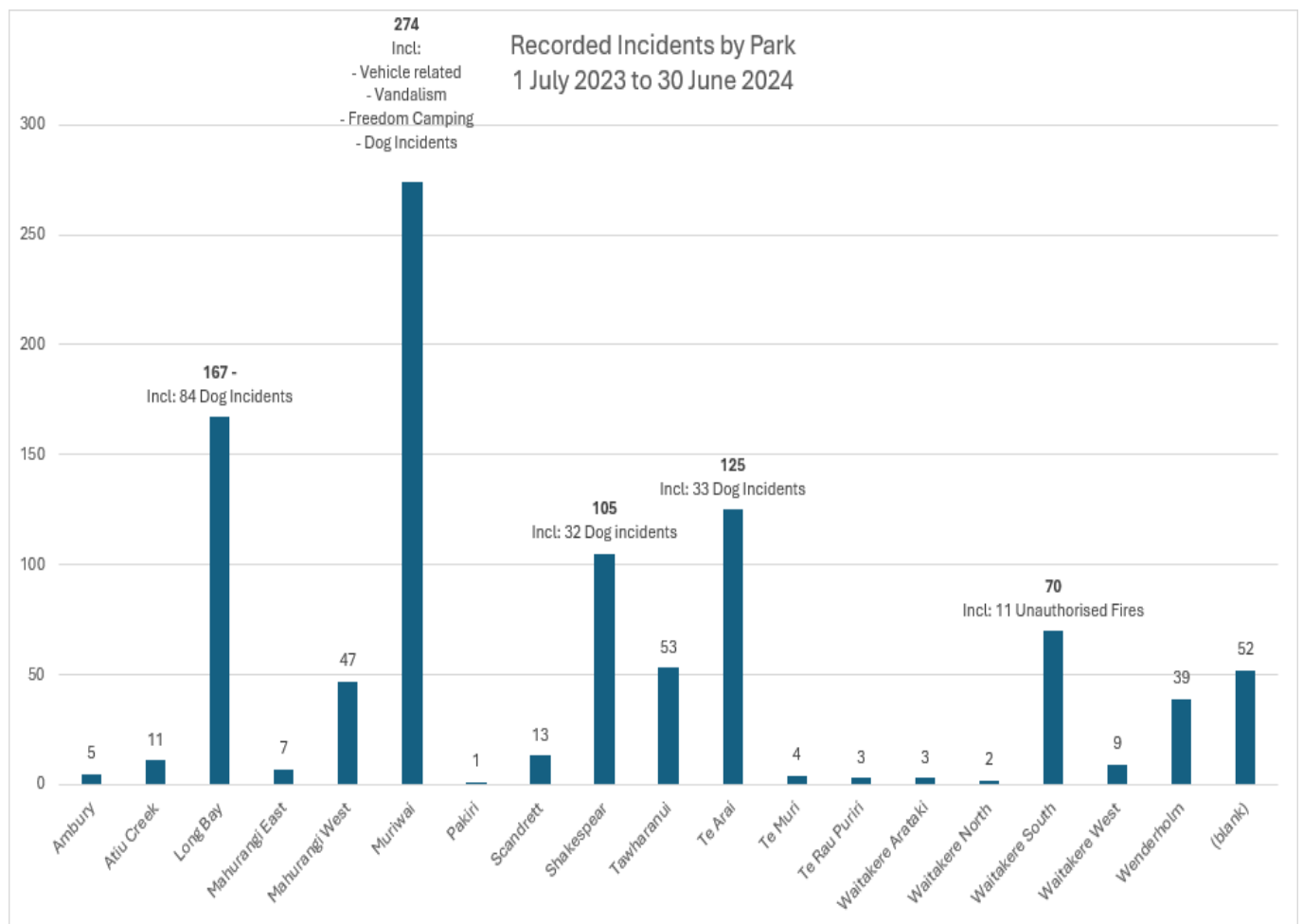
5. Issues and challenges

There are a range of issues and challenges our rangers face daily in the operational management of regional parks. These include park infrastructure failures, visitor pressures, impacts from public vehicle use in vulnerable environments, safety incidents, dogs, the impacts of recurring storm events and restrictions on funding.

Water leaks (both stock and potable water) are a common occurrence due to the ageing water supply infrastructure. These are often expensive to fix and / or replace, requiring works to be staged for inclusion in the annual capex work programme.

Visitor numbers continue to increase across the parks network, which brings its own set of challenges. Peak summer season results in traffic congestion and parking issues in the most popular parks such as Long Bay, requiring additional cost to provide specialist traffic management contractors on site in some locations. Increasing visitor numbers also puts pressure on visitor infrastructure, e.g. toilets and amenities, some of which also need upgrading or replacement.

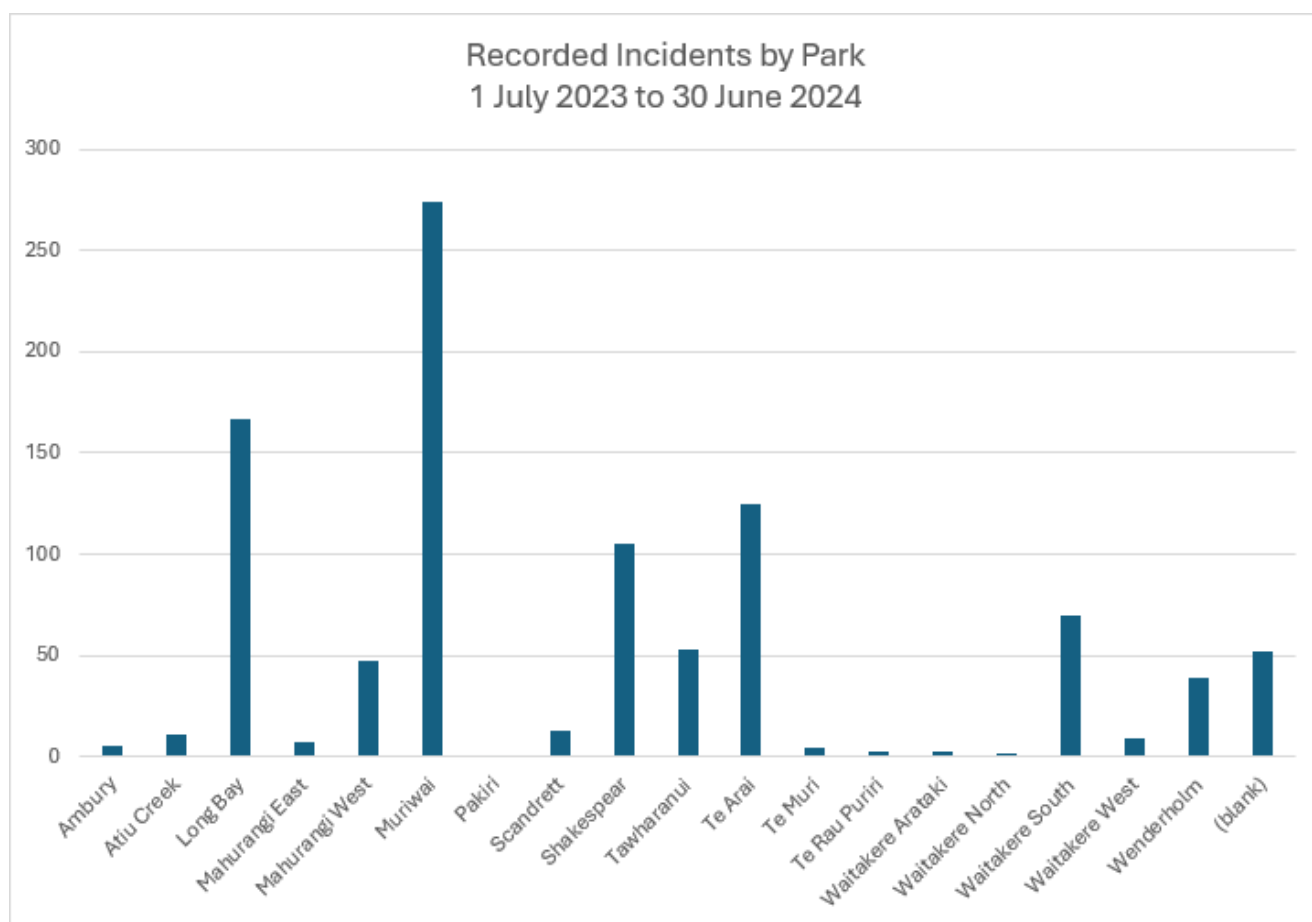
Safety incidents on parks range from personal injuries from walking on tracks to serious incidents that sometimes result in deaths. Water safety is a primary concern in some parks, where there have been repeated drownings.



In the larger parks, visitors can sometimes get lost, resulting in search and rescue call-outs to emergency management agencies, often supported by park rangers. Sadly, regional parks are also sometimes the location where people choose to end their lives, which can have a significant impact on parks staff responding to such events.

Dogs brought onto regional parks by visitors is an ongoing issue and can have a major impact on vulnerable bird species, particularly in the open sanctuaries. Dogs can also become a nuisance to other park users. Rangers do approach dog owners when they are on the park and in most instances the owner will be responsible and leave the park, however this is not always the case. Parks staff work closely with the Auckland Council Animal Management team to look at new ways to educate the public and enforce the dog access rules.

Visitor safety and park ranger safety can also be adversely affected by the aggressive and intimidating behaviour of some park visitors. Rangers are trained to de-escalate these situations, but in some instances their only recourse is to call for police support to deal with threatening or violent incidents.



Long Bay and Muriwai are two regional parks experiencing the highest number of visitors, so it is not unexpected that they also have the highest number of incidents recorded. It should be noted that not all incidents are reported, e.g. number of dogs on parks, due to their regularity, however all significant incidents have been captured.

6. Success stories

6.1 Hihi at Shakespear

40 hihi – one of NZ’s rarest forest birds – have been translocated from the nearby Tiritiri Matangi Island to Shakespear Regional Park’s open sanctuary, which has become a pest-free haven for threatened native bird species and invertebrates.

Auckland Council, the Shakespear Open Sanctuary Society (SOSSI) and Ngāti Manuhiri Settlement Trust worked in partnership over the past few months to achieve this significant conservation milestone, with support from the Hihi Conservation Charitable Trust, the Department of Conservation Hihi Recovery Group, and Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi.

In the late 1880s, hihi lived in multiple forest locations across the North Island but the only naturally surviving population now is on Te Hauturu-o-Toi / Little Barrier Island. Since 2004, a North Island-focused recovery plan led by the Department of Conservation has been successful at establishing seven populations on predator-free islands and protected sanctuaries. But hihi recovery remains uncertain and recovery planning is guided by a strong adaptive management framework to learn and improve.



A male hihi (left) and female bird. Photo: Janice McKenna.

The project team is aiming to establish the eighth secure hihi population in New Zealand and the open sanctuary has all the factors needed for the translocation to succeed. The first nest, with three chicks were banded in late October 2024, followed by a second nest with four chicks in early November 2024.

The open sanctuary is already home to many well-known native birds including the korimako (bellbird), kākārīki (red-crowned parakeet), kererū (pigeon), ruru (morepork), kotare (kingfisher), pīwakawaka (fantail), tauhou (silveryeye) and tūī. It’s hoped the hihi will thrive alongside other species that have successfully been translocated like the kiwi pukupuku (little spotted kiwi), popokatea (whitehead), toutouwai (robin), and tīeke (North Island saddleback).

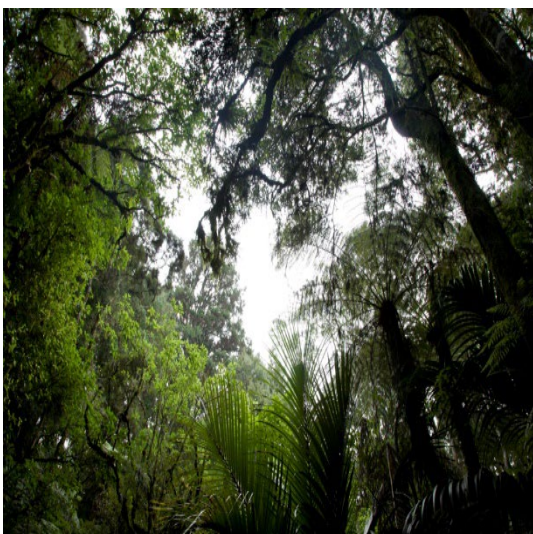
6.2 Awards

Several regional parks received Green Flag awards from Recreation Aotearoa in 2023, with Ōmana, Ātiu Creek, the Hūnua Ranges West and Waitākere Ranges receiving an award for the first time. The Green Flag Award scheme is an international quality mark for parks and green spaces, which assesses parks on criteria such as quality of services, safety, maintenance, community involvement and sustainability.

Ambury Regional Park is located in Māngere Bridge with expansive views along the coastline of the Manukau Harbour. The park provides up-close encounters with farm animals and the chance to see a working farm in action. The park's BBQ and picnic sites are popular, along with its walking and bike trails, camping, and bird watching. Ambury Farm Day, held in September, is an annual highlight when animals and people are brought together from around the region. Ambury has achieved Green Flag status for several years now.



Waitākere Ranges Regional Park has been awarded Green Flag status for the first time this year. A major attraction is the newly reopened Arataki Visitor Centre and viewing platform, along with the Arataki Nature Trail through Te Waonui-a-Tiriwa / the great forest of Tiriwa.



Long Bay, Tāwharanui, Shakespear, Ambury, Ātiu Creek, Wenderholm, Whakanewha and Tāpapakanga regional parks have previously received Green Flag Awards.

7. Financial position

Overall capex funding in financial year 2023/2024 for planned maintenance /renewal and development of parks infrastructure was \$6.7m. Total expenditure was around \$5.1m, resulting from the re-prioritisation of projects to focus on storm recovery works across the network.

Capex funding approved for financial year 2024/2025 financial year is around \$5.5m. Changes to projects planned for delivery may occur due to a re-allocation of funding or new priorities arising over the financial year.

8. Reporting

The Implementation Plan for financial year 2024/2025, outlining projects proposed to be included in the Regional Work Programme for that year, was presented to the Parks Committee in October 2024.



A second annual report on progress in implementation will be provided to the Parks Committee in 2025.

