

Memorandum

5 June 2019

To:	Environment and Community Committee, the Independent Māori Statutory Board and all local boards
Subject:	Update on kauri dieback management, including track upgrade plan for the Waitākere Ranges
From:	Gael Ogilvie, General Manager Environmental Services Rachel Kelleher, Regional Parks Manager

Purpose

- To provide an update on:
 - kauri dieback management in the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges Regional Parks over the past twelve months, including the track upgrade plan for the Waitākere Ranges
 - Auckland Council's wider kauri dieback management programme.

Summary

- In May 2018, Auckland Council closed nine high risk tracks in the Hunua Ranges Regional Park and the entire forested area of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, except for 34 tracks, to manage the spread of kauri dieback.*
- Compliance monitoring on closed tracks shows high levels of compliance overall. For most of the last 12 months Auckland Council has focused on encouraging voluntary compliance. Regulatory enforcement has recently been introduced to support this.*
- Since the closures, maintenance or upgrades have been completed on 20 open tracks in the Hunua Ranges, Waitākere Ranges and other regional parks to ensure tracks remain at required standards.*
- Eight closed tracks have also been re-opened following upgrade works in Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.*
- The result of these works is that 18km more of track are now open to the public and upgraded to kauri safe standard, with up to 26 kms expected to be kauri safe by 30 June 2019.*
- In February 2019 public consultation was undertaken on a plan for prioritising further track upgrades within Waitākere Ranges Regional Park. A strong theme from this consultation was a desire to see more recreational access to the ranges (see report on feedback in appendix A).*
- Based on this feedback, staff have now confirmed the final track upgrade plan for the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park (Appendix B). The main change to the plan is the inclusion of more tracks for re-opening, including Spragg's Bush, Cutty Grass and McElwain Lookout Tracks. Several other tracks have also been identified for further investigative work to determine options for partial re-opening. Te Kawerau ā Maki supports the plan.*
- Across the region, local parks have been prioritised for track upgrades based on kauri ecosystem value and recreational use (see Appendix C). Tracks in 17 local parks have been closed and another 29 local parks will be fully or partially closed over the next fortnight.*
- Scoping is almost complete to assess track upgrade requirements in high priority local board areas. Local board approvals for these works will be sought from July to December 2019.*
- The National Pest Management Plan for kauri dieback has been presented to Cabinet and is expected to be operative by late 2019. Some elements of the plan are more stringent than previously signalled and may require the closure of some additional tracks in local parks. Staff will provide further updates on the implications of the National Pest Management Plan for the Council's budgets and land management approach once confirmed.*

Context/Background

2. In April 2018, the Environment and Community Committee resolved to close high-risk tracks within the Hunua Ranges Regional Park and forested areas of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park to respond to the on-going spread and impacts of kauri dieback (ENV/2018/44).
3. Track and park closures were implemented from 1 May 2018, at the same time as Controlled Area Notices were placed over both the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges regional parkland by the Ministry for Primary Industries. A Controlled Area Notice is a mechanism under the Biosecurity Act that places controls to manage the movement of risk material, in this instance soil, across open tracks and parkland
4. When they approved the closures, the Environment and Community Committee requested that staff report back on the closures and other kauri dieback management activities after twelve months.
5. This memo provides an update on park and track closures, and the proposed track upgrade strategy for the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park (see Appendix A). It also provides an update on recent developments in the wider regional context for kauri dieback management.

Discussion

Waitākere and Hunua Ranges Regional Parks: Compliance with closures

6. Since the closures were implemented compliance has been undertaken to enforce the Controlled Area Notices and assist with the closure of tracks. The initial focus was on education to support voluntary compliance, and data collection to monitor visitor responses to the track closures.
7. Over the past 16 months staff have undertaken track monitoring on closed tracks using track counters and cameras. Monitoring has recorded some ongoing use on the majority of tracks although this has been at relatively low levels, with an average of five to six people movements per week. The main exception was Kitekite Track where approximately 19 people movements per week were recorded. As a high-use track this represents less than three per cent of normal use (pre-closure) during that time.
8. Over Easter 2019 a compliance 'blitz' was carried out over four days with up to 30 staff a day in the Hunua and Waitākere Ranges. Overall compliance was high, with only 0.2 per cent non-compliance observed. Over 3,500 people were observed in total. Of these, seven were non-compliant and were issued trespass notices. A further 50 received warning notices based on vehicles parked at closed track locations.
9. The majority of non-compliant visitors spoken to in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park were local residents.
10. The Licensing and Regulatory Compliance Department have taken over kauri dieback compliance for a 12-month trial period, starting April 2019. Track ambassadors will continue to support the team with education and advocacy over the high usage summer months.

Waitākere and Hunua Ranges Regional Parks: Infrastructure update

Hunua Ranges Regional Park – track closures and upgrades

11. From 1 May 2018, nine high risk tracks were closed in the Hunua Ranges. The focus over the past twelve months has been to ensure that open tracks are maintained to a standard that enables visitors to meet the Controlled Area Notice requirements. This has been achieved through maintenance of open tracks (to ensure they meet 'dry foot' standards) and upgrades to meet current best practice kauri safe standards where required.
12. As shown in Table 1 below maintenance and upgrades have been completed on five tracks and planning work is underway for four more, including the closed Waharau Loop Track.
13. The Hunua Falls have also had two new multi-access cleaning stations designed and installed at the entrance and exit points.

Table 1. Hunua closed track upgrade progress

Track name	Upgrade status	Track status
Wairoa-Cossey Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Cossey Gorge Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Falls Loop Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Wairoa Loop Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Open
Suspension Bridge Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Open
Massey Track	Works planned	Open (Kauri Loop section remains closed)
Southern Wairoa Loop Track	Works planned	Open
Ernie's Track	Works planned	Open
Waharau Loop Track	Works planned	Remains closed

Waitākere Ranges Regional Park – track closures and upgrades

14. The entire forested area of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park was closed to the public except for 34 tracks which remained open or partially open. The tracks that remained open are subject to a Controlled Area Notice.
15. The focus over the past twelve months has been to bring closed tracks to current best practice kauri safe standards so they can be re-opened. All track upgrades include assessment of hygiene station requirements and, where necessary, new stations are being installed. As Table 2 shows, eight closed tracks have been upgraded to kauri safe standards and re-opened.
16. Maintenance work has also been carried out on six open tracks to ensure they remain at required standards, particularly as many are experiencing increased use as a result of closures.

Table 2. Progress on Waitākere closed and open track upgrades

Track name	Upgrade status	Track status
Lower Nature Trail	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Kitekite Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Byers Walk	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Knutzen Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Connect Track (partial from Kitekite Track to top of falls)	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Comans Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Zig Zag Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Re-opened
Mercer Bay Loop	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Lake Wainamu Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Beveridge Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Arataki Lookout Track	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Upper Nature Trail	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open
Upper Nihotupu Walk	Maintenance to keep to kauri safe standard	Open

Waitākere Ranges – Consultation on track re-openings

17. In February 2019, a public consultation process was carried out to seek feedback on a draft plan for re-opening tracks in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park from 2019/2020 onwards.
18. The plan proposed tracks for upgrade work and reopening over a five-year work programme. The purpose of the consultation process was to seek feedback on how the public would like to see the listed tracks prioritised for opening and whether there were any additional tracks that should be included or removed from the plan.
19. Over 700 pieces of feedback were received during the eight-week consultation period, through various channels, including an online survey, community meetings and drop-in sessions, and one-on-one meetings with affected residents. Data and comments from the consultation process were analysed and reported back to Council (see Appendix A) by Buzz Channel, a consultancy with expertise in public engagement processes.
20. A little over a third of submitters (35 per cent) agreed with the proposed track re-opening plan, while 61 per cent disagreed, saying the proposed plan did not provide a good balance between recreational experiences and forest health.
21. Those who felt the proposed plan provided an appropriate balance were generally supportive of the tracks selected for prioritisation and the plan around which tracks would be open over the next five years. They also felt the proposed plan balanced the need for recreation in the Waitākere Ranges with the need to protect kauri and forest health more broadly.
22. The general sentiment among those who do not feel the current plan provides the right balance, is a desire for more access to the Waitākere Ranges. Very few submitters identified tracks that should be removed from the plan.

Waitākere Ranges – Track re-opening work programme

23. In finalising the list of tracks to be included in the detailed five-year track upgrade work programme (Appendix B) staff have taken into account the submissions received through the public consultation process and input from Te Kawerau ā Maki and workshop discussions with the Waitākere Ranges Local Board. This combined feedback has been considered alongside criteria aimed at supporting forest health and reducing the spread of kauri dieback disease.
24. Staff have also considered alignment with the National Pest Management Plan being developed by the Ministry of Primary Industries, which includes mandatory standards for management agencies and landowners.
25. In developing the timing of track work in the plan, operational factors have also been considered, such as:
 - would the proposed works require consent
 - current contractor and staff capacity
 - opportunities to deliver works in an efficient manner whilst also ensuring a good geographic spread of work, recognising the local importance of many tracks.
26. The main changes to the plan, following public feedback are the inclusion eight additional tracks including Spragg's Bush, Cutty Grass and McElwain Lookout Tracks for re-opening within the next five years. Further investigative work is planned for some additional tracks identified as important to the community where partial track openings may be possible.
27. The plan is supported by Te Kawerau ā Maki.
28. As shown in Appendix B, most of the tracks which have not been included for upgrades in the next five years either:
 - a. run through areas of high value, non-symptomatic kauri or are in the inner forest area, meaning that re-opening them would be inconsistent with the biosecurity approach and principles of the rāhui
 - b. were only mentioned by a very small number of submitters (less than 15) as a priority for opening.

29. No decisions have been made on whether tracks not included in the five-year track upgrade plan will be permanently closed. This will be considered as part of the Regional Parks Management Plan review starting in 2020.

Kauri dieback management in other regional parks

30. Staff have assessed and are implementing kauri dieback mitigation measures throughout other regional parks with kauri. As shown in Table 3 upgrades or maintenance have been completed or are underway on nine tracks in Tawharanui, Shakespear, Wenderholm, Glenfern and Awhitu Regional Parks.

Table 3. Closed track upgrade progress for other regional parks

Regional Park	Track name	Upgrade status	Track status
Tawharanui Regional Park	Tawharanui Ecology Trail	Upgrade underway	Open
Shakespear Regional Park	Waterfall Gully Track (heritage trail)	Upgrade underway	Open
Wenderholm Regional Park	Puhoi Track	Upgrade underway	Open
Wenderholm Regional Park	Perimeter Track	Maintenance underway	Open
Wenderholm Regional Park	Couldrey House Track	Maintenance underway	Open
Glenfern Regional Park	Access Road	Upgrade underway	Open
Awhitu Regional Park	Kauri Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Open
Awhitu Regional Park	Dam Loop	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Open
Awhitu Regional Park	Shady Gully Track	Upgrade to kauri safe standards completed	Open

31. In total, across all regional parks staff have carried out upgrades on 8 kilometres of track. Because tracks are closed even if only one section of a longer track requires upgrades to be kauri safe, the result of this work is that an additional 18 kilometres of open track now reaches kauri safe standards.

32. Further works are underway with 26 kilometres expected to be open and at kauri safe standards by the end of the financial year – 30 June 2019.

Local parks update: Prioritisation of kauri dieback mitigation

33. Staff are assessing and implementing kauri dieback mitigation measures in local parks. A more detailed summary of the process being used to prioritise these upgrades is shown in Appendix C.

34. The first step in prioritising local parks for kauri dieback mitigation is to understand the extent and state of kauri on local parks. A desktop review identified 376 local parks with kauri.

35. Parks have been categorised as either:

- Category A – Parks with high or medium kauri ecosystem value and high or medium recreational value (prioritise for temporary closure and track upgrades).
- Category B – Parks with high or medium kauri ecosystem value but low recreational value.
- Category C – Parks with low kauri ecosystem value but high recreational value.
- Category D - Parks with low kauri ecosystem value and low recreational value.

36. Staff are verifying this initial assessment through site visits, and data will be updated in the next few weeks.
37. Five local board areas have been categorised as high priority for kauri mitigation on local parks. These areas have lots of local parks with high ecological and recreational value.
38. Local board areas have been ranked medium or low priority for kauri mitigation if they have fewer parks with high value kauri and high recreational use (more detail regarding this process is shown in Appendix C).
39. A summary of the prioritisation of all 21 local boards is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Prioritisation of local board areas based on potential for kauri dieback mitigation

Local Board Area	Priority	Number of local parks with kauri/kauri ecosystems	Category A Parks
Kaipātiki	High	36	12
Rodney	High	50	10
Upper Harbour	High	31	4
Waiheke	High	16	6
Waitākere Ranges	High	120	11
Franklin	Medium	27	2
Hibiscus and Bays	Medium	11	3
Ōrākei	Medium	9	2
Albert-Eden	Low	11	0
Henderson-Massey	Low	10	1
Howick	Low	3	1
Māngere-Ōtāhuhu	Low	2	0
Manurewa	Low	5	1
Maungakiekie-Tamaki	Low	4	0
Ōtara-Papatoetoe	Low	3	0
Papakura	Low	7	1
Puketāpapa	Low	14	0
Waitematā	Low	7	0
Whau	Low	10	0
Devonport-Takapuna	Low	0	0
Great Barrier Island	Low	0	0

40. Tracks have been temporarily closed in 17 high priority local parks.
41. As a result of further surveying to identify areas in need of protection, tracks in another 29 local parks will be fully or partially closed over the next fortnight.
42. This will provide interim protection until tracks have been upgraded to kauri safe standards.
43. Fieldwork has been completed to inform track upgrade scopes of work in the five high priority local board areas. Draft scoping documents and preliminary cost estimates for capital works are expected by mid-June. Stakeholder and local board workshops to discuss the options are anticipated to be held in July and August 2019.
44. Mana whenua have had input into the prioritisation and mitigation planning through three hui in early 2019, and individually for specific local parks.

Tāmaki Makaurau - Auckland kauri dieback regional programme update

Surveillance

45. The Auckland region has a rolling surveillance programme that is repeated every five years. In the next financial year the following areas will be surveyed:
 - local parks from south of the Harbour Bridge to Franklin (excluding regional parks such Hunua and Awhitu)
 - local parks in western Auckland
 - the gulf islands.

46. Scheduled surveillance will show changes in the distribution of kauri dieback symptoms over time. The lag time between trees becoming infected and showing symptoms is uncertain but thought to be several years. Therefore, the extent of the disease is likely to be more widespread than shown in previous surveys.
47. An update on the results of surveillance in 2018/2019 will be provided by October 2019.

Treatment and research

48. Phosphite is being experimentally trialed to better understand its potential as a treatment for kauri dieback disease in different situations. Treatment protocols will be updated in response to new information. Current trials include:
 - As a treatment for large stands of diseased kauri. A long-term field trial in the Piha catchment is monitoring the progression of disease symptoms trees treated with phosphite. In 2018/2019 the Council treated 7,019 trees.
 - As a treatment for individual trees and small stands.
 - As a barrier to prevent disease spread into healthy stands.

Hygiene stations

49. 11 high volume hygiene stations have been installed to support track openings and biosecurity requirements, including one station at the Pier 2 Ferry terminal.
50. Over 300 hygiene stations on council land will be replaced with stations that meet the standards of the new National Pest Management Plan for kauri dieback over the next two years from 2019 to 2021.
51. Additional specialist hygiene station designs are being tested for bikes and vehicle wash downs at council depots and ferry terminals.

Communications and engagement

52. There have been two communications focus periods in the last 12 months:
 - communications around the closures in May 2018
 - communications over the summer period from 1 December 2018 to 30 April 2019.
53. Key messages through these periods have been:
 - building awareness of park and track closures
 - scrub, spray and stay
 - promotion of alternative park destinations
 - Kitekite track re-opening
 - Easter compliance blitz.
54. During the May 2018 closure phase, publicity across the channels was driven by reaction to the decision, with media widely covering both sides of the story. The resulting outcome was broad coverage reaching an approximate 2 million readers, listeners and viewers.
55. The May marketing campaign included radio, print ads, social media (Facebook), digital display banners, letterbox flyers and ads in response to searches – this achieved 9.7 million impressions and 23,400 click throughs and reached a total of 490,100 people.
56. The summer 2018/19 campaign included radio, press ads, OurAuckland, social (Facebook and Instagram), digital display banners and ads in response to searches. Together this achieved 2.56 million impressions and reached 615,000 people.
57. A 'Keep Kauri Standing' e-newsletter is dispatched monthly to around 1,000 Aucklanders who have indicated interest in the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges tracks.

Engagement and Education 2018/19

58. A series of free public science talks has been held at Arataki Visitor Centre in 2019, with invited speakers from research institutes outlining their research projects into kauri dieback disease.

Each session has seen a full venue, and has been live-streamed on social media, with an average of close to 700 views per talk so far.

59. More than 30 full, and part-time kauri dieback ambassadors have worked across the Auckland region to educate and engage the public. This has included the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges, northern regional parks, Waiheke Island, Great Barrier Island, and at wharves at Half Moon Bay, Devonport, and downtown Auckland, to engage with visitors heading to the Hauraki Gulf islands.
60. Staff have also attended many events over the past year, including the Eye on Nature schools' event, the Kauri Karnival, Matariki events, Sculpture on the Gulf on Waiheke, mountain biking, running, and orienteering events across the region. Nearly 20 schools have also been engaged.

Kauri dieback National Pest Management Plan update

61. The Kauri Dieback National Programme is developing a National Pest Management Plan for kauri dieback. Auckland Council has two members on the governance group that has overseen the process. Biosecurity New Zealand (Ministry for Primary Industries) have led extensive public consultation on the plan – a summary of feedback is available on the kauri dieback website: <https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/consultation/>
62. The National Pest Management Plan proposal has been presented to Cabinet and is expected to come into effect in September or October 2019.
63. A new management agency is likely to be set up to lead implementation of the National Pest Management Plan. The nature of this agency has still not been finalised.
64. Auckland Council will be a key partner in the formation of a regional coordination group that will deliver the National Pest Management Plan priorities within the Auckland region. It is not yet clear what decision-making mandate the regional committee will have. However, there is a clearly signaled shift towards a model of multi-party shared decision-making.
65. The plan proposes that the Treaty partnership is front and center and is reflected at all levels.

National Pest Management Plan implications for Auckland Council's land management

66. Rules within the National Pest Management Plan will affect council's autonomy in decisions as a land manager.
67. The proposal that has gone to Cabinet contains stricter track standard requirements than had been signaled earlier in the plan development process. All public tracks through kauri forest will have to meet kauri safe standards as soon as the plan is operative (i.e. late 2019), or else be closed. Earlier drafts of the plan allowed three years for tracks to be upgraded to the standard.
68. Most kauri forest tracks on regional parks are already either closed or upgraded, therefore will be unaffected by the rule.
69. Local park tracks with medium or high kauri ecosystems value are already recommended for closure and upgrade and therefore are also unaffected (97 parks).
70. Local park tracks that are most likely to be affected by the track standards rule are tracks in parks with low kauri ecosystem value but high recreational value (Category C in Appendix C, 91 parks).
71. It is also possible that some tracks in local parks with low kauri ecosystem value and low recreational value (189 parks) may be affected, although this is not yet confirmed.
72. Staff will provide further advice on the impact of the new standards on the council's prioritisation of closures and track upgrades once the National Pest Management Plan is confirmed.

Financial implications

73. Auckland Council is forecasting an investment of \$4.8 million into kauri dieback management for the 2018/2019 financial year to date.
74. The vast majority of this funding comes from the natural environment targeted rate – which has significantly increased the council's budget for kauri dieback management activities.
75. This includes \$2.3 million capital expenditure on track upgrades and other infrastructure works, including \$1.84 million on regional parks and \$630,000 on local parks. Most areas of expenditure

are tracking to forecast, although local park infrastructure upgrades are behind in spend due to time required to assess assets, set up new systems and facilitate local board decision-making.

76. The council has also invested \$2.5 million of operational expenditure, including

- surveillance and monitoring - \$130,000
- treatment and research - \$241,000
- compliance, engagement and behaviour change - \$1,429,000
- tracks upgrade regional parks opex - \$616,000
- tracks upgrade local parks opex - \$73,000.

77. The council will invest a further \$5.15 million opex and \$10.15 million capex into kauri dieback management in 2019/2020. The largest areas of investment will be track upgrades and behaviour change initiatives, including enforcement of closures and public education.

Risks and mitigations

78. Effective management of kauri dieback spread and impacts continues to be affected by a variety of risks. Key risks are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Key risks to kauri dieback programme

Risk description	Risk type, likelihood and consequence	Mitigation
New National Pest Management Plan track standards may increase cost of track upgrades and require more tracks to stay closed for longer.	Likelihood: High Consequence: High Risk type: Financial, Reputational	Staff will assess and close tracks to ensure the council is compliant with the new standard. Further prioritisation of track upgrades may be required to adjust the timing of upgrades, including consideration of recreational value of some tracks.
Unknown lag time between disease spread and observable symptoms, which limits our understanding of disease distribution and how effective various management options are. Lag time means surveillance will continue to measure increased spread, despite council's activity.	Likelihood: High Consequence: High Risk type: Operations, Reputational, Environmental	Focus on spread prevention, based on best available knowledge. Continue adaptive management approach and trial new management approaches in collaboration with research agencies.
Current approach inadequate to protect urban kauri where public land can be accessed from multiple points on private land.	Likelihood: High Consequence: Medium Risk type: Operations	Develop new compliance, educational and infrastructure upgrade measures specific to urban situations.
Constrained contractor market for track upgrades to kauri safe standards	Likelihood: High Consequence: Medium Risk type: Operations	Upskill wider contractor pool using Project 17 full facilities maintenance contractors. Ensure quality through prescriptive engineering standards and increased training and audit capacity. Upskill regional parks staff and contractors to deliver less complex track mitigations.

Risk description	Risk type, likelihood and consequence	Mitigation
Risks to other recreation areas through the displacement of visitors from closed kauri areas. This may place pressure on parks infrastructure including ongoing maintenance costs. In addition, it may impact on visitor experience.	Likelihood: High Consequence: Medium Risk type: Environmental, Reputational	Staff will engage in a regional planning process to identify recreational areas which are being most impacted and may require additional investment in infrastructure or a higher level of maintenance.

Next steps/implementation

79. 71 kilometres of track network is scheduled to be upgraded across regional parks in 2019/2020, including tracks in Waitākere Ranges, Hunua and Awhitu Regional Parks.
80. The forward work programme for local park track upgrades will be confirmed in August 2019. Tracks within 43 high priority Category A local parks will be scheduled for works across the next two years.
81. Further work is required to assess the implications of the forthcoming National Pest Management Plan for track upgrade priorities and other budgeted spend. Staff will assess the implications of the track standards rule for local parks, and a small number of regional park tracks that might be affected (e.g. Hunua).
82. This work will be completed by August 2019 to inform future local board decision-making. Staff will seek approval from local boards for additional track closures and track upgrade priorities.
83. Staff will also provide an update to the appropriate committee on implications of the National Pest Management Plan at a regional level for council's approach to kauri dieback management.
84. Finally, the next annual update on kauri dieback management will be provided in June 2020.

Attachments

Appendix A: Feedback report on proposed track upgrades in Waitākere Ranges Regional Park

Appendix B: Track upgrade plan for Waitākere Ranges Regional Park

Appendix C: Local parks track upgrade prioritisation process