



Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area News

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Dear resident,



The Waitakere Ranges have been officially recognised as a place of national significance.

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act was passed by Parliament in April. The act is a major milestone in the long and varied history of the ranges and will ensure that the character and heritage of the area is kept intact well into the future.

This recognition and the opportunities for protection and development in the ranges is fantastic news. The ranges have been a source of inspiration, of recreation, of livelihood, and home to countless people from all walks of life over many generations. It is a great tribute to the people of New Zealand that this place, that many compare to the most beautiful landscapes in the world, will be preserved in perpetuity.

The great challenge for the ranges has been the fact that the area is a huge patchwork of private properties, public land, parks, bush, farms, orchards and baches. Now, under the act, the entire area is covered by one key piece of legislation that is designed to preserve its many distinctive characters; from West Coast beaches, to the bays of the Manukau Harbour, to the rural blocks of Oratia and Swanson.

The ranges have sustained so many people in so many ways throughout history; from providing for Maori in

ancient times, through the times of kauri logging and farming, and on to the wide range of homes, businesses and recreation activities that exist today. Now it is time for us to consider how we will sustain the ranges unique natural assets, the well-being of those who live there, and the places people love to visit.

To all that live in and visit the ranges, they are a precious place. Creating the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area will open up many opportunities to protect the stunning landscapes, to support bush, coastal and rural lifestyles and develop new social, cultural and economic opportunities.

Today, the Waitakere Ranges and immediate surroundings are home to 21,000 people, many essentially living in a rainforest. This is a rare situation anywhere in the world, where such a special natural environment sits on the edge of a major city.

The creation of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area will help meet the great challenge of maintaining the character of the rural, coastal and bush areas of the ranges alongside fast growing urban Auckland.

Mayor
Bob Harvey

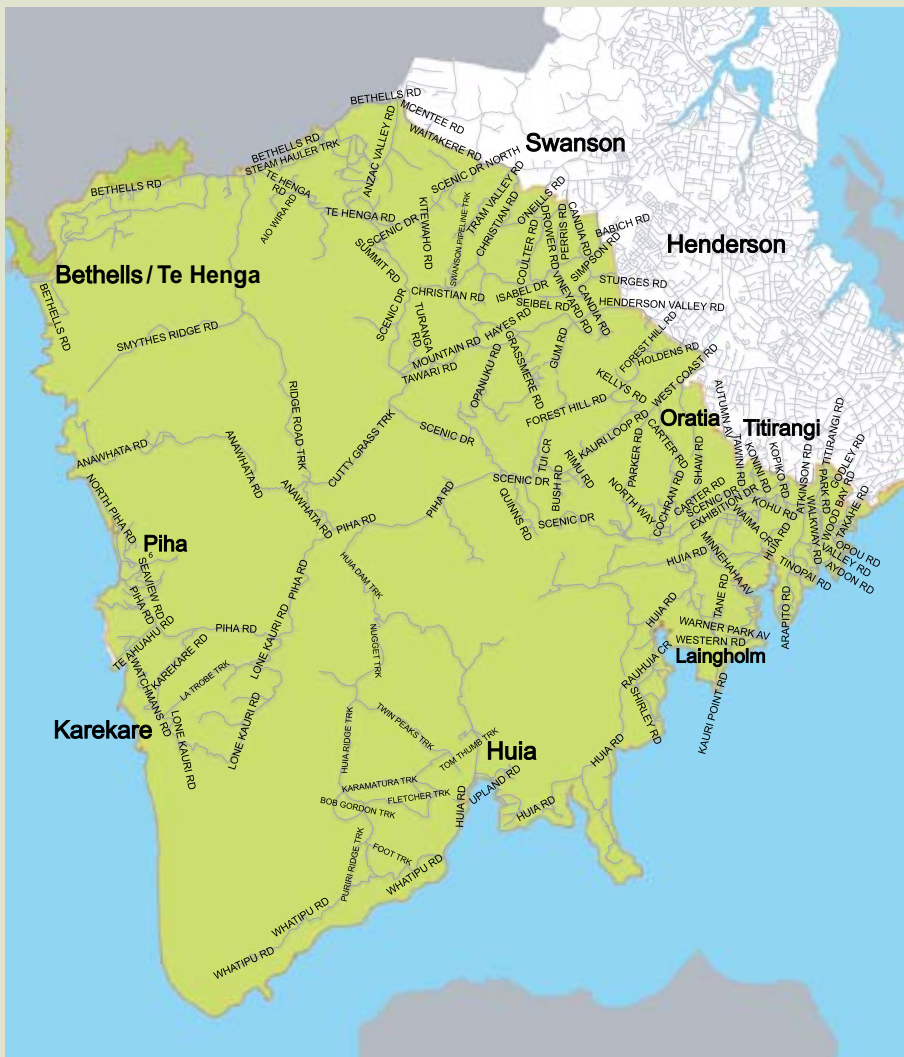


Where is the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area?

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act (2008) covers more than 27,720 hectares of public and private land including the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, the foothills areas of Titirangi, Oratia, Henderson Valley and Swanson, coastal villages such as Piha and Karekare, Manukau harbour villages such as Laingholm and Huia, and parts of south-west Rodney District, near Muriwai.

The act states the national significance of the area, establishes a set of objectives for managing the Heritage Area, and identifies heritage features that are individually and collectively valued. It will require the Auckland Regional Council, Waitakere City Council and Rodney District Council to follow the objectives in the act when preparing or considering any documents, policies, regulations, and resource consent applications.

The act provides for the development of Local Area Plans in consultation with local communities to identify and provide for long term objectives relating to the future amenity and character of the local area within the Heritage Area.



Why was an act needed?

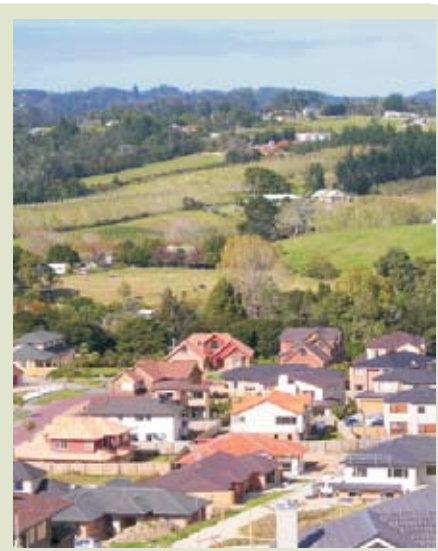
The Waitakere Ranges and foothills are under pressure from urban development- and have been for a number of years.

After extensive consultation and research, the Auckland Regional Council, Waitakere City Council, and Rodney District Council, found that the area identified as the Heritage Area needed greater protection.

The new act will not stop development, but it will look closely at the scale and

character of future developments so they fit the character and heritage of the distinctive areas within the Heritage Area.

As an example, recently the level of development in areas such as Piha have started to negatively affect the character of the area, and its outstanding natural features have been impacted as a result.



Filling the gaps in existing regulations

The Resource Management Act and the Waitakere City District Plan have some limitations when it comes to managing the Waitakere Ranges for the people who now live there and also for future generations. These laws are also limited in the ways they can manage natural environments.

For example, if land is subdivided today and one or two houses are built there is very little impact on the area but once 99 to 100 houses are built an area changes

significantly. Working out when the level of development compromises the character of an area is known as considering the 'cumulative' effects of incremental development. There is a lack of guidance about the thresholds of future development and no long-term certainty to protect and preserve the varying environments and communities of the Heritage Area.

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act provides a framework and guidance to more effectively plan for the well-being of resident communities while protecting and enhancing this area.



Know it, love it, feed it!



The creation of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area offers a great opportunity for people to get the best out of the area and give their best to it. The act will look at making sure that both the ranges environment and economy is viable for the long term. It will encourage people to look at ways they can protect important natural features on their land while at the same time discovering further options for making a living in keeping with the character of their community.

It will enable different environments to complement one another in the transition from wilderness areas, coasts and harbours through rural districts to the urban city.

It's not only about the bush!

The Waitakere Ranges has many of the characteristics of New Zealand's great national parks, such as Tongariro National Park or Fiordland, but the big difference is the number of people living in the area and how much of the land is owned privately. It requires a special approach to protect both the outstanding natural areas and the lifestyles of residents in the area. The Heritage Area recognises not just the outstanding landscapes and natural environments, but also the rural character of the foothills and the villages and communities in places such as Titirangi, the West Coast beaches, and the Manukau Harbour.

There has been a lack of clarity in existing legislation about managing and protecting the variety of landscapes in the Heritage Area. While there are guidelines about outstanding and significant natural landscapes, these have generally been interpreted to mean wilderness environments, rather than mixed, rural or urban landscapes. The new act will take account of all the landscapes in the ranges, from coastal, to bush and urban, and manage the transition from the city to the coast.

The act will offer guidance in applying and integrating the Resource Management Act, the Local Government Act and other relevant legislation across both public and private land. These laws, including district plans and regional plans, have always fallen short of looking at the ranges as a whole, and their long term future for the next 20, 50 and 100 years.



Waitakere Ranges residents to plan their own future

The Act provides for the development of Local Area Plans to be prepared by the Council. These Plans are forward-looking in that they bring together community and the Council to identify the desired future character and environment of the local area. They will outline the unique characteristics of each community, what people value now and how they would like to preserve and protect their special character for the future. These Local Area Plans will also consider the social and economic needs of residents.

The Council has decided to first focus on the foothills area of the ranges and is considering how Local Area Plans can be usefully developed for this area.

Information and guides

The Council has information and guides available on the act and its requirements. These will assist people, communities, and those making resource consent applications to understand the provisions of the act. Information includes:

- Policy statement for the act
- Section by section summary of the act
- Descriptions of the Heritage Features
- Interpretation of Heritage Objectives
- Matters to consider when applying for a resource consent

A copy of the act can be found at www.waitakere.govt.nz/AbtCit/ne/ranges.asp. The Council will also be preparing guidelines and other public information in the near future. These will be available at the Council offices, and online at the council website.



A Community Information Pack on the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is now available. This pack contains information on a range of issues relevant to the Heritage Area including its history, culture and biodiversity, the Regional Park, information on protecting and restoring the ecology of the area, and information on community links and resources.

The pack is an initiative of the West Coast Plan Liaison Group, the Waitakere City Council and the Auckland Regional Council. Packs are available to all residents of the Heritage Area and will be distributed by local residents and ratepayers groups. Alternatively you can collect a pack from Customer Services at Waitakere City Council or download any of the pack contents from the following page www.waitakere.govt.nz/AbtCit/ne/ranges.asp

For further information, please ring the Waitakere City Council on 839 0400 and ask to speak to the Strategic Policy Analyst for the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. There is also further information available, including a copy of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008, at www.waitakere.govt.nz