

Report No.	24-53
Decision Required	

TOTARA RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN TEN YEAR REVIEW

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform Council of the option to review the **Tōtara Reserve Management Plan 2014 (TRMP)**, and to seek Council approval to begin this review in line with the process set out by the **Reserves Act 1977 (the Act)**.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. The Act provides the legislative framework for how Council manages, develops and disposes of its reserves.
- 2.2. The Act requires the Administering Body, in this case Horizons, to have a **Reserve Management Plan (RMP)** for Tōtara Reserve Regional Park and stipulates how the plans are developed and adopted.
- 2.3. This report provides detail on the:
- Financial costs (Section 4) and risks (Section 6) involved in a review;
 - History of management of Tōtara Reserve (Sections 8.1 - 8.5);
 - Current TRMP 2014 (Section 9);
 - Legal considerations of a review (Sections 11);
 - Management benefits of carrying out a review through 2024 (Section 10);
 - Public notification and submissions process proposed (Section 12) as required by The Act; and
 - Timeline for the proposed review process (Section 13).
- 2.4. The report seeks Council approval to review the TRMP including the required public notification and submission processes.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 24-53.
- b. approves the review of the Totara Reserve Management Plan 2014 including public notification and submissions process as per the provisions of the Act.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. Operating cost – Approximately \$10,000 is the anticipated cost of the public consultation process including: newspaper advertising, online survey software use (Social Pinpoint) and some printing costs.
- 4.2. Personnel cost – The review would be carried out by internal Horizons staff, namely:
- Biodiversity Team – coordinating the review, assisting with submissions process and writing the bulk of the draft management plan;

- Communications Team – overseeing the public submissions processes and analysis of submissions;
- Senior Policy Analyst – supporting the review process with advice to ensure it follows due process and that the draft TRMP includes required policy;
- Senior Advisor Iwi and Hapū Relations – supporting consultation and engagement with mana whenua throughout the review process; and
- Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Partnerships Manager – overseeing and supporting the review process.

4.3. Initiating the review in this financial year would enable the costs of the review to be spread across two financial years, mitigating the impact of these costs on annual budgets.

4.4. The above costs are able to be provisioned from within existing Annual Plan and the draft Long-term Plan budgets.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1. Community engagement is a requirement of a RMP review through a public consultation process. This is detailed in Section 11.

6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

6.1. There is no significant business risk arising from this item. Some of the legal and management risks are addressed in Section 9.6 – 9.10.

7. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT

7.1. In delivering works associated with this review there will be negligible impact on the climate in terms of the use of materials, fuels and other resources that are considered to contribute to climate impact because public consultation will be carried out largely online with the bare minimum of printed paper.

7.2. The TRMP review is an opportunity to incorporate consideration for climate change not currently addressed. Management to mitigate impacts on climate change through:

- Maximising the forest's positive impact on climate change by managing plant and animal pests on it;
- Incorporating restoration planting where appropriate;
- Integrating Mātauranga Māori principles and connections and the incorporation of nature-based solutions into management of the reserve; and
- Exploring options to manage the impact of increased temperatures and frequency of river inundation of the campground and surrounding forest.

8. TŌTARA RESERVE BACKGROUND

8.1. Tōtara Reserve is in the Pohangina Valley north of Ashhurst with the Pohangina River along the western boundary (Figure 1). Its 340 ha includes ecologically rare habitat remnants, large tracts of indigenous forest, a network of walking tracks, a campground and picnic spots, and with a rich history of use by local Iwi.

8.2. In 1886 the forest remnant was gazetted under the provisions of the State Forests Act (1885) as a '*reserve for growth and preservation of timber and for river conservation purposes*'. This status was cancelled in 1946 and replaced with Recreation Reserve status before being changed to Scenic Reserve status in 1975.

8.3. Administration of the reserve was passed from Pohangina County Council (1932) to Palmerston North City Council (1947) and to Manawatū District Council (1989).

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- 8.4. In 2006 Horizons partnered with Manawātū District Council to establish Tōtara Reserve as a Regional Park and shared its management until January 2012, when Tōtara Reserve was fully vested in Horizons which assumed full responsibility for the Regional Park.
- 8.5. The Tōtara Reserve Advisory Board was established in 2013 with representatives from the local community, Rangitāne o Manawātū and Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua, Horizons staff and councillors.

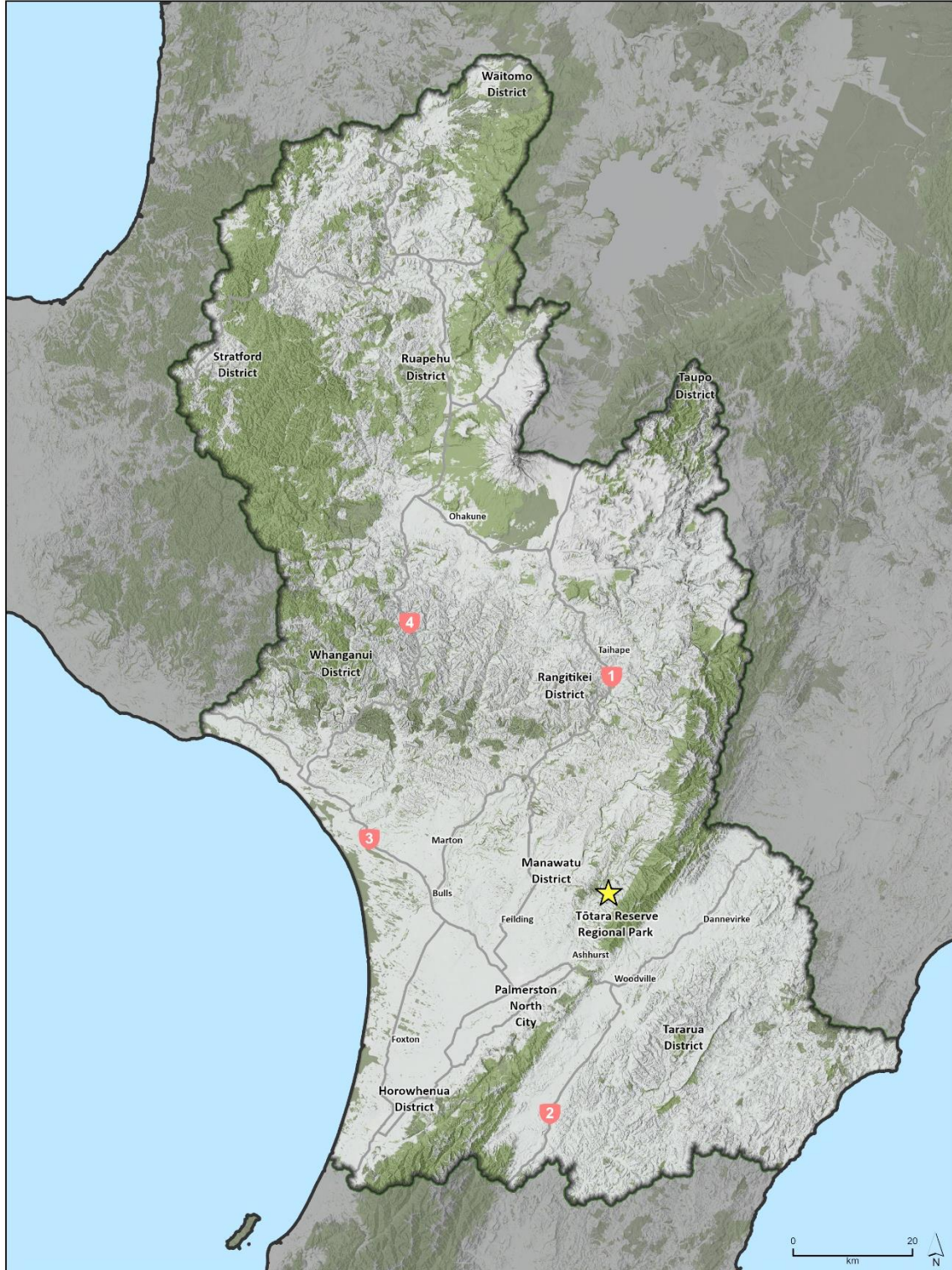


Figure 1: Location of Tōtara Reserve Regional Park.

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9. CURRENT TŌTARA RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 9.1. In accordance with the requirements of the Act Horizons, as administering body for Tōtara Reserve, was required to prepare a management plan within five years of appointment.
- 9.2. Creating a management plan for the reserve provided advantages which extend beyond compliance with the Act. These were:
- Providing the community with opportunity for input into the way the reserve was managed and preserved;
 - Setting objectives and policies for matters that were not covered by a bylaw or Council policy, for example – no dogs, provision for open fires under certain circumstances and rubbish management within the reserve;
 - Simplifying re-leasing of reserve land, in this case Camp Rangī Woods. If leasing land is anticipated in the TRMP, then Council is no longer required to pass a resolution and publicly notify its intention to renew a lease and hear submissions under the provisions of the Act;
 - If an RMP makes provisions for the issue of licences for certain complementary activities within reserves, such as coffee carts, then these licences could be issued simply and cost effectively in line with the fees and charges set by Council; and
- 9.3. Ultimately, the adoption of the TRMP provided more certainty to the community and reduced the time and cost involved with activities consistent with strategies, plans and policies of Council and the District Plan.
- 9.4. Before preparing the TRMP, Council was required to:
- Give public notice of its intention to do so; and
 - In that notice, invite interested persons and organisations to send to the administering body at its office written suggestions on the proposed plan within a time specified in the notice; and
 - In preparing that management plan, give full consideration to any such comments received.
- 9.5. Once the draft plan was prepared, Council was then required to publicly notify that the draft plan was available for inspection, inviting written objections and suggestions over a two-month period. Council was then required to provide a reasonable opportunity for anyone who wished to speak to their submission before considering submissions and adopting the TRMP.
- 9.6. With due process being followed, the TRMP was adopted in 2014.

10. PLAN REVIEW

- 10.1. Section 41(4) of The Act requires the administering body to keep its management plan 'under continuous review'. The Tōtara Reserve Asset Management Plan 2014 states the plan should be reviewed at ten-yearly intervals. Based on this timeframe, the review for Tōtara Reserve is due in 2024.
- 10.2. As per the initial development of an RMP, two phases of public consultation are required (under Section 41 of the Act) for a review of the plan. Initial engagement and response to a draft plan is explained in more detail under Section 11.
- 10.3. It is considered that there are advantages to reviewing the Plan at this time as:
- A review is an opportunity to ascertain public opinion on how the reserve has been managed in recent years and to obtain input into the future management of this area; and
 - A lot has changed during the previous 10 years and a number of management issues could be considered in a refresh of management plan Tōtara Reserve.

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- 10.4. New and/or important matters that could be updated or added to a refreshed TRMP include:
- Identifying Iwi as partners and ensure they are better reflected in more aspects of the management plan;
 - Including Statutory Acknowledgement of Rangitāne o Manawatū over the Pohangina River and Tōtara Reserve, from Treaty settlement in November 2015;
 - Including Area of Interest recognition for Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua over the area, given in August 2016;
 - Including Tōtara Reserve Advisory Board entity and detail its function;
 - Simplifying the authorisation process for collection of rongoā (traditional Māori medicine) species;
 - More fully addressing the growing impact of deer as a pest species;
 - Capturing the Camp Rangi Woods lease agreement in the Plan;
 - Updating staff delegations to authorise certain activities that are out of date due to changes in Horizons organisational structure;
 - Capturing the contracted roles and responsibilities for the campground;
 - Describing policies for recent developments in the reserve including the water treatment plant and its new legislative requirements;
 - Considering climate change impacts on the reserve;
 - Updating marketing policies;
 - Addressing key decisions around the future of maintaining camping facilities in their current location due to repeated impacts of significant flooding;
 - Updating the plan by capturing completed actions and incorporate new recommended actions to steer future activity; and
 - Updating the Development/Improvement Plan to include relevant recommendations from a recent investigation of reserve management via a spatial plan and the feedback from the community through the engagement process.

11. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1. Once Tōtara Reserve was vested in Horizons in 2012, Horizons became responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the reserve including recreational use within the powers delegated under Sections 55, 56, 61 of the Act and responsible for flood protection, erosion control, animal pest and weed control, and biodiversity enhancement under the Local Government Act 2002.
- 11.2. Section 41 of the Act sets out the provisions for RMPs. Section 41(3) states: 'The management plan shall provide for and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection, and preservation, as the case may require, and, to the extent that the administering body's resources permit, the development, as appropriate, of the reserve for the purposes for which it is classified, and shall incorporate and ensure compliance with the principles set out in section 17, section 18, section 19, section 20, section 21, section 22, or section 23, as the case may be, for a reserve of that classification'.
- 11.3. The function of an RMP in the context of local government therefore, is primarily in relation to use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection, and preservation of the reserve.
- 11.4. Section 41 of the Act outlines the legislative requirements for reviewing an RMP. Key milestones of the review process are outlined in 13. Timeline/Next steps.
- 11.5. The Local Government Act 2002 makes provision for the development of a Long-term Plan (LTP). In relation to Tōtara Reserve, the LTP is informed by the RMP.

Legal risks of not conducting a review

- 11.6. The plan must be consistent with the provisions of the Act and the classification of the reserve. As the administering body of the plan, Horizons is bound by the Act to comply with

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its plan. If Horizons undertakes actions that are misaligned with the TRMP, Horizons can be challenged by the community, stakeholders etc, and this poses a reputation risk. There is also a legal risk if it breaches the TRMP.

- 11.7. As mentioned in 10.1, Horizons is required to keep the TRMP plan under continuous review so that it is adapted to changing circumstances, in accordance with increased knowledge as well as communicating that engaged and responsible management is taking place. While the “continuous review” allows flexibility re timeframes, it is considered best practice to undertake a review as signalled in the original plan at this point.

12. CONSULTATION

- 12.1. Two phases of consultation are required (under Section 41 of the Act) for the review:

- Phase 1 - It is proposed that a preliminary engagement survey be used to capture public opinion about existing management of the reserve and aspirations for its future direction to help inform the draft TRMP 2024.
- Phase 2 – Once the draft plan has been prepared, Council is then required to publicly notify that the draft plan is available for inspection, inviting written objections and suggestions over a two-month period. Council is then required to provide a reasonable opportunity for anyone who wishes to speak to their submission before considering submissions and adopting the RMP.

- 12.2. This public submissions process is an opportunity to seek the public’s feedback on the reserve and input into the future management of the Regional Park.

- 12.3. It is proposed that an engagement survey is used for the first stage of consultation, to capture public sentiment around the five key management areas:

1. Forest Health;
2. Campgrounds;
3. Tracks;
4. Community Engagement; and
5. Cultural Framework/Integration.

- 12.4. Submissions will particularly be sought from existing stakeholders and active users of Tōtara Reserve.

13. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 13.1. If Council approves this TRMP review, the indicative proposed timeline is set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed timeline of Tōtara Reserve Management Plan Review process

Milestone	Date
Council resolution to begin review of TRMP	May 2024
Consultation Phase 1 (<i>4 weeks</i>): Initial engagement survey to assist in drafting the RMP	June-July
Preparation of the draft TRMP	July-Aug
Council approval of the draft TRMP for public consultation	September
Consultation Phase 2 (<i>2 months</i>): Public consultation on draft TRMP, analysis of submissions	Sept-Oct
Submission hearings (<i>1 week</i>): If required	Oct-Nov
Draft TRMP amended in accordance with council decisions	Jan-Feb 2025
Final TRMP published and made publicly available	Feb-Mar 2025

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14. SIGNIFICANCE

- 14.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

Anna Mackintosh

TEAM LEADER BIODIVERSITY

Craig Davey

BIODIVERSITY, BIOSECURITY & PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER

Jon Roygard

GROUP MANAGER CATCHMENT OPERATIONS

ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.