



Bream Bay Strategic Plan

SEPTEMBER 2006



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Whangarei Area Office, Department of Conservation,
Ph 09 430 2133, PO Box 147, Whangarei, New Zealand
www.govt.doc.nz

Cover: Bream Bay from the mouth of the Sperm whale, *Yvonne Ritchie, 1997*

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P R E F A C E

This strategic plan is not a Conservation Management Plan as provided for in s17 of the Conservation Act, 1987. Rather, it is an operational strategy that is the outcome of an extended period of internal debate and consideration over the past 2 years, and of a parallel programme of consultation with the community. At this stage, the document represents the Department of Conservation's current thinking about the management needs of the land under its administration, stretching for some 10 kilometres along the Bream Bay coast from Marsden Point, in the north, through to Waipu Cove in the south.

The presence of the refinery at Marsden Point, together with recent developments associated with the neighbouring deep-water port, the Marsden power station and other significant industries in the area, are putting considerable pressure on land resources. Whangarei City has its own needs as it expands south and the magnificent coastal environment provides its own momentum for coastal subdivision to satisfy the demand for homes along this readily accessible coast.

Acknowledging that the management of the land under its care has largely been guided by a draft Management Plan prepared by the Department of Lands and Survey, more than 20 years ago, and noting that this is one of the few remaining stretches of beach in Northland with a substantial area of public land behind it, the Department of Conservation initiated this current exercise to ensure that decisions are well informed. The Department also needed to develop a credible basis upon which to respond, when approached by individuals, groups and commercial entities, to make use of this public land. The perception that this is wasteland available for all manner of development needs to be dispelled.

Of immediate concern, too, is the safety of the public taking time-out to enjoy what this area has to offer, with an escalating number of safety incidents reported during the past 18 months involving horses, dogs, motor bikes and 4WDs interacting with people on foot.

Having updated its own thinking about options for enhancing the management of the conservation lands in the coastal strip, the Department will now seek to work with other public agencies to develop an effective coordinated strategy for the use and development of land resources in this important area.

DOC is also aware of the considerable interest and energy in the community towards this coastal strip, clearly in evidence during the past 12 months of public consultation. The Department is keen to tap into this energy to ensure the area is monitored and managed in the best possible way, so that it makes a significant contribution to the needs and well-being of the community while meeting national conservation objectives and retaining its essential open space characteristics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy is the product of a lot of hard work by many people over the past 2 years. A range of community groups and individuals contributed, with enthusiasm to the open days and other opportunities providing input. Most neighbouring owners were visited and they too provided valuable information and insights.

Sterling organisational support was provided by a number of individuals for the public meetings and, special mention must be made of the facilitation role of Rick Stolwerk and the invaluable logistical support for the process of public consultation provided by Marilyn Cox, Editor of the Bream Bay News.

S U M M A R Y

The first section of the strategy considers existing resources, values, acquisition and land status, relevant legislation and statutory documents, and past planning e.g. The Bream Bay Management Plan 1982.

Examples of the management issues that have arisen in the Bream Bay area over time, the contemporary issues identified by DOC, and the issues raised during public consultation April - July 2005, are covered in section two.

A commentary of related statutory plans and policies of other public agencies under the Resource Management Act 1991 covering the Bream Bay area is provided. The implications for the management of conservation land by the Department are discussed.

A section is provided for the statement of long term outcomes sought for this significant area, with consideration for its special natural values and cultural significance.

The Vision is described along with the strategic approach that will lead to the management of appropriate public use that will compliment the work of other agencies, organisation and the community.

A list of the outcomes sought by the Department is identified. There is a full range of actions proposed - those that DOC will do; the joint venture opportunities with other statutory agencies; and those areas where the community can support the Department through active participation.

A section of appendices is attached, each one containing a more complete description of essential information and the issues to be addressed. This followed by a detailed list of references.

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1. Background

1.1. THE RESOURCE

The Bream Bay coastline is special, with its long sweeping curve of sandy beach, estuaries and river mouths, low rolling dune-lands and bush-clad hinterland. This Bream Bay Strategic Plan covers the holocene dune sands from Marsden Point to Waipu Cove.

From the forested hills at Waipu Cove looking towards the dramatic forest-clad profile of Bream Head in the north, and with excellent views of Taranga and the Marotere Islands [the Hen and Chickens], Sail Rock and Hauturu [Little Barrier], Bream Bay is a popular place for holidays and for an increasing number of new residents.

It is a place unique for its variety of coastal and shoreline bird-life, the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries and nearby open shores providing an internationally important habitat for several species which are critically endangered. Fairy terns, NZ dotterel and variable oystercatchers all nest and feed on this coast. More common godwit, knot, turnstones, caspian tern, white fronted tern and Australasian gannet use the coast and the estuaries.

Archaeological sites around the estuaries of the Ruakaka and Waipu Rivers include pa, pits and terraces, and extensive midden. Intensive surveys of the coast have yet to be carried out. Sites of historical significance include the Nova Scotian landing at Waipu and the graves of these early immigrants, as well as evidence of gum digging, mining and early sawmilling.

Less than a two-hour drive from Auckland, and 20 minutes from Whangarei, this area is an easily accessible destination for visitors. Fishing, boating, sailing, swimming, surfing, sun bathing, picnicking and camping are all popular. The growing towns of One Tree Point, Ruakaka and Waipu service both visitors and an increasing number of permanent residents.

The combination of natural, historic and recreational values makes the Bream Bay coast a significant area for conservation. However, these values are under pressure from many sources. Industrial development, the oil refinery, a power station, pipelines, transport and the recently developed deep-water port generate impacts. These impacts stem not only from the activities themselves, but from the increasing number of people, houses, services, roads and other associated demands. The requirement for clean water, housing subdivisions, rubbish disposal and space for recreation is placing increasing pressure on the sometimes fragile natural values of Bream Bay and surrounding areas.

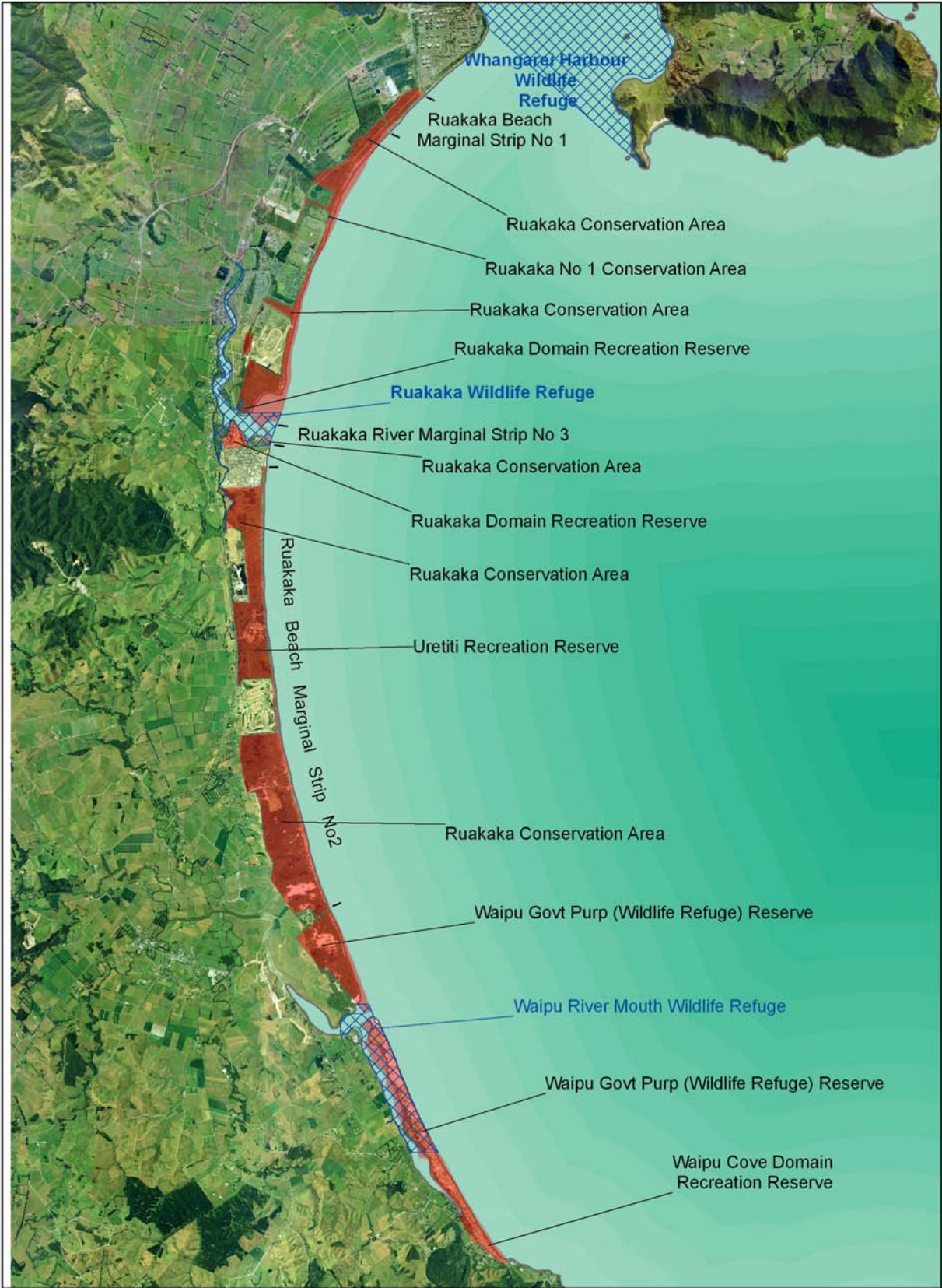
Appendix A provides a more complete resource description.

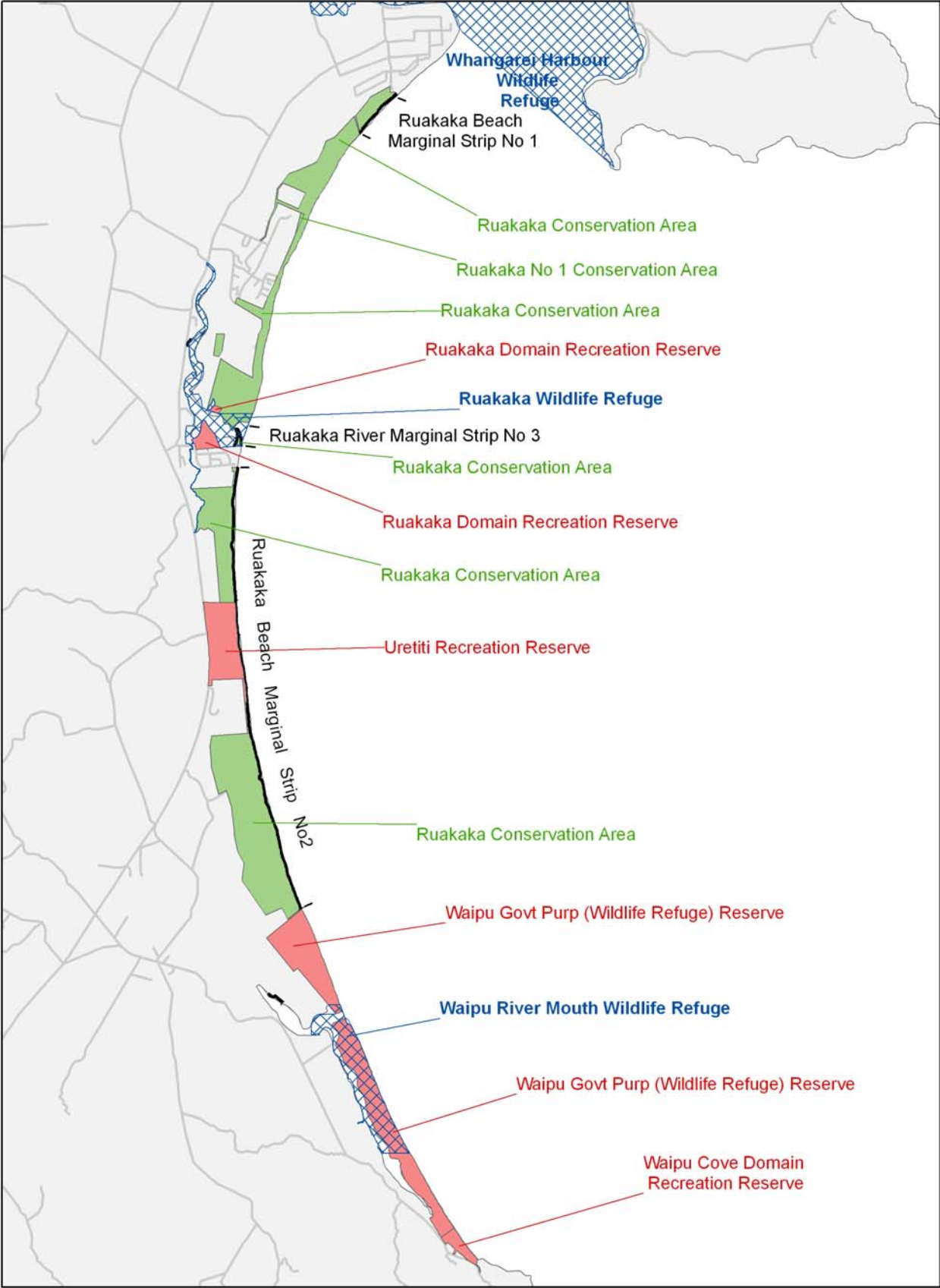
1.2. LAND STATUS

This plan covers all coastal lands administered by the Department in the Bream Bay area. It includes the following parcels:

	Hectares	Reference
Ruakaka Conservation Area	456.0081	Q07037
Ruakaka Beach Marginal Strip No1	2.0000	Q07080
Ruakaka River Marginal Strip No3	1.2000	Q07082
Ruakaka Beach Marginal Strip No2	15.5000	Q07083
Uretiti Recreation Reserve	72.7240	Q07086
Waipu Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserve	137.9668	Q08007
Waipu River Marginal Strip	<u>0.7000</u>	Q08072

Land Status - Public Conservation Lands of Bream Bay





1.3. THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The lands included in this strategy are managed by the Department of Conservation in terms of the Conservation Act 1987, the Reserves Act 1977 and the Wildlife Act 1953.

The Conservation Act, 1987 has implications for the management of all areas administered by the Department in Northland through the over-arching provisions of general policy and of any conservation management strategies and plans.

Section 4 of the Conservation Act charges that the Act shall be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. This requires the Department, in the administration of all land under its care, to have particular regard to the interests and aspirations of tangata whenua, in this case Patuharakeke and Ngati Whatua. This responsibility has been exercised through consultation with the Patuharakeke Trust Board.

The Conservation Act also applies directly to the management of conservation areas, stewardship areas and marginal strips, and generally requires that these areas be managed so that natural and historic resources are protected.

The Reserves Act, 1977 applies directly to the management of all reserves, including those classified as Recreation Reserve and Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserve.

The Act requires managers to preserve, for their own value and for the benefit of the public, areas of recreational use or potential, indigenous flora and fauna or where the environmental and landscape amenity have special features or value.

Managers are also to ensure, as far as possible, access for the public to and along the sea coast, lake shores and riverbanks, and promote the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment and its protection from unnecessary subdivision and development.

The Wildlife Act, 1953 and its regulations provide for the protection or management of most indigenous birds and terrestrial mammals, all reptiles and amphibians and some terrestrial invertebrates. This protection applies to the species, irrespective of land tenure, and includes all lands and waters declared to be a Wildlife Refuge.

The Resource Management Act, 1991 applies to all land at Bream Bay and to the adjacent waters. The purpose of the Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

Regional and District Councils are to manage the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way which enables communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well being, while at the same time sustaining the potential of the resources to meet the needs of future generations. Councils are also to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

The Resource Management Act is implemented through District and Regional Plans prepared by Councils. In undertaking this task, Councils are required to have regard to any management plans and strategies prepared under any other Act including, in this case, the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland.

[A more complete description of the legislation is contained in Appendix C]

1.4 NZ GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT, 2005

Prepared in terms of s.17C of the Conservation Act 1987, this document is the first statement of General Policy under the Conservation Act, 1987. It also provides unified policy for the implementation of the following Acts, listed in the First Schedule of the Conservation Act:

- The Conservation Act, 1987
- The Wildlife Act, 1953
- The Marine Reserves Act, 1971
- The Reserves Act, 1977
- The Wild Animal Control Act, 1977
- The Marine Mammals Protection Act, 1978

There is an allied, but separate, General Policy for National Parks.

The NZ General Policy Statement 2005 provides guidance for consistent management planning for the wide range of places and resources managed by the Department, including the preparation of conservation management strategies and management plans.

The above Acts were originally the responsibility of a number of Government agencies, but with the passing of the Conservation Act in 1987, most conservation functions came together under a single agency, the Department of Conservation. The Department was also given functions not previously provided for in legislation, such as conservation advocacy.

The Bream Bay conservation lands are subject to this General Policy. [Refer also Appendix D]

1.5 NORTHLAND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, 1999-2009 (CMS)

The purpose of a CMS is “to implement general policies and establish objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources, including any species, managed by the Department under the Wildlife Act 1953, the Marine Reserves Act 1971, the Reserves Act 1977, the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978, the National Parks Act 1980, the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990, the Conservation Act 1987, or any of them, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes” in short, integrated conservation management.

The Northland, CMS was approved in 1999 in the absence of a General Policy Statement. The Bream Bay conservation lands and reserves are identified within the CMS as part of the Whangarei/Bream Bay Priority Area for Integrated Management. The following Management Issues and Priority Actions are among those identified in the CMS for the Whangarei/Bream Bay Priority Area as relevant to the Bream Bay area.

Management Issues

- The invasion of plant pests, especially pampas, climbing asparagus, ginger and mistflower in forests and spartina in the harbour and estuaries
- Wild animal control, including possums, goats, cats, dogs and rodents
- Protection of habitats and breeding grounds for threatened coastal birds
- Coastal subdivision and development
- Impacts of urban expansion, industrial processing and port development
- Disturbance to archaeological sites
- Activities and developments in the coastal environment

Priority Actions

1. Seek to increase the area of protected forest, shrub-land, freshwater wetland and coastal/estuarine habitats, together with outstanding geological features and scoria cones, according to priorities established in Sections 5.2 and 5.16 of the CMS and using methods identified.
2. Carry out sustained control of possums, goats and other animal pests in Bream Head/Manaia and fence to limit stock invasion.
3. Control plant pests, especially pampas, ginger, climbing asparagus and mist flower in forests, and spartina and sharpshrub in harbours. Carry out a public awareness programme on plant pest issues and control.
4. Protect breeding sites of coastal birds through fencing, signs, predator control and wardens at Ruakaka, Waipu, Lang Cove, Langs Beach, Mangawhai and Ocean Beach.
5. Maintain and upgrade tracks and existing campgrounds, when necessary.
6. Advocate for appropriate objectives, policies and methods of implementation in planning documents and conditions on resource consents under the Resource Management Act processes, to ensure the protection of natural and historic resources.
7. Consult with tangata whenua, as appropriate, prior to making management decisions and assist the Office of Treaty Settlements in the resolution of Waitangi Tribunal claims.

[Refer also Appendix E]

1.6 DRAFT BREAM BAY MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1982 [L & S]

There are a number of published and unpublished plans and documents relating to the coastal land administered by the Department of Conservation at Bream Bay. The most comprehensive is the 1982 Department of Lands and Survey Bream Bay Management Plan, which contains a broad inventory of the land resources and recommendations for the development, conservation and preservation of Crown Land at Bream Bay.

The management proposals included [in order of priority]:

- the stabilisation of sand dunes and restoration of sand blows
- upgrading picnic and camping areas, with emphasis on controlled access and the provision of essential facilities only
- modifying existing utility areas to make them more environmentally acceptable
- protection of wildlife areas, wetlands, estuaries and areas of botanical and visual significance
- enhancement of ground cover for wildlife
- the development of small parks, picnic areas and walkways
- making provision for game bird breeding and management

Recommendations for management included some land purchases and sales, the reservation of 800 hectares to bring management under the Reserves Act 1977, and the development of a coastal park with emphasis on multiple-use recreation and the conservation of the natural environment.

The management issues have not changed significantly since these were identified in 1982. In the period since responsibility for the area passed to the Department of Conservation in 1987, the Department has, in many cases, followed the management proposals noted above. This has included upgrading of the Uretiti campground, closing the rubbish dump and working with the Whangarei District Council to provide an efficient transfer station, protection of threatened shorebirds with wardens and beach fencing, predator and weed control and the management of fire threat and actual 'events'.

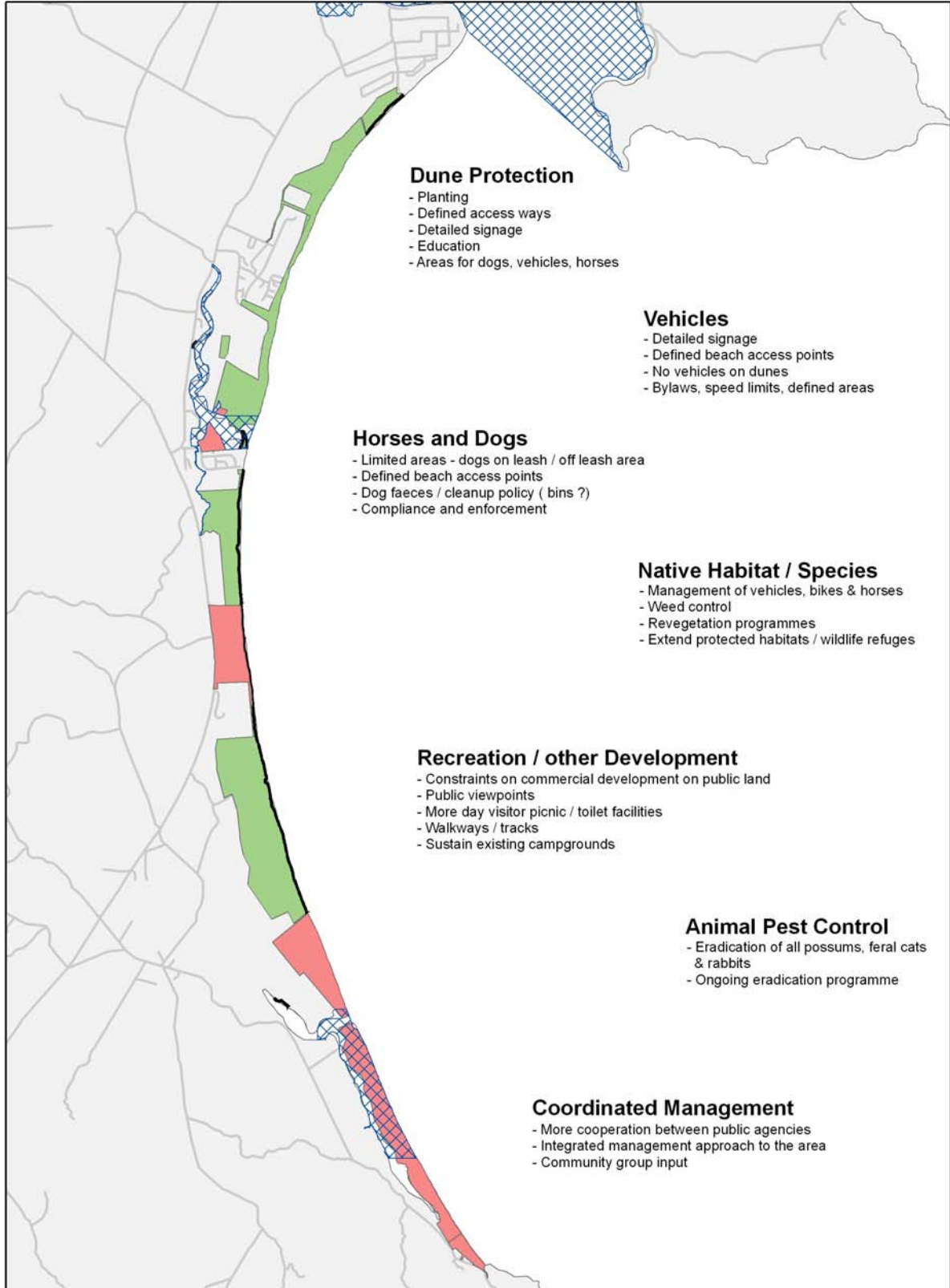
2. The Issues

The following management issues have arisen in Bream Bay through –

- historical management
- reference to published and unpublished reports, plans & documents
- discussion with Department of Conservation officers; and
- the public consultation process, April - July, 2005

Draft Breem Bay Management Plan	Subsequent Published and Unpublished Plans and Docs	Contemporary Issues for DOC	Issues Identified during 2005 Public Consultation
Sand dune stabilisation	Dune system revegetation, restoration succession	Sand dune protection	Sand dune protection
Upgrading picnic and camping areas	Recreational use and camping facilities	Public safety	Constraints on development
Enhancement of ground cover for wildlife	Threat of uncontrolled fires	Visitor facilities and public access	Increased indigenous planting
Making existing utility areas more environmentally acceptable	Management and control of access to, and across, conservation land	Land status upgrade	Access for boat launching, fishing, shellfish gathering, walking, picnicking
Protection of wildlife areas, wetlands and estuaries	Boundary definition of conservation and privately owned land	Fire management	Rubbish – particularly since WDC Transfer Station being locked
The development of small parks, picnic areas and walkways	Management of plant and animal pests	Weed and pest control	Animal and plant pest control
Protection of areas of botanical and visual significance	Management and recovery of listed species	Restoration programmes and the protection of wildlife	Integrated coordinated management [partnerships]
Making provision for game bird breeding and management	New subdivision developments	Dogs and horses	Dogs and horses
	Archaeological site management	Vehicles, including motorbikes	Vehicles on beaches and access points Public safety
	Community involvement through coastal care groups and Hapu	Relationships with other public agencies	Lack of coordination between NRC, WDC, Police and DOC
	Commercial activities [sand mining and concessions]	Concessions management	
		The use of firearms	Dangers presented by shooting and hunting in the dunes

Issues raised in Public Consultation Process



3. Regional and District Plans

While the legislation administered by the Department, the NZ General Policy Statement and the Northland CMS will primarily direct the management of this area, the Resource Management Act also has application. It is therefore necessary to consider the relevant plans and policies of the Northland Regional Council and the Whangarei District Council and appropriate to explore opportunities for working co-operatively with these Councils.

Adjacent land uses and, in some cases, uses far removed from protected areas can have adverse impacts on lands administered by the Department. The Department sees the Regional Policy Statement and Plans, and the Whangarei District Council plans, as important mechanisms for promoting activities which are compatible with the management of the natural and historic resources in the area.

3.1. NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

The Regional Policy Statement for Northland, the Northland Regional Coastal Plan and the Northland Community Plan of 2004 - 2014 together provide an important statutory framework for the wider Bream Bay area.

Each Regional Council is required by the Resource Management Act, 1991 to prepare a Policy Statement applicable to its region. This is intended to serve as a vehicle for identifying and dealing with the key resource management issues in the region.

The Regional Policy Statement for Northland contains a description of the region's environment, including its natural resources, social and economic resources and historical resources. Of particular relevance in the context of this strategy are the sections on outstanding natural features and outstanding landscapes; Ecosystems and biodiversity; and Heritage protection.

Each section identifies the issues, sets objectives reflecting the RM Act's imperatives, adopts policies and methods for implementing the policies and outlines the environmental results anticipated.

The maintenance of Northland's biodiversity, the protection of the life supporting capacity of natural ecosystems, the protection of significant indigenous vegetation and the significant habitats of indigenous fauna are key objectives for ecosystems and biodiversity.

Heritage protection has a specific objective - the protection and, where possible, enhancement of the cultural, historic and amenity value of heritage features highly valued by the Northland community.

The Northland Regional Coastal Plan zones the Bream Bay coast into two areas.

Marine 1 (Protection) Management Areas are those identified by the Minister of Conservation as being Areas of Significant Conservation Value. The priority in these areas is the protection of the significant conservation values identified as occurring within each particular area. ASCV's cover the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries, inland to the CMA (saline) boundary, and include the sand spits. They extend approximately 500m offshore.

The remainder of the coast is zoned as Marine 2 (Conservation) Management Area, to be managed to conserve ecological, cultural and amenity values.

In its **Northland Community Plan, 2004 – 2014**, the Northland Regional Council has identified a number of priority actions for each of six Community Outcomes, some for the immediate three years, 2004-2007, and then others for the remainder of the ten-year life of the Plan.

Under the Indigenous Biodiversity Community Outcome the Council intends to:

- work with DOC and the district councils to develop and implement a plan to identify and protect land with high biodiversity values
- encourage the development and implementation of a habitat strategy for threatened species in Northland
- work with other lead agencies to increase the area of high biodiversity-value land under formal protection
- support the fencing of all regionally significant wetlands

[Refer also Appendix F]

3.2. WHANGAREI DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

The WDC has a number of Statutory Plans geared to facilitating a better future for the Bream Bay area. These include:

- The Whangarei District Plan, 2001
- The Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy, 2002
- The Open Space Strategy, 2001
- Long term Council Community Plan, 2004-2014

The Whangarei District plan makes particular provision for the area from Marsden Point to Bream Tail. A coastal band varying from 100m to 400m in width is zoned as an outstanding scenic area. Significant ecological areas within this are identified on the north side of the Ruakaka estuary and the Waipu sand spit. The whole coastal strip is a land instability area and most is zoned as open space.

However, adjacent to land administered by the Department are areas zoned as Living 1, at Ruakaka and Business 4 around Marsden Point. The area from Ruakaka north through to Marsden Point is being reviewed as part of the Marsden Point Master Plan. This is in recognition of the oil refinery, the deep-water port, other business developments and housing subdivisions.

Through its Coastal Management Strategy, Structure Plans, Open Space Strategy and Community Plan, the Council acknowledges the special natural heritage of the Bream Bay area, the recreational importance of this expansive coastal environment and the significance of sites from prehistoric Maori and historic European activities.

To help it achieve its goals for the area, the Council will seek to protect and enhance the coastline and significant stream margins and take steps to ensure the community has access to the coastal fringe and the riparian corridors. Planting sand dunes and constructing pedestrian access-ways along the Bream Bay coastline is a priority project identified in the Council's Open Space Strategy.

The Council says it will seek to create recreational networks and ecological corridors that maximise the value and accessibility of open space, and promote the viability of natural areas.

The Council acknowledges the value that partners add to its open spaces. It will seek and support partners in the community to assist in implementing the open space strategy and to foster a sense of commitment to open spaces.

The Council has a Dog Management Policy with 'No dog' zones in central Whangarei, in designated children's play areas and on a number of designated beaches; and summer dog bans on all beaches for 2 months from 20 December, between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00 pm. The Council has designated Ruakaka Beach between Mair Road and the northern-most car park of Marsden Village to be a dog exercise area, where dogs can be exercised off the leash, provided owners maintain effective control of their animals.

Each type of control is exercised within the Bream Bay area covered by this plan. The dog exercise area is applicable in the north; a year round ban on dogs is in place for the Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges and areas of open coast both north and south of the Waipu River mouth; and all other beaches are subject to the 2 month summer policy.

[Refer also Appendix G]

4. Vision

The conservation lands of the Bream Bay coastal area are places where:

- Shorebirds and other coastal fauna flourish as a result of a caring public.
- Dune-lands, wetlands and estuaries are protected, restored and enhanced.
- The special nature of the expansive coastal environment is understood, enjoyed, valued and safeguarded.
- Restrictions on public access for habitat protection, health and safety or security of commercial operations are both understood and respected.
- Maori cultural values and traditions are understood and valued.
- The facilitation of new recreational opportunities and the authorising of existing informal uses where appropriate.
- The community appreciates the dynamic nature of coastal systems and actively participates in their protection and enhancement.
- Visitors are provided with a safe environment in which to satisfy their recreational needs.
- Essential community infrastructure needs, not incompatible with the overall management objectives for the area, are able to be met.
- The Department is working in line with its legislative role and responsibilities when processing or planning for future development

5. Proposed management objectives and strategic approach

Strategic thinking on the needs of this area, in the context of the legislation and other statutory documents, has identified a number of fundamental objectives. Several have application to the whole area, but most pertain to only one or two specific areas.

5.1. GENERAL

- Dune systems and the general coastal environment are stable, allowing them to support their natural range of life-forms.
- Maori and colonial prehistoric and historic sites are protected for their own significance and are respected by visitors.
- Public access to, and along, the coastline of Bream Bay is readily available for passive/low impact recreational experiences.

5.2. SITE SPECIFIC

- The significant coastal habitats within the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries are sustained and/or enhanced, so that they continue to provide “safe haven” for the full range of shorebird species frequenting the area. The adjacent land uses are closely monitored and action is taken so as to minimise impacts.
- Specific management measures are in place to ensure the survival of endangered fauna species, notably Fairy tern and New Zealand dotterel.
- The opportunity for low impact, limited facility, outdoor recreation/camping holidays is sustained at the three current campgrounds
- Access by vehicles, horses and dogs is restricted to those locations specifically authorized and “developed” for the purpose, minimizing the impact on natural values and public safety.

- Community infrastructural needs will be considered for particular proposals at specific sites, provided it cannot be accommodated elsewhere

Having regard to the natural resource base of the area, the recent history of public use and the perceived needs for the future, the area has a clear pattern of “zones” of public interest and conservation needs.

5.2.1 Northern Zone:

The zone consists of important coastal landforms but with lesser ecological values relative to those in the zones to the south. There is a high level of industrial development on adjacent land, regular horse exercising on beach, a dog exercise area on Ruakaka Beach under WDC dog policy and a public vehicle beach access point adjacent to the racecourse.

The area lends itself to;

- More active recreational pursuits, while retaining the essential open space character of the area.
- Those activities likely to impact on the safety of visitors and their quiet enjoyment of the more popular family swimming/picnicking locations.
- A vehicle beach access zone, with vehicles limited to the area of beach north of the race-course.

5.2.2 Ruakaka Wildlife Zone:

For legislative and ecological reasons, the protection of wildlife and their habitat takes priority over all else. No vehicles, horses, dogs, or cats, predators or disturbing factors of any kind will be permitted. No excuses.

5.2.3 Middle Zone:

Ecological values at specific locations, camping / day visitor access points to cater for high “family” recreational use over a broad length of the beach.

The area lends itself to passive or low impact recreational use - quiet enjoyment in safety, away from vehicles, horses and dogs. Ecological values in the dunes are protected.

5.2.4 Tip Road Zone:

Lesser ecological values and vehicle beach access point for “middle” beach. The former Uretiti refuse disposal area has been identified by the Whangarei District Council for a potential recreational development site. Tip Road lends itself to a recreation / access zone, with limited vehicle the access.

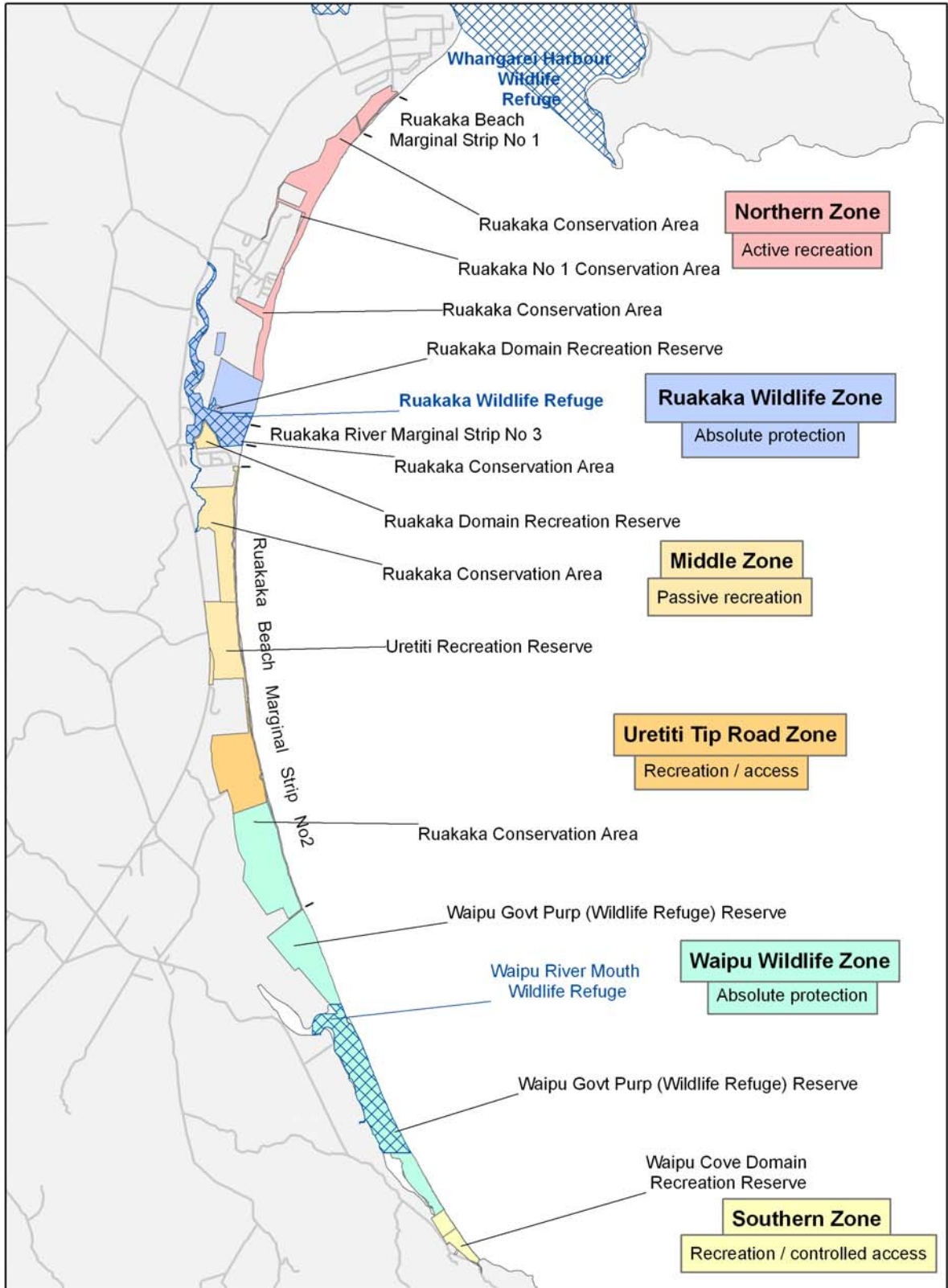
5.2.5 Waipu Wildlife Zone:

For legislative and ecological reasons, the protection of wildlife and their habitat takes priority over all else. No vehicles, horses, dogs, or cats, predators or disturbing factors of any kind will be permitted. No excuses.

5.2.6 Southern Zone:

Encourage the Waipu Cove Domain Recreation Reserve Board to retain the status quo - family recreational enjoyment and controlled vehicle access to the beach through the Waipu Cove Domain Recreation Reserve.

Strategic Management Zones



6. Management Proposals

6.1. PROTECTION OF SAND DUNES AND ESTUARIES

6.1.1 The Issues

In 1974, A. Esler prepared a report on the vegetation of the dune-lands of Bream Bay and speculated on the possible patterns of change in the vegetation. He concluded that:

- The sand dune system is still at an early stage of colonisation by native species.
- The presence of gorse can only help promote the further development of the vegetation and thus the sand dune stability.
- Under no circumstances should attempts be made to remove the gorse.
- There is evidence that native species are actively colonising the sand dunes by growing through the gorse and in the moist hollows.
- It is at present unclear what the future pattern of vegetation development will be, although it is likely that it will be more rapid due to the presence of gorse.
- The lack of a seed source for dispersal agents may slow forest development. Trial enrichment plantings could be attempted.
- Agents detrimental to sand dunes such as rabbits, possum, trail bikes, kikuyu and *Pinus* seedlings need to be monitored and controlled.
- Protection needs to be afforded to areas particularly susceptible to erosion and areas such as moist hollows that will be centres for future vegetation development.

Current legislation, the General Policy and the Northland CMS all protect sand dune areas as an important natural ecosystem supporting the stability of the coastline and providing key habitat to a wide range of protected species. The coastal environment generally contains landscapes, landforms and geological features of special significance to tangata whenua and the wider community.

While much is known about the natural values of the Bream Bay area, this part of Northland has not yet been surveyed in a holistic manner. In 2007, the Waipu Ecological District, of which Bream Bay is part, is to be surveyed under the Protected Natural Areas Programme [PNAP] and the opportunity will be taken to identify the key ecological sites in that area. This, in turn, will indicate the need for particular site management and assist the ordering of priorities.

This work will also allow an assessment to be made of the appropriate management of gorse on specific sites where a truly indigenous coastal plant community can be sustained. In such identified sites consideration will be given to suppressing gorse, as it is known to compete with some species of indigenous flora.

It is acknowledged that in the Bream Bay area the general public must be able to cross dune areas to access the open beaches and more sheltered waters. Presently there are only a few formally designated and signposted beach access points, this generally occurring wherever people choose to cross the dunes. This is damaging an increasing area of fore dune, although it is the increasing numbers of 4x4s and trail bikes in the wider community and the exercising or riding of horses, that is causing relatively high adverse impacts on the dunes of Bream Bay. The formation, over time, of random vehicular access points to the beach across public land and the indiscriminate use of these vehicles by fun seekers along the coastal dunes and the lands behind them are now management issues that must be addressed.

The estuaries of Ruakaka and Waipu are somewhat special in that their benthic communities are sand/silt rather than silt dominated. Consequently, the resident breeding bird populations are dominated by those that forage on fish, shellfish and crustaceans, rather than crabs and worms.

Arctic waders that feed on shellfish and silt associated worms use the mid and southern Waipu estuary for foraging in summer. Ruakaka estuary is generally not used for foraging by these birds, but the entrance and beach are critically important for them during the very high spring tides as a roost site. Most of the bar-tailed godwit and lesser knot that use and generally roost in Whangarei Harbour (up to 5,000 birds) move south to use this area during these very high tides.

The estuaries in the Plan area must be looked after if the large numbers of birds reliant on this important ecosystem are to have any chance of survival. A number of these bird species are already defined as threatened. Another priority is the protection of the last remaining dune lake on the eastern coastline of Northland, behind the racecourse.

The pace of subdivisional development and the potential to adversely impact the estuaries and key habitats on neighbouring conservation lands requires careful scrutiny of development proposals.

6.1.2 Public Opinion

During the 2005 public consultation round it was ascertained that public opinion supports total protection for the entire fore-dune area. There was also strong support for the two Wildlife Refuges at Ruakaka and Waipu and a request that other specific areas be set aside as Wildlife Refuges, the view being that wildlife habitats should have priority over recreational activities.

There was support for the development of clear directions and goals for protecting scenic, cultural and ecological values; increased indigenous planting on all public conservation land in the area; and stronger enforcement of current legislation. Individuals and groups have offered to initiate a dune planting programme, some with their own funding, but would like to acquire some element of decision-making in the process.

6.1.3 The Outcome Sought

Enhanced protection of the sand dune system and estuaries, both as a coastal protection measure and to maintain important ecosystems and habitats is sought. People value the overall worth of the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries, recognizing them as an ecological, as well as a recreational, resource.

6.1.4 Actions

1. All issues adversely impacting on the protection of the fore-dune and secondary dune systems have been catalogued and appropriate actions are being defined [DOC].
2. The PNAP survey for the Waipu Ecological District will be completed in 2007 [DOC].
3. Specific management proposals will be developed for key sites, requiring a particular approach to ensure their protection, both on the dunes and around the estuaries [DOC].
4. Authorised public access points across conservation land to the beach have been identified and will be maintained or further developed in cooperation with the Whangarei District Council, including those specifically designated for vehicles and horses. Refer also 6.5 [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]
5. Enhanced legal protection will be provided for the dune system and key habitats by declaring these areas to be reserves subject to the Reserves Act 1977, with an appropriate classification and the gazetting of bylaws to assist compliance and law enforcement [DOC].

6. The Whangarei District Council will be asked to change the status of any unformed legal roads adjoining the Wildlife Refuges to esplanade reserve [DOC].
7. Appropriate signage is being provided at key locations to ensure visitors are aware of the prohibition on the use of vehicles, motorbikes and horses on fore-dunes and secondary dunes. Other measures will be implemented to enforce current legislation [DOC].
8. Current weed control and planting programmes are being sustained, and support provided for community initiatives for enhancing the stability of dunes, protecting habitat values and providing road end amenities [Joint venture - Community / DOC].
9. A public awareness and education programme is to be initiated through local interest groups, the media and schools in relation to environmental issue at Bream Bay [Joint venture - NRC / WDC / Community / DOC].
10. The NRC and WDC initiatives for establishing Coastal Care Groups will be promoted and supported. [DOC].
11. All necessary steps are being taken to ensure the survival and/or maintenance of the last remaining dune lake on the east coast of Northland [Joint venture - NRC / WDC / DOC].
12. The Department will participate in planning applications / hearings for developments likely to adversely impact on protected areas, with a particular focus on maintaining the integrity of the estuaries.

6.2. SPECIES PROTECTION

6.2.1 The Issues

The most significant indigenous species inhabiting the Bream Bay area is the **Fairy tern** *Sterna nereis*. Once found in coastal areas throughout the North Island and in parts of the South Island, the Fairy tern's breeding sites are now restricted to Waipu, Mangawhai, Pakiri (nesting in the 2004/05 season), and the Papakanui Spit on the Kaipara Harbour.

With a total population of only around 30 birds, the survival of this species is hanging in the balance. A formal Recovery Plan has as its objectives:-

- Protecting all known breeding pairs and nesting areas, including individuals found at new sites. This objective is primarily met by employing wardens during the breeding season to fence and patrol key sites, monitor tide levels and weather conditions and, when necessary, sand-bag nests or relocate them, assist with predator control and monitor actual or potential predator incidents, educate and involve the public visiting the areas, and undertake compliance and law enforcement.
- Measuring the population parameters and monitoring the population dynamics of Fairy tern. This involves a regular census programme at current, former and potential breeding sites.
- Reviewing and improving the legal status of the breeding and flocking habitat of Fairy tern and protecting all known and potential habitat from development. Known breeding sites are designated Wildlife Refuges, but problems of jurisdiction and compliance are ongoing.
- Raising public awareness of the need for special measures to ensure the survival of Fairy tern, including the active support of locals.

Also threatened, but less critically so, is the **New Zealand dotterel** *Charadrius obscurus*. These birds breed at the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries.

This species is also the subject of an approved Recovery Plan. The Plan's objectives are similar to those for Fairy tern, involving the protection of habitat, generally, and nesting sites specifically; the employment of seasonal wardens to have a local presence during the breeding season and undertake specific protection tasks; upgrading the legal status of key sites to afford appropriate protection; enhancing bird census programmes to provide a greater understanding of population dynamics; and public liaison and advocacy.

Variable oystercatchers *Haematopus unicolor* breed at the two estuaries in high numbers and in lower numbers on the beaches.

High numbers of common seabirds use the estuaries and, to a lesser extent, the coastal area. These include the godwit *Limosa lapponica baueri*, knot *Calidris cantus canutus*, turnstones *Arenaria interpres interpres*, white-fronted tern *Sterna striata*, caspian tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (a nationally vulnerable threatened species) and Australasian gannet *Sula bassana serrator*.

Rare migratory waders seen in the estuaries include terek sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, far eastern curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* and the red-necked stint *Calidris ruficollis*. Other species that use the estuaries or associated

habitat are the banded dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus*, wrybill *Anarhynchus frontalis*, banded rail *Rallus philippensis assimilis* and fernbird *Bowdleria punctata vealae*.

Birds are not the only important indigenous species reliant on the habitats provided by the Bream Bay conservation lands. This area is a stronghold for the endemic Black Katipo spider, with some of the highest numbers of this species in its known home range. The dune shrub-lands of Bream Bay also hold small populations of the threatened Auckland Green gecko and of the Shore skink.

While not an indigenous protected species, the Green and Golden Bell frog that is doing well locally is significant because it is now endangered in its native Australia. New Zealand is now home to the largest population of this species, world-wide, and has international obligations for ensuring its survival.

In terms of native flora, spinifex, pingao, coprosma acerosa and muhlenbeckia would all have been part of this coastal plant community on the dunes. These survive in places but have been impacted by the invasion of other plant species and pests. Management is required to ensure healthy native plant communities at selected sites.

6.2.2 Public Opinion

Public opinion expressed during the 2005 consultation round supports effective measures to provide protection for rare or endangered species, and wildlife generally. There was strong support for the two Wildlife Refuges at Ruakaka and Waipu and a request that other specific areas be set aside as Wildlife Refuges, the view being that wildlife habitats should have priority over recreational activities. There has been considerable support, too, for the protection of wetlands.

General opinion favours extending areas where habitat protection for indigenous species is increased. Indicatively, the logical areas to extend this protection are to the north of each of the existing Wildlife Refuges.

6.2.3 The Outcome Sought

That threatened species such as Fairy tern and NZ Dotterel be provided with an appropriate level of protection within the strategy area, and that the Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges provide “safe haven” for the full range of native species frequenting the area.

6.2.4 Actions

1. The adequacy of the current Wildlife Refuges is being assessed and, where appropriate, the area of protection will be extended. [DOC].
2. Options for providing enhanced legal protection to key wildlife habitats are being investigated, including that of declaring these areas to be Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserves subject to the Reserves Act 1977, and gazetting bylaws to support compliance and law enforcement. [DOC].
3. The more effective use of signs at key locations will be pursued to ensure visitors are aware of the *no go* zones that are in place to protect nesting areas during the breeding season. [DOC].
4. The current public awareness and education programme delivered through local interest groups, the media adjoining landowners and schools is being revamped, both as to scope and content. [Joint venture - Community / DOC].
5. A staffing presence is maintained by the Department in the area, and particularly at the two Wildlife Refuges during the breeding season, to assist the protection of wildlife, develop relationships with adjoining landowners and cultivate support within the community. [DOC].

6.3. FIRE MANAGEMENT

6.3.1 The Issues

Uncontrolled fires present a major threat to the vegetation of the area. The low moisture-holding capacity of the sands, gorse, scattered pines, *Acacia* and shrub-land and the moderate level of recreational use all make this area particularly vulnerable to fire. Over the past ten years almost 100 fires have been extinguished. These have been caused by the torching of abandoned vehicles, camp/bon fires, children playing with matches and the careless use of barbeques and cigarettes.

The proximity of residential areas, especially at Ruakaka, makes effective fire suppression important. The local Ruakaka and Waipu volunteer fire brigades are well located to handle many fires. The Marsden Point Oil Refinery needs

to be especially vigilant and also to have an emergency response unit. A major constraint is the availability of suitable water. As the Rural Fire Authority, the Department is currently responsible for managing open air fires and extinguishing escaped fires within one kilometre of any land it administers.

The Department's current fire management regime is outlined in Appendix G of this plan [page 92]. As fire management in Bream Bay is critical to public safety, as well as ecologically important, strict regulations apply. Strategically-placed firebreaks will compartmentalise any potential fire outbreak and prevent wide-spread destruction.

6.3.2 Public Opinion

Fire management, either in its prevention or control, did not feature among the issues the public identified during the 2005 consultation round. However, endorsement of the need for clear management was implied, with the strong messages of support for dune, habitat and species protection and the ability for visitors to enjoy the area in safety.

6.3.3 The Outcome Sought

That the risk of fire is minimized, hereby protecting important ecological resources and removing an associated hazard to visitors. Strong organisational links are in place to ensure a speedy response to any fire event by the combined resources of the various fire authorities.

6.3.4 Actions

1. Existing firebreaks have been mapped and a strategic approach developed for the future management of firebreaks. [DOC]
2. The Department's fire response capability in the area is appropriate and will work with other fire authorities to maximize cooperative arrangements. [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]
3. Steps are being taken to ensure visitors are aware of the high level of risk to the environment, and to themselves and others, from the careless use of barbecues, cigarettes, etc. [DOC]
4. All fire events will continue to be thoroughly investigated, with offenders prosecuted and/or facing recovery of costs in appropriate cases [DOC]

6.4. PLANT AND ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

6.1.4 The Issues

Plant Pests - Plant pests are an ongoing problem along the entire Bream Bay coastline. Because of disturbance to native vegetation, fires, passage of heavy machinery, mobile and shifting dunes and the proximity of domestic gardens, there is a wide variety of plant pests present. In the extreme summer heat, with low moisture and exposure to desiccating wind, certain species of plant pests thrive. The most widespread of these are acacia, smilax, climbing asparagus, ginger, pampas, purple shore groundsel and wilding pine trees. Yucca lilies, aloe, agapanthus, polygala, banksia, privet, lantana, moth plant, and buddelia are also present.

Gorse is widespread in places. In most circumstances, gorse is regarded as a plant that is beneficial to the process of native species regeneration. There is no doubt that at Bream Bay it has assisted in stabilising the dunes, fixing nitrogen, providing shelter to some indigenous plant species and making it difficult for further intrusion by plant pests. However, it is a fact that gorse can impact on the establishment of some indigenous plants that are, or should be, part of the coastal plant community at Bream Bay.

Current plant pest programmes will be maintained until such time as the Protected Natural Areas Programme survey identifies specific sites where it is appropriate to manage for the full restoration of an indigenous coastal plant community. In such areas the control of all plant pests will be undertaken to facilitate the establishment of native coastal plant communities.

Planting programmes at designated amenity areas such as road ends, other day visitor locations and campgrounds, will include the use of introduced species, but these will be scrutinized to ensure they will not become an invasive problem.

Animal Pests - Unlike most areas administered by the Department, there is little need for possum control. The vegetation values have not justified any large scale effort against possums to date. However this does not discount the potential for plant species composition to gradually improve via restoration, regeneration and replanting programmes.

The presence of rabbits, in even modest density, is a problem for the entire dune system, particularly on the sand spits and high-value wildlife refuges at Ruakaka and Waipu. Rabbits eat the leaves of *Spinifex* and reduce its ability to catch sand. Rabbits are also ready foods for mustelids, cats and harriers and can attract these predators into areas under specific protection, and sustain

trap-shy mustelids and cats. Their burrows are also day hiding sites for hedgehogs and burrow presence could dictate distribution of hedgehogs on dune systems. Hedgehogs are numerous on the northern dunes and are nest predators and also eat many beetle larvae and adults. Burrows and areas of dense vegetation, including weeds and the coastal *Coprosma aecerosa*, can harbour ship (*Rattus rattus*) and Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*).

Trapping for rats in the vicinity of camping areas is undertaken at the start of each camping season as a health and safety issue.

The control of predators has been a priority. Both the Fairy tern and NZ dotterel recovery plans prescribe predator control before and during the summer breeding season. The elimination of stoats, ferrets, weasels, wild cats and dogs is essential for breeding success. Initially concentrated around the nests of these birds, predator control has more recently been extended to cover a much wider area, but the refocusing of national effort on site management to seek multi-species gains indicates that community support will be needed to maintain this programme.

Incursions of any new animal pest species will always be treated as a priority to attempt eradication. This includes feral goats, deer, cattle and pigs.

6.4.2 Public Opinion

Plant and animal pests did not appear to be a key issue with the public in terms of the overall 2005 public consultation programme. However, many respondents from the open day identified with the CMS view that the invasion of plant pests, especially pampas, climbing asparagus and ginger, is a significant management issue and they supported the idea of a community restoration programme to better control invasive weeds on public land.

There was also quite a high level of support for initiating a community predator trapping programme in the wildlife refuges.

6.4.3 The Outcome Sought

To contain and, in time, reduce the variety and range of pest species that are impacting on the ecological resources of the area, so that indigenous species may once again flourish and restore the natural working and vitality of this special coastal area.

6.4.4 Actions

1. Current plant pest control programmes will be sustained. [DOC]

2. Support will be provided for community initiatives to eradicate exotic species adversely impacting on the natural working of the dune system, the restoration of an indigenous coastal plant community in particular sites and for enhancing habitat values and road-end amenities via weed control. **Refer also 6.1** [Joint venture - Community / DOC]
3. The need for rabbit control will be re-assessed following completion of the PNAP survey in 2007 and the identification of key sites for dune restoration. [DOC]
4. A community initiative for predator trapping in the wildlife refuges will be encouraged and supported. [Joint venture - Community / DOC]
5. Initiatives are being taken for increasing community awareness of the problems posed by plant pests, including some garden varieties. [Joint venture - NRC / WDC / Community / DOC]

6.5. PUBLIC ACCESS

6.5.1 The Issues

Arguably the most complex and potentially difficult management issue to resolve in the interests of all parties in the area covered by this Plan is that of providing access to conservation land, and across this land to the beach. A wide range of interest groups and individuals currently make use of the area, some claiming an historic “right” to continue making use of it as they have done for 20 years or more. Much of this use is the product of personal enterprise, with no thought to seeking authority from those responsible for managing the area.

However, pressures of use have increased markedly over the past 20 years and the risks to both the environment and to people are very much in evidence. The advent of 4x4 vehicles and trail bikes has generated particular areas of concern. This trend of increased use is unlikely to slow as development around Marsden Point proceeds, the attractive coastal environment generates further retirement or holiday subdivisions and Whangarei City spreads southward.

There are currently thirty sites and road-ends on public land where the general public has pedestrian access to the Bream Bay coastline. These include Mair Road in the north, the Ruakaka Racecourse, the Ruakaka Surf Club, Paradise Shores subdivision, the Uretiti day-use area, Uretiti campground, Tip Road [Uretiti transfer station] and Johnson Point road-end down to the Waipu Cove Domain Recreation Reserve.

These access points were provided primarily for foot traffic via specially constructed board-walks designed to protect the dunes, or by using other methods which seek to minimise the effects of numerous human feet and the impacts of wind. However, horses, off-road vehicles, motor bikes, tractors and other vehicles have been used to gain ready access to the beach in a number of places, with adverse impacts to the dune system and associated environment, disturbance to wildlife and physical risk to pedestrians.

6.5.2 Vehicles

The Department accepts that vehicular access to the three sections of beach, within the Strategy area for the launching of boats and to facilitate fishing at historically frequented areas of the coastline. However, the use of vehicles, for whatever reason, on the sand dunes above the mean high water mark and within the Wildlife Refuges, is unacceptable. So, too, is the use of vehicles, at access points and along the beach, being driven in a manner that poses a direct threat to, or is annoying to, the many adults and children who frequent this popular coastline for legitimate recreation and enjoyment.

To accommodate the bona fide interests of all beach users, it is proposed that vehicular access across public land to the beach for the launching of boats be formalized at three locations, one for each section of beach:

- The Racecourse - access for the northern section of beach
- Uretiti Tip Road - for access to the middle beach; and
- Waipu Cove Domain Recreation Reserve - for access to the southern beach [controlled as per the current Reserve Board arrangements]

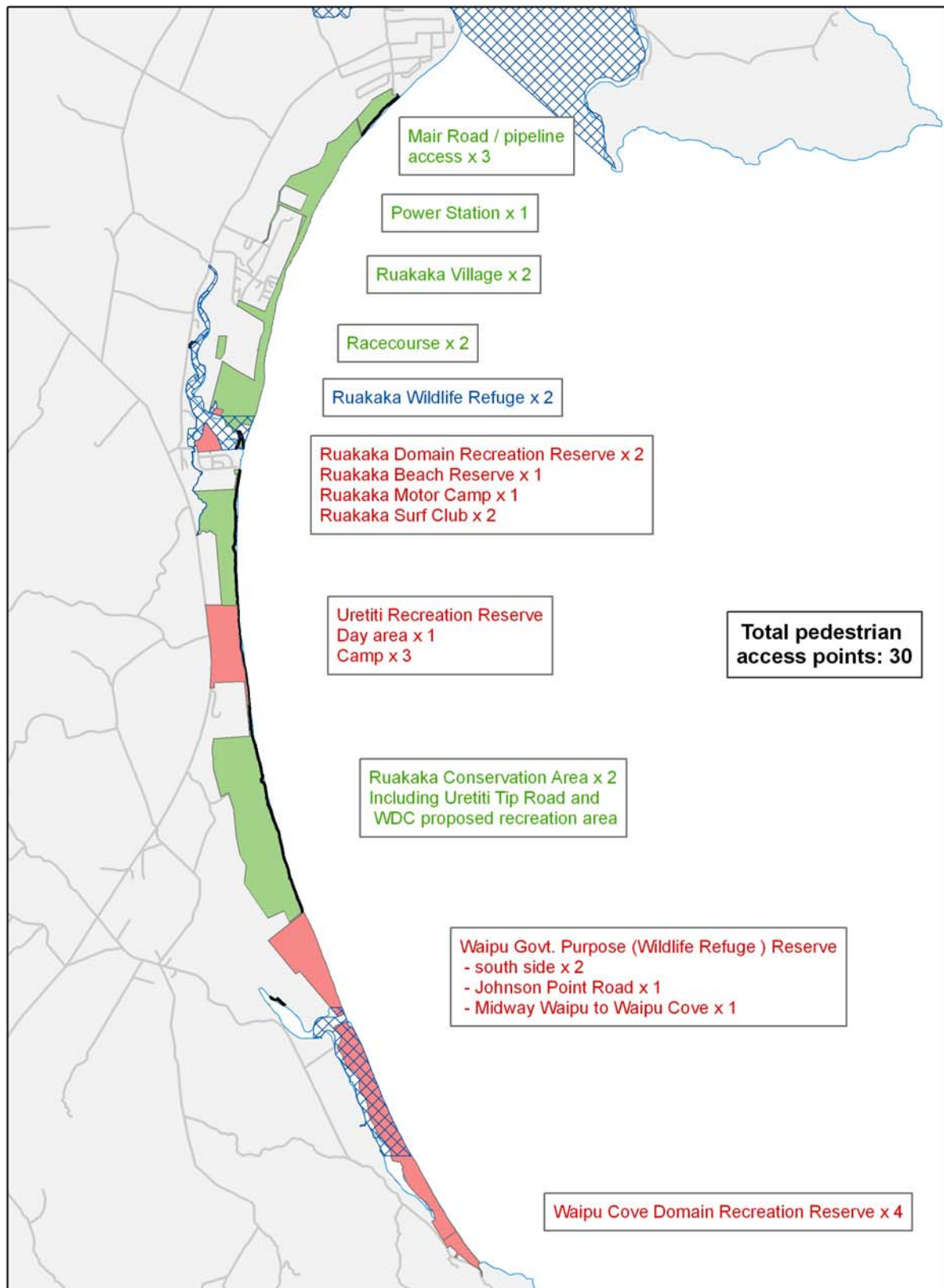
By virtue of another process, some elected members of the Whangarei District Council are advocating for the closure of the current informal access from the Ruakaka Beach Recreation Reserve car park. In the short term, the status quo will apply at existing access points, but in the longer term access to the beach will only be for the launching and retrieving of boats through the designated access points.

Unrestricted use of the beach by vehicles is not envisaged, it being necessary and appropriate to look after the safety and interests of other beach users and protect the Wildlife Refuges. Discussions will be held with the Whangarei District Council with a view to restricting the use of the beach by vehicles to the designated access points. Access by ambulance and other emergency services will continue to be available at currently used locations.

The Department will increase the enforcement of existing legislation throughout the year, especially in relation to the Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges and the Waipu Government Purpose Wildlife Refuge Reserve. This will be with the support from other agencies, e.g. NZ Police and Councils, who will also need to work with inside their legislative roles.

One argument against leaving cars parked off the beach at the moment is security. The Department acknowledges this and will look to cooperative measures with other agencies and the community to provide a measure of supervision that will lessen any perceived problem. This is not just a local issue.

Current Public Pedestrian Access Points to Bream Bay



Access Points across Conservation Land to the Beach for Vehicles and Horses.



6.5.2 (i) Access For the Disabled

General public opinion is that access to the coastline by those who are physically impaired is a right and that special access points need to be provided for this purpose. Logically these would be by way of the vehicle access areas discussed previously, but the Department is prepared to consider local arrangements to meet the needs of individuals.

6.5.2 (ii) Trailbikes /Motorcycles

As with vehicles, the use of vehicles such as 4x4 quads and trail bikes on the sand-dunes above the mean high water mark and within the Wildlife Refuges is of concern and the Department is moving to stop this. Of equal or greater concern is the threat to people, and there have been many complaints about inconsiderate riding within conservation areas and along the beaches. Public opinion is overwhelming against the use of motorbikes within this area, primarily on the grounds of public safety, noise and general nuisance.

The designation of a motorbike riding area has been suggested as an answer, but based on experience elsewhere the Department believes this is an inappropriate use of conservation lands. .

6.5.2 (iii) Horses

Horses have historically accessed the two northern sections of the beach for exercising by those associated with the racing industry. However, in recent years pony clubs and commercial riding establishments have increasingly frequented the area and the best means for accommodating this use needs to be considered. As with the use of vehicles and motorcycles, issues of public safety and disturbance and damage to the environment are relevant, even if the circumstances and effects are different.

There is a requirement under current conservation legislation for permits to be obtained before horses cross or use any conservation land. It is an offence for anyone to ride or lead a horse on lands administered by the Department and approval to do so within the Bream Bay area is required from DOC's Whangarei Area Office.

Formal arrangements are required for that wanting horse access across public conservation land to the beach. Appropriate signage will be provided informing the public of the reasons for such access, where and for what periods of the day and year.

6.5.3 Dogs

Whangarei District Council By-laws and Department of Conservation legislation provide specific controls for the movement of dogs on beaches and within conservation areas, including access across conservation land to the beach.

A specific provision under the Conservation Act affecting the conservation areas of Bream Bay restricts the movement of dogs. [Refer Appendix C page 85 and map page 84]

By notice in the NZ Gazette, 2004, page 4225, the Uretiti Recreation Reserve and Waipu Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserve were declared to be Controlled Dog Areas, with no access. The balance of the conservation areas at Bream Bay were declared Controlled Dog Areas: with entry by permit only for management and/or for recreational hunting, subject to conditions.

The Whangarei District Council's dog policy has three components -

1. No dog zones;
2. Summer dog bans on all beaches between 20 December and 20 February each year, between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00 pm; and
3. A dog exercise area on Ruakaka Beach between Mair Road and the northern most car park of Marsden Village, where dogs can be exercised off the leash provided owners maintain effective control of their animals.

A year-round ban on dogs is in place for the Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges and areas of open coast both north and south of the Waipu River mouth.

[refer Appendix G page 98 and map at page 71]

6.5.4 Pedestrian Traffic - Issues of Public Safety

The thirty access points on public land, and the road-ends where the general public has access to the Bream Bay coastline, appear to be in appropriate locations. Some need management attention, both to protect the stability of dunes and their vegetation and, at the recognised vehicle / horse access ways, to provide an appropriate degree of separation between visitors on foot and vehicles or horses. Visitor safety is a priority.

6.5.5 Public Opinion

General opinion is that the status quo of unrestricted vehicular access is unacceptable. However, there is support for accessing the beach by vehicle for launching boats and to facilitate fishing and shell fish gathering. There is a small area of support for vehicles to be allowed on beaches in the interests of security [the security of those vehicles]. Public opinion is overwhelming against the use of motorbikes within this area, primarily on the grounds of public safety, noise and general nuisance.

General public opinion is that existing legislation controlling dogs and horses on Crown land administered by the Department of Conservation be monitored and enforced throughout the year. Opinion is mixed on dog access and use of the coast.

Opinion favours access to the beach for horses and continued horse riding on portions of the beach.

6.5.6 The Outcome Sought

The dune systems of Bream Bay, the two Wildlife refuges and other nationally significant ecological resources are no longer impacted upon by inappropriate public activity. Visitors now enjoy the area in safety and relative peace.

6.5.7 Actions

1. All access issues adversely impacting on the protection of the fore dune and secondary dune systems are being catalogued. [DOC]
2. Authorised access points across conservation land to the beach have been identified and will be maintained, or further developed, in cooperation with the Whangarei District Council, including those areas specifically designated for vehicles, motorbikes and horses. [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]
3. The three locations where public vehicular access to the beach will continue to be available for the launching of boats and will be managed jointly with the Whangarei District Council to minimise the risk to pedestrian users. { WDC / DOC }
4. Measures are being implemented at the authorized vehicle beach access points to ensure there is an appropriate separation of vehicles from visitors travelling on foot, in the interests of public safety [DOC]

5. The Department will liaise with the Northland Regional Council and Whangarei District Council on the councils' adoption of appropriate policies for the use of beaches by vehicles and horses, and adopting supporting bylaws. [DOC]
6. The needs of various parties for horses to be able to access the beach for exercising will be investigated, with a particular focus on the area adjacent to the racecourse. [DOC]
7. Appropriate steps are being taken to ensure visitors are aware of the prohibition on the use of vehicles, motorbikes and horses on fore dunes and secondary dunes, and within the Wildlife refuges. Other measures will be implemented to enforce current legislation. [DOC]
8. The Department will pursue enhancing its protective management tools via options such as the reclassification of public land, gazetting bylaws to improve compliance and law enforcement.
9. More effective signage is being provided at key locations, as a matter of priority, to inform visitors of policy applicable to the area, their ability to access the beach in safety and to clearly delineate the boundaries of protected areas where access is restricted. [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]
10. The development of a 'coast-watch' group will be facilitated to harness the interest and energies of local interest groups. [Joint venture - Community / DOC/NRC]

6.6. HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROTECTION

6.6.1 The Issues

Piecemeal surveys of archaeological sites in the area have been carried out in response to development proposals, such as an oil pipeline and subdivision for housing. A more comprehensive survey, with the assistance of tangata whenua, is required. This would include a review of historical maps and documentation in order to build up a more accurate picture of the historic resources and values of the area.

Damage to known archaeological sites is occurring through the use of off-road vehicles and motor bikes on the dunes.

6.6.2 Public Opinion

The public generally supports the protection of any known archaeological and historic sites.

6.6.3 The Outcome Sought

That Maori and post-colonial prehistoric and historic sites are protected for their own significance and are valued and appreciated by visitors.

6.6.4 Actions

1. Management issues currently known to be adversely impacting historic and archaeological sites in the area are being catalogued. [DOC]
2. A relatively comprehensive survey is to be undertaken to improve knowledge of the historic and archaeological resources of the area, so that significant sites are protected. [Iwi / HPT / DOC]

6.7. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

6.7.1 The Issues

Current recreational activity is focused on the beach, on providing ready access to the coastline, and in facilitating opportunities for low-key overnight accommodation, e.g. the camping grounds.

Ongoing residential development adjacent to the Bream Bay coastline may, in the future, lead to calls for the development of walking tracks and the provision of other relatively passive recreational facilities to meet the needs of a growing local population.

The issues of public access are dealt with in Paragraph 6.5 [page 32].

An associated access issue, and one of public safety, is that of issuing hunting permits for people to shoot rabbits and game birds. While this has been allowed in the past, on the basis of unsubstantiated need when matched against the risk to public safety, the Department will no longer be issuing permits for this recreational hunting.

Three campgrounds have been established on reserves in the area and these are technically the responsibility of the Department. The more formal campgrounds at the Ruakaka Domain and the Waipu Cove Domain are managed by Domain Boards under the Reserves Act. Each Board has a

management plan which directs the operations of the camps.

The camping area at Uretiti is managed directly by the Department. Issues at this camp include the maintenance of an adequate water supply, the number and type of toilets, the re-creation of shelter, security of the camp and an adjacent day-use area and the management of fire risk.

The concept of providing one or two public viewpoints off State Highway 1 has been mooted from time to time. One location, adjacent to the Uretiti Camp turn off, would ideally have a parking area and wheelchair access to one of the two knolls in this area. Both of these sandy knolls, when cleared of exotic vegetation, would offer expansive views over Bream Bay.

A second viewpoint has been suggested in the proposed Whangarei District Council recreational facility on the location of the old Uretiti tip.

6.7.2 Public Opinion

General public opinion supports the idea of one or more public viewpoints off State Highway 1.

There are mixed views in the community on the creation of walkways through existing conservation areas, and some support for specific areas being set aside for walking tracks. Others are worried about the risks associated.

General opinion supports the improvement of the existing walking track at Paradise Shores and the establishment of other designated walkways in the landward dune area.

There is minimal support for the formation of new campgrounds. Given that there are three campgrounds evenly spaced geographically in Bream Bay, this is viewed as sufficient for the immediate future.

Public comment favours the creation of picnic areas, accompanying toilet facilities and some form of car security in at least two areas:

- at the Mair Road road-end, and
- Uretiti Tip Road road-end.

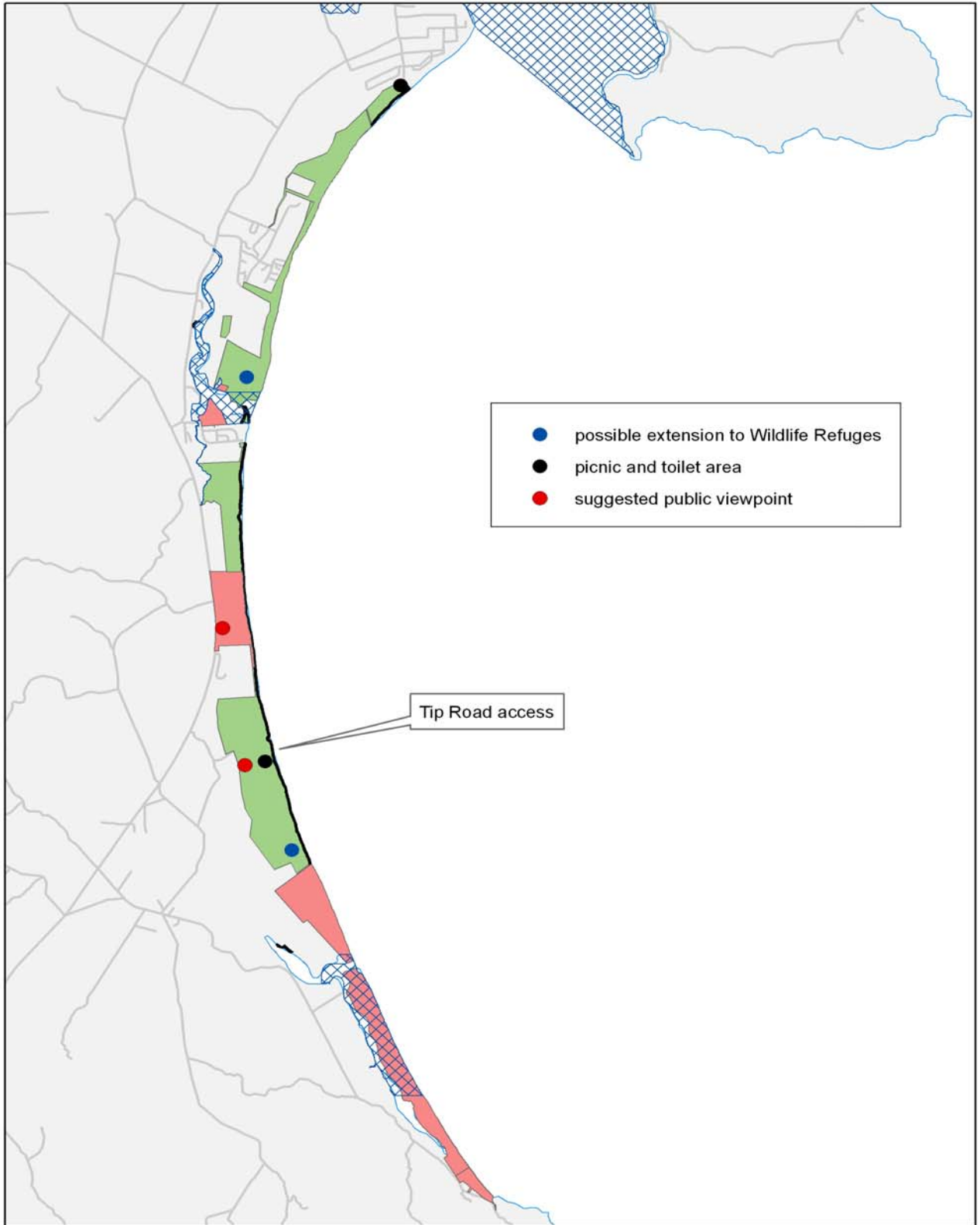
6.7.3 The Outcome Sought

That the recreational needs and legitimate aspirations of users are met, in a manner that complements the strategies and facilities of the Whangarei District Council.

6.7.4 Actions

1. The three campgrounds at Ruakaka, Uretiti and Waipu Cove will be sustained. Additional campgrounds will be considered as and when the need arises. [DOC / WDC / Reserves Boards]
2. The Ruakaka Domain and Waipu Cove Domain campgrounds meet the requirements of the Whangarei District Council under the Campground Regulations. [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]
3. The development plan for the Uretiti camping area and adjacent day-use area will be finalized by 31 December 2006. [DOC]
4. No further recreational hunting permits will be issued for the lands covered by this plan. [DOC]
5. The current identified projects and potential long-term needs of the community for local community recreational facilities [particularly at Ruakaka] will be identified, and the basis of resourcing these agreed in discussion with the Whangarei District Council. [Joint venture - WDC / DOC]

Possible Recreational / Other Development



6.8. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

6.8.1 The Issues

Being in such a desirable location, the conservation lands of Bream Bay attract many enquiries or proposals for development. The oil refinery, and more recent deep water port and timber processing plant at Marsden Point with their supporting infrastructure, are generating demand from associated industry, while coastal residential development continues unabated.

This area not only contains high ecological values in some parts and provides for legitimate recreational and open space needs but, looking ahead, these values will become even more important for the expanding community as well as the wider New Zealand public. On this basis the Department will manage these lands and values for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

6.8.2 Public Opinion

General public opinion is that there should be no further industrial, commercial or residential development at Bream Bay on land administered by the Department of Conservation. Strong views were expressed that there should be no sand extraction or coal pipeline.

Public opinion is mixed on existing community infrastructure, but accepts the community value of facilities such as the oxidation ponds and refuse transfer station. Acceptance of these facilities is on the understanding that they will be managed in a sustainable way and with community input.

Existing concessions, while necessary to support the infrastructure at the present time, should not be extended in the immediate future. Given the present and predicted residential and industrial development in the Bream Bay coastal area, this position will require review in the mid- to long-term.

6.8.3 The Outcome Sought

Applications for commercial activities on Public Conservation Land will remain subject to the existing process outlined in the relevant legislation and policy. That development is accommodated on private land and the essential ecological/open space character of this public land be maintained.

6.8.4 Actions

Any new concession application for commercial activity on conservation land will be processed as they arise seeking input and advice from affected parties.

6.9. CONSERVATION WITH COMMUNITIES - BREAM BAY

6.9.1 The Issues

A key step for achieving the Department's *Appreciation* Outcome in its Statement of Intent, is seeking to ensure the public understand and make valued contributions to conservation. This is reflected in DOC's *Conservation with Communities Strategy* (CWC) designed to increase the community's ownership and participation in local conservation projects.

The CWC strategy is implemented through DOC's annual Community Relations Action Plans. These list the key community groups that achieve a high level of conservation outcome from their work on conservation land. The plans also outline the level of DOC support the groups require and the Department's commitment to an effective working relationship during the year. Each relationship forms part of the Department's annual business plan, project work-plans and relationship management systems.

6.9.1 (i) Tangata Whenua

The Department is required to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in the administration of all land under its care. Apart from the legalities, Maori are an integral part of the community and the relationship of Maori with their natural resources must be considered. The Department is committed to working with tangata whenua by involving Iwi authorities (e.g. Ngatiwai Trust Board) in departmental processes and pro-actively informing them of projects that may impact on natural resources.

The Department has an established relationship with the local hapu, Patuharakeke, based on mutual understanding and interests. DOC has committed itself to keeping the hapu informed on matters relating to the management of public land within their tribal area. The Patuharakeke Trust Board also features strongly in the community relations planning process, and hapu representation on local conservation working groups will provide a valuable link to this part of the Bream Bay demographic.

6.9.1 (ii) The Bream Bay Community

Among those living in the Bream Bay area -

- there were a number of individuals and informal groups who were interested in conservation, and are ready to participate.

- there is a good level of support for conservation, as indicated by the response to the public consultation process for this plan, attendance at community meetings, local media items and participation in local events.
- there has traditionally been a low level of communication between groups and individuals, although this is changing.
- many are unaware of the land management issues, existing natural values and in some cases those who are responsible for managing the public land.
- there are a few, uninterested in conservation, who would prefer to see the current 'wasteland' management approach continue, with unhindered access to conservation land for all manner of activities.
- there is recognition that the seasonal increase in visitor numbers is having a significant impact both on the community and on public conservation land.

Following discussions in 2005 with members of the community who have long expressed an interest in the conservation of natural values along the fragile coastal area from Marsden Point through to Waipu Cove, the Department agreed to sponsor the establishment of a community-based conservation group to undertake a broad range of activities at Bream Bay. Work on the establishing the representation and functions of this group continues and it is expected this process will be completed by during 2006.

6.9.1 (iii) Support Networks

It is anticipated the Bream Bay community group will seek the support of key conservation/environmental organisations such as the Coastal Dune Vegetation Network, the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society and Landcare NZ. The support of public agencies other than DOC [the Northland Regional Council, Whangarei District Council, NZ Police, etc.] will also be important.

6.9.1 (iv) Community Strategy

General opinion supports a high profile public information, communication and education programme to address the management issues in the area, in particular:-

- Dune protection and re-vegetation;
- Vehicle use and access; and
- The management of dogs and horses

Education is a useful tool in raising public awareness when aimed at specific audiences. A multi-pronged prevention, protection and participation strategy including public information campaigns, a media strategy, consultation with tangata whenua and an enhanced compliance and law enforcement effort is needed to obtain the shift in thinking that will move the public to action and change present behaviours.

6.9.1 (v) Good Fences Make Good Neighbours

A key community that needs to be “on-side” in order to achieve key objectives for the area is the neighbouring property owners. The standards of boundary fencing are variable and the maintenance of stock-proof fences is difficult in a salt laden atmosphere where wire corrodes rapidly. The unstable sandy soils are especially difficult to fence.

Because of ill-defined boundaries, encroachments have occurred in several places. Good information generates good management and the development of sound solutions with neighbours.

6.9.2 Public Opinion

Seventy five percent of the people surveyed at the Bream Bay Conservation Open Day held in October 2005 supported the idea of establishing an effective working relationship between DOC and the community.

Respondents also held the view that formally establishing a community conservation group, working with DOC to develop a formal plan, involving other agencies and providing adequate training were most important to them.

Many survey participants, who earlier responded to the public consultation round in February 2005, said they would participate in conservation activities at Bream Bay as part of a community working group. More recently there has been support at public meetings for the formal establishment of a Community Trust representing all Bream Bay coastal communities, with sub-committees representing individual communities and interest groups to work towards the protection or enhancement of species and special sites.

6.9.3 The Outcomes Sought

That the community generally, and specific interest groups, support the management objectives outlined in this plan and are actively involved in programmes designed to maintain, protect and enhance this significant coastal resource, while DOC and its neighbours work together to protect each others' assets.

Relationships with tangata whenua are flourishing and the keen interest of the hapu in the conservation of their natural resources is evidenced by their involvement in leading conservation initiatives that are important to them.

6.9.4 Actions

1. A community based conservation group is being established to undertake conservation programmes and activities that protect and enhance the natural values on public conservation land in the Bream Bay area. [Joint venture - DOC / NRC / WDC]
2. Issues of importance to Maori arising from the management of conservation land at Bream Bay will continue to be discussed with tangata whenua via their tribal authorities and structures. [DOC]
3. The activities of Community groups will be effectively supported and coordinated through joint effort with the Northland Regional Council, the Whangarei District Council and other organisations. [Joint venture - NRC / WDC / DOC]
4. Current public awareness and advocacy are giving new impetus, particularly in respect to protecting the dunes and estuaries. An overall communications plan will be part of this work. [Joint venture - NRC / Community / DOC]
5. All boundary fence-lines have been inspected and an action plan is being developed for managing the maintenance and replacement of fences, barriers or boundary markers. [DOC]
6. Liaison with neighbours is being stepped up and measures taken to remedy inappropriate practices. [DOC]

7. Appendices

- A Resources and Values
- B The Purposes and Provisions of the Key Administering Legislation
- C NZ General Policy Statement, 2005
- D The Taitokerau Northland Conservation Management Strategy
- E Northland Regional Council Plans and Policies
- F Whangarei District Council Plans and Policies
- G The current issues for DOC

References

Resources and values

1. PHYSICAL

The land within this plan consists of a narrow coastal strip of sand dune country of predominantly semi-consolidated sand, bounded to the north by Marsden Point and the Whangarei Harbour entrance and to the south by Waipu Cove.

The Bream Bay coastline comprises holocene sands that were deposited over the last few hundred thousand years. They are primarily derived from the volcanic zone in the central North Island, and were carried north when the Waikato River flowed into the Hauraki Gulf via the current Firth of Thames route during the last glaciation. The sands were then driven westward onto the land as sea level rose.

The beach and dune sands are described as clean, well-sorted feldspathic sands of fine-to-medium grain size (0.17mm to 0.33mm). The finer sands occur in the shelter of Whangarei Heads. The major constituent of the sand is feldspar (55% to 76%) with quartz (19% to 33%). Mafic mineral and rock fragments constitute the remainder.

The dune system consists, generally, of a steep fore dune backed by a series of parallel ridges which have frequently been eroded by wind into small hummocks or knobs. Coastal “blowouts” are hollows breached in the parallel ridges by wind or wave action. Coastal elongate dunes are formed along the margins of blowouts. Large oval shaped longitudinal dunes, up to 13m high, occur inland from the more irregular coastal topography and run generally at right angles to the shoreline.

The shoreline has varied considerably over the last few million years due to alternating glacial and warm periods. During the ice-ages, with their lowered sea levels, the Hen and Chickens Islands would have been linked to the mainland. The extent of kauri/beechn forest would also have been much greater. It is likely that several layers of downed kauri are present beneath the sand country similar, to that of the Aupouri peninsula. Around 6,000 years ago the shoreline was 2m higher than at present. (Schofield 1960).

Records indicate that the Bream Bay coast is eroding at a rate of 0.5 - 1.0 metres per year. (MfE 1990 after Gibb 1984). The eroding areas tend to be places where there are no new sources of gravel or sand.

During the past century, the average temperature in New Zealand has risen by half a degree Celsius and sea level has risen by 15cm.

Surveys of Bream Bay in the 1920s describe the presence of white sand dunes along much of the coast. Behind these dunes were often large shallow wetlands or swamps. These wetlands contained the limbs of kauri as well as kauri gum, which were extracted from the peat. In the Ruakaka area these were once shallow swamps and so the soils formed have a much greater organic and clay content. This is particularly the case in the area behind the race course, where a shallow dune lake remains.

The soils of the Bream Bay coastal area are classified as coastal sands. They are very young, shallow A horizon over parent material (C horizon). In the A horizon, clay content is less than 10% and their capacity for moisture and nutrient retention is poor. They are very susceptible to wind erosion when unvegetated.

A coastline of this type is inherently dynamic and is forever changing, particularly at the mouth of the rivers. Many years ago there were large areas of mobile sand. These were stabilised in the 1920's by planting marram *Ammophila arenaria* along the dunes from Marsden Point to the Waipu River. Pine trees have also been planted in the Uretiti and golf course area. *Acacia* is present in scattered areas at Uretiti. Some areas of sand are still mobile.

2. HABITATS

The habitats of the Bream Bay coast comprise three broad types; the open coastline bordering directly the ocean; secondary dunes; and those within the shelter of sand spits.

2.1 Open Coastline Habitats

Northern Bream Bay: Between Marsden Point and the power station the fore dune has been removed by erosion, leaving a steep face capped by a dense vegetation of flax, *Cortaderia splendens*, pohuehue and bracken, along with a few pohutukawa trees. Near the power station the fore dune has spinifex, pingao and sand convolvulus. This falls to a longitudinal moist depression with *Leptocarpus*, *Baumea juncea* and *Scirpoides*.

The wider taller rear dune has been used for an oil pipeline and is now dominated by marram with sheep sorrel and some *Scirpoides*. Beyond is scrub.

Ruakaka Beach: The seaward face of the fore dune is steep but the crest is level or has a longitudinal depression. The lee slope falls away to lower undulating land. The fore dune crest has spinifex and pingao and occasional marram, haretail and sand convolvulus. Pingao is most abundant at the Ruakaka river mouth. In places pohuehue, *Scirpoides* and ice plant are present and there is some sand coprosma.

A long depression behind the fore dune has *Baumea articulata*, *B. juncea*, *Leptocarpus*, *Cyperus* and flax. Probably the only occurrences of *Zoysia pungens* and *Austrofestuca* in Bream Bay are on the dunes here.

Waipu Cove: The dunes consist of a steep-sided front, falling by a steep lee slope to a flat adjacent to the estuary. The northern half has some blowouts. The tip, at the mouth of the Waipu River, is un-vegetated and unstable. Spinifex dominates with occasional pingao and sand convolvulus. The lee slopes are sparsely vegetated with stunted lupin and gorse.

2.2 Secondary dunes - “inland habitats”

Marsden Point to Power Station: This area appears to have been stabilised for the longest period. The wetter hollows support cabbage trees, flax, *Leptocarpus simplex* and *Baumea juncea*. There are a number of mature pohutukawa, some pohutukawa saplings, as well as manuka and flax. An area of kanuka and cabbage trees also includes the ferns *Asplenium lucidum*, *Doodia media*, *Phymatodes diversifolium* and *Asplenium falcatum*.

Marsden Village: *Coprosma lucida* and *C. australe* have become established beneath planted Ngaio (*Myoporum* spp.)

Racecourse / Ruakaka River: These areas show a good development of native trees, with a small vigorous stand of kanuka, mingimingi, *Coprosma lucida* and some ferns (*Phymatodes diversifolium*, *Pyrrosia serpens*, *Asplenium flabellatum*). The gorse is quite old and the canopy appears to be opening out.

Ruakaka Village: The dunes to the south of the village are fragile, with a good succession of native flora characteristic of the earlier stages of succession. The moister dune slack areas are colonised by manuka and kanuka, with gorse in the older areas of the dunes. Mingimingi, *Muhlenbeckia*, and *Coprosma lucida* are colonising the gorse. An unusual *Coprosma* hybrid, *C. acerosa x repens*, is present.

Uretiti: Pines and wattle have been planted here and there is extensive gorse. A number of native species are colonising the area, including ferns, cabbage trees and flax.

Rubbish Tip: Despite the rubbish tip, parts of this area appear to have remained undisturbed for a relatively long period. Cabbage trees are overtopping gorse and wattle, and three *Coprosma* species (*C. lucida*, *C. australae*, and *C. robusta*) are common in the area. In some places, kanuka is overtopping the gorse and mingimingi is quite common. *Pinus* seedlings are invading the gorse and may exclude native plant establishment.

Waipu River: Cabbage trees are common, particularly in the hollows, and are growing through the gorse and wattle.

"Race-course" Lake: This is an elongated lake of approximately three hectares adjoining the south-western side of the racecourse. The dune lake is contiguous with the Bream Bay dune land system administered by the Department on its southern boundary. A corridor of private land is located between the lakes' western boundary and the eastern boundary of the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge.

The lake contains approximately seventy-five percent of open water, with raupo and tall reeds such as *Eleocharis* and *Baumea* sedges frequenting the shallow littoral margins. The lake is habitat to large numbers of mallard duck, together with grey duck, paradise shelduck, little shag, pied shag, black shag (threatened species), white-faced heron, red-billed and black-backed gulls, and occasionally, black swan. Two threatened birds, the Australasian bittern and spotless crane, have also been reported from the lake, as well as the Australian little grebe.

The lake is significant ecologically, as it is the only natural dune lake occurring on Northland's east coast between Karikari Peninsula in the north and the Tomarata lakes located south of Mangawhai. It is, however, under pressure from adjoining residential subdivision, encroachment of activities from the adjoining racecourse stables and invasion from weeds.

2.3 Estuaries and associated wildlife areas “within the shelter of sand spits”.

The Ruakaka estuary is currently maintained by the outflow of the Ruakaka River. It extends from the shoreline to the bridge near Bream Bay College. Its upper reaches are tide-dominated at high tide and fresh water-dominated at low tide.

In contrast the Waipu estuary is cut off from a former fresh water input, the Waipu Cove stream, and is protected to some extent from input by the Waipu River by a concrete bund. This makes the estuary more dependent on tide inputs and more limited backfilling by fresh water as the tide changes. However, without significant flooding the Waipu estuary is likely to be filling, with silt driven into it from the river in incoming tides.

There is limited spit development at Ruakaka, and a 3.3 km long c80-100m wide spit at Waipu. The associated estuaries benthic communities are sand/silt rather than silt-dominated and consequently the resident breeding bird populations are dominated by those that forage on fish, shellfish and crustaceans, rather than crabs and worms. Arctic waders that feed on shellfish and silt-associated worms use the mid- and southern-Waipu estuary for foraging in summer. Ruakaka estuary is not generally used for foraging by these birds, but the entrance and beach are critically important for them in the very high spring tides as a roost site. Most of the bar-tailed godwit and lesser knot that use and generally roost in Whangarei Harbour (up to 5,000 birds) use this area at these times.

The Ruakaka River is one of the few waterways that flows over a flood plain in Northland with substantially intact riparian forest cover. The sparse short-jawed kokopu (*Galaxias postvectis*) has been recorded in its headwaters. The inner estuary had mangroves, and these ecosystems are the foraging and breeding ground of up to 30 species of marine fishes in Northland. Australasian gannet and pied shags mass on the seaward entrance to Ruakaka Estuary and chase fish up the estuary at the change to incoming tide.

The loss of drift wood and other sea-cast material is of concern. Drift wood is important in breeding wave energy on beaches and forms the basis for dune development in places like Poverty Bay. Drift wood is sparse on Northland's east coast beaches because sources are more limited and wave action covers many beaches daily. Species like the threatened Black Katipo spider (*Latrodectus atritus*) and the littoral earwig (*Antisolabis littorea*), which inhabit the area, are dependent on littoral materials and drift wood. Young shorebirds frequently use vegetation and these sites as cover from predators.

At both Ruakaka and Waipu the presence of rabbits in even modest density is a problem to the entire dune system. Rabbits eat the leaves of *Spinifex* and reduce its ability to catch sand. Rabbits are ready foods for mustelids, cats and harriers and can attract these predators into areas, and sustain trap shy mustelids and cats. Their burrows are also day-hiding sites for hedgehogs and burrow presence could dictate distribution of hedgehogs on dune systems. Hedgehogs are numerous on the northern dunes, are nest predators and also eat many beetle larvae and adults. Burrows and areas of dense vegetation, including weeds and the coastal *Coprosma aecerosa*, can harbour ship (*Rattus rattus*) and Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*).

Despite Marram being planted within a lot of dune areas in Northland, including the Ruakaka Wildlife area, it has not taken over. This species needs to be eradicated as a weed in the wildlife areas, and Northland's naturally vegetated fore dunes need to be retained.

While much is known about the natural values of the Bream Bay area, this part of Northland has not yet been surveyed in a holistic manner. Over the past 15 years the Protected Natural Areas Programme [PNAP] has surveyed all but three of the region's Ecological Districts - Otamatea, Waipu and Kaipara. Waipu is to be surveyed in 2007 and the opportunity will be taken to undertake a more detailed study of the Bream Bay area.

3. Species

If there was a symbol of the Bream Bay area it would have to be the New Zealand Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis davisae*). It was once found in coastal areas throughout the North Island and in parts of the South Island. Now its breeding sites are restricted to Waipu, Mangawhai and the Papakanui Spit on the Kaipara Harbour. The total population is around 30 birds.

Areas around the entrance of both the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries and the sand-spit have been fenced off by the Department in recent years to reduce human disturbance and encourage breeding of not only the Fairy tern, but the New Zealand dotterel (*Charadrius obscurus*) and variable oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*). Summer wardens have maintained these fences and monitored, to varying degrees the success of all these species. However, their principal role has been to enhance Fairy tern recruitment. In addition, student projects have assessed the impact of visitors using sighting periods on the upper estuary using footprints within the fence lines. Incidental sightings and staff and warden interviews also document the principal issues affecting the waders, and also attitudes of the public to the wildlife refuge.

The shorebirds that breed at Ruakaka are predominantly the variable oystercatcher and the New Zealand dotterel. The Whangarei to Mangawhai coastline is a variable oystercatcher stronghold in New Zealand (c.12-24% of the c.4500 in 2004), and the doubling of the population there, since 1970, is attributed to protection and predator control at the North Island wildlife sites, including Ruakaka, Waipu and Mangawhai. The wildlife refuges are also breeding grounds and winter roost sites for the “nationally vulnerable” northern New Zealand dotterel.

These species require open, sandy nest sites amongst shoreline shell and debris. After hatching, chicks are mobile and need safe hiding sites near and under upper beach debris. Adult birds require access to the marine areas for food during daylight and especially at night. Chicks can use the estuary at night. The reasons for poorer breeding at Ruakaka are untested, but are potentially due to increased disturbance and associated energetic costs to reproduction, chick predation and reduced cover in which chicks can hide.

Historically, fenced off areas allow public access along the estuary and beach front and such disturbance may just be too much for breeding waders. In addition, cover for wader chicks is severely restricted by the removal of almost all wood from the beach for fires, including DOC signs, for bonfires.

The management of predators impacting threatened, indigenous species is crucial. Hedgehogs, mustelids and cats have been targeted at Waipu sand spit since the 1996/97 breeding season. A substantial by-catch of harriers has been taken, with uninjured birds being released. Gulls are a threat to breeding Fairy terns and are also potential food stealers from wader parents. Black-backed gull breeding has been discouraged in the Waipu Wildlife Refuge reserve by the removal of nests. In 2003-05 the populations of an undescribed northern species of *Pericoptus* (large black sand scarab) were monitored using the southern dune at the entrance to Ruakaka estuary and the Waipu sand spit as control sites for assessing the impacts of a newly discovered introduced wasp (*Radumeris tasmaniensis*).

High numbers of common seabirds use the estuaries and, to a lesser extent, the coastal area. These include the godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri*), knot (*Calidris cantus canutus*), turnstones (*Arenaria interpres interpres*), white-fronted tern (*Sterna striata*), caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and Australasian gannet (*Sula bassana serrator*).

Rare migratory waders seen in the estuaries include terek sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), far eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), and the red-necked stint (*Caliris ruficollis*). Other species in the estuaries are the banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus*), wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*), banded rail (*Rallus philippensis assimilis*), and (fernbird *Bowdleria punctata vealae*).

Research has shown that most of the general public respect the fencing for waders and that it is the design of the controlled access areas that may be the issue. However, without constant staff presence there are risks. Fairy tern nests have been lost to human disturbance within the fences, and there are ongoing issues with people walking dogs and driving vehicles within the wildlife areas. The behaviour of some of these people on being observed by DOC staff, and interviews with people caught within the areas with vehicles and dogs, indicates that some New Zealanders are not prepared to change their behaviour to fencing, or obey signs, when there is a low risk of being caught. In addition, there are continuing issues with vandalism of signs which means that people may inadvertently enter the area with dogs because signs have been removed.

There are issues with dogs running uncontrolled and accessing the wildlife areas. Random monitoring grids in all habitats has also shown that just one dog can access all regions within a fenced off area in a matter of hours and destroy breeding there. Horses have regularly been seen within the Ruakaka wildlife Area. The consequences of such activity is often difficult for members of the public to understand, as they are unaware that they are disturbing breeding birds.

In terms of terrestrial species, the Bream Bay coastal area is a stronghold for the threatened endemic Black Katipo spider. This spider is a true coastal species and is confined to the northern third of New Zealand. Recent surveys [J Griffiths] have identified Bream Bay as being one of the more significant habitats for this species on the east coast, containing some of the highest numbers of Black Katipo in its known home range [at between 20-50 per ha].

However, it is a threatened species in serious decline. Habitat disturbance by uncontrolled vehicles [4x4s and motor cross bikes], weed invasion and competition from introduced spiders are its greatest threats. They are in moderate numbers in the northern areas, particularly north of Ruakaka estuary. They are also in moderate numbers around Uretiti. All this assists the case for close protection of the Ruakaka Wildlife Zone.

The dune shrub land communities of Bream Bay hold small populations of the threatened Auckland green gecko. This species has declined over much of its former range, due to development of its favoured habitat. It is classified as a threatened / gradual decline species.

The full distribution (and density) of the species is unknown in the study area. Few observations have been recorded, but those made in the mid 1990s indicate the Auckland green gecko is in low numbers in this area. During this period they were located in native shrub land (mostly kanuka/manuka) on the northern side of the Ruakaka River mouth and Wildlife Refuge, and also in mixed kanuka and exotic shrubs and trees just to the south of Ruakaka Township within lands administered by the Department.

Further survey work would be necessary to increase our knowledge of this species at Bream Bay. It would be restricted, due to the non-availability of suitable habitat such as native shrub land enclaves, and may be absent over much of the area where this vegetation community does not exist.

Shore skink (*Oligosoma smithi*). The shore skink has been observed to the north of the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge and southwards to near the Waipu Wildlife Refuge, from near mean high spring tide area and back into the rear dunes. It has only been seen in small numbers and could be more widespread, i.e. occurring along all of the dune land north of the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge and up to the entrance of the Whangarei Harbour wherever suitable habitat exists. The shore skink's favoured habitats are open areas close to the high tide mark where driftwood is present and within mat forming vegetation, e.g. *Muehlenbeckia* or pohuehue, along the sand dunes.

The Bream Bay dune-lands also contain populations of the Shore skink, which is confined to coastal habitats in the northern areas of the North Island.

The introduced Green and golden bell frog breeds in artificial dune land ponds and some natural seasonal wetlands. While not an indigenous protected species in New Zealand, this country is now home to the largest population of this species world-wide. With the species now endangered in its native Australia, there are international reasons for looking after this frog.

The invertebrates that are found within the fore dunes and immediate back dunes of both the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries are diverse, and the result of the relatively high remaining natural character of the fore dunes there. The invertebrates include the sand dune tiger beetle (*Cicindela tuberculata*), various ichneumonid wasps, the red-tailed cicada (*Rhodopsalta cruentata*) and a species of worm. However, at Ruakaka the secondary dunes are being taken over by introduced weeds and garden escaped plants, putting the habitat for these species at risk.

4. Historic

The majority of recorded archaeological sites tend to be clustered near the estuaries of the Ruakaka and Waipu Rivers. They include pa, pits, terraces and extensive midden sites. A few midden have been noted in the dunes along the coast, but most of this extensive beach has not been adequately surveyed.

Several of the recorded pa in the general area have been partially destroyed by quarrying or farming activities. An archaeological survey is warranted.

5. Visitors and Recreation

There are thirty primary public access points to the beach. Most are intended for pedestrian access only, but are used by those in vehicles and on motorbikes and horses, with implications for management. To upgrade the access points and the associated tracks will be a significant cost. It will be important to be strategic and that the approach account for both biodiversity values and the burgeoning community needs. There are numerous unauthorised secondary access points that need to be reviewed.

The priority public access points are located near Marsden Point and at the power station, in Ruakaka Township, the Ruakaka Surf Club, the Uretiti day use area and Uretiti campground, Tip Road, an unnamed road on the north side of Waipu River, Hammond Road, Johnson Point Road and at Waipu Cove.

Several camp grounds are available for use in the Bream Bay area. These include those administered on behalf of the Department by Reserves Boards at the Ruakaka Domain Recreation Reserve and Waipu Cove Domain Recreation Reserve. Several privately operated campgrounds are located at Waipu and nearby One Tree Point, on the shores of the Whangarei Harbour.

The Department operates a minimum facility camping area at Uretiti which is visited by approximately 20,000 campers per year. Adjacent to this is a day use area catering to around 90,000 visitors. Other sites of public interest include the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge and the Waipu Wildlife Refuge that are visited by up to 50,000 people annually.

In the interests of the safety of the many visitors to the area, recreational hunting permits are no longer being issued by the Department. The opportunity to work and train hunting dogs subject to permit is still possible.

The following are estimates for visitor use at sites within the Bream Bay area.

Uretiti Beach,	90,000
Uretiti campsite	20,000
Uretiti amenity area	15,000
Tip Road, Waipu	5,000
Waipu Caves Walkway	3,000
Brynderwyn Walkway	2,500
Piroa Falls track	1,500

(visitorstatslzp 17.7.98)

These visitation statistics are likely to be low given the estimation occurred in 1998 and the rapid growth in the intervening period. There have been no major, visitor use surveys conducted to verify actual numbers. However substantial growth in the associated urban areas has occurred. This coupled with significant growth in visitor numbers has seen the visitor facilities used at unplanned for, and at often unsustainable/damaging levels. With appropriate development of facilities the area can sustain increased use and provide better experiences for both “locals” and visitors.

Current appropriate and legitimate use is largely associated with the shore margin. The public, walk, sunbathe, fish, swim, bird-watch, explore and generally appreciate the Bream Bay beach area. Some use occurs inland e.g.: camping and walking. The greatest use of the inland dune area is by vehicle users who have no authority to do so. These bikes quads and 4x4 present a threat to visitors (reported hospitalisations) and the biodiversity values of the area. - see elsewhere.

6. Public and private uses

The activities marked * occur on land administered by the Department, and are managed by the Department or on its behalf. Other activities occur adjacent to conservation land, with direct and indirect impacts on it.

Marsden Point Oil refinery

* Easements enabling three pipelines carrying gas and petroleum products servicing the Marsden Point oil refinery and Marsden Power station and connecting with Wiri depot.

* Power pylons

* Ruakaka Sewage Treatment Works

Marsden Power Station

Ruakaka racecourse

Ruakaka Township

* Ruakaka domain and camping ground

Surf Club access

* Subdivision access across dunes

Sand extraction

Bible class camp

* Uretiti day use area DOC

* Uretiti campground DOC

Golf course

* Uretiti rubbish dump/transfer station

* Tip road beach access

* Sewage pond

Groyne in Waipu river mouth

* Waipu Cove Recreation Reserve Campground

* Waipu Cove Surf Club

* Waipu Cove day use area

Waipu Cove housing subdivisions

LAND STATUS CHANGES SINCE CROWN ACQUISITION

In recognition of the value of the Ruakaka and Waipu estuaries as wildlife habitat, land of various status [including lands of the Crown and foreshore and seabed] was set apart as Wildlife Refuge, subject to the Wildlife Act, 1953. [s14]

The Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge was gazetted in 1958, with an area of 206 acres [83ha] - primarily foreshore and seabed but with a relatively small area of Crown Land on the northern shore. [NZ Gazette 1958/1553]

The Waipu Wildlife Refuge was established in 1969 over an area of reserve and seabed, primarily including the Waipu River mouth and the area to the south of it. The Refuge covers an area of 310 acres [125ha] as described in NZ Gazette 1969/403.

In 1987, as a result of the reform of environmental administration, all the land that is the subject of this report was allocated to DOC, pursuant to Section 62 of the Conservation Act, 1987.

The purposes and provisions of key administering legislation

The Conservation Act, 1987 has implications for the management of all areas administered by the Department through the over-arching provisions of general policy and conservation management strategies and plans. Section 17A provides that “the Department shall administer and manage all conservation areas and natural and historic resources in accordance with:-

- a. Statements of general policy approved under section 17B or section 17C of this Act; and
- b. Conservation Management strategies, conservation management plans and freshwater fisheries management plans.

The Conservation Act also applies directly to the day to day management of conservation areas, stewardship areas and marginal strips, and generally requires that these areas “shall be so managed that its natural and historic resources are protected”.

Access to, and the use of, conservation areas by the public is free. [s17]

A specific provision under the Conservation Act affecting the conservation areas of Bream Bay restricts the movement of dogs. Section 26ZS of the Act allows the Minister of Conservation, by notice in the Gazette, to declare any area managed by the Minister to be either a controlled dog area or an open dog area. Options within a controlled dog area range from no access to entry by permit for management and/or recreational hunting subject to conditions, and dogs on lead subject to conditions.

By notice in *NZ Gazette* 2004, page 4225, the Uretiti Recreation Reserve and Waipu Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserve were declared to be Controlled Dog Areas, i.e. No Access, with the balance of conservation areas in the area being declared Controlled Dog Areas, and Entry by Permit for Management and/or Recreational Hunting Subject to Conditions.

The Reserves Act 1977 applies directly to all reserves, including those classified as Recreation Reserve, Scenic Reserve and Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserve.

Section 3 provides that, subject to the control of the Minister, the Act shall be administered in the Department for the purpose of:

- a. Providing, for the preservation and management for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, areas of New Zealand possessing:-
 - i. Recreational use or potential, whether active or passive; or
 - ii. Wildlife; or
 - iii. Indigenous flora or fauna; or
 - iv. Environmental and landscape amenity or interest; or
 - v. Natural, scenic, historic, cultural, archaeological, biological, geological, scientific, educational, community or other special features or value.

- b. Ensuring, as far as possible, the survival of all indigenous species of flora and fauna, both rare and commonplace, in their natural communities and habitats, and the preservation of representative samples of all classes of natural ecosystems and landscape which, in aggregate, originally gave New Zealand its own recognisable character.

- c. Ensuring, as far as possible, the preservation of access for the public to and along, the sea coast, its bays and inlets and offshore islands, lake shores and riverbanks, and fostering and promoting the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment and the margins of lakes and rivers and the protection of them from unnecessary subdivision and development”.

To ensure the appropriate management, preservation and use of reserves for their appropriate purposes, the Minister is required to classify each area according to its principal or primary purpose, as defined in sections 17 to 23 of the Act.

However, all classifications contain a proviso that nothing in the provisions for each purpose authorises any activity with respect to fauna that would contravene the provisions of the Wildlife Act, 1953 or any regulations made under that Act, or the doing of anything with respect to archaeological features in any reserve that would contravene any provision of the Historic Places Act, 1993.

PURPOSE OF A RECREATION RESERVE

Recreation reserves are established under Section 17(1) of the Reserves Act, 1977 for the purpose of:-

“Providing areas for the recreation and sporting activities and the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public, and for the protection of the natural environment and beauty of the countryside, with emphasis on the retention of open spaces and on outdoor recreational activities, including recreational tracks in the countryside”.

Section 17(2)(b) requires that “Where scenic, historic, archaeological, biological, geological or other scientific features or indigenous flora or fauna or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or that flora or fauna or wildlife, shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve.

PURPOSE OF A SCENIC RESERVE

Scenic reserves are established under Section 19(1) (a) of the Reserves Act, 1977 for the purpose of:-

“Protecting and preserving, in perpetuity for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, enjoyment and use of the public, suitable areas possessing such qualities of scenic interest, beauty or natural features or landscape that their protection and preservation are desirable in the public interest”.

Section 19(2)(a) requires that “Except where the Minister otherwise determines, the indigenous flora and fauna, ecological associations and natural environment and beauty shall, as far as possible, be preserved, and for this purpose, except where the Minister otherwise determines, exotic flora and fauna shall, as far as possible, be exterminated.

Section 19(2)(d) “Where historic, archaeological, geological, biological or other scientific features are present in the reserve, those features shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve.

PURPOSE OF A GOVERNMENT PURPOSE [WILDLIFE REFUGE] RESERVE

Government Purpose [Wildlife Refuge] Reserves are established under Section 22(2) of the Reserves Act, 1977 which states: “a reserve may be classified as a Government purpose reserve for wildlife management or for other specified wildlife purposes”.

Section 22(4)(a) “Where scenic, historic, archaeological, biological, cultural, scientific or natural features or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or wildlife shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve”.

The Wildlife Act, 1953 provides for the protection and control of all animals and birds living in a wild state in New Zealand, and for the regulation of the management of game shooting. This protection applies to the species, irrespective of land tenure.

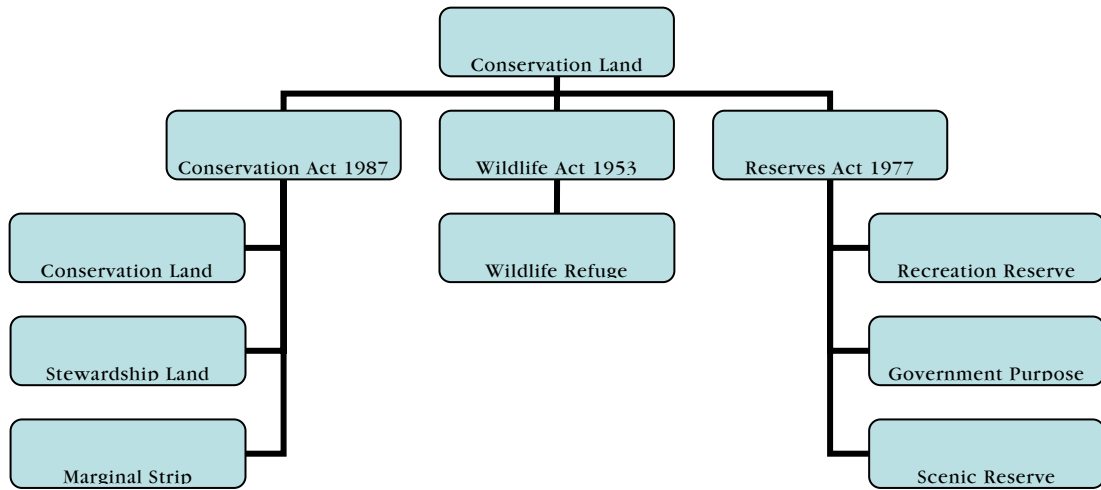
All wildlife are declared to be absolutely protected throughout New Zealand, except those species specified in schedules to the Act that:-

1. have been declared to be game
2. are partially protected [4 species]
3. may be hunted or killed where the Minister formally notifies [currently 11 species]
4. are not protected [common introduced species]
5. have been declared to be subject to the Wild Animal Control Act, 1977

In order to provide a higher level of protection to a particular habitat or species of wildlife, the Governor-General may, by proclamation, declare any area [land or water, private or public] to be a Wildlife Refuge for the purposes of the Act. S 14(3) provides:-

“It shall not be lawful for any person to hunt or kill for any purpose, or molest, capture, disturb, harass or worry any wildlife in the wildlife refuge, or to take, destroy or disturb the nests, eggs, or spawn of any such wildlife, or for any person to bring onto the wildlife refuge or have in his possession or discharge in the wildlife refuge any firearm or explosive, or have in his possession or control in the wildlife refuge any dog or cat, or to do anything likely to cause any wildlife to leave the wildlife refuge”.

In diagrammatic form, this is how the public conservation areas of Bream Bay draw their status and their management principles from the relevant legislation.



The Resource Management Act, 1991 applies to all land at Bream Bay, and to the adjacent waters.

Under section 5, the purpose of this Act is “to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources”. Sustainable management is defined as “managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while:-

- a. sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- b. safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems; and
- c. avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment”.

In Section 6, the Resource Management Act identifies matters of national importance that must be recognized and provided for:

- a) The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development
- b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development
- c) The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna
- d) The maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers
- e) The relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga
- f) the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development
- g) the protection of recognised customary activities

Anyone exercising functions and powers under the Act is also required to have particular regard to:

- kaitiakitanga

- the ethic of stewardship
- the efficient use and development of natural and physical resources
- the efficiency of the end use of energy
- the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values
- the intrinsic values of ecosystems
- the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment
- any finite characteristics of natural and physical resources
- the protection of the habitat of trout and salmon
- the effects of climate change
- the benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy

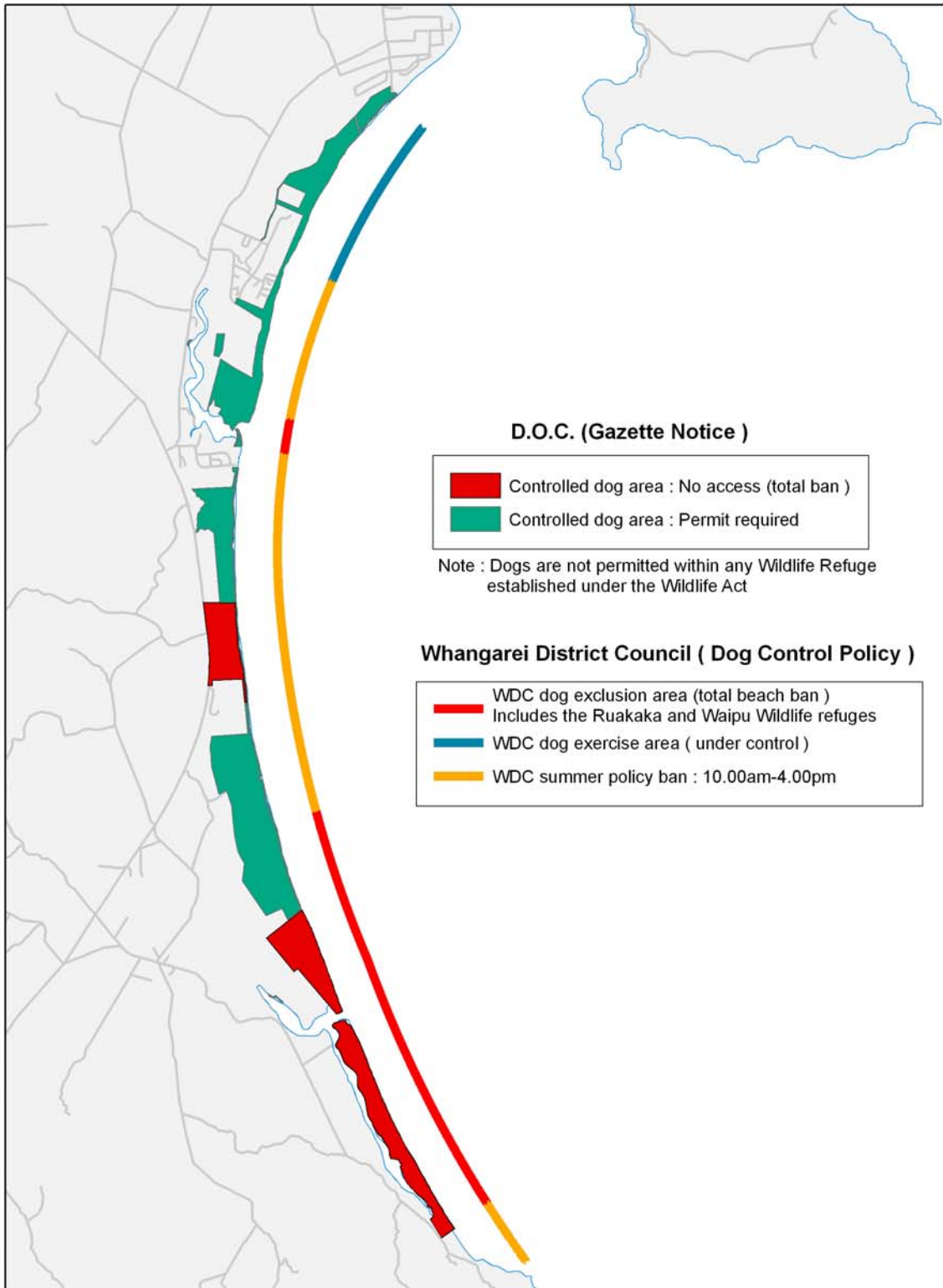
Section 8 of the Act provides:

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi).

The Resource Management Act is administered by local government and is implemented through Regional and District Policies and Plans prepared by Councils. Section 74(2)(b) of the Act states “A territorial authority shall have regard to any management plans and strategies prepared under any other Act”. The Northland Regional Council and Whangarei District Council are therefore required to have regard to the provisions of the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland when preparing their plans and policies.

Current Statutory Dog Controls

Department of Conservation [land] - Whangarei District Council [beach]



NZ General Policy Statement 2005

This document is the first statement of General Policy under the Conservation Act, 1987. It was prepared by the Director-General in terms of Sections 17B and 17C of the Conservation Act, 1987, endorsed by the New Zealand Conservation Authority and approved by the Minister of Conservation. It provides unified policy for the implementation of the following Acts listed in the First Schedule of the Conservation Act:

- The Conservation Act, 1987
- The Wildlife Act, 1953
- The Marine Reserves Act, 1971
- The Reserves Act, 1977
- The Wild Animal Control Act, 1977
- The Marine Mammals Protection Act, 1978

The General Policy also provides guidance for consistent management planning for the wide range of places and resources managed by the Department, including the preparation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans.

The above Acts were originally the responsibility of a number of Government agencies, but with the passing of the Conservation Act in 1987 most conservation functions came together under a single agency, the Department of Conservation. The Department was also given functions not previously provided for in legislation, such as conservation advocacy.

The NZ General Policy Statement 2005 contains policies for:

- Treaty of Waitangi responsibilities
- Public participation in conservation management
- Conservation of natural resources
- Historical and Cultural heritage
- Changes to public conservation land

- Conservation beyond public conservation lands and waters
- Natural hazards
- People's benefit and enjoyment
- Accommodation and related facilities
- Activities requiring specific authorization
- Research and information needs
- Conservation management strategies and plans
- International agreements and cooperation

The scope of the policies is necessarily broad, reflecting the wide spectrum of conservation areas administered under the legislation and the many conservation tasks to be performed. In order to achieve integrated conservation management, the policies are carefully formulated, taking into account this spectrum of areas and responsibilities, but they maintain a strong statute-based focus on the protection and preservation of natural and historic resources.

The importance of conservation areas for public recreation and enjoyment is fully recognised but, under the legislation, for most types of conservation areas this recreational use must not be inconsistent with their preservation and protection.

Conservation Management Strategy: Northland Conservancy 1999-2009

Department of Conservation, Northland Conservancy - 1999

The purpose of a CMS is “ to implement general policies and establish objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources, including any species managed by the Department under the Wildlife Act, 1953, the Marine Reserves Act, 1971, the Reserves Act, 1977, the Wild Animal Control Act, 1977, the Marine Mammals Protection Act, 1978, the National Parks Act, 1980, the New Zealand Walkways Act, 1990 or this Act [the Conservation Act, 1987], or any of them, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes.” [s17D Conservation Act 1987]

Prepared in terms of s.17D of the Conservation Act, 1987, the Northland CMS covers more than 500 discrete areas of conservation land and reserves, with an area exceeding 160,000ha. This document was developed over a period of 5 years and in the absence of a General Policy Statement. It was approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority on 15 April, 1999.

The Bream Bay conservation lands and reserves are identified within the CMS as part of the Whangarei/Bream Bay Priority Area for Integrated Management. The objectives and implementation statements within that document form the basis for this Strategy.

The following Management Issues and Priority Actions have been identified in the CMS for the Whangarei/Bream Bay Priority Area:

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- Invasion of plant pests, especially pampas, climbing asparagus, ginger and mistflower in forests and spartina in the harbour and estuaries
- Escape of potential plant pests from suburban gardens
- Wild animal control including possums, goats, cats, dogs and rodents

- Protection of habitat and breeding grounds for threatened coastal birds
- Coastal subdivision and development
- Impacts of urban expansion, industrial processing and port development
- Disturbance to archaeological sites
- Quarrying of Whangarei scoria cones
- Activities and developments in the coastal environment

PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. Seek to increase the area of protected forest, shrub-land, freshwater wetland and coastal/estuarine habitats, together with outstanding geological features and scoria cones, according to priorities established in Sections 5.2 and 5.16 of the CMS and using methods identified.
2. Carry out sustained control of possums, goats and other animal pests in Bream Head/Manaia, with fencing to limit stock invasion.
3. Control plant pests, especially pampas, ginger, climbing asparagus and mist flower in forests and spartina and sharprush in harbours. Carry out public awareness programme on plant pest issues and control.
4. Protect breeding sites of coastal birds by fencing, signs, predator control and wardens at Ruakaka, Waipu, Lang Cove, Langs Beach, Mangawhai and Ocean beach.
5. Support the ecological restoration of Matakoho [Limestone] Island.
6. Pursue the investigation of a marine reserve proposal for part of the Whangarei Harbour.
7. Carry out maintenance, interpretation and visitor-impact monitoring on historic sites at Bream Head. Manage stock on Motukiore Island and survey Otaika Valley for historic sites.
8. Establish interpretation facilities at the VIN office at Tarewa Park.
9. Maintain and upgrade tracks and existing campgrounds, when necessary.

10. Advocate for appropriate objectives, policies and methods of implementation in planning documents and conditions on resource consents under the Resource Management Act processes, to ensure the protection of natural and historic resources.

11. Consult with tangata whenua, as appropriate, prior to making management decisions and assist the Office of Treaty Settlements in the resolution of Waitangi Tribunal claims.

The Management Issues and Priority actions relevant to the Bream Bay reserves and conservation areas are identified in Section 1.6.

Regional Policy Statement for Northland

Northland Regional Council - 31 March 1999

Each Regional Council is required by the Resource Management Act, 1991 to prepare a Policy Statement applicable to its region. The purpose of a regional policy statement is to provide an overview of the resource management issues of the region, and the policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the natural and physical resources of the whole region.

Working in consultation with Northland's residents, the Northland Regional Council has developed the following general directions for resource management in Northland:-

1. Protecting and improving environmental quality, recognising the priority within the community for retaining Northland's unique and high quality environmental heritage.
2. Enabling development while avoiding, remedying and mitigating adverse effects. The Policy Statement allows people to undertake as wide a range of activities as possible, provided certain environmental standards are met and significant adverse effects are avoided.
3. Allowing time for change and finding solutions, recognising that some resource-use practices will have to change so that natural and physical resources can be managed in a sustainable manner.
4. Promoting individual and community involvement, by creating an awareness of current problems and involvement in finding and implementing solutions.
5. Partnership with tangata whenua, recognizing the principles in the Treaty of Waitangi.
6. The need for environmental standards. Education, on its own, will not provide sufficient protection of the environment and resources, particularly in the short term.
7. The resource user pays. The costs of resource use should not fall on the environment, the community as a whole or future generations.

8. Adopting a precautionary approach, as our knowledge of the extent and value of some resources and the impacts of some activities on them, is limited.

The Regional Policy Statement contains a description of the Northland environment, regional administration, natural resources, social and economic resources and historical resources. Of particular relevance, in the context of this strategy, are the sections on Outstanding natural features and Outstanding landscapes [Section 19]; Ecosystems and biodiversity [Section 23]; and Heritage protection [Section 24].

Each section identifies the issues, sets objectives reflecting the RM Act's imperatives, adopts policies and methods for implementing the policies and outlines the environmental results anticipated.

The maintenance of Northland's biodiversity, the protection of the life-supporting capacity of natural ecosystems, the protection of significant indigenous vegetation and the significant habitats of indigenous fauna are key objectives in Section 23.

The objective for Section 24 is the protection and, where possible, enhancement of the cultural, historic and amenity value of heritage features highly valued by the Northland community.

REGIONAL COASTAL PLAN FOR NORTHLAND

Northland Regional Council - June 2004

Among the functions of regional councils under the Resource Management Act, 1991 is the control of activities within the coastal marine area in the region. This is done in conjunction with the Minister of Conservation and covers:

- Land and associated natural and physical resources
- The occupation of space on land of the Crown or land vested in the regional council that is foreshore or seabed, and the extraction of sand, shingle, shell, or other natural material from that land
- The taking, use, damming and diversion of water
- Discharges of contaminants into or onto land, air or water and discharges of water into water

- The dumping and incineration of waste and the dumping of ships, aircraft, and offshore installations
- Any actual or potential effects of the use, development or protection of land, including the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards and the prevention or mitigation of any adverse effects of the storage, use, disposal or transportation of hazardous substances
- The emission of noise and the mitigation of the effect of noise
- Activities in relation to the surface of water

The Northland Regional Coastal Plan covers the entire coastal marine area of the Northland region. The CMA is defined in the Act as the foreshore, seabed and coastal water, and the air space above the water, of which the seaward boundary is the outer limits of the territorial sea and the landward boundary line of mean high water springs. Where that line crosses a river, the landward boundary, at that point, is the lesser of one kilometre upstream from the mouth of the river or the point upstream that is calculated by multiplying the width of the river mouth by five.

The NRCP was adopted by the Northland Regional Council on 19 November 2003 and approved by the Minister of Conservation on 21 June, 2004. Within the Plan, the Council has zoned the entire coastline into six management areas:-

Marine 1 [Protection] encompasses regionally significant sites of special ecological, cultural, historic, scientific, scenic, landscape and amenity value, including those identified by the Minister of Conservation as being Areas of Significant Conservation Value. The priority in these areas is the protection of those significant conservation values identified as occurring within each area.

Marine 2 [Conservation] covers those areas not included in the other management areas and encompasses the greater proportion of Northland's CMA. Development in these areas is to be managed so as to maintain, and where practical, enhance natural, cultural and amenity values.

Marine 3 [Marine farming] makes provision for marine farming activity in Northland's CMA while avoiding, remedying or mitigating its adverse effects.

Marine 4 [Moorings] covers the appropriate location and use of moorings within the CMA while avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of these activities on the coastal marine area. This management area also provides for the appropriate location of marinas while avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of marina construction and operation.

Marine 5 [Port facilities] provides for commercial port operations while avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of such operations on the CMA.

Marine 6 [Wharves] makes provision for wharves, which are predominantly commercial, while maintaining and enhancing the quality of the surrounding environment.

The Bream Bay coastline is zoned into two management areas:-

Marine 1 (Protection) covers the areas identified by the Minister of Conservation as being Areas of Significant Conservation Value. These are the Waipu and Ruakaka estuaries inland to the CMA (saline) boundary, including the sand spits and extending approximately 500m offshore.

The remainder of the coast is zoned as Marine 2 (Conservation) Management Area.

NORTHLAND COMMUNITY PLAN 2004 - 2014

Northland Regional Council - May 2005

The Local Government Act, 2002 made changes to the way Councils engage with their communities, requiring them to be effective, responsible, responsive and accountable in achieving the long-term well-being of their communities. There is now much greater scope for community participation in determining what local authorities do, and how they do it.

Long Term Council Community Plans are a requirement of the new legislation and the Northland Regional Council is required to produce, once every three years, a Community Plan for the next ten years. This Plan incorporates what was the Council's Annual Plan, but also contains additional information on the outcomes each community has told the Council they value.

During the process of developing its first Long-term Council Community Plan, the NRC undertook an exercise to identify what the people of Northland value most, and what they would like the region to be like in the future. These were developed into six Community Outcomes, incorporating the community's priorities:-

- CO1 Northland has a sustainable growing economy, with strong collaborative links between sectors of the regional economy.
- CO2 Northland has safe and efficient services of a sufficient standard to support the needs of its communities.
- CO3 Northland has clean land, water and resources available to meet the needs of its communities.
- CO4 The Northland coast is available for people to enjoy safely and its natural character is protected from inappropriate uses.
- CO5 The habitats and species of indigenous plants and animals in Northland are valued and protected.
- CO6 Northland communities feel safe from potential hazards.

The Council identified a number of priority actions for each of these Community Outcomes for the immediate three years, and then others for the remainder of the ten-year life of the Plan. Under the Indigenous Biodiversity Community Outcome the Council intends to:

- work with DOC and the District Councils to develop and implement a plan to identify and protect land with high biodiversity values.
- encourage the development and implementation of a habitat strategy for threatened species in Northland.
- work with other lead agencies to increase the area of high biodiversity-value land under formal protection.
- support the fencing of all regionally significant wetlands.

The Northland Community Plan 2004-2014 was adopted by the NRC in May, 2005.

Northland: Our place, Our future. This is a regional community outcomes project commissioned by the NRC and the three District Councils to more comprehensively research community needs and aspirations, not only in terms of local body functions, but also in terms of the functions and capabilities of other groups and organisations within the community. A report produced in November, 2005 identified a number of broad community outcomes which, while not binding on the Councils, will be very helping in guiding the planning processes used to review the various community plans.

The AC Nielsen report of November, 2005 identified the following outcomes, in order of priority:

1. Northland residents are safe and happy
2. Northland's infrastructure is developed in a sustainable way
3. Northland's natural environment is sustainably managed
4. Northland is prosperous
5. Northland residents are educated and skilled
6. Northland has cohesive communities
7. Northland retains and enhances its regional identity
8. Northland residents have access to recreational and leisure opportunities

Each outcome is supported in the report with detailed information on the elements that make up each one, the perceived importance of the outcome, the perceived level of effort required in each area and any variations in the way each outcome was expressed within each of the Districts and for Maori.

Whangarei District Council Plans and Policies

WHANGAREI [PROPOSED] DISTRICT PLAN

Whangarei District Council - July 2001

Every territorial authority has responsibility for a range of functions for the purpose of giving effect to the Resource Management Act, 1991. These include establishing objectives, policies and methods for achieving integrated management of the effects of using, developing or protecting land and the associated natural and physical resources of the district. Implementing these policies, and having a programme of review, is also required.

Other functions include the control of any actual or potential effects of the use of land, including those generated by natural hazards, the storage and handling of hazardous substances and the development or use of contaminated land. The maintenance of indigenous biological diversity the control of noise and the control of any actual or potential effects of activities in relation to the surface of water in rivers and lakes are also important functions specified in this Act.

The principal mechanism for giving effect to these functions is the District Plan, its purpose being “to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources”. [s5(1) RMA 1991] As with the other plans prepared under the RMA, it seeks to manage land-use activities on the basis of their effects on the environment.

The Proposed Whangarei District Plan describes the Whangarei District and its resources very thoroughly and contains sections covering the full spectrum of resources and issues. Of particular interest to this strategy are the sections dealing with the Coast [Section 9], Riparian and coastal margins [Section 10], Open space [Section 14], Landscape [Section 15] and Indigenous vegetation and habitat [Section 16].

In line with the requirements of the RM Act, each section identifies the issues, sets objectives consistent with the purpose of the Act, adopts policies and methods for implementing the policies and outlines the environmental results anticipated. The Whangarei District Council has identified a range of challenges facing all Councils, particularly that of finding an appropriate balance between the protection of ecosystems and ecological processes and the sustainable development and use of land.

The area from Marsden Point to Waipu Cove is included in the District Plan. A coastal band, varying from 100m to 400m in width, is zoned as an outstanding scenic area. Significant ecological areas within this are identified on the north side of the Ruakaka estuary and the Waipu sand spit. The whole coastal strip is a land instability area and most is zoned as open space. However, adjacent to land administered by the Department are areas zoned as Living 1 at Ruakaka, and Business 4 around Marsden Point. The area north of Ruakaka to Marsden Point is being reviewed as part of the Marsden Point - Ruakaka Structure Plan. This is in recognition of the oil refinery, deep-water port, other business developments and housing subdivisions.

Significant issues identified in the Plan include the lack of adequate public access to and along coastal areas the potential effect of subdivision and development within the coastal environment and alongside rivers on significant ecological areas, sites of significance to Maori, heritage sites and outstanding landscapes; and the insufficiency of open space [especially in the coastal environment] to provide for recreational opportunities and for people's health and well-being.

WHANGAREI COASTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Whangarei District Council - September 2002

The purpose of the Strategy is to “establish a strategic, integrated framework for managing the protection, use and development of the coastal environment within the Whangarei District”.

The strategy contains a vision for the next 50 years; which includes four sets of goals for the community on how to Live, Work and Play in the coastal environment and how to protect this environment.

The Whangarei Coastal Management Strategy includes a set of strategic Objectives and Policies to help the Council and the community achieve the vision and goals. These range over economic development, infrastructure needs, coastal hazards, the features that make the beach special, recreation and open space and the protection of heritage and biodiversity.

In developing these objectives and policies, the Whangarei District Council has had regard to its own District Plan. The Council also acknowledges the influence of national and regional policies and plans, particularly the Regional Policy Statement for Northland and the Regional Coastal Plan.

The WCMS makes numerous references to the land, interests and responsibilities of the Department of Conservation, including proposals for collaborative work between the Department and the Council in the Bream Bay area. Some of the more relevant examples include:

The Vision for the One Tree Point to Ruakaka Policy Area

- Recognising and providing for ongoing growth sensitive to the expansive coastal environment;
- Recognising the importance of the expansive coast and promoting public access along this coast;
- Promoting a Regional Park or recreation areas that recognise the regional recreation importance of the area;
- Protecting and enhancing those elements of the coast that contribute to its expansive and special natural heritage.

The Vision for Uretiti to Bream Tail

- Developing opportunities for active recreation (e.g. boating) where this does not compromise the ecological values of Uretiti;
- Promoting the area as a tourist and recreation destination (e.g. through a Regional Park);
- Protecting and enhancing those elements of the coast that contribute to its special natural heritage;
- Managing active and passive recreation to ensure natural values are adequately protected.

District Wide Implementation of the Strategy

- Schedule areas through the District Plan where public access will be restricted for specific reasons, such as habitat protection, Maori cultural values, health and safety or security of commercial operations.

- Work with Northland Regional Council and Department of Conservation to give legal protection to natural buffers and defence systems, such as dunes, spits and wetlands (e.g. through by-laws).
- Enforce bylaws to control the adverse effects of recreation activities, such as off road vehicles.
- Prepare public information on the opportunities to establish community lead stewardship, management and kaitiaki groups (including information on opportunities for financial assistance for these groups).
- Use a suite of legal tools such as Heritage orders, District Plan rules and covenants to give formal protection to known heritage sites.
- Through Structure Planning, identify linkages between protected areas that can be added to the reserves network or protected by District Plan controls.
- Identify priority natural areas for purchase and addition to the reserves network.
- With Department of Conservation and Northland Regional Council, prepare education material regarding potential damage to indigenous flora and fauna from domestic pets.
- With Department of Conservation and Northland Regional Council use bylaws or other controls to restrict domestic pets within and adjacent to very sensitive ecosystems, such as kiwi habitat.
- Establish an Inter-agency Working Party comprising representatives of Whangarei District Council, Northland Regional Council and Department of Conservation, who meet at least quarterly to guide inter-agency co-operation on achievement of Coastal Management Strategy recommendations.
- Whangarei District Council to sponsor a series of community workshops to actively promote the adoption and implementation of Coastal Management Strategy recommendations by private organisations and groups such as Landcare groups, farmer organisations, Beach care groups and residents associations.
- Whangarei District Council to make funding available for a part time Coastal Management Strategy implementation co-ordinator who can advocate policy and assist private organisations to implement Coastal Management Strategy recommendations.

OPEN SPACE STRATEGY [OPEN SPACES - SPECIAL PLACES]

Whangarei District Council - September 2001

Open space can be described for the four main values they have -

- conservation - including plants and animals, wildlife habitats and ecological processes;
- landscape - including landform and land use, visual appreciation and the sense of place;
- recreational - including the opportunity for active and passive, formal or informal, recreation; and
- cultural - including sites with cultural or historic significance, lifestyle patterns and preferences.

Conservation values

Bream Bay is one of seven areas in the Whangarei District that has its open space characteristics described in the Strategy. The Conservation values include the extensive areas of wildlife refuge on the Waipu coast, with significant habitats for bird life. These include intertidal and subtidal habitats, dune estuaries and rocky and sandy coastal margins. Coastal forest, areas of inland indigenous forest and the flora and fauna inhabiting streams and small rivers have high ecological value. The Waipu Cave system is identified as a significant and specialized habitat.

Landscape

The Landscape of Bream Bay features an expansive ocean beach, typically backed by extensive dunes. The area has a strong sense of natural character and wilderness. It is also very open and exposed. Built development is largely separated and screened from the coastal area.

Recreation

The opportunities for Recreation are numerous, the Strategy authors identifying walking, mountain biking, swimming, beach activities, diving, fishing, boating, playing golf, wildlife observation, caving, camping, active sports, horse training and horse racing at Ruakaka.

Culture and heritage

Sites from prehistoric Maori and historic European activities abound in the wider Bream Bay area. Maori have lived in the area for centuries and continue to play a part in its development. European settlement in the Waipu area dates back 150 years.

Guiding Principles

The council has developed ten guiding principles to help it achieve its vision and the open space goals of the District Plan. These include:

“Principle 7: The Council will seek to protect and enhance the coastline and significant stream margins. The Council will also ensure the community has access to the harbour, the valued coastal fringe and the riparian corridors.

Principle 8: The Council will seek to create recreational networks and ecological corridors that maximize the value and accessibility of open space and promote the viability of natural areas.

Principle 9: The Council acknowledges the value that partners add to its open spaces and will continue to seek and support partners in the community, to assist in implementing the open space strategy and to foster a sense of commitment to open spaces, for mutual benefit.”

In terms of open space developments, through its Open Space Strategy the Whangarei District Council has identified a number of priority projects. Those for the Bream Bay area include:

- Community open space facilities for Ruakaka [priority 2]
- Planting sand dunes/constructing access ways for pedestrians along the Bream Bay coastline [3]
- Developing a walkway along the Ruakaka and Waipu Rivers [8]
- Facilitating an all-tide boat ramp in the area [11]
- Considering the acquisition and development of the Bream Bay Regional Park, in partnership with the community. [13]

WHANGAREI DISTRICT COUNCIL LONG-TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN, 2004-2014

Whangarei District Council - June 2004

As noted earlier [Appendix G Northland Regional Council Plans and Policies], the Local Government Act, 2002 made changes to the way in which councils are to engage with their communities.

The legislation requires councils to prepare Long Term Council Community Plans, incorporating the information that would otherwise be published as the Council's Annual Plan. The Plan is also to contain additional information on the outcomes each community has told its council they value in terms of their environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being.

During the process of developing its first Long-term Council Community Plan, the Whangarei District Council undertook an exercise to identify what the community wants and values most, and the ways in which these outcomes may be achieved. This resulted in the following five community outcomes:

- CO1 A Community which enjoys and treasures its natural and cultural values
- CO2 A District which is safe and crime free
- CO3 A District with growing business and employment opportunities
- CO4 A community which is healthy and educated
- CO5 A District with lots of community facilities and programmes for all ages.

Some of the suggestions received from the community for achieving CO1 included:

- Protecting the coastline from inappropriate development
- Heritage, landscape and bush protection
- Improving facilities at parks, reserves and beaches
- Promoting an awareness of the importance of our unique environmental and cultural values

The Council has identified nine groups of activities it is undertaking to achieve its five Community Outcomes. One of these is Parks and Recreation, the council's goal being to enhance the health and quality of life for the residents of the district through the protection of the environment, enhancement of civic facilities and the provision of recreational opportunities. A key vehicle guiding its programme is the Council's Open Space Strategy.

The Whangarei District Council Long-term Council Community Plan 2004-2014 was adopted in June, 2004, and makes strong reference to fostering the development of Maori capacity in council's decision-making.

As noted in Appendix G [page 55], in 2005 the Whangarei District Council joined the regional council and Northland's other district councils in commissioning more comprehensive research about the Northland community's needs and aspirations. **Northland: Our place, Our future** is a report produced by AC Neilsen in November, 2005, that identifies a number of broad community outcomes which, while not binding on the councils, will be very helping in guiding the planning processes used to review the various community plans.

WHANGAREI DISTRICT DOG MANAGEMENT POLICY

Whangarei District Council - Updated May 2003

The Council's dog policy has three components -

1. No dog zones, with a total prohibition on dogs in central Whangarei, at designated children's play areas and on a number of designated beaches;
2. Summer dog bans on all beaches between 20 December and 20 February each year, between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00 pm; and
3. A dog exercise area on Ruakaka Beach between Mair Road and the northern-most carpark of Marsden Village, where dogs can be exercised off the leash provided owners maintain effective control of their animals.

Each of the three components are contained within the Bream Bay area covered by this plan. The dog exercise area is applicable in the north; a year-round ban on dogs is in place for the Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges and areas of open coast both north and south of the Waipu River mouth; and all other beaches are subject to the summer policy whereby dogs are banned between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm for 2 months of the year.

The Current Issues for DOC (The management issues of concern to the Department)

1. PUBLIC SAFETY

Of all the issues confronting the Department at the present time, the safety of visitors to the area is of primary concern. The threats posed to those on foot by the indiscriminate use of vehicles and motorbikes and the exercising of horses and dogs, as well as the prevailing threat of fire during many months of the year, demand a clear management response. The use of firearms for hunting is another safety issue that needs addressing.

The following locations have been identified as needing particular attention in the short-term. Many of the actions noted are in the process of being implemented, but the issues point to the need for clear policies and for the Department to take a firm lead in ensuring compliance.

Mair Road

- Vehicle access to the beach
- Enhanced signage

Ruakaka access (south of power station)

- Enhanced signage

Ruakaka Racecourse

- Horse/vehicle access to the beach
- Separation of vehicles & horses from pedestrians [public access]
- Vehicle access to the beach and signage at private [southern] access point
- Unauthorised private access south of racecourse

Ruakaka access (north of surf club)

- Vehicle access to the beach
- Enhanced signage
- Information dissemination

Paradise Shores Subdivision

- Locked gate access

Tip Road

- Fence reinstatement
- Horse/vehicle access to the beach [public access]
- Separation of vehicles & horses from pedestrians [public access]
- Enhanced signage at beach access point
- Signage at Wildlife Refuge boundary

Private landowners

- Liaison re authorisation and use of formed private access points
- Cooperation between adjoining landowners and DOC

2. FIRE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

As a Rural Fire Authority, the Department has responsibility to protect life, property and environmental values from the risk of fire on land it administers. The Bream Bay reserves and conservation land are high fire-risk sites. This risk is derived from high levels of human interaction in an environment that frequently has elevated fire weather danger and contains highly flammable vegetation. As human activity increases so does the risk of fire. The Department proposes to manage this risk by:-

- Continuing the current one kilometre rural fire safety zone, with a 365 day a year fire permit requirement within this zone
- Maintaining strategically placed firebreaks. These are designed to compartmentalise any potential fire outbreak and prevent wide-spread fire destruction. These firebreaks have the potential to become part of the network of access ways for various user groups to use, where appropriate and authorised;
- Engaging and networking with volunteer fire brigades to provide shared training opportunities, familiarisation and information sharing;
- Sustaining current advocacy and awareness to the local community through signage and publicity during times of elevated fire risk;
- Facilitating a fast and effective initial fire attack response through the Bream Bay Fire Procedural Action Plan, and initiating Co-ordinated Incident Management for large fire events;
- Providing encouragement, advice and support to the community for initiatives to ensure the planting of fire resistant native species and a fire safe environment.

3. HUNTING AND THE USE OF FIREARMS

The issuing of hunting permits for rabbit shooting and game birds, and the permitting of firearms (.22 calibre rifles and shotguns) in the Ruakaka Conservation Area, has been occurring for many years.

The use of firearms to hunt game, game birds and other introduced fauna is a permitted activity under the Conservation Act 1987. Hunting is widely carried out and encouraged on many parts of the Conservation estate, both for its recreational attributes and to assist wild animal control. The risks arising from the use of firearms is dependent on a number of factors - the user, the type of firearm used and the location.

Increasing public concern, and an awareness by the Department of ensuring public safety, saw the introduction 5 years ago of a policy of not promoting the Bream Bay area for hunting. Only those hunters who had been hunting the area for some years, or were known to the Department, were issued with permits, and then only for a much-restricted area, other hunters being redirected to other locations.

It is timely to review whether any hunting should be permitted in this area, bearing in mind that the Ruakaka Conservation area:-

- is only 300 metres wide at the widest point
- has a high-use public beach to the east
- has State Highway One and local roading to the west
- is used by a wide range of interest groups (fishers, walkers, bird watchers etc)
- is adjoined by increased coastal sub-division, associated housing and industry

Particular aspects bearing on this assessment include:

- the real potential for liability by any person under Section 48 of the Arms Act "who, without reasonable cause, discharges a firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon in or near a dwelling house or a public place, so as to endanger property or to endanger, annoy, or frighten any person".
- increased public anxiety on seeing firearms in public places potentially affects others' enjoyment of the area. The increasing use of steel shot in game bird hunting may add increased risks to other users of the conservation lands.
- a game bird shooter may have little or no clear appreciation of the risks behind the target, where he/she is aiming on a moving target.

- the sandy topography in parts of the area may increase the risk of ricochet.
- the number of hunters applying to hunt in the area is small (less than 10 pa) and any decision only affects a small number of people. However, the activity has the potential to impact on many people.
- The hunting of rabbits does not provide a benefit to bio-diversity values; it is a recreational opportunity.

The conclusion is that the Department should not issue any further recreational hunting permits in this area. Existing permits will not be renewed on expiry. The use of firearms will still be permitted, subject to a full risk and impact assessment, for:-

- Departmental management purposes, or
- Gun club dog trials at which only blank cartridges are to be used

4. RESTORATION PROGRAMMES AND THE PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE

4.1 Sand dune protection

Under the Conservation Act, the Reserves Act and the Wildlife Act the flora, fauna and natural character of the dune land of Bream Bay are fully protected. Since the Lands and Survey management plan was written in 1982 there has been a gradual decline in the quality and natural character of sand dunes along the Bream Bay coast. Although fully protected, the sand dune area can, for the purposes of management, be split into two zones, the dynamic fore dune being the principal focus in terms of its natural working, but the landward dune areas of Bream Bay are also important as a habitat for a number of threatened species. The open space character of this coastal zone is to be maintained in terms of the National Coastal Policy statement.

A survey of the entire Bream Bay coastline is required to identify and prioritise the best representative dune-land areas for restoration and in situ management. Priorities might well involve:

- a) Identifying the most natural areas already remaining, so they can be managed to prevent further invasion of weeds and human impacts;
- b) Focusing restoration at areas already modified but which can be restored;
- c) Grasping opportunities to create compatible dune-land habitats where past disturbances have occurred, i.e. dune-land lakes and wetlands where sand mining has occurred.

- d) Undertaking restoration and/or management of key dune-land plant communities, and of habitats for key species, e.g. Black Katipo spider, Auckland green gecko and shore skinks.

4.2 Wildlife Refuges / Estuaries

The Ruakaka and Waipu Wildlife Refuges have historically received management and compliance under the Wildlife Act, 1953. However, these areas and the species they support are under increasing pressure from neighbouring subdivision and the flow-on effect of increased human, dog and pet cat activity. Current and future proposals for subdividing adjoining lands should be carefully considered to ensure all mitigation measures have been explored to reduce the effects and impacts on the estuaries and their value as habitat for local and migratory populations of water birds.

4.3 Wildlife species

NZ Dotterel, variable oystercatcher, Fairy tern and a wide range of waders and other water birds have benefited from many years of active management to protect the areas they rely on to survive. However, the increased level of interest in both Ruakaka and Waipu for coastal homes means those water birds, whether breeding, feeding or roosting, are now under constant threat from people and their pets. These recent arrivals expect to enjoy their recreation in the same area that the birds have relied on for many, many years.

When Whangarei Harbour is inundated by spring tides, many of these waders fly to roost within the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge, so the disturbance factor becomes ever more significant when factors such as this are taken into account.

5. WEED AND ANIMAL PEST CONTROL

A large percentage of the Bream Bay area is a highly modified habitat in which the majority of the plant and animal species currently present are introduced. This has been the result of past land management practices that saw attempts at clearing the land by using fire and other practices associated with forestry development allowing pests to become well established. Weeds and animal pests are a public nuisance and an environmental risk.

The Department is responsible for protecting natural biodiversity values and a key task in achieving this is managing the impacts of introduced pests on New Zealand's indigenous habitats, and the native plants and animals that inhabit them. Currently at Bream Bay these biodiversity values are concentrated in the active dune systems and the Wildlife Refuges. Outside of these particular sites the Department has no immediate plans for controlling weeds and any projects initiated to restore or enhance habitat values in these lower value sites will require a long term vision that includes the community being engaged in active conservation action. The Department will support any community initiatives involving priority restoration planting, weed and animal pest control.

Wilding pine and wattles are high impact species that are greatly reducing the opportunity for Bream Bay to regenerate. These species are voracious feeders on the limited nutrients and water available. In their presence, native seedlings and plantings struggle to establish. Opportunities are constantly being explored to have these removed when timber markets make it viable for contractors to undertake such operations.

Priority is being given to weed and animal pest control in the key biodiversity sites, notably the Wildlife Refuges and active dune lands. Weeds and other pests have potential to transform these habitats and impact on the native animals present.

In DOC-managed recreational sites weeds and pests are being controlled where they impact on the recreational experience. The Department is focussing its effort within the Uretiti camping area as a matter of priority. The Uretiti Day visitor area and other road end amenity areas are the other priorities in the short term. In the medium term track edges and amenity areas will be managed to a similar standard as the camp.

The Northland Regional Pest Management Strategy requires all landowners to control and prevent certain weed and animal pests from encroaching onto adjoining properties by maintaining a buffer zone. The Department will work with adjoining landowners who are controlling their weeds to ensure that species such as gorse, ginger, pampas and privet are kept clear of property boundaries.

Any incursions of new environmental weed species will be controlled as soon as they are reported and before they spread. This includes species such as buddleia, himalayan fairy grass, ochna, kennidia, kangaroo acacia, fork leaf hakea, mile a minute, chocolate vine, climbing spindleberry, ageratum, giant reed, yellow flag iris, old mans beard and lantana.

The Department will assist and support community-driven initiatives that are proposed for conservation land by providing advice on weed and pest identification and effective control techniques, and by helping community groups with the legislative and administrative requirements of working on public land.

6. VEHICLES, INCLUDING MOTORBIKES

Under current legislation it is not an offence to access the area below MHWS by crossing public conservation land. However, it is an offence to interfere with or damage the sand dune environment. The increasing numbers of 4x4 and trail bikes from both in the community and from outside areas has led to relatively high impacts on the dunes of Bream Bay. The formation, over time, of random vehicular access points to the beach across public land, and the indiscriminate use of these vehicles by fun seekers along the coastal dunes, is now of considerable concern.

The Department has identified the following issues which require guidance, further discussion and management:

- Vehicular access points across conservation land to the beach;
- The use of the beach below mean high water springs
- Access to and use of public conservation land.
- Introduction of bylaws, regulations or local authority restrictions to better manage vehicles.

7. DOGS AND HORSES

Dogs and horses are not permitted on the various types of public conservation land at Bream Bay without a permit. For people to access the beach below mean high water springs, where they are allowed to exercise their dogs in most areas under existing Whangarei District Council Bylaws, they must cross conservation land. Horses require a permit at all times.

The Department has not rigidly enforced these provisions; however the increasing presence of both horses and dogs throughout the entire area is now generating public complaints. Managers are concerned at the increasing damage occurring to the dune systems by horses. Some horse riders are also disregarding [and intentionally undermining] attempts to protect key breeding sites for endangered species.

DOC would like to see an outcome that meets its legislative mandate to protect this area and look after the species that live there, which is enforceable under current legislation and has community support.

In 1996 the Conservation Act was amended to allow the Department to declare areas of public conservation lands as 'controlled dog areas'.

The following areas of coastal Bream Bay are covered by these regulations:

Controlled Dog Area - No Access

Dogs are not permitted in the areas listed below:

- Uretiti Recreation Reserve
- Waipu Govt Purpose Wildlife Refuge

Controlled Dog Area - Permit

Dogs are only able to enter conservation lands covered by this strategy by permit for management.

8. VISITOR FACILITIES

The Conservation Department is directed under the CMS to maintain and improve visitor facilities, walking tracks and camping areas. Conservation officers are looking forward to working with community groups to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Tracks

At present there is a network of tracks in existence. There is a pressing need to upgrade these tracks to sustain the level of use. In most instances this would involve retiring many spider-like informal tracks and surfacing a single route to key features e.g. car parks, beach.

A fuller review of what tracks exist and what are needed will be undertaken. The site survey work will also involve visitor monitoring qualitative and quantitative to assist with planning what is “needed and desired”.

Camps

The DOC directly manages one camp and administers two via Domain boards. In light of the ever decreasing number of coastal camps which is in contrast to the increasing demand from visitors in the Bream Bay area these camps are of increasing importance to provide a “kiwi experience” summer holiday.

Car parks

The DOC provides three key car parks. These have minimal formation at the present but given increasing use if supported by the surveys should be significantly upgraded - mainly in quality i.e. hard stand surface as opposed to size increase.

Other facilities

The DOC provides no other facilities but over time this will be reviewed as uses and demands change.

9. COMMERCIAL CONCESSIONS

The Conservation Act makes provision for concessions [leases, licenses and permits] to be granted to authorise the private use of public land for the provision of public services and facilities. At the present time the following concessions are in place for Bream Bay:

- A short term permit covering approximately six bore sites in the vicinity of the wastewater ponds to monitor discharge. The ponds are located on land owned by the Council adjacent to power station. A further four bore sites have recently been applied for in the same vicinity;
- A permit to the local golf club which encompasses a very small segment of conservation land within the coastal margin.
- There are a number of existing easements across the coastal fringe;

- High voltage transmission power lines also traverse the Conservation managed land to the North of the Marsden Power Station to the Marsden Point Refinery.
- A ten year license to the WDC for the purposes of a Transfer Station off Tip Road.
- DOC is currently assessing two other concessions to undertake ecotours.
- Refinery gas pipeline

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