

Driving on Muriwai Beach

Feedback from public engagement



Prepared for
Auckland Council
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Prepared by
Buzz Channel Ltd
(09) 379 8920



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Summary

This report outlines community feedback on the proposed options to manage the future of vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach in response to safety concerns raised during consultation for the Regional Parks Management Plan review. Input was received through formal feedback forms (2,051 online and 129 hard copy forms), informal submissions from 24 groups and individuals, and three community meetings.

Attitudes towards vehicle access to Muriwai beach are reasonably mixed, with different groups having different perspectives and levels of concern. At a high level, 35% of formal submitters say they have no concerns about vehicles driving on the beach, 42% sometimes see driver behaviour that is concerning, and 22% often see driver behaviour that is concerning.

Overall, two thirds of submitters (64%) are seeing concerning driver behaviour on Muriwai beach.

Muriwai residents and those who visit the beach frequently are more likely concerned than others, with 26% of residents and 38% of daily visitors often seeing concerning behaviour. This is likely due to their exposure to vehicle activity.

There are also differences by submitters who drive on Muriwai beach and those who do not. Drivers, who tend to be younger males, have a more positive view on vehicle access than non-drivers, while around half of non-drivers, who tend to be older females, say they often see driver behaviour that is concerning.

Awareness of the current requirements for driving on Muriwai beach is high, with almost all who made a formal submission aware of the requirements in place. Submitters with higher exposure to vehicles on the beach, including Muriwai residents, frequent visitors, and the drivers themselves, have higher awareness than others.

When asked which of the three options to manage the future of vehicles on the beach they prefer – seasonal closures, controlled access, or permanent closure:

- 37% said they would prefer seasonal closures, restricting vehicle access to the beach at core times
- 32% said they would prefer controlled access, and
- 21% they would prefer permanent closure of all public vehicle access points.

4 in 10 submitters made it clear in the free text question at the end of the form that they were not in support of closure or the options provided in the form. Feedback collected through informal email submissions and at the community meetings also showed strong objection to closure of the beach to vehicles, with many saying there should be an option for access to remain unchanged.

There is a strong correlation between level of concern submitters have with driver behaviour and the restrictions or closure options they support. Submitters who have no concerns tend to support seasonal closures, submitters who sometimes see concerning behaviour tend to support controlled access, and submitters who often see concerning behaviour tend to support permanent closure.

Although Muriwai residents are among those more likely to see concerning driver behaviour, they do not tend to support permanent closure of the beach to vehicles, with 7 in 10 saying they drive on the beach themselves. Residents are more likely to support controlled access (38%) than non-residents (27%).

Half of those who drive on Muriwai beach say they support seasonal closures (50%), while a high proportion of non-drivers support permanent closure to vehicles (59%).

When asked to provide their thoughts on driving on Muriwai beach, comments against closure or restrictions to vehicles were the most commonly mentioned, however, better policing, enforcement, and control were prevalent themes across formal submissions, informal feedback, and the community meetings. People felt that if the beach were policed in the same way roads were, there would be no safety concerns and no need to make changes.

There were also comments in support of the closure of Muriwai beach to vehicles, with 1 in 10 expressing strong concern for the environment and the need to protect the environment from vehicles on the beach, and another 1 in 10 saying they had witnessed dangerous, reckless driving.

Engagement process

Background

Auckland Council are considering a number of options to manage the future of vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach. This is in response to safety concerns raised during consultation for the Regional Parks Management Plan review about:

- beach user safety and enjoyment;
- environmental protection;
- fire risk;
- driver behaviour.

At the moment vehicles can access the beach at three separate points:

- 1) Coast Road via Muriwai Regional Park, approximately 2km up the beach.
- 2) Rimmer Road via an easement managed by Hancock Forestry and the Department of Conservation, approximately 15km up the beach.
- 3) Wilson Road via a paper road controlled by Auckland Transport, approximately 30km up the beach.

Process

In April 2021, Auckland Council began a public consultation process seeking community feedback on vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach. As part of the feedback process submitters were asked which of the following options they prefer:

- Seasonal closures restricting vehicle access to the beach at peak times, such as Christmas/New Years, Christmas to after Auckland Anniversary weekend, Guy Fawkes and other times where required to reduce fire risk.
- Controlled access - which may include gated access points to control vehicle access to the beach. Access would be restricted to authorised paid permit holders, surf lifesaving and other emergency service vehicles.
- Permanent closure of all public vehicle access points to Muriwai Beach (with the exception of surf lifesaving and other emergency services vehicles).

Auckland Council consulted with the public through the following ways:

- An online feedback form distributed through various channels including Auckland Council's Have your Say website, Regional Parks and Auckland Council media/social media channels, etc.
- A hard copy feedback form distributed at public meetings:
 - Waimauku War Memorial Hall: 15 April 2021
 - South Head Golf Club: 22 April 2021
 - Muriwai Surf Club: 27 April 2021.
- Email and letter submissions accepted through a designated inbox.
- One-on-one discussions between park rangers and other council staff and affected community members.

The consultation process, which ran from **9 April to 14 May 2021**, gathered 2,204 pieces of public feedback, and included 2,051 online and 129 hard copy feedback forms (formal feedback), 24 informal email submissions from groups and individuals, and notes/feedback from three community meetings (informal feedback).

All feedback received has been collated and analysed by Buzz Channel and is presented in this report.

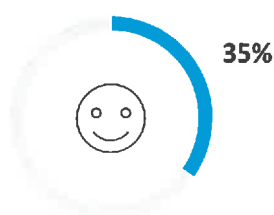
Detailed Feedback from public engagement on: Driving on Muriwai Beach

Level of concern with vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach

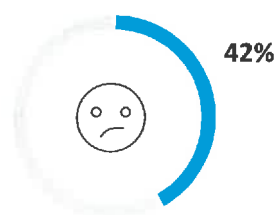
Submitters were asked to select from three options regarding their level of concern about the behaviour of vehicles driving on Muriwai beach.

Concern with vehicles driving on Muriwai beach is mixed, with 35% of formal submitters having no concerns, 42% sometimes seeing driver behaviour that is concerning, and 22% often seeing driver behaviour that is concerning.

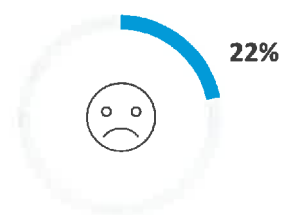
Question: While at Muriwai beach what do you think about the behaviour of vehicles driving on the beach?



35% have no concerns about vehicles driving on the beach



42% sometimes see driver behaviour that is concerning



22% often see driver behaviour that is concerning

Base: All formal submissions, n=2,180. 1% did not provide an answer.

Muriwai residents and those who visit the beach frequently tend to have a higher level of concern than others, with 26% of Muriwai residents and 38% of daily visitors often seeing concerning behaviour.

There are also differences in perceptions by the types of activities people tend to visit Muriwai beach for. Land-based activities, or those who use the beach for walking, running, or horse riding, tend to feel more negatively about vehicles driving on Muriwai beach (30% of walkers or runners and 43% of horse riders often see driver behaviour that is concerning). On the other hand, those who participate in water-based activities on the beach, or those who use the beach for water sports (37%) or fishing (44%) are the least concerned with vehicles driving on the beach.

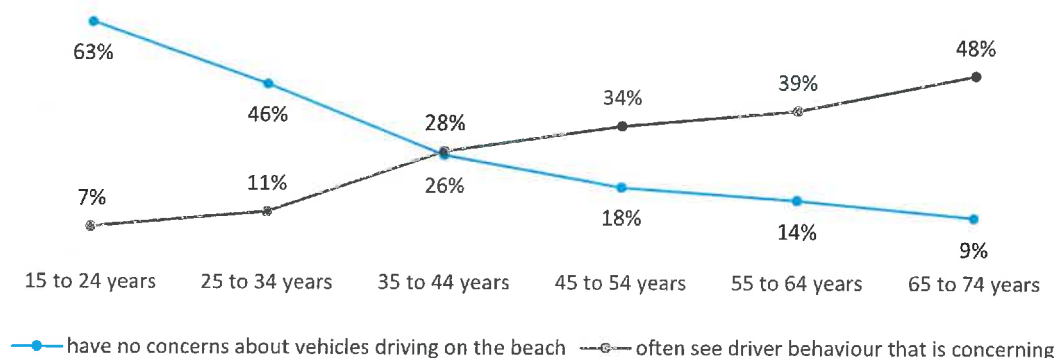
There are also differences by submitters who drive on Muriwai beach and those who do not. Drivers tend to have a more positive view on vehicles access. Less than 1 in 10 drivers say they often see concerning behaviour (9%), with a little under half saying they have no concerns (46%) and a little under half saying they sometimes see concerning behaviour (45%), while almost half of those who do not drive on the beach see concerning behaviour frequently (50%).

There are key demographic differences in the profiles of drivers and non-drivers. Submitters who drive on the beach tend to be younger males, with 73% of drivers identifying as male, and half being under the age of 45 (50%). Note 30% of submitters who drive on the beach did not provide their age. On the other hand, non-drivers tend to be older females, with 60% of non-drivers identifying as female, and 49% being 45 years of age or older. Note: 21% of those who do not drive on the beach did not provide their age.

There are also differences in level of concern by age alone, with older submitters more concerned than younger submitters – these differences are shown in the chart below.

Level of concern with vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach by age

Question: While at Muriwai beach what do you think about the behaviour of vehicles driving on the beach?



Base: all formal submissions, n=2,180. 27% did not provide an age, 2% were aged over 74 years, and 1 person was aged under 15.

Awareness of current requirements in place for driving on Muriwai Beach

People submitting feedback through the formal submission process were given the following information about the requirements and asked if they were aware.

Driving on Muriwai Beach is currently allowed on the condition that the driver has a permit, their vehicle is warranted and registered, and only drives on the beach on the coastal side of the dune system. Vehicles are prohibited at all times in the dune system or in Defence Force land at the northern end of the beach.



91% are aware of the requirements currently in place



8% are not aware of the requirements currently in place

Base: all formal submissions, n=2,180. 1% did not provide an answer.

Almost all who made a formal submission said they are aware of the requirements currently in place for driving on Muriwai beach, with Muriwai residents and those who visit the beach frequently more likely aware than others (96% of residents vs. 88% of non-residents, and 96% of those who visit at least weekly vs. 89% of those who visit less often).

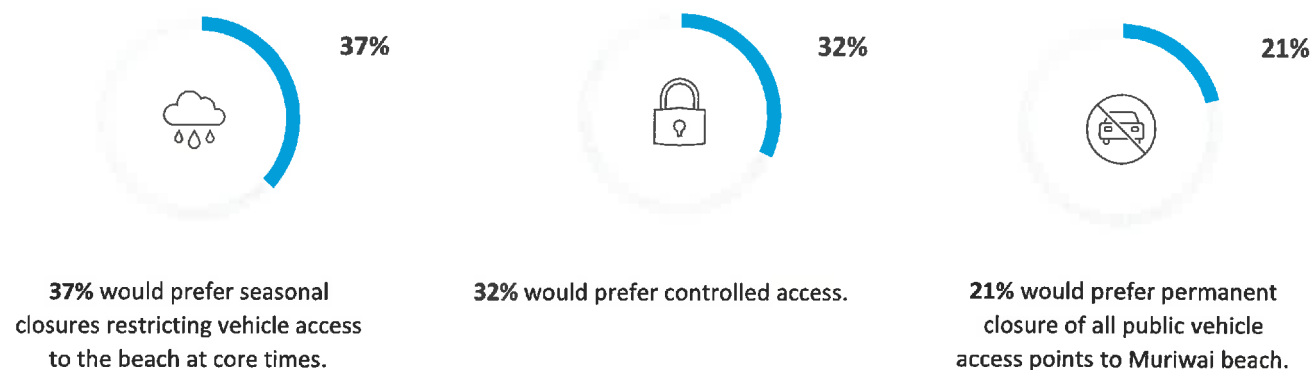
There is also higher awareness of requirements among those who drive on Muriwai beach, with 96% of drivers who submitted feedback saying they are aware of requirements. 82% of those who do not drive on the beach said they are aware.

Awareness of the current requirements correlates with the level of concern submitters have, with those unaware of requirements more likely to say they see concerning behaviour.

Preferred restrictions for driving on Muriwai Beach

Submitters were asked to select from 3 options relating to their preference for restriction for driving on Muriwai beach. 37% of submitters would prefer seasonal closure, restricting vehicle access to the beach at core times, 32% would prefer controlled access, and 21% would prefer permanent closure of all public vehicle access points. 10% did not provide an answer to this question, and some commented that there needed to be an option to leave the access as it is.

Question: Which would be your preference of the following options?



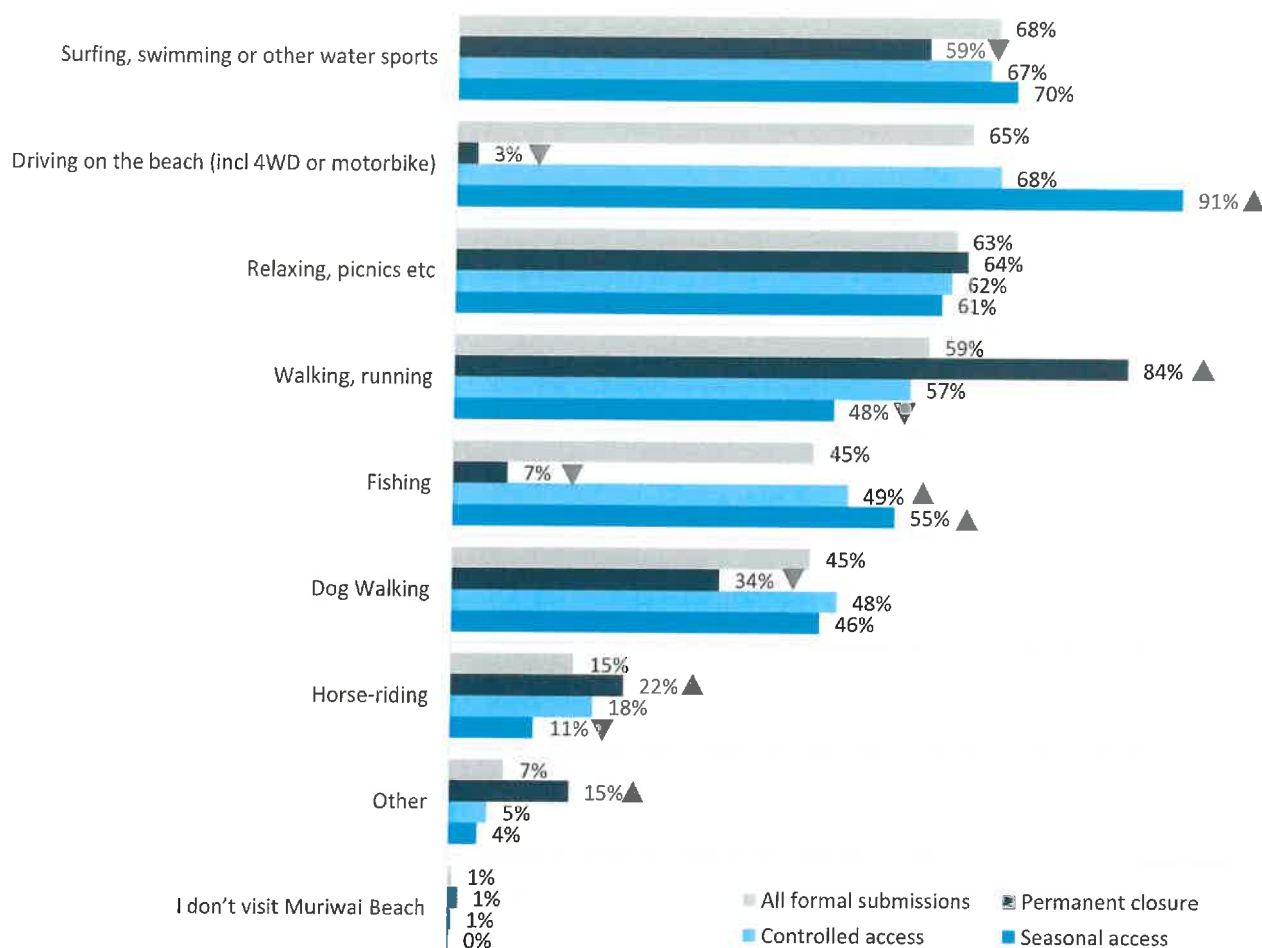
Base: all formal submissions, n=2,180. 10% did not provide an answer.

Feedback collected in the free text question at the end of the formal submission form, through informal email submissions, and at the community meetings showed strong objection to closure of the beach to vehicles, with many saying there should be an option for access to remain unchanged. This feedback is explored in more detail later in the report.

Muriwai residents are more likely to support controlled access than non-residents, while non-residents are more likely to support seasonal or permanent closure to vehicles.

Respondents were also asked about the kinds of activities they enjoy participating in at Muriwai beach. These responses shed insight into main reasons for spending time at the beach, as well as a closer look at who makes up the preferred option groups. Results are charted below:

Preferred option by "What do you like to do at Muriwai Beach?"



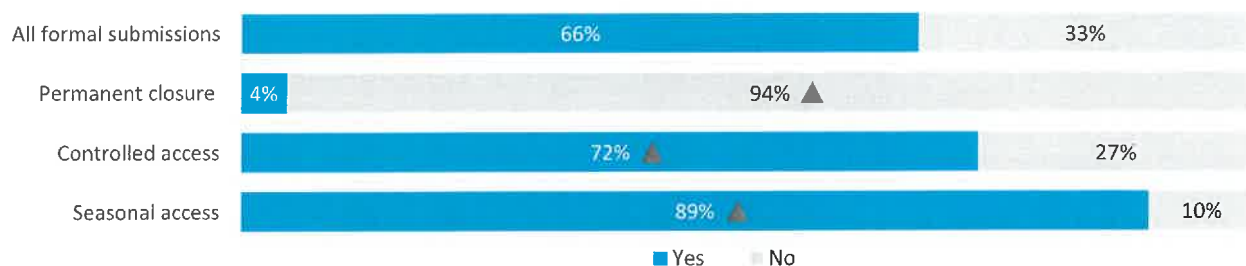
Note: respondents were allowed to select more than one answer, so totals may not equal to 100%. Arrows denote results are significantly different to other groups.

Base: all formal submissions (n=2180), those whose preferred option is permanent closure (n=447), those whose preferred option is controlled access (n=693), those whose preferred option is seasonal closures (n=814). No preference/answer (n=226).

Submitters who participate in land-based activities at the beach, or those who use the beach for walking, running, or horse riding are more likely to support permanent closure than other users – this was the group most concerned about driver behaviour.

91% of those whose preferred option was seasonal access said they like to drive on Muriwai beach, while 84% of those whose preferred option was permanent closure said they like to walk or run on Muriwai beach. Only 3% of respondents whose preferred option is permanent closure say they like to drive on the beach, compared to 4% of respondents whose preferred option is permanent closure and say they actually do drive on Muriwai beach (charted below):

Preferred option by “Do you drive a vehicle on Muriwai Beach?”



Note: Arrows denote results are significantly different to other groups.

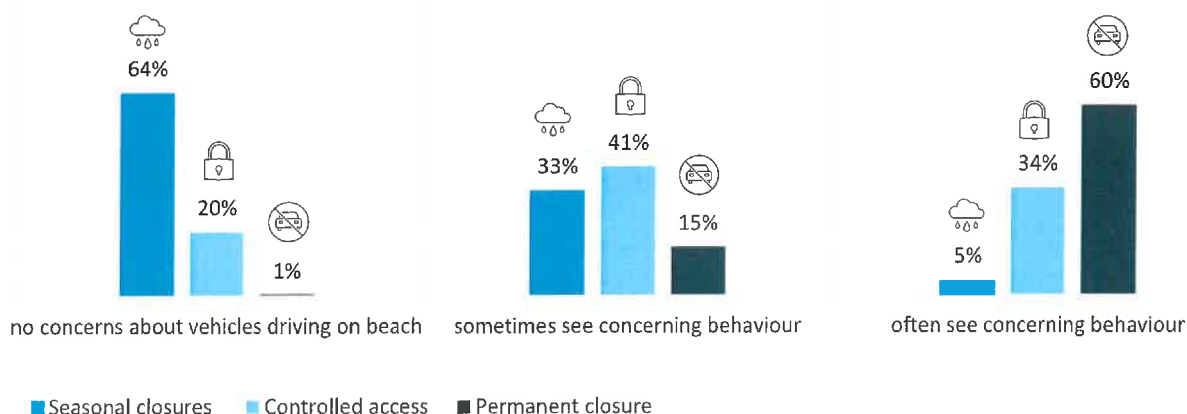
Base: all formal submissions (n=2180), those whose preferred option is permanent closure (n=447), those whose preferred option is controlled access (n=693), those whose preferred option is seasonal closures (n=814). No preference/answer (n=226).

Those whose preferred option is permanent closure are significantly more likely to say they do not drive a vehicle on Muriwai beach. This is in contrast to almost three quarters of those whose preferred option is controlled access (72%) and almost 9 in 10 of those whose preferred option is seasonal access (89%) who are significantly more likely to drive vehicles on the beach.

Over half of those who drive on Muriwai beach, who also tend to be younger males, support seasonal closures (50%), while over half of non-drivers, who also tend to be older females, support permanent closure to vehicles (59%).

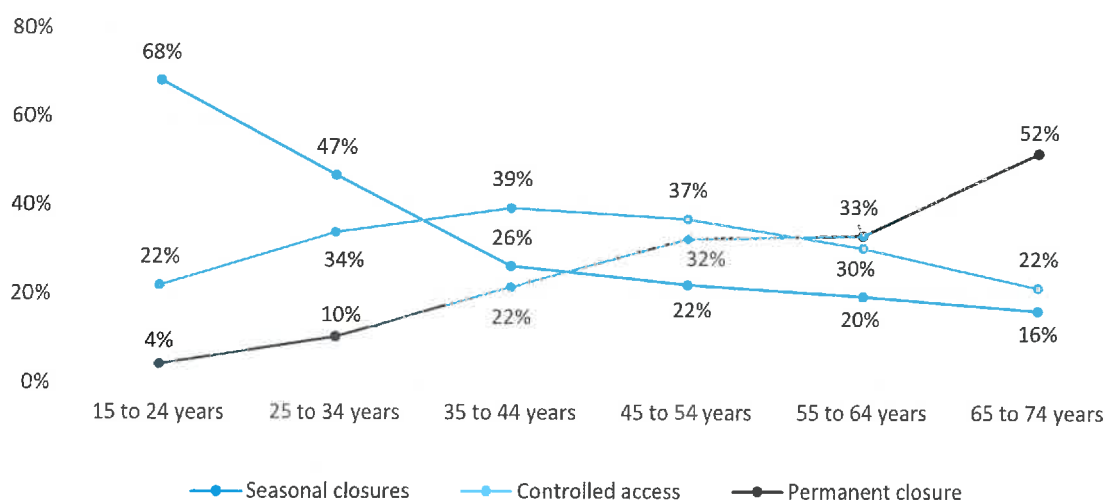
There is correlation between submitters' level of concern with driver behaviour on Muriwai beach and the restrictions or closure options they support. Submitters who have no concerns tend to support seasonal closures, submitters who sometimes see concerning behaviour tend to support controlled access, and submitters who often see concerning behaviour tend to support permanent closure. This is illustrated in the following chart.

Preferred option by level of concern



Younger submitters more likely to support seasonal closures and older submitters more likely to support permanent closures – shown in the chart below.

Preferred option by age



Thoughts on driving on Muriwai beach

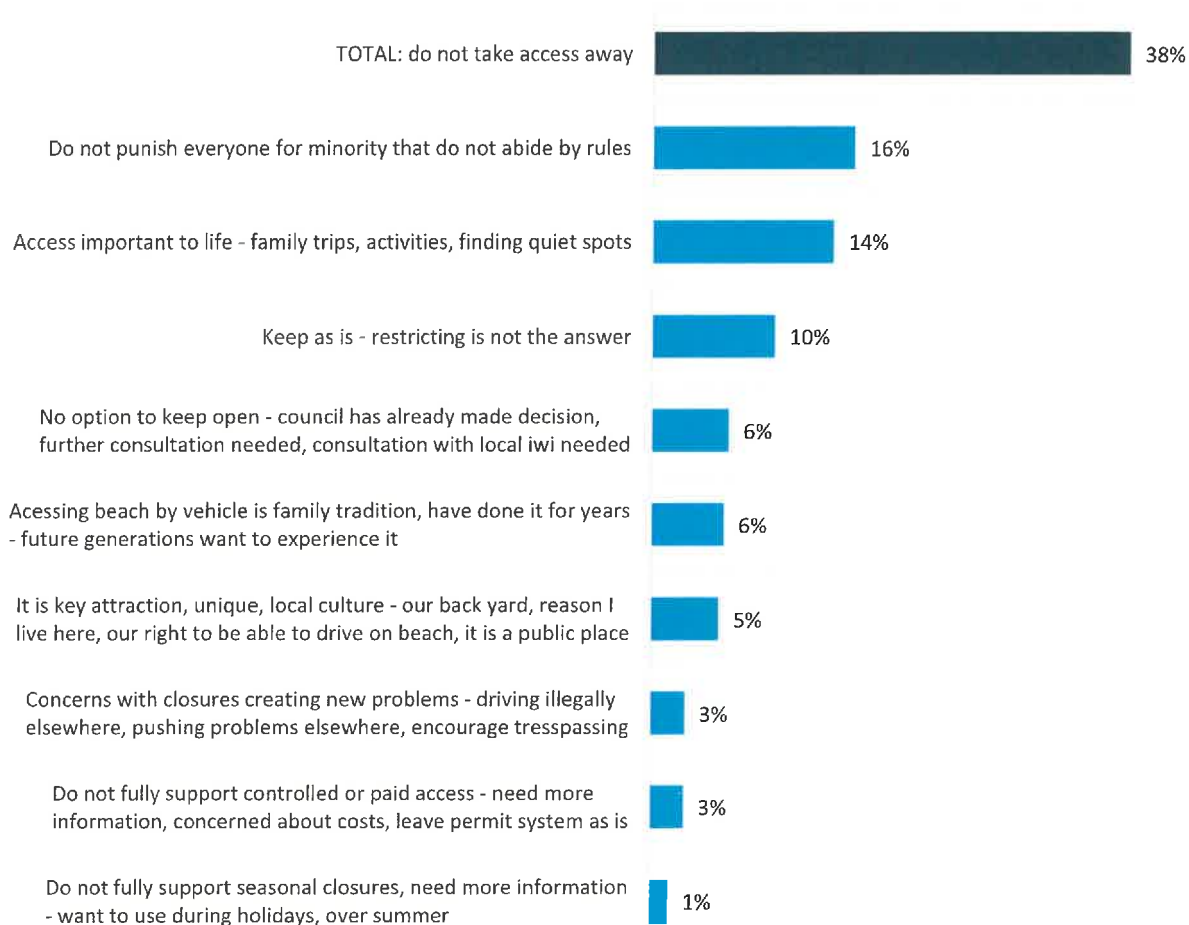
Formal submitters were asked if they had any thoughts on driving on Muriwai beach, including other access options.

Comments against closure or restrictions to vehicles on Muriwai beach were the most common, with 37% of submitters against closure to vehicles.

Verbatim comments have been grouped into themes to illustrate reasons for not supporting closure or restrictions, reasons for feeling neutral about restrictions or controls, and reasons for supporting closure to vehicles on Muriwai beach.

Question: Do you have any thoughts on driving on Muriwai Beach including other access options?

Reasons for not supporting closure or restrictions to vehicles on Muriwai beach



Note: chart showing themes with minimum n=25 mentions.

Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 27% did not provide a comment.

A significant proportion of those who submitted feedback feel distressed at the idea that their access to Muriwai beach by vehicle might be affected. 4 in 10 submitters asked that access not be taken away, saying restrictions are not the answer and that they do not support the options offered. They expressed their love for driving on Muriwai beach, saying

it was tradition, good for their mental health, unique to the area, and respected by most. More specifically, a little under 2 in 10 asked that not everyone be punished for the minority who do not abide by the rules, and little over 1 in 10 highlighted how important access was to them, mentioning family trips, the activities they do, and how it allows them to find quiet spots for relaxation and time to themselves.

1 in 10 specifically asked that things be kept as is – status quo, and a little under 1 in 10 drew attention to there being no option in the questionnaire to keeping the beach open to vehicles, saying council had already made up their mind and that further consultation needed to happen.

Feedback from community meetings also shows strong objection to permanent closure, with attendees at all three meetings against the notion. In all meetings, members of the public highlighted the absence of an option to keep access as is, though when the need for something to change was explained, attendees were keen to discuss alternative measures to address concerns, such as enforcement and education.

Informal submissions also showed strong objection to the idea of closure or restrictions, with many saying they did not support of the notion, and some saying that access to the beach by vehicle was an important part of their lives.

Submitters who drive on Muriwai beach and those aware of the current requirements felt particularly troubled at the idea that access to the beach by vehicle might be jeopardised, with half of drivers asking for access not to be taken away.

Example comments against closure or restrictions to driving on Muriwai beach:

"It is the only place in Auckland that still allows beach driving so do not ruin the only place for 4WD enthusiasts to go that is close to home by enforcing restrictions or closing the beach. It is there for EVERYONE to enjoy. Including 4WDers."

- Weekly Muriwai beach visitor

"The people that are performing bad behaviours and dangerous driving on the beach are a very small minority. I feel like closing the beach permanently would not only disadvantage the large amount of people that use the beach properly but would only move the dangerous drivers to other areas closer to people that could be injured. I can understand closing the beach at peak times like Christmas but a permanent closure all year round would be a huge disappointment to a majority of beach users - not just the 4WD community."

- Monthly Muriwai beach visitor

"I think it's extremely important for the beach to stay open to vehicle access as it brings hundreds fun and opportunity, whether it's just driving along the long beautiful beach or taking advantage of the great fishing, enjoying our door sports and activities like surfing, riding, cricket and being able to drive allows people to space out and take advantage of the beach and it's space. There are so many good things that come with vehicle access and brings enjoyment for ALL ages. There are a few people who make bad choices but most only at their own risk however regular police patrol could be a better option than closing the beach all together because of a very small percentage of people who may ruin it for the rest. It's a huge part of West Auckland and would be a sad day to see it shut down."

- Daily Muriwai beach visitor

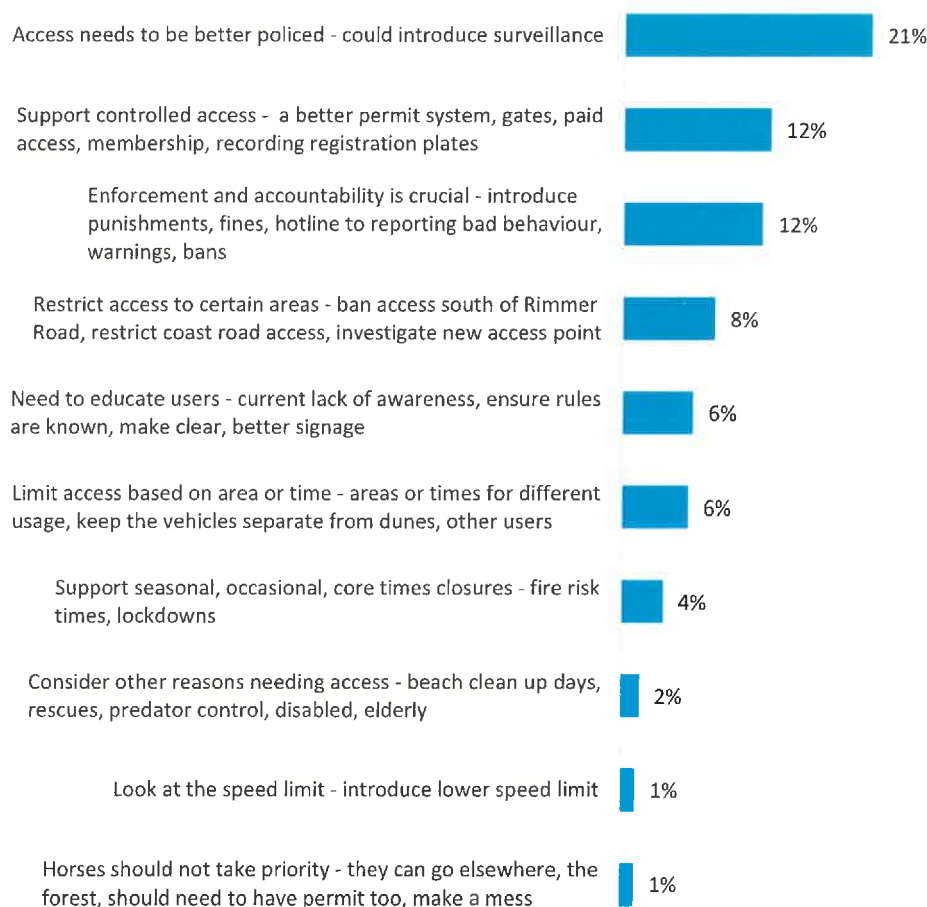
"We need to keep it accessible to the people. Unless you make other entry points, 90% of the beach will be inaccessible to the general public which would be a shame for surfers, swimmers and fishermen. All true kiwi traditions. Keep the beach open."

- Fortnightly Muriwai beach visitor

"This is an important part of lots of local families' downtime and relaxation. If there are individuals causing problems. they should be banned (e.g. 1yr) from driving through. But the rest of us who respect the beautiful beach should not be punished for their behaviour. Maybe cameras to catch number plate of people going through? Or more policing of the beach. And maybe a slower speed limit down the end closer to the main beach and drivers have to go up more quickly rather than driving in circles etc down near the access."

Feedback supporting restrictions or controls to vehicles on Muriwai beach

Question: Do you have any thoughts on driving on Muriwai Beach including other access options?



Note: chart showing themes with minimum n=25 mentions.

Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 27% did not provide a comment.

21% of submitters feel access to Muriwai beach by vehicle needs to be better policed and that current controls are inadequate. These submitters felt the beach should be policed like any other road, and that if it were, there would be no problems. They also suggested introducing surveillance.

12% emphasized how important enforcement and accountability really is, suggesting they better enforce existing rules, introduce punishments, and encourage others to report bad behaviour.

More generally, 12% said they supported controlled access, with mention of a better permit system, gates, paid access, memberships, or recording registration plates.

Feedback from community meetings also showed strong support for improved enforcement, with members of the public feeling the beach should be policed like other roads. There was also strong support for better education and signage on the requirements for driving on the beach, including the areas people can and cannot drive, how to drive around horses and people, and the condition of a permit and a registered and warranted vehicle. There were also suggestions to improve the current permitting system, ensuring drivers are suitably skilled, and to create greater separation between vehicles and horses. This separation could be an alternative space for vehicles, with the defence force bombing range being suggested as an option.

Informal submissions also showed support for improved policing.

Muriwai residents and those who drive on Muriwai beach are more likely than others to suggest better policing, with these submitters showing the strongest objection to the closure of Muriwai beach to vehicles.

Example comments for restrictions or controls:

"I'm not against vehicles on the beach, however it's not policed well enough. This has resulted in some dangerous driving and damage to the beach / dunes which is the part that I find unacceptable. I think having seasonal closures will at least limit this potential damage during the most problematic times."

- Weekly Muriwai beach visitor

"It is definitely not fair to punish 98% of 4WD enthusiasts for someone who has just passed their restricted license, Mum and dad has bought them a 4 wheel drive and they go off to destroy dunes and ruin it for everyone else. I believe by restricting access via memberships and gates, this will filter out bad behaviour and everyone else left on the beach is there for the right reasons. I know many 4wd groups that go on that beach for fun, clean ups, fishing or recovering other vehicles that may be stuck."

I believe having community patrols recording rego plates and issuing fines is the best way."

- Weekly Muriwai beach visitor

"I ride and walk on the beach at least 3 times a week. I can honestly say I never have seen any vehicle keeping to the speed limit and the beach is not policed, which I can appreciate is logistically difficult. The unregistered dirt bikes are always the most dangerous, many times I have seen dangerous driving and I constantly see the dunes being ridden on."

- Weekly Muriwai beach visitor

"Controlled access with given times of beach use. This is to allow the best of both world for horse riders and those wanting to drive on the beach."

- Fortnightly Muriwai beach visitor

"Use license plate and driver's license scanners at gated entry points, this will eliminate vehicle dumping and significantly reduce bad behaviour. Permit fees should be low, but easily cover gate costs and maintenance. Offer free permits to those helping on beach clean-up days."

- Fortnightly Muriwai beach visitor

"I believe this is a case where the few are ruining it for all. There are lots of beach drivers that follow the rules and only a few that break them. Perhaps also introduce dobbing in hotline where people can take photos and submit them if they people abusing the beach."

- Fortnightly Muriwai beach visitor

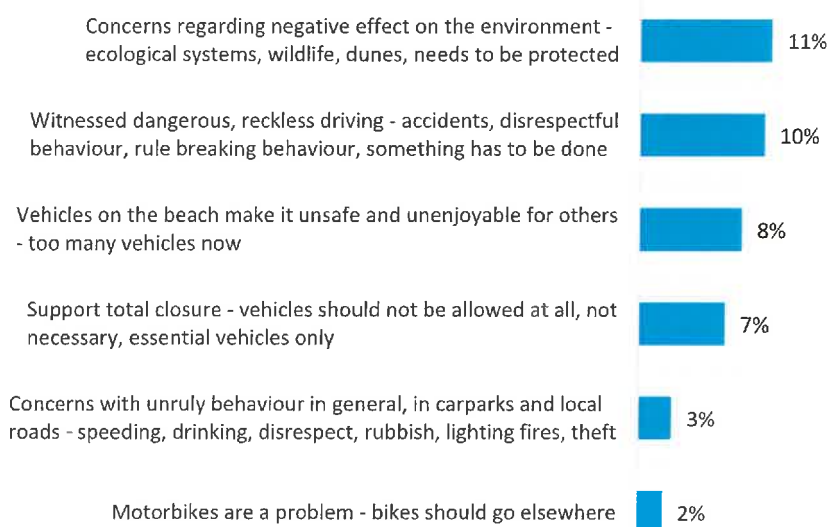
"I believe if it was policed more there would not be so many people acting in such a manner that is dangerous to other beach users and the environment. I have seen police on the beach while some drivers have been doing donuts, driving dangerously, and driving at excessive speeds but the police don't appear to be removing these people. They just talk with them and off they go. I do believe education can help in some instances but not in this instance. I believe it should be instant escorted removal from the area and hefty fines otherwise there is no

deterrent. Having controlled access again will only work if it is policed. Just because you've got a registered vehicle and have a permit, does not stop some doing donuts and driving dangerously once on the beach."
- Monthly Muriwai beach visitor

"While I agree that there needs to be control and accountability of vehicles with access to the beach, I am not sure that a paid access system is the correct way. Access should not cost the user, but they should have the to register their vehicles and access should be controlled. There needs to be accountability of the small number of people that are causing issues, but this should not impact those that have always followed the rules and just want to take the family out for an awesome day down the beach. I do agree that season closure is a good thing as this is when I see more of the behaviour that is causing issues - there needs to be a half-way option."
- Less often than monthly Muriwai beach visitor

Feedback supporting closure of Muriwai beach to vehicles

Question: Do you have any thoughts on driving on Muriwai Beach including other access options?



Note: chart showing themes with minimum n=25 mentions.

Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 27% did not provide a comment.

11% of submitters expressed strong concern for the environment and the need to protect the environment from vehicles on the beach, with mention of the ecologic systems, wildlife, and dunes.

10% of submitters said they had witnessed dangerous, reckless driving, with drivers breaking rules and being disrespectful, and expressed the need for something to be done. A little under 1 in 10 felt vehicles on the beach made it unsafe and unenjoyable for others, and that they supported total closure.

While most feedback from the community meetings showed strong objection to the closure of Muriwai beach to vehicles, there were some members of the public who commented on the effect vehicles have on the environment. One attendee made specific mention to dotterels struggling to nest, and the damage to toheroa mounds on the dunes due to vehicle activity. There were also a few members of the public who said they had concerns for their safety around some vehicle users.

Non-residents were more likely to comment on the negative effects on the environment than residents, as were non-drivers. 3 in 10 submitters who do not drive on the beach, and tend to be older females, commented on the effect on the environment, and 2 in 10 commented on the dangerous, unsafe behaviour, and their support for closure.

Example comments for closure to Muriwai beach to vehicles:

"I was initially in favour of a controlled access solution so that responsible drivers could still enjoy driving on Muriwai, however sadly I see a total ban as the only way forward to protect our environment and the safety of other non-vehicle users. By allowing restricted vehicle access to the beach there will always be those irresponsible drivers that find a way in or use friends access to get on the beach and wreak havoc. I can't see a way that even restricted access can be effectively policed - that would be a huge cost and resource commitment. Unfortunately, now the sheer numbers of vehicles accessing the beach is just unsustainable - why should we let vehicles carve up our beautiful beach and delicate dunes? These vehicles are just too heavy and damaging."

- Weekly Muriwai beach visitor

"It is time to leave the beach and it's wildlife to recover without cars on the beach. Every week there is bad behaviour effecting this beautiful natural environment. It would also stop the noise and light pollution at night to stop. It has become unsafe for all. No to cars on the beach."

- Daily Muriwai beach visitor

"I've reluctantly ticked no access because I believe it is impossible to prevent dune incursion, and dune incursion will always be a fun aspect for 4x4ers. I believe realistically, the permit system is simply unenforceable. There are many access points along a very long beach."

- Daily Muriwai beach visitor

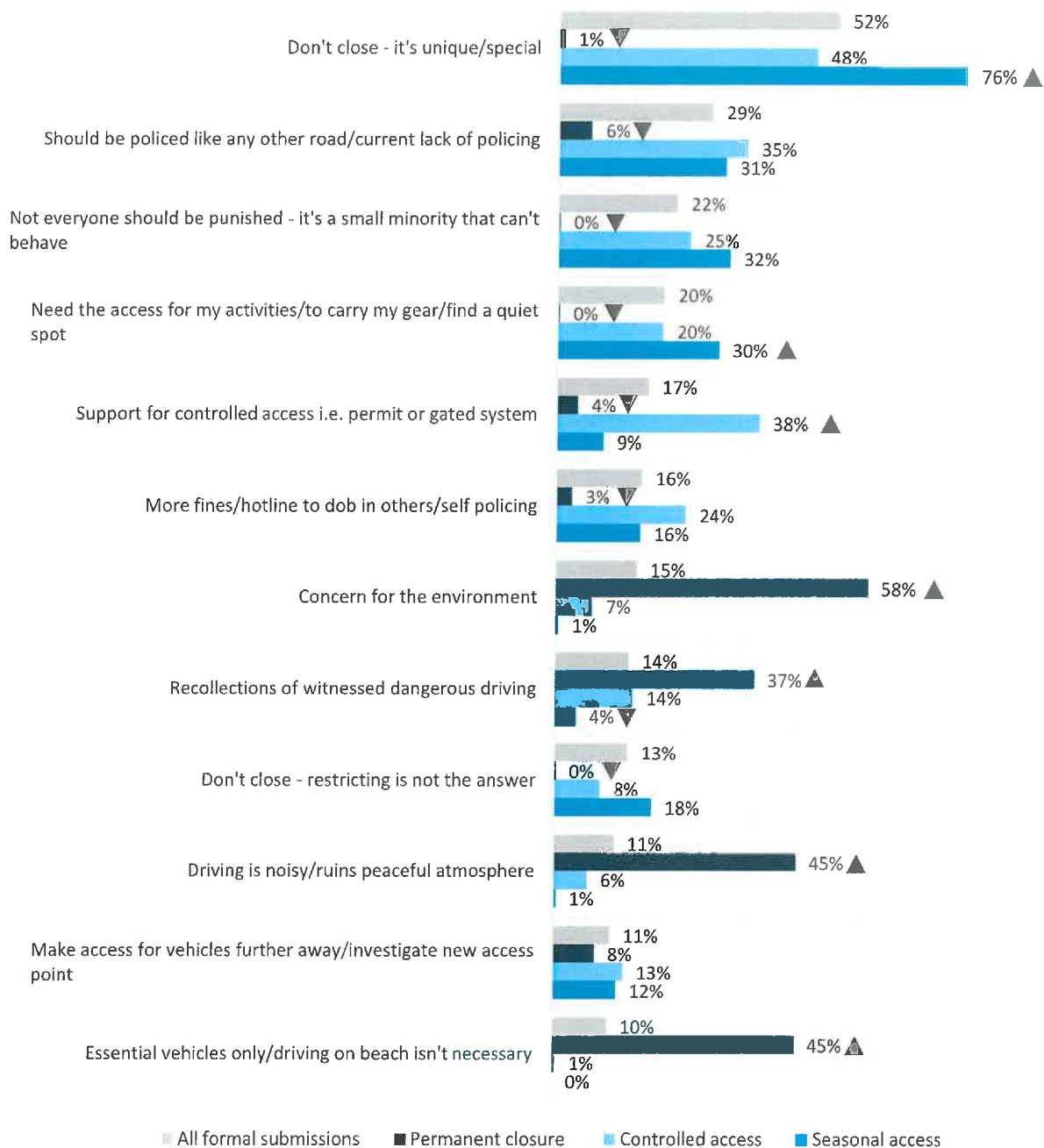
"It's has just got too busy - there are too many non-vehicular users to make vehicle use on the beach safe, it is a huge safety concern. There is also a huge environmental impact of dunes being destroyed and cars getting left on the beach. It makes going to the beach particularly with kids very unpleasant. I fully support a full ban."

- Monthly Muriwai beach visitor

It is evident that each opinion group has their own reasons and justification for their preferred choice. Safety, ambience and environmental concerns are top of mind for those passionate about permanent closure. However, those who advocate for controlled or seasonal access are much more lenient and are intent on finding a solution of compromise. Comments from those campaigning for controlled or seasonal access propose various alternative options that they feel would improve the current situation. These are illustrated in the chart below:

Thoughts on driving on Muriwai Beach by preferred option – summary

Overall top 12 themes only



Note: Arrows denote results significantly different to other groups.

Base: all formal submission comments (n=1592), those whose preferred option is permanent closure and provided a comment (n=332), those whose preferred option is controlled access and provided a comment (n=504), those whose preferred option is seasonal closures and provided a comment (n=539). No preference/answer and provided a comment (n=217).

As demonstrated in the chart above, key themes in comments provided by those whose preferred option is permanent closure are: concern for the environment, recounts of witnessing or experiencing dangerous driving behaviours on

Muriwai beach, noisy/reckless driving ruining the atmosphere and driving on the beach being perceived as unnecessary (driving on the beach should be reserved for essential vehicles only).

Appendix 1: Profile of submitters

Where they live:



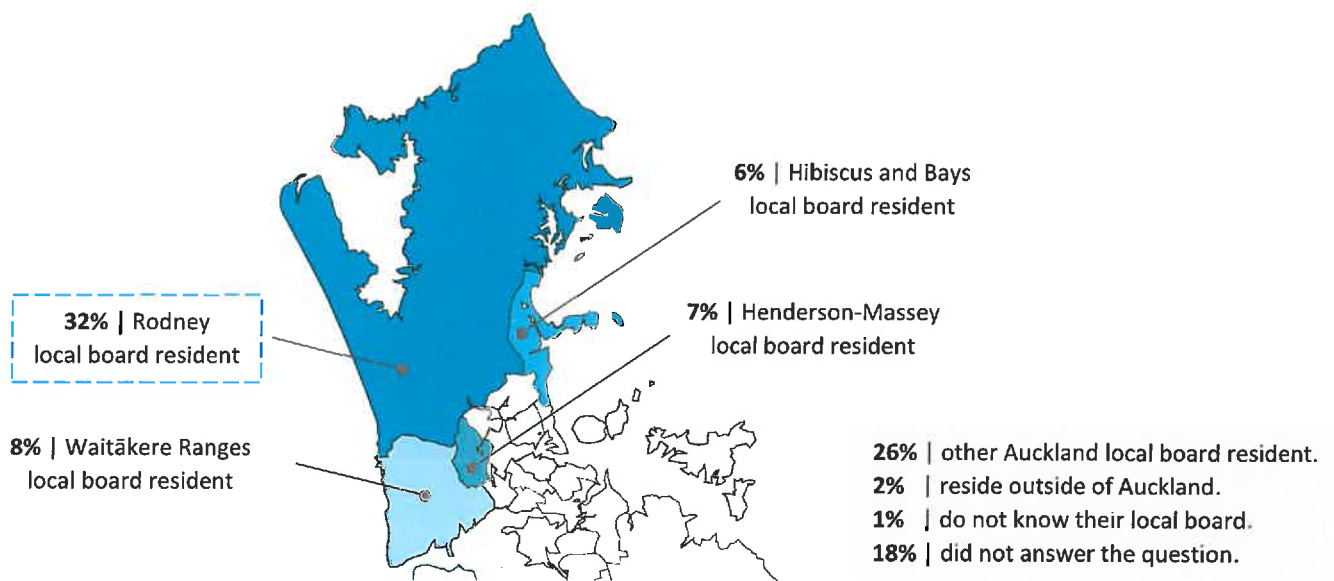
40% live in the Muriwai area



58% do not live in the Muriwai area

Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 2% did not provide an answer.

Local board area:



Whether submitters drive on Muriwai beach:



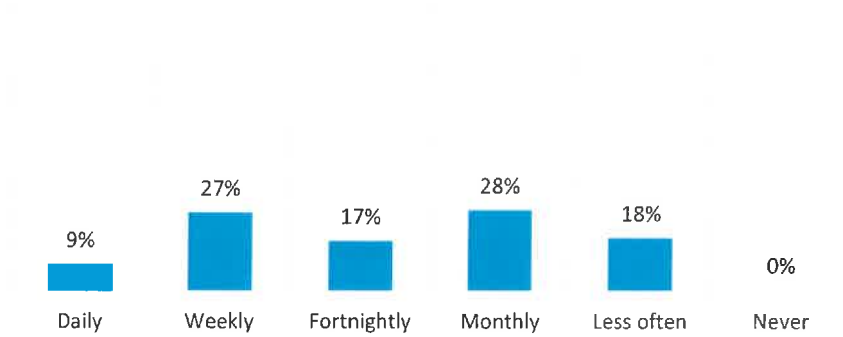
66% drive a vehicle on
Muriwai beach



33% do not drive a vehicle
on Muriwai beach

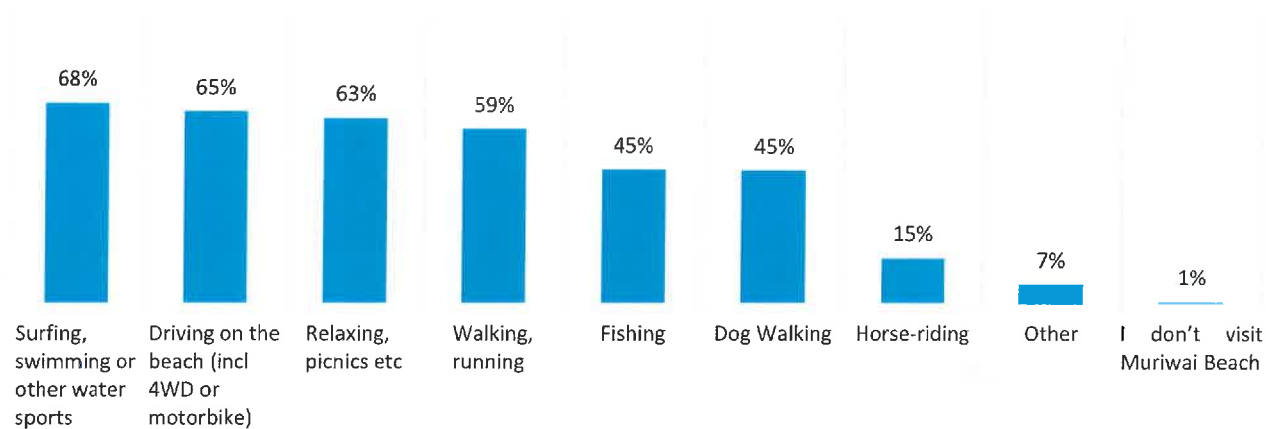
Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 1% did not provide an answer.

Frequency of visit to Muriwai beach:



Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. 1% did not provide an answer.

Activities undertaken at Muriwai beach:



Base: all formal submission, n=2,180. Less than 1% did not provide an answer.

Appendix 2: Supporting document



Driving on Muriwai Beach

Public engagement background information

Recreation at Muriwai beach

Muriwai beach is a popular beach with locals and visitors enjoying a range of recreational activities including swimming, surfing, fishing, dog walking, driving, horse riding, bike riding and enjoying nature.



Driving on the beach

Muriwai and Kariotahi beaches are the only two places in Auckland where public can drive a vehicle on the beach. There is a long history of driving on Muriwai beach and people come from afar to enjoy the experience.



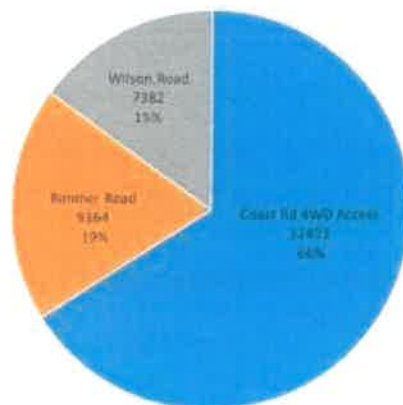
Public can access the beach by vehicle at three locations:

- Coast Road - via Muriwai Regional Park approximately 2 kms up the beach
- Rimmer Road - via an easement managed by the Hancock Forestry and the Department of Conservation, approx. 15 kms up the beach
- Wilson Road - via a paper road controlled by Auckland Transport, approx. 30 kms up the beach



Between 1 October 2020 and 31 January 2021 a total of 24,600 vehicles accessed Muriwai beach via these three access points.

Vehicle Movements into and off Muriwai Beach by entry point
1 October 2020 to 31 January 2021



What are the rules for driving on the beach?

A permit is required to drive on Muriwai beach. Under the law, beaches are legal roads, so all road rules apply including:

- speed limits
- licensing of drivers
- vehicle registration and warrant of fitness
- alcohol use
- seatbelts
- helmets
- driving behaviour.

The speed limit on Muriwai beach from the 4WD access at Coast Road to Okiritoto Stream is 30km/h. From Okiritoto Stream (650m north of Coast Road) to southern extent of New Zealand Defence Force bombing range is 60km/h. Vehicles are prohibited south of the 4WD access and in the Defence Force bombing range

Regional Parks Management Plan (2010)

The Regional Parks Management Plan (2010) identifies vehicles accessing the beach through the regional park. Specific actions over the 10-year life of the plan focus on:

- managing the impacts of erosion on the park
- managing appropriate pedestrian, vehicle and horse access to the beach.

Auckland council is currently undertaking its 10-year review of the regional parks management plan that covers all regional parks, and sought the community's suggestions for the plan in September and October 2020. The community's suggestions are now being used to inform the preparation of a draft plan. Once the draft plan is prepared and approved for release, it will be presented for public comment.

Recent consultation on the Regional Parks Management Plan included submissions from 98 individuals and seven organisations providing comments on Muriwai Regional Park specifically. Feedback themes included:

- people enjoy the rugged nature and isolation of Muriwai
- park users value the opportunity to ride horse and motorbikes and drive vehicles on the beach especially because there are few other places to do this in the region
- an issue raised was the tension between vehicle drivers on the beach and other users. Many submitters commented motorised two and four wheeled vehicles on the beach cause damage to the dunes, plants and wildlife.
- a large portion of comments from horse riders reported conflicts on Muriwai beach with speeding motorbikes and with 4WD vehicles.
- Some locals commented the beach was not safe or enjoyable
- some 4WD owners and a bike riders also commented on tensions between themselves and horse riders and requested that room be made for everyone.
- most submitters agreed vehicle use on the beach was a problem which needed to be addressed.

The submissions also made suggestions for improvements including:

- limiting or controlling the number of vehicles on the beach
- speed control
- separating the vehicle and horse entrances to the beach
- providing horse only and vehicle only zones on the beach

- providing four-wheel drive and dirt bike tracks elsewhere to reduce the number of vehicles on the beach

Recent closures

There have been several closures to vehicle access points since late 2019:

1. An overnight closure of Coast Road 4WD access during Guy Fawkes week in 2019.
2. An overnight closure of Coast Road 4WD access and Rimmer Road on 5 February 2020 in support of a prohibited fire season.
3. Coast Road 4WD access, Rimmer Road and Wilson Road were closed during the Covid-19 Level 4 lock down in early 2020.
4. An overnight closure of Coast Road 4WD access during Guy Fawkes week in 2020
5. Coast Road 4WD access, Rimmer Road and Wilson Road from 23 December to 10 January (inclusive).

Ecology

The sand dunes at Muriwai are home to the rare and important Muriwai gecko. Please see the following news article for more information:

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/123706495/muriwai-gecko-unique-species-hanging-on-on-auckland-s-coast>



Photo credit Dylan van Winkel

An ecological assessment of the Muriwai Regional Park and beach area was completed in November 2020:

Biodiversity Values of Muriwai Regional Park Muriwai Regional Park has outstanding ecosystem and biodiversity values recognised within the 5 Mile Strip, comprising a mosaic of critically threatened and endangered species and ecosystems. It is classified as a Biodiversity Focus Area (BFA) and prioritised for threat management.

The BFA extends along the sand dunes for approximately 6.5km north from the southern side of Okuripoto Stream and covers 197 hectares. It comprises a mosaic of ecosystems including, active sand dune ecosystems of *Spinifex-pingao* grassland/sedgeland (DN2), *Oioi-knobby clubrush* sedgeland (DN5), and forest ecosystems including native forest *Tōtara*, *kānuka*, broadleaved forest (WF5), and exotic-dominated tree land TL3.

Sand dune ecosystems are a national priority for protection and both ecosystem types found here are regionally threatened with threat rankings of Endangered (DN2) and Critically Endangered (DN5).

Very little native forest on stabilised sand dunes remains in Auckland because of clearance for farming and urban development, consequently this ecosystem type, (WF5), is regionally threatened with a threat ranking of Critically Endangered. Within the WF5 ecosystem is an area of Pohutukawa forest which is a rare occurrence on sand within the Auckland region.

The tree land (TL3) is not classified as a threatened ecosystem but it does have threatened plants scattered throughout.

There are 12 threatened and at-risk species within the Muriwai Regional Park and a species of carnivorous beetle which is of interest. The 5 Mile biodiversity focus area is recognised as a key site in the Auckland region to protect three threatened and at-risk species, the Muriwai gecko, pingao, and sand coprosma. The Muriwai gecko is endemic to the site and is classified as 'critically threatened' at a national and regional scale. The pingao and sand coprosma are important for binding the sand and help to prevent loss of sand inland, an important function of the coastal near shore marine and terrestrial ecosystem.

All vegetation in this sequence of ecosystems, from the foreshore dunes to the stabilising young sandy soils with native forests, is important in buffering inland sites from large storm events and will become increasingly valuable with climate change and sea level rise.

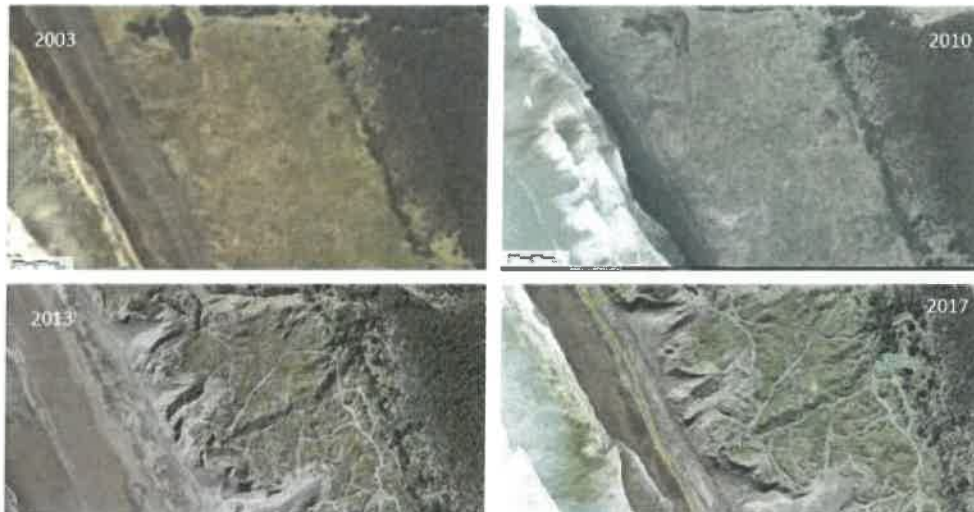
Threats identified for the ecosystem and species include, deer, possums, rabbits, rats, stoats, weeds, climate change, fire, myrtle rust and vehicles. Pest plant and animal control, and prevention of vehicle damage are the priority management activities for the 5 Mile BFA. Damage from vehicles is the most significant, visible, and immediate threat to the ecosystem and species currently, due to the scale of encroachment.

The direct impact from vehicles is confined to the dune ecosystems (DN2, DN5) where the fragile vegetation is easily damaged and results in open tracks with no vegetation. Large scale loss of the sand coprosma has occurred due to vehicle damage. Lizards occur throughout the dunes and it is likely that individuals have been killed directly by vehicles. A secondary effect to ecosystems and species is the migration of sand inland with the loss of the binding vegetation. Migrating sand can bury the developing forests of the more stable sites. Migrated sand is also lost to the foreshore ecosystem. Another secondary effect of vehicle damage is an increase of weeds that rabbits and browsers prefer thereby increasing the pressures from these species as they utilise the weedy tracks.

Threatened Species List

Common name	Scientific Name	Threat classification	
		National	Regional
White-fronted tern	<i>Sterna striata</i>	At Risk - Declining	At risk - Declining
Muriwai gecko	<i>Woodworthia alii maculata</i> 'Muriwai'	Threatened - Critical	Threatened - Critical
Tatahi skink (Western shore skink)	<i>Oligosoma smithi</i>	At Risk - Declining	Threatened - Endangered
Corokia	<i>Corokia cotoneaster</i>	Not Threatened	At risk - Sparse
Sand coprosma	<i>Coprosma acerosa</i>	At Risk - Declining	At risk - Serious Decline
Western karika	<i>Kunzea amathicola</i>	Threatened - Vulnerable	not assessed
Pingao	<i>Ficinia spiralis</i>	At Risk - Declining	At Risk - Serious Decline
Myrsine divaricata	Weeping matipo	Not Threatened	Threatened - Endangered
Itanga	<i>Galaxias maculatus</i>	At Risk - Declining	At Risk Declining
Grey mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	Not Threatened	At Risk - Naturally Uncommon
Giant kokopu	<i>Galaxias argenteus</i>	At Risk Declining	Introduced and Naturalised
Toheroa	<i>Pagurus verticosa</i>	no lists for shellfish	no lists for shellfish
Carnivorous carabid beetle	<i>Brachia antarctica</i>	not checked	not checked

Photo imagery shows a significant increase in the impact of vehicle activity in the back dune areas:



Fire risk

Fires are prohibited at Muriwai beach, however there is an ongoing history of illegally lit fires on the beach, in the back-dunes and adjacent forest. Between 2015 and 2020 there were 145 recorded fire events. The fine-leafed dune vegetation and prevailing wind means fire presents a major threat to the dune system and Woodhill Forest.



Vehicle wrecks on the beach

Complaints have been received by council about the behaviour of people driving vehicles on the beach. This includes accessing the back-dune, failure to stick to speed limits, driving in a manner that is dangerous to other beach users, vehicle crashes and damaged vehicles being left on the beach.

Vehicle wrecks are not uncommon and cause significant hazards for other beach users.



Thank you for reading through this summary and considering the future of driving on Muriwai beach.

We look forward to receiving your feedback via the online survey.

Appendix 3: Feedback submission form

Driving on Muriwai Beach

All of the questions below are optional. We encourage you to give feedback online at [akhaveyoursay.nz](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/feedback), or you can complete this form and return it to us using one of the options below.

Your name and feedback may be included in public documents. All other personal details will remain private.

First name:

Last name:

Email address or postal address:

Your local board:

Is your feedback on behalf of an organisation or business? (If yes, this confirms you have authority to submit on the organisation's behalf)

☐

Yes

☐

No

Name of organisation/business:

The following information is optional but will help us know whether we are hearing from all Aucklanders.

Are you:

☐

Female

☐

Male

☐

Gender diverse

What age group do you belong to:

☐

Under 15

☐

15-24

☐

25-34

☐

35-44

☐

45-54

☐

55-64

☐

65-74

☐

75+

Which of the following describes your ethnicity? (Please select as many as apply)

☐

Pākehā / NZ European

☐

Māori

☐

Samoan

☐

Cook Islands Māori

☐

Tongan

☐

Chinese

☐

Indian

☐

South East Asian

☐

Korean

☐

Middle Eastern / Latin American / African

☐

Other (please specify):

Do you live in the Muriwai area?

☐

Yes

☐

No

What do you like to do at Muriwai beach?

Tick as many activities that apply to you.

☐

Surfing, swimming or other water sports

☐

Driving on the beach (incl 4WD or motorbike)

☐

Walking, running

☐

Dog Walking

☐

Fishing

☐

Relaxing, picnics etc

☐

Horse-riding

☐

Other

☐

I don't visit Muriwai Beach

How often do you visit Muriwai Beach?

- ☐ Daily
 ☐ Weekly
 ☐ Fortnightly
 ☐ Monthly
 ☐ Less often
 ☐ Never
 ☐

Driving vehicles on Muriwai beach

Do you drive a vehicle on Muriwai beach?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No

Driving on Muriwai Beach is currently allowed on the condition that the driver has a permit, their vehicle is warranted and registered, and only drives on the beach on the coastal side of the dune system. Vehicles are prohibited at all times in the dune system or in Defense Force land at the northern end of the beach.

Are you aware of these requirements?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No

While at Muriwai beach what do you think about the behaviour of vehicles driving on the beach? Thinking about where people are driving and what speed they drive at, which statement best describes you?

- ☐ I have no concerns about vehicles driving on the beach
☐ I sometimes see driver behaviour that is concerning
☐ I often see driver behaviour that is concerning

Auckland Council is considering a number of options for the future management of vehicles driving on Muriwai Beach. This is to address concerns raised about beach user safety and enjoyment, environmental protection, fire risk and driver behaviour.

Which would be your preference of the following options:

- ☐ Season closures restricting vehicle access to the beach at core times, i.e. Christmas / New Year period, Christmas to after Auckland Anniversary weekend, Guy Fawkes and other times where required for fire risk reduction
☐ Controlled access i.e. gated access points to control vehicle access to the beach (access would be restricted to authorised paid permit holders, Surf Lifesaving and emergency services vehicles only).
☐ Permanent closure of all public vehicle access points to Muriwai beach (with the exception of Surf Lifesaving and other emergency services vehicles)

Do you have any thoughts on driving on Muriwai Beach including other access options?
