



*caring about you & your environment*

## **Report 01.811**

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Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Bruce Andrell, Manager, Parks and Forests (Operations)

### **Parks and Forests Visitation**

#### **1. Purpose**

To advise Councillors of the current park and forest visitation monitoring system.

#### **2. Background**

At the 6 September 2001 Landcare Committee meeting, Councillors discussed the visitor statistics in some detail. From the discussion, it emerged that Councillors had not been provided with a clear picture of how we record visitor numbers, their trends over time and what the information is used for. As a result, I undertook to prepare this report on visitor numbers.

#### **3. How We Estimate Visitor Numbers**

Park and forest visitation is estimated by counting the number of vehicles using a park or forest entry point. The number of vehicles is then multiplied by a calibration figure to calculate the number of people using the park or forest.

The calibration figure was set by surveying the total number of people entering a park/forest and dividing it by the number of vehicles over the same period. There are separate calibration figures for summer (peak season) and winter (off-peak season). The calibration survey was last updated in 1995 for Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, Belmont Regional Park and Kaitoke Regional Parks, Queen Elizabeth Park and the Pakuratahi Forest. Vehicle numbers are not recorded at East Harbour Regional Park, Akatarawa Forest, Hutt and Wainuiomata Water Collection Areas, and the Hutt River Trail.

#### 4. **The Accuracy of the System**

The visitation monitoring system provides an estimate of the number of person visits over a year for the parks/forests that are monitored. It is not absolute or 100 percent accurate. To provide more accurate information calibration surveys would need to be redone every few years.

Changes in the type and number of users may cause alterations to the calibration figure. For example the number of mountain bikers have displaced some walkers at Belmont Regional Park over the last ten years. Mountain bikers are more likely to ride to the Park than walkers and are not picked up by our vehicle counters.

#### 5. **Use Trends Over Time**

**Attachment 1** summarises the annual visit estimates of the monitored parks/forests since 1993/1994. The solid line in the graphs are the estimated visitor numbers and the dashed line represents an average trend. The trends are:

- Queen Elizabeth Park - visitor numbers have increased significantly since the WRC took over control and management of the Park.
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park - visitor numbers have decreased significantly since 1993.
- Belmont Regional Park - visitor numbers have decreased since 1993.
- Kaitoke Regional Park - visitor numbers have increased significantly since 1993.
- Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully Recreation Areas - visitor numbers have increased since 1993.

#### 6. **What Do the Estimates of Use Tell Us?**

Current visitation monitoring gives a useful estimate of use and change in use over time for a given park or forest. It also allows us to compare the popularity of parks relative to one another. However, it does not give an estimate of the total visitation to the parks and forests network.

The visitor statistics in themselves give us little insight into **why** visitor numbers fluctuate. For example weather, changing recreational trends, the economy, levels of satisfaction of the service all potentially affect levels of use. As a result, we are only able to suggest **possible** reasons for the changes, but these “reasons” are simply our opinions.

Our biannual visitor satisfaction survey provides much better information on why people use (or potentially don't use) the parks and forests. It asks specific questions on visitor satisfaction and draws out potential issues that may affect use levels.

**7. Communications**

There are no communication opportunities arising from this report.

**8. Recommendations**

*That the Landcare Committee:*

(1) *receive the report; and*

(2) *note the contents.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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**Attachment 1 : Annual Visit Estimates**