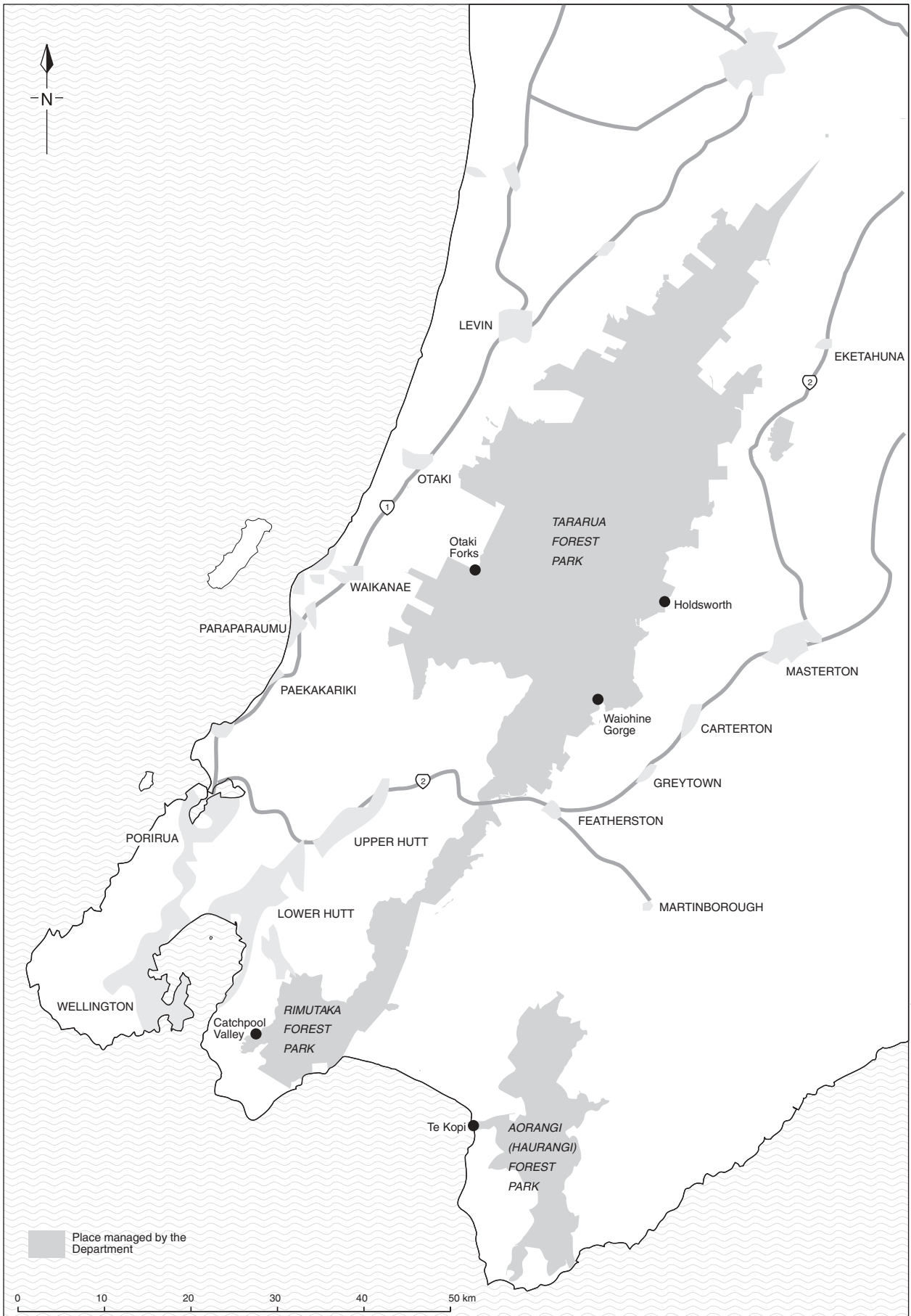


Map 31:
Forest Parks



8. Forest Parks

Tararua Forest Park

Number:	S26001	S24504
Status:	Forest Park and Stewardship	Tokomaru Valley Stewardship
Area:	116 535.6 ha	1896.56 ha
Ecological District:	Tararua	South Manawatu Gorge
Local Government:	KCDC/HDC/TDC/UHCC/WRC/ SWDC/CDC/MDC/MWRC/PCC	HDC/MWRC

Number:	S25019	S25014
Status:	Tokomaru Valley Road Stewardship	Waiti Stream Stewardship
Area:	538 ha	102 ha
Ecological District:	South Manawatu Gorge	Tararua
Local Government:	HDC/MWRC	HDC/MWRC

Number:	S25013
Status:	Ohau Stewardship
Area:	253 ha
Ecological District:	Tararua
Local Government:	HDC/MWRC

Rimutaka Forest Park

Number:	R27052	R27053
Status:	Forest Park	Orongorongo Stewardship
Area:	14 876 ha	4830 ha
Ecological District:	Tararua	Tararua
Local Government:	HCC/SWDC/WRC	HCC/WRC

Aorangi Forest Park

Number:	S28001
Status:	Forest Park
Area:	19 381.72 ha
Ecological District:	Aorangi
Local Government:	SWDC/WRC

Description The Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges form the backbone and visual backdrop to the whole Conservancy and provide the central link to the chain of mountains that extend from the East Cape to the South Island. The Forest Parks and their adjacent stewardship areas provide protection for 60% of the Tararua Ecological District. Both ranges are covered in indigenous forest and

sub-alpine shrubland, with areas of alpine grasslands and river valleys in the Tararua Forest Park.

Aorangi Forest Park incorporates Aorangi Range in eastern Wairarapa and extends practically to the coast in the south. It is managed as a Recreational Hunting Area (the sole RHA in the Conservancy). The park is predominantly indigenous forest, with an area of second growth in its central portion.

Some small areas of exotic plantation exist in all forest parks.

Rimutaka Forest Park, including Orongorongo Stewardship Area, Tararua Forest Park, including Tokomaru Valley Conservation Area and Tokomaru Road, Ohau, Marquee and Waiti Stream Stewardship Areas, and Aorangi Forest Park make up approximately 88% of the land administered by the Department in the Wellington Conservancy.

Values

- The foremost value of the parks is that they protect mountainous landscapes containing extensive tracts of relatively unmodified indigenous vegetation, wildlife habitat and the upper catchments of many rivers in the Conservancy.
- All the forest parks encompass areas that feature in the tribal history of tangata whenua.
- Notable geological features, including landforms created by faults and glaciation, occur in the parks.
- Recreational opportunities from remote to back country drive-in; land-based and water-based opportunities and recreational hunting. They are well used and visitor numbers at Catchpool Valley, Otaki Forks and Holdsworth are the highest of any Departmental destination in the Wellington Conservancy other than the National Wildlife Centre.
- Tararua Forest Park contains two huts which are considered historically significant: Cone Hut and Field Hut. The history of tramping is particularly significant in Tararua and Rimutaka Forest Parks, as these were probably the first areas in New Zealand to attract recreational tramping and the formation of tramping clubs. Tararua Forest Park was the first forest park to be created (in 1954). Historic sites, including Rimutaka Incline railway, old sawmilling sites, buildings dating from times when attempts were made to farm the forest parks, and huts and tracks associated with the history of tramping, add to the conservation values of the forest parks.
- Areas of vegetation within the forest parks have been identified as representative examples of a forest type or containing rare or unique forest communities; these are potential Ecological Areas.
- Forest parks are the upper catchments of many rivers in the Conservancy. The retention of their indigenous forest is important for river management, soil conservation and water supply catchments. Deterioration in the condition of mountain catchments can result in reduced water quality, reduced low flow yields, increased river sediment loads, and associated increases in flooding, bank erosion and changes in river courses.
- The parks support populations of indigenous forest birds including falcon, kereru, kaka, parakeet (absent from Aorangi Forest Park), shining and long-tailed cuckoos, morepork, rifleman, whitehead, pied tit, bellbird and tui. Species no longer present include little spotted kiwi

(Tararua), blue duck, weka, kakapo, laughing owl, bush wren (Rimutaka), robin, stitchbird, kokako, saddleback, huia (Tararua and Rimutaka) and piopio. Forests of the Tararua and Rimutaka Ranges were the stronghold of the huia in the 1800s.

- Native fish are present in the waterways; populations of the threatened land snail *Powelliphanta traversi* and the flax weevil *Anagotus fairburni* are found in Tararua Forest Park.

Management Issues

Animal Pests

Red deer, sika deer, goats, wasps, pigs, rabbits, hares, mustelids, cats, rodents and possums are all present in the forest parks (sika deer are currently only in Tararua Forest Park). Domestic stock are intruding in some locations where fencing is inadequate. Domestic goats are becoming re-established in areas of the parks from which they were eliminated. Control of these animals, which may range from their eradication to controlling numbers to a predetermined density or to reduce their distribution, is important for the preservation of natural resources and soil and water values within the parks. [refer Section 20, p 183]

Priority areas for control within the forest parks (not in priority order), some of which overlap are:

- Areas with populations of *Powelliphanta* snails (western Tararua foothills)
- Alpine grassland and high altitude forest
- Proposed Ecological Areas
- Lowland forest where goats, deer and possums have caused substantial damage
- Fuchsia forest [refer Table 11, p 186]

In these areas the priority is to control deer, goats and possums to levels where plants which are the animal pests' preferred food can regenerate. Elsewhere in the Forest Parks deer and possums will be controlled by recreational and commercial hunters. The exception is sika deer, which were illegally released into Tararua Forest Park. Their elimination is a high priority. Goats will be controlled to prevent extension of their range.

Elimination of newly established populations and containing the range of animal pest species is a more effective use of resources than accepting perpetual sustained control.

Wasps periodically cause problems in areas of high visitor use, primarily in Catchpool Valley, Otaki Forks and Holdsworth. Reduction of wasps in these areas will be in response to the impact wasps have on visitors' enjoyment of the area. The impact of wasps on native fauna and their control is the subject of a national research programme.

Alpine areas are vulnerable to the effects of deer browsing, and recreational hunting is not sufficient to control deer numbers at the densities necessary to protect the alpine grasslands. Surveys within forest parks in the Conservancy have shown that commercial helicopter hunting has been very effective in controlling deer numbers in alpine areas in Tararua Forest Park. The Department will continue to license commercial operations there and will look at alternative strategies for control if commercial hunting declines.

In Aorangi Forest Park a Recreational Hunting Area (RHA), declared under section 27 of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, covers the entire forest park. (RHAs are areas where recreational hunting is the only means of control, unless investigations show the presence of animal pests is detrimental to the land, vegetation and waterways. In these circumstances the Department can undertake control or permit commercial hunting.) In Aorangi Forest Park the Department undertakes control of goats. Densities are maintained at a stable level by recreational hunting, but deer densities are not low enough to prevent browsing of plants preferred by deer, and the forest composition is changing. The ability and means to further reduce deer densities in the Aorangi Forest Park will be assessed in a Conservancy Pest Management Plan. [*refer Section 20, p 183*]

The Department is committed to strengthen and expand recreational hunting in Forest Parks and will discuss with hunters how this can be achieved.

Ecological Areas

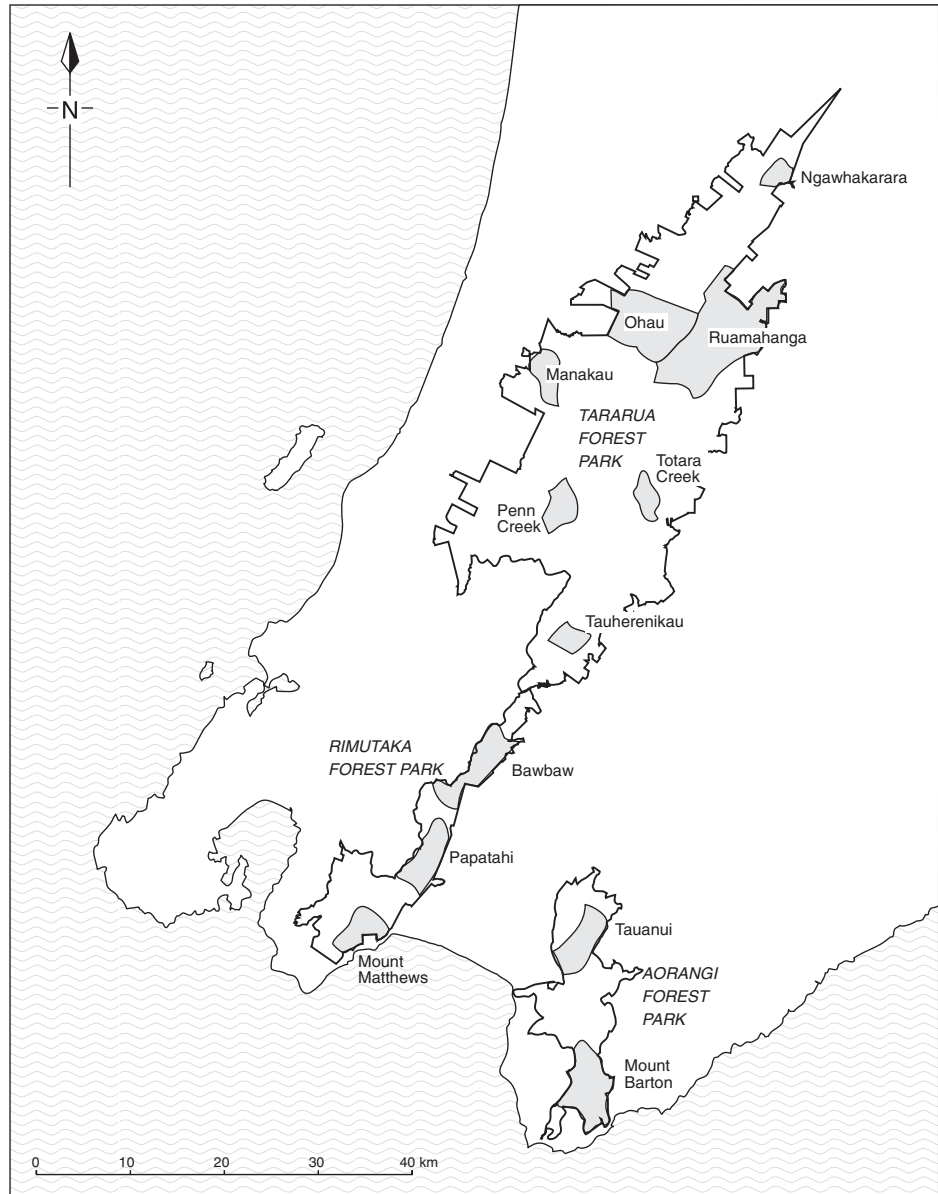
There are 12 proposed Ecological Areas within the forest parks: seven in Tararua Forest Park, three in Rimutaka Forest Park and two in Aorangi Forest Park (*refer Map 32, p 99; Table 4, p 100*). They were identified by a scientific co-ordinating committee established by the former NZ Forest Service. They were identified in recognition of their significant ecological features and to ensure adequate protection for representative vegetation types for land administered by the NZ Forest Service, before 1987. The Department will be seeking to gazette these proposed areas as Ecological Areas under section 21 of the Conservation Act. In the CMS they are identified to highlight some areas within the Forest Parks which are recognised as more ecologically significant and require more intensive conservation management. They are priority areas for animal control, because of their high natural values. Other high priority areas for animal pest control are alpine grasslands and high altitude forests in Tararua Forest Park, fuchsia forest, and lowland forests in Forest Parks. [*refer Section 20, p 183*]

Huts, Tracks and Recreation Opportunities

Within the forest parks are a network of campgrounds, huts and tracks which provide a range of opportunities for visitors. The Department, in consultation with the Tararua-Aorangi Huts Committee [*refer Section 27.2, p231*], has been determining which huts should be maintained, whether the network meets the needs of those wanting to visit, and what are maintenance needs. The Department's Hut and Track Strategy is expressed in Appendix 3: Recreation Facilities and includes huts and tracks listed in the forest park CMPs.

Development or up-grading of huts and tracks in the forest parks will primarily focus on low-level valley-based overnight tramping, where high standard facilities will be provided for visitors with limited back country experience in areas classified as High Use Back Country Walk-in. Two high altitude routes will also be upgraded. Key areas for this in Tararua Forest Park are lower Waingawa, Atiwhakatu, Waiohine and Tauherenikau Catchments and the circuit tracks Table Top-Penn Creek and Powell-Jumbo. A link track between Holdsworth Lodge and the Pines (Barra Track) will also be investigated and implemented, if feasible, to provide a two-day circuit.

Map 32:
Proposed
Ecological Areas



In Rimutaka Forest Park the tracks and other facilities will continue to be maintained and developed to a high standard to meet the increasing visitor pressure in the area.

In Moderate-Low Use Back Country Walk-in, in the northern catchments of the Tararua, the eastern Rimutaka and Aorangi Ranges, the Department will continue to manage for visitors with a high level of back country experience providing tramping tracks or routes and Category 3 standard huts or bivvies.

In consultation with user groups the Department will investigate and implement if feasible, improved public access and tracks in the upper Tokomaru River and the upgrading of the Pakihore Ridge Track to create a two- to three-day loop from Otaki Forks with a new hut on Pakihore Ridge to replace Maungahuka Hut.

The Department will continue to manage the remote areas of the Tararua Range as a Low Use Remote zone for highly experienced back-country visitors. Routes will be primarily track standard while accommodation will generally be basic bivvies or Category 3 huts.

Table 4:
Proposed Ecological Areas in Forest Parks

Name	Area (ha)	Description
Rimutaka Forest Park		
Mt Matthews	1750	Includes a variety of forest types ranging from coastal communities to montane beech forest, in an exposed and tectonically highly unstable environment. Other aspects of interest are regeneration of forest after gale damage and burning, and plant succession on screens.
BawBaw	1750	Reserves forest with red beech at its southern limit and a large area of highland forest without beech.
Papatahi	2750	In the eastern Rimutaka Range contains rare black beech-silver beech forest.
Aorangi Forest Park		
Mt Barton	3500	Southern-most stands of red beech on the range. Unique extensive areas of black beech-silver beech forests with a peripheral low forest of mixed hardwoods.
Tauanui	2500	Altitudinal succession from podocarp-hardwood forest on the valley floor, up through black or red and silver beech dominated forest, with occasional podocarps on valley sides.
Tararua Forest Park		
Tauherenikau	1600	Lowland to montane forests of the dry southeastern ridge of the range.
Totara Creek	1200	Montane to sub-alpine vegetation of the mid eastern Tararua Range.
Penn Creek	1800	Altitudinal vegetation sequences on eastern and western sides of Penn Creek Catchment. There are different altitudinal sequences, red and silver beech forest on the eastern side, but no silver beech on the western side.
Ngawhakarara	1600	Low shrub-like forest, representative of southern Manawatu forests and is a remnant of a continuous tract of forest on the southern Ruahine and northern Tararua Range.
Manakau	1600	Lowland hill country forest and provides a contrast to the typical beech forests of the southern Tararua Range.
Ruamahanga-Ohau	18500	This area protects a number of special areas. Beech-gap forests occur in the north of this area where beech has been replaced by kamahi and podocarp forest. The treelines of these forests are lowered because kamahi has a lower altitude range than beech. Pink pine, which is rare in the range, is found within the area. Mt Kaiparoro is included because of its unusually low timberline and presence of red tussock growing below its normal minimum altitude. Area also includes evidence of glaciation in the heads of the Park Valley and Waiohine Valley.

The Department has been successfully using volunteers as hut wardens in Tararua Forest Park to attain high hut fee compliance and minimise vandalism. An added benefit of wardens is the improved visitor safety provided by their presence. This approach will continue, with greater emphasis being placed on wardens' contribution to informing visitors about the park and huts.

Roadends

Roadends are the main access points to the forest parks and have developed as visitor destinations in their own right. They are Holdsworth, Otaki Forks and Waiohine Gorge in Tararua Forest Park, and Catchpool Valley in

Rimutaka Forest Park. Visitor numbers have been increasing; facilities at Catchpool Valley, one of the most frequently visited sites, now require upgrading or replacement to cater for users and to protect the recreational experience and the area's natural and physical resources. Facilities at Waiohine Gorge were upgraded between 1990 and 1992; the toilet block at Otaki Forks was upgraded in 1993, and at Holdsworth, facilities were upgraded in 1994.

The Department will be focusing on developing recreation facilities and interpretation at roadends as they are areas a wide range of people can enjoy and gain an appreciation of the natural resources of the conservancy. The management approach and possible developments for the roadends are set out in Appendix 3.

Orongorongo Valley

This valley provides for high numbers of day users. Day users walk to the Orongorongo River from Catchpool Valley, to private baches, tramping and scouting club huts and five public huts (which can be booked for exclusive use by the public). In addition a research station operated by Landcare Research Ltd is located in the lower Orongorongo Valley. It is used as a base for the study of the ecology of native forests. [*refer Section 26.2.2, p 221*]

The easy walking access makes this an ideal location for inexperienced back-country visitors, especially family and school groups. Current demand for use of public huts is such that huts are booked each weekend. The Department will continue to manage the valley as a high-use site for these visitors, providing high standard facilities.

Access to the Orongorongo Valley in the forest park for vehicles is limited to seven annual "open weekends" for leaseholders of private baches to drive in via Orongorongo Station. Other private access for special events will be allowed by permit or licence. [*refer Sections 26.1, p215, and 27.4, p 246*] Continued vehicle access will be needed for leaseholders to maintain their baches. However road upkeep is expensive, and the Department will be investigating means to retain vehicle access and maintenance options for the 4 wheel drive road. The Department seeks to maintain this access as long as this is feasible. [*refer Appendix 3*]

The Landcare research station occupies part of the valley, by arrangement with the Department. The Department supports the work undertaken at the station, which contributes to understanding of the ecology of indigenous forests. Should Landcare vacate all or part of the station, the Department would investigate the feasibility of retaining the buildings for recreational and educational purposes.

Access to the Parks

Access across private land to parts of the forest parks is based on landowners' goodwill. Access for hunters is restricted in many such areas. The Department takes responsibility to inform park visitors of access agreements and rules at agreed access points. The Department will seek to legalise access routes across private land.

Public road access to the forest parks is most intensive around the southern half of Tararua Forest Park, providing Wellingtonians with ready access to the park. The Department has used the choice of access to provide a variety of back-country drive-in experiences, ranging from largely undeveloped to

highly developed. The Department, however, has no control over the standard of access roads. Otaki Forks would attract many more visitors than at present if road access were easier.

Roads to and within the forest parks provide a range of access for public vehicles. The Department aims to ensure vehicle access to major roadends (Otaki Forks, Waiohine, Holdsworth, Catchpool and Kaitoke) is maintained along with some other roads for 4-wheel drive access.

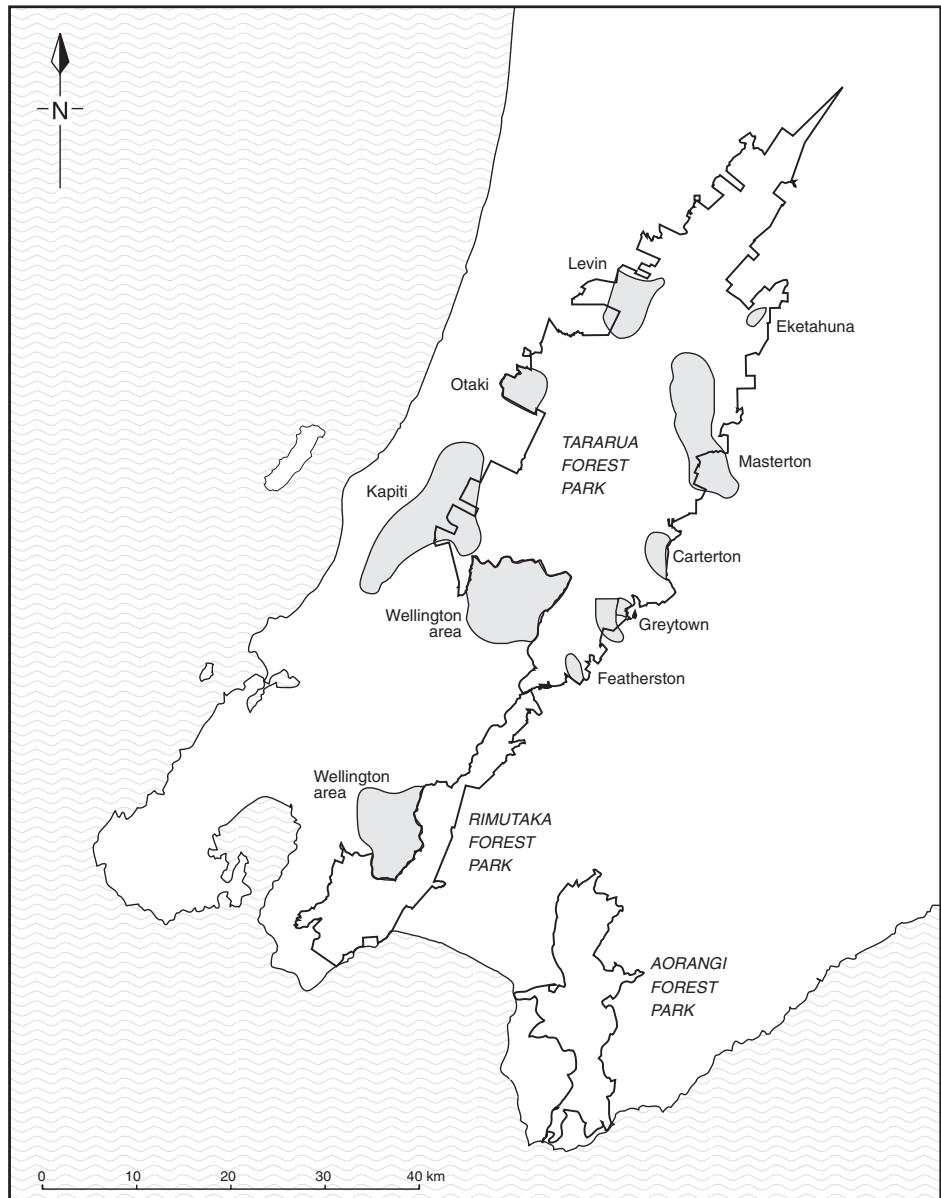
[refer Section 27.4.1, *Horses and Motorised Off-road Vehicles*, p 249]

Water Supply Areas

The Tararua and Rimutaka Forest Parks include the upper catchments of Waikanae, Otaki, Ohau, Hutt, Wainuiomata, Waiohine, Waingawa and Tauherenikau rivers, which provide water for urban areas in Wellington, Horowhenua, Kapiti Coast and Wairarapa [refer Map 33, below].

The Wellington Regional Council manages water supply areas of the Hutt, Wainuiomata and Orongorongo River catchments adjacent to the forest parks.

Map 33:
Water Supply Areas



The WRC water supply areas contain vegetation communities similar to those in the forest parks. Some of these communities are excellent representative vegetation communities with high conservation values. Although public access is not allowed at present, the areas have the potential to provide recreational opportunities. Modern water treatment will reduce the risks to public health from public access.

The Department acknowledges the importance of the parks for water supply and the benefits of its management, particularly animal pest control, to maintaining the condition of the catchments within and beyond the park boundaries. The management of the adjacent water supply areas and the retention of their indigenous forest also benefit the forest parks. Ecological connections will be recognised in management of the forest parks, and in advocacy in relation to the management of the water supply catchments.

The Department considers public access can be compatible with the protection of natural resources and water supply and will be advocating water supply areas be managed to facilitate recreation in addition to providing good quality water.

Extensions

Tararua and Rimitaka Forest Parks are almost continuous, separated only by Rimitaka Saddle Road and private land. The NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust owns a block adjoining the northeast boundary of Rimitaka Forest Park. The block has an Open Space Covenant over it – providing a protected natural link between the forest parks. Access tracks to both Rimitaka and Tararua Forest Parks begin at the summit of the Rimitaka Saddle Road. Protection of land through the Rimitaka Saddle which has regenerating vegetation is a high priority.

Priority areas for protection in both Tararua and Aorangi Ecological Districts are lowland hill country natural areas with good connections to the forest parks. However these areas are a low priority for protection within the Conservancy. [refer Table 9, p 166]

Aorangi (Haurangi) Forest Park

Since the southern portion of the Aorangi Range was gazetted in 1900 as Haurangi State Forest, the Park has been extended and now includes most of the range.

The Department has decided to change the name of the park from Haurangi Forest Park to Aorangi Forest Park to reflect the original name given by tangata whenua to the range the park protects. The Park is held under section 61(2) of the Conservation Act.

Conservation Management Plans

All forest parks have management plans prepared for them under the Forests Act 1949: Haurangi 1977–1987, Rimitaka 1982–92, and Tararua 1990–2000. The Tararua Plan is an exception, having been prepared under sections 26 and 63(c) of the Forests Act but approved under the Conservation Act. The Department will not be preparing Conservation Management Plans for the parks, as the CMS provides sufficient detail for management. The CMS will be the primary planning document for the parks, and its provisions will take precedence over the earlier management plans.

Objectives

- 1 Conservation of the natural and historic resources, in particular threatened ecosystems or species, and subject to:
- 2 Facilitation of public recreation and enjoyment.
- 3 Management of the parks in a manner which is consistent with sound water and soil conservation principles and which will protect habitat of freshwater native fish.
- 4 Increased public awareness of the natural and historic resources, recreational opportunities and management issues in forest parks.
- 5 Co-operative working relationships with tangata whenua on management of resources significant to them.
- 6 Participation of recreation and other user groups, conservation groups and local government in management of the forest parks.
- 7 Improved understanding of natural and historic resources present.

Implementation*Ecological Areas*

- 1 Seek to gazette proposed ecological areas and other appropriate areas as Ecological Areas under section 21 of the Conservation Act 1991 in recognition of their natural values and their priority for animal pest control.

Animal Pests

- 2 Undertake animal pest control in accordance with Conservancy priorities, for species and areas. [*refer Table 11, p 186*]
- 3 Continue to offer licences to commercial hunting operations in Tararua Forest Park to complement Departmental and recreational hunting.
- 4 Continue to promote recreational hunting in the forest parks, especially in the Aorangi Forest Park Recreational Hunting Area subject to achieving pest control objectives.
- 5 Erect and maintain fences on boundaries of the forest parks, where domestic stock are adversely affecting natural and historic resources.

Recreation Facilities

- 6 Maintain and upgrade as necessary the core network of huts and tracks in the forest parks in accordance with the directions outlined in Appendix 3: Recreation Facilities.
- 7 Continue to manage back country huts in consultation with Tararua-Aorangi Huts Committee. [*refer Section 27, p 231*]
- 8 Maintain and enhance major roadends within the forest parks, in accordance with the directions outlined in Appendix 3: Recreation Facilities.
- 9 Prepare a site plan for Orongorongo Valley in Rimutaka Forest Park to guide development of picnic and camping sites, and other recreational facilities.
- 10 Prepare site plans for Holdsworth and Otaki Forks in Tararua Forest Park and Catchpool Valley in Rimutaka Forest Park to guide upgrading and development.
- 11 Continue to seek volunteers to assist as Hut Wardens at high-use huts and to provide separate accommodation as appropriate for them.
- 12 Advocate the maintenance of vehicle access to the major roadends which are outside areas managed by the Department, and maintain vehicle access to roadends within the forest parks.

- Access* 13 Seek to improve public access into forest parks, particularly access to Aorangi (Forest Park) and northwest Tararua Forest Park in consultation with landowners.
- 14 Inform visitors of access arrangements and any restrictions on access.
- Public Awareness* 15 Maintain existing interpretation and visitor information of natural and historic resources of the parks and recreational opportunities and facilities available and to investigate new initiatives including opportunities for community involvement in management.
- Water Supply Catchments* 16 Advocate Hutt, Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water supply catchments be managed to protect their natural resources and to provide recreational opportunities for the public.
- 17 Authorities applying for permission to use catchments in the parks will be required to submit an EIA of their proposal and the following matters will be considered by the Department:
- Whether an alternative exists outside the park.
 - Whether the existing water reticulation system operates efficiently.
 - That the water supply does not limit public use.
 - That any natural or historic resources are not adversely affected.
 - The Department will consult with the Wellington Conservation Board concerning such applications
- Extensions* 18 Seek to extend legal protection of areas which link the Tararua and Rimutaka Forest Parks near the Rimutaka Saddle.
- Monuments* 19 Consider requests to erect monuments on their individual merits.
- Landcare* 20 Investigate feasibility of retaining the Landcare buildings in Rimutaka Forest Park if they become vacant.
- Tangata Whenua* 21 Consultation with tangata whenua to identify their interests.
- Aorangi Forest Park* 22 Publicise the name change of Haurangi Forest Park to Aorangi Forest Park, and change signs and publicity material.

Other sections which contain explanation, objectives and implementation particularly relevant to the forest parks are:

- Section 14.4: Taking Plants and Animals, p 151
- Section 15: Historic Resources: Table 7, p158 and Table 8, p 159
- Section 20: Animal Pest Control, p 183
- Section 24: Research, Survey, Monitoring and Information Management, p 203
- Section 26: Uses of Areas Managed by the Department, p 215
- 26.1 Recreation/Tourism Concessions, p 215
- 26.2.1 Grazing, p 219
- 26.2.2 Private Baches, p 221
- 26.2.3 Easements, p 223
- 26.2.4 Military Use, p 224
- 26.2.6 Exotic Forestry, p 226

Section 27: Recreation

- 27.4 Managing Recreational Impacts, p 246
 - 27.4.1 Activities, p 247
 - Dogs*, p 248
 - Horses and Motorised Off-Road Vehicles*, p 249
 - Mountain Bikes*, p 249
 - Helicopters*, p 250
 - Recreational Hunting*, p 251
 - Game Bird Hunting*, p 251
 - 27.5 *Environmental Care Code*, p 252
- Appendix Three: Recreation Facilities*