

Motueka Sandspit Scenic Reserve, Tasman – Summary of Survey Responses

Context

The Motueka sandspit has significant cultural, recreational and wildlife values, but sometimes these can be in conflict. We've previously identified some issues relating to the current classification and management of the reserve, and a range of options to address these, which were set out in [Motueka Sandspit Scenic Reserve: Issues and options \(PDF, 568K\)](#).

Over six weeks in September and October 2024, we sought feedback on these issues and options to help us decide how to manage the sandspit in the future. Specifically, we sought feedback on the following questions:

1. What do you value about the Motueka Sandspit? Why is it important to you?
2. What activities do you think should be enabled on the sandspit, and what activities should be restricted? Why?
3. What are your views on the issues that we've identified? Are there any other issues that should be considered?
4. What are your views on the options that we've identified? Are there other options that should be considered?
5. Which would be your preferred option and why?

A preliminary AI-assisted analysis of responses to these questions has now been completed, and the results of this are set out on the pages that follow.

Next Steps

We will be carrying out further analysis of the feedback and may contact submitters directly to discuss their comments further. We will then identify a preferred approach and test this with iwi, the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board and other stakeholders.

Contact

Lionel Solly, Senior Ranger, Community (Motueka), lsolly@doc.govt.nz.

Q1: What do you value about the Motueka Sandspit? Why is it important to you?

Key Themes

1. Ecology and Biodiversity:

- Many respondents value the Motueka Sandspit for its rich biodiversity and the presence of various bird species, including godwits, dotterel, and other native shorebirds.
- The area is seen as an important wildlife sanctuary, with a strong emphasis on the protection of native flora and fauna.

2. Cultural Significance:

- The sandspit holds cultural importance for mana whenua iwi, with respondents highlighting its role in their cultural narrative and heritage.

3. Recreational Use:

- The sandspit is a popular spot for recreational activities such as walking, dog walking, horse riding, picnicking, and fishing.
- Respondents appreciate the open spaces, scenic views, and the ability to engage in various outdoor activities.

4. Environmental Protection:

- There is a strong sentiment towards the need for protecting the sandspit from human and dog disturbances to preserve its ecological integrity.
- Some respondents express concerns about the impact of uncontrolled dogs on the bird population and the need for regulations to manage mixed-use areas.

5. Accessibility and Scenic Value:

- The sandspit is valued for its accessibility and the opportunity it provides for people of all ages to enjoy a natural environment close to home.
- The scenic beauty of the area, including views of Tasman Bay and the natural landscape, is highly appreciated.

6. Community and Social Interaction:

- The sandspit serves as a social space where people can meet, interact, and enjoy shared activities with their dogs and other community members.
- It is seen as a place that fosters a sense of community and connection with nature.

Summary

The Motueka Sandspit is highly valued for its ecological, cultural, and recreational significance. Respondents emphasize the importance of protecting its biodiversity and cultural heritage while also appreciating its role as a recreational and social space. The need for balanced management to ensure the protection of wildlife and the enjoyment of recreational activities is a recurring theme.

Q2: What activities do you think should be enabled on the sandspit, and what activities should be restricted? Why?

Key Themes

1. Activities to Enable:

- **Walking and Bird Watching:** Many respondents support walking and bird watching as suitable activities, emphasizing the importance of doing so respectfully to avoid disturbing wildlife.
- **Dog Walking:** There is a mixed opinion on dog walking. Some respondents support controlled dog walking in specific areas, while others suggest banning dogs entirely to protect bird habitats.
- **Horse Riding:** Some respondents are in favour of allowing horse riding, particularly below the high tide mark, while others are concerned about its impact on the environment.
- **Recreational Activities:** Activities such as swimming, picnicking, and fishing are generally supported, provided they do not disturb wildlife.

2. Activities to Restrict:

- **Motorized Vehicles:** There is a strong consensus against allowing motorized vehicles, including cars, quad bikes, and motorbikes, due to their potential to disturb wildlife and damage the environment.
- **Uncontrolled Dogs:** Many respondents suggest restricting or banning dogs, especially in areas where birds nest, to prevent disturbance and protect wildlife.
- **Human Disturbance:** Some respondents advocate for minimizing human disturbance by restricting access to certain areas, particularly those critical for bird nesting and roosting.

3. Environmental Protection:

- **Wildlife Sanctuary:** Several respondents emphasize the need to establish or maintain the sandspit as a wildlife sanctuary, prioritizing the protection of native flora and fauna.
- **Educational Signage:** There is a call for better educational signage to inform visitors about the importance of protecting wildlife and how to avoid disturbing sensitive areas.

4. Balancing Use and Protection:

- **Mixed-Use Regulation:** Some respondents suggest a balanced approach that allows for recreational use while implementing regulations to protect wildlife. This includes designated areas for different activities and clear guidelines for visitors.
- **Community Involvement:** Ensuring public access while encouraging responsible behaviour and community involvement in reporting bad behaviour is seen as important for the sandspit's protection.

Summary

The responses highlight a desire to balance recreational use of the Motueka Sandspit with the need to protect its ecological and cultural values. While activities like walking, bird watching, and controlled dog walking are generally supported, there is a strong call to restrict motorized vehicles and uncontrolled dogs to minimize disturbances to wildlife. Educational efforts and clear regulations are seen as essential to achieving this balance.

Q3: What are your views on the issues that we've identified? Are there any other issues that should be considered?

Key Themes

1. Support for Restrictions:

- **No Dogs and Vehicles:** Many respondents support banning dogs and motorized vehicles to protect the sandspit's wildlife and environment. However, there were diverse views about dogs and whether further restrictions should be imposed (see below).
- **Environmental Protection:** There is a strong emphasis on prioritizing the protection of native flora and fauna over recreational activities.

2. Dog Walking:

- **Diverse Opinions on Dog Walking:** There are mixed views on allowing dogs on the Motueka Sandspit. Some respondents are against dog walking on the sandspit due to concerns about disturbing wildlife, while others support it under certain conditions, such as restricting dog walking to specific areas or ensuring dogs are under control. A few respondents are in favour of allowing dog walking without restrictions.
- **Companion Dogs:** There is recognition of the importance of companion dogs for people's mental and emotional well-being, and some respondents advocate for accommodating dog walkers' needs.

3. Balancing Recreation and Conservation:

- **Recreational Use:** There is a desire to retain the sandspit as a recreational area for the benefit of as many activities and people as possible, while balancing this with conservation needs.
- **Mixed-Use Regulation:** Some respondents suggest a balanced approach that allows for recreational use while implementing regulations to protect wildlife. This includes designated areas for different activities and clear guidelines for visitors.
- **Community Access:** Ensuring public access while encouraging responsible behaviour and community involvement in reporting bad behaviour is seen as important for the sandspit's protection.

4. Need for Clear Regulations and Signage:

- **Educational Signage:** There is a call for better educational signage to inform visitors about the importance of protecting wildlife and how to avoid disturbing sensitive areas.
- **Enforcement:** Some respondents emphasize the need for active monitoring and enforcement of regulations, particularly regarding dog control and vehicle access.

5. Concerns About Future Changes:

- **Sandspit Movement and Sea Level Rise:** Some respondents express concerns about the future of the sandspit due to predicted movement and sea level rise.
- **Changing Morphology:** The changing shape of the sandspit affects how birds use the area, and this should be a central consideration in management decisions.

6. Other Issues:

- **Kayaks and Watercraft:** Some respondents mention the impact of kayaks and other watercraft on the sandspit, particularly in areas where birds are present.

Summary

The responses highlight a range of views on the issues identified, with a strong emphasis on protecting the sandspit's ecological and cultural values. While there is support for restricting certain activities, such as dog walking and vehicle access, there is also a desire to balance recreational use with conservation efforts. Clear regulations, educational signage, and active enforcement are seen as essential to achieving this balance.

Q4: What are your views on the options that we've identified? Are there other options that should be considered?

Key Themes

1. Support for Options that Protect Wildlife:

- **Wildlife Protection:** Many respondents support options that prioritize wildlife protection, such as declaring the area a sanctuary or wildlife reserve.

2. Concerns About Dog and Vehicle Access:

- **Dog Restrictions:** Several respondents emphasize the need to restrict or control dog access to protect wildlife, particularly during sensitive periods like the godwit season.
- **Vehicle Access:** There is strong support for preventing vehicle access to the sandspit to avoid disturbances and damage.
- **Enforcement:** Some respondents emphasize the need for active monitoring and enforcement of regulations, particularly regarding dog control and vehicle access.

3. Balancing Recreation and Conservation:

- **Mixed-Use Regulation:** Some respondents suggest an approach that allows for recreational use while implementing regulations to protect wildlife. This includes designated areas for different activities and clear guidelines for visitors.
- **Public Access:** Ensuring public access while encouraging responsible behaviour and community involvement in reporting bad behaviour is seen as important for the sandspit's protection.

4. Need for Clear Communication and Signage and Enforcement:

- **Clear Communication:** There is a consensus that any chosen option should be clearly communicated to the public to gain maximum support.
- **Educational Signage:** There is a call for better educational signage to inform visitors about the importance of protecting wildlife and how to avoid disturbing sensitive areas.

5. Alternative Options:

- **Viewing Platforms:** Some respondents suggest creating viewing platforms to allow people to enjoy the sandspit without disturbing wildlife.
- **Boardwalks:** The idea of building boardwalks to manage human access and protect nesting sites is also mentioned.

6. Other Considerations:

- **Cost and Feasibility:** Some respondents express concerns about the cost and feasibility of re-surveying the sandspit and implementing new regulations.
- **Changing Environment:** The dynamic nature of the sandspit, including its movement and changing morphology, is highlighted as a factor that complicates management decisions.

Summary

The responses highlight a range of views on the options identified, with a strong emphasis on protecting the sandspit's ecological and cultural values. While there is support for restricting certain activities, such as dog walking and vehicle access, there is also a desire to balance recreational use with conservation efforts. Clear regulations, educational signage, and active enforcement are seen as essential to achieving this balance. Additionally, alternative options like viewing platforms and boardwalks are suggested to enhance visitor experience while protecting wildlife.

Q5: Which would be your preferred option (and why)?

The most popular options from the discussion document were:

1. **Option vi:** Re-survey and Proclamation as a wildlife sanctuary, wildlife refuge, or wildlife management area under the Wildlife Act 1953. This option is mentioned multiple times and is favoured for its potential to increase protection for wildlife, enable improved enforcement, and provide clarity over the area's status. Respondents favouring this option believe that native fauna and flora need all the help and protection they can get due to declining numbers worldwide. It is also noted that if the area is classed as internationally significant, it should be fully protected to maintain New Zealand's reputation for conservation.
2. **Reclassification and Signage:** Several responses support reclassifying the sandspit to define significant areas and using education, engagement, and signage to protect wildlife. This includes changing the classification to a scenic reserve under s19(1)(a) of the Reserves Act or adopting different classifications for different parts of the sandspit.
3. **Nature Reserve or Government Purpose Reserve:** Turning the spit into a Nature Reserve or Government Purpose Reserve (Wildlife Refuge) under s.20 or s.22 of the Reserves Act is another popular option. These classifications are seen as a way to provide stronger protection for the area.
4. **Status Quo with Improvements:** Some respondents prefer leaving the current access and dog regulations as they are, with improvements such as better signage and enforcement to prevent disturbances from recreational vehicles and quad bikes.
5. **Different Classifications for Different Parts of the Sandspit:** A few responses support the northern part of the sandspit being classified as a wildlife refuge (allowing some human use) and the southern part as a wildlife sanctuary (with more restricted human access). This approach is seen as a way to balance human use with higher protection for birds.

The preferences generally reflect a strong emphasis on protecting the sandspit's ecological and cultural values while balancing conservation efforts with recreational use.