



BATTLE HILL FARM FOREST PARK NEWSLETTER 2

Battle Hill Management Plan Review

About the park



Battle Hill Farm Forest Park is the smallest of the Greater Wellington (GW) regional parks with a total land area of 502 ha. It is situated in the Horokiri Valley accessed off the Paekakariki Hill Rd, 6 km north of Pauatahanui. The park's terrain encompasses rolling land in the valley floor that stretches up into the surrounding hills, and extends to the Puketiro forest boundary.

Various tributaries of the Horokiri Stream cross the park dissecting the high steep hills to the east of the park which deposit gravel and silt into the valley floor below. These hills are covered in plantation forestry with a small remnant of native lowland forest located on the lower face; the remainder of the park is in pasture.

Battle Hill has a rich history, being the place of a fierce battle between Ngati Toa and colonial forces in 1846, hence its name. It is also one of the last remaining extensive pastoral properties in the area, preserving the land use patterns established in the area a century ago.

The park attracts thousands of visitors every year who come to enjoy walking, mountain biking, horse riding, picnicking and camping. It provides a unique opportunity to visit an operational productive farming unit. Hundreds of school children, community groups and corporate groups visit and participate in its upkeep each year.

What makes Battle Hill Farm Forest Park special?

When thinking about the future management of the park and considering the draft management plan it is important to think about the features that make Battle Hill special. These are the values that have been identified:

- Public access to an operational farm
- Walking and cycling tracks in wide open spaces
- Historical significance
- 33 hectare native bush remnant
- Wetland restoration
- The Ken Gray Education Centre
- Remnant of colonial land use; including the traditional style of buildings and plantings
- Link with the Akatarawa Forest
- Swimming and picnic spots

Management plan review

Management plans are agreements between Greater Wellington and the community about how a regional park will be managed. This management plan is required under the Local Government Act 1974. The current management plan for Battle Hill Farm Forest Park was written in 1992 and is now being reviewed.

Greater Wellington approved the Regional Parks Network Management Plan in 2003. This sets out the overarching direction and management framework for all regional parks. The Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Management Plan will provide the detailed management guidelines for the park consistent with the direction set in the Network Plan and consistent with the provisions of the Local Government Act.

The review process

We are in the second phase of the management planning review. It is important to us that the plan lives up to your expectations and that we address your concerns.

During the first phase of the review, we received 29 submissions as part of the initial round of consultation. Many of the comments reflected a high level of satisfaction with the park and the ranging service. The availability of open space, the sense of tranquillity and easily accessible family camping were noted as positives.

There were also requests for further infrastructure and to accommodate more recreation activities in the park by providing more tracks and extending 4WD opportunities.

Council considered the submissions in June 2006 and, taking into account the submissions that had been received, the draft plan is now available for public comment.

If you have any comments, suggestions or concerns about the park or the planning process, we would like to hear your views. You can do that by sending us your comments on the draft plan by **5pm on the 13 April 2007**.

There will also be an opportunity to present your submission to the Council at a hearing to be held later this year.

Public meeting

A public meeting will be held on **28 March 2007, 7:30-9pm** at Anchor Church, 1 Joseph Banks Drive, Whitby to discuss issues to do with the draft plan with staff and councillors, and to clarify the process for making submissions.

Key issues for the park

GW has received feedback about the park over recent years and through the initial round of consultation. These issues are likely to be debated as part of this round of consultation. These key issues include:

- The impact Transmission Gully, a proposed windfarm in the Puketiro Forest and logging of plantation forests within the park will have on the park's character.
- Should interpretation of the significant historical clash between Iwi and colonial forces be developed and displayed in the park?
- Whether to classify the park as a Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977
- Whether formal protection of the "bush reserve" area is desired
- Whether there is a place for other activities in the park, including commercial activities
- How the different values of the park should be promoted

We are also consulting with Porirua City Council, the Department of Conservation and Iwi about the draft management plan.

Farewell to John Bissell

I have been asked to pen a few words and thoughts on my time as the Battle Hill Ranger. I really enjoyed my time there and things are certainly a bit different than when I started. The cottage had a low fence around it - it was like living in a goldfish bowl. These days it is a nicer and more private place to live.

The farm needed work and a lot of fencing, fertilising, roading and weed control has made it something to be proud of. Norm the lessee farmer is a good source of advice on how we could improve the farm. He is also good on politics, the state of the nation and the current performance of the All Blacks/ Black Caps! I learned a lot.

From when I first arrived we started to look at how we could enhance the natural environment. The streams were fenced and planted with natives to increase biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of farming. One of the most satisfying things for me was restoring wetland areas on the property.

Along with restoration work a lot has been done on weed and pest control. In 1997 you couldn't walk a metre in the bush reserve without seeing possum poo. There was almost no forest understorey. These days you would be lucky to find a possum and the understorey is well over head height now.

With the improvements and since Project Pateke began two years ago the birds are back. One day I would like to see Brown Teal released in the park. All wildlife is now benefiting from the intensive predator control that volunteers are carrying out – that's a result I am really proud and would like to thank all those involved.

Battle Hill has given me a unique opportunity to observe people and I have seen the best and worst of them. There have certainly been times when I have been left shaking my head at what some people do. On the flip side there are some quality people out there and it is thanks to those behind the scenes that BH is what it is today.

So to the future; it is places like BH and all the parks and forests that are so vital to the health of our community. GW is to be commended for its attitude of preserving and enhancing these areas for future generations.

To everyone I have met and worked with over the years at BH, thanks and stay in touch. I wish you all the best.

John

Further information

For more information about the park and its values see:

- The current Battle Hill Farm Forest Management Plan
- The Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Plan resource information
- The Regional Parks Network Plan
- The GW website www.gw.govt.nz. Search under the key words "Battle Hill Management Plan"

These documents are available at GW offices and at public libraries.

If you do not want a copy of this newsletter sent in the future please contact Eloise Page on 04 802 0327 or email Eloise.page@gw.govt.nz

Send us your comments

Please send your comments or suggestions on the draft management plan to: Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Management Plan
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