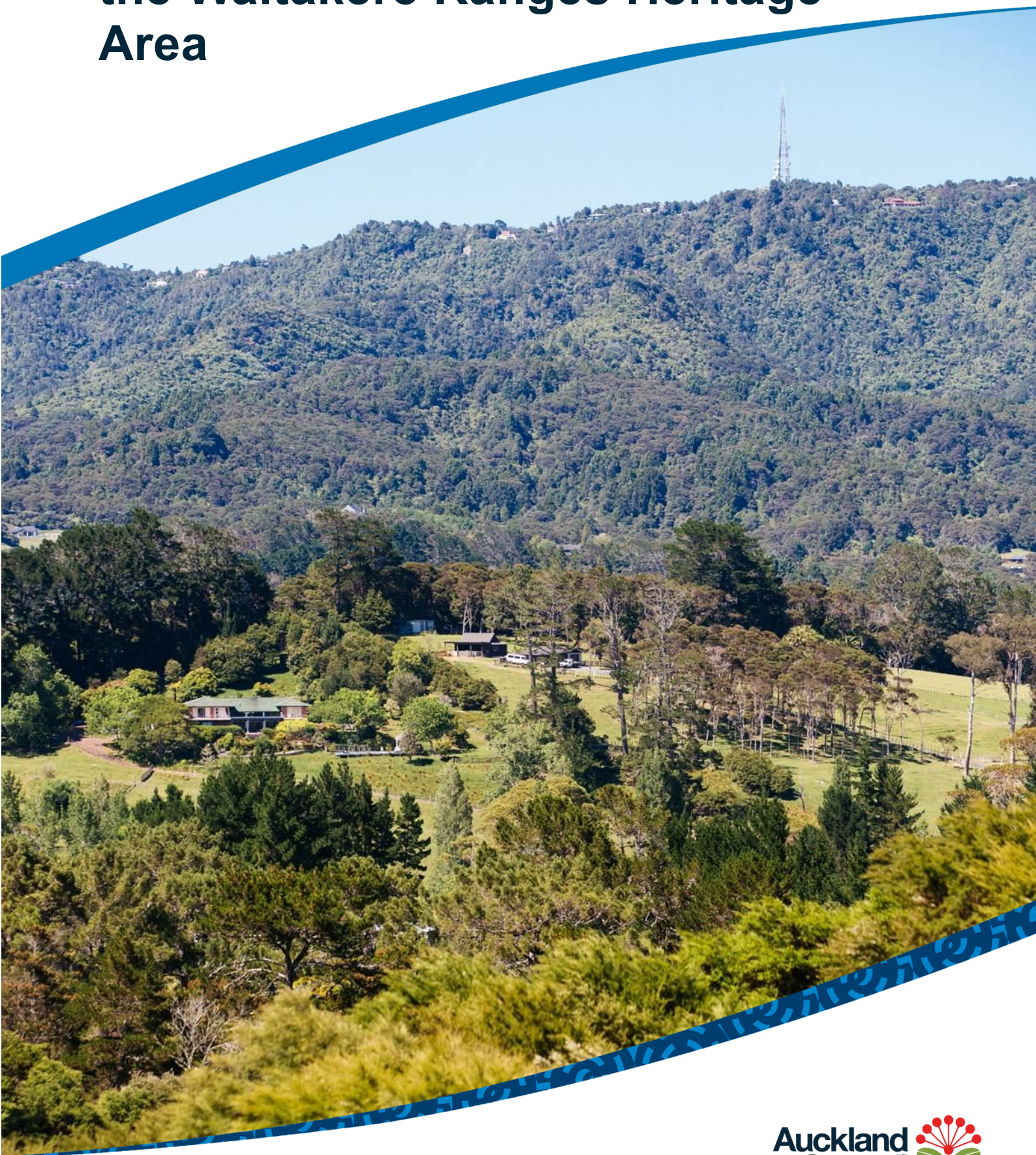


# A guide to the heritage features of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area



# The Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area



## The Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008: a guide to the heritage features

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The purpose of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act (the Act) is to recognise the national, regional and local significance of the heritage area and to promote the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations.

The heritage features are those things that individually or collectively contribute to the significance of the heritage area. The features include ecosystems, landscapes and landforms, the human culture of the heritage area both past and present, the regional park and the water catchment and supply system.

The purpose of this guide is to help you identify and understand the different heritage features, especially when you are considering development (including subdivision) within or adjoining the heritage area.

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### Development in or adjoining the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area

The Act does not in itself generate any requirements for resource consent but relies on the Auckland Unitary Plan to determine whether a consent is required.

When making a decision on your resource consent application for development (including subdivision) in the heritage area, the Act requires council to:

- have **particular regard** to the purpose of the Act and the relevant objectives for non-complying or discretionary activity resource consent applications
- **consider** the purpose of the Act and the relevant objectives as if they were listed as 'matters for discretion' in the Auckland Unitary Plan for restricted discretionary or controlled activity resource consent applications.

All resource consent applications require an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE), not just those in the heritage area. An AEE is a written statement which identifies the effects of your proposed activity or activities on the environment, so the council can assess the likely environmental effects of the proposal. See the council website for general information on preparing an AEE: <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz>.

For resource consent applications within or adjoining the heritage area, your AEE should also:

- identify the relevant heritage features within or adjoining the subject site. Section 7 of the Act lists the heritage features. These are summarised in this guide.
- identify the relevant objectives from Section 8 of the Act, noting that Objectives 8(a), 8(b), 8(c) and 8(d) will always be relevant and the consideration of other objectives will depend on the location and type of activity
- provide an assessment of the proposal and its effects in relation to the relevant objectives, to evaluate how those objectives are achieved. This guide identifies what some of the potential adverse effects could be for the different heritage features.

The Act can be read in full at the following link:

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/local/2008/0001/latest/DLM1076035.html>

## What are the heritage features?

Section 7 of the Act lists the heritage features (a) – (n). In summary these include:

- the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character
- the different classes of natural landforms and landscapes
- the coastal areas
- the natural functioning streams of the eastern foothills
- the quietness and darkness of the Waitākere Ranges and coastal parts of the area
- the visual backdrop to the Auckland Metropolitan Area
- the heritage area's wilderness experience and recreational opportunities
- the eastern foothills
- the subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape
- historical, traditional and cultural relationships
- evidence of past human activities
- the heritage area's distinctive local communities
- the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park
- the public water catchment and supply system.

This guide sets out each of these heritage features below and highlights potential adverse effects that may occur as a result of subdivision and/or development.

## The terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character

- 7(2)(a) it's terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character that—
- (i) include large continuous areas of primary and regenerating lowland and coastal rainforest, wet land, and dune systems with intact ecological sequences:
  - (ii) have intrinsic value:
  - (iii) provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna:
  - (iv) collect, store, and produce high quality water:
  - (v) provide opportunities for ecological restoration:
  - (vi) are of cultural, scientific, or educational interest:
  - (vii) have landscape qualities of regional and national significance:
  - (viii) have natural scenic beauty.

While small areas of unmodified forests remain in the heritage area, most of the forested area is regenerating through natural processes. The area is valuable for its beauty, intrinsic value, size and the number of complete ecosystems. This includes areas of contiguous indigenous vegetation that go from the coast, into the inland hills and up into the Waitākere Ranges.

Potential adverse effects of development on these heritage features include:

- reduction of indigenous vegetation and biodiversity
- degradation, fragmentation or loss of habitat
- reduction in the heritage area's ability to regenerate
- increase in number of pest plants and pest animals
- spread of kauri dieback disease.

## The different classes of natural landforms and landscapes

7(2)(b) the different classes of natural landforms and landscapes within the area that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character

The distinctive character of the heritage area is in large part due to its striking and varied landforms and landscapes. Landforms are physical features such as ridges and valleys while landscapes are an expanse of scenery that can be seen in a single view.

## Landforms

The landforms of the heritage area include the Waitākere Ranges which are the remnants of the uplifted and eroded Waitākere volcano, the coast with its steep cliffs and dune systems, stream valleys and the slopes of the eastern foothills.

Potential adverse effects of development on these landforms include:

- increase in erosion and subsidence
- removal of rock, soil or vegetation
- reduction of the integrity of the heritage features.

## Landscapes

The rural landscapes (such as the eastern foothills) of the heritage area consist of pastoral areas and sparse settlement where natural features dominate. The landscape contains elements of indigenous and exotic vegetation, such as bush and plantation forestry.

The coastal landscapes (including the West Coast, Manukau Harbour and coastal villages) have a sense of natural variety, wildness and openness. Houses are generally low level, with wide yards and extensive planting. The natural elements of the landscape dominate the human-made features.

The bush landscapes (including Laingholm, Titirangi and the upper eastern foothills) contain winding roads along prominent ridgelines, buildings that merge into the extensive bush areas, areas of sparse population with some more intensive settlement and a feeling of peaceful quietness despite proximity to the city.

Potential adverse effects of development on these landscapes include:

- dominance of human-made structures over natural elements
- loss of views of the different landscapes
- encroachment of settlements
- reduction of indigenous vegetation
- diminishment of the physical features that are crucial to people's appreciation of the heritage area.

## The coastal areas

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 7(2)(c) | the coastal areas, which—                 |
| (i)     | have a natural and dynamic character; and |
| (ii)    | contribute to the area's vistas; and      |
| (iii)   | differ significantly from each other.     |

The coastal areas of the heritage area are varied and complex and include the west coast from Te Henga (Bethells Beach) to the Manukau Heads and the coastal and estuarine areas from Whatipu to Green Bay.

Landscape elements of the west coast (from Te Henga (Bethells Beach) to Manukau Heads) include patterns of dunes, beaches, streams, lagoons, ridges, headlands, cliffs, islands and coastal forests.

Landscape elements of the Manukau Harbour coast (from Whatipu to Green Bay) include patterns of tidal flats, cliffs and headlands, estuaries and coastal forest.

Potential adverse effects of development in coastal areas include:

- increase in dominance of the built environment over the natural environment
- loss of vegetation especially mature coastal pōhutukawa that provide a sense of cohesion at a suitable scale
- loss of the sense of wilderness, quietness and isolation
- increase in quantity of pest plants
- reduction in water quality, especially in the lagoons
- increase in coastal erosion
- deterioration in the amenity of the areas.

### The natural functioning streams of the eastern foothills

7(2)(d) the naturally functioning streams that rise in the eastern foothills and contribute positively to downstream urban character, stormwater management, and flood protection

The streams of the eastern foothills (Oratia, Opanuku and Swanson Streams) originate in the Waitākere Ranges and drain into the Waitematā Harbour. The reference to 'natural functioning' relates to the fact that these are some of the few remaining natural watercourses in the heritage area, the other main streams in the Waitākere Ranges having been dammed for water supply purposes.

The streams have intrinsic value but also provide important ecological functions. Their vegetated margins prevent contaminants from entering the streams, alleviate flooding and contribute to the amenity of the urban areas.

Potential adverse effects of development on the streams of the eastern foothills include:

- loss of ecological linkages and biodiversity
- increase in quantity of pest plants
- reduction in water quality

- deterioration in the amenity of the areas around the streams.

### **The quietness and darkness of the Waitākere Ranges and coastal parts of the area**

7(2)(e) the quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges and the coastal parts of the area

Other than Titirangi and the eastern boundary of the heritage area, the area has low levels of street lighting and a subservience of built environments to rural, bush and coastal landscapes. Houses are screened by bush which minimises the extent to which lighting is visible at night. These factors, along with the size of the undeveloped parklands contribute to a relatively dark night sky and an impression of sparse settlement.

Activities that might impact upon the darkness of the area include increased development and a decrease in vegetation so that house lights are not screened, increased street lighting and brightly lit activities.

Potential adverse effects of development on the characteristic quietness and darkness of the heritage area include:

- increase of traffic volume or speed
- increase of noisy activities
- reduction of visibility of dark night sky.

### **The visual backdrop to the Auckland Metropolitan Area**

7(2)(f) the dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline

The Waitākere Ranges forms a striking backdrop to the western skyline of the city. The ridgelines are relatively undeveloped and buildings generally have a low profile. However houses that stand out from the bush or are overly prominent on the ridgelines because of their size and colour and the removal of vegetation, diminish the naturalness of the landform.

Potential adverse effects of development on this visual backdrop include:

- visual deterioration where buildings and other structures intrude upon, and dominate, the natural landform through inappropriate design, location, colour or materials.



## The heritage area's wilderness experience and recreational opportunities

7(2)(g) the opportunities that the area provides for wilderness experiences, recreation, and relaxation in close proximity to metropolitan Auckland

The Waitākere Ranges, and in particular the regional park and the west coast beaches, are popular destinations for local and greater Auckland residents and visitors. They are also popular locations for filming and outdoor adventure activities.

The regional park covers approximately 60 per cent of the heritage area. Local parks and reserves also contribute to recreational opportunities.

The Regional Parks Management Plan 2010 controls visitor activity within the Regional Park.

Potential adverse effects on opportunities for wilderness experience, recreation and relaxation in the heritage area include:

- a loss of amenity for local residents due to increased number of users and activities
- reduction of wilderness experience
- increase of pressure on infrastructure such as roads, car parks and septic tanks and damage to ecosystems and tracks
- spread of kauri dieback disease.

## The eastern foothills

7(2)(h) the eastern foothills, which—

- (i) act as a buffer between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coasts; and
- (ii) provide a transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast

The eastern foothills can be separated into upper and lower foothills. The upper foothills include Titirangi and Laingholm, upper Opanuku and Oratia, displaying a strong connection with the Waitākere Ranges through their elevation above the urban areas of the city and the extent of their native vegetation.

The lower foothills are less steep, with remnant pockets of vegetation, and retain their visual connection to the Waitākere Ranges through their rural character.

From an ecological viewpoint, the eastern foothills buffer the Waitākere Ranges from the environmental effects (such as pest plant and animal pests) of the more densely populated

metropolitan Auckland. A variety of landscapes merge into one another, providing a visual transition from urban Waitākere to the Waitākere Ranges.

Potential adverse effects on the buffering and transitional functions of the eastern foothills include:

- visually obtrusive development introducing urban elements into the rural landscapes,
- removal of streamside vegetation and loss of rural land uses leading to pressure for subdivision.

### **The subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape**

7(2)(i) the subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape, which is reflected in—

- (i) the individual identity and character of the coastal villages and their distinctive scale, containment, intensity, and amenity; and
- (ii) the distinctive harmony, pleasantness, and coherence of the low density residential and urban areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings; and
- (iii) the rural character of the foothills to the east and north and their intricate pattern of farmland, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas, indigenous vegetation, and dispersed low density settlement with few urban scale activities:

'Subservience' refers to the extent to which the settlements of the heritage area nestle into their surrounding environment, rather than appearing superimposed upon it. Maintaining this subservience requires careful management of subdivision and development.

The coastal villages exhibit individual identity and character through their scale, form and intensity of development. The villages are contained within the landscape and are generally dominated by natural elements.

Subservience is particularly evident in the bush clad areas of Laingholm, Titirangi and the upper eastern foothills. Steep slopes and unstable land require a particular style of housing, generally pole houses, rather than suburban style development.

In the lower foothills the rural character is provided by the pattern of properties on spacious lots, farms, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas and native bush.

Potential adverse effects on this feature include:

- loss of views, especially of rural landscape
- development that dominates its surroundings through inappropriate size, location, colour and reflectivity and vegetation removal.

## Historical, traditional and cultural relationships

7(2)(j) the historical, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities, and tangata whenua with the area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship

The historical, traditional and cultural relationships of people, communities and tangata whenua are recorded in written and oral history and in the physical evidence of that relationship. Ngāti Whātua and Te Kawerau ā Maki have both issued resource management statements setting out their key concerns. Deeds of acknowledgement (section 29 of the Act) may be used in the future to acknowledge the historical, cultural or spiritual relationships of tangata whenua with public land within the heritage area.

The history of the coastal villages such as Te Henga (Bethells Beach), Piha, Huia and Cornwallis, established to service farming, milling, infrastructure and recreation, has been extensively recorded. Farming and orchards thrived in the foothills for many years, and that rural character endures despite changes in land use.

Potential adverse effects of development on these relationships include:

- lack of consultation on resource management issues and lack of provision for cultural and spiritual values in decision-making
- degradation of sites or impacted upon by visitor activity or by pest plants and animals.

## Evidence of past human activities

7(2)(k) the evidence of past human activities in the area, including those in relation to timber extraction, gum digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, quarrying, extensive farming, and water impoundment and supply

This refers to the physical evidence of both pre-colonial Māori settlement (dating back approximately 1,000 years) and settlement from colonial and later immigrants.

Any pre-1900 archaeological site is protected by the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Heritage New Zealand maintains a list that identifies New Zealand's significant and valued historical and cultural heritage places.

Three schedules in the Auckland Unitary Plan include cultural heritage sites, places and items that may also be heritage features. These schedules are:

- Historic Heritage (Schedule 14)
- Sites and Places of Significance to Mana Whenua (Schedule 12)
- Notable Trees (Schedule 10).

The council's Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) database also contains information on cultural heritage places and items within the heritage area.

Potential adverse effects of development on the history and culture of the heritage area include:

- destruction or modification of heritage places and consequent loss of heritage values
- inappropriate development adjacent to heritage places.

### The heritage area's distinctive local communities

7(2)(l) its distinctive local communities

There are a number of distinctive rural, coastal, and low-density urban communities in the heritage area. Each has its own unique character, amenity and identity based on the historical and present-day development patterns. Local area plans are developed by council and local communities. They help to identify the heritage features for a given area and localise the objectives of the Act.

Local area plans have been prepared for the following areas:

- Waiatarua
- Muddy Creeks
- Henderson Valley / Opanuku
- Oratia
- Te Henga (Bethells Beach) / Waitākere River Valley.

Potential effects of development on the distinctive communities of the heritage area include:

- physical changes to the landscape such as removal of bush, sprawling development, construction of buildings that dominate their surroundings due to their size, location, materials or colour
- increased population and increased noise
- loss of public access.

### The Waitākere Ranges Regional Park

7(2)(m) the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resource

Acquisition and gifting of land since the late 19th century culminated in the creation of the approximately 18,000 hectares of regional parkland in the heritage area today.

Potential adverse effects on the park include:

- an increase in visitor numbers to a level where people's ability to access the park is limited, their enjoyment of the park decreases and the physical environment of the park suffers.

The Regional Parks Management Plan 2010 sets out Council's approach to managing activities in the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park.

### The public water catchment and supply system

7(2)(n) the public water catchment and supply system, the operation, maintenance, and development of which serves the people of Auckland

The five water supply dams and reservoirs in the regional park, operated by Watercare Services Ltd, provide 19 per cent of Auckland's bulk water and supply households in West Auckland, the City's south western suburbs, parts of the North Shore and Whangaparaoa/Orewa. Water supply in the heritage area comes not only from the dams but also from bores and streams.

Recent surveys of streams in the foothills and bush clad areas of the Waitākere Ranges have found that most have 'good' water quality.

Potential effects of development on water quality and quantity include:

- contamination of water ways through run off of sediment, sewage, stormwater and animal faeces
- degradation of the health and functioning of aquatic ecosystems through removal of riparian (streamside) vegetation, introduction of weeds and alteration of natural water courses
- cutting and clearance of bush and vegetation on and adjacent to water areas and within the coastal environment
- increase in the size and frequency of flood events.

## How are the ‘heritage features’ managed in the Auckland Unitary Plan?

The Auckland Unitary Plan uses a variety of methods to manage effects on the heritage features. Some methods apply only to the heritage area and include the:

- Rural – Waitākere Ranges Zone
- Rural – Waitākere Foothills Zone
- Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Overlay
- Oratia Village Precinct
- Te Henga Precinct
- Bethells Precinct
- Wainamu Precinct

Other methods may also apply to the heritage area, and include but are not limited to the:

- Auckland-wide rules
- Residential – Large Lot Zone
- Open space zones
- Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Overlay
- Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONL) Overlay
- Ridgeline Protection Overlay
- Outstanding Natural Character (ONC) Overlay
- High Natural Character (HNC) Overlay
- Outstanding Natural Features (ONF) Overlay
- Notable Trees Overlay
- Historic Heritage Overlay.

A significant part of the heritage area is covered by one or more of these overlays, in particular the SEA, ONL and Ridgeline Protection overlays.

Please check the Auckland Unitary Plan to find out what applies to your site and the surrounding areas. It can be viewed online at:

<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/unitaryplan>.

## Other useful information

- Building in the Bush Design Guide
- Waitākere Ranges Foothills Design Guide
- Local area plans for:
  - Waiaatarua
  - Muddy Creeks
  - Henderson Valley/Opanuku
  - Oratia
  - Te Henga (Bethells Beach)/Waitākere River Valley.

These can all be found on the council website at:

[www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz).



Photo source: Sean Shadbolt

Find out more: **phone 09 301 0101**  
or visit **[aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/)**