



REPORT WAITĀKERE CLOSURE AUDIT OCTOBER 2018

Introduction

This report has been compiled by the Waitākere Rāhui Team. Each track and track entrance in the Waitākere Ranges has been audited by a volunteer during September and October 2018. Signage, fencing, evidence of use, cleaning stations and condition of track (if open) have been assessed. A summary of the main findings is presented below. A detailed spreadsheet of all assessments can be provided on request.

Tracks not clear whether open or closed

A number of tracks were found where the auditor could not tell whether the track was supposed to be open or closed. In most cases there was no clear signage and no fencing. There was evidence that these tracks were being used (cars in carpark, visitors observed, track worn with use). **At least 14 of these tracks (Cutty Grass, Arthur Mead, Dreamlands, Parau, McElwain Loop, Whatitiri, Pipeline Track, Slip Track, Swanson Pipeline Track, Ferndown Track, Twin Peaks Track, Manchester Unity Block, Donald McLean Track, Kuitaika Track) are supposed to be closed** but were still open when audited.**

*McElwain Loop / Lookout Track is supposed to be closed but had no fence & had a poor quality cleaning station and signage relating to the cleaning station (not closure signage) present implying that it was open. Our auditor reported this to Council on the day she did the audit and we understand it has subsequently been closed.

** Ref: Auckland Council Waitakere Ranges Track List (attached)

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/environment/plants-animals/pests-weeds/Documents/waitakere-ranges-track-list.pdf>

***Whatitiri Track not only isn't closed (see photo) but has out of date signage showing all tracks are open into the Cascades.



Kuitaika Track (Anawhata Rd) also has out of date signage showing closed tracks as open (see photo). Huia Dam Road also has a similar sign implying most of the tracks in the area are open as does Lucy Cranwell Track at Piha & Donald McLean Track at Whatipu.



There are many other closed tracks where the fencing &/or signage is inadequate. The Auckland City Walk is an excellent example of this with just a low beam across the track, a closed sign but a cleaning station crate next to it - mixed messaging (see photo).



The Parau Track (Huia end) has a totally inadequate fence which has been broken down and the muddy track is clearly still being used heavily. This track leads off the Huia Dam Road which is still open and therefore should have all connecting tracks securely closed.



Track name	Official status	Signage	Fencing	Evidence of use
Ian Wells Track	Open	No	No	Yes
Cutty Grass Track (Anawhata Rd end)	Closed	No	No	Not stated
Cutty Grass Track (2 Ridge Rd access points)	Closed	No	No	Visitors observed
Firebreak Rd entry to Cornwallis Beach (2 entry points)	Open	No	No	Yes
Arthur Mead Track (Piha Rd end)	Closed	No	No	Not stated
Spragg Monument Track	Open	No	No	Visitors observed
Dreamlands Track (both ends)	Closed	No	No	Not stated
Parau Track (Huia end)	Closed	No	Inadequate, broken	Visitors observed (large numbers)
Parkinson Lookout Track	Not stated	No	No	Yes
*McElwain Loop / Lookout Track	Closed	Cleaning station signage	No	Not stated
Takapu Refuge Track (Muriwai)	Open	No	No	Visitors observed (large numbers)
Maori/Maukatia Bay Track (Muriwai)	Open	No	No	Cars in carpark
Edwin Mitchelson Track (Muriwai)	Open	No	No	Visitors observed

Lookout Track (Muriwai)	Open	No	No	Visitors observed
Quarry Track (Muriwai)	Open	No	No	Visitors observed
Te Henga Walkway (both ends)	Open	No	No	Visitors observed (large numbers)
Crusher Pipe Track (Huia)	Closed	Yes	No	Not stated
***Whatitiri Track (Cascades)	Closed	Open track signage present	No	Visitors observed
Pipeline Track (Pipeline Rd end)	Closed	No	No	Visitors observed
Slip Track (Pipeline Rd end)	Closed	No	No	Visitors observed
Swanson Pipeline Track (both ends)	Closed	Yes	No	Not stated
Ferndown Track (Opanuku Rd end)	Closed	No	No	Visitors observed
Twin Peaks Track	Closed	Yes	No	Visitors observed (large numbers)
Manchester Unity Block (Huia Rd end)	Closed	Yes	No	Not stated
Donald McLean Track	Closed	No	No	Visitors observed
Kuitaika Track (Anawhata Rd)	Closed	Yes - out of date	No	Not stated
Large Kauri Walk (Christian Rd)	Closed	Only on one entrance	No	Very large fallen tree on track, dangerous

Open tracks failing to meet Controlled Area Notice standard

Open tracks should have clear signage relating to the Controlled Area Notice and actions required to comply with it and why. They should also have a new in-ground cleaning station that has been made unavoidable. Tracks are only supposed to be open if the condition of their surface has been agreed with Te Kawerau ā Maki as being of a satisfactory engineering standard and complies with the Controlled Area Notice standard of “no soil on footwear”. The following open tracks had inadequate signage, inadequate cleaning stations &/or unsatisfactory surface conditions and therefore should be closed until they have been upgraded. Ambassadors were not seen on any of the open tracks except Arataki Lookout Track, Beveridge Track & Exhibition Drive at any time during this audit period which covered most weekends in September and October.

Track name	Signage	Cleaning station	Track condition	Comments by auditor
Upper Nihotupu Track	Yes	New	Loose gravel	Needs fresh gravel in places, clay base
Rose Track	No	No	Loose gravel, no engineered surface	Poor, exposed roots
Te Henga Walkway (both ends)	No	No	No engineered surface, loose gravel, exposed tree roots	Variety of surfaces. Mostly exposed soil or sand. New loose gravel added but already washed off
Anawhata Beach Track	No	No	Loose gravel, No engineered surface	Second part of track through Pohutukawa bush is exposed sandy soil
Cave Rock Track (Karekare)	Yes	No	Bad (needs attention), mud	Track is very neglected, muddy, debris over track and dangerous in places
Taraire Track (Karekare)	No	No	Loose gravel	Small areas of mud puddles
Pohutukawa Glade Walk (Karekare)	No	No	Mud, sand	Mainly dry with a few mud puddles

Pipeline Road, Parau	Yes	Yes	Loose gravel	Brushes old and worn. Tray full needs emptying. Where does dirty spore water go? Needs some gravel in places.
Lake Wainamu Track (Te Henga)	No	No	Boxed gravel, mud,	Exposed roots, mud on footwear
Kakamatua Beach Walk	Yes	Yes basic (has since been upgraded to a new one)	Boardwalk, Loose gravel, Mud	Signage very poor in the context of this track's high use, a dog walker doesn't relate to a picture of trumper. Needs a fenced boardwalk to stop dogs going off the track into kauri. Informal track very clearly being used.
Large Kauri Walk (Waimauku)	Yes	Yes	Loose gravel, boardwalk	Newly added gravel washing off track on steps before boardwalk/observation deck. Muddy water collecting in cleaning station brushes, hard to get dirty water off shoes
Laird Thompson Track, Piha/Anawhata	No	No	Poor, exposed roots, mud	Muddy in shady areas, despite hot and sunny weather.
Marawhara Track, Piha	Yes	Yes	No engineered surface	Roots of putaputaweta and other trees, soil/sand/leaves
Arataki Lookout Track	Yes	Yes	Boardwalk, Boxed gravel, Loose gravel	Track good except approaching the boardwalk bridge where the gravel is scant and underneath surface is showing through
Exhibition Drive	No	No	Loose gravel,	Generally good,

			Mud	however there are numerous muddy patches mainly at the sides of this track, even on what was a dry day. There are foot and tyre marks in the mud.
Parker Track (Arataki)	Yes	Yes	Loose gravel	Exposed roots in 2 places otherwise in very good condition
Parkinson Lookout Track	No	No	Loose gravel, exposed tree roots	Track loose gravel with a lot of leaf litter in places. It doesn't look like it has been regravelled for a long time. Exposed tree roots
Firebreak Rd (2 entrances)	No	No	Boxed gravel, mud	Mud on footwear
Ian Wells Track	No	Yes - very basic	Gravel and grass	2 bottles of sterigene, 2 dirty brushes. No signs or instructions.
Huia Dam Road	No	Yes - very basic	Gravel road	3 bottles of sterigene, 3 dirty brushes. No signs or instructions.

Lake Wainamu Track is open - the track condition is not satisfactory and some sections are extremely muddy (see photo):



Ian Wells Track is open but there is no signage and the cleaning station is totally inadequate (see photo):



Upper Nihotupu Track is open but the track surface is down to exposed clay in places (see photo):



Laird Thompson Track between Piha and Anawhata is open but the condition of the track is very poor with exposed roots (see photo):



Informal Tracks and Bypassing Fences

Well formed informal tracks were observed in a number of locations as well as a lot of evidence that closure fencing is inadequate and is being bypassed so the tracks are still in use. In many cases this is because the fence has been located in an unsuitable position and moving it a few metres will improve the ability to close the track more securely. These sites should be priorities for camera surveillance to apprehend repeat offenders breaching the closure. A few examples of informal track sightings and bypassing of closure fences are included in the table and list below, there are many many more.

Track name	Official status	Signage	Fencing	Informal track use
Zigzag Track (Titirangi)	Closed	Yes	Yes	Informal tracks going between kauri trees from Park Rd down into Atkinson Reserve
Kakamatua Beach Walk	Open	Yes	No	Informal tracks next to kauri trees
Spragg Monument Track	Open	No	No	Lots of unofficial tracks in to the bush area at the top by the grass area. Evidence of pigs (and possibly weed control contractors)
Chateau Mosquito Track (Anawhata Rd end)	Closed	Yes	Yes	Possible alternative track entrance near road looks used.
Hettig Track	Closed	Yes	Yes - broken	Deer fence cut and rolled down. Post at one end loose. Damage advised to Council on 28 Sept
Slip Track (Arataki end)	Closed	Yes	Yes	Evidence of by-passing closure fence and informal tracks in several places

Evidence of Bypassing Fences:

Comans Track (Karekare end)
Parau/Farley Track (Huia Dam Road end)
Taraire Track (both ends)
Hettig Track
White Track (both ends)
Arataki Nature Trail Lower Loop
Slip Track (Arataki end)
Puriri Ridge Track (Whatipu Rd end)
Omanawanui Track (Whatipu Rd end)
Destruction Gully Track (Whatipu Rd end)
Gibbons Track (Whatipu end)
There are so many more examples (see detailed spreadsheet).

Filter Track
Anderson Track
East Tunnel Mouth Track
Incline Track
Twin Peaks / Tom Thumb Track
Clark Bush Track (all entrances)
Cutty Grass Track (Scenic Drive end)
Houghton Track
Long Road Track
Chateau Mosquito Track
La Trobe Track

Kakamatua Beach Walk is open but the track is unfenced next to large kauri and there is a well used informal track leading from it with exposed tree roots (see photo):



Chateau Mosquito Track has a number of informal tracks heading into the bush (see photo):



Taraire Track (Karekare) shows clear evidence of people going around the fence next to the waterfall to use the track (see photo):



Comans Track at the Karekare end is poorly located so it is easy to get around the end of the fence (see photo):



The Parau Track entrance on Huia Road is also easy to bypass because the fence hasn't been erected to close the gap properly (see photo):



Arataki Nature Trail Lower Loop closure fence is poorly constructed, does not reach the sides of the track and has been damaged in order for people to go around it and use the closed track (see photo):



Recommendations

1. All closed track entrances which are currently open should be closed and properly secured with permanent fencing and signage.
2. All out of date signage should be removed and replaced with current signage.
3. All open tracks that do not meet required standard for track surface condition should be closed until they have been upgraded.
4. All open tracks that do not have new unavoidable cleaning stations on both ends should be closed until they have been upgraded.
5. All open tracks that do not have appropriate signage relating to compliance with the Controlled Area Notice should be closed until they have been upgraded.
6. Kakamatua Beach Walk track should be upgraded past the kauri trees with fenced boardwalk to prevent off track use.
7. Signage should clearly state that dogs must be on leads on open tracks.
8. All closure fences should be checked for ability to be bypassed and gaps secured.
9. All informal tracks should be closed and secured.
10. Covert security cameras should be installed where there is evidence of bypass and/or informal tracks are present.
11. Ambassadors should be permanently located on all open track entrances.
12. Carparks should be closed where tracks are closed.
13. Large signs should be placed on roads clearly stating that forest tracks are closed.
14. The Controlled Area Notice should be amended to cover the entire Waitakere Ranges Regional Park so that risk goods (soil) being moved on closed tracks or informal tracks can be enforced.
15. A monthly audit of all tracks (security of closure of closed tracks plus condition of open tracks) should be completed and reported publicly along with a monthly report on enforcement.