

AKATARAWA FOREST

**MOTORISED
RECREATIONAL USER CODE
AND MANAGEMENT
GUIDELINES 1997**

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Off-Road Motoring in the Wellington Metropolitan Area

Off-road motoring offers a variety of recreation activities which provide challenge, excitement, social interaction, development of physical and co-ordination skills, and a means of experiencing and enjoying the outdoors. In controlled situations, such as closed circuits, it can satisfy the desire for speed and risk taking with minimal danger to participants, particularly when compared with on-road vehicle activities.

Unfortunately, off-road motoring, including trail biking, can engender significant conflicts. Careless use of vehicles can damage ground surfaces and conflict with other recreational users and adjoining residents. Conflict arises as a result of noise from poorly muffled vehicles, damage to tracks and environmental qualities, risks to the safety of other users, fright or unwanted surprise, and the different aspirations of other recreational users.

The Akatarawa Forest is important as the only sizeable area of public land in the Wellington metropolitan area which is currently available for off-road motorised recreational use. By making parts of this area available for legitimate motorised recreational use, the Regional Council is seeking to prevent problems of conflict arising from the use of motorised recreational vehicles in other, less appropriate areas e.g. river berms, regional parks, sensitive beach areas etc.

Motorised recreational use of the Akatarawa Forest must be carefully managed to ensure it does not conflict with the Regional Council's land management responsibilities, or with other legitimate recreational uses. It is for this reason these guidelines have been produced.

1.2 Management of Akatarawa Forest

The Akatarawa Forest is owned and managed by the Wellington Regional Council as a future water collection area. Management of the Forest aims to protect environmental quality while providing for exotic forestry activities within current production forestry areas, and for appropriate recreational opportunities as established within the *Forest Lands & Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996* (page 15).

Indigenous forest management is primarily the responsibility of the Regional Council's Natural Forestry Department. The Plantation Forestry Department is responsible for plantation management activities. The Regional Parks (Operations) Department is responsible for recreation management in the Forest including access issues.

The Regional Council's key management activities for the Akatarawa Forest are:

- forest management, particularly the protecting and enhancing native vegetation, and plantation silviculture;

- monitoring and controlling animal pest populations and noxious weeds;
- protecting the forest against a number of threats including insect, disease and fire;
- long term management of water resources which depend on forest catchments;
- identifying, protecting and managing high priority ecosystems on Council lands; and
- protecting natural heritage and cultural values.

1.3 Purpose and Status of This Document

This document has been developed by a joint working party comprising representatives of the Wellington Regional Council and the Akatarawa Recreation Action Committee (ARAC — Friends of Akatarawa), a body established to represent off-road motorised recreational user groups within the Wellington Region. The document provides a guide for the Regional Council in its management of motorised recreation, and a code to be observed by motorised recreational users of the Akatarawa Forest.

To accommodate and manage the forms of motorised recreation deemed appropriate for the Akatarawa Forest, the joint working party has developed proposals for the management of motorised recreational use. The proposals cover permits, education, safety, designation of zones and tracks, track maintenance, closures and the management of events and concessions and are set out in this document. This is an evolving document, which may be adjusted over time in response to the experience of the Wellington Regional Council and or user groups.

In terms of status, this document is to be considered within the context of the *Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996*. The Interim Management Plan sets out the aims, objectives and policies for the management of a number of Regional Council land areas including the Akatarawa Forest.

The Interim Management Plan will remain operative until it is superseded by the full and final Management Plan, due to be completed in 1999 or earlier. The final Management Plan will be the ‘parent’ document to all other subsequent management or operational plans for specific areas or functions within forest lands and water collection areas, including the Akatarawa Forest. It is intended that this document will eventually become part of the final *Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Management Plan*.

In compiling the final Management Plan, the Regional Council will canvas the views of other recreational users. As a result this document may need to be revised before being incorporated into a comprehensive recreational policy for the Akatarawa Forest.

2. Akatarawa Off-Road Motoring Code

This user code has been jointly developed by the Akatarawa Recreation Action Committee (ARAC — Friends of Akatarawa) and the Wellington Regional Council. The code is designed to inform motorised recreational users about restrictions and standards of behaviour necessary to ensure that the Wellington Regional Council can meet its statutory obligations to protect the environment, other recreational users and adjoining landowners. Your co-operation will impact directly on the future access of motorised recreational users to this area — please respect the rules.

Respect Access Restrictions

1. Stay on designated tracks. Respect the zoning system.
2. Obey signs and advertised instructions.
3. When organised events occur, please comply with organisers' wishes and instructions.
4. Seek permission from landowners before crossing private property.

Respect Others

5. Keep your speed down and keep left— these are **not** race tracks. Remember the 30 km per hour speed limit. Consider track conditions and other track users. Always assume there may be someone coming around the next corner.
6. Respect other people's rights. Always give way to others and pass with care.

Think Safety

7. Use approved safety gear.
8. Ride or drive well-maintained bikes or vehicles with effective mufflers.
9. Travel in groups and with experienced people, in case you have an accident and to avoid getting lost.
10. Take warm clothing. Be prepared for rapid weather changes and rapid flooding of river crossings.
11. Let others know of your intended route and estimated time of return.
12. Please report any vandalism of signs or damage to tracks (such as slips or blocked culverts) to the Wellington Regional Council.
13. Every party should carry a first aid kit, map and compass, breakdown tools, tow rope, food and drink (and a cell-phone if possible).

Act Responsibly

14. Always carry a valid permit. You may be asked to produce it.
15. Respect the environment and the Wellington Regional Council's responsibilities for managing forests and water quality.
16. Leave no trace of your visit – don't litter. Take all of your own and maybe other people's rubbish home.

3. STRATEGIES

3.1 *Appropriate Motorised Recreation Activities for the Akatarawa Forest*

3.1.1 Goal

That a range of appropriate motorised recreation opportunities be planned or available within the Akatarawa Forest.

3.1.2 Strategies

1. A speed limit of 30 km per hour applies to all vehicles using the Akatarawa Forest.
2. Casual motorised recreational use of parts of the Akatarawa Forest will be restricted to those forms of motorised recreation deemed appropriate for the Akatarawa Forest. Motorised recreational activities which are considered appropriate for the Akatarawa Forest include:
 - casual non-competitive use by trail bikers, quads (ATVs), trials riders and
 - organised four wheel drive groups.
3. Casual two- and four-wheel drive off-road racing, scrambling, motocross, and competitive riding or driving (with the exception of trials riding) will not be permitted.
4. Subject to section 3.8 *Events and Concessions*, forms of motorised recreation other than those deemed appropriate for casual use may be permitted for organised events.

3.1.3 Discussion

There is a range of types of motorised recreation. These include motocross, enduro, observed trials, trail biking, scrambling (or cross country racing), quads (all-terrain vehicles or ATVs), four wheeled off-road racers and four wheel drives. (See Appendix 3 for a description of the different types of off-road motorised recreation.)

Each form of motorised recreation has particular requirements in terms of track conditions, riding or driving features etc., and the requirements of riders or drivers of different skill levels also vary significantly. Appendix 4 gives a summary of the preferences and requirements associated with each of the motorised recreational activities which are considered appropriate for the Akatarawa Forest, given the restrictions on speed which apply.

Drivers or riders must be able to stop within half the distance visible to them, and must not exceed 30 km per hour. Exceptions to the speed limit may be granted in the case of organised events (see section 3.8 *Events and Concessions*). Other non-permitted activities (i.e. organised racing) may be better developed or promoted elsewhere within the Region e.g. at Kaitoke or in the Wairarapa.

3.2 Permits

3.2.1 Goal

That a permit system for motorised recreational users will be administered by the Wellington Regional Council.

3.2.2 Strategies

1. All casual users will be required to have individual permits.
2. In the case of four wheel drive groups and other large groups of casual users, group permits and keys will be issued for the day or event.
3. Permits and keys will be issued by the Wellington Regional Council's Upper Hutt office
4. For organised competitive or commercial events, permits will be issued in accordance with section 3.8 *Events and Concessions*.

3.2.3 Discussion

The issuing of permits to motorised recreational users offers a number of management benefits to the Regional Council as well as benefits to motorised recreational users. The system provides a means of gathering statistical information and monitoring the level of use, and facilitates the up-keep of a mailing database (for disseminating information about maintenance work, emergency closures, zone closures, etc.). The permit system offers a means of controlling and managing events, and encouraging compliance with the user code. It also facilitates the provision of up to date information to motorised recreational groups.

The effectiveness of the permit system to deliver on these objectives will depend on the proportion of users who obtain permits. Therefore it is important that users be given every encouragement to apply for permits. Means of encouraging permit applications may include supplying post-paid permit renewal forms and free-post permit application forms.. No permit fee will be charged for the 1997/98 financial year, to encourage motorised recreational users to obtain permits. Any future charges will be in line with the Wellington Regional Council's funding policy.

Occasional permit spot-checks may be conducted at entry points as a means of monitoring compliance. Passive education through peer pressure will achieve the best results.

3.3 Provision and Use of Information

3.3.1 Goal

That information be provided to clearly explain the responsibilities of motorised recreational users and to protect public safety, while preserving the remote nature of the Akatarawa Forest.

3.3.2 Strategies

1. The design of signs will be standardised and will conform to the Wellington Regional Council Recreation Department's sign systems.
2. Types and locations of new signs will be determined through consultation between the Wellington Regional Council and user groups.
3. The zones available for motorised recreation use will be clearly indicated both on the ground (with signs and, where appropriate, directional markers) and on maps.
4. Where appropriate, exit signs will be attached beneath existing road signs to clearly show the routes to each exit point.
5. The Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreation Code will be printed on pamphlets and motorised recreation permits.
6. The Wellington Regional Council will maintain a database of motorised recreational users. Subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act 1993, this information will be available for user groups to distribute information on upcoming events.
7. The Wellington Regional Council will instigate a telephone answering service to inform user groups of maintenance work, temporary closures, track conditions and events within the Akatarawa Forest. This telephone number will be available on permits and from the Wellington Regional Council.
8. Relevant Regional Council brochures and information from motorised recreational user groups may be supplied to users along with permits.
9. Where appropriate, retail outlets may be involved in distributing user information.

3.3.3 Discussion

The provision of information will be a key element in managing motorised recreational use of the Akatarawa Forest. Education is seen as an important means of influencing users towards appropriate behaviour. Information will be provided on two levels:

- Signs:
 - ⇒ designation of routes available to motorised recreational users;
 - ⇒ Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreational User Code;
 - ⇒ maps;
 - ⇒ exit routes;
 - ⇒ speed control;
 - ⇒ safety information (including emergency pick-up points and cell-phone coverage areas once these have been identified).

- Off-site information:
 - ⇒ Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreational User Code (on pamphlets and permits);
 - ⇒ maps and guides (these maps will be general indication maps, rather than topographical maps);
 - ⇒ safety information (on pamphlets and permits);
 - ⇒ presentations by Regional Council officers to motorised recreational user group meetings;
 - ⇒ liaison with other local authorities to co-ordinate the provision of public information to motorised recreational users.

3.3.3.1 Signs

The use of track signs and symbols increases the chance that motorised recreational users will accept and recognise the conditions of use, and also helps to ensure that users can enjoy their back-country experiences in relative safety. Pictograms will be used where possible. Detailed public information signs and displays are most appropriately located at entrances and other key points, such as the Orange Hut.

An important consideration is that part of the Akatarawa Forest's attraction to recreational users is its sense of remoteness. The presence of signs can impact negatively on this and some users may perceive signs as a disruption to their outdoor recreational experience. Signs and route markers should be clear and effective yet unobtrusive. Signs alongside tracks should be kept to a minimum.

3.3.3.2 Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreational User Code

The code is probably the single most important item of user information (see Section 2). It clearly states the responsibilities of motorised recreational users and is aimed at encouraging responsible self-management. Encouraging motorised recreational users to adhere to the code will help to mitigate the social and environmental impacts of these activities.

3.3.3.3 Education

Local bodies and the Police will be advised of the management strategies for the Akatarawa Forest. It will be necessary to emphasise to local bodies and the Police which forms of motorised recreation are appropriate for use in the Akatarawa Forest (see Section 3.1).

3.3.3.4 User Feedback

Contact with users presents important opportunities for the Regional Council to obtain information about the forest. Encouraging users to report track damage, user impact problems and other concerns will effectively help to increase the coverage and regularity of monitoring.

3.4 Safety Provisions

3.4.1 Goal

That the safety of all users of the Akatarawa Forest be maintained within reasonable limits.

3.4.2 Strategies

1. The Wellington Regional Council will actively promote compliance with the Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreational User Code.
2. The Wellington Regional Council may exclude the public from zones where work activities such as forestry and logging operations are taking place.
3. The involvement of volunteers in fire-fighting, construction and maintenance work will be in accordance with the *Duty of Care* provisions of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
4. Sites for emergency pick-up points will be identified for approval by the Civil Aviation Authority, then notified to emergency services, marked by on-site signs and maintained by the Regional Council.
5. Subject to section 3.3 *Provision and Use of Information*, areas of cell-phone coverage (once these have been identified) and track time durations (based on novice times) will be identified on signs.
6. A register of people accredited to lead four wheel drive trips will be maintained by the Wellington Regional Council. Nominations for accreditation will be sought from motorised recreational user groups and copies of the register will be supplied by the Regional Council to permit applicants.

3.4.3 Discussion

3.4.3.1 Responsibilities of Users

By its nature, motorised recreation involves safety risks to participants and other track users. Managing risks to avoid accidents is the first priority of public safety management. User behaviour plays a big part in safety management. Controlling speed is important for minimising the risk to public safety. It is for these reasons that the Wellington Regional Council will actively promote compliance with the Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreational User Code and encourage user groups to educate their members.

The weather, the Akatarawa Forest's large size and isolated nature, minimal cell-phone coverage and the presence of rivers are factors which need to be brought to the attention of users. Individual responsibility to know and be prepared for these potential hazards is an essential element of the safe use of the Akatarawa Forest.

Inexperience in off-road driving or riding increases the risk of accidents when combined with difficult or dangerous track conditions. A lack of familiarity with the

forest carries with it a risk that users may become disoriented or lost. Maps or guides are no substitute for experience. Encouraging novice users to travel with experienced users is a practical step towards reducing these risks.

3.4.3.2 Mitigating Hazards

Managing risks for motorised recreational and other users relates partly to track conditions and the presence of general hazards in the track environment (such as steep drops beside tracks or sharp objects).

3.4.3.3 Provision for Emergency Services

In the event of an accident it is important that the response time of emergency services be minimised, and that these services are able to effectively locate accident victims. Identifying areas where accidents are likely to occur and identifying emergency pick-up points within these areas (with signs and on forest maps) will assist users to respond efficiently in the event of an emergency. As emergency pick-up points are established, the grid co-ordinates of these will be provided to emergency services, and will be displayed at each site so that users with cell-phones can contact emergency services and give reliable instructions regarding their location.

3.4.3.4 Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

Under this Act the Wellington Regional Council has a number of responsibilities regarding the safety of the public who use its land.

The Act places a duty on the Regional Council to take all practicable (reasonable) steps to ensure that any person at or near a place of work is not harmed by hazards resulting from work activities. Because of the inherent dangers involved with forestry and logging operations, the Regional Council's policy is to exclude the public from areas where these activities are taking place. The *Duty of Care* requirements under the Act apply to the involvement of volunteers in fire-fighting and major works such as the construction or maintenance of tracks or buildings. The Council must ensure that volunteers involved with this work are dressed correctly, and must provide additional safety equipment as required for particular operations. The Act does not apply to accidents not related to work activities.

3.5 Designation of Motorised Recreation Zones and Tracks

3.5.1 Goal

That a range of opportunities for motorised recreation will be provided in areas where the impacts of these activities can be maintained within acceptable limits.

3.5.2 Strategies

1. Motorised recreation will be restricted to designated tracks within acceptable zones as shown on the zone map.
2. Additions to the trail riding network will be determined through consultation between the Wellington Regional Council and motorised recreation user groups.
3. The Wellington Regional Council, through consultation with motorised recreational user groups, will develop a strategy for monitoring the impacts of motorised recreational use on forest health, water quality, and tracks.
4. Subject to section 3.7 *Closure*, the Wellington Regional Council may temporarily or permanently close certain zones to motorised recreation if motorised recreational use is found to have unacceptable impacts on forest health, water quality or tracks.
5. Motorised recreational activities will not be permitted within zones of particular ecological sensitivity, including the summits of mounts Barton, Maunganui, Titi and Wainui; the upper Akatarawa Valley; riparian zones, stream beds, swamps and wetlands, as identified in the *Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996*.
6. Motorised recreational use of tracks within areas designated for natural regeneration will not be permitted.
7. The Wellington Regional Council, in consultation with motorised recreational user groups, will develop a system of excluding motorised recreational users from tracks to be regenerated.
8. The cutting or removal of live vegetation is not permitted.
9. Motorised recreational use of current water collection areas will comply with the Kapiti Coast District Council's District Plan.
10. Casual motorised recreational use of Battle Hill Farm Forest Park is not permitted (although four wheel drive groups on group permits or organised events may be accommodated).
11. Access to the Akatarawa Forest via adjoining private or Department of Conservation land will not be permitted unless by agreement between users, individual land-owners and the Wellington Regional Council.

3.5.3 Discussion

Motorised recreational activities must be limited to designated areas as identified on the zone map, where they do not conflict with the Regional Council's conservation, plantation and water supply responsibilities. Because of the Akatarawa Forest's status as a future water collection area, the protection of key environmental qualities must take precedence over other uses. These environmental qualities are:

- **Water Quality.** Water is currently drawn from the Maungakotukutuku catchment for supply to Waikanae township. The Whakatiki and Akatarawa West rivers have been identified as possible future water sources for the Wellington metropolitan supply. Management of these water sources requires the control of turbidity, faecal coliform and bacteria counts to acceptable levels within current and future water collection areas. Maximising water quality at the source minimises the cost to the Regional Council and end users of treating water to required drinking water standards.
- **Forest Health.** The health of the forest within a catchment is a key determinant of the quality of water flowing from it. Considerations include protecting natural successional and regenerative processes within all vegetation types, and protecting canopy closure within established forests.

3.5.3.1 Impacts of Motorised Recreation

Motorised recreational activities can have negative impacts on soils and soil stability, the quantity and quality of surface and ground waters, plants and vegetative cover, and wildlife. (The Wellington Regional Councils' *Trail Bike Riding in the Wellington Metropolitan Area* (1992) includes a detailed discussion of the possible environmental impacts of motorised recreation.) Track Maintenance will help to mitigate these impacts. User groups will be encouraged to assist with reducing impacts.

Motorised recreation also impacts on track surfaces. Riding and driving styles, experience and quality of equipment all have a bearing on these impacts.

Monitoring of the impacts of motorised recreation on forest health, water quality and track conditions will be necessary to ensure that these impacts are kept within acceptable limits.

3.5.3.2 Seasonal Variations

Motorised recreational activities are restricted to the 14 management zones identified on the zone map. Within these zones, some tracks will be available continuously, some will be available seasonally, and others will be available only for special events. It is intended that the zoning system will allow the Regional Council to provide alternative areas during temporary zone closures. Any zone closures will be in accordance with section 3.7 *Closure*.

3.5.3.3 Water Collection Areas

The Kapiti Coast District Council and the Wellington Regional Council have designated parts of the Akatarawa Forest as water collection areas. Under Sections 176 and 177 of the Resource Management Act, any uses of the land must be consistent with the designation. Land uses may be restricted if they are not consistent. Controlled motorised recreation on existing roads is deemed consistent with this designation.

3.6 Track Maintenance

3.6.1 Goal

To maintain, a network of roads and tracks which meet the requirements of the Regional Council and other users year-round.

3.6.2 Strategies

1. Tracks to be maintained for motorised recreational use (outside the Wellington Regional Council's annual operational requirements) will be determined through consultation between the Wellington Regional Council and user groups, prior to and during the construction period each year.
2. Fund-raising initiatives for additional maintenance purposes will be decided through consultation between user groups and the Wellington Regional Council.

3.6.3 Discussion

The Regional Council's main operational activities within the Akatarawa Forest are for forest health, pest control and rural fire protection. All of these require reliable vehicle access throughout the forest. Maintenance of key roads and tracks is done as part of the Council's annual work programme.

The Regional Council is currently preparing an Asset Management Plan for roads and tracks in the Akatarawa Forest. This plan will identify which roads and tracks are required for year-round operational use and which are required for summer operational use, and will identify how the available maintenance budget is to be allocated.

Some tracks used for Regional Council operations are also available for motorised recreational use. There may be others which are not used by the Regional Council but which are appropriate for motorised recreational use. It is likely that these tracks will need to be maintained if they are to be used. Decisions about which additional tracks are to be maintained will be negotiated by user groups and the Regional Council. The additional tracks which need to be maintained are likely to vary from year to year, depending on user group and Regional Council priorities.

Motorised recreational user groups will discuss with the Regional Council their involvement in joint maintenance programmes. Casual users may carry out minor track maintenance (e.g. clearing water tables with gardening tools) without having to notify the Council, but major maintenance or development will require regional Council approval. The involvement of volunteers in major maintenance or development work will need to be in accordance with the Council's responsibilities under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (see section 3.4).

3.7 Closure

3.7.1 Goal

That forest or zone closures will be used to reduce risks and environmental damage and to provide for special events, while minimising inconvenience to all casual recreational users.

3.7.2 Strategies

1. Where possible, track or zone closures will be discussed in advance with motorised recreational user groups and advance notice of closures will be given via appropriate channels.
2. Temporary signs at entrances and around closure zones will be used to notify users and a message will be placed on the Wellington Regional Council's telephone message service. .
3. For large events, representatives of recognised user groups will be notified, public notices will be placed in local daily newspapers by the event organiser, and a message placed on the Wellington Regional Council's telephone message service.
4. In an emergency it may be necessary to close track(s) or zone(s) without notice and to notify user groups afterwards.

3.7.3 Discussion

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to close the Akatarawa Forest, or particular tracks, zones or areas within zones, to some or all recreational use.

Total forest closures will apply in cases of extreme fire risk (when all members of the public would be excluded from the forest), and may also be necessary in certain instances to protect public safety, such as during a forest fire.

Zone closures may be necessary during forest harvesting activities (see section 3.4 *Safety Provisions*), during periods of extreme wet weather (when particular tracks or sections of track may become dangerous or susceptible to damage), for organised events, for track maintenance work, or due to fire risk in particular zones.

3.8 Events and Concessions

3.8.1 Goal

To accommodate commercial and organised events with minimal impact on the environment and other recreational users.

3.8.2 Strategies

1. Provision for commercial activities will be in accordance with the Wellington Regional Council's policy for *Commercial Recreation and Related Services on Regional Council Lands* and the *Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan*.
2. In the event of a proposed change to the *Commercial Recreation and Related Services on Regional Council Lands* policy, user groups on the database will be notified.
3. A permit or licence from the Wellington Regional Council is required for all events and concessions.
4. Organisers must provide a safety plan for their event to the Wellington regional Council.

3.8.3 Discussion

Commercial and organised events provide opportunities for activities which are outside the scope of what is considered to be acceptable casual use. Concessions provide opportunities for people who might not otherwise be able to participate.

The environmental impacts and cost implications of events and concessions can differ from those of casual use. Organised club events or competitions typically involve large numbers of participants using a set area over a short period of time, so environmental impacts may be amplified. There may also be significant implications in terms of track maintenance requirements. The Regional Council is likely to incur administration costs in dealing with events and concessions. Events and concessions may also have social impacts due to the displacement of or disturbance to other users.

The benefits of events and concessions may include positive publicity and heightened public awareness of the forest and recreational opportunities. These benefits generally accrue only from well-organised, successful events.

The Wellington Regional Council has prepared a policy document entitled *Commercial Recreation and Related Services on Regional Council Lands*. This document will guide the administration of event and concession applications and existing permits. Issues which need to be considered in the administration of the policy include the application of fees and charges, environmental impacts and safety management.

Wellington Regional Council policy is that charges are to be applied fairly. The general practice is to levy a per-participant charge as well as a one-off administration charge, although the level of each of these charges varies between different events. While the issues upon which charging decisions are based can be complex, it is important that the basis for charges be clear and consistent. Under the *Commercial recreation and Related Services Policy*, concessionaires are responsible for remedying any damage to Council property. Where a proposal risks significant environmental damage a bond may be required to ensure the restoration of the site.

Public safety in parks and recreation areas is a key management issue with implications for event and concession management. An approved safety plan is a pre-requisite of all concession and event licences.

Many events and concessions fail within the first year of operation. Of the many factors which might lead these initiatives to fail, poor planning is thought to be a significant factor. A business plan should be a pre-requisite for substantial events. A well-planned event or concession is not only likely to be more successful, but may also have fewer environmental and social impacts.

Appendix 1: The Akatarawa Forest — General Description

The Akatarawa Forest covers 15,438 hectares of rugged hill country between Upper Hutt and the Kapiti Coast. It contains extensive areas of indigenous forest as well as scrub-land, retired grazing land and exotic forest plantations, which are managed for timber production as well as soil protection and recreation.

Although not in pristine condition, the Akatarawa Forest has great potential for ecological restoration as well as significant historical interest value. The indigenous forest has been considerably modified by the effects of fire, logging and introduced mammals. For over 100 years saw-milling was an important part of the economy of the area, and much of the readily accessible rimu, matai, totara, kahikatea and some miro was extracted from the forest. Isolated remnants of these stands, which would have been uneconomic to harvest, remain scattered throughout the Forest.

The Forest is covered by an extensive network of forestry roads, tracks and old disused logging tracks, reflecting past and present logging and forestry uses. In recreational terms, this track network is a very significant resource. As well as a variety of motorised recreational activities, popular pursuits include mountain biking, hunting, horse riding, walking, tramping and running.

Appendix 2: The Planning Framework

This document must be consistent with the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972. In addition, it must be consistent with a number of important plans prepared under these Acts.

Resource Management Act

The Resource Management Act requires the Regional Council to manage:

“... the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—

- (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
- (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.”

(Resource Management Act 1991, p21).

Under this Act the Regional Council is required to manage outdoor recreational activities in ways which ensure that the effects of those activities do not undermine the long-term sustainability of natural ecosystems.

Regional Policy Statement and Plans

The Wellington Regional Council’s Regional Policy Statement obliges the Council to protect ecosystems under its care. It contains policies on recreation which address resource issues, including the need to protect natural resources from the harmful effects of recreation. Under this umbrella document, a series of regional plans are currently being prepared by the Regional Council (including the Regional Landscape Plan, the Regional Freshwater Plan, the Regional Discharges to Land Plan, and the Regional Soil Plan). Two of these have direct implications for the management of motorised recreation in the Akatarawa Forest.

Regional Freshwater Plan

The Regional Freshwater Plan helps the Regional Council to carry out its fresh water management functions under the Resource Management Act 1991. The plan addresses the effects of human activities on fresh water resources. This includes effects on values held by the tangata whenua, natural and amenity values, access, water quality and quantity, and the beds of streams, rivers and lakes. The plan contains objectives, policies, methods and rules which establish the frame-work within which certain uses are permitted and other uses can be assessed.

A Proposed Plan was notified in 1996 and has now been through the formal submission process.

Regional Soil Plan

The Draft Regional Soil Plan deals mostly with vegetation clearance and soil disturbance activities and the avoidance, mitigation or remedying of any potential adverse effects associated with these. The objectives of the Soil Plan are that:

“...vegetative cover is maintained, enhanced or established, so that the adverse effects of erosion are avoided, remedied or mitigated...” and that “riparian vegetation cover is maintained, enhanced or established so that erosion and sediment deposition is minimised.”

A non-statutory Draft Plan was released for public comment in June 1996 and this will be followed by a formal submission process.

Resource consents will be needed for the construction of new tracks, and may also be required for major track upgrades.

Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972

This Act allows for the Regional Council to set apart and have exclusive control and management of any land vested in it or under its control as a current or future water collection area or a forestry area. The Akatarawa Forest is held under the Act as a future water collection area. The Wellington Regional Council is required to manage the Akatarawa Forest principally for conservation and water supply purposes. The act makes no specific reference to motorised recreational activities.

Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996

The aim of this Plan is to conserve the cultural values and indigenous ecosystems of the Wellington Regional Council's forest lands and water collection areas. Cultural values encompass all legitimate aspects of the community's relationship with these lands. To conserve is defined as

“to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values, providing for their appreciation and appropriate use by the community, and safeguarding their potential and the options of future generations.”

Maungakotukutuku Valley Management Plan

This plan provides a co-ordinated framework for managing the use and development of a popular recreational area in the Maungakotukutuku Valley. The plan covers lands held by the Kapiti Coast District Council as well as part of the north-western sector of the Akatarawa Forest (including the western entrance to the Forest). The plan complements the management plans of adjoining areas including the Maungakotukutuku Scenic Reserve (held by the Department of Conservation).

Local Authority District and Transitional Plans

The Akatarawa Forest fall within the boundaries of two different territorial authorities, each of which has different requirements in terms of their district plan provisions.

The Akatarawa Forest is designated a “Proposed Water Catchment” under the Upper Hutt Transitional District Plan. Permitted activities include passive recreational uses, production forestry and protection forestry. Active recreation (such as motorised recreation) is classified as a discretionary activity. Discretionary activities are permitted to the extent that the sustainability of natural and physical resources can be protected through the mitigation of effects.

Under the Kapiti Coast District Council’s Draft District Plan, the Akatarawa Forest is zoned “rural” with an underlying designation of “Waikanae Water Collection Area”. Recreation is not listed in any of the use categories. Under the plan, any activities which are not listed but which comply with “Permitted Activity” standards are classified as permitted activities. Two standards applying to the “Rural” zoning may be relevant to motorised recreational use of the Akatarawa Forest. These are controls on earthworks (e.g. no earthworks are to be taken within 20m of a water body, including a wetland), and controls on noise levels at residential boundaries

Appendix 3: Types of Off-road Motorised Recreation

Trail Bikes and Quads (ATVs)

Trail biking may be non-competitive and can involve groups or individuals. Trail bikes are less specialised and tend to be better muffled and produce less noise than the bikes used in competition. Trail bikes are often used for access to remote areas by hunters, campers, farmers and other back-country users. Trail biking tends to involve a strong social element, and the enjoyment of the natural surroundings is often important.

Motocross

Motocross is a competitive sport which involves specialised off-road racing bikes designed primarily for use on a short, bumpy, twisting circuit (a motocross or supercross tracks). Motocross bikes are very light and can accelerate rapidly. Races typically last for 15-30 minutes and are conducted in front of an audience.

Enduro

Enduro racing is also a competitive sport but the emphasis is on distance rather than speed (although courses sometimes include a “speed section”). Events usually last all day and circuits need to be about 100 km long.

Cross Country Racing (formerly “Hare Scrambling”)

This is a mix of motocross and enduro. The emphasis is purely on speed, with the winner being the rider who completes the longest distance within a set time (two riders sometimes share one bike). Events last 2-4 hours on a closed circuit between 8 and 50 km long.

Observed Trials

Trials riding involves acrobatic feats of skill on specialised bikes — the object of the activity is to ride over a series of obstacles within a given time frame, with the least possible support from the feet or other parts of the body, without stalling, falling off or running outside the bounds of the course. Events can last all day and do not require a large area - several hectares of rough terrain is often sufficient. Trials bikes are usually well-muffled and produce minimal noise.

Four-wheel Drives

Four wheel drive activities are social by nature, with the large majority being family oriented. Participants range from the very young to senior citizens. Scenic views, a sense of isolation and some degree of difficulty are all important attributes of the activity. With increasing numbers of people acquiring four-wheel drive vehicles as their main form of transport, the standard of vehicles participating in off-road activities is continually improving. There remains however a minority who prefer more arduous challenges. These people tend to have specialised vehicles fitted with aggressive off road tyres, and are generally more tolerant of damage to the bodies of their vehicles incurred during motorised recreational activity.

Appendix 4: Preferences for Recreation Attributes and Experiences

Off-road Motorcycling, Including Quads (ATVs)

Setting / Experience Attributes	Novice / Beginner / Casual (about. 15% of participants)	More Experienced (about 60% of participants)	Experts (about 25% of participants)
Preferred Features of Activity	Local convenient access, inexpensive involvement, skill development and gaining experience, exercise and fitness.	Opportunities for technical skill and fitness improvement, testing endurance, excitement, challenge.	Opportunities for skill honing: high degree of difficulty preferred.
Preferred Riding and Track Features	Preference for main tracks and well-marked routes, wide firm smooth tracks in good condition, easy access, tracks with room for error, few obstructions, loops. Riders want to avoid getting stuck. Rides of 2-4 hours duration.	Preference for physical, mental and technical challenge, competitive and adventurous riding. Rough, muddy and greasy tracks with water crossings preferred. Tighter, winding terrain preferred (more preference for less developed secondary tracks). Loops of 2-6 hours duration.	Little tolerance for repetition. Rough, muddy and greasy tracks with water crossings preferred - the rougher the better. Tight, winding terrain preferred (more preference for less developed secondary tracks). Generally not concerned about getting stuck. Unlimited riding time: generally prefer to ride to point of exhaustion
Downhill Attribute Preferences	Gentle and slow with few ruts.	Moderate to extreme steepness with ruts and bumps.	High degree of difficulty.
Uphill Attribute Preferences	Not steep, with few ruts and not slippery.	Moderate to extreme steepness with ruts and bumps.	High degree of difficulty.
Landscape Preferences	Greatest preference is for native forest / bush settings (least for farmland). Beginners have the least preference for forestry areas.		
Social Encounter Attribute Preferences	Generally very tolerant of other users; always offer assistance to other users in difficulty or in accident situations. Most leaders will advise other users of how many individuals are following behind. Enjoy socialising with other users.		

Observed Trials

Setting / Experience Attributes	Novice / Beginner / Casual	More Experienced Riders	Expert Riders
Preferred Activity Features	Opportunity to participate in a competitive event with minimal risk of injury or damage to equipment. Social contact is an important attribute.	Opportunities for greater challenge. Skills development is important. Social contact is also important.	High level of technical challenge. Skill development and testing is of most importance.
Preferred Riding Features	Ease of access to location (proximity to parking) and between sections is important. Easy terrain, allowing access by family and friends to the site, is also important.	Challenging events with larger and more difficult obstacles preferred. Tolerant of greater distances and more difficult travel between sections than novice riders.	High preference for challenging obstacles and difficult terrain. Prepared to tolerate extremely difficult travel between sections provided sections are of a sufficiently high standard.
Section Preferences	Preference for sections which combine a modest level of skill requirements with a maximum level of safety. Speeds are generally walking pace or slower.	Preference for sections requiring a higher level of skill, with many obstacles including large and/or steep logs, rocks and banks, and tight turns with adverse cambers. Some risk of personal injury acceptable.	Preference for all obstacles to be highly difficult (taller, steeper, tighter and more slippery). Preference for a wide variation in speeds, from bouncing backwards through stationary to fast forward runs.
Terrain Preferences	Natural obstacles (banks, logs, rocks, tree roots etc.) are strongly preferred over artificial obstacles. Least preference is for level terrain or for completely artificial courses in parks or stadiums. Events are traditionally held in and around natural watercourses, although this is becoming less common.		All of the features listed at left apply, although there is more tolerance of artificial obstacles.
Landscape Preferences	The greatest preference is for varying landscape, preferably with some elements of shade and/or shelter for competitors and spectators (events are rarely cancelled)		
Social Encounter Attribute Preferences	Generally extremely tolerant of other users. Little potential for conflict since the area used for observed sections is small.		

Four Wheel Drive Vehicles

Setting / Experience Attributes	Novice Family-type 4WDs (about 40% of participants)	Experienced Family-type 4WDs (about 40% of participants)	Specialised off-road 4WDs (about 20% of participants)
Preferred Activity Features	A sense of isolation is important. Views, scenery, historical interest and social contact are important attributes. Attributes of moderate technical challenge and skill development important.		Technical difficulty and skill development are the most important attributes. Social contact also important.
Preferred Driving and Track Features	Prefer well groomed main tracks with a few technical challenges but no significant risk (no large drop-offs etc.) and short bogs up to 20cm deep.	Prefer "single" tracks of moderate difficulty in generally good condition, with some elements of risk and excitement, but no large drop-offs and not too rutted. Longer bogs up to 40cm deep.	Prefer less developed, rough "single" tracks and large, deep bog areas. Tracks in the worst possible condition preferred.
Downhill Attribute Preferences	Prefer those which are not too steep and provide good traction.	Moderate loss of traction acceptable.	High level of difficulty and technical challenge preferred.
Uphill Attribute Preferences	Prefer those which are not too steep and provide good traction	Moderately steep and slippery hills acceptable.	High level of difficulty and technical challenge (rough and slippery etc.) preferred.
Landscape Preferences	Native forest preferred. High vantage points (for views) important.		
Social Encounter Attribute Preferences	Generally very tolerant of other users. Drivers tend to be willing to assist other users in difficulty or in accident situations. Most leaders will advise other users of how many individuals are following behind. Socialising with other users is enjoyed.		