AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Secretary,
Mrs S. Jones,
14 Park Road,
Auckland, 7.

25 July, 1984.

The Director,
Regional Parks Division,
A.R.A.,
Private Bag,
Auckland.

Dear Mr Jew,

Waitakere Ranges Regional Park Land Management Plan
May 1984 Draft

As you will be aware our Society has a particular interest in the botany of the regional parks and our members are regular visitors both in organised groups and as individuals. We are naturally pleased to see that "The management of the Ranges will be carried out in a manner which will preserve and ensure the continued vitality of the indigenous flora and fauna of the area." (1.5.1.2 #1, p.22) and are in agreement with the general philosophy of the plan and most of the specific policies, although we would like to see greater emphasis given to the biological value of the park. One area of special concern to us is the Water Catchment Land, which includes a large portion of the Waitakere forests. Long term, we would like to see this land incorporated into the Centennial Park, albeit accepting that special restrictions on public usage might be needed.

We wish to make some specific comments relating to botanical matters:

1. Botanical Surveys

Detailed management is impossible without detailed knowledge of the vegetation and flora. There is quite a body of published information available and our Society has published Dr R.O. Gardner's 1982 "Native Vascular Flora of the Waitakere Range, Auckland", the most up to date listing of native plants of the area. However, detailed information is available for only relatively few areas (e.g., Te Henga) and communities (e.g., Leptospermum). We suggest the A.R.A. give high priority to sponsoring a detailed botanical survey of the whole of the Waitakere Ranges by a professional botanist. Amongst products of the survey would be:

(a) a detailed vegetation map delimiting the various communities. This would include not only the forest types but also communities of specialised habitats such as the coastal cliffs, gumlands, and wetlands. While many of these special communities are present only as small scattered pockets, they are important elements in the park's biological spectrum.

(b) identification of localities of rare and endangered plants. We understand the A.R.A. holds a list at present which could be used as a baseline. (We would not support making such a list available to the general public and would advocate careful scrutiny of any requests from the scientific community).

(c) identification of the precise location of weeds of the aggressive alien class. (See below).

The survey would take perhaps 2 -3 years full-time research.

2. Weed Control

Weeds pose a greater threat to the long-term integrity of the natural communities than any other factor, including feral animals. We believe that greater emphasis should be given in the plan to control of "aggressive alien" species. Although we note in 1.3.4, p.15 that "Policies in this plan are directed towards controlling exotic vegetation in the Ranges .." and in 1.4 #12, p.21 that it is policy "To control .. undesirable plants within acceptable limits", nowhere can we find the details on how these policies are to be implemented. Weed control is very dependent on getting in early - 100 seedlings can be pulled up by hand in half an hour but 100 young trees might require days with axe and slasher and will leave a seed source for years to come. We suggest that:

(a) A list of weeds requiring control should be prepared. The list in 1.5.31.1, p.48 includes climbing asparagus, wild ginger, and wandering Jew, which are mostly associated with urban development at Titirangi and Cornwallis, but omits some of the most significant; mist flower (Eupatorium riparium), Mexican devil (E. adenophorum), honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica), and Hakea spp. We are particularly concerned about mist flower, as this weed is capable of growing in shaded stream beds, causing local extinction of the native plant communities.

(b) Circumstances where control of these species will be concentrated should be recognised. It is probably impossible to eradicate any of them, and attempts at control in some areas will be pointless. Areas where they are present in few numbers should be identified and control concentrated at these points. One such example is the small piece of wetland opposite the golf clubhouse at the Cascades. The large sugar-cane-like grass (Arundo donax) has established there and will soon spread and displace the small remnant of native swamp vegetation - it could be removed relatively easily at this time.

(c) Distribution maps for the listed weeds should be prepared and continually updated with results of control programmes. The initial maps could be prepared by the botanist mentioned in part 1 of this submission. Rangers should be instructed in identifying the weeds and could update the maps, along with interested members of the public.

3. Tracks

Tracks are an important feature of the parkland. However, we are concerned about some of the techniques used.

(a) It is not infrequent to see major roots of forest trees cut. This makes the trees vulnerable to wind throw and provides points of entry for wood rotting fungi. Rather than cutting such roots the track should be rerouted or a step built around the root.

(b) We note that on occasion rare plants have been cut down by over vigorous track clearing (e.g., Bob Gordon Track). Tracks should be routed away from rare plants.

(c) In general we suggest that track widths be kept to a minimum - wide tracks let light into the forest and the resulting trackside vegetation is quite unlike that in the forest. This may mean more frequent, but less intensive, track trimming than is currently practiced. We note (1.5.2.1, p.24 and 2.4.3, p.63) that bush crashing is to be discouraged. While we approve this policy, recent observations seem to show that tracks are being increasingly upgraded, widened, metalled. This is likely to encourage bush crashing by those who have been accustomed to walking along rough tracks in a wilderness area.

4. Exotic Planting and Removal of Fallen Trees

We are unable to find any merit in the policy to establish forestry woodlots in any parkland (1.5.1.2 #6, p22) and are rather concerned lest areas of the Waitakere Water Catchment Land be used for exotic timber production and extraction (1.5.17.2 #1e, p.39). Are we to assume that exotic timber production is acceptable in Water Catchment Land because it is out of sight, away from public scrutiny? Some of the least modified forest in the Ranges is present in the Water Catchment Land.

On occasions large trees, perhaps suitable for timber production, are blown over. They should be left to rot providing, as they do, niches for a variety of fungi, mosses, insects, and other biota and eventually returning their nutrients to the soil.

5. Spragg Bush

We note the intent to provide a minor reception area at Spragg Bush and that some of the tracks will be made suitable for people of limited mobility. We fully support the provision of facilities for the disabled to enjoy the park and accept that some of the Spragg Bush area is probably suitable.

But we point out that the Spragg Bush is botanically very important. It contains the best examples in the Ranges of moist forest moss and liverwort communities, probably because of its high rainfall, frequent cloud cap,and relatively unmodified forest vegetation. These communities are rather vulnerable to trampling. With the relatively high residential population nearby, and increasing visitor population, we believe that these communities could become threatened. We suggest that only limited further facilities should be provided.

We also note the rooting area of the large kauri is being badly trampled. While the tree has a dead top it has probably got some hundreds of years to go yet and we would suggest the construction of a raised walkway some distance back - perhaps coupled with the path for disabled visitors (See 2.2.5, p.58).

6. Bethells - Muriwai Walkway

The proposal from the Auckland Walkways Committee to establish a walkway in the Bethells area (2.3.5, p.61) includes the Wainamu Track. The character of the Wainamu Track is very different from that of the Long Road and Kuataika tracks; it is at present a narrow, in places overgrown, track with some interesting plants along the track sides. Widening and increased use would spoil it. A better choice for the walkway is Long Road, **Smythe Ridge**, Kuataika tracks. We consider that the desired aim of 1.5.3.1 #5, p.27, to "introduce more people to the park without serious risk of compromising the scenic, fauna and flora values" can only be achieved by excluding the Wainamu Track from any upgrading.

However, linking the Wainamu Track with a route down Wainamu Stream to Lake Wainamu seems a good idea (2.3.4 #4a, p.61).

7. Cornwallis/Kaitarakihi

(a) We note the intent to prepare a vegetation management plan (2.9.5, p.76) and hope we can assist. This is an area where the control of Hakea spp. may be important.

(b) We do not favour planting, even of indigenous forest trees, in the area. In areas denuded by landslips, fires &c, teatree should be

allowed to regenerate naturally and any planting that does occur should be well documented. We consider forestry (2.9.6, p.76) an inappropriate use of the land.
(c) Some study already done by our Society to prepare a submission to the A.R.A. on the Proposed Cornwallis Forest Park in December 1981 indicates that it would be appropriate to set aside some of the Cornwallis/Kaitarakihi area as a scientific/ecological reserve.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) R.E. Beever,
President,
Auckland Botanical Society.

MT MANAIA, WHANGAREI

E.K. Cameron & P.J. Bellingham

Vascular plant additions and one confirmation to the list compiled by Carol West (Auckland Bot. Soc. Newsletter, January 1984). Also additional records for the ridge north of Mt Manaia and a new locality for Celmisia adamsii with associated plants.

1. Mt Manaia

FERNS

Lindsaea linearis
Paesia scaberula

GYMNOSPERMS

Podocarpus hallii

ANGIOSPERMS - DICOTS

Calystegia tuguriorum
Coprosma macrocarpa
Elaeocrpus dentatus
Hebe macrocarpa var. macrocarpa
H. sp. "Whangarei" (speceis "m" of A.P. Druce)
Metrosideros excelsa x M. robusta
Passiflora tetrandra
Phebalium nudum
Pittosporum ellipticum
Pseudopanax lessonii
Rubus australis
Senecio kirkii

MONOCOTS

Aira caryophyllea*
Briza minor*
Astelia trinervia
Carex forsteri
C. lambertiana
C. spinirostis
Cortaderia selloana*
C. ?fulvida
Dianella nigra
Lolium perenne*
Orthoceras strictum
Thelymitra longifolia