



Equestrians in Mahurangi

Presentation to Jason Maguiness & Mike Cash,
Northern Regional Parks | Parks & Community Facilities

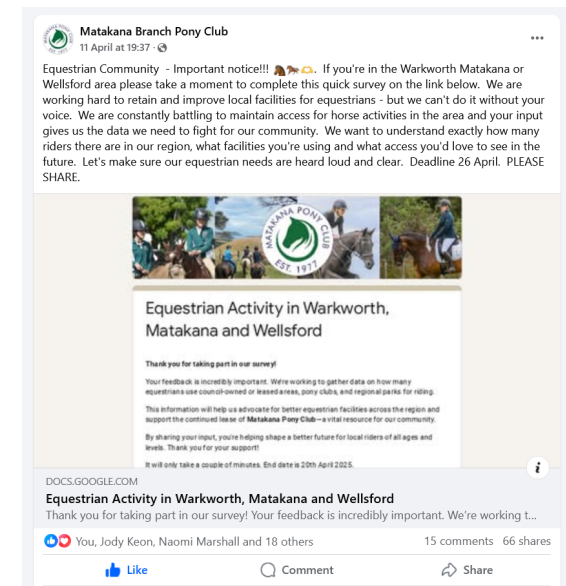
Naomi Marshall and Karen Richardson

11th July 2025

Introduction



- The Warkworth, Matakana and Wellsford equestrian community has concerns that its needs are not being heard in our area and the access to facilities and safe places to ride are becoming limited
 - Existing equestrian facilities on Council green space land are being reduced or eliminated due to the rapid development of rural towns in favour for other sports
 - To present our case, we looked in to statistics:
 - There are many equestrian databases across different disciplines, however the recent Equestrian Facility Strategy 2023 is limited to only 2, both of which are competitive, so the numbers may be conservative:
 - Equestrian Sports New Zealand (ESNZ): for competitive equestrians above a certain level
 - Nominate: New Zealand Pony Club Association (NZPCA): for Pony Club members only
 - Some riders obtain a Auckland Regional Horse Riding Pass
 - These databases do not provide a complete picture of the various disciplines equestrians are involved in. Therefore, we distributed an online questionnaire through local community pages to better determine the number of people involved, the activities they participate in, and their concerns and wishes
 - Conducted 11th April 2025 – 26th April 2025 via Facebook & email: 261 responses
- NB: This is a sample of our community. To collect more data, we could open it up to other social platforms, press etc.

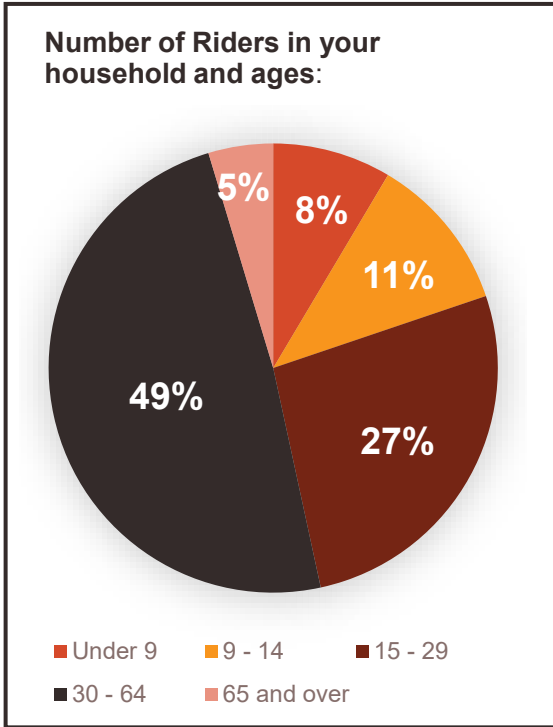
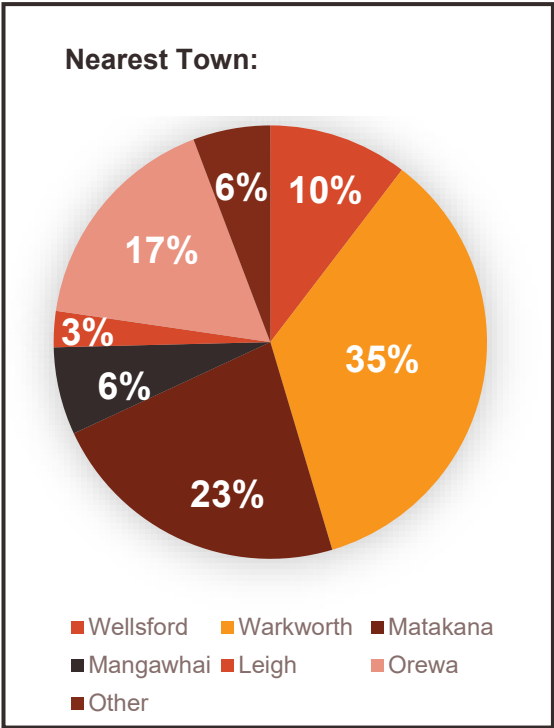




Our findings in summary

- Of the 515 riders in total, 58% live nearest Warkworth and Matakana
- Riders are multi-generational; kids, mothers and grandmothers
- Riders are primarily female¹

MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION 2			
The overall membership profile for ESNZ and NZPCA is summarised below:			
ESNZ	33%	44%	
	AGED UNDER 18	AGED 19-50	
NZPCA	45%	44%	
	AGED UNDER 18	AGED 26+	
			92% FEMALE
			93% FEMALE



New Zealand Government

Women and girls' participation

"We know that women and girls are underrepresented in decision-making roles within sport and active recreation, there are clear participation differences, and opportunities for females in sport and active recreation are not always fair and equal"
PETER MISKIMMIN, CEO SPORT NZ, OCTOBER 2018

Our aim is to see more women and girls physically active through play, active recreation and sport.

- Vision – "Enabling women and girls to realise their potential in and through sport and active recreation."
- Three key priority areas that underpin the strategy:
 1. Leadership – more women and girls are leading, working, coaching and volunteering at all levels.
 2. Participation – more women and girls are physically active.
 3. Value and Visibility – women and girls in sport and active recreation are valued and visible.

1: 100% of Matakana PC members are female / 98.5% of questionnaire respondents are female

2: National Equestrian Facilities Strategy 2023

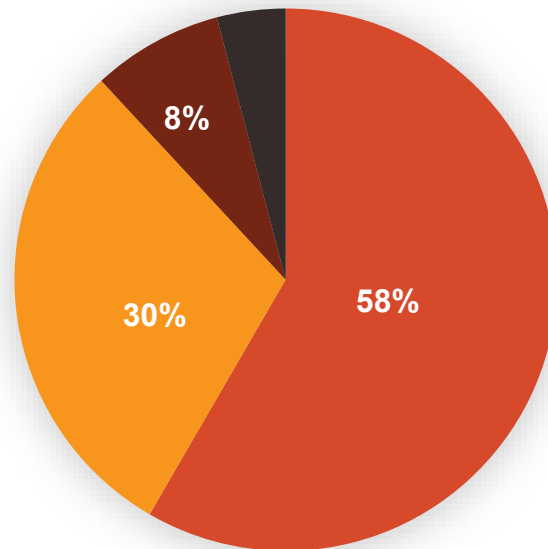


Our findings in summary

- Around 739 horses in this area are exercised OFF the property

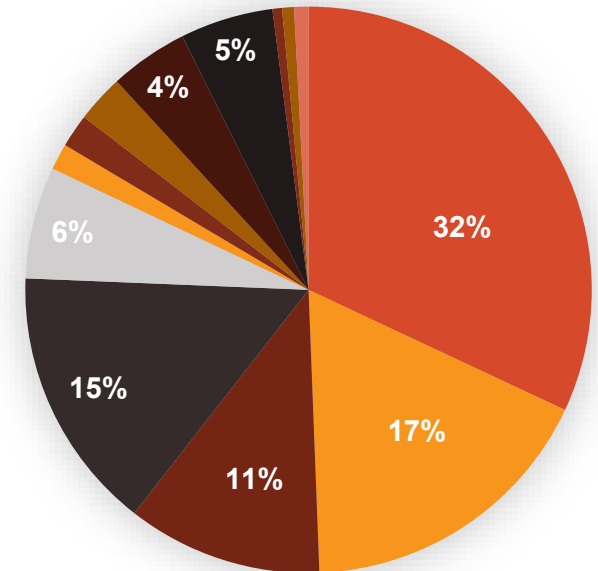
NB: This is not a total number of horses owned by responders. There will be horses on properties that are young, retired, brood mares etc. that are not included in this number – we are trying to ascertain shared, public access, not horse ownership.

How many horses / ponies do you / your family regularly exercise off your property?



■ 1 to 2 ■ 3 to 4 ■ 5 + ■ Riding School

What are your main horseriding disciplines?



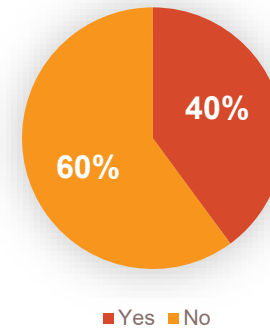
■ Hacking / trekking
■ Show Jumping / Show Hunter
■ Eventing
■ Dressage
■ Western / Cowboy Challenge
■ Endurance
■ Breeder
■ Hunting
■ In hand / Showing
■ Trainer / Instructor
■ Games
■ Working Equitation / Natural Horsemanship
■ Other



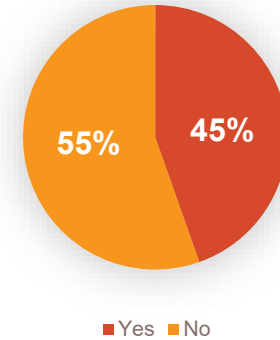
Our findings in summary

- Existing statistics do not represent full equestrian activity in our area and this questionnaire helps to fill the gaps:
 - 55% of respondents do not have a family member belonging to NZPCA
 - 60% of respondents do not have a family member belonging to ESNZ

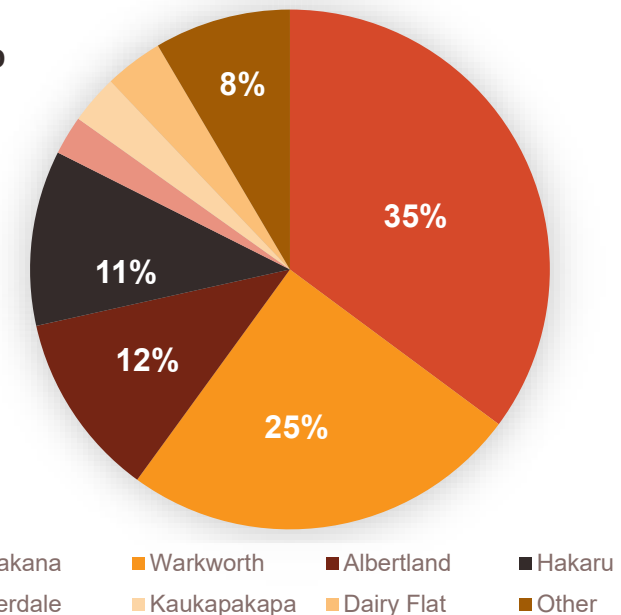
Are you registered with ESNZ?



Do you / family member attend a Pony Club?



If yes, to Pony Club which one(s)?

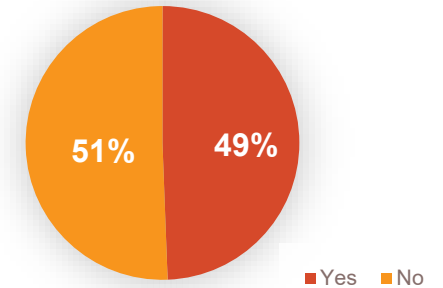




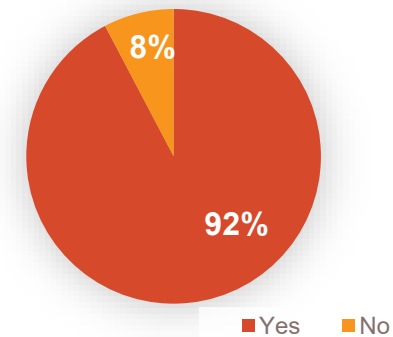
Our findings in summary

- 92% of people said ‘yes’ to riding in Regional Parks or public spaces but only 49% have a permit (it may be down to the outdated registration system as you need to download and print then post the form back to council)
- In this area, the only Regional Park with a dedicated parking and marked horse tracks is Ātui Creek
- Other public spaces identified do not have horse parking or designated areas
- The attraction to the Pacific Road, Forestry and Tomarata Lakes car parks ride location is far and wide as it offers the best year round riding options with the sandy trail options
- These figures represent only a small sample from the Warkworth, Matakana, and Wellsford area. Other locations—such as Mangawhai, Kaiwaka, Waipu, and Maungaturoto—have not yet been surveyed, and a more comprehensive study could be carried out

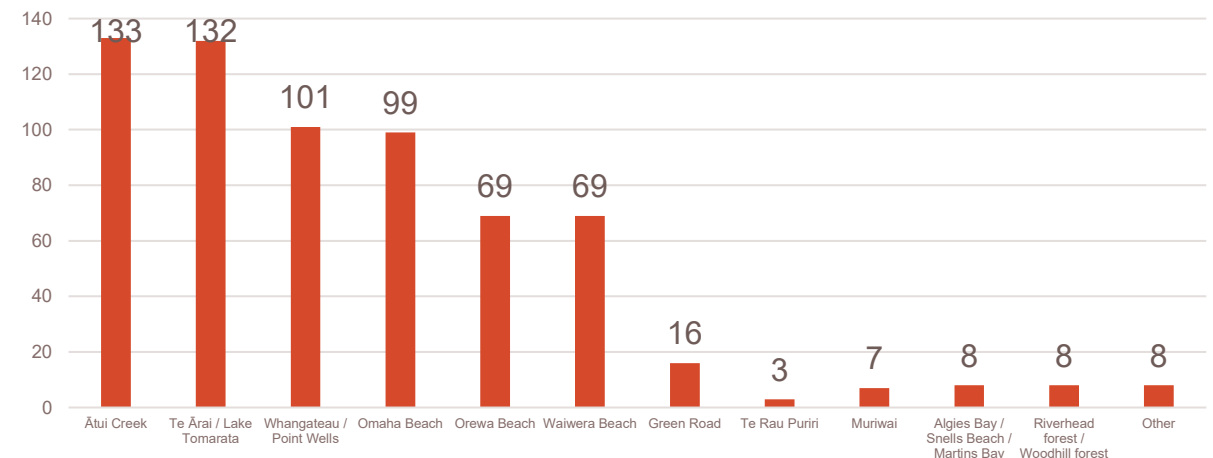
Do you / family member own a Auckland Regional Council Horse Riding Pass?



Do you / family member ride in any of the Regional Parks or Public spaces?



If yes, which ones?





Our findings in summary

- The 'Wish List' clearly shows a need for all weather facilities in our area and hacking facilities:
 - Riding / Pony Club Facility:
 - 110 would use 1 to 3 times a week,
 - 32 would 3 to 5 times a week
 - Full Equestrian Facility:
 - 90 would use 1 to 3 times a week,
 - 48 would 3 to 5 times a week
 - Hacking Facilities:
 - 129 would use 1 to 3 times a week,
 - 67 would 3 to 5 times a week

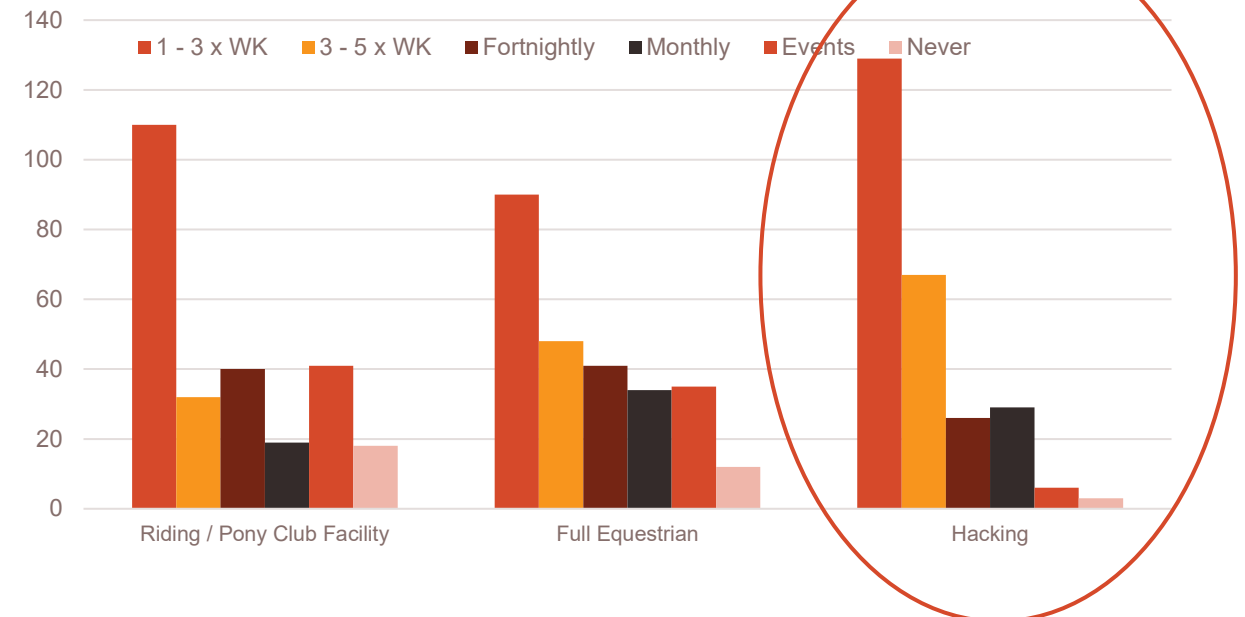
The following is a 'wish list' for our area
(Matakana, Warkworth, Wellsford):

1. Riding / Pony Club Facility: includes all weather sand arena, x country jumps, yards and a club house eg. Coatesville PC

2. Full Equestrian Facility: suitable for large events and competitions. For the purpose of multiple equestrian and educational groups including and not limited to; Dressage, Show Jumping, Eventing, Equitation, Showing, and the Pony Clubs Association. These facilities include a minimum of one 20 x 60m all weather dressage arena, one all weather 80 x 50m show jumping arena, riding and grazing paddocks that include a 4-6km cross country course. A club house and teaching facilities. Storage facilities, covered yards and wash bay. eg. Papatoetoe PC.

3. Hacking Facilities: riding tracks through park lands, farmland and forest with adequate parking. eg. Green Park

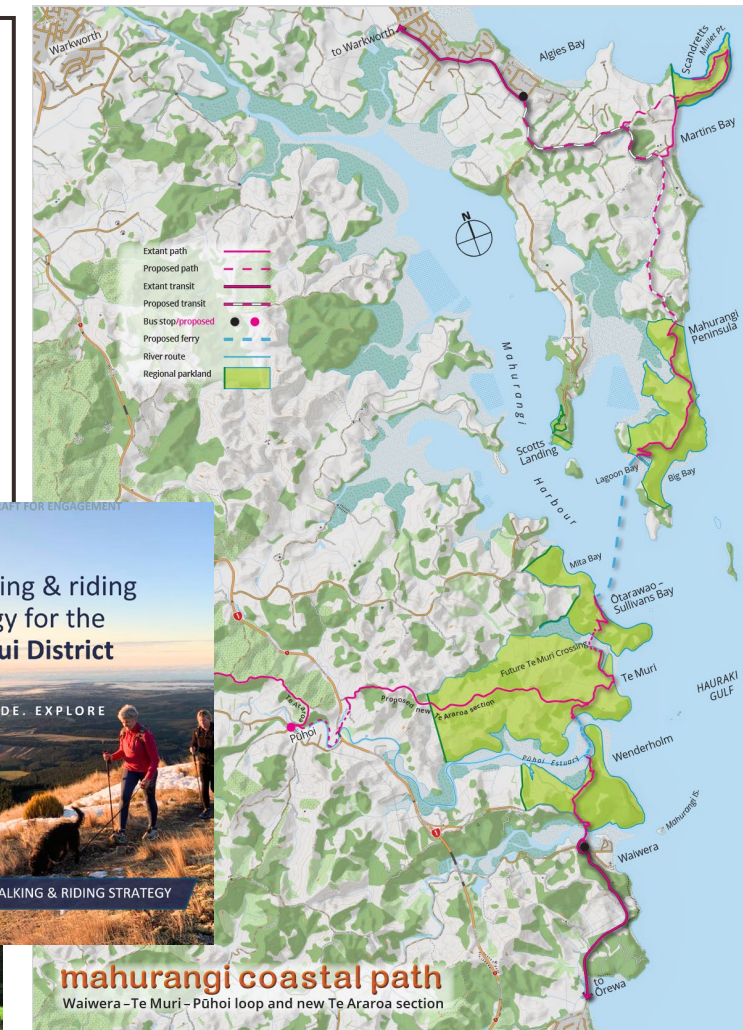
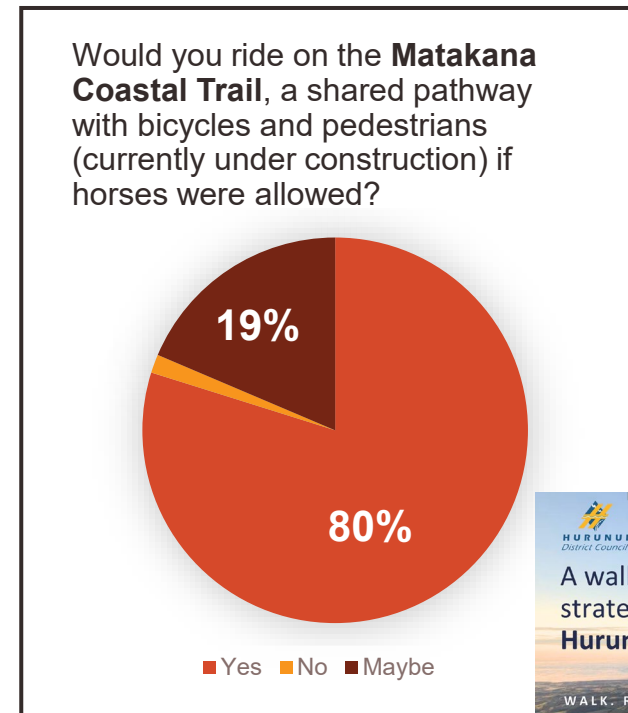
Please rate each according to how much you / your family would use them:





Our findings in summary

- 80% of respondents would use the Matakana Coastal Trail which currently does not allow horses
- NB: The Mahurangi Coast Trail starts in Puhoi and will go 11 Km through private land to Perry Rd. The trails will be shared cycle, bike, walking and equine trails
- We need a combined Cycleways, Walkways and Bridleways Strategy. This is successfully being used in Kāpiti Coast District, endorsed by the council and other agencies.
*"This strategy takes a broad view of walking so that people with physical or cognitive disabilities, limited or no vision or hearing and those in wheelchairs or on mobility scooters are included. Walking, cycling and horse riding are vital for healthy, happy individuals and safe, vibrant and sustainable communities. Providing facilities and support for these activities is a priority for the Kāpiti Coast District Council"*¹.
- As with Kāpiti Coast, these bridleways become a visitor destination, bringing more to the community
- Hurunui district has recently changed from a walking, cycling strategy to "walking, riding" so including cycling and horse riding. This is very exciting for the district, and has focus on residents but also active tourism





Horses in Regional Parks – basic requirements

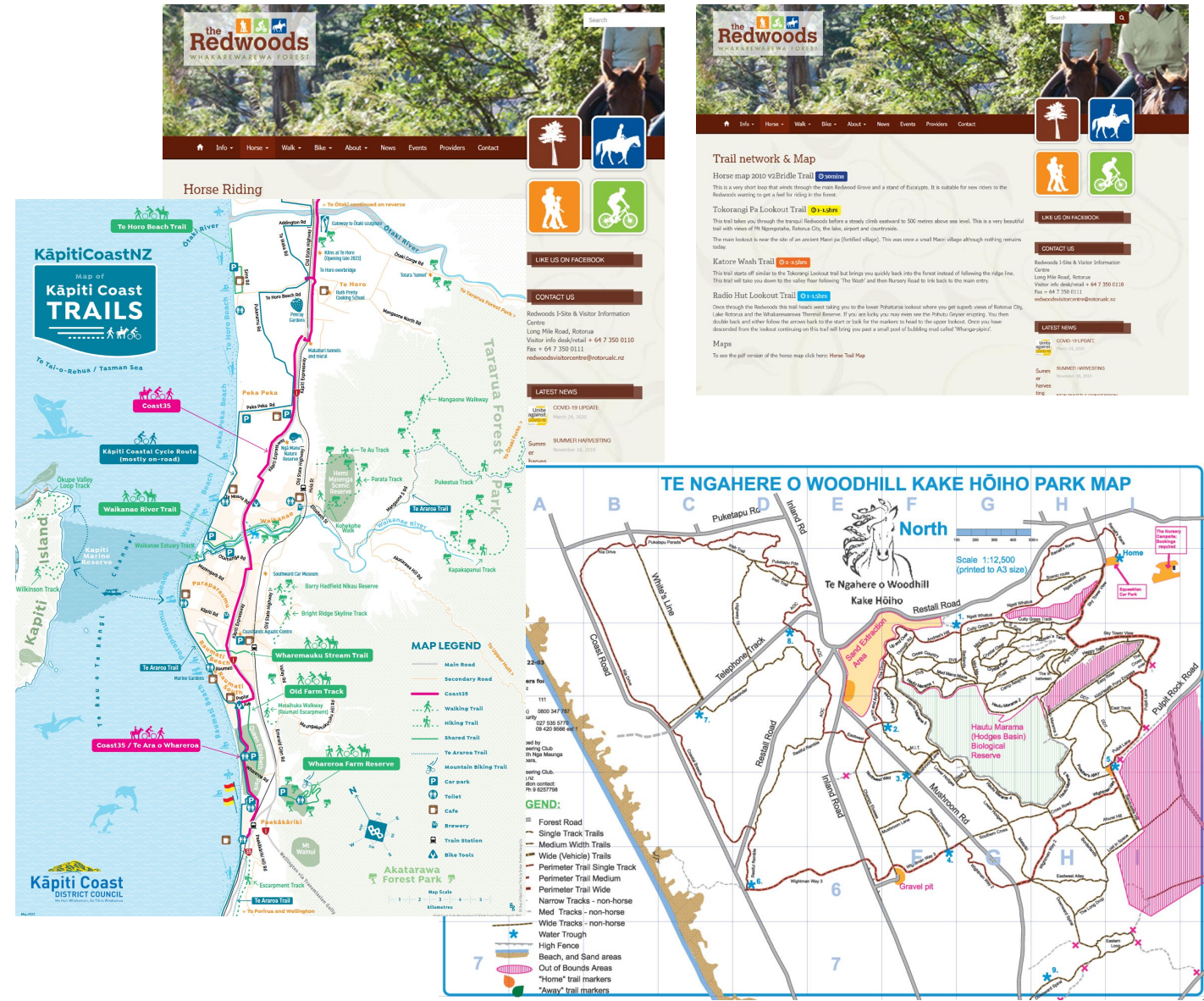
- General Signage
(example Pacific Road)
 - Directing where to park
 - Showing how to park
 - Rules / requirements





Horses in Regional Parks – basic requirements

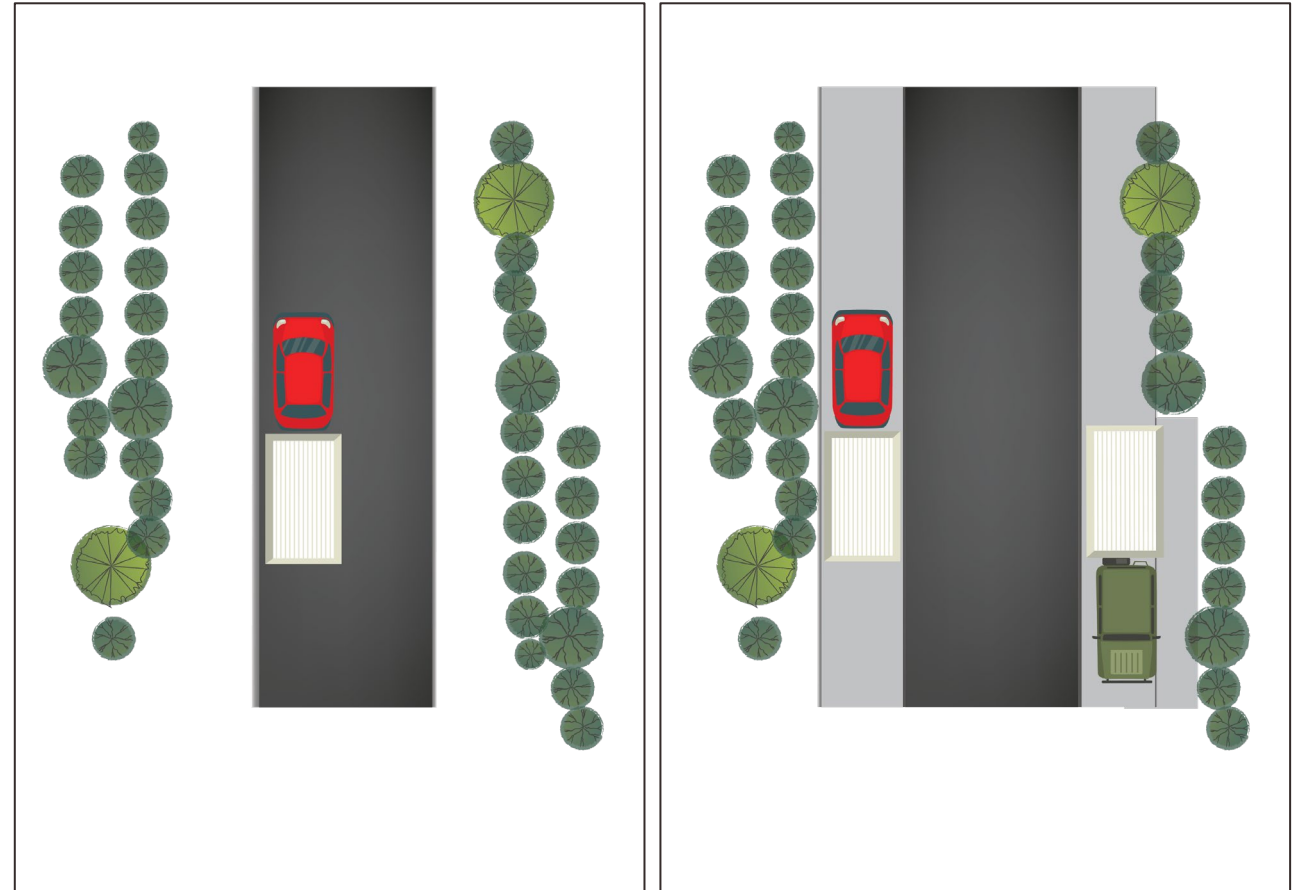
- Route Signage
 - could have easy, medium and long (see Redwoods example with colour coding)
 - We have experienced trekkers that can help suggest these routes
- Maps with routes key areas
- On-line information and downloadable maps





Horses in Regional Parks – basic requirements

- Float park if room
- Another alternative may be to widen the side of the road area for parking
- An example is Muriwai – a great example of an easy parking and turning circle, tie up areas with poo pits
- Trails do not need to be gravelled, most horse riders prefer no gravel and many are now without shoes so find this surface too rough
- Where you have shared paths:
 - If visibility is good, they needn't be 4 metres wide. An example of this is the St James Cycle Trail and Conservation area where there are many narrow trails
 - Signage and education on who gives way is imperative



Ātiu Creek - comments from a regular rider:

The farm itself at Ātiu Creek is just brilliant and they have done a wonderful job of creating some great places to ride.

The parking area for the horses though is too boggy, floats get stuck. The access to the farm itself is a tricky, muddy start to the ride, with a gate that you have to dismount to open and shut.

Riders got locked out the other day and went to the other entrance where the bike park is and it was awesome. The area was gravel, toilets, tables and much easier to ride straight into the park.

Can we improve the horse area or allow us to share with the cyclist entrance?





Other possible Regional Parks

Wenderholm / Te Muir / Mahurangi West

- Puhoi locals used to ride the farm there – excellent trekking
- If open to equestrians, riders from all over Auckland would frequent this park - the motorway terminates at Puhoi now, Albany, Coatesville, Henderson, Greenhithe and Massey are just a stones throw away.
 - If an annual membership was \$100 (this is reasonable, Woodhill Forest charges \$350) x 1,000 riders = \$100k
 - One offs rides \$10 (Woodhill Forest charges \$30)
 - Charge for camping at Te Muir or Sullivan's Bay campground
 - We can research to get estimated numbers
- Access via Hungry Creek Road or Ngarewa Drive requires upgrading - the numbers would justify spending capital on roading and internal Te Muri infrastructure
- Upgrading the road will also benefit other visitors (cyclists, walkers, tour buses etc.) as well as locals

Controlled activities	Description of site (if applicable)	Restrictions/conditions
Recreational horse riding	Recreational horse riding will not be permitted until Hungry Creek Road has been upgraded or safe and appropriate alternative access has been developed. Initially this will be managed as a discretionary activity until demand establishes a need to develop dedicated horse facilities, at which time it will be managed as a controlled activity on designated routes. Restrictions will apply to protect sites of value to mana whenua, sensitive historic heritage, archaeological sites and ecological areas.	Subject to Hungry Creek Road being made safe for the passage of horse floats. Riders must obtain an annual horse riding pass. Access may be denied for periods because of park operations, such as farming operations, track repair and pest control or poor ground conditions. Check the Council website.





Other possible Regional Parks

Wenderholm / Te Muir / Mahurangi West cont...

- Upgrading the road will also benefit other visitors (cyclists, walkers, tour buses etc.) as well as locals
- The increase in equestrians arriving to ride your trails - this has a flow on effect to those who can host equestrians, a paddock, a bnb, all sorts of accommodation would be considered. Trail riders travel all over NZ looking for places to ride
- The Tearoa Trail had 5000 registered users last summer, the Puhoi Loop track, which is part of the trail was getting 500 a weekend - build the infrastructure and the patrons will come
- Ideal stopover location for either schooling or staying the night for the northland riders when they're travelling long distances to the Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Hawke's Bay, or the southern riders when they're heading north. At the moment these riders often just push through to Taupo.
- Investigate links to 'Non formed roads' for alternative access

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Other possible Regional Parks

- Possible 'equestrian areas' with a dedicated area with jumping, cross country, flat area
 - Eg. McLaren Falls equestrian area shared with the Tauranga Pony Club: 13 hectares of cross country riding ground
- Scandrett Park / Martins Bay
- Tāwharanui Regional Park
- Pakiri Regional Park





How can we help?

- Signage
- Volunteer hours to help maintain trails
- Fund raising



Some comments from the survey that resonate

- This area is very under resourced for public equestrian facilities. Losing pony club grounds compounds the problem of finding safe, local places to travel to in order to enjoy our sport.
- Please consider how effectively other countries have included horse riding in their communities
- Having been members of Coatsville, Huapai, Wainoni, Whenuapai, Rosedale pony clubs it is vital in this economic and decreasing land availability for councils to support pony clubs as part of the other codes they provide / support for within the community.
- For a rural area we have very limited safe hacking areas close by other than beaches where tides and summer hours limited riding times. Local horse riders would love to be accommodated for on the Matakana Coastal Trail and would probably appreciate and use it more than cyclists who already have many more options than horse riders.
- It would be nice to have options local so we don't have to travel so far! I feel like our options are getting less and less at the moment!
- If you make the jumping arena 80 x 60m you might be able to hold larger dressage shows with 3 arenas on a good surface. The long term viability of Woodhill sands is in question. If Auckland loses the woodhill facility, then the nearest and only other comparable facility would be papatoetoe pony club. Eventing Waitemata doesn't currently have a venue and have been looking for somewhere to hold horse trials for years. That's a decent length of xc tracks so could potentially be an option. With the extension of the northern corridor, this area will be very accessible to the northland riders, many of who regularly travel to woodhill sands to compete and train. It could also be an ideal stopover location for either schooling or staying the night for the northland riders when they're travelling long distances to the Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Hawkes Bay, or the southern riders when they're heading north. At the moment these riders often just push through to Taupo.
- Auckland Waitemata area has the largest number of registered & pleasure riders in NEW ZEALAND. For our youth & children this is a wonderful sport to participate in, as it is for the older /mature riders. I have ridden all my life & it's sad to see equestrian sports being phased out of this area. Please include horses for the Matakana Coastal trail. The Greens road horse park has been a huge hit!



Some comments from the survey that resonate

- Please include horses for the Matakana Coastal trail. The Greens road horse park has been a huge hit!
- We are 3rd generation riders on both sides of the family, horses are in our blood and both our children have had horses since they were 5yrs old, as did I and as did my parents and mother in law. My sons compete individually, for their Pony Club, for their District and for their school. This area with the increased population is losing its country charm and the types of facilities that help promote this thriving sport - there are some exceptionally talented equestrians in this area which is something as a community we can feel incredibly proud of, especially when these kids are out representing the area. Please, please, please help keep this wonderful sport alive in our country town for my children's generation and generations to come. This support has provided my sons an outlet for energy, a way to connect with animals and I can't imagine many other sports that teaches resilience quite like this.
- You cannot live where we live and not have horses as a full integral part of the community!
- Save our spaces and create ones as it is very hard to ride around here with limited farm access etc and any trails
- There is a need for equestrian facilities here, being "rural" to the bone and still so little to offer for horse riders is a disgrace.
- Please give us more space for riding.
- Horse riding facilities everywhere are under pressure from expanding urban boundaries. Please don't let our young people lose the connection to the land and country that gives NZ its special character.
- Quite literally printed the regional pass off to fill out last night! Normally ride with friends so am only just discovering these places even though I've lived in the area 20years! Please consider build it and they will come. There are lots of people that would love to move closer to equestrian facilities if they existed. More usage means more investment opportunities if there was a hire fee associated with it.
- Please provide more facilities for equestrian hacking. We are frequently prohibited whereas cyclists and walkers are accommodated.



Some comments from the survey that resonate

- If a shared space is being considered (continued) then the questions here should include anyone who would like to keep the grounds for general use and other purposes like dog walking or just having a green space surrounding their homes to look into. Also Outside visitors who like to see the pony club & grounds on market days or when they visit as part of the matakana rural tourist 'features'. This way more support & signatures are likely from the general community and further afar.
- Please could council accomodate horses on all trails along with walkers, cycle tracks these are able to be shared tracks and crossings should be made horse safe.
- It's so important to have access to these facilities for our mental health, animal wellbeing with variety for them and fun, promotion of events is crucial for clubs and our gorgeous region should be enjoyed on horseback more.
- Equestrian is a much needed sport with much needed accessibility for all people.
- Please keep riding facities for horse riders... The regional parks are fantastic... We just need more!
- There's very few places for riders and non riding horse owners to take horses. Years ago the waitemata/rodney area had the highest number of recreational riders in the Southern Hemisphere. We need places to ride and lead our horses, the roads are not safe, we also need places to train and compete. If there was other dedicated trails I'd use them. I've had horses for 50 years and it's getting harder and harder for horse owners to enjoy their sport due to few facilities available.
- More bridleways and riding facilities need to be available in the region.
- We love having these wonderful riding locations would be devastating to lose them
- The Lake Tomarata riding area needs to have safer access. It is too dangerous to be sharing the space with boaties and jet skiers. You can arrive early in the morning when the car park is empty but when you return it is likely to be full of boats and trailers, boats and jet skis being revved onto trailers, cars parked around your loading ramp so you have to weave in and out of expensive cars to load and keep your fingers crossed your horse won't spook and slam into someone's car. I have written to the council to request a separate car park be considered for horse floats but never heard back. Possibly more voices might elicit a response.



Some comments from the survey that resonate

- We use Green Rd almost every weekend - you only have to look at the carpark full of horse trucks and floats to see how well used any riding facilities will be... more places to ride would be amazing!
- Reducing facilities for equestrian sports where the majority of riders are female tee
- Horse riding and caring for/ owning our own horses have given my children grounding, learning responsibilities and resilience, focus, kindness, patience, connection to and caring for the land they are riding on and the connection to the wider community, sharing their passion with younger members of the wider community and so so much more. And last but not least it keeps them off the streets and getting into trouble. nagers is ludicrous and short sighted.
- With a young daughter in pony club and having grown up attending pony club and related events myself it is so important to preserve access to these clubs and facilities for community, instruction and the safe enjoyment of our sport. It feels like equestrians are always having to defend the use of land for their sport to a disproportionate extent than any other sports in this country, which is unfair. As more and more rural blocks are divided up into lifestyle blocks, having a variety of public options for horse riding is more important than ever.
We find that people are largely very receptive to seeing us and our horses out riding enjoying local beaches respectfully; people often stopping us to comment how nice it is to see me and my daughter out with our horses. With the drive to improve cycle ways access in the area with the Matakana coastal trail, it would be great to see equestrians also able to enjoy these same (or similar) facilities/opportunities.
We love Atui Creek but it is quite a drive away; I wondered if there was possibility horse riding may be considered for the newer regional park in Mahurangi East area - that would be amazing!
- We are in desperate need of safe off road riding spaces and all weather arenas on the eastern side of North Auckland and our family
- Big yes to facilities and safe places to hack that don't involve a huge drive each timeuld fully support a facility and tracks



Thank you