

# Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Park Recreation Plan

This report has been developed as a scoping exercise prior to the proposed development of Lake Wairarapa Wetland Park.



Photo: Jeremy Paterson

**Greater Wellington  
Department of Conservation**

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# Contents

<b>1. SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Recommendations .....	3
<b>2. CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	5
2.2 Aim .....	5
2.3 Scope.....	5
2.4 Existing Strategies and Plans .....	5
2.4.1 Department of Conservation .....	5
2.4.2 Greater Wellington .....	5
2.4.3 Other plans.....	6
2.5 Contributions.....	6
2.5.1 Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee – Initial Survey .....	6
<b>3. CURRENT SITUATION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Site context.....	7
3.2 Regional Recreation Context.....	7
<b>4. PLANS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.</b>	

<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>5.1 Appendix A</b> .....	<b>16</b>
5.1.1 Lake Wairarapa Wetlands – current tenure.....	16
<b>5.2 Appendix B</b> .....	<b>17</b>
5.2.1 Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee - Survey Results .....	17

## 1. Summary

At present the recreational use of Lake Wairarapa and surrounds include waterfowl hunting, bird watching and recreational fishing. There is also some camping at Lake Domain, picnicking, walking, trail bike riding, motorised off road vehicles (MORV's) and windsurfing.

Overall the use of the lake by locals and visitors is limited. The majority of visitors to the lake are waterfowl hunters.

The limited use by visitors appears to be a result of:

- a lack of awareness by the public of the lake and what you can do there
- a lack of an obvious route to the lake with no clear signage
- run down or lack of facilities
- weather conditions – the lake and its surrounds are exposed to winds

### 1.1 Recommendations

The recommendations provided relate to the lake and its surrounds. For site specific recommendations please see the following Preliminary Landscape Plans.

#### Short/medium term recommendations (1- 5 years):

1. Carry out research at key sites into visitor numbers and recreational use to gain an understanding of existing visitation.
2. Develop Lake Domain Reserve as the key entry point / node for recreation and interpretation activities at Lake Wairarapa.
3. Develop Boggy Pond, Matthews Lagoon and Oporua Spillway along with Lake Wairarapa Scenic Reserve as nodes for passive recreation.
4. Assess and demolish old and unsafe buildings such as the toilet block at the western end of Lake Domain reserve.
5. Maintain existing tracks at nodes identified in the Preliminary Landscape Plans. In time upgrade these tracks to meet the Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures SNZ HB 8630:2004 standard.

6. Mark the start and end of existing tracks with track times and distances.
7. Investigate bridging options along the Ruamahanga River between tracks 41 and 43 to provide a continuous track along the river edge (see page 7 for map).
8. Investigate and improve directional signage from towns including Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough.
9. Investigate providing information boards in the local towns of Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough on the values of the lake, why it is special and what you can do there.

3. Create links, where feasible between different node areas-may require access easements
4. Investigate the need for additional facility structures such as toilets and camping buildings and their potential location.
5. Investigate and upgrade other tracks around the lake to meet the Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures SNZ HB 8630:2004 standard.



#### Long term recommendations (5-10 years):

1. Once the park has been vested and a Park Board established, involve the community in park development through 'on the ground' publicised events and a 'vision' setting process. There may be opportunities for community involvement in ecological restoration.
2. Develop an information and interpretation plan for the lake area

Information required includes:

- the start and end of tracks marked, walking times, location of facilities.
- what is special about the lake and where you might see it including flora and fauna.

Interpretation includes:

Telling the stories of the lake such as

- the long Maori association with the lake
- pioneer farming
- the special ecology of the lake including the flora and fauna
- integrated catchment management
- flood control including the Polder Scheme

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Introduction

Lake Wairarapa and its associated wetlands is one of the largest wetland complexes in the North Island and is internationally recognised for its flora and fauna. It is also used for a limited range of recreation activities. The lake is generally little known or visited by locals and other visitors despite its size (approximately 7800 hectares) and its proximity to Wellington.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) with Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) are working together on the future management and development of Lake Wairarapa as a Wetland Park. As part of this vision an assessment of the current uses and future opportunities for recreation are being planned for.

DOC and GW would like to begin a joint management arrangement under the governance of a single entity most likely to be a Park Board. The Board, yet to be established, would be made up of representatives from Iwi, Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington. The land would then be vested with the Board, with the majority of funding provided by Greater Wellington Regional Council.

The following report is presented with a summary of short/medium term actions and long term recommendations and then a series of maps and plans from a regional perspective, down to the concept landscape plans for individual nodes. A summary analysis has been provided at the back of this document from the *Lake Wairarapa Action Plan 2000-2010* of the values and issues facing the lake.

### 2.2 Aim

The aim of this scoping report is to provide a preliminary assessment of the existing and potential recreational opportunities for the proposed wetland park. The report will look at existing recreational facilities and users of the lake including casual visitors, clubs and sporting organisations and include potential links between recreational areas surrounding the lake and the development of key nodes including new facilities, walkways and structures.

This report will make up part of the picture when forming an overall vision for the lake. A Restoration Strategy and Implementation Plan for indigenous vegetation plant species of the Eastern Shoreline is currently being written in tandem with this report.

The overall vision for the lake should be developed in close consultation with the community and reflect the other important values and issues including the unique ecology, flora and fauna, restoration opportunities, heritage and tangata whenua.

### 2.3 Scope

The scope of this report includes:

- reference to the 'Active Wairarapa' publication in terms of recreation goals.

- consideration of issues raised in the *Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000 – 2010*, pages 38 & 39.
- An assessment of 'Goal 3: 'To allow for recreational use of the Lake Wairarapa Wetlands whilst ensuring the protection of ecological, cultural and historic values' of the *Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000 – 2010*, page 32 ff. for implementation options.
- a focus on key sites for short term development such as Lake Domain, Boggy Pond and Lakeshore Reserve, and links between sites for long term planning and landscape development.
- a description of current recreational activities around the lake and planning for these and any potential new recreational activities.
- Concept ideas for priority sites, showing signage, walking tracks and location of structures.
- recommendations for track standards etc, so that any eventual linking of nodes provides a consistent standard of facilities.
- linkages with other nearby recreation sites (e.g. Cross Creek/Rimutaka Incline, round-the-lake biking opportunities).

Not included:

- As this is a scoping report prior to the establishment of a 'wetland park' a wide community consultation has not been completed. A meaningful consultation process would be more appropriately timed once the Park Board has been established and the Park vested.
- The plan does not include detailed drawings including planting plans, design drawings and/or structure scope.

### 2.4 Existing Strategies and Plans

#### 2.4.1 Department of Conservation

The *Department of Conservation's Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for Wellington 1996–2005* identified the need to prepare a "site plan" for the Lake Wairarapa Wetlands. The "*Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Management Guidelines 1991*" and the *Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000 – 2010* (both non-statutory documents) provide a framework and guiding principles for overall management of the wetlands.

The Lake Wairarapa Wetlands is identified in the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy as a special wildlife habitat, and as a key recreation and tourist attraction

#### 2.4.2 Greater Wellington

##### Long Term Council Community Plan

The proposed joint management of Lake Wairarapa is signalled as a goal in the *Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016*.

##### Wetland Action Plan 2003

Greater Wellington's *Wetland Action Plan, 2003* sets out the Council's responsibility for protecting wetland systems. Section 4.4 states the need for the Council to work with other agencies and Iwi to improve Lake Wairarapa and outlines actions that can be taken to do this.

### 2.4.3 Other plans

#### Action Wairarapa (Wairarapa Physical Activity Plan 2005 - 2008)

Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils and Sport Wairarapa initiated the development of a regional physical activity plan, supported by funding from SPARC, the Sport and Recreation Agency of New Zealand. The purpose of the plan is to develop strategies to increase the level of physical activity in the Wairarapa.

## 2.5 Contributions

Greater Wellington and the Department of Conservation are working jointly to develop this background report on recreation opportunities for the lake.

Contributions have been made by Department of Conservation staff, Greater Wellington staff, Featherston Family 4x4 and Yacht Club, South Wairarapa District Council, Fish & Game, Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee, and the Wairarapa Rural Education Activities Programme.

### 2.5.1 Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee – Initial Survey

The Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee was set up in 1990 and includes a range of interest groups, landowners and agencies. The purpose of the committee is to help achieve integrated management and to enable a forum for any new issues that have arisen to be discussed. A two page questionnaire was sent to 21 members of the Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee to seek out their initial views. Five were returned with the following summarised responses - see appendix for full questions and responses.

#### 1. What do you value about the lake?

- The majority enjoyed the opportunity to watch and study birdlife in the peaceful surrounds of the wetlands.
- Grazing was listed by one of the respondents.
- It was also noted that there's a lot of untapped resources around the lake.

#### 2. What activities do you or others do on or around the lake?

- The main activity is bird watching, followed by water sports, fishing and hunting.

#### 3. Where are the main places you recreate or see recreation taking place?

- Predominantly mentioned were Lake Domain, Lakeshore Reserve, Lake Onoke and Boggy Pond.

#### 4. What opportunities do you see for any new recreational activities occurring on or around the lake?

- Improvement of existing tracks and development of new tracks and boardwalks with bird hides.
- New and more signage (information and interpretation).
- Better developed camping at Lake Domain.

- Tours and information relating to the history and people of the lake (for example the drainage scheme).
- Native planting programmes.
- Upgrade and fix the boat ramp at Lake Domain/Yachting Club.
- One of the respondents couldn't see any development potential due to the wild weather.

#### 5. How do you see the lake in 20 years time?

- Development and provision of a wide range of marked and signposted walking and cycling tracks around the lake, that include interpretation panels, viewing platforms and hides with a focus on birdwatching.
- An education centre and camping at Lake Domain – better developed and promoted.
- A range of picnic spots on all key sites.
- Native planting projects around the lake.
- Potential RAMSAR site that includes all of the wetlands to create an ecological tourist attraction.
- Hunting only to be allowed in areas managed by Fish & Game.

Overall the majority of respondents were in favour of recreational development around the lake at key sites, but we note the low number of responses received.



### 3. Current Situation

#### 3.1 Site context

Lake Wairapapa and its associated wetlands is located at the southern end of the Wairarapa plains between the Rimutaka Range to the west and the Aorangi Range to the east. Both ranges are managed by the Department of Conservation as forest parks.

At present the lake is managed by the Department of Conservation under the *Conservation Act 1987*. The land surrounding it is a mix of farmland and reserves. Much of the farmland is owned privately, while some reserves are held by the Crown under the *Reserves Act 1977* and other agencies including South Wairarapa District Council, Greater Wellington and Fish and Game Council.

Wairarapa's population at the 1996 census was 38,511 of which 28,275 people live in urban areas of Masterton, Carterton, Greytown, Martinborough and Featherston.

The closest towns to the lake are Featherston and Martinborough. Featherston (pop. 2500) at the bottom of the Rimutaka Range on SH2, is approximately a 10 minute drive from Lake Domain Reserve along sealed roads. Martinborough (pop.1600) has access to the lake from Boggy Pond/ Matthews Lagoon and Lake Domain Reserve.

The small coastal settlement of Lake Ferry is located on the edge of Lake Onoke (Lake Ferry).

#### 3.2 Regional Recreation Context

##### Camping

Camping is available in DOC reserves on the edge of the Tararua Range at Waiohine Gorge, Mount Holdsworth and Kiriwhakapapa road ends, and on the south coast at the Putangirua Pinnacles camp site. Serviced campgrounds are located at Featherston, Greytown, Martinborough and Masterton.

##### Tramping and hunting

Tramping and hunting are popular recreational activities in the Tararua, Rimutaka and Aorangi Forest Parks.

##### Walking

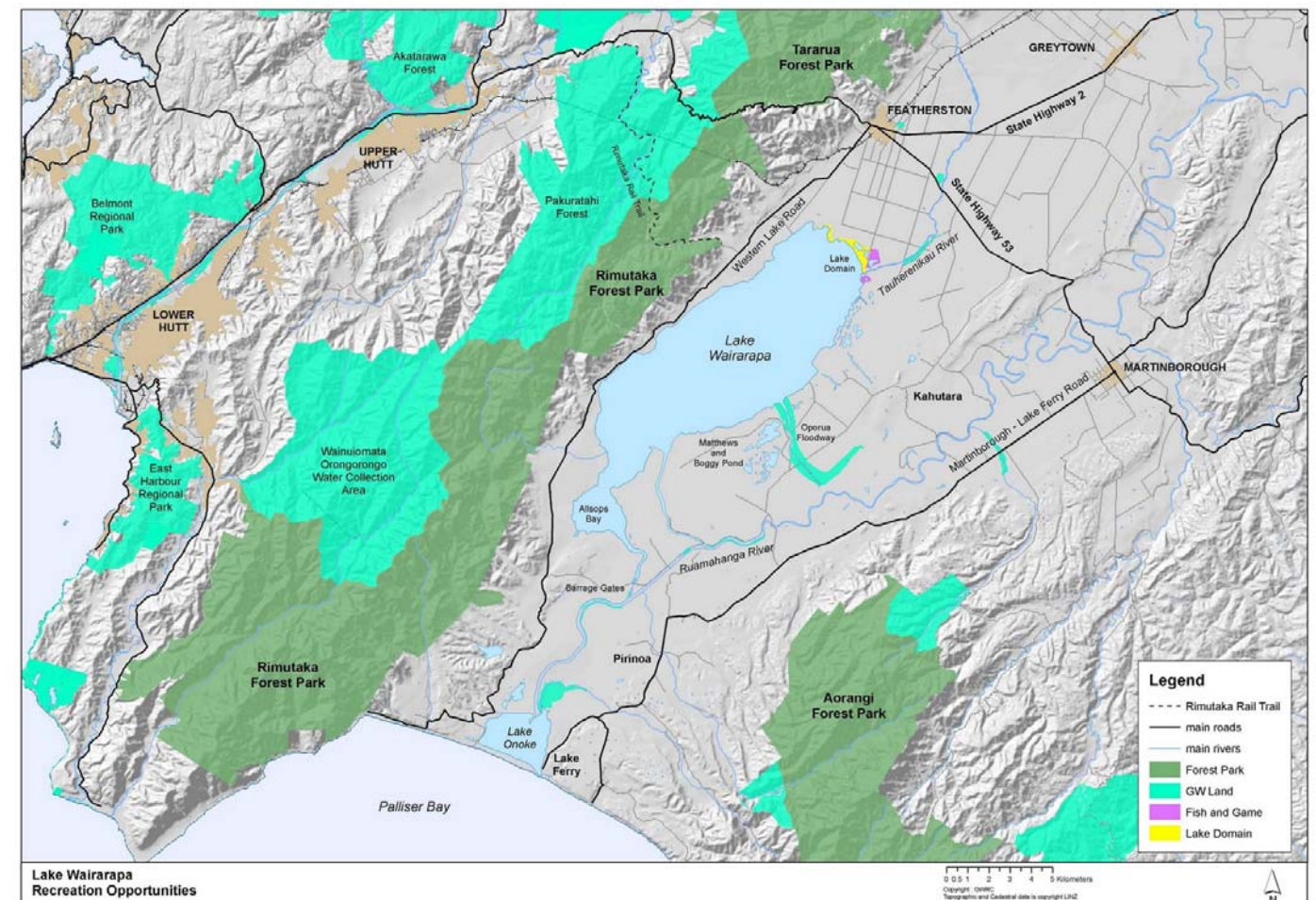
Short walks available on Department of Conservation managed reserves include:

- Rimutaka Incline off the Western Lake Road
- Carter Scenic Reserve, 12 km south-east of Carterton
- RW Tait Scenic Reserve on the outskirts of Greytown
- WA Miller Scenic Reserve north of Mt Bruce at Kaipororo.
- Walks along the rugged coastline at Castlepoint Scenic Reserve
- Honeycomb Rock Walkway on the Wairarapa Coast.

Other walks not managed by DOC include walking along the rugged coast of Ocean Beach and around Lake Henley in Masterton.

#### Other activities in the Wairarapa region include:

- Mountain biking the Rimutaka Incline , golf, horse treks, hunting
- Winery tours, wine & food festivals, markets, art & craft galleries, museums/archives and garden tours.
- Greytown, Carterton, Masterton with shops, restaurants, arts & crafts.
- Ngawi fishing village
- Maori culture
- History, geology and wildlife watching (seals) at Cape Palliser.
- Environmental education at Pukaha Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre in northern Wairarapa.
- 4-wheel driving, abseiling, bird watching, diving, farm tours, fishing, four wheeler safaris (farm bikes)
- Jet boating, rafting and canoeing, sailing, surfing, wind surfing and waterskiing
- Hang gliding and parapenting



#### **4. Plans**

**Existing recreation activities**

**Potential future short term actions and long term recommendations**

**Lake Domain Reserve – West, Preliminary Landscape Concept**

**Lake Domain Reserve – East, Preliminary Landscape Concept**

**Boggy Pond/Matthews Lagoon and Oporua Spillway, Preliminary Landscape Concept**

**Values – a desktop exercise using the Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000 – 2010**

**Issues – a desktop exercise using the Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000 – 2010**





## Game bird hunting

Game bird hunting is one of the main recreational activities around Lake Wairarapa. The 2 month duck shooting season runs from May to June. Most hunting occurs on the eastern side of the lake within reserve areas, with a small amount on the western side mainly on private land.

There are around 70 stands built by individuals and licensed by Fish & Game, mostly located on the eastern shore. A draft agreement between Fish & Game and DOC is awaiting approval. The agreement will set minimum construction standards for stands, remove old stands, allocate stands and monitoring/ enforcement. The plan includes 15 new stands to be built along the eastern shore by Fish & Game.

The birds hunted are ducks (mallard, grey duck, New Zealand shoveler and paradise shelduck), black swans, Canada geese and pukeko.

Fish & Game have been instrumental in ensuring Lake Wairarapa is maintained as a wetland habitat.



## Walking

At present there are limited walking opportunities for the public around the lake. The walks that are available generally follow stopbanks, completed as part of the flood control scheme.

A pamphlet on Wairarapa walks does include walks available around the lake. The tracks however are hard to find as there is generally no signage to indicate the start of a track, no track information and the tracks are poorly maintained.

### Current walks listed in the Wairarapa Walks Brochure

- 31 Rimutaka Incline (Walk)
- 35 Waiorongomai Valley (Track)
- 36 Battery Stream and Wharepapa River (Track)
- 39 Western Palliser Bay Coastal Walk (Track)
- 40. The Spit, Lake Onoke (Route)
- 41. Lake Onoke and Ruamahunga Stopbank (Walk)
- 42. Kumenga Lakeside Walk(Walk)
- 43. Ruamahunga Western Stopbank (Walk)
- 44. Eastern Shore, Lake Wairarapa (Route)
- 45. Matthews Lagoon and Boggy Pond (Track)
- 46. Wairarapa Lake Domain (Walk)
- 47. Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve



## Picnicking / camping

The most frequently used area for picnicking and camping is Lake Domain Reserve at the northern end of the lake, especially during the summer months.

Lake Domain provides access to the lake, large open spaces and some shade. However the area is very exposed during windy days - which are frequent.

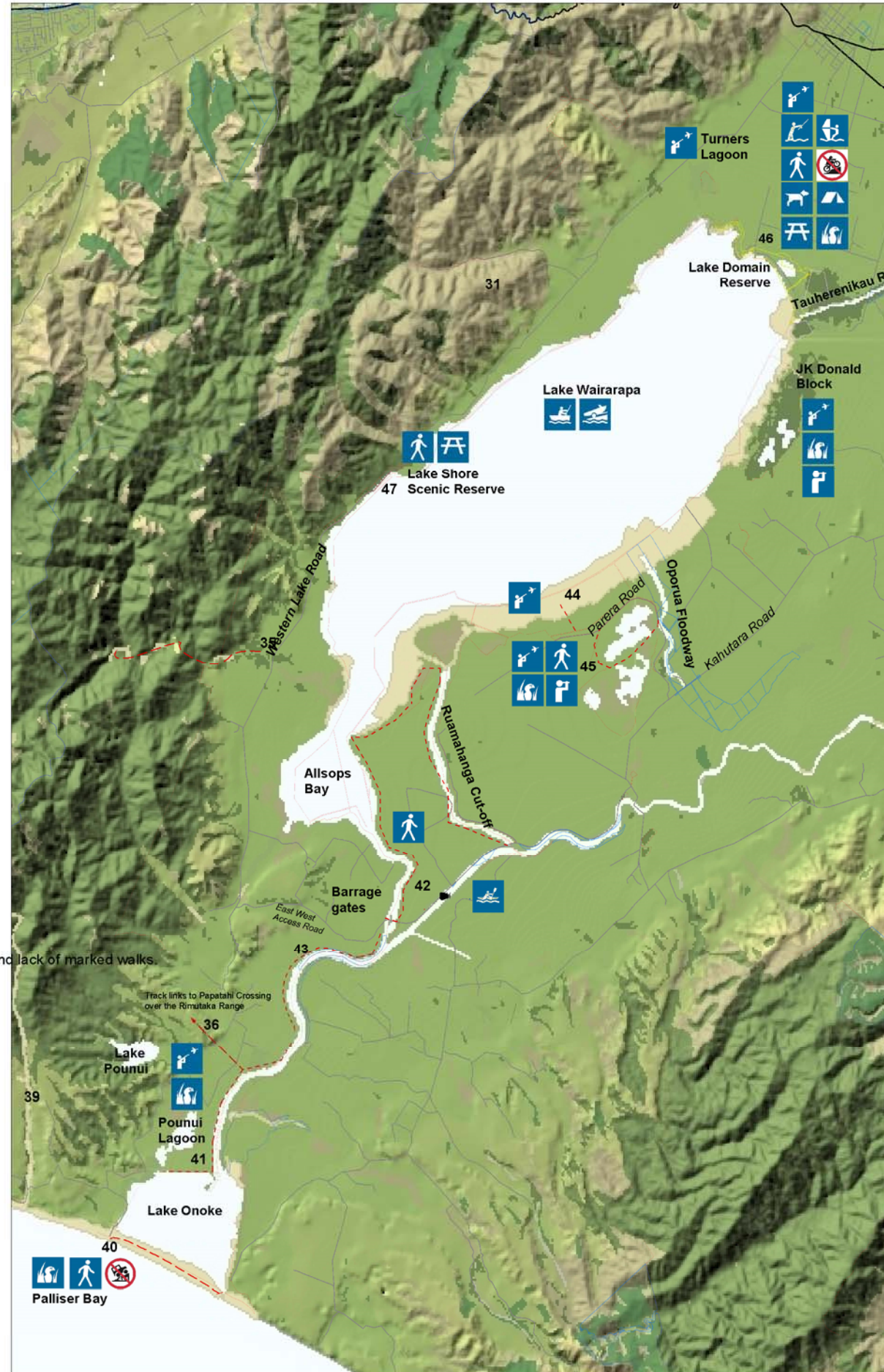
At present Lake Domain is used by a limited number of visitors. Factors limiting its use include a lack of awareness of the reserve, delapidated facilities, climate and lack of marked walks.

Lake Shore Reserve on the western side of the lake has easy access to the lake but it also has delapidated signage, picnic tables and is poorly maintained.

## Key

	Fishing		Boating		Wildlife		No 4WD
	Wind surfing		Camping		Picnicking		No trail biking
	Game shooting		Bird watching		Biking		
	Trail biking		Dog walking		Walking		
	Swimming		4WD		Fishing from a boat		
	Kayaking						

36, 39, 40, 41, Existing walks  
42, 43, 44, 45, open to the public  
46, 47



## Boating, sailing, windsurfing, kayaking

There is limited boating activities on the lake partly due to the shallow depth of the water. It is approximately 2.5 metres at its deepest. This limits the type and frequency of boating on the lake.

Different yacht clubs run approximately 2 regattas each year. Wind surfers from around the region use the lake in summer along with recreational motor boats.

Powerboats have organised races along the Ruamahunga River. The river is also used by Kahutara Canoes (which run a commercial kayaking venture).



## Fishing

Fishing is a popular activity on and around the lake. Trout, perch, mullet and flounder are the main species caught. There is some eeling by iwi and commercial fishing companies.



## Trail biking / 4WD vehicles

At present there is some use by 4WD vehicles at Lake Onoke Spit and Lake Domain Reserve. The Lake Wairarapa Guidelines (1991) have a policy to restrict the use of vehicles to formed roads and tracks only, except for management purposes. Trail bikes are thought to have led to a total breeding failure of Caspian terns on Onoke Spit in some years. Trail bikes also use Lake Domain Reserve, riding along the dune area.



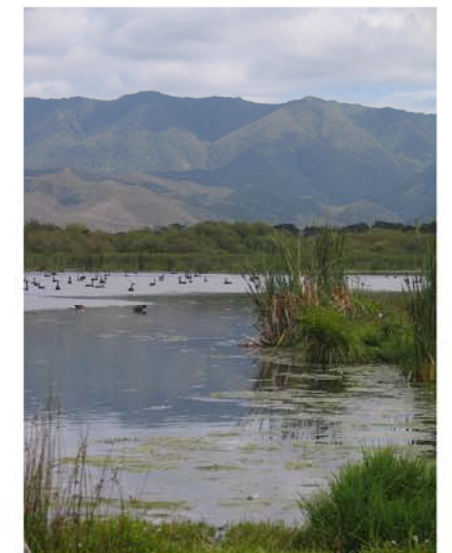
## Birdwatching

There are significant opportunities for birdwatching around Lake Wairarapa especially on the eastern shore, however to access most areas you need to know the area well as tracks are not signed.

Some groups visit such as the Ornithological Society.

## Mahinga Kai

The wetlands were an important source of kaiwairua to Maori. There has been considerable loss of the vast majority of wetland habitat, traditional fishing sites and sources of plant material. The remaining areas containing mahinga kai are of great value to iwi/hapu. Tuna (eels), raupo and harakeke are the most common food gathered today (Airey *et al.*).



Wetland in Lake Domain Reserve

Drawn by Annabel Riley  
Checked: Graham Laws  
Recommended: Philippa Crisp (GW) /  
Colin Miskelly (DOC)  
Approved: Murray Waititi

Original at A3, Vectorworks  
Drawing no: A3 10364/3

File number PK 15/1/2 vol 1  
Date: 29 April 2007

# Lake Wairarapa

## Existing recreation activities



An example of a bird hide at Travis Wetland, Christchurch

## Wairarapa Lakeshore Scenic Reserve

### Short term actions

- Improve access and visibility of the reserve by improving signage from Western Lake Road
- Replace existing picnic tables with new ones
- Where possible limb up appropriate trees to create shade areas for picnics
- Mow grass areas and tidy up
- Investigate developing a track through the reserve

### Long term opportunities

- Investigate developing camping opportunities on the reserve

## Barrage Gates

### Short term actions

- Investigate bridging the ditch linking the existing tracks along the Ruamahanga River.
- Erect some interpretation about the history of the flooding issues of the Wairarapa.

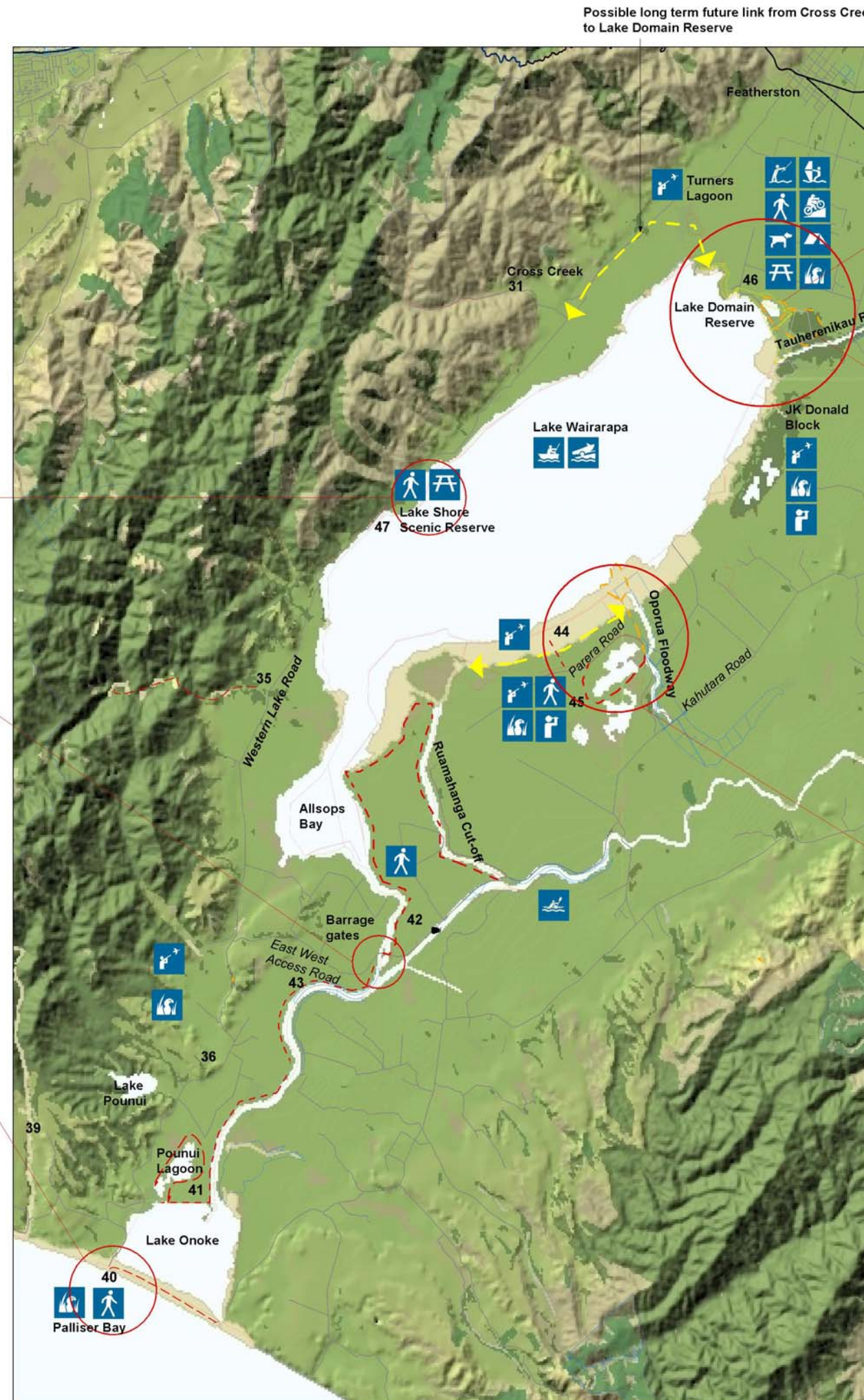
## Lake Onoke Spit

### Short term actions

- Install a small interpretive sign near the entrance explaining what is special and fragile about the spit and why vehicles should stay off the area.
- Mark the existing tracks.

## Key

	Short / medium term (1-5 years)		Boating
	Long term future connection		Camping
	Existing track		Bird watching
	Future development node		Dog walking
	Fishing		4WD
	Wind surfing		Wildlife
	Game shooting		Picnicking
	Trail biking		Biking
	Swimming		Walking
	Fishing from a boat		
	Canoeing/kayaking		
	41,42,43, 44, 45, 46, 47		Walks from Wairarapa Walks Brochure



Possible long term future link from Cross Creek to Lake Domain Reserve

## Lake Domain Reserve Western end

### Short term actions

- Improve approach to the lake by landscaping the road end and providing unobstructed views. Develop a small carpark with an information panel on what you can do at Lake Domain and around the lake.

- Develop the main grassed area for picnicking and passive recreation.
- Remove the existing toilet block in the reserve.
- Landscape the area and plant hardy species to create some semi-sheltered areas.
- Mark a walking / cycling route around the coastal edge of the reserve.

### Long term options

- Investigate the possibility of marking a public walking /cycling route from the boundary of Lake Domain Reserve through private land to Turners Lagoon and out to the Western Lake Road. This could connect to Cross Creek and the Rimutaka Incline
- Assess the need for upgrading the boat ramp and wharf.
- Replace the toilet block if demand is there.

## Eastern end

### Short/medium term actions

- An engineers report is required on the structural safety and possible replacement of the vehicle bridge

- Discuss and investigate with trail bikers and others to find a new area for trail biking in Lake Domain or elsewhere in the area.

- Redevelop area in and around gum and pine trees for camping, picnicking and passive recreation. Work to include upgrading toilets, parking area, landscaping and provide information on the lake.

- Develop an interpreted track/boardwalk based around the unique ecology of the area taking in the open water wetlands, wading birds, unique vegetation, coast and Tauherenikau delta.

### Long term actions

- Assess the need over time for an upgrade of facilities and the need for a facility building for campers.

## Oporua Spillway Boggy Pond/Matthews Lagoon

### Short / medium term actions

- Develop a walk along the Oporua Spillway stopbank and around the spillway to the lake edge and back.
- Provide interpretation on the birdlife that visitors might see at the end of the stopbank.

- The Boggy Pond Walkway is at present overgrown and lacks signage. Mow, improve the track surface and provide some signage.

- Develop a small parking area for both Boggy Pond/Matthews Lagoon and Oporua Spillway and provide some information on the 2 walks.

- Develop a short walk along the overgrown track and picnic area off Parera Road.

### Long term actions

- Assess the need for a viewing platform and interpretation panels at Matthews Lagoon and Boggy Pond.

- Investigate developing a marked route along the lake edge

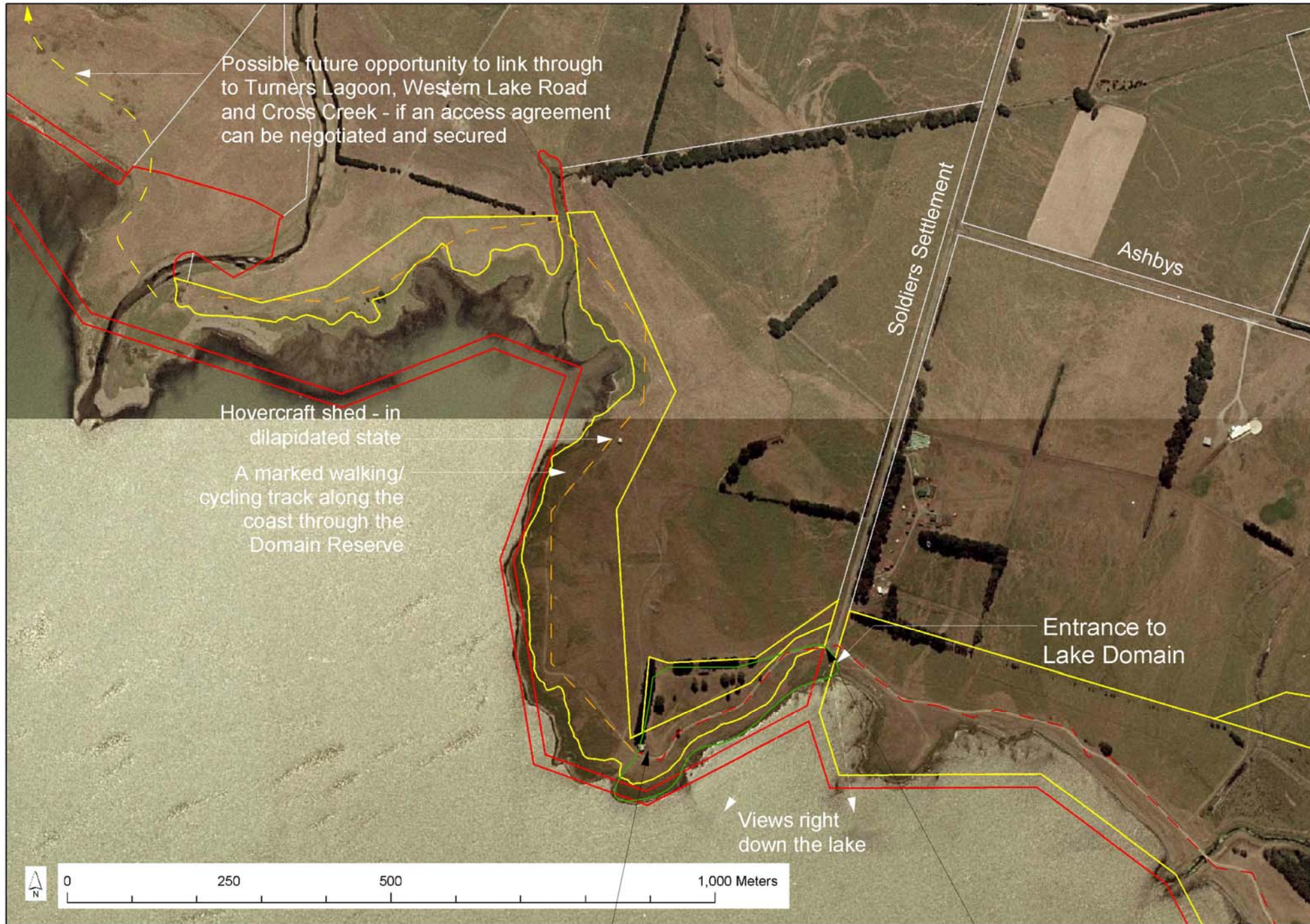
Drawn by Annabel Riley  
Checked: Graham Laws  
Recommended: Philippa Crisp (GW) / Colin Miskelly (DOC)  
Approved: Murray Waititi

Original at A3, Vectorworks  
Drawing no: 10364/4

File number PK 15/1/2 vol 1  
Date: 29 April 2007

# Lake Wairarapa

Potential short term actions and long term opportunities



Lake Domain toilets are in a derelict state and require removal



Lake Domain recreation area, looking south down the lake past the Yachting and 4WD Clubrooms.



Boat launching ramp in disrepair

**Key**

- Existing track/stopbank
- Short/medium term indicative track (1-5 years)
- Longterm indicative track (5-10 years) - (with landowners permission)
- Possible location of a bird viewing hide
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Fish and Game
- Department of Conservation
- Potential recreation areas

Drawn by Annabel Riley  
 Checked: Graham Laws  
 Recommended: Philippa Crisp (GW) / Colin Miskelly (DOC)  
 Approved: Murray Waititi  
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 Drawing no: 10364/5

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Develop area for picnicking and passive recreation. Demolish existing toilet block and replace in time if required.

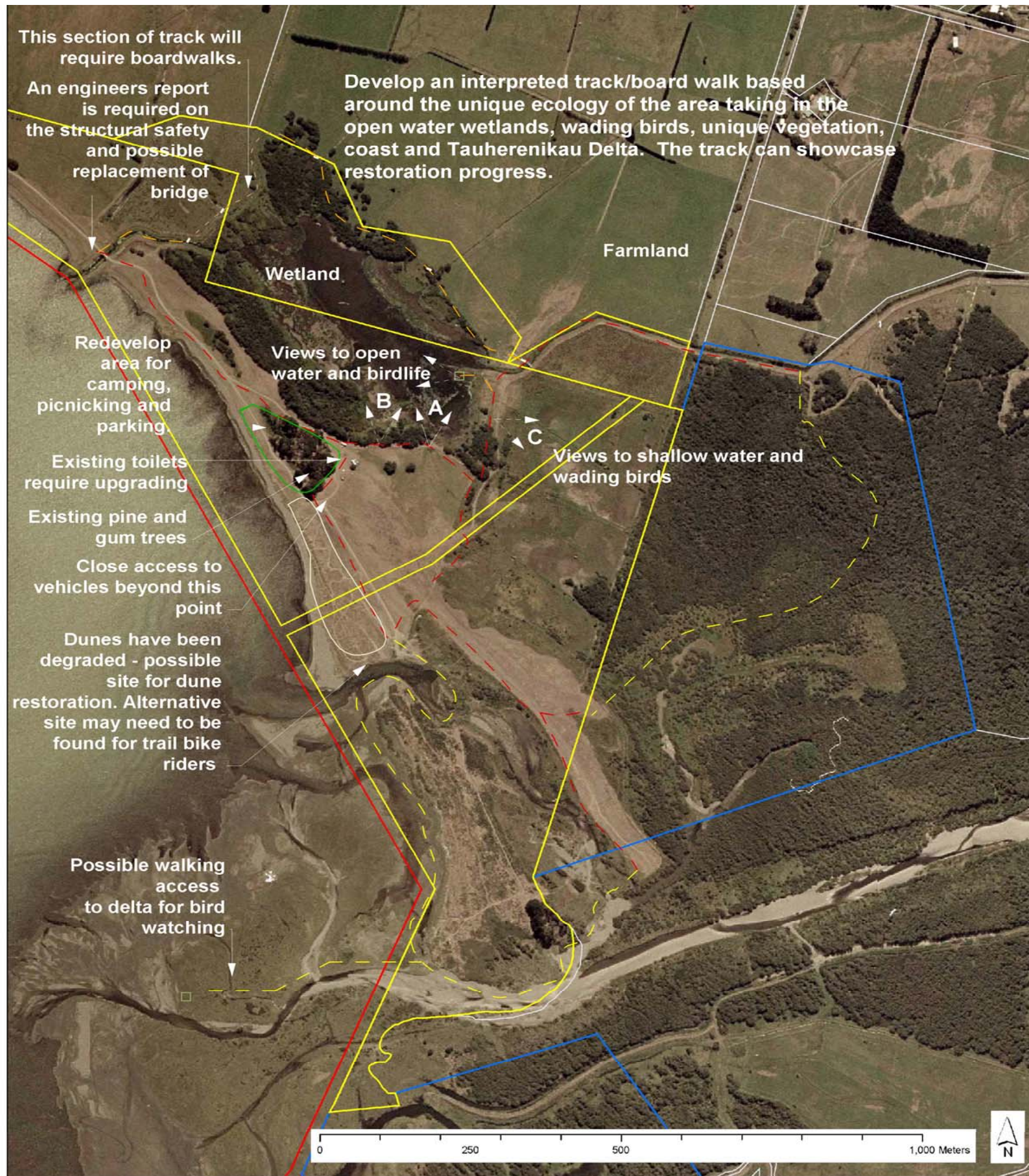
Assess the need for upgrading the boat ramp and wharf.

Provide picnic tables and plant hardy species for shade and shelter.

Improve entrance area at road end to give visitors a favourable first impression of the lake. Develop a small carpark with clear views out to the lake and provide information on facilities and what you can do here. Remove old fences and install bollards and low planting.

# Lake Wairarapa

Lake Domain Reserve West - Preliminary landscape concept



**A** - View looking northwest across the wetland to the Tararuas



**B** - View looking northwest across the wetland and birdlife to Tararua Range



**C** - View looking across a shallow wetland to the east



**Key**

- - - Existing track/stopbank
- - - Short / medium term indicative track
- - - Longterm indicative track (with land owners permission)
- Possible location of a bird viewing hide
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Fish and Game
- Department of Conservation
- Potential recreation areas
- Potential restoration areas
- - - Boardwalks
- Bridges

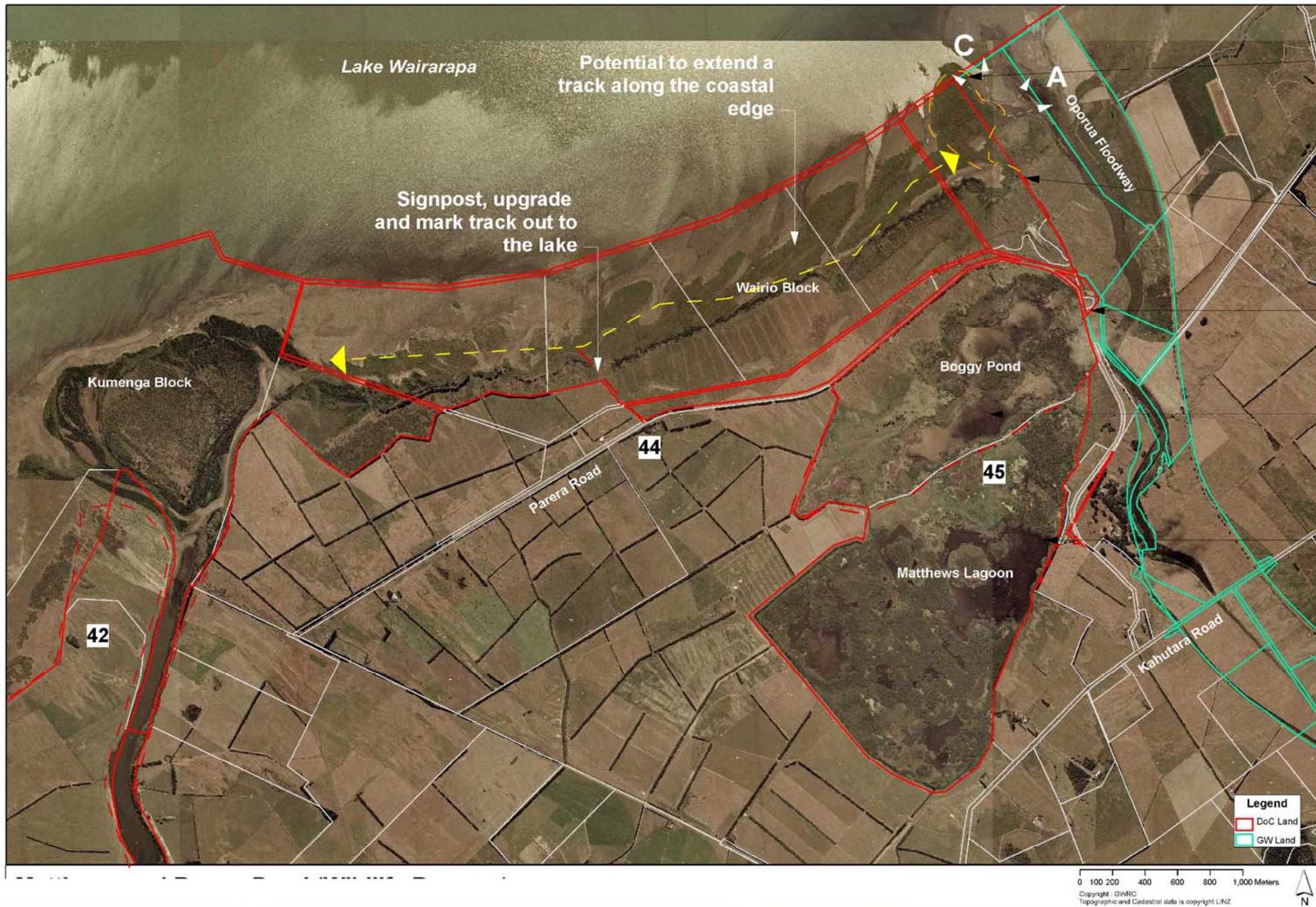
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 Approved: Murray Waititi

Original at A3, Vectorworks  
 Drawing no: 10364/6

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# Lake Wairarapa

Lake Domain Reserve East -  
 Preliminary landscape concept



Develop a walk along the Oporua stopbank and down around the spillway. The spillway has good examples of indigenous vegetation and is a key place for a wide range of birdlife. The walk may be assessible only in summer due to the high rainfall during winter.

Locate a small interpretation panel at the end of the stopbank about flora and fauna you are likely to see on your walk.

Develop a small parking area for both Boggy Pond/Matthews Lagoon and Oporua Spillway walks. Place a small information panel at the carpark.

Signpost the existing track along the stopbank from either end, upgrade and maintain the track.

Develop a short walk / picnic area from Parera Road to Matthews Lagoon. There is easy access to the water edge and an open gently sloping area for picnicking.

Assess the need for a viewing platform and interpretation at Matthews Lagoon and Boggy Pond

**Key**

- Existing track/stopbank
- Short/medium term indicative track (1-5 years)
- Longterm indicative track (5-10 years)
- Possible location of a bird viewing hide
- South Wairarapa District Council
- Fish and Game
- Department of Conservation
- ◐ Potential recreation areas
- ◑ Potential restoration areas
- 42, 44, 45 Wairarapa Walks brochure

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**A** Oporua Spillway



**B** Royal spoonbill, photo by Rolf Hicker Photography



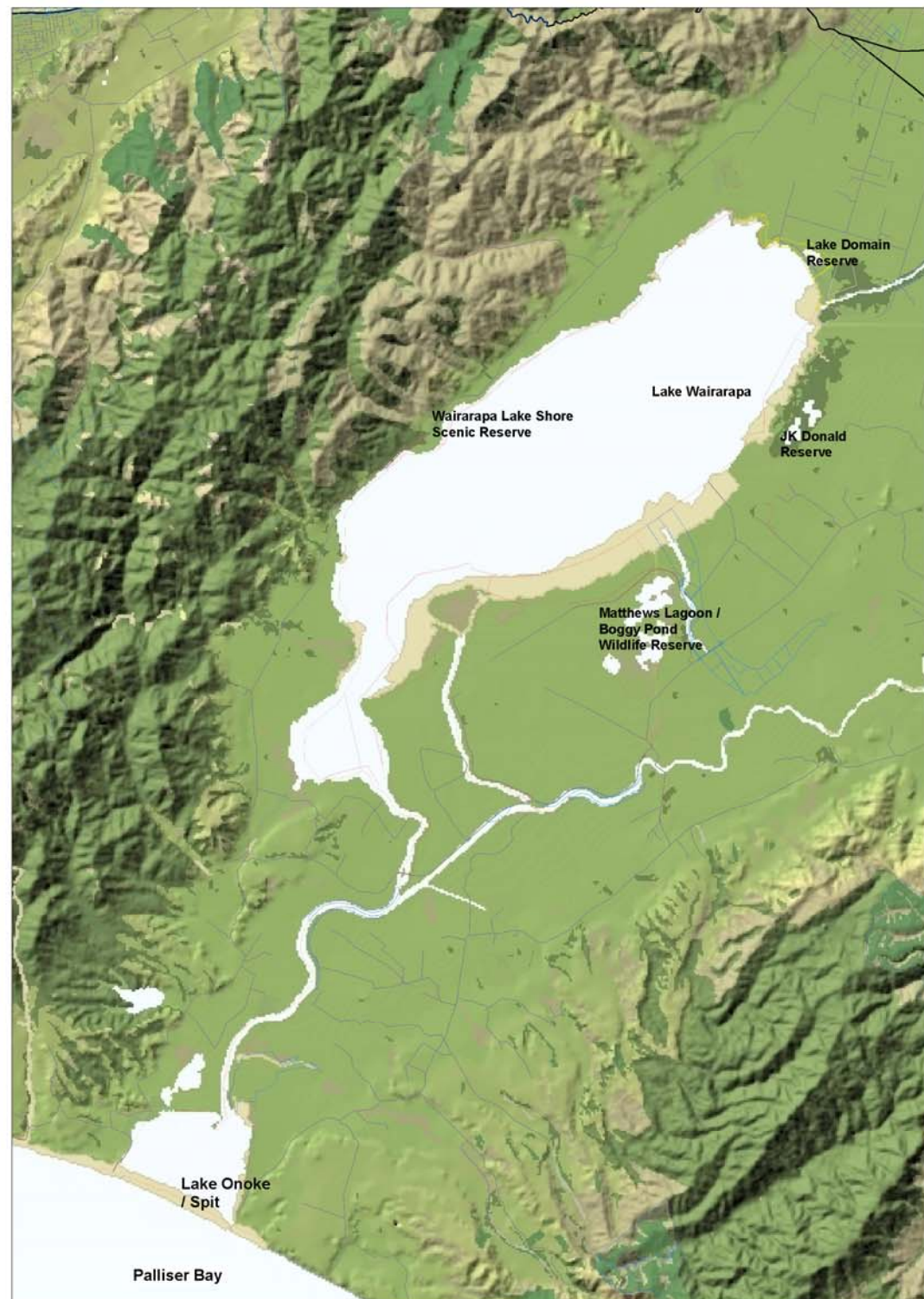
**C** Looking across Oporua Spillway to the Rimutuka Hills

# Lake Wairarapa

## Boggy Pond, Matthews Lagoon and Oporua Spillway

### Preliminary landscape concept

# Values of the park



## Heritage

- The lake environ has a long history of human habitation and this is an important aspect of the character of the area.
- The lakes and wetlands were an important source of food and materials for Maori and for transporting produce traded throughout the North Island. Many archaeological sites are on farmland to the east of the lake.
- European settlement included the first sheep stations in the Wairarapa, the beginning of flood control measures, the relationship between early settlers and Maori and the effects of the 1855 earthquake were particularly significant.

## Tangata whenua values

- The Lake is considered by iwi/hapu to be taonga for many reasons including their spiritual linkage to the area through whakapapa, their historic association and its taonga.
- Many sites for collecting mahinga kai no longer exist. The remaining areas containing mahinga kai are of great value and include tuna (eels), raupo and harakeke are gathered.

## Educational

- The Lake Wairapapa wetlands have high ecological, historic and recreational values. There is considerable potential for greater awareness of the values and threats and use of the wetlands by the local and wider community.

## Interpretation

- The lake is a significant location for interpretation of wetland ecosystems.

## Ecology

- The wetlands comprises of a high diversity of habitats with the eastern side containing the most diversity. Some areas are identified for protection

## Vegetation

- The lake edge supports the largest submerged 'turf' grass community in the North Island.
- There are more than 40 species of indigenous aquatic plants at Lake Wairarapa including nationally threatened plants.
- The nationally uncommon mistletoe (*Korthalsella salicornioides*) is found on the western shore.

## Birds

- The wetlands are of major significance for wildlife and rank internationally important for this reason (Moore et al. 1984)
- 96 bird species have been recorded at the Lake in the last 15 years (Robertson, 1991)
- Nationally significant numbers of some species include bar-tailed godwit, golden plover, pied stilt, banded dotterel and Caspian tern (Robertson & Heather, 1999). Rare vagrants have included Japanese snipe, great knot, greenshank and lesser yellowlegs.
- The habitat diversity and maintenance of the lake is important for attracting a wide range of wetland birds

## Freshwater

- The wetlands including Lake Onoke have been identified as wetlands of national importance to fisheries (Hicks, 1993).

## Invertebrates

- Tadpole shrimp is a priority for protection in the Wellington Region although little is known about aquatic invertebrates.

## Recreation

- The lake provides many recreational opportunities including waterfowl hunting, motorboating, yachting, windsurfing, kayaking, camping, picnicking, swimming, walking and studying nature.
- There is keen community interest in the area especially at Lake Domain Reserve where there is a more opportunities for recreation.
- Approximately 10% of recreational hunting is done at the lakes.



Banded dotterel



Caspian tern



Looking to the southwest across the lake to the Rimitaka Forest Park



Lake Shore Scenic Reserve



Bar-tailed godwit

Drawn by Annabel Riley  
Checked: Graham Laws  
Recommended: Philippa Crisp (GW) / Colin Miskelly (DOC)  
Approved: Murray Waititi

Original at A1, Vectorworks  
Drawing no: 10364/2

File number: PK 151/ 2 vol 1  
Date: 29 April 2007

# Lake Wairarapa

## Values

The analysis of values for Lake Wairarapa has been developed using the Lake Wairapapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000-2010 as a desktop exercise.

## Broad issues for the whole lake

### Pest plants

- The lake has more than 100 naturalised exotic plant species including tall fescue, mercer grass, willows, alders, hawthorn and hornwort.

### Pest fish and animals

- Pest fish include rudd and koi carp.  
- Animal pests include rats, mustelids, rabbits, hares, feral cats and possums  
- Canada geese are valued by hunters but have an impact on grazing pasture.  
- Dogs are a threat to nesting Caspian terns and dotterels.

### Water management

- The lake level is set at a minimal level and is controlled and monitored by Greater Wellington.

### Water quality

- Discharges into the lake from direct and non direct point sources are increasing nutrients and encouraging the growth of some weeds such as tall fescue, willow, alder and mercer grass.

### Research

- There are many unanswered questions regarding the most appropriate management of the Wairarapa wetlands.

### Recreation

- Lack of a broad recreational vision for the lake and how it can link to other areas  
- Lack of public access to the lake at designated recreational nodes  
- Lack of recreation facilities such as marked walks / bike rides - both short and long  
- Lack of visitor information and interpretation on the values of the lake, historic and flora and fauna  
- Vehicles driving over ecologically sensitive areas

### Heritage and Tangata Whenua issues

- Lack of protocols between land managers and iwi/hapu to ensure effective relationships.  
- Lack of protection of waahi tapu and archaeological sites.  
- Need protection of areas of mahinga kai such as tuna (eels), raupo, harakeke.  
- The decline of eels in the lake and wider catchment.  
- Opportunity for restoring areas of mahinga kai has also been raised.

## Site specific issues



Lake Shore Scenic Reserve

### Lake Shore Scenic Reserve

#### Ecological issues

- Pest plan inventory and control plan has been developed for Lake Shore Scenic Reserve.  
- Picnic area looks neglected and requires improved access from road, parking area, new picnic tables and signs.



The fragile spit area

### Lake Onoke /Spit

#### Ecological issues

- Traditionally Lake Onoke is an important eel fishing area - eel stocks are thought to be reducing  
- Dogs disturbing or killing ground nesting Caspian terns and dotterels.  
- 4WD vehicles accessing the spit and driving over local plant communities and bird nesting areas.

#### Recreation issues

- Vehicles driving over the sand dunes  
- Lack of information about the ecological significance of the spit and its wildlife and how to look after it.

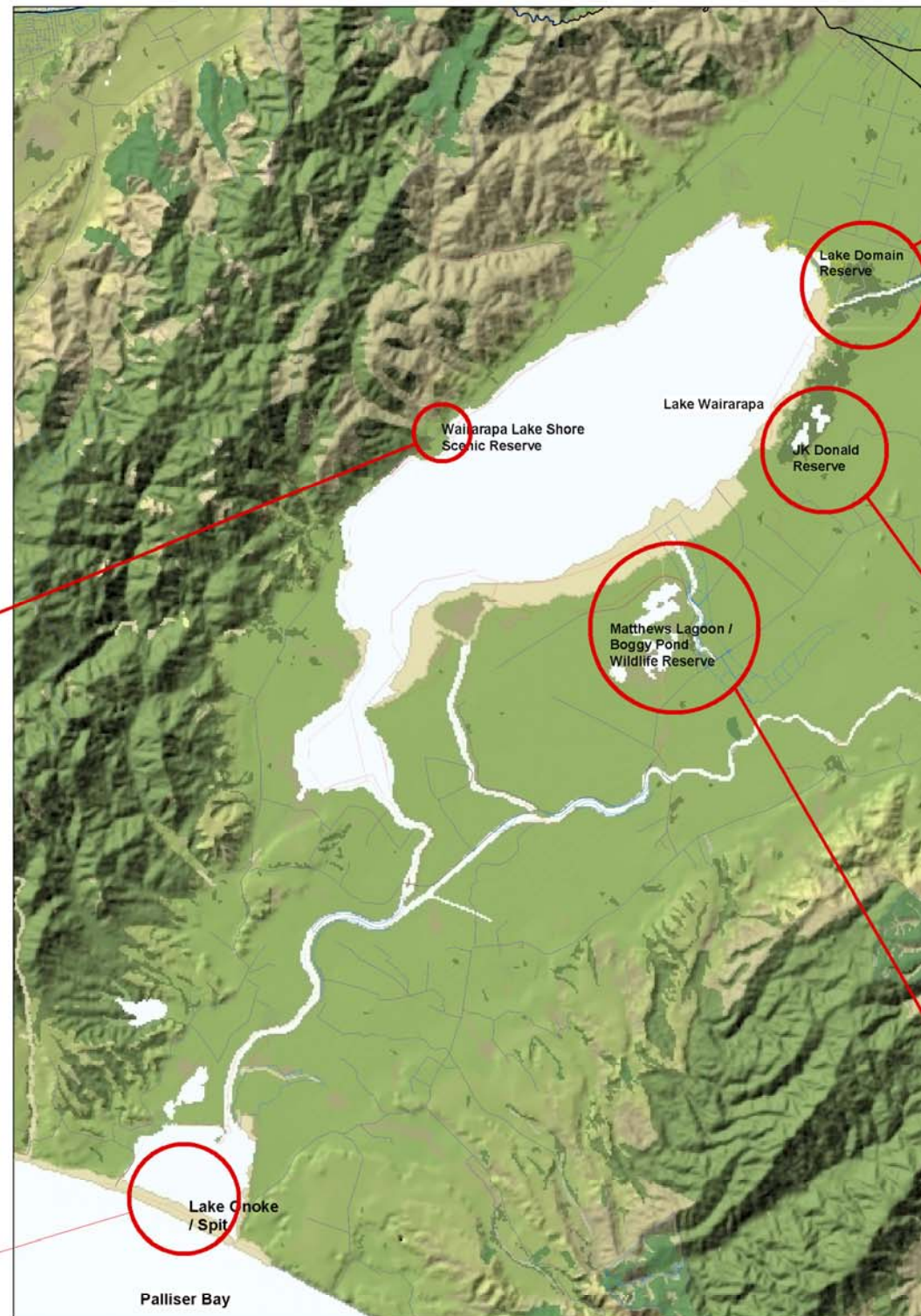


Present access to spit by 4WD vehicles

Drawn by Annabel Riley  
Checked: Graham Laws  
Recommended: Philippa Crisp (GW) /  
Colin Miskelly (DOC)  
Approved: Murray Waititi

Original at A1, Vectorworks  
Drawing no: 10364/1

File number: PK 151/ 2 vol 1  
Date draft: 1 December 2006



Alder spreading around wetland edge



Looking across the western side of Lake Domain to the yacht clubrooms



Remnant native vegetation amongst the willows



Raupo is increasingly spreading around the margins and open water of Boggy Pond



Entrance from Perera Road to Boggy Pond

### Lake Domain Reserve

#### Ecological issues

- Weeds including alder, gorse, willow and marram  
- Invasion of waterways by hornwort  
- Effect of maintenance of the Tauherenikau River mouth on ecological values and flood control  
- Tauherenikau River delta is growing at an increasing rate due to gravel and sediment deposited from the river.  
- Rabbits and hares are a problem at Lake Domain.

#### Recreation issues

- Trail bikes and 4WDs damaging the sand dunes, vegetation and disturbing wildlife  
- Effect of the Tauherenikau River on access to swimming areas, water flow and sedimentation of wetlands  
- Vehicles disturbing other reserve users  
- There is no obvious recreation uses for the reserve to visitors  
- Reserve infrastructure is in disrepair - fences are broken and toilets unusable on the western side of reserve  
- There are no marked walking tracks  
- There is a lack of information signs or interpretation of the lake values  
- The army uses Lake Domain for exercises

### JK Donald Reserve

#### Ecological issues

- Pest plants include tall fescue, mercer grass, willows and alders.  
- Animal pests at this reserve include rats, mustelid, possums, rabbits, hares and feral cats  
- The waterways are being grazed by cattle, having an impact on water quality  
- The water levels are currently managed by Fish and Game. Water from Otakura Stream is diverted into the JK Donald Block from late summer to reach target levels for waterfowl hunting. A resource consent has been given for this water management regime.  
- A weir has been suggested on the lagoon to maintain water levels for waterfowl  
- Mudfish may require a dry habitat in summer to reduce competition and predation. The maintenance of artificial summer lake levels may be detrimental to mudfish.  
- Habitat loss for fish is a major impact cause of lowered species diversity and abundance.

#### Recreation issues

- Access is through private land with the permission of the land owner.  
- There is no formal tracks or access through the reserve apart from the access road

### Matthews Lagoon / Boggy Pond

#### Ecological issues

- Raupo is becoming dominant along the waters edge due to accretion and high nutrient level of the water  
- Exotic trees around the lake edge are crack willow, hawthorn and alder  
- Pest plants include tall fescue, mercer grass, willows and alder.  
- Hornwort is spreading from Matthews Lagoon.  
- Water quality within Boggy Pond and Matthews Lagoon is affected by discharges into the lake.  
- The maintenance of high water levels in Boggy Pond during summer for hunting is thought to be reducing the ecological diversity.

#### Recreation issues

- Increase in raupo around waterfowl hunting areas  
- Some existing maimais are in disrepair and / or without a licence. A few have been converted into baches.  
- Lack of marked walkways to encourage visitors to the area.  
- Lack of signage and interpretation.  
- Lack of developed recreation areas with well maintained facilities

# Lake Wairarapa

## Issues

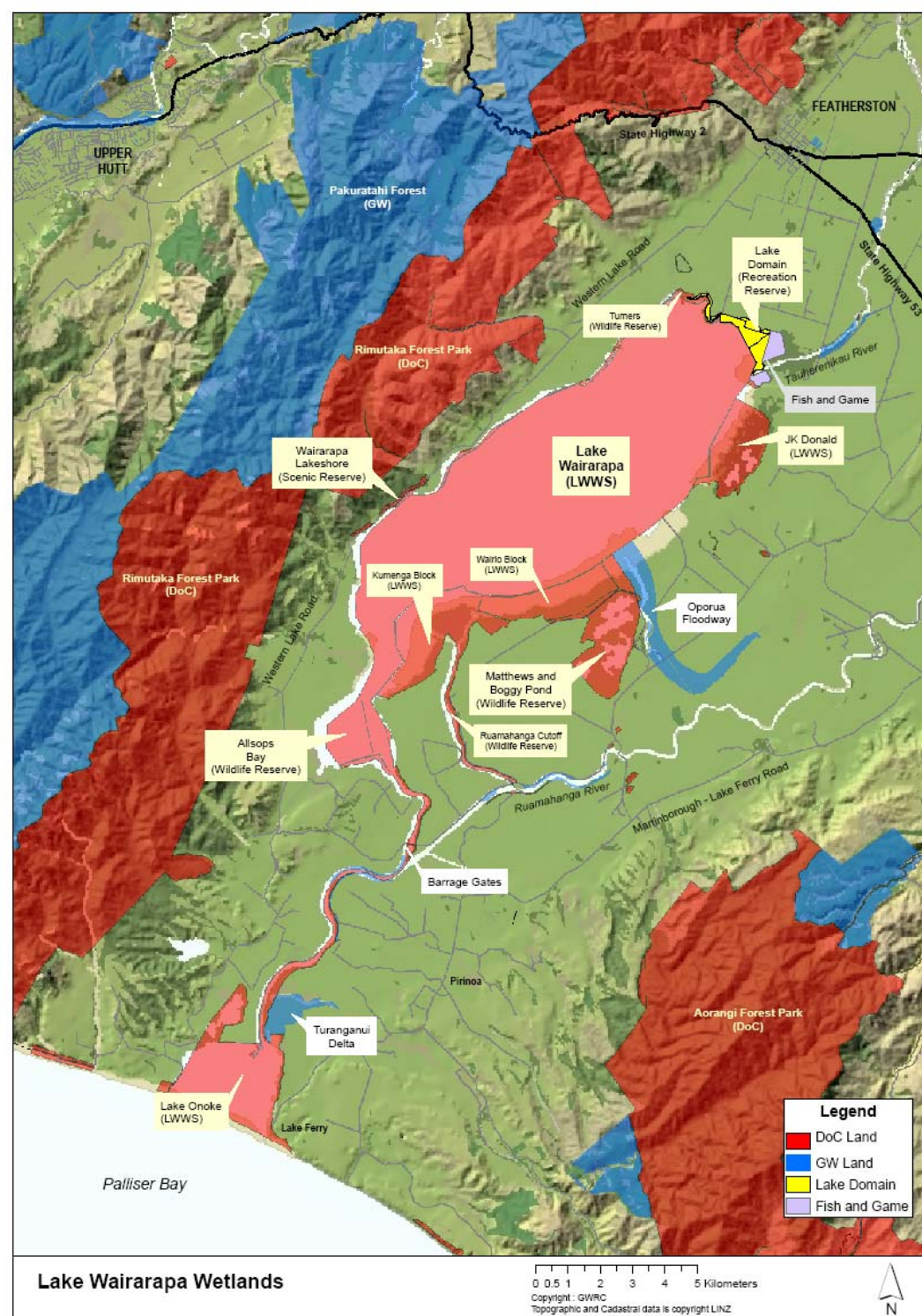
The analysis of issues for Lake Wairarapa has been developed using the Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan 2000-2010 as a desktop exercise.

## Appendices

### 5.1 Appendix A

#### 5.1.1 Lake Wairarapa Wetlands – current tenure

The map below shows the current land tenure, from the *Lake Wairarapa Wetlands Action Plan*, (Airey et al. 2000)



#### Lands administered by the Department of Conservation

Matthews and Boggy Pond, Allsops Bay, the Ruamahanga Cutoff and some former esplanade reserves are “Government Purpose: Wildlife Management Reserves” and are managed for wildlife. The Department also administers the Wairarapa Lakeshore Scenic Reserve on the western shore of Lake Wairarapa under the Reserves Act 1976. This scenic reserve is managed to protect and preserve its qualities of scenic interest and beauty for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public.

#### Lands administered by the South Wairarapa District Council

The South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC) administers the Lake Domain Recreation Reserve at the north end of the lake. Under the Reserves Act the SWDC has responsibility for preparing a management plan for the Lake Domain Recreation Reserve.

#### Lands administered by the Greater Wellington Regional Council

The Wellington Regional Council (WRC) owns the area known as the Oporua Floodway. This land was acquired by the Wairarapa Catchment Board in 1978 for soil conservation and river control purposes. It also has a River Protection and Improvements Reserve known as Turanganui delta on the north eastern side of Lake Onoke.

#### Lands administered by the Wellington Fish and Game Council

The Fish and Game Council own land at the northern end of the lake known as Simmonds Lagoon, adjacent to the Lake Domain Recreation Reserve.

#### Private lands

The Pearce Wetlands at the eastern lakeshore north of Oporua Floodway is a link between DOC’s Boggy Pond/Matthews Lagoon Reserve and the J. K. Donald block. Ducks Unlimited, its previous owners, registered a QEII Open Space covenant on its title which is binding on all future owners of the land. A management plan has been prepared for the wetlands.

A QEII Open Space covenant has been obtained for Tairoa Wetlands, also on the eastern shore and south of Simmonds Lagoon. A management plan has been prepared for the area.



## 5.2 Appendix B

### 5.2.1 Lake Wairarapa Coordinating Committee - Survey Results

1. What do you value about the lake?
  - a. Good grazing
  - b. Opportunities for bird watching and study of wetland dynamics.
  - c. The wetlands and the birdlife which live there. The peace and quiet and the diversity of the landscape.
  - d. Sense of solitude in many areas, serenity, opportunities to observe bird life, trout fishing.
  - e. I find the lake has a lot of untapped resources around it.
2. What activities do you or others do on or around the lake?
  - a. Water sports, duck shooting, fishing
  - b. Bird watching
  - c. Look and study birds.
  - d. Sailboarding, fishing, yachting, bird watching, floundering, some jet boating, camping, picnics in Bush Reserve along Western Lake Rd. Trail biking, gamebird shooting – not in favour of these activities.
  - e. Duck shooting, farm work, work in the JK Donald Reserve, look after Lake Domain Reserve for SWDC.
3. Where are the main places you recreate or see recreation taking place?
  - a. Lake Reserve
  - b. Lake Domain at the Tauherenikau delta at the end of the Oपुरua Floodway, the stopbank on the north bank of Lake Onoke and Onoke spit.
  - c. Boggy Pond, Lake Domain, Lake Onoke, Pounui Wetlands. We band Caspian Terns on Onoke Spit.
  - d. Predominantly Lake Domain, simply because it is the most accessible part of the Lake.
  - e. Lake Domain Reserve, Boat Club, Tauherenikau River mouth, Western Lake Scenic Reserve, JK Donald Reserve, Boggy Pond, Matthews Lagoon, Ruamahanga River.
4. What opportunities do you see for any new recreational activities occurring on or around the lake?
  - a. Not a lot, wild weather puts a stop to most activities.
  - b. Tours that relate to the history of the lake and its people and at the same time an account of the Lower Valley drainage scheme that had such an effect on the lake and surrounding land.
  - c. With better tracks and signage pointing out highlights, people could walk and bike around the lakes and wetlands, enjoying the wildlife and scenery.
  - d. Lake Domain offers a tremendous opportunity for development similar to Pauatahanui Inlet, with walkways and hides. A properly planned and run camping area would be a bonus.
  - e. Boardwalks, day trips, fixing boat jetty, planting of native blocks instead of grass, encourage recreational activities
5. How do you see the lake in 20 years time?
  - a. The same as the last 20 years.
  - b. I would like to see clearly identified access points and marked routes that lead to a viewing platform or hide. The hides would contain a series of photographs that help people to identify the various birds – also they would have information about migratory birds that use the area.
  - c. A RAMSAR on Lake Wairarapa wetlands, including Lake Onoke, Onoke Spit and Pounui Wetlands. An education centre with a café at the Domain with facilities for caravan park and camping. Walk and bike trails around the lake and picnic spots for people to be able to see the highlights around Lake Wairarapa and Lake Onoke. This would be a great ecological tourist attraction for the region with Karori Sanctuary, Southern Coast Marine Reserve, Matiu/Somes Island, Pukaha/Mt Bruce, Foxton Ramsar site and Kapiti Island.
  - d. Much better cared for than now! Native trees planted on lake perimeter where public has access and possibly also on western side of lake. Efforts made to prevent dead stock either dying or being thrown into the stream at Lake Domain. Shooting prohibited in all parts except those run by Fish & Game. Lake Domain in particular to be developed and promoted to the public.
  - e. As an untapped resource I see it as a huge tourist attraction for the whole district.