



Approaching Whakapapa (Photo: Jared Haslemore)

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President's Report



August 2025

Kia ora koutou,

Despite very little snow, July has seen very good use of the Ruapehu A-Frame during the School Holidays. My children and I loved staying at the hut for a full week, enjoying the comfortable bunkrooms, excellent company, stunning views and delicious food. We even managed to ski for 2-3 hours most days on the man-made snow at

Happy Valley. It was wonderful to meet new club members and their families and see them enjoy the hut and being part of ASC. Please spread the word and encourage new members to join and use our huts. Let the committee know if you know a group who may want to use our facilities, at Ruapehu or in the Waitākeres.

Looking to spring, we have the Ngatuhua Lodge booked in the Kaimais. It's always an exciting weekend, full of adventurous activities. See Upcoming Trips later in the magazine for lots of fun ways to get into the outdoors, to volunteer or to learn bushcraft skills.

Summer Camp will be in the Coromandel this year. Mark Roberts and I will be travelling to inspect a site in August, and we'll let you know as soon as it's confirmed.

Come along to Club Night next week Tuesday 5 August and hear Kate Sewell talk about her trip to Vietnam and Laos.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Ngā mihi,

Miranda

Notices

Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Tuesday 5 August 2025

St Mark's Church Parish Hall, 95 Remuera Road

Kate Sewell will be speaking about her trip to Vietnam and Laos.

New Members

We warmly welcome new members:

- Theo and Emma Sangster with Aria (18 months)
 - Kay McCabe
-

ASC and Remus Roe Traplines – Volunteers Needed!

We need a person/people to join an enthusiastic team to service the ASC and Remus Roe trapline once every four weeks. This involves a walk through lovely bush, clearing and re-baiting traps and recording the catches and filing a short report. There is even the chance of seeing/hearing the kōkako. Time taken depends on one's tramping speed. For more information and no obligation, please contact Sue Grant.

Ruapehu Lockers

Book a locker at our Ruapehu huts for the season. \$30 annual fee. Contact Lloyd Lin for more details at ruapehu@alpinesport.org.nz.

Thursday Walks

Walks are held on the second and fourth Thursday of each month somewhere in the Auckland area.

If you are interested in joining, please send an email to Clive Bolt at Thursday.walks@alpinesport.org.nz

Upcoming Trips

Sunday 3 August 2025 – Sunday Walkers, Rangatahi Ramblers and Small People on Big Hills combine - Auckland Coast to Coast Walkway – Susan Stephens, Marion Browne and Miranda Hutton

ASC walkers Susan Stephens, Marion Browne and Miranda Hutton combine to walk the full length of the Auckland City Coast to Coast trail. Starting at 9.30 am from the statue in Te Komititanga Square near by the Ferry Buildings & Britomart Station, through to Onehunga - returning to the city by either rail or bus. Our walk will include climbing Mt Eden and One Tree Hill along the way. More details to come on the day. The distance is approximately 16km but anyone wishing to finish earlier can easily do this by catching a bus back to the city once we reach Cornwall Park or beyond.

Rangatahi Ramblers Clara (11) and Lukas (8) will be leading the young team. Bring lunch, snacks, water and money (for treats on the way). Meet younger Small People on Big Hill walkers on Maungakiekie/One Tree Hill at about 2pm to finish in Onehunga. Contact Miranda, Susan or Marion for more information miranda@alpinesport.org.nz

Sunday 14 September 2025 – A hike through the Parks and Reserves in Warkworth – Don Baker

Circumnavigate the township of Warkworth taking in Kowhai Park, Mahurangi River Walk, Harry Parry Kauri Park, and the Old Cement Works Ruins. A mixture of concrete paths, bush tracks and some Heritage street walking.

It takes about 1 hour on the new motorway to Warkworth from points on the Southern Motorway or about 40 minutes from the Harbour Bridge. Meet at 9.30am. Details to be advised.

20 September – 3 October 2025 – Whakapapa Spring Fling – Jared Haslemore

Come and join like-minded families for a final spring fling for the year at Whakapapa. Come for a night, come for a week!

Make the most of the fantastic facilities that we have at Mt Ruapehu and enjoy an alpine adventure. With it being a slow start to the season we're hopeful that it might be a late one with fantastic spring skiing to be had.

If not, then there are lots of adventures to be had in the surrounding area. Hiking (Tongariro Crossing anyone?), hot pools, mountain biking, rock climbing, volcano museum, and the ever popular dinosaur museum in Raetihi.

Our Ruapehu Hut will be open throughout. Book your bunks now at www.alpinesports.org.nz.

27/28 September 2025 – Children's Practical Bushcraft Weekend – Sue Grant

9.30 am Saturday to approximately 2.00 pm Sunday. Waitākere Hut, Anawhata Road. Aimed at 7-11 year olds with accompanying adults. Club members only. Limited numbers. Cost: Pay only for your overnight stay at the hut.

Contact Sue Grant. You will need to provide contact mobile phone numbers for the accompanying adult(s) and for a named off-site emergency contact person.



Outdoor cooking



Navigation

Sunday 5 October 2025 – Manukau Harbour Coastal Walk (Onehunga to Lynfield) – Warren Whyte

Meet at Orpheus Drive parking area near to Seacliff Road, Hillsborough at 9.30am for walk along coastal tracks, beach reserves and scenic bush areas through to Lynfield. Return by bus to Orpheus Bay car park. This little known piece of coastline is a most attractive area to explore so be sure to note it in your diary now.

Friday October 24 to Monday October 27 (Labour Weekend) - Ngatuhua Lodge – Leaders tba

We are looking at a trip to Ngatuhua Lodge for Labour Weekend. This is one of the premier ASC events of the year with ziplining, river-tubing, kayaking, and more!

Costs will be ~\$35 per person per night and we need a minimum of 10 people. Kids under 5 are free!

One or more people who will be staying the duration need to volunteer to be the trip leader(s). Without trip leaders this trip cannot go ahead.

Please register your interest with Jared by 15 August absolute latest on tours@alpinesport.org.nz (Subject "Ngatuhua 2025"). Please include the names of all attendees and their ages, the dates that you are intending to stay for, and whether you would be happy to be a trip leader.

Trip Reports

27 June – 13 July 2025 -Winter Wanders – Jared Haslemore

Our experience. June 6th - 12th.

A leisurely Sunday drive from Auckland meant we arrived at Ruapehu just before dusk. After a quick hike up to the A Frame, seeing more rocks than we would like, we settled in saying hi to old friends and meeting some new ones.

There was limited snow all week with the Whakapapa snow team not getting a second carpet running in Happy Valley until Wednesday. However, the weather was beautiful and we made the most of it. Sarah and the kids checked out Meads Wall and we all had a couple of scenic tours on the Sky Waka. Our kids skied on Tuesday and Wednesday, quickly catching up skill wise to where they left off at the end of last season. It was great to have them out there enjoying themselves. Several potential new members were also given tours of the club.

The weather started to deteriorate towards the end of the week and we decided to go to Raetihi on Thursday and then have a total hut day with board games on Friday. However the weather didn't stop some hardy club members who kept skiing on both days!

The storm really set in on Friday night with significant winds really shaking the hut about but we weathered it and were greeted with a foggy but calm Saturday morning for check out.

A great week with fantastic people, and beautiful meals pulled together by our club members. Looking forward to doing this again for the Spring Fling at the end of September.





Photos: Jared Haslemore



First Week of School Holidays (Photos: Abi Raymond)

Sunday 13 July 2025 – Stillwater Walk - Jonathan & Janet Hodder

The group of 17 gathered at the carpark at the end of Ara Weiti Road in inclement weather. The Okura bush walkway is nestled north of Long Bay and south of Whangapāroa around Karepiro Bay to Stillwater.



Dacre Cottage

Was it going to rain properly or just keep threatening with its drizzle. It is a short walk along what was a formed and metalled track through gum trees to the coast and the Dacre building. Seems the track has not been maintained since it was built as part of the consent given for the subdivision across the stream. Wet feet was the feature of the day as a small stream needed to be negotiated for our first Dotterel encounter. Ornithologists (on ebird) have a list of 40 or so sea and land birds for the Stillwater area.

Dacre is the name of the second owner of the land who was a shipping merchant. The square brick dwelling was built from the ballast bricks off his ships. One assumes the ballast was replaced with Kauri trees from the area. This house is said to be the second oldest building in Auckland. Later there was a family house built (now gone) and the brick building was used as an abattoir. The buildings and grounds are maintained by the Dacre volunteers and is part of the Okura Reserve walkway. The Okura track end is closed due to Kauri dieback.

After a rain-enforced, early lunch in the shelter of the storage shed roof we set off north on the high tide track up and over the sea cliffs. This bush is the

highlight of the trip with large Puriri trees and Nikau's in this original coastal bush. There were many possum and wasp traps dotted along the track.

We exited from the high water track onto the beach and walked along the sand bank to the Weiti river mouth. This is the river flowing past Stillwater. Upstream we could see the piling for the Penlink motorway across the river above Stillwater to the wharf on the Whangapāroa Peninsula.

After a snack we avoided the uninteresting stretch of muddy track to Stillwater. On our return, we followed the beach around and under the sea cliffs making it back to Dacre by mid-afternoon. An interesting, and usually by-passed, scenic corner of Auckland.



Left to right Glen Hill-Willis (guest) Jocelyn Whyte, Warren Whyte, Ian Hall (guest) Rosemary Wakeman, Linda Webber, Marion Browne, Susan Stephens, Rob Lorden (guest) Jonathan Hodder, Janet Hodder (Leaders) Brian Bargh, Dieuwke Gers, Peter Loveridge, Jenny Hudson, Don Baker (photographer) James Hodder (Bird watching)

Special Report

A New Dawn in the Waitākeres? 42km of Tracks to Re-open?

By John Mackay

I'm really hopeful that we'll see more tracks being re-opened soon – leading over a three-year period to another 42km of tracks in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. These would reinstate a coherent 85km network of tracks suitable for a full range of walkers and runners, with a greatly increased number of:

- Half day and full day routes
- Loops
- East-West and North-South routes
- Stream walks
- The multi-day Te Ara Tūhura / Hillary Trail re-imagined as an 85-km Arataki to Arataki loop

Key benefits would include:

- Spreading the increasing visitor load across multiple tracks and entry points
- Addressing the significant frustration amongst Auckland residents and park users that track re-openings would be delayed by formal planning processes.

But we've had false dawns before, haven't we?

There was certainly a false dawn a couple of years ago when the peer review of research reached the conclusion that most of the original assumptions that led to the track closures were quite wrong. The disease was spreading much more slowly than expected. I was optimistic that we would start seeing tracks re-opened. But, to my astonishment, the Council decided - "on the precautionary principle" - that they would need to allow even longer for the research period.

Amongst other things the peer review (Waitakere Ranges Kauri Population Health Monitoring Survey Technical Report 2022/8, <https://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/media/2392/tr2022-08-2021waitakere-ranges-kauri-population-health-monitoring-survey.pdf>) had found:

- Initially, it was believed that 70% of infected kauri trees were within 50 metres of walking tracks. However this conclusion was based on a flawed mapping procedure, which started by analysing aerial photos, but then added other infected trees that were discovered by checking along tracks.
- Because infected trees within 50 metres of a track were attributed to human activity, the Kokako Block baitlines that ASC members service were wrongly blamed for all of the infected trees in the Kokako Block.
- The disease probably spreads due to other environmental factors rather than predominantly humans (e.g. soil movement in storms, introduced and native animals)
- We know that wild pigs, for instance, uproot vegetation and create muddy wallows, making them a probable vector of disease spread. There is plenty of evidence that the pigs enjoy rooting along the Waitakere tracks without having to share them with trampers.



- The assertion that if kauri die, the rest of the forest will die along with the birdlife the forest supports, has been debunked by ecologists. A glance at the old photos of Titirangi or the extensive areas that were cleared for farming, tells us that the Waitakere Ranges have more kauri today than they've ever had.

- There's no clear scientific data showing whether track closures or upgrades have improved kauri health. There hasn't been a controlled study to compare areas left open versus those closed.
- The Phytophthora fungus is most concentrated at two old sawmilling sites.
- The disease is spreading much more slowly than originally expected.

This peer reviewed research led us to believe that many tracks would soon be re-opened. The hopes were premature however. Because of the slow spread of kauri dieback, the Council decided that a longer period would be required to reach conclusions from the research!

Was there anything to be grateful for?

There were nevertheless some things to be grateful for back then:

- Early on, with the help of the incredibly patient Stu Leighton, we were able to have Cutty Grass Track re-opened as a necessary east-west link across to Scenic Drive.
- The Cascades Kauri Track loop was re-opened.
- A cascade of wooden steps down to Fairy Falls was built.
- Stu Leighton was working on better connections from Scenic Drive and the Fairy Falls Tracks across to the camping ground in the Bethells Valley.
- The priority was to link up tracks to enable longer distance tramps. This would continue most urgently along the coastal edge, where there are few kauri, in the form of the Hilary Trail
- The maps now showed the old tracks as being “temporarily closed,” so the worry that the tracks might never ever re-open receded slightly.
- When we looked back at the few shorts track that remained open after the original Closed Area Notice, it was clear that progress had been made through incremental additions

How did this latest breakthrough come about?

I was recently invited by a friend to join the executive committee of FORParks (Friends of Regional Parks) – an organisation which supports, advocates for, and does vast amounts of volunteer work in Auckland's Regional Parks network. I made it clear that I would follow the lead of Tony Walton, who has

made extensive intelligent submissions on behalf of the Auckland Tramping Club and FMC. His approach is to engage positively with key players in the Council, Government and iwi, in an attempt to understand their positions and work towards better solutions for kauri dieback and track access.

I found time to do a bit of lobbying of Government and Council politicians who seemed relevant or influential. Some, like Tama Potaka, replied to my emails with standard bureaucratic office responses (which I'm told would reflect DOC officer views rather than his own). Paul Goldsmith met me at a Mt Eden Café. He's a keen tramper and dead against the closures. He was adamant that it was the Council's fault and the Government had no role in the matter (The Closed Area Notice is in fact the responsibility of the Minister of Biosecurity) but he would contact the Mayor and tell him to sort it out.

Mayor Wayne Brown passed my email on to Stuart Leighton (patient ex-ranger, now Senior Biosecurity Adviser within the Council) to answer. He rang me and made it clear that the Council rather than Te Kawerau a Maki (TKM) were responsible for the muddling lack of progress over the past few years.

He and Ed Ashby (CEO of TKM) spend a lot of their time being bashed about the head by extremists on both sides of the issue. They now wanted to set up a small sounding board of people prepared to listen and contribute positively. I suggested Tony Walton, Graeme Campbell and a couple of others.

Tony suggested the group needed to be kept small. Four of us (Tony Walton, Graeme Campbell, Shaun Collins of Lactic Turkey Events, and myself) met with Ed and Stu at TKM's Henderson office.

TKM, with the signed support of the above, subsequently made a well-received submission to the June Parks Committee. (And I understand that Bronwen Turner, the very astute Chair of FORParks, will now be added to the sounding board group).

The Parks Committee, led by Councillors Ken Turner and Mike Lee, are very receptive to the re-opening of tracks (I'd spent time with Mike Lee and made an earlier more personal presentation to their April Committee Meeting). But they've been told repeatedly by Council officers that they have no power to make decisions. They can only ask for information to be brought back to them. The real power lies within the budget-making process.

Aren't TKM trying to close off half the forest?

In the general vacuum, when the Council was not disseminating any strategy for the next Recreation and Track Plan, Te Kawerau a Maki put forward a “Heart of the Ngahere” proposal. The Ngahere concept proposed that a significantly larger part of the Waitakere tracks could be re-opened, challenging Auckland Council to fund work in the short to medium term while other processes take their course.

Along with their acceleration of re-opening tracks, TKM proposed that there should be a “sanctuary” in the central part of the Waitakere Ranges that would be largely off-limits for the public. The area they proposed was smaller than, but within the areas covered by:

- Forest & Bird’s “Ark in the Park” ecological sanctuary
- The water catchment exclusion zones that existed for half a century to protect Auckland’s water supply

It was open to negotiation (and has already been modified in several ways) but was seen as a protected wilderness sanctuary in the heart of the ranges.

It is accepted that *Phytophthora agathidicida* has no cure, is spread through soil movement, and, combined with other environmental impacts (e.g. climate change, pests, mechanical compression of root systems) leads to the death of kauri. We’ve known for a long time that kauri roots are sensitive for other reasons. The big old kauri need boardwalks, fencing, or even forbidden access.

So what exactly are the latest proposals?

The Council is well-advanced towards opening up more tracks. The aim is to develop a network of tracks, with loops both for day trips and for multi-day tramps. The trails up the coast and also parallel to Scenic Drive would eventually connect with each other at Cascade Kauri in the north and at Karamatura in the south.

(There are also some possibilities for the re-opening of the Te Henga Walkway on up to Muriwai but these are complicated by big landslips and potential private landowner issues. It should also be noted that this is neither Regional Parks land, nor subject to the legal processes of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act)

The priority tracks proposed for completion ahead of the statutory recreational planning, are:

- **Kura Track** 3.6km (Kauri, Forest and Coastal) - Creates a 3-hour loop when linked with Omanawanui Track. Follows Whatipu Stream before climbing to meet the open Puriri Ridge Track.
- **Walker Ridge Track** 2.8km (Kauri, Forest) - Links Gibbons and Muir Track to Karamatura and Donald McLean Tracks. Creates multiple options for long loops (6 hr +) from Huia, Karekare and Whatipu.
- **Piha Valley Track** 2.2km (Kauri, Forest) - From end of Glen Esk Road provides a link with Centennial track to Anawhata Road. Also provides access to the Piha gorge for a stream access trip that is kauri safe.
- **Centennial Track** 3km (Kauri, Forest) - Well graded track linking to Anawhata Road and Cutty Grass Track.
- **Panto Track** 4 km (Kauri, Forest) - Key linking track from Arataki to Huia when combined with Farley Track. Part of Te Ara T hura
- **Farley Track** 3.2km (Kauri, Forest) - Key linking track from Arataki to Huia when combined with Panto Track
- **Old Coach Road Track** 2.4km (Kauri, Forest) - Completes Fairy Falls Loop
- **Fairy Falls Track Mountain Road** 1.2km (Kauri, Forest) - Completes Fairy Falls Loop
- **Ridge Road Track** 3km (Kauri, Forest) - Follows the route of old clay service road. Provides options for 8hr plus loops from Piha and Te Piringa. Reopens access to AUTC hut. Part of Te Ara T hura.
- **Ian Wells Track** 2.4km (Kauri, Forest) - Connects Cutty Grass to Upper Nihotupu Dam Road. Provides link back to Arataki enabling long 10 hr loops when combined with Summit and Hamilton Tracks. Part of Te Ara T hura
- **Summit Track** 2.6km (Kauri, Forest) - From Upper Nihotupu Dam connects to Hamilton Track linking back to Arataki. Part of Te Ara T hura.
- **Hamilton Track** (eastern half from Hamilton Saddle) 4.2km (Kauri,Forest) Connection through to Arataki part of Te Ara T hura.

Still to be confirmed are 7 kilometres of “route standard” tracks close to the west coast in the area of Whites Beach and Anawhata. Altogether these tracks would add 42 kilometres at a total estimated cost of \$14.4m. They are shown

in red on the map below. The tracks already open are shown in black. Dotted red near Anawhata are the 7 kms of “route standard” track, while dotted blue are the two proposed natural stream trips.



What's in it for the Alpine Sports Club?

Of special note for ASC are:

- The connection from near our hut down to the Piha Valley at Glen Esk Road
- The re-opening of Ridge Rd/Long Rd right up to the Bethells valley
- The confirmation of the Cutty Grass Track connection to Scenic Drive (It's been a bit off-again/on-again but the logic of it is compelling)
- The re-opening of Ian Wells Track, connecting Cutty Grass Track to Upper Nihotupu Dam and onwards via other tracks to Arataki

The trial of 7 kilometres of “route standard” tracks is also an encouraging innovation. Many trampers are offended by the wooden stairways and other structures that are being imposed on otherwise natural areas. They would appreciate the choice of more diverse track types.

ASC has earned brownie points from the Council by being co-operative with their processes. Mike Frith, Joe Scott-Woods and others have liaised with the track and research contractors and ensured that our hut is available for them as a base (earning extra hut revenue along the way). Some of us have volunteered for track upgrade working parties. I'm the Council's track auditor for Comans Track, etc.

And what do we need to pursue next?

I put it forward that we should re-open the Maungaroa Ridge Track as part of the long-term research. It's the track with the worst dieback but the kauri are all young rickers on a high dry ridge where the old track is not muddy.

We could monitor any progression of kauri dieback on such a track to compare with those tracks that have already been upgraded to the current boardwalk standard and those that remain closed.

This approach is predicated on what has happened in the past with diebacks of other tree species, both indigenous and exotic (e.g. Ti Kouka, Pohutukawa, Dutch Elm and, to a lesser extent, most of the Podocarp species). The assumption is that vulnerable trees die, but those with genetic resistance to the vector causing the dieback then re-invigorate the species.



The steep climb up to the Maungaroa Ridge has recently been re-opened up to the Maungaroa Lookout. One extremist website, which has regular photospreads by locals who illegally follow forbidden tracks to record the state of the old tracks and their infrastructure, recently showed the state of the remaining track along the ridge up to the Anawhata Road.

This illegal use highlights the need to install phyto-sanitary gates (with a “Track Closed” notice) at each end of closed tracks to avoid spores being taken out of the Park on boots. This would be safer than the current situation where illegals skirt round the end of the fencing used to close off a track.

The consensus of people who know the many Piha valley tracks better than me was that the Piha Valley and Centennial Tracks would offer a better connection up to Anawhata Road. It has a more even gradient, more attractive vegetation, historic features, waterfalls, and a section of stream that could be accessed in its natural state. Maungaroa Ridge Track could perhaps be considered later to complete a loop track for day walks.

The other ongoing work that FORParks is pursuing vigorously relates to the future funding of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. Regional Parks have been seriously under-funded since the legacy Auckland City imposed their culture when the SuperCity was formed. The kauri dieback closures resulted in a burst of funding but the three-year budget for research has not been

renewed. And both the Government and Council are focussed on the cost-of-living and trimming their budgets.



FORParks has consequently been advocating for the targeted rate (NETR) to be used for its statutory purpose. It is also drawing the Council's attention to rapidly increasing visitor use, conflicts between uses, problems caused by multiple contractors and Council departments providing services, new environmental challenges, expanding urban areas, lack of a parks acquisition strategy, and the need for a new vision and strong political leadership to take Regional Parks forward for the next 50 years.

As always – for the up-to-date map of all re-opened tracks (including those in the Hunuwas, on Waiheke, and in the Kaipātiki catchment), click on:

<https://aucklandcouncil.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=090a929b13884cfdb17078f7bb41c8a4>

Club Contacts

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Club records archivist	Jenny Hudson	email@alpinesport.org.nz



Sennen airborne in Happy Valley!