



Part C:
Management Considerations





C.1 LANDSCAPE

The reserves are located within the **Upper Waikato River Valley**, an area of significant natural landscape quality managed by the Taupo District Council, Department of Conservation and the Wairakei Tourist Park. All three organisations wish to protect and enhance the unique features of the valley landscape and legislate accordingly.

Eg: Department of Conservation

Draft Tongariro / Taupo Conservation Management Strategy (1995 – 2005).

"The purpose of a conservation management plan is to implement conservation management strategies and establish detailed objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources within any area or areas referred to in subsection (4) of this section, and for recreation, tourism, and other conservation purposes."

S17E Conservation Act 1987

Spa Thermal Park has been developed using its naturally attractive landscape character, keeping large areas of open space which encapsulate views of the Waikato River and the surrounding landscape.

The Park consists of gently rolling open space with large areas planted with a mixture of trees and shrubs.

The Park is bordered by the Waikato River.

There are still some areas within the Park which are dominated with *Pinus pinaster* plantings.

Areas have been developed for children's recreational activities with play equipment and large open spaces for casual walking.

A casual walk around the area affords enchanting views of the Waikato River and its surrounding landscape. Tracks along the bank of the Waikato River provide interesting nature walks and include some of the area's geothermal features. Geothermal activity occurs in several areas of the Spa Thermal Park and includes hot water streams, tomos, steaming ground blowholes and other such features, all of which add interest and variety to the landscape of the reserve.

The landscape character of the reserve is one of the main attractions to the area. It is therefore worthy of protection and should be enhanced where possible.

The Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve provides an opportunity for a natural experience adjacent to the Taupo urban area. Its natural landscape has a wide variety of contours and levels with large open spaces and in places vertical cliffs which are in total contrast to the adjacent urban area.

The Waikato Valley has its own natural beauty with captivating views of the Waikato River from many interesting areas.

The landscape character of Spa Thermal Park and Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve is the main attraction to these areas and therefore worthy of protecting.

C.2 CONSERVATION

The Spa Thermal Park and Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve are in an area possessing interesting natural values. The reserves accommodate botanical associations and geothermal activity worth protecting.

The main areas where conservation values are apparent are along the Waikato River bank, the Otumuheke Stream and the thermal area near the present Venture Centre. The Waikato River bank is covered with native vegetation that has been heavily modified in the past and contains a number of pine trees. The area is, however, worthy of protection as there are not many other patches of native vegetation in the locality. This bush also provides a wildlife corridor along the riverbank which is important to allow birds and other wildlife to pass through to maintain the vegetative cover along the riverbank for soil conservation purposes and to protect water quality.

Rare and endangered ferns occur in an area along the Waikato River bank and along the Otumuheke Stream. These ferns should be protected and management of these areas should ensure their long-term viability.

All three areas contain geothermal activity of some kind. This activity is worthy of protection in its own right and also because of its botanical associations. Thermal ferns and prostrate manuka and kanuka are only found in this type of geothermal area.



C.3 RECREATION

Spa Thermal Park

Spa Thermal Park is presently used for a variety of recreational activities. These include:

walking, jogging, fishing, skateboarding, swimming, reading, harriers, picnics, orienteering, exercising dogs, confidence course training, playing on children's adventure playground equipment, informal soccer and cricket and other informal ball sports.

Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve

This reserve lends itself to pedestrian traffic through a number of walks (e.g. Memorial Walkway on the banks adjacent to the Cemetery).

Other activities include abseiling and bungee jumping, picnicking, swimming.

C.4 HISTORICAL

The Spa Thermal Park and Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve have an interesting history worthy of note. It is, however, unfortunate that little of the early Maori history of the area has been documented. This creates a large gap in our knowledge as to who occupied the area and to its land use history. It is therefore very difficult to know what historical sites of Maori origin may be on the Park and be of value to be protected and interpreted to the public in an apt manner.

It is likely that with further investigations and as information comes to hand that some Maori historical sites may be identified. Where this occurs the history of these sites should be documented and interpreted appropriately.

The main known historical points of interest in relation to the Park include its association with the Armed Constabulary Unit and the Spa Hotel. The old coach road across the Otumuheke block and through Spa Thermal Park is a historical feature in that it was used over 100 years ago. This feature should be interpreted to the public in association with other aspects of the Park's history.

C.5 TOURISM

The reserves are important features in Taupo's tourist circuit. This is evident by the large number of holidaymakers visiting the area during the holiday season.

C.6 EDUCATION

In the past Spa Thermal Park has been used for some educational activities. The most frequent users are school groups, with youth groups (e.g. Scouts) also using it on occasions. The reserves have areas suited to nature walks and biological studies as well as providing examples of interesting geological and geomorphological features. Spa Thermal Park is therefore ideal for interpretation to school groups and suited to outdoor educational activities. It provides an ideal environment for youth club activities, such as Scout Jamborees

In addition to the above, some recreational activities such as abseiling provide educational benefits to the community.

C.7 SOCIAL

The reserves provide an area where people can relax and undertake recreational activities. There is opportunity to increase their fitness and co ordination skills through utilising the equipment provided.

The reserves are aesthetically pleasing and provides an area where people can walk, relax and enjoy the scenery and open spaces. It is a safe area that both children and adults can enjoy.

Spa Thermal Park provides an area for exercising dogs, where they can run free, away from the residential areas of town.



C.8 COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Taupo District Council has since 1991 been involved in community employment schemes in association with the Work and Income Support (formally New Zealand Employment Service).

The scheme's objectives are:

- to help the long-term unemployed improve their skill base and to assist their return to the workforce
- to achieve an asset that has long lasting value and benefit to the community
- to utilise government subsidies to complete a project at a minimum cost to the ratepayer
- to develop a programme to identify and promote local employment opportunities

In 1975 an employment scheme was used for the initial clearing of Spa Thermal Park.

In 1997, a community employment scheme (Task force Green) assisted the development of the Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve-Taupo Cemetery Memorial Walkway, which extends from the Taupo Cemetery down the bank to the Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve along the Waikato River.

The work included clearing blackberry and scrub, creating walkways, constructing wooden retaining walls and steps, along with planting native trees and shrubs.

Since this scheme has proven to be beneficial to the community, any future developments of this nature should use the resource base available through the New Zealand Employment Service.

In 1999, the Council allowed the Tu Kakariki Project to take place on the Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve. This project, sponsored by the Council, Department of Conservation and MacDonalds, is aimed at introducing intermediate school pupils to native tree planting during Conservation Week. During the week up to nine hundred trees are planted. The Council will continue to allow planting along the Riverbank Recreational and Scenic Reserve thus encouraging younger members of the community to appreciate their natural environment more.

See Appendix 6: Community Initiatives

Legend

■ ■ ■ Adventure Tourism Area

Indicative Location of:

- - - Approximate Lease Site

① Cafe/Staff/Toilet/Admin Block

② Giant Swing

③ Carpark Extension

Drawn by: Jason Gale
Date: 22/2/00



Adventure Tourism Area Concept Plan

Details and exact boundaries to be held within lease agreement.