

Developing a management plan for Te Whanau Hou Grovetown Lagoon

Summary of feedback received



It was heartening to read the submissions for the intention to prepare a new management plan for the Grovetown Lagoon. The submissions were very positive of how people are enjoying the area. There were 37 submissions received in total. The submissions came in different form, letter, email or in the template form provided. Three of the submissions were from organisations/groups; being Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, Fish and Game and a cycle group with 25 members.

A summary of the feedback and suggestions has been prepared and a copy of all feedback received is available on the Council's website at <https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/recreation/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-and-open-spaces-plans-and-reports/te-whanau-hou-grovetown-lagoon-reserve-management-plan>. The summary has been prepared based on the questions asked in the brochure.

The suggestions made in the submissions will be considered as the management plan is developed through its various stages.

Frequency of use

The responses to this question ranged from daily year round to four or five times a year.

Activities and use of the Lagoon

People enjoy sitting, walking, dog walking, cycling, kayaking, canoeing and fitness or exercising at the Lagoon. Bird watching, watching the wildlife and seasonal changes, looking for rare native birds and

enjoying the native plants were also commonly mentioned.

Taking out of town visitors to the Lagoon, taking photographs, picnicking, and exploring the area with children/grandchildren were other activities that occur. A number of submitters undertook game bird hunting or duck shooting during the season. Swimming in the nearby Wairau River in summer was also mentioned in submissions.

For those who volunteer at the Lagoon growing seedlings, planting, weeding, track maintenance, mowing, clearing dead trees and pest control all form part of the activities carried out.

Things most enjoyed about the Lagoon

Common themes amongst aspects people most enjoyed about Grovetown Lagoon include:

- great walking trail with picnic tables and a toilet, dog friendly walking area and the cycle track
- handy location and proximity to Blenheim being within easy biking distance
- native bird life, the large groups of black swans, the surprise of seeing spoonbills, kingfishers and kararearea



- the peacefulness, tranquillity and its “wellbeing”, the beautiful scenery, the relaxing environment and being close to the waterway
- native plantings, diversity, the growth of the new plantings, the regeneration, the constant improvements, and the control of invasive pest species, predator control being conducted
- the harvest of game birds and duck shooting
- appreciating the opportunity to volunteer
- appreciated the opportunity to donate a seat for the enjoyment of all visitors and as a memorial

Other responses commented on how looking after the Lagoon in a collaborative manner is really important for the mana whenua and our whole community. It was also said that this project will be with us forever and should be taken a step at a time.

Concerns about Grovetown Lagoon

Dogs off leash were of concern to some who noted that people have been bagging their dog poo and then dropping it by the track or throwing it down the bank.

Some considered the track network should not be developed for cycles and that it should be for walking only. A particular concern was raised with the speed of cyclists using e-bikes on the track. Continued access to Grovetown Lagoon was identified as being

important and some responses highlighted concerns about this including:

- whether payment to walk the area would be required
- whether access to the Lagoon would be restricted
- ensuring the area is maintained as a public space open for all and year round
- ensuring access to enable pest control and other habitat enhancement projects.

(It is important to acknowledge that the management plan can only cover areas that are public land. It cannot manage activities over private and/or communal owned iwi land.)

Game bird shooting was of concern to those who opposed the activity but also to those who enjoyed duck hunting. Those enjoying this activity wanted it to continue and were concerned this would be restricted through the management plan. More commentary on game bird shooting can be found later in this summary.

Other concerns noted in the responses included:

- the area may get too popular and disturb the birds
- ongoing bad smells from around the land where the piggery operation occurred
- the flood protection works and weed control work organised and managed by the Council needs to align with the recreational use of the Lagoon
- ongoing funding security

Responses also identified that the ongoing weed and pest control and maintenance of the tracks is a big responsibility for the Grovetown Lagoon volunteers to find the money and time to administer the project. It was suggested the Council take over the long-term maintenance of this valuable asset for the future enjoyment of the Marlborough public and visitors/tourists to the area.



Suggestions for improving the Grovetown Lagoon area

Physical structures such as a jetty or floating platform, more boardwalks including through the Springs wetlands and a rope swing in the big eucalypts halfway around the track were suggested. Moving the bird observation structure to a better place to watch birds was also proposed. Making the track more weather resilient was sought so that muddy areas and large puddles were a thing of the past.



Community amenities easily accessible and inclusive of people with limited mobility were sought including a suggestion that the track be sealed (even halfway) for people with limited mobility.

Plainly designed, easily recognised seating suitable, for people with sight impairments or dementia and benches with a center handrail so that people can easily get into and out of seats, were also suggested.

In terms of getting people involved in the Lagoon area it was said it would be good to see iwi whanau actively involved, especially tamariki, koroua and kuia. Others suggested getting young people from the Rowing Club volunteering, continuing to work with the schools and getting the kids more involved in the restoration and information panels.



Other suggestions for improvement included:

- the area be smoke and alcohol free as to help keep the surrounding environment free of litter
- there be more grassy picnic areas for families
- banning duck shooting so the area is people friendly all year round

- continuing with weed control and planting of native species
- getting rid of the willows
- more water through-flow through the Lagoon
- whether there was a need to consider culling black swan which had become a predominant species

Improving signage around the Lagoon was suggested. This included flora and fauna billboards and information about the history of the area, interpretive signage and better signage for dogs on leash. Promoting the current website more to include local history from local residents was suggested as was a place (such as the website or Facebook page) where reports or comments can be left.



One response hoped that one day there would be more land added to the reserve area and planted in natives.

Game bird shooting

Submissions supporting and opposing game bird hunting at the Lagoon were received. Fifteen submitters were concerned about game bird hunting while ten submissions wanted shooting to continue.

Supporting game bird hunting

The comments made in support of game bird shooting continuing at Grovetown Lagoon highlighted the long history of shooting at the Lagoon with time spent with family and friends as well as intergenerational connections being made as father, sons and grandsons hunt at the Lagoon. The Lagoon was identified as a place with easy access and a great place to take young hunters to learn to hunt safely.

Fish and Game supported the use of hunting hours and no shoot areas to manage potential conflict. Having agreed guidelines for hunting clearly mapped out in the management plan was said to be very helpful for all users going forward. It was also commented that the current management plan has been successful for allowing hunting as well as recreation.

Other reasons for supporting game bird hunting included:

- hunters are careful with the use of firearms and safe hunting ensuring clear lines of sight and that signage is put up when hunting occurs
- with the development of vineyards and the drainage of wetlands there are fewer places for people to hunt game birds
- hunting enables the gathering of food and the harvest of mahinga kai
- hunters build and enjoy shooting from mai mai
- the majority of the harvest is over opening weekend and there could be an option to consider closing the track either for opening day, opening weekend, the first week of the season or the month of May
- shooting controls the number of birds without using poison.

Opposing game bird hunting

For those opposing game bird hunting at the Lagoon the most significant concern raised was in relation to public safety. People were concerned that there will be accidental harm to other users of the Lagoon from stray bullets and that young families were feeling extremely vulnerable. Other safety concerns included:

- people shooting towards houses on Māori Island with pellets raining down on the roof

Where to from here

Staff have begun working on drafting the plan and looking at the issues that have been highlighted through the submission process. Consultation has already begun and there will be opportunities for further consultation throughout the drafting process. It is likely that a draft management plan will be publically notified for submission during May/June in 2022.

If you would like to talk with someone about this process please contact Justine Johnson at the Council on 03 520 7400.

- duck hunters shooting from boats
- people using the lagoon for kayaking and canoeing is dangerous whilst there is hunting
- shooters that are facing towards the walking track when shooting from mai mai

Submitters also commented on the contradiction of protecting the birds and shooting the birds, the alignment of conservation goals with duck shooting and that the area should be a true bird and native plant sanctuary. People considered there was noise and disruption to the birdlife and that bird life is reduced/ shot or scared away.

A strong theme running through submissions opposing game bird hunting was that Grovetown Lagoon was a public walkway on public land and a place for families and the community. It should not be promoted as a place to take your family while shooting is taking place. There were concerns that the Lagoon may be closed for a period, perhaps up to three months while duck shooting takes place.

Other reasons for opposing game bird hunting included concerns about:

- hunting dogs off lead
- mai mais being an eyesore and a blight amongst the beautiful native plants on the water's edge
- rubbish being left behind by shooters

