

Media release

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Shakespear Regional Park to re-open on 1 December

Shakespear Regional Park will re-open to the public on 1 December, following a five month closure for animal pest eradication. Those wanting to book summer camping and picnic sites at Shakespear will be able to from 6 September.

Auckland Council Open Sanctuary Coordinator Matt Maitland says the first stage of animal pest eradication has been completed successfully and the team is now hard at work checking to see if any pests remain.

“Excellent weather conditions allowed us to carry out the three applications in the best possible timeframe and with the minimum gap (of two weeks) between flying days, despite a wetter than average July.

“Each application went ‘without a hitch’ and we have been very pleased with the bait uptake and the breakdown of the residual bait.

“We continue to sweep the park, monitor for pest activity and remove animal carcasses where appropriate,” he says.

Councillor Sandra Coney, chair of the Auckland Council’s Parks, Recreation and Heritage Forum, acknowledges the support and assistance of many groups in the efforts to create an open sanctuary at Shakespear.

“We still have a lot of work ahead of us to make the park completely pest free and a safe haven for treasured native species, but we couldn’t have got to this point without the support of our partners, our neighbours, SOSSI and the park volunteers,” she says.

Auckland Council continues to work with park neighbours and partners the NZ Defence Force, Watercare and YMCA Shakespear Lodge, as well as the Shakespear Open Sanctuary Society Inc (SOSSI) and a number of dedicated park volunteers, and is grateful for their support.

Bookings for picnic and campsites from 1 December onwards will be taken from Tuesday 6 September. Phone the Auckland Council on 09 301 0101 to make a booking or inquiry or go to www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/regionalparks for information and to check availability of the Shakespear sites.

The early completion of the aerial operation means that the park can open earlier than first indicated – the earlier ‘mid-December’ reopening date allowed for unfavourable weather delays. Livestock will return to the park around the same time.

There will be no further temporary closures of Army and Okoromai Bays. Park users exercising dogs in the designated Army and Okoromai Bay areas, are advised to ensure dogs are kept under control at all times as there may still be poisoned carcasses found in this area.

While the park remains closed (between now and 1 December), a range of ground-based pest monitoring and eradication operations will continue on the park. This includes trapping for mustelids, hedgehogs and any remaining rats; detection dog monitoring for signs of rodents, mustelids, hedgehogs and rabbits (and targeting these pests accordingly); spotlight hunting; and implementing longer-term monitoring and surveillance control methods including traps and tracking tunnels.

“Once the park reopens, eradication operations will continue as we deal with any remaining pests and monitor for any incursions,” says Mr Maitland.

“This is particularly important in the park buffer zone to the west of the fence. We will also be asking the public to be vigilant about ensuring they don’t transfer pests into the sanctuary through vehicles or equipment.

“A simple check of belongings before visiting the park can protect the future of Shakespear Open Sanctuary,” he says.

While the aerial applications of brodifacoum bait are complete, there is a requirement for the signs advising the public of the use of the poison bait to remain in place for one year after the last application; these won’t be removed until early August 2012.

Samples of seafood were taken both before and after the aerial bait operation and have been sent to a laboratory for testing, this is in accordance with resource consent requirements. The public will be notified when the all clear is given and in the meantime should observe advice on signs in coastal areas.

All the things people are used to doing at Shakespear, like swimming, picnicking, walking, mountain biking and camping will still be possible when the park reopens and when it becomes an open sanctuary.

“We know people are looking forward to visiting Shakespear again this summer and watching the open sanctuary develop,” says Cr Coney.

“At first, the biggest difference people will notice is the pest proof fence and automated gates – a reminder that we’re trying hard to keep unwanted pests out.

“Over time we expect to see species regenerate and flourish in a pest free environment and others return to the park of their own accord. We hope to see bellbirds, kakariki and pateke making their way across the Gulf from nearby Tiritiri Matangi Island,” she says.

It is hoped that planning for reintroductions of absent species like kiwi, robins and whiteheads will begin around a year after the pest eradication operation is complete and the first bird translocation might take place in spring 2013.

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For media assistance, please contact:

Glyn Walters | Media and Public Affairs Manager

021 278 6858

For further information, please contact:

Jo Davidson | Communications Advisor Parks, Sport and Recreation

09 307 7688 or 021 334 634