

About the research:

Greenpark Sands extends along 13 kilometres of lakeshore from the LII River /Ararira to the Halswell River/Huritini. The Sands contain a range of wetland vegetation within saline to freshwater habitats, identified as nationally significant. The lower sand flats have particular value because of their size and combination of halophyte and freshwater plant species. Most of the area is of outstanding importance for wader birds, especially migrant species, and of high importance for waterfowl. It also provides significant recreation opportunities to the public, such as bird watching and waterfowl hunting. To Ngāi Tahu, Te Waihora represents a major mahinga kai and an important source of mana.

This area is being severely impacted by off road vehicle activities, as demonstrated by an initial study funded by the Mai Mai fund completed early this year. The study was carried out by a Landscape Architecture Masters student, Johanna Blakely, who measured the aerial extent of impacts using GIS spatial analysis.

The study starting in 2021 will carry on from this initial research. The purpose of this research is to determine the values attributed to the Conservation area, how it is used (including ORV use), and opinions regarding impacts and alternative strategies for their mitigation. Although research methods to answer these questions have yet to be refined, it will likely involve social surveying of key stakeholders (such as Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, the Department of Conservation, Fish and Game, TRONT and others). Based on this survey, recreation ecology theory, and best design practices for mitigating human activity impacts, improved policies and a conservation area redesign are anticipated.

The thesis will be supervised by Dr Wendy McWilliam wendy.mcwilliam@lincoln.ac.nz.