

Ōhiwa Harbour Recreation Research

Report prepared for Bay of Plenty Regional Council
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By Heather R. Hamerton



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 - Ōhiwa Beach Holiday Park
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Photo on front cover courtesy of Tanja Rothers

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	5
1 Background.....	6
2 Methodology	6
3 Findings	6
3.1 Observations.....	6
3.1.1. Port Ōhope Boat Ramp.....	7
3.1.2 Port Ōhope Wharf.....	9
3.1.3 Ōtao South Reserve	11
3.1.4 Tauwhare Pā	12
3.1.5 Wainui Road.....	12
3.1.6 Nukuhou Lookout and River Walk.....	13
3.1.7 Ruatuna Rd	13
3.1.8 Kutarere Wharf	13
3.1.9 Ōhiwa Walkway	14
3.1.10 Ōhiwa Boat Ramp.....	15
3.1.11 Ōhiwa Spit	17
3.1.12 Summary of Observations.....	18
3.2 Surveys.....	19
3.2.1 Demographics.....	19
3.2.2 Place of residence	20
3.2.3 Present accommodation	20
3.2.4 Visiting Patterns.....	21
3.2.5 Recreational Activities.....	23
3.2.6 Satisfaction with Facilities	24
3.2.7 Information and signage	25
3.2.8 Suggested improvements	28
3.2.9 Aspects of Interest and Value	29

3.3	Interviews with business owners	31
4	Summary and Discussion	33
	Appendix 1	35

Executive Summary

As part of the monitoring of the Ōhiwa Harbour Recreation Strategy, Bay of Plenty Regional Council on behalf of the Ōhiwa Strategy Co-ordination Group requested information about recreational use of the harbour over the summer holiday period. Between 6 January and 10 February 2014, researchers completed observations of recreational usage patterns at twelve sites around Ōhiwa Harbour and conducted brief interviews with 226 people about their activities and satisfaction levels with facilities, and what was of interest and value to them about the harbour. Six local business owners/managers commented on the feedback and requests for information they receive from visitors and made suggestions for improving facilities.

The observations demonstrated that the numbers of people around the harbour were highest in January and decreased into February. Numbers were also higher during weekends, particularly Auckland Anniversary weekend and the weekend immediately following Waitangi Day. The most popular water-based activities were fishing, swimming, power-boating, kayaking, sailing, paddle-boarding and dinghies. The most popular land-based activities were sight-seeing, walking, picnicking and cycling. Patterns of activities observed varied across the different sites.

The 226 survey participants were 80% European, equal numbers of men and women and from a broad range of age groups. More than half reported that they live in the Bay of Plenty. One third of those surveyed were visiting Ōhiwa Harbour for the first time, and 90% of people planned to visit more than one location around the harbour. Port Ōhope Wharf was the most popular site for people to visit. Ninety-five per cent of participants said their recreational needs were well catered, and gave high satisfaction ratings for a range of facilities. Most people found the signs useful and said there was about the right amount of signage. People get information about Ōhiwa Harbour from a range of sources, often from other people, and also rely on local businesses to provide information. The quiet and tranquillity of the harbour was highly valued, as were the natural environment, beautiful scenery and wildlife. People liked the easy access to the water at many points around the harbour, the safety of the harbour for families with children, and the diverse range of activities available. Business owners reported they get a lot of positive feedback about how wonderful the area is for recreation and receive many requests for information.

People are attracted by the quiet, uncluttered and scenic natural environment, and appreciate the diverse recreational activities available. This is demonstrated also in the broad range of recreational activities which were observed around the harbour. Generally people are satisfied with the facilities and signage. However, they also made suggestions for how their experience could be improved. The information collected will assist regional and district councils in their management of Ōhiwa Harbour and its environs.

1 Background

The Ōhiwa Harbour Strategy calls for regular monitoring of recreational use of the harbour "...to assess usage, to identify incompatible activities, including conflict with cultural and ecological values, and to assist demand management (such as the need for facilities)" (10.3.7, p51). This report was requested by the Ōhiwa Strategy Co-ordination Group from Heather Hamerton of the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic to satisfy the requirements of this action and to provide information about issues such as the provision of signage.

2 Methodology

Three research assistants completed observations of recreational usage patterns at a number of different sites around Ōhiwa Harbour between 6 January and 10 February, 2014. Observation times at each were usually one hour; on some days observations were carried out at the same site in both morning and afternoon.

The research assistants also surveyed 226 people, asking them what activities they were involved in and how often they visit Ōhiwa Harbour sites. Survey participants were asked how satisfied they were with facilities and the signage and information available, and invited to comment on what they valued most about the harbour.

Interviews with 5 business owners around Ōhiwa Harbour were also carried out in mid-February. Business owners were asked about the feedback they received about the harbour and recreational opportunities and what kinds of information people most often request. They were also invited to make suggestions for improving facilities. Campground owners were asked if there is sufficient capacity to cope with demands for camping and whether demand for camping is rising or declining.

3 Findings

In this section, findings from observations are reported for each site at which observations were carried out. Survey findings are then presented, followed by a summary of information contributed by business owners.

3.1 Observations

Regular one-hour observations were carried out at the following sites:

- Port Ōhope Boat Ramp (27 observations over 19 days)
- Port Ōhope Wharf (28 observations over 18 days)
- Ōtao South Reserve, Ōhope (14 observations over 13 days)
- Tauwhare Pā carpark (14 observations)
- Wainui Rd
- Nukuhou Lookout (Burke Rd) (10 observations)

- Nukuhou river walk (3 observations)
- Kutarere Wharf (9 observations)
- Ruatuna Rd (8 observations)
- Ōhiwa Boat Ramp (18 observations over 13 days)
- Ōhiwa walkway (10 observations)
- Ōhiwa Spit (16 observations over 14 days)

3.1.1. Port Ōhope Boat Ramp

Observations were carried out on 27 different occasions over 19 days. The chart below summarises the total numbers of people at this location during each observation time. Between 30 and 92 people were observed in January; after anniversary weekend numbers dropped down to between 11 and 30 people during a one-hour period.

During both January and February, the observation periods when only small numbers of people were observed were days on which sea and/or wind conditions were rough. As an example of how weather affected numbers, rainy conditions on the morning of 21st January meant that only 10 people were counted at the boat ramp, whereas on the afternoon of the same day after the rain had cleared 57 people were observed.

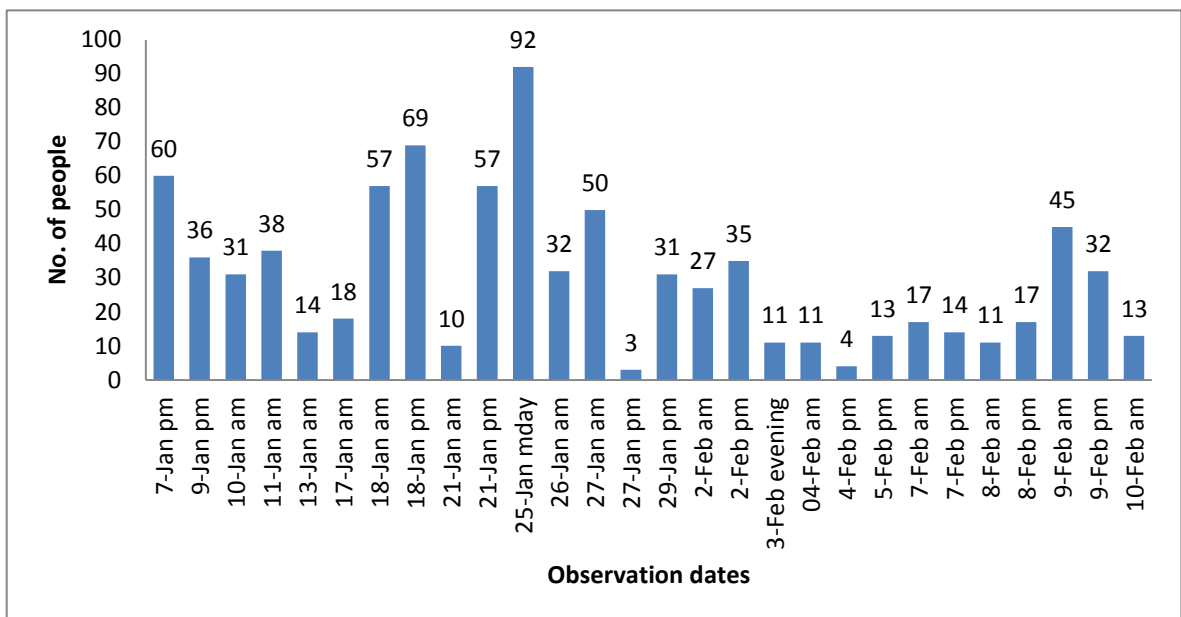


Figure 1: Total numbers of people observed at Port Ōhope Boat Ramp

The most popular activity at the Port Ōhope Boat Ramp area was power-boating. Other very popular activities were swimming, fishing and sightseeing. Swimming was popular here because of the safety of the water. Many other water activities were also popular, including water-skiing, jet skiing, kayaking, paddle boarding and biscuiting. The area was popular for picnicking and walking, and people were camping in the area on most days. The figure below shows the recreational use pattern for the eight most popular activities observed at Port Ōhope Boat Ramp.

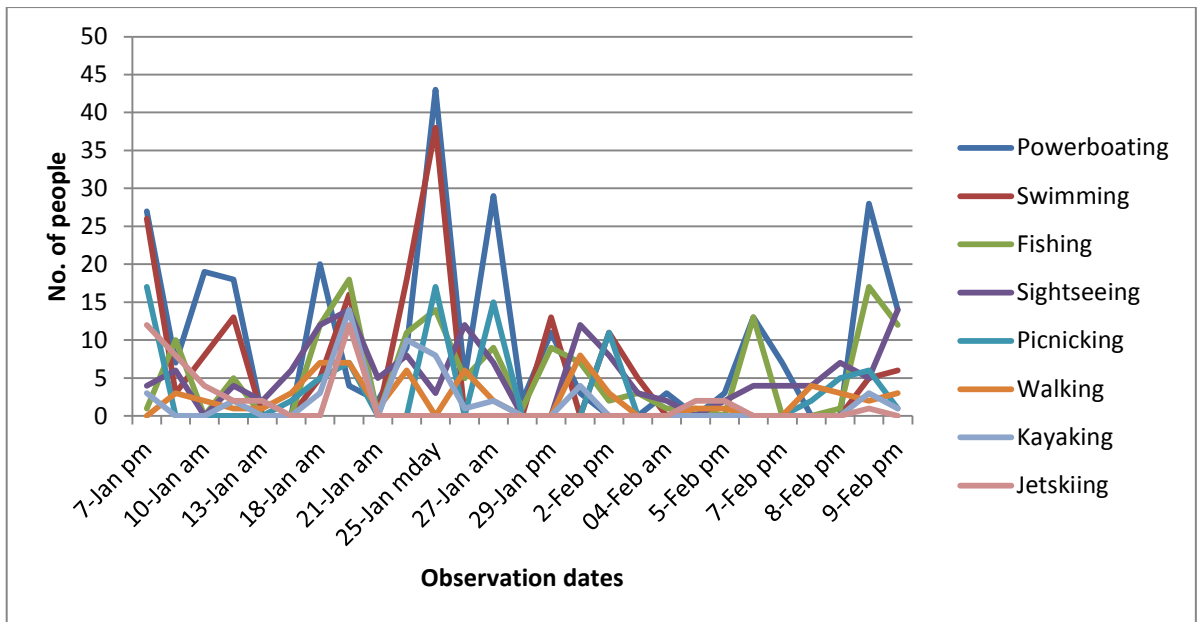


Figure 2: Recreational use patterns for the eight most popular activities at Port Ōhope Boat Ramp

Numbers of vehicles with trailers was recorded at the beginning and end of each observation period. The number of vehicles with trailers parked at Port Ōhope Boat Ramp varied from 1 on a few days to 43. The average number of vehicles with trailers counted at this location was 14, making this the most popular spot for launching boats around the harbour. Higher numbers were recorded on weekends. From the changes in numbers at the beginning and end of some observation periods, it appeared that people are launching and bringing in boats at all times of the tide. The table below shows the numbers of vehicles with trailers parked at this location at the beginning and end of each observation period.

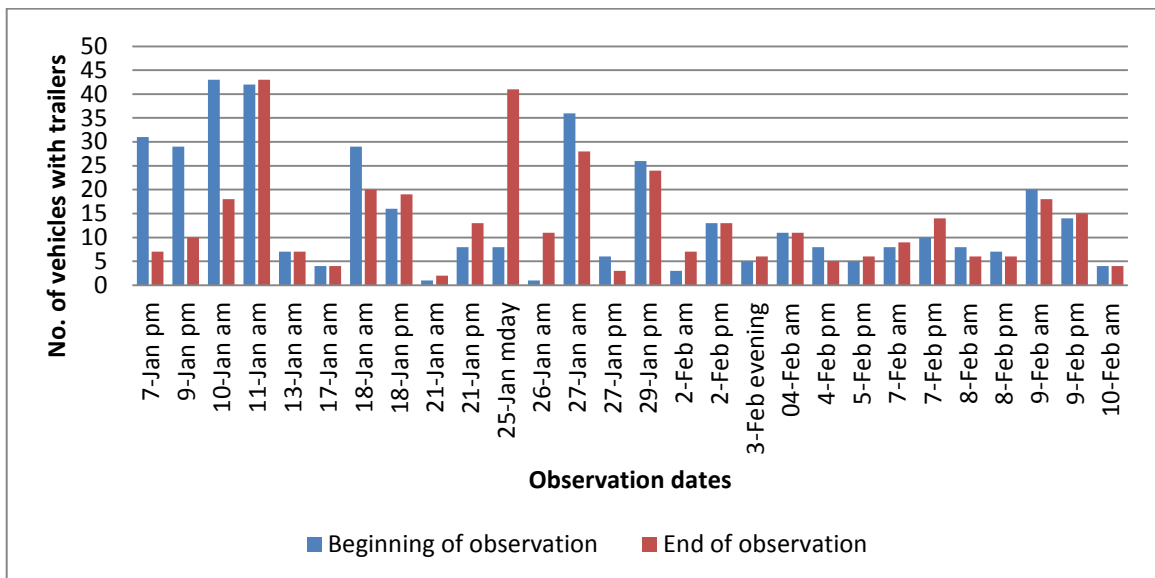


Figure 3: Numbers of vehicles with trailers at Port Ōhope Boat Ramp

3.1.2 Port Ōhope Wharf

During the observation period, numbers fluctuated from day to day, but started to decrease slightly in February, with the exception of the weekend following Waitangi Day. The average number of people observed during a one-hour period was 48, with numbers ranging from less than 10 on some days up to 160. The total numbers of people observed at each time are recorded below.

As at the boat ramp, numbers were lower when weather conditions were rainy or overcast and windy, as was the case on 9th January. Fewer people were also counted at the wharf in the early morning observations and when the tide was low.

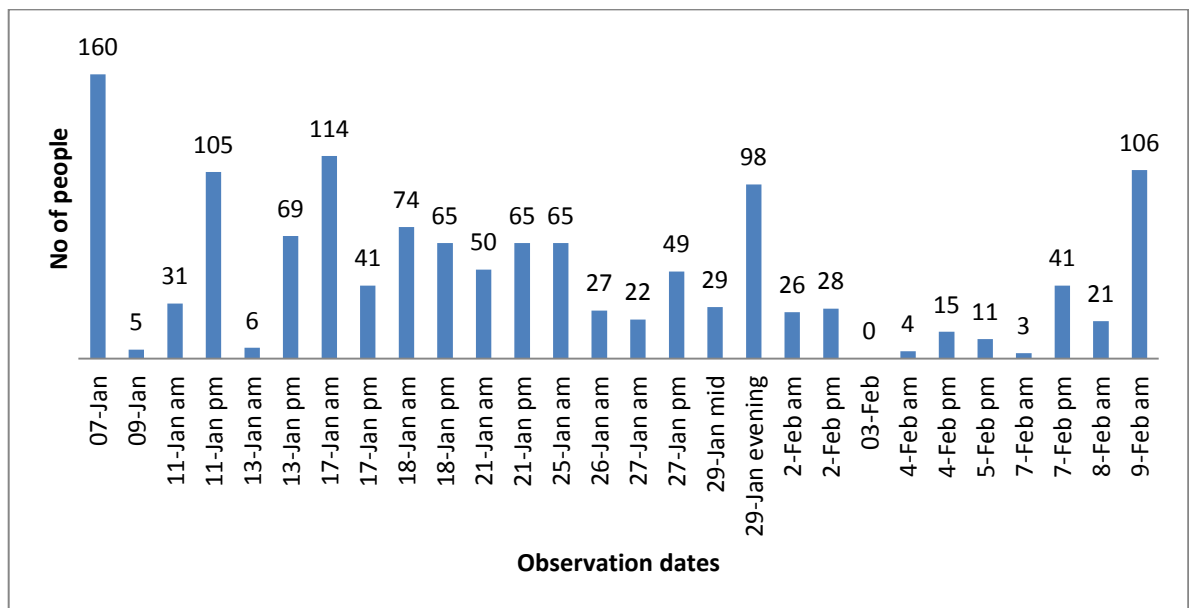


Figure 4: Total numbers of people observed at Port Ōhope Wharf

Fishing was by far the most popular activity at this location. Numbers of people fishing from the wharf ranged from 15 - 40 people, with 20 being the average number on days when the tide was favourable. Swimming and sightseeing were very popular activities around the wharf area. People were also engaged in a number of water activities, including sailing, kayaking, power-boating, paddle-boarding and kite-surfing. A kayak hire business is located at Port Ōhope Wharf adjacent to the boat ramp over the busy summer period; from here people paddle kayaks all around the harbour.

Land-based activities consistently observed included walking, cycling and picnicking. At high tides, the wharf was a popular place for swimmers jumping into the water from the wharf. The figure below shows the patterns of recreational activity for the six most popular activities.

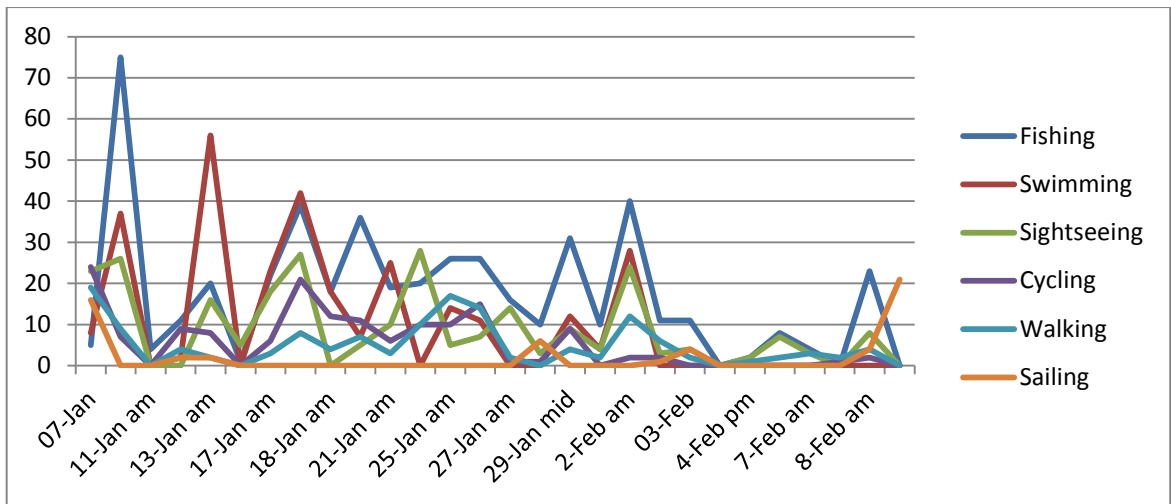


Figure 5: Recreational use patterns for the eight most popular activities at Port Ōhope Wharf

A boat ramp is situated adjacent to and west of Port Ōhope Wharf. The number of vehicles with trailers parked near the boat ramp varied from 0 on some days to 50 on one Sunday in February. The average number of vehicles with trailers counted at this location was 8. Higher numbers were recorded on weekends. Slightly lower numbers of vehicles with trailers were counted at low tide times, but it was different to discern boat launching patterns. The much higher number of vehicles and trailers on Sunday 9th February was due to activities at the local yacht club at this location. The table below shows the numbers of vehicles with trailers parked at this location at the beginning and end of each observation period.

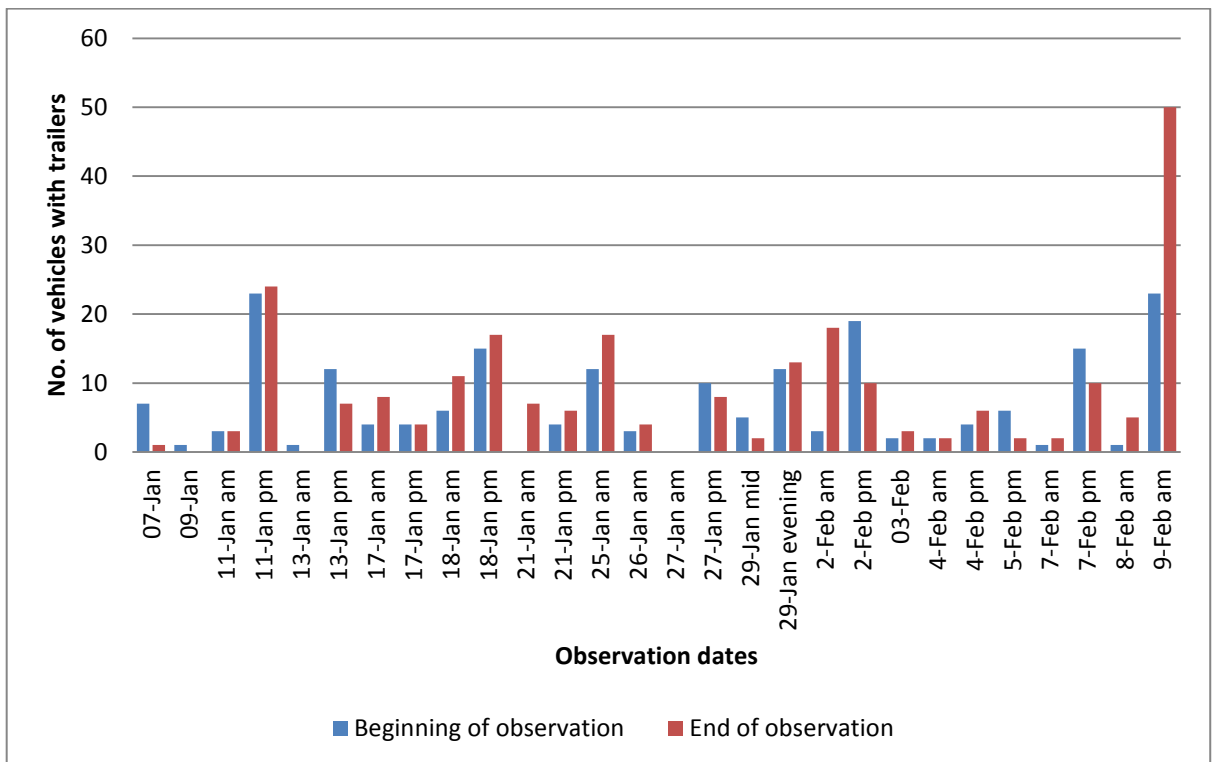


Figure 6: Numbers of vehicles with trailers counted Port Ōhope Wharf

3.1.3 Ōtao South Reserve

Observations were carried out on 13 days, and on one day in both morning and afternoon. Numbers ranged from 0 on a rainy day to 43 people on one day on anniversary weekend, with an average number of 18 people during one observation period. The chart below summarises the total numbers of people observed at this location on all observation dates.

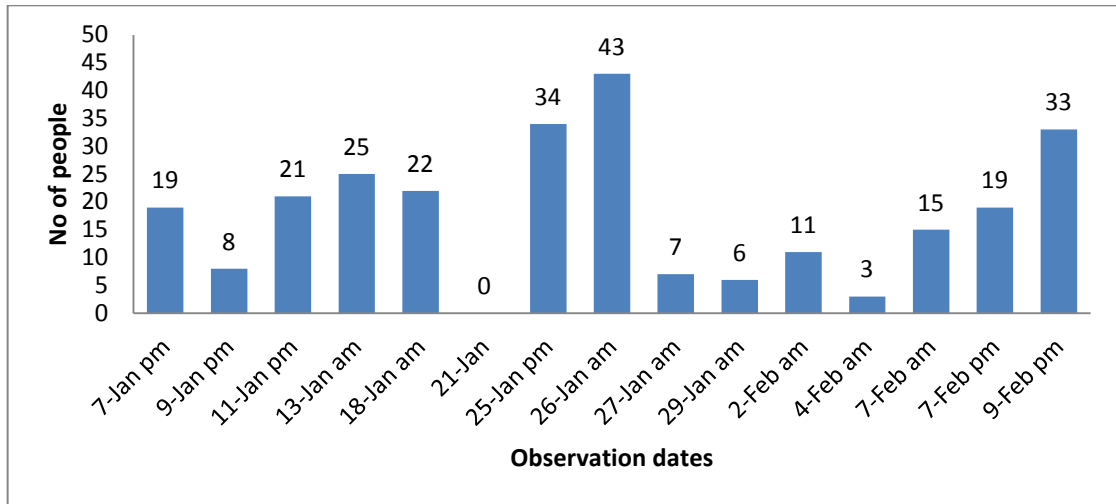


Figure 7: Total numbers of people observed at Ōtao South Reserve

At Ōtao South Reserve, people were observed both on the land and on the water. The most popular activities at this location were kayaking, walking and playing at the playground. Other activities were powerboating, sailing, picnicking, sightseeing and paddle-boarding. A stand-up paddle-boarding hire business operates from the Port Ōhope General Store at this location. The figure below shows recreational activity patterns for the six most popular activities.

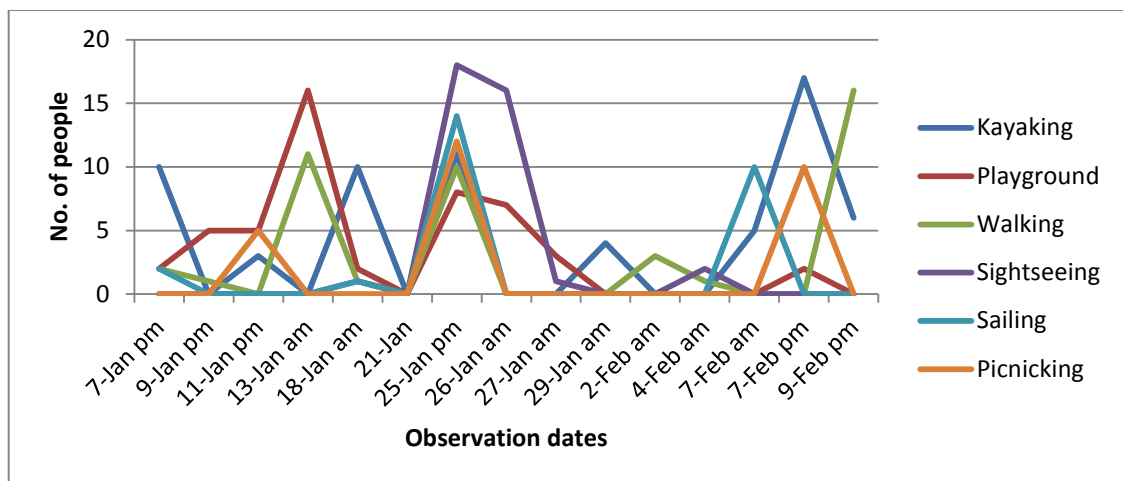


Figure 8: Recreational use patterns for the eight most popular activities at Ōtao South Reserve

3.1.4 Tauwhare Pā

One-hour observations were carried out at the carpark at the bottom of the path to Tauwhare Pā on 14 occasions. Small numbers of people (between 1 and 21) were observed walking and sightseeing there. On two days no-one stopped at this location during the observation time. It is not known how many of the people who stopped at the carpark climbed the path to Tauwhare Pā.

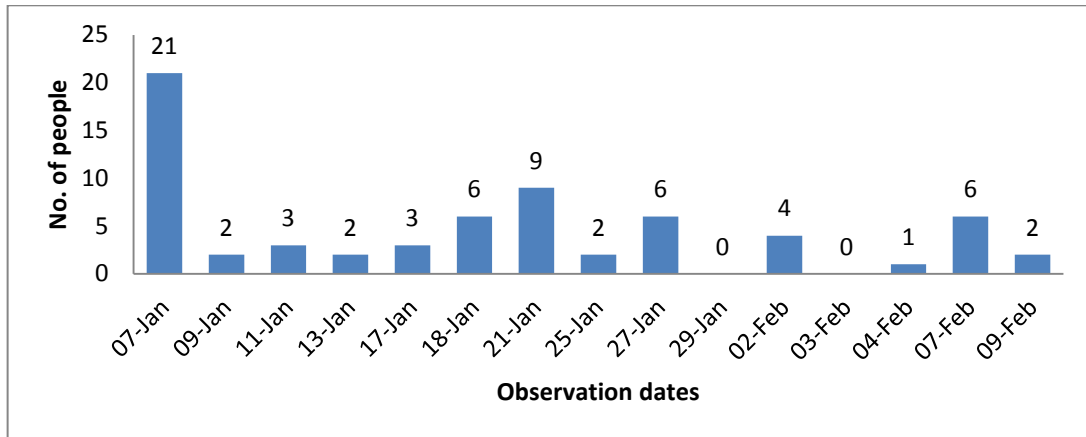


Figure 9: Numbers of people observed at Tauwhare Pā

3.1.5 Wainui Road

Although only one observation sheet was completed for Wainui Rd, and this showed no people present, researchers frequently drove through this area. They reported that few people stopped along the road, possibly because there are not many safe places to park. There is one rest area on Wainui Rd not far from the Ōhiwa Oyster Farm but there are no tables at this location, which may be a reason for not many people stopping there. Most of the vehicles that the researchers observed at the rest area were trucks; no one was observed engaged in recreational activities in this area.

3.1.6 Nukuhou Lookout and River Walk

Observations were carried out at the lookout for approximately an hour on ten days during January and February and on the river walk on three days. Information from both locations is included here. On all visits, a small number of visitors were at the site, mostly sightseeing and walking. On two days larger numbers of people were visiting: 16 people on 8th January and 12 people on 1st February. People remained at this location for around 15 – 20 minutes or less. Most people who stopped at the Nukuhou Lookout did not do the river walk. People were observed on the river walk on only one of the three days that observations were carried out.

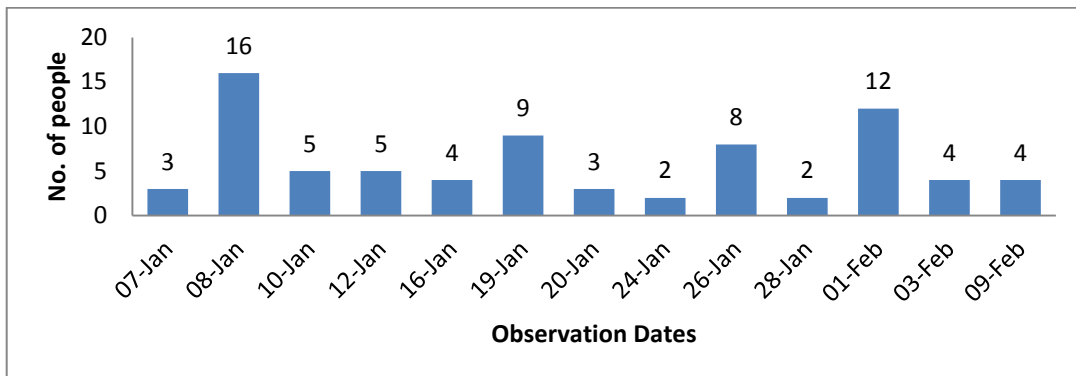


Figure 10: Numbers of people observed at Nukuhou Lookout and River Walk

3.1.7 Ruatuna Rd

Brief observations were carried out on Ruatuna Rd on eight occasions. On one day there were six people riding horses, and on another one person gathering oysters. On the other days there were no people or cars.

3.1.8 Kutarere Wharf

Brief observations were carried out on nine different days at this location, with researchers remaining there between 15 and 30 minutes. On one visit there were two people there. Otherwise no people were observed, although researchers noted on one visit that new rubbish had been dumped there and there were signs of a vehicle being driven on to the wharf.

Kutarere Wharf is sign-posted from the main road at Kutarere, but it seems that not many tourists see the sign or go down this road. The road itself is quite rough approaching the wharf, and no information is provided on this route about the area, or any scenic attractions or history.

3.1.9 Ōhiwa Walkway

Ōhiwa Walkway runs along the harbour’s edge from Ōhiwa round to Ōhiwa Boat Ramp (approximately 5 km long). Observations were carried out on Ōhiwa Walkway on ten days, for up to an hour each time. Small numbers of people (between 2 and 9) were observed on each occasion. The chart below records the total numbers of people counted during each observation period.

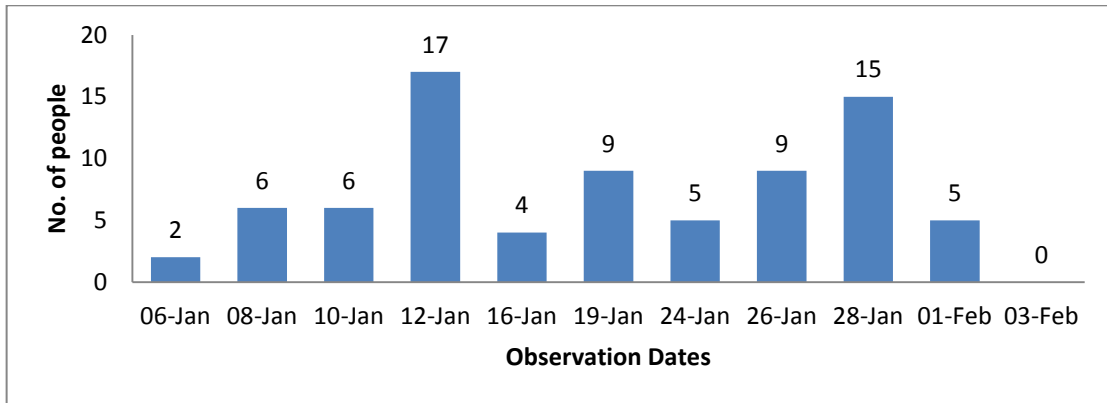


Figure 11: Numbers of people observed on Ōhiwa Walkway

Walking and cycling were the most popular activities on the walkway. People were also seen running and kite surfing on the harbour. On two occasions observations coincided with low-tide; at these times 12 and 17 people respectively were counted collecting shellfish. The figure below shows the pattern of recreational activities across the observation dates.

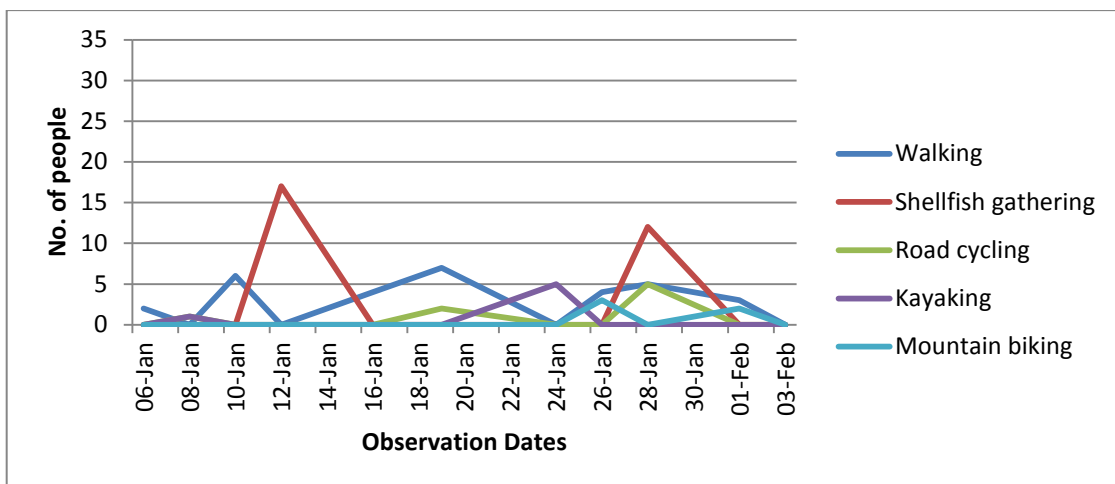


Figure 12: Patterns of recreational activity at Ōhiwa Walkway.

3.1.10 Ōhiwa Boat Ramp

Observations were carried out at this site on 13 days between 6th January and 10th February. On eight days, observations were carried out in both the morning and afternoon. Higher numbers of people were observed in early January, with numbers decreasing through the rest of the month. Weekend numbers were only slightly higher than during the week. The highest number of people during one observation period was 45 people on Sunday 12th January. This observation also coincided with low tide, when 14 people were observed collecting shellfish.

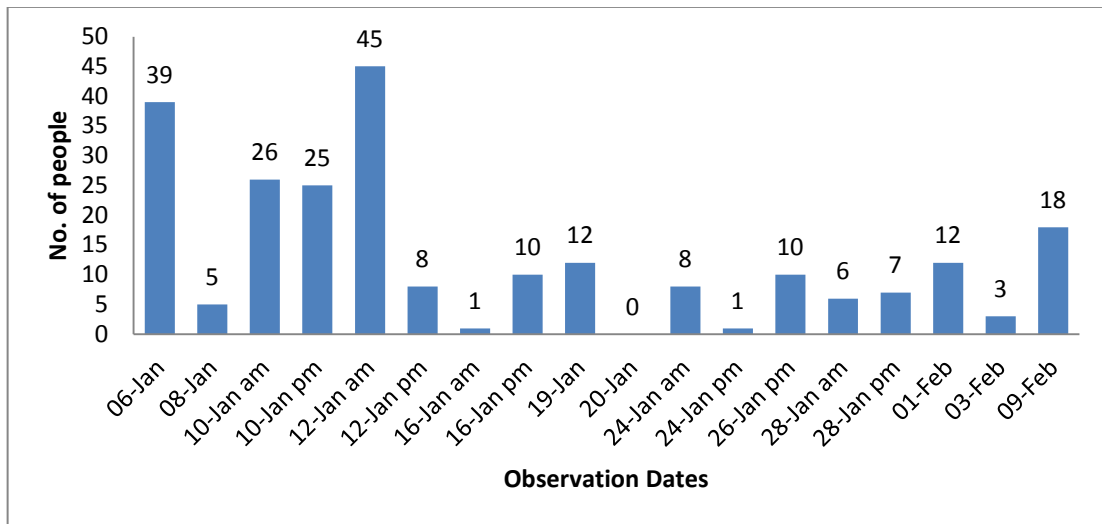


Figure 13: Total numbers of people observed at Ōhiwa Boat Ramp

The most popular activities at Ōhiwa Boat Ramp were powerboating, sightseeing, picnicking and fishing. People were also observed swimming, collecting shellfish when the tide was low, kayaking, walking and biscuiting. Tide did not appear to affect people launching boats and fishing in this area. The figure below shows the patterns of recreational use for the six most popular activities.

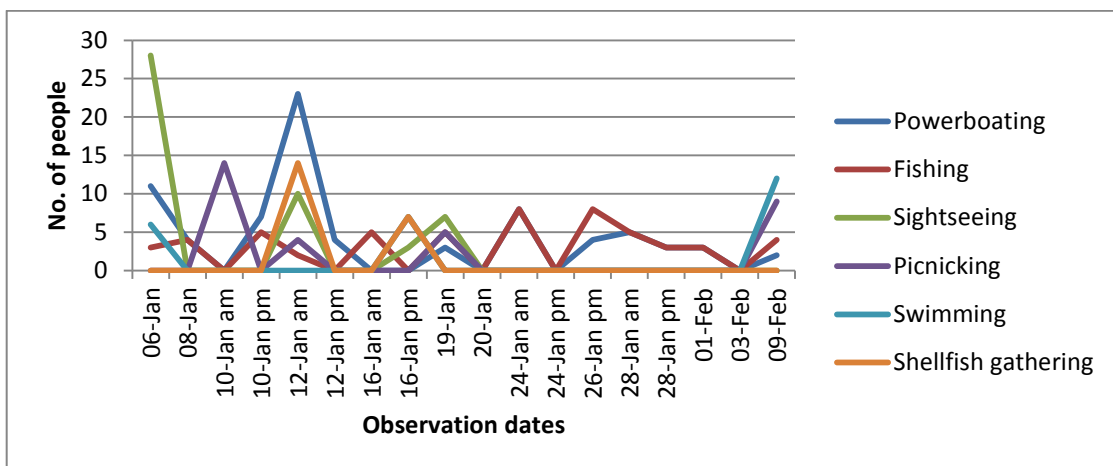


Figure 14: Recreational use patterns for the eight most popular activities at Ōhiwa Boat Ramp

The numbers of vehicles with trailers parked around the Ōhiwa Boat Ramp during observations varied from 0 to 14, with the average number being three. Because observations were carried out for only an hour at a time, it was difficult to discern how patterns of boat launching varied with the tide. However, on one observation which occurred on a January weekend at mid-tide, 5 vehicles were counted at the beginning of the observation and 14 at the end, demonstrating that people were launching boats at mid-tide as the tide was going out. It is not known how many of the boats being launched were boating in the harbour nor how many crossed the bar to the open sea. Numbers fluctuated each day throughout the observation period with slightly higher numbers of vehicles counted in mid-January. However, this boat ramp was still being used regularly in early February. The table below reports the numbers of vehicles with trailers counted at the beginning and end of each observation period.

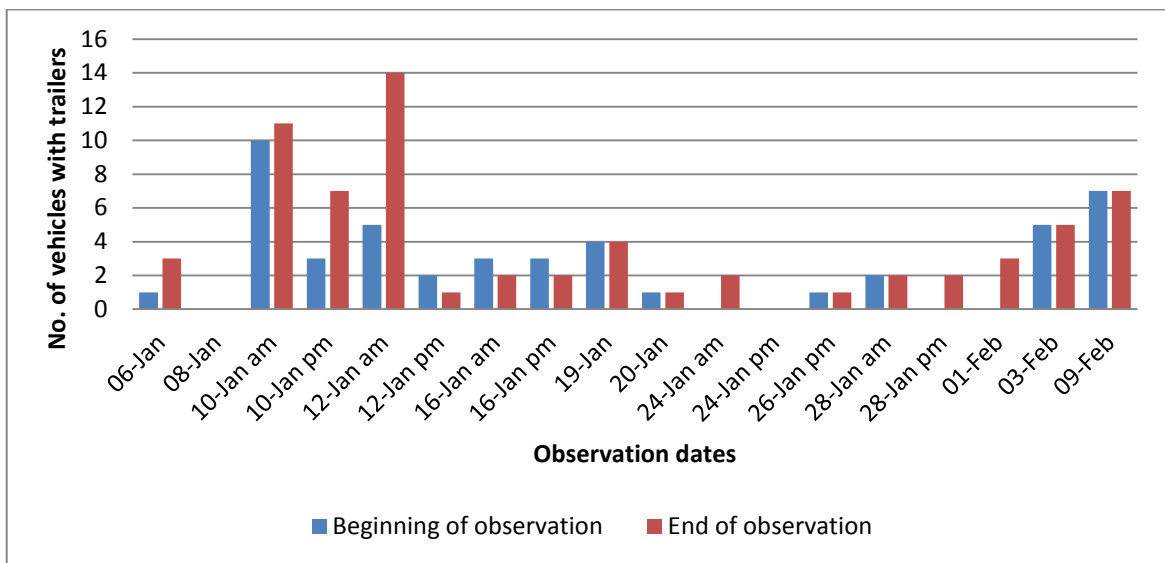


Figure 15: Numbers of vehicles with trailers at Ōhiwa Boat Ramp

3.1.11 Ōhiwa Spit

Regular observations were carried along Ōhiwa Spit. As with Ōhiwa Boat Ramp, numbers were highest in early January when between 17 and 37 people were counted (mean = 26). The numbers observed can be seen in the table below.

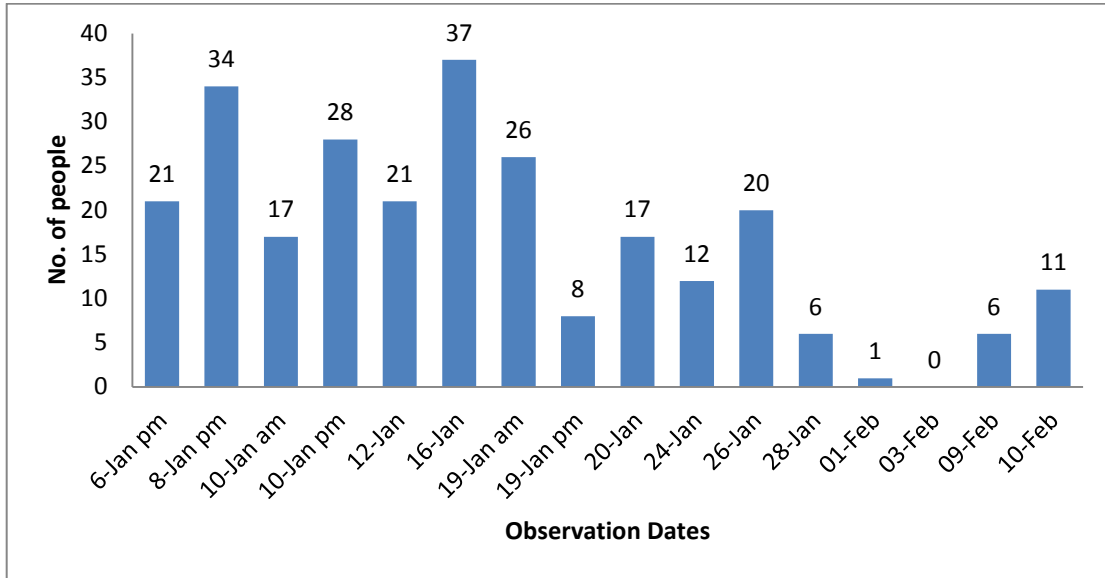


Figure 16: Total numbers of people observed at Ōhiwa Spit

The most popular activities in this location were kayaking, swimming and walking. The area was only suitable for launching kayaks and swimming around high tide as at low tide there are extensive sand- and mud-flats. People were also fishing, power-boating, picnicking, stand-up paddle-boarding, sailing and cycling. The figure below shows the patterns of recreational use for the eight most popular activities.

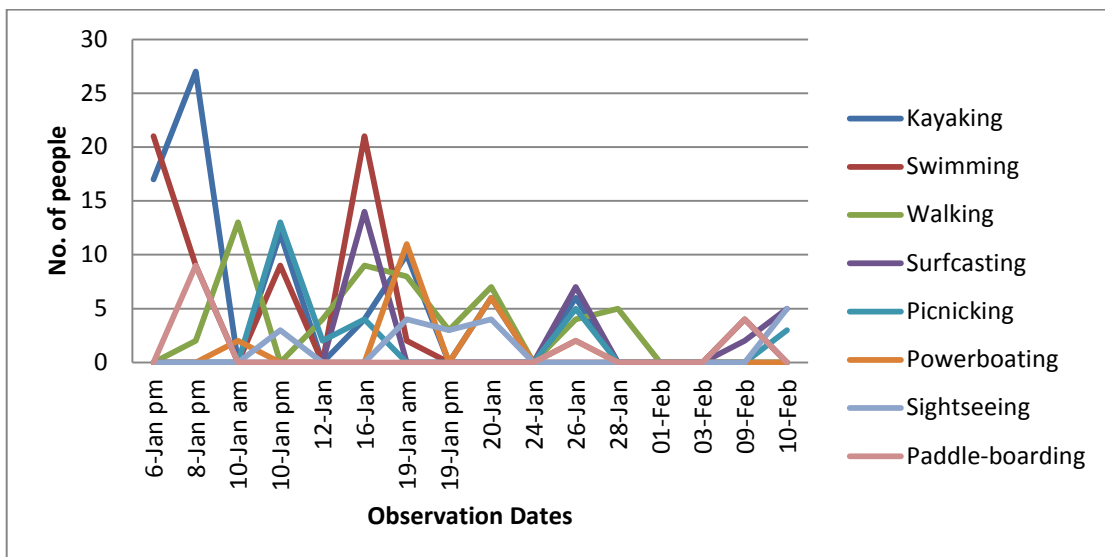


Figure 17: Recreational use patterns at Ōhiwa Spit

3.1.12 Summary of Observations

The observations demonstrated that the numbers of people around the harbour were highest in early January and decreased into February. Numbers were also higher during weekends, particularly Auckland Anniversary weekend and the weekend immediately following Waitangi Day.

Water-based activities were popular right around the harbour; the most popular water-based activities were fishing, swimming, power-boating, kayaking, sailing, paddle-boarding and dinghies. Many people were observed fishing in boats as well as from shore and from Port Ōhope Wharf. Swimming was most popular at Port Ōhope Wharf and Port Ōhope Boat Ramp, with smaller numbers observed swimming on the Ōhiwa side of the harbour. Kayak and stand-up paddle-board hire businesses based beside the harbour at Port Ōhope make these two activities popular, and kayaks are also available for hire at Ōhiwa Holiday Park. Paddle-boarding is a fairly new activity, and numbers of paddle-boarders on the harbour could be expected to rise in coming summers. Most water users were carrying out activities such as jet-skiing and water-skiing in the zones marked for these activities.

The most popular land-based activities were sight-seeing, walking, picnicking and cycling. These were popular activities at every location. Sightseeing was the most popular activity on land, and was most common in areas where parking was readily available and where signs indicated sites of interest such as Tauwhare Pā and Nukuhou Lookout. Walking and cycling (both road cycling and mountain biking) were popular activities on both Ōhope and Ōhiwa sides of the harbour. Cycle hire is available at the Port Ōhope General Store. The only playground observed was at Ōtao South Reserve and this was a popular attraction. However, it should be noted that both Ōhope Beach TOP 10 Holiday Park and Ōhiwa Holiday Park have playground facilities available for children staying at these facilities.

Shellfish gathering was mostly observed at several spots on the Ōhiwa side of the Harbour and only when the tide was low. A number of activities were also tide-dependent. Kayak launching at low tide was restricted to certain places such as boat ramps; swimming was similarly restricted at low tide to areas with sufficient depth of water. Bird-watching was observed only at Ōhiwa Spit and Nukuhou Lookout.

3.2 Surveys

A total of 226 surveys were carried out at locations around Ōhiwa Harbour. The numbers of surveys completed at each of the sites are reported in the table below.

Table 1: Numbers of surveys completed at each site

Location	No of surveys
Port Ōhope Wharf	71
Port Ōhope Boat Ramp	55
Ōhiwa Boat Ramp	24
Ōhiwa Spit	23
Nukuhou Lookout	21
Tauwhare Pā	15
Ōtao South Reserve	11
Ōhiwa Walkway	4
Kutarere Wharf	1
Location not specified	1
Total	226

3.2.1 Demographics

The vast majority of the survey respondents were European or Pakeha. The table below summarises reported ethnicity.

Table 2: Reported ethnicity of survey respondents

Reported Ethnicity	No of respondents	Percentage
New Zealand European / Pakeha	180	79.64%
Maori	16	7.08%
Asian	3	1.33%
Other	19	8.41%

Approximately even numbers of men and women were interviewed, with the gender breakdown illustrated in the table below.

Table 3: Gender breakdown of participants

Gender	No of respondents	Percentage
Male	105	46%
Female	99	44%
Not specified	22	9.7%

There was a wide spread of age groups among the people surveyed. The majority of respondents were aged 40 or older, with smaller numbers of young people completing the survey.

Table 4: Respondents' reported age groups

Age Group	No of respondents	Percentage
Under 20	3	1.3%
20 - 29	9	4%
30 - 39	32	14%
40 - 49	62	27%
50 - 59	38	17%
60 or over	65	29%
Not specified	17	7.5%

3.2.2 Place of residence

Thirty per cent of respondents (n=67) reported living in the Eastern Bay of Plenty and a further 27% (n=62) live elsewhere in the Bay of Plenty. Thirty-five percent of respondents (n=80) reported they live elsewhere in New Zealand, and almost seven per cent were from overseas. Table 5 reports where participants live.

Table 5: Respondents place of residence.

Place of residence	No of respondents	Percentage
Ōhiwa	6	2.7%
Ōhope	26	12%
Whakatane	22	9.7%
Opotiki	6	2.7%
Elsewhere in the Eastern Bay of Plenty	7	3.1%
Wider Bay of Plenty	62	27%
Elsewhere in New Zealand	80	35%
Overseas	15	6.6%

3.2.3 Present accommodation

When asked where they were staying, about one third (n=74) reported they were staying at home, just over one third (n=82) were camping (either in a camping ground or freedom camping). Approximately 17% were staying with friends or family or in a bach, while the others were staying in a range of accommodation options.

Table 6: Respondents' reported accommodation during their visit to Ōhiwa Harbour

Accommodation during visit	Number	Percentage
At home	74	32.74%
Holiday Park	53	23.45%
Freedom camping	29	12.83%
Staying with friends/family	22	9.73%
Bach	18	7.96%
Motel	10	4.42%
Holiday House	9	3.98%
Bed & Breakfast	2	0.88%
Backpackers	1	0.44%

3.2.4 Visiting Patterns

Approximately one third of respondents were visiting the site where they were interviewed for the first time. Another quarter (n=58) had been visiting this site for more than five years. Smaller numbers had been visiting there for less than a year (13%) or between one and five years (16%). Table 7 below reports how long respondents had been visiting the interview site.

Table 7: Length of time respondents have been visiting this site

Length of time visiting this site	No of respondents	Percentage
First time today	90	39.82%
Less than 12 months	29	12.83%
1-5 years	37	16.37%
More than 5 years	58	25.66%

Respondents were also asked about the frequency of their visits to the location where they were interviewed. This question was not relevant to those who had never visited before. Forty per cent (n=91) said they visited this location approximately once or twice a year; twenty per cent (n=46) said they visited more frequently. Sixty per cent of respondents (n=136) visited only during the summer months, while 28% reported they visit all year round. Table 8 below records respondents' reported frequency of visiting the location where they were interviewed.

Table 8: Frequency of visits to this site

Frequency of visits to this site	No of respondents	Percentage
Never been before	64	28.32%
Once a year	51	22.57%
Twice a year	40	17.70%
Once a month	30	13.27%
Once a week	10	4.42%
Two or more times a week	6	2.65%

Interviewees reported they planned to stay at their location for varying lengths of time. Thirty-four per cent (n=77) planned to spend 1 – 2 hours there, while another thirty-three per cent (n=76) said they would stay longer but less than a day. Twenty-two per cent only planned to stay for less than an hour, while a small number said they would stay longer than a day. Exact numbers and percentages are reported in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Planned length of current visit

Planned length of visit	No of respondents	Percentage
More than a day	20	8.85%
More than 1/2 day but less than a day	28	12.39%
2 1/2 to 4 hours	48	21.24%
1-2 hours	77	34.07%
less than an hour	49	21.68%

People were asked about the size of their group. Group size varied from 1 to 29, with an average of 3 people reported in each group.

Participants were asked what other sites around Ōhiwa Harbour they also visited. Many people said they planned to visit other sites. Port Ōhope Wharf was the most popular site, mentioned by 45% of people. Table 11 below contains a summary of the numbers who reported they planned to visit different sites. Small numbers of people also mentioned they planned to visit other sites, including the Oyster Farm, Ōtao South Reserve, Ōhiwa Domain and Tauwhare Pā.

Table 10: Other sites visited

Other sites visited	No of respondents	Percentage
Port Ōhope Wharf	102	45%
Ōhiwa Beach	89	39%
Ōhope Boat Ramp	83	36%
Ōhiwa Boat Ramp	58	26%

Eastern Bay of Plenty residents were asked how often they visit other sites around the harbour. Responses from the 58 people who answered this question are summarised in the table below. Most people who lived in the Eastern Bay visit other Ōhiwa Harbour sites once a month or less, with only small numbers visiting other locations more often.

Table 11: Frequency of visits to other sites around Ōhiwa Harbour

Frequency of visits to other sites	No of respondents	Percentage
Never been before	8	13.79%
Once a year	12	20.69%
Twice a year	11	18.97%
Once a month	19	32.76%
Once a week	5	8.62%
Two or more times a week	3	5.17%
Total	58	100%

People who indicated that they lived elsewhere were asked how often they planned to visit other sites during their stay. Thirty-six percent did not indicate that they planned to visit other sites. The frequency with which respondents said they plan to visit other sites is reported in Table 13 below.

Table 12: Frequency of visiting other sites during this visit

Frequency of visiting other sites	No of respondents	Percentage
1 - 3 times	70	44.59%
4 - 6 times	15	9.55%
More than 6 times	15	9.55%
Total	100	63.69%

These findings suggest that many people, even those who live in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, visit Ōhiwa Harbour fairly infrequently. Only a small number are frequent visitors, and while some visit all year round, many only visit during summer. While some respondents planned to visit a range of other locations, more than one third had no plans to visit other locations during their stay.

3.2.5 Recreational Activities

Survey respondents reported recreational activities they were engaged in during their current visit. The main activities reported are summarised in the table below. Fishing (including surfcasting from the shore and fishing from boats) and sightseeing were the most popular activities, followed by walking and swimming. The chart below summarises the most popular recreational activities respondents reported.

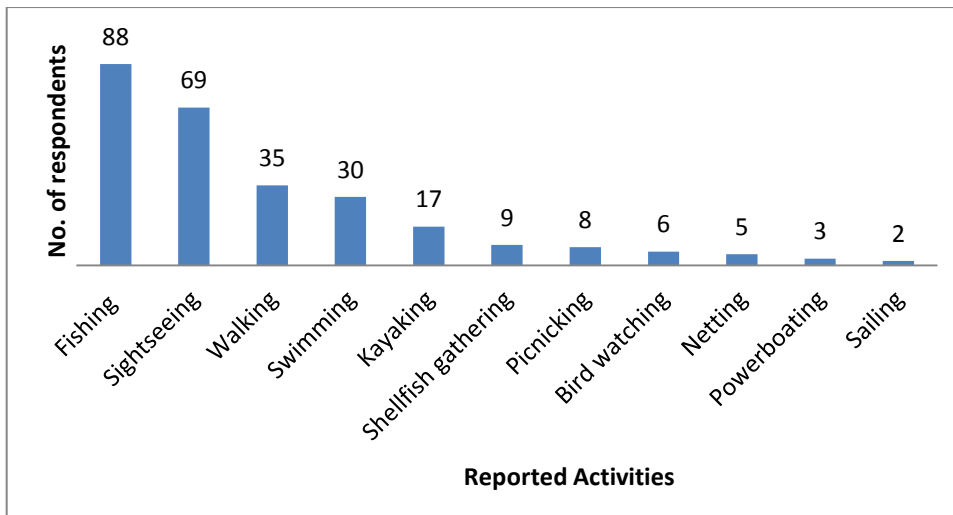


Figure 18: Activities in which survey respondents were engaged in during their current visit

Participants were asked how well their recreational needs were met. Ninety-five per cent of respondents reported that their recreational needs were catered for either very or reasonably well. Less than 2% said their needs were not very well catered for. The chart below summarises these responses.

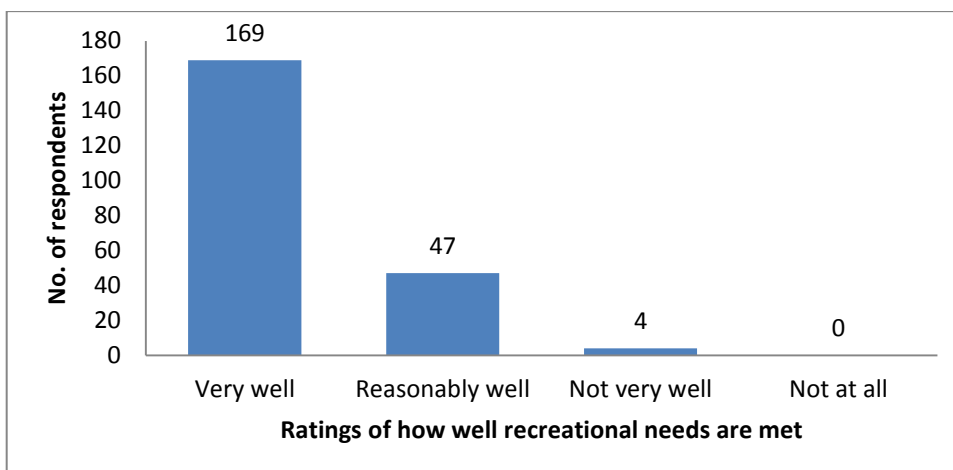


Figure 19: Respondents ratings of how well their recreational needs are met

When asked about how their recreational needs could be better catered for, only a small number of people made suggestions, which included requests for more shade, seats, tables and toilet facilities at some picnic spots.

3.2.6 Satisfaction with Facilities

When asked to rate their satisfaction with facilities at the location where they were interviewed, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was very satisfied and 5 was not at all satisfied, overall people were satisfied with facilities (mean rating = 1.33). All facilities received above average satisfaction ratings as can be seen from Table 13 below. The availability of seats and tables and adequacy of shade were rated lowest.

The table also shows the ratings for sites on the Ōhope side of the harbour separately from ratings on the Ōhiwa side. When satisfaction ratings were broken down in this way, satisfaction ratings for individual items and overall satisfaction did not vary much across particular sites. Noise levels received a slightly lower rating on the Ōhiwa side and overall satisfaction was slightly lower as well. The availability of seats and tables, adequacy of shade, cleanliness and water quality were all rated lower on the Ōhope side.

Table 13: Mean satisfaction ratings of facilities

Facilities	Ōhope side of harbour	Ōhiwa side of harbour	Overall mean rating
Overall Satisfaction	1.29	1.40	1.33
No of people	1.34	1.30	1.33
Cleanliness	1.42	1.36	1.40
Noise levels	1.39	1.58	1.45
Water quality	1.61	1.50	1.58
Boat ramp	1.72	1.52	1.66
Toilets	1.84	1.46	1.75
Seats/tables	2.18	2.11	2.15
Adequacy of shade	2.36	2.01	2.25

3.2.6.1 Feedback about this location

When asked what they liked most about this location, participants gave a broad range of responses. Many people liked the quiet and peacefulness, and the beauty of scenery and views. They liked the natural environment, with plenty of space, fresh air and easy parking. They also liked how close the harbour was to where they lived or were staying and the easy access to water and a diverse range of activities. Some people specifically mentioned the fishing and shellfish, and a small number liked the walks and birdlife. Several people liked having access to both harbour and sandy beaches. Respondents appreciated how calm the harbour water was and safe for children. They appreciated the facilities that were available, including information about history and birdlife, walkways and freedom camping.

3.2.7 Information and signage

When asked about the amount of signage around the harbour, eighty-eight per cent of respondents said there was about the right amount. Ten per cent said there was not enough signage. Less than two per cent said there was too much signage.

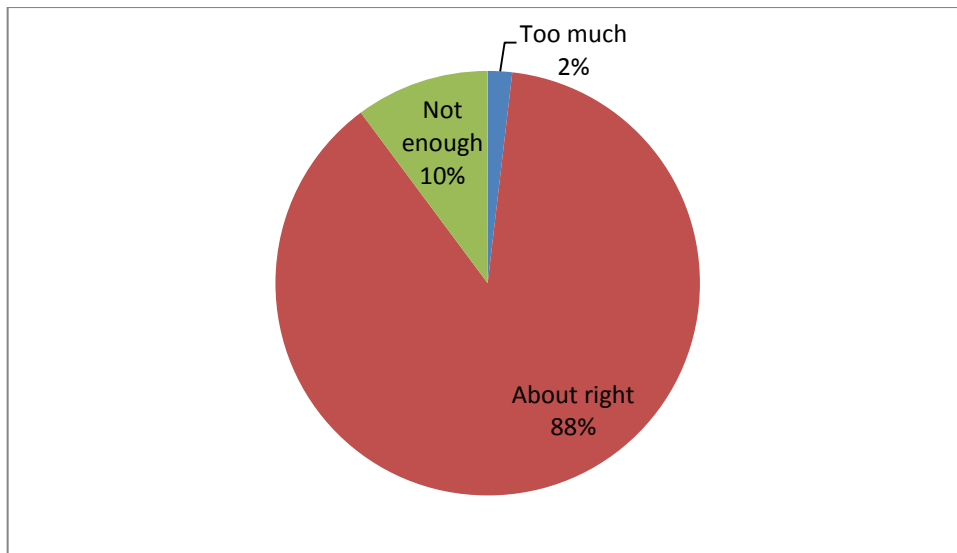


Figure 20: Respondents' ratings of the amount of signage around Ōhiwa Harbour

Respondents were also asked to rate the usefulness of the signage. As the chart below demonstrates, most people thought the signs were either very useful or somewhat useful (n=189).

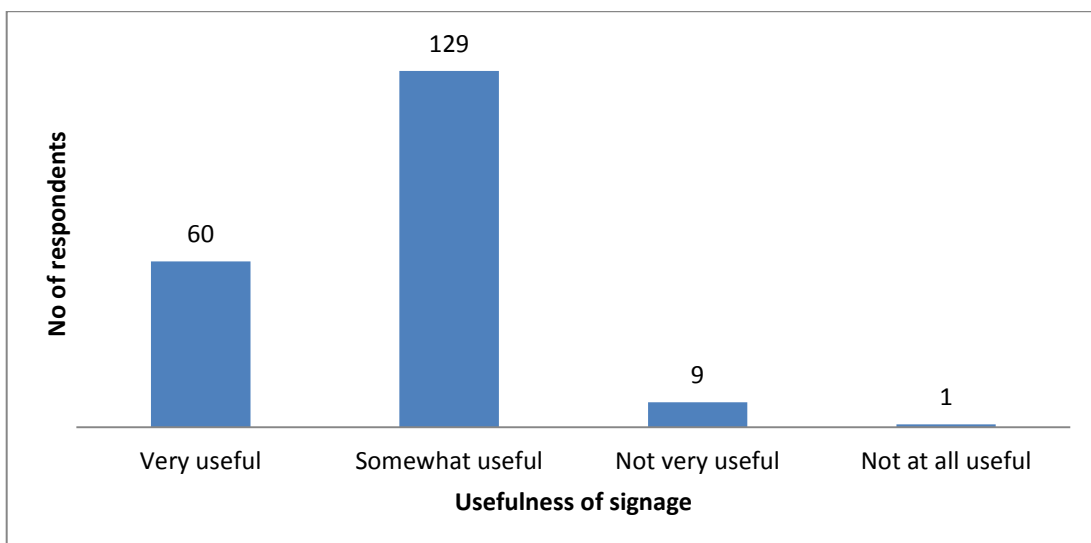


Figure 21: Respondents' ratings of the usefulness of signage

A wide variety of suggestions were made about the signage, including information people would like to be included. The table below summarises the suggestions made by more than one person.

Table 14: Suggestions about signage

Suggested signage	Number of people
Fish: descriptions, sizes and limits (currently available at some sites only)	16
Overnight (“freedom”) camping: spots and boundaries more clearly indicated	13
History: especially at Tauwhare Pā	10
Birds: nesting places, descriptions/photos	9
Maps: more at various locations with recreation areas marked	6
More educational information about wildlife (other than birds)	6
Rubbish: instructing people to take it away or provide more bins	4
Toilets: more clearly signposted	4
Jumping off Port Ōhope Wharf: re no jumping from front of wharf	4
Shellfish: limits and ban (signage was not accurate)	3
Fire ban areas: Ōhope Beach and Spit	3
Dogs: where they can and can’t go, especially around Ōhope Spit and Beach	3
Walkway signs to include estimated walking times	2
Boat warnings and coastguard signs	2
Crossing the bar (with a map)	2

Several people also commented that the existing signs were faded and needed to be replaced with newer and brighter ones. Many people also commented that they had not read or did not see the signs.

When asked where they would like more signage, a small number of people suggested better signage at the boat ramps and also on Ōhope Spit. Several people also commented about signage on the main road at the turnoff to Port Ōhope Wharf and at the wharf itself.

When asked how they obtained information, people reported that they got information about the area from a range of different sources, which are summarised in the table below. Some respondents also said they knew about the place because they lived here or had lived here, or had been coming here for a long time.

Table 15: How people get information about Ōhiwa Harbour and activities

Information Source	No of respondents
Word of mouth (other people including family and friends)	59
Internet (including Google, Trip Advisor, fishing & boating websites)	36
Campground or motel offices	19
Locals	18
Paper (especially Beacon and Bay View)	14
Driving past (and stopped)	13
i-sites (Whakatane and Opotiki were mentioned)	12
Booklets & brochures	10
Motorhome Guide	9
Signs and noticeboards	8
Councils (BOPRC & WDC)	5
Radio	3

3.2.8 Suggested improvements

Survey respondents were each asked to make one suggestion for improving facilities around Ōhiwa Harbour. A great many different suggestions for improvements were made, some of which were general, and some of which related to specific sites.

At the Port Ōhope Wharf, there were suggestions for improving safety at the wharf by having railings and a life buoy available, and for providing more seats and tables and shade. At the Port Ōhope Boat Ramp, people requested more camping sites (although some wanted camping banned there), a jetty, barbeque facilities and better parking as well as rubbish bins. On the Ōhiwa side, people wanted a store/café, public toilets, extension of walkways and better beach access. More shade and tables were also requested at Ōhiwa.

The table below summarises the suggestions that were made.

Table 16: Suggested improvements

Suggested improvements	No. of people
Rubbish: More bins/better signage/more frequent emptying of bins	21
More seats and tables	16
Toilets: public toilets on Ōhiwa side; better maintenance/cleaning & signage	14
More shade	13
More camping sites	12
Better pest control/eradication of weeds	7
Drinking water taps	6
Extension of walkways	6
Improvements to boat ramps	4
Sealing road to Ōhope Spit	4
Improvements to parking	4
BBQ facilities	4
Store/cafe on Ōhiwa side	4
Better beach access	3
Wifi access	3
Better policing by fisheries officers	3
Pontoon for childres	3
Rod holders at Ōhiwa boat ramp	3

3.2.9 Aspects of Interest and Value

Survey respondents were asked two questions: firstly about what interested them about the harbour, and secondly what they most valued. Although there was considerable overlap in responses to these two questions, they are reported here separately.

When asked what else they were interested in about the harbour, the most popular responses were all related to recreational activities: fishing, swimming, walks and kayaking. People were also interested in the natural environment and bird watching. The table below summarises all the activities mentioned by more than one person.

Table 17: Respondents' reported interests

Items people were interested in	No of respondents
Fishing (including shellfish gathering & floundering)	50
Swimming	39
Walks	36
Kayaking	32
Nature	28
Scenery	17
Birds or bird watching	17
Boating, including water skiing and jetskiing	12
History	8
Quietness and tranquillity	6
Activities for kids	4
Sustainability	3
Cycling	3
Sightseeing	3
Glow worms	2
Shops and cafes	2

People were also asked what they valued most about the harbour. The most valued aspect by far was the scenery and beauty of the harbour, which one person described as "...a good taste of coastal New Zealand" and another saw as having "uncluttered, clean looking shorelines and views".

Although there were varied responses, it was clear that people particularly valued aspects of the natural environment and the relatively undeveloped state of the harbour and its environs. One respondent reported that they valued "...its pristine condition, really well preserved, not developed" while another said "...no high rises here like in Mt Maunganui".

The safety of the harbour for families with children was another thing that people valued, with one person saying it was a "great place to bring the grandkids". The range of recreational activities available was valued: "...caters for so many people interested in aquatic activities". Many other respondents simply made brief one word comments, such as "beauty", "scenery" or "peacefulness".

The table below summarises the specific responses that were made.

Table 18: What people value about Ōhiwa Harbour

What people value	No of respondents
Beauty, scenery, view	76
Water	24
Safety of the harbour, especially for children	20
Accessibility	19
Availability of kaimoana/seafood	18
Cleanliness	15
Quiet and peaceful/lack of people	21
Natural environment/ecosystem	13
Activities available	7
That there are groups who care for it	5
Birdlife	5
Sheltered	4

3.3 Interviews with business owners

Local business owners reported they get a lot of positive feedback about how wonderful the area is for recreation, particularly for fishing and boating, paddle-boarding and kayaking, also cycling, walking and bird-watching. People really appreciate how safe the harbour is for swimming and boating and are surprised at how beautiful and varied. Many people return to the campgrounds year after year, and many campers bring boats.

Businesses receive requests for information about a wide range of recreational activities including fishing, boat launching, charters and tours, navigating the bar, fishing, shellfish gathering spots, tide times, daily limits and shellfish bans. They are often asked about water activities such as stand-up paddle-boarding, kayaking and surfing, particularly on the Ōhope side of the harbour. Many of the requests are for information about activities for families.

People also request information about walks and walkways, local history, bird-watching and mountain biking, these requests are most common on the Ōhiwa side. One person commented that the number of boats on the harbour and going out to sea has decreased over the years, with more people now running and cycling instead of engaging in water-based activities. He attributed the changes to an “ageing population” and a decrease in the number of fish in the sea.

On the Ōhiwa side of the harbour, business owners reported that they are also asked about activities east of Ōhiwa Harbour.

Business owners, in particular those providing accommodation, really want to be able to answer the queries they get and have multiple ways of ensuring that any information they have is passed on. One campground manager said “We love to pass information

on if we have it” and described that they hand information out to people on their arrival, post information in camp kitchens and give daily information bulletins over their PĀ system as well as making information available in their office.

One business owner commented on the increase in the number of motorhomes in the area who make use of “park-over” facilities around the harbour, adding that a lack of space for motorhomes to park in Whakatane has contributed to this increase.

A number of suggestions for improvements were made by business owners:

- Improved signage on the main road at Port Ōhope Wharf: at present signage implies many businesses/activities are operating there, and people are often disappointed to find nothing open. The suggested change was “only advertise things that are actually happening or available – perhaps people could slot their sign in when they’re there”;
- Better and more readily available information about crossing the bar at Ōhiwa Harbour entrance (requested by several people, one of whom reported that the information available in the Harbourmaster’s brochure has deteriorated, with no map of Ōhiwa Harbour included);
- Make fishing information available to business owners not just at the main boat-launching sites– daily limits and shellfish bans;
- Better signage in BOPRC regional park (Ōhiwa side) to clarify where the park boundaries with private property (campground) begin as people come down from the park and use their facilities;
- Improve signage on the main road to areas of interest (for example as has been done at Nukuhou Lookout);
- Fencing off of part of the area around the Port Ōhope Boat Ramp has created difficulties for paddle-boarders who now have to paddle through the jet ski zone to get back to shore;
- Board walk through the sand dunes at Ōhiwa as many residents are older adults who find walking on soft sand difficult;
- Please complete Ōtao South walkway as soon as possible;
- Advertise recreational activities more widely to people who live locally – as often they are surprised by what is available. More website promotion was suggested as a way of doing this;
- In consultation with tangata whenua provide more information about the history of the harbour, and also include European settlement history;
- Reduce the speed limit on Wainui Rd to 80 kph;

- Provide better access to rubbish disposal and recycling facilities, especially on the “Opotiki side” of the harbour;
- Extend the Ōhiwa walkway/cycle trail.

One person recommended a 2-year ban on fishing and shellfish collecting inside the harbour to let fish stocks replenish. This person gave several examples of over-fishing that they had observed, both from shellfish gathering and netting, and said “we have to stop the take and take and take” attitude. In his view, greater protection was needed to ensure sustainability and so that future generations will be able to have the pleasure of going fishing with their children and grandchildren.

4 Summary and Discussion

Analysis of the information collected from observations, surveys and interviews with business owners demonstrates that many people flock to Ōhiwa Harbour during summer, particularly for water-based activities such as boating and fishing, but also for sightseeing, walking and cycling. Ōhiwa Harbour is a popular destination for people from the Bay of Plenty, as well as wider New Zealand. Many people come to the area specifically for the recreational opportunities that the harbour offers, although many people come just to enjoy the sights.

People value highly the beautiful scenery, ecology and wildlife of the area, and particularly like the quiet and tranquil nature of the harbour and its environs, which makes it safe for families with children. They appreciate the diverse range of activities available and for the most part are satisfied with the facilities provided. Several people said they appreciate the work that councils and care groups put into ensuring the harbour and its environs are well-maintained. Nevertheless, suggestions were made for improving signage in some places, such as on walkways, and providing more shade and picnic facilities at various locations. It was also suggested that authorities take greater steps to protect the natural environment and wildlife, especially fish and shellfish.

It is clearly the undeveloped nature of Ōhiwa Harbour that attracts visitors. While some said the area’s attractions could be more widely advertised, they were not keen on increasing the numbers of people visiting. The many comments made about how easy it is to park and to access the water are probably because the harbour remains relatively undisturbed and uncluttered. It is likely that people who prefer shops and cafes mostly choose to go elsewhere.

The information collected will be of interest to all those who have responsibility for providing services and facilities around the harbour, including local business owners. It will also assist regional and district councils in their management of Ōhiwa Harbour and its environs.

Appendix 1: Observation Locations



LEGEND	
POBR	Port Ohope Boat Ramp
POW	Port Ohope Wharf
OSR	Otao South Reserve
TP	Tauwhare Pa
WR	Wainui Road
NLO	Nukuhou Lookout
NRW	Nukuhou River Walkway
KW	Kutarere Wharf
RR	Ruatuna Road
OBR	Ohiwa Boat Ramp
OWW	Ohiwa Walkway
OS	Ohiwa Spit