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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Andrew Annakin, Divisional Manager, Landcare

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Landcare Committee about activities and matters of interest within the Landcare Division since the last Landcare Committee meeting, 13 July 2000. Departmental activity reports are also attached.

2. A Great Year's Work

The Landcare Managers' reports give their perspectives on the year's work. They speak for themselves, though there are some particular highlights listed below. At year-end, the Division's overall funding position is \$70,000 favourable, (excluding the Rural Fire Reserve transfer) against operating expenditure of \$10.4 million and \$3 million on capital projects. An excellent result, especially noting the significant additional requirements from the flood damages project, preparing for the Long-term Financial Strategy (LTFS), the Regional Parks/Natural Forestry integration, the forest lands management issues, and the accelerated Hutt River FMP.

I look forward to 2000/01 creating a different excitement through the LTFS start-up and the benefits from the new Parks and Forests structure; Flood Protection remain ever hopeful of a "normal" year.

Particular Highlights

Flood Damage Repairs

While significantly in surplus at the third quarter, a supreme effort exceeded all expectations. There was some rebudgeting because of uncontrollable rock supply difficulties (\$235,000). However, the 1998 flood damage repairs are now substantially complete. This is a major achievement.

All the flood damage capital projects are substantially complete. Remaining tasks include final land negotiations at State Highway 1 to Maple Lane, top-up, rock rip-rap supply at Block Road, and the formal openings for Otaki Flood Damage/Chrystalls and State Highway 1 to Maple Lane. The other outstanding item is the purchase of the Rentokil property. The forecast to complete the flood damage capital construction projects is an unfavourable \$19,800 - including \$38,000 yet to be expended (excluding the Rentokil budget). A favourable purchase settlement for Rentokil may improve this significantly.

Asset Management Plans

The Landcare Committee endorsed the Division's Asset Management Plans (AMP) in June. This followed very positive comments from Audit New Zealand. The leading-edge Parks and Forests AMP now includes the Environmental AMP for the natural assets, though this needs more work to become an operational document. The Flood Protection AMP progressed to an adequate stage, though additional resources were required to complete the core documents. The next step is to fully operationalise the AMPs, finalise the database, and introduce the reporting regimes.

Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan

The project is on track and within budget, as modified slightly through the LTFS process. Significant achievements this year include the local area "hot spot" investigations, a draft environmental strategy, and Landcare Committee endorsement of the important non-structural principles. The later will be developed and implemented as the Plan is written and consulted with Territorial Authorities. Some political trepidation remains in the Advisory Committee, however, the understanding at Officer level is very positive. This augurs well for a draft Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan by 30 June 2001. The project received excellent Press coverage through the year and is a high profile Community Connection activity for the Council.

Regional Parks/Natural Forestry Integration

The integration exercise is essentially complete. All significant appointments have been made. A successful launch event occurred in early July; vehicles re-badged and a client information programme agreed with Communications.

Parks and Forests (Operations) continues under a transitional structure with the maintenance teams reporting to Fraser Oliver, while Matt Ballantine is acting Kaitoke Ranger and Western Senior Ranger. This situation will remain until the Team Leader split is determined, and the Kaitoke Ranger appointee starts work.

Disestablishing the WRC Rural Fire District

This is now complete. Several conditions were included in the NRFA's final disestablishment approval. These were essentially volunteered anyway and are about the Regional Council staying active in the Rural Fire community and retaining an appropriate asset management capability for fire protection and assisting with fire suppression on Council lands. Parks and Forests (Operations) will maintain that capability; Plantation Forestry now own and manage the Fire Store.

Upper Hutt City have confirmed they will “take-over” the Hutt Valley Bush Fire Force. They are also interested in renting part of the Upper Hutt Depot for an emergency management centre.

3. **Out and About**

Ava Rail Bridge Discussions, 18 July

I met with William Peet, General Manager Infrastructure for Tranz Rail to discuss replacing the Ava Rail Bridge. Tranz Rail takes a straight forward cost of capital/business impact approach to infrastructure and believe the bridge can be maintained in situ, essentially forever. However, they have agreed to work with us on investigating the full range of options and within their “total relationship” with the Regional Council. I will be confirming this project with Tranz Rail in the near future.

Dean Munn’s Farewell, 21 July

Dean’s position was disestablished through the Regional Parks/Natural Forestry integration and he did not take-up a position in the new structure. Dean has worked with the Regional Council for nearly 17 years. Dean left the Council with the best wishes of management and colleagues.

Pakuratahi Forest Field Trip, 24 July

Myself, Howard Stone, Barry Leonard, and Dean Hearfield, accompanied by Councillor McQueen, undertook a field trip into the Pakuratahi forest to further confirm the “red-line” dividing the pure commercial forestry activities from the Landcare interests to do with the Pakuratahi *Signature* values - the high value recreation and ecological areas.

The trip was successful for clarifying various understandings and mapping out the future once the current logging cycle ends. This is a "one-pass" opportunity to set the scene for future generations. It is important that we learn from the current logging experience in this difficult (access) but important (*Signature* values) area of Council lands. Barry Leonard and I have yet to confirm a similar approach to the Akatarawa forest, particularly for recreation management. A Councillors field trip to the Plantation forests is still envisaged for some time in October.

Other Council lands/forestry matters:

- Discussions on a revised Vegetation Management regime (including pest control) for the Water Collection Areas are continuing with Utility Services. I hope to be able to report on the outcome of this to the next Landcare meeting.
- Following Report 00.412 to the Utility Services Committee, the Landcare Division has been asked to prepare an access policy for the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchments. My intention is to present this to the next Utility Services Committee meeting.

Conservation Week Awards, 2 August

I attended this function, at Parliament, along with the Council Chairman and a number of Regional Council staff from Landcare, Biosecurity and the Environment Division. This year's Conservation Week theme was *Enjoy your Parks*. I was pleased to hear the Minister of Conservation refer several times to the role of the Regional Council and the environmental contribution the Regional Parks make. The function was about recognising the contribution of volunteer and community groups, and several connections were made to work done in Regional Parks.

4. Recommendation

That the Divisional and Departmental reports be received and the contents noted.

ANDREW ANNAKIN
Divisional Manager, Landcare

Attachment 1 : Departmental Managers' Reports