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Report to the Utility Services Committee  
from Anne Manley, Landcare Planner - Policy, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

## **Review of the Forest Lands Management Plan**

### **1. Purpose**

To update Councillors on the process for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan, which covers the Council's forests in the western part of the Region. (The Landcare Committee will also be notified about the timetable for completing this review.)

### **2. The Western Forests**

The Council owns and manages four forest areas in the western part of the Region (refer **Attachment 1**). The forests comprise two water collection areas (the Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Areas) and two future water collection areas (Akatarawa Forest and Pakuratahi Forest). These areas are administered under the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972.

While the forests are held primarily for water supply purposes, there is a range of other activities permitted and taking place on the forest lands. The future water collection areas contain exotic plantation forestry as well as native forests and they are popular areas for recreation. Limited recreational access is also permitted in the water collection areas.

In 2000, Council approved a restricted Access Plan for the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area recognising the primary need to protect the quality of the water supply and the high ecological values in the area while providing for some public access. The Hutt Water Collection Area has been open (for day use) since 1997, but its remoteness prevents all but the most experienced of recreational users from visiting the Area.

### 3. **Review of the Forest Lands Management Plan**

#### 3.1 **Background**

The Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972 does not require the preparation of a comprehensive management plan, (although a working plan in respect of plantation forestry operations is required). However, in 1996 the Council chose to prepare a management plan for the (western) forest lands in the interests of good land management. This management plan was designated as an *Interim* Plan as the divisional structure of the Council had just changed and regional plans under the Resource Management Act 1991 were still being prepared.

#### 3.2 **Progress**

The review of the (interim) Forest Lands Management Plan started last year. While a significant amount of preparatory work was undertaken, a process for completing the review was not finalised. To date there have been several Councillor Workshops to look at the vision for the Forest Lands in 20 - 40 years. More recently, Councillors “workshopped” issues associated with the plantation forests. Officers provided extensive background information for these workshops and worked on identifying key issues to be addressed.

We envisage that the revised Forest Lands Management Plan will form an overarching policy document for the current and future water collection areas and include separate chapters dedicated to management issues in specific locations. The Plan will include principles to guide strategic planning and should form a link between the various operational plans, e.g., the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area Access Plan and the Environmental Asset Management Plan. Most of the key operational plans have been revised or completed in the last 18 months.

#### 3.3 **Timetable and Process for Completing the Forest Lands Management Plan Review**

A detailed timetable for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan is outlined in **Attachment 2**. The process this financial year involves establishing a cross-divisional project team to identify/consider issues and develop principles for management, consultation with tangata whenua and public focus groups, and production of a draft plan for approval by the Utility Services and Landcare Committees in June 2002, before release for public comment. We propose to hold Councillor workshops in February and May 2002, to look at policy issues and matters for inclusion in the Plan.

### 4. **Tangata Whenua Input**

The management plans for the Council’s five regional parks are also being reviewed over the next two years. The proposed review process for both the five parks and the forest lands management plans has been presented to Ara Tahi for their comment. We have sought feedback on Ara Tahi’s preferred processes for tangata whenua input into the management plan reviews. At this stage, we are proposing to liaise with iwi on issues in the parks and the forests at one time (for ease when dealing with common issues and efficient use of time).

### 5. **Public Input**

To gain public input into the Forest Lands Management Plan review, we plan to:

- publicly notify our intention to review the plan and seek submissions;
- convene focus groups to obtain the views of forest users and other affected/interested parties; and
- publicly notify the draft management plan and seek submissions.

## 6. **Communications**

There will be communication with the public throughout the process, as outlined in section 5 above.

## 7. **Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

- (1) *notes that the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan is progressing.*
- (2) *notes the timetable (set out in **Attachment 2**) for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan in December 2002.*
- (3) *notes that the Landcare Committee has also been notified about the timetable for completing the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan in December 2002.*

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**Attachment 1** : Parks and Forests Location Map  
**Attachment 2** : Forest Lands Management Plan Timetable