



caring about you & your environment

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Ross Jackson, Landcare Planner – Volunteers Co-ordinator

Environmental Education and Environmental Enhancement Projects

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the 2001/02 environmental education and enhancement projects in order to meet the Performance Indicator requirements of the Annual Plan.

2. Annual Plan Performance Indicator

The 2001/02 Annual Plan contains the following Performance Indicator:

The annual environmental education and environmental enhancement initiatives as agreed with the Divisional Manager, Landcare, will be completed, within a budget of \$248,000, and reported to the Landcare Committee following the end of the financial year.

The non-financial aspects of the Performance Indicator have been achieved. The financial aspects of the programme will be confirmed once the final year end position is known.

3. Environmental Education Projects

Officers worked with the Environmental Education Co-ordinators (Environment Division) during the year to identify a schedule of infrastructure needed in the parks and forests for the Environmental Trails. This included:

- Construction of an extension to the Stratton Street woolshed (Belmont Regional Park) which serves as a classroom and meeting room.
- Building boardwalks on the streamside walk at Stratton Street.

- Constructing a veranda and completing the conversion and upgrade of an existing building to be used as a classroom at the Wainuiomata Catchment.
- Construction of a new access track and planting trees and shrubs at Tunnel Gully around a new park toilet.
- Construction of outdoor picnic tables and seats.

The Council allocated \$110,000 for this work during the 2001/02 financial year. All the scheduled work was completed within budget.

4. Environmental Enhancement Projects

Nine Environmental Enhancement projects were also included with this Performance Indicator. A brief summary of each of the projects is set out below.

4.1 Te Marua Bush Restoration

For around ten years, members of the Wellington Botanical Society have been working towards restoring Te Marua Bush at Kaitoke Regional Park. They have carried out extensive weed control work and planting. However, they have been struggling with some specific pest plant infestations. The Council agreed to help with their work and provided \$3,000 towards the project during the last two financial years. The budget for this financial year has been spent on professional weed control. A contractor has used the weed maps prepared by Philippa Crisp to complete work on a range of pest plant species.

4.2 Korokoro Bush Goat Control

The Lower Hutt Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society has been undertaking possum control in the Korokoro Bush at Belmont Regional Park for several years. The Council agreed to help the Society with pest control as one of the environmental enhancement projects in the Long Term Financial Strategy (LTFS). Goats were identified as a major pest, eating many of the seedlings in the bush and impacting on its regeneration. *Prohunt* was contracted to undertake a control operation, killing 121 goats. The understory is at last showing some positive signs of recovery after the sustained hunting pressure of the last two years.

4.3 Mainland Island Restoration Operation (MIRO)

The MIRO group based at East Harbour have worked on several projects with officers during the year. The vegetation inside the enclosure plot erected in the last financial year was identified and measured by Robin Blake and members of MIRO.

In February 2002 rat traps were purchased with Council funds and MIRO members have been trapping their core area for rats for several months. Philippa Crisp has been working with the group to assist with advice for further monitoring work in East Harbour. She has trained two MIRO members to make monthly recordings of fruiting and flowering in the MIRO core area.

Council staff have continued photographic monitoring programmes of 50 trees at East Harbour. They also assisted in the establishment of Miro (the tree not the Group) fruitfall plots, to complement the Hinau fruitfall plots established the previous year. A native fish specialist was hired to complete a fish survey of Gollan's Stream and Butterfly Creek. Members of MIRO attending the survey were excited to find and see rare giant kokopu as well as banded kokopu in these waterways.

4.4 **Pakuratahi River Riparian Planting and Ladle Bend Wetland**

The purpose of this project is to develop a buffer strips of riparian planting along the edge of streams and rivers in the Pakuratahi Forest catchment to reduce sediment runoff and enhance the area's environmental and landscape values.

Planning and design work was carried out in 2000/01 and included:

- trialing different types of vegetation and management techniques.
- establishing ways that the community groups can be involved.
- establishing and monitoring of vegetation trials.

Since logging has been completed, a lot of natural regeneration has taken place especially in more sheltered areas at lower altitude. Consequently, we decided to establish trials to record the survival of the planted seedlings compared to natural regeneration. The nursery-grown seedlings were planted out into five plots, which are being compared against naturally regenerating plots of a similar size. Re-measuring the plots will continue in the future to obtain valuable information about the effectiveness of planting seedlings. At this stage, it would appear that "managed" natural regeneration (i.e. removal of weed species) is proving more effective than planting.

Over the past financial year, the emphasis has been restoration of the top of the catchment at the former Summit rail yards of the Rimutaka Incline. During the restoration, some interesting remnants of the rail era were uncovered. Unfortunately a contaminated site was discovered which had to be capped and sealed off at a considerable cost. Planting of a riparian zone alongside the contaminated site took place at an Arbor Day event recently. At the same event, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust announced the Rimutaka Rail Trail is now registered as a historic area. The Rail Heritage Trust also presented their annual restoration award to the WRC for the restoration of the Pakuratahi Bridge.

4.5 **Queen Elizabeth Park Remnant Forest Restoration**

For the past 10 years, the Kapiti Branch of Forest and Bird, and Kapiti Environmental Action have been involved in the restoration of the last remaining Kahikatea forest remnant in the Park. A restoration plan has recently been prepared. This will provide continuity for years to come as volunteer and Council personnel change.

Community members and Council staff have done extensive planting and maintenance in the remnant. There is significant natural regeneration taking place in parts, but planting will need to be carried out for many years. The plantings will eventually link up with the surrounding wetland areas.

4.6 Queen Elizabeth Park Wetland Restoration

The Council included a Queen Elizabeth Park wetland restoration project in the LTFS. However, the project has been affected by Transit New Zealand's proposal to upgrade State Highway 1 at Mackays Crossing. This road upgrade will impact on Park and adjacent Department of Conservation (DOC) wetlands, and the MacKays Crossing Park entrance.

As compensation for the loss of some of the DOC wetlands outside the Park, Transit have agreed to fund work on restoration of the wetlands. The main focus of our work this year has been on planning the new entrance and identifying areas for wetland development using the Transit funding.

Ongoing planting in the existing ephemeral wetlands has taken place during the winter including a recent Arbor Day celebration attended by the Governor General and the British High Commissioner.

4.7 Queen Elizabeth Park Foredune Restoration

The Park foredunes are identified as being the last relatively unmodified dunes on the Kapiti Coast. As the dunes are a very specialised and dynamic ecosystem, an ecologist and a coastal processes expert were contracted to prepare a discussion document on how best to manage them. Specific projects and recommendations identified include:

- Establishment of secure points of access between the coastal foredunes and the beach.
- Foredune habitat restoration.
- Track development.
- Weed and pest control.
- Archaeological site management.
- Interpretation and education.
- Further studies and monitoring.

During the summer a public meeting was held to discuss the document. This was followed with four organised walks in the Dunes looking at aspects of Maori history, plants and ecology. Over 250 people attended these walks. Detailed plant and weed surveys have also been carried out and work continues on the control of the most serious weeds.

Twelve enclosure plots were erected at a working bee in the bush remnants at the back of the dunes in February. These plots are to be used to assess why seedlings are not growing in any abundance in these remnants. Some enclosures have been fenced to keep out rabbits, while others are to keep out rats.

A trial wooden access structure has been constructed at Whareroa beach alongside some trial plantings of sand binding plants. Groupings of spinifex and pingao have been planted and the effect of fencing and fertiliser on the growth of these plants will be tested. These plantings are part of a national trial and have been established with the assistance of community volunteers

4.8 **Battle Hill Wetland Restoration**

Construction of several ponds and one kilometre of fencing to retire Swampy Gully have been completed. This is the first stage in establishing a long identified wetland area in the Farm Forest Park. Technical assistance has been provided by members of Wetland Care Inc., a voluntary organisation who specialise in wetland restoration. They have also provided advice on Queen Elizabeth Park. Extensive planting will now take place at Battle Hill over the next five years.

4.9 **Cannons Creek Valley Bush Restoration – Belmont Regional Park**

The project to restore Cannons Creek Valley Bush arose from a submission on the Wellington Regional Council's 1999/00 Annual Plan from the Eastern Ward Residents and Ratepayers Association. The key person promoting the project is Cannons Creek resident Sylvia Jenkin. She is well supported by an enthusiastic group with a wide range of skills, who have formed the Friends of Maara Roa (Inc.).

The restoration project is about helping the naturally regenerating native bush in the valley to grow and spread. The enhancement of the native bush will assist to:

- Increase the range of native species in the area.
- Increase and improve native wildlife habitat.
- Provide the Cannons Creek community with an improved recreation area, and its own native forest.

A restoration plan was jointly prepared in 2001 and planting is currently being carried out in earnest every second Saturday morning during June and July. The council grant has been used to purchase plant material, which has been augmented by plants grown by Friends of Maara Roa.

Council staff in conjunction with the Friends have carried out some specific weed control, track construction and possum control. The Friends organised an Arbor Day planting with local schools on the Porirua City Council owned portion of Belmont Regional Park

5. **Communication**

These projects provide excellent public relations opportunities. A number have already been publicised in the local and daily newspapers, and in *Elements*. We are working with Corporate Communications to ensure continued publicity of these projects.

6. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

- (1) **Receive the report.**
- (2) **Note the contents of the report.**

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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