



Report 06.197
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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Rough Hill/Wairangi Boundary

1. Purpose

To inform the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee of an approach by Tawini Limited (Trading as Wairangi Station) to erect a give and take boundary fence adjacent to the Rough Hill Soil and Water Conservation Reserve.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Rough Hill is a 440 hectare local purpose reserve (soil conservation and river control purposes) adjacent to the southern boundary of Stoney Creek Conservation Reserve Forest.

Rough Hill was purchased in 1966 by the Department of Lands and Survey at the request of the WCB. The intention was to retire the land from farming and vest it in the Wairarapa Catchment Board (WCB) for Soil Conservation Purposes. The buildings and approximately 40 hectares of land were sold to the neighbouring Wairangi Station.

Boundary fences were assessed in 1996, and following cost estimates, remedial repairs and new fencing carried out in conjunction with three neighbouring properties to reduce stock movement into the reserve. On the fourth neighbouring property (Wairangi) three possible fence lines were considered (See map – **Attachment 1**).

- Option 1, close to the legal boundary line, is difficult to erect and maintain (2700 metres, \$31,200 in 1996).
- Option 2 was within Wairangi Station and would retire about 65 hectares from grazing (3200 metres, \$34,400 in 1996).

- Option 3 was within Rough Hill and would effectively add about 45 hectares (of Rough Hill) to Wairangi (1800 metres, \$20,400 in 1996).

None of these options are straight forward due to the terrain and vegetation. Wairangi was not interested in proceeding with the fencing at that time and the property again changed hands.

Over the last three years there has been intermittent contact with Stephen Franks, the current owner, to again consider fencing this boundary. The area normally has no stock pressure due to not being grazed and on that basis there has been little need to pursue the matter. Mr Franks has been advised that any decision to adopt the fence line within Rough Hill (Option 3) would need to be approved by the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee. In addition he was not to proceed with clearing the fence line as had been advocated by a potential fencing contractor until such time as decisions had been made and ratified.

Urgency has increased over the last few months with an upcoming 1080 operation in the area and anticipation of increased stock pressure through this part of Wairangi as Mr Franks moves stock to accommodate the 1080 operation. Mr Franks now proposes a fence on the leading ridge within Rough Hill (email dated 7 April 2006 - **Attachment 2**).

Cost estimates for Mr Franks preferred Option 3 were updated in 2005 to \$25,300 for a conventional fence. Mr Franks is seeking a deer fence (at an unspecified additional cost) on the basis of a long term potential use for Wairangi as a game park and that goats are reinfesting Wairangi via Rough Hill.

Shooting of goats within Rough Hill has been carried out annually by helicopter and casually by permitted hunters with numbers of goats being highest on the property boundaries with the least shooting pressure.

4. Comment

A legal opinion has been obtained from Oakley Moran. This advises that a give and take boundary is possible on the Option 3 boundary, but that the registration of a fencing covenant or agreement against the Council's title would be problematic, and if it is possible, it will require the consent of the Minister of Conservation (Crown land vested in Greater Wellington Regional Council). Staff believe this is likely to be difficult and will take some time as the land lost from Rough Hill is likely to receive increased stock pressure unless a suitable agreement is in place. If grazing is to be incidental the need for a fence is questioned.

The request from Mr Franks includes the benefits, from his perspective, that would accrue to both parties by fencing within Rough Hill. These benefits include a cheaper cost based on the length of fence. Fence costs supplied are our estimates only, as fencers are not prepared to quote on the fence until the line has been agreed and cleared, and do not include the additional cost of a deer fence.

Most of the benefits of having any fence at all are to Wairangi not to GW. A partial fence on the stable part of the legal line (Option 1) is likely to achieve the required benefits for GW as the topography in the unstable section is so difficult that stock have little likelihood of penetrating the surrounding land. The lack of a boundary fence has not been an issue due to many years of minimal stock pressure.

From a wider perspective, Soil Conservation benefits would come from permanently retiring a greater part of Wairangi, (Option 2). This is partly addressed in Mr Frank's offer to covenant not to clear the land in the whole affected catchment. Clearing would require GW consent but grazing pressure will damage regeneration and aggravate erosion in an already vulnerable area. It is likely however that he is referring only to the eroding gully system immediately adjacent to the legal boundary.

Other parts of Mr Frank's offer include:

- Paying for the work now, with our contribution next financial year. Unfortunately this would require a commitment from GW now, based on estimates only and without any budgetary provision.
- Adding part of the Wairangi land which would require survey with associated costs, including access complications (a right of way to the balance of Wairangi would be required).
- Payment or land swap for a strip in the Awhea catchment. This would involve the approval of the Minister of Conservation as Rough Hill is Crown Land vested in GW. Wairangi does not extend into the Awhea catchment.

There are a number of aspects of the proposal that require more detail and clarification.

5. Conclusions

- (1) A give and take boundary on Option 1 would be difficult, but partially fenced would limit stray stock movement through the area.
- (2) Officers are not in a position to recommend that the Committee agree to Option 3 without doing further work on the potential impact on the reserve, and the work and costs associated with such an agreement.

6. Communication

This is a matter between GW and a neighbour and does not require further communication with the public.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- (1) **Receives** the report.
- (2) **Notes** the content of the report.
- (3) **Acknowledges** Mr Frank's request, and ask officers to advise that GW is not in a position to proceed until the implications of his proposal have been more fully explored, any liabilities identified, and budgetary provision obtained.

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Attachments 1 & 2: