

Tawini Limited

(trading as Wairangi Station)

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April 7,2006

Rural Committee
Greater Wellington Regional Council
Masterton

Boundary Fence between Wairangi Station and Rough Hill Reserve

I write to seek approval to run a new 1.8km boundary fence partly on your reserve land instead of down the surveyed boundary. The fence is needed between Wairangi Station (Cape River Road, Tuturumuri, RD 2, Martinborough) and the Council's Rough Hill Reserve.

Summary

We propose that the fence go largely on your ridge instead of on the legal boundary because, in the interests of both parties liable to build and maintain it, it would be:

- a) Shorter, by nearly a kilometre than the legal boundary line,
- b) Up to 1/3rd cheaper (approx **\$8000**),
- c) less steep,
- d) avoid crossing a large moving slump,
- e) run 90% through dry ridge kanuka thus avoiding cutting a line through maturing beech and broadleaf forest,
- f) need less maintenance,**
- g) be more accessible for maintenance,
- h) avoid crossing a difficult creek, where the floodgate will blow out and be extremely hard to access for repair.

In addition we offer:

- a) to covenant not to clear the land in the whole affected catchment (our land on our side of the legal boundary as well as the area on your side);
- b) if the decision is prompt, to pay for the work now as it is done, leaving your contribution until the next financial year;
- c) to add the part of our land that is cut off on your side of the fence to your reserve, thus retiring some mature lowland native forest; and
- d) to compensate for the balance of the strip on our side of the fence if that is what you require, with payment or a land swap, offering a strip in the Awhea catchment.

Background

The land which is now your conservation Reserve was once fenced from Wairangi, but it has not had an effective fenced boundary for many years. Apparently that did not matter when few cattle were run, because the sheep rarely went through the bush and scrub. Now cattle have established routes across two watersheds into the main Reserve watershed where soil conservation pines are planted. They regularly use stock tracks between that WRC stream and the creek-head that runs down into Wairangi's clear country. They have moved in both directions, from Riversdale and Manahau stations up the Cape River bed and the Reserve creek, then down into Wairangi, and vice versa.

In addition goats have moved freely between Wairangi and the Reserve. We believe Wairangi has been reinfested with goats from the Reserve after intensive hunting had almost eliminated them from Wairangi.

We propose running the fence as shown (thin dark line) on the accompanying photographic plan. The position of the survey boundary (white line) is as supplied by your staff. It appears to be slightly out of line with the old fenceline that we have assumed to be the boundary. The survey boundary is now just a line on a map.

Both the survey boundary and the old fenceline are now impractical as new fencelines. The terrain is uneven, overgrown and steep. Permanent fencing there would require clearing mature beeches, and would be much more expensive. The creek bottom is narrow and steep-sided. A fence would be frequently damaged by floods, slips and tree falls. It is too steep for vehicle access and maintenance would be problematic.

The sensible alternative to the legal boundary is to fence down either of two ridges.

Entirely within Wairangi

The more recent boundary fence may have run at least partly down an intermediate ridge (now largely regenerated beech) and across the creek to the ridge which carries Wairangi's access track to the back of our 1000 acre "Old Place" block. That ridge is entirely within Wairangi. The fence is now a rusting remnant in the trees, on the ground where it has not disappeared.

To renew the fence on that ridge is problematic. The upper part running north south would be wind exposed, and intrude on the skyline.

The lower part of the fence route is now largely through maturing beeches and broadleaf, and across several very steep old slip faces (now thickly covered in manuka, kanuka and broadleaf). There are two additional problems - erosion, and ending the fence at the bottom of the ridge. A 100m section of the track (which would be the only practical fence route on that ridge) is near to becoming a razor back (we plan to shift the access track to another ridge further into Wairangi property, upgrading an old stock route).

At the bottom end the Wairangi ridge ends in cliffs and near cliffs covered in trees. We are advised that no one would take a fencing tractor down that route.

The new fence will become the practical boundary for hunters. One day Wairangi's best use may be for manuka honey production, and trophy hunting. We would lose that entire catchment, including several warm evening hunting faces hutable only from our side of the valley, if our effective boundary fence cuts it all off.

Partly Wairangi and partly Reserve

The preferred fence line would run down a broad even gradient ridge from Rough Hill. It too has had a fence down it, perhaps even older than the one on the Wairangi ridge. Only a few totara posts and rusting waratahs remain. It has no significant forest on it. It is almost entirely in 2-3m scrub. At a low level it runs across the Wairangi boundary and from there the fence can be easily brought down to the valley floor level and a new floodgate. We have now walked the route with an experienced fencer. He is satisfied that his post driving tractor can do the whole route.

The proposal would take the fence mostly on Reserve land, but it will also fence off some Wairangi land on your side of the fence, including 200m of Wairangi stream-bed at the bottom end. That will retire from grazing a small Wairangi block of mature low level forest (not all shown at the bottom of the photograph).

The second route is strongly preferred.

Use of Reserve land cut off by new fence

We do not use the reserve area that would be cut off by the new fence, and do not want to use it. It is steep and largely clad in trees and thick scrub. We periodically shoot the goats that emerge in several favoured sites (rocky outcrops) there. Other stock move through but do not live there. Once the fence stops through access for stock they would have little reason to go into that catchment on your land or ours, and the through tracks should close again. .

We are happy to undertake expressly not to clear your reserve land on our side of the new fence. Fencing it on our side would not give us any right to disturb it in any event.

Soil conservation

There is no adverse soil conservation effect from leaving your strip behind our fence. That area historically showed few open slips. Our part of that catchment has much more vulnerable land. The entire catchment has since become heavily overgrown under Wairangi stocking. That will not change.

We do not want any of that catchment (including our side) to be disturbed from its natural condition any more than is necessary to build the fence on the ridge. We would add our land in that catchment to any undertaking against clearance, thus increasing the practical soil conservation area.

Visual intrusion

The preferred ridge is broad enough to run the fence largely off-centre, to reduce any skyline visual impact. The 3m high scrub on that ridge will shield any intrusion on the landscape. Only from the high country inside Wairangi which looks directly across to it, will the whole fence line will be clearly visible.

Timing

We are anxious to start the fence immediately so that we can move our cattle in to the old place until June. We must spell our clear country to build up reserves if a 1080 drop is to go ahead in the 'old place' block (and our other back country), normally accessible for emergency grazing.

Land swap

We do not want your land, and we do not want to have to wait for survey and other formalities that could be required for a land swap. Nevertheless, we recognize the practical accretion effect of a fence. If you want to "regularize" the new fence in the future we would be happy to make a boundary adjustment. We would transfer to you the steep Wairangi land and creek bed at the bottom of the fence, thus retiring a section of mature lowland forest (reserving an access easement through).

In addition we could pay for any remaining difference in value, or transfer to you equivalent value land adjacent to Stoney Creek forest. That land is at least as susceptible to erosion as the strip of reserve that would be cut off behind the new fence, and it is in the Awhea catchment, (not the Opouawe) where erosion has much more expensive consequences.

We believe that the proposal is in the interests of the Council, soil conservation and Wairangi.

Sincerely,

Stephen Franks
Director
Tawini Ltd