



Report 06.348
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Committee Landcare
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Environmental enhancement projects performance indicator

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the 2005/06 environmental enhancement projects in order to meet the performance indicator requirements of the Annual Plan.

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. Annual Plan performance indicator

The 2005/06 Annual Plan contains the following performance indicator:

The annual environmental enhancement projects as agreed with the Divisional Manager, Landcare, will be completed within a budget of \$104,000 and reported to the Landcare Committee following the end of the financial year.

This performance indicator was **achieved** at a cost of \$88,914.

4. Contribution to Take 10 objectives

This performance indicator contributes to the quality of life of the regional community by ensuring that community participation in the regional parks, forests and water collection areas is enhanced. The intent of this Annual Plan performance indicator is to ensure that people are encouraged to use our parks and get involved in their management, and that environmental community care groups are supported.

5. Environmental enhancement projects

Nine environmental enhancement projects were included with this performance indicator. A brief summary of the work that was carried out on these projects this year is set out below.

5.1 Te Marua Bush restoration

Members of the *Wellington Botanical Society (Botsoc)* have cared for the bush remnant at Te Marua since the early 1990s. They have carried out extensive weed control work and plantings in the remnant over the years. *Botsoc* have continued to clear pest plants and plant seedlings that have been grown by the Upper Hutt Branch of *Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Forest and Bird)*. The seed was eco-sourced from Te Marua bush. Greater Wellington funds have been used this year for fencing work and to provide potting mix, etc. for the growing of more seedlings by *Forest and Bird*. The fencing will extend the Te Marua bush area to the south. This land has come across to Council from Transit now that the SH2 roading changes have been completed. The new extension includes two large isolated podocarp trees (a totara and a matai) and *Botsoc* will plant the new area over time.

5.2 Korokoro Bush goat control

The Judas goat control programme has been continued and goat numbers have now been maintained at low levels for five years. Funds were used this year to continue to keep the goat numbers down. Thirty-eight goats were culled this year. The ongoing problems with reinvasion from neighbouring land to the south of the park have been tackled by the Environmental Ranger, who worked with *Wellington City Council* to enable an integrated attack to be made on the goats. The ongoing possum control now in place means that improvements in forest health are being seen. Bird monitoring established in the valley in 2004 has again shown recordings of bellbirds, which were only rediscovered in Korokoro after many decades.

5.3 Mainland island restoration operation (MIRO)

The *MIRO* group based at East Harbour Regional Park have worked on several projects with officers during the past five years. *MIRO* volunteers have assisted in keeping possum numbers down within the northern block during the past financial year. The volunteers clear traps and change rat toxin regularly as part of the possum control program. Their hard work has been successful, as a recent monitor showed possums to be at very low levels in the area. Volunteers are also actively involved in the rodent/mustelid monitoring program which involves a week of field work every three months. The committee has made some progress in their aims for East Harbour Regional Park and have been involved in submitting on the management plan currently under review. They are also keen to initiate a restoration planting program in the Lakes Block and to this end, have started up a nursery in Eastbourne. This year, Greater Wellington funds were spent largely on a *MIRO* brochure and for equipment for this nursery.

This year 180 attended the annual Wellington Regional Restoration Day to celebrate the activities of care groups around the region. It was held at Eastbourne and *MIRO* played a big part in assisting GWRC and DOC to organise and run the event. This included guiding field trips into East Harbour Regional Park to view areas where they are actively involved in the pest control and management.

5.4 Pakuratahi River riparian planting

Over the past four years, the emphasis has been on restoring the top of the catchment at the former summit rail yards on the Rimutaka Rail Trail, removing weed species in the riparian zones and carrying out developments at specific nodes as outlined in the Restoration Plan. This project had no allocated budget this year, but 700 revegetation plants carried over from the previous year, were planted in gaps in existing plantings. Some maintenance work was carried out by prison inmates but it was significantly less over the past few months due to a shortage of prison staff.

A Totara grove has been established at the Summit and it is planned to reintroduce some of the larger growing species including totara, rimu and kahikatea amongst the smaller colonising species. These are currently being grown at a local nursery.

5.5 Queen Elizabeth Park remnant forest restoration

Members of *Kapi-Mana Forest and Bird* and *Kapiti Environment Association (KEA)* have been actively involved in the restoration of this remnant for over a decade. Following extensive weed removal and replanting by the community and park staff, monitoring of bird numbers began in 2001. The data shows there are more birds in the forest remnant and there now appears to be more species in the area. The continuing concerted pest control programme carried out by staff should ensure that an increase in bird numbers continues.

Planting over the past six years beyond the remnant by staff and volunteers, plantings will eventually link up with the surrounding wetland areas. As the health of the remnant has improved, staff have been able to collect seed which is being grown by staff and volunteers in the park nursery.

5.6 Queen Elizabeth Park wetland restoration

Ongoing work has continued in the restoration of the 16 hectares of wetland areas near the MacKays entry area. The 3.5 hectare wetland immediately inside the entrance was excavated and a new channel installed to try and prevent localised drainage problems in the area. This was partially funded by Transit NZ as part of a negotiated arrangement because of the impact the new road will have on the front of the park and the adjoining DoC wetlands. A new 2km wetland walk, which includes a short, hard-surfaced, wheelchair accessible section, was officially opened by Councillor Laidlaw in January as part of the Regional Outdoors Programme.

Planting of the larger ephemeral wetland was again the site of the most recent Arbor Day celebration officiated by Jack Rikihana representing *Te Atiawa Ki Whakarongotai*, *Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park* Chairperson John Lancashire, GW Chairperson Ian Buchanan and sportsman/conservationist Simon Kennett. Ongoing planting and maintenance continues in the area with several corporate organisations as well as the Friends of the Park participating.

5.7 Queen Elizabeth Park foredune restoration

The major focus of the programme this past year was fencing and planting of spinifex on the foredune near Raumati and in front of the Paekakariki Surf Club with active support from the community. Results at the Raumati site have been very encouraging but unfortunately severe storms destroyed the Paekakariki planting before it was properly established.

Parks staff have carried out ongoing maintenance on several sand ladders and protective fences at several access points onto the beach as well as installing some proactive signs encouraging people to stay off the planted areas. The sand ladders are intended to try and reduce the erosion that is induced by people making numerous tracks through the foredunes.

A detailed pest plant control plan was produced in 2003. Excellent results have been achieved with the eradication of boneseed, boxthorn and Italian buckthorn which are all serious weeds. However, this work still needs to continue to control several other problem weeds and to replant with suitable native species.

5.8 Battle Hill wetland restoration

Construction of several ponds was completed four years ago and the area has now been extensively planted and is progressing well. A large portion of Swampy Gully was fenced off three years ago and retired. Since that time additional areas have been retired and a total of 2,100 plants were planted by volunteers from the *Westpac Bank*, community members and local school students at a successful Arbor Day. The growth of the plants has been excellent with some cabbage trees now up to two metres high. Further extensive planting of the wet gullies and riparian areas will continue to take place at Battle Hill over the next few years.

Poplar pole planting in the adjoining grazed gullies is continuing each year and some Totaras in stock-proof protectors are also now being introduced. Other corporate organisations are being encouraged and are getting involved in this project doing releasing work as well as planting.

5.9 Cannons Creek Valley bush restoration – Belmont Regional Park

The *Friends of Maara Roa* continue to do excellent work on this project in line with the restoration plan recommendations prepared jointly with GWRC in 2001. Currently, planting and maintenance is being carried out in earnest every second Saturday morning during June, July and August. The largest portion of the Council contribution was used to purchase plants, which has been supplemented by plants grown by the Friends. Hare nets were also purchased

to protect planted seedlings from browse damage. The Friends continue to maintain bait stations for pest control. In addition, Parks staff recently installed a new map board at the entrance at Cannons Creek as well as continuing the maintenance of the main tracks in the area.

The Friends again ran a series of walks during the summer as part of the Regional Outdoors Programme.

5.10 Whareroa Stream Restoration Programme

Although not included in the original budget, this project was provided with funding by Council over the past two years following a presentation by the Chairperson of the *Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park*, Dr John Lancashire. This funding has been used to fence both sides the entire Whareroa Stream that flows through the Park. Excavation work was carried out on one portion to break the edges of what is essentially a drainage ditch to allow it to again become a more “naturalised” stream.

Three successful planting events have now been held and a total of 2,500 plants have been put in the ground by the community and staff. Most survived the dry spring and a new walking circuit is now evolving through the Park alongside the stream.

6. Communications

These projects provide excellent public relations opportunities. All of them have been publicised in the local and daily newspapers, and in *Elements*. We are continuing to work with Corporate Communications to ensure ongoing publicity of these projects.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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