



Report 08.525  
Date 21 July 2008  
File PK/01/01/01

Committee Parks, Forests and Utilities Committee  
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## Community enhancement projects performance indicator

### 1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the 2007/08 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 2007/08 Annual Plan contains the following performance indicator:

*The annual community enhancement projects will be completed within a budget of \$94,000. A progress report will be approved by Council.*

This performance indicator was **achieved** at a cost of \$80,464. The projects were substantially achieved. The variance is because of less staff time being spent on the projects.

### 4. Community enhancement projects

#### 4.1 General

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.

## **4.2 Te Marua bush restoration**

Members of the Wellington Botanical Society 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. The Wellington Botanical Society has 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 Regional Council (GWRC) funds have been used this year for more fencing and plants. The fencing work has allowed for a 600 m<sup>2</sup> expansion of the reserve to the north. The area has now been planted and will assist the long-term viability of this small remnant. There have been some losses in the revegetation areas to hares in the past, so hare nets were used this year to protect the plants.

## **4.3 Korokoro bush goat control**

Forest health is continuing to improve in the Korokoro Valley, as the ongoing possum control in the area combined with the Judas goat control programme (funded through this programme) has given seedlings a chance to grow. The habitat has also been enhanced for native birds, lizards and insects. Seven years ago goat numbers were very high in the valley but they have been maintained at low levels for many years, although reinvasion from neighbouring land continues to be a problem. A further 37 goats were culled in the park this year. Monitoring data has shown an increase in the palatable seedlings (noted in photo-points) and in bird numbers (through spring bird surveys) in the Korokoro Valley. The Korokoro Environmental Association has recently expressed an interest in helping out with enhancing the native ecosystem in the valley.

## **4.4 Mainland Island Restoration (MIRO)**

The MIRO group based at East Harbour Regional Park has worked on several projects with officers during the past six years. MIRO has continued to maintain low possum numbers in the northern block by servicing a trap network in the 1,500 ha forest. Over 30 volunteers spend around 2,000 volunteer hours per year tramping into the forest, clearing traps and refilling nearby bait stations.

The mainland island area in the northern forest is a combined MIRO/GWRC project, with GWRC supplying the funds to maintain the rat bait stations and MIRO completing the monitoring and future planning for the site. MIRO recently released robins into the mainland island area after much preparation, including obtaining permission from the Department of Conservation and GWRC. This is the first time that the North Island robin has been in that forest for over 100 years. Some of their funds this year were spent on expenses associated with transferring the robins from where they were captured in Wanganui, e.g., petrol, blood tests for the robins.

A restoration plan developed for the Lakes Block has proposed six planting sites there. MIRO runs a nursery in Eastbourne to provide plants for the area

and one restoration site was fenced and planted last year. Fencing protects the plantings from hares and rabbits, as well as any other animals that may stray into the block.

#### **4.5 Pakuratahi River riparian planting**

Over the past six 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 developing specific nodes as outlined in the restoration plan. This work is bearing fruit and the native regeneration is coming back very well in most places.

A small totara grove established at the Summit was expanded and this will continue over the next few years. Some of the other larger growing species, including rimu, matai and kahikatea, in addition to totara, are being grown under contract at a local nursery for planting amongst the smaller colonising species in the coming year.

#### **4.6 Queen Elizabeth Park**

##### **4.6.1 Remnant forest restoration**

Members of Kapi-Mana Forest and Bird, and Kapiti Environment Association are currently working with park staff in reviewing the restoration plan for this forest remnant. The forest is the only remnant of this type in the lower part of the Kapiti Coast and it is proving to be a valuable seed source to grow plants in the park nursery. Over the next few years we will aim to expand the remnant from 2 hectares to 5 hectares to make it a more viable piece of bush.

At this year's Arbor Day 150 school children, along with Committee Chairperson Rex Kirton, Jack Rikihana representing Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai and John Lancashire representing the Friends of the Park, planted 1,000 plants in an area adjoining the bush remnant.

The wetland/bush remnant is also a popular area for research purposes. Currently there are three separate university projects involving graduate students looking at biological or social aspects. While some of the study may only be of academic interest, invariably we find that new information is identified that is useful resource material, allowing a better understanding the ecology and history of the area.

##### **4.6.2 Wetland restoration**

Work continues with the restoration of the 16 hectares of wetland areas near the MacKay's Crossing entrance. Most of the work has been carried out by numerous corporate groups, along with staff members, planting and weeding throughout the year. The 2 km Wetland Walk, which includes a short hard-surfaced wheelchair accessible section, is proving popular and will continue to improve as the plants grow and create a better habitat for birdlife. A geological interpretation trail describing the area, including the wetlands, is being developed and will begin at the Ranger's office.

Retired Geologist Tony Edwards is providing technical information and staff members are working on panels and surrounding structures.

Over the last year a big effort has gone into pest control in the wetlands. One of the main persons leading the charge is volunteer Michael Stace, who has become an expert trapper and has an impressive tally of pests destroyed. We are seeing more wetland birds around here and further monitoring over the next 12 months will quantify this increase.

#### 4.6.3 Foredune restoration

The major planting focus continues to be spinifex on the foredune between the Whareroa Stream outlet and the Raumati South entrance. Spring storms invariably create havoc and this often results in significant losses, with the work tending to be two steps forward and one back! However, there are some encouraging results being achieved and with ongoing active support from the Friends and the community, we are confident we can further reduce the current erosion at that end of the park. Funding has also contributed to more fencing to direct visitors to the more stable dune areas.

A detailed pest plant control plan was produced in 2003. Excellent results have been achieved, with the elimination of major infestations of boneseed, boxthorn and Italian buckthorn, which are all serious weeds. However, this work is still needed to control new seedlings as they emerge, along with several other problem weeds, and to replant with suitable native species.

#### 4.7 Battle Hill wetland restoration

Construction of several ponds was completed six years ago and the area has now been extensively planted, and is starting to get an established feel about it. The planting has continued into a large triangular block that was retired above the ponds. This work is carried out by a variety of groups, including schools, corporate organisations and locals, along with Parks' staff members. A community *Creating Habitat Day* was held and this was a successful event involving people from around the district. These types of plantings are always good opportunities to discuss practical environmental issues and the value of the biodiversity programme.

The planting of Swampy Gully, which began in 2004, is now really starting to show, with some cabbage trees 2 to 3 metres in height. This was again the site for Arbor Day this year and 150 children from local schools, along with teachers and parents, planted 1,000 plants. Councillor Rex Kirton officiated at the event, which was attended by Porirua Mayor Jenny Brash. Graeme Hastilow from Ngati Toa conducted a mihi.

Some poplar pole planting in the adjoining grazed gullies is continuing each year and a few totara in stock-proof protectors are also now being introduced.

#### 4.8 Cannons Creek Valley bush restoration, Belmont Regional Park

The Friends of Maara Roa is a very focused committed group, which continues doing excellent work restoring of 100 ha area of Cannons Creek Valley in line

with the restoration plan recommendations prepared jointly with GWRC in 2001. Planting and maintenance is currently being carried out in earnest every second Saturday morning during June, July and August. The group has focused its planting on a number of key areas developing “green corridors”, where they plant fire resistant species in an effort to prevent a major fire, as occurred four years ago. Each year GWRC funds around 2,500 plants, which is supplemented by another 2,500 grown by the Friends, and the results are really starting to show.

The Friends continue to maintain bait stations for pest control. They are currently developing an interpretative walk through one of the covenants and again ran a series of walks during the summer as part of the Regional Outdoors Programme.

A few months ago one of their very devoted members, Richard Robertson, passed away. A new seat made by Parks’ staff members was unveiled by the family at a private ceremony in memory of Richard.

## **5. Communications**

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

## **6. Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

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

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