

Report 16.425
Date 14 September 2016
File CCAB-10-205

Committee Environment Committee
Author Wayne O'Donnell, General Manager, Catchment Management
Nigel Corry, General Manager, Environment Management
Luke Troy, General Manager, Strategy

General Managers' report to the Environment Committee meeting 20 September 2016

1. Purpose

To inform the Environment Committee of Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibilities.

2. Catchment Management

2.1 Biosecurity

RPMP Review

The Regional Pest Management Plan review consultation document is under development, with internal consultation on proposed species and programme changes underway.

2.1.1 Pest Plants

Surveillance and Total Control Programmes

The annual Surveillance and Total Control programmes are underway as the spring growth and flowering begins for a number of species. Delimiting work is being undertaken for blue passionflower, mothplant and woolly nightshade in Paraparaumu, Raumati and Upper Hutt.

Mothplant and blue passion flower inspections have been completed in Featherston and Masterton, with a number of new plants found in Featherston.



Biosecurity staff with a mothplant pod found at an urban Featherston property. Gloves are required as protection against the toxic sap of the plant.

Containment Species

The annual boneseed control programme will begin in September with control scheduled on the Wairarapa, Wellington and Porirua coasts. Control of boneseed involves manual and herbicide control by ground and aerial contractors and Biosecurity staff.

2.1.2 BioWorks

Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP)

Monitoring of the 2015/16 programme has now been completed. The final four results all returned Residual Trap Catch (RTC) below 1%.

Work has commenced on the 2016/17 RPPCP programme which will cover approximately 74,800 hectares.

Five new projects covering 33,833 ha have been added to the programme after they were declared TB free during the 2015/16 year.

- Clareville 3,642 ha
- Carterton 6,145 ha
- Taratahi 5,942 ha
- Te Ore Ore 9,190 ha
- Te Whanga 8,932 ha

TBfree New Zealand Programme

BioWorks has been awarded the Southern Rimutaka project and planning is well underway. The project includes:

- 13,350 ha aerial 1080 control
- 4,200 ha ground control

BioWorks has submitted a Registration of Interest to do future aerial control works for TBfree NZ. During August BioWorks provided a presentation to TBfree NZ to undertake the Kapakapanui aerial project (11,000 ha near Waikanae) during the 2017 year.

2.2 Land Management

2.2.1 Akura Conservation Centre

The winter works programme is coming to an end. The winter has been rather benign and very dry. Parts of the region are recording rainfall figures to the end of August at 60% of normal. This has had a profound impact on Akura Conservation Centre sales of both poplar and willow poles and native and exotic seedlings to farmers. All of which are down on numbers from previous years. Pole numbers are currently at 18,000 for the 2016/17 financial year. This has been the result of a number of farmers cancelling their pole orders for this winter.

Approximately 2,000 poles were cancelled in the last month and a further 2,000 were not ordered in the first place due to the dry conditions. On the flip side, the Akura Conservation Centre native and exotic seedling retail sales, direct to the public, are going very well and tracking with last year's sales which totalled 20,900 native sales. Final retail numbers for the 2015/16 year, including exotic species, was 39,500.

Mangapakeha Nursery (west of Masterton) is currently being marketed by Bayleys Real Estate. It is being marketed as a tender sale and to date there has been good interest. In the first two weeks there were 100 viewings across two websites. Interested parties include all the neighbouring property owners, a local bee keeper and people interested as a lifestyle block. The tender closes on 22 September 2016.



Mangapakeha nursery

2.2.2 Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative (WRECI)

The annual winter works programme is almost completed with the majority of the 24,000 poles planted, approximately 18,000 of which have been planted in July and August. Furthermore, 37.7 ha of land has been permanently retired in July and August. This puts us well on track to reach our MPI targets for 2016/17 as indicated in the table below. The winter programme went very smoothly considering the number of new staff in the Land Management department. Unseasonably dry conditions at the beginning of winter were, however, a concern for farmer clients, and there were a number of cancellations.

Activity	Actual 2015/16	Actual to date 2016/17	% of MPI milestone 2016/17 Milestones
Poles planted (#)	24,411	18,000	73.7
Poles planted (ha.)	344	257	73.4
Land retired via afforestation & reversion (ha)	54.2	37.7	62.8

2.2.3 Farm Environment Plans (FEP's)

The contestable fund framework is now in operation. This new approach to funding works through the FEP programme will allow work to be targeted in priority sub-catchments that have been identified in Method 12 of the Proposed Natural Resource Plan.

At the end of the 2015/16 financial year 46 FEP's were completed, including eight on the Kapiti Coast. This coming financial year will see a further 15 FEP's completed which will target farmers in the Wairarapa Moana Catchment

and also in the Parkvale, Kopuaranga, Huangarua and Taueru catchments. The 2016/17 year will see more emphasis on extension and advice around good management practice on farms, with a focus on soil management and riparian management.

The Riparian Programme supports landowners to achieve water quality and biodiversity outcomes and to be ready to comply with new rules around stock access to waterways which come into effect in 2018 and 2022. It involves the provision of advice on managing stock access to waterways as well as financial incentives for landowners to effectively manage the margins of streams and lakes on their properties. Part of this programme is also to work with landowners to identify waterways that meet the definitions for Category 1 (sites of significance) and category 2 surface water bodies (water bodies with a bed width of >1 metre in the lowland areas of the region).

In collaboration with a local Martinborough farmer a programme of work on sequence cropping of kale and oats has commenced. Sequence cropping has the potential to achieve a 40% reduction in the percentage of nitrogen leached. This work is being conducted in collaboration with farmers and industry in our region and supports the identification and promotion of Good Management Practice.



Monitoring site for sequence cropping

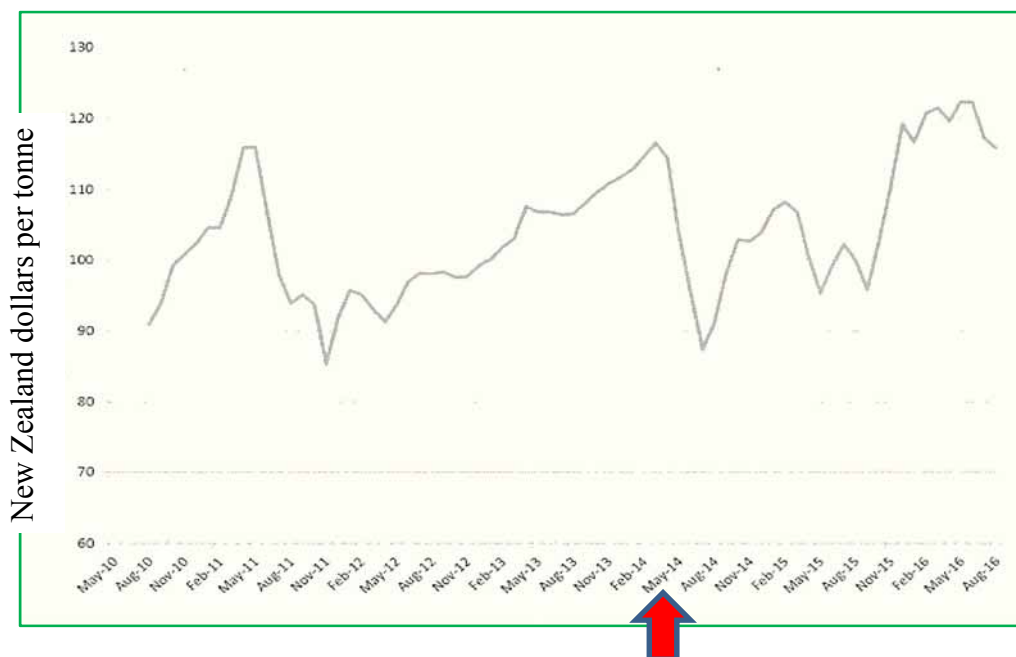
2.2.4 Porirua Harbour Sediment Management Programme

The first winter of soil erosion control programmes lead by Land Management in the Porirua Catchment is almost complete. Work implemented on private land include planting close to 1,000 poplar and willow poles, 14 hectares of land permanently retired from grazing, with a further 45 hectares planned, and 20 hectares of conservation forestry. This represents great progress as the new staff member has only been in place for six months. Collaboration with Porirua City Council and the Parks department at GWRC is also ongoing, looking at soil erosion control opportunities on public land.

2.2.5 Wairarapa and Metro Forests

Discussions are being held between RMS NZ Ltd, as owners of the cutting rights, and the Rallywoods Partners. Rallywoods Partners receive a royalty for log tonnage across their Right of Way located in the Valley View forests. Following the sale of cutting rights in 2014, the royalty is to be renegotiated. The parties are currently assessing a fair market rate for the royalty.

Harvesting continues across both the Wairarapa and Metro blocks with three crews taking advantage of very good prices up to July 2016. On the back of a stronger local economy and higher shipping rates, export log prices slipped to an eight month low in August 2016. The following graph tracks the marker log grade over the last six years. The cutting rights were sold at the end of a rapid rise in log prices around May 2014, and for the last eight months similar prices have resulted.



Cutting Rights Sold

2.3 Flood Protection

2.3.1 Floodplain Management Plan Implementation

RiverLink – (Hutt River City Centre Upgrade Project)

The project has been renamed by the communications and engagement teams of the NZTA, GWRC and HCC to RiverLink.

The design process will soon refine the river channel and stopbank inner toe details. This will enable progress with stopbank and civil works design to commence, and provide more certainty for other design aspects. Community design workshops are being held on 29 September and 1 October, and a business and stakeholder organisation workshop is being held on 30 September.

We will launch a project gateway website on 23 September, this will provide an overview of the project and link out to each of GWRC, HCC's and NZTA's website for more detailed information. An updated version of the project overview video will launch alongside the website. This video will be a key communication tool and act as a progress reporting tool to the community.

Property purchase continues steadily with 4 of 117 properties purchased. We have confirmed our preferred supplier and will appoint property acquisition consultants in early September.

NZTA have commenced work on their indicative business case for the Melling Intersection Improvements. A recent meeting with NZTA has confirmed their desire to work closely with the two Councils on this project. NZTA have indicated a desire to develop a wider SH2 Hutt Corridor perspective within which the Melling project would be a component. We will work with them to develop the overview document focusing on key outcomes that are trying to be achieved within the SH2 Ngauranga to Te Marua Corridor.

Hutt River Environmental Strategy (HRES) Review

A public information session about the user intercept survey was held on 7 September.

Phase 1 of the HRES review has been completed and a Phase 1 summary including recommended actions for Phase 2, was reported to the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee. We are now progressing with the Phase 2 work.

Hutt River Flood Management Plan (FMP) Implementation

Planting has been completed at the Ebdentown protection works site. Landscaping works have been completed for the Connolly Street/Safeway Storage and Transpower entrance intersection.

Otaki FMP Implementation

Updated Otaki River Trail signage has been installed. This was inspected by the community during the Otaki River walkover held on 2 September. This

signage marks the trail running from Crystals Lagoon to the Otaki River mouth and includes information panels installed in an information booth constructed by the Friends of the Otaki River.

Waikanae FMP Implementation

All submitters have officially withdrawn their submissions on the consent application for Jim Cooke Park project. The consent for the project is anticipated to be granted before the end of September.

The tender process has commenced, and advertisements for registration of interest will shortly be placed. Enabling works are programmed to commence in November 2016. Land entry agreements are near completion.

2.3.2 Operations, Delivery and Planning

All western operations work programmes are progressing to plan and budget and good progress has been made in completing additional internal work requests.

Willow and native planting is ongoing in the Wairarapa river schemes and in the Hutt and Kapiti rivers. Willow rejuvenation programmes using hybrid willow species to replace the basket willows are progressing well. The operation of a weed cutting boat to clear a number of Kapiti drains has been successfully completed, leaving only a few minor drains requiring mechanical clearing later in the year.

Annual resource consent reporting for consented operational works and gravel extraction operations has been submitted for various river schemes.

Annual asset condition analysis and reporting is ongoing. Staff have completed review workshops to help develop new asset management improvement initiatives for the coming year.

Staff spent time building closer working relationships with Wairarapa gravel extraction operators to improve each other's understanding of the many challenges with supply and demand for gravel.

Scoping investigations have begun looking into integrated catchment management opportunities that may be aligned with the proposed Tauanui River diversion planned for the current year. The main objective of the project is to intercept gravel and prevent it blocking the Ruamahanga diversion channel.

A meeting of the Wairarapa River Scheme Advisory Committee Chairs is scheduled to take place on 8 September. Topics for discussion include engagement with the Wairarapa floodplain management plan processes and future scheme governance.

Notification of resource consent applications for the Hutt, Otaki, Waikanae and Wainuiomata Rivers is anticipated to occur in this quarter. Work has been completed on the new Code of Practice for river management and is currently being discussed with mana whenua and key stakeholders.

The Hutt River corridor continued to have steady use. There was a buggy walk held along the river trail in Upper Hutt with over 230 people participating in the event. There are challenges with the design of new gates controlling access to the river and we are working with a number of stakeholders on these designs. Progress is continuing with the development of a new walkway at Otaki in conjunction with the Ashford Park quarry development adjacent to the river. Signage has been installed and a track constructed over the stopbank to link with the walkway to Te Roto Road.

A successful annual walkover of the Otaki River took place on 2 September. In spite of the poor weather over 150 people attending including a number of dignitaries.



Otaki Walkover Morning Tea Break

2.3.3 Investigations, Strategy and Planning

FMP Development

The hearing for the draft Waiohine FMP planned on 22 and 23 August was deferred due to hearing committee members being unavailable. It is still intended to hear the submissions but it will not now be possible to hold a hearing until after the local authority elections. Officers will progress this with Council once the new Council and committees are in place.

Rural option development continues on Te Kāuru Upper Ruamahanga FMP. A number of workshops have been held with the Subcommittee on sites where a particular response is needed. Work has commenced on the structure and content of a draft FMP, and work will proceed in parallel on the rural and Masterton urban reaches. A working group of GWRC and MDC officers and councillors plus the chair of the TKURFMP Subcommittee is proposed to progress the Masterton urban options development.

Investigations and Strategy

A gravel analysis report has been completed for the Otaki River along with recommendations on gravel extraction volumes and locations, as well as on longer-term issues that will feed into the Otaki FMP review that is currently underway. Gravel analysis has been completed for the Waitohu Stream and a staff workshop will soon be held to confirm recommendations for gravel

management on that stream. Analysis will next be carried out on the Hutt River.

The review of the Flood Warning System (in conjunction with Environmental Science, WREMO and Community Engagement) is ongoing. An independent consultant (GNS Science) has been appointed to review our system and workshops have been held in Carterton and Judgeford with a range of stakeholders to better understand their needs. The next step is to determine desired levels of service based on the stakeholder feedback.

A project has commenced to update the Porirua Stream flood hazard maps (currently issued as draft) and better align them with stormwater flood hazard maps produced by Wellington Water. The intention is to develop combined maps suitable for feeding into the Porirua City Plan review.

Our input into the Roads of National Significance (RONS) projects is high at the moment, with particular emphasis on a bridge crossing the Porirua Stream (Transmission Gully project) and assisting tenderers and NZTA during tendering on the Peka Peka to Otaki project.

3. Biodiversity

3.1 Biodiversity Management

Key Native Ecosystems

The Biodiversity department is continuing to work with the Department of Corrections regarding regaining access to Wi Tako Ngatata Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) site to continue pest animal and rodent monitoring at the KNE site. The department is concerned about safety for people entering the site due to the risk of falling branches from a stand of dead trees. Biodiversity staff have provided a proposal to the department for their approval that aims to address their concerns.

Wetland

The first Wetland Restoration Management Plan under the recently expanded Wetland programme has been approved for the Tairoa wetland (South Wairarapa). A further Restoration Management Plan, for the Te Wānanga o Raukawa (Ōtaki) wetland, is in the final stage of the approval process.

Fish Passage Restoration

Biodiversity and Parks department staff are producing the resource consent application required for the potential installation of three structures to restore fish passage in an unnamed tributary of the Horokiri Stream at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Work is planned to modify a weir and two culverts, adding a fish ladder and two fish ramps.

Advice has been provided to the Parks department on a proposed fish pass at the Woollen Mills Dam, which is located in Belmont Regional Park. Fish passage advice has also been provided to the Whitebait Connection - an external organisation working with local schools groups in Lower Hutt. This

organisation is seeking opportunities for undertaking fish passage remediation at several sites in Lower Hutt.

Biodiversity staff have provided feedback on the Hawkes Bay Regional Council's design for a floating fish ramp. GWRC has previously contributed to funding the development of these ramps and the department aims to trial their use later this financial year.

3.2 Biodiversity Advice and Advocacy

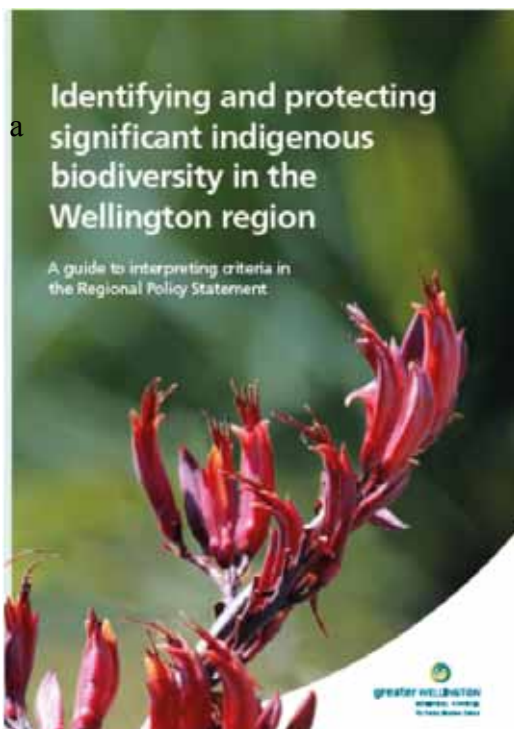
Biodiversity Advice

Staff contributed to a GWRC submission on the Coastal Environment chapter of the proposed Kāpiti Coast District Plan. GWRC is opposed to the revised Coastal Environment line scheduled in the Plan.

Staff coordinated contributions on a GWRC response to Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary supporting their proposed translocation of rifleman birds from Wainuiomata Mainland Island to Zealandia. The comments sought to ensure that GWRC will be adequately informed of all work related to the translocation of these birds and that the risks of the translocation will be recognised and planned for wherever possible.

The guidance document *Identifying and protecting significant indigenous biodiversity in the Wellington region* (see Figure 2) has been published. This guide clarifies how territorial authorities and resource consent applicants can identify and protect significant biodiversity in line with provisions in the Regional Policy Statement. The guide has been presented to GWRC staff with further presentations scheduled for territorial authorities, the Ecological Institute of Australia and New Zealand, and other groups over the coming months.

Figure 2. Cover of *Identifying and protecting significant indigenous biodiversity in the Wellington region*



Collaborative Restoration: Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

The Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project financially supported the Featherston Youth Programme's restoration group to construct a stock-proof fence as part of their community planting event in Featherston. This area is within a flood detention basin through which Donald's Creek flows. The group held the planting event in August which involved 57 participants planting 580 plants.

A round of consultation and feedback on a draft of the Wairarapa Moana Visitor Guide has been completed. A final draft will be prepared and approval sought for publishing from the Wairarapa Moana Management Team and Governance Group.

The Wairarapa Moana Brand Guide has now been finalised. This document guides the design and production of materials for the Project (e.g. the website, visitor guide, on-site information, signage and other publications).

A report on the findings of the February 2016 kākahi (freshwater mussel) monitoring has been published. The results of the monitoring, undertaken by members of the community, show that the population on the western shore of Wairarapa Moana has very few juveniles. This is not a good sign for the health of this population. However, future years' monitoring data will provide information about whether the population is being sustained.

Collaborative Restoration: Porirua Harbour and Catchment Project

Two school planting events that had been postponed in July due to poor weather were held in the month of August. These events were well attended with over 200 children participating from nine schools from around the Porirua catchment. Planting was coordinated with Porirua City Council at two sites at Bothamley Park. Children were introduced to restoration and learned about biodiversity values and how their efforts would contribute to improving the health of biodiversity in the Porirua catchment. The children were exceptionally enthusiastic and managed to plant around 800 trees in total. Many of the children expressed their wish to visit the site again with their whanau.

4. Environment Management

4.1 Harbours

Harbours held their annual Regional Oil Spill Response Support Group meeting on 31 August. This meeting updates all the local groups who assist GWRC in the event of a major marine oil spill.

This coincided with Exercise Tangaroa, a National Civil Defence exercise involving national tsunami response. This was well-timed to bring parties up-to-speed, as an actual tsunami warning was made early on 2 September after an earthquake off the east coast of North Island!

World Maritime Day saw Maritime New Zealand hold a “Maritime Industry National Forum” on 2 September, and Merchant Navy Day commemorations were held on 3 September, both in Wellington.



Some Beacon Hill staff as flag-bearers at Merchant Navy Day.

4.2 Parks

Western Sector

As a result of MacKay's to Peka Peka Expressway (M2PP) works near Poplar Avenue, more water is being redirected through Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP). To support improved flow and mitigate the risk of flooding, NZTA has agreed to replace a culvert and undertake 2.5kms of stream sediment clearance in the park. We have recently obtained resource consent for this work, which allows for 1km of sediment removal annually. As this work is completed, the streams will be fenced to retire them from grazing, weeds controlled and riparian plantings carried out over time.

Parks has lodged a further resource consent application to allow gravel extraction from Waterfall and Whareroa streams after significant flood events. Lodgement followed extensive consultation with local iwi. If granted, the consent will allow completion of repairs from the May 2015 floods.

At the same time we have been discussing alternative access options with NZTA, in light of their wish to close off the current SH1 QEP farm access to address safety concerns. Through this process, NZTA have agreed to build a culvert across the Whareroa stream on the site of the current ford. Pending regulatory approval, construction is likely in February-March 2017. As part of the process, NZTA have held a risk workshop involving the Friends of QEP, park licence holders and GWRC officers, who all see this as a positive outcome for the park.

Building movers descended on QEP to clear the site of the old Rangers office in preparation for a new visitor hub/meeting room and Park Ranger office complex. The old building was shifted to an area close by, and is currently being enlarged and repurposed as a Depot office building. The broader project has involved considerable planning, with the blessing of iwi and support from numerous park stakeholders. The Depot building is expected to be ready for use by October, while the visitor hub building work should be finished by the end of the financial year.

Severe weather during July washed away a large section of the Coastal Track at QEP, requiring extensive realignment works within the dunes. Planning involved collaboration across GWRC and with external partners; the site is part of a KNE, we needed to manage ecological impacts, agree the District Plan requirements and manage cultural and heritage aspects. Once complete the team could swing into action and develop the track, which now has more of an “inland” aspect.

While this work addressed the immediate problem, coastal erosion remains an ongoing concern affecting numerous assets in the coastal zone. Over the next few months we will investigate ways to streamline heritage authority application processes.



From left: new Coastal Track section; new bridge and barriers in Korokoro Valley

Along a similar theme, the Korokoro track is open again following a temporary closure to repair a track edge collapse. A concrete wall dating back to the construction of the original Korokoro Dam fell away while contractors were preparing the site for a new retaining wall. The site now is stable, with a full width track, a bridge and a new safety barrier. However, the collapse is a good reminder about the risks associated with managing heritage features.

Planning for retirement of a section of the upper Belmont (Speedy’s) Stream is underway. Initial works will include fencing to protect the retired areas and site preparation for around 20,000 plants in the 2017 winter. This restoration project is being funded through the LTP (fencing) and Winstones (plants) and is being jointly delivered by the Parks and Biodiversity departments.

A successful restoration planting season has been completed at QEP. A total 15,000 trees were produced in the park nursery by volunteers and planted by a mix of volunteers and corporate groups in the dune swamp, alongside Te Ara o Whareroa, and by streams in the farmed area. The latter was part of the Kapiti Biodiversity stream shade project, funded by the Ministry for the Environment.

Discussions with Riding for the Disabled (RDA) continue, and we are finalising licence terms for their relocation to Battle Hill, operating for a maximum three years from the homestead and (assuming resource consent is granted) from a temporary arena south of the homestead. Once there, they will finalise their proposal for a permanent all-enclosed site at the top of Abbotts Field.

Eastern Sector

The review of motorised recreation tracks in the Akatarawa Forest is almost complete. Many years in the making, this project will provide visitors and GWRC staff with an up to date resource for the forest that better reflects use and manages environmental concerns. The public consultation was undertaken in May-June 2016. Since the public consultation in June, Parks staff have been reviewing submissions and updating the map in consultation with Akatarawa Recreational Access Committee (ARAC). Council will be asked to approve the final Map 20 for the Parks Network Plan later this month.

Following a successful work programme on the Rimutaka Cycle Trail in 2015/16, which saw the grading and metalling of the Rail Trail and improvements on Department of Conservation land in Siberia Gully, GWRC has coordinated a second NZ Cycle Trails Maintaining Great Rides (MGR) funding application to MBIE. The application for \$271,000 (in matching funding) includes work on the Petone Esplanade, Hutt River Trail, Western Lake Road, Orongorongo Station/South Coast and new toilets at Tunnel Gully.

Cannon Point Walkway is one of the most popular walks in Upper Hutt located in the suburb of Totara Park. However, most of the walkway from Tulsa Park up the zig zag to the trig is on privately owned land. Due to ongoing issues with dogs, the part of the track that is on privately-owned land has been temporarily closed for lambing. Parks has installed signage to notify the public of the closure.



Planting site in the Parangarahu Lakes Area

Taranaki Whānui, GWRC and Mainland Island Restoration Operation (MIRO) completed a joint planting day at the lighthouse plot in August 2016 that built on the success of the first partnership planting at the same site in 2015. While there has been relatively little progress in other areas since signing the Co-management Plan due to other more pressing priorities for Taranaki Whānui, we have recently recommenced Roopu Tiaki meetings to discuss how we work together and begin implementation of the plan.

Parks has been liaising closely with OSPRI and Bioworks as consultation continues in relation to the planned Southern Rimutaka 1080 operation. As part of this, we have attended “drop-in days” in Eastbourne and Wainuiomata, and facilitated meetings with local iwi. At this point, feedback indicates that concerns have been heard and largely addressed. We are strongly encouraging OSPRI to communicate further with the public, especially dog owners, and will be helping them check tracks immediately following the operation.

5. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

5.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is not necessary.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry
General Manager,
Environment Management

Report approved by:

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager,
Catchment Management

Report approved by:

Luke Troy
General Manager,
Strategy