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## **Report 01.290**

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Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Susan Edwards, Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

### **Gift of Land for Reserve - Rimutaka Hill**

#### **1. Purpose**

To seek Council approval to receive a gift of land on the Rimutaka Hill from the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (the Society) for incorporation into the Regional Council's Pakuratahi Forest.

#### **2. The Land Concerned**

The land covers approximately 67 hectares of regenerating bush on the western side of the Rimutaka Hill summit (refer **Attachment 1** for location and pictures). It is contiguous with Regional Council land within the northern portion of the Pakuratahi Forest.

The Society purchased the land as its members believe the area has conservation values worth protecting (they have undertaken vegetation surveys in the area) and seek to have more land along the Rimutaka Hill Road protected and held in public ownership.

#### **3. Why the Society Wish to Gift the Land and Conditions of Gifting**

The Society purchased the land with grants from its local branches and the Nature Heritage Fund. Conditions of the grants were that the land was gifted to the Regional Council as a scenic reserve. The Society does not have the resources to manage the land itself. (Refer letter **Attachment 2**.)

Conditions for gifting the land to the Council have been discussed and negotiated with the Society over the last few months. We have now reached conditions that are acceptable to the Society, and that Council officers and O'Brien Property Consultants believe are appropriate for Council consideration. These are:

- (1) That the land be declared a scenic reserve under the Reserves Act 1977.
- (2) If ever the land is no longer required by the Council it is to be offered back to the Society at the same nominal consideration, (i.e., as a gift).
- (3) That the Society's part in the purchase be recognised in literature produced by the Council on the reserve and that the Society, in consultation with the Regional Council, can erect a sign or plaque recognising the gift.

However, prior to passing a resolution declaring the land scenic reserve, the Council is required under Section 14 of the Reserves Act to publicly notify the proposal, calling for submissions.

#### 4. **Benefits and Costs of Accepting the Gift of Land**

Benefits of accepting the land include:

- the Council working with and assisting a community group achieve its objective to protect an area with conservation values;
- widening the area of land under Council control acting as a wildlife corridor between the southern and northern portions of the Pakuratahi Forest and ultimately on to the Hutt Water Collection Area;
- ensuring the neighbouring land is maintained to the same pest control and forest health standards as the remainder of the Pakuratahi Forest, therefore reducing the re-infestation of pests into the Pakuratahi Forest and Hutt Water Collection Area.

Disadvantages of accepting the land include:

- the set-up and annual maintenance costs;
- the potential that other organisations may see this as a precedent and seek Council assistance with or management of other conservation areas.

Officers consider that the advantages of accepting the gift of land outweigh the disadvantages in this instance.

#### 5. **Financial Implications of Accepting the Gift**

The likely costs of accepting the gift and the proposed management approach have been discussed with the Society to ensure future service levels are clearly understood. Pest control and forest health monitoring would be to the same standards as in the adjacent Pakuratahi Forest. On that basis officers assessed costs in the order of:

### **Set-up**

- Property management consultants: \$2,000
- Land transfer and legal costs: \$1,500
- Public notification and gazettal as reserve: \$2,000
- Signage (jointly with the Society): \$2,000

### **On-going Maintenance**

- Pest control (every sixth year starting 2001/02): \$1,340

Set-up costs can be absorbed within this and next year's Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing) budgets. Pest control and forest health monitoring costs can be absorbed within the Parks and Forests (Operations) budget as the work will be done in conjunction with the adjacent Pakuratahi Forest (covering 7,950 hectares) and it is not a significant increase in the area to be covered.

The Reserves Act requires that management plans be prepared for all reserves. The Interim Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Management Plan covers the Pakuratahi Forest. The Plan is currently being reviewed and could easily incorporate this land.

Gift duty will not be payable, as the land will be transferred to the Council over a two year period; two parcels in one year and one the other year. Both gifts will be less than the Society's \$27,000 exemption limit. The same process would be undertaken if the Council ever decided to transfer the land back to the Society.

## **6. Communication**

If the Council agrees to the proposal, good communication opportunities exist through press releases or articles in *Elements* and/or the *Forest and Bird* magazine.

## **7. Recommendations**

- (1) *That the Committee receives the report and note its contents.*
- (2) *That the Committee recommends that the Council accept the offer of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand to gift to the Council 67.1317 hectares of land on the Rimutaka Hill Road (contained in CT 55A/550, CT 48C/988 & CT 48C989) subject to the Society's conditions that:*
  - (a) *the land be declared a scenic reserve under Section 19(1)(a) of the Reserves Act 1977 (subject to the requirements of Section 14 of the Act);*
  - (b) *if ever the land is no longer required by the Council it is to be offered back to the Society on the same basis, (i.e., as a gift);*

- (c) *the Society's part in the acquisition be recognised in literature produced by the Council on the reserve and that the Society, in consultation with the Regional Council, can erect a sign or plaque recognising the gift.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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**Attachment 1 :** Location of the Society's land and photographs

**Attachment 2 :** Letter from the Society offering to gift the land to the Regional Council