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Report 01.335

28 March 2001

File: E/7/10/7 & E/5/1/54

Report to the Wellington Regional Council
From Councillor Chris Laidlaw

Wellington Conservation Board Meeting – 4 May 2001

The meeting held on 4 May 2001 produced the following matters of interest:

1. Conservation Week – (Beginning of August)

It was noted that the theme of this year's Conservation Week (beginning of August) will be "Conservation Caretakers". The emphasis will be on care groups and kaitiakitanga and will fit well with our enlarged effort to work alongside care groups in the region. It would be useful to see suggestions in due course as to how WRC will recognise Conservation Week this year.

2. Land Acquisitions

A schedule of recent land acquisitions by DOC in the region was provided. (copy for Landcare staff). It showed that the number of acquisitions is not great and that most acquisitions have been either conservation covenants or acquired for purposes as scientific or other reserve purposes. The two alternative means of acquisition by DOC include its Reserves Trust Account and the Natural Heritage Fund. Neither is particularly well endowed however.

DOC has tended to pass most blocks acquired on to TLAs and WRC (eg Belmont). The department has been working with a number of substantial landowners to find ways of jointly protecting the natural values of sensitive areas on their properties. DOC feels that the collective approach has worked particularly well in the Wairarapa where there is a very constructive relationship

with WRC and the TLAs in negotiating deals with private landowners and wants to encourage similarly constructive approaches in the Kapiti and Porirua area.

It isn't always that easy in the Wairarapa however. One of these landowners is Dan Riddiford with whom DOC are currently negotiating to acquire the badly degraded (by deer) forested areas of the "Heights" block on Mr Riddiford's property and it was noted that several years ago WRC had declined to contribute to an acquisition plan and it fell through. The Conservator had not given up hope however, notwithstanding the difficulties of negotiating with the owner, and he asked if WRC would once again consider entering this particular minefield. I assured him that WRC was always looking for challenges and that this issue would be looked at again. I offered no guarantees however, conscious of the turbulent history of our relations with the landowner.

3. **Marine Reserves Review**

It was reported that submissions on the Marine Reserves Review were currently being collated by DOC and that a report would shortly be submitted to the Minister of Conservation. DOC expected the Minister to ask for further work to be done on the issue, notably the expansion of consultation with key interest groups, not least Maori. The Board agreed that strong support should be given to the "no take" option. The Board's submission will be prepared on this basis and forwarded to DOC. A copy will be obtained for WRC staff concerned.

4. **Regional Walkways Proposal**

WRC's offer of some modest seed funding (up to \$5000 - from Landcare consultancy budget) for the initial phase of a regional walkways plan was well received. The Board formed a sub-committee to draw up a programme of activity and a budget for this and the first step will be to commission a research student to collate information on existing walkways, beginning in the Kapiti area but subsequently moving to other parts of the region.

The objective is to prepare a compendium of existing and planned walkways with a view to identifying issues such as gaps between adjoining jurisdictions and other considerations such as land tenure and topographical difficulties. It will take some time to prepare a full regional picture but the exercise is considered worthwhile and it may prove to be a very useful resource for WRC and other local bodies as a promotional tool for a region-wide walkway system.

CHRIS LAIDLAW
Councillor

18 May 2001