



caring about you & your environment

Report 01.493

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Ross Jackson, Landcare Planner - Volunteers Co-ordinator

Environmental Education and Environmental Enhancement Projects

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the 2000/01 environmental education and enhancement projects in order to meet the Performance Indicator requirements of the Annual Plan.

2. Annual Plan Performance Indicator

The annual environmental education and environmental enhancement initiatives will be completed within budget as agreed with the Divisional Manager, Landcare and reported to the Landcare Committee following the end of the financial year.

A steering group including the Divisional Managers Landcare, Environment, and Utility Services agreed to a schedule of environmental education infrastructure projects in the parks and forests (refer section 3). The Council approved the environmental enhancement projects through the 2000/01 Parks and Forests Business Plan (refer section 4).

3. Environmental Education Projects

Officers worked with the Environmental Education Co-ordinators during the year to identify a schedule of infrastructure needed in the parks and forests for the Environmental Trails. The Council allocated \$120,000 for this work during the 2000/01 financial year.

We have achieved most of the work including:

- additional storage facilities at the Ken Gray Education Centre at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and at Kaitoke Regional Park;

- constructing new and upgraded, (e.g., wheelchair accessible) tracks at Belmont Regional Park, as well as the Wainuiomata and Tunnel Gully Recreation Areas;
- building safety fences along walking tracks;
- removing an internal wall and painting an existing building to be used as a classroom at the Wainuiomata Catchment;
- preparing a landscape plan for wetland development and boardwalks at Belmont Regional Park; and
- providing electricity to the Stratton Street woolshed at Belmont Regional Park.

All this work was achieved within budget.

The only project not achieved was the construction of an extension to the Stratton Street woolshed (the Council approved rebudgeting the money for this to the 2001/02 financial year, refer Report 01.393). The design work is complete, resource consents obtained, and tenders called. Construction will be undertaken early in the new financial year.

4. **Environmental Enhancement Projects**

(1) **Te Marua Bush Restoration**

For around ten years members of the Wellington Botanical Society have been working towards restoring Te Marua Bush at Kaitoke Regional Park. They have been struggling with pest plant infestations and wrote to the Council seeking assistance during the Long-term Financial Strategy process. The Council agreed to help with their work and provided \$3,000 towards the project during the 2000/01 financial year.

Officers worked with the Botanical Society on how the money could assist the restoration work; most was spent on a professional pest plant contractor helping remove weeds. The Society and Council officers checked the contractor's work. Good results were achieved. The remaining money was spent on potting mix for growing seed sourced from the Bush for planting over the next few years. Further money is included in the 2001/02 Annual Plan to continue assisting the Society.

(2) **Korokoro Bush Goat Control**

The Lower Hutt Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society has been undertaking possum control in the Korokoro Bush at Belmont Regional Park for many years. The Council agreed to help the Society with pest control as one of the environmental enhancement projects in the Long-term Financial Strategy. Goats were identified as a major pest, eating many of the seedlings in the Bush and impacting on its regeneration. *Prohunt* was contracted to undertake a control operation, killing 204 goats. Further goat control is likely to be needed during 2001/02 as goat numbers were higher than expected.

(3) **Mainland Island Restoration Operation (MIRO)**

Officers and the MIRO group based at East Harbour Regional Park worked together on several projects during the year. In August 2000, Council staff and members of MIRO constructed a deer enclosure to identify the impacts of large animals on the forest.

In November 2000, a joint project began mapping the health of rata trees in the Northern Block. The Council paid for a helicopter flight to take aerial photographs of rata trees during the peak of the rata flowering so that these trees could be distinguished from other tree species. In early January Philippa Crisp and members of MIRO spent a day in the forest, selecting 50 rata trees used for a rata health survey which was undertaken in autumn. The information gained through the survey will be very useful to compare the impact of the current possum control operation on the health of the rata trees.

In June Council field staff set up hinau fruitfall monitoring plots. Hinau has not fallen as yet, but the sites have been readied for an assessment when this occurs (in July/August).

(4) **Pakuratahi River Riparian Planting and Ladle Bend Wetland**

The purpose of this project is to develop a buffer strip of riparian planting along the Pakuratahi River to enhance the area's environmental and landscape values.

Planning and design work is now complete and incorporates:

- trialing different types of vegetation and management techniques;
- ways community groups can be involved; and
- long-term monitoring of vegetation trials.

Officers extended the project to incorporate trial plantings in a buffer zone around the Ladle Bend wetland. The site was recently logged and officers were concerned that sediment in run-off from the logged area may be detrimental to the wetland. The native seedlings selected for planting were local pioneer species, (e.g., manuka, toetoe, kohuhu (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*), *Hebe stricta*, *Coprosma robusta* and tutu).

During site visits, officers noted a lot of natural regeneration in the area. Consequently, we decided to establish trials to record the survival of the planted seedlings compared to natural regeneration. The nursery-grown seedlings were planted out into five plots, which will be compared against naturally regenerating plots of a similar size. We will remeasure the plots in the future to obtain valuable information about the effectiveness of planting seedlings.

(5) **Queen Elizabeth Park Remnant Forest Restoration**

For the past 10 years, the Kapiti Branch of Forest and Bird, and Kapiti Environmental Action have been involved in the restoration of the last remaining Kahikatea Forest remnant in the Park. Work has progressed well but there was a desire by those involved to have a restoration plan prepared. A plan has been prepared which will provide better direction for years to come as volunteer and Council personnel change.

Twenty-five community members did extensive planting in the remnant on Saturday, 23 June 2001. They showed enthusiasm for the project and were complimentary of the Council's support. Planting will carry on for many years and eventually link up with the surrounding wetland areas.

(6) **Queen Elizabeth Park Wetland Restoration**

The Council included a Queen Elizabeth Park wetland restoration project in the Long-term Financial Strategy. However, the project has been affected by Transit New Zealand's proposal to upgrade State Highway 1 at Mackays Crossing. This road upgrade will impact on Park and adjacent Department of Conservation (DoC) wetlands, and the MacKays Crossing Park entrance.

As compensation for the loss of some of the DoC wetlands outside the Park, Transit is offering to fund work on the Park wetlands. The main focus of our work this year has been on planning the new entrance and identifying areas for wetland development using the Transit funding. Officers need to consult further with iwi and the wider community on the wetland and entrance design.

Some planting occurred in existing Park wetlands during the recent Arbor Day celebration. The Arbor Day celebration also launched the Wetland Restoration Project and the establishment of a Care Group.

(7) **Queen Elizabeth Park Foredune Restoration**

The Park foredunes are identified as being the last relatively unmodified dunes on the Kapiti Coast. The existing Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan states that the dunes are a very important conservation zone. Only limited investigation has been undertaken into how the dunes should be managed. Dunes are a very specialised and dynamic ecosystem, so we contracted an ecologist and coastal processes expert to advise how best to restore and manage the dunes. Detailed plant and weed surveys have also been carried out.

The restoration work will commence in the new financial year following further consultation with the community and iwi.

(8) **Battle Hill Wetland Restoration**

Officers have completed the design work for this project. The restoration work will commence during the new financial year.

(9) **Cannons Creek Valley Bush Restoration**

See Report 01.447 on this Order Paper for details on this project.

5. **Communication**

These projects provide excellent public relations opportunities. A number have already been publicised in the local and daily newspapers, and in *Elements*. We are working with Corporate Communications to ensure continued publicity of these projects.

6. **Recommendation**

That the Committee receive the report and note the contents.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

ROSS JACKSON
Landcare Planner - Volunteers Co-ordinator

SUSAN EDWARDS
Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

ROB FORLONG
Divisional Manager, Landcare