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Report to the Utility Services Committee
from Anne Manley, Landcare Planner - Policy

Walking Tours in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area

1. Purpose

To report back to the Utility Services Committee on the feasibility of allowing up to 60 visitors a day during this year's walking tours in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area, using the trained volunteer guides. This report was requested by the Policy and Finance Committee (refer Minute PF&S 56, of the Policy, Finance and Strategy Subcommittee meeting of 6 August 2002).

2. Progress with Phase 3

On 6 August 2002, the Policy and Finance Committee adopted the recommendation from the Utility Services Committee to progress with Phase 3 of the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area Access Plan.

Progression with Phase 3 of the Access Plan, as recommended in Report 02.442, provides for a maximum of 40 visitors in the Water Collection Area on the days reserved for walking tours, with the ability to review and increase that number during Phase 3. As outlined in Report 02.442, it is intended that the number of visitors will be increased to 60 visitors per day, once the Interpreters Programme is fully operational. That is when there are sufficient trained guides (interpreters and rangers) to maintain the 1:10 guide-to-visitor ratio, required under the Access Plan.

During 2001/02, the Ranger team prepared a training programme for volunteer interpreters to assist guiding groups through the Water Collection Area. Training of 17 volunteers is continuing and we will be in a position to increase the number of visitors to 60 once that training has been completed¹.

While the "Interpreters Programme" is being implemented, at least one Ranger will continue to accompany the interpreters taking tours in the Wainuiomata Catchment and at least one Ranger will be required to accompany all groups through the Orongorongo Catchment. (The terrain in this Catchment means that it will always be limited to experienced groups with a good level of fitness.)

¹ The Interpreters Programme will be fully implemented during Phase 3. This Programme is based on the Otari and the Karori Sanctuary models with modifications relevant to water catchment management.

The interpreters are all volunteers. As such, we feel that the demands the Council makes on their time must be reasonable. Furthermore, interpreters must be familiar with health and safety issues (including location of hazards and requirements on visitors specific to a water collection area, e.g., no entry for people who have had diarrhoea in the past two weeks, no damaging or removal of plants, “take in, take out” rubbish policy, no fires, no camping, etc), as well as the history, ecology and geography of the area, before they can guide groups through the Catchment without the assistance of a ranger. There must also be consistency in terms of the information presented to each walking group if a good level of service is to be maintained.

Bearing this in mind, we envisage that we will be in a position to increase the number of visitors from 40 to 60 people per day from February 2003 onwards. As with last year’s “individuals’ tour”², there will be 60 places on the three “individuals’ tours” scheduled during Phase 3 (October 2002, January and June 2003). This will increase the total number of people visiting the area to 660 per annum, compared to 500 people who participated in walking tours during Phase 2.

Since 6 August 2002, Landcare and Utility Services officers have prepared a schedule of walking tours through until July 2003 (refer Attachment 1). We have also drafted letters to members of the public and groups who applied last year but missed out on walking tours and drafted advertisements for the tours. Ballots will be held to allocate the walking tours.

Officers have now started revising the Access Plan and will report back to this Committee later in the year. Once a revised Access Plan has been approved, it will be included in the draft Forest Lands Management Plan to go out for public consultation.

3. **Communications**

This report is written for Councillor information. No particular communication initiatives are proposed at this stage.

4. **Recommendation**

That the Committee receives the report and notes its contents.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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² Walking tours reserved for individual members of the public as opposed to people from clubs and other *bona fide* organisations.

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Attachment 1 : Schedule of Walking Tours in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area 2002/03