



Report 04.420
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Committee Landcare
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Environmental education and environmental enhancement projects performance indicator

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on the 2003/04 environmental education and enhancement projects in order to meet the performance indicator requirements of the Annual Plan.

2. Annual Plan performance indicator

The 2003/04 Annual Plan contains the following performance indicator:

The annual environmental education and environmental enhancement projects as agreed with the Divisional Manager, Landcare, will be completed and reported to the Landcare Committee following the end of the financial year, within a budget of \$287,000

3. Contribution to Take 10 Objectives

This performance indicator contributes to the quality of life of the regional community by ensuring that community participation in the regional parks, forests and water collection areas is enhanced. The intent of this Annual Plan performance indicator is to ensure that people are encouraged to use our parks and get involved in their management, and that environmental community care groups are supported.

4. Environmental education projects

Officers worked with the Environmental Education Co-ordinators (Environment Division) during the year to develop infrastructure needed in the parks and forests for the Environmental Education Programme.

The environmental education budget of \$128,000 was underspent this year (by \$82,100) even though we completed the annual work programme as agreed with the Divisional Manager, Landcare. The agreed programme for developing infrastructure in the parks to support the environmental education programme was significantly reduced this year because developing new infrastructure for the programme is no longer required. Funding for this programme ceases in the 2003/04 financial year.

During the year, our work included:

Belmont Regional Park

- Building a boardwalk and viewing structure at the Stratton Street wetland pond. This boardwalk forms part of the environmental trail walk;
- The stream walk next to the Stratton Street Education Centre was repaired after a flood washed out bridges and removed track surface metal;
- New outdoor lighting and a water filter system were installed at the Stratton Street Education Centre;

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

- A new track was developed along Swampy Gully. The track winds its way through the gully and forms part of an easy loop for education groups and park visitors to enjoy;

5. Environmental enhancement projects

The performance indicator for the Environmental Enhancement component was achieved. \$141,200 was spent out of a budget of \$159,000.

Nine environmental enhancement projects were also included with this performance indicator. A brief summary of the work that was carried out on these projects this year is set out below.

5.1 Te Marua Bush restoration

Members of the Wellington Botanical Society (Botsoc) have carried out extensive weed control work and planting based on the weed maps prepared by GWRC staff. In addition, some members of Botsoc and the Upper Hutt Branch of Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Forest and Bird) have collected seedlings and assisted in the transplanting of some Swamp Maire from the State Highway 2 road deviation and relocated them in a bush remnant alongside the Stuart Macaskill Lakes. They have also provided advice to the roading contractor, when requested, on remnants being impacted by the road works. This year, funds were used to remove a concrete slab from near a large kahikatea tree. This slab was making it difficult to replant this section of the bush. A load of topsoil was also purchased and Upper Hutt Forest and Bird have provided more plants for the site.

5.2 Korokoro Bush goat control

The Judas goat control programme has been continued and goat numbers have now been maintained at low levels for three years. Fifty-three goats were culled this year (45 goats last year) and the under-story is continuing to show positive signs of recovery. Re-infestation from the southern boundary of the park continues to be a problem. Staff are liaising with landowners and the territorial authority in an effort to minimise this. Bird transect lines were established in the Korokoro Valley this year and it is hoped that bird numbers will be shown to increase in this important remnant over time.

5.3 Mainland island restoration operation (MIRO)

The MIRO group based at East Harbour Regional Park have worked on several projects with officers during the past four years. Restoration of the northern block is now well underway with a major possum and rat control operation initiated this year. MIRO members have been involved in setting traps, checking bait station lines and maintaining rat bait in the bait stations, as

well as a wide range of monitoring work. Council staff work with MIRO on an ongoing basis and an interpretation sign purchased with last year's funds, has now been erected in Williams Park (in conjunction with Hutt City). This year, rodent/mustelid tracking tunnels were purchased and Owen Spearpoint (GWRC) assisted MIRO members in installing and monitoring these tracking tunnels. The care-group also purchased some tools and other items, such as photos for display purposes.

5.4 Pakuratahi River riparian planting

Over the past 2 years, the emphasis has been on restoring the top of the catchment at the former summit rail yards on the Rimutaka Rail Trail, removing weed species in the riparian zones and carrying out developments at specific nodes as outlined in the Restoration Plan. Planting of a riparian zone by the streams at the summit took place at an Arbor Day event in 2002 and has been continued over the past 2 years by staff and prison labour. In addition a successful 125th anniversary of the opening of the Rimutaka Incline was held last October and a grove of Totara were planted to mark the occasion

A final re-measurement of the re-vegetation plots near Ladle Bend wetland was completed. A trial was being conducted to determine the success of planted seedlings versus natural re-growth at the site, which was planted in June 2001. The results of this trial are yet to be analysed.

5.5 Queen Elizabeth Park remnant forest restoration

Monitoring of bird numbers was begun last year. This year's data shows there are more birds in the forest remnant, however, it is too soon to establish whether this is an ongoing increase or what the potential causes of this increase are. Planting over the past 5 years plus the concerted pest control programme carried out by staff should ensure that an increase in birds numbers is continued.

An easy strolling 15-min walking track has been developed through the remnant. On a recent annual walkover with Kapiti Forest and Bird and KEA, the members present expressed delight at the health and vigour of the remnant. The perimeter fence has also been extended outwards and there have been two community plantings carried out beyond the remnant. The plantings will eventually link up with the surrounding wetland areas.

5.6 Queen Elizabeth Park wetland restoration

Planning the entrance, including the restoration of an adjacent 3.5 ha wetland in conjunction with Transit has been carried out this year. The work will take place in conjunction with the new overbridge due to be constructed over the next 2 years. However, the main project has been the excavation and restoration of a 2 ha wetland adjacent to the Marines Memorial. A very successful planting day (attended by 60 people) was held in September 2003, sponsored and supported by NEC. A problem that impacted on the project was the discovery of buried ordnance from the former marine camp, which slowed progress and increased the cost on the project.

Ongoing planting in the existing ephemeral wetlands has taken place during the winter including a recent Arbor Day celebration attended by Messrs Jack and Miki Rikihana representing Te Atiawa Ki Whakarongotai, Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park Chairperson John Lancashire and GW Chairperson Margaret Shields.

5.7 Queen Elizabeth Park foredune restoration

During the past year there were several organised walks in the dunes looking at aspects of history, geology, plants and ecology. A detailed pest plant control plan was produced and work continues on the control of the most serious weeds. A blackberry control trial and planting was implemented and also a dune reshaping and planting of spinifex was carried out near Raumati. Very active support from the community made a big impact on three planting days and two plant release days. Staff constructed several sand ladders and erected protective fences at several access points onto the beach. The sand ladders are intended to try and reduce the erosion that is induced by people making numerous tracks through the foredunes.

The Coastal Dune Vegetation Network annual conference held in Wellington in March had a field trip to the Park to allow the 140 delegates the opportunity to look at the work on the dunes.

5.8 Battle Hill wetland restoration

Construction of several ponds was completed two years ago and the area has now been extensively planted and progressing well. A 500 metre long section of Swampy Gully was fenced off last year and retired. A thousand plants have been planted in the area including 400 planted by local school students at a successful Arbor Day this year. Further gully retirement and extensive planting will continue to take place at Battle Hill over the next five years. Members of Wetland Care Inc., a voluntary organisation who specialise in wetland restoration have provided technical assistance. They have also provided advice at Queen Elizabeth Park.

5.9 Cannons Creek Valley bush restoration – Belmont Regional Park

The Friends of Maara Roa continue to do an outstanding job on this project in line with the restoration plan recommendations prepared jointly with GWRC in 2001. Currently, planting is being carried out in earnest every second Saturday morning during June and July and August. The council contribution was used to purchase plants, which has been augmented by plants grown by Friends of Maara Roa. Since last years tragic fire which destroyed most of the previously planted areas, contractors have cleared a lot of the burnt gorse and these areas have been planted creating 'green firebreaks.' Staff in conjunction with the Friends have carried out some specific weed control, track construction and possum control. In addition, Parks staff constructed a new footbridge over Cannons Creek. The new Takapu Track was officially opened in March and a series of public walks took place.

6. Communications

These projects provide excellent public relations opportunities. All of them have been publicised in the local and daily newspapers, and in *Elements*. The wetlands project at Queen Elizabeth Park gained widespread national coverage on TV, radio, and newspapers when the buried ordnance was discovered. We are continuing to work with Corporate Communications to ensure ongoing publicity of these projects.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report.*
2. *note the contents of the report.*

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

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