

## **Manager – Parks**

### **Report for period ending Friday 2 February 2007**

#### **1. Manager's comments**

##### **1.1 Whitireia Park**

At the last Landcare Committee meeting the Committee asked officers to identify key stakeholders of Whitireia Park and to report back on how Greater Wellington could work with the community into the future.

As the Committee is aware, the Department of Conservation (DoC) and Ngati Toa Rangitira continue to work to ensure the Iwi's interests in the park are protected. At this point, until Greater Wellington (GWRC) knows the conditions for taking over the park, it is difficult to be specific. As such, I will wait until there is more clarity around this issue before reporting back.

##### **1.2 Lake Wairarapa**

Planning work for a Lake Wairarapa Park is currently in full swing. Two plans are being prepared jointly by GWRC and DoC. A Recreational plan is being developed where key nodes will be identified and recreational priorities detailed. An ecological plan is also being developed where pest plant and native vegetation mapping will occur over the next couple of months.

In recognition of the ancestral connection Rangitane and Ngati Kahungunu people have with the lake, GWRC and DoC have invited Iwi to discuss a joint future governance of the lake and its surrounding public land with GWRC and DoC.

While it may take a couple of years to fully implement a formal governance structure for the park, officers are currently working on confirming a Memorandum of Understanding with DoC and the two Wairarapa Iwi to ensure a Park service can begin as programmed in the 2007/08 financial year.

##### **1.3 Horse Riding Concession**

Tenders for the horse riding concession at Queen Elizabeth Park closed on 15 December. Only one tender was received, and that was from the existing concession holder, Mandy Robinson of "Stables in the Park". The finishing touches are now being made to the contract documents and I expect the tender to be granted to Mandy in mid February. An update on the restoration of the barn will be given to the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee at their February meeting.

## **2. Planning and Policy**

### **2.1 Management planning**

The draft of the Battle Hill Farm Forest Park management plan was approved at the last committee meeting. Submissions will be sought on this draft plan from late January to late March and a public meeting will be held in February.

Hearings and deliberations were completed in late November for the East Harbour Regional Park management plan. A workshop was also held and the recommendations of the Hearing Committee are presented at this Committee meeting (see report 07.15). Once approved, the plan will be released.

Submissions on the current Belmont Regional Park plan closed in early December. An analysis of those submissions is being presented at this Committee meeting (see report 07.18). Drafting of the new Belmont Regional Park management plan will begin following a workshop with Councillors in early March.

### **2.2 Pest Control Operations**

Preparatory work is underway for the Akatarawa Forest 1080 operation planned for July 2007. In previous years, the Akatarawa Forest was split into two operations, but this year the whole 15,400ha area will be controlled in one operation. The Tb Mangaroa operation, which covers Pakuratahi Forest and the front faces of Kaitoke Regional Park is also likely to happen in mid-2007. For this reason, the Parks and Biosecurity departments have been working together to look at ways to assist Upper Hutt dog walkers who may be affected by these operations. Amanda Cox has liaised with Upper Hutt City Council and a brochure showing where dogs can be exercised safely during the operations, is being prepared. These areas will be in Tunnel Gully Recreation Area, Te Marua, Harcourt Park and Trentham Memorial Park.

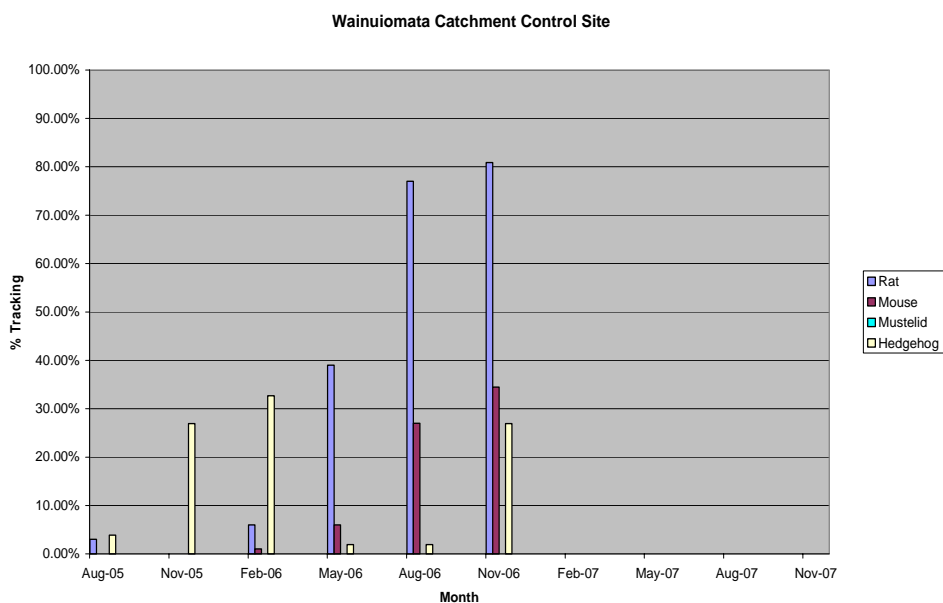
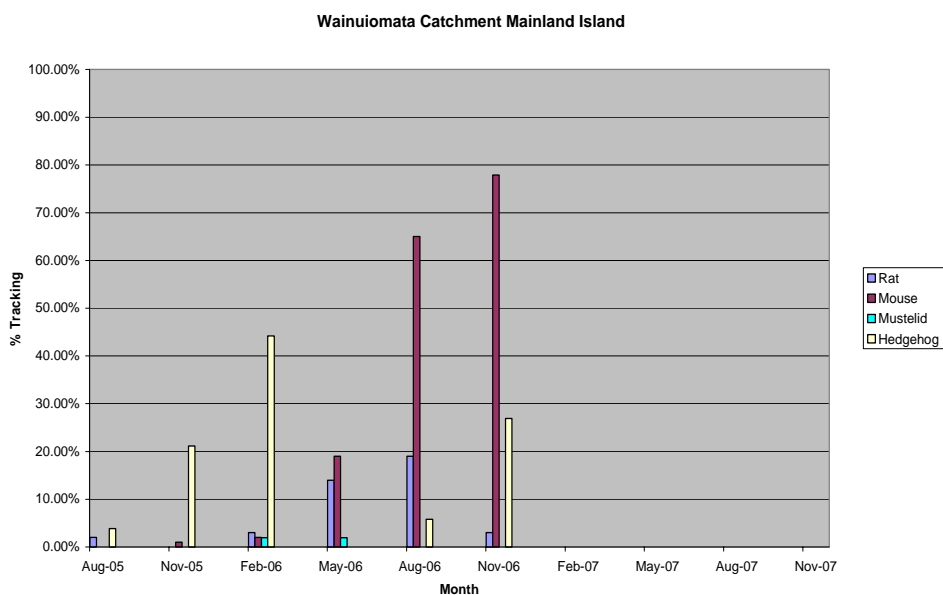
The pest plant control team have been tackling alder trees in the Akatarawa Forest, after ceasing work on the climbing asparagus in East Harbour Regional Park due to the summer period of growth cessation. Other ongoing pest plant and pest animal control work is progressing well.

### **2.3 Monitoring**

Bird counts have now been completed in all of the parks and the current water collection areas. Good increases in bird numbers have been seen in Korokoro Valley (due to the ongoing pest control) and in the Wainuiomata Water Collection Area. Officers have recently re-measured two permanent plots on Quoin Ridge in the Hutt Water Collection Area. The results have not been analysed as yet, but good numbers of palatable seedlings were noted. These improvements in forest health are being seen now as a result of the pest animal control completed in recent years.

## 2.4 Wainuiomata Mainland Island

A bait fill was completed in the mainland island in early December. Across the 600 existing possum traps, 29 possums were found while bait-take again increased. Rodent/mustelid monitoring was undertaken in early November. The result of 3% rat tracking rate in the mainland island, with 81% outside is good news for the mainland island. This means that the techniques being used in the mainland island are working and the target of < 5% rat tracking rate is being achieved. Mice continue to show higher levels inside the mainland island (78%) than in the non-treatment area outside (35%). No mustelid tracks were recorded.



Bird monitoring inside and outside the mainland island was completed in November. No differences in bird numbers could be seen between the mainland island site and the non-treatment area or between 2005 and 2006. It will take time to see improvements in bird numbers.

## **2.5 Capital works**

### **QEP Paekakariki toilets completed**

Townscape Construction completed the replacement toilets at Paekakariki picnic area, Queen Elizabeth Park in November 2006. The grass is now established, amenity planting around the toilet block was completed in December, and the toilets are now open for public use.

### **QEP Paekakariki picnic shelter designed**

Architects have prepared plans for a shelter building at the Paekakariki picnic area. Detailed structural designs are being completed to apply for building consent and call tenders in February.

## **2.6 Asset Management**

### **Asset Management System study**

Consultants have completed their initial report to identify an Asset Management Information System (AMIS) that will meet GW legal and operational requirements. The Request for Proposal was issued to selected suppliers on 1 December 2006 and proposals are due back to GW by 19 January 2007.

## **3. Western Sector**

### **3.1 Belmont Regional Park**

Work has continued over this period to complete the landscaping around the Ranger's office at Stratton Street. Staff have also given the office a spruce up with a fresh coat of paint and our building team have added a new deck and ramp access to the office.

General track maintenance continues with fallen trees at Takapu Road, weed spraying and new bollards installed at the Dry Creek entrance. Mowing has now been completed from Cannons Creek through to the Takapu Road track.



**Ranger's office complete at Stratton Street entrance of the park.**



**Land Management staff field trip**



**Farm activities at Waitangirua this period including lamb shearing (500 approx) and main shear of ewes (6900 approx)**

Just prior to Christmas we hosted Catchment Management Division's Land Management team on a short field trip to visit Waitangirua Farm. Officers were impressed with the future potential of the farm property for promoting sustainable land management and integrated catchment management concepts.

Staff hosted Kev the Wondering Kiwi at Dry Creek as part of the regional outdoors programme. There was a great turn out with approximately 60 people attending. The Old Coach Road History Tour was hosted by staff and Friends of Belmont. This event took people on a 4hr moderate walk along the Old Coach Road pass the WWII bunkers learning about the history and seeing fabulous views of the Hutt Valley and Porirua harbours a great day enjoyed by all.

### **3.2 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park**

An increasing number of people are choosing to use the homestead and gardens at Battle Hill as a backdrop and setting for their weddings. Two wedding ceremonies where held in the homestead gardens over the period.

Staff have introduced a new recycling area to the homestead and have incorporated this by concreting an area to keep recycling bins and also making easy access to the nursery behind the workshop.



**Battle Hill camping, a good meeting point for family from Wellington and New Plymouth**

**The Battle Hill swimming hole became well used as summer arrived.**



We have hosted three Regional Outdoor programme events during the period.

Over this period we have seen a variety of schools, IHC groups and school holiday programmes enjoying feeding the chickens and learning about the park from talks from the ranger. Both the Pauatahanui Pony Club and the Hutt Valley Pony Clubs have held their training days with the National Team Horse Riding Champs held over the new year period. The Cross Country Vehicle Club and various corporates also enjoyed in park as a venue for their Christmas functions.

### **3.3 Queen Elizabeth Park**

The new Paekakariki toilet block is operational and we have received a number of compliments on the new addition such as “my dog is very appreciative of the doggy drinking fountain!” However it has also received its first “tags”. We quickly remedied the graffiti and are working with local constable John Stewart to prevent this type of activity in the future.

A lot of rain over the period has lead to a decrease in the amount of park use we would expect at this time of year. We have also had a number of cancellations of bookings for summer BBQs. The park looks great; green grass, lush bush, limited rubbish and actually wet wetlands!

The avian life at QEP this summer has been fantastic. We have had breeding Grey Teal, Dabchick, Black Swan and Pied Stilts as well as hosting Royal Spoonbills, Little and Black Shags, NZ Falcon, NZ Pipits, Shining Cuckoos, Cockatoos and the occasional Brown Teal. All this rain has been annoying for most of our human visitors but it has been a blessing for our avian visitors (as well as for those of us who like to watch the birds)!



**Royal Spoonbills in QEP Wetlands**

This has also been a great period for equestrian fans. The New Zealand Equestrian Federation has hosted two big events (200 riders each) and a couple of smaller training

days (20+ riders each). The horse riding concessionaire, Mandy Robinson, has also been quite busy. She has updated her advertising and signage as well as starting up a brand new web page. As a result she is getting a lot more business and the park is seeing a lot more people on horse back!



#### **Mandy Robinson and friends enjoying the Sunshine at QEP**

Our Regional Outdoor Program was kicked off this period with the introduction of the Tramway Museum's *Anything Vintage Festival*. This was the first of what they hope to be an annual event. Ranging staff offered free guided walks through the wetlands and the remnant bush, as well as walks along the Whareroa Stream. The event ran from December 30 – January 2. Although numbers were not officially recorded it is estimated that about 5,000 people visited the park over the four days. Needless to say the organisers are quite happy and planning for next year. With the Mackay's Crossing overpass being open, travelling to and from the park was quite smooth and even inviting. No congestion problems and no accidents!



#### **Anything Vintage Transport and Machinery Festival**

## **4. Eastern Sector**

### **4.1 Kaitoke Regional Park**

The Christmas season resulted in plenty of bookings for the barbecue area with over a dozen groups holding functions there. However, the coldest December since 1928 meant that camping numbers have been well down on previous years, although a fine Wellington Anniversary weekend saw many campers bring their tents out of storage.

Regular testing of the campground water supply by our water supply colleagues indicated the presence of E-Coli. As a result much work has been done cleaning tanks, replacing filters and re-testing the supply. The Ministry of Health have been informed and have been satisfied with our actions. Recent tests have been negative. To add to this, we are having to replace the septic system for the main camping building in the campground. The system has been plagued by issues to do with its design, and now needs major work to make it work efficiently. On a brighter note though, it now gives us the opportunity to increase the capacity of the system, something that is well overdue.

Apart from dealing with visitors, rangers have been busy on a number of projects.

A ranger team flew into the Eastern Hutt River to work on the hut situated there. Work included installing a new bench top, repairing leaks in the chimney, and removing rubbish from around the hut. The access way to the Kaitoke Hill underpass was also asphalted and new directional signs installed on the Kaitoke Hill and Pylon Loop tracks. A small but increasing number of horse riders and mountain bikers are beginning to use these tracks. In addition, six new interpretation panels have been installed on the Loop Track and have been well received by park visitors. A film crew from China were so impressed with them that they took footage of several of these for a documentary on New Zealand.

On a sour note, New Years Eve was marred by several alcohol fuelled fights. Three arrests were made and two youths required hospital treatment. The clean up of broken bottles and rubbish took staff all the next day. A liquor ban over this period is being looked at to create a safe family environment and to protect the Councils' assets here in the park.

Five events have been held as part of the Regional Outdoors Programme. All have been well attended and plenty of positive feedback received.

### **4.2 East Harbour Regional Park**

The park was well used over the Christmas/New Year period despite the bad weather. Easy accessibility from urban areas and the better condition of the tracks in the park now allows for a steady stream of visitors even in more unfavourable conditions.

One of the larger recent maintenance projects was the surfacing work on two sections of the Bus Barn/Korohipa track. A few years ago this was one of the most degraded and least used tracks in EHRP. However, with continual improvements it has since become one of the most popular. Until recently, two particular sections of the track remained in a poor state. To rectify this, extensive trackside drainage has now been put in place and, with the



aid of a helicopter, track metal has been transported in and laid on the surface. There is now year-round access and it's well worth a visit.

Annual track vegetation cutbacks have been completed throughout the park and general maintenance has continued. The refurbishing of park entrances is also continuing with the Bus Barn/Korohiwa track entrance being the most recent project. This was done in consultation with Hutt City Council particularly with regard to their development issues in the Bus Barn area. Other park entrances currently receiving upgrades are at Korimako Road in Days Bay and Fraser Street in Wainuiomata.

A barbeque was held at Days Bay in early December for the volunteer possum trappers in the MIRO organization. This is put on by GW and MIRO as a 'thank you' to all those people who get out there on a regular basis doing active field work. Most of these people are not your committee types so it's good to get them all together for a catch up. Over 60 people turned up for a social get together and a good meal. Gail Abel, the MIRO chairperson, Philippa Crisp, and Kim Broad from Biosecurity gave speeches which were well received. These barbeques are now held twice yearly and have been a great success.

The summer events programme is going well with three of them run to date. The events at EHRP opened with an off track tramp through the Gollans Valley aimed at the fit but inexperienced. The next event featured a medium level walk along the main ridge from Wainui Hill to Days Bay while the third was a community run event featuring the work of the MIRO group and a look at the big rata trees on Hawtrey Hill above Eastbourne.



**Emptying hopper on Bus Barn track**

### **4.3 Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo Water Catchments**

The spray programme over the last few months has been going well with all 45km of track being sprayed to control annual weeds including broom, gorse, ragwort and foxglove. Also the Wainuiomata boundary fence has been sprayed to control gorse.

90 tonnes of rock was delivered for repairs to the Truss Bridge abutment which was damaged by floodwaters last year. Repairs will be carried out as soon as consent has been approved and a contractor is available.

Repairs to the Water Collection Area's communications repeater have been ongoing during the month. A technician from Tait's Radios has been to the site twice with the repeater currently removed. During removal of the repeater, a lightning arrester cable was disturbed on the main Water Group repeater which created a problem but was rectified.

Once again the weather damaged tracks in the Recreation area. The walking track that the public use to access the "Ultimate" swimming hole slipped away. With the quick response from staff a new track was created. This track will take a while to settle and will require some retaining walls but I'm sure will be better in the future than the last track.



**Ultimate  
Swimming Hole  
track**

A large Rata tree was found to be blocking the Orongorongo access road in November. With the help of Water Group staff driving a small tractor, the tree was removed from the road. A tree larger than the first blocked the road a month later. This tree required the assistance of a digger and Water Group staff. Both trees were only metres apart and fell after high wind periods. The access road is required to be open to provide access for contractors working in the Orongorongos.



**First fallen rata tree – November 06**



**Second fallen rata tree – December 06**

On the 26th November and 21 January, 2007 two Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchment Tours were held. The people on these tours seem to thoroughly enjoy a day to look at an excellent patch of virgin forest.

On 1 February we had *Kev the Wandering Kiwi* in the Recreation Area. The public, especially the kids, seem to get really involved with this walk. Two school groups were also taken on a walk around the Sledge Track by the ranger in November as part of the Take Action school programme.

#### **4.4 Akatarawa/ Pakuratahi Forests**

The main focus during this period has been on preparing areas for the Christmas/New Year break. As the weather continues to be changeable, with moderate amounts of rain and some quite significant wind events, we have had to concentrate on the walking tracks, clearing wind-blown debris. For instance, in the Tunnel Gully reserve, two old mature indigenous trees fell across the Upper Tane's track. These have since been removed and several other trees that have lost branches have been cleaned up.

Guests from Rimutaka Prison have been concentrating their efforts on the access roads into both the Tunnel Gully Reserve and the Rimutaka Incline walkway. This has involved them removing vegetation to increase lines of sight for traffic safety, and also filling potholes. We are happy to say that these areas now look good and were so over the Christmas/New Year break.

We have had a large range of events during this period covering a variety of recreational users. We have had applications from historical societies, recreational motorised 4x4 clubs, orienteering clubs and the Kapi-Mana Motorcycle Club. These are all consented events over and above the general public accessing for their own recreational needs.

The recreational clubs that use regional council land are communicating well amongst themselves and with GWRC, and arrange events in such a way that they do not cause conflict between the different types of users, i.e. Kapiti Car Club with motorsport events, orienteering events with walking/mountain biking events, 4WD/motorcycle events, etc.

We have also had two events associated with the summer programme, and these have both gone extremely well with good feedback from users.



**Kev Kiwi visits Tunnel Gully**

During this period we have also had a search and rescue in the Akatarawa Forest for a lost motorcyclist. Fortunately this had a happy result with the young fellow being found the following morning. On a safety note, staff undertook fire training in December. This ensures our staff are qualified to attend any wild fire incident and are able to perform tasks efficiently and safely.

**Murray Waititi**  
Manager, Parks