

Report 13.33
Date 8 February 2013
File E/11/04/04

Committee Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee
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General Managers' report to the Social and Cultural Wellbeing Committee on 6 March 2013

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington Regional Council's activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibility.

2. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

3. Water Supply

3.1 Water Situation

Demand for water during the mid summer period has been below average. The average daily supply for January and February was 6.5% and 1.9% lower than the average for the same months over the previous 5 years (2008 - 2012).

The maximum daily supply so far this summer was 174 ML on 28 January 2013. Our water supply rivers are continuing to drop steadily, and at the time of writing (25 February) are sitting at well below average levels. The last significant rainfall occurred on Monday 4 February.

3.2 Stuart Macaskill lakes upgrade

Following mobilisation to Lake 1, the Crest Raising and Seismic Enhancement works are progressing well on the second lake.

Installation of the Linear Low Density Polyethylene (LLDPE) Liner has resumed, with full reinstatement of the liner progressing via the earth-works sub-contractor as the liner is completed. These works are approaching 10% completion and are on schedule.

Excavation of the existing riprap and FMA materials from the lake slope is currently over 30% complete. Most of the excavated material is immediately placed on to completed sections of the LLDPE Liner to save time on hauling and stockpiling.

The crest raising works are now over 40% complete, with the intricate reinforced earthworks wall work approaching 90% completion. The contractor is currently on target to meet the required handover date in August.

3.3 Emergency water supply

A consultant brief for the preparation of a feasibility study for an emergency storage reservoir at Takapu is in preparation.

Discussions have been held with Wellington City Council (WCC) officers about the possibility of constructing small emergency storage ponds within the city boundaries, and about investigating the feasibility of constructing a pipeline across the harbour to bring water directly to Wellington City from the Waterloo wellfield following a major disaster. Water Supply staff have identified 10 possible storage pond sites, and WCC officers have been asked to indicate which of these might be acceptable to the city and should be investigated further. A specialist consultant will be engaged to investigate a cross harbour link.

3.4 Pakuratahi land purchase

Arrangements are underway with AgResearch Ltd for the valuation of Kaitoke Farm land prior to negotiating a sale and purchase agreement. A draft valuation brief is being prepared by Jigsaw Property Consultancy for agreement with AgResearch. It is important that the valuation for each side is based on the same brief, to allow a direct comparison of the valuation results obtained by each party.

AgResearch has raised the option of continuing their current farming of the land under a licence from Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). The scope and terms of such a licence will be discussed with AgResearch towards the end of February.

GWRC will commission a rural valuer following completion of the valuation brief. The valuer will also be commissioned to provide advice on the market rental rate for the property. The sale and purchase negotiations are expected to be completed before the end of this financial year.

4. Environment Management

4.1 Changes to dog walking controls at the Wainuiomata Recreation Area (WRA)

In preparation for the opening of the Lower Dam to public access on 16 March 2013, there has been some significant discussion around the appropriate level of dog control in the WRA.

Waterfowl are establishing themselves in the improved bird nesting habitat of the wetland and surrounds of the Lower Dam. Species such as grey duck, paradise shelduck, and Pūkeko, live in the area and sometimes congregate on the grassy areas of the Lower Dam. There are also hopes that a shag colony may establish itself nearby. However, this birdlife would be put at risk and the overall visitor experience compromised, if dogs were allowed in the area.

The Rimutaka Forest Park Trust has released kiwi over several years and they are now frequenting the WRA. An adult pair has settled near the top end of the WRA and others move through the area regularly. One was found within metres of the Gums Loop Walk. Kiwi are extremely vulnerable to dog attacks.

However, the WRA is identified in the Parks Network Plan as a park where dog walking is allowed, and it is a very popular place for that activity. For several years GWRC has asked people to put a lead on their dogs while walking them on tracks near where kiwi are known to travel, but it is difficult for the Park Ranger to enforce this request. People in the local community are well aware of the kiwi release project and are very supportive of it.

The Parks Network Plan enables us to vary the conditions of dog control to protect the environment. As we improve the public access in relation to the Lower Dam, we also intend to vary these conditions to look after the indigenous habitat and the needs of all park users.

As a result we have agreed that the Lower Dam and Reservoir Road will be off-limits to dogs 'upstream' of the track to the swing bridge. The rest of the WRA will remain open to dogs, but they will have to be on a lead.

Should people wish to run their dogs off a lead; the Hine Road dog exercise area is adjacent to the WRA.

A communications plan is being developed to inform people of the change. We are confident that these changes will enhance the area for the majority of visitors, protect the bird habitat, and support the kiwi release project.

4.2 Storm damage

As a result of extremely heavy rain in the region on 4-5 February 2013, there was some significant damage to structures in several of our parks.

At Queen Elizabeth Park, there was significant undermining of the bridge over the Wainui Stream near the Tilley Road entrance. Investigations have shown that the bridge should be shifted about 20 metres downstream to avoid high maintenance costs in the future.

There is also flood debris to be cleared out of the Wainui and Whareora streams.

At Battle Hill, repairs are required to the armouring on all three bridges over the Horokiri Stream, with the middle one presenting the biggest issue (see photo below).

In the Akatarawa Forest, a truck full of cones was needed to mark hazardous areas on the main road through the forest. Culvert replacements will be required in several areas. Fortunately, some considerable road maintenance had been underway in the Hukinga during January which meant that we have retained the road access to the area.

While there has been some track scouring across the parks network as a result of the storm, it is pleasing to see that the network is otherwise reasonably unscathed. This is no doubt due to the proactive approach we have taken to park maintenance over recent times.

While there are costs associated with this extra work, we are confident that these can be covered from existing budgets.



Battle Hill Bridge block damage



Bridge over Wainui Stream, Queen Elizabeth Park

5. Recommendations

That the Committee

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

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