

Report 16.7
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Committee Environment Committee
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General Managers' report to the Environment Committee meeting 17 February 2016

1. Purpose

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

2. Environment Committee meeting 1 December – public participation

Heli Matilainen spoke to item 6 on the agenda- General Managers Report 1 December 2015. Ms Matilainen spoke on the health impacts of the spraying agent- glyphosate. Ms Matilainen stated that GWRC should consider including provisions in the Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington region that restrict the chemicals use, and/or consider alternate methods of weed management.

Since the second public meeting with regard to spraying at Queen Elizabeth Park, aerial spraying at the park has been put on hold until community concerns have been resolved. Ground based spraying has resumed in the park to address the ongoing weed issues. Parks notes the wide range of scientific and agency views regarding the health impacts of glyphosate.

3. Catchment Management

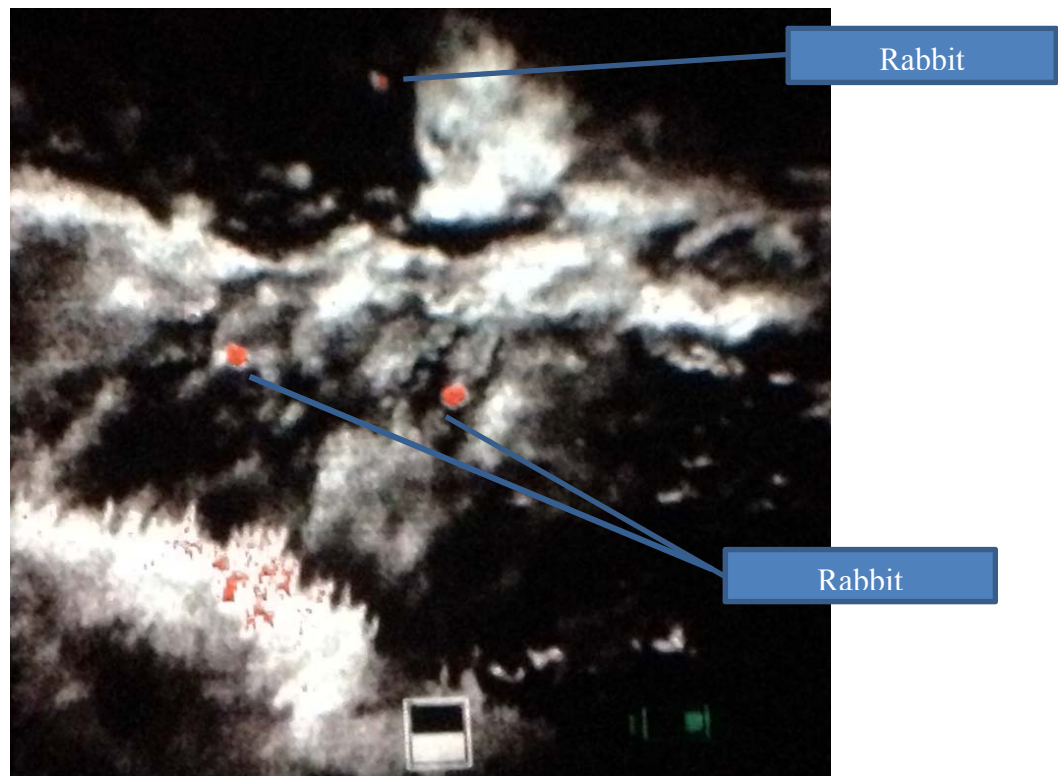
3.1 Biosecurity

3.1.1 Pest animals

Rabbits

Rabbit numbers are naturally at their highest during the spring and late summer. Despite this, the rabbit population remains at low levels across most of the region. Enquiries from the public remain relatively low.

New thermal imagery technology is being trialled to detect rabbits in difficult and sensitive areas. A thermal imager has been tested to assess sensitivity to animals, humans and other objects. At night it has a considerable advantage as animals can be easily detected in coastal and pasture sites. The imager clearly showed animals in sand dunes that were unable to be detected by spotlight (see image below). There were multiple attempts to locate the rabbits in the photo using a spot light but due to the vegetation they could not be identified. This technology will greatly assist with the monitoring and control of pests at night.



View through thermal camera. The animals indicated with their heat signature were not visible with a spotlight

Feral cats

Biosecurity are continuing to receive a number of calls from the public requesting assistance with cat control. This is largely asking for assistance with trapping stray cats or animals left behind when the property owner has moved.

Staff met with the Morgan Foundation to discuss cat management issues in Wellington City. A cat camera trap trial will be undertaken in Otari to see how far cats are active in bush reserves on the edge of urban areas.

3.2 Pest Plants

3.2.1 Surveillance and Total Control

Four hundred properties have been surveyed in Raumati South as part of the delimiting programme for woolly nightshade, blue passion flower and moth plant. Five new woolly nightshade and four blue passion flower sites were identified.

The rural saffron thistle sites have been inspected in the Wairarapa with only two plants found. The first round of Bathurst burr inspections was completed with no plants found. Inspections of perennial nettle sites are ongoing.

3.2.2 MPI funded programmes

The annual 'Check, Clean, Dry' Freshwater Pest Plant advocacy programme has commenced with GWRC staff visiting the high use freshwater sites in the region.

As a part of the MPI funded National Interest Pest Response programme (NPIR) staff have inspected the cape tulip sites with no plants found. Preparation for the annual NPIR Manchurian wild rice control is underway. Notification letters and maps for both aerial and ground based spraying work have been delivered to the 172 landowners within 300 m of the operational area near Waikanae.

3.2.3 Containment

The work controlling boneseed on coastal sites has been delayed this season by unfavourable weather and other control priorities. Large numbers of seedlings have been found on the coastal escarpments. The Ngawi escarpment aerial contract and an abseil contract at Titahi Bay were completed before Christmas. The aerial contract for boneseed on the Wellington south coast still awaits suitable weather.

3.2.4 Biocontrol

Monitoring and release work continues for privet lace bug, green thistle beetle and tradescantia beetles.

WCC hosted a meeting at the Botanic Gardens to discuss the next steps with their tradescantia beetle rearing. As beetle numbers increase WCC staff intend to release them in the WCC owned gardens and assess their establishment in the wild. A public display in a terrarium will also be set up in the visitors centre.



Annual weed swap programme, Wellington City

3.3 BioWorks

3.3.1 TBfree NZ Control Programme

BioWorks has completed two aerial contracts for TBfree NZ (14,037 ha). Staff are working on four possum survey and detection projects (11,475 ha) and one output possum control project (1,770 ha).

BioWorks staff have begun planning work for the Southern Rimutaka aerial operation.

3.3.2 Regional Possum Predator Control Programme

The RPPCP covers approximately 72,000 hectares in the 2015/16 year. There are approximately 2,900 hectares of new work while the remaining areas have been treated in previous years.

The control target for all maintenance projects is residual trap catch (RTC) 5.0% or less. For initial control operations it is expected that it will take two years to achieve an RTC below 5.0%.

BioWorks staff attended a meeting of the Makara Community Board to explain the RPPCP in the Makara and Te Kopahou areas and received favourable comments on the programme.

Staff are encountering high possum numbers in the new Makara possum control area.

3.4 Land Management

3.4.1 Pakuratahi West Forest Harvesting

The Pakuratahi West block is located in the Pakuratahi forest adjacent to the Te Marua treatment plant. It covers some 51.8 hectares. The trees are 31 years old and were to have been harvested in the 2016/17 financial year. P F Olsen, acting as Forest Manager for the owners notified Council prior to Christmas that they wished to bring this forward to January 2016.

The Pakuratahi West block has a number of well-established bike trails including one that had recently been constructed by a group of local bike trail enthusiasts. While they knew that harvesting was imminent the timing of the notification to harvest was very inconvenient. Parks and Land Management staff suggested a delay to harvesting until 1 March 2016 so that cyclists could enjoy the Christmas period and Upper Hutt City could run their summer activation programme which includes a day in the forest.

Agreement has been reached between the parties that harvesting will not now start until 1 March 2016. While the Cutting Rights documents allow a change to cutting plans, approval of Council is required to ensure there is no conflict between the annual cutting plan and Council's obligations to employees, invitees or licensees.



Pakuratahi West Block

3.4.2 Farms Plans WRECI Plans

The contract with the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) was signed off in January 2016 and extends through to 30 June 2019. The four year contract has a total budget of \$3.2M, of which MPI are contributing \$1.15M. The balance of the funding comes from regional rates and landowners. The first years' work programme is well advanced and on track to meet the annual targets for pole planting and afforestation.

WRECI 2015/16	Target 2015/16	YTD 2015/16	% Progress
Poles planted	25,000	18,421	74%
Poles planted (ha)	312	267	86%
Afforestation (ha)	45	28.4	63%

On an area basis the annual target is 357 hectares, of which 295.4 hectares have been completed in the first six months. This represents 83% of the target area. The balance of the planting programme is scheduled to be completed in May/June 2016.

Farm Environment Plans

Two new staff members were appointed in November to assist with the expansion of the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) programme, one focusing on landowners in the Wairarapa Moana area and the other based in Wellington and servicing the Kapiti and Porirua areas. Fifteen FEPs are to be completed this financial year which will assist land owners with managing water quality and biodiversity issues on farm. The FEPs will include a work programme to address these issues along with an advice service around good management practices.

3.4.3 Akura Conservation Centre

The main activity over the summer months is associated with the management of nursery plantings. Largely this is pruning to ensure that the growth of poles on the stumps is maximised. Additionally the two irrigators are in action 7 days a week to ensure optimum growing conditions are maintained.



While an extensive spraying programme has been operating since the spring some of the new plantings have suffered a couple of *Pseudomonas* bacterial blights. This bacterium is related to the PSA outbreaks on kiwifruit orchards. In the nursery it causes wilting of new growth and in more severe circumstances can lead to death or severe retardation of growth. This year's outbreak could

affect up to 20% of the new plantings. Decisions will be made shortly as to whether parts of the new blocks should be ploughed in and replanted in the spring.

3.5 Flood Protection

3.5.1 Floodplain Management Plan Implementation

Hutt River City Centre Project

The Hutt River City Centre Project reached a major milestone in December 2015 with the Council approval of an option to proceed to the next stage of preparing a preliminary design and costing. The Project Working Group is currently preparing the scope and programme for the next stage of the works for consideration by the HVMFS at its meeting on 3 March 2016.

Officers are preparing a land strategy and a communication and consultation strategy for the HVMFS endorsement in March 2016. Ten landowners, whose land is required for the project, have expressed willingness to sell their land in the near future. Officers will commence discussions with these landowners and any purchase recommendations will be brought to Council on a case by case basis until the overall strategy has been agreed.

Pinehaven Stream FMP Implementation

The property purchase has been completed and the 50% share of these costs has been received from UHCC. A MoU with UHCC regarding the project management and cost share agreement for the implementation of the works is currently being reviewed by UHCC. It is expected that this will be signed by both GWRC and UHCC before March 2016.

Jim Cooke Park Stopbank

Preparation of the NOR/Consent application for the proposed stopbank upgrade works and river channel improvements at Jim Cooke Park has progressed well but the target for lodging the applications had to be extended from December 15 to March 16 because of additional investigations. Negotiation of land entry agreements with KCDC has progressed well and has reached the final review stage. Negotiations with a private landowner are also progressing and involves mitigation measures, land purchase and land swap.

Otaki River

Rock delivery has commenced for the urgent maintenance of Traceys groynes. Investigations are underway to look at options to repair approximately 100 metre length of erosion and for future reconstruction of the Harpers stopbank.

Lower Wairarapa Development Scheme

Landowner entry permits for the Whakawhiriwhiri Stream upgrade project have been finalised except for Jim Hedley and John Barton. Construction work in the reach upstream of Pahautea Road has been completed up to Catherine Cross' culvert. Work downstream of Pahautea Road will commence in February 2016.

The Barrage Gate control system upgrade and Tawaha Culvert upgrade contracts have been awarded. Off-site works on both projects have commenced.

Boulder rip rap protection work of wave damaged stopbanks at Macland Farms (Western Lake) will commence in February.

Environmental Strategy Implementation

Otaki improvements are scheduled to commence in February. This includes new access gates on the north bank, walking track improvements at the Estuary and improved signage for Crystals Bend.

A fish friendly flood gate will be installed this quarter on the Otaki River, and adjustments are being considered for the existing Rangiuru fish friendly gate to improve its ease of maintenance.

The Hutt River Environmental Strategy Review has commenced and public engagement will commence in March/April.

Hutt River Maoribank & Ebdentown Riverbed Stabilisation

Rock supply for completing the Ebdentown edge protection works on the Hutt River in Upper Hutt has been completed. Construction works have commenced and will be completed in the summer of 2015/16.

Te Kauru Upper Ruamahanga FMP Implementation

Work has commenced to design additional rock groynes to address erosion occurring at Dakins Road in Carterton. A temporary fix has been put in place by the operations team to prevent further erosion losses.

Land purchase has been completed at River Road in Masterton to bring a section of land that straddles the Waipoua River into public ownership.

Strategic Land Purchase in advance of physical works

- El Rancho-Waikanae (Surplus NZTA land)
- Andrews-Otaki (Part of NZTA Expressway PP2O)

3.5.2 Operations Delivery

Western River Schemes

All maintenance work is continuing to programme. Channel shaping has now finished in the Otaki River and spraying of the dry river beaches is now underway.

Rock line and groyne maintenance is in progress on the Hutt River, with a small groyne being built at Manor Park and a number of repairs to rock lines above the Silverstream Bridge.

Staff continues to remove windblown trees from a number watercourses throughout the western watercourses as a result of a storm event early in January.

Wairarapa River Schemes

Summer low flows have not interfered with work this summer. Channel maintenance work has been completed in the Te Ore Ore, Gladstone and Waiohine schemes.

Rock delivery for erosion control is complete. Construction of rock structures will begin in February.

Spray maintenance of crack willow regrowth in the drainage schemes and Eastern Hills river schemes has been the focus in recent weeks.

Community Recreation

The Great Outdoors Summer Events programme has kept staff very busy over the last month and will continue until the end of March. These activities are attracting large numbers of visitors to the river berms.

Staff have been working closely with Hutt City Council litter control officers on illegal dumping in the lower river and infringement notices have been issued to perpetual rubbish dumpers in the hope it will be a deterrent.

Resource Consent Project

Notification of resource consent applications for the Hutt, Otaki, Waikanae and Wainuiomata Rivers is anticipated to occur in February 2016.

3.5.3 Investigations, Strategy and Planning

Floodplain Management Plan development

Te Kāuru Upper Ruamāhanga FMP rural options development is progressing. Focus will shift onto engagement with the rural community over the next couple of months. Progress is being made resolving Waipoua River flood hazard issues between GWRC and Masterton District Council through a joint project team. A new hydrology assessment has recently been completed and this will now be peer reviewed. An updated hydraulic model is also under development.

An initial draft Waiohine FMP has been produced and reviewed internally. This will now be workshopped with South Wairarapa District Council and Carterton District Council in late February prior to meetings of the Waiohine Floodplain Management Advisory Committee in March. The aim is to take the draft FMP to community consultation mid-2016. Scoping of the Lower Wairarapa Valley FMP continues and we will be seeking input from senior SWDC officers in March.

The hearing of submissions on the Pinehaven draft FMP will take place on 7th April 2016.

Investigations and Strategy

The five-yearly Otaki River cross-section survey commenced in mid-December and will run until the end of February. We will also compare the results against data generated from aerial photography and a drone trial scheduled for early February.

A review of GWRC's flood warning system has begun. This is a joint project between Flood Protection, Environmental Science and WREMO with involvement from other GWRC Departments.

3.6 Biodiversity

3.6.1 Biodiversity Management

Key Native Ecosystems

Since the last GM report in November, 10 Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) plans have been published for: Battle Hill Bush, Belmont-Dry Creek, Belmont-Speedy's, Fensham Reserve, Haywards Scenic Reserve, Haruātai/Pareomatangi, Lower Waikanae Forest Remnants, Strangs Bush, Nga Manu wetland complex and Western Wellington Forests KNE sites.

Pest plant control at the Queen Elizabeth Park KNE site have been allowed to go ahead after community concerns about a separate spraying operation were resolved.

At the Wainuiomata Mainland Island KNE site the annual summer bird counts undertaken by the Environmental Science department have positively identified North Island Kaka as being present. This is the first time in twenty years that North island Kaka have been observed here.

The A24 gas trap trial at Johnsonville Park (part of Western Wellington Forests KNE site) to control rats is struggling to reduce the number of rates recorded through monitoring. The latest monitoring was recorded at 30% tracking rate (target tracking rate is 10%).

Recent sightings of Red mistletoe, a threatened plant species within Wi Tako Ngatata and Keith George Memorial Park KNE sites are a good indication that possums are being effectively controlled as part of the KNE programme.

Contract hunters are carrying out targeted control of feral goats and feral pigs in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area KNE in January.

Wetlands

Some aspects of the Wetland Programme are being reviewed. This is in anticipation of an increased interest in the programme in response to the provisions relating to wetlands protection set out in the Proposed Natural Resources Plan.

Advice was provided to the coordinators of the Wairarapa Moana Catchment Community Restoration Fund about potential lakeshore restoration projects.

3.6.2 Biodiversity Advice and Advocacy

Biodiversity Advice

Staff contributed to a GWRC submission on PCC's discussion documents issued to help inform the provisions of the draft Porirua City District Plan. In the submission the need to protect the full range of significant indigenous

biodiversity values in the district using both regulatory and non-regulatory methods was outlined.

In November and December, Biodiversity staff attended submitter reference group meetings for the proposed Kapiti Coast District Plan. Staff also contributed to comments on an issues and options report produced by Environmental Management Services for Kapiti Coast District Council in relation to the proposed Plan. Advice emphasised the importance of retaining regulatory mechanisms for protecting biodiversity and highlighted opportunities to better recognise and incentivise biodiversity protection on private land.

Collaborative Restoration: Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

Four groups in the Wairarapa Moana area have been successful in securing the Community Restoration Fund in the round that ended late last year. The groups' funds are being used for ecological restoration activities that include wetland fencing and planting, propagation of wetland plants and purchasing dune plants.

Construction of new visitor facilities has been undertaken at Lake Domain. Work at the entrance includes repair and sealing of the car park area, new fencing, installation of gates for safer pedestrian access and landscaping. A metalled car park area has also been constructed near the Barton's Stream outlet.

Predator control work continues at Boggy Pond, Mathews Lagoon and the Wairio Restoration Block. Shared servicing of the traps during the breeding season is now underway with the work shared by GWRC and DOC staff. Key Bittern predators continue to be trapped with 46 cats, 109 ferrets, 6 stoats and 39 weasels removed from the control area over the last two and a half years. Bittern surveys have been completed in the management area and results indicate that the population is stable.

Collaborative Restoration: Porirua Harbour and Catchment Project

The Community Restoration Fund was launched in November, and five successful community groups around Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour were notified in December. The groups plan to restore streams, wetlands and areas of native bush in the catchment, enhancing biodiversity values and stabilising soil to reduce the amount of sediment entering the harbour and its waterways.

In November, the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Joint Committee endorsed the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Sediment Reduction Plan. This plan outlines how GWRC, PCC, WCC and Ngati Toa will work together to reduce erosion in the catchment and the volume of sediment entering the harbour and its waterways. This will include land management activities on public and private land, regulation of sedimentation that results from development, and education for the community about how they can reduce sedimentation.

Implementation of the Porirua Stream Mouth and Estuary Enhancement Concept Plan is progressing well with detailed designs developed for a new wetland area on the west side of the Porirua stream mouth.

Biodiversity Advocacy

The School Support Plan identified a need for the provision of quality stream monitoring equipment and guidance for teachers on stream testing. Eight Stream Kits have now been developed and are available to schools across Wellington region. A number of teacher training sessions will also be rolled later this year with the support of the Enviroschools team.

4. Environment Management

4.1 Harbours

Harbours department have had a busy couple of months of “business as usual” since its last report to the Environment Committee.

The ferry *Arahura* sailed from Wellington on 3 October 2015 for scrapping at Alang, India.



The ferry *Arahura* reached its destination, was beached at Alang on 3rd November, and has now been fully scrapped. See photograph below of the bow removal.





On 28 October 2015, an oil pollution response equipment exercise was held in Pauatahanui Inlet in cooperation with other emergency services.

On 23 and 24 November 2015, two staff attended the Regional Council/Maritime New Zealand Oil Spill Workshop in Dunedin.

On 19 November 2015 the yacht below, with serious stability issues, was given a Harbourmaster's Direction forbidding it from sailing from Mana Marina on safety grounds.





Two harbour swim rafts were positioned in Oriental Bay on 30 November 2015 for use during the summer weather.



Harbours department assisted with scuttling of the derelict hull of the fishing vessel *Southern Prospector* in Cook Strait on 28 December 2015.

Commencing in early December 2015, a major operation was the transfer of all oil pollution response equipment, navigation light equipment, boats and trailers, mooring chain, etc., from their previous CentrePort storage shed to an alternative storage shed on Tyers Road, Ngauranga Gorge (below). This was essentially completed as required, by the end of January 2016, with only a few crates of “ready-response” equipment awaiting a converted container from CentrePort for on-wharf storage at Aotea Quay.



On 20 December 2015, information concerning a recently purchased yacht intending to sail from Wellington Harbour with inadequate safety equipment on board resulted in notice given by Maritime New Zealand preventing it from leaving Wellington Harbour until certain safety items were rectified to the satisfaction of Maritime New Zealand.

On 31 December monitored discharge from a ship of a considerable quantity of equipment and explosives destined for the Waiouru army training area was undertaken.

On the morning of 21 January, a recreational boat ran aground on Mana Island, west of Porirua Harbour. The refloating, safe towage back into Mana Marina and pollution risks were monitored during recovery operations and the boat was delivered safely to a repair facility later that evening, thanks mainly to the assets of Mana Coast Guard.



During the hot sunny weather, the harbour rangers (including additional summer ranger) have, in addition to their usual duties, kept a good eye on the situation at the Mana Bridge, Porirua Harbour, where conflicts have occurred in the past between bridge-jumpers and boaties launching or recovering their boats at the nearby launching area where swimmers tend to come ashore. Similar to last year, a security guard was employed (weather-dependant) to assist them with this work to ensure safety.



Swimmers near Mana Bridge

During the summer period there were numerous media articles about tragic drowning incidents around the coastline of New Zealand. Three divers were drowned at different periods off Wellington's South Coast.



Diamond Princess and Celebrity Solstice at Aotea Quay

Numerous large cruise ships called at Wellington during the summer, and with two berthed at the same time, up to 7,000 passengers are on board.

4.2 Parks

4.2.1 General

After months of planning, including numerous consent applications, significant flood repair works commenced at Belmont, Battle Hill and Queen Elizabeth Parks. The insurance claim has been settled, providing sufficient funds for the works to be completed. The work is especially significant in the Korokoro Valley with crews widening and realigning many sections of track, replacing and/or repairing structures and contractors felling hundreds of hazardous pine trees. This work is expected to be completed by the end of March, and will result in a more accessible and safer experience for visitors, and for future maintenance.

Spraying operations at Queen Elizabeth Park attracted the attention from concerned members of the public in October. The new farm licence holder undertook blanket spraying of around 90 hectares of Queen Elizabeth Park and Whareroa Farm to allow the establishment of predominantly plantain pastures to support his farming operation. GWRC publicly notified and undertook the aerial spraying of lupin and gorse on the park as part of the outcomes agreed through the farm licence negotiations.

Following an operation early on Labour Day morning, this work gained much publicity through the local and social media with a petition launched to ban all aerial spraying on the park. Two public meetings were held to identify issues and a way forward. There has been some robust debate on the subject with many people voicing concerns over land management practices, use of agri-chemicals and use of helicopters to apply them. At present no aerial spraying is to be undertaken on QEP until community concerns have been adequately addressed. However, ground spraying across the park has resumed, including weed control on the new pastures.

Parks is now working with Biosecurity to develop a consistent approach to signage for all departments to follow for ground spraying operations. From now on we will undertake no parks spraying on weekends or public holidays.

On a more positive note, construction of Te Ara o Whareroa Trail was completed early in December and the trail formally opened on 23 January by our Chair Cr Chris Laidlaw, Mayor Ross Church, Raewyn Bleakley of NZTA, local iwi and the Chair of the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park Denise Davis. Since works were completed, Te Ara o Whareroa has been extremely popular with both recreational riders and a growing number of commuters who are using it to reach school, work, the surf club and for visiting cafes, friends and family.

4.2.2 Western Sector

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

Structure repairs following the May floods continued, with the pedestrian access bridge to the campground being completed in the lead up to Christmas.

The camping season is very busy with many people making the most of the summer weather. The campground has been at capacity during the main holidays with rangers working long hours to ensure campers enjoyed their stay. The swimming hole was dug out pre-Xmas and with the fine warm weather has been enormously popular.

Equestrian events are well underway, with support up on previous years. Over the spring to autumn period we will host between 30-40 equestrian events.

Discussions continue with Riding for the Disabled and the proposal to relocate their operations to Battle Hill. These focus on use of existing facilities, grazing areas and development of new infrastructure.

Belmont Regional Park

New signage has been developed for the western side of Belmont RP to ensure visitors can better navigate their way around the tracks, to clarify closed areas and guide people to viewpoints over TGM construction works. The TGM contractors will install interpretation signs at viewpoints on existing tracks to keep visitors up to date with the works. We have worked with Porirua City Council (PCC) to show linkages between both agencies' networks of streets and tracks. As part of TGM related works, planning continued for an entrance relocation at Takapu Road and new park signage alerting visitors to the reduced access and alternative routes to take. This work will result in a more attractive entrance area, and provide safe access plus good viewing of the road and large bridge over Cannons Creek during construction. It is being funded by LHJV in return for construction access to tracks outside the TGM designation.

Construction of the new 4 Degrees track has been completed with signage installed. It was opened by Councillors Bruce and Grieg in early December, and is proving extremely popular. This was one of the main projects funded by income from the Stratton St pine plantation logging revenue.

Planning for a connector track to link Hill Road and the Old Coach Road is underway. The Friends of Belmont have secured some community funding to undertake the survey works with the TGM reinvestment funds being used to undertake the actual construction.

Retirement fencing in the Upper Cannons Creek headwaters has been completed. This retires an area of 74 hectares from grazing, which is a good outcome for the environmental restoration programme.

The new farm hub development project is nearing its end with the focus now on completing farm laneways and fence construction. Two sets of satellite yards will be constructed later in the summer. This is the last of the NZTA funded activity compensating for the TGM construction project as it affects the farming operation on Belmont Regional Park.

Landcorp will cease farming the eastern side of the Transmission Gully Motorway designation on 30 June 2016. A tender opportunity has been advertised throughout regional papers, on the GETS website and in farming magazines. Site visits with potential tenderers took place during December with 11 parties attending, many making two visits. Tenders close on 29 January with assessment of these to be undertaken in early February. The new grazing licence will become effective from 1 July 2016.

Queen Elizabeth Park

Planning for the fence maintenance and replacement programme is well underway, with a key focus on stream retirement to comply with the Proposed Natural Resources Plan. NZTA have agreed to undertake 2.5kms of waterway maintenance works ahead of retirement fencing being completed, to manage extra water being directed into the park from the M2PP project. A resource consent application is in development.

As noted above, Beetham Pastoral commenced the farming licence at Queen Elizabeth Park and Whareroa Farm. While the spray issue presents a significant challenge for us, we are impressed with Beetham Pastoral's willingness to engage with the public and work with us to answer questions and enhance public access. As part of the licence negotiations we agreed to retire around 32 hectares of former grazing land, 22 ha as wetland and the other 10ha around Te Ara O Whareroa and other restoration sites. This presents us with large areas to be planted and otherwise restored over time.

We also rationalised the farm buildings, demolishing several that dated from the dairy farm days. Construction of a small woolshed and implement shed is underway. Sheep yards have been built in the old herring bone section of the former cow shed, with the roof retained to provide a covered work space. Materials and machinery salvaged from an old woolshed in Belmont Regional Park are being reused as part of this project.

The Friends of QEP have secured a grant from the Transpower Community fund to seal the track to the bird hide in the Marines wetland and thus provide for disabled access. This work is now underway.

Planning for the 2016 planting season is underway with site preparation to occur during March. All 12,000 trees are growing in the park nursery; the high quality plants being produced are a testament to the invaluable work undertaken by a group of dedicated volunteers.

Eventing Wellington has held training days and had a full field of competitors for their November event. We are observing good compliance with their health and safety obligations, including ATV training to meet the required unit standard level.

Whitireia Park

A new picnic table and path, designed to be barrier-free for people with disabilities, was installed at Onehunga Bay car park. The Pou car park construction will get underway in later February as visitor number reduce allowing less disruption through the construction.

Signs reinforcing the "no off-road vehicle use" and "no fire" messages have been installed replacing the old DOC signs that were in a state of disrepair.

The annual firebreak planting with low flammability species and planning for 2016 sites has been completed with release spraying now complete. Planning for 2017 sites is well advanced with sites confirmed.

4.2.3 Eastern sector

Akatarawa

Major roading projects have been completed on the main road network with over 30 contractor days prior to Christmas in preparation for summer. Works included vegetation cutbacks, clearing water tables, removing slips and metalling sections of track.

The collapse of the Bridge Road vehicle bridge led to UHCC installing temporary vehicle road access through GWRC lands between Totara Park and Bridge Road along an existing walking track. This access route has been sealed and will remain in use for residents until a new bridge is designed and built in approximately 12 months.

Parks has completed the mapping and exploration of tracks in the forest in conjunction with ARAC and Kapiti Mana Motorcycle Club to rationalise the motorised track network. This has been shared and discussed internally prior to finalising for public consultation in 2016, so that the necessary changes may be made to the Parks Network Plan.

East Harbour

A steering group comprising GWRC and members of the Friends of Baring Head has been formed to lead the planning for the Lighthouse complex restoration. GWRC has now received detailed costings on the proposal for using two houses for commercial accommodation and the generator building as a day use area with shelter and interpretation. The steering group will work on the terms of reference, business case, funding strategy and governance model for the lighthouse complex.

GWRC and the Eastbourne Community Board hosted a public meeting to discuss the Harbour View Track initiative. The proposal involves a themed loop track through the Northern Forest and the community of Eastbourne that connects the forest and sea with interpretation and stories at various points. The initial community response at the meeting was positive.

The planned replacement of the main access bridge at Baring Head (over the Wainuiomata River) is on hold while discussions are held with right-of-way holders regarding funding contributions.

Kaitoke Regional Park

The camping season is another record breaker to date being close to capacity over Christmas- New Year and Wellington Anniversary periods. The fine hot weather along with the closure of the DOC Otaki Forks Campground in December has led to the high visitation. Feedback from “Otaki Forkers” has been very positive, with many appreciating the easy access, well organised service, high quality facilities and environment and cellphone reception!

The carpark reconfiguration and resealing has been very successful. This has led to greater use of the carpark and less congestion on the entrance road, with vehicles now parking in well-marked parking slots.

A bollarding project has been completed at the Te Marua area of Kaitoke. Prior to this work staff struggled to manage vehicles in this area with people driving over the grass areas and also running over trees in planting sites. The results have been immediate and very effective.

A group of local mountain bikers hand-built a short 1.3km section of single track in plantation forest at Kaitoke Hill, supported by the Park Ranger. The trail was officially opened in November with a well-publicised event attracting

around 60 people. The trail has received great coverage (front page) in the local media and has resulted in increased use of this area of the park.

Pakuratahi Forest

The news that the Rimutaka Cycle Trail will receive a \$230,000 funding boost from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's (MBIE) Maintaining Great Rides Fund was a highlight of the period. Following a successful application led by GWRC and Hutt City on behalf of the partners (Positively Wellington Tourism, Destination Wairarapa, Upper Hutt City Council and South Wairarapa District Council) the trail received the largest single amount awarded nationwide from the Great Rides fund.

The funding recognises the collaborative cross-council and agency commitment to this regional tourism venture. The grant was based on 50/50 funding model that matched council annual budgets for 2015/16 to be spent on the trail from GWRC, HCC and UHCC dollar for dollar.

A new gate and cycle squeeze barrier has been installed at the Maymorn entrance, following the KiwiRail upgrade of the site. This is part of an ongoing programme to improve the biking experience on the Rimutaka Cycle Trail (RCT).

The road sealing in Tunnel Gully was completed in December 2015 with the top road and carparks chip sealed as part of our ongoing maintenance programme. Work commenced to re-metal the very popular Tanes Track, with several sections of the track being improved.

Surfacing and road formation work on the Rail Trail has also commenced with the metalling and rolling of the section from the main carpark to the Rifle Range. This work was funded by the Hutt Valley Branch of the Deerstalkers Association, which acknowledged their use of the road. Work has also started at the Rail Trail Summit to address the trail formation, surfacing and also drainage and erosion around the Summit Tunnel.

Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection & Recreation Area

Swimming is one of the most popular summer activities in the Recreation Area. Parks has upgraded the track to the main swimming hole on the river and increased the size of the area at the river's edge. This has given visitors better access and more space to sit and relax. This area may also be further enhanced with picnic tables in the near future.

Community connections continue to be developed with 80 Wainuiomata School children having a second visit to the catchment and Zealandia in December. This initiative also builds on our Nature Connections partnership.

Parks continues to work closely with Wellington Water on maintaining water supply infrastructure in the Wainuiomata catchment. The Park Ranger has supervised further contractor work on the catchment road in December and also the use of an orchard cutter to open up the main Reservoir Road access to the treatment plant.

5. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

5.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is not necessary.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report approved by:

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager,
Catchment Management

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry
General Manager,
Environment Management