

Report 99.493

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Andrew Annakin, Divisional Manager, Landcare

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Landcare Committee about activities and matters of interest within the Landcare Division since the last normal Landcare Committee meeting, 8 July 1999. Departmental activity reports are also attached.

2. Fourth Quarter Review

At the recent year-end review with the General Manager and Chief Financial Officer, the best way to describe the 1998/99 financial year in Landcare was *mad, mad, mad!*

We took on a number of challenges at the start, then a whole lot more! And delivered the goods. There is a huge sense of achievement through the Division. Particular highlights were:

- Managing the October '98 flood events (River Corridors and Regional Parks). Damage was quickly assessed and comprehensively reported. Staff then launched into, and significantly advanced, the repair programme;
- Flood Protection maintained momentum on an earlier commitment to recommend a Design Standard for the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan. The public consultation phase is underway and generating a lot of interest - proving a good Community Connection opportunity;

There is some skepticism about "another Landcare snow-job". However, we have been scrupulous that the consultation is about desired levels of security and protection, relative to cost and residual risk. The question of funding - which essentially comes down to the speed of implementation - is a function of the Council's Funding Policy (who pays) and Council-wide priorities to be established through the Long-term Financial Strategy process;

- After the October rain, the summer was hot and dry. Visitor numbers swelled in Regional Parks (those with water areas), stretching Rangers and facilities;
- Providing a Ranging service for the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchments placed further pressure on Rangers, upsetting work rosters, plus the effects of managing a firm deterrent role in the early stages. Relationships, particularly amongst neighbours, are much improved. Scott Farrell is now the permanent Ranger and Gareth Cooper has been appointed as a second Mobile Ranger (for the seven-day service);
- Susan Edwards' team excelled with various issues, workshops and presentations on the future direction of Regional Parks, the *Signature* tools, and a strategic vision for East Harbour Regional Park;
- Regional Parks and Natural Forestry made a significant contribution to the Plantation Forestry Exit Strategy;
- A successful pest control operation took place in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchments;
- Despite other pressures, particularly from flood repairs, Asset Management Plans have been significantly advanced across functional areas. While always a three year programme, considerable effort has gone into ensuring that Councillors will be able to make informed policy decisions on renewals, deferred maintenance, and service levels as part of the Long-term Financial Strategy review.

Moving into the First Half of 1999/00

As well as our normal work programmes, my focus for the first six months will be on:

- **Asset Management Plans:** The second year of this programme has been about preparing Interim Asset Management Plans such that the Council can consider these before final plans are adopted by June 2000. The Interim Asset Management Plans will show a complex mix of “maintenance gaps” in Flood Protection and the product of historic renewal deficiencies (deferred maintenance) in Regional Parks. The acquisition of unfunded assets from the 1995 dissolution of the then Forestry Department created further obligations on Rate funded activities.

The Landcare Managers now have a clear programme for taking this information through the Corporate management loop, to the Landcare Committee and on to the Long-term Financial Strategy. The Interim Asset Management Plans prove the value of a thorough zero-based process and offer a reality check on previous management systems and assumptions. There are two key riders: so far public safety is not compromised, if anything it has been systematically enhanced; and the Council will always have choices for service levels.

- **Hutt Floodplain Management Plan “Design Standard”:** This is to be confirmed with the Advisory Committee and from there to the Landcare Committee’s October meeting. This then completes the Policy and Finance Committee loop from June 1998 to the LTFS review.

Committee members may like to note that the next Hutt River Floodplain Management Advisory Committee meeting, 20 September, is the day before a full Council meeting (the next Landcare Committee meeting is not until 12 October). Therefore, depending on the outcome of the Advisory Committee meeting, either the Advisory Committee Chairman or the Chairman of the Landcare Committee may want to brief the Regional Council directly, at its 21 September meeting.

- **Preparing for the Long-term Financial Strategy:** We have been careful to maintain the mandate set for us in *Facing the Future*, while facilitating the development of new ideas initiated through Council Committees.

However, we are now beginning to contemplate how best to present the Division to meet Councillor requirements through the financial modelling part of the strategic decision making process - resource allocation. A preliminary hierarchy looks like:

- Asset Management Plans (renewals, deferred maintenance and service levels);
- Implementing the Kapiti Coast and Hutt Valley Floodplain Management Plans;
- Regional Parks “Futures”: opportunities in the existing estate drawn from the *Signatures*, particularly the environmental and heritage values, plus other opportunities both internal and external;
- An overarching theme of how best to make Landcare’s contribution to Community Connection, through: Environmental Education, Ranger Services, Iwi, Biodiversity, Care-groups and Volunteers, access to forests and river corridors, heritage, tourism and commercial opportunities.

In addition, through the Divisional visioning exercise I completed for the General Manager in the last final year, I will be undertaking work on:

- The Regional Parks/Natural Forestry integration exercise;
 - Possible name and role changes across the Division; and
 - Future arrangements for the management of Council lands, specifically: achieving the right balance between amenity, environmental and heritage values, and the interface with Utility Services.
- **Disestablishing the WRC Rural Fire District** is now programmed as a Long-term Financial Strategy project - pitched at the 2000/01 financial year. This sits better with the current funding regime and allows appropriate Council consideration following Territorial Authority consultation, plus any transitional arrangements should the proposed disestablishment be agreed.

3. Recommendation

That the Divisional and Departmental reports be received and the contents noted.

ANDREW ANNAKIN
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