

**Report 00.277**

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Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Graham Laws, Landscape Architect, Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

## **Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Fund**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of the origins and use of the Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Fund and to outline possible future land purchase priorities.

### **2. Request for Information on the Fund**

When considering a report on the possible purchase of Rewanui Farm (Report 00.159), the Landcare Committee asked staff to report on:

- the origins and purposes of the Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Fund;
- past purchases from the Fund;
- the present balance of the Fund; and
- future priorities and objectives for the Fund.

This report addresses the request.

### **3. Why Was the Fund Established?**

#### **3.1 Territorial Authorities Agreed to a Levy to Purchase Land for Regional Parks**

The Wellington Regional Planning Authority through the Regional Reserves Committee, undertook the original planning for the regional parks. The Reserves Committee comprised representatives from the territorial authorities<sup>1</sup> and government agencies (Forest Service and Lands and Survey). Their 1976 report *Regional Parks for the Wellington Region* identified suitable park areas, which were provided for in the Wellington Regional Planning Scheme.

<sup>1</sup> Eastbourne Borough Council, Hutt County Council, Lower Hutt City Council, Kapiti Borough Council, Petone Borough Council, Porirua City Council, Tawa Borough Council, Upper Hutt City Council and Wellington City Council.

In April 1977, the Wellington Regional Water Board obtained agreement from the territorial authorities to fund \$50,000 each year to purchase land for regional parks, until a Regional Council was formed.

The Water Board envisaged buying land adjacent to Belmont Regional Park. The land was valued in the order of \$785,150 in 1977, a sum which could be achieved over a ten year period at the levy rate of \$50,000 per annum plus interest (Report PE-83.578).

The Water Board used its land and its management powers, including land acquisition, to carry out the initial development of Belmont and Kaitoke Regional Parks and to open its forest land for public recreation uses. In 1980 the Water Board's functions were taken over by the Regional Council.

### 3.2 **The Purpose of the Fund was Reviewed in 1983/84**

At a meeting of the then Regional Council on 13 June 1983, it was resolved:

*That approval of contributing local authorities be sought to change the name of the Regional Land Purchase Fund and to broaden the purposes and objectives of the fund.*

The Council had in mind using the accumulated funds towards the development costs (as opposed to solely land purchase) associated with Belmont and Kaitoke Regional Parks (Report PE-83.578). The Hutt County, Tawa Borough and Upper Hutt City Councils gave their approval as sought, but the other Councils had opposing views.

In June 1984, the Regional Council again sought the territorial authorities' consent to use the Fund for developing recreation facilities. Porirua City Council insisted that the fund be spent only on the development of Belmont Regional Park. If this request could not be complied with, Porirua City required that its contribution to the fund be refunded (Report 84.515).

The Director of Planning advised (Report PE - 85.243):

*Notwithstanding the non-conclusive nature of present correspondence exchanges with local authorities, it could be helpful to look back to the origins of this fund. Nowhere in the resolutions of the Water Board is there any limiting of the land purchase to Belmont Regional Park, the correspondence with the local authorities being headed 'Regional Parks'.*

*Up until 1983/84, the Wellington Regional Council continued to levy \$50,000 annually for regional parks, and the consensus view of both Regional Council staff and local authorities appears to be that the accumulated fund, up until that time, must be spent on land purchases for regional parks.*

*However, for the most recent year, 1984/85, the \$50,000 has been directly rated for and it would appear there is no limitation on the Regional Council in redirecting use of the monies collected. This sum may be considered unencumbered as to use, and could possibly be used for development works in regional parks, or for purchases outside regional parks."*

In December 1985 (Report PE-85.657) the Regional Council resolved:

*To pursue a policy of land purchase in the regional park areas using the land purchase fund accumulated up to 31 March 1984. That the land purchase fund accumulated since 1 April 1984 be available for land purchase for recreational use outside the regional parks. While accepting that market, availability will be a key determinant, the priorities for land purchase for regional parks and recreation purposes be those set out in this report.*

The Regional Council continued to rate the \$50,000 annually for regional parks land purchases until about 1988, a total of some ten years.

### 3.3 Land Purchase Priorities were Established in 1985

Officers identified future land purchase priorities, (Reports PE-85.243, PE-85.657 and PE-85.658) noting that much depended on when suitable land became available for purchase and whether conservation covenants or walkway easements were viable alternatives.

- ***First Priority***

- (1) Belmont Regional Park - Cornish Street entry (Petone), Boulder Hill and Stratton Street rationalisation and ranger house.
- (2) Kaitoke Regional Park (if State Highway deviation proceeds) - Quesnel land (Te Marua) and land on the left bank of the Pakuratahi River (Waterworks Road).
- (3) East Harbour Regional Park - Pencarrow coastal areas and lakes (Fitzroy Bay) and Gollans Valley (Wainuiomata Golf Club).

- ***Second Priority***

- (1) Land in Makara area to secure significant wildlife features and key recreation access routes.
- (2) Key sites for recreation access elsewhere in the Region (for example Birchville, Cannon Point land). Such purchases could possibly be in conjunction with the relevant territorial authority. Other examples could involve key biological sites.

- ***Third Priority***

- (1) Belmont Regional Park - northern extension to Pauatahanui (SH 58) and rationalisation of the boundaries along the Horokiwi Road/Korokoro Stream area.
- (2) Kaitoke Regional Park - mainly in the Kororipo Stream and Putaputa Stream catchments.
- (3) Battle Hill (with contribution from Forestry Section).

#### 4. Purchases Made From the Land Purchase Fund

Some of the proposed land purchases have been made:

- Stratton Street, 1977 - Belmont Regional Park. (Purchased by the Regional Water Board and transferred to Wellington Regional Council in 1981). *(293ha, \$150,000)*
- Bridge Road, Akatarawa, 1984. (Birchville entrance to Cannon Point Walkway). *(0.5ha, \$35,000)*
- Battle Hill, 1987 (Total \$822,000 with a contribution from Plantation Forestry). (Reports PE-86.538 and 88.219). *(500ha, \$200,000)*
- Wainuiomata Golf Club Block, 1987 - East Harbour Regional Park (Report 87.379). *(140ha, \$20,000)*
- Cornish Street, 1988 - Belmont Regional Park (Report 88.451). *(0.5ha, \$64,000)*
- Stratton Street Road Widening, 1989 - Belmont Regional Park (Report 89.67). *(\$90,000)*
- Pencarrow Lakes Block, 1992 - East Harbour Regional Park (Total \$266,000 with contributions from DoC \$40,000, QEII National Trust \$10,000 and Forest & Bird \$5,000) (Reports PE-90.881, 90.81, PE-91.384, PE-91.489). *(420ha, \$211,000)*
- Baring Head (Improvements, property and legal fees), 1993 - East Harbour Regional Park (Report PE 93.509) *(\$72,000)*
- Karapoti Bridge, 1995 - Akatarawa Forest. (Report 93.104) *(\$20,000)*
- Walkway easements/survey costs, 1995 - Belmont Regional Park. *(\$25,000)*
- Rose Property, Waitohu Road, York Bay, 1996 - East Harbour Regional Park. (Total \$80,000 with a \$40,000 contribution from the Indigenous Forest Heritage Fund) (Report PE-96.07). *(44ha, \$40,000)*

Total expenditure from the fund to 1996 was \$902,000.

#### 5. What is the Balance of the Land Purchase Reserve Fund?

The balance of the Fund at 31 March 2000 was \$645,469. The fund is currently accumulating interest of about \$40,000 per annum.

## 6. Current Future Uses/Priorities for the Land Purchase Fund

In February 1999, Susan Edwards highlighted key issues for the Landcare Committee to consider in relation to the future direction for Regional Parks (Report 99.18). The report recognised there was pressure on existing lands, pressure to create additional parks and also for increased access to forests. The “Porcupine Diagram” outlined opportunities within the existing regional parks network for the next three years.

Future priorities for expanding the Regional Parks have been identified through submissions to the Council's Annual Plan and LTFS deliberations.

- First priority is to maintain existing regional parks and recreation areas;
- Second priority is for creating new regional parks, (e.g., Whitireia Park and Wairarapa Wetlands); and
- Third priority is for linear trails and facilitating access to the coast or rivers.

It should be noted that the total current balance of the Land Purchase Reserve could be expended solely on priority one purchases, depending on whether land needs to be purchased and whether conservation covenants or walkway easements are viable alternatives.

### 6.1 First Priority - Existing Regional Parks and Recreation Areas

#### *Belmont Regional Park*

Recently, when the Hutt City Council was considering selling land in the Kilmister Block, potential threats to the future of Belmont Regional Park were identified (Reports 00.157 and 00.160).

Landcorp owns almost all of the western (Porirua) side of the Park and provides important links between Dry Creek and the Kilmister Block through to Korokoro Valley. The land is effectively private land that could potentially be sold. Although the existing walkways are protected, if the land is sold there would still be significant impact, particularly on environmental and heritage values.

Similarly, in the event that the Takapu Block is sold, legal provision has been made for existing public walkways across the Block to be gazetted, ensuring protection of the walkways, if not the whole Block, for future generations. Department of Conservation and Regional Council officers are continuing to seek ownership of the Block.

Porirua City Council continues to make submissions via the WRC Annual Plan process, requesting more access points into Belmont Regional Park from Porirua City. Currently there are only two access points within Porirua City compared with seven access points on the Hutt City side of the Park. There may be opportunities to create additional entrance points from Porirua and walking track links, through negotiation with Landcorp.

#### *East Harbour Regional Park*

A Councillor workshop in May 1999 looked at future directions for East Harbour Regional Park (Report 99.352). There are expectations that the Council will develop East Harbour Regional Park. There are major issues over obtaining public access to two areas of the Park managed by the Regional Council - Baring Head and the Lakes Block - land purchase is a likely strategy.

The Park is high in all three *Signature* values; having nationally important lakes and wetland habitats, nationally rare plant species, regenerating bush, forests, numerous archaeological features, lighthouse heritage features and moderately high recreational values.

There have also been discussions in the past about the Regional Council taking over control and management of some of the areas of land in the Park owned by the Department of Conservation and the Hutt City Council - this may involve land purchase, survey or legal costs.

### ***Pakuratahi Forest***

The Regional Council owns and controls only part of the Rimutaka Incline Walkway - the section from State Highway 2, near Kaitoke, to Summit. The Department of Conservation controls the portion from Summit to Cross Creek on the Wairarapa side of the Rimutaka Range. It has been suggested that the walkway and environs should be controlled by one organisation as a regional park. It may be possible to link the Rimutaka Incline Walkway to Tunnel Gully, along the old railway route/formation. Better links to Kaitoke Regional Park may also be facilitated with the proposed highway realignment works.

The wider Pakuratahi Forest is high in all three *Signature* values - high heritage and ecological values and increasingly important for recreation. Public demand to use the area and to protect its heritage and environmental values is increasing.

## **6.2 Second Priority - New Regional Parks**

### ***Wairarapa Wetlands Regional Park***

The Regional Council has no Regional Parks in the Wairarapa. The Council is proposing to develop a Wairarapa Wetlands park in the LTFS. Lake Wairarapa Wetlands could be developed in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and the South Wairarapa District Council. It may be desirable to buy some land, or to negotiate access easements or walkways to link existing reserves.

### ***Whitireia Park***

In August 1999 the Landcare Committee considered a request for the Regional Council to take over management of Whitireia Park (Report 99.482). The proposed LTFS provides for this. Although most of the Park is reserve land, some other areas may need to be purchased and this may involve survey or legal costs.

## **6.3 Third Priority - Future Trails, Coast and Rivers Access**

### ***Coastal Trail***

A proposal was developed in 1991 to create a coastal trail following the coastline around the Region (Report 94.47). This would provide public access along the entire coastline, linking areas like Queen Elizabeth Park, Wellington South Coast, East Harbour Regional Park and the Hutt River Trail. There is currently access to many areas of the coastline, but there are gaps limiting access along its entirety. Some land may need to be purchased, or access easements or walkways provided over other areas.

The Makara Guardians wrote to the Council towards the end of 1998, asking the Council to buy the land south of Makara for a Regional Park. ECNZ is considering a wind farm in this area. The Wellington City Council also has an interest in this area becoming a park.

### ***River Corridors***

Other opportunities exist for environmental protection and recreation access along river corridors, for example the Waikanae or Otaki Rivers or rivers in the Wairarapa. Public input into the Floodplain Management Plans and Resource Consent processes for river management has supported the intent to bring river corridors into public ownership, over time. These river corridors could be multi-purpose parks for flood protection, soil conservation, water quality, wildlife/ecological corridors and recreation on the water and land, (e.g., Hutt River).

The maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers is a matter of national importance in the Resource Management Act [S6(d)].

### ***Te Araroa - North Island Foot Trail***

Te Araroa Trust proposes to establish a walkway running the length of the North Island. Some portions of the proposed walkway pass through Regional Council land. The Trust requested funding assistance to purchase land and/or negotiate access easements or walkways over other areas, such as Whareroa Farm (Report 93.388). The Whareroa Farm walkway proposal would link Queen Elizabeth Park and Akatarawa Forest.

## **7. Communications**

This report is for information and there are no communications/public relations opportunities arising.

## **8. Recommendation**

*That the Committee receives the report and notes its contents.*

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