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WELLINGTON

Dear Murray

Public Access to the **Wainuiomata** and Orongorongo Water Supply Catchments

Thank-you for the opportunity to comment on **this issue**. Regional **Public Health** views this as **an** important issue in terms of the potential risk to the people that are served by the water supply.

Up until the early 1990% there has been an increased trend on the reliance of water treatment technologies to ensure the safety of drinking water. At the same time there was a trend to relax **control** in the area of management and protection of water supply **catchments**. **Internationally**, the turning point **followed** the (US) Milwaukee outbreak of **cryptosporidium** in 1993. This outbreak **affected** over 400,000 people and resulted in a number of deaths. Since then the trend has reversed and it is acknowledged that there is a considerable risk to **rely** solely on **water** treatment technology. There is now a growing recognition that **effective** drinking water risk management includes ensuring the quality of source **water** is as high as possible.

The USEPA has a proposed vision to ensure that in 25 years, nearly 100% of the community drinking water supplies will have source water protection measures in place as part of a **comprehensive** water quality management approach to provide safe drinking water to the public. The third report on the Sydney water contamination event identified a seriously compromised **catchment** and as a consequence a Catchment Authority was set up **to** manage and protect Sydney's water supply catchments.

In New Zealand, the proposed Health (Water Supply) Regulations will introduce a risk management approach to chinking water supplies. Under this approach risk management **procedures/plans** will need to be developed for all aspects of a **community** drinking water supply from collection of raw **water** through to treatment, distribution and storage. **Catchment** management and raw water protection will be an integral part of these plans and will **ensure** that potential risks **to** public health are managed.

The natural bush **forest** of the **Wainuiomata/Orongorongo** water supply **catchment** area is one of the most effective natural filters. Native forest is considered superior to

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exotic forest in terms of water purification. The natural ecology of the **native** forest ensures that high quality **source** water is provided. In permitting **access** to the area, measures need to be taken to ensure that the native forest is not adversely **affected**.

Given the importance of the native forest, it is important that effective measures are taken to control feral animals which **degrade** the forest and are one of the main contributors to pathogens in the source water.

The area is physically more accessible than the **Hutt** collection area and closer to a urban population. The high level of recreational users in the **neighbouring** Catchpool area and the desire people have to visit shows the value people place on the outdoor environment. **An increased** number of visitors to the area not only will increase the pathogen risk but will also have an adverse input **on** the natural forest. A higher loading of pathogens in the source water will undoubtedly have an affect downstream at the treatment plant and therefore increase the risk of contamination of the public water supply.

The definition of a “protected catchment” is outlined in **the** Guidelines for Drinking **Water** Management in New Zealand: “A **catchment** which is has major points of **access fenced and is controlled so that there is only strictly controlled human access and limited feral animals**”.

It is our **preference that** the catchment meets the definition of “protected”. **It** is also our preference that the **area** is managed and controlled in such a way that there is not an adverse input in the native forest as this will affect **the** overall water quality **from** the catchment.

In restricting access to the **catchment**, consideration must be given to:

- Clear buffer zones of no entry around the catchment intake areas
- Restricting vehicle access to the road under supervision
- No camping overnight
- NV domestic animals
- Feral animal control **programme**

Regional Public health are happy to provide further input or advice **and** look forward to working with the Wellington Regional Council on this issue.

Yours sincerely



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REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH