

Flood Protection Strategy and Assets Manager : Brendan Paul

Report for Period Ending 16 March 2001

1. Waikanae River Floodplain Management [Graeme Campbell]

1.1 Friends of the Waikanae River

Work with the 'Friends' is continuing. Their Working Group met on 28 February 2001 and there has been considerable contact with the Chair and Secretary to discuss aspects of their activities. The next meeting is on 4 April.

The Group has approved its annual and strategic plans. The highest priority projects have begun. These are:

- Developing the south bank upstream of Otaihanga where John Topliff has been planting trees for some time.
- Maintaining plantings and clearing weeds on the north bank between SH1 and Pukekawa Reserve.
- Developing a project to enhance and maintain the Pukekawa Reserve.
- Assisting the Iwi with the rehabilitation project at the waterworks intake.

Operations staff cleared a large area of ground on the south bank to allow the group to plant trees in the autumn. The group is also proposing to spend Saturday 23 March 2001 clearing weeds in the Pukekawa Reserve.

1.2 State Highway 1 to Maple Lane

Design work for modifications to the bank edge protection in the Kebbells bend area is complete and the rock necessary for the works delivered to site. The works entail raising a section of rock rip-rap below the bluff and widening the grade control immediately downstream of the bluff. It is proposed to construct the works by the end of March 2001.

1.3 Otaihanga

KCDC consultants have substantially completed design of the proposed road raising on Otaihanga Road and draft plans were provided to the Flood Protection Group. We will now contact individual owners affected by the work and seek their sign-off.

Work is progressing preparing resource consents for gravel extraction from the river in the vicinity of Otaihanga. A draft consent, ready for consultation, should be complete by the end of March 2001. A meeting with the Otaihanga community is proposed for early April to introduce the document and to advise them of the consent application process. Councillors will be informed of meeting details through the Councillors Bulletin.

2. Otaki River Floodplain Management Plan [Graeme Campbell]

2.1 Friends of the Otaki River

The 'Friends' group has held two further meetings to plan activities for the coming year. These activities include:

- Planning their involvement in Chrystalls Bend environmental areas.
- Planning their involvement in the river mouth nature reserve project.
- Meeting staff from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's office as part of the review of Kapiti Coast District Council's proposed water take from the Otaki River, to supplement the Waikanae water supply.
- Making a submission on the proposed Otaki water take.
- Making contact with the wider Otaki community in relation to activities and opportunities associated with the river.
- Meeting the formal requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Flood Protection Group.

2.2 Mouth to State Highway 1 Bank Edge Protection Work

Work has started on construction of the Lethbridge (south bank) edge protections. The bank edge has been shaped to the preferred channel alignment and placement of the rock rip-rap has commenced. 2,000 tonnes of rock was delivered to site and a further 1,500 tonnes of rock will be delivered over the next two weeks. Rock placement will be completed within three weeks.

The design and set-out for the Winstones (north bank) work is complete and delivery of rock to the site will commence when the Lethbridge deliveries are complete.

The design of berm and stopbank reinstatement works adjacent to the Katihiku Marae has commenced. The berm was eroded during the October 2000 flood, and the stopbank eroded by a succession of smaller events since then. Reconstruction of the berm is expected to commence in early April 2001.

2.3 Convent Road Deflector Bank Design

A design report on options for improving flood protection in this area is complete. The investigation found that only minor improvements can be made using deflector banks. A substantial improvement would require raising the bridge and extensive channel widening. The bridge raising and channel works are included in the Otaki Floodplain Management Plan, but are not budgeted in the current ten-year business plan.

The findings will be reported back to the local community at a meeting on Friday 6 April 2001. Councillors will be informed of the meeting arrangements through the Councillors Bulletin.

2.4 **Rangiuru Outlet Structure**

Design for this project is substantially complete and a resource consent prepared. The resource consent will be non-notified and no major objections to the work are expected. Construction is expected to start in May and be complete by June 2001.

2.5 **South Bank Landowner Meeting**

A number of the riverside land owners on Otaki Gorge Road, opposite Upper Rahui, have requested a meeting with Flood Protection officers to discuss the continuing cliff erosion. Edge protections were proposed as part of the recent Upper Rahui works but the south bank owners declined to participate at that time. A range of options will be presented again to the owners at a meeting to be held on 22 March 2001.

Substantial bank protection works are proposed in the Otaki Floodplain Management Plan but the priority is such that they are not included in the current ten-year business plan.

2.6 **Otaki River Cross-section Survey**

Work is progressing well on this survey with approximately 70 percent of the field work complete. The field work should be fully completed by the end of March 2001. Analysis of the survey information will follow and is expected to be completed by June 2001 as programmed.

3. **Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan (HRFMP) [Daya Atapattu]**

3.1 **Plan Drafting**

The Hutt River Floodplain Management Advisory Committee endorsed the HRFMP Consultation Draft on 8 March 2001. This marked a major milestone in the actual Plan preparation process which started in July 2000. The Consultation Draft will be available for public consideration and submissions from 19 March 2001. Submissions close on 17 April 2001.

3.2 **Design Standard Implementation**

Ava Railway Crossing Investigations

Stage 1 of the Ava Railway crossing feasibility study is on programme to be completed by mid April 2001. Holmes Consulting Group have presented a draft report containing outcomes of the preliminary investigation of selected options. Flood Protection staff are now reviewing this report.

From this Stage 1 study, at least two preferred upgrade options will be put forward for further evaluation. Stage 2, programmed to commence in April 2001, will further evaluate and refine the two preferred options and recommend an implementation option. Stage 2 will be completed by June 2001.

Tranz Rail and the Regional Council will then negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding to conclude an upgrading strategy and define responsibilities for the crossing; to be completed in the 2001/02 financial year.

Ava to Ewen Preliminary Design and Resource Consents

The Ava to Ewen reach upgrading will include channel relocation, edge protections, stopbank upgrades and other associated works. The appointed consultant, AC Consulting Group has completed the topographical survey and geotechnical investigations. Preliminary design and resource consent applications will be completed by June 2001.

Detailed designs, including a physical model study, and tender documents will be completed in 2001/02 ready for construction to commence in 2002/03.

Progress in implementing the HRFMP was reported to the community through press releases and the "Living with the River" newsletter. Local community and major stakeholder input and preferences for Ava to Ewen structural works will be obtained through direct consultation and public meetings. The resource consent process will provide further opportunities to make formal submissions.

3.3 Environmental Strategy

We are delighted to present to the Landcare Committee at this March meeting, the Hutt River Environmental Strategy. Its preparation has been a very challenging process and its publishing marks another milestone towards completion of the HRFMP. Copies will be distributed to Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, public libraries, Hutt Valley schools and selected groups. Trecia Smith managed the publishing process.

Release of the Hutt River Environmental Strategy was advised through press releases and the "Living with the River" newsletter.

4. Porirua Stream [Geoff Dick]

4.1 Findlay Street Realignment Works

AC Consulting Group was appointed to this contract. Design work and consents preparations are well underway, a non-notified consent is anticipated and the design report is due on 28 March.

Following acceptance of the design report, the next step is to prepare construction documents – at that stage a decision will be made on whether to proceed with construction before autumn, or defer it until the next construction season in November.

5. **Mangaone Stream Flood Hazard Assessment [Phillip Purves]**

The Professional Services Contract was awarded to Montgomery Watson NZ Ltd on 27 February 2001. They will carry out the detailed investigation work needed to complete the assessment by the end of the 200/01 financial year.

The stream survey component of the investigation is underway and an initial walkover of the area with the Consultants took place on 5 March 2001.

6. **Planning and Development Services [Phillip Purves]**

The following summarises the formal, written requests for information or advice attended to during January and February:

	<u>Jan/Feb</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Requests brought forward	37	13
Additional requests received	25	125
Responses provided	20	96
Outstanding requests	42	42

7. **Manager's Comment**

As recorded above, progress on all key projects is excellent. Recent highlights were the Hutt River Floodplain Management Advisory Committee endorsing the HRFMP Consultation Draft, and publishing the Hutt River Environmental Strategy.

Applicants who responded to our advertisements for river environment engineers have been short-listed. There is a good range of applicants for each of the graduate, assistant and senior engineer positions – there are no suitable applicants in the engineer category. The latter will be re-advertised following the other appointments.

BRENDAN PAUL
Manager, Flood Protection (Strategy and Assets)

Flood Protection Operations Manager : Geoff Dick

Report for Period Ending 16 March 2001

Flood Protection Operations and Maintenance [Geoff Dick]

1. Hutt River

The settled summer weather is enabling excellent progress with the Hutt River works programme. Notable items include:

- Rock delivery for the final *Owen Street* groyne is nearly complete.
- Construction of a new rock lining at *Maoribank* to repair failing debris fences is underway.
- We completed some follow up work at *Bridge Road*, following requests and funding input from the Robins family and Upper Hutt City Council.
- Trees removed from the stopbank at *Manor Park* as part of the ongoing maintenance programme.
- Commencing refurbishment of a further 150m of the rail iron and gabion protection works at *Totara Park*, Upper Hutt.
- Installing replacement anchor chains for the marker buoys that define the *Hutt River Mouth* extraction area.

October 1998 flood repairs

This project is finally nearing total completion in the Hutt River with the arrival of the remaining rock to build the third and final groyne at Owen Street. All work at Owen Street is expected to be complete by mid April.

October 2000 Flood Damage Repairs

The key project at present is constructing a new section of rock lining at Maoribank to replace failing debris fences. The survey work reminded me of the dedication of our field staff. In order to survey bed levels at the erosion site, Mike Jensen was literally 'up to his neck' in the river with a surveying staff. Mike assures us that it is difficult to swim and hold a fully extended 5 metre staff at the same time.

The next priority is to prepare a design and commence repairs at Mary Huse Grove, Manor Park.

Maintenance Programme

We are progressively removing trees from stopbanks as part of the annual maintenance programme. We have removed trees at Manor Park and will shortly remove two large trees at Totara Park. However, tree removal often causes controversy with adjacent residents. Quite naturally some people do not like to see well established trees removed, despite our explaining the need to maintain stopbank security.

Work has started on refurbishing a further 150 metres of the existing rail and netting gabion work downstream of Norbert Street, Totara Park. This original work is now approaching 15 years old and beginning to fail in some areas. The riverbed through this reach has dropped markedly in parts undermining existing work. The asset maintenance plan provides for the renewal of a section every year until the full 800 metres of fence is refurbished.

Tenders were recently advertised to renew the grass mowing contract in the Hutt Valley and Porirua areas. This work involves the tractor mowing of river berms and stopbank faces. Four tenders were received and are currently being evaluated.

2. **Otaki River**

We also continue to make the most of the settled weather in Kapiti. Notable work items on the Otaki River include:

- *Upper Rahui* gravel extraction contract completed.
- Upper river in-channel works, including cross-blading and beach grooming completed.
- Rock lining extensions and top-ups on the main *Chrystalls Bend* rock wall and at Stresscrete completed.
- Additional debris fences and a cabled concrete block mattress installed to stop berm scour at the downstream end of the *Chrystalls Bend* rock lining.
- The eroded right bank berm at Winstones restored as part of the capital improvement works on the lower Otaki River.

Upper Rahui

All physical works associated with the Upper Rahui project are now complete. Winstone Aggregates extracted 122,000m³ of river gravel to form the new floodway. In addition, a final remnant of former Manawatu Catchment Board edge protection works that extended into the newly widened channel was removed. 12 concrete blocks and about 45 tonnes of rock were recovered and returned to the stockpile.

October 2000 Flood Damage Repairs

Good progress is being made on flood damage repairs, with costs tracking close to budget.

Otaki River Mouth

Winstone Aggregates Limited commenced extraction of the “top end” of the diversion cut at the river mouth. Surveyors are currently producing a topographical plan for the repair to the Katihiku stopbank on the south bank.

3. Waikanae River

All cross-blading work required to repair flood damage is complete. We also completed repairs to the footpath and carpark at Pukekawa Reserve.

Rock for the State Highway 1 to Maple Lane repairs is now on site. The repair design is complete, and construction is planned for April.

4. Water Courses

A grade-control weir was built in the *Mangaone Stream* below the Camm and Lucinsky properties to restore the degraded bed and help stabilise two access bridges.

The annual clearing run has commenced in the *Porirua Stream*.

Periodic Detention workers are continuing to clear weed from the *Waiwhetu Stream*. However, the weed appears to be winning in parts. Continuing efforts will be made to prepare the stream for winter by manual methods, but a decision will need to be made shortly on whether to carry out a weed spray run.

The Environment Division has selected the Waiwhetu Stream for an environmental enhancement project. An action plan has been developed to improve its health and appearance. A committee of local residents, industry, and iwi are managing the process. Hutt City Council and Wellington Regional Council have representatives on the committee, including Steve Murphy from Flood Protection. This committee has agreed to take over the role of the Waiwhetu Liaison Group which was specifically set up to monitor the control of aquatic weed.

6. Willow Sawfly

On 7 March we hosted a meeting of regional council river staff to examine alternatives to willows. Indications from Hawkes Bay and Bay of Plenty are that the sawfly may mean the total loss of existing edge protection willows in some areas. Climate may exert some control but the very small genetic base of New Zealand willows multiplies the risk. Stan Braaksma from WRC Wairarapa presented a list of possible alternative species and it was agreed that regional councils would include the more promising of these in their coming planting programme as trials.

Steve Murphy and Garry Baker also attended a willow and poplar workshop at the HortResearch nursery, Aokoutere. This workshop covered the identification of willows and poplars as well as an appreciation of their habits, uses and site requirements. The latest knowledge on the sawfly was also discussed.

7. **Gravel Extraction**

Gravel extraction for the Upper Rahui project is now complete.

Selection of preferred extractors to remove gravel from the Hutt and Waikanae Rivers is progressing. Interviews with selected applicants will be held shortly. Unfortunately this process has been delayed by other priorities.

Gravel extraction figures for the period ending 28 February 2001 are set out below.

River	Area	Contractor	Period Year 2000/2001 (cubic metres)		Year 1999/2000 (cubic metres)
			Period	Year	Full Year
Hutt	Estuary	Winstones	4,704	25,921	46,966
	River		0	0	927
Otaki	River	Winstones & G Holland (99/00)	7,790	12,250	71,492
	Upper Rahui	Winstones	9,310	40,220	46,350
Waikanae	River		Nil	Nil	1,484
TOTALS			21,804	78,391	167,219

GEOFF DICK
Manager, Flood Protection (Operations)

Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

Manager : Susan Edwards

Report for Period Ending 16 March 2001

1. Manager's Comments (Susan Edwards)

During February and March the Parks and Forests Strategy & Marketing team focused on a number of policy projects and ensuring the capital works programme is delivered by year-end; information on core projects is contained below.

Historic Places Trust Visit to the Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully Recreation Areas

Dean Hearfield (Ranger - Akatarawa/Pakuratahi) and I took the archaeologist and planners from the Historic Places Trust on a site visit to the Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully Recreation Areas. The purpose of the visit was to look at:

- the Pakuratahi Bridge restoration;
- two areas where rail heritage features are threatened by river erosion and to identify acceptable solutions to the problems;
- the State Highway 2 road re-alignment proposal by Transit New Zealand and its impact on the railway formation.

This was the first time these people had visited the area. They were impressed with the heritage features along the walkways.

Biodiversity Projects

Philippa Crisp and I have been working with the Environment and Wairarapa Divisions and the Biosecurity Department on the various Biodiversity projects. A workshop for Councillors is planned during April.

Environmental Education Infrastructure in the Parks and Forests

In the 2000/01 Annual Plan, the Council allocated money to develop infrastructure for the Environmental Education Trails in the parks and forests. The Environmental Education Co-ordinators have identified the additional infrastructure they require to run the Trails. We are now working with them to design and construct the facilities. Many of these facilities will also be available to the public (e.g., new tracks).

Open Space Seminar Presentation

On Saturday, 17 March, I gave a presentation at an Open Space Seminar (organised by the Wellington Civic Trust) on the Wellington Regional Council's role in open space management. I was asked to cover three core areas: parks and forests, biosecurity (pest control) and coastal management responsibilities. The presentation generated a lengthy discussion covering a range of topics. Wayne Hastie and Wayne O'Donnell helped prepare the information on coastal management and biosecurity.

2. **Resource Management and Planning (Anne Manley & Philippa Crisp)**

Wainuiomata-Orongorongo Water Collection Area Access Plan Launch

On Sunday, 25 February 2001, Regional Councillors, local iwi and members of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association (programmed as Catchment visitors that day) joined together for the official launch of the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area Access Plan. The current phase of the Access Plan (Phase 1) is based on a series of ranger-guided walking tours. These tours give people the chance to view exceptional flora and fauna, while minimising the risk to the water supply. We were blessed with fine weather and a good day was had by all. Phase 1 is being reviewed and a report will be prepared for the Utility Services Committee soon.

Strategy for Marketing Commercial Recreation and Ecotourism Concessions

Tourism Resource Consultants (TRC) who were involved in the review of the concessions policy and preparing the guidelines for staff working with concessionaires, have been contracted to prepare a strategy for marketing our parks and forests for commercial recreation and ecotourism concessions. The objective is to identify new opportunities for recreation and tourism concessions in the parks and forests and new ways of marketing the areas to potential concessionaires. This exercise is part of the Marketing Strategy for the Parks and Forests approved by the Committee last July (refer Report 00.489).

Porirua Walkways

Porirua City Council has developed a strategy for developing new walkways within its boundaries. Late last year, Porirua City Council officers met with Parks and Forests officers. We gave our support to the concept and gave preliminary comments on the detail in the walkway plans. We were particularly pleased to see the links into Belmont Regional Park identified. Porirua City officers will contact us again once work on walkways linking to or crossing WRC land is scheduled to begin. We will continue to work with them and offer assistance, where required.

Concessions and Filming

February and March have again been busy months for filming and concession applications. Demand to use the parks and forests for these activities, remains fairly high, although we expect to see the usual down turn over winter.

Planning is underway to launch the filming promotional video during late April/early May. We will be inviting producers and directors from film companies, along with representatives from Film New Zealand and Film Wellington.

Environmental Management in the Parks and Forests

Philippa Crisp has the annual Forest Condition Survey underway for the Water Collection Areas. Fieldwork will be carried out later this month and through April to check that pathogens (e.g., moths, fungi), that may damage the forest, are not present.

Work on identifying the extent of the pest plants in the parks and forests is progressing well. Pest animal control work has also been undertaken (refer Bruce Andrell's Manager's Report for details).

State Highway Realignment Projects

Staff continue to work with consultants on the various roading proposals and projects that impact on the Regional Parks. These include State Highway 58 upgrade on the northern end of Belmont Regional Park, State Highway 1 road widening at Queen Elizabeth Park and the proposed overbridge at Mackays Crossing.

East Harbour Regional Park Survey

We commenced a visitor survey at East Harbour Regional Park during March. The survey is the first stage in the Park Management Plan review. We are also undertaking four focus group meetings with:

- environmental groups, (e.g., East Harbour Environmental Association, MIRO);
- duck shooters;
- walkers, runners;
- mountain bikers.

The results of the survey and focus groups will be analysed to give a Park users perspective on issues like:

- whether the Northern Block should be part of the Park;
- if access is currently adequate;
- which, if any, organisation should be the lead management agency;
- whether the Park name should be changed to "Pencarrow Regional Park";
- what people like and dislike about the Park.

These issues were identified during the strategic visioning exercise for the Park (refer report 99.352).

Staff will also meet Hutt City Council officers, Department of Conservation and key landowners adjacent to the Park, to obtain their perspectives on future Park management.

3. Community Connections and Marketing (Graham Laws)

Marketing Strategy - "*Regional Outdoors*" Programme

The last "*Regional Outdoors*" event was held on 24 March. The programme of events in the parks and forests commenced in December and received good attendance. Feedback on the events is positive with several users thanking the Regional Council for organising the events.

Events included: guided walks, mountain biking skills and secrets, power pramming (walks with baby buggies), history talks, a 4WD sunset tour, a hands-on pest control session, horse-care and maintenance, a walk the dog day, and a beginner's guide to the rainforest.

We distributed feedback surveys at each of the events. These are being analysed and the results will be reported to the Committee in May.

4. Capital Works Projects (Graham Laws & Anne Manley)

Road Resealing Queen Elizabeth Park and Kaitoke Regional Park

The contractor has completed the pre-sealing work at Queen Elizabeth Park; re-sealing will be happening in April. The Kaitoke resealing work is being undertaken by Technical Services, of Utility Services Division. The work is due for completion in May.

Rimutaka Incline Walkway Bridge Restoration

Work on restoring the Pakuratahi Bridge is progressing well. The contractor should complete the job in May. The restoration work is specialised and time consuming.

Replacing Paekakariki Beach Toilet, Queen Elizabeth Park

We are replacing the existing toilet at Paekakariki Beach further inland to the same design as the one at Whareroa Beach. Iwi have agreed to the chosen site and a Historic Places Trust authority obtained in case any archaeological features are disturbed during construction. Consultants have completed the design and gained resource consents. Tenders have been called, with construction planned to start early April, after peak summer visitation.

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Workshop

Construction of the workshop and storage shed will commence shortly.

5. Environmental Enhancement and Volunteer Projects (Ross Jackson)

Friends of Belmont Regional Park Public Meetings

Parks and Forests officers worked with Valerie Smith and other community representatives facilitating public meetings at Lower Hutt and Porirua on the proposal to establish a "Friends of Belmont Regional Park". A steering group has been formed to work on Terms of Reference for the Friends. The meeting at the Belmont Hall was attended by 45 people, while the Porirua meeting attracted 17.

Paekakariki Focus Group Continue to Meet

A meeting was held recently at Paekakariki with the Focus Group formed to oversee the preparation of an Improvement Plan following a public meeting in 1997. The group decided to continue to meet twice a year with Council officers to express their views on the management of "their" end of Queen Elizabeth Park. The items they wish to discuss are largely day to day operational matters.

Cannons Creek Restoration Plan Draft Completed

The Restoration Plan being produced by Boffa Miskell, Parks and Forests officers and Friends of Maara Roa is progressing well. The Plan will provide a blueprint for Council and the Friends for this long-term project. The project will eventually provide the Porirua side of Belmont Regional Park with a substantial bush area. When the Plan is completed, we will report it to the Committee.

Queen Elizabeth Park Environmental Enhancement Project

Planning work is continuing on the dune, remnant bush and wetland restoration projects at Queen Elizabeth Park.

SUSAN EDWARDS

Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

Parks and Forests (Operations) Department

Manager: Bruce Andrell

Report for Period Ending 16 March 2001

1. Manager's Comments

Bedding in the New Parks and Forests (Operations) Structure

We have completed our restructure recruitment with the appointment of Colin Knapp to the remaining Assistant Ranger vacancy. Colin started work on 5 March 2001. This appointment brings the eastern maintenance team up to full complement. As reported in the March issue of *Coast to Coast*, the western maintenance team has set up a temporary base in the Plimerton industrial estate. They will move to Battle Hill Farm Forest Park in the third quarter of next financial year, after completing building renovations. Splitting the maintenance teams was a key feature of the new Operations structure; creating efficiencies by reducing travel times, balanced our focus, and improved our ability to respond across the network. Both Matt Ballantine and Fraser Oliver are busy inducting the new staff and organising a comprehensive training programme.

Environmental Protection Work Programme

Animal Control Operations

I worked closely with Philippa Crisp, Landcare Adviser - Environmental Stewardship, on prioritising and planning this year's large animal control programmes. Philippa has added a more scientific approach to our planning - correlating pest animals to the forest health status. The Rangers, who are in the best position to manage the operations and minimise conflict with park users and neighbours, complement Philippa's work.

Professional hunters carried out an animal pest control operation in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water collection areas in early January. The initial operation was successful and a follow-up operation in February further reduced animal populations in specific hot spots, identified during the initial sweep. The total kill for both operations is 205 goats, 30 pigs and 30 deer.

Professional hunters have also carried out a feral goat control operation in the Korokoro Valley, Belmont Regional Park. Hunting in the block is difficult with steep valley sides covered in Onga Onga (native stinging nettle) and gorse. The operation culled a total of 205 goats that were damaging native forest regeneration in the Park. Reducing goat numbers in conjunction with last year's possum control operation will result in a significant improvement in forest health.

Weed Control – Battle Hill Bush Reserve

Control work has begun on two pest plants in the Battle Hill Bush Reserve. A contractor is spraying Tradescantia and African Club Moss. The native seedlings will have a better chance of establishing after eradicating these two species from the forest floor.

Pest Plant Surveys

Rangers and contractors are conducting pest plant surveys in the Regional Parks and Forests. The weed surveys will identify and map the distribution of the pest plants across the network. This information will be used by Philippa Crisp to formulate a pest plant management strategy for the parks and forests.

Rural Fire

Parks and Forests (Operations) staff have been actively involved in suppressing multiple rural fires in the Silverstream/Pinehaven area during 16, 17 and 18 January and Makara on 2 March. We have demonstrated the Council's on-going commitment to assisting territorial authorities with rural fire management, since dis-establishing the Council's Rural Fire District last year. Our involvement has been front line, suppressing the fires, and in one case managing a fire operation. Maintaining our rural fire capability enables the Council to contribute as part of a regional response to large-scale incidents. Regular staff training and exercises are scheduled for the rest of the fire season.

2. Western Sector (Matt Ballantine)

Work continues on replacing a long footbridge on the Cornish Street Track, Belmont Regional Park, as part of the structures upgrade programme. The spell of fine weather enabled the project to proceed smoothly with minimal interruptions. All materials were pre-fabricated and flown in to the site; two kilometres from the road end. The project will be completed by the third week of March.

Kereru Back in Numbers at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

A large flock of Kereru (native wood pigeon) have been seen around the Ranger's house recently. Numbering 20 birds, this is the largest group anyone can remember seeing in the valley. Intensive possum, rat and mustelid control work on Regional Council lands and neighbouring properties has contributed to an increase in the available food source and reduced the level of predation the birds suffer.

Korokoro Dam Survey – Belmont Regional Park

Clearance of vegetation around the face of the Korokoro Dam has been carried out to allow IPENZ (Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand), to undertake a survey of the structure. This will help the group to assess the structure's historical and national engineering significance. The group is interested to continue working with the Regional Council to commemorate the structure's centenary in 2003.

Events Programme

During January, nearly 200 people participated in the Queen Elizabeth Park Regional Outdoors Programme. Events ranged from walks around the remnant bush, wetlands and coastal dunes, to learning how to saddle and ride a horse. Participants enjoyed the activities and are keen to see a similar programme next year. Particularly pleasing were the number of people attending events who had not visited Queen Elizabeth Park before. Very positive comments were received on the Park - many expressed a wish to return to explore the Park further.

3. Eastern Sector (Fraser Oliver)

Significant Works

The construction team have completed a new 10-metre staircase on the Gorge Track at Kaitoke Regional Park. The staircase provides access to a popular swimming hole and short walk adjacent to the Pakuratahi River.

The maintenance team have been carrying out significant track upgrade work on the Cannon Point Walkway and in the Wainuiomata Recreation Area. Park users have commented favourably on the improved track surfaces. The Gums Loop Track at the Wainuiomata Recreation Area got a bit slippery under foot after early summer maintenance work combined with poor weather. However, these sections of the track have now been metalled and the walk continues to be as popular as ever.

Events Programme

The Tunnel Gully *Power Pramming Family Fun Walk* attracted approximately 230 people on 22 January 2001. Several people wanted more signage, whilst others felt there is too much signage and that this can affect the perception of being "in the bush", but generally the feed-back was very positive.

The annual *Big Coast* cycling event proceeded without incident through the Pakuratahi Forest. Participants numbered approximately 1,200 and the weather was fine. Staff facilitated access, directional signs and acted as 'tail-end-Charlie' to the Summit Yards.

We have had a steady flow of school groups both camping and coming in for day trips within Kaitoke Regional Park. Combining discussions on Park values and the role of the Ranger, Steve Edwards (Ranger - Kaitoke Regional Park) has been running a treasure hunt/nature discovery trail for children. Four groups have participated in the hunt. The children seem to really enjoy it, especially crossing the swing bridge and consuming the treasure.

Three events have been held at Kaitoke Regional Park during the period. Two (attended by a total of 120 people) encouraged people to explore the Park after dark. Glow worms, koura, morepork, eels and possums were seen or heard. *An Expert's Guide to the Rainforest* followed up two *Beginner's Guide to the Rainforest* held in December and January. John Dawson, a retired botany lecturer and member of the Botanical Society, took a small but interested group on an in-depth look at the rainforest ecology.

A number of water collection area open day tours have been held in recent months, culminating in the official opening of the Wainuiomata catchment on Sunday, 25 February (refer to Susan Edward's report for details). Parks and Forests staff appreciated the help of Noel Roberts, Wainuiomata Treatment Plant Supervisor (Water Group), during the day. Feedback is very positive from clubs who have entered the catchment.

Seventy-two people and 13 dogs attended the *Dam Dog Day* on 22 January, and 12 people attended the *Nikau Track Nature Trail* on 11 February 2001. Both events combined to give locals and visitors alike an appreciation of the interesting history and natural environment that surrounds the Wainuiomata Recreation Area.

Weir Walk Closed, Kaitoke Regional Park

Three unstable rata trees posing a threat to the Weir Walk have been removed.

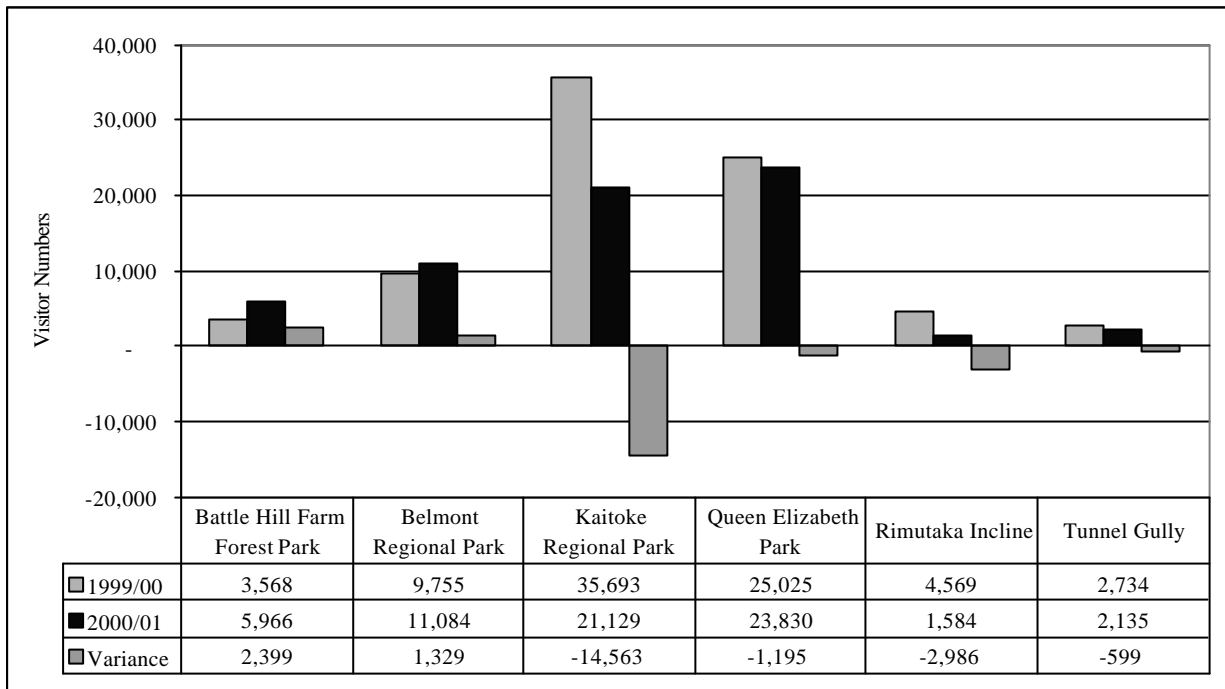
4. Visitor Numbers

See visitor information attached.



BRUCE ANDRELL
Manager, Parks and Forests (Operations)

REGIONAL PARKS
Visitors Information Data
For the Month of February 2000/01



There is a problem with the visitor data collection at Kaitoke Regional Park. We are investigating the issue and will report the outcome in the next Manager's report. Across the network visitation is similar to last year. Notable exceptions for the month are: Battle Hill Farm Forest Park has an increase in casual users picnicking in the shady environs; Rimutaka Incline Walkway has a noticeable decrease due to the open nature of the area, hot weather and cycling events in other parts of the Region.

REGIONAL PARKS
Visitors Information Data
Year-to-Date : February 2000/01

