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Report to Environment Committee
from Tim Porteous, Biodiversity Co-ordinator

Pauatahanui Inlet Project Update

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of proposed expenditure priorities for the Pauatahanui Inlet project through to 30 June 2001.

2. Background

Councillors will recall that funding provision for the Pauatahanui Inlet project was provided for in the Long Term Financial Strategy at the level of \$40,000 per annum from the 2000/01 to the 2004/05 financial years. Porirua City Council has made a budgetary provision of \$40,000 for this financial year also.

The Pauatahanui Inlet Action Plan was adopted by both Councils in August last year. Contained within the plan were a series of suggested actions to address specific issues. Officers from both Councils have identified the work needing to be done to start to address these issues, and work has begun on them. Our initiatives for this year are outlined in the schedule attached to this report. The Pauatahanui Inlet Advisory Group has also given considerable thought to the best use of the available funding and has guided and endorsed the direction taken.

3. The Projects

The projects reflect both the Council's and the Advisory Group's desire to move as quickly as practicable from "planning to doing", while recognising the need to improve the information we have about the current state of the Inlet. Highlights of the programme include the following:

(i) **Increasing our Understanding of the Inlet**

In determining to undertake some data gathering, care has been taken in ensuring that this is not just for its own sake, but will contribute to the objectives of the Action Plan. The general approach taken has been to attempt to reproduce some of the relevant data sets collected during the comprehensive “Healy” study of the 1970’s.

Much public debate during the Action Plan consultation process centred on the relative contributions of different sub-catchments to the sediment of the inlet and the land-uses causing this. We have commenced work on identifying the level of sediment and other contaminants entering the Inlet via the six main streams draining the catchment. The results of this may lead to specific targeted investigations of “hot spots” in subsequent years. (Projects 1.3 and 1.4 in the attachment relate to this topic.)

(ii) **Education and Communication**

The Advisory Group’s report placed considerable emphasis on the need for an education and communication programme and the group is keen to see this idea implemented. This year, this project would encompass:

- raising awareness of the Inlet’s natural values for new and existing residents. This will include highlighting the influence (both positive and negative) residents can have over the health of the Inlet by their actions;
- highlighting the “good news” stories of restoration activities taking place and;
- developing suitable signage to interpret the values of the Inlet, the roles of the various agencies and the restoration works around the Inlet.

(iii) **Community Projects**

Two Environmental Care Groups are to be established this year for the catchment. There has been public interest expressed in a care group following the launch of the Action Plan and funding has been allocated for a freshwater wetland restoration at the Wildlife reserve. In addition, funds have been set aside to assist with the set up of the on-going management entity and for the profile of restoration activities taking place on public lands around the Inlet to be raised.

Support for private land protection initiatives is limited in this year. Greater provision will be made in budgets from next year when policies relating to the application of Council funds to, say, riparian planting on private land have been determined. In addition, it is anticipated that the publication of Porirua City Council’s survey of ecologically significant areas will stimulate interest in legal protection.

4. **Subsequent Years**

As noted, this is year one of a continuing programme. Planning for projects in subsequent years has commenced and will be presented to the Committee in due course.

5. **Communication**

Public relations and communication opportunities are inherent in many of the proposed projects and every opportunity will be taken to maximise such opportunities.

6. **Recommendation**

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

TIM PORTEOUS
Biodiversity Co-ordinator

GEOFF SKENE
Manager, Environment Co-ordination

JANE BRADBURY
Divisional Manager, Environment

Attachments: 1