

Flood Protection Manager's report for period ending 4 June 2004

1. Manager's comments

The February flood clean up is still putting pressure on our maintenance and capital construction programmes, but overall most projects are proceeding well as we near the end of the financial year.

1.1 Staff

Two of our Riverhands resigned during May to take up new opportunities. The two were Kevin Whitburn from Otaki and Joe Manihera from Mabey Road. Both were experienced and valuable staff members who will be missed. We wish them well for their new directions. Recruitment of replacement staff is underway.

1.2 Geoff's wanderings

I was very lucky to have Rob approve some extended leave during April and the last week of May. In that time I managed trips to the Mohaka River, Hawkes Bay, the Marlborough Sounds, Chalky Inlet in Fiordland and most recently had a week chasing thar in the Poerua River, South Westland. All were great trips with good friends into some of the more remote and wild places this country has to offer. We enjoyed generally excellent weather with flooding the furthest thing from my mind. Daya Atapattu and Phil Purves did a great job holding the fort while I was away.

2. Waikanae River floodplain management [Graeme Campbell]

2.1 Friends of the Waikanae River Inc.

The Friends group has been working on the development of its strategic plan for the next three years, including planning for the next Care Group project starting 2004/05. Planning is also underway for the AGM to be held on 23 June 2004.

2.2 Otaihanga floodwall

The main landscaping and finishing works are complete. The substantial completion inspection has been undertaken and a defects list prepared for the contractor to attend to during the maintenance period. KCDC plans to undertake the landscape planting later in the year.

2.3 Jim Cooke Park realignment

An agreement has been reached with the one landowner affected by the project, to purchase the land necessary to undertake this work. The matter is reported separately on this order paper (PE04.297). Design work is progressing, with the design channel alignment confirmed and options for the river bank protection works now being considered.

3. Otaki River floodplain management [Graeme Campbell]

3.1 Friends of the Otaki River

There are no matters to report at present.

3.2 Flood hazard mapping

The revised flood maps for the Kapiti Coast were presented to a public meeting in Otaki on 17 May 2004. Approximately 100 members of the public attended the meeting along with Councillors and Officers from both KCDC and GW. The meeting was organised by KCDC to inform the public on the outcomes of the consideration of the issues they had raised at the June 2003 meeting. Generally there seemed to be an acceptance of the reported outcomes.

Of significance was a show of hands indicating that 70% of those present favoured the bringing forward of the Chrystals extended stopbank works. KCDC officers are now preparing to formally notify the plan change with a report going to their 17 June 2004 Environment and Planning Committee meeting seeking approval to notify the plan change in July 2004.

4. Hutt River floodplain management [Daya Atapattu]

4.1 Ava to Ewen project

Strand Park river realignment

Cashmore Contracting Ltd is progressing the construction of Strand Park viewing platform. Concreting of the steps has been completed and paving commenced. All works on the viewing platform including landscape planting will be completed by 30 June 2004.

Cashmore's plan to start construction of the river realignment in September 2004. Rock delivery to stockpiles in Ava Park started in late May 2004.

Hutt City Council (HCC) stopped mowing Strand Park in April 2004. Our own contractor will now mow the Strand Park until Cashmore's take over the site on 1 August 2004.

Opahu Stream pump station

HCC approved the Opahu Stream Outlet agreement at its May 2004 Council meeting. This agreement, jointly prepared by GWRC and HCC officers, sets out the programme and responsibilities for improving the Opahu Stream outlet. GWRC approved this agreement in September 2003.

The design and resource consents process for the Opahu Stream pump station is underway. Construction of the pump station and associated works is programmed for the 2005/06 financial year.

4.2 Belmont improvements

Cashmore Contracting Ltd has completed construction of the edge protection works at Belmont. These works, which involved placing about 7000 tonnes of rock delivered from Linton quarry in Palmerston North, have greatly reduced the erosion risk to the riverbank properties in Belmont. A 350 metre long walkway that relocates the Hutt River Trail on to the riverbank is also complete. An environmental planting programme, which involves planting of about 3400 native plants, has commenced. A community planting day will be held on 12 June 2004.

The stopbank at the southern end of Norfolk Street is now essentially complete. Environmental planting and installation of the implement shed will be completed by 30 June 2004. A community exercise to show how to sandbag the gap across Norfolk Street is planned for July 2004.

4.3 Whirinaki Crescent stopbank upgrade

The preliminary design is on track for completion by 30 June 2004. The Silverstream College Board of Proprietors has given its consent in principle, to the purchase of a strip of land from the school. The Upper Hutt City Council (UHCC) has provided its comments on the proposed upgrade works. We also hope to meet the Wellington Golf Club before the Landcare Committee meeting.

4.4 Hutt River bed level survey

Connell Wagner Ltd have completed the fieldwork for the Hutt River bed level survey. This work was delayed by one month because of the February rains. Susan Borrer, Flood Protection Graduate Engineer, has started analysing the survey data. This analysis will provide information for developing Hutt River gravel management policies for the next 5 years. We expect to report outcomes of the gravel analysis to the September 2004 Hutt River Advisory Committee meeting.

4.5 Implementing non-structural measures

HCC has commenced pre-notification consultation on the proposed district plan changes. Submissions close on 14 June 2004. During this consultation period, GWRC officers will assist HCC in dealing with any technical issues raised by affected residents. GWRC and HCC officers attended a Belmont Ratepayers Improvements Association meeting on 26 May 2004 to explain the proposed plan changes. Residents raised a number of objections to the proposed plan changes which will need further investigation before responding. Following the meeting we also received a letter from HCC officers which reflected the residents concerns. We will discuss these matters further with HCC staff.

UHCC's District Plan is expected to become operative by September 2004. UHCC is committed to the proposed plan changes and it is expected that the plan change process will begin in February 2005.

We have engaged Opus International Consultants to identify potential landslide sites along the Hutt River. This work is being carried out as part of an emergency management project being managed by UHCC.

5. Planning and development services [Phillip Purves]

The following summarises the formal, written requests for information or advice attended to during April and May 2004:

	March 2004	YTD
Requests brought forward	21	29
Additional requests received	30	116
Responses provided	33	127
Outstanding requests	18	18

The revised flood hazard information for the Kapiti Coast is now being used as the basis for flood level recommendations in that area.

6. Investigations [Phillip Purves]

6.1 Waiwhetu Stream floodplain management study

Good progress is now being made with the Waiwhetu Stream flood hazard scope. Initial meetings have been held with HCC officers and GW staff from several departments to determine the interests and likely roles of all parties in the proposed investigations.

The draft hydrology report has been reviewed and the final report will provide a sound basis for the flood hazard investigations.

6.2 Waitohu flood hazard assessment

Reports for the technical investigation components of the flood hazard assessment are now being finalised for the completion of this part of the original study. The consultation programme is continuing well.

7. Operations

7.1 Wellington [Jeff Evans]

Staff are continuing with the clean up after the February floods. Some of the small streams have wind blown trees still to be removed from the more isolated and difficult to reach areas but this work is now almost complete.

We have also been kept busy giving erosion advice to landowners. This can be very time consuming especially where farmers have lost large areas of land, or where established protection works have been damaged.

Hutt River

We have completed the survey sight line clearing on the Hutt River. This proved to be a big job, and staff had to be constantly aware of the sensitivities of cutting and trimming trees on both private and public land.

The native plants for the upcoming planting season are now being ordered. Willows which were ordered last year will be ready for uplifting from the nursery in early July.

Some channel shaping has been completed above Gibbons Street in Upper Hutt and below the Kennedy-Good Bridge in Lower Hutt.

Hutt River Trail

Significant lengths of the trail at Melling, Avalon and Mills Street have been resurfaced, and a new section of trail has been formed at the old nursery site, Silverstream.

Hutt River ranging services

May was mainly fine with steady use of the trail and berm as people got out and about and enjoyed the good weather.

With the river settled after the February floods anglers were out during the day and evenings trying to snare the big one. According to the Hutt Valley Anglers Club the floods have had a major impact on the fishery, and it may take several years for the fish numbers to get back to what they were.

The first of the new Hutt River signs with the Greater Wellington logo are being installed. The new signs are larger and more “up market” than the old signs, and they also promote the river trail.

Watercourses

Stream runs have now been completed in the Kenepuru Stream, Porirua Stream, Stebbings Stream and Te Mome Stream. A small amount of willow tethering has also been completed in the Mangaroa River.

7.2 Kapiti [Garry Baker]

The settled weather conditions over the last six weeks has allowed construction works to be carried out with very little river flow interruptions. Accordingly good progress has been made with flood damage repair earthworks. However, our rock supply contract is well behind schedule due to quality problems. The rock supply problems have delayed the repair and upgrade of edge protections at a couple of sites, however, we are confident that scheme security is not being unreasonably jeopardised.

Otaki River

Work complete includes:

- Channel realignment at Mangahanene, Barrett's, Hughes/Lutz, and at Upper Rahui. Most of this work will be followed up with willow planting, and at Barretts both debris fencing and willow planting.
- At the Transmissions line site (right bank downstream of Winstones) the eroded berm has temporarily been restored pending the construction of the new permanent rock works approved as part of the flood damage repair package. The rock work is currently programmed for summer 2004/05.
- Maintenance of the Taylors groynes and the Leithbridge rock lining is complete. Construction of the platform for the lower Chrystalls rock line extension is complete, and it is hoped that the rock can be placed before the end of June. This is the key job which has been delayed by the rock supply difficulties.
- Releasing of the new native plantings at Chrystalls Bend.

Waikanae River

Works carried out include:

- Pylon Corner – rebuilding of the right berm and planting willow poles.
- Falconers – rebuilding of the right bank berm and, installation of a double row of cabled concrete blocks and willow poles.
- Kebbells Corner right bank – flood debris buried, and gravel beaches groomed.
- Maple Lane and Sunny Glen rock groynes – shrub growth cut and sprayed.

Extraction from the lower river continued during April and finished at the end of May.

Watercourses

Tidal debris was cleared from the Waimeha Stream debris arrestor.

7.3 Operations Support [Steve Murphy]

Asset Management

Former flood protection manager, Brendan Paul, has been assisting with the implementation of the Western Rivers Asset Management Plan. Brendan has done a good job and the asset management tasks for the next 10 years, are set out in a detailed programme and wall chart.

A key assumption of our asset management plan is that individual scheme components will, in most cases, be maintained in perpetuity. Their importance in protecting the community is such that they must always be ready to perform their protective role in a flood event. Because large floods are rare events, and flood protection systems are rarely tested to their design level, regular assessment of their condition by experienced personnel is essential.

These inspections are currently in full swing on the Hutt, Otaki, Waikanae, Wainuiomata, and Porirua schemes.

A peer review of the Otaki and Waikanae schemes by Wairarapa flood protection staff is also being arranged.

Gravel extraction

Gravel extraction figures to the end of April 2004 are set out below.

River	Area	Contractor	Period		Year
			Year 2003/2004 (cubic metres)	Year	2002/2003 (cubic metres)
			Period	Year	Full Year
Hutt	Estuary	Winstones	3,486	34,818	40,362
	River	Horokiwi	0	9,426	13,364
Otaki	River	Winstones	6,576	25,184	54,004
Waikanae	Above Greenaway Road	Various	0	0	7,472
	Below Greenaway Road	Gary Holland Earthmoving	1,920	5,300	2,617
TOTALS			11,982	74,728	117,819

Geoff Dick
Manager, Flood Protection

Parks and Forests Manager's report for period ending 4 June 2004

1. Manager's comments [Murray Waititi]

As this is the last Committee meeting of the 2003/04 financial year, I would like to take the opportunity to thank both the Committee and my staff for what has been an excellent year. In the next couple of committee meetings, my focus will change to reporting on how we have done against achieving our annual plan performance indicators. This is always enjoyable as it gives me the chance to "showcase" our work.

1.1 Answers to questions raised at the last Committee meeting

At the last Committee meeting Councillor Kirton was concerned for motorists' safety of having the Dry Creek Entrance to Belmont Regional Park situated at the intersection of a SH2 and SH58. I have spoken to Transit NZ and they have a plan to redevelop the Haywards intersection that they have requested funding for in next financial year (starting July 2004). Transit will know if the funding for the intersection is successful by early July. Transit have identified that there are safety risks associated with the intersection as a whole and are proposing a system of overpasses and roundabouts to solve the problem. In the short-term Transit have suggested that vegetation which blocks the sight line of that intersection be trimmed to improve visibility. I will look at whose responsibility that is, and get it done.

1.2 Arbor Day

The annual Arbor Day celebrations are our highest profile planting events, and an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of our natural environment. They are also a "hands-on" chance for local children to learn more about the history of the various parks and help recreate a likeness of the original landscape. This year we planted wetlands at Queen Elizabeth Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park on 8 and 11 June respectively.

We have invited local schools, iwi and Councillors to join in the planting sessions. At the end of the session the children (and adults) are treated to a sausage sizzle and other refreshments. The children also take home a bag including an information booklet, cabbage tree seedling and chocolate (care of our new sponsors Whittakers Confectionery).

2. Planning and policy [Dr Philippa Crisp]

2.1 Environmental asset management

East Harbour possum and rat control

The planned possum control operation in the northern forest of East Harbour Regional Park has now begun. Rat bait was placed in bait stations last month to lower rat interference with the possum bait. Possums were fed a non-toxic bait for a number of weeks before the toxic bait was put out in mid-May. The carcasses of 167 possums have been recovered/found, but the control will be ongoing. Members of the East Harbour Care Group, MIRO, have been assisting with the operation.

Possum monitoring

A possum monitor of Wainuiomata/Orongorongo water collection area was completed in May. Contractors set out 20 traps on each of 21 lines randomly located throughout the catchment. The average tally of possums caught over two fine nights was 15.5% RTC (residual trap catch), but there was a large variation in the number of possums caught between individual lines (from 0 to 65%). The RTC is now in excess of the 5% standard so we are beginning to plan for a control operation probably in late 2005.

2.2 Pest plant control

Nga Uruora and their team of Task Force Green workers have been removing ivy from the dunes at Queen Elizabeth Park. They have also been controlling other weeds including boneseed on the pa site at Whareroa. Other pest plants controlled recently on Council land are:

- Boxthorn at Queen Elizabeth Park
- Old man's beard in Akatarawa Forest
- Tradescantia in Dry Creek
- Japanese honeysuckle, tradescantia, selaginella and brush wattle in Korokoro Valley.

2.3 Monitoring

The re-measurement of permanent vegetation plots in Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke Regional Park has been completed. This data provides information about the changes in the growth of the forest vegetation over time. It also forms part of a national database called the "National Vegetation Survey database", which is administered by Landcare Research. Expertise is required to re-measure these plots correctly and an audit of this work was recently completed by Dr Ian Payton, a Landcare Research scientist. Dr Payton has indicated that the work completed by Owen Spearpoint has been of high quality.

2.4 East Harbour pest plant mapping

Two contractors hired to map the distribution of pest plants in the northern forest in East Harbour have finished their survey. The most invasive species mapped were climbing asparagus, cathedral bells, old man's beard and banana passionfruit. A pest plant plan will now be developed for the area. Funds for the control of pest plants will be allocated on the basis of urgency and practicality of control.

3. Planning and policy

3.1 Ecological monitoring kit

Staff from Landcare and Environment Divisions have been working with Peter Hanford of Forme Consulting on the development of an ecological monitoring kit for caregroups and landowners. A national database and analysis website has now been developed as part of this work. A recent workshop on the website was held at Greater Wellington and was attended by staff from KCDC and QEII Trust.

3.2 Capital works projects [Graham Laws]

New MacKays Crossing toilets progressing

The contractor is continuing work intermittently on the new toilet block at MacKays Crossing, Queen Elizabeth Park. Framing and roof is complete. The sewage disposal field has been redesigned with a pumped system to cope with the high water table. We propose to install an in-line pump to boost water pressure. The plumber plans to complete the works in late May. The problem with the high water table means that the project will exceed the contingency allowance in the budget by \$5-10,000.

3.3 Asset management

Consultants to inspect bridges

Duffill Watts Tse will be carrying out detailed structural inspections and analysing load-carrying capacity of vehicle bridges at Kaitoke and Tunnel Gully to meet Transit standards. This is part of our Asset Management Plans regular inspection and monitoring programme.

3.4 Forest Lands Plan

A workshop was held on the 12 May 2004 looking at the draft Forest Lands Plan's provisions. Councillors were given an opportunity to further comment on the draft plan, before the final draft plan is considered by the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee at the end of June. A two-month submission period will then follow.

3.5 Kaitoke Regional Park Management Plan review

The Kaitoke Regional Park Management Plan review began in May with public notices, letters to stakeholders and newsletters being sent out to people interested in the park's future management. Two submissions have been received so far, both complimentary of the park and its management

3.6 Iwi liaison

Staff have been working with iwi at Battle Hill and Queen Elizabeth park to develop signage and interpretation that includes reference to tangata whenua and their stories. We have started a project working with Ngati Toa to develop interpretation of the battle and related issues at Battle Hill. We are also working with iwi at Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) on information boards to include statements about their links to the area. A wider range of interpretation will be developed later for QEP.

3.7 Local Government and Environment Select Committee hearings

Trecia Smith and Victoria Owen attended the Local Government and Environment Select Committee hearings on the Local Government Act amendments to listen to Auckland Regional Council present their submission requesting a change in the status of land in regional parks able to be protected in perpetuity through an Order in Council. The issues raised by ARC are of some relevance to GW.

4. Marketing and design [Amanda Cox]

4.1 Information boards

East Harbour Regional Park

A team of staff has developed the copy and design for the 20 information boards to be located at main entrances and at key park junctions.

The information panels will provide a large colour map, information on the park as a whole, a care code and entrance specific track information including walking times. We expect these to be installed in early June.

Queen Elizabeth Park

We have finalised the words, photos, image strip and maps for the information panels and the designers are developing a concept for the detailed layout.

To add some extra interest and to celebrate some of the creativity of the Kapiti Coast residents we asked local poets to submit poems to be used on the panels. We selected four from the poems submitted; one for each entrance and one for Whareroa Beach.

4.2 New park brochures

We have had a very positive response to the three new brochures published to date – Hutt River Trail, Walking in the regional parks and forests, and Kaitoke Regional Park. Three more will be completed by the end of June – a general parks and forests brochure, mountain biking in the parks and forests and one for Queen Elizabeth Park. Councillors will continue to receive new brochures as they are printed.

4.3 Parks research framework

The aim of this project is to devise a park visitor research strategy that will provide robust information so that we can plan and meet park users' needs.

It will include the means of gathering quantitative (including visitor counts) and qualitative (satisfaction, enjoyment, etc.) information, and a methodology for analysis that can be deployed in-house. We will also accommodate testing of new ideas and exploring new opportunities as they arise.

4.4 Restoration Day

The fourth annual Wellington Region NZ Ecological Restoration Network Restoration Day was held on Saturday 8 May at the Wallaceville Research Centre. It was co-ordinated by the Department of Conservation Wellington Conservancy, with support from Greater Wellington.

The purpose of the workshop was to celebrate all the ecological restoration being carried out in the Wellington region by community groups. Over 120 people attended including representatives from most of the GW Take Care groups. This enabled us to promote local community projects, encourage networking and provide practical examples through work being carried out.

Botanist Dr Ian Atkinson gave the keynote address and this was followed by a series of workshops on subjects such as weed and pest control, obtaining funding and seed collection plus some case studies. In the afternoon there were field trips to Barton's Bush and Kaitoke Regional Park's Te Marua Bush. Surveys returned by participants indicated that it was a very successful and stimulating day.

GW staff had high profiles with Ross Jackson on the organising committee, presentations by John Holmes (Environment), Mark McAlpine and Kim Broad (Biosecurity), and extra support and assistance from Annabel Riley (Parks and Forests), Nigel Clarke and Susan Hutchinson-Daniel (Environment).

4.5 Volunteer co-ordination

Hutt River Trail is getting longer!

Thanks to an \$85,000 grant from the Phoenix Trust to Upper Hutt City, a Hutt River Trail extension project is now underway. Contractors have built new track and structures between Birchville and SH2. Twenty-five volunteers at a Rotary working bee in May spread 25 cubic metres of gravel over the surface. Work on this section of the trail is co-ordinated by Upper Hutt City with assistance from GW.

Construction of an underpass under the Mangaroa Bridge will commence shortly, to provide safe access across SH2 for Te Marua residents. Transit NZ will build the 1km section of trail alongside SH2 from Te Marua south when they upgrade this section of the road. This project is expected to take place within 12-18 months.

The section from Te Marua north to the Kaitoke Regional Park entrance is the next challenge. However, there is a wide shoulder alongside most of that stretch of highway that should accommodate the Trail.

Friends of Belmont Regional Park

Greater Wellington has helped the Friends to publish their latest newsletter, which includes details of their recent projects and the Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 14 June. They have also organised a tree planting session at the Stratton St entrance of the park.

Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park

The Friends committee has now met twice since its formation. During these meetings several Parks and Forests representatives have helped to familiarise members with the park and the entire network through various presentations. Cr Turver gave an overview on the relationship between Friends Groups and Council. Murray Waititi spoke about the Parks and Forests network, and then focused on Queen Elizabeth Park future plans. Victoria Owen spoke about the Management Plan process and Annabel Riley on the park information upgrades and landscape developments.

Ranger Chris Muller and Community Projects Advisor Ross Jackson update the committee on activities in and around the Park at each meeting.

A familiarisation tour of the whole park took place on Saturday 29 May. Committee members were able to visit areas outside their "home patch" including the farmland, remnant bush and wetlands.

The committee is keen to promote activities in the park and to learn more about the sand dunes and the coastal processes. A public meeting has been arranged for 15 June at which environmental experts John Lumsden and our own Philippa Crisp will do a presentation on coastal erosion.

Green Shoots community newsletter

A new edition of the newsletter was distributed in mid May. This recounts some of the events in the Regional Outdoors Programme, and other developments in the parks and forests. The mailing list has grown to around 800 people and organisations, so it is proving a very useful way to keep in touch with more interested members of the community. We also enclosed a copy of the new Hutt River Trail brochure to demonstrate more of our work and alert recipients to the latest extension project now underway.

4.6 Environmental enhancement projects

The various planting projects are getting into full swing and there will be activities on most Saturday mornings over the next three months. These projects include the Friends of Maara Roa Cannons Creek restoration project where there will be planting every fortnight. Queen Elizabeth Park has a number of projects, including the restoration sand dunes, various wetlands and the remnant bush area. Planting is also planned at Battle Hill, Kaitoke Regional Park, the Hutt River Trail and the Hutt side of Belmont Regional Park.

An average planting day sees around 15 people attending, but collectively over the winter months many hundreds of hours are given by volunteers in our parks.

4.7 Queen Elizabeth Park MacKays Crossing entrance upgrade

Staff members have been working closely with Transit NZ and their consultants on the design of the park entry and the new over-bridge. The project is currently out for tender as a design and build contract. With tenders closing on June 22, Transit expects to award the contract in August with construction commencing in October.

An updated landscape concept for the park is currently being prepared but it cannot be finalised until the road design chosen by the successful tenderer is known. Staff members are meeting with the tenderers as they develop their respective designs. Specific issues being considered in the landscape concept include the locations of the barn/stables, the new ranger's office and memorial gates, and wetland developments. More details will be presented to Committee at a future meeting.

5. Western sector [Matt Ballantine]

5.1 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

Lots of firewood

Storm damaged trees that fell in the February floods have been cleaned up. The public have been making the most of the free firewood. Most are park visitors who have noticed the wood lying around and asked if they can have some. If anything good has come from the floods, it is the good PR that comes from helping out the community, even if it is just firewood.

The Conservation Corps did some good work in the park recently. The most notable was cleaning the sheep manure out from under the woolshed (a horrible job at the best of times) and weeding plants around the wetlands.

WCC Rangers have a site visit

Ranger staff hosted the recently appointed WCC Rangers, for an afternoon visit. They were interested to see how we do things and compared that to their own operations. They had plenty of questions and had a look around the park at our structures and environmental projects.

Lots of activities

School visits are still happening despite the colder weather and, as always, the pet sheep and chooks prove a real hit. Several schools timed their visit perfectly and were at the farm while shearing was happening. They were very interested to watch the real thing happening and had plenty of questions for the Ranger afterwards.

The Olympic Harriers have held two cross-country events on the park and these were well patronised with several hundred people per event.

The Pauatahanui Pony Club held their big show day, which is always popular and on the same day the park hosted a large orienteering event on the rest of the farm. It made for a full house and kept the ranger busy but all went smoothly and the weather was kind. There have also been the usual run of pony club rallies.

Several more weddings have happened on the park and we had one held on the veranda of the homestead for the first time. This site will get more popular as the gardens mature.

5.2 Belmont Regional Park

Flood damage repairs continue

We have been concentrating on repairing tracks damaged in the February floods in the Dry Creek, Korokoro and Stratton Street areas. Work has involved installing new footbridges and metalling parts of tracks. There has been a fair amount of public interest in the maintenance of the Korokoro Tracks and we have received some good feedback from users about the standard of work being carried out.

Activities in the Park

Hutt Multi Sports Club held a duathlon, which included a mountain bike leg at Dry Creek in May. This event was well attended by riders as a lead up to the Crazyman Triathlon.

The Stratton Street Education Facility has been well utilised over the period with visits by Johnsonville School, Miramar School and Sacred Heart School to take part in the Take Action programme.

Another school using the park over the period was Raphael House, their class of six pupils walked from Stratton Street, along Old Coach Road and then back to their school in Tirohanga.

5.3 Queen Elizabeth Park

The calm, pleasant conditions associated with the season have enabled us to have a productive autumn.

A new access track into the Mackays Crossing wetland development has been constructed giving the public a greater opportunity to enjoy the new feature and its wildlife. The entrance point for the new track is adjacent to the Marines Memorial and will in the future, form part of a larger track network that will include the Remnant Bush area.

As the wetland and its plantings progress it will become a very peaceful and tranquil area. This quality is already being exploited by one park user who has been regularly sighted practising Tai Chi next to the ponds.

This year's tree planting season is underway with approximately 1,500 plants already in the ground. The Wainui Stream, coastal dunes and retired farmland have all been the recipients of these plantings. We are aiming to plant 10,000 trees in total this year throughout the Park.

Other maintenance has included the placement of track marker posts along the inland and coastal tracks. The posts look good in the corporate blue and are used to indicate secondary tracks that link the Inland and Coastal tracks together.

We've also had contractors removing logs that have been congesting at the mouth of the Wainui stream.

The farm operations on the Park are currently going through some significant changes with the new leaseholders taking over control of the farmland from 1 June 2004. The most noticeable change being that the Dairy operation has ceased and only dry stock farming is now allowed. The new Leaseholders are settling in well and a good rapport is developing between them and the Rangers.

The inaugural 'Wheels beside the Water' event was held on 16 May. This was a family orientated event organised by enthusiastic locals, Nga Uruora and the Council. Participants biked, walked or pushed baby buggies, the fittest from Paekakariki to Pekapeka and back again, while enjoying the spectacular scenery of the Kapiti coast. Along the way they were encouraged to plant a tree in the park which resulted in 100 cabbage trees and flaxes finding a new home amongst the dunes. The weather was perfect for such an event and it is hoped that it will return bigger and better next year.

Other recent events include the annual Remnant Bush planting day. The event ran smoothly with volunteers planting over 300 trees, including Kaikomako, Mahoe, Flax, and Kahikatea just to name a few.

Our trusty planters were rewarded for their efforts with a hot cuppa, a muffin and a pat on the back. After observing the progress of plantings from previous years our regular volunteers offered us positive feedback which is very encouraging.

5.4 Hutt River

The Ranger has also been liaising with Upper Hutt City and Rotary on trail extensions north of Upper Hutt and been working with Hutt City on installing bollards at Ewen Bridge (a constant source of unauthorised vehicle access).

School students from Hutt Valley High School are growing trees for Hutt River planting. Materials have been supplied to help set up a nursery for them. The Ranger will be contacting a number of schools to assist with environmental planting projects along the river this year.

The annual 'Crazyman Multisport Event' was held along the Hutt River and at East Harbour Regional Park on Sunday 16 May 2004. Tracks in the northern block of the East Harbour Regional Park were used to host the 18km mountain run as part of the event. The event also includes a 33km mountain bike ride and a 12km kayak down the Hutt River. The trail from Silverstream to Sladden Park was used for the cycle stage. To cap this successful event, former Flood Protection Senior Planner Al Cross was the winner. A number of other Council staff members also distinguished themselves.

On a different scale a fun run/walk organised by Hutt Valley High School along the lower reaches took place in late May.

6. Eastern sector [Fraser Oliver]

6.1 Akatarawa/Pakuratahi Forest

Akatarawa Forest

We have now completed all of the flood damage works within the Akatarawa block. Removal of windthrow trees continues throughout the forest, not just trees that have blown down during the February storms but also trees that were weakened during this event and have fallen down since.

Unfortunately due to a recent incident at the Rimutaka Prison facility and a severe shortage of prison staff, we have been unable to use our two inmate gangs for routine maintenance on the Cannon Point walkway, Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully. Fortunately at this time of the year, vegetation growth is minimal so our own teams have been able to complete vegetation control in this area.

As we are now coming to the end of the "roar", the hunting numbers are starting to decline. It is pleasing to report that there have been no issues, conflicts or problems between the hunting fraternity and the wide range of recreational users that frequently access this forest.

As you are aware, we have a sinking lid policy with our bach users situated on the Karapoti Gorge access road. Recently one of the four remaining baches in this area was burnt to the ground, the cause of this fire is unknown. The remaining three baches are in a very poor condition and it is fair to say that they are in no longer habitable. We are currently talking with the bach users to reach agreement on the potential removal of these structures.

We have had one driver training exercise for GWRC staff, three army exercises centred around driver training in a range of army vehicles, three 4WD club events, three firewood recovery days for the general public and one exercise to recover a motorcycle from the bottom of the rock garden.

Ongoing dog training by the New Zealand Police Dog Training School continues in several parts of the Akatarawa Forest.

Pakuratahi Forest

All windthrown trees that were blocking access through the forest have been removed, however, now we have to deal with numerous trees that were hung up in other vegetation. Trees that are now very prone to further windthrow are being removed to avoid not only damage to the surrounding vegetation but also damage to historic cuttings and road verges along several areas of the Rimutaka Incline Rail Trail.

The repairs to the bridge accessing the Tunnel Gully Reserve have now been completed, restoring safe access to this area.

6.2 Kaitoke Regional Park

February flood repairs are complete. The slip above the Hutt River has been hydraseeded, and the washout along the gorge road has been retained and the road reinstated.

A bulldozer was used to clear a 1,000 metre square area of weeds between the campground and the river. This has been grass seeded and will open up a new site for campers in the summer.

The number of hunters using the park and Hutt Water Collection Area during the “roar” this year was well down. Those who did hunt reported a lack of deer sign. The reason for this is unknown.

A Conservation Corp group from the Department of Youth Affairs helped with planting and releasing of the Pakuratahi riverside restoration area. Well over 1,500 plants were planted as a result.

Ranging staff ran a night event for the Kiwi Conservation Club. Sausages and marshmallows were cooked on the fire, eels were fed, the night sky observed and a walk over the swing bridge and through the bush was enjoyed by all.

6.3 Wainuiomata

Recreational hunting ballot

Once again the public roar hunt has been successfully completed. Previous years have seen reports of poachers within the Catchment, which is a danger to staff and the hunters. Staff put in considerable time and effort patrolling the Catchment boundaries, and with the assistance of external security staff saw minimal illegal activity over this period. While deer numbers were around the same as previous years, goat and pig numbers were down. Nine deer, four goats and one pig were shot from a total of 1,694 hunting hours. A number of positive comments were received. The hunt continues to be a successful public relations event.

Ten hunting blocks were balloted over four hunting periods during the “Roar”: 27-31 March, 3-7 April, 9-13 April and 16-20 April. Eighty hunters were given the opportunity to hunt in the catchment during this time, as each block was allocated to two hunters per hunting period.

Tallies from previous years are shown in the table below:

Ungulates culled during the balloted hunt

Year	Deer	Goats	Pigs
2004	9	4	1
2003	8	7	6
2002	10	11	2
2001	10	11	10

Weed and pest control

Through monthly phenology monitoring and watchful eyes Kahikatea have been observed having high fruit numbers indicating a mass seed year for the tree. While this is great news for the Kahikatea, it could result in a boom in rats and mice numbers because of the food abundance.

Walking

Public walking tours were held in May. Fine weather saw 60 people turn out on Sunday 9 May. Demand for the event is still high. Positive feedback continues to be received by staff after each tour.

Staff have upgraded the Sledge Track walk in the recreation area. Timber runoffs have been installed along the track and the track has been metalled in places where needed. New signs are to be installed.

An increase of incidents involving vandalism and vehicles around the front gate car park were reported during the weeks of the school holidays. Patrols of this area were stepped up.

A good run of weather has seen the fencing contractors get all the new boundary fence posts in the ground. With wire placement and straining to follow, the second stage of the fence is expected to be complete by early June.

6.4 East Harbour Regional Park

This has again been an extremely busy period at East Harbour Regional Park. The tracks maintenance team has completed a cutback on the Kowhai Street Track, which is the quickest and most popular route into Butterfly Creek.

The construction team has completed an upgrade and replacement of structures on the Kaitawa Road Track behind York Bay. The team has also assessed and measured parts of the Butterfly Creek Valley for boardwalk installation. The boardwalks are currently being prefabricated at the Upper Hutt Depot.

On the Wainuiomata side of the park a contractor has completed work on the lower gorse-covered tracks. The majority of tracks on the Wainui side are now clear of vegetation for future track maintenance.

The key initial projects are now getting underway. Considerable work has gone into the new sign system for the park and all material is now ordered. The identification of future projects is continuing, particularly in the area of track and structure upgrade.

Murray Waititi
Manager, Parks and Forests