

Manager, Marketing & Design, Water Supply, Parks and Forests

Report for period ending Friday 27 July 2007

1. Manager's comments

Results of the annual survey (n=500) of Community Awareness and Usage of Regional Parks were received in July. It was pleasing to see that awareness of the parks has increased to 86% (from 81%) of regional residents. Awareness of the Hutt River Trail and East Harbour Regional Park has increased substantially and total satisfaction remains at 90%. While the percentage of residents visiting a regional park in the last 12 months has remained the same (51%), visitors are now using the parks for a greater variety of activities. There has also been an increase in "frequent users" (i.e. using the parks monthly or more often) from 14% in 2006 to 18% this year.

These findings and other information has been incorporated into the Parks Marketing Plan 2007-08, which focuses on the following work:

- Implementing the Regional Outdoors Programme and other events, particularly targeting less active people.
- Completing the review of relationships with Friends groups.
- Continuing to improve the brochure distribution in the region and developing a re-stocking service to maintain our presence.
- Finalising new interpretation at Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park.
- Implementing the Visitor Monitoring Framework at East Harbour Regional Park.

2. Signs

2.1 Queen Elizabeth Park

At the time of writing the design work for the updated Marines interpretation panels was complete. The signs will replace those on the existing "hut façade" structures located at MacKays Crossing. There will now be seven panels to replace the original six and adding one more to give the overall context for the display. We have been able to superimpose the basic layout of the camps onto an aerial photo of QEP and its surrounds to give visitors a good idea of where the camps actually were. It is interesting to see that some of the road works carried out for the camps remain evident in the aerial photographs 65 years after the Marines departed.

2.2 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

The text for the signage has been finalised, after being checked with local iwi and the park rangers. The location of the signs has been carefully determined, again using iwi knowledge, archaeological opinion and historical research.

The structures supporting the signs are to be of macrocarpa posts and lichen-covered rocks, which will stand up to the curiosity of stock and harsh weather conditions. We are hoping to use 3D oblique photographs on the signs to allow all the sites to be identified from each location along the track. This will help people understand the relationship between the sites, thus allowing for a better understanding of the battle and its context.

3. Brochures

Five brochures – Mountain-biking, Akatarawa Forest and those for Queen Elizabeth, East Harbour and Kaitoke Regional Parks were updated and reprinted. They now include all the new tracks now available to explore and are consistent with recently approved management plans.

A new brochure stand was despatched to Kilbirnie Library and two wall racks were sent to Go Wairarapa for display in the Martinborough and Masterton I-sites. Metlink is preparing for their timetable restocking tender process and we are liaising with them to ensure our brochure outlets are included in the requirements.

4. Events

4.1 Buggy Walks

The July Buggy Walk, in conjunction with Sport Wellington Region and on this occasion Wellington City Council, was located at the Karori cemetery. Forty-two caregivers attended with their children as well as a reporter from City Life and a photographer from the Dominion Post. Of the 40 around two thirds were newcomers.

The next Buggy Walk is planned for 2 August at the Whitby Lower Lake Reserve. Besides promoting this via the usual channels, we have worked with Porirua City Council to secure additional promotion through their networks.

A review was held with Sport Wellington Region (SWR) as to the future organisation and funding of Buggy Walks. SWR is seeking an external naming rights sponsor to give a substantial funding boost. Should this occur we will take a lower profile but retain the buggy walks over summer in the regional parks (with the walks moving to the cities during the winter). We are also encouraging them to retain some reference to the greater Wellington region in the event title.

4.2 Regional Outdoors Programme

Conversations have started about next summer's programme. We have discussed ideas for an event focussing on the Pacific Island community with the East Porirua Residents and Ratepayers Association, and we have met with Hutt City Council's Leisure Active and Upper Hutt City Council's Active Recreation teams regarding ideas for the successful Kev the Wandering Kiwi initiative.

4.3 Of Gorse Of Course

The planting day was held at the Wainuiomata Recreation Area in conjunction with the New Dowse on the afternoon of Saturday 16 June. There was a lower turnout than planned (around 20 people) but those who came along were very enthusiastic and managed to plant around 250 seedlings.

4.4 Launch of East Harbour Management Plan

An opportunity to thank the people who contributed to the Plan, this morning "coffee and cake" occasion will be held at the Pavilion in Days Bay on 11 August. Around 100 people have been invited to attend the event which will be followed by a guided walk into the park.

5. Networking

Officers are now attending the regular Physical Activity and Nutrition Group (PAANG) meetings held between staff from the health sector and related agencies in the Wellington Region. These meetings are an opportunity to meet and educate the providers who work hands on with communities about the parks and options which might be suitable for them such as easy 1 hour walks. Two speakers at the recent meeting were Healthy Eating, Healthy Action (HEHA), and the Active Families representatives from Porirua.

We also attended the monthly Nature Coast meeting, comprising tourist operators within the Kapiti Coast and Horowhenua area. Once again, the aim is to promote Greater Wellington's parks and forests and to build links with service providers.

6. Corporate planting days

During the period, QEP hosted three plantings with ANZ and the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, while IAG New Zealand Limited and Westpac visited Kaitoke Regional Park. With both of the latter groups we planted in the morning then had lunch before going for a walk around the Swingbridge track. By incorporating walks into the planting days it enables participants to gain a bigger picture of what we are aiming for within the park.

We are sending larger groups "thank you" posters noting the date, location and number of plants put in the ground and photos from the planting day. These have been very well received, and are a good way to promote the parks and planting day concept in workplaces.

7. Health and safety template

At this point it is common that when a community group or event organiser approaches Greater Wellington (GW) about holding an event in the park, we ask them to provide a health and safety plan as part of their application. These can vary substantially in quality and scope with considerable lack of understanding about what is involved. To address this we are preparing a template which will align with the concessions policy and be a guide to holding a safe and enjoyable event.

8. Whareroa Farm

A development concept plan is being prepared for the entire site, in conjunction with the Guardians of Whareroa Trust, DoC and Masters students studying ecological restoration. The landscape concept plan along with a series of layers of information will be based on an Integrated Catchment Management approach and on recreation, education, ecology, culture and heritage.

The “Source to Sea” concept (the entire catchment approach) will include the area between the Farm and QEP, the entranceway to QEP and the road to the coastline, as well as actual and potential wetland areas. This is to allow analysis of both the ecological and the economic benefits from joint management of the two properties.

9. Ngauranga reservoir site planting

Officers were recently asked to assess the visual screening and amenity values of the revegetation required as a condition of consent for the 1996 construction of the reservoir.

The planting was implemented over two years after construction with an approximate total of 8350 plants. A sheep proof fence was erected; however it had failed to protect the plantings against sheep and goats thought to have escaped the nearby meat works operation. Together with a very dry season, a large proportion of the planting had been lost.

Prior to our recent site visit, we asked GW Biosecurity staff for an update regarding the presence of sheep and goats. They reported the animals were still being sighted in the area and that efforts by both GW and WCC to control them had been only partially successful.

On inspection, it was found that despite the previous damage and plant losses, some planted and some naturally occurring indigenous species had managed to establish and were of a good size. Most of the remainder had been colonised by gorse and broom, and some wilding pines. Less benign weed species, such as blackberry and buddleia were also present.

The dense colonisation of gorse has provided a good “nursery” for naturally occurring indigenous regeneration. The wilding pines will, until a certain maturity, play the same role and provide stability and control of erosion. The density and height of the vegetation provides effective screening of the reservoir from the surrounding neighbours.

Staff concluded that the most effective treatment should be control of the more invasive weed species. To disturb the existing vegetation would encourage further damage by animal pests and expose naturally establishing native seedlings. In both economic and environmental terms the “least management” approach of allowing the land to remedy itself is the best option.

10. Cycleways in Queen Elizabeth Park

Officers have liaised with Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) regarding the Cycleways, Walkways and Bridleways (CWB) strategy they developed in 2004. The KCDC project manager was pleased to hear that GW officers had identified two broad concept links, one for commuting and another for recreation but linked at several points to form loops. KCDC has allocated some funding to implementation of this strategy and are keen to work with GW on the project.

They have appointed a full time cycling coordinator who is due to start on 13 August. We are planning to meet soon after that, involving the park ranger and a representative from the Friends of QEP.

11. Community Liaison

11.1 Review of Friends groups relationships

A Terms of Reference was re-developed to clarify the objectives and scope, link the project with the Community Engagement Strategy, and reinforce that the process was to focus on the relationships between GW and the Friends groups. While there will be regular reporting to the Committee on progress, key deliverables were identified as:

- A programme for the completion of the assignment.
- A report detailing the assessment of the working relationship with each of the groups.
- A report detailing opportunities to further enhance the effectiveness of the relationship between GW and the Community groups.

11.2 Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park

A spinifex planting was held at the Raumati South park entrance in late June, and the first of two plantings on the Whareroa Stream is planned for 21 July. The Friends’ AGM is planned for 6 August and we have arranged for guest speakers, Drs Ian Flux (DoC) and Philippa Crisp (GW), to talk about pest control in a wider context and more particularly at Queen Elizabeth Park.

11.3 Friends of Belmont Regional Park

The Friends of Belmont Regional Park has been encouraging its members to support planting days at the Dry Creek and Oakleigh Street entrance, combining these with a short walk to appeal to more of the members. The AGM will be held on 7 August and officers have arranged for Dave Bamford of Tourism Resource Consultants to speak on “Recreation, conservation and commerce – co-existence or conflict.”

11.4 Friends of Maara Roa

The group is holding fortnightly planting days in the restoration area. The AGM was held on 18 July and attended by 30 people. Ross Jackson spoke on GW activities in the park. Friends of Belmont Convenor, Peter Matcham, did a presentation on the work they are focusing on. Two French students: Claire Carbou and Fanny Berger, who are being hosted by the Friends of Maara Roa for 10 weeks, gave a powerpoint presentation on their lives in France.

11.5 ARAC

The new Orange Hut is now well and truly “opened” and providing a much appreciated base for the 4WD and other recreational visitors to the forest. With a turnout of 120 vehicles and over 300 people in teeming rain, this event was probably the biggest “traffic jam” ever in the forest, raising over \$5,000 for the Mary Potter Hospice.

Meetings have now resumed their regular 3-monthly timetable. We are producing an A1 version of the topographical map in the forest for display in the hut which should be of interest to visitors given the complex terrain in the area.



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