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Report 98.428

27 August 1998

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Reports\

Report to the Landcare Committee
from Divisional Managers Landcare and Utility Services

Public Access to Wainuiomata - Orongorongo Water Collection Area

1. **Purpose**

To obtain the Committee's endorsement of the officers operational decision to defer the opening of the Wainuiomata - Orongorongo Water Collection Area due to water supply operational requirements and to recommend future action to address the issues that require the catchment to remain closed. The action to defer the access is in accordance with Council policy.

2. **Current Policy on Opening**

In June the Policy and Finance Committee adopted an access plan for the 1998/99 year for the catchment (Report 98.296) that provided for:

- ◆ 3 public open days;
- ◆ club access by permit on the first Sunday of each month;
- ◆ staff hunting;
- ◆ sensitive areas and intakes to remain closed at all times; and
- ◆ no after hours access or camping.

The first open day is proposed for 13 September 1998 and was to incorporate an official opening of the catchment. To date no club access has occurred, although approval has been given to some events planned during November and February.

The access policy is prepared under the *Forest Lands and Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996* which states that:

“Access can be suspended *if* water treatment is not in compliance with the Drinking Water Standards”

3. Water Supply Operational Issues

As a result of a very low level of giardia in a treated water sample the Wainuiomata Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was temporarily closed on 27 August. The level of detection in the treated water is not believed to create a public health risk. However, the plant closure was instigated as a precautionary measure.

The protozoa *giardia* and cryptosporidium have been detected in the Wainuiomata River and the Orongorongo catchment at the water intake site at slightly higher levels than normal. A sample of treated water taken at the Wainuiomata WTP returned a positive result for *giardia* on Thursday 27 August. This is the first time *giardia* has been identified in treated water. A problem would arise if the level of the protozoa in the treated water was to increase significantly. For this reason the treatment plant was turned off. Additional water was drawn from other treatment plants to replace this supply.

Giardia in treated water from Wainuiomata would typically be killed by chlorine within four and a half hours. The water takes more than five hours to enter the first service reservoir.

Following confirmation that at least one source of raw water is satisfactory, the water treatment plant will be brought back on line. Additional testing of raw water and treated water will continue to provide an assurance that protozoa are not entering the water supply system.

The source of the protozoa in the rivers is being investigated. This intake will not be returned to service until test results indicate the contamination has past, or when the commissioning of the chemical reaction tank at the Wainuiomata WTP can ensure that there is a very low level of risk of protozoa passing through the plant. Construction of reaction tank is expected to be completed by December 1998. Following construction there will be a commissioning and proving period.

This incidence has highlighted the vulnerability of the Wainuiomata WTP to contamination of the river water upstream of the intakes. The risk of further contamination increases with public access.



4. **Water Quality**

Water quality in New Zealand is measured against the Ministry of Health 1995 Drinking Water Standards. The Utility Services Committee, at the July 1997 meeting, approved targeting an "A" Grading, which is the highest grading, for all water treatment plants. This was subsequently approved by the Council.

The Wainuiomata WTP currently qualifies for a "C" grading. Although relatively modern it was designed to an earlier standard. In 1997 the Utility Services Committee also approved detailed design work for the Wainuiomata Treatment Plant to be upgraded to an "A" grade standard. A tender was accepted for this work in June 1998.

5. **Consultation**

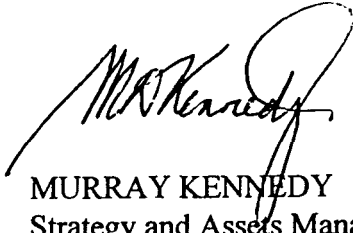
The Public Health Service has been contacted about the present problem. They are supportive of the action taken to close the Wainuiomata Treatment Plant on a temporary basis and deferring the public opening of the catchment.

6. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

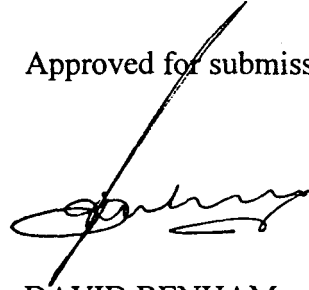
- (1) *endorses the operational decision of **officers** to defer the public opening, open days and club access until the issue is resolved,;*
- (2) *accepts the proposal by **officers** to isolate the cause of the water quality problems and develop solutions to those problems to enable managed public access to the catchment to proceed;*
- (3) *endorses the decision of **officers** to stop all hunting in the catchment, including **staff hunting** and organised pest control work until such time as the solutions to the water problems have been identified.*

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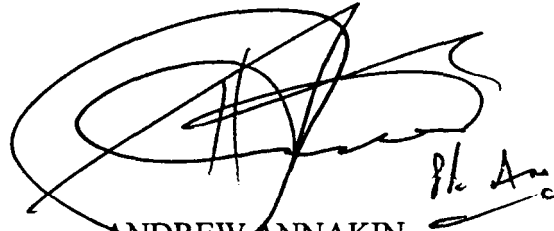
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