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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Graham Laws, Landcare Planner – Landscape Architect, Parks and Forests

Parks and Forests Marketing Strategy Update

1. Purpose

To report progress marketing the Council's parks and forests in the 2001/02 financial year.

2. Marketing Strategy

In July 2000, Council approved a marketing strategy and three-year Action Plan for parks and forests (Report 00.489). The Strategy notes that officers will report progress against the Action Plan at the conclusion of each financial year. This report is designed to meet that requirement.

3. Progress with the Action Plan

Progress with the key tasks in the Action Plan is summarised in **Attachment 1**. All actions are completed. Most marketing activity is undertaken during the summer when people are more likely to be encouraged outdoors into the parks and forests.

4. Marketing Activities

4.1 Events

Running events is a key requirement of the marketing strategy. In addition to the major events programme, *Regional Outdoors*, we organised several other events in the parks and forests. Increasing work with volunteers and care groups is spreading activities throughout the year.

4.2 Advertising and News Media Releases

Advertising and media releases this year have focussed on the *Regional Outdoors* programme and also associated with the release of the *Lord of the Rings* movie. “*You’ve seen the movie, now see the real Middle Earth — in the Wellington Regional Council parks and forests.*”

Following the successful joint promotion in 2000, we have again worked with the Upper Hutt and Hutt City Councils, contributing four pages (featuring the Hutt River Trail, Belmont, East Harbour and Kaitoke Regional Parks) to the 2002 reprint of the Hutt Valley Visitor Guide.

We advertised in AA “What to See and Do” Guides and on the AA website, in 2003 we will be listed in Britz and Maui Campervan booklets. We have also been working with Kate Clode, the Internet Marketing Co-ordinator for Totally Wellington, to develop website links.

4.3 Recreation Association Awards

We were pleased to receive two *highly commended* awards from the New Zealand Recreation Association. The award winning projects were the *Here and Now* filming video and the *Orange Hut* project with the Akatarawa Recreation Action Committee.

4.4 Interpretation Signs

Although not a Marketing Strategy action point, we have continued to update park signs – developing new interpretation signs for Queen Elizabeth Park and Battle Hill (awaiting new Council branding) and installing *Lord of the Rings* signs at Kaitoke. We assisted Rotary Club members to design a user-friendly map of the Hutt River Trail and, together with the Hutt cities, helped to install the map-boards along the river.

5. Filming and Concessions

5.1 Concessions

The number of concessions in the parks and forests continued to grow this year. Filming continues to be the most significant type of concession; both in terms of the amount of activity and the revenue earned. Filming concessions included regular use of the parks network for television series’ (*The Tribe* and *Revelations*), and for filming advertisements, music videos, television programmes, educational programmes, corporate promotional videos, film-school projects and photo shoots.

Also increasing during the year were the number of fundraising events. The Wild Food and Farm Festival (Battle Hill), races for custom-built, non-motorised trolleys (Te Marua), musical events (Te Marua and Tunnel Gully), corporate Christmas parties and social club events (Queen Elizabeth Park and Kaitoke) to name but a few. Annual events such as the Big Coast and Karapoti Classic continued to attract a lot of interest.

Several commercial recreation operators and event managers looking to operate in the parks and forests within the next 12 months have approached the Council. Assessment of those proposals has begun.

Consultants are completing a report on marketing our parks and forests for commercial recreation and eco-tourism concessions. The objective is to identify new opportunities for recreation and tourism concessions and new ways of marketing areas to potential concessionaires. A separate report will be prepared on this issue for the July meeting of the Landcare Committee.

5.2 Promotional Video for Filming

The 12-minute promotional video for filming in the Regional Parks and Forests, *Here and Now*, was officially launched a year ago. In addition to Councillors and officers from this and other Councils in the Wellington region, the launch involved location managers, producers, film directors, Film New Zealand, Film Wellington and representatives from economic development agencies.

The video has been distributed by Film New Zealand as the agency responsible for marketing New Zealand to international moviemakers. The film has been shown at a range of film festivals around the world (Cannes, L.A. and London), and to visiting delegations of film-makers (Canada, United Kingdom and the United States). Over 400 copies of the video have been distributed. We continue to receive requests for copies from people overseas interested in filming here, along with visitor information centres, educational agencies and film companies within New Zealand. Feedback on the video has been very positive. Of particular note was the commendation received by Parks and Forests at last year's New Zealand Recreation Association Conference for producing the video.

5.3 Lord of the Rings

A large number of overseas journalists visited Wellington before the New Zealand premiere of the Lord of the Rings (in conjunction with Tourism New Zealand) last year. Council staff worked closely with Totally Wellington to ensure the journalists were well informed about the locations. Parks and Forests Rangers met with many of the journalists on site. Feedback was very positive.

Given the amount of public interest in the film, an interpretation board was erected at the Rivendell site at Kaitoke Regional Park setting out information about the filming and includes photos of the set. The WRC Parks and Forests were noted in the credits at the end of the film. There will be further publicity by way of a book being prepared, covering all the locations in New Zealand (including GPS reference points). The author visited our parks and forests recently to view the locations.

6. Regional Outdoors Summer Events Programme

A key part of our marketing for 2001/02 was "*Regional Outdoors*", our summer programme of 37 events, from November through to March. As before, several events were run in conjunction with clubs and volunteer groups involved in the parks, (e.g., Botanical Society, Fell Museum). Other Council departments, e.g. Harbours, Water Group, Environment, Biosecurity, helped with specialised information and talks. We also co-operated with the New Zealand Festival of the Arts organisers to promote events at Queen Elizabeth Park and Tunnel Gully. In addition, 11 events organised by other agencies were advertised through the *Regional Outdoors* programme.

In response to public demand, we included more “interpretative” events this year. We also arranged buses and back-up transport for the longer and "point-to-point" walks (e.g. Rimutaka Rail Trail, Lighthouse and Lakes). Although this required prior booking to manage numbers and user charges to cover the hire of buses, we could promote these events to people who are less mobile.

We distributed 5000 copies of the *Regional Outdoors* programme by mail to previous participants and through public libraries and visitor information centres. Promotion and advertising was co-ordinated with Corporate Communications and included press releases, articles in *Elements* and on our web-site. A small number of newspaper adverts and regular radio advertising (including a series of three-minute "interviews" with Rangers and event co-ordinators) helped to maintain a high profile for the programme.

We started the *Regional Outdoors* programme by jointly promoting “*Push-Play Day*” in early November with Sport Wellington, using their distribution network. We launched the latest *KiwiWalk* (the Swingbridge/Terrace Loop at Kaitoke Regional Park) in association with Sport Wellington, Sport and Recreation New Zealand, and Upper Hutt City Council.

6.1 Survey of Participants

We surveyed *Regional Outdoors* participants to measure the effectiveness of the programme, asking similar questions to those in our regular Visitor Satisfaction Survey to compare some data. The results are summarised in **Attachment 2**. They indicate that participants enjoyed their experience and generally had a high level of satisfaction.

6.2 Key Results

There were 780 participants at 28 *Regional Outdoors* events (9 events were cancelled because of wet weather). Thirty-two percent were first-time visitors to the park or forest.

Both Maori history walks at Queen Elizabeth Park were well attended (around 65 people per event). Eighty-seven people attended the Rimutaka Rail Trail walk and the Wonderful Water walks attracted around 25 people per event. The East Harbour Lighthouse and Lakes event in March was fully booked so we repeated the trip in early April.

The events advertised through the *Regional Outdoors* programme but organised by other agencies also achieved good attendances (over 8000).

7. Communication

Officers will prepare a press release in conjunction with Corporate Communications to publicise the overall level of satisfaction with the *Regional Outdoors* programme.

8. Recommendations

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) **Receive** the report.
- (2) **Note** the contents of the report.
- (3) **Note** the progress on the action plan for marketing the Council's parks and forests for 2001/02.

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Attachment 1: Progress with Marketing Parks and Forests 2001/02

Attachment 2: Results of *Regional Outdoors* Survey