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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Murray Waititi, Manager, Parks and Forests

Belmont Regional Park : Control and Management of the Takapu Block

1. Purpose

To advise the Committee that the Department of Conservation (DOC) has now officially invited the Wellington Regional Council (WRC) to be appointed as the administering authority of the Takapu Block as part of Belmont Regional Park.

2. Background

In 1995, the Crown owned area within the Belmont Regional Park known as the Takapu Block, was designated as surplus land to ECNZ requirements and earmarked for sale. It was then transferred from the Treasury to the Department of Survey and Land Information (DOSLI) for disposal.

Both DOC and the WRC highlighted the importance of the Block to Belmont Regional Park and consequently, the Treasury and DOSLI agreed to withdraw the property from sale. DOC indicated at that time that it was interested in pursuing a land transfer from DOSLI with the intention of the land then being gazetted as a Recreation Reserve and (with the Council's agreement) vested in the WRC to control and manage. The Takapu Block could then remain within Belmont Regional Park in perpetuity.

On 1 July 1996, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) took over management of the Takapu Block, and the land was leased to Landcorp Farming Limited and managed as part of the Waitangirua Farm, within Belmont Regional Park.

Council officers undertook a full assessment of the values of the Takapu Block early in 1996. That assessment highlighted the Block's geological, landscape, open space and recreational values. The Block is also important as a link in the north-south Park track system and connects the Park to both Porirua and Takapu Road. At that time the Landcare Committee:

- agreed with the assessment of the Takapu Block and supported officers' initiatives to secure the Block within the Belmont Regional Park.
- authorised officers to request DOC to seek the transfer of the land as a Recreation Reserve from Treasury, at nil consideration, as part of the land allocation process.
- noted that if DOC is successful in securing the land as recreation reserve, DOC would gazette control and management of the Block to the Regional Council to be administered as part of Belmont Regional Park (refer **Attachment 1, Report 96.211**).

Officers were to report back to the Landcare Committee on progress of the transfer. This followed an earlier resolution by Council that it would:

*Submit to Treasury support for the allocation of all of the Takapu Block to the Department of Conservation, who, in turn, should appoint the WRC to control and manage the land as a Recreation Reserve and part of Belmont Regional Park (refer **Attachment 2, Report 95.160**).*

The Chairperson at the time, Stuart Macaskill, wrote to the DOC Regional Conservator asking that discussions with Treasury / LINZ be progressed (refer **Attachment 3**). During following years, the WRC and DOC have continued to pursue the transfer of the Takapu Block to DOC, to secure its retention in the Park.

On 27 May 2002, DOC wrote to WRC advising that it had been successful in securing the transfer of the Takapu Block from LINZ and that the Block had been declared Recreation Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977 (refer **Attachment 4**). DOC noted that it does not see itself as best placed to realise the recreation and ecological potential of the Block and supports its retention and management under the ambit of the Belmont Regional Park Management Plan, as provided for in section 619D of the Local Government Act 1974. DOC has now officially invited the Council to consider being appointed to control and manage the Takapu Block, in line with earlier discussions. The Council has a similar management arrangement in other areas within the regional parks network, including Queen Elizabeth Park and the Dry Creek Recreation Reserve (also within Belmont Regional Park).

3. **Process for Completing the Transfer of the Takapu Block to WRC**

It is clear from past Council resolutions that the WRC will shortly take over control and management of the Takapu Block. As noted, in addition to its geological landscape and open space values, the Takapu Block has been, and continues to be, an important recreational link both within the Park and as a connection to Porirua and Takapu Road. The retention of the Takapu Block in Belmont Regional Park and the Council's appointment to administer it, will secure long-term public access to the Block and protection of the values it holds. However, a number of details require resolution before the Council is appointed as administering authority. These include an assessment of improvements on the property, and the transfer of responsibility for management of the three conservation covenants within the bounds of the Park.

DOC has conservation covenants with Landcorp on several sites of the Waitangirua Farm. One of these sites is the valley system extending up behind Cannons Creek to the border of the Takapu Block (Cannons Creek Valley). The Council is currently working with the Friends of Maara Roa care group undertaking a restoration project in the Cannons Creek Valley.

DOC regards management of the conservation covenants as a logical extension to management of the Takapu Block and has asked that the Council take over responsibility for managing the covenants in the Park, as well as part of becoming the administering authority of that Block.

We will liaise with Departmental officials and report back with final recommendations on these matters in August.

4. **Communication**

At this stage no external communication is necessary. However, a press release will be prepared in conjunction with the Department of Conservation once final details of the appointment as administering authority have been determined.

5. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

- (1) **Receive** the report.
- (2) **Note** the contents of the report.
- (3) **Note** that the Regional Council will shortly be appointed to control and manage the Takapu Block.
- (4) **Note** that Landcare officers will liaise with Department of Conservation officials regarding details of the Council's appointment as the administering authority and will report back to the Landcare Committee in August 2002 for final approval of details of that appointment.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachment 1 : Report 96.211

Attachment 2 : Report 95.160

Attachment 3 : Letter from WRC to DOC (18 September 1996)

Attachment 4 : Letter from DOC to WRC (27 May 2002)