

Regional Policy Statement and regional plan implementation summary

1. QEII Private Land Protection programme

1.1 Background

Private landowners wishing to legally protect and better manage areas of biodiversity value on their land can enter into covenant agreements with the QEII National Trust (QEII). Such covenants bind existing and subsequent owners to manage the area in question (normally a block of indigenous forest or wetland) to protect and enhance the natural values.

The costs involved in establishing a covenant typically relate to the need to fence the area to exclude stock and define the area by survey to enable registration on the title. These costs are normally shared by the landowner and QEII. In 2000, Greater Wellington established a fund to enable the costs of establishing covenants in the region to be shared. The effect of this funding is two-fold. First the cost to the landowner of covenanting is reduced (but not eliminated) making it more attractive to landowners and, secondly, the per covenant cost to QEII is reduced, enabling the Trust to undertake more work in our region.

1.2 Progress

Since Greater Wellington's funding assistance programme was established, the number of covenants established per year has risen from an average of 5 per year to 15. There are now 274 approved or registered covenants in the Wellington region protecting a total of 5,801 hectares of indigenous ecosystems in perpetuity.

The following table shows what was achieved last year, with a budget of \$70,000:

QEII National Trust Covenants established 2006/07

Type	No.	Area (hectares)
Lowland forest remnants	8	225.3
Coastal or semi-coastal forest	3	119.0
Wetlands	1	5.3
Total	12	349.6

A highlight this year included working with a landowner, Horizons Regional Council and the Department of Conservation to secure significant valuable forest areas on Patitapu Station near Mt Bruce.(160 hectares within the Wellington region).

2. Waiwhetu Stream Action Plan

2.1 Background

A programme to implement the Waiwhetu Stream Action Plan has been running since 2000. It is jointly funded by Greater Wellington and Hutt City Council, and is guided by the community-based Waiwhetu Stream Working Group.

The programme has a whole-of-catchment focus, from the headwaters in the Eastern Hutt hills at Taita, to the mouth at the confluence with the Hutt River at Seaview. While community and school planting events to improve the riparian environment have taken place annually, inevitably the greatest attention has been given to the issue of the contaminated sediments in the lower reaches of the Waiwhetu Stream. Greater Wellington and Hutt City Council, with the assistance of the Ministry for the Environment's Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund (CSRF), have commissioned a series of reports characterising the sediments and examining remediation options.

As a result of the flooding from the Waiwhetu and Awamutu Streams in February 2004, a joint Hutt City Council/Greater Wellington Waiwhetu Stream Floodplain Management Study was commissioned in 2005. The "Waiwhetu Project", as it is known, has now brought together the environmental rehabilitation and flood mitigation projects. This recognises that neither the issue of contaminated sediments nor the flooding problem can be dealt with in isolation of the other. The Waiwhetu Project is overseen by the Waiwhetu Stream Advisory Committee (WSAC) which contains representatives from Greater Wellington, Hutt City Council, Iwi and the Waiwhetu Stream Working Group and is chaired by Stuart McCaskill. The Advisory Committee reports to this Council through the Landcare Committee.

The Waiwhetu Project has been able to draw upon the body of work on the contaminated sediments completed prior to 2005 to inform its considerations

2.2 Progress

Funding Application

It is the view of the WSAC that removal of the contaminated sediments from the lower reaches of the stream is an action that logically precedes any structural flood mitigation works. As a result, the Committee requested that priority be given to preparing and lodging a funding application with the Ministry for the Environment's Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund requesting funding of \$5,859,000 exclusive of GST (100% of the clean up costs). A 220 page application was lodged in early November and followed up

with meetings with the CEO of the ministry, Hugh Logan, and the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. David Benson-Pope.

The initial response from the Fund was disappointing (offering 40% of the total costs) but subsequent discussions involving Councillors Glensor and Laidlaw indicated that the Minister was considering increasing the contribution. A final decision is awaited.

Contaminant source investigation

In March 2007 the final of four investigations jointly funded by Greater Wellington, Hutt City and the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund into the sources of contaminants entering the lower Waiwhetu Stream was completed. The objective of this project was to establish the significance of contaminated groundwater infiltration as a source of contaminants into the stormwater system. Approximately 30% of the 93 industrial/commercial sites in the Gracefield Industrial area are listed in the Regional Selected Land Use Register as having a history of storing, using or manufacturing hazardous substances. The high groundwater level and shallow stormwater drains in this area introduce the risk of contaminated groundwater entering the Waiwhetu Stream via infiltration into stormwater pipes. The investigation was undertaken by CRL Energy Ltd.

This project involved the installation of 4 groundwater monitoring wells in the Gracefield area and sampling groundwater levels and quality during wet and dry weather over a twelve month period (12 samples per site). The data was interpreted to establish groundwater level, flow direction, flow velocity and contaminant concentration, and estimate likely scale of contribution to the stormwater system.

The investigation confirmed that contaminants such as heavy metals are present in the shallow groundwaters in this area and that some of the stormwater systems are periodically or permanently submerged by groundwater. However, the consultants concluded that the contaminant contributions from groundwater to the stormwater systems is likely to be minor compared to other sources previously identified such as surface flows into the stormwater system from industrial properties. This finding reinforces the relevance of the decision recently taken to delegate enforcement powers to control contaminant discharges to Hutt City officers.

3. Pauatahanui Inlet Catchment project

3.1 Background

In the 2005/06 Greater Wellington, Porirua City and the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund jointly funded a one year project with the objective of designing a programme to improve the management of the catchments draining into the Pauatahanui Inlet, primarily by encouraging retirement and planting of waterways. The project, "Vegetation Frameworks" was developed by Peter Handford and Associates.

Progress

During the year under review, Peter Handford was retained by the two councils to continue implementing the project. Considerable progress was achieved with highlights including:

- Farm plans completed for three major properties totalling 1,560 hectares or 15% of the total Pauatahanui Inlet catchments;
- Funding of \$60,000 was obtained from the national Biodiversity Condition Fund for fencing and riparian planting works. It was noted by the Fund in granting this funding that, while the project did not meet the normal criteria relating to formal legal protection (grants are normally only made to areas subject to perpetual covenants), they were prepared to support the project because of its innovative approach to dealing with a significant environmental issue;
- First retirement plantings undertaken on “The Glenn” property;
- Funding has been secured from the Ministry for the Environment’s Sustainable Management Fund to engage a Catchment Co-ordinator. The application was made by the N.Z. Landcare Trust and the appointee will be an employee of the Trust but working to a work plan agreed to between the Trust, Greater Wellington and Porirua City Council. This externally funded appointment will allow the project budgets of the two councils to be applied to “on the ground” catchment projects. It will also allow the project to draw upon the not inconsiderable experience of the Landcare Trust in integrated catchment management.

4. Wetland Action Plan

4.1 Background

Eight key actions were identified in the Wetland Action Plan, which was approved by the Council in March 2003. The 2006/2007 year was the fourth year of implementation. Day to day implementation of the Wetland Action Plan is undertaken by staff across a number of Greater Wellington departments; notably Environmental Policy, Environmental Education, Environmental Regulation, Environmental Monitoring and Investigations, Biosecurity, Parks, Land Management and Flood Protection.

4.2 Progress

- The wetland database has been up and running since the beginning of the year. It is helping us with the review of the Wetland Action Plan and is used for general planning purposes. We are also making it available to city and district councils. An example is its use by Wellington City Council in the preparation of their Biodiversity Action Plan. This database is updated as additional wetlands are found.

- Many wetlands in the region depend on groundwater. Work is underway on a groundwater model for the Wairarapa that will improve our understanding of aquifers and how wetlands in the Wairarapa function. A monitoring programme has begun at Te Harakiki Wetland on the Kapiti and we are investigating monitoring wetlands the Wairarapa. Greater Wellington is also supporting a Crown Research Institute research programme that is hoping to develop simple and low cost methods for monitoring wetland hydrology. Work is continuing on this project.
- Wetlands on land owned or managed by Greater Wellington include some of the most important in the region. There are four wetlands on land Greater Wellington holds that are used for flood protection purposes, and sixteen wetlands on land managed by the Parks and Forests Department. The public have also been involved in a number of corporate and community planting days at wetlands on Queen Elizabeth Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Weed control has been undertaken in several wetlands by Parks staff.
- The Wetland Action Plan states that we will work in partnership with other agencies and iwi to improve the Lake Wairarapa wetland. Greater Wellington owns land around the Lake and is responsible for controlling water levels through the operation of the barrage gates. Discussions with the Department of Conservation over the governance structure for the proposed regional park are ongoing. Work is ongoing by the Parks Department on an ecological restoration plan and strategy for ecological monitoring and weed control.
- Greater Wellington has funded ongoing pest management in Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) wetlands. This programme is being carried out by the Biosecurity Department. The KNE wetlands include Te Harakiki (Waikanae), Nga Manu Reserve (Waikanae) O te Pua (Otaki), Lake Pounui (South Wairarapa), Waingawa Swamp (Masterton), Taumata Oxbow (east of Carterton), Waimeha Lagoon (Waikanae), Lake Onoke (South Wairarapa) and Pikes Lagoon (Gladstone). A number of wetlands also benefited from pest control carried out as part of the Animal Health Board TB vector programme, including the Pencarrow Lakes.
- The Wetland Incentives Programme was launched in November 2003 after being developed with input from wetland landowners. An additional 27 landowners have joined the programme this year, making a total of 109 landowners. Under the programme the fencing of twelve wetlands was subsidised and weed control was undertaken on eleven properties. The budget was fully spent last year and \$20,000 of the \$50,000 available for spending in the 2007/08 financial year has already been committed.
- A review of the Wetland Action Plan has commenced. A big part of the review is a survey of landowners that have been assisted through the Wetland Incentive Programme. A good proportion of surveys (approximately 20%) were returned and the data has been analysed.

Analysis of expenditure through the Wetland Incentives Programme has also been done. Staff in the Parks Department are satisfied that they have improved management of wetland areas on our land since the Action Plan was approved by Council.

5. Kaiwharawhara Stream Plan

5.1 Background

The Kaiwharawhara Stream and its main tributary, the Korimako Stream, have been the subject of various initiatives over the last few years. Greater Wellington has been working in partnership with local community groups and Wellington City Council on planting programmes and promotional work for managing streams and monitoring water quality in the catchment.

5.2 Progress

In August/September 2006 two fish passes were constructed on the Kaiwharawhara Stream to aid fish passage - one below the Blackbridge Rd intersection, and another at the confluence of the Kaiwharawhara Stream and the Korimako Stream.

Infill planting has been carried out at a number of sites within Otari-Wilton's Bush, and revegetation planting has begun at three new sites within Treliissick Park. These plantings were carried out by community volunteers, corporate groups, local schools, and the Global Volunteer Network. They conclude planting efforts in Otari-Wilton's Bush. In the future the planting focus will move to the lower Kaiwharawhara Catchment with assistance from the Treliissick Park Group under their Take Care funding.

With the help of the Biosecurity Department through the KNE programme, we have prepared a weed control plan for the lower Kaiwharawhara Catchment. Weed control is being carried out in conjunction with Wellington City Council.

BioBlitz 2007 occurred in March at the Otari-Wilton Bush reserve. It was an event to promote urban biodiversity and protection of the environment. Scientists and volunteers located plants, birds, insects, fish and other animals in the area. There were displays, talks, walks and interesting events. A total of 1347 different species were identified over a 24 hour period. Staff from Greater Wellington participated and helped out with the event, which was organised by the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust

This year one new Care Group, the Albemarle Stream Group has joined Project Kaiwharawhara.

Greater Wellington will continue its involvement in Project Kaiwharawhara and is currently working with Wellington City on a review of what's been achieved and future direction.

6. Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Programme

6.1 Background

In November 2006, the draft Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Action Plan was approved for public release by the Policy Finance and Strategy Committee and sent to all territorial authorities and stakeholders involved in the coastal environment, including iwi. Submissions were received from Kapiti Coast District Council and the Department of Conservation. Comments were assessed and minor changes made to the draft plan. Further consultation on the plan will now occur with iwi before it is finalised.

As part of ongoing work, a survey was undertaken into the beaches and river estuaries of the Wairarapa coast. This survey, completed over a three week period in December 2006 completes a comprehensive survey of the region's entire coastline. The work will assist in locating areas of high biodiversity for possible enhancement as part of the Action Plan. The survey has other important benefits, including identification of coastal areas where pre-emptive priority planning for oil spill response may be needed, and in the long term ecological monitoring of coastal ecosystems. The results of the survey were reported to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee and the Environment Committee.

7. The Freshwater Ecosystems Programme

7.1 Introduction

Greater Wellington's Freshwater Ecosystem Programme has been running for several years now and it has the following goals.

- To identify ways that the Council can improve the health and functioning of freshwater ecosystems.
- To increase community interest and awareness of freshwater.
- To enhance freshwater ecosystems through restoration.

7.2 Progress

This year we have worked with community groups on enhancing fish passage at locations in streams where culverts or weirs are limiting the upstream migration of native fish. By providing better fish passage, more habitat can be made available to a greater number of native fish species. A number of community groups working on stream restoration projects have approached us for assistance.

We have prepared concept plans for fish passes at nine locations on four streams. These are the Kaiwharawhara Stream, Owhiro Stream, Waiwhetu Stream and Hulls Creek. The concept plans have been developed into full engineering drawing and resource consents have been obtained at two locations

on the Kaiwharawhara Stream and at Hulls Creek. The passes in the Kaiwharawhara Stream have been built. Construction is about to begin for the pass at Hulls Creek.

In the upcoming financial year, we will be working with a Care Group and Wellington City on improving fish passage in the Owhiro Stream.

Point, Click, Fish

A computer based tool called Point, Click, Fish has been developed in past years and is used on a customised Geographic Information System (GIS). It was designed to help manage the habitats of freshwater fish in rivers and is used when resource consents applications are made for structures in rivers, reporting on the state of the environment and in education and public awareness programmes.

Pencarrow Lakes

This year we commissioned a hydrological investigation of how the Pencarrow Lakes are linked to the sea because there were concerns about whether there was adequate fish passage through the existing culverts. Both lakes and their catchments have valuable native fish habitats. The modelling work showed that the outlet of Lake Kohangatera is not really an issue, but there may be some problems with the current functioning of the culverts out of Lake Kohangapiripiri.