

## **Parks Manager's report**

### **For period ending Friday 7 September 2007**

#### **1. Manager's comments**

##### **1.1 Recreation strategy**

Parks are in the process of developing a project scope and Terms of Reference for a recreation strategy covering the Council's network of Regional Parks. The recreation strategy will be an integral part of the Council's decision making processes when considering the future use and development of the parks network.

Once a draft set of documents are completed, I will bring them and a proposed process for the strategy's development before Council for discussion and approval. These documents should be ready early next year.

##### **1.2 Management of Whitireia Park**

I am pleased to advise that the Department of Conservation (DoC) has contacted this Council to advise that they will be formally offering the management of Whitireia Park to Greater Wellington during September. Due to the timing of this offer, and reporting deadlines for this Landcare Committee meeting, consideration will have to wait until the last full Council meeting of the triennium on 27 September.

##### **1.3 Carbon Neutral Public Service Programme**

Greater Wellington has been contacted by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) enquiring whether GWRC would consider offering some eligible land for exotic afforestation under the Carbon Neutral Public Service (CNPS) programme (MfE is centrally coordinating the offsetting requirements for six lead-in agencies under the programme).

This Council has recently joined the Communities for Climate Protection programme (CCP-NZ) and has just completed *Milestone 1* which is an emissions inventory for the region and the organisation. Its next tasks are to set emissions targets and develop an action plan. The issue of carbon neutrality will have to be assessed as part of the CCP-NZ programme, and as such, no further action is required regarding the CNPS programme at this stage.

#### **2. Policy & Planning**

The final Battle Hill Farm Forest Management Plan is being presented to this Committee for recommendation for approval by Council (Report 07.472). The plan will be released following approval by Council at its 27 September meeting.

Information regarding the Concessions Policy and Bylaws Reviews was provided to Ara Tahi at a recent meeting on 14 August. A workshop will be held in late September with Ara Tahi Committee members to provide background about those reviews and to gather feedback.

A new Parks policy advisor, Martin Nunn has started work with Greater Wellington. Martin will be involved in planning for the Western Sector parks, which includes the Belmont Regional Park management planning process.

## 2.1 Pest Control

### 2.1.1 Pest animals

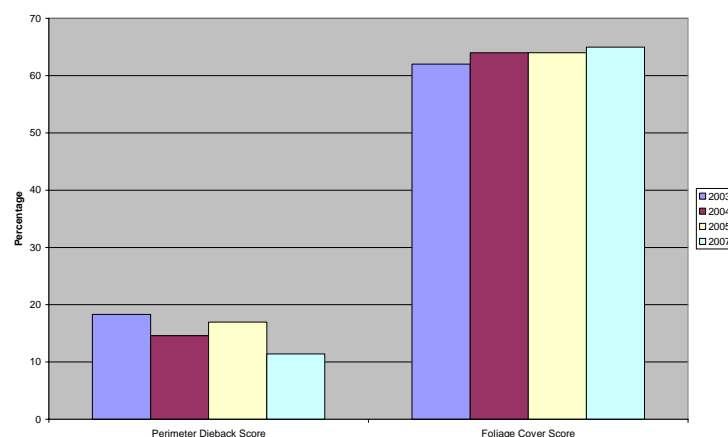
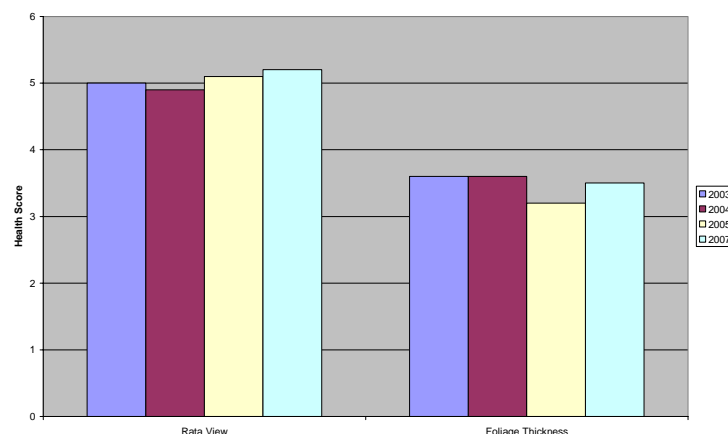
The pre-feed bait (non-toxic) was aurally sown for Akatarawa Forest on 19 August and for Mangaroa/Kaitoke on 21 August. Bioworks then aurally applied the toxic bait (1080) on 6 and 7 September respectively.

A professional pig control operation was completed in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo water area collection during July. Ten pigs and four deer were culled. Pigs are of major concern in the Wainuiomata catchment as, despite increased hunting effort, they appear to be present in greater numbers and are causing damage.

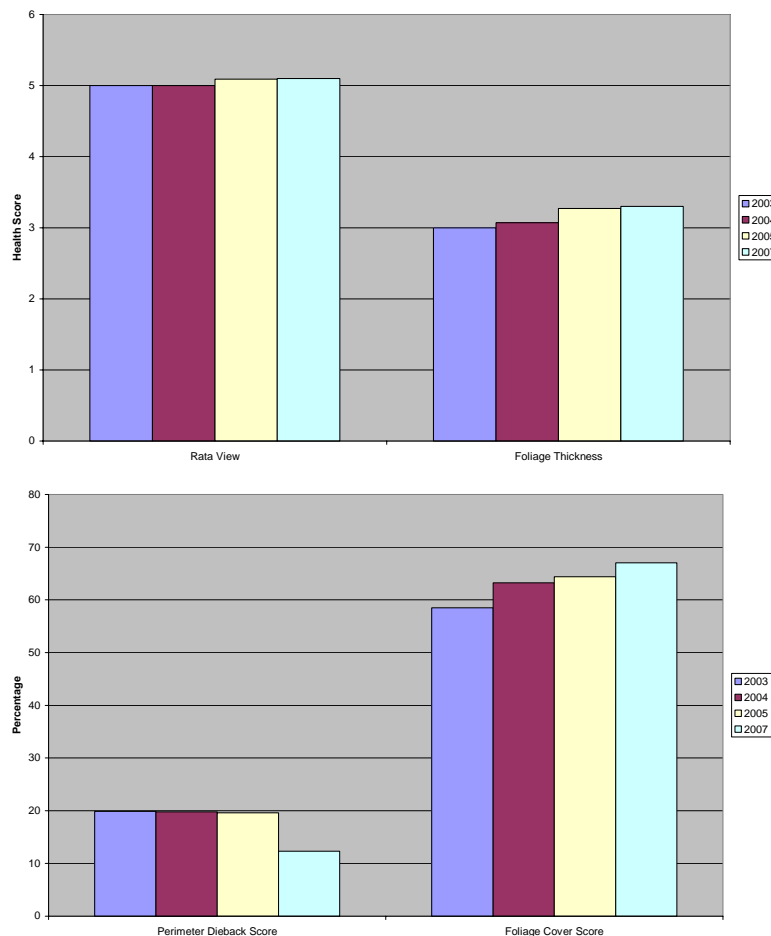
### 2.1.2 Monitoring

Staff recently finished biannual Rata digital photography monitoring used to determine the impact of possums on foliage cover (as rata trees are a preferred food for these pests). Recent monitoring shows that the selected trees in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo and Hutt water collection areas are in good health (see graphs) as vegetation dieback on them has decreased while the amount of foliage present has increased.

#### Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area Rata Tree Health



### Hutt Water Collection Area Rata Tree Health



#### 2.1.3 East Harbour Hinau Fruitfall plots

Mainland Island Restoration Operation (MIRO) members have been re-measuring hinau fruitfall plots in East Harbour Regional Park for a number of years. The results found there are heartening, as there were only 0.4% of the fruit damaged by possums, while the number of rodent-damaged fruit has fallen from 44% in 2006 to 18.5% in 2007.

#### 2.1.4 Wainuiomata Mainland Island

Another bait fill was completed in late July. Tallies of pest animals killed in the area since it was started in 2005 (following the 1080 possum control operation) are: 228 possums, 25 mustelids, 122 hedgehogs, 46 pigs and 10 deer.

A recent rodent tracking monitor showed rats to be at 99% outside the mainland island and 13% inside. No mustelids were recorded in the tracking tunnels.

### 3. Western Sector

#### 3.1 Belmont Regional Park

Visitors have continued to enjoy the park in limited areas during the period as public access on to Waitangirua Farm was closed due to lambing on 18 August. Access will be re-opened on 20 October. Other parts of the park remain open to visitors. Prior to the lambing closure, staff completed maintenance work on the main Puke Ariki Track and Kilmister Block, replacing broken track markers and identifying stiles to replace this coming spring.

The Ranger has almost completed a condition survey of Waitangirua Farm fences. The location of all the farm fences has been mapped by GPS, to provide accurate data for GIS maps of the area. This information will enable scheduling of future maintenance and replacement, and will help with priority establishment. This survey has been conducted over 30 separate days to this point, and should only require another three days for completion.

An engineering inspection of track structures has been completed by staff in the Dry Creek, Stratton Street and Korokoro Stream areas of the park. This inspection is required as part of the regular structures monitoring programme in our parks. No significant maintenance issues were identified. Several minor repairs and maintenance jobs have been prioritised and will be completed by the parks construction team

Two planting days were held at the Oakleigh Street entrance. Greater Wellington provided 900 plants for the Friends of Belmont group, and these were placed in accordance with a planting plan for this area.

Our maintenance teams have made security improvements to the Oakleigh Street entrance, including installation of a gate, which give staff the option to close the carpark during night time hours.



New gate at Oakleigh Street

#### Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

Public access to the farm is limited now as lambing season started on 13 August (and ends on 19 October). Signs were erected on the park and public notices placed in both the Dominion Post and the Kapi-Mana paper advising the public of the temporary closures. The closures are generally well received by the public who are still happy to have restricted access to the park and through-access to adjoining Akatarawa Forest during this eight week period.

Be that as it may, we are starting to notice an increase in visitor numbers on the weekends now that the winter months are behind us. We are now getting enquires from schools, Guides, Scouts and community groups for camping, ranger talks and day visits. We expect to have a lot of groups camping prior to the Christmas period.

The Mana Lions and Mana Boat Club volunteers have been out in the park checking and restocking their trap lines. There are 180 traps throughout Battle Hill and these volunteers are doing a great job. The work they do is critical to the continued success of our low pest numbers.

The ranger attended an open day for the Puketiro Windfarm project. The purpose of the day was to inform the local community about the impacts of the Windfarm project. RES, the developer, was very happy with the turnout and comments received by the local community.

Possum traps have been installed along the boundary between the farmland and the forest to coincide with the Akatarawa Forest possum control operation. This will help to reduce possum numbers on the park as the traps should catch any possums that wander out of the forest.

Ranger's met with the Catchment Management Division's Land Management team regarding the woodlot concept plans for the Park. The reason for this meeting is that some of our old pines are due to be felled and we are looking at what we will replant in these areas.

Anthony Philips, our volunteer student from Gateway Industry Training, recently spent a week working with our lessee farmer learning about stock management, farm maintenance and pasture growth. Anthony has now completed his 20 week course towards his NZQA credits on animal welfare, pasture planning and farm maintenance.

Forty metres of new water pipe have been run to an existing water trough on the Pipe Line Ridge that has not been working for approximately four years. This is the first stage in establishing new water troughs along the northern Pipe Line area. This will reduce stock looking for water in swampy areas which should help reduce stock loss in the winter.

### **3.2 Queen Elizabeth Park**

It has been a quiet period at QEP as there has been lots of rain and overcast days on the Kapiti Coast.

High tides have left a lot of debris at the Wainui stream bridge causing some concern from the local white baiters. A digger was brought in to clean out the debris. The rain also filled up a drainage ditch near the Tramway barn so the culvert there was cleaned out as well.

Staff also had a spring clean at the nursery which included creating a small car park area for use by the many volunteers that join the horticulture team to do volunteer nursery work on Wednesdays, and the New Zealand Equestrian Federation that store equipment there.

The park has, however, had its fair share of vandals visiting the park this period. All the windows at one of the Whareroa beach toilets were broken and two of the toilet blocks at the Paekakariki entrance had various plumbing bits stolen.

The volunteer group that painted our historic barn has been working in the park once a week on planting projects. The group consists of teenagers



ranging from 15-18 that are attending the Trade and Commerce school in Paraparaumu. We are hoping this becomes a long term relationship.

We had a number of planting days this period. 1,000 plants were put in the Remnant Bush, approximately 2,000 plants on the Whareroa Stream, and about 1,000 plants at the Rainbow Court entrance to the park. The Rainbow Court planting was the last of our community plantings for the season but we have a number of corporate plantings scheduled for next period.

The Wellington Search and Rescue team utilised the park (as well as Whareroa Farm) for two days. They were at the park training their dogs in the fine art of sniffing through the cow patties. Most of their training takes place in the forest so they really enjoyed the diversity we offered them at the park. We had an enjoyable NZ Equestrian Federation training day. They were fortunate to have great weather so they had a really good turn out. The park also hosted a couple of Tramway “Sunday Fundays”. While the Fundays haven’t been as busy as they were during the summer, they are still seeing an increase in the number of visitors.

This period also saw the Friends of QEP Annual General Meeting. The group said goodbye to long term members Leon and Rachel Keil, Trish Sarr, Barry Williams, and Carol Reihana. However, they also welcomed a number of new members. Staff have had a number of queries from the Friends group about pest control on the park of late so Ian Flux from DoC and our own Philippa Crisp gave a presentation at the AGM on pest control issues.

## **4. Eastern Sector**

### **4.1 Kaitoke Regional Park**

Things have been generally quiet in the park as a result of some wet wintry weather.



Maintenance has continued however, with the ongoing bark mulching of the campground, Rivendell and Millennium Plantings. Plantings have included 100 White Maire on the campground fringe near Pakuratahi River, and infill planting of 150 Rimu, Karamu and Manuka opposite the Strainer House.

The Kaitoke Hill track and Pylon Loop tracks in the Kaitoke Hill Plantation have been completed with the installation of two information boards. These tracks have opened up a new area for park users to explore and also enable mountain biking and horse riding which are prohibited elsewhere in the park.

The Kaitoke Hill track provides a link between the Hutt River Trail and the Rail Trail and the signs highlight this link. As the tracks have become better known more people, especially dog walkers and mountain bikers, have been using them.

ACCOR group which operate several hotel brands in Wellington including Novotel had a staff planting day at Te Marua. 30 volunteers planted over 600 plants on a prepared site that was prone to

rubbish dumping and anti-social behaviour. The area has been covered with bark mulch and chained off to prevent vehicle damage to the plantings. The group worked hard in the morning and then had a barbeque and tour of the rainforest and “Rivendell” to finish off the event.

15 people attended a Botanical Society Working Bee in Te Marua Bush where they undertook planting, weeding and mulching. An internal fence that was created when the bush was extended as part of the State Highway II realignment, has now been removed allowing better access throughout the site. A new fence will be erected shortly to extend the north western end of the bush by 600 square metres.



Seven Totara were planted during this period in the Celebrate Life Grove. Three Totara were planted by Councillors Baber and Glensor, accompanied by Chairperson Ian Buchanan and former Chairperson Stuart McCaskill. Cr Wilde was unable to attend so staff planted her tree on her behalf. This continued the tradition of a Councillor planting a tree during their first term on the Council.



## 4.2 East Harbour Regional Park

While the weather during this period has been generally mild, some heavy rain storms did result in a major breach of Lake Kohangatera to the sea.

Staff are currently installing 45 metres of boardwalk in a flood prone area between Butterfly Creek and Gollans Stream. Snaking through lush swamp forest, the boardwalks are designed to limit further erosion and allow



the bush understory to recover from trampling. This again adds to the quality of the bush walk experience as visitors head for the Butterfly Creek picnic area.

There were sightings of NZ Falcon and Whitehead during this period.

This years *Night-time Madness* event at EHRP attracted a record 318 participants. The race is run in pairs, teams or family members, and to complete the course, group members must finish together.



The big difference with this race is that it is run in the pitch black night time bush. An extreme run was added to the event for the first time. This utilised the newly opened route along the eastern ridge from Days Bay to Eastbourne. To top it all off, rain absolutely belted down throughout the event but apparently everyone had a great time. Unlike the name, you don't have to be mad to run this race - but it probably helps!

A timber routed sign (“No horse riding beyond this point”) has been installed on Cameron Ridge, Lakes Block, and a further two mountain bike information mapboards have been installed at Fraser Street and Stanley Street. Upgrading of the Fraser Street entrance continues with the installation of a post and rail fence together with pipe gate. The new barrier and routed sign (“No mountain bikes beyond this point”) installed at the top of the Howard Road track lasted the grand total of 2 days. Both were cut down and removed from the site by vandals.

### 4.3 Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo Catchments



A further 150 Kanuka and Manuka were planted on the Mainland Island lower dam site during this period. A group from a local church once again assisted with planting. This group are keen to help in the community and are happy to assist with any projects we have.

The Annual General Meeting of the Orongorongo Club was held on 16 August and attended by our Ranger.

The Wainuiomata Bush Fire Force also held a training exercise in the Recreation Area in early August.

Apart from working with local community groups, it was a busy period for the Ranger





managing inappropriate behaviour in the recreation area:

During a patrol in July three men on motor bikes were seen entering the front gate area from the Moores Valley track. The group was approached in the flax planting of the recreation area but wouldn't stop as requested and sped from the area. In the short time they were in the area quite a lot of damage to the grassed areas had occurred.

A group of runners from a harriers club were spoken to by our Ranger because they were using the area for an event without contacting the Council for permission. A letter will be sent to this group from Parks staff.

During August our Ranger assisted the police with an armed callout out in the recreation area. The area was checked, but the offender was not found and no further action was required.

Strong winds on 11 August brought down quite a few large trees across walking tracks and caused minor windfalls on the Catchment access road. Snow also fell on the catchment's roads during August.

#### **4.4 Akatarawa/ Pakuratahi Forests**

We continue to maintain culverts, run-offs and water ways throughout the roading network and this has required extra effort this period due to the weather conditions and the fact that the prison inmates have not been available. This has meant our Ranger has had to address the potholing issues himself and has spent a fair bit of time clearing water ways and culverts in both the Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully areas. Two wind-thrown trees have also been removed from the back road in Pakuratahi.

Apart from the major 1080 possum control operations currently underway, ongoing pest animal control continues throughout the Tunnel Gully and Rimutaka Incline areas and various other parts of the Akatarawa Forest.

The volume of rubbish collecting around the Deerstalkers range is becoming excessive so our Ranger asked one of the members if they could have a rubbish clean up.

Recently our Ranger spoke to GW's Plantation Forestry Department regarding the removal of wild cattle in Puketiro forest. Plantation Forestry has now engaged professional people to assist with the removal of the stock. These stock issues will continue for as long as the boundary fence separating GW forest and private land owners remains in a shoddy condition.

We are in the process of totalling the final cost for constructing the Orange Hut. This will give us an idea of whether there are funds left over to build a toilet at the site. Funding for the project has come from an insurance payout when the original Orange Hut was burned down. However with the enormous community support for its construction, the project's cost is expected to be well under budget.

Nine 4WD events were held during this period, involving 100 vehicles, as well as one police motorcycle training event.

**Murray Waititi**  
Manager – Parks  
Water Supply, Parks and Forests