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**Report 01.397**

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Report to Environment Committee  
from Kirsten Forsyth, Policy Advisor

## **Draft Riparian Management Strategy**

### **1. Purpose**

To approve the draft Riparian Management Strategy for public consultation.

### **2. Background**

Preparing a strategy for achieving riparian management in the Wellington Region has been a long term project that has been underway for the last four years. The Strategy has been prepared by the Riparian Management Group with representation from the Environment, Wairarapa and Landcare Divisions. Members of the group are: Kirsten Forsyth, Geoff Skene, Ian Gunn, Don Bell, Brett Stansfield, and Graham Sevicke-Jones. Other staff who have advised the Group are Nigel Clarke, Murray McLea, Steve Murphy, Phil Purves, Trecia Smith, Steve Blakemore, Dave Cameron, Geoff Cameron, John Sherriff, Alison Berry, and Gretchen Robertson.

Riparian management is the management of stream margins, generally by retirement and planting, to achieve specific outcomes for the stream, or the riparian zone itself. The riparian zone has been defined as “any land that adjoins or directly influences, or is influenced by, a body of water”.

The careful management of riparian areas can bring about long term improvements to river environments by improving water quality and aquatic habitat, and increasing ecological links through the wider landscape. Depending on the kind of plants used and where they’re planted, it contributes to healthier river ecosystems and helps rebuild regional biodiversity.

Over the last year, Council staff have been working with landowners and volunteers in three riparian management pilot programmes funded by the Long Term Financial Strategy. The purpose of the pilot programmes is to demonstrate the benefits of riparian management to aquatic ecosystems and the wider environment, and to build our knowledge and experience with this technique.

The three streams in the programme are the Enaki Stream, a tributary of the Mangaterere Stream in central Wairarapa, the Kakariki Stream, a tributary of the Ngarara Stream in Waikanae, and the Karori Stream in Wellington City. Work on the pilot programmes will continue for the next two years.

### 3. **What does the Strategy propose?**

The Strategy describes riparian management and outlines why the Council needs to act to promote the appropriate management of riparian areas. The Strategy suggests the Council should do this by providing information and assistance to landowners with appropriate incentives to encourage the take-up of this idea.

To determine who should pay for riparian enhancement and how the costs should be apportioned, we identified the likely costs, benefits, and beneficiaries. This analysis showed that landowners both contribute to the need for, and benefit from, riparian management, and that the community benefit increases as more permanent and vegetated means of protecting rivers and streams are chosen.

For the level of community contribution to riparian management works on private land to reflect the increasing community benefit that accrues from more intensive treatment, the Strategy proposes that the following subsidy percentages apply.

- Works comprising temporary or partial exclusion of stock, with any directly associated works – 30%
- Works comprising permanent exclusion of stock, with any directly associated works, and predominantly exotic vegetation planted – 40%
- Works comprising permanent exclusion of stock, with any directly associated works, and predominantly native vegetation planted – 55%

Comparable works with a community benefit include one-off river erosion control works (i.e. not in a scheme), which attract a Council contribution of up to 30%, floodplain and river management works which attract a Council (general rate) contribution of up to 50%, and soil conservation works which attract a Council contribution of up to 45%.

### 4. **What will it cost?**

We have costed various forms of implementing riparian protection and concluded that meaningful results could be achieved with an annual budget of \$250,000. However, this has to be a long term commitment. It won't be achieved instantly and results may not be apparent for some time.

The Strategy recommends that Council moves from the pilot programmes to a more formal programme with a budget of \$250,000 per annum, to be decided at the next Long Term Financial Strategy.

5. **What happens next?**

Over the next two years we will

- take the Strategy for consultation with Iwi and landowners, including territorial authorities
- continue with the pilot programmes, and
- identify priority areas to target, taking into account the surrounding land uses and the potential positive effects that riparian management could achieve.

The Council will be able to make its decision about its future involvement in riparian management through the next Long Term Financial Strategy.

6. **Communication**

The draft Strategy will be taken for consultation with Iwi and landowners, including territorial authorities and farmers.

7. **Recommendation**

*That the draft Strategy for Achieving Riparian Management in the Wellington Region be released for public consultation.*

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