

Report 03.94
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Committee Landcare
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Wellington Conservation Board (WCB) Meeting: 14–15 February 2003

1. Purpose

To advise the Landcare Committee of issues arising from the Wellington Conservation Board (WCB) meeting.

2. Landcorp Whareroa Farm possible sale

The Conservation Board wants:

- (1) the popular walking access from SH1 to Mt Wainui in Greater Wellington – The Regional Council's (GWRC) Akatarawa Forest.
- (2) areas of regenerating native bush, that may have been agreed to be covenanted in the 1987 Crown Land Carve-up, raised with Landcorp prior to any sale. The farm lies between GWRC's Queen Elizabeth Park and its Akatarawa Forest, and a legal walking path, e.g. NZ Walkway linking the two is also desirable.

Rob Forlong says an agreement was reached with Landcorp in 1996 re public access but it did not gain funding. There is also a legal road that runs part of the way over privately owned Wainui Station. Kapiti Coast District Council which is responsible for legal roads, as well as having an interest in local recreational access, should also be approached. The Department of Conservation (DOC) may well be able to provide walkways more economically than GWRC, so it is desirable for GWRC and DOC to consider this matter jointly.

3. DOC Wellington coastal foredunes vegetation report

Scientist John Sawyer talked to this report. Foredunes are an endangered habitat. The region covered includes the whole GWRC region. It shows the distribution location of five key sand-dune species – sand tussock, pingao, spinifex, sand coprosma and sand daphne. It lists public dune areas where these species have been planted. It explains propagation methods, and identifies key areas of foredune for management, and much further useful information.

4. Ashes storage area: Rimutaka Forest Park, Wainuiomata

A Hutt City proposal to lease a grassed and tracked area of the Rimutaka Forest Park in Wainuiomata East, as a “Garden of Remembrance” area for urns of cremated human ashes, was turned down by the Board. The area is at the start of the Whakanui Track, an important track into the Park, and adjoins GWRC water supply open space land. It was to be for 30 years. The Board was concerned this was a permanent fixture, and as well took open space in a forest park, a specially protected area under the Conservation Act, held for conservation, and especially recreation.

5. Pauatahanui Inlet inspection

On the Saturday the WCB inspected the Pauatahanui Wildlife Refuge, and the Horokiri and Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserves, round Pauatahanui Inlet, together with the Guardians and the Community Trust. These reserves are conservation land administered by DOC. All groups are keen to see district and regional planning constraints introduced to protect riparian zones, and help achieve the long-term preservation of the Inlet. Another important issue is enhancing the growth of native eelgrass, to assist fish spawning etc.

6. Long-term survival of native freshwater eels in doubt

A pre publication draft of a data modelling scientific paper ‘*Longfin eels need reserves: modelling the effects of commercial harvest on stocks of New Zealand eels*’ by S D Hoyle and D J Jellyman, was circulated by DOC staff to the Board. The paper discusses the major risk that heavy commercial eel fishing poses by greatly reducing return to the sea and spawning by adult fish, especially females. If insufficient fish grow to adulthood and return to the sea breeding grounds, as appears to be happening at present, then the long term survival of the species is at risk. Eels are becoming an endangered species through over-fishing. The existence of true non-fishing areas is consequently important to eel survival in the present commercial fishing environment.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. receive the report.*
- 2. note the contents of the report.*
- 3. note the paper on Longfin eels and its results.*
- 4. ask officers to jointly discuss, with the Department of Conservation and Kapiti Coast District Council, the case for a linking walkway, including legalising public access to Mt Wainui, and report back to the Landcare Committee.*

5. *request that Greater Wellington – The Regional Council’s (GWRC) Environment Division staff note and use the Department of Conservation’s “coastal foredunes vegetation report” in their management and review of the GWRC’s Coastal Strategy and Plan.*

Report prepared by:

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