

Flood Protection Manager's report for period ending 16 January 2004

1. Manager's comments

1.1 Ohariu/Makara Streams inspection

Following on from the Ohariu/Makara Community Board Meeting on 16 October 2003, an inspection of the Makara and Ohariu Streams was arranged for 8 December 2003.

From Greater Wellington, Cr Terry McDavitt, Paul Jolly (Resource Investigations), Sharyn Westlake and Steve Murphy (Flood Protection) attended. Five Ohariu/Makara Community Board members participated as well as three officers from the Wellington City Council.

Key issues of interest to the Community Board identified during the inspection included undersized road culverts, trees blocking the stream, cutting the Makara Stream mouth and a need for more frequent inspections.

A draft set of notes from the inspection has been made and circulated for comment. The notes will form the basis of a short report, including action recommendations, to both the Landcare Committee and the Makara Community Board.

1.2 Paekakariki flood, October 2003

On 6 January 2004 we received a letter from the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) enclosing copies of two reports investigating the causes of the flooding that occurred in Paekakariki township on 3 October 2003, and looking at options for stopping such an event occurring again. The letter also asked what assistance Greater Wellington could offer in reducing the risk to Paekakariki.

In a nutshell, the flooding was caused by an intense storm that caused a lot of shingle to move in the Fly-by-Wire Stream. About 3000 cubic meters of shingle deposited between the Paekakariki Hill Road and State Highway 1 and diverted floodwaters into the township. Some under-capacity culverts to the north of the township also appear to have contributed to the flooding.

The reports commissioned by KCDC have investigated which culverts are undersized and options for managing the shingle and consequential flooding from the Fly-by-Wire Stream. Some further investigation, discussions with land and culvert owners and monitoring of gravel movement is required before KCDC can make any long-term decisions on mitigation options. A report to be considered by KCDC on 29 January recommends a range of immediate measures including installing a telemetered rain gauge to provide early warning of future flood events.

Under the 1990 Kapiti Coast Watercourse Agreement the responsibility for managing the Fly-by-Wire Stream, Te Puke, Wainui and adjacent streams for flood management purposes lies with KCDC. This responsibility includes planning and funding any mitigation work that KCDC considers appropriate.

Greater Wellington will assist KCDC by continuing to make available key staff, as necessary, to assist in the assessment of options and technical reports, and in the provision of expert advice such as on hill stabilisation possibilities.

2. Waikanae River floodplain management [Graeme Campbell]

2.1 Friends of the Waikanae River

Our gravel extraction contractor damaged a small area of the Friends' plantings on 18 December 2003. This damage has subsequently been repaired and amends made.

2.2 Otaihanga floodwall

The Contractor has started work on the precast panels which make up the flood wall. Assembly of the panels is proposed to start on site in the week beginning 26 January 2004.

2.3 Jim Cooke Park

A meeting has been arranged with the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) on 28 January 2004 to ensure our proposed river works are co-ordinated with any possible proposals KCDC may have for a water storage lake in the area. We should be in a position to confirm what land purchase is required for the project following the meeting.

3. Otaki River floodplain management [Graeme Campbell]

3.1 Friends of the Otaki River

The Friends are planning an open day at Chrystalls Lagoon to give the public an opportunity to see how this area is developing. The open day is proposed for late March 2004 and Councillors will be advised nearer the time.

3.2 Flood hazard mapping

Greater Wellington responses to the submissions on the flood hazard maps have been completed and sent to KCDC. Our information will be incorporated into a KCDC letter for sending out to individual submitters.

Changes to the maps resulting from the consultation are being incorporated into revised maps that should be completed by mid February 2004.

3.3 Rock protection works

A contract for the supply of rock rip-rap to construct 100m of rock wall extending downstream from the existing Chrystalls Bend works has been let with delivery now underway. Construction of the works is programmed for March 2004. The prices for the rock rip-rap were slightly higher than budgeted and the extent of work able to be completed has been modified to keep the overall project within budget.

3.4 Lower Otaki walkway

Agreement has been reached with Winstones Aggregates on the design and alignment of the walkway past the Winstones Crushing Plant, and the first 100m section constructed. The remaining 300m will be constructed in stages over the next three months. The Friends of the Otaki River propose to have an opening for the walkway in June 2004. The opening will include a working bee to plant some native trees.

4. Hutt River floodplain management [Daya Atapattu]

4.1 Ava to Ewen project

On 15 December 2003 we let the Strand Park river realignment contract to Cashmore Contracting Ltd of Wanganui for a sum of \$3.7 million. Opus International Consultants Ltd, will supervise this contract.

The contractor's current programme is to set up a site office and start stockpiling rock at Ava Park in March 2004. The viewing platform near Ewen Bridge will be completed by June 2004. We understand Cashmore Contracting will want to start some river realignment work before May 2004, with the main body of the work to proceed summer 2004/05. The contractor's detailed programme will be submitted for approval at a meeting on 30 January 2004.

Hutt Valley High School have agreed to close Strand Park to sports activities until September 2005 when the construction works will be completed. However, limited access to Strand Park will be provided during the winter season for training activities.

An information sheet providing an overview of the project with some of the key implementation dates was distributed to adjoining residents, stakeholders and other interested parties in December 2003. The next information sheet giving more detailed information will be distributed in February 2004.

Our agreement with Hutt City Council calls for the concept design of the new Opahu Stream Pump Station to be completed by June 2004. In order to achieve this we aim to complete the Ava Bridge stopbank layout design by February 2004 so the stopbank design is integrated with that of the pump station. We expect to appoint a consultant for the detailed design of the Ava Bridge stopbank by August 2004.

4.2 Belmont improvements

We are making good progress with the Belmont improvements. The edge protection works are on track for completion by May 2004. The Contractor started work in November 2003 and by December 2003, the rock groyne at the northern end of Owen Street and six debris fences were completed, and about 2,400 tonnes of rock were delivered to the site. The Contractor is currently constructing groynes at Charles Street.

An information sheet was distributed to Belmont residents and stakeholders in November 2003, before commencing the edge protection works. The next information sheet will be distributed in February 2004, before starting the Norfolk Street stopbank works.

Hutt City Council has granted resource consents for the stopbank at the southern end of Norfolk Street. Construction is planned for February/March 2004.

Environmental and restoration planting will be carried out in May/June 2004. We will seek community involvement with the environmental planting.

4.3 Whirinaki Crescent stopbank upgrade

The existing stopbank, built on a narrow strip of reserve land, has to be raised by 600-900mm to meet the 2,300 cumec standard recommended by the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan. It quickly became obvious we needed the assistance and co-operation of the three major adjacent landowners to get an acceptable concept design.

Some options, and associated issues, for raising and strengthening the stopbank were discussed with Upper Hutt City Council officers on 2 December 2003. Further discussions will be held as the proposals develop. We have agreed to present the preliminary design proposal to Upper Hutt City Council following endorsement by the Hutt River Advisory Committee.

The stopbank upgrade proposals were discussed with Wellington Golf Club representatives on 12 December 2003. A Golf Club suggestion to incorporate the proposed stopbank into a new sub-division proposed on the northern side of the stopbank will be investigated.

We have also now met with the Silverstream College Board of Proprietors to discuss the stopbank upgrade and other flood protection issues. It was a very useful meeting with an agreed way forward achieved.

We aim to complete the preliminary design by June 2004. Consultation with affected residents on the design, resource consents and the tendering process is programmed for 2005/06.

4.4 Port Road improvements

Hutt City Council has appointed landscape designers, Urban Perspectives, to prepare the landscape design from the Waiwhetu Stream mouth to the Estuary. We will work with the landscape designers to develop an edge protection design that will integrate into the overall landscape design.

4.5 Non-structural implementation

The District Plan change programme was reviewed at a meeting with Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council officers on 17 December 2003. Hutt City Council officers aim to obtain their Council approval on 5 May 2004 to notify the proposed District Plan changes. Upper Hutt City Council officers are committed to seeking their Council's approval to a plan change once their plan becomes operative, currently anticipated to be May/June 2004. We are progressing the Section 32 analysis for the proposed changes.

Work on the six emergency management projects by the two city councils is progressing. Debbie Cunningham is co-ordinating these projects. A progress review meeting was held on 15 December 2003.

A draft flooding hazard fact sheet for the Hutt floodplain has been prepared. Resource Policy and Flood Protection staff are jointly reviewing this draft. We expect to present the draft hazard sheet to the Hutt River Advisory Committee in February 2004.

4.6 Hutt River bed level survey

The Hutt River bed level survey is on track for completion by April 2004. About 15% of the work was completed by December 2003.

5. Porirua scheme

5.1 Seton Nossiter detention dam safety review

In June 2003 we received the final report on the Comprehensive Safety Review of the Seton Nossiter detention dam. Reviews of the two Porirua detention dams are undertaken at five to seven yearly intervals to ensure that the dams are being operated safely and to established dam management standards.

The Seton Nossiter safety review report contains 10 Recommendations, the most significant of which require further analysis of flood frequency and the consequences of dam failure. The dam was built without an overflow spillway and relies totally on storage volume to ensure that it can safely handle very large flood events. A recent review of the potential rainfall events that could occur at the site by NIWA show that there is an extremely small possibility of a storm event that could overtop the dam. This puts the dam outside current guidelines, and hence the need for further studies to more accurately clarify if there are any issues of public safety and what remedial actions may need to be taken.

Other recommendations from the safety review relate to monitoring procedures during a flood event and some maintenance issues that we plan to pick as part of our annual maintenance programme.

We are currently preparing a programme of work to respond to the report recommendations. A more detailed report to the Committee is proposed for the March meeting.

5.2 Findlay Street

We have now come up with a third option for this project that incorporates a small island at the lower end of the works reach. This option has the potential to be a good compromise between the two current options – full realignment and floodway (channel alignment unchanged).

Ian Boothroyd, our consultant aquatic ecologist, had a look at the new option and advised us it has some potential benefits over the full realignment option. We then forwarded our sketch drawings of the new option, with Ian Boothroyd's report to Wellington City Council (WCC) and requested a meeting to discuss. WCC officers agree the option is worth pursuing. Accordingly we will get some engineering drawings prepared and a cost estimate so the option can be compared with the two current options.

6. Planning and development services [Phillip Purves]

The following summarises the formal, written requests for information or advice attended to during November and December 2003:

	Nov/Dec 2003	YTD
Requests brought forward	19	29
Additional requests received	18	59
Responses provided	23	74
Outstanding requests	14	14

7. Investigations [Phillip Purves]

7.1 Waitohu flood hazard assessment

Work is continuing on the *Sedimentation and River Morphology* component of the flood hazard assessment.

The project scope has also been reviewed to reflect the more holistic approach that is now proposed in order to meet both the Landcare and Environment Divisions' requirements for community consultation. The change in scope and revised consultation programme is reported separately to the Committee. The Environment Committee will be similarly updated.

8. Operations

8.1 Wellington [Jeff Evans]

Hutt River

It was an exceptionally busy period for staff over the build up to Christmas. As usual there was a large increase in public enquiries during the pre-Christmas period, which had to be responded to.

Two labour only contractors have been employed to assist us with cutting the sight-lines for the Hutt River survey, to ensure we keep ahead of the surveyors.

Two new car parks have been formed on the river berms at Avalon, with bollards installed to restrict vehicle access.

Bed recontouring was undertaken in the upper river opposite Gibbon Street to put the river back into a better alignment and mobilise the large beach to maintain channel capacity. We estimate that approximately 25,000 cubic metres of gravel was pushed over to the opposite bank.

Hutt River Trail

Staff are completing the flood damage repairs from the October floods. The track has been re-metalled in many places and a new retaining wall is being installed in the Taita Gorge.

Hutt River ranging service

Use of the river and trail increased as the weather warmed. With the onset of daylight saving there has been a steady increase in the number of cyclists, walkers, runners, swimmers, dog owners and anglers.

There was an increase in rubbish dumping over the Christmas period. Rubbish bags, waste concrete, garden waste and lawn clippings were dumped sporadically amongst the willow lines. A number of dumped cars also had to be removed.

On a more positive note, trail bikes and hoons in cars appear to have decreased. More people out on the river helps to deter these undesirable activities.

Watercourses

A stream clearing run was completed in Collins Creek and the Mangaroa River prior to Christmas.

Several large trees were removed from the Waiwhetu Stream after the high winds on 9 January 2004. A large *Macrocarpa* tree which fell into the stream below the Porirua Debris arrestor, needed a 20 tonne digger to remove it.

Work for other departments

Fabrication work is being undertaken prior to the construction of an Air Quality hut, to be installed on the corner of Vivian Street and Victoria Street in Wellington.

8.2 Kapiti [Garry Baker]

Otaki River

Three minor flood “events” occurred during this report period (13 November 2003, 13 and 23 December 2003) with no major damage sustained.

Routine maintenance activities undertaken included:

- grass seeding and fertilising of the river berm at Tracey (left bank) and Stresscrete (right bank).
- replacing two irons, lowering three debris fences and planting additional willow poles at Lutz’ right bank.
- trimming trees along the right bank haul access roads, and selected survey sight-lines.
- spraying of noxious plants on islands and beaches throughout the length of the river.
- long-reach mulching of stopbanks and berms along the right bank between Rangiuuru floodgates and Chrystalls Bend.

The D9 bulldozer commenced channel works in the upper reach with islands and beaches being stripped and edge-ripped to maintain an open fairway and reduce erosion pressure on adjacent buffer zones.

Access tracks were established at the end of Rahui Road, to accommodate the delivery of 1,200 tonnes of rock for toe-line and groyne repairs.

Waikanae River

Extraction in the lower river re-commenced for this financial year. The contractor is currently extracting adjacent to and above Otaihanga Domain. The channel will be lowered by about 300mm when the extraction is complete.

Repairs were undertaken to areas of eroding bank edges along the right bank adjacent to Otaihanga Domain. Willow poles and flaxes were planted along newly reformed bank edges.

Watercourses

A weed-clearing run was completed in the Mangapouri Stream from County Road to the State Highway.

8.3 Operations support [Steve Murphy]

Waiwhetu Stream – flooding Hayward Terrace

We have now largely completed our investigation into the feasibility of constructing a low stopbank beside the stream to provide protection to the level of the November 2001 flood event. The investigation soon revealed the existence of a side stream, which runs through the area to be protected. Modelling shows that during a flood event this side stream would quickly fill the area and largely negate the benefits of any stopbank.

The results of this study were fairly conclusive and were presented to a meeting of the residents prior to Christmas. They were left with time to consider the situation and will be contacted again shortly prior to finalising the study.

Waiwhetu Stream – weed clearance

Tenders were recently sought for the manual clearance of aquatic weed growth in the Waiwhetu Stream. The tenders were publicly advertised with five tenders being received.

The tender from Excell Limited was accepted at a price close to budget. The Contractor has started work in front of the Marae in Waiwhetu.

Steve Murphy arranged for Teri Puketapu from Te Ati Awa to meet the contractor's staff at the stream and explain to them the importance of the area to Iwi. Teri was explaining the past pollution of the stream and the loss of stream life, when, as if on cue a kokupu appeared right beside them swimming lazily upstream. We took it's appearance as a good omen that perhaps after many years of pollution, the stream was slowly but surely being returned to health.

Asset management

An assessment of the risk to flood protection assets from a significant earthquake in the region is about to be commissioned. Basically this means documenting the various construction types and profiles of the assets and applying the appropriate earthquake loadings depending on location of the asset. The results of this study may have implications for Council's risk management of flood protection assets. Our self-insurance funds currently provide for flood damage.

Gravel extraction

Gravel extraction figures to the end of December 2003 are set out below.

River	Area	Contractor	Period Year 2003/2004 (cubic metres)		Year 2002/2003 (cubic metres)
			Period	Year	Full Year
Hutt	Estuary	Winstones	9,786	20,076	40,362
	River	Horokiwi	4,568	9,426	13,364
Otaki	River	Winstones	7,876	10,946	54,004
Waikanae	Above Greenaway Road	Various	0	0	7,472
	Below Greenaway Road	Various	950	950	2,617
TOTALS			23,180	41,398	117,819

Geoff Dick
Manager, Flood Protection

Parks and Forests Manager's report for period ending 16 January 2004

1. Manager's comments [Murray Waititi]

1.1 A busy summer

The December/January period is a busy time for us. Rangers and work crews focussed on ensuring that our Parks are in tip-top condition for the summer, and preparing for the start of the Regional Outdoors (summer events) Programme.

Overall, rangers are reporting average visitor numbers pre new year and higher than average post new year. Visitation before the new year was affected by inclement weather as well as a growing trend of people just wanting to relax at home with friends and family to recover from the busy run into Christmas. After new year, the weather was good, and the public visited the parks in droves. Kaitoke Regional Park was especially busy because of tourists coming to see the Rivendell filming site fuelled by the premiere of the "Return of the King".

1.2 Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) leases

We reported to the Committee in August 2003 (Report 03.494) that the leases on the Dairy Unit and Southern Block were due to expire in May 2004.

In October 2003 we tendered for interest in leasing the blocks. Response shown by prospective dairy leasees was lukewarm. There are two reasons for this situation occurring

- (i) The leases are only for a three-year period. The leases need to be shorter term to accommodate the upcoming review of the QEP Management Plan. The three-year lease is designed as an interim land management tool until a firmer steer regarding the uses for the land is known. Following that we can either set up a longer-term grazing lease or further develop the area for recreational uses.
- (ii) There is a large capital outlay required to be able to start dairy farming on the Northern Block. Plant and equipment and a herd, needs to be purchased as well as Fonterra shares. A three-year lease period doesn't give a dairy farmer a lot of time to recoup their initial investment. Consequently, leasing the area for dry stock farming provides more flexibility thus maximising our financial return over a shorter lease period.

At the moment we are close to finalising the leases for cattle farming both blocks, however, we expect a \$15,000 per annum reduction in revenue. Some of this reduction is offset by the leasee doing the weed control over areas that we had previously needed to regularly spray. The remainder has been absorbed into our existing budgets.

1.3 Iwi working group meeting

The iwi working group for East Harbour Regional Park (EHRP) convened just before Christmas. Notes from the meeting will be sent out for your information shortly.

1.4 Launch of the East Harbour Regional Park ranger service

Around sixty people attended a successful launch function held at the Pavilion, Days Bay on Saturday 22 November. Chairperson Margaret Shields, Hutt City Mayor John Terris and Regional Conservator Allan Ross all spoke on the significance of East Harbour Regional Park, the contributions of local community groups over the years and GW, Hutt City and DOC's commitment to the Park.

Following the function, many of the invited guests and members of the public joined rangers and staff for a series of guided walks to the Pencarrow Lakes, Ridge Track and rata forest. The Pencarrow trip was especially popular, and included a look inside the newly restored historic lighthouse.

The launch of the ranger service also proved a newsworthy media story, with 10 press articles and several radio interviews covering this keenly anticipated appointment.

1.5 Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) Active Communities' proposal

The Wellington Region Initiatives Group (WRIG) was set up in response to a SPARC-convened meeting in May 2003, to discuss initiatives for improving recreation provision across the greater Wellington region. The group consists of representatives from Hutt City Council, Porirua City Council, Wellington City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Sport Wellington and Greater Wellington.

This group provides us with a mechanism to work co-operatively with local authorities and other recreation agencies to provide better outcomes for the community.

The group applied for a grant to promote a regional calendar of events (in the Dominion Post) that would include events staged by each of the Territorial Authorities.

SPARC has awarded the group a grant of \$15,000 (less than half the amount requested), on the condition that the programme is regionally sustainable. Staff and managers from the various authorities met in January to discuss the WRIG's draft Terms of Reference and any other outstanding issues. Ideally we will be able to use the calendar to promote some February and March events from the Regional Outdoors Programme.

2. Planning and policy [Dr Philippa Crisp]

2.1 Coastal Dunes Vegetation Network Conference

Parks and Forests staff have been heavily involved in preparations for the Coastal Dunes Network Conference, which is planned for mid-March. This conference is being planned jointly by Parks and Forests and Environment Divisions. Invitations are being sent out and registrations taken for the conference which is being held at Te Papa. Queen Elizabeth Park will feature during the main field trip on 12 March.

2.2 Forest and Bird gifted land: Rimutaka Summit

In 2001, the Royal Forest and Bird Society gifted land near the Rimutaka Hill summit to the Regional Council, on the proviso that the land would become a scenic reserve. The Council agreed to accept the land on this basis. Reports 01.370, 01.315 and 01.290 contain the relevant minutes and background to this decision.

The land parcels were transferred over a two-year period and Council notified its intention to declare the lands a scenic reserve in October 2003. No objections were received, however, Transit signalled that a small part of the land would be required for a realignment project at 'Muldoon's Corner', along State Highway 2. The realignment project is currently rated third on the regional transport priority list.

Transit has requested the resolution declaring the land a scenic reserve is delayed until they are ready to purchase the land. This means that Transit does not have to uplift the reserve status prior to commencing the project. It is likely that any delay would be until November 2004. We have explained the situation to Forest and Bird and are discussing the details of the road realignment with Transit. A full report will be available at the next Landcare Committee meeting.

2.3 Councillor's workshop: Belmont Regional Park

A workshop was held on 18 December 2003 to update Councillors on the management plan's progress. The workshop included a short talk from Boyden Evans about windfarm and landscape matters. Key outcomes from the workshop were circulated in a memo to Councillors on 19 December 2003 and further copies are available. Further comments and suggestions were due to Victoria Owen by 31 January. Another workshop for Councillors will be held in March to report back on the draft management plan.

2.4 Environmental Management System: six monthly report

A new environmental management programme has been developed for 2003/04 and agreed with Landcare managers. Progress has been made in achieving the agreed targets, including completing most of the planting and native plant cultivation. Good progress has been made in researching environmentally friendly designs in toilets, biodegradable coolants and recycled materials in construction.

3. Marketing and design [Amanda Cox]

3.1 Information boards and brochures

We are aiming to have the new Kaitoke Regional Park information boards in place by the end of February, at the main campground, the Pakuratahi Forks carpark and in the Te Marua kiosk. Information at the Keith Spry memorial lookout will be updated later in the year, to coincide with the opening of the realigned portion of SH2. Planning has commenced for new information boards at Queen Elizabeth Park

We have drafted a framework to guide the development of new park brochures. The first draft of the Kaitoke Regional Park brochure has also been completed, and this will be finalised once the new library of resource information becomes available.

3.2 Events

Return to Rivendell

Around 235 locals and tourists in town for the world premiere of “The Return of the King” took this opportunity to visit the Upper Hutt Lord of the Rings film location sites. Departing from Upper Hutt Railway Station, the five buses stopped at Dry Creek quarry, Poets’ Park, Harcourt Park and Kaitoke Regional Park. Rangers Thane Walls and Steve Edwards were able to give attendees the “inside knowledge” of their parks, with Scott Farrell and Jeremy Collins also assisting on the day. After experiencing Rivendell and the new Pakuratahi River Walk, participants were treated to an excellent BBQ lunch provided by Location Catering, a solar and wind powered onsite catering service.

Both ourselves and Upper Hutt City Council staff were delighted with the success of this event, and the response from the participants. We were able to work together and draw on the relative strengths of our two organisations to generate what was the largest single gathering of overseas tourists ever in Upper Hutt. There was considerable media interest with numerous press and radio articles, and mentions on LOTR-related websites. Many of the bookings were generated through our listing on the Wellington City Council World Premiere event calendar shown on their website, and the “Jasons What’s On” newspaper column.

Regional Outdoors Programme

The Regional Outdoors Programme was distributed in December to all households in the region via *Elements*, posted to around 400 people in our contacts database and publicised through press releases and articles. The programme has generated a very positive response to this point. Several of the events have been booked out, including the new “Have-a-go” horse riding days and most of the 4WD trips. Our attention now is focused on the detailed planning for the events, distributing and collating survey results, and organising promotions, materials and staff as required.

Community newsletter

The second edition of the newsletter was distributed along with a copy of the Regional Outdoors Programme to everyone on our Parks and Forests contacts database at the end of December. It was packed full of news from the last six months, ranging from the wetland development at QEP to the plantings at the Battle Hill homestead.

3.3 Environment enhancement projects – 2003/04 updates

Queen Elizabeth Park

Remnant Forest restoration

We continue the restoration programme with the eventual aim of linking the remnant to the wetlands under restoration nearby.

This year we will purchase plant material for volunteers to plant in autumn 2004. Staff remain heavily involved, creating a walking track through the remnant and continuing to control pests.

During a recent walkover with Kapiti Forest & Bird and Kapiti Environmental Action, everyone present was delighted at the growth and recovery of the remnant. The pest control programme is obviously very effective judging by the new growth and the natural regeneration.

Wetland restoration

The overall programme calls for the planning, design and restoration of 16 hectares of wetland areas that have been retired from grazing. The community has contributed to the project design, which links in with the restoration of the forest remnant.

The two-hectare wetland was finally excavated in late August (after the discovery and disposal of WWII munitions on the site). Over 3,000 plants grown for the project have now been planted, transforming a previously nondescript area.

Transit NZ will restore the four-hectare wetland close to the MacKays entrance as part of the SH1 realignment project. They will carry out the excavation to our design and provide the plant material, which will be planted by the community. This work is scheduled to commence in 2004.

Coastal dunes management

An overall strategy for the management of the QEP dunes was developed in 2001 and this is steadily being implemented. \$20,000 is allocated to the project annually and is currently being split between construction and planting.

The construction consists of establishing reinforced access points off the beach, signs and marker posts and protective fencing. Volunteers have been reshaping a foredune at the Raumati end of the park and planting 2,000 sand binding spinifex plants. The remaining plant material will be planted in the autumn.

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

Wetland restoration

The Swampy Gully restoration project began in 2002 with the creation of three ponds and the retirement of surrounding grazing areas. Planting has been carried out during the last two Arbor Days and this will continue in 2004. In 2003 extensive retirement fencing excluded stock from an 800m stretch alongside the stream.

This year we will concentrate on planting wetland plants in the autumn/winter months.

Belmont Regional Park

Cannons Creek restoration and Development

A disastrous fire in 2003 destroyed most of the planting carried out over the past two to three years. The Friends of Maara Roa took a very positive approach and planted approximately 2,000 plants last winter and are following a "Green Firebreak" approach that one of their members, John Hodges, designed. The project this year will consist mainly of plantings, clearing areas of burnt gorse and spot spraying gorse seedlings.

A weed control programme was prepared for the group. Volunteers and GW staff have been controlling plant and animal pests. In addition, the Western Sector work crew has constructed a new footbridge over Cannon's Creek and reopened the Takapu Track. An official opening will take place on 29 February 2004.

Pakuratahi Forest

Pakuratahi Valley riparian recovery

This project is intended to develop a buffer strip of riparian planting along the Pakuratahi River and key tributaries to enhance the area's environmental and landscape values. A guideline strategy was developed in 2001 setting out a framework for ongoing work. Emphasis has been placed on several key areas, with the Summit yards receiving the greatest input to date.

We have trialled several different types of vegetation and management techniques, and concluded that the most effective means of establishing a riparian buffer is to let it occur naturally and to remove the weed species including seedling pines. The riparian buffer varies in width from 10 to 20 metres on either side of the watercourses.

We recently planted native plants around the watercourses at Summit. During the 125th Anniversary celebration of the Rimutaka Railway, a group of memorial Totara were planted by invited guests. Over the next six months there will be ongoing weed clearance along the riparian areas plus the creation of one or two areas for camping close to the Pakuratahi River.

4. Environmental asset management [Dr Philippa Crisp]

4.1 Hutt 1080 operation

A post-operational monitor of 50% of the Hutt catchment was completed in mid-November. Only three possums were caught over two trap nights (320 traps), which translates to a residual trap-catch (RTC) rate of 0.5%. This is an excellent result, considering that the pre-operational RTC was 23%.

East Harbour possum control operations

Northern Forest Block

Planning is well underway for a new possum control operation in the East Harbour forest. Staff are liaising with MIRO members to find the best way for the care-group and Greater Wellington to work together on this operation.

Lakes Block

A pre-operational monitor of the Lakes Block completed in December showed a very high trap-catch rate of 38.1%. This is well above the pre-operational average RTC of 27% for the Wellington region. We intend to control the possums in this block soon after the grazing lease expires in May 2004 and the stock have been removed.

4.2 Pest plant control operations

Pest plants controlled in the parks and forests recently include:

- Old man's beard, buddleia and cotoneaster in the Akatarawa Forest
- Tradescantia and selaginella in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park
- Old man's beard, hops, tradescantia, selaginella and climbing asparagus in Belmont Regional Park
- Buddleia and ivy in Pakuratahi Forest
- Various weeds in the Kaitoke remnant bush
- Japanese honeysuckle and convolvulus in the Wainuiomata recreation area.

4.3 Monitoring

Rodent/mustelid monitoring

Very high rat numbers were recorded in the rodent/mustelid monitoring conducted in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area. Rat sign was recorded in around 90% of the monitoring tunnels.

Bird monitoring

Bird density monitoring has now been completed in Wainuiomata and Hutt water collection areas, Battle Hill, Queen Elizabeth, Kaitoke and Belmont Regional Parks. Bird numbers appear to be continuing to decline in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area. There was an initial surge in birds counted in the area in 2000 after the 1080 operation in 1999, but numbers have been decreasing since that time. This decline is probably linked to the rat numbers in the area. An initial analysis of bird densities in the Hutt Water Collection Area shows that bird numbers have not changed since the 1080 operation was completed in late July 2003. This is in line with expectations that a boost in bird numbers would not be expected to show up until next year until after a breeding season.

5. Western sector [Matt Ballantine]

5.1 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

The park has been kept busy during what has been one of the more hectic times of the year. Prior to Christmas there were a lot of organised events and large groups of campers. After Christmas the focus changed towards family groups and day-trippers. The weather was on the whole hot and sunny with a couple of rain storms thrown in to keep the grass growing.

A group of Indonesian delegates visited the park for a tour and a look at what we do on the farm and how we integrate it with a public park. They were very interested and discussed a wide range of topics ranging from animal husbandry for small farms to conservation and sustainable agriculture.

A wedding with a difference was held in the corner paddock. The bride made her way over the bridge by the ford and the couple were married under the willow trees. The groom then took his new wife away on the back of a motorbike.

5.1 Belmont Regional Park

It is satisfying to observe regular park visitors including walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders returning to the park after the Christmas and New Year holidays. With the often hot weather, there is a marked increase in visitor use during the cooler evenings within the park. Overall the park retains a steady visitation all year round with use picking up early in the new year as people put into effect new year resolutions for better fitness, or just to walk off the effects of the Christmas dinner!

We have been completing a short walkway and pond viewing structure at Stratton Street that links in with the existing stream walk. This track provides an easy and interesting walk alongside the upper Korokoro Stream, particularly suitable for young children and family groups. The track also provides students participating in the Take Action programme with a closer look at the stream and pond environment.

Contractors have completed 900m of fencing, which protects regenerating bush in the upper Korokoro Stream catchment in the Stratton Street block. The completion of this fence marks a major milestone in the fencing programme for protection of bush remnants in Belmont Regional Park. Fencing off uneconomic pasture or scrub areas in Stratton Street started over ten years ago. The latest fence to be completed was a particularly awkward section that was challenging for the fencing contractors involved. It is the last major fence required at Stratton Street to completely protect the regenerating portion of native forest in the upper Korokoro Stream.

At Dry Creek, the ACTS Institute have removed almost all the buildings at the entrance with the exception of the main barn building. Most of the structures were removed off site, although some were not economic to remove and permission was given for the Fire Service to burn a prefab building as a training exercise. The removal of the buildings gives us the opportunity in the medium term to redevelop the Dry Creek valley floor as an attractive park entrance. The site does offer opportunities not available elsewhere in the park; being relatively flat and easily visible and accessible from a major state highway.

5.2 Queen Elizabeth Park

The summer rain that we are experiencing at present is ensuring that our revegetation plantings are establishing well this year. However, the weeds are also capitalising on the perfect growing conditions. It is a struggle to keep up with weed control around our plantings and the sides of walking tracks during the busy summer period.

Despite a number of rainy days we are still getting good numbers of post Christmas summer visitors. Ranging services at this time of the year are focused on ensuring our facilities are maintained to an appropriate standard and visitors are able to enjoy their day at the coast. Rangers are regularly patrolling the park to provide information, ensure the year round fire ban is enforced, inappropriate behaviour is minimised, the toilets are clean and rubbish levels are minimal.

The pre Christmas period proved to be a disappointing one for end of year functions at the park. Although most of the sites were booked out, the majority of groups cancelled due to the weather conditions.

5.3 Whitireia Park

Planning for the new fenceline to protect the Onehunga Bay and Kaitawa Pa escarpments from stock is well underway. A site visit with the contractor, DOC and Greater Wellington staff was undertaken and a fenceline position through sensitive archaeological sites was decided on. The fencing contractor is due to start work in February.

6. Eastern sector [Fraser Oliver]

6.1 Akatarawa Forest

Unfortunately on Christmas eve the Orange Hut was vandalised. This involved the removal of the windows and the window frames, graffiti and damage to the storage cupboards. During the three years the new Orange Hut has been in place, this is the first time it has received vandalism to this degree (we have had two previous cases of graffiti vandalism).

These instances have been reported to the police and we have been liaising with the ARAC committee regarding repairs and possible means of identifying the culprits.

Routine maintenance on the Cannon Point walkway continues. As a consequence of the last heavy rain we received, several areas of the walkway have required attention to control water runoff and repair areas of severe scouring. Security has been maintained throughout the Christmas and New Year period with no instances of vandalism to our gates and padlocks.

Due to the number of events over this period, a large portion of ranger time has been spent liaising with the various groups requiring access, adjoining landowners and the plantation forestry group regarding logging operations. The weekly publishing of our events calendar with Plantation Forestry's weekly operational report prevents conflict and informs everybody of the movements within the forest.

On 8 December we held a fire training exercise. This involved GWRC staff and Silviculture Contractors working for the Plantation Forestry group.

6.2 Pakuratahi Forest

Due to the high winds experienced over the Christmas period we have had several instances of wind thrown trees affecting roads and tracks. One instance in the Tunnel Gully reserve on Upper Tane's track, a family had to run to avoid a large beech tree which fell across a portion of the track. On inspection it was found that the tree had died of natural causes i.e. internal rot and had been knocked over by the wind.

General ranging throughout the Rimutaka Incline walkway and Tunnel Gully over the Christmas period has noted that during this time a lot of rubbish was being left in the reserve areas by less desirable users. The rubbish consisted mainly of empty cans and bottles and also fast food wrappers.

In contrast, on New Years Day the same areas were used extensively by family groups i.e. anywhere from 40 to 50 families spent the day in Tunnel Gully reserve. The lack of rubbish from these groups was very evident.

During this period we have had several requests for access to the Rimutaka Incline for elderly people. We have agreed for these people to use the forestry roading network to get them to the Summit Yards.

The Deerstalkers range and Kaitoke Go Cart Club continue to attract large numbers of users, and the Upper Valley gliding club has been operational several times over the Christmas period.

The area leased to the Deer Stalkers for their rifle range has become very well known amongst the general public. Due to the lack of a public rifle range, the Deer Stalkers range has now become the quasi public range, causing some concern amongst Deer Stalkers Club committee members. We are currently liaising with the committee with regard to finding a solution to this awkward situation,

6.3 Kaitoke Regional Park

Sealing of the rangers office, information kiosk and Farm Creek car parks has been completed.

Changeable weather during the week of Christmas and New Year kept park visitation relatively quiet, but a fine spell over the New Year period meant a busy time.

Over 2,000 camping person nights were taken between 30 December and 4 January and approximately 17,700 people used the Waterworks Road entrance over the same period. The behaviour of campers has been relatively good, with only one arrest and about a dozen alcohol related incidents/accidents over the period. New Year's Day was very busy and pushed the toilet system in the campground area beyond capacity.

There has been a notable increase in the number of overseas tourists visiting and staying in the Park. There are also now four tour operators with concessions to run guided trips to the 'Rivendell' site. This shows that the benefits from the filming of Lord of the Rings Trilogy in the Park are ongoing.

Two events have been held as part of the Regional Outdoors Programme with the Nature Discovery Treasure Hunt attracting over 90 people and the Beginners Guide to the Rainforest held on a wet night attracting ten keen participants.

6.4 Wainuiomata

Fence maintenance and patrolling is now a lot safer and easier since the completion of the preparation of the next section of the Northern Boundary fence. Tenders for material and construction have now been called for. The next section of fence, 3.8 kilometres, will be completed before this winter.

The weather conditions have had a bearing on the number of visitors to the area. An article in The Dominion Post on 8 January has increased walker numbers but unfortunately a few people ignored the no access sign and were caught walking or riding around and were asked to leave by the ranger.

Landcare Research Limited staff based in Palmerston North completed a possum trapping study that is being carried out in the Orongorongo River Valley on council land. 159 possums were trapped at five kilometre intervals up the river with DNA samples taken from each possum.

Three tours have been completed since the last report with 160 walkers enjoying the walks in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo Catchment. Staff are assisted on these tours by volunteers, without their much appreciated assistance, these walks would be very difficult to manage and run safely. The walk into the Orongorongos has taken walkers up to ten hours to complete, which is a long day but enjoyed by all.

6.5 East Harbour Regional Park

Work has included extensive inspection of assets in the northern block. Priority work has already begun with two small bridge replacements and handrail constructions on key Eastbourne and Days Bay tracks.

Track maintenance work has started at key sites and entrance areas both in the Eastbourne and Wainuiomata areas.

New ranging service has now been put into motion at EHRP. Initial tasks have included park orientation, asset monitoring, liaison with community groups and neighbours. The ranger has also been involved with police search and rescue over the holiday period.

Murray Waititi
Manager, Parks and Forests

Landcare Support, Divisional Accountant's report for period ending 16 January 2004

Good progress is being made in Landcare on the years work programmes and capital jobs. There are still, however, a few issues in both departments that are impacting upon the year to date result creating a year to date funding surplus variance of \$360,000.

These issues disguise the fact that the Division is running very much to target in most areas and is looking to be in a good position to materially achieve its performance indicators by year-end.

Landcare Division					
Financial Summary Statement					
For the 6 months ending 31 December 2003					
\$000					
	Year to Date			Full Year	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	
External Revenue	6,883	6,880	2 F	13,862	
Internal Revenue	472	537	(66) U	1,075	
TOTAL REVENUE	7,355	7,418	(63) U	14,937	
Direct Expenditure	4,007	4,312	305 F	9,087	
Indirect Expenditure	1,806	1,902	96 F	3,877	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE	5,813	6,214	401 F	12,964	
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	1,541	1,204	338 F	1,973	
Net Asset Acquisitions	281	299	19 F	612	
Capital Projects	360	745	385 F	2,335	

Direct expenditure

The year to date variance of \$305,000 (or 7%) in direct expenditure is predominantly made up of the following items:

- Savings in personnel costs in both Parks and Forests and Flood Protection largely as a result of staff vacancies (now filled).
- Flood Protection work programmes are falling slightly behind schedule due to rock shortages and availability of plant. This is a timing variance.
- Land issues in Parks and Forests (mainly in Belmont and East Harbour Regional Parks) are delaying environmental and infrastructural work programmes.

Indirect expenditure

The year to date variance of \$96,000 (or 5%) in indirect expenditure is made up of a combination of savings in depreciation and financial costs resulting from a lower than planned capital spend in 2002/03, and a one-off book gain on sale on the disposal of a Flood Protection tractor.

Net asset acquisitions

Overall there is very little variation in the net asset spend. A year to date overspend of \$188,000 on the Strand Park land (which was budgeted to occur later in the year) is offset by the delay in the vehicle purchasing round (which was budgeted for September).

Capital projects

The year to date favourable variance of \$385,000 in capital projects is largely timing related, with most capital projects still expected to be completed by year-end. The exceptions to this are:

- Baring Head Access bridge – we had planned to spend \$78,000 this financial year as our part in a major bridge upgrade. However, a “work around” solution was found at a cost of \$2,000 which will defer the cost of repairing the bridge for a few more years.
- The office and track development at East Harbour Regional Park (\$150,000) has been put on hold until the land swap with Hutt City Council has been resolved.
- Jim Cooke Park realignment is running behind schedule and some funding may need to be carried over into the next financial year.

Tina Walker

Divisional Accountant, Landcare