

Report 99.481

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Councillor Dick Werry

Regional Parks, Commercial Concessions and Community Connections

1. Purpose

To ask Officers to report back on ways to enhance the utilisation of Regional Parks and forests, particularly through commercial concessions, to support the Environmental Education Initiative and in so doing increase the Regional Council's profile - Community Connection.

2. New Opportunities

During the last few years, the Region has seen a significant increase in tourism; no doubt connected to Te Papa and the efforts of Tourism Wellington.

It may therefore be appropriate for the Council's concession policy to be reconsidered in the light of this and in relation to the expansion of our environmental education activities and to generally raise the Council's profile - Community Connection.

At this stage, I would like to signal the question of commercial concessions for the Council's Regional Parks and forests as a matter for investigation, noting of course that the community must always have free access to public outdoor recreation areas.

In the past, the Council has given concessions to small commercial tourist operators as well as specific approvals for temporary concessions - film crews and the like - to use park lands. However, previous tourist operators have not been particularly successful and it has often been necessary for Council staff to closely supervise such activities.

Connected to this is the question of the Council's profile with respect to its Regional Parks and forests. For instance, how many people in the regional community know about their parks and how to take advantage of them?

It would be appropriate for the Landcare Committee to have a good look at these questions under the following headings:

- how to promote increased recreational use of our Regional Parks and forests;
- the value derived from the Council's current concessions policy and how it might be significantly improved;
- linkages between the Department of Conservation, Maori, and the tourism industry with Local Government and with respect to commercial, recreation, education and tourism activities in our Regional Parks.

3. **Recommendation**

That Officers from the Landcare and Environment Divisions, together with the Communications section, report to the Landcare Committee on ways to support the Environmental Education Initiative by better co-ordinating the use of Regional Parks and forests (possibly using Concessions) and thereby enhance the Regional Council's profile in the Community.

DICK WERRY
Chairman, Landcare Committee