

## **Report 00.489**

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Report to Landcare Committee  
from Susan Edwards, Manager Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

### **Parks and Forests Marketing Strategy**

#### **1. Purpose**

To seek approval of a strategic direction and action plan for marketing the Council's parks and forests commencing in the 2000/01 financial year.

#### **2. Current Marketing Activities**

During the last ten years the Regional Parks team developed a marketing regime for the parks and forests that involved:

- A series of brochures on the parks and forests, activities, (e.g., mountain biking, horse riding), education and flora/fauna;
- Advertising in newspapers and outdoor recreation publications, and a short period of television advertising in 1994 (very successful for visitor numbers);
- Undertaking public relations activities, (e.g., media releases, feature articles);
- Providing on-site information, (e.g., interpretation signs, maps);
- Running events, (e.g., Arbor Day plantings, Summer Treks - until 1995, displays at expo's);
- Giving talks to schools, interest groups, (e.g., East Harbour Environmental Association), service clubs, (e.g., Rotary);
- Working in conjunction with corporate services to put information about the parks and forests on the web-site;
- Printing park T-shirts for sale and to give away as prizes at park events.

The annual budget in the last three years has varied from \$12,000 to \$42,500. Much of this budget was spent on brochures and advertising each year.

Public demands, technology and park user behaviour is continually changing and we need to respond to this if we are to maintain or increase our share of the market. Therefore, we need to rethink the direction of our marketing activities and why we are doing them. The marketing budget is limited and needs to be spent effectively.

The budget for 2000/01 is:

- Contractors \$6,000 - this covers design work for any publications, brochures, etc.
- Materials \$33,500 - this covers printing of brochures, advertising, display materials, signs, interpretation, etc.

This budget needs to cover existing marketing activities we decide to continue with and any new activities.

### 3. Purpose of the Marketing Strategy

This paper focuses on marketing the parks and forests over the next three years.

In order to determine the purpose of the marketing strategy, it is useful to examine the Council's objectives relevant to its parks and forests.

*Towards a Greater Wellington : Investing in the Future*, explains the Council's objectives and what the Council can do towards meeting its vision. Parks and Forests marketing activities can contribute to three of these objectives:

- Healthy people in a safe region;
- A high quality environment;
- A prosperous and viable region.

It follows therefore, that the strategic direction for our marketing should have a three-pronged purpose reflecting and contributing to these Council objectives.

## 4. Healthy People in a Safe Region

### 4.1 Marketing Purpose

To maintain services to existing users and encourage inactive people to recreate in our areas - contributing to the objective of *Healthy People in a Safe Region*.

## 4.2 Council Objectives

*To maintain and enhance the health and wellbeing of the community, to give people access to many recreation opportunities, environmental features and heritage sites (by providing valuable outdoor open spaces - “special places”), to ensure people are able to enjoy a safe and high quality outdoor environment on Council lands, and take care of the regional parks, forests and water collections areas for the benefit of the community (Proposed Volume 1 pp. 30 & 41).*

## 4.3 Target Groups

In order to maintain and enhance the health and wellbeing of the community, our marketing activities need to encourage existing users to continue undertaking recreational activities that benefit their health and fitness, as well as enticing other “inactive” people to utilise the parks and forests for recreation and enjoyment. These are the two target markets to contribute to this objective.

Why should the Council target these groups?

The importance of recreation to community wellbeing is supported by the Ministry of Health research which estimates that 2143 New Zealanders die prematurely each year as a result of not being active for 30 minutes a day. This is three times more deaths than the annual road toll. The Ministry is now advising government that the inactivity problem is the greatest emerging problem confronting public health, with 38 percent of the community being inactive. BERL consultants estimate that physical inactivity leads to *at least* \$163 million per year in extra health costs (source: Hillary Commission).

There are many reasons why people are inactive – lack of facilities to meet specific needs (e.g., disabilities, or parents with young children (Power Prammers), perceived lack of time, inability to get to recreational facilities, etc). When marketing parks and forests we have to be aware of these reasons and ensure that our facilities address these needs. Our marketing should focus on the benefits to the person and be individualised - about what the individual receives - rather than more general community benefits. The person needs to appreciate how the parks and forests can directly benefit them and meet their needs.

## 4.4 Products

The focus here is on marketing recreation activities and facilities as this is a proven way of contributing to health and well-being. However, the parks and forests also provide opportunities to relax, enjoy and get away from the stresses of urban life. Therefore these intrinsic benefits of the parks and forests can also be marketed.

## 4.5 Distribution Methods

In order to target existing park and forest users we will need to maintain some of the existing distribution methods we currently use for marketing, (e.g., some brochures, the web-site, advertising in outdoor recreation publications, distributing information through mountain bike shops and clubs, etc). We need to encourage existing users to remain active. The Council’s parks and forests provide opportunities to undertake a variety of recreational activities to entice recreationalists. The purpose of our marketing is to add to their experiences and to facilitate their continued activity. It should not be to compete with other recreational providers. There is no additional benefit to community well-being if the Council encourages people to recreate on its land rather than someone else’s. The important thing is that they are active.

To target the “inactive” people, we will need to develop new distribution methods. These may involve co-ordinating our marketing efforts with other organisations, (e.g. Sport Wellington), targeting these groups and possibly utilising their distribution networks. Another distribution method is through doctors. Research undertaken by the Hillary Commission earlier this year indicated that half of all GP’s are prescribing *Green Prescriptions* to their inactive patients. The emphasis being on keeping people well through simple lifestyle changes.

#### 4.6 Proposed Marketing Opportunities and Tasks

When undertaking our marketing it is important not to raise expectations and encourage use when resources and budget have not been allocated to meet those expectations, or deal with the impacts of use. We do not want the experience, for the user, to fall short of expectations. The challenge for recreational marketers is to integrate visitor facility development and marketing strategies. Investment in track quality, interpretation resources and facilities needs to be closely aligned with communications and marketing strategies.

Before we start marketing to these target groups it is important to ensure that we provide suitable recreational opportunities for them. Many of the facilities, (e.g., tracks) in the parks and forests are suited to fit and experienced recreationalists (existing users). In order to encourage inactive people into the areas, we need easier grade (preferably loop) tracks that take about 30 minutes to walk or bike, with higher standards of surfacing, through attractive environments and close to residential areas. These criteria are similar to those for *KiwiWalks*. We need to re-examine existing service levels for track maintenance and development to see what can be achieved within maintenance budgets.

Key tasks to achieve this objective are:

- ***Developing KiwiWalks***

The Council currently has two *KiwiWalks* on its land; one on the Hutt River Trail, the other on Tane’s Track at Tunnel Gully (Pakuratahi Forest). We could develop one additional track to *KiwiWalk* standard for each of the next three years.

These tracks would provide facilities suitable for “inactive” people to begin to exercise. They would also be suitable for power prammers and people with certain types of disabilities.

- ***Producing Brochures***

We will continue to produce a range of brochures on the parks and forests and the recreational opportunities available. However, during 2000/01 we will re-assess which brochures we produce, deleting ones with low demand. We will also assess what additional brochures could be developed, for example one promoting the *KiwiWalks* on Council lands and educational brochures on facilities like the native forest trail at Kaitoke Regional Park. We will develop at least one new brochure during each of the next three years.

We will re-assess our distribution methods to better reach target audiences, for example, distribute the new *KiwiWalks* brochure through doctors’ surgeries, Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, Slim Forever, Physiotherapists, and Gyms.

- ***Advertising***

This is an area where we can reduce our costs and be more effective. We are moving away from advertising in newspapers and more into joint marketing in recreation and tourism publications with territorial authorities, also in commercial publications like “Power Pramming” and outdoor recreational guides. These are more specifically targeted to the audiences we wish to reach.

- ***Enhancing the Web-site***

This year we will upgrade the Parks and Forests area of the web-site to incorporate a diary of activities and events happening on the parks and forests. The *Rangers News* publications will be put on the web-site to increase their distribution. Brochures will be put on the web to reduce printing and distribution costs. Adding additional information will assist with increasing awareness of the recreational opportunities and the environmental and heritage values of the parks and forests and may target new users.

## **5. A High Quality Environment**

### **5.1 Marketing Purpose**

To educate and increase peoples’ awareness of the natural and cultural heritage values of the parks and forests and encourage their involvement in environmental enhancement work - contributing to the objective of ***A High Quality Environment***.

### **5.2 Council Objectives**

*To raise environmental and heritage awareness, to ensure people are well informed about environmental issues and actively involved in them, and to enhance biological diversity (Proposed Volume 1 pp.20-21).*

### **5.3 Target Groups**

The target groups to achieve this objective are schools and the wider community. The Council’s *Environmental Education and Communication Strategy* goes a long way towards this. We are working with the Environment Division to identify the role of the parks and forests in achieving these objectives. For example providing a venue for the environmental trails and locations for running programmes like *Trees for Survival* and *Adopt a Stream*.

The parks and forests are also providing venues for *Care Groups* and other volunteers groups who will be actively involved in environmental enhancement projects. These projects will help raise environmental and heritage awareness and inform people about environmental issues.

However, the parks and forests can contribute in other ways too, (e.g., through interpretation and signage). The parks and forests visitor survey undertaken in March this year identified an increasing public demand for good interpretation and signage. Survey respondents stated that they wanted to learn more about the environmental values and heritage features in the parks and forests. This adds value to the experience during their visit and may encourage them to bring others to the areas or to return to see changes over time, (e.g., success of revegetation projects).

In the past our interpretation signage and map boards have tended to focus on the recreational opportunities available in the parks and forests, to the exclusion of the other *Signature Values*; environment and heritage. We are starting to address this through new interpretation signs at Queen Elizabeth Park on the coastal dunes and Belmont Regional Park on the cultural heritage values.

#### 5.4 **Products**

The products being marketed to achieve this objective are the environmental and heritage values of the parks and forests.

#### 5.5 **Distribution Methods**

Marketing of environmental education opportunities will be undertaken through schools (most will be undertaken in association with the Environment Division).

General marketing to the community on the environmental and heritage values of the parks and forests will be undertaken through on-site interpretation and signage, public relations, and running events and programmes.

#### 5.6 **Proposed Marketing Opportunities and Tasks**

Key tasks for achieving this objective are:

- ***Developing Interpretation***

There are opportunities to develop interpretation trails, (e.g., interpreting the heritage features on the Rimutaka Incline) in a number of the parks and forests. Interpretation sign boards are expensive to design (generally \$2,000 for labour) and produce (approximately \$2,500 for printing the sign and construction materials), plus there are associated asset management and maintenance costs.

We are currently working on some interpretation signs in Belmont Regional Park. The cost of designing them was funded from additional filming revenue received during 1999/00. We will continue to develop interpretation in the parks and forests, and identify funding opportunities.

The rangers will be trained, where necessary, in delivering on-site interpretation and presenting information to visitors.

- ***Running Events***

Well-targeted events can be a very good public relations tool and increase public awareness of our parks and forests. We will instigate a programme where rangers run one event per year in their park or forest. This could be done in conjunction with local community groups or iwi. Advertising for the events will be undertaken through *Elements*, the web-site, and/or *Rangers News*, along with press releases in local newspapers. These events will increase awareness of the recreational opportunities and the environmental and heritage values of the parks and forests.

## 6. A Prosperous and Viable Region

### 6.1 Marketing Purpose

To identify opportunities for and encourage appropriate eco-tourism, commercial recreational and filming activities in the parks and forests – contributing to the objective of creating *A Prosperous and Viable Region*.

### 6.2 Council Objectives

*To ensure the regional economy is growing sustainably and Council lands are used to assist the development of the economy (Proposed Volume 1 p.26).*

### 6.3 Target Groups

The parks and forests can contribute to the Regional economy through providing venues for eco-tourism, commercial recreational activities and filming. Individuals and companies involved in these activities are our target markets to contribute to this objective.

We are currently reviewing our concessions policy to clarify the processing of such applications. Once this phase of work is complete, we will look at identifying eco-tourism and recreational concession opportunities on Council lands, then market them to appropriate target groups such as eco-tourism and commercial recreation operators.

We have recently completed a filming promotional video targeted at film producers to encourage them to come to the Wellington Region for filming and to use the Council's parks and forests as locations. (Councillors will be able to view the video during lunch at the conclusion of the meeting.)

### 6.4 Products

The products being marketed are the commercial recreation, eco-tourism and filming opportunities available in the parks and forests.

### 6.5 Distribution Methods

We will target eco-tourism and commercial recreation operators by direct marketing and public advertising of opportunities available in the parks and forests.

Film producers will be targeted through a variety of methods including:

- mail-outs of the video;
- a promotional launch;
- working with Film Wellington;
- the Council web-site.

### 6.6 Proposed Marketing Opportunities and Tasks

Key tasks for achieving this objective are:

- *Promoting Filming Opportunities*

This will involve the promotion and distribution of the new filming video.

- ***Identifying and Promoting Commercial Recreation and Eco-tourism Opportunities***

The concessions policy review will be completed during 2000/01 and we will commence a process of identifying eco-tourism and commercial recreational opportunities available on the parks and forests for approval by the Council in 20001/02. A marketing programme will be commenced in 2001/02 to encourage operators to take up the opportunities identified.

## 7. Action Plan

The key tasks and action points from sections 4 – 6 are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 : Action Plan and Tasks for Parks and Forests Marketing 2000/01 - 2002/03**

Year	Programme
<b>Year 1</b> (00/01)	<p><b>Strategy &amp; Marketing</b></p> <p>Distribute the filming promotional video            Re-assess which brochures to produce            Re-assess the distribution methods for the brochures            Complete the concessions policy review            Begin undertaking a process of identifying eco-tourism and commercial recreational opportunities available on the parks and forests</p> <p>Update and reproduce appropriate brochures            Develop a new brochure            Put brochures on the web-site            Upgrade the web-site with a diary of events and activities in the parks and forests            Target advertising to joint marketing with other agencies and in publications specifically targeted at the audiences we wish to reach            Develop new interpretation on the environmental and cultural heritage values of the parks and forests within existing budgets or through identify new funding opportunities</p> <p><b>Operations</b></p> <p>Rangers to run one event (focusing on one or more of the specified marketing objectives) in each of their parks or forests            Develop one additional track to <i>KiwiWalk</i> standard            Rangers will be trained in delivering on-site interpretation and presentations</p>
<b>Year 2</b> (01/02)	<p><b>Strategy &amp; Marketing:</b></p> <p>Complete a process of identifying eco-tourism and commercial recreational opportunities available on the parks and forests and commence marketing to operators to enable implementation</p> <p>Update and reproduce appropriate brochures            Develop a new brochure            Update the brochures on the web-site            Update the web-site diary of events and activities happening in the parks            Target advertising to joint marketing with other agencies and in publications specifically targeted at the audiences we wish to reach</p> <p>Develop new interpretation on the environmental and cultural heritage values of the parks and forests, and identify new funding opportunities</p>



	<p><b>Operations:</b></p> <p>Rangers to run one event (focusing on one or more of the specified marketing objectives) in each of their parks or forests          Develop one additional track to <i>KiwiWalk</i> standard</p>
Year 3 (02/03)	<p><b>Strategy &amp; Marketing:</b></p> <p>Update and reproduce appropriate brochures          Develop a new brochure          Update the brochures on the web site          Update the web-site diary of events and activities happening in the parks          Target advertising to joint marketing with other agencies and in publications specifically targeted at the audiences we wish to reach          Develop new interpretation on the environmental and cultural heritage values of the parks and forests, and identify new funding opportunities</p> <p><b>Operations:</b></p> <p>Rangers to run one event (focusing on one or more of the specified marketing objectives) in each of their parks or forests          Develop one additional track to <i>KiwiWalk</i> standard</p>

## 8. Measuring Effectiveness

Measuring the effectiveness of marketing activities can be difficult and expensive. However, there are some cost effective ways we will use:

- The visitor survey can be used to compare changes in user demographic profiles, (e.g., ethnicity, age groups) or uses, (e.g., we could ask a question on whether someone came to an area to use a *KiwiWalk*). The survey can also measure satisfaction with interpretation and signage in the parks and forests.
- The number of hits on the web-site could be a useful measure.
- The numbers and duration of concessions or filming activities provide a useful measure of the effectiveness of our marketing to those target groups and our contribution to the Region's economy through these activities.
- The number of brochures distributed provides a measure of their effectiveness.
- The number of people attending events organised in the parks and forests identifies how effective they are.

Each of these methods provides information we can use to re-assess and improve our marketing activities on an on-going basis.

## 9. Communications

There are no communication opportunities arising directly from this report. However, as we progress marketing activities and the specific proposals outlined in this report, opportunities will arise.

## 10. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

- (1) receive the report and note the contents.*
- (2) approve the marketing strategic direction for Parks and Forests as outlined in the report focusing on contributing to the Council's objectives of:*
  - healthy people in a safe Region;*
  - a high quality environment;*
  - a prosperous and viable Region.*
- (3) approve the broad action plan for marketing the Council's parks and forest from 2000/01 – 2002/03 as outlined in Table 1 of the report.*
- (4) note that officers will report progress against the action plan at the conclusion of each financial year.*

Report prepared by:

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