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

Cleary's Road Alternative Route

1. Purpose

To report on a proposal from the Akatarawa Recreation Action Committee (ARAC) to create an alternative route along part of Cleary's Road (in the Akatarawa Forest) to enable the existing portion of road to be used for recreational purposes and to seek the Committee's view on whether the proposal should proceed.

2. What Does the Proposal Involve?

ARAC's proposal is outlined in **Attachment 1**. Essentially, ARAC would like to let the existing alignment of Cleary's Road deteriorate to *become a more challenging wet weather "bog"* available for motorised recreational use. The topography of the area makes it relatively safe to undertake this type of activity. An alternative road alignment would be formed near the existing road for all weather access (helpful for management purposes, but not essential, as there are other access roads into this area).

3. What are the Implications of the Proposal?

This proposal requires a trade-off between the recreational and environmental *Signature Values*. The proposed new route would need to be cut through 40 - 50 year regenerating Kamahi/Hinau native forest. The forest has moderate environmental values, containing a regionally unusual species (Hutu - *Ascarina Lucida*).

The length of the new road would be in the order of 200 to 250 metres and it would need to be between 3 and 4 metres in width (sometimes more in areas where benching and stabilising the road formation are required). The proposal would leave a small patch of bush between the two roads. There may also be a need to deal with sediment in run-off from the bog.

One issue to be decided is the principle of whether the Council considers that native vegetation should be cut down to enhance and add a new service for recreational use.

The other issue relates to the precedent set if this proposal proceeds. By adopting the *Akatarawa Forest Motorised Recreation Guidelines* in December 1997 (Report 97.435), the Council agreed to allow motorised recreational use on **existing** roads and tracks in the Akatarawa Forest. The Guidelines also state that *the cutting or removal of live vegetation is not permitted*. This new section of road is not particularly long, but if this project proceeds, it could set a precedent for further applications.

ARAC are correct in their comment that the existing portion of road degrades quickly. It is on a clay base and there are difficulties keeping the running surface clear of water in wet weather. However, it is likely that any new section of road created in the vicinity will also be on a clay base and pose management difficulties like the existing road.

The other implication is the cost of constructing the new road. Because the work would be through a fairly sensitive area, the work would need to be done to a high standard by experienced contractors. The new road could cost in the order of \$4000.

4. **In What Other Circumstances Have New Roads Been Constructed On Council Lands?**

The Council has cut new roads and tracks through native vegetation in several other instances:

- the access road to the Orongorongo River weir in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area;
- widening of the Te Marua end of the Ridge Track in Kaitoke Regional Park to improve access for track maintenance;
- forestry access roads in the Pakuratahi and Akatarawa Forests;
- widening of existing recreational tracks to improve their standard, (e.g., Queen Elizabeth Park Inland Track, Belmont Regional Park Cannons Head track).

5. **What Other Options are Available?**

Officers have inspected the site. One alternative we considered was to construct a new road immediately adjacent to the existing road, with water channeled down onto the “bog” site. This would minimise the environmental damage as it would destroy less forest and it would contain the damage to an area already affected by roading. The disadvantages are that the road will still be on clay and be fairly steep (but it could be metalled), there would be road construction costs, and it may not be as satisfactory to the motorised recreation users. There may be a risk of the adjacent road being used for the same purpose as the bog by the motorised recreation users.

6. **Where To From Here?**

Officers are seeking an indication from the Committee on the trade-off between the recreational and environmental values affected by the proposal. If the Committee is in favour of realigning the road to achieve ARAC's recreational objectives, then Officers will investigate the feasibility and likely costs of the proposal further. However, if the Committee is of the view that the environmental values should be protected, then we will decline ARAC's request.

7. **Communication**

If the Committee agrees to the ARAC proposal, then there will be public relations opportunities when the work is completed and the new track is opened.

8. **Recommendations**

That the Landcare Committee:

(1) *Receive the report and note the contents.*

(2) *Either:*

(a) *note the opportunity to enhance the recreational values of the Akatarawa Forest created by the ARAC proposal to utilise the existing portion of road as a bog and agree that officers further investigate the feasibility and likely costs of the proposal to create a new portion of road parallel to Cleary's Road.*

or

(b) *note the environmental values of the native vegetation in the vicinity of Cleary's Road and decline the proposal put forward by ARAC to create a "bog" on the existing road and a new section of Cleary's Road parallel to the existing road.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1 : Proposal for Recreational Enhancement to Cleary's Road from ARAC