



Report 05.197
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Committee Policy, Finance & Strategy Committee
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Regional Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan

1. Purpose

To consider adopting the Regional Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan.

2. Significance

The matters in this report do not trigger the Council's significance policy or section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The Regional Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan governs the Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests. The current water collection areas, Wainuiomata and Hutt, are not governed by this plan. Similarly plantation forestry operations are not governed either, with the exception of some recreational activities in plantation areas.

The forests are primarily held for future water supply purposes. Maintaining and protecting the area's environmental values is the prime management objective for ensuring that the lands remain fit for water supply. This does not preclude uses that are consistent with the area's values, such as recreation.

The management plan review began in 2000. A draft plan was released for public consultation last year (Report 04.372). Fifty one submissions were received and a hearing was held in March 2005 (Report 5.122). The Parks & Forests Hearing Committee formally considered each of the fifty-one submissions in turn at the hearing, with nine submitters being heard. The minutes of the meeting are attached for your information (Attachment 1).

4. Consideration of submissions

Submitters were generally supportive of the management plan's approach, although some submitters wished to change some of the plan's policies in support of their own particular interests. Issues raised by submitters and officer's comments were summarised in the hearing report. At the hearing, the Committee instructed Officers to make revisions per the hearing report's

recommendations and in response to the submissions considered and heard at the hearing.

4.1 Summary of amendments

Many submitters identified editing and style improvements that could be made. Officers agree that these could be made with little or no substantive changes to the plan’s intent. Small editing changes that do not alter the meaning or intent of the plan have not been noted. Changes to the plan’s text have been highlighted in the attached plan and are summarised in the table below.

Tables have been revised accordingly and maps labelled to provide greater clarity. Text boxes are used to illustrate the plan and inform readers about the land’s values and/or particular management issues. The confusion between ‘permit’ and ‘allow’ has been resolved by only using ‘permit’ in reference to the issuing of permits for hunting, collection of natural materials or motorised recreation. This has meant a small change in policy 6.11 to add clarity that motorised recreation is a ‘managed’ activity. The major changes are noted in the table below.

Suggestion	Submitter	Amendment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add ‘protect & enhance’ ‘avoid, remedy, mitigate’ clause to policy 1.1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to policy 1.1, as suggested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change ‘indigenous’ to ‘valued’ ecosystems in policies, greater acknowledgement for trout species and habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish and Game New Zealand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text box added acknowledging F&G & trout habitat with further information on trout fisheries in the forests.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add more descriptions of forest types, as well as threatened and native fish species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to text, as suggested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion between activity types and ‘permit’ and ‘allow’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various submitters, Hearing Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table developed to aid clarity and ensure consistency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps for motorised recreation be improved for clarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R Zhradhral, Cross Country Vehicle Club, Windy City Off Roaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maps continuing to be edited and track names included with supporting table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of ‘minor upgrades’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transpower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to text, subject to consultation with GW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sundry editing changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various including HPT, E McQueen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As marked, throughout document

4.2 Other matters raised in submissions

Matters were raised that, after consideration by the Hearing Committee, did not result in changes to the draft plan. Matters included allowing the reinstatement of the Rimutaka Rail line and service as a permitted activity. The Hearing Committee considered that the activity should remain a ‘restricted’ activity.

This approach was endorsed by the Department of Conservation as an appropriate course of action.

Motorised recreation supporters requested that the map and table be removed from the document restricting motorised recreation in the Akatarawa Forest. They believed that this would allow a more flexible approach. The Hearing Committee considered that the draft plan's approach was sensible and provided clarity for all forest users. In addition, there were sufficient review provisions for the Council to continue managing motorised recreation in the area and the plan was to be reviewed in five years. A request to open the Pakuratahi Forest to motorised recreation was declined. Motorised recreation is not considered appropriate in the Pakuratahi Forest as the area is currently managed for passive recreation.

Fish and Game New Zealand were concerned that the plan's policies did not reflect the value of introduced species, such as trout, and recommended substituting 'valued' instead of 'indigenous' within policies. The area's values reflect the high quality of indigenous biodiversity and the healthy functioning of ecosystem processes which introduced species such as trout are dependant on. For this reason, no change was made to these policies.

Fish and Game New Zealand also requested that upland game hunting be allowed in the plantation forest areas. Allowing hunting in plantation forestry is contrary to current Council policies. These areas are popular for cycling, tramping and some motorised recreation. The areas are also located on the periphery of Council lands and have higher visitation rates. For these reasons, upland game hunting was not made a permitted activity in the forests.

The Department of Conservation requested that further assessment criteria be added to the natural materials policies. This was considered unnecessary as the current policy already requires the impacts on biodiversity and ecology to be assessed. The suggested wording changes do not further the policy's intent or meaning and no change has been made.

5. The final management plan

Officers have made the changes as instructed at the hearing and summarised above (Report 05.122). The amended management plan is attached to this paper for your consideration and changes are highlighted (Attachment 2). The maps are still being edited and officers are continuing to work on improving the map's readability.

6. Next steps

Once the committee adopts the management plan, Officers will begin getting the document ready for publication. Some small editing changes may be required, prior to publication, but these will not affect the intent or meaning of the final plan, its objectives or policies.

7. Communication

Letters will be sent to submitters, advising them of the Committee's deliberations and decisions. Letters will also be sent to all those people interested in the forests and the plan review. Copies of the final plan will be made available to stakeholders, submitters, Council offices and libraries. The management plan's adoption will be announced with a media release and will be included in the next *Green Shoots* community newsletter.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee;

1. *receive the report and **note** the contents of the report.*
2. *recommend to Council that it*
 - i. ***adopt** the Regional Forests Land Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan, subject to any minor technical or editorial amendments to be approved by the Committee Chair.*
 - ii. ***revoke** the relevant provisions of the Forests Lands Plan Water Collection Areas Interim Management Plan 1996*
 - iii. ***instruct** Officers to finalise the publication and distribution of the Regional Forests Land Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan.*

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Attachment 1: Minutes of the Forest Lands Plan Submissions Hearing 18 March 2005

Attachment 2: Regional Forests Land Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan