



Report **05.615**
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Committee **Landcare**
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Waikanae River environmental strategy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform the Landcare Committee of progress being made implementing the Waikanae River Environmental Strategy.
- Advise the Committee of the intention to develop a 5 year action plan for the implementation of the Strategy between partners Greater Wellington, Kapiti Coast District Council and the Friends of the Waikanae River.
- Seek the Committee's continued endorsement for the implementation of the Strategy.

2. Significance of the decision

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

3. Background

The Waikanae River Environmental Strategy was published in 1999 after the completion of the Waikanae River Floodplain Management Planning process. Its intent is to provide a framework to guide the various agencies involved in the management, protection and enhancement of the river. This overall co-ordination of the different roles is necessary to ensure that all opportunities and priorities for environmental enhancement are maximised and consistent with the long-term vision for the river.

The vision for the Waikanae River as outlined in the Strategy is "an ecological corridor from the mountains to the sea". This greenbelt corridor concept derives from the recognition of the importance of the Waikanae River as a visual landscape link between the Tararua Ranges and the coast, and through the Kapiti Marine Reserve to Kapiti Island. The Waikanae area is special because it provides a rare opportunity in New Zealand where there are

sufficient elements in the catchment to make such a vision possible. This “ecological corridor” concept is also the only realistic opportunity for restoring a full range of ecosystems within a densely populated landscape.

The Strategy does not seek to re-establish the natural environment that existed before human habitation. This was reiterated in the ensuing “Strategy for restoring the Waikanae River corridor’s indigenous ecological values” written by Geoff Park, and also published in 1999. Given the various ecological realities that exist, because the river corridor ecosystem is part of a cultural landscape, the focus is on creating and enhancing natural vegetation habitats by assisted restoration within present parameters.

The Environmental Strategy outlines “methods” for protecting and improving the river environment, and identifies the actions that the various agencies can be involved in. The methods include community and tangata whenua involvement, maintaining land uses which provide for a greenbelt, improving and restoring vegetation and habitat, maintaining and enhancing water quality and fish habitat, and provision for recreational facilities and access along the river.

4. Progress to date

In the six years since the Strategy was first adopted, many of the recommended actions identified for Greater Wellington have been achieved or progressed. Some of these actions, identified in the ‘methods for protecting and improving the river environment’ include:

Engaging community and Tangata Whenua support

We have;

- Established the ‘Friends of the Waikanae River’, a community group who monitor the river, and focus on protection and enhancement. The Friends have been operating since 1999, are an incorporated society, hold annual general meetings and continue to receive financial and administrative support from Greater Wellington.
- Held annual walkovers of the river corridor with the Friends of the Waikanae River and the other agencies involved with its management.

Maintaining land uses which provide for a greenbelt

- Acquired three pieces of strategically located land that will provide for future habitat restoration and floodway.

Improving and restoring vegetation and habitat

- Planted native trees and shrubs as part of on-going management work, and enhancement activities during the implementation of major river works.
- Removed willows where they are not required for flood protection objectives.

Maintaining and enhancing water quality and fish habitat

- Identified opportunities to enhance fish habitat as part of river protection works.
- Provided information to landowners about riparian management.

Provision for recreational facilities

- Made improvements to walkways and river access points along the river corridor.
- Facilitated the development of swimming holes when designing flood protection works.

In 2001 the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) developed a 10 year action plan for implementing the Waikanae River Environmental Strategy. KCDC also has various Reserve Management Plans and the Cycleways, Walkways and Bridleways Strategy 2004 that are all based around the principles of the Waikanae River Environmental Strategy.

5. Future direction

The partnership between Greater Wellington, KCDC, the Friends of the Waikanae River and other agencies involved in the protection and management of the Waikanae River has been very successful.

However, the time has come to consolidate and review the approach that we will take over the next 5 years. By developing an integrated 5-year Action Plan with our partners we aim to maximise our existing resources and ensure that we all continue to work towards the vision for the Waikanae River in the most efficient manner.

The Action Plan will be a working document that outlines the intentions and capabilities of each party and the synergies that will be achieved through this joint approach.

The timing for this intended review coincides with:

- The upcoming review of the Waikanae River Flood Plain Management Plan.
- The need to recognise the importance of flood capacity in the Waikanae River corridor and the need to find a balance between flood protection and ecological restoration.
- The creation of new roles at KCDC including a Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Walkway Ranger and Riparian Maintenance staff.
- The extensive planting done by John Topliff and John McLachlan and their concern that they may not be able to continue maintaining it. Part of the Action Plan will focus on the best way to maintain these areas of native planting to ensure that the hard work of both Johns isn't lost.

- The \$10,000 additional funding to the Friends of the Waikanae River to assist with the ongoing enhancement of the river.
- The increasing restoration work done on the Waikanae River by different parties and the need to co-ordinate this.
- The knowledge that there is still surrounding land that is intended to become part of the river corridor.
- The ongoing discussions with the Department of Conservation over management of the river mouth.

6. Financial considerations

There are no financial considerations resulting from this report. The ongoing enhancement work will continue to be funded from budgets already allocated to environmental enhancement and the Friends of the Waikanae River Care Group funding.

7. Communications

Discussion will be initiated between GW, KCDC and the Friends of the Waikanae River to develop the Action Plan. After this the community will be consulted on the outcomes of these discussions and a press release made.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives*** the report.
2. ***Notes*** the content of the report.
3. ***Notes*** the intention to produce a Five Year Action Plan in conjunction with the Environmental Strategy partners that will take us into the next phase of working towards the vision for the Waikanae River.
4. ***Endorses*** the work being done to implement the Environmental Strategy.

Report prepared by:

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