

## **Parks Manager's report**

### **For period ending Friday 27 July 2007**

#### **1. Manager's comments**

This period brought an end to the 2006/07 financial year. We are now in reporting mode to comply with internal and external reporting processes. This Committee meeting is filled with reports that advise Council and the community on how we have done on achieving our 2006/07 work programmes, and, more importantly, how that work is contributing to wider community outcomes as stated in Council's LTCCP.

The most pleasing thing of all this year has been how well our environmental programme is progressing toward providing a healthy environment for the greater Wellington community. Monitoring results that we have been undertaking annually over the last few years are definitely showing that our programme is, over time, reducing threats to biodiversity on Council land. We can all be very proud of that. In terms of park maintenance and the ranging services we provide, it was business as usual and staff have again shown their professionalism in providing those services to a high standard. Good progress is also being made on integrating the proposed new parks into the network. The only sense of disappointment that I have about the year was with unforeseen problems to do with the capital works programme (Report 07.477). Un-programmed works, soaring material prices and the problems with getting a suitable site for the East Harbour Ranger's office have meant that we have had to go back to the drawing board on a couple of projects.

#### **1.1 Proposed Porirua City Council Recreation and Open Space Zones**

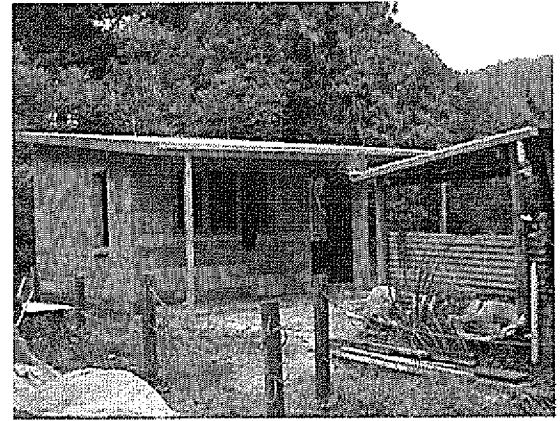
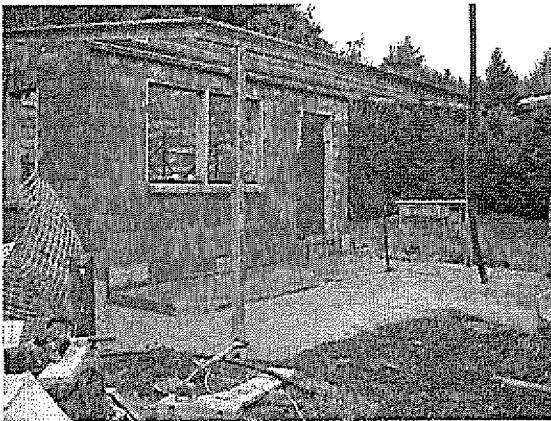
Officers have been reviewing potential zoning changes that Porirua City Council (PCC) is proposing as part of their District Plan review. PCC is proposing to develop two new zones (*Recreation* and *Open Space*) that may have impacts on park, farming and forestry operations at Battle Hill, Belmont and Whitireia Parks. Officers have drafted a submission on proposed zoning changes and have been discussing the issues with PCC. A report covering the matter will be prepared for Policy and Finance Committee in September.

#### **1.2 Orange Hut rebuilt**

After being ravaged by fire in 2005, the 'new' Orange Hut opened on 1 July 2007.

There was a very good turnout on the day from the 4WD/motorcycle fraternity with 150 vehicles attending. Landcare Committee Chairperson Chris Laidlaw filled the role of Master of Ceremonies on the day and, considering the pouring rain, the official opening went very well. I would like to acknowledge the huge effort put in by the 4WD community and Dean Hearfield, the Akatarawa Ranger, to make this project happen. The sheer desire and determination of these people to want to make this project happen was incredible. Donations of labour and materials from volunteers kept coming meaning the overall cost of the project (funded by an insurance payout) was well under budget.

Some works still need to be done to finally complete the project; a proper toilet needs to be built and internal linings and finishing jobs need to be completed.



## **2. Planning and Policy**

### **2.1 Management Planning**

A workshop on the Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Management Plan was held on 11 July to discuss the proposed changes to the plan resulting from the Hearings. The final plan will be presented to the September Landcare Committee once issues with incorporating wind energy into the plan are resolved.

The draft Belmont Regional Park Management Plan will also be considered at the September Committee meeting. Public meetings as part of the formal public consultation for this plan are to be held in late October. On a further note, Fiona Shaw, who has been instrumental in developing both these plans, left Council in late July. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

The review of Council's Concessions Policy for its Parks and Forests continues. Meetings with commercial and non-commercial concessionaires have been held in July to gain feedback and propose suggested changes to the policy and administrative processes. A workshop was also held with Councillors about the policy on 26 July. The draft Concessions Policy will be presented to the relevant Committee in November for approval, prior to being made available for formal public consultation in December.

Officers have also been reviewing the first season's hunting ballot at East Harbour Regional Park. Officers have spoken to ballot holders and the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association about possible improvements to the ballot system. As a result, next year's ballot will be changed from ballot holders hunting for periods of one week, to now only hunting for three day periods with Wednesdays as 'free' days. This will allow more hunters to take up the opportunity.

## 2.2 Pest Control

### 2.2.1 Pest animals

The Mangaroa/Kaitoke Tb possum control operation will begin in mid-July, with non-toxic feed bait to be distributed in the first fine weather window. The Akatarawa Forest 1080 operation will start after the Mangaroa/Kaitoke operation has been completed. Media releases and public notices about these operations have been published in the local papers.

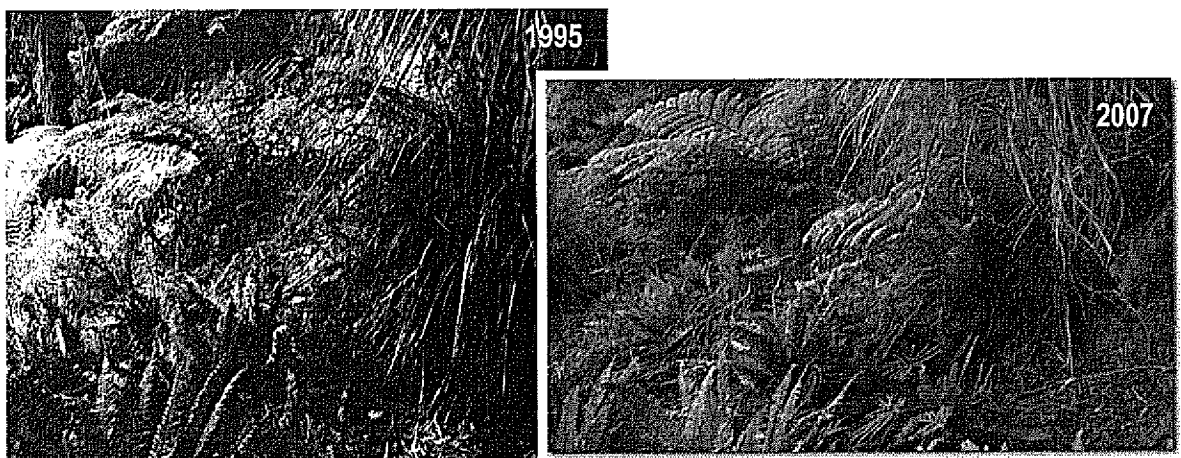
Another bait fill was completed in Korokoro Valley as part of the ongoing possum control operation there. Professional goat control operations were completed in Akatarawa Forest, (54 goats), Pakuratahi Forest (35 goats and 5 pigs) and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area (22 goats, 2 pigs and 1 deer).

### 2.2.2 Pest plants

Pest plant control work is slowing down now that winter has arrived. As the work is seasonal, the pest plant team has disbanded until work comes back on stream in September. However, the team is to be congratulated for the work they achieved this year, especially on the efforts with controlling holly, climbing asparagus and wilding pine.

### 2.2.3 Monitoring

Photopoints are currently being remeasured in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area. Changes in vegetation cover and vegetation growth can be demonstrated visually over time using this technique. In the example below, the improvement in ground cover and growth of tree ferns are apparent over a 12 year time period.



#### 2.2.4 Fruit-fall plots

Hinau fruit-fall plots were re-measured in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo and Hutt Water Collection Areas. These plots provide an indication of pest numbers in the area. In the Hutt catchment, 1% of the fruit were possum damaged while 27% showed rodent damage. The low percentage of possum-damaged fruit is a surprise, as possum numbers are likely to have built up within the area since the 1080 operation in 2002. In the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchment, where possum numbers should not be high, the result was again surprising at 49% possum damaged and 24% rodent damaged fruit.

#### 2.2.5 Rare plant finding



Another triumph for the continued pressure on pest animals in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchment has been the discovery of an uncommon orchid. This tiny plant, with minute flowers of 5mm across, was discovered by Mark Lynch (Environmental Assistant.) *Drymoanthus flavus* flowers from September to December and is predominantly insect-pollinated. A quote from Dunedin's Naturalists Field Club minutes for 1936 says: "Rare and beautiful plants grow in profusion. Of these plants pride of place is given to the rarest, the epiphytic orchid *Sarcobilus adversus* (*D. flavus*). The *Sarcobilus* was examined carefully, the

bunchy tufts of purple spotted leaves, waxy blooms of yellow green and withering whitish aerial roots adhering to the bark making a very quaint and interesting study."

### 2.3 Permits

Officers have processed a number of natural use permits for the parks and forests over the last few months. Three of these were high impact: two nurseries collecting seeds and propagating material and a researcher assessing oil extraction possibilities from snowberry. The seven low impact permits included collections of plant material for teaching purposes (university and polytechnic), carbon monitoring (Landcare Research), local revegetation work (Pauatahanui Catchment Frameworks project), herbarium specimens and research on kowhai moth larvae. Iwi consultation is gained during the processing of the permit.

### 2.4 Wainuiomata Mainland Island

A bait fill was completed in late May. The bait was changed from brodifacoum back to diphacinone now that the bait quality issues have been resolved. The rats do not appear to be taking much bait at this time of year. It is thought that this is because they store food in their den sites and are less active during the colder weather.

Hinau fruit-fall plots inside and outside the mainland island were measured. The hinau plots inside had no possum damage, but outside, the proportion of possum-damaged hinau was 49%. Rodent damaged fruit was scored at 19% inside and 24% outside the mainland island.

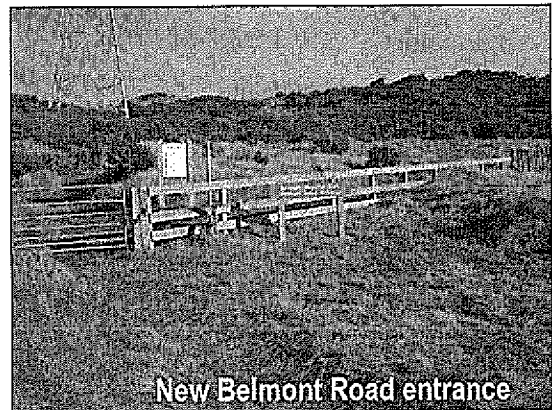
### 3. Western Sector

#### 3.1 Belmont Regional Park

The ranger has commenced a condition survey of Waitangirua Farm's fences. The location of all the farm fences is being mapped by GPS, to provide accurate data for GIS maps of the area. This information will enable prioritising and scheduling future maintenance and replacement works. It is intended that this task be completed before the beginning of lambing in late August.

With it being the middle of winter, much of the work going on in the park is scheduled maintenance.

- Sections of the Stream Walk track at Stratton Street have been upgraded with improved benching and a new gravel surface
- A contractor has removed part of a block of pine trees adjacent to the upper Shepherd's house on Hill Road
- Fences have been repaired on parts of Waitangirua Farm and at the Belmont Road entrance



With this being said, there are still some activities going on in the park. Visitors continue to enjoy the park. However, visitor numbers have reduced because of inclement weather. The Ranger has noted good numbers of walkers, mountain bikers, runners and horse riders throughout the park on fine days, and there are still some very keen people the rest of the time.

- The ranger is liaising with the Mana Kayak Club about a proposed multi-sport event in the park. The current plan is to stage a mountain bike section through the park, as part of a larger event run from Porirua
- The Ranger has spoken to several trail bike and quad bike riders found riding in the park

- A road bike/run duathlon event was run at Dry Creek, with 100 competitors enjoying this location
- A mountain bike orienteering event was held on part of Waitangirua Farm in late July. The event was based at the Stratton Street entrance

A night-time Search and Rescue exercise was held in the park. This was also based from the Stratton Street entrance, and was a realistic scenario for members of the public becoming lost in this park.

Opus has been engaged in site surveys along the Duck Creek and Takapu tracks for future geotechnical investigations along the Transmission Gully highway route.

### **3.2 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park**

As is with the other parks this time of year, maintenance work continues along with the odd keen park visitor or group still using the park:

- Repairs to a boundary fence were made at the Bush Reserve to prevent stock gaining access into it
- Work has begun on widening a section of the farm road at the northern end of the Airstrip. The upgrade to the road is required so that the pine trees that fell through a fence in the Spring Paddock can be trucked out in the New Year. Once the pines are removed, a new section of fence will be erected. Temporary repairs were made to the fence in the interim. A gate is also being moved in that area to help improve stock movement between paddocks
- Staff continued to clean up wind blown trees in the Pipeline Ridge gullies
- Westpac Bank held a planting day where they planted 300 plants. The plants were a mixture of cabbage trees, manuka, mahoe and flax. The day was cold, but the barbecue lunch warmed everybody up and a great day was had by all.
- Mana Lions and Mana Boat Club groups worked in the park this period. They were out checking their respective trap lines. Pest numbers remain steady in the park but, with winter arriving at Battle Hill, pest numbers may pick up as pest animals move into the park from surrounding properties to look for easy feed. Both groups are very enthusiastic and come out in all kinds of weather.

The Ranger has attended several meetings with Opus and their contractors, regarding access to Transmission Gully for the geotechnical investigation work on the proposed route. The Ranger met with the Battle Hill Equestrian Management Committee, regarding the upcoming horse event season and upgrading of their jumps around the park.

The Ranger has also been liaising with the Pauatahanui Pony Club regarding the upcoming Akatarawa 1080 drop, and the closure of the park when the control operation happens, as well as co-ordinating the club's event calendar for the upcoming event.

The Ranger has been working with the Parks Department's Landscape Architect on developing new interpretation signs for the park including assessing new locations for signs so that the public will get a better appreciation of the history of the park.

### 3.3 Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP)

The landscape and construction teams have been incredibly busy this period, with bridge repairs, installing information signs, upgrading the Coastal Track and the nursery driveway, and removing gum trees along the State Highway 1 boundary.

Officers have also been working with the local community meeting with the Friends of QEP, Guardians of Whareroa, Tramways, an equestrian interest group, some “friends of the barn”, a Signal Box Market Day, Kapiti Emergency Services, and Trade and Commerce. It seems each period brings a new community group into the folds of QEP.



New cattle stop/public access into farm areas at Queen Elizabeth Park

Our winter planning calendar is quite full this year so the teams have been doing a lot of planting preparation. Community planting projects this period have included two dune restoration plantings, several corporate planting days, a Northern Wetland Raumati South Residence Group planting, the Friends of QEP planting in the Whareroa Stream and plantings conducted by the Guardians of Whareroa on Whareroa Farm.

Some members of the public continue to test the Ranger’s patience. This period has seen a quad biker trespassed from the park, a picnic table stolen from a popular picnic site, and a number of ‘hoons’ driving in the areas they should not be in. The Ranger has set up a local Service Level Agreement with the Kapiti Police, and the Police are now frequently patrolling the Park a number of times throughout the day.

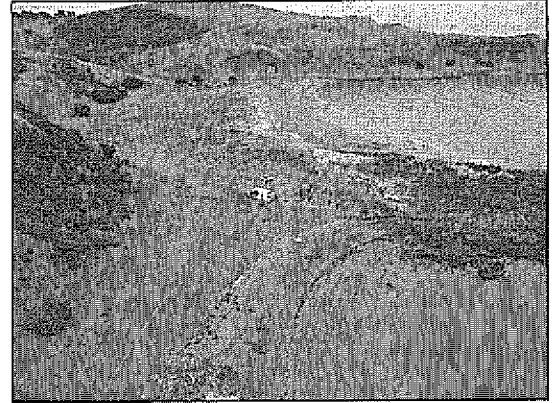
The Park continues to be a destination point for active groups. QEP has seen a number of walking groups use the park, and a cycling group that rode through and raved about the widening of the Coastal Track.

Events held this period includes: the ‘blessing’ of the Tilly Road building; a Wellington club orienteering day; the Victoria University Harriers and the Tramways ‘Sunday Funday’.



### 3.4 Whitireia Park

Staff assisted *Take Care* and Whitireia Board members with Spinifex plantings at Whitireia Park. This is a good way for staff to get familiar with a park we get closer to taking over the management of this park.



## 4. Eastern Sector

### 4.1 Kaitoke Regional Park

Winter maintenance is well under way with:

- Bark mulching of gardens, removing an old willow tree, and improving swales for drainage in the campground area
- Gorse alongside the Hutt Water Collection Area access road has been sprayed
- A new solar panel was installed at Te Marua gate after vandals cut down the pole holding the old panel and stole it

The Ranger continues to deal with park user antics, even at this time of year:

- During June a park user was locked inside the park. Staff were unable to contact or find him and the user took it upon himself to cut through the gate at Waterworks Road to exit. He is suspected to have been poaching
- Several pukeko were shot at Te Marua. Unfortunately, the offenders were not caught

Planting is a major activity in the park this time of year. A total of 1,000 manuka and cabbage trees were planted at Te Marua to link the various bush remnants there, and around 600 karamu, kanuka, ribbonwood and cabbage trees were planted around the campground area and Keith Spry Lookout.

- Plateau School took part in a planting day and potted seedlings. This involved about 25 primary school children
- An IAG corporate planting day was held on 21 June. Preparation for this event included installing two stiles to allow access to the area for the group, as well as weed spraying the area



- An Arbor Day planting saw 47 members of the Heretaunga Scout Group turn up to plant
- An ACOR group planting was also held during July

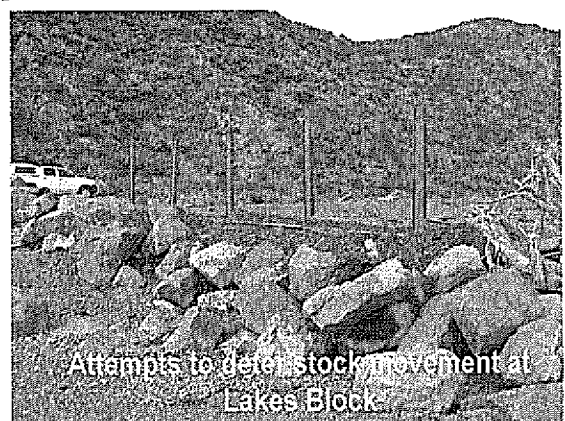
Problems with the water quality at the Ranger's residence have sparked a review of the water treatment system for this property. Steps are being taken to install a new system which will ensure a cleaner supply. Planning has also begun to develop new signs for the plantation forest area at the Te Marua entrance.



## 4.2 East Harbour Regional Park

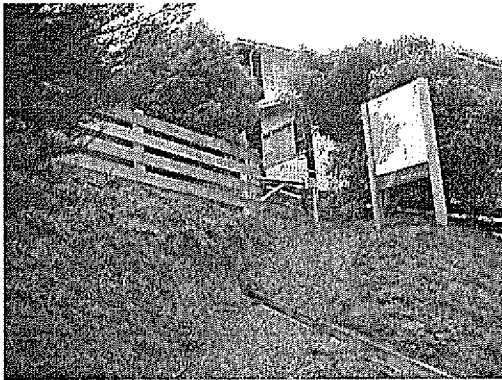
A concession was granted for one day's filming in Lakes Block. The filming took place in early July. While driving back from the Lakes Block with film crew members and one of our Pest Plant staff members, officers encountered a boat in distress about 200m south of Burdans Gate. The local police officer was also at the scene. The boat engine had failed and the vessel was taking in large quantities of water in deteriorating conditions. The two occupants were safe but were trying to get the boat onto the beach. It was a case of "all hands on deck", getting all the gear off the boat. We then managed to tip most of the water out and drag the boat up the beach to a safe spot much to the delight of the owner and his freezing young son.

Stock entering the Lakes Block from surrounding farmland is an ongoing problem in this area. Recently, sheep and goats have been accessing the park via the beach because of shingle build-up over the boulder barrier boundary. A steel girder frame and fence netting has now been put in place to halt this problem. However, any structure will have limitations in such a harsh marine environment.



Maintenance during the period included:

- A helicopter was used to drop structure materials for 15 boardwalks into the Butterfly Creek area (McKenzie Track). Use of smoke flares was an excellent tool for guiding the helicopter to the sites and this method is recommended for dense bush areas.
- Three mountain bike information map panels have been manufactured and these have now been installed on Main Ridge track, Rata Ridge track and Zig-Zag Track.
- General track maintenance has been carried out for water tables and run-off clearance.
- 200m of boundary fence upgrade has been carried out on the northern boundary of Lakes block.
- Refurbishment of the Fraser Street (Zig Zag track) is now complete.



The Resource Consent for Gollans Valley wetland boardwalk is under way. Work on the Butterfly Creek Valley boardwalk has been scheduled to commence within the next few months.

Arbor Day plantings included a combined GW/DoC project on the raised beach in front of Lake Kohangapiripiri using a range of rare and uncommon species. This was a good opportunity for the key stakeholders to get to know each other and share their thoughts on the Lakes Block management.

Toward the end of June, Global volunteers helped plant 100 locally grown native plants from the MIRO nursery. The planting site was high above Eastbourne alongside a section of the Mackenzie track.

A thank you evening was held for the volunteers who helped out with possum trapping and other environmental work at East Harbour. Again, a good opportunity for the organisers to explain how their pest management work is benefiting the park.

### 4.3 Wainuiomata Orongorongo Catchments

The Flood Protection work in the Recreation area has now been completed. This work was required to protect the Truss Bridge abutment that has had severe scouring issues from flooding of the Wainuiomata River in the past.

A total of 10 environmental education signs have been installed on the Sledge Track in the recreation area. These signs are to help members of the public walking the area to identify tree species. All the signs were concreted into place near the trunk of the specific tree.



An environmental restoration planting day was held on the Gums Loop Track with Normandale Kea and Scout Groups. A total of 150 trees were planted as a result. A further 500 native trees were planted in this area using GW and Hutt City Council staff as part of the "Of Gorse of Course" programme. This programme is part of TheNewDowse art exhibition featuring works by Regan Gentry who uses gorse to create his artworks.

Two islands that were built in preparation for the flooding of the Lower dam site received plants. Pukeko have also finally arrived at the site (of their own accord) during the winter of 2006. These birds have now bred and established themselves. Although the birds are abundant in New Zealand and in some areas they become quite a nuisance, it is good to see the pest control work having an effect in the area allowing ground dwelling birds to inhabit a new site.

The final catchment walking tour for the year was held on 17 June. There were only eight participants because of wet weather. The new season of tours will commence in October.

A large pine stump was removed from the Wainuiomata River in mid-June. The stump was from a tree that fell across the river last December, taking out the power to the treatment plant. The Akatarawa/Pakuratahi Forest Ranger assisted with blasting the stump to enable the 12 tonne digger to drag the stump out of the watercourse.



## Akatarawa/ Pakuratahi Forests

Dean Hearfield, the Ranger, was pleased to be awarded the Rotary "Pride of Workmanship Award" during this period. Dean was nominated for this award in recognition of his 30 years service to Greater Wellington and its parks, and his dedication to Upper Hutt.

Maintenance continues on the roading network throughout both forests, including the weekly clearing of culverts, waterways, watercourses and run-offs.

A crew of Rimutaka Prison inmates has been clearing the walking tracks alongside the Rimutaka Incline formation, filling in potholes at Tunnel Gully Reserve and Rimutaka Incline, and trimming roadside vegetation at Tunnel Gully reserve.



Events this period have included:

- A New Zealand Army exercise
- Orange Hut working parties
- Cross Country Vehicle Club 4WD "shiny" tours
- Police College off-road training
- A Scout group biking on the Rimutaka Incline
- The public gaining access to the forest to get firewood

**Murray Waititi**  
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Water Supply, Parks and Forests