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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Andrew Annakin, Divisional Manager, Landcare

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Landcare Committee about activities and matters of interest within the Landcare Division since the last normal Landcare Committee meeting, 8 February 2001. Departmental activity reports are also attached.

2. Big Coast Mountain Bike Ride

My wife, Kerry signed us up for this. The *Big Coast* is a 95 kilometre bone-rattling two day ride from Maymorn, up and over the Rimutaka Incline Walkway, down to Lake Wairarapa, around the coast and across the Baring Head saddle, then along the Pencarrow Coast Road, through East Harbour Regional Park to Eastbourne. Piece of cake!

It was interesting being a "punter" - though I wore Regional Council logoed gear - along with a thousand or so other participants (including a surprising number of tourists). I listened to people's comments along the way (especially through the Rimutaka Incline Walkway and East Harbour Regional Park) and passed on my mental notes to Parks and Forests. My main observations were:

- Riders enjoyed the Rimutaka Incline Walkway; though those who rode *into* tunnel walls, or cartwheeled across the Commission Siding ford, probably disagree. Many clearly knew nothing of the area, its significance, or current mixed use with Plantation Forestry. Future interpretation and landscaping will greatly improve this. I ended up tour-guide to several Canadian visitors, which went down well.
- The ride from Bearing Head saddle (over the *closed* Wainuiomata River bridge and down though the Orongorongo Station to Fitzroy Bay) offers spectacular views, currently denied Park users.

- We were blessed with glorious sunshine and a gentle southerly - tail wind - making the last leg to Eastbourne quite euphoric (loss of feeling in the lower limbs!). I saw several groups stop at the new Regional Council interpretation signs by the Lakes Block. Cycling along, admiring the seascape, rugged escarpment and the BT Challenge fleet (a surprising number of spectators trekked quite far into the Park to secure vantage points), I was struck by the big job ahead for us to preserve these values while also making them more accessible to Park users. This is going to be a major test for the Regional Council in its aspirations to develop plans for the future of East Harbour Regional Park over the next few years.

3. **Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan Consultative Draft**

As noted in the Hutt River Floodplain Management Advisory Committee minutes, the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan Consultative Draft is now out for public submissions, prior to its formal recommendations to the Landcare Committee.

This is a significant milestone in a process that for some, dates back over ten years (since the Plan was first seriously mooted). For Brendan Paul, his enthusiastic team, and me, this project variously represents almost three years commitment (noting the added pressures from the two major flood events, 1998 and 2000). As an exercise in project management, community connection and financial planning (LTFS), this exercise has been almost flawless. There is still a lot to do and hurdles remain, but the Advisory Committee endorsement of a consultative draft is a major accomplishment.

4. **Wainuiomata WCA Access Policy Launch**

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to attend this event due to pressure from elsewhere to take some holidays! However, by all accounts the day was a great success. The Utility Services Committee will consider the Access Policy Phase 2 review, scheduled for the new Financial Year, in due course. Some advances to the current policy are possible, the details of which are being worked on with the Water Group.

My main concerns with expanding access opportunities into the Water Collection Areas, centre on scarce Landcare resources to run "controlled" access events. Then there is the need to establish a track record, with associated water testing, to ensue that public access to the catchments has no discernible impact on water quality; current low rain levels (no run-off) make this aspect more difficult to establish.

5. **Recommendation**

That the report be received and its contents noted.