



caring about you & your environment

Report 01.305

25 April 2001

File: R/2/3/3

Report to Landcare Committee
from Dean Hearfield, Ranger - Akatarawa/Pakuratahi and Susan Edwards, Manager, Parks and
Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

Cleary's Road Alternative Route - Report Back

1. Purpose

To report back following the last Committee meeting and the requested site visit, on the Akatarawa Recreation Action Committee (ARAC) proposal that a portion of Cleary's Road (Akatarawa Forest) be used for recreational purposes and that the Regional Council access road be moved.

2. Previous Committee Decision

In February, the Committee initially considered the proposal (refer Report 01.51) and resolved:

That 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 be noted, 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 including the potential impacts on private land owners.

The Committee also requested a site visit prior to making a final decision on the matter. The site visit occurred after the Orange Hut opening on 24 March 2001.

3. What the Proposal Involves

ARAC want WRC 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. Under the proposal, the WRC access road would be moved.

The length of the new road would be in the order of 200 to 250 meters and 3 to 4 metres wide (more in areas where benching and stabilising the road formation are required).

4. **Key Issues**

The previous report outlined two key issues for Committee consideration:

- **Environmental Impact:** The proposal requires the removal of 40 – 50 year regenerating Kamahi/Hinau native vegetation. Following the site visit, Councillors appeared to consider that, within the context of the *Signature Values* for this Forest, the relatively small amount of vegetation removal is sustainable.
- **Precedent:** The proposal is a departure from existing policy. Guidelines developed for motorised activities in the Forest state that no new tracks are to be created or opened up for the activity. Although the proposal is to use the existing road for motorised recreation, a new road will be necessary for access because the old road will no longer be maintained to a suitable standard.

If the Committee believe the application should be granted, then it may wish to give a clear indication to ARAC that the approval should not be considered as a precedent for future applications.

At the last meeting, Mr Gilbert raised a concern about the impact of the proposal on private landowners. It is considered that the impacts, (e.g., vandalism of property and fire risk), will not be increased as a result of this proposal as it will not lead to more vehicles entering the Forest via the route adjacent to their land. There is no private land in the immediate vicinity of this portion of Cleary's Road.

5. **Project Feasible and Costs?**

Officers have considered the feasibility of the proposal and believe that it is possible to construct the new road for under \$5,000. Work would include:

- clearing native vegetation from the site;
- constructing the new road formation and water tables with a digger;
- installing culverts, as needed;
- metalling the surface.

6. **Who Would Do and Pay for the Work?**

There are three options:

- a) The Council pays for the work and employs contractors to construct the new road.
- b) ARAC undertakes and pays for the work.
- c) The Council pays for the work and employs contractors to construct the new road, with ARAC contributing to the costs.

6.1 Who Would Do the work?

Officers consider that the work needs to be undertaken by experienced contractors engaged by the Council, as:

- the work is in an environmentally sensitive area;
- it needs to be done to a high standard as it will be a publicly accessible road;
- the work requires use of heavy machinery with difficult access issues;
- occupational health and safety liability lies with the Council as the principal and landowner;
- professional contractors have health and safety and hazard plans that they work to;
- contractors could undertake the work over two weeks. Whereas ARAC, as a voluntary group, is likely to take much longer.

6.2 Who Would Pay for the Work?

As the new road is largely to enable ARAC to use the existing road for their recreational pursuits, it is appropriate that the group pay for some or all of the work. As noted in the previous report, there will be some public benefit from the new road; it will provide all weather access (the current road is often impassable during wet weather). All weather access is desirable for forest management, (e.g., vegetation monitoring, pest control and ranging services), fire fighting and during emergencies. Alternative access to the southern portion of the Forest is possible from other entrance points, but it takes much longer. Therefore, there is a case for some of the roading costs to be Council funded.

Officers believe there may be another advantage in the Council funding some or all the cost of the road. The Council will be seen to be continuing its co-operative working relationship with ARAC by helping meet their recreational needs. Such an approach should encourage ARAC members to continue assisting the Ranger educate motorised recreational users on appropriate behaviour in the Forest.

Disadvantage of requiring ARAC to fully fund the road are that:

- It may create a sense of ownership of the road among ARAC members. However, if they only contribute to the road such expectations would be reduced.
- It will be difficult for a voluntary group to come up with the money to pay for the work.

ARAC may be able to contribute in other ways. Members could contribute materials to the project, (e.g., culverts and metal). They may also be able to *work off* some of the costs by taking over responsibility for monitoring the new road and clearing out the water tables and culverts. Officers could draw up an agreement with ARAC outlining their responsibilities and the term of maintenance required to work off the costs apportioned to ARAC. In the meantime all the cost of the new road would be borne by the Council. Parks and Forests Operations can absorb the costs in this year's Akatarawa Forest roading budget, as the unexpectedly dry weather over the last few months has meant that the roads have stayed firm and in good condition; requiring less maintenance than usual.

The existing section of Cleary's Road would no longer be maintained by the Council, as it will be used as a bog by ARAC. Sediment traps may be needed to control any runoff from the bog and to stop sediment getting into nearby waterways. We will canvass this issue with Consents officers to determine any requirements.

7. **Communication**

If the Committee approves 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) *Note the environmental impacts of the proposal and agree that the impacts are acceptable and sustainable.*
- (3) *Agree to the ARAC proposal to enhance the motorised recreational values of the Akatarawa Forest by allowing use of the existing portion of Cleary's Road, as outlined in the ARAC proposal, as a bog.*
- (4) *Note that the proposal is a departure from existing policy and agree to advise ARAC that the approval should not be considered as a precedent for future applications.*
- (5) *Agree to construct an alternative road for forest management access around the bog.*
- (6) *Agree that the work should be undertaken by professional contractors managed by Council officers.*
- (7) *Agree that the work be Council funded and authorise the Manager, Parks and Forests Operations to negotiate and finalise a contribution from ARAC.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

DEAN HEARFIELD
Ranger - Akatarawa/Pakuratahi

BRUCE ANDRELL
Manager, Parks and Forests (Operations)

SUSAN EDWARDS
Manager, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

ANDREW ANNAKIN
Divisional Manager, Landcare