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Report to Environment Committee
from Tim Porteous, Biodiversity Co-ordinator

Update on Implementation of the Waiwhetu and Pauatahanui Inlet Action Plans

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the projects underway this financial year to implement the action plans for the Waiwhetu Stream and Pauatahanui Inlet.

2. Background

Significant funding for these two environmental restoration and enhancement programmes was provided in the current Long Term Financial Strategy (LTFS). The relevant Territorial Local Authority in each case (Hutt City and Porirua City Councils) has made matching funding available to date.

This financial year (2001/02) is the first year following the completion and adoption of the action plans for both programmes and, consequently, the first full year of “on the ground” projects.

3. Details of Projects Underway

3.1 Waiwhetu Stream

The Waiwhetu Stream is a small slow flowing stream arising in the Eastern Hutt hills above the Hutt Valley near the Taita cemetery. It flows through the valley before flowing into the Hutt River at Seaview.

The stream has long been identified by this Council as having “impaired” water quality, almost certainly as a result of discharges from the 40 or so stormwater drains that flow into the stream. An additional significant issue is the legacy of contaminated

sediments in the lower reaches of the stream. These sediments contain residues of heavy metals and other chemical pollutants from over sixty years of intensive industrial activity in the adjacent area and the use of the stream as a means of disposing of industrial waste prior to the commissioning of a trade waste sewer in the late 1970s.

Projects

Funding for the programme this year is as follows: Wellington Regional Council (WRC) \$50,000 and Hutt City (HCC) \$40,000. WRC funding falls to \$25,000 per annum for the balance of the current LTFS period. This year's projects are:

a) Contaminated Sediments

Three related investigations have taken place to accurately determine the spatial extent and exact nature of the contaminants. The results from the first two studies were reported to the Environment Committee in August last year (Report No. 01.508). The current study further refines our understanding of the distribution of the sediments, and is due for completion by the end of February.

Funding: WRC \$15,000 HCC \$20,000

b) Contaminated Sediments: Remediation Options

A project to examine the possible remedial options for the stream in the light of the above is about to commence. This is essentially a desktop study that will highlight one or two possible options that will then be the subject of further detailed study.

Funding: WRC \$6,000

c) Flood Risk Assessment

The Waiwhetu Stream Action Plan acknowledges the stream corridor's importance as a floodway. A computer-based assessment is to be undertaken to determine areas adjacent to the stream where, if riparian planting was to take place, there would be no decrease in the stream's ability to deal with flood events. This will be used to guide future planting plans.

Funding: WRC \$5,000

d) Landscape Rehabilitation Plan

One of the aims of the Waiwhetu Stream programme is to get the community involved in restoration activities and to instil a sense of pride in the stream. A Landscape Rehabilitation Plan for the whole stream corridor is nearing completion. The plan does not prescribe site specific landscape treatments but rather divides the stream into logical reaches and highlights the potential of

each. Community planting and restoration projects will be developed for the 2002/03 year from the plan. (Some limited planting will also take place this autumn).

Funding: WRC \$12,000 (Plan development)
\$ 5,000 (Riparian planting)

e) Encroachments

A project to investigate and produce an inventory of encroachments by businesses and private landowners into the stream corridor will be undertaken this financial year. Some encroachments restrict public access along the corridor.

Funding: WRC \$- HCC \$20,000

3.2 Pauatahanui Inlet

Pauatahanui Inlet is the larger of the two Inlets of Porirua Harbour. The Inlet covers an area of 4,500 hectares of which about 1,100 hectares are tidal flats. The Inlet is well recognised for its high ecological, aesthetic and recreational values. Natural processes and the effects of human activities have significantly changed the ecological and hydrological conditions of the Inlet. A feature of this year's programme is to develop a good understanding of what is flowing into the Inlet so that its overall health can be gauged.

Projects

A total of \$40,000 each is budgeted for this programme by the Wellington Regional Council and Porirua City Council (PCC).

a) Stormwater Investigation

This is part of the Council's region-wide urban stormwater project looking at the composition of the contaminants within stormwater. This will tell us which chemicals are entering the Inlet and from where. By applying some of the Pauatahanui programme funding an extra two sites can be examined within the Inlet.

Funding: WRC \$10,000 PCC \$10,000

b) Septic Tanks

Porirua City is undertaking a study of the efficacy of septic tanks in the Pauatahanui Inlet catchment focussing initially on Pauatahanui Village and Motukaraka Point.

Funding: WRC \$0 PCC \$6,500

c) Stream Water Quality

The Resource Investigations Department is undertaking continuous water quality monitoring of the major streams entering the Inlet to determine the volume of sediment entering the Inlet and its possible sources.

Funding: Covered internally

d) Habitat Restoration Plan

To guide both our own ecological restoration activities and those of future community groups, a Habitat Restoration Plan is to be commissioned for the public lands at the northern and eastern margins of the Inlet.

Funding: WRC \$4,000 PCC \$4,000

e) Education/Communication Strategy

This project is intended to serve as a blueprint for raising awareness of the Inlet's values, the relationship between the catchment and the Inlet, and the influence individuals and organisations can have over its health. This will be a long-term project, with funding ear-marked for the next five years.

Funding: WRC \$5,000 PCC \$5,000

f) Establishment Grant for Community Trust

After extensive consultation with councils, organisations and the public, the establishment of a charitable trust to take over the role of implementing the action plan is almost completed. Porirua City has made funding available to assist with the establishment of the Trust.

Funding: WRC \$0 PCC \$15,000

g) Ecological Restoration on Public Lands

The Regional Council has undertaken ecological restoration (weed control and revegetation with salt marsh species) on public lands on the margin of the Inlet for the last few years. Funding has been applied to this to increase the area restored.

Funding: WRC \$6,000 PCC \$3,000

h) Forest and Bird Freshwater Pond Restoration

Forest and Bird manage the Pauatahanui Wildlife Management Reserve at the head of the Inlet. Support has been provided for their restoration of an important freshwater pond within the reserve.

Funding: WRC \$10,000 PCC \$-

The balance of WRC funding will be applied to signage to publicise the ecological restoration activities on public land.

4. **Communication**

Both the Waiwhetu and Pauatahanui initiatives have received good coverage in the local press and, on more than one occasion, on radio. Their success is dependent on public awareness and support and every opportunity will continue to be taken to highlight the programmes, including their co-operative nature.

5. **Recommendation**

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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