



**Report**                    **04.489**  
**Date**                     31 August 2004  
**File**                      ENV/15/03/01

**Committee**            **Environment Committee**  
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## **Take Care and Corporate Volunteer Programmes - a progress report**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of the activities and achievements of care groups during the 2003-04 year and the environmental restoration activities of corporate groups.

### **2. Background**

Through the *Take Care* programme, Greater Wellington supports community groups working to improve the environment in their local area. The groups work in ecosystems that are degraded and need enhancement or restoration. The ecosystems covered by the programme are streams, estuaries, wetlands, dunes, and coastal escarpments. By concentrating on these areas, the activities of the groups make a useful contribution to the achievement of the Council's biodiversity objectives.

A second programme, which operates in tandem with *Take Care*, is the restoration of selected priority ecosystems by corporate groups. The goal set for this work is to enable at least five business or public sector organisations per year to work on improving the ecological health of a particular area or ecosystem.

### **3. Discussion**

In 2003-04, Greater Wellington helped 26 care groups to improve or restore degraded ecosystems around the region. At the start of the year there were 21 groups, and five more were added through the annual application round. The groups are spread throughout the region from Castlepoint and Riversdale, to Masterton, the Kapiti coast, Wellington, Porirua, and the Hutt Valley. The cost to provide the programme was \$209,000 against a budget of \$202,000 (including staff time).

As indicated in the RPS Implementation report to the last Environment Committee (Report 04.432), four more groups were also supported through RPS funding, bringing the total number of care groups assisted financially by the Council to 30. These groups are the Waitohu Stream group, the Days Bay dune restoration group, the Henley Lake group, and the Greendale Reserve group. We also routinely provide advice and occasional assistance to a number of other groups working on restoration projects in the region.

Most groups receive \$19,000 over four or five years, although some have smaller projects, or obtain other sources of funds, and do excellent work on as little as \$500 per year. Most groups work continuously throughout the year, clearing weeds, looking after their plants, and measuring the ecological changes they are causing (fresh water, bird, and pest monitoring). Sixty per cent of the groups work at their sites at least weekly. At the moment, the groups are busy weeding and planting. During the winter/spring-planting season most groups have two or three major planting events, with their local communities providing the labour. Over the course of the last financial year approximately 60,000 plants were planted at 49 major events, involving 1500-2000 people. Twenty-eight plant pest and five animal pest control initiatives were carried out or are still underway.

#### **4. Care group achievements**

The groups' achievements are considerable. All of the groups have produced outcomes to be proud of. Some of their major achievements are:

- Extensive planting alongside the Porirua Stream by the Glenside Group and the erection of a large sign explaining the project. Plants put in last year held up well in the February storms, reducing the amount of erosion of the stream bank that occurred in this violent event.
- The completion of a fence to provide unimpeded access to the Hull's Creek site at Silverstream Railway, and significant planting in the wetland and alongside the stream. This group has been very active and the achievements of its members were recognised with a Conservation Award.
- The removal of weeds and the planting of pingao and spinifex on the dunes at Island Bay. This site contains a number of rare coastal plants and an area of remnant pingao which would once have clothed much of the sandy areas of the Wellington coastline.
- The construction of a shadehouse at Pukerua Bay School by the Waimapehi Stream care group and other community groups, and the continued development of the "Secret Valley" (weed removal and planting). This includes the construction of an environmental education structure, the energy for which will be supplied by solar panels. This group won a Trustpower award in recognition of its achievements.

- The Manuka Reserve restoration plantings becoming well established, as the area changes from a bare paddock to a biologically diverse ecosystem. Some of the ribbonwoods now tower over passers-by. This group also provides an excellent example of self-sufficiency, as the members propagate their own plants in their shade house and standing out area.
- Further planting alongside the Kaiwharawhara Stream by the Otari-Wilton's Bush group.
- The removal of willows and Japanese Honeysuckle from O Te Pua Wetland (this weed control programme continues as the summer weather prevented the completion of spraying).
- Comprehensive pest control, bird monitoring, and the planting of around 600 plants at the Waimeha lagoon on the Kapiti coast. A huge amount of weed (blackberry, water celery, tradescantia) has been removed from this site.
- Releasing plants and further planting alongside the stream at Te Horo and the planting of a small coastal wetland.
- Continued weed removal and planting of the dunes at Days Bay and the erection of a large sign to explain the project. This group won three awards this year.
- The excavation and shaping of the wetland ponds at Henley Lake, leading to the return of birds not seen in the area for some time.
- Winning a prestigious Green Ribbon Award for the rehabilitation of the Waitohu Stream.
- Further planting of flax, ngaio, and muehlenbeckia at the Kaitawa Reserve in Paraparaumu.
- Extensive planting of the Greendale Reserve. This year (2004-05) the group is extending its planting to cover the northern bank of the stream.
- Planting and weed clearing on the Owhiro Stream in Wellington. This group has also purchased a shade house and begun to propagate its own plants.
- The removal of acacia from the dunes at Riversdale and the construction of a walkway to gain access to the beach in front of the surf club.
- The removal of 800 metres of crack willow from the Motuwaireka stream and the purchase of fencing materials to exclude stock from the area. Planting this area is the focus for the next two years.

- Ongoing monitoring of vegetation, water quality, mudfish, and species diversity at Fensham wetland, Carterton. The group produced its own wetland monitoring guidelines in April 2004. It also carries out regular working bees and planting events.
- Water quality monitoring at Pauatahanui by the Guardians of the Inlet. This moved into its third winter this year. The data will help with the management of the streams flowing into the inlet.
- Beginning weed control and growing on plants for use at Moehau Park.
- The completion of the penguin habitat by the NIWA office at Greta Point.
- Soil rehabilitation and planting by the Millwood Residents Association at Hulls Creek.
- Extensive re-vegetation on the banks of the Waikanae River.
- Ongoing work at the sand dune restoration trial plots and wetland restoration at QE Park.
- Extensive replanting of the fire damaged area at Maara Roa
- Completion of a detailed management plan for the three wetlands and forest at Millenium Reserve.

The role of Greater Wellington staff in the work of care groups is pivotal to their success. For most staff, this work is just a part of their responsibilities but they undertake the work with passion and commitment because the results are always rewarding and often astounding. Staff help their groups to organise planting events, choose and obtain appropriate plants, supply and maintain equipment, prepare signage, obtain publicity, design and build shade houses, and generally support them to achieve their goals.

Our aim is to move as many groups as possible towards a state where they can sustain themselves. This means helping them to develop a reliable supply of plants and materials (often by building a community nursery), and training group members in health and safety, how to organise themselves, engage with their community, and keep members interested and enthusiastic. The advantage of having groups apply for funds, rather than being “created” by the Council, is that many of them are already quite well formed and with support networks within their communities. This makes the transition to self-reliance all the more rapid.

Our training for community groups is extensive and includes the popular Restoration Day (where we have workshops and field trips), Growsafe courses (how to apply agrichemicals), propagating plants, building community nurseries, weed control, the management of groups and carrying out pest control programmes.

## 5. Corporate Volunteer Programme

The Corporate Volunteer programme is very popular. Our staff work with businesses on environmental projects to help them meet their objectives, which may be to:

- enhance their corporate image and reputation;
- demonstrate good corporate citizenship;
- contribute to triple bottom line reporting;
- improve employee moral; or
- help with team building.

Greater Wellington's objectives for the programme are to:

- raise people's awareness about the environment;
- inform them of the benefits of good environmental practice; and
- provide them with the tools to change their behaviour.

Working with corporate groups helps target an influential sector of the community to achieve our aims.

In 2003-04 we worked with the ANZ Bank, the Land Transport Safety Authority, Schering Plough, Simpson Grierson, Deloitte Consulting and the Environmental Risk Management Authority. The projects the businesses have worked on are:

- Replanting the sand dunes at Otaki
- Planting saltmarsh at Pauatahanui
- Fencing and planting native fish spawning zones on the Kakaho Stream
- Restoring a wetland at Horokiri
- Streamside and wetland planting at Hulls Creek
- Streamside planting at Otari.

This work is ongoing and we will work with at least another five businesses in 2004-05.

## 6. Conclusion

Within the *Take Care* programme there is a wide variety of projects, covering different types of ecosystems in locations throughout the region. Groups working with our staff have made significant progress on their projects over the last year.

The projects that Greater Wellington supports provide good opportunities to showcase what communities can do to help restore their own environment, and challenge others to examine how their behaviour can be modified in the light of the groups' efforts to work in these unique environments.

The 2004-05 application round is currently open and, while some groups will “drop off” the list because their four years of funding has come to an end, more groups will be added. Some of the existing groups have already applied again.

## 7. **Strategic context**

The work undertaken by care groups contributes to the Biodiversity, Water, Recreation and Parks, and Community elements of “Towards a Sustainable Region”. The five new groups that joined in November meet the annual target in the Community section of the strategic plan.

## 8. **Communication**

With the assistance of their staff facilitators, the groups, corporate volunteers and Greater Wellington received extensive positive coverage in the media over the last year. We will continue to help the groups in this way and report Greater Wellington’s support for their initiatives.

## 9. **Recommendation**

*That the Committee:*

1. *receive the report; and*
2. *note the contents.*

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