



Report **04.501**
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Committee **Landcare**
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Hutt River Ranger Service

1. Purpose

To report back on the results of the first two years of the Hutt River Ranging service, and the management of the environmental aspects of the river and trail in the western area of the region.

2. Background

The Hutt River ranging service was established in October 2002. The service was set up as a result of the increased popularity of recreational use of the Hutt River and a growing awareness of the river environment.

The increased development of the Hutt River Trail also played a large part in the expectation of service standards on not only the trail but also the surrounding areas.

Another key part of the service was to provide a point of contact for recreational users and community enquiries.

3. Key Work Areas

3.1 Policing of the river environment

When the service was set up we were aware that that the initial focus would be on improving behaviour of some users of the river corridor. Once that was under control we could then focus on more positive initiatives.

Regular patrols are however, still a key work area. We try to have a presence on most weekends and public holidays. The purpose of the patrols is discourage adverse activities such as misuse of vehicles and rubbish dumping, it is also used to encourage appropriate use of the river environment. Where possible offenders are spoken to about these adverse activities and when appropriate follow up letters are also sent.

We support the patrolling by issuing media releases to increase the public awareness of these matters. We are getting good public support in dealing with negative behaviour through telephone calls and river users reporting problems they see.

Our view is the overall reaction by the community to the patrolling has been positive.

3.2 Developing community contacts

Over this period we have initiated, continued or enhanced our working relationships with the Hutt and Upper Hutt City Councils, Police, Ministry of Fisheries, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game Council, Hutt Valley Rotary clubs, local schools, user interest groups, local newspapers and the general public.

One of the key relationships developed has been with the local police. They have been very supportive since the introduction of the service, because they see Greater Wellington now being more proactive in managing behaviour in the river area.

We have developed new contacts with many of the local schools in the area, by doing talks, planting days, rubbish collection activities and helping the schools with their plant nurseries.

We have also continued to promote the river through timely media releases, both informing and accentuating the positive. Examples of these include the Hutt River poster, four wheel drive information sheet, Hutt River Trail brochure and the Hutt River “yours to enjoy” summer promotion.

3.3 Co-ordination of community and GW enhancement projects

The River Ranger is now actively getting involved in a number of joint projects between the community and Greater Wellington. Initiatives include planting days, recreation events and the ongoing development of the Hutt River Trail.

Recreational use of both the trail and berms have increased significantly over the last two years and the ranger is helping to support the organisation and management of these events. Examples include the recent Crazy Man, which attracted four hundred participants and the valley to sea family cycle day, which attracted over five hundred people.

Planting days by local schools have also been organised. To date the children have planted well over a thousand native trees and shrubs on the river berm. The schools have taken ownership of their respective areas and care and maintain them in partnership with us.

We continue to work well with the rotary clubs in maintaining and enhancing the river trail by giving both assistance and expertise in this area. This has recently been recognised by the awarding of a regional conservation award to Rotary for their efforts along the river trail.

4. A few figures

The river ranger completes a daily activity log, which is then summarised into a monthly report, we have compiled the first 22 months of these reports and have produced some simple figures to see if we can establish some trends.

Period	Oct 02 – Sept 03	Oct 03 – July 04 <i>(note 10 months only)</i>
Misuse of Vehicles	88 <i>7.33 average per month</i>	48 <i>4.8 average per month</i>
Abandoned Vehicles	23 <i>1.92 average per month</i>	18 <i>1.8 average per month</i>
Others Stolen vehicles, Rubbish dumping follow-ups.	42 <i>3.5 average per month</i>	23 <i>2.3 average per month</i>
Totals incidents	153 <i>12.75 average per month</i>	89 <i>8.9 average per month</i>

Over this period there has been a significant drop in the misuse of vehicles, and the number of abandoned vehicles dumped on the river berms has also slightly declined. All vehicles that were traceable were either followed up or reported to the police. The statistics clearly show that total incidents have decreased over the last year.

Rubbish dumping on the river berms appears to have lessened but there is still a seasonal increase in the amount of dumping at both Easter and the Christmas / New Year period. In all instances where dumped rubbish can be identified we have followed up on this.

5. Conclusion

The ranging service has been well received by the community, the general public, local councils and government departments. It continues to provide an interface for recreational users and abusers.

The Hutt River Trail has now been recognised as a major recreational asset for the Wellington region. Work to develop the trail is on-going and the ranging service provides an essential link between community use and the maintenance of the trail.

Recreational use of the river and environment is expected to increase even more in the coming years. We see the River Ranger service as being an essential component of helping to manage the Hutt River corridor. It is perhaps ironic that the council's performance in regard to the Hutt river will most of the time be judged more on environmental issues of public access, control of motorbikes and the collection of rubbish rather than on the flood protection scheme, but this is the reality.

6. Recommendations

That the Landcare Committee:

1. *receive the report*
2. *note the contents of the report*

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