

1. Environmental Management

1.1 Parks

1.1.1 Overview

- Quarter dominated by the move into the Environment Management Group and associated familiarisation process for everyone

1.1.2 Key results for the year

- First meeting of the Whitirea Park Board
- Work commenced, via consultant Rob Greenaway, on farming options for QEP, and other, regional parks
- Stratton Street pine tree removal 'postponed' and robust public engagement process entered into
- Progress in the relationship with the Kapiti Marines Trust for 70th anniversary celebrations in late May
- Great Outdoors Sumer events programme underway

1.1.3 Looking ahead

- Roll out of park by park assessment for committee
- Continuation of farming assessment for QEP and other parks
- Ongoing enhancement of relationships with NZTA over impacts of RONS projects on Parks

1.1.4 Departmental activity

The major projects undertaken this quarter related to:

Marines 70th Anniversary celebrations

Staff met several times with members of the Kapiti Marines Trust, and made good progress on identifying priorities for the celebration at the end of May. The Yankee Trail route has now been confirmed, and trail upgrades at the north end will be carried out to ensure that elderly visitors will have the opportunity to see the wetlands and at least part of the park interior. Vegetation was cleared at the rear of the Marines Memorial and we have agreed that a Sailors Memorial will be erected there. Sites for ceremonial and memorial (mass) plantings have been identified, and for an interpretation sign at the beach. With GW staff now driving the project it now has some momentum and is expected to deliver an excellent result.

Stratton St plantation forest

Material was gathered for the resource consent applications to both the Hutt City Council (for the logging activity) and Greater Wellington (for the new culvert), and the applications will be lodged in late January. In the meantime there was a second community meeting in the Stratton Street woolshed, which included talks from GW staff and the forestry contractor. This clarified the plans and addressed many of the concerns expressed earlier by the community. It is likely that construction of the forestry road will start in late February/ early March and we will reassess the timing for the logging itself depending on harvest prices.

Network/ cross park activity

Engineering assessments were carried out on all four of the cable structures (swing bridges) in the parks (Pakuratahi Forks, Hutt Water Collection Area, Bridge Road and Wainuiomata). Maintenance work was done on the Pakuratahi Forks bridge, and all the bridges will be load tested in April 2012.

With the addition of Baring Head and Whitireia Park, the **mowing requirements** of the network have escalated significantly, in areas where it was uneconomic to employ contractors. To address this, staff trialed a 4WD mower which successfully coped with the steep terrain, high grass, narrow access and sometimes boggy or slippery surfaces found in the parks. Two mowers were purchased, with funding from the budgets for contract mowing and mower replacement.

Preparations for the **Great Outdoors Summer Events** moved into the final phases, with the appointment of the Booking Officer, design, printing and distribution of the programme, communications and detailed event planning. Bookings opened on Monday 5 December and demand has once again proved very strong.

Concessions were processed for several medium/large public events in the regional parks this summer – Eat, Drink Be Crafty at Battle Hill, the Kapiti Festival and Safer Communities at Queen Elizabeth Park. Some modifications to the online concessions database were requested to improve its usability. As a result of Corporate Communications discontinuing the Be the Difference programme, we are likely to incur higher license fees for the online database if there are no other users for the *m-savvy* database within GW.

This year the annual **Park User Survey** will be conducted from late January to early March (with no weather delays) in Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and Kaitoke Regional Park. The survey supervisor from last year was reappointed and a team of four new survey assistants has been employed.

The Encore Awards were judged and a very well received Awards night was held in December.

Cleaning up the remnants of the August snowfall continued during the period, complicated by strong winds bringing down other trees. We can expect more dead branches to come down onto tracks over the next twelve months and possibly longer.

Track cutbacks and extensive mowing has been carried out across all the parks throughout the period, to deal with this year's very strong spring growth.

Several staff were recruited during the period, including the summer rangers for Queen Elizabeth and Kaitoke Regional Park, a trainee ranger from NMIT, two new members of Western Landscape Maintenance Team, the Team Leader Marketing & Design and the Manager – Parks. An advertisement was placed for the Eastern Principal Ranger and applications close at Wellington Anniversary Weekend.

At the Upper Hutt depot, staff installed office partitions to accommodate the assets team, the Eastern Principal Ranger and create a staff hot desk.

Akatarawa

Two illegal huts were removed from the forest, and staff worked with police to deal with a squatter's campsite and structures near the Maungakotukutuku Valley.

Improvements were made to the dam safety barrier to minimise the chance of accidental falls. Repairs to the vehicle tracks were delayed due to the ongoing wet weather. This work will be carried out in summer so that the recently formed tracks have time to compact and harden up before they receive large doses of rain. The approximate cost of this maintenance work is \$12,000.

A tree planting involving GW and Birchville School students was carried out at Bridge Road in very wet weather. The prison crew helped prepare the site and plant the leftovers from the school event. While being a great improvement on a previously weed infested wet area, the site will require ongoing maintenance, especially as the plants get established.

The Upper Hutt Heritage Trust has indicated their interest in restoring the historic boiler that has been retrieved from Boiler Gully. We met with them and they are to present a written proposal.

Battle Hill

The ranger hosted the Adventure Wellington online “meetup” group at two events in the park. This group plans its activities via its website and attracts many recent arrivals to Wellington wanting to explore the outdoor opportunities around the region and meet up with like minded people. Both events – a sunset walk followed by a BBQ and bonfire and a planting day – were well received and attended. Other events included an orienteering day in the forest, a car-boot sale in the Dell which attracted around 1,500 people and several equestrian events.

Camping was in full swing, with groups eg, Air Cadets, Girl Guides and Pippins along with casual campers. There were numerous school visits and two group Christmas parties.

Volunteers continue to trap pests in the park, and staff are carrying out night shooting to reduce hare numbers. A large common skink was sighted in the bush reserve, the first time the ranger has seen one in the park.

Staff replaced guttering on the homestead and installed insulation in the ceiling. On the farm the spring topdressing was completed and the sheep yards were scraped of debris. Visitors were interested in the seasonal docking and drenching of lambs; due to the large number of spectators the tails were ringed this year rather than cut off.

Belmont

A culvert at Dry Creek needs to be replaced, and erosion further down Dry Creek itself. Transpower will be asked for a contribution towards the cost, expected to be around \$20,000.

The Park Ranger has installed new track markers on the Cannons Creek side of the park as a trial to see how they withstand the weather conditions and stock rubbing. Last summer's visitor survey indicated that signage in the park needed to be improved.

The mountain biking group BAMBA is running regular "dig days", completing a track they have named Bull-a-Vard from the Old Coach Road to the Sweetacres Track and working on another downhill track to Hill Road to be called Bull-Run. They also cleared water tables and ruts on the Sweetacres Track in readiness for a race, which has benefited other park users. The Friends of Hill Road have been marking several of the informal tracks in the area, and held a walk during the period to introduce local residents to the area and what they may see there. They also have an archaeologist looking at some old Pa sites within the valley.

Two meetings were held with community groups regarding restoration of the lower (Maara Roa) and upper Cannons Creek catchment. The updated Maara Roa Restoration Plan will be finalised with this feedback in mind. We are also expecting to work with the Porirua City Council on an open space recreation plan for Porirua East, which will link with Belmont Regional Park.

GW has funding from 2014 to start restoring the upper Cannons Creek catchment. Forest & Bird and the Friends of Maara Roa are interested in bringing forward this work, and are seeking other funding sources.

The boundary fences between Willowbank Farm, Speedy's Reserve and the Stratton Street block and Waitangirua Farm were all re-built, which were major pieces of work. Several dams were constructed on the farm to provide water for stock that had recently been excluded from a wetland area near Hill Road. A neighbouring property owner helped reduce costs by driving the bulldozer.

East Harbour

The upgrade of the Kowhai Street track was completed, a significant project which involved the use of a helicopter to transport 20m² of track metal. The Kowhai Track now has a metalled surface from the entrance to the top of the main ridge.

The access road up the Baring Head escarpment has been identified as a hazard, now that the land is open to public access. A paper outlining issues and options was prepared and work will be carried out to install signs, impose speed restrictions and improve visibility. Pipe gates were installed on the Fitzroy Bay access track and the Baring Head Pylon track. This has been done to help stop unauthorised 4WD vehicles accessing the upper marine terrace area of the block.

Works required to ensure the safety of the Wainuiomata bridge over the next five years have been priced at around \$21,000 – significantly more than the \$10,000 budgeted. Contributions are to be requested from the four other main users to make up the difference.

During the period GW Parks, Flood Protection and engineering staff visited the Gollans Valley boardwalk in response to a letter from neighbour John Martin. He stated that erosion on his property had become more evident since the construction of the Gollans wetland boardwalk. All those who visited the site concluded that the boardwalk had no impact on upstream hydrological pathways and that water was passing freely at the site. A letter was forwarded to Mr Martin detailing these conclusions.

Following assessment of a 'Remedial Work Specification Plan' for the historic pump shed from the Friends of Baring Head, GW is to supervise a Friends-funded contract for the restoration of the shed. GW and the Friends are investigating further projects that the group might undertake eg, environmental monitoring work, pest plant control. Following a site visit we also agreed to exclude a small area on the true left of the river north of Khyber Pass from the farming lease as it contains the rare *muehlenbeckia astonii*. We are now exploring options to fund fencing including recycling the surplus fence posts on block, as there is no spare fencing budget available for the project.

A meeting with the Ministry of Fisheries revealed that the Baring Head area is being used for illegal seafood gathering and the activity is known to be gang related. Staff are now required to patrol the area only in pairs.

Kaitoke Regional Park

A large slip on Waterworks Rd near the Pakuratahi Forks has resulted in barriers being erected to stop cars parking on the side of the road and pedestrians potentially slipping down the hill. Geo-technical investigations ascertained that there is unlikely to be further slippage but a measuring point near the site will be monitored.

Numerous school, community, corporate and family groups have been camping and enjoying BBQs at the park over the period. Camping fees are estimated to be 10-15% up on normal takings for this time of year.

A Search & Rescue operation was conducted to rescue six poorly prepared and inexperienced rafters who went down the Hutt Gorge. Three were winched out in darkness, whilst three spent a night out and walked out the next morning. Police commented that alcohol was also a factor contributing to this incident, which featured on TV3 news.

Site inspections have shown that the wooden side barriers on the concrete road bridges all need to be replaced, which will be a significant unbudgeted expense. This work will be carried out in autumn with the funding to come from within existing budgets. A contribution will also be requested from the Water Group.

Pakuratahi

Staff completed a pipe cover replacement in the Summit tunnel which had presented a hazard to cyclists. Water seepage remains an issue in the roof of Mangaroa tunnel and we are getting external advice to address the issue.

There has been significant planning for upgrade work on the Rimutaka Trig track, involving new structures and gravel that will be flown into the site when weather permits in early 2012. The flying time is to be funded by NZTA as part of the Muldoon's Corner works.

Repairs were carried out on the bridge, retaining wall and tracks in Tunnel Gully, which suffered damage from the August snowstorm. This is a well used area over summer, especially as part of the Great Outdoors Summer Events programme.

More eucalypt trees have been planted in the upper picnic area, replacing several that had died off.

One-kilometre distance markers were installed on the Rimutaka Rail. This work arose as a result of feedback from the visitor survey, as people were looking for ways to tell how far they had to go before reaching key points such as Summit (10km from Kaitoke) or the end of the track, which is 18km long.

There have been numerous enquiries from school teachers planning end of year trips on the Rimutaka Rail Trail. These have proved useful as a way of understanding who is using the trail, educating them on the conditions to be expected and as an opportunity to check their progress on the event days.

Queen Elizabeth Park

During the period the playground at Paekakariki was removed. Two media calls were received and one complaint required a detailed reply. The public has been invited to give feedback but, despite the large numbers of visitors over Christmas and Boxing Day, the ranger has not received any comments from the public regarding this. Feedback received via the website will be discussed with KCDC during January as they may consider building a playground should they take over management of the area near the Tilley Road entrance as a neighbourhood park.

A tender was let for the removal of the dog obedience shelter, which will result in a small amount being paid to GW. Investigations were started into removing the pavilion building near the old MacKays Crossing playing fields, which had become a fire hazard. One of the park concession holders will remove this at no cost to GW, which is a very good outcome.

Planting activity finished up for the season. This year two Periodic Detention gangs released plants in the Northern Wetland, the Whareroa Oxbow and the Dune Swamp restoration site, which has helped complete work that volunteers find less appealing but is still needed.

Dangerous trees or their branches were removed from the Paekakariki campground and from near the Rainbow Court entrance. These trees had been assessed and deemed a hazard to the campers and visitors. The work was carried out by the Eastern and Western Sector work crews and the local community quickly removed the resulting firewood.

An invoice was issued for around \$18,000 to Goodmans Contracting for the deposition of cleanfill at the northern end of the park. Goodmans have applied to renew their permit to deposit cleanfill for another 12 months, on the same terms. However, the Sustainable Land Use Plan notes that a wetland

area lies within the designated site, albeit currently infested with gorse and blackberry. We are requesting assistance from Peter Handford to identify the most appropriate course of action.

Wainuiomata

Maintenance crews have undertaken significant metalling of the Gums Loop track, to make it more usable for baby buggies. They also cut back the Pack Track, used by tramping groups and the stoat trappers, and cleared a large slip on the track to the Orongorongo intake in preparation for the opening of the Wainuiomata mini hydro generator.

The valve structure on the old Wainuiomata Lower Dam was repaired to make it safe. The Historic Places Trust was informed of the work within five days of completion in accordance with the HPT Authority. However, during the period we decided to delay the public opening of the Wainuiomata Lower Dam to the 2012/13 financial year, to allow more time to plan and deliver the changes required.

The Recreation Area was very busy with the hot weather over Christmas, mostly with swimmers. Visit numbers at the Truss bridge near the Hine Road entrance seems to be up on last year's count in contrast to the Swingbridge counter further up the valley which is lower than last year.

1.1.5 Financial reports

Last Year YTD Actual \$000	YTD Actual \$000	YTD Budget \$000	YTD Variance \$000	Regional Parks Income Statement 6 months ending 31 December 2011	Last Year FY Actual \$000	Full Year Forecast \$000	Full Year Budget \$000	Full Year Variance \$000
2,674	2,305	2,305	-	Rates & Levies	5,347	4,610	4,610	-
-	-	-	-	Government Grants & Subsidies	-	-	-	-
233	233	228	5	External Revenue	516	468	468	-
-	-	-	-	Investment Revenue	-	-	-	-
517	406	410	(4)	Internal Revenue	1,147	820	820	-
3,424	2,944	2,943	1	TOTAL INCOME	7,010	5,898	5,898	-
				less:				
1,300	1,116	1,076	(40)	Personnel Costs	2,563	2,203	2,153	(50)
392	409	357	(52)	Materials,Supplies & Services	912	806	806	-
79	74	60	(14)	Travel & Transport Costs	167	119	119	-
503	269	359	90	Contractor & Consultants	1,055	889	903	14
-	-	-	-	Grants and Subsidies Expenditure	-	-	-	-
475	425	414	(11)	Internal Charges	1,149	827	827	-
2,749	2,293	2,266	(27)	Total Direct Expenditure	5,846	4,844	4,808	(36)
117	132	138	6	Financial Costs	233	276	276	-
-	15	-	(15)	Bad Debts	-	-	-	-
264	235	235	-	Corporate & Department Overheads	529	469	469	-
325	315	325	10	Depreciation	643	650	650	-
(9)	(15)	(77)	(62)	Loss(Gain) on Sale of Assets / Investments	(16)	(83)	(83)	-
3,446	2,975	2,887	(88)	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	7,235	6,156	6,120	(36)
(22)	(31)	56	(87)	OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(225)	(258)	(222)	(36)
325	315	325	(10)	Add Back Depreciation	643	650	650	-
(9)	(15)	(77)	62	Other Non Cash	(16)	(83)	(83)	-
294	269	304	(35)	Cash Operating Surplus from Operations	402	309	345	(36)
-	-	-	-	less:				
(25)	(100)	(217)	117	Total Asset Acquisitions	(38)	(242)	(242)	-
9	22	77	(55)	Asset Disposal Cash Proceeds	16	83	83	-
(40)	(12)	(177)	165	Capital Project Expenditure	(172)	(353)	(353)	-
(56)	(90)	(317)	227	Net Asset Acquisitions	(194)	(512)	(512)	-
-	-	-	-	Net External Investment Movements	-	-	-	-
238	179	(13)	192	NET FUNDING BEFORE DEBT & RESERVE MOVEMENTS	208	(203)	(167)	(36)
40	12	177	(165)	Debt Additions / (decrease)	163	353	353	-
(135)	(139)	(147)	8	Debt Repaid	(283)	(294)	(294)	-
160	109	109	-	Net Reserves (Increase) / decrease	(97)	109	109	-
303	161	126	35	NET FUNDING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(9)	(35)	1	(36)

Last Year YTD Actual \$000	YTD Actual \$000	YTD Budget \$000	YTD Variance \$000	Regional Parks Capital Expenditure Statement 6 months ending 31 December 2011	Last Year FY Actual \$000	Full Year Forecast \$000	Full Year Budget \$000	Full Year Variance \$000
25	100	217	117	Total Asset Acquisitions	38	242	242	-
40	11	177	166	Capital Project Expenditure	172	353	353	-
(9)	(22)	(77)	(55)	Asset Disposal Cash Proceeds	(16)	(83)	(83)	-
56	89	317	228	Net Capital Expenditure	194	512	512	-
-	-	-	-	Investments Additions	-	-	-	-
56	89	317	228	Net Capital and Investment Expenditure	194	512	512	-

1.1.6 Financial variance analysis

- Parks has a net deficit of \$31k which is \$87k worse than budget mainly due to unbudgeted redundancy costs
- Total operating expenditure is \$2,975k which is 49% of the full year budget so spend is on track for the year
- Staff costs are \$40k over budget because unbudgeted redundancy costs have been offset by savings from vacancies. The forecast has been updated to reflect this
- The main variance is \$62k in loss / (gain) on sale of assets which is for replacement vehicles which have been ordered but will not be delivered for several months

- The forecast has also been updated to include savings on one of the mowing contracts following purchase of a mowing machine so that the work can be done in-house

Capital works programme

- Parks have a capital budget of \$353k of which only \$11k has been spent. Much of this work needs dry weather so it is planned to be done over the summer months. Capital spend has been reviewed by the Parks management team recently and includes \$100k for erosion control at Belmont and \$120k for a water project at QEP.

1.1.7 Business plan performance indicators

Activity: Recreational, facilities and services

Performance indicator	Performance to date
<i>Park and forest assets will be maintained in accordance with the relevant asset management plans and reported to the satisfaction of the Council.</i>	The work programme is proceeding as planned. The asset maintenance projects will be completed by year end. However, at Queen Elizabeth Park an investigation into alternative options for land currently being grazed is underway. This year's work planned at QEP for fencing and water reticulation replacement project is under investigation but is likely to go ahead.
<i>Ranger services will be provided for seven days per week in four parks and for five days per week in the remaining parks and forest areas (excluding Whitireia Park and Lake Wairarapa). This will amount to 7,000 hours of ranger time.</i>	On schedule and within budget.

1.1.8 Risk analysis

We have reviewed our risks and no changes are required to the risk register.