

**Flood Protection
Strategy and Assets
Manager : Brendan Paul**

Report for Period Ending 10 March 2000

1. Waikanae River Floodplain Management [Graeme Campbell]

1.1 Flood Damage Work

Work is continuing on the construction of the flood damage repair works and is reported separately. The State Highway 1 to Maple Lane river channel works and rock supply contracts are now complete. Landscaping and planting are scheduled for completion by 31 May 2000. No issues have arisen during construction with the project forecast to be completed \$50,000 under budget and to programme.

1.2 Friends of the Waikanae River

The Friends of the Waikanae River Group are working to define their terms of reference and working relationship with the Wellington Regional Council.

2. Otaki River Floodplain Management Plan [Graeme Campbell]

2.1 Flood Damage Works

Work is continuing on construction of the flood damage repair works which are reported separately. In summary, the Mangahanene Island and Gas Crossing works are now substantially complete with only top-soiling and sowing of grass to be undertaken. The Stresscrete and Tracey's jobs are both expected to be completed before 30 June 2000.

2.2 Chrystalls Stopbank Upgrade [Malcolm Abernethy]

Good progress has been made to construct the new stopbank at Chrystalls. The contract completion date was extended to 31 March 2000 due to the inclusion of additional work. The variation resulted from a landowner's request to maintain existing drainage on his land; the drainage arrangement required a culvert to be installed under the new stopbank, complete with headwalls, penstock and access platform. Some additional cost will be incurred, however the project remains within the budget reported to the Landcare Committee meeting of 23 November 1999 (Report 99.690).

Work remaining to complete the contract comprises:

- Topsoiling and grassing
- Raise haul road
- Construct upstream drainage trench
- Fence new property boundaries and contour work areas to ensure drainage from landowners properties
- Complete installation of penstock and access platform to culvert

Environmental enhancement for the project is covered in Section 2.3.

2.3 **Environmental Enhancement**

G & E Williams Ltd have been appointed as consultants to prepare a concept design for improving pedestrian access along the north bank of the Otaki River, from Chrystalls Lagoon down to the river mouth. The investigations are part of the enhancement works undertaken in conjunction with capital improvement works. The investigations are funded through consolidated provisions in the October 1998 Flood Damage projects and the Chrystalls stopbank upgrade budgets. The outcome will be an overall plan identifying what needs to be done to improve pedestrian access, and will include:

- track location, including links with existing tracks
- car parks at strategic locations
- amenity planting
- signs
- fencing
- access arrangements with Winstones

In addition to this concept design, the consultants are preparing a native planting plan to extend the existing wetland and riparian habitat at Chrystalls Lagoon and Waimanu Stream. Local schools and Friends of the Otaki River will be encouraged to actively participate in the tree planting, scheduled as an Arbor Day event during the second week in June.

2.4 **Friends of the Otaki River/Other Matters**

The Friends of the Otaki River Group are also working to finalise their terms of reference. Progress has been slower than anticipated due to the unavailability of some key members of the group, over the last month.

Work has started on inspecting the river cross section benchmarks, in preparation for the full cross section survey programmed for next year. The inspection will determine which benchmarks are missing and need to be reinstated. Site lines will also be checked so that they are clear for survey.

3. Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan (HRFMP) [Daya Atapattu]

HRFMP “Design Standard” investigations are complete and the emphasis is now on non-structural measures and the environmental strategy. Public consultation on the non-structural measures will commence in April 2000. Preparation of the draft environmental strategy is well underway. Both work packages are on track for completion by June 2000. Plan writing will commence in July 2000 with a June 2001 target for completing the plan.

3.1 Design Standard Implementation

The Landcare Committee recommendation of \$2 million per annum capital spend over the western region, based on a prioritised list of works, is included for consultation through the Council’s LTFS process. The Advisory Committee had the opportunity, at its meeting on 13 March 2000, to consider on the proposals. At that meeting, the Advisory Committee also reviewed Officer’s design standard recommendations for the four “Local Areas” – Belmont, Bridge Road, Gemstone Drive and Whirinaki Crescent.

3.2 Non-structural Measures

Investigations for developing appropriate non-structural measures for the upper catchment, floodplain and river corridor, and a review of current emergency procedures are nearing completion. The Advisory Committee will consider recommended non-structural measures at a workshop on 27 March 2000, before public consultation, commencing April 2000. The target date for adopting a suite of non-structural measures appropriate for the Hutt Valley is June 2000.

3.3 Upper Catchment

Consultants have completed a review of the current planning provisions and policies in district and regional plans. They have recommended several options to strengthen policy as it relates to upper catchment land use activities, and also to reinforce the links between regional and district plans.

3.4 River Corridor and Floodplain

Draft policy guidelines and river corridor plans are nearing completion. The measures for the river corridor will focus on an approach to land use activities which balances the needs of private landowners with the security of the flood defence system. Regulatory and voluntary methods and draft policy guidelines are being developed for reducing residual flood damages on the floodplain.

3.5 Emergency Management

The Regional Council’s Emergency Management team, together with their Hutt City and Upper Hutt City Council counterparts, have identified gaps in the current Flood Emergency Procedures. Officers will consider methods for filling these gaps and allocating responsibilities at a workshop on 15 March 2000.

3.6 **Environmental Strategy**

Consultants have completed the conceptual designs for the preferred “Linear Park” option. Preparation of the report, which will cover the park concepts as well as management and operational arrangements, is well underway. The target for completing the draft environmental strategy is April 2000.

4. **Asset Management Plans [Malcolm Abernethy]**

The generic base plan for the “Western Rivers Asset Management Plan” is being reviewed and refined, before it is submitted to Audit NZ for comment. The specification for the Data Management System is complete, and work is progressing well on development of the database system.

First draft river specific Asset Management Plans are complete, and are being reviewed for Hutt, Otaki, Waikanae and Wainuiomata Rivers and the Porirua Stream. Work is continuing on a review of the Asset Valuation Methodology, the latter is applicable to each of the specific plans.

5. **Wainuiomata Flood Hazard Assessment [Phillip Purves]**

Although progress has slowed due to other project demands, work is continuing on the channel management and river morphology component of the flood hazard study. Information to date has already been very useful in providing advice in relation to building and subdivision proposals on the lower Wainuiomata floodplain.

6. **Planning and Development Services [Phillip Purves]**

Written requests for information or advice attended to during January and February 2000:

	<u>Jan/Feb</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Requests brought forward	17	14
Additional requests received	52	168
Responses provided	40	153
Outstanding requests	29	29

The Regional Council has lodged an appeal with the Environment Court over Upper Hutt City Council’s decision to only require a 100 year return period standard of flood protection for the proposed ProMall regional shopping centre on the St Patrick’s College land at Silverstream. The Regional Council requested that the standard of flood protection for the proposed building be the 2300 cumec design standard that was selected for the Hutt River Floodplain Management Plan. The scale of the proposed ProMall development justifies application of the scheme standard and that it be consistent with the overall standard of flood protection proposed for the upper Hutt Valley. The applicant has indicated a desire to resolve this matter without recourse to the Court.

7. **Manager's Comment**

It has been a very busy six weeks since my last report, with very acceptable progress and achievements over the capital works, investigations and policy/liaison areas. To keep our momentum we need:

- better weather for construction
- successful recruitment to the three vacant staff positions

BRENDAN PAUL
Manager, Flood Protection (Strategy and Assets)

**Flood Protection
Operations
Manager : Geoff Dick**

Report for Period Ending 10 March 2000

Flood Protection Operations and Maintenance [Geoff Dick]

1. **Hutt River**

Flood Damage Repairs

Good progress is again being made with the remaining flood damage repairs. There has been a frustrating delay waiting for materials and specialised plant for the **Bridge Road** repairs, but this very weather-dependent work is now ready to start.

The supply of rock rip-rap is still a key item in progressing the **Owen Street** and **Avalon Berm** repairs. Frequent discussions have been held with the John Ray Ltd, the rock supplier, to try and get both these jobs and the **Block Road Improvements** completed by 30 June. While the Hutt River rock delivery is now underway, it is apparent that we will not be able to get all the large "C" grade rock in time to complete the Owen Street works. Unfortunately the construction of this will need to carry over into the new (2000/01) financial year.

Steve Murphy has now sent the final invoice to the Manor Park Golf Club, with a nice saving on budget, following the completion of this repair. Steve can take much credit for the smooth completion of this project, and for the excellent working relationship with the Golf Club.

Maintenance Work

Staff are taking full advantage of the current fine and settled weather to make good progress with a variety of maintenance projects.

Work has commenced on repairs to the stopbank adjacent to the Black Creek outlet. The lower half of the stopbank contained a considerable number of silver poplar trees between the outlet and the Ava Rail Bridge. In addition, the toe of the stopbank has eroded over the years. The poplars have now been felled in preparation for the removal of the tree stumps, installing toe rock, and reconstructing the stopbank face.

The opportunity is also being taken to refurbish the Black Creek outlet gates. Surface corrosion is being treated and worn hinges replaced.

Repairs have been undertaken to the top of the stopbank north of Gibbons Street in Upper Hutt. Low areas were filled and the crest surface restored. Access tracks along the River Road were metalled and graded, and two exit points upgraded to improve safety for vehicles rejoining the River Road.

Demolition of the Assembly of God's former administration building at Ewen has been completed. The site will be returned to a grassed area.

The regular fenceline weed control run has commenced. Heavy grass growth this season has generated more than the usual enquiries; highlighting some difficulties with the mowing contractor. Discussions will be held with the contractor on ways to improve the situation.

A leaflet drop was made to Totara Park residents, Upper Hutt about planting trees in stopbanks. Over the years, many Hutt Valley residents have planted trees in the stopbank to screen their property from view. A lot of staff time is spent policing this problem and the numerous enquiries it generates.

Operations staff recently took part in a 'drift dive' fish count with Fish & Game NZ staff; this monitoring is required under the long term maintenance resource consent.

2. **Hutt River Mouth**

A complaint was received during the period from the Wellington Recreational Fishers Association (Inc.) regarding the disposal of the dredge waste materials. According to the complaint, one barge load of material was deposited outside the approved dredging area. In a letter of response Winstone Aggregates Ltd refuted the allegations. This letter has been passed to Consents Management.

3. **Kapiti Rivers**

The main focus for Kapiti staff during the period has been the flood damage repairs and capital improvement works.

The lower Otaki River improvement works are now substantially complete. At Mangahanene Island a total of 2,600 tonnes of toe-rock has been placed to protect the newly reformed bank edge. A further 600 tonnes of rock is proposed to be placed this year. It is also proposed to upgrade the river face of the stopbank, budget permitting.

At the Gas Crossing site, the stopbank reinstatement works is essentially complete; 1,800 tonnes of toe-rock placed over 149 metres to protect the newly reformed stopbank. The stopbank will be top-soiled and sown to grass later in the autumn.

Gravel extraction at Upper Rahui will recommence later this month. Winstone Aggregates Ltd is currently extracting downstream of the bridges. At the end of February, Winstone Aggregates had extracted 66,134 cubic metres of the proposed 120,000 cubic metres from Upper Rahui.

4. Watercourses

Some further bank edge stabilisation and gravel removal work has been completed in the Waitohu Stream. This section of the stream, in Whakapua Farms, will require regular follow up work over the next few years to re-establish willows lost in recent flood events, and to deal with the growing gravel build-up.

A comprehensive clearing of aquatic weeds in the Mangapouri Stream, Otaki, has been completed. During the run it was found many of the culverts had significant debris build-up at their entrances. This has been discussed with the Kapiti Coast District Council.

The Pahiko Drain was machine cleared over its total length of 2.5 kilometres. A combination of weed blockages and elevated water levels in the main Pahiko Drain had meant very slow drainage following heavy rain in December 1999.

5. Work for Others

Mabey Road staff carried out a repair to the artesian monitoring bore at Gracefield, Lower Hutt. A water level sight glass required fixing.

6. Resource Consents

A proposal has been received from Opus International Consultants Ltd to prepare and lodge a long term consent application for the Wainuiomata River. \$20,000 was reallocated for this work at the Six Month Review.

Similarly, work has been commissioned to further the Waitohu Stream consent application. So far two packages, a baseline environmental study and a review of our stream management approach, have been commissioned. An Iwi report, to be prepared by Te Runanga o Raukawa, is in the final stages of negotiation.

7. Gravel Extraction

Gravel extraction figures for the year to 31 January 2000 are set out below.

			Period Year 1999/2000 (cubic metres)		Year 1998/1999 (cubic metres)
River	Area	Contractor	Period	Year	Full Year
Hutt	Estuary	Winstones	6,272	26,411	42,630
	River		Nil	Nil	2,967
Otaki	River	Winstones	6,370	8,482	15,854
	Upper Rahui	Winstones	2,270	30,060	20,454
Waikanae	River	Winstones	Nil	Nil	Nil
TOTALS			14,912	64,953	81,905

8. **Staff Matters**

A day was taken in February to catch up on some Health and Safety work, and to do a sandbagging exercise.

Staff tasks are routinely audited for safe practices. The outcome is a safe procedure sheet for the task. A target number of audits is set each year. This target was completed at the February workshop. Similarly it was time for staff to have a catch-up on correct sandbagging techniques. A very realistic exercise was set up in Speedys Creek. Councillors may have seen a report in Coast to Coast on this successful exercise.

9. **Manager “Goes Bush”**

I will be away on extended leave from mid-March until the end of May. Andrew has kindly granted me this time out to do a bit of fishing, hunting and catching up on a few old friends. Steve Murphy will assume my responsibilities while I am away. I look forward to coming back at the end of May with the cobwebs well and truly cleared from the system. I will no doubt owe my team a few favours for covering in my absence.

GEOFF DICK
Manager, Flood Protection (Operations)

Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

Manager : Susan Edwards

Report for Period Ending 10 March 2000

1. Manager's Comments (Susan Edwards)

Out and About

The Strategy & Marketing team has been maintaining its networks over the last few weeks:

- Anne Manley attended a Local Government New Zealand (Zone 4) / Society of Local Government Managers Workshop on reviewing the Local Government Act. Several Councillors also attended this workshop. Anne was pleased to have the opportunity to keep up with current thinking and proposed changes to the Act.
- I attended the launch by Sandra Lee, Minister of Conservation, of the Somes/Matiu Island Charitable Trust. It was a perfect day to visit the island and admire the efforts of Forest and Bird members and Department of Conservation staff. The partnership between these two organisations and the Tenths Trust is also interesting and could provide a model for us to work closely with conservation groups and iwi in the Council's Parks and Forests.
- Andrew Annakin, Bruce Andrell, Nola Urquhart, Ross Jackson, Tracey Whare and I visited the Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai marae to discuss their vision and future direction for Queen Elizabeth Park. Nola was formally welcomed to the marae as the new Park Ranger. Chris Turver attended for part of our visit.
- Bruce Andrell, Chris Wootton, Anne Manley and I met with Landcorp Farming Limited representatives to discuss a range of issues relating to Belmont Regional Park. Landcorp have agreed in principle to the Council and the Cannons Creek Valley Protection Group undertaking restoration planting in the regenerating areas on their land adjacent to Cannons Creek. Details are being worked through by the Ranger, Chris Wootton, and Landcorp's Waitangirua Farm Manager. We agreed to meet every two-three months to discuss common issues relating to the Park.
- Anne Manley attended a Department of Conservation open day on the Wairarapa Wetlands. The open day was to celebrate World Wetlands Day, launch the Lake Wairarapa Action Plan and to increase people's awareness of the Lake and its particular values. Conservation staff provided displays at the Kahutara Hall and an informative guided walk of Boggy Pond. (WRC staff from the Wairarapa Division were also involved.) Anne found the day interesting and very enjoyable.

- Ross Jackson arranged a tour for a visiting Japanese Group from Kobe investigating the development of town belts and revegetation in earthquake prone areas. Wayne Hastie gave a short presentation and Councillor Shields provided an insight to issues for the greater Wellington area specifically in relation to State Highway 1 and Transmission Gully.
- Ross Jackson attended a meeting arranged by the Kapiti Coast District Council on a proposed walkway/cycleway along the Kapiti Coast, traversing Queen Elizabeth Park. Several interest groups are involved and he was able to advise them on development ideas based on the Hutt River Trail as well as the Park Management Plan requirements.

Orange Hut

The Akatarawa Recreation Access Committee (ARAC) have recently completed the rebuilding of Orange Hut located in the Akatarawa Forest; using volunteer labour with most of the materials donated. Instead of an estimated \$12,000, it was built for \$2,000. The hut is used as a central meeting place for groups using the forest. It is also a point of reference if somebody is lost or injured.

2. Resource Management and Planning Issues (Anne Manley, Graham Laws & Ross Jackson)

State Highway Upgrades

Regional Parks staff have continued to work with Transit New Zealand's consultants on several State Highway upgrades.

State Highway 1 - MacKays Crossing

The State Highway 1 project has significant impacts on Queen Elizabeth Park. We are endeavouring to minimise these impacts and retain good public access to the Park.

State Highway 2 - Petone to Melling

The State Highway 2 upgrade is likely to have positive benefits for Belmont Regional Park users by enhancing access opportunities.

State Highway 2 - Rimutaka Hill

Transit New Zealand has started designing the upgrade of a section of the Rimutaka Hill Road, near the Summit. The work has relatively minor impacts on the Pakuratahi Forest. Graham Laws has commented on restoration work we would like undertaken and suggested an alternative alignment for a new section of the road to reduce environmental impacts in the area. We will continue monitoring progress on the roading design.

Asset Management Planning

Audit New Zealand have provided feedback on the Draft Asset Management Plan, as presented to the October Landcare Committee meeting. The comments were very positive and the feedback will be useful for finalising the Plan.

Promotion Programme and Events

During January and February we continued promoting the Parks and Forests through newspaper advertisements and articles to attract visitors.

Several brochures are currently being reprinted, with others being updated ready for printing over the next few months.

Events

Graham Laws and Ross Jackson worked with Sport Wellington and the Hutt City Council on the launch, during the River Festival, of the Regional Council's first KiwiWalk; along the Hutt River. The launch was not as well attended as we had hoped as many visitors were involved in other Festival activities. However, there was a good attendance to displays at the Festival and to a shared site with the Environment Division the following Sunday at the Petone Market Day.

Arbor Day

Regional Parks staff are currently organising a series of planting projects to be held over a period of two weeks centred on 5 June - Arbor Day and World Environment Day. Most of these projects are involving groups both before and after the actual planting event. They are:

- Kaitoke Regional Park - Millennium Totara Planting;
- Otaki River Environmental Improvement Planting;
- Queen Elizabeth Park Wetlands Planting - Project is being commenced with a local primary school on 30 March;
- Belmont Regional Park - Bush restoration planting with the Cannon's Creek Restoration Society;
- Wainuiomata Recreation Area - Revegetation planting near entrance gate with local schools;
- Battle Hill Community Planting - Planning in association with a Porirua based group is proceeding. A decision on our application for a Millennium grant will be known in April.

Councillors will be advised of details and dates in the Bulletin in the near future.

Concession Applications

January and February have again been busy months for filming in the Parks and Forests. Areas used have been:

- Belmont Regional Park;
- Kaitoke Regional Park - both Te Marua and Waterworks Road ends;
- Wainuiomata Recreation Area;
- Queen Elizabeth Park

We are getting a lot of repeat business from some film companies who have commented that they find us good to work with and responsive to their needs. Often film companies will contact us seeking a specific type of setting. The Parks and Forests have a diverse range of settings which are generally fairly accessible which means that more often than not we are able to help. If we cannot provide a specific setting, we can suggest locations within the Region and advise film companies who to contact.

Visitor Satisfaction Survey 2000

The Regional Parks Visitor Satisfaction Survey for 2000 has just been undertaken. Installations were placed at locations in Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, Kaitoke and Belmont Regional Parks and at the Rimutaka Incline and Tunnel Gully Recreation Areas. The survey is self-administering with respondents either filling in a questionnaire on-site or taking one away to post back to the Council once they have completed it. In addition to the questions asked in previous years (on satisfaction with the facilities, environment and experience in the Parks, activities and standard age and gender questions), visitors were also asked to note their ethnic group and the place where they reside. Officers hope these changes will help give a clearer indication of Park visitors' demographics. Officers will report back to the Landcare Committee once the results have been analysed.

SUSAN EDWARDS
Manager, Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

Regional Parks (Operations) Department

Manager: Bruce Andrell

Report for Period Ending 10 March 1999

1. Manager's Comments

Kilmister Block Tour, Belmont Regional Park

The Regional Parks Operations group pooled 4WD vehicles to enable Hutt City Councillors and Mayor to visit the Kilmister Block. The visit enabled the Councillors to familiarise themselves with most of the Block, from its boundaries on Belmont Road, to the high point at Boulder Hill and back to Hill Road. I distinguished myself by getting my 4WD stuck on a slippery climb with the Mayor onboard!

Hutt River Festival

Operations staff contributed to the recent Hutt River Festival. Staff helped with the visitor display and put up the tent provided for the occasion.

Conservation Corps in Regional Parks

The YMCA Wellington Conservation Corps assisted in track work on the Nikau track at the Wainuiomata Recreation area. The track which provides a pleasant two kilometre loop walk from the main recreation area. Over the same period, Conservation Corps members from the Pacific Island Education Centre in Porirua have been working at Cannons Creek, Belmont Regional Park. This group has been preparing native planting sites in gorse areas. Regional Parks often provide good "hands-on" conservation work experience. Working in Regional Parks helps build an affinity with the area and a respect for the environment - most Conservation Corps members are young and have very little experience in the outdoors.

2. Battle Hill Farm Forest Park (John Bissell)

John has been involved in discussions with Porirua City Council over placement of bollards on Paekakariki Hill Road to discourage unauthorised access into the adjoining Bush Reserve. Lay-bys on the road enable people to access the Bush Reserve from the road, contributing to problems such as rubbish dumping and theft of native plants. Placement of bollards to prevent vehicles accessing the lay-bys would encourage people to use the correct Park entry and car park area.

The Battle Hill Eventing Committee has been approved to start work on a storage facility in the Dell. The storage facility will mean that Pony Club equipment can be stored away from the farm work area and will look tidier.

3. **Belmont Regional Park (Chris Wootton)**

An action group propelled by Belmont resident Valerie Smith held a public open day, on 5 March, to publicise the Kilmister block issue. The event attracted 300 people over the day. Chris assisted organisers by marking walking tracks through farmland and helping manage public access to avoid disruption to Landcorp farming activities.

Chris has continued to assist with community initiatives in Cannons Creek. Possum control operations are planned for the area, Conservation Corps have been preparing tree-planting sites, tracks have been mown and Old Mans Beard controlled. Chris has also attended meetings with the Cannons Creek Valley Protection Group along with Strategy and Marketing representatives.

Park maintenance during the period included Old Mans Beard mapping and control in the Korokoro Valley, upgrading of the Sweetacres Reserve track off Hill Road, Belmont and tractor mowing of walkways.

4. **East Harbour Regional Park (Chris Wootton)**

A map board sponsored by Forest and Bird has been installed at the front of the Lakes. Additional signs directing people to both Lakes and track markers have also been installed by Parks Operations staff. These new directional signs are enabling better public access to the Pencarrow Lakes. Chris has noted during patrols over the period increased numbers of people walking in the Lakes Block area. A press release on the new signs at the Pencarrow Lakes was published in the Petone Herald, Hutt New and Dominion.

Possum control work has seen a significant improvement in shelter belt health at Baring Head. Some pohutakawa is showing new growth as possum numbers have been drastically reduced. New shelter plantings have benefited from a relatively moist summer period.

The Big Coast mountain bike ride passed through the Baring Head/Pencarrow Road area in February. A local Eastbourne based run and walk event was also held along the Pencarrow Road during February. Good numbers attended both events.

5. **Kaitoke Regional Park (Matt Ballantine)**

Camping remained relatively steady in the Park despite a poor summer. There is an increase in the number of large group bookings such as Upper Hutt Scout District Camp and Wairarapa Caravan Club.

Planning for the replacement Bengie Creek bridge is underway. Resource building consents have been lodged. The new bridge will provide safe access for walkers using the Ridge Track.

6. **Queen Elizabeth Park (Nola Urquhart)**

Nola attended the Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai meeting along with myself and Susan Edwards. For Nola, this was an excellent way to be introduced to the local iwi. Having been working in the Park now for four months, Nola sees contact with local iwi as essential, given the range of management issues the Council and iwi are involved in together.

Nola also met with Jane Rowlands from the Kapiti Environmental Association (KEA) to discuss conservation work in the Park, especially work in the remnant bush areas. KEA continues to support tree planting and weed control work in the Park. Large areas of pampas grass and brush-wattle have been sprayed. These weeds are highly invasive and have the potential to take over slower growing native species.

In response to safety concerns and continuing vandalism, the top car park at MacKays crossing has been closed for a trial period. Signs notifying the public are in place and to date no public concerns have been received by Nola.

7. **Wainuiomata Water Collection Area (Scott Farrell)**

Scott has noted a marked decline in unacceptable visitor behaviour over the period. Incidents involving cars entering restricted areas and causing roadside damage have reduced due to intensified patrolling and better management of gate security. Further into the catchment area, unauthorised public access is low; one instance of motorbike riders being stopped on Moores Valley Ridge.

Scott has been assisting Geoff Cameron and Water Group staff organise a hunting ballot for the water collection areas. Security for the upcoming "Roar" has been programmed around the hunting access.

Filming for the television series Ivanhoe took place in mid February at the Wainuiomata Recreation Area. Scott reports that the weather was good for filming and that the Australian Gums and New Zealand bush provided the perfect backdrop for a day out in the medieval English countryside. Palana Productions, who are producing the Ivanhoe series, are currently utilising other Regional Parks areas for their filming.

8. **Forest Lands (Dean Hearfield)**

Dean has been away on leave this period and his role has temporarily been filled by Fraser Oliver.

750 riders completed the Big Coast mountain bike ride over the Rimutaka Railway Incline. Over 1,000 mountain bike riders competed in the Karapoti Classic event held over two days. Fraser monitored both events and reports that they went well.

All bridges on the Karapoti Gorge road have been reviewed by an independent engineer. A meeting with Upper Hutt City Council is planned to clarify issues such as road ownership and responsibility for structure maintenance.

At Tunnel Gully, two persons were apprehended by Police and charged following an incident of dangerous driving in the recreation area. Fortunately Fraser was patrolling the area at the time and reported the incident to Police.

9. **Parks Maintenance Management (Dean Munn)**

Simon Stopford, has been acting Ranger Maintenance as Dean Munn has been on annual leave.

Maintenance management activities have focused on monitoring structures, renewing sections of the Hutt River Trail, mapping and treating Old Mans Beard and bindweed sites.

An external safety audit was carried out in all Regional Parks and forests and the Upper Hutt depot. A report outlining the results of this audit is due shortly.

Ben Jordan, Assistant Ranger, resigned this period.

10. **Visitor Activities**

See attached visitor data schedule.

BRUCE ANDRELL
Manager, Regional Parks Operations

Natural Forestry Department
Manager : Geoff Cameron
Report for Period Ending 10 March 2000

1. Forest Operations (Robin Blake/Geoff Cameron)

Pest Plant Control

Our contractor began spraying seedling Old Mans Beard, and cutting and treating any vines found, on Council land between Bridge Road and Totara Park, Upper Hutt. He also sprayed Old Mans Beard seedlings in the Orange Hut area of Whakatikei forest.

Robin Blake assisted Biosecurity staff check the lower reaches of the Hutt catchment for signs of Old Mans Beard. They were alerted after Old Mans Beard plants were found in Tararua Forest Park - seeds were apparently brought in on trampers' polar fleece jackets. No plants were found, but we need to remain vigilant.

Forest Health Survey

I have finalised the technical details with Forest Research, and anticipate signing a contract shortly. Work is programmed to begin on 27 March.

2. Catchment Operations (Robin Blake/Geoff Cameron)

Animal Pest Control

Robin Blake checked the high altitude areas of the Hutt catchment (below Alpha Hut) for deer numbers. Presumably because of the cold summer, there was little evidence of deer migrating to that altitude at this time. They normally feed in this area during February before going back to lower altitudes for winter.

I reported last month on a tender process for a professional goat control operation. Water Group declined the tender proposals.

Trial Hunting Period - Wainuiomata/Orongorongo

Water Group requested that we conduct a trial hunting programme in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water collection areas to test the efficacy of recreational hunting as a pest management tool. With Scott Farrell and John Bissell, we devised a publicly balloted programme that had a number of key points:

- hunting available for four weeks in April
- 10 hunting blocks to be balloted
- each hunter to have six days hunting
- independently supervised ballot, run according to a formula used elsewhere
- hunters to be made aware of the importance of the area for water supply, including provision of recent typhoid test results
- the programme to be run on a cost-recovery basis
- data on all kills will be gathered and analysed

We advertised the ballot, and Water Group issued a press release. The response was phenomenal with 278 hunters purchasing information packs (which included a ballot entry form). Of that number, 224 hunters called into the Upper Hutt office.

When the ballot entry time closed, 229 hunters had returned their forms. The ballot was held under Police supervision, and 40 successful hunters have been notified. A further 20 are on a “reserve list”.

Hunting begins on Friday, 31 March and concludes on Wednesday, 26 April. Appropriate safety measures for hunters and for staff have been stressed.

Vegetation Assessment

Robin Blake completed the re-measurement of vegetation plots in the Wainuiomata catchment, and sent the data to Landcare Research for analysis.

Robin also carried out some maintenance on the high altitude plots in the Hutt catchment. The pegs which mark the corners of each plot, and the interior subdivisions, had rusted badly and were programmed or replacement this summer. Because of slow growth, these plots are not due for re-measurement for another three years. They were re-pegged now to ensure other staff know the location of the plots.

3. Rural Fire Control (Geoff Cameron)

WRC Rural Fire District

I had a final meeting with Upper Hutt City staff to ensure they knew precisely what the “soft landing” arrangement included, and what our future intentions were.

When submissions to the NRFA closed on 19 February, they had received two responses. One was from the Upper Hutt City Council on the basis that there was no net benefit to the community, and that the WRC as the major property owner should retain the role of the rural fire authority. They felt that the rural fire systems in Upper Hutt are in a poor state of repair and the “soft landing” will not compensate for the resources needed to bring the area up to a satisfactory standard.

The other submission was from Federated Farmers who were “quite concerned at WRC absolving itself of rural fire control on one of its largest areas of jurisdiction namely 70 percent of the land area of the Wellington, Upper Hutt, Lower Hutt, Porirua and Kapiti territorial authorities.”

The NRFA will hold a hearing on 21 March. The WRC will have the opportunity to present the proposal for disestablishment of the rural fire district, and we have the right of reply to the submissions.

Fires

We had two fires in our fire district, both at the same location - the Silverstream Railway Museum. Both were suspicious and the Police have been informed. Although the Silverstream volunteers and our Hutt Valley Bush Fire Force exercise at that location on a regular basis, we still had to call helicopter assistance to the first fire to prevent the fire spreading into the Upper Hutt City’s plantation. The second fire, the next night, was contained by ground crews.

Fire Permits

Robin Blake has dealt with the seasonal rush of fire permits as rural landowners tidy up debris before the winter months. The fire weather conditions have been such that some precautions were prescribed, but there were no burns of significant size.

4. Management Issues (Geoff Cameron)

Environmental Management System

Some work on this topic was reported last month. Since then, the Council’s inter-divisional group has met, and I have further refined the task for the Parks and Forests EMS.

Rimutaka Summit Toilets

I organised a plumber to upgrade the water supply system to the toilets, after some problems caused one of the women’s toilets to be closed. There is now new piping from the water tanks to the toilets, and proper ball-cock systems ensuring that the tanks remain full.

Sustainable Land Management Workshop

I attended this workshop, convened by Environment Division. Given the diversity of lands owned or managed by the Council, we have a real opportunity to demonstrate sound stewardship as the focus of sustainable land management, especially in rural areas.

Rimutaka Incline Recreation Area Harvesting

Now that a proposed harvesting plan has been prepared by Plantation Forestry's contractors, I have had a chance to investigate the proposals and make my comments as part of a combined Landcare approach. The main objectives are to protect the swamp adjacent to the railway formation and to minimise environmental damage within the "red-line" area.

GEOFF CAMERON
Manager, Natural Forestry