

Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
From Tim Porteous, Policy Advisor, Resource Policy

Submission on the Bio-What? Report

1. Purpose

To seek approval from the Committee for a submission on *Bio-What?*, the preliminary report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the protection of native ecosystems on private land.

2. Background to the Bio-What? Report

In early 1999 a Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) was appointed by the Minister for the Environment to look into ways to promote effective and sustainable management of biodiversity outside the conservation estate. It is intended that the MAC's report (*Bio-What?*), when finalised, will bring about the implementation of some of the priority actions from the *New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy*.

The MAC report focuses on biodiversity on private land. The Biodiversity Strategy has a wider focus than the MAC's work, looking at biodiversity wherever it occurs – on Crown land managed for its conservation values, on private land, and in aquatic and marine areas.

3. Wellington Regional Council's Response

Reflecting the Council's current direction on the promotion of natural ecosystems (see the accompanying Report 00.357 in this Order Paper), the attached submission emphasises the importance of starting the process of "turning the tide" on private land as expeditiously as possible. Consequently, the submission is sceptical of the value of pursuing a national policy statement and a national goal, not only because of the resulting diversion of resources away from "frontline" implementation, but also because of the potentially divisive debates that are likely to ensue in their formulation.

The submission strongly supports a voluntary co-operative approach to the problem as opposed to a regulatory approach, noting that the latter approach needs to create a climate in which voluntary protection and management of private land is encouraged and well resourced.

The submission also notes that the Council enjoys, in general, a good working relationship with private landowners and is well placed to assist them in the voluntary protection and management of their biodiversity resources.

4. **Communications**

There is no relevant communication advantage to make this submission widely known at this stage. However, where the Council is involved in successful ventures which implement the philosophy of the submission, these should be made known to the public (e.g. Te Kopi private land protection field day).

5. **Recommendation**

That the Committee recommends to Council that it:

- a) *Approve the submission on Bio-What?; The Preliminary report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee.*
- b) *Authorise the Chairperson, Environment Committee and the Divisional Manager, Environment, to approve any minor editorial changes.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

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Attachments: 1