

## **Priorities for the Regional Parks Reserve Purchase Account**

In May 2000, the Committee considered a report on the Regional Parks Land Purchase Reserve Fund (Report 00.277). The report outlined how the fund had been acquired and the uses it could be put to, noting a priority for the fund to be used to purchase additional land for inclusion in the existing regional parks and forests.

In February 1999, Susan Edwards highlighted key issues for the Landcare Committee to consider in relation to the future direction for Regional Parks (Report 99.18). The report recognised there was pressure on existing lands, to create additional parks and also for increased access to forests.

Future priorities for expanding the Regional Parks were identified through submissions to the Council's Annual Plan and LTFS deliberations.

- First priority is to maintain existing regional parks and recreation areas;
- Second priority is for creating new regional parks, (e.g., Whitireia Park and Wairarapa Wetlands); and
- Third priority is for linear trails and facilitating access to the coast or rivers.

It should be noted that the total current balance of the Land Purchase Reserve (around \$650,000) could be expended solely on priority one purchases, depending on whether land needs to be purchased and whether conservation covenants or walkway easements are viable alternatives.

### **First Priority - Existing Regional Parks and Recreation Areas**

#### ***Belmont Regional Park***

Recently, when the Hutt City Council was considering selling land in the Kilmister Block, potential threats to the future of Belmont Regional Park were identified (Reports 00.157 and 00.160).

Landcorp owns almost all of the western (Porirua) side of the Park and provides important links between Dry Creek and the Kilmister Block through to Korokoro Valley. The land is effectively private land that could potentially be sold. Although the existing walkways are protected, if the land is sold there would still be significant impact, particularly on environmental and heritage values.

Similarly, in the event that the Takapu Block is sold, legal provision has been made for existing public walkways across the Block to be gazetted, ensuring protection of the walkways, if not the whole Block, for future generations. Department of Conservation and Regional Council officers are continuing to seek ownership of the Block.

Porirua City Council continues to make submissions via the WRC Annual Plan process, requesting more access points into Belmont Regional Park from Porirua City. Currently there are only two access points within Porirua City compared with seven access points on the Hutt City side of the Park.

There may be opportunities to create additional entrance points from Porirua and walking track links, through negotiation with Landcorp.

### ***East Harbour Regional Park***

A Councillor workshop in May 1999 looked at future directions for East Harbour Regional Park (Report 99.352). There are expectations that the Council will develop East Harbour Regional Park. There are major issues over obtaining public access to two areas of the Park managed by the Regional Council - Baring Head and the Lakes Block - land purchase is a likely strategy.

The Park is high in all three *Signature* values; having nationally important lakes and wetland habitats, nationally rare plant species, regenerating bush, forests, numerous archaeological features, lighthouse heritage features and moderately high recreational values.

There have also been discussions in the past about the Regional Council taking over control and management of some of the areas of land in the Park owned by the Department of Conservation and the Hutt City Council - this may involve land purchase, survey or legal costs.

### ***Pakuratahi Forest***

The Regional Council owns and controls only part of the Rimutaka Incline Walkway - the section from State Highway 2, near Kaitoke, to Summit. The Department of Conservation controls the portion from Summit to Cross Creek on the Wairarapa side of the Rimutaka Range. It has been suggested that the walkway and environs should be controlled by one organisation as a regional park. It may be possible to link the Rimutaka Incline Walkway to Tunnel Gully, along the old railway route/formation. Better links to Kaitoke Regional Park may also be facilitated with the proposed highway realignment works.

The wider Pakuratahi Forest is high in all three *Signature* values - high heritage and ecological values and increasingly important for recreation. Public demand to use the area and to protect its heritage and environmental values is increasing.

## **Second Priority - New Regional Parks**

### ***Wairarapa Wetlands Regional Park***

The Regional Council has no Regional Parks in the Wairarapa. The Council is proposing to develop a Wairarapa Wetlands park in the LTFS. Lake Wairarapa Wetlands could be developed in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and the South Wairarapa District Council. It may be desirable to buy some land, or to negotiate access easements or walkways to link existing reserves.

### ***Whitireia Park***

In August 1999, the Landcare Committee considered a request for the Regional Council to take over management of Whitireia Park (Report 99.482). The proposed LTFS provides for this. Most of the Park is reserve land, therefore it is unlikely that there will be a need to purchase land for inclusion in the park.

### 6.3 Third Priority - Future Trails, Coast and Rivers Access

#### *Wellington South Coast*

The Council received a few submissions through the Long-term Financial Strategy process requesting formation of a new regional park on the Wellington South Coast. The proposal is listed in “*Towards a Greater Wellington*” as a possible project beyond 2010.

#### *Coastal Trail*

A proposal was developed in 1991 to create a coastal trail following the coastline around the Region (Report 94.47). This would provide public access along the entire coastline, linking areas like Queen Elizabeth Park, Wellington South Coast, East Harbour Regional Park and the Hutt River Trail. There is currently access to many areas of the coastline, but there are gaps limiting access along its entirety. Some land may need to be purchased, or access easements or walkways provided over other areas.

#### *River Corridors*

Other opportunities exist for environmental protection and recreation access along river corridors, for example the Waikanae or Otaki Rivers or rivers in the Wairarapa. Public input into the Floodplain Management Plans and Resource Consent processes for river management has supported the intent to bring river corridors into public ownership, over time. These river corridors could be multi-purpose parks for flood protection, soil conservation, water quality, wildlife/ecological corridors and recreation on the water and land, (e.g., Hutt River).

#### *Te Araroa - North Island Foot Trail*

Te Araroa Trust proposes to establish a walkway running the length of the North Island. Some portions of the proposed walkway pass through Regional Council land. The Trust requested funding assistance to purchase land and/or negotiate access easements or walkways over other areas, such as Whareroa Farm (Report 93.388). The Whareroa Farm walkway proposal would link Queen Elizabeth Park and Akatarawa Forest.