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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Melanie Dixon, Policy Advisor

Draft Wetland Action Plan 2002–2006

1. Purpose

To consider the draft Wetland Action Plan 2002–2006. The Wetland Action Plan is enclosed separately with the Order Paper.

2. Background

Why develop a Wetland Action Plan?

Like much of New Zealand, the Wellington Region has lost a large proportion (about 90 percent) of the wetlands that existed in the early 1800s. Wetlands continue to be threatened by a range of activities including urban encroachment, drainage, grazing, and weed invasion. A proactive approach is needed to reverse this trend and to protect the unique plant and animal species that depend on our remaining wetlands. The Council has made this commitment through its support of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy and its own Biodiversity Programme.

The Council is already undertaking work to manage and protect wetlands. Under the Council's biodiversity programme advice is given to landowners on wetland management, funding is provided for community groups through the *Take Care* programme, and work has commenced on the restoration of a number of wetlands on Council land. In addition, the use and development of wetlands is regulated through the Regional Freshwater Plan. However, there has been no overall strategy or direction for this work and it was always intended that a guiding document would be prepared to provide this. This is the role of the Action Plan.

This Action Plan outlines priorities and actions proposed to reverse wetland decline over the next four years and the recommended process for adoption gives groups a chance to comment on what is proposed before the plan is finalised. The Action Plan has been prepared and supported by staff in the Landcare, Environment, and Wairarapa divisions (the Wetland Ecosystem Group).

This draft Wetland Action Plan will also be presented to Environment Committee at the meeting on 2 May 2002.

3. What does the Action Plan propose?

The options the Council has to support wetlands in the Region are:

- Investing in wetlands on Regional Council land.
- Encouraging wetland restoration on private land using advice and incentives.
- Regulating activities that effect wetlands.

The draft Action Plan proposes using all of the above methods (although on private land there is a stronger emphasis on encouraging rather than regulating). The key actions proposed under the Action Plan are to:

- (1) Develop a prioritised inventory of wetlands in the Wellington Region.
- (2) Increase our knowledge of wetlands, and in particular wetland hydrology.
- (3) Protect and restore wetlands on land owned or managed by the Regional Council.
- (4) Work in partnership with other agencies to improve Lake Wairarapa.
- (5) Protect the very best wetlands on private land under the Key Native Ecosystem Programme.
- (6) Provide practical advice and assistance to encourage wetland restoration on private land.
- (7) Provide an effective regulatory bottom line for wetlands.
- (8) Monitor our progress towards achieving our vision.

Protecting and Restoring Wetlands on Regional Council land is a key part of what is proposed in the Wetland Action Plan.

There are a number of important wetlands in Regional Council land and wetland decline cannot be reversed without ensuring these wetlands are in good condition.

Action on Council land will also:

- Provide opportunities to involve the wider community.
- Demonstrate wetland restoration techniques that can be used on private land.
- Demonstrate that the Council is acting in good faith when encouraging wetland restoration on private land.

The Wetland Action Plan proposes protection or restoring the following wetlands:

- Orongorongo Montane Wetland, Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area.
- Pencarrow Lakes, East Harbour Regional Park.
- Ladle Bend wetland, Pakuratahi Forest.
- Queen Elizabeth Park wetlands.
- Swampy Gully, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park.
- Sledge Gully wetland, Wainuiomata Recreation Area.
- Whakatikei, Martins River, Valley View wetlands, Akatarawa Forest.
- Otaki River Mouth.

4. What will it cost?

For the Landcare Division, the bulk of funding has already been included in current budgets through the last Long-term Financial Strategy (LTFS). These are outlined in the following tables (with additional funding requirements in Table 2 in bold):

Table 1: Projects currently included in the LTFS

Description	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Battle Hill Wetland	\$10,000	\$35,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$5,000
Queen Elizabeth Park	\$17,000	\$13,707	\$41,000	\$17,000	\$15,000
East Harbour Regional Park Development (not all of the budget is to be spent directly on the Lakes and Wetlands)			\$79,000	\$79,000	\$79,000

Table 2: Proposed projects not currently included in the LTFS

Description	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Orongorongo Montane Wetland	\$4,600 (research)	\$35,000	\$6,000 (research wetland hydrology)	\$3,000 (research)	\$3,000 (research)
Pakuratahi Ladle Bend Wetlands	\$4,500		\$3,000 (weed control and research)	\$2,000 (weed control)	\$2,000 (weed control)
Akatarawa Forest Wetlands					\$6,000 (investigation into Martins River)

There are also costs involved in implementing those parts of the Action Plan which relate to private land. These are outlined in Appendix 2 of the Action Plan and amount to approximately \$60,000 per year. If these projects are to proceed then their funding will need to be considered later this year through the Council's LTFS.

5. **What happens next?**

We will talk with the following groups and seek their feedback about the plan:

- Iwi
- Landowners
- Territorial Authorities
- Interested groups
- Wellington Fish and Game Council
- Department of Conservation.

A final Wetland Action Plan will then be presented to the Landcare and Environment committees for approval next financial year in time for decisions to be made about whether to fund the extra projects.

6. **Communications**

Staff will talk directly to iwi, landowners, territorial authorities, farmers, interest groups, Wellington Fish and Game Council, and the Department of Conservation. The plan will be widely distributed and submissions invited.

7. **Recommendations**

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) *receive the report.*
- (2) *note the contents of the report.*
- (3) *recommends to the Policy and Finance Committee that the draft Wetland Action Plan 2002-2006 be released for public consultation.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1 : Draft Wetland Action Plan 2002–2006