



caring about you & your environment

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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Ross Jackson, Volunteers Co-ordinator, Parks and Forests (Strategy & Marketing)

Partnerships in Wellington's Regional Parks

1. Purpose

To update Councillors on progress in fostering volunteerism on Council owned land

2. Background

Since commencing in this newly established position just over 12 months ago I have focused on carrying out key environmental enhancement projects in the Long-term Financial Strategy. These include a variety of restoration projects (e.g. Queen Elizabeth Park wetlands, remnant forest and coastal dunes) and other key projects involving community groups.

While this has been an effective approach in the early stages there are many other options that could be taken to expand the opportunity for volunteers in the Council's parks and forests. As a result we have developed a volunteer strategy for Parks and Forests. The objective of the Strategy is to ensure that community involvement is managed systematically and effectively within existing resources and to best suit our situation

3. What Currently Happens

Parks and Forests staff currently work with various groups as the opportunity arises. The types of public involvement can be classified into three categories:

1. Community and interest groups undertaking specific (usually ongoing) projects relating to environmental restoration or facilities development.
2. Education and training programmes including Arbor Day plantings, school projects, surveys, research and team building activities.

3. Stakeholder groups established from time to time to develop park and forest management plans, or (as in the Akatarawa Forest) to develop protocols for specific activities.

In addition to these volunteer activities, the Council also makes use of labour provided by a number of government sponsored schemes including Taskforce Green and Periodic Detention assignments. Since these people are either paid or not undertaking the work of their own free will, they cannot be classed as volunteers.

4. **Key Findings of the Strategy**

The Strategy outlines:

- A range of approaches to involving communities at different levels.
- Critical success factors for the involving the public in park and forest partnership arrangements.
- A set of guidelines and tools to assist park rangers involving communities and groups in the operation of the parks, covering how to set priorities, and the appropriate level of community involvement.
- Guidelines for the Volunteers Co-ordinator and Rangers identifying specific tasks to support the development of a Parks and Forests Partnership programme.

The Strategy also recommends that we continue to foster and encourage community group involvement rather than promote individuals to volunteer. To cater for causal volunteers requires more staff resources than we have available at the present time. We have established a number of Care Groups so we can encourage individuals who want to contribute to join a group that caters for their particular interest.

5. **Where To From Here**

We want to build on what we are currently doing by improving the volunteers programme and increasing the opportunities for public involvement in regional parks and forests. Ways of achieving this include:

- Publicise activities being undertaken.
- Provide opportunities for people to signal interest in becoming a volunteer.
- Provide the opportunities for different levels of involvement, so that those who are unable to contribute practical work can still contribute to the parks and forests, e.g. "Friends of" groups.
- Involving schools in volunteer activities.
- Organising field trips and using volunteer guides to assist.
- Further expansion of our volunteer database.
- Providing a brochure on ways to volunteer.
- Produce a volunteers newsletter three or four times per year listing dates of events, advertising opportunities, etc.

We have a reasonably wide range of partnerships in our parks and forests (refer **Attachment 1**). However, there is the potential to greatly increase the involvement of the community in proactive activities. The Strategy will help us be more proactive in working with volunteers in the parks and forests.

6. **Communications**

There are no immediate communication opportunities arising from the report. However, we will be undertaking the communication activities listed in 5 above as we implement the strategy.

7. **Recommendations**

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) *receive the report.*
- (2) *note the contents of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment 1 : Voluntary groups currently associated with WRC Parks and Forests