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Report to the Landcare Committee
from Ross Jackson, Landcare Planner - Volunteers Co-ordinator

Queen Elizabeth Park - Mackays Crossing Entrance/Wetland Development and Arbor Day 2001

1. Purpose

To seek approval in principle to the landscape concept for the Mackays Crossing entrance wetlands development (to be presented at the Committee meeting) and an associated Arbor Day event.

2. State Highway 1 Upgrade

For the past year, officers and Department of Conservation (DoC) representatives have been meeting with Transit NZ consultants on the proposed State Highway 1 upgrade and overbridge at Mackays Crossing. The proposal impacts on the Park and will remove a portion of the DoC wetland between State Highway 1 and the Park immediately south of Mackays Crossing. However, it also provides an opportunity to redevelop the Park entrance and make it safer and more functional as well as facilitating some wider development objectives.

3. Wetlands Restoration

As compensation for the loss of some of the DoC wetlands outside the Park, Transit is offering to fund work on the Park wetlands. A workshop was held late last year with various interest groups, iwi, DoC and WRC officers. The workshop considered the wetlands both inside and outside the Park as well as the entrance, to link into the highway upgrading proposals. It was facilitated by Frank Boffa of Boffa Miskell Limited who have several specialists experienced in this type of work and have a good understanding of Queen Elizabeth Park from previous work undertaken. For the workshop, Mr Boffa developed an initial concept for the wetlands and Park entrance (see **Attachment 1**). This was very well received.

4. Proposal Fits In With LTFS and Management Plan

Biodiversity funding has been allocated to restore parts of the park wetlands and to establish a Care Group. The proposed Transit funding will greatly assist this project.

In addition to the community groups currently supporting the project and who will form the basis of a care group, Wetland Care (formerly Ducks Unlimited) have also expressed an interest in being part of the project. They are currently providing funds and expertise on another project in the Wairarapa and recently undertook wetland developments on Mana Island for DoC. They would like to be involved in a Wellington based wetland.

The Queen Elizabeth Park Management Plan policies identify and allow for:

- (1) redevelopment of the entrance area in conjunction with State Highway 1 upgrading (p25, 1.41);
- (2) conservation and enhancement of the wetlands (p3, 2.1-2.5).

This project will tie in with other biodiversity projects in the Park including dune restoration and the remnant bush restoration.

5. How Long Will All This Take?

Transit expect construction to commence in 2002, once the consent process is completed. We plan to have detailed designs for the entrance and wetlands completed by May this year; to be incorporated into a revised Park concept plan which will form an essential tool to revise the Management Plan in two years time.

As Arbor Day and World Environmental Day are on 5 June, this would be an ideal time to have the completed plans on display and to start some wetland planting. It will also provide the opportunity to launch the Wetland Care Group proposal, to commence in 2001/2002.

6. Arbor Day Planting

We would like to use this project as the Council's main Arbor Day event this year.

We have ordered three hundred *Cordyline Australis* (Cabbage Tree) to establish a grove of this threatened species; abundant in the area 150 years ago.

Dr Philip Simpson, a prominent botanist, has recently written a book on the Cabbage Tree called "Dancing Leaves". In it he explores the social significance of the Cabbage Tree as well as its ecological and botanical values. Dr Simpson has indicated that he would be happy to attend and participate in Arbor Day as a guest speaker.

7. **Communication**

The Arbor Day event provides a significant opportunity for the Regional Council to contribute to wetland restoration and to launch the Queen Elizabeth Park Care Group Project. Good public relations opportunities will exist around the event. Media releases will be prepared closer to the time.

8. **Recommendations**

That the Landcare Committee:

- (1) Approve in principle the redesign of the Mackays Crossing entrance and the Wetland Restoration Project.*
- (2) Note that officers will report back to the Committee once the landscape concept plan is finalised.*
- (3) Approve the Arbor Day proposal at the Mackays Crossing entrance to Queen Elizabeth Park.*

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Approved for Submission:

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Attachment 1 : Concept for the Wetlands and Park Entrance