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**Committee**        **Regional Sustainability Committee**  
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## **Community Environmental Projects Annual Report 2007-08**

### **1. Purpose**

To provide the committee with a summary of the achievements and activities of Greater Wellington funded community environmental groups during the financial year ended 30 June 2008.

### **2. Significance of the decision**

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### **3. Background**

The Community Environmental Projects programme (*Take Care*) provides funding, staff support and specialist advice to community groups which volunteer their time and skills to restore the health of threatened ecosystems in the region. These include rivers, streams, wetlands, estuaries, coastal dunes and escarpments. The programme's primary focus is the restoration of ecological sites but it also includes environmental education, and provides the Council with more opportunities to connect with the community.

The Annual Plan performance indicator for the programme is that existing groups are maintained and five new groups are established and assisted to the satisfaction of the Council and within budget.

### **4. Comment**

Greater Wellington has assisted groups at 36 project sites over the past year. Seventy five percent of these projects have arisen out of the contestable fund process and are co-ordinated by staff in the Environment Management

Division. A further 25% are selected by Greater Wellington staff in response to identified needs and, while partly funded from the Environmental Education Department's budget, their activities are coordinated by staff outside the Environment Management division. Three of these projects are in our regional parks and there are two Friends of the River groups (Waikanae and Otaki) that are also funded in this way. Four sites in the Wairarapa have also been selected in this way and are looked after by Wairarapa based staff. This twofold means of selecting groups has been a feature of the care group programme since its inception. It was determined at the outset that there would be some areas where Greater Wellington would want to initiate a care group to address a specific environmental issue, in addition to responding to the restoration initiatives of the public.

#### 4.1 Geographic spread

Table 1 below shows the number of care groups in each district. A map, showing care group locations, is appended to this report (see Attachment Four). The Kapiti Coast continues to have the largest number of care groups in the region with 36% of all currently funded groups. This reflects the greater number of applications that are made in this district. In addition to Porirua's three 'official' groups, we are also restoring degraded habitats at Pauatahanui Inlet with funds that have come from a fine levied by the Environment Court. Two corporate groups have helped to plant 750 salt-tolerant species along the Te Ara Piko walkway near Horokiri stream.

**Table 1: Regional distribution of care groups**

Care group locations 2007- 08		
Kapiti Coast	13	36%
Porirua	3	8%
Hutt Valley	5	14%
Wellington	8	22%
Wairarapa	7	20%
Total	36	100.00%

#### 4.2 Range of ecosystems

Table 2 below shows the range of ecosystems being restored around the region. Sixty four per cent of the projects are focussed solely on the restoration of freshwater ecosystems (streams, rivers and wetlands) with the remaining 36% having a coastal focus. The three combination projects incorporate riparian, wetland and dune elements.

**Table 2: Ecosystems being restored by care groups**

Ecosystems being restored in 2007- 08		
Streams and rivers	20	56%
Wetlands	3	8%
Coastal dunes	7	19%
Coastal escarpments	1	3%
Estuaries	2	6%
Combination	3	8
Total	36	100%

Five new care groups were established during the year. These are groups at: Albemarle Stream (Wellington), Whangaehu River (South Wairarapa), Waipahihi Stream (Wellington), Petone beach, and Waikanae beach (the latter two being dune restoration projects). Funding for two existing groups was extended; the Kapiti-Mana Forest and Bird site at Kaitawa Reserve on the Wharemaukau Stream and the estuary restoration at Makara, where volunteers have started restoring the ecosystem after previously receiving funding for a management plan. The key achievements of all the groups supported in 2007-08 are summarised in Attachment One, appended to this report.

### **4.3 Restoration Day**

Held every year since 2001 to celebrate the work of volunteers involved in ecological restoration throughout the region, Restoration Day is organised by the key agencies involved in community restoration projects - Greater Wellington, the Department of Conservation, The Royal Forest and Bird Society and territorial authorities.

The theme for this year's Restoration Day on 5 May was "Back to Basics". The keynote speaker was George Gibbs, entomologist and author of *Ghosts of Gondwana*, who addressed the three E's of restoration: education, endemism, and enthusiasm. Other workshops covered photography, pest animal and pest plant control, propagation, managing volunteers, restoration plans and media advice. One of the highlights of the day was the lunch time debate featuring Greater Wellington Chairperson, Fran Wilde, Al Morrison (Department of Conservation), and Kevin Hackwell (Forest & Bird) arguing against the Victoria University debating team on the subject: "My Cat's a Conservationist".

## **5. Honda TreeFund**

The Honda TreeFund was created in 2004 as a way to offset car emissions. It ensures that for every new Honda sold, ten native trees are funded and planted. The trees are planted in association with regional councils all over the country, providing a measurable way to absorb some of the carbon dioxide produced by motor vehicles. Honda customers are invited to donate to the Honda TreeFund

at the time of purchase and then join in the planting of the trees with their Honda dealer and regional council.

Monies allocated to Greater Wellington are split between the Environment Management Division (40%) and the Water Supply, Parks and Forests Division (60%). The following table (Table 3) shows how many trees have been funded in our region since 2004-5. Honda trees make a big difference to our ecosystem restoration capability. We use them to support and supplement the work of care groups and to provide restoration materials and plants for sites where we are working with corporate volunteers (such as those around Pauatahanui Inlet and at Moehau Stream).

**Table 3: Trees Funded by Honda in the Wellington Region 2004-08**

Financial Year	Trees Funded
2004-05	76,089
2005-06	78,278
2006-07	83,358
2007-08	62,500

The following table shows how the trees provided by Honda were allocated to restoration projects at both parks and care group sites in 2008. Honda allocated \$62,500 to Greater Wellington, and the following trees were planted. Care group and related restoration sites are highlighted with an asterisk.

**Table 4: Honda Tree sites 2008**

Name of Location	No. of Plants
Shields, adj to Fensham, Wairarapa*	1000
Makara Peak, Wellington*	1000
Oku reserve, Wellington*	1233
Pigeon Bush, Wairarapa*	50
Waikanae estuary, Kapiti*	700
Queen Elizabeth Park, Kapiti	4500
Kaitoke, Upper Hutt	3450
Battle Hill, Porirua	2500
Mauriceville, Wairarapa*	280
Wainuiomata Recreation Area	2000
Whakatiki, Hutt	2,000

The Oku Street reserve, a coastal headland above Island Bay, was the site for the Honda TreeFund planting day for the Wellington area this year.

A combination of Honda staff and customers, a large contingent of locals and Wellington City Council and regional council staff planted 1200 trees and shrubs and enjoyed a late barbeque lunch afterwards.

On the Shields property adjacent to the Fensham Reserve west of Carterton, children from South End school joined staff and customers from Southey Honda from Masterton and regional council staff to plant 300 wetland species in and around a nutrient catchment area designed to prevent farm nutrients entering the wetland at Fensham Reserve.

## 6. Trees for Survival

The Trees for Survival Trust (TFS) is a national organisation that provides students with the opportunity to grow plants in schools and then plant them to protect soil and water values and promote biodiversity. Sixteen schools in our region are growing plants under this scheme, which is affiliated with the Rotary Club and, since 2000, supported by Greater Wellington. The schools are listed in the table below.

Greater Wellington's contribution to the TFS programme is to provide each school with a facilitator who organises seedlings for children to pot up, delivers potting mix and containers to the schools and organises planting days. In most cases the planting site is a local *Take Care* site. The successful connection of this kind between the Waikanae Estuary Care Group and various Kapiti schools was reported to the Committee at its last meeting. Our aim with this programme is empower schools to be as self-sustaining as possible; to this end, for example, we ran a propagation workshop for TFS teachers in early October. The cost to Greater Wellington of the programme is minimal, as some of the schools get sponsorship from local Rotary Clubs or businesses and other costs are met by the Trust. We were also successful in gaining sponsorship from Fonterra during the year, which provided schools with 5,000 milk cartons for the children to pot up their plants. During the year the Trust was also successful with its application to the Lotteries Environment and Heritage Grant Committee to fund a Regional Coordinator in Wellington.

**Table 5: Trees for Survival Schools in the Wellington Region**

School	Planting Site	Rotary Club/sponsor
1   Kenakena	Waikanae Estuary	
2   Waikanae	Waikanae Estuary	
3   Paraparaumu	Waikanae Estuary	
4   Greytown	Memorial Park	
5   Pukerua Bay	No planting this season	
6   Upper Hutt College	Moehau Stream	
7   Hutt Valley High	Hutt River trail	Lower Hutt Rotary
8   Muritai	Eastbourne Dunes	Pencarrow Rotary

School		Planting Site	Rotary Club/sponsor
9	Raphael House	No planting this season	
10	Epuni	Waiwhetu Stream	Eastern Hutt Rotary Club
11	Mana College	Tributary of Takapuwahia stream	
12	Porirua College	Maara Roa, Belmont RP	
13	Newlands	Moonshine Rd	Tetrapak
14	Wainuioru School	QE II Trust property	Sustainable Business Network
15	Douglas Park	Makoura Stream	

## 7. Corporate volunteers

A total of 12 corporate groups have assisted *Take Care* groups with either planting or weeding this year. This allows the care groups to accomplish more with their budget and gives much needed assistance, particularly where jobs for younger, stronger people need completing. The participating companies and where they worked are set out below.

**Table 6: Corporate planting days 2007 - 2008**

Company	Site for planting
ANZ National Bank	Trelissick Park
OMV Group	Trelissick Park
Hutt Valley DHB	Moehau Stream
MFE Youth forum	Trelissick Park
NZ Defence Force	Millwood
ANZ (technology)	Trelissick Park
Brother International	Island Bay Dunes
Victoria University Disability Support Services	Trelissick Park
BNZ Upper Hutt	Moehau Stream
Parliamentary Service	Pauatahanui Inlet
Baptist Church	Petone Dunes
Plimmerton Rotary Club	Pauatahanui Inlet

We are hoping to encourage some of the corporate groups to come out and work with *Take Care* groups over the summer months releasing and mulching this winter's plantings.

Staff from the Body Shop continue to hold a monthly stream clean up at their School Road site on the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream.

## **8. Threatened species**

The great majority of care group sites are in areas where the loss of natural vegetative cover means less than 10% of that type of ecosystem remains in the region. As the restoration of these threatened areas evolves and they become more secure, there are opportunities to re-introduce species which are now missing from those habitats.

In the last six months we have developed a list of threatened species that could be re-introduced at each care group site and considered the degree of threat they are under at a national and regional level. This will enable groups to work on re-introducing these plants as part of their restoration efforts, adding another layer to the effectiveness of their endeavours. Some groups will be able to re-introduce species that are in serious or gradual decline on a national scale.

There are also species which are threatened in our region, whilst not uncommon on a national scale. These species are no less deserving of being reintroduced back into sites, as to lose them would be to lose our regional genetic diversity. Attachment 3 lists these species and the sites where they could be re-introduced.

## **9. Performance against budget**

The budget for *Take Care* in 2007 – 2008 was \$269,000. Actual expenditure was \$256,000. The variation was due to temporary vacancies in the *Take Care* team while new staff were being appointed.

## **10. Funding policy change**

Our usual policy for funding care groups is to spread \$19,000 over five years. In year one we grant the groups \$3,000, and in year's two, three and four this is increased to \$5,000. The final year grant drops to \$1,000. We have had a small number of groups request a further year's funding when they find they need only one more year to finish their project. Although groups are able to apply for an extension to their funding, it seems pointless to drop a group's funding down to \$1,000 for their fifth year and then grant a further year when the project could be finished earlier if they had a larger grant. We propose allowing these groups to be granted (up to) an additional \$4,000 in their last year of funding to enable completion of the project and that this be granted on a case by case basis. The Council's Funding Policy for Care Groups would be changed accordingly. As the number of groups in this situation is small, this will not require any change to the overall funding requirements for *Take Care*.

## 11. Communication

The council's web page continues to be the main source of information about the programme and the activities of groups. A newsletter was also prepared for circulation to all care groups in August 2008 and it is intended to produce a newsletter every quarter. Several groups have developed their own web sites and some also produce and circulate newsletters. The activities and achievements of care groups frequently feature in local newspapers around the region.

### Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. *Receives the report; and*
2. *Notes the contents.*
3. *Approves the proposed change to the Take Care funding policy.*

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Report approved by:



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**Attachment 1:** Summary of care group activities 2007-2008

**Attachment 2:** Honda TreeFund allocations 2005 to 2008

**Attachment 3:** Threatened species for Care Groups

**Attachment 4:** Map outlining care group locations