



Report 10.105  
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Committee Regional Sustainability  
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## **Future of duck shooting in the Parangarahu Block, East Harbour Regional Park**

### **1. Purpose**

To request the Council's endorsement of a recent decision made by the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) to cease duck shooting in the Parangarahu Block (formerly known as the "Lakes Block") at East Harbour Regional Park.

### **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**

#### **3.1 General**

In 2009 the PNBST concluded its Port Nicholson Block claim settlement negotiations under the Treaty of Waitangi with the Crown. As part of that settlement, ownership of the lake beds and esplanade reserves surrounding the lakes within but not part of the (then) Lakes Block of East Harbour Regional Park passed to the PNBST.

Since 2007 Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has been in negotiations with the PNBST and Department of Conservation (DoC) to develop an ongoing joint management arrangement between the parties that would have an ownership interest in the Block. The ownership, post-settlement, would include GWRC as the owner of the wider Lakes Block, PNBST as the owner of the lake beds and esplanade reserves, and DoC as the owner of the water body and air column above the water body. Subsequently, as part of those negotiations, DoC would then vest its interest in the air column and water body to GWRC to manage on its behalf, subject to the land being designated as Scientific Reserve under the *Reserves Act 1977*.

In August 2009 the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was presented to Council for endorsement (see Report No. PE-08.565). As part of that MOU, there were specific provisions surrounding how decisions would be

made post-settlement for the entire area. The two that are most relevant here are that:

*A Roopu Tiaki (an advisory group) made up of representatives from both GWRC and PNBCT be established to manage the Council's land, the Crowns water body and air column, and the Trust's lake beds and esplanades. The Roopu Tiaki objectives will be to make strategic recommendations on the management of the Parangarahu Lakes Area, develop a long term vision, review and endorse a management plan, recommend an annual works programme with priorities and promote the Parangarahu Lakes Area ecological, cultural and historic values.*

*If and when a Roopu Tiaki impasse arises, where the decision is in respect of recreation or scientific reserve, Council shall hold the casting vote. Where the decision is in respect of the lake beds and esplanades, the Trust shall hold the casting vote. In effect, this provision gives the "landowner" the final right of decision-making on its own land.*

At this point, the Roopu Tiaki has not been established. This is primarily because the PNBST are reviewing how they can best manage the multitude of assets they now hold, and the many relationships they now have with Crown and local territorial authorities. In the absence of the Roopu Tiaki being established as the formal decision making body, and the urgency of the matter at hand, the PNBST is exercising its right as landowner under the agreement to make decisions over land that it owns. Before doing so though it has consulted both DoC and GWRC.

### **3.2 Duck shooting at the Parangarahu Lakes Block**

The duck shooting season starts in the first weekend of May each year.

Duck shooting has been a recreational pursuit at the block for a number of years. DoC has only been issuing permits for the activity for the last 10 years or so. However, the activity has been undertaken at the lakes for many years informally prior to that.

There are currently approximately 50 people on DoC's database that have received shooting permits in the past. DoC issues approximately 20-25 permits on average per year, some of which do not get taken up during the season.

In 2006 DoC, as the then owner of the lakes, tried to cease duck shooting on the lakes. This effort was met with strong resistance from the duck shooting community. Complaints were made by the duck hunters to the Minister of Conservation and the attempt to cease duck shooting in the area was eventually stopped.

### **3.3 Environmental value of the lakes**

In 2004 GWRC commissioned the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA) to undertake a survey of submerged aquatic flora in the lakes.

NIWA described the lakes as being:

*...outstanding examples of “healthy” lakes with a strong native character and no oxygen weeds present. Most other lakes of this type in New Zealand have been degraded as a result of the introduction of aquatic pests ... and by nutrient enrichment.*

In terms of threats to the “health” of the lakes, NIWA also went on to state that:

*... the lakes are highly susceptible to invasion by oxygen weed ... or hornwort ... Any of these species would displace most of the native flora in these lakes and would likely degrade many other aspects of these lakes. The species are spread by vegetative fragments only so the lack of boat access and eeling is essential in keeping these species out in the long term. Special checks and sterilisation procedures .... need to be made of any fishing equipment used in these lakes ....*

In 2002 DoC published *Pencarrow Lakes – Conservation values and management*, which backgrounds the landscape, cultural and biological knowledge of the lakes’ ecosystem, provides an evaluation of the wetlands on a local and national scale, and makes recommendations for their sustainable management in a situation of increasing public pressures.

The report concluded that:

*There is ample landscape, historical and biological evidence to give Pencarrow lakes a national conservation significance ...*

Among a number of other management recommendations, one was:

*... To minimise the risk of introducing additional water weed species it is recommended that power boats and all boat trailers be prohibited.*

### **3.4 The Council’s previous stance regarding duck shooting in the Lakes Block**

The issue of duck shooting at the block was raised as part of the review of the *East Harbour Regional Park Management Plan* in 2006. At that time the ownership and management of the lakes was under the jurisdiction of DoC, although it was known to be an area of interest for the Port Nicholson Block claim. As a result, Council took the stance that it would support whatever DoC thought was appropriate in terms of duck shooting on the lakes. At that time DoC was prepared to allow the shooting to continue in the short-term (albeit after attempts to cease it were curtailed). As a result, the Council allowed access through its land for the purpose of duck shooting on the adjacent lakes and the following is included in the Parks’ plan:

#### ***Recreational Duck Hunting***

**3.38 *To allow access across Greater Wellington land to the Pencarrow Lakes block for duck hunting activities.***

**3.39 *To allow hunting dogs, firearms and associated duck hunting equipment within the Pencarrow Lakes block for duck hunting activities.***

*The policies in this management plan apply to all land managed by Greater Wellington in the East Harbour Regional Park. The Pencarrow lakes are managed by the Department of Conservation as a Wildlife Management Reserve. Currently the Port Nicholson Block is subject to settlement by OTS. The outcomes of any such claims may change the ownership/management of the Lakes Block.*

*Greater Wellington and the Department of Conservation are committed to working together to protect the high ecological values of the entire wetland ecosystem. This fragile environment is highly sensitive to modification and special vigilance is needed to ensure no new aquatic or other weeds are introduced. The Department of Conservation will manage the use of the lakes through a separate management plan for the Pencarrow Lakes. Separate permits for duck hunting activities are administered by the Department of Conservation. Fishing, diving and swimming activities in the Pencarrow Lakes will be covered under the Department of Conservation's Management Plan. At any time, permission to undertake duck hunting activities in the Pencarrow Lakes block will be determined by whether DoC permits or prohibits duck shooting on or over the lakes.*

*Greater Wellington will not allow dogs (other than for duck hunting activities) or the use of recreational motorised vehicles within the Pencarrow Lakes block. Access into wetland areas will be restricted to protect their environmental values.*

#### **4. Comment**

It is clear, by the research that has been undertaken by experts over the last decade, that the (now known as) Parangarahu Lakes have significant conservation value. Duck shooting as an activity requires vehicular access and boats for salvaging ducks. Both of these have the ability to introduce pest weed species to the lakes.

Not allowing any duck shooting activity on or around the lakes is one way of ensuring weed pest species do not introduce themselves to the lake environs from this activity. It does not mean that duck shooting is not a valid and enjoyable recreational activity or that weed pests will not be introduced by other means. However, this - coupled with the site's remoteness to visitor use - would prove an effective first barrier to weed invasion.

The other alternative would be to intensively manage duck shooting to ensure that any associated gear is cleaned effectively before being allowed into the lake environs. This is a costly and time consuming exercise but will allow duck shooting to continue, albeit with some hassle and cost to both hunters and staff.

## 5. Communication

The PNBST has already contacted all current permit holders and adjacent landowners regarding the intention to cease duck shooting. PNBST will act as the central point for reply.

No other media is anticipated.

## 6. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. **Receive** the report.
2. **Note** the content of the report.
3. **Endorse** the decision by the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust to cease duck shooting at the Parangarahu Block, East Harbour Regional Park.

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Report approved by:

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## Attachments

- 1 Copy of letter from Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust to permit holders