

STAFF REPORT

TO: The Community Services Committee

FROM: Community Services Manager
Reserves Manager
Community Services Planner

DATE: 4 December 2008

SUBJECT: Future Management Options for Waimea River Bermlands

PURPOSE

To advise the Committee of the work which has been undertaken to date with respect to considering future alternative management options for the 394 hectares of river berm land adjacent to the Waimea River and the lower reaches of the Wairoa and Wai-iti Rivers.

To provide a recommendation to Tasman District Council on the preferred option for future management of the bermlands.

BACKGROUND

The Waimea River berm lands comprise 394 hectares of land which were taken for "soil conservation and river control purposes" and vested in the Nelson Catchment Board in 1961 (See Attachment a). Responsibility for the management of the river and the berm lands has since progressed from the Catchment Board to the Nelson-Marlborough Regional Council in 1990 and to Tasman District Council in 1992. TDC has managed the area since that time principally for river control purposes.

In recent years a more diversified management approach has been explored by Council. The approach aims to maximise recreational opportunities, enhance natural character and conservation values and improve public access to (and perceptions of) the area, whilst maintaining its primary purpose of flood control.

In response to the interest in a new management approach the Tasman Environmental Trust was asked to lead the development of a river park concept. The Community Services Committee has provided funding to progress its development.

One of the principal initial work streams identified by staff was the preparation of a comprehensive management statement that defines management objectives, and the issues and options for the future use and development of the area and provides recommendations for preferred management options.

The objective of the work undertaken to date was to prepare a draft management statement for the area.

This included:

- identification of the principal values associated with the area;
- investigation and capture of information about the scope and content of management issues or conflicts, including information gaps and other uncertainties, from documentary, staff and other informant sources. The areas of investigation must include the maintenance of flood protection function, provision of public access, enhancement of nature conservation, and opportunities for gravel extraction and commercial use of the area;
- Identification of the set of management objectives for the area;
- Identification of options for future management of the area, including its protection and development, and the means of implementation of these options;
- A evaluation of the implications (costs, benefits and risks) of each proposed option (including implementation costs and time frames expected to complete any process, degree of public consultation and options for enforcing compliance with management framework/ bylaw/rules in conjunction with each option);
- Undertake stakeholder consultation on draft statement; and
- Present a draft management statement to Community Services Committee and provide advice on preferred options for the future management and development of the area.

DISCUSSION

This work has now been undertaken and a briefing paper prepared and attached for the Community Services Committee. A copy of the "Waimea River Park Proposed Management Statement" is also attached. This provides a more comprehensive description of the values, uses and options for management of the Waimea River berm lands.

OPTIONS

The three management options which are considered most capable of achieving the long term objectives for the future management of the bermlands are:

1. Retaining the Status Quo with a Non-Statutory Management Strategy
2. Establishment of a Regional Park under the Local Government Act 2002 with a Non-Statutory Management Strategy
3. Gazettal as a Local Purpose Reserve (Flood Control) with a Statutory Management Plan

The main difference between the options is the extent to which each option provides secure legal protection for the berm lands and whether the management plan or strategy has legal status.

PREFERRED OPTION

The preferred option is for Council to prepare a non-statutory management strategy. That is, we simply leave the land status as it is presently under the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act. We already own and control all the land. We now just need to proactively manage it.

This management option has the following advantages:

- the flood protection function of the berm lands could remain a priority for management;
- there will be an opportunity to consider which parts of the berm lands are best suited to different uses, such as the protection of areas with open space and nature conservation values, and the provision of public access and recreational use;
- there could be a formal opportunity for public consultation;
- there will be an opportunity to plan for different uses and to address conflicts between uses;
- there will be little initial disruption or change to administrative arrangements;
- delays and costs are significantly reduced; and
- the current status provides sufficient protection and flexibility and, in conjunction with other Council and landowner rights, sufficient controls for an effective management plan.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council gives notice of its intention to prepare a non-statutory management strategy for the river berm land adjacent to the Waimea River and the lower reaches of the Wairoa and Wai-iti Rivers.

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http://tdctoday:82/shared_documents/meetings/council/committees_and_subcommittees/community_services_committee/reports/2008/rcs081204_report_future_management_options_for_waimea_river_bermlands.doc



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