



STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Lindsay Vaughan, Policy Planner

REFERENCE: B122

SUBJECT: **INVESTIGATION INTO SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS IN TASMAN DISTRICT - REPORT EP07/12/06** - Report prepared for 13 December 2007 Meeting

1. PURPOSE

The paper provides Council with an update on the proposed investigation into significant natural areas involving a number of parties who had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Council. The parties include Federated Farmers, the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, and Friends of Nelson Haven and Tasman Bay.

2. BACKGROUND

This report builds on the two earlier reports (EP07/05/04 and EP07/06/03) that were presented to the Environment & Planning Committee at the 9 May and 20 June meetings. The **May** report described the biodiversity work being undertaken by the Council, outlined its legislative responsibilities and the background in relation to Plan appeals, and also noted that the TRMP recorded (in Methods of Implementation 10.1A.20 b (i)) that an investigation into remnant areas of indigenous vegetation would be undertaken to assess their significance.

The **June** report described the key features of the proposed SNA investigation process. These included:

1. Selected landowners would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis and receive an ecological report on the biodiversity values on their land.
2. As well as private land, it would include council land and crown land outside the conservation estate (e.g. crown forest licence land).
3. The assessment would include terrestrial sites and freshwater wetlands but exclude riverine and estuarine ecosystems.
4. A Landowner Assistance package would be developed to encourage landowner participation and assist with the ongoing management of important sites.
5. A Communication Strategy would be developed to manage communication with landowners, community and the public.
6. A person outside of council would liaise with landowners, communities and with the management team and implement the Communication Strategy.

7. MOU partners would publicly support the investigation process and have an oversight role.
8. A framework for assessing significance would be developed by a technical working group.
9. A protocol for the use of the ecological information by Council would be developed by a data management working group.
10. The Council would apply for co-funding of the programme from the Biodiversity Advice fund.
11. There would be ongoing contact with participating landowners to provide advice and other forms of assistance (where appropriate) and to monitor progress.
12. The project is expected to take between five and ten years to complete the assessment.
13. Council would be provided with an annual review of the programme and its achievements.
14. Council would be invited to appoint a ward councillor to the Project Oversight Group. Initial investigations will commence in the Waimea – Moutere – Motueka areas.
15. The report proposed an increase in the Council funding for the project with matching funding from the Biodiversity Advice fund.

The June report also recommended the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Committee agreed to do this, noting that the programme will be subject to funding availability and that any additional funding would come through a request during the annual budget cycle for 2008/2009. They also requested that the Nelson-Marlborough Fish & Game Council be invited to participate in the project.

3. DEVELOPMENTS

Ongoing work has focused on:

- developing a project management structure and the other logistical arrangements.
- identifying the best features of work being done elsewhere and learning from the experience of similar councils who have run successful projects (e.g. Marlborough).
- liaising with other stakeholders to determine their level of interest in participation e.g. Nelson-Marlborough Fish and Game Council, Tiakina te Taiao.
- identifying the skill sets for the Community Liaison role.
- developing budgets for the first three years of the project.
- preparing an application for the Biodiversity Advice Fund.

4. RESOURCING

Councillors have discussed the budget for the 2008 / 2009 year and this will go forward into the draft annual plan. In the meantime, it would be appropriate to identify a replacement for Mayor Kempthorne on the Project Overview Group.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. **accept** the Report
2. **appoint** a member to sit on the SNA Assessment Project Overview Group as the point of liaison with the Committee

Lindsay Vaughan
Policy Planner