

STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Neil Jackson, Policy Planner

REFERENCE: L338

SUBJECT: **PROJECT BRIEF FOR WAIMEA ESTUARY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – SEPTEMBER 2009 - REPORT EP09/10/02** - Report prepared for meeting of 8 October 2009

1. BACKGROUND

The Waimea Estuary is the largest estuary in the Nelson-Tasman combined region and receives freshwaters from the Waimea River catchment and coastal catchments west and east of this river, from Mapua in the west to Tahunanui in the east. The estuary is shared between Tasman and Nelson districts but is largely within Tasman District. The estuary has many significant natural values and is the front yard for the urban areas of Nelson, Richmond, and Mapua. Issues raised are centred around the risks to the natural ecosystem including biodiversity values in the estuary and its margins arising from catchments urbanisation, and associated use of the waters and margin land, as well as contaminant risks from contributing catchments.

This project originated from advocacy by community interests to Tasman District Council with support from the Department of Conservation in late 2007. Concern was expressed at the threats to biodiversity values in the estuary from a range of activities in the waters, on the margins and in contributing catchments. A community planning process led by the Tasman District Council, was sought into the adequacy of management measures for the Waimea estuary. In December 2007 the Tasman Council agreed to include this as a project in its Resource Policy programme but to confirm the scope and nature of the proposed process before commencement. Work has not commenced yet because of other priority projects. An initial meeting of some key stakeholders in July 2008 informed the current proposed project description, noting issues other than biodiversity enhancement, and the relevance of margin and catchment development to the issues. In July 2009 the Tasman Council after adopting its ten year plan in June, has directed that the project proceed without further budgeted resources other than those available under departmental allocations.

This present report gives a more specific project brief. The same report will go to Nelson City Council on 15 October 2009.

2. PURPOSE

The ultimate purpose or goal of this project is proposed as:

An agreed statement from the Tasman-Nelson community and management agencies, of the actions required or current to effectively manage the significant natural biodiversity, landscape and other values in the Waimea estuary, integrated with the sustainable management of its environment.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives in carrying out the project are:

- Achieving a collective vision for the future of the Waimea Estuary;
- Reviewing the state of Waimea Estuary (including its ecological state), its margins, and the principal catchment influences on them;
- Reviewing the uses and values of the estuary and its margins;
- Reviewing the current management measures for maintaining or enhancing those values, and the effectiveness of those measures;
- Identifying any changes or additions to management measures, whether statutory, informal, or voluntary, that might be desirable to enhance the use and enjoyment of the estuary while maintaining or enhancing its ecological functioning and importance.

4. OUTPUT

The output is expected to be statements of current measures and changes to them that the community wants to see implemented for effective management of the estuary, its environs, and contributing catchments. The output should include agreed statements of management goals to give a vision for the future of the estuary. In these ways, the output can be described as an integrated management strategy, linking commitments in a collaborative agency-community programme of action.

Implementation of these changes may be through any combination of:

- RMA, Reserves, or Biosecurity management plans
- Engineering and Reserves projects;
- Clearance, clean-up, restoration (including planting) projects;
- Heads of agreement between management agencies and the wider community on management actions and priorities;
- Provision for regular review and reporting.

Implementation by the councils will be subject to annual plan priorities and funding allocations. Some projects may be adopted by or assisted by the community through community groups, schools, or public working bees, and through industry, iwi, and the Department of Conservation.

5. LTCCP CONTEXT

The scope and output from this project sits within a number of community outcome statements of both Tasman and Nelson Councils (refer to the LTCCPs).

6. PROCESS

The five objectives define process milestones for the project. There may need to be iteration of some tasks (see stages below). A significant consideration for the potential success for this project is the style of community participation. A culture of collaborative inquiry, assessment and decision-making is proposed. In this way collective ownership of the output is a success factor. The role of the two councils is seen as facilitating and guiding the process.

Because completion of the objectives relies not only on council work but contributions from the wider knowledgeable community, governance of the process is proposed to be shared between the Tasman and Nelson Councils, iwi, Department of Conservation, and stakeholder interests in the community at large who so identify themselves in the process (see governance below).

7. GOVERNANCE

The project is a non-statutory project.

A joint Council steering group of three Councillors from each Council is proposed to oversee the project. Its tasks are:

- To ensure the project remains within an agreed timeframe and budget.
- To work with the reference group (see below).
- To endorse the recommendations that result from the project, through a joint recommendation to both Councils.

A wider reference group is proposed, to represent all interested parties. A few meetings may be required, but email will also be used for contact. The reference group tasks are:

- To ensure through the course of the project that all interested parties have opportunity to put their points of view.
- To keep represented organisations informed about the strategy development, so those organisations are able to endorse the final strategy.
- To provide feedback on draft material produced.
- To recommend to the Councils (through the steering group) the final strategy.
- To facilitate and monitor implementation of strategy actions through their own and other organisations.

Iwi representation and involvement is to be considered at the Kotahitangi hui on 20 October 2009 for advice on their preferred form of engagement.

8. LAUNCH

A public launch of the project is proposed. This would be preceded by a newspaper article (also Newline and Live Nelson).

An independent facilitator is proposed to run the public launch meeting. The launch will outline what is known about the range of values and uses for the estuary, and issues about the estuary. It needs to include presentations on significant aspects of the estuary and its margins, to set the context for the project. These could be made by organisations such as the Ornithological Society of NZ, Tasman Environmental Trust, iwi agencies, Department of Conservation, Recreation users, and staff of the Councils.

The launch will provide a first public opportunity for people to identify their interests, concerns, proposals and preferences. As part of the launch, an outline of the possible further process and management of the project needs to be presented for discussion and subsequent adoption or amendment. At the launch, the identification of the membership of a governance group to represent all key interests and to steer the further steps in the process can be sought by consensus.

The launch will include a session for break-out groups to identify additional values and issues; and help in the initial stocktake of existing information, expertise, and other resources for the project.

The launch will clarify that participation and input in the project are voluntary.

9. POST-LAUNCH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Following work in the technical stages (see below), it will be necessary to run further community fora; perhaps as focussed workshops, with active steering by the governance group on the timing and focus for these. Once the vulnerability assessment is to hand in 2010, an updated summary of what is known about estuary values and the implications for this would need to be discussed publicly through another forum.

10. TECHNICAL STAGES

These comprise:

1. Desk-top and key-informant assessment of the state of the estuary and its margins, including an up-dated literature review. This is partly needed as background information for the public launch of the project, but is also likely to include follow-up from leads given at the launch.
2. Identification of any critical information gaps; i.e. gaps that are a bar to developing an adequately informed strategy. This is likely to be in response to the launch. It needs an assessment of what is critical – without committing the Councils to satisfying every good-to-know request.

3. A decision about whether to commission further information; or to proceed on the basis of current information.
4. Desk-top and key-informant assessment of values about the estuary and its margins, and threats to those values. This can commence immediately, and be augmented from leads that result from the launch.
5. Formulation of management goals, and desk-top and key informant review of current management measures, their effectiveness, and any significant gaps, including a community feedback process on these.
6. A decision about whether, and how, to address any gaps.
7. Drafting of proposals for an integrated management strategy to deliver statements of key management measures, amendments to those measures, or additional measures, across defined issues, including community feedback process.

TDC has budgeted for a “vulnerability assessment” of ecological values and threats. This will cover the general ecology of the estuary and extend to approximately 200 metres inland from the line of mean high water spring tides. This work is to be completed by April 2010.

11. TIMETABLE

| | Desk-top state of estuary and margins | Critical information gaps | Decision re further information | Values and threats to estuary and margins | Formulation of management goals and assessment of the effectiveness of current management measures | Decision re how to address management gaps | Drafting management strategy |
|------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|--|------------------------------|
| Sept | ↓ | ↓ | | ↓ | | | |
| Oct | ↓ | ↓ | | ↓ | | | |
| Nov | Public launch | | | | | | |
| Dec | ↓ | → | Decision (Councils) | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | |
| Jan | ↓ | | ? | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | |
| Feb | ↓ | | ? | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | |
| Mar | | | ? | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | |
| Apr | | | ? | Report due | → | Decision (Councils) | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| May | | | | | | | ↓ |
| Jun | | | | | | | ↓ |
| Jul | | | | | | | ↓ |
| Aug | | | | | | | Report to Councils and community |

12. FUNDING AND STAFF SUPPORT

Both councils are to provide key staff to provide advice, carry out the technical stages in conjunction with experts from the wider community, and to commission and brief the facilitator. Tasman District Council and Nelson City Council are to fund the facilitator, launch and further fora. Staff accountabilities rest with Steve Markham and Martin Workman, policy managers for each council, with Neil Jackson, Trevor James and Paul Sheldon as the key team of staff with collaborative support from a number of others in each Council.

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