

## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Environment & Planning Committee

**FROM:** Robert Smith, Environmental Information Manager

**REFERENCE:** B120, R10000

**SUBJECT:** **SUPPORT FOR A RAMSAR DESIGNATION FOR MANGARAKAU WETLAND, LAKE OTUHIE AND WESTHAVEN INLET - REPORT REP10-07-05 - Report prepared for meeting of 2 July 2010**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Council has been asked for a letter of support by the Friends of Mangarakau Swamp (FMS). The letter is to support an application for; Mangarakau wetland, Lake Otuhie and Westhaven Inlet to be designated a Ramsar site.

### 2. WHAT IS RAMSAR<sup>1</sup>

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance came into force in 1975 following a treaty signing in Ramsar (Iran) in 1971. New Zealand signed on 13 December 1976, one of the now 160 contracting parties. New Zealand presently has six sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance out of the total 1890 sites listed worldwide, Farewell Spit being one of these. The Ramsar Mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

### 3. PROPOSED SITES FOR RAMSAR DESIGNATION<sup>2</sup>

The boundary of the proposed Ramsar site at Whanganui Inlet largely follows the same boundary as the Westhaven (Te Tai Tapu) marine reserve / Westhaven (Whanganui Inlet) wildlife management. The only deviation from this boundary is the inclusion of the Mangarakau wharf and surrounding water, which are excluded from the marine reserve, to the mean spring high tide mark.

At Mangarakau Swamp the boundary follows a polygon encompassing the greatest extent of the wetland area on the eastern portion administered by the Department of Conservation, including within it the low spurs that reach into the swamp. The main road along the northern portion and the boundary of the NZ Native Forest

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1 <http://www.ramsar.org>

2 Details copied from the draft application prepared by the Friends of Mangarakau Swamp incorporated society

Restoration Trust land serve as a boundary along the western edge of the swamp. For the southernmost part of the swamp on land owned by Snake Creek Limited the boundary of the Ramsar site follows the same line as the QEII covenant on that property. Pockets of swamp on the western side of the main road administered by DoC are also included in the proposed Ramsar site.

At Lake Otuhie the lake edge serves as the boundary for the Ramsar site along the southern, western and northern sides. At the eastern end the boundary encompasses the area of swamp adjoining the lake. The boundaries of the Lake Otuhie Station wetlands follow fence lines surrounding those areas to exclude stock.

#### **4. LAND TENURE OF THE PROPOSED SITES**

The area is predominately administered by the Department of Conservation which is reviewing the draft application at present. The next largest landowner is the Native Forest Restoration Trust which owns the bulk of the Mangarakau wetland to whom the FMS are affiliated. There are two other private landowners upon whose land the application also covers. These are Lake Otuhie Station Limited and Snake Creek Limited and both have given their support.

This Council has a paper road (partially formed) running through the middle of the Mangarakau wetland. Clarification of the council's interest in this road is being sought at present. Additionally Network Tasman has a line traversing the Mangarakau wetland. The FMS have been asked to consult with Network Tasman regarding the Ramsar application.

#### **5. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN BY FRIENDS OF MANGARAKAU SWAMP**

The FMS has letters of support from the directly affected landowners; NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust, Lake Otuhie Station Limited and Snake Creek Limited. Additionally they have support from Manawhenua ki Mohua and the Golden Bay Community Board. FWS indicate that there is a mix of support from the wider community who surround the proposed area both for and against with some indicating that there are already sufficient controls in place for the Inlet. It should be noted that greater control is not an outcome of the Ramsar application, a greater recognition of the uses and values of the area is desired.

#### **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL**

The mandate of the convention is the wise use of the wetland without excluding the community that presently use or enjoy the wetland or its boundaries. It is not a document which introduces enforceable rules that replace any responsibility that Tasman District Council already has. Rather it is used to elevate the status of the wetland and act as a focus to establish the wise use and management of the wetland. The existing laws that cover the area now are still the rules that will govern once a site is designated.

For the recently designated Manawatu River mouth and estuary site (2005), the management plan included all those organisations that have jurisdiction over the area. This is used to focus work programmes to achieve benefit rather than duplication of effort. It would be expected that Tasman would work in a similar

fashion with the landowners and organisations with jurisdiction over the site. No demand for staff or financial resources is anticipated.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

A Ramsar listing is an excellent opportunity to elevate the status of the Mangarakau wetland, Lake Otuhie and Westhaven Inlet. It may also provide an opportunity to focus resources in the area by the owners and regulators. Potentially it will also lead to increased visits by tourists with an interest in natural areas. Lastly it puts the Tasman region on the map as showing a level of interest in the future of our wetlands.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. That Council receive this report**
- 2. That Council write a letter of support for the Ramsar application**

Robert Smith  
**Environmental Information Manager**