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Committee **Environment**
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Take Care, corporate volunteer and environmental restoration activities 2005-2006

1. Purpose

To provide the committee with a summary of the achievements and activities of Greater Wellington funded care groups, corporate groups and others during the financial year ended 30 June 2006.

2. Background

The *Take Care* programme provides funding, staff support and specialist advice to community groups working to restore the health of the region's most at risk ecosystem types. These include rivers, streams, wetlands, estuaries, coastal dunes and escarpments. The programme balances the joint objectives of restoring ecological sites with the delivery of environmental education, and gives the Council more opportunities to connect with the community.

The Annual Plan performance indicator for the programme is that existing groups are maintained and five new groups are established and assisted to the satisfaction of the Council and within budget. The groups supported in 2005-06 are discussed in section three and their key achievements are summarised in a table appended to this report (appendix one).

The Environmental Education Department also carries out a range of activities with corporate groups, community groups, and others designed to restore degraded ecosystems and in the process promote alternative ways of relating to the environment. The performance indicator in the Annual Plan for this work is similarly worded to the care group indicator. These achievements are discussed in section four.

3. Take Care

Greater Wellington has assisted groups from all over the region with 32 projects this year. 72% or 23 groups have been selected through the contestable fund process and are managed by staff in the Environment Management Division. The remainder are selected by Greater Wellington in response to identified needs in particular areas. Funding for these groups comes from the Department's budget. Three projects by community members in our regional parks and two Friends of the Rivers groups are funded in this way each year. Four Wairarapa groups are run out of the Catchment Management Division.

This year three new groups commenced projects on the Enaki Stream, Ngati Awa stream (a Waikanae River tributary) and Porirua Stream at Churton Park. Two further groups, Glenside Streamcare and Otari Wilton's Bush Trust, having completed a previous funding round, began new projects on the Porirua and Kaiwharawhara Streams. The latter group has joined with a group working in Trelissick Park on their new project. All the *Take Care* projects are well underway and the groups have made good progress this year, with the exception of just two groups. Otaki North Beach Care asked that their funding be suspended pending a decision about a new protocol for cutting the mouth of the Waitohu Stream. The Kapiti wetland group O Te Pua wound up in May after five years, following the departure from the district of the lead person. During its life, the group achieved increased legal protection for the wetland, raised awareness, cleared the wetland of willows and worked on the control of other weeds. Some of the landowners will continue to receive support and advice through the Wetland Incentives programme.

Six groups reached the end of their funding round at the end of June this year. Of these, three have submitted new applications and been approved to continue with new or expanded projects from 2006-07 onwards.

3.1 Geographic Spread

Table one below, shows the number of care groups in each district. A map, showing care group locations for all groups since 2000, is appended to this report (see appendix two). The Kapiti Coast continues to have the largest number of care groups in the region with 40% of all currently funded groups. While Porirua officially has only two groups, significant work has been done by corporate volunteers and community service workers in both the Horokiri and Kakaho catchments. *Take Care* staff also assist Kapiti-Mana Forest and Bird with their nursery and restoration project at Pauatahanui Inlet.

Table 1: Regional distribution of care groups

Regional distribution of groups in 2005-06		
Kapiti Coast	13	40%
Porirua	2	6%
Hutt Valley	6	19%
Wellington	5	16%
Wairarapa	6	19%
Total	32	100%

3.2 Range of Ecosystems

Table two below, shows the range of ecosystems being restored around the region. Freshwater projects (streams, rivers and wetlands) continue to be the most numerous, with over half of all projects involving riparian restoration. The two combination projects incorporate riparian, wetland and dune elements

Table 2: Ecosystem types being restored by care groups

Range of ecosystems being restored in 2005-06		
Streams and rivers	17	53%
Wetlands	5	16%
Coastal dunes	6	19%
Coastal escarpments	1	3%
Estuaries	1	3%
Combination	2	6%
Total	32	100%

3.3 Regional Highlights

It is difficult to summarise the achievements of this many groups succinctly. Appendix one contains details of the groups' efforts, and where they are working. However, some of the highlights for the year are as follows:

- There has been substantial progress with the removal of willows and replanting at the Moehau Stream in Upper Hutt;
- The Hulls Creek group received a grant from the Sustainable Management Fund (SMF) to construct a fish pass and remove willows. The willows have now been removed and planting of native species to replace them is underway;

- The project to restore the Silverstream Straight Wetland has been completed;
- The Waikanae Estuary group received \$39,000 from the SMF to enable it to expand its restoration work in the estuary. An additional \$24,000 has been allocated to the Department of Conservation to undertake pest plant and animal control in the reserve;
- The Otari-Wilton's Bush and Trelissick Park groups planted 3000 plants in their restoration area;
- At Riversdale, a second demonstration area of native grasses and ground covers has been established and a sand ladder constructed to give access to the beach. Acacia were removed from the reserve at the southern end of the beach;
- The Papawai group held two community planting days and, with help from Greytown School, planted over 1400 native trees and shrubs;
- There was extensive planting and restoration by the Friends of the Waikanae River (3000 plants) on the south bank of the river;
- The dune restoration project at Days Bay was completed, with the last pingao and spinifex being planted by Wellesley College students;
- 2100 plants were added to the Battle Hill wetland by students, Westpac employees, and community members on Arbor Day;
- Ongoing pest control and planting was carried out by the Friends of Maara roa at Cannon's Creek;
- The Glenside group planted 2000 native shrubs and grasses along the Porirua Stream near the Rowell's Road intersection
- The Friends of Owhiro Stream developed a brochure and signage to advertise their work and recruit new members, and continued removing weeds and replanting (planting 1500 plants).
- The Oku Coast Care group has made good progress restoring the rare original pingao bed at Island Bay. Some 2000 plants have been added.
- An external evaluation of *Take Care* was carried out which showed it is delivering its expected educational and social outcomes;
- A Conservation Award was made to the Otari-Wilton's Bush Care Group in August 2005 and the Manuka Street Group in Masterton received a Merit Award. The Trelissick Park, Manuka Street, and Henley Lake groups also received Weedbuster Awards.

There is no completely accurate record of the number of plants planted for the financial year, as most groups supplement the plants purchased using Greater

Wellington funds with those they have grown themselves. Territorial authorities often supply plants on an ad hoc basis as well. However, the 16 groups which keep records of their activity report planted 27,000 plants in the 2005 winter season.

3.4 Performance against budget

The budget for *Take Care* in 2005 – 2006 was \$280,000. Actual expenditure was \$235,000. The variation was due to staff time budgeted for *Take Care* in the Resource Policy and Environmental Education departments having to be devoted to other activities (e.g., wetland advice, RPS development, and other community restoration projects).

4. Corporate volunteer and environmental restoration projects

The Environmental Education Department carries out a range of ecological restoration projects with corporate volunteers, community groups, community service workers, and others. The aim is to restore degraded areas whilst generating greater awareness of the environment and encouraging the development of values that promote environmental responsibility. The projects are also intended to raise the profile of Greater Wellington. 2005-6 was a particularly busy year in this regard.

4.1 Corporate volunteers

On six occasions, businesses and organisations got involved in environmental care through the Corporate Volunteers programme. During last winter's planting season, IAG and BP staff planted 1500 trees to control river bank erosion at the Gray farm on the Kakaho Stream. These trees were provided from the Honda Tree Fund. Volunteers from IAG also worked on the Horokiri restoration project in October and NZI staff worked at Days Bay beach with the care group in December. In March, 66 people from ERMA spent a day removing weeds at Queen Elizabeth Park and in June volunteers from Accor Hotels worked at the Moehau Stream.

4.2 Horokiri, Kakaho and Mangaone streams

The restoration of the salt marsh at the Kakaho Stream at Pauatahanui has been completed. This has been undertaken over a number of years by a combination of volunteers, Forest and Bird members, and community service workers from the Corrections Department. Only maintenance should be needed on this site in future.

Community service workers have also continued restoring and replanting the Horokiri estuary. This project has been underway for the last five years and considerable progress has been made this year. Most of the south bank of the Horokiri has been planted with over 2000 plants having gone in in the 2005 season. There is room for more on the north bank but further work has been deferred while a walkway is being constructed for Porirua City Council along this stretch of the stream. A further 1500 trees were planted on the Mitchell property to reduce bank erosion just upstream of the Horokiri estuary. The Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet did most of this work in July and August 2005. These plants were provided from the Honda Tree Fund.

A further 500 Honda trees were planted at the Mangaone stream mouth by residents of Te Horo beach. This supplemented the restoration planting undertaken by the Te Horo Beach care group the previous year. Honda also supplied trees for the Makara Peak restoration project and to the Paraparaumu dune care group (DUNE).

4.3 Restoration Day

Restoration Day, the annual celebration and training event for people restoring the environment, was held on May 27. This event has been held every year since 2001 to celebrate the work of volunteers involved in ecological restoration throughout the region. It is organised by the key agencies that support community projects (the Department of Conservation, Greater Wellington Regional Council, the New Zealand Ecological Restoration Network and Hutt City Council). Although labour intensive, it is very popular and provides considerable scope for learning restoration techniques and developing linkages between groups.

Eastbourne Community Centre provided an excellent venue for this year's event. The day was attended by about 180 people who enjoyed a wide range of specialist workshops and field trips to East Harbour Regional Park and the sand dunes in Robinson's Bay being restored by the Eastbourne Dunes Protection Group.

4.4 Advice

Throughout the year, staff are called on to give advice on restoration and environmental care to schools, land owners, community groups, and many more. Two instances of note were the assistance provided to a school for people operating earth moving machinery in the Wairarapa and for the Youth Environment Forum. For the former, we explained the biology and working of stream ecosystems and did some simple stream testing with the trainees to highlight the ecological values of water ways. For the Ministry for the Environment's annual Youth Environment Forum, which brings teenagers from across New Zealand to Wellington to discuss environmental issues and meet key decision makers, Greater Wellington provided a field trip to Petone Beach to study the beach ecosystem and learn about its physical processes.

4.5 Trees for Survival

As in previous years, assistance and plants have been provided to a dozen primary and secondary schools with Trees for Survival programmes. Plants to the value of \$2,500 were supplied to schools, along with advice and assistance in finding suitable planting sites. In most cases, these schools undertake planting on their own.

4.6 Performance against budget

The budget for this work was \$48,000 in 2005-06. Actual expenditure was \$77,000. This is due to the additional staff time put into these projects this year, and the need to hire short term assistance to cover a staff vacancy.

5. Conclusion

The *Take Care* and corporate volunteers programmes have a good spread of groups and restoration sites throughout the region and support restoration projects in a wide range of threatened ecosystems. Community planting days are very well supported, with several groups reporting attendances of over 40 people at these events. In addition, most care groups also carry out regular working bees. Most groups have made significant progress on their projects and provide an excellent showcase of what communities can do to look after and restore their local environment.

6. Communication

The council's web page is the main source of information about the programme and the activities of groups. Several groups produce and circulate their own newsletters. The activities and achievements of care groups frequently feature in local newspapers around the region. An article for publication summarising the year's care group achievements will be prepared.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the report; and*
- 2. Note the contents.*

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Appendix 1: Care groups funded by Greater Wellington in 2005-06

Appendix 2: Map of Greater Wellington Care Groups since 2000