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Memo To: Councillor Arbuckle

Copy To: Alan Johnson

From: Matt Oliver, Dave Aires, Robin Dunn

Subject: Wairau River Regional Park proposal for MLG

At meeting was held between Dave Aires, Robin Dunn and Matt Oliver in an attempt to understand what constraints and possibilities exist to creating a Wairau River Regional Park.

The original concept was proposed as a thought experiment by Dave Aires due to the increased public use the area is receiving. While some of this is positive recreational uses, much is anti-social and destructive. It is felt that enhancing the area by primarily controlling public access would improve public behaviour and provide a large-scale recreational area within the existing flood reserve. The potential extent of the reserve is indicated in Figure1. The total area is around 482 hectares (but this only includes the southern bank of the river).

Key Points

A number of key points came from this meeting:

- Flood protection must be a primary concern. The area is first and foremost a floodway reserve. The environment is a dynamic one and all activities need to include hydrological considerations.
 - Hazards in the area can include unexpected bank or bed erosion; frequent high energy deep fast flowing water
- The area already has substantial amounts of existing assets and activities. These include:
 - Stopbanks – No activities can occur on or within 8 m of them.
 - Floodgates and outfall channels - must not be obstructed, integral component of designated land drainage mechanisms and conveyance of ecological and biodiversity values
 - Berm lands – assist with protecting stop banks from erosion, providing amenity value and a source of income.
 - River protection plantings – assist with protecting stop banks by reducing water velocities, filtering sediments and improving water quality; an economic and sustainable land use
- Access ways- Access for heavy equipment is often needed urgently and good access must be maintained.

We concluded that Primary Management Goals can be considered, as follows:

- Goal 1 - River management and flood mitigation objectives
- Goal 2 - Protect and enhance the natural environment
- Goal 3 - Provide for safe and balanced recreation while minimising conflict between widely differing user groups.

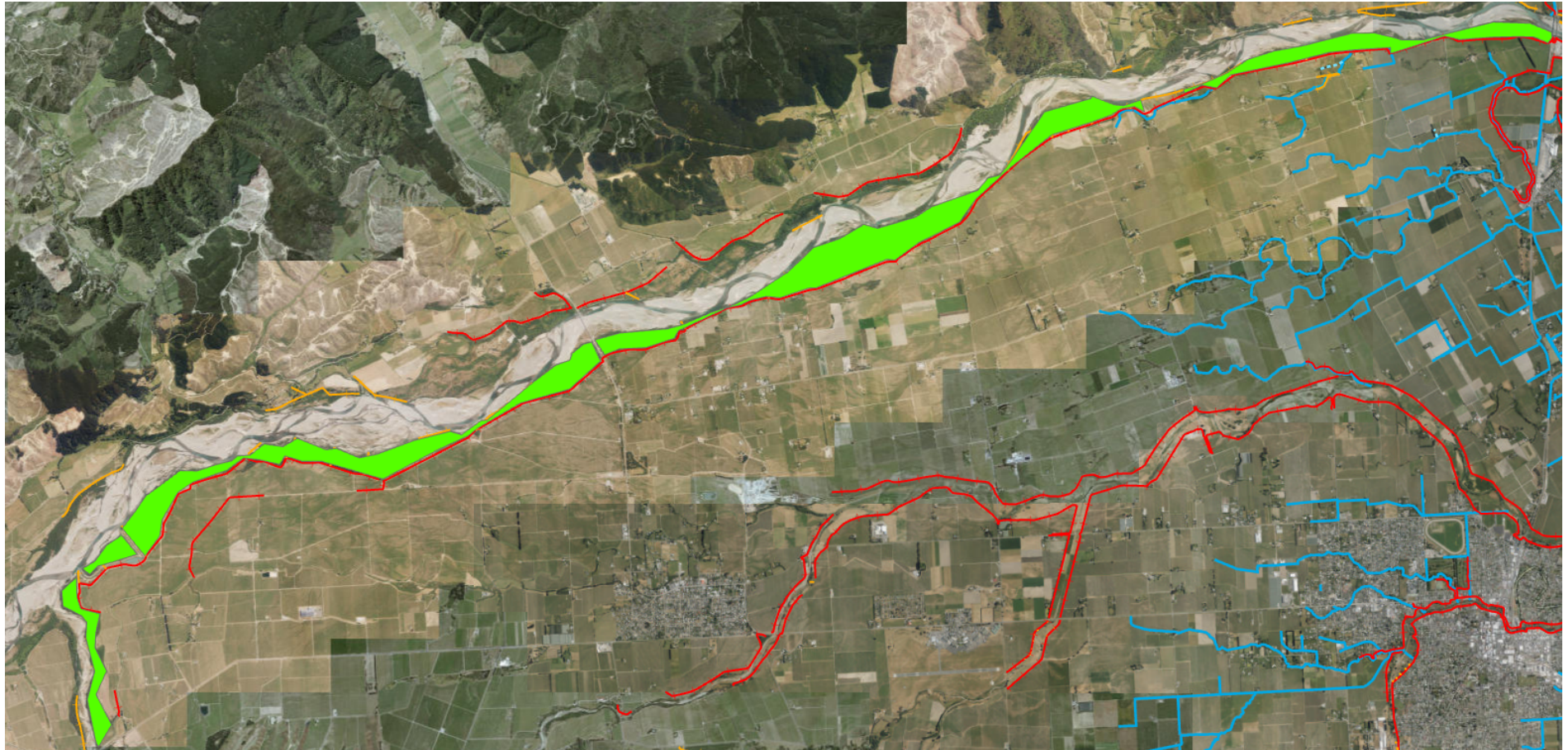


Figure 1: Potential River Reserve area marked in green from SH1 bridge to SH63 Bridge across the Waihopai River . Red and yellow lines are stop banks, blue lines are managed waterways. Total Area is approx. 482 ha

Current State of the river reserve

Activities within the river reserve

Some Council facilitated activities occur in the river reserve. It is important to note any activity or change to the current land use must meet flood protection requirements as its sole purpose. These activities include:

- Leased land- Haymaking, grazing etc. These leases should be flexible enough to enable changes to them with short-notice. Ending or modifying leases means Council becomes responsible for maintenance costs (and should consider loss of revenue into flood protection scheme).
- Council forestry. This serves as both income generation and flood protection. Hazards are created around forest management such as pruning, thinning and harvest.
- Winery wastewater disposal. This activity can produce odour and requires regular management input often involving vehicles.
- Gravel extraction- means heavy vehicle traffic on shared roadways.
- Southern Valleys Irrigation System. The intakes and channels should be considered hazardous due to deep fast flowing water.

All of these activities will not cease and need to be considered as part of the overall plan

Public activities that currently occur informally are:

- Informal walking trails – these extend almost the entire length of the river on the south bank from Spring Creek to the Waihopai River Bridge. Includes:
 - Dog walking
 - Horse riding.
 - Mountain biking
- Motorised activities also occur. Some of these may be illegal and can cause damage to river assets or interfere with other activities. These include:
 - Motor cross biking
 - Four-wheel driving
- Wine cycle tours – along stop banks.
- Other Recreational activities:
 - Swimming
 - Fishing
 - Canoeing
 - Rafting
 - jet boating

Reserve and river access can be enhanced and promoted to better cater for these activities. This would enhance the Wairau River as a more valuable community asset.

Anti-social behaviour within the river reserve includes:

- Illegal dumping of both organic and inorganic materials
- Damage to stop banks and other river protection assets from vehicles and vandalism
- Illegal fire wood cutting and removal
- Risk of camp fires and parties
- Illegal freedom camping in high risk areas

A key component of the plan would be to create defined access points and parking areas, with vehicle access beyond these locations for Council designated activities only. Also increased public access and use of the reserve alongside effective vehicular controls would discourage illegal activities and increase the likelihood of offenders being caught.

Pest Plants

The prevalence of pest plant species (old mans beard, barberry, sycamore and other invasive climbing or woody weed species) in the reserve should also be considered. Control of these and replacement with more suitable plantings is expensive and time consuming.

Opportunities within the river reserve

While there are several issues to be addressed, there remains a wide scope for the enhancement of the River reserve. The reserve has a number of special characteristics that would benefit from enhancement. These include:

- Proximity to a large, braided river
- Isolation from populated areas
- A mixture of vistas and viewpoints.

Other activities that could be further encouraged and enhanced include:

- Swimming (in safe managed swimming holes)
- Picnicking
- Increased walking and cycling
- Fishing, canoeing, rafting, jet boating
- Formal 'designated' areas for motor sports
- Tree planting
- biodiversity including:
 - riverbed nesting birdlife (often transient)
 - freshwater fish especially in side streams such as Cravens Creek
- General amenity enhancements

National examples

There are a number of examples of this kind of river reserve in the country. Auckland Council Regional Parks provide a conceptual example but these are mainly developed around beaches. A smaller example is the Taylor River floodway but larger examples include the Ashley River regional Park and Waimakariri Regional Park in Canterbury



The overall scale of this project would be well beyond the financial capability of the Group on its own. However, it does fit with the Groups enhance and advisory roles. One of the Groups goals is to champion landscape projects on public land and to give visibility to these sites and projects by promoting and publicising them. Another benefit is an increase in opportunity for community social well-being, which

when tethered with existing assets such as Taylor River Floodway Reserve and the Wither Hills Farm Park and the wider Wairau Plains and Richmond Range landscapes makes an ensemble of world class natural environs easily accessible.

Future management options

It is most likely that this project would be carried out under the auspices of the Rivers Section with input from Reserves, and other internal specialists input as required. The work would likely be carried out as part of the normal function of these sections but an overarching strategy would be required to guide the work. Into the future, more funding will be required by these sections to ensure maintenance work can be carried out.

We suggest that the Group considers the following:

- Is the Group is willing to promote the concept?
- How the Group might best contribute. Possibilities include:
 - At Governance level:
 - Assist Rivers with preparing a Strategy document that fleshes out the above Goals and underlying objectives to develop a Community Vision. MLG would then become a main contributor/facilitator for those issues best understood by this group.
 - Assist Rivers with the formation of a Management Plan which supports district, regional and national policy statements. This can then be adopted by the community and council.
 - At Local Level:
 - Commissioning a conceptual plan targeting Landscape values and highlighting first few areas to work on.
 - Publicising the concept
 - Education / signage
- Which areas should be worked on first?
 - Capitalising on existing high profile areas such as SH1, SH6 and SH63
 - Easily accessible and secured areas