

STAFF REPORT

TO: Community Services Committee

FROM: Community Services Manager

REFERENCE: C780

DATE: February 2007

SUBJECT: Proposed Tasman Aquatic Multi-Sport Development
At Rabbit Island

PURPOSE/REASON FOR REPORT

To report on the processes/consents required in relation to the Tasman Aquatic Multi-Sport Development at Rabbit Island and to also discuss some of the pros and cons of such a development.

BACKGROUND

At the October 2006 Community Services Meeting a presentation on the proposed Tasman Aquatic Multi-Sport Development was given by Kevin Strickland and Ben Burger. While there was general support for the concept, the Committee resolved that staff report back on the implications and pros and cons of this development in regard to Council processes.

COMMENT/DISCUSSION

The planning implications of this proposal are complex, and therefore feedback was sought from relevant staff on what consents would be required and these are broken down under the following headings:

Rabbit Island Management Plan

As this proposal does not comply with this plan, if Council were to support it in principal then it would need to initiate a review of the plan, which would be required to be carried out under the special consultative procedure as per the Local Government Act 2002. This public process could run parallel to any planning public process.

Consent Requirements

1 Restricted Coastal Activities

The following two activities proposed as part of the development are both restricted activities.

- Excavation/disturbance (500m³) of coastal marine area
- Impoundment of approximately 22 hectares of coastal marine area

Restricted Coastal Activities are automatically publicly notified and the applications are required to be considered by a committee of the Council and by one person appointed by the Minister of Conservation. The committee then makes a recommendation on the application to the Minister of Conservation for his/her decision.

2 Structures in the Coastal Marine Area

Any structures erected for the launching, haul out, mooring, berthage or storage of craft etc. are non-complying activities in the Waimea Estuary as it is identified in the Proposed Tasman Resource Management Plan as having nationally important ecosystem values and contains sites occupied by endangered vegetation and birds.

3 Discharges to Coastal Marine Area During Construction

A discharge consent under Section 15 of the Resource Management Act 1991 would be required during the construction period.

4 Land Disturbance

A land disturbance consent is required for any disturbance within 200 metres of mean high water springs.

5 Land Use Consents

Land use consents would be required for any structures erected within 200 metres of mean high water springs.

6 Occupation

On a more positive note – exclusive occupation of the area during regattas and events may be easier to resolve if the provisions of the Navigation Safety Bylaw were used. As the area would be navigable water, that bylaw would apply. The bylaw contains provisions to allow the Harbour Master to temporarily reserve any area of water for the running of particular events by specific groups. Those provisions and the general powers of Harbour Masters should effectively control traffic in any such area, excluding the public as necessary.

PROS AND CONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The Committee have asked for this report to include the pros and cons of the development and the following is an attempt to do this with the information to hand. This is obviously only a start that may help Councillors in considering this matter.

Pros

- Provide a much needed facility in the Nelson/Tasman Region.
- Provide a facility that meets a national need in a central area of the country.
- Many water sports would benefit from the facility, e.g. rowing, kayaking, water-skiing, triathlons and duathlons etc.
- Increase in visitor numbers to the region – two small and one large regatta per year equals estimated 10,000 bed nights and the MAADI cup attracts 8,000 to 10,000 people a day for eight days.
- The Traverse has been badly compromised for many years and the draft proposals provides:
 - weirs that will allow as natural as possible water flows to prevent silting up;
 - increased indigenous grasses and trees in the area of the Traverse.
- Because of the protection offered by both Rabbit and Rough Islands the area is protected from the Regions prevailing winds.
- The Forestry Managers have indicated that ongoing forest operations with radiata pine could be managed alongside recreational use of the estuary with careful planning.

Cons

- Affects on the forestry along the edges of the Traverse and future reduction in forestry profits.
- The estuary in the Traverse will be extensively modified by such development, e.g. course, viewing areas etc.
- There maybe some impact on the bird life in the areas although with the enhanced plantings proposed this could offset these issues.
- There will definitely be disruption during excavations.
- The Waimea Estuary is recognised nationally for its ecological issues and the shutting off of a significant area by the use of weirs will be seen as having a major impact on the estuary.
- The issue of controlling public access to the islands especially at times of high fire danger.
- The effects of future seal level rises.

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received, and a copy be forwarded to the Trust for their information.

L L Kennedy
Community Services Manager