

STAFF REPORT

TO: Enterprise Subcommittee

FROM: Jeremy Butler, Environmental Education Officer

REFERENCE:

DATE: 23 January 2008

SUBJECT: Reservoir Creek Native Forest Remnant – Issues and Recommendations

PURPOSE/REASON FOR REPORT

This report is to inform the Committee of the work that is being done by Council staff in the upper Reservoir Creek catchment and the report that has been commissioned. This report also seeks to inform the Committee of the significance and vulnerabilities of the native forest part of the upper Reservoir Creek catchment with regard to the impending logging of the surrounding *Pinus radiata* forestry.

Finally, the report makes recommendations on the future management of the forest remnant and the surrounding forestry land.

BACKGROUND

Since mid 2006 the Tasman District Council has been running a programme, partially funded by the Ministry for the Environment through its Sustainable Management Fund (SMF), to restore and enhance Reservoir Creek, and to create public awareness and ownership of the Creek.

The 06/07 SMF project focussed on the lower catchment (below Hill Street) whereas the 07/08 SMF project is focussing on the upper catchment above Hill Street.

PF Olsen has advised that the pines surrounding the upper catchment native forest remnant (see Appendix 1) are to be harvested during late 2008. Therefore TDC staff have included an assessment of the potential impacts of the harvest on the ecological and aesthetic values of the Creek in the 07/08 SMF project, as concerns are held about the immediate and long term impacts of the logging and ongoing management of the land as production forestry.

In November 2007 Brad Myer of Te Ngahere (a native forest management and restoration company) was engaged to produce a report on the native forest remnant.

The purposes of the report were, firstly, to provide a professional assessment of the values and vulnerabilities of the remnant and, secondly, to provide an assessment of the likely effects of the logging of the surrounding *Pinus radiata* forestry block. Also, Mr Myer was asked to provide recommendations for the logging operation and future management of the native forest remnant.

Mr Myer's report is attached as Appendix 2 and is central to the rest of this report. The content and findings of the Myer report are not repeated here and are taken as read.

Clearly, the forest remnant has significant values due to its high level of representativeness, diversity and the presence of important species such as tawa and nesting wood pigeons (kereru). Also clear is the very intense pressure on the remnant due to the presence of a wide range of animal and plant pests.

Other observations from fresh water ecologists including Trevor James (including Tasman District Council's Resource Scientist, Freshwater) show that the stream upstream of the reservoir has important fishery values with banded kokopu and the chronically threatened longfin eel being present. There has also been an, as yet, unsubstantiated sighting of a chronically threatened giant kokopu in the upper stream. Further fish surveys will be occurring in late January 2008 to obtain a better understanding of the life in Reservoir Creek.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Section 6 of the Resource Management Act 1991 states as a fundamental principle of the Act:

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons ... managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:

(c) The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna:

Mr Myer's report clearly states that this remnant is significant in the context of the above quotation from the Act. The fishery values of the creek also suggest that the catchment has significant ecological value. With this in mind the following issues are relevant.

2008 logging operation

After discussing the logging with PF Olsen's Peter Wilks who will be in charge of the operation it is understood that an access road is planned through the native forest remnant. While it may be possible to avoid most of the large emergent native trees during the construction of the road, it will cause serious damage to the integrity and natural character of the forest. It will also provide a prime opportunity for weeds to gain a foothold in the interior of the forest.

Ongoing weed control along the length of this road is therefore necessary to prevent invasion.

Mr Myer's report also sets out the likely effects of the pine logging on the native forest. These are:

1. Exposure of the forest margin;
2. Direct physical damage to native vegetation from the logging
3. Weed invasion
4. Spray drift
5. Sedimentation

Of the above some can be solved through careful work by the logging contractor.

Items 1, 3 and 5 however are more long term concerns and are further discussed below.

Future management

The removal of the pines around the native remnant will expose an unnatural open forest edge which will provide opportunities for weed invasion and infestation.

A programme of weed control and the establishment of boundary planting of more dense native species will essentially "plug the gap" on the margins of the native forest.

Sediment runoff will also be an adverse effect of the removal of the pines. Much greater volumes of stormwater are expected to enter Reservoir Creek as a result of the removal of the pines and it is imperative for the persistence of aquatic life in the stream that significant volumes of sediment do not enter the stream. This is best managed by the forestry contractor operating effective sediment control measures and maintaining the runoff as a diffuse flow through the native forest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That this report be received by the Subcommittee
- That the Subcommittee instruct their forest management contractor (PF Olsen) to take all practicable precautions to minimise the damage inflicted on the margins of the native forest during the logging operation and to effectively control sediment to minimise the volume entering the native forest.
- That the Subcommittee provide funds to enable the active control of weeds and pests around the margin of the native forest and through the length of the new road on an ongoing basis, and to plant and maintain native boundary species along the margins of the native forest as recommended in Mr Myer's report.