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Wellington Botanical Society

Wellington Botanical Society Inc.
Box 10412
WELLINGTON.

Michael Gee
Secretary, Whitireia Park Board
C/o Wellington Conservancy
Department of Conservation
Box 5086
WELLINGTON.

23-11-95

R26 660 105 Cook.

Dear Michael,

THE BOTANICAL/ECOLOGICAL VALUES OF WHITIREIA PARK.

Thank you for the invitation to submit material on the botanical/ecological values of Whitireia Park, for consideration at the Board meeting on 5 December.

BACKGROUND

The Wellington Botanical Society was founded in 1939 and has a membership of approximately 350, including professional and amateur botanists. Copies of our brochure are enclosed. We aim:

> *To encourage the study of Botany in all its branches and the N.Z. flora in particular;*
>
> *To create an interest in and foster an appreciation of N.Z. native plants, especially in the field;*
>
> *To collect and disseminate knowledge and encourage the cultivation of native plants;*
>
> *To advocate the protection of scenic reserves, National Parks, sanctuaries and similar reserves in their native state;*

As stated in our submission last November on the proposal to extend the Whitireia Park golf course, we consider the peninsula an important, accessible public amenity ideally suited to its present purpose as expressed in the Management Objectives.

Our members are familiar with the peninsula's ecosystems, having botanised the area over many years, the last time only three weeks ago when we looked in vain for new occurrences of the endangered clifftop daisy *Leptinella nana*. For your information, our updated species list is appended to this letter. Plants which are designated rare vulnerable or susceptible are highlighted.

COASTAL FOREST REMNANT

In botanising the tiny, indigenous forest remnant in Onehunga Bay, we were pleased to see considerable regeneration. Pasture grass between the trees is gradually being shaded out, and this will allow an understorey of ferns, sedges and herbs to develop. However, for the forest to be self-sustaining, we recommend the fence be extended to include the whole catchment. If this is not possible at once, perhaps it could be done in stages. Areas of vegetation under a hectare in area are subject to what is called the "edge" effect, whereby wind damage and subsequent dehydration can eventually mean the death of the plants. Considerable ecosystem decline has already occurred in this remnant. For instance we found only one specimen of the large-leaved milk-tree, *Streblus banksii*, and epiphytes, particularly some common epiphytic orchids, were few. With appropriate management strategies however, this remnant, already an important seed source, could become an outstandingly valuable, local example of Wellington's coastal forest.

Such an important natural resource must not be allowed to deteriorate further. We believe that under the Resource Management Act, the Board has a duty to take every feasible action to protect and conserve it for posterity. A pest-eradication programme (installing and regular maintenance of bait stations) would improve the survival chances of the remaining, battered kohekohe trees, whose flowers and fruit are preferentially devoured by possums.

CLIFF VEGETATION

In general, cliffs are refuges for indigenous plants, and it is still possible that some of Wellington's rare species survive undiscovered on Whitireia's cliffs. While botanising there we noted that the indigenous vegetation is in steady decline as a result of fires and the subsequent invasion of exotic species. This decline is unlikely to be reversed unless barriers are erected to prevent people from dumping car wrecks such as those which at present litter the site.

VEHICLES

We see a need for a Park policy on vehicles off-road, so that indigenous vegetation in sensitive areas such as the foreshore, is given an opportunity to recover from fires, litter, and vehicle damage. Ideally there should be barriers here as well, and a requirement to use the existing carpark.

SUPERVISION/VANDALISM/STOCK DAMAGE

There appears to be inadequate supervision of the Park, resulting in vandalism (for instance the toilet block has been vandalised recently). Increased supervision and strategically-placed, educative notices might help to raise public awareness and reduce the thoughtless and destructive behaviour which at present mars the Park's undoubted scenic and conservation values.

Stock damage to the track system has been extensive in places. This inconveniences walkers, is bad publicity for the Park, and causes siltation of the Onepoto inlet, with resultant damage to the estuarine ecosystems. Estuaries are among the most endangered ecosystems nationwide, and this estuary is one of very few left in the Wellington region. We ask that when the stocking lease comes up for renewal, the Board consider reducing the stocking levels to allow the ecosystems to recover.

ONEPOTO STREAM CATCHMENT

The upper reaches of the Onepoto Stream support small populations of indigenous grasses, sedges and rushes, surviving among the pasture grass. The lower reaches contain remnant coastal scrub and wetland species which should be fenced to allow for regeneration. In the True Left tributary there is a large, male Totara, (*Podocarpus totara)* which the Board wisely fenced some years ago. This sole survivor is a unique genetic resource. Perhaps the Board would consider planting near it, seedling totara from the nearest true-wild source, to provide the nucleus of a totara restoration programme. The resultant trees could be planted out in e.g. the Onepoto remnant, and/or in some of the already-fenced clusters of trees, eventually replacing the planted karo, which are not native to this region.

WEEDS

Massive invasions of weed species in the Park such as boneseed and boxthorn are of concern to us, as is the pampas outside the toilet block, (probably planted in error, having been mistaken for toetoe, *Cortaderia sp.*): it should be immediately removed.

CONCLUSION

The Society would like to see better protection of the existing indigenous ecosystems and a vigorous programme of propagation, planting and protection of appropriately-sourced indigenous species. Park usage for casual, unstructured recreation should continue but should not be allowed to further degrade or compromise the outstanding natural values of Whitireia Park.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Mitcalfe, Vice-pres., Wellington Botanical Society Inc.

Aciphylla	squarrosa					
Adiantum	cunninghamii					
Asplenium	flaccidum x terrestre					
Asplenium	obtusatum					
Asplenium	terrestre	ssp maritima				
Asplenium	oblongifolium					
Asplenium	flabellifolium					
Asplenium	hookerianum					
Asplenium	colensoi					
Asplenium	polyodon					
Asplenium	gracillimum					
Atriplex	sp					
Australina	pusilla					
Azolla	rubra					
Blechnum	"lowland"					
Blechnum	filifolium					
Brachyglottis	repanda					
Beilchmiedia	tawa					
Calystegia	tuguriorum					
Calystegia	soldanella					
Cardamine	sp					
Carex	breviculmis					
Carex	coriacea					
Carex	flagellifera					
Carex	lessoniana					
Carex	pumila					
Carex	virgata					
Carmichaelia	arborea var					
Cassinia	leptophylla					
Centella	uniflora					
Clematis	forsteri					
Colobanthus	muelleri					
Convolvulus	sp					
Coprosma	areolata					
Coprosma	crassifolia					
Coprosma	propinqua	ssp propinqua				
Coprosma	propinqua x robusta					
Coprosma	repens	ssp repens				
Coprosma	rhamnoides					
Cortaderia	toetoe					
Corynocarpus	laevigatus					
Craspedia	uniflora	var maritima				
Crassula	sieberiana					
Cyathea	dealbata					
Cyathodes	juniperina					
Cyperus	ustulatus					
Dichelachne	crinata					
Dichondra	repens					
Dichondra	brevifolia					
Disphyma	australe					
Drymoanthus	adversus					
Dysoxylum	spectabile					

Einadia	triandra					
Elymus	rectisetus					
Epilobium	nummularifolium					
Festuca	multinodis					
Galium	propinquum					
Geniostoma	rupestre	var. ligustrifolium				
Geranium	sessiliflorum					
Gnaphalium	audax					
Gnaphalium	luteo-album agg					
Gnaphalium	limosum					
Gnaphalium	gymnocephalum					
Gonocarpus	aggregatus					
Griselinia	lucida					
Haloragis	erecta					
Hebe	elliptica	var crassifolia				
Hebe	stricta	var macroura				
Hedycarya	arborea					
Helichrysum	aggregatum					
Histiopteris	incisa					
Hydroctyle	heteromeria					
Hydrocotyle	moschata					
Hydrocotyle	sp (H. novae-zelandiae var montana)					
Hypolepis	lactea					
Isolepis	cernua					
Isolepis	nodosa					
Isolepis	prolifer					
Juncus	australis					
Juncus	distegus					
Juncus	gregiflorus					
Juncus	maritimus	var australiensis				
Juncus	planifolius					
Juncus	pallidus					
Kunzea	ericoides					
Lastareopsis	glabella					
Lastraeopsis	velutina					
Lagenifera	pumila					
Leptinella	dioica	ssp monoica				
Leptinella	dioica	ssp monoi x Leptinella squalida ssp squalida				
Leptinella	dispersa	ssp dispersa				
Leptinella	nana					
Leptinella	squalida	ssp squalida				
Leptinella	tenella					
Leptocarpus	similis					
Leptospermum	scoparium					
Leucopogon	fraseri					
Lilaeopsis	sp					
Linum	monogynum					
Lobelia	anceps					

Lophomyrtus	bullata					
Lophomytus	obcordata					
Luzula	banksiana	var banksiana				
Macropiper	excelsum					
Melicope	ternata					
Melicytus	ramiflorus					
Melicytus	obovatus	"cook strait"				
Metrosideros	perforata					
Metrosideros	diffusa					
Microtis	unifolia					
Muehlenbeckia	complexa					
Muehlenbeckia	australis					
Myoporum	laetum					
Myrsine	australis					
Nertera	setulosa					
Olearia	paniculata					
Olearia	solandri					
Ophiglossum	coriaceum					
Oxalis	exilis					
Paesia	scaberula					
Parsonsia	heterophylla					
Pellaea	rotundifolia					
Pennantia	corymbosa					
Peperomia	urvilleana					
Phormium	cookianum					
Phymatosorus	pustulatus					
Phymatosorus	scandens					
Pittosporum	tenuifolium					
Plagianthus	divaricatus					
Plantago	raoulii					
Poa	cita					
Podocarpus	totara					
Polystichum	richardii					
Pseudopanax	crassifolius					
Pseudopanax	arboreus x crassifolius					
Pterostylis	banksii					
Pteridium	esculentum					
Pteris	macilenta					
Puccinellia	stricta	var suborbicularis				
Pyrrosia	eleagnifolia					
Ranunculus	acaulis					
Ranunculus	reflexus					
Raoulia	sp (unnamed)					
Rubus	cissoides					
Rubus	schmidelioides					
Rytidosperma	unarede					
Sarcocornia	quinqueflora					
Schoenoplectus	validus					
Scleranthus	biflorus					
Selliera	radicans					

Senecio	minimus					
Senecio	lautus					
Sonchus	kirkii					
Spergularia	media					
Stellaria	parviflora					
Stellaria	dissipiens					
Streblus	banksii					
Tetragonia	trigyna					
Thelymitra	longifolia					
Triglochin	striata					
Trisetum	antarcticum					
Typha	orientalis					
Wahlenbergia	colensoi					
Wahlenbergia	gracilis					
Zoysia	minima					