



3. SHEPARDS STREAM WETLAND PURCHASE - 206 LOWER STYX ROAD

Officer responsible Water Services Manager	Author Bob Hopkins and Andrew Crossland Bill Morgan, Property Services Officer LD-001-56
Corporate Plan Output: New Assets (Waterway and Wetlands 9.3.45)	

The purpose of this report is to consider the purchase of part of the property situated at 206 Lower Styx Road adjacent to Bottle Lake Plantation for wetland restoration purposes.

BACKGROUND

Shepards Stream, a tributary of the Styx River, was the old outfall from Bottle Lake and once flowed around the foot of the Bottle Lake Plantation sand dunes. Past records show that ground levels within the lower catchment are equal to or slightly higher than the maximum recorded water levels of 10.36m in the Styx. Land near the Styx River was flooded in the past and drainage work and a pumping station installed during the 1970s were constructed as a result.

At the Jeffreys property, at 206 Lower Styx Road, north of the legal road joining Lower Styx Road to the Plantation, an area of low land at the foot of the sand dune has remnant native wetland plants. In the winter it is too wet to be grazed. The area concerned is shown as Lot 4 on the tabled plan S22027/1 and contains approximately 1.593 ha.

Pre-European landforms in this area were dominated by dune ridges and associated inter-dune hollows. The wetter dune hollows contained permanent or seasonal ponds (such as Bottle Lake). Most dune hollows, however, contained ephemeral marshes dominated by rushes or by turf forming salt-meadow vegetation. Under the sandy topsoil old estuarine mud confirms that this area was once a dune lake area.

Commonly occurring species of birds expected to use an inter-dune pond include pukeko, grey duck, shoveler, grey teal, scaup, harrier, kingfisher and pied stilt. Restoration of the dune hollow would also attract spur winged plover as well as seasonal populations of white faced heron, and welcome swallow.

Within the Christchurch City area, and indeed within the Pegasus Bay coastal strip, inter-dune hollows are now scarce. Many were covered by drifting sands in the late 19th –early 20th century when overgrazing caused serious erosion. Others were drained and/or filled for farming or forestry land uses.

The restoration of a dune–hollow type habitat at 206 Lower Styx Road would be a useful link in the chain of wetlands and natural habitats found within the Christchurch coastal area. It would reinforce the north-south link, offering a “stepping stone” between the lower Styx River, Janet Stewart Reserve, and Brooklands Lagoon in the north; and Bottle Lake, Travis Swamp and the Avon River in the south. It would also provide a considerable volume of storage for flooding and reduce the peak flood flow that is currently pumped into the Styx River.

From a wildlife perspective, the ideal development of the site would be to expand and enhance the existing low wetland area; develop a dune hollow marsh habitat as well as some open wet/boggy grassland and to create ephemeral ponding area. Beyond the wetland area a small area of bush, similar to Riccarton Bush, would be planted as this can withstand periodic flooding.

A small area of remnant sand dune to the north of the legal road stands several metres above the wetland area and will provide an excellent viewing platform. The legal road, which rises over a larger sand dune, is used by runners as part of a route through Bottle Lake Plantation, along the Styx returning to the car park at Waitikiri Drive. Staff at Bottle Lake Plantation are keen to see this area planted as they believe this wetland will be an attractive addition to the park.

PROPERTY DETAILS

At the time the owners were approached they were in the process of subdividing the property into two lifestyle blocks containing 4 ha and 5.95ha respectively and held subdivision consent. The owners’ intention was to sell the front lot containing the house and to construct a new home for themselves on the rear lot.

As a consequence of the Council’s approach, they are prepared to sell the wetland area to the Council subject to it undertaking the necessary survey to define the area and to provide them with two complying lifestyle blocks for the balance. The proposed subdivision is depicted on the tabled plan S22027/1 and it will be noted that four lots are to be created. Lot 1 contains the existing house and as indicated is to be subsequently sold by the current owners. Lots 2 and 3 containing 4.3670 ha are to be retained by the current owners and held in one Certificate of Title with a right-of-way connecting the two to be formed over Lot 4 which is the lot the Council is to acquire as a wetland. The right-of-way will follow the existing track which currently connects the two areas. Once the subdivision is completed it is the owners’ intention to build a new residence for themselves on Lot 2.

To determine the land's value the Council engaged the services of Ford Baker, registered public valuers, the details of which are included the Public Excluded section of the report. Agreement has been reached to acquire the area subject to formal approval, with the Council agreeing to meet the costs of survey estimated to cost approximately \$7,000 together with fencing the proposed reserve boundaries at an estimated cost of \$3,500.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

The purchase will be funded from the Water Services Unit's Waterway and Enhancement Fund and will come to charge in the 2000/01 financial year. A total of \$1,009,000 has been allocated of which \$561,000 is already committed.

The above report was before the Shirley/Papanui Community Board at its meeting on 31 May 2000. The Board supported the proposal to purchase part of the property for wetland restoration purposes.

Recommendation: That the property be acquired on the terms and conditions contained in the public excluded section of this report.