

## 5. STYX RIVER ESPLANADE RESERVE PURCHASE

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The purpose of this report is to consider the purchase of an Esplanade Reserve adjoining the Styx River at No. 75 Lower Styx Road.

### BACKGROUND

The Styx River, its associated tributaries and artificial waterways constitute one of the three major spring fed river catchments in the Christchurch area. The Styx River itself is 23.8 kilometres in length, extending from Nunweek Park to the east and flowing northeastwards to the sea via Brooklands Lagoon and the Waimakariri River. The upper catchment flows partly through suburban areas but the majority flows through rural industrial (particularly S.M.A.C.K.S and Kaputone streams) and rural land uses. The largely rural landscape character associated with the Styx River gives this river its uniqueness. It also forms an important function part of the natural drainage system of the northern part of the city. Various investigations indicate that it has high ecological landscape, recreational, cultural and heritage values.

The Styx River is given priority in the Strategic Open Space Strategy and the Waterways and Wetlands Natural Asset Strategy.

### PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The property situated at 75 Lower Styx Road is located on the southern banks of the Styx River downstream from the Janet Stewart Reserve. The property has recently been sold and is in the process of being subdivided into four-hectare allotments, which will be sold as rural lifestyle blocks. As a consequence of discussions with the owner it is proposed, subject to formal Council approval, to acquire Lots 2 and 3 shown on the attached plan No. 22212/1 for esplanade reserve purposes. Situated on the property is a single-story, three-bedroom brick dwelling constructed around the 1960s, having a gross floor area of approximately 131m<sup>2</sup>. Other improvements on the property include a single car garage, an implement shed, a dairy and haybarn.

Although this stretch of the Styx River has been straightened by the former Christchurch Drainage Board it retains high ecological values with the old riverbed forming backwater wetlands. The waterway itself is relatively fast flowing and has a gravel bed.

### GENERAL

The purchase of this property is consistent with the Waterways & Wetlands Asset Management Strategy and the Vision 2000-2040 for the Styx River, both having been adopted by the Council.

Vision 1, the creation of a source to sea experience, indicated under key actions the need to identify and protect suitable walking routes along the Styx River. The purchase of this property will enable the progressive development of a walkway along the Styx River. It will also form part of a smaller circular walkway which incorporates both the Styx River and Kaputone Stream.

Vision 2, the development of a living laboratory, identifies the need to develop an on-site research centre through the acquisition and development of a building that can provide a laboratory suitable for analysis of results, facilities for class and student visits, library, interpretation facilities and plant nursery. The buildings located on this property will provide a suitable site for such activities.

A steering group consisting of representatives from the Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, MIWA Land Care, University of Canterbury, Lincoln University and the Guardians of the Styx are currently developing a long term management structure and research programme that will involve tertiary and school students as well as the wider community. The group is also investigating ongoing funding to ensure the long term viability of the project.

### VALUATION

To assess the land's value, the Council engaged the services of Ford Baker, Registered Public Valuers, the details of which are included within the public excluded section of this report. Agreement has been reached with the owner to acquire the area subject, of course, to formal Council approval at valuation, with the Council meeting the necessary survey costs as well as meeting a half share of the fencing. Agreement has also been reached with the owner to lease back the house contained within the property until 31 March 2002.

**SOURCE OF FUNDS**

Provision has been included within the 2001/2002 programme for the acquisition of the land.

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