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Corporate Plan Output: New Assets – Waterways and Wetlands.	

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to consider the acquisition of approximately 1.0432 hectares of land adjoining Smacks Creek to protect and enhance the waterway and to ultimately provide a walkway link.

**BACKGROUND**

Smacks Creek is classified as one of the priority streams within Christchurch for protection and restoration and is a major tributary to the Styx River. The land is one of the few substantial areas of land along this waterway that is not already subdivided or developed. It is currently the best opportunity along the creek to improve the stream environment. This is because of the land itself, the location and the owner’s attitude.

The land has frontage to Gardiners Road, extends 250 metres along the stream and is linked with Hussey Road. Most of the proposed reserve is located between the terraces on either side of the stream. In the vicinity of Gardiners Road the reserve extends significantly beyond the terrace to provide opportunity for greater visual appreciation of the stream environment from Gardiners Road. This is important because Gardiners Road is a reasonably busy road within the area and a substantial frontage to the road will increase the visual appreciation of the proposed reserve by passers by. The upper terrace land will also provide the opportunity for the restoration of a sequence of riparian land form. It provides the opportunity to restore vegetation representative of that found above the terrace as well as that found below the terrace.

Colin Meurk recognises the proposed reserve as worthy of protection.

*“This stretch of river has a fine riparian sequence of land form components and strong representation of indigenous species although the whole is dominated by introduced willows and grasses. Some of the native species are locally rare. There is a very good basis for restoring a more natural sequence of vegetation largely using the existing cover of trees as a nursery.”*

Part of the property lying to the north of Hussey Road is capable of subdivision into residential allotments and it has been determined that 10 sections could be provided which would comply with the City Plan requirements. It is known that a number of developers are interested in the property. However, before pursuing this avenue, the owner has expressed his interest in protecting the waterway through the sale of the land to the Council.

In discussion with owner, a planting plan has been prepared to indicate how the property could be developed. This also serves to assure the owner of the Council’s intention to protect and restore the stream area in an environmentally sensitive way.

The attached planting plan for part of the proposed reserve indicates how vegetation natives through the area can be used to enhance visual and ecological values. The opportunity to create a walkway through the reserve linking Gardiners Road and Hussey Road would extend the public's appreciation and enjoyment of the area.

#### **GENERAL**

Smacks Creek is spring fed, its source lying to the of south at Wilkinson Road and is the major waterway servicing Willowbank Wildlife Reserve and a major tributary of the Styx River. Where possible, attempts are being made to secure conservation covenants and esplanade reserves along the boundary to the creek, in order to protect and enhance the waterway. Should the Council not proceed with the above purchase there is no doubt that the possible subdivision of the adjoining sections will be extended to include the creek frontage which would be an added attraction to many prospective purchasers.

Over the past two years a number of residential developments have been completed in the vicinity, one of which, Birchwood Springs, extends through from Gardiners Road to Hussey Road and comprises 20 sections and Smacks Close which contains 18 sections. The recent extension of the Council's sewerage outfall in Gardiners Road has facilitated the subdivision of the area and there is no doubt that in due course the land adjoining the proposed reserve purchase will similarly be subdivided. Given the owner's willingness to sell the proposed reserve to the Council prior to disposing of the Living 1E land, it is believed that the opportunity should be taken to avoid the stream frontage being lost into private ownership.

#### **SETTLEMENT**

The value of the property has been determined by independent valuation with Ford Baker, Registered Public Valuers, acting on the Council's behalf and Rolle Hillier Parker providing an assessment on the owner's behalf. The details of the respective valuations are included in the Public Excluded section of this report. A conditional agreement has been entered into to acquire the property and as such approval is sought to purchase the land for a reserve.

#### **SOURCE OF FUNDS**

The purchase will be funded from the Water Services Unit's Waterway and Enhancement Fund. The balance remaining in the fund, if this purchase and the Templeton land purchase are approved, will be \$321,000.

**Recommendation:** That Lot 13 on the attached plan S3022 containing an area of approximately 1.0432 hectares being part of the land contained in Certificate of Title 22K/1483 be acquired by the Council as an esplanade reserve, subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the public excluded section of this report.

The above report was before the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board at its meeting on 1 September 1999. The staff recommendation was supported by the Board on the grounds the new reserve will enhance the new housing development in the area.

#### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.