

18. SOUTHSHORE DUNES MANAGEMENT POLICIES

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The purpose of this report is to address a number of dune management issues which have arisen in the Southshore Beach Park area. These issues include fire risk, private encroachment, public access, dune erosion and the illegal dumping of garden and building waste on recreation reserve lands. Staff have attempted to address these issues, on an individual basis with neighbouring landowners and residents groups, without success. Increasing staff concerns have prompted a formal review of these issues and to recommend a Council policy.

The Southshore dune area considered by this report extends from Caspian Street in the north, to Tern Street in the south (Ref. [Appendix 1](#)). It is presently managed under policies approved in the Christchurch Beaches and Coastal Parks Management Plan, 1995. At that time the management plan allowed for some general policy recommendations, such as the development of an extensive scenic walkway, now known as the Southern Pegasus Bay Track, to be excluded from that area. The plan however also allowed for these policies to be reviewed at a later date.

The problems being addressed are unique to the Southshore area and may be attributed to the nature of the boundary between private and public land at this point, and the lack of a consistent dune management policy throughout the area. This review seeks to implement such a consistent policy, which is in line with original management plan recommendations, and aims to improve environmental and recreational management in the Southshore area. With the recent publication of the Southshore Spit Development Plan, which clarifies policy for the Spit area in line with the 1995 plan, attention has now been focussed on this adjacent section of dunelands.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The area is mostly classified as recreation reserve, with some small sections of road reserve as shown on cadastral map attached (*see [appendix 1](#)*). The dunes south of Tern Street to the Southshore Spit Reserve are in private ownership right to MHWS. The dunes north of Caspian Street are bounded on the inland side by Marine Parade.

The dunes are currently well vegetated, predominantly with marram grass, increasing amounts of bonesed, some elderberry and a small number of various native species such as cabbage tree and coprosma. There are numerous private tracks that run from neighbouring properties to the beach, as well as those maintained by the Council, which run from road ends to the beach.

This dune area differs from others because the dunes are steep and undulating with thick vegetation extending right up to private property boundaries. There is no formal firebreak protecting properties and the rugged nature of the terrain makes it very difficult to traverse on foot.

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

Fire is a reasonably frequent occurrence on the Southshore dunes. It could potentially threaten private properties where marram grass, and the more flammable boneseed, grows adjacent to property boundaries. Further hazard to private property lies in the piles of green waste dumped inside the reserve boundary by residents.

The fire service recommendations for preventative measures are as follows:

- that green waste and weed removal is important in reducing potential fire risk,
- that a five metre strip of ground, either mown grass or planted with iceplant or evergreen native species would act as a buffer in the instance of a fire in the reserve,
- that increased public recreation in the reserve usually decreases the instance of intentionally lit fires by delinquents.

The Southshore Spit Development Plan notes that fire risk is seen as:

- "a serious concern on the Spit as it could threaten human safety, destroy vegetation cover and destabilise the dunes or cause damage to adjacent residential properties"

PRIVATE ENCROACHMENT INTO RESERVE LAND

Over the past five years staff have noticed a marked increase in the number of private property owners encroaching beyond their boundaries, into the reserve. An increasing number of residents have removed their rear boundary fences and are using the pretext of creating a fire break or 'beautification' to develop private gardens and lawns on reserve land. Of increasing concern are the number of fences and permanent structures extending beyond private property boundary's (*see photos [appendix II](#)*).

In addition to this encroachment is the abuse of the duneland reserve as a dumping ground for green waste and building materials and as a storage area for firewood and vehicles. Individual residents have been asked on a number of occasions to remove the waste and illegal structures with no action forthcoming in many cases.

RECREATION RESERVE – ACCESS FOR THE PUBLIC

The Christchurch Beaches and Coastal Parks Management Plan 1995, excluded development of the Southern Pegasus Bay Track south of Caspian Street, subject to review at a later date (ref. Management Policy Section 11.2, pg 17). The Southern Pegasus Bay Track has become very popular north of Caspian Street, and the extension of the track to Tern Street would meet a growing interest from runners and walkers who use existing sections of the track. Staff consider it is now time to resolve the issue and review the issue of public access into the recreation reserve and develop a consistent policy.

The lack of a track from Caspian Street to Tern Street is believed to have severely limited management ability to undertake native planting, manage weed control and monitor illegal activities in the area. It is also believed that the lack of a unifying track along the dune system has contributed to increased erosion impacts from numerous private tracks crossing the dunes.

From a staff perspective, it is quite possible to extend the Southern Pegasus Bay Track and still not impinge on the values of the residents in adjacent properties. The track would be a mown strip in the mid-dune area and follow the undulations of the dunes without destabilizing them.

It is proposed that the track extension would come no closer than 50 metres to any private property boundaries and in most cases would be nearly 100 metres away. The line of the track would follow the natural humps and hollows of the dune system, and mostly properties would be out of sight of track users. Therefore it seems quite possible to develop the track so that privacy would not be compromised.

It would be an advantage in terms of management for the following reasons:

- improved effectiveness of planting programme and maintenance of plants
- improved effectiveness of weed control
- improved monitoring of illegal encroachment and dumping
- improved pedestrian management and dune erosion control

Presently numerous small private tracks criss-cross the backslope dune area and the frontal dune system, between Caspian and Tern Streets. They have evolved in a totally unmanaged way and several significant erosion features can be attributed to these private dune crossing points. A major advantage of having the Southern Pegasus Bay Track extended to Tern St is that adjacent property owners could then travel along the new track until they reach a managed beach access. Private tracks could still continue to exist, to the point where they intersect with the proposed track extension.

This management of pedestrian impacts is consistent with policies operated in all other Beach Parks and would considerably reduce the erosion presently attributable to pedestrians crossing the dunes in a haphazard manner.

Relevant Legislation guiding management in this reserve

Relating to public access to a recreation reserve:

Reserves Act

Part III

Section 17 Recreation Reserves

- (1)recreation reserves...providing areas for the recreation...of the public...with the emphasis...on outdoor recreation activities, including recreational tracks in the countryside.

Relating to private encroachment and dumping onto a coastal area:

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement

Guiding policy for development in the coastal area is set out in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 1994, as follows:

Section 6. Matters of National Importance

- (b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;
- (d) The maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers;

Policy 1.1.1

It is a national priority to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment by:

- (a) ...avoiding sprawling or sporadic use or development in the coastal environment;
- (b) taking into account the potential effects of subdivision, use or development on the values ... of the coastal environment, both within and outside the immediate location;

Residents Perspective

There has been ongoing conflict over the idea of a track extension along the Southshore dunes, which would link the Southern Pegasus Bay Track from Spencer Park in the north to the Spit in the south. Historically, residents have been opposed to any development or change in management of these dunes. They feel they would like things to remain the same. Any development that might attract public into the area is seen as undesirable, for the reasons it may increase fire risk, threaten security and undermine their privacy.

Staff respect these concerns and acknowledge that any development would need to take these points into consideration. However things are changing at the Southshore, with increased housing density, increased encroachment, evidence of increased dune erosion, increased dumping into the recreation reserve and more demands for access in public reserves. The need for management and recreational access to fulfil the recommendations of the 1995 management plan means that the proposed developments are justified.

RECOMMENDATION:

That policy state:

- that the Southern Pegasus Bay Track be extended from Caspian Street to Tern Street,
- that private tracks crossing the dunes are rationalised and users encouraged to use the managed crossings points to help reduce erosion of dunes.

SUMMARY

The increasing problems, of illegal dumping of waste and private encroachment onto reserve land, have given rise to the need for policy guidelines. Recreational and management needs to access the Southshore dune area have instigated a review of the extension of the Southern Pegasus Bay track from Caspian Street to Tern Street.

Recommendation: That the Board support the:

1. Policy for Private Encroachment and Fire Risk on reserve land Southshore dunes - Caspian Street to Southshore Spit:
 - that private owners may if they wish, manage a strip of no more than five metres wide for fire protection,
 - that dumping of green waste be banned, and existing waste be removed,
 - that any management by adjacent residents, within the five metre fire strip, be either mown grass or plantings of iceplant or evergreen native species,
 - that no earthworks occur within the five-metre strip,
 - that building of structures by residents in the reserve be prohibited, and that existing structures be removed.
2. Policy for Southern Pegasus Bay Track:
 - that the Southern Pegasus Bay Track be extended from Caspian Street to Tern Street,
 - that those private tracks crossing the dunes be rationalised and users encouraged to use the managed crossings.

Chairperson's

Recommendations:

1. That the aforementioned recommendation be adopted.
2. That the Southern Pegasus Bay Track be no more than a mown strip at least 50 metres from any property boundary.