

25. THE STYX 'SISTER RIVER' RELATIONSHIP

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The purpose of this report is to obtain the support of the Shirley/Papanui Community Board for the establishment of a 'Sister River' relationship between the Styx River in Christchurch and the Styx River in Alabama, United States of America.

BACKGROUND

The Christchurch community group 'Guardians of the Styx' was formed in 1999 in response to local residents' increased awareness of environmental issues. This awareness has itself arisen from educational initiatives of the Water Services Unit of the Christchurch City Council. The Guardians is incorporated under the Charitable Trusts Act and states its aims as follows:

"To protect, conserve and restore the Styx River and environs, plus turn the tide on the decline of its biodiversity."

A member of the Guardians, Mr Warwick McFadden, has become aware of another Styx River, located east of Mobile in Alabama, USA. Mr McFadden has made contact with the local community river watch group and with Baldwin County. It was suggested that a 'Sister River' relationship be developed between the two waterways, to promote international rapport between the communities and local governments associated with each Styx River. Opportunities would follow for environmental education and for promotion of both rivers. Baldwin County is very keen to formalise this relationship with both Guardians of the Styx and the Christchurch City Council.

Mr McFadden will be visiting Baldwin County in May/June 2000 to meet with officials of the County, who are organising a ceremony to exchange proclamations with Guardians of the Styx.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TWO STYX RIVERS

The Styx River, Christchurch

The Styx River and its tributaries constitute one of the three major spring-fed river catchments in the Christchurch area. The Styx is 23.8 kilometres long; its tributaries Kaputone Stream and Smacks Stream are 10.8 and 2.1 kilometres in length respectively.

The upper catchment flows partly through suburban areas, but the majority flows through rural industrial (particularly Smacks and Kaputone Streams) and rural land uses. This wild and rural character makes the Styx unique among Christchurch waterways. The river flows through many landscapes. In the middle reaches it widens out and is visible from main roads, lined often by willows and native plantings. Toward its mouth it flows through tidal wetlands with significant saltmarsh habitats, before emptying into Brooklands Lagoon. The Styx River, its tributaries and associated wetlands have values of high ecological, recreational, landscape, heritage, and cultural significance. They also form an important functioning part of the natural drainage system of the northern part of the city.

Opportunities are available for sustainable management and development of this catchment. The local community is actively involved in creating a vision for the future of the Styx area, through establishment of Guardians of the Styx and by working with the Water Services Unit.

The Styx River, Baldwin County

To be tabled at the meeting

THE OPPORTUNITIES

The Water Services Unit feels that this is an excellent chance to develop a relationship with another part of the world, and to exchange information, increase publicity, and enhance environmental education and management practice transfers.

Such a formal relationship has not been undertaken previously in New Zealand. However, many international relationships at a community level exist throughout Christchurch, from Christchurch's sister cities programme to formalised relationships between service organisations, schools, sporting groups and other like-minded organisations. This relationship would focus more closely on environmental and community group links.

The opportunities that such a relationship offers include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Educational links between schools and universities
- Exchanges in techniques of conservation and environmental management, both at the policy and practical levels
- Publicity and promotion of waterways and cities
- Extension of the international connections between New Zealand and other parts of the world
- The linking of like minds, and creation of friendships
- The chance to share environmental and consultation ideas
- Enhancement of local interest in the local environment
- Linking of views related to the various values of each waterway; for example, ecological, recreational, heritage, and cultural aspects.

Recommendation: That the Shirley/Papanui Community Board support the formalisation of the Styx 'Sister River' relationship, and investigate opportunities to become actively involved.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the officer's recommendation be adopted.