

Meeting Notes of the Sounds Advisory Group, held at Port Underwood on Monday 24 February 2014 commencing at 9.10 am

Present: Councillor Trevor Hook (Chairperson), Victor Koller, Joe Heberley, Monyeen Wedge, Ken Roush, Graeme Coates, Rob Schuckard, Tim Greenhough, Eric Jorgensen, Judy Hellstrom, Poneke Rene, Robin Cox (9.40 am) and Councillor Graeme Barsanti.

MDC Staff: Alan Johnson, Steve Ulrich and Kay Leach (Secretary)

Apologies: Kristen Gerard, David Hayes, Ron Sutherland, Ian Mitchell, Rachel Drake, Linda Booth, Raymond Smith, Councillors David Oddie, Jenny Andrews, Laessa Shenfield and Peter Jerram

Actions from Last Meeting

Alan had forwarded information to Animal Control regarding ticks.

A message of appreciation had been forwarded to Council for appointing Steve Ulrich.

Inwards Correspondence

The application to cart logs on Port Underwood and Tumbledown Bay Roads was received from the Assets and Services Department of Council, dated 11 December 2013.

This application was before the Assets and Services Committee last week. The recommendation is to decline this application. This was passed by the Assets and Services Committee, but it still requires to go to Full Council.

Eric questioned what action is being put in place to resolve the issue, for the long term, of heavy vehicles on Sounds roads. Trevor agreed this needs to be addressed. One avenue could be through the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement review. Victor noted some logging does not have the option of using barges. It is impossible to have a general rule for the whole Sounds. Judy felt there is social and community cost to the road use. Maybe the price for that is not to replant. Joe felt it made more sense to make more barge sites. Trevor advised barging is not always economic, particularly for the domestic market. Rob questioned if there had been proper analysis of the economics, or is it just what the industry is telling us. Alan advised maybe the best approach would be for an industry forum to consider in terms of an analysis reviewing how best to integrate the economic, social, environmental and infrastructural imperatives that exist. Maybe the Primary Industry or Forestry Forum could be tasked through the Smart and Connected initiative. Rob noted one of the Environment Award winners highlighted environmentally friendly logging. Monyeen suggested another option to be addressed could be commercial forestry of kauri trees, or other natives. Tim suggested making toll roads for harvesting with revenue utilised for road maintenance. Graeme Barsanti advised this could not be achieved without a law change.

Robin Cox joined the meeting at 9.40 am

Membership

Trevor read Lynley Perkin's memo advising of her resignation. Trevor had spoken with Lynley and advised her she did not need to be a member of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association to remain a member of the Sounds Advisory Group (with the Association's agreement). Lynley's resignation is to be held over until dialogue is completed regarding a Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association representative.

Port Marlborough Facilities

Joe had been approached by Tony Crapper, who voluntarily cleans the facilities on the wharf in Picton. There is no water source on the visitors wharf. Tony had requested Port Marlborough provide this water and a hose on the wharf. This would be useful for fire fighting purposes also. Alan will make contact with Port Marlborough regarding this.

Speed of Ferries

Joe had been asked by several residents in Tory Channel to bring up this issue. Joe had been working closely with the Harbour Master. There is concern visitors would not be aware of the ferry wash. The Harbour Master had advised Joe the data collection system is not working at present. Gina Ferguson would present analysis of the data at the next Sounds Advisory Group meeting. Graeme Barsanti advised the Harbour Master had reported twice to the Environment Committee. Alan advised the issue had been escalated to the Compliance Unit at Council. Alan thanked Joe for bringing this issue up.

D'Urville Island Pest Control

Alan spoke of an email received from Dean Heiford of Council, which covered a request he had received from a resident of D'Urville Island regarding trying to mitigate issues in terms of spread risk on D'Urville Island when machinery is taken from French Pass on to D'Urville Island. It was requested that cleaning equipment be provided, but this is considered to be problematic, including D'Urville being one of many islands in the Sounds. It is though the best option is education of communities and contractors regarding cleaning of equipment. Alan provided a draft fact sheet 'Biosecurity Hygiene in the Marlborough Sounds'. This still required review by the Department of Conservation. Alan would like members of the group to distribute the fact sheet, once finalised, to their respective resident associations. Judy noted that machinery is not the only issue. Gravel brought in for road works can import pest weeds. She also suggested examples of the worst plants would be useful on the fact sheet. Monyeen suggested the fact sheet could be included with building consents, although Alan felt this could be an overload of information. Trevor noted that residents need to ask the questions whether machinery had been cleaned. There are not a huge number of contractors so education of contractors is the key.

Poneke advised the pest issue came up regularly with the D'Urville Island Residents' Association, particularly when there is a review of the pest management strategy. Pest plants are not the only issue, deer, pigs, ants. D'Urville does not have possums at present. Alan advised it is the responsibility of everyone, including property owners and contractors, for managing biosecurity pathways. Regulation is not the answer in its entirety. Poneke noted a lot of pests come in on barges. He felt a large sign advising of the risk would be helpful. Cleaning at point of departure is the best option. Poneke spoke of contractors going to D'Urville Island being encouraged to deal with pest clear sites first so pests are not distributed from one part of the island to another. Trevor felt Council contractors should set an example.

Joe noted the falcon population increasing in the Sounds and questioned how the Department of Conservation felt about this with regard to native birds. Eric noted the increase is a good sign. They are there because the feed is there. Joe noted there is no indication if the falcons are attacking native birds.

Steve Ulrich provided the following link following the meeting:

NZ Journal of Ecology article on falcon diet in Marlborough. The study authors looked at what falcons hunted in hill country and vineyards. They found that falcons favoured introduced birds more than what was expected. They also hunted rats, mice, rabbits and even stoats.

http://newzealandecology.org/nzje/new_issues/NZJEcol37_1_51.pdf

New Zealand Journal of Ecology, 37(1): 51–59 (2013)

Diet composition and prey choice of New Zealand falcons nesting in anthropogenic and natural habitats

Sara M. Kross, Jason M. Tylianakis and Ximena J. Nelson

Styela Clava Update

A governance group has been formed which is represented by industry, Marlborough District Council, Ministry for Primary Industries, Port Marlborough and iwi. A management plan has been agreed, with a funding mechanism for ongoing management. Every response is followed by a review, i.e. what it is costing and are the objectives achieved. The Ministry for Primary Industry fund 50%, with industry, Marlborough District Council and Port Marlborough funding the balance 50%. Eradication will be impossible, but reduction of density and risk in Picton Marina will reduce the risk of spread. Numbers are now down considerably. Graeme Coates felt this is a good example of getting on to something quickly. This is a national issue because of risk pathways. Graeme Coates noted industry minimise the transfer by antifouling each year. Alan advised the biggest issue for Council and the stakeholders is another organism could arrive and new decisions will need to be made. Monyeen suggested recreational divers could be educated to identify Styela Clava. Graeme Coates spoke of difficulties with this. Alan suggested education is the key. The TOS Marine Biosecurity Partnership had been set up which is working well.

Regional Policy Update

Alan provided a report 'Progress with the Review of the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement, Wairau/Awatere Resource Management Plan and Marlborough Sounds Resource Management Plan' from Pere Hawes. He advised Pere would attend the next Sounds Advisory Group meeting. Alan updated the Group on the new committee structure, Environment Committee and Regional Planning and Development Committee, and where responsibilities sit.

Monyeen queried if the completion date to notification of December 2014 would be affected by significant events. Alan advised this is a political decision by the committee as to when the plan would be notified. The staff are on track to getting most of the chapters worked up. Largely 16 of the 19 chapters are complete, with Water Allocation, Urban Environment and Rural Environment outstanding. Alan noted good processes are in place to deal with those three elements. Trevor noted it is better to have in depth discussion on the issues during the draft phase rather than the notification phase. Once notified it is in a more formal process.

A water allocation working group has been formed working on technical information, including developing new policy framework to stimulate new mechanisms.

Graeme Coates questioned if Council is happy with the response to the draft. Trevor noted that did not take into account working group comments. That is a more substantive process. Trevor noted the rules are the most important, which are guiding us for the next 20 years and will have environmental, social and economic effects.

Landscape

Alan provided a report 'Landscape Review' from Emma Richardson. Alan spoke on the landowner meetings and then the subsequent survey and feedback received. There are some emerging signals coming out of the survey. Council is now considering where to go next. This is still a conceptual phase. Feedback from members of the Sounds Advisory Group is encouraged. Trevor noted Councillors will be workshopping this.

There was considerable discussion regarding management of commercial forestry and management of built form (colour pallet, reflectivity, light pollution). In general terms members considered that the prohibition of new commercial forestry in the Sounds is too broad in definition (exotic and native species), not the best way to mitigate the environmental concerns and viewed that consideration of other consent controls would be more pragmatic. The issue is a straight out prohibition would limit, in the long term, innovation and any technical advances.

Coastal Monitoring

Salmon Farming

Steve provided a report 'Best Practice Guidelines for Salmon Farming Management'. A process is to be undertaken, informed by overseas experts as well as NIWA, Cawthron, members of the Sounds Advisory Group and Council. The report informs on the process to date. The visit by Professor Black encouraged people to start talking to one another again. Two sub-committees have been formed, one looking at best practice farm management and operational guidelines, the other developing monitoring and standards. Each sub group has had one meeting. Further meetings are proposed. It is hoped to have a draft of the guidelines ready by mid year.

Eric spoke on the group looking at farm management and operational guidelines. Eric advised they are focusing on the lifecycle of the farm. There are several headings under the lifecycle which King Salmon are going to make a first draft on. At the same time industry is looking at a code of practice for salmon farming, so there is discussion about how these fit together. Eric is to write the foreword for the guidelines. The next meeting will be in two weeks. Eric felt the December workshops are an important first step to get everyone talking.

Graeme Coates advised the codes of practice are moving at a faster pace and how would these link with the guidelines. Eric advised Mark Gillard is looking at that. These best practice guidelines are for salmon farming, hopefully all, not just King Salmon. Other finfish species are not included at this point.

Rob spoke on the group looking at monitoring and standards. The baseline hydrodynamic data is still in draft, which should be the precursor for the guidelines. They are still working with the Board of Enquiry and Supreme Court outcome, which is pending. What is the ability of the Sounds to deal with what is there and for what is to come? Where do the existing consent conditions sit with the guidelines being produced? Issues have been identified but meaningful dialogue has not been achieved as yet. Relationships in the group are positive.

Rob advised the guidelines are to be received as a draft and to be taken to the community as a draft.

Hydrodynamic Modelling

Steve provided a report 'Development of Hydrodynamic Models for the Marlborough Sounds'. He advised the modelling enables Council to understand why and where things are in the Sounds. NIWA are behind with timelines but are now putting urgency into this. Animated models are planned to be available on the Council website. The models will enable Council to better understand the flow of nutrients and how phytoplankton respond to that, as well as understanding the patterns of movements. Impacts in the future will be able to be modelled. Monthly monitoring is continuing which is providing powerful information now. Hopefully models will be delivered for the Queen Charlotte Sound by the end of May and for the Pelorus Sound by the end of June. These will come in the form of reports and some animations, to be provided to the Environment Committee meeting on 1 May.

Alan advised there is not a lot of good science and information in the Marlborough Sounds. Working up these best practice and monitoring guidelines, there is a need to put timeframes around it so you get outputs. When this good information comes in those things can be reviewed and adapted. Science is always behind operational. There is a need for patience. Rob questioned if Marlborough was unique in coming up with the baseline models. Alan advised Waikato region are doing some work. Graeme Coates advised Marlborough has gotten behind, but Marlborough is complex. Steve will give an update at the next meeting on the coastal monitoring strategy and where we are up to with collecting information in relation to the objectives, and the staged implementation of the strategy.

DOC Update

Robin provided a Department of Conservation update:

Staff

The full complement of staff for the Sounds is now in place. Leanne Flynn, who has received promotion as a result of the restructure, has been replaced by Joe Healey, who was employed on a short term contract. The morale of the staff based in the Sounds is at a high level compared to some other locations, it is reported.

Maud Island

Planning for the eradication of mice during the winter of 2014 continues. As the brodifacoum is being applied from the air a resource consent will be required. Derek Brown has been employed to coordinate the process. This operation probably means that the takahe will have to be removed from the island for a period.

The six public trips to Maud went ahead as per normal during January. All the groups saw the newly hatched takahe chicks and one group was very privileged to see orca. The numbers of visitors were down from the previous year to 122 adults and 8 children. Since then two other public groups have visited, Tennyson residents and Renwick Lions.

The annual visits to Maud Island by the schools in the Pelorus cluster are now being organized. These groups are very lucky to stay overnight and experience the prolific nocturnal wildlife on the island.

Spartina

The five person spartina team has started work and this will continue until mid March. This is a joint DOC/MDC project, with the numbers of plants found declining each year.

Blumine Island

In early December a selected group of students from Canterbury and Marlborough spent five days on Blumine Island sponsored by the Untouched World Foundation. They undertook monitoring and assisted staff with weed control. The following week an Outward Bound watch undertook track work for two days. The Outward Bound group also tidied up after a local school visited the island and, after persuasion, the school paid the cost of transporting two Outward Bound watches to the island, which is a great result.

A possum was reported on Blumine Island and this has now been caught. How it got there is unknown, with the closest land, Arapawa Island, supposedly possum free.

A public trip organized by the Marlborough Historic Society is planned on 23 February and as of 20 February over 40 people had booked on it.

Motuara Island

A rodent was reported on Motuara Island. After a rodent detection dog visit, the use of tracking tunnels and chew sticks, it was confirmed that no rodents were present. During the same period Pickersgill Island was checked, with no pests found.

Arapawa Island

The hunters, now based from Renwick, spent four weeks on Arapawa Island and for their efforts shot 120 goats and 5 pigs. This is well down on last year when 160 goats were shot. The 5 pigs were shot in the fenced reserve area.

Campgrounds

The first stage of the Momorangi Campground has now been completed. The planning and tendering for the second stage is well underway. A public event was held at Momorangi on 9 January involving the Minister of Conservation, Mr Nick Smith. He highlighted the desire to involve others in conservation, such as Kathmandu at Mistletoe Bay, and stressed the extra effort required to protect our native species. This event was supported by Te Atiawa and Eco World.

Cow Shed Bay and Kenepuru Heads campgrounds were well used over the summer, no doubt helped by the new toilets and shelters being open for their first summer. Some individual/s thought they should also benefit from the increased usage and fished out envelopes containing camping fees from the iron ranger. This was in spite of voluntary camp ground hosts being on site most of the time.

Marine

Around Christmas there were two marine mammal incidents which involved staff. In both cases the results are dead animals. One was in Tory Channel and the other in Double Cove. The fast ferry monitoring and the Long Island Marine Reserve has started and this will continue until March.

Queen Charlotte Track

The work on the Queen Charlotte Track has changed from mowing and vegetation clearance to spraying. Outward Bound has helped with maintaining the track by providing a watch in February.

During much of the summer there has been a volunteer camp ground host at Camp Bay and this has ensured the camp ground is maintained to a higher standard and a higher fee compliance achieved. During this summer there have been few incidents reported.

A start has been made on the annual \$50,000 upgrade, this year from Tawa Saddle towards the Pines in Endeavour Inlet. Two staff will be involved in this project for approximately eight weeks.

King Salmon has provided \$10,000 toward the cost of a viewing platform for the Regal Rimu close to Furneaux Lodge. Once a plan is accepted it will be costed, materials purchased and the carpentry course at Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology will pre cut it and assemble it on site. It has been indicated that Outward Bound will help carry the pre cut material from the barge to the construction site.

Summer Program

Numerous activities were undertaken in the Sounds for the DOC coordinated Marlborough Summer Program. Those that took place in the Sounds were:

1. Six trips to Maud Island - DOC and Pelorus Tours
2. Trip to Pelorus Bridge to learn about the bats - DOC and Forest & Bird
3. Tramp to Emerald Pool - Marlborough Tramping Club
4. Trip to Kaipupu - Kaipupu Point Mainland Island Society and DOC
5. Guided trip to Blumine Island - Marlborough Historic Society and DOC

Save the Birds

All the indicators are that 2014 will be a mast year, when beech trees produce heaps of seed. This results in an increased number of rats and mice, followed by an increased number of stoats. Later in the year, the rats and mice will suffer from food shortages, as will the stoats at a later time, and increased predation of birds will occur.

It has been announced that the government will spend \$21 million to protect the native species. The only area where this money will be spent in the Sounds is the area between Nydia and Tennyson Inlet, and then only if monitoring indicates an increased level of pests. This is basically the same area that was treated prior to Christmas and, although the results appear to be successful, the final monitoring report is still being worked on. Early indications are that immediately following the operation rat numbers were very low and the possum numbers below the equivalent of 4% of the residual trap catch.

General Discussion

Whale Survey

Joe thanked the Department of Conservation for their support regarding the whale survey. Last year the weather was against them. The programme has been operating for 10 years. There have been 15 match ups in that 10 year period with surveys in Australia and the Cook Islands. There is hope that the numbers are building. An oil company which is funding the project has committed funding for another two years.

Next Meeting

The next meeting to be held in the Committee Room at Marlborough District Council on Monday 12 May 2014. Items to be included in the May agenda are:

- Building Amendment Act 2013 – potential for unexpected impact on the Sounds (Monyeen Wedge)
- Wilding pine eradication on road reserves by volunteer groups – David Oddie had been looking into this (Victor Koller)

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm

**Agenda items should be sent to
Bea Gregory (e-mail Bea.Gregory@marlborough.govt.nz)
by Friday 24 April 2014.**

Action	Responsibility
Membership - Lynley Perkins	Trevor
Port Marlborough Facilities - Water Source	Alan

Record No: 1449171