

MEETING NOTES: Meeting with Jim Dahm and some Tirohanga Residents

DATE: 27 Jan 2011, 12.30pm

LOCATION: Trotter Residence, Tirohanga

ATTENDED BY: John Galbraith, Awhina White, Mike Houghton, Jim Dahm, Alan Trotter, Bill Shadwell, Natalie Jaffarian (& visitor), Coral Chalmers

BACKGROUND

At a site meeting on 20 January with residents (see separate notes) some residents questioned the accuracy / validity of the Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment prepared by Jim Dahm, EcoNomos Ltd. That Assessment had been commissioned by the Working Group to assess the effect of the proposed trail. Their concerns with this report were that it was too generic and did not assess specific site locations, especially the eroding dune face on DOC land 70 metres in front of the Trotter residence.

In response, the Working Group requested Jim Dahm to inspect the site and provide a report. Residents were invited to meet with Jim during the site inspection to discuss.

MEETING

The meeting proceeded to the dunes and broke into smaller groups where separate discussions took place; among them Jim Dahm (JD), Coral Chalmers (CC) and Alan Trotter looked at the erosion evident on the dune face.

Coral Chalmers left the meeting.

Separate discussions continued for approximately 20 minutes before the meeting reconvened in the shade of the macrocarpa tree on the State Highway road verge.

John Galbraith (JG) asked for an orderly discussion to proceed so that the meeting and key points raised might be properly recorded.

AT: Meeting notes from the 20 Jan omitted reference to; trialling the track construction method and; 28th July meeting comments AT to Doug Leeder? [Action: minutes to be revised to include trialling request.]

JG: Explained the current consultation process, that response to submissions will be completed on Friday 28th and posted on web site.

JD: It was not his decision where the trail is located but confirmed that in his opinion the trail through the dunes is manageable and said the bigger issue facing the dunes is to enhance the vegetation; improve access way management; tackle weeds; prevent / control vehicle access; and dogs.

That the improved access provided by the cycle trail would be the initiative to commence such enhancement.

The effects of earthworks and machinery to construct the cycle trail is are minor
The access ways are presently poorly managed and designated access points should be developed to improve the current situation.

Motu Trails Cycleway Project

He gave examples of work he has been involved with at Whangamata where with improved access ways and vegetation, healthy dunes are growing and accommodate up to 5000 visitors a day.

Access to the dunes is a public right but the trail could be located a bit closer to the coast to accommodate privacy concerns without compromising the dune environment. As a coastal scientist he encourages managed public access to dunes so that people can appreciate them better and in most cases this results in enhancement of the environment. Encouraged this option over the highway option.

Suggested planting dune shrub plants to help as a visual barrier and to create a sense of separation between the houses and the trail and that these plantings would most likely take 3-5 years to establish.

AT: This does not address deliberate theft and other unofficial use

JD: This is public land now with public access as of right. Suggested a boundary fence and commented that you would expect burglars to take the easy option of access by way of the highway.

AT: Questioned the proposed aggregate / composite surface of the trail was 'cheap and nasty'

JD: Not qualified to comment on this

JG : Asked for other issues JD might address?

MH: on behalf of Natalie Jaffarian (NJ) who had previously discussed with JD the effect of climate change on the proposal and environment in general.

JD: Explained that the BOP coastline experiences cycles of erosion and accretion that move in 20 – 30 year cycles. Currently in an erosion cycle and have been for 2-3 decades so expectation / indications are that this is now shifting back to an accretion phase. This is a natural process influenced by La Nino / El Nina / Southern Oscillation. Climate change is likely to have little noticeable effect on sea level in the next 20 years and latest reports suggest no increase in cyclones in the BOP. In the 40 - 50 year+ timeframe it is likely that sea level change will trigger significant response ie; coastal retreat.

Bill Shadwell: Expressed doubts in the ability of DOC, ODC, and Police to deal with vehicle incursions, fires, theft etc

AW: Advised of DOC's 24hr 0800 number for anything to do with DOC land

JD: Suggested including this information in the consent application?

NJ: Asked about the DOC lizard survey

AW: Advised that despite the Tirohanga dunes being an ideal environment for lizards there was none evident in surveys they had undertaken, The survey was therefore seeking any knowledge from local residents.

Motu Trails Cycleway Project

JD: Commented that lizards like good thick mat of Muehlenbeckia for habitat – not exotics / weeds. Suggested that by allowing the current ‘lawn’ encroachments to revert to Muehlenbeckia would be the best thing for lizards, that lizards are very mobile and tend to scatter away from approaching people, the effect of the trail would be minimal on fauna habitat.

NJ: What sort of machinery would be used in construction?

JG: Light earth moving equipment

AT: DOC as custodians of the dunes should take a very conservative approach to any potential risk; that the composite construction method should be trialled to assess effects of erosion and quoted a letter from DOC of July 2010 describing the dunes as a ‘sensitive area’.

AW: advised that the results of the consultation will be passed on to the Regional Conservator to make a decision on proceeding or otherwise with cycle trail – he will assess any effects and issues against the benefits. Chk Awhina?

AT: asked that the Tirohanga houses section be omitted until track construction method ; that biking along the beach was suitable option – subject to tide; repeated that he is willing to go to the Environment Court, has secured pro bono legal aid – will cost him nothing; and that if the cycle trail does proceed then cyclists will have to face the ‘attitude of the locals’.

NJ: asked about dogs on the trail

AW: Clarified that a Management Plan will be prepared for the trail and the dunes that will address these kinds of operational matters.

JG: Promoted the Management Plan as a way of addressing many of the concerns raised by this group of residents.

NJ: expressed that it is a shame these matters have not been discussed before

AW: Replied, agree but DOC has undertaken a lot of work in recent years along these dunes with weed control, bird surveys, fencing, defining boundaries and addressing encroachments.

JD: Reiterated, from a dune welfare point of view there are serious issues to be addressed regarding current use, encroachment, weeds, ‘garden escapees’ but stressed that the cycle trail itself has only minor negative effects and done properly could have considerable benefits to the dune environment.

Meeting concluded 2pm