

WAIPARA RIVER WORKING PARTY

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Working Paper Number: NINE
- Access

Summary

This paper covers access in the Waipara River. There are five main ways in which people access the river.

- Walking
- Horse Riding
- Bicycle
- Motorcycle/ATV
- Vehicle

The issues associated with each type of access have been identified and discussed. In past discussions it has generally agreed that there should be room for all types of access and recreational activities to enjoy using the river bed. This paper outlines how any potential negative effects may be mitigated through a variety of tools. Options include the use of a bylaw, provision of car parking, limiting timeframes of some activities and restricting activities to particular areas of the river.

The Working Party at its most recent meeting looked at some of the issues around spatial use of the river bed and the findings coming out of that meeting have been included in this paper and reflected in the recommendations made.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Waipara River and river mouth area are important recreational areas in the Hurunui District and access is fundamental to those wishing to enjoy the river. For different people access means different things. This paper deals with access on foot, horses, bicycles, motorbikes and in vehicles. Most are in themselves a recreational activity. Each type of access has different environmental effects and different issues arising. Some can be enjoyed together, while some have the potential to interfere with others.

2 HORSE RIDING

- 2.1 Horse riding in the river bed has not been raised by the Working Party or community as being an issue in any part of the river. This is probably largely due to it being a relatively uncommon activity in the river bed. It may also be because it is a relatively passive recreational activity, which does not create excessive amounts of noise for adjoining landowners or other users of the river.
- 2.2 However, the Working Party may wish to consider the effect that horses may have on the environment. Particularly the effect that horse faeces may have on the water quality and environment of the river bed. The effect of horse faeces on water quality is not expected to be greater than that of any other animal. Another potential issue is the spread of weeds. Weed seeds and vegetative matter could be carried in the horses' hooves. The effect of this is unknown in the Waipara River but given the low number of horses being ridden in the river it is not expected that either potential negative effect on the environment is going to be significant.
- 2.3 There is also the potential for possible conflicts between horses and motorised vehicles and bikes. Noisy and fast moving machines may scare horses and may result in the horse causing injury to itself, its rider or to other users of the riverbed.
- 2.4 To enhance public safety it is suggested that a speed limit be applied to motorised vehicles in the riverbed. A recommended option is to set a permanent speed limit across the river bed and a temporary one when driving within a certain distance of users on foot and horses.
- 2.5 The Working Party may need to consider that while the number of horses is low in the Waipara River it may not be desirable to encourage a greater number, as this will increase the potential for harm to the environment. It is recommended that horse access is not discouraged, but done so in a way that will not see their numbers increase significantly.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

THAT THE WORKING PARTY SUPPORTS THE STATUS QUO WITH RESPECT TO HORSE ACCESS IN THE RIVER BED.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMEND TO THE HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL THE USE OF A BYLAW TO SET A PERMANENT SPEED LIMIT IN THE RIVER BED AND A SLOWER TEMPORARY SPEED AROUND HORSES AND WALKERS.

3 WALKING

- 3.1 The relevant legislation with respect to walking is the Walking Access Act 2008 which came into force on 30 September 2008. The Act establishes the New Zealand Walking Access Commission, which provides a central point for the coordination of all walking access in New Zealand. The Commission has released the Draft New Zealand Outdoor Access Code ('the Code'), a copy of which was attached to the previous working paper.
- 3.2 Walking has not been raised as an activity that is a problem in the river bed. Most of the landowners have expressed a willingness to allow walkers access over areas that have AMF rights. There are few negative effects associated with walking specifically. Any negative effects, such as rubbish, are related to all forms of access and have been dealt with by the Working Party as separate issues. Whilst there are a number of people who enjoying walking through different parts of the river bed, it is not always possible due to the length and some obstructions, such as White Gorge.
- 3.3 In the early stages of discussions on the Waipara River the possibility of a walkway was raised. The Walking Access Act sets out the process for declaring a walkway over public land. A walkway up the Waipara River would be possible and may provide the opportunity of promotion for the area. In conjunction with local vineyard owners, it could be a positive tourism opportunity.
- 3.4 If the Working Party is to encourage walking in the river, particularly in those areas where vehicles access is likely to be prohibited, then it may be necessary to provide areas where vehicles can be parked off the road and in relative safety. Areas with high usage have the highest need for car parking to reduce environmental effects and risk of harm that may occur through vehicles parking haphazardly. Car parking areas are likely to be required at the end of Golf Links Road, Stringers Bridge and Laidmore Road. At both Golf Links Road and Stringers Bridge there is crown land that may be available to provide for car parking areas.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

THAT THE WORKING PARTY SUPPORT THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF WALKING ACCESS TO THE RIVER BED THROUGH RECOMMENDING TO THE HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL THAT A WALKWAY BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT THE RIVER AND THAT CAR PARKS ARE FORMED IN HIGH USE AREAS.

4 BICYCLES

- 4.1 Mountain biking is not a very popular activity in the river bed. This is probably due to the loose gravels and rough terrain making biking in the river quite difficult. There are areas where it may be appropriate for mountain biking to occur and these areas could be promoted through the construction of mountain biking trails. The area downstream of Webbs Road would be suitable for mountain biking and could be linked with the track to the rocks or to Amberley Beach settlement.
- 4.2 There have been no problems identified with biking in the riverbed. They do not produce excessive amounts of noise or travel at speeds that may risk public safety.

Given the terrain in the riverbed there is little opportunity to provide a well developed track to facilitate cycling along any large distance of the bed without disturbance of the natural environment. It could also be a costly exercise.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

THAT THE WORKING PARTY SUPPORT THE STATUS QUO WITH RESPECT TO BICYCLE ACCESS IN THE RIVER BED.

5 MOTORBIKES/ATVS

- 5.1 Motorbikes are a popular form of recreation and access in the riverbed. The riverbed provides good opportunities for motorbike riders to go for a ride through parts of the riverbed and find opportunities for challenging terrain to practice their skills.
- 5.2 One of the biggest complaints about the use of motorbikes in the riverbed is the noise pollution that it creates. It affects the peace of the riverbed and is an issue for people living close to the river. Some ways in which this can be mitigated is limiting the hours in which motorbikes can be used in the riverbed to ensure they are not disturbing residents at inappropriate hours. They can also be limited to particular areas of the riverbed, which will concentrate the problem, but measures such as screening could possibly be utilised to minimise the effect of noise. Restricting motorbikes to particular areas of the river will also leave other areas of the riverbed to be enjoyed for more passive recreation.
- 5.3 Another issue associated with motorbikes is the safety factor around other users of the riverbed. As discussed under horse access, motorbikes have the potential to harm others, particularly when travelling at speed. The recommendation made to implement a speed limit in the riverbed should cover motorbikes also.
- 5.4 Motorbikes can damage the environment of the riverbed and surrounding areas. As the Working Party witnessed on the field trip, areas such as the Croft's land, can be significantly altered by the activities of motorbikes. The Working Party needs to take into account the effect that motorbikes can have on the environment particularly with respect to erosion, flora and fauna. As such, areas that motorbikes are limited to should be areas of low environmental value to reduce the effect.
- 5.5 Adjoining landowners have complained that motorbikes are trespassing onto their land and that this can be difficult to control. This is of particular concern at Teviotdale, where motorbikes are being ridden up the side of the edge of the river terrace, which is further encroaching on their land. The Council can work with the landowner to find strategies and solutions, which can be implemented to encourage riders to stay in the riverbed.
- 5.6 The following section of this report deals with the issue of vehicular access and recommends areas where vehicles should be banned, restricted or permitted in the river.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMEND TO THE HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL THE USE OF A BYLAW TO RESTRICT THE HOURS OF OPERATION OF MOTORBIKES TO BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 8AM AND 7PM IN THE RIVERBED.

6 VEHICLES

- 6.1 Vehicles are a form of access that many people enjoy to make their way up the river. Travelling along the riverbed by vehicle provides greater opportunity to visit those areas that some people may struggle to enjoy otherwise, such as young children or people

with physical disabilities. It is also a useful way to get gear into the riverbed for other recreational activities, such as camping and fishing.

- 6.2 The numbers of 4WD vehicles visiting the river has increased over recent years with increasing levels of 4WD ownership attributed to the decreasing cost of purchasing a vehicle and the increased finance options available to purchasers. Another attributing factor may be due to the fact that many of the beaches and rivers around Christchurch are now off limits to vehicles, thereby encouraging more people to travel further afield for their 4WD pursuits. The proximity of the Waipara River to Christchurch is reflected in its popularity as a 4WD destination.
- 6.3 Vehicle use in the riverbed can have in a number of negative effects, particularly in instances where vehicles are used in an inappropriate manner. Vehicle use particularly up the banks of the river can result in increased erosion and sedimentation resulting in a loss of water quality. The compacting of river gravels can impact on micro-invertebrates. Travelling off formed tracks can result in the destruction of vegetation. Disturbance of nesting birds. Impact on water quality through contaminants and weed spread. Associated noise.
- 6.4 To date the Working Party has agreed that vehicles be banned between White Gorge and Doctors Gorge due to the significant geological values in that area. The Working Party has also agreed that vehicles be banned at the Waipara River mouth in the area indicated in blue on the plan shown below, subject to a designated motor vehicle track for access to the nohoanga site and a track on the north side of the river to be phased out within three years from the adoption of the Plan. Tracks are to be sited to minimise impact on wildlife.
- 6.5 In considering other sections of the river where vehicle use may be appropriate, it will be necessary for the Working Party to take into account the existing environment including existing access points, adjacent land use activities, sensitivity of the receiving environment and the potential for conflict between other river users.

Stringers Bridge to White Gorge

- 6.6 In terms of the ownership regime over this section of the river, it would appear from the LINZ maps that the properties adjoining the south side of the river have AMF rights to the centre of the river. The northern side of the river adjoins an unformed legal road. The unformed legal road is no different in law from formed roads and as such the public have the right to use them on foot, on horse, or in vehicles. The unformed legal road in effect allows the public to use that part of the river contained within the road and the northern part of the river to the centre line. In reality however, it may not always be possible to stay within the area designated as crown land particularly given the terrain and vegetation within the riverbed. Representatives from the Combined 4WD clubs commented that due to the terrain, this section of the river is challenging and as such is not as popular with less experienced drivers.
- 6.7 The bed of the river narrows in this section of the river and is constrained between steep high terraces on either side of the river with the river shingles being larger and coarser than those found downstream.
- 6.8 There are a number of landowners adjoining this section particularly on the southern side of the river. The predominant land use consists of pastoral farming activities and vineyard development. There are a number of dwellings located on top of the river terrace in close proximity to river.

- 6.9 The only vehicular access to the river in this section is at Stringers Bridge. Access along the river is constrained by Whites Gorge upstream with vehicles having to travel in and out along the same route.
- 6.10 At the previous meeting there appeared to be a general consensus that managed vehicle use should occur between Stringers Bridge and White Gorge. It was suggested that vehicles be restricted to three or four organised trips per year by the Combined 4WD club subject to landowner approval. Given the presence of the unformed legal road which does provide for vehicular access to the river, it may be difficult to ban vehicles entirely from this section of the river and managed access to the river may be a good compromise.

Stringers Bridge to SH1 Bridge

- 6.11 In terms of ownership, the majority of the riverbed in this section of the river is subject to AMF rights. The adjacent land use consists predominantly of pastoral farming and vineyard development. There seems to be an increasing trend for subdivision on the southern side of the river with a number of 5 hectare sites being developed as vineyard investment lots. This has also resulted in an increase in the numbers of dwelling along this section of the river with a number of these being located in close proximity to the river.
- 6.12 The riverbed widens throughout this section with the river terraces being less steep and not as high as upstream of Stringers Bridge.
- 6.13 This section of the river also adjoins the Waipara Boys Brigade Camp and is in close proximity to the Waipara Township. The area around the SH1 bridge is very popular as a camping and swimming area.
- 6.14 Access is available from Stringers Bridge, Darnley Road, Barnetts Road a track from Weka Pass Road.
- 6.15 Given the high level of recreational users and the number of residential dwellings within close proximity of the river, it is suggested that motorcycles be banned from upstream of the railway bridge due to the potential noise issues and conflict between other users of the river.
- 6.16 Furthermore, given that the majority of the riverbed is subject to AMF rights, and that a large amount of anti-social behaviour appears to be occurring in this section of the river, it is suggested that vehicles be banned upstream from the Barnetts Road / Darnley Road access points. Signage could easily be erected at these access points and monitored for damage.
- 6.17 Given the presence of the nohoanga site and the swimming hole it is considered that vehicular access be permitted downstream from Barnetts Road / Darnley Road.
- 6.18 It was suggested at the previous meeting that vehicles be permitted upstream to a point where the high voltage transmission lines cross the river. The difficulty associated with restricting vehicles from that point onwards is how to inform them they should go no further. Furthermore, there is no exit point from the river at that point so vehicles would either have to turn around and go back the way they came or more likely continue travelling up the river.

SH1 Bridge to Greenwoods Bridge (Double Corner Road)

- 6.19 The ownership regime over this part of the river includes both crown land and land subject to AMF rights. The majority of the adjoining land parcels consist of large pastoral farming properties. The riverbed is quite wide and is constrained on either side by large steep cliffs formed where the river has cut through the underlying sediments. The area is not very populated with most dwellings being located some distance from the river.
- 6.20 Anecdotally, this section of river appears to be one of the most frequently trafficked areas. Motor cross riders utilise this area as part of a round trip that begins at the Leithfield Tavern and concludes at the Waipara Hotel. The area is criss-crossed with a number of vehicle tracks.
- 6.21 Access to the river is available directly upstream of the SH1 Bridge and on the north side of Greenwoods Bridge on Double Corner Road.
- 6.22 Given the topographic features of this area including the high steep cliffs, the adjoining land use and the absence of dwellings near the river, it is suggested that both motorbikes and 4WD vehicles be permitted in this section of the river as any adverse noise effects are likely to be minimised by these factors. The environmental values in this section of the river are also less significant than other parts of the river such as at the river mouth and upstream from Stringers Bridge.

Greenwoods Bridge to Webbs Road

- 6.23 The ownership regime over this stretch of the river is largely subject to AMF rights. The land on the northern bank is made up of Teviotdale which is a large pastoral farming run. The land on the south side of the river consists of smaller farming and lifestyle block properties with one or two dwellings in close proximity to the river.
- 6.24 The riverbed is quite wide throughout this section and bordered on both banks by steep sided river terraces although these are not as high as upstream of Greenwoods Bridge.
- 6.25 This part of the river is a popular area for camping and swimming and is also subject to high vehicle numbers. Many people travelling in vehicles through this area continue down or have travelled up from the beach and the rocks.
- 6.26 Whilst this part of the river is subject to AMF rights, it would seem that the majority of the landowners on both sides of the river rarely utilise these rights to graze stock to the middle of the river. Historically when landowners have tried to block access to the river this has met with resistance and the removal of gates and fences.
- 6.27 Environmentally, this part of the river is dominated by willows and other weed species, however birds such as stilts, ducks and dotterels are regularly observed in this section of the river.
- 6.28 Given that this section of the river does tend to form part of a loop from Amberley Beach and the rocks to SH1, it may be difficult to ban vehicles from this area particularly given the high level of use. Whilst the majority of the adjoining landowners have AMF rights, they seem to have given up any pretence of utilising these rights.
- 6.29 As such it is suggested that vehicular access to this part of the river be retained with speed restrictions and hours of operation for motorcycles be imposed as suggested earlier.

- 6.30 The only way to enforce the proposed management regime for vehicles in the river will be through the development of a Council bylaw.
- 6.31 Any bylaw on vehicle access in the river will need to be supported with signage at the relevant access points to the river. Signage is to be discussed at a subsequent meeting.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMEND THAT VEHICLES BE BANNED BETWEEN STRINGERS BRIDGE AND WHITE GORGE UNLESS BY PRIOR ARRANGEMENT WITH THE LANDOWNERS.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

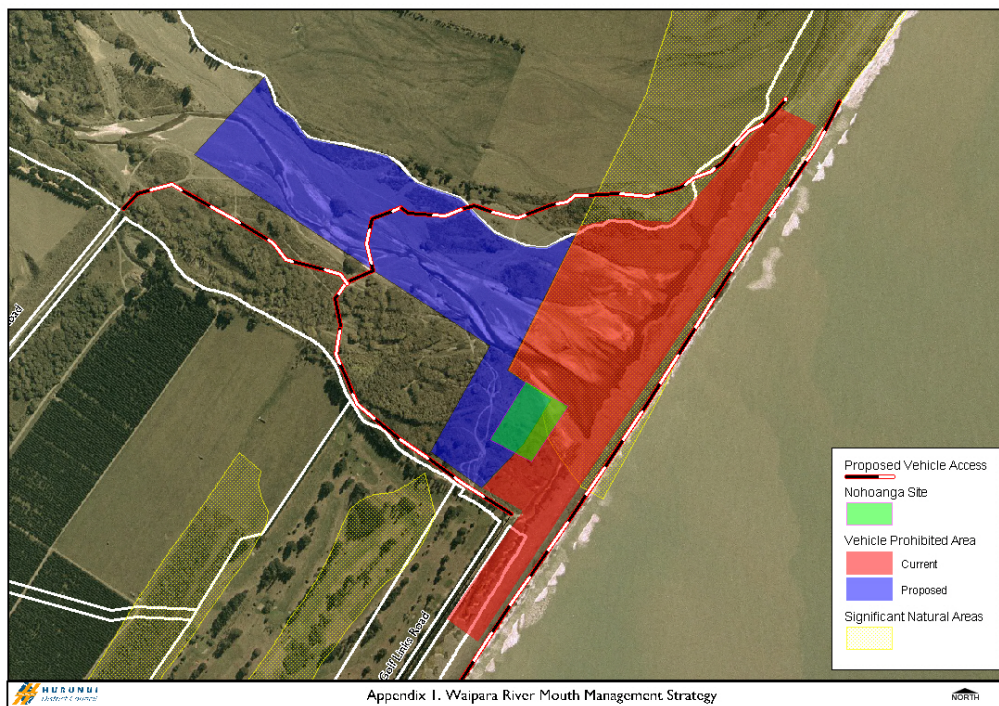
THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMEND THAT VEHICLES BE BANNED BETWEEN STRINGERS BRIDGE AND UPSTREAM OF BARNETTS ROAD / DARNLEY ROAD WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MOTORBIKES WHICH WILL BE BANNED FROM DIRECTLY WEST OF SH1.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMENDS THAT VEHICLES BE PERMITTED BETWEEN SH1 BRIDGE AND WEBBS ROAD.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

THAT THE WORKING PARTY RECOMMEND THAT THE HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL CREATE A BYLAW TO MANAGE VEHICLE USE IN THE WAIPARA RIVER.



Option C: Vehicle ban area around nohoanga site would allow damaged area to be restored. Ban would extend upstream from the mouth to Webbs Rd boundary. Vehicle access would be limited to the designated vehicle access track as shown.