

## 3.1 Taputapuatea Spit

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**TO** Mercury Bay Community Board  
**FROM** Heather Bruce - Community Manager  
**DATE** 3 October 2018  
**SUBJECT** Taputapuatea Spit

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### 1 Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is for the Mercury Bay Community Board to consider the following requests relating to Taputapuatea Spit:

- Removal of self-seeded trees and weed species
- Approving and meeting the cost of planting three large pohutukawa trees to replace vandalised trees
- Installation of a “Tree Vandalism prevention” sign

### 2 Background

Letters have been received from Mr Trevor Ammundsen (resident) and the Mercury Bay Branch- Royal Forest and Bird Society with requests relating to the ongoing maintenance and restoration of Taputapuatea Spit.

Mr Ammundsen, has requested that wild sown trees and weed species be removed from Taputapuatea Spit. The request is for additional trees in excess of those previously approved by the Community Board (**Attachment C**).

Mercury Bay Forest and Bird have provided an updated work plan on the implementation of the plan prepared in 2015 for the restoration of Taputapuatea Spit. This includes a request for the Board to cover the cost of three large pohutukawa trees to replace some of the mature trees which were vandalised in 2016. The cost of the trees would be \$600.00. They are also requesting a “tree vandalism prevention” sign such as those used on Buffalo Beach Reserve. The cost of the sign would be \$600.00. The total cost to implement the request would be \$1,200 (**Attachment E**).

Taputapuatea Spit has been the subject of discussion for some time, with Mercury Bay Forest and Bird working in conjunction with Council on an approved plan to restore the ecological health of the Spit. Also landowners in the wider area around the spit have raised concerns about tree numbers, removal of weed species and height of plants.

To address the views of the respective parties a report seeking direction from the Board on the nature and scale of the future development of Taputapuatea Spirt was presented at the 24 May 2017 Mercury Bay Community Board meeting (**Attachment B**).

The report included written submissions from Mercury Bay Forest and Bird and from the Whitianga Coastal Action Group, representing the landowners in the area.

The Whitianga Coastal Action group expressed their concern over the number of existing trees on the northern part of the spit and requested a number of them be removed and that the area not become a forest. They wanted dune plants to be trimmed and views / view shafts to be restored.

Augusta Macassey-Pickard spoke on behalf of Mercury Bay Forest and Bird at the 24 May 2017 board meeting and noted that the group did not agree with the removal of trees,

including previous tree removals, the proposed removal of additional trees and self-established trees. She also requested that some of the trees proposed for removal from the fore dune area be retained and that this be done in consultation with Coastal Scientist, Jim Dahm.

On behalf of the Mercury Bay Forest and Bird group, Ms Macassey-Pickard also noted that the report presented to the Board included proposals for signage, a pathway and footbridge which did not fully align with the original Mercury Bay Forest and Bird agreement previously approved by the Community Board.

The Community Board made the following resolution at its 24 May 2017 meeting :

**49/17**  
**MBCB** **Resolved**  
*That the Mercury Bay Community Board receives the 'Taputapuatea Spit' report, dated 24 May 2017.*

**Moved/seconded by: Fox/Connell**

**50/17**  
**MBCB** **Resolved**  

- 1. That the Mercury Bay Community Board defers any decisions for a further report on the tree removal at the 5 July 2017 Community Board Meeting.*
- 2. Approves the continuation of the Forest & Bird Plan in the interim.*

**Moved/seconded by: MK McLean/Fox**

The further report on tree removal from the Spit was presented at the 5 July 2017 Community Board meeting for consideration (**Attachment D**). The Board's resolutions from this meeting are below.

**65/17**  
**MBCB** **Resolved**  
*That the Mercury Bay Community Board receives the 'Taputapuatea Spit - Tree removal' report, dated 5 July 2017.*

**Moved/seconded by: Fox /Connell**

**66/17**  
**MBCB** **Resolved**  
*That the Mercury Bay Community Board:*  

- 1. Approves the proposal for the future of the Taputapuatea Spit as set out under Section 4 of the report to the Mercury Bay Community Board dated 24 May 2017.*
- 2. Authorises the Mercury Bay Area Manager to work with the community groups to facilitate the implementation of the proposal and refer any matter requiring additional Council funding for consideration in the Long Term Plan proposal.*

**Moved/seconded by: Connell/Giri-Percival**

The proposal set out in Section 4 (**Attachment B**) includes continuation of the Mercury Bay Forest and Bird Society Taputapuatea Spit restoration plan with the exception of aspects related to retention of trees and details of fore dune planting. It also covers planting of the foreshore area, removal of 14 selected trees, development of a hoggin path, signage and retention of existing grass walking paths.

### **3 Issue**

Given the ongoing differing views of the interested parties and two potentially conflicting requests, the matter is referred back to the Community Board for consideration.

The Board is asked to determine whether the trees indicated in the letter from Mr Ammundsen dated 1 July 2018 should be removed and whether the ongoing removal of self seeded trees should be undertaken.

The Board are further asked to consider the update from Mercury Bay Forest and Bird and whether to approve their request for Council to approve and meet the cost of three replacement pohutukawas and signage at an estimated cost of \$1,200.

#### **4 Discussion**

The removal of trees from Taputapuatea Spit has been raised on several previous occasions. Fourteen trees from the fore dune area were agreed for removal at the 5 July 2017 Board meeting.

There is a difference between the views of the nearby landowners and Mercury Bay Forest and Bird over the retention of trees on the Spit. Landowners raise concerns about loss of amenity value from trees blocking the view they have enjoyed and Mercury Bay Forest and Bird note that trees need to be considered as part of the Spit restoration process.

Council staff have inspected the site following Mr Ammundsen's letter and noted the following:

- The first and second photographs in the letter are located in Zones 1 & 5 of the Forest and Bird Restoration Plan. These zones include the trial area agreed in the early to mid 1990s after extensive community consultation as outlined in an email from Jim Dahm on 1 August 2016 (**Attachment A**).
- The area shown in the second picture has a Kowhai, Whauwhaupaku (Five Finger) and Totara tree. Staff consider these are self seeded from the trial plantings.
- The third photo is taken within Zone 6 of the Plan and the indicated trees are comprised of one weed species (Banksia), which is scheduled for removal by the end of August 2018, and several self seeded Karo trees (a small coastal tree that is found growing naturally in northern New Zealand).
- Council contractors have an annual weed programme for the Taputapuatea Spit area, which is undertaken in conjunction with Mercury Bay Forest and Bird.

Community Facilities staff advise that Karo seedlings and other native tree species will continue to germinate and a decision is required on the future management of the self seeded tree species.

Community Facilities would support the ongoing removal of self seeded native and exotic trees from zones 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 as provided in the Forest and Bird Restoration Plan.

The Roles and Responsibilities section of the restoration plan outlines the wider responsibilities for Mercury Bay Forest and Bird. The plan should be reviewed annually by all major participants, being TCDC, Mercury Bay Forest and Bird and Ngati Hei and in the event that Mercury Bay Forest and Bird are unable to progress with any stage of the project, the group will notify partners and ensure that no task that has been initiated is left incomplete.

The proposed time line for the restoration plan work is currently behind the original schedule outlined in the approved restoration plan; however Mercury Bay Forest and Bird are continuing to work to achieve the outcomes as evidenced by their 2018 update.

The request from Mercury Bay Forest and Bird for approval to plant three pohutukawa trees and a tree protection sign is estimated to cost \$1,200.00. If approved this would be funded from the Mercury Bay Community Assist budget.

## Reserves Management Plan

The area is covered by a Reserves Management Plan. Council has commenced the process to review the Plans for the Mercury Bay area, which includes Taputapuatea Spit. This will include a full public consultation process. This provides an option to defer any decision on the requests from both Mr Ammundsen and Mercury Bay Forest and Bird in relation to the trees on the site to enable the consultation process with the wider community to be completed. To date the parties engaged in the discussion on the Spit have been Mercury Bay Forest and Bird and a group of residents from the area around the spit. There has not been the opportunity for the wider Whitianga and Mercury Bay communities to be engaged. The Reserve Management Plan process will provide this opportunity.

If the Community Board agree with the deferring the matter to the Reserve Management Plan process it would be appropriate for the status quo position to be maintained. This would mean:

- Mercury Bay Forest and Bird would continue the implementation of its restoration plan. It should be noted that this does not include any tree planting, but only low growing plants.
- The request from Mercury Bay Forest and Bird to plant three pohutukawa trees is deferred pending the reserve management plan review being completed.
- The request from Mr Ammundsen for the removal of trees is deferred pending the reserve management plan review being completed.

## 5 Suggested Resolution(s)

That the Mercury Bay Community Board:

1. Receives the 'Removal of Trees - Taputapuatea Spit' report dated 26 July 2018.
2. Defers a decision on the request of Mr Ammundsen for a number of trees identified in his request to be removed.
3. Defers a decision on the request of Mercury Bay Forest and Bird to plant three new pohutukawa trees with Council funding the cost.
4. Refers the requests of both Mercury Bay Forest and Bird and Mr Ammundsen to the Reserve Management review process for consideration as part of the wider consultation process.
5. Notes that the Mercury Bay Forest and Bird Taputapuatea Spit restoration plan implementation will continue and that this does not involve the planting of trees.

## References-Tabled/Agenda Attachments

**Attachment A** *Jim Dahm email - 1 August 2016*

**Attachment B** *Taputapuatea Spit report and attachments - Mercury Bay Community Board Meeting - 24 May 2017*

**Attachment C** *Letter to Tony Fox from Trevor Ammundsen - Tree Removal Taputapuatea Spit - 1 July 2018*

**Attachment D** *Taputapuatea Spit Tree Removal Report and Attachments - Mercury Bay Community Board Meeting - 5 July 2017*

**Attachment E** *2018 update and proposed work plan – Taputapuatea Spit Restoration Project*

## **Attachment A**

**Attachment B**

**Attachment C**

**Attachment D**