

**Chairperson and Committee Members**

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14 JUNE 2012

Meeting Status: **Public**

Purpose of Report: For Decision

**RATES REMISSION FOR CONSERVATION PURPOSES**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 This report tables the rates remission applications for the 2011/2012 year and seeks approval for recommended allocations.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DECISION**

- 2 The recommendations in this report do not trigger the Council's significance policy.

**BACKGROUND**

- 3 As part of the Annual Plan for 2003/04, Council approved a policy for rates remission for land protected for natural and cultural conservation purposes (Attachment 1 to this report CS-11-148). This is included in the 2009 Community Plan as part of the Rates Remission Policy.
- 4 The rates remission policy supports the provisions of the Kāpiti Coast District Plan regarding incentives for heritage feature management and protection. It recognises that most heritage features are already protected by rules in the District Plan and encourages landowners to maintain, enhance and protect heritage features by offering a financial incentive.
- 5 The granting of a rates remission as an incentive for encouraging the protection and management of heritage features is consistent with Council's responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Historic Places Act 1993. It is also consistent with Community Outcome 1: 'There are healthy natural systems which people can enjoy'.
- 6 Historically the fund has been consistently oversubscribed, leading to an increase of funding for rates remission for natural or cultural conservation purposes from \$15,000 in 2007/08 to \$26,175 in 2011/2012.
- 7 A total of 91 ratepayers benefited from the policy in 2010/2011, and the land area to which remission applied totalled 468.6ha. Having applied successfully for rates remission, ratepayers may continue receiving it provided they follow approved management plans designed to protect the natural and cultural values of their sites.
- 8 The Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes programme was advertised in local media in February 2012. Five new applications were received, three of which are recommended for approval. They have been added (marked with an

asterisk) to the list of recommendations included as Attachment 2 to this report CS-12-554. Two applications did not meet the criteria for funding.

- 9 Of the three applications recommended for approval, the first is for an 11.3ha wetland at 182 Te Hapua Road, Ōtaki, that is part of the regionally significant Te Hapua wetland complex, listed as ecological site KO55 in the District Plan Heritage Register. Since acquiring the property the owner has protected and enlarged the wetland area, and is managing it to protect and improve its ecological values.
- 10 The second application is for 20.2ha at 319 Mangaone North Road, Hautere, comprising 2ha of bush protected by QE II covenant and 18.2ha of regenerating bush protected under the Afforestation Grant Scheme administered by Greater Wellington Regional Council. Under the scheme, landowners can apply for a grant to establish and maintain a forest to sequester carbon in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol. In this case the forest is regenerating native bush, and the owners' intention is eventually to include the area within the QE II covenant. As the regenerating bush is formally protected, and the area is being managed for conservation purposes, the application meets the Rates Relief for Conservation Purposes criteria.
- 11 The third application is for 136.4ha of mature and regenerating bush at 1400 Ōtaki Gorge Road that is contiguous with Tararua Forest Park, listed as ecological site KO17 in the District Plan Heritage Register. The landowners are dedicated conservationists who are managing the land to protect and enhance its biodiversity values by controlling pest animals and weeds. Their application meets the Rates Relief for Conservation Purposes criteria.

## CONSIDERATIONS

### Issues

#### **Principles of Rate Remission for Conservation Purposes**

- 12 The following sections will discuss the principles of rates remission, a range of funding scenarios will be presented in a table, and a recommendation made on the levels of rates remission for 2011/2012.
- 13 The main principle behind the rates remission programme is to recognise the conservation efforts of ratepayers and the positive contribution their actions make to the district's cultural and biodiversity values.
- 14 The owners of these properties are often motivated solely by the desire to protect and manage their environment, and their actions are voluntary. Many are keen conservationists while others may fence off a bush remnant as the pasture gain is negligible or to better manage stock movement. Whatever their motivation, addressing significant pressures such as stock grazing or noxious pests has a positive impact on the Kāpiti Coast environment.

- 15 Landowners could use the rates rebate for the upkeep of stock-proof fencing or pest animal and weed control, but in most instances the amount of remission is far less than the true cost of these activities.
- 16 Rates remission is an added incentive for landowners to respect the conservation values in the situation where that property has a legal protection mechanism in place. The provision of rates remission also provides a good basis for an ongoing partnership between Council and the land owner.

### Calculation of Rates Remission

- 17 Rates remission amounts are calculated according to the size of the heritage feature as shown in Table 1. This method is coarsely related to the level of contribution towards the environment as larger areas of forest or wetland are generally more significant. This does not take into account, however, the presence of rare and endangered species or the amount of time and effort put into management.
- 18 This method allows an adjustment to the level of remission using minimum, medium and maximum remission bands as shown in Table 1. The selected band applies to all recipients. This year's budget allowed for a 2.4% increase in remission levels to compensate for inflation, and this increase is applied to all remission bands.

<b>Table 1: 2011/12 Level of Remission vs Feature Size ( Including 2.4% Inflation Adjustment from 20010/2011).</b>			
<b>Size of total protected area/feature (ha)</b>	<b>Minimum rates remission possible (\$)</b>	<b>Medium rates remission possible (\$)</b>	<b>Maximum rates remission possible (\$)</b>
Up to 1.0 ha	\$61	\$91	\$122
1.001 – 5.0 ha	\$119	\$182	\$244
5.001 – 10.0 ha	\$179	\$273	\$366
10.001 – 20.0 ha	\$238	\$365	\$487
20.001 – 30.0 ha	\$298	\$455	\$609
30.001 – 40.0 ha	\$358	\$547	\$731
40.001 – 50.0 ha	\$417	\$638	\$853
50.001 – 70.0 ha	\$477	\$729	\$974
70.001 – 100.0 ha	\$536	\$820	\$1,054
More than 100 ha	\$596	\$912	\$1,219

- 19 Applying the maximum band results in modest levels of remission, \$244 for areas between 1.001ha and 5ha, and most areas are smaller than 5ha. Council approved the application of the maximum band of rates remission for the 2010/2011 year.
- 20 The amount of rates remission that would be allocated in 2011/12 if the maximum band is applied is within the budget of \$26,175. Therefore it is recommended that the maximum band of remission is applied, resulting in allocation of \$25,493 for Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes in 2011/12.

### Financial Considerations

- 21 There are no other financial considerations.

### Legal Considerations

- 22 There are no legal considerations.

### Delegation

- 23 The Committee may make this decision under para 7.9 of the Governance Structure and Delegations (5 April 2012 version):

*Authority to consider and approve applications for rates remission for conservation purposes.*

### Consultation

- 24 There are no consultation considerations.

### Policy Implications

- 25 There are no policy implications..

### Publicity Considerations

- 26 A media release will be prepared to publicise the Council's decision.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 27 That the Committee approves the maximum band of rates remission to the properties set out in Attachment 2 to report CS-12-554 in accordance with Council's Policy for Rates Remission for Land Protected for Natural or Cultural Conservation Purposes.

**Report prepared by:**

**Approved for submission by:**

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## **ATTACHMENTS:**

**Appendix 1 – Policy on Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes**

**Appendix 2 – Properties recommended to receive Rates Remission for Conservation Purposes in 2011/2012, and recommended amounts.**