

3. STEPS and Meola Creek Update

STEPS goals also relate to the health and rehabilitation of Meola Creek as a whole, and its related benefits to Waitemata Harbour and the wider Auckland community. As such STEPS' interest in this Central Interceptor project is wider than the Roy Clements Treeway, and below are some 2013 activities to demonstrate this.

This year on 14 April at our Ahurangi Festival "Creeks Connecting Communities" we had more than 100 participants from the community, with artworks from four local schools key to the success of the event : Te Kura Kaupapa o Nga Maungarongo, Marist School, Marist College, and Mt Albert Grammar School produced artworks and hung them along the **Roy Clements Treeway**, then celebrated at the **Mt Albert War Memorial Reserve**.

As another practical demonstration of our interests in the whole of Meola Creek this year STEPS has organized the funding and participated in restoration activities in the lower Meola Creek area at **Moa Reserve, Pt Chevalier** in conjunction with local residents and Albert Eden Local Board and Waicare. Both STEPS and the Albert Eden Local Board are planning ways to extend the restoration of Meola Creek including riparian plantings at new sites in the lower creek.

Recently the Stormwater Unit has responded to ourselves and Plant and Food on our repeated requests to rehabilitate the upper creek Ahurangi which was piped in the 1990s. Here we are discussing a possible wetland planting adjacent to Watercare's **Haverstock Road site**.

4. Meola Creek and Location of Lyon Avenue site.

We acknowledge and appreciate the reduction in Meola Creek overflows as outlined by Mr Cantrell and referenced by Mr Slavens. However we note that while the interceptor will reduce wastewater overflows by 80 per cent [11.6] the **remaining events after the project are still on Meola creek**, mostly at **Lyon Ave and Haverstock Rd** where combined sewer overflows containing pollutants and human excrement will continue for at least the next century. The currently proposed **Lyon Ave** site in the Roy Clements Treeway is acknowledged in both Ecological and Visual reports as one of three key sites where adverse impacts will occur.

STEPS is focused on the long term health of the Meola Creek environment including adjacent terrestrial habitats. We will tolerate the many **temporary** effects to residents of noise, traffic, loss of visual amenity etc. Our main concerns are with the **long term effects** on Meola Creek and its terrestrial habitat including the Roy Clements (RC) Treeway.

Our patron Mr. **Roy Clements** initiated the community planting as a MAGS initiative over 30 years ago. STEPS' reasons for focusing on the banks between Haverstock Rd, Lyon Ave and Alberton Ave were that the largest Watercare Services outfalls in Auckland occur at these locations and by shading the creek and naturalizing it we have been trying to alleviate the ongoing degradation of the upper catchment. Because of these efforts the RC Treeway is now noted as a Significant Ecological Area on the draft Auckland Council Unitary plan, providing vegetation corridor and habitat for many native birds [including tui, kingfisher, pukeko, swift], eels, rare volcanic rock forest and [downstream] threatened aquatic moss. It is an intact expanding hub of nature with potential for lizards and other fauna, which makes it all the more disturbing that Watercare propose to separate it into two pieces if the proposed Lyon Ave CI site removes the central 10 per cent of this ecological corridor.

STEPS RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 We query the meaning and implications of **Lyon Ave vegetation clearance outside Watercare designation (Slavens 7.6)**. We trust that this means more weight will be given to the local community's proposed alternative.

4.2 **The alternative site** we ask to be considered is the car park of the "Phillips building" directly **adjacent to the proposed Lyon Ave site**. It is on the RC Treeway and we understand that it is crown owned. It has road access and has no trees within it which need clearing. We believe the wider community also supports this location. Even if it is not large enough the area of tree destruction would be less than half what is currently planned and it is only about 50 meters further south.

Other possible alternatives include: – consider whether the St Lukes Megacentre lower car park could be used; use the flat grass surface on the opposite side of the creek at MAGS; finally we ask if consideration has been given to a single surface structure for both Lyon Ave and Haverstock Rd? If so then it is suggested that the project relocate to the empty grassed area in Kerr Taylor Reserve west bank, about 500 metres south between Meola creek and MAGS which would provide an alternative site with existing permanent road access from Haverstock Rd.

4.3 Clearly public access is required to remain throughout the long construction period. Given the recent closure of the path between Sandringham and Mt Albert via MAGS the Roy Clements Treeway is now the only linkage between Haverstock Rd and Alberton Ave. Note that temporary access to this popular walkway would require allowance for hundreds of MAGS students daily, cyclists, families with prams etc.

5. Mitigations

Mitigation for damage in Roy Clements Treeway.

STEPS was surprised to see conditions RC1 and RC2 though we agree that a wider mitigation than simply replanting the Lyon Ave engineering site would be required. STEPS and Auckland Council Parks have had a planting plan for the Roy Clements Treeway for over 8 years, and have largely completed it and moved on to weed control and "species enrichment" in selected locations as presented at STEPS AGM June 2013.

In our conversation with Watercare Services we indicated a mitigation preference for extending the Meola riparian plantings in association with possible daylighting of sites at Haverstock Rd and Mt Albert War Memorial. STEPS has recently been made aware that the path adjacent to one proposed CI site (at Mt Albert War Memorial Reserve) covers the top and encloses Meola creek. Raising this footpath adjacent to the proposed site; extending riparian plants and rerouting the public walkway would be an easy win for Auckland Council and Watercare Services as well as the community and creek. We have already indicated our intent to proceed with riparian or wetland plantings at Haverstock and given their long occupancy of this area, would appreciate help from Watercare Services. We note that St Lukes Garden Apartments Body Corporate is an interested party who should be consulted.

STEPS RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Should this unfortunate Lyon Ave CI site go ahead then STEPS would strongly recommend the following amendments to the **Roy Clements Treeway Vegetation Enhancement Plan** (p12 of Designation Conditions) *see bold italics*.

RC.1 A Vegetation Enhancement Plan shall be prepared that sets out proposed works that the Requiring Authority will undertake within **1 km of** the Roy Clements Treeway to mitigate effects of vegetation removal at the Lyon Avenue construction site. The Plan shall be prepared by a suitably qualified person.

RC.2 The Vegetation Enhancement Plan shall be prepared in consultation with the owners of land on which the mitigation works are to be carried out, the Council, the Albert – Eden Local Board, Mana whenua, and established community groups or environmental organisations having an interest in restoration and enhancement works on the land. The objectives of the Plan shall be to enhance amenity and ecological values of the Meola Creek riparian habitats and vegetation between ~~Fergusson Reserve- Haverstock Rd / (Plant and Food) site~~ and ~~Alberton Avenue Mt Albert War Memorial Site~~. The mitigation works to be set out in the Plan may include **access paths**, planting and weed control, and shall be integrated with any other works planned in this area by the Council.

5.2 We support the future introduction of native skinks to the Roy Clements Treeway. Re **Loss of Habitat for Native Lizard Species** [Slavens 7.7]

- We request **STEPS be consulted on relocation site** for any native lizards found in the Lyon Avenue site

Rock Forest: [Slavens 8.5, 8.6 and 8.7]

5.3 STEPS requests a mention of mitigation work that enhances the rock forest – not only in the Lyon Ave area but also in Chamberlain Park with species that are specific to rock forest. Reference has been made to removal of exotic trees from the latter. However we do not want standard revegetation species being used in rock forest areas (eg Coprosma robusta).

- STEPS recommend care shall be taken to ensure in any rock forest areas being rehabilitated that **revegetation will be with rock forest species** (including a variety of rock forest ferns and astelias and rock forest groundcover species eg. Peperomia urvilleana)
- We request that STEPS will be consulted over the **plant list for the restoration plans on all the Meola Creek catchment sites**. This includes: Lyon Ave, Haverstock Rd, Norgrove, Mt Albert War Memorial , Motions Rd and Rawalpindi.
- With regard to Slavens 7.2, Loss of Indigenous Vegetation and Impacts on Existing Meola Ecological Corridors, we request that **replacement of any loss of vegetation should be in consultation with STEPS**.

6. Response to evidence and additional information.

6.1 Additional Recommendations

Attached in Appendix 1 are our responses to the new evidence.

6.2 Watercare and Auckland Council

Meola Creek is one of only five Auckland Council (AC) owned creeks on the Auckland isthmus. This gives the Governing body significant control over it, providing its various arms and CCOs (including Watercare Services) work together. Meola Creek improvements can only be achieved by joint commitment and co-ordination between Watercare Services and Auckland Council with support of the Albert Eden Local Board. STEPS and the wider community and future environment are in the hands of all these organisations and the conditions imposed at this hearing.

We commend Mr McIlroy's statement [4.8] that Stormwater unit will investigate opportunities for the Central Interceptor tunnel to capture first flush pollution from the initial small volumes of diverted runoff.

- We ask what conditions have been imposed to ensure this or any other joint efforts ?

We are disappointed to note that the overflows have been removed from the scope of this hearing [6.19 Slavens] and included in the scope of a separate network discharge consent. None the less we believe that the standards Watercare uses should be high with a view to the future. In this context “localised minor adverse effects in terms of sediment discharge to the local streams” is in our view not good enough.

We requested information re number and size/ volume of Meola Creek overflows now and supporting detail since the fact remains that according to Part A Executive Summary p xvii, overflows will be eliminated in 2030 from every other waterway and site leaving only Meola overflow points. We are still unclear on the meaning and assumptions behind these low detail maps.

We expect that this massive project is a “one off” upgrade. By this we mean that we are reliant on Auckland Council to enforce compliance with the standards in the Unitary plan and thus ensure no further growth of stormwater or combined sewer overflows.

We are also looking for assurance in the project approach on:

- Wetland restoration as a means of ensuring aquifer recharge, maintenance of base flows
- Daylighting opportunities to reinstate creeks with AC Stormwater unit
- **Removal or reduction of concrete walls and stream floors**
- Plant appropriate native plants on the stream banks along daylighted creeks
- **Plan space for future walkways** during earthworks
- Inbuilt funding streams for 10 years or more of maintenance for plantings and weed control
- Low impact design eliminating runoff
- Neutral carbon footprint especially during operation

We urge Watercare and the Hearing to include these in the design approach, and/ or in the conditions or mitigations.

7. Conclusions

- STEPS recognises the improvements that will be made to Meola Creek in carrying out this project and ask that appropriate community consultation is conducted throughout. In particular we ask that STEPS be recognised as a key stakeholder on the six Meola Creek sites and wish to support their rehabilitation.
- We request that the Lyon Ave site be moved by about 50 meters to reduce the damage to 30 years of community planting.
- We ask that any mitigation plans for tree damage incurred at Lyon Ave should include the adjacent CI sites (Haverstock Rd and Mt Albert War Memorial) in conjunction with STEPS, rather than be limited to a site which has been intensively replanted over the past 8 years (RC Treeway).
- We ask Watercare Services to adopt best practice standards in design and building with a view to an operational life and ongoing impact on catchments and Harbour for the next 100 years or more.

Elizabeth Margaret Walker,

Deputy Chair,

St Lukes Environmental Protection Society (Inc),

1 August 2013

STEPS Website: www.meolacreek.org.nz

APPENDIX 1

Additional Information received from Watercare Services:

1. Evidence for hearing at <http://www.watercare.co.nz/Pages/Central-Interceptor-Main-Project-Works---Evidence.aspx>
2. Hard copy reports :
 - Consideration of Alternatives
 - Assessment of Ecological Effects
 - Arboriculture assessment Report
 - Lyon Ave alternative location assessment (MAGS sports field site)

Mr Goodwin's visual evidence.

5.3, 5.19 STEPS does not accept the **assessment in 5.3 Table 3 that within 5-10 years the visual amenity will be enhanced.** The removal of many valuable 30 year old native trees cannot be replaced. Even if they were replaced at the end of this project – the loss of growth and size and habitat will be experienced for 2-3 generations.

He states that it will be flush with the car park deck. This is about 3 meters above the current ground level. The site drawing on page 7 does not clearly show how this will work, nor does it show the creek nor any riparian planting so it is difficult to comprehend.

Mr Slavens' Ecological evidence

Referring to 6.2, p22 re piping of the upper creek. These pipes have been in place for about 15 years, and local residents are not aware of the exact rationale for piping yet another stream. Since the CI project will greatly reduce the CSOs at this site, STEPS is working with the Auckland Council Stormwater and Plant and Food on riparian planting of the upper creek Ahurangi. Kura Kaupapa o Nga Maungorongo is also supportive and with this degree of interest and support we believe that riparian planting and/ or wetland restoration is very likely. Removal of the upper pipes is under active consideration with the Albert Eden local Board, and we would welcome any support that Watercare Services or Auckland Council can give to these initiatives. Clean spring water currently flows on top of the pipe so we are planning to use this water. In future the riparian vegetation **will no longer** cease at the mouths of those pipes.

Re Loss of Significant (Threatened and 'At Risk') species of Flora... while a number of reasonably sized native trees are present at the Lyon Avenue site, none of these are considered to be notable specimen trees. [Slavens 6.5]. STEPS notes the potential for these 'reasonably sized natives trees' to become 'notable specimens' in the near future.

6.7 We note no mention of the bisection / fragmentation of Roy Clements treeway riparian margin forest, which to us is significant. We understand that Watercare has tried to limit the size of the Lyon Ave site and thus the numbers of large and small trees to be removed, though this still number in the hundreds when seedlings and understorey are considered. Mitigation by replanting will take 30 years to reach existing condition.

6.15 We note and are concerned by the probable more pronounced effects of the habitat fragmentation on birds at Roy Clements Treeway. Whether the effects are “minor” or “more than minor” - we seek some form of mitigation for this if it goes ahead.

7.2 Support - keeping the actual construction footprints as small as practicable, retaining all woody vegetation that lies within the construction footprints but is not in the way of any of the proposed site facilities, and configuring the access roads and site facilities in such a way as to avoid (as far as practicable) large trees and other significant woody vegetation.

7.3 Support - ... where trees must be removed, transplanting will be undertaken where possible and practicable.

7.6 Support - ... The proposal that in addition to the Site Reinstatement Plan for this area a Vegetation Enhancement Plan will be prepared that goes beyond the designation boundary

Support - **Rare Habitat Type & Species** - 8.10 Furthermore, Watercare is committed to reinstating the site, as stated in the AEE (Part B - Site Specific Assessments section 3.5.4): Watercare will work with the landowner, Auckland Council, the Albert- Eden Local Board and other key parties to develop appropriate reinstatement planting to mitigate these effects

7.6 and 8.11 and 10.5 We do not yet agree with a plan for revegetation of other parts of the Roy Clements Treeway as a mitigation, as this is well in hand given the years of effort our volunteers and Parks have put in. We are actively promoting mitigations on Meola Creek nearer to the Haverstock site and the Mt Albert War Memorial; also possibly Motions Rd. We request that the stated consultations do take place and the options are not restricted to the Roy Clements Treeway, but to the 3 Meola Creek sites within 1 km. of the Roy Clements Treeway. (Watercare's Proposed Designation Conditions RC.1- RC.2). see our mitigations above.

8.12-8.13 *Fissidens berteroi*: Nationally threatened aquatic moss *Fissidens berteroi*. in Meola Creek, Motions Creek and the Western Springs lake. We request assurance that these populations will be monitored throughout the prolonged construction period and for 2 years after it to ensure that the various changes in riparian habitat and runoff do indeed not threaten these plants further.

We support ... the Plant and Food cabbage tree plantings on Haverstock site be enhanced by way of augmentation plantings of appropriate semi-wetland species is achieved through the inclusion of such an outcome in the Site's Reinstatement Plan. [Slavens 8.14]

Mr Twose' Geological evidence

STEPS notes 7.17 there is a very low risk of any impact on stream base flows associated with groundwater effects arising from shaft and tunnel construction

Mr McIlroy's Stormwater Evidence

We note statement 4.12 It will be important that Watercare minimises any potential constraints on future stream management options available to Auckland Council as a result of the Project.