



Media release

Thursday 4 December 2014

McHughs Forest Park Plan adopted

Selwyn District Council has adopted a plan to guide the future development of McHughs Forest Park.

The 43 hectare park is located to the west of Darfield Township and under the plan it will be developed as a forest park which could be used for walking and mountain biking, picnicking and education while continuing to operate as a production forest.

McHughs Forest Park was originally established as a plantation in 1893 with mixed conifers. The plantation was previously owned by Selwyn Plantation Board and was purchased in 2013 by Selwyn District Council. Today the forest is mostly Douglas Fir with *Pinus radiata* around the perimeter, along with a mix of other species, and is considered to be one of the most important Douglas Fir forests in New Zealand.

81 submissions were received on the draft development plan for the Park, with 91% of submitters indicating they supported the overall direction of the plan. Mountain biking, walking, running, dog exercise and picnicking were the most popular activities submitters indicated they planned to use the park for in the future.

The McHughs Forest Park Development Plan will enable all of these activities to occur at the park. The plan includes a schedule of future actions. The first actions planned to be completed within the next year include installing boundary fencing, developing a parking area and loop track and upgrading the existing track. The installation of educational signage, development of a pump track and picnic tables are other actions planned to be completed by 2017.

A working group was formed last year to create a master plan for the development and management of the forest. Councillor Sam Broughton who chairs the working group says that is pleasing that submissions showed there was a high level of support for the overall concept of how the park could be developed.

"The working group was also pleased to see that people indicated they were planning to visit the park more often once it has been further developed. It would be great to see the community making use of the tracks and picnicking facilities and for children to learn more about the forest once signage is installed."

19 of the 81 submitters requested that the park accommodate horse riding. The development plan identifies that the park is not suitable for horse riding because of the potential conflict between horse riders and people using the park for walking and cycling. Horse riding may be possible around the perimeter of the park and this will be investigated. As part of the Council's Draft Open Spaces Strategy, the Council has indicated it is planning to look at identifying suitable sites for off road horse riding in Selwyn.

Ends

Image attached: McHughs Forest Park provides a spectacular natural environment.

For media enquiries please contact:

Allanah Jarman

Selwyn District Council

Phone 03 347 2807

allanah.jarman@selwyn.govt.nz