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# North - West Wildlink Accord

“linking people to link nature”

*A high level strategic agreement which documents the commitment between three local authorities, a regional authority, the Department of Conservation, and a large community-based environmental organisation, to work together to develop an ecological corridor that links the Hauraki Gulf Islands, through the Auckland isthmus, to the Waitakere Ranges.*

## The Parties

Auckland Regional Council

Rodney District Council

North Shore City Council

Waitakere City Council

Department of Conservation

Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ

## Background

Although the parties all knew each other, and many had strong bilateral relationships, they had never previously worked together in a long-term collaborative way. Forest and Bird, who had launched the “Auckland Naturally” campaign, initially brought the group together. The campaign proposed, amongst other things, a series of ecological corridors. This concept resonated strongly with Waitakere City’s Green Network and Auckland Regional Council’s desire to develop wildlife corridors.

The staff group, which came together to progress the concept of a regional wildlife corridor, was a combination of passionate ecologists and those working with community environmental groups. All had very different views of biodiversity. With no formal meeting processes this often meant the group went ‘round in circles’, covering the same ground again and again.

There was some initial scepticism about the need for a collaborative agreement, with a preference by some to go straight to the ‘action’ phase of the Wildlink as there had already been many months of talking. However, recognising the importance of a written agreement to galvanise the group and get shared agreement on the concept, a decision was made to go to paper.

## Benefits of Putting Pen to Paper...

- getting shared understanding and clarity on what the North-West Wildlink actually was before it was formally launched;
- having a tool (an agreement) that could deliver political mandates and support for the Wildlink concept;
- having agreed visions and goals that could be communicated to the community and other key stakeholders;
- building awareness of what each organisation was already doing to support biodiversity and how it could be better linked by geographic location.

## Putting it Together...

A staff-based working group drafted the agreement. The initial focus was on defining and getting agreement on the Wildlink concept and then on how the agencies could work together to achieve the Wildlink vision. Two or three key brainstorming workshops were held with a couple of members taking responsibility for facilitating and framing up the workshop notes into a working document. The Accord development process took 6-10 months to complete and went back to individual members for consultation prior to finalising. The group chose the word 'Accord' because it reflected the high level strategic nature of their collaboration at that time.

The Accord's signing on the Te Atatu Peninsula, with both the Waitakere Ranges and Gulf Islands in view, also acted as the Wildlink's launch. This was an upbeat outdoor event with mayoral speeches and food and wine. For the working group this event brought relief at having reached a long awaited milestone and also resulted in great pride when it was seen how strongly the Wildlink and the Accord were supported politically.

The event and the signed accord helped energise the working group into its action phase. Looking back, the key staff involved now consider the process of deciding on the wording of the agreement to have been as valuable as the agreement itself.

## Key Agreement Features...

- outlines the broad vision and goals for the North-West Wildlink and how participating agencies will work together. Being broad and general has enabled flexibility and allowed the North-West Wildlink to evolve over time;
- articulates what the Wildlink is and is not;
- the one page document led to the work programmes and monitoring plans to be developed in the 6-10 month period following the Accord signing;
- it has a three year life and acknowledges the North-West Wildlink Accord as a possible template for similar initiatives elsewhere in the Auckland region.

## Biggest Challenges...

- drawing together different approaches to managing the environment and community;
- a lack of dedicated coordination resource to pull the Accord together, plan ahead, and support team members;
- working out how to meaningfully involve the regional community and iwi in what was essentially an agency-driven process. Tight timeframes, differing local approaches to community and iwi engagement, and the lack of an established regional process for collective iwi conversations meant that community/iwi engagement processes have become part of the post-Accord work programme, rather than part of the Accord development process as was initially hoped.

## Things That Helped...

- strong relationships between group members with high levels of trust and understanding about where each person was coming from;
- individuals within the group able to take on brokering roles at different times to keep the Accord development process moving forward;
- huge passion and desire to make the Wildlink concept a reality;
- being realistic about what both individuals and agencies could commit to at that point in time.

## What Has Happened Since...

*"The agreement signing is only the first step - it takes so much planning to get there but then you need to have action that will lead to results."*

*- Nick Beveridge, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society*

The Accord has been pivotal in getting things moving. It has ensured a high level of political support and long-term security because the Wildlink itself now has a mandated vision and governance structure. Work and outcome monitoring programmes are being developed and, as the Wildlink translates from a concept into key deliverables, planning is now underway to secure long-term resources.

Relationships are also said to be stronger for 'surviving' the agreement development process. As mentioned, the process of deciding on the wording of the agreement is now viewed as being as valuable as the agreement itself.

The diversity of agencies is now seen as the Wildlink's key strength with ongoing monthly meetings for sharing information on who's doing and funding what across the corridor. It has also offered the opportunity to link into and across community groups' networks. A regional planting day at Whangaparaoa resulting in 80 people from the regional community turning up to assist local volunteers plant trees.

*"Until the North-West Wildlink we were working in silos, now we're all working together and collaborating for biodiversity."*

*- Sam Hill, Auckland Regional Council*

## Best Advice For Others...

- understanding that collaboration and agreements are long-term processes. Take the time to move as fast or as slow as your group dynamics demand as process is important;
- not all your goals and ways of working will be alike. There is the need to focus on the commonalities as these are what bring and bind you together;
- See if you can get some low risk but visible action on the ground at the same time as you are developing the agreement;
- don't be afraid to say what you think and challenge group dynamics. Asking the hard questions about what the group is doing and why adds integrity and robustness to the process.



Signatories around the North - West Wildlink Accord

# North-West Wildlink Accord

## “Linking people to link nature”



### Introduction

#### Purpose

The purpose of this accord is to confirm the relationship between the founding agencies and organisations (the signatories) to collaborate on, and contribute to, the North-West Wildlink.

While this accord is a statement of the signatories' intentions about their relationship, it is not intended to be legally binding or to give rise to any legal rights or obligations between the signatories.

#### Background

Officers from Auckland Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Forest and Bird, North Shore City Council, Rodney District Council and Waitakere City Council have been working together to develop the North-West Wildlink concept, with the understanding that a co-ordinated approach across the region is the most effective way to address biodiversity conservation and community participation issues.

The purpose of the North-West Wildlink is two fold: firstly to provide healthy and safe habitat from the Hauraki Gulf Islands and Whangaparaoa through to the Waitakere Ranges; secondly, to link community, individual and agency effort along the wildlink. This project developed out of the Forest and Bird Auckland Nascosity initiative - which promotes this type of approach for conservation throughout the region - and strongly aligns with existing projects and goals of the other founding partners.

The North-West Wildlink does not propose to create a continuous, vegetated corridor but rather focuses on existing natural areas and restoration projects that can contribute to a patchwork of habitats and refuges. Such existing areas include parks, riparian reserves, strandlines, coastal fringes, open space and backyards.

#### The broad goals of the North-West Wildlink are to:

- 1) *Improve the ecological health and connectivity of native habitats throughout the area.*
- 2) *Increase meaningful community participation in environmental care.*
- 3) *Increase collaboration and communication between agencies, groups and individuals.*

More detailed goals and objectives are being developed in conjunction with the community and will be laid out in the operational project plan.

These benefits will be achieved through prioritising and co-ordinating efforts, and linking individual actions and community projects into a broader regional picture. The North-West Wildlink was identified as the best opportunity for a first focus, and may provide a template for future wildlink initiatives in other areas of the region.

### Accord Signatories

#### Signatories to this Accord

##### The founding signatories to this accord are:

- Auckland Regional Council
- Department of Conservation
- Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc. (Forest and Bird)
- North Shore City Council
- Rodney District Council
- Waitakere City Council

#### Responsibilities

##### Accord signatories will:

- Work together to develop the North-West Wildlink project and support on-the-ground community biodiversity initiatives.
- Support implementation of the North-West Wildlink by considering initiatives through their planning processes.
- Provide representation on the Officers Steering Group.
- Adhere to the principles and protocols of the project's communications plan.
- Work together within the principles set out in "Accord Participation Principles".

#### Officers Steering Group

##### a) Role:

- Implement the collaborative relationship between Accord signatories.
- Oversee the budget, communications and content of the process.
- Develop and implement project plans and other management tools within best practice.
- Provide the primary communication contact network for the initiative.
- Establish working groups comprised of steering group members - and others as necessary - to progress specific projects as required.

##### b) Membership:

- Each Accord signatory will appoint a representative/s to the Steering Group.
- As the need arises, Accord signatories may assign specialist staff to the Steering Group to provide additional support. They may not necessarily be required to fulfil all the responsibilities of Steering Group members.
- Additional members may be added as agreed on a consensual basis.

##### c) Member responsibility:

- Commit to collaborative effort.
- Attend steering group meetings.
- Provide members as appropriate to working sub-groups.
- Undertake project work - as agreed through the agencies planning processes.
- Arrange for a representative of their parent agency to sign this accord.
- Be accountable to, and provides advice and updates to their respective management and governance bodies on planning, progress, scope, budget and content.

### Accord Participation Principles

#### Accord signatories and their representatives will:

- Interact with respect, patience and commitment while understanding other signatories' accountabilitys and timetables.
- Contribute resources to the project.
- Work co-operatively.
- Work with the community to encourage participation in the project and to work together to support the vision.
- Recognise that other accord signatories may have varying goals and objectives and the signatories will seek together co-operatively to accommodate as far as possible these varying goals and objectives.

### Availability of Resources

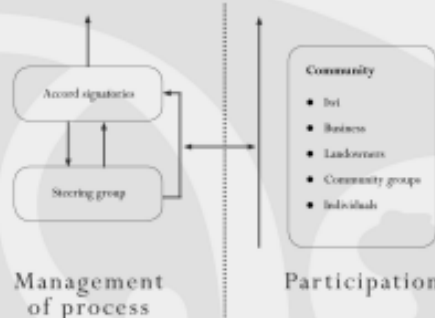
This Accord does not oblige any signatory to commit any particular level of resources to the accord during the term. The accord signatories acknowledge that the availability of resources will vary over time according to community participation and skills, and according to resources allocated by the accord signatories through their respective planning processes.

### Term of the Accord

The term of the Accord will be for 3 years from February 28 2006, after which it will be reviewed and the signatories will decide whether, and on what terms, to renew it. If one Accord signatory decides to withdraw from the Accord, this agreement will remain in effect amongst the remaining Accord signatories. The Accord signatories may at any time agree to renegotiate this Accord in order to include new Accord signatories or to bring the Accord to an end.

### Governance Structure

#### North West Wildlink outcomes



#### Explanatory note:

The above model illustrates the current governance of the North West Wildlink concept. It is an evolving concept, whose governance may, as required, change as the concept evolves. North West Wildlink outcomes will be delivered through the community, individual agencies and at times collectively. The management of the process is led through the steering group, whose members retain their accountabilitys to their parent agencies. Community members influence the management process through regular forums.



**Sandra Coney**  
Parks and Heritage  
Committee Chair  
28th February 2006



**Chris Carter**  
Minister of Conservation  
28th February 2006



**Anne Fean**  
Executive Committee  
Member  
28th February 2006



**George Wood**  
Mayor  
28th February 2006



**John Lee**  
Mayor  
28th February 2006



**Bob Harvey**  
Mayor  
28th February 2006

North - West Wildlink accord  
SKIP - Barnardos  
Aranui Community Renewal Project  
Te Uri o Hau - Kaipara District Council  
Community Outcomes Bay of Plenty  
Northland Monitoring Forum  
Rotorua Strategy - Youth Transitions  
Southland Rural Fire Authority  
South Wairarapa Safer Community Council  
Coromandel Independent Living Trust  
Community Waitakere