

LGOIMA

When releasing responses to previous LGOIMA requests, names of individual requestors may be withheld to protect their privacy.

Information requested by the media, from public sector organisations and MPs will always be published while information specific to an individual or their property will not generally be published.

**Request
from:**

For: Copper Sulphate usage on the Modellers Ponds

**Response
by:**

Rosie Bartlett
Manager Parks and Facilities



Ref: SR2021065

Civic House, 110 Trafalgar Street
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17 July 2020

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[Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST ON COPPER SULPHATE APPLICATION ON THE MODELLERS POND

I refer to your official information request dated 29 June 2020 on copper sulphate usage on the Modellers Pond, including dates when started and ceased being used, dosage amount, application guidelines and actual dosage administered in the pond.

The information you have requested is below:

1. Usage of copper sulphate on the Modellers Pond

Copper sulphate has been used by the Nelson Society of Modellers as a treatment to control the algae growth in the Modellers Pond.

2. Dates when this has started and ceased using

Because some of the information is not held or does not exist, we are unable to complete part of your request. Therefore we are refusing part of your request under section 17(f) and section 17(g) of the LGOIMA.

Whilst we cannot meet your exact request, we are able to provide information that the Nelson Society of Modellers has advised staff that it has been using copper sulphate as an algae treatment between the mid-1970s and the latest known usage around 2000. The Community Services Committee report RA1115742 in 2014, **attached** (A1115742), states in 4.1 *"that Nelson City Council requested this practice to stop as there was no consent allowing this."*

3. Dosage Amounts – application guidelines and actual dosages administered in the pond

The exact quantity, and actual dosages that have been applied are not known by Council, as the Modellers Pond Society is the lessee of the site, and as such had the responsibility of maintaining the pond at the time copper sulphate was applied.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or free phone 0800 802 602.

Internal Document ID: A2413223

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Rosie Bartlett by email rosie.bartlett@ncc.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rosie Bartlett', written over a horizontal line.

Rosie Bartlett
Manager Parks and Facilities

Encl.

(A1115742) – Community Services Committee – 2014 – Modeller's Pond Update

MODELLERS' POND – UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the upgrade of the Modellers' Pond.

2. DELEGATIONS

- 2.1 This report provides an update only but any proposed solution would be in variance to the 2014/15 Annual Plan and is a decision of the full Council.

3. RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report Modellers' Pond Update (A1115742) and its attachment (A1281762) be received;

AND THAT Council note that the option to utilise fish to control the weed and algae in the Modellers' Pond is no longer considered a viable solution;

AND THAT a detailed assessment at an estimated cost of \$30,000 on the environmental impacts, capital investment and associated long-term, operational and maintenance costs be undertaken on three options, namely:

1. Continue to manually clean into the future; or
2. Fill in the Modellers' Pond, landscape and maintain into the future; or
3. Modify the Modellers' Pond to minimise ongoing operational and maintenance costs;

AND THAT Council approve this additional cost as unbudgeted operational expenditure;

AND THAT staff engage with Pond users and a Tahunanui community representative and seek their contributions in assessing the options;

AND THAT results of this detailed assessment be reported back to the Community Services Committee to be able to guide deliberations on the Long-Term Plan.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Modellers' Pond has long been a feature of the Tahuna recreation area. The Pond is well loved and supported by a club with a small number of members. Up until around the turn of the century, the Pond was regularly dosed with copper sulphate by the Modellers' Society to control algae. At that time Council requested this practice to stop as there was no consent allowing this. Since then there has been an attempt to control the algae and pond weed using chemical control but this was unsuccessful due largely to the brackish nature of the water.
- 4.2 It is often said of projects that there is a tension between the three parameters of project cost, timing and quality. Council has invested considerable resource over the last decade into finding a solution to the issues with weed control in the Pond (see 5.5). The reality is that in this instance, there is a tension between the three parameters of regulatory requirements, project cost and finding a workable technical solution.
- 4.3 In 2013/14, initial investigation and design options to address issues with water quality in the modellers' Pond showed that any workable solution was complex and came with a considerable price tag – up to \$1.2 Million. Council indicated a reluctance to spend this amount.
- 4.4 Further work was undertaken by officers to refine options, and Council approved an amount of \$490,000 in the last financial year (2013/14) to upgrade the modeller's pond to address the ongoing long-term maintenance issues. During the projection rounds, Council received updated advice that allowed a reduction to \$120,000 with an operational ongoing budget of \$60,000 per year. This advice was based on a proposal from Nelmac (see 4.7 below).
- 4.5 The pond is susceptible to an invasive weed known as *Ruppia megacarpa* and a prolific filamentous green algae.
- 4.6 Officers sought resource consent to use chemicals to control the weed – firstly to kill the weed and secondly to control the re-growth on a monthly basis. This consent also sought to use natural dyes to reduce UV sunlight into the pond which was aiding the growth of the weed and algae. The consent was withdrawn, due to complications in proving the chemical could be used safely.
- 4.7 Nelmac are contractors for cleaning the pond, and officers had discussed issues and potential solutions when seeking alternatives to the \$1.2 million first proposed in the budget process. Nelmac proposed an alternative to use fish (firstly Carp and then a combination of Grey Mullet and Parore). This initiative promised a cost effective solution and discussions with DoC, Fish & Game and iwi were also positive.
- 4.8 This initiative was enthusiastically received by councillors in December 2013 when first suggested and was used as the basis to prepare a workable plan for Council to consider in the upcoming 2014/15 Annual Plan.
- 4.9 Councillors Davy and Lawrey consulted with the three users of the pond, namely the Yacht Squadron, Railway Modellers Society and Boat Modellers

Society, who were all receptive to the use of the fish as a permanent solution to their maintenance concerns as well as satisfying their need to retain a pond depth of 750mm.

4.10 Nelmac continues to monitor and clean the pond.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 In early 2014, Nelmac advised officers that their proposal to use fish to control the weed and algae was now not considered viable and that an alternative solution was preferable. The Chair and Chief Executive of Nelmac met with the Mayor and Chief Executive in mid-August to apologise for any failing on their organisation's part, in leading Council to believe it had a solution which was not now viable. A letter from Nelmac is provided as Attachment 1.

5.2 The withdrawal of fish as a method of control has necessitated a re-think, as a workable, cost effective solution cannot be achieved for the funding allowed for in the current Annual Plan.

5.3 Officers were unable to report to Council earlier for a range of reasons: Nelmac wanted time to see whether it could provide any alternatives; contamination issues needed further exploration; and finally, the unavailability of key staff.

5.4 The fish were proposed to be introduced early spring and Council is now faced with the added complication of trying to manually control the weed and algae as we move into the warmer seasons (spring and summer) where both proliferate.

5.5 In 2010, officers commissioned a study from NIWA on management options. This proposed chemical and dyes; further work on these options have shown them not to be viable. Other options had unacceptable price tags (eg relining the pond at a cost of \$1.2 million).

5.6 The pond is considered a HAIL site and any solution will have to address the associated costs of working on such a site.

5.7 Finally, the pond plays a role in receiving stormwater from the Centennial Road pump station constructed in 1998 and built to alleviate historical flooding to the lower parts of Tahunanui.

- 5.8 The pond is seen as a community asset to the Tahunanui community, and a drawcard to some of the businesses in the area. It may be helpful to ask the Tahunanui Business Association to nominate a member of their community for staff to engage with as the options are worked through. This would ensure that there was good understanding of any choice that Council finally makes.
- 5.9 The cost to clean the Pond to date currently sits at \$25,000 and with another seven months of the financial year still to run, the operational budget of \$60,000 may be insufficient.
- 5.10 The cost of assessment - \$30,000 – will also be operational expenditure. (There is currently a budget of \$120,000 capital expenditure, but this cannot be used for the assessment of options.) Council should be aware that this additional cost of \$30,000 opex is not currently funded.
- 5.11 The cost of implementing any solution may be funded from the \$120,000 capital expenditure in the budget, although until the final choice is made, advice on costs cannot be given. The opex for the chosen option may require further consideration.

Options

- 5.12 An initial evaluation of options available to Council identifies three main options. These comprise:
- Retain the status quo and continuing to manually clean the pond into the future; or
 - Fill in the pond, landscape and maintain into the future; or
 - Modify the pond to minimise ongoing operational and maintenance costs.

Proposal

- 5.13 It is proposed that a detailed assessment be undertaken for each of these options. The assessment will comprise water quality aspects, environmental impacts, technical feasibility, capital costs and ongoing operational and maintenance costs. The assessment of each option will enable Council to fully understand the implications of any decision it makes.
- 5.14 It is estimated that it would cost around \$30,000 to undertake this detailed assessment. This assessment will not only include the upfront investment for each option but also the ongoing operational and maintenance costs over the next 30 years. This will enable Council to make an informed decision based on life cycle costs. This cost will be operational expenditure.

6. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AGAINST COUNCIL'S SIGNIFICANCE POLICY

- 6.1 This is not a significant decision.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The proposed work to the modeller's pond was consulted on as part of the 2013/14 and 2014/15 Annual Plans. Feedback from the discussions at that time was that the pond is important to some in Tahunanui. It would be appropriate for Council to recognise the partnership approach set out in Nelson 2060, and to seek a representative from that community to engage with as the options are developed. Users of the pond should also be engaged with.
- 7.2 Once it has received the proposed assessment, Council may want to consider adopting a preferred option. This will give the opportunity of consulting with the wider community before making a final decision.

8. ALIGNMENT WITH RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICY

- 8.1 Improvements to the pond align with the intent of the Annual Plan 2014/15 however the allocated funding of \$120,000 may not be sufficient.
- 8.2 This work is consistent with Nelson 2060, particularly lifestyles, partnerships and protecting our natural environment.

9. INCLUSION OF MAORI IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 9.1 There has been no consultation with Maori, outside of the Annual Plan processes.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Council has previously approved funding to upgrade the modeller's pond, but solutions have proved more complex and costly than previously envisaged.
- 10.2 The solution of using fish which formed the basis of the funding in the current 2014/15 Annual Plan is now considered not to be a viable option.
- 10.3 It is proposed that three options be assessed in detail. This would give Council the ability to engage with its community and the pond users before making an informed decision on an option.

Richard Kirby