

Report 99.180

15 April 1999

File: Y/21/1

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Colin Wright, Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information on matters of interest since the previous meeting held on 9 March 1999.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Financial Report

The financial reports to the end of March indicate that the Division is \$280,000 under budget after nine months of the financial year. Within the various departments there are a number of variations from budget which largely relate to timing differences. This is particularly so in the Biosecurity Department which is currently \$374,000 under budget. By contrast, the Operations Department was \$260,000 over budget because of the additional \$670,000 that has been expended so far on flood damage repair work. Capital expenditure is close to budget at this stage of the financial year.

As earlier indicated, 14 of the 17 Annual Plan Performance Indicators are on target for achievement. The exceptions relate to under activity in the soil conservation area and the flood damage in the river schemes.

2.2 Councillors Tour

The councillors enjoyed a two day tour of the Wairarapa in mid-March. This was an opportunity, particularly for new councillors, to inspect some of the Wairarapa activities of the Council. We endeavoured to provide an informative and varied programme over the two days and feedback indicated that this was achieved. The tour was also an opportunity for councillors to get to know one another better, and in this regard the social evening at Cr Long's home was very appropriate.

2.3 Annual Plan

For the benefit of appointed members of the Committee, I note that the Council's Draft Annual Plan has been finalised and will be available for public submissions from approximately the end of April. Overall, there is a proposed 1.85% increase in Regional Council rates with this being primarily required because of the effects of the major floods throughout the region in October last.

2.4 Joint Councils Meeting

Crs Long and Buchanan and the Divisional Manager attended a Joint Councils meeting with representatives of the three Wairarapa district councils in late March. A number of items of mutual interest were discussed. As reported in the media, most attention was focused on discussion of possible amalgamation of the district councils. There was also discussion on whether there should be a greater move towards joint operation of services between the three councils as an alternative. In addition, some of those present wished to see a unitary authority in the Wairarapa, and I have been asked to work with the three chief executives as to a possible process for this to be considered.

2.5 Forestry Exit Strategy

Again for the benefit of appointed Committee members, I note that the Council considered a report on a Forestry Exit Strategy at a recent meeting. This report set out various requirements that would be necessary to safeguard various values and interests if the Council decided that it wished to sell cutting rights for its forests in the Wairarapa and the metropolitan part of the region.

The Council has deferred consideration of any decision to sell or not until its review of the Long Term Financial Strategy later this year.

2.6 Staffing

Goran Stojmirovic (Investigations & Design Engineer) has tendered his resignation with effect from Friday, 16 April 1999. Goran has been successful in obtaining a position with the Hydro Power Commission in Tasmania. A vacancy will be advertised shortly.

Wendy Saunders is shortly to join the staff as a replacement Hazards and Emergency Management Officer. This position will have involvement with the move in the region to the Emergency Management Group arrangement. However, emphasis will be also very much on hazard identification as a specific Regional Council responsibility.

3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

3.1 Pest Summit

Five senior Biosecurity staff attended the third national Pest Summit conference hosted by Horizon.mw (formerly the Manawatu – Wanganui Regional Council). The three-day conference attracted a large variety of speakers, ranging from the Ministers of Biosecurity and Conservation, scientists, and councillors and staff from regional councils throughout New Zealand. It was disappointing that no councillors from this Council were able to attend as it provided a unique opportunity to become familiar with a host of biosecurity issues.

The conference focused on variety of topics, with emphasis on regional and national pest management strategies, national border control issues, and the role of science and technology in assisting with the resolution of biosecurity issues.

The conference delegates passed a number of resolutions, including

- ◆ seeking further amendments to the Biosecurity Act 1993
- ◆ progressing a national pest plant strategy for the current 'national interest' pest plants
- ◆ identifying whether a national pest management strategy for possums was appropriate
- ◆ that central government provide additional assistance to facilitate the development of private sector pest management strategies
- ◆ that the Minister of Biosecurity establishes a single agency to provide advice and co-ordinate support for Government departments responsible for dealing with unwanted exotic incursions.
- ◆ that the Minister for the Environment addresses the need for informed and constructive debate concerning the use of new technological controls (especially biocontrols) in the pest management industry.

A number of groups will be working to progress the resolutions, including the LGNZ Biosecurity Technical Advisory Group, and the Pest Management Strategy Advisory Committee, which reports to the Minister of Biosecurity.

3.2 Hornwort

Further assessments have been carried out for Hornwort around eastern Lake Wairarapa. Further sites were located in the Oporua Floodway and the irrigation channel into Boggy Pond. This now brings the total number of known sites in the region to nine.

DoC have laid a trial in the drainage system at the northern end of the lake. This has involved covering the drains with black polythene, which will be left in place for several months.

Letters and identification brochures have been sent to all eelers pointing out Councils concerns regarding this plant. It is also intended that a sign be erected at the lake reserve for public awareness.

Paul Champion, NIWA scientist, will be in the Wairarapa on 21 April to view some of the problem areas and provide an opinion on the future status of this plant for the RPMS review.

3.3 Biocontrol Agents

A monitoring trial has been set up at Ron Wilmshurst's property, Carterton to assess the impact of Ragwort Flea beetle. The trial is based on the recommendations supplied by Landcare Research and will be carried out over a two-year period.

The Old Man's Beard leaf fungus has been released in Seatoun. Performance monitoring will be ongoing. The fungus appears to be influenced significantly by climatic conditions. A range of release sites throughout the region may be necessary to determine the most suitable conditions.

3.4 Old Man's Beard

This year's programme on Wairarapa rivers has seen good progress made for the control of Old Man's Beard (OMB). The final contract for the year on the Ruamahunga River will take work as far south as Morison's Bush.

A recent article on OMB in the Upper Hutt community newspaper has resulted in up to 100 calls to the Upper Hutt office. Most landowners are seeking advice and assistance. However, the response has identified a number of previously unknown infestations in the area.

3.5 Manchurian Wild Rice

The 1999 eradication programme on the sole regional site at Waikanae has been completed. All approvals were received in early March with chemical spraying commencing immediately.

Work commenced on the southern infestations at the golf course, moving north to the large infestations near the Waikanae sewage ponds. Recent inspections indicate that the plants are starting to discolour and wilt.

The entire programme is likely to take at least three years with minor maintenance control ongoing.

3.6 Bovine Tb Operational Update

The revised programme and current area treated is as follows:

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	179,841	79.4	111,885	49.4
Private Contracts	46,676	20.6	27,230	12.0
	226,517	100.0	139,115	61.4

Progress to plan is currently satisfactory.

The following monitoring result has been made available this month.

Haurangi Crown 2.3%

3.7 External Contracts

Pakowhai An interim monitor over 2100ha produced a result of 4.3%. There is approximately 1200ha left to work in this contract.

Ponatahi-Longbush This operation began on 15 March and should be completed by mid-May.

3.8 Bovine Operations

The staff required to complete the annual programme has now been employed. The Bovine Unit currently employs 18 Fixed Term Employees as well as the usual permanent staff.

The following operations are nearing completion.

- Martinborough
- Otaki Crown
- Tinui
- Whangaehu
- Featherston-Wairongomai Crown

3.9 Rabbit Proneness Survey

The annual rabbit proneness survey has been completed in the Western Zone and is almost completed in the Wairarapa. The survey entails inspecting land with a known rabbit proneness history and grading the rabbit levels to the Modified McLean Scale.

The information is transferred to maps to allow a visual comparison of rabbit prone lands on an annual basis. Landowners with an infestation of level 4 or greater are written to and advised of their obligations under the Regional Pest Management Strategy to maintain rabbit populations on the land they occupy at, or below level 5 of the Modified McLean Scale.

Rabbit infestations are far lower than they have been for many years. The cause is apparently last years RCD epidemic followed by some recycling of the disease during February this year on the Kapiti Coast.

Two sites that have proven to be good indicators of seasonal rabbit infestations in the past are the Tauherenikau and Waingawa riverbeds. The recent inspections disclosed low to moderate densities with level 4 being the maximum recorded. Whilst inspections have not been completed in the eastern Wairarapa, there are sites of concern in the Te Wharau, Homewood and Riversdale districts in spite of the known presence of RCD last year.

3.10 Rooks

Rook control has been to the fore in the Wairarapa as flocks have concentrated on harvested grain crop sites and walnut groves. Hundreds of rooks have been destroyed but it is not known what the impact has occurred on the overall population. The best indicator will be the annual rook census by nest counting in October this year.

3.11 Key Native Ecosystem Programmes

All of the known KNE sites within the region have now been surveyed. No doubt others will arise as covenanting or retirements of farm bush blocks occur. There are still some survey results to be written up and regional priority scores to be allocated. Maintenance possum control works continue at many sites, primarily utilising waxed brodifacoum baits in bait stations. The waxed baits have better moisture repellent qualities and therefore remain palatable for longer periods.

Planning will soon commence for two KNE management areas located at Clareville and Battersea in the Wairarapa. Once undertaken, these areas will complete possum control coverage of the Wairarapa Plain between the Waingawa River and Pirinoa.

Operational work has commenced on the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary project with the installation of track networks to facilitate the placement and servicing of bait stations. The exotic animal eradication programme is being planned to coincide with the completion of the predator proof fence by 30 June this year. Councils involvement will include establishing the track network, contributing towards resource consent costs, the initial possum knockdown including two aerial bait drops, the provision of bait and bait stations and being responsible for the eradication of feral rabbits. A total of \$68,100 has been budgeted by Council to undertake these responsibilities within the current and next financial years. The Sanctuary work is being undertaken as it ranks particularly high as a KNE management area.

4. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

4.1 Environment Incidents – 26/2/99 to 8/4/99

<i>Date of Report</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
26/02/99	Odour and dust causing problems at property near crematorium.	Found to be problems with a new firebox.
2/03/99	Tradesman spray painting on footpath, causing complaints from neighbour.	Referred to District Council.
2/03/99	A member of the public reported spray drift from a neighbour who was spraying vehicles with paint next door.	Historic problem. Currently being dealt with by District Council.
3/03/99	Council officer complained about damage to stopbank and stockpiles of gravel placed in unconsented locations.	Site inspection carried out with complainant, operator and council officers. Operator given one week to remove stockpiles of gravel and repair damage to stopbank.
5/03/99	Report that bulldozer had been working in coastal area without consent.	Inspected with District Council staff, and found to be outside of coastal marine area. Handled by District Council.
8/03/99	Dust nuisance reported at residential site surrounded by industrial site.	Dust nuisance confirmed by Council staff. Company who may be responsible was inspected, and volunteered to make improvements.
8/03/99	Diesel smell detected from Makoura Stream, which runs through complainant's property in McKenna Road Masterton.	Odour detected by two council officers. Odour found to be diesel floating in stream. Investigations indicated source was from sumps under local bus company. Sumps are being inspected to assess their condition. Follow up requirements still under investigation.
9/03/99	Complaint of an abattoir letting all effluent soak into the ground near complainants bore.	Consented activity, but consent holder was not complying. Changes to their management of waste requested.
10/03/99	Complaint of smoke and odour from crematorium	Found to be problems with cleaning rags catching fire.
16/03/99	Smoke nuisance caused by school incinerator, Masterton.	School put the fire out. Asked to be careful about the type of rubbish being burned in future.
18/03/99	Offensive smoke odour, from burn-off in paddock, Lansdowne Masterton.	Officer visited complainants house, confirmed the smell of smoke was objectionable. Could not find party responsible. District Council had issued a burning permit, subject to conditions. District Council to follow up complaint and speak to permit holder.
30/03/99	Frequent odour problems reported from Masterton landfill	Still being investigated.

31/03/99	Severe odour problem from unknown source, urban Masterton	Found to be from neighbours rotting drum of seafood. Offending matter removed
3/04/99	Foul odour, alleged to be coming from Masterton landfill	Still being investigated
7/04/99	Rubbish thrown in stream running through complainant's property, urban Masterton	Person responsible for rubbish was asked to remove it.
8/04/99	Re-alignment of riverbed may cause flooding problems to downstream neighbour.	Under investigation.

4.2 Notified Consents

- Ruamahanga Catchment Gravel Hearing held. Decision awaited.
- Greytown Sewage Submissions have closed with several opposing the continued year round discharge.
- Castlepoint Jetty Pre hearing meeting held. Joint hearing set for 21 April 1999.
- Greytown/Featherston Water Consent application pending from South Wairarapa District Council.

4.3 Appeals

Recently issued consents for marine farming and a coastal structure have both been appealed as to their conditions, and also to their costs in the latter instance. The appeal to costs will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

4.4 Infocall River Information

A decision has been made to install an Infocall Message Box which will link with the river level monitoring telemetry. The system allows up to 200 callers to access the system at any one time and provides automatically updated river level information. A small charge is made to each caller.

The system offers a number of advantages over the current phone in system and will be implemented over most gauging sites after an initial installation/familiarity stage. Lake Wairarapa levels at Burlings will also be included. The capital cost is \$2000 and will be accommodated within the current budget.

4.5 River Level Monitoring Sites

A new site has been established and is now operative in the Mangatarere Gorge. This will provide valuable low flow and flood flow information.

A prefabricated concrete gauging weir has been installed on the lower Otakura Stream. This enabled precise flow information to be obtained

which will assist water allocation and low flow irrigation restrictions. This is the first valley stream to be measured in this way.

5. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

5.1 Willow Sawfly

The outbreak of willow sawfly, which was first reported in Auckland in 1997, has reached as far south as Hawkes Bay and Taupo. The prevalence of northerly conditions during much of the summer has assisted the spread. Heavy defoliation of certain willows has occurred in Bay of Plenty and Gisborne although no adult trees have been killed to date. The most susceptible clones appear to be crack, golden, and matsudana, and some matsudana hybrids.

40% of the willow population at Akura Nursery comprise the above species. Other matsudana hybrids such as Tangoio may well be susceptible. It is possible that damage to foliage on new cuttings could ultimately lead to permanent loss.

Akura Nursery contains some 70 % poplar varieties. This is likely to reduce the overall impact should the sawfly become resident.

5.2 Nursery Pole Production

Early predictions were for the production of 22,000 3metre poles. A recent assessment has realised a new tally of 15,000, plus 2,000 2.5 metre poles. It appears that the ongoing dry subsoil conditions have had a more severe impact than was first predicted. Poles have generally reached the required height but have not attained the minimum diameters.

Soil conservation programmes have secured the entire production, meaning that there will be no opportunity for gate sales. Sufficient 2 metre stock exists to satisfy the demand for internal river clients, plus a substantial external order from Environment Bay of Plenty.

It appears from some recent work in Hawkes Bay that significant pole growth occurs from November to February and that ample water in November is required to maximise growth. The rainfall in January and February, although very welcome, has not been sufficient and has been too late to optimise pole growth.

5.3 Riversdale Dune Management Committee

The Committee met recently to consider various activities in relation to dune protection and revegetation. Projects confirmed for the coming year are Spinifex propagation, a wooden slatted walkway trial, and more signage to encourage care of the dune formations.

The meeting also agreed to change the name from the formal sounding Dune Management Committee to Riversdale Beachcare. It is envisaged that greater community involvement can be achieved through the name change and an ongoing focus on education and facilitation. The Regional Council will play a key role in the activities of the group.

5.4 Forestry – Silviculture

380 hectares of pruning have been completed within Stoney Creek to date with a further 206 hectares scheduled before the end of the financial year. 13 hectares of pruning have been completed at Hiwinui with a further 12 scheduled before the end of the financial year.

5.5 Logging

8000 tonnes of the planned 10,000 tonnes have been produced for the year to date generating a net return of \$180,000. Ground based logging is expected to commence in May to complete the annual target.

5.6 Waiohine/Ruamahanga Rivers

The cross-section network between the Waiohine and Ruamahanga Rivers confluence has been surveyed using GPS surveying equipment. Concrete benchmarks were installed at each cross-section.

Aerial photographs have been updated for the Waiohine and Upper Ruamahanga Rivers.

5.7 Waiohine River Advisory Scheme

A special meeting was held in March to consider the financial position of the Scheme and to also consider what works needed to be completed during this financial year. After some debate the advisory committee agreed to a works programme which will result in the Scheme carrying a debt forward to next year of approximately \$200,000.

The advisory committee voted unanimously to increase their rates next year by 60%. This will enable the debt to be paid off within 3 years, subject to no large flood events, and will match the increased regional component to the Scheme already programmed for 1999/2000.

A newsletter is currently being prepared for all Scheme members outlining the reasons for the advisory committee's decision.

David Bulman, recently retired District Valuer, has been engaged to undertake a review of the rating classification of the Scheme. It will be an exercise commencing with a "blank sheet of paper" approach.

5.8 Global Gravel Resource Consent

The Operations Department has applied to extract gravel from the Ruamahanga River system. A hearing was held mid-April with independent hearing commissioners Sue Driver and John Clark.

The issues at the hearing focused primarily on the length of the term of the consent, equality of law, ownership of the riverbed and Iwi issues. The Iwi are particularly interested in how they can be involved in the management of one of their 'toangas', i.e. sand and gravel.

There was virtually no discussion on environmental matters.

A total of 17 submissions were received. The majority supported the proposal. Messrs Barton, Hedley and Riddiford opposed the consent. Ngati Kahungunu also opposed the consent with Rangitaane O Wairarapa giving conditional support.

A decision on the application is awaited.

5.9 Gladstone Public Water Supply

Regional Council staff and the Environmental Health Officer from the Carterton District Council presented information to a public meeting at Gladstone recently. A proposed Scheme for the area was suggested.

A steering committee has been created to oversee further investigations to test the viability of the project.

5.10 Barrage Gates – Painting

The maintenance painting contract at the Lake Wairarapa Barrage Gates has now been successfully completed.

5.11 Donalds Creek Flood Protection Project

The earthmoving and concreting works associated with the Donalds Creek Flood Protection Project have been completed. The Committee may wish to consider whether it would like to celebrate the completion of the works in some way.

5.12 Flood Damage Repairs

Work continues on these repairs. Contributions from landowners for the lower priority works have been very few and therefore many of these works have not proceeded.

5.13 Lower Whangaehu River Tree Clearance

Clearance of the last 3.7 kilometres of the 8.5 kilometre length of the Lower Whangaehu River channel has been completed. The total

clearance cost to date over a 4 year period was \$120,000 in comparison to the \$140,000 estimate. An ongoing programme of channel maintenance consisting of debris blockage removal and herbicide spraying of regrowth will be implemented.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Wright', written in a cursive style.

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa