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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 of interest since the previous meeting held on 9 May 2000.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Long Term Financial Strategy and 2000/01 Annual Plan

For the benefit of appointed members of the Committee, it is noted that the Council will be hearing submissions on the proposed Long Term Financial Strategy and Annual Plan on 6, 7 & 8 June. Over 230 submissions have been received although only a portion wish to be 'heard'. Final decisions will be made by Council on 29 June.

A particular budgetary complication at present is the lack of certainty over next year's Bovine Tb programme. As Committee members are aware, the Council has budgeted for an expansion of the programme beginning in 2000/01 and for approval by the Animal Health Board of the Eradication Zone proposal in northern Wairarapa. At the time of writing there is still no clear indication as to the degree of funding support that will be forthcoming from the Animal Health Board.

2.2 Audit by Animal Health Board

The Animal Health Board has recently undertaken audits on the vector management services provided by regional agencies throughout the country. The Wellington Regional Council is the regional vector management contractor for the Wellington Region.

The purpose of the audit was to determine the status and effectiveness of the agency's quality assurance programmes in relation to meeting the Animal Health Board's vector management services specifications.

The Biosecurity Department, as can be seen by the following excerpts from the audit report, achieved a very positive audit result.

“Overall Finding:

The overall finding is that the Vector Management function of WRC’s Biosecurity Department is operating very effective management systems and the outcomes being achieved are consistent with the specifications and expectations of the Animal Health Board.

Of particular note is the abundance of very impressive quality system documentation covering the whole function from service planning to field delivery. The level and depth of ‘management-type’ quality assurance thinking behind the documentation is exceptional and the vector management accountability has clearly been thoroughly analysed and captured in well structured and practical procedures. The Vector Management Services Group is to be congratulated on their efforts in this area.

WRC’s commitment to customers is evidenced in various Council and Department documents and the AHB’s ‘Customer Requirements’ has been used as the basis for much of the WRC’s system documentation.

Effective systems are in place for the design and implementation phases and the WRC has a very good working relationship with AgriQuality NZ (which is an immediate neighbour). A high level of communications is maintained with farmers and contractors, and systems are continually being developed to assess, records and manage contractors’ effectiveness.

A relatively small number of areas have been identified for further attention to enhance the quality system already in place. These are identified in the Non-conformance Notification Form completed at the time of the audit.

The WRC Vector Management Services Group showed a willingness to integrate the recommended changes into their systems.

While the overall rating was “Acceptable”, this is unfortunately the highest rating available. The results from this audit demonstrate that a very high quality vector management service is being undertaken in the Wellington Region.

Overall Audit Rating:

An overall audit rating was ‘Acceptable’.

The WRC’s Vector Management Services Group’s understanding and implementation of its role are of the highest order.”

2.3 Staffing

Helen Marr has been appointed as a Resource Advisor to the Policy and Planning Section.

3. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore

3.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date of Report</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
27/04/00	Odour from industrial emission causing nuisance effects, Masterton.	Company concerned is reviewing information provided for resource consent.
28/04/00	Major fly infestation, rural Carterton	Flies identified as dung flies. No obvious single source. No further action taken.
3/05/00	Effluent spilled at petrol station hosed down into stormwater system and into creek.	Petrol station owners have been asked to re-grade the forecourt so that run-off into creek cannot occur.
4/05/00	Rubbish dumped at river, Masterton	Rubbish removed by contractors
10/05/00	Noise from mobile crushing plant working by the Waingawa River	Spoken to gravel extractor, and complaint referred on to Carterton District Council
10/05/00	Dead cow reported in the Mangatarere Stream	Farmer was asked to bury cow.
16/05/00	Dust problem from neighbouring industry, Masterton	Under investigation
16/05/00	Thick black smoke coming from industrial site, Masterton.	Found to be burning plastic. Company was sent letter indicating those materials, which are acceptable to be burned.
20/05/00	Truckload of rubbish found on banks of Waiohine River.	Unable to trace source.
22/05/00	Complaint of run-off from commercial car wash into neighbouring property, Masterton	Complaint handled by District Council.
22/05/00	Pit on railway land being used as rubbish dump, with rubbish periodically being burned, Masterton	Occupier of land asked to remove rubbish within two weeks and to fill pit. To be re-inspected.
22/05/00	Complaint of foul odour from neighbouring septic system, rural Masterton	No odour detected at time of inspection
25/05/00	Complaint received regarding excessive weed growth in a small stream in Carterton causing resistance to flow.	Complaint passed onto WRC Engineering Section to investigate.

3.2 Compliance

Two abatement notices were issued relating to excavation within the active river channel associated with the removal of logs. The Para Stream culvert has been removed and reinstalled to a correct level. Upstream neighbours concerns as to the back up of water were shown to be correct with a noticeable drop in water level occurring.

3.3 Notified Consents

JNL – Air Discharge Variation	Consent on hold while applicant determines whether to include fungicide in the application.
Greytown Sewage – Discharge	Consent appealed by Ngati Kahungunu.
Craggy Range Vineyard – Water take	Application on hold with further information on surface water effects to be provided. No further action by applicant.
Martinborough Sewage – Discharge	Comment provided to consultants on draft AEE. Consultation to then be followed by a revised application.
Featherston Sewage – Discharge	On hold awaiting full assessment of effects and consultation. Agreed lower priority than Martinborough.
Masterton Sewage – Discharge	On hold. Consultants are proceeding with development of proposals Consent application scheduled for August 2000.

3.4 Appeals

Ruamahanga Gravel Consent	Ngati Kahungunu have declined further mediation. Environment Court Hearing to be set.
DTS Riddiford - Marine Farm - Consent Charges Boulder Wall	Environment Court hearing to be set.
Flat Point (Carterton District Council)	Issues resolved and conditions agreed. Appeal by Maori interests remained unresolved.

3.5 Hydroline

A new telephone based information system has been launched under the name “Hydroline”. Using Telecom’s Infocall service, up to 200 enquirers at a time can source current information on river and lake levels, rainfall, barrage gates and Lake Onoke openings. There is a twelve cents per minute charge which goes on the callers phone account.

A newsletter has been provided to all floodwarning clients explaining the system, and a brochure and publicity programme is planned for the general public. It is anticipated that the information will be useful to a range of people: farmers, fishermen, rafters, whitebaiters, yachties, trampers, etc.

The Hydroline number for Wairarapa rivers is 08 322 0669.
The Hydroline number for Wairarapa rainfall and lakes is 08 322 9069.

3.6 Emergency Management Training

Two very successful training exercise have been held with staff centred on establishing and operating an emergency headquarters, followed by setting up the mobile headquarters and undertaking an exercise under a Tsunami based scenario.

3.7 Air Quality Management

The Regional Air Quality Management Plan became operative on 8 May 2000. This places two requirements on the Department. Staff will endeavour to identify potential odour issues when considering District Council consents and comment and act accordingly. New discharges to air will require consent (as in the past) but some discharges that were previously permitted under the Clean Air Act will now need to apply for consent within six months. Council is advising these requirements to those identified within this category.

It is noticeable in both Wellington and Wairarapa that complaints and incidents involving odour/air pollution are increasing. These are difficult incidents to follow up as the source of the problem may not be easy to identify or the odour may have dispersed before an officer reaches the scene.

4. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

4.1 Advisory Committee Meetings

The monthly meeting of the Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee was held in late May. The main issues discussed at the meeting were progress with the SH2 Bridge upgrade investigation, the proposed new rating classification, and the community consultation programme.

Advisory Committee meetings were held for the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme; and the Waiohine, Waipoua and Upper Ruamahanga River Management Schemes plus the five catchment scheme. The main issues addressed were annual reports for the current financial year, and works programmes and rating levels for next financial year.

The attendance of Cr Long and appointed members at these meetings was appreciated.

4.2 Kaipatangata Stream

The accumulated gravel has been removed from the Kaipatangata Stream to reduce the risk of flooding to adjoining properties and to Dalefield Road. The work was carried out under the terms of a recently obtained resource consent.

4.3 Ruamahanga Gravel Consent

Further to the report to the previous Committee meeting, the Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Maori Executive Taiwhenua Iwi Authority Inc has written to the Council “to conclude our involvement in the mediated process and will direct our energies toward a case before the Environment Court”.

No discussions have taken place between the ‘politicians’ on both sides.

The letter stated “the Executive noted with some concern the failure of the discussions to adequately protect the future recognition of tangata whenua rights over the gravel resource”.

The Environment Court in due course will advise us of a hearing date.

4.4 Conserving Natural Areas on Private Land

A very successful field day was held at the Buchanan property, near Gladstone. Organised jointly by the Department of Conservation, Federated farmers, QE II National Trust and the Regional Council, the day focussed on the options for landowners wishing to protect natural areas on their properties.

The day coincided with a visit to Wairarapa of John Kneebone, Chairman of the Bio-What Ministerial Advisory Group. Other speakers included Cr Long, Derek Daniell, and Allan Ross from DOC. In excess of 100 people attended the day which finished with a stroll through Peter's Bush, a remnant lowland forest soon to be protected with a QE II Trust covenant.

The outcome of the Long Term Financial Strategy will determine what final role Council takes on this issue but it is hoped that inputs can be delivered from both the Soil Conservation Section and the Bio-Security Department.

4.5 Winter Planting Programme

Sufficient rain has fallen in the past month to allow a start to be made on the seedling planting programme. Seedling quality is very good

and, coupled with the good soil conditions, trees should establish very well.

The situation regarding pole planting is less favourable. Areas within the Wairarapa hill country remain relatively dry necessitating a slow start to the pole planting programme. A small number of poles will be dispatched to properties in the north and south of the Wairarapa. A helicopter operation incorporating 625 poles will be undertaken in mid-June.

5. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

5.1 Bovine Tb Update

Of the 36 operational areas, 22 are completed, 10 are operational and 3 are still to commence. One operation has been deferred.

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	218,854	81.0	183,215	67.8
Private Contractors	51,254	19.0	51,254	19.0
	270,108	100.0	234,469	86.8

(a) External Contractors

All external contracts have now been completed. The last contract, Mataikona Block 3, was completed on 14th May and resulted in a post-operational RTC of 5%. The Bideford contract of 18,856 hectares was completed on 20th April and resulted in a post-operational RTC of 2.9%.

The "Register of Interest" for possum control contracts for the 2000 – 2001 financial year has been notified and closes on 2nd June 2000. A meeting will be held with suitable contractors in early June to discuss the operations and release the tender documents. It is envisaged that up to 100,000 hectares will be let for tender, depending on future monitoring information. Contracts shall be available to commence in early July.

(b) Recent Results

The Moeraki/Ngokanui and Tora Initiative areas have recently had post operational monitors. These results are provisional. The non-aerial component of Moeraki/Ngokanui resulted in a RTC of 3.6 %. The Tora aerial block was 5% and the hand treated area 4%.

The Mt Bruce/Waipoua area (16,183 ha) was worked by stratifying the operation into four different methods. The results were:

<u>Method</u>	<u>Percentage of Area</u>	<u>RTC Result</u>
1080 carrot	41%	0.6%
Brodifacoum Pellets	10%	0.0%
1080 Pellets	40%	2.2%
Trapping	10%	3.8%

(c) Feratox Trial

A trial using Feratox (encapsulated cyanide) is being conducted over 510 hectares of very rough farmland in the Flat Point area of the Eastern Wairarapa. The area has a pre-operational RTC of 8.5% and has traditionally been worked with 1080 bait methods. Previous trials conducted by Council with Feratox resulted in less than optimal results. However the product has been enhanced and new methods of application have been developed. This trial is substantially supported by Feral Control (the manufacturers of Feratox) and is being carried out to their instructions. The toxic baits are being utilised in special biodegradable plastic bags within the control area and in specially designed bait-stations around the periphery. The results of the trial will be known in early August 2000.

(d) Ferret Control

- The Allsops Bay (4,000 ha) ferret control operation at the southern end of Lake Wairarapa will not now be undertaken within this financial year, The optimum time for ferret control has elapsed. The delay in commencing this job was due to the intensive nature of control required over 16,500 hectares in the other ferret operations completed this year. These were the first large-scale ferret control operations embarked upon in this Region.
- Landcare Research NZ Ltd. and the Animal Health Board have recently released a pamphlet on ferrets in New Zealand. The pamphlet was produced to provide landowners with up-to-date information about ferret biology, their role in transmitting Bovine Tb and methods of control. The information outlines what we already know about ferrets as well as recently completed research. The pamphlet also highlights areas for further research.

5.2 Magpie Research Update

Further culling has occurred at the 1,400 hectare Woodside study site. To date, 839 magpies have been captured, far exceeding the original estimate of 300 to 400. The main method has been the use of Larsen traps with mutton flap wired to the trap door. This has proved to be excellent bait that lasts well in all weather conditions and remains

palatable to magpies. There has been a problem with interference from harrier hawks and cats now that the weather has turned cooler.

Waikato University is currently advertising a Regional Council Conservation Management Doctoral Scholarship to support the magpie research programme. The Scholarship will be awarded on academic merit and the suitability of a candidate to undertake the research project. The project will be supervised jointly by Dr. Joe Waas of the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Waikato and John Innes of Landcare Research

A letter was sent to seven Regional Councils (not fully participating in the research programme) seeking a financial contribution to the PhD study.

5.3 Regional Pest Management Strategy Review Update

To date, 168 Discussion Documents have been mailed out of which 146 were interested parties such as previous submitters, councillors and appointed members, district and city councils, non-governmental organisations, government departments and libraries. Only five responses to the Discussion Document have been received (30/5) with submissions closing on 15th June.

There have been 64 submissions received from the “Elements” newspaper promotion to date. Fifty-eight percent of these respondents wanted to view either the Discussion Document or the Summary Pamphlet. Only three responses have indicated that they do not support the goals or that the goal is too ambitious. There may be more interest once the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy is released for comment later this calendar year.

5.4 What Plant? What Place?

An ‘in-house’ workshop was recently organised and attended by staff from the Environment Division and Biosecurity Department. Isobel Gabites, from Boffa Miskell, led the workshop with assistance from Council’s Tim Porteous. The focus of the workshop was to assist staff to identify the right native plants for specific sites. Pest Plant officers, in particular, are frequently asked to recommend native plants for replanting sites following the removal of pest plants. The three-hour session proved to be very worthwhile and has led to the development of a matrix by Isobel to assist the What Plant? What Place? decision making process.

5.5 Trend Monitoring for Rabbits and Possums

This is the seventh year that the permanent trend monitoring lines have been ‘night counted’. Permanent night count lines for rabbits and possums were introduced in 1994 to monitor the fluctuations of these

feral animals in the absence of control. Sites were selected on the criteria that there would be no control of feral animals in the foreseeable future and that there was a reasonably high and established population of the target animal. Each count line consists of 25 individual and permanently marked sites, which are accessed by motorcycle and spotlight, counted for three consecutive nights annually in May/June.

In regard to rabbits, the trend indicates that the populations are reasonably stable. The Wairarapa line shows a marked decrease and the Western Zone a slight upswing. The true impact of the RHD event cannot be assessed on this data as the sample is far too small.

The possum count route in the Western Zone has shown a substantial increase from an average of 9 possums counted per night to 30 per night. The Wairarapa possum count line has been disestablished because it now lies within a formal Bovine Tb control area.

5.6 Annual Rabbit Proneness Survey

A rabbit proneness survey is conducted annually during March/April when rabbit populations are usually at their lowest and most consistent levels over time. Each known rabbit prone property is inspected during the day and allocated a rabbit proneness score from the Modified McLean Scale. An individual property may have pockets of rabbits that score at different levels. These scores are further analysed to allocate a category rating to the property as follows.

1-2	Negligible
3-4	Medium-Low
5-6	High
7-8	Extreme

Only one property located on the sand country between Waikanae and Te Horo Beach has been classified as 'High'. Two properties located at Homewood in the Eastern Wairarapa and Queen Elizabeth Park near Paekakariki have pockets of rabbits that were assessed at level five on the Modified McLean Scale. Level five is described as 'Sign very frequent with faecal heaps less than 5 metres apart in pockets. Rabbits spreading.'

These properties are in jeopardy of breaching Rule 10.4.1 of the Regional Animal Pest Management Strategy (RAPMS) which states "Occupiers shall maintain rabbit populations on the land they occupy at, or below level 5 of the Modified McLean Scale." Letters will be forwarded to all occupiers within category three and above to remind them of their obligations under the RAPMS.

5.7 Communications and Promotions

The Biosecurity Department attended the Lifestyle Farmers Field Day at the Otaki Racecourse on 13th May. The attendance was on a par with other years with approximately 1,000 visitors. Staff from the Pest Plants, Pest Animals and Bovine Tb Sections provided a display and offered assistance on a variety of Biosecurity matters.

A Land Protection Field Day was held at Te Kopi Station, Gladstone on Friday, 26th May. The theme of the day was to promote the protection of private land as part off the ecological restoration of the Wairarapa and was a joint effort between Federated Farmers, Department of Conservation, Queen Elizabeth II National Trust and the Regional Council. The Pest Plants and Pest Animals Sections provided a display to match the theme. There were approximately 100 attendees with the Regional Council and DoC well represented. The keynote speaker was John Kneebone, Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Biodiversity, and joint author of BioWhat?

On 19th April, 2,262 KNE brochures were circulated to all rural delivery and rural box holders in the Western Zone.

5.8 Old Man's Beard

Plant's staff responsible for the Wellington City programme have recently started surveying the suburb of Northland along and adjacent to Glenmore Street. This area is recognised as having some of the highest infestation levels of Old Man's Beard, with almost every property affected. The area is steep with a dense vegetation cover making location and control very difficult.

Staff are having a great deal of difficulty establishing ownership of many properties in the area. GIS printouts, VNZ and Wellington City Council rating records often differ. Officers are spending more time than usual on this task.

Because of the size and difficulty of many infestations it is anticipated there will be significant problems obtaining the required levels of Old Man's Beard control in the southern portion of Northland. Increased enforcement procedures can be expected resulting in more work being carried out in default.

5.9 Key Native Ecosystem Surveys

Staff have inspected a range of designated KNE sites to determine weed problems that impact on the viability of the site. Bush areas in the Western Zone generally have the higher levels of infestation and variety of species. This is particularly noticeable when a site has public access or is close to or adjacent to residential properties. Most

Wairarapa KNE's have minor weed problems with the majority of species having negligible or low impact.

If the KNE is to be protected from reinvasion following control measures, clearance of infestations on surrounding properties also needs to be achieved. This may prove difficult if the co-operation of the landowners can not be obtained. A buffer zone may be required to ensure long term protection.

5.10 Bathurst Bur

A third site of Bathurst Bur has been located in the Wairarapa. This minor infestation in the Kahutara district is a considerable distance from the two located at Ponatahi two years ago. The source of this latest infestation is unknown.

Bathurst Bur is an invasive pasture and cropping weed of major significance in many parts of eastern Australia. It is also now established in several areas of the North Island. The species can form dense colonies and the seed pod burs produced adhere to sheep, downgrading fleece value.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.



Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa