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**Report 00.719**

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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee  
from Ian Gunn, Acting Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

**Acting Divisional Manager's Report**

**1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information of interest since the previous meeting held on 29 August 2000.

**2. Divisional Matters**

**2.1 Wellington Regional Navigational & Safety Bylaws 2000**

Captain Mike Pryce (Wellington Regional Harbourmaster) and his team have developed a new set of bylaws for the regional coastal marine area out to 3 nautical miles from the shoreline.

At the present time the 'true' harbour areas (Wellington and Porirua) are administered by the Regional Council. The rest of the coast is administered by the Maritime Safety Authority using honorary wardens. The wardens are typically based near popular launching areas such as Castlepoint and Ngawi.

A set of generic bylaws has been developed by a working party including pleasure boat user groups for New Zealand wide use. To be lawful they will have to be adopted by the Regional Council under a Special Order process of the Local Government Act. The public can make submissions to the process. It is expected that the bylaws will be in place by this summer.

The new arrangement will see the Regional Council bylaws applying to all of the regional coastline, including the Wairarapa coast and Lake Wairarapa. It is expected that honorary wardens will again be used at Castlepoint and Ngawi. Harbours Department staff in Wellington provide a 24 hour, 365 day service via Beacon Hill. They will service the Wairarapa coast via the honorary wardens on an 'as required' basis, or with own staff if required.

The focus of the new bylaws is navigation and safety. A significant change will be the requirement for pleasure boat craft to carry at all times appropriate life jackets for each person on board, and for lifejackets to be worn in certain risky situations.

### **2.3 Clean Up New Zealand Week**

Clean Up New Zealand Week occurred over the period 18-23 September. Any visitors to the office during that week would have observed staff dumping 'piles' of paper into various bins and skips around the office.

Staff were awarded spot prizes for the tidiest workstation, the most untidiest workstation, best excuse, biggest hoarder, etc, and I ultimately was judged the winner of the Snail Award for the person who hasn't quite got there yet! It was pleasing to see that staff enthusiastically embraced the concept. The real 'trick' however will be maintaining a long term 'clean up' practice.

Regional Council staff worked with the local Clean Up NZ Organising Committee on Saturday, 23 September, which comprised staff from The Warehouse, McDonalds Restaurant, and Healthy Communities. Council also contributed vehicles with staff as voluntary drivers, and advertised in the special Times Age supplement. A good public involvement of over 50 turned out on the Saturday enabling a number of sites to be improved including a clean up of small watercourses in the vicinity of Masterton and the removal of a number of abandoned cars. A similar involvement is likely next year.

### **2.4 Flood Event – 3 October 2000**

At the time of the order paper preparation the region is coming to grips with a significant flood event. Just over 1,000 millimetres of rainfall fell in the upper Tararua Ranges. Because of the length of the event high flows of the order of 5 metres occurred in the lower Ruamahanga River twice within two days. Further details will be provided at the meeting.

## **3. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)**

### **3.1 Lower Tauherenikau River**

River engineering consultant, Gary Williams, has investigated options for future management of the lower Tauherenikau River. These options have been discussed with the affected landowners, and presented to the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme Advisory Committee. A report summarising the findings of the investigation is part of this meeting agenda.

### **3.2 Global Resource Consents**

A resource consent application for routine maintenance activities within the Waiohine-Mangatarere, Waipoua, and Upper Ruamahanga River Management Schemes has been successfully lodged. It is anticipated that the consent will be granted by the end of October.

### **3.3 Waipoua River and Floodplain Investigation**

The third of a series of meetings has been held with the Waipoua Scheme Advisory Committee. The meetings are required to develop an appropriate

approach for future management of the river and floodplain, and a new Scheme rating classification approach and funding mix.

### **3.4 Seedling and Pole Sales – Akura Conservation Centre**

The trading season at Akura closed at the end of September. While financial data is not up to date because of the timing of payments and internal postings, indications are that the season has been a good one.

It is estimated that 37,700 poles and 502,700 seedlings have been sold. This compares very favourably with the 1999 selling period when 32,400 poles and 474,300 seedlings were sold.

### **3.5 Visual Soil Assessment Tool**

The Council has contributed to the development of a Visual Soil Assessment Tool (VSAT) for measuring soil quality. VSAT is based on the visual assessment of key soil “state” and plant “performance” indicators of soil quality. Many physical, biological, and to a lesser degree, chemical soil properties, show up as visual characteristics. Changes in land use or land management can markedly alter these.

The VSAT Field Guide has been developed jointly between the Wellington Regional Council, Hawkes Bay Regional Council, Horizons.mw, Ministry for the Environment, and Landcare Research. It is designed to help land managers assess soil quality easily, quickly, reliably, and cheaply on a paddock scale. Guidelines for prevention or recovery of soil degradation are included in a separate publication.

The national launch in late September will be followed by a series of staff training workshops and ultimately the promotion of the tool to individual landowners and community groups.

### **3.6 500 Soils**

The national “500 Soils” programme is to begin within the Wellington region with the sampling of 25 sites. The “500 Soils” programme is a national series of soil quality monitoring that will ultimately provide a basis for regional and national reporting as part of the State of the Environment reports.

Sampling will begin in November 2000, concentrating on the intensively used lowland soils. A tentative list of sample sites has been prepared, with equal representation from around the region. In future years, less intensively used lowland sites and the hill country soils will be sampled.

Landcare Research scientists will carry out the sampling. The work is jointly funded by Council and the Ministry for the Environment.

## **4. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)**

### **4.1 Hornwort**

A total of 20 individuals or groups recognised as having the potential to influence development decisions at or around Lake Wairarapa have been advised of the proposed trial to control Hornwort using the herbicide Endothall. These contacts do not include the major influential organisations represented on the Hornwort Control Working Party. Most of the information required for a resource consent has now been collated and an application will be made within the next few weeks.

### **4.2 Old Mans Beard**

- (1) Five registrations of interest have been received for contract work controlling Old Mans Beard on river reserves during the 2000/01 financial year.
- (2) Tenders for the first Old Mans Beard contract have been called. This contract covers initial clearance on an eight kilometre length of the west bank of the Ruamahanga River. The work commences some six kilometres below the Martinborough Bridge and finishes at Pukio.
- (3) The initial survey of properties in Karori has made better progress than expected. The survey should now be completed by early November.
- (4) Some 2000 letters are currently being prepared for mailing to owners of properties in Wellington with a previously recorded site of Old Mans Beard, Wild Ginger or Cathedral Bells. This is the second year such a letter has been posted. It is sent to remind occupiers of their ongoing responsibility to control these pest plants. The letter also advises that random inspections will follow and Notices of Direction will result where active sites are located.
- (5) There had been an ongoing problem with Transit regarding the control of Old Mans Beard on reserve land along SH 1 between Ngauranga and Tawa and SH 2 north of Horokiwi. This has now hopefully been resolved with Transit agreeing to obtain the services of a contractor experienced in Old Mans Beard control to carry out this work.

### **4.3 Notices of Direction**

During August and September ten Notices of Direction were issued. These included eight for Old Mans Beard, one for Wild Ginger and one for Gorse. One statutory land charge was registered.

### **4.4 Magpies**

It's that time of year again when the Biosecurity Department receives many calls from the public about magpies harassing people and pets. Each complaint is evaluated before a decision is made to try and alleviate the problem. Some

magpies are far more aggressive and persistent than others when protecting their nesting territory.

The research culling exercise at Woodside has been postponed until mid October because of lambing and calving. Prior to the cessation of work 297 magpies were culled from the area in 10 days. Most were juveniles and is an indication that re-invasion of the research area is going to occur as soon as control measures are reduced.

#### **4.5 Rooks**

The annual rook census has just been completed. Rook numbers have decreased over the past year by 32% from 1,456 to 987. Counting the nests at breeding rookeries and multiplying the number of nests by 3.5 assesses the rook population. The multiplier of 3.5 allows for the presence of two adult birds plus the fact they will raise the equivalent of 1.5 chicks each year.

Another exciting trend is that the rookeries have decreased from 28 to 22. This downward trend in rookery numbers is the first since 1991 and is most probably attributable to the use of helicopter rook nest baiting introduced two years ago.

The objective to reduce the rook population of the region to below 1,000 during the term of the Regional Pest Animal Strategy has now been achieved with a further control season still available. It is intended to carry out further helicopter rook nest baiting on 19 rookeries (240 nests) during early October this year. It is conservatively estimated that the rook population would have been in excess of 6,000 if regular control had not been undertaken since 1994.

It is also heartening to know that Horizons.mw intend to use the same methodology within the Tararua District this Spring. This should help to slow the southwards drift of rooks into the Wellington Region. Biosecurity staff have been assisting both Horizons.mw and Hawkes Bay Regional Council to set up their helicopter rook nest baiting programmes.

#### **4.6 Wasps**

The annual Biosecurity Department report entitled 'Wasps in the Wellington Region – The 1999/2000 Season' has recently been completed. The report summarises information from registers completed by staff of Department of Conservation Field Centres, City/District Councils and Regional Council who are involved with wasp nuisance calls. The registers have been in use since the 1990/91 season and summarise wasp nest type, location, time of year and frequency of occurrence. The monitoring of wasps on a regional basis gives an understanding of seasonal influences on wasp population trends and may assist with future biological control opportunities.

Overall, the region experienced a low wasp prevalence in spite of the prediction that it was going to be high. Predictions are made by considering the mean ambient air temperatures during November each year and the effect it may have on the queen wasp's capabilities to establish viable nests. A Landcare Research report in Wasp Times (No.29 Sept. 2000) states that the most likely factors affecting wasp numbers are:

- Self regulation, due to density-related changes in queen quality and competition/fighting between queens in Spring, and;
- Spring weather, which affects the ability of queens to forage and establish nests at the time they are most vulnerable and have no workers to help.

Some of the main points to come out of the report are:

- The past season was the lowest recording of wasp nuisance for six years.
- The Wellington City area recorded 31% less nuisance calls than the previous year.
- No German wasp nests were located in the Lower Hutt region during the 1999-00 wasp season.

#### **4.7 Key Native Ecosystems**

Landowners that have had a Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) site assessment carried out on their property(s) have been contacted. A copy of the scoring form was included and landowners were asked to advise of any additional relevant information that they thought should be included on our database. They were also reminded that the Council sells various pest control products and that trained staff were available to give advice on pest management.

KNE operations continue at seven sites in the Western Zone with work plans being prepared for a further seven new sites. Members of the Upper Hutt Forest and Bird Society are continuing with maintenance control in Maidstone Park, Keith George Memorial Park and Silverstream Reserve.

In the Wairarapa, the KNE sites being treated are Fensham Reserve at Carterton (volunteers), Pounui/Wharepapa at Western Lake, Battersea at Greytown and Big Hill Bush at Tukurumuri.

#### **4.8 Communications and Promotions**

The Biosecurity Department provided a display at Wellington Cathedral and at Parliament for the Conservation Week promotion in early August 2000.

Staff were in attendance with a display at the Otari Botanical Garden Open Day on 17<sup>th</sup> September and will also attend the Wellington Home and Garden Show at the Westpac Stadium during 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

#### **4.9 Bovine Tb**

##### **(1) Technical Review**

The review of future vector control operations with the Animal Health Board took place in Palmerston North on 28 September. This particular review required a considerable amount of effort to complete as staff were expected to consider a three-year control programme based on new property risk categories. The review highlighted the excellent working relationship the Council has with AgriQuality NZ. A selection of presentation slides will be provided at the Committee meeting.

#### 4.10 Operations Update

##### (1) Operations Unit

Work has been completed in the new Ruamahanga River operation and the Lake Wairarapa Crown operation. The latter requires the use of a boat to undertake the work.

Aerial operations are scheduled to take place in the near future in the Tinui, Te Wharau, and Otaki Buffer operations.

Some changes to the 2000/01 programme are anticipated following the Technical Review. Staff have identified savings in a number of areas. Approval will be sought to re-allocate these funds to intensify control in other operational areas with persistent Tb problems.

#### 4.11 External Contractors

Vector control has commenced in the Martinborough and Tinui operations. Work is yet to start in the Pakowai, East Alfredton, Ponatahi – Longbush, and Stronvar contract areas

### 5. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

#### 5.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date &amp; Time</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
28/08/2000	Bulls grazing on marine reserve, Otahome	Owners of stock were asked to remove them.
30/08/2000	A member of the public reported black smoke from a burn-off near Masterton requiring compliance with Regional Air Quality Management Plan.	Second incident reported on property within a week. Abatement notice served on landowner.
01/09/2000	Timber treatment chemical wastewater being dumped at back of industrial site, rural Carterton.	Still under investigation.
01/09/2000	Foam on water in stream suspected to be pollution, Masterton	Unable to trace source of foam, or identify what was causing it.

05/09/2000	Wastewater from domestic house discharging directly into watercourse, rural Carterton.	Owner of property given one month to make changes to the plumbing.
12/09/2000	Rubbish dumped on side of Waiohine River, Carterton district.	Removed during Clean Up NZ Week
15/09/2000	A staff member reported some unconsented river works in the Ruamahanga River, downstream of Double Bridges.	Stopbank feature was being constructed in river bed. Activity wasn't consented and was removed. No further action taken.
18/09/2000	Sewage overflow from main sewer, Martinborough	No Regional Council involvement required.
18/09/2000	Rubbish being dumped in Ruamahanga riverbed, rural Masterton	Abatement notice served requiring person responsible to remove the rubbish within eight days.
22/09/2000	Smoke and ash nuisance from regular burning at industrial site, Masterton.	Under investigation.

## 5.2 Compliance

Four abatement notices have been issued as follows:

- Mobil Oil NZ Ltd and Kuripuni Motors - requiring measures to be put in place to prevent diesel spillage from contaminating the Kuripuni Stream. Preventative measures underway.
- West Bush Road property – requiring cessation of use of rubber tyres as fire accelerants, and prevention of air pollution through burning of green waste.
- Saw milling company, Waingawa – requiring cessation of disposal of timber fungicide to land.
- Rangitumau property – requiring removal of rubbish and offal dumped in the bed of the Ruamahanga River.

## 5.3 Contaminated Site

An initial sampling of the site has been made with approval of the owners. Results from the analysis of samples are awaited.



#### 5.4 Notified Consents

JNL – Air Discharge Variation	A further variation is to be lodged to include fungicide as well as insecticide in the application. Previous variation has been withdrawn.
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. Consent application being processed to undertake rapid infiltration trials.

#### 5.5 Appeals

Ruamahanga Gravel Consent	Callover held and followed up by Judge with a telephone conference with Ngati Kahungunu. Date set for Environment Court Hearing.
Greytown Sewage – Discharge	Court advice awaited.
DTS Riddiford – Marine Farm - Consent Charges Boulder Wall	Pre trial conference held. Mr Riddiford not present. Proceeding to a hearing with a warning as to costs, unless Mr Riddiford withdraws or settles.
Flat Point (Carterton District Council)	Conference held with remaining appellant. Hearing set for 27 November 2000.

#### 5.6 Riversdale – Motuwaireka Lagoon Water Quality Improvement

Councillors Long and Buchanan and staff met with Masterton District Council representatives to discuss issues arising from the last Committee meeting. A meeting with residents is to be held at Labour weekend.

#### 5.7 Air Quality Plan

Good progress is being made assessing the need for consents for activities that create odours or issue dust or other air pollutants. All known activities have now been visited and their requirements determined. Consent applications for confirmed discharges are required by 8 November.

The recent closure of a large piggery close to Carterton will remove what has been the source of a steady stream of complaints to both the District Council and Regional Council and eliminates what would have been a difficult discharge to air consent.

A seminar is being organised for agricultural sprayers to explain the requirements and provisions of the plan.

## 5.8 Hydrology

Rainfall for August was generally below average with 85% of normal in the Tararua Ranges, 64% in the valley and 92% in the eastern hills.

Year to date rainfall to the end of August was 80% for the valley and eastern hills, 90% for the Tararua foothills, and 99% in the main ranges.

Both the Ruamahanga River at Waihenga and the Waiohine River at the Gorge recorded below average flows for August, at 75% and 72% of normal respectively.

## 5.9 Hydroline

The recent moderate floods resulted in some calls relating to the new 'user pay' information service. Whilst the flood warning service has not been changed in any way, and overall a greatly improved service has been provided, areas of concern have been:

- The loss of the Gladstone site
- The 'user pay' basis and price of the calls
- The lack of instantaneous river levels

Other callers have been quite complimentary about the service and the added features.

Calls are being logged and improvements made as appropriate.

## 5.10 Hazards

A concentrated focus is being made towards the publication of the WELA report with good support from members. A brief is being agreed for the fourth stage of the study of the Masterton and Carterton fault lines. Staff have attended a biennial Hazards Seminar and a recent Lifelines Forum.

## 6. Recommendation

*That the report be received and its contents noted.*



Ian Gunn  
Acting Divisional Manager, Wairarapa