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Report 00.801

10 November 2000

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 of interest since the previous meeting held on 10 October 2000.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Annual Plan

Managers are about to start on preparing the proposed annual plan for 2001/02. The draft will be considered at the next Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee meeting in February. As this is the first annual plan and Long Term Financial Strategy update since the new LTFS was adopted last June, the process will be more of a review by exception. However, managers will still be preparing detailed budgets and business plans as per normal.

Obvious items for review at this stage are the contributions to the Council's flood contingency fund and the Bovine Tb vector control programme for the next few years. The flood contingency fund is expected to be in deficit by the time all the repairs are completed from the recent floods and clearly this situation needs to be addressed. With Bovine Tb matters, Committee members will be aware from earlier meetings of the general thrust of the Animal Health Board's proposed new National Strategy. This included expanded operations in the South Wairarapa and a new funding formula. However, the proposed strategy requires a very substantial increase in Crown funding and it seems unlikely that the full proposal will be approved by July next year. Hence the Council will once again be in a position of considerable uncertainty regarding next year's vector control programme.

2.2 Seasons Greetings

It seems rather early to be writing this but this is the last Committee meeting before Christmas. Hence I would like to extend best wishes for Christmas and the holiday season on behalf of staff of the Division to all Committee members and their families.

2.3 Return From Holiday

Writing the above reminded me that I have quite recently returned from a most enjoyable 6 week holiday in Eastern Europe and Italy. It is amazing how quickly one returns to the usual routines and recent experiences fade into the memories. In my case this was probably speeded up by being involved on my return with the collective employment negotiations with staff and their unions, and also by the Council visit to the Manawatu-Wanganui Region.

I must say that it was very pleasing on my return to see how well staff had dealt with the pressures resulting from the significant flooding in early October. Although the flooding was quite drawn out, there was good support from throughout the Division and everybody coped.

I was in Northern Italy at the beginning of the recent heavy flooding experienced in that part of the world. In their case there were about 30 people killed by flood related events. In our Wairarapa case we did not receive any reports of stock losses!!

2.4 Multi-Sport Success

I thought it worthy of mention that a Wairarapa Division team won the government section of the multi-sport event in the recent NZ Business House Games.

2.5 Staffing

Matthew Morgan has resigned as Section Leader, Resource Investigations with effect from 1 December, and is joining the consultancy team at Lincoln Environmental in Christchurch.

Advertising and recruitment is in progress for his replacement, and for the new position of Maori Policy Advisor approved during the annual plan process.

Boyd Lawrence, Soil Conservation Field Supervisor, has also resigned, with effect from 22 December, and a replacement will be sought shortly.

3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

3.1 Bovine Tb

(1) Operational Progress as at 31 October 2000

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	191,616	69.6	46,700	16.9
Private Contractor	83,551	30.4	-	0.0
	275,167	100.0	46,700	16.9

(2) Budget Comparison (Total Operational Area)

% of budget used (AHB invoice) 15.7%

(3) Private Contractors

The following areas are to be treated by private contractors:

Pakowhai	6,747 ha
Tinui	7,577 ha
Stronvar	25,320 ha
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,851 ha
East Alfredton	5,226 ha
Martinborough	21,830 ha

(a) Contractor Progress

- Control is almost complete within the Tinui contract
- Control has commenced within the Martinborough

(b) Operations Unit Contract

The operations unit was successful in tendering for the following operations:

Mount Bruce Reserve	392 ha
Otaki Crown	5,568 ha
Featherston Crown	4,384 ha

(4) Operations Unit as at 30 October

% of labour used	19.6%
Treatment area	191,616 ha
Area Completed	46,700 ha
% of area completed	16.9%

Labour usage is 2.9% ahead of treatment area completed, however this is not concerning because a further 7.9% of operational area is currently under control.

(a) Operation Progress – Bovine Unit

Twenty Six (26) operations to be treated
 Three (3) operations completed
 Seven (7) operations have commenced control
 Sixteen (16) operations have not yet started control.

(5) **Monitoring**

The following operational monitoring results have been reported to date this year:

Ruamahanga River (initial) 0.2%
 Tinui Aerial (south – maintenance) 0.3%

3.2 Argentine Ants – Implications for the RPMS Review

Argentine ants are native to Argentina and Brazil. They were accidentally introduced to Auckland during the Commonwealth games in 1990. At that time MAF chose not to attempt control. The ants are now established in Auckland and aided by human activity have infested other parts of New Zealand also. It is thought that they have been present in Wellington for 2-3 years.

A summary of the facts follows;

- They are now well established in Auckland, and aided by human activity, have spread to Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Canterbury.
- The human activity processes that aid the spread of this species continue unabated and are impossible to manage.
- Trials are underway in NZ to establish an effective control methodology, but effectiveness is yet to be determined.
- There is abundant information on adverse effects from overseas studies although very little exists in the New Zealand context.
- There appear to be risks in terms of nuisance to humans, horticultural production and possibly indigenous species and ecosystems.

The Department of Conservation, and the Royal Forest and Bird Society of NZ consider that Argentine ants should be included in the Regional Pest Management Strategy currently under review. Biosecurity staff do not support this. The eradication of Argentine ants from NZ is not yet technically feasible and consequently achieving and maintaining eradication status in the Wellington Region would be difficult. If eradication is not possible then the next option is to manage the adverse effects on an ongoing basis. It is not considered that the benefits of regional intervention will outweigh the benefits of individual intervention, a key criterion under the Biosecurity Act Section 72 analysis.

With respect to:

- *Human nuisance*; - individuals can engage commercial pest control operators as they do for other domestic insect pests.
- *Horticultural and other commercial production*; - the benefits of control fall to the affected grower, and, therefore, so too should the cost of control.

- *Effects on native species and ecosystems;* - WRC could consider managing Argentine ants on a site led basis under its Key Native Ecosystems programme if adverse effects manifested themselves in future.

However, most native species and ecosystems in the Wellington Region occur on DoC estate where the pest animal RPMS currently has no jurisdiction. As DoC is responsible for the management of a large component of New Zealand's native fauna and flora and indigenous ecosystems, it is considered that perhaps the Department of Conservation should take the lead role and propose a National Pest Management Strategy for Argentine ants.

The Forest and Bird Society have produced a fact sheet about Argentine ants which includes a plea for people to write to the Minister of Biosecurity and local Member of Parliament outlining their concerns about the impacts of the Argentine ant on New Zealand's environment, native species, horticulture and trade.

3.3 Zinc Phosphide – A New Toxin for Possum Control?

A Canterbury company, Pest-Tech Ltd., has developed an experimental possum paste bait containing microencapsulated zinc phosphide. Cage trials and preliminary field trials have demonstrated that the bait is highly palatable to possums and very good kills (similar to 1080) have been attained. Advantages of this toxin include a low risk of poisoning of domestic animals, including dogs, and a reduced risk to non-target animals generally. However, research is ongoing to further quantify non-target risks.

It is expected that the final product will be of a similar cost to 1080 but substantially cheaper than alternative bait/toxin combinations on the market. No licence is likely to be required for its use so landowners and contractors will be able to take advantage of this new product.

The Biosecurity Department will be conducting field trials of the experimental paste bait in the Tinui Bovine Tb vector control operation before the end of the year. This is a collaborative project with Pest-Tech Ltd.

3.4 Rabbits

The traditional springtime influx of calls for assistance with rabbits is occurring now. This is especially noticeable during the cooler wet periods when rabbits are more conspicuous because they frequent areas of short grass and the barer ground around sheep or cattle yards, roadways and driveways. The many young rabbits around at this time of year are adversely affected by cold damp conditions with up to 80% expected to die of natural causes prior to being able to breed.

The amount of rabbits being seen has also brought enquiries about the release or likely spread of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD). Our advice is not to rely on RHD until the autumn provides more favourable conditions. In the interim the more traditional methods of rabbit control should be used. Diced carrot bait incorporating the anticoagulant Pindone has proven to be very effective this year.

In order to get some information about rabbit RHD immunity levels, five different farming areas in the Wairarapa have been sampled with a further six

areas to follow. The general areas selected are Homewood, Riversdale, Mataikona, Bideford, Ponatahi, Carrington, Western Lake and Hinakura. Only one laboratory result is available to date showing a 90 percent immunity at Te Wharau.

3.5 National Technology Transfer

Staff from the Biosecurity Department attended the annual National Technology Transfer Seminar organised by the National Possum Control Agencies group. This was held in Wellington on 7th and 8th November 2000. The seminar was supported by the National Science Strategy Committee (Bovine TB), Animal Health Board, AgResearch, Landcare Research, AgriQuality NZ, Feral Animal Control Network, Department of Conservation and Regional Councils.

The programme included possum control/genetic engineering, research contributing to improved possum and ferret control practises, developments in pest management technology, pest population monitoring, contracting in possum control and what's new from manufacturers servicing the pest management industry.

3.6 Cape Tulip

Staff have completed inspections and clearance of the Class A Plant Cape Tulip on recorded sites at Wellington, Lower Hutt and Porirua. Of the 15 sites inspected only two had infestations. This work is undertaken under contract to AgriQuality NZ.

3.7 Wellington City Programme

Staff have now completed the initial survey of Karori. This survey involved inspecting every property and required a total of 4,715 individual inspections over a period of 14 months. During the survey the following Total Control Plant infestations were located and clearance completed:

Cathedral Bells	16 sites
Old Mans Beard	526 sites
Wild Ginger	549 sites

3.8 Random Inspection Programme

Random inspections of properties in areas of Wellington with a record of Old Mans Beard infestation have commenced. Some 200 properties will be checked for re-infestation and Notices of Direction will be issued where infestations are located. This year the letter sent to occupiers was not subject to the negative reaction that occurred in 1999/00.

3.9 Communications

Plants and Animal Pest Staff arranged and attended displays at two major public events on the weekend of 28 and 29 October. The Wellington Home and Garden Show 2000 was held at Westpac Stadium. There was a high level of interest in the Biosecurity Department display and officers in attendance

estimate that over 10,000 people visited the display with many making inquiries.

A Biosecurity Department display was also arranged at the Carterton A and P Show. There was a record crowd for the Show. Staff were kept busy over the two days supplying information to a steady flow of people.

3.10 Hornwort

A resource consent application to trial the herbicide Endothall at Lake Reserve has been prepared and will be submitted for approval in the near future. Written support for the trial has been received from all known organisations with an interest in the Lake Wairarapa area.

4. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

4.1 Visual Soil Assessment Training Day

The first of a series of nation-wide training days to promote the use of the Visual Soil Assessment technique was held recently near Masterton. Following an introduction to the science that underpins the visual assessment, participants visited three sites to test each of the modules. Participants included staff, farmers, industry representatives and agricultural consultants

The three modules covered dairying, cropping and hill country soils. The objective of the day was to train relevant staff and agricultural advisors in the use of the technique and to receive feedback on its appropriateness as a soil quality monitoring tool at the farm level. It is proposed to develop a User Guide to further assist the promotion and uptake of the technique across the region

4.2 Poplar Researcher to visit Akura

Professor Reini Stettler from the University of Washington is to visit the Wairarapa in the coming weeks. He is a world-renowned poplar breeder and researcher and is in the country as a guest of HortResearch. The Council's nursery operations at Akura are considered the foremost of its kind in New Zealand. Topics for discussion at Akura include new breeding initiatives, nursery management, and disease management.

There will be an opportunity to take Professor Stettler to a hill country trial site to view 13 year old poplars, and a to a more recent trial site to view Veronese plantings.

4.3 Damage to New Plantings

The extremely strong southerly winds experienced in mid October have caused significant damage to some shelter plantings in the Lower Valley, and some *P. radiata* plantings at Castlepoint. In the Lower Valley evidence of salt burn has been found as far inland as the Oporua floodway. Leaf burn here is not severe enough to kill the plant, however some shelter belts closer to the southern coast will have relatively high mortalities.

The burning effect of the southerly wind has also been noted at Castlepoint. New plantings of *P. radiata* on land exposed to the south have suffered severe salt burn. It is hoped that the calm, wet weather conditions experienced in the early part of November will result in recovery of some of the less affected trees.

4.4 October Flood Damage Repairs

Following the floods of early October inspections were carried out, and flood damage schedules were prepared for the Wairarapa River Management Schemes. Approval was then obtained at the recent meeting of the Council's Policy and Finance Committee for up to \$1.1m of flood damage repairs.

Advisory Committee meetings were held to approve the flood damage repair programmes, and to agree on appropriate funding mechanisms for the work. Also the Wellington Regional Council has agreed to fund their 50% share of a \$380,000 flood damage repair programme to protect Masterton District Council assets and utilities.

Flood damage repairs are well underway, with works at high priority sites such as the Masterton Aerodrome and Homebush stopbank well advanced.

Also work has been completed on the sites as listed below:

- Watt property at River Road, Masterton
- Massey Farm on the Waipoua River
- Osborne's on the upper Ruamahanga River
- Masterton water supply pipeline on Waingawa River
- Brazendale's, Cullinane's, and Herrick's on the Waiohine River
- Gillett's on the Tauherenikau River

5. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

5.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
15/10/2000	Abandoned car at Waingawa River.	Removed by Masterton District Council
16/10/2000	Alleged river works being undertaken in the Mangatarere River without consent or prior approval from Council.	Under investigation
16/10/2000	Abandoned cars in Waiohine riverbed, South Wairarapa.	To be removed by WRC
18/10/2000	Possible contamination of roof and tank water from fertiliser.	Under investigation
20/10/2000	Large dam like crossing being constructed across stream at Te Wharau	Under investigation
20/10/2000	Farm dump scoured out by river in recent floods.	Farm dump found to be flood prone. Farmer has been asked to move dump to safe site.

20/10/2000	Car in river at the Cliffs	Car removed by Regional Council
26/10/2000	Flooding - water not getting away.	Under investigation
27/10/2000	Bull died of suspected arsenic poisoning after having access to closed landfill, rural Masterton.	Under investigation
1/11/2000	A staff member from the Wellington office passed on a complaint about a bonfire in urban Masterton	The complaint was passed to MDC for action as they have by laws covering domestic burning.

5.2 Compliance

An abatement notice was issued requiring unconsented works in the Mangatarere River to cease and previously consented works to be completed. A proposal for additional work is being developed with Engineering staff.

An infringement notice was issued following the discharge to land of contaminated stormwater from a timber treatment facility.

Annual inspections of dairy discharges to land and water are in progress.

5.3 Potentially Contaminated Site

Results from sampling the potentially contaminated site near the Masterton rail yards have shown the site not to be contaminated. The substances visible in the soil and on water are now considered to be related to the saw milling and log storage activities currently taking place. Consent requirements are being pursued.

Another potentially contaminated site has been identified as part of a proposed subdivision on the outskirts of Martinborough.

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	Hearing set for Masterton on 29 November 2000.
Greytown Sewage – Discharge	Callover to be held in Masterton on 29 November 2000.
DTS Riddiford - Marine Farm - Consent Charges Boulder Wall	Hearing set before Judge Jackson at Wellington on 1 December 2000.
Flat Point (Carterton District Council)	Hearing set for Masterton on 29 November 2000.

5.6 Riversdale

A presentation was made to a very well attended meeting of residents on the Sunday morning of Labour Weekend. The outcomes of the Motuwaireka Lagoon study were presented together with the action points arising from the study. This was followed by discussion of the seven non-complying, large sewage discharges, the likely inadequacies of current septic tank systems, and the need for a community scheme. Follow up on the action points is being initiated.

The presentations were well received with good discussion. A steering committee has been formed to work with the District Council and consultants towards implementation of a community sewerage scheme. The Regional Council will be an ex officio member of this committee.

5.7 Castlepoint

Around 100 residents attended a meeting to discuss issues related to Castlepoint. Presentations were made by Wes Ten Hove (Masterton District Council) Steve Blakemore (WRC) and Derek Field (DOC).

The meeting was called to discuss landscape issues, in particular “What is special about Castlepoint and how can this be preserved?”. Concerns relating to roading, coastal erosion, road safety and other matters were also discussed.

Two Christchurch landscape architects explained the process that had been used to develop community landscape aspirations for Peel Forest, Canterbury, and how these had then been incorporated into planning documents.

The meeting felt Castlepoint was unique and had a village atmosphere that was dominated by Castle Rock, the reef, and the lighthouse. They stressed that flat land was very limited and permitted section sizes were too small to accommodate boats and visitor parking. Currently restrictions on section sizes, buildings, and all other planning requirements are the same as those applying in Masterton.

A residents committee has been formed to work towards the identification and development of these issues. This may involve input from Regional Council officers at a later date.

5.8 Eastleigh Subdivision – Riversdale

A submission has been made against the creation of lifestyle blocks on the terrace behind the golf course and southern part of the Riversdale settlement. If approved this would allow buildings on the skyline of up to 10 metres height.

Boffa Miskell (Landscape Architects) have assisted the Regional Council in its submission and they have concluded that the subdivision should be rearranged so that buildings should not be visible from the beach. At time of writing this item, photomontages and sight lines are awaited from the applicant for consideration.

This matter has attracted media and political comment. Through the Regional Council submission and subsequent meetings, staff have been trying to obtain quality information from the applicants so that the effects of the subdivision and subsequent development can be properly assessed. Although the application was notified on 9 December 1999, as yet, no date has been set for a hearing.

5.9 Proposed Plan Changes – SWDC

Submissions have been made in relation to a number of plan changes proposed and draft plan changes put forward by South Wairarapa District Council. Of concern is the intention to relax the controls on additional detached accommodation (i.e. family flats, sleep outs etc.) which raises particular concerns in relation to effluent treatment and disposal in existing coastal settlements. The Regional Council's submissions strongly opposed both the draft and the proposed changes.

5.10 Annual Consent Charges

Invoices for 2000/01 annual charges on 754 consented activities and an enclosed consents newsletter were mailed on 24 October. A number of clients hold multiple consents. (Eg a dairy farmer may have two consents: a take for irrigation and a discharge for effluent to land.) Payment is due on invoice and to date there have been only a few client enquiries.

5.11 Floods

Two major flood events saw a commendable effort put in by staff on three fronts: monitoring and issuing of flood warnings, gauging of flood peaks, and the co-ordination of road closure information. With the first flood event of 29 September to 3 October being a multi peak event, considerable effort was made to advise landowners and the public of the changing situation.

There were no malfunctions of recording equipment or loss of sites through damage. This reflects the work that is put into making sure sites are robust and well maintained with appropriate backup in systems available in some cases.

A debrief has been held to identify areas where improvements can be made

5.12 Hydrology

Not surprisingly, river levels were well above their average monthly flows for October with the Waiohine River at 174% and the Ruamahanga River at Waihenga at 245% of average monthly flows.

The October rainfall pattern varied across the Wairarapa. The Tararuas recorded 228% of the monthly average at Angle Knob, the valley 138% at Tauherenikau, and the eastern hills only 79% at Tanawa.

Whilst annual rainfall to 1 November is above average in the Tararuas at 122%, it is only 86% of average in the valley and 82% of average in the hill country.

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