



## **Report 01.277**

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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 27 March 2001.

#### **2. Divisional Matters**

##### **2.1 Annual Plan**

The Council's Proposed Annual Plan and Update of the 10 year Financial Strategy is currently available for public consultation. Submissions close on 21 May and will be considered by Council in early June.

##### **2.2 Regional Pest Management Strategy**

The Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy was publicly notified on 11 April and submissions close on 18 May. Over 200 copies of the Proposed Strategy have been sent out at this stage to various organisations and individuals. Despite our offers, we have been unable to achieve any invitations to date from district or city councils to make presentations to relevant committees.

##### **2.3 Animal Health Board Chairman**

It is very pleasing to record that Mr John Dalziell has been recently elected as Chairman of the Animal Health Board. The Council works very closely with the Animal Health Board over the Bovine Tb vector control programme and it is most gratifying to see these links further strengthened by a member of the Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee being selected for this important position. Congratulations John.

## 2.4 Wairarapa Coastal Strategy

All Councils have now nominated their representatives for the group to develop a Wairarapa Coastal Strategy as agreed at the Coastal Forum at Brackenridge. The first meeting is being arranged for later in May and is expected to work on identifying the issues and the process that might be followed in developing a strategy.

It was interesting to see that the Parliamentary Commissioner For The Environment has given a ‘Bouquet’ to the Council in his latest newsletter for organising the Wairarapa Coastal Forum. He notes that “this initiative enabled the tangata whenua and all the regional and district councils of the area to discuss, in a forward thinking forum, a framework for sustainable coastal development.”

## 2.5 Waitangi Tribunal

The Waitangi Tribunal will be hearing Wairarapa claims later this year and into next year. A preliminary judicial conference was held in Masterton on 26 April and Jason Kerehi, our recently appointed Maori Policy Adviser, attended in case of any issues arising that may affect local government.

The judicial conference was intended to deal with procedural matters so that the hearings can more readily proceed later. There are approximately 18 claims in total and because of the time taken only the first two were dealt with at the initial conference. The first claim concerns land at Mangakino and this was withdrawn and will be heard up north. The second claim, relating to land and fisheries, involves mainly hapu from Ngati Kahungunu. A further conference will be held on 24 May. No issues affecting local government have arisen so far.

## 3. Planning & Resources Department:

### 3.1 Environmental Incidents

<b>Date</b>	<b>Complaint Incident</b>	<b>Details</b>
16/3/01	Truck wash in Masterton appears to be leaking. May be affecting groundwater.	Under investigation.
20/3/01	Old Featherston landfill being eroded by creek.	Inspected. River works need reinstating. Council engineers working on the problem.
26/03/01	Odour in the air, south Featherston.	Unable to verify odour or trace source.
27/03/01	Oil in creek, Masterton.	Minor amount of hydrocarbon sheen on surface. Unable to trace source.
28/03/01	Domestic rubbish dumped in riverbed.	Suspect identified, officers tried to speak to him but could not locate him. Rubbish removed by MDC contractor.

28/03/01	Dust problems from industrial site, Masterton. Ongoing problem site.	Not able to be investigated on the day of complaint.
29/03/01	Dust problems from industrial site, Masterton.	Objectionable dust confirmed. Company has been asked to take action to minimise dust.
29/03/01	Further dumping of fill in wetland, south Wairarapa.	Landowner has instructed contractor responsible to stop using it as a cleanfill.
30/03/01	Water pollution, Riversdale.	Suspected to be natural process. Investigation continuing.
1/04/01	Resident in Masterton complained about odour emitted from a local industrial discharge.	Odour detected at complainant's property. Not considered objectionable, noxious or offensive.
1/04/01	A member of the public reported a burning rubber-like smell in Masterton.	Faint odour detected but unable to locate source.
4/04/01	Damage to shore platform, Coastal Marine Area, by towing fishing boats using a Cat D9 bulldozer from Uriti to southern end of Riversdale Beach.	Under investigation.
5/04/01	Report of dairy farmer leasing neighbouring block of land and fording the river with his herd to get to the grazing, Carterton.	Unsubstantiated complaint, alleged party knew nothing of the activity. No further action taken.
10/04/01	Water pollution at Riversdale.	Suspected to be caused by natural process. Council considering remedial action.
10/04/01	Dust nuisance from industrial site, south Wairarapa.	Meeting arranged with company responsible. Ongoing problem site.
12/04/01	Noise, trucks and dust problems being caused by mobile gravel crushing operation, rural Carterton.	Considered to be a district council matter, referred to CDC.
12/04/01	Residential property burning vehicle parts at night, Masterton.	Under investigation.
13/04/01	Dust and noise from mobile gravel crushing plant, rural Carterton.	Under investigation.
20/04/01	Neighbouring industrial site burning copper cable to recover copper, causing toxic smoke irritating neighbours.	Under investigation.
23/03/01	1. Dairy shed effluent in open drain flow. 2. Irrigating at night (unconsented surface water take).	Under investigation.

### 3.2 River Levels

Generally river levels in the Wairarapa have been low for March, as can be expected for this time of year, however they are significantly below average.

Monthly figures for March 2001:

	Monthly Flow (cumecs)	Average Flow for March	Percent
Waiohine	9.3	18.2	51.1%
Waihenga	18.9	49.6	38.1%

### 3.3 Current Low Flows

Flows in the western catchments as mentioned above were below average, around 51% for the Waiohine and 38% for the Ruamahanga at Waihenga. The Council does not at present have continuous stage/flow recording sites measuring low flows in the eastern Wairarapa. However NIWA does, and indications are the flow trends are similar to the above with flows well below average.

The Waihenga site reported a low flow return period of between 15 – 20 years on 22<sup>nd</sup> March although rainfall falling in the catchment immediately following returned this to a 5 – 10 year period. The Waingawa and Waiohine are reporting a 1 in 4 year low flow.

### 3.4 Rainfall

Rainfall figures indicate that it has been drier than normal in the western hill country and for the eastern catchments, although not to the same extent (a reversal of the trend reported on in March's report). For the Angle Knob raingauge around 108% (470mm) of normal has fallen and for Tanawa Hut in the Whareama catchment rainfall has been around 12.4% (13 mm).

The effect of low rainfalls has been lessened to an extent by the reduced incidence of westerlies since mid January to the end of March.

Rainfall data collected from the Alloa site has identified the conditions being experienced in the Martinborough area as 7<sup>th</sup> (250mm) lowest since 1964, this compares to the 1998 drought year where it was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (202mm).

## 4. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

### 4.1 October Flood Damage Repairs

The \$1.1m October 2000 flood damage repair programme is on target for completion during the current financial year. Repair work completed over the reporting period is as follows:

- Waipoua River rock weirs
- Rathkeale College bank protection

- Channel alignment and bank protection work in the upper Waingawa River.

Outstanding works include bank protection work at the Oliver, Forbes, and Te Whiti sites on the Upper Ruamahanga.

The Upper Ruamahanga Scheme flood damage programme will be under-spent by an estimated \$74,000 due to the unwillingness, or the inability of landowners to part fund repair works. These savings have been reallocated as follows; \$34,000 to the Waipoua Scheme for the Waipoua rock weir reconstruction, and \$40,000 to the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme for erosion protection of the Lake Wairarapa Lookout site at Abbots Creek. The lookout is located on top of the old Featherston Township refuse dump, and rubbish is beginning to fall into Abbots Creek as a result of erosion from the October 2000 flood event.

#### **4.2 Waiohine River & Floodplain Investigation**

The Special Order notification process is underway for the new Waiohine, Mangatarere, and Waipoua River Management Scheme rating classifications.

#### **4.3 Lower Tauherenikau River Works**

Construction of the one kilometre long overflow sill bank through the Gillet property, and adjacent to the Tauherenikau River, has been completed.

#### **4.4 Waiohine River Management Scheme**

The reinstatement of the Muhunua Stream culvert and floodgate, repair of the Bicknell stopbank, and construction of the Hodder stopbank has been completed.

#### **4.5 Conservation Woodlot Applications - 2001**

Applications for the establishment of Conservation Woodlots on erosion prone land closed on 20 April 2001. A total of 31 applications were received, covering some 250 hectares. Funds are set aside on an annual basis to cover 200 hectares.

This work is normally scheduled for starting in June, however soil moisture conditions may delay the start. Significant rain is required to lift soil moisture levels to appropriate levels for seedling establishment.

It is envisaged that the full list of applications will be approved. The additional funds will be made available from the pole planting programme which will be reduced because of the fewer numbers of poles available from Akura Conservation Centre.

Pole numbers from the nursery are 25% down on previous years. This is a result of the 1997/98 drought and its effect on pole growth within a three year rotation. Pole numbers will return to previous levels over the next two years. To boost pole numbers for 2004, 4 hectares of new planting will be undertaken in the spring.

#### **4.6 Nursery Managers Workshop**

Soil Conservation staff and the Nursery Manager are hosting a workshop entitled “Fertiliser Usage in Poplar and Willow Nurseries”. To be held at Akura, the workshop will discuss the use of fertilisers for maximising tree growth, and share recently obtained results from trial work carried out jointly with Ravensdown Fertilisers Ltd.

Scientists from HortResearch will present results from glasshouse trials on moisture and fertiliser usage. The second part of the workshop will discuss Akura’s recently obtained soil moisture data, and the potential for establishing an irrigation system.

The workshop is to be attended by nursery managers from North Island regional councils and is part of an ongoing series of workshops that rotates through the various councils on an annual basis.

#### **4.7 Compliance Monitoring of Permitted Activities**

The Regional Soil Plan contains a rule covering the removal of vegetation, which is specifically targeted at forest harvesting operations. If four conditions are met, the activity is permitted. Forest harvest consultants and contractors, and Council staff have been working together to ensure an adequate level of compliance monitoring takes place and that operations are not negatively impacting on the environment.

A series of inspections have been undertaken in recent months on a selection of recently logged sites to monitor compliance with industry best management practices. Of the five sites inspected, four were compliant in all respects. A fifth required remedial work to a track and the removal of waste from a streambed. Further inspections are planned after the winter.

#### **4.8 Hiwinui Logging**

The global economy has had a significant impact on the harvesting operations at Hiwinui. The building downturn in Australia and recession influences in USA have reduced demand for export lumber. Local sawmills are no longer prepared to carry speculative stocks for this market and have in fact reduced operating hours accordingly.

As a result we will not achieve the targeted 20,000 tonnes of production this financial year. To date we have produced approximately 6,000 tonnes and are likely reach approximately 11,000 tonnes for the year based on the current situation.

In terms of the budget, while revenue from harvesting will be down, the contract expenditure will also be proportionally reduced.

#### **4.9 Silviculture**

Steady progress on pruning has seen the completion of 540 hectares for the year to date. Potentially a further 60 hectares are increasing in priority, some due and the balance almost due for the next lift.

Tenders have been let, but due to other work commitments the successful contractors may not complete all available work prior to the end of the financial year.

Thinning has been delayed as a result of volatile conditions within the trees as a result of the lack of rain.

#### **4.10 Technical Services Section Projects**

Activities completed include;

- surveys at Oliver's on Ruamahanga River for construction of sill bank.
- setting out surveys for the construction of the new Tauherenikau sill bank at Gillet's property.
- setting up new colour ortho-photos for sheet T26 on GIS system.
- water race coverage produced for Planning & Resources Dept.
- completion of survey and plans for Akura stock race investigation.
- Bovine Tb mapping and warning signs for various new operations.

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

#### **5.1 Hornwort Trial**

The Hornwort control trial at Lake Reserve was laid on March 28. The trial was arranged by NIWA with the herbicide Endothal being applied by a high-pressure spray unit over three areas of still water totally infested with Hornwort. A Bay Of Plenty contractor experienced in aquatic weed control carried out the application. A strong wind on the day made application difficult. All conditions required by the Resource Consent have been met including regular water sampling of the trial area following the herbicide application.

Visual assessments following the trial indicate an excellent result. The larger trial plot has a high to total control rate, with reduced results in the other two areas. NIWA scientists completed an underwater survey of the area on the 26 April. They reported that the remaining infestations are only light and restricted mainly to the surface of the waterbodies. There has been small amounts of reinvasion from untreated areas. It appears that application methods may need to be

modified where higher water flow exists. A gel formulation may be needed to ensure the chemical adheres to the plants.

NIWA report that a visual assessment of native aquatic plants suggests negligible impact. The chemical appears to have been highly selective in this trial which supports the findings from work completed in the USA.

NIWA will prepare a full report on the trial for a future Committee meeting.

## 5.2 KNE Pest Plant Control

Two further contracts for the control of specified pest plants in KNE areas have been arranged as follows.

1. Otari Wilton Reserve in Wellington City. This involves the clearance of several species mainly brush weeds adjacent to the Kaiwharawhara track which is a main public area running south from the Otari Centre.
2. East Harbour Reserve. This contract requires the control of designated species along a 30 metre buffer strip between private land and the Reserve. The buffer strip lies between Point Howard in the north to the southern end of York Bay.

## 5.3 Tranz Rail

A contractor employed by Tranz Rail has now completed required pest plant control on areas of the Wairarapa railway length within the Region. Work included Old Mans Beard control at recorded sites and Gorse clearance along areas where complaints had been received from adjacent occupiers.

## 5.4 Notices of Direction

During the month seven Notices of Direction have been issued for the control of pest plants. One Statutory Land Charge was approved for release.

## 5.5 Bovine Tb Update

### (1) Operational Progress as at 1 April 2001

	<b>Treatment Area (ha)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Area Completed (ha)</b>	<b>%</b>
Bovine Unit	207,378	71.4	133,630	46.0
Private Contractor	82,998	28.6	53,205	18.3
	<b>290,376</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>186,835</b>	<b>64.3</b>



**(2) Private Contractors**

The following areas were tendered to private contractors:

Pakowhai	6,747ha (Completed)
Tinui	7,577 ha (Completed)
Stronvar	24,793 ha
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,851 ha (Completed)
East Alfredton	5,200 ha (Completed)
Martinborough 1	16,830 ha (Completed)
Martinborough 2	5,000 ha

**(3) Contractor Progress**

The Stronvar operation has commenced and Martinborough 2 will commence shortly.

**(4) Operation Progress – Bovine Unit**

Thirty Two (32) operations to be treated  
 Twelve (12) operations completed  
 Ten (10) operations have commenced control  
 Ten (10) operations have not yet started control.

Currently the Bovine Unit is on schedule to complete the 2000/01 programme.

A number of meetings have been held with landowners in the proposed South East Wairarapa Stage 1 operation, planned for 2001/02. As expected, there are some concerns about the proposed methods and potential impacts on farming and recreational activities. Operations will probably be staged to account for the drought and farming practices.

**(5) Ferret Control**

Two ferret control operations have been completed.

Allsops Bay Ferret	4,000ha	38 ferrets
Otaki Ferret	2,000ha	23 ferrets

**(6) Monitoring Results**

The following operational and trend monitoring results have been reported in the past month:

Whangaehu (23,495ha)	3.3%
Castle Hill – Tawhero Crown (trend)	7.4%

**(7) Future Control**

Tinui Aerial	1,000ha	-	May
Te Wharau Aerial	4,000 ha	-	May
Featherston Crown Aerial	4,350 ha	-	May
Bideford Aerial	1,000 ha	-	May

Approximately 4,000 hectares of the Te Wharau aerial operation will be delayed due to the drought conditions. Landowners are under pressure to find grazing and water. Stock have gained access into bush reserves, including the DoC Rocky Hills Reserve. These areas will be treated once sufficient rain has fallen to replenish water supplies and stock have been removed from the proposed treatment areas. There is little hope now of any significant grass growth before winter. Treatment may occur in September.

**5.6 Rabbits**

The annual rabbit proneness survey has been completed, except for some properties in the drought stricken South Wairarapa. All properties with a significant history of rabbit proneness are inspected and assessed against the Modified McLean Scale. The occupiers of properties that have rabbit levels of concern will be written to and reminded of their responsibilities under the Regional Animal Pest Management Strategy.

In spite of the drought conditions throughout much of the region, rabbit infestation levels at sites inspected to date are generally low and on a par with the previous two years. However, there are exceptions. Some properties in the Te Wharau and Homewood Districts of the Wairarapa have high infestation levels that are likely to increase further if dry conditions continue. Proficient rabbit control is difficult to undertake at the moment due to livestock management problems created by the drought. However, rabbit densities will need to be addressed by occupiers at the earliest opportunity.

In the Western Zone, isolated pockets of medium to high infestations were identified on the coastal belt at Otaki, Te Horo, and both sides of the Waikanae River mouth.

Occupiers will be hoping that the RHD virus will recycle but any positive impact the virus might have will not be noticeable until late Spring when the rabbit breeding season is advanced.

There have been many calls for assistance for control of rabbits at the beach resorts of Riversdale and Castlepoint over the past two months. Most have been about the rabbits digging and scratching in private lawns and gardens but there is also concern about damage to the fragile dune lands.

Shooting of the rabbits is not a viable option in the built up area and the use of a poison (even an anticoagulant) entails an expensive and lengthy risk management programme. There is only a brief window of opportunity to undertake a control programme before the next breeding season. Very young rabbits are unlikely to eat bait. Therefore the decision was made to release Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) at specific sites to encourage an epidemic in the rabbits. This is very much a trial but is low cost compared to a conventional baiting programme, as only a few square metres need to be baited at each site.

The rabbits sampled at Riversdale during last November had very low immunity levels so should be candidates to contract the disease. The rabbits at Castlepoint were not sampled to test immunity levels. RHD is host specific to rabbits and poses no danger to humans or other animals.

### **5.7 Rook Control**

Rook baiting has ceased due to difficulties getting them to feed well enough on the pre-feed (non-toxic) bait lines. The rooks feeding habits change with the onset of cooler, damper weather. Further control will be initiated at the start of the breeding season. The annual census by counting rook nests will take place in early October.

### **5.8 Key Native Ecosystems Programme**

The Key Native Ecosystems programme is virtually the same as reported to the Committee last month. In the Wairarapa, focus continues on culling predators within the Morisons Bush and Carterton East KNE's. The Waingawa Swamp and Greytown Park Bush KNE's are the next areas scheduled for maintenance.

In the Western Zone the first phase of the Witako operation at Silverstream has been completed. This was treated with FeraCol paste (cholecalciferol) and has to be described as a failure. The post-population monitoring result was most disappointing. This is the first time that the Council has applied FeraCol in such a manner. A follow-up programme will be carried out by the Upper Hutt Forest & Bird volunteers using brodifacoum bait. This has provided excellent results in the past. Approval is being sought to use brodifacoum on the Department of Conservation portion of the control area. DoC has a policy of severely restricting the use of brodifacoum on their estate.

The East Harbour KNE (2,375 ha) possum trapping operation started on 24<sup>th</sup> April and will be completed by October this year. The operation has received a lot of favourable publicity through the local newspapers. A meeting was held at Eastbourne on 5 April to brief interested parties. In attendance were representatives from WRC, Hutt City Council, major land occupiers affected, Professional Guiding Services Ltd (the contractor), East Harbour Environmental Association, Eastbourne Forest Rangers, MIRO (Mainland Island

Restoration Organisation), Community Boards and Possum Buster Groups.

## **6. Recommendation**

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

Colin Wright  
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa