

**Report 99.370**

29 June 1999

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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee  
from Steve Blakemore, 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 1 June 1999.

### **2. Divisional Matters**

#### **2.1 Financial Report**

The financial reports to the end of May indicate that the Division is \$196,000 under budget after eleven months of the financial year. Within the various departments there are a number of variations from budget which relate to timing differences and savings. This is particularly so in the Biosecurity Department which is currently \$409,000 under budget. By contrast the Operations Department was \$437,000 over budget because of the additional \$850,000 that has been expended so far on flood damage repair work. Overall, capital expenditure is \$86,000 below budget and largely relates to the cancellation of a carrot cutter acquisition for the Biosecurity Department.

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

#### **2.2 Office Systems**

The new financial year is being accompanied by three major changes in the systems and technology used by Council:

- A common phone system is being installed throughout Council, with the Wairarapa office the first to come on line on 28 June. A major advantage with the new system will be direct four number

dialling with all staff, effectively treating the Wellington and Wairarapa offices as one.

- A replacement financial system, SAP, commenced on 1 July. This has required significant changes to purchasing and timesheet procedures, and a renumbering of all account codes. When fully implemented the system will transfer most inputting to individual staff PC's.
- A new consents and compliance database becomes operative in early July. It offers considerable reporting and speed advantages over the previous system and links directly with the SAP financial system.

The programme has been built on an Auckland Regional Council database with considerable enhancement and new features developed on a co-operative basis between the two Councils.

These systems constitute major changes in the way the Council operates and serves its customers. Like all such investments, a fall in productivity is to be expected as staff progressively learn and adapt to the new systems, and become increasingly aware of their features and capabilities.

### **2.3 Annual Plan Submissions**

Appointed Members may have read in the media of a submission by Liz Burge seeking the appointment of a Maori Liaison Officer to the staff of the Division. This position is sought to improve the effectiveness of Council's liaison and consultation with Wairarapa Maori on environmental issues and resource management consent applications. A key part of the proposal is the establishment of a Maori Advisory Committee to appropriately assist, advise and recommend in these matters.

The Council declined to adopt the proposal at this stage, on the casting vote of the Chairman. It was felt that the proposal needs to be considered alongside others seeking an improved partnership with Maori in the Region.

### **2.4 Staffing – Planning & Resources Department**

Anna McKenzie has been engaged on a six months contract to assist in the Planning and Policy Section. Bryce Lawrence has completed his six month contract term with the Water Resources Investigation Section.

### **2.5 Staffing – Biosecurity Department**

There have been a number of staffing changes in recent weeks-

- Andrew Gay resigned from the Wellington City OMB eradication programme and was replaced by Robert Hudson, from Waipukurau;
- Rachel Helson has filled the new Biosecurity Officer (Animals) position in Upper Hutt. Rachel has a Masters Degree in Conservation Science;
- Scott Farrell (Pest Animals Section – Upper Hutt) has recently resigned to take up a position as the new Ranger at Wainuiomata for the Regional Parks Department;
- Fifteen fixed term staff completed their contracts on the 4 June. The staff were all involved in the Bovine Tb vector control programme.

### 3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

#### 3.1 Bovine Tb Rates - 1999/2000

The total rate requirement for the next financial year remains at \$523,509 (excl GST).

There is no proposal to seek changes to the current 80/20 differential between operational and non-operational areas. Apart from minor changes arising from subdivisions, etc, there should be minimal change to the current hectare rates.

Exact totals will not be known until after the 1 July when updated valuation data becomes available.

#### 3.2 Bovine Tb Operational Update

Operational Progress to 31 May 1999

	<b>Treatment Area (ha)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Area Completed (ha)</b>	<b>%</b>
Bovine Unit	177,816	79.0	159,987	71.1
Private Contractor	47,284	21.0	47,284	21.0
	<b>225,100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>207,271</b>	<b>92.1</b>

It is pleasing to be able to report that the programme for the 1998/1999 financial year is expected to be completed on schedule. A small (850 ha) aerial operation in the TeWharau district is weather dependent and may be delayed until July. Otherwise there will be no requirement to carry over any operational activities or funding into the next financial year. In all, 29 operational areas will have been completed. The Bovine Unit has performed creditably to be able to complete the large

programme on time and under budget. There has been nothing controversial to report in spite of the programme including large-scale aerial operations. This can be directly linked to the commitment given to enhanced risk management and quality assurance procedures throughout the year.

As required by the management agreement between Council and the Animal Health Board, an annual report will be submitted by 30 September 1999 on the 1998/99 programme comparing actual physical and financial performance.

### **3.3 External Possum Contracts for 1999/2000**

Some 53,400 hectares of Bovine Tb possum control works has been tendered for the 1999/2000 financial year. Tenders close on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1999. These areas comprise-

- Aohanga 4,065 ha
- Homewood/Riversdale 25,978 ha
- Mataikona Block One 3,035 ha
- Mataikona Block Two 1,475 ha
- Bideford 8,856 ha

Following a registration of interest and a meeting to discuss the contract areas in detail, eleven contractors were invited to tender. This included a business unit from Environment Waikato and EPRO, a commercial pest management company formed by staff previously employed by Environment Waikato. Canterbury Regional Council withdrew their business unit's registration with us. This creates an interesting scenario if these work groups are successful tenderers and require using 1080 within this region. Any aerial works would require these groups to go through the full resource consent process for areas that this Council already has approval.

### **3.4 Animal Health Board Workshop**

The Animal Health Board presented their new Customer Requirements at a workshop held recently in Palmerston North. Representatives attended the workshop from Agriquality NZ, Horizons m.w, Hawkes Bay Regional Council and Wellington Regional Council.

The focus of the workshop was on communication processes and the relationships between Vector Managers (Regional Councils) and Disease Control Managers (Agriquality NZ). Currently, there is no contractual relationship between these two groups. Each party has responsibility for provision of services to the Animal Health Board and to each other. Some of the required service activities overlap, especially in the areas of operational design, technical reviews, management area reviews, Operational Plan reviews, surveys and

communications. The relationships are further complicated by the dual link with the Regional Animal Health Advisory Committee.

In order to formalise the link between this Council (as VM) and our regional DCM it was decided that it would be advantageous to have a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties. This would (amongst other things) outline the various responsibilities and reporting timelines to ensure the provision of robust information for vector control and disease control programmes within the region.

The Animal Health Board has set a deadline of 8<sup>th</sup> September for recommendations to be considered by them for inclusion in the next financial year's disease and vector control programmes. It is imperative that this deadline is met.

### **3.5 ID Plan to Find TB Sources**

The Animal Health Board will phase in a scheme for the compulsory identification of cattle and farmed deer on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999. The scheme will require animals to be officially identified with a number showing their herd of origin, plus an individual animal number. This should help in tracing sources of Bovine Tb when animals sent for slaughter are found to be infected.

### **3.6 Karori Wildlife Sanctuary**

Western Zone staff have now prepared all of the access routes in readiness for the possum trapping campaign scheduled to start in early July. The pest eradication programme to remove rats, mice, possums, rabbits, hares, wild cats, ferrets, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, goats, deer and pigs is about to get underway. This is just one step in the programme to provide a significant conservation site in the heart of Wellington. Meetings between the Sanctuary Trust and Regional Council pest management staff are now held on a regular basis to ensure the smooth progress of the control operation. The high profile of the project together with the unique nature of the operation and the partially urban setting, demands competent planning and risk management practises.

### **3.7 Wainuiomata Orongorongo Operation**

The aerial baiting of this operation was finally completed on the 24<sup>th</sup> June after unfavourable weather conditions had caused delays. There were no major problems encountered and audits conducted by the Public Health Service and Regional Council consents staff did not disclose any issues of non compliance.

### **3.8 Pest Animals Programme, Wairarapa**

The Wairarapa staff have been busy completing end of year tasks including the annual population trend monitoring of rabbits, completing the maintenance of the Pounui/Wharepapa KNE management area and undertaking rook control. Planning is also in the final stages for the KNE operations based around the periphery of Masterton, at Clareville and Battersea. KNE sites are also programmed for possum control during July and August in the Clifton Grove area.

### **3.9 A Potential New Toxicant**

A recent possum research newsletter from Landcare Research has identified zinc phosphide as a potential new toxicant for possum control. Zinc phosphide is already used as a rodenticide in many countries, has a wide acceptance by pest species and a lack of environmental persistence. A trial with possums however has disclosed a palatability problem that may be due to the strong garlic-like taste and odour of the compound. It is hoped to overcome this problem by encapsulating the compound to mask the odour and slow its release from bait. Trials are continuing.

### **3.10 Magpie Research**

Landcare Research has forwarded a contract and operational design format for our consideration. The research trial is to test the hypothesis that the maximum practicable control of magpies will increase the numbers of other birds. "Other birds" includes both native and introduced species. The trial is intended to be replicated in the Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay and Southland regions. It is proposed that the trial will commence this coming spring.

### **3.11 NPCA Quality Assurance Project**

During 1998/99 the National Possum Control Agencies committee have focused on the development of a national quality assurance programme for the possum control industry. Industry staff, predominantly from regional councils, have been revising existing protocols and developing new standards for inclusion in the programme. Three milestones have recently been achieved –

- Completion of the QA Code of Practice document
- Completion of the QA Resources on Contracting document
- Documentation reviewing and summarising all legislation relevant to vertebrate pest control

The NPCA is also seeking to develop a web site where all material will be available from a central library.

Biosecurity staff have actively participated in this project, as the benefits to us are considerable. Quality assurance is one of the critical components of ensuring our vertebrate pest control programmes are successfully implemented with minimal risk.

### **3.12 Wellington City Programme**

Changes to inspection procedures in the Wellington City Programme will commence, with a focus on initial surveys in Karori West, in July. It is intended to advise residents in each area at least two weeks before the survey. This notification will be carried out by mail drop to each property. It will also provide residents an opportunity to give written agreement for the use of herbicide on their property by Council staff to clear minor infestations of any targeted species located. Such agreement is required before any service delivery is carried out. Written consent will enable the work to be completed at the initial inspection.

### **3.13 Plant Identification Pamphlets**

Two new colour pamphlets have been produced by the Plants Section to assist the public with plant identification. One titled “ Creepers and Climbers” is designed as an identification guide to some of the more troublesome vines found in this Region. The other pamphlet identifies the aquatic pest plant Hornwort with emphasis on the way the species is inadvertently spread by man.

### **3.14 Hornwort**

Six large colour signs have been erected at public entranceways to key wetland areas in the Lower Wairarapa Valley identifying the pest plant Hornwort. These signs include photos of the species and warnings about the possible accidental spread into wetland areas. These signs were jointly financed and erected by the Council and the Department of Conservation.

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

### 4.1 Environment Incidents

<i>Date of Report</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
24/05/99	Rubbish dumped in Ruamahanga river bed.	Rubbish removed by Council staff.
26/05/99	Septic waste system not meeting Regional Council environmental standards	New system to be installed. Resource consent required for new system.
1/06/99	Complaint received that the remains of a cattle beast was deposited beneath the Waiohine River S.H.2 Bridge, just north of Greytown.	Council officer investigated the site, and engaged local operator with heavy machinery to dispose of the remains
9/06/99	Smoke pollution from industry reported.	Found to be a breach of consent conditions. Incident recorded.
14/06/99	Learnt that District Council had undertaken channel realignment activities in the Waiohine River outside the term of their consent.	Staff talked to all parties concerned. Letter of explanation sought from local council. Further action will then be considered.
16/06/99	A complaint was received regarding gravel extraction in the Arawhata Stream, on the coast at Flat Point.	Extraction completed was unconsented. The contractor has been identified and asked to explain actions. Further action will then be considered.
23/06/99	Car body found dumped on the river bed at the end of Kuratawhiti Street, Waiohine River	Police examined car wreckage, no identification numbers on it. Car to be taken away by Operations Department.

### 4.2 Compliance

Two abatement notices have been issued requiring:

- Removal of spoil placed in the bed of the Mangatarere Stream
- Cessation of unconsented stopbanking adjacent to the Upper Ruamahanga River at Double Bridges

### 4.3 Notified Consents

Greytown Sewage – discharge	On hold for 60 days to enable further Iwi consultation and public health input.
Greytown/Featherston – water take	Agreement for temporary takes obtained by SWDC from principal affected parties. Consent application still awaited.
Craggy Range Vineyard – water take	Application on hold while bores developed and tested. Submitters advised.
Moroa water race – take	Meeting held with Committee and SWDC. Application awaited for a short term, two year consent.



#### **4.4 Rivers Bacteriological Water Quality Monitoring**

The results from the annual bacteriological monitoring programme of swimming sites in the Wairarapa have been collated. Main findings are:

- Most sites in the Wairarapa rivers bacteriological monitoring programme showed compliance for safe swimming during the swimming season (Dec 1998 – 23 Feb 1999).
- Although the Double Bridges and Te Ore Ore sites did not comply with the 1998 guidelines for the swimming season, the guidelines should be treated with caution as the limits set in them require more research to make them more defensible.
- A pathogen sampling programme has been underway since January 1999 at two sites in the Wairarapa (Double Bridges and Morrison's Bush) which forms part of the national fresh water microbiological research programme. Results from this research programme and targeted investigation studies conducted by council will help in formulating more defensible microbiological guidelines for safe swimming in rivers.

#### **4.5 Coastal Bacteriological Monitoring**

This programme involves weekly sampling of coastal and estuarine water at six sites – two at Riversdale and four at Castlepoint. The main findings from this years survey are:

- With the exception of Riversdale Lagoon, swimming water quality was good throughout the 1998/99 summer. Riversdale Lagoon continues to have water quality which is unsuitable for swimming.
- In terms of shellfish gathering, Riversdale Lagoon mouth did not exceed the recommended median limit for faecal coliforms over the season. It did however exceed the faecal coliform standard with 10% of the samples exceeding 43 per 100ml.
- This years results line up with those for previous seasons
- A sanitary survey of the Motuwaireka Stream catchment is planned during 1999/00 to identify the likely point and non-point sources of pollution.

#### **4.6 Air Monitoring**

The Council's mobile air monitoring laboratory has been installed at Memorial Park Masterton with the co-operation and assistance of Masterton District Council. It will operate there for a total of nine months with air quality readings taken and analysed automatically and sent to computer.

#### **4.7 Solid Waste Management**

A public discussion document on solid waste management has been prepared by the three Wairarapa District Councils. This is part of the development of integrated waste management for the Wairarapa. As part of this process, Russell Loudon from the Tindall Foundation addressed the group and a public meeting on the concepts of zero waste management. Karen Brewster represents the Division on the Waste Management Committee.

#### **4.8 New Section Name**

From 1 July the Water Resources Investigation Section will be known as the Resource Investigation Section. This will better embrace the work of the section in relation to water, soil and air resources.

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

#### **5.1 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 have been dispatched, and a helicopter operation incorporating 800 poles will be undertaken before the end of June.

#### **5.2 Akura Conservation Centre**

Sales are lifting as the planting season gathers momentum. The targets for June should be achieved despite the small pole orders received to date through the soil conservation programmes. Other lines of poles have been sold to Conservation Forestry, Rivers and an external sale to Environment Bay of Plenty that will ensure income for the month.

The new EFT-POS facility is proving most popular. Advertising is underway, through newspapers and fixed signage at Akura, Upper Hutt, Otaki, and the Council Centre. New signage inviting public sales has also been installed on the road frontage at Akura.

### **5.3 Whareama Scheme Advisory Committee**

Recently this Committee met to discuss two issues relating to the proposed 1999/00 Scheme programme. Committee members met with affected landowners to discuss the issue of gorse growth on the banks of the lower reaches of the Whareama River. Gorse is gradually spreading along the banks and down towards the water edge. Channel capacities are being compromised as a result. There was general agreement that the Scheme would contribute to the capital clearance and that maintenance would be the responsibility of each landowner.

The second issue related to Scheme contribution towards riparian zones established in logged conservation woodlots. There was general agreement that revenue gained from the log sales should be used to establish riparian zones within existing areas. In the case of new or expanded woodlots the Scheme would contribute half the costs of the riparian planting. The balance would be funded through the Property or Sustainability Plan.

### **5.4 Gladstone Water Supply Scheme – Feasibility Study**

The feasibility study for the proposed Gladstone Community Water Supply Scheme is progressing well, including a preliminary assessment of groundwater quality and the selection of a bore site. The drilling and pump testing of a bore, and a detailed landowner survey of water requirements will be completed over the next 6 weeks. After this, a Steering Committee meeting will be held to report on these results, and to decide on the scheme design parameters.

The Carterton District Council have agreed to provide an \$11,000 grant to cover the bore construction and pump testing costs.

### **5.5 Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee**

The Committee membership has been finalised, including a representative of the landowners alongside the Apple Barrel Floodway, and representatives from the Iwi and Transit N.Z.

A total of three meetings have been held to date, involving the presentation and discussion of information from both the Waiohine River and Floodplain Investigation Issues and Options reports.

A particularly pleasing aspect is the representation from Transit N.Z. This is seen as important as the SH2 Bridge is recognised as having both traffic and waterway capacity limitations, and is an integral part of any long term flood protection project. Transit is planning to carry out an investigation of bridge improvement and replacement options over the next 6 months.

### **5.6 Waiohine-Mangatarere Scheme – Bentley Property**

Willow cabling work to the value of \$10,000 has been completed on the Bentley property, and will be funded half by the landowners.

### **5.7 Upper Ruamahanga Scheme – Forbes Property**

The stopbanking and associated willow cabling bank protection works on the Forbes property have been completed within the estimate of \$75,000. The cost of this work is being shared by the Wellington Regional Council and Masterton District Council.

### **5.8 Masterton Oxidation Ponds**

The oxidation pond protection works consisting of rock groyne bank protection has been completed within the \$45,000 estimated. This work is being funded entirely by the Masterton District Council.

### **5.9 Technical Services**

A large number of mapping projects have been prepared –

- Soil conservation farm maps
- Arcview maps and plans
- Shelter Plans
- Biosecurity operational maps and posters

Major surveys were also completed –

- Junction of Waiohine and Ruamahanga Rivers for a proposed diversion of the Muhunoa Drain
- Six monthly beach and offshore survey as part of the Castlepoint Beach coastal erosion study.

## **6. Recommendation**

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

Steve Blakemore  
Acting Divisional Manager, Wairarapa