

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 26 August 1999.

### **2. Divisional Matters**

#### **2.1 Financial Report**

Data for the new financial year has been unavailable to date due to the changeover to the new SAP financial information system. However, as is normal, staff are working closely to approved budgets and therefore no significant variations are expected at this time of the year.

#### **2.2 Landcare Research Award**

As previously advised, the Council received an Environmental Excellence Award from Landcare Research in recognition of the very substantial reductions achieved in Bovine Tb numbers within the region over the last few years. A function was held in the Masterton office last week to present this Award to the Biosecurity Department, and to thank them for their continuing and enthusiastic work in this area.

#### **2.3 ISO 9002 Accreditation**

An item later in this report records the ISO 9002 Accreditation obtained by the Monitoring & Investigations Section of the Biosecurity Department. This is a significant achievement as it provides a quality assurance of our monitoring work. This is a first for New Zealand and the relevant staff are to be congratulated, particularly Diederik Meenken who heads this Section.

#### **2.4 Horizons.mw Tour**

Committee members will be aware that members of the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council visited the Wellington region recently and that they spent a day in the Wairarapa. Presentations were given on some aspects of our activities and then they were taken for a short tour to sites of interest, including lunch at the Akura Conservation Centre.

A letter of thanks has been received from the Horizons.mw Chairperson.

#### **2.5 Irrigation Study**

A steering committee has been formed to co-ordinate a study of possible irrigation proposals in the Wairarapa. This committee consists of representatives of the Regional Council, the three Wairarapa district councils, Federated Farmers, and some industry representatives. This Council's representative is Cr Rick Long.

The committee has agreed to make application for a grant from a \$2M fund set up by Government to assist drought-prone regions. An application will be forwarded shortly. If it proceeds, this study will require significant input from Regional Council staff. It will also require some funding to be provided from within the region.

#### **2.6 Long Term Financial Strategy**

The Council is now moving into the more detailed aspects of the three yearly review of its 10 year financial strategy. In particular, a workshop session for the Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee is planned for 9.30am on 5 November to review possible programmes in the relevant areas.

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

#### **3.1 Akura Conservation Centre**

The Akura Conservation Centre will close to the public for this season on 1 October. The season has been a good one with 97% of the pole material sold, and some 450,000 seedlings purchased by internal and external clients. The surplus poles are predominantly the less desirable species that are suitable only for summer wet, low wind run areas. Other Councils have little use for these species as well. They are programmed for replacement in the next two years.

Ground conditions at both the Mangapakeha and Akura Nurseries are ideal and new stool beds will be planted in the first week of October. Staff have met with the Ravensdown Fertiliser Company representative

to formulate the fertiliser programme for the coming season. Soil tests show all target levels for key nutrients have been achieved and a reduced quantity of fertiliser will be applied.

### **3.2 Battle Hill Concept Plan**

Three staff members from the Soil Conservation Section met recently with key staff from the Landcare Division involved in the development of the Battle Hill Concept Plan. The Plan has been prepared to develop a planting programme that will integrate the requirements of a multi-use Regional Park and a planting programme that will cover riparian management, shelter, agroforestry, plantation forestry, soil conservation, landscape and aesthetic values.

The session focused on conceptual matters and further visits are planned to assist with more detailed specifications when the concepts are finalised. It is hoped that Akura Conservation Centre will play a key role in this programme, and other initiatives run by the Wellington based Regional Parks Section.

### **3.3 River Surveys and Plans**

River cross-section surveys have been completed on the

- Waipoua River - 46 cross-sections
- Stoney Creek and Awhea River - 26 cross-sections

Survey plans have also been prepared for

- Barton Lagoon
  - Mahaki Culvert
  - Muhunoa Drain proposal
- where resource consent applications are involved.

### **3.4 Gladstone Water Supply Scheme**

The feasibility study for the proposed Gladstone Community Water Supply Scheme is progressing well. A bore has been drilled at the Gladstone Sports Complex, and a long term pump test has confirmed that the available yield is more than adequate. The water quality is also very good although basic treatment will be necessary to meet domestic and commercial needs.

A landowner survey to determine water requirements has received an excellent response. A steering committee meeting was held on 24 September to report on the results of the survey and to discuss the remaining steps in the investigation programme. A preliminary scheme design and estimate will be reported to a further steering committee meeting in early October.

### **3.5 Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee**

The fifth meeting of the Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee was held in late August. The main agenda items included the results of the SH2 Bridge waterway modelling exercise, and the progress with the Scheme classification review. The level of interest and participation of the Advisory Committee has been very pleasing.

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

### **4.1 Moth Plant**

Following the location of a Moth Plant site at Trentham, an article on the species was supplied to and published by the Upper Hutt Leader. This has resulted in seven sites being identified in the Hutt Valley and one in Masterton. All sites involve only one or two plants. These will be cleared by staff following discussion and agreement with the various occupiers.

Moth Plant is a vigorous climber able to tolerate shaded conditions. It is recognised as one of the most invasive climbers in the Auckland and Northland regions. This species was marketed as a garden plant as recently as 1989.

### **4.2 Advertising to Purchase a Pest Plant**

An advertisement was noted in the August issue of a popular gardening magazine seeking to purchase seed or plants of Cathedral Bells. The advertiser resided in Otago. Cathedral Bells is a Total Control Pest Plant in a number of North Island regions including Wellington. It is also listed as a National Surveillance Plant which prohibits its propagation, sale or distribution.

Letters advising this situation have been sent to both the advertiser and the editor of the magazine. The Otago Regional Council has also been advised.

### **4.3 Italian Buckthorn**

Scattered infestations of this shrub have been located in Carterton and south east of Greytown. The extent of areas infested is uncertain but could be over a wide area. In some Carterton residential areas, Italian Buckthorn has been found growing as trimmed hedges. Sometimes known as Evergreen Buckthorn, the species is a prolific producer of seed which is often spread over lengthy distances by birds. Plants can attain a height of 10 metres. The species is invasive of forest margins, open land and coastal dunes.

#### 4.4 Annual Clearance Letters

Letters advising occupiers of their responsibility to clear a range of pest plants have been mailed. These are sent each Spring to land occupiers with recorded active sites of Ragwort, Nodding Thistle and Saffron Thistle. During November, letters will be forwarded regarding Woolly Nightshade, African Feathergrass and Perennial Nettle.

#### 4.5 Variegated Thistle

High infestation levels of the boundary control pest plant Variegated Thistle are apparent in several areas of the Region, particularly the South Wairarapa. Overall, infestations are lower than that experienced during the 1997/98 drought but are as high in areas where adequate control was not carried out during the drought period. Generally, infestations were declining in the ten-year period prior to 1997/98.

#### 4.6 ISO 9002 Certification



The Monitoring & Investigations Section achieved ISO 9002:1994 certification. This international standard ensures that the monitoring team is working within a robust and reliable quality system.

The Monitoring and Investigations Section is committed to supplying accurate indices of vertebrate pest density that are "confidently useable". That is, they may be used for assessing performance of contractors or scheduling of repeat control operations without the need for any checking, editing or correction.

To this end, International Standard ISO/NZS 9002:1994 (Quality Systems: Model for production, installation and servicing) has been adopted as the framework for implementation of a quality system. Vertebrate pest monitoring data are collected under conditions which are imprecisely controlled and difficult to repeat. In view of these problems, credibility of results is by adherence to proven scientific practices, which are fully documented in national protocols, and have ongoing evaluations of precision and accuracy. The entire process is recorded on purpose designed quality forms. Together these documents provide a complete chronological record to support the validity of the information supplied.

#### 4.7 Bovine Tb Update

The Bovine Tb operational programme is now in full swing with the continuing good weather allowing satisfactory progress. Six fixed

term employees have been employed to date. Others will be employed as the programme expands in the summer/autumn period.

Most Bovine operational staff have been involved with night shooting of possums in pine plantations, willows and poplars to coincide with the new Spring growth. Possums are attracted to feed on the new shoots and leaves and have a tendency to congregate in preferred areas.

**(1) Operational Status**

Waingawa	2,791 ha	Completed
Mt Bruce/Mikimiki Crown	2,542 ha	Completed
Mt Bruce Reserve Crown	350 ha	Completed
Otaki Buffer and Otaki Crown	9,976 ha	Started
Bideford	19,622 ha	Started
Owahanga (Aerial prefeed 10-9-99)	4,000 ha	Started
Kahutara/Haurangi Crown	24,000 ha	Started
Mt Bruce/Waipoua	16,183 ha	Started
Taueru/Maungaraki	29,605 ha	Started

**(2) External Contracts**

- Mataikona 559/1 (3,305 ha) – This block has been completed and is due for a post operational monitor.
- Mataikona 559/2 (2,000 ha) – The successful tenderer for this area was Gert Vermeer. The area is due for completion by 30<sup>th</sup> December 1999.
- Homewood /Riversdale (25,978 ha) – A progress possum density monitor has just been completed over approximately 14,000 hectares and resulted in a residual trap-catch (RTC) of 5.9 percent. A RTC of 5.0% or lower was required for payment to be made to the contractor. This block contains large areas of native bush and pine forest that has traditionally been treated by aerial baiting. To date, 3,664 possums and 75 mustelids have been destroyed. Further control work is being undertaken.

**(3) LIP's Programme – Te Awaite Station**

A feasibility study for a Locally Initiated Programme (LIPS) is currently being carried out for Te Awaite Station. Grant Crawford (Field Officer, Bovine Tb) has had discussions with the owner and station manager and will forward a report to the Wellington Regional Animal Health Committee (WRAHC) for their consideration. A LIP's programme on TeAwaite Station will be complimentary to the adjacent Tora WRC Initiative Programme.

The National Pest Management Strategy provides for LIP's programmes whereby the Animal Health Board will provide a measure of support for landowners wishing to undertake vector control work outside or beyond the scope of formally agreed vector control programmes.

Applications for financial support from the AHB for LIP's programmes are made in the first instance to the WRAHC and must include detailed objectives and a work plan.

**(4) WRC Initiative**

As part of the Council's Bovine Tb Initiative Programme, some 14,600 hectares has been scheduled for possum control commencing this financial year. The Initiative Programme entails the Council conducting the initial works and then gradually passing the responsibility for future control back to the occupiers.

The three areas programmed are centred on Tora (3,000ha), Moeraki/Ngakonui (4,400ha) and Lake Ferry (7,200ha).

Tora involves five properties and includes both ground and aerial control. The five occupiers are very supportive and control works are due to start early in the New Year. The Lake Ferry operation has 15 properties involved and is due to start this month. The Moeraki/Ngakonui operation will include aerial works and is scheduled to commence in early November 1999.

**(5) Memorandum of Understanding**

At the request of the Animal Health Board (AHB), a Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted between the Regional Council (as Regional Vector Control Manager) and AgriQuality NZ Ltd (as Regional Disease Control Manager). The agreement confirms that both parties wish to ensure a proficient delivery of service to each other and to mutual customers to achieve the objectives of the Regional Operational Plan for the Wellington region. Council already has an annual Management Agreement with the AHB. The new agreement with AgriQuality NZ Ltd will complete the "triangle" for delivery of customer requirements.

**4.8 Pest Animals – Communications and Promotions**

- Pest Animals staff will have a display at the Otari Native Botanic Garden native plant sale on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 1999. The main focus of the display will be on methods available to urban residents for possum control in their gardens. As well as pictures and pamphlets describing control options, Biosecurity staff will have bait-stations and

Timms traps on display and available for purchase. Part of the display will focus on the Key Native Ecosystems programme and staff will be present to answer any queries. A press release has been prepared to help further promote the Councils KNE programme.

- On 14th October the Council's Native Plant Guide will be launched at Te Papa Museum in Wellington. A display will outline the Key Native Ecosystem programme. The new KNE brochure together with a form will be provided for landowners who are interested in registering their bush remnant with the KNE programme.
- The 'Wellington Green Day', to be held at Wellington South Intermediate in Newtown on 17th October, will also feature a display by Biosecurity staff. Controlling possums in gardens will again be the main focus, with some information available on other pest species likely to be a problem in a city environment (i.e. magpies) and the KNE programme. The display will be in conjunction with Pest Plants and staff from both sections will be available to answer any queries. Bait-stations, bait and Timms traps will be available for purchase.
- On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, Ken Wright (Biosecurity Officer, Upper Hutt) gave an address to the Wainuiomata Rotary Club about the activities of the Pest Animals Section in the Western Zone. The talk was well received with plenty of interest in the recent Wainuiomata-Orongorongo aerial operation.
- The Pest Animals Section has undertaken to arrange circulation of the Pest Eradication Assistance Programme (PEAP) pamphlet to all rural box holders in the Wairarapa. The PEAP scheme is a Forest & Bird and Ducks Unlimited venture that received assistance from both the Department of Conservation (DoC) and Regional Council. The trap-bonding scheme for mustelids and possums is complementary to the objectives of both DoC and the Council. There is to be a promotion of the scheme through the Wairarapa Times Age newspaper.
- The Pest Animals Section (Western Zone) are to assist the Wellington Branch of Forest and Bird with their 'Bring Back the Birds' campaign. The focus will be on promoting 'backyard' possum and rodent control especially on those properties that are in close proximity to the Wellington City reserves. Biosecurity staff will market starter packs containing a bait station and possum bait. The KNE logo will be displayed on the pack and carry a brief message about the KNE programme and how to get a replenishment of possum bait. Forest & Bird will also be promoting their programme through the media.



#### 4.9 Karori Wildlife Sanctuary

The Western Zone staff have been extremely busy with the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary eradication programme. Possums were trapped to less than a 10% residual trap catch rate (RTC) and then 210 bait stations located throughout the Sanctuary were filled with brodifacoum pellet baits. A possum population density monitor indicated that the population had reduced to a 2.5% RTC less than three weeks after the baiting. A further application of brodifacoum baits by both hand and aerial distribution occurred on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September. This was to primarily target the two rat species present as well as mice but would have destroyed any remaining possums. The possum, rats and mice carcasses are also toxic to feral cats and mustelids. A further dual aerial and ground laid application of brodifacoum baits is scheduled to occur as soon as a fine spell of weather is forecast. The further light application is to compensate for any areas that may have been missed previously and to control mice that may have been too young to eat the first bait broadcast. Mice only have a small home range.

#### 4.10 Wi Tako Reserve Possum Control

A joint venture is underway with the Upper Hutt Branch of Forest and Bird, DoC, Corrections Department and Biosecurity Department to treat the Wi Tako, Ecclesfield and Fendalton Reserves as well as the neighbouring Department of Corrections property. The venture is being driven by the Upper Hutt Forest & Bird Society who have been involved in three previous possum control operations with Council.

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

#### 5.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date of Report</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
24/08/99	Thick black smoke coming from industrial site.	Found to be caused by tyres on a rubbish fire. Person responsible was required to stop burning of tyres. They complied.
26/08/99	Complaint from concerned river user that a farmer was using the Ruamahanga River as farm dump with carcasses and agrichemical containers being found in the river.	Abatement notice issued requiring farmer to dispose of waste properly.
31/08/99	Neighbour creating smoke nuisance by burning plastic rubbish over a three-day period.	No action taken at time.
31/08/99	Farmer letting dairy effluent overflow into Ruamahanga River.	Investigated and problem fixed. Farmer is in process of installing a new system.

1/09/99	Smoke nuisance reported from school incinerator	School will make changes to their waste management practices, in liaison with neighbours.
1/09/99	Foul odour from industrial site burning waste	Abatement notice issued requiring changes to waste management practices.
7/09/99	Bulldozer pushing spoil into waterway, Castlepoint.	Investigated, found to be relatively minor. Raised with Masterton District Council.
10/09/99	Smoke nuisance from neighbouring property, Masterton.	The people responsible were asked not to burn rubbish.
15/09/99	Direct discharge of washwater from sand quarry, Ruamahanga River	Ongoing problem which may require enforcement
20/09/99	Member of the public phoned the office and reported seeing some five dead cows in the Ruamahanga River downstream from the Rathkeale College bluff. He said that they were first seen on Saturday.	Stock were removed and buried up on the river bank.

## 5.2 Compliance

Two abatement notices were issued relating to rubbish disposal and burning of waste.

## 5.3 Notified Consents

Greytown Sewage – discharge	Pre hearing meeting held. Draft conditions to be circulated.
Greytown/Featherston – water take	Pre Hearing meeting held.
Craggy Range Vineyard – water take	Application on hold with further information on surface water effects to be provided. A non-notified consent for groundwater take has been issued.
Maori Education Trust – water take	Pre hearing meeting held.

## 5.4 RMA Amendments

Staff have contributed to the Council's submissions on the Bill. Indications are that submissions will not be heard until after the General Election and the final form of the Bill, if and when it is reported back, will largely be determined by the Election outcome.

## 5.5 Dairy Discharge Consents

A meeting was held with Federated Farmers representatives to update them on progress with the project and to discuss the process being followed. A commitment to change to a discharge to land has been given by 24 clients and discussions are being held with the remaining 10 clients to confirm their intentions. Processing of short term temporary consents has commenced.

### **5.6 Riversdale Sanitary Survey**

A meeting has been held with Riversdale residents to discuss the proposed summer survey to be undertaken to identify the origins of pollutants in the estuary of the Motuwaireka Stream. A first sampling has been made.

### **5.7 Irrigation Rates**

Victoria University staff gave a presentation on the initial findings of their research into the irrigation requirements of different soils in the Wairarapa valley. There are dramatic differences in the ability of different soils to retain water indicating that the volumes applied on some soils are an inefficient use of water and largely uneconomic. On soils with poor moisture retention very little water can be held within the root zone and is lost to groundwater. More field work will be undertaken this summer on different soils. Potential publicity to farmers will also be pursued.

## **6. Recommendation**

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

Colin Wright  
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa