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## **Report 00.632**

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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 18 July 2000.

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

##### **2.1 Financial Year End**

The Division has completed a busy and successful 1999/2000 financial year with most outputs and financial results on or close to targets. All annual plan performance indicators were achieved and there were very good results in many areas.

Financially, the Division finished with a surplus of \$602,000 as detailed in a separate report in this order paper. However when results from the three business units are deducted (favourable variance of \$620,000), the remainder of the Division was very close to budget. There were offsetting variances in a number of areas, but the overall result was very close indeed from a total budget of approximately \$13m.

##### **2.2 Combined Councils Meeting**

Crs Long and Buchanan and I attended a combined Wairarapa Councils meeting on 28 July. There was a good attendance from the three district councils and items discussed included pest plants and the Wairarapa train service where regional council officers gave presentations.

This Council's offer to host the next combined meeting in February was received with acclamation!!

### **2.3 Economic Development**

Cr Buchanan and I have been involved in a small working group looking at possible proposals for a Wairarapa Economic Development Strategy. This group, being led by the Masterton Business Enterprise, is planning to put forward a proposal based around the Wairarapa strengths of land use, education, and tourism, for approval under the Government's Regional Partnership Programme.

### **2.4 Hong Kong Students Visit**

A group of twenty Hong Kong students spent over a week in the Wairarapa looking at a range of environmental issues. Council staff made a strong contribution to their programme with in-house and field presentations on Council activities. Staff from Biosecurity, Operations, and Planning and Resources Departments all contributed.

### **2.5 Holiday**

I will be taking an extended period of leave from 4 September to 16 October. Unfortunately this means that I will miss the Committee's next scheduled meeting, as I will be in Italy on that day. Other countries that I will be travelling in are Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Czech republic, and Austria.

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

### **3.1 Lower Tauherenikau River**

River engineering consultant, Gary Williams, is working jointly with staff to investigate options for future management of the lower Tauherenikau River. Discussions with affected parties and the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme Advisory Committee are in progress. The results of the investigation will be reported to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee in due course.

### **3.2 Waiohine River and Floodplain Investigation**

Two meetings of the Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee have been held in the last month. A submission was made to Transit NZ supporting the SH2 Bridge upgrade currently being investigated, and a new Waiohine River Management Scheme rating classification approach was discussed. A report on the proposed new classification approach and related public consultation needs is part of this meeting agenda.

### **3.3 Asset Management Plans**

Updates of the asset management plans for the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme, and the Waiohine-Mangatarere, Waingawa, Waipoua, and Upper Ruamahanga river management schemes, have been completed. A

report on the status of these Schemes in relation to the asset management plans is part of this meeting agenda.

### **3.4 Global Resource Consents**

Negotiations are nearing completion to secure a global resource consent for routine maintenance activities within the Waiohine-Mangatarere, Waipoua, and Upper Ruamahanga River Management Schemes. The aim is to obtain the consent by 1 September 2000.

### **3.5 Waipoua River and Floodplain Investigation**

The first two of a series of meetings have been held with the Waipoua Scheme Advisory Committee to develop an appropriate approach for future management of the river and floodplain plus a new Scheme rating classification approach and funding mix.

### **3.6 Seedling and Pole Planting**

The winter season continues to be one of mild conditions and below average rainfall. These conditions have enabled good access to planting sites. Soil moisture levels are a concern in some areas where rainfall has been significantly below normal winter averages.

Most of the seedling planting has been completed. Pole planting is traditionally later and is approximately 65% complete. A total of 23,000 poles are programmed to be planted.

### **3.7 Soil Conservation Planner**

This is a new piece of software being developed by Landcare Research, funded for three years by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The Regional Soil Conservator has been involved in the User Group development team. Currently Version 1 is in the process of evaluation.

The Soil Conservation Planner is designed to assist land management advisors, resource management consultants, landscape architects, farmers, and restoration practitioners. It helps select plant species, choose spacing and establishment methods, evaluate costs, and determine consequences for pasture production and land stability. It has application at the farm or catchment scale.

The Planner consists of seven modules which can be used independently or together in a systematic fashion. The modules are land resources, species, finance, erosion, pasture production, database management, and case studies.

### **3.8 New Dynex Sleeve**

The first plastic Dynex sleeves were produced in 1991. Some minor modification has occurred since that time, primarily to improve the splitting ability when the tree trunk fully occupies the sleeve. In recent years staff have been concerned that some batches of sleeves are not splitting with ease, and in some cases the sleeve has strangled the tree.

A new prototype has been manufactured and will be trialled this year. The major difference is the incorporation of the drainage and air circulation holes into a vertical perforation line. This should greatly improve sleeve shedding.

Staff are intending to develop a sleeve recovery programme that would enable recycling of sleeves shed from poplar and willow poles. The intention is to involve the rural schools in a programme that would return a financial contribution to the schools based on the quantity of sleeves recovered.

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

### **4.1 Aquatic Weed**

Two infestations of the aquatic plant Ell Grass (*Vallisneria gigantea*) has been located in the Makora Stream on the eastern side of Masterton. This species has been identified as the Meola creek variety named after the original site in NZ at Western Springs, Auckland. The Masterton infestation is the third known of this variety to exist in this country.

Ell Grass is a submerged species with long strap-like leaves which can vary in length from a few centimetres to over 5 metres, depending on the depth of water. It forms dense stands of vegetation in both still and flowing water to the exclusion of other species. The plant is not known to produce seed in NZ. It is spread vegetatively, generally through the movement of root fragments.

Ell Grass is listed as a National Surveillance plant throughout NZ. However, all varieties are popular aquarium plants and it is likely that the Masterton infestation is the result of unwanted aquarium material being dumped in the stream. Surveys of the total stream are yet to be completed and it is hoped that no further sites exist. It is intended to clear the existing infestations during the early summer with the assistance of the Conservation Corp.

### **4.2 Herbicide Gel**

A recent development in the application of a herbicide is currently under testing by Plants staff. This product, marketed as Vigilant, is a formulation of the herbicide Picloram as a gel. Picloram in liquid form has been available in NZ for almost 30 years and as an addition to other products such as Grazon or 24D has been marketed under the Tordon label.

In gel form Picloram can now be conveniently applied to the freshly cut stumps of a range of weeds with little risk of contamination to adjacent species or the applicator. The product is recommended for the control of several pest plants. As application is as simple as squeezing a small amount from the container on to the plant stump, it will be ideal for occupiers to use for small infestations of pest plants.

### 4.3 Ragwort Flea Beetle

For the last ten months AgResearch have been trialing the effects of a range of herbicides on Ragwort Flea Beetle populations. This work has been carried out on a dairy farm west of Carterton. The investigation has been aimed at establishing the relationship between the application of various herbicides and the residual Flea Beetle populations in sprayed and untreated paddocks.

Although the research is not conclusive, it appears that some commonly used products can be detrimental to the build up of this biocontrol agent. This may not necessarily be from herbicide reduction of the host plant but rather from the direct effect of the chemical on the insect.

AgResearch intend to continue this programme into the summer when a final conclusion should be determined.

### 4.4 Community Care Group

Several residents of the Otaki Gorge Road area have formed a group to clear Italian Buckthorn and Banana Passion Fruit from Totara Reserve on the Otaki Gorge Road. They requested the advice of Plants Staff. One officer spent two days working with the Group advising on plant identification and control methods.

This group comprises some 15 people who intend to work on the project every second week until the initial clearance is completed.

This Care Group should continue to be supported as their aims align well with Council's own biodiversity objectives.

### 4.5 Bovine Tb Update -

#### (1) Operational Progress

Operations have commenced in the Lake Wairarapa Crown (Matthews Lagoon/Boggy Pond, 1,130 ha), Bideford (20,000 ha) and Whangaehu (23,495 ha) sectors of the Eradication Zone and the initial control area of Ruamahanga River (5,830 ha). This latter operation is almost complete. Approval was obtained from the Department of Conservation to use 1080 carrot in bait stations for the Lake Wairarapa Crown operation. The use of this method had been declined in previous years.

Planning is underway for the areas of Tinui/Tinui Crown (28,679 ha), Te Wharau (35,987 ha), and Otaki Crown (5,568 ha). Each operation has a significant component of aerial work.

Last year's results show major decreases in herds and reactor numbers, signifying ongoing success in the battle against Tb.

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
Herds	150	108	80
Reactors	517	358	201

**(2) External Possum Contracts**

This year, 93,775 hectares of operations have been let for tender. These include the following:

<b>Contract</b>	<b>Hectares</b>	<b>Contractor</b>	<b>No. of Tenders</b>
Mount Bruce Reserve	466	WRC	5
Otaki	5,185	WRC	2
Featherston	5,230	WRC	WRC only tenderer
Pakowhai	6,747	G Higginson	4
Tinui	7,577	G Vermeer	8
Stronvar	25,320	J McCaslin	6
East Alfredton	5,600	G Higginson	6
Martinborough /1	5,000	J McCaslin	5
Martinborough /3	16,000	G Higginson	5
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,850	J McCaslin	7

**(3) Registration of Interest for Aerial Works**

An advertisement was placed in the Dominion newspaper on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2000 inviting registrations of interest for the aerial application of baits for possum control comprising 29,600 hectares during the current financial year. There have been four enquiries to date.

**(4) Meeting on Regional Boundary Issues**

Graeme Butcher (Operations Controller, Bovine Tb) recently attended a meeting in Dannevirke of Vector Control and Disease Control Managers to discuss future options for Bovine Tb control on the regional boundary with Horizons.mw. There have been co-ordination problems at times in the past and it has become increasingly important that this does not reoccur. It is likely that vector control operations will occur along the full length and both sides of the boundary within the next two to three years.

**(5) Animal Health Board Technical Review**

Staff from the Bovine Tb Operational Unit and Management Services Group are currently busy collating information for the Technical Review for control proposed to be undertaken within the period 2001/02 to 2003/04. Some preliminary discussions have already occurred with the Animal Health Board (AHB) and AgriQuality with more to follow.

The information requirements for the review are more complex than in previous years. There is now much more emphasis on 'targeting' infected and neighbouring properties and /or high-risk habitat with intensive control measures. Historical and research information has identified that Tb foci tend to remain in the same location over time and allow the spread of infection between possums through prolonged close contact. 'Targeting' high risk areas has been part of the practice for this Councils Bovine Tb control in recent years and has no doubt contributed to the reduction of infected herds in this region.

For this year's review, AgriQuality have classified cattle and deer herds into high, medium and low risk properties. This information, combined

with knowledge of the possum habitat, will dictate the intensity of possum control required. At this stage, it is intended that the required post operational residual trap-catch (RTC) indexes will be no more than 2% for high risk areas and no more than 5% for medium and low risk areas. The 2% RTC targets have performance implications for both the Councils Operational Unit and external contractors and will result in higher costs due to the need for an increase in performance monitoring as well as more intensive control works.

This Council's vector control proposals are required to be with the AHB's Technical Manager by 8<sup>th</sup> September. The Technical Review will take place in Palmerston North on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

## **4.6 Pest Animals Update**

### **(1) Rabbits**

A rabbit control operation is being planned for areas within and adjacent to Riversdale Beach Resort on 30<sup>th</sup> August, weather permitting. Rabbits have been causing damage to the Southern Reserve, golf course and some residential sections. Shooting is not a viable option so it is intended to use diced carrot with the anticoagulant poison Pindone on the rabbit prone areas. The operation will be advertised warning posters and signs will be placed in critical places and an information leaflet will be delivered to each property/occupier.

Consultation is currently being undertaken with Masterton District Council and Choice Health. The cost of risk management associated with this type of operation is substantial. It is often difficult to adequately quantify the cost benefits when a relatively small rabbit population causes so much havoc.

Suggestions have been made to release the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease virus (RHD) as an alternative. However the best time to release the virus is in the early autumn when there are the least number of juvenile rabbits. Juvenile rabbits (up to about 10 weeks of age) are usually able to overcome the disease, with apparent lifelong immunity. There are also sufficient vectors (such as flies) around in the early autumn to assist in spreading the virus.

There is a problem of not knowing the current rabbit immunity levels. Therefore, a sample of rabbits will be obtained from nearby farmland and blood serum collected to ascertain the percentage of rabbits that are immune. If immunity levels are low it will provide an opportunity for maintenance control in 2001.

### **(2) KNE Operations**

In the Western Zone, possum control is continuing in the Te Rama, Waikanae Reserves, Ngaraunga/Kaiwharawhara, Huntleigh Park, Redwood Bush and Karehana sites with the Kelson Bush operation to start soon.

In the Wairarapa, the Greytown Park Bush and Pounui maintenance operations have been completed. Work is continuing at the Battersea

site where the threatened mistletoe species *Ileostylus micranthus* and *Korthasella lindsayii* have been located by Council staff. The Department of Conservation has been advised of the discoveries.

**(3) Draft Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy**

Preparation work is continuing on the draft proposed RPMS. Emphasis is concurrently focussed on selecting candidate pests, allocating an interim pest status (total control, containment or regional surveillance) and collating impact data. Each candidate pest will then be subjected to a cost-benefit analysis as required by Section 72 of the Biosecurity Act 1993. It is proposed that the draft will be available in late October 2000.

**(4) Aerial Operation**

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, a 1080 aerial baiting operation was carried out over an area of 1,944 hectares on behalf of the Landcare Division. The areas involved were the Akatarawa Saddle (Bull Creek) area and a portion of Kaitoke Regional Park (Putaputa and Koripiro Catchments). Post operational monitoring is scheduled for the last week in August.

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

**5.1 Environmental Incidents**

<i>Date &amp; Time</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
11/07/2000 08:20:00	A landowner was concerned about a proposed aerial spraying operation planned for the area that was using a potentially harmful agrichemical.	Still under investigation
18/07/2000 14:50:00	Cow effluent being sluiced off crossing on road directly into river, South Wairarapa.	People responsible have been written to.
28/07/2000 09:45:00	Concern at a rumour that there had been an arsenic spill at a near-by industrial site.	The two likely industries were contacted by the Council, and there was no apparent problem. No further action possible without further details.
28/07/2000 10:50:00	Contractor dumping excavated spoil in Waiohine riverbed	Contractor was required to stop and find a more suitable place for disposal of spoil.
1/08/2000	Odour from piggery affecting school.	Owner of piggery notified that resource consent is required.
2/08/2000 08:30:00	One dead fish found in stream leading to Park Lake, Masterton	Dead fish removed and disposed of at local rubbish dump.
2/08/2000 11:30:00	Urban resident complained about domestic burning of incinerator	Complaint passed to MDC for response under the Health Act



2/08/2000 14:30:00	Yellow powder in and around house next door to property undergoing aerial topdressing.	Yellow powder likely to be fertiliser, advised complainant to talk to neighbour to find out what substance is and how toxic it is. Permitted activity in Regional Discharge to land Plan.
4/08/2000 10:30:00	Rubbish being dumped at South Wairarapa rural property in a manner which may allow it to end up in the river.	Still to be investigated.
6/08/2000 09:45:00	Fire Brigade burning three vehicles and tyres next to Carterton oxidation ponds. Large clouds of dense black smoke produced.	CDC spoken to and sent letter advising them of provisions in Air Plan.
9/08/2000 09:00:00	Odour from piggery affecting school	Piggery owner notified that discharge to air consent will be required.
9/08/2000 16:55:00	Thick black smoke seen over Masterton originating from rural property on outskirts of town	Smoke not objectionable or offensive at the time of inspection
16/08/2000 09:00:00	Effluent from industrial site getting into waterway, Carterton.	Investigated, and found to be problems at piggery rather than industry. Problem since resolved.
17/08/2000 11:30:00	Strong smell of sewage from neighbouring property, Martinborough	Still under investigation.

## 5.2 Compliance

One abatement notice was issued requiring a piggery to comply with the conditions of its resource consent and ensure that no piggery effluent enters waterways and excessive application of effluent to pasture does not occur.

Infringement notices were issued to a farmer and a contractor for removal of gravel without consent.

## 5.3 Contaminated Site

Detailed investigation proposed. No further progress to report.

## 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 applications received to undertake rapid infiltration trials.

## 5.5 Appeals

Ruamahanga Gravel Consent	Ngati Kahungunu have declined further mediation. Environment Court Hearing to be set.
Greytown Sewage – Discharge	Court advice awaited.
DTS Riddiford – Marine Farm - Consent Charges Boulder Wall	Further pre hearing conference set for 1 September 2000.
Flat Point (Carterton District Council)	Conference held with remaining appellant. Hearing likely in new year. Consent orders will then be prepared and signed.

## 5.6 Floodwarning

A moderate flood occurred on 27 July which gave a good opportunity to test the new flood-forecasting model against a real flood. The predicted timing of flood peaks and the shape of hydrographs gave an excellent fit, further increasing the confidence in this new tool. Accurate predictions were given 6 hours ahead for Wardells and 11 hours ahead for Waihenga.

## 5.7 Hydrology

Whilst Tararua Ranges rainfall was close to average for the month of July, rainfall in the valley was low (37% of normal at Tauherenikau). The eastern hills were closer to normal with the Tanawa site receiving 86% of its normal rainfall.

## 5.8 Air Quality Management

With the Regional Air Quality Management Plan now operative, letters have been sent to activities that may require consent for odour or emissions (piggeries, poultry farms, quarries, etc) advising of possible consent requirements. Staff are following up each letter with visits and site discussions to determine whether consent is required.

## 5.9 Clean Up New Zealand Week

Clean Up New Zealand is a national environmental event established to encourage the public to help clean up waste in local areas and work towards longer term waste solutions. The week is set down for 18-24 September, and is being sponsored nationally by The Warehouse, TV2 and McDonalds.

Staff have been working with the local Health Communities Co-ordinator, the sponsors, and Masterton and Carterton District Councils to promote this event locally. While many clean up events are occurring throughout the week, the big 'spring clean' day will be Saturday, 23 September, with specific areas targeted.

### **5.10 Wairarapa Engineering Lifelines Association**

A very well attended annual meeting of the Wairarapa Engineering Lifelines Association was held recently with presentations made on climatic and earthquake soil liquefaction hazards, and a progress report on studies of the Carterton and Masterton fault lines.

A large work programme has been set for the year, planned to culminate in publication of a Wairarapa Engineering Lifelines Report. This will contain relevant information on Wairarapa natural hazards, and the vulnerability of community engineering lifelines to these.

## **6. Recommendation**

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

Colin Wright  
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa