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Report 01.542

20 July 2001

File: Y/19/0/4

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from the Regional Pest Management Strategy Review Sub-Committee

Regional Pest Management Strategy Review - Sub-Committee / Hearings Committee Report

1. Purpose

To provide the Hearings Committee's report and recommendations following completion of the review of the Regional Pest Management Strategy.

2. Background

The November 2000 meeting of the RSW Committee appointed a Sub-Committee comprising Crs Long, Buchanan, McQueen, Turver and Mr Southey to progress the development of the new Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS). It was also agreed that the Sub-Committee be delegated the responsibility of determining membership of the Hearings Committee. The Sub-Committee subsequently decided that all its members would comprise the Hearings Committee.

3. Hearings

A total of 41 submissions were received following notification of the Proposed RPMS on the 11 April 2001. Eighteen of the submitters requested the right to present an oral submission.

Staff produced a Summary of Submissions document, with copies being forwarded to all submitters prior to the hearings. Hearings occurred on Friday 15 June at Masterton and Monday 18 June in Wellington. The Hearings Committee considered all the submissions (written and oral), together with staff comments, following completion of oral presentations on the 18 June. The meeting was then adjourned to permit staff time to make amendments to the Proposed RPMS, as suggested by the Hearings Committee.

The final meeting of the Hearings Committee occurred on Friday 13 July. The Committee considered the amended Proposed RPMS and draft written responses to individual submitters. The latter include the Council's proposed decisions on points raised by the submitters. It is these decisions which can be appealed by the submitters to the Environment Court following Council's approval of the new RPMS.

4. The Consultation Process

Council staff have gone to considerable lengths to ensure the widest possible audience were consulted prior to development of the Proposed RPMS. Report 00.161 to the March 2000 Committee meeting outlined a consultation strategy for the RPMS review. This strategy included the following-

- development of a RPMS Review Discussion Document and pamphlet inviting public comment on the 'shape' of the future RPMS;
- utilising our Elements newspaper to invite further comment on future pest management;
- undertaking meetings with interested iwi, TLA's and Crown agencies;
- preparing a draft Proposed RPMS Summary Document for further review and comment by major stakeholders; and, finally
- preparation and notification of the Proposed RPMS.

There have, therefore, been numerous opportunities for affected parties to communicate with the Council on the future of pest management in the region.

5. Issues raised by Submitters

Of the 41 submissions received, twenty-one indicated general support for the Proposed RPMS. Several congratulated the Council for preparing a well written and comprehensive proposal. Five submitters specifically indicated support for a 20-year term strategy with 5-year reviews.

Whilst many submitters supported the strategic approach for determining the appropriate management of pests plants and animals, 20 submitters suggested relocating some species to other categories, defining new management approaches, or including species that were not listed. Three submitters requested the removal of a species - two regarding feral Deer and one regarding Magpies.

The greatest number of relocation requests was concerning the Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) Management programme. Six submitters were concerned that there was no specific management strategy for Possums. Five submitters requested that freshwater fish be moved to the Eradication or Containment categories. Five submitters requested that Crack and/or Grey Willow be added to the Containment or KNE Management categories, and three suggested including the marine pest Undaria.

There was specific support for KNE Management and the Wellington City Programme. However, one submitter did question why the Wellington City Programme was not being repeated in other areas of the region.

Of particular note was the lack of submissions from some organisations affected by the Proposed RPMS. No submissions were received from Iwi organisation, although two did comment on the draft. Only three of the nine TLA's in the region forwarded submissions, and only two of the six Crown agencies with significant landholdings responded. The Sub Committee can only presume that the organisations that did not forward submissions are confident that the proposed strategy adequately addresses their long-term needs. There has certainly been ample opportunity for them to be involved in the process.

6. Amended Proposal

The Sub-Committee has recommended a number of changes to the notified Proposed RPMS, following a review of the submissions and staff comments. The recommended changes are highlighted in red in the revised Proposed RPMS, which is attached to this report as Appendix 1. The Sub Committee is confident that the amended Proposed RPMS satisfies the content requirements of the Biosecurity Act (Sections 76 and 77). Further, the Sub Committee is of the opinion that the amended strategy meets the criteria of Section 72 of the Biosecurity Act, with regards to the following –

- the benefits of having a strategy outweigh the costs;
- the need for regional intervention for the listed pests;
- the use of general rates to fund the implementation of the strategy;
- the requirement for landowners to be responsible for the costs of managing pests on their land, in accordance with the rules of the strategy; and
- that the selected pests are of regional significance with regards to economic, environmental, social and cultural effects.

7. Recommendation

That the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy 2001-2021, as amended, be approved by the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee and recommended to Council for adoption.

Councillor F R Long
Chairperson, RPMS Review Sub-Committee