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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 21 November 2000.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Wairarapa Councils Joint Meeting

The regular joint meeting of the four councils in the Wairarapa is to be held on Monday, 12 February. This meeting will be hosted by the Regional Council for the first time.

These meetings are a good opportunity for Wairarapa councillors to discuss items and issues of mutual interest in a relatively informal situation.

2.2 Climate Talk

A public talk on the Wairarapa climate and likely climate change was given by a NIWA Scientist on 12 December in Masterton. This event was organised by the Regional Council and there was reasonably good support from the public. Very heavy rainfall from local thunderstorms that afternoon and evening added to the relevance of the talk.

Further discussions will be held with NIWA on the possibility of providing regular climate information for the public.

2.3 Wairarapa Irrigation Study

The first two stages of this four stage study have recently been completed. This study has been undertaken with funding from the government and the four councils in the Wairarapa. A detailed report on findings to date will be prepared for the next Committee meeting.

2.4 Staffing Changes

Graham Bensemann commenced as Soil Conservation Works Supervisor on 15 January. Graham has previously worked for the council under several fixed term contracts in the Biosecurity area.

Mark McAlpine has been appointed as Biosecurity Officer (Plants) to cover the Hutt Valley area. He has previously worked on the Old Mans Beard programme in Wellington City.

Graham Sevicke-Jones has been appointed as Section Leader, Resource Investigations. Graham's career has centred on water quality management with experience in the Canterbury and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils. He replaces Matthew Morgan who is now consulting with Lincoln Environmental.

Jason Kerehi has commenced duties as Maori Policy Advisor (Wairarapa). Jason originates from the Wairarapa and has recently completed a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration degree at Victoria University, majoring in Management and Maori business. He has both Rangitaane and Ngati Kahungunu affiliations.

Laura Watts has been employed during her university vacation in the Resource Investigations Section. She has been undertaking flow gauging and water quality sampling, covering staff on leave.

Steve Blakemore will be overseas from 3 March to 1 May.

3. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

3.1 October Flood Damage Repairs

The \$1.1m repair programme following the October 2000 floods is on target for completion during the current financial year. Repair work has been completed at key sites as follows:

- the Masterton Aerodrome, Minnell-Johnsons, Wouters and Water Supply Pipeline on the Waingawa River
- the Masterton Oxidation Ponds and Homebush stopbank on the Ruamahanga River
- the Herrick, Wong, Swamp Road, and Van Den Bosch sites on the Waiohine River.

Outstanding works include the repair of the Waipoua River rock weirs, and bank protection work at the Oliver, Masterton Cemetery, Forbes, and Te Whiti sites.

3.2 Waiohine River & Floodplain Investigation

The development of the proposed new rating classification has been substantially completed, along with the related public consultation process. Progress with these issues, as well as assistance with the investigation of a new SH2 Bridge, are outlined in the report presented to this Committee meeting.

3.3 Waipoua River & Floodplain Investigation

Staff have been working jointly with the Waipoua Scheme Advisory Committee to develop a new river management and rating classification approach. Progress has been excellent, and a letter outlining the suggested changes will be sent out to individual ratepayers during February. A ratepayer meeting is planned for late February, after which a report will be prepared for this Committee outlining the proposed new river management approach, and seeking approval for initiation of the Special Order process under the Rating Powers Act.

3.4 Road Formation - Hiwinui and Stoney Creek

At Hiwinui the formation and metalling of two kilometres of new logging road and the next major hauler landing have been completed. Formation work on the next 1.5 km to the Hiwinui boundary including a further landing is nearing completion.

Maintenance grading and metalling has been completed within Stoney Creek

3.5 Logging

Logging has recommenced in Hiwinui with a second, larger hauler, capable of producing 3000 tonnes per month due on site by the middle of February.

3.6 Indonesian Visitors

Nine foresters from Indonesia together with two from Landcare Research visited Hiwinui to see how we are practising Conservation Forestry. There are efforts at Regional Authority level in Indonesia to establish sustainable exotic afforestation to counter some of the indigenous forest exploitation and slash and burn farming which in uncontrolled situations has caused massive wildfires in recent years.

3.7 Silviculture

Pruning and thinning at Stoney Creek is progressing steadily with ideal conditions for tree growth again this summer.

3.8 Technical Services Update

Staff have recently completed –

- the Waingawa River 5 yearly resurvey – 30 survey lines were cleared and the central points along the river logged by a Geographical Positioning Survey
- new aerial photos have been flown on the Upper Ruamahanga and Waipoua River schemes
- operational maps for Bovine Tb aerial operations, Pest Plants Section and the Planning & Resources Department.

3.9 Riverside Sheep Feeding Trial

The feeding of poplars and willows to stock is continuing at Massey University's Riverside farm. The trial is into its second year. Changes to the trial include the feeding of ewes rather than two year old cattle, and the feeding of poplars instead of willows. The farmer group has sought these changes as it more accurately represents the drought situation in the eastern hill country.

Poplars will be wands supplied from the Akura Nursery for a period of twelve weeks. Two levels of feeding are being monitored in addition to the control mob. Additional funding for technology transfer and extension programmes will be sought from the Sustainable Farming Fund.

3.10 Conservation Woodlot Silviculture

The backlog of silviculture programmes that existed at the end of last winter has been cleared. Eight contract gangs have completed the work and it is envisaged that six will remain to keep up with the present demand.

A workshop is to be held in late February to assist contractors with their Occupational Safety and Health requirements. A variety of safety, hazard and operational plans will be prepared as part of the day. Discussions will also centre on public liability insurance and training programmes.

4. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

4.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Details</i>
8/11/00	Complaint of dust arising during aggregate crushing and processing near Featherston.	No dust emissions occurring at time of inspection. Landowner advised of consent requirements and permitted activity standards under the Regional Air Quality Management Plan.
13/11/00	Contractors seen extracting gravel on a Saturday at Waiohine Bridge.	Under investigation.
13/11/00	A landowner rang concerned about the lowering of Kourarau dam lake levels near Gladstone	The dam was very low and had exposed a wetland where the Kourarau stream enters the dam. Complaint logged and placed on consent file.
14/11/00	Landowner complained of dust nuisance at local industrial site in Masterton.	Dust was observed coming off the yard. Follow up will be undertaken with new owners of the site.
15/11/00	Landowner adjacent to Kuripuni Stream was concerned that there may be a blockage in the stream that was affecting stream height during a heavy rainfall event.	Some minor weed was removed from stream in adjacent property, but was unlikely to be causing a backflow affect at the complainant's property.
16/11/00	Landowner in rural Carterton expressed concern about stopbanking work completed upstream that would cause additional flooding on their property.	Under investigation.
16/11/00	During a site inspection for another incident, an illegal weir was discovered in a stream on a property in rural Carterton.	Under investigation.
16/11/00	Garden waste thrown in Makoura stream, causing blockage at bridge.	Staff removed material, could not trace source.
21/11/00	Dust from neighbouring industrial site causing pollution, Masterton.	Under investigation.
22/11/00	Dead sheep dumped outside neighbouring property, causing offence.	Removed by person responsible.
23/11/00	Access track on steep hill country causing run-off problems, may have needed resource consent.	Under investigation.
28/11/00	A member of the public reported that some native bush near Mauriceville had been aerially sprayed.	Found to comply with Regional Plans.
28/11/00	Dust pollution from neighbouring industry, Carterton.	Being dealt with by Carterton District Council.
30/11/00	Diesel spill at service station washed off directly into gutter, and into stormwater system. No separator used at the site.	Company has been asked to install separator.

30/11/00	A suspected illegal water take was reported by a staff member	The take was consented however the consent holder was taking up to 30% more than their maximum permitted take under their consent. Person advised to comply with consent and reapply for higher volumes of water in the immediate future.
1/12/00	Complaint of odour and poor coverage at landfill.	Found to originate from uncovered rubbish. Council verbally warned and written to.
1/12/00	Neighbour burning tree trimmings using tyres as an accelerant. Large plume of black smoke pollution.	Person responsible was spoken to and asked not to use tyres in the fire. He has agreed.
5/12/00	Dairy effluent overflowing into creek, rural Carterton.	Found to be a well managed effluent system when inspected. Complaint found to have no substance.
7/12/00	A landowner adjacent to a gravel extraction processing plant near Featherston expressed concern about the commencing of crushing activities and potential dust problems	No objectionable or offensive dust emissions were observed off the site.
14/12/00	Landowner was concerned about the Kopuaranga River running dirty.	Natural conditions prevailing at the time. Likely to be due to heavy rainfall experienced two days prior to notification of the incident.
14/12/00	A landowner east of Carterton reported that a tributary of the Parkvale Stream was running red/brown colour and heavily foamed up.	Point source discharge not able to be traced. Samples taken. Condition of stream likely to be natural as iron stained water from the water table is likely to have been released into the stream following heavy rain two days prior to the incident.
18/12/00	Odour from landfill.	Unable to confirm odour.
18/12/00	Kuripuni Stream carrying a high sediment level.	Due to watercourse carrying a high sediment load.
19/12/00	Waipoua River running dirty, preventing children swimming in it.	Found to be due to contractors repairing weirs. Consented activity, short term effect.
21/12/00	Landowner complained of ongoing and increasing dust problems adjacent to Tauherenikau River, Featherston.	Dust at the complainant's boundary not considered objectionable, offensive, or noxious.
30/12/00	Telephone call by complainant to Beacon Hill receiving station.	Horticultural spray drift - under investigation.
3/01/01	Abandoned car in Waipoua River	Removed by Regional Council.
3/01/01	A landowner complained about odour from a stream entering the Riversdale lagoon	Odour was confirmed close to the waters edge, complaint logged.
8/01/01	Resident in Masterton believes local stream is blocked during heavy rain events by an inadequately positioned culvert	Restriction in culvert unlikely to be causing problems in residents property. The storm flow peak is possibly slightly higher than previous due to increased subdivision upstream. No action required.
9/01/01	Possible illegal discharge of effluent into watercourse	Discharge of piggery effluent stopped.
9/01/01	Cattle damage to Papawai stream	Under investigation.

11/01/01	A landowner rang in concerned about the flow in the Taueru River and the effect that a water take upstream for irrigation was having on river flow.	A flow gauging of the river was completed and showed that the flow was above minimum flows on conditions of the consent of the landowner concerned. No action required.
15/01/01	Landowner said that downstream neighbour has built a stopbank like feature that could cause flooding problems around their property.	Under investigation.
15/01/01	A landowner at Riversdale Beach reported that the Motuwaireka Stream was a light grey colour.	Staff in the area at the time took a water sample. E-coli and ammonia results were very high. Landowner concerned contacted about results. Complaint logged as ongoing issues are being dealt with in immediate area.
16/01/01	Resident at Riversdale Beach complained about pollution and odour in the Motuwaireka lagoon.	Samples of a tributary of stream taken previous day and showed high E.coli and ammonia levels. Complaint logged and resident advised of ongoing issues WRC are attending to at Riversdale.
20/01/01	Dairy effluent was discharged into a stream illegally using a slush pump the previous weekend.	Dairyshed effluent was discharged to water the previous weekend without a consent. Action still being considered.
24/01/01	Used oil being dumped inappropriately, Masterton	Under investigation
24/01/01	Gravel processing plant near Featherston was operating crusher outside of permitted activity standards in Regional Air Quality Management Plan.	Operator instructed to cease crushing operations until totally wet process in place. Infringement notice issued.
26/01/01	Thick black smoke from industrial premise, Carterton. Complainant suspects tyres being burned.	Found to be tyres used as an accelerant for a bonfire. Person responsible warned not to use tyres in future.
2/02/01	Illegal discharge of dairy shed effluent to a watercourse	No discharge of effluent found. Complainant to be contacted again to see if the discharge point is different from the one investigated.
2/02/01	Illegal dam on waterway being used for flood irrigation, affecting downstream water users, Carterton	Under investigation
3/02/01	Discharge of noise affecting neighbour adjacent to a factory in Carterton	Complainant informed that noise is a District Council matter. Case Closed.
3/02/01	Discharge of aerosols from car painting affecting next door neighbour, Carterton.	Under investigation.

4.2 Compliance

- An abatement notice was issued following discharge of dairy effluent into water when the consent only provides for discharge to land. The notice also required correct application of effluent to land in terms of consent conditions.

- An infringement notice has been issued to a firm in relation to crushing operations at their Tauherenikau site, which were not meeting the requirements of the Regional Air Quality Plan. There have been a number of complaints about dust arising from this site.
- Attention was drawn to a recently constructed embankment created to provide access across a deep gully in the Wainuioru district. Concerns are held as to the safety of the work in terms of its construction, the small size of the pipe, and the absence of an emergency spillway. The structure is a dam under the Regional Fresh Water Plan and requires consent.

The owner was not available to discuss the issue with staff for 2 – 3 months. Consequently a letter setting out Council concerns, consent requirements, and a consent application form has been provided. No response has been made within the last fortnight and enforcement action will now need to be taken.

4.3 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. No recent action by the applicant.
Craggy Range Vineyard –Water Take	Application on hold with further information on surface water effects to be provided. No recent action by applicant.
Martinborough Sewage – Discharge	Comment provided to consultants on draft AEE. Consultation to then be followed by a revised application. No recent action by the applicant.
Featherston Sewage – Discharge	On hold awaiting full assessment of effects and consultation. Agreed lower priority than Martinborough.
Masterton Sewage – Discharge	On hold. Consent application being processed to undertake rapid infiltration trials. No recent action by the applicant.
Coastal Aohanga Incorporation	Full payment of application fees awaited and detailed AEE. Meeting with owner’s representatives suggested.
Discharges to Air	Pre hearing meetings are proceeding for major discharges associated with large piggeries. Sewage discharges to air awaiting further information. Some may be able to be processed as non-notified.

4.4 Appeals

Ruamahanga Gravel Consent	Hearing held on 29 and 30 November 2000. Decision awaited.
Greytown Sewage – Discharge	Callover held in Masterton on 29 November 2000. Court mediation set for Greytown on 5 March 2001.
DTS Riddiford – Marine Farm - Consent Charges Boulder Wall	Pre trial conference held with Judge Jackson just prior to hearing date of 1 December 2000. Appeals withdrawn. Consent processing cost paid in full together with \$900 towards Council costs.
Flat Point (Carterton District Council)	Hearing held in Masterton on 29 November 2000 and decision made for the applicant. Subsequently appealed to the High Court on matters of law.

4.5 Riversdale

- An inspection of the lagoon and backwater has been made with Ratepayers Association members, staff and Gary Williams (consultant). Following survey, a detailed examination of hydraulic improvements to the watercourses and the opening to the sea will be made and reported to Council. Complaints have been lodged this summer regarding odour and water quality in the lagoon and the backwater.
- Consents and Compliance staff are meeting with owners of major activities at the beach, and will be inspecting and discussing their current effluent systems with them. Any requirements will be balanced against the intended installation of a communal sewerage scheme.
- A complaint has been received regarding alterations to a watercourse within the settlement and its possible effect on downstream properties. This is being investigated.
- Masterton District Council is hearing the Eastleigh subdivision application before an independent Commissioner on 14 February 2001. Council evidence in respect of effects on natural character will be made by staff and Frank Boffa, Landscape Architect from Boffa Miskell.

4.6 Coastal

- Invitations to the Coastal Forum have been forwarded to each District Council inviting members and appropriate staff to attend. Local Iwi have also been invited. The programme and speakers have been confirmed as follows:
 - Morgan Williams - *Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment*
 - Jim Dahm - *Coastal Management Consultant*
 - Rebecca Maplesden - *Planner, Ministry for the Environment*
 - Frank Boffa - *Landscape Architect*

Alistair Aburn will be facilitating the forum.

The day is scheduled for Monday 26 February 2001 at Brackenridge, Martinborough, and will run from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm. All members of the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee are invited and urged to attend.

- Karen Brewster attended the two-day workshop at Castlepoint arranged by the Residents Association to discuss future development and management of the resort. A Council contribution was made towards the cost of the workshop.
- An initial familiarisation/scoping inspection has been made of a proposed large coastal subdivision at Tora, South Wairarapa. Recommendations have been provided to the owner to first obtain geological, hazard, Maori, and engineering suitability reports before contemplating sites and survey.
- Policy and Planning staff are working with Department of Conservation arranging activities for "Seaweek" to be held nationally in mid March. A day of activities is

scheduled at Cape Palliser for 13 March covering topics such as Maori interests, marine mammals, archaeological sites, shipwrecks, and fisheries.

4.7 Hazards

- WELA - *Wairarapa Engineering Lifelines Association*

Progress towards publication has continued, but will now be held back by the recent resignation of Matthew Paterson. The first draft of the hazards chapter is complete together with GIS maps. All utility providers are providing the required information, except for Telecom where an approach to national management is now being pursued.

Trenching on the Masterton fault is underway by GNS scientists, with the intention of identifying the dates of previous fault movements. From this the hazard associated with the fault should be determined.

- Proposals have been obtained from consultants for a study of Tsunami hazard along the Region's coastline. The initial year of the two-year study will collate all available information, identify gaps and research needs, and provide an initial categorisation of tsunami risk zones. Tsunami can arise from distant earthquakes within the Pacific basin, or from local earthquakes and/or associated submarine landslides. This project is being co-operatively managed with the Hazard Analyst, Environment Division.

4.8 River Levels

Generally river levels in the Wairarapa have been low for December and January, as can be expected for this time of year, but not significantly below average.

There were two "freshes" in the western Tararua tributaries of the Ruamahanga River on December 29th and January 26th. The Waiohine River at the Gorge reached 3.3m and 3.8m respectively and the Ruamahanga River at Waihenga reached 4m on both occasions.

4.9 Current Low Flows

Flows in the western catchments, as mentioned above, were a little below average, around 65% for the Waiohine River and 90% for the Ruamahanga River 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 below average, but not significantly.

We do measure spot flows by gaugings in a number of locations around the Wairarapa. Indications are that flows are tending to drop in a number of smaller streams and water races. Consented surfacewater abstractions have started to be cut back.

With the mild winters over the last couple of years baseflows are down, so if the present weather patterns persist for the next couple of months flows may soon reach more significant lower levels.

4.10 Rainfall

Rainfall figures indicate that it has been drier than normal in the eastern hill country but slightly above for the western catchments. For Tanawa Hut in the Whareama catchment rainfall has been around 55% of normal, but for Angle Knob rain gauge around 105%

4.11 Hailstorm

At around 5:30pm on 7th January, Masterton and surrounding areas experienced a severe thunderstorm. The most significant part was not the thunder and lightning, but the hail. The size of the hailstones exceeded “golf balls” and at that size the damage sustained to property around the town was significant. Among the casualties were plastic roofing, guttering, glasshouses and vehicles. Plants in orchards and gardens also took a severe hammering.

The Council’s rain gauge on the roof of its Masterton office recorded 44mm in just over an hour with intensities of up to 8mm in 5 minutes and with an hourly maximum intensity of 43mm/hour.

5. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O’Donnell)

5.1 Nodding Thistle

Inspections of recorded active Nodding Thistle sites are nearing completion. Plant counts continue to decline. The number of clear sites is increasing each year. However, new infestations continue to be located or reported with three minor sites located over the last 12 months. While infestation levels decline soil seed banks will remain high at many sites for a long period of time. Climatic events such as a very dry summer could trigger significant re-infestation from this source.

5.2 Wellington City Programme

Following the completion of initial inspections through Karori, staff have now commenced an initial survey of the suburb of Wilton. Re-inspections of active sites located during the early stage of the Karori survey are also being carried out as well as final compliance checks on properties inspected in this year’s random inspection programme. During the months of November, December and January a total of 790 inspections were carried out. Of these, 172 were initial resulting in the location of 50 new sites of Old Mans Beard, 38 of Wild Ginger, and 3 of Cathedral Bells.

5.3 Old Mans Beard - Rivers Programme

Contracts for two further Old Mans Beard control operations have been advertised. These cover areas on both banks of the Ruamahanga River upstream of the Martinborough Bridge. If appropriate tenders are received for these, a total of 6 contracts will have been arranged for the current season. There has, however, been a lack of interest in tendering for Old Mans Beard

control contracts this season. This may be a reflection of the upsurge in the rural economy with potential contractors already fully committed.

5.4 Bovine Tb

(1) Operational Progress as at 31 December 2000

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	191,616	69.6	94,264	34.2
Private Contractor	83,551	30.4	24,407	8.9
	275,167	100.0	118,671	43.1

(2) Operations Unit Progress to 30 December

The operations unit is currently ahead of schedule with the 2000/01 programme. Half of the operational area has been completed with 47% of the budgeted labour requirement utilised.

Further operational statistics are:

- 26 operations were programmed for treatment
- 5 operations are completed
- 11 operations have commenced.
- 10 operations have not yet started.

(3) External Contractors

The following areas were tendered to external contractors:

Pakowhai	6,747 ha
Tinui	7,577 ha
Stronvar	25,320 ha
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,851 ha
East Alfredton	5,226 ha
Martinborough	21,830 ha

(4) Contractor Progress

- The Tinui contract has been successfully completed with an RTC of 1.7%.
- The East Alfredton operation is being reworked due to an initial RTC result of 5.9 %.
- One contract (16,830 ha) of two within the Martinborough operation area achieved an RTC of 2%.
- The Pakowhai contract has commenced.

- Ponatahi-Longbush, Stronvar and the remaining 5000 hectares of Martinborough will start soon. The remaining portion of Martinborough has an RTC requirement of 2%. This is the first external contract to have a target of under 5%.

(5) **Monitoring**

The following operational RTC monitoring results have been reported to date for this financial year: Of note are the excellent results being obtained for aerial operations using the formula of 2kgs prefeed followed by 2kgs toxic per hectare.

Aerial

Tinui (7,056 ha)	0.8%
Te Wharau (3,799 ha)	0.7%
Otaki Crown (3,240 ha)	1.7%

Ground

Ruamahanga River	0.2%
Lake Wairarapa Crown	1.4%
Bideford (Interim)	0.3%
Holdsworth-Carterton (Interim)	0.3%

5.5 Notices of Direction

Three 'Notices of Direction' have been issued requiring landowners to undertake possum control on their properties to achieve an RTC result of 5.0% or less. The regulatory approach is usually prompted because occupiers do not wish to utilise the control options preferred by Council. The three properties are located at Tinui, Castlepoint and Longbush. The Castlepoint occupiers have successfully completed their own control with a post operational result of 1.1% RTC.

5.6 Zinc Phosphide

An experimental possum paste bait containing micro-encapsulated zinc phosphide is currently undergoing field trials with the Canterbury company, Pest-Tech Ltd. Information about this new toxin was reported to the Committee in November 2000.

Some of the trials were undertaken in conjunction with one of Council's Bovine Tb vector control operations. However, problems have been encountered with the storage and effective field life of this bait. One of the bait ingredients was intolerant to heat and was considered to be affecting palatability. A new formulation is being developed and further trials will be undertaken at an early date. The perceived benefits of this toxin include: that it is considered to be economical, is a low risk to non-target species and will have the ability to be used without a licence.

5.7 Rabbits - RHD Survey

The Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) became established in the Wellington Region during mid-September 1997. The disease has since manifested itself throughout the region and dramatically lowered rabbit populations. Late last year there was an influx of calls from occupiers seeking advice or assistance with rabbit control. This included enquiries about the possible release or likely spread of RHD. A decision was made to gather some information about rabbit RHD immunity levels by collecting serum (blood) samples from rabbits in eleven different areas of the Wairarapa. The rabbits were shot at random over as wide an area as possible. Generally there was a distance of several hundred metres between the rabbits sampled.

The blood samples were forwarded to the Wallaceville Animal Research Centre in Upper Hutt. The RHD diagnosis is done by competitive enzyme linked immunosorbent assay, commonly referred to as an ELISA test.

The overall virology status resulted in 58% of all adult rabbits having positive antibodies. That is, they would have substantial resistance to the virus and be unlikely to contract RHD. The tables provide further detail.

Area	Total Samples	% Adults Negative	% Adults Positive	Regional Analysis	Total	%
Te Wharau	20	11%	89%	Adult Males Sampled	88	46%
Bideford	20	44%	56%	Adult Females Sampled	103	54%
Homewood	20	47%	53%	Total Adults Sampled	191	
Ponatahi	20	47%	53%	Adult Males Positive	46	52%
Dyerville	20	53%	47%	Adult Males Negative	42	48%
Woodside	18	65%	35%	Adult Females Positive	64	62%
Western Lake	19	67%	33%	Adult Females Negative	39	38%
Carrington	15	77%	23%	Total Adults Positive	110	58%
Riversdale	20	83%	17%	Total Adults Negative	81	42%
Hinakura	16	93%	7%			

5.8 Riverbed Rabbit Density Surveys

An inspection of the Waingawa and Tauherenikau riverbeds and adjacent farmland is carried out in January each year to assess rabbit density levels. These rabbit prone areas provide a reliable guide to what is likely to occur with rabbit densities in other parts of the region. It is also the responsibility of Council to undertake rabbit control in riverbeds. Tenure over problem areas such as riverbeds are likely to involve several landholders making individual control efforts impractical and ineffective.

On the Waingawa riverbed, rabbit densities are as low as they were last year with the highest density score being three on the Modified McLean Scale. There were no areas requiring control works or further surveillance. It is considered that the change in land use with the increase in small farms and lifestyle blocks along the river is helping to restrict rabbit numbers.

The Tauherenikau riverbed and adjoining properties are also not under threat from high rabbit densities. Density scores ranged between level two and level three with one small area assessed at level four. This riverbed is a favourite location for recreational shooters and the continued culling is keeping numbers down.

5.9 Magpie Research Programme

The research programme is in its second year and is been designed to test the hypothesis that maximum practicable control of magpies will increase the numbers of other birds. Part of the experimental design is to conduct an annual census of all birds in both the treatment and non-treatment areas. The second bird count survey was completed in early January.

The data has been forwarded to Landcare Research Ltd in Christchurch but we are yet to receive their analysis report. The numbers of native birds seemed to be about the same as the previous year and there was the usual assortment of finches, starlings and skylarks. Most noticeable, was the absence of magpies in the Woodside control area following the culling of about 1,500 last year.

The research programme is being replicated in Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Southland.

5.10 Key Native Ecosystem Programme

The programme in the Wairarapa is focussed on mustelid and feral cat control in the Pounui, Lake Nganoke, Tauherenikau and Morisons Bush sites. This is a shift of emphasis from possums and is being undertaken in an attempt to afford more protection to the sites from predators. It is too early to gauge the success of the operations. The predator catch rates are low (particularly weasels) but there is little information at this stage to know what is a 'predator safe' level. Possum control maintenance is also being carried out in areas not currently under Bovine Tb control.

In the Western Zone, possum control is continuing at several sites. The Kelson operation has just been completed and staff have now commenced work in George Denton Park and Polehill Reserve in Wellington City. These reserves are adjacent to the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary and the intensive possum control programmed will add to the benefits already apparent with the restoration occurring in the Sanctuary. Once this operation has been completed the plan is to undertake possum control within the town belt reserve of Tinakori Hill. The Miramar Peninsula has now had possum density monitoring completed and is being programmed for control from June this year. Possum maintenance is also to be undertaken in Huntleigh Park, Otari and Johnston Hill Reserves.

In Porirua City, possum control is continuing on the Paekakariki Escarpment. Maintenance of the Porirua Scenic Reserve will commence in April.

In Upper Hutt City, the Forest and Bird volunteers have started on the 158-hectare Witako operation. This operation has taken a long time to get off the ground due to the need to address technical and environmental issues. The operational area is made up of four different occupiers comprising Department of Conservation (59ha), Department of Corrections (93ha), Forest and Bird (5ha) and Upper Hutt City (1ha). Credit must be given to the Upper Hutt Branch of the Forest and Bird Society who have provided the foresight, initiative and drive to get this project operational. The reserve lands are known to contain rare comb ferns, the endangered red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*) and whitehead, a protected native bird.

Planning is underway to carry out possum control over some 2,300 hectares in the Gollans Stream and Butterfly Creek areas of the East Harbour Regional Park. Negotiations are taking place with landowners and final boundaries have yet to be established. The intention is to tender the operation for external contract and a registration of interest has been called. The operation is scheduled to commence in April this year.

5.11 Communications and Promotions

A pest animal display was set up at the Pauatahanui 'town meets country day' held at Battle Hill on 18th November.

A similar display was set up for the Queen Elizabeth Park Tram Museum open days on 9th and 10th December.

A practical demonstration and talk on animal pest control was given as part of the Battle Hill summer programme on 10th January.

A promotion will be in place at the Masterton Agricultural & Pastoral Show on the 17th and 18th February and at the Upper Hutt Summer Carnival on 24th February.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.