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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 13 March 2002.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Farm Environment Awards

Judging has been completed for the Wellington Region Farm Environment Awards and the results will be announced at a function on Friday, 12 April. The Council Chairperson will be speaking at this function.

In a few weeks time a field day will be held on the winner's property so that others can observe successful practices and discuss viewpoints.

In my view these Awards have had a successful first year. The emphasis is on sustainable farming in the wider sense of the word, not just economics, and this fits in very well with the directions that the Regional Council sees for the future. In addition, the Awards are mostly about sharing information and successful practices rather than just being a competition.

A very positive aspect of the Awards programme has been the involvement of a number of organisations working collaboratively with the Council. These include the sponsors at both national and regional levels, such as Ballance Agri-Nutrients and the ANZ Bank, and also

those organisations who have supplied people to act as judges, such as Forest & Bird, Department of Conservation, and Federated Farmers.

2.2 Waitangi Tribunal

Last year the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee asked if they could have a presentation from the Waitangi Tribunal to explain the processes in relation to the Wairarapa claims which the Tribunal will be hearing shortly.

A short presentation from one of the Tribunal's staff is being arranged for the Committee meeting on 9 July.

2.3 1080 Briefing

Dr Charles Eason of Landcare Research gave a factual presentation on the toxin 1080 at a briefing in the Wellington office on 28 March. A number of representatives from the Regional Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Hutt City Council, and Upper Hutt 1080 Protest Group attended this briefing.

Also discussed was the transmission of Bovine Tb between farmed livestock and wildlife.

It is to be hoped that this information was educational to all those who attended.

2.4 Future Involvement with Bovine Tb

As Committee members are well aware, this Council plays three key roles in the implementation of the National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb in the Wellington Region. Our roles involve being a part funder, the regional management agency for the vector control programmes, and the implementer of a substantial number of vector control operations.

In terms of the vector control operations, we have deliberately chosen over time to use a varying mix of outside contractors and in-house staff to get the best possible results from each approach for the regularly changing regional vector control programme. However, central government has required as a condition of their funding for the new National Pest Management Strategy that all vector control operations be fully contestable by 1 July 2002.

The Animal Health Board has confirmed to regional councils that this requirement needs to be implemented. Hence, management are considering the best ways of addressing the situation given that in recent times we are having some difficulty attracting sufficient outside contractors at reasonable prices. Options include converting our Bovine Tb Unit into a Business Unit, a LATE, or closing it down completely.

In the bigger Bovine Tb picture, the disease control work currently undertaking by AgriQuality NZ is being made contestable shortly and regional councils have been advised that regional vector control management will not be made contestable in the meantime. Another recent change is a decision by the Animal Health Board to not make any further progress payments for operations, meaning that this Council will now need to bankroll operations until they pass monitoring tests.

It seems to management that increasingly the Council is being seen as just another contractor in the Bovine Tb situation. That therefore raises the question of whether, in the longer term, this Council should continue to be involved in Bovine Tb activities at all given that it is not a statutory requirement.

Accordingly, I would like to make a short presentation after the Committee meeting so that there can be a preliminary discussion on this subject with Committee members. Wayne O'Donnell will assist with this presentation.

2.5 Staffing

Stephen Thawley, Resource Advisor in the Consents & Compliance Section of the Planning & Resources Department, has been granted a year's leave of absence, departing overseas at the end of April. Lucy Martinez has been employed on contract to cover this vacancy. Lucy has a BSc from Victoria University and was employed by MAF Biosecurity.

A replacement has yet to be made to fill Phillip Percy's vacancy in the Policy & Planning Section.

3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

Pest Plants

3.1 New Infestations

(1) Hornwort

A new infestation of Hornwort has recently been discovered growing in the Forest Lakes at Kapiti. This is the first recorded infestation for the Region outside of the known infestations in South Wairarapa.

Geoff Angel, a contractor from Rotorua, is to assess the site for control options. It appears at this stage that control will be feasible with the currently registered chemical, Reglone, as the water clarity in this situation is good.

(2) Climbing Asparagus/Snakefeather

An infestation of Climbing Asparagus/Snakefeather was located on a property at Ponatahi, Carterton District. The infestation is spread throughout 4ha of gardens, including 3ha of native bush.

Some areas contain dense infestations and have begun to smother small trees, but the majority of infestations are light. As Climbing Asparagus is included as an eradication species it will be the responsibility of Council to ensure the necessary work is undertaken.

The area also includes Banana Passionfruit, which is also located throughout and in some situations is blanketing mature trees.

3.2 Old Man's Beard – Urban Surveys

To date 687 properties have been visited in the Masterton urban area. With approximately only 730 properties in total to be inspected the work should be completed in early April. The survey will then move to Greytown, focusing on urban areas and orchards, before concentrating on Carterton.

3.3 Old Man's Beard - River Contracts

The contract on the Ruamahanga River extending nine kilometres upstream from the Tuhitarata Bridge has now been completed. This contract covered both banks.

A further contract has been let on the Ruamahanga River from the Waingawa confluence to Borthwicks vineyard at the Cliffs. The contract is for the true right bank and is set to be completed by early May.

3.4 Biological Control

(1) Old Man's Beard Sawfly

A release of Old Man's Beard sawfly is set to be made around 9th April. The release will be made in the Western zone.

Female Sawfly lay eggs on the leaves and after 2-3-weeks the larvae hatch and feed on the leaves. Landcare Research first imported the Sawfly in 1997 but until now had difficulties with mass rearing.

(2) Ragwort Flea Beetle

Over the next two weeks collections of flea beetles from an established site at Carterton will be undertaken for further releases around the Region.

A number of releases in previous years have been made in the Kapiti area, but surveys have indicated poor or no establishment at most sites.

3.5 Enforcement Actions

Over the past two months 17 Notices of Direction for Old Man's Beard have been issued to occupiers within the Wellington City programme.

3.6 Pest Plants Database Upgrade

A new version of the Pest Plants program has recently been introduced which includes an attachment to a software programme called Gismo. Gismo is a reduced version of Arcview.

Gismo gives each individual property inspected a GPS co-ordinate. This program will assist with the mapping of various species for monitoring and reporting progress against annual Regional Pest Management Strategy Operating Plan objectives.

Pest Animals

3.7 Rabbits

The annual rabbit proneness survey throughout the region has begun. Only areas that have a historic propensity for medium to high rabbit densities are inspected and to date no areas of concern have been identified. This is in direct contrast to some of the more prone areas in the South Island where rabbit numbers are reported to be on the increase due to a drier than usual winter and spring. It is considered that the wetter conditions in the Wellington region have caused a high mortality rate of young rabbits, thus lowering the breeding potential. There has still been no obvious sign of the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease during this late summer and early autumn period.

3.8 Rooks

Rooks were targeted at several Wairarapa locations during March with mixed success. A large flock at Kopuaranga frequented a hay paddock in the early stages of re-growth but the rooks showed little interest in the feed bait and the operation was discontinued. Some satisfactory toxic bait takes occurred when the rooks were targeting walnut trees, particularly fruit on the ground. However, results are difficult to predict.

A cultivated paddock on the Castlehill Road, north of Tinui proved to be an attraction for 160 rooks. These were pre-fed for four days and subsequently poisoned with excellent results. It is possible that these birds originated from north of the Regional Councils boundary.

3.9 Key Native Ecosystem Management

Work continues in a number of KNE areas:

- The Tauherenikau KNE predator control operation has been completed with 21 feral cats, 17 ferrets and 20 rats trapped. Most of these predators were caught adjacent to the Tauherenikau River and demonstrates the value of this type of work on a major wildlife corridor.
- Initial possum control works are complete for Wright's Hill and Karori Park.
- Maintenance possum control works are underway in Denton Park/Polehill, Khandallah and Trelissick Parks. These KNE are all part of the large Wellington City KNE Management Area.

3.10 Communications

Pest Animal Officers have attended a variety of events providing advice and information to the public. Many of these occurred on weekends and included the Masterton A&P Show, Battle Hill 'Farm Day' and a training day for pest control volunteers at Dry Creek (Belmont Regional Park).

The popular 'Lifestyle Farmers Field Day' is to be held at the Otaki Racecourse on 11 May 2002. This event has been held for 10 years and was an initiative of the Wellington Regional Council.

3.11 Bovine Tb Operational Progress

The Bovine Unit has completed approximately 60% of their programme.

Private contractors have completed approximately 42% of their programme.

3.12 Recent Monitoring Results

Bovine Unit	RTC%
Waingawa (High Risk)	0.0 (redo work)
Mount Bruce-Miki Miki Crown Aerial	
1kg/hectare	1.5
2kg/hectare	0.9
Ponatahi-Longbush (High Risk)	0.3
Pakowhai (High Risk)	1.2
Stronvar	1.6 (redo work)

3.13 Issues

Operational problems in South East Wairarapa Stage 1 have now subsided. Agreement for control on all properties has now been reached.

Problems continue to exist within the Mangaroa-Kaitoke operation. Due to the public opposition this operation has attracted, operators are finding it is taking much longer to discuss operation details with occupiers than normal. There is more opposition to toxins and general control work than has been experienced in this area. Much of this is due to misinformation that has been spread in the area.

A final work proposal is expected mid-April once all occupiers have been visited. Applications will then be submitted to the appropriate authorities for approval.

3.14 Staff

The Bovine Unit has been affected by a high number of work and non-work related injuries and the resignation of five permanent employees and one experienced fixed term employee. This is causing problems meeting the objectives of the annual programme.

Rearrangement of the programme will occur to ensure minimal disruption occurs. Options to consider include:

- Contracting more areas.
- Non-treatment of medium risk properties
- Reviewing current programme to determine if any other staff savings are possible.

3.15 Surveys

No Bovine tuberculosis infected possums were caught in a recent survey within the Featherston operational area - 180 possums were autopsied.

3.16 Ferret Control

Ferret control has commenced surrounding Lake Wairarapa. Forty-nine ferrets have been captured to date over approximately 3,500 hectares.

One Bovine tuberculosis ferret was caught within the Ponatahi-Longbush operational area.

4. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

4.1 Upper Ruamahanga Scheme Review

The review of the Upper Ruamahanga River Management Scheme and rating classification is near completion. Ratepayer meetings have adopted new schemes for the Hidden Lakes to Te Ore Ore (Upper Ruamahanga), and the Te Ore Ore to Wardells (Middle Ruamahanga) sections.

A new scheme proposal to cover the remaining Wardells Bridge to Waiohine River (Lower Ruamahanga) has been developed in consultation with the Steering Committee, and will be considered at a ratepayer meeting scheduled for 10 April. A report on the proposed new rating classifications is included in this agenda, and a report on the outcome of the ratepayer meeting will be tabled at the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee meeting.

4.2 River Scheme Asset Revaluation

Good progress is being made with the revaluation of river scheme assets in line with the Local Government Amendment Act's new Financial Reporting Standard. The valuation methodology has been approved by an independent consultant, and individual Scheme Asset Registers are in the process of being updated. The updated valuations will then be certified and incorporated into the Council's asset register.

4.3 Milk Tanker Access Along Stopbank

The Operations Department is preparing a submission opposing Mr Barton's resource consent application for the passage of milk tankers along the Hikinui Road stopbank. Milk tanker access is expected to damage the stopbank, and make it more vulnerable to failure during flood, as well as pose a serious safety and health hazard. Resource Policy staff in Wellington are currently processing a proposed change to the Regional Freshwater Plan prohibiting the use of stopbanks for access by vehicles greater than 9 tonnes weight.

4.4 Silviculture

Steady progress through the pruning and thinning programme at Stoney Creek continues.

A total of 460 hectares of pruning has been completed along with 250 hectares of thinning. It is expected that a further 50 hectares of each will be completed before the end of the financial year.

4.5 Logging

The logging contractor has struggled with wet ground conditions at Stoney Creek. On one occasion he became so severely bogged that he needed a tractor with a winch to extract his forwarder.

The continuation of this operation is being reviewed this week and it is unlikely that the operation will continue.

The hauler operation for Hiwinui is uncertain as a result of financial difficulties being experienced by the contractor compounded by his slow recovery from a major logging accident.

4.6 Tauanui Access

While there is still some distance to go in terms of legal requirements, a recent meeting with an advisory trustee for the Pirinoa Blocks, lawyers and staff, revealed no significant problems. Staff now have two options and are close to selecting their preferred option so that the road can be constructed early next summer.

4.7 Soils Mapping

Staff are involved with three landowner groups studying the formation of soils and the characteristics that can assist in determining wise use of those soils. The project is funded through the Sustainable Farming Fund and covers three areas of the Wairarapa. Two hill country groups and one covering the plains meet on a monthly basis to report their individual progress and learn new skills from the technical advisors.

The twelve members in each group implement the mapping techniques to prepare soil maps of their own farms. From this base map, soils of similar characteristics are grouped into landform units which will ultimately determine the sustainable management regimes for each unit.

Staff involved with these three groups report considerable interest in the programme, with farmers relishing the opportunity to understand soil forming processes and being able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of soil present on their farms. The project will run until June 2003.

4.8 Soil Monitoring

The soil monitoring programme is continuing with a further 22 sites being sampled this financial year. Fourteen sites in the Wairarapa were sampled in November. The remaining sites, located within the Kapiti district, are programmed for April. The programme is on target to complete the 75 scheduled sites during the next financial year.

The sites still to be sampled are predominantly hill country soils. At the completion of this initial sampling, decisions on future sampling to include repeat sites or inclusion of expanding land uses e.g. vineyards and irrigated dairy soils will be required.

At the national level Councils are co-ordinating other land monitoring programmes. These will focus on soil intactness, and will include streambank, slip and earthflow erosion at the regional level. Additional funds will be sought to begin this programme, probably in 2003/04.

4.9 Soil Conservation Woodlot Applications

Applications for regional assistance in funding conservation woodlots close on 20 April 2002. The area to be funded has been reduced from 200 hectares to 100 hectares, as a result of budget considerations. The budget allows for a return to the higher level for next year.

Priority will be given for those properties where Sustainability Plans are operating. There is considerable demand for poplar and willows and some restraint will be required to remain within budget allocations.

4.10 Technical Services Section – Highlights

Activities completed include:

- Preparation of the new Upper Ruamahanga River Scheme Classification Maps.
- Completion of a GPS survey of Riversdale bores.
- Ongoing processing and auditing of gravel licences.
- Completion of stopbank and riverbank cross-sectional surveys for the Barton stopbank hearing.
- Bovine Tb mapping.
- Computer draughting work on Soil Conservation Farm and Sustainability Plans.

5. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

5.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date</i>	<i>Complaint</i>	<i>Details</i>
27/02/2002	Considerable quantity of agricultural effluent on track around Masterton landfill.	Effluent from stock truck collection facility. Discharged too close to landfill face and ran down a track coming within close proximity of surface water. Contractor requested to dispose of waste away from the tip face to prevent it from running off site.
1/03/2002	Discharge to air observed from the newly installed boiler plant, Waingawa.	Company written to stating operation of boiler without consent was a contravention.
4/03/2002	Dust nuisance from timber yard blowing over neighbouring properties under gusty north-westerly conditions.	No further action taken that day as no dust nuisance observed at the time of the site visit.
5/03/2002	Incoming fumes from spray painters, which operate from an abutting building in Masterton.	Incident recorded and closed.
7/03/2002	Rubbish dumped on banks of river, Masterton.	Domestic rubbish dumped on riverbed, unable to trace source. Rubbish removed and taken to landfill.
15/03/2002	A landowner in rural Carterton was concerned about potential excavations puncturing a shallow aquifer and affecting their domestic water supply.	Excavations did not affect the shallow aquifer. No further action required.
19/03/2002	Black smoke and odour from neighbouring industrial premises, Carterton.	Under investigation.
19/03/2002	Some children from Greytown School reported some pollution in the Moroa water race in south Greytown.	As incident was reported a week later, no pollution was noted when the site was inspected.
19/03/2002	Staff member reported suspected illegal gravel extraction in the Waingawa River.	Under investigation.
22/03/2002	Odour from fumes entering building from adjacent premises, Masterton.	Record only of the incident.
23/03/2002	Large hole excavated in access way to Ruamahanga River.	A hole had been excavated in gravel road to river. Contractor contacted and asked to level their work out so that vehicle access to the river was not restricted.
27/03/2002	Aerial spraying of regenerating native vegetation, Masterton district.	Under investigation.

31/03/2002	Creek in Masterton running milky white.	Found to be caused by 10 litre container of paint in creek. Not able to determine how it got there.
2/04/2002	Dairy effluent polluting spring water, Carterton.	Found to be unjustified complaint. No further action taken.

5.2 Enforcement

Abatement and Infringement Notices

- The company involved in a diesel spill into a water race last year has provided an upgrade timetable. The abatement notice is still in force and a site meeting and discussion has been arranged.
- The hearing of a defence lodged against an infringement notice, issued in relation to unconsented wild flood irrigation, is yet to be held. Council solicitors are seeking a half-day hearing this month before Stephen Thawley heads overseas.
- An abatement notice was issued for failure to move a dairy effluent sprinkler.

Waingawa Chemical Spill

A joint prosecution of Renalls Ltd is to be taken with the Carterton District Council with informations to be laid shortly.

5.3 Notified Consents

Carterton - Kaipatangata water take	Final AEE due on 12 April 2002.
Featherston Sewage – discharge	On hold awaiting full assessment of effects and consultation. Application expected soon.
Martinborough Sewage – discharge	Hearing adjourned to 21 May 2002. Hearings Committee requested discharge quality standards to be set for the interim and final plant upgrades and negotiation and agreement to be pursued with applicant submitters and WRC.
Masterton Sewage – discharge	Interim consent application to be made before June 2002
Owahanga Station – coastal	Meeting held with owner's representative to clarify scope and requirements. No further progress.
J Barton – heavy vehicle access on stopbank – land use	Submissions closed. Proceeding to hearing.
Renalls Ltd – air discharge	Submissions closed. Proceeding to hearing.
QE Park Lake Masterton - 4 consents	Final issues being resolved with applicant.
Water Races - 6 – Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils	Applications received for all races. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ AEE's assessed for Masterton races with further information requested. ◦ Carterton full AEE yet to be received. ◦ South Wairarapa AEE's assessed, some additional information being provided.

5.4 Coastal Strategy

The Group has met and considered submissions received on the draft vision and strategy. A combined tender to provide Ecology and Landscape Technical Reports has been awarded to Boffa Miskell. These reports are to be completed by the end of June.

5.5 Hazards Research

- The consultants report identifying current responses to tsunami hazard and how these might be applied within the Region is to be completed by mid-May with a workshop to be held for emergency management staff, planners and consultants.
- IGNS are part way through the initial study of the Mokonui fault, west of Masterton. They are accurately mapping the fault, determining fault movement, and identifying possible trenching sites for later detailed study.
- The joint Masterton District and Regional Council study of the Masterton fault within urban Masterton is underway. The contract was awarded to Ian Brown and Associates.

5.6 Lake Ferry Sewage

A presentation was given to a residents meeting held on Easter Sunday, outlining the Regional standards for sewage discharge and the Council's support for a community scheme that preferably discharges to land.

5.7 Databases

Phillip Percy has left the Department with a legacy of excellent databases. The recently completed Department Library database records all the reports and technical references within the Department. Raelene Hurndell has undertaken the demanding task of entering all these publications into the database.

Other databases in regular use are the consultation database and a heritage database for the Coastal Strategy, and the Policy and Planning database.

5.8 Hydrology

Rainfall

Rainfall figures for March were well up on February's figures in the Tararua Ranges, but down on February's figures in the eastern hill country and lower valley. Angle Knob went from 108% to 212% of its average monthly total in March. In fact its total of 912mm is the

highest on record for March since 1975 (NB: There is missing record for this period in 1982 & 1990). The March rainfall totals for Tanawa Hut (upper Tinui) fell from 137% in February to only 28% of normal. Rainfall in the lower Wairarapa Valley, measured at Alloa, (Tauherenikau) reduced from 100% to 82%.

The weather in general was almost like autumn with frequent shower periods. Although there was a high total in the Tararua's there was only one moderate heavy rainfall event on 21 March, with a maximum intensity of 28.5mm/hr.

The table gives rainfall data for three representative rainfall sites.

Site	Location	March 2002 (mm)	March Average (mm)	% of Average
Angle Knob	Tararua Ranges	912	430	212
Alloa	Middle Valley	66.5	81	82
Tanawa Hut	Eastern Hills	29	105	28

Rivers

River flows have risen and are well up from the January/February period. Increased flows have come mainly from the western Tararuas, not the eastern hills. Average river flows are up from the below normal flows experienced in the first two months of this year, to nearly twice normal in March.

The table below shows March flows for two representative sites.

Site	March 2002 Flow (m ³ /s)	Average March Flow (m ³ /s)	% of Average
Waihenga	84.2	48.9	172
Waiohine	36.0	18.0	200

Floodwarning

	March	Financial Year to Date	Previous Year to Date
No. of events	1	5	16
No of Lists Issued	7	23	131

* Note, Angle Knob alarmed 5 times above the 1st high alarm of 15mm/hr

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa