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## **Report 02.311**

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Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Councillor Hugh Barr

### **Wellington Conservation Board (WCB) Meeting : 19 April 2002**

#### **1. Purpose**

To advise the Landcare Committee of significant issues arising from the Wellington Conservation Board (WCB) Meeting

#### **2. Sustainability of the Eel Fishery in the Wellington Region:**

##### **2.1 Eels Killed when Lake Wairarapa Drains Cleaned**

I reported this matter to the Council Meeting of 4 April 2002 (Report 02.168). To recap, a drain cleaning operation last winter by a contractor for a farmer caused the death of many eels. The WCB wants to ensure that this does not happen again, and requested a change in Council standard practices to stop this wasteful eel kill.

At the time of the meeting the WCB was still awaiting a response from the Council.

##### **2.2 Eel Quota and Over-exploitation of the Wellington Region Eel Fishery:**

Eels are about to come into Mfish's Quota Management System on 1 October 2002. This may be delayed to 1 October 2003. The eel Quota areas for the North Island have yet to be decided, and Mfish is still consulting. The WCB is concerned that the whole North Island will be the quota area. An alternative would be areas based on river catchments, e.g. the previous Catchment Board areas.

The WCB is concerned about reports that the eel fishery in the Wellington-Wairarapa area especially Lake Wairarapa, has been badly overfished recently, possibly by fishers from outside the region. The same issue was raised at the last Ara Tahi meeting with regard to the Pencarrow Lakes. If this is the case, then it is an unsustainability issue that the WRC should be concerned about.

Mfish say commercial quota is set on the basis of 1990-91 and 1991-92 eel commercial catch. So any current eel overfishing would seem to be overfishing other peoples' patch, because the commercial value of eels is high, e.g. as with current poaching of paua and crayfish.

Having the whole of the North Island as one quota area, would most likely continue this major problem, that eel fishers from outside a region have little interest in sustainably managing an individual regional eel fishery. This is greatly to the detriment of local fishers who have a stronger interest in gaining a sustainable harvest each year.

So it would be far better for each major watershed, (or group of watersheds), e.g. Wellington Region, Whanganui River, to be managed as a separate eel quota management area. Each watershed has minimal ecological interaction with any other. Then constraints could be put on locally when the health of the eel fishery was threatened by over-fishing or for other reasons. The WRC has a responsibility for the health of the region's freshwater ecosystems. So the WCB has asked for Council support in putting this case to the Minister of Fisheries.

### 3. **Wild Goats on Conservation Lands:**

A report to the Board showed that wild goats are a problem on most conservation lands in the region, particularly the Rimutaka Forest Park. DOC uses the assistance of recreational hunters in an informal way to manage the goat populations. Given wild goats are a significant problem in the Council's Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water supply areas, I would like to see more co-ordination between Council, DOC and recreational hunting groups in goat control in the Rimutaka Ranges. This is likely to be more effective than the present fragmented approach, as goats simply cross from Forest Park to and from Council Forests, to escape the hunting pressure.

### 4. **Recommendations**

*That the Committee:*

- (1) **Receive** the report.
- (2) **Note** the contents of the report.
- (3) **Recommend** that the Committee request the Chairperson of the Council write to the Minister of Fisheries expressing our concerns and supporting the Wellington Conservation Board's concerns about the need for regional eel fishery areas.
- (4) **Recommend** that Council officers be requested to discuss a co-ordinated approach to wild goat control together with the potential benefits from such an approach with the Department of Conservation and hunting groups.

Report prepared by:

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