



Report **03.574**
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Committee **Environment Committee**
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Wetland Incentives Programme

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the implementation of the Wetland Incentives Programme.

2. Background

The Wetland Action Plan was approved by Greater Wellington in March 2003. The Plan identified the need to provide practical advice and assistance to encourage wetland restoration on private land.

Providing incentives signals Greater Wellington's commitment to wetlands and acknowledges the efforts of private landowners. It also complements Greater Wellington's other biodiversity and freshwater initiatives including:

- *Take Care* – Community Environmental Care Programme;
- Greater Wellington's Riparian Management Strategy;
- The Key Native Ecosystem Programme; and
- Greater Wellington's support for landowners through funding schemes with the QEII National Trust.

3. Strategic Context

One of the approaches of the Take 10 element – Biodiversity is 'protecting, restoring and managing the Region's most important ecosystems'. One of the success measures is 'remaining wetlands are protected'. The Wetland Incentives Programme is fundamental to the Council's strategic approach to Biodiversity.

4. Development of the Wetland Incentives Programme

The Wetland Incentives Programme was developed following consultation with landowners and other interested groups. It is consistent with and other incentive programmes offered by Greater Wellington and by other agencies.

Staff invited landowners known to be interested in wetland restoration to workshops - one in Greytown (15 attendees) and one in Raumati (25 attendees). A meeting was also held with agencies (Department of Conservation, Fish and Game, and Territorial Authorities) to discuss possible incentives.

The landowners were asked what they needed to be able to look after their wetlands and what incentives would help them the most. The main priorities landowners identified were:

Weed Control: Landowners gave a high priority to being given assistance with weed control. The Wairarapa group asked for help with identification of weeds and techniques for weed control. The Kapiti group asked for a lot more assistance with weed control.

Advice: Landowners want detailed on-site advice, such as identification of 'special features' like rare plants. They also asked for illustrated guides to wetland plants and animals.

Fencing: This was ranked as a high priority by the Wairarapa group and as a medium priority by the Kapiti group.

Planting: Planting was less important than fencing and weed control for both groups (perhaps reflecting the capacity of wetlands to regenerate naturally).

At the meeting with agencies, the same priorities were raised, as well as the need for assistance with monitoring and restoring wetland water levels. This was raised by landowners but not marked as a priority.

5. The Wetland Incentive Programme

Details of the programme and how it will be implemented are included in Attachment 1 to this report. This section summarises the key points.

5.1 Who will be supported through the programme?

Landowners who have a wetland on their property qualify for assistance under the Wetland Incentives Programme. The landowners do not need to have covenanted their wetland to receive assistance under this programme.

5.2 What is provided?

The range of incentives available under the Wetland Incentives Programme is outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of wetland incentives

Incentive	What Greater Wellington will provide	What landowners will provide
Jointly developed management plans	Comprehensive on-site advice, detailing work required and assistance from Greater Wellington	Plan will detail landowner commitment (e.g. past management and future management to be undertaken by the landowner)
Weed control	Full funding of weed control	On a case by case basis, landowners may be required to do follow up weed control work or control species that do not need trained specialists
Animal pest control	Lend traps and provide advice	Labour
Fencing	50% of costs or 100% materials	50% of costs or labour
Monitoring wetland hydrology (water levels)	Install simple groundwater monitoring equipment	Record hydrological measurements

5.3 How do eligible landowners get assistance?

Landowners will contact Greater Wellington and arrange for a member of staff to meet the landowner on site. The staff member will fill out a management plan on site with the landowner and agree on the incentives they can receive.

Landowners can apply any time of year. If the budget is already allocated, applicants will be asked to re-contact Greater Wellington after July 1 of the next financial year.

5.4 How much will the programme cost?

As detailed in the Wetland Action Plan, \$40,000 per year is allocated to the Wetland Incentives Programme.

6. Communications

The Wetland Incentives Programme will be promoted in the December addition of *Elements*.

Landowners who participated in the workshops will be sent letters informing them of the programme and inviting them to apply.

When the programme is up and running, ‘word of mouth’ will probably be the main way eligible landowners learn of the programme.

Future promotion will include a combination of print media, letter box drops, and material on Greater Wellington’s web site.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee

- 1. receive the report; and*
- 2. note the contents.*

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