greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Report on the Regulatory Committee meeting held on 14 October 2008

1. Purpose

To inform Council about the meeting of the Regulatory Committee that took place on 14 October 2008.

2. Significance of Decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Reports

3.1 Progress report: implementation of the national environmental standard for air quality (PM_{10})

A paper providing an update on progress towards implementing the national environmental standard for air quality (NES), and options for reducing domestic emissions to meet the NES by 2013, was provided to the Committee. The paper provided information on the implementation programme required by the NES, particularly around the requirement to define a 'straight line path' to show how at-risk airsheds will meet the NES standard for particulate emission by 2013. For the Wellington region, this is most relevant for the Masterton airshed where a straight line path 'starting point' was confirmed by the Committee.

In terms of air quality management options to reduce emissions, a number of non-regulatory options (such as publicity and education campaigns and incentive schemes) and regulatory options (such as banning open fires, banning outdoor backyard burning, and the phased replacement of solid fuel burners) were explored. The Committee expressed reluctance to explore incentive schemes, and indicated that a combination of awareness raising and some form of regulation around backyard burning and the use of multi fuel burners as

more appropriate. The Committee noted that an action plan will now be developed for the Masterton airshed, with the objective of achieving the emissions reductions necessary to comply with the NES in 2013. Once developed, the action pan will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

3.2 Wairarapa Groundwater Model update

A paper and demonstration of the Wairarapa Groundwater model was given to the Committee to update on progress on the development of the model, and to summarise the key findings of the first of three computer models being developed for the Wairarapa valley. The first of these completed models, and the subject of the presentation, is in the middle area of the Wairarapa valley, generally bordering the Waingawa River and Greytown. There has been a significant amount of field work undertaken in the last 18 months to support the development of the model, including the drilling of 11 new monitoring boreholes, a seismic survey, sampling to determine groundwater age and the reading of meters on groundwater takes. The models are three dimensional, and take into account inputs (rainfall leakage through the soil zone and river bed leakage) and outputs (groundwater discharge into rivers, springs and wetlands), and can simulate groundwater patterns from 1992 to 2007.

The developed middle valley model can be run on four different scenarios, such as modelling where there is no groundwater pumping (the natural state of the resource) to one where it is assumed that all consented takes are being fully drawn upon. Results have shown that there are potential overallocation issues in some groundwater zones in the middle Wairarapa valley if all consents were fully drawn upon. Information gathered to date and ongoing analysis from the models will be a key part of the future review of our Freshwater Plan. It is currently anticipated that the remaining two models, for the Upper Valley and Lower Valley areas of the Wairarapa, will be completed in mid 2009.

3.3 Wairarapa targeted groundwater quality investigations

This report highlighted the results of six targeted groundwater quality investigations undertaken in the Wairarapa between 2004 and 2008. The studies were prompted by our routine state of the environment monitoring programme showing elevated nitrate levels in these areas. The studies all concluded that groundwater contamination was evident in the six study areas, with the most significant nitrate contamination found in shallow aquifers in the intensively farmed areas of Carterton, Te Ore Ore, and to a lesser extent, South Featherston. All of the studies emphasised the impact of land use activities on the groundwater system, and highlights the need to ensure that soil nutrient loadings and wastewater application rates must be carefully managed in these areas. This is particularly so given the linkages that are becoming more apparent between shallow groundwater and surface water.

3.4 Key findings from Greater Wellington's riparian rehabilitation monitoring, 2002-07

Riparian rehabilitation is a widely accepted way of improving aquatic ecosystem values of small streams. However, as the scientific documentation of changes that occur in stream systems as a result of rehabilitation was relatively limited, a riparian management pilot programme was established in 2001. The programme involved rehabilitation and monitoring of the reaches of three streams in the region; the Enaki Stream in the Wairarapa, the Karori Stream in Wellington City, and the Kakariki Stream in the Kapiti Coast. The primary aim of the monitoring was to document the effect of riparian rehabilitation on water quality, aquatic habitat and healthier river ecosystems. The monitoring associated with the pilot programme has shown that riparian rehabilitation is an extremely useful tool to mitigate some of the degradation to stream health caused by agricultural and urban land use issues. All three pilot streams showed improvement in aesthetic values, vegetation and shade cover, bank stability, reduced water temperature and improved aquatic habitat.

However, it is also concluded that riparian rehabilitation alone will not address all of the issues relating to poor stream health in the three pilot catchment areas: improvements are also needed in upstream farming practices and in some cases, stormwater management. This highlights once again, that the way in which the land is used is the primary contributor to the state of our freshwater systems.

4. Field trip

At the conclusion of the meeting there was a two hour field trip in the Carterton District, to the southwest of Masterton, where issues such as wetland loss, our river monitoring network, and land use impacts were highlighted.

5. Regular reporting

Regular summary reports on decisions made on non-notified resource consents applications, pollution control incidents, and the Council's input into city and district planning were also provided. This information is readily available on the Council's website to ensure public accessibility of the information.

6. Unconfirmed minutes

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee meeting are attached as ***Attachment 1.***

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives** the report; and*

2. ***Notes** the contents.*

Report prepared by:	Report prepared by:
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Attachment 1: Unconfirmed minutes of the Committee