
Utilities and Services Group

November/December 2009

Parks

Review of operations for the period ended 31 December 2009

1. **Manager's comments**

The inclement weather over the Christmas period has meant that visitation of the parks has only been average at best. A considerable decrease in numbers visiting Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) has been experienced because of the weather causing unfavourable beach conditions.

Officers have met with representatives of Ngati Toa and a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the future management of Whitireia Park has been drafted and is in the process of being sent to Ngati Toa for their consideration.

2. **Environmental Management**

2.1 **Pest control**

Possum control on the more easily accessible lands within the parks and forests is completed through the use of bait station network, with bait being renewed every three months. In the last two months bait stations have been refilled in Korokoro Valley, Speedy's Reserve in Belmont Regional Park, Cannon's Point in Akatarawa Forest and in Battle Hill remnant bush. This ongoing work keeps possum numbers low and, where certain baits are used, rat numbers are also decreased. The results of this maintenance regime can be seen in the low rat tracking figures that were recorded in November (see the graph on page 6).

In East Harbour Regional Park, the mainland island area bait stations for rat control have also been refilled. However, there have been some difficulties in keeping rats at low numbers at that site this year, because of the beech mast (a heavy seeding year for beech, which provides a lot of food for the rodents). Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) officers have met with Mainland Island Restoration Organisation (MIRO) members to discuss ways of overcoming this problem. More bait stations at selected sites may be required to increase the rate that rats encounter at a station, while monitoring of beech flowering may also be used to predict heavy seeding years.

A fall in mustelids in the Parangarahu block was reported in the last manager's report. However, in December mustelid activity increased (three weasels and two stoats were caught). More mustelids have also been trapped on the farmland in Battle Hill and in Wainuiomata Mainland Island. This increase will be happening because the young become independent in December and leave the den to seek their own territory.

Buddleia in the Wainuiomata Water Collection Area has been targeted by the Parks' weed team in recent months. The team is controlling seedlings and resprouting stumps of plants previously controlled buddleia plants, especially around George Creek and the river terrace area near Morton Dam. The Environmental Ranger has also been using a Community Max team to control buddleia, cotoneaster and barberry in Dry Creek.

2.2 Monitoring

Rodent monitoring in November showed a drop in rat numbers at all the sites monitored. In Battle Hill bush remnant it was good to see that rats that had been tracking at 60 percent in July had dropped to 0 percent in late November. This is as a result of the excellent work by volunteers being completed in the remnant. In Korokoro Valley a 0 percent tracking rate was also recorded, while in East Harbour Regional Park, levels were 22 percent (down from 44 percent in August) inside the mainland island and 70 percent (down from 81 percent in August) outside the mainland island. It is thought that the beech mast year has caused a rat plague but there is concern that rat numbers have not dropped to below 10 percent.

As part of Project Kaka (extensive possum control and monitoring by the Department of Conservation), the Environmental Ranger organised a team to complete rodent monitoring in the Hutt Water Collection Area in early December. The result (less than 1 percent tracking rate) showed the effectiveness of the 1080 operation completed in August 2009 in lowering the numbers of this pest. Interestingly, mice tracking was very high - 49 percent. This effect has been seen elsewhere, where mice numbers increase when rat numbers fall. Officers took a photo of a native weevil discovered while completing the monitoring in the Hutt Water Collection Area, which is on page 6.

Work has begun on remeasuring the vegetation plots in the Parangarahu block. These plots were established in 2004, soon after grazing animals were removed from the area. It will be interesting to see how well the native vegetation is regenerating in this setting. Rata has had an excellent flowering year in many of the forests. A photograph of rata taken in Tunnel Gully is on page 6.

2.3 Wainuiomata Mainland Island

The two monthly bait fill was completed in early December. Bird monitoring inside and outside the Mainland Island has shown a good increase in bird numbers in the Mainland Island. The data needs further analysis but it is heartening to see that the intensive pest control is being effective in improving bird habitat. A graph showing details is on page 6.

2. Western sector

Hardy souls continue to seek camping at Battle Hill and overall the Ranger there, Andrew Nevin, reports good compliance at the park over the Christmas and New Year period. Of course, the weather has influenced overall visitation to the park. A number of booked events continued, such as the annual Belmont Pony Club camp and other equestrian events.

QEP can usually be relied on for a good summer but not so this year. The park has received more than its normal rainfall. The weather affected the *Anything Vintage Festival* held post-Christmas at MacKays Crossing. Two out of three days were wet but the organisers (Tramways Museum) were hopeful of breaking even with a reasonable turnout on the one fine day. Organised group picnics continue to be popular, although we need to reinforce the “take home

all rubbish” policy that applies in our parks, with some groups leaving sites in the park messy and littered.

Our staff have started assisting with the *Great Outdoors* summer programme events, including *The Helitramp* and *4WD Sunset Tour* at Battle Hill, and the *Farm to Sea Walk* between Battle Hill and Whareroa Farm/QEP on the Kapiti Coast.

Ranging staff have dealt with the usual graffiti and vandalism that occurs during the holiday period. Toilets were tagged at QEP and Belmont over the period. Otherwise our maintenance staff have been busy working on track maintenance and cutbacks throughout the sector, with particular attention being paid to the Oakleigh Street to Korokoro Dam Track at Belmont Regional Park.

Contract fencers have been working at both Belmont Regional Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, carrying out repair and maintenance work.

We have two park ranger vacancies presently, at QEP and Belmont, and are working to fill these positions by the beginning of February. Meantime staff are ably filling the gaps.

2. Eastern sector

2.4 Challenges and opportunities

As expected over the summer period, visitor numbers began to increase at Kaitoke Regional Park, which unfortunately also means an increase in vandalism. Two vehicles were broken into at the Forks, several buildings were graffitied, a youth had his keys taken by Police to prevent him driving, and four youths were evicted for reckless driving.

Once again, staff members were tested over New Year, with several groups defying our no-liquor rule by drinking in their tents. One group was asked to leave early in the evening and duly did so. Another group verbally abused rangers and were eventually removed by the Police. Rangers finally got to bed at 3:30 am to be woken at 6 am by campers who needed to leave the park.

While there were few incidents of vandalism in Wainuiomata during December, this was preceded by a spate of bollards being pulled out, grass being ripped up, and vehicles being burned out. The incidents were reported to the Police. This action, along with the installation of 62 new bollards in the recreation area, has resulted in a marked decrease in vandalism during December. Police presence has notably increased in the vicinity of the recreation area and we are pleased with the result!

Rangers have been involved in portfolio group workshops for Lake Wairarapa. With such a large number of agencies and interested people involved, it will take some time for how things are going to work to bed down. We are excited about the potential of the project.

As in previous years, the annual ballot hunts in Wainuiomata and East Harbour have been advertised. Successful members of the public have the opportunity

to access and hunt areas that are not normally available. Interest at this stage is moderate but we expect numbers to pick up as the close-off date approaches.

Guided walks continue to be popular events within our parks. Our East Harbour Ranger conducted two such walks during November for the Kapiti WEA and Kiwi Conservation Club, three park tours were conducted in Kaitoke for local schools, and three guided walks and two guided tramps were held in Wainuiomata. Tours were also held for our Biosecurity staff at their request.

Our ranging staff continue their involvement with volunteer groups and celebrated the festive season by hosting barbecues for their major volunteers as an expression of thanks for their work during the year. The *Great Outdoors* summer programme is once again proving popular, with hundreds of people attending buggy walks and Kev the Kiwi, and other events booked out.

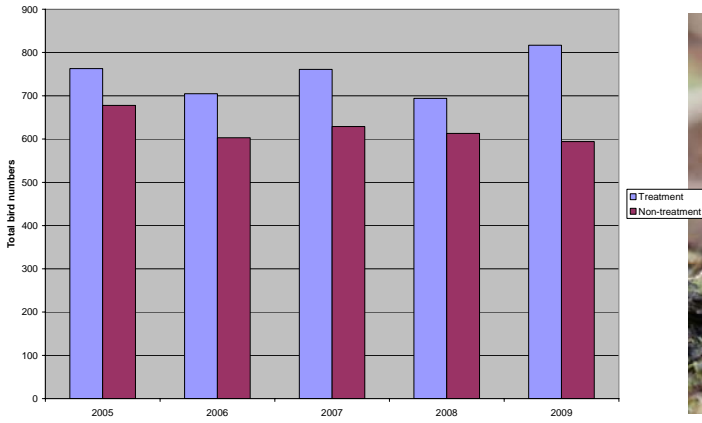
East Harbour played host to a horse trek on Cameron Ridge and a Hutt City Council biking event, while Kaitoke Regional Park had several barbecue bookings, along with the anticipated camping during better weather. The barbecue bookings involved more than 600 participants from several clubs and businesses around the valley.

Akatarawa Forest continues to be well used by 4WD and motorcycle clubs, with 18 four wheel drive and 14 motorcycle events taking place during this period. Three training events were also held during this time.

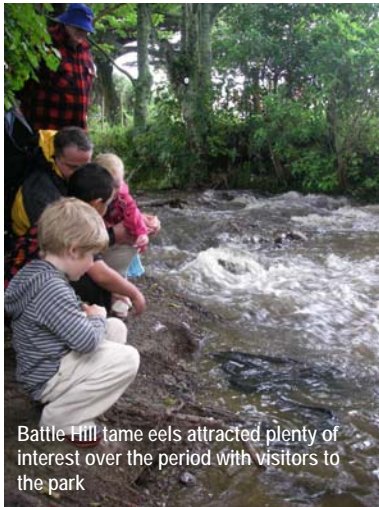
At Kaitoke the Waterworks Road entrance gates were moved to the other side of the bridge for greater security. A new back-up pump for the campground was also installed in Kaitoke, along with a new wash basin installed in the Farm Creek toilets to comply with Ministry of Health water supply advice. Plumbing from this building to the septic tank was replaced and the tanks emptied.

We have had a lot of recent interest on concessionaire and filming activities in the parks. A film crew was on-site at the Lower Dam and Morton Dam in Wainuiomata during November, and further filming is planned at Pencarrow Lighthouse - keep an eye on the energy spot commercials at 7 pm. A number of the concessionaire events are commercial recreation events such as marathons.

Kaitoke Regional Park played host during November to *Wild Rivers* – a day to celebrate the wild rivers of New Zealand. This event was shared by Forest and Bird and GWRC, and featured staff from clubs such as the Kayak Club and Fish and Game New Zealand. All the participants, of whom there were around 700, were able to try kayaking, fly and electric fishing.



Mainland Island bird monitoring data



Above and right - Displays of flowering rata and mountain cabbage in Wainuiomata



Left - Participants of *Wild Rivers* enjoy opportunities to try new ventures

Marketing and Design

Review of operations for the period ended 31 December 2009

1. **Manager's comments**

One of Wellington's most forgettable summers is dampening the need for water and activities in our parks.

With demand low and supply plentiful, we have cancelled some water conservation advertising but are continuing to encourage residents to "test, target and time" their garden watering and promoting special offers available at garden centres. However, we do not anticipate any issues with water shortages over the next few months.

The summer rain has receded enough to give us some fine days and very successful events. We believe that the new *Our Region* distribution via the community newspapers has been very helpful in promoting the events and encouraging people to visit new parks. Awareness has been helped along with the new "Capital Day" *The Dominion Post* page and various other websites and publications often mentioning our events.

2. **Water Supply**

2.1 **Spring/summer water conservation**

The retailer feedback on the 2009 spring mulch campaign was mixed. Larger retailers once again reported that their sales of mulch products increased year on year, with one major retailer reporting a 116 percent increase in sales in their mulch product, while nationally their sales of that mulch product only had an increase of 58 percent. However, the smaller retailers reported either flat or slightly lower sales. Some of the smaller retailers indicated that they believe adverse weather in November may have contributed to the sales result.

We completed preparations with Capacity and Porirua City Council in readiness to implement our *Summer Water Demand Management Plan*. This included updates to the joint water restriction advertisements. Key messages for city councils' own water restriction advertising were agreed and advertising made ready. To date there has been no need to use most of these pre-prepared messages.

Our summer watering tips promotion was finalised, with print, radio, on-line and poster advertising, and related media bookings arranged prior to Christmas. Our *Be Water Smart* message, launched on 9 January, includes advice about watering techniques and appropriate watering equipment. We have arranged for garden industry association member retailers to link with the campaign, by offering low prices on suitable watering equipment during January and February. A media release was made to coincide with the start of the campaign. Given the unsettled weather and low demand during, we have cancelled some planned advertising and will continue to assess the need for the remainder.

2.2 Water efficient showers pilot proposal

We are in early discussions with the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) and Wellington City Council about a pilot project to encourage take-up of water-efficient shower fittings and get related feedback from consumers and plumbers. EECA has proposed the project that will involve green plumbers. The aim is to test means of promoting - and overcoming objections to - purchasing water-efficient showers, and to identify water-efficient fittings that consumers feel give a good shower experience.

2.3 Presentations and treatment plant visits

There has been one tour of the water treatment plants during the period. Typically there are few tours requested during the summer holiday period.

3. Parks

3.1 Events

3.1.1 Buggy walks

The December Buggy Walk was cancelled because of poor weather. Fortunately the sun emerged enough for the combined Buggy Walk/ Kev the Wandering Kiwi event at Tunnel Gully, which had a good turnout of 200 people, many of whom had not visited the park before.

The February buggy walk at Queen Elizabeth Park should be popular, with more than 100 people expected to attend.

2.2.2 Great Outdoors summer events

At the time of writing, 14 events had been run and two had been cancelled because of adverse weather. The poor weather is having an effect, with slightly fewer people turning up to the non-booked events than in previous years. That said, the numbers have still been good, with around 400 people attending the first two Kev the Wandering Kiwi walks in January.

As in previous years, several events booked out well in advance, e.g., the Rimutaka Rail Trail Walk, Helitramp, 4WD Sunset Tours, Lighthouse and Lakes, Back of the Bay forest walk and the Wairarapa Moana tour to name a few. Many people have booked on multiple events, enjoying the full scope of the programme.

Feedback has been very positive to date, with people enjoying the rangers' and guides' interpretation and personalities. Participants have also noticed and retained their programmes received via community newspapers, and traffic to the GWRC website events pages is significant.

3.2 Research

Preparations were finalised, staff appointed and briefed, and surveying started as planned on Wednesday, 20 January. However, the unsettled weather is expected to affect surveying and extend the project timetable. The job has

been made easier by the rangers installing new and better concealed “date/time” track counters at sites we are monitoring.

We plan to collate responses and present results of the survey work to the May Committee meeting.

3.3 Landscape/environment

Several landscape interpretation signs have been finalised and installed on the MacKays Crossing Wetland Walk at Queen Elizabeth Path. These particularly note the geological features of the area and how it has been impacted by human use over the last several hundred years.

Staff members have prepared numerous maps as part of development of the Draft Park Network Management Plan. Each park will have two maps, one of which will show current facilities and recreational activities, and the other the changes anticipated during the period of the plan (2010 to 2019).

There has been further refinement of the Recreation Plan to raise the profile and build visitation to Wairarapa Moana. The aim in the short term is to reverse the decline in local use and in the longer term to develop its appeal as a regional asset and attract people from Masterton, Wellington and further afield.

We are recommending that further survey work be carried out among residents, visitors and service providers in local towns to more clearly understand public perceptions of Wairarapa Moana, and recreational preferences, issues and opportunities in the area.

4. Community liaison

4.1 Recent meetings

4.1.1 Friends of Belmont Regional Park

The group held a Christmas function, which included a presentation on their year’s activities, the planned “Open Day” in February, the Parks Network Management Plan, the Hill Road restoration project and a presentation by representatives from BAMBA (the volunteer group Belmont Area Mountain Bike Association).

4.1.2 Friends of Maara Roa

Staff visited the restoration area with Parks’ Kim Broad and the Friends to go over pest animal and plant control issues, and review the overall project in general.

4.1.3 ARAC

The main items discussed were the draft Memorandum of Understanding for the Orange Hut and an update on the Parks Network Management Plan.

4.1.4 Hutt River Trail Operations liaison

The quarterly meeting of the liaison group was held on 8 December.

Discussions included the Rotary Club's submission on the proposed Boulcott Reach upgrade and River Trail furniture prototypes based on the "gabion basket" theme. There has been a lot of interest from people wishing to "buy a seat" to be placed along the river.

4.1.5 National cycleway

Significant assistance was provided to Positively Wellington Tourism in preparing a Concept Proposal for the "Central New Zealand" cycleway to start at Queens Wharf and finish in Martinborough.

The Ministry of Tourism received a total of 53 Concept Proposals from around New Zealand, demonstrating the interest in this concept. We should expect an announcement of proposals approved to proceed to stage 2 (Feasibility Study) in mid-late February.

5. **Water usage**

Charts detailing water sales for the year are on page 12.

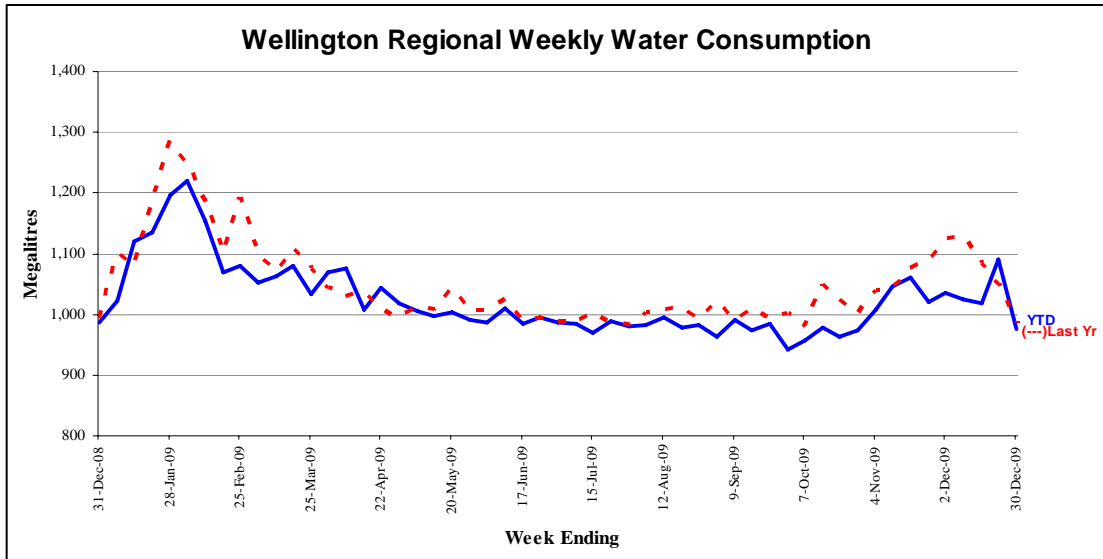


Figure 1 - Water sold over the last 12 months

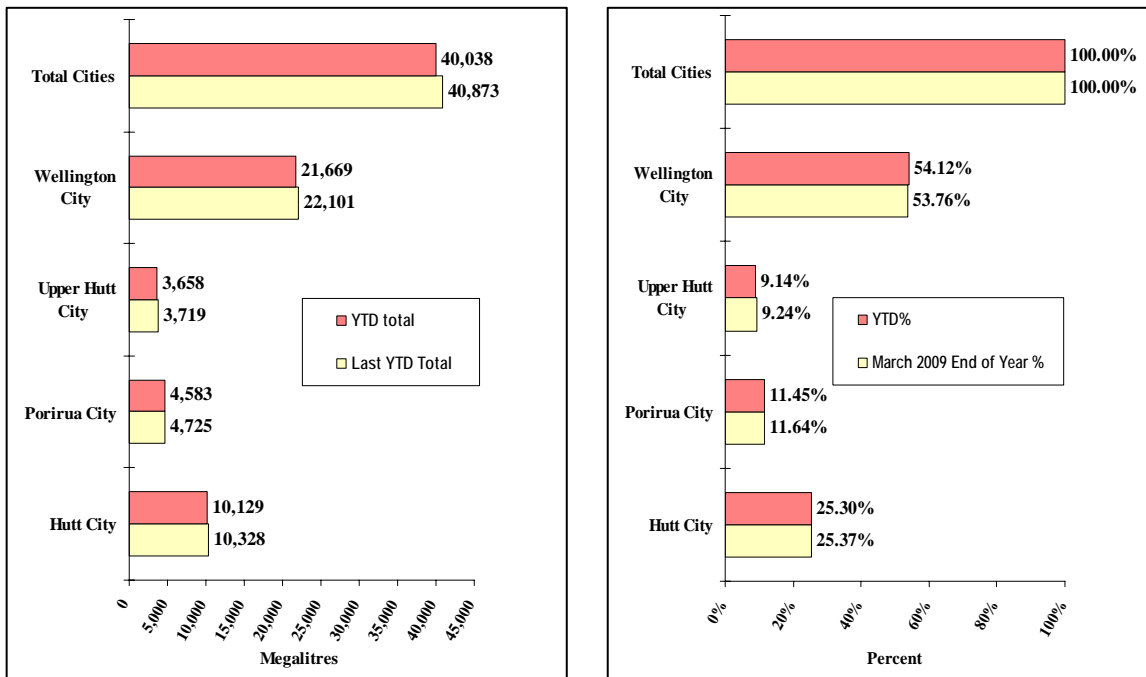


Figure 2 - Water sold during the metering year to date [April 2009 to December 2009]

Water Supply

Review of operations for the period ended 31 December 2009

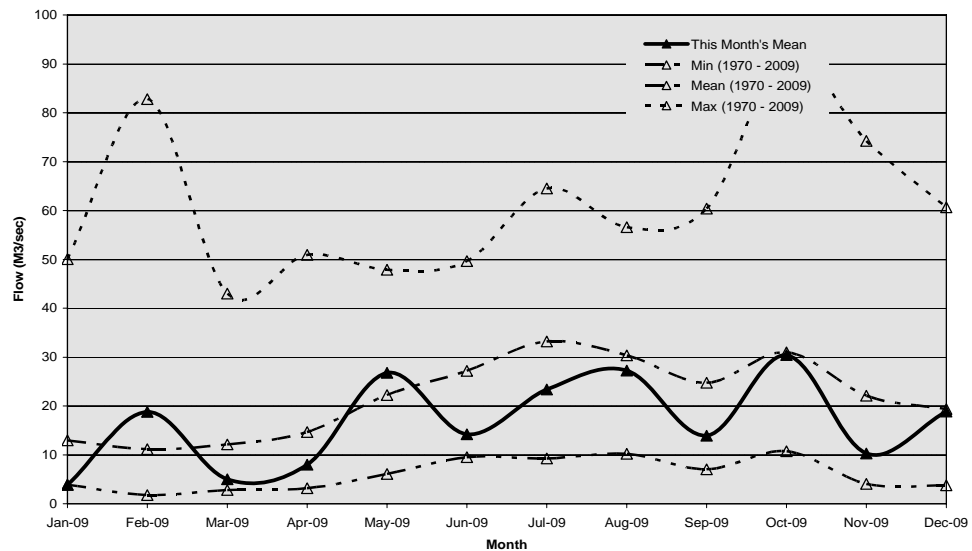
1. Supply situation

1.1 General

There have been no supply issues of note for the period. Although rainfall has been less than average, demand has been low because of cool/windy weather conditions. Demand for the six months July to December is over 3 percent lower than for the same period last year. Lakes' storage at the time of writing (3 February 2010) 87 percent for Lake 1 and 100 percent for Lake 2.

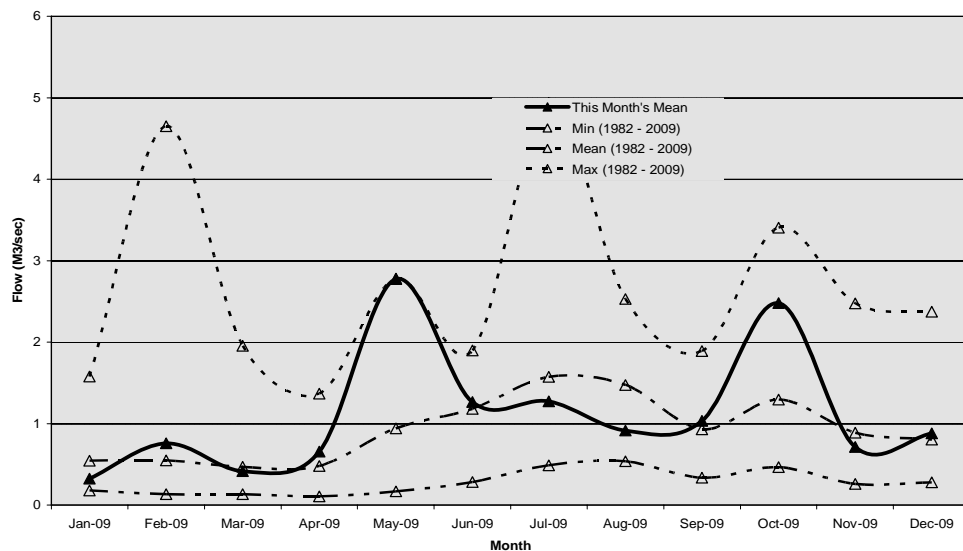
1.2 Hutt River flows measured at Birchville

The mean flow in the Wainuiomata River at Manuka Track was below the mean during November. During December the mean flow was at the mean.



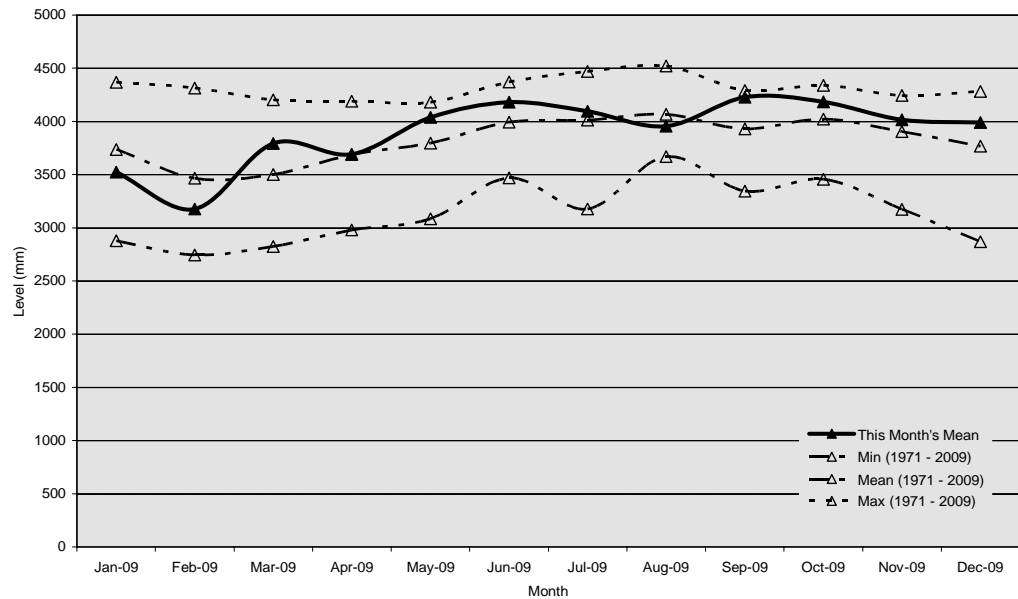
1.3 Wainuiomata River flows measured at Manuka Track

The mean flow in the Wainuiomata River at Manuka Track was below the mean during November. During December the mean flow was about the mean.



1.4 Aquifer levels measured at McEwan Park

The water level in the Waiwhetu aquifer during both November and December was above the mean.



2. Pipe break at Motuhara Road, Plimmerton

The pipe failure has been repaired. However, there were delays in obtaining various approvals from Porirua City Council. The bank reinstatement is complete and the road and pavement repairs are expected to be done by February.

3. Te Marua pump as turbine project

The Te Marua pump as turbine project has been commissioned and is now in service. Estimated reduction in energy use is 5 percent, with dollar savings at around \$80,000 per annum.

4. Interruptible load

Eight months ago we entered into an agreement whereby we are paid to have a certain amount of electrical load available to be automatically interrupted for short periods of time. To date the payments for 200 kW at Waterloo have averaged \$550 per month. The occasions when our load has been interrupted have posed no issues with water supply.

5. Chemicals

Between early 2008 and early 2009 chemical prices increased very sharply (approximately 30 percent overall). Given this situation, in November 2008 we budgeted for an ongoing increase in chemical prices. Since June 2009 prices have been falling, almost as rapidly as they increased over the previous year, and are now back to late 2008 levels.

To prevent corrosion of cement lined pipes, certain aspects of treated water quality - primarily pH and alkalinity - are closely controlled. Following investigations we have determined that the present target quality is overly conservative and plan to reduce our use of calcium hydroxide, carbon dioxide and sodium hydroxide from early 2010.

Development and Strategy

Review of operations for the period ended 31 December 2009

1. **Stuart Macaskill Lakes**

Design and supervision of the construction works to raise the top water level of the lakes, and strengthen and line the embankments has been awarded to Tonkin and Taylor Ltd. Damwatch Services Ltd will carry out peer review of this work, as required under the dam safety legislation.

Design will commence in January, with a topographical survey of the site and investigations to confirm the foundation requirements for the strengthening of Lake 2 embankments. A preliminary project programme has been developed which provides for the draining of Lake 2 from the end of July 2010 and construction commencing November 2010. Lake 2 is planned to be out of commission until June 2011 and then Lake 1 will be drained for construction works over the summer of 2011/12.

Preliminary discussion on the requirements for resource consent for the construction work has taken place with Environment Waikato, which is managing the consent process for large dams on behalf of GWRC. Similar discussions have also taken place with Upper Hutt City Council on their requirements for an outline plan as required for this designated site. Both discussions will continue in February and guide the preparation of the applications.

A letter has been sent to our customer water supply managers on the construction work planned over the next two summers and the need to manage water demand. This issue will be discussed further with our customers to ensure that an agreed plan of action is in place. A communications strategy will be developed to raise the awareness of consumers on the construction work to be carried out and the need to conserve water.

2. **Reduced low flow at Kaitoke weir**

The modified draft documents for an application to change the water take resource consent conditions at Kaitoke weir have been reviewed by GWRC Environment Management staff and discussed with them. The documents include changes made as a result of the previous review by the Group.

Those discussions have resulted in the decision to carry out further ecological investigations to provide more robust data to support the application. The investigation will be carried out over a number of weeks at low river flows. The timing of the work is uncertain since the low flow threshold does not normally occur in an average year until late February or March and it is possible that suitable conditions may not eventuate at all this summer. If that is the case, an alternative approach may be needed to avoid further delay.

The results of these additional investigations could delay the completion of the final application until early May. A decision can then be made whether to proceed with submitting the application.

The customer councils will be advised of the decision and discussed with them.

With approval to proceed, there is no certainty that the consent change will be in place for the summer of 2010/11 when Lake 2 will be out of commission. Therefore, demand management procedures over the summer period will need to be agreed with the customer councils based on the current level of water take.

For two summers there will only be about half the normally available lake storage.

3. Economic benefits of Whakatikei dam

The reports produced for GWRC by Business and Economic Research Ltd (BERL) on the assessment of the economic benefits of the Whakatikei dam were presented as a case study to the Wellington Lifelines Group in December.

The reports provide a framework for assessing the economic impact from lifelines disruption following a Wellington Fault movement and the application of this framework to disruption of the wholesale water supply.

The presentation was well received and the framework is seen to be a useful tool for other lifeline utilities in emergency planning and upgrading for seismic resilience.

4. Wainuiomata mini-hydro power generation

The request for Tenders for the supply of the turbine generator closes on 7 January 2010 and evaluation of the Tenders will take place in January. Sinclair Knight Merz Ltd will carry out a preliminary design of the civil works and the building to house the generating equipment when the preferred Tenderer is known. The project cost estimate will also be updated.

We have been advised that the lead time for the supply of turbine-generator sets has recently increased because of worldwide demand, such that the time from order to delivery has increased from six months to possibly in excess of one year. As a consequence, it is likely that only a small percentage of its purchase cost will fall within this financial year. In addition, since the building and civil works design cannot be completed until the generating set has been selected, the design is also unlikely to be fully completed in the financial year. A request will be made to carry forward the unspent Capex funding into next financial year (currently estimated at \$1 million).

Verbal and/or written support for the project has been received from iwi and the Department of Conservation (subject to specific monitoring of impact). Approval of the outline plan for the project has been received from Hutt City Council, as required for a designated site.

Comments on the draft application for resource consent to discharge excess water into George Creek following generation and for a discharge structure have been received from the Environment Management Group. Further work is to be carried out to clarify whether the generator operation will impact on

George Creek. Approval of the discharge consent is necessary before an order is placed for the turbine-generator set.

5. Puketiro wind farm

The final draft replacement contract was supplied to RES in December for a legal review, which is being carried out in the United Kingdom. The final version resolves all outstanding issues and no further substantive changes are anticipated. RES expects the review to be completed before the end of January 2010, which will then allow the execution copies to be produced for signing.

Meanwhile engineering design, logistics planning and wind data collection has continued. Civil designs are in the process of being completed and signed off.

6. Stoney Creek wind farm

The results of the first five months of wind monitoring on the Stoney Creek site have been provided by Meridian Energy. The average wind speed over June to October 2009 showed a reasonable wind resource for electricity generation over the period.

Emergency Management

Review of operations for the period ended 31 December 2009

1. Background

The Civil Defence Emergency Management Department (CDEM Department), located at The Regional Council Centre Wellington, became part of the Utilities and Services Group on 1 December 2009.

The CDEM Department comprises four staff, namely Rian van Schalkwyk (Manager), Craig Hamilton, Chris Killeen and Jessica Hare. The CDEM Department is mainly responsible for co-ordinating CDEM in the Wellington Region. The department's core functions are:

- Advising the Co-ordinating Executive Group (Chief Executives) on emergency management matters
- Co-ordinating CDEM in the Region
- Administering authority for the CDEM Group
- Maintaining the Group Emergency Operations Centre
 - Accommodating the Group Controller and alternates
 - Accommodating the Group Recovery Manager and alternates
 - Training for staff, GWRC volunteers and appointed officials
- Managing the CDEM Group Plan and work programmes
 - Associated group plans, e.g., welfare
 - Public education and marketing
 - Hazards research and mitigation identification

2. Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEM Group) activities

- Preparing order papers for Co-ordinating Executives Group meetings
- Preparing order papers for CDEM Group meetings
- Keeping the CDEM Group Emergency Operations Centre in a state of readiness
- Developing and maintaining public education and information programmes
- Maintaining a robust communications system for emergency management in the Region
- Training and development of council volunteer staff, controllers, recovery managers, etc.
- Planning and executing exercises to test the CDEM Group's capabilities and capacities

- Actioning several work programmes for 2009/10, e.g.
 - Second generation CDEM Group Plan
 - Radio/satellite communications review
 - External supply of resources to the region during a disaster
 - GIS in emergency management
 - CDEM support for fuel supply during response
 - Planning for two major exercises, *Exercise Tangaroa* (an international tsunami exercise in October 2010) and *Exercise Phoenix VII* (an earthquake exercise in Wellington in November 2010)
 - Reviewing and updating several CDEM Group plans (tsunami, welfare, mass evacuation, etc.)

3. Sharing of Services project

The Wellington Region's Chief Executives requested a project be lodged to investigate *a best CDEM structure and delivery model for the Wellington Region*.

An external consultant was appointed by the Chief Executives to carry out the initial research and to come up with options regarding structures, arrangements (including rate funding models), and the CDEM capabilities and capacities within the Region.

The project is well under way and first reports are expected in early April 2010. It is expected that the recommendations may have a severe impact on the current way of delivering CDEM to our communities and on the Wellington Region CDEM Group Plan.

More information will be available once the consultant's report is finalised.