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Committee Council
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Report on the Te Upoko Taiao - Natural Resource Plan Committee meeting 29 July 2010

1. Purpose

To inform council on the Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Plan Committee meeting that took place on 29 July 2010.

2. Reports

2.1 Oral Reports

Three oral reports were presented to committee members:

- An update on the community engagement workshops by Terry Parminter
- Information on progress and arrangements for meetings with territorial authorities and iwi by Miranda Robinson; and
- An update and overview of the current regulatory framework surrounding bulk earthworks in the region and on the *Muddy Waters* programme by Al Cross, Tracey Grant and Luke Faithfull. Slides from this presentation are attached as **Attachment 1**.

2.2 Contaminated land and soil health

Paul Sorensen provided an overview of the requirements under the Resource Management Act in relations to contaminated land management, and also on the Council's soil monitoring programme.

Section 35 of the Resource Management Act (RMA) (1991) requires regional councils to monitor and report on the state of the environment. In the areas of contaminated land and soil health, Greater Wellington fulfils its RMA obligations through maintaining a Selected Land Use Register of potentially contaminated sites and conducting a soil quality monitoring programme across different land uses.

The Selected Land Use Register (SLUR) is Greater Wellington's register of sites which have had or have a history of hazardous activities occurring on them. The criteria for listing a site on the register is whether its present or past land use matches an activity or industry on the Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL). This list, which contains 53 activities and industries, was compiled by the Ministry for the Environment.

The purpose of HAIL is to identify sites where land may be contaminated as a result of the land use – there is no assumption that contamination is actually present. Contamination is only confirmed when an investigation has been carried out. Sites are categorised on SLUR in a number of ways to reflect the contamination status of the site. Currently there are over 1,900 sites on SLUR.

Greater Wellington's current soil monitoring programme consists of 118 sites on the high quality soils across the region.

The frequency of sampling is dependent on the intensity of the land use; dairying, cropping and market garden sites are sampled every 3-4 years, drystock, horticulture and exotic forestry sites are sampled every 5-7 years, while native forest sites are sampled every 10 years. Soil samples collected from each site are tested for physical soil structure, organic resources, nutrients, fertility and trace elements.

2.3 Soil Plan review

Paul Denton provided an overview of the existing Soil Plan, and provisions contained within, and issues around soil management in the region.

The two main issues for soils in the region, identified in the proposed regional policy statement and regional plans, are:

- preventing soil erosion (this includes soil disturbances, vegetation disturbance, plantation forestry and earthworks that can lead to increased sedimentation of waterways) and;
- maintaining soil health (this includes land practices that lead to a deterioration in soil quality, and contaminated land).

Regional councils have controls over the use of land that may induce soil erosion, e.g. vegetation clearance and large scale soil disturbance on steep land. The RMA requires regional councils to control the use of land for the purposes of identifying and monitoring contaminated land.

District councils control the use of land but are not specifically required to control soil. District councils must also prevent any adverse effects of the development, subdivision, or use of contaminated land. This requirement assists to prevent land (and soils) becoming further contaminated and reducing life supporting capacity.

By way of comparison, this report also outlined what Horizons, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Environment Canterbury and Auckland regional councils are doing.

3. Mana whenua discussions document

Mike Grace presented a report which outlined Mana whenua values pertaining to soil management in the region.

This report made clear that Māori interests are not just cultural. They include social, economic, environmental and cultural interests, and the health of the land is regarded as fundamental to wellbeing. Natural and heritage landforms and productive soils require active management and protection.

Mike also highlighted that the cultural landscape is informed by the narrative of Mana whenua history on the land and that Mana whenua have a responsibility to ensure that the life giving properties of the land are sustained.

Mike stressed that the relationship between land and water is contiguous and interdependent.

4. Field trip

At the conclusion of the meeting, members were taken on a field trip to the northern growth area see first hand the effects and management of large-scale subdivision development on the environment.

5. Recommendations

That Council:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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Attachment 1: Slides on Muddy Waters presentation

Attachment 2: Unconfirmed minutes