

Report 11.170
Date 26 April 2011
File E/11/02/04

Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
Author Wayne O'Donnell, General Manager, Catchment Management
Murray Kennedy, General Manager, Utilities and Services
Nigel Corry, General Manager, Environment Management

General Managers' report to the Environmental Wellbeing Committee meeting on 3 May 2011

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibilities.

2. Catchment Management Group

2.1 Biosecurity

Freshwater biosecurity

At the March 2011 Committee meeting, members asked about responsibilities for freshwater biosecurity issues. Freshwater biosecurity was not covered specifically by any of the work streams in the Future of Pest Management Project led by MAF Biosecurity New Zealand. The area of freshwater is not addressed as such in the Pest Management National Plan of Action. The advice staff received from MAF officials and Local Government representatives on the working groups is that freshwater biosecurity issues will be addressed as currently, on a case by case basis. The changes proposed to the Biosecurity Act to streamline responsibilities and decision making on biosecurity threats and National Plan of Action will have positive effects on freshwater biosecurity as well.

Proposed changes to the Wildlife Act - Canada Goose

The Minister for Conservation recently announced that changes will be made to the status of Canada Goose (CG) under the proposed changes to the Wildlife Act. The species will be moved from the Schedule 1 to Schedule 5 of the Act. This effectively changed the status of CG from a sports bird, under Fish and Game jurisdiction and game licence, to unprotected. GW staff are already receiving calls for action from affected landowners. CG is not a

species in RPMS and are outside of GW jurisdiction. It is likely that there will be calls to include CG in the RPMS. There is a lengthy process to include a new species in a RPMS and thereafter designated as a pest of regional significance. There is no guarantee at all that CG would meet the criteria or that a regional council would offer any better alternatives to control that landowner could organise themselves.

Biosecurity staff recently met with DOC and Federated Farmers representatives to discuss the issue of CG control in the region.

Transfer of biodiversity functions

Meetings have been held between personnel from the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Departments to facilitate the transfer to Biodiversity of the planning responsibilities for the Key Native Ecosystem and Territorial Authorities Reserves programmes. The stocktake of current operational data and transfer process has commenced but still requires substantial input from staff from both Departments. The financial implications for each Department are being worked through. Both the KNE and TLA biodiversity enhancement programmes started in earnest in 1996.

A new Vertebrate Toxic Agent for Pest Animal Control

A new toxin for the control of mammalian pests, thought to be the first registered in the world for at least twenty years, has been developed in New Zealand. Its use will strengthen the ability of pest control agencies to better control stoats, and feral cats. Unfortunately, it is not considered to be effective for ferrets.

Pest control agencies welcomed the approval by the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) for the new toxin which is known as PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone). Stoats and feral cats pose a significant threat to endangered native species like kiwi, kokako and kaka.

Work on the new toxin has been ongoing since 2000 and a total of around \$1,000,000 has been invested by DOC and its commercial partner Connovation Ltd.

PAPP is considered to be a humane toxin with its mode of action described as being similar to carbon monoxide poisoning. It works quickly; as stoats become unconscious within about 15 minutes, and die shortly afterwards. There is also an antidote available which significantly reduces the risks to non target species. It should be noted that PAPP is not an alternative to the ongoing use of 1080, as it will not control possums, rats or ferrets. A technical representative from Connovation Ltd has visited Biosecurity staff in Upper Hutt and Masterton and provided information on known best practice for use.

Rabbit Control at Paraparaumu Airport

An urgent rabbit control operation has been completed recently at Paraparaumu Airport. Rabbits had risen to unacceptable levels and were digging up one of the grass landing strips posing serious risks to aircraft.

Rabbits were also digging warrens under meteorological information towers, exposing sensitive wiring and being a general nuisance around the facility. This complex operation was conducted in a very sensitive area and a high level of risk management was required. The official air space boundary at the now commercial airport was increased to act as a measure to deter people from entering the danger zone. The cost of the poisoning, fumigation and nightshooting exercise is being met by the airport authority and the MetService. They are extremely pleased with the outcome of the operation and have agreed to an ongoing maintenance programme.

2.2 BioWorks

BioWorks is working to complete 52 contract areas covering 205,493 hectares.

All contracts have passed audits to date. Survey work is well advanced to meet late autumn deadlines. Approximately 60% of the contract area has been completed to date.

BioWorks has completed the initial round of ground contract tenders for the 2011/12 year. Aerial tenders are due for submission in mid May.

The first phase of the Biosecurity Department's Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP) contract in northern Wairarapa is completed. Initial work covered communication / consultation with landowners and installing / filling bait stations.

2.3 Land Management

Discussions with the Papawai Kaikokirikiri Trust regarding the expansion of Akura nursery are proceeding well. Despite the uncertainty around ongoing funding for the MAF hill country erosion programme, the Trust are looking to accommodate Greater Wellington's interests in the short term. The review of the MAF funding of forestry and hill country erosion programmes is due for release in July 2011 meaning that any decisions regarding nursery expansion will be made after that date.

The winners of this year's Ballance Farm Environment Awards were Ray and Lyn Craig of Carterton. The Craigs are dairy farmers on the outskirts of Carterton and their property is located within the Mangatarere catchment. They have worked closely with Land Management staff over the last ten years and established some very good examples of riparian planting. The Mangatarere catchment is one of high interest for Greater Wellington and this award will provide a great opportunity to begin dialogue with other landowners in the local community.

Applications for grants in the final round of the Afforestation Grant Scheme have just closed. A total of \$2.17M is available through the Regional Council pool. There have been 52 applications from contributing regional councils totalling \$5.968M. Grants for projects to be planted in 2012 will be allocated in May 2011. This is the last round of applications under the current funding. In

this last round there are 12 applications totalling 375 hectares from landowners in the Wellington region.

3. Utilities and Services Group

3.1 Forestry

Good prices and strong markets continue for both Metro and Reserve forests. A third logging crew has started in the Metro forests and a second crew is expected back at Tauanui before year end.

4. Environment Management Group - Harbours

4.1 Kings Wharf navigation light

A Strait shipping vessel damaged the pile that the navigation light is affixed and Greater Wellington is currently in negotiation with Strait Shipping over the straightening of the pile that was damaged 12 months ago. We are hopeful this will be resolved shortly.

4.2 Harbour Safety Management System

We have commissioned John Riding of Marico Marine Services to develop our Harbour Safety Management System (SMS).

A SMS essentially documents processes and practices around our Harbour Management functions, particularly how we manage risk. The SMS is required by the Port and Harbour Safety Code and requires formal approval by Maritime New Zealand once completed.

4.3 Summer Cruise Ship season

The last summer saw an increased number of cruise ships call at the port. This included the 295 metre Queen Elizabeth on 19 February, and the even larger 345 metre Queen Mary II on 26 February. The Queen Mary II is the largest vessel of any type to have called at Wellington.

4.4 Beacon Hill Signal Station opening

On 7 March the new Beacon Hill Signal Station was officially opened by Chair Fran Wilde. The opening commenced with a blessing by Kaumatua Sam Jackson and was followed by a tour of the facility.

4.5 Pat Dixon – retirement

Pat Dixon, Department Secretary at our Harbours department is retiring after 22 years with Greater Wellington in June this year.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*

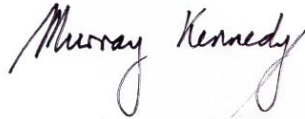
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:



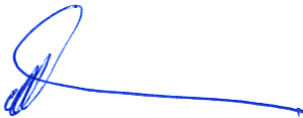
Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager, Catchment
Management

Report prepared by:



Murray Kennedy
General Manager, Utilities and
Services

Report prepared by:



Nigel Corry
General Manager, Environment
Management