

Report 16.501
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Committee Council
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Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022: Operational Plan Report 2015/16

1. Purpose

To report on the performance of the 2015/16 Operational Plan to implement the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. Background

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) is responsible for the Wellington Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022 (RPMS). The Council approved the current RPMS on 17 September 2002.

Under Section 100B of the Biosecurity Act 1993, Council is required to prepare an annual Operational Plan outlining the activities under the RPMS. Following the end of the financial year, Council is required to produce an Operational Plan Report, detailing the results of the Operational Plan.

The Operational Plan Report is made available to the public and a copy forwarded to the relevant Minister(s).

3. The Operational Plan Report

During 2015/16, the Biosecurity Department continued implementation of the RPMS as outlined in the Operational Plan 2015/16. Control activities are based on the biology of the pest plant and pest animal species and best practice pest control methodology. Resources are allocated according to the impact of the species and the subsequent requirements of management programmes.

The control and management regime for each pest species is considered against the impacts, spread, costs and benefits of the species. All pests in the strategy are listed in one of five management categories; Regional Surveillance, Total Control, Containment, Suppression and Site-Led.

The significant resources continued to be allocated to the Total Control and Site-Led species. Intensive surveys for Total Control plant species were

undertaken across the region, with 51 new sites discovered. All 1,160 Total Control sites were inspected at least once during the year and any pest plants found were controlled. Good progress is being made, with 406 of the Total Control sites now determined to have the target species eradicated.

The Total Control rook programme was successfully undertaken. Another season of strong winds prevailed causing disruption and damage at rookeries. These winds both help and hinder the control of rooks. Strong winds help by destroying rookeries and nests, yet also hinder the amount of rookeries that can be treated from the air. The programme is aiming to achieve total control (eradication) of rooks in the region by 2025.

The successful suppression of feral rabbits continues across the region with numbers remaining at low levels overall. An overall mild winter appeared to have little impact on the rabbit population. The Peka Peka area had an increase in rabbit numbers due to high immunity to the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) virus, and increased subdivision, preventing effective rabbit control over the wider area. The RHD continues to cycle naturally in the wild rabbit population, assisting with the management of rabbit numbers.

The Regional Possum and Predator Control Programme (RPPCP) included control of possums across approximately 72,200 ha of the Wellington region during the 2015/16 year. The programme included 42,700 ha recently declared free of bovine Tb by OSPRI, and a further 29,500 ha in western areas of the region not included in the National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb programme. The RPPCP continues to expand, now encompassing peri-urban areas of Wellington (7,250 ha). Expansion into the rural areas surrounding Wellington City will greatly assist the recently announced Predator Free Wellington initiative with WCC and the NEXT Foundation. Monitoring results for the majority of controlled areas indicate we are keeping possum numbers at very low levels, well below the target of 5% Residual Trap Catch.

Site-Led programmes remain a focus of the RPMS, with successful management of a wide range of plant and animal pests in specific high value ecosystem sites. The long-running Key Native Ecosystem programme, administered by the Biodiversity Department, continues to be successfully implemented. A realignment of the work programme has seen pest control expand into a number of new vulnerable ecosystems, and utilising new tools such as the Goodnature self-resetting gas traps.

An essential part of implementing the Strategy is successful relationship building and providing advice and education to the community. The Biosecurity department retains strong partnerships with central and local government, iwi, science providers, community groups and the general public. Advice and education remains an important tool to ensure that the public are aware of their responsibilities under the RPMS, and can access resources and information for successful pest management.

Enquiries from the public remain an important part of the RPMS, with 611 enquiries for information, advice and assistance with pest control during the 2015/16 year. Many of these required site visits or inspections, often followed

by control advice and sale of equipment. The GWRC website continued to receive regular enquiries seeking information and advice on pest management.

The Operational Plan Report 2015/16 for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002 -2022 (**Attachment 1**) further details the achievements against the objectives of the Operational Plan.

4. Communication

Public notices will be issued to inform the public that the Operational Plan Report 2015/16 for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002 -2022 is available for inspection. Copies will be forwarded to the appropriate Ministers for their review and comment.

5. The decision-making process and significance

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002.

5.1 Significance of the decision

The significance of the matter has been considered, taking into account the Council's significance and engagement policy, and decision-making guidelines. Due to the procedural nature of this decision it is recommended that the matter be considered to have low significance.

A formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is not required in this instance.

5.2 Engagement

Due to its procedural nature and low significance, no engagement on this matter has been undertaken.

6. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Approves the Operational Plan Report 2015/16 (Attachment 1) for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.*
- 2. Notes that a copy of the Operational Plan Report 2015/16 will be forwarded to the relevant Ministers.*
- 3. Notes that the Operational Plan Report 2015/16 will be made available for public inspection.*

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Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Operational Plan Report 2015/16 for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022