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Committee Environment Committee
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General Managers' report to the Environment Committee meeting 22 March 2017

1. Purpose

To inform the Environment Committee of Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibilities.

2. Catchment Management

2.1 Biosecurity

RPMP Review

The Regional Pest Management Plan review consultation document was developed and consulted internally, with external consultation underway. The first consultation was with the Poutiriao Forum, to be continued by further consultations with our iwi partners. The consultations with territorial local authorities (TLAs) and other significant stakeholders will follow.

2.2 Pest Animals

2.2.1 New strain of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) Virus (HDV1 K5)

A new variant of rabbit haemorrhagic disease known as RHDV1 K5 has been approved for registration in Australia by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APMVA). The Australian release of RHDV1 K5 is planned between March and June 2017.

RHDV1 K5 is a potentially significant biological control tool for pest rabbits in New Zealand. While exact figures are unknown, it is expected that there will be improved "knockdown" (deaths) in areas where the current strain of RHDV is less effective due to acquired immunity of local rabbit populations.

The New Zealand Rabbit Coordination Group (RCG) is co-ordinating the approvals process for the release in New Zealand. RCG includes representatives from Regional and District Councils, Federated Farmers, the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Department of Conservation and Land Information New Zealand. The approvals process is being run in parallel with a Landcare Research Sustainable Farming Fund project to prepare a release strategy for RHDV1-K5. This will help participating Regional and District councils to effectively release RHDV1 K5 in rabbit-prone areas of New Zealand. The strategy will also include pre and post release monitoring to measure impacts and inform future research.

2.2.2 Predator Free Wellington

The Predator Free Wellington City project is gathering momentum. A full time Project Director has been appointed. The Project Technical Advisory Group has prepared a draft plan for the Miramar peninsula eradication proposal. The 'predator free' concept has touched the hearts and minds of Wellingtonians with numerous new groups forming to commence control activities in their neighbourhood. The NEXT Foundation 'community champion' Kelvin Hastie, is co-ordinating these groups.

Further details on Predator Free Wellington City and the national Predator Free NZ 2050 project will be presented at the Committee meeting.

A survey is being developed for Wellington residents about the Predator Free Wellington Project. The intent of the survey is to gather information about what residents think of predator control and the available methods. The results will help inform the project going forward.

2.3 Pest Plants

2.3.1 Biocontrol

Biocontrol agents are very active with the recent spell of fine weather, and monitoring, harvesting and releases continue across the region. Agents which have reproduced well in the region are being harvested and sent elsewhere, such as the green thistle beetle.

Biosecurity undertook two releases of the Honshu white admiral butterfly as a biocontrol agent for Japanese honeysuckle. It is hoped that the establishment of this species will help to slow the spread of this prolific weed in the region.



Released Honshu white butterfly on Japanese honeysuckle in Upper Hutt

Biosecurity staff presented at a green thistle beetle field day hosted by Beef and Lamb New Zealand in the Wairarapa. The green thistle beetle is being heralded as a success in the Wairarapa by a number of agencies, with monitoring showing high numbers of beetles and considerable damage to the target thistle species. Biosecurity staff are continuing to harvest and distribute the thistle beetle within the region as resources allow.

Staff have undertaken further releases of the broom gall mite across the region, focusing on areas of the Wairarapa where broom is just beginning to establish.

2.4 BioWorks

Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP)

The 2016/17 RPPCP programme will cover approximately 74,800 hectares in 15 operational areas. Eight operations covering 43,800 ha have been completed to date. Field activities in a further three projects have commenced, with approximately 9,500 ha completed to date.

Control within the initial Te Kopahou operation (2,931 ha) has commenced. This operation is west of Wellington city and extends between Owhiro Bay and Makara settlement. It is a challenging programme due to difficult access, thick scrub and gorse. Permission has been obtained from Regional Public Health to apply feratox cyanide and 1080 in some areas, with other control measures being brodifacoum, cholecalciferol and trapping. Public notifications have been completed.

2.5 TBfree New Zealand Programme

BioWorks has been contracted to deliver the Southern Rimutaka Aerial project on behalf of TBfree New Zealand (13,350 ha aerial and adjoining 4,200 ha of ground control).

Initially, aerial control was planned to commence before Christmas, but due to persistent spring winds using helicopters for the operation was deemed unsafe and postponed until early 2017.

Planning for the operation has recommenced. This operation will now be completed in two stages. Stage one includes East Harbour Regional Park and all farmland west of Coast Road, to be treated from mid-March onwards. Stage two includes the Rimutaka Forest Park and Orongorongo Station, to be treated late April – May, after the annual deer roar hunting season.

Staff are currently re-obtaining approvals from all landowners because the previous consents expire March 30, 2017. Updated approvals from Regional Public Health and the Department of Conservation are also required.

2.6 Change to 1080 regulations

A report published by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in June 2011 recommended investigating ways to simplify and standardise how 1080 and other toxins for pest control are managed under the RMA and other legislation. In 2016 the Government consulted on a proposal to standardise and simplify the regulatory regime for vertebrate toxic agents (VTAs) used to control mammalian pests such as stoats, possums and rats, as well as pest fish.

The new regulations exempt users of three VTAs – sodium fluoroacetate (1080), brodifacoum and rotenone – from RMA requirements for aerial or ground application come. This means that such operations will not need resource consent, nor will they be managed through regional plan rules. The new regulations come into force on 1 April 2017. Importantly, the new regulations will not change the other controls that are in place to protect people and the environment when VTAs are used. Also, there are no changes to the requirements for public notification and the posting of signs prior to the use of 1080, brodifacoum or rotenone. The regulations will allow operations to be more timely and effective, thereby better protecting New Zealand's flora and fauna from pests.

2.7 Land Management

2.7.1 Akura Conservation Centre

During February, Akura received 173mm of rain, with the majority falling on the 17th when 110.6mm were recorded. This had an immediate effect on soil moisture levels which rose from 10% to 24%. Current soil moisture levels are steady at 18%.

A very successful North Island Poplar and Willow workshop was hosted by GWRC over three days at the end of February. Regional Council staff from six councils attended a series of presentations, field trips and nursery visits. Information covered the whole gambit of the use of poplar and willows as an

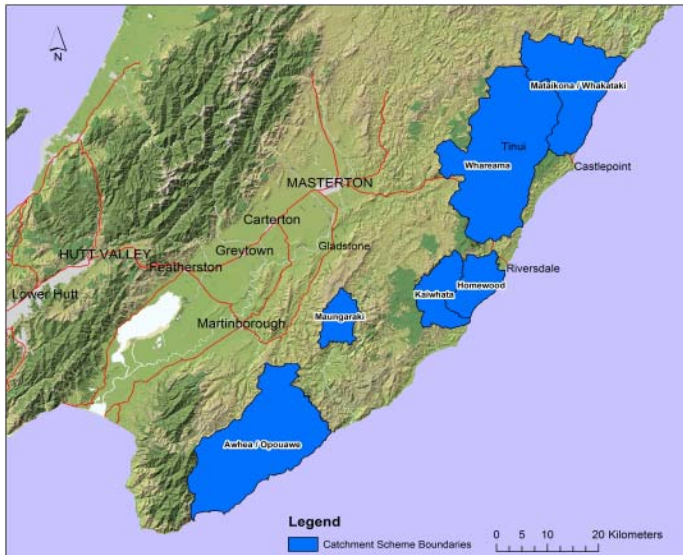
erosion management tool. Greater Wellington's reputation in this particular area of sustainable land management is well recognised and the nursery at Akura is the largest of its kind in the country. Feedback from participants, many of whom are relatively new to the industry, has been extremely positive.



Weraiti poplar trial

2.7.2 Catchment Management Schemes

There are six catchment management schemes operating in the Wairarapa hill country. These schemes are a legacy of the 1960 – 1990 era when central government provided funding for catchments where erosion and flooding risks were severe and community infrastructure such as roads, bridges and buildings were under threat. Funding was also provided to remove willows and flood debris from rivers to reduce flooding in some areas e.g. Tinui.



Catchment scheme areas

Today these schemes are supported by regional and local government funding. Administration is provided by Land Management staff, and works programmes are approved by a local Scheme Advisory Committee in consultation with GWRC staff. Storm damage reserves are established to cater for damage caused by significant rainfall events. These reserves operate alongside the normal asset management programmes.

The coastal area of the Wairarapa received between 150 – 200 mm of rainfall in a 24 hour period in mid-February. This caused significant damage to erosion control structures within the Homewood Catchment Scheme. Emergency works have been undertaken to repair the worst damage, with funding being immediately available from the Storm Damage reserve. A meeting has been organised with the Homewood Advisory Committee to establish a works programme to deal with the less urgent repairs.



Debris blocking a local bridge

2.7.3 Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative (WRECI)

Recent rain has significantly lifted soil moisture levels across much of the Wairarapa and Porirua/Kapiti areas. While autumn and early winter can be drier than normal it is hoped that farmer confidence around the planting of poplar and willow poles has lifted. Letters have been sent to all clients seeking an indication of poplar and willow pole orders for the winter. Early indications are that preliminary orders have increased from last year.

2.7.4 Riparian programme – managing stock access to waterways

The Riparian Programme supports landowners to achieve water quality and biodiversity outcomes through the management of stock access to waterways. Part of this programme is to work with landowners to identify waterways and sites that meet the definitions for Category 1 (sites of significance) under the proposed Natural Resources Plan (pNRP).

Landowners with Category 1 waterways or sites have recently received a letter setting out the requirements to manage stock access and offering assistance and advice to achieve compliance with the pNRP provisions by July 2018. Staff are currently contacting these landowners and arranging site inspections.

Complex Sites

Of the 251 Category I sites identified, 183 have been defined as complex for the criteria defined below. These sites, due to their complexity haven't received a letter and are now the priority for staff contacting landowners.

Complex site criteria:

- Extensive scale
- Multiple number of landowners

- Combination of values identified in the Proposed Natural Resource Plan (PNRP) that are overlapping
- Difficult previous relationships with the landowner(s)
- Physical conditions of the site make stock exclusion difficult

This project is being delivered in collaboration between the Land Management, Biodiversity, Environmental Regulation, Environmental Policy and Environmental Science departments. The project manager (housed in the Land Management department) works across these departments to coordinate input.

The key objectives for this project are to:

- Assess the 183 individual sites for their stock exclusion status
- Record the sites that presently have stock excluded and the landowner is aware of their obligations to meet the rule
- Engage with the landowners whose sites that do not have stock excluded and work with them to get them into either the wetland or riparian programmes in order for them to commit to stock exclusion over a period of time.
- Develop collaborative solutions to manage the effect of stock access where the landowner is willing to exclude stock but the physical conditions of the site make traditional stock exclusion practices (e.g. fencing) not practicable
- Record the sites whose landowners were unwilling to engage in a programme of stock exclusion.
- Record behavioural change using a logic model.

The implementation of this project will be across a number of phases. It is expected to take eighteen months to complete.

2.7.5 Farm Environment Plans (FEPs)

To date in 2016/17 ten new FEPs have been completed, predominantly in the Wairarapa Moana catchment, bringing the total FEPs in the region to fifty eight.

\$95,000 has been spent so far through the contestable fund. The funding has been split across a variety of land uses with projects being predominantly focused on riparian or effluent management issues.

| Contestable Fund - Priority Catchments approved projects 2016/17 | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Catchment | Total Cost | Farmer Contribution |
| Kapiti | \$15,137 | \$3,006 |
| Mangatarere | \$107,772 | \$56,020 |
| Wairarapa Moana | \$179,016 | \$112,438 |
| Upper Ruamahanga | \$26,923 | \$13,461 |
| Total | \$328,848 | \$184,925 |
| Non-Priority Catchments approved projects 2016/17 | | |
| Total | \$184,259 | \$92,129 |

2.7.6 Dung Beetle Release

In conjunction with staff from Biosecurity a further release of dung beetles has been made on three Wairarapa properties. This follows an earlier release in 2013.

Dung beetles are found worldwide, on every continent except Antarctica. There are 11 different kinds of dung beetle approved by the EPA for release in NZ. The beetles are attracted to fresh livestock manure and make tunnels beneath the manure where they bury the manure to make food balls for their young. Different beetles bury at different depths and make different food balls. Their young develop into new beetles from 6 weeks to 6 months depending on the species with nearly 2/3 of each food ball remaining in the soil after the new beetle emerges.



The most recent release has been on two sheep and beef farms and an organic dairy farm. Populations take some time to establish at the farm scale and benefits are not expected for 4/5 years. Successful establishment provides a very important land management tool in dealing with the adverse environmental effects of dung. Benefits include:

- Improved water quality

- Improved soil structure and fertility
- Increased pasture quality and productivity
- Reduced nutrient runoff
- Increased soil carbon
- Maintenance free.

Monitoring will be undertaken on an annual basis. Recent communications with a landowner involved in the 2013 release confirms the population was thriving although it's still early days to see any real environmental impacts.

2.8 Flood Protection

2.8.1 Floodplain Management Plan Implementation

RiverLink

RiverLink held a 90% preliminary design progress workshop at the start of March. This workshop pulled together all design streams and sets up for a design review by the council project team and the development of rough order costs. Key design elements completed for this 90% stage are:

- 3D model of the physical changes (stopbanks, river channel etc)
- Pedestrian bridge, promenade and urban interface designs
- Locations for integrated transport opportunities
- Outline summary of NZTA Melling Interchange investigation

A community design workshop that will present information about the design progress is being held at the start of April.

The project team is developing a programme of workshops with the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee (HVFMS) for March, April and May. These councillor workshops will lead to the presentation of preliminary designs to the Subcommittee to seek their approval to move into a community consultation phase. The programme is on track to present a preliminary design to the Subcommittee for approval in September 2017.

Community engagement has been ongoing and focused primarily on raising the project profile and providing information about the project to the community. This ongoing programme of activities include:

- A pop up community hub adjacent to a river beach trial
- Trial areas for amenity, edge protection and ecological designs
- Newsletter 5
- A community open day scheduled for start of April

Hutt River Environmental Strategy (HRES) Review is on programme to deliver its findings in June. A drone flight of Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River from its headwaters in Kaitoke to the Harbour is being flown in conjunction with Rotary, this footage will be used for both the Environmental Strategy and also for Rotary 25 year celebrations.

2.8.2 Otaki FMP Implementation

In response to flooding issues in Otaki we have brought forward design work for a number of projects identified in the Otaki FMP. These include Seaward Stopbank near the Otaki River Lagoon, and a reprogramming of works planned for the Waitohu Stream.

The Seaward stopbank will protect against tidal surge and lagoon overtopping that caused flooding into Kapiti Lane.

The Waitohu and Mangapouri stream works are part of a complicated network of stopbanks and channel works. The current programme aims to provide a 1-in-100 year level of service for habitable buildings in one large project, this programme is being amended to allow a staged approach that will provide an interim level of protection that will address frequent flooding issues without causing negative downstream effects. This interim level of protection will later be upgraded to the full 1-in-100 year level of protection once land entry negotiations have been completed.

2.8.3 Waikanae FMP Implementation

Jim Cooke Park stopbank upgrade works are progressing well. A stand of poplars was identified adjacent to the vaulting club and near to the public footpaths which pose a significant hazard. This stand of trees will be removed as part of the Jim Cooke Park work and replanting will be incorporated into the Jim Cooke Park planting plans.

2.8.4 Waiwhetu Stream

Design is underway for soft edge erosion repair works to maintain the channel edge between Bell Road and Seaview Road bridge. The design of these works is being undertaken in conjunction with Hutt City Council.

2.8.5 Pinehaven Stream

UHCC made a decision to notify plan change 42. This plan change will be notified on 8 March 2017. The plan change is an essential part of the Pinehaven Stream Floodplain Management Plan.

A preferred consultant for detailed design and construction supervision of the Pinehaven Floodplain Management Plan physical works has been identified.

2.9 Operations, Delivery and Planning

2.9.1 Western Operations

On 2 February the western part of the region experienced a further significant flood event in the Wellington and Kapiti river systems. Return periods for this event ranged from 14 year return period in the Waikanae River, 8 year return in

the Otaki River and 5 year return period event in Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River. Unfortunately staff were still in the process of clearing up after the November flood event and it was disappointing to see much of the repair work once again eroded and damaged. Access tracks, trails and berms were particularly affected along with bank edge protection works. Many property owners, located near rivers and streams, have contacted staff for advice and assistance and resources have been busy clearing windblown trees and blockages and doing urgent machine work to assist where we can.



Hutt River car park – asphalt lifted up after flood



Waikanae River Kebbell's bend erosion

2.9.2 Wairarapa Operations

The Wairarapa operations programme is progressing on schedule with minimal flood damage resulting from the series of frequent freshes during the summer. The exception to this is the erosion that has occurred at Fullers Bend, in the Waiohine River. There is now a significant risk of failure of the right bank stopbank at this location during a large flood. Progressive erosion during floods has caused the bank edge protection work to fail. The preferred solution would be to bring forward the major capital works proposed in the draft floodplain management plan. However, given the uncertainty with this programme it will be necessary to undertake some interim work. Options are being investigated for rock revetment along a section of the bank at an estimated cost of \$100,000. Work is proposed to commence next month.



Waiohine River, Fullers Bend rightbank erosion – February 2017

The Barrage Gates painting contract commenced in February and is expected to be completed in early April. This involves sand blasting “spot maintenance” areas on the steel gates and re-finishing the entire gate surfaces.



Barrage Gates painting scaffolding – February 2017



Barrage Gates painting before/after photos – February 2017

2.9.3 Asset Management and Operations Planning

Progress is continuing in a number of asset management areas. The annual condition rating of our infrastructural assets has commenced, utilising an upgraded mobile application to improve data capture. We have also progressed the process to complete a five yearly revaluation of the Council's flood protection assets; updating current unit rates and engaging external valuers for land, plant and equipment and an external peer reviewer. A training provider has also been engaged to facilitate Dam Safety training for staff involved in the maintenance and operation of the Porirua Stream detention dams.

2.9.4 Operational Resource Consent Project

Resource consent applications for the four western rivers were notified on 4 February 2017. A meeting of key stakeholders was held on 2 March to discuss the application documents, the Code of Practise and the Environmental Monitoring Plan. Given the size and complexity of these applications, stakeholders have requested an extension of time in which to make submissions. It has been agreed to extend the notification period by a further 4 weeks.

2.10 Investigations, Strategy and Planning

2.10.1 Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) Development

The draft independent audit report for the Waiohine FMP flood hazard information is expected in early March and officers plan to present the final report to the Environment Committee at the May meeting. In the meantime, we will work on how to address any issues raised in the report, and work with CDC and SWDC on the best way to progress the draft FMP to a successful conclusion.

We have presented on the draft Te Kāuru Upper Ruamahanga FMP to both Masterton and Carterton District Councils and will follow up with both councils about how best to engage with them on this project. We have also met with representatives of Rangitāne and Kahungunu, and a focus group of rural landowners. The initial draft of the FMP will be revised in response to comments received and presented back to the Te Kāuru FMP Subcommittee.

Delays to these projects are having an impact on other projects in our FMP Development programme and this will be considered in recommending revised FMP timeframes to Council through the LTP process.

2.10.2 Investigations and Strategy

The hydrology is being peer reviewed to feed into an update of the Porirua Stream flood maps. PCC officers plan to include this in a District Plan change later in 2017. A cross section survey will be carried out beginning in April 2017 on the Mangaone Stream to allow us to update the flood mapping for this area. Landowners have been advised of this survey by letter. Feedback from the landowners has mainly been focused on what are we going to do to "fix" the existing flood problem and we are having to emphasise that the current work is primarily focused on ensuring the community are clear about what the current flood risk is. A decision on whether to embark on a comprehensive floodplain management plan and develop mitigation strategies will have to be

considered in conjunction with the prioritising of other flood hazard work in the region. We are working with some of the landowners and supporting them with a resource consent application to maintain the flood carrying capacity of the existing channel as an interim measure.

The Otaki FMP review will be discussed with Nga Hapu o Ōtaki to confirm the full scope. Technical elements already underway include an update of the flood damage assessment (showing benefits of the works to date) and an assessment of how effective planning controls have been at avoiding flood hazard.

A workshop on flood hazard information development and use was held with planning officers from the Wairarapa District Councils. We used the same format as was used for a similar meeting with HCC planning and building control officers. The workshop was well received and we are planning to roll this workshop out to other District Councils and other audiences such as professionals involved in land development (engineers, planners, surveyors etc).

3. Biodiversity

3.1 Biodiversity Management

3.1.1 Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programme

A proposed translocation of rifleman from the Wainuiomata Mainland Island within the Wainuiomata-Orongorongo KNE site to Zealandia has been postponed. This was due to occur in March, but the latest results of GWRC's yearly rifleman monitoring data has shown that the population of these At Risk/Declining birds at the Wainuiomata site is considerably lower than previously thought. The decline is potentially due to high levels of rat predation. Several 'mast' events, when trees have an exceptionally high seeding season, have occurred in recent years, resulting in an explosion of rat numbers. The worrying nation-wide trend of more frequent mast events is possibly linked to climate change. Staff are investigating different management options to deal more effectively with this problem in the future.

OSPRI have offered to fund and undertake an aerial 1080 possum control operation in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area KNE site. They will include this area in their northern Rimutaka 1080 operation which is planned for September 2017, and which also includes the Pākuratahi KNE site. OSPRI funding and managing this work in 2017 means that possum numbers will be controlled at least a year ahead of schedule, that Wellington Water will now not have to pay GWRC for the work to be carried out, and that Biosecurity staff will be freed up for other control operations.

An increased number of community groups have made contact with GWRC following announcements around Predator Free 2050. This has resulted in increased demands on staff time and resources. Demand for advice around predator control is expected to increase over time.

The annual ungulate culling programme is in the final stages and has been successful across the Hutt Water Collection Area, Kaitoke Regional Park,

Pākuratahi and Wainuiomata-Orongorongo KNE sites. A total of 136 goats, 65 pigs and 41 deer were destroyed.

3.1.2 Wetlands

A new landowner with three significant natural wetlands on their property has signed up to the Wetland Programme. Two of these significant wetlands (Uriti Point wetland and Riversdale South Dunes) are coastal marshes located within the Homewood Coastal Plains KNE site that require fencing to exclude stock. The third significant natural wetland (Ruakaka pond) is a moderate sized palustrine swamp containing a reasonably diverse plant community.

3.2 Biodiversity Advice and Advocacy

3.2.1 Biodiversity Advice

Biodiversity staff are coordinating a GWRC submission on the Department of Conservation's draft *Wellington Conservation Management Strategy* (the CMS). The submission has identified opportunities for GWRC to work more closely with DOC, especially in areas where DOC land adjoins regional parks. The suggested changes cover areas including biodiversity management, pest management, recreational use and collaborative restoration projects. The submission also includes suggestions to make the CMS more consistent with regional plan provisions and highlights areas where existing collaborative relationships can be recognised. Comments from a range of GWRC departments have been collated into a draft submission, which is appended to this report. The submission will be lodged in early April.

Staff presented to the Regional Planning Managers Group (RPMG) on a proposal to help to facilitate discussion with territorial authorities when implementing RPS Policies 23 and 24 through their district plans. In particular, the workshop is intended to cover the range of regulatory and non-regulatory biodiversity protection options councils should consider. The RPMG discussed the proposal and agreed to endorse it.

3.3 Collaborative Restoration: Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

Predator control work to protect nesting bird species in Wairarapa Moana, including the endangered bittern and spotless crane, is ongoing. Bittern have recently been seen in the Wairio restoration block and on the Battery Stream Delta.

The third kākahi (freshwater mussel) survey for the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Kākahi Monitoring programme took place in February. Twenty seven new and returning volunteers participated in the survey, which was coordinated by Biodiversity staff with support from a freshwater ecologist. This was the second year of monitoring at the northern shore site of Lake Wairarapa, at Lake Domain Reserve. The results will be published by the end of April 2017.



Volunteers and staff who took part in the kākahi (freshwater mussel) survey for the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Kākahi Monitoring programme



Volunteers measuring and recording kākahi (freshwater mussels) at the northern shore site of Lake Wairarapa, at Lake Domain Reserve

A combined meeting and field trip was well attended by members of the project's Governance Group and Management Team. The group visited Lake Domain and Wairio Wetland to look at some of the work of the project, and discussed the shape of an upcoming workshop that will look at preparing the project for transition to a new governance structure when the Treaty of Waitangi settlements take place in the next two years or so.

3.4 Biodiversity Advocacy

Biodiversity staff coordinated the region's contributions to Seaweek again this year. Seaweek is a national initiative and regional coordination involves

publicising a range of different activities around the region, hosted by many different agencies and groups. This year there were 23 activities, including two GWRC-funded public snorkelling events at Whitireia Park and the Common Ground Festival, in the Hutt Valley, where GWRC had a stall and supported a citizen science activity. Feedback was universally positive, and participants were receptive to information about how they could help protect marine biodiversity in the harbour by reducing stormwater pollution.

4. Environment Management

4.1 Harbours

Marine Oil Pollution Tier 1 Response Plans (3 yearly) were approved for the following mobile transfer sites (road tanker marine deliveries): Gull, Fuel Express and Rural Fuels (done under delegated authority from Maritime New Zealand).

24 February – a floating harbour boom was reinstated near the Thorndon Pile to contain sediment plumes whilst CentrePort contractors repair the earthquake-damaged seawall with rock armour.

4 March – Expedition cruise-ship *Caledonian Sky* (which had planned to visit Kapiti island on Christmas Day 2016, before cancelling the visit at the last minute) ran aground with 102 passengers aboard on a coral reef off Indonesia. Initial reports after refloating indicate little hull damage, but the coral suffered significant damage. In the current NZ summer cruise season, there have been two cruise-ship grounding incidents and a berth ‘break-out’, and provide a reminder that all operations in harbour or regional waters with cruise ships need to be well planned, especially in the small “expeditionary” cruise ships.



Cruise ship *Caledonian Sky* at Queens Wharf

13 March – because of the pending first-arrival of a tug barge transporting large quantities of rock from Tarakohe to Wellington’s Aotea Quay Nos.5/6 berth in transit to the Transmission Gully project, the “spare” Barrett Reef buoy needed to be moved from its storage to the Kaiwharawhara Reclamation.



“Spare” Barrett Reef buoy being moved to Kaiwharawhara

14 March – a Tier 2 Marine Oil Spill Response exercise was held at Chaffers Marina.



Seacare deploys a floating harbour oil spill boom.



An oil skimming device is deployed adjacent to a portable storage tank

4.2 Environmental Regulation

We have recently released our report cards which summarise the regulatory activity undertaken in the 2015/16 financial year (July 2015 – July 2016). The cards cover:

- Resource Consents
- Compliance Monitoring
- Incident Response
- Enforcement
- Take charge and other projects

The above reports are attached to this document in full as **Attachment 1**. Some of the highlights are summarised below.

4.2.1 Resource Consents

646 resource consent applications were processed in 2015/16. All of these applications were processed within statutory timeframes and 97% of applications were processed on a non-notified basis.

4.2.2 Notified consents

Of the four notified consent projects processed in 2015/16, one decision was appealed to the Environment Court.

The following three applications were approved (subject to consent conditions) by Hearing Panels:

- South Wairarapa District Council – discharge permits to discharge wastewater to water, land, and air from the operation of the Martinborough wastewater treatment plant.
- South Wairarapa District Council – discharge permits to discharge wastewater to water, land, and air from the operation of the Greytown wastewater treatment plant.
- Jagger NZ Ltd – land use consents, water permit, and discharge permit associated with a 148 lot subdivision in Whitby, Porirua.

The following application was approved (subject to consent conditions) by the Environment Court as this application was directly referred to the Environment Court:

- Site 10 Redevelopment Ltd Partnership & Wellington City Council – City Shaper – coastal, discharge, and water permits associated with the North Kumutoto Precinct Project, Wellington.

4.2.3 National consenting projects

GWRC has been actively involved in national consenting projects for the NZTA including the following roading projects:

- Transmission Gully – A number of applications to change consent conditions and new consents were processed during 2015/16. This project is now under full construction.
- MacKays to Peka Peka – A number of applications to change consent conditions and new consents were processed during 2015/16. The road is now open.
- Peka Peka to Otaki – There have been no applications to change consent conditions or for new consents processed during 2015/16. No site works have commenced for this project yet.

4.2.4 Compliance Monitoring

This year was the first year for implementing GWRC's Strategic Compliance Monitoring Programme. This resulted in increasing monitoring on some consents, and reducing/closing monitoring programmes on other consents. Previously GWRC monitored all active consents. Activities were also targeted for monitoring at particular times of the year. This ensured that consents were being monitored when activities were either operating or when activities had the potential to have greater effects on the environment.

77% of consents monitored were complying with consent conditions.

8% of consents monitored were assessed as major non-compliance, where immediate action is required by consent holder to address non-compliance and potential environmental effects.

The activities with the greatest rates of non-compliance were:

- Non-municipal wastewater – only 51% of consents monitored were complying
- Municipal water supplies and water races – 21% of consents monitored had major non-compliance
- Municipal wastewater – 18% of consents monitored had major non-compliance

Consents associated with forestry and agricultural effluent had the best rates of compliance.

4.2.5 Incident Response

The number of environmental incidents investigated increased from 1116 in 2014/15 to 1197 in 2015/16. Air continues to be the receiving environment most affected by pollution in the Wellington Region, with 23% of all incidents reported relating to odour.

16% of all environmental incidents reported resulted in confirmed breaches of regional rules and the Resource Management Act 1991 – a 4% decrease from last year.

During the year, six incidents were rated to be of “high” environmental significance (compared to seven in 2014/2015, seven in 2013/14 and six in 2012/13).

4.2.6 Enforcement

Environmental Regulation staff have a range of formal tools available to them to deal with breaches of the RMA. The table below shows the different types of regulatory actions taken during the past year. In determining the most appropriate form of enforcement action, officers consider factors such as the severity of environmental effects, compliance history, efforts to remediate and the likelihood of reoffending.

| Type of action | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Advisory notices | 58 | 48 | 60 | 82 | 76 | 90 | 56 | 136 | 95 | 74 | 75 |
| Warning letters | 15 | 40 | 85 | 149 | 134 | 147 | 236 | 89 | 76 | 73 | 64 |
| Infringement notices | 44 | 41 | 49 | 46 | 32 | 46 | 52 | 52 | 22 | 30 | 23 |
| Abatement notices | 24 | 29 | 83 | 91 | 137 | 74 | 58 | 46 | 82 | 29 | 27 |
| Enforcement orders | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Prosecutions | 0 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Total | 141 | 169 | 283 | 376 | 386 | 365 | 406 | 336 | 280 | 213 | 199 |

Summary of actions taken for non-compliant activities

4.2.7 Take Charge and Other Projects

Take Charge is GWRC's pollution prevention programme, which is aimed at improving the environmental performance of small to medium sized businesses across the Wellington region. The programme involves an assessment of an organisation's facilities, activities and management procedures, followed by a report outlining areas of non-compliance and opportunities to improve environmental performance. Businesses are assessed to ensure they:

- Comply with our regional rules
- Have adequate equipment and the correct processes and procedures in place to minimise the risk of contaminants entering the environment

As with last year, the Take Charge programme continued in the Te Awarua o Porirua Harbour Catchment focusing on the industrial/commercial area to the north of Wall Place. A walk over of the area saw twenty three businesses visited and given an information sheet on the aims of the Te Awarua o Porirua Harbour Strategy and the pollution prevention programme. Of the twenty three businesses, eight were identified as being likely to benefit from participating in the pollution prevention programme as they had yard areas, used/stored hazardous substances or carried out activities where discharges to the environment are likely to occur.

4.2.8 Other projects

GWRC staff also contributed to wider projects that assist the Council to meet its core regulatory activities. This year a number of projects were completed or commenced including:

- Completing a Memorandum of Understanding with Department of Conservation for consent processing services
- Developing some 'Can Do' education leaflets about everyday activities that have the potential to have effects on the environment

- Engaging with the winery sector in the Wairarapa about our regulatory activities
- Making further refinements to our webpages containing information for consent holders on water restrictions when low river and stream flow conditions exist
- Developing a water allocation calculator that can provide accurate up to date information on water allocation status for catchments and aquifers
- Undertaking collaborative work with some key stakeholders in relation to our regulatory activities (eg Wellington Water).

4.2.9 Last Line of Defence: compliance, monitoring and enforcement of New Zealand's environmental law

As you may be aware, the Environmental Defence Society has recently released its most recent major report: *Last Line of Defence: compliance, monitoring and enforcement of New Zealand's environmental law*. The report looks at how environmental laws are enforced in New Zealand.

The author of the report Dr Marie Brown spent time with some members of the Environmental Regulation department, including a site visit. This included conversations about how we operate, how we balance the line between formal and non-formal action, engagement, collaboration, executive buy-in, information systems and managing key stakeholders.

The report concluded that regional authorities demonstrated increasing technical capacity for the compliance function, with well-staffed teams. Of concern is that political influence on decision-making (including resourcing) still appears widespread (this is not the case with GWRC where clear separation between governance and the compliance operations clearly exist).

District and city councils fared less well, evidently struggling with the demands of the compliance function due to both political involvement and resourcing (these are of course linked). On the Department of conservation (DoC) estate the report concluded that the resourcing is “just as dire” and that “an enormous regulatory role has been bestowed upon DoC and that aspect of its work – like much of its work – is inadequately funded.”

4.3 Environmental Policy

4.3.1 Natural Hazards Management Strategy progress

The Hazards Strategy Management Strategy is currently being progressed for approvals through all the partner agencies.

The Strategy has received approvals from:

- The Coordinating Executive Group of Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management
- Ara Tahi
- Greater Wellington Regional Council and
- Hutt City Council

It has approval in principle from Porirua City Council after being presented and discussed in depth at a workshop session with Council on the 2nd of March and will go up for formal approval/endorsement at the end of March. It is being taken up to Kapiti Coast District on the 23rd of March and Upper City Council on the 28th of March. Wellington City Council is still working through the process of how we can get the strategy through their Council for approval.

Each Council is providing useful feedback and small changes to improve the clarity and meaning of the Strateg. These are being incorporated into the document and will not impact on the intent or key actions of the strategy.

The idea of having a political champion for the strategy has been raised with all the councils and the consensus coming back is that each council would like to appoint an elected member to be part of a Councillors group. The idea is that the steering committee for the strategy can use this Councillors group as a sounding board and for political advice through the implementation of the strategy and as a way of keeping the political arm of councils informed and in a better place to drive the Strategy.

4.3.2 Resource Legislation Amendment Bill

The Select Committee has reported back on reforms to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The omnibus Bill proposes changes to the RMA and also to the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012, the Environmental Protection Authority Act 2011, the Conservation Act 1987, the Reserves Act 1977, and the Public Works Act 1981.

Some of the Committee's recommendations are to:

- Amend iwi participation arrangements in several ways, including changing the name to “Mana Whakahono a Rohe: Iwi Participation Arrangements”, and enable iwi to initiate the arrangements with local authorities
- Remove some of the Minister’s proposed regulation-making powers
- Introduce a single development and consultation process for national direction
- Amend the notification regime and submission strike-out provisions for resource consents
- Adjust the infringement regime for offences relating to stock-exclusion from water bodies
- Expand upon the proposed amendments to the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012 relating to the decommissioning of offshore petroleum production structures.

There remains a clear thread of additional powers for the Minister and various mechanisms to promote urban development. There is likely to be lengthy

debate during the second reading of the Bill given its complexity and controversial nature of the reforms. A supplementary order paper proposing changes to the Bill could also be introduced into the House at that time.

Officers' are weighing up the merits of the amendments to Schedule 1 of the RMA that allows a collaboration path with reduced appeal rights. Our Whaitua programme could fit into this framework and there would be some advantages for using this path rather than the traditional Schedule 1 route. We will provide you with further advice on this issue following enactment.

5. Parks

5.1.1 Parks network

The process to review the overall Parks Network Plan has commenced with project planning and issues analysis. A briefing will be provided at a later meeting of the Committee.

Progress continues towards developing a regional trails framework, with a number of stakeholder workshops held around the region and a discussion with the steering committee. All participants see the greatest opportunities to be the provision of a complete network linking natural areas and access to a range of outdoor recreation activities. A draft report is expected early in April; all partners and stakeholders will be invited to comment, and the final report produced in May.

The Rimutaka Cycle Trail steering group has met with MBIE, NZCT and NZTA regarding the trail concept plan for the next 10 years. Focussing on moving from "good to great", this centres on track upgrades (Taita Gorge, Siberia, South Coast) and completing the loop back to Eastbourne.

The Greater Wellington Great Outdoors summer programme is more than two thirds complete, and an interim report has produced some very encouraging results:

- The social media "reach" has topped 100,000 "impressions" with more than 40,000 people seeing the new video
- Attendance to date is up on last year, even with a number of cancellations due to bad weather
- More than half of participants at events were new to that park, compared to around a third in previous years. Almost all say they want to return.
- Event satisfaction is at around 95%; a testament to the quality of organisation, the engagement and knowledge of our staff and volunteers.

The Battle Hill Farm Day was a highlight, attracting around 1,200 people with sheep dog demonstrations, shearing and yard work, eel feeding and cooking by Silver Fern Farms. GWRC partnered up with our three farm licence holders to put on a really enjoyable day.



Commercial dog walking operators in the regional parks is a relatively new activity that has been unregulated to date, but which has grown rapidly in recent times. GWRC is working with the operators to develop licence terms and conditions to ensure they operate safely and minimise the impacts and risks to other park users.

Vegetation cutbacks were completed across the network, including 50km of track in the East Harbour northern forest alone. The wet summer has made this a significantly larger and more time consuming task than usual.

5.1.2 Akatarawa Forest

A new scour valve has been installed in Birchville Dam, as backup water level control mechanism in case of failure of the intake valve. The Birchville Dam is now a “working” dam rather than a weir. These measures have reduced the potential downstream impacts of a dam failure, but do entail environmental impacts as some of the built up sediment will be discharged at intervals down the stream. We are working with the Environmental Regulation team to develop a management regime that mitigates this effect as much as possible.

Further work has removed a slip and repaired washouts on the track to the dam, around Cannon Point trig and on the Dopers Creek track, which is part of the Karapoti Classic route.

As a result of a competitive process we awarded a 2-year licence to NZ Manuka Ltd to place several hundred beehives in the Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests, in regenerating native and manuka areas. In the interim we will review our policies regarding beehives as part of the upcoming Parks Network Plan review.

5.1.3 Battle Hill

Porirua City Council has granted the Riding for Disabled Association (RDA) a resource consent by to undertake their activity at Battle Hill on a long term basis. This consent is required in addition to permission from GWRC as landowner and manager. Once GWRC has completed our assessment of the RDA proposal to build the covered arena and associated facilities we intend to publicly notify it as a significant and long term change for the park.

Park visitors, licence holders and management are now using the 5m x 5m underpass through the Transmission Gully Motorway (TGM) designation, as construction begins on the headwall and associated earthworks.



5.1.4 Belmont Regional Park

GWRC has confirmed with the Transmission Gully motorway (TGM) contractor that we are prepared to make another 110ha available in the Cannons Creek catchment and Duck Creek catchment available for mitigation of the effects of the project. Much of this land has already been fenced and retired from grazing; this initiative will enable further fencing and considerably more planting to take place.

The Parks team has completed the track realignment on the Otonga Track portion of the Korokoro Dam Loop from Oakleigh Street. Further access improvements are being developed at the historic Korokoro Dam, which is one of our most popular visitor destinations. The crew is working its way up the Oakleigh Street section, replacing or removing a number of structures at the end of their useful life and creating more sustainable alignments as they go.

Hutt City Council has granted a resource consent to construct the new shared use trail from Hill Road to Old Coach Road along with other tracks to support the stream retirement and revegetation works in Speedy's Stream catchment.

We are nearing completion of laneway fencing from Normandale to Hill Road. This will allow year-round recreational access to Old Coach Road, as park users can then be separated from lambs and calves (and their either very flighty or protective mothers).

Detailed design works are underway for the septic system to support the Dry Creek toilet project, required to obtain building consent from HCC. We expect construction to be completed towards the end of May/early June.

5.1.5 East Harbour Regional Park

As noted elsewhere in the report the aerial 1080 pest control operation will take place after 1 April in the park, avoiding a local Wild Foods festival. It will still occur during relatively warm weather which hastens breakdown of animal carcasses (thus reducing the risk to dogs from scavenging). However, it will affect balloted deer hunters during the "roar" period, who will be subject to further restrictions following the drop.

Construction of the new walking trail from Muritai Park to the Main Ridge commenced in the first week of March. This trail will link with a marked path through the Eastbourne village, creating a loop opportunity for residents and visitors alike. The existing Muritai Track, now maintained by locals, has reverted to a tramping experience which many enjoy but which has become more inaccessible to the less fit and able.

Massey University students are assisting GWRC and the Friends of Baring Head again this year with interpretation related projects as part of the Baring Head lighthouse complex redevelopment. The Friends are seeking to a recent \$50,000 grant for detailed design works needed to obtain consents and be 'hammer ready' for works when further funds are obtained.

5.1.6 Kaitoke Regional Park

The Parks team was delighted to receive confirmation that Kaitoke Regional Park is one of 22 parks in New Zealand to be awarded a Green Flag by the NZ Recreation Association and Keep Britain Tidy, recognising an international standard of park management, presentation and community engagement. This is the second Green Flag award for Kaitoke, and specifically acknowledges efforts to implement recommendations from the first award in 2013.

5.1.7 Queen Elizabeth Park

Following a recent meeting with a local resident and KCDC, GWRC has requested that DoC amend the Control and Management agreement to include the Rainbow Court entrance area. This will open the way to improving park visitor and management access at this location, which has become even more popular since the opening of Te Ara o Whareroa shared path. KCDC has undertaken to improve the street exit on the road reserve and carry out further traffic calming in the nearby streets.

GWRC has partnered with the Friends of QEP and the family of the late Chair John Lancashire to develop "Lanc's Lookout" in the park, looking over the dunes, Te Ara o Whareroa, and the connections to the farmed area and hinterland. The new seat acknowledges the significance of John's contribution to the park and the partnership between GWRC and the Friends.



We recently hosted a Friends of QEP/ volunteer tour of the park to see planting trial sites and discuss management challenges for the park. These include riparian management of the Wainui Stream in QEP, the escalating impact of erosion on the dunes, and the extensive infestation of tree lupin in the southern block. The tour was a good opportunity for the Friends to also engage with Cr Lamason (Parks Portfolio Leader), Cr Gaylor (Kapiti) and Cr Holborow (KCDC).

Stream bed survey work is underway in the Whareroa and Waterfall Streams to determine future trigger points for gravel extraction works, to comply with consents conditions. Once complete, the gravel extraction itself will get underway in late March/early April.

5.1.8 Whitireia Park

Following questions from our iwi partners Ngati Toa regarding aerial weed control, we met with them to discuss their concerns in more detail. These discussions have resulted in development of a "Fact Sheet" to outline in plain language what is happening, why it is needed, the risks involved and how these are mitigated. It can be readily circulated to stakeholders and easily adapted for aerial operations in other areas.

Test digs required as part of the archaeological authority to carry out hard landscaping at the Kaitawa Pou will be completed by the end of March, depending availability of an archaeologist and Iwi monitor.

New signs indicating the dog "on leash" area at Onehunga Bay have generated mixed comment in local papers and to staff on site. It will take time to get broader public acceptance of the restriction; for the Park Ranger team this will

be a process of drawing attention to the new rules and educating people around the reasons for their introduction.

6. Climate Change

6.1 Submission on the draft replacement NZ Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy

GWRC officers prepared a submission on the document “Unlocking our energy productivity and renewable potential,” the New Zealand Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy 2017-2022 during the MBIE-led public consultation period that ran until February 2017. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (the EECS) is a companion to the New Zealand Energy Strategy 2011-2021. The EECS sets the overarching policy direction for government support and intervention, and guides the work programme of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) over the next five years.

GWRC’s submission (**Attachment 2**) made a number of recommendations in response to the draft EECS:

- The target for a decrease in industrial emissions intensity should be:
 - A target for change and not just reflect the business as usual forecast
 - Accompanied by new and specific policy actions to achieve it
 - Supplemented by a target to reduce absolute emissions in the sector.
- The target for an increase in electric vehicles should be:
 - Strengthened beyond the projected business as usual scenario
 - Broadened to include measures and corresponding actions relating to other sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling, public transport and car-share
 - Supplemented by fuel efficiency standards for both heavy and light internal combustion engine vehicles, and a tax on the purchase of internal combustion engine vehicles considered.
- An economy-wide energy efficiency target should be included.
- The target for 90% renewable electricity generation by 2025 should be re-stated.
- A clear evidence-base and sound analysis of the relative costs and benefits of NZ’s energy efficiency and emissions reductions options should be outlined in the EECS and should demonstrably inform the strategic approach and actions set out in the Strategy.
- Improvements could be made in the energy data available for business, household and public sector planning.

6.2 Consideraton of Climate Change

The GWRC Climate Change Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to taking a proactive approach to managing the risks associated with a changing climate, to reducing the emissions associated with its activities, and to contributing to the enhanced resilience of the region by considering climate change in its decision making processes.

To this end, a requirement to consider climate change in the development of all new initiatives, and to include a summary of the assessment in council and committee reports is planned for implementation in May.

6.3 Climate Change Adaptation Funding Workshop

Cr Blakeley participated in the 24th February Climate Change Adaptation Funding Workshop hosted by Victoria University's School of Government and the NZ Climate Change Research Institute.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss possible funding mechanisms for climate change adaptation, the need for them, lessons from existing mechanisms, the pros and cons of different approaches, design features, their governance and implementation issues. The outcomes of the workshop will contribute to a working paper.

GWRC also assisted with facilitation, providing an officer to record minutes and synthesise the discussion into a report that will inform the working paper.

6.4 EVelocity Programme

Greater Wellington is a Silver Sponsor of the 2017 Wellington region EVelocity Programme. EVelocity is an electric vehicle competition for high schools that is already established in Canterbury, Nelson and Waikato, and is launching in Wellington this year. Programme sponsors include Wellington Electricity, Weltec, Future in Tech, Sustainability Trust, Hutt Science and Wellington, Upper Hutt, Kapiti and Poriria Councils.

EVelocity delivers practical education on electric transportation through:

- A project based learning programme in high schools in which teams of students are equipped with an electric motor kit and, with tutoring and a series of hands-on workshops throughout the year, they design and build their very own electric vehicles. In most cases this will form part of their NCEA technology, physics, science or education for sustainability studies.
- Running public electric vehicle test drive programmes in association with the end of year schools competition.

Chair Chris Laidlaw attended the launch event and spoke to the other sponsors and the approximately 40 students present about the pivotal role low emission public transport and electrical engineering skills will play in New Zealand's transition to a low carbon economy.



Staff and students look under the hood of GWRCs fully electric Nissan Leaf

7. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

7.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is not necessary.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report approved by:

Report approved by:

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry

General Manager,
Environment Management

Wayne O'Donnell

General Manager,
Catchment Management

Luke Troy

General Manager,
Strategy

Attachment 1 Report cards summarising the regulatory activity undertaken in the 2015/16 financial year

Attachment 2 GWRC submission on the draft replacement NZ Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy