



caring about you & your environment

Report 00.727

28 September 2000

File: K/4/6/1

[Report 2000.Env:00217.KH:mm]

Report to Environment Committee
from Kathryn Hooper, Resource Quality Officer

Sewage Disposal Practices in the Orongorongo Valley – Follow Up Investigation

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the results of follow up investigations of sewage disposal practices undertaken in the Orongorongo Valley.

2. Background

In March 2000 ten water samples were taken from rivers and streams in the Orongorongo Valley and tested for Faecal Coliforms and Enterococci. The results of this sampling were presented in the Resource Investigations Technical Report “Investigation of Sewage Disposal Practices in the Orongorongo Valley, 1999-2000” (WRC/RINV-T-00/10).

One of these samples revealed faecal coliform levels of 392 CFU/100ml that were of concern to the Wellington Regional Council. This sample was taken from an unnamed tributary of the Orongorongo River adjacent to the camping area at Manuka Flat. As a result, further investigation in this area during winter was recommended in the report.

3. Key Findings

3.1 Faecal Coliform Levels Lower

On 4 September 2000 three further samples were taken from the unnamed tributary running through Manuka Flat after an extended period of wet weather in the area.

The results of this sampling are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of sampling of an unnamed tributary of the Orongorongo River, Manuka Flat, 4th September 2000

Location	Faecal Coliforms (CFU/100ml)
Upstream of camping ground	14
Adjacent to camping Ground	26
Confluence of tributary with Orongorongo River	6

These results show low levels of Faecal Coliform bacteria. This indicates that the initial suggestion that the high Faecal Coliform levels recorded in March were attributable to the natural character of the stream was correct. The stream that was sampled has a muddy bottom and is quite slow flowing. Water temperature in summer is also quite warm. This type of environment is favourable for bacteria.

During September the stream flow was notably higher, and water temperature was also cooler than when original samples were taken in March. It should be noted that in July 2000 (i.e. between the two sampling runs) a Department of Conservation (DoC) long drop toilet in the camping ground was de-commissioned due to concerns about the effect this may have on the environment. This toilet was also of some concern to the Wellington Regional Council as it was a potential source of faecal contamination in this area. This toilet will not be replaced.

3.2 Sewage Disposal Concerns Remedied

The initial report also identified one hut where there were concerns about sewage disposal. During the visit to the valley on 4 September 2000 this hut was re-inspected. This inspection revealed that the inadequate sewage treatment system had been decommissioned, and had been replaced with a traditional long drop toilet.

Two further huts were inspected for the first time. These had adequate toilet facilities that did not appear to pose any significant threat to the environment.

4. Summary

Findings of this follow up investigation indicate that the environmental impacts of sewage disposal systems in the Orongorongo Valley are very small. This investigation has also shown that the concerns expressed by the Wellington Regional Council were taken seriously, and the parties who were approached have taken steps to improve their disposal facilities.

Through continued liaison with DoC and Hutt City Council, we are confident that any concerns about sewage disposal practices in the Park can be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

5. Further Action

There remains potential for environmental impacts to occur given the large numbers of huts in the area and the heavy recreational use in parts of the Orongorongo Valley. The following recommendations from the initial report are therefore re-iterated:

- The WRC should continue to liaise with DoC and the Hutt City Council so they can bring any concerns about sewage disposal in the Orongorongo Valley to the attention of WRC officers.
- The WRC should continue to liaise with the Orongorongo Club and hut licensees to raise awareness of the Council's environmental requirements.

6. Communication

Copies of this report will be provided to the Department of Conservation and the Hutt City Council. Findings of the report will also be communicated to media sources in the Region who expressed interest in this issue at the time of the initial report.

7. Recommendations

That the report be received and the contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

KATHRYN HOOPER
Resource Quality Officer

JOHN SHERRIFF
Manager, Resource Investigations

JANE BRADBURY
Divisional Manager, Environment