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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Colin Wright, Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information of interest since the previous meeting held on 8 May 2001.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Annual Plan

Appointed members on the Committee are advised that the Council will be finalising the items to be included in the 2001/02 Annual Plan and Long Term Financial Strategy update on 14 June. The final document will then be agreed on 28 June ready for the start of the new financial year.

One item being progressed at present is the change in the Bovine Tb rate as recommended by this Committee. The special order process under the Local Government Act is required to discontinue the present differential rating system. That process will take till nearly the end of August to complete. Therefore the new Bovine Tb rate on operational areas only will not be formally struck until late September.

2.2 Irrigation Study

Work on the Wairarapa Irrigation Study is continuing and the consultants expect to report their findings to the steering group towards the end of the month. It is likely that they will be presenting concepts for several possible community schemes that between them could cover a significant portion of the Wairarapa valley.

In order to provide sufficient and reliable water throughout the irrigation season, any scheme will need to involve substantial off river storage. As a result there would be limited or no withdrawals from rivers during low flow periods.

An application has been made to the Sustainable Farming Fund for funding towards a second stage of the investigation. This stage would involve detailed technical and economic study of possible schemes and would include public consultation, particularly with the landholders. This application has passed the initial screening phase. Further detailed work will need to be undertaken after this next phase if there is sufficient interest in adopting any schemes.

2.3 Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre

I attended a recent meeting at the Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre where the Department of Conservation outlined their plans to restore the 940 hectare Mount Bruce forest. Their vision is for Mt Bruce to once again be a place where everyone can hear the dawn chorus. Clearly this aim will be complementary to the work that this Council is already undertaking in biodiversity and in particular with the KNE areas.

As might be expected, pest control will be a major part of their planned activities. DOC staff publicly acknowledged the very valuable work that this Council (and Horizons.mw) have undertaken in the Mt Bruce area as part of our Bovine Tb vector control activity. At the end of the meeting I was given the privilege of releasing one of three North Island Kaka into the wild. This release of Kaka followed the first successful release on mainland NZ at Mt Bruce some four years ago.

2.4 Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the large amount of work that staff have undertaken recently in relation to the public submissions process on both the Proposed Resource Management Charging Policy and the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy. A substantial amount of work under tight time pressures was required on both these matters.

2.5 Staff

Summer Warr has commenced duties as Water Quality Scientist/Aquatic Ecologist. She holds an MSc in freshwater and marine ecology and replaced Brett Stansfield who is now with the Hawkes Bay Regional Council.

3. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

3.1 October Flood Damage Repairs

The \$1.1m October 2000 flood damage repair programme is on target for substantial completion. Factors such as recent high river levels, unavailability of machinery, and the unwillingness of landowners to part fund works, have all contributed to a slow down in the works programme in recent weeks. Recognising these factors the projected \$57,000 under-spend is a very satisfactory result.

Repair work completed over the reporting period is as follows:

- Rock protection at the Lake Wairarapa Lookout – Abbots Creek, Featherston
- Channel alignment at various sites – Waingawa River
- Willow trenching at various sites – Mangatarere River
- Willow cabling at the Cliffs site on Dakins Road – Ruamahanga River

Outstanding works include bank protection work at Oliver's on the Ruamahanga River and at the Mahunga Golf Course on the Waipoua River.

3.2 Waiohine River & Floodplain Investigation

The Special Order rating notification process for the new Waiohine, Mangatarere, and Waipoua River Management Schemes is progressing. To date no objections have been received.

3.3 Advisory Committee Meetings

A successful round of meetings was held with the seven river management scheme advisory committees. The main agenda items were progress with the current works programme, the 2001/02 works programme and rating requirements, and the annual election of the committee chairmen.

3.4 Gravel Extraction Licensing System

The Global Resource Consent for gravel extraction in the Ruamahanga River system is expected to be operative from July 2001. The Operations Department has been working on a gravel extraction licensing system to operate within the framework of this consent. The licensing system will provide better river management outcomes and improve service delivery for gravel extractors.

Meetings explaining the proposed process will be completed with the Gravel Guardians and the Gravel Users Group. A gravel forum is scheduled for late June.

From the beginning of July, Graham Reidy from the Technical Services Section will issue gravel licences. These will be issued within two days of receipt.

3.5 Forestry – Silviculture

A total of 650 hectares of silviculture is expected to be completed by the end of June.

It is anticipated that approximately 11,000 tonnes of trees will be harvested by the end of the financial year.

3.6 Technical Services – Activities

Activities completed include –

- Gravel licence process ready for meetings with other interested parties.
- Writing Arcview training manual ready for training days with Biosecurity and Planning & Resources Departments.
- Production of Grade Control Reports for the Engineering Section.
- Cross-section resurveys of the lower Tauherenikau River following construction of the sillbank.
- Six monthly resurveys of Tauhereinkau, Waiohine, Waipoua and Upper Ruamahanga Rivers.
- Bovine Tb mapping and warning signs for various new operations.
- Dam surveys for Brancepeth and Highcliffs farms.
- Produced pump station plans for the Engineering Section.
- Overseen the construction of Akura stock race.
- Produced flood coverage maps for addition of ‘areas of uncertainty’.
- Production of WELA maps for drainage schemes, soil units, and faultline information.

3.7 Registration of Interest – 20001/02 Works Programme

During the last month there has been a call for Registration of Interest for the upcoming soil conservation works programme. This is the first time the full complement of work has been advertised this way. Normally advertisements for individual work such as pole planting, silviculture or fencing have been placed.

A total of thirteen contractors from throughout the region registered their interest, and have subsequently submitted prices for all or part of the work. Most of the contractors are proven performers from past years and are Wairarapa based. It is pleasing to have received tenders from two contractors based on the Kapiti Coast. This will enable greater efficiency in completing the increasing works requirement in this part of the region.

3.8 Akura Nursery Developments

In recent weeks a new mezzanine floor has been installed in the storage shed at the Akura Conservation Centre. The area will primarily be used for storing Dynex pole sleeves and other tree protection products. The new area will greatly reduce congestion in both the sheds and make for more efficient handling of project stock.

In preparation for new planting in the spring, stumps have been removed from four small compartments. A total area of 2 hectares will be available for new planting, with a focus on some of the better performing poplar clones. The stumps were some of the very early plantings at the nursery and due for removal either because of ill-thrift or they had been superseded by new clones.

3.9 Catchment Scheme Advisory Committee Meetings

Meetings have been held over the past month for each of the six Catchment Schemes. Two Scheme reviews have been completed, for the Homewood and Maungaraki Schemes. At each of these meetings endorsement of the Scheme objectives and works programme has been achieved. Rate increases have ranged from 0% to 12.5%. In all Schemes the storm damage reserves are building to more adequate levels.

To assist with future planning of Scheme programmes it is envisaged that an Asset Management Programme will be required. While maintenance is a strong focus in all of the Schemes all assets need to be identified and a maintenance regime scheduled. Once completed this will enable ratepayers to fully understand the ongoing requirement for protecting the various plantings, structures and waterways.

4. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

4.1 Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference – May 2001

The Manager of Biosecurity recently attended the 13th Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference in Melbourne. The conference is held every three years, attracting a range of speakers from throughout the Pacific Basin.

A total of 81 papers were presented over the course of the five day conference. A total of 42 poster displays were also available for review. Main topics included –

- Contribution of vertebrate pest management to biodiversity
- Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease
- Politics, risk management and decision making in managing vertebrate pests
- Fertility control
- Bioeconomics of pest control

Keynote speakers included –

- the NZ Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr. Morgan Williams, who spoke on public perceptions to genetic engineering;
- Dave Choquenot, Department of Natural Resources & Environment, Victoria, who spoke on the relationship between vertebrate pest control and biodiversity enhancement; and
- Dr Larry Clark, USA, who covered the bioeconomics of vertebrate pest management.

A brief presentation will be given to Committee members to elaborate on a number of the key issues of the conference.

4.2 KNE Pest Plant Control

Two pest plant KNE contracts have recently been completed. Two separate contracts have also commenced.

Raroa Reserve. Work controlling a range of pest plants in the bush portion of this reserve, adjacent to State Highway One at Pukerua Bay, was completed on schedule. This proved a difficult contract due to the steep terrain. It is likely that a maintenance control programme will be required late in 2002.

Otari / Wilton Reserve. The initial contract to clear a range of pest plants along the Kaiwharawhara track, which runs to the south of the visitors' centre, has been completed. This work involved the clearing mainly brush weeds several metres back from the track and an adjacent stream. The areas cleared are to be replanted in native species by voluntary groups over the next two years. An extension to this contract has now been arranged. This will enable all the waste areas adjacent to

the total length of the Kaiwharawhara Track to be cleared and replanted.

East Harbour Reserve. Work has commenced on this contract. However there have been some recent delays with the work now behind schedule. These delays have resulted from inclement weather and the recent ill health of the contractor.

Otaki River. A contract has commenced clearing mainly Banana Passionfruit along both banks of the Otaki River. The length to be cleared starts at the swing bridge below the Otaki Gorge and continues to approximately one kilometre below State Highway One.

4.3 Disputes Tribunal

On 22nd of May two Plants staff were involved in a Disputes Tribunal hearing. This was by phone-link with the Auckland Court where an absentee Wellington property owner had made a claim against the Council. The claim followed the release of a statutory land charge placed on the claimant's Wellington property following non-compliance with a Notice of Direction issued in March 2000. The amount of the claim equalled the release cost, namely \$1,100.

The Claimant brought the case on the basis that she had not received the Notice nor any other correspondence. However, staff were able to show by documentation that all procedures in serving the Notice had been carried out correctly. The postal address of the property owner had been checked and verified. No correspondence had ever been returned to Council unopened. Council staff had no way of knowing that the correspondence was not reaching its destination. The Disputes Tribunal adjudicator found in favour of the WRC and the claim was dismissed.

4.4 Communications

Plants staff have been involved in assisting education and voluntary weed control group projects at Masterton, Otaki, Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt. Pest Plant displays were organised at -

- The Otaki Field Day
- Wellington City Council Berhampore Nursery Open Day
- Wellington Regional Council sponsored "Restoration Day"

4.5 Bovine Tb Possum Contracts

Registrations of interest were invited nationally from suitably qualified groups or individuals to undertake possum control contracts on up to 16 operations totalling approximately 187,000 hectares. The final amount of hectares will be conditional upon pre-operational monitoring results.

Eleven (11) registrations were received and 10 contractors were invited to tender for the first available contracts. This is for 60,960 hectares over 7 operational areas, with the performance target requirements set at either a residual trap-catch index (RTC) of 2.0% with no lines over 7.0%, or an RTC of 3.0% with no lines over 13.5%. These new performance requirements will put more pressure on breaking the Bovine Tb cycle between possums and cattle or deer.

A meeting has been scheduled in Masterton on 18th June to provide up-to-date information to the selected contractors. The Animal Health Board Regional Co-ordinator will be in attendance. Tenders will close and be notified in early July.

A further round of tenders will be notified in August once pre-operational possum density results are known.

4.6 East Harbour KNE Operation

This 2,375-hectare possum trapping operation commenced on the 24th April, this year under contract to Professional Guiding Services Ltd. To date, 1,162 possums, 2 mustelids and 120 rats have been captured. It was expected that the possum tally would have been higher at this stage although there is still a lot of the area to be covered. The operation is not expected to be completed until late October this year.

4.7 Porirua Scenic Reserve KNE

Staff have commenced a maintenance programme in this 290-hectare reserve. It was last treated two years ago and the possum density has crept back up to an amazing 16.0% RTC.

Of note is that staff consider the regrowth in this reserve to be phenomenal. They had trouble finding the access lines and bait stations locations.

4.8 Goat Control

Twenty (20) goats were destroyed in the Glover Road area of Ngauranga Gorge. They were destroyed at the request of a roading contractor because they were damaging amenity plantings on earth works. The costs of control will be shared with Wellington City Council. Staff will continue to monitor the area and arrange further control when remaining goats mob up.

4.9 Prioritising Sites for Biodiversity

This project is progressing well, and we expect to be able to rank all indigenous and semi-indigenous remnants in the region by the end of July. The initial computer generated ranking can be used with some confidence, however some manual amendment may be required to

distinguish the small, rare and highly specialised ecosystems such as wetlands and coastal escarpments.

This information will provide a sound foundation for determining appropriate levels of assistance for private land occupiers, and some insight into the ecological potential of various “mainland island” proposals.

Landcare Research Ltd has recently provided the environmental distinctiveness data for our region. This is a critical piece of the puzzle and along with the land cover database and various other datasets pertaining to natural character, will enable us to commence ranking of sites regionally.

By the end of July, Landcare Research Ltd expects to also complete a revised form of the land cover database. This will provide superior resolution and incorporate much improved definition of forest types. We will probably generate an initial regional priority ranking without this data, and revise our ranking in August.

With the continuous change in the region’s land cover and our data pertaining to that, regional priority ranking will always be a moving target to some degree.

4.10 Bovine Tb Update

(1) Operational Progress as at 31 May 2001

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	207,378	71.4	165,364	79.7
Private Contractor	82,998	28.6	53,531	64.5
	290,376	100.0	218,895	75.4

(2) Private Contractors

The following areas were tendered to private contractors:

Pakowhai	6,747 ha
Tinui	7,577 ha (Completed)
Stronvar	24,793 ha
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,851 ha
East Alfredton	5,200 ha (Completed)
Martinborough 1	16,830 ha (Completed)
Martinborough 2	5,000 ha

(3) Contractor Progress

- The Stronvar operation will be completed by 20th June and Martinborough 2 will commence thereafter. The contractor has been granted an extension of time to complete both operations.

(4) Operation Progress – Bovine Unit

Thirty Two (32) operations to be treated

Eighteen (18) operations completed

Fourteen (14) operations have commenced control

- Currently the Bovine Unit is on schedule to complete the 2000/01 programme except for some 4,000 hectares in the Te Wharau district which has had to be deferred until September because of the Autumn drought conditions.
- The Featherston Crown aerial (4,330 hectares) has been completed. The Te Wharau (4,000 hectares), Tinui (1,000 hectares) and Bideford (1,000 hectares), should be completed by the 14th June. It is expected that the trend of post operational low residual trap-catch results will continue.

5. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)**5.1 Environmental Incidents**

Date	Complaint	Details
27/04/01	Car dumped in Ruamahanga River, Masterton	Car removed by WRC
30/04/01	A resident in Masterton was concerned about sediment build up and dumping of concrete in stream	MDC followed up matter with complainant. No action required by WRC.
30/04/01	Fertiliser from aerial topdressing has covered houses and vehicles at two properties, polluting drinking water, rural Masterton	Found to be caused by drift of fertiliser from neighbouring property. Company responsible to be charged for staff time spent investigating incident.
8/05/01	Abandoned vehicle in Huangarua River.	Car stolen and dumped in Huangarua River. Car removed.
10/05/01	Large drain has been dug on farm, which is diverting a large volume of groundwater, rural Carterton.	Under investigation
14/05/01	Smoke pollution at industrial site, Carterton.	Investigated, found to be primarily steam from an industrial site, which has resource consent.

21/05/01	Dust from neighbouring industrial site, South Wairarapa	Logged only, complaint made the day after the incident. One of a series of on-going complaints.
22/05/01	MDC reported an abandoned car in the Waipoua River	Removed by WRC
22/05/01	Resident in Featherston is concerned about smoke pollution from neighbouring property	Found to be normal discharge from domestic wood burner. No further action taken.
22/05/01	Domestic rubbish dumped in picnic area	Under Investigation
5/06/01	Suspected diesel discharging into a water race, Carterton	Diesel spill confirmed, Council considering options.
7/06/01	Advice received that a large load of gravel had been extracted from a local landowner's property without consent.	Under Investigation
11/06/01	Landowner in Gladstone area expressed concern about neighbouring property irrigating out of creek during summer	Under investigation

5.2 Compliance

Two abatement notices were issued in relation to an illegal irrigation take and an unsatisfactory dairy shed effluent disposal system. Both incidents were on the same property, one matter involving the lessee, the other the owner of the property.

An infringement notice, issued in relation to unconsented wild flood irrigation, has been appealed. A pre-hearing conference has been scheduled before a District Court Judge. Normally these appeals are heard and determined by a Justice of the Peace.

A decision has been taken to prosecute a dairy farmer for the discharge of dairy shed effluent by direct pumping into a stream, in contravention of consent conditions and the Resource Management Act.

Consents and Compliance staff attended a recent enforcement seminar. This was conducted by Local Government NZ, with training given by Karenza da Silva, the author of the LGNZ Enforcement Manual.

5.3 Notified Consents

JNL – air discharge variation	Previous application for variation withdrawn. Awaiting revised application. No recent action by the applicant.
Craggy Range Vineyard –water take	To be withdrawn. Application made to take water from high Huangaroa flows, likely to be non-notified.
Greytown sewage – discharge	Operative. Variation being processed to align dates with withdrawal of appeal.
Martinborough sewage – discharge	Applicant has requested further time for comment provided to consultants on draft AEE.

Featherston Sewage – discharge	On hold awaiting full assessment of effects and consultation. Agreed lower priority than Martinborough.
Masterton Sewage – discharge	On hold. No apparent progress with rapid infiltration trials. No recent action by the applicant.
Owahanga Station – Coastal	Meeting held with owner’s representative to clarify scope and requirements. No further progress.
Martinborough Landfill	Submitters meeting held. Time frame extended at applicant’s request to allow further negotiation with submitters.
WRC Operations – Ruamahanga gravel	Operative. Appeal resolved. <i>Refer separate report.</i>
Genesis Power – 7 consents – Kourarau	Replacement consents recently notified
Kopuaranga River - 5 takes	Granted
S McLachlan – Rathkeale – underground takes	Notified, open for submission.
N Davies Lake Meadows partnership - takes - Lake Wairarapa	Notified, open for submission

5.4 Rights Granted Under 1967 Water and Soil Conservation Act

Existing rights granted under this Act expire this year (10 years after implementation of the Resource Management Act) and require the issue of new consents. In total there are some 150 of these rights, predominantly involving discharges to land, or water takes. It appears that up to a third of this number are likely to have ceased their activity, or alternatively, their activity does not now require consent under the Regional Plan rules. Steady progress is being made in processing these consents with a good overall acceptance by the consent holders of this “update” requirement.

5.5 Riversdale Sewage

Following a ratepayers meeting in October last year, general agreement was given to proceed with development of a community sewage scheme for Riversdale. Since then a Steering Committee has been established by Masterton District Council. Two Steering Committee meetings have been held, with Graham Sevicke-Jones – Section Leader, Resource Investigations attending in an observer and advisory capacity. The Committee is obtaining `harder` data on costs to support the proposed community scheme.

5.6 Coastal Strategy

Following on from the recent Coastal Forum, an initial meeting of Regional and District Councils and Iwi representatives was held on 21 May to progress the decision of the forum to develop a common Wairarapa Coastal Strategy. South Wairarapa District Mayor, John Read was elected as Group Chairman and the Group gave strong support towards working together and taking the opportunity to

developing a common Wairarapa approach to sustainable use of the Wairarapa's coast. A discussion paper is to be prepared for the next meeting on 27 July, setting out a possible process for developing a Coastal Wairarapa Strategy.

5.7 Bore Permits

Strong agricultural prices and the recent dry weather have given a very strong demand for permits to drill or excavate wells. To the end of May, 108 bore consent applications have been received, compared to 77 for the previous year. These consents cover the construction of the well. Testing of water yield and the effect on aquifers requires determination before a subsequent consent application can be made to use the water for irrigation.

5.8 Publicity

Steve Veix – Resource Advisor, provided an article for the latest “Pork Environment” magazine. Entitled “Resource Consents Made Easy” it gave advice on how pork producers can make their resource consent application process more smooth and streamlined.

5.9 Floodwarning

	May	Financial Year to date	Previous Year to Date
No. of events	1	17	6
No of Lists Issued Warnings	5	136	23

5.10 Hydrological Summary

Rivers

The rivers in the Wairarapa have continued their trend from the proceeding month with flows still below their average. The table below is for 2 of these sites.

Site	May 2001 Flow (m ³ /s)	Average May Flow (m ³ /s)	% of Average
Waihenga	47.7	82.3	60
Waiohine	15.9	23.4	68

With the cessation of the irrigation season at the end of April pressures on the river systems have now eased. Rainfall (see below) has also reduced irrigation need. Flows within rivers have been sufficient to meet in stream needs.

Rainfall

Site	Location	May 2001 (mm)	Average May (mm)	% of average
Angle Knob	Tararua Ranges	607	604	100
Alloa	Middle Valley	106	99	107
Tanawa Hut	Eastern Hills	117	134	87

These figures show a significant change from last month where the percentages were in the 25% region. Even though there has been a “wintry” change with somewhat cooler and damper conditions, pasture growth has come away significantly from what in April was a ‘parched’ landscape in many areas.

Looking back over figures for two rainfall recording sites:

- Alloa - Tauherenikau received only 224 mm of rain for the six months from mid November. This is the lowest 6 monthly figure since 1963 and has a rough order return period of 30 years.
- Purunui – near the Blairlogie junction received 282mm from mid October. This was far from its lowest 6 monthly figure for that period, when only 141 mm was recorded in the six months from October 1967.

These figures bear out the observation that the drought conditions progressively worsened towards the south.

It should be noted that with the lower rainfall in the Tararuas earlier this year there was also a lower incidence of the north-westerly winds associated with the typical frontal rainfall events. These winds tend to have a drying affect as they move across the valley. If the winds had blown the “drought” effects would have been worse.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa