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**Report 01.805**

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Report to Environment Committee  
from Nicola Shorten, Policy Adviser, Resource Policy

## **Regional Monitoring Strategy**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek approval of the draft Regional Monitoring Strategy.

### **2. Introduction**

Quality information on the environment is essential for making sound resource management decisions. The Regional Monitoring Strategy sets out the purpose and objectives for environmental monitoring in the Wellington Region, outlining methods and key outputs. The strategy has been prepared in conjunction with the Resource Investigations and Wairarapa Planning and Resources Departments of the Council. It is designed to assist the Council to:

- Meet its requirements under section 35 of the Resource Management Act 1991 with respect to environmental monitoring;
- Collect relevant and robust information on the state of the environment, trends or changes in environmental quality and the pressures or reasons for these changes;
- Undertake integrated environmental monitoring and establishing links between the Council and other organisations responsible for information gathering and reporting, particularly territorial authorities;
- Have good information for decision making, especially for regional policy and plan reviews; and
- Report effectively on the results of monitoring to achieve maximum uptake of the information by decision-makers, interest groups and the wider community.

A Regional Monitoring Forum has been established to promote and co-ordinate the gathering and sharing of environmental information of common interest to local

authorities in the Wellington Region. The forum is administered by the Regional Council and includes all eight territorial authorities in the Wellington, plus the Ministry for the Environment.

Regional Monitoring Forum members and the Department of Conservation assisted in developing the Strategy.

In addition, an Iwi workshop took place on 10 October 2001, involving representatives from each of the Iwi in the Region. The workshop was seen as the beginning of a process to ensure Iwi have the opportunity to be involved in monitoring activities within the Region, and that the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are taken into account by the Regional Council when reporting on the state of the environment. An action plan arising from the workshop, approved by Ara Tahi, forms part of the Strategy.

### 3. **What does the strategy propose?**

The Regional Monitoring Strategy is attached as a separate document for Councillors only. The main proposals recommended in the Strategy are:

#### ***Monitoring:***

The Council will:

- Continue to co-ordinate and attend the Regional Monitoring Forum for the purpose of achieving integrated monitoring and reporting in the Region.
- Continue to work with Iwi to:
  - develop more user friendly monitoring outputs;
  - distribute results to Iwi on a more regular basis;
  - produce reporting products that are integrated (not resource specific);
  - set up freshwater monitoring programmes using SHMAK kits where there is interest;
  - develop a complementary Iwi monitoring process; and
  - include Iwi monitoring results in state of the environment reporting.
- Continue to work with the Ministry for the Environment to assist with the National Performance Indicators Programme.
- Begin to monitor plan effectiveness, using the process set out in the Strategy.
- Put in place procedures for monitoring any transfers or delegations of powers, functions or duties.
- Extend its monitoring of the exercise of consents that have effect in the Region:
  - using state of the environment and plan effectiveness monitoring results; and
  - establishing a process whereby a number of consents will be assessed each year to provide a measure of whether or not consents granted are achieving the desired outcomes of the plans.

- Extend the process aimed at identifying where monitoring of permitted activities should take place to the entire Region.
- Develop a Regional inventory of information held, consistent with the national system.

***Reporting:***

- The Regional Council will produce a State of the Environment report every 6 years to pull together all of the monitoring information, and show what trends are occurring in the Regional environment.
- Technical reports will continue to be produced annually for each resource monitored.
- Summaries of these technical reports will be placed on the Council's website as user-friendly 'report cards' that can be downloaded.
- Annual state of the environment summaries will be produced.
- Issue based reports will be produced in conjunction with other organisations as and when necessary.
- Information about each resource monitored will be made available on the Council's website, with different levels of information able to be accessed by 'drilling down'. The data will be as recent as possible with real-time information provided where relevant.
- The Council will continue to work with MfE to ensure links between websites remain up to date and to ensure information and expense is not duplicated between websites.
- Pages will be developed on the Council's website for monitoring information gathered by Council supported care groups
- 'Enviro-mail' will be used where possible. This will allow users to sign up to the system and register their areas of interest. The system will then alert that user to new information posted on the relevant website/page.
- A plan efficiency and effectiveness report will be produced for each regional plan, every 5 years. Summaries of these reports will be placed on the Council's website, and a printed copy will be made available for interested groups.

#### **4. Affordability and Timing**

The Regional Monitoring Strategy outlines the Council's future direction for environmental monitoring and reporting in the Region. As stated above, the Strategy contains some changes to the way we currently do things. During its preparation, the funding implications of these changes have been recognised, but are not considered within the Strategy at this stage.

The details of how the Strategy is funded will be considered by the Council during the preparation of the next Long Term Financial Strategy, although some implementation will involve reallocating resources that are currently available for monitoring. The level of funding the Council decides to allocate in the next Long Term Financial Strategy will determine the rate of implementation of the Strategy and the priorities for implementation. Further work is required to determine the optimal timing with respect to regional plan reviews.

## 5. **Communication**

The Strategy is considered to be an internal working document, and as such, there are no plans for public consultation.

## 6. **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

- (1) **approve** the Draft Regional Monitoring Strategy.

Report prepared by:

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