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## **Report 02.516**

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Report to Environment Committee  
from John Sherriff, Manager Resource Investigations

### **National Environmental Information Sharing Protocol**

#### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee about progress being made towards reaching an agreement to share environmental information with the Ministry for the Environment (MfE).

#### **2. Background**

The Ministry is seeking to develop partnership agreements with regional councils to improve the way that environmental information is collected and used in New Zealand. This initiative recognises that that good quality information is increasingly important for both central and local government to meet public expectations, be accountable and demonstrate performance.

Through this initiative MfE is seeking to ensure that there is a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting throughout the country and that the national environmental performance indicators are being implemented.

There are two levels of agreement. The first is a general agreement of intent to partnership, principles of data sharing and the goal of providing access to shared information, including the collection of information for environmental performance indicators. The second are Schedules to this agreement that will be attached as an agreement to collect and provide information for each environmental area (e.g. land, air, water etc.) The details of these schedules will be worked out with individual regional councils for each resource.

Information provided to the MfE will be used to compile the national State of the Environment Report and possibly lead the development of national environmental policy and/or national environmental standards. It will also enable regional data to be compared with data from other regions and national data.

### 3. **Progress So Far**

MfE have been working through the details of the general agreement with the Regional Council's CEO's Group and the Regional Council's Resource Management Group (Jane Bradbury is our representative on this group). The general wording of the agreement has now been finalised.

At the same time MfE have been developing the first schedule under this partnership agreement which will deal with monitoring of air quality. This has been developed with close liaison with the National Air Quality Working Group. (This group comprises staff from regional councils involved in air quality monitoring) and individual regional councils

The schedule outlines the pollutants that will be monitored, (particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide) and the locations and frequency of monitoring. It also outlines how, and in what form, information will be exchanged.

As part of this agreement MfE has committed to assist regional councils to build their capacity to undertake monitoring and reporting through training and the preparation of best practice guidelines. They will also undertake regular audits of monitoring practice.

The first agreement of this type was signed between MfE and Taranaki Regional Council in early August.

### 4. **Where to from Here?**

We have had discussions with MfE about the Schedule for Air Quality Monitoring for the Wellington Region and the content of the schedule has been agreed at officer level.

Within the next two months MfE will be presenting the general agreement to share information and the first schedule to the Wellington Regional Council (WRC) for signing.

Further schedules to the general agreement will be prepared in the coming few months. MfE have indicated that, at this stage, the next subject areas will be soil/land: marine bathing, and waste. However, they have signalled their intention to review this priority list towards the end of 2002.

### 5. **Implications**

The schedules to the agreement to share environmental information essentially set a minimum requirement for monitoring by the WRC. In the case of air quality monitoring, the schedule is consistent with the WRC's strategy for continued development of its air quality network. In some other areas, e.g. soil and land monitoring, the WRC will probably need to undertake more monitoring to meet the minimum requirements.

Measures that are needed to meet the requirements of the MfE schedules will be included in proposals which will be presented to the Council for consideration in developing its Long Term Council Community Plan and budgets for the next ten years.

**6. Recommendation**

*That the report be received and its contents noted.*

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