



Report **03.188**
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Committee **Environment Committee**
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Summary report on the collection of unwanted agricultural chemicals

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with a summary of the unwanted agricultural chemical collections undertaken throughout the Region over the past two years.

2. Background

For the past two years the Greater Wellington Regional Council has offered an unwanted agricultural chemical collection service to rural properties throughout the Region. This project was initiated by concerns that inappropriate storage and disposal of unwanted agricultural chemicals had the potential to cause significant adverse environmental effects.

The disposal of unwanted agricultural chemicals was identified as a priority by a regional hazardous waste management group comprising officers from local authorities in the Region. Greater Wellington undertook this project alone after it was decided that the Regional Council should address the agricultural waste issue and territorial authorities would address household hazardous waste issues in their respective cities and districts.

Many chemicals stored on farms are obsolete. Many are dangerous, poisonous to stock and people, and can affect the environment. Unfortunately safe disposal can be difficult, especially for older chemicals.

Information explaining this project was sent to every rural property in the Region. People who had unwanted chemicals were asked to register either by post, i.e., returning a registration form, or by calling an 0800 number. Tredi NZ Ltd. were contracted to undertake the collection and disposal of chemicals from the Wellington Region. This was to be a one-off, free and confidential collection.

3. Progress summary

Over the past two years our contractor has visited 460 properties throughout the Region. This represents a response rate of about 7.5%. The response rate was low but appears to be similar to response rates experienced in collections in other parts of New Zealand

A total of 22.3 tonnes of chemicals were removed from these properties. The average quantity of chemical removed per site was 48.53 kg. Again this result is similar to other New Zealand collections.

The chemicals collected ranged from substances such as 2,4,5-T and DDT, which are now prohibited or restricted from being used, to surplus quantities of pesticides and herbicides, such as Round Up or Tordon, which can still be used.

Of the total quantity of chemicals collected, 11.6 tonnes (52%) needed to be exported to be disposed of in an environmentally appropriate manner. A further 6.8 tonnes (31%) was able to be disposed of within New Zealand. The remaining 3.8 tonnes (17%) was able to be re-issued for re-use.

A number of final charges are still to be received for disposal of some of the collected chemicals. At this stage we have spent only \$137,000 (74%) of the total contractor's budget of \$185,000 provided for in 2002/03. Total expenditure over the two years has been \$297,891. This represents a collection and disposal cost of \$13.34 per kg.

4. Issues arising

In its promotional material Greater Wellington made it clear that this was to be a one-off collection and urged rural property owners to use the service while it was available. We have received feedback which suggests that at least some of the community think that this service will be provided on a regular basis.

No provision has been made for this type of service in the budgets for the next 10 years.

The issue remains about how we respond to further request for disposing of this type of chemical. Our proposal at this stage is to direct people to their territorial authority or to Tredi NZ directly.

5. Establishing a mobile hazardous waste disposal facility?

Several territorial authorities within the Region (Wellington City Council, Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council) have undertaken household hazardous waste collections. Some propose to continue to do so in the future. When Councils have carried out a household hazardous waste collection, a mobile hazardous waste reception facility, known as Hazmobile, has been brought down from Auckland at a cost of \$3,000 each time.

It has been suggested that the surplus from the agrichemical collection project could be used to develop a mobile hazardous waste facility for use in the Wellington Region. This facility would be owned by Greater Wellington but would be available for use by territorial authorities throughout the Region.

The provision of this type of facility could encourage other territorial authorities in the Region to undertake household hazardous waste collections and would be our contribution to on-going hazardous waste management in the Region. The facility may also be of use during emergency situations.

We currently own a shipping container which has been used as a temporary store during the agrichemical collection project. This could be developed into a mobile collection facility by fitting it out with appropriate storage areas and safety equipment etc. A rough estimate for a developing a fully equipped facility is \$20,000. We are currently awaiting a detailed proposal and cost estimate for this initiative.

Some informal feedback on this proposal has been sought from territorial authority officers. Officers from four councils (Wellington City, Hutt City, Upper Hutt City and Porirua City) supported the idea. Officers from two other Councils (Kapiti Coast District and Masterton District) thought alternative approaches may be better. The remaining two officers (Casterton District and South Wairarapa District) did not respond. The alternative approaches suggested by officers for Kapiti Coast District Council and Masterton District Council were:

- training of territorial staff in aspects of hazardous waste management; and
- subsidising hazardous waste disposal costs incurred by territorial authorities.

Expenditure of this nature was not part of the original agrichemical project but does contribute to broader hazardous waste management goals for the Region.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *receive the report;*
2. *note the contents*
3. *agree to using the surplus from the unwanted agricultural chemical project to develop a mobile hazardous waste facility for use in the greater Wellington Region.*

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