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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Review of Guidelines for Gravel Extraction and Update on Implementation of Ruamahanga Gravel Consent

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of recent changes to the management of gravel extraction activities in the Wairarapa and to seek their endorsement of updated 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction'.

2. Significance of the Decision

The matters in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

In July 2001 resource consent was approved and issued to the Land & River Operations Department (LARO) to extract all the sustainable gravel allocation from the Ruamahanga River system. In turn, LARO set up a licensing system to authorise gravel extraction activities from the catchment. At this time, LARO developed 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction' which set out criteria and policy for the implementation of the licensing system.

4. Changes to Ruamahanga Gravel Consent

The Ruamahanga Gravel Consent was approved for a 15 year term, with regular reviews of the consent set down for every three years. A formal review was scheduled to take place following the third anniversary of the consent (1 July 2004). Following internal discussions with staff from LARO and Planning & Resources, the main area of concern with the implementation of the consent was that Maximum Annual Extraction Limits (MAEL's) were now considered outdated and inflexible in some cases. Hence rather than undertake a formal review of the consent, LARO were advised that they should seek a variation of consent conditions to change the MAEL's.

Following an extensive period of pre-application advice and discussions, LARO lodged an application to vary condition 7 of the Ruamahanga Gravel Consent on 24 February 2005. Condition 7 specifies the MAEL's for various rivers and reaches in the Ruamahanga River system. The application also requested greater flexibility in the management of MAEL's so that peaks and troughs in gravel extraction demand could be taken into consideration. Hence LARO requested that an additional 25% allocation buffer could be applied when issuing licenses, provided that total amount extracted over a three year period did not exceed three times the MAEL. For example, if a river reach had a MAEL of 20,000 m³, the licenses issued for any given year could total 25,000 m³, however the total extraction volume permitted over a three year period could not exceed 60,000 m³.

The application was considered on a non-notified basis as the effects on the environment were deemed to be minor given that MAEL's are calculated to be the sustainable level of gravel extraction for particular rivers and reaches. The written approval of affected parties was sought and gained by LARO, and following assessment of the application, a variation of condition 7 was approved on 24 June 2005.

5. Changes to 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction'

At the time of considering and assessing the variation application, a few issues were raised as a result of the Council undertaken some enforcement action against a gravel contractor in regard to some illegal gravel extraction operations. The transferring of licenses between sites and contractors was a practice that was occurring with no written authorisation from the Council. It was initially considered that this issue could be dealt with through additional requirements being attached to condition 7 of the Ruamahanga Gravel Consent, as part of processing the variation application. However following internal discussions between LARO and Planning & Resources, it was felt that reviewing the 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction' would be a more appropriate way to address these issues.

The revised guidelines are included in Appendix 1 with changes highlighted in grey shading. Essentially the new guidelines explicitly state that extraction can only occur by the operator/contractor specified in the license, and at the extraction site specified in the license. If license holders wish to deviate from the terms and conditions of their license, then that can only occur once written authorisation is obtained by LARO.

The proposed changes to the 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction' were distributed to key stakeholders in the gravel industry and a meeting was called by the Council to discuss the proposed changes. A meeting was held on Tuesday 19 July and nine persons from the gravel industry were represented. An outline of the changes to the Ruamahanga Gravel Consent was given, and the proposed changes to the 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction' was tabled and discussed. There was agreement amongst all persons present that the proposed changes put forward were satisfactory and provided greater certainty to the Council and gravel contractors when going about their business.

6. Gravel Guardians

A key component of the Ruamahanga Gravel Consent was the initiation of 'Gravel Guardians'. This group comprising representatives from both iwi authorities in the Wairarapa, Federated Farmers, and staff from the Council, has met on an occasional basis since the consent became operative. A variety of issues surrounding gravel extraction management have been discussed by Gravel Guardians. There has also been two very informative site visits to the Black Rock Rd area and Oldfields Waingawa yard.

7. Communications

At the gravel industry meeting on Tuesday 19 July it was explained to those present that the proposed changes would be put to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee for their endorsement. No further communications are considered necessary as key stakeholders have been adequately informed of the recent developments discussed in this report.

8. Recommendation

That the Committee

1. **Receive** the report.
2. **Note** its contents.
3. **Endorse** the proposed changes to the 'Guidelines for Gravel Extraction'.

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