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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Biodiversity and *Streams Alive* Programme – Annual Report 2006/07

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of progress in implementing the Streams Alive and associated biodiversity programmes during 2006/07.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision 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

Streams Alive is one of Greater Wellington's biodiversity programmes aimed at stopping the continuing loss of species and ecosystems around the region and restoring biodiversity. It focuses on 12 selected catchments throughout the region.

A large additional component to Streams Alive is the provision of an advisory service to landowners whom don't fall into the priority catchments but are seeking advice and information for the best land management of their properties.

A third associated component is involvement in the national research project on the Ohariu catchment. The objectives of this project are to learn what encourages landowners to take action towards improving and enhancing biodiversity, without the provision of financial incentives.

In March 2007 the incumbent Biodiversity Land Management Officer, Michelle Bird left on parental leave and Megan Banks started on a 14 month fixed term contract.

Streams Alive was designed to work in the high value streams using criteria that were adopted in the Riparian Management Strategy. The priority catchments are:

- Waitohu Stream and Otaki River (flows to the Kapiti Coast)
- Ration Creek (flows to the Pauatahanui Inlet)

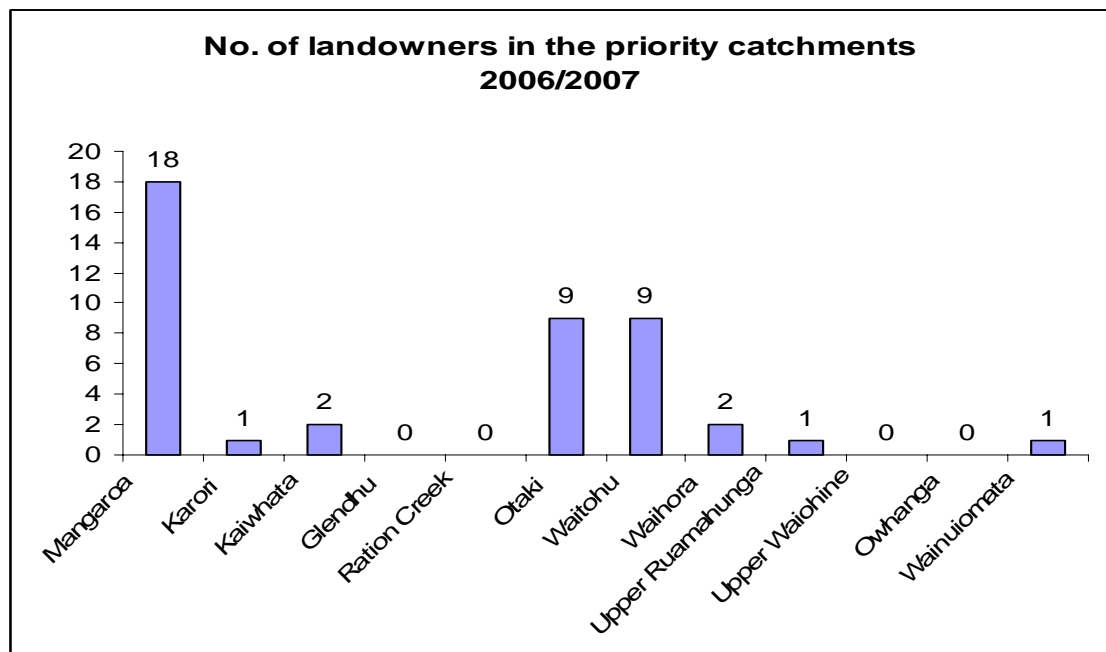
- Mangaroa River (Hutt River tributary)
- Karori Stream and Wainuiomata River (flows to Cook Strait)
- Glendhu Creek and Kaiwhata River (flows to Wairarapa east coast)
- Owhanga Stream (flows to Lake Wairarapa from the Tararua Ranges)
- Upper Waiohine River (Ruamahanga River tributary)
- Upper Ruamahanga River (sourced in the Tararua Range)
- Waihora Stream (lower Ruamahanga River tributary).

4. Works completed for 2006/2007

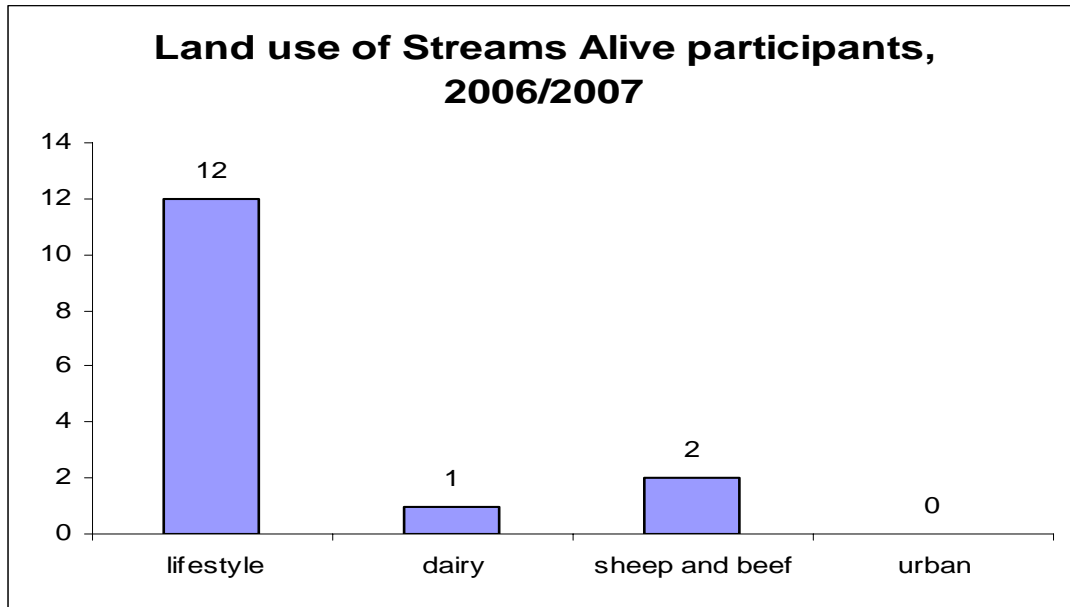
4.1 Streams Alive

Within the Riparian Strategy, Greater Wellington aims to plant at least 4 kilometres of stream per year under the assisted programme.

There are currently 43 active landowner plans in the Streams Alive programme. Of these, 15 received planting work in this financial year. Two of the plans are now finished after receiving assistance for planting and two years of tree maintenance and weed control.



Of the twelve Streams Alive catchments, GW is currently working, or has initiated works in eight of the catchments. There has been a large interest in the programme in the Hutt Valley and Kapiti Coast, with 38 landowners participating, compared with 5 landowners participating in the Wairarapa. There is still no uptake in the Glendhu, Ration Creek, Upper Waiohine and Owhanga catchments.



The above graph indicates that landowners living on lifestyle blocks have a high participation rate but only 5 farms participated in the programme this year. The participation of farms in riparian programmes is important because land use is much more intensive on farms, and farms are likely to have a higher influence on sediment and nutrients entering the water way.

Length of stream planted

Over the year there was just under 2 kilometres of new riparian strip planted, and 1.7 kilometres of maintenance planting.

This figure is lower than expected due to a late start to the planting season in 2007. This was due to a dry autumn, a change in staff and budget restraints due to the maintenance plantings. In regards to the late season more plantings will now show in the new financial year.

The replacement maintenance planting is a necessity to ensure successful establishment at each site. The main reasons for varying levels of success were frost damage, pest damage (rabbits, hares and pukekos) and competition by weeds. In some cases it was a matter of unsuitable conditions where there was a loss of all plants of one species. All of these factors will be looked at for improvements each year.

4.2 Other Biodiversity programmes

Around 20 properties have been visited outside the priority catchments and advice and information given on the best land management of the properties. Some properties require the preparation of farm plans to meet sustainable land management goals.

4.3 Ohariu National Research Project

The Ohariu catchment is part of a long term national project and is still in the building rather than action stage. The main objective at this stage is to communicate the

condition of the waterways within the catchment and the opportunities for improvement to the community. Activities over the year include:

- A workshop hosted by GW and attended by the national research group in May 2007.
- A field day held in June 2007 in the Ohariu valley. This was targeted at the larger holdings in the catchment. Around 15 people came and discussed land management issues, with most staying the whole afternoon.
- Preparations have been underway for a larger rural living field day to be held in early September 2007.

4.4 Promotion

A series of posters on biodiversity and land management programme initiatives and individual fact sheets have been developed for use at the various events GW participates in, e.g. Otaki small farm field days, Ballance farm environment awards etc.

There is potential for a *Streams Alive* package with signs for gates promoting healthy streams and biodiversity protection. e.g. similar to QEII covenant plaques.

5. Review of the *Streams Alive* Programme

The *Streams Alive* programme has been underway since June 2004. Staff plan to review and refine the programme to make sure it is meeting its objectives and to take into account any changes to the direction of biodiversity management in Greater Wellington that will be reflected in the upcoming Biodiversity Implementation Plan. A review of the programme will include:

- A technical report on the impact planting and fencing has had on stream ecology in the three pilot streams.
- A report on the levels of uptake of the incentives by target landowners, and their satisfaction with the programme. This will be based on surveys and workshops with participants and non-participants. This work will evaluate both the *Streams Alive* and Wetland Incentives Programmes.

Some of the issues that have arisen already during the implementation of the programme are:

- Catchments where a large number of neighbours join the programme probably provide greater gains than catchments where just one landowner is involved. An example of this can be seen in Mangaroa Valley where there has been a large uptake of both the streams alive programme and the wetland incentives programme.
- There is value in the *Streams Alive* programme working alongside other Greater Wellington programmes (e.g. Waitohu flood assessment project).
- So far farmer uptake of the incentives offered under the *Streams Alive* programme has been low compared to lifestyle block owners. We will need to consider whether we need a proactive approach to involve farmers in priority areas.

- On properties in priority catchments where fencing is not required landowners are receiving a very large subsidy (i.e. free plants and plant maintenance) with no requirement for a contribution from the landowner. Paying for some of the plants would provide a more equitable split.

6. Communication

There will ongoing opportunities for communication of the Streams Alive and Ohariu voluntary incentives programme. The Ohariu programme, particularly the field days have received very good coverage to date.

An opportunity exists to report progress with the Streams Alive programme in the Rural Services newsletter, particularly as the review process will include a region wide survey to assess attitudes to riparian management and options for expanding the programme outside of the existing twelve catchments.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the contents of the report.*

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