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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Divisional Managers' Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the activities and progress and any matters that have arisen since the Committee's previous meeting held on 14 November 2006.

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

The Departmental Managers' reports are attached.

4. Divisional matters

4.1 Catchment Management – Geoff Dick

Staffing

I am pleased to confirm Ian Gunn's appointment to the role of Senior Policy Advisor in the Catchment Division. Ian will lead the development of the integrated catchment management concept within Greater Wellington, and I am pleased that we are able to present an initial paper for the Committee's information.

Ian also has a major role helping to co-ordinate Council's response into a number of national reviews including the flood review, and the climate change and sustainable land management initiatives. Ian is also the Division's representative on the Lake Wairarapa park project, and retains some residual responsibilities from his former role including completing the LWVDS review, and the Kopuaranga enhancement project.

There have been a number of staff changes in the Division since the last report in November. These include:

- Tony Faulkner commenced work in January as a Land Management Officer. However Chris Ladd (Land Management Officer) has recently tendered his resignation to go back to the dairy industry. Recruitment to replace Chris is underway.
- Ewan Kelsall commenced work as a Biosecurity Officer (Animals) based in Upper Hutt late last year. Ewan will have a major role in the RPMS review. Geoff Lewis recently transferred to Biosecurity (from BioWorks) and has a new role in the Investigations & Monitoring team.
- Last week Philip Purves left the Flood Protection team, and will shortly commence a new position with the Otago Regional Council. Phil was with the Council for 16 years and made a major contribution to the flood hazard investigation programme in the western part of the region, and in providing advice to landowners and developers in Kapiti, Porirua and the greater Hutt Valley. Recruitment for Phil's replacement is underway. In the meantime Sharyn Westlake has taken on Phil's duties.
- Trent Oakley resigned from BioWorks effective at the end of January. Trent had completed 28 years service with Council and predecessor authorities, and was one of our most experienced field staff. A recent recruitment drive has been very successful to fill a number of field operator vacancies.

Divisional Workshop

On 16 February the Division got together for a day so that staff could get to know each other, Managers could briefly talk about their areas of responsibility and we could all work on what is good about the Division and areas that we jointly need to work on.

The day was very successful with a great spirit coming out of the team building exercises. Cr Long joined us for lunch and had the role of chief judge for the afternoon's team building event. The Division's management team is working its way through the feed back from the day and some key issues that emerged.

Half Yearly Review

I have attached the executive summary from the divisional half yearly management report to 31 December 2006. The summary highlights most of the issues covered in the report. Also attached is a financial update to the end of February 2007.

The Division has to very carefully monitor expenditure in the second half of the year. Deficits are forecast for BioWorks, Land Management and Biosecurity, and these are only partly offset by forecast savings in the Flood Protection area.

Vector Management Contract

A new contract for vector management services for the Animal Health Board has been agreed to 30 June 2008. Initial discussions have been held with AHB management for the period post June 2008 and there was general agreement that this needed to be progressed quickly so that both parties get some certainty about where we are heading.

BioWorks

BioWorks had a very successful final tender round which includes a major aerial operation in Upper Hutt – Mangaroa/Kaitoke, and a smaller aerial operation in Otaki. BioWorks is also managing the Akatarawa possum operation on behalf of Parks & Forests. As a consequence BioWorks has a large amount of work to complete by 30 June and Scott and his team are going to have to work smart and hard to ensure they meet their commitments.

A lot of work is going into preparation for the Mangaroa/Kaitoke operation as it affects a large number of landowners and dog walkers in Upper Hutt. Most Committee members will be well aware of the concerns raised by Upper Hutt residents in previous operations. In addition the Council funded possum control operation in Akatarawa is scheduled to proceed in winter 2007, only a few months after Mangaroa/Kaitoke. A joint information/publicity campaign is being prepared to cover both operations, with a joint management team in place to deal with strategy and issues as they arise.

I recently travelled to Whakahoro (west of National Park) with Scott Forbes to visit the crews working on this AHB operation managed by Horizons. The crews seem to be getting stuck into a difficult field operation and I got some very positive feedback from two landowners we met about our staff. An aerial 1080 drop is due to proceed shortly as part of this job.

Lower Valley landowners

In late February I made a site visit to Mike Moran's lakeside dairy farm to view his nearly completed repairs and to discuss the upcoming private stopbank review. Stewart Barton also joined the discussion and we had a brief look at the work he is doing to his section of stopbank.

On Friday 9 March I visited John Barton's property off Hikunui Road and got a great briefing on most of the issues regarding the section of scheme stopbank in his property, access to his milking shed, and his concerns with the Whakawiriwiri drain. I have promised to get back to John once I have had a chance to read up on the huge amount of reports that have been generated regarding the proposed Whaka drain upgrade.

Communications – Catriona Robertson

An eight page edition of Rural Services Newsletter was distributed to all rural addresses in the region (6,500) week beginning Monday 12 March. A copy is enclosed with this report.

Distribution breakdown is 3750 for Wairarapa and 2750 for the rest of the region. Nine of the thirteen stories had a region-wide focus; three were on Wairarapa initiatives and one on Wellington. The next issue will be published in June.

I'm currently working on the communication plans for the Mangaroa/Kaitoke and Akatarawa 1080 aerial operations to ensure a consistent public information/media approach for the two operations. Detailed brochures for each operation and several related fact sheets are currently in production. The first media release and brochure distribution will be on Monday 16 April. Information will be sent to approximately 20,000 households in the area.

A Kopuaranga Scheme Newsletter was distributed early December to everyone in the scheme area.

Media work covered two possum control operations in Hutt Valley, bathing water quality and the Wairarapa Peace Treaty.

I'm also working with the RPMS team on the proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy.

4.2 Environment Management - Nigel Corry

Hydrological Network review

The Committee will recall that in late 2006, a review of the region's hydrological network was completed. The report included a number of recommendations, some of the most pressing were in relation to enhancing the flood warning network in the Wairarapa eastern hills. As an outcome of the half-yearly review, \$80,000 of funds has been applied from current budgets to implement many of the high priority outcomes from the network review. While we are in the process of finalising how to fully allocate these funds, the majority will be spent in the Wairarapa area installing additional rain gauges and flow monitoring sites.

Building Act Accreditation

Regional Councils are currently working together to best determine how to meet the requirements of the Building Act which dictate that we must be 'accredited' and in a position to process building consents for dams by 30 November 2007. While Greater Wellington has already adopted a Dangerous Dams Policy, the requirement to become accredited to process building consents is significantly more onerous, with 19 specific regulations in place defining accreditation requirements. In addition, \$16,000 has been included in the 2007/08 Draft Annual Plan specifically for the accreditation fee that we, along with other Regional Councils, are required to pay.

Greater Wellington, along with the majority of Regional Councils across the country, do not consider that the costs and implications associated with becoming accredited are justified, particularly given the likely number of building consents that would be processed in any one year. Given this, Regional Councils are working collectively in a “cluster” in an attempt to find a pragmatic alternative to becoming individually accredited. This may take the form of two or three Councils becoming accredited and processing building consents on behalf of the other councils, or all Regional Councils forming a Council Controlled Organisation to act on our collective behalf. I hope to be able to provide a further update at the meeting as to where Regional Councils may be going with this issue.

Regional Policy Statement (RPS) Review

As councillors and appointed members are aware, we are in the middle of a series of workshops being held throughout March to discuss recommended draft provisions in the Regional Policy Statement. We have been very pleased that many appointed members have been able to attend and contribute to these workshops.

4.3 Water Supply, Parks & Forests – Murray Kennedy

Logging

No logging was scheduled for the period and none has been carried out.

Stoney Creek wind farm proposal

The tender documents for the right to develop a wind farm at Stoney Creek will be issued within about two weeks.

Reserve Forests and Conservation Forestry (Tom Ward)

Tauanui

Road extensions have progressed well in the prevailing dry conditions. Formation, water tabling and culverting have been completed. Base course metalling is currently underway and due to be completed in the week of 12 March. Weathered rock from within last year’s formation has provided an on site source of suitable material.

Top course material (old slip debris) is also available on site and will be used as required, particularly on the steeper hill sections, to complete the operation.

Sites and options are being considered for a crossing to provide access to the timber on the Northern side of Tauanui River.

Following recent discussions, the logging contractor is now expected to return at the end of April with logging re commencing in May.

Hiwinui

Silvicultural operations have been closed down due to extreme fire danger conditions within the Wairarapa.

Rough Hill

Following financial approval at the six month review and the signing of a Fencing Agreement, clearing of the agreed fence line has been commenced on the agreed Rough Hill fence line.

Fire Danger

The continued dry period within the Wairarapa has seen the imposition of a Total Fire Ban across the region. The majority of the indices that are used to assess Fire Danger on a daily basis have reached extreme levels.

The Drought Code which is based on days since significant rain and an indicator of difficulty of extinguishing a fire (particularly in the mop up phase) reaches Extreme at a reading of 326. The current reading at Ngaumu is 610 and all other Drought Code readings within the Wairarapa are in excess of 400.

Strong winds impact dramatically on two key indices, the Initial Spread index and through the Build Up Index (fuel available) significantly influence the Fire Weather Index which is a measure of fire intensity on a daily basis.

Currently all major forests have imposed restrictions on work (logging, chainsaws and machinery) and other activities (recreation etc) within the forests. Crews are held on standby.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4

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