

Report 16.90
Date 17 March 2016
File CCAB-10-133

Committee Environment Committee
Author Wayne O'Donnell, General Manager, Catchment Management
Nigel Corry, General Manager, Environment Management
Luke Troy, General Manager, Strategy

General Managers' report to the Environment Committee meeting 30 March 2016

1. Purpose

To inform the Environment Committee of Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibilities.

2. Catchment Management

2.1 Biosecurity

Velvet leaf incursion

Velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) is a highly invasive crop weed and is listed as an Unwanted Organism. The recent discovery of velvetleaf in fodder beet crops in the South Island has necessitated a response from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), with the aim of preventing it from becoming established. Although present in the Auckland and Waikato regions, it appears that this infestation was spread to the south island through imported contaminated fodder crop seeds.

Because velvetleaf seed can remain viable for over 50 years in the soil, the removal and destruction of plants before they have the chance to set seed is vital. Working in conjunction with MPI, GWRC Biosecurity staff will respond to any reports of velvetleaf in our region.

Regional Pest Management Plan Process

The GWRC Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002 – 2022 review process has begun. Biosecurity staff attended a workshop in February run by MPI outlining the review process and workshopping ideas and issues amongst the lower North Island Regional Councils.

A paper has gone to the Council outlining the review process and the development of the Regional Pest Management Plan. The project plan has been developed and reviewed and the affected Managers within Greater Wellington have been informed of the review and the potential tasks for their teams. Biosecurity staff will attend the next Kaitiaki/Takawaenga meeting in late March or early April to discuss pest management and the review process.

2.1.1 Pest animals

Rabbits

Rabbit numbers have increased as the hot and dry conditions in late summer have improved their survival rate. Upon request problem sites have been targeted with cost-recovery poisoning and shooting operations. Despite some pockets of high numbers the regional rabbit population remains at low levels.

A thermal imaging viewer and scope has been purchased for night and dusk shooting. Testing has shown the scope to be extremely effective in the areas that GWRC regularly night shoot. Rabbits are located and shot without the animals knowing that the shooter is there, improving the control rate. The handheld thermal imager also provides an additional level of safety by allowing staff to easily identify non-targets in dark areas.



Photo taken through thermal imager showing shooter and rabbits in complete darkness

Possums

The WCC funded rural HALO project is being set up to help to protect the rare native bird species spreading from Zealandia. Goodnature self-setting traps will be used for both the initial knock-down and ongoing maintenance control. This

is the first operation where we have used these traps to perform this task. Rats and mustelids in the area will be targeted by other methods.

Cat Management

Wellington City Council has recently agreed to consult on an amendment to their Animals Bylaw. The proposed amendment includes:

- Compulsory identification of cats (recommended microchipping)
- Maximum number of cats (3) per household
- Mandatory de-sexing of cats (except registered breeders)
- Cat management education programme

WCC will consult on the proposed amendments during April.

WCC are the first city council in NZ to consult on mandatory identification and limiting household cat numbers.

Biosecurity and WCC are planning a camera trap trial in Otari to see how far cats are venturing into the forest from the urban fringes.

Feral Ungulates

Feral deer continue to damage the nursery plantings at the GWRC Mangapakeha Nursery in the Eastern Wairarapa. Several animals have been removed by evening and night shooting.

2.1.2 Pest Plants

Surveillance and Total Control

The team continues survey and annual inspection work for all Total Control plant species. Particular focus has been on Bathurst burr and climbing spindleberry in the Wairarapa. High numbers of Bathurst burr plants are being found in rotational crop land, with no seed burrs found. Landowners are more actively engaged with the programme this season.

The MPI funded work for Manchurian wild rice and the aquatic pest awareness campaign continues. The Manchurian control programme has an aerial spot spray contract awaiting suitable weather. The Check Clean Dry advocacy programme for aquatic plants is almost complete. It has recently focused on visiting popular recreational sites and the recent Karapoti Classic mountain bike event.

Suppression species - Biocontrol

Broom gall mite was first released in New Zealand in 2006 and in our region in 2008. The gall mites spend the winter in the buds on broom stems, and in the spring feed on the new growth, causing galls to form. As well as damaging the plant, the galls offer a refuge for successive generations of the tiny gall mites and protect them from predation. Mites move on the wind, which is ideal for our region.

The mites are thriving at most release sites in the region. Severe damage to the host plants is now obvious at the original release sites (see photo below) and we have observed a rapid increase in the number and size of galls three years

after mites were transferred to new sites. The seedlings around the infested plants are also heavily parasitised. Isolated plants over 100 metres away are infested with mites originating from this plant.

Another biocontrol success story is likely from the green thistle beetle. Very good numbers of beetles and juveniles are still active and causing substantial damage to the host plants. Now that beetles are present in most of our region we have supplied beetles for release to Horizons (five releases), Hawkes Bay (four releases) and Gisborne (four releases) to help initiate their programmes. Beetles seem to be working in conjunction with a pathogen rust. During the last round of monitoring staff observed a dramatic increase in a pathogen rust, (*Puccinia punctiformis*). The rust is typically present on Californian thistles but only in small amounts. It is suspected the spread in the rust is linked to the thistle beetle.

Two releases of the privet lace bug, native to China, were received from Landcare Research and released within Wellington city. New Zealand is the first country to undertake biocontrol release of this species.



Broom plants with masses of galls in Masterton – infested 2011

2.1.3 BioWorks

TB Free New Zealand Control Programme

BioWorks is preparing a plan for a possum control operation in the southern Rimutaka range. This project covers approximately 22,000 hectares and extends southwards from Wainuiomata and Eastbourne. The project will include aerial 1080 and ground based control.

Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP)

The RPPCP will cover approximately 70,000 hectares during the 2015/16 year, divided into 18 projects. Approximately 60% of the programme is complete for the year.

Because of the very high numbers of possums in the Makara area staff have developed a novel bait station to help with control. The ground mounted 'fish bin' station holds a large amount of bait but still exclude dogs and livestock. The bait stations are laid on the ground because the low vegetation in the area does not allow for traditional tree-mounted stations.

2.2 Land Management

2.2.1 Porirua Harbour Sediment Management Programme

A new Land Management Advisor has been appointed to run the sediment reduction work programme on private land within the Porirua Harbour catchment. The programme is being transitioned to Land Management from a consultant who had previously been delivering the programme on behalf of Greater Wellington. The Land Management programme will provide grants towards sediment reduction activities such as poplar and willow planting, riparian planting and land retirement. The programme also includes an advice component on good management practices to reduce sediment loss.

2.2.2 Catchment Control Schemes

Annual works programmes for the six catchment schemes are coming to a close and six scheme committee meetings will be held over the next two months. The Awhea-Opouawe Scheme will be having its five-year review of the scheme. A substantial project – the Manawa cutting- was undertaken as part of the Whareama Catchment Scheme. The project was funded through the Masterton District Council and involved the rechannelling of the Whareama river to mitigate against persistent flooding and erosion along a section of the Annedale Valley Road, near Tinui.



2.2.3 Farm Environment Programme

The FEP programme in the Mangatarere has extended to include Daleton Farm. Daleton Farm is owned by Carterton District Council and is used to irrigate treated municipal waste water to land. The property is leased to a local dairy farmer as a support block. The construction of a large wetland is also underway, with Mangatarere Restoration Society tasked with project management along with a significant contribution from both Land Management and Biodiversity Departments.

A further 12 new Farm Environment Plans are being developed in the Wairarapa Moana Catchment along with two new plans on the Kapiti Coast near Otaki. Land Management Advisors are also developing a strong presence at DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb discussion groups. This is all part of the drive to take a more integrated approach to discussing nutrient and soil management issues on farm.



2.2.4 WRECI Hill Country Programme

Following the signing of a new contract with the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI), work has focussed on visiting landowners to prepare individual work programmes. 30,000 poplar and willow poles have been allocated to the WRECI planting programme for 2016, and it is estimated that a further 100 hectares of severely eroding land will be afforested, or have stock excluded to allow natural reversion to take place. Over the last two months soil moisture has dropped to very low levels, this may well impact on the start date of the planting programme.

2.2.5 Forestry

In recent weeks a new Forestry Ranger has been appointed to work closely with the cutting rights forest manager PF Olsen Ltd. The ranger position has been moved from Land Management to Parks to enable closer liaison and communication between the parties and reflects the need for improved integration between the two activities.



2.2.6 Akura Conservation Centre

Mangapakeha Nursery – It is anticipated that Council will sell the Mangapakeha Nursery land following this winter’s work programme. This land will become surplus to requirements. As part of the recent expansion and upgrade at Akura, the sale of the Mangapakeha land was identified as a source of revenue to reduce debt.

It is anticipated that any marketing would be undertaken during the spring/summer of 2016/17.

2.3 Flood Protection

2.3.1 Floodplain Management Plan Implementation

Hutt River City Centre Upgrade Project

The Hutt City Centre Upgrade Project (HRCCUP) is now in the preliminary design phase to refine the preferred option selected in December 2015. Report 2016.24 to the Hutt Valley Floodplain Management Subcommittee provides more details of the scope and programme for the Preliminary Design.

In addition to the information contained in the Hutt Valley Flood Management Subcommittee reports. The HRCCUP working group (including GWRC, HCC and NZTA officers) continues to refine the scope of works and has commenced the process of procurement of consultancy services for the different project work streams. We have set a target of March 2017 to define the preliminary design with the aim of completing the economic and affordability assessment by June 2017, coincidental with the Melling Interchange investigations being lead by NZTA.

Jim Cooke Park Stopbank

The consent application for the stopbank upgrade works and river channel improvements at Jim Cooke Park has been lodged. Negotiations continue to secure the land entry agreements with KCDC and private land owners.

Otaki River

Work will commence shortly to repair Traceys Groynes.

Investigation into a permanent solution to address erosion occurring at Harpers Bend will commence upon completion of the Traceys Groyne works. Temporary management of this erosion issue is being carried out by the Flood Protection Operations Team.

Lower Wairarapa Development Scheme

The Barrage Gate control system upgrade and Tawaha Culvert upgrade contracts have been awarded. Off-site works on both projects have commenced.

Environmental Strategy Implementation

Otaki improvements have been completed, including new access gates at the north bank and walking track improvements at the Estuary.

A fish friendly flood gate has been installed at Katihiku, on Otaki River.

A user survey on the Hutt River commenced on 5 March 2016. This user survey will conclude on 30 March 2016. Outputs from this survey will inform the Hutt River City Centre Upgrade Project.

Hutt River Maoribank & Ebdentown Implementation

The construction of the Ebdentown groynes adjacent to Totara Park in Upper Hutt has been completed. A planting plan is currently being prepared and will be implemented during the next planting season. The planting plan in development aligns with outcomes sought by the Hutt River Environmental Strategy and has a longterm aim to create greater biodiversity along the river edge.

2.3.2 Operations Delivery

Western River Schemes

All works programmes in the Western River Schemes are running to schedule, with the predicted 3% overspend still forecast.

On the Otaki River spraying has been completed on the dry river beaches and is in progress along the river trails and berms. Mowing operations continue. Pest plant eradication is also in progress in both the Otaki and Waikanae Rivers together with general drain maintenance.

Rock line and groyne maintenance including the removal of woody weeds is progressing.

Staff continue to remove windblown trees from watercourses throughout the region, with 22 trees removed from the Porirua Stream channel in the last two months.

Stream clearing runs are underway in Wainuiomata River, Takapu, Porirua and Waimehu Streams and a Korokoro Stream mouth cut has been completed.

Wairarapa River Schemes

Rock placement in the Te Ore Ore and Waiohine schemes has been temporarily delayed due to low flow conditions. It is anticipated that rock placement will be completed in March/April once the drought conditions break.

On 3 March, Wairarapa based staff assisted the Environmental Policy Department with a trial drain cleaning exercise at Kaiwawai Farm, exploring the issues relating to implementing the Proposed Natural Resources Plan.

Community Recreation

The Great Outdoors Summer Events programme has now finished for the Flood Protection team. Once again the Gravel Grabs prove to be a great success with good turn outs to both the Hutt and Otaki events. Bike the Hutt River Trail attracted 1,400 people. A new event on the Otaki River was the edible native plant day arranged by members of the local iwi. This event was very informative and well received by those who attended and is likely to be very popular in the future.

Both the River Ranger and Operations staff have helped make these events a great success for the Council with many staff volunteering their time and their weekends to help organise and run them.

Resource Consent Project

Notification of resource consent applications for the Hutt, Otaki, Waikanae and Wainuiomata Rivers is anticipated to occur in this quarter.

2.3.3 Investigations, Strategy and Planning

Floodplain Management Plan development

Te Kāuru Upper Ruamāhanga FMP rural options development is progressing. A workshop (including site visits) has been held with the Subcommittee to develop options for the Waingawa River as well as common tools across all the rivers. Progress is being made resolving Waipoua River flood hazard issues between GWRC and Masterton District Council through a joint project team. A new hydrology assessment is being independently peer reviewed. An updated hydraulic model is also under development, and additional topographic survey is being carried out at present.

An initial draft Waiohine FMP was provided to South Wairarapa District Council, Carterton District Council, the Waiohine River Floodplain Management Committee and GWRC Councillors in late February. This has been workshopped with WRFMPAC and a series of meetings and further workshops are planned with WRFMPAC, SWDC, CDC and the Environment

Committee leading towards final signoff of the draft FMP for public consultation. The aim is to take the draft FMP to public consultation mid-2016.

Scoping of the Lower Wairarapa Valley FMP continues and we have met with senior SWDC officers in March to brief them and seek their engagement on the project.

Investigations and Strategy

We have engaged a consultant to undertake some gravel management-related investigations and to help us develop a Gravel Strategy. This work will update our knowledge of gravel movement in several of our rivers and will further develop our approach to how we collect information about gravel and manage it across the region.

A new approach to how we will present flood hazard information was presented to the Council in a workshop on 9th March. The proposed approach will now be summarised into a Council report for endorsement.

Wellington Water is also developing its approach to modelling and mapping flooding from surface water (local stormwater flooding). We have provided input to this. They are in the process of finalising their modelling of the Tawa catchment which will allow us to produce maps showing combined flood hazard from the Porirua Stream and local stormwater.

The preparation for the Pinehaven FMP hearing, to be held at Upper Hutt City Council on 7 April 2016, is continuing. Upper Hutt City Councils Landuse Strategy, which includes details of a landswap in the Pinehaven Catchment, was released for consultation on the 9 March 2016. This land swap will assist with achieving some of the outcomes of the proposed Pinehaven Stream Floodplain Management Plan. The hearing date was deferred to 7 April 2016 to allow time for the Landuse strategy consultation to be completed as it was considered that it may assist with the response to some of the questions raised in sub missions on the Pinehaven FMP.

2.4 Biodiversity

2.4.1 General

The refreshed GWRC Biodiversity Strategy has been published and will be rolled out to departments across the organisation during April and May.

Staff attended the Forest and Bird Wellington regional meeting in March to present information about GWRC's biodiversity management programmes. Forest and Bird members are interested in learning about the work of a range of organisations to help identify projects they could be involved in.

2.4.2 Biodiversity Management

Key Native Ecosystems

- Biodiversity Management staff visited the Wellington South Coast KNE site as a team to discuss general management approaches, issues and opportunities. They met with a Wellington City Council Ranger and a local tourist operator to gauge the opportunities for collaborative biodiversity management at this site.
- Two new KNE plans have been published since the beginning of February. These are for the Omahu and Tauherenikau Bush Remnants KNE sites. A further four KNE plans are expected to be published in the coming weeks
- Rodent monitoring carried out in February has shown that pest animal control regimes are being very effective in all monitored areas. No rats were recorded at the Wainuiomata Mainland Island, East Harbour Northern Forest, Belmont-Korokoro or Queen Elizabeth Park KNE sites
- NIWA has published their findings after monitoring the outcomes of Egeria spraying at the Parangarahu Lakes Area KNE site. Their report states that the herbicide application to the upper ponds of Gollans Wetland, undertaken as part of the KNE programme, was successful in reducing the Egeria, though some localised increase has also been found. Further control of this aquatic weed is being planned for May
- Aerial and ground hunting has taken place at the Hutt Water Collection Area, Kaitoke Regional Park, Akatarawa Forest, Pukuratahi, Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo Water Collection Area and Parangarahu Lakes Area KNE sites. 52 feral goats and 14 feral deer were destroyed
- Biodiversity staff facilitated a group of 42 staff from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) who released native plants from grass, blackberry and lupin at the Queen Elizabeth Park KNE site. The native plants were planted over the last two years by the local community and had since been inundated by exotic species, particularly blackberry.
- Staff provided input into the draft catchment management plan for the Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo water collection areas, which is being prepared by Wellington Water.

QEII Covenant Support

- Three new proposals for QEII open space covenants have been reviewed by staff and will now go to the QEII National Trust Board for their consideration. Once approved, these sites will receive GWRC funding to support restoration, and the area of legally protected land will increase by 32 ha.

Wetland Programme

- The Wetland Programme has been reviewed and adjusted to bring it into alignment with requirements of the PNRP. This has been a collaborative process involving the Biodiversity, Biosecurity, Land Management and Environmental Science departments
- Several private landowners have received wetland management advice, with one landowner becoming the first landowner to officially sign up to the programme and request a wetland Restoration Management Plan for her property

Fish Passage Restoration

- A contribution has been made toward development of the first national guidelines on fish passage assessment and barrier design solutions, a project which is being led by NIWA and DoC
- GIS information has been provided for a national database on barriers to fish passage

2.4.3 Biodiversity Advice and Advocacy

Biodiversity Advice

- Following the GWRC submission on Hutt City Council's (HCC) district plan change regarding notable trees, staff worked with Environmental Policy staff, attended a pre-hearing meeting and represented GWRC at the hearing. GWRC supported the plan change on the understanding that significant indigenous biodiversity values in urban areas would be considered and protected through a forthcoming plan change focused on vegetation clearance rules and identification of Significant Natural Areas
- Staff contributed to a GWRC submission on the UHCC district plan change in relation to notable trees. The submission was largely in support of the work done by UHCC but also highlighted the need for clarity on which pest and wilding species can be removed under the proposed rules. GWRC suggested that UHCC ensure that appropriate ecological criteria are used to delineate urban tree groups
- Staff members contributed to GWRC submissions on the Resource Management Amendment Bill 2015 (RLAB) and a discussion document on a proposed new Marine Protected Areas Act (MPA). Contributions from the department focussed on ensuring that any potential effects on biodiversity in the proposals, or opportunities for protecting it, were identified and commented on where necessary. Staff members raised concerns that the MPA proposals did not appropriately recognise the role of regional councils in managing regional ecosystems.

Collaborative Restoration: Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

- A kākahi monitoring event was held at Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve on February 13th. Twenty-one enthusiastic volunteers helped to collect kākahi, count them and record their measurements. The data collected will be analysed and a report prepared in due course.
- South Featherston School and St Theresa's School are both participants of "Whitebait Connection - Wairarapa Moana Kaitiaki", an environmental education programme delivered by staff of the Island Bay Marine Education Centre. The schools have each had two field trips during March to learn about stream ecology and evaluating stream health. Biodiversity staff evaluated the service that is being provided as well as the health and safety measures in place for the programme.

Collaborative Restoration: Porirua Harbour and Catchment Project

- A public snorkelling event was run by Biodiversity staff in Whitireia Park. The event was run through the Parks department GOSE programme and was also part of Seaweek. In response to high demand, two trips were planned, though bad weather resulted in one being cancelled. The event that did go ahead was very well received, with a lot of positive feedback from participants. A key component was a briefing to participants on the health of the harbour and this was followed up by asking them to identify actions they could take.
- In March, the department supported the Porirua Harbour Trust Educator to run a training session for school teachers in the Porirua Harbour catchment about stormwater issues. Participating teachers were encouraged to involve their students in the online Whaitua survey about harbour and stream values

Biodiversity Advocacy

- In late February Biodiversity staff successfully coordinated Seaweek in the Wellington region for the second year. There were a good number of events organised by a range of participants this year, from marine-themed storytelling in libraries and tours of the Moa Point treatment plant, to beach clean ups on the South Coast and the snorkel event at Porirua Harbour (discussed above)
- *An Educator's Guide to Stream Health Assessment* has been prepared by Biodiversity staff and published. This is included in a stream assessment kit which is now available for loan to schools in the region and includes equipment for carrying out measurements and identifying habitat quality in streams. Staff from the Biodiversity department, alongside EnviroSchools facilitators and representatives from the Whitebait connection, the Porirua Harbour Trust and Kapiti Coast District Council, are now trained in use of the kits and will, in turn, train teachers who borrow them

3. Environment Management

3.1 Harbours

3.1.1 Recreational Boating

The exceptionally good weather during the summer period has resulted in large numbers of people making the most of the good weather and using the region's waterways. The down-side to this has been more congestion and safety issues at locations such as the launching area between the Paremata bridges, areas within Pauatahanui Inlet and issues between other harbour users at various locations.

As mentioned in the previous report, we have had a security guard at the launching area between the Paremata bridges at peak times in good weather. This has been in an effort to educate swimmers about not swimming among the boats being launched or retrieved, and also not parking their cars on the beach in such a way that vehicles with trailers cannot easily get around them. The security guard is in addition to the amount of time our summer ranger has spent in this area. Generally there has been a positive response when the safety issues are pointed out, but unfortunately not always so. This approach is only a short term 'quick fix' and is not intended to address the underlying issues of conflicting water users in a small space. Any long term solution lies in Porirua City Council's area.

Staff have meet with rowers and the East By West harbour ferries about safety issues in the Lambton Harbour area with positive results.

There are on going dicusssion between ourselves, Maritime Police and Hutt City Council concerning swimmers around the small harbour ferries, predominatently at Days Bay wharf.

Our summer ranger has continued to have a positive presence around the coast, especially in the Porirua area, educating boaties, distributing boating safety packs and information, as well as undertaking compliance activity when required.

There have been the usual variety of harbour events during the summer, during which we monitored and coordinated harbour useage. The Triathalon National Champs and Captial Swim Classic at the end of January both had our vessel SeaCare in attendance.

On 14 February, Grant Nalder was testing lifejackets and distributing boating safety information as part of Yachting New Zealands "Have a go" promotion for Watersports.



Lifejacket Testing at Evans Bay

3.1.2 Navigation Aids

During January it was discovered during a maintenance diving inspection on Barrett Reef buoy that one (of the two) mooring chains had become disconnected from its seabed anchor. After some careful searching and work by contracted divers, the mooring chain was reconnected to the anchor, so the buoy is once again well secured for the approaching winter weather.



Barrett Reef buoy – on a calm day

3.1.3 Oil pollution response

The move of oil pollution response and other maritime equipment from our leased store at Centreport's Shed 29 into the two new sites of the container on Aotea Quay (the main wharf at Centreport) and the store in Tyers Road (Ngarunga Gorge) was fully completed by the end of February 2016. The photos show the initial-response equipment stowed in a converted 40-foot container situated at Aotea Quay, Centreport, located at the highest-risk area of any spilled persistent oil.



Initial-response storage container at Aotea Quay No. 5 berth

On 17/18 March, John Tattersall participated in a Maritime NZ National Response Team table-top oil spill response exercise that was held in Wellington. (The National Response Team is a broad selection of trained oil spill responders from around the country who are available to respond to a significant (Tier 3) oil spill anywhere in NZ.)

During this period, no marine oil spill responses occurred or required response activity (although several "oil spill" reports were received and checked-out, but were found to be "false alarms".)

3.1.4 Commercial Shipping

Cruise Ships

Centreport have had a busy cruise ship season, with seventy-six calls during this summer season.

Such vessels usually have numerous passengers and crew on board, so it is important that all goes well during their port call. For example, when *Explorer of the Seas* called in early February, the vessel had 3,328 passengers and 1,198 crew on board, a total of 4,526 on board. With two large cruise ships in port together, up to 10,000 additional people could be in Wellington for the day.



Cruise ship Explorer of the Seas at Wellington

3.1.5 Ferries

The last few double-bottoms sections of the ferry Arahura were being broken up on Alang Beach during February 2016.



Last pieces of the Arahura being scrapped at Alang

3.2 Parks

3.2.1 General

The camping season in the regional parks has been the biggest ever to date. At Kaitoke Regional Park there were up to 500 campers a night on Wellington Anniversary at the peak of the summer, while the hot dry weather particularly over Christmas and New Year also played a role in record numbers. Since February the campground has been busy with schools and weekend groups. Battle Hill Farm Forest Park has consistently been at capacity over the summer period. International visitors (Europeans) have been more noticeable during summer, travelling out of their traditional shoulder season months. Many visitors are using apps to find sites; the regional parks are popular due to their low cost, accessibility and high quality environment.

Budget campervans have been overnighiting at the Dry Creek entrance to Belmont Regional Park earlier in the season and in much higher numbers than previous years. This has partly been driven by local councils enforcing no freedom camping rules within their areas as these visitors are seeking low cost camping opportunities. Due to the Dry Creek carpark configuration and distance from the toilets this created an issue with toilet waste and displacement of day visitors. We have reviewed the situation and the following improvements are either in place or planned:

- Increased Park Ranger visits to clean up the site, educate visitors and collect fees
- Installing a self registration system (overseas tourists are used to this type of facility).
- Opening up campervan access to the grassy area further up the gravel road and behind the hill over summer. Bollards will be installed to limit parking options. This will provide a quieter space for camping that is closer to the toilets. During winter access will be restricted to the current parking area nearer the entrance.

These improvements will be funded by the extra fee revenue received.

3.2.2 Western Sector

Korokoro Valley upgrades/ pine tree felling

Pine tree felling has been completed in the area near Korokoro Forks and adjacent to the tracks from that point and slightly beyond Baked Beans Bend. All overgrown trees presenting a risk to tracks have been felled, a job that has involved taking down over 1000 trees. The contractors have done an excellent job; while it is a dramatic sight, the trees are safely locked in, the underlying vegetation is quickly springing up and the damage to large native trees at Baked Beans Bend has been minimised.

The Assets team has made very good progress in the valley down to Cornish Street. The only jobs remaining are to fly in a 14m long replacement bridge, install several new barriers and signs, and repair one final drop out near

Cornish St. We expect to open the whole valley to visitors in mid April, 11 months after the flooding event.

New farm licence at Belmont Regional Park

Following an open tender process, we are pleased to confirm that the new holders for the eastern grazing licence is the private company Toviewadream Farming Ltd owned by Dion Kilmister and Ali Rooney.

Dion and Ali farm two hill country properties and several finishing blocks in the Wairarapa so they are experienced and familiar with the challenges they will likely encounter at Belmont. Their proposal has been thoroughly reviewed by GWRC and our advisors Baker & Associates and approved by Hutt City Council officers as required by our agreement with them. We are looking forward to working with Dion and Ali, and their stock managers Kerry Kilmister and his partner Lorena who will be living on the park. The new farming licence will take effect from 1 July 2016.

QEP entranceway upgrade

Tenders for the construction of the new information centre/meeting room/rangers office building at Mackays entranceway have been received and are being reviewed. Building and resource consents are currently being processed. Consultation with iwi partners regarding support for the archaeological authority application is reaching the final stages. Preliminary site preparation work has begun to clear exotic trees for the main depot office building and workshop. This work leads into the eventual relocation and extension of the existing rangers office. Mulch created from the tree clearance will be reused at restoration planting sites as part of the broader landscape redevelopment plan and throughout the rest of the park (including the newly constructed Te Ara o Whareroa).

The next steps include:

- Engaging the successful tenderer, confirming a start date and construction period for the buildings work
- Continuation of minor site preparation work (including relocation of fences etc.)
- Obtaining approvals for archaeological authority (NZHPT) and building consent and resource consent/outline plan (KCDC)
- Site blessing and media engagement; contractor induction and cultural training
- Operational planning for services connections (power, high speed data/phone)
- Procurement planning for the construction of a 5-bay workshop facility
- Procurement planning for the landscape development work (including road improvements carparking and Pou)
- Initiating the planting programme

3.2.3 Eastern sector

Baring Head bridge upgrade

Following a number of offers to meet with right of way (ROW) holders Alan Loan and Kerry Nicholas, which have not been taken up, GWRC is serving a notice under the Property Law Act proposing the shares of cost to be apportioned among all the ROW holders. The holders in turn have 15 days to serve a cross notice, outlining an alternative proposal. Should there be a disagreement regarding a cross notice then the matter would most likely proceed to the District Court.

3.2.4 Parks Planning

Draft management plan for the water collection areas

A draft management plan for the Hutt and Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo Water Collection Areas (WCA) is being prepared to guide the management of these areas by GWRC and Wellington Water Limited. The draft plan draws on a plan developed in 2008 but not published, a resource statement, water safety plans, draft key native ecosystem plans and other key policies and strategies. It summarises the key features of the WCAs and outlines the primary threats to water quality and supply and biodiversity and measures taken to mitigate and minimise them. The plan will also encompass the directions of the current access plans for the WCAs and provide a new management framework with rules for use and development presented in a similar format to the Parks Network Plan. In response to the challenge of two agencies working collaboratively in management of the WCAs, the plan also details decision making responsibilities and agreements.

The plan is being developed with input from GWRC and WWL staff and external stakeholders, but broader community consultation is not proposed because general public access to not permitted (unless guided) to Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo and not encouraged in the Hutt WCA. The plan is expected to be completed in the coming months and will be presented to the Committee for approval. Parks operational staff have already identified that it will be a useful tool for their day to day management activities.

Concession proposal from Wellington Riding for Disabled at Battle Hill Farm Park

Wellington RDA are wishing to relocate their operations from Kenepuru to Battle Hill Farm Park. They submitted an initial application in mid-2015 which was assessed against the criteria identified in the Parks Network Plan. Further information was requested from RDA about the detail of the proposal and how impacts would be minimised and mitigated. Their proposal included:

- Constructing a large covered arena in the homestead paddock
- Construction of horse holding pens within the homestead grounds beside the Horokiwi Stream

- Utilising parts of the homestead for offices and meeting rooms and building a deck onto the rear of the building
- Utilising most of the homestead outbuildings for feed and equipment storage
- Licencing paddocks for horse grazing

RDA are now completing their proposal which is expected to be presented to a Council workshop for discussion before being presented to Council for approval of a public notification and feedback period.

4. Climate change

4.1 GWRC Emissions reduction targets

The GWRC Climate Change Strategy and 10 Year Plan 2015-25 include a commitment to develop corporate emissions reduction targets using the 2014/15 GWRC carbon inventory as a baseline. Analysis was undertaken to forecast for each key emissions source what targets are achievable under both business as usual (BAU) and with additional investment. The proposed emissions reduction goals under BAU and investment scenarios are outlined in the table below. Note that the target proposed for 2050 is aspirational.

Target completion date	Reduction goals BAU (% below 2014/15)	Reduction goals investment (% below 2014/15)
2019/20	5%	10%
2025/25	10%	25%
2029/30	20%	45%
2049/50	70%	70%

In principle the investment scenario is proposed as the agreed direction for GWRC, subject to further consideration of more detailed information on costs and value for money. The next step is to develop a clear pathway of action to achieve these targets, along with further analysis of the potential costs (and savings) and resourcing required in achieving them. The targets, proposed plan of action and investment requirements will be developed for further consideration in May.

4.2 Electric vehicles – GWRC fleet

Options for replacing the GWRC vehicle fleet with electric vehicles (EVs) have been analysed. In summary:

- The fully electric Nissan Leaf and the plug-in hybrid electric Mitsubishi Outlander are considered to be suitable replacements for GWRC fleet cars and SUVs – based on their purchase cost, size and specifications. and electric travel range.

- The cost of purchasing an EV is higher than its petrol or diesel equivalent, however higher capital costs are offset by lower fuel and maintenance costs.
- An initial assessment of the GWRC fleet identified 20 operational cars and SUVs that could potentially be replaced with either a Nissan Leaf or Mitsubishi Outlander by 2020.
- Replacing the 20 operational cars and SUVs with EVs has the potential to reduce GWRC's overall fleet emissions by 5.5 percent.
- 68 percent of GWRC's fleet is made up of utes and heavier vehicles. Suitable EVs are not yet available in the market place to replace these vehicles.

Next steps for replacing the GWRC fleet with EVs are:

- A pool car is being replaced with a Nissan Leaf and a slow charging station will be installed at Shed 39.
- Information on suitable EV options will be provided for consideration when other cars and SUVs are due for replacement (potential exists to replace all operational cars and SUVs with EVs by 2020).
- GWRC Departments will be consulted to identify whether any existing fleet utes could be replaced with lighter vehicles.
- The GWRC vehicle purchasing policy will be updated to support the transition to an EV fleet, including developing criteria to assess the suitability of replacing a vehicle with an EV.
- A watching brief will be kept on new EV technologies entering the New Zealand market to identify suitable EV replacements for the heavier vehicles in the GWRC fleet.

4.3 Electric Vehicle Symposium

GWRC and WCC are organising and will co-host an Electric Vehicle Symposium on 27th June at the Rydges Hotel, Wellington.

The Symposium will bring together national and international experts to discuss accelerating the uptake of electric vehicles in the Wellington region and New Zealand. Presentations and panel discussions will focus on the challenges and opportunities of electric buses, cars and trucks; the economic, social and environmental benefits of electric vehicles; and the policy, infrastructure, skills and services changes needed to stimulate rapid uptake.

Hon. Simon Bridges will speak at the event, which will be opened by Mayor Wade-Brown and closed by GWRC Chair Chirs Laidlaw.

Staff are currently in the process of approaching sponsors, international and national speakers and panelists.

Promotion of the event is due to begin mid April, once sponsors and key note speakers are confirmed.

4.4 Regional Electric Vehicle Working Group

GWRC convened a meeting with relevant offices from TAs around the region in February 2016. All councils were supportive of the development of a Regional EV Working Group, to act as a coordinating mechanism for the promotion of EVs generally, and in relation to the development of charging infrastructure across the region.

A first initiative of the group was to support recommendations made by Christchurch City Council to NZTA re standardising signage relating to EV parking and charging infrastructure.

The group is currently collaborating on the initial draft of an *Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Guidelines for Local Authorities* document which could eventually be published by NZTA or LGNZ.

5. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

5.1 Engagement

Engagement on this matter is not necessary.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry
General Manager,
Environment Management

Report approved by:

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager,
Catchment Management

Report approved by:

Luke Troy
General Manager,
Strategy