

Report 2017.196
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Committee Environment Committee
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Western river management resource consents update

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the western river management consents project and the proposed programme from the close of submissions.

2. Background

River management activities are undertaken by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) to meet our statutory responsibilities for both flood protection and erosion control, and the avoidance or mitigation of flooding hazards. These activities contribute to community safety and well-being, and enable sustainable economic development on river margins and floodplains. In undertaking this work, GWRC seeks to minimise the adverse effects of its activities on the environment and on important cultural values.

Between 2013 and 2016 GWRC lodged five new river management resource consent applications to replace its eight existing “global” consents and three gravel extraction consents. The eleven existing consents are spread between the western and eastern parts of the region. The five new applications were lodged six months prior to the expiry of GWRCs existing consents which has enabled work to continue until such time as new consents are granted.

As part of the resource consent process GWRC has sought wide ranging input into the re-consenting process from both within the Council and from external parties. To this end, GWRC has also prepared a new region wide Code of Practice and environmental monitoring plan.

2.1 Code of Practice

The proposed Code of Practice (Code) guides all river management activities undertaken by GWRC for the purposes of flood and erosion protection across the Wellington Region, irrespective of funding, location or whether an activity requires resource consent. This means it applies to permitted activities as well as those activities for which resource consent is required by the relevant regional plan or plans.

The Code aims to achieve:

- Greater awareness of the effect of river management decisions and activities on a river's natural character and other significant river values, at both broad (whole of river) scale and detailed (reach or specific site) scale
- Greater consistency of river management practice across the rivers that GWRC administers and manages
- Good management of the environmental and cultural impacts of river management activities.

2.2 Environmental Monitoring Plan

The Environmental Monitoring Plan (EMP) sits alongside and supports the Code. It includes a programme of environmental monitoring, involving collection of a range of physical parameters that reflect aspects of river natural character and processes, and which can be used as indicators of the effects of river management activities on selected environmental values. This information will form a valuable database against which the appropriateness of river management activities, in terms of their environmental effects, may be evaluated. This knowledge can be used to inform changes to river management practice (as outlined in the Code), to allow it to evolve and improve in terms of environmental outcomes over time.

3. Comment

Of the five consents, the four western river management consents covering GWRC works in the Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt, Wainuiomata, Waikanae and Otaki Rivers were notified in February 2017 and submissions closed at the end of April 2017. Note the fifth consent, for the eastern rivers, remains on hold until the Te Kauru FMP is completed.

Fifty-five submissions were received from 26 separate organisations or individuals including Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika, Ngāti Toa Rangātira, Nga Hāpu o Otaki and Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai, DOC, and Fish and Game NZ. A total of 27 submissions were in opposition and 28 supportive, conditional or neutral.

A breakdown of submissions by river is provided below and a summary of submissions is included in **Attachment 1**.

Submissions received for Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River

General Position of Submission	Total
Oppose	6
Support	2
Conditional	4
Total submissions received	12

Wainuiomata River

General Position of Submission	Total
Oppose	6
Support	1
Conditional	1
Total submissions received	8

Submissions received for Otaki River

General Position of Submission	Total
Oppose	6
Support	6
Conditional	4
Total submissions received	16

Submissions received for Waikanae River

General Position of Submission	Total
Oppose	9
Support	2
Conditional	4
Neutral	2
Total submissions received	17

3.1 Next steps/programme

Over the next four months our intention is to resolve most, if not all, of the submissions without the need for a hearing as we believe this is achievable given the nature of the submissions and our discussions with most submitters prior to notification. We have started this process and have already had several meetings with submitters. We are also keeping in contact with Environmental Regulation around procedural issues with submitters, commissioners and prehearing and hearing processes. In September we will review where we are at with all submitters and make a decision whether to proceed to a hearing or spend more time trying to resolve any outstanding issues. If we decide to proceed to a hearing, it is anticipated that this could be scheduled before Christmas 2017.

4. Communication

The resource consent documents were all available on the GWRC website. All submitters have been contacted by Environmental Regulation. We will be

contacting individual submitters over the next four months, no further general/wider public communication is proposed.

5. Consideration of Climate Change

The matter/s addressed in this report have been considered by officers in accordance with the process set out in the GWRC Climate Change Consideration Guide.

5.1 Mitigation assessment

Mitigation assessments are concerned with the effect of the matter on the climate (i.e. the greenhouse gas emissions generated or removed from the atmosphere as a consequence of the matter) and the actions taken to reduce, neutralise or enhance that effect.

The effect of the works proposed under these resource consents will be addressed via the Code of Practice (see section 2.1), the GWRC corporate sustainability programme and where relevant, through GWRC's procurement process which is undergoing review in 2017 and will encourage suppliers and contractors to minimise emissions.

5.2 Adaptation assessment

Adaptation assessments relate to the impacts of climate change (e.g. sea level rise or an increase in extreme weather events), and the actions taken to address or avoid those impacts.

GWRC plans for climate change in assessing the degree of future flood hazard and in determining an appropriate response. There are only specific, limited situations in which climate change is not relevant (for example, planning for present-day emergency management).

The term of the consent being sought is 35 years. Within this timeframe the climate change impacts on our day-to-day activities can be managed through the responsive management framework we are proposing in the consent application. This means we should be able to adapt to changes as they occur.

In terms of the wider, long term work of the Department which these consents support, assessing flood hazard and determining appropriate structural and/or non-structural responses in areas subject to flood risk, GWRC applies the following allowances for climate change predicted to occur over the next 100 years in the design criteria for flood hazard investigations:

- Increases in rainfall intensity – 20%
- Sea level rise – 0.8m

6. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

6.1 Engagement

The following engagement processes have been followed:

- Consultation with affected and interested parties leading up to lodgement of the applications.
- Ongoing engagement with submitters to seek resolution of their concerns

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

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Report approved by:

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Attachment 1: Summary of submissions western rivers consents