greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

APRIL/MAY 2009

RURAL FOCUS

This pine seedling east of Masterton was one of the first planted in the new Afforestation Grant Scheme partnership between the Government and regional councils

More trees for Wellington region

An extra 300,000 trees could be planted to mitigate climate change in the Wellington region in 2009 with funding from the Afforestation Grant Scheme.

Landowners with land suitable for forestry are being encouraged to contact Greater Wellington and apply for funding under the new central government scheme – 50% of which is being allocated through regional councils. The scheme allocates $3.5 million a year, for the next four years, to a national regional council pool.

The Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS) will help reduce the forecast impacts of climate change and create other environmental benefits around the region, such as reducing erosion and nutrient run-off in hill country areas.

Greater Wellington's Land Management Manager David Cameron says: "Greater Wellington has a long history working with landowners to plant trees to stabilise erosion prone land, slow down flood peaks and for shelter. Planting to mitigate climate change is a natural progression of our work.

"The AGS will allow us to do more of what we have always done – promote trees on our landscape, ensure sustainable land use and help landowners with planning and managing their plantings. We were able to get some funding in 2008 and we have helped a landowner plant 90 hectares of pine forest at Blairlogie, east of Masterton.

David says Greater Wellington will work directly with landowners to arrange and manage planting projects, as well as auditing the establishment of the forests.

Under the regional council pool, priority will be given to afforestation proposals that will reduce the risk of soil erosion, improve water quality and improve biodiversity. The money can be used for fencing new forestry or regenerating blocks, as well as purchasing seedlings, planting and release spraying costs. A fixed grant rate will apply per hectare depending on the rate of carbon sequestration achieved by the forest.

Continued on p2

Part of the pine planting at Blairlogie in winter 2008, which is a good example of land meeting the criteria of the AGS and showing a mix new forest and regeneration. The land is steep enough to be at risk of erosion in a major storm. A block of 110 hectares of grazing land was retired, 90ha went into pines and the remaining 20ha, predominantly regenerating kanuka forest in two main gully-systems, was left to continue regenerating. The light brown dots on the landscape are where the grass has been sprayed, so as not to compete with the young pine trees

Continued from p1

"Landowners can consider planting exotics or natives, or enhancing a regenerating native block by fencing, pest control and supplementary planting. It's about using this money wisely and getting the maximum benefit for the region from every hectare planted."

"Greater Wellington's land management officers will assist with finding the most suitable planting options for each landscape, securing the trees and arranging the planting. Landowners who are interested should get in touch with a land management officer at our asterton office 06 378 2484."

Next AGS applications due 20 April 2009

- Applications for the second round of AGS funding for 2009 close on 20 April
- The first round closed on January 31 and 15 applications were received
- Eight applications were approved from the January 31 round which amount to 169ha of planting, reversion, etc
- The remaining seven applications are currently under discussion and involve a further 182ha

What is the Afforestation Grant Scheme?

The Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS) is a government initiative to plant new forests on private land to gather carbon credits to offset New Zealand's carbon emissions, in response to climate change under the Kyoto protocol. The AGS is overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The AGS applies to what is termed 'Kyoto-compliant land', that is, land that was not forested before 1990. It promotes new exotic forests, new native forests and assisted reversion of native remnants. Parcels of land must total five hectares to be considered for funding, and meet other conditions.

Under the AGS, the government will retain the carbon credits for the first 10 years after the forest has become established. After the contract period finishes, the carbon credits from the land will revert to the landowner, who will also incur any liability attached to the credits. This means that if landowners cut down the forest and do not re-plant, they will have to buy carbon credits to cover the shortfall.

Landowners can apply directly to the AGS for funds, or through regional councils. Regional councils will be helping with planning, planting and protecting the new forests.

Further information about the Afforestation Grant Scheme contact:
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, PO Box 2526, Wellington
0800 CLIMATE (254 628)
climatechange@maf.govt.nz
www.maf.govt.nz/climatechange

Rainfall comparison 2007 to 2008

Annual rainfall in mm	2007	2008
Otaki	687	1034
Reikiorangi	925	1480
Tuturumuri	927	1548
Tauherenikau	727	1177
Longbush	563	983
Masterton	578	918
Ngaumu	752	1135

Spring/summer 08/09 rainfall figures

Spring/summer rainfall in mm	Sep 08	Oct 08	Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09
Otaki	47	139	44	143	63	154
Reikiorangi	74	172	68	141	53	174
Tuturumuri	96	90	17	92	23	121
Tauherenikau	52	112	51	98	15	175
Longbush	53	73	19	67	6	110
Masterton	48	91	14	68	19	123
Ngaumu	48	68	17	50	34	94

A thick mat of didymo in a South Island river. Imagine this brown snotty material covering the rocks at your favourite river swimming hole or fly-fishing spot

Spreading the check, clean and dry message

Two staff were out and about around the region's popular freshwater spots this summer promoting the check, clean and dry message to help combat the spread of aquatic weeds.

Senior Biosecurity Officer Pest Plants Richard Grimmett says the most severe threat to the region's waterways is didymo, or rock snot, which has already become a major pest in the South Island, but the check, clean and dry message works with all aquatic weeds.

"If people check, clean and dry their boots, boats, bikes or whatever gear they are using, between waterways, then we can stop any aquatic weed spreading from one waterway to another."

Richard says some aquatic weeds can spread from the tiniest fragment that arrives in a waterway, and end up fouling the entire system.

"It is likely didymo was spread around the South Island waterways through tiny fragments on wet fly-fishing gear, and hornwort, another nasty weed, is thought to have been spread around Wellington region in eel nets.

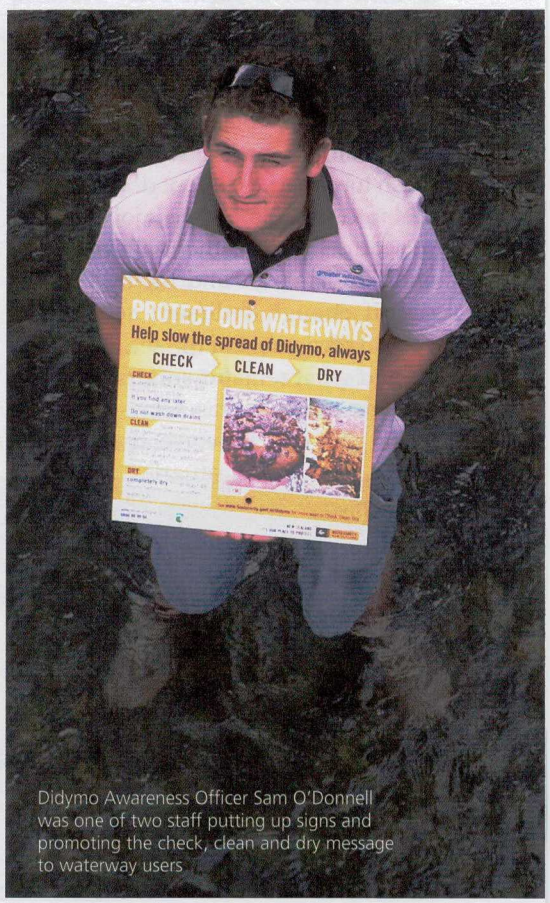
"Our two staff were targeting popular recreational spots around rivers, streams and lakes across the region and working from Wednesday to Sunday to get the message out to the people who use our waterways.

"They were reminding people to check all their gear for traces of aquatic weeds when leaving a waterway and before entering another one. Gear can be a boat, boat trailer, boots, fishing gear, nets or anything else that people take into the water. The message is check it, clean it and dry it, before you enter another waterway."

"Didymo is already fouling many of the South Island's iconic rivers and it will only be vigilance on the part of all water users that will stop the same thing happening here."

This was the second summer Greater Wellington had staff working fulltime to promote awareness about didymo.

For general information on didymo visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz



Didymo Awareness Officer Sam O'Donnell was one of two staff putting up signs and promoting the check, clean and dry message to waterway users

Paua need a sediment-free environment to thrive and divers need clear water to find them

A healthy sea needs healthy land

Strange as it seems, a hill country slip miles from the sea can affect your ability to collect seafood or catch a fish off the beach. Heavy rain can wash tonnes of sediment down valleys and into streams, where it joins tonnes of sediment from other valleys, which ends up in rivers and finally into the sea. If enough sediment settles in a coastal area, most of the sea life moves on and what remains suffers.

Some coastal areas act as sediment traps and cop it worse than others. These tend to be estuaries, harbours, inlets and bays that are sheltered from waves or don't have strong tidal flows to flush them out.

Excess rain and sediment running into a river during heavy rain

The sediment build up is generally slow, so is very difficult to notice from year to year. As sediment builds up in an area, the seaweed and shellfish habitats start to struggle and thin out. All the other sea life that rely on these habitats for food, shelter or hunting thin out too. This means less small fish, less big fish that eat the small fish, less paua and crayfish and so on. In short, a silt build up means poor fishing.

Sometimes sediment gets caught up in coastal currents and is deposited many kilometres from the river mouth whence it came. The coastal current that moves south down the west coast of the North Island is a good example. It picks up sediment from the Manawatu and Rangitikei rivers and moves it down the coast. The arc of Pukerua Bay is in the path of this current and more sediment is deposited there than other parts of the coast. The sea life suffers and what remains in Pukerua Bay is easily fished out. There have been a series of temporary fishing bans in the bay this decade to encourage fish and shellfish to recover.

Strong wave action on the Wairarapa and Wellington south coast means the region is spared most of these problems, although some river mouths and estuaies are affected. This is a goodthing, as the region's multi-million dollar crayfish and paua fisheries need clean and healthy reefs to thrive.

A sure way to stop our fisheries getting degraded by sediment is to stop sediment getting into the sea in the first place. Wairarapa has 100,000 hectares of erosion prone land, mainly in the east, and for the past 50 years farmers have been working with catchment boards and latterly Greater Wellington to protect it with soil conservation plantings. Pine forests have been planted, some land has been allowed to revert to native bush, and up to 25,000 poplar and willow poles are planted each year to stabilise hillsides.

Having a vegetation buffer along river and stream sides is another way to stop sediment getting into waterways. The sediment in the run-off is trapped in the vegetation as the excess rain flows off pasture into streams and rivers.

Greater Wellington runs the Streams Alive programme which promotes streamside plantings in 12 streams throughout Wellington region – Owhanga Stream, Upper Waiohine River, Upper Ruamahanga River, Kaiwhata River, Waihora Stream, Waitohu Stream, Otaki River, Ration Creek, Karori Stream, Wainuiomata River and Mangaroa River. The programme works to improve the health of these waterways and quality of the water they discharge into the sea.

As part of the government's Afforestation Grant Scheme Greater Wellington is helping landowners with forestry development and retiring regenerating bush to help bind fragile soils and improve water quality.

For more information about planting waterways go to www.gw.govt.nz/section986.cfm? or contact Jacki Byrd 04 526 5323.

New ways of understanding our streams

Freshwater scientist Caleb Royal says he has never been bitten by a tuna (native eel), but has been nibbled hundreds of times.

This was certainly proved to be the case at the stream behind Papawai Marae in Greytown where Caleb was speaking in February about the cultural health monitoring techniques he has developed in Otaki.

More than 70 people from around Wairarapa and Wellington came to hear about his technique which blends western science and traditional Maori values.

In a nutshell, Caleb's cultural health monitoring technique measures the health of a stream and everything that lives in it and around it – plants, animals and people.

He developed this technique after talking to his kaumatua about how bad the water quality was in the stream that runs through hapu land in Otaki.

"I was telling them about how much phosphorous there was in the stream, up to 10 milligrams per litre, which is a very high and toxic level. One of the kaumatua said 'that's interesting boy, is that good?' So I decided I had to come up with something that was more relevant."

One of the main uses for the stream had historically been catching tuna for food and storing them the in stream, live in wash-through boxes. So tuna became one of the main focuses of his study.

Caleb has found that while tuna can live in polluted waterways where most fish and insects have long since given up, they show many signs of stress. In polluted water the tuna get fin-rot, suffer lesions and other skin problems and grow much more slowly than in clean water.

Caleb says in polluted water there is a lot less food around and the tuna are getting just enough to survive, which explains the stunted growth. He has aged eels from polluted streams and found them to be growing two or three times slower than eels in healthy streams.

The day was organised by Greater Wellington, Department of Conservation and Papawai Marae. Caleb is also an advisory member of Greater Wellington's Catchment Committee.

Greater Wellington Maori Liaison Officer Mike Grace says there was a lot of interest in Caleb's techniques which could easily transfer to Wairarapa.

"Tuna are very significant to Wairarapa. The tuna fishery was the heart of the Maori economy and the most extensive tuna fishery in the North Island. Draining wetlands, declining water quality and fishing pressure have made a huge dent in tuna numbers."

Department of Conservation Wairarapa Area Manager Chris Lester says there is growing concern throughout Wairarapa about the decline of the tuna population.

"Caleb's approach helps illustrate the change in tuna numbers and condition and uses values that most in our community can understand and relate to. We now need to follow his example and look to make a difference in our local area" says Chris.

Freshwater scientist and Catchment Management Committee member Caleb Royal feeds eels in the stream behind Papawai Marae in Greytown

Whiteheads are making a comeback in bush around eastern Wairarapa. Picture courtesy DOC

Whiteheads doing well in north-eastern hill country

Regular reports have been coming in about whitehead sightings in the north-eastern Wairarapa hill country for the past 12 months. For many years whiteheads were mostly missing from eastern Wairarapa, with their range restricted to the larger tracts of mature bush around the Tararuas.

Greater Wellington has been doing intensive possum control in the area since the mid 1990s on behalf of the Animal Health Board to control bovine Tb. Possum numbers have been low for the past 10 years.

Greater Wellington's Senior Biosecurity Officer Animals Ray Clarey says it is very pleasing to see whiteheads making a comeback in eastern Wairarapa.

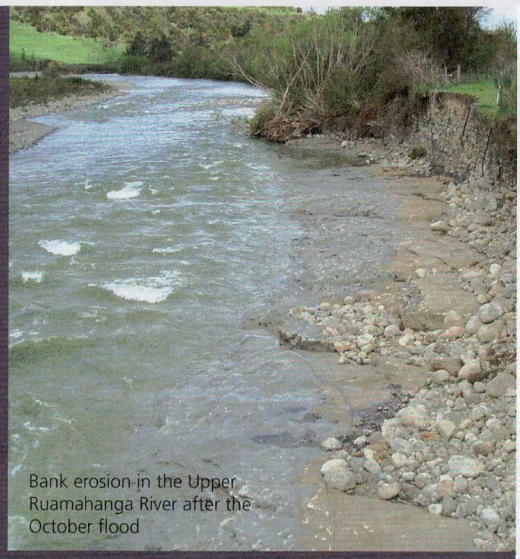
"We've had confirmed whitehead sightings in bush around Mataikona, Castlepoint, Riversdale, Blairlogie and Te Wharau.

"With possums at very low numbers, the bush is in better health and there is more food around for birds like whiteheads. The omnivorous possum is also quite partial to the eggs and chicks of our native birds, so most birds will breed more successfully if possum numbers are low."

Ray says people are also noticing more bellbirds, kingfishers, tui and kereru, which have become much more prolific in eastern Wairarapa this decade.

Whiteheads have also made a comeback in the bush around Wellington city after their release in Karori Sanctuary in 2001 and intensive predator control funded by Greater Wellington and Wellington City Council in WCC reserves.

October floods hit Wairarapa rivers



Bank erosion in the Upper Ruamahanga River after the October flood

Heavy rain on 7 October caused a total of $369,000 worth of damage to the Waiohine, Waingawa, Waipoua and Upper Ruamahanga river schemes. The rain gauge at Angle Knob in the Tararua Ranges received 440mm of rain in 15 hours creating flood peaks with a statistical possibility of occurring every five years in the Upper Ruamahanga and Waipoua and two year flood peaks for the Waingawa and Waiohine.

The rivers were high for eight to 10 hours which contributed to the erosion and undermining of some of the river banks. Much of the damage was to bank plantings in the upper reaches of these rivers, while the rock structures further down faired much better.

Flood protection staff and contractors undertook urgent repairs in October and November to get the protection structures back in shape with the risk of further spring floods. Fortunately this did not happen and full repairs should be completed over then next 12 months.

The Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme and the Hutt, Waikanae and Otaki rivers were not badly affected by the flood.

Waiohine Floodplain Management Project

The first step of reviewing the flood protection needs for the people living on the Waiohine Floodplain got underway in February with a meeting to amalgamate the two groups that advise Greater Wellington. The Waiohine/Mangatarere River Management Scheme Advisory Committee and the Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee agreed to join forces to advise on this new project. Flood Protection engineer Graham Reidy says the new advisory committee will be helping GW with assessing the flood risks and deciding how much protection is required for Greytown and its surrounding landowners. Members of the advisory committee include councillors, landowners, hapu, recreational users and other interested parties.

Dairy effluent and the environment

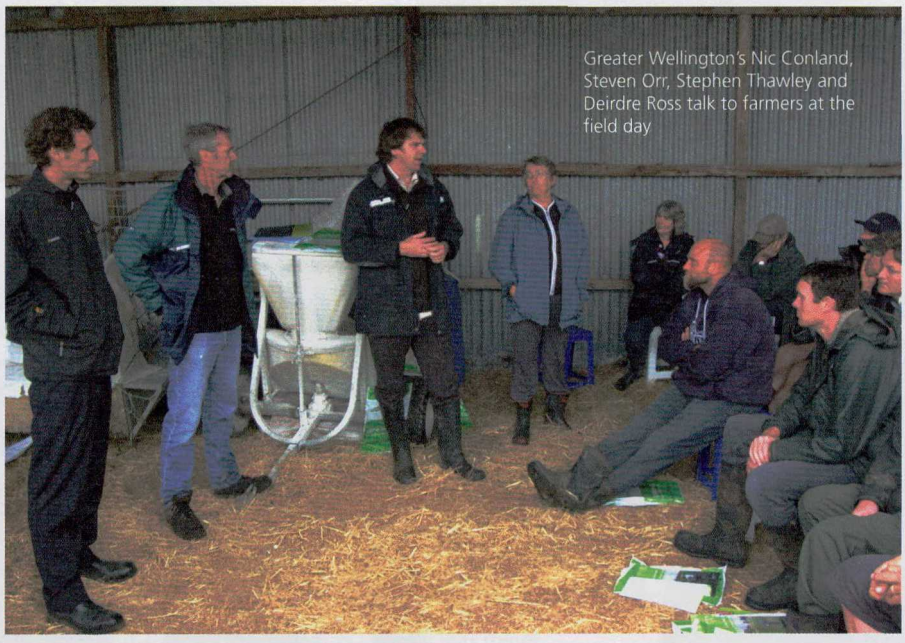
Getting more out of farm effluent and creating a sustainable dairying operation were at the heart of a Wairarapa field day attended by more than 100 farmers at James Smallwood's Greytown dairy farm this summer.

The field day held last December was a joint Fonterra, DairyNZ, Greater Wellington and Federated Farmers initiative.

Farmers learned about travelling effluent irrigators, the value of effluent and the best practice for effluent application. They also heard about DairyNZ's Farm Enviro Walk, a practical tool to help dairy farmers understand what environmental issues they may have, and provide advice on solutions.

Local Federated Farmers Provincial President Anders Crofoot says the event was well timed as it focused on an issue of best practice (maximising farm effluent value while being environmentally sustainable) that farmers are obviously interested in.

"One of the other big benefits is getting groups like DairyNZ and Greater Wellington talking together and working together."



Greater Wellington's Nic Conland, Steven Orr, Stephen Thawley and Deirdre Ross talk to farmers at the field day

Anders believes that by focusing on farm best practice, farmers will go beyond what is required just for compliance. "If you build something for best practice generally you will exceed compliance."

Greater Wellington's Environmental Regulation Manager Alistair Cross says the field day was a great opportunity for Greater Wellington staff to update farmers on consent and compliance processes and addressing issues around effluent systems and ponds.

DairyNZ Developer Sustainability Mike Bramley says the level of interest from farmers was pleasing.

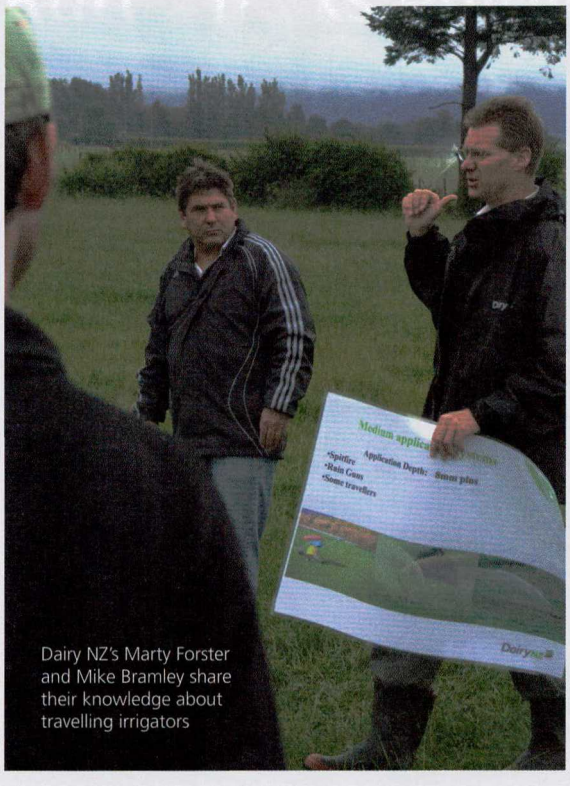
"It was clear that the farmers were keen to get onto their properties with the Farm Enviro Walk in hand to identify aspects of their effluent treatment systems where improvements can be made, for example improving their effluent application. Farmers can maximise the nutrient value of effluent to grow more grass and utilise those nutrients to save costs on fertiliser."

Mike says key areas for farmers to consider are whether the size of their effluent storage is sufficient and covers situations when systems may break down or when soil conditions are unsuitable for application. Also, whether their effluent irrigation rate and depth is appropriate for the soil type and conditions, and that all staff are able to have a plan B up their sleeves so they can ensure no effluent gets into waterways.

South Wairarapa farm manager Neville Fisher says the field day highlighted effluent as a product with value, rather than just a cost. The Farm Enviro Walk was also useful because it "helps you focus on what's happening, how it's happening and what you need to change."

However, Neville believes there is still an information gap when it comes to what's required for compliance. "Farmers want to comply but they need direction on how to comply."

He's currently in the process of upgrading effluent systems including constructing a new effluent pond. "Knowing you've got enough storage for those winter months and don't have to worry about where to put the effluent irrigator gives peace of mind."



Dairy NZ's Marty Forster and Mike Bramley share their knowledge about travelling irrigators

Councillors inspect new river walkway

The Catchment Management Committee strides out on a section of the new Otaki River Walkway

Greater Wellington's Catchment Management Committee inspected the new Otaki River Walkway as part of a Kapiti Coast field trip this summer. The public walkway runs from SH 1 to the newly enhanced Chrystall's Lagoon upstream. This complements the walkway from SH 1 to the sea on the north bank of the river. Greater Wellington and Friends of the Otaki River have planted a lot of native trees to enhance the area and will continue to beautify and improve the walkway into the future.

The committee is made up of councillors and advisory members from around the region. It oversees the work of Greater Wellington's Catchment division which is made up of Flood Protection, Biosecurity, Land Management and the predator control contracting arm BioWorks.

Keep a look out for unusual freshwater crayfish

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand is appealing to those exploring the region's freshwater streams and ponds to be on the lookout for an introduced freshwater crayfish that could threaten our native koura.

MAFBNZ says the Aussie cray, marron, was legally introduced to New Zealand for farming in the 1980s. Farms were later shut down and all known stock eradicated when it was found the introduced crayfish posed a risk to the environment.

MAFBNZ, however, suspects some marron may remain in unknown populations out there. While it is believed any marron are likely to be in ponds in the upper North Island, MAFBNZ is circulating information on the crays to waterway users all over the North Island as a precautionary measure.

Marron are similar to appearance to native koura only they can grow to a larger size (approx 38cm long), and their large front claws are smooth textured (as opposed to the native koura's hairy or spiny claws).


Our native koura, or crawly, with its spiny front pincers

If you believe you have seen a marron, take a good note of its location, grab a sample if you can, and call MAFBNZ tollfree on 0800 80 99 66.

For further information on marron, visit: www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/marron


The Australian freshwater marron with its smooth front pincers

Bio-control agents working in Greater Wellington

Bio-control agents were first introduced to fight pest plants in the Wellington region about 20 years ago. Bio-control agents are usually insects and, less often, fungi. Insects have become established at many sites in the region that attack many pest plants, including broom, gorse, nodding thistle and other mainly agricultural pest plants.

Broom shoot moth was released on reserve land near Porirua in December, and it is hoped a bio-control for tradescantia (wandering Jew) will be ready for release this year.

GW's Senior Biosecurity Officer Richard Grimmett says many pest plants that arrive in New Zealand are not pests in their original countries.

"Sometimes this is because those countries have insects that keep them in check. Bio-control is about finding which of those insects could control introduced pest plants in New Zealand and seeing if they are suitable to release."

Most bio-control agents are brought into the country by Landcare Research and thoroughly tested in laboratory conditions to ensure they will not attack desirable plants. Some of them establish well to New Zealand conditions, while others struggle, or die out.

"It's not an overnight cure," says Richard. "These insects quietly work away on pest plants, hopefully making them less invasive over time."

Notable successes to date have been controlling large infestations of ragwort and nodding thistle.

Common name of bio-control	Status in the region
Gorse soft shoot moth	Failed
Gorse spider mite	Well established
Gorse thrip	Well established
Gorse colonial hard shoot moth	Failed
Gorse pod moth	Well established
Nodding thistle crown weevil	Established at some sites
Nodding thistle gall fly	Established at some sites
Californian thistle leaf beetle	Failed
Californian thistle flea beetle	Failed
Californian thistle gall fly	Suspect failure
Green thistle beetle	Too early to know
Scotch thistle gall fly	Established at some sites
Old man's beard leaf fungus	Established then disappeared
Old man's beard leaf miner	Well established
Old man's beard saw fly	Failed
Broom psyllid	Well established
Broom seed beetle	Well established
Broom leaf beetle/shoot moth	Too early to know

Ruru chicks enjoy predator control

These two ruru (morepork) chicks enjoyed the benefits of predator control in the bush behind Silverstream this summer.

Their mother layed her eggs on the ground, with only a tree trunk for protection, and successfully raised her chicks there.

Greater Wellington Biosecurity Officer Glen Falconer says without predator control it is highly likely her eggs would have been a meal for the first rat, possum, stoat, ferret or feral cat that wandered by the makeshift nest.

"Even if they had hatched, these little balls of fluff wouldn't stand much of a chance against a hungry predator."

However the area is part of the predator control programme run by Greater Wellington where poison baits keep the numbers of these introduced predators to a minimum.

The mother of these two chicks was glaring at predator control contractor Lindsay Bowring from a branch above as he took this photo.

Greater Wellington run or support similar predator control projects at 92 sites across Wellington region.

These two ruru chicks enjoyed the protection of predator control in a rural Upper Hutt reserve before fledging this summer. Picture courtesy Lindsay Bowring.

The green thistle beetle could be munching Californian thistles in a paddock near you soon

Thistle muncher released as bio-control

A tiny green beetle was released in Wairarapa this summer to help landowners across the Wellington region with controlling Californian thistle.

Greater Wellington's Biosecurity staff released the green thistle beetle as a bio-control for Californian thistle at Rangitumau, 10 minutes north of Masterton.

Greater Wellington's Senior Biosecurity Officer Richard Grimmett says landowners across the Wellington region who are interested in introducing green thistle beetle to their property can contact him at the Greater Wellington Masterton office.

Richard says green thistle beetle is proven in parts of America to reduce the density of Californian thistle infestations by up to 80%. "It would be great if it was that successful here, however, it takes many years to get that kind of success. Bio-control is a long-term strategy to controlling pest plants. It can be very effective and has the bonus of being labour and cost-free once it is established at a site."

Richard says the adult beetles feed sparingly on the thistle, but the larvae can defoliate the plant, if there are enough of them.

"It's about introducing this beetle and encouraging them to breed and build up to numbers that can damage large infestations of Californian thistle."

"Californian thistle spreads mainly by its wandering root system, with new plants shooting up from the roots. It crowds out pasture and lowers the productivity of infested paddocks. In other countries, continuing damage to the foliage from the thistle beetle has caused these root systems to die back, meaning far fewer plants and more productive pasture."

Green thistle beetles were released at sites in Southland and Otago in 2007 and have survived the past winter, which bodes well for them establishing and having an effect.

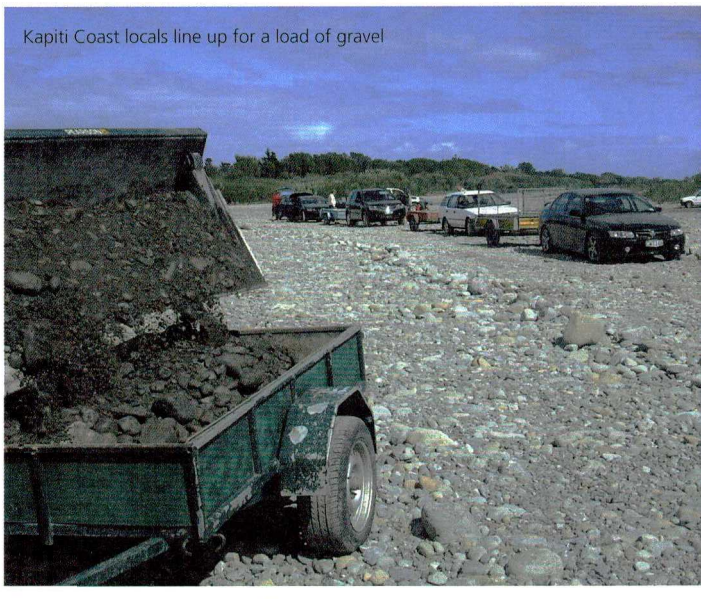
For more information contact
Richard Grimmett,
Greater Wellington Senior
Biosecurity Officer Pest Plants
Masterton office
06 3785616
027 4719283

Otaki River gravel grab

Kapiti Coast residents made the most of the opportunity to get gravel loaded for free at the Otaki River Gravel Grab on a stretch of river up stream of State Highway 1 in February. A total of 185 vehicles took away 201 cubic metres of river run during the day. Around 40,000 cubic metres of gravel is extracted from the river each year by commercial contractors under licence to Greater Wellington.

Greater Wellington's River Ranger Thane Walls says people get the choice of having trailers and utes loaded with a digger or tractor, or can take their time and handpick what they want.

Gravel grab events are run in the Hutt and Kapiti Coast rivers to give people an opportunity to some gravel for around the home and to help explain why Greater Wellington takes gravel out of specific parts of a river system to help manage the risk of flooding and erosion.



Kapiti Coast locals line up for a load of gravel

Safeguarding the flood protection network in Wairarapa

For the past two years Greater Wellington has been setting up legal "designations" to safeguard the flood protection works on private land in the Wairarapa.

These stopbanks, floodways and drains protect thousands of hectares of valuable farmland and many millions of dollars of homes, roads and other developments.

Some activities, including excavating or dumping spoil, can damage flood protection works and put property and homes at risk. It is Greater Wellington's job to ensure that the Wairarapa's flood protection works are well maintained and continue to provide the community protection they were designed and built for.

The designations define areas where Greater Wellington can carry out and maintain its flood protection works without requiring a land use consent from the district council. They also give the landowner certainty by defining the area of their land required for flood protection purposes.

This debris deflector and stopbank are good examples of flood works protected by designations

For a stopbank, the designation width is usually 20 metres either side of the centreline of the stopbank.

Maintenance includes vegetation control, minor earthworks, construction of culverts and floodgates, channel alignment work, gravel extraction, bed re-contouring, fencing and boulder collection. Greater Wellington will continue negotiating with landowners over access for these works.

Landowners need to get written approval from Greater Wellington if they plan any activities in a designated area. This only applies to activities that could weaken the stopbank, not every day farming activities. The task of getting approval will be made as easy as possible. A form is available from the Masterton office or on the Greater Wellington website.

Landowners wanting advice on any planned activity in a designated area can talk to their Flood Protection Scheme Engineer. More information about Flood Protection Designations can be found on Greater Wellington's website www.gw.govt.nz – go to Information and Services, then Rivers, Streams and Estuaries, then Flood Protection.

Plans to manage excess gravel

Greater Wellington is purchasing 17 hectares where the Tauanui River enters the Ruamahanga Diversion to manage excess gravel coming down the Tauanui.

Greater Wellington Flood Protection Manager Graeme Campbell says large amounts of gravel entered the Tauanui after land clearance in the upper reaches last century. Land around the upper reaches has since been retired and planted or encouraged to revert to native forest, lessening the risk of further erosion problems.

"However, the gravel has moved lower down the river and is now spilling out into the Ruamahanga Diversion and threatening to block the channel and cause problems for properties further up the Ruamahanga."

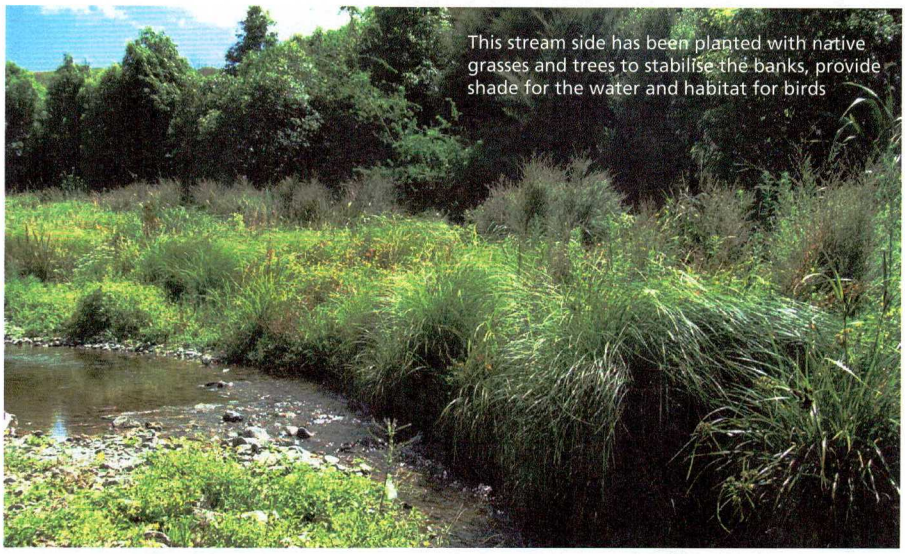
Graeme says the options are to continuously dig the gravel out and truck it away, which is ongoing and very expensive, or divert the river to allow it to deposit gravel on low-lying land, before flowing into the Ruamahanga Diversion.

"There is a landowner willing to sell a low lying block at the mouth of the Tauanui at a reasonable market value. The stopbank will be shifted and the 17ha will give us between 50 and 100 years of gravel settlement, depending on the frequency of large floods moving gravel from further up the river."

Graeme says the block will become a wetland area available for ecological restoration, which should benefit local wildlife. The cost of the project will come out of savings in other areas of the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme.

A similar project is planned to remove gravel from the lower reaches of the Turanganui River and, depending on gravel movement, is likely to begin in 2011.

Both projects were endorsed by the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme Advisory Committee, the Greater Wellington Catchment Management Committee and the full Council.



This stream side has been planted with native grasses and trees to stabilise the banks, provide shade for the water and habitat for birds

Free natives for fenced streamsides

Free native plants for fenced stream sides are on offer to landowners in the Wairarapa's Upper Ruamahanga, Upper Waiohine, Kaiwhata, Glendu, Owhanga and Waihora river catchments as part of Greater Wellington's Streams Alive programme. These six rivers are some of the best in the region and have been selected for the riparian programme as planting in these areas will have the most benefit to fresh water habitats and biodiversity for the limited funds available.

Proportionately, more landowners in the west of the region have taken up the opportunity and Greater Wellington is hoping to increase the numbers of landowners getting involved in Wairarapa.

There are currently 60 landowners involved in Streams Alive and over 13km of streamside have been planted. A survey of these landowners said that improving biodiversity and aesthetics were their main reasons for becoming involved in the programme.

Many of the participating landowners are neighbours, so their planted stream sides are joining up to create linkages in the landscape. These native corridors provide food and habitat and make it easier for native birds and insects to move around. The trees shade the stream which keeps stream water cool, which is very important for native fish and the freshwater insects they feed on.

Streams Alive is an incentive programme for private landowners to improve water quality and biodiversity on their stream sides. In these priority catchments, Greater Wellington gives landowners native plants, planting labour and weed control, providing the area is fenced. Streamside advice is freely available to all landowners with streams, regardless of the catchment they live in.

These landowners have done an excellent job of improving their stream, which contributes to the health of the whole catchment. If you live in these catchments and are interested in natives for your fenced stream side, or if you have a stream any where in the region and would like advice, give Jacki Byrd a call on 04 526 5323.

Comment on Greater Wellington's 10-Year Plan

Greater Wellington is seeking ratepayers' views on its 10-Year Plan, with public submissions due by 24 April. Catchment Management Committee Chair Ian Buchanan says there are many initiatives that affect rural landowners, including possum control, flood protection and increased planting for erosion-prone hill country.

The proposed 10-Year Plan outlining Greater Wellington's projects and spending was released for consultation on March 23. A summary of the plan and a submission form was sent to every household in the region in March.

Cr Buchanan says: "We're looking forward to receiving lots of submissions and fine-tuning our 10-Year Plan to meet the needs of our communities."

For the full copy of the 10-Year Plan, see www.gw.govt.nz (select "Publications & reports" and "Annual Plan and 10-Year Plan")

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