

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Colin Wright, Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information of interest since the previous meeting held on 6 July 1999.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 End of Financial Year

Full details of the Division's performance for the last financial year are reported to the General Manager at the regular Quarterly Review and to the full Council as part of the Annual Report. A brief summary for Committee members information follows.

The Division was \$254,000 over budget at the end of the 1998/99 financial year over a total operating expenditure of \$13.4 million. However, this figure includes the \$1,013,000 spent on flood damage repair works as a result of the three floods that occurred in September and October 1998. This additional expenditure above the Annual Plan was approved by Council in December last.

Significant savings were achieved in several areas, notably in Bovine Tb operations and in the Soil Conservation Reserve Forests. Capital expenditure was \$70,000 below the total budget of \$570,000 because of the decision to not proceed with the purchase of a carrot cutter for pest operations.

13 of the 17 relevant Performance Indicators in the Annual Plan were fully achieved. The four variations were not of real significance, for example, the river schemes were overspent because of the flood damage repair work and soil conservation activities were undertaken on less properties than targeted because of the effects of the previous year's drought.

Performance of the three Business Units this year was particularly pleasing. The Akura Conservation Centre made a small surplus above its dividend, while the Workshop achieved a surplus of \$9,100 and the Soil Conservation Reserve Forestry revenue was 25% greater than expected from the scheduled logging.

2.2 Mr George Hawkins

As Committee members will be aware, George Hawkins, the Iwi representative on this Committee for the last triennium, died suddenly on 10 July. Councillors Long, McQueen and Buchanan, and the Divisional Manager attended the tangi on behalf of Council. George was the Chairman of the Ngati Kahungunu Taiwhenua Executive, and his passing will be particularly felt by that Iwi group.

2.3 Federated Farmers Discussion

Committee members met with members of the Wairarapa Federated Farmers Executive following the last Committee meeting. Useful discussions resulted on a number of subjects which were raised by both parties. I hope that we will be able to repeat this type of meeting at appropriate intervals in order to retain good communications with one of our key stakeholder groups.

2.4 Horizon.MW Visit

Members of Horizon.MW (Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council) are planning to visit the Wellington Regional Council on 22 and 23 September to discuss items of mutual interest. The second day of this visit will be spent in the Wairarapa and there should be opportunity for Committee members to join in the programme if they so wish.

2.5 Joint Wairarapa Councils Meeting

Cr Long and the Divisional Manager attended a combined meeting of the three Wairarapa district councils on 4 August. A number of issues of common interest were discussed. In particular, Mayor Bob Francis and the Divisional Manager spoke about work they are currently undertaking in an endeavour to achieve Government funding for the investigation of potential irrigation schemes in the Wairarapa.

2.6 Iwi Discussions

The Council has been expressing a desire to achieve a better working relationship with the various Iwi within the region. To progress this, councillors are currently meeting with the different Iwi groups and discussions have been held recently in Masterton with Rangitaane and Ngati Kahungunu. Goodwill was evident on both sides at these discussions.

2.7 Landcare Research Award

It is pleasing to note the receipt of an Award from Landcare Research to the Biosecurity Department. This Award has been made in recognition of the outstanding achievement in possum control which has significantly reduced the Bovine Tb levels in cattle and deer in the region.

Cr Long and the General Manager will be making a suitable presentation to staff at a function to be organised shortly.

2.8 New Investigations & Design Engineer

Michael Hewison has recently replaced Goran Stojmirovic as the new Investigations & Design Engineer. Michael lives on a small farm on the outskirts of Carterton, and is a Civil Engineer with considerable project management experience in the oil industry. His key roles initially will be the management of the Waiohine River Scheme, and assistance with the Waiohine River floodplain investigation and the related public consultation.

3. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

3.1 Environmental Incidents

<i>Date of Report</i>	<i>Complaint</i>	<i>Details</i>
28/06/99	Foul smell from soil when complainant had hole dug to install water tank.	Found to be contaminated with phenoxy herbicide. Landowner given information on how to deal with the problem.
14/07/99	Rubbish dumped in Ruamahanga River, South Wairarapa.	Abatement notice issued to farmer who had been dumping rubbish in the river. Notice required removal of rubbish.
14/07/99	Wastewater from industry discharging to water.	Company has been visited, illegal discharge found. Company has been required to obtain consent.
15/07/99	Odour, flies, rats said to be causing problems from landfill.	Complaint came from District Council who were going to investigate the problem themselves.
21/07/99	Fill dumped on roadside reserve may end up in creek, rural Masterton.	Investigated and found to be relatively minor incident. Company responsible was given warning not to dump material where it can get into water.
22/07/99	Pollution of Makoura Stream reported. Described as having been milky over the last two days.	Unable to investigate because the incidents were reported some days after the occurrence.

28/07/99	A staff member reported that there were two dead stock in the lower part of the Papawai Stream.	Stock unable to be removed because of bog. Nothing further could be done.
3/08/99	Complaint of abattoir not complying with consent conditions.	Further inspections undertaken, found to be complying, but will need inspections in the future.
4/08/99	Sewage overflowing out of manhole in Greytown and into stream	SWDC written to seeking explanation. Relevant parties have been kept informed
5/08/99	Rubbish being dumped in Waingawa river	Still being worked on.

3.2 Compliance

One abatement notice was issued requiring dumping of rubbish to cease and previously dumped rubbish to be removed.

3.3 Notified Consents

Greytown Sewage – discharge	Further Iwi consultation completed by applicant and Choice Health report received. Pre Hearing meeting to be held.
Greytown/Featherston – water take	AEE received. Consent notified. Pre Hearing meeting to be held.
Craggy Range Vineyard –water take	Application on hold with further information on surface water effects to be provided. A non notified consent application for groundwater take is being separately processed.
Maori Education Trust – water take	Irrigation take of 80 l/sec from underground bore has been notified.

3.4 Consents

(1) Conditions Audit

Price Waterhouse Coopers were engaged to undertake an independent review of consents issued by the Environment and Wairarapa Divisions to identify whether resource consent conditions imposed by the Council were reasonable or not.

65 consents were analysed on a random basis. 97% of these were found to have conditions that were appropriate to the circumstances and reasonable. Two consent applications (both processed by Wellington staff) were seen to have insufficient conditions in that they did not adequately mitigate environmental risks.

This independent study found that staff were not too risk averse in their approach to consent conditions. It identified some minor areas where better consistency could be achieved

between the two Divisions. Overall it was a timely and reassuring report for staff, councillors and consent applicants.

(2) Annual Statistics

In the 1998/99 year Council processed 99.4% of consents within the statutory timeframes. (98.85% 1997/98). The average costs per consent were \$345 for non-notified consents and \$2906 for notified consents.

3.5 RMA Amendments

The RMA Amendment Bill has had its first reading and has been sent to the Select Committee. Staff are contributing to a Council submission to the Select Committee. Indications are that submissions will not be heard till after the General Election and the final form of the Bill, if and when it is reported back, will largely be determined by the election outcome.

3.6 Emergency Management

Government has announced its intentions to introduce revised Emergency Management legislation (formerly Civil Defence) which may be enacted before the election. The policy centres on governance by regional Emergency Management Groups (EMG's) who will prepare and administer Emergency Management Group Plans. The exact procedures and requirements in each region will be determined by each EMG. The proposals embody a more proactive approach to emergency management with stronger links between hazards mitigation, engineering lifelines, and the longstanding response capability.

3.7 Dairy Discharge Consents

Following on from the Committee meeting with Federated Farmers, discussions have been held to confirm the approach being taken to the replacement of these consents. This information is now being conveyed to consent holders.

3.8 Coco

The new Consents and Compliance Database (Coco) is now 'on line' and in use. This is the culmination of a year of development and planning involving staff from Wairarapa and Wellington consents, Information Technology, and Auckland Regional Council. Full use will be achieved once inevitable teething and transfer problems are overcome and staff get up to speed.

The data base records statutory requirements such as processing timeframes, and is directly linked to the new financial information system.

3.9 Engineering Lifelines

Wendy Saunders (Hazards and Emergency Management Officer) and Steve Blakemore have attended a Lifelines workshop in Hastings and the annual national seminar in Wellington. Both meetings established some very useful contacts in the areas of hazards, lifelines and emergency management

3.10 Infocall

A new telephone system giving reports on Wairarapa's river levels has recently been established. Sites currently include Ruamahanga at Mt Bruce, Wardells and Waihenga and the Waiohine Gorge. It is directly linked to the telemetry system and can deal with a large number of telephone calls at the one time.

A criticism of the old river interphones is that with only one line available they were often engaged. A disadvantage is that river levels are not instantaneous and will normally only be updated every 3 to 6 hours. However during flood events it is expected that levels will be able to be updated more regularly. Power constraints at some sites limit the frequency of updating at present.

Although the system is still in the development phase the phone number is listed in the new Wairarapa telephone directory. You can try it out on 0832 20669. Calls for this Telecom service cost 12 cents per minute. We will extensively publicise the service when it is fully operational, hopefully within the next few months. It is expected that a future enhancement will see an additional number for inquiring on Lake Wairarapa and Onoke levels and the status of the Barrage Gates and the Onoke opening to the sea.

3.11 Gladstone Water Supply

Staff have been involved in progressing the Gladstone water supply project. A bore has been drilled at the Gladstone Sports Complex and preliminary pump testing suggests the required yield is available and the water quality suitable. A longer term pump test will be carried out soon to assess effects of the take on the aquifer. Depending on how the project progresses a second bore may be drilled.

A landowners survey to determine water requirements will be completed shortly by Operations Department staff, after which a steering committee meeting will be held to report on the results and to decide on the Scheme extent and design flow.

4. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

4.1 Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee

A total of four meetings of the Waiohine Floodplain Advisory Committee have been held to date. The Committee has been given background information from the Waiohine River and Floodplain Investigation Issues and Options Reports. Also a field inspection has been held jointly with Waiohine Scheme Advisory Committee members. The level of interest and participation of the Committee has been very pleasing.

4.2 Flood Damage Repairs

The approved 1998 flood damage repairs have been completed at a total cost of \$1.05 million in comparison to the estimate of \$1.1 million. This is a very good result in the circumstances and more than doubled the normal expenditure managed by staff on the Wairarapa river schemes.

4.3 Waingawa River Scheme

Ratepayers in the upper reaches of the Waingawa River attended a meeting to discuss their concerns relating to the Scheme and this year's programme. Six ratepayers out of a total of 18 landowners were present. The concerns expressed related to -

- Inequity of the Scheme due to the Masterton District Council 'strengthening' its bank to protect its water supply pipeline.
- Work completed had been repeated, had a poor success rate, and the 1998/99 programme was not achieved.
- River alignment due to an island downstream of Atiwhakatu River junction.
- Consultation with landowners prior to works being commenced.
- Desire to see Scheme 'D' implemented.

Staff presented background information on the Scheme. A highlight was the incidence of flooding since the inception of the Scheme. Floods greater than 300m³/sec occurred nine times in 16 years prior to the Scheme and ten times in the six years of the Scheme's operation.

A preferred works programme has been prepared and an inspection will occur shortly to prioritise the works.

4.4 Winter Planting Programme

Ground conditions are currently ideal for both pole and seedling planting. Contracted labour is working steadily through the schedule of works. Approximately 75% of the planting programmes have been completed. The target date for completion is early September.

4.5 Montfort Trimble Foundation Submission

The Trimble Trust, through the Masterton District Council, is seeking submissions from interested parties on the formation of the Montfort Trimble Foundation. The Foundation is being formed to utilise the revenue from the pending harvest of the Trimble Trust forest at Miki Miki. Harvesting is due to begin in 2003, but before any legal dispensing of revenue can occur, a new framework needs to be prepared.

The new Foundation is proposing to broaden the existing objectives. Among these new objectives are two that are of particular interest to Council. They include the establishment of parks for enjoyment and scenic development, and to develop other commercial forests owned by the Masterton District Council. Soil Conservation staff are keen to see the development of a scenic reserve on the Masterton – Castlepoint Road centred on the last significant area of indigenous forest. The second proposal seeks funding to manage the District Council forests where land has been planted for road stabilisation purposes.

Submissions on the proposed framework for the Foundation close on 27 August 1999.

5. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

5.1 Wellington City Old Man's Beard Programme

Recent changes to the Wellington City Old Man's Beard Programme inspection procedures are now in place. As from 1st July a single annual re-inspection of infested sites will be made. This has enabled staff to concentrate on initial property inspections, significantly progressing the overall survey. Initial inspections have now commenced in the suburb of Karori. During July, 670 inspections were completed with 65 infested sites located.

As part of these new procedures a greater emphasis has been placed on publicity in the operational area. This has included displays explaining objectives and responsibilities and identifying the targeted species. Displays were arranged at the Karori Library, the Community Sports Centre, and the Citizens Advice Bureau. There have also been articles on the Karori survey in three local community newspapers. The Western News also included a photo of the three officers involved in the survey, which has proven to be of considerable value as several occupiers have recognised staff as they arrive on their property.

Prior to initial inspections each property receives programme details by mail. This advises occupiers of the survey, identifies the plants, and

gives occupiers an opportunity to have minor sites cleared by herbicide application as a service delivery. There has been a positive response to this notification and other recent publicity. Staff are finding a higher level of occupiers at home in Karori and in the majority of situations their visit was expected. In some cases infestations had already been cleared.

Letters will be posted to all owners of infested properties surveyed since the inception of the programme. This letter will explain changes to the annual re-inspection programme, advise owners of their responsibility to control infestations and indicate that random inspections will now take place with immediate Notices of Direction issued for non-compliance. Letters are planned for delivery in October.

5.2 Moth Plant

Initial control trials on the site at Paraparaumu have now been completed. Work was carried out by a spraying contractor applying a range of herbicides both as spray application and as a stump treatment. A second infestation of Moth Plant has been located. This site is in Upper Hutt and is somewhat unexpected, as Moth Plant is not considered a frost tolerant species. Further publicity is planned in an attempt to locate other infestations that may exist in the Region.

5.3 Woolly Nightshade

A small site of Woolly Nightshade has been found in a Masterton garden. This is the first recording of this species in the Wairarapa. Woolly Nightshade is a Total Control Pest Plant and has been cleared from several sites over recent years in warmer areas of the West Zone. The species is not considered to be frost tolerant and, therefore, it is surprising to find it growing in Masterton.

5.4 Plants Database

An upgrade of the plants database has now been completed. This computer programme has been in use since 1993 to record pest plant information. A major review occurred during 1998/99. The upgrade was carried out by the Information Technology Dept., assisted by Plants staff. Improvements include the layout and speed of the programme.

5.5 Regional Surveillance Plants

Over the last 18 months, staff have spent considerable time carrying out a random survey to determine the extent of Regional Surveillance Plant infestation.

Surveys were completed during the summer in urban areas. The focus is now on rural properties.

Sites are selected by computer and focus on areas most likely to harbour such plants. These areas include road, river, and rail margins, and bush reserves. Sites are located by GPS with site information included in a database.

All infestations found during normal fieldwork are also plotted by GPS and recorded in the database. These sites make up the bulk of the infestations recorded to date. The random site inspections are designed to increase our knowledge of regional infestations.

5.6 Medical Officers of Health Meeting

The Manager, Biosecurity (acting as a member of the NPCA) recently gave a presentation to the national meeting of the Medical Officers of Health (MoH) on the subject of controlled pesticides. This Council is involved in developing protocols for water sampling following aerial and ground application of 1080. It is anticipated that the protocols will be adopted by the Ministry of Health and applied nation-wide in due course.

Of particular interest was the united concern voiced by the MoH regarding the current use of cyanide. All considered current regulations to be inadequate. A joint NPCA / MoH working group may be formed to present a case to MAF to have the regulations urgently reviewed.

5.7 Bovine Tb

Operational planning has been the priority for the early part of the new financial year's programme. Good operational progress has been made to date with work well advanced in the following operational areas:

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| • Waingawa | Completed |
| • Mount Bruce Miki Miki Crown | Started |
| • Otaki Buffer | Started |
| • Mount Bruce Waipoua | Started |
| • Taueru Maungaraki | Started |

Work has been delayed on the Lake Wairarapa Crown operation due to DoC refusing to grant Council an approval to treat the area with 1080 carrot in bait stations.

Some progress has been made in starting the 4,000-hectare WRC Initiative Programme for the Wairarapa coastal area of Tora. Generally, there is positive support from landholders and works will commence in the New Year to minimise farming disruptions.

An aerial operation of around 1,500ha is planned for the end of the month on Owahanga Station. This will complement the work recently carried out by horizons.mw. up to the regional boundary.

5.8 Bovine Tb Contracts

Contracts have been let to:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| • Graham Higginson | Homewood - Riversdale |
| • John McCaslin | Bideford |
| • Bill Roydhouse | Mataikona 1 and 3 |
| • WRC Tb Unit | Owahanga |

Five contract staff have been working in Homewood - Riversdale for about a month, eliminating 1,442 possums and 35 mustelids todate.

Work began in Mataikona 1 at the end of July.

The Bideford operation is not due to be started until early in the New Year.

5.9 Bovine Tb Technical Review

The annual review of all Bovine Tb vector control operations commenced recently with a full days meeting with AgriQuality staff. A considerable amount of work is required to be completed by both parties for consideration at this meeting. The review considered the following –

- ◆ all 1998/99 operations, including monitoring results and Tb status;
- ◆ proposed 1999/2000 operations, including opportunities for variation to maximise progress; and
- ◆ a draft operational programme and budget for 2000/01.

Recommendations from the review are to be presented to the Animal Health Board in early September.

5.10 Wainuiomata Orongorongo Operation

This large-scale 1080 aerial operation was completed in late June this year. Some provisional post operational population density monitoring results are now available. They indicate that an excellent possum cull was achieved, particularly in the Wainuiomata Catchment. The preliminary results indicate a mean residual trap-catch of 1.5% for Wainuiomata and 3.6% for Orongorongo. Sixty percent of the monitoring lines have been checked todate.

5.11 Animal Control Products

Animal Control Products (ACP) has just announced price increases effective from 1 October 1999 after effectively holding prices from June 1997. They cite the reason as increases in raw material costs, overhead costs and wage movements. Most of the increases are minor ranging around 1% to 4%. However 1080 stock solution has increased by 11.5%.

ACP is the Crown owned company that the Council purchases most of its pest management materials from. They have establishments at Wanganui and Waimate and manufacture all of the 1080 cereal bait for New Zealand. They supply a wide range of toxic and pre-feed baits, hardware and other sundry materials used in the pest management industry.

5.12 Brodifacoum

MAF have requested the Pesticides Board to review the current controls placed on the commercial use of brodifacoum. Brodifacoum residues were found in seven feral pigs at export game packinghouses in Hokitika and Blenheim. It is presumed that the feral pigs had eaten possums poisoned by brodifacoum baits. Brodifacoum is an anti coagulant used for control of rodents and possums and is marketed under the trade names Pestoff, Talon and Storm. It is available for use by the general public without the need for a special licence.

There is likelihood that the Pesticides Board will tighten the procedures regarding the use of this toxin in rural situations. However, when used correctly, brodifacoum poses a much lower risk of serious poisoning to children, pets, working dogs and domestic livestock than acute poisons. It is also often the only possum control measure that can be used efficiently when there are factors such as aversion to acute toxins or unacceptable risks associated with alternative toxins. This Council has relied on the use of brodifacoum for its KNE programme within the Wellington metropolitan area. It is therefore hoped that any procedural changes for the use of brodifacoum will only focus on mitigating the current cause of the review.

5.13 Magpie Research Programme Deferred

Following discussion with John Innes and Dr Eric Spurr of Landcare Research NZ the magpie research programme has been deferred until January 2000. Some Council's who had originally signalled that they wished to participate, had not made sufficient commitment to enable the signing off of a binding contract with Landcare Research. Delaying the project for several months will allow participating Councils to be more fully prepared without jeopardising the integrity of the programme.

5.14 Key Native Ecosystem Programmes

The Western Zone staff are fully committed at present to the possum eradication programme at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. The intensive trapping programme was initially slow due to the public nature of the site. Trap lines had to be discreet with such factors as equipment security and hazards to domestic animals to be considered. Now that the predator proof fence has enclosed the Sanctuary, better progress is being made. The Sanctuary is now also closed to the public for the eradication programme. To date over 700 possums have been culled from the 210-hectare site. The initial trapping regime is expected to be completed by early September and will be followed by an aerial and ground baiting operation to target rats, mice, rabbits and any remaining possums.

KNE work is continuing in the Wairarapa in sites on the southern Maungaraki Range, Clifton Grove and on the eastern side of Masterton. Several new sites of yellow mistletoe have been located at Homebush. The Department of Conservation will be advised of these locations so that they can be added to the national database.

5.15 KNE Branding

The guidelines for the application and use of the KNE brand have been formalised. The branding was introduced to assist in enhancing public awareness of the native ecosystems within our region. It is to be used for sign-posting significant KNE sites, for advertising about KNE issues and for use as a monogram on apparel such as polo shirts or caps. The imagery is based on the kereru, or wood pigeon as being a representative icon of native ecosystems. Perched on a branch laden with berries the whole image symbolises the flora and fauna that make up valuable ecosystems.

The next step is to market the brand so that it gains acceptance by territorial authorities and the community at large. Use of the KNE brand will be approved and audited by the Communications Section of Council.

5.16 Ferrets

At the April 1999 meeting, the Committee considered the implications of ferret management under the Wildlife (Farming of Unprotected Wildlife) Regulations 1985. Concerns have been expressed by a number of regional councils that the Regulations are not being used for their original intended purpose. A situation has arisen whereby the Regulations are in direct conflict with the objectives of the Regional Pest Animal Management Strategy, the National Bovine Tb PMS and the Department of Conservation.

A letter was forwarded to the Minister of Conservation seeking to have the Biosecurity Act amended to allow precedence over the Regulations. A reply was received on 25 July (copy attached) which indicates the Minister intends to undertake a review of the Regulations this year. The Minister states that “ Pest management strategies should be given the chance to be effective and I expect that changes to the regulations will enable the strategies to be implemented.”

Submissions from interested or affected parties will be sought as part of the review process.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa