

Implementation of the Regional Policy Statement in 1999-2000

1. Introduction

The Regional Policy Statement (RPS) contains around 250 “methods”. These are commitments the Council has made to act to resolve the Region’s environmental issues and to manage the environment in a sustainable manner. Since the adoption of the RPS in mid-1995, the Council has worked hard to implement these methods. This report describes what has been done to give effect to them between July 1999 and June 2000.

Implementing the RPS is not about working on the listed methods so they can simply be “ticked off” and the Council said to have complied with its statutory obligations. The work that is done each year, by staff in the implementation team in Resource Policy, by others in the Environment and Wairarapa Divisions, and by many more across the Council in their normal day-to-day activities, is done for a purpose - to improve the environment. The point of the methods in the RPS, and of our efforts to implement them, is to move towards meeting the environmental objectives and outcomes which the document list as our Region’s desired environmental state.

There are, of course, too many environmental objectives in the RPS to report here on how well we are achieving them. In any case, that it is the job of the five yearly state of the environment report (SER) and the Annual Environment Report. The recently released SER for the Wellington Region, *Measuring Up*, is an assessment of how well the Region is doing in meeting the environmental objectives of the Regional Policy Statement.

The purpose of this implementation report, therefore, is to describe how we have addressed the environmental problems of the Region by means of the methods in the RPS and how we have worked towards achieving its stated resource management objectives. Since *Measuring Up* is the accountability mechanism for the RPS, it is appropriate to refer to its findings when considering what has been done to implement the RPS and what is proposed for future years.

In the following paragraphs the letters and numbers in parentheses denote the relevant RPS method. For example, FW 12, is method 12 of the Freshwater Chapter.

2. Iwi Matters

Measuring Up concludes that, although there are increased opportunities for iwi to participate in resource management, this is often difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons. The report says that iwi and the Council have a relationship but, at the time of writing, it was at best only “adequate”

The first objective contained in the RPS states that the iwi of the Region and the Council will develop and maintain a “mutually satisfactory relationship”. The methods in this chapter are designed to deliver that situation. However, it has been recognised

during the past year that more needed to be done to improve the relationship. A number of initiatives have been taken to achieve this. These are:

- The review of the Charter of Understanding (Iwi 1);
- An increase in the number of meetings of Ara Tahi to 6 per year;
- Technical workshops (e.g., on Maori Hearing Commissioners);
- Training for staff and Councillors on the Treaty of Waitangi and the Maori environmental management system (Iwi 6);
- The discussion of environmental projects desired by iwi which may be suitable for Council funding;
- The creation of a hapu liaison position in the Wairarapa office; and
- The inclusion within Council policy of these new initiatives.

3. Using Fresh water

Regional Freshwater Plan

In December 1999 the Regional Freshwater Plan became operative after completing its progress through the statutory approval process. Although the proposed plan has been guiding the use of water for a number of years, it is very satisfying to see the major regulatory arm of the Council's water management regime cemented into place. The Plan is probably the single largest means by which the RPS's water provisions are implemented.

Surface Water Use

Measuring Up found that, in general, enough surface water is available to meet community needs but that climatic conditions cause shortages in some areas and the flows in some rivers can go below levels we have set to protect them. This is particularly the case in parts of the Wairarapa and the Kapiti Coast. The RPS contains methods to address these problems and they have been a part of the Council's work programme for several years. A report on the water use and conservation methods of the RPS was undertaken in 1998-99 (Report 99.207); it contained a number of proposals for implementing those methods.

One of these was to match water use with the needs of crops (FW 8, 12). Work on this by Victoria University and the Council began last year and will be completed shortly. The purpose of this study is to identify the irrigation and moisture needs, as opposed to demands, of the varying land uses and crops of the Wairarapa. The first phase of this study on the availability of water for plant growth as a result of the climate of the eastern part of the Region has been completed and the remainder is due to be finished this month.

A number of other initiatives which contribute to the efficient use and conservation of water have also been completed. These are:

- An assessment of the surface and groundwater of the Wairarapa to determine where opportunities exist for further water use. It concluded that in most catchments it is unlikely that more water is available in significant amounts at times of low flow (FW 12, 13);

- Involvement in an on-going Wairarapa based project which aims to foster the growth and development of the area through access to reliable sources of water (known as the AGMARDT project);
- A major study of the likelihood of drought in the Wairarapa as a result of the Southern Oscillation (El nino/la nina) (FW 9) (to be reported on shortly);
- A similar study on the Southern Oscillation's effects on the Kapiti Coast (Report 99.395);
- A feasibility study for the Gladstone water supply scheme;
- Routine monitoring of large water takes and summer low flow monitoring throughout the Region (FW 11);
- Draft water allocation plans for the Upper Ruamahanga and Kopuaranga rivers containing minimum flows, allocation limits, and guidelines for the efficient use of available water (FW 4, 9). Though not regional plans, these plans provide for the day-to-day management of these stressed water bodies and contain information for consent holders and Council staff processing consent applications.

As if to reinforce the need for these allocation plans, low river and stream levels caused by below average rainfalls over the summer meant irrigation and water use restrictions were placed on consents on the Kopuaranga, and Upper Ruamahanga rivers, as well as the Tauherenikau, Waiohine, and Waingawa rivers (FW 7). In the Wellington area, all of the rivers we monitor experienced below average flows over the summer, except for the Wairnuimata and Orongorongo rivers.

The Water Group promoted its water conservation message once more this summer (FW 9) (see the Regional Plan Implementation Report in this Order Paper for details).

Groundwater Use

The verdict of *Measuring Up* on groundwater use is that Lower Hutt groundwater is over allocated and abstraction volumes in several other groundwater zones, especially in the Wairarapa, are increasing. The SER also sounds a warning that the quality of some shallow aquifers is being affected by surrounding land uses.

In the Hutt Valley, a significant investigation has been undertaken this year of the Moera Aquifer to determine how much water is available from this source. After drilling to a depth of 150 metres, a pump test was done in May to see what effect the abstraction of water might have on the aquifer and other Hutt Valley groundwater resources (FW 13).

In addition, work has commenced on improving our knowledge of groundwater use in the Raumati-Paraparaumu area (FW 13). There is anecdotal evidence of a large number of shallow bores being constructed in this area for garden watering, which could have an effect on groundwater levels. This work will extend the reach of our monitoring and will be on-going. Water samples have been taken from 6 existing bores to appraise the quality of the resource, and 3 further bores will be made to determine quantity impacts. This project has also involved a certain amount of education for drillers in the area about the requirements of the Freshwater Plan and the Council's role in groundwater management (FW 16). We have also continued to contribute to a national project to develop bore drilling standards.

The quality of groundwater at Peka Peka was investigated (undertaken in early 1999 but reported in this financial year [99.393]) to check for nitrate and microbial contamination. Few problems were found but the report observed that many people

were using shallow groundwater for domestic supply and that a small number of bores suffered from water contamination due to the close proximity of the bore to a septic tank (FW 16). The report concluded that education regarding bores and waste disposal was necessary for landowners if the intensification of residential development in the area is to continue.

The above mentioned report on water availability in the Wairarapa concludes that, for groundwater, water is still available in most zones but points out that there are still significant steps needing to be taken before the groundwater resource is appropriately managed (e.g., the need for a more holistic approach to management where surface and groundwater resources are managed together). To this end, the Council has been supporting an investigation funded by the Ministry for the Environment into the effects on stream flow of groundwater extraction.

4. **Water quality**

The RPS puts considerable emphasis on keeping our rivers and streams clean and in good ecological condition. *Measuring Up* concludes that, overall, freshwater quality is generally good and suited for its stated purpose (as determined by the RPS and Regional Freshwater Plan). Progress is being made, with the effects of major discharges decreasing as their resource consents are renewed. However, the SER points out that water quality in some places is still deteriorating due to stormwater and non-point source discharges (runoff from urban and rural land uses) and the worst affected water bodies are not improving significantly.

The annual freshwater quality report (the first to describe the state of this resource across the whole of the Region) (Report 00.35) backs up these conclusions. It says that over the last four years the Waiwhetu, Ngarara, and Ngauranga streams, and the Wainuiomata and lower Waiohine and Ruamahanga rivers have failed to improve. It also describes the Waitohu, Porirua, Makara, Karori, and Pauatahanui streams as having poor water quality in parts.

Nevertheless, improvements are occurring in some areas, and the actions we are taking now should lead to greater improvements in the future. The need to take more concerted action to clean up our worst rivers has been considered as part of the Long Term Financial Strategy. The first water body programmed to be addressed in this way is the Waiwhetu Stream.

Waiwhetu Stream

As earlier investigations have shown (Report 98.411), the Waiwhetu has many problems. The first steps towards dealing with these have been taken this year, namely the commencement of a process to determine a community vision for the stream (FW 22). Small plantings have also occurred along the banks of the stream (Eco 12) (see also the discussion of “adopt-a-stream” activities on the Waiwhetu in the Regional Plan implementation report). If the Waiwhetu project is successful, other rivers which are amenable to this approach, could be addressed in this way over ensuing years.

Waitohu Stream

Recognising the Waitohu Stream’s problems, the Resource Investigations Department undertook a targeted investigation of its ecological health and water quality in March

(reported in this Order Paper) (FW 22 and 24). This investigation recommends riparian planting as a solution for some of the turbidity problems of the stream, and also suggests greater attention be given to the faecal contamination of the Mangapouri Stream which feeds into the Waitohu below the Otaki township. We have been supporting a community group from the area which wants to improve the health of the Waitohu and restore its ecological connections with the sea (FW 22, Eco 14). This group could contribute significantly to monitoring and improving the stream. Riparian planting is one of its objectives.

Waikanae River

Earlier RPS annual reports have made comment on the water quality of the Waikanae River at Otaihanga and the potential of public education to improve the quality of runoff in the area. An awareness raising campaign was carried out along the lower Waikanae over the last summer in co-operation with the local tangata whenua and the Kapiti Coast District Council (FW 21 and 25). Monitoring by the Kapiti Coast Council over the summer at Otaihanga shows that the bathing limit is still being exceeded about a half of the time but usually not by much. A more complete analysis will be produced as soon as the relevant data is available.

Pauatahanui Stream

The Council has also been heavily involved this year in a programme to improve the ecological health of the Pauatahanui Inlet (and its catchments) with the Porirua City Council and local residents (Eco 11, 12, 14). Whilst this does not directly target the Pauatahanui Stream at this time, it is likely this stream will feature highly in any future actions taken to implement the Action Plan now being finalised.

Kaiwharawhara Stream

On the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream in central Wellington another ecosystem and water quality enhancement project has developed steadily over the year (FW 22). It is expected that the first phase of this project, the removal of coarse debris from the bed and banks of the stream, will be completed by the end of June. This project will continue next year.

Ngarara Stream

Appeals on the consents for the Waikanae wastewater treatment plant and the Paraparaumu treatment plant were finalised during the year (FW 1). The eventual closure of the Waikanae plant should see an improvement in the quality of the Ngarara stream in due course.

Other Western Region Rivers

The Council has also been active in other rivers which do not suffer from water quality problems but where action has been necessary to resolve minor issues or prevent future problems. An investigation into the impact of sewage disposal practices at recreational huts on the Orongorongo River highlighted the potential for contamination but found relatively few problems (Report 00.300) (FW 23). On the Akatarawa River, the Resource Investigations Department has been active in removing a number of old car bodies (FW 29).

Wairarapa Water Quality

In the Wairarapa progress in improving water quality has been made on a number of fronts throughout the year. Steady progress is being made towards the conversion of dairy effluent discharges from water to land. Of the 32 properties, 13 have converted to land (or will by next season), and 17 will change within three years. Two farmers have stopped using their sheds. The move to land based disposal is very encouraging because continued discharging into streams causes a measurable and significant deterioration in average water quality downstream (Report 99.461).

The annual farm effluent compliance inspections have occurred in both halves of the Region (FW 17, 28). These will be reported on shortly.

Wairarapa Sewage Discharges

With regard to the major urban discharges, the Greytown sewage treatment plant resource consents have been processed this year but are currently subject to appeal by Ngati Kahungunu. When implemented, there should be an improvement in the quality of the Papawai Stream, which receives this discharge (FW 17). The receiving waters for all five Wairarapa municipal oxidation ponds are monitored monthly by the Council (see Report 00.382). The Masterton and Greytown discharges are having a significant impact on their receiving waters, and this impact is increasing. By contrast, Carterton and Martinborough have good water quality downstream of their outfalls. The renewal of the Wairarapa's remaining urban sewage treatment consents will remain an important focus over the next two years or so.

The subdivision of Wairarapa land continues apace. This has implications for water quality. Council officers assessed and made submissions on 18 notified and 61 non-notified consents during the year. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring adequate on-site effluent disposal (51 submissions) (FW 28), as well as dealing with water quality (7 submissions), potential for flooding (40 submissions) (NH 7), and slope stability and erosion issues (Soil 3). On the western side of the Region submissions were made of a similar nature on a range of notified resource consents.

Riparian management

The message of *Measuring Up*, that pollution from runoff is causing water quality problems, has been a concern of the RPS since it was written. There are methods in the Freshwater and Soil chapters that require steps to be taken to address non-point source pollution, principally through the management of river margins (FW 31, 32, Soil 7). Recognising this, proposals for a riparian management programme have been included within the Council's proposed strategic plan. The proposal is to trial the concept on four streams over a three year period, commencing in 2000/1, and includes assistance for landowners who participate in the scheme. It is also expected that community care groups will become involved in riparian planting (see below).

As in previous years, the Trees for Survival programme continues to contribute to the Council's riparian management goals, as well as reducing bank erosion (Soil 7) and teaching young people about water care (FW 21). The Council now provides the programme for 11 schools across the Region, with the principal sponsorship of each school resting with a local Rotary Club. Other streamside plantings have also been carried out in regional parks and river corridors by the Landcare Division (e.g., Arbor Day).

Riparian issues have also been addressed by the Council's river managers during the year. The environmental strategy for the Hutt River puts considerable emphasis on the nature of the river edge (and its ecosystem) whilst, in the Wairarapa, the Council has committed to a riparian enhancement programme for the Kaipatangata Stream near Carterton as part of its gravel extraction activities (FW 33, Soil 17).

Educating the public about water and its care

Considerable effort has been put into education and information to help clean up water quality. Much of the work of the Pollution Response services in both parts of the Region has to do with showing people how to look after water (FW 28). Information sheets on aspects of water care have been produced by the Resource Investigations Department. Staff have attended field days and addressed groups, provided information to schools, written articles for the media, and continue to check on how resource users are exercising their consents (FW 21 and 28). We have also added to our ability to manage pollution incidents by developing mechanisms to fine polluters for infringements and charge for the time spent responding to these incidents (FW 29).

Learnwell and community care groups

We have taken a major step forward this year in the cause of reducing water pollution by starting to develop an environmental education programme for young people and community groups. This focuses in the first instance on water (FW 21 and 28). The *Learnwell* programme will teach school children about the causes of water pollution and the importance of water to human and ecosystem well-being. There are a number of water related methods in the RPS which rely on education and the promotion of responsible environmental behaviour to which the *Learnwell* programme will contribute. (Progress in implementing this programme is reported on separately in this Order Paper.)

Work has started on developing a programme of support for community groups which want to undertake local environmental care projects. Many of them are likely to relate to stream rehabilitation and ecosystem enhancement. Applications to participate in this programme will be called for in the next few months (FW 21, Eco 14).

Other activities

Finally, in reporting on specific projects directed at particular problems, the day-to-day impact of many of the Council's activities on the use or health of rivers, streams, and wetlands can be overlooked. Activities such as consent granting, plan writing, hydrological and water quality monitoring, compliance monitoring, and pollution response all contribute to the implementation of the RPS (FW 1, 2, 13, 17, 29, 30, 34, 43, and 46).

5. **Soil**

Measuring Up says that, despite the fact that more people are adopting sustainable land use practices, there is still a need for a more sustainable approach to land management and that some severely erosion prone land is not under active control (about 10% of the Region's erosion prone land). Lack of information about the quality of our soils is also said to be a problem.

Sustainable land management

Sustainable land management is a relatively new concept which did not have a common currency when the RPS was written. Hence, there is little mention of it. Fortunately, this has been remedied by the Regional Soil Plan and the policies and methods it contains. Work has been undertaken this year on the development of ways to achieve more sustainable land use (see the Regional Plan implementation report).

Erosion control and soil conservation

The methods in the Soil Chapter of the RPS are directed primarily at erosion control and the management of flood risk and river beds. As such, they describe much of the work that is carried out by the Wairarapa Operations Department and the Flood Protection departments of the western region..

The Council continues to bring erosion prone land into active management and to provide incentives for soil conservation works under the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941 (Soil 3). These include the preparation of property conservation plans and sustainability plans for the control of hill country erosion and wind erosion, and annual works programmes in support of these plans. This year afforestation work has been completed on 200 hectares (Soil 8). A further 250 hectares have been space planted with poplar and willow species to control erosion on land that can sustain pastoral land uses. Soil conservation advice and guidance for land owners remains a significant activity (Soil 5).

In consultation with the major forestry groups of the Wairarapa, a set of guidelines has been developed for the management of riparian zones within production forests that have a high risk of erosion (Soil 4). Typically these zones exist on farm land that has been purchased for afforestation. Their inherent instability means that in many cases the blanket planting of *pinus radiata* is inappropriate.

River management

Soil methods 14 to 19 describe the Council's on-going river management activities. These are reported on regularly through the Landcare and Wairarapa and Rural Services Committees (e.g., Report 00.381).

Soil health information

Our lack of information about the quality of our soils was considered by Councillors as part of the Long Term Financial Strategy and funding proposed to remedy this situation in part, commencing next financial year.

6. The Coastal Environment

With regard to the coast, *Measuring Up*, says that the loss of the "naturalness" of coastal areas is a growing problem. Although not too bad in remote areas, close to urban settlements the open, wild nature of this environment is being lost to creeping subdivision and increased development. The SER also identifies our lack of monitoring of changes in the marine ecosystem, but says that coastal water is generally of good quality. All of these findings have been addressed this year through various implementation activities.

Regional Coastal Plan

The major achievement of the year is undoubtedly the Regional Coastal Plan becoming operative (CE 1). Although not an RPS implementation project as such, like its freshwater equivalent, the Coastal Plan is probably the single largest mechanism for implementing the RPS's coastal provisions.

Coastal developments and natural character

The decline in the naturalness of coastal areas has been addressed this year on both the Wairarapa and Kapiti coasts. The Council relied on its RPS coastal policies to argue that sporadic coastal subdivision on the Wairarapa coast, and the cumulative nature of development on the Kapiti coast, was leading to a loss of natural character (Reports 99.489 and 99.550). This led to considerable debate on the issue. The Council appealed a decision on a subdivision at Flat Point to the Environment Court on these and related grounds.

Coastal ecosystem projects

The loss of open space and indigenous species that is "natural character" also places coastal ecosystems in jeopardy. The importance of coastal ecosystems and their rapid disappearance was recognised in the state of the environment report's assessment of regional biodiversity. Coastal habitats contain a higher number of threatened species than any other form of habitat. For this reason, *Measuring Up*, identified estuaries, dunes and coastal escarpments as priority ecosystems for action.

The Council has been active in the last year to protect and enhance examples of some of these areas. As mentioned above, the Pauatahanui Inlet Advisory Group is being supported by the Council to produce a management strategy for this highly important estuary and wetland complex (CE 3 [1 and 2], Eco 14). Work is also underway on the

restoration of two small river estuaries which flow into the Pauatahanui Inlet, namely the Kakaho and Horokiri Streams (Eco 12). On the Wairarapa Coast, assistance has been given to the Riversdale dunecare and Castlepoint beachcare groups (Eco 14), and on the Kapiti Coast, the dune restoration activities of the Waitohu care group are also being supported.

Water quality

Council activities which have (or will) contribute to improved coastal waters are:

- Processing of the Porirua wastewater discharge consents . These are currently awaiting the decision of the Minister of Conservation as the discharge is a Restricted Coastal Activity;
- A sanitary survey to determine the source of the pollutants in the estuary of the Motuwaireka Stream at Riversdale (FW 23 and 24);
- Coastal water quality monitoring; and
- Support for clean-ups of the coast (CE 3[2]).

Marine Biodiversity

The minimal role played by the Council in marine biodiversity protection was considered during the development of the Long Term Financial Strategy. Provision has been sought in next year's budget for funds to investigate further a role for this organisation in marine protection.

7. Air Quality

Motor vehicles and domestic fires are the two main causes of air quality problems in the Region, according to *Measuring Up*. In some confined areas, and under certain weather conditions, air pollution from these sources reaches levels set to protect the environment. However, more needs to be known about the extent of these problems. The SER also observes that, like the rest of the world, the Region is suffering from the effects of global warming.

In our continuing efforts to quantify the extent of the Region's air quality problems, the ambient air quality monitoring station has been in service throughout the year (Air 3[1]). The need to extend this programme into a network of stations was recognised and provision made for the purchase of additional stations in the proposed Long Term Financial Strategy.

An emissions inventory is also being developed to identify the relative contribution of various types of emissions to the Region's overall pollutant loadings. Stage Three of this exercise - covering natural sources of emissions - is expected to be completed by 30 June 2000 (Air 3[2]).

During the year, the Regional Land Transport Strategy was adopted. This contains a number of measures designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles and it promotes the use of public transport, cycling, walking, and other measures designed to reduce the need for vehicle trips (Air 10 [5] and Air 12). Air quality monitoring has also been carried out near roads to determine the extent of pollution caused by vehicles (Air 3, En 6).

The Regional Air Quality Management Plan became operative in May of this year, and work has started on identifying ways to implement its policy direction and methods. Again, whilst not an RPS implementation project, the plan does give effect to the RPS's stated air quality objectives by implementing a number of methods (e.g., Air 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 14).

8. **Ecosystems**

Perhaps more than any other issue, "biodiversity" has captured the imagination this year. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy has kept the issue in the limelight at a national level. Over the course of the year, Councillors have put considerable effort into deciding what needs to be done to implement the RPS's ecosystems provisions over the next 10 years and respond to the expectations of the Biodiversity Strategy at a regional level.

Council's proposed ecosystem programme

Measuring Up's survey of this Region's ecosystems helped identify those places where natural biodiversity has been lost and where our management and protection efforts need to be directed. Programmes have been developed (through the Long Term Financial Strategy) for enhanced Council services for a range of priority areas (Eco 10). These are:

- Lowland bush;
- Wetlands;
- Rivers and their margins;
- Estuaries;
- Dunes; and
- Marine ecosystems

These programmes include enhanced biosecurity services for key native ecosystems, assistance for landowners wanting to manage their own biodiversity, and additional emphasis on the special and rare ecosystems on the Council's land.

The Council's desire to invest additional resources in the management of these ecosystems is one of the most important developments in the implementation of the RPS. It represents a significant step up in effort and will, if adopted, enable the Council to meet, to a much greater degree, its resource management objectives across a number of the RPS's chapters (see the discussion of the LTFS in previous sections of this report). The Learnwell and Community Connections (care group) programmes of the Environmental Education and Communication Initiative will also make an enormous contribution to meeting these ecosystem objectives. This will occur as the number of care groups doing local restoration projects grows steadily and young people become more aware of the importance of the "web of life" around them.

Implementing the “ecosystems approach”

Significant progress has been made this year in implementing the ecosystems provisions of the RPS. Relevant work includes:

- The continued development of the concept of the “ecosystems approach” and its application to all of the Council’s resource management activities;
- The publication of the Wellington Regional Native Plant Guide, which shows how to support neighbourhood ecosystems by planting “the right plant in the right place”. Over 6000 copies have been either sold or distributed since October 1999 (Eco 14, 15);
- A submission on the “Bio-What?” report on the protection of indigenous ecosystems on private land and a response to the confirmed New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy;
- The upgrading of the ecosystem information held by the Council and its integration with other agencies’ databases (Eco 1 [2] and 6 [2]);
- Developmental work on the Council programme for the protection of bush remnants (foreshadowed in the LTFS) (Eco 15);
- A field day for landowners interested in private land protection, held jointly with the Department of Conservation, Federated Farmers, and The Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (Eco 15);
- The inclusion of the ecosystems approach in the Draft Hutt River Environmental Strategy (Eco 13);
- The enhancement of habitats at the mouths of the Kakaho and Horokiri streams (Eco 11, 12);
- The inclusion, where relevant, of ecosystems and ecological processes as factors to be considered in the assessment of resource consents by the Council (Eco 2);
- Advocacy of RPS ecological policies and objectives in local authority consent and planning processes (e.g., a submission on Wellington City Council’s review of its District Plan’s rural provisions);
- Revegetation at Canons Creek in Belmont Regional Park, Wainuiomata Recreation Area, Totara Grove planting at Te Marua, on the Otaki River, and wetland restoration planting at Queen Elizabeth Park (Eco 13);
- Weed control at Queen Elizabeth Park, animal pest control at Belmont, Kaitoke, and the Akatarawa Saddle, and deer population monitoring in the Wainuiomata catchment (Eco 9)
- The assessment of the ecological values of the Ladle Bend wetland (Eco 13);
- The continued management by Landcare of our indigenous forests on an ecosystem basis;
- Asset management plans, which help improve the management of Council owned ecosystems (Eco 12, 13).
- Research into native forest ecosystem monitoring, the development of monitoring techniques, and the publication of a book to make the methodology widely available (with Forme Consulting and the Ministry for the Environment).

Key Native Ecosystems and pest management

The KNE work is of critical importance to the Council achieving its RPS ecosystem objectives (Eco 7 [2], 12, 14, 15). Work in a number of areas has continued throughout the year and is regularly reported to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee (see, for example, Report 00.298). Over the past 12 months 31 new sites have been assessed and prioritised for work. The total number of sites now stands at 331, with 168 in the Western Zone and 163 in the Wairarapa. Eighty-two sites have

either had or been programmed for possum control. Areas which have been treated this year include the Karori Sanctuary, Nga Manu, Raroa (Pukerua Bay), Huntleigh Park (Wellington), Masterton, and Waingawa/Clareville. All 2,300 rural delivery properties in the Region were sent KNE information in April to continue the implementation of the programme.

In other areas the bovine Tb programme (which gives effect to Eco 7) also protects native bush. At the start of June this year, 87% of the operational area had been completed. The substantial reduction in bovine Tb numbers within the last few years was recognised with an Environmental Excellence award for the Biosecurity Department from Landcare Research.

Other pests have also been targeted this year, including magpies (Report 00.36), Old Mans' Beard (in Wellington city and along some Wairarapa rivers), Manchurian Wild Rice (an eradication programme for the only known site in the Region at Waikanae), rooks, nodding thistle, ferrets, and Hornwort in Lake Wairarapa (Report 00.187).

Site based pest management

With the growing emphasis within the Council's pest management activities on ecosystem health and the protection of indigenous biodiversity, there has come a need to re-do the pest management strategies to this end. The strategies are essentially species based, which means that, in general, sites of ecological value cannot be treated holistically. The process of changing the strategy to provide for more site based management (including both plant and animal pests) has commenced. A discussion document has been released for public comment (see Report 00.161) (Eco 9). If the public agrees and the shift to site management takes place, this work (and other KNE activities) will become probably the Council's single most important means of "turning the tide" to protect native biodiversity.

9. Heritage

Little work has been carried out this year by the Council to manage regionally important heritage resources. The Council's role is minimal in relation to heritage, being restricted to general policy matters and national issues where they arise.

Two initiatives have been taken to protect heritage resources on Council land (L&H 14). These are:

- A conservation plan for the heritage structures in the Rimutaka Incline Recreation Area; and
- The identification of heritage sites in Queen Elizabeth Park by an archaeologist.

10. **Natural Hazards**

A study to determine the risk from natural hazards to the storage of petroleum products in the Region has been completed (and reported to the Committee separately in this Order Paper). This study gives effect to Natural Hazards Method 10. Method 7 (making information available) is mainly given effect to through the activities of the Emergency Management Department and the Wairarapa emergency management officer. In addition, members of the public and territorial authorities have continued to seek information from us on the Region's hazards (NH 7).

Other activities mentioned above (such as the drought studies, flood plain management plans, and submissions on resource consents for new buildings relating to earthquake and flood risk) help meet *Measuring Up's* concerns about natural hazards in this Region. These are flooding, drought, coastal erosion, and the need to identify risks before new developments go ahead.

11. **Energy**

Measuring Up's main concern about energy use is our continued reliance on fossil fuels and the only modest gains in energy efficiency that have been made. The Council's energy related activities this year have been:

- The continued development of Environmental Management Strategies by departments, most of which include energy efficiency and audits (En 1)
- The inclusion of energy efficiency as a factor in the Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) (En 2);
- The promotion through the RLTS of:
 - existing modes of sustainable transport and their infrastructure (trains, buses etc);
 - more efficient use of fossil fuels; and
 - cycling, walking and other modes of transport fuelled by renewable energy sources (En 4);

12. **Waste Management and Hazardous Substances**

According to *Measuring Up*, the quantity of waste produced in the Region is not being minimised, but recycling, the consenting of waste disposal facilities, and the gradual clean-up of high risk contaminated sites are helping to manage the by-products of the way we live.

Other sections of this report discuss the Council's involvement in the consenting of the Region's major sewage discharges and the work that has been done to keep a track of agricultural effluent. The Council seeks to control waste discharges to land through consents under its Regional Discharges to Land Plan. The Pollution Response Services have continued to police waste discharges of all kinds. By the start of May this year, the Wellington based arm of this service had responded to nearly 900 call-outs.

Measuring Up's conclusion that our pollution response service is mainly reactive will be addressed next year with the commencement of the Business Bridges programme of the Environmental Education Initiative (Waste 13 [1]). This involves working with businesses and industries that use resources to reduce the amount of waste they

produce and avoid the adverse effects of their activities on the environment. An internal paper to scope ways in which this programme might work has been completed this year.

The concept of waste reduction was also relied upon by the Council in its submission on a discussion document on waste in the Wairarapa. The Council supported the development of a single regional landfill for the Wairarapa, combined with waste minimisation options such as the “zero waste” concept.

Councillors considered the options for collecting and disposing of unwanted agrichemicals as part of the Long Term Financial Strategy (Waste 23). The future of contaminated sites on Council land, and a report on munitions dumps, are both reported separately in this Order Paper.

13. Built Environment and Transportation

The SER describes the Wellington Region as being “on the up”, a place to come to, with a lifestyle to be envied. It says we have a public transport network that is the best in New Zealand. Nevertheless, it also says that the way we live, particularly how we move around, use resources, and generate waste, is generating environmental pressures.

The Council’s role in achieving its RPS objectives in this area is centred around its regional transport functions and, in particular, the promotion of a sustainable transport system that encourages the efficient use of infrastructure (BE 3). In the last year this has meant work on the following:

- The completion of the Regional Land Transport Strategy (launched in September 1999);
- The draft Western Corridor Implementation Plan;
- A road pricing study, to promote awareness about the full costs of using this mode of transport (BE 3 [1]);
- A car pooling study (BE 3 [3]);
- A teleworking study;
- A pedestrian strategy, to promote walking as an alternative mode of journeying to work (BE 3 [3]);
- The development of “park and ride” facilities at the Waterloo and Paremata Stations;
- Additional facilities for commuters at the Wellington Railway Station; and
- Funding for public transport.

The Council has not taken a strong advocacy role on the development of the Region’s urban areas, opting to leave decisions about these areas to the territorial authorities. However, submissions have been made on proposed developments within the cities where Council policies have been relevant or Council services affected (e.g., the Promall development in Upper Hutt) (BE 5 [2]).

14. Challenges for 2000-2001

Whilst the implementation of the RPS will continue to occur across the Council, the following major initiatives could be thought of as the major RPS related challenges for the Environment and Wairarapa Divisions in 2000/2001:

- The progressive implementation of the projects designed to assist ecosystems and biodiversity;
- The commencement of the community care group and Business Bridges programmes and the development of the first environmental trail;
- Ensuring the relationship with iwi continues to improve
- Further work on water quality and quantity issues; and
- The enhancement of the air quality monitoring network.