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Report to the Policy and Finance Committee
from Howard Stone, General Manager

Approval of the Wellington Regional Pest Management Strategy 2001-2021

1. Purpose

To recommend that Council approves the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2001-2021, as amended by the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee.

2. Background

At the September 1996 meeting, Council delegated its functions, powers and duties as the Management Agency for the Regional Pest Management Strategies 1996-2001 to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee. Over the past five years, this Committee has been responsible for implementation of the strategies over the Wellington region.

Section 88 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 requires a Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) to be reviewed every five years. A review formally commences when a new proposed strategy is publicly notified. Once a review has commenced, the existing strategy continues in force until amended or revoked on completion of the review, including the completion of any rights of appeal to the Environment Court.

The Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee delegated review responsibilities to a Sub-Committee in November 2000. The Sub-Committee was required to receive and consider all submissions received following notification of the Proposed RPMS (the Strategy) in April 2001. Hearings were completed in June and a number of amendments were subsequently

recommended to the proposed Strategy. The amended Proposed Strategy was considered by the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee at its 31 July 2001 meeting. The Committee has resolved to recommend to Council that it be adopted. A copy of the amended Strategy has previously been forwarded to all Councillors.

3. Approval Process

Council is now in a position to consider approving the Proposed Strategy. However, before approving, Council must have regard to –

- a) all submissions received; and
- b) all relevant provisions of Part V of the Biosecurity Act 1993; and
- c) a report on the Proposed Strategy made to it by its principal officer (General Manager).

Where the strategy includes provision for funding by rates, the Council must be satisfied that ratepayers have had adequate opportunity to be consulted and their views considered.

Council must also be reasonably satisfied that prerequisites for a proposal identified under Section 72(1) of the Act have been adequately addressed. These prerequisites include –

- the benefits of having a strategy, in relation to each pest, outweighs the costs; and
- the benefits of regional intervention exceeds the benefits of an individual's intervention; and
- the funding methodology proposed for the strategy adequately reflects the level of benefit that funders receive; and
- the requirement of landowners to be responsible for the direct costs of managing pests on their land is appropriate; and
- that the selected pests are of regional significance with regards to economic, environmental, and social effects, and effects on Maori cultural values.

This report to Council meets the obligations of the Principal Officer. The Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee has considered the requirements of Sections 72, 76 and 77 of the Act. The Committee has also received and heard submissions on the Proposed Strategy. A number of amendments have occurred as a result of these deliberations. The conclusion of this review process enables the Council to now consider approving the Proposed Strategy.

4. Legal Process

Pursuant to Section 55 of the Act, the management and eradication of pests shall be in accordance with regional and national pest management strategies proposed, approved and implemented under Part V of the Act.

I have reviewed the extensive and demanding process for developing the Proposed Strategy. In my opinion, some review of the costs and benefits of undertaking this process should be considered. As this process is supposedly a review of an existing Council function, I am concerned that the law requires such an enormous effort at considerable cost to ratepayers. It may be necessary to seek an amendment to the Act.

I am satisfied that the Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Act. In particular, I am satisfied that Council has had proper and due regard to Section 72 (prerequisites for approval), Section 73 (consultation), Sections 76, 80 (preparation and content), Sections 77, 97, 99 (funding), and Section 78 (notification of Proposed Strategy) of the Act. In fulfilling these requirements, a sensible and diligent application has been made of the Second Schedule of the Act, which specifies the procedures for submissions, and Hearings.

Following the receipt of submissions, I note that the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee was satisfied that there was no significant opposition to the Proposed Strategy. Having reviewed the Committee's report, I consider that there has been careful consideration of the submissions. Its decisions and recommendations have been consistent with the future direction envisaged by Council regarding pest management in the Region. The recommended amendments to the Proposed Strategy appear well reasoned, defensible and supportive of the desire to provide clear and concise public documents.

The examination of the submissions gives confidence that no significant material opposition to the Proposed Strategy exists. To the contrary, there appears to be support from a variety of stakeholders. This reinforces my belief that the benefits from implementing the Strategy will considerably outweigh the costs to individual landowners and the Region.

I endorse the Proposed Strategy and recommend that Council adopt the Proposed Strategy, as amended by the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee recommendations.

5. Recommendations

That the Council:

- (1) Adopt the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee's recommended amendments to the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy; and*
- (2) Confirms that it is satisfied that the benefits for the region of implementing the Strategy outweigh the costs to the region; and*
- (3) Adopt the amended Regional Pest Management Strategy for the Wellington Region and approve affixing the Common Seal of the Council to that Strategy; and*

- (4) *Reaffirm that the Council's functions, powers and duties as the Management Agency for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2001-2021, be delegated to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee; and*
- (5) *Revoke the Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy 1996-2001 and the Regional Animal Pest Management Strategy 1996-2001.*

HOWARD STONE
Principal Officer and General Manager