

Wetland Incentives Programme: Guidelines for Implementation

1. Purpose of the programme

The purpose of the Wetland Incentives Programme is to encourage wetland restoration on private land by providing practical advice and assistance to landowners.

2. Programme objectives

The programme aims to:

- appeal to wetland landowners;
- achieve wide community support; and
- make a tangible improvement to wetland management on private land.

3. Who qualifies for assistance?

Landowners who have a wetland on their property qualify for assistance under the Wetland Incentives Programme.

Support is not available for land owned by territorial authorities or other Crown entities. Nor is support given for landowners who are legally required to undertake wetland restoration activities (for example, if wetland restoration is a requirement of a subdivision consent).

Landowners do not need to have covenanted their wetland to receive assistance under this programme.

4. How do eligible landowners access funding?

Landowners will contact Greater Wellington and arrange for a member of staff to meet the landowner on site. The staff member will fill out a management plan on site with the landowner. The management plan will include what assistance can be provided (this may need to be double-checked back in the office first). There will be two signed copies of the management plan. There is no contestable funding round.

5. What incentives are available?

The following incentives will be available from this financial year (2003/2004).

- (a) Jointly developed management plans

A simple and concise wetland management plan will be prepared on site with landowners. This will provide landowners with:

- comprehensive on site advice; and
- certainty about what can be funded and what can't.

Management plans will cover the following:

Background information and site evaluation	Planned restoration activities including Greater Wellington and landowner commitments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowner information • An aerial map of the site (supplied by GW) • A description of wetland type, current vegetation, wildlife, special features, and adjacent natural areas • Site history (if known) • Water flow and drainage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the landowner wants to achieve • Restoration activities • The mix of incentives Greater Wellington will provide to suit their site. • Landowner contribution • The timing of restoration activities

Every effort will be made to keep the management plans simple and concise. If the management plan is too complex, it will limit the uptake of the programme.

(b) Help with weed control

Weed control in wetlands is a specialist task, especially if herbicides are required. Under the Wetland Incentives programme, Greater Wellington will organise professional contractors to undertake weed control.

This has the following advantages:

- We can ensure the job is done, and that it is done safely; and
- We can put together a number of sites and get a competitive tender for the work.

If resource consents are necessary for weed control, these will be applied for and paid for by Greater Wellington.

(c) Help with animal pest control

Greater Wellington will provide advice and lend traps to landowners.

(d) Fencing assistance

Greater Wellington will:

- reimburse 50% of the landowner's total material and labour costs on receipt of the bill (up to a maximum of \$5,000); or
- pay for materials (again, on receipt of the bill) under an agreement that the landowner contributes labour.

(e) Help with monitoring wetland hydrology

Greater Wellington will install groundwater monitoring sites and staff gauges for landowners who wish to monitor water levels in their wetland.

6. How much money is available for each landowner?

A maximum of \$5,000 is available for any one landowner. This can be spread across three years if required.

In special circumstances, Greater Wellington will consider funding above the \$5,000 maximum or funding restoration projects longer than three years.

The total funding set aside for the wetland incentives programme is \$40,000 per annum. Therefore, the minimum number of landowners that could be funded is eight per year (at \$5,000 per property).

7. Review of available incentives for 2004/2005

It may not be possible to get the 'mix' of incentives right, especially in the first year. The incentive programme will, therefore be reviewed annually. This should include assessments of:

- programme participants; and
- non-participants who are in the target group (ie. wetland landowners)

The second bullet point recognises that it will take time for the community to learn of the existence of incentives and to feel comfortable applying for them. Uptake is not expected to be large in the first two years.

8. Who determines who gets funding?

Staff will determine who receives funding in accordance with the criteria set out under point 8 and 9 below, and the general provisions of these guidelines.

9. Criteria and constraints

(a) Environmental benefits

The funding can only be used for projects that provide direct benefits for indigenous biodiversity (i.e. it must do more than improve the appearance). This will mean, for example, that weed control would not be funded if the landowner has no commitment to fence out stock.

(b) Timing

Landowners can apply at any time of year. If the budget is already allocated, applicants will be asked to re-contact Greater Wellington after July 1. Summer is generally the best time for weed control and installing hydrological monitoring equipment. This may influence when applications for assistance can be approved.

(c) Wetland restoration:

Funding is for **restoring** wetlands not **creating** wetlands. Wetland creation is the construction of a wetland in an area *where no wetland existed in the past*, and where it is isolated from existing wetlands. Landowners who are planning wetland creation will be referred to groups who provide advice and assistance for wetland creation. The creation of open water in existing wetland will not be encouraged if the wetland has not been previously disturbed and is dominated by native species.

10. Monitoring and reporting

Landowners may be asked to fill out 'self evaluation forms' to confirm what progress they have made, and to give them an opportunity to feed back on the programme.

A random number of applicants will be visited and their progress assessed to make sure that the environmental objectives have been met.

Information on the number of programme participants and what has been achieved under the Wetland Incentives programme will be presented to Greater Wellington's Environment Committee and Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee annually.

11. Promotion of the programme

(a) Internal Promotion

Relevant staff will be given training about the programme so that they are able to promote it to the public.

(b) External Promotion

Landowners who participated in the workshops will be sent letters informing them of the programme and inviting them to apply. The programme will be promoted to the territorial authorities and other agencies in the Region through the Land Protection Fora.