

Catchment Management Division

Departmental Managers' Update
for period ending 18 April 2008

Biosecurity (Wayne O'Donnell)

1. Pest Animals: (Ray Clarey)

1.1 KNE Programme

The KNE programme is progressing satisfactorily overall. However there are delays with the TA Reserves programme created by the need to remark and clear bait station lines that have become overgrown. In addition, new signage that is compliant with the regulations is being installed. The new regulations have been in place for some time but it has not been practicable to change the signs before now. There are many hundreds of signs that need replacing.

The March newsletter of the Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves (FOTBR) reported several people having seen a bellbird in Woodburne Reserve, Takapu Valley and went on to say that this was the first confirmed report of a bellbird in one of Tawa's bush reserves in living memory. FOTBR are very proactive with their bush improvement initiatives and this adds to the enthusiasm of Biosecurity staff to see their work so appreciated. The writer acknowledged the addition of the Spicer Block into the general Tawa operational area.

1.2 Rabbits at Mt Bruce

Staff are currently in the process of collecting blood serum samples from wild rabbits throughout the region to establish Rabbit Calicivirus immunity levels. The results are still to be notified by the processing laboratory.

The Mount Bruce area was included on this occasion because of the substantial lift in rabbit numbers over the past year. It is currently the worst rabbit situation in the region. This area experienced the same phenomena about twenty years ago when there was a prolonged dry spell through spring, summer and early autumn. Knowledge of the RCD immunity levels in this area will provide assistance towards a management plan should the rabbit population not decrease to more acceptable levels through natural regulation.

1.3 Rooks

We have had three requests for assistance over the past two months about rooks visiting crops. These are the first such requests in nearly three years. All were oat crops planted as quickly maturing stock fodder to ease the effects of the drought. Very little damage occurred to the oats with the main interest for the rooks being the easily available invertebrates. Control was only attempted at one site without success. Dead rooks from previous control operations were supplied to the farmers to place out in their crops and act as deterrents the way scarecrows do.

Greater Wellington is acting together with Horizons and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils to register the avicide DRC1339 in petrolatum with the Animal Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Group as a vertebrate toxic agent for rook control. This product got left out of the loop during the transfer from the old legislation because it was never a 'labelled' product although it has been recognised as a proficient tool nationally for several years. It is used in conjunction with helicopter rook nest baiting. Supporting information for the registration was sought from the three regional councils and Animal Control Products Ltd.

1.4 Pest Control Warning Signage – Comprehensibility Test

As part of the new regulations it is contingent upon users to undertake a test to set performance standards to prove that the signage is readily understandable. This 'test' is required under Hazardous Substances (Identification) Regulations 2001 - 'Duties of Persons in Charge of Places in respect of Signage'. The test requires a sample of 50 or more people randomly chosen from the general public who have a reading age of at least 12 years and have no particular education or training in relation to hazardous substances. The tests will be undertaken by year nine science classes at Onslow College, Wellington.

We intend to do the test using the three main templates for the VTA's we use at GW. These are Pindone, Cyanide and 1080. All have differing bait products but the main differences are that Pindone is a 'warning sign'. Cyanide is a 'danger' sign with skull & crossbones and 1080 is a 'danger' sign with emphasis about dogs. The three VTA's selected cover the range of major hazard issues and there is every confidence that the new signage will be totally compliant for GW (Biosecurity, BioWorks and Parks).

The Department of Conservation have already undertaken the comprehensibility test and GW signage is considered to be very similar.

1.5 Regional Roding Authorities – Pest Management Plans

Planning is underway to effect discussions with regional roding authorities to address the management of pests on land for which they are responsible. The current RPMS outlines the responsibilities of the nine TA and requires them to control pests on their land and on the roadside verges for which they are responsible.

Similarly, Transit NZ which is responsible for over 230 kilometres of State Highway in the Wellington Region, is subject to the same pest management rules as defined for other private land occupiers.

Both the TA and Transit have generally complied with the spirit of the RPMS and voluntarily controlled some of the pest plant and animals within road reserves. The relationship between these bodies and the Biosecurity Department has been cordial and satisfactory to date and the formalisation of Road Reserve Management Plans is not expected to change this relationship.

The five Western Zone TA (KCDC, PCC, WCC, HCC & LHCC) have been formally agreeing to pest management principles on road reserves for many years through the annually reviewed Memorandums of Understanding for supporting biodiversity through jointly implemented pest plant and animal management plans. The seeking of formal agreements with the remaining four District Councils and Transit may prove more difficult as we do not have shared funding agreements with them.

NZ Railways Corporation (Ontrack Ltd) is responsible for rail trunk lines extending through the eastern and western areas of the region. The rail corridors have potential to impose the same impacts upon adjoining occupiers as district roads and state highways. Ontrack Ltd however is not bound to the Strategy except to the extent it might agree. There is potential to enter into a formal Reserve Management Plan with Ontrack Ltd similar to that proposed with the TA's.

Road and rail corridors provide pathways for the establishment and spread of known common pests and new unwanted organisms. They require an effective surveillance and management programme.

1.6 Reporting 1080 Aerial Operations to the Environmental Risk Management Authority

Sodium Fluoroacetate (1080) has recently been reassessed under Section 63 of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. Additional Control 12 of that decision requires provision of a written report containing specific information relating to any aerial application to ERMA NZ within six months after the operation. This requirement came into force on 1 January 2008.

ERMA considers the most appropriate way of managing the requirement is to provide a web based database that will allow electronic capture of the information to a standardised format. The electronic storage system is also to be used as a data sharing system. ERMA is seeking feedback on this proposal and will receive submissions up until the end of April 2008.

This proposed online reporting system seems to request excessive amounts of material, some of which has little relevance to meeting the requirements set out by the review. There are also issues about the confidentiality of the 'shared' information. GW will be submitting on the proposal.

GW works closely with the Ministry of Health, AHB, Department of Conservation (DoC) and the relevant TA when undertaking control operations. Other administration and consultation involves notification of adjoining landowners, iwi consultation, environmental effect assessments, notification of user groups, clubs and schools, MOH approval, resource consent to discharge to land and water, preparation of warning signs, newspaper advertisements and information brochures for stakeholders. Pre and post control monitoring is undertaken, and a comprehensive post-operation report is published after every aerial job.

GW staff are familiar with the DoC and MoH database systems, and currently produce comprehensive logs following aerial 1080 operations. GW supports the proposal to move to online reporting for post 1080 operations, providing that the material requested is appropriate and relevant to the requirements of Control 12. The wording of Control 12 is provided for information. It is GW's contention that the proposed 1080 database structure goes far beyond these requirements.

2. Pest Plants: (Richard Grimmett)

2.1 Didymo awareness campaign

The Section commenced the Didymo awareness campaign in early January. This programme was funded by MAFBNZ (\$20K max). Three students were employed for two months. Close liaison was kept with DoC and their concurrent programme, also MAFBNZ funded, to ensure maximum impact was achieved without duplication. MAFBNZ supplied all promotional material and signage, plus continued to inform all Inter-Island Ferry passengers. Parks & Forests staff were also active in delivering the message to all visitors they had contact with. Students supplied information to river users, clubs, businesses (in tourism & outdoors), accommodation providers, car hire outlets, sports shops and contractors.

2.2 Control and surveillance programmes

The control and surveillance programmes progressed well with continued fine weather to the end of March. Completing more frequent inspections and control at each infestation site annually continues to show benefits in reducing plants reaching maturity. The incidence of mature plants and sites clear of pest plants continues to trend down. Unfortunately, property inspections around known infestations and surveillance surveys continue to return more new sites. Most new sites are small infestations, which staff treat at the time rather than revisiting later for initial control.

2.3 KNE Programmes

KNE work programmes continue across 43 sites within the region. MOU agreements with TA's are progressing ahead of target with increased interest in working on joint projects. Many of these areas have moderate biodiversity values but have the support of care groups and provide aesthetic and educational exposure in highly populated areas. Monitoring assessments are being initiated to show the change in species composition, density and size of plants. These Permanent Sample sites will monitor the change over time in plant biodiversity. The aim is to aid future planning and report restoration trends and increase in site values. Dialogue is underway with TA's regarding the ongoing problem with ratepayer garden dumping and encroachment beyond their boundaries into these sites.

2.4 Biological control

This has been a focus for the section during this period. All staff received a training presentation on current initiatives and identification of biocontrol agents. Part of the session was on how to identify potential new agents having a detrimental effect on pest plants. Staff members from other Sections and Departments were invited, with several Parks staff attending. Specialist staff received further training in advanced biocontrol techniques and monitoring. Training was undertaken at workshops at Landcare Research, Lincoln, and in Masterton with Landcare Research staff. A future task is to map and report each biological control agent's level of infestation and effect on host pest plants.

3. Bovine Tb: (Graeme Butcher and Grant Crawford)

3.1 2007/08 Progress

The entire 2007/08 bovine Tb programme has been contracted. This includes:

- 208,000ha possum control
- 2,100ha ferret control
- 24,800ha possum & ferret surveys
- 152,800ha pig surveys

The pig surveys are 40% complete but are on target for a 30 June completion date. All the other surveys are finished.

To date, only 38% of the possum control programme has been completed. A further 6.5% has agreed to be completed after the 30 June. This leaves 56% of the programme to be completed over the final quarter.

Vector control contractors have made good progress with ground operations over the last quarter. The weather has been a major factor i.e. less stock due to drought conditions, easier access for vehicles, and improved working conditions for their staff. There were no performance failures over this quarter, a major improvement on previous years.

The Animal Health Board 'Registration of Interest' process for 2007/08 produced one new contractor for this region. The attributes of this contractor would not have been sufficient to obtain control in this region under normal contract procedures. The appointment was delayed until the contractor obtained the required qualifications. Unfortunately, the new contractor has failed the first performance monitor undertaken on their activities.

3.2 Vector Management Contract Extension

The VM contract extension proposal was completed and forwarded to the AHB for a response. A formal response is yet to be received. The proposal includes a detailed list of activities and tasks that the VM team would undertake in 2008/09. We believe these are all essential activities to ensure the vector control programme continues uninterrupted. The proposal also provides for a smooth transfer of services to the AHB well before commencement of the 2009/10 year.

3.3 Bovine Tb NPMS Review

The AHB commenced the review process by compilation of a Discussion Paper in late 2007. This paper has raised the interest of all stakeholders as the AHB appear focused on pursuing an eradication policy for Bovine Tb at a greatly increased cost to stakeholders. Dairy NZ and MAF have organised a two day workshop for stakeholders, analysts and research scientists to discuss the validity of the proposal and to explore other options for future management of Bovine Tb in NZ. Wayne O'Donnell and John Simmons (EW) have been invited to represent regional government.

The AHB are obliged to present a Proposed NPMS to the Minister of Biosecurity before September 2009.

4. Monitoring & Investigations: (Murray Hudson)

4.1 Bovine Tb monitoring programme

There has already been a substantial change to the monitoring programme this year, brought about by the AHB implementing changes to the way it manages its national programme. These changes have been disruptive, particularly as the changes have been radical and have come three quarters of the way through the financial year. The Section now has no control over most parts of the Bovine Tb monitoring programme, resulting in the current ISO 9001 system becoming redundant. Whilst the intent of the "new" AHB process may be necessary, some of the new systems are not fully developed (e.g. VectorNet, Vectorlink, Tbl) and in some cases the new systems are not overly flexible. The final roll out of the new systems is planned to take effect as of 1 July.

4.2 KNE Evaluation

A full scale evaluation of the KNE programme is being initiated by Murray Hudson, Ray Cleary and Richard Grimmett (Reference Group). The frame-work for the evaluations is being worked on now which includes defining the evaluation questions and the outcomes expected from an evaluation. Following this a Focus/Evaluation Group (FEG) will be set up to run with the information gathering, analysis, reporting and implementation components of the KNE programme. The evaluation should feed into the LTCCP nearer the end of this calendar year. The main focus of the evaluation is to ensure resources are being used appropriately, the KNE selection is appropriate, the possibility of expansion of effective initiatives and a focus on outcomes.

4.3 Rewanui Forest

The Section is setting up a unique monitoring programme to measure Biodiversity gains and changes to the ecological status of Rewanui over time. This has involved some extensive research and consideration of many different monitoring options to come up with a sample that will indicate changes in biodiversity over time. This is a first to be completed at a site level and is effectively a surrogate for future monitor programmes and in particular the KNE programme. A presentation to the Trimble Foundation Board is being made on the 17th April to show them the proposal.

Flood Protection (Graeme Campbell)

1. Manager's comments

The works programme for the Department is continuing to progress well. The majority of the capital works are at or near completion and the maintenance work on the rivers and streams is well in hand. The key successes for the period have been:

- Successful completion of the Waiwhetu cleanup trial.
- Good progress on this year's Lower Valley Development Scheme improvement works programme.
- Completing the repair works from the January 2008 floods (mostly Kapiti) within the existing works programme and budget.

The major issues for the next period are:

- Finalising a decision on the Boulcott Stopbank alignment.
- Completing the maintenance works programme for the year.
- Seeking expressions of interest from consultants for the design and consents of the Waiwhetu Stream cleanup and flood improvement works.
- Completing preparations for the Chrystalls Extended stopbank and walkway opening.

The Department has appointed replacements for the Senior Engineer and Environmental Planner roles left vacant following earlier resignations. The appointment of the new staff will be a great help in getting the investigations work, which has been falling behind programme this year, back on programme.

2. Western FMP's [Daya Atapattu]

2.1 Ava to Ewen project

The Ava Rail stopbank reconstruction and waterway upgrade works are now complete. The contractor has topsoiled and hydro seeded the stopbank and the river berm. Recent rains will help establish a grass cover before winter. There were complaints from two residents near the pump station about excessive dust from the construction works. We are working with the contractor to assist the residents in cleaning their houses.

The waka prow found during excavation of the pump station excavation is preserved in a container placed on the pump station site until Hutt City Council (HCC) finds a permanent location. We have offered HCC another site to store the waka container while it is being restored to enable the tidying of the pump station site to be completed.

We have engaged a landscape architect to prepare planting plans for the Opahu Stream outlet channel. Planting will be completed in two stages. The first stage, to be completed in June/July 2008, will involve planting in the tidal zone and on the slopes of a 250 metre section on the upstream end of the outlet channel. We will involve the local community in this planting.

2.2 Boulcott/Hutt stopbank project

On 4 April 2008, GWRC officers met with HCC's chief executive to discuss the funding option proposed by Councillor Glensor at the 13 March meeting. A letter was subsequently sent to HCC on 11 April 2008 providing details of the proposal and requesting it to be placed in front of the Hutt City Council. We understand that this matter will be discussed in a HCC Committee meeting on 21 May 2008. Staff will report to the Catchment Management Committee once a response from HCC has been received.

While we are awaiting the response from HCC on the land purchase proposal, we are preparing a draft report setting out the remaining matters relating to the two alignments for consideration by this Council. Depending on the outcome of this exercise we may seek time for a short workshop on the matter before the report is finalised and presented to Council for a decision.

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2.3 Whirinaki Crescent stopbank

Stage 2 of the stopbank works are progressing. Out of a total length of 700 metres of stopbank, reconstruction of about 500 metres is substantially complete. The contractor is progressing with the final trimming and grassing of this section. The remaining 200 metres at the Kiwi Street end will be completed in May 2008.

A resource consent application to remove four trees from the Stage 1 fill area is now ready and will be lodged with UHCC on 18 April 2008. We expect this application to go through a limited notification and hearing process and it is very likely that this site filling will now not be completed until September/October 2008.

2.4 Maoribank investigations

Staff are currently assessing the repair costs of Maoribank failure scenarios. A workshop is scheduled for 18 April 2008 to identify remedial measures and to set priorities.

2.5 Kapiti floodplain management

2.5.1 Waikanae River

Flood Protection's recommended location for the proposed footbridge at Jim Cooke Park is approximately 250 metres upstream of the entrance to Jim Cooke Park. The site was chosen because it offered the least flood risk of the sites investigated, is close to key access points on the north bank of the Waikanae River and did not affect vehicle access along the river.

The raising of the Harrison's house at 17 Makora Road, Otaihanga has commenced. This work is expected to be completed by end of June 2008.

Weed spraying has been undertaken on the gravel beaches to reduce islands forming, some minor tree work has been done on the left bank walkway and gravel extraction is programmed to start on 31 April

2.5.2 Friends of the Waikanae River (FOWR)

We are currently working with the FOWR to prepare sites for planting along the river. This year the FOWR will plant about 3500 natives, most of which will have been raised from local seed sources.

The FOWR have been nominated for a Green Ribbon award for their efforts to enhance and restore the ecosystems of the Waikanae River. As a volunteer community group, FOWR have worked closely with GW, KCDC, DOC and Iwi in the management and care of the river. In particular the group has achieved a phenomenal degree of re-vegetation along a considerable length of the river.

2.5.3 Otaki River

Spraying and weed clearance on the berms and gravel beaches has been the main focus on the Otaki River over the last period. Gravel extraction continues below the State Highway Bridge, and a number of large poplar trees have been removed to stop them falling into the river above the Leithbridge groynes.

Chrystalls Extended Stopbank

Following the recent rain it is expected that grass seeding will be completed by mid April 2008. Apart from this the only other outstanding works are fencing, survey, and purchase of the LINZ land.

Chrystall's Walkway

The new walkway surface and carpark are nearing completion. We have also applied for the resource consent and building consent for the new footbridge over the Waimanu Stream. Outstanding works include a stonework entrance, signage and the footbridge.

The new walkway and stopbank will be officially opened by the Chair, and KCDC Mayor, on 24 May 2008. Councillors will be advised of the details of the opening in the Councillors Bulletin. The FOOR are assisting GW with the Chrystall's walkway project and have approximately 4000 native plants ready to be planted alongside the walkway.

Friends of the Otaki River (FOOR)

The FOOR have erected an impressive timber and stone sign at the SH1 end of the "Sea to Highway" river walkway. The materials and work were donated by local people.

During the Easter weekend over 100 Rover Scouts spent time clearing weeds from around native plants in the Chrystall's bend area.

3. Western Operations [Jeff Evans]

3.1 Hutt River

Key activities during the period were continuing gravel extraction below Kennedy Good Bridge and construction of two new rock groynes at Whakatiki and Maori Bank. Groynes are used to deflect the river back into the main channel, which helps to stop bank erosion. Work has also started on forming a new dish channel in the berm above the existing culvert at Masfield Street in Upper Hutt. This will help improve flood flows through the drainage channel system.

3.2 Hutt River Ranging Services

Maintenance work consisted of vegetation control around the Belmont area and plant releasing in a number of riverside amenity plots. Tagging of signs has become more

predominant over the last year and a considerable amount of time has been required to remove it. Vehicle damage has also increased and we are monitoring a number of areas.

Staff worked with the Hutt Angling Club and held a number of "Have a Go Flying Fishing" events which all had a good turn out. The Women's Cycle, Run or Walk challenge was held on the lower reaches of the river and the annual Hutt News 5-10k fun run was also held.

3.3 Watercourses

Flood debris has been cleared from the Mangaone Stream and work is underway in the Waitohu to realign the river in a number of places, and to remove flood debris. The Pukenamu drain has been cleared to stop a build up of weed growth which was keeping the water level high and blocking other culvert outlets.

Stream clearing runs have now been completed in the Porirua and Kenepuru Streams.

3.4 Gravel extraction

Gravel extraction figures to the end of March 2008 are set out below.

River	Area	Contractor	Period Year 2007/08 (cubic metres)		Year 2006/07 (cubic metres)
			Period	Year	Full Year
Hutt	Estuary	Winstones	3,675	31,458	46,100
	River	Horokiwi	7,691	36,177	46,890
Otaki	River	Winstones	1,068	29,944	40,929
Waikanae	Above Greenaway Road	Various	0	0	3,330
	Below Greenaway Road	Gary Holland Earthmoving	0	0	5,360
Waitohu	River	Mills Albert	0	2,502	2,500
TOTALS			12,434	100,081	145,109

4. Wairarapa Operations [Mike Longworth]

4.1 Wairarapa River Schemes

General

The long period of fine weather over the spring and summer has enabled the work programmes in the northern Wairarapa rivers to progress to the point where they are substantially complete. Construction work involved with the annual works programme and development programme in the Lower Valley is continuing. In the Lower Valley approximately 80% of the annual works programme is completed. Spraying for vegetation control in the rivers is now largely completed.

The Cliffs heavy protection work involving rock groynes to prevent erosion of the Ruamahanga River bank adjacent to Daikens Road for the Carterton District Council is completed.

In the new Kopuaranga River scheme 90% of the mechanical willow clearing work for the year has been completed. Spraying of willow re-growth has been completed.

Nine of the river schemes will hold their annual advisory committee meetings from 21 April to 12 May. The dates for these meeting have been included in the Councillors Bulletin.

4.2 Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan – Notice of Requirements (Designations)

We recently received from the Hearing Commissioners considering submissions on the proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan. In short the Commissioners recommended that all the Notice of Requirements be confirmed in the subject to the following conditions:

- Prior to any restrictions being put in place and/or work undertaken, the Requiring Authority is to consult with all landowners as to the nature of ongoing works, uses and restrictions. A copy of any restrictions must be provided in writing.
- Prior to any major upgrade of a stopbank or drain being undertaken by Greater Wellington Regional Council on a site subject to this designation, the accuracy and scope of the designation as it relates to that site, is to be checked and confirmed, and any necessary modifications made.

In accordance with Section 172 of the RMA, Greater Wellington as the Requiring Authority must advise the three Councils whether we accept or reject their recommendations in whole or in part by 9 May 2008. In response Geoff Dick (on behalf of Greater Wellington) has advised the three Councils of our decision to accept their recommendations and conditions without change.

This is a significant milestone, as the designations provide ongoing recognition and protection of our flood protection assets, as well as allowing us to construct and upgrade both existing and new stopbanks, floodways and drains without the need for resource consents from these Councils.

It is also significant that the designations have had the general support of those landowners whose properties are affected by the designations. While we have some work ahead of us to advise the landowners of the designation and any restrictions that will result, this process is now underway.

4.3 Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme

New Rating Classification

The special consultative procedure to adopt the proposed new rating classification for the LWVD Scheme has been completed. The hearings committee considered a number of submissions on the proposed new rating classification and will recommend to Council that the proposed new rating classification be adopted with some minor amendments. The new rating classification is expected to be in place for the financial year 2008/09.

Development Work LWVDS

The development work budgeted at \$870,000 for this year is approximately 80% complete. The main work being, shifting the Mahaki stopbank back from the river, extending the Butchers rock berm protection, placing stone rip rap wave erosion protection at Macklands farm, constructing boulder groynes at Devenports, clearing trees and vegetation back from

the stopbanks in the lower Tauherenikau River, removal of gravel and upgrade of stopbanks in the lower Tauherenikau.

4.4 Investigations

Private Stopbanks around Lake Wairarapa

A study to investigate the state of private stopbanks and other private structures associated with preventing flooding around Lake Wairarapa has commenced with the site inspections and assessments being completed. Options for Council's involvement, if any, are still to be developed for reporting to Council.

4.5 Drainage Schemes

The lower than normal rainfall over winter has meant lower power costs for the pumped drainage schemes than has been the case in recent years. Aside from a significant electrical repair to the Papatahi pump electric the maintenance costs have not been excessive for the schemes. In all, the budgets for the drainage schemes are on track to recover the reserve balances that had been depleted in the previous year. As part of the recovery of the reserves, the Onoke pump scheme has elected to increase rates by 78% in the new financial year and the Pouawha scheme will increase its rates by 70%. The final work to be completed this year is the annual weed spraying which is underway.

5. Investigations and Assets [John Eyles]

5.1 Waiwhetu Stream floodplain management study

A trial to test the clean up methodology for the lower reaches of the Waiwhetu Stream was successfully completed at the end of March. A 50m section of the stream bed, just below the Bell Road bridge, has now been cleaned up. The validation test results show that heavy metal levels have been reduced to below levels that pose a risk to human health. The trial was completed by contractors Brian Perry Civil on behalf of the partners in the clean up: GW, Hutt City and the Ministry for the Environment at a cost of about \$500,000.

The trial involved constructing 3 sheetpile walls across the stream creating two working cells. The stream flow was pumped around the cells. The upstream cell was dewatered into the second cell and the contaminated material excavated and transported in sealed trucks to the Silverstream landfill. Approximately 430 tonnes of contaminated material was removed safely to the landfill.

Several lessons were learned during the trial which will benefit the full clean up work, and stream widening and deepening. A full report of the outcomes of the trial will be given at the next Waiwhetu Stream Advisory Subcommittee meeting.

5.2 Asset management

Planning is underway for the annual asset management inspections and peer review by Horizons Regional Council staff. A two day visit is scheduled during the last two weeks of May.

A student has been employed to finalise the changes made to the asset registers as a result of the work undertaken during the summer to compile a GIS layer incorporating the location of all flood protection assets.

6. Strategy & Technical Support [Sharyn Westlake]

The following table summarises the number of formal, written requests responded to from 1 March 2008 – 11 April 2008. These include information requests from the public, local authorities and also Flood Protection comment on resource consent applications to Greater Wellington.

	1 Mar – 11 Apr 2008	YTD
Requests brought forward	6	3
Additional requests received	37	168
Responses provided	24	152
Outstanding requests	19	19

Over this period Flood Protection staff have been working with the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) and their Consultants to review flood hazard maps for the Otaki area. Revised maps will take into account local stormwater flooding in Otaki and the reduced flood risk as a result of the completion of the Chrystalls Extended Stopbank. Staff will be assisting KCDC with the consultation process about the updated maps, which is expected to start shortly.

Staff met with Upper Hutt City Council officers to discuss a proposed plan change to include the Hutt River flood hazard information in the Upper Hutt District Plan. The Mangaroa River flood hazard information and the process for this to be included in the district plan were also discussed.

Land Management (Dave Cameron)

1. Manager's comments

1.1 Drought Situation

The drought situation has been alleviated in some parts of the region. Rainfall in the Whangaehu, Ngaumu and Awhea districts since 1st April has totalled 40mm, however the rest of the Wairarapa hill country has received only 20mm. Similar quantities are required on a consistent basis over the next month to maximise grass growth before the cooler winter temperatures have an impact.

Letters have been sent to all Farm Plan clients seeking confirmation of pole requirements for this year. A heartening response has been received to date. Early indications are that demand will be relatively high despite the adverse economic situation and the low soil moisture conditions.

1.2 Hill Country Erosion Fund

The Hill Country Erosion Fund Stage 1 application has been approved, with one item declined. The fund will not fund capital projects such as the irrigation upgrade at Akura nursery. The balance of the application is to be discussed with MAF officials before the Stage 2 application is presented. The deadline for the Stage 2 application is 8 May 2008.

1.3 Afforestation Grant Scheme

The Afforestation Grant Scheme proposal from Regional Councils has been approved by MAF subject to the various parties signing off legal agreements. The funds are available over the next five years and will target up to 25,000 hectares of new forest.

Regional Councils can expect to be allocated approximately \$3M in the coming financial year. This will equate to some 2,000 hectares of new forest. Greater Wellington's share of this pool may amount to 300 hectares. There has been limited publication of this fund, however an interested party has tentatively agreed to present 100 hectares for evaluation. A key part of any application will include the co-benefits of erosion control and improved water quality.

1.4 Ballance Farm Environment Awards

The Farm Environment Awards were presented at a very well attended function in Masterton recently. Supreme winners were the Harvey family from Martinborough. They also took out a couple of minor awards for their sheep and beef operation. This is the seventh year that these awards have been held and while it is difficult to attract large numbers of entrants the quality of the field is always very high.

A field day is being planned at the Harvey's property on Wednesday 30th April and besides the traditional farm tour, specialist speakers have been invited to present information relating to carbon farming and the emissions trading scheme, and farm succession planning.

1.5 Catchment Schemes

Catchment Scheme expenditure for the first nine months totals \$86,600. This represents 95% of the \$91,000 annual budget. River training works are scheduled for the Kaiwhata River. River clearance work in the Wainuioru River and repairs to the Bushgrove drop structure have been completed.

Meetings with each of the six Advisory Committees are scheduled from mid-April to mid-July. A meeting of ratepayers in the Whareama Catchment Scheme has approved a recommendation to complete another five years of work.

2. Farm Plans (Don Bell)

2.1 Delegated Approvals - New Plans, Reviews and Annual Programmes

Approvals	New Plans, Reviews	Annual Plan Target	Total 10 Year Expenditure	
New Sustainability Plans	0	3	\$0	
New Conservation Plans	3	2	\$102,212	
Ten Year Reviews	8	20	\$295,285	
Programme delivery	Annual Programmes Undertaken	Annual Plan Target	Expenditure to date	Annual Plan Budget
Annual Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability plans • Conservation plans • Shelter plans 	132	130	\$534,000	\$550,000
Isolated works	10		\$9,800	\$10,000

2.2 Comment

A very successful team building retreat for the Land Management Department was held in late February involving a mix of fun, education and challenge over two days and an overnight stay at Castlepoint.

A further round of Farm Plan mapping has commenced with nine properties scheduled for completion by 30th June 2008. The programme is being managed by Dr Doug Hicks on a consultancy basis, assisted by Land Management staff.

There are two main areas of focus for Land Management staff in this fourth quarter; planning for their Catchment Scheme meetings at which budgets and programmes for the coming year are confirmed, and the completion of Farm Plan Ten-Year Reviews including updating the erosion control works programmes on hill country properties.

2.3 Projects

The review of the Wairarapa Valley Wind Erosion Control Scheme is progressing well. Focus group meetings were held with the two main sectors – sheep, beef and arable and dairy – both very well attended. Feedback is currently being collated by the facilitators, Margaret Brown (Social Scientist, Ag Research) and Katie Jones (Post-graduate student, Victoria University). A report is currently under preparation as a step towards revamping our policy delivery for sustainable soil and water management on arable landforms.

The Papawai Stream Restoration Group was successful in obtaining \$56,000 from the MfE (Sustainable Management Fund) for 2008/09. This, together with an anticipated \$40,000 “in kind” contribution from the community, means the group can appoint Peter Handford Ltd (Environment Consultants) as project manager and commence a new phase in their stream restoration programme.

A joint programme between a private landowner, The Fensham Group and the Enaki Stream Care Group will receive \$5000 from the Honda Tree Fund to enable planting around a wetland development area. The site is immediately upstream of the Fensham wetland and will form an interception zone for sediment and nutrients that would otherwise enter the main wetland.

The Makoura Stream restoration proposal received enthusiastic support from catchment residents, schools, Iwi and local authorities at a hui (April 13th). Masterton District Council will match GW’s Take Care funding of \$19,000 over five years, commencing this July. In addition, the group will receive \$7,500 from the World Environment Day fund much of which will be used to purchase native plants. It is intended that the five schools and colleges in the Makoura Stream catchment, along with community members, will hold a series of planting days in early June.

3. Akura Conservation Centre (Stan Braaksma)

3.1 Nursery Operations

- Soil moistures are still very low; however they improved following a decent rainfall at the end of March. The irrigator is still operating to capacity but will cease shortly with the end of the growing season. In non-irrigated areas of Akura, there have been stool deaths especially in the lighter soils and also in the adjacent shelterbelts. Growth of poplar and willow was strong until early February when the extreme temperatures arrived and an outbreak of poplar rust slowed growth rates considerably.
- Stump pruning is still in progress and behind the planned completion date. An extra crew has been trained to get this task completed. Tasks to be completed shortly are row mulching and mowing, burning of nursery slash, pole counts for 2008, and removal of dead and ill-thrift stools.
- Pest control has resulted in the removal of 10 hares and 40+ rabbits from Akura Nursery. There has been recent cattle trespass into Akura, and similarly with the continuing logging operations at Mangapakeha Nursery some stock ingress has occurred. Both situations have resulted in minimal plant damage.

- A yard plan is being drafted to improve the safety of operations. The intent is to separate the retail section from heavy traffic/loading and product processing areas. Numerous improvements have also been made to yard safety including signage, safety rails and stairs to upper storage areas, and some repairs to doors and buildings. The chemical shed has been shifted away from the retail area and a new water supply established to service chemical mixing.
- Eco-sourced seed collection is almost completed, and two local nurseries are trialling root trainer plant production.

3.2 Trading

- The final payment for the P.radiata harvest from Mangapakeha Nursery arrived on 14 March 2008 and now totals \$37,309. A letter from Whittakers apologised for the delays, and thanked staff for their understanding.
- A large order of light rail iron has been secured and brought into stock.
- Improving presentation and description of plants is being considered in the new yard layout plans.

3.3 Staffing

- A nursery workshop was attended by Stan Braaksma. The workshop included inspections of two poplar and willow nurseries in Waikato/Northland regions, and a visit to the Replas factory which currently recycles our Dynex sleeves. Attendees were shown a range of new products being made including the Netlon sleeve for pole protection and an interesting initiative to recycle agricultural bailage wrapping. Included in the tour was a visit to a willow energy farming initiative to produce ethanol, xylose and lignin from short rotation shrub willows.
- Raewyn Hullena has again offered her services as Nursery Assistant on adjusted hours for this winter. Raewyn has been a long term employee at Akura. Advertising for a further part time assistant will take place shortly.

3.4 Budget

The Akura Business Unit is showing a good result for the first nine months of the financial year. The operating surplus has dropped by \$15,000 since the last report, a result of contract payments for pruning, costs associated with yard improvements, and the payment of the Research Collective fee. The overall position is good as the fourth quarter approaches. The last quarter of the year is one where expenditure often significantly exceeds income.

Activity	Budget 2007/08 Operating Surplus	February Operating Surplus 2007/08
Nurseries	21,100	(9,500)
Trading	(58,200)	(67,300)
Total	(37,100)	(76,800)

4. Biodiversity (Megan Banks)

Michelle Bird has returned to work from maternity leave and will be involved in the Streams Alive programme on the Kapiti coast, working 2 days per week. She is based at Battle Hill and is on a fixed term contract until 30 June 2009. A new appointment, based in Upper Hutt is to be finalised by the middle of May. This will provide additional resources to the Streams Alive programme and will enable staff to engage in more biodiversity outreach programmes.

The review of the Streams Alive programme is nearing completion. Focus group meetings have been held and the feedback is being collated. Recommendations are due to be forwarded by the end of April.

5. Operations (Kevin Burdan)

Silviculture is continuing in the reserve forests but is still really slow on Farm Plan properties (total 9 properties to date) due to cash flow constraints associated with the drought and poor stock prices. A large thinning programme (40 hectares) is currently underway at Kotu. In total 74.1 hectares of silviculture (thinning and pruning) has been completed out of a target of 250 hectares.

Work in the Reserve Forests continues with a total of 106.3 hectares of pruning and 16.2 hectares of thinning completed in the current financial year.

Integrated Catchment Management (Ian Gunn)

1. TCM Concept

Further meetings have been held with the Catchment Management and Environment Divisions senior managers. A framework on how the TCM concept could be delivered will be presented to the June Catchment Management Committee meeting.

2. Drought Committee

Councillor Fran Wilde convened a meeting in March regarding the drought in the Wairarapa. A Drought Committee, chaired by Anders Crofoot (Federated Farmers) and which includes Cr Wilde, has been created. The committee has produced a flyer for the rural community and organised the successful Drought Shout at the Tui Brewery at Mangatainoka.

Climate statistics are being publicised by GW to highlight the current drought situation. The present situation can best be described as a “green drought”. The pastures are green, however there is not likely to be enough growth to feed stock through the winter period. The supply of feed is limited because of the widespread nature of this drought. Only north Gisborne and Northland have escaped the effects of the drought this year. Also dairy farmers can afford to pay higher prices than sheep and beef farmers.

The Drought Committee is continuing to monitor the situation.

3. Lake Wairarapa Co-ordinating Committee

At a meeting in early April Councillor Fran Wilde outlined to the committee the progress being made on the establishment of a governance structure for the proposed Lake Wairarapa Regional Park. It is expected that within a couple of months an “establishment board” will be confirmed. The parties involved in the discussions include DOC, Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, Rangitane o Wairarapa, South Wairarapa District Council and GW.

The meeting had a lively debate about fish and were pleased to hear that trials on the control of plants such as alder are being planned.

The committee are looking forward to playing a full role in the development of this “100 year plus” project.

4. Water Programme for Action

The Regional Affairs subcommittee on water (Local Government New Zealand) met recently to receive an update. A Proposed National Policy Statement on Water is expected to be released in June for public submission. Submissions will close probably in February next year. In this instance an independent Board of Inquiry will be established to consider and recommend a National Policy Statement for adoption.

The subcommittee has identified some work streams to develop best practise in water management.