

Report 11.510
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Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
Authors Wayne O'Donnell, General Manager, Catchment Management

General Manager's report to the Environmental Wellbeing Committee meeting of 11 October 2011

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington activities relating the Committee's areas of responsibility.

2. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

3. Catchment Management

3.1 Land Management

Managing Stock Access to Waterways Guideline

A guide to managing stock access to waterways in the Wellington region was recently launched in Martinborough. The guide is a result of collaboration between Greater Wellington, Beef and Lamb, Dairy NZ, Federated Farmers, the NZ Deer Farmers Association and Fonterra, and is designed to assist farmers in working towards best practice for managing stock around waterways.

Stock can cause stream bank erosion, water pollution and sedimentation. The impact that each pollutant has on water quality will vary depending on farm features, land use and the management practices in place. A number of management options are contained in the booklet and cover the following topics:

- Fencing livestock from waterways
- Temporary fencing

- Bridges and culverts
- Managing water bodies without fencing (troughs, shade, crossings, stock classes)

There is also a planning guide to assist with the on-farm decision making process.

The guidelines will be promoted throughout the region over the coming months using a variety of media opportunities, mail-outs, community meetings and field days.

Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) Reviews

Two important reviews have just been presented to the Government making recommendations on the ETS rules. The Agriculture ETS Advisory Committee reported to the Government on 30 June and the ETS Review Panel reported on 15 September. The Government's response to these reports might be expected any time from February 2012 to December 2012.

Key recommendations - Agriculture

- In the ETS Review Panel's view, agriculture does have abatement opportunities. On the evidence presented, such opportunities include forestry, nitrification inhibitors, and 'good practice' farm management techniques that increase productivity. All of these options are available now and others will be available in the medium to long term as a result of the efforts going into research today. Overall, the Panel considers that there are sufficient abatement opportunities for agriculture to enter the ETS in 2015. Therefore Agriculture remains within the ETS on the timetable that is currently legislated, with mandatory reporting beginning in 2012 and surrender obligations beginning in 2015.
- The point of obligation for agriculture should be at the farmer level rather than the processor level. It means that there will be stronger incentives for farmers to change their management practices.
- The free allocation of NZUs for agriculture should be 90 percent of a baseline initially, phased out at 1.3 per cent per annum on a straight-line basis from 2016. This clarifies the current situation where currently the free allocation is reduced by 1.3% of the previous year, effectively meaning that it is never phased out. The new recommendation means that it is reduced in a straight line basis i.e. 90% to 88.7% to 87.3% to 86%, etc.

Key recommendations - Forestry

- Pre-1990 forestry offset planting should be introduced within the rules for pre-1990 forestry from 2012. This recommendation brings into play the idea that if one hectare of pre 1990 forest is harvested, as long as another

hectare is planted somewhere there is no penalty. This means that forestry will be able to be moved off a lot of central north island land that has potential for agriculture.

- Averaging should be available as an option from 2012 for post-1989 forests. Averaging is a method suggested by some submitters as a way of reducing the risks of having to payback credits at harvesting time at a higher cost than what they may have received for them when claimed. It seems to work by the Government only issuing credits up to the long term average forest carbon stock level. In return no credits need to be paid back at harvest time.
- The Government should consider the appropriateness and means of introducing a voluntary ETS equivalent for pre-1990 indigenous forests. Potentially this may bring in the ability for landowners to gain carbon credits for carbon being sequestered in pre 1990 native vegetation.

Overall the report seems to be saying that the ETS is here to stay and is not dependant on international agreements being reached, but it is likely to slow down the introduction of the cost of emissions falling on those who produce the emissions. There seems to be some potential benefits for forestry.

3.2 Biosecurity

National Biosecurity Capability Network

Reviews of the biosecurity system in New Zealand in the past identified a need for a nation-wide capability network prepared to respond promptly and effectively to incursions of exotic organisms. The incursion response simulations in recent years (Operation Taurus, the Waiheke Island foot and mouth disease response simulation, 2005) identified a significant role for regional councils in New Zealand biosecurity system response structure. In 2009 AsureQuality had been selected by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to build and manage a network of resources to respond to biosecurity emergencies. The system supporting this is known as the “National Biosecurity Capability Network”. The National Biosecurity Capability Network will enable the selection and deployment of the best capability for responding to a biosecurity emergency. Greater Wellington Biosecurity was approached recently to provide staff and equipment resources for the network. The department will make six staff and relevant equipment available for the programme. A number of regional councils including Environment Southland, Hawkes Bay Regional Council and Bay of Plenty Regional Council have already signed agreements with AsureQuality.

Workshop for Setting Outcomes and Measuring Performance of Pest Management Plans

A workshop attended by nine senior Biosecurity and Biodiversity Department staff was recently held to discuss the setting of outcomes and measuring the performance of regional pest management plans. The workshop was facilitated

by Chris Jones and Will Allen of Landcare Research as part of an Envirolink research project supported by the national Biosecurity Managers Group.

The Local Government Act 2002 obliges territorial authorities to identify, monitor and report on progress towards community outcomes. Recent reviews have disclosed weaknesses in regional pest management strategies in the degree to which they link programme activities to outcomes for both pest affected sectors and for the wider community. On a national basis, there are inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of reporting to stakeholders.

The workshop focussed on adopting an outcome based approach using intervention logic models. Attendees were encouraged to design a series of projects using a model based on defining inputs, activities, outputs and then outcomes, in that order. A strong message that flowed throughout the workshop was to be concise and to say 'what' and not 'how'. A booklet of guidelines and resource materials was provided at the end of the workshop. Effective use of these models will allow councils to ensure programmes are achieving their goals cost effectively, report performance with clarity (to both internal and external stakeholders) and to align with the national focus on pest management. The standardisation of all regional council pest management strategies will enable fair comparisons to be made and provide a meaningful understanding of the pest management situation in NZ on an annual basis.

Henry Trap Trial - automatic humane possum trap

The Henry trap is a Co2 gas powered self re-setting possum kill trap that currently will deliver twelve kills. The trap is baited with a lure system that will last for 12 months. The Henry trap has been developed over the last few years and is now available for sale. The Department of Conservation have invested substantially in the development of this device. Staff consider this trap will have huge benefits for possum control. It could be used for both high density possum populations and for maintenance. The trap should be particularly useful for slowing down possum re-invasion into treated areas such as the periphery of the outer Wellington City greenbelt. Diederik Meenken (Biodiverse Ltd) has been commissioned to design a pilot study to better define the traps effectiveness in typical Greater Wellington possum control sites prone to re-invasion from non-controlled areas. Fifty traps have been purchased for the trial.

Rook Control

The first round of the aerial rook nest baiting for the region was completed in ideal conditions on 21 September. There were no rookeries treated in the western part of the region. A second round of baiting is scheduled for 7 October, weather conditions permitting. Eight of the nine known rookeries were treated. There were 58 nests baited which is a slight decrease on the 70

baited last year and 150 nests in 2009. The number of rookeries has also declined from 22 in 2009 providing evidence that the programme is achieving good results.

Four regional councils (Greater Wellington, Horizons, Hawkes Bay and Environment Waikato) have agreed to share-fund an application to the Environmental Protection Authority and the ACVM Group of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to formally register walnuts and macaroni as rook baits that can be coated with the avicide DRC 1339. Whilst walnuts and macaroni have been recognised for twenty years as good alternative baits to bread and maize, they have never been registered.

Rat Monitoring Results

A permanent rat monitoring programme was established in nine selected Key Native Ecosystems(KNE) in 2002. The purpose of this monitoring is to assess the level of these pests when their control is part of, and sometimes secondary to, ongoing possum control. It is a well known fact that rats have a detrimental effect on native flora and fauna by eating the seeds, fruits and seedlings of native trees, by eating birds eggs, chicks, native snails, stick insects, skinks and geckos. The rat density is assessed by using an ink pad in a small cover designed as a tunnel. Imprints of feet are recorded on paper, hence the measurement of density is by interference and recorded as ‘rat tracking rate’.

Recent rat tracking rates for some sites have been exceptional and signify that the baiting regime is keeping both possums and rats at very low levels. Some of the sites are only fragments of a large landscape with certainty of re-invasion if the baiting regime is relaxed. Results as follows:

KNE Reserve	Rat tracking rate	
	March 2011	August 2011
Keith George	6.5%	10%
Parkway	5%	0%
Otari-Wiltons	3.5%	2%
Wrights Hill	0%	0%
Johnsonville	0%	0%
Porirua Scenic	3%	0%
Wi Tako	3%	0%
Tauherenikau	20%	0%
Fensham Reserve	0%	0%

Biocontrol Update

Tradescantia

Despite losing a lot of beetles when the containment facility overheated following the September earthquake, Landcare Research managed to establish a parasite free colony of leaf beetle (*Neolema ogloblini*). The agent was approved for a release at the end of 2010. Mass-rearing has gone smoothly allowing ten releases to be made in the first half of 2011. Biosecurity purchased agents for release in our region in October and additional releases were secured through co-operation with local authorities following the Biocontrol workshop held in Wellington earlier this year. At this stage Lower Hutt City and Wellington City have confirmed they will fund additional releases with a decision from Porirua City pending. Kapiti is interested in contributing funding in the future but currently lack funds. A monitoring operation will track agent establishment and measure the impact on Tradescantia.

In June, the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) approved the release of two more Tradescantia natural enemies, the stem-boring (*Lema basicostata*) and tip-feeding (*Neolema abbreviata*) beetles. Biosecurity has ordered two releases of each species once agents are mass reared by the Landcare Research.

Smilax Rust

A significant pathogen of the invasive pest plant Smilax (*Asparagus asparagoides*) has arrived in New Zealand naturally (via air currents) from Australia where it was released as a biocontrol agent. It is showing very promising signs of having significant effects on the host plant at known sites in the Wairarapa. Some sites have plants being defoliated by up to 90 percent, resulting in significantly reduced vigour and lack of flowering and berries thus reducing competitiveness of this invasive pest plant. The rust is now being actively shifted by staff to known infestations of Smilax in the region that have not been infected by natural dispersal.

4. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne O'Donnell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W" and "O".

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager, Catchment
Management