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Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
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General Managers' report to the Environmental Wellbeing Committee 4 September 2012

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington's activities relating to 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

3.1.1 National Forestry Schemes Review

The National Forestry Schemes Review was completed in 2011 and has spent most of 2012 on the shelf as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was restructured into the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI). The Review considered each of the forestry programmes including Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCEF), Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS), Permanent Forest Sink Initiative and the East Coast Forestry Project. Greater Wellington has funding from the HCEF, and has been a very active participant in the AGS. Early signals from the review panel were that the AGS would be scrapped and the HCEF would be replaced by a nationally contestable erosion fund.

The National Land Managers Group met recently in Wellington and received two presentations from senior staff at MPI on the likely future of these four forestry schemes. While no final ministerial decisions have been reached it was very pleasing to note that the HCEF is a baseline funded programme with funding levels set at \$2M per year. Similarly, and somewhat at odds with the panels recommendations, the AGS is still on the radar. It will be very

important that land managers from regional councils are given the opportunity to have input into programme development. This failed to occur when the schemes were first drafted in 2008, however MPI staff undertook to ensure that full consultation took place.

Greater Wellington's WRECI programme is funded through HCEF and is to be reviewed this year with a view to seeking new funding from 2013/14 onwards.

3.1.2 Supply Fonterra

Supply Fonterra is a recent addition to the company's focus on sustainability and the environment. The company recognises that while on-farm environmental performance has improved over the last ten years there is a continuous need to improve, especially to reduce the risk of regulation and to meet local community's expectations of on-farm environmental performance. To meet Regional Council and community water management expectations Supply Fonterra is aligning with the Land and Water Forum framework, the National Policy Statement for Freshwater and the Sustainable Dairy Water Accord and has produced the following framework.



For Regional Councils the key part of the Supply Fonterra framework is the Environment Programme and the preparation of Environmental Improvement Plans. These plans contain management programmes for effluent, waterways and nitrogen. While the effluent management programme has been in place for two years the other two programmes are being launched in 2012.

The Waterway Management Programme will require stock to be excluded from all waterways by December 2013 and farm races must include bridges or culverts where stock regularly cross a waterway also by December 2013. Compliance will be assessed by an independent contractor during the annual Farm Dairy and Environment Assessment

The minimum standard for the Nitrogen Management programme is to use Overseer to model each supplier's nitrogen loss and efficiency, using actual farm data and in accordance with the industry developed protocol for the use of

Overseer. Of particular interest to Land Management is the development of a joint protocol between Fonterra, fertiliser industry and regional councils for using Overseer. This will remove most of the doubt that exists around managing inputs into Overseer and landowners can expect consistent messages to be given from each of the parties. It will also enable a more collaborative approach to be taken to engaging with landowners around nitrogen management. This initiative from Fonterra will align very well with Greater Wellington's programmes in the Mangatarere catchment and Wairarapa Moana.

3.1.3 Levy on Poplar and Willow Poles

The Poplar and Willow Trust (PWT) has been charged with finding \$175,000 to replace funds from the Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCEF) which supported poplar and willow breeding and field trials, and was withdrawn in June 2012. Despite strenuous efforts from PWT only \$50,000 has been procured to date. This has come from Beef and Lamb NZ.

On the suggestion of the CEO's Group the notion of a levy on end-users has been developed by PWT. The levy would be applied to all 3 metre poles sold by regional councils and commercial nurseries. Each party would recover 40 cents per pole from its clients and forward the levy onto PWT. While this is relatively easy for regional councils to administer there may be more difficulty collecting the levy from commercial growers.

Present 3 metre pole production from regional councils is 120,000 so it is possible to generate \$48,000. The Land Managers Group (LMG) approved a recommendation to support a levy of 40 cents per 3 metre pole and requested the PWT begin dialogue with commercial growers with a view to adopting a levy for sales in 2013/14.

For Greater Wellington this is a relatively easy administrative exercise as our invoicing systems are capable of applying a line cost that would not attract any regional grant. Currently our 3 metre pole price is \$7.00 (excl.GST). The proposed levy would increase the cost of a pole by 5.7%. A potential issue for landowners who regularly buy 300 poles (as an example) is that the annual cost would rise by \$120. It has been recommended to PWT that a carefully constructed communications plan be developed to assist regions explain the reasons for the levy.

3.2 Flood Protection

3.2.1 Boulcott/Hutt Project

The Boulcott/Hutt project is progressing to the shortened programme, i.e. to complete the project by June 2013. The stopbank from Mills Street to the former Boulcott course boundary is substantially complete. Footpaths, top soiling and grassing remains to be done in some sections. The contractor is currently working with river gravel to form the landscaping fill along the stopbank to incorporate the golf course features. The low bund and the golf

course features required for the Interim Course are complete. Construction of the next section of the stopbank is scheduled to commence in October 2012.

Construction works on the concrete retaining walls in the Connolly Street realignment are progressing. The realigned section of road is now chip sealed and the final sealing with asphalt is due by the end of September 2012. The new road edge from the stopbank south was planted to provide some privacy for two houses affected by the raised road. More plants will be provided in planter boxes placed on the stopbank as a temporary measure until the other planting is established. The traffic noise from the chip seal currently experienced by the residents will be greatly reduced when the road is sealed with asphalt. Discussions with Safeway are also underway regarding the turning arrangements at their entrance and also on security fencing.

A cost estimate has been prepared for the reinstatement of golf course features affected by the stopbank. These include 11 Tees, 13 Fairways and 15 Greens. Negotiations with the golf club are currently underway to agree on a procurement process.

3.2.2 City Centre Stopbank Project

The Planning and Design phase of the first phase of the City Centre project extends from 2012/13 to 2015/16. Staff have now commenced the project scoping. Following a request from the Hutt Valley Floodplain Subcommittee, staff will arrange a meeting with the Mills Street residents in late September 2012 to explain the programme for the project and also to discuss any issues related to the construction timing.

3.2.3 Otaki River Works

Erosion control works at the Gas Crossing are now programmed for completion in 2012/13. A part of the total rock requirement for the Gas Crossing site (600 tonnes) was delivered to site in 2011/12 to take advantage of competitive rock supply rates provided for the Leithbridge works. The detailed design for the Gas Crossing works is scheduled to commence in September 2012.

3.2.4 Lower Waitohu Stream

The Lower Waitohu Stream Project includes stream improvements, reshaping an existing stopbank on the south bank of the stream, a deflector stopbank near the Old Coach Road Bridge and the proposed South Waitohu stopbank along the Mangapouri Stream.

Land entry negotiations for stream improvement works are progressing. An application has been lodged with the Maori Land Court to obtain an easement for the deflector stopbank. Land entry negotiations for the South Waitohu stopbank have progressed with the Otaki and Porirua Trusts Board (OPTB). At this stage, OPTB have indicated they may allow construction access but not grant an easement. Whilst Flood Protection prefers ownership of the land under the proposed stopbank, works could proceed if a suitable easement was put in place. The Board also requests a partnership between GW and OPTB for the

future management of the stream. Staff are continuing to work with the OPTB on these issues. Staff are now looking at reviewing the construction timing for the South Waitohu stopbank to provide more time to resolve these issues.

3.2.5 Western Rivers and Streams

Hutt River

Willow and native planting and mulching of overgrown areas alongside the river has taken up a lot of staff time over the last period. Follow up planting is planned for the coming months. Wet gravel extraction is continuing in the vicinity of the Kennedy Good Bridge. Extraction will stop at the end of August, on account of native fish spawning, and recommence on the dry river beaches from mid September.

Otaki River

Willow planting is also underway along the Otaki River. Staff have planted a large area of channel in the upper river below the Cliff's with hybrid willow stock. A new boundary fence has been constructed at Upper Taylors.

A floodgate maintenance schedule has been developed to assist maintenance planning. A labour maintenance contract has been approved for a casual Riverhand to help with environmental work along the river, in coordination with the Otaki Friends.

Waikanae River

Mulching and minor stopbank repairs have been carried out on the Waikanae River. Staff have also been working closely with the PD workers to clear planting sites for the Friends of the Waikanae River. Willow planting is underway along the river.

Western Watercourses

The Mangaone stream mouth has been cut several times during the last month. A mouth cut was also undertaken on the Waimeha on 3 August as the stream was eroding the sand dunes and restoration planting.

3.2.6 Wairarapa River Schemes

Work is progressing on the 2012/13 Wairarapa river scheme work programmes and includes planting both willows and native plants, clearing beach vegetation, fencing and winning boulders for the Lower Valley bank protection work later in the year. The Lake Onoke outlet to the sea has stayed open because of the higher river flows and fewer big southerlies. The wet period through August is not causing too many problems although there has been some river bank slumping.

Staff have completed reports on last year's work to satisfy asset condition recording and resource consents requirements.

A meeting of all the Wairarapa River Scheme Chairs was held on 25 July to share views on how the various schemes are progressing and to talk about a number of issues of mutual interest. This was the first meeting of all the Chairs that has been held and all attendees were supportive of having an annual meeting in which the future direction of flood protection activities in the Wairarapa can be discussed.

A meeting of the stakeholders in the upper Wairarapa valley was held to report on the work the department is doing such as recording and monitoring the impact of flood protection activities along the rivers. It was pleasing to hear a number of compliments from Fish & Game and Forest & Bird representatives on this work.

3.2.7 Recreation Activities

Arbour Day was celebrated with Totara Park School, UHCC and Greater Wellington representatives planting two hundred shrubs along the new Totara Park walkway. A further planting day was held at Whakatiki on 4 August with support from Forest and Bird, Hutt Valley Anglers and the Friends of the Hutt River.

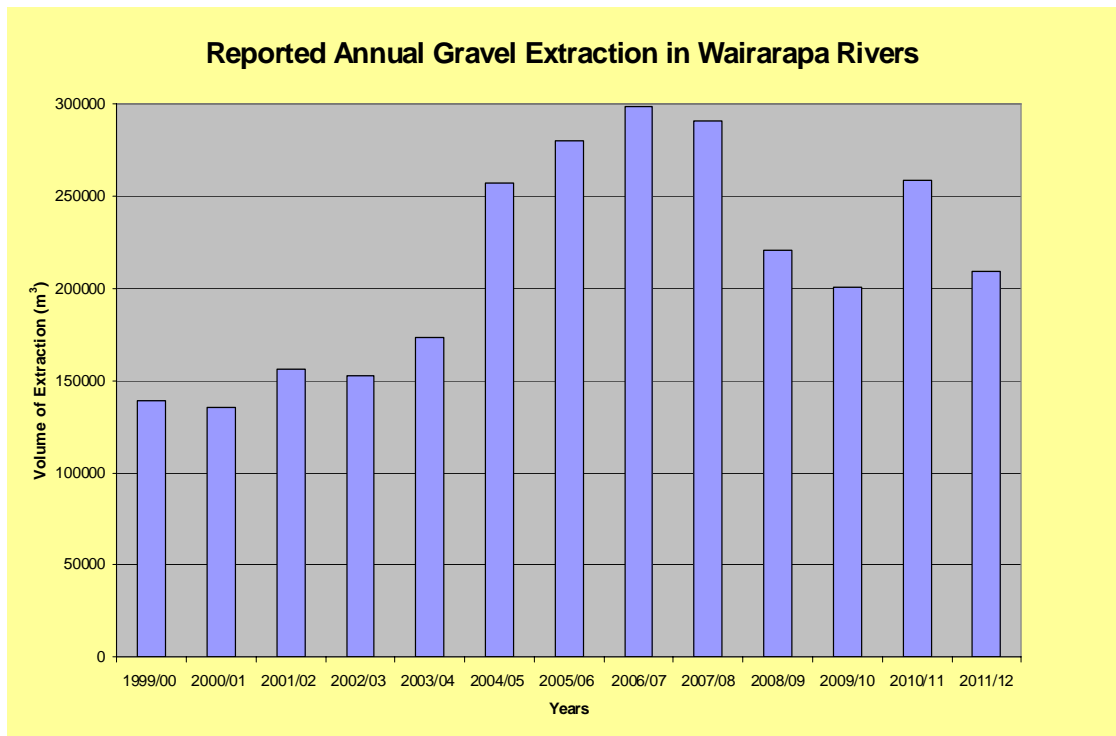
A successful buggy walk took place along the Waikanae River with 122 buggy walkers turning out on what was a fine but chilly winter's day.

3.2.8 Gravel Extraction

Details of gravel extraction volumes are provided in the following table:

River	Extraction Volumes (m ³)	
	YTD 12/13	FY 11/12
Hutt Mouth	3,332	29,057
Hutt	14,180	49,873
Otaki	3,450	50,265
Wairarapa		209,359
Totals	20,962	338,554

The following graph shows the trend of gravel extracted from Wairarapa Rivers during the last 13 years. The forecast extraction was based on 200,000m³/year and the average over the period has been very close to that. A review of the amounts needing to be extracted will be undertaken as part of the Upper Valley FMP development process.



3.2.9 Drainage Schemes

The Manaia drain was cleaned during July using a weed removal method that reduced the environmental impact. This entailed reducing the amount vegetation removed and returning eels to the watercourse. Monitoring of the drain before and after the cleaning was undertaken by Environmental Science staff and will be reported in due course.

A viable insurance option for material damage and machinery breakdown for the Onoke pump scheme has now been implemented following discussion with AON brokers and a number of insurance companies. The four remaining pump schemes will now be evaluated in order to provide recommendations to the pumped drainage scheme committees at the annual meetings in November.

3.2.10 Global Resource Consent Project

Progress with the Global Consents Project for flood protection maintenance and operations is gaining momentum. 10 of 11 of the region's existing global consents need to be renewed in the next 5 years. The western consents are being completed first with the eastern consents following in 2014/15.

Since the last report, Tonkin and Taylor Ltd have prepared their scoping report and confirmed a decision on the nature and scale of the applications to be lodged. Work has also started on preparing the various technical reports that are required to support the applications. Initially these will cover recreation, ecology and river morphology. Additional information may be required, however we are proposing to wait until consultation with affected parties to initiate any further work.

MWH have completed their scoping report on a proposed region-wide monitoring programme that will support the consent application, and possibly be required to be continued once consents are granted. This includes specific in stream habitat monitoring of the current extraction operation in the Hutt River between September 2012 and March 2013.

The existing Environmental Code of Practice is in its initial stages and is being updated by staff, and is also likely to be required as part of the consenting process.

Renewal of the Waingawa River global consent for a short term (2 years) to bring it into line with the expiry of the remaining eastern consents is also underway. An internal draft of the application has been prepared and is currently being reviewed.

At the same time staff will be progressing work on the Natural Resources Plan with Environmental Policy to look at permitting more of the routine maintenance activities. The revisions of the RMA currently under way may also provide an opportunity to list flood protection assets as regionally significant infrastructure, which will assist with the inclusion of maintenance activities in the NRP.

3.2.11 Asset Management and Planning

The Flood Protection Asset Revaluation Project has been completed in accordance with accepted standards. The asset valuations were carried out by a team of qualified and experienced flood protection engineers and external consultants. The asset valuation was independently reviewed by John Vessey, Principal Engineering Economist, Opus International Consultants. He concluded that the 2012 valuation of Greater Wellington's flood protection assets is deemed acceptable and appropriate for financial reporting purposes.

Flood Protection staff are involved with the GW Asset Management Development Group activities. A gap analysis of the asset management policies, plans and protocols for each of the asset owning departments has commenced. The review is being undertaken by an external consultant who will provide feedback on the state of maturity of each department from an asset management perspective. Flood Protection has developed an asset management improvement plan and this review will provide timely guidance on priorities and direction. The current focus is on reviewing our business process. A number of staff workshops have been held to develop a structured approach for the integration of SAP Plant Maintenance into our work processes. One area already in progress is the condition rating programme, where training and consistent recording of assets is being developed which will enable detailed reporting across the range of assets.

3.2.12 Floodplain Management Plans

Waiwhetu Stream

Design work on the four combinations of options selected for detailed assessment is continuing.

The environmental enhancement plan development is under way and will run in tandem with further floodplain management plan development. Review of weed management methods, particularly focused on cape pondweed and willow weed has been brought within the scope of this plan.

Pinehaven Stream

A range of options have been presented to the community, including at a workshop, on 18 July 2012. The project steering group then selected a preferred combination. The group will now draft up the preferred combination of options into a detailed report, and seek confirmation from the community that it meets their desires before bringing it back to the Council for approval.

Waikanae River

The FMP review, which was consulted on with the wider public in 2011, is being finalised internally and has been sent to KCDC for final comments and approval. It will then be presented to the Environmental Wellbeing Committee in October before being officially published.

Otaki River

The FMP review has been scoped. The scoping report is being finalised and the review will then begin with information gathering and discussions with FMP stakeholders. The draft report for internal and external consultation is expected by the end of November 2012.

Hutt River

The scoping of the FMP review commenced at the end of July. Due to resourcing issues, and other more pressing priorities and expectations in the programme, it is likely that the continuation of the review will need to be deferred. Confirmation of the Environmental Wellbeing Committee will be sought if a deferral is recommended.

Waiohine River

Combinations of options have been developed which were presented and discussed at the Waiohine FMP Committee. A Multi Criteria Analysis process developed and explained during the previous Committee meetings, on 29 June 2012 was used to help the Committee identify its preferred combination of options.

Preferred options (two) were identified which are going through a sensitivity process before being finalised to be presented at a wider community consultation process beginning in September 2012.

Following the wider community consultation process the preferred option, after sign-off by all concerned parties (end of Phase 2), will be taken forward into Phase 3 (detailed assessment) by the end of 2012.

Waingawa River

The Scoping Report to take the current Scheme reviews into a full FMP process has been completed following internal and external consultation. The findings of the report are to be reported back to the Scheme Committee on 20 September 2012 which will include the next stage of implementation (investigations) and the anticipated time frame.

Waipoua and Upper Ruamahanga River

The scoping of both FMPs is underway. The draft Scoping Report, for consultation with all internal and external parties, is expected at the end of August 2012.

3.2.13 Other Investigations and Support

Waikanae River Environmental Strategy

After many years 'in the making', the Waikanae River Environment Strategy (review) is in final draft form and is currently progressing through the council sign-off process which is taking longer than anticipated. The publication of the Strategy is now expected to be at the end of September 2012.

Tawaha Catchment Diversion (Whakawirwiri Stream)

The hydraulic design and related construction drawings has been peer reviewed by an independent consultant. Indicative costing of the project has also been completed and the construction methodology has been incorporated into the resource consent application.

A third round of landowner consultation on the 'solution', access and possible compensation was completed in July 2012.

The Department of Conservation (DoC) has been consulted and confirmed that they have no objections to the proposed works.

Resource Consent Application will be lodged in week commencing 27 August 2012. Actual construction works are scheduled to commence in January 2013 providing the Application is not appealed.

Climate Change Adaptation Scoping Study

The draft final report for this study has been received by GWRC, and is currently being reviewed. This report includes:

- A review of the quality and accessibility of our hydraulic and hydrology models.
- Regional flood model for the 1-in-100 year storm and a model for predicted maximum rainfall
- A priority list to assist with programming investigation works to target those areas at greatest risk, which would suffer the greatest consequence of flooding.

The review by GWRC will be completed by 14 September 2012. Opus will then incorporate any changes, where appropriate, with the final report to be submitted on 21 September 2012.

Floodplain Management Guidelines

Boffa Miskell has been appointed to facilitate the review, development, completion and adaptation by the Council of the Flood Protection – Floodplain Management Planning Guidelines. The completion date for the final draft Guidelines is anticipated to be January 2013.

Regional Flood Warning and Flood Forecasting

A Project Plan has been developed to review our Flood Warning Procedures across the region.

The review will result in recommendation for a consistent regional approach and the relationship / interactions / line of communications with Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO). Two field trips have been held with WREMO staff, and a third visit to the Wairarapa is organised for early September.

It is anticipated the review will be completed, through internal resourcing, by March 2013 with an approximate budget of \$10,000.

3.3 Biodiversity

3.3.1 General

An investigation is underway into the destruction of native trees at Rangitatau Reserve on Wellington's south coast undertaken as part of a Greater Wellington/Wellington City Council pest plant control programme. The actions caused considerable anger amongst the local community.

The GW Biodiversity Strategy has been formatted in GW publication style and placed on the GW external website and on *Gwennie*.

3.3.2 Department planning and reporting

A report tracking the organisation's progress implementing the Biodiversity Strategy has been prepared for ELT. The approved report will be presented to the Committee at the October meeting.

3.3.3 Policy advice and research

- Biodiversity advice was provided to the Environmental Regulation Department towards processing of consents, including:
 - Wainuiomata river works (private 35 year consent)
 - Mackays to Peka Peka Expressway (EPA / NZTA)
 - A subdivision proposal for the Long Gully rural area (Wellington City Council)
- Technical Policy advice was provided as part of GW submissions on:

- The Pauatahanui - Judgeford Structure Plan (Porirua City Council)
 - The Kapiti Coast District Council district plan
 - Hutt City Council draft stormwater plan. As a result of this submission, the department was subsequently contacted for technical and policy advice on fish passage issues
 - The Minister for the Environment Technical Advisory Group's report on RMA amendments.
- Staff were part of a GW team involved in the Environment Court mediation on the RPS. Agreement has now been reached with the appellants over the Indigenous Ecosystems sections of the RPS.
 - Staff contributed to the public workshops on the Regional Plan development – including issues surrounding biodiversity; water quality, quantity and allocation; sites of significance to tangata whenua; coastal structures; coastal activities.
 - Comprehensive advice is being prepared to assist the drafting of the Regional Plan components relating to biodiversity offsetting.
 - New information on biodiversity contained within the Coastal Marine Area is now available on our GIS system. This is the result of work involving NIWA and the Environmental Monitoring and Investigations, Environmental Policy, and Biodiversity departments.

3.3.4 High value biodiversity areas

- A total of 140 areas are actively managed for their biodiversity value¹. Of these, 106 receive pest animal control on an ongoing basis and 90 are scheduled for pest plant control in the 2012/13 year.
- Over the last six weeks:
 - staff have worked on planning management activities for 76 sites
 - 50 sites received pest animal control, and
 - 47 have received pest plant control.
- The department is planning to complete 27 Biodiversity Area Plans (BAPS) in this financial year. So far 10 are in the process of being prepared.
- After successful translocation of North Island robin from Kapiti Island, extra ground-based bait stations have been deployed in the Wainuiomata Mainland Island. This is to protect the birds from predators as planned aerial 1080 operation continues to be delayed due to the wet weather.
- Back-dune Research Trials: three sites in the Wellington region (Waitohu dunes in Kapiti, Whitireia Park in Porirua and Riversdale in Wairarapa) are part of the national effort to develop best practise guidelines for dune restoration by the Dune Restoration Trust and the Ministry for the Environment. The sites involved in the trials have now all been planted and information recorded. Next year the sites will be

¹ Active management can involve various activities, including advice to landowners, exclusion of stock, as well as pest and weed control.

revisited to determine survival, growth rates of various dune plant species. (Figure 1.)

- Following the construction of a track through a wetland reserve on the Riversdale-Orui Coast, staff have met with the Riversdale Residents Association and Masterton District Council to reach an agreement on appropriate mitigation of the effects.

Figure 1. Riversdale, planting of dune vegetation as part of the effort to develop best practise guidelines for dune restoration



3.3.5 Site-specific biodiversity advice

Site specific advice has been provided to eight external and four internal stakeholders on forest, riparian and dune ecosystem types.

External stakeholders were landowners, iwi, private trusts, and individuals.

3.3.6 Priority areas for community engagement

The Community Projects team has undertaken Social Marketing training and will adapt lessons into their Priority Areas programmes

Wairarapa Moana

Staff gave a presentation to the Wairarapa Moana Management Team about the role of the Community Projects team

The first meeting of GW Wairarapa Moana Information Exchange Group was held. This group involves representatives from various departments and groups involved in the project (Biodiversity, Biosecurity, Environmental Monitoring and Investigations, Environmental Policy, Environmental Regulation, Flood Protection, Land Management, Wairarapa Moana Wetland

Project, Wairarapa Water Use project). The purpose of the Information Exchange Group is to ensure that each part of the organisation has a good understanding of the roles and work programmes of other parts to maximise opportunities for cooperation and to minimise duplication of effort.

Staff developed draft lists and maps of “flagship” species for the purpose of community engagement.

Staff are working to identify the key habitat sites identified with restoration potential for community groups and on key biodiversity messages regarding issues and threats to biodiversity around Wairarapa Moana.

One staff member attended a 3 day field trip with DoC staff and Wairarapa community representatives to look at the work of two community volunteer restoration groups at Whaingaroa Harbour and Tongariro.

The 3-year project plan and timelines for the department’s work at Wairarapa Moana is being developed.

Porirua Harbour

A piece of work to identify the potential to improve ecological health of the estuary through community restoration has gone out to tender. The outputs will include an estuarine re-vegetation plan to identify management units that are appropriate for community management.

The second meeting of the GW Porirua Harbour Information Exchange Group was held with representatives from all departments involved in the project (Biodiversity, Biosecurity, Environmental Monitoring and Investigations, Environmental Policy, Environmental Regulations, Flood Protection, and Parks). The Group’s objectives are similar to those of the Wairarapa Moana Information Exchange Group.

3.3.7 Region-wide ecological restoration support

Staff were involved with planting trees at Raumati South School.

Staff helped Pirinoa and Kahutara schools to make penguin nest boxes.

The department prepared Memorandums of Understanding with Wellington City Council regarding the support of three Care groups. These are now with WCC to be signed.

3.3.8 Key biodiversity messages

The GW website has now web pages dedicated to biodiversity activities. While the main pages have been populated, more work is planned to provide information to external stakeholders.

3.4 Biosecurity

3.4.1 NZ Biosecurity Institute (NZBI)

During the year the National Pest Control Association (NPCA) joined forces with the NZBI to present the National Education and Training Seminar. The combined conference was a success in delivering each organisation's needs through one conference. This saves resources in staff attending two conferences and presenters duplicating efforts and offers a more comprehensive choice for attendees.

This year's seminar theme was **“Pests in our Dynamic Landscapes: The pressure is on!”**

Of interest was the topic on:

Achieving Synergy

Currently, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) manages pests that are considered a national priority under the Biosecurity Act 1993; the Department of Conservation manages pests on conservation estates, and the 16 Regional Authorities are responsible for controlling pests within their geographical boundaries. In addition to these agencies, there are numerous other organisations involved in pest research and management, for example; Forest & Bird, NZ Landcare Trusts, District Councils, Animal Health Board, WWF, Landcare Research, HortResearch, AgResearch, Scion, NZ Biosecurity Institute, National Pest Control Agencies, and Tertiary institutions etc. Even though there are some excellent synergies between these organisations and many collaborate quite closely, we still have hundreds of invasive species impacting on our biodiversity and livelihoods. The questions arise: what is working, what is not, and how do we get even better results?

In the 2008 report to Regional Councils on “The Future of Pest Management in NZ: a Think Piece”, Enfocus Ltd identified and made recommendations to remove highly fragmented institutional arrangements, be more coordinated with standardised guidelines, provide clarity about roles, responsibilities and boundaries, introduce tenure neutrality, establish a statutory purpose, and develop a coherent and efficient Crown funding system. It is now 2012 and many of these issues have not been resolved.

It should be noted that the newly formed Lower North Island Partnership (Nature Central) between GW, DoC, Horizons and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils is seeking to address some of the issues raised above, e.g. improved collaboration between the agencies to remove duplication of services, appointment of lead agencies for the entire lower North Island and linked communication initiatives.

Pest Animals:

3.4.3 Rabbits

RHD (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease) blood sampling results have become available for the Western zone, with 27% of the population sampled having immunity to the virus. The last sample was taken in 2010 with 33% immunity. This level of immunity is pleasing as it is still relatively low compared to many of the rabbit prone parts of New Zealand. The virus has a very high probability to retain populations at a low level, allowing resources to be allocated to other pest control activity.

3.4.4 Key Native Ecosystems programme

The KNE work programme for 2012/13 has now been planned, with work underway by our internal team. A number of external contracts have been signed up for a variety of work, with much of it already underway by the contractors. It has been a learning curve for Biosecurity taking on the goat/pig and deer control contracts for the GW Regional Park areas, but these are going as planned.

New control programmes are proposed for predators in some Wairarapa river areas. Site meetings have been completed with the Biodiversity team and other departments.

3.4.5 Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Aerial Operation

Staff are still waiting to apply 1080 bait for this operation. The Mainland Island bait stations had to be baited on foot due to this delay, as pest control was a condition of the North Island Robin release. Robins require low rat numbers for breeding during the nesting season, which is due to start at the beginning of September. Staff from various departments pulled together and made a huge effort to get the bulk of this work completed in two days.

3.4.6 Proposed Amendments to the Animal Welfare Act

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has proposed a number of amendments to the Animal Welfare Act 1999. This Act currently excludes wild animals and matters relating to pest control activities. One of the proposed amendments is to bring some aspects of wild animal welfare into the Act, which may impinge on our vertebrate pest control activities. GW and other Regional Councils are proposing to submit in opposition to the change.

MPI has been receptive of the proposal, and have indicated that it was not the intent of the change to impact on professional pest control activities.

BioWorks:

3.4.8 Rimutaka Range Aerial Project

This operation has been delayed for many weeks due to adverse weather conditions. However, it is pleasing to report that the entire 28,000ha operation

was completed on the 30 & 31 August. Four helicopters were used to apply the 1080 bait from a number of loading zones. Staff are now busy checking public walking tracks. This will continue for some days. A plan is in place for the Hutt River should a significant rainfall event occur and possum carcasses make their way in to the river channel.

Associated ground control operations continue, but access is very difficult and slow due to wet weather.

3.4.9 Pukeatua Aerial Project

Control in this project has come to a standstill due to unsuitable weather patterns.

Staff have received all approvals and completed notifications for this project.

Prefeeding with non-toxic bait will occur once favourable weather conditions arise.

3.4.10 2012/13 programme

Staff have commenced control in the Otaki Buffer area. Current work includes the concurrent survey and control of the HR 1 strata.

3.4.11 Staff accommodation

BioWorks has moved into theASURE-Quality building in Masterton. Conditions are adequate, but the unit is hampered by having storage at two other sites within Masterton.

Pest Plants:

3.4.12 Total Control Plants - Delimiting Surveys

Following a public enquiry, staff have discovered mature Blue passion flower plants in an area that was surveyed 7 years ago and deemed to be clear of the plant. A delimiting survey of adjacent properties revealed significant infestations of mature and juvenile plants. The survey is continuing as new sites are discovered. This current investigation supports research initiated by Biosecurity to establish data confidence limits, i.e. how can we be confident that undiscovered sites are not present and over what period of time can we expect reinvasion if eradication is not achieved.

This event will force a rethink on current survey timeframes. Electronic logging of infestations is becoming a critically important tool to ensure accurate information is available for future decision making, particularly for plant species that are considered to be eradicated.

3.4.13 Containment Boneseed

The annual inspection programmes are well advanced this year. The season is mild and plants are early flowering species. Ground inspections are completed on the great majority of residential and rural sites. Aerial and abseil contract

activity on steep terrain awaits a change of weather to safely undertake cutting or spray operations.

3.4.14 Containment Aquatics

Staff have contributed to the Wairarapa Moana Aquatics Weed Group's initial meeting. The aim is to gather more detailed knowledge of individual landowner site infestations and impact. A brochure on Aquatic Pest plants is almost completed for printing and distribution to stakeholders. Staff have contributed to the Fresh Start for Fresh Water project Technical Advisory Group. Advice has been provided on control techniques and avoiding negative impacts through rapid vegetation mortality.

3.4.15 Biodiversity

The KNE work programme for 2012/13 has been agreed between the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Departments. Work is underway setting up contracts with the Territorial Authorities under our MOU agreements. A number of external contracts have been signed up for a variety of work, for commencement in September. Managing the pest plant work within the Regional Parks is a new challenge for Biosecurity staff this year.

3.4.16 Biocontrol

Darwin's barberry

Application to release two agent species to control this pest plant has been lodged with the EPA. Biosecurity staff will give a presentation at the hearing in early September.

Darwin's barberry (*Berberis darwinii*) is a threat throughout New Zealand and features in the Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) of 10 regions (including Greater Wellington). It invades pasture, disturbed forest, shrubland, tussock-land, along roadsides and other scarcely vegetated sites. The seeds are spread long distances by birds that eat the berries. It can grow more rapidly than native species when suitable conditions arise, dominating sites where it establishes. It can suppress existing vegetation and prevent the establishment of desirable plants. Darwin's barberry can persist under canopy in forest and shrub land.

The key to the success of Darwin's barberry management is to reduce the risk that Darwin's barberry will reinvade cleared sites or expand its distribution. To this end, we wish to limit the ability of the weed to disperse by introducing biological control agents that reduce flowering, seed production and dispersal. Its distribution in the region is still limited, and it is important to reduce the ability of this weed to extend its range beyond current infested sites. The application proposes the introduction of two weevils; *Anthonomus kuscheli* which destroys flower buds, reducing flowering and fruiting, and *Berberidicola exaratus* which feeds on seeds within the remaining fruits. Agents are self-dispersing and can locate host plants that are unknown to weed

managers. This is the first biological control programme ever mounted against this weed.

The expected positive effects of biological control of Darwin's barberry using these two weevils include:

- Reduced invasion of un-infested land;
- Reduced damage to native ecosystems in the long-term;
- Reduced control costs to farm businesses, restoration projects and communities in the long-term; and improved allocation of resources to maintain biodiversity values in the long-term.

Darwin's barberry is still has limited distribution in Greater Wellington, and this proposal is targeting the weed before it generates significant costs here.



Seed Beetle larvae and adult



Flower weevil and non productive flowers above

Tradescantia leaf beetle (Neolema ogloblini)

The Tradescantia leaf beetle was a new release last year with six releases made in the region (three in the Western zone and three in the Wairarapa). This was a long-awaited release as Landcare Research battled for two years to clear the population of a gregarine gut parasite before they were able to be released from containment.

After discussions with TAs, a successful outcome was achieved in obtaining support from the WCC and HCC to purchase a release of Tradescantia leaf beetle for their areas. Both councils will allocate funds for the conventional control of Tradescantia in their bush reserves. It is pleasing to gain their support for biocontrol.

Tradescantia stem beetle (Lema basicostata)

Two releases of this agent were made in the year. No visual evidence noted at sites yet.

Aquatic pest plant agents

A Steering Group was formed, as part of the National Biocontrol Collective, to meet on the biological control of aquatic weeds. This was initiated by Landcare Research to highlight the impact of aquatic weeds throughout the country, and raise awareness of the potential of biocontrol as a management tool. Attendees included representatives from not only regional councils but LINZ, NIWA, MAF and several major power companies. The Steering Group decided not to operate away from the core Biocontrol Collective, but include Aquatics as a target area in annual discussions and raise the profile. A core suite of current invasive aquatic species has had an initial scoping assessment completed. There are very promising prospects for some of our most invasive species. LCR tabled a proposal to investigate and report on potential biocontrol options for a selection of species of highest ranking as potential winners for biocontrol focus. Each assessment costs approximately \$25K.

Council has contributed significant funds to undertaking assessment on one high priority species of aquatic pest plant (Hornwort, Egeria or Lagarosiphon). This will progress once other stakeholder's contributions are known.

3.5 Wairarapa Moana

General

Very successful community plantings have occurred at the Ruamahanga Cutoff, Lake Onoke Spit, Lake Ferry, Wairio and Lake Domain. The community including school children have been participants at the plantings.

Bird monitoring on the eastern lakeshore of Lake Wairarapa has not been possible this winter due to the high lake levels.

The Environmental Science team continues to collect samples and measure flows into Lake Wairarapa as part of their investigations to develop a water balance.

The Argonaut monitoring device sited upstream of the barrage gates is now operating and can be telemetered. Flows of the order of 50 m³/second both in and out of the lake have been recorded. Over a typical tide cycle backflow into the lake occurs 15% of the time. Further gaugings are required to develop a rating curve.

An amended Ramsar application will be formally forwarded to DoC in September.

Cleanup Fund

The Technical Advisory Group continues to work through the following issues prior to commencing fieldwork. An approach to farm assessments using a land environment plan approach is being trialled. Restoration plans for the priority edge wetlands are being developed. Monitoring options for the water and

cultural health within wetlands and the extensive drainage network are being costed.

Payment for last year's activities has been received and 50% of this year's contribution from the Ministry for the Environment is expected in September.

4. Development

4.1 Plantation Forestry – cutting rights

Council has approved a staged process that could lead to selling the plantation forestry cutting rights for 60 years. An expression of interest document is being distributed in the first week of September. Potential bidders for the cutting rights are being asked to provide a non-binding indicative price as to the value of the cutting rights. Information from this process will be available to Councillors in October.

4.2 Forestry harvest residue

Over the years, a number of initiatives have taken place to see if there is a market for the forest harvest residues left at each skid site. These consist of tree branches, off cuts and logs that do not meet the standard of the lowest market grade. Apart from selling a small amount for firewood, nothing has eventuated.

Recently a contract was signed for selling the residues at one skid site as a trial. The advantages to GW are a small amount of revenue and the ability to plant additional trees once the residue is removed.

4.3 Health and safety

In the last five months, there have been six health and safety incidents reported by our logging contractor relating to members of the public in the metro forests. Three of these relate to cyclists or light vehicles nearly colliding with authorised forestry vehicles. In one of the instances, mountain bikers were travelling at speed downhill on the wrong side of the main access road. Just as disturbing are the two instances where bikers and vehicles entered the tree felling zone, to do so they had to proceed past barriers and signage. Fortunately on both occasions, the watchman was able to stop them before they endangered themselves.

A mountain biker died shortly after an accident in the Akatarawa forest in July. The biker came from a secondary track and hit the side of the utility vehicle driven by a logging contractor whose vehicle was travelling on the main road. The bush at the intersection has been trimmed and signage will be installed on the secondary track.

While our forestry harvesting contractor complies with best practice, it is difficult to control members of the public who refuse to act responsibly, particularly given the size of GW's forests. Even so, how signs are used to designate access to areas being harvested is being reviewed.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

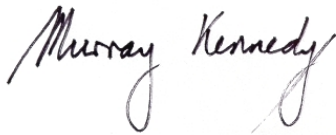
1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:



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General Manager, Catchment
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Report prepared by:



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Development