



caring about you & your environment

Report 01.172

19 March 2001

File: Y/21/1

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Colin Wright, Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information of interest since the previous meeting held on 16 February 2001.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Annual Plan

For the benefit of appointed members I note that the Council is currently finalising its Proposed Annual Plan and Long Term Financial Strategy Update. The overall change in rating at this stage is a 4.2% increase, but the effect will vary from district to district depending particularly upon valuation changes and transport rating.

The key uncertainty at this stage is the situation with Bovine Tb vector control as discussed at length by this committee at the last meeting. There should be a reduction in Council funding requirements for next financial year and subsequent years provided the current proposals for funding the new National Strategy for Bovine Tb come to pass. We expect to have a firm indication of the situation by the time Council finalises the Annual Plan in early-mid June. Whether there will be opportunity for the Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee to further consider the situation before Council decision may be dependent upon the timing for the notification of the Proposed National Strategy.

2.2 Tauherenikau Delta

The Council has accepted this Committee's recommendation that the possible land purchase for river works at the Tauherenikau delta be approved in principle. However, there needs to be further consultation with the Lower Wairarapa Valley Scheme Advisory Committee before any figures will be included within the Annual Plan.

2.3 Staffing Changes

Sam Barrow has joined the staff recently as Hazards and Emergency Management Officer replacing Matthew Patterson. Sam has a M.Sc in Physical Geography and a diploma in Engineering Geology. Before commencing with us he had undertaken some consultancy work in relation to the fossil forest at Titahi Bay.

Fiona Bancroft and David Hurst recently started with the Biosecurity Department, based at the Upper Hutt office.

Fiona is working in the Monitoring and Investigations Section, principally on monitoring Bovine vector control and KNE operations. She will also be undertaking ecosystem health monitoring. Fiona previously worked under contract to DoC in the central North Island and, more recently, on the Chatham Islands and Stewart Island.

David Hurst will be part of the team working on the Wellington City pest plant control programme. David has also been working under contract to DoC, undertaking weed assessment and control programmes on Kapiti Island and in the Horowhenua area.

3. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

3.1 October Flood Damage Repairs

The \$1.1m October 2000 flood damage repair programme is on target for completion during the current financial year. Repair work completed over the reporting period is as follows:

- Masterton Oxidation Pond berm clearance and beach ripping
- River Road bank protection
- Masterton Cemetery rock protection

Outstanding works include the repair of the Waipoua River rock weirs, and bank protection work at the Oliver, Forbes, and Te Whiti sites.

3.2 Waiohine River & Floodplain Investigation

The development of the proposed new rating classification approach is complete, along with the related public consultation process. A report recommending the start of the Special Order notification process under the Rating Powers Act is presented to this Committee meeting.

3.3 Waipoua River & Floodplain Investigation

A Waipoua River Management Scheme ratepayer meeting was held in early March. The proposed new rating classification and approach for ongoing river management

were both adopted by the meeting. Also it was agreed that Scheme rates should be doubled to fund Scheme flood damage, repay the Scheme deficit, and build up satisfactory flood damage reserves. A report recommending the start of the Special Order notification process under the Rating Powers Act is presented to this Committee meeting.

3.4 Lower Tauherenikau River Works

Good progress is being made with construction of the overflow sill bank through the Gillett property adjacent to the Tauherenikau River.

3.5 Ward Meetings - Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme

A meeting of the Tauherenikau and Western Lake Wards of the Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme was held, during which the past Scheme works, current financial position, and proposed works programmes were discussed. Ward representatives were re-elected for the next four year term.

3.6 Willow Sawfly – Potential Impact

The presence of sawfly in the Wairarapa continues to be monitored closely, particularly in the nursery and along major rivers. Populations in the nursery are very light and causing insignificant damage. The same assessment can be drawn for the major river systems. The cooler weather will soon bring a halt to the presence of larvae.

In light of the potential for damage to existing soil conservation and river management plantings, an assessment of the potential asset value of willows has been estimated. In the Wairarapa an asset value of \$6,680,000 has been estimated. It is made up of the following;

- Shelter \$ 150,000
- Nurseries \$ 150,000
- Soil Conservation \$3,420,000
- River Management \$2,960,000

A further \$2.5m willow asset value is located in the western part of the Region.

3.7 Sustainable Farming Fund Applications

The next round of applications to the Sustainable Farming Fund closed on 15 March 2001. The soil conservation section is involved in two new applications.

The first is to expand on the current willow and poplar feeding trial being undertaken at Massey University's Riverside Farm. This is the second year of the trial and staff are keen to expand the sphere of operation into the hill country environment to utilise the poplars and willows established for soil conservation purposes, and to establish new fodder banks for integration into drought management strategies.

The second application involves the use of soil mapping and soil monitoring to assist landowners to understand the uniqueness of the variety soil types that exist

on their properties. The programme aims at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each soil type, and matching those characteristics with the stock management systems. The application is a joint one involving Council and MAF Policy.

3.8 Silviculture

Four registrations of interests have been received for forestry silviculture work as a result of two newspaper advertisements. Tenders will be invited from all four although one has indicated that he would not be available until August or September. Approximately 500 hectares of pruning have been completed this year.

3.9 Tauanui Access

A meeting has been held with the Maori Trustee to progress the issue of logging access for the Tauanui Reserve through the Pirinoa Blocks.

As a result of this meeting, our solicitors are checking the registerability of the easement as proposed, then the Maori Trustee will pursue the matter with the Pirinoa Blocks owners.

3.10 Roding Hiwinui

The roding access within the Hiwinui Reserve has now been completed. The formation, water tabling, culverting, and metalling of approximately three kilometres of new roding provides the access needed for further harvesting in Hiwinui.

3.11 Harvesting

Five thousand tonnes of the targeted 20,000 tonnes had been completed by the end of February. A much larger capacity hauler is having repairs carried out enroute to Hiwinui. The arrival of this machine has been delayed by the operator having broken his leg.

3.12 Technical Services Section Projects

The Technical Services Section staff have worked on the following projects:

- Completion of stage one of the flood photo project, which has been added to arcview region templates for Wairarapa Division staff, and is getting rave reviews.
- Resurvey of 6 monthly gravel sites, Gladstone, Kokotau and Waihenga.
- Completion of the Waingawa 5 year resurvey and GPS survey.
- Survey of Riversdale Beach lagoon and backwater, and results sent to engineering consultant.
- Riversdale Beach arcview coverage developed to assist in various Riversdale investigations.
- Riversdale Beach 6 monthly resurvey.
- Stopbank set out for construction of new banks on Tauanui River.

- Investigation surveys for stopbank works on the Waiohine and Tauherenikau Rivers.
- Rating work on the Lower Valley, Upper Ruamahanga, and Awhea schemes.
- Start on Wairarapa rivers swimming pamphlet and Harrison Street sign.
- Completion of 42 piezometric maps for Planning & Resources Dept.
- Large number of sustainability and farm plans completed.
- Aerial photo run of Upper Ruamahanga and Waipoua Rivers completed.

4. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

4.1 Environmental Incidents

Date	Incident	Details
7/2/01	Landowner rang in concerned about the state of the Taueru River and the effect an upstream irrigation system was having on river flows.	Staff investigated the complainant's property and a gauging was completed. As a result a full irrigation ban was placed on the consent holder concerned.
7/2/01	Landowner concerned about upstream irrigation take on Otakura Stream affecting stock water supply.	Restrictions placed on water use in Otakura catchment.
7/2/01	Residents concerned about drain re-alignment work carried out on neighbouring property at Riversdale.	Agreement on 16 March with all potentially affected parties and Masterton District Council for additional drainage works to be undertaken.
9/2/01	Landowner irrigating after a full irrigation ban was enforced.	Infringement notice issued.
12/2/01	Landowner concerned about a dam feature causing flooding problems on their property.	Under investigation.
14/2/01	Offensive odour from piggery.	Not confirmed. Logged only.
15/2/01	Shop owner in Featherston reported pungent odour from weed spray.	Under investigation.
15/2/01	Spraying of roadside drain affecting farmer's property, south Wairarapa.	Under investigation.
16/2/01	Animal carcass dumped in Waingawa River upstream of swimming area.	Removed by staff and disposed of.
16/2/01	Abandoned car in Ruamahanga River, Masterton.	Removed by other party.
21/2/01	Resident in Masterton reported that a creek running through their property was running milky white.	Upstream resident had been washing paint close to stream edge. Resident warned and advised to take more appropriate measures in the future.
21/2/01	Report of a discharge into the Waipoua River downstream of the Paierau Road bridge.	Discharge of tail race in Opaki water race causing noticeable effect on Waipoua River. Issue being followed up with the district council.

24/2/01	Neighbouring landowner observed aerial spraying scrub.	Slope angles measured, found not to trigger the need for a resource consent in the Soil Plan. Advice on scrub clearance given to landowner.
24/2/01	Complaint of odour coming from local printing company.	Staff visited the property and considered the odour was not offensive or objectionable at the time of investigation. Printing company visited and complaint lodged with company foreman.
27/2/01	Contractor notified WRC about discharge of silt laden water into Kuripuni Stream due to burst water main.	Stream had cleared quickly once repair work was completed. No public complaints logged.
27/2/01	A member of the public was concerned about waste oil spilling out on land near the Waipoua River, Masterton.	Masterton District Council cleaned up the site the same day. No traces of waste oil left remaining at the site.
5/3/01	Rubbish being deposited beside creek at a rural Masterton property, causing the risk of littering the creek during flooding.	Landowner was asked to remove rubbish.
6/3/01	During random monitoring of water takes in Otakura catchment, some land was noticed to be flooding.	Landowner warned verbally and in writing to cease flood irrigation practice.

4.2 River Levels

Generally river levels in the Wairarapa have been low for February, as can be expected for this time of year, however they are significantly below average.

Monthly figures for February 2001:

	Monthly Flow (cumecs)	Average flow for month	Percent %
Waiohine	6.4	17.1	37.4
Waihenga	14.9	41.7	35.7

4.3 Current Low Flows

Flows in the western catchments as mentioned above were below average, around 37% for the Waiohine and 35% for the Ruamahanga at Waihenga. The Council does not at present have continuous stage/flow recording sites measuring low flows in the eastern Wairarapa. However NIWA does, and indications are the flow trends are similar to the above with flows below average.

4.4 Rainfall

Rainfall figures indicate that it has been drier than normal in the western hill country and for the eastern catchments, although not to the same extent (a reversal of the trend reported on in last month's report). For the Angle Knob raingauge around 33% of normal rainfall has fallen and for Tanawa Hut in the Whareama catchment rainfall has been around 66%.

4.5 Hornwort Control

The Hearings Commissioners have approved a resource consent with a number of conditions for the planned trial for chemical control of the aquatic plant Hornwort.

The appeal period expires on 27 March and the trial is scheduled to begin on 28 March.

4.6 Greytown Sewage Discharge

The appeal by Ngati Kahungunu against the Greytown Sewage Discharge consent has now been withdrawn in writing. We have advised the Environment Court that we will not be seeking any costs.

5. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

5.1 Bovine Tb Update

(1) Operational Progress as at 1 March 2001

	Treatment Area (ha)	%	Area Completed (ha)	%
Bovine Unit	207,378	71.4	117,129	40.3
Private Contractor	82,998	28.6	29,933	10.3
	290,376	100.0	147,062	50.6

(2) Private Contractors

The following areas were tendered to private contractors:

Pakowhai	6,747 ha	
Tinui	7,577 ha	(Completed)
Stronvar	24,793 ha	
Ponatahi-Longbush	16,851 ha	
East Alfredton	5,200 ha	(Completed)
Martinborough 1	16,830 ha	(Completed)
Martinborough 2	5,000 ha	

(3) Contractor Progress

- Control in Ponatahi-Longbush is expected to be completed at the end of March.
- Pakowhai is currently under control.
- Stronvar and Martinborough 2 will commence shortly.

(4) Operation Progress – Bovine Unit

Thirty Two (32) operations to be treated
 Twelve (12) operations completed
 Ten (10) operations have commenced control
 Ten (10) operations have not yet started control.

(5) Additional Works

The Animal Health Board (AHB) has approved the following works to be undertaken.

These works will be paid for by savings identified from other operations and therefore have no impact on the original budget approved by Council or AHB.

Mangaroa-Kaitoke	1,335 ha
Owahanga	2,815 ha
Taueru-Maungaraki	2,540 ha
Kahutara	1,916 ha
Homewood-Riversdale	3,329 ha
Featherston	<u>520 ha</u>
	12,455 ha

(6) Performance Monitors

The following operational monitoring results have been reported to date this year:

Otaki Crown	1.7%
Te Wharau Aerial Stage 1	0.7%
Ruamahanga River	0.2%
Tinui Aerial (2 parts)	0.3% & 1.4%
Holdsworth-Carterton (Interim)	0.3%
Bideford (Interim)	0.3%
Lake Wairarapa Crown	1.4%
Martinborough - Contract	2.0%
Tinui - Contract	1.7%
East Alfredton - Contract	3.4%
Haurangi Crown	2.7%
Moeraki-Ngakonui	4.4%

(7) Trend Monitors

Mount Bruce Reserve	13.5%
Waingawa	2.1%
Homewood-Riversdale	15.2%
Kahutara	6.8%

(8) Future Control

Te Wharau Aerial	5,500 ha	-	March
Te Wharau Aerial	6,000 ha	-	April
Featherston Crown Aerial	4,350 ha	-	April
Bideford Aerial	1,000 ha	-	May

5.2 Rabbits

Rabbits are normally at their highest densities during the early autumn. There have been no reports of high levels of rabbits on larger farm properties, but there have been many rabbit nuisance calls from small lifestyle blocks and semi urban properties. The rabbit nuisance problem around gardens and amenity plantings has increased sales of Pindone carrot bait.

Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) has not made itself obvious anywhere in the region, but must still be recycling. RHD sampling is currently being undertaken in the Western Zone to give some indication of immunity trends compared to the Wairarapa.

The annual rabbit proneness survey will commence throughout the region in mid March. All properties (or parts of properties), with a history of rabbit proneness will be inspected and assessed against the Modified McLean Scale. The occupiers of properties that have rabbit levels of concern will be written to and reminded of their responsibilities under the Regional Animal Pest Management Strategy.

A rabbit nightshooting programme has been undertaken at Heretaunga Golf Course, Riding for the Disabled, and Trentham Memorial Park in Upper Hutt.

5.3 Magpie Research – Bird Count Data

We are still awaiting the results of the bird count data being analysed by Landcare Research Ltd. We would have liked to be in a position by now to advise the findings to the occupiers involved in the research programme.

5.4 Rook Control

Rook baiting has been carried out on small flocks at Gladstone, Pirinoa and Flat Point with limited success. The prevailing dry conditions are usually the best time for baiting and better results were hoped for. There is no apparent reason for the mediocre results.

5.5 Key Native Ecosystems Programme

In the Wairarapa the focus continues to be on culling predators within the Morisons Bush, Tauherenikau and Carterton East KNE's. These sites border onto the river systems of the Ruamahanga and Tauherenikau. The predominant catch has been feral cats followed by ferrets, stoats and an occasional weasel. The original bait used was feral rabbit but a change has been made to using table quail

(seconds) obtained from a Manawatu game farm. Cage traps are used in the vicinity of homesteads to ensure the safety of domestic cats.

Possum control maintenance work has been undertaken at Pounui/Wharepapa (Western Lake), Lake Nganoke (Pirinoa) and Big Hill Bush (Tuturumuri) KNE sites.

In the Western Zone, the Witako operation at Silverstream is well underway. The Upper Hutt Forest & Bird volunteers have started the baiting programme following the placing of bait stations on defined grid lines.

Initial works have started in the Tinakori Hill Reserve and maintenance control is soon to commence in the Khandallah Reserve and Johnsonville Park sites of Wellington City. The Porirua Scenic Reserve is also due to commence a maintenance programme. It is intended to utilise service contracts for some of the maintenance procedures to reduce the current pressure on staff.

Tenders have been received for the East Harbour KNE (2,375 ha) possum control operation. It is hoped to have the contract signed off by 23rd March for a start immediately after Easter.

5.6 Aerial Works

An aerial baiting programme is currently being planned to treat the Whakatikei and part of the Puketiro blocks on the Regional Council's estate. The 7,000 hectare operation includes Council and private plantation forestry and will be undertaken in May this year, weather permitting. This work is funded by the Plantation Forestry Department and private landowners.

5.7 Communications and Promotions

The following venues will be attended by Biosecurity staff as part of the ongoing advice and education programmes:

- Wainuiomata 'Over the Hill' Day - 10th March
- Jubilee Park (Lower Hutt), Historic Picnic Day - 11th March
- Wellington Home and Garden Show - 20th22nd April
- Lifestyle Farmers Field Day at Otaki - 5th May

Staff have recently mounted displays at the Masterton A & P Show and the Upper Hutt Summer Carnival.

Plants staff have been involved advising and assisting voluntary pest plant control group projects at Otaki and Pukerua Bay.

5.8 Regional Pest Management Strategies Review

The document review process is close to being concluded. A final draft Proposed RPMS has been completed and circulated to the Sub-Committee for comment. The Sub-Committee is scheduled to meet on 27 March to finalise any changes. The Proposed RPMS should be notified in early April. At least 20 working days

will be made available for the receipt of submissions. Hearings will be scheduled for late May.

5.9 Eel Grass

Infestations of the aquatic weed Eel Grass (*Vallisneria gigantea*) located in the Makora Stream in Masterton last August have now been cleared. Conservation Corp trainees under the supervision of a Plants Officer removed the infestation by hand. Screens were set below the sites to ensure plant fragments dislodged during removal did not move downstream. Further areas were discovered during the clearing operation and follow-up control will be required for some time to eradicate the species from this stream.

Eel Grass is a submerged species with long strap-like leaves that can grow up to 5 metres in length. It forms dense stands in still or flowing water to the exclusion of other species. Few natural sites are recorded in NZ with the nearest at Wanganui. The species is often illegally used as an aquarium plant. It is suspected that the Makora Stream infestation may have established from an aquarium disposal or from contaminated eel nets.

5.10 Biological Control

In conjunction with Landcare Research, a release of the biological control agent Gorse Colonial Hard Shoot Moth has been made on a property in the Norfolk Road area of Carterton District. This is the first release of this agent in the Region. Landcare have been working with this agent for some time. There had been difficulties breeding the insects in captivity to establish numbers adequate for general release purposes. However, this now appears to have been overcome and a number of releases have recently been made throughout NZ. This release brings to five the number of bio-control agents for gorse released in the Wellington Region.

The collection of Ragwort Flea Beetle for distribution to new sites will be carried out over the next few weeks. A reasonable coverage of Ragwort problem areas within the Region has already been achieved with further releases closing gaps more quickly. The establishment of releases generally takes three to five years before effective Ragwort population decreases are noted.

5.11 KNE Pest Plant Control

Tenders have been called for the control of a range of pest plants in bush areas of the Raroa Reserve at Pukerua Bay. This KNE site was subject to a possum control programme last year and if a suitable tender can be arranged will be the first KNE pest plants control operation. Other areas currently being assessed for KNE pest plant control are at Eastbourne and two areas in Wellington City.

5.12 Manchurian Wild Rice

Further control spraying of Manchurian Wild Rice in the wet land at Waikanae will be carried out this month. This application should complete initial control of

the main infestations. It is likely that maintenance control will be necessary for three to five years to achieve eradication.

Kapiti Coast District Council has agreed to have remaining infestations adjacent to the Waikanae sewage ponds cleared at their cost. This work will be carried out following the wetland operation and will require another input next season to complete initial clearance.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.



Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa