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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 31 July 2001.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 Last Meeting

As members will be well aware, this is the last scheduled meeting of the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee for the triennium. I believe that a lot has been achieved over the past three years, and Committee members can be very pleased at the progress made over the wide range of activities under their jurisdiction.

Wairarapa Division staff have very much enjoyed working with the Committee. On their behalf, I wish the best of luck to those of you standing for election. For those of you who do not return in the next triennium, either by choice or otherwise, I sincerely hope that this is not the last we see of you. We already know that Crs Margaret Shields and Chris Turver will be back on Council from October and that gives a strong starting point for the new Council.

It is very appropriate that I particularly acknowledge at this time of their retirement as councillors, the many valuable contributions over the years from Cr Euan McQueen and Cr Stuart Macaskill. This is especially so for Stuart who has been Chairman of the Council through the whole life of the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee since 1989.

2.2 Last Financial Year

We have now finished collating all the information and reviewing the results of the last financial year. It is pleasing to report that the Division successfully delivered on virtually every aspect of a very full programme. As a result of the new Long Term Financial Strategy, there was increased activity in most programmes and, in addition, we delivered over \$1m of unbudgeted flood damage repair work plus several six months review items. I would very much acknowledge the substantial contributions by all the department managers and their hard working staff.

The summary of the financial results is included in a separate report.

2.3 Farm Environment Awards

At the last meeting the Committee received a presentation regarding the proposal for a series of Regional Farm Environment Awards throughout the country and then a national final.

Crs Buchanan and Long were asked to consider this matter in more detail. They will be reporting back to Council on 27 September recommending that this Council assist with a Regional Farm Environment Award in the Wellington region. If this proceeds, it is likely that entries would be called as early as October with the presentation of awards next March.

2.4 Bovine Tb Pest Management Strategy

The Minister of Agriculture has announced that a Board of Enquiry is being appointed to consider the 94 written submissions received on the Proposed National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb. The hearings for this are likely to take place in November. In the meantime, we are continuing to operate under the legal basis of the old Bovine Tb National Strategy, but using the new programmes and revised funding basis as in the Proposed Strategy. All parties to the Strategy are comfortable with this arrangement.

2.5 Waitangi Tribunal

Early in the year the Committee received a report in relation to the Waitangi Treaty claims in the Wairarapa. Committee members were interested in obtaining further information on this process and requested a presentation when convenient. Appropriate officers of the Waitangi Tribunal are happy to give such a presentation, but this is now likely to be in early 2002.

2.6 Staff Matters

Two members of the Division's staff are undertaking significant personal activities in the next few weeks.

In September, Brenda Clapp will be competing for New Zealand in the World Mountain Bike Championships being held in Colorado, USA. During the past few weeks Brenda has been training and competing in the USA as part of her bid to gain selection for next year's Commonwealth Games.

Kim Broad has been asked to play the role of Scrooge in the Royal New Zealand Ballet's forthcoming nation-wide tour of 'A Christmas Carol'. This is a significant lead role and Kim has taken extended leave in order to undertake this challenge.

2.7 Wairarapa Irrigation Study

Previous reports have outlined the significant irrigation study being undertaken in the Wairarapa with the assistance of regional development type funding being provided by government. The Regional Council and the three Wairarapa district councils have also contributed some funding and we have been heavily involved with providing water resource data and assisting the study over the past year.

Stage 1 of the study has now been completed and three possible community scheme concepts are suggested. In total approximately 35,000 hectares in the Wairarapa Valley could be irrigated at a capital cost of around \$100m.

I propose to give a short presentation at the Committee meeting to explain the proposed concepts and to outline likely steps from here with this substantial project.

3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

3.1 KNE Pest Plant Control

Initial KNE pest plant control has now been completed along the banks of the Otaki River and in stage two of the Otari/Wilton contract. By late October both stages of the Otari/Wilton Reserve will require maintenance control for regrowth and seedling broom and gorse. Blackberry will be controlled in late summer.

Following the initial clearance of pest plants, the Otari/Wilton's Bush Trust have planted native species in open areas and some treated sites where regrowth should not be a major issue. The completion of the summer control programme will enable restorative planting to be completed next winter throughout the total area.

The very steep and difficult location of infestations of Banana Passionfruit and Old Mans Beard in the Otaki River contract has forced an increased use of cut and treat methods. However, with the onset of

regrowth in the spring, developing basal regrowth will be able to be treated using predominantly spray application methods.

3.2 Climbing Asparagus Control

Staff are about to commence a range of control trials on Climbing Asparagus (Snakefeather) at Mount Victoria in Wellington. These include using both chemical and mechanical methods. While the recommended herbicide for use on Snakefeather is Roundup, other products are being tested in an attempt to obtain a higher level of control, and identify a more selective herbicide.

Staff have also erected roadside signs from Tawa to Karori to promote the identification and control of Snakefeather. This area was chosen as it has a high level of infestation. Twelve signs each measuring 1200mm by 600mm have been positioned through the area and are to remain in place for a month.

3.3 Bovine Tb Update

Maintenance has commenced in many of the 2001/02 operations. This year the targets have been increased in high-risk areas. For example, there is 129,000 hectares which has a Residual Trap Catch (RTC) target of 2.0% or less. It is likely that approximately 148,000 hectares will be classified as high risk in the 2002/03 year.

Control has been completed in:

- Waingawa Operation – 1,800 hectares (no monitoring results available)
- Rocky Hills Reserve (aerial control RTC 1.7%)
- Te Awaiti Station (aerial control – draft monitoring results - no possums or non-target species caught – expected RTC 0.0%)

Control is being undertaken in:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| • Mount Bruce-Waipoua | - | medium risk area |
| • Featherston | - | high risk area |
| • Kahutara-Pirinoa | - | high risk area |
| • Te Wharau | - | high risk area |
| • Whangaehu | - | high risk area |
| • Tinui | - | high risk area |

Pre -operation planning has commenced in:

- Castlehill
- Whitemans Valley
- Featherston-Waiorongomai Crown (11,600 hectare aerial operation)

Planning is well underway for the annual Animal Health Board Technical Review to be held in September 2001.

3.4 Possum Control Contracts

A further 40,000 hectares has been let for tender in the following areas of the Wairarapa:

- Owahanga
- Woodside
- Stronvar
- Taueru-Maungaraki

The total area tendered to date is 100,810 hectares.

Local contractors, Trappersnz, have nearly completed Strata 2 at Homewood-Riversdale, working 3 teams of 3 in the operation. (Strata relates to the different levels of performance expected of a contractor).

Trappersnz have also recently launched a website at www.trappersnz.co.nz.

3.5 Key Native Ecosystem Management

Maintenance control continues in the Porirua Scenic Reserve, Mill Stream Bush (Pikarere Farm) and the Kaitawa Reserve at Paraparaumu. Maintenance also continues at Khandallah and Johnsonville Parks in Wellington City. Assistance is being provided to the Upper Hutt Branch of Forest and Bird with the maintenance of Wi Tako Reserve, Maidstone Park and Keith George Memorial Reserve in Upper Hutt.

KNE possum control work in the Wairarapa has ceased temporarily awaiting the outcome of the prioritisation process for future KNE site work in rural areas. The rapidly expanding Bovine Tb programme now includes most KNE sites subject to possum control.

Liaison is planned with the Department of Conservation to investigate the possibility of involvement in protecting threatened native species on private land.

3.6 Magpies

Complaints regarding nuisance magpies has commenced with the onset of the breeding season. The incidence levels in the Wairarapa are low to date compared to other years. Calls for assistance within the Wellington metropolitan areas are also low. The reason is thought to be that there are lower densities of magpies in the urban environments due to the upsurge of trapping by the public. The traps supplied by Council are constantly being utilised. Many occupiers now also own their traps.

3.7 Aerial Possum Control Works

Planning is well underway for the October aerial possum control operation (8,233 hectares) encompassing the Regional Council blocks of Akatarawa and Valley View administered by the Parks & Forests and Plantation Forests Departments. The western boundary of this operation is contiguous with the large Whakitikei/Puketiro block of Council land that was aerially baited in June this year.

3.8 Rural Services Newsletter

The annual Rural Services Newsletter is in draft form and should be substantially completed by early September. It is intended to deliver these to approximately 6,000 rural box holders throughout the region. The newsletter will include a supplement from the Regional Animal Health Committee regarding the status and progress of Bovine Tb control in the region.

3.9 Communications

The Biosecurity Department will have a display at the Wellington Spring Home and Garden Show to be held at the Westpac Stadium from 28th – 30th September. The display will focus on environmental pest plants and pest animals in urban areas.

A talk was given to the Wairarapa Branch of the Forest and Bird Society on 16th August. The subject was 'Pest Animal Management'.

4. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

4.1 Environmental Incidents

Date	Incident	Details
26/07/01	Bonfire causing smoke nuisance, Masterton	Found to be a person burning domestic rubbish on a regular basis. He was asked not to burn such material in future.
30/07/01	Car abandoned in Waiohine River, Carterton.	Car removed by WRC and taken to landfill.
31/07/01	Dam constructed upstream of complainants property, blocking off the flow.	Dam inspected and found to require a consent under the Regional Freshwater Plan. Landowner contacted and is happy to apply for the relevant consent.
1/08/01	Smoke pollution from neighbouring domestic premise, Featherston	On-going problem site. Smoke not considered offensive or objectionable, but improvements to the chimney have been recommended.

7/08/01	Odour from industrial site, Masterton	Offensive odour not confirmed. The discharge has a resource consent. There has been a history of complaints about this site, and staff are working with the company to improve the discharge.
9/08/01	Bores drilled in South Wairarapa without the necessary resource consents.	Being followed up.
10/08/01	Sewage flowing from septic tank into waterway, rural Masterton	Owners of the property have been asked to make changes to their septic waste system.
10/08/01	Papawai Stream, Greytown, has been very discoloured recently.	Found to be caused by a diversion of a tributary of the stream to allow for building of a house. No further action taken.
15/08/01	Sewage overflowing into Henley Lake, Masterton	Caused by infiltration of stormwater during extreme rainfall event. Public Health was informed, and area where overflow was occurring cordoned off.
17/08/01	Domestic rubbish dumped in recreational area.	Under investigation.
20/08/01	Upstream neighbour has dug a hole in a stopbank, allowing floodwaters out of stream, Masterton.	Person who modified the stopbank is required to reinstate it. No further action taken.

4.2 Enforcement

The hearing of a defence lodged against an infringement notice, issued in relation to unconsented wild flood irrigation, has still to be heard. A third callover was held before a District Court Judge on 27 August 2001. Until then no hearing date had been set. Normally, hearings under the Summary Judgements proceedings are heard before a Justice of the Peace.

Hearing of a prosecution against a dairy farmer for the alleged discharge of dairy shed effluent by direct pumping into a stream has been transferred to the Environment Court, Wellington. A callover is set for the Environment Court, but as yet no hearing date has been set.

4.3 Notified Consents

JNL – air discharge variation	Previous application for variation withdrawn. Awaiting revised application. No recent action by the applicant.
Martinborough sewage – discharge	On hold with applicant requesting further time for comment provided to consultants on draft AEE.
Featherston Sewage – discharge	On hold awaiting full assessment of effects and consultation. Agreed lower priority than Martinborough.
Masterton Sewage – discharge	On hold. Progress with rapid infiltration trials held up by landowner negotiations. No recent action by the applicant.
Owahanga Station – coastal	Meeting held with owner's representative to clarify scope and requirements. No further progress.
Craggy Range – surface take	On hold at applicants request

S McLachlan – Rathkeale – underground takes	Number of submissions received. Pre-hearing meeting held. Hearing to be held.
N Davies Lake Meadows partnership - takes – Lake Wairarapa	Both granted. No hearings required.
Water Races - 6 – Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils	Applications and AEE's received. Applications being assessed.

4.4 Resource Management Charging Policy

Letters have been sent to all submitters advising them of the outcomes. All consent holders will be informed of the changes in the Consents newsletter that will accompany this year's charges when they are sent out later this year.

4.5 Iwi Gravel Workshop

An Ara Tahi workshop on gravel was held on the Papawai Marae attended by Iwi representatives from throughout the Region. The day included presentations, discussion, and an inspection of extraction from the Waiohine River. This was the first Iwi workshop to be held outside the Wellington office.

4.6 Hydrology

Rainfall

Rainfall for July followed the same trend as the previous month with figures well below average.

Site	Location	July 2001 (mm)	Average July (mm)	% of average
Angle Knob	Tararua Ranges	366	640	57
Alloa	Middle Valley	58	117	50
Tanawa Hut	Eastern Hills	127	169	75

For the eastern hill country the annual total for the year ending 31 July was between 50– 60 % of normal, and 70 % of normal for the Tararuas and Alloa. The Tanawa and Alloa rainfall totals for this year are the lowest on record for this period.

Looking at longer-term trends, over the last seven months to 31 July, Alloa has had 328mm, ranked lowest for this period since records began in 1963. Over the same period, Tanawa Hut had 460mm, and is also ranked lowest since 1956. Angle Knob is ranked fourth lowest at 2528mm.

It should be noted that with the lower rainfall in the Tararuas there was also a lower incidence of the north-westerly winds associated with the typical frontal rainfall.

This situation has been eased somewhat by the southerly storm over 13-16 August which brought heavy rain throughout the Wairarapa. Three day totals of around 100mm of much needed rain were recorded throughout the eastern hill country

Rivers

The rivers in the Wairarapa have continued their trend from the preceding month with flows well below their average.

Site	June 2001 Flow (m³/s)	Average June Flow (m³/s)	% of Average
Waihenga	71.2	140.9	50.5
Waiohine	17.1	29.5	58

The lowest flows were at the end of July, with Waihenga reaching 6.25m³/s and Waiohine 2.91m³/s, with estimated return periods of 15 years and 3 years respectively.

The southerly rain of 13 to 16 August resulted in moderate flood levels in all rivers, the highest levels being in rivers and streams draining the Haurangis and the Whareama River. Floodwarnings were issued for several rivers receiving flows from the east.

4.7 Hazards Research

A meeting has been held with IGNS staff to discuss opportunities for further seismic research. GPS fault mapping within Masterton and study of the Mokonui Fault are being explored.

Victoria University are agreeable to undertake a study of seismicity at the Blundell Barrage and Waihenga. The WELA study has identified these areas as having a soil liquefaction hazard that may affect the infrastructure at these sites.

Possible specific tsunami modelling for representative coastal sites within the Region is being investigated.

5. Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

5.1 2001 Winter Works Programme

There has been steady progress to the end of July with both the pole and seedling planting programme. Below average soil moisture levels were causing some concern to staff and landowners, however a significant rainfall of 100mm in the middle of August has given renewed confidence to continue planting.

Soil moisture levels are good at present, however there is some urgency to complete the planting by early September. Equinoxal winds often arrive in early October and poles in particular need to be well established by that time.

A final helicopter run is scheduled for 23 August, dropping poles into a range of sites in southern Wairarapa.

5.2 Akura Conservation Centre - Sales Update

After a slow start to the season, mainly as a result of the dry soil conditions, sales at Akura Conservation Centre have strengthened in the last two or three weeks. In particular the demand for good native tree stocks is very evident, as well as requests for a wide range of shelter tree species.

Stocks are running low at some of the key suppliers. New suppliers can be found but price and quality are often unacceptable at this stage of the season.

Demand for poles is steady, with a noticeable lift after the rains came in mid-August.

5.3 Akura Conservation Centre - Irrigation Project

Planning is underway for the establishment of an irrigation system for the Akura Conservation Centre. For many years the vagaries of the summer climate have severely affected pole production from the nursery. Rotation lengths have been extended from two to three years to enable poles to reach the desired specifications. Demand for poles exceeds the present annual supply. Irrigation will enable a consistent number of poles to be produced each year, meeting the predicted demand on a sustainable basis.

The system will incorporate a series of primary and secondary pipelines, supplying a travelling boom sprayer. Maximum flexibility will be possible and the labour input minimised. A range of options were considered including flexible trickle tubing either laying on the soil surface or buried to shallow depth.

The installation of equipment and plant is to be completed by the end of October to enable early applications if the rainfall continues to remain at below average figures.

5.4 Upper Ruamahanga Scheme Review

A review of the Upper Ruamahanga River Management Scheme has commenced. Ratepayer meetings have been held and Steering Committees elected for each of three sections of the existing scheme. These sections extend from Mount Bruce to Te Ore Ore, Te Ore Ore to Wardells Bridge, and Wardells to the Waiohine confluence.

The intention is to complete this review over the period to April 2002, and to set up a separate scheme for each of these sections. The review team will work closely with the Steering Committee members to develop a new management approach, funding basis, and rating classification for each scheme.

5.5 Te Whiti Stopbank Upgrade

Landowners have asked Council to upgrade the stopbank providing flood protection to the Te Whiti area. An investigation is underway, and is planned for completion over the next eighteen months. Council has allowed provisional funding for this upgrade during the 2004/05 and 2005/06 financial years. Approval for the upgrade will be sought once a preferred option has been adopted by the Te Whiti community.

5.6 Willow Sawfly Study

Ian Gunn and Ian Heslop attended a meeting of the National River Managers Group in July. A key topic of this meeting was the reported progress with the willow sawfly study being carried out by HortResearch. Scientists summarised the research results so far, which covered the economic value of willows, effects of repeated defoliation on willow growth, identification of resistant willows, and suggested alternative tree varieties.

The study confirmed that the standard willow varieties used in NZ were particularly vulnerable to sawfly damage. Also a team had travelled to California, and had brought back seed from willow varieties with river management potential and natural resistance to sawfly.

The results of the study so far are considered very worthwhile, and an accelerated programme has been adopted over the next two years to finalise the study and develop a strategy for managing the sawfly threat.

5.7 Logging Truck Accident

On Friday, 10th August, a fully loaded logging truck and trailer ran off the road, rolled and was written off in Hiwinui Forest.

The driver suffered minor injuries (bruises and grazes) when he jumped from the cab of the truck before it ran off the road. The driver claimed that all of the brakes, including the emergency, failed as he was descending a steep part of the road. The truck was in second gear travelling very slowly at the time and there was no evidence of any skid marks.

The truck and trailer were recovered by crane and transported off the site for insurance assessment. The logs were reloaded on to another truck and trailer unit and delivered to the sawmill.

5.8 Forestry Activities

All silviculture, logging and re-establishment planting is proceeding well within the limitations of seasonal weather conditions.

5.9 Technical Services Section Activities

- Survey for Te Whiti stopbank investigation - GPS survey of existing stopbanks and floor levels of houses, production of plans for initial design.
- Production of Oporua Floodway Wetlands report for Engineering Section
- Work on 'areas of uncertainty' coverage for Engineering Section and Masterton District Council
- Completed Riversdale Beach 6 monthly survey
- Work on Barrage Gates – replacing cables
- Completed Waingawa 6 monthly x-section survey
- Drain survey at Cross's Line for Engineering Section
- Assistance to Planning & Resources Dept in hydrology field work
- Produced maps for Irrigation Study
- Work for external customer enquires for maps and information.
- Bovine Tb mapping for Whitemans Valley operations
- Computer draughting work on Soil Conservation farm plans
- Work on Gravel Licence System – processed bulk of the applications

Issues Next Quarter

- Work on Gravel Licence System – gravel return forms sent out to extractors
- Completion of coastal surveys at Castlepoint
- Completion of riverbed monitoring programmed resurveys at 6 monthly sites.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa