



Report **03.478**
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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa**
Author **Ian Gunn, Land and River Operations Manager**

Integrated Catchment Management

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about an initiative with Massey University on research in the Ruamahanga River Catchment.

2. Background

Greater Wellington are charged with the management and protection of the natural environment within its region. Massey University has restructured and created an Institute of Natural Resources. Professor Russ Tillman heads this Institute. He has a goal to develop the Institute into an environmental research organisation of international repute.

The Institute has a significant number of under-graduate and post-graduate students in disciplines varying from botany, GIS, agriculture, ecology, agricultural economics, waste disposal practices, and communication. Professor Tillman is keen to pursue integrated catchment management studies in the Wairarapa.

An informal chat had been held with Professor Tillman in June to discuss interests and opportunities. At this discussion the information on phosphates and nitrates in the Ruamahanga River, collated by Graham Sevicke-Jones and Summer Warr (Resource Investigations staff), was outlined. This has further stimulated Professor Tillman's interest in the Ruamahanga River Catchment.

To date Greater Wellington Regional Council has typically studied specific issues, e.g. dairy shed effluent. Increasingly in the past few years, and especially since the Council took initiatives in biodiversity, staff have been taking an ecosystem approach to managing natural resources. Integrated catchment management recognises that the catchment basin is a good unit for research in ecosystem processes for the purpose of managing natural resources in a context that includes social, economic and political considerations.

Some members will remember during the Masterton sewage discharge resource consent hearing that people such as Cr Mike Gray from the South Wairarapa District Council were saying "the river is special to us too, so we want a say in

how the Ruamahanga River system is managed”. Thus there is an interest in the wider community on how land/water, - the natural environment - is managed within the Ruamahanga River Catchment.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council currently has an extensive water quality monitoring programme. The focus is habitat quality. We know from the data produced by Resource Investigations staff that the phosphate and nitrate nutrients measured in the Ruamahanga River come from both point and non-point sources. Which is more important? Integrated catchment studies would help resolve these “theory” issues.

3. What’s Happened?

Professor Russ Tillman has made a presentation to section leaders and interested staff from all three departments in the Wairarapa Division. He outlined Massey University’s set up and what they can do. He would like to develop a strong relationship with the Greater Wellington Regional Council, specifically in the Ruamahanga River Catchment. He has offered to kick start the relationship by proposing 2-3 research scholarships on topics within the Ruamahanga River Catchment in the next academic year. Staff have been given the challenge of providing three areas of study. The challenge will be for them to think in a catchment scale rather than trying to fix the current problems.

4. Conclusion

I believe this is too good an opportunity to miss. It is an opportunity for staff to be involved in “real science” and if it is to be successful for the community to become involved in the issues within the Ruamahanga River Catchment. It is a first step in a long journey. In accepting the challenge GWRC is signalling that if the relationship “blossoms” it will contribute to funding research at some time in the future.

5. Communications

There are no communication issues to the general public at this time.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Ian Gunn
Land and River Operations Manager

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa