

Environment Management Division update

For period ending 31 October 2006

1. Environmental Monitoring and Investigations (Ted Taylor)

1.1 Floodwarning

A moderate south-easterly flood event occurred over the 24 – 25th October.

Warning Statistics:

	September	October	Financial Year to 31 Oct	Previous Year to 31 Oct
No. of events	0	2	9	2
No of Lists Issued	0	11	64	8

The opening to Lake Onoke closed on the 10th September and remained closed for the next 11 days before a channel to the sea could be cut.

The water level in Lake Wairarapa was above the target level of 9.95m for the month of September. The spring target level of 10.00m was exceeded for the whole of October apart from a few days at the beginning. This was due to a combination of high Ruamahanga River base flows and a blocked outlet at Lake Onoke. A high Wairarapa Lake level of 10.94m was recorded on the 26th.

1.2 Groundwater

Confined groundwater levels have reached their seasonal recovery point but are still below the long term mean. However, as a result of the winter rainfall unconfined/semi-confined aquifers have settled to around the long term mean for this time of year.

1.3 Air quality

The concentration of fine particles (PM₁₀) in ambient air did not exceed the limit set by the National Environmental Standard for Air Quality (NESAQ) as recorded by our monitoring station at Wairarapa College, Cornwall Street, Masterton for the period 1 September to 31 October.

1.4 Rainfall

Rainfall in September was below average in the Tararua Ranges, the Wairarapa Valley and the Eastern hill country. There was less than an 'inch' of rain at Tanawa hut in the Eastern hill country, the September total of 23.5mm being the lowest since our records began in 1956..

By contrast, rainfall in October was above average across the Wairarapa. For both the Wairarapa Valley and Eastern hill country the monthly totals were just over 200mm which is double the long term average for this time of year. Nearly half of the rain fell between the 22nd and the 24th when a passing front developed into a depression off the east coast of the Wairarapa.

The table below shows rainfall statistics for our three representative rainfall sites.

1.4.1 Rainfall Totals

	September		October	
	mm	% of average	mm	% of average
Angle Knob (Tararuas)	440	72	925	127
Alloa (middle valley)	30.2	35	202	204
Tanawa Hut (eastern hills)	23.5	20	203	205

1.4.2 Annual Rainfall

On an annual basis it is noted that the cumulative rainfall continues to be above average at our three representative rainfall sites (tabulated below).

	October		Year to Date (Jan – Oct)	
	mm	% of average	mm	% of average
Angle Knob (Tararuas)	925	127	6072	107
Alloa (middle valley)	202	204	1215	134
Tanawa Hut (eastern hills)	203	205	1428	124

1.5 Rivers

River flows reflected rainfall with below average flows in September and above average flows in October.

A moderate flood event resulted from the southerly storm referred to above. The Ruamahanga River at the Waihenga bridge at Martinborough reached a height of just over 4.5m and a flow of about 850m³/s. This was less than an annual return period flood (1064m³/s) but did put water across the Jenkins Dip floodway for a short time,

River flow statistics from our representative sites are tabulated below:

	September		October	
	m ³ /s	% of average	m ³ /s	% of average
Waiohine River	19.4	68	39.3	118
Ruamahanga River at Waihenga	56.3	50	155	143

2. Environmental Regulation (AI Cross)

2.1 Consent Statistics

In the period from 1 August 2006 to 15 October 2006 we have received 61 Wairarapa-based applications. This compares with 53 in the same period last year.

In this period we have processed 41 consents compared with 34 last year.

Our median processing time (excluding s37 extensions) for Wairarapa non notified consents was 12 working days.

Details of non-notified consents approved in the period are provided in report 06.536 to the Environment Committee.

2.2 Key Notified Consents Update

N & E E Reid¹

These are applications to replace and extend on existing consents for the discharge of piggery effluent from herd of 13,000 animals to land and odours to air, north of Clareville, Carterton.

Following a GW-commissioned review of soil conditions and treatment capacity in the Carterton-Claireville area, the applicant has now indicated to us that they will not be increasing herd size and extending their disposal area to treat piggery effluent. We will continue to process applications and it is possible they may be heard by December 2006.

Masterton District Council

Application for managing the closure of the Masterton Landfill and provide for ongoing waste management related activities has been placed on hold for further information. Once information is received, the applications will be notified which will now is unlikely to take place before the end of 2006.

Prema Investments Ltd

This is an application for discharging communal wastewater to land arising from a 6 lot subdivision at Whangaimoana. We have received clarification from the applicant regarding off-site discharge effects, and the applications were jointly notified with South Wairarapa District Council on 22 October.

M B and H F Herrick

We recently held a pre-hearing meeting with parties connected with replacement consent applications to take groundwater for irrigation from two existing bores, at Taumata Island, Carterton. Submitters are primarily about the potential impact of the abstraction on the Taumata Ox-bow reserve wetland. We will now, with the

¹ These are applications to replace and extend on existing consents for the discharge of piggery effluent to land and odours to air.

applicant, consider options to gather monitoring information over summer to assess impacts on the reserve wetland, before completing the consent process.

Other limited notified applications to Greater Wellington are providing opportunities to negotiate conditions, thus avoiding the need for hearings, saving both Greater Wellington and the respective applicants both time and money. We recently achieved such an outcome for **M S Creary, MacLand Farms, E P M Handyside and Rotopai Farms** who sought replacement consents to take water from Ruamahanga River, South Wairarapa. Both Department of Conservation and New Zealand Fish and Game Council had initially opposed the consents. A decision was released on 15 September. **Rathkeale College**, at Opaki, north of Masterton, have applied for a short term replacement consent to discharge treated effluent to Ruamahanga River, near Masterton. The application is to use the current system over the next two years until investigations into a new land-based system have been completed and new applications can be made. We are currently negotiating conditions with the applicant, and expect a consent will soon be issued.

2.3 Appeals and Objections

Greater Wellington: Land and River Operations Department (LARO) – Scadden’s stopbank

This relates to an appeal by A J Barton² on a decision that granted consent to LARO to upgrade an existing stopbank adjacent to the Ruamahanga River. Evidence was exchanged on 28 August regarding the one remaining issue concerning the use of a paper road, and the Court hearing will be on 22 November.

Masterton District Council

No progress has been made on the appeal by Masterton District Council against the decision on stage two – the Castlepoint sea wall. The onus is on Masterton District Council to come up with an integrated foreshore management plan.

Martinborough Coastal Developments Ltd (MCDL)

Mediation was recently commenced on an appeal by D T S Riddiford of a joint decision that granted consent to MCDL for a 30-lot subdivision at Tora, South Wairarapa. New concerns were raised about the location and design of the proposed community wastewater treatment system, and the applicant has subsequently changed the proposed location. We are assessing possible options before a further possible round of mediation.

A E & S W Benton Partnership

This relates to an appeal by the applicant on a decision which declined consent to take groundwater from two bores for irrigation near Kahutara.

Mediation on this appeal of a benchmark-setting decision to decline an application to take groundwater from the Kahutara groundwater zone (affected by a moratorium

² The Environment Court has struck out a number of aspects of the appeal relating to consideration of Regional Freshwater Plan provisions and section 5 and 104 RMA considerations.

not to 'accept' further applications) continues. We have undertaken technical work to better establish evidence supporting that the aquifer is over-allocated and, following the 10 October mediation round, have asked the applicant to provide further information and possible conditions to support their position. This case is particularly important in that it may establish precedent for Greater Wellington regarding the formal 'status' of moratorium groundwater zones and the level of technical evidence necessary to support a status, which could be reasonably far-reaching for us. We are yet to receive further information from the applicant; therefore no further mediation dates have been set.

2.4 Compliance and Enforcement

2.4.1 General

We are developing our summer monitoring programme, and will be hiring a student during summer to provide the team some space to undertake compliance work.

2.4.2 Abatement Notices

Three abatement notice was served on J T Cook and Kevin Anderson Combined Projects Ltd to provide a management plan for the use and removal of around 3,000 tyres from a property in the Castlepoint area. The tyres have the potential to breakdown and release contaminants into the site and to groundwater, and also exist as a fire hazard. We are currently working through options with the parties for addressing the abatement notice requirements.

2.4.3 Infringement notices

No infringement notices were served in the period since the last Committee meeting.

2.4.4 Prosecution and Enforcement Orders

No prosecutions or enforcement orders have been issued in the period since the last Committee meeting.

2.5 Pollution Control

We have not been able to collate our reported incidents data for this period, however we will report on the period in the next Committee report.

A significant discharge of diesel at Riggs Zschokke Limited's site in Akura Rd. Masterton, is being investigated by Greater Wellington officers. Our initial fears about the diesel moving directly into groundwater have been allayed, although now we face more immediate concerns of options for removing the diesel from the site before it leaches into groundwater. Investigations continue and we are seeking an explanation from the Riggs Zschokke regarding the incident.

No other incidents from the period are regarded as significant.

2.6 Department integration

Now that I have been appointed permanently to the Manager's position we are now able to increase efforts to integrate our Department across the region. While we continue to develop shared documents and processes, and streamline administrative support, I have also commenced work with the Department to examine and confirm a Department structure and determine options for refining our roles and responsibilities, and I expect to release a draft for discussion in the second week of November. It will be critical that the new structure will ensure we are best placed to deliver a quality product and service to our customers across the region.

In the meantime we have rolled out a new non-notified officer's report and consent certificate package regionally on a trial basis. The trial has been successful and we are now putting finishing touches to it. We will next commence work on our notified officer's reports, crucial to support a quality output in the typically more exposed area of our consents work.

I continue to be heartened by the positive approach to the new structure taken by all, and I am pleased to witness the regular team and monthly Department meetings continuing to pull the Department together.

3. Environmental Policy (Murray McLea)

3.1 Regional Policy Statement Review

The main areas of work on the review since the last meeting of the Wairarapa and Rural Services Committee are:

- Preparation and consultation with territorial authority staff and key stakeholders on preparation of draft provisions for the next RPS.
- A draft report on the resource management issues of significance to iwi authorities in the region has been prepared by Bev James for both Ara Tahi and Greater Wellington. A summary will be provided to Council when the report is finalised.
- The establishment of a working group, with representatives from the project executive group of the WRS, to discuss and recommend what should/could, from the WRS, be reflected in the RPS.
- A draft consultation and communication plan has been prepared for the development of provisions. This addresses:
 - Ara Tahi's role in the review process;
 - Liaison with the WRS Chief Executive Group and (interim) Committee;
 - Identification and level of involvement of territorial staff;
 - Identification and level of involvement of key stakeholders;
 - Involvement of Greater Wellington staff across Divisions;
 - How territorial authority elected representatives can be kept updated on the review process and consulted on draft provisions; and

- How consultation with general stakeholders will be undertaken and when.

A Councillor workshop will be held on 8 November 2006 to discuss RPS provisions. This will be followed by a combined Council and Ara Tahī workshop on 22 November 2006.

3.2 Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan

The Wairarapa policy team has co-ordinated Greater Wellington's submission on the Proposed Plan. The period for submissions closed on 30 October 2006. The proposed Plan is an important statutory document that sets out objectives, policies and rules that will guide and control how land is used in the Wairarapa. We will have further opportunities to be involved in the process through further submissions and hearings.

3.3 Regional Plan Changes

Plan change 1 to the Regional Freshwater Plan

The outstanding matter in this plan change related to conditions on a rule requiring resource consent for heavy vehicles to use a stopbank. The High Court made an interim decision which was considered by staff on the Wairarapa Flood Protection department and the appellant (J Barton). We filed our response to the Court on 29 August.

Plan change 3 to the Regional Freshwater Plan – water allocation from Wairarapa groundwater and some rivers

Draft Plan Change 3 to the Regional Freshwater Plan will limit the taking of additional water from three groundwater aquifers and six streams in the Wairarapa. It has been sent to affected consent holders and other interested people for their comment. Once comments are received we will be reporting back to the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee on how to proceed with the plan change.

3.4 Resource consents

Eight consents notified by territorial authorities in the Wairarapa have been received since the last Committee meeting, and submissions have been made on seven of these. Comments have also been made on five non-notified resource consent applications received from Carterton District Council. The most significant notified applications were:

- Chopsticks Partnership, Masterton District Council
- Pinehaven Orchard Ltd, South Wairarapa District Council
- Martinborough Coastal Developments Ltd, Tora, South Wairarapa District Council.