



Report **06.645**
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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee**
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Regional Pest Management Strategy: Operational Report 2005/06

1. Purpose

To report on the performance of the 2005/2006 Operational Plan for implementation of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. Background

Section 85 of the Biosecurity Act requires Greater Wellington, as the Management Agency, to prepare an operational plan for each Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) which it has approved. Furthermore, the Agency must prepare a report on the plan and its implementation no later than five months after the end of the each financial year. The report is to be made available to the public and a copy forwarded to the relevant Minister(s).

A few Councils have determined to use the Annual Plan reporting process to provide details on performance against RPMS Operational Plan objectives. The Biosecurity Act does provide for this option. However, it is considered more transparent to utilise a separate reporting process where greater detail can be included on performance, trends, issues and expenditure. A separate report also provides a higher level of accountability and transparency for ratepayers.

3. Comment

Attachment 1 contains the Annual Report on implementation of the 2005/2006 Operational Plan. This is the fourth progress report detailing performance against the objectives contained within in the twenty year Strategy.

A review of our performance indicates that we are making considerable progress in meeting most of the Strategy objectives. However, it is clear that in some cases we are going to need more time, particularly where we are seeking to eradicate a pest from the region. For example, intensive field surveys and a more informed and aware public have resulted in an increased number of pest plant infestations being recorded.

In a few cases, this new information will lead to recommendations to amend the status of various pest plants during the five year Strategy review process.

The 2005/06 year has seen a focus on maintaining current progress, and striving to identify and implement efficiencies in our activities. For pest plants, the emphasis has been on the Eradication species and increasing our involvement in biodiversity projects with other stakeholders. Stronger relationships have been developed with the Territorial Authorities (TA). Joint work programmes have been maintained with the Department of Conservation (DoC) and with Biosecurity NZ regarding National Pest Plant Accord species.

For pest animals, the majority of effort continues to be centred around the biodiversity support programmes. Excellent working relationships have been established with DoC, TA, care groups and landowners. Funding contributions by TA exceeded budget by 39%. The rook control programme was successfully implemented, with operations on our northern boundary successfully undertaken in conjunction with Horizons Regional Council. Rabbits remain at low levels generally but there are concerns that wider use of traditional control methods will be required in the future as the effectiveness of RCD reduces.

Enhancing public awareness through various communication initiatives continues to be a critical activity for the Department. Responding to client enquiries is also a major function under the Strategy. In 2005/06, staff managed 1,244 individual enquiries, many of which resulted in site visits and supply of advice and equipment.

Public understanding of biosecurity issues continue to grow. This interest has been fuelled by national biosecurity events such as the discovery of Didymo in South Island rivers and Sea Squirt in various ports. Didymo, in particular, has attracted attention nationally as its impacts on our freshwater fishing industry (recreational and commercial) become understood.

A well-informed public is essential for the achievement of both national and regional biosecurity objectives. Biosecurity agencies simply do not have enough resources to adequately explore and investigate all potential pest incursions. However, increased public knowledge has also lead to an increased number of new pest infestations being notified. This necessitates an ongoing need to reprioritise work programmes to ensure adequate control is maintained on key species. In some cases this has resulted in some RPMS tasks being deferred.

The report contains separate Pest Plant and Pest Animal sections with an outline of performance against key activity objectives; an overview of major strategy issues encountered during the year, details on biodiversity support programmes; and, finally, ecological and trend monitoring activities.

4. Communications

Public notices will be utilised to inform the public that the Annual Report is available for inspection.

Copies will be forwarded to the appropriate Ministers for their review and comment.

Consideration will be given to using Elements to provide a summary of the key issues.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee recommends to Council that it:

- (1) Approves the Annual Report on the implementation of the 2005/2006 Operational Plan for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.*
- (2) Notes that a copy of the Annual Report will be forwarded to the relevant Ministers.*
- (3) Notes that the Annual Report will be made available for public inspection.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment: