



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee held in the Committee Room, Greater Wellington Regional Council, 34 Chapel Street, Masterton, on Tuesday, 4 March 2008, at 4.00pm.

Present:

Peter Gawith (Chairperson), GWRC Councillors Fran Wilde and Ian Buchanan, Andy Pottinger, Jamie Falloon, Michael Blundell, Jenny Boyne, David Holmes, Emily Crofoot.

Officers Present:

Geoff Dick, David Cameron, Ian Gunn (GWRC).

Guests:

Wayne O'Donnell (Manager, Biosecurity, GWRC), Chris Garland (Baker & Associates), Richmond Beetham (Meat & Wool NZ), and Anders Crofoot (Federated Farmers Wairarapa).

There were no apologies.

Peter gave a warm welcome to both the guests and the committee. He was especially pleased to see Fran at the meeting.

Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2008 were taken as a true and accurate record.

Moved David Holmes/seconded Ian Buchanan

Passed unanimously

Presentations

- Wayne O'Donnell gave a presentation on the Possum and Predator Control Programme from 2008 onwards. The actual presentation is attached.

Wayne noted that possums are included in the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy. The Animal Health Board (AHB) will commence a rollback in 2009. The AHB has commenced a review of their NPMS. They will be considering a number of options, including the current containment policy and a more ambitious eradication policy. This terminology confuses people as they focus on the eradication of the possum. There will be no wildlife monitoring by the AHB in the rollback areas. If there is no control there will definitely be an increase in possums with the opportunity for the re-emergence of Tb. This is more likely because there is still Tb in the pig and deer population which can be re-introduced to clear areas.

Wayne proposes to consider a number of options and consult widely with the community. Members of the committee strongly supported ongoing control measures. The big picture view is that there are biodiversity benefits, land management benefits and economic benefits from continuing to have a possum control programme. The council needs to show initiative. Such a programme allows the use of the total catchment management approach with ongoing work possibly being related to sustainability farm plans

There were questions on the ongoing role of the AHB especially as it is possible there will only be two infected herds by July this year.

- Chris Garland, Richmond Beetham and Anders Crofoot answered questions on how to involve the farming community in the WHAC's business. Points noted are;
 - Possible use of monitor farms
 - There were lots of opportunities to produce printed material eg. the Ag letter, Countrywide, Wairarapa News, Richmond email updates, websites and blogs, Feds Friday flash. However demonstration in small groups is considered the better way to change attitudes and approaches.
 - Farming is at a point of change there is the opportunity to take the initiative to reduce the possibility of regulation
 - Need for empathy in the short term
 - Retain the point of difference that is the clean green image
 - Use big concepts to get debate eg Emission Trading scheme, climate change.
 - Remember the personal contact, craft the message and give feedback.
 - Develop good practise especially for environmental matters.

- Put out a message “Who WHAC is”, that our strategy is “sustainable economic development in a non regulated environment”, what are we going to do next and that Greater Wellington has heard the farmers concerns and wishes to go forward with the farmers in a partnership, identify the initial topics being tackled, that the GW programme of work is focussed on vulnerable soils and 40% of vulnerable soils still need to be treated.
- One possible approach is through environmental management plans.
- Demonstrations could be staggered over a couple of days.
- Give plenty of warning of any activities. Rural mail delivery can be problematic as they deliver as and when they like.
- David Cameron to provide the Terms of reference of WHAC to all the visitors.
- There is an opportunity to combine the rollback proposed by the AHB and the WHAC programme at the same time.
- Be mindful of the generation gap ie keep to the basics.
- Dave Cameron explained the different plans produced by his staff, farm plans (with a 10 year focus) and sustainability plans (with a 30 year focus including sustainability, pasture production, site indexes and biodiversity). There is an opportunity to develop a land environment plan including riparian management, nutrients management, soils management and wider biodiversity issues. This could cost up to \$12K per plan.

Communications

- Need to develop a draft communications strategy for the next meeting.

Updates

Dave outlined that

- GW has applied for funds from the Hill Country Erosion Fund from MAF.
- GW is part of a consortium of regional councils applying for \$25million funding to be spent over 5 years as part of the Afforestation Grants Scheme. GW would act as agents for the Crown in this process. WHAC members urged caution as the devil will be in the detail which appears to be evolving daily. Opportunity to explain to the farming community.

Meeting closed at 17.55 with Peter Gawith thanking everybody for their attendance and contributions.

Actions

1. Preparation of a media release on WHAC- David C
2. Preparation of a Communications Strategy – David C and appropriate Comms staff.