



MINUTES

SUBJECT Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee

WHEN Thursday 6 August 2009

WHERE Masterton Committee Room

PRESENT Peter Gawith (Chairperson), Cr Ian Buchanan, Jamie Falloon, Jenny Boyne, Andy Pottinger, Michael Blundell, Emily Crofoot, Bernard Card, and Anders Crofoot (guest).

Officers present: Wayne O'Donnell, David Cameron, Tim Porteous, Melissa Jesson, Ian Gunn

APOLOGIES David Holmes, Prue Lamason.

1. Apologies

Apologies were moved and accepted.

(Michael Blundell/Andy Pottinger)

2. Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved

(Jenny Boyne/Michael Blundell)

That the minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee held on 8 June 2009 be confirmed with the addition that Emily Crofoot was in attendance.

3. Earthworks in the Coastal Environment – Combined District Plan

Anders Crofoot updated the committee on progress to date. He has found the process very frustrating because following agreement on wording on a recent visit to Castlepoint Station Boffa Miskell has now withdrawn the wording. To date no new wording has appeared. The confusion relates to the rule trying to capture small lots and large farms with the result it has to deal with amenity values on the large farms and subdivisions on the small lots.

Anders believes a farm is a grass factory and should be treated as such rather than increasing regulation. What goes on in a factory is an OSH issue, so the same could apply to farming. In a point of clarification for Andy Pottinger. Anders agreed that that the visual amenity rules would apply regardless of whether the farm was in public view or not.

Ian Buchanan responded by reflecting that sorting out such issues was the challenge in developing the new regional plan. Environmental performance must improve, as to date regulation had not worked effectively. A best practise approach may be a better approach when it was clear what was trying to be achieved and why.

Anders was pleased there had been clarification of the definition of water bodies in using this rule. The definition in the RMA is very broad and captures almost all places where water lies.

4. Stock Access to Waterways – Draft Guidelines

Melissa Jesson backgrounded why the paper had been prepared. Following the recent incident of stock in waterways in South Wairarapa, GW staff have studied the current plan. The aim is to give clarity to a set of rules which only by default deal with stock and waterways. There are two rules which can be applied, one when beds of waterways are damaged and the other when standards of water quality are exceeded.

The committee expressed strongly that there is no benefit in publicising the information regarding the existence of a rule. If publicised there would likely be a back lash from the hill country farming community. After a wide ranging debate which included again the broad definition of waterbodies, the viability of hill country farming and what were the effects of stock in waterways compared to sediment generated from unprotected erosion prone soils, it was recommended that:

- A set of guidelines be developed, based on the section in the draft guidelines headed “Managing waterways without fences”.
- The farming community be reminded that a new regional plan is going to be developed over the next couple of years. During the development the hill country farming community will be consulted with.

Ian Buchanan indicated that the development of a new set of rules will be a challenge. However, what is proposed is a change from the region wide approach currently used to a catchment approach. There will be a focus on best practise, there are no given answers, and there will be an opportunity to redefine terms such as water bodies.

Jenny Boyne highlighted that intensity of use is a factor e.g. driving a mob of cattle across a water way occasionally compared to a dairy herd crossing a waterway daily. She was also concerned that significance was attached to all waterbodies.

Andy Pottinger supported the guidelines. It is far better to provide stock with water from a trough than a polluted dam/waterway, for example.

The publishing of the guidelines and the proposal to review the current rules is seen as positive step.

The committee then resolved that:

“it supported the preparation of a set of guidelines to improve the quality of water through best practise farming methods.”
(Peter Gawith/Jenny Boyne)

5. Homebush Nursery Update

Dave Cameron summarised progress on the upgrade of Akura nursery. The new bore has been drilled and tested. An application for a resource consent has been filed.

The application to develop 8-15 hectares at Homebush utilising treated wastewater had received favourable comment by Masterton District Council. Formal approval by MDC is awaited. It was possible that planting could occur in 2009 but more likely October 2010. Dave's immediate priority is to achieve the irrigation upgrade at Akura in time for the coming irrigation period. Dependent on the final agreement of area at Homebush then Mangapakeha nursery could be phased out and sold. There was still some discussion regarding the irrigation methodology with MDC regarding spray drift. Dave is confident they have an option to overcome this issue.

Sales at Akura are relatively slow this year especially from the general public.

Approval has been given to appoint the two vacant Land Management Officer positions. One position will implement WRECI.

6. Bovine Tb Programme 2009/10 Update

Wayne O'Donnell tabled a short report. The report highlighted an increase in the RTC exceeding 3% and 5% in areas where control had not occurred for some time. This was expected due to the increasing gaps between treatments. The RTC increases are higher than expected. Bernard Card wanted to see this information forwarded to the AHB. The AHB in his opinion need to know what is happening to its potential vector numbers.

The report highlighted the success of the Bovine Tb programme with a decline from 331 infected herds in 1994 to 4 infected herds with three on one clear test in July 2009. Anders Crofoot commented one infected site is the research farm and that is unlikely to be ever clear.

Wayne indicated that the high RTC numbers will probably mean increased GW expenditure when it launches its Regional Possum Control programme in 2010/11. He noted that in

Hawkes Bay the AHB was leaving a matrix of bait stations when it pulled out of the area. Negotiations will occur with the AHB to achieve something similar in the GW region.

Regarding Jamie's question on the impact of reduced funding by the GW to the current Bovine Tb programme, Wayne stated there had been no change to the original control programme. However, the trend monitoring programme had been reduced by \$100k. This will have an impact in future decision making as in the past GW had been able to make considerable savings on the work programme based on trend monitor results.

Jamie thanked Wayne for his response.

There was then a general discussion on what could happen between the Tb rollback completion and the implementation of the Regional Possum Control programme. Andy Pottinger, supported by Emily Crofoot, believed that results need to be given to land owners as the work is completed by contractors. Wayne explained that the contract did provide for the results to go to the landowner verbally but that any written report would inflate costs.

Update: The new AHB contracts **do not** require monitoring or control results to be passed onto landowners. Some contractors do this as part of their communication plan. However, no specific control results are available where contractors use certain pesticides. All monitoring catch results are now sent directly to the AHB from the contractor. GW is only informed of the final monitoring result. GW will raise this issue with the AHB to determine whether monitoring and/or control results can be given to landowners.

Could there be a requirement in a sustainability plan for farmers to monitor their possum numbers? This was seen as good way to collect the data and make good decisions on treatment. Wayne outlined that in the interim staff could give advice to farmers on pest management strategies. The committee thought this could be publicised.

Further questions were asked about the AHB's proposal to eradicate Tb. Andy believed that the Crown had walked away from its share of the costs. Both Wayne and Bernard stated that the issue was not that simple. Rather during discussions between the stakeholders groups and the AHB it had become apparent that the AHB needed to prove categorically that they could eradicate Tb, particularly in deep bush situations. Thus the stakeholders at this stage had not supported an eradication model. This could change at a future NPMS review.

7. Communications

There was good publicity in Wairarapa media in July around the extra money being spent on the Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative and a replacement possum control programme after AHB funding stops. WHCAC chair Peter Gawith was quoted in these stories on behalf of the committee.

A 600 word story about soil conservation will appear in GW's Our Region magazine in September, which is delivered to 180,000 mailboxes in the region. Dave Cameron is quoted on behalf of GW and Peter Gawith is quoted on behalf of the committee.

After the discussion around the bovine TB programme for 2009/10 and the increasing RTC rates in parts of the region, Jim will prepare a media release reminding landowners of GW's services for surveying possum numbers and advising on control options. The release will spell out the many negative effects of the possum population building up again, particularly if bovine Tb somehow found its way back into the population. A member of WHCAC with knowledge of bovine Tb should be quoted encouraging landowners to consider taking action if possum numbers are increasing.

8. General Business

Jamie Falloon enquired as to the progress on the significant landscape and outstanding amenity survey presented at the last meeting. The meeting was informed that Boffa Miskel has secured the contract and they are underway with the preliminary stages. As soon as the report or any interim report comes to hand it will be circulated to members prior to further Committee discussion.

Ian Gunn

Integrated Catchment Advisor/Senior Policy Advisor