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Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
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General Managers' Report to the Environmental Wellbeing Committee 22 November 2011

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of Greater Wellington activities relating to the Committee's areas of responsibility.

2. The decision-making process and significance

No decision is being sought in this report.

3. Catchment Management

3.1 Biosecurity

2011/12 AHB and GW joint aerial 1080 projects

The Animal Health Board have approved three aerial control projects for the region during 2011/12:

- Mangaroa Kaitoke 8,500 ha
- Featherston Waiorongomai Crown 12,300 ha
- Kapiti Buffer 5,600 ha

GW also intends to undertake aerial 1080 control within the Wainuiomata Orongorongo water collection area over approximately 7,400 hectares. The AHB and GW have decided to undertake a joint project for the Mangaroa-Kaitoke, Featherston-Waiorongomai and Wainuiomata-Orongorongo operations. The enlarged project known as Rimutaka Range Aerial Project will be covering some 28,000 hectares. Consultation with user groups and interested parties is underway and the contractors (BioWorks) have commenced discussions with landowners in the area.

The Kapiti Buffer project has been named Pukeatua, after the highest peak within the project. It will be controlled as a stand alone AHB project.

Consultation with landowners has commenced. This project has been initiated to provide support to the Otaki Buffer operation which is due to be declared bovine Tb free in June 2013.

The application of aerial 1080 baits in both projects is expected to occur from May 2012 onwards.

AHB Bovine Tb vector management contract

The GW vector management services contract with the AHB comes to an end on 30 November 2011. Staff are ensuring that all contract requirements are up to date before the conclusion date. The main issues include reporting of contractor information, preparation of monitoring work plans and the upcoming aerial projects.

Regional Possum Predator Control Programme (RPPCP)

Trend monitoring is underway within the North Wairarapa RPPCP area, which was first treated in the 2010/11 year. The results of monitoring will be used to determine the level of control works to be implemented for the 2011/12 year. To date, only one stratum has finished being monitored and the results determined. The McLay's strata, immediately north of the Ruamahanga River near Mt Bruce has been completed. Pre-operation monitoring result (Dec 2010) was RTC 9.5%. Recent results, RTC of 0.7% (Oct 2011), indicates an excellent reduction in possum numbers in the area.

Dung Beetle workshops

Biosecurity staff organised a series of presentations on the results of the dung beetle research funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund. Based on the results of the research the Environmental Protection Authority have authorised importation and releases of the number of dung beetles into the New Zealand environment. Following the presentation to the Farming Reference Group, Dr Shaun Forgie, Landcare Research scientist, held five presentations at venues throughout the region discussing biology, life cycle and potential benefits of dung beetle releases for livestock owners and the environment.

Although staff put a significant effort in advertising and contacting interest groups and organisations a limited number of people (33) took the opportunity to attend the presentations. Those in attendance were enthusiastic about the benefits of introducing dung beetles and were committed to inform their farming groups and neighbours about the programme. Five people requested additional information following the meetings. The Enviro-schools programme coordinators have shown interest in developing a programme with schools to rear beetles for future releases.

Rook control

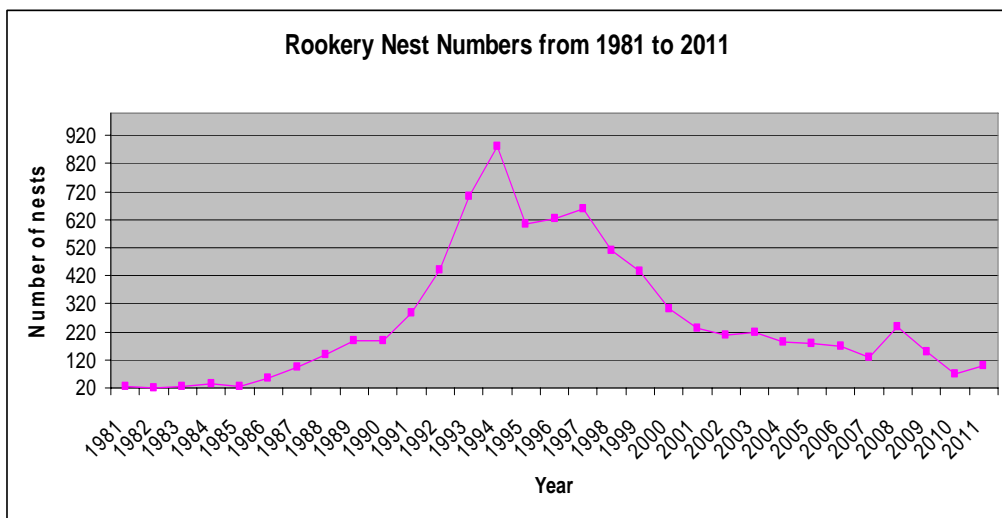
The aerial rook nest baiting programme for the year was completed. There were nine rookeries treated this season with a total of 98 nests. This equates approximately to a total population of 440 rooks before this year's control was initiated.

Rook nest numbers are up on the previous year due to the disclosure of a previously unknown rookery in the Tinui Valley area. The landowner alerted GW to the presence of the rookery as a direct result of GW's extensive media awareness programme about the rook menace.

Greater Wellington's rook population peaked at 881 nests in 1995. Rooks have proven to be a resilient and tenacious species with the ability to quickly expand in numbers in the absence of programmed control.

Biosecurity staff will meet with Horizons and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils staff later in the year to coordinate control operations and discuss any proposed changes to current best practise procedures.

The following graph provides data on rook population trends over the past 31 years. There was no control undertaken between 1985 and 1995. It is conceivable that without intervention, the rook population would have continued to expand at the same rate as for those ten years (Dr Cowan pers. comm) potentially resulting in over 25,000 rooks resident in the region today. In this scenario there would likely be rookeries established within urban areas as occurred in the Hawkes Bay cities of Napier and Hastings. These rookeries are the most difficult to control.



3.2 Land Management

Envirolink Tool Application

An Envirolink funding application that seeks to link catchment scale assessments to farm scale solutions through farm plans has successfully passed the first stage.

The project will produce a tool that will provide a way to link resource management issues identified at a catchment scale, with the implementation of best management practices at a farm scale level through the use of farm plans linked with catchment-level assessments.

The tool would further develop the capability of the CLUES (Catchment Land Use Environmental Sustainability) model by better linking it to on-farm nutrient management via Overseer along with appropriate diffuse pollution attenuation tools implemented through a farm plan process. The tool would allow the best places in a catchment to be identified to target farm plans, as well as a providing a method to identify which on-farm issues would be addressed within each plan.

The tool will enable the most effective use of resources by prioritising where on farm works should occur within a catchment and the net effect of farm plan implementation. This will incorporate for example soil type, land class, hydrology, land use and the targeted pollutant (N, P, sediment, *e.coli*) in the prioritisation of farm plan implementation. Our intention is to develop and implement this work in the Mangatarere catchment.

The next stage of the approval process involves the Ministry for Science and Innovation who must approve the development of full proposals. Full proposals are written by the successful bidders, in this case Greater Wellington and NIWA. These then get externally reviewed and all going well the contracts are in place to start the work 1 July 2012.

Ballance Farm Environment Awards (BFEA)

The Ballance Farm Environment Awards is currently at the initial judging stage and is expected to be completed prior to 30 November 2011. From this pool the best properties within the categories will be identified for the final judging on 17 February and will culminate in the BFEA Awards presentation evening on 26 April 2012 where the winners of the various categories will be announced. A Field Day on the winner/s property is planned to be held on 16 May 2012.

The Awards are presented under the following categories:

- Sheep and beef (5 entries)
- Dairy (1 entry)
- Cropping (2 entries)
- Lifestyle (3 entries)

3.3 BioWorks

BioWorks has been awarded sufficient contracts to fully utilise all available staff resources for the year. The current workload includes 31 contract areas covering 78,583 hectares.

Teams are fully occupied on surveys and consultation for aerial operations. The West Tararua aerial is the one remaining operation to be completed from the 2010/11 year. This operation awaits suitable weather for pre-feed and toxin bait application.

BioWorks was successful in being awarded aerial contracts for 3 years in the region. Three aerial operations will be completed this year.

AHB has developed a new data base module to capture information in the field (bar code system) that now requires BioWorks to invest in field computers (PDA). AHB require these to be used in all survey work as of 1 November 2011. Field staff have received initial training. Upskilling staff will be ongoing for the remainder of the year. The cost for each PDA is \$3,200. We are investigating an opportunity to gain wider use of the PDA within Biosecurity, including integration into the database under development.

3.4 Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project

Fresh Start for Freshwater Clean-up Fund

In mid-September the Minister for the Environment announced the “Fresh Start for Freshwater Clean-up Fund”. The Clean-up Fund will provide \$15 million in funding over two years to help communities to clean up waterways that are affected by historical water quality issues.

An application for funding for Wairarapa Moana has been prepared by staff involved in the project, i.e. Department of Conservation, Ngati Kahungunu, Ducks Unlimited and Greater Wellington. The total cost of the project is \$2,940,000 with 47% of the funds (\$1,382,000) being requested from the Clean-up Fund. The funding bid had to be received by the Ministry by 31 October. The bid will be assessed in November with funding decisions being made in December and announcements occurring in February 2012.

The application has included the normal commitments from the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington, plus additional funding currently in the Annual Plan for the development of “land environment farm plans” and a commitment from Ducks Unlimited for restoration works in the Wairio area.

The bid highlights the historical events contributing to the poor water quality at Wairarapa Moana, e.g. land clearing within the Ruamahanga River catchment, the discharge of sewage and dairy factory effluent into the Ruamahanga River, plus the works associated with Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme resulting in the drainage/conversion of a high percentage of the wetlands to pasture.

The works programme includes widespread consultation with the landowners within the immediate vicinity of Wairarapa Moana, further investigations to evaluate water and nutrient balances and cultural health monitoring measures, works in edge wetlands around Wairarapa Moana (weed and pest control, land environment farm plans, riparian fencing wetland enhancement etc), and the development of limits for water quality, quantity and lake levels. The works programme will be managed by the current Wairarapa Moana Management Team.

Wairarapa Moana is ranked as one of the largest lakes with historical pollution problems having a trophic level index of 5.0. Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere at 6.9 is the worst in New Zealand, with Lake Rotorua having a trophic index level of 4.7.

The fund has already allocated \$6 million to Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

Audit

Staff from the Auditor-General's office are about to commence an audit of the Department of Conservation's activities under the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. They have visited Wairarapa Moana to assess what they need to consider in their audit. Key issues which came out of the discussion were the importance of the relationships within any project plus the affected landowners, and that achieving biodiversity gains was complex, taking considerable time and funds.

3.5 Biodiversity

Restructuring

The restructuring process to establish the Biodiversity department in its new form continues with interviews for the Implementation and Strategy and Systems teams about to commence. The review of the current *Take Action* and *Take Care* programmes has commenced and will be completed by 31 March 2012.

The *Biodiversity Monitoring Needs Assessment Project* has also commenced with Philippa Crisp and Nikki McArthur working towards a 31 March 2012 completion date for this work.

Project Rena

Biodiversity Department staff have been involved in putting their relevant oil spill recovery training skills into action as part of the Project Rena recovery operation in the Bay of Plenty. Phillipa Crisp has been involved in the incident control area and is trained in oil wildlife recovery, whilst Harley Spence has been training volunteers.

Draft Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan

A multi-agency *Draft Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan* has been developed over the last three years as a result of a partnership between Porirua City Council, Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington and Te Runanga O Toa Rangatira. The process has been mainly driven by Porirua City Council. The Strategy is a non-statutory document.

The draft strategy was publicly notified at the end of August and submissions closed on 30 September by which time a total of 23 written submissions were received of which seven requested to be heard in support of their submissions.

A four person hearing panel was established with representatives from the three councils and the Runanga to consider submissions. The members were Rawiri Faulkner (Te Runanga O Toa Rangatira), Councillor Liz Kelly (Porirua City Council), Councillor Ngaire Best (Wellington City Council) and Councillor Barbara Donaldson. Rawiri Faulkner chaired the panel. A public hearing to hear submissions was held on 11 October. As a result of the

submissions and subsequent hearings the Hearings Panel has produced a report in which it recommends a small number of minor changes to the draft strategy.

A final version of the *Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan* will now be produced and the three councils and the Runanga will be asked to endorse the document as a blueprint for future collaborative management of the harbour. A report to this effect will go to the December Council meeting.

4. Development

Unfortunately forestry prices received from logs sent to China remain depressed. However some logs are being sent to India and these are showing better returns than the Chinese market.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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