

Report 13.718
Date 18 July 2013
File CMG/01/21/01

Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
Author Ian Gunn, Project Co-ordinator, Wairarapa Moana

Wairarapa Moana Clean Up Fund - Grant Rates

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval for the process and allocation of Greater Wellington Regional Council funding towards on-farm development works under the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Fresh Start for Freshwater Clean Up Fund Project.

2. The decision-making process and significance

Officers recognise that the matters referenced in this report may have a high degree of importance to affected or interested parties.

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act). Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

2.1 Significance of the decision

Part 6 requires Greater Wellington to consider the significance of the decision. The term 'significance' has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

This report requests that the Committee allocates funds from a pool, which is set out in the Council's adopted Annual Plan 2013/14. The Annual Plan was developed in accordance with the process set out in the Act.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

3. Background

In early 2012 the Ministry for the Environment accepted an application for funds to the Fresh Start for Freshwater Clean Up Fund from the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Project. The aim of the Project is to improve the water quality being discharged off the neighbouring farmland into the series of edge wetlands surrounding Wairarapa Moana and subsequently into Wairarapa Moana. The total funding for this Project is the order of \$2.3 million with the Ministry funding 44%. The balance is being funded by a partnership including landowners, Department of Conservation, Ducks Unlimited, Dairy NZ and Greater Wellington Regional Council. The Council contribution is provided under the approved budgets of a number of contributing Departments.

Implementation of the Project is managed by the writer as Project Co-ordinator. However, there are a number of staff from different GWRC Departments involved (Land Management, Environmental Science, Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Flood Protection) providing a range of services including on-farm assessments, contract management, physical field work, and science research.

The Project comprises the following workstreams;

- Land owner engagement;
- On-farm works;
- Restoration planning;
- Restoration works;
- Assessment monitoring;
- Technology transfer.

This report focuses on the methodology used to determine grants assistance packages to fund on-farm projects which either improve water quality and or biodiversity. An average funding rate of 50% must be achieved across the on-farm projects category.

4. Comment

Initial discussions with the farming community have identified a group of “willing landowners”. Each such landowner has been visited and a ‘farm assessment’ has been completed. The assessments produce short documents which summarise the farm and environmental management, soils, hydrology, biodiversity, weed and pest animal management plus cultural/historic sites. From these assessments a list of potential projects/opportunities are prepared for the land owner to consider. Some 92 projects have been created from the 20 odd “willing landowners”.

The variety of projects includes:

1. Water quality: improved effluent management, eliminating runoff from tracks, developing constructed wetlands, improved fertiliser

application, improved accuracy and efficiency of water irrigation, drainage management and monitoring of drainage water quality.

2. Biodiversity: riparian planting and fencing, shelter belt management and incorporation of native species, weed control in retired areas, restoration of wetland areas and monitoring fish in drains/waterways.

A defensible grant funding process which deals with this variety of projects is required to motivate landowners to be part of the project.

5. Criteria

In simple terms, there are four criteria that must be satisfied before a project can be considered for Clean Up funding. These are determined during the farm assessment review:

1. a proposed project must not be to satisfy a compliance requirement, e.g. there will be no funding to achieve legal compliance with the RMA;
2. the project must be legal;
3. the project must comply with either water quality and/or biodiversity criteria;
4. the landowner must show commitment to the project. Usually this will be by making a financial contribution to the works, but may also include retiring productive land to create wetlands.

Proposed project criteria include the following: water quality and biodiversity benefit, demonstration/learning (of best practise), financial benefit to farm production or business cost savings, profile/visibility, timeline (how long to be achieved), risk/likelihood of success. A scoring system is used to identify suitable proposals.

With the identification of a variety of projects a range of grant rates have been recommended, as per the table below.

Recommendations for grant rates:

Rate (Grant funding)	Notes
15%-35% Effluent management, farm efficiency projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project will provide major revenue generating or cost saving benefit to the landowner. • There is little disturbance of current farm operations. • There is some moderate water quality or biodiversity value from the project.
35%-65% Riparian projects plus modification/protection of infrastructure, stream bank, wetland restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is useful revenue generating or cost saving benefit to the landowner. • Some minor disturbance of farm operations. • Good value for water quality or biodiversity value from the project. • Other criteria score at good levels

Rate (Grant funding)	Notes
65%-80% Development of a constructed wetland, retirement of farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is only minor and insignificant revenue generating or cost saving benefit to the landowner. • There may be significant disturbance of farm operations e.g. through permanent retirement of an area. • The project provides high value for water quality or biodiversity value. • Other criteria score at good levels.
80%-90% Research project e.g. study to determine water quality drainage from tile drains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is only minor and insignificant revenue generating or cost saving benefit to the landowner. • There may be significant disturbance of farm operation e.g. through permanent retirement of an area. • The project provides very high value for water quality or biodiversity value. • Other criteria also score at high levels.

6. Approval Process

The team leaders managing the various streams within the project i.e. the leaders of the on-farm works, restoration and assessment monitoring, will receive briefs for the individual projects and recommend a level of funding. Written agreement of funding by the landowner will trigger the individual project manager to approve projects up to \$10,000 grant funding.

Larger funding projects will be approved by senior management staff within GWRC, i.e. Managers of Biodiversity, Biosecurity, Land Management, Environmental Science and Flood Protection.

Quotes to obtain firm estimates for the project will establish the financial obligations for both the landowner and the Clean Up Fund. A memorandum of understanding protecting the works from poor grazing practise, sale of the property, adverse natural events and negligence, will be prepared for each landowner participating in the Clean Up Fund project.

7. Communications

Once approved, this set of grant rates will be communicated to the “willing landowners” and used in publicity to motivate other farmers to participate in the Clean Up Fund Project.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Approves the process and grants rates outlined in this report for the implementation of the on-farm work programmes within the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Fresh Start for Freshwater Clean Up Fund Project.***

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'I. Gunn', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. O'Donnell', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ian Gunn
Project Co-ordinator,
Wairarapa Moana

Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager, Catchment
Management