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Report to Environment Committee  
from Wayne Hastie, Manager, Resource Policy

## **Marine Biodiversity - Proposed Case Study**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek the Committee's approval of a proposed programme of work on marine biodiversity in collaboration with the Ministry for the Environment.

### **2. Background**

Over the past two to three years the WRC has been striving to ensure that ecological principles are incorporated into its management of the environment. The work has its origins in the Ecosystems Chapter of the Regional Policy Statement. The Council's biodiversity goal is:

*Maintain and restore **all** remaining natural habitats and ecosystems to a healthy functioning state and sustain those features and ecological processes that support indigenous biodiversity in all ecosystems.*

The RPS ecosystem objectives are:

- *The overall quality of ecosystems in the Region is increased.*
- *Healthy, functioning ecosystems are distributed throughout the Region, including the rural and urban environments.*
- *The area and quality of indigenous ecosystems in the Region is increased.*
- *The Region has a diversity of healthy ecosystems which represent the full range of regional flora, fauna and habitats.*

- *Special ecosystems in the Region are actively protected and appropriately managed.*

Marine ecosystems have been identified as a core element of the Council's overall Ecosystem and Biodiversity Implementation Plan.

Two workshops have been held for councillors. In November 1999, councillors considered the role that the Council might take in providing additional protection for the Wellington Region's marine environment. In June 2000, councillors were presented information about their marine environment and community attitudes towards it. Glen Lauder, Commonground Associates, facilitated the workshop, and he has continued to participate in and advise the Council on its marine work.

The Council has allocated funds to marine biodiversity as part of its overall package of ecosystem projects.

### 3. **Steering Group**

In September 2001, the WRC established a steering group to assist it with defining a work programme. The group is known as the Wellington Region Marine Biodiversity Steering Group (WRMBSG). In addition to WRC staff members and Glen Lauder, representatives from the Ministry for the Environment, Maritime Safety Authority, and NIWA participated. A second meeting was held in October 2001, with additional representation from the Department of Conservation and Ministry of Fisheries.

### 4. **Key Themes**

Three key themes have emerged from the work with Councillors and the WRMBSG:

(i) Information base

We need to find out what is already known, make it available to those who need or desire to know, and fill the gaps in our knowledge.

(ii) Community engagement

The community has indicated a high level of interest in the marine environment. We need to explore this further to identify community objectives and ways to actively involve the community in marine management. In this context "community" is given its broadest possible meaning, and includes iwi, individuals, groups and institutions.

(iii) Interagency collaboration

To a large degree, management of the marine environment has been partitioned into separate silos. Co-operation, collaboration and integration will be essential if we are to maximise our progress towards achieving biodiversity goals.

## 5. The Proposal

The WRMBSG has recommended a case study approach to addressing the three themes. The initial focus is to be on Wellington Harbour and the adjoining coastal marine area, bounded by Sinclair and Turakirae Heads. This is an area of high community interest with many current issues including proposals for a marine reserve, a marine education centre, a surf reef, beach nourishment, dredging and the sinking of a frigate. In the future, a similar approach is proposed for other parts of the Region.

It is proposed that the project be undertaken jointly with the Ministry for the Environment. A Collaboration Proposal is being prepared to set out how the project will be structured and managed. A copy of the draft is included as Attachment 1.

The project has strong linkages with a number of national initiatives being carried out as part of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Package and the Ministry for the Environment's Indicator Programme

We are fortunate in having key personnel from central government agencies on the WRMBSG and in having involvement on behalf of local government in central government's Marine Biodiversity Co-ordination Group and the Oceans Policy official's group.

## 6. Objectives

### Knowledge

- Improve our understanding and management of marine biodiversity.
- Identify and implement opportunities for rehabilitation, restoration and protection of marine biodiversity.
- Develop and trial tools for management that enable decision-makers to consider whole ecosystems.

### Participation

- Identify and implement opportunities to involve the community and iwi in marine biodiversity management.
- Raise the public profile of marine biodiversity and enthuse, encourage and support public involvement.

### Integration

- Maximise the value of investment in marine biodiversity.
- Identify key inter-agency management responsibilities and how these can be integrated between agencies and with the community.
- Learn how to work together across silos.

## 7. Where to from here?

This report is seeking approval from the Committee to proceed with the project. The Ministry for the Environment is also seeking approval and requires the concurrence of the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries.

The joint project is at a stage where we are developing some specific work elements with the intention of refining these in the period up until Christmas and, subject to obtaining approvals, commencing work in the New Year.

## 8. **Communication**

Communication will be a critical element of the project. It will be an integral part of all three strands of work. Consideration will be given to the preparation of newsletters, information sheets, the Internet (possibly the NZBS Website), public meetings, public seminars, attendance at meetings external to the project (e.g. at a community group's regular meeting), as well as regular meetings between participants.

## 9. **Recommendations**

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

- (1) ***endorse the proposed project on marine biodiversity; and***
- (2) ***agree that the project be undertaken jointly with the Ministry for the Environment.***

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

WAYNE HASTIE  
Manager, Resource Policy

JANE BRADBURY  
Divisional Manager, Environment

Attachment:

1. **Marine Biodiversity in Wellington Region: Knowledge, participation integration**