



Report 04.119
Date 3 March 2004
File WS/08/05/01

Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
Author Colin Wright, Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of current activities and provide information of interest since the previous meeting held on 3 February 2004.

2. Divisional Matters

2.1 February Floods

February was a most unusual month, as all will appreciate. We had flood after flood with the Lower Valley floodways operating four times in two weeks, plus extensive lightning and thunder, and very strong winds (230 kilometres per hour at our Angle Knob rain gauge).

I wish to acknowledge the fine contributions by many staff in responding to the circumstances and the problems in the community. Some worked through the night, others dealt with numerous phone calls, while the River Management staff will be very busy for several months to come.

Different aspects of the floods are mentioned elsewhere in this order paper, but I particularly note that much of the very large Lower Valley Scheme was designed for a flow of 1,500 cubic metres per second (cumecs). On 16 February the scheme successfully handled approximately 2,000 cumecs, admittedly with extensive overtopping to stopbanks. In my opinion, this scheme and the other schemes in the Wairarapa performed extremely well in the circumstances. In effect this was 'pay back' time for much of the ratepayer funds that have been invested in flood protection over the years.

2.2 Taskforce Green

As part of the Government's flood relief package, we have agreed to administer and organise Taskforce Green workers to assist with the clean up of a number of badly affected Wairarapa farm properties following the series of flood events during February.

There are two gangs of five workers each who are working on properties as advised through the Wairarapa Flood Relief Co-ordinator, Bruce Watkins. These gangs are expected to be employed for 2-3 months. All costs associated with this activity will be reimbursed by Government and we have already received a \$20,000 initial grant towards this.

2.3 Tony Draper

It is with sadness that I inform Committee members of the recent death of Tony Draper who was an appointed member of the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee during the 1995 – 1998 triennium.

Tony was also an excellent chairman of our Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme Advisory Committee since its commencement in 1988, and more recently was also chairman of the newly formed Lower Wairarapa Valley Scheme Review Committee.

Tony also was on the Whaka Drain Sub-Committee which met on several occasions to consider Whakawiriwiri Drain and other related issues.

Crs Long and Buchanan, together with Mr Gunn and I, attended Tony's funeral service on 27 February. The Council Chairperson has also forwarded a letter of sympathy to his family.

I note that Tony was able to appreciate that the Lower Valley Scheme successfully coped with its largest ever flood shortly before he died.

2.4 Staffing Issues

Deborah Walker, our new Communications Advisor, commenced duties on 11 February, and will be based in the Masterton office.

Deborah has spent around 14 years in communication-related areas for a wide range of organisations (large and small, profit and non-profit), as well as being self-employed as a communications consultant. As well as the "usual" PR/communications activities, her experience includes web communication, marketing communications, brand management and event marketing. She has also had experience in cross-cultural communications, in particular with communications targeting New Zealand's Asian communities.

Michelle Bird has taken up duties as Land Management Officer, Biodiversity from 1 March 2004. Based in Masterton, her role will primarily be to implement the Super 12 Catchments programme. This involves working with landowners in twelve key catchments throughout the region with a view to protecting and enhancing aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems on private land. Michelle will also be involved with other landowners who need information and advice on riparian planting, wetland protection and enhancement, and indigenous forest protection. She will also be providing administrative support, advice and information for the Take Care Programme within the Wairarapa.

Faith Barber has been appointed to replace Helen Marr as Resource Advisor in Policy and Planning. Faith has a MSc in Resource Management and had worked at the DOC Field Centre at Kaikoura, for the past eight years.

David Bayly has been promoted to the Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants) position left vacant after the retirement of Kevin Worsley. Dave has been involved with our Pest Plants Programme for approximately 10 years and previously worked for the Taranaki Regional Council.

Ray Clarey, Senior Biosecurity Officer (Animals) has been appointed as the Local Government NZ representative on the National Possum Control Agency for a 3 year term.

3. Biosecurity Department: (Wayne O'Donnell)

Pest Plants

3.1 Eradication species

Aquatic species

Two new sites of eelgrass have been located at Otaihanga, Kapiti Coast. The infestations were located by the Department of Conservation (DoC). Property owners have informed DoC that the eelgrass was intentionally introduced to their properties along with koi carp around four years ago. The source of the infestations can be traced to a now deregistered company "Pondcare" which was based in Raumati. The ponds containing the eelgrass cover hundreds of square metres with estimated depths of several metres. A further pond containing Lagarasiphon has also been located. The Lagarasiphon was also intentionally introduced.

With eelgrass being an eradication species Council could incur considerable costs in eradicating it. Staff are working with DoC on management options.

Staff have also been undertaking work on an historical Senegal tea site at Reikorangi, which is another intentional introduction.

Following these incidents, staff are now considering the development of an aquatic pest plants pamphlet. This could be an appropriate time to develop a pamphlet that could be distributed to households in the Kapiti and Porirua areas.

Blue passionflower: Seven new sites have been located in the Wairarapa and Western zone. The seed of this plant readily strikes, necessitating up to three site visits by staff on some sites.

Madeira vine: Two new sites have been located at Eastbourne.

Sweet pea shrub: Four new sites have been located in the Western zone

Bathurst bur: The Section recently spent a day controlling Bathurst bur at Gladstone. The number of plants were considerably less than in previous years but this may be due to the flooding that has recently taken place.

African feathergrass: In previous years one of the largest infestations of African feathergrass located at the Karori cemetery has been, by agreement, controlled by Wellington City Council. A recent inspection by staff revealed that the work was not being done to the required standard. Many plants were simply being cut with seed-heads left to lie around the cemetery. In view of the plants eradication status, and the need to guarantee timely and effective control, Greater Wellington staff have now taken over responsibility for control.

3.2 Containment species

An Otaki survey identified numerous sites of Evergreen buckthorn. These have now been cleared by the occupiers. However, two properties have been served Notices of Direction.

3.3 Suppression Plants

Large areas of Banana passionfruit in the Otaki survey area have been controlled by occupiers. Occupier in a further fifteen properties outside of the survey are under instruction to clear.

Several new sites of various Suppression species have been located in Eastbourne during surveys:

Banana passionfruit: Thirteen new sites located;

Wild ginger: Twenty-eight new sites located.

Old mans beard: Twenty-four complaints have been investigated in Wellington City. Twelve of the infestations were small enough for staff to deal with.

Wild ginger: Eleven new infestations recorded.

Cathedral bells: Five new infestations recorded.

Seven Notices of Direction have been served on Wellington City residents to date, but no default work has been required.

3.4 Vigilance Species

A site of Purple loosestrife has been located in Otaihanga, Kapiti. Staff are working with DoC to control the infestation during March.

Staff have spoken to colleagues at Hutt City and Wellington City Councils with a view to them reporting infestations of vigilance species. Greater Wellington currently inspects sites based on a random selection process. However, we will require more extensive coverage of the region if we are to generate sufficient information to consider changing the Regional Pest Management Strategy during the next review. Both organisations are keen to be involved but will require training in the identification of the species. Training could occur at the Greater Wellington Hutt Depot plant nursery.

A number of infestations of Asiatic knotweed have been located in the Wellington area. This species is not included in our RPMS. Staff are investigating management options in other regions. The species may be included as a Vigilant species in the interim until further information is available.

3.5 Contracts

Service delivery contracts for eradication and containment species have been issued. The contracts are for three areas, Kapiti, Wellington and Wairarapa.

A further contract has been let for the control of Old Mans Beard on the Ruamahanga River. The area to be controlled is from the Kokotau Bridge to the confluence with the Waiohine River.

3.6 Publicity

The regular Pest Watch articles for plants and animals in Midweek continue to receive positive feedback. A recent article on Blue passionflower (eradication species) resulted in three new sites being confirmed.

Bovine Tb

3.7 Bovine Tb 2003/04 Programme

- The approved programme for the 2003/04 year has been increased slightly with the inclusion of a further wildlife survey and increases in possum control hectares in the SE Wairarapa Stage 2 operation and Masterton Flats.

AHB Approved Hectares

Possum control	302,307
Ferret control	31,770
Surveys	<u>38,748</u>
	372,825

Only one vector control contract remains to be let for the 2003/04 year:

- Mangaroa-Kaitoke 3,618

Tenders for this operation close on 12 March 2004.

- **Control Operations**

To date the following contractors have been issued control contracts for the 2003/04 year:

	Possum (ha)	Ferret (ha)	Survey (ha)	Total
GW Bovine Unit	185,814	23,828	22,349	231,991
Professional Guiding	41,894	2,874	3,102	47,867
J McCaslin	40,356	-	13,297	53,653
Target Pest Control	6,620	-	-	6,620
Horizons Regional Council	19,311	5,068	-	24,379
Central Trappers	4,700	-	-	4,700
Remove Control	31,476	-	5,047	36,520
To Let	3,618	-	-	3,618
Totals	333,783	31,770	43,795	409,348

3.8 2003/04 Programme Progress

- To date, 103,560 hectares of possum control and 1,734 hectares of ferret control have successfully been completed from this year's programme.

272,578 hectares are still required to be completed. However, all contractors are currently working in the region and many contracts are nearing completion. At this stage, we have not been notified by contractors that they do not expect to complete their 2003/04 contracts. However, a very wet February has caused delays for most contractors.

- **Monitoring Results**

The following monitoring results have been recorded since the last Committee meeting:

Featherston	HR 6	1.1	GWRC Bovine Unit
Featherston	HR 3	0.0	GWRC Bovine Unit
Kahutara-Pirinoa	MR 2	0.7	GWRC Bovine Unit
Mt Bruce Reserve		1.0	Department of Conservation
Ruamahanga River	HR 1	0.2	GWRC Bovine Unit
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	HR 5	0.0	Professional Guiding
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	MR 6	4.9	Trend Monitor
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	MR 7	2.3	Trend Monitor
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	MR 8	3.9	Trend Monitor
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	MR 9	5.0	Trend Monitor
SE Wairarapa – Stg 1	MR 10	8.4	Trend Monitor
Tinui	HR 2	0.2	J McCaslin
Tinui	MR 1	1.3	Trend Monitor

3.9 Animal Health Board Plans

The Vector Management Group within the Biosecurity Department has prepared three-year vector control plans (2004/05 – 2006/07) for Animal Health Board approval.

The Plans include:

- Vector Control Programme Plan
- Contract and Capacity Management Plans
- Local Environment Management Plan

The three-year Vector Control Programme Plan was designed after consultation with the following parties:

- GWRC Vector Managers
- AgriQuality - District Disease Control Manager
- Animal Health Board - National Disease Control Manager
- Regional Co-ordinator

The Vector Control Programme Plan does require an increase of vector control within the Region for the next few years. If the plans are successful, as anticipated, vector control within some areas will be able to cease or reduce by the 2006/07 year.

Pest Animals

3.10 Communications

Articles on topical aspects of pest animals and plants are being published fortnightly in the Wairarapa Midweek newspaper under the banner 'Pest Watch'. The latest articles focussed on Old Mans Beard and unwanted and feral cats. Media releases on the Huntleigh Park (Crofton Downs) feral cat problem and Miramar Peninsula possum eradication programme have brought welcome positive publicity. An article on the possum problem was also published in the Central Community Newspapers publication, 'Life in the Rural Lane'.

Ken Wright, Biosecurity Officer, gave a presentation to the Wellington South Rotary Club on 4th February.

The updating of information brochures is continuing following the Greater Wellington re-branding. This has been quite a major task. In the interim, old brochures are being utilised.

3.11 Key Native Ecosystems Management

Land Ecosystem Strategy

A Land Ecosystem Strategy (Action Plan) for Greater Wellington is currently being developed under the leadership of Tim Porteous, Biodiversity Co-ordinator. As part of this strategy, the Key Native Ecosystem management programme is being revised. The KNE programme has been in place since 1996 and over time has become dated.

The main issue for the KNE programme is to redefine eligibility criteria and to divide the management areas into three principal categories, private land, territorial authorities and Greater Wellington Parks and Forests. The private land management eligibility criteria have become the most difficult with increasing requests for pest control assistance allied to the increase in native bush and wetland areas being covenanted. The draft proposed plan for biodiversity and private land outlines a means to standardise the prioritisation process for all applications for assistance. It is intended to have the final draft of the KNE management plan available in early April this year.

Programme for 2004-05

The regional KNE programme for 2004-05 is currently being fine-tuned. The programme entails possum and predator control for 69 sites over 16,150 hectares. Of these sites, 43 (62%) are reserves administered by territorial authorities. The remainder are areas of private land containing protected sites

which are mostly QEII covenants. The 69 sites include six coastal escarpments and eight wetlands. The remainder are mostly lowland native bush remnants, many of which also contain wetlands. There will be practical assistance from care groups, volunteers or owner(s) at 29 of the sites.

Wellington City Council is hoping to be able to expand its KNE programme and is seeking extra funding for 2004-05 on. This work is usually conducted on a cost share basis with Greater Wellington but does not preclude WCC from funding their own initiatives. Any change to the currently proposed KNE programme will be subject to availability of funds saved from other areas.

Maintenance work is continuing throughout all of the 53 established KNE sites. This usually involves three-monthly visits to replenish bait stations, clear and re-bait kill traps, keep access routes open, check public warning signage is appropriate and take GPS readings for each site wherever this has not been done previously. New works underway are the Wilf Mexted Scenic Reserve at Greenacres (WCC) and Speedy's Reserve at Kelson for Greater Wellington Parks and Forests.

Contracts have been awarded to the Bovine Business Unit to undertake possum control in the Pencarrow Lakes Block of East Harbour Regional Park (EHRP) and also for the privately owned bush areas adjacent to EHRP at Wainuiomata. Biosecurity is undertaking possum and rat control within EHRP for Parks and Forests.

3.12 Magpies

Magpie traps have been in heavy demand, particularly in the Wairarapa. Most users are small block owners who perceive that magpies deter native birds from becoming established in their neighbourhood. One sharemilker from Kopuaranga (near Masterton) has captured more than 600 magpies in a year with the one trap.

4. Land & River Operations Department: (Ian Gunn)

4.1 Tauanui Logging

Logging in Tauanui came to an abrupt halt when the access road was severed (in five places) as a result of the flooding.

Temporary access was restored so that the felled timber could be loaded out and logging machinery could be moved to another site. Since then a digger and D6 have been used to progressively repair the damage, protect the repairs and work to restore the access to logging truck standard.

Some windthrow has occurred around stand margins and will be salvaged when logging resumes.

4.2 Hiwinui

Minor damage to roads and crossings has been repaired. Scattered windthrow of crop trees across the road has yet to be cleared. The area logged and replanted over the previous five years has withstood the recent series of storm events with only minor slip damage.

4.3 Stoney Creek

A major slip occurred in the back catchment of Stoney Creek (headwaters of Huangarua River). This blocked the stream for a time and the subsequent release of debris when the water broke through wiped out the floodgate on the downstream boundary. Two dropouts partly severed internal roads, but have now been restored.

Stoney Creek breached a bank into a neighbour's property immediately downstream of the Tukurumuri Hall. The bank has been repaired and we are working with the neighbour to remedy the fence damage.

4.4 Rough Hill

Rough Hill suffered floodgate and fence damage adjacent to Cape River Road.

4.5 Wind Damage at Akura Conservation Centre

A combination of wet soils and high winds has combined to caused damage at a number of sites within Akura Nursery. In addition, the recent heavy rain has caused flooding on three occasions in the lower half of the nursery.

Toppling of recently pruned blocks has occurred, and while most of it is species specific, there will be a significant reduction in pole numbers for this year. The reduction could be as high as 20%. Once cutting of the poles has been completed over the winter months the stools will be stood up and stabilised through ramming of the surrounding ground.

A new block planted in the spring of 2003 has suffered from significant wind damage. To a certain extent this will remedy itself over the next three years, however it is a setback to a new block that was looking a picture in mid-January following irrigation.

4.6 Soil Quality Monitoring

The baseline monitoring for soil quality throughout the region was reported in the last Divisional Manager's report. Since that time decisions regarding future soil quality monitoring have been stalled through the removal of funding. Funds carried over from 2002/03 and to be used to complete the baseline data have been earmarked for 'savings against budget'.

This decision will mean that the next State of the Environment Report will be very limited in its ability to report the present state of the region's soils.

4.7 River Management

The River Management Section has been very busy coping with the flood damage repair work. This includes damage in watercourses outside of the schemes. This is likely to stretch our isolated works budget. A specific report will be prepared for the April meeting.

A contract has been let for the replacement of the roof of the Onoke pumping station. The newly designed roof will be removable to allow the pumps to be lifted out for maintenance work, etc.

4.8 Technical Services Activities

The focus has been on the collection of flood data. This has included:

- Assisting with river gaugings and floodwarning duties
- Picking up flood levels throughout the Lower Wairarapa Valley
- Taking aerial photographs to assess the extent of the flooding
- Mapping the areas where overtopping of the stopbanks occurred
- Re-flying and photographing all the rivers to understand the condition of rivers following the flood events

Additional surveying analysis is being prepared prior to the development of our three dimensional model of the Lower Wairarapa Valley river system.

5. Planning & Resources Department: (Steve Blakemore)

5.1 Environmental Incidents

Date	Incident	Outcome
28.1.04	Asbestos allegedly dumped in cleanfill, Masterton landfill.	Found not to contain asbestos. No further action required.
28.1.04	Agrichemical leaking from spray unit parked in urban Masterton	Minute amount of foam marker had dripped onto side of road. Not agrichemical. Covered with sand, no further action required.
3.2.04	Foam in Waipoua River	Found to be natural.
4.2.04	Dust from industrial site, Masterton	Abatement notice served.
13.2.04	Abandoned car in Waiohine River	Removed by Regional Council.
17.2.04	1000 litres transformer oil spilled in Masterton street	Contained and cleaned up by various agencies.
18.2.04	Smell of sewage, Riversdale	Under investigation.
27.2.04	Foam in Waipoua River	Found to be natural.
1.3.04	Flooding caused by blocked drain, Mauriceville	Investigated, problem left to be sorted out between neighbours.
2.3.04	Sewage overflowing from septic tank to land, Carterton	Drainage being worked on. Under investigation.

5.2 Notified Consents

<i>Consent Application</i>	<i>Status</i>
The Terrace – Martinborough Groundwater take	Limited notification. Conditions agreed.
Sewage discharge. Application for variation – Carterton District	Submissions closed on 19/12/02. Application on hold at applicants request.
Water Races - Carterton District (2)	Awaiting further information from applicant's consultant.
Water Races - South Wairarapa District (2)	Staff assessment almost complete. Decision to be taken to either further negotiate conditions or proceed to a hearing.
Featherston Sewage – discharge	Notified.
Hammond and Co. Ground Water Take - Papawai	Limited Notification. Conditions finalised. Awaiting submitters sign off.

5.3 Enforcement

An Abatement Notice was issued to limit the dust pollution affecting Railway Crescent properties in Masterton.

Two Infringement Notices have been issued:

- For exceeding the irrigation limit from the Para Stream.
- For discharge of silt into the Lansdowne Stream

5.4 Appeals

<i>Appellant</i>	<i>Nature of Appeal</i>	<i>Status</i>
I Alexander	Appeal of abatement notice requiring irrigation to cease	Heard before Judge Sheppard in October. Additional evidence accepted by Judge. Decision awaited.

5.5 Hydrology

Rainfall

February was the wettest on record for the three sites. This is in keeping with 30 other MetService regions.

Rainfall totals in the Wairarapa for February were excessive with record rainfall recorded between 430% and 480% of long term February averages.

The following table sets out the monthly totals for January and February 2004:

Site	Location	February		January		February	January
		mm	Average	mm	Average	% of Average	
Angle Knob	Tararua Ranges	1702	354	476	454	480	105
Alloa	Middle Valley	286	64	102	65	447	158
Tanawa Hut	Eastern Hills	329	75	212	64	439	330

For each of these sites, the previous wettest February was in 1988. The table below gives these values for comparison.

Site	February 2004 mm	February 1988 mm
Angle Knob	1702	952
Alloa	286	176
Tanawa Hut	329	292

Alloa's rainfall total of 286mm is the highest recorded for any month going back to 1963.

Rivers

Four floods occurred during February with the event on 15 and 16 February the largest, producing record floods in the Lower Valley. The weather pattern had many similarities to Cyclone Giselle, which resulted in the Wahine Storm. The event arose from a mix of tropical and polar air, which became stationary off Cape Palliser. The floods arose from prolonged southerly rain under 36 hours of gale force wind conditions.

A separate report is included covering Wairarapa hydrology during the flood. A Council hydrological report has also been prepared, covering the whole region.

All telemetred sites operated throughout the event without interruption or failure. Floodwarnings ensured stock losses were minimal, with additional urgent warnings given when it became apparent that this was a very large event and stopbanks between Waihenga and Tuhitarata were likely to overtop.

During the event, two critical flood events in January and February were well above normal (an understatement for February) at the two sites covered in this report.

The table below contains February 2004 flow statistics for two representative sites with January data given for comparisons.

Site	February		January		February	January
	Cumecs	Average	Cumecs	Average	% of Average	
Waiohine	65.4	15.8	20.5	17.3	413	118
Waihenga	323	40.2	60.3	46	803	131

5.6 Road Closures

There were two regional road closure events during the month. The first smaller event was solely flood related on 12 February.

The second regional road closure event was declared early on 16 February. From then until mid afternoon on 17 February, staff co-ordinated road closure information for the Wairarapa, receiving information, providing regular media releases and answering public enquiries. At its peak there were 35 roads closed due to flooding, slips and fallen trees in the Wairarapa.

5.7 LAEMG Conference

The Local Authority Environmental Monitoring Group Conference has been held in the Wairarapa with Greater Wellington being the host organiser. Approximately 50 attended the conference and gained updates on a range of topics associated with monitoring water levels, and water and air quality. The conference tour took in the Masterton air quality monitoring site, the

Mangatarere Stream monitoring site, Waihenga, and the water level radar installation at Gladstone.

5.8 Coastal Strategy

Printing of the Strategy and the Guidelines is proceeding with a launch planned towards the end of March.

5.9 Masterton Sewage

The Masterton District Council has reached agreement with the landowner enabling rapid infiltration trials to occur. A non-notified consent has been issued in relation to these trials. The consent term extends to 31 May 2005.

The reports provided by Masterton District Council under consent conditions have been reviewed. A meeting is to be arranged to discuss some related issues.

6. Recommendation

That the report be received and its contents noted.



Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa