



Report **06.269**
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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa**
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Review of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with an update on the Strategy review process, including proposed timeframes, and to seek approval to appoint a sub-Committee to undertake the various tasks required to progress the development and implementation of the revised Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The current Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) was approved by Greater Wellington in September 2002. A twenty year term was selected to realistically reflect the expected time it would take to manage many of our regionally significant pests.

The Biosecurity Act 1993 (BSA) requires the RPMS to be reviewed every five years. The Council may, following the review, decide to amend or revoke the Strategy or leave it unchanged. The five year review provides an opportunity to consider the relevance of new information gained in the preceding years. This information may indicate that some objectives and rules may no longer be appropriate or needed. Conversely, there may be a need to include new pests whose impacts have only recently become known.

4. Review Timeframes

The review process has commenced with the appointment of a staff Steering Group. A number of internal meetings have been held to identify issues, gather

information and consider proposed changes. Time frames for the development of written material are as follows:

- Late July – produce a public Discussion Document calling for submissions on proposed changes;
- August – September - consider submissions and confirm proposed changes. Complete Section 72 BSA analyses (incl. cost benefit analyses) for amended and new pests;
- October – December – complete rewrite of amended Strategy;
- February 2007 – publicly notify proposed amended Strategy and call for submissions (note that notifying the proposal formally commences the review process);
- Late March 2007 – submissions close. Prepare Summary of Submissions document.
- April – May 2007 – Hearings Committee hear and consider submissions;
- June – July 2007 – Prepare report on the proposal by the Principal Officer (i.e. Chief Executive). Prepare decision report on the proposed Amended Strategy, including reasons for accepting or rejecting any submissions.
- August 2007 – RSW considers Principal Officer’s report and decision report from Hearings Committee.
- September 2007 - Publicly notify decision and Amended Strategy. Provide all submitters with decisions on the issues raised by their respective submissions.

5. Appeal Process

All submitters are allowed 15 working days, from receipt of the decision on their submission, to appeal to the Environment Court. The Court must hold a public hearing and may confirm, or direct Greater Wellington to modify, delete, or insert, and provision or matter which is referred to it.

It is important to note that submitters may appeal any part of the amended Strategy, as long as they have raised the matter in their submission. Essentially, this means that parts of the Strategy that have not been amended can still be appealed. Clearly this is a ridiculous situation that reflects the inadequacies of the BSA.

The final Amended Strategy is ‘made’ (approved) after making any amendments directed by the Environment Court. Approval is by way of affixing the Council seal to the Strategy document.

The existing Strategy remains operable until such time as the Amended Strategy is approved.

6. Potential Amendments

A combined Regional Councils working group (Biosecurity Generic Guidelines Group – BGs) have worked together over the past 12 months to produce a series of guideline documents. The intention of the guidelines is to ensure that there is a level of consistency in objectives, rules and terminology across the country. However, there will always be some level of variation as, for example, plants or animals

considered as pests in Northland or Auckland may not receive the same status in Otago.

Following the BGs work, it is likely that a number of amendments will be required to our current classification terminology. Furthermore, information gained via field surveys in recent years indicates that some existing pests will require reclassification to reflect changes in infestation levels and spatial distribution.

7. **Sub-Committee Appointment**

The Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee has been delegated responsibility to oversee the review of the Strategy. During the 2001/02 review, a Sub-Committee was appointed to hear, consider and decide on submissions. This was considered a very useful process as it provided an opportunity for Committee members to fully understand the issues before decisions were made on submissions and amendments to the proposed Strategy. This process also allowed for a flexible meeting schedule, thereby enabling the review process to continue smoothly with minimal disruption. The Sub-Committee can also be used to review draft documentation prior to publication.

It is suggested that the Sub-Committee be involved until the final Amended Strategy is recommended by the full Committee for approval by Council. This would enable greater flexibility than seeking Committee feedback through the formal reporting process. It would also be appropriate for all or some of the Sub-Committee members to constitute the Hearings Committee. The latter Committee is likely to be required in the April-May 2007 period.

8. **Recommendation**

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Appoints a Sub-Committee to undertake the various tasks required to progress the development of the revised Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.***
4. ***Agrees that the Sub-Committee be delegated the responsibility of determining the membership of the Hearings Committee.***

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