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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee**
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Regional Pest Management Strategy: Operational Plan 2006/07

1. Purpose

To seek adoption of the 2006/07 Operational Plan for implementation of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters 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 Council approved the new Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022 on the 17 September 2002. An Operational Plan for the 2005/06 year was approved and implemented. A report on performance against objectives in that Plan will be presented to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee on 14 November 2006.

The Council is required to prepare an annual Operational Plan under Section 85 of the Biosecurity Act. However, there is no specific statutory requirement for an Operational Plan to be formally approved by the Council. It is considered appropriate to do so, however, as it reinforces the Council's ongoing support for biosecurity functions and indicates our desire to be transparent regarding expenditure and means of achievement.

The Biosecurity Act 1993 specifies a number of requirements for an Operational Plan-

The Council must:-

- review the Plan annually and, if deemed appropriate, amend it;
- provide a copy of the Plan to the responsible Minister;
- prepare an annual report on the Plan, including the effectiveness of implementation, not later than five months after the end of each financial year; and
- make copies of the Plan and annual report available to the public.

The power to disallow a Plan, if it is deemed to be inconsistent with the Strategy, lies solely with the Council, as the agency that approved the Strategy.

4. The Operational Plan

The proposed Operational Plan is enclosed separately as Attachment 1.

Whilst the Act requires Plans to be developed, there is no advice on their purpose, form or content. It is presumed that their purpose is to assist the Management Agency to implement the Regional Strategy. Through the process of annual review and reporting, the Council, as Management Agency, details how the Strategies are to be implemented and the achievement, or otherwise, of stated performance targets. Secondly, the process enables stakeholders the opportunity to annually examine a Strategy's cost effectiveness for its duration.

The 2006/07 Operational Plan seeks to continue the progress made in the first four years of the Strategy. Division of the target pests in to Eradication, Containment, Suppression and Site Led categories has been very beneficial in terms of prioritising and focusing resources to maximise benefits for the Region.

One of the cornerstones of implementing the RPMS is improved public awareness through educational material and discussion. The Department has a strong focus on education, ensuring our communications material is regularly reviewed and updated where required. A total of 23 pest plants brochures, 11 pest animals' brochures and 35 other pest related publications (e.g. Weedbusters, biocontrol) are available for public use. Public interest in these publications remains strong. Staff are regularly providing presentations to schools, community and interest groups on RPMS related topics.

Surveys to identify new infestations of Eradication and Containment pest plants have been a critical tool over the past three years to clarify whether changes may be required to the current RPMS. These will continue in 2006/07. We will also be reviewing our Vigilance species inspection programme to ensure we capture information on new entrants before they become established.

We anticipate an increase in rabbit management in 2006/07. Whilst rabbit calicivirus is still prevalent, there are areas where infestations are increasing. Monitoring of immunity levels will continue to be critical. Greater Wellington will

also have access to RCV as part of the consortium that gained ERMA approval to import the material from Australia for biocide releases. Application will be strictly controlled by a national protocol.

The site led Key Native Ecosystem programme continues to be well supported by landowners and Territorial Local Authorities. The majority of Authorities are financial partners in site-led programmes on their land. These partnerships are formalised by Memorandums of Understanding agreements, which detail annual resource commitments of both parties. Commitments have increased in recent years as biodiversity values and benefits are becoming more recognised and appreciated by the Authorities and the wider public.

A major task over the 2006/07 year will be progressing the five yearly RPMS review. The Consultation document was recently released and the Proposed Amended RPMS is scheduled for publication in late February 2007.

5. Communications

The Biosecurity Act requires that copies of the Plan be made available to the public at cost price. Historically, public notices have been placed in the major regional papers drawing the publics' attention to the availability of the Plan. This process will be repeated for the 2006/07 Plan.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee recommends to Council that it

Approve the proposed Operational Plan 2006/07 (Attachment 1) for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

Report prepared by:

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