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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
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Regional Pest Management Strategy - Operational Report 2002/03

1. Purpose

To report on the performance of the 2002/2003 Operational Plan for implementation of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. Background

Section 85 of the Biosecurity Act requires the Council, as the Management Agency, to prepare an operational plan for each Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) which it has approved. Furthermore, the Agency must prepare a report on the plan and its implementation no later than five months after the end of the each financial year. The report is to be made available to the public and a copy forwarded to the relevant Minister(s).

A few Councils have determined to use the Annual Plan reporting process to provide details on performance against RPMS Operational Plan objectives. The Biosecurity Act does provide for this option. However, it is considered more transparent to utilise a separate reporting process where greater detail can be included on performance, trends, issues and expenditure. A separate report also provides a higher level of accountability and transparency for ratepayers.

3. Comment

Attachment 1 contains the Annual Report for the 2002/2003 Operational Plan. This is the first progress report regarding achieving the objectives in the new 20 year Strategy. In this first year, particular emphasis has been applied to identifying and controlling Eradication and Containment pest plant species, upgrading the Departments publicity material to align with the new Strategy rules, and focusing our efforts on priority Key Native Ecosystem sites. Educating the public on pest related issues continues to be a cornerstone

activity. A well-informed public is paramount to ensuring we progress the Strategy objectives at a satisfactory rate.

The report includes a separate Pest Plant and Pest Animal section with an overview of major issues encountered during the year, details on the Key Native Ecosystem programmes, ecological monitoring activities, and finally, details on performance against specific activity objectives.

4. Highlights for 2002/03

The new Strategy introduced some significant changes from the original document. This followed an in-depth analysis of community aspirations via submissions, and a review of our ability to deliver on both short and long term objectives. The use of the pest infestation curve to focus our resource inputs was a major step forward in managing pests in the region. The eradication of regional significant pests at low densities and containment of others to specific areas is, and will continue to be, a high priority.

The review of priorities also led to an analysis of the future value of the Wellington City Pest Plant Eradication Programme. The Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee Sub-Committee that considered this Programme concluded that achievement of the programme objectives was highly unlikely, despite over 10 years investment. Consequently, the Programme was removed from the Strategy and resources re-allocated.

The magpie research programme was completed throughout the country. It was concluded that magpies do have a negative impact on indigenous bird species. However, the study recommended that resources would be more appropriately allocated to controlling other predators, particularly possums and mustelids.

Two large Key Native Ecosystem projects commenced during the year –

- ◆ The Mt Bruce – Pukaha predator control programme is a joint initiative with private landowners adjacent to the DoC Mt Bruce Reserve. The project has been very successful with considerable support and enthusiasm provided by the landowners.
- ◆ The Miramar Peninsula possum eradication project commenced in conjunction with Wellington City Council. This project has also received widespread support from landowners and occupiers of the peninsula.

Rabbit populations are starting to recover quickly in some areas of the region. However, RHD is still cycling in areas where landowners have maintained a control programme. The Committee gave its support to invest in the importation of RHD from Australia as part of a regional council consortium. An application is currently before ERMA for consideration.

The report contains further details of other highlights concerning pest plants and animals.

5. Communications

Public notices will be utilised to inform the public that the Annual Report is available for inspection.

Copies will be forwarded to the appropriate Ministers for their review and comment.

Consideration will be given to using Elements to provide a summary of the key issues.

6. Recommendation

- (1) That the Committee, as the delegated Management Agency, approves the Annual Report on the implementation of the 2002/2003 Operational Plan for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.*
- (2) That a copy of the Report be forwarded to the relevant Ministers.*
- (3) That the Report be made available for public inspection.*

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