
Parks, Forests and Utilities

February 2008

Parks

Review of operations for the period ended 29 February 2008

1. **Manager's comments**

The recreation strategy is progressing well at this point.

We will be able to start working with the Councillors within the next month on the strategy's development. The only question that really needs to be sorted at this point is about the scope of the project, i.e. will the strategy cover the Regional Parks & Water Collection Areas, or, extend to the major river ways managed by Flood Protection, or even become a regional recreational planning document. I am currently working with EMT to get some clarity around the implications of the scope and will be discussing it with Council in April.

2. **Environmental planning and implementation**

2.1 **Policy and planning**

2.1.1 Local Government Act submission

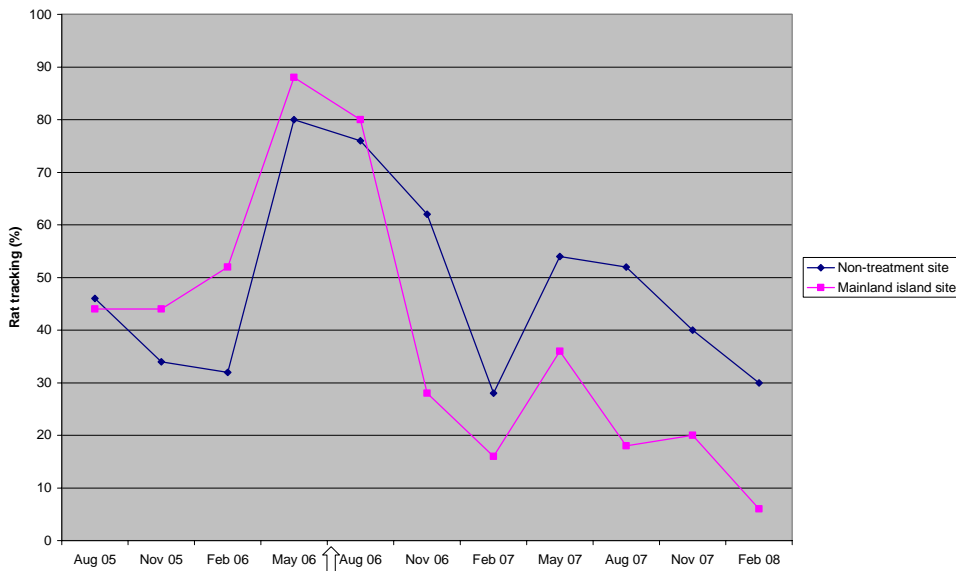
The Local Government Act submission was approved by Council on 25 February 2008 and has been sent to the Local Government Commission. The Concessions Policy Review will be discussed with Councillors at the workshop following this Committee meeting. Seven concessions are currently being processed. The Council's intention to reserve Waitangirua Farm has been advertised. Objections to the classification of the farm as a recreation reserve will be received in writing until submissions close in mid-April.

2.2 **Monitoring**

Rodent/mustelid monitoring was recently completed in East Harbour Regional Park (see graph 1).

MIRO is hoping to release robins in the Mainland Island in late autumn this year, so it was great to see that the tracking percentage of rats in that area (6 percent) has almost fallen to the target rate of 5 percent. Some intensive pest control had been instigated in the section where rats had been a continuing problem, so it is good to see that that work was successful.

The Mainland Island project has differed from the one in the Wainuiomata Water Collection Area where an initial knockdown of rat numbers was achieved by the 1080 possum control operation.



Graph 1 - Rat tracking in the East Harbour Regional Park Mainland Island since August 2005

3. Western sector

3.1 Belmont Regional Park

At the end of January we hosted the *Old Coach Road History Trail*, a well attended event led by the *Friends of Belmont Regional Park*. The event looks at the history of the first road link between the Hutt Valley and Porirua, passes many of the World War II ammunition bunkers and takes in the beautiful view of the Hutt Valley and Porirua Harbours.



The Real Cannons Creek event was run by the *Friends of Maara Roa*. This event involved discovering the course of the little streams that water the bush and feed the ponds in the Cannons Creek Valley.

A land resource evaluation consultant has completed field mapping of Waitangirua Farm. The information collected will provide the basis for sustainable land management decision making for the future management of Waitangirua Farm.

A tour of the western area of the park by the Ranger, Rural Fire/Emergency Management staff from Porirua City Council and the Porirua Fire Service to assess risk potential and emergency access requirements was undertaken.

3.2 Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

The Regional Outdoors Programme has proven to be extremely popular again at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. During February we held a heli-tramp, which consisted of a short helicopter flight up Transmission Gully and landing at a spot just before Mount Wainui and walking back along the ridge to Battle Hill.

The Ranger has been dealing with the Battle Hill Pony Club Management Committee over their big horse event on 16 March. They will have an anticipated 500 people attending.



The park hosted the opening of its new History Trail on Sunday 9 March. The construction crew made and installed four trail signs which start in the campground and follow the main ridge north up to Battle Hill. The signs provide important and informative interpretation on Ngati Toa's Te Rangihaeta's last battle with British troops before being forced to flee Wellington.

3.3 Queen Elizabeth Park

This period has seen the close of Queen Elizabeth Park's summer Regional Outdoor Programme.



We also hosted our annual botany programme, led by Greater Wellington staff. We had a keen group of about 20 people walk through the wetlands and the dune system identifying native and non-native plants.

In conjunction with our Rural Fire Project Team, we had just erected nine *Total Fire Ban* signs throughout the park. The latest fire was started within a couple of metres of one of these new signs.

4. Eastern sector

4.1 General

We are currently struggling to get control of graffiti and vandalism in our parks and are attempting to arrange a meeting with the Police to discuss. Our rangers are limited in their ability to deal with the culprits, both from a point of being in the right place at the right time (all hours of the day and night) and with enforcement tools they have to deal effectively with the situation.

It is a tough business weighing the perception of the park and the cost of damage, against the cost of security patrols and enforcement. Of course, this is usually a low priority for Police, so we have not been able to rely on their backup.

With the low river water levels, our rangers have been actively involved with algal bloom and didymo education, and passing this on to the public. Staff also

assisted the Department of Conservation to clean bikes prior to the Karapoti Classic to avoid the potential spread of didymo.

4.2 Kaitoke Regional Park

A total fire ban was declared in the park mid-month and has been well respected. Unfortunately the recent clampdown on prohibiting trail bikes and quads on the Hutt River Trail has resulted in a few trail bikes being sighted at Te Marua and in the campground. These are difficult to control.



The information kiosks at Pakuratahi Forks and Keith Spry Lookout were badly tagged with graffiti. We have now painted these kiosks karaka green, which looks very smart and gives a quick and easy solution to cleaning up the work of graffiti artists.

4.3 East Harbour Regional Park

A major highlight during February was the *Mount Lowry Challenge* with a total of 349 people registered for this popular annual hill run. The race, which utilises the steep tracks behind Days Bay has become one of the premier hill races on the Wellington sports calendar.

Having completed the boardwalk across the Kohangatera wetlands in the Lower Gollans Valley in December, work on the final stage of the Lakes Block circuit is now under way. Parks staff are in the process of constructing the last section of the track from the Kohangatera Lookout to the boardwalk. This has been a challenging section of track construction but when finished will provide the user with good walking/biking grades and stunning views, along with a full loop around both lakes. New directional signs will be erected along the track.



An upgrade of the lower benched section of the Korimako Track at Days Bay has been completed. Again, this was a deeply rutted formation inherited with the park, which carried excessive amounts of water during rain.

4.4 Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Catchments



Two catchment tours were conducted during February. Both were very full and we have received excellent feedback.

The hunting ballot draw was conducted under Police supervision for both Wainuiomata/Orongorongo and East Harbour. There were 65 entries for the Wainuiomata draw meaning only five people

did not receive a block. The ballot will entail five periods of four days commencing 21 March.

4.5 Akatarawa/Pakuratahi Forests

The Rimutaka Summit café had a fire in late February, resulting in the power supply to the toilet system and café being destroyed.

We are currently investigating the costs associated with installing a toilet and dispersion field at the Orange Hut. The costs of this operation will be covered by the remainder of the money from the insurance claim.

Marketing and Design

Review of operations for the period ended 29 February 2008

1. **Manager's comments**

- One of the clearer messages to emerge from the public opinion research is that there is no real perception amongst residents of metropolitan Wellington that we have a problem regarding availability of potable water. While the sprinkler and irrigation ban may have cast a “cloud” over what has been a great summer, the “silver lining” of the extra advertising and press coverage of restrictions should be increased awareness that our water supply system is very dependent on consistent rainfall. Ironically these measures may make it easier to create more interest in a debate over the most appropriate direction for managing water infrastructure in the Wellington Region.
- Through the Regional Outdoors Programme, development of *At the Heart* and now its implementation, and now the SPARC review of national and regional sports facilities it is becoming ever clearer what can be achieved through collaboration within and across councils, other agencies, clubs and industry. We now have an opportunity to work with Upper Hutt City Council on a “pilot” multi-sport event using the Stuart Macaskill Lakes. Details are covered in a separate report.

2. **Water Supply**

2.1 **Metropolitan Water Supply Strategy public opinion research**

The second draft of the final report, covering qualitative and quantitative responses, was reviewed and returned to the Consultant for further minor changes. We anticipate signing off the finished report by mid-March.

2.2 **Draft Wellington Water Management Plan Technical Report**

The Technical Report was updated to include research findings and additional input from our four city council customers. It was then returned to the customers for review and comment.

2.3 **Summer water conservation campaign**

Low catchment water flows and a prolonged period with minimal rainfall during January and February raised serious concerns about being able to maintain unrestricted supply for the remainder of the summer period. Significant time and effort has gone into remaining abreast of the developing situation, keeping key staff and customers informed, co-ordinating media activity and responding to enquiries.

Once it became likely that a residential sprinkler and garden irrigation ban would be imposed, we produced new “ban” radio and print advertising and scheduled extra media time. The ban was introduced on 26 February - the first such measure for more than 20 years in the Metropolitan Wellington Region. As of 7 March, the ban was still in place and intensive situation assessment

and customer co-ordination work was ongoing.

Five media statements updating the supply situation have been issued since mid-January. These have received good coverage in the local newspapers.

2.4 Education and interpretation

Technical handouts

These three publications (one for each of our water treatment plants) were finalised and printed, with copies distributed to the plants and relevant staff in the water treatment plants. They are also available on our web site.

We are also exploring opportunities to promote them via Wellington based and other tertiary institutions. As Wainuiomata and Te Marua Water Treatment Plants are two of only several in New Zealand to be graded A1, this new material should help raise their profile for educational purposes and as potential career opportunities.

3. Parks

3.1 Brochures

We have recently completed a *Casual horse riding* A4 brochure, promoting the opportunities available at Kaitoke Regional Park's Te Marua entrance and the Pakuratahi Forest. Once riders obtain keys and a permit from our Upper Hutt office, they may now park horse floats inside a locked gate located just off the Kaitoke Loop Road and explore the tracks in the surrounding area.

3.2 Signs

Battle Hill History Trail

Printing was completed and the final product delivered to Battle Hill Farm Forest Park for mounting in the prepared macrocarpa slabs, which will go on posts at each site ready for the launch event on 9 March. During the period we also selected positions to optimise people's experience of the trail and acknowledge that it is a place where people lost their lives.

4. Events

4.1 Regional Outdoors Programme

We are almost at the end of the 2008 summer programme, with most events having been booked out in advance and attendances strong at those asking people to "just turn up". A few events were postponed because of poor weather but have remained full on the postponement dates.

We will begin a review of this year's programme in mid-March and present a report to the May Committee meeting.

4.2 Buggy walks

The March Lion Foundation buggy walk was another successful day at Kaitoke Regional Park, with 56 mums, dads and babies.

The April buggy walk will be at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Starting in May, the winter series of buggy walks will be based in urban areas with GWRC taking a supporting role.

4.3 Restoration day

GWRC staff members are meeting regularly with the Department of Conservation to plan for the next Restoration Day on 3 May at Victoria University. We have now completed the invitations and forwarded them to the various care groups around the Region. Because of the popularity of the day, we have to limit numbers to 200 plus staff members involved and the speakers.

5. Networking

5.1 *At the Heart* regional physical activity plan

Since Council endorsed the plan on 25 February, the WRRIG group has met and agreed that, following feedback from SPARC, the Expression of Interest be altered to identify seven projects at which funding should be directed. These projects include areas such as regional leadership and co-ordination, sport development (including alignment with No Exceptions) and workplace health and physical activity.

5.2 SPARC review of national and regional sport facilities

SPARC is currently facilitating the creation of a single national information set for all regional and national sport facilities in New Zealand, to aid decision making by local authorities and other facility funders. They have decided to run a pilot for the project in the Greater Wellington Region, to test their methodology and the volume and depth of information required. Staff recently attended the first meeting and will continue to liaise with SPARC and the contracted database development company as required.

While GWRC does not manage any built facilities, both Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and Queen Elizabeth Park are important venues for equestrian events. The internationally renowned Karapoti Classic mountain biking event is held in the Akatarawa Forest and Battle Hill, Belmont and East Harbour Regional Parks have all featured in elite multi-sport events.

5.3 Parks Forum *Value of Parks* document

As a member of the Parks Forum, we have been commenting on the writing and design of a new publication designed to raise awareness amongst parks' owners, funders and advocates of the benefits provided by parks to society. One of the features of *Values of Parks* will be the numerous case studies from around the world using objective measures of these benefits.

The *Values of Parks* publication will be launched by the Minister of Conservation at the *World without Parks?* Parks Forum conference to be held in Auckland on 20 to 22 May 2008.

6. Community liaison

6.1 Belmont Regional Park

Staff members took three consultant landscape architects on a site visit through Belmont Regional Park. They have been engaged to carry out work for Porirua City Council in the review of the rural section of the District Plan.

6.2 Queen Elizabeth Regional Park

Copies of the Queen Elizabeth Park Resource Statement were sent to community groups, neighbours and people who contributed to the management plan review process. .

Staff members led a walkover of the kahikatea bush remnant with members of the community group who initiated the restoration work in 1990 and were key contributors to the 2001 Restoration Plan.

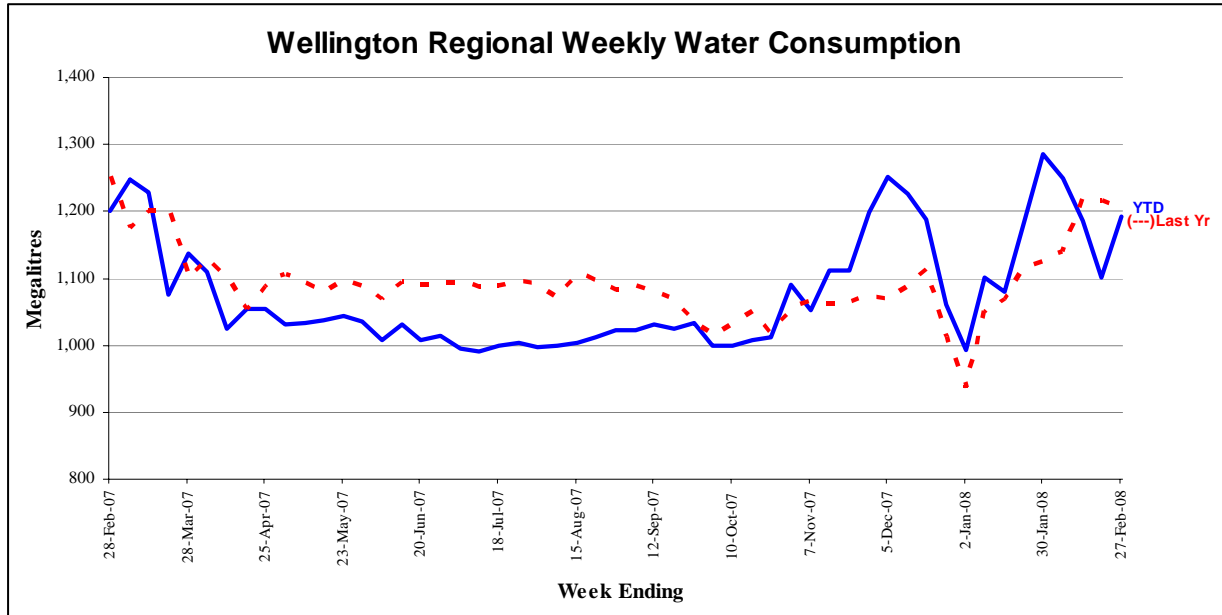
The Kennett Brothers have now completed a cycling concept plan for the park. Kapiti Coast District Council staff and the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park have been heavily involved in the development of this. While discussions have been held with the main farming lessee, all the lessees are to be invited to a presentation at the Friends' meeting on 17 March.

Given that we would like the opportunity to work through any major issues, we plan to ask that the Committee endorse the cycling concept plan in principle at the May meeting.

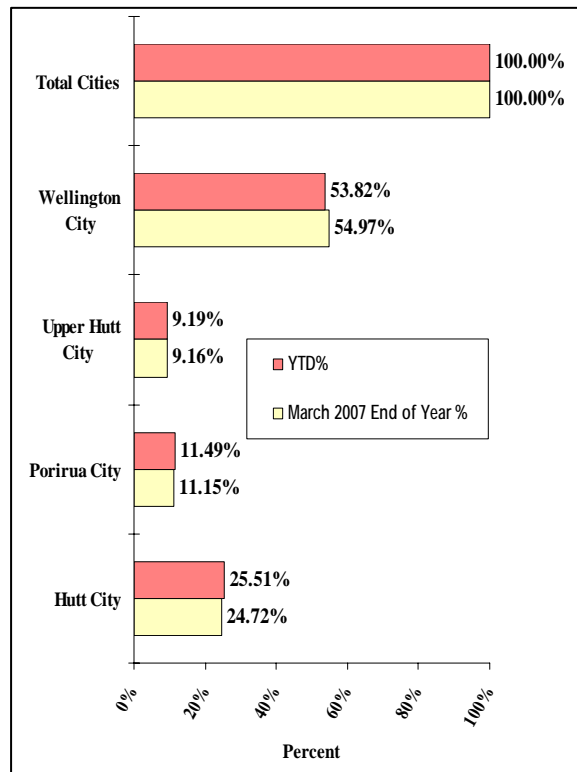
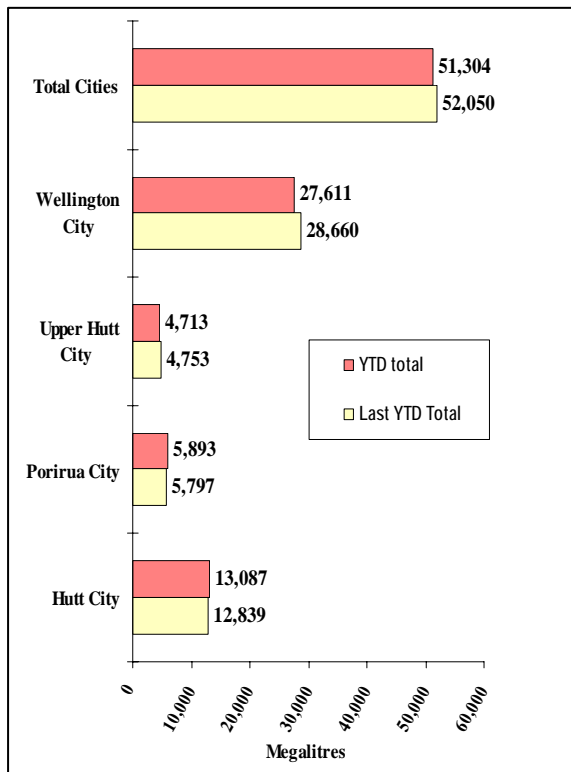
7. Water usage

Charts detailing water usage are on page 21.

Water sold over the last 12 months



Water sold during the metering year to date (April 2007 to March 2008)



Forestry

Review of operations for the period ended 29 February 2008

1. Plantation forests

1.1 Log harvest contract

Although it was intended to move at least the hauler crew to Puketiro over summer, wind throw in both the Kilometre and Parry's Bush blocks which needed to be recovered while it remained merchantable precluded this from occurring. The hauler crew is planning to move in early March.

The export prices remained firm but a lack of ships resulted in port closures and some logs being diverted to the Kaiwharawhara reclaim. Although the cost of the extra transshipment was met (in our case) by Rayonier NZ Ltd, there can be no doubt that if this practice continues the costs will be reflected in the wharf gate prices.

As reported in the media, the shortage of "handy" ships has eased to the point where the costs ex-Wellington for our logs are currently in the low \$US50 range. While this is still high compared with earlier years, it is better than the \$US70 of last year.

Further shipments of logs in containers are being assembled for despatch to China.

Production for January was 4,563 tonnes for \$102,875 and February for the regular crews was 5,125 tonnes for revenue of \$156,423, supplemented by the Wairarapa crew, which harvested 641 tonnes for \$15,750.

1.2 Silviculture contract

In addition to the original block completed by the Wairarapa silvicultural crew, we allocated part of a block on the east side of the Pakuratahi River, which they completed at the end of February

During January and February a total of 26.76 hectares of silviculture was completed.

1.3 Plantation Forestry operations

Thus far we have harvested a total of 45,752 tonnes against a pro rata target of 46,667 tonnes if we are to achieve a total harvest of 70,000 tonnes. The target would have been met had Centreport not suspended trucking, as there was over 1,000 tonnes remaining on the skids.

The Wairarapa crew is proving very effective in clearing up remnant stands that were uneconomic to allocate to full sized crews.

1.4 Forest access

Maungakotukutuku access remains the only significant problem, with the only access requiring two crossings of the Maungakotukutuku Stream between the

end of the public road and our boundary.

We have recently had deliberate damage to the lock in the McGhies Bridge and Dude Ranch gates. Diesel was also stolen out of the forwarder at Reservoir Ridge.

1.5 Market trends

While the domestic markets have remained relatively stable, it appears that export will cease come March, unless the combined effects of shipping and exchange rates work in our favour.

The container trade in China continues and may yet develop into a regular trade.

2. Reserve Forests

2.1 Tauanui logging

Given the payment difficulties with one customer, there has been no logging at Tauanui since Christmas. The Logging Contractor agreed to an extended holiday through January and worked in the Metro Forests for February.

2.2 Silviculture

The silviculture programme has continued within the second rotation in Hiwinui.

Low pruning has been completed over a further 8 hectares and a final thin completed in 3 hectares.

Extreme fire dangers have resulted in early contractor starts and finishes, and added fire precautions.

The use of chainsaws for thinning was being closely monitored and consideration given to suspending operations until conditions eased.

2.3 Maintenance

A bulldozer was used to clear and restore access along the Manahau boundary at Stoney Creek.

2.4 Fire danger

Extreme fire danger saw the restricted fire season (fires by permit only) upgrade to a prohibited season at the end of January.

There were 72 vegetation fires during the period, of which 11 were caused by power lines during high winds. Three fires were in commercial forests.

Our role has mainly been limited to a liaison role through the Wairarapa Operating Committee and the Greater Wellington Rural Fire Committee.

For one of the fires in a commercial forest, three Catchment Management staff members and two contractors were put on standby as relief crews if the

incident escalated any further and the Senior Conservation Forester was on standby for the Incident Management Team. As the fire was contained on the second day, we were not required at the scene.

Work has continued on the development of training packages for specialist planning and intelligence roles within the Greater Wellington Rural Fire Incident Management Unit.

Water Supply

Review of operations for the period ended 29 February 2008

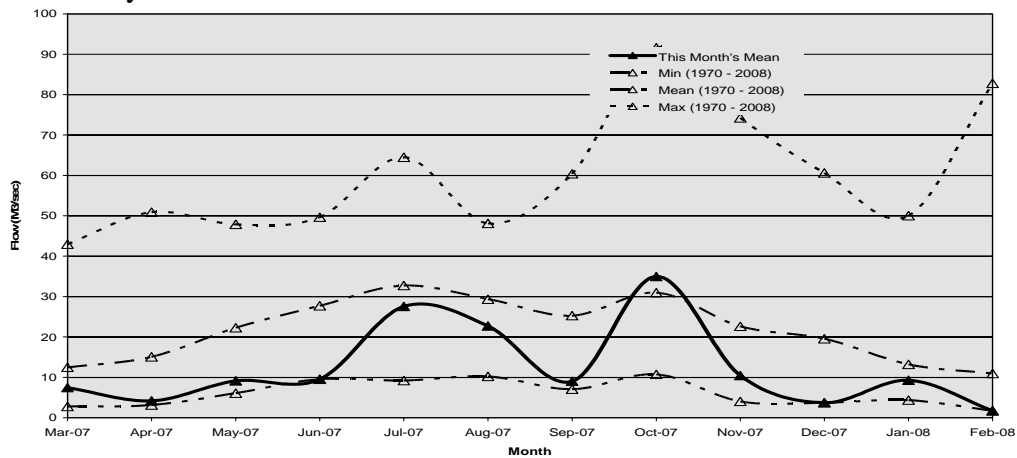
1. Manager's comments

- The drier than average weather, coupled with summer demand, has pushed the water supply harder than at any time in at least the past 10 years.
- Our operational focus has shifted from targeting economic efficiency to managing the sources to preserve water. This has meant close attention to the treatment processes and immediate response to equipment problems. It also means that we have significantly less scope for energy and, to a lesser extent, chemical savings.
- Because of the low river levels, there were a few unintended occasions when we briefly breached the resource consent conditions for residual flow.

2. Supply situation

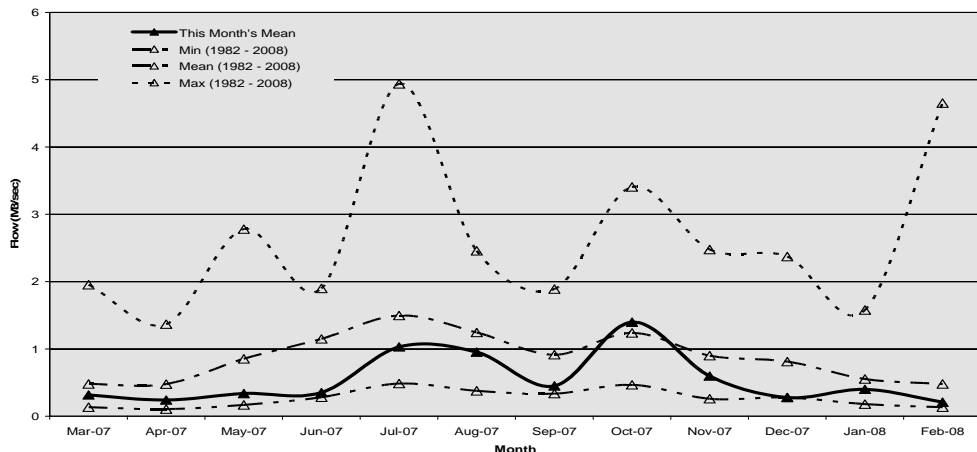
2.1 Hutt River flows

The mean flows for the Hutt River were below average during January and February 2008.



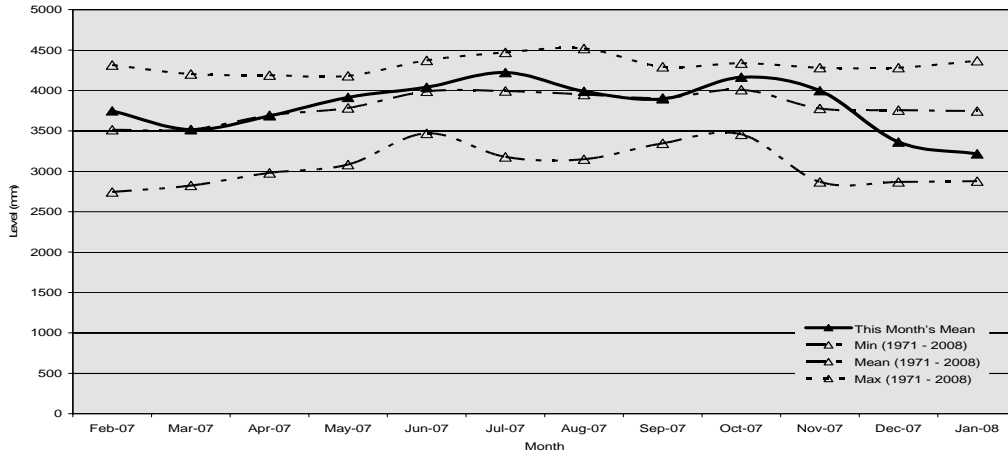
2.2 Wainuiomata River flows

The mean flows for the Wainuiomata River were below average during January and February 2008.



2.3 Aquifer levels

The water level in the Waiwhetu aquifer during the period was below average during January and February 2008.



Engineering Services

Review of operations for the period ended 29 February 2008

1. Water asset management

Key projects and their status are as follows:

- Disconnection of pipework to the old Karori Pumping Station is almost complete. The old building will be demolished in April.
- Design of the bypass to the main water supply pipe across the Wellington Fault at Te Marua is almost complete. The bypass is programmed for installation by the end of June 2008.
- The Contract with Derceto Ltd for supply and implementation of the wholesale water distribution system optimiser has been signed and system build is progressing. Much of the work will be completed by the end of the financial year. However, final completion is not planned until August.

2. New water sources

- The draft Wellington Metropolitan Water Supply Strategy has been completed to internal review stage. The draft strategy aims to meet the longer-term need for water as a result of projected population growth. It will be presented at a Councillor workshop in mid-March.
- A detailed feasibility report on raising the level of the Stuart Macaskill Lakes is to be commissioned.
- Final reports on the initial investigation of the Upper Hutt aquifer are expected by the end of March.
- A response has not yet been received from Capital and Coast District Health Board on the GWRC/Wellington City Council joint letter requesting confirmation of commitment to part fund a new Central Business District water reservoir. Discussion is continuing with WCC on an alternative smaller reservoir.
- A series of reports on the potential impact of increased water take at Kaitoke weir is practically complete and awaiting sign off by the review consultant. Discussions with stakeholders (Fish and Game New Zealand and Department of Conservation) are continuing.

3. Quality assurance

- Our records indicate that compliance with the new *Drinking-Water Standards for New Zealand 2005* continues to be achieved at all four water treatment plants.
- Information for the grading of the Gear Island Water Treatment Plant is

expected to be collated and ready for submitting to Regional Public Health before the end of March.

- A web interface for the laboratory information management system is close to completion. This will allow the data file of laboratory test results from the Laboratory Services Contractor to be uploaded directly into the system for long-term storage to meet Drinking-Water Standards' requirements.

4. Environmental

- Installation of the equipment to reduce the volume of waste lime at the Wainuiomata Water Treatment Plant is practically complete. A shutdown of the plant will be planned after the summer peak demand period to carry out its commissioning.
- Instrumentation has been installed in two of the aquifer new monitoring wells on The Esplanade, Petone and the wells are in test phase. Instrumentation is still to be installed in the McEwan Park monitoring well.
- Investigations have commenced on the installation of sentinel wells upstream of the Waterloo wellfield to minimise the risk of any contaminants reaching the production wells.

5. Catchment management

- Three "short" and two "long" guided tours were held and enjoyed by a total of 139 participants.
- As expected, the usual rate of vandalism and trespass increased over the school holiday period and during the spell of good weather.
- A cull was undertaken in December, with 19 pigs, 4 goats and 2 deer culled.
- A decision has been made to defer the 1080 operation planned for the Hutt Catchment following a residual trap catch of 1.5 percent.