

# Biodiversity

Full Year Review  
30 June 2008

Biodiversity Coordinating Group

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## **1. Significant biodiversity projects**

### **1.1 Biodiversity Implementation Plan**

A Biodiversity Implementation Plan to guide Greater Wellington's biodiversity activities was completed and subsequently approved by Council in May.

### **1.2 Wetlands programme**

#### *Wetland database*

Newly found wetlands are being added to the inventory as they are discovered. Kapiti Coast District Council has agreed to add some additional wetlands to their District Plan, as a part of Plan Change 55B, which is currently at final draft for consultation. Porirua City Council has notified their intent to incorporate identified Sites of Ecological Significance which occur on public land through Open Space Plan Change 8, which will include a number of wetland areas. They are currently collating a summary of submissions.

#### *Wetland incentives and advice*

In the last quarter, five landowners joined the Wetland Incentives Programme making a total of 122 landowners involved since the programme started. Subsidised fencing and weed control remain the most popular ways to use the incentives offered.

An application to the Biodiversity Condition Fund for funding a weed control programme in Te Hapua Wetland, following the weed survey over 14 individual properties has recently been completed. An application was also completed for Te Harakiki (Rawakahia) Wetland weed control work. Both of these applications were prepared in consultation with the Kapiti Coast District Council.

Investigative work for the establishment of a hydrological monitoring network of Te Hapua Wetland was undertaken in anticipation of \$25,000 funding for monitoring equipment from Kapiti Coast District Council through their annual plan. The monitoring equipment would mostly be located on private land to measure the hydrological characteristics of the wetland to guide future resource management decisions.

### **1.3 Pauatahanui Inlet Catchment project**

As previously reported, funding has been secured from the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund to engage a Catchment Co-ordinator to lead the 'on the ground' aspects of this project. After two unsuccessful attempts by the Landcare Trust to employ someone to this position, Peter Handford has agreed to continue in his position as interim co-ordinator. Peter continues to work with private landowners in the catchment to get streams and wetlands fenced from stock and, in some cases, revegetated.

## **1.4 Porirua Harbour project**

Porirua City Council is preparing an environmental strategy for the Porirua Harbour (incorporating both the Pauatahanui and Onepoto arms) in recognition of the pivotal role the Harbour plays in many aspects of the city. Keith Calder has been appointed as Porirua Harbour Strategy Co-ordinator to write the strategy. This is an exciting development that has the potential to see the sorts of catchment initiatives underway in the Pauatahanui arm extended to whole Porirua Harbour catchment. Much of the Porirua Stream catchment is within Wellington City and discussions are underway to bring them into the project.

It is anticipated that much of the planning and research work that Greater Wellington and Porirua City Council have undertaken since 2000 in relation to the Pauatahanui Inlet will be rolled into the strategy.

## **1.5 Streams Alive**

This programme has progressed well during the year despite interruptions because of staff changes. Work has been concentrated in the Otaki, Waitohu and Mangaroa catchments. A limited amount of work has been carried out in the Upper Ruamahanga and Waihora catchments. These five catchments are part of the Streams Alive programme which covers eleven selected catchments throughout the region. Little work has been carried out in the other six catchments.

The review of the Streams Alive programme has been completed. Results of the review will be considered shortly by the Biodiversity Coordinating Group and incorporated into the LTCCP process.

## **1.6 Biodiversity voluntary change research programme**

This project is focussing on the Ohariu catchment and our work promoting streamside management to protect and enhance aquatic biodiversity.

On 16 and 17 April, Greater Wellington and Wellington City Council hosted AgResearch and other members of the national project to a workshop to discuss the achievements of the project and its strengths and weaknesses. We planned two more events for this year. On 27 and 28 May, three staff attended a workshop in Rotorua about the regional project run by Environment Bay of Plenty. This coming financial year is the last year of the project. We will be reviewing its success and using that information in the development of the Freshwater Ecosystems action plan later in the year.

With the help of AgResearch and Wellington City Council we continue to send out monthly newsletters to the entire Ohariu and Makara community.

## **1.7 Coastal and marine biodiversity action plan**

The Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Action plan was completed this quarter. Work is progressing on implementing the plan. The first implementation project involves an area of significant coastal vegetation at Tora which the landowner wishes to protect from stock and pests. Discussions are still continuing with this landowner and we await costings from them for the agreed work.

## **1.8 QEII covenant support programme**

This financial year commitments totalling \$40,679 have been made to eight covenant projects which, when finalised, will protect 39 hectares of lowland forest and wetland. This low level of activity reflects difficulties QEII have had filling the regional positions in our region.

## **1.9 Freshwater ecosystems**

A consultant has been engaged to prepare a Freshwater Biodiversity Action Plan, which will be completed in the new year. Following the completion of this plan, Greater Wellington will have biodiversity action plans for all ecosystem types. Biodiversity action plans document and guide Greater Wellington's actions and provide a basis for future budgeting.

Work is underway with the Friends of the Owhiro Stream on three fish passes at the outlets of culverts in the Owhiro Stream. Design work on the fish passes is complete and resource consent applications have been prepared. These are now on hold because Wellington City Council is investigating whether a general upgrade of the culverts is needed.

## **1.10 Wairarapa Biodiversity Strategy**

Following on from our involvement in the Wairarapa Combined District Plan's biodiversity provisions, we have moved on to guide the new Wairarapa Biodiversity Coordinator by providing technical advice on the Strategy, particularly in relation to landowner liaison, ecological survey and non-regulatory methods for achieving the biodiversity requirements set out in the RMA. The Wairarapa Biodiversity Coordinator is based at Masterton District Council and her fixed-term position is funded by a grant from the Biodiversity Advice Fund.

## **1.11 Take Care programme**

In 2007-08 36 care groups have been working at sites across the region to restore the environment. Seven of these are either new groups this year or groups that had come to the end of their previous funding arrangement and been renewed. These are groups at: Makara estuary; Waikanae Beach; Petone Beach; Albemarle Stream (Wellington); Onslow College stream (Wellington); Wharemaukau Stream (Kapiti); and Whangaehu Stream (Wairarapa).

Highlights from the year include:

- The Papawai Stream group received \$68,000 in funding from the Sustainable Management Fund to continue its work after its *Take Care* funding runs out in June. The group played a key role in the Greentown project and staged a planting event for Greytown's schools.
- The Albemarle stream group has planted 1000 plants, constructed a walking track and built community support for its activities. The group featured in a two-page article in the Dominion Post.
- At the Churton Park Group's Wingfield Place site, blackberry and other weeds have been removed, over 1500 plants planted, and a sign erected to publicise the project.
- A nutrient catchment has been formed on a farm next to the Fensham wetland to prevent nutrients entering the wetland. It will be planted in August using plants from the Honda Tree Fund.
- A substantial amount of concrete and waste (around 23 tonnes) was removed from the Owhiro Stream. Planting has continued at three sites on the stream.
- The Otaki Friends ran several successful releasing and planting days at Chrystall's Bend. Over Easter this included scouts from a local jamboree.
- Henley Lake Trust members removed 20 willows, maintained walking tracks and installed seats at the wetland.
- Makaracarpa members planted grasses at the estuary and set up an irrigation system for their nursery at Makara School. They have established around 50 traps and have thus far caught stoats, rats, and mice along the estuary and coastline.
- A large number of willows were removed from Moehau Stream in Upper Hutt and large areas have been weeded to assist plant growth. New areas have been planted by scouts, school students and corporate volunteers from several organisations.
- The Island Bay Dune Protection group has planted 900 spinifex this winter and held several working bees and weeding days.
- The Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group has planted 1800 plants this season.
- At Onehunga Bay 1000 wetland plants have been planted and 500 spinifex will be planted shortly.
- Petone Beachcare has set up a trial mid and back dune planting, funded by Ministry for the Environment.



- Pines, lupins, and buckthorn have been sprayed at Riversdale beach. Students from Whareama School and local residents also planted 1000 spinifex and pingao at the annual planting event.
- The Waikanae Dune group has put a lot of effort into preparing its site and growing spinifex from seed. Members have planted spinifex this winter and will put a further 1000 plants into the dunes this season.
- At Paraparaumu Beach the DUNE group has started planting the 2000 spinifex to be used this year.
- Regular working bees and planting days at the Waikanae Estuary have seen considerable progress made at this large site. This busy group has also fully utilised additional funding of \$11,000 from the Ministry for the Environment.
- A new group has been formed in Masterton to work on the Makoura Stream. The group has widespread public support. It will officially join *Take Care* in July but its opening day and first planting event occurred during World Environment Week in early June. Several schools were involved. The Masterton District Council is matching its Take Care funding.
- The Greater Wellington Environmental Awards were held in December. Nga Uruora – Kapiti Project won the Rata Community Partnership Award for their outstanding effort in restoring native forest between Pukerua Bay and Paekakariki.
- Restoration day, the annual celebration and training event for care groups, was held in May. Around 200 people attended the event for workshops and field trips and to share their successes and learning with others.

## 1.12 Parks

### Implementing the Parks Environmental Asset Management Plan

The Parks Environmental Asset Management Plan work programme for 2007/08 was completed. Good progress was made in improving ecosystem health in the parks and forests through pest control and restoration. Monitoring information provided feedback about the outcomes of this work. Highlights of the year include:

- Completion of a major 1080 operation in Akatarawa Forest (Residual Trap Catch (RTC) levels fell to 0.4%)
- Over 240 goats culled in the parks and forests
- Set up of an ongoing possum control operation in Dry Creek in Belmont Regional Park
- Over 86 pest plant infestations controlled in the parks and forests

- Good increases in kereru numbers in Kaitoke Regional Park
- Alder control trial at Lake Wairarapa wetlands
- At least 25,000 plants planted during restoration work in the parks and forests

A highlight was the release of North Island robins (*Petroica australis longpipes*) into East Harbour Regional Park in 2008 through the efforts of the care-group MIRO. This group have been working in partnership with Greater Wellington on a “mainland island” site in the forest behind Eastbourne. This is the first time this species has been returned to the wild in the Wellington region.

#### Water group contract

The Hutt 1080 operation that was programmed to take place in the 2007/2008 financial year was reprogrammed to 2008/2009 as the pre-operational monitoring results showed low RTC levels. Other work programmed was completed, including ungulate control, pest plant control and monitoring. The monitoring results indicate that the forests in both the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo and the Hutt water collection areas are improving in health.

### **1.13 Wainuiomata Mainland Island**

Implementation of the 2007/2008 operational plan was completed, which involved a range of pest control and monitoring tasks. Possum numbers remained low (0.5% RTC inside the mainland island), while rats varied between 2 and 19% tracking rate (a method of determining how many rats are present) in the intensive control area. Bird counts have shown some increases in bird numbers. The project is continuing to go well, but controlling rat numbers remains a challenge.

### **1.14 Key Native Ecosystem programme**

The KNE programme is currently undergoing a full review to ensure that the selection of areas for KNE status is appropriate and that resources are being used effectively.

The programme has been very successful in improving biodiversity outside the Greater Wellington estate by working with territorial authorities and private landowners in high value areas. Currently there are 55 territorial authority reserve sites (52 in the western zone and 3 in the eastern zone) and 33 private land sites.

### **1.15 New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Award**

Greater Wellington has won the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network's (NZPCN) premier award for a Council - acknowledging an outstanding contribution to native plant conservation in New Zealand. The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network is New Zealand's only non government organisation devoted to protecting New Zealand's

indigenous plant life. It's a diverse organisation made up of scientists, botanists, horticulturalists, academics, local authorities and community groups.

NZPCN said Greater Wellington won the award thanks to its leadership on a range of programmes throughout the region including habitat protection, community restoration days, coordinating community planting groups and undertaking pest control.

## **2. Looking ahead**

- Finalising the remediation and ecological restoration design for the lower Waiwhetu Stream ahead of works commencing March 2009.
- Completing the indigenous ecosystems chapter of the draft Regional Policy Statement, including responses to submitters and the section 32 report.
- Completing the review of the Key Native Ecosystems programme.
- Completing of the review of the Wetlands Incentive programme.
- Working with the Wairarapa Biodiversity coordinator to guide the development of the Wairarapa Biodiversity Strategy.
- Providing input into Porirua City Council's Porirua Harbour Strategy.

### 3. Business Plan Performance Indicators

#### 3.1 Environment Management Division

Performance Indicator	FY Actual	FY Budget
<p><u>Environmental Education</u></p> <p>Through the Take Care community environmental education programme, five new Care Groups will be established and assisted to care for degraded local ecosystems and existing Care Groups will be maintained.</p>	\$212,100	\$225,000
<p><u>Environmental Policy</u></p> <p>The following programmes and plans will be implemented and a progress report will be approved by Council:</p> <p>Wetland Action Plan</p> <p>Queen Elizabeth II National Trust private land protection programme</p> <p>Freshwater ecosystems programme</p> <p>Kaiwharawhara Stream Plan</p> <p>Waiwhetu Stream Action Plan</p> <p>Pauatahanui Inlet Action Plan</p> <p>Coastal and marine ecosystem programme</p>	\$741,000	\$601,000

### 3.2 Catchment Management Division

Performance Indicator	FY Actual	FY Budget
<p><u>Land Management</u></p> <p>Five kilometres of riparian restoration works will be carried out to increase biodiversity along stream banks, within a budget of \$196,000.</p>	\$170,000	\$196,000
<p><u>Biosecurity</u></p> <p>Implementing the Key Native Ecosystem aspects of the Regional Pest Management Strategy.</p>	\$778,362	\$650,000

### 3.3 Water Supply, Parks and Forests Division

Performance Indicator	FY Actual	FY Budget
<p><u>Parks</u></p> <p>Environmental assets and settings within the regional parks and forests will be managed in accordance with the <i>Parks Environmental Asset Management Plan</i> service levels, and within a budget of \$1,118,000. A report on compliance with the standards in the Environmental Asset Management Plan will be approved by Council.</p>	\$841,568	\$1,118,000
<p><u>Water Group contract</u></p> <p>Vegetation management and pest control measures will be carried out in GW's water supply catchments, in accordance with the Forestry Management Plan, and within a budget of \$306,000, so that the treatment plants receive good quality water.</p>	\$115,000	\$306,000