

Report 12.574
Date 15 November 2012
File CMG/01/14/02

Committee Environmental Wellbeing Committee
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Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022: Operational Plan Report 2011/12

1. Purpose

To report on the performance of the 2011/12 Operational Plan for implementation of the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.

2. The decision-making process and significance

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002.

2.1 Significance of the decision

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance policy and decision making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter is considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision making process is required in this instance.

3. Background

As the Management Agency that has approved the Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS), the Council is required to prepare an annual Operational Plan under Section 85 of the Biosecurity Act 1993. Furthermore, the Management Agency must prepare a report on the plan and its implementation no later than five months after the end of each financial year. The report is to be made available to the public and a copy forwarded to the relevant Minister(s).

The Council approved the current RPMS on 17 September 2002. The statutory five year review of the RPMS was approved by Council on 12 June 2009. The reviewed RPMS is based on current knowledge of the targeted plant and animal pest species biology and contemporary pest control methods available.

The Biosecurity Act does provide for an option to use the Annual Plan reporting process to provide details on performance against the RPMS Operational Plan objectives. However, Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) considered it more transparent to use a separate reporting process where greater detail can be included on performance, trends, issues and expenditure for scrutiny by ratepayers.

4. The Operational Plan Report - Highlights

The proposed Operational Plan Report 2011/12 is attached as Attachment 1. This is the tenth progress report detailing performance against the objectives in the RPMS 2002-2022 and the third report on the progress of the reviewed RPMS.

During 2011/12, the Biosecurity Department focused on Total Control and Site-Led species. We continued to make advances in the effective management of a wide variety of pests with continued support of landowners, care groups and territorial authorities (TAs). This has resulted in progressive reductions in the impacts of pest species on the primary production sector and further enhancements in biodiversity values over large parts of the region. Staff continue to receive positive feedback from the public on increasing numbers of native birds, especially tui and kereru, and improvements of native flora in treated areas.

Staff completed intensive field surveys around Total Control pest plant sites. The delimiting surveys in 2011/12, covering 492 properties, resulted in 23 new pest plant infestations being recorded and controlled. Over the five years of the Total Control species delimiting programme Biosecurity staff have surveyed 12,743 properties.

The rook control programme was very successful this year, progressing well towards the planned eradication of the species from our region by 2022. Staff have worked closely with Horizons and Hawkes Bay regional councils and scientists to improve control methods and effectiveness of the programme.

Monitoring indicates that rabbit numbers remain at low levels across the region. The rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus continues to cycle and suppress rabbit numbers. Staff continued to control rabbits at high value ecosystem sites and in TA reserves and esplanades, when required.

Relationships with key stakeholders, such as TAs, NGOs, and Crown Departments continued to be strengthened. Opportunities for collective funding and collaborative works were vigorously pursued. We collaborated closely with the Department of Conservation on a number of projects, including around Lake Wairarapa, and worked with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) on National Interest Pest Responses for Manchurian wild rice and Cape tulip, and surveillance for didymo. Staff were active in the implementation of the MPI national summer Check, Clean, Dry programme aimed at raising public awareness of didymo and other aquatic pests.

Responsibility for pest control outside of KNEs and TA reserves remains largely with landowners and occupiers, making education and communication an essential part of the control programme. GW has a duty to ensure these parties are aware of their responsibilities and have the appropriate knowledge and skills to address biosecurity risks.

Staff continued to encourage public awareness about biosecurity matters through various communication initiatives including numerous newspaper articles, presentations and attendance at A&P shows and field days. Staff also continued to update a suite of GW publications and the GW website on pest species.

Responding to client enquiries is a major function of staff under the RPMS. In 2011/12, staff responded to 1,333 individual enquiries from the public. Many of these involved site visits, and in most cases, staff provided control advice and equipment.

Staff actively collaborated with other regional councils and science providers working to improve management of pest species. The National Biocontrol Collective is continually increasing the number and range of biocontrol agents available for releases against some of the worst pest plant species in the country. Staff are working with landowners to address some of the environmental effects of intensive farming in our region using biocontrol agents like dung beetles.

The attached 2011/12 RPMS Operational Plan Report contains separate Pest Animal and Pest Plant sections with an outline of performance against key activity objectives and an overview of major issues encountered during the year.

5. Communication

Public notices will be issued to inform the public that the RPMS Operational Plan Report 2011/12 is available for inspection. Copies will be forwarded to the appropriate Ministers for their review and comment.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Approves the Operational Plan Report 2011/12 (Attachment 1) for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022.*
2. *Notes that a copy of the Operational Plan Report 2011/12 will be forwarded to the relevant Ministers.*
3. *Notes that the Operational Plan Report 2011/12 will be made available for public inspection.*

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:



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Manager, Biosecurity



Wayne O'Donnell
General Manager, Catchment Management

Attachment 1: Operational Plan Report 2010/11 for the Regional Pest Management Strategy 2002-2022