

Report 14.218
Date 22 April 2014
File E/12/07/04

Committee Wellington Regional Strategy
Author Michael Bassett-Foss, Project Director

Wairarapa Water Use Project update

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on progress with the Wairarapa Water Use Project (WWUP) and illustrate potential economic and social benefits that might accrue from this project.

2. Introduction – project vision and positioning

The project's vision is: *“A multi-purpose water scheme for Wairarapa to collect and store water then distribute it for a variety of economic and community uses. This will be done in a way that promotes sustainable management of land and water and creates regional prosperity.”*

Relevant for the Committee, a significant portion of the stored water will be used for farm irrigation and as such, it is seen as a key economic development catalyst for the whole Wellington region as noted in the Wellington Regional Strategy document.

Importantly, the project is also an integral component of a broader programme of work undertaken by Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) to provide effective catchment wide management of land and water in the Ruamahanga Valley. Accordingly, the project is embedded in the environmental science and regional plan change process. This involves the Whaitua process, which is a collaborative community committee that aims to set limits for water quality and quantity in the catchment.

3. Background

The project first evolved in the early 2000s emanating from several consecutive dry summers which culminated in the formation of the Wairarapa Regional Irrigation Trust. In 2010 GWRC offered to fund and oversee the project with an improved level of resourcing. This coincided with the formation of the Ministry for Primary Industries Irrigation Acceleration Fund, which is currently funding 50% of the costs.

Several studies have so far been completed in the current series of investigations, the major technical studies being the Scheme Options Identification and Options Refinement Reports in 2013.

The project overview in **Attachment 1** provides more information on the project and an indicative project timeline showing the current prefeasibility phase of investigations that will run through until mid-2015. This will be followed by a full feasibility phase of 12 – 18 months and a consenting phase of 24 months allowing for scheme construction to start in 2018 at the earliest.

4. Prefeasibility phase

The project has recently started the prefeasibility phase of investigations, which are expected to take until June 2015. The indicative prefeasibility work programme is outlined in **Attachment 2**.

Earlier investigations have identified five potentially viable schemes, supported by three ‘reserve’ storages. The aim of the prefeasibility phase is to determine which water scheme/s, if any, show enough viability to proceed to a more detailed full feasibility study. Identifying schemes that are not viable from technical, financial, cultural, environmental and social perspectives is a focus of this work.

In summary, the prefeasibility study comprises the following workstreams:

- Workstream #1:** Access river conveyancing, distribution area and on-plain storage.
- Workstream #2:** Water storage site geotechnical assessment
- Workstream #3:** Geotechnical and cost assessment of distribution systems
- Workstream #4:** Non-engineering studies including social impact, alternative land use, recreation impacts, commercial aquatic ecology and water resources
- Workstream #5:** Additional scheme-specific studies yet to be confirmed
- Workstream #6:** Consolidate studies, develop recommendations, confirm full feasibility study programme
- Ongoing:** Involving communications and community engagement, water demand and economic assessments.

Review points have been programmed at the end of each workstream to allow the project team and key stakeholders to reassess the direction the project is taking and what it should next focus on.

5. Presentation to Committee

A presentation will be provided at the meeting. This presentation will provide the historical context for the project, the current status and the future plans through to completion.

The presentation will also highlight the possible economic effects the WWUP may generate with reference to the effects that have been realised in areas of New Zealand that have seen extensive land use change due to the provision of reliable water. These effects are both at the farm gate level and further down the value chain.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:

Geoff Copps
Business and Demand
Development - WWUP

Report approved by:

Michael Bassett-Foss
Project Director- WWUP

Report approved by:

Nigel Corry
General-Manager,
Environment Management
group

Attachment 1: Project overview

Attachment 2: Indicative prefeasibility work programme