

MEMO

TO Pam Guest

COPIED TO Tim Porteous, Ali Caddy

FROM Tarryn Wyman

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Information on Greater Wellington Regional Council wetlands work

Protection of remaining wetlands is a focus of the *Proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region* (PNRP), which was notified in 2015. The PNRP contains a number of significant changes to the rules controlling what landowners can do on their land. The new rules require the exclusion of stock from waterways and the protection of scheduled wetlands. The PNRP intends to restrict stock from accessing Category 1 and Category 2 waterways. It also requires landowners to manage the effects of stock access to other waterbodies.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) is working to support landowners to improve water quality in the waterways and wetlands on their properties, as well as helping them comply with the rules set out in the PNRP. The approach taken by Greater Wellington to help protect and manage wetlands in the region has been to identify wetlands that are subject to the stock exclusion requirement of PNRP Rule R97(e) (scheduled significant wetlands that are > 0.1ha), contact landowners to inform them of any of these wetlands located on their property, and raise awareness of the support we provide to carry out fencing and restoration activities.

The Environmental Policy department requested the Biodiversity department to provide a summary of the work done by Greater Wellington to implement the new wetland rules in the PNRP and support landowners to meet these requirements. This memo records our response to this request.

Identification of wetland type and definition of boundaries

There are 305 wetlands mapped at present in Greater Wellington's wetland database¹ including the scheduled significant natural wetlands and outstanding natural wetlands. Wetlands are continuing to be added to the database as they are identified through liaison with landowners or through other sources of new information.

Outstanding natural wetlands (Schedule A3)

14 wetlands have been identified as having outstanding indigenous biodiversity values and are listed in PNRP Schedule A3. All 14 outstanding natural wetlands have been visited by wetland ecologists and have accurate boundary definition. Seven outstanding natural wetlands are on lands managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC), while four are in Greater Wellington's parks and forests, with the remaining three located on private land.

Significant natural wetlands (Schedule F3)

There are 197 identified significant natural wetlands listed in PNRP Schedule F3 that are greater than 0.1 ha and meet one or more of criteria (a) to (d) in Policy 23 of the Regional Policy Statement 2013 being representativeness; rarity; diversity; ecological context.

Of these scheduled significant natural wetlands:

- 160 have had their boundaries assessed, meaning that a Land Management or Biodiversity advisor has gone out and done an initial site assessment
 - 149 of these have boundaries that have been agreed between Greater Wellington and landowners for practical purposes including the feasible location of fencing². In a small number of cases, landowners have requested a scientific delineation of the wetland boundary. This has occurred for five wetlands
 - The remaining eleven sites need further conversation with the landowner to determine the best way to manage those specific areas
- 37 wetlands are still to have their boundaries assessed. Of these, 25 are actively managed, either by Greater Wellington through the Key Native Ecosystem Programme or by DOC. Greater Wellington is currently checking whether these sites have livestock. Where there are stock we are working with landowners (such as DOC) to help them comply with the PNRP rules. Due to budget constraints, the fencing of large areas will be difficult to achieve but Greater Wellington is looking at how we can support these stakeholders and protect these wetlands in other ways

¹ Environmental Science department's wetlands layer in GIS (2016)

² Expert delineation (by a wetland ecologist) may or may not have been undertaken in these cases

Non-scheduled wetlands

We are proactively working with landowners to identify natural wetlands³ on their properties that have not been scheduled in the PNRP. When requested, Environmental Science staff will go out to a property to identify or delineate natural wetlands.

The Environmental Science and Biodiversity departments are exploring options for guidance material to support wetland identification.

Wetland Programme

The Wetland Programme⁴ supports the protection, management, and restoration of wetlands in the Wellington Region and is delivered through Greater Wellington's Biodiversity department. It involves the provision of advice on wetland restoration and incentives for landowners to undertake restoration of wetlands on private land.

The programme was developed in response to Method 20 of the PNRP, which outlines the non-regulatory work Greater Wellington will engage in to support the restoration and good management of wetlands in the region. This non-regulatory method is a complement to the rules and policies around wetlands, which respond to the acutely threatened status of wetlands in the region. Under this programme, funding is available to help protect and restore significant natural wetlands on private land.

Under the Wetland Programme staff develop restoration management plans, which help landowners protect the wetland's ecological values and guide restoration activities over a three to five year period. There are two types of restoration management plans - statutory and non-statutory. A statutory plan is required if a restoration activity requires a resource consent⁵ under the PNRP, while a non-statutory plan is appropriate when the restoration works in the plan are classed as permitted activities⁶.

The Wetland Programme also provides resources and information to anyone restoring wetlands. This includes getting advice from biodiversity advisors on restoring wetlands and funding sources for doing so, and provision of publications such as *A Beginner's Guide to Wetland Restoration*⁷ and *Understanding the 'wet' in wetlands*⁸.

The Wetland Programme complements two other Greater Wellington programmes that aim to improve water quality and encourage sustainable land management practices. These are the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) Programme and Riparian Programme (both delivered by the Land Management department). The FEP Programme involves working with farmers to support best practice on farms in priority catchments. The programme provides financial incentives for work, including fencing and planting, to improve water quality

³ These wetlands include many that have not so far been identified on maps. These likely include types such as hillside seepage wetlands, that can only be identified on site, rather than by remote methods (eg, analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery)

⁴ The Wetland Programme plan: http://ourspace.gw.govt.nz/ws/biodiv/_layouts/15/DocIdRedir.aspx?ID=BIOD-10-602

⁵ Under PNRP Rule 106, restoration activities that are not otherwise permitted under PNRP Rule 105 will be granted consent provided they are stipulated in, and carried out in accordance with, an approved Restoration Management Plan

⁶ Under PNRP Rule 105

⁷ <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Land-Management/A-Beginners-guide-to-wetland-restoration-2009.pdf>

⁸ http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/council-publications/wetland_hydrology.pdf

and environmental outcomes. The Riparian Programme supports landowners to protect Category 1 and Category 2 surface water bodies, which includes advice on sustainable land practices as well as financial assistance to effectively manage the margins of waterways on the property. In areas where these three programmes overlap, staff work closely together to provide a seamless service to landowners. This can mean including wetland restoration objectives into FEPs and riparian plans, and allocating budget appropriately from the two departments.

The Wetland Programme currently provides the following incentives to private landowners for restoration of significant and outstanding natural wetlands:

Restoration activity	Funding available from Greater Wellington
Fencing to prevent stock access	Up to 50% of agreed total cost for materials and labour
Pest plant control	Up to 100% of the total cost (maximum \$5,000 per year for three years). This can include pre- and post- spot spraying for planting
Planting of eco-sourced native plants	Up to \$1,000 per year for 3 years to cover plants and associated materials (eg, plant protectors)
Pest animal control	Traps/bait stations available for landowners to purchase from GW at cost

*Note: funding levels are determined on a case by case basis and are at the discretion of Wetland Programme advisors

The Wetland Programme is also looking into offering training and networking opportunities this year for landowners signed up to the programme to educate and share knowledge of wetland restoration.

Progress to date under the Wetland Programme includes 20 wetlands with approved restoration management plans, two with plans on hold, and 15 with plans in the review or writing process. For the 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years, a total of \$82K has been spent/allocated to sites under the Wetland Programme. This includes \$40K for fencing to prevent stock access, \$30.5K for pest plant control and \$6K for planting. Budget has also been allocated to wetland sites already for the next three financial years.

Awareness of wetlands and support available

Greater Wellington has been working through the list of Schedule F3 wetlands to contact people directly to inform them of the wetlands of their properties. In 2014/2015, letters were sent to all landowners of Schedule F3 wetlands to notify them that they had a scheduled significant wetland on their property. In 2016, 96 landowners or land managers were contacted to inform them of the availability of funding through the Riparian and Wetland Programmes⁹. 36 of these received the 2016 Riparian/Wetland Programme

⁹ Sites owned by territorial authorities and other agencies were not contacted as they are not eligible for financial assistance through the Wetland Programme

letter¹⁰ while owners/managers of 60 sites were phoned or visited in lieu of a letter. It was felt it would be better for these 60 sites to have direct communication with us rather than a letter due to the complexity of the site or an existing relationship with Greater Wellington.

A media campaign was held in late 2017 that included newspaper, radio and video advertising to raise awareness of our support programmes. We worked with DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb and Federated Farmers to create promotional material about our Wetland Programme and the support it can provide. They were able to share this among their networks and it was also made publicly available.

Landowners are made aware of the other wetland activity rules in the PNRP (in addition to Rule R97 for stock exclusion) when they meet with staff working on the Wetland, Riparian or Farm Environment Plan Programmes. Biodiversity and Land Management advisors discuss these PNRP wetland activity rules with landowners, particularly if they are wanting to undertake non-complying activities in their wetland, such as creating more open water, or putting boardwalks or tracks through wetlands. Landowners are also directed to the Environmental Regulation department if they require further clarification on the rules. Biosecurity staff are also able to communicate these rules to landowners if questions come in via phone calls or during site visits.

Biodiversity and Land Management staff have been giving presentations to territorial authorities on the wetland rules and funding Greater Wellington has available to support private landowners with natural wetlands. Therefore, if queries are received by territorial authorities from members of the public they can be directed to Greater Wellington.

The Environmental Science department has a Wetland Health Monitoring Programme in place and visits 30 wetlands a year as part of this programme. Advice about the ecological values of the wetlands is provided to the landowners following these surveys.

Behaviour change monitoring

A selection of wetland sites are very complex to manage and stock exclusion is often not simple to fence. While 78% of scheduled wetlands are under 10ha in size, some wetland areas are large and it takes some time for landowners to come to terms with the change in land management/land use required under the PNRP. At other sites, the terrain is difficult to fence and how these wetlands are protected involves conversations and agreements with landowners. In order to measure landowners' responses to the stock access rules and fully understand the complexity around this, Greater Wellington is using a 'stages of change' method for monitoring attitude change towards complying with the rules. This is opposed to measuring how many metres of fencing we have paid for, which would not tell us much about these sites. Below is a table of the stages of change. As part of this we are also recording the barriers people are facing that stops them from excluding stock even though they may want to.

The value of this system is that we can learn about whether our efforts to reach out and encourage behaviour change are having effect, and whether we need to change our approach.

¹⁰ <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Land-Management/For-the-health-of-our-water-PUBLIC-FAQs-FINAL-.pdf>

Stages of Change Scoring			
Stage	Description	Score	Percentage* of scheduled wetlands as at 23 May 2018
No	Landowner is not willing to engage in the programme	1	12%
Yeah... But	Landowner indicates willingness but presents barriers as to why they can't	2	21%
OK	Landowner accepts that they will take action	3	15%
Action	Landowner commences implementation	4	4%
Maintenance	Implementation complete, some follow up required	5	14%
No stock/Fencing in place	-	6	25%

* Note the remaining 9% are sites we have not been able to contact the landowners to do an initial site assessment

Please contact me if you require any further information.

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