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Report to Environment Committee
from John Sherriff, Manager Resource Investigations

Revised Environmental Reporting Framework

1. Purpose

To present to the Committee the outcomes of a recent review of environmental reporting.

2. Background

For some time now staff of the Environment and Wairarapa Divisions have been working to improve the manner in which we get our monitoring information across to the community. The Regional Monitoring Strategy identified reporting on environmental information as an area requiring improvement and this has been adopted in the Environment Divisional Strategy and Direction.

A review of the way in which we translate data into information and disseminate that information to the community has now been completed.

3. Review Outcomes

The review recommends changes to the monitoring periods for some programmes. This will require changes to some reporting dates, specifically, the current annual plan performance indicators to prepare hydrology and groundwater reports by 30 June 2002. The review also seeks to change the style in which information is released. A summary of the proposed monitoring and reporting strategy is attached to this report.

3.1 Monitoring Period

There are two main issues that are taken into account in determining the monitoring period.

- It is important to report on monitoring activities as soon as practicably possible after the period of greatest environmental stress, e.g., air quality will be reported after the end of winter, contact recreation will be reported after the end of the bathing season.
- Report preparation needs to fit into other programmed activities. For example, monitoring activities for water based programmes reduce in winter. This is the time when most data analyses and quality assurance checks occur. It is sensible that report preparation should follow these activities, hence a monitoring year ending 30 June with reporting in September is preferable.

3.2 **Report Format**

Most of the monitoring currently undertaken by the Council is presented in either annual reports, or as technical documents. The Regional Monitoring Strategy identifies that data gathered through the monitoring programmes needs to be translated into information which is more useful for a range of audiences, and that reporting requirements will vary depending on the target audience. While the main users of the information gathered will be decision-makers and policy advisors within the Council, its outputs will continue to serve a public awareness and education role.

A range of reporting styles are recommended. These include press releases and pamphlets, report cards, technical reports and area specific information for distribution to resource users.

3.3 **Comprehensive Six Yearly Analyses**

It is proposed that, for most of the major environmental monitoring programmes, a comprehensive review and analysis of monitoring results will be undertaken every six years. These will be scheduled so that the results can feed into the development of the Region's State of the Environment Report. A six-year time frame is considered to be an appropriate period of time for analysing long term trends in monitoring results as identified in the Regional Monitoring Strategy.

3.4 **Reporting of Exceptional Events**

Exceptional events such as floods, droughts and exceedances of environmental guidelines will be reported as stand alone technical reports once the event has finished.

4. **Implications**

As proposed in the new strategy, the next annual reports for groundwater and hydrology will be presented in September 2002 rather than 30 June 2002 as is currently stated in the annual plan.

5. **Communication**

The proposed changes follow approval of the Regional Monitoring Strategy, and are designed to improve the way we communicate our monitoring information. However, at this stage there are no benefits to be gained from making these changes more widely known.

6. **Recommendation**

That the Committee:

- *endorse the proposed changes to the monitoring and reporting strategy; and*
- *acknowledge the implications of this change to the stated Annual Plan performance measure.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachments: 1