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Committee Environment Committee
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Divisional Manager's report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the activities and progress of the Environment Division and about any matters that have arisen since the Committee's last meeting.

2. Managers' reports

The Department Managers' reports, along with the Divisional Accountant's report follow as **Attachment 1**.

3. State of the Environment Report and Regional Policy Statement (RPS) Review

Councillors will have gained some idea of the content of the state of the environment report at the recently held workshop. This report is an extremely important document for the Council – and our region. It is really our “school report” as it shows our progress in meeting the objectives set out in the Regional Policy Statement which was written ten years ago.

The findings of the state of the environment report provide the foundations for the review of the Regional Policy Statement. As we have discussed before, the new requirement for territorial authorities “to give effect” to the RPS means that our processes will need to be inclusive and transparent. We will be involving Councillors every step of the way. Several workshops are planned for next year and I would just like to take the opportunity to remind Councillors of the importance of the RPS. It is the foundation document for the environmental management of the Region.

4. Non-regulatory approach to environment management

As we prepare our budgets for the next ten years, through the Long-term Council Community Plan, one of the major issues that we grapple with is the extent to which we involve ourselves in non-regulatory work. The scope of this work is great – and the opportunities endless. And so we have to be mindful of the budgetary implications.

The purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act) is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The Act gives regional councils many regulatory functions – e.g., RPS and regional plan development. However, it is generally accepted – and in areas other than environment management – that regulation is not always the only way achieve desired outcomes. Non- regulatory methods, such as persuasion, information, education etc can often complement regulation.

The *Muddy Waters* programme (the subject of a separate report to this meeting of the Committee) is a good example of a non-regulatory approach. Our pollution response and consents management staff have taken a proactive approach to the issue of silt control. The environment education programme is another obvious non-regulatory approach as, for example, are our wetland and riparian programmes – and our native forest protection programmes.

Councillors have indicated that they would like us to move to integrated catchment management. This certainly involves a non-regulatory approach. This approach is “a way of working” and will include all those whose functions impact on the environment, such as river managers and transport planners etc. It will also involve the community, particularly land owners, territorial authorities, government departments and other interested parties.

Hopefully, all our non-regulatory approaches will mean, in the long-term, lesser regulation. If children learn in schools about pollution, maybe in the future we will have less need for pollution control. The same principle applies to the care of wetlands, planting riversides and working with developers.

The RPS workshops will provide an opportunity for Councillors to discuss both approaches – regulatory and non-regulatory – to environment management in the region.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. receive the report; and*
- 2. note the contents.*

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Attachment 1: Department Managers' Reports