



Report 06.276
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Committee Rural Services and Wairarapa
Author Dave Cameron, Regional Land Management Officer

Catchment Management Framework – Pauatahanui and Waikanae

1. Purpose

To inform Committee of an integrated catchment management project within the Waikanae and Pauatahanui catchments and the impact of the project on Council's catchment management services.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Peter Handford and Associates have been working on a Ministry for the Environment sponsored project for the headwaters of the Waikanae River and the Pauatahanui Basin. Specifically the project is to develop a vision and support for planting and vegetation management for both catchments. It aims to provide ongoing benefits to individual landowners and the whole community.

The project is based around an assessment of landforms and vegetation. Vegetation in key areas of the catchment is very important for water quality. It can protect soils that are vulnerable to erosion, shelter and bind the soil, stabilise bank erosion and filter sediments, keep water cool and reduce algal growth, and regulate flood events and control stream channel erosion.

Project partners include Greater Wellington, Porirua City Council, Kapiti Coast District Council and the QEII National Trust.

4. Project Steps

Funding has been approved from MfE for one year (nominally ends 30 June 2006), at which point the project will be handed over to community groups to administer. The following has been completed to date

- A review of existing information on the catchments including current vegetation, soil and water values, and management issues.
- Contact with a sample of major landowners to obtain their views on soil and water issues and to begin the identification of opportunities for enhancing vegetation management.
- Wider contact across all landowners, including a mail out of information and the holding of drop in meetings
- Draft of a vegetation framework for the catchments, based on issues and opportunities put forward by landowners. The framework will indicate where the community has identified the need for more vegetation.
- Refining the draft framework to produce the communities' initiative for ongoing implementation.
- Scoping out what is needed to implement the framework including the provision of a network of support, sources of information and advice, access to plants, coordinated pest control, and funding.

Peter Handford and Associates are currently working on the database of information and support, and the formation of a structure to deliver the desired community outcomes. The appointment of a Catchment Coordinator and the establishment of Community Action Groups will be essential for the future of this programme. The NZ Landcare Trust is being contacted to assist with the appointment of the Coordinator.

5. Comment

The project has been managed in a way that both communities develop, support, and lead its implementation. As such it meets many of the components of integrated catchment management. It is however focussed solely on vegetation management and does not integrate all the environmental, social, economic and cultural issues. It has raised awareness within the catchments and there is a high degree of interest from landowners.

A farm plan is being prepared for one of the larger properties, and a group of lifestyle block owners has begun identifying their needs from within the framework.

Expectations within both catchments for the implementation for all or part of the framework have been raised and accordingly ongoing agency support will

be vital to ensure that these expectations can be met, and the benefits defined in the framework are met for both individuals and the wider community.

6. Project Implementation

Greater Wellington potentially has a key role in supporting the implementation of the vegetation framework. The project aligns well with many of the functions of the new Catchment Management Division, including land management, flood protection, pest and weed management, and biodiversity enhancement.

It will be essential that the transition from the current externally driven MfE initiative to a community driven project is a seamless one. This will require the position of co-ordinator to be appointed quickly. It will also require the support agencies to be able to meet their service delivery requirements.

For Greater Wellington this may lead to a demand for services beyond our ability to meet at present. Resources in some areas are already under pressure. We are working with Peter Handford to ensure that landowner expectations for support from Greater Wellington are not unrealistically raised.

7. Communication

The project offers very good communication opportunities. These will exist within Council, as the project potentially involves staff from at least three Divisions. External opportunities are also significant, initially through the Rural Services newsletter, and subsequently through a range of media communications.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

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

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Dave Cameron

Regional Land Management Officer

Geoff Dick

Divisional Manager, Catchment Management

Attachment 1: Pauatahanui vegetation project leaflet

Attachment 2: Waikanae vegetation project leaflet