

Report 08.130
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Committee Catchment Management
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Application for Funding - MAF Hill Country Erosion Fund

1. Purpose

To inform members of the application for funding from the MAF Hill Country Erosion Fund, and to advise of potential funding implications.

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

The MAF Hill Country Erosion Fund was established in 2007 as part of the Government's Sustainable Land Management package. A total of \$10 million was set aside for projects targeting the control of severe hill country erosion. The catalyst for the development of the funding policy was a series of severe rainfall events including the catastrophic Manawatu storms of February 2004.

Much of the development work was carried out in the two years following the Manawatu event, primarily between MAF and Horizons Regional Council. This collaborative work culminated in an application from Horizons to the fund in July 2007. The Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) focussed on priority catchments within the region and contained a significant contribution from ratepayers and landowners. In November 2007 MAF approved \$5.873 million over four years.

The balance of the fund (\$4.127 million) was therefore available for other applications. In December 2007 Cr Buchanan and senior staff met with MAF officials to discuss a possible bid from Greater Wellington. At the conclusion of that meeting a draft bid was circulated for discussion.

4. Application Criteria and Process

The Fund can be used for regional initiatives that:

- Protect unstable or potentially unstable land
- Protect stream banks
- Support community catchment facilitation groups
- Plan or implement erosion protection programmes
- Educate owners of hill country
- Provide resources for protection programmes

Regional councils and unitary authorities may submit applications for funding. Community groups and landowners are not eligible to apply but can participate in regional initiatives that are supported by the fund.

Applications to the Fund are to be assessed in a two stage process. Stage 1 applications are evaluated against eligibility criteria. Those applications that meet the criteria and provide a strong case for further consideration will progress to the Stage 2 application process.

Evaluation of Stage 2 applications will focus on:

- The definition of the problem
- How the programme will be implemented
- Consideration of alternatives
- The level of support for the programme
- How the proposal relates to local and central government policies and rules

Stage 1 applications closed on 8 February 2008. Stage 2 applications are to close on 24 April 2008. Applicants are to be notified of final decisions by June 2008.

5. Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative

The Wellington Regional Council Erosion Control Initiative (WRECI) has been forwarded to MAF as a Stage 1 application. It focuses on four priority catchments and local hotspots within the region where sediment generation from erosion is at moderate to high levels.

WRECI is a four year programme and the objectives and outcomes are contained in **Attachment 1**.

In summary, Government funds are sought for

- The preparation of 100 new Sustainability Plans
- An increase in grant rates for works contained within Sustainability Plans
- Resources to administer and implement an increased works programme
- Nursery development to supply additional poplar and willow poles

The application, as proposed requires additional contribution from Greater Wellington and individual landowners. This contribution results from an increased volume of new work, generated by the preparation of Sustainability Plans. Additionally, in relation to Greater Wellington there is contribution towards additional resources and nursery development

A summary of Greater Wellington’s proposed additional annual cash contribution is:

| Activity | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Planning | - | - | - | - |
| Works | - | \$100,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 |
| Resources | \$30,000 | \$30,000 | \$30,000 | \$30,000 |
| Nursery | - | \$30,000 | - | - |
| Total | \$30,000 | \$160,000 | \$230,000 | \$230,000 |

The nursery contribution will be generated from within the Business Unit and will not impact on general rates.

Landowners and Greater Wellington will also be making a small amount of annual ‘in-kind’ contribution in support of the initiative. This recognises the time involvement of staff and landowners.

6. Communications

A successful application will provide a substantial opportunity to promote sustainable land management. This is particularly relevant for the priority catchments and local hotspots, but will also signal Greater Wellington’s commitment to long term sustainable land management.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee

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

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Attachment 1