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Minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Committee Room, Greater Wellington Regional Council, 34 Chapel Street, Masterton, on Monday, 1 February 2010, at 3.30pm.

Present:

Peter Gawith (Chairperson), GWRC Cr Ian Buchanan, Jamie Falloon, Jenny Boyne, David Holmes (representing Wairarapa district councils), Emily Crofoot, Andy Pottinger, Michael Blundell.

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

Officers Present:

David Cameron, Ian Gunn, Andrew Stewart (for item 3), Jim Flack.

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved

(David Holmes/Jenny Boyne)

That the minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee meeting held on 5 October 2009 be confirmed.

2. WRECI Implementation Strategy

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Stewart, the recently appointed WRECI Co-ordinator, to the meeting to give a presentation on the WRECI Implementation Strategy.

Dave Cameron reminded the Committee of what GW had signed up to in its contract with MAF to deliver the WRECI programme. Initially it was a 10 year programme, as indicated in our LTCCP. Currently MAF has agreed a 4 year programme which includes a client satisfaction survey in the third year. A number of catchments will be targeted plus isolated erosion hotspots. The five

catchments involved included the Whareama, upper Taueru, Flat Point, Awhea and Opouawe.

Isolated hot spots in the Mataikona, Castlepoint, and Maungaraki areas have been identified on the basis of rates of sediment discharge and percentage of erosion prone land in the catchment. The coordinators role is funded 50:50 with MAF. Overall funding will be 30% MAF, 40% landowner and the remaining 30% GW. The \$6million ten year programme is an addition to the current funding for Land Management activities.

There will be 10 new plans created this financial year. The aim is to achieve the planting of 250 poles per property per year. By year seven Akura will have to produce 36,000 poles.

Jamie was concerned at the slow rate of progress likely across the programme. He believed the rural community wanted faster progress than this.

The draft WRECI Sustainability Plan was tabled. The Sustainability Plan is proposed as a comprehensive management plan including land resource information, an assessment of erosion risk, a targeted programme of works implementation, and an assessment on the economic impact on farm businesses.

Feedback was sought from the Committee as to how members envisaged engaging with the communities for the WRECI programme to achieve outcomes for the project.

Emily Crofoot arrived at 3.40pm.

Andrew Stewart then presented the WRECI proposal –

General principles:

- Target those farms generating most sediment
- Farmers that are part of a catchment approach
- Properties that want to and are able to commit to works over a period of time.

System to prioritise farms for developing a plan:

- Sedimentation rates from a farm
- People factor
- Catchment priority
- Amount of work likely to be done. Work was still to be done with some people having kick started the initiative while others will need to wait to go into the initiative and some will have to wait 7 years.

Feedback from the assessment approach was sought as to how farmers were to be ranked.

System to prioritise on-farm work:

- Hill slope directly connected to stream
- Active erosion on land form

- Good likelihood of success

Proposed roll out as per the table:

- Year 1: 10 selected properties for Whareama
- Year 2: Start programme in Awhea catchment
- Pool system. Properties selected by score
- Minimum number of properties completed per catchment

Andy Pottinger stated that it was important that the available information is circulated. It is an unknown in the Whareama catchment as to the number of properties which are active. GW's old catchment scheme was a good initiative. The good work needs to be built on. He would hate to see any work lost during the implementation of the initial phases of WRECI.

Andrew Stewart then gave a brief summary of the WRECI Sustainability Plan which covered three main sections.

WRECI Plan - farm details:

- Summary of current operation
- Summary of current land use
- Property soil conservation history
- Goals for the property

WRECI Plan – farm resource assessment

- Land Use Capability assessment
- Erosion management units
- CO₂e budget (forestry and livestock)
- Water resources/biodiversity

WRECI Plan – work programme

- Preferred land use scenario
- 30 year and 10 year programme
- Financial implications of changes
- CO₂e balance preferred scenario

David Holmes asked whether there was any data from existing farm plans as to how the sediment changes, and Peter Gawith queried whether GW holds any records for the Whareama catchment on sediment changes. Peter asked about the history of planting in the Whareama catchment and the catchment approach.

Andrew Stewart said that if there is demand for this kind of information there is a good case to get detailed information in terms of communication with the community.

Peter Gawith suggested that it would be good to have information on base sediment discharge to sell in the future to convince landowners that what is being done is working.

Andy Pottinger said that it was interesting to see aerial photographs of the Whareama catchment scheme and the discharge that occurs out to sea during a flood. Ian Gunn reported that of interest is a map prepared by DoC which shows that the Whareama catchment discharges significant volumes of sediment equal to the whole of the Ruamahanga.

Jamie Falloon considered there was an issue with managing the expectations with only 10 out of the 65 Farm Plans being implemented in the first year and this was nothing different from what is currently happening. In his view it was disappointing that it was going to take so long to get the plans implemented. Jamie also commented that the reason for the WHCAC Committee being formed was to get GW to control hill country erosion. He would like to know how farmers can kick start their Land Use Classification mapping?

Emily Crofoot asked how the community was to be approached. Were the Whareama catchment landowners only being approached, or different catchments approached? Emily did not wish to see peoples' expectations increased if there is going to be a time delay to get them on board.

Dave responded by saying that it was not intended to contact all landowners about WRECI but it was more about proceeding in a priority order. Of the 65 properties in the Whareama Catchment Scheme, in any one year GW may only be engaged with approximately 50% of these property owners.

The Committee was asked for feedback by 8 February on the draft WRECI Implementation Strategy as to how the programme can be rolled out to capture the enthusiasm of landowners. It was proposed that this would be rolled out to the Wharema catchment on 17 February 2010.

3. Natural Resource Management review update

Cr Buchanan reported that the Governance Strategy for the Natural Resource Management Plan had now been lodged with the Iwi and the first meeting scheduled for early March will set the programme. There will be an opportunity for the WHCAC Committee to be involved and have input into the Natural Resource Management Plan Governance Review Group (Te Upoko Taio).

Dave Cameron outlined the structure beneath the Natural Resource Management Plan Committee with a Staff Steering Group formed to target four work streams to the NRMP Committee – review of existing plans, Iwi and their interests and input, science to back up the approach, and the non-regulatory approach.

Members were advised that there were five phases of the engagement phase which will form the basis of developing the Natural Resource Management Plan. The starting point was the setting of principles around the non-regulatory approach and resources in the region.

Peter Gawith reported that a request had been raised at a Wairarapa Farm Monitoring Group meeting for a speaker from GW talk about the new NRMP

Committee at their meeting on 3 March 2010. Two meetings of the Farm Monitoring Group were to be held before funding ceases in mid-July.

Andy Pottinger commented about solving resource management issues that supported the regional growth. With the set of resources in the region there were significant opportunities for growth. Cr Buchanan said that phase two of the five phases covered the issues and the resource information. There were two parts to the solution. One is to focus on the development of the Regional Plan. The other was the pathways around communication and social development with an opportunity for integration. There is an opportunity for discussions with the farming community to develop that aspect also and go down a pathway of integration.

Cr Buchanan indicated that the engagement process was going to be an enormous challenge.

4. Meeting Schedules

The Chairman raised the suggestion put forward to consider bringing in specialist speakers to address the Committee at future meetings.

Jamie Falloon had indicated an interest in getting a better understanding of how Horizons Regional Council had developed their One Plan. Learning about what other regional councils were doing with programmes like WRECI would also be of interest to the Committee. Other topics of interest could be followed up for future meetings.

The Committee agreed that an approach be made to the Horizons Regional Council to have an official from their council address the WHCAC Committee at its next meeting on 1 March 2010.

The following scheduled meeting on 3 May was suggested as an appropriate time to have a speaker to discuss the first level engagement process around the Natural Resource Management Plan.

Action point: Dave Cameron to follow up the two agreed suggestions with programmed timing taken into consideration when setting the agenda for the meetings.

Michael Blundell asked that the minutes of the Committee meetings be forwarded to members as soon as possible following the meetings.

5. Communications

(1) Landscape Evaluation Project

Jim Flack gave an update on the Landscape Evaluation Project and the development of a communications plan.

A media article had appeared in the Dominion late in 2009.

Land evaluation is currently being developed. It will be used by both the territorial authorities and used in the preparation of the new Regional Plan.

Public meetings and meetings with key stakeholders are proposed for mid-April.

Members asked that information be provided prior to the meetings to get a better understanding of the landscape evaluation. It was noted that there had been a suggestion that the best approach was to talk to landowners face to face about the value of their land, but time restraints would not allow this to happen.

Jim advised that a letter to each landowner was proposed to be forwarded.

Cr Buchanan indicated it was about the evaluation phase and not about protecting landscapes. Once the evaluation phase is completed, every landowner potentially affected needed to be contacted.

Emily Crofoot considered it was important to remember that the landscape is already managed and as a consequence it is a modified landscape. It is important that the right to operate within the modified landscape is not taken away.

(2) Stock in Waterways

Jim Flack advised that staff have met with Federated Farmers and Fonterra NZ and a draft has been prepared of practice guidelines to manage stock in waterways. A final draft has now been signed off and is awaiting photographs prior to its distribution in coming months.

It was agreed that the full and final draft of the best practice guidelines of managing stock in waterways be forwarded to the Committee prior to going to printing.

Action point: Jim Flack to email Committee members.

(3) Possum numbers

Jim Flack updated the Committee on the increase in possum numbers. A recent media article had said that possum numbers were on the decrease. However, Jim indicated that this was not the case and that possum numbers were building up again.

The Chairman said he would like any survey figures and information that can verify that possum numbers are on the increase to be put before the Committee.

David Holmes said it was about educating landowners about possums as there are a number of younger landowners who don't remember the Tb times. A number of stoats and ferrets were also being observed.

Andy Pottinger referred to the AHB funding issue with no further possum control being undertaken. Landowners needed to be aware of the availability of bait stations and traps that GW can provide to assist with the eradication of possums, and the resulting biodiversity benefits.

Cr Buchanan reported that the Regional Possum Control Programme has been adopted and the first phase was to pick up where the AHB moves out with a long term possum control programme added to that. The self-help aspect forms part of this.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.