



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL

5 May 2010
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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, 3 May 2010, at 3.00pm.

Present:

Peter Gawith (Chairperson), GWRC Cr Ian Buchanan, Jamie Falloon, Emily Crofoot (from 3.15pm), Andy Pottinger, Jenny Boyne.

Apologies:

Resolved

(Andy Pottinger/Jenny Boyne)

That the Committee accepts the apologies from Cr Fran Wilde, Bernard Card, Michael Blundell, David Holmes, and Wayne O'Donnell.

Officers Present:

David Cameron, Ian Gunn, Jim Flack.

The Chairman welcomed Helen Marr, Senior Policy Analyst, Horizons Regional Council, to the meeting to give a presentation on their One Plan.

Guest - Anders Crofoot (Wairarapa Federated Farmers) also attended the meeting.

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved

(Jamie Falloon/Peter Gawith)

That the minutes of the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee meeting held on 6 April 2010 be confirmed.

2. Horizons One Plan

Helen Marr gave an overview of the One Plan prepared by the Horizons Regional Council and outlined the process taken since 2004 in bringing all regional plans together into one consolidated document. The process is approximately two-thirds the way through the timeframe. Over three years drafts had been prepared prior to notification of the One Plan. 450 submissions had been received.

Helen spoke of the notification and submission process, and technical information, and indicated that the Hearing Panel Commissioners were now deliberating with outcomes expected in July/August. The Commissioners have already decided that consents are needed for all activities on slopes greater than 28° where staff had initially sought 23°.

The One Plan focuses on two areas:

- Erodeable hill country land
- Intensive farming in low land areas

Approximately four years of consultation had identified four key environmental issues that the community and stakeholders wished to have managed, as follows:

- surface water quality degradation
- increasing water demand
- unsustainable hill country land use
- loss of native biodiversity

The One Plan deals with air, water quality, landscapes, biodiversity, land, water quantity, coastal marine, farm strategy, and natural hazards.

The One Plan proposes both regulatory and non-regulatory methods. Horizon's overall approach to the One Plan implementation was to use methods that encourage responsible resource use, benefit responsible resource users, and discipline irresponsible users.

Nutrients are coming from run-off from farm land, direct discharges from town and industries, stormwater run-off, and septic tanks.

Points noted from the presentation included:

- (i) Nutrient management through outputs
 - how measurement of the outputs on a farm by farm basis is proposed, and how is it known that the individual farm within a catchment is complying with the regime? Computer program model used.
- (ii) Hill Country Erosion
 - impact on floodplains – infilling of berms - reduced flood capacity
 - identified risk areas – requiring the planting of trees
 - SLUI – a farm plan which included biodiversity, wetlands and pest control sections. Staffs original position was no resource consent required – farmers objected as an equity issue for those who didn't have SLUI farm plan. As a result all activities on slopes greater than 28 degrees need a consent
 - voluntary approach with incentives
 - 500 new plans expected to be produced in 5 years
- (iii) Water Quality
 - target intensive farming
 - lowland nutrient enrichment, faecal coli, blue-green algae and sediments
 - Causes - diffuse run-off, direct discharges (controlled by regulation)
 - stormwater run-off
 - septic tanks (controlled by regulation)
 - Mangatainoka River at Woodville carries 800 tonnes Nitrogen per annum, the desirable level is 230 tonnes
 - 95% of nutrients sourced from intensive agriculture, balance is point source
 - farmers demanded regulation should be output focused – the job of the farmer is to manage the inputs
 - OVERSEER nutrient management software – identifies leakage of nutrients from the land
 - intensive agriculture – dairying, cropping, horticulture, irrigation of sheep/beef
 - dairying is 50% of the agriculture – causing 80% of problem

- targeted areas with significant problem, e.g. downstream of Feilding and Palmerston North on the Manawatu River.
- (iv) Targets of the One Plan are
 - 10% reduction in nutrients being discharged in 10 years, and a 20% reduction in 20 years
- (v) Costs
 - \$5 - \$10K per farm plan
 - additional cost of complying with other rules, e.g. effluent disposal, fencing of waterways and bridging waterways
 - land units Classes 6 & 7 most difficult to achieve reductions especially in the high rainfall area (1500mm+/yr)

(v) Compliance regime

The OVERSEER nutrient plan is the basis of the regulation and landowners must reach the target output by a specific date, so there is a sinking lid. Cost of nutrient plan based on OVERSEER \$1500.

Compliance is recorded at the time of the annual inspection.

Failure to achieve target raises potential for landowner to be prosecuted.

Horizons desire the development of Codes of Practice for activities – to date only achieved by Forestry and the Operations Department of Horizons (this includes flood protection and land management).

Dairying, for example, has no code, yet Fonterra have more tools than a Regional Council.

Sediment has not been dealt with in the Plan. Nothing requiring the planting of trees. No integration of land use.

Staff developed a Farm Strategy – a farm resource management strategy – every intensive agriculture operation must have one.

The Chairman thanked Helen Marr for her informative presentation.

3. Climate Change presentation – NIWA

Dave Cameron, in the absence of Alison Lash, Climate Change Response Co-ordinator with GW, presented a Powerpoint presentation which had recently been presented to the Te Upoko Taiao – Natural Resource Plan Committee, and updated the WHCAC Committee on GW's approach to climate change and potential social impacts. Considerable work has been undertaken by James Renwick, NIWA.

Dave said that the presentation was for the Committee's information to give a perspective of where Greater Wellington's risks were around its mandatory statutory obligations and particularly around for regional communities.

Dave indicated that no reference had been made in the presentation to Cyclone Bola type storms or the storm at Castlepoint in 2005.

A Climate Change presentation was to be given to GW staff in the Masterton office on 4 May to which Committee members were invited to attend if they so wished.

Andy Pottinger commented that there are different interpretations and varying opinions as to the credibility to be given to climate change. This was something new presented here.

Jamie Falloon made reference to the opportunities to influence emissions from transport and agriculture, and enquired about the development of an agricultural strategy.

Cr Buchanan said that GW does not propose having an initiative around emissions management on agriculture, but does so around transport emissions. The only committed policy decision to date is incorporating high risk elements in flood management planning and sea level rise.

4. Afforestation Grant Scheme Funding

In response to a request prior to the meeting from Michael Blundell, Dave Cameron gave an update on the Government's position with the AGS.

AGS funding had commenced with \$50M nationally for new afforestation projects. This has now been cut back to \$30M. \$8M was removed in late April following a reduction of \$12M in 2009.

What this means for the AGS is that 2010/11 is fully allocated and what remains is two further years of funding. \$2.5M is available for 2011/12 through the Regional Council pool which is halving our ability from the original \$5M to establish new forests. Since commencement in 2008, 8,100 hectares of erosion prone land has been planted. The original target was 25,000 hectares and with the recent cuts this is now likely to reach 15,000 hectares which is 10,000 hectares short of the original target. It was a very good scheme and well accepted by landowners, Regional Councils and MAF, and it was disappointing for the scheme to be cut back when landowner interest was apparent.

5. Emissions Trading Scheme

Dave Cameron reported that coastal Wairarapa farmers, George and Sarah Tatham, were the supreme overall winners of the recent Ballance Farm Environment Awards. The Tathams were also winners of the Wairarapa Farm Business of the Year and a field day had been held on 21 April on their property at Matariki.

In lieu of the Ballance Farm Environment Award's field day, the organising committee has arranged for an Emissions Trading Scheme seminar to be held in the afternoon of 26 May at the Gladstone Community Complex. Members of the Committee were encouraged to attend. The focus will be on helping landowners understand current opportunities particularly in land use.

Dave updated members on the recent combined Land Management and Environment Policy staff field day on 9 April visiting Ray Craig's dairy farm and Peter Gawith's hill country farm to hear and learn about how farmers manage environmental matters. This was an excellent initiative and it was considered there was merit in holding similar field days in other areas within GW. Of interest was the number of consents (7-10) required by the dairy farmer as opposed to the hill country farmer who could only recall one consent being processed.

6. Communications

(a) Stock access to waterways

A meeting with the newly formed Hinakura landowners group has been arranged to discuss the draft guidelines around stock access in waterways. The landowners group had been formed following the situation with the Riddells where there had been dissatisfaction with GW's policy decision regarding the incident of stock in the river.

Dave Cameron reported that there had been a further complaint regarding 150 head of cattle in the Pahaoa River. GW's Environment Protection officer has followed up on the complaint and considers there is nothing to indicate any unease and therefore recommended that no further action be taken. Only 30-40 head of cattle were noted along a 2.2km stretch of river.

Emily Crofoot was pleased to hear that the draft guidelines were to be discussed with the Hinakura landowners group and considered it would be interesting to get their viewpoint as to how best to keep stock out of the river rather than from the rule writers themselves.

(b) Landscape Evaluation Process

An update was given on the landscape evaluation process. Members were advised that the first round of public consultation was to occur in late May with

articles in the newspaper seeking the public's comments. The desire to talk to people first was to be commended.

Anders Crofoot reported that this was one of the outcomes in the Combined District Plan. A further point in the proposed Regional Policy Statement related to a new level of outstanding natural features and landscapes. Rather than a group of policy people preparing a draft document, consultants were engaged through a working group comprising individual stakeholders, District Councils, Regional Council, Federated Farmers, and Iwi. Boffa Miskell are to prepare a document describing each of the various landscape areas in the Wairarapa.

7. General business

Future meetings

In response to a question from the Chairman seeking ideas as to a speaker for future Committee meetings, Jamie Falloon considered that the Irrigation Study Project would be of interest to members with Bob Tosswill as the speaker.

A further suggested speaker was Scott Ihaka to give an update on the Landscape Evaluation process. It was noted that what is in the document going out for public discussion is a description of the units relating to the significant amenity landscape provisions in the proposed Regional Policy Statement. It was considered that there may be a need to report back to the Committee for further discussion following evaluation and classification.

Dave Cameron said he would circulate the document to the Committee.

Irrigation survey

Anders Crofoot reported that he had been concerned to receive an irrigation survey while landowners who should have received the survey had not done so. Anders considered that his input was totally irrelevant.

Cr Buchanan said that he understood that the survey related to where the potential area of irrigation would cover. The bigger environmental issue was the land use issues and not around the management of water. Currently there is a theoretical feasibility study being done but was some time away. If the project was to go anywhere \$2M was required.

It was agreed to leave Bob Tosswill as a speaker to address the Committee at this point.

Wairarapa Development Board

Anders Crofoot, as a member of a group initiated by John Hayes MP to look at economic development within the Wairarapa, gave an update. Two meetings had been held to date to identify opportunities for agriculture, tourism, forestry, hospitality, in the Wairarapa. Issues to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting on 11 May were outlined.

Homebush Nursery update

Dave Cameron advised that a meeting has been held with David Hopman, Manager, Assets and Operations to discuss the Homebush Project. MDC had indicated that a decision around the method of wastewater disposal to land was now expected to be delayed until August. This delay causes timeline issues for Akura as shelter planting for the proposed Homebush expansion was programmed to occur in early winter.

A report outlining options for the Akura expansion is to be prepared for the June meeting of the Catchment Management Committee.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.