



Report **04.429**
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Committee **Environment Committee**
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Summary of Science and Research Support 2003/04

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about how the Division's Science and Research budget has been used over the past year.

2. Background

The Environment Division currently has a budget of \$20,000 per annum to support science and resource projects undertaken by outside agencies.

Greater Wellington receives a large number of requests each year to support projects. These range from students undertaking theses, to research institutes and consultants seeking contributions to support applications from the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund. MfE generally require contributions from end users before committing funds from their budget.

Historically we have found it difficult to support worthy projects from existing budgets. The \$20,000 has been provided since 2000/01 with the idea that four to five projects could be supported each year. This is consistent with approaches taken by other regional councils.

3. Project assessment

Staff have developed a list of science and research needs for the Division. This list provides the basis for assessing the worth of proposals received by the Greater Wellington. When a proposal is received it is reviewed by a relevant staff member and they assess its benefit to the Greater Wellington work programme.

Assessment is made on a wide range of criteria including:

- the relevance of the project to our role, responsibilities and our strategic directions;
- the creditability of the science provider;

- the methodology, outputs and timeliness of these outputs; and
- the costs and benefits to Greater Wellington.

Funds are allocated on a first come first serve basis.

4. Projects supported during 2003/04

The following projects have been supported in the last financial year.

Project: Stormwater Management Resources Project

Provider: NZWERF

WRC Contribution: \$2,950

This project involves the development of a range of stormwater management resources. The information will be available for people working on all aspects of stormwater management, ranging from designing stormwater management structures, to monitoring.

The project outputs will provide a valuable resource for implementing our regional stormwater action plan once it is completed.

Project: Resistivity Analyses of Waikanae Groundwater

Provider: Victoria University School of Earth Sciences,

WRC Contribution: \$2,500

Support has been given to a student at Victoria University to complete a resistivity investigation of Waikanae groundwater.

This project uses geophysical methods to develop a two dimensional model of the variation in subsurface resistivity along the lower reaches and mouth of the Waikanae River. This will identify the extent of saltwater intrusion and how this varies in space and through time.

We do not currently have this information and require it to devise a sustainable management framework for the shallow aquifer.

Project: Building a methane digester using post industrial and post consumer plant

Provider: Enviromart Working Group

WRC Contribution: \$2,500

This project assesses the feasibility of developing a low cost methane digester for application on dairy farms using recycled materials.

If successful the project will provide a range of possible benefits. These are:

- recycling waste industrial materials;
- re-using dairy farm waste, reducing the need for other treatment options; and
- providing an alternative energy source for farm buildings and vehicles.

Project: Pesticide Risk Analyses
Provider: New Zealand Agricultural Education Trust
WRC Contribution: \$2,500

The objective of this project is to develop and implement industry specific risk reduction practices to protect soil and groundwater resources from pesticides use. It is driven by broad concerns about the environmental impacts of pesticides' use and increasing requirements to provide markets with assurances about the sustainability of production systems.

In the first year the project collated information and developed a risk assessment model (SPASMO).

The second year of the project will involve transferring and implementing the findings of the risk assessment modelling in a way which makes it useable by both industries and regional councils.

The outputs of this project will complement our existing groundwater and contaminated sites management programmes.

A large number of regional councils and industry organisations are contributing to this project.

Project: Integrating NZ Flax into land management systems
Provider: NZ Flax Farmers Group
WRC Contribution: \$4,000

This project focuses on identifying opportunities for using NZ Flax (Harakeke) in ways which contribute to sustainable land management, maintaining indigenous biodiversity and economic development.

The project will assess the effectiveness of using flax in riparian margins to remove nutrients from rural run-off. The regular removal of flax leaves is believed to critical to this process. Accordingly, other parts of the project will assess the viability of using flax leaves for a variety of purposes which may provide opportunities for business development and employment. Some of the uses identified are:

- using flax as a stock food;
- producing natural fibre products, e.g. hapene, handmade paper, flax gel and biodegradable packaging.

All of the regional councils in the lower part of the North Island are supporting this project.

Project: Forest Monitoring and Assessment Kit (FORMAK)
Provider: Peter Hansford and Associates
WRC Contribution: \$4,000

We provided funding to support the completion of a forest monitoring and assessment kit. This kit provides landowners, landcare groups, and community

groups with a simple tool for assessing the condition of native forest ecosystems. The kit complements the Native Forest Monitoring guide.

The FORMAK kit will be a useful tool for care groups and private landowners within our region.

5. Communication

No further public communication is necessary for this report. The outcomes of the projects will be reported to the Committee as and when they are completed.

6. Conclusion

The provision of funds to support science and research has enabled us to help in a wide range of projects which will ultimately benefit Greater Wellington in its management of the Wellington environment.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

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

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