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Committee            Environment Committee  
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## Pollution Control Annual Report 2003 - 2004

### 1. Purpose

To report on work undertaken by Greater Wellington's Pollution Control Team during the last financial year (presented in further detail in the Annual Pollution Control Report 2003-2004).

### 2. Background

Greater Wellington provides a 24-hour pollution incident response service through out the region. It also conducts environmental assessments for small to medium sized industrial sites, and undertakes a range of special projects to establish baseline conditions, track trends, and characterise environmental problems.

Each year, the Pollution Control Team prepares an annual report, summarising its activities throughout the year, and proposing a direction for the forthcoming year. This paper provides a synopsis of the Annual Pollution Control Report 2003-2003.

### 3. Strategic context

Greater Wellington's Pollution Control activities contribute to the Take 10 targets in the following ways:

- Pro-active monitoring should contribute to a reduction in reported incidents
- *Take Charge* will encourage businesses to implement waste reduction initiatives
- Stormwater investigations and *Take Charge* visits will help to reduce the incidence of contaminants entering our more polluted surface waters, contributing to a sustained improvement in their quality.

## 4. Incidents

Pollution Control Officers responded to 1,109 environmental incidents during this period, which gave rise to 1,425 individual complaints. This represented a small decline in both incident and complaint numbers when compared to the previous year. Almost 80% of all complaints occurred in the Wellington City Council and Hutt City Council areas, where the bulk of the region's industrial and residential land use occurs.

The most common types of incidents that were reported throughout the region were nuisance odour from industrial sites, silt pollution of surface water from subdivision sites, inappropriate disposal of solid waste, uncontrolled sewage discharges to surface waters, and vehicles driving on restricted beaches. There was a significant reduction in odour complaints recorded during this period, which is attributed to unsettled weather, our pro-active monitoring programme and operational improvements at source. Some of the more significant pollution incidents that happened during 2003-04 were:

- Uncontrolled sewage discharges to surface water were widely reported across the west of the region. Most were caused by intense rainfall events that overwhelmed the capacity of sewers and sewage treatment plants, causing slips that damaged sewer pipes.
- Diesel fuel was discharged into Wellington harbour when the Interisland ferry, Aratere, collided with a fishing boat, San Domenico.
- Untreated sewage discharged to Wellington's south coast via the Moa Point short outfall on 11 occasions. Most of these discharges occurred due to pumps being damaged by debris in the incoming sewage. Pumping infrastructure has since been upgraded and Wellington City Council is working to reduce stormwater inflow to sewers and increase sewer storage capacity.
- There were 10 hazardous substance incidents associated with the transfer and storage of hazardous substances at the Port of Wellington and adjacent rail yard.
- S&S Water Cartage was issued with an infringement notice after a driver was witnessed dumping liquid waste into a stormwater sump in Petone.
- Over 250 litres of diesel was spilled at the NZ Oil Services site at Seaview, affecting the Hutt River and coastal water.
- Plant failure at Colgate Palmolive Limited in Petone resulted in over 30 cubic metres of soap entering the stormwater system, some of which reached the Petone foreshore. The company implemented a prompt and effective clean up under the supervision of Greater Wellington pollution control officers.

- About 300 puffer fish were washed up on beaches in Wellington’s eastern suburbs in April. Their deaths did not appear to be related to any pollution incident so they may have been dumped from a fishing vessel.
- Dairy shed effluent discharged in breach of a discharge permit resulted in a Carterton dairy farm owner and the farm manager each receiving infringement and abatement notices.

## 5. Enforcement action

We took a range of enforcement actions for breaches of resource consents or regional plans during the year. Advisory notices were introduced as a non-statutory means of encouraging compliance, and have proven effective in achieving required outcomes, and reducing the need for more formal approaches such as infringement and abatement notices.

### Enforcement action summary

Type of Action	2003-04 (2002-03)
Advisory notices	68 (0)
Infringement notices	19 (23)
Abatement notices	12 (34)
Enforcement orders	1 (0)
Prosecutions	1 (3)

Our only prosecution in 2003-04 was against Kapiti Coast District Council. It received a suspended sentence for breaching low flow abstraction restrictions on its resource consent to take water from the Waikanae River.

## 6. Pollution prevention

*Take Charge* is a pollution prevention programme, the objective of which is to improve environmental performance of small to medium sized businesses across the region. Our *Take Charge* programme was delivered to 60 service stations and 109 motor mechanics during the year.

A review of incident statistics confirmed that water pollution attributed to subdivision development was increasing across the western region. Greater Wellington staff are currently addressing this issue by preparing resource materials and arranging a series of educational workshops for territorial authority officers and developers.

Pollution Control Officers undertook a risk-based assessment of stormwater contamination sources in the lower part of the Waiwhetu Stream catchment. This centred upon the Gracefield industrial area, and was intended to identify and prioritise potential sources of heavy metals, hydrocarbons, organics and particulates.

A further study was conducted into contaminant residues in selected kaimoana species (mussels and eels) in the Waiwhetu Stream. This identified concentrations of DDT, dieldrin, cobalt and lead that significantly exceeded guideline values. Findings were presented to the Environment Committee on 12 August 2004 (report 04-437).

Our officers have been undertaking proactive monitoring at Carey's Gully and Taylor Preston Ltd, to better understand the relationship between site activities, odour emissions, and complaints in the surrounding community. Although the weather has not generally been favourable for this programme, some significant observations have been made. A report on our proactive monitoring programme will be presented to the Environment Committee when the first year of the programme concludes in November 2004.

## **7. Selected Land Use Register**

Greater Wellington maintains a Selected Land Use Register (SLUR), which records sites where:

- there is a potential for land to be contaminated due to current or past use of hazardous substances, or;
- there is evidence that contamination of land has actually occurred.

A total of 90 new sites were identified during this reporting period, bringing the current listing of sites in our Selected Land Use Register to 1,591 sites. Many sites were identified as a consequence of implementing the *Take Charge* programme at industrial sites around the region.

A total of 147 requests were received from people enquiring about the contamination status of specific sites. The majority of information requests came from prospective purchasers or their agents.

## **8. General observations**

The following is a summary of significant issues and trends that became apparent during 2003-04:

- The illegal disposal of liquid waste into stormwater drains remains one of the most common types of pollution incidents across the region. Usually the problem is people tipping household waste (leftover paint, used oil from the car, water from washing cars) into roadside drains but there have been some deliberate acts by commercial operators. It is hoped that the "Be the Difference" water campaign will have a positive effect on this type of behaviour in the future.
- There were 55 incidents of surface water pollution from vegetation clearance and earthwork activities at subdivision sites. In most cases the pollution happened because there were inadequate sediment control measures adopted on-site. Greater Wellington is addressing this issue with

a series of resource materials and workshops for territorial authorities and developers.

- The increasing popularity of water-blasting to form exposed aggregate driveways can result in highly alkaline wastewater entering stormwater drains or streams, where it can have serious effects on fish and other stream life. The pollution control team is working with people in the building industry to develop practical solutions to this issue.
- A survey of service stations and motor vehicle workshops in March revealed a disturbing lack of understanding about regulatory requirements, poor knowledge of site history, and a general lack of awareness about stormwater protection requirements. Of the 216 sites visited to date under the *Take Charge* programme, 75% were unaware of the Resource Management Act 1991, and 80% did not know about regional rules relevant to their activities. It is considered that this lack of awareness may contribute to an elevated risk of environmental incidents via inappropriate operations, sub-standard infrastructure and uninformed management decisions.

## 9. Communication

No further public communication is necessary for this report.

## 10. Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Committee:*

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

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