



LAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – 1 FEBRUARY 2020 TO 30 APRIL 2020

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Council on the Land Management activity within the **Sustainable Land Use Initiative** (SLUI), Regional and Coast, and Nursery activities carried out under the Annual Plan, the **Te Uru Rakau** (TUR) contract, and the Operational Plan for the year to date. The report is presented in five sections:
1. Activity over the last reporting period and upcoming activity;
 2. Report on progress against the Annual Plan, and contract outputs;
 3. SLUI activity by Whole Farm Plan production, work completed life-to-date and year-to-date, and against Operational Plan targets;
 4. Regional and Coast work completed against year-to-date and Operational Plan targets; and
 5. Nursery activity.
- 1.1.2 The Land Management programme's primary activity is to reduce hill country erosion in order to increase the resilience of the region to storm events and improve water quality. The **Sustainable Land Use Initiative** (SLUI) is the main component of the programme. It has more than 557,000 ha of farm plans across 764 farms and aims to complete approximately 3,440 ha of erosion control works and 22,500 ha of new farm plans in the 2019-20 year.
- 1.1.3 Beyond hill country erosion control, the Land programme also supports industry partnerships, including the Ballance Farm Environment Awards and events that enable discussion among industry professionals and farmers around land management activity. The Land Management team also provides support to the regulatory teams around the implementation of the **National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry** (NES-PF) and the implementation of One Plan policies and rules around land disturbance and vegetation clearance.
- 1.1.4 Management of poplar and willow nurseries in order to provide the necessary materials for the hill country erosion work is the final component of the Land activity. Upgrades to Horizons' Woodville nursery will continue this year. The programme aims to produce and plant more than 30,000 poplar poles

- 1.1.5 The Annual Plan and contract targets are agreed, with the latest [Ministry of Primary Industries \(MPI\)](#) contract signed in August 2019. This commits MPI funding of more than \$6.4 million over four years until 30 June 2023. The overall budget for this programme exceeds \$30 million, consisting of funding from Horizons, MPI and landowners.
- 1.1.6 Operational Plan targets for 2019-20 were approved by Council at a Strategy & Policy Committee meeting on 10 September 2019. The Land Management activities link to the Council's Long-term Plan 2018-28 and to the non-regulatory methods of the One Plan (Chapter 5, Policies 5-1 & 5-5).

2 ACTIVITY

2.1 ACTIVITY DURING LAST REPORTING PERIOD

- 2.1.1 This activity report relates to the period 1 February 2020 - 30 April 2020 and includes the initial part of the Covid-19 lockdown which began on 25 March. Land Management staff were set up to work from home with varying standards of computer equipment and internet access. While in lockdown, staff concentrated on contacting landowners and updating progress with outstanding works to be completed this financial year along with proposed winter planting programmes. A paperless electronic claim system was instituted with staff being able to enter 80 claims on jobs they had completed before lockdown.
- 2.1.2 An email was sent to SLUI WFP landowners at the early stage of lockdown, advising them of our work plans and asking that if they had any queries or work completed to get in touch.
- 2.1.3 A number of scheduled events and programmes were disrupted during lockdown, including the Land Managers' [Special Interest Group \(SIG\)](#) meeting in Wellington (since held virtually in three sessions), a Te Ao Māori and Mātauranga Māori workshop, the Ballance Farm Environment Awards dinner and subsequent field day on the regional winner's farm. The field trip for the Massey Advanced Soil Conservation Certificate was changed to a virtual field trip with support from staff, and the Technical Advisory Group meeting for the Poplar and Willow Research Trust was postponed until September.
- 2.1.4 February and most of March continued to be warm and dry. Staff in Taumarunui report the driest summer since 2008, and in Tararua the dry conditions were similar to the late 1990s. Late March and April saw good rainfall over most of the region and this was combined with warm conditions, promoting grass growth. Farmers remain concerned over winter feed levels and dry dams, especially as Covid-19 lockdown has resulted in lower meat works capacity and only online stock sales. Many farmers have more stock on hand than normal and are very concerned about winter feed levels. This has prompted some farmers to postpone winter afforestation projects as they feel they will need all the grass areas they can get to use for winter grazing.
- 2.1.5 Despite the dry conditions we are still reporting reasonable establishment of poles, however survival rates as low as 50% are being reported in Tararua District and on sunny faces in the lower Whanganui and Rangitikei areas, but generally up around 80% elsewhere. As always, poles that are well sited, well planted and have had follow up ramming are doing well.
- 2.1.6 Staff were visiting landowners before lockdown and phoning landowners during lockdown. Generally, landowners had been over-optimistic about the amount of fencing they could

complete and a shortage of posts, fencers and six weeks of little to no work will mean a number of jobs will be carried over into the next financial year.

- 2.1.7 Work with **Te Uru Rākau** (TUR) on the SLUI contract has included completion of one milestone report noting progress with the programme, and in a wider sense with the **One Billion Trees** (1BT) programme. Horizons is continuing to support a proposal to agree on a “green lane” process for regional councils where councils could offer support to landowners in their 1BT applications. Other work with TUR has included putting together a proposal for staff support for some councils and an investment in capability and capacity (training programmes) for land management. These proposals are continuing to be worked on and progress is largely dependent on the processes and level of priority that TUR place on them.
- 2.1.8 Three site visits have been completed by the Land Management Advisor (Forestry) and the local Land Management Advisor to assess on-farm forestry proposals. Two have been delayed under Covid-19 lockdown.
- 2.1.9 Staff have assisted with input into possible “shovel ready” environmental projects for consideration by central government. This includes a proposal to expand SLUI from a 4,440 ha per year programme to a 5,000 ha per year work programme.
- 2.1.10 The autumn sampling round of soil health monitoring may not get completed. At this stage 75 of the proposed 100 sites have been established.

2.2 ACTIVITY OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

- 2.2.1 During May - July staff will:
- Continue to keep in touch with landowners regarding grant work. Programmes that were over-allocated are likely to come in closer to budget;
 - Work through claim processing, visiting farms and inspecting works;
 - Complete Milestone reporting to TUR for the SLUI programme (May and June);
 - Finalise a new time for SLUI Advisory Group meeting (this was originally planned for June but has been postponed until Covid 19 restrictions are eased further);
 - Discuss work programmes for winter 2020, including on-farm inspections;
 - Deliver completed farm plans;
 - Liaise with local Balance Farm Environment Awards Committee over winner’s field day at appropriate time;
 - Liaise with **Poplar and Willow Research Trust** (PWRT) to update pole trial sites in our region;
 - Continue to liaise with **Ministry for the Environment** (MfE) over the government’s Freshwater proposals, with some expectation of progress before parliament rises in August;
 - Continue monitoring/audit programme for SLUI plans, with the aim of having a report available to meet the TUR contract target of August 2020. Fewer inspections have been

carried out than planned but two more inspections will be enough to complete the programme for the year;

- Potentially continue silviculture programme in joint venture forests. Contractors had not returned to the site by early May as our SOPs for work under Level 3 limited options for getting staff on site. This work may not re-start until next year.

3 REPORT ON PROGRESS

3.1 ANNUAL PLAN AND CONTRACT TARGETS (2019-20)

3.1.1 The Annual Plan and Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCEF) contract targets for 2019-20 are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Annual Plan and HCEF contract targets 2019-20

MEASURE	ANNUAL PLAN	HCEF CONTRACT	TARGET	YTD	PREDICTED RESULT
Sustainable Land Use Initiative					
Erosion reduction works programmes in targeted SLUI catchments (ha)	3,100	3,440	3,440	1,707	On track to achieve target
Whole Farm Plan properties mapped per year (ha)	20,000	22,500	22,500	7,535	May not achieve target
Farm or paddock assessments mapped per year (ha)	-	1,000	1,000	0	Probably achieve target
Case study completed (number)	-	1	1	0	No action at this stage
Feasibility reports (number)	-	6	6	0	On track to achieve target
Regional and Coast					
Manage grant programmes to deliver erosion reduction works (ha)	175	-	175	131	Probably achieve target
Support industry initiatives that promote sustainable land use (number)	5	-	5	underway	Provisionally achieved target in modified manner
Nurseries					
Operate council nurseries and source additional commercial pole material to deliver poplar and willow poles to control erosion (number of poles)	30,000	28,000	30,000	31,732	Provisionally achieved, 31,732 poles sourced for farmers

COMMENT ON TARGETS

- 3.1.2 It is unclear if all targets will be met and much will depend upon how quickly work can be achieved following the change to Covid Level 2 and with on-farm work like mapping and property inspections, continued settled weather would be an advantage.
- 3.1.3 SLUI work claims are progressing and although Levels 3 and 4 slowed progress, 382 claims had been completed by the end of April compared with 324 at the same time last year. The largest number of claims by work type (178) has been for space planting (poplar and willow claims). The largest amount of work by work type has been afforestation with 971 ha claimed across 50 claims. The bulk of the afforestation has been radiata pine.

4 SLUI ACTIVITY

4.1 WHOLE FARM PLAN (WFP) PRODUCTION

4.1.1 WFPs are a tool for bringing new land into the programme and for allocating grants to farms on various land types (priority land). An important part of maintaining the momentum of SLUI is the ability to bring new farms, new land and new work into the programme. This table shows the plans completed in SLUI's **life-to-date** (LTD) and progress with bringing new plans into the programme.

Table 2: WFP production (life-to-date)

No. of Plans	Hectares	Comments
745	552,067	WFPs completed in SLUI to 30 June 2019
11	3,472	Plans completed in 2019-20 and delivered to landowners
8	4,063	Plans/ha mapped in 2019-20 but yet to be delivered to landowners
38	18,397	Plans on the list in 2019-20, and with contractor to complete
57	25,932	Equals (11 + 8 + 38) Plans on list to be mapped 2019-20 financial year
55	35,493	Information with landowner who is still to finally commit to a plan

4.1.2 All plans from last year's programme have been delivered to landowners.

4.1.3 There are 57 (25,932 ha) of plans allocated to the contractor in 2019-20. This exceeds the target for new WFP for the year. No new plans will be allocated unless they are deemed top priority, and this may be at the expense of a lower priority plan currently allocated.

4.1.4 Our contractor was unable to complete any field mapping under Level 4, and under Level 3 used a staff member based in Dannevirke to work only within the Tararua District. Under Level 2, with travel restrictions eased, another mapper will work out of Taihape or Feilding. The aim was to meet the target of 22,500 ha mapped by the end of June.

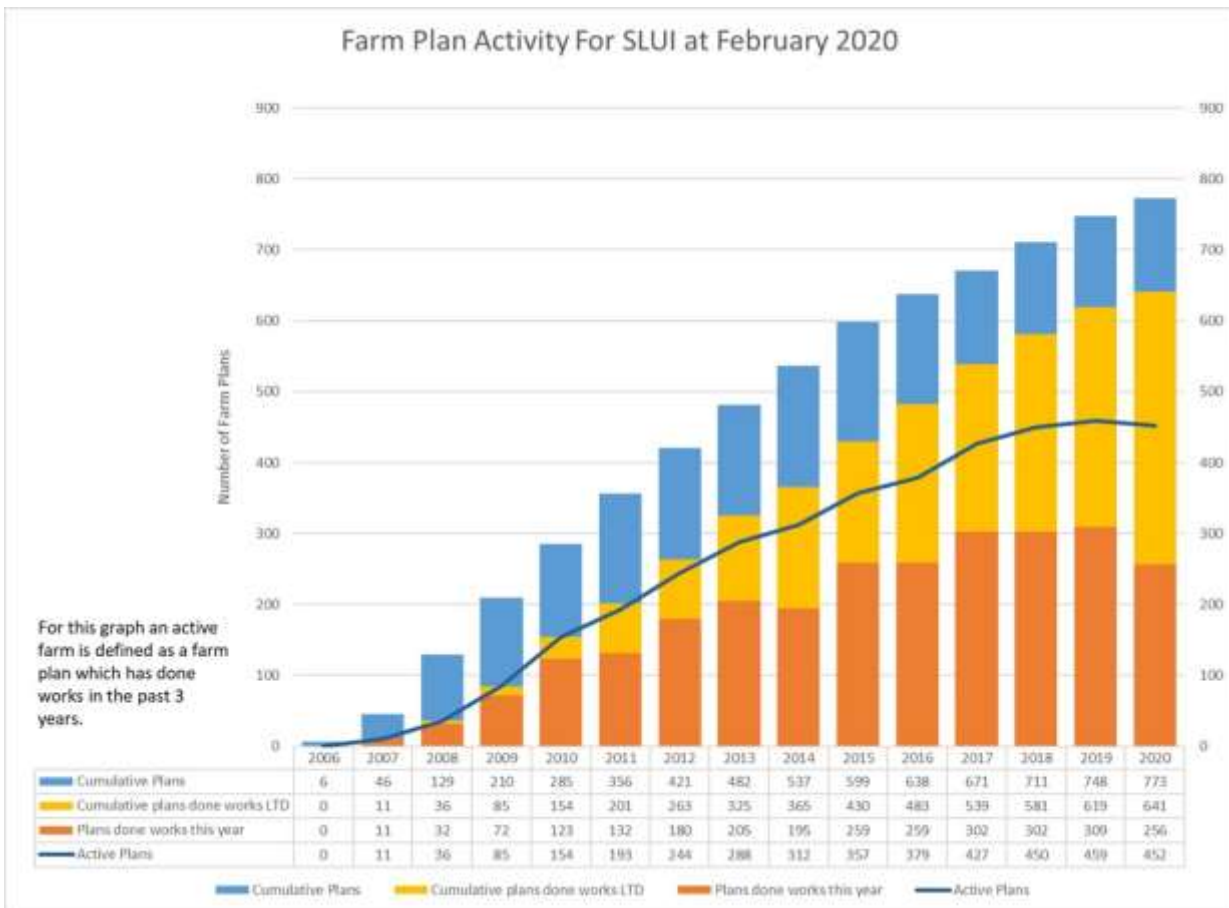
4.1.5 We are awaiting the return of information/documents from a further 55 farms accounting for 35,493 ha. Those with paperwork outstanding have been prioritised by: 1. having existing plans, 2. being on top priority and high priority land, 3. being in the Oroua Catchment, and 4. the likelihood of doing works. Some of those on the list who have had the information from Horizons for some time will be followed up with a reminder to provide the information, and if this is not provided by a certain date they will be removed.

4.2 WHOLE FARM PLAN ACTIVITY

4.2.1 The contract targets focus on the number of plans completed. The activity of individual plans over the life of the programme and on an annual basis is another measure of SLUI activity. The number of plans active in any one year can and does change.

4.2.2 Graph 3 is a new way of looking at the farm plan activity as a whole, and in any particular year. It is a "stacked column graph" where the orange, yellow and blue components of the column add up to the total number of plans in SLUI at the end of any given year. For example, in 2018-19

there were 746 plans completed over the life of SLUI, 619 plans had completed some works (83% active), 309 plans had completed some work in that year (41% of plans active in 2018-19). The blue line tracks “active” farm plans, where active is taken to be “has completed works in the last three years”. In this instance the number of plans at the end of 2018-19 with some works completed in the last three years was 459 (62%). It is noted that the lower number of farms completing works in this year in the graph reflects the year only being partially completed at this stage.



Graph 1: Farm Plan Activity at April 2020.

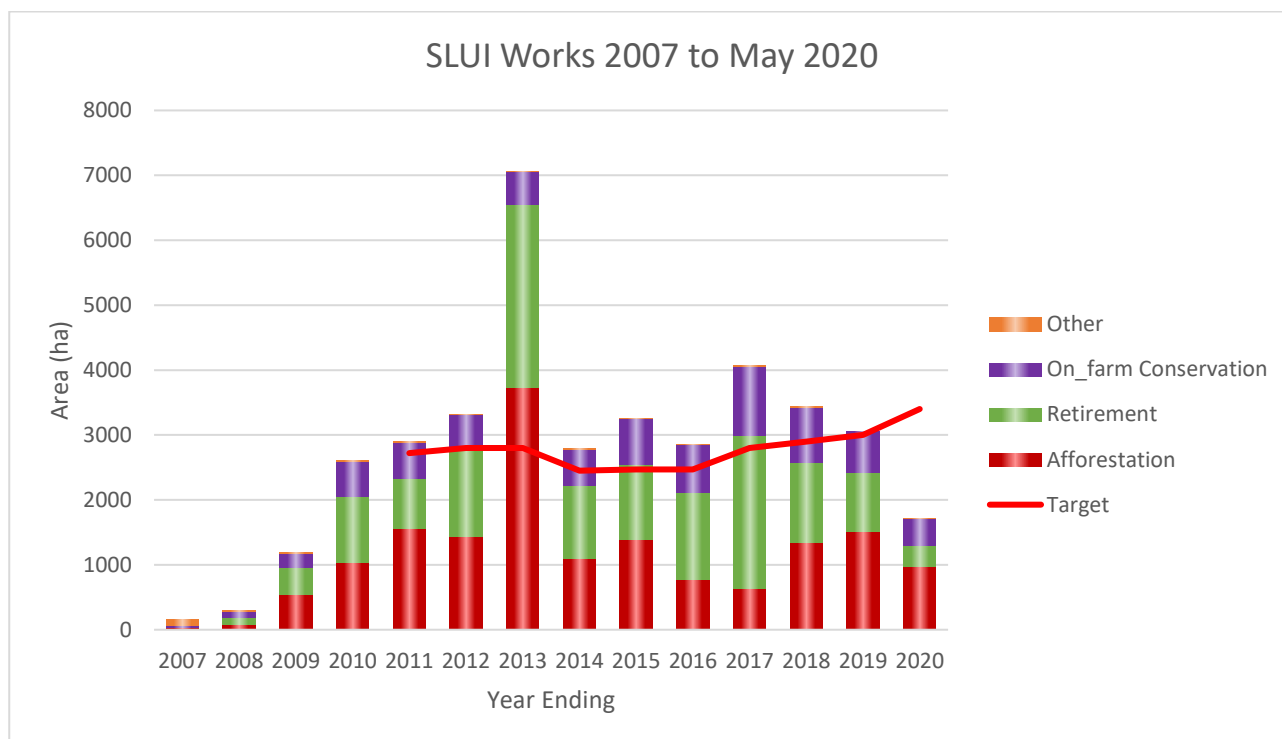
Table 3: Trend of active vs. inactive plans over the life of SLUI

Age of Plan	Total Plans	Active	Inactive	% Active
<2 years	62	24	38	39%
2-5 years	112	88	24	79%
>5 years	599	529	70	88%
Total	773	641	132	83%

- 4.2.3 The data in Graph 1 shows a trend of more active plans (yellow stacked column) it also shows that the number of plans active in any given three-year period (blue line) has grown, but has slowed over the last two years. There are a number of reasons for this, e.g older plans will have completed priority works and may be less motivated, landowners with more than one plan may be concentrating on one farm at a time, and if ownership changes or circumstances change plan works may be a lower priority. The blue line also shows a decrease for 2020. This is expected as this is a partial year at this stage. At present 382 claims have come to charge on 324 plans and we expect up to at least another 200 claims to be completed on approximately 130 plans. Some of these will be new plans undertaking their first works.
- 4.2.4 Table 3 shows the trend of plan activity, where the activity rate for plans more than five years old remains at 88%. There are 12 newly active plans Table 3 (641 vs 629 active plans) since the last report to the Catchment Operations Committee in March 2020.
- 4.2.5 Thirty-eight inactive plans are less than two years old, up from 23 in the March report, and this reflects the new plans completed late last financial year and this financial year being delivered to farmers. We expect the majority of these plans to become active over the next 12 months.
- 4.2.6 There has been no change in the activity rate of older plans in this report with 529 active plans at a rate of 88%.
- 4.2.7 The ratio of active to inactive plans has improved considerably. In 2010 there was approximately one active plan to one inactive plan, but by the end of June 2018 this had improved to more than four active plans for every inactive plan. At the end of June 2019 there were nearly five active plans for every inactive plan.
- 4.2.8 In the early part of every financial year we expect a slight rise in the number of inactive plans as the new plans are delivered and there is a lag before the work programmes commence.

4.3 SLUI LIFE TO DATE AND OUTCOMES

4.3.1 SLUI Life-to-date



Graph2: SLUI works completed by work type during the life of the programme against annual contract targets (red line). Note 2020 is a partial year at this stage. See Graph 3 for the change in job status through the year.

4.3.2 Each year since 2010 the contract target for hectares of works completed has been exceeded.

4.3.3 The amount of work completed was relatively stable from 2010 to 2016. However, 2013 was an exceptional year with 3,224 ha of afforestation. This was primarily due to uptake of the Afforestation Grant Scheme and retirement projects in association with Ngā Whenua Rāhui.

4.3.4 The 2017-18 year was the third largest work year, largely due to an increase in the afforestation category with more mānuka planted.

4.3.5 Until June 2019 afforestation (red) made up approximately 41 percent (15,540 ha) of the work completed and retirement/riparian retirement (green) was 39 percent (14,704 ha). These two work types account for the bulk of the hectares of work completed during the life of the programme.

4.3.6 On-farm conservation (purple) is predominantly space planting and gully planting with poplar and willow poles but also includes structures and earthworks. It makes up 19 percent (7,208 ha) of the work by area to 30 June 2019. In total, the programme has planted more than 218,000 poplars with 28,414 ha planted in 2018-19.

4.3.7 The total hectares of work completed is around 38,000 ha, with 32% on top priority land, 31% on high priority land, 33% on erodible land and the remaining 4% on non-erodible land and 14,073 ha on erodible or non-erodible land.

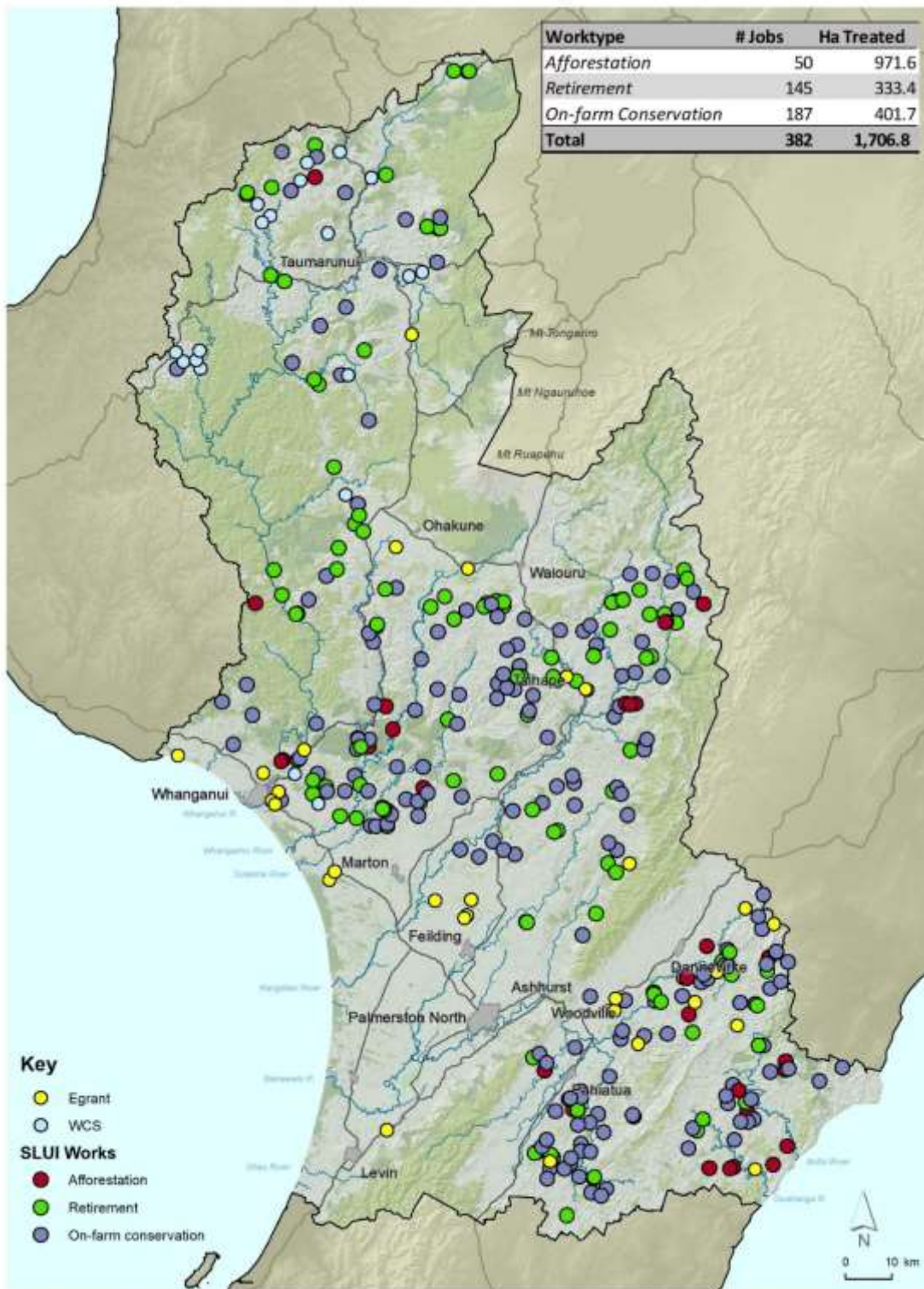
4.3.8 At the current rate of progress analysis suggests it will take 112 years to carry out works on all the top priority land that is currently in pasture (based on completing approximately 3,000 ha of work per year with 1,000ha on top priority land and around 500 of that in pasture. The other 500 ha being retirement of existing tree-covered land), and 252 years for all the high priority land that is currently in pasture. Current progress is slightly in excess of 3,000 ha per year, with this year estimated to be around 4,500 ha.

Outcomes for SLUI have been modelled by [Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research](#) (MWLCR) and this work was reported in the 2019 State of Environment Report (SOE) at page 19.

<https://www.horizons.govt.nz/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=a77bc2a4-381f-4660-8ef9-4e2486ac7165>

4.3.9 The MWLCR modelling reports:

- That SLUI works to date (June 2018) are estimated to have reduced sediment load in rivers by 835,000 tonnes (6%) with the greatest reductions (up to 19%) in the Kai Iwi, East Coast and Lower Rangitikei areas.
- With ongoing implementation of SLUI works at approximately the current pace, the average annual sediment load could be decreased by 27 percent and water clarity improved by 29 percent by 2043.
- Climate change, however, is likely to alter annual rainfall patterns and impact rates of hill slope erosion and river sedimentation, particularly in the northern and western areas of the region. Modelling suggests that this could result in a potential change to the predicted reduction in sediment load from 27 percent by 2043 to just 19, 12 or 5 percent under minor, moderate and major climate change scenarios, with the amounts varying across the region.
- Modelling also shows that New Zealand's largest hill country erosion programme, SLUI, may not offset the increases in sediment load from climate change in the longer term, as sediment loads in the river could increase by between 40 and 180 percent by 2090. This suggest the long-term effectiveness of work already undertaken through SLUI is expected to reduce under climate change, as heavier rainfall events increase sediment loading in the region's rivers.



2020 Worktype Locations

Map prepared by W McKay, NRP Group on 12/05/2020

Map 1: Location of all grant works completed this financial year to 30 April 2020 (SLUI and Regional and Coast).

4.4 YEAR-TO-DATE ACHIEVEMENTS

4.4.1 The table below shows the types of works completed and claimed this financial year.

Table 4: Works year-to-date (completed and claimed, by grant amount and land priority)

WorkType	2019-20			Priority Land Type (ha)				
	Claims	Farms	Grant \$	Total Ha	Not Erodible	Erodible	High Priority	Top Priority
Afforestation	50	27	521,006.78	971.6	51.3	198.8	500.2	221.3
Retirement	48	45	351,488.39	242.5	18.3	57.6	79.8	71.2
Riparian Retirement	78	52	406,199.89	71.7	14.0	21.1	23.5	13.2
Wetland Retirement	15	12	53,720.30	7.2	3.2	3.9	0.1	
Managed Retirement	4	4	16,584.13	12.1	0.3	1.4	4.9	5.4
Pole Planting	178	175	240,073.70	400.7	31.0	208.3	118.2	43.2
Structures/Earthworks	5	5	18,822.70	0.3		0.2	0.1	
Other	4	4	11,308.38	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.3	
Grand Total	382	324	1,619,204.27	1,706.8	118.4	491.4	727.2	354.2

4.4.2 The 1,707 ha of works completed and claimed is 50% of the full year target of 3,440 ha.

4.4.3 Hectares completed by land type shows 1,081 ha (63%) of work claimed to date is on high priority and top priority land. The bulk of this work has been completed on afforestation projects.

4.4.4 There have been 382 claims completed to date on 324 farms and we have allocated 618 claims (down from 671 earlier in the year).

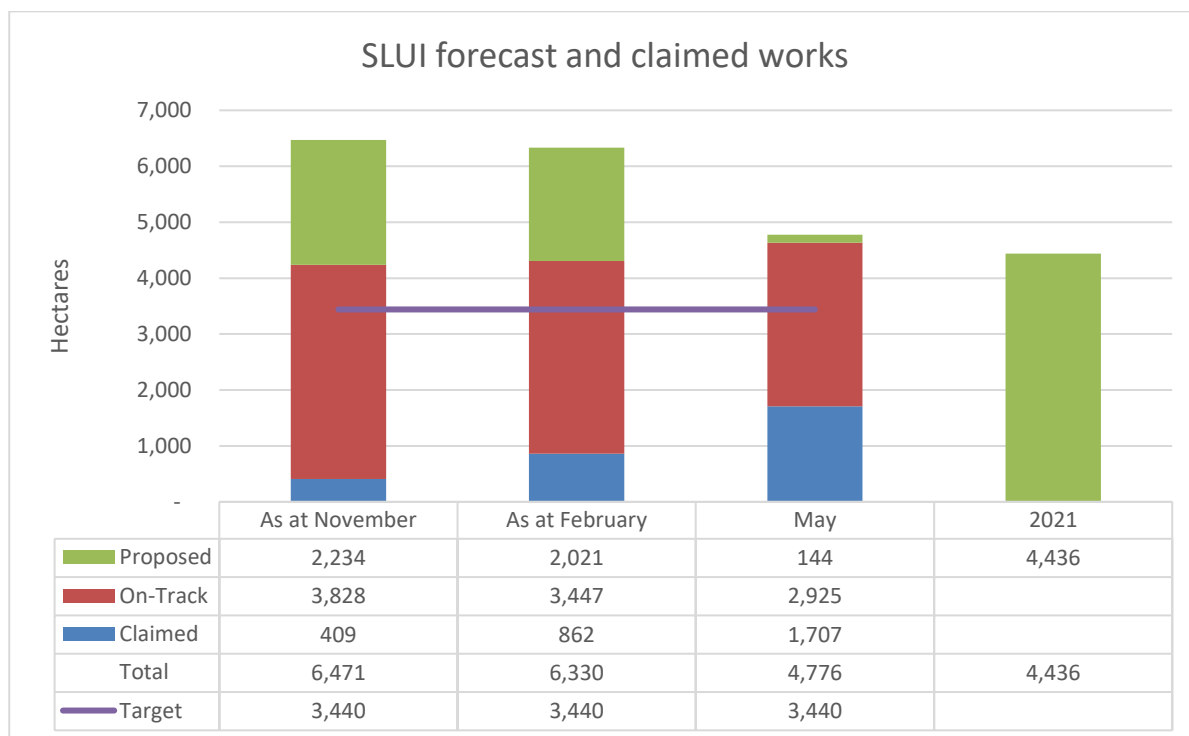
4.5 FORECAST VS ACTUAL (TARGETS VS ACTUAL BY WORK TYPE)

4.5.1 Table 5 shows the forecast figures against target for 2019-20. The work programme is fluid and changes throughout the year. Some of the changes are due to postponements or cancellations and some are due to new plans coming on stream and bringing in new work programmes. The dollars shown in the table are the grant cost. Covid-19 impacts add considerable uncertainty to forecasts for works completed by the end of the financial year.

Table 5: Work this financial year (contract vs forecast vs actual by hectares and dollars).

Work Type	Hectares				Dollars \$ x 1000			
	Contract Target	Forecast	Actual	Actual vs Contract	Contract Target	Forecast	Actual	Actual Vs contract
Afforestation	1,460	1,836	971	-484	1,097	1,396	521	-576
Retirement	850	1,811	243	-607	426	856	351	-75
Riparian Retirement ^{*A}	220	404	72	-148	358	997	406	+48
Wetland Retirement	See above	27	7	-		55	54	-
Managed Retirement	90	66	12	-78	26	53	17	-9
Space Planting & Gully Planting	810	474	401	-409	340	297	240	-100
Structures/Earthworks	10	1	1	-9	30	19	19	-11
Other (inc. blank)	-	6	1	-	60	53	11	-49
Total	3,440	4,625	1,707	-1,733	2,337	3,701	1,619	-718

*A – includes wetland



Graph3: Changes to SLUI job status through the year and the works allocated for the next financial year. On track is where the Land Management Advisor has re confirmed the work with the landowner or is confident the work will proceed. Graph 3 updates Table 5 with more recent forecasts.

- 4.5.2 Table 5 compares contract target (ha and \$) to forecast and actual. There can be wide variation in individual work targets, in reality the contract is to deliver 3,440ha and the mix of work type will change from year to year. Graph 3 tracks the changes in amount of work and the certainty of that work being completed over the course of the year as understood through conversations with landowners, and into next financial year.
- 4.5.3 Graph 3 shows that the jobs allocated at the start of the year include a high proportion of “proposed” works. These are often fencing projects planned for summer and autumn. The “On-Track” jobs are primarily jobs associated with winter afforestation or space planting. As the year progresses the ratio of proposed, on-track and claimed works changes.
- 4.5.4 Current allocation includes jobs recorded as claimed, on-track and proposed. We expect very little of the proposed work will come to charge, however there is still a large amount of on-track work. In these cases, landowners have been contacted and remain committed to completing the works. However, past experience tells us there will still be a proportion of this work not completed in time to claim by 30 June. There is \$331,000 of proposed work which we would think is unlikely to be completed. There is another \$1,606,000 of on track work which if all came to charge would total \$3,313,000. This amount is in excess of the contract target of \$2,337,000 but can be accommodated through approved reserves use.
- 4.5.5 The hectares of work allocated for completion has also dropped from 6,471 ha in November to 4,776 ha in May. This is still well over the contract target of 3,440 ha
- 4.5.6 In order to meet these work targets staff will have to complete more than 200 claims on 130 farms between mid-May and the end of June. Some work and funding will need to be carried over into the 2020-21 financial year.
- 4.5.7 We have already allocated approximately \$3.2 million of grant spending (4,436 ha) to the 2020-21 financial year.

4.6 JOINT VENTURE FORESTRY OPERATIONS

- 4.6.1 Horizons has interests in 10 **joint venture** (JV) forests (under a registered Forestry Right) with a net stocked area of 1,387 hectares. A report on these forests was provided to Council in April 2017 and another report is planned for early next financial year. Work and expenditure in the forests includes rates and insurance payments, maintenance of tracks and fences, pest control, audits and inspections, monitoring and measurements, arranging silviculture, valuations for external audit, maintaining Emission Trading Scheme registration and reporting, and liaising with landowners.
- 4.6.2 An independent forestry consultant has completed the annual forestry valuation as required by our auditors. This year the valuation included an update of the growth models using plot data taken in the forests. The valuation was completed in March and made some assumptions regarding log value from March through to June, but overall uses a 36-month rolling average of log prices. The valuation increased over the year due to:
- The forests are one year closer to harvest, thus reducing the discounting effect on current net value,
 - The expected harvest yields have been re-run using recent growth measurements,

- A new three-year average log price at March 2020 (32 of 36 months with assumption that for April 2020 to June 2020 prices would be in line with March),
- Decreased rail process assuming rail to New Plymouth rather than Napier or Wellington.
- These increases have offset:
 - An increase in insurance cost,
 - The recent downturn in log prices (January to March 2020),
 - Increased internal roading and infrastructure costs.

4.6.3 At the March Committee meeting we reported on a fire in the Wickham (now Roswick) JV forest on the Whanganui River Road. Follow up assessments and access track maintenance have been completed and damage is limited to approximately 1.0-2.0 ha. This was assessed and accounted for in the forestry valuation.

4.6.4 Thinning to waste and quality control plots have been completed on Wright's forest and a small amount on Roswick's.

4.6.5 Maintenance of access tracking has been completed on Thompson's forest. This has included pruning and removal of some edge trees. The maintenance will improve access for weed control (areas of old man's beard were discovered and reported to the Biosecurity team), silviculture and any potential fire suppression.



Photo 1: Track maintenance with excavator on Thompsons JV forest. Photo Josh Penn.

4.7 SLUI OPERATIONAL PLAN TARGETS

The SLUI operational plan targets were presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee of Council in the Operational Plan 2019-20 by Natural Resources and Partnerships on 10 September 2019. The SLUI Operational targets made up section 2.2 of that plan.

COMMENTS ON OPERATIONAL PLAN TARGETS

- 4.7.1 Contract management is on track with Milestone reports completed until the end of March and two reports due at the end of May and end of June.
- 4.7.2 Farm Plans are fully allocated for the year. Staff do have the ability to move any “top priority” farms forward and these will be added to the work programme for the year.
- 4.7.3 Grant administration is on track and staff have a new grant document for making grant allocations. Under Covid Level 4 staff moved to electronic grant claims. This has worked reasonably well but involves a little more administration at the approval level.
- 4.7.4 Upgrading of the SLUI database has fallen behind schedule due to the Covid lockdown. The aim of having a new system for staff to use in the field by 1 July will not be achieved. Staff are hoping to re-start work once under Level 2 and still get improvements to the reporting functionality completed this financial year.
- 4.7.5 Entering the joint venture forestry data into the new **Asset Management Information System** (AMIS) and user analysis data testing is complete. The system still requires more development.
- 4.7.6 There were six SLUI scholarship applications this year. Assessment of these has been delayed and a final decision on successful applicants will be made before the end of May.

5 REGIONAL AND COAST ACTIVITY

5.1 PROGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT AND ADVICE

5.1.1 Environmental Grant funding is in place to support landowners to undertake works that will reduce erosion and protect the environment. This funding is targeted slightly differently between the **Regional Land and Coast** (RL&C) environment grant and the **Whanganui Catchment Strategy** (WCS) grant. Under the WCS, support from **Whanganui River Environmental Trust** (WRET) enables a greater variety of work to be funded and at higher grant rates in some areas.

Table 6: Work area and budget expenditure for the year to date

Grant Type	WORK AREA (ha)				BUDGET (\$)			
	AP Target	Allocated	Complete	AP % Complete	AP Budget	Allocated	Complete	AP % Complete
WCS	75	75	41	55	113,000*1	157,387	129,759	115
RL&C	100	154	90	90	80,000	125,993	54,861	69
Total	175	214	131	75	193,000	283,380	184,620	96

Note *1 - this is \$50,000 Horizons and \$63,000 WRET

5.1.2 A total of 134 projects (130 last reporting period) have been allocated to date (78 in Land and 56 WCS). Fourteen of these projects have been cancelled or transferred into the next financial year, leaving 57 projects to be completed at the end of April. Both the Land and WCS grant budgets are over-allocated and the new SLUI contract enables these works to be charged (and accounted for) in SLUI. Some of these jobs will be transferred to SLUI.

5.1.3 Space planting accounts for 61 of the 134 projects, riparian retirement 40 and retirement six.

5.1.4 WRET has signaled an increase in allocation from \$53,000 to \$63,000 with more funding available on further application. They have also allocated \$12,000 to demonstration projects.

5.1.5 One Environmental Property Plan has been completed and one is proposed. These plans are a low priority, usually with small holdings and are completed as and when staff have time. They are a good way of training staff in land mapping and plan writing.

5.2 INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

BALANCE FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

5.2.1 The Ballance Farm Environment Awards Regional Supreme Winner evening was to be held on 19 March with the winner's field day set for April. Unfortunately, the awards evening was cancelled and replaced by a video presentation which outlined the entrants and winners for the year.

5.2.2 Woodhaven Gardens has been named 2020 Regional Supreme Winner, the first vegetable growing enterprise to win the supreme award in our region. In addition to the supreme award Woodhaven received the following:

- Hill Laboratories Agri-Science Award;
- Norwood Agri-Business Management Award;
- Synlait Climate Stewardship Award;
- WaterForce Wise with Water Award.



Photo 2 John and Jay Clarke, Woodhaven Gardens, Photo courtesy BFEA

The 2019-20 regional awards video can be found on the following link:
<https://www.nzfeatrust.org.nz/horizons-award-winners-2020>

5.2.3 Other Horizons 2020 award winners were:

- Brendon & Rachel Williams, Pencoed Trust – Marton;
- Tony & Lynda Gray, Kinross Partnership – Apiti;
- Mark Johnston & Rebecca Jeffery, Ruahine Range Views – Dannevirke;
- Chalky & Lesley Leary, Onga – Hunterville;
- Dave Milne, Lakeview Farm – Levin (winner of the Margaret Matthews Trophy for Commitment to Sustainability).

5.2.4 The Trust is still planning to run the regional winner's field day and the national showcase event in the next financial year.

POPLAR AND WILLOW RESEARCH TRUST

5.2.5 A new funding agreement was signed with the **Poplar and Willow Research Trust** (PWRT). This commits Horizons to supporting the Trust with funding of \$25,000 per year over the next three years.

5.2.6 PWRT have produced a draft Nursery Managers' Manual.

BEEF AND LAMB NEW ZEALAND

- 5.2.7 Staff discussed with Beef and Lamb NZ the potential to make Visual Soil Assessment an on-line tool.
- 5.2.8 Horizons are contributing to the winter grazing campaign coordinated by Beef and Lamb NZ. This campaign, which has run over the previous two winters and has support from industry players as well as Regional Councils, targets farmer publications and social media.
- <https://beeflambnz.com/wintergrazing>

HORIZONS REPRESENTATION AT EVENTS

- 5.2.9 Staff have attended and presented at a number of events, either in person before Level 4 lockdown or virtually since. They include:
- Support with soils information to the new agriculture teacher at Taihape Area School,
 - Input into the One Billion Trees government-funded study for integration of trees on-farm in the Rangitikei area and input as part of the Land Managers' Special Interest Group to a funding application led by **Beef & Lamb NZ** (B&L NZ) for workshops supporting trees on farm,
 - Support for the Rangitikei Catchment Group, providing maps and advice,
 - Attended the Vinegar Hill water reticulation group meeting, potentially supplying more maps to help in planning of the project,
 - Attended and spoke at Taumarunui Rural Professionals' breakfast,
 - Attended B&L NZ Land and Environment Plan workshop at Ongarue (Ruapehu District) with a follow up request for a SLUI plan, and an Indigenous Biodiversity workshop at Hunterville,
 - Attended a Red Meat Profit Partnership meeting at Te Uri (Tararua District) and spoke about SLUI funding,
 - Attended proposed Pohangina Catchment group meeting,
 - Attended a Farm Forestry Association cypress field day at Okota forest near Hunterville, and
 - Attended a Dairy NZ / NIWA constructed wetland Webinar, a native plant identification workshop, and NZ Institute of Primary Industry Management seminar on greenhouse gas emissions.

5.3 SOIL HEALTH

- 5.3.1 The autumn programme was planned to commence in May but was prevented due to Covid-19 limitations. It is unlikely the 10 sites proposed will be completed this autumn due to time constraints and other priorities.

5.4 WHANGANUI CATCHMENT STRATEGY (WCS) AND WHANGANUI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST (WRET)

5.4.1 Work programmes in the upper Whanganui-Ruapehu area are slightly behind target and farmers in the area have had to deal with a very dry summer. Environmental work programmes generally become lower priority when feeding and getting water to stock, and finding space at meat works are priorities. During lockdown staff have been in touch with landowners with work programmes, and by the end of April, 29 of the 56 projects had been completed and only two cancelled. The bulk of the projects left to complete involve fencing and riparian retirement. There will be a rush to get projects finished by the end of the financial year on June 30 and it is likely some will transfer to the next financial year and a few additional jobs may be cancelled.

5.4.2 Staff have continued to liaise with WRET regarding funding of the works programme.

5.5 SUPPORT FOR CONSENTS AND COMPLIANCE

5.5.1 Advice to landowners regarding the need for consents or compliance for a number of activities which may be permitted or require consent, including:

- Two on vegetation clearance, culverts and complaints regarding cattle in a river;
- One tracking;
- One consent for four-wheel drive activities;
- One soil interpretation regarding siting of a new dairy shed;
- One erosion mapping regarding proposed vegetation clearance; and
- One complaint regarding burning received during lockdown.

6 NURSERY

6.1 WORK PROGRAMME TO DATE

6.1.1 WRET-supported nurseries in the Ruapehu District:

- Thinning and pruning, and copper and ground spraying, were completed before Level 4 lockdown;
- Pole counts were completed at the end of April and there are six sites to harvest this year with approximately 2,200 poles to be produced;
- Plans to replant the leased Ohura nursery site have been put on hold;
- Whio (Blue Duck) nursery has plans to expand this winter.

6.1.2 Woodville:

- Pruning began in mid-February but was interrupted by lockdown, and will now be completed after winter pole harvest as contractors are committed elsewhere;

- Nursery work recommenced on 29 April at Alert Level 3 with mowing and tidying while some aphid and rust spraying was missed during lockdown;
- Preparations are now concentrating on harvest which should commence early to mid- June;
- An initial pre-harvest stock take was completed in February, indicating around 17,600 poles for harvest. This is lower than previous years due primarily to a low point in the three-year pole production cycle. New areas planted after the nursery purchase will not be available for harvest until next year.

6.1.3 Bulls nursery:

- Contractors almost completed pruning before Level 4 lockdown and the remaining work will be completed by the nursery manager;
- Pole production will be low at Bulls this year as dry conditions have meant fewer poles are suitable for harvest.

6.1.4 Overall pole numbers will be lower this year than for the last 3-4 years due to an anticipated gap in the harvest cycle at both Bulls and Woodville nurseries as new areas are brought into production. The low numbers have been exacerbated by the dry conditions affecting harvest volumes in Horizons, commercial and farmer nurseries.

6.1.5 Horizons hosted the nursery managers' meeting in March. Regional Council and a small number of commercial nursery managers attended and the programme focused on information sharing around pole production. The overall comment from all nurseries is that supply will be down on last year. Irrigation systems were a major topic of discussion.

6.1.6 Work is underway to get further information on potential design for the Woodville nursery irrigation that has been budgeted for next year.



Photo 3 Nursery Managers' Meeting – Observing contractors using electric pruners at Woodville Nursery. Photo Sara Mathieson - 16 March 2020

6.2 WORK PROGRAMME OVER EARLY WINTER

- 6.2.1 Work is geared up for harvest in early June at Woodville and later for other nurseries.
- 6.2.2 Contractors are confirmed for all sites.
- 6.2.3 Begin pole distribution and planting programmes.
- 6.2.4 Investigate water supply options for irrigation at Woodville nursery.
- 6.2.5 Confirm pole supply from commercial growers.