

Report No.	20-78
Information Only - No Decision Required	

LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report covers work carried out by the Natural Resources and Partnership – Land Management team for the period 1 February to 30 April 2020, and proposed work up until 30 June 2020. It includes the activity areas of **Sustainable Land Management Initiative (SLUI)**, Regional Land and Coast, and Nursery.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. This report focusses on the operational targets of the Annual Plan 2019-20 Land Management Activity for SLUI, Regional and Coast, and Nursery budget activity areas. It also provides updates on the contract targets with **Te Uru Rakau (TUR)** regarding delivery of the SLUI programme. The annex provides a more detailed update on progress.
- 2.2. At the time of writing this report autumn rains and mild conditions had helped stimulate pasture growth but more rain was needed, especially to fill dams and boost stream flows. The dry conditions and Covid 19 lockdown had impacted on farmers ability to sell stock and concentrate on building up reserves of winter feed.

SLUI

- 2.3. The SLUI programme has entered into a new four year funding contract with TUR. The Hill Country Erosion Fund contract provides for over \$6.4 million in funding over four years. This year is year one with the TUR contribution being \$1.734 million, the Horizons' contribution \$3.677 million, and an estimated landowner contribution of \$2.390 million in cash, and \$0.428 million in-kind providing a total estimated budget of \$8.229 million.
- 2.4. The **Whole Farm Plan (WFP)** programme is contracted to complete 22,500 ha of new plans plus another 1,000 ha of one off paddock maps. At present 57 plans covering 25,932 ha are allocated for the year. We are awaiting information from a further 55 farms (over 35,000 ha) who have progressed in the process of obtaining a farm plan. The interest in farm plans has increased following the governments release of consultation documents around freshwater management.
- 2.5. The environmental works programme is contracted to complete 3,440 ha of “on the ground” works. The programme currently has 4,625 ha of works allocated for the year and experience shows not all of this will be delivered within the year. The expanded budget for grants this year is \$2.337 million, allocation levels indicate up to \$3.701 million of grants of Ministry of Primary Industry and Horizons funding indicating that Horizons SLUI reserves will be used during the year. Staff have worked hard during Level 3 and 4 lockdowns to contact landowners and obtain a clearer picture of likely work completion.

Regional and Coast

- 2.6. The Regional and Coast programme is funded via general rate, it targets advice and grants for erosion control works on a one off basis largely outside of the SLUI contracted area and in funding partnership with the **Whanganui River Enhancement Trust (WRET)** within the Whanganui River Catchment. In total 175 ha of land is targeted for erosion control works. At this point in the year 202 ha of works have been allocated between the combined programmes, with 41 ha of work completed within the Whanganui Catchment Strategy programme and 90 ha in the wider environmental grant programme.

10 June 2020

- 2.7. The Industry Partnership programme proposes supporting five initiatives promoting sustainable land use and good management practice on farms within the region. Funding partnerships exist with the New Zealand Farm Environmental Trust and the Poplar and Willow Research Trust. Other programmes are supported as funding and opportunities allow.
- 2.8. The Soil Health programme maintains the Regional State of the Environment soil quality monitoring programme through a regional network of soil health assessments, and a general advice programme around soils and soil health.
- 2.9. This programme is well underway, with the major partnership programme involving funding for the regional Ballance Farm Environment Awards, with 2019-20 being completed through an online video after the awards dinner set for the 19th of March was cancelled due to Covid 19. Woodhaven Gardens has been named 2020 Regional Supreme Winner.

Nurseries

- 2.10. Council operate a number of poplar and willow pole nurseries to produce planting material for erosion control programmes. The aim is to produce or source 30,000 poles.
- 2.11. The 2019 winter pole season has been completed, with provisional numbers showing 31,732 poles distributed to landowners.
- 2.12. Dry conditions in the nurseries are affecting pole growth, this along with an anticipated drop in pole supply will impact on the number of poles able to be harvested in winter 2020.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-78 and Annex.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. There are no direct financial impacts associated with this report. However, it does update members on a number of financial matters associated with SLUI, Regional and Coast, and Nursery activities.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Consultation was carried out through the 2012-22 Long-term Plan (LTP) submission process and the recent Annual Plan process. Te Uru Rakau (TUR) has a key role in part-funding and overseeing the SLUI section of this activity. The year end level of delivery for this programme and budget projection remain difficult to project due to changing situational conditions including contractor availability, lack of autumn pasture growth, delays due to Covid-19 restrictions and potential new government legislation.

6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 6.1. There are no significant risks inherent in the adoption of the recommendations contained in this report.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

- 7.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

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ANNEXES

A Land Management progress report