

Report No.	20-37
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 November 2019 to 31 January 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 continuing dry conditions, drop in schedule prices and uncertainty around the impact of the Coronavirus are having an impact on landowner confidence, it remains to be seen what impact this will have on work programmes.

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. In year one the TUR contribution is \$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 54 plans covering 24,823 ha are allocated for the year. We are awaiting information from a further 57 farms (over 34,000 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 6,459 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 \$4.076 million of grants of Ministry of Primary Industry and Horizons funding indicating that Horizons SLUI reserves will be used during the year. Allocation for works in this financial year have ceased and over \$784,000 of grant projects have been allocated to the next financial year. Staff are currently working through the allocated works with farmers to further establish the likelihood of completion of the individually allocated works this year.

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, however only 48 ha allocated for the target of 75 ha for the Whanganui Catchment Strategy programme.

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- 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 awards entrants having completed the judging rounds with the awards dinner set for 19th of March and the winners field day in April.

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 may have an 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. 20-37 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. During the reporting period, staff attended a range of meetings where SLUI was discussed and a SLUI newsletter was circulated to farmers with a SLUI Whole Farm Plan. The SLUI Advisory Group is updated on SLUI progress approximately every six months, the last meeting was in December 2019. The year end level of delivery for this programme and budget projection remain difficult to project due to changing situational conditions including contractor availability, dry weather conditions, dropping schedule prices, uncertainty of the impact of Coronavirus 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.

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7. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Grant Cooper

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ANNEXES

A Land Management progress report