



LAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – 1 JULY 2020 TO 15 AUGUST 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 – Forestry NZ** (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** (WFP) 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 583,000 ha of farm plans across 796 farms and aims to complete approximately 3,065 ha of erosion control works and 22,500 ha of new farm plans in the 2020-21 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 2020-21 are yet to be presented to Council. The Land Management activities of this year's work programme 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 July 2020 – 15 August 2020, the beginning of the 2020-21 financial year. Work completed up until the end of June 2020 is included in the Annual Report.
- 2.1.2 The priority for field staff is to ensure winter planting programmes are completed. This includes staff arranging delivery of poplar and willow poles and giving advice and assistance to landowners to ensure poles are planted correctly. Afforestation projects will also be underway with some landowners procuring trees through the Horizons contract supply.
- 2.1.3 Fencing claims continue to occur. Fifteen claims have been processed for this financial year to date.
- 2.1.4 The winter period has been relatively kind for farming activities after autumn rainfall set up reasonable pasture growth and a mild winter has seen growth continue. There are still parts of the Region where it is drier than normal and some landowners in the Turakina/Rangitikei/Taihape areas are cutting back on pole planting because of hard ground conditions.
- 2.1.5 Staff have more than 4,600 ha and \$3.7 m of works allocated for the 2020-21 year. There are other funding programmes ("shovel-ready" and green projects both internal and external) that may pick up some of this work and staff are finding it difficult to get a clear picture of their work for the year.
- 2.1.6 For office staff the priority has been completing end of year reports including: EOY Milestone report to TUR (report, financial report, shape files, invoice), Annual Report on Land Management activity, EOY financial reports and targets for the Council Annual Report and early work for the Long-term Plan.
- 2.1.7 Staff have continued to assist with input into possible "shovel-ready" environmental projects for consideration by Central Government.
- 2.1.8 Staff are working on providing an annual report to WRET for their AGM in September. At this time a formal application is made for funding for 2020-21.
- 2.1.9 Staff were present for harvesting poles in the WRET-supported nursery on Whio (Blue Duck) Station. The harvesting was being filmed by the "Country Calendar" team for an upcoming television episode.

- 2.1.10 Pole harvesting has been completed in all Council nurseries and even though supply numbers were down, late cancellations from farmers due to dry ground conditions have meant most farmers wanting poles have been able to get them this year.
- 2.1.11 Staff have attended and presented at a number of events. Once Covid-19 restrictions ended, a number of the events continued to be run as virtual meetings. This mix of events include:
- Attended Taumarunui Sustainable Land Management meeting,
 - Two virtual Land Management Group **Special Interest Group** (SIG) meetings (a meeting of land managers from regional councils and unitary authorities across New Zealand),
 - Presented at the **Agricultural Communities Respecting the Environment** (ACRE) winter workshop at Massey University,
 - Attended a Tararua Right Tree, Right Place workshop as part of a Billion Trees partnership programme,
 - Joined two meetings for a Farm Environmental Planner reference group as part of a proposed Massey University short course,
 - Attended a regenerative agriculture seminar at Linnburn Station (Huntermville)
 - Attended an "understanding farm business" course run by Ag Women and Red Meat Profit Partnership.
- 2.1.1 SLUI Whole Farm Plans continue to be produced, with plans not completed in 2019-20 carried over into this financial year, Table 1

Table 1: WFP production (life-to-date)

No. of Plans	Hectares	Comments
745	552,067	WFPs completed in SLUI to 30 June 2019
22	10,207	Plans completed in 2019-20 and delivered to landowners
28	12,464	Plans/ha mapped in 2019-20 but yet to be delivered to landowners
17	7,927	Plans on the list in 2020-21 and with contractor to complete
50	22,671	Equals (22 + 28) Plans on list to be mapped in 2019-20 financial year
62	71,870	Information with landowner who is still to finally commit to a plan

- 2.1.2 All WFPs from the 2018-19 plans have been delivered and 22 from the 2019-20 programme. Of the 22 plans delivered, 10 have agreed to a programme at this stage.
- 2.1.3 There are 17 (7,927 ha) of plans allocated to the contractor in 2020-21. This number will increase as staff revisit those noted as having information out with landowner.
- 2.1.4 A virtual meeting was held with the Poplar and Willow Trust and funding partners to discuss progress on the poplar sawfly research carried out last summer. This work is carried out by SCION with support from PWRT and Regional Councils (see info sheet below). Covid-19 lockdown impacted the end of this project and the project team will apply to the SFF Futures for additional funding for another summer programme.



Agriculture & Investment Services
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

SFF Futures

The biology and impact of poplar sawfly in New Zealand



Snapshot

Industry partners: NZ Poplar and Willow Research Trust

Project length: 1 year

Start date: December 2019

Estimated completion date: November 2020

Industry funding: \$25,000

MPI funding: \$100,000

Research on the poplar sawfly's biology and impact on different poplar varieties will inform New Zealand's approach to long-term management of this pest.

The opportunity

An established population of poplar sawfly (*Cladius grandis*) was detected in Dunedin in January 2019. It feeds on most poplars currently in slope stabilisation programmes. New Zealand has three native sawfly species (all distantly-related parasites of wood-boring insects) and no native poplars. This species may spread rapidly throughout New Zealand. It's essential to understand the potential impacts of the pest upon the currently grown poplar varieties that have been bred specifically for New Zealand conditions.

The solution

Before long-term management options can be considered, basic information on the biology of poplar sawfly must be gathered to quantify its potential impact. This project will monitor the life-cycle of poplar sawfly for 12 months to determine the number of generations per year, the rate it is spreading, and its initial impact on New Zealand poplar varieties. Evidence of larvae observed to be infected with potential microbial or insect biocontrol agents will be kept for future analysis to inform

future decision-making on potential bio-control options.

Monitoring fieldwork will be carried out at known infested sites and poplar trial sites around Dunedin to help shape the New Zealand Poplar and Willow Research Trust's future poplar breeding programme to maximise tolerance to poplar sawfly.

The public will also be encouraged to put any finds of the pest onto the web platform iNaturalist. A project to track its spread has been set up here: inaturalist.nz/projects/tracking-the-poplar-sawfly

The benefits

If successful, this project could benefit New Zealand by:

- protecting investment in poplar plantings as a critical tool for stabilising erosion-prone land and reducing runoff to waterways;
- informing the best approach for long-term pest management of poplar sawfly.

March 2020

SFF Futures
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3 ACTIVITY OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

3.1.1 During August - October staff will:

- Continue to keep in touch with landowners regarding grant work;
- Begin working through the list of plans where work has not been carried out in the last five years and, where necessary, re-establishing contact with landowners;
- Work through claim processing, visiting farms and inspecting works which at this stage will mostly be fencing projects;
- Finalise a new time for SLUI Advisory Group meeting (this was originally planned for June but was postponed and will now aim to return to the normal twice-yearly cycle);
- Deliver completed farm plans and discuss work programmes;
- Complete registration of three large grant works programmes and authorise payment of grant funds;
- 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;
- Continue monitoring/audit programme for SLUI plans, with the aim of having a report available to meet the TUR contract target of August 2020;
- Plan new season work programmes in both Joint Venture forests and nurseries.

4 REPORT ON PROGRESS

4.1 ANNUAL PLAN AND CONTRACT TARGETS (2020-21)

4.1.1 The Annual Plan and **Hill Country Erosion Fund** (HCEF) contract targets for 2020-21 are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Annual Plan and HCEF contract targets 2020-21

MEASURE	ANNUAL PLAN	HCEF CONTRACT	TARGET	YTD	PREDICTED RESULT
Sustainable Land Use Initiative					
Erosion reduction works programmes in targeted SLUI catchments (ha)	3,100	3,065	3,100		4,600 ha work proposed to date. 18 claims completed.
Whole Farm Plan properties mapped per year (ha)	20,000	22,500	22,500		
Farm or paddock assessments mapped per year (ha)		1,000	1,000		
Case study completed (number)		1	1		
Feasibility reports (number)		6	6		
Regional and Coast					
Manage grant programmes to deliver erosion reduction works (ha)	175		175	1.0	3 claims completed.
Support industry initiatives that promote sustainable land use (number)	5		5		
Operate council nurseries and source additional commercial pole material to deliver poplar and willow poles to control erosion (number of poles)	30,000		30,000		Pole harvest completed, stakes still to complete.

4.2 SLUI GRANT WORKS TARGETS (2020-21)

Table 3: 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	1,250	1,794			939	1,331		
Retirement	600	2,064			261	897		
Riparian Retirement ^{*A}	220	381			357	1,114		
Managed Retirement	85	8			25	5		
Space Planting & Gully Planting	900	401			398	185		
Structures/Earthworks	10	39			60	24		
Other (including blank)	-				63			
Total	3,065	4,688			2,102	3,723	1,619	

^{*A} – includes wetland retirement

- 4.2.1 Contract targets are in place and agreed within the SLUI four-year contract. While there are individual work targets, TUR generally accept that these are difficult to manage on a yearly basis and tend to look at the overall outcome. This year the funding provided by TUR is reduced compared to last year. This is reflected in a slight decrease in the contracted work target, from 3,440 ha last year to 3,065 ha this year.
- 4.2.2 Forecast work already exceeds the contract target. The 4,688 ha forecast to be completed is from 498 individual jobs. This forecast will continue to change throughout the year and we would expect more jobs to come onto the allocation as staff visit new WFP landowners and discuss work programmes. Inevitably, jobs will drop off as circumstances change through the year.

4.3 REGIONAL LAND AND COAST AND WCS GRANT WORKS TARGETS (2020-21)

- 4.3.1 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 4: 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	56	1.0	1.0	113,000*1	51,875	2,048	2.0
RL&C	100	86	-	-	80,000	79,716	-	-
Total	175	142	1.0	0.6	193,000	131,591	2,048	1.0

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

- 4.3.2 A total of 92 projects have been allocated to date with an estimated work area of 142 ha.
- 4.3.3 Space planting accounts for 47 of the 92 projects and riparian retirement 18.
- 4.3.4 WRET allocation of \$63,000 cannot be confirmed until their AGM has been held in September.
- 4.3.5 Three projects have been completed within the WCS area to date this year.