

Report No.	20-01
Information Only - No Decision Required	

NATURAL RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS PROGRESS REPORT

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this item is update members of Council's Environment Committee on the progress made in the Natural Resources & Partnership Group's activity over the period 1 October to 31 December 2019. The item provides updates on progress against the annual plan targets and aspects of the Natural Resources & Partnerships Group Operational Plan 2019-20.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-01 and Annexes.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no financial impact associated with recommendations in this paper.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. This is a public item and therefore Council may deem this sufficient to inform the public.

5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. It is considered that there is no significant risk impact of this item

6. SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

- 6.1. The Natural Resources & Partnerships Group activity includes the non-regulatory and science programmes across the land and water management, biosecurity, biodiversity and environmental reporting activities of the Long-term Plan. The group also delivers regulatory functions for biosecurity and supports Horizons' regulatory programmes.
- 6.2. Over the reporting period the Natural Resources and Partnerships group prepared and presented a range of Council Papers including
- Councillor Roles for Non-Regulatory projects, Regional Council meeting November 5;
 - Update on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) investigations, Strategy and Policy November 12;
 - National Pesticide Survey, Strategy and Policy November 12;
 - Natural Resources and Partnerships progress report, Environment Committee November 13;
 - Drinking Water Update, Strategy and Policy Committee December 10; and
 - Land Management Progress report, Catchment Operations December 11.
- 6.3. Engagement with new national policy direction included staff input and engagement in:
- The Essential Freshwater Policy development through the Regional Sector Water Sub group, the Science Technical and Advisory Group and other forums.

- The 1 billion trees programme working with Te Uru Rakau staff to seeking funding via the partnerships funds for projects within Horizons region and separately on behalf of the Regional Sector.
 - The proposed National Policy Statement for Biodiversity including identifying Horizons as an agency to Road test the proposed policy with the Ministry for Environment and a Territorial Authority within the region.
 - A submission on proposed new regulations around the use of the possum bait Brodifacoum which is the primary bait used within Horizons possum control programme
- 6.4. Progress on the Land Management Activity within the Group was reported to the Catchment Operations in December. In summary the programme is progressing through the first year of the new Hill Country Erosion Fund Contract with central government that has provided additional funds for the programme this year. The programme is fully allocated for work including a significant amount of funding from reserves (as approved by Council). Staff are working with landowners to increase the amount of works that are allocated that will actually be completed during the year, noting that in previous years for some work types around 70 percent of allocated works have been completed. The Land Management Activity is not further reported on in this item and will be reported on at the Catchment Operations Committee meeting in March.
- 6.5. Progress on the Freshwater and Partnerships team's activity is updated on in Annex A. In summary the programme is on track to deliver on all targets and to exceed some. Overall 161 km of stream fencing is allocated for a target of 79 km and 38 km have been completed. Over 159,000 riparian plants have been allocated for a target of 63,333. The target for riparian planting has already been achieved with 86,639 plants planted this year. During the reporting period there were a range of Freshwater Improvement Fund Governance Group meetings held and a Manawatū River Leaders' Accord meeting. Progress was made on the access track to the proposed boat ramp for Lake Horowhenua. A range of other activity was undertaken to inform the Freshwater programme including work to investigate removing two weirs to increase fish passage in the Akitio River. Further a stocktake of coastal lake outlets has been initiated and this has identified in a number of lakes have weirs that are at risk of collapsing. For some of the dune lakes this may result in the loss of the lake due to the shallow nature, for example Lake Kaitoke.
- 6.6. The Biosecurity Animals programme (Annex B) significantly progressed during the reporting period. Overall the programme has completed 34% of the PCOs and 30% of the area to be controlled by the end of December. At face value this seems to be behind considering the programme is 50% through the financial year, however the programme is currently assessed as on track as the nature of the business is that there is increased contractor capacity operating in the programme during the summer/autumn period with contractors required to complete their work by the end of May. Another item reported on in the item is the submission on the Governments review of the use of brodifacoum. A copy of the submission is provided as part of the item. During the reporting period the rooks programme of nest control was undertaken and the results show a decrease in the number of nests compared to the previous year. In December the Woodville team responded to a sighting of rooks and it is estimated that 130 individuals were controlled. Staff have also reported a potential challenge for the programme in that the control of nests during the October/November period is proving successful at identifying and reducing breeding, however it may be that where nests are disturbed the rooks establish a second nest and second clutch of eggs and do still successfully breed within the season. Information on rooks in New Zealand indicates that the birds can produce two clutches per season and successfully breed if an initial nest is disturbed. It is recommended that Horizons undertakes a second round of nest control next season.
- 6.7. The Biosecurity Plants programme (Annex C) has been active across a range of pest plants including a busy period around incursion response including activity on pea weevil, velvet leaf, brown marmorated stink bug and Chinese knotweed. Some surveillance work

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has been undertaken to look for weeds that may have newly established in the region as a part of the Regional Pest Management Plan's exclusion programme. The biological control programme has not been able to meet demand for the green thistle beetle due to low numbers of beetles at the traditional nursery and harvest sites. An item is programmed for March 2020 to update Councillors on a review of progress against the Regional Pest Management Plan.

- 6.8. The Biodiversity Programme (Annex D) has continued to progress site assessments to inform prioritisation of sites for inclusion within the programme within an additional 76 sites visited during the period. The Annex updates on progress on the range of biodiversity partnership projects and the majority of these are considered to be on track and some are receiving further follow up. The biodiversity partnerships programme is undergoing review and a paper on this is being presented to Council at the February Strategy & Policy Committee meeting. The Tōtara Reserve Regional Park project has focussed on preparations for the busy camping season. During the reporting period the campground maintenance contract was awarded for a term of three years and further work as a part of upgrading health and safety at the camp has been a focus including electrical work and work in relation to the septic tank. A Tōtara Reserve Advisory Group is in the process of being organised for February/March and the primary aim of this is to gather the new group and to familiarise them with the park and its activity. A key goal for the year for this project is establishing a strategic plan from which to base the annual work programmes.
- 6.9. The Science & Innovation programme (Annex E) has initiated a range of summer monitoring programmes during the period including swim spot monitoring, invertebrate monitoring and additional lake monitoring. Over the reporting period there has been several items to Council in relation to the groundwater research programme including the PFAS item and the National Pesticides Survey item. A comprehensive report on the drinking water research programme has also been provided. The climate change research programme has contracted the development of a Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory to further understand the contributions of various activities in the region to greenhouse gas emissions. This study will be completed at both a district and regional scale. To increase the communication around Horizons' climate change research programme additional material has been added to Horizons' website as outlined in the Annex.

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 Freshwater & Partnerships Progress Report
- B Biosecurity Animals Progress Report
- C Biosecurity Plants Progress Report
- D Biodiversity Progress Report

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- E Science & Innovation Progress Report
- F Call for information on the use of Brodifacoum as a vertebrate toxic agent