

Report No.	20-169
Information Only - No Decision Required	

## HARBOURMASTER'S REPORT

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the **Manawatu River Users' Advisory Group (MRUAG)** with an update on matters relating to navigation and safety on the Manawatu River and its tributaries.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-169.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no direct financial impact arising from matters discussed in this item.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk from matters discussed in this item.

### 6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. This report covers the period December 2019 to December 2020.

### 7. RIVER EVENTS

- 7.1. The annual meeting and BBQ for Honorary Enforcement Officers and support organisations is scheduled for Tuesday 8 December 2020 at the **Manawatu Marine Boating Club (MMBC)**. The meeting invitees also include members of Manawatu Coastguard and MMBC. These meetings are very beneficial in maintaining and enhancing the important relationships between the organisations and members and a great way to pass on our thanks for their support and efforts over the past year.
- 7.2. The **Manawatu Power Boat Club (MPBC)** has advised the date for their Annual Gold Cup regatta, which is 10-11 April 2021, and which will again be held at Whirokino. A temporary reservation will be applied for and supported by a Public Notice placed in the Manawatu Standard prior to the event. The MPBC has not advised of any further planned events at this time.
- 7.3. The Harbourmaster has not received notification of any further events planned for the Manawatu River at this time.

### 8. GENERAL COMMENT

Monitoring of Recreational Activity over the summer period at the Manawatu Estuary, Whirokino, and lower reaches of the Manawatu River – Involvement in Maritime NZ 'No Excuses' Campaign 2020-2021.

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- 8.1. Members have been kept well informed over the past couple of years regarding on water recreational activities at the above locations. Those discussions have previously arisen regarding vessel operator behavior, in particular jet skis, over this time.
- 8.2. The Harbourmaster has continued to monitor recreational activities on the lower reaches of the river and has had ongoing discussions with stakeholders over this time. Previous meetings with the MMBC Executive Committee and other stakeholders over this time have confirmed the level of comfort that exists in regard to the ongoing monitoring of recreational activities on the river and potential measures that have been adopted over recent summers where recreational activity on the river increases markedly.
- 8.3. In reviewing the measures undertaken over the past summer periods, there has been general agreement that this work is contributing to an improvement in the overall behaviours of recreational users, but also that we need to adapt and continue to take opportunities to encourage responsible use of this waterway and surrounding areas, and implement measures to ensure that occurs.
- 8.4. Those measures have included monitoring over the summer seasons by several agencies in partnership with the Harbourmaster, with the assistance of the following organisations:
  - Manawatu Coastguard;
  - Manawatu River Honorary Wardens;
  - Manawatu Marine Boating Club;
  - Foxton Surf Lifesaving Club;
  - Foxton Beach Community Patrol & Beach Wardens.
- 8.5. Further to the above, and as signaled previously, Horizons Regional Council has taken the opportunity to become part of the Maritime NZ led 'No Excuses' Campaign as part of the Safer Boating Forum. The 'No Excuses' Campaign, focuses on recreational activities and those undertaking them, and ensuring adherence to Maritime rules and local bylaws.
- 8.6. The campaign has grown since its inception, and last year 18 Local Authorities, including Horizons Regional Council, took part. For the recreational activities on the Manawatu River, this has been the next step on the path we have been on in terms of safety and control of the various recreational activities on the waterway, and in encouraging the adherence of the Maritime Rules and River bylaws.
- 8.7. The support of the Regional Council and Maritime NZ to run this campaign in our Region and on the Manawatu River has been instrumental in its success. Our first involvement with the 'No Excuses' Campaign took place on Sunday 15 March 2020, where the Harbourmaster joined Maritime NZ Officer, Matt Wood, and NZ Police Skipper Kyle Smith, on board a Police RIB vessel. The day was spent on the lower reaches of the river and out off the coast speaking to skippers and other users undertaking various on-water recreational activities.
- 8.8. The focus of this campaign day locally was on monitoring, education, and compliance, rather than enforcement, where the opportunity was taken to utilise the various mechanisms of the campaign to educate and encourage boaties to act responsibly for not only the safety of themselves and their crew, but also that of other users of the waterway.
- 8.9. Over the day the team had interactions with in excess of 30 vessels including jet skis and it was satisfying to find that by and large all operators were well prepared, with more than one form of communication, enough lifejackets for all on board and of the correct size for each person, and the majority had filed trip reports with the local marine VHF radio operators.
- 8.10. Most skippers spoken to had good knowledge of the maritime and local rules. All details of these interactions were recorded on an iPad at the time and fed into the information gathering part of the campaign. A small number of warnings were however issued with the majority of those to jet ski operators for either excessive speed in a restricted area or

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towing without an observer on board. Those persons details were recorded, and an official warning issued.

- 8.11. Dates for the next 'No Excuses' Campaign are yet to be confirmed for our region, but at this stage we will be looking at 3 days over February/March 2021. These events will be well advertised and promoted with the MMBC included in the promotion and coordination of local involvement in the Campaign. Members will be kept informed as planning for this year's campaign comes together.
- 8.12. The following Maritime NZ media release regarding the 'No Excuses' Campaign is included for Members information.

*"A record 18 harbourmasters around the country are taking part in this year's 'No Excuses' campaign, focusing on recreational boaties who don't carry or wear lifejackets or whose speed on the water is unsafe. The fifth annual campaign gets underway in October – and involves harbourmasters and Maritime New Zealand Maritime Officers working side by side for at least five random days in each region over the summer. Action will be taken against boaties who break lifejacket and speed rules, including infringement notices of up to \$300. The campaign has been steadily growing since it started in 2016, initially involving eight councils and Maritime NZ working together in each area to reinforce safety rules and regulations to recreational boaties. Maritime Officers and harbourmasters will check that people are complying with the safety rules, including those for life jackets, speed, dive flags and towing with an observer. "Boaties speeding in busy areas is dangerous and can injure children, swimmers, divers and people in small craft. "Safe boaties follow the rules each and every time they go on the water. There are no excuses for breaking the rules and causing risk to yourself and others."*

- 8.13. As previously reported to members, one of the main concerns that has come to the Harbourmaster over recent times has been speed of some vessel operators, and jet skis in particular, when transiting through the section of river adjacent to the boat launching ramp at Foxton Beach.
- 8.14. A 5 knot speed restriction applies through this section of river 200 metres upstream and downstream of the launching ramp, and is sign posted at both ends on the Foxton Beach side. However the restriction is often ignored by users entering that section. Over the last summer the Manawatu Coastguard was engaged to install the speed restriction buoys seen below, in the middle of the river at the points 200 metres upstream and downstream of the boat launching ramp, to clearly depict and encourage adherence of the speed restriction within this often congested section of the waterway.
- 8.15. The overall view is that these buoys did help to generally slow speed through the area and the Coastguard team will again be installing the buoys at these locations prior to the summer holiday season. Compliance of this speed restriction will again be monitored, and the results used to inform any further actions that may need to be taken to ensure compliance in this area in the future.



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**9. DE-CONSTRUCTION OF THE OLD MANAWATU RIVER BRIDGE – UPDATE**

- 9.1. Members will be aware that the construction of the new river bridge across the Manawatu River has now been completed.
- 9.2. As members will also be aware, Navigation Safety measures have previously been adopted by the implementation of a 5 knot speed restriction on the river, 200 metres upstream and downstream of the bridge construction site, with all river users, including all known river user groups, advised of both the speed restriction on the impacted section of the river and of the hazard to Navigation Safety.
- 9.3. Brian Perry Civil (new bridge builders) also installed an information board at the Whirokino boat ramp on Matararapa Road to inform river users in that area.
- 9.4. Since then the focus has turned to the removal of the existing river bridge. Preliminary discussions with Brian Perry Civil has resulted in the decision to leave all current speed restrictions in place until the works to remove the old bridge are completed. Further to that a temporary river closure was implemented to allow for the de-construction of the old river bridge over a 12-week period earlier from May to July 2020. This was however subsequently lifted as the New Zealand Transport Agency are now reviewing the decision to remove the old bridge with consideration given to retaining it for foot and cycle traffic in the long term. If the old bridge is retained, consideration will need to be given as to whether a permanent speed restriction should be implemented through this area given that 2 sets of bridge piles will remain in situ in this stretch of the river and any safety implications that may arise from that. Members will be kept informed of further restrictions and/or river closures as these decisions are made

**10. CENTRAL DISTRICTS JET BOATING NZ MANAWATU RIVER USERS GROUP REPORT**

- 10.1. This past six months our branch has been busy with a wide variety of activities. The Manawatu River has been used a lot, launching at either Albert Street or Ashhurst now that the river has moved over towards the western side making Boat access a lot easier. The Oroua from Feilding down to the confluence of the Manawatu has been boated several times this year. It is great boating, and we are lucky to have it at our back door.
- 10.2. This winter, for the first time, we applied for and were granted a one day uplifting on the Upper Oroua from the rail bridge in Feilding and 4 of the small mini boats ranging from 3m to 3.6m got as far as the bridge at Coulters line after cutting through 2 log jams. This was thoroughly enjoyed, and I know that we will be applying for more uplifting's for next winter.
- 10.3. We also had a run from the Ballance Bridge to the Weber Road Bridge at Dannevirke. This was attended by 14 boats and crew about 40 people. We would like to in the future apply for an uplifting from April until October. Next 24-25 April, our branch is hosting the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jet Sprinting in NZ. Central Districts started the sport on the Manawatu River and it is now a worldwide sport. We will at the same time be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Central Districts branch. These celebrations are being held on the Manawatu River with on water and off water activities. Central Districts branch would like to take this opportunity to thank Ross as Harbourmaster for the strong relationships that he has fostered in his role, and I'm sure other Manawatu Rivers group members would agree and wish him well with his new business.

**Richard Anderson, Central Districts Branch**

**11. REVIEW OF NAVIGATION SAFETY BYLAW**

- 11.1. The review of the navigation safety bylaw was due to start earlier this year however this process was delayed due to the COVID-19 response. As a result of COVID-19

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amendments to the Local Government Act 2002 have meant that we now have more time to undertake the review. This will be a key output of the new Harbourmaster once appointed.

## 12. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Ian Lowe  
**MANAGER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Ged Shirley  
**GROUP MANAGER REGIONAL SERVICES  
& INFORMATION**

## ANNEXES

There are no attachments to this report.