

Report No.	20-182
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 during the period 15 August to 31 October 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 2020-21 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), formerly Forestry NZ, regarding delivery of the SLUI programme. The annex provides a more detailed update on progress.
- 2.2. This activity report relates to the period 15 August – 31 October 2020. Spring conditions have generally been average (rainfall and temperatures), but have followed a generally dry 2020 calendar year. Most areas have been reporting good pasture growth, with patchy dry areas in Taihape and the lower Turakina, Whangaehu and Whanganui catchments. In Taumarunui, two September frosts held growth back. At the time of writing this report November was tending mild and wet.
- 2.3. While conditions so far would point to good tree establishment, only a small number of tree claims have been completed. Pine seedlings are reportedly establishing well while many poles are only just leafing up. Drying winds are the main concern as we go through October and November.

#### SLUI

- 2.4. The SLUI programme has entered into a new four-year funding contract with TUR. The **Hill Country Erosion Fund** (HCEF) contract provides for more than \$6.4 million in funding over four years. This year is year two with the TUR contribution being \$1.388 million, the Horizons' contribution \$3.677 million, and an estimated landowner contribution of \$4.3 million in cash, and \$0.5 million in-kind providing a total estimated budget of \$9.855 million.
- 2.5. The **Whole Farm Plan** (WFP) programme is contracted to complete 22,500 ha of new plans plus 1,000 ha of one-off paddock maps. At present 35 plans covering 16,922 ha are allocated for the year. We are awaiting information from a further 55 farms (more than 35,000 ha) which have progressed in the process of obtaining a farm plan. The interest in farm plans has increased following Central Government's release of consultation documents about freshwater management. In their current form, SLUI plans will not meet the requirements of the farms plans required by Government.
- 2.6. The environmental works programme is contracted to complete 3,440 ha of "on the ground" works. The programme 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 with allocation levels indicating up to \$3.701 million of Ministry of Primary Industry and Horizons' funding grants. That should mean Horizons SLUI reserves will be used during the year.

**Regional and Coast**

- 2.7. The Regional and Coast programme is funded via general rate targeting advice and grants for erosion control works on a one-off basis within the Whanganui River Catchment. These works will be largely outside of the SLUI contracted area and in funding partnership with the **Whanganui River Enhancement Trust (WRET)**. 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.
- 2.8. 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.
- 2.9. 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.
- 2.10. This Soil Health programme is well underway with the major partnership programme involving funding for the regional Ballance Farm Environment Awards. The 2019-20 awards were streamed online video after the awards dinner, set for 19 March, was cancelled due to Covid-19. Woodhaven Gardens, a leading vegetable grower near Levin in Horowhenua District, was named 2020 Regional Supreme Winner. The judges commended the owners for changing their growing practices to reduce nitrogen loss and minimise the impact on water quality. A field day is planned on 3<sup>rd</sup> December at Woodhaven Gardens.

**Nurseries**

- 2.11. Council operates a number of poplar and willow pole nurseries to produce planting material for erosion control programmes. The aim is to produce and source a total of 30,000 poles per season.
- 2.12. The 2020 winter pole season was completed with provisional numbers showing 31,994 poles distributed to landowners.
- 2.13. Dry conditions in the nurseries are affecting pole growth and this, along with an anticipated drop in pole supply, will reduce the number of poles able to be harvested in winter 2021.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-182 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 has a key role in part-funding and overseeing the SLUI section of this activity. The year-end level of delivery for this

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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. CLIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT**

- 6.1. This item reports on Horizons' activity in relation to our Annual Plan targets and is not considered to have a climate change impact. The land management activity includes a range of planting programmes, the benefits of which have been reported to council in various items.

## **7. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT**

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

## **8. SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Grant Cooper

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER LAND**

Jon Roygard

**GROUP MANAGER NATURAL RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS**

## **ANNEXES**

- A Land Management progress report