

NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes from the Whāngārei Harbour Catchment Group Meeting,

Sub-Committee of the Environmental Management Committee

held at NRC, 36 Water Street, Whāngārei

on Tuesday 2 December 2014, commencing at 6.30 pm

Present

Andrew Warren	Forestry representative
Glen Mortimer	Community representative
Jack Price	Commercial fishing representative
Jeremy Busck	Environmental interests representative
Jon Clotworthy	Beef and sheep farming representative
Mira Norris	Hapu/Iwi representative
Murray Byles	Dairy farming representative
Paul Dimery	NRC Councillor

In attendance

Darryl Jones	NRC
David Hebart-Coleman	WDC
Helen Moody	Dairy NZ
Joanna Wilson (Minutes)	WDC
Lorna Douglas (Item 7)	NRC

1. Apologies

Adrian Tonks, Brian MacLachlan, Dane Karepu, Freya Lynch, Juliane Chetham, Kim Jones, Margaret Kay, Murray Owen, Neville Erceg, Nicki Wakefield and Paul Dunn.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes from the meeting of 28 October 2014 were accepted. No amendments were made by the group but the following points were made:

- The recreational swimming water quality monitoring results for the 2013/14 season for the five sites in the Whāngārei Harbour catchment were tabled. Darryl talked the group through the graphs. Coastal sites comply for swimming most of the time; freshwater sites comply far less frequently. Approximately 16 samples per season are collected and median value taken per season. On some occasions, the median sample results are above action threshold. Total number of samples is # samples since testing started.

- There is a history of illegal dumping in the Otaika Valley Road area. This is being followed up by NRC staff.

3. Feedback from Member Networks

Nothing Discussed

4. Actions Undertaken

- Sea Cleaners Trust – a grant of \$25k approved by NRC to support community clean up events.
- Sedimentation and e-coli modelling underway – MPI and NIWA and Landcare Research assisting. Mal Green from NIWA will be working on this.
- Dairy Environmental Leaders Forum next week – Freya is attending. **Action:** Request feedback from Freya at next workshop.

5. Discussion – What have we learned this year?

The group split into pairs and discussed what they had learned during 2014 based around a map of the harbour and associated freshwater catchments.

- Freshwater Quality
 - Otaika and Raumanga have sedimentation issues. NIWA is re-testing and confirming the results. Otaika also has elevated levels of nutrients.
 - Water quality at Whāngārei Falls is poor. Many people use this as a swimming venue. There is some question about where the e-coli comes from. Source tracking suggests cattle (drystock) and avian sources.
 - There is another popular swimming hole above AH Reed Memorial Park. There was a question about whether testing is done on this site. **Action:** Darryl to follow up on this.
 - The group learned about nutrients, sediment, macro-invertebrate communities, dissolved oxygen, periphyton, fish in the catchments. MCI score is only “fair” where it has been scored (Hātea and Waiarohia).
- Coastal water quality
 - The main problem is in the Upper harbour. Urban runoff and non-consented stormwater discharges which often exceed acceptable levels. There was a question about leachate from dumping grounds. Pohe Island is monitored. **Action:** David to provide the information on what is being monitored.
 - There is a large amount of weed/algae in the harbour.
 - Introduced marine pests in the harbour – need to discuss this in future. **Action:** Put on a future agenda.
 - Nutrient discharge is of concern. 35% nutrients from WWTP, rest of it is from runoff etc. Fall in bacteria due to WWTP upgrades but wider sewage network needs some work to reduce contamination – incidents in several places.
- Water quantity

- Otaika, Hatea and Waiarohia are highly allocated catchments due to WDC water takes in all three plus Portland in Otaika.
- Smaller southern catchments are highly allocated in terms of stream takes
- There was a discussion around Marsden Point regarding discharges from the refinery/jetty, stormwater management, sewage issues, growth at the point. There was a question around pest control for boats coming from Auckland. Biosecurity has programmes in place.

6. Presentation

Lorna Douglas gave a presentation on what the Land Management Team at the NRC do. Focus on sustainable farming, water quality, biodiversity and soil conservation.

- Environment fund (\$600,000 pa) and free advisory services.
 - There was a question if this was just productive land. Lorna explained that lifestylers and some environmental groups are also funded.
 - There was a discussion around lifestylers as a target group. Lorna explained that she had tried a letterbox drop in several areas but received no response. Perhaps a communication strategy needs to be developed, including articles in lifestyle magazines. etc.
- There was a question around why permitted activity rules are different for forestry and farming, with the suggestion that the bar is higher in forestry. This was discussed and there is potential for the new water quality framework to reduce this gap.
- There was discussion around the use of poplars on erosion prone land. Falling/Cutting down mature trees at a later date is equally bad for the environment long-term. Management of poplars is an issue. Native alternatives are being researched by Landcare. Ribbonwoods are an option.

7. Discussion – Uses and Values

As agreed at the previous workshop, a document listing the uses and values for the Whāngārei harbour catchment had been sent out for comment. No comments were received. Darryl distributed a revised version in which duplications were removed, “Ports” added and a couple of uses and values moved to the “other” category. It was suggested that aquaculture needs to be added. **Action:** Darryl will include this under fishing and shellfish gathering. **Decision:** It was agreed to accept the document with the addition of aquaculture.

8. Discussion – WDC Wastewater Capital Strategy Fund

David shared prioritised actions for stormwater projects - rubbish attenuation projects, sediment concentrations, community planting projects, urban stormwater treatment ponds. **Decision:** The group supports these. There was a question around training lay people to service water quality stations. NIWA is currently looking into this as an option and are doing trials.

9. General Business

Appreciation was recorded to Andrew for running the field trip.

Meeting schedule for 2015 was distributed. Eight workshops/meetings on Tuesday evenings have been scheduled, each around six weeks apart. Additional field trips will be added as necessary. The scheduled dates for the workshops/meetings in 2015 are as follows.

10 February
24 March
5 May
16 June
28 July
8 September
20 October
1 December

Members were provided with a copy of the current proposed water quality objectives for the Whāngārei Harbour from the strategy document. This will be a good basis for moving on and developing objectives in the new year.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Next Meeting: 10 February 2015.