



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DROUGHT COMMITTEE

- Date:** Tuesday 10 March 2020
- Time:** 10.00am
- Venue:** Council Chamber
Hawke's Bay Regional Council
159 Dalton Street
NAPIER
- Present:** W Foley, HBRC (Chair)
M Barham, East Coast Rural Support Trust
J Galloway, Federated Farmers
R Graham, HBRC
T Kerr, HDC Councillor (via telephone)
L MacGillivray, Co-Chair HB Rural Advisory Group
W Nilsson, Co-Chair HB Rural Advisory Group
J van Beek, Hort NZ
A Walker, Mayor CHBDC
- In Attendance:** J Palmer – HBRC Chief Executive
L Lambert – HBRC
I Macdonald – Group Manager HB CDEM
I Maxwell – Group Manager Integrated Catchment Management
L Hooper – Governance Lead
D Evans - Manager Catchments Delivery
Dr J Smith – Manager Science
Dr K Kozyniak – Principal Scientist Air
N Zaman – Manager Compliance
D Broadley – Community Engagement & Communications Manager

1. Welcome/Apologies

HBRC Chairman, Rex Graham welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Resolution

DRO1/20 That apologies for absence be accepted from Mark Harris, Beef & Lamb NZ; Alison Prins, HB CDEM; Gillian Mangin and Annette Carey, Ministry for Primary Industries; Mayor Kirsten Wise, Napier City Council; Dianne Vesty, HB Fruitgrowers' Association; Tiki Marra, HB Rural Advisory Group; Cr Tim Aitken, CHBDC Councillor; Mayor Sandra Hazelhurst, Hastings District Council; and Richard Hilson, Vet Services HB.

**Foley/Walker
CARRIED**

2. Introduction by Cr Will Foley

Situation getting dire in CHB in particular, with cumulative effects of drought and Covid-19, and other parts of the region experiencing dry conditions with the addition of the bovine and deer Tb outbreak.

3. Situation update from the Hawke's Bay Rural Advisory Group (HB RAG)

Minutes of HB RAG teleconference held last Tuesday to discuss the situation across the region were included in the Agenda.

- Some areas quite dry - experiencing a dryer than normal Hawke's Bay summer – operating as if in a drought; short of feed and short of water
- South of Hastings very, very dry – have already started using winter supplementary feed
- Difficulty buying in supplementary feed and finding places to move stock as other North Island regions also experiencing drought
- Tb movement control areas have added to issues with 570 farms in lockdown – and now Covid 19

4. Situation Update from the Hawke's Bay Regional Council Science Team

Dr Kathleen Kozyniak and Dr Jeff Smith provided a climate update.

- Areas South of Ruahine Ranges received only 30-40% of average rainfall over last four months, some received the lowest amounts recorded in the last 50-60 years
- High pressure systems preventing rain from reaching HB, and have been bringing high temperatures
- Ruahine Range, Heretaunga Plains, Ruataniwha Plains and southern coastal area received only 10% of monthly averages in February, with only 2-18 mm recorded at rainfall sites
- Short term forecasts are not predicting much change, with temperatures most likely to remain above average
- Soil moisture below average and in the lowest 10th percentile in most of the region
- Flows measured in the Ngaruroro River at Fernhill and in the Tukituki River at Red Bridge remain within the lowest 5th percentile of historical records
- Region has been lucky enough to get at least some rain at critical times.

5. Catchment Management Update - Dean Evans, Hawke's Bay Regional Council

The role of the Council's catchment management team is to educate land owners about preventative actions at all times so they are more resilient to adverse events.

- Catchment management staff, when out visiting farms in the community, may pick up on people under particular stress and/or experiencing hardship
- It would be of benefit to have all sectors of the rural community linked up to build knowledge and resilience to better prepare for the next drought - and the Rural Advisory Group would be the ideal forum for this – a good place to 'house' links to relevant

information is the HBRC website “farmers hub”

- Horticulture sector on the Heretaunga Plains has been managing well overall through efficient irrigation systems and active management. Young trees are struggling.
- Some have started rationing water for some process crops as bans came on, and yields are generally lower.
- Surprised by the number of mature (20-30 years old) trees in CHB that are dying or dead

6. Situation Update from Hawke's Bay Regional Council Regulation Team

Liz Lambert – minimum flows and bans update as of this morning

- 500 consents subject to minimum flow, and 296 consents currently on ban
- 20 of 35 sites on ban
- Overall river levels are lower than 2013
- Tukituki River (2300 l/sec) has been on ban for 47 consecutive days
- Waipawa River (2500 l/sec) has been on ban for 54 consecutive days
- Tukipo River running at 285 l/sec (minimum flow is 1400 l/sec) has been on ban for 53 consecutive days; Waipawa River running at 1658 l/sec
- Emergency takes for tree survival
- Normal access to water is not there, i.e. springs and streams have run dry
- For 6-8 weeks now, stock water and drinking water supplies have been failing
- Community messaging to raise awareness and understanding, specifically to address the disconnect between urban and rural communities
- Narrative around irrigators wasting water when urban communities on water restrictions and value of getting information from Irrigation NZ to support the 99% who irrigate efficiently
- Need to work out who has what issues and what assistance can be provided – available only once a drought has been declared
- Priority is for water for human consumption and stock water, and to look at whether irrigation takes can be ‘switched’ to provide stockwater
- Compliance with water take conditions has been very good, as continuous monitoring has shown

9. Situation Update: East Coast Rural Support Trust (ECRST)

Mike Barham and Jim Galloway

Messages going out are to take care of yourself, have a project to focus on; and to ignore corona virus and other external influences that cannot control.

- Know this is a 50 year event
- ECRST has a team of six
- Providing welfare support for Ospri around the Tb outbreak affecting
- Financial impacts will compound over the next year with increased costs and decreased production
- Minister announced \$6,000 for farmers experiencing issues with banks – for assistance with mediation

10. Roles and Responsibilities of Members of the Drought Committee

MPI is lead agency and concern raised that no-one from that agency is in attendance

Gillian Mangin does a fantastic job, MPI currently advertising for a person in HB on 3 month contract

Regional Council looking for feedback on the “Assessment of HB Drought” template prepared for submission to MPI

Agree to seek declaration of a regional Medium Scale adverse event – based on Tb and drought

11. Are the Right People in the Room?

HB Rural Advisory Group forms the basis of the Drought Committee, and several members were not able to attend today.

13. Agreed Action Points

- Request for Declaration to Minister – to go from the Drought Committee (as a collective of representatives across the rural sector). James Palmer and Joanne Lawrence to action.
- HBRC Farmers Hub ideas and communications - links that come to mind (to Vets, farmlands, PGG Wrightsons, Agri HQ, etc) for the HBRC farmers hub, email to Drew@hbrc.govt.nz. All to action.
- Investigation into using irrigation water for stock. Liz Lambert and Nick Zaman to action.
- Bring together water supply companies to gather information about extent of needs ahead of next Committee meeting. Dean Evans and Iain Maxwell to action.

Resolution

DRO2/20 That the Drought Committee seeks the declaration of a Regional Medium Scale adverse event from the Minister for Primary Industries.

**Foley/Nilsson
CARRIED**

14. Next Meeting Date

To be scheduled next week, 17 March with venue and time to be confirmed and invitations issued.

Closure:

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.08pm on Tuesday 10 March 2020.

Signed as a true and correct record.

DATE:

CHAIRMAN: