



STAFF REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Subcommittee

FROM: Daryl Page, Compliance Officer

REFERENCE: C653

SUBJECT: **WATER METERING REPORT - REPORT EP05/11/10** - Report prepared for 16 November 2005 Meeting

1. INTRODUCTION

Report EP05/08/13 was presented at the 24 August 2005 meeting. Resolution EP05/08/27 reads (in part):

Adopts the water metering compliance monitoring flowchart (Appendix 2); and

That staff report back to the Environment and Planning Subcommittee in November 2005 on how the water metering project administration can be improved for the future.

The purpose of this report is to recap the primary role of the water metering project, summarise improvements to database records, discuss the 2005/2006 pre season publicity, outline the water meter audit process, and preview future administration of the project during this coming season.

This report has also coincided with the first meeting of the Dry Weather Taskforce on 1 November 2005 and the subsequent introduction of step 1 rationing for the following zones in the Waimea Plains; Upper Catchments, Reservoir, Waimea West, Golden Hill, Delta, and Upper Confined. This report therefore includes a brief summary of this situation.

2. PURPOSE

The primary role of the water metering project is to receive accurate and timely water usage data from consent holders subject to water metering. This is an essential tool in managing the District's valuable and limited water resource. The information is used for:

- Management of the districts water resources and improving/enhancing future understanding of the system;
- Monitor the effectiveness and suitability of the policy provisions within the TRMP and the exercise of resource consents;
- Bona fide review/renewal of existing consents; and
- Compliance with drought restrictions

3. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DATABASE

One significant issue in previous years has been the ability to accurately maintain the water metering database. While the actual water consent detail and the water metering monitoring function remain in separate databases, the flow of information between the two has been enhanced by introducing audit reports that show when the two sets of data are different. The main function of the audit report is to highlight when a record is present in one database but not in the other. However, it now also identifies when a piece of information is different between corresponding records, for example where the water allocation or rationing step detail does not match. The accuracy of this information is very important when corresponding with and receiving water usage data from a consent holder.

Other database improvements have included what is termed as the transition between traditional 'paper records' onto the computer system. These include the capacity to record and view contact details for the person responsible for water meter readings, the ability to exclude records that are 'inactive' during the season, an extensive notes field where 'need to know' information is displayed in a prominent position, and an electronic link to photographs, location map, and letters.

While the improvements will be a great asset in project administration and monitoring efficiency in the future, it must be recorded that the set up process and implementation has required a significant time involvement. The assistance of the Information Services team is acknowledged.

4. 2005/2006 PRE-SEASON

The traditional pre-season letter was dated 14 October 2005 (posted 16 and 17 October) and this was later than previous years. There were two reasons for this. First and foremost, the mail out was intentionally put back so the timing of the letter was more relevant to the start of the season. Secondly, some delay was incurred due to the auditing of existing records to ensure they were as up to date as possible before the mail out. The pre paid meter reading return cards were printed off site for the first time this year and avoided a very time consuming task for staff.

A progressive breakdown of the information contained in the pre season letter also received media coverage by inclusion in the Newline Update section within The Leader, The Guardian, and Council's Newline The Mag.

In line with resolution EP05/08/27, both the pre season letter and the media publicity contained advice to consent holders that should Council staff be required to follow up missing returns by way of a site visit, then the associated costs will be recovered.

A copy of the pre season letter is attached as Appendix A.

5. WATER METER AUDIT

It was signalled in report EP05/08/13 that consideration to phasing out the traditional 'pre season' visit would be given. Following staff discussion, a replacement water meter audit has been established. The intention is to visit each and every active water meter during the water metering season. Notwithstanding the spreading out of this time consuming task, certain zones were identified as priority areas for which the meter audit was to be carried out pre season or as close to that as possible. The priority zones for the latter part of October and during November are Moutere Western, Waimea Delta, Waimea Upper Confined, and Waimea Lower Confined.

The purpose of the water meter audit is to check the integrity of the meter, read the meter, and while we are in the transition period between existing paper records and the new electronic facility (Ipaq), the taking of photographs etc.

The introduction and use of Ipaq's has enabled staff to be in the field and have access to the water metering database records previously restricted to the office environment. While still in a transition phase, the indication is that the use of the Ipaq will mean efficiency gains in future seasons.

6. 2005/2006 ADMINISTRATION

Most non complying issues in previous years have involved missing returns and the investigation of excessive takes. To a lesser degree, the clearing up of confusion between consents, take points, and meters has been a factor.

As mentioned earlier in this report, some records have been noted as 'inactive' (e.g. future meter implementation or no irrigation during the season). While not a significant total, the ability to do this will reduce the number of records requiring monitoring. It is thought that these inactive records may have contributed to the total of missing returns in previous years.

The intention is to follow up missing returns on a timely basis this year. With updated records, contact with the person responsible for reading the meter should be a lot easier. In terms of the adopted compliance monitoring flowchart, when compliance work is required, first contact will be by telephone and/or letter.

Council has again employed a temporary staff member whose primary role is to enter the data received from water meter returns and follow up missing returns but has also been involved in auditing the existing database and the pre season documentation. One main focus already has been in making telephone contact with consent holders to ensure our information is up to date, in particular, a push towards the use of email for returns/contact.

At the time of writing, there are 585 water meter requiring monitoring in the 2005/2006 season. This is an increase of 31 from the 2004/2005 season.

7. 2005/2006 WATER RATIONING

The first meeting of the Dry Weather Taskforce was held on 1 November 2005. The decision was made to implement a Section 329 (RMA) Water Storage Direction for certain zones in the Waimea Plains from 7 November 2005. A copy of the Water Storage Direction and the Water Report dated 3 November placed in the Newsline Update section of the Nelson Mail on Saturday 5 November 2005 is attached as Appendix B.

Further administrative tasks from the Dry Weather Taskforce meeting 1 November were:

- Issue the required water rationing letter to consent holders (total of 252) in the affected zones;
- Promote message to consent holders that if they haven't started irrigating yet and don't need to, don't start;
- Reiterate the need for accurate and timely water meter readings and Council's procedure when dealing with missing returns;
- There is a high priority for the set up of an automated email reminder and return template and/or the ability to record meter readings directly on Council's website;
- Prepare for moving to weekly returns and/or step 2 rationing;

A copy of the water rationing letter dated 3 November 2005 is attached as Appendix C.

A further Dry Weather Taskforce meeting was scheduled for 8 November 2005.

8. RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report.

Daryl Page
Compliance Officer

14 October 2005

«name»
«addr1»
«addr2»
«addr3»
«addr4»

ATTENTION WATER USER – PLEASE READ

WATER METERING

According to Council records you are the holder of a consent to take groundwater and/or surface water and a condition of your consent is water metering.

This letter is to advise you that the first weekly meter reading for this 2005/06 summer season is required on **Monday 31 October 2005** and continues to 1 May 2006.

Because of the number of meters involved, Council will make a change this year from the traditional pre season meter audit. An audit of your meter will now be completed sometime during the season. When visiting your property, staff will leave a card stating:

- The consent and well numbers to which the water meter relates
- The date of the audit; and
- The meter reading at the time of the visit.

WATER METER RETURN CARDS

Return cards for the 2005/06 season are enclosed. Please note while your meter must be read weekly from 31 October 2005 to 1 May 2006, the return card is to be sent to Council on a fortnightly basis. The return cards are pre-paid and no envelope is required. Alternatively, and many users did this last season, returns can be sent by email to meterreturns@tdc.govt.nz or by facsimile to 03 5439524. Council also hopes to provide the ability for consent holders to enter the reading directly on the Council website in the future. To receive details once this is available send an email to meterreturns@tdc.govt.nz with the heading Website Access.

It is important that you:

- Read your meter each Monday
- Advise Council of the meter readings each fortnight (by the Wednesday)
- Advise Council of any nil reading.
- Advise Council if you are not irrigating or do not intend to irrigate this season

If you have more than one metered well it is important that the reading that you send to Council is on the correct card and/or corresponds to the correct meter.

A 100% return rate is required to enable Council to effectively manage the District's valuable and limited water resource. Last year return rates varied between 77% and 91% depending on the particular zone Your 2004/05 data is enclosed so you can not only see a summary of your weekly usage last year, but to highlight instances where there was no return made and/or an overtake situation. Where no return was received, there is no entry in the 'Reading' column. Council asks all water users to play their part by sending in every return on a timely basis.

A particular focus will be put on 'missing returns' this year. A continued absence of returns will result in Council staff having to read your meter themselves. This cost will be recovered from you.

GENERAL

I look forward to working with you during the season. You will find my contact details at the top of this letter or you can simply send a message to meterreturns@tdc.govt.nz

Should you have any technical and/or consent enquiries, you can contact Joseph Thomas or Neil Tyson and their contact details are provided below.

Yours faithfully



Daryl Page
Compliance Officer

Joseph Thomas
Resource Scientist – Water
Email: joseph.thomas@tdc.govt.nz
Direct Dial: (03) 543-8494

Neil Tyson
Consent Planner
Email: neil.tyson@tdc.govt.nz
Direct Dial: (03) 543-8497

3 November 2005

«name»

Dear Water User

IMPORTANT NOTICE

RE: WATER RATIONING – «consent» «zone» Zone

This letter is being sent to all holders of water permits to take water from the «zone» Zone being part of the larger Waimea unconfined aquifer. The Tasman District Council (TDC) in consultation with Water User Committee Representatives on the Dry Weather Taskforce considers that there is a serious temporary shortage of water in this zone and rationing of water usage is necessary to help prevent further reductions in river flow and reduce the risk of seawater intrusion into the aquifer. Graphic representation of the current situation is appended at the end of this letter for your information.

Therefore and in terms of your consent condition, **Step 1 rationing is to be implemented by Council. Rationing in all affected zones will be effective from 9.00 am, Monday, 7 November 2005.** This rationing is implemented pursuant to section 329 of the Resource Management Act 1991.

Notice of any further rationing steps will be available on the TDC website (www.tdc.govt.nz), by weekly reports in Tasman District Council's *Newsline Update* in the *Nelson Mail* (Saturday edition), *The Leader*, *The Guardian*, Council's *Newsline the Mag* (fortnightly). Water users will be kept informed of water level trends during rationing through these mediums.

As river flows are falling rapidly and without significant rain, it is likely that Step 2 rationing may be necessary from 14 November 2005. Please minimise your water use to help prevent this. One message from the Dry Weather Taskforce Group to water users was that if you haven't started irrigating yet and you don't need to, don't start. Council confirms that nil usage will not affect the 'bona fide' use of your water right.

From Monday, 7 November 2005 your weekly extraction must therefore be less than the following Step 1 allocation. Your allocations at Steps 2 and 3 are also listed:

Permit No. «consent» **Step 1 = «step1» cubic metres per week**
 Step 2 = «step2» cubic metres per week
 Step 3 = «step3» cubic metres per week

Council cannot stress enough the importance of receiving accurate and timely water meter readings – this importance is heightened during times of a water shortage. Returns made by email appear to be both the most efficient and increasingly preferred way of making returns. If we have not got your email address details, please provide them by emailing meterreturns@tdc.govt.nz. Council is investigating the introduction of an email reminder and return template being sent to you each Monday.

At this stage, the fortnightly return of weekly meter readings is still in place. However, and concurrent with the introduction of step 2 rationing, Council may require meter readings to be sent in weekly. Council recognises the difficulty this will cause with the prepaid return cards already sent and we are assessing what options are available to solve this problem.

Council asks and looks forward to your co-operation during this time of rationing and over the whole of the water metering season. All water users in the zones affected are equally responsible for protecting the valuable and limited water resource.

Please note that Council has adopted the following procedure when dealing with missing returns. After first making telephone contact and/or writing and the problem persists or represents itself during the season, Council staff will visit and read the water meter and a monitoring cost of \$150.00 will be applied.

Any administrative or compliance enquiries you have about rationing should be directed to Daryl Page. Any technical enquiries about rationing and/or water levels should be directed to Joseph Thomas. Contact details are provided below.

Yours faithfully



D C Bush-King
Environment and Planning Manager

cc: Mike Schruer, Nelson City Council, P O Box 645, Nelson

Joseph Thomas
Resource Scientist – Water
Email: joseph.thomas@tdc.govt.nz
Direct Dial: (03) 543-8494

Daryl Page
Compliance Officer
Email: daryl.page@tdc.govt.nz
Direct Dial: 5438425

Aquifer Status Graph: Waimea Groundwater @ CW2 (Delta Zone)

Ground level is 5.8 metres above sea level.

Records began 1975.

