

Title: Overlay 3A and Sustainable Hill Country Programme Update
Section: Environmental Services & Protection
Prepared by: Lois Easton (Environmental & Science Manager)
Meeting Date: 10 October 2018

Legal Financial Significance = low

Report to ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING & REGULATIONS Committee for information

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is update the Committee on the implementation of the Overlay 3A and Sustainable Hill Country Programme.

Severe erosion is a very significant resource management issue in the Gisborne District, which is why the Overlay 3A provisions were developed, and why the government has provided \$30M in funding over ten years for their implementation.

Since the last meeting of the Committee there has been substantial progress in getting target landowners to apply for Erosion Control Funding Programme (ECFP) funding for grants to establish effective tree cover. There were 62 landowners with Overlay 3A land who applied for funding, predominantly for reversion grants. There remain 95 properties who have not got a draft Overlay 3A works plan, however 34 of these did apply for East Coast Forestry Project (ECFP) funding and these applications are intended to translate into works plans.

The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **low** significance in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Environmental Planning & Regulations Committee:

- 1. Notes the contents of this report.**

Authorised by:



Nicholas Zaman
Director Environmental Services & Protection

Keywords: Sustainable Hill Country Programme

BACKGROUND

1. The Sustainable Hill Country Project is the umbrella project for the implementation of the Overlay 3A provisions in the Tairāwhiti Plan.
2. These provisions require that land identified as Overlay 3A (the most severely eroding in the region) must have effective tree cover established by 2021. The provisions provide that a Sustainable Hill Country Works Plan is developed and implemented by the landowner, and approved by Council, or a resource consent is gained for the activities being undertaken on the land.

DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS

Progress with Overlay 3A Works Plans and the Implementation of Effective Tree Cover

3. There remain 95 properties without a draft works plan. These are predominantly made up of the following types of properties:
 - Land administered on behalf of Maori Landowners by Te Tumu Paeroa – the Maori Trustee
 - Multiply owned Maori land administered by a Trust
 - Multiply owned land without governance structures
 - A small number of general title properties.
4. Since the last report to Committee in May (18-174) significant progress has been made with a number of these landowners to progress these works plans. As a result 62 landowners with Overlay 3A land applied for ECFP funding in the latest grant round – the largest number for many years. Of these most of the applications made were for reversion grants, with a small number of sites for pole planting and forestry.
5. The assessment panel for the ECFP met on 20-21 September to consider the grant applications, and it is expected that decisions on the grants will be made at the end of October and contracts progressed in November.
6. Work is now underway with those landowners to codify and confirm their land use change decisions in a works plan.
7. There remain 60 landowners who are not engaged with Council to progress a works plan at this stage, but this is a considerable improvement since May this year.

Land Not eligible for ECFP Grants

8. Land areas less than 5 hectares are not eligible for ECFP grants, however Council staff are scoping a project for ECFP Community Project funding to target this land. There is 621 hectares of Overlay 3A land which falls into the category of being ineligible for ECFP funding.

Effect of the Winter Storms and Rain on Erosion

9. Winter 2018 has been a difficult year for the region in relation to erosion. The June storms created very wet conditions and while initially many sites held up and substantial land movement did not occur, the conditions - particularly on the East Coast - continued to be very favourable for erosion. As a result, at the end of winter and with further spring rain, large scale mass movement is evident across a range of land uses including land which has been deemed to be effectively treated through the ECFP.
10. The most significant concerns lie around gullies. Many gullies were treated with pine planting around the perimeter in the 1990s and 2000s. While this has prevented the gullies enlarging, the actual gully itself has not been treated.

The wet winter has activated these areas and we are now seeing significant mass movement from them. However, large-scale erosion is evident from this winter in all land cover types – indigenous vegetation, pole planted areas, forestry and pastoral farms.

- This highlights the fact that the Overlay 3A mechanism, while targeted at the most severely eroding land, does not capture all land needed to be treated for erosion. As has been signalled at previous meetings, the next steps in erosion management are to identify further areas where land use change is required. This will be a key matter for discussion as part of the development of the Spatial Plan for the region, and review of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan.

Implications of the 1 Billion Trees Programme

- While the final announcements on the structure of the One Billion Trees programme are yet to be made, there are some significant positives for Gisborne and the Overlay 3A Implementation. The programme makes it likely that should grant applications exceed the \$30 million cap on the ECFP, that funding should still be available. As a surge region, and as the area with the most significant erosion in the country, Gisborne is clearly identified as a location where tree planting grants will continue to be provided.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria	This Report	The Process Overall
The effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district	Low	Low
The effects on individuals or specific communities	Low	High
The level or history of public interest in the matter or issue	Medium	Medium
Inconsistency with Council's current strategy and policy	Low	Low
Impacts on Council's delivery of its Financial Strategy and Long Term Plan.	Low	Low

- The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of low significance in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.
- Erosion is one of the most significant environmental issues facing the region.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Engagement with landowners with Overlay 3A on their property is ongoing and sustained. Follow ups and contacts with all landowners who are not working to progress their erosion treatment will be made over the summer months.

CONSIDERATIONS

Financial/Budget

- Apart from staff resourcing, there is no funding allocated in the Long Term Plan to implement the Sustainable Hill Country programme. The ECFP is currently funding 1.5 FTE staff to work to progress the implementation of the ECFP and this has direct benefits to the programme.

Legal

- Once the 2021 compliance deadline is reached, it is likely there will be several landowners who have not met the provisions of the Tairāwhiti Plan. Some sort of enforcement action will be required, and a proposed enforcement strategy will be brought to Council closer to that date.

POLICY AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

18. Implementing the sustainable hill country programme is a key implementation project arising from the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan.
19. The identification of further areas of severe erosion risk and appropriate rule frameworks for these will be a key part of the review of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan.

RISKS

20. The main risk is that there will be some landowners that do not implement the Overlay 3A provisions within the required timeframe. This could require the Council to take enforcement action to ensure effective stabilisation of this land.