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<i>Decision required</i>	

Report to: Motueka Community Board
Meeting Date: 14 February 2012
Report Author: David Ogilvie
Subject: **Motueka Flooding Issues – RMCB12-02-09**

Purpose

The purpose of the report is to inform Community Board members of flooding issues in Motueka.

Comment

The December 2011 heavy rain which caused major damage in Golden Bay, Nelson, and to a lesser degree in Richmond and the Waimeas, avoided our Motueka district. The highest flow in the Motueka River at Woodman's was less than the annual flood level.

It is however timely to consider situations which exacerbate the flooding/heavy rain event. Over the last 25 to 30 years considerable improvements in the stormwater drainage for Motueka have reduced many surface flooding problems. Older residents will acknowledge the benefits. Notwithstanding, there remain many local areas of concern and the need to continue the past efforts. It is important also for residents to keep their drains clear and to monitor the street drains and gratings for blockages.

It is in the rural areas and Motueka outskirts where the risk of flooding is greatest. In Golden Bay, forestry slash may have contributed to their problems; in the Motueka River Valley there are similar conditions and these should be cleared. Are there requirements in the TRMP that deal with forestry "slash" in logging areas? There are potential problem spots on both sides of the lower reaches of the Motueka River.

Many rural drains and streams pose problems. Keeping these clean and clear from trees (branches and prunings) and from rampant grass and from litter is an ongoing necessary activity. There are places where this is the Council's responsibility; otherwise the landowner is responsible. Some landowners are excellent, having had past experiences of costly flooding caused by blocked drains and/or culverts.

Currently the Council's Environmental Resource Scientist (Trevor James) is encouraging property owners to plant shrubs and trees along stream and drain banks, primarily to improve the health of the stream and its natural habitat, but there are additional benefits in that the vegetation will absorb rainfall and lessen the flooding risk.

This brief report does not cover the management of the main rivers – Motueka, Riwaka, Marahau and their various tributaries – this is a major factor itself, and operated by the Council and contractors.

A flooding disaster can be costly in so many ways, not necessarily in repairing damaged property and infrastructure. The inconvenience, the need to divert funds and projects can be considerably frustrating.

There is much that both the Council and individuals can do to mitigate the risk of flooding: the stormwater rate and the river rate provides some of the funding (and this has been successful in the past) but must be continued.

Both maintenance and capital expenditure on a sustainable basis is required. The initial step could be to write a concise overview for urban Motueka and the three or four “general” rural districts for the necessary stormwater projects in the next few years. This could be a task for the Motueka Community Board for 2012 and would involve residents directly and Council officers for advice.

Prioritising the work and arranging the funding would follow quickly, but the emphasis always would be getting those projects done as quickly as possible.

There is also the matter of personal responsibility, where individuals and families and companies do their best to maintain local drains and streams to a high standard.

The role of the Council would be advisory, but it may be necessary to establish regulations should private landowners be unwilling to provide protection, either for themselves or for the community.

List of “Concerns” – Planning for a 1 in 10 year event

- Forestry slash with obvious potential to block drains, streams and enter the rivers.
- Lack of maintenance for open ditches, swales, drains and streams. Evidence of prunings, fallen branches (and small trees), heavy growth of long grass, litter.

- Extra attention to the Moutere River, Lower Motueka River (and tributaries such as Chapman Creek, Brooklyn Stream), Riwaka River, Little Sydney Stream, Marahau River, Sandy Bay Stream. Keeping the channels clean, the banks maintained and vegetation controlled.
- Provide protection (covenants?) for secondary flow channels from further development.
- In urban Motueka keep drains, grates and culverts clear. Monitor the open drains and increase their capacity. Flood gates and tidal gates to operate properly.
- When difficult problem areas arise, Council to act quickly to resolve the issues.

Recommendation

That the Motueka Flooding Issues Report (RMCB12-02-09) be referred to the Environment and Planning Manager, seeking clarification of regulations for “logging slash” which pose flooding risk to neighbouring properties. The report also be referred to the Stormwater and Rivers Engineers for their information, emphasising the precautionary approach for monitoring of maintenance and operational programmes for drains, streams and rivers.