

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements relating to its Public Information functions for the 2008/2009 year.

The Public Information programme involves advising, informing, educating and generally engaging with the community on Council business, to provide non-regulatory implementation of Council policies. The range of communications activities has continued to grow, particularly in areas such as transport and the Council's riparian programme. The Council's websites continue to demonstrate their value for engaging with the community.

The environmental education programme focuses on the school sector to promote sustainable use of the region's natural resources. The programme is an important part of the Council's operational focus and its success is reflected by the number of requests for the Education Officer to present class visits or field trips.

The main Public Information activities for the 2008/2009 year (2007/2008 in brackets) were:

- The Council adopted a *Communications Strategy* and *Communications Plan*.
- Five issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
- The Council's partnership with Puke Ariki included the Amazing Backyard Adventures exhibition, a project to produce a water publication (to be published in 2010) and extension of the "60 Springs" environmental education programme.
- The monthly average of visits to the Council's website was 27,060 (29,963) and 105,427 (70,029) for the Taranaki Regional Explorer site.
- The Taranaki Regional Council presented 18 environmental awards to recognise environmental projects in categories of industry, agriculture and individual/school/community group.
- The Council's Education Officer worked with 156 (210) classes involving 4,657 (5,585) students this year and a further 535 (669) visitors to the Council's display areas.
- During the year, 75 (35) units of work and 98 (447) additional resources were sent out to teachers covering topics such as the weather, rivers, coast, waste minimisation and recycling, sustainable land management, civil defence emergency management and trees.
- The Council produced four issues of the S.I.T.E newsletter to schools and distributed over 770 copies of each issue.
- Three teacher workshops were facilitated by the Council including *Visit the rock pools, A pond as an example of a wetland and Biodiversity*.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements on its Public Information functions for the 2008/2009 year.

1.2 Background

The Council's Public Information programme involves a range of communications activities to advise, inform, educate and generally engage with the community on Council business.

It provides a non-regulatory method of implementing a range of policies in the Council's resource management, biosecurity and other planning documents. The programme contributes towards sustainable resource management by raising public awareness and commitment to environmental management and developing appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in the resource users of the future.

The external activities of the Public Information programme are directed at three major groups:

The regional community

The promotion of the role, policies and activities of the Council is directed at the wider public audience through newsletters, the media, websites, displays, information sheets and a partnership with Puke Ariki. The aim is to encourage the understanding of and active participation in achieving sustainable outcomes for the region.

Resource users and special interest groups

Programmes on specific activities are aimed at target groups, generally within industry or agriculture, to encourage sustainable environmental practices.

The formal education sector

The Council's environmental education programme is directed at primary school children, as the resource users and decision-makers of the future. Some resources and support are provided to assist early childhood and secondary school teachers with environmental education.

The Public Information Section also provides graphics, information and publication support to all sections of the Council.

The Taranaki Regional Council's 2008/2009 *Annual Plan* outlined the Council's Public Information programme as follows:

1.2.1 Objective

The overall objective for public information activities, as contained in the Council's 2008/2009 *Annual Plan*, is to:

"Promote community awareness and understanding of the Council's functions and activities, and make quality and timely information publicly available."

1.2.2 Programme

In response to the above objective, the following performance measures for 2008/2009 were adopted by the Council in its *2008/2009 Annual Plan*:

- Publish and distribute regular editions of the *Recount* newsletter (4) to over 1,000 stakeholders, maintain the Council's website and implement the Council's environmental awards programme.
- Provide an ongoing resource management programme for school children and the wider community, including presenting at least 150 class visits or field trips, and hosting approximately 1,000 visitors to the Council.
- Maintain an ongoing partnership relationship with the Puke Ariki regional museum and library including the use of display and presentation material within an annual project.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Communications Strategy and Plan

A *Communications Strategy* and a *Communications Plan* were adopted by Council in February 2009. These documents provide guidance for the Council's communications and environmental education activities.

The vision of the *Strategy* is "*An engaged community contributing to a sustainable region*".

Most of the non-regulatory approaches contained in the Council's key policy plans and strategies are delivered through communications and environmental education activities set out in the *Strategy* and *Plan*.

All staff and councillors are involved in communicating with the community and the *Strategy* provides a structure for communications activities, and for the Public Information section to provide planning and coordination of communications activities throughout the Council. The *Strategy* does not represent a major change in approach and recognises that the existing regulatory and advice programmes are unique and involve much face-to-face contact with resource users

The *Strategy* identifies a range of communications and education tools. The *Plan* sets out a programme to implement the tools and methods, and includes communications procedures to maintain the standard and consistency across communications material and activities.

In future the *Public Information Annual Report* will be structured around reporting on the *Communications Plan* as well as the *Annual Plan*.

In addition to the *Communications Strategy* and *Plan*, the Public Information section also works with other sections to develop or review specific communications or public education plans to coordinate targeted programmes to inform, educate and engage with sectors of the community on specific activities.

During the 2008/2009 year the *Civil Defence Emergency Management Public Information Plan for Taranaki for 2005 – 2010* and the *Riparian Management Communications Plan* were reviewed, and a *Biodiversity Communications Plan* was developed.

2.2 Information for the regional community

General information on the role of the Council and its activities is provided to the regional community in a variety of ways, including the regular publication and distribution of *Recount* newsletter, media releases, information sheets and publications, the Taranaki Regional Council's website and the Taranaki Regional Xplorer website.

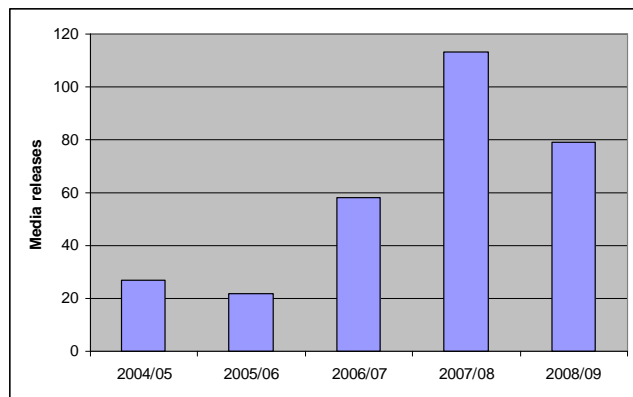
2.2.1 Recount newsletter and the media

The *Recount* newsletter is used to inform and consult with the regional community and is distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media. Five issues of *Recount* were produced during the 2008/2009 year, including an audited summary of the 2007/2008 Annual Report.

A total of 79 (113) media releases were issued during the year. The highest monthly totals were 10 and 11 in October 2008 and November 2008 respectively, many of them relating to the launch of refurbishments at the Council's two heritage properties, Tupare and Hollard Gardens.

In the past two years the number of media releases has increased. This reflects a changed emphasis on distributing Council-related material.

Sound relationships have been developed with national and local gardening media around activities at Tupare and Hollard Gardens. There have been a number of features on the events and the series of workshops at both gardens. In June 2009 Greg Rine, Regional Gardens Manager began a regular column in the gardening section of the Taranaki Daily News.



Media releases issued, 2004/05 to 2008/09.

A total of 243 (277) articles relating to Council business were published in the region's main newspapers during the 2008/2009 year – 155 in the Taranaki Daily News and 88 across four community newspapers (North Taranaki Midweek, Stratford Press, Opunake and Coastal News, and South Taranaki Star). Of these, 221 (90.9%) provided positive coverage, 16 (6.6%) were neutral and six (2.5%) were negative.

2.2.2 General Council information

A summary of the 2009/2019 Long-Term Council Community Plan was distributed with the region's four community newspapers (49,000) in March 2009.

Taranaki: Where We Stand, the Council's third five-yearly State of the Environment Report, was launched on 14 April 2009 by the Minister for the Environment, Nick Smith. As well as the full

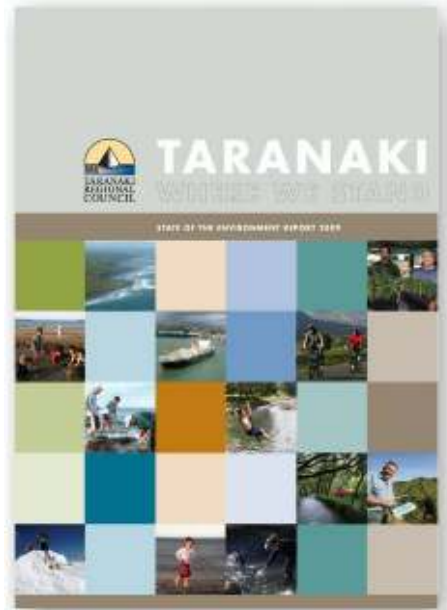


2009/2019 LTCCP summary.

280-page version, a 20-page summary booklet was also published. Both documents were published to the Council website. Seven case studies from the report were featured in a weekly series in the Taranaki Daily News.

In the 2008/2009 year there were 23 (37) requests for information received from teachers and school or tertiary students. Information was provided on a range of environmental topics and Council activities. Most requests were for further information about topics covered by the Council's Environmental Education Programme.

Further information was provided from the series of information sheets on Council activities, while more specific requests involved supplying material such as annual monitoring reports or more detailed information provided by other Council staff. The Council's websites continue to demonstrate their value as a source of information for the public and students.



2009 State of the Environment Report.

2.2.3 Council websites and intranet

The main Council website, www.trc.govt.nz, experienced steady traffic during 2008/2009. The monthly average of 27,060 (29,963) unique visits was down 9.7% on the previous year, when dramatic climatic events including tornadoes and drought led to abnormal spikes in website traffic.

Such website traffic spikes were absent in 2008/2009, with monthly visits mostly within the range of 25,000 to 30,000.

Besides the home page, the most popular destinations for website visitors were pages offering live weather data, pages with information on bus services and regional gardens, and the portal page for Taranaki Regional Xplorer.



Visits to the Council website in 2008/2009.

Monthly document downloads were also monitored and although there was wide variance in the monthly top 10, they regularly featured Land Management information brochures and the Environmental Education study units for teachers.

The website is continually monitored and altered with the aim of increasing its usefulness to the public as well as to the Council. Significant developments during the year included:

- The development of "separate look and feel" web pages for Tupare and Hollard Gardens, their launch coinciding with the launch of refurbishments at both properties. Although these pages remain within the architecture of the main Council website, they are accessed with the respective URLs www.tupare.info and www.hollardgardens.info. As noted above, these pages appear regularly in the monthly "top 10" of most popular pages on the Council website.

- The incorporation of Google maps and Google calendars into the Tupare and Hollard Gardens web pages. These offer a degree of interactivity and also allow the events calendar to be managed remotely by Regional Gardens staff.
- The development of new web pages devoted to Biodiversity, the Council's Local Governance Statement, and dams (safety requirements and building consents).
- The development of a new website section dedicated to the Council's 2009 State of the Environment Report, *Taranaki Where We Stand*.
- The development of a Stormwater Management Plan Template, available on the website as a Word document that businesses can download and customise.



The Tupare web page www.tupare.info.

During the year, the Association of Local Government Information Management (ALGIM) released the results of its annual audit of all 85 Council websites in New Zealand. The audit covers technical, accessibility and usability elements, as well as adherence to Government Web Guidelines. The Taranaki Regional Council website was ranked 36th (42nd) of the 85 sites and 8th (8th) of the 12 Regional Council websites in the 2009 audit.

Most if not all of the technical issues raised in the audit are expected to be addressed when new Content Management System (CMS) software is implemented for the Council website during the 2009/2010 year. The CMS is to be implemented by a New Zealand company, SilverStripe.

The Council's intranet was continually monitored and altered during the 2008/2009 year with the aim of increasing its usefulness to staff.

The intranet will also be migrated to the new SilverStripe CMS upon implementation of the latter.

The Council also maintains Taranaki Regional Xplorer in partnership with Stratford and South Taranaki district councils. It is a free public enquiry website with a broad range of geographic and local government information about the Taranaki region. Total visits to the site increased by more than 50% for the 2008/2009 year, averaging 105,427 (70,029) per month, and peaking at 124,032 (111,572) in March 2009. The continued increase in usage of the site proves the usefulness of the resource to create map images.

2.3 Puke Ariki partnership

The Council's "Annual Contribution" to Puke Ariki for the 2008/2009 funded two major projects, the Amazing Backyard Adventures exhibition and a publication on water quality in Taranaki.

The Amazing Backyard Adventures exhibition was an interactive exhibition which focused on the science people can find in their own backyards. The exhibition ran from November 2008 to February 2009 and had nearly 17,000 visitors. Some of the displays were modified for a New Zealand audience and a special interactive on riparian planting was developed

in consultation with Council staff.

The riparian interactive was the fourth highest rated “favourite interactive” and has now been permanently installed in the children’s area – “Discover It!”

The second project is to research and produce a publication recording the recent history and progress in addressing water pollution in Taranaki’s coastal and fresh waters. Research and writing will be completed by the end of 2009 and publication is planned for early 2010.

During the 2008/2009 year there was further development of Puke Ariki’s “60 Springs” environmental education programme. Initial funding for “60 Springs” was provided by the Council’s 2007/2008 Annual Contribution.

The “60 Springs” pilot programme was developed with Devon Intermediate in 2008 and in 2009 it has been extended to other schools in the region. Through the programme, Puke Ariki provides an educator, resources, equipment and access to other professionals to assist in presenting and publishing projects. The programme is aimed mainly at secondary schools.



Councillors visiting a “60 Springs” session at Waikirikiri Lagoon.

“60 Springs” encourages information sharing and community participation, and in some cases the programme will support Council biodiversity projects such as management of the key native ecosystem at Waikirikiri Lagoon.

2.4 Environmental awards programme

The public recognition of activities and projects that benefit the environment helps to increase awareness of environmental issues. The environmental awards programme also promotes positive attitudes and actions towards the environment, within the wider community.

In May 2009 Council presented 18 (17) environmental awards in the categories of business/local authority (6), agricultural (4) and individual/school/community group (8). The award winners are listed in Appendix I.

2.5 Targeted communications programmes

The Council carries out a number of public information activities to support or promote Council programmes aimed at specific activities or sections of the community.

2.5.1 Promotion of riparian management

The *Riparian Communications Plan* aims to encourage farmers to increase implementation of riparian plans. Most communications activities are aimed at the group of plan holders that are “willing to do the right thing” and can be more readily motivated to act to increase the level of fencing and planting.

As key partners in the *Riparian Communications Plan*, the Fonterra Co-operative Group Ltd, Fonterra Shareholders Council members and Federated Farmers are actively involved in delivering many of the communications activities.

The main method for promoting riparian fencing and planting is through Council and Fonterra staff meeting directly with farmers to discuss the riparian programme. The *Plan* also outlines a number of other communications activities for promoting riparian planting.

Throughout the year media releases were produced on key messages on the riparian programme, such as the environmental benefits of riparian management; the need to integrate riparian management into budgeting and farm management planning; the role of riparian management in future-proofing dairying; the provision of advice and support from the Council; the provision of plants at cost; and the coordination of contractors to carry out riparian work.

During the year the partners to the *Regional Action Plan for Taranaki* have supported the riparian programme with comments to the media and the publication of opinion pieces in regional newspapers and dairy industry communications.

Riparian management topics were well featured in the regional media, in particular the Thursday Farmer section of the Taranaki Daily News, and in rural and community papers.

The riparian planting prize draw promotion was again used to increase plant orders and to encourage earlier ordering by plan holders. Fonterra sponsored two major prizes for Fonterra suppliers, a package of 700 riparian plants, pre-planting preparation, planting and maintenance valued at \$3,500, and goods to the value of \$2,500 from a RD1 store. They also provided 80 \$50 RD1 vouchers to reward early orders.

This year, for the first time, non-Fonterra suppliers were eligible for a second prize package, sponsored by Revital Fertilisers. The prize was \$1,000 worth of riparian plants and \$2,000 worth of Revital Fertiliser.

Riparian management and the prize draw were promoted by advertising and a direct mail-out to plan holders, and the prize-winners were publicised through advertising and a media release.

The riparian planting prize draw promotion successfully increased the number of early orders of riparian plants for 2008/2009.



The Council Chairman with prize winners and sponsors at the presentation of the riparian planting prizes.

2.5.2 Civil Defence public education

The Public Information section supports the Emergency Management staff in implementing the *Civil Defence Emergency Management Public Information Plan for Taranaki for 2005 - 2010*.

Communications activities in 2008/2009 included an advertising feature, a survival kit competition, posters at supermarkets and an emergency survival kit display at the New

Plymouth Mitre 10 Mega Store during Disaster Awareness Week in October 2008. Throughout the year Emergency Management officers responded to requests for presentations to community groups and supported schools studying the "What's the Plan Stan" teaching resource. Civil Defence information on the council website was maintained.

Around 80 people attended a presentation by a panel of experts on *Volcanic Activity, the Impacts and Recovery*, held at the Taranaki Emergency Management Office (TEMO) in October 2008.



The presentation at TEMO on Volcanic Activity was well attended.

In November 2008 the Emergency Management staff combined with the Red Cross to take the Civil Defence public education messages to South Taranaki by having a joint stand at the Hawera show.

Emergency Management Officers also work with the Education Officer to provide training and support for teachers using the "What's the Plan Stan?" teaching resource. The use of this resource in Taranaki Schools continues to grow and during the year three schools visited the Taranaki Emergency Management Office as part of their "What's the Plan Stan?" study.

The Senior Information Officer also liaised with the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management on public education activities and represented the Taranaki CDEM Group on the Ministry's National Public Education Reference Group.

2.5.3 Communications activities for external organisations and groups

The Taranaki Regional Council again implemented the *Didymo Communications Plan* over the 2008-2009 summer period, on behalf of the Taranaki Regional Didymo Group. A communications programme was developed to increase public knowledge of didymo, especially amongst freshwater users, and to encourage responsible freshwater hygiene practices. The programme was funded by MAF Biosecurity New Zealand (BNZ).

The primary audiences for the 'Check, Clean, Dry' campaign were anglers, trampers and kayakers. The recommended approach with these groups was face to face contact, visits to clubs and meetings to discuss didymo, distribution of communications material provided by BNZ and the demonstration of cleaning techniques at key events and locations.

2.6 Communications activities delivered across the Council

The Public Information section provides communications advice, graphics and design support to staff in all other sections, to develop and deliver a wide range of communications and education activities, across all Council activities.

The *Communications Plan* identifies a range of methods to communicate with the regional community or targeted audiences. The main methods include:

- Information sheets
- Newsletters
- Booklets or guides
- Posters and leaflets

- Educational resources
- Presentations
- Websites
- Workshops, field days, meetings
- Sponsorship
- Advertising
- Media releases
- Face-to-face contact
- Media interviews.

During the year the Public Information section developed advertising and promotion campaigns for significant events and activities, including:

- CityLink, Inglewood and SouthLink bus services
- Garden Fairs, Farmers Markets and an Antiques Roadshow to celebrate the refurbishment of Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- A series of garden workshops at Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- Monthly radio advertising campaigns on Council events and activities.

Advertising features and advertising supplements also provide an opportunity to promote the Council's key messages. Council has provided editorial content as well as placing the advertisements on topics such as Civil Defence, wetlands, riparian management, pest plants and other environmental topics.

Public Information staff have supported other Council staff in running field days, workshops and meetings across a range of Council activities.

Events included a field trip to the Murphy's property at Auroa to celebrate World Wetlands Day in February and seminars on carbon farming.

A comprehensive communications response was required following the uncovering of drum remnants and agrichemical residues in May 2009, at Marfell Park in New Plymouth as the level of media interest and public concern was high. Considerable effort was made to engage with the local community to ensure that their concerns were taken into account in the response to the event, and to ensure that they were informed as further investigation was carried out.

2.7 Sponsorship

Each year Council receives a number of applications for sponsorship funding. In allocating funding, consideration is given to events and activities that promote sustainable resource management and environmental education in the region.

During the 2008/2009 year sponsorship was provided for:

- Fonterra Taranaki Science and Technology Fair Environmental Awards



A City Link bus promotes Tupare and Hollard Gardens.



Live music and stalls featured at the Hollard Gardens' garden fair.

- Taranaki Young Enterprise Scheme Environmental Award
- Regional Dairy Industry Awards
- NZ Coastal Society Conference (hosted in Taranaki, November 2008)
- NZ Freshwater Sciences Conference (hosted in Taranaki, November 2008)
- Seaweek 2009.

Sponsorship of these educational and environmental events contribute to the communications and educational requirements of policies in the Council's regional plans and strategies.

2.8 Environmental education in schools

The Council's environmental education programme focuses on the school sector to promote sustainable use of the region's natural resources. The main objective of the programme is for primary school children to develop understanding, skills and attitudes that will then shape the behaviour of future resource users and communities.

There are many opportunities for environmental education to be taught in schools. The Council aims to foster the teaching of environmental education by identifying links to the curriculum and working with teachers who are committed to implementing programmes.

The Education Officer provides resources, training and support for teachers to implement environmental education programmes with their classes. The programme focuses on providing practical action-based learning experiences for students. The Council's website is also extensively used as a source of information and resources by both students and teachers.

2.8.1 S.I.T.E. newsletter to schools

The S.I.T.E. (Schools In The Environment) newsletter is sent to all schools in the region at the beginning of each term. Its main purpose is to promote environmental education within our region. Six hundred and fifty copies are issued each term to schools in the region, with each school's allocation matched to its roll. An additional 120 copies are sent to other interested parties in the region and beyond, to promote environmental education.

Each issue covers an environmental theme and over the past year air, transport, our environment and civil defence emergency management have been the main themes.

Regular features included in S.I.T.E. are:

- Practical information on Council functions and environmental education, with links to the school curriculum
- Information on resources and services available from the Council
- Features on environmental initiatives in schools
- The Council's professional development programme for teachers
- A children's activity page for use in the classroom.



SITE newsletter.

Feedback indicates that the newsletter is well received and is a very useful way to communicate with teachers and schools and to promote the Council's environmental education programme.

2.8.2 Teacher development and environmental education resources

For environmental education to be further integrated into teaching programmes throughout the region, the Council must encourage and support individual teachers to deliver suitable programmes themselves. The Council facilitates professional development seminars to help teachers develop their skills and knowledge and has a range of resources for teachers to use in their teaching programmes.

Professional development seminars

The Education Officer facilitated three teacher training workshops during the 2008/2009 year. They were:

Visit the rock pools

– 24 February 2009

Seven pre-school, primary, and secondary teachers took advantage of an exceedingly low tide and warm weather to explore the rock pools at each of the three tidal zones on Kawaroa Reef, New Plymouth. This course is always well supported by teachers and is invariably used as a springboard to a class or school rocky shore investigation.



Teachers study a rock pool during the professional development session at Kawaroa, New Plymouth.

A pond as an example of a wetland – 11 March 2009

Nine primary teachers spent an afternoon looking at ways their classes could use a pond as a study resource. A feature was the practical session where the teachers discovered just how many organisms use this unique area as their chosen habitat.

Biodiversity - 11 June 2009

Six primary and three secondary teachers attended this workshop in which attendees looked at biodiversity in general, programmes currently in operation at the Council, at Puke Ariki and with the Taranaki Kiwi Trust.

Units of work

The Council has a range of resources available to encourage the teaching of environmental education in schools. Resources are provided, on request, to teachers who are willing to teach an environmental education programme themselves. The Council has developed teaching units which are targeted at years 4 – 8, but can be adapted to all levels and contain curriculum objectives, information and class activities. Most units contain material for teachers to carry out a study or field trip with a class group.

The units of work that are available include: *Weather, Rivers, Coast, Waste Minimisation and Recycling, Sustainable Land Management, Civil Defence Emergency Management, Wetlands, SHMAK, The Sleeper Wakes and Trees*. The units provide teachers with a range of activities for a whole class or for a group on a related sub-topic. In addition four mini units are also available covering: native fish, possums, pest plants and pest animals.

Each year more and more teachers are using the Council website as a source for teaching

resources and downloading the units rather than requesting hardcopies from the Council. As already noted, study units regularly feature in the “top 10” downloads from the Council website.

During the year 75 (35) units of work were sent out to teachers. The Council also issued 98 (447) other resources to assist teachers in their programmes. These included videos, posters, books, education kits, leaflets and pamphlets.

2.8.3 Direct support for teachers providing environmental learning experiences

The Council has continued to encourage the growth of environmental education programmes in schools by providing assistance for teachers undertaking learning experiences both within and outside the classroom. Assistance is offered at any stage of the learning programme from the initial planning to the evaluation of the study itself.

The provision of support for teachers who require assistance is vital, as the trend towards schools being staffed with a greater proportion of inexperienced teachers continues. However, support is provided on the understanding that eventually teachers will gain the necessary confidence and skills to deliver the sessions themselves with less assistance from the Education Officer.

Visits to schools

The Education Officer offers classroom visits on environmental topics that relate specifically to Council activities. These visits are provided on request and must be part of a broader study programme that the teacher is taking with the class. The Education Officer provides technical knowledge, presentations, activities or experiments, with the emphasis on providing support for the teacher.

A brief overview of the Taranaki environment is included in most lessons. Practical interactive activities are usually included and the main topics covered are water quality, weather, civil defence emergency management, recycling, the Taranaki coast, pest animals, trees and sustainable land management.

During the year the Education Officer visited 96 (141) classes involving 2,751 (3,773) students. He also attended 10 (4) staff meetings during the year to promote the teaching of environmental education in schools, to support the teachers and to encourage them to take the programmes themselves.

Field trips

Field trips offer students the opportunity to learn **about** the environment, **in** the environment and sometimes to carry out action **for** the environment.

The field trips often focus on river or coastal sites, and generally involve an introduction to environmental monitoring. In most cases the field trips follow up on a classroom visit by the Education Officer to introduce the topic and to ensure the children are prepared, to get the best possible value from the



Students from Eltham Junior School identify macroinvertebrates found in a stream near their school.

trip itself. Technical support and specialized equipment, such as nets, or laboratory equipment, are provided by the Council as they are not generally available in schools.

A growing number of schools are now involving their children in riparian planting projects, assisted by the expertise of the Council's Land Management Officers.

The Education Officer accompanied 60 (69) classes on field trips involving 1,906 (1,812) children during the year.

Visits to the Taranaki Regional Council

School visits to the Council's environmental education centre or the Taranaki Emergency Management Office are usually linked to work that is being taught at school. They involve either a lesson based on a Council unit of study or can be tailored to meet the group's needs. The biology laboratory and environmental display room provide a comprehensive learning experience, including native and introduced fish, and awareness of environmental issues. Other topics such as animal pest management or sustainable land management are sometimes included in the visit.

There were 535 (669) visitors, mainly from schools, to the Council's aquarium and display areas during the year.

2.8.4 Other projects

Schools assisting with local riparian planting projects

The 2008/2009 year saw an increasing number of schools become actively involved in the Council's riparian management programme. The initiative began in 2001 and to date 16 schools have been involved, with more schools showing interest in joining.

The Education Officer first takes a lesson in the classroom where the children learn about riparian management and the protection of water quality in the region's rivers and streams. The follow-up session involves the school children assisting with riparian planting in their local area. The Council facilitates contact between the schools and the landowners.



Students planting the riparian margin of the Waionganaiti Stream beside the Inglewood Primary School.

Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum

The fifth annual Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum was held in April 2009. The Council selected the three representatives from year 12 and 13 students in the region by an environmental essay competition.

The five-day programme involved visits to places of interest, environmental talks from experts, group discussions and opportunities to share ideas and spend time with other like-minded young people. The highlight for many was the opportunity to be part of a group presentation held in Parliament and attended by many VIPs including the Minister for the Environment. The delegates made a presentation to the Council on their experiences and learnings from the forum.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has met its performance targets set out in the *2008/2009 Annual Plan* for its Public Information functions. The activities undertaken support the Council's slogan of "Working with people, caring for our environment", and further enhance the environmental awareness and attitudes of the Taranaki community.

3.1.1 Programmes and performance measures

1. The Council's *Communications Strategy* and *Communications Plan* were adopted in February 2009.
2. Five issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
3. The Council website has been maintained and updated with an average of 27,060 unique visits per month and 105,427 (70,029) for the Taranaki Regional Explorer site.
4. The Amazing Backyard Adventures exhibition and a project to produce a water publication (to be published in 2010) were funded by the Council's 2008/2009 Annual Contribution to Puke Ariki.
5. Four issues of the S.I.T.E. newsletter to schools were distributed during the year.
6. Three teacher workshops were facilitated by the Council including *Visit the rock pools, A pond as an example of a wetland and Biodiversity*.
7. The Council's Education Officer worked with 156 classes involving 4,657 students this year and a further 535 visitors to the Council's display areas.
8. Eighteen environmental awards were presented during the year.

Appendix I

2008/2009 Environmental Awards

The Council presented 18 awards in May 2009.

Business/local authority

- **The Links coastal development** – for environmental enhancement and stormwater treatment.
- **New Plymouth District Council** – for environmental management and performance of water supply schemes.
- **Okurukuru Winery restaurant** – for energy efficiency and waste minimisation.
- **La Nuova Apparelmaster** – for energy efficiency and water conservation.
- **Fonterra Kapuni** – for advances in wastewater and stormwater treatment and environmental performance.
- **Downer EDI Works** – for advances in asphalt plant operation and environmental performance.

Agricultural

- **Nigel Megaw** – for biodiversity protection and enhancement.
- **Selwyn O'Neill** – for riparian management.
- **David and Karen Peat** – for sustainable land management.
- **Bruce Leckie** – for protecting biodiversity and agriculture through possum control services.

Individual/school/community group

- **Marfell Community Garden** – for promoting sustainability through environmental education.
- **Coastal Taranaki School Student Extension Programme** – for promoting environmental responsibility and action.

The following awards were for increasing environmental awareness and understanding through environmental education:

- **Omata Primary School**
- **Kaimata Primary School**
- **Marco Primary School**
- **Matapu Primary School**
- **Opunake High School**
- **Waitoriki Primary School.**