

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievement on its land management functions for the 2006/2007 year.

The implementation of the Sustainable Land Management Programme continues to be the Council's operational focus for land management. This programme focuses on the provision of advice and advocacy through property planning services whereby plans are prepared addressing sustainability issues on a site-specific basis within individual properties. The success of this programme and the Council's essentially non-regulatory approach to addressing land management issues in the region is reflected in the number of requests received by the Council and the action taken by the farming community to address land stabilisation and riparian issues.

Set out below is a summary of the main land management activities carried out by the Council in 2006/2007:

- Prepared 30 comprehensive farm plans covering an additional 15 031 hectares of hill country. This means that at 30 June 2007, the Council has prepared a total of 271 comprehensive farm plans and agroforestry plans, which together cover 158 602 hectares.
- Prepared 303 riparian management plans covering 1 552 kilometres of stream bank. This means that at 30 June 2007, the Council has prepared a total of 1 706 riparian management plans, which cumulatively cover 12 386 kilometres of stream bank.
- Monitoring confirms that land occupiers are implementing the recommendations set out in riparian management plans but at a slow pace. As at 30 June 2007, 53% of stream banks covered by riparian plans were fenced and 35% of stream bank has riparian vegetation (either existing or newly planted). As at 20 June 2007, 406km of stream bank fencing has been undertaken and 332 km of stream bank has been planted across Taranaki.
- Prepared 15 conservation plans addressing site-specific soil conservation, biodiversity and water quality issues.
- Liaised with and provided supplementary advice to property plan holders on 2 872 occasions.
- Responded, within ten working days, to 633 requests for general advice and assistance on sustainable land management, soil conservation and riparian management practices.
- Provided a total of 204 250 plants for soil conservation and riparian enhancement purposes, at cost, to 709 landholders.
- Through the Council's sustainable land management programme, the Council is working with land holders to adopt land use practices and techniques that avoids or minimise soil erosion in the hill country and which maintain and improve water quality in ring plain streams. With continued land holder and community support for this programme and other land management activities, the Council believes it will continue to meet its land management objective of promoting sustainable land and riparian management.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements on its land management functions for the 2006/2007 year.

1.2. Background

The Taranaki Regional Council has responsibilities for sustainable land management in the Taranaki region derived from the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941.

Over 60% of Taranaki's total land area of 723 610 hectares has been developed for pastoral farming. The rest is mainly indigenous forest cover (half of which lies in the Egmont National Park and other Crown reserves) with some exotic forest cover. Good management of the region's land resource is essential for Taranaki's environmental and economic future. The soil resource, which supports the flora and fauna, and is the base for the region's primary production, must be carefully managed.

Under the Resource Management Act, Council has prepared the *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* (1994), the *Regional Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki* (2001), and the *Regional Soil Plan for Taranaki* (2001). These policy documents, amongst other things, promote sustainable land use, soil conservation and appropriate riparian management.

The Council promotes sustainable land management through advisory and regulatory methods. The focus is on the use of non-regulatory methods whereby advisory and extension services are provided to land occupiers to promote voluntary change towards sustainable land management practices.

The property planning service involves Council, on request from interested land occupiers, preparing four types of farm plans. These are:

- **Comprehensive farm plans:** These are prepared for properties in erosion prone parts of the eastern hill country and look at all aspects of a farming operation including land and stock management and specifically address management practices that protect soil and water resources while maximising the productive capability of the property. If forestry is seen as part of the property's future viability, this plan can also include an agroforestry plan.
- **Agroforestry plans:** These are prepared primarily for properties in the hill country but on occasion can be applied to other parts of the region. These plans are based upon a computer programme designed to model the physical and financial effects of a sustained planting to felling regime on a property.
- **Conservation plans:** These are prepared primarily for properties with individual site-specific soil or water conservation problems that do not require long term input and planning. Examples include shelterbelts and sand drift control.
- **Riparian plans:** These are prepared primarily for properties on the ring plain but on occasion can be applied to other parts of the region. These provide

advice on the retirement or re-vegetation of land along the banks of rivers and streams for the purpose of enhancing water quality.

Set out below are the objectives and performance measures of the Council's significant land management activities.

1.2.1. Objective

The two overall objectives for land management activities for 2006/2007, as set out in the Council's *Long-term Council Community Plan, 2006/2016*, are:

"To promote sustainable land and riparian management by providing property-planning services that identify actions for land use and management on an individual property basis", and

"To promote sustainable land and riparian management to the regional community through advocacy and facilitation".

1.2.2. Performance measures

In response to the above objectives, the Council adopted the following performance measures for 2006/2007 in its *Long-term Council Community Plan, 2006/2016*:

- Provide property planning services to landholders including:
 - comprehensive, agroforestry and conservation farm plans covering not less than an additional 15 000 hectares from an estimated 45 properties; and
 - riparian management plans covering not less than an additional 1 250 kilometres from an estimated 350¹ properties.
- Liaise with and provide supplementary advice to the 1 900 landholders with existing plans.
- Monitor and report on progress on implementation of all sustainable land management plans.
- Have active or completed riparian plans in place for over 90% of dairy farms (approx 2 100) by end of the 2006/2016 *Long-term Council Community Plan*.
- Have active comprehensive farm plans in place for over 80% of sheep and beef farms (840) by the end of the 2006/2016 *Long-term Council Community Plan, 2006/2016*.
- Respond to all requests for general advice and assistance on sustainable land management, soil conservation and riparian management practices within ten working days.
- Provide servicing and support to the Taranaki Tree Trust and assistance to other organisations involved in promoting sustainable land management.
- Provide, on a cost-recovery basis, an estimated 200 000 suitable plants for land stabilisation and riparian protection programmes for soil and water protection.

¹ This target was subsequently modified to 300 in light of results from the Council's survey and riparian implementation strategy which highlighted the importance of one on one liaison with existing plan holders.

2. Report on progress

2.1. Preparation of comprehensive and agroforestry plans

Each year, the Council receives requests from land occupiers to prepare comprehensive farm plans or agroforestry plans for their properties.

Comprehensive farm plans cover all environmental aspects of a farming operation including land and stock management while maximising the productive capability of the property. The plans are based upon a detailed land resource inventory and include an analysis of soils, geology, vegetation, slope and erosion. Land use and management recommendations promoting the stabilisation and protection of the productive capability of the soils within the property are also included in the Plan. The comprehensive farm plan format has evolved over the past two years to indicate production potentials for the different land units and provide some basic economic analyses.

In 2006/2007, the Land Management Section of the Council prepared 30 comprehensive farm plans covering an additional 15 031 hectares of farmland in the hill country and on the coastal terraces.

The Council may also receive requests from land occupiers to prepare agroforestry plans for their properties. The Council prepares these plans for land occupiers interested in diversification by establishing woodlots or plantations.

Agroforestry plans involve the use of the Agroforestry Estate Model to generate a number of scenarios taking into account land use capability and the nature and extent of forestry in which the land occupier is interested. However, in 2006/2007, there were no requests for Council to prepare an agroforestry plan.

As at 30 June 2007, a total of 271 comprehensive farm plans and agroforestry plans have been prepared covering 158 602 hectares (Table 1). The most 'at risk' area in terms of soil erosion occurs on steep slopes in the hill country and on the coastal terraces – particularly, pasture land on Class VIe, VII and VIII land.

The coverage of the comprehensive plans and agroforestry plans throughout Taranaki is shown in Appendix I.



Differentiating land use capability units on a property enables a land holder to farm to the property's strengths and weaknesses

Table 1: Comprehensive and agroforestry plans prepared

Year	Comprehensive plans		Agroforestry plans		Total	
	No. of plans	Ha	No. of plans	Ha	No. of plans	Ha
Prior to 2000/01	91	55 708	20	11 444	111	67 152
2001/2002	23	11 516	0	0	23	11 516
2002/2003	17	14 532	2	812	19	15 344
2003/2004	37	14 917	1	412	38	15 329
2004/2005	41	25 827	0	0	41	25 827
2005/2006	19	11 737	0	0	0	11 737
2006/2007	30	15 031	0	0	30	15 031
Total						158 602

2.1.1. Monitoring implementation of plans

Landowners with comprehensive farm plans or agroforestry plans are contacted annually and information gathered on changes they have made to their farming practices and land use as a result of the plans. In the 2006/2007 year Council began the job of digitalising farm plans developed before 2002 to bring them up to the current GIS format so that a monitoring programme can be developed. This, plus the digitising of changes in land use that have been made as a result of implementing the farm plans will enable Council to monitor and report on progress with implementing recommendations in the farm plans.

2.1.2. Promoting sustainable land management

In addition to the preparation and implementation of property plans, in 2006/2007 Council staff facilitated two hill country discussion groups on sustainable land management issues in the Tarata and Matau areas.

The Council was also involved in supporting the Taranaki Monitor Farm at Tikorangi and the Taranaki Shelter and Farm Forestry Association.

Council staff organised a workshop demonstrating the visual soil assessment technique at the monitor farm, and helped facilitate another workshop on growing native trees for timber with Tane's Tree Trust.

2.1.3. Flood relief

In early July 2006, a high intensity rainfall event occurred in south eastern Taranaki. It was concentrated across a belt extending from Mangamingi, through the upper catchments of Tangahoe, Manawapou, Patea and across the



Moumahaki catchment, showing silt deposition and slip erosion debris trails.

Whenuakura, Moumahaki and mid to lower Waitotara. This resulted in significant flooding of low lying areas and high rates of silt deposition.

A request was made to Council on behalf of 23 landholders in the Moumahaki Catchment, seeking assistance for relief. Council approved a relief package for the supply of land stability planting material, such as willow and poplar poles and grass seed. Council also facilitated a workshop on pasture restoration following the flood.

2.2. Preparation of riparian management plans

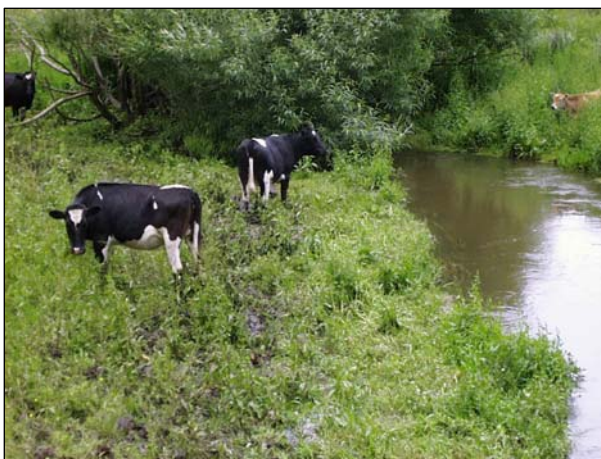
Each year, Council targets and receives requests from land occupiers to prepare riparian management plans for their property. Riparian management plans focus upon the protection of watercourses, primarily on the ring plain. These plans set out recommendations for the retirement or re-vegetation of land along the banks of rivers and streams for the purpose of enhancing water quality.

Complementing the planning service is the provision of riparian plants at cost to plan holders. To make riparian planting more affordable, Council contracts nurseries to supply, in bulk, suitable indigenous plants, and then passes on the savings to participating land occupiers (see section 2.5.2 below).



An example of a riparian plan prepared using GIS technology

In 2006/2007, Council staff surveyed and prepared 303 riparian management plans covering 1 552 kilometres of streambank (Table 2).



A key aspect of successful riparian management is preventing stock access

To date, the Council has prepared 1 699 riparian management plans that cover 12 386 kilometres of streambank (Table 2).

Council's riparian programme is a key component of the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord. Progress with targets in the Accord is reported on separately.

This year the Council's riparian management programme was featured on TV One's Rural Delivery programme.

Table 2: Riparian management plans prepared

	Prior to 1 July 2004	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Total
No. of plans	711	382	303	303	1 699 ²
Km of streambank	6 412	1 362	1 462	1 552	12 386

2.2.1. Monitoring implementation of riparian plans

Since 2004/2005, the Council has been monitoring the implementation of riparian management plans in terms of additional riparian fencing and planting carried out following the preparation of the plan. This monitoring confirms that land occupiers in the riparian management programme are only implementing slowly the fencing and planting recommendations set out in the plans (Figure 1).

When taking into account existing fencing and planting, Council monitoring shows that as at 30 June 2007 approximately 53% of the streambanks covered by the riparian plans are fenced and 35% of the streambanks have riparian vegetation.



Water quality is significantly enhanced through the fencing and planting of riparian margins

² The actual total number of riparian plans on the Council system is 1706 due to subdivision of properties, amalgamations etc.

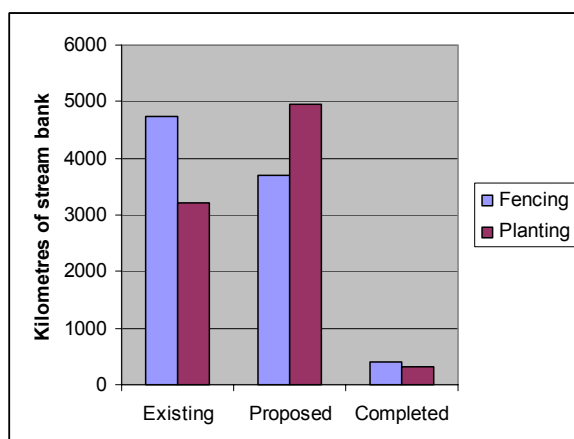


Figure 1: Total amount of fencing and planting as at 30 June 2007

As at 30 June 2007, approximately 106 665 hectares (or 60%) of dairy farmland has been covered by the riparian plans. Plan implementation is however the ever increasing challenge.

The coverage of the riparian plans throughout Taranaki over time is shown in Appendix II.

2.2.2. Research into barriers to implementing riparian plans



Success in riparian plantings can be attributed to farmers having a positive experience.

The Council recognizes there is a need to increase the implementation of the riparian plans, and has therefore undertaken two pieces of work looking into the barriers to riparian plan implementation and how to improve the rate of implementation.

Firstly, a 25 question phone survey was undertaken with 146 dairy farm plan holders. This survey highlighted that there was a very high regard for the services provided by the Council and a high awareness of the plant scheme, the Dairying Clean Streams Accord and the 2015 deadline. Arising out of the results of the survey was the development of a Riparian Planting Implementation Strategy, which will see the Council increase the amount of face to face contact with plan holders, obtain commitments to order plants from new plan holders, promote the use of

contractors and promote enticements.

An Auckland University of Technology student was employed to look at the barriers Taranaki farmers perceive they face to implementing riparian management on their farms. This research was undertaken in the Waiokura Catchment, as it is part of the *Best Practice Dairying Catchments for Sustainable Growth* project.

The study concluded that to the farmers concerned, the benefits associated with riparian strips and stock exclusion from streams justifies the objective of riparian management. However, the study found that farmers needed to have a positive outcome from their first planting experience before they would continue in future years. This emphasised the importance of one on one contact and support required from Council officers.

2.2.3. Riparian planting schools programme

As part of its Riparian Implementation Strategy, a new initiative this year has seen Council staff 'adopting' a rural school and engaging with them to facilitate a riparian planting project. 16 schools are included in the programme. The Council Education Officer presents a riparian management /planting lesson in the classroom 2-3 weeks before a planting day that involves both pupils and parents.



Pupils and parents from Urenui School get stuck into riparian planting

2.2.4. Enticements to implementing riparian plans

Fonterra sponsored two major prizes to encourage farmers into riparian management this year. A package of 700 riparian plants, preplanting preparation, planting and maintenance valued at \$3 500, and a Sony wide-screen television set were provided. Seventy riparian plan holders, who ordered over 400 riparian plants before 1 May 2006 received \$50 RD1 vouchers. The promotion was a success, with increased plant orders arriving earlier to make the prize-winning cut-off date.



Fonterra Manager Sustainable Milk Growth Mark Leslie and Council Deputy Chairman Roger Maxwell present riparian management prizes to the Smiths (left) and Selwyn O'Neill (right).

2.3. Conservation plans

Each year, the Council receives requests from land occupiers to prepare conservation plans for their property.

Conservation plans are prepared primarily for properties with localised site-specific land or water conservation problems e.g., shelter establishment, sand restoration, wetland protection, and erosion control.

The advice set out in conservation plans do not require long term or on-going input and planning.

In 2006/2007, the Council prepared 15 conservation plans. As at 30 June 2007, the Council has prepared 217 conservation plans. (This number is less than the total shown in figure 1 due to farm subdivisions, amalgamations etc).

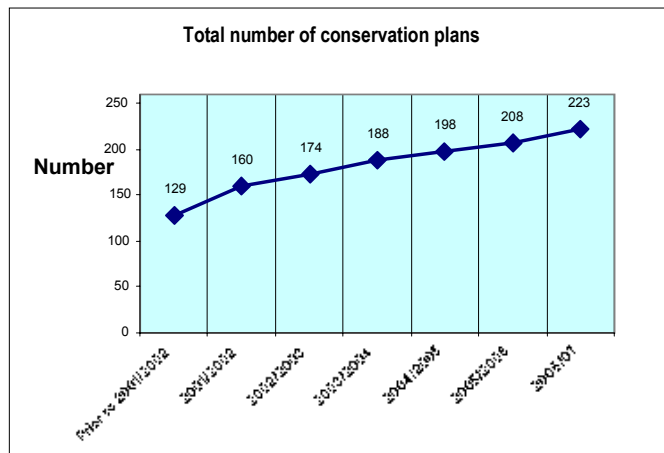


Figure 1: Total number of conservation plans over time

2.4. On-going liaison

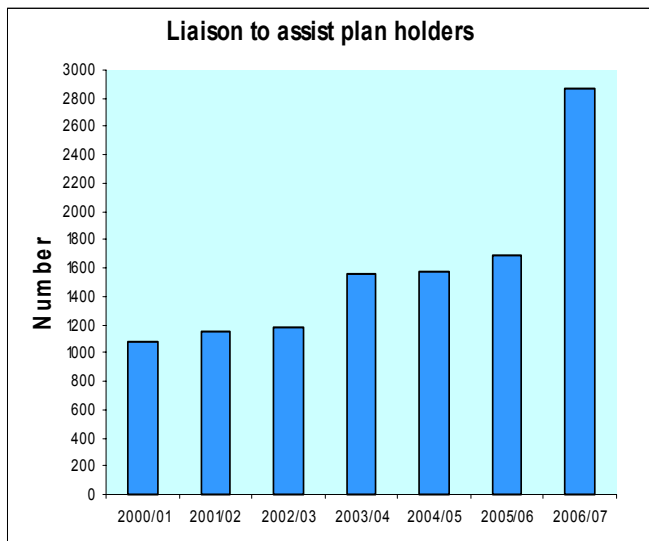


Figure 2: Number of liaisons with property plan holders over time

On-going liaison between Council and property plan holders is the most important component of ensuring that the plan holders implement the plans' recommendations over time.

In 2006/2007, the Council liaised with and provided supplementary advice on 2 872 occasions to landholders with existing property plans. This was a significant increase to previous years and reflects both the increased number of plan holders and the Council's commitment to on-going liaison with those landowners.

2.5. Requests for general advice and assistance

2.5.1. Planting material

Each year the Council receives and responds to numerous requests from the public for information on sustainable land management. Public requests may relate to vegetation clearance, native logging, implementation rate of the sustainable land management programme and riparian management strategy, aerial photography, planting advice and new property plan enquiries.

Council officers also distribute a large number of pamphlets and other educational material to interested individuals and organisations in relation to sustainable land management.

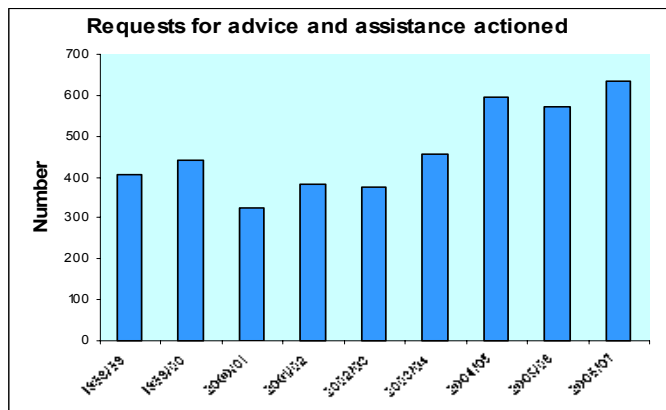


Figure 3: Requests for advice and assistance continue to increase

In 2006/2007, the Council received and responded to 633 requests for advice and assistance on a wide variety of land management related issues (compared with 572 information requests the preceding year). Most of these requests related to practices, and, to a lesser extent information requests from other agencies. All requests for general advice and assistance were responded to within ten working days.

2.5.2. Planting material

The Council has two plant production schemes whereby it grows or obtains quality conservation planting material and makes these plants available to property plan holders at cost. The provision of planting material at cost is a key component in the success of the Council's soil conservation and riparian management programmes.

Table 3: Number of plants supplied

Year	Poplar & willows	Riparian plants	Total
1996/1997	0	15 655	15 655
1997/1998	7 094	25 000	32 094
1998/1999	9 918	32 630	42 548
1999/2000	10 458	51 320	61 778
2000/2001	8 691	69 400	78 091
2001/2002	9 700	92 000	101 700
2002/2003	9 500	115 000	124 500
2003/2004	0	95 018	95 018
2004/2005	12 700	219 000	231 700
2005/2006	6 874	150 691	157 565
2006/2007	4212	200 038	204 250
Total	79 147	1 065 752	1 144 899

The first scheme involves Council supplying low cost poplar and willow plants for soil stability purposes. During the 2006/2007 year the Council provided 4212 poplars and willows to 92 landholders.

The second scheme is the 'Riparian Plant Scheme'. This scheme involves the Council contracting nurseries to supply suitable native riparian planting material. By bulk purchasing these plants, the cost of the plants is reduced and the Council then passes on these savings to riparian management plan holders.



Landoccupiers collecting riparian plants from the depot.

In recent times there has been a significant upward trend in land occupier interest in riparian planting. In 2006/2007 the Council supplied 200 038 plants to 617 property plan holders (13 nurseries supplied plants to the scheme).

In 2006/2007, the Council supplied a total of 204 250 plants, bringing the total number of plants supplied under these schemes since 1996 to over one million (refer Table 3 and Figure 4).

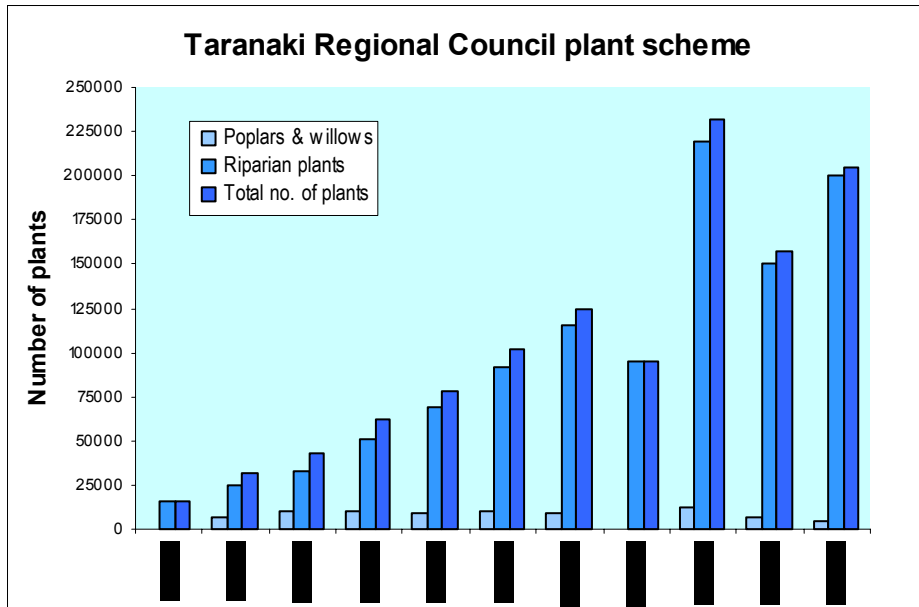


Figure 4: Number of plants supplied

2.5.3. Poplar nursery development and production programme

This financial year, Council has negotiated the purchase of a property to establish a poplar nursery and base for dispatching them. The 4.76ha block is located on State Highway 3a, near Manutahi Road, Lepperton. Establishing this base will facilitate the Council’s Sustainable Land Management Programme through the production of quality three-metre poplar and willow material in a two year rotation and will enable the production of poplar species suitable for Taranaki conditions. It will also be used to produce shrub willow material for riverbank stabilization. Council also has plans to establish a wetland/riparian planting demonstration site on the existing gully on the property.

2.5.4. Taranaki Tree Trust

The Council continues to administer and service the Taranaki Tree Trust – a charitable trust dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the region’s

ecosystems and landscapes. It also donated \$30,000 to the Tree Trust from the Environmental Enhancement Grant.

The Trust met four times during the year to consider potential projects. The annual report of the Trust was approved at the Annual General Meeting held on 20 October 2006.

The Taranaki Tree Trust continues to receive contributions and attract sponsorship. It is therefore in a position to financially support a number of projects. In 2006/2007 the Taranaki Tree Trust undertook to assist with projects including:

- Herekawe Stream walkway project
- *Treescaping Taranaki* field day
- Te Wera Arboretum restoration
- Wetland Enhancement
- Rapanui Petrel colony
- School environmental educational projects
- School Arbour Day plantings
- Assisted with QEII covenants.



Council staff talk about the value of trees for stock shelter at the Treescaping field day.

Further to the above, the Taranaki Tree Trust continued to provide financial assistance to land owners for riparian planting in 18 catchments on a 50% share cost basis.

The theme of this year's Treescaping field day was on the value of trees for providing shelter for stock. Visiting speakers included Professor Kevin Stafford from Massey University and Dexcel scientist Dr Gwyneth Verkerk.

2.5.5. Regionally significant wetlands

Wetlands, such as lagoons, estuaries, bogs, swamps, shallow lakes and farm dams, have a vital role in maintaining the health of the region's natural environment.



World Wetlands Day was celebrated with a field trip to Corbett Lake Scenic Reserve

The Council promotes wetland protection through education, advice and information and financial incentives. In particular, the Council focuses on protecting 77 significant wetlands or group of wetlands, covering 2 844 hectares.

This year Council facilitated a public field trip to Corbett Lake with Fish and Game and Department of Conservation.

Regionally significant wetlands, those over 5 hectares and those with rare or uncommon indigenous species are protected from drainage through rules in the *Freshwater Plan for Taranaki*. The Council then advocates for the protection of these wetlands from other threats with a particular focus on fencing and covenanting the wetlands for their long-term protection.

Grants are made to land occupiers to cover the costs of enhancement and protection. There are two legal protection mechanisms available – a Covenant (with either the QEII National Trust or the Department of Conservation) or a Memorandum of Encumbrance with Council. The 77 significant wetlands are classified into regionally significant wetlands (48), wetlands over 5 hectares (18) and wetlands with rare or uncommon indigenous species (11). The legal protection status of the 77 significant wetlands as at 30 June 2007 is set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Legal protection status of the 77 significant wetlands identified in the Regional Freshwater Plan.

	Regionally significant wetlands	Wetlands over 5ha	Wetlands with rare or uncommon species
Protected through the Freshwater Plan, and legally protected through being on public conservation land, through covenants or memorandums.	34	3	3
Protected through the Freshwater Plan, and partially legally protected through covenants etc.	5	0	1
Protected through the Freshwater Plan, but no other form of legal protection.	8	15	7
Protected through the Freshwater Plan, but destroyed.	1 ³	0	0
Total	48	18	11



New fencing at Lake Taumaha will safeguard the wetland's values.

During the 2006/2007 year Council staff worked with landowners on securing protection or undertaking maintenance or enhancement on 8 of the 48 regionally significant wetlands: Lake Waiau; Umutekai Conservation Area; Umutekai Bush; Lake Rotokare; Lake Kaikura; Toro Road; Dorset Road and Clarke Road, and on 4 of the 18 wetlands over 5 ha: Te Wera covenants; Wiremu Road; Lake Taumaha and Spence Road Ponds, and on 3 of the wetlands with rare or uncommon indigenous species: Toko; Te Wawa, Maitahi.

³ Wetland was largely destroyed in 2000. All parties involved in the unauthorized incident were prosecuted under section 15 of the Resource Management Act 1991.

Council staff undertake a significant wetland monitoring programme which includes site visits for all significant wetlands, liaison with land owners, the monitoring and recording of information relating to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the wetlands, including following up on protection works initiated. 90% of regionally significant wetlands were visited in the 2006/2007 year.

3. Conclusion

In summary, the Council substantially met its objectives and performance measures for land management activities as set out in the Council's for 2006/2007 in its *Long-term Council Community Plan, 2006/2016*.

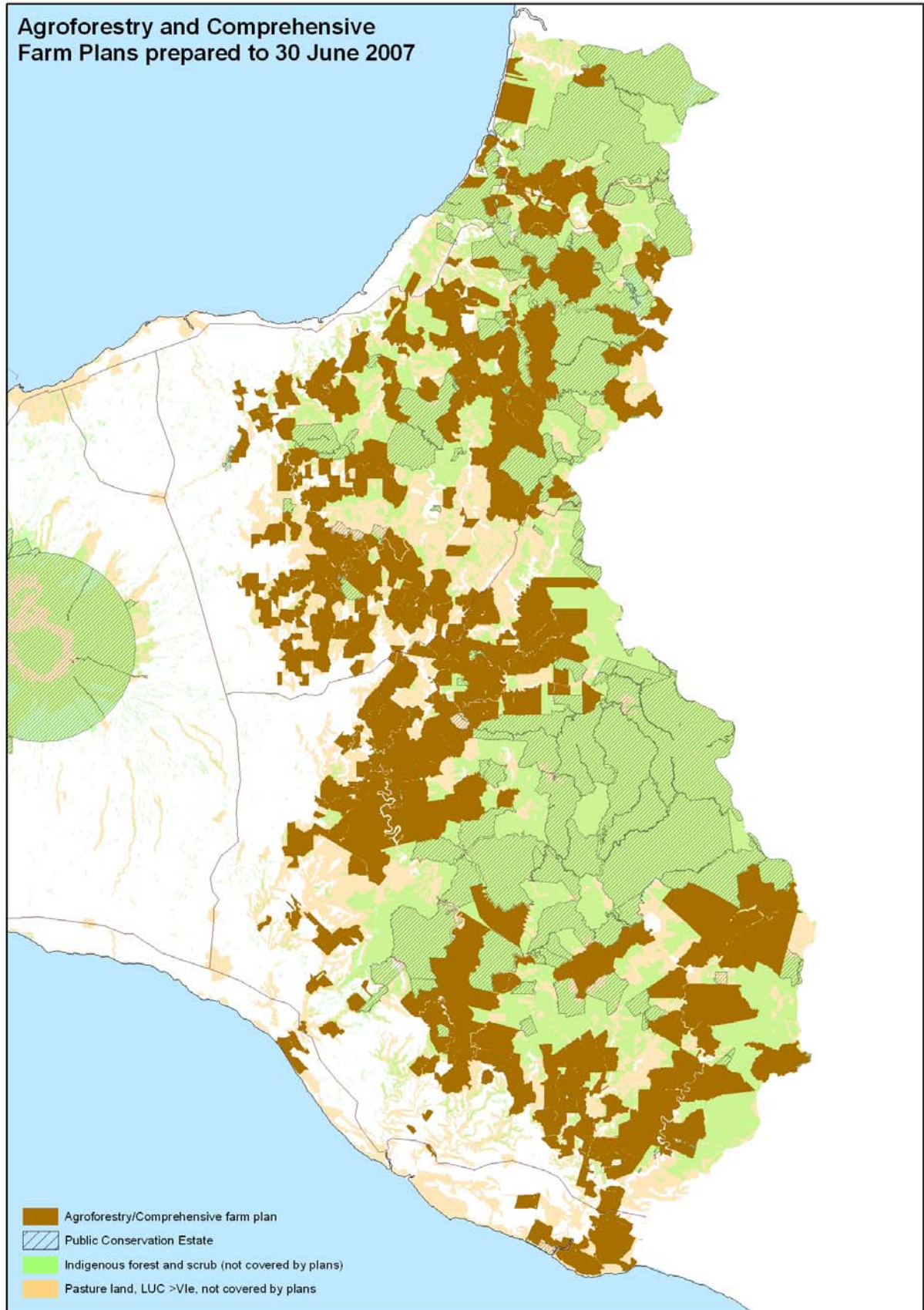
The implementation of the Sustainable Land Management Programme continues to be the Council's operational focus. Through this Programme, significant parts of Taranaki's erosion prone areas are being sustainably managed and soil erosion minimised or avoided. Likewise, the fencing and planting of riparian margins through intensively farmed land on the ring plain is making a significant contribution to avoiding, remedying or mitigating the effects of land use practices on water quality.

Programmes and performance measures

1. Prepared 30 comprehensive farm plans (covering an additional 15 031 hectares of farmland) and 15 conservation plans.
2. Prepared 303 riparian management plans covering 1 552 kilometres of stream bank.
3. Monitoring confirms that land occupiers are implementing the recommendations set out in riparian management plans but at a slow pace. As at 30 June 2007 plan holders had fenced an additional 406 kilometres of stream bank and planted 332 kilometres of stream bank since their plans were initially prepared.
4. Liaised with and provided supplementary advice to property plan holders on 2 872 occasions.
5. Responded, within ten working days, to 633 requests for general advice and assistance on sustainable land management, soil conservation and riparian management practices.
6. Provided 204 250 plants for soil conservation and riparian enhancement purposes, at cost, to 709 landholders.
7. The Council continued to provide servicing and support to the Taranaki Tree Trust and other organisations involved in promoting sustainable land management.

This report will be forwarded to interested stakeholders for land management.

Appendix I: Coverage of agroforestry and comprehensive farm plans



Appendix II: Coverage of riparian plans

