

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements relating to its Public Information functions for the 2006/2007 year.

The implementation of the resource management programme for school children continues to be an important part of the Council's operational focus. This programme focuses on the school sector to promote sustainable use of the region's natural resources. The success of this programme is reflected by the number of schools requesting the Council's Information Officer to present class visits or field trips.

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

- The Council's Education Officer worked with 198 classes (compared to 87 for 2005/2006) involving 5,553 students this year (3,511 for 2005/2006) and a further 1,100 visitors (670 for 2005/2006) to the Council's display areas.
- During the year, 37 (44) units of work and 732 (242) additional resources were sent out to teachers covering topics such as the Weather, Rivers, Coast, Recycling, Sustainable Land Management, Civil Defence Emergency Management and Trees.
- Five issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
- Fifty-eight (41) requests for information were received and provided on a range of environmental topics and Council activities.
- The Council hosted a visit from the Minister for the Environment David Benson-Pope to launch the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord annual report.
- The short film on Mount Taranaki was produced as part of the annual project for the Puke Ariki partnership for 2006/07.
- The monthly average of visits to the Council's website was 26,645 (25,407) and 59,690 (53,951) for the Taranaki Regional Xplorer site.
- The Taranaki Regional Council presented nine environmental awards to recognise environmental projects in categories of industry, agriculture and individual/school/community groups.
- The Council introduced a riparian planting promotion with sponsorship from Fonterra Co-operative Group Ltd.
- The Council produced four issues of the S.I.T.E newsletter to schools and distributed over 750 copies of each issue.
- Four teacher workshops were facilitated by the Council including *Visit the Rock Pools*, *Stream Health Assessment* and two sessions on the Civil Defence resource *What's the Plan Stan?*

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose	1
1.2	Background	1
1.2.1	Objective	1
1.2.2	Programme	1
2.	Report on progress	2
2.1	Information for the regional community	2
2.1.1	Recount newsletter and the media	2
2.1.2	General information on Council activities	2
2.2	Puke Ariki partnership	4
2.3	Environmental awards programme	4
2.4	Targeted information programmes	4
2.4.1	Promotion of riparian management	4
2.5	Information, awareness and education activities delivered across the Council	5
2.6	Environmental education in schools	6
2.6.1	S.I.T.E. newsletter to schools	6
2.6.2	Teacher development and environmental education resources	7
2.6.3	Direct support for teachers providing environmental learning experiences	8
2.6.4	Other projects	9
3.	Conclusion	10
3.1.1	Programmes and performance measures	10
	Appendix I	11
	2006/2007 Environmental Awards – 16 May 2007	11

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

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

1.2 Background

The Public Information programme provides a non-regulatory method of implementing a range of Council policies. 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, website, displays, information sheets and a partnership with Puke Ariki.

Resource users and special interest groups

Information on specific activities is provided to target groups, generally within industry or agriculture, to encourage sustainable environmental practices.

The formal education sector

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

The Public Information Section also provides graphics, information and publication support to all sections of the Council. Work on a draft communications strategy and communications plan continued during the 2006/2007 year.

The Taranaki Regional Council's *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community 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 *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community 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 2006/2007 were adopted by the Council in its *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan*:

- Implement a programme of information transfer, advice and education on the Council's activities including:

- Publishing and distributing regular editions of the *Recount* newsletter to over 1,000 stakeholders, maintaining the Council's website and implementing the Council's environmental awards programme.
- Providing 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.
- Ongoing use of display and presentation material at the Puke Ariki regional museum and library.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Information for the regional community

Information on Council activities is provided to the regional community in a variety of ways, including the regular publication and distribution of *Recount* Newsletter, information sheets, booklets addressing specific environmental issues, the Taranaki Regional Council's website and the Taranaki Regional Explorer website.

2.1.1 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 2006/2007 year, including an audited summary of the 2005/06 Annual Report.

Regular coverage of Council activities and related issues was provided by the region's media, mainly the region's daily newspaper, and to a lesser extent the community newspapers, radio and regional television. During the year 58 media releases were distributed.

Monitoring of the region's print media showed that there were 146 articles in the Taranaki Daily News and 57 articles relating to the Taranaki Regional Council in the region's community newspapers during the year. Of these 203 articles, 168 (83%) provided positive coverage of Council business, 25 (12%) were neutral and 10 (5%) were negative.

2.1.2 General information on Council activities

A summary of the 2005/2006 Annual Report (as a *Recount* newsletter) was distributed with the region's four community newspapers (49,000) in October 2006. In March 2007, a brochure summarising the 2007/2008 Annual Plan was distributed with community newspapers (49,000).

During the year, 58 requests for information were received from the general public, 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. Much of the information that was previously provided in response to information requests is now accessed directly from the Council's website.

In March 2007 Emergency Management staff coordinated an open day and demonstration of civil defence and emergency services at the New Plymouth emergency management office. Around 300 people watched displays by Fire, Police, Ambulance, Red Cross and the Taranaki rescue helicopter. Displays on how to prepare for an emergency were set up in the emergency management centre.



A family check information on being prepared at the emergency management open day.

Interest in the Council's website (www.trc.govt.nz) continued to increase during the 2006/2007 year. The site provides an overview of the Taranaki region and the Council's significant activities. The website also allows people to directly access information about the Council, request further information, or provide feedback on issues.

The monthly average usage of the website was 26,645 with a peak of 34,121 sessions during June 2007. This compares with a monthly average of 25,507 and a monthly high of 37,568 in the previous year.

The Council's intranet website also assists internal communication and is the source of a large amount of information for staff.

The Council also maintains Taranaki Regional Xplorer with the support of 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. Visits to the site averaged 59,690 per month for the 2006/2007 year, peaking at 69,964 in October 2006. This compares with an average of 53,951 and peak of 61,784 in the previous year. The consistent use of the site to create map images is proving the usefulness of the resource.

Environment Minister David Benson-Pope released the third annual report on the national Dairying and Clean Streams Accord in Taranaki in March 2007. The Council organised a media opportunity at the Adamski's property near Omata with displays on the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki.



Barry Harris, Fonterra, David Walter, Chairman TRC and David Benson-Pope, Minister for the Environment discuss riparian management with Kathleen and Peter Adamski.

2.2 Puke Ariki partnership

Filming and production of *360 Degrees*, a short film on Mount Taranaki, was completed as part of the Council's funding of the 2006/2007 annual project under its partnership with Puke Ariki. The film was launched in May 2007 and will be installed in the Puke Ariki theatre later in 2007.

The remainder of the Council's 2006/2007 annual contribution has been allocated to the *Taranaki Whenua* project, an environmentally themed exhibition and publication.

2.3 Environmental awards programme

The Council's 2006/2007 environmental awards programme recognised environmental projects in the categories of business/local authority (3), agriculture (3) and individual/school/community (3) groups. The public recognition of activities and projects that benefit the environment helps to increase awareness of environmental issues. The programme also helps promote positive attitudes and actions towards the environment, within the wider community.



Vogeltown School received an environmental award for increasing environmental awareness through education.

In May 2007, the nine environmental awards were presented. The list of award winners for the year is included in Appendix I.

The Council continued to support other award programmes that include environmental criteria in their selection process. The Council provided an environmental award in the 2006 Fibre Farmer of the Year and the Sustainable Farming Award for Sharemilkers in the 2007 Dairy Industry Awards.

2.4 Targeted information programmes

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

2.4.1 Promotion of riparian management

A targeted campaign to encourage implementation of riparian plans and the planting of riparian margins was carried out during 2006/2007 in partnership with Fonterra Co-operative Group Ltd and Federated Farmers.



Mark Leslie, Fonterra and Deputy Chairman Roger Maxwell present the Smiths with their prize in the riparian promotion.

A joint newsletter reporting on progress on meeting the targets of the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki with messages from dairy industry leaders was sent to all dairy farmers in January 2007.

A major prize package sponsored by Fonterra was offered to all landholders ordering plants through the Council's plant supply scheme. The incentives successfully increased the number of plants ordered and also encouraged earlier ordering.

The two major prizes of \$3,500 worth of riparian plants, preparation and maintenance, and a widescreen television were presented in May 2007.

2.5 Information, awareness and education activities delivered across the Council

The Public Information section provides communications advice, graphics and design support for a wide range of communications and education activities that are delivered by staff in other sections, across all Council activities.

The range of methods used to communicate with the regional community or targeted audiences includes:

- 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
- Video production
- Television interviews.

During the year Council staff carried out 47 presentations or displays and 18 workshops, field days or meetings to promote awareness of a wide range of activities.

During the year Public Information staff provided support to other Council staff, particularly Land Management staff and the Tree Trust Co-ordinator, to run a number of field days and workshops. Events included a field trip to Corbett Lake Scenic Reserve to celebrate World Wetlands Day, a Treescaping Taranaki field day and the public opening of the Herekawe Stream Walkway Project with other key partners.



A display on sustainable land management, pest control and riparian planting at the Hawera show.

In addition to the environmental awards noted above sponsorship was also provided for a small number of community, educational or agricultural events that promoted actions that benefit the Taranaki environment. These included Seaweeek 2007, the Science and Technology Fair for schools, the Youth Environment Forum and the Young Enterprise Scheme.



Chairman David Walter with four of the finalists in the essay competition to select delegates to the Youth Environment

2.6 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.

Although it is not a core part of the school curriculum, 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 interested in 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.

2.6.1 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 being commensurate to its roll number. In addition, another 105 copies are sent to other interested parties in the region and beyond to promote environmental education. Each issue covers its own environmental theme and over the past year environmental management, pest animals, pest plants and the coast 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
- a children's activity page for use in the classroom.



S.I.T.E newsletter

Feedback indicates that the newsletter is well received and provides a key method of communication with schools.

2.6.2 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 available to teachers.

Professional Development seminars

The Education Officer facilitated four teacher training workshops during the 2006/2007 year. They were:

1. What's the Plan Stan? – 16 August 2006

A total of 33 primary and intermediate schools were represented at this Civil Defence workshop which was held at the Taranaki Emergency Management Office in New Plymouth. The Education Officer and Civil Defence officers assisted the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management to run the workshop. The workshops were run nationally to support the teaching resource which the Ministry sent to all primary and intermediate schools, and Taranaki had the third highest attendance, behind Auckland and Wellington.



Students at New Plymouth St Josephs school had a civil defence exercise after the teacher attended the professional development seminar.

2. SHMAK (Stream Health Measurement Assessment Kit) – 2 November 2006

This practical workshop was designed to provide secondary teachers with the skills and resources to extend year 13 students beyond the more widely used river study. Teachers had practical sessions using the SHMAK kit in the Patea River and the Council's biology laboratory.

3. Visit the Rock Pools – 20 February 2007

Fourteen primary, intermediate 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.

4. What's the Plan Stan? (Number 2) – 3 May 2007

A survey of teachers late in 2006 indicated that there were still schools interested in teacher training to deliver a civil defence programme in their schools. A further 13 primary and intermediate were represented at the second training session.

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.

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

During the year 37 units of work were sent out to teachers. The Council also issued 732 other resources to assist teachers in their programmes. These included videos, posters, books, education kits, leaflets and pamphlets.

2.6.3 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.

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 usually focus on river or coastal sites, and often involve an introduction to environmental monitoring. In most cases the field trips are preceded by a classroom visit by the Education Officer to introduce the topic and to ensure the children get the best possible value from the 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 programmes using the expertise of the Council's Land Management Officers. The Education Officer accompanied 79 classes on field trips involving 2,011 children during the year.



Students find and identify freshwater invertebrates as an indication of stream health during a river study.

Visits to schools

The Education Officer also 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. 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 Weather, Civil Defence Emergency Management, Recycling, the Taranaki Coast, Pest Animals, Trees and Sustainable Land Management.

During the year the Education Officer visited 119 classes involving 3,543 students. He also attended 14 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.

Visits to the Taranaki Regional Council

School visits to the Council's environmental education centre 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 1,100 visitors, mainly from schools, to the Council's aquarium and display areas during the year.

2.6.4 Other projects

Schools assisting with local riparian planting projects

The 2006/2007 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 indicating they will join next year. 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.



Rahotu Primary students and parents helping with riparian planting on a nearby farm.

Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum

The fourth annual Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum was held in July 2007. The Council selected the three representatives from the region by an environmental essay competition. The three representatives selected were accompanied by the Education



Council staff visited Frankley School to study waste and help the school with their recycling programme.

Officer throughout the forum.

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.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has met its performance targets set out in the *Long-term Council Community Plan, 2006/2016* 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. Five issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
2. Fifty-eight requests for information were received and information was provided on a range of environmental topics and council activities.
3. The Council hosted the Minister for the Environment David Benson-Pope to launch the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord annual report.
4. Four issues of the S.I.T.E. newsletter were distributed during the year.
5. Four teacher workshops were facilitated by the Council including *Visit the Rock Pools*, *Stream Health Assessment* and two sessions on the Civil Defence resource *What's the Plan Stan?*
6. The Council's Education Officer worked with 198 classes involving 5,553 students this year and a further 1,100 visitors to the Council's display areas.
7. Nine environmental awards were presented during the year.

Appendix I

2006/2007 Environmental Awards – 16 May 2007

Business/local authority

- **Environmental Products NZ Ltd** – for creating fashion products from a pest and increasing awareness of the negative environmental impact of possums.
- **EcoInnovation** – for promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy systems.
- **Firth Industries Hawera** – for advances in wastewater treatment and environmental performance.

Agricultural

- **Mark and Leigh Caskey** – for sustainable farming and commitment to improving biodiversity.
- **Stephen and Helen Newton** – for protection of primary forest remnants.
- **George and Bobbie Oliver** – for riparian management and sustainable farming.

Individual/school/community group

- **East Taranaki Environment Trust** – for protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
- **The Herekawe Stream Walkway Project** – for environmental enhancement and community/industry partnership.
- **Vogelton School** – for increasing environmental awareness and understanding through environmental education.

