

Executive summary

The 2008/2009 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. The Council:

- prepared, published and launched its third state of the environment report *Taranaki: where we stand. State of the environment report 2009*;
- completed a Hearing of submissions to the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki and released its decisions on submissions;
- publicly notified a Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki for submissions continuing the process of reviewing its operative Regional Air Quality Plan. 45 submissions were received;
- continued a review of its Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki while awaiting release of the Government's New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement;
- commenced an interim review of its Regional Soil Plan for Taranaki;
- commenced a review of the Lower Waitara River Local Purpose Reserve Management Plan for the Council's river control and flood protection scheme on the Lower Waitara River;
- commenced a review of the Council's navigation safety bylaw for Port Taranaki and its approaches;
- completed the fourth annual report on implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki under the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord;
- completed the third report on progress towards achieving community outcomes. This report was the first full three yearly report required by the Local Government Act 2002 and included the results of a community survey of Taranaki residents completed during the year;
- considered the implications of new waste management legislation for the Regional Solid Wastes Working Party and the Council's Regional Waste Strategy;
- reviewed its Water Shortage Event Standard Operating Procedure;
- made 19 submissions to the policy initiatives of various agencies including submissions on Proposed National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards, discussion documents, proposed plans and draft legislation, all within required timeframes;
- completed a transfer of Council functions under the Building Act 2004 for large dams; and
- undertook other policy advocacy and liaison activities during the year.

Much of the policy and planning work of the Council has involved working alongside stakeholders and others in the community to ensure that the Council's policies are both effective and efficient in carrying out the Council's statutory responsibilities and are appropriate to the needs of the Taranaki community.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements in its policy and planning functions for the 2008/2009 year.

1.2 Background

Policy and planning comprises the analysis, development and dissemination of policy associated with all the Council's functions. It also includes response to the policy initiatives of other agencies where there are implications for the Council or for the wider Taranaki region.

Relative to other regional councils Taranaki has a small policy and planning staff (4.8 FTEs). Other council officers are involved in policy and planning activities as required.

Policy and planning is a core activity for the Council. A range of statutes require or enable the Council to engage in policy and planning activities. These include the following statutes:

- Resource Management Act 1991
- Biosecurity Act 1993
- Local Government Act 2002
- Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002
- Land Transport Management Act 2003
- Maritime Transport Act 1994
- Public Transport Management Act 2008.

Various policies, plans and strategies are prepared under these statutes. Some examples are the Regional Fresh Water, Coastal and Air Quality Plans, pest plant and pest animal management strategies and the regional land transport strategy. These are important documents because they set out what the community would like to see achieved in these areas and the various Council rules and requirements that apply. Where the policies, plans and strategies have statutory or legal force, they must be developed in accordance with procedures provided for in the parent statutes. In general these procedures require the detailed analysis of options and provide opportunities for formal and informal public input.

Public consultation and good information are fundamental elements of policy and planning activities. This ensures that the Council's policies, plans and strategies remain up-to-date in meeting the needs of the community and effective in achieving their purpose.

1.2.1 Objectives

Two main areas of activity are reported on in this report: statutory policies, plans and strategies and advocacy and response.

The overall objective for statutory policies, plans and strategies as contained in the 2008/2009 Annual Plan is:

“To prepare, adopt and maintain comprehensive and publicly considered policies, plans and strategies that will deliver to the Taranaki community, efficient and effective management of the Council’s functions”.

The overall objective for advocacy and response as contained in the 2008/2009 Annual Plan is:

“To advocate and respond, on behalf of the Taranaki community, to initiatives proposed by other agencies, when those initiatives affect the statutory responsibilities of the Council or relate to matters of regional significance, which are of interest or concern to the people of Taranaki”.

1.2.2 Performance measures

In response to the objective for statutory policies, plans and strategies, the Taranaki Regional Council adopted the following performance measures for its 2008/2009 programme:

- complete a review of the Council’s navigation safety bylaw
- complete a review of the Regional Coastal Plan subject to appeals
- publish and launch a State of the Environment Report
- review the Regional Waste Strategy.

In response to the objective for advocacy and response, the Taranaki Regional Council adopted the following performance measures for its 2008/2009 programme:

- Assess the implications of the policy initiatives proposed by other agencies, including discussion documents, proposed policies, strategies, plans and draft legislation, and respond within required timeframes.

Other policy and planning work was carried out under other groups of activities and are reported on in those annual reports – see for example annual reports for:

- Emergency Management
- Navigation safety and harbour management
- Regional land transport planning and passenger transport
- Biodiversity.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Statutory policies, plans and strategies

2.1.1 Launch of the state of the environment report

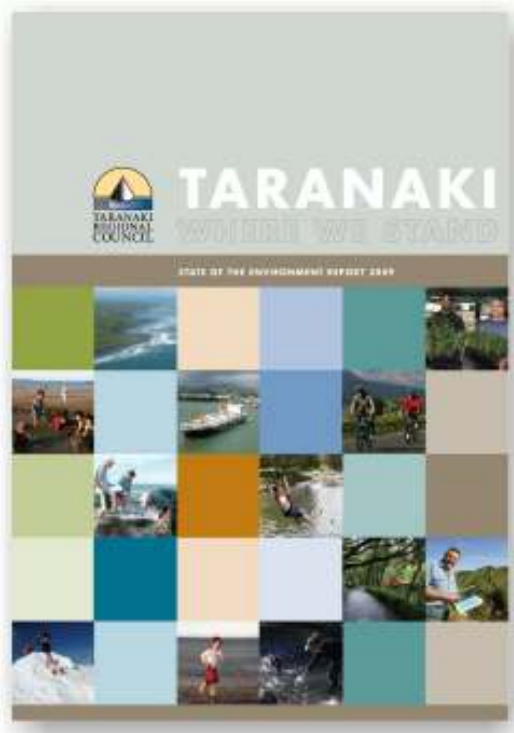
The Council's latest five yearly state of the environment report was launched by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Dr Nick Smith on 14 April 2009. The launch, which took place at a formal function in New Plymouth, was well attended by a wide cross-section of community leaders, district councils, central government agencies, industry, environmental organisations, iwi representatives, individuals and other stakeholders.

The report entitled *Taranaki: where we stand. State of the environment report 2009*, is the Council's third state of the environment report following those prepared in 1996 and 2003. The 2009 report runs to 280 pages and contains 11 chapters dealing with topics such as land and soil, fresh water, coastal and marine environment, biodiversity, atmosphere, landscape, heritage and amenity values, natural hazards, waste and energy.

Putting the report together was a major effort for Council staff with large amounts of data collated, assessed and analysed for publication. Much of the data was obtained from the Council's long-running state of the environment monitoring programme. Many of the individual programmes have now been running for a sufficiently long enough period to enable statistical testing of trends.

Some of the report's main findings were:

- Water quality in Taranaki's rivers and streams is generally good. The ecological health of rivers and streams does decrease down catchments, as would be expected in an intensively farmed region. Significantly, however the report notes that over time, ecological health is either not changing or has measurably improved. This is despite agricultural expansion and intensification.
- There have been further positive movements towards land use sustainability on erosion-prone inland hill country. 87.4% of the hill country is being used sustainably with no significant soil erosion problems.
- Taranaki has excellent air quality. Improvements in air emissions from major industries have continued over the last 5 years.



The Council's 2009 state of the environment report

- The quality of the region's coastal waters is also excellent. The report notes the significant reductions in point source discharges to coastal waters that have occurred since the 1970s with major improvements in treatment and disposal of those that remain.
- Much good work is being undertaken by many individuals and organisations throughout the region to maintain and enhance our indigenous biodiversity. The report notes that ongoing effort will be required to combat pressures on indigenous biodiversity from land development and invasive pest plants and animals.
- Challenges for the future include reducing the impact of land use on water quality in our rivers and streams. The report notes that the Council and the community already have in place programmes with this aim, notably the riparian management programme on the ring plain and that the focus for the future must be on accelerating the rate of implementation of riparian plans.

Other organisations assisted in the preparation of the report including the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries. Community groups and individuals also helped with the preparation of the more than 50 case studies showcasing the environmental and heritage protection efforts of a wide range of organisations and individuals in the region.



Farmer Tom Gibson with well established riparian planting on the banks of the Kaupokonui Stream

Many businesses, council and other organisations supplied information on the costs - both capital and operational costs - of their environmental work. From this, independent economic analysts Business and Economic Research

Limited (Berl), estimated that over the last 5 years capital expenditure on environmental improvements in Taranaki totalled \$216.7 million. With annual operating costs of \$41.8 million, total spending on the environment by the Taranaki community was conservatively estimated at \$85.1 million per year. This reinforced one of the key messages of the report - that the positive outcomes in the report have not come about by accident or by good luck but by the hard work and considerable efforts of the local community.

Every effort was made in preparing the report to present the information in a form that the community could understand. The main chapters begin with an "At a glance" summary of key points. Maps, diagrams and photos are used extensively

throughout the report and for those wanting more detailed information, footnotes point to relevant sources.

At 280 pages, the report is a major document. A 20 page summary booklet has also been produced. This covers the main findings and is designed for a wide audience including schools and community groups.

The report is important for the Council and its ongoing policy development and review work. It helps the Council answer questions such as: “Is the quality of our environment improving or deteriorating?”, “Have our policies and programmes been effective in promoting sustainable management?” and “What standard of environmental quality do we want in Taranaki and what changes if any are required?”.

At the release of the report, the Council’s Chairman David MacLeod noted that the report contains much good news for the people of the region. He also observed that while it reveals solid progress on many fronts it also highlights some areas where more work is needed. This is the benefit of comprehensive, scientifically based state of the environment monitoring and reporting - it provides robust information on which to make sound resource management decisions in future.

2.1.2 Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki

A Hearing of submissions on the Proposed Regional Policy Statement was held on 16 October 2008. The hearing followed an extensive process of pre-hearing consultation and meetings with submitters to resolve outstanding issues raised by submitters. This again proved to be highly effective with no submitters wishing to appear in person at the Hearing. A number of submitters, however, provided further written evidence or submissions that were tabled at the hearing and considered by the Hearing Committee.

Following consideration of the Hearing Committee’s report and recommendations, the Council released its decisions on submissions on 24 February 2009. Only one appeal against the Council’s decisions was lodged with the Environment Court and this was by TrustPower Ltd who reconsidered its earlier position on the issue of water allocation grants and priorities. The Council is undertaking mediation with TrustPower in an effort to reach agreement on a resolution of the appeal.

2.1.3 Review of the Regional Air Quality Plan

Following an extensive process of plan review and development outlined in last year’s annual report, the Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki was publicly notified for submissions on



Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki

7 March 2009. By the close of submissions on 8 May 2009, 45 submissions had been received.

In general terms the submissions received were positive. Many submissions indicated support for the Proposed Plan requesting that certain provisions be retained. However, there were also requests for changes to various parts of the plan including changes to some policies, methods, rules and definitions.

The single issue that attracted the largest number of submissions (23 of the 45) was the prohibition on residential backyard burning of waste under Rule 31. This is a new rule (not currently in the operative Air Quality Plan) and it attracted both supporting and opposing submissions. 11 of the submissions were in complete support of the rule and a further 6 in partial support but requested certain exemptions. Three submissions opposed the rule with a further three opposing the rule due to the size of their property and the cost that the rule would impose, however the size of the submitters' properties in those cases means they are not covered by the rule.

Submissions were also received by the oil and gas industry which submitted largely in opposition to the proposed reduction in the duration of flaring per zone from hydrocarbon exploration well sites.

Other submissions were received from the pork and poultry industries (both supporting and opposing some aspects of the plan dealing with intensive farming); the contracting industry largely supporting rules in the plan on earthworks and farming and horticultural interests regarding rules in the plan on applying fertilisers and soil conditioners.

The Resource Management Act requires the Council to prepare a summary of decisions requested in the submissions, publicly notify the availability of the summary and call for further public submissions in support or opposition to the submissions already made. Public notice was given on 13 June 2009, with further submissions required to be lodged by 10 July 2009.

The next stages of the process will involve the preparation of an officers' report and recommendations on submissions. This report will be circulated to submitters as a basis for pre-hearing consultation.

A further report recording the outcome of the pre-hearing process will then be prepared. This will form the basis of Council deliberations at a Hearing of submissions.

This process will continue throughout 2009/2010. Given the time involved in evaluating submissions, meeting with submitters and developing recommendations for Council consideration, the hearing of submissions is not likely to occur until late in 2009 or early 2010.

2.1.4 Review of the Regional Coastal Plan

The review of the Regional Coastal Plan progressed slowly during the year. Major progress on the review was delayed to await the release of the New Zealand Coastal

Policy Statement (NZCPS) being prepared by central government. The NZCPS will have a significant bearing on the content of the Coastal Plan, including details of activities classified as Restricted Coastal Activities which are to be included in Coastal Plans.

The Board of Inquiry on the NZCPS has prepared its report and recommendations to the Minister of Conservation but the final NZCPS has yet to be released.

This situation has meant that the Council was not able to meet the Annual Plan target to complete a review of the Coastal Plan in 2008/2009. However work continued on a number of aspects of the review, including a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the rules and other provisions of the currently operative plan.

2.1.5 Interim review of the Regional Soil Plan

An interim review of the Regional Soil Plan for Taranaki commenced in the second half of the year.

The Resource Management Act requires the Council to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of policies, rules or other methods in its plans and to report on the results of its monitoring every 5 years. The Regional Soil Plan became operative in October 2001. The Plan addresses the Council's soil conservation responsibilities (soil erosion and soil health). It differs significantly from other plans prepared by the Council in that it largely enshrines a non-regulatory approach. Non-regulatory methods include the provision of information and advice to land users and the provision of property planning services. Under its Sustainable Land Management Programme, the Council works closely with landholders to promote the voluntary adoption of sustainable land management practices on erosion-prone land in the hill country and coastal sand country.

The generally non-regulatory approach to soil conservation is complemented by two regional rules that set out requirements for vegetation disturbance activities over 5ha in area on land that has a slope greater than 28°.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the plan remains relevant, lawful, and appropriate and that it is achieving its purpose in an effective and efficient way. Depending on the conclusions drawn from the review, the Council will need to decide whether changes to the plan are required now or can wait until the 10 year review of the plan.

It is anticipated that a report on the review will be completed for consideration by the Council in the first quarter of 2009/2010. It will then be distributed to key stakeholders for comment. The comments received and responses to them will be included in a final report later in 2009/2010.

2.1.6 Review of Lower Waitara River Reserve Management Plan

The Council commenced a review of its Lower Waitara River Local Purpose Reserve Management Plan in the latter part of the year. The Plan, which was prepared under the Reserves Act 1977 and approved by the Minister of Conservation in 2001,

provides a framework to guide management of the reserve. The reserve has an official Reserves Act classification of "Lower Waitara River Local Purpose Reserve (Soil Conservation and River control and Soil Conservation, River Control and Recreation Purposes). The reserve contains the Council's river control and flood protection scheme works on the Lower Waitara River.

The Reserves Act requires the Plan to be kept under continuous review and the Council has committed itself to review the plan regularly, at intervals of no more than 5 years.

The review process commenced during the latter part of 2008/2009 has involved giving public notice of the Council's intention to review the Plan; inviting suggestions on the proposed plan; holding meetings with the Waitara Community Board, and holding a public meeting in Waitara to seek feedback from the public on the future direction for management of the reserve.



Lower Waitara River Local Purpose Reserve

It is anticipated that a draft Plan will be publicly notified for submissions early in the next financial year (2009/2010). The Council will provide an opportunity for submitters to be heard in support of their submissions before submitting the final plan to the Minister of Conservation for approval.

2.1.7 Review of navigation safety bylaw

A review of the Council's navigation safety bylaw for Port Taranaki and its approaches was commenced during the year. Discussions were held with representatives of Maritime New Zealand regarding the operation of navigation safety requirements throughout the region including the requirement of Maritime Rule 91 administered by Maritime New Zealand. In addition, the Council was advised that Maritime New Zealand was to review Maritime Rule 91 (which sets national navigation safety rules) and that part of this review was to cover matters that the Council was to consider as part of its own bylaw review.

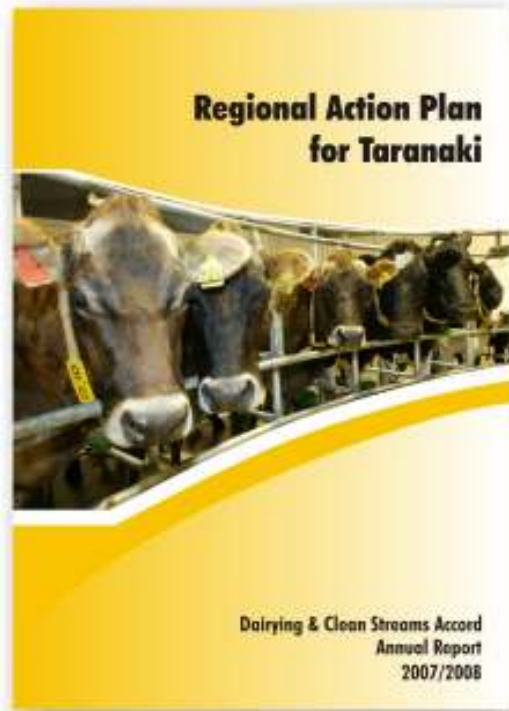
Information was collected from other regional councils on the nature and scope of bylaws in other regions. A meeting was held with the Council's harbourmaster, deputy harbourmasters and honorary enforcement officers to obtain feedback on the effectiveness and general workability of the Council's current bylaw for the Port. The overall consensus from those applying the bylaws at the coalface was that the bylaws have worked well but that a review was timely given the increased use of the port.

The detailed redrafting and notification of new bylaws however was held up owing to the possibility of major developments at the Port that would have had significant implications for design of the bylaws, coupled with the impending review of Maritime Rule 91. This meant that the review of the bylaws was not completed in 2008/2009 as programmed. Work will continue on the bylaw review in 2009/2010.

2.1.8 Other policy

Dairying and Clean Streams Accord

In October 2008, the Council prepared its fourth annual report on Taranaki's progress in meeting the targets of the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord as set out in the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki. The Accord is an agreement between Fonterra, regional councils, Ministry for the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to work together to achieve clean, healthy water in dairying regions. It contains targets in a number of areas to be implemented through Regional Action Plans. The Regional Action Plan for Taranaki, prepared by local representatives of Fonterra, Federated Farmers and the Taranaki Regional Council, adapts the national targets to Taranaki conditions.



Regional Action Plan for Taranaki
Annual Report 2007/2008

The Annual Report for Taranaki over the 2007/2008 year period showed that:

- 72% of all Taranaki dairy farms have a property plan (up from 62% in 2006/2007) and we are on track to meet the target of 90% of dairy farms to have a property plan by 2010.
- 61%* of streambank is protected by fencing. Of that protection, 56% consists of fencing that was already in place (existing) at the time of preparing the property plans and 5% consists of new work completed on dairy farms (Taranaki target: 50% of property plans are to be implemented by 2010, 90% by 2015).
- 56%* of streambank is protected by planting and vegetation. Of that protection, 52% consists of vegetation that was already in place (existing) at the time of preparing the property plans and 4% consists of new work completed on dairy farms (Taranaki target: 50% of property plans are to be implemented by 2010, 90% by 2015).

*The sample size of 72% of dairy farms should be representative of regional conditions

- 97%* of all regular stream crossing points at the regional level are adequately bridged or culverted (Taranaki target: 50% of regular crossing points are to have bridges or culverts by 2007, 90% by 2015).
- 100% of dairy farms in Taranaki have a farm dairy effluent discharge consent that complies with the Taranaki Regional Fresh Water Plan (Taranaki target: 100% of dairy farms to have a consent that complies with the regional plan by 2004).
- 76% of regionally significant wetlands are fenced and we are on track to meet the target of 90% fenced by 2015.
- 99.1% of dairy farms in Taranaki to have a nutrient budget in place (up from 65% in 2006/2007) and we are on track to meet the 100% target.

Overall, the Accord partners and the Taranaki dairy farming community should be satisfied with the continuing progress being made on most of the targets set out in the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki. A number of targets have already been achieved and others are on track to be achieved by the dates set.

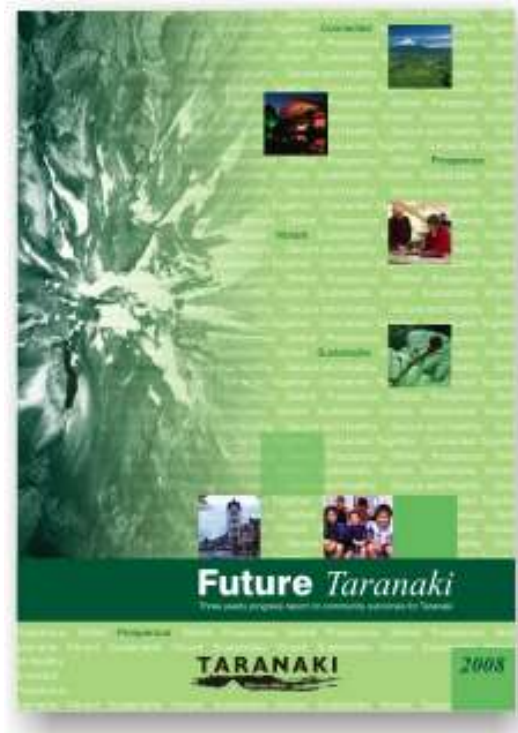
However, an issue that continues to exist is the slow pace of property plan implementation. Whilst the target for 2010 has been met, this is largely due to existing fencing and planting carried out pre-Accord. If plan implementation continues at its current rate, the implementation target for 2015 will not be met. The Council has continued to make adjustments to its approach to promote wider and faster implementation. However if the 2015 implementation target is to be met, other Accord partners and ultimately dairy farmers will need to apply more effort to physical works.

Community outcomes

The third report on progress towards the achievement of community outcomes for Taranaki was released in February 2009. The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to monitor and report on the progress made in achieving community outcomes. These outcomes were identified earlier in a joint process with the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils.

The Taranaki Regional Council has agreed to take on the role of preparing an annual progress report and reporting it to the Future Taranaki Facilitation Group, a group of local and central government representatives formed to identify priorities for taking action towards community outcomes.

The 2008 report was the first progress report to



Third progress report on community outcomes for Taranaki

incorporate information on indicators collected from a survey of the perceptions of Taranaki residents on various aspects of the outcomes. The "perception" type indicators include such things as residents' perceptions of safety, satisfaction with health services, infrastructure and transport systems, levels of satisfaction with work/life balance and satisfaction with management of the natural built environment. The community survey was undertaken to coincide with the requirement in the Local Government Act 2002 that Council's report every three years on progress in implementing community outcomes. The survey enabled the full suite of 45 indicators to be reported on whereas the previous annual reports had noted that the survey information would be provided in the first full three year report programmed for 2008/2009.

The report noted that good progress had been made overall towards achieving the outcomes of a prosperous and sustainable Taranaki. Of interest for the Taranaki Regional Council from the community survey was a high level of satisfaction (87% or almost nine in 10 residents) with management of Taranaki's natural environment. Satisfaction with public transport on the other hand averaged 44%. The report noted issues in relation to crime rates, recorded road injuries and the number of school leavers with no formal qualifications. However, these are issues to be taken up primarily by agencies other than the Taranaki Regional Council.

Review of Regional Waste Strategy

The review of the Council's Regional Waste Strategy programmed for 2008/2009 was deferred because of the implications for waste management planning and implementation arising out of enactment of the Waste Minimisation Act in September 2008.

Under the new Act there is no statutory role or funding for a regional council to be engaged in waste management. Should such a role be desired in future, territorial authorities will need to create a role and provide scope for any regional council involvement through new Waste Management and Minimisation Plans that must be prepared by territorial authorities.

These plans must provide objectives, policies and methods for achieving effective and efficient waste management and minimisation within the territorial authority district and in doing so have regard to the New Zealand Waste Strategy.

The Act also introduced a Waste Disposal levy to be applied to the disposal of waste to a landfill. The levy is to be collected and forwarded to central government. Fifty percent of the levy is to be returned to territorial authorities with the remainder of the levy being available through a contestable fund on application to the Minister. Levy money can only be spent on matters to promote or achieve waste minimisation, which must be in accordance with a district council's waste management and minimisation plan.

The Council's Regional Waste Strategy (which is a non-statutory document) was designed to integrate and coordinate waste management initiatives across the region. The strategy was developed in conjunction with the Regional Solid Waste Working Party made up of representatives of this Council, the three district councils and Waste Management Ltd.

Under the new Act there will be benefits to continuing to cooperate and promote waste minimisation and waste management projects with region-wide benefits. In recognition of such benefits the Taranaki Regional Council agreed in principle to support a proposal to reconstitute the current Regional Solid Wastes Working Party as a joint committee of both regional council and district council representatives having functions under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008. This could include for example extending the current Working Party's role to cover waste minimisation and revising the Working Party concept from a purely advisory role to a decision making role, including decision making associated with the use of waste management levies.

The New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils will each need to consider the proposal for a joint committee and agree to suitable terms of reference.

In the meantime, the Council will proceed with a review of its Regional Waste Strategy beginning early in 2009/2010 with an update of a waste inventory for the region.

Review of Water Shortage Event Standard Operating Procedure

The Council reviewed its 2001 Water Shortage Event Standard Operating Procedure and adopted a revised procedure document.

The purpose of the document is to:

- assist the Council to fulfil its functions under the Resource Management Act to avoid or reduce the risk to the environment and property in water shortage events;
- provide a framework for the management of water shortage events in Taranaki and set out procedures to be followed during such events; and
- establish systems to collect and disseminate information, liaise with water users, monitor water shortage events, issue warnings, advise of restrictions that apply and monitor compliance with any restrictions that may be put in place.

The procedures set out in the 2001 document remain largely intact in the reviewed procedure document, with relatively minor changes to reflect operational experiences as well as changes to the Council's hydrometric network.

One option provided for in the reviewed document is for the Council, in a severe water shortage event, to take a coordination/facilitation role to form or assist in the formation of a drought committee.

2.2 Advocacy and response

2.2.1 Submissions

The Council made 19 submissions to policy proposals or initiatives proposed by various agencies. This compares with 30 submissions made in the previous year

(2007/2008) and 33 in 2006/2007. The number of submissions made over the last 5 years is shown in Figure 1.

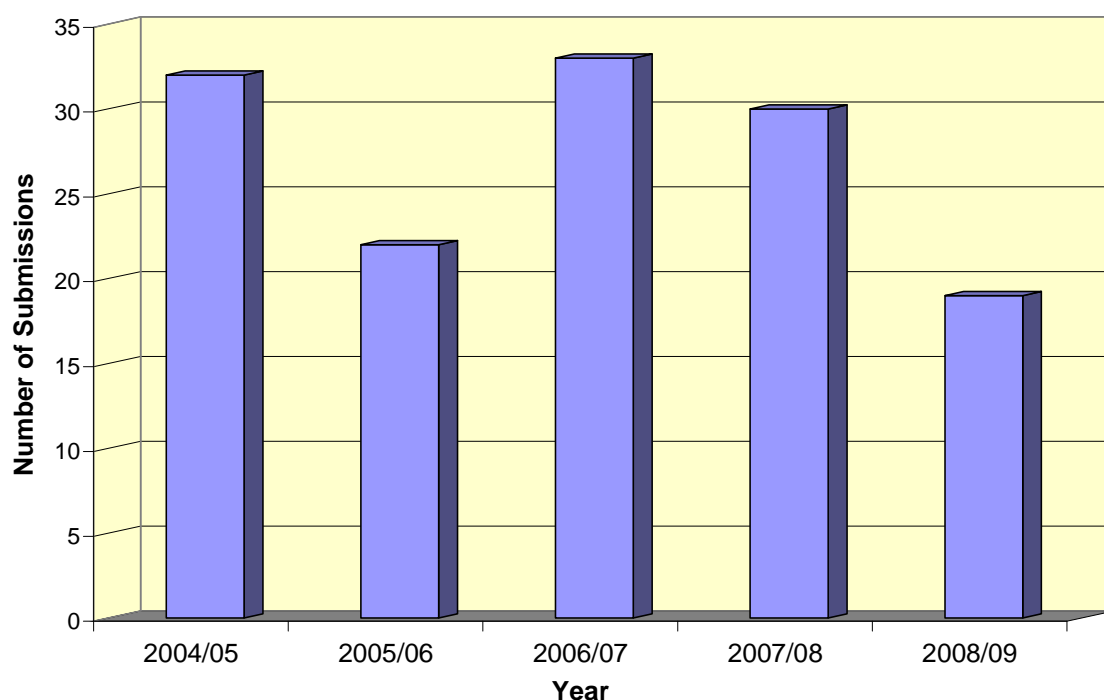


Figure 1 Number of submissions made by year

The full list of submissions made in 2008/2009 and the result or outcome of those submissions (where known) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Submissions made in 2008/2009

| Submission made to | Policy initiative or proposal | Results |
|---|---|--|
| Ministry for the Environment | Proposed National Environmental Standard on Ecological Flows and Water Levels | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Board of Inquiry on National Policy Statement on Renewable Electricity Generation | Proposed National policy Statement on Renewable Energy Generation | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Ministry for the Environment | Proposed National Environmental Standard for On-site Wastewater Systems | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management | The Guide to the National CDEM Plan 2006 Draft Revisions | Submission considered |
| New Plymouth District Council | Rural Review Discussion Paper | Submission considered and reflected in Council decisions |
| Board of Inquiry on National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management | Proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Minister for the Environment | Ideas sought for reform of the Resource Management Act | Some suggestions reflected in RMA Amendment Bill |
| MAF Biosecurity NZ | High Priority Organisms Project | Submission forwarded. |

| Submission made to | Policy initiative or proposal | Results |
|---|--|--|
| | | Matter is under consideration. |
| Department of Conservation | Review of Canada Goose Wildlife status | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Local Government and Environment Select Committee | Resource Management (Simplifying and Streamlining) Amendment Bill 2009 | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Ministry for the Environment | Waste Minimisation in New Zealand | Submission considered and proposals amended |
| Taranaki Regional Council | Draft Regional Land Transport Programme for Taranaki | Draft Programme amended |
| Environment Waikato | Draft Regional Land Transport Programme for Waikato | Submission considered. Some changes made. |
| Taranaki Regional Council | Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki | Submissions yet to be heard |
| New Plymouth District Council | Long-Term Council Community Plan submission on passenger transport infrastructure | Submission considered, acknowledged and endorsed |
| Ministry of Consumer Affairs | Draft Consumer Information Standards (Water Efficiency) Regulations 2009 | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Maritime New Zealand | Part 200 Rules for off-shore installations discharges | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| Department of Conservation | Intention to grant a concession to GNS to undertake monitoring at Egmont National Park | Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration. |
| NZ Historic Places Trust | Registration proposal for Kaupokonui dairy factory complex under the Historic Places Act | Submission forwarded. Yet to be considered. |

All submissions were made within the required timeframes.

It is sometimes difficult to determine, given the processes adopted, whether the submissions have made a difference to the policy or other matter under consideration. In some cases there is formal feedback and the submissions were successful while in others no or limited feedback is provided. Senior council officers receive anecdotal feedback on submissions that is positive and that changes in policy have been made as a result or other actions taken in recognition of the matters raised.

Senior Council staff were also directly involved in various working parties and other fora in Wellington to advise on policy development. In addition, Council staff responded to many other requests for advice or comment on policy matters.



A submission was made on the Government's Proposed National Policy Statement on Fresh Water Management

The net effect of the Council's wide ranging advocacy activities has been to make policy proposals more relevant, pragmatic and cost effective for the region.

2.2.2 Other initiatives

Other policy related advocacy and liaison activities were undertaken during the year.

Transfer of Building Act functions

On 1 July 2008, the Council entered into a Deed of Transfer with Environment Waikato to transfer to Environment Waikato, the Council's functions of a Building Consent Authority (and some complementary non-Building Consent Authority functions) in relation to large dams.

Under amendments to the Building Act 2004, all regional councils were required to become an accredited Building Consent Authority (BCA) to process building consent applications for large dams including significant modifications to existing large dams and their appurtenant structures.

The costs of becoming a BCA and the ongoing audit, training, system modification etc requirements were significant and Councils were expected to pass on all or some of the costs to applicants. For many regional councils including Taranaki, where the workload in this area was very low, the costs of becoming a BCA and passing these costs on to applicants was clearly unrealistic.

As a consequence, a number of regional councils including the Taranaki Regional Council worked collaboratively to agree on a transfer of BCA and related functions to Environment Waikato, significantly reducing costs to this Council.

The Council has retained a number of major functions under the Building Act in relation to dams including the preparation of a Dangerous Dams Policy, maintaining a register of dams in the region, the provision of Project Information Memoranda in relation to dams and the administration of Warrants of Fitness in relation to dams.

Ngati Mutunga MOU and Iwi Management Plan

During the year the Council held discussions with Ngati Mutunga Iwi, to progress the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Ngati Mutunga, similar to those proposed with other iwi.

The Council also provided technical support and input into the preparation of an Iwi Management Plan being prepared by Ngati Mutunga. The Iwi Management Plan is a vehicle for Iwi to express that Iwi's cultural perspective concerning the environment and resource management and their role as kaitiaki; detail the goals and aspirations of iwi with regard to the environment; provide a strategic approach to dealing with issues of concern to the Iwi and introduce mechanisms to make iwi involvement in resource management processes more efficient and effective.

There are potentially significant benefits to the Council from such plans. These include Council staff having access to information concerning the value and belief systems of iwi with regard to the environment. Staff are therefore better able to

recognise and provide for these values in carrying out Council functions under the RMA, including the preparation of regional policy statements and plans and the processing of resource consents.

Updates on science and technology

Good information is the foundation of good policy. During the year the Council was kept up to date on a number of developments in the area of policy, science and technology that will be of relevance to its policy development and review responsibilities. These included updates on:

- Nitrification inhibitors and their potential place in nutrient budgeting, water and soil management and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Primary sector Water Partnership Leadership - Plan of Action;
- Energy saver lightbulbs and their environmental implications;
- The future of pest management in New Zealand: A think piece;
- Afforestation Grant Scheme;
- Reports on managing diffuse source pollution from agriculture in the UK;
- Bridging the gap between environmental knowledge and research;
- Assimilation and dilution of discharges from dairy effluent ponds;
- Biosecurity surveillance strategy 2020;
- Sequestration of carbon dioxide - biochar update;
- Study of cumulative effects of dairy pond effluent discharges;
- Public perception of New Zealand's environment - 2008;
- MCI values, site altitude and stream quality in Taranaki ring plain streams;
- Waiokura catchment best practice dairying study.

Conclusion

The 2008/2009 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. The preparation of the Council's third state of the environment report was a major undertaking culminating in a successful launch of the report by the Minister for the Environment on 14 April 2009. Reviews of major policy documents commenced and continued during the year. The Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki was released for public submissions and a Hearing of submissions on the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki concluded and Council decisions released.

The Council was again active in the area of advocacy and response, representing and advocating the interests of the region over a wide range of matters from the review of Canada Goose Wildlife status to proposed major amendments to the Resource Management Act.

Much of the policy and planning work of the Council has involved working alongside stakeholders and others in the community to ensure that the Council's policies are both effective and efficient in carrying out the Council's statutory responsibilities and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the Taranaki community.