

Executive summary

The 2005/2006 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. The Council:

- commenced a review of the Council's Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals and Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants agreeing to publicly notify a revised Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants on or before 1 July 2006;
- prepared a draft Proposed Regional Policy Statement and released the draft for comments from key stakeholders and for legal audit;
- completed an aquaculture constraints mapping exercise;
- continued with the development of a Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki;
- made 22 submissions to the policy initiatives of other agencies including discussion documents, proposed policies, strategies, plans and draft legislation, all within required timeframes;
- completed an Inventory of Key Native Ecosystems in furtherance of its policy to maintain and protect the indigenous biological diversity of Taranaki;
- reported on a successful first year of implementation of the Regional Action Plan under the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord;
- completed an internal audit of the management of freshwater resources and
- undertook a range of other policy and response initiatives 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 2005/2006 year. This is the first Annual Report for Policy and Planning activities.

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 planning staff. As required, other council officers are involved in planning activities.

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 Act 1994
- Maritime Transport Act 1994
- Transport Services Licensing Act 1989.

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 with 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 2005/2006 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 2005/2006 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 2005/2006 programme:

Implement a programme of policy, plan and strategy development and review including:

- commencing a review of the Council’s *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* and *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants*
- releasing a *Proposed Regional Policy Statement* for public submissions
- conducting an aquaculture constraints mapping exercise
- developing a *Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki*.

In response to the objective for advocacy and response, the Taranaki Regional Council adopted the following performance measures for its 2005/2006 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.

2 Report on progress

2.1 Statutory policies, plans and strategies

2.1.1 Review of pest management strategies

Reviews of both the pest plant and pest animal management strategies were commenced during the year. The review of the pest plant strategy was advanced first as this strategy fell for review at an earlier date than the pest animal strategy.

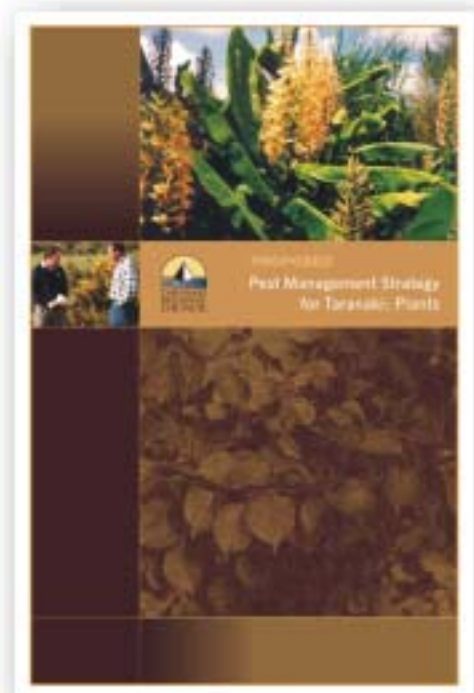
The current pest plant strategy was made operative on 1 July 2001. The Council is required to review the strategy after five years. The formal review process involves the Council in publicly notifying a new strategy proposal, calling for public submissions on the proposal and considering those submissions before adopting a new strategy.

During the year the Council completed preliminary review work on the operative strategy to assess its efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. This involved evaluating monitoring data and other information collected by the Council over the previous five years, holding discussions on the operative strategy and possible changes required with affected parties and reviewing best practice in pest plant management through an inter-regional project team (the Biosecurity Generic Guidelines Group).

In undertaking the review and reporting to the Council, it was noted that the current pest plant strategy had stood the test of time well and continued to be relevant. Its provisions were clearly stated, well understood and widely accepted throughout the community.

However, with developments over the previous five years and the experience gained from implementing the strategy, several changes were agreed to by the Council as a basis for further consultation with the community during the formal public submissions stage of the review. These changes included:

- the inclusion of Undaria, an invasive seaweed, to the Proposed Strategy with rules to require owners of boats and structures to control the plant
- the inclusion of Purple Ragwort in the Proposed Strategy
- an increase in land occupier obligations in relation to Pampas Grass requiring its removal in all circumstances after 2010
- amendments to Strategy rules requiring land occupiers adjacent to the Kapuni Stream to destroy Old Man's Beard on their property
- provisions for increased site-led pest control to treat environmental pest plants impacting on sites with regionally significant biodiversity values.



Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants

The Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants was publicly notified on 1 July 2006. It is anticipated that decisions on public submissions will be made and a new pest plant strategy adopted by the Council in the first half of the 2006/2007 financial year.

Work on the review of the Council's pest animal strategy also commenced during the year. This strategy has also been working well with the Self-Help Possum Control Programme proving to be highly effective in reducing possum numbers on the ring plain. This is having major benefits for the Taranaki economy and for protecting and maintaining the region's native plants and animals. As the Programme nears its maximum coverage, increasing attention will be given to site-led animal pest control on sites with regionally significant biodiversity values and this will be included in the review of the Strategy.

Earlier in the year, the Council signalled the possibility that measures to address a new pest animal to Taranaki: the Argentine ant may be included in the upcoming review of the Strategy.

It is expected that a Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals, will be released for public submissions in the first half of the 2006/2007 financial year.

Both pest plant and pest animal management strategies are making important contributions to the community outcomes of a sustainable and a prosperous Taranaki.

2.1.2 Review of Regional Policy Statement

The review of this strategically important policy document continued throughout the year. The Regional Policy Statement is a requirement of the Resource Management Act. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the significant resource management issues of the region and what is to be done in relation to those issues. It is also to achieve integrated management of resources, ensuring that agencies work together to achieve common objectives across all aspects of the environment.

Review work during the year focused on drafting a revised Regional Policy Statement drawing on earlier consultation and the results of state of the environment monitoring. The outcome of the earlier phase of the review was that the Regional Policy Statement had set a sound policy direction for resource management in Taranaki and that no major shifts in policy were required. However, changes were proposed to include new issues (such as indigenous biodiversity and sustainable urban development); to align issues with those developed subsequent to the Regional Policy Statement in other Council plans and strategies (such as soil health and waste management) and to reflect changes in legislation or central government policy on such issues as historic heritage, climate change and renewable energy.

It was noted that changes to the Resource Management Act had given Regional Policy Statements greater legal weight by requiring regional and district plans to give effect to the Regional Policy Statement.

In March 2006, the Council considered a draft Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki and agreed to forward the draft for review and comment from a wide-range of key stakeholders and to submit the draft for legal review for compliance with the RMA and statutory documents. Many constructive comments on the draft were received and these are being assessed for inclusion in the Proposed Regional Policy Statement.

The considerable work required in drafting and revising such a wide ranging document meant that the Council was not in a position to release a Proposed Regional Policy Statement for public submissions during the year, as originally intended. However, very good progress was made towards a final document for public notification and submissions. It has been important to take the time to consider carefully, the comments and suggestions made to the Council before the document enters the more legally prescribed statutory process. Nevertheless the Council expects to publicly notify a revised Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki in the first half of the 2006/2007 year.

2.1.3 Aquaculture constraints mapping

Changes to the way in which the aquaculture industry (marine farming) is managed in New Zealand were introduced in early 2005. Amendments to the Resource Management Act introduced new functions and powers for regional councils. These included powers for regional councils to identify Aquaculture Management Areas (AMAs) through a change to its Regional Coastal Plan or to identify areas where aquaculture is excluded and then to invite the industry to apply for a plan change to establish AMAs in the remaining coastal space.

The nature of the Taranaki coast is such that it is not suited to traditional aquaculture activities because of the very rough seas and high turbidity, and demand for space for aquaculture is currently non-existent. The Council decided that under these circumstances lengthy and costly processes to identify AMAs or excluded areas was not justified. However, changes in technology or in potential species for marine farming could well change the outlook in future. An initial aquaculture constraints mapping exercise was therefore completed during the year. It identifies potential areas that may not be suitable for aquaculture such as recreational and amenity areas, fishing reefs, important ecological, historic or cultural sites, pipelines, cables and port areas.

The mapping exercise provides useful information for any interested parties on areas that might not be suitable for aquaculture and conversely, areas that may potentially be available. It also places the Council in a good position to go further in future if it needed to. The mapping report was distributed to the aquaculture industry, iwi and Venture Taranaki.

2.1.4 Walkways and cycleways strategy

Development of a Walkways and Cycleways Strategy continued during the year. Information on current walkways and cycleways was collected. A Working Party comprising representatives of the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, Taranaki Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Federated

Farmers, Transit New Zealand, Venture Taranaki, and the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board, met to discuss the scope and content of the Strategy.

Work on the Strategy was slowed somewhat during the year by the demands of reviewing the Regional Land Transport Strategy (of which the Walkways and Cycleways Strategy is a component part), and public passenger transport planning (see Regional land transport planning and passenger transport Annual Report). Nevertheless, useful progress was made and this will pickup further in 2006/2007.

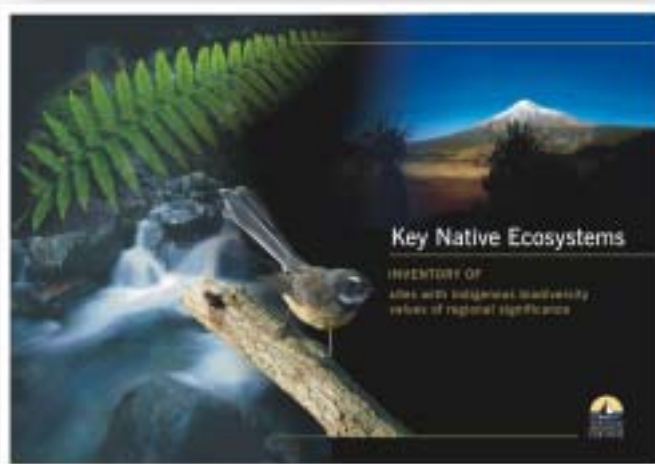
It is intended that the Strategy will look to identify current and possible future walkways and cycleways as part of an integrated, region-wide network connecting Taranaki's natural environment and linking with other walking, cycling and road infrastructure and population centres. The further development of such opportunities features strongly in the community outcomes for Taranaki under a sustainable and vibrant Taranaki. Greater opportunities for walking and cycling also have important economic, tourism and health benefits and will be an important part of the region's land transport network.

2.1.5 Other policy

Inventory of key native ecosystems

An inventory of key native ecosystems in the Taranaki region was completed during the year. The Inventory entitled '*Key Native Ecosystems – Inventory of sites with Indigenous Biodiversity values of Regional Significance*', provides site-specific information on 155 key terrestrial native ecosystems. In relation to each site, information is presented that identifies the site and describes its habitat type, land tenure, size, flora and fauna and values. It also identifies risks or pressures on the values present and the current condition of the sites. The current protection status of each site (if any) – for example QEII covenant, - is also identified.

The combined area of these sites amounts to 118,933 hectares or 16.4% of the region. Of these, 44 sites covering 109,486 hectares are in the public conservation estate. The majority of sites, 111 – are smaller sites on privately owned land covering some 9,447 hectares.



Inventory of key native ecosystems in Taranaki

The Inventory is the culmination of a comprehensive 'desktop' exercise involving the review and analysis of site-specific information on all sites of interest. The information gathered has come from a wide variety of sources including the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, Department of Conservation, QEII Trust, Royal Forest and Bird

Protection Society, Fish and Game New Zealand, the Taranaki Kiwi Trust and the Council's own wetlands database which was updated during the year.

The sites described in the Inventory have values considered to be of regional significance based on criteria of rarity and distinctiveness, representativeness, ecological context and ongoing sustainability.

The Inventory is an important part of the Council's policy adopted in the previous year for maintaining and protecting indigenous biological diversity in Taranaki. The need for the Inventory was driven by the lack of readily accessible site-specific information on sites of regional significance. The completion of the Inventory is therefore a vital step in the Council's development of a strategy and management programmes for a targeted site-led approach to maintaining indigenous biodiversity in Taranaki.

Audit of management of freshwater resources

Early in the year a self audit of the Council's management of freshwater resources was carried out. The audit followed a report released in May 2005 by the Office of the Auditor-General entitled '*Horizons and Otago Regional Councils: Management of freshwater resources*'. That report set out the Office of the Auditor-General's key findings and messages for good practice in freshwater management. The Council's own approach to freshwater management was audited against the criteria applied by the Office of the Auditor-General.

The audit showed that the Council met in full or in part, all of the criteria adopted by the Office of the Auditor-General – with 60 of the 68 performance criteria being met in full.

The remaining eight criteria which the Council met 'in part' related primarily to information within the planning documents on linkages between objectives, the environmental results anticipated and monitoring – specifically suggestions that information on monitoring procedures be contained within the statutory plans. This is perhaps more to do with the Council adopting a different approach to structuring its plans than to actual performance in freshwater management whereby the Council has chosen to maintain separate monitoring procedures documents, rather than increase the size and complexity of its statutory planning instruments.

However, the Council can be satisfied that it has performed very well across most of the criteria set by the Office of the Auditor-General in relation to freshwater management. Ways in which to improve further, some of the linkages between objectives and monitoring will be considered when reviewing all of the Council's relevant policy and planning documents.

Dairying and Clean Streams Accord: Annual Report

In September 2005, the Council prepared its first report on Taranaki's progress in meeting the targets of the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord set out in the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki.

The Dairying and Clean Streams Accord is an agreement between Fonterra, regional councils, the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and

Forestry to work together to achieve clean healthy water in dairying areas. 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. The Annual Report for Taranaki over the 2004/2005 period showed that:

- 54% of Taranaki dairy farms have a property plan (Taranaki target: 90% of dairy farms to have a property plan by 2010)
- of the 750 farms surveyed 96% of all regular stream crossings at the regional level are adequately bridged or culverted (Taranaki target: 50% of all regular crossing points are to have bridges or culverts by 2007, 90% by 2015)
- 99.99% of dairy farms in Taranaki have a farm dairy effluent discharge consent that complies with the Council's Regional Fresh Water Plan (Taranaki target: 100% of dairy farms to have a consent that complies with regional plans by 2004)
- 66% of regionally significant wetlands are fenced (Taranaki target: 60% of regionally significant wetlands are to be fenced by 2005, 90% by 2010).



Bridge over regular stock crossing – before and after

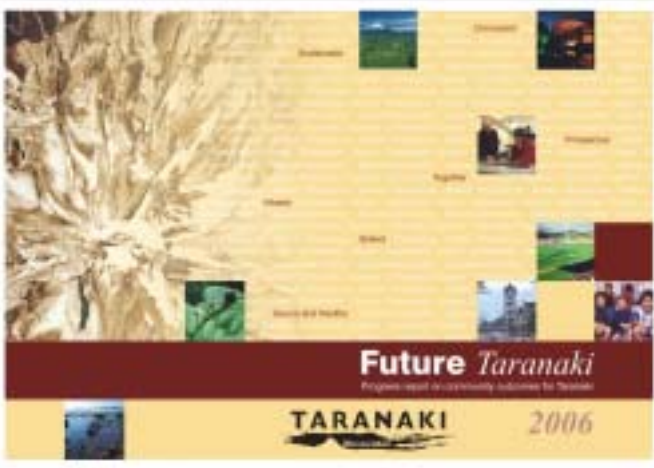
The report showed that Taranaki dairy farmers have put a great deal of effort into working towards the targets set by the Regional Action Plan. Further work, particularly in the areas of increasing awareness of the Accord and its aims, will generate even greater progress and momentum towards achieving the Accord targets. The Council has recommended that targeted promotional work be carried out by Fonterra and Federated Farmers to this end. The Council also recommended that Fonterra make compliance with the Accord a condition of supply. Changes to tax law introduced in mid 2005 and which provide tax deductions for a number of new categories of environmental expenditure, will also provide minor incentives to promote Accord related activities.

For its part the Council will continue its commitments to its property planning services, wetlands protection programme and resource consenting requirements.

Community outcomes

The Council continued its membership of the Future Taranaki Facilitation Group (FTFG). The FTFG was established in 2004 to facilitate and promote action towards the achievement of the community outcomes identified by the people of Taranaki as desirable for the future wellbeing of the region. Other members of the FTFG are senior managers of the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, Taranaki District Health Board, Venture Taranaki, Ministry of Social Development and Te Puni Kokiri. The FTFG reports to a wider Future Partners Group made up of representatives from these and other agencies in the region.

During the 2005/2006 year, the Council led work for the FTFG in identifying a core set of indicators by which progress towards the implementation of the community outcomes could be measured. These were agreed to in October 2005. Subsequent to this, the Council undertook to prepare a report for the FTFG on progress towards the community outcomes, collating available information on the indicators previously agreed to. The report was completed in June 2006. A formal launch of the report is planned for July 2006.



Progress report on community outcomes completed

strong mandate, promotes coordinated and more effective decision-making at the regional level.

The report will form the basis of discussions by the Future Partners Group on priorities for action to promote the economic, social, cultural or environmental wellbeing of the region.

While the Council's role in many of the areas reported on will be minor or peripheral, involvement in the processes of monitoring, planning and reporting, and taking action where it has a

2.2 Advocacy and response

This activity involves the Council in advocating and responding on behalf of the Taranaki community to initiatives proposed by other agencies. It also involves responding to issues which relate to the Council's responsibilities or are of regional significance and which are of interest and concern to the people of Taranaki.

2.2.1 Submissions

The Council made 22 submissions to initiatives proposed by other agencies. This compares with 32 submissions made in the previous year (2004/2005) and 17 in 2003/2004. The numbers of submissions made over the last 5 years is shown in Figure 1.

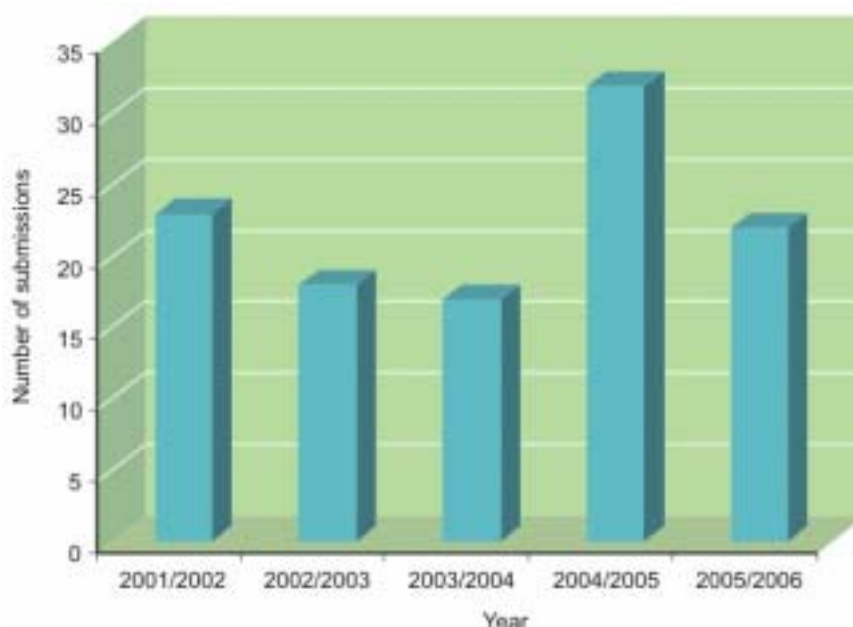


Figure 1 Number of submissions made by year

The full list of submissions made in 2005/2006 and the result or outcome of those submissions (where known) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Submissions made in 2005/2006

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Result
Horizons Regional Council	Regional Land Transport Strategy Review – initial consultation paper (July 2005)	Comments noted and included in draft strategy
Maritime New Zealand	Draft 2006 NZ Marine Oil Spill Response Strategy (August 2005)	Submission considered
Ministry for the Environment	Draft Offshore Petroleum Industry Practices Accord (September 2005)	Submission considered and guidelines developed
New Plymouth District Council	Coastal Strategy Discussion Document – Ideas for Draft Vision, Goals and Actions July 2005 (September 2005)	Comments noted and amendments made to parts of the document
MAF, Biosecurity Strategic Unit	Crown contributions to Regional Pest Management Strategies (October 2005)	Awaiting further response (unlikely to secure Crown contributions)
Ministry for the Environment	Proposed National Environmental Standard for Human Drinking-water Sources (October 2005)	Submission considered. Proposed NES still being developed and likely to take a less complex approach than initially proposed
New Plymouth District Council	Preliminary information gathering on NPDC Coastal Reserves Management Plan (October 2005)	Information supplied and acknowledged
Animal Welfare Group Biosecurity New Zealand	Draft Animal Welfare (Companion Cats) Code of Welfare 2005 (October 2005)	Draft code revised
New Plymouth District Council	Draft District Tree Policy (November 2005)	Draft Policy document amended in part
Stratford District Council	Proposed Stratford District Trade Waste Bylaw (November 2005)	Minor amendments sought and were made

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Result
Horizons Regional Council	Draft Regional Land Transport Strategy for the Manawatu-Wanganui region (January 2006)	Support for Strategy noted. Amendments made to parts of the Strategy
Ministry of Economic Development	Report for national guidance on the management of electricity transmission (February 2006)	Matter still under consideration by central government
New Plymouth District Council	Draft Coastal Strategy (February 2006)	Submission considered and parts of Strategy amended
NZ Historic Places Trust	Draft Guide to Heritage Provisions. Dangerous, Earthquake Prone, Insanitary Buildings and Dangerous Dams Policies. Building Act 2004 (March 2006)	Draft guide amended. Letter of thanks received
New Plymouth District Council	Draft NPDC Structure Plans for Urenui and Oakura	Submission considered. Structure plans still under development
Transit New Zealand	Draft 2006/07 – 2015/16, 10 Year State Highway Forecast (March 2006)	Draft Forecast amended
Local Government and Environment Select Committee	Resource Management (Climate Protection) Amendment Bill (April 2006)	Bill still under consideration
South Taranaki District Council	Proposed Ten Year Plan (May 2006)	Submission considered and Plan amended
New Plymouth District Council	Proposed Ten Year Community Plan (May 2006)	Submission considered and Plan amended
Walking Access Consultation Panel	Outdoor Walking Access Consultation Document (June 2006)	Submission forwarded. Matter is still under consideration
Department of Building and Housing	Proposed Standards for accreditation as a Building Consent Authority (June 2006)	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Ministry of Transport	Public transport procurement legislation review (June 2006)	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration

All submissions made were made within the required timeframes and generally resulted in changes being made.

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.

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

A wide range of other policy initiatives were undertaken during the year.

New Plymouth District Council transfer agreement

After negotiations, the Taranaki Regional Council and New Plymouth District Council agreed to a transfer of powers from the New Plymouth District Council to the Taranaki Regional Council in relation to consent processing for coastal hard protection works. This means that rules in the New Plymouth District Plan controlling the erection of hard protection works will now be administered by the Taranaki Regional Council where these works cross over the landward boundary of the Coastal Marine Area and are partially in the Coastal Hazard Zone and the Coastal Policy Area as defined in the New Plymouth District Plan. This will avoid duplication of documentation and consultation with respect to the issuing of consents for coastal hard protection works and will achieve integrated resource management for such works. Following the transfer, applicants need only apply to one council instead of two for a resource consent, resulting in cost savings and efficiencies for applicants, councils and the wider community.

Undaria eradication trial

In March 2005, *Undaria*, an invasive, exotic seaweed, was found in Taranaki coastal waters for the first time. It can colonise many different types of substrates and is capable of having significant adverse effects on environmental values as well as fouling ship hulls and wharves. In July 2005 the Council agreed to undertake an *Undaria* eradication trial in Port Taranaki where the species was found. While the Council had no statutory obligation to undertake the trial it took the opportunity to try to eradicate *Undaria* and to give effect to its broad policy objective to protect the region's coastal waters and biodiversity. Monitoring carried out during the year revealed that the trial was a success. *Undaria* was subsequently included in the Council's revised proposed pest plant management strategy (see earlier sections of this report) as an eradication pest plant.

Response to threat of didymo

Didymo is an invasive Northern Hemisphere diatom alga. In bloom *didymo* forms large unsightly brown mats that smother the riverbed affecting aquatic life, habitat and food sources for fish as well as affecting recreational and amenity values. In response to known infestations of *didymo* in South Island rivers, the Council in conjunction with staff from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) and Taranaki Fish and Game Council carried out a survey of a range of sites in Taranaki waterways. No evidence of the presence of *didymo* in Taranaki waters was found. However, the Council agreed to assist with a public awareness campaign by Biosecurity New Zealand by distributing information packs to river user clubs, organisations and recreational stores in the region. Ongoing surveillance at Council monitoring sites will be carried out.

Response to discovery of Argentine ants

In early 2006, colonies of Argentine ants – one of the world's most invasive and problematic ant species – were discovered in Taranaki. The Council moved quickly to gather information on the extent of the infestations and treatment and control measures. Publicity was carried out and educational material prepared and distributed to raise public awareness and to assist the community. Council staff provided training to pest control contractors in the region. The Council agreed to consider the inclusion of Argentine ants in the forthcoming review of the Council's pest animal management strategy.

South Taranaki District Council plan change

In October 2005, the Council advised the Environment Court that it wished to be a party to an appeal by Federated Farmers against decisions of the **South Taranaki District Council** on a District Plan Change No 1 that would allow consideration of 'reverse sensitivity' issues during applications for subdivision consents. Reverse sensitivity refers to an effect on a proposed new activity moving into an area, from an already established activity. The Council wished to see some controls on new activities, for example new dwellings that might otherwise be affected by a legitimate existing activity such as a pig or poultry farm that had appropriate resource consents in place. Negotiations continued throughout the year and by year end agreement among the parties had been reached although this was still subject to final agreement by the Environment Court.

Ngati Mutunga Deed of Settlement

The Council welcomed the news that Ngati Mutunga had signed a Deed of Settlement with the Crown on 31 July 2005. The Council noted that the Deed of Settlement would provide for the Council to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Ngati Mutunga which would further develop the relationship between the Council and Ngati Mutunga. It was also noted that the Deed of Settlement would lead to the establishment of a Governance Entity to receive redress in accordance with the Deed, prior to the introduction of settlement legislation.

The Council looks forward to being invited, as and when Ngati Mutunga resources and priorities allow, to establishing an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding and further developing its existing relationship with Ngati Mutunga.

Memoranda of Understanding

The Council discussed with Ngati Ruanui and Ngaa Rauru the possibility of the Council entering into a memorandum of understanding with each Iwi. Both Iwi have their governance structure in place as a result of the Treaty settlement process.

Best practice guidelines

During the year, the Council considered and endorsed three best practice guidelines:

- Best management practice for N fertiliser on hillcountry pasture
- Spreadmark Certification Programme and
- Dairy stand-off/feed pads best management guidelines.

The best management practice guidelines endorsed by the Council provide industry-based and developed guidelines on measures to avoid or reduce adverse environmental impacts of agriculture. They are an important part of achieving the Council's objectives and policies as set out in the Council's Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plans. Similarly, the spreadmark certification programme establishes a licencing or certification regime to ensure the proper application of groundspread fertilisers. This programme also has benefits for water quality and soil health as well as financial benefits for farmers. The Council commended the Taranaki Branch of the Groundspreaders Fertiliser Association in promoting certification and in achieving a high level of membership, and endorsed the Spreadmark Certification Programme for effective fertiliser spreading.

Working parties

The Council continued its membership of the Stock Truck Effluent Working Party. This Working Party met during the year to discuss the operation of existing facilities in Taranaki and the need for operational changes or new facilities. Agreements were reached to improve the performance of the Waverley facility.

The Council also continued its membership of the New Plymouth District Council's Coastal Management Strategy Working Party. This has been useful to achieve integrated management and a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the New Plymouth District Council, Department of Conservation and the Taranaki Regional Council.

3 Conclusion

The 2005/2006 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. Reviews of major policy documents that have been in place for the last 5 or 10 years were commenced and continued during the year. An aquaculture constraints mapping exercise was completed and progress made towards a Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki. The Council again was active in the area of advocacy and response representing and advocating the interests of the region over a wide range of matters from codes of welfare for feral cats to the management of electricity transmission lines.

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.