

Executive summary

The 2006/2007 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. The Council:

- completed a review of the Council's Pest Plant and Pest Animal Management strategies with the Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants becoming operative on 1 March 2007 and the Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals becoming operative on 1 May 2007;
- publicly notified a Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki for submissions;
- adopted a Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki following a hearing of submissions on the draft Strategy;
- commenced a review of the Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki;
- made 33 submissions to the policy initiatives of other agencies including discussion documents, proposed policies, strategies, plans and draft legislation, all within required timeframes;
- launched the first progress report on the achievement of community outcomes identified for the region under the Local Government Act 2002;
- completed the second annual report on the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord;
- adopted a Dangerous Dams policy as required under the Building Act 2004;
- commenced preparation of a Biodiversity Operational Strategy;
- put in place a memorandum of understanding with the region's district councils to manage, inspect and monitor on-site domestic wastewater treatment systems throughout the region;
- commenced preparation of memoranda of understanding with Taranaki iwi who have settled their Treaty claims with the Crown;
- 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 2006/2007 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 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 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 2006/2007 Long-Term Council Community 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 2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community 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 2006/2007 programme:

- completing a review of the Council’s *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals and Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants*
- completing a review of the *Proposed Regional Policy Statement* subject to any Environment Court appeals
- completing a *Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki*
- commencing a review of the Regional Air Quality Plan.

In response to the objective for advocacy and response, the Taranaki Regional Council adopted the following performance measures for its 2006/2007 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 plan and pest animal management strategies were completed during the year.

The Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants was publicly notified for submissions on 1 July 2006. A total of 16 submissions were received. A hearing of submissions took place on 12 October 2006 and Council decisions on submissions were released in November 2006. No appeals against the Council's decisions were made and as a consequence the Council approved its revised Pest Management Strategy for Plants on 21 February 2007 and agreed that it would become operative on 1 March 2007.

The main changes included in the new 2007 strategy for plants were:

- The inclusion of new pest plants – Undaria, Pink Ragwort, all the Giant Gunnera species and Woolly Nightshade;
- Amendments to strategy rules relating to the control of Old Man's Beard and Pampas Grass, increasing land occupier obligations;
- Provision for the Council to undertake pest plant management on sites with regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values;
- The inclusion of statements in the Strategy that the Department of Conservation is neither bound by the provisions of the Strategy nor contributes to its funding;
- An amendment to increase the duration of the Strategy to 2017 (from 2011) to accommodate amendments to strategy rules relating to Pampas Grass extending the time by which all Pampas Grass is to be destroyed to 2012;
- The inclusion of a new Appendix containing the list of plants in the National Plant Pest Accord.

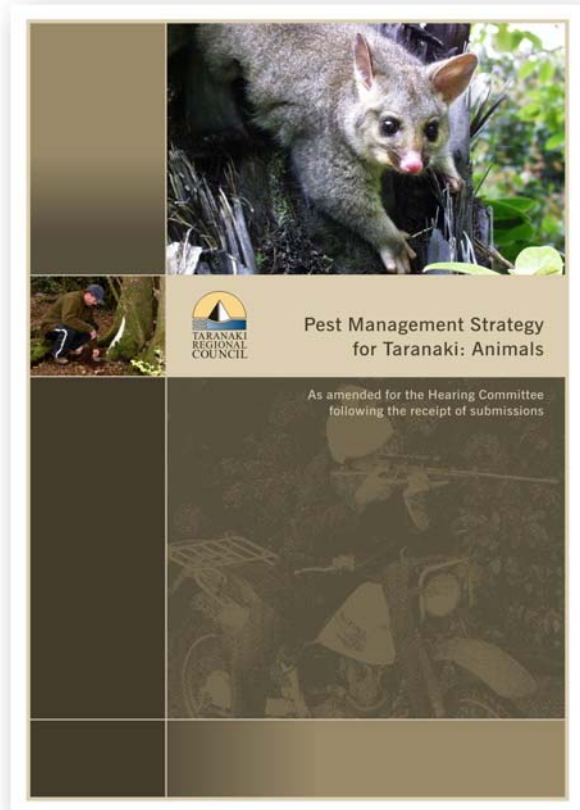


Woolly Nightshade

The Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals was publicly notified for submissions on 12 August 2006 with 7 submissions being received by the closing date. A hearing of submissions took place on 23 November 2006 with Council decisions on submissions released in December 2006. No appeals were lodged against the Council's decisions and as a result the Council approved its revised Pest Management Strategy for Animals on 4 April 2007 and agreed that it would become operative on 1 May 2007.

The main changes included in the new 2007 Strategy for Pest Animals were:

- The inclusion of new pest animals – Argentine ants, brown bull-headed catfish, koi carp, mosquito fish and rudd;
- A decrease in the estimated area of land to be treated and included in the Self-Help Possum Control Programme on a per annum basis as the Council, during the course of the Strategy, achieves its aim of covering the ringplain;
- Provision for the Council to undertake a new pest animal management programme associated with the protection of sites with regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values;
- The inclusion in the strategy of statements regarding concerns over the long term viability of the Self-Help Possum Control Programme near the Egmont National Park;
- The inclusion of a statement in the Strategy that the Council will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Conservation that sets out agreed collaborative monitoring, reporting and management programmes addressing possum control around the boundary of the Egmont National Park;
- The inclusion of statements in the Strategy that the Department of Conservation is neither bound by the provisions of the Strategy nor contributes to its funding;
- An amendment to extend the duration of the Strategy to 2017 (from 2011) to make it consistent with the Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants.



2007 Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals



Brown bull-headed catfish

Work commenced during the year on preparing Operational Plans for both strategies with the Operational Plan for the Pest Plant Strategy being adopted by the Council in June 2007. Work was also progressed on updating field procedures and public information resources to reflect changes made to the strategies.

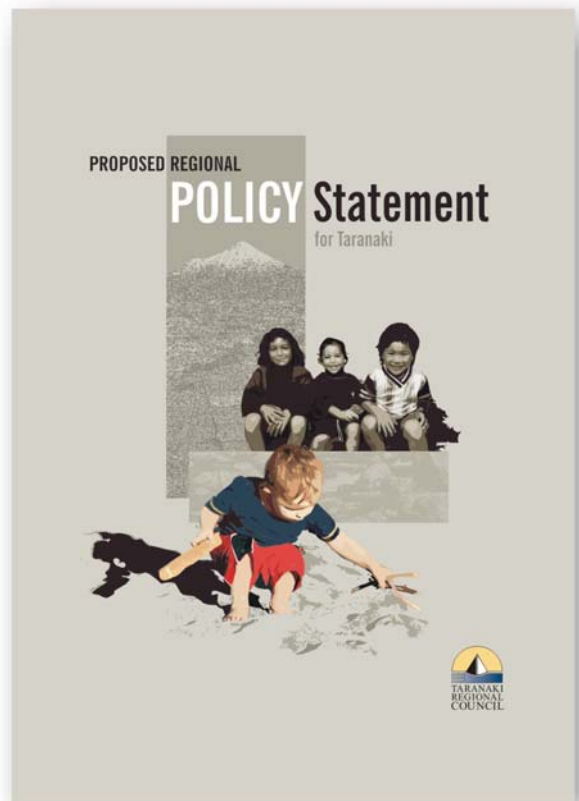
The successful review of both the pest plan and pest animal management strategies places the Council in a good position to contribute further to an environmentally sustainable and economically and socially prosperous Taranaki.

2.1.2 Review of Regional Policy Statement

The review of this strategically important policy document culminated in the release for public submissions of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki 2007. Public notification was made on 23 September 2006 with 35 submissions having been received by the closing date of 24 November 2006. Further supporting or opposing submissions were called for on 10 March 2007 with a further 21 supporting or opposing submissions received by the closing date of 13 April 2007.

A number of submissions have indicated support for the Proposed Regional Policy Statement with submission points requesting that certain provisions be retained. However there have also been many requests for changes to be made.

The considerable work required in drafting and revising such a wide ranging document and in summarising and analysing submissions meant that the Council was not in a position to complete the review (subject to any Environment Court appeals) as originally intended. The small policy team were also involved with transport planning activities. However steady progress was made with the review of

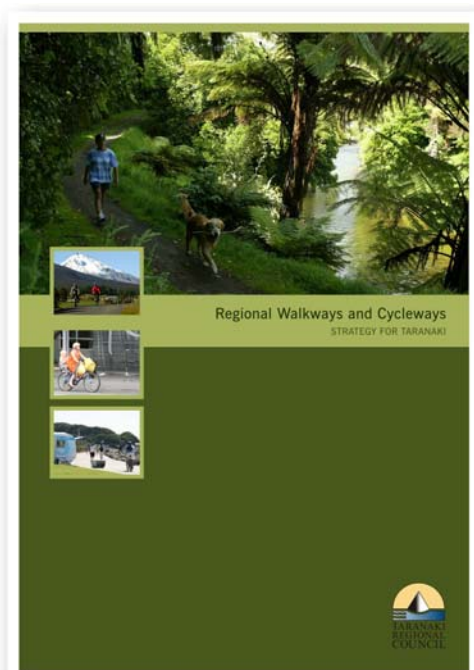


Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki 2007

this document and this will continue in 2007/2008. As with earlier policy and plan processes the Council will take time to work through the issues raised with submitters to ensure that the Council's Regional Policy Statement fulfils its statutory purpose of achieving sustainable and integrated management of the natural and physical resources of the region.

2.1.3 Walkways and Cycleways Strategy

The Council adopted its Regional Walkways and Cycleways for Taranaki on 27 June 2007 after the Council's Regional Land Transport Committee had heard and considered public submissions on the draft Strategy.



Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki

The Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy establishes a vision and supporting policies, methods and targets to promote a wide range of walking and cycling opportunities throughout the region. These range from short urban and rural walks to more remote walking experiences and on and off-road cycling opportunities. Coastal, mountain to sea and eastern hill country areas are included. The document takes a “big picture” view by providing a broad strategic direction at a regional level but also focuses on key walkway and cycleway opportunities at a more local level.

The Taranaki Regional Council will continue to work with local authorities, and government agencies such as the Department of Conservation, to promote the objectives of the Strategy. Implementing the Strategy will have economic, social, environmental, and health and safety benefits that will contribute to the community outcomes of a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Taranaki.

2.1.4 Review of Regional Air Quality Plan

The Council’s Regional Air Quality Plan was made operative in April 1997. The Resource Management Act requires such plans to undergo a full review once they have been operative for 10 years.

A review of the Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki commenced during the year. All Council staff who have been closely involved in using or implementing the plan have provided feedback on the plan and suggestions for changes, additions or improvements. Key stakeholder groups have also been contacted and their views on the plan sought. Meetings have been held to discuss particular issues and research is being undertaken to update various provisions of the plan to reflect current best practice.

It is anticipated that a revised proposed Regional Air Quality Plan will be publicly notified for submissions in the 2007/2008 year.

2.1.5 Other policy

Community outcomes

The first progress report on the achievement of community outcomes for Taranaki was officially released by the Associate Minister of Local Government, the Hon. Nanaia Mahuta at a launch at Puke Ariki on 10 July 2006. The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to monitor and report on the progress made in achieving community outcomes. The desired community outcomes were identified earlier in a joint process with the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils. The Taranaki Regional Council took the lead in preparing the report for the Future Taranaki Facilitation Group collecting information on a wide range of indicators covering the economy, health and safety, education and the environment among



Launch of the first progress report on the achievement of community outcomes

others. Some 50 representatives of central and local government, industry, iwi, social and other agencies were present at the launch.

The Taranaki Regional Council continued its membership of the Future Taranaki Facilitation Group which during the year worked on a number of projects identified from the monitoring work, as priorities for action in achieving our desired community outcomes.

Dangerous dams policy

Under the Building Act 2004, all regional councils are required to adopt a Dangerous Dams Policy for their region. The policy applies to dams that are greater than 3 metres in height and retain more than 20,000 cubic metres volume.

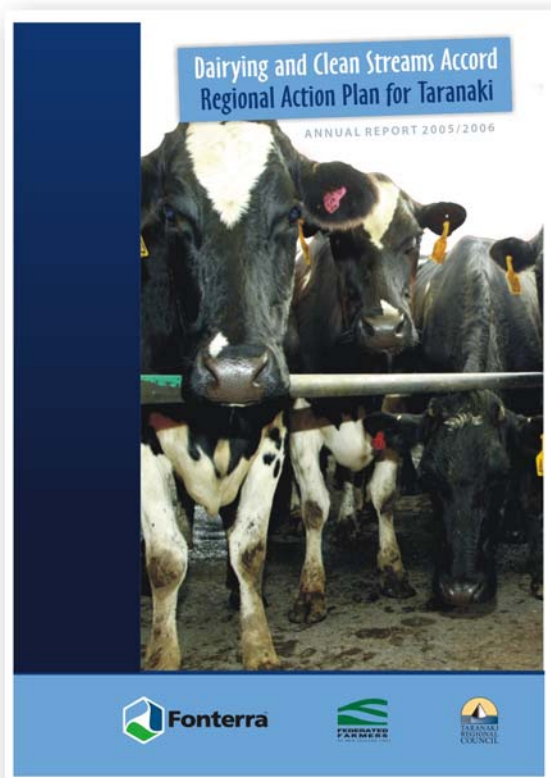
A draft Dangerous Dams Policy was adopted by the Council in accordance with the special consultative procedure of the Local Government Act and was publicly notified for submissions on 11 August 2006. The Council heard submissions on 20 September 2006 and adopted its Dangerous Dams Policy having made amendments in response to submissions.

Regional councils from throughout New Zealand worked in a collaborative way in developing draft policy for dams which resulted in a high degree of consistency across the country. While the number of dams in Taranaki that are covered by the policy is small, there is potential for significant impacts in the event of dam failure. The Council has worked very closely with dam owners and other interested and affected parties in Taranaki to develop a robust policy that is both pragmatic and cost-effective.

Dairying and Clean Streams Accord: Annual Report

In October 2006, the Council prepared its second 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 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, health 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.



Dairying and Clean Streams Accord: Annual Report for 2005/2006

The Annual Report for Taranaki over the 2005/2006 period showed that:

- 49% of all Taranaki dairy farms have a property plan (Taranaki target: 90% of dairy farms to have a property plan by 2010). With 265 new property plans prepared in the 2005/2006 year, progress is on target to have plans for 90% of all dairy farms (1007 more plans) by 2010.
- 97% of all regular stream crossings 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).
- All dairy farms in Taranaki have a farm dairy effluent discharge consent that complies with the Taranaki Regional Fresh Water Plan, with only one exception (Taranaki target: 100% of dairy farms to have a consent that complies with regional plans by 2004).
- 74% of regionally significant wetlands are fenced (Taranaki target: 60% of regionally significant wetlands are to be fenced by 2005, 90% by 2010).
- 39% of dairy farms in Taranaki have a nutrient budget in place (Taranaki target: Fonterra to have 100% of dairy farms with systems in place to manage nutrient inputs and outputs by 2007).

Overall, the Accord partners and the Taranaki dairy farming community can be satisfied with the progress made to date on most of the targets in the Regional Action Plan for Taranaki.

However, an issue that is arising is the slow rate of implementation of the property plans. A survey of property plan holders was carried out by the Taranaki Regional Council to establish awareness about the Accord and the barriers to its implementation regarding planting and fencing of riparian margins. Not surprisingly, time and cost were the biggest barriers to implementing the plans. Some 98% of farmers were aware of the Accord and its deadlines, however, implementation was not seen as a priority because of increasing pressures on time and cost and a lack of enforceability.

The Council has made adjustments to its approach to promote wider and faster implementation. However, if Accord targets are to be met a few years out, other Accord partners and ultimately dairy farmers will need to apply more effort to physical works.

Didymo

During the year the Council entered into discussions with Biosecurity New Zealand (BNZ) on BNZ's Draft Didymo Long Term Management Programme and the possible future role of the Taranaki Regional Council, in this programme.

Didymo (or "rock snot") is an invasive northern hemisphere diatom alga. In bloom, didymo forms large, unsightly brown mats, sometimes with streamers that smother the riverbed, causing



Didymo in the Mararoa River, Southland

significant adverse impacts on river ecology, aesthetic and recreational values.

Didymo was first reported in New Zealand in Southland in 2004. At least 13 rivers and streams are now known to be affected in Southland, Otago, Tasman and Canterbury regions. Didymo has not yet been detected in the North Island.

In October 2006, the Council resolved to support in principle the development of a Didymo Management Strategy for the North Island and to undertake a number of initiatives in house to prevent the inadvertent spread of didymo. The Council also accepted a BNZ offer to fund a short term summer education programme to deliver the key messages of “check, clean, dry” equipment to key stakeholders and water users throughout the region.

Later in the year BNZ sought support as part of its Long Term Management Plan, for a joint partnership programme at the regional level. BNZ considers that a partnership with parties including regional councils, Fish & Game, industry, iwi and Department of Conservation is the most effective way to manage didymo in the future. The Council agreed to facilitate a regional didymo group to ensure good co-ordination of didymo public awareness and the development of a multi-agency didymo response plan. The objectives of the joint programme will be to slow the spread of didymo and maintain the North Island free of didymo for as long as possible, protect high valued sites and at risk species and mitigate the impacts of didymo on affected sectors. The Council has sought that BNZ continue to resource the surveillance monitoring, social marketing and response to didymo while it is still in the incursion phase in the North Island.

The Council will continue to work with BNZ and other regional partners on an efficient and effective response plan to deal with didymo.

Biodiversity operational strategy

Work began during the year on the preparation of a Biodiversity Operational Strategy for the Council. The purpose of this Strategy is to pull all the Council’s work programmes that contribute to indigenous biodiversity outcomes, into a single document to better co-ordinate and integrate the Council’s biodiversity work and to provide guidance and direction on priorities for the future.

The Strategy will give effect to Council policy developed in this area through the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki 2006, and in other Council plans and strategies, to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity values, places and sites throughout Taranaki. The Strategy will however have a strong operational focus. It will identify opportunities for prioritising Council work, for example in plant and animal pest control, to make the most effective and efficient biodiversity gains using available resources. While the Strategy will guide the Council biodiversity work it



Lake Rotokare and surrounding reserve

will also provide a mechanism to acknowledge and incorporate, if appropriate, the biodiversity work of other organisations with biodiversity responsibilities and activities. The Key Native Ecosystems inventory reported on in last year's annual report will provide useful information on which to determine priority areas or sites. Changes to the Council's pest management strategies for plants and animals reported earlier in this report provide the Council with one of the main tools it will apply under the Strategy.

It is anticipated that the Strategy will be completed in the 2007/2008 year.

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 33 submissions to initiatives proposed by other agencies. This compares with 22 submissions made in the previous year (2005/2006) and 32 in 2004/2005. The numbers of submissions made over the last 5 years is shown in Figure 1.

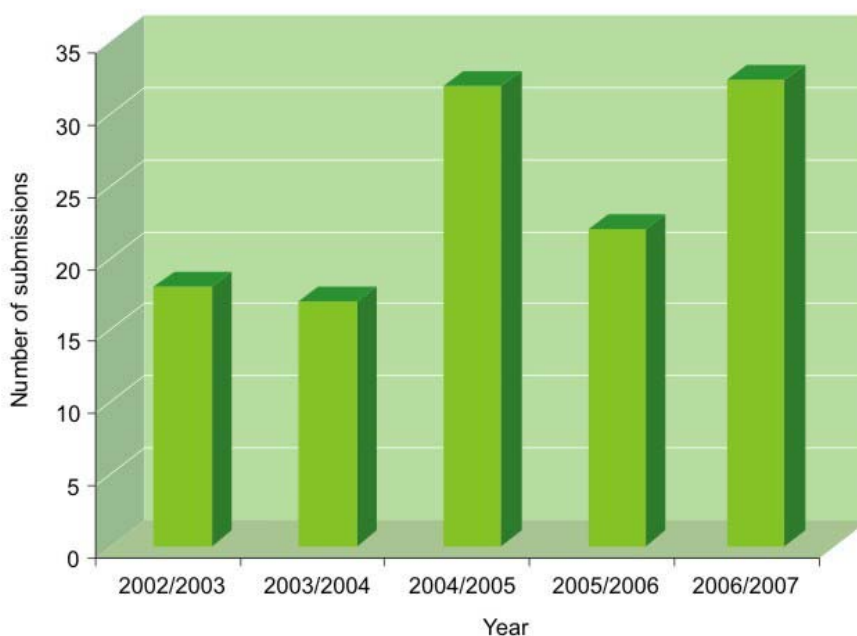


Figure 1 Number of submissions made by year

The full list of submissions made in 2006/2007 and the result or outcome of those submissions (where known) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Submissions made in 2006/2007

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Results
Land Transport New Zealand	Community focused land transport activities	Submission considered
Local Government and Environment Select Committee	Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill	Select Committee consideration
Ministry for the Environment	National Implementation Plan – Persistent Organic Pollutants	Submission considered and outcome consistent with submission
New Plymouth District Council	Coastal Reserves Management Plan	Amendments made to parts of the document
Department of Building and Housing	Dam Safety Regulations under the Building Act 2004	Submission considered
Department of Conservation	Review of the level of protection for some New Zealand wildlife	Submission considered
Department of Conservation	Draft Whanganui National Park Management Plan	Submission considered
Ministry of Fisheries	To allow for taking of aquatic life to relocate it elsewhere	Submission considered
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Building resilience – a review of the on-farm adverse events recovery framework	Submission considered
New Plymouth District Council	Application by Dow AgroSciences (NZ) Ltd re the operation of the existing secure waste containment facility on land at the Waireka Research Station, Omata	Submission considered and consent conditions modified
Maori Land Court	Application by Kanihi Umutahi Me etahi Hapu for a customary rights order	Submission forwarded. Applicant to make changes. Matter is under consideration.
Ministry of Education	Feedback on NZ curriculum draft for consultation	Submission considered
Department of Conservation	Review of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement: Issues and Options	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
New Plymouth District Council	Requirement to designate land for the New Plymouth Wastewater Treatment Plan	Submission considered and designation confirmed.
Department of Building and Housing	Proposals to set Building Consent Authority Accreditation Fees	Submission considered
Ministry for the Environment	Proposed Environmental Standard for Water Measuring Devices – Discussion Document	Submission considered and affected development of Standard
Ministry for the Environment	Working towards a comprehensive framework for managing contaminated land in New Zealand	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
ERMA	1080 Reassessment	Submission considered
New Plymouth District Council	District Plan Change 1	Submission considered
Transit New Zealand	Draft 2007/2008 Land Transport Programme and 10 year Financial Forecast	Submission considered
Biosecurity New Zealand	A Biosecurity Science, Research and Technology Strategy for New Zealand	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Ministry of Economic Development	Powering our Future – Towards a Sustainable Low Emissions Energy System	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Sustainable management and climate change – options for a plan of action	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Ministry for the Environment	Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in New Zealand post-2012	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Environment Waikato	Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy 2007-2012	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
ERMA	Application by ERMA to vary HASNO controls for petrol on farms	Amendments to controls made in line with submission
New Plymouth District Council	New Plymouth's Land Supply Review	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Department of Internal Affairs	Proposed National Civil Defence Emergency Management Strategy 2007- Consultation Draft	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Results
Representation Commission	Proposed Electoral Districts 2007	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Department of Internal Affairs Fire Policy Team	New fire legislation – a framework for New Zealand's fire and rescue services and their funding	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Board of Inquiry	Proposed National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Department of Conservation	Draft Kiwi Recovery Plan 2006-2016	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Proposal to regulate the sale and use of specified leg hold traps	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration

All submissions were made within the required timeframes.

It is 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 that the submissions were successful while in others limited feedback is provided. Anecdotally, senior Council officers receive feedback on submissions that is positive and that changes have been made as a result.

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 range of other policy related advocacy and liaison activities were undertaken during the year.

Memorandum of understanding: On-site domestic wastewater systems

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils and the Taranaki Regional Council, dealing with the management of on-site domestic wastewater systems was agreed to during the year.

There are well known potential adverse environmental effects from septic tanks and other wastewater systems if they are not properly designed, installed and maintained. There is also an abundance of legislation or regulation relevant to the management of the adverse effects of these systems, including requirements under the Building Act, Health Act and Resource Management Act. The Taranaki Regional Council's Regional Fresh Water Plan contains a rule that permits discharges from on-site domestic wastewater treatment systems provided certain standards are met.

While there are existing arrangements and understandings in place, a formal documented MOU was considered to be important to establish the respective roles of the councils to deliver clarity and certainty for the community.

The MOU sets out a common understanding and an agreed process to be adopted by the district councils and the Taranaki Regional Council in relation to receiving and

providing advice on on-site domestic wastewater system design suitable for Taranaki conditions; monitoring; responding to complaints; educational material and reporting and information sharing.

One of the outcomes of the MOU is agreement that at the time district council staff assess on-site domestic wastewater treatment systems for compliance with the relevant building codes and standards checks would also be made against the conditions of the permitted activity rule in the Regional Fresh Water Plan. Any cases of non-compliance would be referred to the Taranaki Regional Council for follow-up action. The MOU also provides for an appropriate monitoring regime to be developed by all the signatories and that this would be based around a random sample of systems being inspected and monitored.

The MOU represents a more integrated and strategic approach to the management of domestic wastewater systems in the region and is a further example of councils working in a proactive, joint and effective manner to ensure a high standard of environmental quality in the community.

A 24 page booklet "Looking after your household sewerage system" was also developed jointly by the three district councils and the Taranaki Regional Council. The booklet was developed for owners of domestic wastewater systems to promote greater self management of system operation and maintenance. There are estimated to be about 1000 domestic wastewater systems in townships or urban areas in the region and about 5000 in the rural area. The proper operation and regular maintenance of these systems is key to ensuring that their environmental effects are no more than minor.

Ngati Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006

The Council welcomed the news that the Ngati Mutunga Claims Settlement Act 2006 had been passed by Parliament and came into force on 22 November 2006. The passing of the Act is a significant milestone not only for Ngati Mutunga but also for the Council and the wider community. The Council has indicated its willingness to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to guide and further develop the relationship between Ngati Mutunga and the Council. Such a memorandum may include such matters as the development of Council policies and plans and the processing of resource consents as well as a range of other matters.

The coming into force of the Ngati Mutunga Claims Settlement Act brings to four the number of iwi in Taranaki who have settled their historical Treaty claims with the Crown and had the necessary enabling legislation passed.

Iwi memoranda of understanding

The Council has indicated a willingness to enter into a memorandum of understanding to guide and further develop the relationship between Nga Rau and Ngati Ruanui.

Renewable energy

The Council participated in the preparation of a report assessing renewable energy potential in the Taranaki region. The report entitled "Renewable energy assessment for the Taranaki region" was prepared for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority. It looked at the potential for solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal and ocean current energy in Taranaki.

Authors of the report made a presentation to the Council's Policy and Planning Committee on renewable energy development.

The assessment contained useful information for the Council's own policy development work as well as for the energy industry and the wider Taranaki community.

Code of Practice for Nutrient Management

The Council considered a recent revision of FertResearch's Code of Practice for Nutrient Management. Dr Hilton Furness, Technical Director for FertResearch made a presentation to the Council on the significance and implications of the Code.

The Council sought to be briefed on developments occurring in the fertiliser industry given the potential for adverse environmental effects from poorly managed or inappropriate fertiliser use. The Council's policy in this area promotes good practice by industry and land users. The promotion and implementation of the code to manage fertiliser use on farms directly complements the approach of the Council in addressing soil health and water quality and in raising public awareness throughout the farming community. The advice and information delivered through the Code's dissemination will therefore be beneficial in terms of educating farmers on sustainable farm management practices.

Afforestation options for carbon credits

The Council sought to be updated on the various options and schemes currently being discussed throughout New Zealand, for afforestation as a means of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

As a result of New Zealand's commitment under the Kyoto Protocol, permanent forestry options have now become an attractive option for Governments and greenhouse gas emitters to reduce net emissions of climate-changing gases and for growers of permanent forests to gain economic benefits from such forests.

The Council considered a number of options currently being developed, from the Permanent Forest Sinks Initiative and Agroforestry Grants Scheme to forestry investment schemes such as Greenplan and heard firsthand from one commercial operator who is seeking to utilise one of the schemes proposed by the Government.

The Council has an interest in such initiatives because of their potential to meet or promote a number of the Council's policy objectives from mitigation of the effects of greenhouse gases to the promotion of sustainable land management, water quality enhancement and the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity.

While details of the various afforestation options that might be used for carbon credit purposes are still being worked out, the Council has deemed it important to keep up with developments in this area so that it is well placed to respond if and when necessary.

Conclusion

The 2006/2007 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. Reviews of major policy documents commenced and continued during the year. The Council's pest management strategies were successfully reviewed and made operative during the year and a Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy was adopted.

The Council was active in the area of advocacy and response representing and advocating the interests of the region over a wide range of matters from the draft New Zealand curriculum for schools to measures to reduce greenhouse gases in New Zealand post-2012.

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.