

Executive summary

The 2007/2008 year was a busy one for policy and planning activities. The Council:

- continued the review of the Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki preparing a draft Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan for stakeholder feedback and legal review;
- commenced a review of the Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki and invited comments on the Plan from stakeholders;
- commenced preparation of the Council's five yearly State of the Environment Report;
- continued with the review of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki by releasing a report and recommendations on submissions and beginning pre-hearing consultation with submitters;
- commenced an interim review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Regional Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki;
- carried out policy and planning work in association with emergency management, navigation safety and harbour management, and regional land transport activities;
- adopted an Operational Plan for Pest Animal Management in Taranaki;
- adopted a Biodiversity Operational Strategy to guide the Council's priorities and actions on biodiversity;
- completed the third annual report on the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord;
- completed the second report on progress towards achieving community outcomes;
- made thirty submissions to the policy initiatives of other agencies including discussion documents, proposed policies, strategies, plans and draft legislation, all within required timeframes;
- completed and reported on a water recreation survey of Taranaki beaches, rivers and lakes;
- undertook a range of other policy advocacy, liaison 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 2007/2008 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
- Land Transport Management Act 2003
- 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 2006/2016 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 2007/2008 programme:

- complete a review of the *Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki* subject to any appeals
- commence a review of the Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki
- commence the preparation of a State of the Environment Report.

In response to the objective for advocacy and response, the Taranaki Regional Council adopted the following performance measures for its 2007/2008 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 Review of Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki

The purpose of the Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki is to assist the Council to carry out its functions under the Resource Management Act to promote the sustainable management of the air resource of the Taranaki region. The plan has policies and methods addressing air quality management and contains rules setting out environmental standards for all industrial and trade premises, intensive farming operations, agrichemical spraying and burning.

The Air Quality Plan was adopted by the Council in April 1997 and was the first fully operative air plan in New Zealand. Under the RMA a review of the Plan must commence no later than 10 years after the Plan became operative.

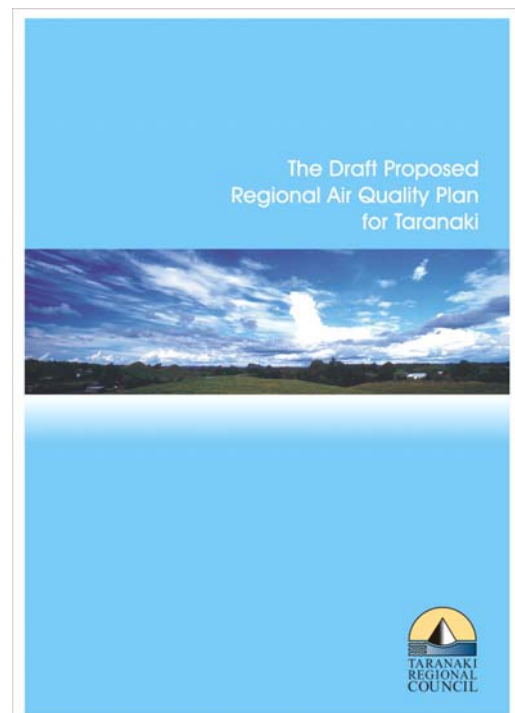
A review of the plan commenced in 2007. The review process has involved scientific, policy and consents staff in examining previous research, policy developments and reviews, changes in legislation, changes in environmental issues or attitudes in the community and state of the environment monitoring information.

During the year the Council also consulted with key stakeholders through discussion documents, an invitation to comment on the operative plan and a draft proposed (revised) plan and through face to face meetings. Workshops were held with Council staff and staff of the District Councils to outline the Council's proposed approach and to seek feedback on the on-going relevance of the Air Plan and the effectiveness of its policies and methods.

A draft Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan was prepared and presented to the Policy and Planning Committee in May 2008.

The draft and plan contained five new rules including a rule prohibiting the burning of domestic waste and green waste on residential properties serviced by a municipal refuse collection service. Other new rules were to permit emissions to air from cleanfills and fertilisers and soil conditions (subject to conditions), control dust emissions from larger scale earthworks (4 hectares or more) and prohibit the use of mobile road asphalt paving burners.

The Council agreed that the Draft Proposed Plan be distributed to key stakeholders for comment and that it be subject to a legal audit before being publicly notified for submissions. Changes will be made to the draft plan in response to the feedback received.



Draft Proposed Regional Air Quality Plan

The full review of the Plan was not able to be completed in the 2007/2008 year but very good progress has been made in developing a revised and updated plan. The time taken to consult with key stakeholders will result in a more robust and workable document.

A Proposed Plan will be formally notified for public submissions in the 2008/2009 year.

2.1.2 Review of Regional Coastal Plan

A review of the Council's Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki was commenced during the year. The Regional Coastal Plan was made operative in October 1997, being the first Coastal Plan in New Zealand to be approved by the Minister of Conservation. The RMA requires a review of the Plan to be commenced no later than 10 years after it becomes operative.

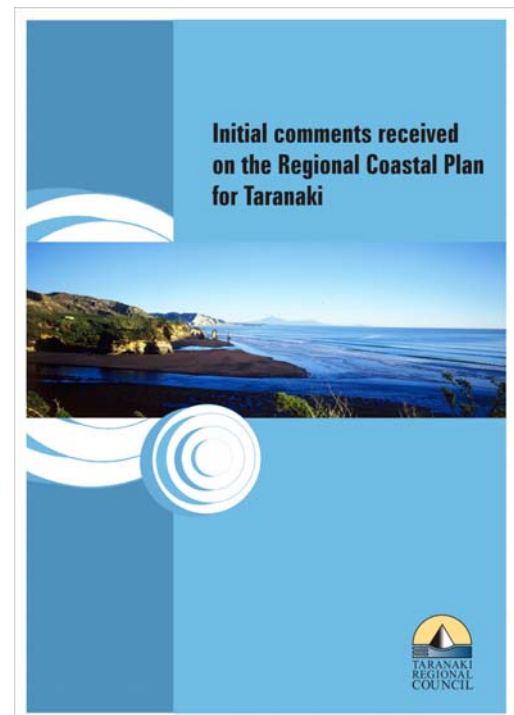
An internal staff workshop was held on the Plan to identify areas that have worked well and areas where changes may be necessary or desirable.

An invitation was extended to key stakeholders to comment on the operative plan and on any changes they would like to see considered during the review process. Comments were received from seventeen individuals, industry groups, government departments and community organisations. The comments will provide useful input into the review process and the preparation of a draft Proposed Regional Coastal Plan.

The timing of the next stages of the review process will depend in large measure on progress with the Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) which was publicly notified during the year and which is currently progressing through a statutory review process. The NZCPS will have a significance 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 review of the Council's Coastal Plan has been delayed given the need to coordinate with the review of the NZCPS.

2.1.3 State of the environment report

A major project to prepare the Council's next five year State of the Environment report was launched during the year. The report is programmed for release in the later part of 2008 and will follow previous reports prepared in 1996 and 2003. The report will look at trends in the state of the Taranaki environment over the last ten to fifteen years and whether these trends are showing improvements in the state of our



Stakeholders were invited to comment on the Coastal Plan

environmental quality (or whether there has been no significant change). The report will look at this information in the context of changing pressures on the environment and what actions are being taken to manage our environment.

The State of the Environment report is important because it provides a baseline against which to measure the effectiveness of the Council's policies and whether a change in policy or approach is needed. It will also include information from the region's District Council's and other agencies such as the Department of Conservation.

During the year the Council considered a number of reports that will provide some of the 'building blocks' for the main report. These included reports on: trends in the ecological state of Taranaki's rivers and streams; trends in soil quality in Taranaki; marine recreational water quality between 2002-2007; sustainable land use in the inland Taranaki hill country and coastal sand country and results of a water recreation survey. The Council also commissioned economic research on the dollar value of investments made by the Taranaki community in environmental protection and enhancement over the last five years.

2.1.4 Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki

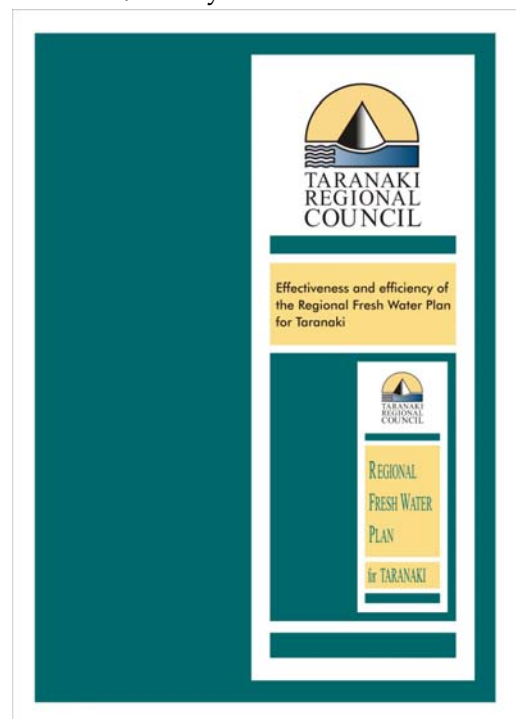
A report on submissions to the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki was prepared and distributed to all submitters and further (supporting or opposing) submitters as a basis for pre-hearing consultation.

The report addressed each of the 35 submissions, 21 further submissions and 585 separate submission points raised in submissions and provided an officer recommendation in response to each submission point. Meetings were held with a number of submitters and good progress made in resolving outstanding issues. The pre-hearing consultation process will continue into the 2008/2009 year with the likelihood of a hearing of those submitters who still wish to be heard, taking place in the first quarter of 2008/2009.

2.1.5 Interim review of Regional Fresh Water Plan

The Council has adopted a practice of undertaking "interim reviews" of its regional plans mid-way through their statutory terms, to assess if any changes are required ahead of the statutory review. The Resource Management Act also requires councils to monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of its plans.

The Regional Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki was made operative in October 2001. During the year a comprehensive one hundred and sixty page report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Fresh Water Plan was



Report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Regional Fresh Water Plan

prepared and released for stakeholder feedback.

The report looked at the effectiveness of the Plan (i.e its ability to achieve its stated objectives or goals) and its efficiency (or ability to achieve desired results at least cost). This was done by examining the results of the Council's State of the Environment Monitoring, resource investigations and trends in compliance monitoring and by evaluating the role of policies in decision making and consent conditions. The review assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of both regulatory and non-regulatory methods in the Plan.

The report concluded that the Plan is standing the test of time well and is assisting the Council to promote the sustainable management of freshwater resources. It did not identify any issues that would warrant an urgent or immediate review of the Plan.

The report found that the ecological health and life supporting capacity of rivers and streams in Taranaki is generally being maintained. Some areas where further improvements could be made or where investigations might be needed to provide more or better information were identified. It was noted for example that while many farmers on the ring plain have had riparian plans prepared by the Council to voluntarily fence and plant their riparian (streamside) margins and improve water quality, the rate of implementation of these plans has to date been slow. The Council's non-regulatory approach to this issue will be kept under review and if necessary alternative options considered to increase the rate of riparian enhancements.

The report also identified the need for more information on stream modification, stream diversions and culverting and wetland drainage.

The report was circulated to key stakeholders for comment. Comments received will be assessed in the new financial year (2008/2009).

2.1.6 Operational Plan for Pest Animal Management

The Operational Plan for the "*Pest Management strategy for Taranaki Animals 2007*" was adopted by the Council in August 2007, following adoption of the revised Strategy in April 2007. The Plan identifies the programme and performance measures to achieve the objectives from the strategy. It lists the proposed programme of actions for eradication pest animals (rooks) containment pest animals (Argentine ants, possums and rabbits) and a number of surveillance pest animals.

The Plan provides operational detail on when targeted publicity campaigns will be run. It also provides operational detail on the possum control programme, particularly adjacent to Egmont National Park.

The operational plan for pest Plants was approved by the Council in June of the 2006/2007 year.

2.1.7 Other Policy

Biodiversity operational strategy

A major new strategy for the Council – the Biodiversity Strategy – was adopted by the Council after consultation with a wide range of interested and affected parties.



Umutekai Bush – a Key Native Ecosystem

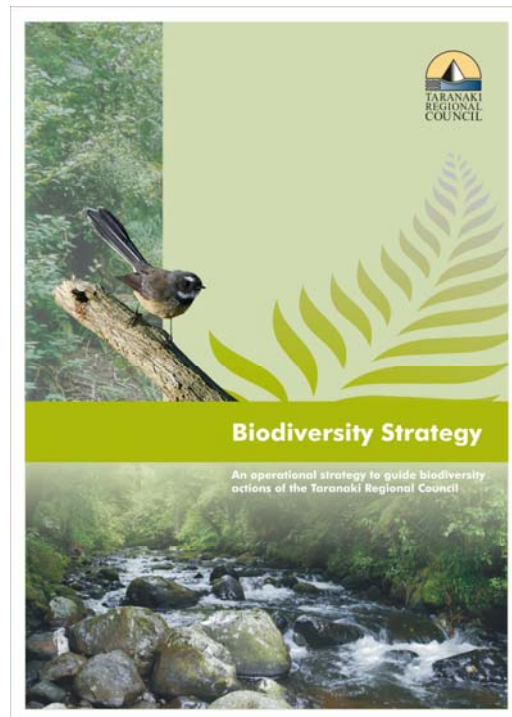
programmes; working with others in the community to assist with the overall coordination and facilitation of biodiversity work across their region and contributing to the management and development of systems for gathering and managing biodiversity data.

Given that the draft Strategy proposed that a key role for the Council would be to help facilitate better working together of all the various groups involved with biodiversity in Taranaki the draft Strategy was circulated to stakeholders for comment. In addition, representatives were invited to a very successful workshop held in April 2008 to discuss the Strategy and the future direction of biodiversity work in Taranaki. The workshop produced widespread support for the Council's Strategy and a commitment from all parties to work together to coordinate and integrate biodiversity work across the region.

In June 2008 the Council made an appointment to the new position of Manager-Biodiversity Operations. This position will provide the coordination at a manager level of biodiversity operational work across the Council and with other organisations and groups and therefore provide the necessary drive and energy to implement the Strategy.

The Council already undertakes many functions that maintain and enhance our biodiversity. However, the Council saw a need to draw all its activities and proposed new initiatives into one operational document to provide a framework to implement the Council's biodiversity policy and guide its practical actions in this important area.

The Strategy, which was adopted in May 2008, focuses the Council's biodiversity work into four priority areas: regionally significant sites (Key Native Ecosystems); enhancing the biodiversity component of existing



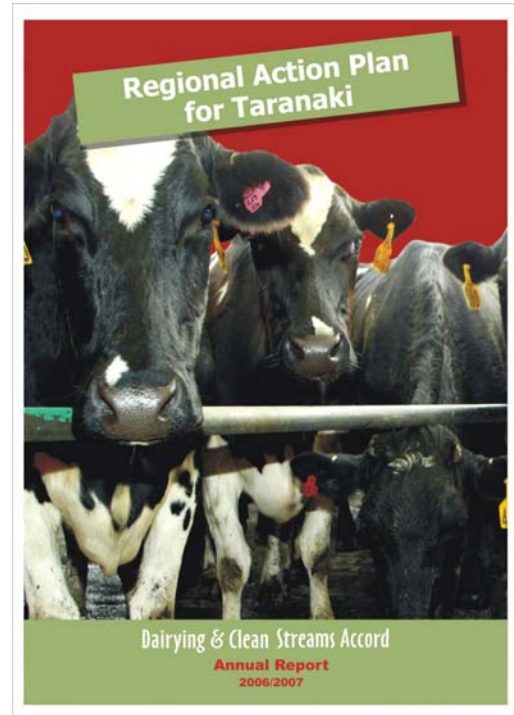
The Council's Biodiversity Strategy

Dairying and Clean Streams Accord

In October 2007, the Council prepared its third 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, 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 adopts the national targets to Taranaki conditions.

The Annual Report for Taranaki over the 2006/2007 period showed that:

- 62% of all Taranaki dairy farms have a property plan (up from 49% in 2005/2006) and on track to meet the target of 90% of dairy farms to have a property plan by 2010).
- 48% of streambank protected by fencing on all property plans prepared but only 3% protected by new fencing (target 50% by 2010 and 90% by 2015).
- 42% of streambank protected by planting on all property plans prepared but only 4% protected by new planting (target of 50% by 2010 and 90% by 2015).
- 93% of regular crossings with bridges or culverts (target 50% by 2007, 90% by 2015).
- 100% of dairy farms have an effluent discharge consent that complies with the Fresh Water Plan (target 100% by 2004).
- 79% of regionally significant wetlands fenced (target 60% by 2005, 90% by 2010).
- 65% of dairy farms with a nutrient budget in place (target 100% by 2007).



**Regional Action Plan for Taranaki
Annual Report 2006/2007**



The Council is seeking more effort in fencing and planting riparian margins

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

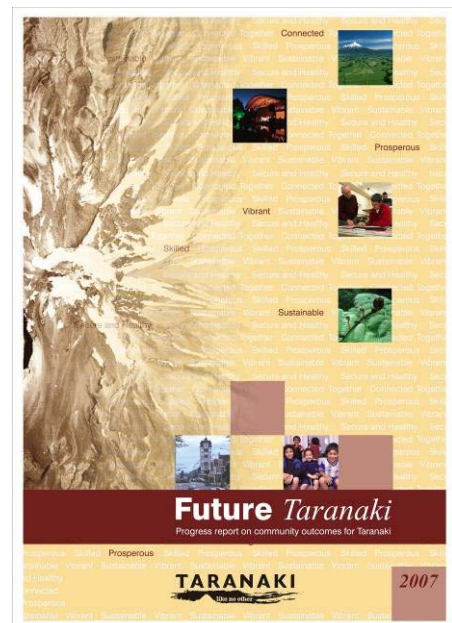
However an issue that continues to cause concern is the slow pace of property plan implementation. Performance towards the 2010 target largely relies on existing pre-Accord fencing and planting. However, if plan implementation continues at its current rate the implementation targets will not be met. The Taranaki Regional Council has continued to make adjustments to its approach to promote wider and faster implementation.

Community outcomes

The second progress report on the achievements of community outcomes for Taranaki was released in September 2007. The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to monitor and report on the progress made in achieving community outcomes. Those 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 the 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 the community outcomes.

The report noted that good progress had been made overall towards achieving the outcomes and in particular with the desired outcomes of a prosperous and sustainable Taranaki. However, the report noted that youth crime had increased significantly and skill shortages in the region persist. There are issues to be taken up primarily by agencies other than the Taranaki Regional Council.



Second progress report on community outcomes for Taranaki

Waste strategy: Review of progress

In August 2007, the Council reported on progress within the Taranaki region towards implementation at the regional level of the New Zealand Waste Strategy targets. The review of progress followed release of a report by the Ministry for the Environment on progress in implementing the New Zealand Waste Strategy released in 2002. The Taranaki Regional Council adopted a Regional Waste Strategy in 2004 to give effect to the New Zealand Waste Strategy.

The review of progress was in many ways a 'good news' story for Taranaki. It showed a considerable range of activity across many sectors. The review showed there has been good progress towards a better and more effective level of waste management services and that the region is generally doing as well if not better than the national situation. Where national targets proved unworkable, the Councils have sought to find alternative means of achieving the same end. With increased commercial involvement in waste management, the Councils have less direct control of what happens and have turned to advocacy, education and promotion.

Increased diversion of organic wastes and recovery as compost appears to be a viable option in the region but other special wastes continue to pose greater technical and economic challenges.

The review noted that the management of “contaminated land”, cleanfills and wastewater treatment in the region appears to be well ahead of the national scene.

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 30 submissions to policy proposals or initiatives proposed by other agencies. This compares with 33 submissions made in the previous year (2006/2007) and 22 in 2005/2006. The number of submissions made over the last five years is shown in Figure 1.

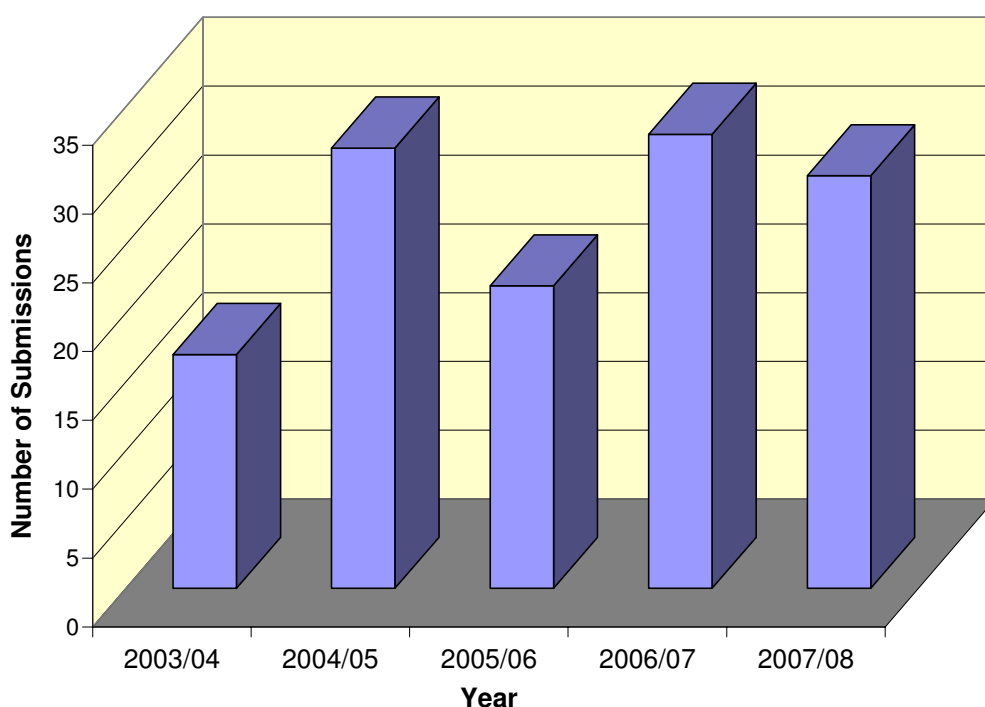


Figure 1 Number of submissions made by year

The full list of submissions made in 2007/2008 and the result or outcome of those submissions (where known) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Submissions made in 2007/2008

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Results
New Plymouth District Council	Draft Cycle Strategy	Submission considered
Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management	Proposed National CDEM strategy 2007- Consultation document	Submission considered
Ministry of Consumer Affairs	Proposed Mandatory Water Efficiency Labelling – Discussion document	Submission considered
Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management	Guide to the National Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan	Submission considered

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Results
Maritime New Zealand	Urenui River – Proposal to remove permanent speed uplifting	Submission considered
Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation	Marin Protected Areas : Draft Classification and Protection Standard	Submission considered
Ministry for the Environment	Improving Regulation of Environmental Effects in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone	Submission considered
South Taranaki District Council	Rotokare Scenic Reserve Draft Management Plan	Submission considered
Stratford District Council	Stratford District Plan Changes 14 and 15	Submission considered
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Feedback on Indigenous Forests and the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme	Submission considered
South Taranaki District Council	Proposed Waverley wind farm	Submissions yet to be heard
Game Animal Panel	Managing numbers of deer, chamois, tahr and pigs	Submission considered
Ministry of Transport	Application under S.12 Submarine Cables and Pipeline Protection Act 1996 by Origin Energy and OMV NZ Ltd	Submission considered
South Taranaki District Council	Proposed Plan change 10: Scheduled Rivers and Streams	Submissions yet to be heard
Ministry of Transport	Port and Harbour Safety Management	Submission considered
Local Government and Environment Committee	Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill- Supplementary Order Paper	Submission considered
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Feedback on the option of including pre – 1990 indigenous forests in the NZ Emissions Trading Scheme	Submission considered
Transport and Industrial Relations Committee	Land Transport Management Amendment Bill	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Transport and Industrial Relations Committee	Public Transport Management Bill	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Transit New Zealand	Draft 2008/2009 Land Transport Programme and 10 year Financial Forecast	Submission considered and some changes made
MAF Biodiversity	Policy for Responding to Pests and Diseases (risk organisms)	Submission considered
MAF Biodiversity	Joint Decision Making and Resourcing for Readiness and Incursion Responses	Submission considered
Maritime New Zealand	Proposal to remove the gazetted speed uplifting on the lower Urenui River	Submission considered
Ministry of Transport	Draft updated New Zealand Transport Strategy	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
Department of Conservation	Taxon Management Plan for Western North Island Brown Kiwi	Submission considered
Board of Inquiry	Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
New Plymouth District Council	Designation of site 7-9 West Quay, Waitara	Submission forwarded
Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management	CDEM sector representation on national working groups	Submission forwarded

Submission made to	Policy initiative or proposal	Results
Stratford District Council	Proposed Stratford District Plan review 2008-further to plan changes 14 and 15	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration
New Plymouth District Council	New Plymouth Strategic Transport Study	Submission forwarded. Matter is under consideration

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 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.

Response to drought and low river levels

Very low rainfall in the period from November 2007 to March 2008 led to low soil moisture levels and drought conditions throughout Taranaki and particularly in south Taranaki. Rivers were recorded at very low levels and in some cases at the lowest levels since records began 30 years ago. The Council applied its Water Shortage Event Standard Operating Procedure to ensure that as far as possible sufficient water remained in the region's rivers for aquatic life and other important instream uses. Under the Procedure, pasture irrigators in the west and south of the region were required to cease abstracting. Other water users were urged to conserve water with urban and stock/domestic water users given priority under the Procedure.

The Council declared that South Taranaki was experiencing drought conditions and advocated appropriate support for farmers and others affected by the drought.

Carbon farming and landowner opportunities

During the year the Council was brought up to date with Government policies to promote the removal of carbon from the atmosphere. This included several schemes to encourage landowners to retain land in trees and to promote the growth of new trees and at the same time earn carbon credits. There are potentially very positive income streams from "carbon farming" of marginal land for dry stock grazing purposes.

The Council recognised from an early stage in Government policy development on this issue that any scheme which encourages the retirement or planting of marginal hill country thus making its land use more environmentally sustainable, is completely complementary with the Council's sustainable land management objectives.

Therefore as part of the Council's advice and information service, three seminars were organised to raise awareness of this issue with hill country farmers and to provide information to them. The Council did not promote one scheme over another or specific service providers but rather aimed to provide information for all landowners to enable them to make decisions on the long-term use of their land. All the seminars were well attended.

Councillors also sought and attended an in-house seminar and briefing on the government's climate change policies and programmes, including the Emissions Trading Scheme and sustainable land use programmes. This will enable the Council to make more informed decisions on the opportunities available to the region under the various programmes and how these might be applied to assist the Council's own policy objectives in areas such as sustainable land management and biodiversity enhancement.

Water recreation survey

A water recreation survey was undertaken over the 2007/2008 summer to obtain up-to-date information on recreational use of Taranaki's rivers, lakes and beaches. The last such survey was carried out in 1984.

Some 417 Taranaki residents completed and returned postal questionnaires of their water use patterns and over 200 observation counts were undertaken at selected known water recreation sites.



Surfing at Fitzroy Beach

The postal questionnaire sought information on such things as frequency of visits to different beach, river or lake sites, activities undertaken, reasons for visiting, reasons for not visiting as often as desired, ease of access and perceptions of overall water quality.



Children on body boards at Urenui River Mouth

Fitzroy Beach, Ngamotu Beach, Opunake Beach and the New Plymouth Coastal Walkway, were the most frequently visited locations in the region. These locations were followed by East End, Urenui and Oakura Beach. Walking, swimming and relaxing were the most popular activities at beaches and rivers, while walking,

relaxing and scenic appreciation were the most popular activities at lakes. Some 61% of respondents indicated that they did not visit rivers, lakes or the coast as often as they would like, citing work commitments, lack of time, family commitments and cost as the main reasons for this.

About 90% of respondents thought the level of public access to rivers, lakes and the coast was about right. Some 90% of respondents thought that the water quality of Taranaki beaches was good or excellent while 77% of respondents thought the same for Taranaki's rivers.

The information provided by the survey will be included in the Council's next State of the Environment Report due for release in late 2008 and used for general water management purposes.

Iwi Memoranda of Understanding

The Council continued dialogue with those iwi willing to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Council to further develop and strengthen the relationships between iwi and the Council. A consultant was commissioned to provide advice to the Council and iwi on a wahi tapu database project and how existing Council investments in GIS could potentially be utilised.

Relationship with Paraninihi ki Waitotara Incorporation

The Council continued discussions with Paraninihi ki Waitotara (PKW) on a memorandum of understanding between PKW and the Council. PKW is the largest landowner in Taranaki and is committed to achieving excellence in its farming operations and associated environmental management. The Council and PKW are keen to enter into a memorandum of understanding to further promote this goal.

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:

- the biological control of pest plants
- the Government's Sustainable Land Management (Hill Country Erosion) Programme
- the biological control programme for clover root weevil
- nitrification inhibitor trials at Whareroa Research Farm
- future management of 1080
- trends in organic carbon, organic nitrogen and phosphate in Taranaki pasture
- the New Zealand Energy Strategy to 2050
- groundwater quality in New Zealand
- the Government's contaminated land position paper
- the costs and benefits of climate change and adaption to climate change in New Zealand
- the National Environmental Standard for Sources of Human Drinking Water.

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. A Biodiversity Operational Strategy was adopted to guide future action by the Council in this area.

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 new Plymouth Strategic Transport Study to policy for responding to pests and diseases.

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.