

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements relating to its Public Information functions for the 2005/2006 year.

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

Set out below is a summary of the main Public Information activities carried out by the Council in 2005/2006:

- The Council's Education Officer worked with 87 classes involving 3,511 students this year and a further 670 visitors to the Council's display areas.
- During the year, 44 units of work and 242 additional resources were sent out to teachers covering topics such as the Weather, Rivers, Coast, Recycling, Sustainable Land Management, Civil Defence Emergency Management and Trees.
- Four issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
- Forty-one requests for information were received and provided on a range of environmental topics and Council activities.
- Two Ministerial visits were hosted by the Council during the 2005/06 year: one with the Environment Minister David Benson-Pope and another for the Minister of Agriculture Jim Anderton.
- The refreshment of the *Taranaki Naturally* gallery at Puke Ariki was completed as part of the annual project for 2005/06.
- The monthly average of visits to the Council's website was 25,407 (compared to 15,118 monthly average for 2004/2005).
- The Taranaki Regional Explorer site averaged 53,951 visits per month.
- *A guide to surface water availability and allocation in Taranaki* was published by the Council and a promotional campaign was undertaken to advertise the new and improved bus services for New Plymouth, Bell Block, Waitara and Oakura.
- The Taranaki Regional Council presented eleven environmental awards to recognise environmental projects in categories of industry, agriculture and individual/school/community groups.
- The Council produced four issues of the S.I.T.E newsletter and mailed out over 750 copies of each issue.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements on its Public Information functions for the 2005/2006 year.

1.2 Background

The Public Information programme provides a non-regulatory method of implementing a range of Council policies. The programme contributes towards sustainable resource management by raising public awareness and commitment to environmental management and developing appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in the resource users of the future.

The external activities of the Public Information programme are directed at three major groups:

The regional community

The promotion of the role, policies and activities of the Council is directed at the wider public audience through newsletters, the media, website, displays, information sheets and a partnership with Puke Ariki.

Resource users and special interest groups

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

The formal education sector

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

The Public Information Section also provides graphics and information support to all sections of the Council.

The Taranaki Regional Council's 2005/2006 Annual Plan outlined the Council's Public Information programme as follows:

1.2.1 Objective

The overall objective for public information activities, as contained in the Taranaki Regional Council's 2005/2006 Annual Plan, is to:

"Promote community awareness and understanding of the Council's functions and activities, and make quality and timely information publicly available."

1.2.2 Programme

In response to the above objective, the following performance measures were adopted by the Council in its 2005/2006 Annual Plan:

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

- Publishing and distributing regular editions of the *Recount* newsletter to over 1,000 stakeholders, maintaining the Council's website and implementing the Council's environmental awards programme.
- Providing an on-going resource management programme for school children and the wider community, including presenting at least 150 class visits or field trips and hosting approximately 1,000 visitors to the Council.
- Ongoing use of display and presentation material at the Puke Ariki regional museum and library.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Information for the regional community

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

2.1.1 Recount newsletter and the media

The *Recount* newsletter is used to inform and consult with the regional community and is distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media. Four issues of *Recount* were produced during the 2005/2006 year, including an audited summary of the 2004/05 Annual Report.

Regular coverage of Council activities and related issues was provided by the region's media, mainly the region's daily newspaper, and to a lesser extent the community newspapers, radio and regional television. During the year 22 media releases were distributed.

Monitoring of the region's print media showed that there were 125 articles in the Taranaki Daily News and 28 articles in the region's community newspapers during the year relating to the Taranaki Regional Council. Of these 153 articles, 123 (80%) provided positive coverage of Council business and the remainder were neutral.

2.1.2 General information on Council activities

During the year, 41 requests for information were received from the general public, teachers, and school or tertiary students. Information was provided on a range of environmental topics and Council activities. Most requests were for further information about topics covered by the Council's Environmental Education Programme.

Further information was provided from the series of information sheets on Council activities, while more specific requests involved supplying material such as annual monitoring reports or more detailed information provided by other Council staff. Much of the information that was previously provided in response to information requests is now accessed directly from the Council's website.

A summary of the 2004/2005 Annual Report (as a *Recount* newsletter) was distributed with the region's four community newspapers (49,000) in November 2005. In March 2006, a brochure summarising the *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan* was distributed with community newspapers (49,000).

In August 2005 Council published *A guide to surface water availability and allocation in Taranaki* to help water users or those planning to take or use surface water to interpret the *Regional Fresh Water Plan*.

In February 2006 the Council hosted Environment Minister David Benson-Pope on a tour of the region to view some of the Council's resource management programmes such as riparian management, sustainable land management, biodiversity and pest control programmes.

The Minister of Agriculture Jim Anderton also visited the region in May 2006 to study the Council's land management programme and riparian plant scheme.



Tour by the Minister of Agriculture - Jim Anderton

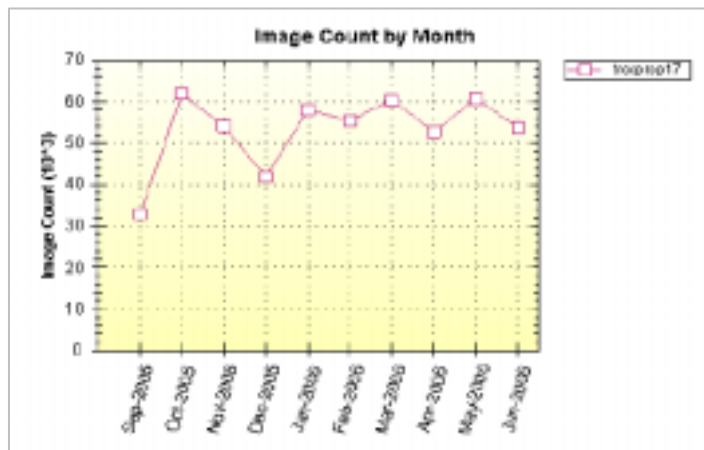
Interest in the Council's website (www.trc.govt.nz) continued to grow throughout the 2005/2006 year. The site provides an overview of the Taranaki region and the Council's significant activities. The website also allows people to directly access

information about the Council, request further information, or provide feedback on issues.

Website usage peaked at 37,568 sessions during September 2005, with a monthly average of 25,507 for the nine months that statistics were available for. This compares with a monthly high of 18,141 during May 2005 and a monthly average of 15,118 for 2005/06.

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

Taranaki Regional Xplorer, a free public enquiry website with a broad range of geographic and local government information about the Taranaki region, was launched in August 2004. The website was developed in partnership with the Stratford and South Taranaki district councils. Visits to the site peaked at 61,784 in October 2005, with a monthly average (between July 2005 and June 2006) of 53,951. The consistent use of the site to create map images is proving the usefulness of the resource.



The number of map images requested by month

New rural and urban aerial photography was flown in January/February 2006 and will be loaded into the website later in 2006. This will include new high resolution photographs for some urban areas in Taranaki, with this being a huge asset to the region.

2.2 Puke Ariki partnership

The refreshment of the *Taranaki Naturally* gallery at Puke Ariki was completed as part of the 2005/2006 annual project under the Council's partnership agreement with Puke Ariki. The gallery refreshment was initiated as the 2004/2005 annual project.

The remainder of the Council's 2005/2006 annual contribution has been allocated to the "Mountain Project", a short film on Mount Taranaki. Council staff are continuing to work with Puke Ariki staff on this project and concepts for future projects.



Puke Ariki Manager Bill McNaught, Council Chief Executive Basil Chamberlain and Council Chairman David Walter celebrating the refreshed "Taranaki Naturally" gallery

2.3 Environmental awards programme

The Council's 2005/2006 environmental awards programme recognised environmental projects in the categories of business/local authority (2), agriculture (5) and individual/school/community (4) groups. The public recognition of activities and projects that benefit the environment helps to increase awareness of environmental issues. The programme also helps promote positive attitudes and actions towards the environment, within the wider community.



Environmental Award presented to St Joseph's School Waitara

In May 2006, eleven environmental awards were presented. The list of award winners for the year is included in Appendix I.

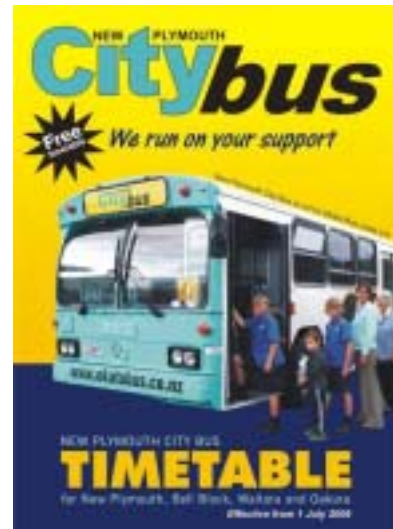
The Council continued to support other award programmes that include environmental criteria in their selection process. The Council again provided an environmental science prize for the Science and Technology fair, supported the 2005 Taranaki Sharemilker of the Year and the 2006 Taranaki Meat and Fibre Farmer of the Year.

2.4 Targeted information programmes

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

2.4.1 Promotion of revised New Plymouth City Bus services

In June 2006 Council ran a promotional and advertising campaign to promote public support for an 18 month trial of revised bus services in New Plymouth. The campaign involved the design and production of bus timetables, posters and flyers, as well as an extensive media campaign and newspaper/radio advertising. Ongoing promotion of the bus service will continue throughout the 2006/2007 year.



Cover page of the revised New Plymouth City Bus Timetable

2.5 Information, awareness and education activities delivered across the Council

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

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

- Information sheets
- Newsletters
- Booklets or guides
- Posters and leaflets
- Educational resources
- Presentations
- Websites
- Workshops, field days, meetings
- Sponsorship
- Advertising
- Media releases
- Face to face contact
- Video production
- Television interviews.

During the year Council staff carried out 19 presentations or displays and 88 workshops, field days or meetings to promote awareness of a wide range of activities.

During the year Public Information staff provided support for Land Management staff and the Tree Trust Co-ordinator to run a number of field days and workshops. Events included a field trip to Lake Rotokare to celebrate World Wetlands Day, a Treescaping Taranaki field day and a public planting day for the Herekawe Stream Walkway Project.

In addition to the environmental awards noted above sponsorship was also provided for a small number of



Planting day for the Herekawe Stream Walkway Project

community, educational or agricultural events that promoted actions that benefit the Taranaki environment. These included Seaweed 2006, Youth Enviro School 2006 and the Youth Environment Forum.

2.6 Environmental education in schools

The Council's environmental education programme focuses on the school sector to promote sustainable use of the region's natural resources. The main objective of the programme is for primary school children to develop understanding, skills and attitudes that will then shape the behaviour of future resource users and communities.

Although it is not a core part of the school curriculum, there are many opportunities for environmental education to be taught in schools. The Council aims to foster the teaching of environmental education by identifying links to the curriculum and working with teachers who are interested in implementing the programme.

The Education Officer provides resources, training and support for teachers to implement environmental education programmes with their classes. The programme focuses on providing practical action-based learning experiences for students.

2.6.1 S.I.T.E. newsletter to schools

The S.I.T.E. (Schools In The Environment) newsletter is sent to all schools in the region at the beginning of each term. Its main purpose is to promote environmental education within our region. 650 copies are issued each term to schools in the region with each school's allocation being commensurate to its roll number. In addition, another 105 copies are sent to other interested parties in the region and beyond to promote environmental education. Each issue covers its own environmental theme and over the past year Civil Defence Emergency Management, Wetlands, Rocky Shores and Trees have been the focused areas. Regular features included in S.I.T.E. are:

- practical information on Council functions and environmental education, with links to the school curriculum
- information on resources and services available from the Council
- features on environmental initiatives in schools
- a children's activity page for use in the classroom.



S.I.T.E. newsletter

Feedback indicates that the newsletter is well received and provides a key method of communication with schools. The Education Officer is working with principals and teachers to investigate other ways for the Council to communicate with them so as to ensure the children in the region receive the best possible environmental education programme.

2.6.2 Teacher development and environmental education resources

For environmental education to be further integrated into teaching programmes throughout the region, the Council must encourage and support individual teachers to deliver suitable programmes themselves. The Council facilitates professional development seminars to help teachers develop their skills and knowledge and has a range of resources

available to teachers.

Professional Development seminars

The Education Officer facilitated two teacher training workshops during the 2005/2006 year. They were:

1. The Mountain Environment - 30 November 2005

A total of 17 primary and secondary school teachers met at Dawson Falls to look at ways they could involve their classes in a mountain environment study. An important part of the day was the session devoted to water quality assessment using identification of invertebrates.



Teacher education session at Dawson Falls

2. Visit the Rock Pools - 16 February 2006

A total of 13 primary teachers took the opportunity of exploring the Kawaroa Rock Pools. This session was aimed at giving teachers the confidence to undertake a rocky shore study of their own with their classes.

Two other planned workshops were cancelled owing to the low numbers of registrations. The Education Officer is investigating other ways in which the Council can assist teachers with professional development. There have been changes made this year to classroom release time for teachers and this may provide an opportunity for a different approach.

Units of work

The Council has a range of resources available to encourage the teaching of environmental education in schools. Resources are provided, on request, to teachers who are willing to teach an environmental education programme themselves. The Council has developed teaching units which are targeted at years 4 – 8 but can be adapted to all levels and contain curriculum objectives, information and class activities. Most units contain material for teachers to carry out a study or field trip with a class group.

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

During the year 44 units of work were sent out to teachers. The Council also issued 242 other resources to assist teachers in their programmes. These included videos, posters, books, education kits, leaflets and pamphlets.

2.6.3 Direct support for teachers providing environmental learning experiences

The Council has continued to encourage the growth of environmental education programmes in schools by providing assistance for teachers undertaking learning experiences both within and outside the classroom. Assistance is offered at any stage of the learning programme from the initial planning to the evaluation of the study itself.

The provision of support for teachers who require assistance is vital as the trend towards

schools being staffed with a greater proportion of inexperienced teachers continues.

Field trips

Field trips offer students the opportunity to learn **about** the environment, **in** the environment and sometimes to carry out action **for** the environment.

The field trips usually focus on river or coastal sites, and often involve an introduction to environmental monitoring. Many of these field trips are preceded by a classroom visit by the Education Officer to introduce the topic and to ensure the children get the best possible value from the trip itself. Technical support and specialized equipment, such as nets, or laboratory equipment, are provided by the Council as they are not generally available in schools. A growing number of schools are now involving their children in riparian planting programmes using the expertise of the Council's Land Management Officers. The Education Officer accompanied 45 classes on field trips involving 1,532 children during the year.



Amenity planting day with Urenui Primary School children



Visit to Inglewood Primary

Visits to schools

The Education Officer also offers classroom visits on environmental topics that relate specifically to Council activities. These visits are provided on request and must be part of a broader study. The Education Officer provides technical knowledge, presentations, activities or experiments, with the emphasis on providing support for the teacher.

A brief overview of the Taranaki environment is included in most lessons. Practical interactive activities are usually included and the main topics covered are Weather, Civil Defence Emergency Management, Recycling, the Taranaki Coast, Pest Animals, Trees and Sustainable Land Management.

During the year the Education Officer made 42 school visits involving 1,979 students. He also attended 11 staff meetings during the year to promote the teaching of environmental education in schools, to support the teachers and to encourage them to take the programmes themselves.

Visits to the Taranaki Regional Council

School visits to the Council's environmental education centre are usually linked to work that is being taught at school. They involve either a lesson based on a Council unit of study or can be tailored to meet the group's needs. The biology laboratory and environmental display room provide a comprehensive learning experience, including native and introduced fish, rocky shore creatures and awareness of environmental issues. Other topics such as animal pest management or sustainable land management are sometimes included in the visit.

There were 670 visitors, mainly from schools to the Council's aquarium and display areas during the year.

2.6.4 Other projects

Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum

The third Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum was held in Wellington in April 2006. The Council organized an essay competition to select the region's representatives and as a result Alexandra Masters (New Plymouth Girls' High School), Harriet Kingston (Inglewood High School) and Sarah Peel (Inglewood High School) were selected. Two runners-up (Opunake High School students Stephen Vince and Chrystal DeCleene)



Taranaki representatives and runners-up at the Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum in Wellington

were also presented with prizes for their efforts. The three representatives selected were accompanied by the Education Officer throughout the forum.

The five day programme involved visits to places of interest, environmental talks from experts, group discussions and opportunities to share ideas and spend time with other like minded young people. The highlight for many was the opportunity to be part of a group presentation held in parliament and attended by many VIPs including the Minister for the Environment.



Mike Norris Memorial Outdoor Classroom at Spotswood Primary School

School Beautification Projects

The Education Officer has also helped schools with programmes designed to making their school environment more attractive in a sustainable way.

Taranaki Science and Technology Fair

The Council sponsors prizes and makes staff available for judging at the annual Science and Technology Fair.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has met its performance targets set out in the 2005/2006 Annual Plan for its Public Information functions. The activities undertaken support the Council's slogan of "Working with people, caring for our environment", and further enhance the environmental awareness and attitudes of the Taranaki community.

3.1.1 Programmes and performance measures

1. Four issues of *Recount* were produced and distributed to over 1,000 key stakeholders, organisations and the media.
2. Forty-one requests for information were received and information was provided on a range of environmental topics and council activities.
3. Two Ministerial visits were hosted by the Council during the 2005/06 year: one with the Environment Minister David Benson-Pope and another for the Minister of Agriculture Jim Anderton.
4. Four issues of the S.I.T.E. newsletter were distributed during the year.
5. Two teacher workshops were facilitated by the Council including *Visit the Rock Pools* and *The Mountain Environment*.
6. The Council's Education Officer worked with 87 classes involving 3,511 students this year and a further 670 visitors to the Council's display areas.
7. Eleven environmental awards were presented during the year.

Appendix I

2005/2006 Environmental Awards – 17 May 2006

Business/local authority

- **Swift Energy New Zealand Ltd** – for community engagement and environmental management.
- **PPCS Ltd (formerly Richmond Hawera)** – for investment and improvement in environmental performance.

Agricultural

- **Ian and Judith Armstrong** – for advocating and implementing sustainable farming practices.
- **Daryl and Karyn Johnson** – for advocating and implementing a whole farm approach to environmental management.
- **Mark and Claire Ogle** – for sustainable land management.
- **Robin and Jacqueline Blackwell** – for sustainable land management.
- **Neil and Denise Phillips** – for sustainable land management.

Individual/school/community group

- **TSB Topec** – for waste minimisation and increased energy efficiency.
- **Fonterra and Hawera Rotary** (Nowells Lakes Walkways Project) – for environmental enhancement and development of an environmental education resource.
- **St Joseph's Primary School Waitara** – for environmental education and riparian planting in the lower Waitara valley.
- **Spotswood Primary School** (Mike Norris Memorial Outdoor Classroom) – for increasing environmental awareness and understanding.

