

# Recount

Taranaki Regional Council Newsletter

June 2003 No. 43

## Minister launches environment report

The May launch of the report *Taranaki – our place our future, report on the state of the environment of the Taranaki region – 2003* was a significant event in the Council's calendar. The report represents a highly complex and comprehensive project that measures progress towards the Council's ultimate goal on behalf of the Taranaki community – the sustainable management of our natural and physical resources.

The launch also provided an opportunity for guest of honour, Minister for the Environment Marian Hobbs, to observe the region's environmental initiatives and the partnerships the Council has with its community, on a whistle-stop tour of North Taranaki.

Commenting on the report, the Minister emphasised the importance of environmental monitoring as a tool for tracking environmental trends. She congratulated both the Council and the Taranaki community on the comprehensive monitoring programmes already in place which had formed the basis for the report.

She noted also the Taranaki community's strong financial commitment to the environment.

"In particular, the economic analysis indicates that total spending on the environment by the Taranaki community is conservatively estimated at \$57 million per annum. This is an indication of the extent to which you all value your local environment and the efforts that are being made to maintain it. Harnessing commitment from all sections of the community – agricultural, commercial, industrial, government and the general community – is vital if your current success is to continue and expand," the Minister said.

*Taranaki – our place our future* records



Minister for the Environment Marian Hobbs and Council Chairman David Walter with the new report.

favourable results in water quality in rivers, streams, coastal waters and bathing beaches, sustainability in the erosion prone inland hill country, soil and air quality, landscapes, natural and physical amenities and in the preservation of historic buildings and sites.

The report represents good news for the Taranaki community, and confidence in the region's ability to meet the environmental challenges of the future.

The Minister visited the environmental award winning Colson Road transfer station and landfill site, and discussed the recently released *Regional Waste Strategy for Taranaki*.

At the Moturoa lookout, she viewed sites and discussed a range of issues and initiatives, including the investigation, nature and extent of hazards of the Moturoa oil field, the investigation of alleged historical disposal of dioxin wastes around New Plymouth, the operation and development of Port Taranaki and oil

firing at New Plymouth power station.

An informal visit to Puke Ariki brought the Minister up to date with the Council's role in the development, and its potential for promoting community awareness and understanding of the Taranaki environment through environmental education.

Representatives of Federated Farmers joined the tour at a local farm to view riparian management in practice and to discuss water quality and the response to pressures on the environment brought by an increase in dairying.

A visit to a gas exploration site adjacent to the Methanex Motunui methanol production plant rounded off the tour with discussions on the environmental performance of the energy sector generally, the resource consent process for the Pohokura gas field and the future of gas reserves in the region.

(For a report summary, see page four.)

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## From the Chair

The goal of the Council to achieve sustainable management of Taranaki's natural and physical resources is not something that happens quickly. It will be the result of much hard work and incremental improvements.



Chairman David Walter

Bearing this in mind, it is heartening to note the progress made in only six years, since the presentation of the last state of the environment report. The Taranaki community can be justifiably proud of the efforts made in the recent past to ensure that Taranaki's natural resources – vital to our economic and social wellbeing – are managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Generally, the Taranaki Regional Council's state of the environment report *Taranaki – our place our future, report on the state of the environment of the Taranaki region – 2003* shows that by both comparative and absolute measures from anywhere in the world, we live in a wonderful place with a fresh, clean environment that supports a healthy and prosperous community. There is clear evidence that industry, agriculture and the community at large in Taranaki are acting locally in significant ways to maintain and enhance our high quality environment.

But there remains further work to do. Continued growth, particularly in our agricultural sector, will intensify pressures on the environment and will require ongoing awareness. This is an issue that we all need to keep in mind.

The Council believes that sustainable development is the key to prosperity and that cooperation and partnerships are vital to achieving that goal. For our part, the Council will continue to strengthen these efforts based on cooperation. This will mean Council and farmers, landowners, industry and business leaders working together to bring about positive and permanent results over the next five years and in the decades beyond.

Taranaki people enjoy action. They prefer to solve problems quickly and decisively rather than to debate them as they grow larger. The Council too prefers to identify issues early, analyse response options competently and then to act, working with the community, in a pragmatic and timely manner to address issues and to manage them.

As a community we have greatly raised our awareness of the need to work with our environment carefully and in an informed way. The Council is confident, given the record of environmental performance and improvement demonstrated by the community to date, that Taranaki will remain vigilant and well placed to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

David Walter - CHAIRMAN

## Council appoints new directors

A re-distribution of responsibilities has preceded the recent appointment of Gary Bedford as Director – Environment Quality and Fred McLay as Director – Resource Management. The appointments follow the departure of former Director – Resource Management Bill Bayfield to the Ministry for the Environment in Wellington.

Gary Bedford, who was formerly the Council's Technical Services Manager, is now responsible for science and technical services, hydrology, emergency management, environmental monitoring, compliance monitoring, research investigations and programmes, and the Council's waste minimisation project. He began work for the Taranaki Regional Council 13 years ago as a scientific officer, following a position with the New Plymouth District Council in which he set up and managed the waste water laboratory.

Fred McLay returns to the Council after almost two years as Head of External Affairs with Shell Todd Oil Services (STOS) dealing with statutory approvals, communications and community involvement initiatives (sponsorship) and, in particular with the consent process for the Pohokura development. Prior to his appointment at STOS, he worked for the Council for 18 years, beginning as a water resource officer and later holding the position of Consents Manager.



Gary Bedford  
Director – Environment Quality



Fred McLay  
Director – Resource Management

## Pesticide residue survey has good results

Recent monitoring of groundwater pesticide levels throughout the region has concluded that Taranaki continues to have no levels of any significance.

Six Taranaki wells were sampled as part of a National Pesticides in Groundwater survey in December last year and the samples were analysed for residues. No pesticide contamination was detected in any of the Taranaki samples.

Groundwater quality is increasingly important nationwide as it feeds, either as the sole or a partial source, around 50% of all community water supplies. In terms of international trade, good quality groundwater is taken to be an indicator of environmentally responsible agricultural practices.

Herbicides account for 68% of pesticide usage in New Zealand, followed by fungicides at 24% and insecticides at 8%. Shallow unconfined groundwater systems are particularly vulnerable to pesticide residue contamination and the Council promotes the careful use of chemicals through both the *Regional Fresh Water Plan* and the *Regional Air Quality Plan*.

The most recent survey was the fourth in a series of national surveys since 1990, all of which have found no levels of any significance in Taranaki to date. The next National Pesticide in Groundwater survey will be held in 2006.



# Farm irrigation report looks to the future

A recent Council-commissioned report on optimisation of farm irrigation provides guidelines for the allocation of water for pasture irrigation purposes, and suggests areas of Taranaki that might be suited to irrigation.

The number of resource consent applications for pasture irrigation in the last few years has highlighted many issues relating to water allocation and future demand in Taranaki. Irrigation development within the region has traditionally been based on access to surface water, often the most easily accessible and cheapest option. To plan for and manage water resources, it is necessary to understand present and future irrigation demands. This report assists in the process.

The report's analysis of eight possible irrigation zones throughout Taranaki (omitting the eastern hill country) identifies the highest potential daily or seasonal irrigation allocations in the four coastal zones Inaha, Hawera, Opunake and New Plymouth and the lowest in the four inland zones of Stratford, Normanby, Okato and Inglewood.

The most popular irrigation systems currently used are k-lines and long-lateral systems perceived to be the cheapest and the best suited to existing farm layouts. Figures show that up to 30% of the total water allocation is being lost through inefficient system performance, notably poor distribution or excessive application depths and rates. The effects of Taranaki wind, in particular, call for tailored design in both systems and operations. The report identifies optimal application



A centre pivot irrigator at work in South Taranaki in February this year

depths and return intervals for each of the eight irrigation zones, along with guidance on sprinkler and spray irrigation systems.

Working with assumptions relating to farm production, irrigation costs (the lowest capital k-line system) and milk solid returns (\$4/kg MS), the report shows that the marginal benefits for irrigation development are positive for Inaha (high development potential), Normanby, Hawera and Opunake (all medium potential) and negative for the four other zones.

The report did not take into account water use or access, both issues addressed under the *Regional Fresh Water Plan*, but concentrated instead on identifying

the potential irrigation area and the associated water take. The results show a potential irrigation area of almost 95,000 ha (current allocations cover 2500 ha almost exclusively for irrigation of pasture on dairy farms) and conclude that if only a small proportion of the farms are irrigated in these zones, demands for irrigation takes could increase several-fold.

The optimisation of farm irrigation report will be circulated to relevant consentholders and businesses. A one page summary and guideline on pasture irrigation management is available from the Council or at the web address [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)

## Community outcomes to be identified

What do we want most out of our regional community? It's a big question and one that the Taranaki community will soon be asked to consider.

Under the new Local Government Act 2002, which came into force at the end of last year, local authorities have acquired new powers and assumed new obligations to their communities. As part of an adjusted accountability, they must identify their community outcomes or, in other words, ask their communities what they want to see happen and monitor the progress towards these goals. The process is to be repeated every six years.

South Taranaki, Stratford and New Plymouth district councils and the Taranaki Regional Council have planned a joint process to ensure that everyone can have a say.

Agreement to the process has still to be obtained from various parties. Plans at this stage suggest a series of public meetings, meetings with key stakeholders, a flyer distributed throughout the region inviting community feedback, focus groups, a telephone survey to gauge community opinions, and a call for submissions on a draft report on community outcomes.

The outcomes when finally identified will relate to both the present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the Taranaki community. An important step in the process will be identifying who in the community is responsible for the success of the outcomes, and determining how that success can be measured.

A final report is planned to be completed around Christmas and will be part of the four councils' long-term council community plans for 2004.



# Report examines the state of the environment

The Council's report *Taranaki – our place our future, report on the state of the environment of the Taranaki region – 2003* gives the region a very favourable bill of health. At the same time, the report cautions that a high quality environment must never be taken for granted. Continued intensification of the dairying industry, it warns, can cause soil compaction while the nutrient run-off from pasture has its effects on shallow groundwater and water quality in the lower reaches of rivers and streams. Both issues require ongoing attention and responses.

The 200 page detailed report notes any environmental trends or changes in the region, and is the second state of the environment report for Taranaki. The first was released by the Council in 1996. Under the 1991 Resource Management Act, regional councils are required to monitor the overall state of the environment of their regions, including the control and management of water, air and land, coastal marine areas, the discharge of contaminants and the use of river and lake beds.

The 2003 report draws on comprehensive state of the environment monitoring programmes that were put in place by the Council mainly in the mid 1990s with some stretching back even further. To ensure that the data is good, recognised and reputable methods and measures have been used and their results have been collected and analysed by appropriately qualified people.

So, how are we doing? Overall, the report shows that Taranaki is a good place to be.

Water quality in Taranaki's rivers and streams remains high, with some improvements in mid and lower catchment sites and, as the inevitable consequence of agricultural expansion and intensification over the last five to 10 years, some deterioration in the lower reaches. Significant progress in the Council's continually expanding riparian management programme is now addressing this issue.

The state of its water is an important issue in a region that lists 286 primary river catchments and over 530 named rivers. Surface freshwater resources in Taranaki are valued highly for a wide range of uses from agriculture and industry to town water

supplies and recreation. There has been a 35% increase in allocated water use since 1996, with a large jump in the amount of water allocated for pasture irrigation. However, taken overall, water use pressures on our rivers and streams are still relatively low with only 4.5% of median or normal flows allocated. Good progress continues in the protection of regionally significant or important wetlands.

Keeping a watchful eye on Taranaki's water is the Council's *Regional Fresh Water Plan* that took effect in 2001 and contains policies, methods and rules designed to best manage water resources.

Soil is another of Taranaki's most important resources and has a vital role in sustaining the food and fibre industries. The region has a wide range of soil types from fertile, well drained soils on the ring plain and coastal terraces, to relatively infertile and erodible soils in the steep inland hill country.

The state of the environment report shows that 92.5% of the region is now sustainably managed with no significant soil erosion problems. In the hill country, 85.1% of farmland is sustainably managed – a healthy 1.1% increase over the monitoring period. Twenty-eight per cent of privately owned land in the hill country is now covered by property plans as part of the Council's ongoing sustainable land management programme.

A continuing reduction in the number of landfills in the region has seen 15 landfills closed and rehabilitated since 1983. The Council, in conjunction with district councils, will maintain its efforts to reduce the number of operative landfills even further.

Air quality too receives good marks. The Council regularly monitors key indicators of overall air quality in the region at up to 30 representative sites in urban, rural, coastal and pristine areas.

On the basis of national guidelines, overall air quality in Taranaki is excellent and compares extremely well with other regions and countries. The few discharges at specific sites primarily involve odours and are being managed to reduce effects as far as possible. There are 230 air discharge permits held in Taranaki and over the last 10 years, major air-discharge permit holders have made significant improvements to their operations.

The water quality of Taranaki's 295 km coastline also is rated as excellent and compares well with other regions. The most popular bathing beaches in the region comply with "safe level" national bathing standards on a seasonal basis, and healthy and stable communities of marine life inhabit the waters. There are now only four major community or industrial treated wastewater discharges to coastal waters in Taranaki – a reduction from some 25 major discharges in the mid 1970s, and significant improvements have been made in existing waste treatment and disposal systems.

Natural features and landscapes, and amenity and heritage values are reported as being of high quality, with the region's district councils playing a major role. Most notable in the work to protect the environment are efforts to combat possums and other pest animals and plants that remain one of the greatest threats to the regional environment. The Council's self help possum control programme has increased in size by 78% in the last six years and now covers 182,000 ha on 2800 properties in the region and continues to expand. Department of Conservation



Taranaki – our place our future, report on the state of the environment of the Taranaki region – 2003



operations have further increased the possum eradication programme.

Programmes that monitor and protect the environment require considerable resources and the report notes that the Taranaki community itself has made a substantial investment in this work. Independent assessments put the level of capital investment conservatively at \$91 million over the last five years. Total operating and capital investment has been conservatively estimated at \$57 million per annum. The high quality environment enjoyed by Taranaki's residents and visitors has not come about by accident but by the cooperative and increasingly proactive work of the community.

The combined effect of all the policies, programmes and actions described in the report represents a significant step along the path to sustainable development in Taranaki. This means a balanced, integrated approach to development that ensures people and the environment are looked after both now and in the long term. This is not just a local concern. The underlying principles of sustainable development were confirmed by the international community at last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg.

There will always be a role for rules and regulatory actions in resource management. The report points out, however, that over the past decade there has been a noticeable shift from the often adversarial, regulatory approaches towards resource management issues, to today's more inclusive partnerships. Increasingly, the Council is working alongside farmers, landowners and industry leaders and taking practical actions to protect and improve the environment. In promoting future environmental programmes, the Council's approach remains "working with people, caring for our environment".



The water quality of Taranaki's 295 km coastline is rated as excellent

The report includes comprehensive sections on Taranaki – the people and the place; land and soil; fresh water; coastal environment; air; landscape, natural and built heritage and amenity values; natural hazards and towards sustainable development in Taranaki. The information is illustrated by photographs, maps and explanatory graphs.

For a full copy of the report, a report summary and a CD, contact Taranaki Regional Council, Cloten Road, Private Bag 713, Stratford, Phone 06 765 7127 or 0800 736 222, Fax 06 765 5097, e-mail [publications@trc.govt.nz](mailto:publications@trc.govt.nz) or visit [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)

## More regional wetlands protected



Spence Road coastal lakes near Hawera.

Two further wetland areas of regional significance have been added to the wetland protection scheme with assistance from Council enhancement grants.

The five and a half hectare Maitahi site in Leith and Perth Roads near Okato is being fenced and planted with the support of the landowners Mervyn and Rae Hooker and Bernard and Pauline Gibson. The wetland is a narrow strip in a swampy gully bottom that follows tributaries to the Maitahi Stream, and



Maitahi wetland near Okato.

provides an excellent habitat among the raupo, Carex species and flax for the spotless crane (*Porzana tabuensis plumbea*) and the Australasian bittern.

The Spence Road coastal lakes near Hawera now provide a six hectare water fowl sanctuary. Nearly three kilometres of retirement fencing have been installed and 4,000 native plants have been added to the site owned by Richard Dwyer, Susanne Lacy and Noel and Maria Schrider.



# Taranaki cuts down on rubbish

Taranaki has responded well to the nationwide "Reduce Your Rubbish" campaign. The campaign encourages householders to reduce the amount of rubbish that they send to landfills, through simple actions such as recycling, composting green waste and purchasing items with less packaging. People are acting on the messages that have been delivered by the national television advertisements and supported by local initiatives.

Organizers of the Taranaki campaign attribute its success to the level of co-operation between the South Taranaki, Stratford and New Plymouth district councils, and the Taranaki Regional Council. The regional campaign has been co-ordinated by a group of communication, education and waste officers from the four councils.

Feedback from the public and district council waste officers indicates that local people are supporting the solutions that are available in the region. Support for the local recycling programmes and interest in the composting of green waste, either at home or through transfer stations, appears to be growing. Local

consumers have become increasingly aware also of the need to reduce the amount of unnecessary packaging that often comes with their purchases.

Regional radio and television advertising has targeted the local community and a twelve page supplement on the campaign was distributed with *The Daily News*. There was an enthusiastic response to the "Kerby" colouring competition in the supplement, with almost 200 entries. The prizewinners were: 9-12yrs, Victoria Hoete, Normanby; 5-8yrs, Tori Harvey-Alston, New Plymouth; and under 5 years, Chelsea Coplestone, Stratford.

A national Reduce Your Rubbish Challenge, in which households commit themselves to reducing their rubbish and compete for a \$10,000 prize package, has been a major part of the campaign. Four Taranaki households who were randomly selected in June and were duly audited to ensure that their actions actually met their pledges, are in with a chance to win the major prizes.

The campaign's organizers hope that the collaboration and cooperation now achieved between regional and district



Chelsea Coplestone with her winning kerby colouring competition entry.

councils on waste reduction will continue and will build on the public's newly heightened awareness of the need to reduce rubbish.

# Emergency resource consent activated at Power Station

The activation of an existing emergency resource consent and a rapid engineering re-configuration of the plant have enabled Contact Energy to fire generators at its New Plymouth thermal power plant with oil instead of gas.

Notification of the move was made to the Council in March amid national warnings of an electricity shortfall and a decrease in gas supplies. The Council is satisfied that the strictly defined conditions under which oil can be burned do in fact prevail.

The consent imposes strict and

comprehensive operational and environmental performance requirements upon Contact Energy. An extensive air quality monitoring programme has been put in place to assess the station's performance.

Of particular interest are emissions of sulphur dioxide, one of the key air contaminants to be managed in New Zealand. While natural gas is essentially free of sulphur, it is present in fuel oil at concentrations up to 4%. The emergency consent restricts the type of oil that can be burned to low sulphur oil only,

in order to safeguard New Plymouth's excellent air quality.

The New Plymouth Power Station was originally designed to run on either gas or oil, and its configuration, including many elements of its construction such as the design height of the chimney stack, provide for both these functions.

The New Plymouth station last routinely burnt oil in the late 1970s, before raw Kapuni gas and later treated Maui gas became available. It has run on natural gas for most of its lifetime.

# New season's riparian planting begins

Around 115,000 plants from contract growers were delivered to distribution depots and collected at the beginning of June for riparian plantings on dairy farms throughout the region. The plants are part of the Council's ongoing riparian management programme that aims to restore good health and provide long-term protection for all the rivers and streams.

Requests from farmers for help with their planting projects continue to increase. In 2001, 60,000 plants were provided and

last year, the number grew to 90,000.

The Council's advisory service to landowners on the retirement and planting of riparian margins is free. Individual plans for fencing, planting and maintenance of riparian zones are drawn up and costs estimated. The planting can be carried out in stages and the plants are provided at cost. The landowners plant, fence and maintain their own riparian projects.



Plants are collected for this year's riparian planting.



# The region leads in waste management and minimisation

The prompt development of the *Regional Waste Management Strategy for Taranaki* (based on the *New Zealand Waste Strategy*, released late last year by the Ministry for the Environment) places Taranaki well ahead of other regions in the country in waste management and minimisation and has highlighted much progress already achieved.

Examples include the successful establishment of both domestic and commercial worm farming in Taranaki, the conversion of around 24,000 tonnes per year of chicken manure and available sewage sludge from the New Plymouth District Council's wastewater treatment plant into fertiliser, and the comprehensive processing of fallen stock and offal from abattoirs at the region's rendering plants.

Taranaki is already achieving around 90% of the Ministry's targets and the new strategy sets out practical and feasible developments tailored to Taranaki's needs that will deliver far beyond national requirements.

The regional strategy has been developed by the Regional Waste Management Forum which is made up of representatives of the Taranaki Regional Council and New Plymouth, South Taranaki and Stratford district councils. Together they have wrestled with such issues as hazardous waste collections and landfill operating standards. Their collaboration has been crucial to the success of the project.

The regional strategy has been adopted in principle subject to consideration by the New Plymouth, South Taranaki and Stratford district councils.

Both the national and regional strategies emphasise the need to cut down waste rather than directing most of the available energy and resources on methods for its continued disposal.

In order to further satisfy the targets set by the national strategy and to achieve more efficiencies locally, the *Regional Waste Management Strategy for Taranaki* outlines the following key elements for introduction:

- By December 2003, a Regional Waste Minimisation Officer will be appointed to facilitate the targets of the Regional Waste Strategy;
- By December 2005, it is anticipated that there will be only one operational landfill

in Taranaki. It will be at Colson Road and will continue to: meet industry best practice standards; operate under full cost pricing policy; enforce the policy of non-acceptance of hazardous waste at landfills; and divert inert material where possible;

- By January 2004, all cleanfill consents will be amended to comply with cleanfill disposal guidelines;
- District councils will continue to operate transfer stations throughout Taranaki that provide cost incentives for the diversion of recyclables and green waste from landfill and dedicated hazardous waste collection areas;
- By December 2005, all three district councils will have implemented and be monitoring model general trade waste by-laws;
- All identified high-risk contaminated sites have been remediated, and by December 2008, all identified medium risk contaminated sites will be managed effectively or remediated by the Taranaki Regional Council;
- The district councils will respond within five working days to enquiries for information concerning contaminated sites;
- The Taranaki Regional Council's contaminated sites database will conform with the Ministry for the Environment Classification and Management Protocols, and district councils will have access to this database and any subsequent updates;
- All councils will develop and implement in-house waste minimisation programmes for the facilities they manage, in order to show lead initiatives toward achieving the targets of the *Regional Waste Strategy for Taranaki*;
- Waste minimisation and management programmes and initiatives will be developed with industry in Taranaki including: conducting research into dairy and petrochemical industries wastes to obtain and make available information on volumes and types of wastes arising and the disposal methods used; encouraging extended producer responsibility pilot programmes for the collection and reuse, recycling or appropriate treatment and disposal of dairy and petrochemical wastes; working with the commercial sector to reduce organic waste going to landfill by 50% of 2002 levels by December 2007.

## Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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**EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS**

Emergency Management: 0-6-765 7127

Flood Alert: 0-6-765 7127

Pollution: 0-6-765 7127

Environmental Hotline: 0800 736 222

**NON-EMERGENCY AFTER-HOURS CONTACT NUMBERS**

Emergency Mgmt: Bev Raine 0-6-758 1110

Security: Dave Digby 0-6-765 6463

Port Taranaki: 24 hours Capt.  
Ray Barlow 0-6-751 0200

Pest Animals: George Gallop 0-6-762 2894

Pest Plants: Brian Calkin 0-6-758 5359

Roadsafe Taranaki: Graham Moody 0-6-758 8806

**REGIONAL COUNCILLORS**

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David Walter (Chairman) 0-6-762 7822

**MEETING SCHEDULE:**

The Taranaki Regional Council operates to a six-weekly committee and Council meeting schedule.

Wednesday 2 July, 10.30 am,  
Ordinary Meeting

Thursday 10 July, 10.30 am  
Regional Land Transport Committee

Wednesday 23 July, 10.30 am  
Consents and Regulatory Committee

Thursday 24 July, 10.30 am  
Policy and Planning Committee

Monday 4 August, 10.00 am  
Executive Committee

Wednesday 13 August, 10.30 am  
Ordinary Meeting

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# Resource Management Amendment Act brings changes

The Resource Management Amendment Act 2003 brings a number of changes to the Resource Management Act 1991.

Amendments in summary are:

- Limited notification – if an affected party does not give written approval to an application where environmental effects are minor, only the persons identified by the Council as being affected parties will be notified of the application, be able to make submissions and participate in a hearing. Where effects are more than minor, applications have to be notified;
- Resource consent process changes –
  - If there is inadequate assessment of environmental effects, a local authority can decide that the application is incomplete and return it to the applicant;
  - If a local authority requests further information from the applicant, the processing clock is no longer 'reset' by the local authority but stops for the time taken to provide the further information;
  - New provisions will extend the circumstances when a consent authority may require further information and allow councils to commission a report without the approval of the applicant if the application is deficient;
  - In determining whether adverse effects will be minor (for the purposes of notification) a consent authority may disregard an adverse effect if a plan permits an activity with that effect;
- Section 104 dealing with the matters to be considered when assessing applications is to be simplified; and
- The period within which a resource consent lapses if not exercised is extended from 2 years to 5 years.
- Biodiversity function – Regional councils and territorial authorities have new functions relating to the maintenance of indigenous biological diversity;
- Historic heritage – protection of historic heritage is considered to be a matter of national importance;
- National policy statements – regional policy statements and regional and district plans now have increased obligations to "give effect to" national policy statements and a national policy statement will specify whether or not a full public process in the First Schedule to the Act is required to give effect to the national policy statement;
- National environmental standards – national environmental standards are able to be prepared on a wider range of matters including contaminants, water quality, level or flow, air quality, soil quality, noise and monitoring;
- Rules in plans – new provisions allow councils to defer certain rules in proposed plans from coming into force immediately;
- Environment Court – the Environment Court no longer has the power to order a party to give security for costs.

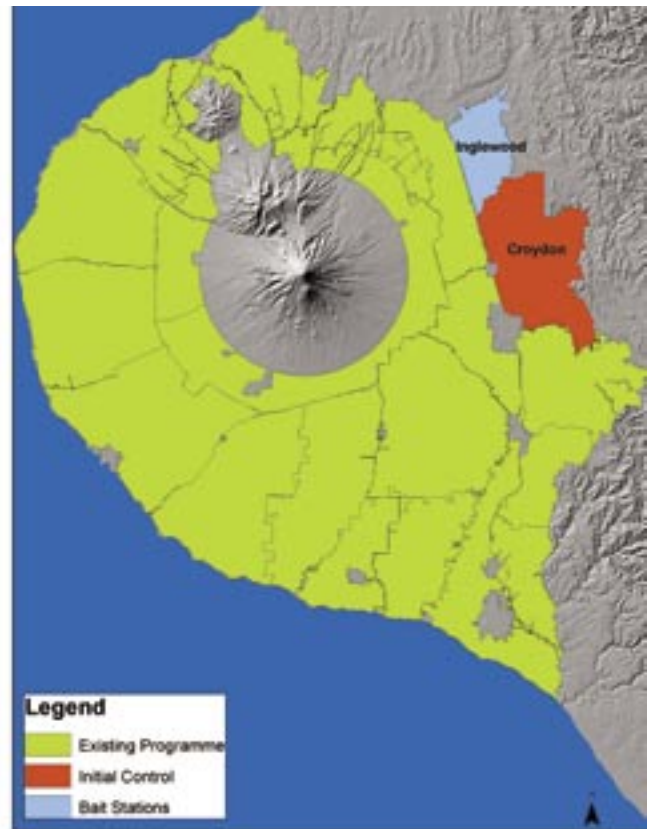
## Self-help possum control programme expands

Two contracts have been awarded for the latest extension to the self-help possum control programme which already covers 182,000 hectares involving 2,800 properties around the ring plain.

The additional new contracts are in the Croydon area east of State Highway 3 between Stratford and Tariki. One contract is for the installation of bait stations over 16,000 hectares and the other is for initial control work over 12,000 hectares. Current contracts for the re-treatment of the marginal area bordering Egmont National Park and covering 24,000 hectares are around 75% complete.

The recently released environment report *Taranaki – our place our future, report on the state of the environment of the Taranaki region – 2003* identifies the impact of possums as a significant threat to the region's biodiversity and recognises it as one of the most important environmental issues facing the region. The self-help possum control programme has increased in size by 78% in the last six years.

Two new areas join the existing treatment area in the self-help possum control programme.



## Survey results welcomed

The response to the survey enclosed in the last issue of *Recount* was very welcome. Thank you for your comments and suggestions, which have been taken into consideration for future issues.